

## The Colonial State as a Social Field: Ethnographic Capital and Native Policy in the German Overseas Empire before 1914

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### **ABSTRACT**

What led modern colonizers to treat their subject populations in radically different ways, ranging from genocide to efforts to “salvage” precolonial cultures? In Southwest Africa, Germany massacred the Ovaherero and Witbooi; in Samoa, Germany pursued a program of cultural retraditionalization; and in the Chinese leasehold colony of Qingdao/Kiaochow, the Germans moved from policies of racialized segregation to a respectful civilizational exchange. Bourdieu is not generally seen as a theorist of empire, despite the partial genesis of his lifelong research program in the late colonial crucible of French Algeria (Bourdieu 1958; Yacine 2004). Nonetheless, Bourdieu’s theoretical work—most notably his conceptions of field and capital—helps solve the main riddle of the colonial state. Different European social groups competed inside the colonial state field for a specific form of symbolic capital: ethnographic capital. This involved exhibiting an alleged talent for judging the culture and character of the colonized, a gift for understanding “the natives.” Competitive dynamics among the colonial rulers decisively shaped the ongoing production of native policies. Policy formation was also influenced by geopolitical and economic interests, responses by the colonized, and the metropolitan government’s final authority in appointing and dismissing colonial officials. The effects of these additional mechanisms were typically mediated by the internal dynamics of the semi-autonomous colonial state.

Why did some modern overseas colonies, such as German Southwest Africa, engage in genocide against their indigenous subjects, while other colonies, such as German Samoa, attempted to preserve the colonized in a condition of precapitalist traditionalism? And why did the German colony of Qingdao (青島) or Kiaochow/Jiaozhou (膠州) in the Chinese Shandong province follow such a different path? This colonial city-state shifted from a framework of treating its Chinese subjects as radically incommensurable and inferior beings, during the first period of German rule (1897 to 1904), to a program of civilizational exchange and open-ended transculturation in the decade before World War I.<sup>1</sup> These different models of governance remained largely unchanged under the colonial rulers who took over the German colonies after 1918.

All forms of colonialism involve a cultural, political, and psychological assault on the colonized. Nonetheless, the type of native policy implemented by the colonizer may make an enormous difference for the colonized—indeed, perhaps, the difference between life and death. The lasting importance of such variations is visible in the long-term legacies of colonialism. The distribution of land in contemporary Namibia remains racially weighted (Werner 1993), and even in the 1980s “almost thirty percent of the estimated 6,000 farm units were owned by Germans or by persons of German descent who spoke German at home” (Weigand 1985:156–57). The Ovaherero, Witbooi, and other Khoikhoi or Nama communities continue to struggle with the traumatic aftereffects of the genocidal war that ended a century ago (Kössler 2005; Zimmerer and Zeller 2003). In Samoa, some of the institutions introduced by the Germans have been maintained by the independent postcolonial state, including the Land and Titles Court, which was introduced to adjudicate intra-Samoan disputes over the inheritance of chiefly titles (Meleisea 1987; Schmidt 1994).

A theoretical enigma emerges alongside this empirical puzzle as soon as we try to apply existing theories of colonialism to these cases. World system theory focuses on historical waves of colonization and decolonization and tries to explain why countries in the global core acquire and relinquish colonies (Bergesen and Schoenberg 1980). This theory is not interested, though, in explaining intercolonial variations in policy, even when they are as significant as the difference between massacre and cultural salvage. Marxist accounts often claim that colonial officials are “either identical with the commercial men or more or less under their domination” (Du Bois [1945] 1975:21), yet have difficulty accounting for policies that directly contradict the demands and interests of European investors, planters, and settlers.

A different class-analytic approach predicts a general association between settler colonialism and extreme levels of violence directed against the colonized (Osterhammel 2005). If this theory were correct, we would expect German colonialism to have been more violent in Samoa than in Southwest Africa, because Samoa had more settlers than Namibia at their respective moments of colonial annexation (1900 and 1884) and was more attractive and profitable for Europeans at that time. Yet the German colonial state created a settler society in Southwest Africa through deliberate policy and discouraged further white settlement in Samoa. Settler interests cannot explain why the colonial state responded to resistance in Samoa with appeasing gestures while engaging in genocide, expropriation, and forced proletarianization in Southwest Africa. In German Cameroon, the colonial state promoted a European-controlled plantation sector, whereas in German Togo it discouraged plantations in favor of African smallholders (Erbar 1991; Michel

1970; Sebald 1988). Class structures were as much the *result* of colonial state policy as they were its determinants.

The “peripheralist” or “excentric” approach argues that colonialism is shaped mainly by resistance and collaboration among the colonized (Robinson 1986). Like the preceding approach, this theory cannot explain varying state responses to resistance in different contexts. It cannot explain, for example, why the Germans responded to uprisings in Kiaochow and its hinterland with extreme violence and repression during the first part of the colonial period, but with conciliatory gestures in the second part.

Postcolonial or discourse-theoretical approaches do not fare much better. Much of this research is inspired by the thesis that the state is a product of “ideas” or “culture” (Steinmetz 1999; Yee 1996), and more specifically by Said’s (1978:117) dictum that “from traveler’s tales . . . colonies were created.” This approach is correct insofar as all the ideological raw materials used by colonial policymakers in forging native policy were drawn from the corpus of representations of native cultures that Europeans brought with them into the newly conquered territories. There is a powerful surface-level correlation between the main thrust of native policies in each of the German colonies and the dominant strand of precolonial ethnological discourse concerning the relevant indigenous populations. But precolonial ethnography was too multivocal to permit an explanatory short-circuit from ethnographic discourse to colonial practice. Said’s (1978:96) claim that European discourse about non-European cultures “could never revise itself” is belied by the sheer polysemy of most European ethnographic and Orientalist discourse in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. At the moment of imperialist conquest, a *plurality* of possible framings were available for characterizing the colonized. The main thrust of German statecraft in Kiaochow was organized around two *different* visions of the Chinese—initially Sinophobia and later Sinophilia. As this study shows, these transformations in native governance were related to reversals of fortune among the main elite groups competing inside the colonial bureaucracy. Historical sociologists need to explain how and why actors in the colonial state field made their selections from this heterogeneous stock of racial, ethnic, and civilizational images, and how these choices shaped their approach to native governance.

In this article, I argue that such policy shifts can best be explained by theorizing the colonial state as a semi-autonomous *field* with its own specific form of symbolic capital, its own specific stakes of competition. The term “autonomy,” as Bourdieu (2000:52) notes, is based on *nomos*, which suggests a “microcosm” governed by “its own law,” which is “the principle and rule of its own functioning.” A field is a structured space of objective positions that operates as a universe of possible stances, a “space of possibilities or options given to participants in the field at any given moment” (Bourdieu 1997:454; see also Bourdieu 1991). Corresponding to this distribution of specific capital and potentials is a homologous space of struggle between opposed postures or position-takings (*prises de position*). The adjustment between the space of possibilities and the space of struggle is effected by the habitus, an internalized system of acquired dispositions that continues to develop over time. Social struggles are mainly about conserving or subverting the principles by which field-specific capital is distributed. They may also attempt to change the very definition of the field’s dominant form of capital.

When the colonial state was operating as a field in this sense, it was partially liberated from the metropolitan government and partially free from the demands and interests of local colonial economic actors. The colonial state was not completely immune to these external pressures, but these pressures were mediated by the state's internal competitive dynamics. When the colonial state surrendered its autonomy—for example, when Southwest Africa was temporarily placed under the control of the German General Staff in 1904, or when colonial governors were directly instructed to implement specific policies—it was no longer operating as a field in the strict sense, even if it continued to exist as an apparatus or machine. Before asking why the colonial state should be conceived of as a special kind of field, we need to establish that modern colonies actually had states and we need to determine what sort of states these were.

## THEORIZING THE MODERN COLONIAL STATE

Modern colonies can be defined as territories in which (1) political sovereignty has been seized by a foreign political power and (2) the indigenous population is treated by the conquering state as fundamentally inferior (e.g., as barbarians, savages, heathens, an inferior race, a stagnant civilization, or denizens of a “failed state”). These two criteria can be summarized as the *sovereignty* criterion and the *rule of difference* criterion.

Political and legal theorists have objected that European colonies cannot be seen as states (or as having states) at all, because they lacked that status in international law (Young 1994). This objection can be countered by showing that colonial governments were perpetually operating, compulsory institutions that exercised a *relative* monopoly of violence inside clearly bounded territories—the core of Weber's (1958) famous definition of the state.<sup>2</sup> With regard to the question of perpetual operation, the German colonies had explicit rules about replacement and the chain of command when governors were absent or unable to perform their duties. Even the most remote boundaries, such as the border between the Rwanda–Burundi section of German East Africa and the Belgian Congo (Louis 1963), were defined through international negotiations and marked in the landscape to show where one colonizer's sovereignty gave way to another's.

To count as a state a colonial apparatus also needs to assert its partial independence from the metropolitan state and from the indigenous polity. Autonomy from the native state is already implicit in the idea of the monopoly of violence. Although the Germans claimed Southwest Africa as a colony in 1884, for example, they had nothing approaching a monopoly over physical coercion prior to the creation of a colonial army in 1899. Most colonial governors and district officials were able to enhance their autonomy from the metropolitan state over time. During the first year of the Kiaochow colony, the governor had to submit his decisions to the naval authorities in Berlin for approval before they could be published and enforced. Starting in 1899, however, prior approval was required only for “the most important and far-reaching regulations” (Seelemann 1982:87). In fact, none of the Kiaochow governors' orders were ever overturned by the central authorities (Schrecker 1971), although one governor was replaced when he resisted pressure to implement a more conciliatory course toward the colony's Chinese subjects. District commissioners (*Bezirksamtmänner*) also had a great deal of autonomy from their respective colonial governors. In German East Africa, Togo, Cameroon, and Kiaochow, district commissioners could adjudicate all legal cases involving indigenous subjects and could impose

any punishment except the death penalty without consulting higher authorities. Even a death sentence could be summarily imposed by a district commissioner “in the case of an uprising, a surprise attack, or some other state of emergency” (von Trotha 1994:110; see also Crusen 1914).

The metropole always retained the power to dismiss governors and other colonial officials, and at certain moments the colonial state came under the direct command of metropolitan authorities. Nonetheless, once the central authorities appointed a governor, they did not micromanage the ongoing production of policy. Several factors enhanced the independence of colonial governors. By defining the colonial state as a space in which ethnographic sagacity was of central importance, colonial officials could suggest that it was impossible to understand the colonial situation from afar and that only officials on the spot could make coherent policy. Governors’ independence was also enhanced by the underdevelopment of telecommunications and the slow pace of maritime transportation. Even in colonies connected to Berlin by telegraph cable, governors were allowed to make momentous decisions on the spot. In October 1904, General Lothar von Trotha initiated his genocidal campaign against the Ovaherero without consulting anyone, informing the chief of the General Staff by letter rather than by telegraph.<sup>3</sup>

By failing to attain legitimacy in the eyes of their conquered subjects, colonies violated Weber’s final criterion of “stateness.” Resistance movements arose in almost every colony immediately following annexation. At the same time, many colonizers found it increasingly difficult to justify conquest to themselves and to parliaments and electorates in the metropole.<sup>4</sup> By the end of the nineteenth century, Europeans had begun to question early-modern arrangements that declared populations living below the equator or beyond the “amity lines” or the Christian *ecumene* to be outside humanity. Of course, this same period saw the apotheosis of biological racism in Europe and the United States, which generated new justifications for colonialism. Each episode of imperial annexation and colonial warfare elicited protest in the metropolitan press and among the political parties. The American Anti-Imperialist League opposed U.S. plans to annex former Spanish colonies at the end of the nineteenth century (Lanzar 1930–1932; Sumner [1898] 1911). In 1931, French surrealists and leftists mounted an anti-imperialist exposition in Paris to counter the official Colonial Exposition (Lebovics 1992). In Germany, the Social Democratic and Catholic Center parties refused in 1906 to approve new credits for the war in Southwest Africa, leading the chancellor to dissolve the Reichstag and call new elections (Reinhard 1978). German colonial officials repeatedly speculated about whether the first Geneva Convention was applicable to colonial warfare. Even if they concluded that such conventions did not apply in Africa (Steinmetz 2007), it is revealing that they felt compelled to discuss the issue.

In an effort to make colonialism seem more legitimate to Europeans themselves, colonial policy was premised on a “rule of difference” (Chatterjee 1993), that is, on assumptions about the inferiority of the colonized and their incapacity for self-government. Although colonial governments multiplied distinctions among the colonized in an effort to dilute opposition, the entire colonized population was juxtaposed against the colonizers in a binary legal, political, and social structure. Of course, the “rule of difference,” like all rules, could be broken. Intermediate groups and exceptional individuals moved from one camp to the other, like the “half-caste” children of mixed Samoan–European unions who petitioned to be treated legally as “non-natives” by demonstrating their “Western” lifestyle and education (Wareham 2002). Even here, though, the legal categories were fundamentally dualistic, and mixed-heritage people were

classified as either natives or non-natives.<sup>5</sup> As soon as a state's policies began to systematically violate the rule of difference, that state was exiting from colonial status.

## **NATIVE POLICY AS THE CENTERPIECE OF MODERN COLONIAL RULE**

In addition to the growing illegitimacy of conquest, the colonial states founded in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries confronted another historically novel problem of governability. Many of the societies annexed in this "modern" period were already familiar with their conquerors, due to the swarms of European missionaries, merchants, and explorers who had penetrated the most remote corners of the globe. This preexisting familiarity with Europeans distinguished the victims of the nineteenth-century scramble for Africa and Oceania from the Native Americans during the conquest of the New World.

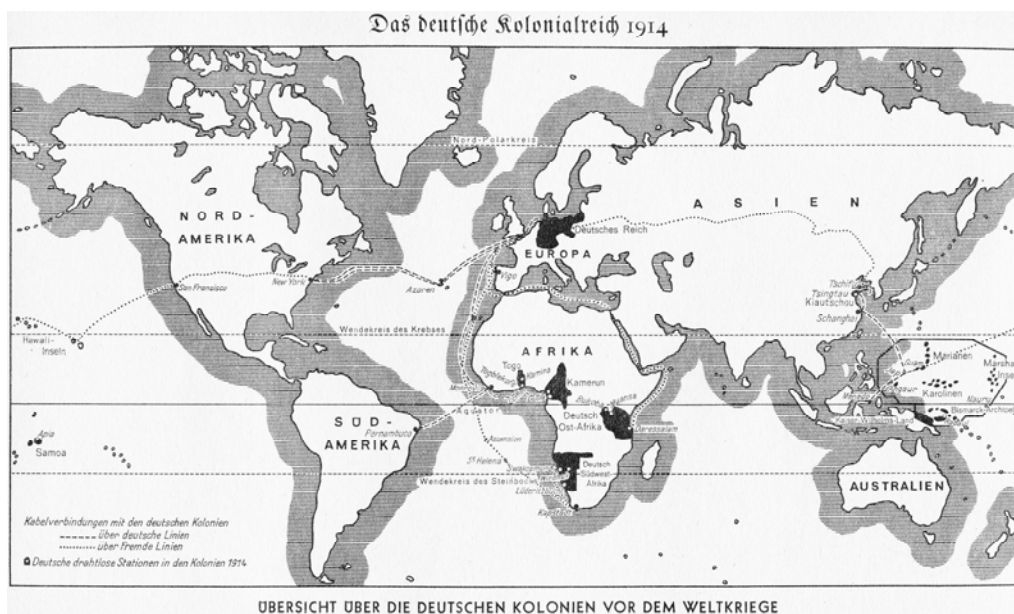
More to the point, Europeans believed that their new subjects were more familiar with them than they were with the colonized. They thought that the colonized were capable of switching strategically between European and local semiotic codes, thereby eluding the colonizer's understanding and control. From Samoa to Southern Africa, non-Western subjects were described as having a special "talent for mimicry" (Müller 1873:79). Sociologist Edward A. Ross (1911:29) discussed "the unfathomableness and superhuman craftiness of the Oriental," in an account of travels in China, including Qingdao, in 1910. According to geneticist Eugen Fischer (1913:303), what mattered most for the European colonizer was "not whether or not there are mulattoes" in a colony "but only that [the mulattoes] must under all circumstances continue to be natives" rather than sliding menacingly between native and European identities. The crux of the problem, according to another German specialist on Southwest Africa, was that "the Hottentot knows us better than we know him" (Schultze 1907:335).

Modern native policy was a response to this supposed biculturalism, this talent for cunning mimicry and code-switching. Native policy tried to compel the colonized to adhere to a constant and stable definition of their own culture and to prevent them from shifting strategically among cultural codes. Native policy became the centerpiece of colonial governance, often trumping concerns of economic exploitation. As the motto on the masthead of one German colonial journal, *Die deutschen Kolonien*, proclaimed, "Colonial policy is essentially native policy."

In addition to being a program of enforced cultural essentialism, native policy was premised on the *inferiority* of the governed. Policies of genuine assimilation were incompatible with the rule of difference. Except for a tiny group of *evolués*, assimilation was only held out as an eternally deferred promise. At the same time, European rulers could not tolerate autonomous cultural difference among the colonized. Even in characteristic cases of "indirect rule," which was organized around "tradition" and "customary law" (Mamdani 1996), the colonized were expected to present a stable, unchanging version of their own culture. Native policy attempted to lock the colonized into a cultural position located somewhere between absolute difference and complete assimilation. A wide range of possible approaches existed between these two extremes. The colonized could be framed as children or as an earlier version of the colonizer, as in social-evolutionary perspectives (Fabian 1983) and discourses of "noble savagery" (Steinmetz 2004);

as a degenerate or stagnant civilization (Grosrichard 1998); or as inherently inferior, as in theories of polygenesis and scientific racism (Stocking 1987).

Native policy can thus be defined as encompassing all policies aimed at providing a stable, uniform definition of the character and culture of the colonized and urging them to act in accordance with this definition. By enlisting the Southwest African Witbooi as trackers and sharpshooters in the colonial army, for example, the colonial government tried to contain the legendary “volatility” (Anon. 1 1854–1855:152) and “unpredictability of character” (Fritsch 1872:305) of the “Hottentots” and to make them behave like reliable “noble savage” warriors.<sup>6</sup> By discouraging Samoans from commodifying their sacred woven mats and preventing them from writing modern individual wills, the German colonizers tried to halt their partial westernization in order to configure them as noble savages.



**Map 1.** The German Colonial Empire in 1914

*Source:* From *Deutsche Kolonien* (Dresden: Cigaretten-Bilderdienst Dresden, 1936), p. 3.

The pressure on the colonial state to stabilize the colonized through native policy put a premium on the colonizer’s supposed ability to understand his subjects. Colonizers were led to frame their interventions as stemming from a profound grasp of the natives’ culture and character. Possession of a facility for understanding the Other became the dominant currency of the colonial state field. Although the specific capital of this field was thus broadly “ethnographic,” this does not mean that state agents needed formal training in ethnology or anthropology. After all, these academic disciplines had barely emerged at the time. New institutions opened at the turn of the century, such as the Colonial Institute in Hamburg and the Seminar for Oriental Languages in Berlin. Future colonial officials and civil servants in many of the colonies were required to earn a certificate from these institutes before beginning their service. Training at the Hamburg Institute for bureaucrats bound for Togo included native languages and English, Islam, area studies (*Landeskunde*), and ethnology, as well as political, economic, medical, veterinarian,

agricultural, cartographic, and bookkeeping sciences (von Trotha 1994). Colonial science was so underdeveloped and had such low status in the metropolises, however, that people holding degrees from these new schools could not automatically dominate the competition for ethnographic capital in the colonies. Claims to ethnographic acuity could also be grounded in evidence of personal character, general knowledge, or formal training in older fields such as Orientalism, philology, and law.

The colonial state was *doubly* autonomous. As noted, its officials were not subjected to constant oversight by the metropolitan state. They were also independent enough from European economic interests in the colony to disregard and even oppose the demands of settlers, planters, and investors. In Southwest Africa, the colonial army exterminated the settlers' main labor force in 1904, creating a labor shortage that lasted for years. In German Samoa, the government refused settlers' demands that Samoans be compelled to work on European plantations and banned the sale of native-owned land to foreigners. In German Togo and Cameroon, colonial officials opposed "the very European merchants whose interests they presumably represented" (Austen and Derrick 1999:130).

## **BOURDIEU AND THE COLONIAL STATE AS A FIELD**

Membership in a field is based on tacit acceptance of a set of assumptions and beliefs, on an agreement that "exceeds the oppositions that are constitutive of the struggles in the field" (Bourdieu 2000:56). But while a field usually has gatekeepers and conditions of entry, it is sometimes difficult to determine who belongs to a field and who is excluded from it (Bourdieu 2000). One methodological advantage of taking the state as an object of analysis is that membership in its field is somewhat easier to establish. At the very least it includes all state employees: governors, district commissioners, judges, policemen, officers, and soldiers. Individuals and groups empowered by the state to carry out official functions may also participate in the field. In parliamentary systems, the legislative branch of government and the political parties are partly inside the state field, but in the colonies analyzed here there were at best rudimentary parliaments representing settlers, and they were strictly advisory to the government. Colonial officials were administratively appointed rather than elected. Colonized subjects were excluded from participating in the formulation of native policy,<sup>7</sup> although they were crucial to policy implementation, acting as native police, chiefs, and judges. The colonized could ensure the success of native policies by playing their assigned roles or undermine policy by withholding their cooperation.

We need to distinguish between field autonomy and field settlement. An autonomous field is one that is dominated by a specific form of symbolic capital<sup>8</sup> that is recognized by all actors in the field as legitimate, and one in which changes are driven mainly by internal struggles. Such a field is characterized by a shared commitment to "everything that is linked to the very existence of the field," a shared interest and belief in "the value of the stakes" (Bourdieu 1993:73–74), by an *illusio* or "investment in the game" (Bourdieu 1991:180). This autonomy is always relative because any field is also influenced by external causal chains. And while all participants may recognize the same form of symbolic capital as dominant, they may disagree about the principles of its distribution. For example, the autonomy of an artistic field is indicated by participants'



agreement that judgments should take an aesthetic rather than a political or economic form. The participants need not agree, though, about the criteria used to rank different artists, artworks, or aesthetic judgments.

Although Bourdieu claims that the political field is generally less autonomous than the artistic field, his political writings deal mainly with electoral democracies in which laypeople can constrain the political field's autonomy through elections (Bourdieu 2000). The colonial state is more similar to nondemocratic political forms such as absolutist or totalitarian states or "traditional" empires. It is therefore theoretically justified to compare the colonial state to literary and scientific fields (Bourdieu 1996a, 1997) insofar as colonial policymaking could systematically ignore external economic and social forces.

There are two main reasons why some fields may *lack* relative autonomy of this sort. First, a field's *illusio*—the consensus among participants concerning the definition of its specific symbolic capital—may be subverted. Second, a field may be directly, forcibly subjected to external forces that undermine its autonomy.

A *settled* field is one in which all participants agree not only about the value of the game and the species of symbolic capital that is dominant, but also about the "criteria of evaluation" to be used (Bourdieu 2000:52), that is, how that symbolic capital should be measured and distributed. The dominant values in a settled field are *doxic*, tacitly accepted by all, rather than needing to be explicitly defended as *orthodoxy*. Generally, such agreement occurs automatically only in fields where some institution monopolizes the definition of distinction, such as the Catholic Church in the medieval European religious field. The colonial state was sometimes able to impose a specific definition of ethnographic distinction. A colonial governor could cultivate writers and scientists who shared his view of native culture, granting them privileged access to informants and specific regions or tribes.

Whether settled or not, all fields involve demands by every actor that all other actors recognize their own holdings of symbolic capital, as well as their performances, perceptions, and practices (Steinmetz 2006). The Hegelian roots of Bourdieu's theory become evident once we consider the French sociologist's frequent use of the word "recognition." This word has two distinct translations in German: *Erkennen* and *Anerkennen*. *Erkennen* is recognition in the empirical sense of comparing a token to a mental type. Hegel (1983) uses *Anerkennen* to describe the emergence of the subject from webs of mutual recognition. This leads Hegel to assert that "man is necessarily recognized and necessarily gives recognition . . . he is recognition" (p. 111). No matter how much a social field is riven by dynamics of conflict, it is also a space of mutual recognition. In this respect, it is incorrect to characterize Bourdieusian field theory for an exclusively agonistic view of social subjectivity (e.g., Martin 2003). Participants in fields are necessarily involved in dynamics of both recognition and competition, identification and dis-identification with other participants.

At the beginning of German colonization in the first half of the 1880s, it was still unclear whether these colonial states would attain the properties of fields. Indeed, Southwest Africa was initially governed by a private chartered company, like British India before the 1860s (Lardinois 2008) and several other German colonies. It was not obvious in 1884 that there would ever be a

Southwest African colonial state.<sup>9</sup> By the end of the 1880s, however, a colonial state was emerging, and it soon began to attain relative autonomy from the colonial economic field and from the metropolitan state. The colonial state began to be characterized by competition for a particular form of symbolic capital: ethnographic capital—a reciprocally recognized talent for making judgments of the colonized. This field was organized around a form of symbolic capital that would have been illegible, or at least irrelevant, in the metropolitan field of power (although not, perhaps, in the emerging academic disciplines of ethnology and cultural anthropology).

If colonial state fields were partly autonomous in this sense, they were entwined with the metropole via the colonial field of power, which bridged the two spaces. The state fields of different German colonies were closely linked, and they were also connected to the state fields in the neighboring colonies of other European powers and to a global field of colonial strategies.<sup>10</sup> Wilhelm Solf, the German State Secretary of the Colonies from 1911 to 1918, served in Calcutta and German East Africa (Tanzania) before being named governor of Samoa (1900 to 1911), and he was ambassador to Japan between 1920 and 1928. While governor of Samoa, Solf frequently compared his own policies with those in the neighboring British colonies, some of which he visited. All colonial administrators spent a period as interns in the Colonial Department (later, the Colonial Office; von Trotha 1994:90). Officials in the colonies were sometimes able to “colonize” the responsible section of the metropolitan Colonial Office. The civil servants in the Foreign Office responsible for overseeing German Samoa were themselves former envoys to precolonial Samoa. They agreed with Solf’s policy course and helped him maintain his independence from settlers in Samoa and their allies in the Reichstag. The selection of new cadres for German Togo was undertaken by top administrators from that colony while they were visiting Berlin (Sebald 1988:234). The Southwest African “Native Ordinances” of 1907 were drawn up in Berlin by veterans of Southwest African politics, all of whom subsequently returned to the colony to occupy key administrative posts (Zimmerer 2001).

The actors, and their dispositions and struggles, originated outside the colonial state, but had to be reconfigured in ways that made them suited for producing colonial ethnographic judgments. The colonial state is no different from other fields in this respect. Fields are always populated by actors coming from elsewhere, equipped with holdings of capital and habituses that need to be adapted to the idiom of the new arena.

To understand how this transposition of external actors, capitals, and habituses worked in the German imperial context, we need to reconstruct the power stalemate among the elite social classes in the German empire (1871 to 1918). The three main actors in the German state were the nobility, the propertied bourgeoisie, and the *Bildungsbürgertum* (i.e., the educated middle class).<sup>11</sup>

Many of the officers and career diplomats involved in the German colonial empire had noble titles of great antiquity. The nobility had converted its inherited cultural capital to economic and modern political capital over the course of the nineteenth century. But at the end of the century, the nobility was losing out to the capitalist bourgeoisie both economically and with respect to some aspects of state policymaking (Steinmetz 1993). The aristocracy retained its hold over the German diplomatic service, which was part of the Foreign Office (Philippi 1985), and it continued to dominate the officer ranks of the Prussian army and its General Staff (Craig

1955:235). Overall, the “percentage of aristocrats in the higher level of the colonial service gradually diminished, albeit at a slower rate in the colonies than in the central administration.” The military played a less important part “as the pioneering period drew to a close” (Gann and Duignan 1977:90, 93).

The second participant in this elite standoff was the propertied bourgeoisie. In 1885, many of the major German bankers had been talked into investing in Southwest Africa by Bismarck (Drechsler 1996). The membership of the German Colonial Association “read like a ‘Who’s Who’ of prominent figures in the German business world” (Blackbourn 1998:333). Some colonial officials, including Karl Ebermeier, the governor of Cameroon beginning in 1912, were drawn from this class.

The third elite class fraction active in colonial governance was the *Bildungsbürgertum*, or cultivated middle class, whose metropolitan sociopolitical power base was in the universities, cultural and scientific associations, research institutes, and the Protestant church. The *Bildungsbürgertum* was the classic bearer of educational titles of cultural nobility. *Bildung* means education, cultivation, and the “forming of the person in accordance with . . . ethical norms” and is closely related to *Kultur* (Ringer 1969:87; see also Koselleck 1990). Many colonial governors were drawn from the *Bildungsbürgertum* and many had law degrees, including Albert Hahl (governor of German New Guinea, 1902–), Heinrich Schnee (governor of East Africa, 1912–), Theodor Seitz (governor of Cameroon, 1907 to 1910, and Southwest Africa 1910–), Wilhelm Solf (governor of Samoa, 1900 to 1911), and Theodor Gunzert (governor of German East Africa, 1902 to 1916).

The ranks of district commissioners also contained numerous *Bildungsbürger*. In Togo in 1905, for example, the seven district officials included “a physician, a doctor of philosophy, a former missionary, an architect, and a lawyer,” along with two military officers (Gann and Duignan 1977:87). The German foreign service in India and China tended to employ people with degrees in law, Sinology, Sanskritology, and other Oriental languages. The training of German translators in China included a period of apprenticeship to a mandarin scholar in Beijing (Matzat 1985).

Some German missionaries can also be considered part of the *Bildungsbürgertum* (Turner 1980). Most missionaries were outside the colonial state, although some were invited to fill official functions, especially in native education. Missionaries paved the way for conquest in all three of the colonies examined here by offering comprehensive representations of the indigenous populations. The most extensive descriptions of Samoan culture before colonial annexation in 1900 came from British missionaries. In Southwest Africa, the Rhenish Missionary Society initiated European settlement before the colonial period and helped negotiate the transfer of sovereignty to the Germans (Menzel 1992). In Shandong province, German Catholic missionaries provoked the incident that justified the German Navy’s invasion of Jiaozhou harbor in 1897.

Characterizing the three main elite social classes as nobility, capitalists, and *Bildungsbürgertum* is shorthand for the forms of capital they brought to the colonies. Many individuals occupied intermediate or combined class locations (Wright 1985), and many had biographical trajectories

that propelled them from one position in the German field of power to another. Such complications made a difference for their activities in the colonial state field. Economic capital grants a freedom from necessity that can help individuals assert an “autonomous” and “anti-economic” stance within a non-economic field, as illustrated by the case of Flaubert in the French literary field (Bourdieu 1996a) and by Weber in the field of early German sociology (Radkau 2005). The Prussian nobleman Ferdinand von Richthofen, an explorer of China who initially pointed German officials toward Kiaochow, illustrates another combination of class positions. Von Richthofen’s aristocratic family connections accounted for his inclusion in the first Prussian expedition to China in the 1860s and for his privileged access to Bismarck in reporting on his travels. Although von Richthofen specialized in the modern and less distinguished discipline of geography and had only a rudimentary knowledge of Chinese (Osterhammel 1987), he was able to dominate the field of China studies and ascend into the pinnacles of the German academic elite. In 1900, he was named *Dekan* of Berlin University (von Drygalski 1905).

Actors inside the colonial state helped to consolidate it as a field by framing their performances as claims to ethnographic sagacity. An official’s position on native policy typically foregrounded his existing holdings of capital, translated into forms appropriate to the field. Colonial officials and civil servants refined and rationalized their ethnographic perceptions and actions in the course of ongoing struggles in the field. Those with origins in the *Bildungsbürgertum* often emphasized empathic and hermeneutic approaches to understanding the indigenes, thereby calling attention to their own ability to speak exotic languages and to think their way into foreign worldviews. Colonial military noblemen tended to evaluate the colonized in martial terms and to emphasize the aristocracy’s hereditary specialization in the arts of physical coercion and the command of subordinates. Capitalist investors and self-employed settlers assessed the colonized in terms of their capacity for labor.

The forms of capital each group brought to the colonies did not function in the same ways as in the metropole but were translated into the particular language of the field. (Conversely, colonial symbolic capital could not be imported back into metropolitan fields without further efforts at conversion.) A cultivated *Bildungsbürger* could not dominate a colonial state field by discussing Plato and Kant. Nonetheless, his general education and disposition allowed him to adopt a posture of hermeneutic empathy and to exude perceptiveness when faced with a foreign Other. Members of the settler class also adjusted their discourse to the demands of the setting. The leader of the settler opposition to Solf in Samoa, Richard Deeken (1901:164), described Samoans as lazy and argued that “colonies are a business venture or they are nothing,” but he also thought that Samoan culture needed special protection. Deeken’s book is replete with the language of the “South Sea idyll” (p. 125) and stories of warm hospitality, combined with images of scantily clad Samoan women caressing male visitors and seducing them with the “savage passion” (p. 142) of their dances. These tropes were drawn from the same ethnographic framework that dominated the colonial state field. The settlers’ economic posture was thus adjusted to the field’s *doxa*.

The reversals of fortune among two groups of field-founding nomothetes in Southwest Africa illustrate the translation of external pressures into the terms of the field. Agents sent to the colonies from the metropole to change the course of colonial policy were quickly inserted into

the extant logic of the field. Some took up “ready-made positions” in the local array of possibilities, while others created new positions, altering the overall field of forces.

The first group of authorities in Southwest Africa was associated with the military nobility. Captain Curt von François, governor (*Landeshauptmann*) from 1891 to 1894, had been involved in colonial military campaigns before coming to Southwest Africa. His father was a hero of the Franco-Prussian war (Meyer 1926; von François 1972). Along with his brothers and other allies, Captain von François took an extremely harsh view of the Witbooi people, who had launched the first armed uprising against the Germans at the end of the 1880s. In a surprise attack on the Witbooi compound in April 1893, he exhorted his troops to “destroy the tribe” (von Bülow 1896:286). Von François was unable to subdue the Witbooi revolt, and the Foreign Office sent Theodor Leutwein as a replacement the following year.

Leutwein was a university-educated, middle-class son of a Lutheran minister and a lecturer in military tactics prior to his posting to the colony (Esterhuysen 1968). He began attacking the previous administration as brutal and incompetent and insisting on his own superior ability to think his way into the subjectivity of the colonized. Leutwein attempted to stabilize the Witbooi by integrating them into the colonial army and treating them as noble savage warriors.

The colonial war with the Ovaherero began in January 1904, and by the middle of that year Leutwein was replaced as commander of the colony’s armed forces by Lothar von Trotha, a scion of the “ancient aristocracy of the Saale district” (Pool 1991:243–44) who had made his name in imperial engagements in China and German East Africa (*Deutschland in China* 1902:230). The first generation of field founders now reemerged, supporting von Trotha’s attack on Leutwein (von François 1905). Von Trotha and Leutwein engaged in a furious war of words, each claiming to possess a better understanding of indigenous character and each trying to disqualify the other in the eyes of the Berlin authorities. Leutwein drew on classical metaphors, comparing the Ovaherero uprising to the Sicilian Vespers revolt in 1282.<sup>12</sup> This effort to flaunt a humanistic education marked a failure to translate cultural capital generated in the metropole into terms fungible in the colony. It was a movement outside the orbit of the colonial state’s local history. Leutwein’s ideological helplessness partly reflected the absence of more compelling representations of the Ovaherero in the one-dimensional ethnographic repertoire he had inherited.

In response to Leutwein, von Trotha escalated his rhetoric, writing, “I *know enough* of these African tribes. . . . I finish off the rebellious tribes with blatant terrorism and cruelty, with rivers of blood and rivers of money,” and adding that his “*exact knowledge* of so many central African tribes demonstrates . . . with absolute necessity that the Negro never bows to treaties but only to raw violence.”<sup>13</sup> In contrast to Leutwein, von Trotha continued to claim a kind of ethnological expertise specific to the colonial field, posing as an experienced colonist with “exact knowledge” of Africans, that is, as an *alter Afrikaner* (old African)—a term that referred to Germans who had extensive experience in Africa. Even in a heightened state of emergency, von Trotha revealed his investment in the illusion of the field. The claim to “know these African tribes” had a currency that it would not have had in 1884, before the field existed, and that it certainly did not have in metropolitan bureaucratic and military fields. Von Trotha’s continuing commitment to the local

game is especially notable insofar as the colony had been temporarily subordinated to the direct control of the German General Staff.

As noted above, we need to distinguish the *autonomization* of a field from its substantive *settlement* around specific definitions of distinction. Although every German colonial state field had become relatively autonomous from the metropolitan state by the 1890s, and while everyone behaved as if ethnographic capital was the field's defining currency, there was not agreement in each colony about what counted as ethnographic excellence. In Southwest Africa, there was a continuous shifting among dominant definitions of distinction, and hence a continuous redistribution of field-specific capital. Military criteria—a commitment to discipline and order—prevailed before 1894 and between 1904 and 1907. Leutwein's colonial hermeneutics dominated the field between 1894 and 1904, with an emphasis on detailed ethnological knowledge and policies of retraditionalization. After 1908, the colony's native policies tilted toward the constitution of a copper and diamond mining proletariat, and evaluations of the colonized according to economic criteria came to dominate the state field.

It is impossible to know whether General von Trotha would have continued to radicalize his interventions to the point of genocide in 1904 if he had not been locked in a polarizing battle with a middle-class rival. Von Trotha's delirious cruelty was directed as much against Leutwein as against the Ovaherero. Leutwein was not just von Trotha's main opponent in the colonial state field but also represented for him the forces deposing the nobility from its ancient domination in Germany. Unlike the African rebels, Leutwein was not killed or imprisoned, but his career was ruined by the coordinated attack on his competence.

Drawn-out contests between different fractions of a splintered dominant class may prevent a field from being settled while enhancing its autonomy, as field-specific modes of action become more systematic and clearly defined. Southwest Africa is not the only colony in which we can trace a purification of ethnographic visions over time. The governor of Samoa honed his approach to native policy in the course of struggles with local settlers and Navy commanders. Solf's program of Polynesian retraditionalization was rooted in a well-wrought paternalistic vision of Samoans as peaceable noble savages. In this respect, his policies corresponded closely to the dominant European vision of Samoans during the second half of the nineteenth century (Steinmetz 2004). It was not a foregone conclusion, though, that Solf would adopt this perspective. Other ethnographic postures were available in the precolonial archive and were exemplified by specific European groups in Samoa on the even of annexation. The settlers who wanted the government to compel Samoans to work on their plantations mobilized a generic vision of the lazy native (Alatas 1977). The Navy officers who patrolled the Pacific wanted to continue their nineteenth-century policy of gunboat diplomacy, which involved bombarding Samoan villages from warships and deporting troublesome leaders to faraway islands, along with other decidedly unhermeneutic practices. They mobilized an alternative representation of Samoans as *ignoble* savages (Linnekin 1991). But Solf derided the settlers and Navy captains as unqualified for colonial rule. The settlers, Solf wrote, had "too little education to find their way in the complicated mental processes of a Samoan brain" and tended to fall back on crude racist formulas such as "bloody Kanaka, this damned nigger!" (Solf 1906:87, 66). Solf enrolled other officials into his paradigm, most importantly his successor, Erich Schultz, who became an expert on Samoan customary law (Schultz 1911) and head of the Land and Titles Commission. Like

Solf, Schultz believed the Germans' central goal was the "preservation of the Samoans' customs and mores and their peculiar character [*ihre Eigenart*] per se."<sup>14</sup>

Figure 1 illustrates a settled colonial state field, that is, one like German Samoa in which most participants recognize the same forms of symbolic capital, whether they are endowed with large or small amounts of it. The *Bildungsbürgertum* is shown here as the dominant sector of the dominant class, the nobility and bourgeoisie as the dominated sectors. In other colonies or historical moments, the nobility or the bourgeoisie might well be dominant, meaning that the + and – signs would be associated with different corners of the triangular field.

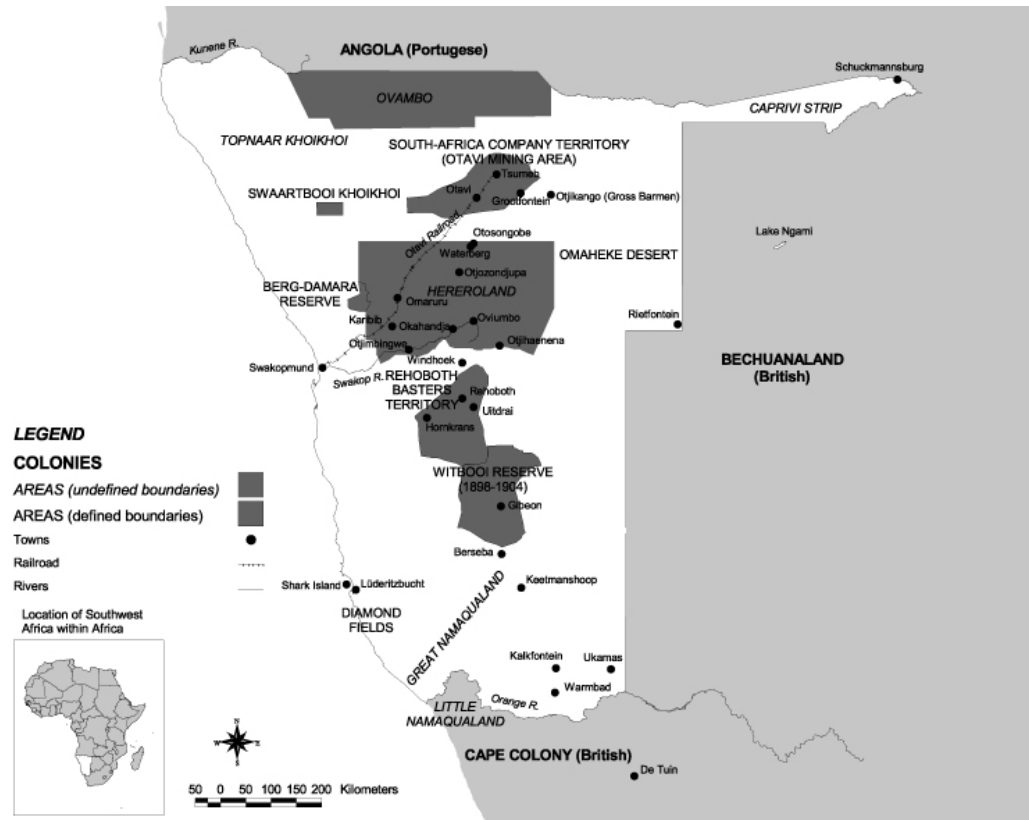
The colonial state field, as depicted in Figure 1, is embedded within the colonial field of power, a space that contains both state and non-state European actors. All white residents in European colonies possessed a certain amount of "racial" capital vis-à-vis all colonized residents due to the rule of difference, and were therefore inside the field of power. The colonial "social space" encompasses both the colonized and the colonizers.<sup>15</sup> The metropolitan field of power was thus transposed into the colonies in a truncated form, but the initial triangular structure of the elite was reproduced.

## THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE COLONIAL STATE FIELD TO EXPLAINING COLONIAL NATIVE POLICY

Like any social practice or historical event, colonial policy was overdetermined by an array of causal processes and could never be explained by the field mechanism alone.<sup>16</sup> The historical archive of ethnographic representations defined the space of policy possibilities available at any given moment. Cooperation or resistance by the colonized determined whether a given regime of native policy could be successfully implemented or had to be replaced. Geopolitical dynamics among the great powers led metropolitan authorities to insist on specific lines of action from the colonies. European colonizers used imagos of the colonized to provide imaginary solutions to their metropolitan social-class dilemmas, and this could intensify or weaken their support for specific forms of native policy.<sup>17</sup> But certain aspects of colonial policy can only be accounted for by considering the internal dynamics of the colonial state, construed as a field.

**SOUTHWEST AFRICA.** In Southwest Africa, the Germans pursued different native policies with respect to each indigenous community, but the genocidal attack on the Ovaherero stands out most starkly in the pre-1918 historical record (even if the suffering of the Witbooi was more prolonged and the genocide more complete in terms of the proportion of the population killed). The campaign against the Ovaherero might be explained as an unmediated and inevitable result of the overwhelmingly negative and dehumanizing representations of this community produced by German missionaries and settlers since the 1840s—a colonial version of Goldhagen's (1996) explanation of the Nazi Judeocide. But General von Trotha did not decide to exterminate the Ovaherero until five months after his arrival in the colony. In preparation for the August 11 battle of Waterberg (Hamakari)—where the Ovaherero had gathered in the tens of thousands with their cattle and were then decisively defeated—the Germans set up POW camps. Von Trotha did not yet have plans to exterminate the Ovaherero at this time (Lundtofte 2003; Pool 1991). In his Order of Annihilation on October 2, 1904, however, von Trotha announced, "The

Herero are no longer German subjects. . . . The Herero nation must . . . leave the country. . . . All Herero, armed or unarmed . . . will be shot dead within the German borders. I will no longer accept women and children, but will force them back to their people or shoot at them.”<sup>18</sup> During the next two months, German troops sealed off the eastern edge of the desert into which the Ovaherero had fled and blocked access to waterholes, waiting for nature to do the work of exterminating the enemy.



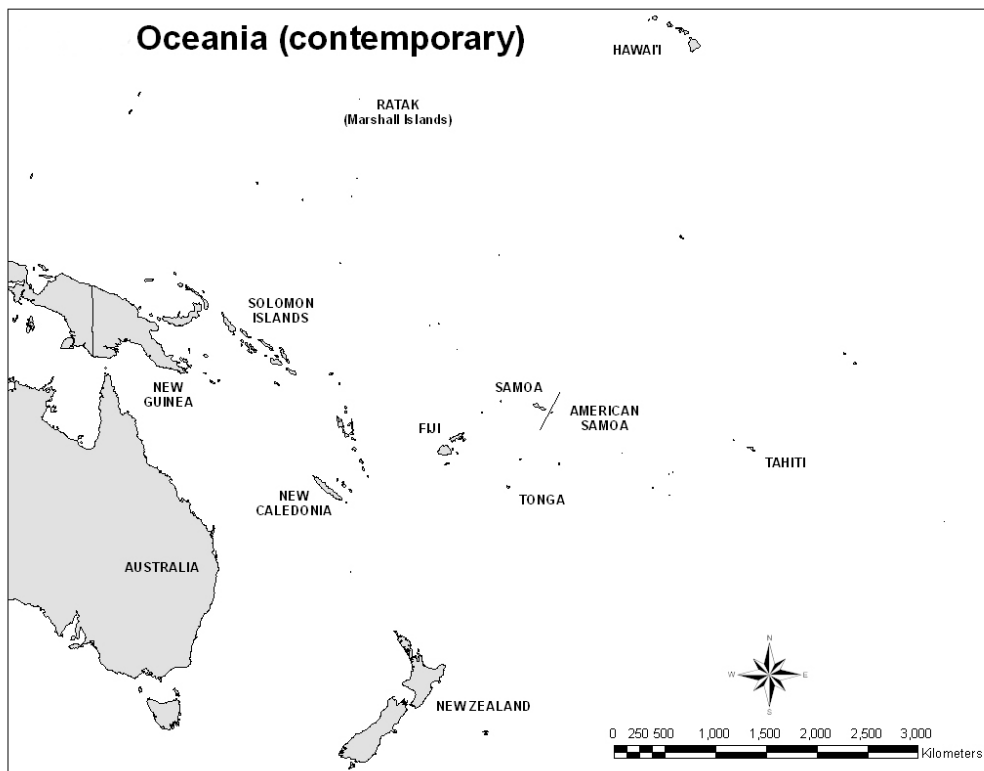
**Map 2.** Southwest Africa during the German Colonial Period  
*Source:* Map by Rob Haug.

One possible explanation for this move to genocide is that by October, von Trotha had imbibed the hatred of the Ovaherero that was so pervasive among German settlers and the colonial army. But Von Trotha’s decision could not have been predicted before October. It was one option in a space of possibilities, and indeed, some of his leading officers questioned his approach. Major (later First Lieutenant) Ludwig von Estorff, commander of the Eastern Division (*Ostabteilung*) during the Waterberg campaign, wrote that von Trotha’s policy of “decimating the people was as foolish as it was cruel; we could have saved many of the people and their herds of cattle if we had spared them and allowed them to return; their punishment had already been sufficient.” Von Estorff “suggested this to General von Trotha, but he desired their complete annihilation” (von Estorff 1968:117). Von Estorff also criticized the deadly conditions at the Shark Island POW camp, where 90 percent of the prisoners died due to deliberate neglect (Erichsen 2003).<sup>19</sup> Nor was there unanimous support for von Trotha’s course of action among the settlers (Rohrbach 1909). His movement toward the most radical position can best be explained by his spiraling clash with Leutwein, who retained his title as governor until August 1905. Von Trotha’s boast



about his “blatant terrorism and cruelty” and “rivers of blood and rivers of money” was not made in public, after all, but in a letter to Leutwein.

**GERMAN SAMOA.** German Samoa was a very different sort of colonial state field, more hegemonized by one particular definition of ethnographic acuity. As a result, there was more continuity in the direction of Samoa’s native policies. But here too we can observe the sharpening of ethnographic visions over time. Solf and Schultz strengthened their opposition to any precipitous “modernization” of Samoans the more the settlers pushed for it. Solf also defined his approach against the Navy officers, especially those he associated with the German nobility. For example, Solf described one navy captain, a personal friend of the Kaiser who tried to infringe on Solf’s authority and seemed to favor a return to gunboat diplomacy in Samoa, as “stupid and vain.”<sup>20</sup> During his first overseas posting with the German Consulate in Calcutta in 1889, Solf had worked under an aristocratic envoy, Baron Edmund von Heyking. The relationship between Solf and von Heyking was highly antagonistic from the start, and it came to a crisis when the Baron attacked Solf for his participation in the Asiatic Society of Bengal, a famous venue for British Sanskritists.<sup>21</sup> Solf’s self-presentation as an Anglicized student of Oriental cultures represented a bid for distinction in an occupational milieu still dominated by aristocrats. Von Heyking was openly disdainful of the ethnographically curious ranks of the foreign office translating staff, and during a later posting as German Consul to China he was said to view any interest in Chinese culture as a sign of a “subaltern mentality” (Franke 1954:98).



**Map 3.** Contemporary Oceania, Showing Location of Samoa (formerly German Samoa)  
*Source:* Map by Rob Haug.

Solf's animosity toward the German nobility was intensified by interactions of this sort. Indeed, Solf was dismissed from his Calcutta posting. But he had the family means to return to Germany and earn a new law degree, which allowed him to shift into the colonial service and take up a position as a judge in German East Africa. His bourgeois background was an essential ingredient in his ability to reassert himself as a political *Bildungsbürger* in the official overseas service. This background also seems to have contributed to Solf's somewhat defiant self-presentation as an Anglicized cosmopolitan gentleman.

Solf's view of Samoans stemmed from his class habitus and from the mix of capital he brought with him to the colony and was reinforced by his parallel struggles in the German field of power and the colonial state field. Although these two realms were relatively independent of one another, he moved back and forth between them and operated in both simultaneously. Solf's ethnographic vision foregrounded the sorts of hermeneutic and linguistic sensitivities with which he was endowed and that helped him dominate the Samoan colonial field.

GERMAN KIAOCHOW. The dynamics of the colonial state field also illuminate the evolution of native polices in Kiaochow. The German Navy invaded the town of Qingdao and the surrounding villages in 1897. The "Lease Treaty" of 1898 granted Germany sovereignty over the area it called "Kiautschou" in Shandong Province for 99 years.<sup>22</sup> During the first seven or eight years of German rule, native policy reflected the values of the Navy officers who served as governors. The Navy and its Third Naval Infantry Battalion, stationed in Kiaochow, was closely involved in the campaign against the Boxer rebellion—a campaign marked by an apotheosis of Sinophobia and brutality against the Chinese (Kuss and Martin 2002; Soesemann 1976). The Germans tried to extend their control beyond the leasehold boundaries using Navy troops, railway lines, and coal mining operations (Schrecker 1971). The city of Qingdao was designed according to principles of strict racial and cultural apartheid. A bifurcated legal system subjected the colony's Chinese subjects to draconian punishments (Crusen 1914; Mühlhahn 2000).



**Map 4.** Shandong Province, 1897 to 1914, Showing Location of German Kiaochow Colony (Jiaozhou leasehold)

*Source:* Map by Rob Haug.

After 1904, the colony began to move away from its violent, segregationist beginnings, engaging in more open-ended processes of civilizational exchange and cultural syncretism. German troops pulled back inside the colony's boundaries. In 1907, the Navy secretary began laying plans for a Chinese–German university in Qingdao.<sup>23</sup> The university, which opened in 1909, was jointly financed and administered by the Chinese and German governments. Professors from both countries taught Chinese students in Western and Chinese disciplines. In the department of law and political economy, students studied both Chinese and European law. The department published the *German–Chinese Legal Journal*, which carried Chinese translations of German law and a column in German by the Chief Judge of Shandong Province on important Chinese legal decisions. One of the school's law professors, Kurt Romberg, argued for a synthesis of German and Chinese legal forms, paraphrasing the Confucian principle of *tiyong* (substance and function, or essence and practical use; Cua 2002). This principle was adopted by Chinese reformers such as Zhang Zhidong, who coined the phrase “the old [i.e., Chinese] learning is the substance—the new [Western] learning is the vehicle” (Stichler 1989:275). Such syncretism, according to Romberg (1911:23, 25), would contribute to an “orderly state” in China and would render “superfluous” European “consular jurisdiction and foreign barracks.” Institutions like the German–Chinese university were moving the colony toward processes of open-ended transculturation and away from assumptions of racial–civilizational hierarchy—and therefore away from colonialism.

Another example of the change in native policy was the creation of a “Chinese Committee” in 1902 (Mühlhahn 2000). The committee’s 12 members were selected by Chinese merchants from the three provincial guilds active in Kiaochow (Zhang 1986). After 1910, the governor selected four representatives from these guilds (Hövermann 1914). Although this was a step backward in terms of Chinese control, the idea was that the representatives would eventually become part of the governor’s advisory committee, which had hitherto consisted exclusively of Europeans (Mohr 1911). Kiaochow’s Chinese inhabitants were increasingly being treated as quasi-citizens. A Chinese chamber of commerce was created in 1909 (Anon. 2 1909:2). After 1911, when many former Qing dynasty officials and exiles from the Republican Revolution took refuge in Qingdao, elite Chinese were permitted to live in the city’s European quarter.

These changes were initiated from outside the colonial state field by the Navy and the German Foreign Office, whose policymakers had decided to cultivate China as an international ally because Germany was becoming increasingly isolated in Europe. The Navy replaced Kiaochow’s governor, Truppel, when he resisted granting the Chinese equal status in running the university. For Truppel, such a joint venture seemed like a colonial “category mistake” (*Begriffsverwirrung*), an “injury to German sovereignty in the protectorate.” He insisted that the Chinese were not the colonizer’s *partners* but rather their “charges (*Schutzgenossen*)” or “subjects.”<sup>24</sup> He was correct, of course, at least if Kiaochow was to continue to be a colony.

An equally important determinant in the policy shift was the large group of Sinophiles inside the colonial state, most of them translators, proto-Sinologists, or missionaries from the liberal Weimar and Berlin mission societies, who regarded China as a civilization equal or superior to Europe (Gerber 2002; Matzat 1985). This group now began to impose its definitions of ethnographic acuity on the colonial state field. The interpreter-Sinologist Otto Franke and the missionary-Sinologist Richard Wilhelm were openly disdainful of German capitalists and military noblemen (Franke 1954; Wilhelm 1914). If these Sinophilic *Bildungsbürger* had not been present, the metropolitan authorities might not have accomplished their goal of liberalizing Kiaochow’s administration. The central state helped legitimate this new dominant grouping in the colony. Native policy was jointly determined by geopolitical calculations and the dynamics of the field, although in this instance the triggering event was outside the colony.

## CONCLUSION: THE COLONIAL STATE AND STATE THEORY

The modern colonial state was structured like a field. Its internal dynamics of competition stimulated the production of a continuous stream of ethnographic representations and projects for native governance. These were the *idées-forces* that Bourdieu (2000) defines as the stakes of the political field in general—performative ideas that both represent and divide the social world. Bourdieu (1996b, 1999) analyzed the modern state as the universe of a new *noblesse de robe* (nobility of the gown) based on scholarly titles rather than pedigrees of noble birth. This scholarly aristocracy, Bourdieu argued, works to establish “positions of bureaucratic power that will be relatively independent of the previously established temporal and spiritual forms of power” (1996b:377). The state helps reproduce this new nobility by recognizing its credentials and legitimating its claims to dominate the state. The state becomes an autonomous field with its own specific form of capital. By the same token, the colonial state field autonomized itself from

the central state and from the European colonial field of power and developed its own self-referential struggles and specific form of symbolic capital.

There are several differences between central and colonial state formation beyond the questions of foreign sovereignty and the rule of difference. Bourdieu's theory of the state is linked to his writings on the political field, which assume the existence of elections and parliamentary or legislative structures. Bourdieu's (2000) brief comments on Soviet-style regimes emphasize that even those states still laid claim to a kind of pseudo-representativeness. The colonial states examined here, however, were essentially dictatorships over European settlers as well as indigenous populations. The competition for political power took place entirely inside the administration, courts, police, army, and other bureaucratic offices. Even if we acknowledge that colonial states were dictatorships, though, this does not mean they were necessarily autonomous from external determination. Dictatorships have been analyzed as expressions of elite social classes (Poulantzas 1974), economic interests (Aly 2007), and mass ideologies (Goldhagen 1996).

The model of the colonial state as a field moves beyond approaches that reduce state policy to extra-state determinations and suggests one way of rethinking the theme of state autonomy that has been discussed since Weber and revived more recently by neo-Marxists and neo-Weberians (Block 1988; Poulantzas 1978; Tilly 1990). The state autonomy literature has not been able to identify and explain the interests that "state managers" pursue. This literature often falls back on general concepts such as a "will to power," an inherent desire for order, or an interest in the accumulation of territory for its own sake. Even more problematic are "rational choice" approaches that set out to describe the state as autonomous from social-class interests but end up reaffirming its heteronomy by describing state managers as maximizers of economic capital. Nor do these theories explain why different parts of the state system, including the local state (Steinmetz 1993) and the colonial state, sometimes become partially independent from the central state but stop short of provoking state breakup or fragmentation.

Bringing field theory to bear on the local state and the colonial state also illuminates the shortcomings of Bourdieu's cursory speculations about the state as a "central bank of symbolic credit" (1996b:376) that dominates all other fields and is constituted "as the holder of a sort of meta-capital" (1999:57) that underwrites the values of all other species of capital. In many ways, these ideas about the state do not really correspond to Bourdieu's insights in the rest of his work. The state may well have the *ambition* to become a meta-field governed by a form of meta-capital, but this does not distinguish the state from the economic or religious fields, from which similarly encompassing ambitions also arise. The state contributes to the emergence of literary, scientific, and professional fields by officially consecrating their members, but these fields may themselves contribute to state formation, as shown here. Field theory explains why peripheral governments sometimes become fields in their own right, developing specific internal criteria for judging representations and practices and generating new *idées-forces* and policies. By doing this, field theory sheds light on the ways colonial states and local or regional governments resist the *centralizing* effect of the state, sometimes breaking away altogether. This theory may also illuminate the centrifugal tendencies and the breakup of non-colonial empires.

In each of the colonies examined here, additional causal processes overdetermined the effects of the colonial state field. First, the legacy of precolonial ethnographic stereotypes provided all the raw materials colonizers used to elaborate their ideas about the treatment of the colonized and in their struggles with one another. Second, colonizers' identifications with images of the colonized across the racial–cultural boundary could either strengthen or undercut their commitment to an ethnographic vision that promised to help them accumulate field-specific capital.

A third mediating mechanism was responses by the colonized. For any native policy regime to succeed, the colonized (or at least some of the colonized) had to be willing to play their assigned parts. In Samoa, Mata'afa Iosefa agreed to step into the role of "Paramount Chief," which the Germans created and assigned to him. Conversely, the uprising in Southwest Africa that started in 1904 brought Leutwein's system of native policy to a sudden halt.

A fourth mechanism was rooted in international relations. The German chief of staff supported von Trotha's genocidal course of action partly to palliate the international humiliation of defeat by an African adversary during the first part of 1904. In Kiaochow, during the years before the Great War, geopolitical interests led the German Navy, foreign office, and diplomatic corps to throw their weight behind the "Sinophiles" in the colonial administration in an effort to curry favor with Beijing. European economic interests and goals also played a role in shaping native policy.

There is every reason to expect that French, British, and Dutch colonies were also structured as fields and that ethnographic capital was often their characteristic form of symbolic capital. It seems unlikely that the comparative salience of educational capital or the unusual prestige of the *Bildungsbürgertum* in nineteenth-century Germany (Conze and Kocka [1985] 1992) led to a uniquely strong emphasis on claims to ethnographic expertise in the German colonies. Historians of the British (Cannadine 2001; Comaroff and Comaroff 1991–1997; Hall 2002) and French (Cohen 1971; Sibeud 2002) empires have shown that symbolic class struggles also raged among British and French colonizers. Goh (2007, 2008) shows that native policymaking was driven in part by internal struggles among colonizers in the American Philippines and British Malaya in which colonizers made claims to ethnographic mastery. As for early modern colonial states, it may well be that ethnographic capital was not as important in this period, for the reasons discussed in this article. What about the typical U.S. imperial strategy of indirect empire (Mann forthcoming), which encourages the creation of dependent but autonomous regimes? The United States may attempt to avoid reliance on place-specific ethnographic knowledge and apply universal "neoliberal" theories of markets, modernization, and democratization (Steinmetz 2003). Eventually, though, even this imperial strategy may be forced to abandon universal theory and call for more detailed ethnographic advice (Rohde 2007), opening the door to the kinds of competitive dynamics discussed here.

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## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> See Gründer (2004) for the best overview of the entire German colonial empire.

<sup>2</sup> Weber's (1958) definition is modified by Tilly (1990), who notes that a state's monopoly of violence is always relative to other coercive institutions operating in a given territory.

<sup>3</sup> Von Trotha to von Schlieffen, Oct. 4, 1904, in German Federal Archives (Bundesarchiv Berlin), Reichskolonialamt (RKA), vol. 2089, pp. 5r, 6r.

<sup>4</sup> Even in the sixteenth century, some Europeans challenged the legitimacy of colonialism, as shown in the famous Valladolid debate of 1550 to 1551 concerning the treatment of the natives of the New World.

<sup>5</sup> In Togo after 1913, Africans were prohibited from taking German names (Sebald 1988), whereas in Southwest Africa, the native "helpers" (*Bambusen*) were given "comical" German names like Mumpitz, "little Cohn," and Bebel (Freimut 1909:37).

<sup>6</sup> The Witbooi were a partially Europeanized community of Cape Khoikhoi who had migrated north into Namibia during the nineteenth century. For centuries, Europeans called the Khoikhoi "Hottentots" (Merians 1998).

<sup>7</sup> For exceptions see Go (forthcoming) and Cooper (1996). Knoll (1978) incorrectly states that Africans participated in the municipal administration of Lomé in Togo. Starting in 1914, the "respectable citizens" of Lomé obtained the right to have two representatives meet weekly with the governor (Erbar 1991).

<sup>8</sup> Because "each particular species of capital is tied to a field" (Bourdieu 2000:64) social life is inherently characterized by a proliferation of different types of capital.

<sup>9</sup> On the transition from chartered company to state rule in British India see Lardinois (2008).

<sup>10</sup> Nor was the colonial state a mere *subfield* of the metropolitan state field. Subfields tend to derive their criteria of judgment from the field that encompasses them, either accepting them or deliberately rejecting them, and this was not the case in the colonial state. On the distinction between field and subfield, see Steinmetz (forthcoming).

<sup>11</sup> On the elite class struggle within the metropolitan German state, see Steinmetz (1993). The German working class was almost completely absent from the colonies. European beachcombers in the Pacific (Denning 2004) were a "lumpen" class never recognized as a legitimate participant in colonial governance.

<sup>12</sup> Leutwein to Colonial Department, May 17, 1904, in Bundesarchiv Berlin, RKA, vol. 2115, p. 66r.

<sup>13</sup> Von Trotha to Leutwein, Nov. 5, 1904, in Bundesarchiv Berlin, RKA, vol. 2089, p. 100v; von Trotha to von Schlieffen, Oct. 4, 1904, in *Ibid.*, p. 5v (my emphasis).

<sup>14</sup> Schulz to Osbahr, March 8, 1914, New Zealand National Archives, Archives of the German Colonial Administration, VI 28, pt. 1, p. 61.

<sup>15</sup> The colonized society might also be analyzed as a field or a system of fields. Chinese social life in colonial Kiaochow, for example, continued to be partially organized around the sorts of political, cultural, and economic capital that prevailed in Chinese society at large (Mühlhahn 2000; Will 2004).

<sup>16</sup> For a more complete multicausal account, see Steinmetz (2007).

<sup>17</sup> Solf's vision of Samoans offered him an *imaginary* solution to his metropolitan social-class dilemma insofar as it described Samoa as a sort of meritocracy of nobles in which honorific titles were gained through strategy, struggle, skill, and deliberate selection rather than through inheritance. The fact that Samoan status competition rewarded oratory and etiquette and disdained monetary wealth (Holmes 1969) could have great appeal to a *Bildungsbürger*. The governor's fondness for Samoans led him to give his own children Samoan names. *Bildungsbürger* like Richard Wilhelm (1914) identified with Chinese mandarins for similar reasons—Europeans had long described the mandarins' power as grounded in educational merit rather than inheritance.

<sup>18</sup> Von Trotha's proclamation of Oct. 2, 1904, in Bundesarchiv Berlin, RKA, vol. 2089, p. 7r.

<sup>19</sup> Report on mortality in the POW camps in Southwest Africa for the High Command of the Colonial Army, in Bundesarchiv Berlin, RKA, vol. 2140, pp. 161–162.

<sup>20</sup> Solf to Dr. Siegfried Genthe, February 22, 1900, in Bundesarchiv Koblenz, Wilhelm Solf papers, vol. 20, p. 134.

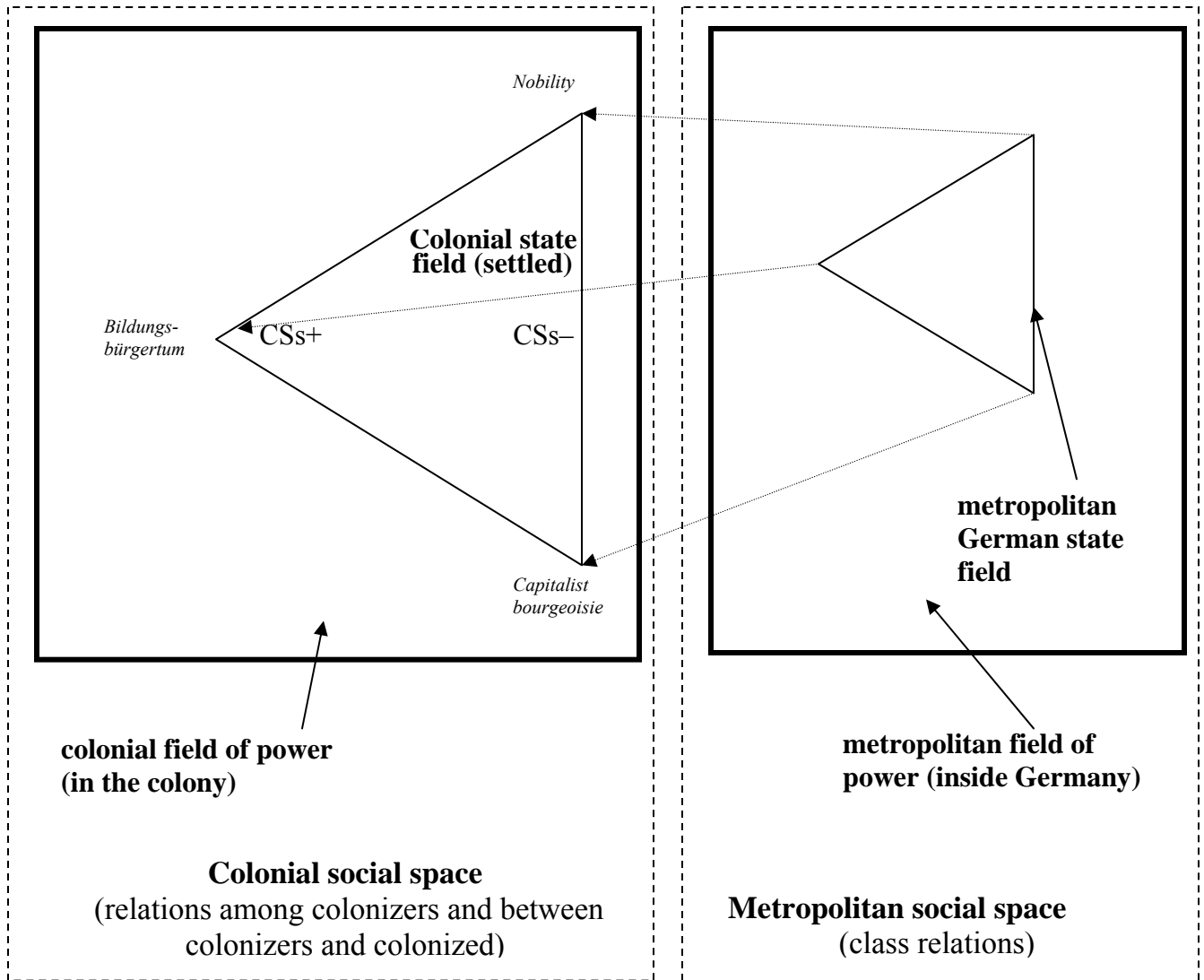
<sup>21</sup> Solf to von Heyking, Sept. 4, 1890, in Bundesarchiv Koblenz, Solf papers, vol. 16, pp. 71–73; von Heyking to Solf, January 15, 1891, in *Ibid.*, p. 275.

<sup>22</sup> The leasehold was an area of 553 km<sup>2</sup> with 80,000 to 100,000 inhabitants encompassing the village of Qingdao, several larger towns, and 275 villages. Qingdao City grew from about 700 to 800 inhabitants in 1897 to about 50,000 in 1914 (Matzat 1998).

<sup>23</sup> The university is discussed in Stichler (1989), Mühlhahn (2000), and in a report by Otto Franke, August 7, 1908, in Bundesarchiv Berlin, Deutsche Botschaft China, vol. 1258, pp. 184–87. For the law school's curriculum, see *Deutsch-chinesische Hochschule* (1910).



<sup>24</sup> Truppel to von Rex, Sept. 1, 1908, Bundesarchiv Berlin, *Deutsche Botschaft China*, vol. 1259, p. 35v; Truppel to von Rex, Aug. 18, 1908, in *Ibid.* vol. 1258, p. 215.



**Key**

- social space
- field of power
- field of the state (colonial or metropolitan)
- + dominant role
- dominated role
- CSs Capital, symbolic, specific to the colonial state field

**Figure 1.** Illustration of a settled colonial state field (left), showing transposition of the axes of the power conflict from the metropolitan state field (right) to the colony (left)

*Note:* This figure excludes any indication of the different types and levels of capital. The labels “nobility,” “capitalist bourgeoisie,” and “Bildungsbürgertum” stand in for these differences, as discussed in the text.