

“Some of us had Troubles and Some of us Were Free:” Illicit Brewing and African Community
Formation under Settler Colonialism in Zimbabwe, 1890-1950

by

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This thesis is dedicated to all the former residents of Mbare:
It should not have been so difficult to find your names.

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Abstract

This thesis explores what was possible for urban Africans under settler colonial rule in colonial Zimbabwe, from 1890 to the early 1950s. Focusing on the township of Mbare, this thesis argues that colonial interests were built upon weakness and division, and that African lives within the settler colonial township were heterogeneous, often shaped by intersecting categories of identity, primarily gender and class.

In order to ask questions about how gender and class shaped the Mbare experience, this thesis looks at drinking spaces within the township, particularly the differences between who frequented the municipally-run beer hall and the illicit *shebeens*. It highlights how the divisions between the clientele in different drinking spaces can tell us a great deal about how Mbare residents were internally divided, and how these factions often had little to do with appeasing the colonial order.

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Chapter One: Introduction

How did Africans live their lives under settler colonial rule, especially within cities, where one would think colonial power was most effective and present? This thesis will ask what was possible for urban Africans during the high colonial period in Zimbabwe, or Southern Rhodesia. One of the current concerns of African social history, into which this thesis fits, is unpacking the complexities and nuances of a multiplicity of African lives lived under colonialism by asking questions that reach past the previous dichotomous portrayal of resistance or oppression.¹ As the new school of social history has demonstrated, African lives under colonialism did not all fit into one of two easy categories, but rather were diverse and resist reductionist simplifications. The social history of alcohol, as this introductory chapter will discuss, has been useful for getting after these questions. This chapter will comment on the wider literature across the continent, and will extrapolate from studies which pertain to states outside of colonial Zimbabwe and adjust their insights to the particular context of this thesis. By examining how various urban Africans drank and attempted to carve out leisure spaces, one may begin to see these figures as active historical agents. In short, the social history of alcohol can illuminate more about African lives lived at the ostensible heart of settler power, the city. As this project will argue, and the historiography reveals, alcohol production and consumption by Africans can enlighten us about the contradictions of the colonial order and the lived experience of daily life under settler colonialism.

This thesis is, in part, a reaction to the older historiography of urban Africans in Southern Rhodesia that outlines a binary depiction of colonial rule. The early work of Terence Ranger, for

¹ For examples of recent social histories which ask similar questions, see the New African Histories series from Ohio University Press, as well as The Social History of Africa Series, by Heinemann Press.

example, discusses how urban Africans were especially oppressed and therefore especially focused on resisting state power. His work from the late 1960s depicts a long history of resistance and uprisings against white rule. He states that the nationalist movement of the 1960s was “radical, almost millenarian,” and “has tapped the same sort of energy that flared up in 1896-97.”² Here, he draws a line from the Matabele uprisings of the 1890s directly to the nationalist movements of the 1950s and 1960s. Although a valuable first step in the historiography, Ranger has been critiqued due to his depiction of African political involvement as being perpetually trapped within a dichotomy of oppression and resistance. This early narrative portrays all urban Africans battling with an ever-present colonial agency. This thesis will argue that Ranger gives colonial rule far too much credit. The image of the “state” which he depicts is one which is all-powerful. This thesis is more in line with the more recent conceptions of colonial power as outlined by Frederick Cooper. Cooper argues that colonial power could not be everywhere at once, was often characterized by weakness not strength, and that there were many different possibilities for African lives within it.

The Early Beginnings of the Social History of Alcohol

The scholarship of the 1960s and beyond which I trace in this thesis arose out of the earlier writings of mission lobbies and the global temperance movement, the moral dangers of alcohol and the “civilizing mission” of colonialism.³ The period from the 1910s through the 1950s saw the formation of committees of white people from most European nations and

² T. O. Ranger, *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia, 1896-97: A Study in African Resistance* (Evanston [Ill.]: Northwestern University Press, 1967), 377-378.

³ For an account of the various agendas of committees involved in this process, see: Cathy Shutt, “A Moral Economy? Social Interpretations of Money in Aidland,” *Third World Quarterly* 33, no. 8 (2012): 1527-543.

America meeting to discuss non-white people in the colonies and the perceived dangers of their access to alcohol. In the later period of the 1940s and 1950s, the discourse often took the form of “social welfare” and concern for the “natives” who were subject to the racist thought that they could not help themselves around drink. The writings of this later period are still deeply entrenched within the racial and religious discourse of the age, however new discoveries in the world of medicine introduced a new discipline called alcoholology.⁴ While certainly not free from moralizing discourse, this new discipline was more interested in the ways alcohol physically affected the body and mind of those who drank. This field also highlighted the significance of what type of alcohol was being consumed, and how various amounts of ethanol affected the drinker.⁵ These new adaptations were of particular interest to colonial officials, in their attempts to understand how alcohol affected the manners and behavior of the “natives.”⁶

The new scientific discourse surrounding drunkenness and the body did not do sufficient justice to the ways in which alcohol and drinking patterns are part of cultural practices.

Ethnographic and anthropological studies on human behaviour and the cultural importance of drinking behaviours began to emerge in the 1950s. Many European ethnographers of Africa, often concerned with capturing what they termed cultural change, traveled to African communities and documented what they saw. Researchers, like anthropologist Monica Wilson,

⁴ Dwight B. Heath, *International Handbook on Alcohol and Culture* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1995), 2.

⁵ Heath, *International Handbook*, 2: “No matter how thorough our understanding of historical and sociological aspects of alcohol use in a given society, it matters whether people are drinking beer (at about 4-12%) or wine (at about 8-20%) or spirits (over 30% alcohol), and how fast they drink it. In short, alcohol is a biopsychosocial phenomenon, and ignoring that complexity can only result in partial understandings, or even misunderstandings.”

⁶ See Allison K. Shutt, “‘The Natives Are Getting Out of Hand’: Legislating Manners, Insolence and Contemptuous Behaviour in Southern Rhodesia, c. 1910-1963,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 33, no. 3 (2007): 653-672.

worked with a focus on particular communities and wrote of the social life and customs which she saw being practiced, and what she thought they meant.⁷ These works often had notes on cultural practices which involved drinking, and despite the problematic and racialized nature of much of this field work, it is invaluable to many historians, as it records practices and customs which would have otherwise gone undocumented.

From this very brief account of the early origins of the social history of alcohol, this chapter will now move into a more intimate account of individual works and contributions which shaped what would happen within the discipline going forward. It was not until the late 1960s that there was a historiographical challenge to the publications that had arisen from the writings of colonialism, temperance, prohibition, alcoholology, and ethnography.⁸ In the 1969 landmark work of Craig MacAndrew and Robert Edgerton, *Drunken Comportment: A Social Explanation*, they claim that there is a social component of every society which influences the role of drunkenness. MacAndrew and Edgerton also argue that the previous approach of the alcoholology studies to garner a chemical understanding of how it acts on the body is insufficient for an in-depth analysis of the importance of alcohol.⁹ They conclude that “the way people comport themselves when they are drunk is determined not by alcohol’s toxic assault upon the seat of

⁷ See Justin Willis, “‘Beer used to Belong to Older Men’: Drink and Authority Among the Nyakyusa of Tanzania,” *Africa: Journal of the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures* 71, no. 3 (2001): 373.

⁸ Of course, ethnography did not end in the 1960s. It later became the discipline of anthropology, which is ongoing. This historiographical critique speaks strictly to the pre-1960s ethnography.

⁹ Craig MacAndrew and Robert Edgerton, *Drunken Comportment: A Social Explanation* (Chicago: Aldine Pub. Co., 1969), vi: “The present effort is addressed to a reconsideration of the conventional understanding of one aspect of man’s relationship to alcohol—the proposition that alcohol by virtue of its toxic assault on the central nervous system causes the drinker to lose control of himself and to do things he would not otherwise do. It will be our contention that the disjunction between this, the conventionally accepted formulation of alcohol’s effects upon man’s comportment, and presently available fact concerning what people actually do when drunk is even now so scandalous as to exceed the limits of reasonable toleration.”

moral judgment, conscience, or the like, but by what their society makes of and imparts to them concerning the state of drunkenness.”¹⁰ This idea is formulated in their work through the phrase “time out,” which they employ to describe leisure time or moments where the social order may be challenged.¹¹ The phrase “time out” was also used to highlight moments where the behavior of those taking part could challenge notions of authority and power.¹²

One of the first pieces produced following the landmark contributions of MacAndrew and Edgerton, which built upon their insights, was a study entitled *Alcohol in Colonial Africa*, by Lynn Pan in 1975. Her work alludes to a long history of brewing and drinking present in African territories prior to European contact and expansion. She also hints throughout her work that liquor had a fiscal role within the colonial order.¹³ This study builds upon the work of MacAndrew and Edgerton when it discusses the social and performative role of alcohol within rituals and leisure time, or as they termed it, “time out.” Pan’s early study is fairly limited in its scope, and in some places is quite problematic, echoing the ethnographic assumptions of the 1950s about an unchanging “native” way of life that was designated as distinctly non-modern. Despite these limitations, Pan’s study, much like the work of MacAndrew and Edgerton, opens up the topic of alcohol as a social history question, rather than one strictly concerned with moral, health, and policy problems.

The Rise of Social History

¹⁰ MacAndrew and Edgerton, *Drunken Comportment*, 165.

¹¹ Justin Willis, ““Beer used to Belong to Older Men,”” 374.

¹² Willis, ““Beer used to Belong to Older Men,”” 374.

¹³ Janet M. Bujra, “Women Entrepreneurs of Early Nairobi,” *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 9, no. 2 (1975): 213.

Some argue that social history rose to the forefront of historical scholarship in the 1960s.¹⁴ This historiographical turn came about in several waves: the first being the effort to historicize and narrate the lives of the working poor and their labour. Social historians then delved more deeply into the theme of gender, and how the experiences of women and men can result in fundamentally different narratives. The necessity of examining labour processes, as well as the gender element of every story, lent itself well to the study of brewing and drinking within Africa. The social history of alcohol that emerged in the 1960s out of the earlier temperance literature and alcoholology work has been a part of the larger school of African social history, which attempts to historicize the lives of the African working poor, particularly women. Writing about Africans brewing and drinking shows a part of the daily lived experience of living under colonialism. The following section outlines how the field moved away from the early assertions of the late 1960s, that drinking simply has a social function, and began to pose the question of what studying alcohol production can teach us about the lived experience of colonialism, particularly settler colonialism.

Janet Bujra's 1975 article on "Women 'Entrepreneurs' of Early Nairobi" exemplifies the new trends of the late 1960s and 1970s outlined above: class-based and gendered historiography. Bujra's work is part of the early social history of alcohol, but the attention she pays to African beer brewing is marginal. Her work is relevant here because of her methodological contributions. Bujra writes of the early development of, and migration to, the city of Nairobi, with a particular emphasis on women's mobility and labour; she also discusses how the city became divided into districts which were segregated by race. Within the "African location" of Pumwani, Bujra notes

¹⁴ E.P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class*, (London: Gollancz, 1963), was arguably the beginning of the field of social history, although others place it earlier.

that there were women who brewed beer and --her main concern-- worked as prostitutes. These women had the “ability to accumulate savings in this way [which] equaled or surpassed that of men in the earliest phase of Nairobi's history.”¹⁵ For Bujra, a “socially viable urban community”¹⁶ was one in which members could earn wages and engage in the market. In order to emphasize the significance which she finds within labour, Bujra attempts to include these female brewers and sex workers within the language of Marxism, by referring to them as part of the “property-owning petty-petty-bourgeoisie.”¹⁷ Highlighting the earning potential and accumulation of the African women in Nairobi was an effort to reject the historiography prior to the 1960s which denied Africans agency and history. By directly including Africans, particularly female prostitutes and beer brewers, within the Marxist discourse of the time, Bujra asserts that Africans not only have history worth celebrating and studying, but also that they are part of a wider narrative involving labourers, petty-bourgeoisie, and a ruling class. While this was an important phase within African historiography, it also had flaws. Classic Marxist frameworks often did not fit easily and naturally within the structures of African societies of the time or earlier, as capital had not been a part of the story prior to the colonial period, and land ownership was understood in distinctly different ways. Bujra’s assertions that beer brewing and prostitution were legitimate forms of work, which many scholars, such as Luise White,¹⁸ put forth in later years, was a significant contribution to the historiography; however, her narrative is rather romanticized, with no evident assessment of whether Marxist frameworks are appropriate within an East or South African colonial context. Bujra instead focuses on the narrative of struggle and

¹⁵ Janet M. Bujra, “Women Entrepreneurs of Early Nairobi,” 213.

¹⁶ Bujra, “Women Entrepreneurs of Early Nairobi,” 214.

¹⁷ Bujra, “Women Entrepreneurs of Early Nairobi,” 213.

¹⁸ Luise White, *The Comforts of Home: Prostitution in Colonial Nairobi* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990).

resistance, depicting her actors as perpetually resisting the encroachments of colonial officials and patriarchal male figures. She seemingly does not question whether these women saw themselves as workers first, whose efforts were directed at undermining the colonial order. She wishes to celebrate the work of these women as far as it supports her Marxist agenda.

Much like Bujra, the work of Elizabeth Schmidt in the early 1990s continued to celebrate individual African women who managed to earn a high wage.¹⁹ Schmidt discusses women in settler urban spaces in Southern Rhodesia, with a focus on market women, prostitutes, and beer brewers, as examples of women who managed to subvert both the colonial order and the patriarchal order by earning a wage. Schmidt's contribution to the historiography is how African women under the colonial order were under two simultaneous forms of patriarchy: from African men and the colonial order. The women who managed to accumulate personal capital were held up by Schmidt as vanguards of liberation in the face of double oppression. Although significant for recognizing the ways that class and gender intersected, and that the experience of living under settler colonialism could be very different for African women, Schmidt's work takes for granted that earning a wage did not allow women to escape the racial and gendered pressures of their situations.

One of the critiques of this celebrationist narrative, and the focus strictly on labour and wages, is that economic activities do not take place in a vacuum. The experience of being an early "entrepreneur" in a growing colonial space cannot be simply celebrated as a story of a woman overcoming adversity and earning money. Even when some women were able to earn a decent wage, their limited economic success did not indicate that they necessarily had social

¹⁹ Elizabeth Schmidt, "Patriarchy, Capitalism, and the Colonial State in Zimbabwe," *Signs* 16, no. 4 (1991): 734.

mobility, due to the fact that their relative prosperity took place within a racist settler state. Earning a wage did not equal independence, liberation, or freedom. Celebrating the economic process of beer brewing and the initiative of the workers that engaged with it is important in that it allows us to appreciate the complexity and difficulty of the labour process, but it is not the complete picture. As Justin Willis says in his discussion of the early social history of alcohol, “the literature divides into two schools. One is triumphalist, and has celebrated alcohol as a source of autonomy, which has offered the subordinate--and especially women--a way into the cash economy, defeating the attempts of states and seniors to exclude them.”²⁰ The other school laments the introduction of a capitalist economy, where alcohol is “an instrumental force in the unravelling of the noncommercial social ties that once offered security and autonomy of another kind.”²¹ This new phase of the historiography raises the following questions: do we celebrate the brewers who were able to engage in the cash economy, move to urban centres, and sell their product as independent heroines? Or do we question the capitalist structures and limited social opportunities which were available to these women, despite their efforts? The historiography since Bujra is indicative of this struggle. In works of the later 1990s, the narrative began to move past this binary depiction and became focused on using the work of female brewers as a way of examining the limits and contradictions of colonial state control and understanding.

The work of the scholars of the 1960s and 1970s had highlighted how much there was to be done, and how important it was to celebrate and study African history in the new era of independence. In the 1990s scholars began to question the over-simplification of the often politically motivated work of the previous decades. Also, crucially for historians of colonial

²⁰ Justin Willis, “Enkurma Sikitoi: Commoditization, Drink, and Power among the Maasai,” *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 32, no. 2/3 (1999): 339.

²¹ Justin Willis, “Enkurma Sikitoi,” 339.

Africa, the social history of alcohol proved to be useful for asking questions about the African experience, for the simple fact that there are plenty of colonial sources concerning the topic. These, as this thesis demonstrates, ranged from police reports, correspondence between colonial officials, newspaper articles, tax records, and legislative council transcripts. Historians in the 1990s began to ask why alcohol was a topic of such concern for colonial officials.

The 1990s and 2000s: Asking Questions about Drink and Colonial Contradictions

Charles Ambler partnered with Jonathan Crush in 1992 on an edited collection about colonial southern Africa. *Liquor and Labor in Southern Africa* argued that alcohol was a major part of life for urban Africans under colonial rule, yet had received little scholarly attention.²² They also argue that work done before 1992 had failed to connect the history of alcohol more broadly with African social history. Crush and Ambler attempt to not only demonstrate the “complex relationship between alcohol use and the emergence...of a modern urban-industrial system, based on mining and the exploitation of migrant labour,” but also the ambiguous attitude of the colonial state towards Africans drinking.²³ Although discussing the specific context of labour migration in the South African colonial economy, their work resonates with an examination of the Southern Rhodesian case because of the broader insights they come to about colonial labour and alcohol. As this thesis will discuss, mining interests played a big role in shaping of the policies framed by the Southern Rhodesian legislative council. Therefore,

²² Charles Ambler and Jonathan Crush, *Liquor and Labor in Southern Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1992), 2.

²³ Ambler and Crush, *Liquor and Labor*, 2.

although Ambler and Crush focus specifically on the role of alcohol in the South African mining complex context, their insights are certainly relevant for the context of this thesis.

The Crush and Ambler collection includes essays on labour, migration, the role of women, and the struggle between state-controlled beerhalls and locally brewed beer. The chapters within this collection by Pamela Scully²⁴ and Ruth Edgecombe²⁵ discuss how liquor had long been used by the mine authorities and the colonial administration to attract and maintain a labour force. The chapters by Helen Bradford,²⁶ Sean Redding,²⁷ and Steven Haggblade²⁸ all pay particular attention to the role which women play within any discussion of the social history of alcohol. As Bradford says, women were not only involved within a series of boycotts against colonial beerhalls erected on worksites and in townships that attempted to monopolize and control the sale of beer to African workers and residents, but that women also “transformed the boycotts.”²⁹ Further, women not only played a key role in the protests, but also, as Redding and Haggblade highlight, in the production of local beer. This discussion of the gender component also blends nicely into the chapters on the tensions and African opposition to state beer halls, by Christian Rogerson,³⁰ and the chapter on colonial concerns over illicit brewing by women nearby

²⁴ Pamela Scully, “Liquor and Labor in the Western Cape, 1870-1900,” in Crush and Ambler, *Liquor and Labor in Southern Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1992), 56-77.

²⁵ Ruth Edgecombe, “The Role of Alcohol in Labor Acquisition and Control on the Natal Coal Mines, 1911-1938,” in Crush and Ambler, *Liquor and Labor in Southern Africa*, 187-207.

²⁶ Helen Bradford, “‘We Women Will Show Them’: Beer Protests in the Natal Countryside, 1929,” in Crush and Ambler, *Liquor and Labor in Southern Africa*, 208-234.

²⁷ Sean Redding, “Beer Brewing in Umtata: Women, Migrant Labor, and Social Control in a Rural Town,” in Crush and Ambler, *Liquor and Labor in Southern Africa*, 235-251.

²⁸ Steven Haggblade, “The Shebeen Queen and the Evolution of Botswana’s Sorghum Beer Industry,” in Crush and Ambler, *Liquor and Labor in Southern Africa*, 395-412.

²⁹ Bradford, “‘We Women Will Show Them,’” in Crush and Ambler, *Liquor and Labor in Southern Africa*, 208.

³⁰ Christian Rogerson, “Drinking Apartheid and the Removal of Beerhalls in Johannesburg, 1939-1962,” in Crush and Ambler, *Liquor and Labor in Southern Africa*, 306-338.

worksites, by Philip Bonner.³¹ Women, labour, and questions of colonial interests cannot be discussed in isolation from one another, as this collection highlights nicely. This is also relevant to the Southern Rhodesian context, as chapters four and five of this thesis touch upon. Gender came to play a pivotal role in the debates surrounding the beer hall in the Salisbury African location, as did class struggles.

Michael West's works in the early 2000s were some of the first to touch on the role of alcohol in colonial Zimbabwe,³² and were the first to discuss another element within the social history of alcohol: not all Africans were poor laborers. As West argues the introduction of a capitalist wage-labour economy allowed for the creation of an African middle-class in Southern Rhodesia.³³ Many prominent men who had received mission education, and worked within the colonial structures as clerks, traders, or the like, were able to amass some capital and prestige under colonialism. These men, particularly within a settler space like Salisbury, were deeply concerned with the hierarchies which existed in the city. The control and separation of space became crucial to the future of the colonial project. Having districts which were strictly for Africans, Indians, and whites became more complicated once there were Africans who could afford to purchase homes elsewhere and did not want to live in the African townships designated for the working poor. These relatively affluent Africans needed other ways to distinguish themselves from the working poor, and to affiliate themselves more with the structures which

³¹ Philip Bonner, "Backs to the Fence: Law, Liquor, and the Search for Social Control in an East Rand Town, 1929-1942," in Crush and Ambler, *Liquor and Labor in Southern Africa*, 269-305.

³² See Elizabeth Schmidt, *Peasants, Traders, and Wives: Shona Women in the History of Zimbabwe, 1870-1939* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1992).

³³ Michael O. West, *The Rise of an African Middle Class: Colonial Zimbabwe, 1898-1965* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002). Also by West, "Liquor and Libido: 'Joint Drinking' and the Politics of Sexual Control in Colonial Zimbabwe, 1920s-1950s," *Journal of Social History* 30, no. 3 (1997): 645-667.

allowed them to maintain their wealth and personal status. Drinking and leisure spaces, such as dancehalls and beerhalls, became a central focal point of middle-class African anxieties, as West highlights brilliantly.³⁴ West crucially contributes that not all Africans were for or against any particular form of drinking; the variances in opinion reveal relations of power. West complicates the narrative even more, by showing how the concerns over labour, urban space, gender, and alcohol all intersect, and reveal more about the contradictions, anxieties, and fears of the colonial order. Especially as West discusses Southern Rhodesia, his work will be foundational for this thesis.

Justin Willis' *Potent Brews, A Social History of Alcohol in East Africa, 1850-1999*, published in 2002, focuses on rural spaces. Willis' ability to discuss alcohol policy transnationally throughout East Africa provides insights into some fascinating themes, particularly where gender is concerned. Like Crush, Ambler, and West, Willis indicates in his many works on the social history of alcohol in colonial Africa that the examination of drinking behavior, brewing activities, and the efforts of the colonial order to control it can tell us about power negotiations, and the lived experience under colonialism. Willis asserts in numerous other works that drinking, as a behavior itself, is directly engaged with the discourse on power and resistance, as inebriation often takes place in "time out." Willis also argues, as West has done, that these moments are crucial in "the management of Africans' encounter with modernity, and of social interactions between Africans and Europeans."³⁵ White settler concerns with maintaining segregation within drinking spaces says a great deal about how tenuous the settlers

³⁴ West, "Liquor and Libido," 645-667.

³⁵ Justin Willis, "Demoralised natives, black-coated consumers, and clean spirit: European liquor in East Africa, 1890-1955," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 29, no. 3 (2001): 56.

claims to power were, and how much they depended upon the irrational demarcation of space, which they failed to control effectively.

One last crucial piece of work which must be examined is the more recent article by Lynn Schler, entitled “Looking Through a Glass of Beer: Alcohol in the cultural spaces of Colonial Douala, 1910-1945.” The works produced prior to Schler have long discussed the ways in which alcohol and policy cannot be divorced from a discussion about power, and how power is formed and constructed. Schler, in her piece, challenges this claim in a particular sense. She discusses the district of New Bell, in the Cameroonian city of Douala, where the African workers lived. Although not within the southern or eastern African context, or within a settler colonial context, Schler’s observations about the organization of space and power within the city along class and racial lines is an observation crucial to the first two chapters of this thesis. She traces, much like West in Zimbabwe, the control of space for “time out” and leisure, and how this becomes part of the differentiation between the colonizers and the colonized. However, as Schler argues, this division of urban space was complicated, and the social history of alcohol reveals why. As she argues, spatial divisions of power and authority were detrimental to the colonial veneer of authority. The protection of white social and leisure spaces became an area of deep concern for the colonial Cameroon state. If Africans could access the same leisure spaces as the occupying force, what would be the justification for keeping them out of areas which held more political weight, like the courts? Schler further argues that, despite the poorer conditions and obvious racial discrimination within the design of New Bell, there was more social, political, and personal space for mobility *because* of the lack of importance colonial officials saw within the district housing the African working poor. Schler asserts, “New Bell residents were not

conscious of colonial power in all aspects of decision making, and the cultural and social life of the quarter was not constructed in constant dialogue with the European center of the city.”³⁶

Along the same lines as Schler, but within the Southern Rhodesian context, Timothy Scarnecchia has argued extensively that the space within African locations was not controlled solely by the colonial officials, nor by the aspiring middle class alone.³⁷ The working poor urban African classes were just as instrumental in shaping what it meant to be urban and black within a settler colonial city space as the aspiring middle classes, white Rhodesians, and colonial officials. His work focuses on complicating the ways that we approach the working classes in urban colonial spaces. Scarnecchia also mentions beer brewing women, but does so in a way that does not celebrate them, working rather to examine the political context of their work. He does not assume that earning a wage meant that these women were free. Particularly, Scarnecchia discusses how much of the struggle over defining space within the urban African communities came from internal discussions between the middle classes and the working poor, as well as men and women. This insight is instrumental in setting up the final chapter of this thesis.

There is an obvious trajectory which can be traced within the social history of alcohol since the late 1960s: MacAndrew and Edgerton’s rejection of the solely chemical and disruptive interpretation of drinking led to insights about the social role of alcohol, and launched the new discipline. The works immediately following the publication of MacAndrew and Edgerton’s work were often attempting to overcompensate for the total neglect of African workers and women, and missed some critical elements of the story. By the 1990s, there was the beginning of

³⁶ Lynn Schler, "Looking through a Glass of Beer: Alcohol in the Cultural Spaces of Colonial Douala, 1910-1945." *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 35, no. 2/3 (2002): 315-34.

³⁷ Timothy Lewis Scarnecchia, *The Politics of Gender and Class in the Creation of African Communities, Salisbury, Rhodesia, 1937-1957*, 1993, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses.

a new school within the social history of alcohol that began to ask questions which went beyond the cultural role of alcohol, and used it as a platform to look for new voices, and ask about the nature of colonial power. This school has produced nuanced insights into how many different groups of Africans lived their lives within settler colonial regimes. Studies like West's reveal how there were divisions amongst Africans based upon class lines, and how drinking spaces and dancehalls were a focal point of these debates. Allowing the historical space for the story of how different groups of Africans brewed, drank, and attempted to live and enjoy their lives away from the eyes of white settlers gives us room to ask questions about the failings and inadequacies of settler colonial power. The historiography of the social history of alcohol deserves to be explored in depth, because it has great potential for enriching our understanding of the contradictions of the colonial project, questions of social history, and African agency.

Concurrently to the social history of alcohol arose a historiography concerning views of the colonial state, and how these ideas developed over time. Although a thorough examination of this parallel historiography is beyond the parameters of this chapter, it is important to note that the more recent social history of alcohol works from a different understanding of the state than was in practice in the earlier decades of the discipline. The social history of alcohol traced throughout this paper could not have progressed without the parallel development of this colonial state historiography, and many of the insights which will frame this project rely upon the work of others who ask about the nature of state power. For instance, West could not have come to his conclusions without Berman and Lonsdale's observations about the contradictions of colonial power.³⁸ Schler could not have asked her questions about space and varying degrees of control

³⁸ John Lonsdale and Bruce Berman, "Coping with the Contradictions: The Development of the Colonial State in Kenya, 1895-1914," *The Journal of African History* 20, no. 4 (1979): 487-505.

without Cooper's efforts.³⁹ This thesis, as well as the more recent scholarship which will be used to frame it, rely upon the conception of the colonial state that Cooper has put forward. This will be discussed more in-depth in chapter two.

Project Parameters

This thesis asks the following question: how did Africans live their lives under settler colonial rule, especially within cities, where one would think colonial power was most effective and present? The focus of this project is the colonial capital city of Salisbury, in Southern Rhodesia, beginning in the 1890s and ending in the 1950s. The insights of West, Crush, Willis, Scarnecchia, and Schler discussed in this chapter will be used to frame the rest of this thesis, and my questions of how African lives were lived within an urban township under settler colonialism. This thesis does not argue that Africans who lived in a township within a settler colonial city were especially colonized, and especially denied agency. In fact, this thesis will argue that there was enough social and political space within Mbare for deeply divided factions of the population to debate what it meant to be urban and African with one another, away from colonial interests. These debates highlight two crucial points: firstly, that there was a multiplicity of ways in which one could experience being an urban African within a settler colonial city, and these were often shaped by intersecting categories of identity, primarily gender and class; and secondly, the very fact that such debates were taking place speaks to the fractured and weak colonial presence within, what one may have previously assumed, was the area most under their control.

³⁹ For a complete list of Frederick Cooper's influential work, see the bibliography of this thesis. Here, I am specifically referencing *Colonialism in Question Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley: University of California Press 2005).

Throughout the four substantive chapters of this thesis, I will argue that the city was very important to white Rhodesians as a way of justifying colonialism; however, white Rhodesians were acutely aware that without Africans in the city, Salisbury could not exist. The settler anxieties over the control of urban space led to the creation of a “native location,” or space specifically designated for African residents. Space and settler fears of sharing it with urban Africans are captured particularly by examining drinking spaces and brewing activity. Chapters two and three set up the context of urban life, and chapters four and five explore how African lives can be seen differently in this reimagined context.

The following chapter will argue that the colonial powers in early Salisbury knew they were deeply reliant upon urban Africans, and the awareness of their tenuous hold on control led to poorly executed segregation efforts, that spilled over to almost every facet of daily life. Drinking and the sale of alcohol to Africans became one of these areas, often expressed through the language of morality, and public health. In reality, early settler panic over drinking had a great deal to do with struggles to control the emerging shape of the city. From the earliest arrival of colonial agents and white people to Mashonaland, the city was not, and never could be, whites only.

Building upon this, chapter three argues that colonial interests in Southern Rhodesia were never a unified and cohesive force; there were deep internal divisions within their ranks that would never be solved. The debates within the legislative council over whether to make Africans’ brewing illegal reveal this. Some factions, particularly the British South Africa Company members of the legislative council, were often in favour of keeping brewing legal in order to maintain a bigger work force. The non-BSAC council members were primarily concerned with the fears their white electorate had with being a minority in a shared city space.

They wished to make brewing illegal, but were often outnumbered by more influential BSAC votes. No clear policy would emerge in the years to follow, as these factions were never going to agree with one another, keeping African brewing in the city in a legally ambiguous zone.

The final two chapters of this thesis argue that urban African lives were heterogeneous and often shaped by additional factors beyond race: gender and class were categories that also influenced how one would experience life in a township. These chapters build upon the work of West and Scarnecchia, by examining the ways that gender and class intersected and complicated one another, and that both middle class and working poor residents, especially the women of both classes, were actively involved in the construction of identities and spaces for themselves in opposition to one another. Chapter four argues that drinking spaces were the epicentre of urban lives lived in intersecting lines of struggle and division, only some of which were defined by colonial power. The prominent African middle class that emerged within Mbare, never stopped campaigning for inclusion in the white city based upon class lines, or for their own space, away from the working poor. In particular, the presence of elite women in Mbare, and their attempts to carve a space out for themselves away from the “immoral” drinking spaces of the municipal beerhall, are examined. Chapter five argues that the poor working women of Mbare were also involved in a decades-long struggles to define a unique class identity, in opposition to both the elite women of chapter four and the colonial police, focused within *shebeens*, or illicit bars. The women of the underground brewing industry highlight the limits of colonial power to shape the African lived experience within Mbare, just as much as they reveal the complex lived experience of community formation under colonial occupation.

This thesis argues that the township of Mbare was a site of creating colonial order and privilege, and yet was never fully under white Rhodesian control. Women in Mbare knew that

there were various ways of being an urban African under colonial authority, and despite the racist colonial ideology of putting everyone within one shared and overcrowded space, they never agreed, or had easy relations with, one another. The colonial order was too weak and fractured to control day-to-day life in Mbare decisively, and the residents struggled with one another within the cracks that this opened up. Drinking spaces reveal a great deal about the way that power was experienced and negotiated, but just as importantly, about the ways that Africans attempted to lead their lives and form communities in spaces that were distinctly their own.

Chapter Two: “The most scattered little townlet in the world:” Settler racism and the creation of a colonial capital, 1890-1923

White settlers in early colonial Zimbabwe, or Southern Rhodesia, elaborated accounts of their privileged position in a racial hierarchy which badly overstate the way things worked.¹ From the very foundation of the colonial city Salisbury, the social structure was fragmented and contested, and settler power existed more in their minds and rhetoric than in social and economic relations. This thesis sets out how weakness, not strength, generated settler ideologies about neat racial hierarchies. And this ideology, indeed, remained weak because it was caught in a bind: settlers needed African labour even as they wanted to remain segregated from Africans. The very basis of settler rule was predicated upon the ability to carve out white spaces, both socially and physically. The demarcation of space became the corner stone of their efforts to govern. However, efforts to have whites-only areas could never be completely successful. Urban spaces situated white settlers intent on emplacing a racial hierarchy next to segregated townships in which Africans strove to transcend their subordinate position in the colonial order and acquire wealth and status. Salisbury and the township Mbare, built alongside the downtown core and erected to house urban Africans, became home to a medley of residents: settlers, BSAC company officials, colonial officers, African rural labourers who migrated, and aspiring middle class Africans, all in one confined space.

Frederick Cooper, commenting on the continuing usefulness of Michel Foucault’s theory of “governmentality” in the study of colonial spaces, challenges his conception of power as “capillary,” and instead refers to it as “arterial...strong near the nodal points of colonial

¹ For reasons of clarity I will refer to this region as Southern Rhodesia, the name attached to this historical period.

authority, less able to impose its discursive grid elsewhere.”² Cooper has argued elsewhere that urban spaces became these critical nodal points, where power was pumping freely.³ Building upon Cooper’s thesis, power within urban spaces had to be concentrated within certain areas, and could not be everywhere at once. Township spaces would appear to be the very nexus of control and resistance which he discusses, where colonial power was implemented more heavily. However, as this thesis will argue, the very fact that this space was specifically for Africans meant that the colonial presence was minimal, if not absent. I do not wish to portray the residents of Mbare as trapped within the dichotomy of resistance versus oppression, but rather as living within a place that the fumbling colonial order could not fully penetrate. In fact, I wish to reinforce Cooper’s thesis by revealing how even within the nodal point, there were crucial places where one may expect colonial power to be at its most influential, where the settlers could not go, and could not ultimately control. The township space, I argue, allowed for the formation of vibrant and complex African-only community structures, which often competed with, and challenged, one another. These divisions and debates over space and meaning within Mbare were often not directed at the settlers, or driven strictly by anti-colonial sentiments. There were often debates within the community, between the various factions, revealing how even within the nodal point of the capital city, where control should have been at its most coercive and effective, the settlers often failed to even be the object of discussion. This chapter will build up to the discussion of these ideas in the final two chapters, by exploring the historical backdrop of the construction of Mbare, Salisbury itself, and the shaky foundation upon which the colonial order

² Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 48-49.

³ Frederick Cooper, *Struggle for the City: Migrant Labor, Capital, and the State in Urban Africa* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1983).

was built. I will then go through the first two decades of the town's history, and examine how the ideology of racial segregation was weakened by the settlers' inability to control and define the space on their own terms. Lastly, I will discuss the divisions amongst the colonial order, including the moment of the campaign for self-rule in the 1920s, which further undermined their ability to govern in a cohesive and effective manner.

Origins of the City

What began as an undertaking of the British South Africa Company (BSAC) with capital mining interests, transformed over time into a state governed by settler self-rule. The history of Mbare Township cannot be divorced from the rise of white Salisbury. They began together, and therefore it is worthwhile to trace their entwined origins, as the long history of white dependence upon urban Africans directly contradicts so much of the settler rhetoric of segregation. The first European settlers came to Mashonaland motivated by the promise of gold and diamond deposits, like those earlier discovered at Kimberly. There had been rumors circulating since the 1870s that this area was flush with gold, as this report from the British Foreign Affairs Office highlights:

It should be premised, as accounting for the recent struggle for the possession of Mashonaland, that the whole country between the Limpopo and the Zambesi had long been reported to be rich in gold. Some efforts were made to develop a mining industry there as far back as 1870, but they failed, and the country was neglected by speculators until after the development of the marvellous gold-field of Witwatersrandt in the Transvaal about 1886-7, when attention was once more turned to Mashonaland, where, for geological reasons, it was thought that deposits of ore would be found to recur, equalling or exceeding in riches the deposits of "the Randt."⁴

⁴ British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print, Part III, From 1940 through 1945, Series G: Africa: In "Memorandum on the Origin and Operations of the British South African Chartered Company, Preliminary and Definitive" S.S. 392 No. 243: *Commercial Rivalry in Khama's County and Matabeleland*, 69.

These sentiments were echoed by early travelers to the area. Hugh Marshall Hole, in his travel journal *Old Rhodesian Days*, discusses how this promise of gold motivated hundreds of colonizers and their British financial backers: “There were undoubtedly men, otherwise sane, in that company of adventurers who expected to see quartz-reefs studded with lumps of gold all ready to be chipped off, and to be able to dip wash-dirt out of the river beds with the certainty of finding nuggets in every bucketful. And who shall blame them?”⁵ Hole details how his own expectations regarding the wealth of the new colony were built upon the journal of Thomas Baines, one of the first white men to travel to Mashonaland, who spoke of the wonders and the beauty of the “extensive gold-field,” where “thousands of persons might work...without interfering with one another.”⁶ Despite the rumors of fortune beyond their wildest imagination, the expectations of the settlers were dashed almost immediately upon their arrival. Hole discusses how these rumors were “all calculated to create the most exaggerated anticipations of the wealth awaiting those were first in the field. And certain evidence which the Pioneers came upon during their northward march was distinctly encouraging.”⁷

All of this encouragement and exaggeration proved a wonderful motivator for settlement, but led to a disenchanting and disappointed group of young, inexperienced, ignorant settlers in a challenging terrain free from a flush of gold and precious stones. In an 1894 edition of the newspaper *The Rhodesia Herald*, one writer expressed this sense of frustration and the shattered expectations which came with the realisation that there was not the gold which had originally

⁵ Hugh Marshall Hole, *Old Rhodesian Days* (London: Cass Library of African Studies, 1968, originally published in 1928), 36.

⁶ Thomas Baines, *The Gold Regions of South Eastern Africa* (London: E. Stanford, 1877).

⁷ Hole, *Old Rhodesian Days*, 36.

captured their imaginations, and the need for the colony to reassess and move forward with alternative plans:

The country has drifted into a state of industrial, social, and political stagnation that remains wholly unwarranted even after the full allowance is made for a long and excessive wet season, and for the temporary draw of a “new rush”...As long as the controlling powers, whoever they be, look only as in the case of the Matabele scramble, to a six months gamble in land quartz reefs, and ignore the wiser course of steady first-class development the country and community will get but little further.⁸

These men were ignorant of almost everything that came with establishing a new colony, and it ran anything but smoothly. The same *Herald* writer discusses how the settlers had been living in a state of “semi-ruinous stagnation”⁹ for years, and continues by saying that “as a community we have been marching up the hill and down the hill again each year since 1890,” detailing how every brief moment of hope or seeming success was shattered by many subsequent downfalls and disappointments.

The poor living conditions, squalor, disease, and ineptitude of the young ignorant men who arrived in the 1890s cannot be emphasised enough. Early settler accounts of this period paint a picture which is anything but glamorous, and suggest that this group were living day to day, barely getting by, and dying off in great numbers. They were certainly not knowledgeable and savvy individuals who conquered the territory swiftly with shrewd calculation and a well-thought out plan for the future; in fact, it was the exact opposite. Salisbury was an artificial, floundering creation, and the discussion over whether or not it even qualified as substantial enough to make into the administrative capital went well into the late 1890s.¹⁰ Hole remarked

⁸ *Rhodesia Herald*, World Newspaper Archive, Africa, March 16 1894: “Progress and the Pendulum.”

⁹ *Herald*, March 16 1894.

¹⁰ *Herald*, March 16 1894: “Two Rhodesias: Yet already Victoria is being drained for Bulawayo, and Salisbury is not quite sure she is the capital of Rhodesia any longer.”

upon this topic, and added his observations about how bleak life was for the white settlers:

“Nominally Salisbury still remained the administrative capital of the country, but in reality it was an isolated up-country dorp where a few bored Civil servants struggled to kill time and a few traders made a precarious living by ministering to their requirements.”¹¹

Hole also remarks upon the economic depression which lasted years after their arrival,¹² owing in large part to the “credit system and the high rate of transport [which] combined to raise the cost of ordinary goods to a level which made housekeeping a constant nightmare.”¹³ Food insecurity and the lack of housing were also very real concerns.¹⁴ The settlers had to wait weeks, and sometimes months, at a time for a shipment of food and goods to arrive by ox and cart from the south. Hole explains how this was often set back by rinderpest outbreaks, which, “in a few weeks, swept all ox-transport out of existence and left nothing.”¹⁵ Additionally, malaria outbreaks were “very prevalent,”¹⁶ and with many settlers having no food, housing, or even additional changes of clothes, once they got sick, it was unlikely that they would last long. On top of the many environmental and material challenges, there was also the added rejection of their presence by the Mashona and Matabele. The well-organized uprisings of 1896 left over a hundred settlers dead.¹⁷ The efficiency of the uprisings was aided by the settlers’ lack of preparedness and organization. The railway, nowhere near complete, stranded the backup troops many miles away. They needed to travel by road to reach the isolated outpost of settlers, and all

¹¹ Hole, *Old Rhodesian Days*, 99.

¹² Hole, *Old Rhodesian Days*, 101.

¹³ Hole, *Old Rhodesian Days*, 80.

¹⁴ Hole, *Old Rhodesian Days*; 74: “Problems of food and housing occupied us far more than abstract questions of government, political rights, or the development of the country.”

¹⁵ Hole, *Old Rhodesian Days*, 77.

¹⁶ Hole, *Old Rhodesian Days*, 100.

¹⁷ Hole, *Old Rhodesian Days*, 49-50.

their oxen had been killed by another rinderpest outbreak, making the trip days, if not a week, long.¹⁸ Hole remarks upon the first two decades of Salisbury, and notes they “were rather like a shipwrecked party on a vast island.”¹⁹

As Paul Mosley discusses in his work *The Settler Economies*, the original investments were sunk into Southern Rhodesia because of the promise that it would be a gold-mining economy, much like South Africa. However “the original intention had to be modified as neither the costs nor the returns on the overhead capital invested to realise these intentions matched the original projections.”²⁰ These “miscalculations,” as Mosley refers to them, “required an emergency economic response if the territories were to be prevented from becoming a long-term drain on the colonial government.”²¹ After the disappointment of the failed gold yields, the BSAC was unwilling to invest anything other than the bare minimum into the colony’s development. The calls of the *Herald* writer in 1894 were not to be answered; no “first class development” was on the horizon. As Mosley details, “the ‘least-cost’ means of forcing development”²² won out. This took the shape of selling off large amounts of land for very little to white settlers who were willing to stay there. Land was cheapest in Salisbury, fetching only 7d. per acre in 1905, just slightly more than a pound of venison.²³ The legacy of the early decades of Salisbury left the city on shaky foundations for the duration of the colonial period, heavily reliant on the knowledge and labour of locals and black immigrant skilled and unskilled labourers

¹⁸ Hole, *Old Rhodesian Days*, 59.

¹⁹ Hole, *Old Rhodesian Days*, 74.

²⁰ Paul Mosley, *The Settler Economies: Studies in the Economic History of Kenya and Southern Rhodesia, 1900-1963* (New York, N.Y.: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 13.

²¹ Mosley, *The Settler Economies*, 13.

²² Mosley, *The Settler Economies*, 14.

²³ Hole, *Old Rhodesia Days*, 80: “Vension 4d/lb.”; See also Mosley, *The Settler Economies*, 14.

The Mbare Township, originally known as Hariri, was established alongside the city of Salisbury, in 1891.²⁴ The process of settling this particular city space took almost two decades of negotiation. With the slow beginnings of the administrative capital, groups of aspiring African immigrants looked to exploit the opportunities of a new town in a new colony. As Richard Parry states, alongside white settlers there came groups of “black south African immigrants known as Cape Boys who brought with them a variety of essential skills particularly in leather working, transport riding, smithing, building, and market gardening.”²⁵ These Cape Boys were also fleeing difficult political circumstances in South Africa,²⁶ and saw the new space being acquired by BSAC as a space of opportunity. Along with groups of skilled workers, workers came from all of the surrounding areas looking for opportunity in the new urban space.²⁷ As Hole remarks, the workers who came for domestic positions came from “the Portuguese Colonies on the coasts, but there were others from far more distant parts—Zulus from Natal, missionary-trained boys from Blantyre in Nyasaland, and even some from far Uganda.”²⁸

While skilled artisans and tradesmen came from the Cape, and unskilled workers came from other neighbouring territories, all came with the intention of working strictly within the city. Hole highlights how white “miners and farmers...were engaged in a constant struggle to obtain labour,”²⁹ and their profits suffered with their inability to attract workers. They were

²⁴ Institute of Commonwealth Studies, *Official Year Book of the Colony of Southern Rhodesia*, Salisbury, No. 1- 1924, 26: “August 19th: First brick house at Salisbury began.”

²⁵ Richard Parry, “Culture, Organisation and Class: the African experience in Salisbury, 1892-1935,” in *Sites of Struggle: Essays in Zimbabwe’s Urban History*, edited by Brian Raftopoulos and Tsuneo Yoshikuni (Avondale, Harare, Zimbabwe: Weaver Press, 1999), 54.

²⁶ Parry, “Culture, Organisation and Class,” 56.

²⁷ Hole, *Old Rhodesian Days*, 51.

²⁸ Hole, *Old Rhodesian Days*, 51.

²⁹ Hole, *Old Rhodesian Days*, 46.

unable to entice or coerce many Mashona or Matabele into working for them, either.³⁰ With no local workers, and almost no migrant workers willing to do farm labour, white settler farms struggled to get any output. Settlers in the city space, moreover, desperately needed more African workers and permanent residents. African labour was essential to any development of Salisbury, and the settlers relied heavily upon their presence for industry and survival. Without the influx of African workers, Salisbury would have withered into obscurity. These workers, however, did not come strictly through coercion, nor did they only come in response to tax pressure, political unrest, drought, or rinderpest.³¹ They came also for opportunity, capital accumulation, and adventure. Their movement into the city profoundly shaped Salisbury. This tension between the need for black labour, and the settler anxiety over the large black presence undermining their tenuous and floundering hold over the young colony, led to the creation of a “native location.”

The Township

The “Salisbury native location” came into being in 1892, situated along the southern boundary of the downtown.³² In 1907, the location, which came to be known as Mbare, was re-located to an area further south from the town’s edge. Despite floundering in these first few years, settlers still made efforts to carve out spaces for black residents separate from their own.

³⁰ Hole, *Old Rhodesian Days*, 48.

³¹ Jens A. Andersson, “Administrators’ Knowledge and State Control in Colonial Zimbabwe: The Invention of the Rural-Urban Divide in Buhera District, 1912-80,” *The Journal of African History* 43, no. 1 (2002): 119-43.

³² *Herald*, October 10 1892: “Health Good. Natives Ditto: The prospects of the district are most promising and the new township is going ahead fast, several substantial buildings being erected and new arrivals frequent.”

However, as some historians have argued, the assumption that this separation of space was successful over time is something which needs to be challenged and historicized. Tsuneo Yoshikuni argues that “it is quite questionable whether, for most of the 1890s, the system (of urban locations) was really an effective and smoothly-functioning one. The period was characterised by a good deal of groping in the darkness.”³³ Yoshikuni continues by stating that early settler policy relating to urban segregation was not a well-thought out and successfully implemented plan. In fact, the 400 to 600 settlers in Salisbury did not have much control early on over where black labourers lived.³⁴ He argues that economic forces, not segregation policies, contributed to the early separation of the city. Business interests and low-income housing took place in two separate parts of the city, and thus contributed to where the later location and downtown cores would rise.³⁵

Early settler accounts support this important theory. As Hole emphasised in his journal, the early Salisbury was far from properly urban. As one writer in another early *Herald* article put it, “the whole place is small as far as population goes-- a sort of hamlet... It is the most scattered little townlet in the world; its founders expected it to spread, but it has not.”³⁶ The city, spread out over the veld, formed into two distinct areas: Causeway and kopje, which means hill. The settlement of early sections led to fierce debates within the *Herald* over what constituted the centre of the new town. As one writer, who clearly had vested interests in the Causeway part of town, put it: “It seems that some vulgar, disloyal people differed, and went and started a town a couple of miles away and called it Kopje. So Salisbury proper is only composed of departments,

³³ Tsuneo Yoshikuni, *African Urban Experiences in Colonial Zimbabwe: A Social History of Harare before 1925* (Harare: Weaver Press, 2007), 23.

³⁴ Yoshikuni, *African Urban Experiences*, 24.

³⁵ Yoshikuni, *African Urban Experiences*, 10-12.

³⁶ *Herald*, March 22 1906.

and Kopje is where all the business is done.”³⁷ Another *Herald* contributor in 1895 lays out the divisions between the Kopje and the other section of town more clearly:

...at a distance we may say that the two portions of what is theoretically one and the same town, lie a good quarter of a mile apart and that at the Kopje are the principal business establishments, while at the Causeway are the Government offices, official residences, the English and Roman Catholic Churches and the admirable and influential Salisbury Club.... though as every visitor to the town soon learns, it is the storekeeper and the artisans who preponderates at the Kopje and the official and financial man who is conspicuous by his presence at the Causeway.³⁸

As this article makes fairly obvious, the majority of white settlers resided in the Causeway, and the Kopje was home to the majority of black immigrants and labourers, and “non-official residents.”³⁹ While the town was divided into two sections, the business district and the administrative section, the racial separation was not total. Many of the opportunistic Cape Boys who Parry discusses looked for lodging closer to the Causeway, and some poor whites made the Kopje their home.⁴⁰

Yoshikuni’s insightful argument surrounding the urban development of Salisbury touches on another point; racial segregation “was so obvious a reality that little need existed for the rulers to enshrine ‘separation’ as an ideology or policy. But this should not be misconstrued as an index for a laissez-faire spirit or an attitude of indifference.”⁴¹ This racial separation in the early years spilled over to almost every facet of life for the white settlers, reflecting their anxieties and their insecurities about the future of the colony. Not only were the settlers facing issues like food and

³⁷ *Herald*, March 22 1906: “As Others See Us.”

³⁸ *Herald*, February 8 1895: “A Salisbury Matter.”

³⁹ *Herald*, February 8 1895; See also, Yoshikuni, *African Urban Experiences*, 12; Richard Parry, “The ‘Durban system’ and the Limits of Colonial Power in Salisbury, 1890-1935,” in *Liquor and Labour in Southern Africa*, edited by Jonathan Crush and Charles Ambler (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1992), 119.

⁴⁰ Parry, “Culture, Organisation and Class,” 23.

⁴¹ Yoshikuni, *African Urban Experiences*, 20.

housing shortages, disease, and an economic crisis, they were also dealing with a severe labour shortage, an inability to control the movement of the African population, and a frontier town with no established mechanisms of control. The emerging shape of the town resulted from the fears of racial mixing and the lack of control over who lived where.

The 1892 location was situated just south of the Kopje.⁴² The work of erecting the structures was done by the new tenants, with almost no money whatsoever sunk into the project by the administration; in fact, the new inhabitants were expected to pay a rent of “5s. for a plot” monthly.⁴³ The idea behind the location arose out of racist settler fears over what sharing the same urban spaces with thousands of Africans would mean, and out of the realisation that Salisbury was developing thanks to the influx of knowledgeable and skilled African workers who outnumbered them.⁴⁴ As Parry so eloquently puts it, “the commoditization of urban space provided a framework for the exercise of administrative power, but it could not conceal the tenuous capture of colonial power itself.”⁴⁵ The more tenuous the hold over control, the more regulations and limitations were imposed upon the black population living and working near the Kopje. In 1892, alongside the establishment of a Sanitary Board, and a Department of Native Administration, the BSAC passed a set of “Native Rules and Regulations,” which were designed to control the movement of African residents inside the spaces the settlers claimed. These regulations included the threat of fines and imprisonment.⁴⁶ This was followed by an additional regulation, which enforced a curfew, with severe punishments.⁴⁷ What is more, the Registrar put

⁴² Yoshikuni, *African Urban Experiences*, 22.

⁴³ Yoshikuni, *African Urban Experiences*, 22.

⁴⁴ Parry, “The ‘Durban system,’” 117.

⁴⁵ Parry, “The ‘Durban system,’” 118.

⁴⁶ *Herald*, October 10 1892: “BSAC Native Rules and Regulations.”

⁴⁷ *Herald*, October 10 1892.

the cost of the passes and their enforcement upon the black population, stipulating that employers may affix a new stamp each month on the pass of an employee, and each stamp would cost the worker a shilling.⁴⁸

Despite these ample new regulations, the pass laws were wildly ineffective. As one member of the Administrator reported in 1905, “it had...been found that a number of ‘boys’ after getting into difficulty had mutilated their passes, and had torn off or erased many important particulars, such as description or previous wages.”⁴⁹ Many labourers refused to carry one, or mutilated it to avoid paying. There were insufficient amounts of police to monitor the system, limited ways of keeping track of the movement of every employee, and the African residents of the township had many ways of getting around the system. Much like the passes, the location was not as popular or useful as the administration had hoped. For decades, even after Mbare was re-located and re-opened in 1907, the police and the administration were falling over themselves to deal with squatting, and illegal living arrangements done under the table. Some employers tried to make money from the renting of some of their land to employees, and continued to do so despite it being made illegal.⁵⁰ It is also possible that some whites aided in the breaking of pass laws and squatting legislation because they saw them as restrictions that got in the way of efficient labour flows. Certainly, the re-location of Mbare further south did not remove the presence of African residents around the Kopje, especially on Pioneer Street.⁵¹

The struggle for control

⁴⁸ *Herald*, October 10 1892.

⁴⁹ *Herald*, May 4 1905: “Native Pass.”

⁵⁰ *Herald*, February 16 1912.

⁵¹ Parry, “The ‘Durban system,’” 119.

Try as they might, with passes, location regulations, threats of fines and imprisonment, the BSAC and the colonial state were still struggling with a severe and unrelenting labour shortage. The availability of Africans to labour in settler industries and sectors was referred to in one article on “Native Affairs” as “so inadequate” that “strenuous efforts should be made immediately to remedy the evil.”⁵² The same report discussed the possibility of making three months of labour mandatory for all Africans residing within the territory, as the “obligation of indigenous native population to the State.”⁵³ Despite the settler concerns, it was not that there were not enough Africans migrating to and living within or around Salisbury. Quite the contrary, as one settler observed, “there is not, as all of us are fully aware, any actual shortage of indigenous labour in this country.... The broad fact with which the people and the Government are confronted is the anomaly existing in the presence of a numerous black population concurrently with a perennial dearth in labour.”⁵⁴ This report calls the ability of the government to mobilize a sufficient labour supply “the pivot on which the future prosperity of this country depends.”⁵⁵ A letter to the editor in a 1906 edition of the *Herald* stated that “the scarcity of labour is choking every industry in Rhodesia at the present moment, more especially the farming industry.”⁵⁶ One settler went so far, several years later, as to claim that the labour problem was so severe, the government needed to advise future settlers of the “untold hardships” which awaited them in the colony.⁵⁷ Labour control was such a constant struggle, and the inability to track and control workers through passes made the settlers even more anxious. As one report

⁵² *Herald*, September 10 1909: “Native Affairs.”

⁵³ *Herald*, September 10 1909: “Native Affairs.”

⁵⁴ *Herald*, March 22 1906: “The Native Factor.”

⁵⁵ *Herald*, March 22 1906.

⁵⁶ *Herald*, March 22 1906: “Letter to the Editor.”

⁵⁷ *Herald*, September 22 1911: “Alien Labour.”

states, the increase or decrease in labourers was so unreliable that it was “impossible to ascertain the net result.”⁵⁸

The fears of financial ruin and poverty manifested in debates over such issues as the presence of unemployed poor whites. It is evident that these fears were also motivated by the ideology of racial separation. If black residents around the Kopje could see unemployed, poor white people in worse conditions than themselves, how could they believe the ideology of racial hierarchy? Race was constructed in the ideology of the early settler administration to be intrinsically tied to social mobility.⁵⁹ One’s ability to reside and work where one pleased was marked as a distinctly white privilege in the eyes of the settlers, and when a white person failed to obtain stable work and housing, they were cast aside as dangerous to the image of white superiority the settlers wished to cultivate. Their very existence threatened so much of what the settler rule was predicated upon: white people living in better conditions than black people. When the image of white people as perpetually being in positions of authority was challenged, the settlers panicked. The same report later stated that this problem was so great that it was in “every trade,” but that “engine drivers and blacksmiths are more to be pitied than the rest, as they are fast being superseded by the Indian coolie and the kaffir.”⁶⁰ The settlers were unable to acquire enough black labour to satisfy their labour demands, but in certain trades, the skilled craftsmen and labourers like the Cape Boys, were more qualified than the settlers.

The ideology of racial separation cropped up almost daily in the *Herald* in discussions ranging from pass laws to eating spaces. In the discussion of how to punish Africans for alleged

⁵⁸ *Herald*, February 10 1908: “Native Labour: The total addition to the labour supply was thus 11,782 boys, or an increase of 2,064 as compared with the aggregate for December.... It is impossible to ascertain the net result.”

⁵⁹ *Herald*, February 10 1908: “The Will-Not-Works.”

⁶⁰ *Herald*, February 10 1908: “The Will-Not-Works.”

wrongdoings, for example, most settlers were in favour of inflicting severe corporal punishment. To allow Africans access to the justice system in the same capacity of the whites would set a dangerous precedent that black people are equal to whites: "...but put white men on their level as to justice, you put white men in their eyes at all events, on a level in all respects.... In other words, when punished for wrong he must be punished severely."⁶¹ As Yoshikuni points to, the recent memories of the 1896 revolts and the military superiority of the nearby Mashona and Matabele could not have been ever far from the minds of the settlers.⁶² The settlers were aware of their tenuous hold over power, as Parry argues, and in order to compensate for their limited and weak control, they extended their segregation ideology into almost every aspect of life.

In 1907 these fears culminated in the closure of the first native location just south of the Kopje, and the opening of a new one, what would become Mbare, further south from the town's edge. The move came about due to increasing concerns over the number of Africans within town, and the fear of the previous location being "considered too near the Kopje."⁶³ The new location was close to the slaughterhouse, the cemetery, and the sanitation works.⁶⁴ In short, it was the least desirable land. The idea of separation was at the very core of the design of the project.⁶⁵ The first location had been a fairly unsuccessful venture from the beginning. By 1906, "the [former] location had less than fifty occupants and most blacks either squatted at the brickfields...or lived on their employers' plots or as tenants in the Pioneer Street area."⁶⁶ The new location was moved further south from the railway tracks, and 56 "rondavels and a four-

⁶¹ *Herald*, January 7 1893: "White and Black."

⁶² Yoshikuni, *African Urban Experiences*, 25.

⁶³ Yoshikuni, *African Urban Experiences*, 29.

⁶⁴ Yoshikuni, *African Urban Experiences*, 30.

⁶⁵ Yoshikuni, *African Urban Experiences*, 30.

⁶⁶ Parry, "The 'Durban system,'" 122.

room brick barracks were erected,”⁶⁷ by the municipality as a way to incentivise residents to move. However, as Parry highlights, these also became notoriously hard to fill. By the end of the year, half were empty.⁶⁸ A new set of rules and regulations accompanied the creation of the second location. It echoed what had been said in the 1890s, but added a new distinction over the importance of keeping spaces strictly for whites or blacks only.⁶⁹ The idea that some spaces were only “suitable” for whites or blacks had become a corner stone of settler policy by the 1910s.

Along with the creation of the new location, the administration also began to keep a register of African residents who were given permission to be exempt from living in the location. In 1909, this included nine Africans; one was an employee of the Telegraph Department and was living in Pioneer Street. Another was a woman who lived at her employers’ house.⁷⁰ Within this register, there is also a reference to the problem the administration was having of finding a lot of Africans sleeping in stores, and squatting in town without permission. The settlers were aware of the necessity of allowing some Africans to escape the location, as well as their inability to force all of them into it. The continued existence of Africans living around Pioneer Street is hinted at in a 1911 report which details the enduring poor conditions of the area. The *Herald* sent in a reporter who investigated the report that the “lane which runs between Pioneer and Salisbury Streets” was in an “insanitary state.”⁷¹ The *Herald* reporter found that these claims were true: “for a distance of some 250 yards, the lane is in a filthy condition...and on either side the closets are in a disgraceful state of repair. In addition piles of refuse are lying about.”⁷²

⁶⁷ Parry, “The ‘Durban system,’” 122.

⁶⁸ Parry, “The ‘Durban system,’” 122.

⁶⁹ *Herald*, September 10 1909: “Native Affairs.”

⁷⁰ *Herald*, September 10 1909: “Natives in Town: The Town Clerk read out a list of nine natives who had been granted exemption from living in the Location and permitted to live in town.”

⁷¹ *Herald*, February 3 1911.

⁷² *Herald*, February 3 1911.

The existence of “unclean” circumstances taking place on Pioneer Street came to the attention of the settlers almost immediately. In 1892, there was a call for a survey of the Kopje, as the settlers living around the Causeway area “do not wish to go to the summit or anywhere near it.”⁷³ They called for improvements to the housing and the market square nearby. While concerns over the state, particularly about the “sanitary conditions”⁷⁴ of Pioneer Street and the Kopje existed as soon as the area sprang up, it was not until the 1900s that the settlers were able, or willing, to take any action. In 1909, the High Commissioner of the colony was sent a report drawing his attention to the conditions of Pioneer Street.⁷⁵ In the same year, there was a discussion in council over the “evil” taking place in the area, and the need for immediate intervention:

Councillor Brown gave a resume, in committee, of the representations he had made to the Board of the Chartered Company, whilst he was in London, in regard to the condition of affairs in Pioneer Street, mentioning that he had received a specific assurance from Mr. Birchnough that the evil would be put a stop to at once. The following resolution was carried unanimously: ...the Council wish to express their regret that no action has yet been taken to remedy matters, and request Councillor Brown to use his utmost endeavours to carry out the wishes of the Council for the removal of these women.⁷⁶

This existence of prostitution in the area, especially since these women were both white and black, was “profoundly threatening”⁷⁷ to the settler administration. Sexual access to white women, mixed living conditions, and leisure spaces which the state had no say in had existed since the inception of the town, and could not be eradicated. The demand for the removal of

⁷³ *Herald*, Dec. 3rd, 1892: “Shall a portion of the Kopje be surveyed?”

⁷⁴ Which were often used to mask racist understandings of health and the need for segregation.

⁷⁵ *Herald*, Sept. 10th 1909 Page 11: Immorality: Councillor Gibbons enquired whether any reply had been received from the High Commissioner in regard to Pioneer Street. The Town Clerk replied that the matter was receiving attention and said that His Excellency was now on his way back to South Africa.

⁷⁶ *Herald*, September 10 1909: “Morality Law.”

⁷⁷ Parry, “The ‘Durban system,’” 119.

African residents from within the town itself led to an onslaught against the Pioneer Street area, and the brothels which settlers feared, with police raids and arrests.

The desire to push African residents out of the Pioneer Street area and the brickfields continued to manifest itself in some odd ways. Black access to streets, even by bicycle, had been an issue since 1901.⁷⁸ The discourse surrounding how to control black movement and transportation around town in areas which were thought of as white by the settlers, is particularly revealing:

If then, the Government of the country is helpless to deal with the kaffir, it is possible that a municipal body has no power.... The fact of his being allowed the use of a bicycle at all is in itself a source of irritation. But as we are so wholly dependent on the black for work, we must give way to him and encourage what little penchant for work he may have for industry as much as possible.⁷⁹

The discussion surrounding bicycling is a small scale representation of the discourse during the entire early twentieth century debates on African mobility and space. There was a constant back and forth over the desire to outlaw African leisure and movement, versus the settlers' inability to do so, and the continued usefulness of allowing it in order to keep the small labour force they had been able to force or entice into working for them "happy." The settlers were caught between two desires, which were inherently incompatible: to act with aggression and wholesale condemnation, or to keep African leisure pursuits legal in order to not hinder their relations with Africans in town any further. To do one alone would cut off their labour supply or undermine their understandings of racial hierarchies; they therefore did both simultaneously and incompletely.

⁷⁸ *Herald*, December 20 1901: "Native Schorcher: This incident is an example of the intolerable nuisance caused by the native cyclist, who, when a-wheel, is a positive danger to life and limb."

⁷⁹ *Herald*, December 31 1901: "The Passing Show."

The tenuous hold of the Settlers, and divisions within their ranks

These tensions culminated in 1923 with the settler campaign for self-rule from the BSAC. While the vote passed, the settlers never fully achieved independence. They relied heavily upon the financial investments of international capital and industry, as they were unable to generate a sufficient profit to keep the colony running on their own. Power in the 1920s and afterwards was divided between the settlers themselves, the many provinces within the colony, the interests of capital, and the remaining British imperial officers. While settler disunity is not the focus of this thesis, it is worth briefly highlighting how the settlers were not a cohesive and homogenous unit, as this further underscores how weakness, not strength, drove many of their decisions. The divisions amongst the BSAC legislative council members, the elected settler members, the white Rhodesian electorate, colonial officials, and the interests of various types of capital illustrate even further how a lack of consensus led to further contradictory policies concerning how to approach relations with urban Africans and labour coercion. These divisions were never resolved, and only heightened due to differences in background and income between the settlers themselves. The settlers who struggled to supply labour to the rural districts and those who failed to control African movement within Salisbury were not part of a homogenous block. These divisions in interests were set aside momentarily during the vote for self-rule, which was more of “a vote against the British South Africa Company Administration rather than one unreservedly in favour of responsible government.”⁸⁰ The settlers who were in favour of remaining had strategic investment interests in the BSAC, especially farmers and ranchers who lived closer to the South African border. The alliances of the majority of settlers in the north

⁸⁰ Ian Phimister, “Accommodating Imperialism: The Compromise of the Settler State in Southern Rhodesia, 1923–1929,” *The Journal of African History* 25, no. 3 (1984): 280.

overshadowed the rural settlers and led to sealing the vote for self-rule, but these ties did not last long.⁸¹ Once the vote was passed, the united front within Salisbury and the surrounding districts dissolved quickly.

The period of self-rule was certainly not free from outside intervention, however, as even the drafting of the new constitution was overseen by BSAC and the British Colonial Office, and “fell well short of responsible government.”⁸² The settlers were made to accept the part of the “junior partner”⁸³ in these negotiations, and were reminded of their role as guarding the interests of British capital. The tobacco industry is a fascinating example of how settler power was subject to the interests of trade deals and investments. Despite many farmers abandoning other crops and getting involved in tobacco production over the years, there was a continuous failure to produce crops of quality. One of the industry’s men commented “there is something almost pathetic about a group of ingenuous and isolated farmers sitting in their rustic high-ceilinged board- room in the village which was Salisbury, blundering confidently into the vortex of international financial and political interest.”⁸⁴ Their crops almost entirely failed, and were below the grade of quality the exhibition required.⁸⁵ The settlers proved that they were very unaware of how to work the land properly, and how to negotiate with big capital. As Ian Phimister points out, “despite the fact that settler colonialism shared an essential community of interests with international capital in the manner in which the black majority was oppressed and exploited, it remained very much the weaker partner.... Accumulation proceeded on terrain designed and dominated by

⁸¹ Phimister, “Accommodating Imperialism,” 280.

⁸² Phimister, “Accommodating Imperialism,” 281.

⁸³ Phimister, “Accommodating Imperialism,” 281.

⁸⁴ Phimister, “Accommodating Imperialism,” 291.

⁸⁵ Phimister, “Accommodating Imperialism,” 291.

imperialism.”⁸⁶ Phimister belongs to a school of revisionist Marxist historiography, which scholars such as Cooper have critiqued heavily as continuing to obscure African voices,⁸⁷ as well as presenting a framework of capital and accumulation which does not fit easily or naturally upon an African context. Nevertheless, his observations about the struggles of the settlers during the campaign for self-rule and immediately after are still insightful and relevant.

There was not just one “state” which was all powerful, as Phimister contributes, or ultimately had the final say on any issue. Rather, the many divisions between the interests of capital, the metropole government, and the various camps within the settlers themselves point to how fragmented and divided this situation was. Capital interests did not have the support of all settlers, and the settlers themselves disagreed amongst themselves bitterly. Self-rule was anything but, as Phimister has illustrated, thus one must be careful about the level of power and control one credits to settlers. Southern Rhodesia may appear as though it was the colony which gave settlers the most freedom of mobility, control over governance, and control over non-white peoples within its borders, but self-rule hardly meant more control. In fact, as my thesis will explore, settler self-rule meant an increase in anxiety over space, a floundering inability to control the movement and actions of all non-white people at any given moment, and the variance over what could be accomplished from one district and municipal government to another. What emerged instead was a fragmented, bureaucratic government, whose understanding of the

⁸⁶ Phimister, “Accommodating Imperialism,” 294.

⁸⁷ For a discussion of this historiographical turn, refer to chapter one of this thesis, which discussed the critique of Marxist historiography in depth.

peoples, land, and politics of their immediate surroundings were largely based upon settler imaginings, rather than fact or knowledge.⁸⁸

As Brian Raftopoulos has said, “There is a need to desegregate the various interest groups within the so-called colonial state.... contradictions in urban policy show that the central Southern Rhodesian state was often subject, in its overall policies, to the various settler interests at local government levels.”⁸⁹ The state was not a homogenous block of all-encompassing authority and control. Rather, from its earliest days of settler encroachment, to the declaration of self-rule, the historical backdrop of the township this chapter has discussed was fraught with tumultuous settler politics, an economic recession that arose in part from settler farming and trading inadequacies, as well as an inability to control a steady work force, and confusion over what to do with urban Africans. The “state” was hardly a well-organized and ever-present mechanism for settler dominance, but rather a fumbling, disjointed, junior partner to BSAC interests, which was unable to successfully control the movement of urban Africans, and was deeply divided over how best to approach this most central issue.

Conclusion

This struggle between the settlers’ desire for segregation, and their awareness of their inability to run the colony by themselves, gets after the fundamental contradiction of colonial rule, as this essay has argued. The settlers needed Africans in town, and were unable to do much of anything about their movement, squatting, and violation of pass laws. The ideology

⁸⁸ For a thorough discussion on this topic see: Carol Summers, *From Civilization to Segregation: Social Ideals and Social Control in Southern Rhodesia, 1890-1934*, Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1994.

⁸⁹ Brian Raftopoulos, *Sites of Struggle: Essays in Zimbabwe’s Urban History*, edited by Brian Raftopoulos and Tsuneo Yoshikuni (Avondale, Harare, Zimbabwe: Weaver Press, 1999), 5.

surrounding the creation of Mbare, its closure and reopening further from town, and the struggles surrounding the Kopje and Pioneer Street highlight this. The settlers were incapable of outlawing and punishing African movement too heavily, while simultaneously wishing to enforce their racist understandings of separation. The result was the expansion of the ideology of racial separation into almost every aspect of daily life, such as the use of bikes and sidewalks, sanitation, and sexual contact with white prostitutes. Despite the numerous fears and anxieties of the settlers, they were ultimately aware of their tenuous hold on power, their inability to be everywhere at once, and their profound reliance upon African urban settlement for their very survival, and were unable to decisively and effectively put a stop to African mobility, illicit living arrangements, or refusal to work.

This leads into the discussion surrounding alcohol and brewing. The settlers could never make these activities fully illegal, because they were ultimately keenly aware of how any attack on the African population was an attack on their own survival and prosperity; and as the first part of this chapter illustrated, the settlers were in no position to take any further risks. The following chapter will discuss the debates amongst various factions of settlers over whether to outlaw brewing and drinking, why this was never possible, and the failed attempts of the settlers to police and regulate brewing activity in Mbare.

Chapter Three: Trouble Brewing: Divisions within the Colonial Order

The settlers in and around Salisbury were acutely aware that illicit beer brewing had taken place on a great scale within Mbare township since its inception. This chapter asks why, if they deemed it to be punishable by a fine and occasionally a prison sentence, did the legislative council never make African brewing explicitly illegal. As I will argue, the legal grey zone African brewing inhabited was created by deep internal divisions within the white Southern Rhodesian leadership and company officials, motivated by the fear of alienating an already insufficient workforce, and by very real financial hardships. These issues emerged from the stumbling beginnings of the city, as chapter two discusses. The settlers were well aware that their economy was teetering on the brink of calamity, particularly in the moments leading up to responsible government in 1923, and recovering from the post-WWI recession of the early 1920s. It was ultimately cheaper for the town to police and collect fines from brewing activity than it was for them to provide alternative employment and resources to the township. Not only were they unwilling to invest into the operating budget of Mbare beyond the bare minimum, they were also financially unable to do so.

The fiscal situation of the colony was tight, and the more pragmatically-minded contingency within the legislative council, predominately BSAC officials, favoured incentivizing workers to stay near sites. This often included the idea of encouraging or allowing beer brewing and consumption at these sites. There was another faction within the council who pushed for prohibition and a total ban. They were influenced by moral discourses of the age, but also by fears of sharing space in an ever-expanding downtown core with drunk Africans, racist understandings of sanitation, and other economic concerns, notably the prospect of a drunk and

absent workforce. These divisions within factions of the settlers and the company membership resulted in a lack of cohesive policy, and were never resolved.

The brewing industry took off as increased African migration to the city in the 1910s and 1920s expanded the demand for leisure and community spaces. This chapter will first discuss the various reasons why white Rhodesians were concerned with, and fearful of, Africans brewing and drinking. I will then explore the divisions which emerged on this issue amongst the BSAC leadership and the elected members of the legislative council, and the debates which dragged on for decades over how, or if, they should make brewing illegal. Lastly, I will touch upon how this ongoing struggle manifested itself over the decades, with particular focus on the opening of a municipally-run beer hall and the financial threat which African brewers posed to the white brewery in town. This chapter will argue that the majority of the council was unwilling to do much of anything about African brewing and drinking, despite the vocal concerns of many, and was often in favour of keeping it legal. The council was keenly aware that colonial interests were financially tethered to the urban African workforce that they so feared, and were unable to implement anything which could threaten their tenuous control.

Who's Afraid of a Glass of Beer?

The evidence that “the native location [was] a source of supply of beer”¹ is overwhelming. Reports of police raids detail the capture of large quantities of beer, as early as

¹ L.C. Masterson, Lieutenant, British South African Police, To the Office of The Resident Magistrate, Gwelo, 15th December, 1908, Accessible through the British Colonial Archives, and British National Archives (lack of full access to *African Confidential Prints* resulted in my being unable to obtain complete file information): “I found the native location to be a source of supply of beer, and, as the result of the night raid, a large quantity was destroyed. The owners could not at the time be ascertained.”

1908, a year after Mbare was opened in its permanent location further from the downtown core. A report from the Magistrate's Office in the same year claimed that this was an "evil which has existed in this district for years past," further illustrating that this practice did not originate with the opening of the township.² The scale of brewing was so great that, as one report concerning a nearby district in the *Daily Telegraph*, claimed:

Apparently the brewing of native beer is a highly lucrative industry. A complaint comes from Gwelo that, owing to the profits made by the sale of Kaffir Beer, the natives in the vicinity are becoming wealthy, and now live in a state bordering on luxury. So remunerative is the traffic that numbers of able-bodied natives are able to purchase cattle and wives, and live in idleness, while the white men have to work hard for a living.... there seems to be ample justification for the suggestion that the native brewer should at least be made to take out a license.³

This concern was echoed again in a report from the Attorney General in 1908, which claimed that "there can be little doubt that many natives make a substantial living through the brewing of Kaffir beer, and selling it where there is any considerable native population....many...take up some light job at a mine for a small wage, but taking their wives with them, these make anything from 10 to 15 [shillings] per month by the brewing and sale of beer."⁴ The Superintendent of Natives chimed in, reiterating that this was a "fairly lucrative trade," and that "large quantities of beer are sold."⁵

The fear of Africans drinking dates back to the very arrival of settlers to the area that became Salisbury. As Richard Parry has illustrated, "the struggle over the control of alcohol

² Percy G. Smith, Civil Commissioner, from the Magistrate's Office, Salisbury, to the Secretary of the Law Department, December 22 1908, Accessible through the British Colonial Archives, and British National Archives: "Kaffir Beer."

³ *Daily Telegraph*, November 2 1908, Enclosure in No. 24 (Annexure No. 1), Accessible through the BCA and BNA: "Drunkenness amongst natives."

⁴ C.H. Tredgold, Attorney-General, To the Secretary, Department of Administrator, 1908, Accessible through the BCA and BNA.

⁵ H.M. Jackson, Superintendent of Natives, To the Chief Native Commissioner, Gwelo, December 7 1908, Accessible through the BCA and BNA.

manufacture, sale, and consumption by Africans in Salisbury” highlights two important points about the nature of the colonial state. “First, it shows that the extent of direct control over the subordinate black population depended fundamentally on the resources available to the colonial authority. Second, it reveals that in practice colonialism was based on a series of implicit compromises, not so much between colonizer and colonized but between ideology and reality in the minds of the colonizers themselves.”⁶ Parry argues that by examining the policies surrounding African alcohol production and consumption, we may begin to get a sense of how tenuous the various settler claims to power really were. Although there were divisions within the settlers over how to approach brewing, what is clear is that they all agreed they needed to create the veneer of authority when attempting to control space and access, even though it often failed, to “obscure the real powerlessness” of their position.⁷ These deep disagreements amongst the white leadership further highlight how stumbling and contradictory the settler claims to power truly were. These observations will inform this chapter, with the understanding that in order to examine the ways Africans lived their lives within Mbare in the next two chapters, we must be familiar with the lack of constraint of their time and place.

The legislative council, originally made up of ten members, expanded to twenty by 1920. Five of the ten original spots were for BSAC members, who buckled to settler pressure and gave the majority of spots to elected officials after the council expanded, while still retaining a powerful position due to financial leverage. The ability to run for one of the elected spots required being white, male, owning mining claims, and meeting baseline income qualifications.

⁶ Richard Parry, “The ‘Durban system’ and the Limits of Colonial Power in Salisbury, 1890-1935,” in *Liquor and Labour in Southern Africa*, edited by Jonathan Crush and Charles Ambler (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1992), 115.

⁷ Parry, “The Durban System,” 115.

The issue of how to respond to African brewing and drinking overlaps with much that was discussed in the previous chapter regarding allocation of space and racism. The various positions within the legislative council articulated their concerns through the language of racial segregation, morality, and public health. The fears of inter-racial mixing, as seen in the crackdown on Pioneer Street in the 1900s, the creation of the location and the struggle for control over the layout of the new town, arose again through the settler fears that a white person would drink with or sell alcohol to a black person. These fears were motivated by concerns that Africans would see themselves as equal to whites if they could access the same leisure spaces and consumer goods, and that sense of equality would challenge the claims to legitimacy of BSAC and settler structures of power. As early as 1894, the topic of whites selling liquor to Africans was a topic of grave concern:

We have no inclination to ride the high horse of specious morality in dealing with this subject, nor to single out for blame and reprobation, the particular persons who are at present, and for some time past, carrying out illicit enterprises with regard to the innate love of strong drink, characteristic of all blacks, and to the perhaps equally innate love of the white race for the games of chance.⁸

This piece called on the Salisbury Sanitary Board to crack down on whites selling beer to, and drinking with, Africans since these actions “immediately degrade and demoralise the whole community.”⁹ The BSAC Administration and the Police took steps to try to tackle this “moral” issue. They implemented a strategy, in which they paid a black man to try to buy alcohol from a white person who the Administration suspected was selling to Africans. They referred to this as “trapping,” where the black man who worked for them was the “trap.”¹⁰ While this did result in the capture and subsequent fining of the poor whites near the Kopje area who engaged in illicit

⁸ *Herald*, January 12 1894: “How not to do it.”

⁹ *Herald*, January 12 1894: “How not to do it.”

¹⁰ *Herald*, August 19 1910: “Police Court, A liquor Case.”

traffic, it clearly did not solve the problem of settlers and Africans drinking and selling alcohol to one another, given the publication of reports on the same topic as late as 1919.¹¹

African drunkenness evoked the sort of fears and language from the settlers that the debates surrounding prostitution on Pioneer Street had; terms like “immorality,” “uncleanliness,” and “degradation” were tossed about liberally within the discourse of the anti-drinking faction. Drunkenness was blamed for all violent crime, and for causing a public health problem.¹² Particularly, it was the concern that drunkenness was hindering the abilities of the African population to labour adequately in white industries that had the anti-beer council members so fixated upon this topic. During an acute labour crisis and economically volatile period, the anti-brewing officials were gravely concerned about how little labour they could squeeze out of a drunken man. The fears of large uncontrollable groups of drunk Africans in Mbare also terrified the settler electorate, given the township’s proximity to the downtown core. In 1910, two town councilors visited the new location, investigating reports of “trouble,” and subsequently reported that “drunkenness and filth were rife amongst the natives there, while quite recently a case of disease was reported.”¹³ In the same breath, drunkenness was related to the outbreak of disease, as if the people in Mbare were to blame for the state of their living conditions. Of course, the

¹¹ *Herald*, January 31 1919: “Kaffir beer canteens under municipal control are established in Durban and Salisbury, and have served a salutary purpose in diminishing the amount of native drunkenness and rescuing poor whites from the temptation of seeking to earn a living by the illicit sale of liquor to natives. On the Rand most, if not the whole of the mining companies supply their “boys” with daily rations of kaffir beer, and it is not suggested that this source has stimulated the native craving for potent intoxicants.”

¹² *Herald*, December 22 1911: “The Commission stated that they considered that the Ordinance of 1909 was a step in the right direction... Briefly, it was indicated that Kaffir beer, if it was properly used, formed a valuable diet, and some said that it was essential to the native. If it was not properly used it resulted in gross immortality. In criminal work, about nine-tenths of crimes of violence were due to kaffir beer, and under those conditions it was injurious to the health of the natives.”

¹³ *Herald*, September 30 1910: “Coolie Laundries.”

unhealthy living conditions and inadequate housing of the location were more likely to blame for the outbreak of disease.

Some sources hint at these conditions, and what the early years in Mbare were like for African residents. In 1920, an article entitled “Conditions in Salisbury” outlined what a missionary saw when he visited Mbare for the first time. While the reverend spoke favourably of the conditions in the Bulawayo location he had also recently visited, he stated that “the same could not be said of the Salisbury location.... The point was that the natives were simply living in...huts...and that is was not healthy. They certainly wanted to provide for better housing.”¹⁴ He went on to say that “overcrowding, with its concurrent crime, dirt, laziness and drunkenness was everywhere apparent, and decent people could not rear families in comfort and purity.”¹⁵ The overcrowding was so severe that he reported in each of the 100 huts in Mbare, there was “an average of about seven occupants.”¹⁶ According to this report, there was only one well for the entire location, leading to “sanitary conditions... [that] were deplorable.”¹⁷ Despite these very real concerns, the reverend spent the rest of his report discussing drinking as the real cause for concern in Mbare, especially that men and women were found drinking together. While in Mbare, he looked into the Municipal Beer Hall on a week day and “saw 35 women, accompanied by children, drinking there with only 13 or 14 men.”¹⁸ Despite his misguided concerns, he commented that the Council should not be shocked with disease in the location, and he concluded that “pigs would not live in some such hovels.”¹⁹

¹⁴ *Herald*, June 18 1920: “Conditions in Salisbury.”

¹⁵ *Herald*, June 18 1920: “Conditions in Salisbury.”

¹⁶ *Herald*, June 18 1920: “Conditions in Salisbury.”

¹⁷ *Herald*, June 18 1920: “Conditions in Salisbury.”

¹⁸ *Herald*, June 18 1920: “Conditions in Salisbury.”

¹⁹ *Herald*, June 18 1920: “Native Location.”

The Legislative Council and the Contradictions of Colonial Rule

As mentioned above, there were two distinct factions within legislative council debates over beer brewing and legality. Ian Phimister described the legislative council as “a buffer between the BSAC and the Imperial government.”²⁰ In many ways, this account holds true. The council was never free from the influence of BSAC capital and interests, and arguably existed as a way to legitimise Company rule, while often blatantly undermining the interests of the settler electorate. The elected officials, there to protect the company against these allegations, were often trapped between competing interests: the Company’s, their own as wealthier, urban individuals, and the varied interests of the electorate. The council was accountable to the various competing demands of capital in ways that often obscured the interests of the electorate. For example, Phimister highlights how the debates over a land ordinance in the early 1900s revealed that elected officials often differed from the interests of the majority of the electorate. Many of the voters, rural farmers, wanted increased resource allocation to agriculture, more attention to labour shortages, and more representation of their financial interests. Instead, the elected officials often neglected the needs of rural constituents, and heavily favoured mining interests.²¹

By 1914, after the “Administration announced ‘agriculture must take a second place’ to mining interests,”²² the council faced backlash from the electorate and was forced to once again reorganize “governmental form and policies along lines more acceptable to the interests of white farmers and producing mines by conceding a majority to elected members in the Legislative Council and by separating its administrative and commercial revenues.”²³ However, this did not

²⁰ Ian Phimister, “Accommodating Imperialism: The Compromise of the Settler State in Southern Rhodesia, 1923–1929,” *The Journal of African History* 25, no. 3 (1984): 32.

²¹ Phimister, “Accommodating Imperialism,” 34.

²² Phimister, “Accommodating Imperialism,” 62.

²³ Phimister, “Accommodating Imperialism,” 64.

fundamentally shift the power of the council away from the BSAC or from the wealthier elected officials. Instead, after proving to be ineffectual, it only further incensed the electorate who felt left behind, and led to the increased influence of the campaign for responsible government from the BSAC. By 1920, when the council debated the prospect of Union with South Africa, a political movement emerged, led by two members of the council, John McChlery and the first female member, Ethel Jollie, with deep ties to the Rhodesia Agricultural Union and the rural constituents.²⁴ They claimed to speak for those white settler farmers who felt they suffered from “Company neglect [and]...with appeal beyond the farmers to the wider white community, particularly the ‘small man’,” whose interests Jollie claimed were “not being provided by settler representatives in the Legislative Council.”²⁵

Additionally, there were also divisions between the legislative council and the town council. The legislative council was responsible for the big picture elements of the Southern Rhodesia economy and operations. One of the biggest challenges for the fragmented and divided legislative council was to balance the competing demands of mining, agriculture, taxation, migration, and, crucially, the Native Affairs department. Meanwhile, the town council for Salisbury had jurisdiction over the issuing of licences, the allocation of resources, and crucially, the municipal beer hall in Mbare. This town council was able to focus strictly upon, and was more accountable to, the racial fears and concerns of their Salisbury electorate. The legislative council, with many competing problems to solve, had less focus or concern with the particular happenings of one township, and was less inclined to pass specific legislation which would infringe upon the profitability of their main concerns.

²⁴ Donal Lowry, “‘White Woman's Country’: Ethel Tawse Jollie and the Making of White Rhodesia,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 23, no. 2 (1997): 266.

²⁵ Lowry, “‘White Woman's Country,’” 267.

The various lines of argument and competing pressures at play within the legislative council were never, and probably could never be, solved. In fact, as the discussion above mentioned, these very divisions were built into the structure of the legislative council. The competing lines of argument between the BSAC-appointed members, wealthy and disconnected elected officials, and the few who claimed to speak for the disenfranchised rural settlers, were never going to agree. These divisions would never be solved, and they get after one of the fundamental contradictions of colonial rule, as John Lonsdale and Bruce Berman have argued:

In order to maintain its own legitimacy through the morality of class domination, the state must be seen to act on behalf of the social order as a whole; indeed it may have to act... against the perceived interests of particular segments of the dominant class in order to renovate the structures and ideology of domination and accumulation.... Its relative autonomy may become eroded to the point where it acts, and is seen to act, as the direct instrument of the dominant class or of some of its fractions.²⁶

The disenfranchised electorate who felt betrayed by the lack-of-representation in the legislative council, and the dominance of the BSAC and mining interests highlight this point. The competing demands of various factions of settlers and officials could not all be resolved; only those in line with the primary capital interests of the colonial order were likely to be dealt with. The contradictions of the Southern Rhodesian state apparatus meant that these divisions would endure.

Having outlined these divisions, I will briefly sketch the preliminary council decisions early on pertaining to beer brewing, and the ambiguous legal position in which this topic would remain. In 1909, just a few years after the new location opened, the High Commissioner of the colony proposed an Ordinance to deal “with the hitherto uncontrolled sale of Kaffir beer to

²⁶ John Lonsdale and Bruce Berman, “Coping with the Contradictions: The Development of the Colonial State in Kenya, 1895-1914,” *The Journal of African History* 20, no. 4 (1979): 490.

labourers.”²⁷ This Ordinance laid out that the company governance would recognize that “a moderate supply of this native drink is...a valuable addition to the food of natives, yet the indiscriminate supply, particularly in the case of large mine compounds, has been the cause of many evils and has necessitated legislation.”²⁸ It also laid out the conditions for issuing a license, to be done entirely with the consent of the employer. It even calls for allowing the employer to issue “kaffir beer” as part of the rations on the worksite.²⁹ The Kaffir Beer Ordinance passed in 1911 reiterated and expanded upon the draft in 1909. The Ordinance, importantly, defined “Kaffir Beer:”

as the drink brewed from malt known to the Matabele as “Utshwala” and to the Mashona as “Doro.” The sale or barter to natives of alcoholic liquids other than these is prohibited, and in future no kaffir beer can be sold save by a person licensed or authorized to do so. Any European employer of labour may supply kaffir beer to the labourers in his employ as part of the rations of such labourers or for maintaining the health of such labourers, but otherwise shall not sell the same to them unless duly licensed.³⁰

This Ordinance made the rules of licensing more elaborate, mandating that the license should state where and how much beer is being brewed, and the time when it would be supplied.³¹ This Ordinance also expanded police power, granting them the “right of entry upon and inspection of the place where any kaffir beer is brewed or supplied.”³²

Almost immediately after the Ordinance was passed, the legislative council debated whether it went too far. The Council discussed the addition of a particular clause, which

²⁷ W.H. Milton, Administrator, to The High Commissioner of Johannesburg, Enclosure 2 in No. 98, May 15 1909, Accessible through the BCA and the BNA.

²⁸ W.H. Milton, to The High Commissioner of Johannesburg, May 15 1909, Accessible through the BCA and the BNA.

²⁹ W.H. Milton, to The High Commissioner of Johannesburg, May 15 1909, Accessible through the BCA and the BNA.

³⁰ *Herald*, November 10 1911: “Kaffir Beer: Manufacture and Sale; Regulations for licensing; New draft ordinance.”

³¹ *Herald*, November 10 1911: “Kaffir Beer.”

³² *Herald*, November 10 1911: “Kaffir Beer.”

stipulated that “no person, except the native in his kraal, shall be in possession of more kaffir beer than is reasonably required for his personal use.”³³ The purpose for adding this was to “prohibit a native going about a township carrying a huge quantity of kaffir beer which clearly was not for his own consumption.”³⁴ Obviously, some members of the Council were aware that this was not the only problem; the original Ordinance did not make brewing or drinking beer illegal. In fact, it stated that it was completely allowed, and could even be considered an essential part of the diet. What they did stipulate was that it had to be a “reasonable amount for personal use.” This was not an amount easily defined, and was still open to interpretation years after the 1911 Ordinance.

By 1919, there was still no resolved upon interpretation. A police Lieutenant in 1919 stated that his “personal definition” was “one paraffin tin for each individual in the hut could not be called an excessive quantity, i.e. four gallons for each inhabitant.”³⁵ The definition of what constituted a “reasonable” amount was so cloudy, that in 1919 the court could not decide if a certain female brewer had actually broken any laws.³⁶ The woman in question, a resident of Mbare, “possessed 15 gallons of kaffir beer within a hut in that location, such not being authorized as a canteen or place for the supply of kaffir beer. The accused pleaded guilty, but the Magistrate... came to the conclusion that the regulation was ‘ultra vires’ of the Administrator and dismissed the case.... The only question for consideration was whether by such possession she in

³³ *Herald*, December 29 1911.

³⁴ *Herald*, December 29 1911.

³⁵ *Herald*, December 29 1911.

³⁶ *Herald*, February 21 1919: “The Locations Ordinance; Natives and Kaffir Beer; Administrator’s Regulation ‘Ultra Vires.’”

any way had broken the law of the land.”³⁷ All that was clear in these years was that beer was profitable in Mbare, and the expansion of *shebeen* sales remained a settler fear.

The Anti-Brewing Faction

The powerful lobby within the legislative council and its electorate which argued against keeping beer brewing legal was primarily made up of the non-BSAC members, who had several arguments. The first, crucially, concerned labour. The settlers were dealing with an endemic labour shortage, and could barely entice enough labourers into their floundering industries. A piece published in the *Herald* in 1910 elaborated upon how “no little inconvenience is being caused employers of native labour in town by the over-indulgence of their servants at week-ends in kaffir beer, which is obtained principally at the native location.”³⁸ The article features a white employer who claimed that “no less than eight of his boys failed to put in an appearance in the morning, all of them being found later in a hopeless state of intoxication.”³⁹ In response, the *Herald* sent a reporter into Mbare on a Sunday to investigate the claims of the employer. What they allegedly found was an almost comically excessive display of drinking and open intoxication:

Near the approach to the location several natives were met who were obviously in a very jubilant state of mind, while their gait was the reverse of steady. One of the party was gloriously drunk, and the road, which is of fairly good width, was far too limited for his perambulations while he had a brick in his hand, with which he vowed to blot out the universe. Passing him with much trepidation, our representative went inside the location, where other natives, in a more or less advanced state of intoxication, were seen lurching from hut to hut.⁴⁰

³⁷ *Herald*, February 21 1919.

³⁸ *Herald*, August 12 1910: The Municipal Location; Kaffir Beer Traffic.”

³⁹ *Herald*, August 12 1910.

⁴⁰ *Herald*, August 12 1910.

The reporter then spoke to the Town Ranger who cited the Ordinance in 1909 as the reason he could not arrest anyone for brewing. He argued that this lack of a ruling encouraged brewing, and he led the *Herald* reporter to the three huts where he knew brewing was taking place as they spoke.⁴¹ He told the reporter how the brewers were able to charge “1/- a mug [and] seeing the highly profitable nature of the traffic, an opposition syndicate was formed, who imported a native woman-- an expert brewer-- from Bulawayo, to supply the increasing demand. The traffic naturally extended, and the Ranger stated that at the present time there were no fewer than 17 huts where beer is manufactured and sold.”⁴² He stated that the price can vary, and when it is lower, the individual demand increased even more. The headman of the location then showed the *Herald* reporter more huts where brewing was currently taking place. He noted that in each one he saw, “there were convivial parties varying from five to a dozen natives. In each of these huts there were at least two drums about 3 ft. 6 ins. high, which either contained or had contained kaffir beer.”⁴³ The headman told him that while it looked fairly calm when they were there, “on Saturday and Sunday evenings pandemonium reigns, and great difficulty is experienced keeping order.”⁴⁴

Another *Herald* article in 1914 reiterates the failure of the legislation of 1911. The article states that it has been “found most difficult to apply effectively the law in respect of large native communities living in reserves.”⁴⁵ A report from 1916 echoes the concerns of the headman and

⁴¹ *Herald*, August 12 1910: “According to the statement of the Town Ranger, prior to the Magisterial decision to the effect that no conviction could be secured under the Ordinance for being in possession of kaffir beer, there were three huts in the location at which the practice of brewing and selling beer was carried on.”

⁴² *Herald*, August 12 1910: The Municipal Location; Kaffir Beer Traffic.”

⁴³ *Herald*, August 12 1910.

⁴⁴ *Herald*, August 12 1910.

⁴⁵ *Herald*, May 21 1914.

the town ranger in 1910, and points out some of the continuing concerns with the Ordinance. Much like the ranger, a mine manager pointed out how he was concerned that “provided the natives were not caught selling kaffir beer, they could brew it in the compounds and the law could not touch them.”⁴⁶ The chairman of the council was apparently thrilled at having the opportunity to speak to this point, claiming that “the uncontrolled making of beer was... a source of danger to the mining industry.”⁴⁷ He details a story of an instance when an association of mine managers approached the council on the topic, and discovered that the Ordinance did not apply to mines, with the result that “the whole industry was jeopardized, their machinery endangered, and the employers’ week-ends on the mine made a perfect hell on earth. Sickness, mortality and crime were directly traceable to uncontrolled consumption of this beer.”⁴⁸ This inability of the employers, police, and administration to regulate or control how much brewing was going on was echoed again in 1920, when the Solicitor General said that the “municipal authorities and the police had had considerable difficulty in dealing with the brewing of kaffir beer under the existing law.”⁴⁹ This was once again linked to poor work performances, with so much alleged drinking going on during the weekends in Mbare that even fewer residents turned up for work than usual.

Much like the arguments that the Ordinance of 1911 had failed to do anything to stop the brewers in Mbare, some also commented on how the ineffective ordinance had contributed to the rise in brewing, and the settlers’ associated fears of labour shortages. As one anti-drink observer noted, the canteen was only contributing to the drunkenness in Mbare.⁵⁰ This prohibitionist

⁴⁶ *Herald*, March 24 1916: “Kaffir Beer.”

⁴⁷ *Herald*, March 24 1916.

⁴⁸ *Herald*, March 24 1916: “Kaffir Beer.”

⁴⁹ *Herald*, July 2 1920: “Legislative Council; Kaffir Beer and Native Taxes.”

⁵⁰ *Herald*, August 30 1912: “Native Canteens.”

claimed that “this excessive drinking not only distracts from [the African workers’] capacity for work but is one of the chief causes of crime, and especially of the class of crime which has been most frequent of late years.”⁵¹ In 1920 the legislative council debated a possible amendment to the 1911 Ordinance. The discussion indicated that by the 1920s, the settlers and the state were still nowhere close to controlling brewing, nor were the canteens any more successful. As one man noted, “the [state-run] brewing establishments...were not regarded by the people as being at all necessary, [and] they had not stopped the illicit trade.”⁵² In fact, as he continues, as the “brewing business...was a money making business if properly conducted,”⁵³ more and more Africans in Mbare were becoming involved. This speaker was not alone, but part of a faction of the council and the settler electorate who felt their interests were under threat, and noted how the canteen in Salisbury “had failed”⁵⁴ to control African brewers and drinkers.

What is clear from the sources which contest the lack of stricter restrictions on brewing, is that the police and the state had a tremendous amount of difficulty stopping the beer flowing “pretty freely” in Mbare.⁵⁵ Crucially, there was also a severe lack of state resources available to police Mbare effectively. This lack of funding resulted in an unending headache for the police department and the town council. Time and again, an employer would bring a case to the police about employees simply not showing up to work, or apparently lying about going to church and going to a *shebeen* instead.⁵⁶ Despite the amount of difficulty the police were having with maintaining control, and the panic and fears this caused, the courts, accountable to the legislative

⁵¹ *Herald*, August 30 1912: “Native Canteens.”

⁵² *Herald*, July 2 1920: “Legislative Council; Kaffir Beer and Native Taxes.”

⁵³ *Herald*, July 2 1920.

⁵⁴ *Herald*, July 2 1920.

⁵⁵ *Herald*, August 12 1910: “Too Much Beer.”

⁵⁶ *Herald*, August 12 1910.

council's decisions, continued to rule that "the inmates of the location could brew and keep beer for their own consumption."⁵⁷ Some noticed this tension; one town council member called the Magistrate into question for allowing a female brewer in Mbare to get off with no charge in court, and argued that:

It was stated in court that permission to brew beer, in the location, was a privilege which could be withdrawn upon it being abused, and that at any time natives might be legally prosecuted for having beer in their possession. Only one of these interpretations [brewing as a privilege or as illegal] can be the correct one, and it is much to be hoped that the view taken in Bulawayo, which gives the municipal authorities there greater control in these matters than the Salisbury Town Council appear at present to possess, will ultimately prevail and thus reduce the opportunities for excessive drinking offered to erring domestics in their leisure time.⁵⁸

In another similar case, where a female brewer from Mbare was brought before the court for possession of a "certain quantity" of beer, the town council struggled to find a way to charge her.⁵⁹ When they were unable to find a way to convict her, the council noted that "there is no desire to prevent the natives from obtaining a reasonable quantity of kaffir beer, to which they can ...obtain in their kraals, but it is high time the authorities obtained effective control of the traffic now carried on in such an extreme in the location."⁶⁰ In a 1920 legislative council debate, one mine manager highlighted just how much of a failure the legislation surrounding this topic had been: "[he] said he agreed that the object of the Ordinance was to control. If the government would promise to increase the personnel of the police he would say by all means pass the Ordinance, but they had not the sufficient police to control things now. It was on account of lack of control that he had asked that these places should be two miles away from European

⁵⁷ *Herald*, August 12 1910.

⁵⁸ *Herald*, August 12 1910: "Too Much Beer."

⁵⁹ *Herald*, August 12 1910: "The Location Difficulty."

⁶⁰ *Herald*, August 12 1910: "The Location Difficulty."

inhabitants, or have them withdrawn altogether.”⁶¹ As another member noted, “if they had breweries they wanted policemen. The one was inseparable from the other.”⁶² Once again, the various factions of the white leadership were at odds with one another over how to address this topic.

The Pro-Brewing Faction

The perspective of the lobby in the legislative council who were pro-Ordinance, pro-brewing, and who did not want to push for any stricter laws and regulations is also crucial, and reveals much about the divisions amongst the settlers and the council itself. The arguments of those who were pro-brewing are also fairly complex, but interestingly, also are predominately about labour; however, their concern was for mine managers and owners more so than for those who simply had minor shares. Their primary argument was that beer and brewing were essential to keeping the workforce “happy and healthy” (i.e. present at the worksite). A piece of correspondence from the civil commissioner to the Magistrate’s office in 1908 noted that the tactic of encouraging brewing on worksites, and in the location, was to make them “popular and induce the boys to remain.”⁶³ Another letter in this chain of correspondence echoes this idea, saying that “if a labourer can find means of spending his money he is likely to remain for a longer period.”⁶⁴ Thus, the stipulation that brewing be allowable on mines. If the workers had a place to spend their earnings, and there was a relatively active social scene, why would the

⁶¹ *Herald*, July 2 1920: “Legislative Council; Kaffir Beer and Native Taxes.”

⁶² *Herald*, July 2 1920.

⁶³ Percy G. Smith, Civil Commissioner, from the Magistrate’s Office to the Secretary of the Law Department, December 22 1908, Accessible through the BCA and the BNA: “Kaffir Beer.”

⁶⁴ C.H. Tredgold, To the Secretary Department of Administrator, 1908, Accessible through the BCA and the BNA.

management want to spoil that? Whether a few workers were absent was not the concern it was for the anti-brewing lobby. For this faction, it was more about the workers as a broad category, than about some small-scale employer's disputes with ten or so workers.

This side of the debate, dominated by BSAC-chosen members of the council, also argued that doctors had approved of beer for Africans, claiming that "the native had been brought up on it, and it was considered essential for the adult native."⁶⁵ In a more explicitly racist speech, one pro-Ordinance speaker from the Hartley district proposed that "it was good policy to feed working animals well to keep them up to the mark."⁶⁶ Along similar lines, others argued that "native beer" had always been used as a part of the "diet by the natives,"⁶⁷ and making it illegal would "be attended with very great difficulties."⁶⁸ This argument came up countless times over the years, stipulating that, "when taken in moderation,"⁶⁹ beer brewed by Africans should be encouraged as a healthy "article of food."⁷⁰ The settlers argued that beer "had been manufactured or brewed in millions of native homes for centuries, and was too much a part of the native food, of their ideas of hospitality, and of the whole of their home life, that it would be practically impossible to do away with the article altogether."⁷¹ By constantly reinforcing that beer was a

⁶⁵ *Herald*, March 7 1919.

⁶⁶ *Herald*, March 15 1912.

⁶⁷ Administrator's Office, January 8 1909, Accessible through the BCA and the BNA.

⁶⁸ Marshall Hugh Hole, Secretary, Department of the Administrator, For the Administrator's Office, Salisbury, January 9 1909, Annexure No. 2 (No. B 25/09), Accessible through the BCA and the BNA.

⁶⁹ Marshall Hugh Hole, Secretary, Department of the Administrator, For the Administrator's Office, Salisbury, January 9 1909, Annexure No. 2 (No. B 25/09), Accessible through the BCA and the BNA.

⁷⁰ *Herald*, February 21 1919.

⁷¹ *Herald*, February 21 1919.

“staple article of diet among the Matabele and Mashona natives,”⁷² the pro-brewing lobby reinforced the idea that making it illegal was an injustice, which would cause “great hardship.”⁷³

Conveniently, what also coincided with the continued legality of brewing was the continued ability of the BSAC administration to save money. With the opening of the beer hall in Mbare in 1913, the administration could channel any profits realized back into the costs of township operations. As was argued in 1911, the year the Ordinance was passed, “where beer is sold by the local authority, any profit derived from the sale, or from rent, should be utilized in improving the location.”⁷⁴ In 1920, the legislative council highlighted this point: that the desire of some factions of the government to keep brewing legal was that it allowed for revenue. One anti-brewing member argued that this stance was unethical, but that “the fact remained that because it was a source of profit to sell more than was good for the consumers it was frequently done.”⁷⁵ The financial records of Mbare indicate that beer hall sales were exceeding the revenue which the state made from rent.⁷⁶ This was, ultimately, a “moneymaking thing,”⁷⁷ and as long as the company could save money by not putting anything but the revenue from beer sales back into Mbare, they were happy to do so.

The concern with profits is again underscored by the way that the legislative council allowed business interests to dominate town council concerns. Three Castles Brewery, the local, municipally-run-and-owned brewery for whites, sold crucial ingredients for beer brewing to

⁷² Val Gielgud, To the Secretary of the Administrator’s Department, For the Chief Native Commissioner, Bulawayo, December 8 1908. Accessible through the BCA and the BNA.

⁷³ Val Gielgud, December 8 1908, Accessible through the BCA and the BNA.

⁷⁴ *Herald*, May 19 1911: “The Liquor Question.”

⁷⁵ *Herald*, July 2 1920: “Legislative Council; Kaffir Beer and Native Taxes.”

⁷⁶ *Herald*, September 16 1921: “Revenue: Native location rents: 1,500; Kaffir Beer Sales: 2,000.”

⁷⁷ *Herald*, June 18 1920: “Native beer halls.”

Mbare residents to turn a profit. The brewery, a profitable enterprise which later was granted a monopoly over beer sales in the beer hall as well, was given deferential treatment over the anti-brewing lobby, due to its lucrative and profit-generating stance within Salisbury. BSAC members were ardently in support of business interests, even when the brewery engaged in the side business of selling malt and yeast directly to African brewers. As Timothy Scarnecchia has written about extensively, the business of illicit brewing was so booming, that the *shebeen* owners posed a major competitive challenge to the profits which the settlers were hoping to extract from township drinkers. The brewery, separate from the Council, although perhaps with BSAC financial backing, recognized that they could make profit from selling brewing ingredients to the African brewers themselves, as a way to salvage some sales.⁷⁸ Scarnecchia discusses this tactic with the sale of baker's yeast in the 1930s, as the amount of yeast being sold to brewers was enough to produce 150,000 gallons of beer per month, drastically more than the local brewery was selling.⁷⁹ Similarly, malt sales in 1913 directed profits away from the brewery and allowed for a "good deal of native drunkenness."⁸⁰ There were calls to tax the sales of malt heavily, as some drew a direct line from malt purchases to increased brewing activity. The town council debated over whether or not they could tax this practice, but it was struck down by the Rhodesia Storekeeper's Association, who protested the proposed by-law.⁸¹ The Storekeeper's Association wanted to continue the practice as they (the brewery included) stood to profit from

⁷⁸ Timothy Scarnecchia, "The politics of gender and class in the creation of African communities, Salisbury, Rhodesia, 1937-1957," PhD Dissertation, University of Michigan, 1993, 69-70.

⁷⁹ Scarnecchia, "The politics of gender and class," 69-70; Also see NAZ S2827/1/8, "Report by the Committee Appointed by the Secretary, Department of Justice and Defense (October 1941) to look into and report on the Hop Beer problem," Salisbury, Accessible at BCA and BNA, February 1942.

⁸⁰ *Herald*, July 18 1913.

⁸¹ *Herald*, July 18 1913.

continued sales. Profits and business interests maintained the legal ambiguity of African brewing. Ultimately, the tactic adopted was one of “supervision,”⁸² not prohibition, as it favored BSAC financial interests.

The Mbare Canteen and the Results of Legal Ambiguity

The deep divisions within the legislative council highlight how there was never any chance of a lasting or cohesive policy concerning brewing. This is particularly evident through the legislative council’s support of the construction of a beerhall in Mbare. In 1913 the “Native Canteen,” was erected, based upon the system in Durban.⁸³ The canteen was the creation of the pro-brewing faction of the council, in collaboration with pro-brewing members of the town-council who looked to cut expenses in the township, and profit themselves. Becoming the only licensed beer seller in Mbare, the canteen was licensed for “the sale of kaffir beer brewed by arrangement by the Castle Brewery,” in the hopes of generating sales beyond their original white Rhodesian market.⁸⁴ The construction of this regulated and monitored space which the council could tax, all while attempting to undercut the booming business of the illicit brewers and also collect profits for themselves, led to further legislation in the legislative council in 1919; ironically enough, they found that the amount of illicit brewing and consumption increased after the beer hall was built.⁸⁵ Perhaps this had much to do with the side industries which Three Castles engaged in.

⁸²*Herald*, November 17 1911: “The Kaffir Beer Trade.”

⁸³ *Herald*, August 30 1912: “Native Canteens;” Also *Herald*, October 2 1913: “Beer for Natives; Opening of Municipal Canteen; The dangers of Illicit brewing.”

⁸⁴ *Herald*, October 2 1913.

⁸⁵ *Herald*, March 7 1919: “Since the repeal of the former Ordinance there had been disgraceful scenes in the location. Drunkenness and fighting had been frequent, and there were 60

By 1920, the pro-brewing faction of the legislative council, together with their supporters on the town council, was attempting to simultaneously hold a monopoly over beer brewing and sales in Mbare through their canteen, and to also not make brewing illegal in an effort to generate profits for themselves.⁸⁶ The council, yet again, proved to be on the side of profits, by any means possible, again underscoring that the anxieties of the pro-and anti-brewing factions, within the legislative council were not to be, and would never be, resolved.

Conclusion

Despite the fact that the canteen made money, it cannot be stressed enough that it was consistently referred to as a failure by the settlers themselves, and that the number, profitability, and popularity of *shebeens* in Mbare continued to grow, with the competing interests within the legislative council simultaneously unable and unwilling to stop it. As some pointed to, it seemed as though the canteen actually created more business for the illicit breweries. One member of the council observed: “no law will ever put a stop to such things or prevent beer drinks in kraals.”⁸⁷ In 1919, a speaker in the Town Council noted that “notwithstanding all the efforts of the police, the sale of beer was uncontrolled.”⁸⁸ As this chapter has discussed, many members of the legislative council never wanted to fully eradicate brewing or beer consumption by Mbare residents. The debates over the ambiguous and vague legislation which did manage to pass through, often by the majority of BSAC officials on the legislative council, are very revealing.

convictions during the year 1918 for illicit selling of beer at Gatooma. On one occasion a fight resulted in the burning of a hut and one death. In December the Location Inspector complained of disorderly conduct in the location to the Town Council.”

⁸⁶ *Herald*, July 2 1920.

⁸⁷ *Herald*, November 17 1911: “The Kaffir Beer Trade.”

⁸⁸ *Herald*, March 7 1919.

What is also crucial to note is that even if harsher legislation could have been agreed upon, its enforcement would have been insufficient, due to the lack of resources invested in policing. The pro-brewing faction of the legislative council whose presence maintained the legally ambiguous status of African brewing, was aware of their tenuous hold of power, and the need to prioritize profits in the face of financial ruin.

The following two chapters move away from the anxieties, divisions, and fears of the settler electorate, elected settler officials, BSAC officials, and police, and begin to dissect what Mbare looked like from African perspectives. This shift of focus can reveal much about the lived experience of township residents. If the city was what Cooper referred to as a “nodal point” of colonial power, I argue that Mbare was never fully under unified settler control. The next chapter will discuss the class and gender dimensions of Mbare, with a focus on the aspiring middle class residents and the contested space of the municipal beer hall. These chapters will explore ramifications of the weak state discussed above. It is indicative of township life that the state did not even factor into many Africans’ discussions concerning leisure and drinking, despite the state’s enduring obsession with these topics.

Chapter Four: “So that we can be dignified women:” Elite Women in Mbare

In spite of colonial interests stumbling to control both movement into the city with pass laws, and the emergent shape of the township with policing, Mbare became home to an ever-growing and diverse population between 1920 and the mid-1950s. The deep divisions within the city’s white leadership were never, and could never be, solved, leaving residents of Mbare in a state of legal ambiguity. From this confusion, Mbare residents similarly formed themselves into divided factions and groups who struggled with their neighbours over how to construct identities in a shared space. This chapter will argue that drinking spaces were epicentres for many of these internal tensions. They not only reveal that Mbare was complicated along gendered lines, but also a great deal about the variance within township life along class lines, and how gender and class intersected and complicated one another. To reinforce this, the emergence of an aspiring middle class within Mbare will be discussed in this chapter, with particular focus on elite women. The civilizing mission aspect of the colonial order often looked to the emergent middle class as a way of legitimizing themselves with the existence of missionary-produced respectability. Some scholars also argue that merchant capital needed Africans with disposable income to survive, and the state structures desperately needed African taxpayers. Perhaps the emergent middle class was not entirely against colonial interests, however the colonial order was unable to control their class interests and the limits of their mobility. The middle class could not be made to follow the colonial script laid out for them, and were often uncontrollable and unpredictable. Elite African women in Mbare highlight the many ways that gender and class were complicated by one another, and the lack of homogeneity of the space. They also reveal a great deal about the lived experience of Mbare, as well as the limits and failings of the colonial order.

The presence of African women within urban centres in the 1920s through the 1950s has attracted a great deal of attention from scholars over the last several decades. Beginning in the 1970s and lasting well into the 1990s, there was a school of literature which attempted to celebrate African women who migrated to urban colonial centres as freeing themselves from the processes of patriarchy and the competing demands of capital from the metropole, settler capital, the BSAC company investments, and various other interests of the colonial order. Elizabeth Schmidt's work in the 1990s is an example of this historiographical era.¹ Her works argue that African women were under dual forms of oppression: "African women's subordination is not solely the result of policies imposed by foreign capital and the colonial state. Rather, indigenous and European structures of patriarchal control reinforced and transformed one another, evolving into new structures and forms of domination."² Her portrayal of being a black woman in colonial Zimbabwe during the 1920s and 1930s was one of inescapable domination, by the African men in rural spaces and by the powerful forces of the colonial order in urban spaces.

Schmidt is not alone in her analysis of the transformative and controlling pressures of the colonial order. Other scholars have adhered to a similar narrative, but instead of portraying female migrants to urban areas as oppressed, stressed how they overcame their many oppressions by earning a wage,³ often describing their economic success as entrepreneurial. A great deal of scholarly effort was exerted to show how female beer brewers, prostitutes, or market women

¹ Elizabeth Schmidt, *Peasants, Traders, and Wives: Shona Women in the History of Zimbabwe, 1870-1939* (Social History of Africa, Portsmouth, NH: Harare: London: Heinemann; Baobab; J. Currey, 1992).

² Elizabeth Schmidt, "Patriarchy, Capitalism, and the Colonial State in Zimbabwe," *Signs* 16, no. 4 (1991): 734.

³ For example, Janet M. Bujra, "Women Entrepreneurs of Early Nairobi," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 9, no. 2 (1975): 197; See also Claire C. Robertson and Iris Berger, *Women and Class in Africa* (New York: Africana Pub., 1986).

could earn more than men who worked in the mines.⁴ The historiography of this topic is indicative of the struggle over how to properly depict urban African women. In works of the later 1990s, the narrative began to move past this binary depiction of oppression and entrepreneurship, to discussion of how the lived experience of African women was not all the same, even if they lived in the same township.⁵ Scholars such as Timothy Scarnecchia moved beyond the earlier dichotomy of total domination by men and the state, and the romanticized notion of entrepreneurial success, towards a history which does not assume that being an African woman meant you were automatically part of a certain class or struggle, or that you had easy relations with other groups of African women or men.⁶

This chapter will first examine Michael West's work on the middle class in colonial Zimbabwe, as he has outlined how influential and involved they were, particularly within Bulawayo. I will then focus on the presence of elite women and their attempts to solidify a community based on both class and gendered interests. Throughout this chapter and the next, I will be using the terms middle class and elite interchangeably, as this categorization has been well established by West in the historiography. By examining how various factions of women lived side-by-side within Mbare, and the many ways in which they interacted and disagreed with

⁴ See Elizabeth Schmidt and also the work of Teresa A. Barnes, such as: *"We Women Worked so Hard": Gender, Urbanization, and Social Reproduction in Colonial Harare, Zimbabwe, 1930-1956* (Social History of Africa, Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1999).

⁵ The works of Justin Willis have been instrumental here: Justin Willis, *Potent Brews: A Social History of Alcohol in East Africa, 1850-1999* (London: British Institute in Eastern Africa, 2002).; Justin Willis, "Enkurma Sikitoi: Commoditization, Drink, and Power among the Maasai," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 32, no. 2/3 (1999): 338-357.; Michael West has also profoundly shaped this historiographical turn: Michael O. West, *The Rise of an African Middle Class Colonial Zimbabwe, 1898-1965* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002).; Michael O. West, "Liquor and Libido: 'Joint Drinking' and the Politics of Sexual Control in Colonial Zimbabwe, 1920s-1950s," *Journal of Social History* 30, no. 3 (1997): 645-67.

⁶ Timothy Lewis Scarnecchia, *The Politics of Gender and Class in the Creation of African Communities, Salisbury, Rhodesia, 1937-1957*, The University of Michigan, 1993.

one another, this chapter reveals as much about the ways that Africans formed communities in constructed settlements as it does about the limitations of settler power. These spaces were distinctly African spaces, created by racist settler ideologies of separation that ironically opened up space for debate within and about various groups of residents, even within the colonial city, the ostensible nodal point of control.

The Emergence of a Middle Class in Mbare, Marital Divides, and the Struggle for the Beerhall

As Michael West has discussed at length in his work on the emergence of an African middle class in Zimbabwe, “a small minority of Africans managed to defy the odds. By exploiting the few alternate social spaces available to the colonized, these individuals were able to achieve a certain degree of upward social mobility.”⁷ There existed a small number of elite African men within Mbare who were educated, worked higher up in the settler industries, or were business owners, who wished to distinguish themselves from the working class majority of their fellow Mbare residents, but were also denied full entrance into the settler neighbourhoods or classes, based on race. Many of the men which West discusses belonged to a mission-educated class: the “men of the African petty bourgeoisie [were] clerks, clerics, teachers, journalists and the like.”⁸ They not only sought “material betterment,” but they “also coveted public affirmation of their social standing by the settlers, whose ranks they ultimately hoped to join.”⁹ The premise which West works from is that “ideology, or the consciousness of class, is no

⁷ Michael O. West, *The Rise of an African Middle Class*, 2.

⁸ Michael O. West, “Liquor and Libido,” 645-67.

⁹ West, *African Middle Class*, 21.

less important than the material reality of class.”¹⁰ The contentious space of the township beerhall and of leisure itself became central to the aspiring middle class’s attempts to carve out a distinct space for themselves in Mbare, and to differentiate themselves from the working poor residents, as this section will highlight.

Almost as soon as the municipal beerhall opened in 1913,¹¹ there were observations that men and women were drinking together.¹² Within a decade, women were banned from entering after 5pm.¹³ According to Teresa Barnes, this ban was protested by some women, who were joined by a group of men “for a time.”¹⁴ By 1932, there were sustained calls from the Southern Rhodesia Conference of Christian Natives for a “separate accommodation at the [beer] Halls for women, apart from men.”¹⁵ This failed to be implemented until “the 1940s [when] the state did attempt to separate female from male drinkers in the beer halls but simply concluded that “the separation of the sexes has [not] had the beneficial effects which ... had been hoped for.”¹⁶ The contentious issue of whether men and women should be allowed to drink together in the Mbare

¹⁰ West, *African Middle Class*, 2.

¹¹ *Herald*, August 30 1912: “Native Canteens”; also, *Herald*, October 2 1913: “Beer for Natives”; “Opening of Municipal Canteen, The dangers of Illicit brewing.”

¹² *Herald*, June 18 1920: “Conditions in Salisbury: The beer hall at the Salisbury location was closed on Sundays, but he had visited there on week days with ...and or peeping into the beer hall saw 35 women, accompanied by children, drinking there with only 13 or 14 men.” In another article entitled “Native Location: ...visited the location there and found that it was a disgrace; men and women were drinking together. Representations were made to the Council and they received a very sympathetic hearing, as the result of which the men and women did not now drink together. They then found that beer was being ladled out through the window, and as the result of further representations to the Council the women were prohibited from visiting the beer hall during certain hours.”

¹³ Teresa A. Barnes, “The Fight for Control of African Women's Mobility in Colonial Zimbabwe, 1900-1939,” *Signs* 17, no. 3 (1992): 604.

¹⁴ Barnes, “African Women’s Mobility,” 604.

¹⁵ Barnes, “African Women’s Mobility,” 604.

¹⁶ Barnes, “African Women’s Mobility,” 604.

beerhall came not only from the missions and the administration; in fact, the loudest protests to the so-called “joint-drinking”¹⁷ problem came from men within Mbare itself.

As West argues, the men of the aspiring middle class in Mbare “sought to control the sexuality of their wives by keeping them away from the beerhalls.”¹⁸ The campaign they waged against women in the beerhall had everything to do with the disproportionate amount of single men within Mbare.¹⁹ Men in Mbare outnumbered the women almost three to one.²⁰ Even if we assume that every woman within the township was married, which we know to be false,²¹ the number of married men would still be less than a third of the men within the township. As West shows, middle class men were more likely to be married.²² Their wives, women who will be discussed at length in the following section, tended to work more in formal sectors as well, but many also did not work outside the home. The beerhall was seen as a danger to the middle class

¹⁷ West, “Liquor and Libido,” 645-67.

¹⁸ West, “Liquor and Libido,” 645.

¹⁹ West, “Liquor and Libido:” “The campaign against joint drinking was driven by fears and anxieties caused by the skewed gender composition of Southern Rhodesia's urban African population. The majority of workers in the cities were “unattached” males, that is to say, bachelors or men who had left their wives and children behind in the countryside, more often than not in neighboring colonial territories. The members of the African elite, by contrast, were more likely to live in nuclear households, though sharing the same segregated townships with the workers.”

²⁰ Teresa A. Barnes and Everjoyce Win, *To Live a Better Life: An Oral History of Women in the City of Harare, 1930-70*, Harare, Zimbabwe: Baobab Books, 1992, 6. This source will be used extensively in this chapter, and the following. It is an edited collection of oral history interviews, discussing the 1930s through the 1960s, done in the early 1990s within Harare. Barnes and Win were concerned with documenting the lives of women in the township, and asked a lot of questions pertaining to work, housing, marriage, relationships, etc. Throughout, they inject their own observations about feminism and the patriarchy, as was the fashion for the early 1990s social history. This source is treated as a primary source for this thesis, and references the women whose memories are recorded, as it contains transcripts of interviews.

²¹ See discussion in Chapter 5 on married versus single divides.

²² West, “Liquor and Libido,” 645: “The members of the African elite, by contrast, were more likely to live in nuclear households, though sharing the same segregated townships with the workers.”

respectability sought after, because it posed a threat, in the eyes of these men, to the sanctity of marriage and the nuclear home by providing their wives with opportunities to engage in adultery with the many single young men who hung around the beerhall.²³ Of course, there is little to support that the wives of elite men within Mbare were the ones to frequently attend the beerhall, especially unaccompanied. However, as West highlights, this male anxiety had more to do with deep feelings of personal inadequacies about being forced to live within the township among so many men who posed a moral threat to their class ambitions.

As was outlined briefly at the beginning of this section, the lobbying of the elite factions of Mbare saw no results within the 1930s. As the Great Depression hit the newly independent colony in the 1930s, the residents of Mbare saw an influx of new migrants to the city. With the growth of secondary industries in the 1930s,²⁴ and the mass influx of Africans to the city spaces, there were also issues of overcrowding to contend with, which only heightened the gender and class divisions within Mbare. “The establishment of its secondary industries, such as meat canning, jam, sweets and cigarette factories”²⁵ meant that more and more workers were needed in the city spaces, much to the fear and dismay of colonial interests, but no additional land was allocated, and little to no housing funding was granted. With the lack of financial investment in social services on behalf of the state beyond the beerhall profits (hence the unwillingness of the settlers to touch it when they themselves were struggling through the Depression times), Mbare acquired slum status. It was difficult for the elite factions to live the respectable life of settler

²³ West, “Liquor and Libido,” 646.

²⁴ Maurice Taonezvi Vambe, “‘Aya Mahobo’: Migrant Labour and the Cultural Semiotics of Harare (Mbare) African Township, 1930–1970,” *African Identities* 5, no. 3 (2007), 355: “The boom in the manufacturing industry in Salisbury in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s demanded stabilized inflows of controllable labour.”

²⁵ Vambe, “Aya Mahobo,” 194.

decency they aspired to when Mbare was struggling to accommodate the newcomers, who were overwhelmingly single and young. This influx of new residents also resulted in a severe housing shortage. Very few new structures were erected, beyond those built by the new residents themselves with what materials they could find. The pre-existing structures therefore came to house multiple residents simultaneously, often with several men sharing one room. The tensions increased to a boiling point.

It was not until the 1940s that the concerns of elite men were able to gain any traction. From the legislative council's point of view in the 1920s and 1930s, imposing any new laws or regulations that would keep some Mbare residents out of the beerhall would be strategically unwise, largely due to fears of losing even more beerhall business to the *shebeens* and the continued need to keep workers satisfied, without needing to invest more money.²⁶ By the 1940s, conditions had changed. The settlers were not in a financial position to object to the lobby of elite men from Mbare because of the costly demands of World War II, and were gravely concerned about what the new arrivals of tens of thousands of more workers would mean for their continued governance. In 1942,

the sex segregation returned again, this time by having separate hours for women and men....The argument used to gain segregation of women and men in 1941 from respectable African leaders, such as Aaron Jacha, connotes a common thread of elite

²⁶ Scarnecchia, *The Politics of Gender and Class*, 241: "Earlier requests by the "Southern Rhodesia Conference of Christian Natives," in 1932 to segregate the beer halls by sex had been turned down by the Municipality. The Chief Native Commissioner explained the financial reason for turning down what he thought otherwise to be the correct move: 'it appears that the indigenous Native desire that separate [drinking] accommodation should be provided for Native women, while the non-indigenous element prefers the continuance of the present system. There reason for this preference are too obvious to need explanation. There is no doubt in my mind that the correct thing to do is to provide separate accommodation for the sexes, but it is also right to inform the Council that such a step would result in a falling off of revenue from the Beer Hall, as the bachelors will spend less money.'"

criticisms of women. Jacha argued that certain women had become detrimental to the men at the Beer Hall.²⁷

Much like their husbands, elite women expressed concern over the presence of unmarried women in the beerhall. The pillars of middle class respectability were marriage and nuclear families, willingness to work hard in formal sectors, and belonging to a church. Women, especially young women, who were divorced or living as single within town, did not work beyond the township, and were not educated or attending church were subject to accusations of prostitution and questions pertaining to their character, often by elite women.²⁸ The language which was used to articulate the fears of the social ills of prostitution were deeply wedded to what the elite class within Mbare, both men and women, thought of the poor.²⁹ As one middle class woman recalls, during the 1940s, “they [unmarried girls] were sort of many”³⁰ in Mbare. She claims that every one of them were engaged in “*chijoki*,” or prostitution.³¹ According to her, there were “plenty” of women like that, “the whole country through. Some just wanted to find a way to live. How else could they survive?”³² Another woman recalled how ubiquitous prostitution allegedly was throughout Mbare in the 1930s and 1940s: “Ha-a. Those are always there. They stayed everywhere. With those [women] you want the beer to be nice, they have to be there. They make beer go down well.”³³ The memories of prostitution of so many residents were linked directly to the beerhall and drinking. As one woman put it:

They would drink beer and go with people’s husbands, when dancing was still there. Ah, there is no dance there [in the beer halls] any more.... So that’s where men and women went and those mahure. Yes. That’s what was there. But they were not slept with for a lot

²⁷ Scarnecchia, *The Politics of Gender and Class*, 71.

²⁸ Scarnecchia, *The Politics of Gender and Class*, 120.

²⁹ *African Weekly*, July 25 1945: “The Causes of Prostitution.”

³⁰ Barnes, *To Live a Better Life*, 121.

³¹ Barnes, *To Live a Better Life*, 121.

³² Barnes, *To Live a Better Life*, 121.

³³ Barnes, *To Live a Better Life*, 122.

of money. If you were given 25 [cents] that was enough. There was no money. What would they be given money for (laughter)?³⁴

The beerhall was the place, according to the elites, where prostitution happened. It is also clear that the concerns, whether legitimate or not, about prostitution in the beerhall had much to do with protecting middle class sensibilities. As West argues, “elite African men opposed the presence of ‘unattached’ women in the cities for various reasons, not least because of the bad example they were deemed to constitute. The urban African townships, the men insisted, should be reserved exclusively for gainfully employed males and legally married couples.”³⁵

What is interesting about the recollections of elite women within Mbare at the time, is what they themselves reveal about tensions between the married and single women of Mbare: “A married woman would never like a whore. There were fights. Real fights!.... [The police] would not intervene because this was a wife with children.”³⁶ Being a single woman who would drink and mingle with unattached or married men was a signifier of low income and as much of an affront to middle class womanhood as it was to the elite manhood West discusses. As one married woman argued when asked about her thoughts on women drinking, “So if [a man] sees you drinking, do you think he will marry you? If you get married while you are a prostitute, you are lucky.”³⁷ In her mind, drinking and prostitution were one and the same. For both elite men and women who waged war on working poor women in the beerhall, marital status became one of the key characteristics for how they defined themselves, however it was not the sole signifier of status that mattered. The decades-long struggle for the beerhall middle class men engaged in was not solely about class, nor was it solely about gender. The opposition of their wives towards

³⁴ Barnes, *To Live a Better Life*, 120.

³⁵ West, “Liquor and Libido,” 648.

³⁶ Barnes, *To Live a Better Life*, 120.

³⁷ Barnes, *To Live a Better Life*, 121.

young, working class women highlights the point that gender, class, and marital status intersected to differentiate various factions within Mbare. As the following section will discuss, this beerhall debate was just the tip of the iceberg. Elite womanhood was a multi-layered hierarchy within a larger Mbare social hierarchy that relied upon exclusion, networking, and access to opportunities.

“So that we can be dignified women:” Elite Women in Mbare

Who were these elite women? Often, they were the wives of the men discussed above, who worked as clerks or teachers. Several of them were nurses or teachers themselves. As this section will discuss, many belonged to Christian mission churches; several were educated and spoke English. They were all expected, and were able, to donate money to keep their clubs and organizations afloat. They had some disposable income. Crucially, several of them also had relations with some white women through the church, and the white superintendent. They often articulated their social goals in the language of respectability and an awareness of class consciousness and aspirations. Elite women were exceptionally active within the social and day-to-day life of Mbare. They were involved in countless activities; from clubs, to church groups, to being homemakers. Many of them also held formal jobs outside of Mbare. Much like their husbands, many of these women campaigned for a separate location for married housing.³⁸

As former members of this exclusive section of the township recall, club membership was one of the best signifiers of who belonged and who did not. Teresa Barnes made a sketch of the membership of elite clubs in Mbare in the year 1958, although she indicated that these groups

³⁸ See West in both *African Middle Class*, and “Liquor and Libido.”

had a “long history,” and that “a variety of women’s clubs also existed in the location from an early date.”³⁹ She found that, in total, there were five major clubs, the largest being the Helping Hand Club, with a total of 125 members.⁴⁰ Other groups included the Salisbury and District Club, with 56 members, the Radio Homecraft Club, with 58, and the Runyararo Club, with 40 members.⁴¹ In total, Barnes found that, of the 4000 women living in Mbare at that time, about 303 were members of a women’s club.⁴² As she so rightly indicated, “since so few women belonged to these clubs, the domestic skills which were learnt and the ideas which were shared belonged to a small elite circle of the township’s women.”⁴³ Exclusive membership insured that there was social status attached to the group, and that elite women could screen out who was able to join, to guarantee social separation from the lower classes. Disposable income and giving to charity was another way in which these women were able to differentiate themselves from the poor. Being able to afford to give to the African poor was a signifier of class and belonging, and served to emphasise the class barriers to access to elite club membership. Additionally, communal giving served as a way to keep wealth within the club, and maintain the financial security of fellow members.

Affiliation with the church, being mission educated, having English proficiency, and skilled homemaking were also indicators of elite status. When asked about what the groups did, former members revealed that these elements of elite womanhood could not be divorced from one another, and often had much to do with what the clubs were aiming to accomplish. By predicating the qualifications for membership on exclusive and unobtainable signifiers of rank

³⁹ Barnes, *To Live a Better Life*, 153.

⁴⁰ Barnes, *To Live a Better Life*, 153.

⁴¹ Barnes, *To Live a Better Life*, 153.

⁴² Barnes, *To Live a Better Life*, 153.

⁴³ Barnes, *To Live a Better Life*, 153.

and wealth for the lower classes, like fluent proficiency in English, or paying club fees, the clubs only reinforced the social hierarchy and separation of Mbare. As one former member of the YWCA (Young Women's Christian Association), Mai Mutizira-Nondo, said "We talked about women's issues. We would say on day when we met, "can so-and-so teach us how to cook-say-vegetables?" or on another day, "can somebody teach us about the Bible?" On another day sewing...mostly we met other women from all over Harare at the YWCA."⁴⁴ Other former members of elite clubs discussed how they learned how to do material arts like sewing, knitting, and cutting patterns for clothes,⁴⁵ how to cook and bake,⁴⁶ how to make and serve tea like the white women did,⁴⁷ and even how to make flower arrangements.⁴⁸ As Mai Chitumba said "we were taught to dress ourselves, look after our own homes- to see how to do things that can help us in our own life."⁴⁹ Elite womanhood was built upon upper-class ideas of respectability, and how to be a skilled home maker and entertainer.

Beyond domestic chores and entertaining, these clubs often had much to do with the church. Mai Ndhela, also a member of *Ruwadzano*, discussed how Christianity influenced their groups' activities:

It's a Christian movement, which builds women- so that they can be strong in their homes, in the church, in the group... [women] are the backbone, especially in our church... Yah. They are very strong. It's said, "Where there is *Ruwadzano*, there is communion." You will see many women. They are the ones who strengthen the church. In Zimbabwe, in all churches, not just in our Methodist church. In other churches- Anglican, Roman Catholic, United Church of Christ, United Church of Methodist, all these.⁵⁰

⁴⁴ Barnes, *To Live a Better Life*, 156.

⁴⁵ Barnes, *To Live a Better Life*, Interviews with Ms. Mai Kanogoiwa, 154, and Ms. Mai Dzvairo, 160.

⁴⁶ Barnes, *To Live a Better Life*, Interview with Ms. Mai Kanogoiwa, 154.

⁴⁷ Barnes, *To Live a Better Life*, Interview with Ms. Mai Bakasa, 161.

⁴⁸ Barnes, *To Live a Better Life*, Interview with Ms. Mai Bakasa, 161.

⁴⁹ Barnes, *To Live a Better Life*, Interview with Ms. Mai Chitumba, 156.

⁵⁰ Barnes, *To Live a Better Life*, Interview with Ms. Mai Ndhela, 161.

Another member of *Ruwadzano*, Mai Rusike, spoke of how praying, and teaching one another “church behaviour”⁵¹ was the focal point of their groups’ activities. Rusike elaborated on how to be a woman of *Ruwadzano*: “you must behave with dignity knowing, ‘I am Mrs so-and-so. I must teach others to go back to God.’”⁵² Marriage and Christianity were two crucial elements which the membership had to subscribe. As was discussed in the previous chapter, tensions between single and married people within the township only escalated over time, as more people arrived in Mbare. As the tensions were deepening between the married and the single factions of the Mbare population, those who belonged to the elite clung even harder to notions of married respectability in contrast to the supposed immorality of young single women, who were often equated with prostitutes, as discussed above. Mai Rusike underscored how marriage, motherhood, and Christianity were the pillars of “dignified” womanhood in Mbare:

That’s why we go to church. Even your children whom you live with- you must teach them Christian ways, not heathen ways. If you have a girl [domestic worker] in the house, you must sit near her and teach her faith in Jesus Christ. So that your home knows Christ and Christian dignity. So that we know, “This is Mai So-and-so’s house, Mai So-and-so and her children behave like this.” That’s why we go to church, so that we can be dignified women...we want to keep our good behaviour!”⁵³

Mai Dzvairo, a member of an elite group centered around the well-known figure of Mai Musodzi, also reiterated the central importance of the church to the social relations amongst women in her crowd: “The greatest thing, my child, if you live in town, [is] going to church. Ah! Nothing will trouble you. Yes. You will be happy. Because if you go to meet your friends, you have a good time.”⁵⁴ Church and so-called church behaviour had much to do with the

⁵¹ Barnes, *To Live a Better Life*, Interview with Ms. Mai Rusike, 161.

⁵² Barnes, *To Live a Better Life*, Interview with Ms. Mai Rusike, 161.

⁵³ Barnes, *To Live a Better Life*, Interview with Ms. Mai Rusike, 161.

⁵⁴ Barnes, *To Live a Better Life*, Interview with Ms. Mai Dzvairo, 161.

construction of, and belonging to, the elite identity, as it also had with a genuine passion for the faith. As will be discussed below, many of the grievances which these women in Mbare brought forward to the white superintendent and the white women they had connections with through the church and their nursing work, were articulated through the language of Christian beliefs, respectability, unity, and decency. It also served as a way for black elite women in Mbare to emphasize their sense of belonging to a broader Christian community, which could transcend the racial hierarchy of the settler government.

So many of the activities within the clubs had to do with learning from the top tier of the elite women, and even sometimes from white women involved in the missions. Mai Bakasa, a member of *Ruwadzano*, highlighted this point in her recollections of the group's activities:

We would plan to invite- say, one week, we would have someone to teach us flower arranging. We would ask the white Methodists that, "Can we have Mrs. So-and-so to teach us flower arrangements?" or, "Can we have a white woman to come and teach us how to make tea?!" Real tea, and how to serve it.⁵⁵

White mission women played a large role in construction of elite Mbare womanhood. Bakasa also recalled how sometimes their organization would have a white nurse come in to discuss hygiene and childcare tips, like how to tie an umbilical cord.⁵⁶ Sometimes white women in the church would come, and sometimes, white women in settler occupations and social circles would come to Mbare to lecture about white womanhood, and how to aspire to it. The elite clubs of Mbare were also home to some of the most elite and well-to-do African women in Salisbury.

The white women who would sometimes come to meetings and functions were not the main faction of influential women in Mbare. They were more like guest lecturers on class respectability, but did not have a lasting presence within the township. The women who are

⁵⁵ Barnes, *To Live a Better Life*, Interview with Ms. Mai Bakasa, 161.

⁵⁶ Barnes, *To Live a Better Life*, Interview with Ms. Mai Bakasa, 162.

remembered by former members of the elite as the leaders of the club movements were residents of Mbare, who spent the 1930s, 1940s, and first part of the 1950s struggling to maintain social boundaries, and form exclusive spaces for women of their circles to travel within. Mai Makoni, discussed these women:

...There were women who wanted us to be helped; so we could help each other...about how we can live in the location. Mai Musodzi...She was the head of our little meeting...If we saw anything bad in this location, we talked about it with Mai Musodzi, and Mrs Gwatidzo, and the one I mentioned before, Mrs. Sundayi, and we talked. Then we went to the office [of the location superintendent] and said, "In the location there is such and such which is bad," and they fixed it up.⁵⁷

These women were clearly poised in very strategic social positions, where they could tap into their networks of elite men and women in Mbare itself, but could also petition the white police, approach them and curry favour when necessary. Makoni elaborated more on who the women were that Musodzi and the others surrounded themselves with. She described how "we were few,"⁵⁸ and that they were all married women. Mai Chitumba argued that there was a mix of educated and uneducated women in their club, and that those who were educated naturally filled the leadership roles and led lectures and seminars in order to help the others.⁵⁹ Those who were educated, especially nurses, who were married to prominent men, and had networks beyond the township were the top of the hierarchy of the elite women themselves. Women like Mai Musodzi rose to ubiquity and renown within the Mbare social elite, due to their education, connections,

⁵⁷ Barnes, *To Live a Better Life*, Interview with Ms. Mai Makoni, 160.

⁵⁸ Barnes, *To Live a Better Life*, Interview with Ms. Mai Makoni, 160.

⁵⁹ Barnes, *To Live a Better Life*, Interview with Ms. Mai Chitumba, 155: "We had the sort of clubs where we mixed with nurses, like, to try and educate ourselves, I remember the first club we had was Sunganai Club, with Mrs [Vistoria] Chitepo (she was our treasurer), and Angelina Makwavarara, and Mrs Samuriwo.... We used to have nurses, and [some] women who were not educated."

and willingness to impart their domestic skills and tips on to the women of her circles who were aspiring to even higher rank.

West's insight about class consciousness being "no less important than the material reality of class,"⁶⁰ is crucial for our understanding the ways in which elite womanhood was constructed, acted out, and experienced within Mbare. These women, despite all their efforts to differentiate themselves from the poor, the single, and the "immoral," were still made to share the same township space with them. Much like the men in the previous section who fought so hard for decades to claim the space of the beerhall, elite women seemed to embody this ideology of class consciousness to which West refers. Class distinctions permeated the everyday lives of these women and, importantly, how they saw themselves. As Mai Chitumba, a former member of the Radio Homecraft Club said on her understanding of why the club was formed: "...clubs started, because getting together made us ask questions without fear.... We said, "let's get together".... Ah, clubs were quite helpful because we could air our grievances together.... People get together, after they feel pain."⁶¹ Women in the elite clubs saw their service as an act of gendered support to the other women in their cohort. Elite women stuck together, out of the need to form a brand of womanhood that they felt differed from their perceptions of working class womanhood. These club spaces became the places in which elite women organized, discussed issues that were of central importance to their brand of Mbare women, and created a space which was theirs and theirs alone.

One last feature of the middle class women in Mbare, and how they understood themselves and the space around them, which is crucial to discuss before delving into the details

⁶⁰ West, *African Middle Class*, 2.

⁶¹ Barnes, *To Live a Better Life*, Interview with Ms. Mai Chitumba, 155.

of the lived experience of poor women, is the unique social leverage which elite women were afforded through their networks and connections. The clubs, as was mentioned above, often hosted white women to give lectures. Through these networks, elite African women were given opportunities to articulate their thoughts about the racist segregation policies of the settler state. One woman, Mai Kanogoiwa, highlighted how her membership in an elite club afforded her the opportunity to have her voice heard in a room full of white women. Kanogoiwa showed up for a meeting, where she “didn’t know what was going on...[as] I attended so many meetings.”⁶² She realised upon her arrival that she was the only African woman at the meeting, which turned out to be about making Market Square Park for whites only. These women, as Kanogoiwa reported, called for “No more Africans!”⁶³ They continued by saying “We don’t like to mix. Africans must have their own place to rest and so on and to eat.”⁶⁴ Being the only black woman present, Kanogoiwa recalled feeling like she had to speak to this point. The white women asked her if she had anything to add to the motion, and she stood up and stated:

“We learn from each other. If we don’t see each other often, then how can you learn from me? Because you won’t see what I do. If I don’t see a European woman, how can I learn from her?” Then I said, “I am an example. Do you remember me saying on the radio, ‘Our African women must stop breastfeeding [while] crossing the road.’”⁶⁵

This passage can reveal so much about the way in which elite black women in Mbare saw themselves and their social role. Firstly, Mai Kanogoiwa’s arguments against segregation measures is a very elitist argument. The women in her circles were the only ones who had this type of relationship with white women in Salisbury, where they were receiving lectures, and were invited to meetings to have their say. The way she articulated her discontent with the

⁶² Barnes, *To Live a Better Life*, Interview with Mai Kanogoiwa, 162.

⁶³ Barnes, *To Live a Better Life*, Interview with Ms. Mai Kanogoiwa, 162.

⁶⁴ Barnes, *To Live a Better Life*, Interview with Ms. Mai Kanogoiwa, 163.

⁶⁵ Barnes, *To Live a Better Life*, Interview with Ms. Mai Kanogoiwa, 163.

measure as stopping her upward class advancement by blocking learning opportunities from white women, speaks volumes to how elite club women saw their relations with white women; they saw themselves as having much to learn from them in order to emulate their example, but also as equal partners in a broader community of elite womanhood throughout Salisbury. The class consciousness of elite women enabled them to speak to white women in their networks as members of a reciprocal type of relationship, where equality could be possible through following the example of one another over time. Women like Kanogoiwa had access to the avenues of social mobility which the lower class women of Mbare did not. Secondly, her views on what the role of elite women within the township are equally revealing. She articulates herself as “an example” of middle class respectability, where she can use her platform as an elite who benefits from the instruction of white women, nurses, and educated individuals, to spread the messages of decency and hygiene to the lower classes. She articulates herself, and the women of her station, as a halfway point, which could be useful for the white women; she argues that elite women served a necessary social service within Mbare by being poised between the white women and the poor black women who were cut off from discourse with the settlers, either by lack of English proficiency, or simply from the lack of invitations to lectures and seminars. Her social utility was, as she claimed, a living example of what the lower classes should be striving for, of middle class respectability, ultimately emulating the example of white womanhood. Her example of preaching at the poor mothers of Mbare to stop breast feeding in public spaces is her recommendation for her abilities to teach her middle class sense of moral decency to the poor. Kanogoiwa, and her fellow elite African women within Mbare, were strategically useful, due to their access to tools and skills which the average female resident of the township would not have.

The ability to speak English was potentially the biggest advantage she and her cohort had over the poor women within Mbare.

Mai Kanogoiwa spoke to this point herself. She knew, much like the other members of her circle, that the ability to speak the language of the settlers was an advantage. She also was acutely aware of how few residents of Mbare had access to this privilege. When asked about how many residents knew the language, Kanogoiwa responded with “Very few people. Even if you could speak English, if you were not assertive enough then you needed an interpreter to speak for you. Even if you could speak English, you would need somebody to tell you what katsekera [the white man] is saying.”⁶⁶ Kanogoiwa knew that this was an ability which was reserved for the most elite few within Mbare: “I think as soon as you showed you could talk to katsekera in his language, you knew something would happen. But most of the township guys, the ordinary people, no they couldn’t.”⁶⁷ Her awareness of her separation from the “ordinary” members of Mbare speaks to this class consciousness and the awareness of club women of their privilege and elite status. They knew that the way to get things done was to be able to articulate themselves in the language and behaviours of the settlers. However, the ability to communicate in English was not enough; one also needed to be poised socially in such a way that they had access to avenues to even have their voices heard. This was an inherently privileged avenue, and one which the elite women did not exactly use for the betterment of the living conditions for all within Mbare. Despite the difficulties of speaking English to the white superintendent of the township, and other members of the police or administration, Kanogoiwa recalled how this did not deter the top tier of elite women from doing so anyway. She comments on how these women used their

⁶⁶ Barnes, *To Live a Better Life*, Interview with Ms. Mai Kanogoiwa, 174.

⁶⁷ Barnes, *To Live a Better Life*, Interview with Ms. Mai Kanogoiwa, 174.

abilities to communicate their ideas and wants to the superintendent of the township for fairly apolitical ends, which were often specific to their class interests:

However people like Mrs. Sodayi and Mai Musodzi insisted on speaking directly [to him], and I think that had an effect. And I think also most of the programmes which they talked about were not programmes which they could say would change the power structure. They were not problems like that, like saying, “We would like to appoint a sergeant for the township,” [Instead they said], “We would like to build a boy’s club.” Which, by the way, ran very successfully.⁶⁸

Kanogoiwa’s keen observations and awareness of the role in which she and her fellow elite women held within Mbare is a useful insight for discussing class divisions within Mbare.

The advantageous position which these club women held within the social structure of Mbare was echoed by Mai Chitumba, the Radio Homecraft member. She recalls the ways in which members of her group were able to obtain an audience with Colonel Lombard, who she remembers as the representative of the Governor, after one woman’s father was fined by the police.⁶⁹ As she recalled it, “women really came together.”⁷⁰ They held meetings in the local hall to organise a delegation to speak directly to the colonel, and were able to address him about the removal of fees. Of course, those who were not members of this elite would never have been able to even discuss having fees dropped, let alone obtain an audience with the representative of the governor. Mai Manhenga recalls how her circle knew that if they were ever in trouble, they were to seek the help of a woman named VaMunjai, who was “near the mambo’s [the location superintendent’s] mouth.”⁷¹ She knew of a select few other women who were able to get favours from the superintendent, but she knew that they were fairly inaccessible for the average

⁶⁸ Barnes, *To Live a Better Life*, Interview with Ms. Mai Kanogoiwa, 174.

⁶⁹ Barnes, *To Live a Better Life*, Interview with Ms. Mai Chitumba, 155.

⁷⁰ Barnes, *To Live a Better Life*, Interview with Ms. Mai Chitumba, 155.

⁷¹ Barnes, *To Live a Better Life*, Interview with Ms. Mai Manhenga, 181.

resident.⁷² Elite women had access to ways of articulating themselves, social networks and connections, avenues of upward advancement, and even access to funds and leisure time which afforded them the opportunity to be involved in such elite clubs in the first place. However, as was stated at the beginning of this chapter, this class of women was in the very small minority of the female residents of Mbare.

Conclusion

Divided along gendered, class, and marital lines, the township of Mbare came to be home to a rapidly expanding population that drew attention to the great array of social discord amongst the multiplicity of residents. The beerhall, the only state-sponsored service within Mbare, became the stage upon which these fierce debates and divides were acted out, with women, especially single women, becoming the focal point. The beerhall was so hotly contested by elite men, because the state-run space was the only socially acceptable place to go drinking within Mbare for their class of aspiring clerks and teachers. They would not be caught attending an illicit bar in the homes of a woman of whom they did not approve. This affront, as they posed it, to the one respectable space for them by prostitutes and single working class men gets after more deeply rooted concerns over space, the forced cohabitation of all Africans within a township, and the ways in which some factions of African men wished to separate themselves from the rest by controlling who had access to which spaces. As Scarnecchia has argued, the beerhall was not the

⁷² Barnes, *To Live a Better Life*, Interview with Ms. Mai Manhenga, 181: “They were there. But we didn’t look and see who they were.... So we saw them. We heard, ‘Today there is a committee for such and such. And we [would see] some women there. But we were far from it. Yes. Very far. We didn’t know what this was. No.’”

place where the working poor went for leisure.⁷³ Leisure spaces were areas where discussions over class divisions took place. The beerhall meant drastically different things for the different residents, depending on whether you were a man or a woman, middle class or poor.

As this chapter discussed briefly, elite women, much like their husbands, wished to distance themselves from the women who engaged in illicit activities such as brewing and drinking beer with men, in order to further their own middle class aspirations. If they were caught partaking in such activities, they knew the judgement from their husbands and their social circles would be swift, as the contests over the beerhall outlined above make clear. In many instances, as this chapter also highlighted, middle class women were often just as firm in their belief of the social hierarchy as their husbands. The overwhelming majority of women in the township were at odds with the elite women, and with the ways in which they attempted to differentiate themselves, and assume positions of superiority.

The next chapter will follow the work of Scarnecchia,⁷⁴ who argues convincingly that the middle class members were not the only ones who contested and struggled to define the space of African locations, but rather that this was the result of an ongoing process of negotiation between the members of the working class and the middles classes, as well as between men and women. Evidence of class struggles between various groups of women reinforces his point; not every woman in Mbare wanted the same things, nor were they all in agreement with one another, simply because they were black women within a racist settler state. This highlights how the reductionist urban planning policy of social leveling the settlers put in place, with all Africans in

⁷³ Scarnecchia, *The Politics of Gender and Class*, 1.

⁷⁴ Scarnecchia, *The Politics of Gender and Class*, 1-337.

town being forced to reside in the same area, was never effective. The urban population of Africans in Salisbury was diverse, ever-expanding, and far from homogenous.

Chapter Five: “Leave us to Drink, Please:” Working-Class Womanhood in Mbare, 1930-1950

The municipal beerhall was an epicenter for social tensions in the township Mbare. A lobby of elite middle class men petitioned for gender segregation in the hall, due to the presence of poor single men and women. The poor who frequented the *shebeens* were equally active in their attempts to solidify spaces that were only accessible to themselves. *Shebeens* became a central part of the working class identity in Mbare, defined in part against the middle class. Those who frequented them formed a sort of underground community. Crucially, gender and class intersected with one another, further complicating the tensions within Mbare; elite men and women were opposed to sharing the township space with the working poor, and elite women and working class women played off of the presence of the other to define their own brand of womanhood. In the midst of these class and gendered tensions arose a distinct and hybrid class of women, ironically through their illicit brewing activities; some of the wealthiest and most well-known former residents of Mbare were women who ran popular *shebeens* and brewing businesses out of their homes. They came to be known as *shebeen* queens. Adding another layer of social tension to the intricate web within Mbare, *shebeen* queens illustrated how wealth alone was not sufficient for membership in the exclusive ranks of middle class womanhood. The working poor and the *shebeen* queens, as this chapter will argue, were also involved in decades-long struggles to define unique class identities within Mbare, in opposition to both the elites and the police presence. *Shebeens* were central to this process. The women of the underground brewing industry, both consumers and business owners, reveal the complex lived experience of community formation under colonial occupation.

The historiography on women in colonial Zimbabwe has been fraught with issues. There is the problem of celebrating accumulation as the way in which women supposedly liberated

themselves. There is also the idea which emerged from the early literature that African women were only involved politically when they challenged the men in the location, and the “double bind” of patriarchy.¹ This is problematic due to the insinuation that black men were to blame for women’s subordination, but also that when women did push back, it was almost always against men and the rule of men through the colonial order. It is, as this chapter will elaborate, much more complex. There were contests over space and meaning within and against various groups of women who fundamentally disagreed with one another over how to be properly urban and over what they wanted Mbare to look like. Through these contests over womanhood and identity there emerged alignments with men which arose out of class unity. The male clientele of the *shebeens* aligned with the brewing elite and the poor women of Mbare, while the elite men were adamantly opposed to interclass mingling.

This chapter will follow the arguments of Timothy Scarnecchia, as he has argued extensively that the space within African locations was not contested solely by the aspiring middle class. Scarnecchia has argued against the historiography of Schmidt and her cohort, discussed in the previous chapter, that emphasized women’s agency at the expense of oversimplifying their complex experiences: “Individual women, celebrated *Shebeen* Queens, ‘Madams,’ or political activists, are now put forth as the vanguard of a gender-based mobility that is no longer simply spatial, but also implicitly social. Such mobility is not located in class, or inter-class, terms, but as women’s individual independence from the controls of lineage or European-style patriarchy.”² Scarnecchia asserts that there is a need to re-examine the literature

¹ Elizabeth Schmidt, “Patriarchy, Capitalism, and the Colonial State in Zimbabwe,” *Signs* 16, no. 4 (1991): 739.

² Timothy Lewis Scarnecchia, *The Politics of Gender and Class in the Creation of African Communities, Salisbury, Rhodesia, 1937-1957*, 1993, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, 13.

surrounding *shebeen* queens and other individuals who were able to accumulate more capital than their Mbare counterparts. These women, whom Barnes and Schmidt have celebrated as escaping patriarchy through their financial mobility, have been ascribed too much agency in past depictions of their lives. This school of the historiography also eclipsed the ways in which their relative financial success was founded upon inter-class and inter-gender struggles within Mbare itself. *Shebeen* queens were not somehow breaking free of the chains of racism and patriarchy, but instead were involved in deeply complicated discussions over contested identities within the township that unfolded over a long and tumultuous historical period. While running a lucrative business may have allowed them a slight advantage over their working poor clientele, much like the elite women of the previous chapter, they were still confined to Mbare by the same racist policies that put them there in the first place. As Scarnecchia says of previous depictions of *shebeen* queens, “the difficulty...is that such approaches ascribe too great agency to women, without the relative weight of more complete historical and social analysis.”³ This chapter will attempt to do justice to the thrust of Scarnecchia’s arguments, by first discussing the working poor, and by then attempting to highlight the continued need to complicate our depictions of the brewing elite.

“Her work was brewing beer:” Beer Brewing and the Working Class Women of Mbare

Although this chapter is critical of the earlier historiography, it is not unsympathetic to the authors who celebrated *shebeen* queens. Non-elite women have been less discussed in the historical record largely because their lives are much harder to trace, and thus harder to analyse.

³ Scarnecchia, *The Politics of Gender and Class*, 13.

Even trying to sketch an image of how many women belonged to the working classes is a challenge, unlike the availability of club minutes and membership lists which give a reliable account of the elite women's presence. One report in 1936 claimed that there were about 3000 African women, in total, living within Salisbury.⁴ This was juxtaposed to the rough estimate of 12,000-17,000 African men in the city around the same time.⁵ Regardless of the exact number, what is evident is that women were a clear minority in both Mbare, and the city more broadly. While the statistics on where and how many women lived in Mbare at any given time are limited, if we work from the premise which was suggested by a rough census estimate in the 1940s, African women represented about one fourth of the number of African men.⁶ Women were certainly present, and in sizable numbers, but they were a minority.

The question of what different women were doing within Mbare is a more difficult one to answer. A report in 1936 estimated that only a handful of urban African women held jobs in formal sectors, approximately 150 of the 3000 African women present.⁷ Common occupations within the "formal" economy were in domestic service, factory work, and as teachers and nurses.⁸ These women were staunchly members of the middle class, and sectioned themselves off socially from the majority of Mbare women. If only about 150 women were working within white industries, homes, and worksites, where were the rest, who are the subject of this chapter, working? It is unrealistic to suggest that the other estimated 2800 were not generating any sort of

⁴ Teresa A. Barnes and Everjoyce Win, *To Live a Better Life: An Oral History of Women in the City of Harare, 1930-70*, Harare, Zimbabwe: Baobab Books, 1992, 79. This resource will be used extensively as a primary source throughout this chapter, as it was in chapter four. It is a collection of interviews with former residents of Mbare over the years, and is treated as a primary source for the purposes of this thesis.

⁵ Barnes, *To live a better life*, 5; 41; 79.

⁶ Barnes, *To live a better life*, 6.

⁷ Barnes, *To live a better life*, 79.

⁸ Barnes, *To live a better life*, 79.

income. This report indicates that the vast majority of women were “self-employed.”⁹ What this suggests is that thousands of women within Mbare were involved in the production and sale of goods and labour to other African residents of the city. One of the most lucrative, and popular, industries within Mbare was beer brewing.

Mai Bakasa, a former resident of Mbare, recalled her earliest impression of Salisbury when she arrived in the early 1920s: “Salisbury was small. It wasn’t that big. Manica Road was the largest road.”¹⁰ Other women recalled what their first homes looked like, or how much their rent was. One woman, Mai Ruswa, recalled the following: “There were women who lived there. Some went to order vegetables [like] bananas and other musika things to sell. Some brewed skokiyana.”¹¹ According to Yoshikuni, Mbare in the 1920s was what Ruswa described; there were no state run “shops, clinics, churches or amenities,”¹² so the residents had to fill in the gaps. The sale of goods in the township by other residents is well-documented, as well as the sale by women who traveled into Mbare from neighbouring communities.¹³ Many women discussed a booming goods and produce trade in town. As one woman, named Mai Chitumba, from the nearby community of Epworth, said of the trade: “people...were coming to buy them [rice, meat, cloth]. You buy everything from town, then you go back home after selling your vegetables...even chicken; we used to come and sell them.”¹⁴ The women of Mbare, and the surrounding areas, filled the gaps in what was available for people in the township. While the

⁹ Barnes, *To live a better life*, 79.

¹⁰ Barnes, *To live a better life*, interview with Ms. Mai Bakasa, 43.

¹¹ Barnes, *To live a better life*, interview with Mai Ruswa, 56.

¹² Barnes, *To live a better life*, 33.

¹³ Barnes, *To live a better life*, interviews from 113-115.

¹⁴ Barnes, *To live a better life*, interviews from 115.

sale of produce and home made goods were profitable and common, the sale of homemade beer (skokiaan, pombe, tempo, koki) was the most common work of the women within Mbare.

As the oral histories of the township reveal, brewing was in fact a popular past-time and industry long before the 1920s in Mbare. One woman, Miss A. Gasa, spoke of how her earliest memories of being a child in the 1920s in Mbare were of her mother and her friends brewing, which they had been doing for years. She recalls how her mother clothed and fed her and her siblings through the money she earned from brewing.¹⁵ Although the oral accounts of the 1920s are limited, this woman recalled how it was mostly mothers who were brewing, a trend which is only confirmed by the accounts of life in the 1930s and 1940s. Accounts from the 1930s go into more detail over the lived experience of female brewers. One Mai Butato, who arrived in Mbare in the 1930s, spoke of how her *ambuya* (grandmother), had been brewing for years:

They brewed beer and sold, there near where [a chain store] is now. There was a brewery and they went to collect waste [from the brewing process] that had been thrown away and came and brew their own to sell and get profit. Some brewed beer, some *chikokiyana*, and others “7-days” [a traditional beer].¹⁶

When asked by the interviewer if her *ambuya* was part of a common trend, and if many women did this, she responded with “they were many. So many.”¹⁷ When asked explicitly if her grandmother in fact brewed, Butato said, “how else would she survive? She did.”¹⁸ She continued to state that her *ambuya* and all the other women who were brewing made a batch every single week. According to Butato, as soon as one batch was complete and sold, her

¹⁵ Barnes, *To live a better life*, interview with Miss. A. Gasa, 95.

¹⁶ Barnes, *To live a better life*, interview with Mai Butato, 96-97.

¹⁷ Barnes, *To live a better life*, interview with Mai Butato, 96-97.

¹⁸ Barnes, *To live a better life*, interview with Mai Butato, 96-97.

ambuya would go and start the next: “They brewed every week [and] as soon as it is finished she goes back to the brewery to get waste and brew again.”¹⁹

The scale and pervasiveness of the brewing industry in Mbare over time is reiterated by former residents. A Miss S. Mazoe spoke of her memories of Mbare in the 1940s, and how “it [brewing] was a lot. You know *skokiaan*? They used to cook *skokiaan*. They used to get money.”²⁰ In the 1930s, a woman named Mai Marange, a female brewer, outlined how much she could earn from different quantities of beer. From the sale of a big drum of beer, she could earn five pounds, and a “jam tin” sized amount for five cents, or a shilling.²¹ She remembered the five pounds as being “a lot of money in those days.”²² Another woman named Mai Mutuma echoed these prices.²³

While the 1930s saw the *shebeen* industry take off, by the 1940s it was positively booming, and continued to be one of the largest income generating activities in Mbare. One man, a Mr. L. Vambe, spoke in great detail of what female brewers meant to the Mbare community, and how they sustained themselves financially:

The majority of those people would evade the law by brewing their own beer which we called *iskokiyana*. That was a very lucrative business and usually those women were quite well-to-do. If they were arrested they pay the fines very happily (laughter). They were making very good money. That was very popular... When during- towards the war, the Second World was, you know what they call the Light Industrial Sites, as you go to the airport, Hatfield Road, you see lots of industries there- that area was predominately called Brickfields.... That is where *skokiaan*, what we called *skokiaan*, really flourished. It was a huge industry. Absolutely. And it was dominated by these very tough women.²⁴

¹⁹ Barnes, *To live a better life*, interview with Mai Butato, 96-97.

²⁰ Barnes, *To live a better life*, interview with Miss S Mazoe, 98-99.

²¹ Barnes, *To live a better life*, interview with Mai Marange, 102.

²² Barnes, *To live a better life*, interview with Mai Marange, 102.

²³ Barnes, *To live a better life*, interview with Mai Mutuma, 96-97.

²⁴ Barnes, *To live a better life*, interview with Mr. L. Vambe, 98-99.

As Vambe noted, the industry really picked up with the flood of incoming residents into Mbare in the war years. For the women who were brewing and providing much needed leisure spaces and community mingling spots, this was a profitable service. More women became brewers to keep up with the demand of new Mbare incomers. Vambe reiterates this point: “It was mainly women, the people who actually brewed.... It was a very big industry. So much so that if you went there during weekends that whole area was covered with people, especially in the evenings. Because it provided a social environment which didn’t exist anywhere else.”²⁵ He remembers the “thousands and thousands of people there,”²⁶ and that Mbare *shebeens* became the place to go to seek leisure within its developing urban culture.

By the 1950s, the industry had expanded even further, and the female brewers and *shebeen* owners were still turning a profit. As one former resident, a Mr. L. Gono, recalled about that decade, “Skokiaan, [was] usually [made by] women. She could brew for her husband to sell or herself, by herself. But married or single, they did it.”²⁷ Mr Gono also revealed how the brewing process was made even more lucrative by how cheap the materials and ingredients for brewing were. He recalled sugar, bread for the yeast, and water being the most basic ingredients, and how each went only for a shilling in the mid-1950s.²⁸ Brewing in Mbare was one of the primary occupations of working class women, was relatively affordable, and serviced an ever-expanding clientele, who were themselves shaping the landscape of the township.

Police responses to brewing and Shebeen Queen tactics in the face of prosecution

²⁵ Barnes, *To live a better life*, interview with Mr. L. Vambe, 98-99.

²⁶ Barnes, *To live a better life*, interview with Mr. L. Vambe, 98-99.

²⁷ Barnes, *To live a better life*, interview with Mr L Goro, 100.

²⁸ Barnes, *To live a better life*, interview with Mr L Goro, 100.

The popularity and profitability of the *shebeen* trade made the Legislative Council and the police deeply anxious about how to respond to it. A woman named Mai Dzvairo, a resident who arrived in 1936, recalls the ambiguous, shifting relationship which *hobbiya* [hop-beer] had with the law: “I found it there. People were not arrested. But after the wars they were arrested. But I found it there.”²⁹ Mai Butato echoes this when she recalls her *ambuya* and her friends getting arrested regularly. They would pay their fines and get released.³⁰ Butato indicated that jail time almost never took place, and that all the brewers could afford to pay their fines.³¹ She also remembered how the white superintendents would sometimes pursue the brewers, and the women would just laugh and carry on, suggesting the same thing as what the settlers themselves noted about the ineffectual policy of keeping brewing legally ambiguous.³²

Butato also touched on the many ways in which these female brewers got creative when it came to hiding their business from the white superintendent and their paid informants, in order to avoid the headache of fines and snooping police: “...they could hide it when the police were passing...in their houses. Some dug pits.... the [floors] were not cemented.”³³ Miss S. Mazoe, elaborated on the hiding mechanisms used in the 1940s: “Oh yes- they used to hide [it]. Sometime you can put it under the bed. Some they used to put [it] in the wardrobe...to put a tin of beer in the wardrobe....What to do? Some they used to dig in the ground; they used to make a drain, put it there, hide it.”³⁴ These practices were echoed once again by Mr L. Vambe, who described how women would hide the beer in the ground while it was fermenting, to keep it

²⁹ Barnes, *To live a better life*, interview with Mai Dzvairo, 96-97.

³⁰ Barnes, *To live a better life*, interview with Mai Butato, 96-97.

³¹ Barnes, *To live a better life*, interview with Mai Butato, 96-97.

³² Barnes, *To live a better life*, interview with Mai Butato, 96-97.

³³ Barnes, *To live a better life*, interview with Mai Butato, 96-97.

³⁴ Barnes, *To live a better life*, interview with Miss S. Mazoe, 98-99.

safe.³⁵ Mai Marange described how the police were always trying to keep up with the brewers, who were perpetually two steps ahead of them and their unclear orders. Even when the police caught on that they were hiding beer underground, the women were normally able to slip away while they looked:

they would hide it...[the police] would bring their metal things and poke all over, like this-looking-because we were now digging holes in the ground, and put the drums down there, [taking pieces of] zinc to close [them]. But now they knew it. So when they came and found you here, they would take those things of theirs and go poking all over. And if they felt zinc, they kept poking; if they didn't see the owner they would just throw it away. You would have run away.³⁶

The brewers were aware of the limits of police power in Mbare, and knew that the industry was profitable enough to make putting up with occasional police interference and fines worth it.

The women in charge of the *shebeens* were also undeniably skilled when it came to attracting customers and spreading the word that their beer was ready to be drunk. These women were posed socially in such a way that they could access networks to covertly advertise their wares throughout the township. As Mai Butao recalled, when beer was ready, the people of Mbare “just knew, ‘There is beer there today,’ they go to so-and-so’s. Tomorrow to that one, like that.”³⁷ They were positioned at the very heart of working class social networks within Mbare.

They were able to reach out and draw a crowd by word of mouth. As one article published in *African Parade* in 1955 put it:

The owner of the house...yesterday bought butter, yeast, mealie-meal and sugar, and with various other ingredients such as methylated spirits, brewed a drumfull of skokiaan or ‘koki’ to give it its popular name. Her husband told some on his trusted friends that at his house, “things are right.” Hence this clandestine organization of boozers, who are coming in in ones and twos at definite intervals. They enter through the kitchen, the maize in the

³⁵ Barnes, *To live a better life*, interview with Mr. L. Vambe, 98-99.

³⁶ Barnes, *To live a better life*, interview with Mai Marange, 102.

³⁷ Barnes, *To live a better life*, interview with Mai Butao, 96-97.

garden which reaches up to the very door, affording an almost complete camouflage. The brew is being sold fast in big and small receptacles, according to the price.³⁸

This article, written as a warning about the evils of Africans drinking in unsupervised areas, highlights how brewers relied upon informal networks and connections to sell their goods. This was obviously a successful tactic, and one which the police could not fine. As long as there were opportunities to speak to neighbours and friends, there were opportunities to spread the word that “things were right.” Informal spaces could not be eliminated, especially by an administration that continued to be divided about how to approach the legality of brewing.

“Leave us to Drink, Please:” The Poor and the *Shebeens*

The *shebeen* was the place where the poor went for leisure. Despite the efforts of some members of the working poor to make use of the beerhall, the efforts of the elites to push them out led to hostilities and resentment, along class, marital, and gendered lines. Of course, *shebeen* culture never stopped simply because the hall was built, and in fact, flourished as Mbare was flooded with more working-class migrants during the 1930s, whom the elites resented.³⁹ *Shebeen* owners, women who opened shop to cater to the low income classes, offered a cheaper, stronger drink, and were open longer than the beerhalls. They also allowed women and men to drink together, socialize, and play whatever music they wanted to play, or dance whatever dance they

³⁸ Barnes, *To live a better life*, 101: quoted article in *African Parade*, May 1955, “Evil Drink.”

³⁹ Scarnecchia, *The Politics of Gender and Class*, 70: “There was never sufficient room to accommodate workers in peak times, and many respectable married Africans did not venture there because of the clientele...But perhaps the biggest complaint stemmed from the low quality, the low alcohol content, and the relatively high price of Municipality beer.”

desired.⁴⁰ Their operations were a direct attack on the values which the elites were desirous to protect, and over issues of class and gender mixing which were major causes of elite anxiety.

Women who were looking to subsidize their family's incomes, or to make some money of their own, often turned to brewing. *Shebeen* owners knew of the reluctance of the state, as well as the value of their labour for those within Mbare who despised the beerhall. These alternative spaces were useful as they gave the lower class segments of Mbare a place to gather, to socialize, and to enjoy their time-off from work, without having to resort to interacting with the elite class who made their disdain for having to rub shoulders with the lower classes known. The sense of community forged within *shebeens* was invaluable, and formed a space that did not have to be in a dialogue with either the state or the elites.

An article in the paper *African Weekly* discussed the class dynamic associated with illicit brewing and *shebeens*, as recalled by a former brewer in the early 1940s:

I am surprised by people who say "skokiaan" is bad, when it is food for the poor. Our husbands who work in towns and on farms get such little money which does not enable us to have good lives and eat good food. Poverty makes us brew "skokiaan" so that we can get a little money to survive. It also makes us happy and we forget our poverty. We black people are not allowed to live "as people" in towns. Other races are allowed to sell things and get money.... How do all the others survive, considering they have to pay rent until they die? So how can a black person leave "skokiaan", when it's the one that makes us forget our poverty?⁴¹

Julia, the author of this piece, signs off with a request that the administration "leave us to drink please."⁴² The equation of poverty and brewing is made directly here, as it was an open letter in response to calls to ban skokiaan. Notably, Julia also articulated how brewing and the *shebeen* culture helped to make life within Mbare more livable.

⁴⁰ Scarnecchia, *The Politics of Gender and Class*, 70

⁴¹ Barnes, *To live a better life*, 98-99: quoted article in *African Weekly*, October 25 1944.

⁴² Barnes, *To live a better life*, 98-99: quoted article in *African Weekly*, October 25 1944.

The poor male residents of Mbare worked primarily as labourers within the white city and were barely compensated for their labour. As one former resident described the financial state and the attitudes of the majority of Mbare residents in the 1930s and 1940s, who were banned from the beerhall: “Nobody went begging or anything like that. We had dignity. And if we didn’t have money to go to the cinema, we made our own cinema. I remember, because we used to have some candles and paper cardboard. The guys would be sitting there and I would be telling them a story....We used to have some fun.”⁴³ Her assertion that the working poor in Mbare had their dignity is a crucial one for understanding the way that class was embodied and understood by the low-income residents. Despite their exclusion from the elite classes, and from the spaces which the elites claimed as their own, members of the working class continued in their attempts to carve out places that were distinctly their own.

Another former resident, who belonged to the poorer class of residents, discussed her memories of what it meant to be poor in Mbare. Miss Savanhu described her days while unemployed: “Just sitting. Just walking around--drinking beer-- as a person who drinks beer. Enjoying ourselves. I didn’t even want to work.”⁴⁴ Despite what the elite women wanted for themselves, to be participating fully in the workforce of Salisbury as working professionals, many poorer residents had no desire at all to find employment outside of Mbare. Many Mbare residents were satisfied with only servicing their townspeople, and not being forced to interact with white people.

Miss Savanhu delved deeper into what unemployed young Mbare women did during the 1930s and 1940s, with especially interesting and revealing recollections about *shebeens*. She

⁴³ Barnes, *To Live a Better Life*, 195.

⁴⁴ Barnes, *To Live a Better Life*, 195-196.

discusses how she and her group of female friends “went together” to “the bars...with my sister.”⁴⁵ Notably, she recalls how men and women drank together freely, as well as how women often bought their own drinks and participated actively in the consumption of skokiaan: “We just drank beer and they just drank beer....We went with our money and you bought for yourself. If there were boys who knew you, they would buy for you. When we were drinking, I was grown up then. We would be given by boys until we started working. Then we had our own money.”⁴⁶ The women who were banned from the municipal beerhall were able to not only frequent the *shebeens* of their choice with men of their own class, but were consumers and participants in the drinking which took place, much like the men. The *shebeens* had no restrictions on who could buy beer, whether male or female.

Young women, like Miss Savanhu, took full advantage of the lack of restrictions on *shebeens*. *Shebeen* spaces were for all the people who were rejected in the white city and from elite circles within Mbare itself. *Shebeens* were the spaces where those who were kept out of elsewhere could mingle and exchange news and stories. Arguably, they were central to the formation of lower class identity, just as much as elite women’s clubs were for upper class residents. To that end, Miss Savanhu recalls what life in Mbare was like in the 1930s and 1940s for a young, single woman of low income, and how the image of doom and gloom was not always appropriate: “I really enjoyed it. There was no problem. There were no tsotsis who beat up people. If you walked at any time-- you could walk at night from here to the musika and come back nicely.”⁴⁷ Mbare was remembered fondly by some former residents, with *shebeens* being a big part of their positive memories

⁴⁵ Barnes, *To Live a Better Life*, 195.

⁴⁶ Barnes, *To Live a Better Life*, 195.

⁴⁷ Barnes, *To Live a Better Life*, 195.

However, even within the *shebeen*, there were tensions between various groups of women. As Miss Savanhu describes, *shebeens* were the place where young single women went to spend time: “We would meet. I-i-I, sometimes in the bar. We were many and we would be friendly to one another. From there we could walk as four or five, going to where we will have thought of-- to drink beer.”⁴⁸ Groups of low income or unemployed single women, while welcomed by the *shebeen* owners to purchase beer for themselves and spend time in the bars, were a problem for the married women of the lower classes. Poor, married women, much like their elite counterparts, took issue with the idea of single women mingling with their husbands. When asked about what married women had to say about women who drank, Miss Savanhu recalled how there were tensions along marital lines which were directed at herself and her drinking companions: “Did we go with them? No. You know people, they do talk.... They would talk if somebody was seeing her husband, if she found her with her husband. But if there was none, there was nothing. We didn’t have anything to do with them. Not at all.”⁴⁹ Tensions between residents ran much deeper than simply men against women, and upper *versus* the lower classes; once again, marital status became divisive.

Nothing but a spot of tea: Tea Party Appropriation and *Shebeen* spaces

Shebeen owners and patrons adapted to the contested nature of space and control within the township by appropriating and exploiting the activities of the elites. Club participation, church attendance, and social gatherings like tea parties featured prominently in the way that elite women expressed their status. Much like their husbands and male counterparts, they

⁴⁸ Barnes, *To Live a Better Life*, 195.

⁴⁹ Barnes, *To Live a Better Life*, 197.

attempted to distinguish themselves from the lower classes within the township by participating in exclusionary activities, premised upon class. The lower classes, residents like Savanhu, who actively took part in the *shebeen* culture, played on these notions of middle class respectability and white Rhodesian culture, and mocked them through appropriation. Tea parties were a popular way of doing so. As Mhoze Chikowero has described in his discussion of music within Mbare, “urban Africans in Mbare dramatized their most intense desire to struggle against, and sometimes appropriate, colonial notions of respectability by going to tea parties.”⁵⁰ In the memory of one interviewee, resident in Mbare throughout the 1930s, ““at a tea party everything was expected except tea.”⁵¹ Another interviewee commented on the presence of appropriated “tea” parties in the bush: “...tea parties (also called tea meetings), an imitation of the parties that whites held, come together. They were tea parties where tea was not drunk. Instead, they brewed beer, and that was done in the bush.... That was for the tea parties in the outskirts of town; these could not be held in the halls.”⁵² According to Chikowero, this appropriation of “high society” language was used “to camouflage the brewing, selling, and consumption of beer in the shebeens (speakeasies) and out in the open veld, in the ruts of Mbare’s Brickfields.”⁵³ The lower classes, those who frequented the illegal *shebeens* in Mbare, took it even further by using a tea pot to serve the beer.⁵⁴ These “‘Mahobo’ parties...drew their membership from the black working class,”⁵⁵ and were often held in the bush on the outskirts of Mbare, or within *shebeens*.

⁵⁰ Maurice Taonezvi Vambe, “‘Aya Mahobo’: Migrant Labour and the Cultural Semiotics of Harare (Mbare) African Township, 1930–1970,” *African Identities* 5, no. 3 (2007): 362.

⁵¹ Mhoze Chikowero, *African Music, Power, and Being in Colonial Zimbabwe* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2015), 194.

⁵² Chikowero, *African Music*, 192.

⁵³ Barnes, *To Live a Better Life*, 194.

⁵⁴ Barnes, *To Live a Better Life*, 194.

⁵⁵ Vambe, “‘Aya Mahobo,’” 363: “The Africans who were considered morally unclean and economically unsuccessful did not go to tea parties patronized by the rich. The poor men and

This was just one way in which *shebeen* owners and attendees attempted to disguise their brewing and drinking; they often “gathered under the guise of birthday parties hosted by householders in turn, selling food and drinks to selected guests alerted through invitation cards to screen out potential...police informers.”⁵⁶ These tactics were echoed by Chenjerai Hove, a Zimbabwean writer, whose short stories weave oral history together with fiction, based predominately on underclass involvement in *shebeens*. One story, entitled “Where People Drink,” blends the 1994 *shebeen* experience with recollections of the early years of *shebeens* in colonial Harare. In this tale, Hove reiterates what Chikowero says about birthday parties and tea parties acting as a guise for illicit drinking and brewing activity: “And later, as we stagger home, everyone talks of “how nice a birthday party it was”. The woman owner announces that tomorrow is her dog’s birthday, please come and enjoy life. So, it will be someone’s or something’s birthday for many years to come as the *shebeen* thrives on.”⁵⁷ The tongue-in-cheek depiction of a *shebeen* owner hosting a birthday party for a dog as a legitimate cover highlights the mocking attitude which many working class residents had for the white police and the elites when it came to their half-hearted attempts to hide their gatherings.

“Within their own sphere men had to bow to them:” The Third Class of Women in Mbare

Several well-known beer brewers, or *shebeen* queens, rose to prominence and wealth during the 1930s and 1940s through the sale of their brew. These women often existed in a grey

women, who were ill-equipped to deal with the new experience in the urban areas of Mbare, created their own sub-culture based in *shebeens* and open spaces where they spent leisure time at the mahobo parties.”

⁵⁶ Barnes, *To Live a Better Life*, 194.

⁵⁷ Chenjerai Hove, *Shebeen Tales: Messages from Harare* (Harare: Baobab Books, 1994), 43.

zone between the elite class and the poor women who were their clientele. This section, in line with the arguments of Scarnecchia will explore this class of women, while simultaneously avoiding the over-romanticized depiction of their accumulation of wealth as analogous with individual liberation. The ambiguous area in-between poor and middle-class in which these figures existed says more about the role of class in shaping divided communities in Mbare than it does about women's agency and liberation.

It is incorrect to solely celebrate female beer brewers as entrepreneurs, who, through capital accumulation, were able to liberate themselves against all odds, and triumph over oppression. This section will attempt to steer clear of this narrative, and instead focus on the ways in which beer brewers who were able to accumulate an income, belonged to neither elite nor lower income ideas of womanhood. Their existence within the same spaces as lower class women raised some interesting questions amongst former residents about the role of income in the construction of identity. Ultimately, this section aims to underscore the point that women in Mbare were far from uniform, and that despite the more contentious debates between elites and low income women, others lived and worked beyond these two categorisations.

Mbare was home to several women who were able to attain distinct prominence and personal wealth through brewing. One woman in particular was remembered for her business savvy and her Mbare brewing empire. As a former resident, Mr. Gusta, recalled, "There were quite a lot of women in the location on the 1930s.... One with her own house. She was an Ndebele woman, very fat. She was rich.... The house was in her name. She had a car and driver! She was the only person in the location who had these!"⁵⁸ This figure who left such a striking

⁵⁸ Barnes, *To Live a Better Life*, 174.

impression was a woman by the name of Magumede. She was the wealthiest person in Mbare, and was known to all. As a Miss Scott recalled,

This Magumede, before I knew her, she was famous for brewing beer called kabanga. She brewed beer kabanga, which was put in bottles. So she had girls who would go around at about three o'clock saying, "Doro! Doro! Makabanga!" and the people would come to drink beer there.... She lived here and people would say, "She is the [famous, popular] one!" and her friends also came from Bulawayo and there were now many of them brewing beer.⁵⁹

Magumede was also surrounded by a network of influential family members in Mbare. Her son-in-law, as Miss Scott remembered, owned the eating-house for the township, called "KwaDavid" which had dances.⁶⁰ She and her close relatives had a corner on the market for lower class entertainment, and were quite comfortable.⁶¹ Magumede was remembered as a shrewd business woman, who was able to avoid arrest by employing some poorer women to do the labour for her once she was established.⁶² She had not only one house, but two, as Miss Scott recalled.⁶³ One was for her to live in, the other was exclusively used as a brew house, and a *shebeen*. In order to avoid getting caught, Magumede allegedly avoided entering the second house: "she doesn't go into where the beer is. Even when it's being brewed or distilled, she didn't go. But before they sold, she went to count the bottles now. When the bottles have been lined up she goes and counts and sees how much money will be raised-- and she goes into her house."⁶⁴

Magumede was remembered as being an innovative brewer, and a woman who was known to everyone in Mbare. A Mr. Rubaba had an extensive recollection of Magumede's impact upon the township: "She was the first woman to introduce some things which were not

⁵⁹ Barnes, *To Live a Better Life*, 174-175.

⁶⁰ Barnes, *To Live a Better Life*, 175.

⁶¹ Barnes, *To Live a Better Life*, interview with Ms. Scott, 175.

⁶² Barnes, *To Live a Better Life*, 176.

⁶³ Barnes, *To Live a Better Life*, 176.

⁶⁴ Barnes, *To Live a Better Life*, 196.

done by blacks but by whites, like washing, cooking, using pots and spoons. Her workers brewed the beer while she managed the business. She was also a chef at that time, so she remained involved in brewing. She was the most popular, well-known black woman [in the location].”⁶⁵ He also described how she was one of the only brewers who originally did a take-away service, where she sold bottled beer from her home or on the streets.⁶⁶ Later she started more of a *shebeen* style set-up, where patrons came to sit and stay.⁶⁷ Mr. Rubaba also recalled how long Magumede remained in the public eye: “She stayed in the business and died late; she stayed in the business until she was very old.... She stayed in the location. She didn’t teach us to do things, people just watched and did what she did.”⁶⁸

Magumede was memorable, and as several of the residents described her “famous” and “quite successful.”⁶⁹ However, she was not alone in her renown and her fortune. When questioned, many of the former residents of Mbare could recall several prominent beer brewers, all with wealth in common. As a Miss Scott recalled,

Yes. There were some like her [Magumede]. VaMusodzi and Lucia Matiwanzira. They had money and we would hear, “I-i-I, these are fierce [rich].” And it was true, when Matiwanzira died the tins of money came out. Truly. Ha-a. There were many who had money. Emilia Mupoto went to buy [a house]. She had money. They [the rich ones] used to brew beer.⁷⁰

These women, in the same rich brewing class as the prominent Magumede, were known for their profitable *shebeens*. There is little explanation as to why these women were the most successful brewers. We know from the descriptions of the township by the settler officials who reported in

⁶⁵ Barnes, *To Live a Better Life*, 179.

⁶⁶ Barnes, *To Live a Better Life*, 179.

⁶⁷ Barnes, *To Live a Better Life*, 180.

⁶⁸ Barnes, *To Live a Better Life*, 179.

⁶⁹ Barnes, *To Live a Better Life*, 174 and 180.

⁷⁰ Barnes, *To Live a Better Life*, 177.

the early 1920s that there were already tens of brewers, and this was when the township was allegedly home to only 700 residents. The increase in residents with disposable income generated by working in the growing secondary industries led to more demand in the 1930s; we can only assume that the number of brewers remained proportional. There were likely hundreds of women who partook in brewing activities. Yet, these women who were remembered managed to make their *shebeens* into the most profitable of all. Perhaps they were poised within beneficial social networks, like Magumede and her son-in-law. Or perhaps they sold the best tasting and most affordable brew. Perhaps their *shebeens* were the most comfortable or held the most cache with particular groups of patrons, and word simply spread. Regardless of the cause of their fame, these women made their money from brewing on a mass scale strictly within Mbare and the brickfields. Oddly, they were an elite class of their own, in the sense of being a small and exclusive group of brewers that depended on popularity and wealth.

Despite being a *shebeen* queen elite, these women were never granted access to the inner circles of middle class womanhood. Activities well outside middle class notions of respectability granted them their renown and riches. The brewers like Magumede, rich enough to own two houses and a car, did not get to where they were based on working within formal industries in the white city, nor through mission education, church attendance, or social networks of well-to-do and well-connected elites. They also did not necessarily have to be married, nor did they have to be born to a family with more money, as was the case of most of the middle-class women and men. These women took part in an activity, brewing *skokiaan*, which was traditionally the domain of poor labouring women, and earned their money by selling it out of their homes. They also participated in the creation of the very spaces and behaviours which the club women found

so abhorrent: they allowed for the gathering of poor men and women together, drunkenness and revelry, which the elites despised being near to.

These differences in the foundational attributes of three different types of Mbare womanhood made them almost irreconcilable. Many club women cast judgements upon the brewers as just as bad as the single, poor, alleged prostitutes, claiming they were immoral. Miss Scott said of Magumede's character: "When we say a person is nice, we don't mean the face. If she was good-hearted she would have told the young ones, "Don't do *chihuu* [beer], don't do this," But she didn't teach anything. I didn't see it. She didn't go to church."⁷¹ Once again, membership in the exclusive social groups or clubs and churches set middle class elite women apart from the *shebeen* queens. Fame and riches, according to Miss Scott, were not enough to make you respectable, and to earn you the approval of the exclusionary and hierarchical club women.

There is little evidence to suggest that women like Magumede even had any interest in acquiring middle class respectability. It would appear that their primary interests were their business ventures, their property, their social networks, and displaying their wealth. Driving around Mbare, as one of the only car-owning residents, and maintaining two homes, may have been an act of defiance in the face of exclusion from the middle class. Exuding wealth everywhere she went served to set her apart from both her clientele and her elitist neighbours who looked down upon her. Whether all *shebeen* queens were at all concerned about fitting into club culture is questionable. In fact, their very participation in, and active exploitation of, activities that they knew to be illicit, would suggest that these women did not get into their business for status; or, at least not elite middle class status. They may have entered it for the

⁷¹ Barnes, *To Live a Better Life*, 177.

relative material comfort it could provide, and as an opportunity to undercut middle class presumptions about their superiority. After-all, as this section aims to highlight, there were more than two types of women and classes in Mbare. There were not simply the poor and the elites, but variations within them. Much like how there was a hierarchy which existed amongst the elite women themselves, with women like Mai Musodzi at the top, and her uneducated, non-English speaking fellows underneath her, there were women who were able to negotiate the working class realms of Mbare more easily than others. *Shebeen* queens are a fine example of that.

Conclusion

Chikowero and Vambe note the fame of other residents within the township who achieved renown through skill and networks, and belonged to neither the middle class nor the working class. Both examine the prominence of several musicians⁷² Entertainers of the non-elites, musicians and brewers, seemed to exist in a grey zone along the class sphere, although perhaps identifying more with the underclasses, who were their patrons. The former resident, Mr. Vambe, remembered a mother-daughter duo, Agnes and Margaret Munjai, who opened a gambling space in their home. He recalls how “they were really extraordinary people. They were so intelligent. Absolutely so intelligent. Within their own sphere men had to bow to them.... She [the mother] didn’t take part in street politics. But her view counted as very important.”⁷³ Working class men and women were united along class lines, and in their common pursuit of enjoyment, escapism, and community building. Not only would men and women drink, dance, gamble, and mingle together within these spaces, but they were also together in their quest to not

⁷² See Vambe, ““Aya Mahobo,”” and Chikowero, *African Music*.

⁷³ Barnes, *To Live a Better Life*, 181.

be caught by the police, and to not be banned or sold out by the middle-class elites. There were certainly elements of inter-class solidarity within the *shebeens* which afforded those who brewed some protection, and those who frequented their bars some role in shaping their continued success.

Shebeen queens and the musicians which Vambe and Chikowero discuss owe part of their prominence to the existence of class divisions within Mbare. This class of entertainers that emerged through popularity with the working classes were not somehow liberated individuals, or capable of having more agency over their lives than the poor. The experiences of working class women who frequented the *shebeens* of Mbare are also crucial to our understanding of existing social tensions. *Shebeens* became a central part of the working class identity in Mbare, and those who frequented them formed a sort of underground community. These spaces allowed for men and women to come together, share news, joke with one another, and to be on their own, away from both the white police and the condescending gaze of the middle classes. Crucially, as some women who frequented *shebeens* recalled, these spaces allowed the working poor to live in dignity within the township. Just as ardently as the middle classes attempted to claim the beerhall, the working classes, particularly the working poor women who made their living through brewing, asserted their control over *shebeen* spaces, and the right to exclude those who disagreed with them. The divisions within groups of women, particularly between elites and the working poor of Mbare, highlight the complicated day-to-day experiences of life in a segregated township, and the fervent need for community spaces that reflected these divisions.

Chapter Six: Conclusion and Moving Forward

This thesis has asked the following question: how did Africans live their lives under settler colonial rule, especially within cities, where one would think colonial power was its most effective and present? Throughout the four substantive chapters of this thesis, I have argued that African lives within the Southern Rhodesian township of Mbare from 1890 to the early 1950s were not trapped in a dichotomous relationship between resistance and an ever-present colonial oppression. One may assume that colonial interests in settler Southern Rhodesia were at their most effective and discursive within the “nodal point” of colonial privilege: the city. Rather, I have argued that colonial interests were built upon weakness and division and were unable to control the daily life of Mbare decisively. I have also argued that there was a multiplicity of ways in which one could experience being an urban African within a settler colonial city, and these were often shaped by intersecting categories of identity, primarily gender and class.

The city was very important to white Rhodesians as a way of justifying colonialism, and legitimising their role as “civilizing” agents. Of course, as chapters two and three of this thesis showed, the city never could be, and never was, white. While the white Rhodesians needed to show white accomplishments, they were acutely aware that without Africans in the city, Salisbury would never have existed. What emerged from the stumbling early years was a distinct white awareness of their tenuous control of power, and deep anxieties over how to preserve it. It also came with powerful, constant fears of what living alongside Africans, particularly Africans who drank alcohol, would mean. What emerged from this period were factions of the white population with deep irresolvable internal divisions and very real financial hardships. Some factions, particularly the BSAC members and the legislative council, were concerned with big-picture issues, like tax, agriculture, and mining interests. The whites involved with the Salisbury

town council were primarily concerned with maintaining spatial segregation. They wished to make brewing illegal, but were always outnumbered by the more influential voices of the BSAC legislative council members. These lines of argument would never be resolved. No clear policy would emerge in the years to follow, as these factions were never going to agree with one another. These internal disagreements were built into the weak colonial order.

Chapters four and five of this thesis took the background of the city set up in chapters two and three, and showed how African residents used the space that these colonial contradictions opened up; not as a response to colonial rule, but as a way to serve their own varying interests, determined by class and gender. Mbare residents formed themselves into divided factions and groups who struggled with their neighbours over how to construct opposing identities in a shared space. Both middle class and working poor residents, especially the women of both classes, were actively involved in the construction of identities and spaces for themselves in opposition to one another. Drinking spaces were epicenters for many of these internal tensions, and they can tell us a great deal about the variance within township life along class lines, and how gender and class intersected and complicated one another.

Chapter four discussed the middle class, particularly middle class women, who identified themselves in juxtaposition to their low income counterparts. Elite womanhood itself was varied and hierarchical, predicated on club membership, income, educational background, command of English, marital status, and church activity. Low income women, as chapter five discussed, formulated identities in opposition to the animosity they were subject to from elite women. *Shebeens* became the meeting places of the poor, and central to the identity of working poor Mbare residents. From within these spaces, a third class of women emerged: the wealthy brewing class, or *shebeen* queens. They did not wish to subscribe to perceptions of elite womanhood, but

no longer belonged to the working classes. They were in a distinct group, joined by shop-owning men who enriched their social networks even further.

This thesis argues that the township of Mbare was a site of creating colonial order and privilege, and yet was never fully under white Rhodesian control. Just as Africans helped to make this urban space, so too did they provide its culture. This was not done as a response to an effective and all-powerful colonial rule, or Africans poking at colonial contradictions, but rather as part of the history of making southern Africa newly urban and the active role which African actors took within that. Women in Mbare knew that there were various ways of being an urban African under colonial authority, and despite the racist colonial ideology of putting everyone within one shared and overcrowded space, they never agreed, or had easy relations with one another. Drinking spaces reveal a great deal about the way that power was experienced and negotiated, but just as importantly, about the ways that Africans attempted to lead their lives and form communities in spaces that were distinctly their own.

The new social history which began in the late 1990s aims to complicate our understanding of colonialism and African experiences within it, by refusing to accept the previous depictions of colonial rule as always effective and present. The promise of this new approach to social history is that it provides avenues to ask new questions, about different actors, and rejects reductionist simplifications. While there are challenges in attempting to move away from the colonial axis of African history, it comes with the pay-off of finding voices which have previously been ignored or hard to find, and new insights about how the lived experience of colonialism is far from straight forward or simple. Going forward, this new approach of asking questions about the lived experience of those who are least accessible within the historical record of the colonial state, promises a more intersectional awareness of complicated lives which resist

easy explanation. This requires social historians to be diligent in their pursuit of questions without easy answers, and to be comfortable with the idea that no such straightforward conclusions may be drawn. African lives under settler colonialism were far from a homogenous bloc of similar experiences, but entangled and variegated; accepting this will result in histories that are rich in detail, and that make an honest attempt to capture a full picture of complex lives, that although hard to find, are just as historically significant as those who left behind a more visible account of themselves.

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