

## **‘A hotbed of sins’ and ‘just like home’. Drinking cultures in colonial Qingdao (1897-1914)**

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„In deutschen Wirtschaften mit deutschen Kameraden: wie schmeckte das heimatliche Bier gut!“<sup>1</sup>

[“In German pubs with German comrades: how good did the beer from home taste!”]

The above quote reflects how closely German soldiers in Qingdao associated the availability of beer ‘from home’ with their sense of comradeship and belonging. Alcohol is indeed a central component of a wide range of social practices and tightly interwoven with the very essence of many group and individual identities.<sup>2</sup> The consumption of alcohol has influenced nearly every civilisation. Its meanings and uses are an essential part of the construction of social hierarchies and the dynamics of class, gender and ethnic differences.<sup>3</sup> It holds therefore great promise to focus on drinking cultures and associated lifestyles to gain a more nuanced understanding of how social relations and feelings of belonging are developed. This contribution aims to do this by investigating the ways alcohol and drinking behaviour in colonial Qingdao (青島, transcribed *Tsingtau* under German occupation) defined life there. Scholarship on the role of alcohol consumption within Qingdao’s colonial society is non-existent. This may appear surprising, given that Tsingtao beer, one of China’s most recognizable beer varieties to date, originated in colonial Qingdao. Yet, alcohol use among Europeans within colonial settings remains an under-researched area.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Reinhard: *Mit dem II. Seebataillon nach China 1900-1901*, 154. Please note: All quotations originally in German are translated by the author if not otherwise indicated.

<sup>2</sup> Wilson, “Drinking Cultures”, 9ff.

<sup>3</sup> Hames, *Alcohol in World History*, 1.

<sup>4</sup> Fischer-Tiné, *The drinking habits of our countrymen*, 384.

The following chapter will shed light on drinking cultures among several social groups in Qingdao (German soldiers, German civilians, the Chinese elite and Chinese labourers). It will investigate in which ways alcohol became a crucial part of the construction of colonial identities. The diverse occasions and locations for alcohol consumption and the types of alcohol consumed - such as German beer and wine, Chinese wine and Scottish whisky – will be discussed in relation to the different groups' perceptions of each other. It will be shown that particular drinking patterns helped Germans to re-establish traces of "home" in an alien environment and that these patterns affected German-Chinese relations in Qingdao. Primary sources for this investigation are private letters, diaries and memoirs, alongside local newspapers, advertisements and official records and reports addressing the "Alkoholfrage" or alcohol question within the colonial context of Qingdao.

## **German colonialism in China**

Qingdao, a port city in China's eastern Shandong province, experienced 17 years of German occupation between 1897 and 1914. During this period, it developed into one of imperial Germany's most prestigious colonial endeavours. Officials hoped to establish here new approaches to and standards of colonialism within both the national and the international context. Qingdao was the main centre of *Kiautschou*, (胶州, now transliterated Jiaozhou),<sup>5</sup> an area of some 500km<sup>2</sup> occupied by Germany.<sup>6</sup> Formally, *Kiautschou* was a leased territory that Germany claimed on the 14. November 1897 for ninety-nine years as part of a set of reparation payments, subsequent to the murder of two German missionaries in the Shandong province. Germany had eagerly awaited an opportunity like this to make her move on China. After the successful seizure, *Kiautschou* was treated as a proper colony that Germany was proudly including to her existing empire. It was the only German colony managed by the Navy Ministry rather than the Ministry for Colonial Affairs, and the naval authorities were keen to show it off as a flagship of imperial Germany's

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<sup>5</sup> The German transcription of 'Kiautschou' used to refer to the colonial leasehold, 1897–1914. Please note: *Jiaozhou* is also the name of a city outside the former German leasehold.

<sup>6</sup> *Kiautschou* was taken over by Japan during the first weeks of the First World War.

newly adopted *Weltpolitik*.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, the rapid and costly construction of Qingdao that immediately followed the occupation can be understood as a direct reflection of Germany's strong desire to be acknowledged as a global player. This colonial city was to function as a port, commercial centre and military camp and was destined to become the cultural hub of *Kiautschou*.

The resident population displayed the typical imbalance in the ratio of colonisers and colonised. While the number of Germans living in Qingdao never exceeded 4,500, the Chinese population rapidly increased from about 1,000 at the time the German takeover in 1897 to c. 53,000 by 1914.<sup>8</sup> Alongside Germans and Chinese, a number of Japanese settled down in Qingdao.<sup>9</sup> The German population consisted mainly of military personnel (c. 2,400 navy officers and soldiers), alongside government officials, entrepreneurs, missionaries and a small number of professionals such as architects and medical doctors. Qingdao's German population remained predominantly male, even though after 1904 the number of German women increased significantly, resulting in a rise of marriages and, subsequently, of births.<sup>10</sup>

Many of the German soldiers were working class while the majority of civilians came from the upper-middle or upper classes. The two groups had little contact with each other since the German civilian population settled in or close to Qingdao's 'European' district, while navy personnel was based in barracks outside the city boundary. The majority of the local Chinese was male and had arrived in the colony to work as labourers (*coolies*) or domestic servants.<sup>11</sup> However, Chinese business developed very successfully in Qingdao and eventually resulted in several well-off

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<sup>7</sup> This ambition is reflected by the term *Musterkolonie* (model colony) that is associated with Kiautschou/Qingdao. See: Leutner and Mühlhahn: *Die Musterkolonie*, 399-423.

<sup>8</sup> Matzat, *Alltagsleben im Schutzgebiet*, 106.

<sup>9</sup> See Biener, *Das deutsche Pachtgebiet Tsingtau*, 218f.

<sup>10</sup> In 1910, about 2,200 German soldiers and sailors lived in Qingdao next to 979 other European males, 203 woman and 439 children. See Uthemann and Führt, "Tsingtau", 37.

<sup>11</sup> In 1910, the Chinese population in Qingdao consisted of 28,127 men, 3,804 women and 2,249 children under 10.

Chinese businessmen and their families living in Qingdao.<sup>12</sup> This group of well-situated Chinese in Qingdao expanded further after the Xinhai revolution in 1911, as a considerable number of former officials of the Qing dynasty and their families took refuge in Qingdao. Representatives of the Chinese elite therefore also left their mark on Qingdao's colonial life from 1912 onwards. The missionary and later sinologist Richard Wilhelm remembers fondly that from then onwards, Qingdao developed to a place where a vibrant intellectual exchange between Chinese and German scholars became possible, with regular meetings between both groups.<sup>13</sup>

However, the majority of Germans in Qingdao had little direct contact with members of the Chinese elite. Their everyday encounters remained to be restricted to working-class Chinese and therefore to the typical colonial master-servant relations of German households and of public spaces where Chinese rickshaw-drivers, tradespeople and shop owners competed for German customers. Most Germans were able to establish an everyday life that echoed their former one in Germany with the notable exception that, due to the high number of Chinese within the service sector, they enjoyed a significantly more privileged, luxurious and affluent lifestyle than before.<sup>14</sup> One element that made them feel at home while, albeit at a more privileged level, was the availability of a wide range of alcoholic beverages.

### **A *Bierfest* in China?**

Colonies were unique places characterised by unequal distribution of power and an eagerness on the part of the colonial rulers to display national and cultural attributes they believed to be most noteworthy. These peculiar spaces captured the imagination of both Germans who were keen to live there and those who stayed in the colonial metropolis. Immediately after the German annexation, representations that could fuel these imaginations were still scarce, but the lack of photographs and illustrations of the newly claimed territory did not discourage Germans to visualise

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<sup>12</sup> In fact, by 1914 nearly 95 percent of business in Qingdao was in Chinese hands. See Mühlhahn, *Herrschaft und Widerstand*, 154.

<sup>13</sup> See Wilhelm, *Die Seele Chinas*, 210ff.

<sup>14</sup> See Groeneveld, *Far away*, 65-80.

their presence in China. One such example is a postcard that was sent from Qingdao to Germany in August 1898, nine months after the occupation when only a handful of buildings had been completed and the colonial city was still in the early stages of construction (see Image 1).

[Insert here Image 1](#)

Qingdao was at that time was still a bleak place, especially since nearly all former Chinese buildings had been demolished by the Germans. The painting on the reverse side of the postcard titled “Gruss aus Kiaotschau” (Greetings from Kiautschau) however, presents us with a very different image of Qingdao. We see a lively scene set at the harbour close to a boarding bridge, where a small group of newly arriving German civilians disembarks. These are the only characters in the picture who are not drinking or appear intoxicated. All of the other protagonists, Germans and Chinese alike, are engaged in merry drinking activities, set around pubs with names such as “Zum Fidelen Matrosen” (‘The Jolly Sailor’). Groups of German sailors and Chinese men are sitting close together at wooden tables in front of these pubs and enjoying “Berliner Weiße” or large mugs of beer, served by women that appear Japanese in style - one of them holding seven mugs of beer similar to images associated with a Bavarian “Volksfest”. Beer is the only beverage that is consumed and as many as nine barrels can be seen in the picture. One German sailor holding a Chinese fan is accompanied by two females. It is not clear if these women appear Japanese because the postcard illustrators had a confused notion of Chinese women or if they depict quite accurately the relatively high number of Japanese prostitutes that settled in Qingdao.<sup>15</sup>

The image on this postcard follows long-established clichés of colonialism as gendered interactions between European ‘conquerors’ and the colonised space, with the latter being portrayed as the personified desirable female.<sup>16</sup> Yet the implied colonial hierarchy is challenged right away by an image of a drunken Chinese,

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<sup>15</sup> See on Japanese prostitutes in Qingdao: Biener, *Das deutsche Pachtgebiet Tsingtau*, 279; Mühlhahn, „Prostitution in der Musterkolonie“, 98.

<sup>16</sup> See Ciarlo, *Advertising Empire*, 164f.

dressed in Mandarin costume, wearing glasses and a German “Pickelhaube” (pointed German military helmet), who mimics a strict German soldier by goose-stepping and by jokingly calling another Chinese to order, who is even more intoxicated and lying down next to a beer barrel. The apparently carnivalesque distortion of power relations demonstrates that mocking stereotypes of oneself and of others was perfectly in the range of expressions within the German context. This implies a certain level of self-confidence among Germans at the end of the nineteenth century.

The postcard also seems to suggest that Germans and Chinese were equally overjoyed by the fact that Germany had gained a foothold in China. That this supposedly shared delight is represented by a wild beer-orgy, in which Germans and Chinese would actively participate, demonstrates that the availability of German beer was conceived of as an essential signifier of an established and accepted Germanness in a foreign environment. Of course, this vision of a German “Bierfest” in China is far from the actual situation in Qingdao, where such a close public encounter between Germans and Chinese would have been unthinkable. Not only did Chinese residents find little reason to celebrate the fact that they found themselves suddenly under German rule, but even if they had, it would not have been expressed by excessive drinking. In traditional Chinese culture, the consumption of alcohol was restricted by tight rules and drunkenness in public was associated with a severe lack of self-control, which was followed by disgrace and ‘losing face’.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, the colonial order that was swiftly established by the German administration left little space for the kind of inter-communal festivity the designers of the postcard portrayed in what was meant as a humorous parody of national clichés.

Nevertheless, the postcard establishes several important points. First, alcohol in general and beer in particular was to play a vital role in Qingdao’s development and its social history. Second, as Saloua-Studer argues in her chapter on French wine and absinthe in Algeria, once the colonised start drinking the colonising nation’s

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<sup>17</sup> Li, *Chinese Wine*, 68.

favourite tipples, the civilizing mission is sure to be implemented.<sup>18</sup> Even though in Qingdao's colonial reality, local Chinese by no means developed into frequent consumers of German beer, the postcard highlights the fact that it seemed necessary for Germans to imagine otherwise in order to support the idea that they had successfully taken up residence in China. Finally, the fact that a particular German region's drinking culture (namely Bavaria's) is standing in for "Germany" and "Germanness" demonstrates that by the end of the nineteenth century this conflation already functioned as a commonly recognised signifier that was able to unify German national, popular imagination.<sup>19</sup>

### Alcohol in Qingdao

In the first years following the establishment of German rule, only a small number of shops and restaurants run by German businessmen sold German beer and wine. German sailors and soldiers found it nigh impossible to afford the high prices for these imported goods.<sup>20</sup> In 1903, the traveller Carl Tanera spoke with a group of German naval soldiers stationed in Qingdao and mused:

Things still look quite bad when it comes to beer. Some is available, of course, but it is still too expensive for our people. But once the new water supply system, which is currently under construction, is completed and delivers absolutely germ-free water [...] then a brewery will certainly emerge, and we will be relieved of this distress.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Saloua-Studer

<sup>19</sup> See on the presentation of Loewenbrau in the USA after 1945 in relation to the Bavarian stereotype in the global perception of Germany: Terrell, *Lurvenbrow*, 9.

<sup>20</sup> As early as November 1898, the *Restaurant Trendel* advertised that a fresh delivery of *Culmbacher-Bier* had just arrived. See DAW, classified section, 1, 21.11.1898.

<sup>21</sup> Tanera, *Eine Weltreise*, 142f.: *Auch mit dem Bier sieht es noch schlecht aus. Es gibt freilich welches, aber es ist für unsere Leute noch zu teuer. Wenn die neue Wasserleitung, die schon gebaut wird, fertig ist, absolut keimfreies Wasser liefert [...], dann entsteht gewiß auch eine Bierbrauerei, und der Not ist abgeholfen.*

Tanera was proved right. The Germania Brauerei was founded in August 1903 and launched its Tsingtau Bier on New Year's Eve 1904. The entire equipment for this brewery was shipped over from Germany<sup>22</sup> and the beers produced by the Germania Brauerei were brewed under the German 'Purity Law' of 1516.<sup>23</sup> The intention was not so much to create new beer varieties in Qingdao but rather to offer a range of beers that were as authentic as possible and easily recognisable as "German" to Europeans living in China. The consumption of these beers would engender a sense of familiarity and with that a direct connection to 'home'. Beer advertisements in the local newspaper *Tsingtauer Neueste Nachrichten*, promoted beer as „Pilsner style" and „dark beers in Munich style" to let consumers know that they were able to continue enjoying their favoured beer variety while living in Qingdao.<sup>24</sup> Easy access to beer that tasted like it did at home was, according to Lieutenant Friedrich Reinhard, one of the main reasons why this colonial city would be remembered so vividly and fondly by many Germans even years after they had returned to Germany.<sup>25</sup> In a similar fashion, the "Tsingtaulied" (Tsingtau song) from 1912 celebrated as the biggest achievements of the German presence in Qingdao the German brewery and pubs that were "quenching the German thirst", alongside the newly constructed harbour and railway system that connected Qingdao with Beijing.<sup>26</sup>

During the years before the Germania Brewery started to operate, it had been mainly Chinese rather than German entrepreneurs who identified a promising business opportunity and opened simple pubs for German soldiers and sailors passing

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<sup>22</sup> All pans and the equipment for the construction of the Germania brewery were provided by the factory 'Germania' in Chemnitz. While filters next to other brewery equipment were provided by the firm 'Enzinger' in Worms. See Matzat, „Germania Brauerei und ihre Angestellten (1903-1914)", Tsingtau.org. Beiträge zur Geschichte Tsingtaus 1.11.2007, from: <http://www.tsingtau.org/germania-brauerei-und-ihre-angestellten-1903-1914/>.

<sup>23</sup> The *Germania Brauerei* was not an entirely German concern concerning finances. While German master brewers operated it, it was established as an Anglo-German cooperation to avoid the strict German law on stock companies. See also Terrell's chapter.

<sup>24</sup> See i.e. TNN, 1.4.1905.

<sup>25</sup> Same as EN1. Friedrich Reinhard was a lieutenant at the 2<sup>nd</sup> See battalion and stationed temporary in Qingdao in June 1900 who was during the Boxer rebellion (1900-1901).

<sup>26</sup> See BA-MA N224/65



through. As early as 1898, the Chinese Ling-Pao opened the tavern “Zur Zauberflöte” (“The Magic Flute”). According to the illustrator Adolf Obst, who visited Qingdao in 1900 during the Boxer rebellion, German soldiers “drank diligently”, even though he believed that the Zauberflöte was not much more than an “elendes Chinesenhäuschen” (miserable Chinese lodge).<sup>27</sup> Similar establishments followed, which were also quite deliberately given names such as Hotel Irene and Zum Riffs-Piraten, in order to attract German customers.<sup>28</sup> This demonstrates that these Chinese entrepreneurs’ business sense was combined with a good level of cultural expertise. Chinese liquor dealers further ensured the flow of affordable alcohol. Within Qingdao’s business district, *Tapautau* (Dabaodao, 大鲍岛), which was designed as a shared zone for Europeans and Chinese, 112 liquor shops could be found in 1912.<sup>29</sup> All shop holders and bar owners had to apply to the colonial authorities for a license to sell alcohol and, once approved, had to pay a quarterly fee to maintain their business.<sup>30</sup>

While German soldiers and sailors preferred Chinese pubs on grounds of affordability, German officers and civilians would never have considered visiting these simple taverns.<sup>31</sup> They frequented more up-market German-run establishments, which started to open in larger numbers after 1900.<sup>32</sup> For example, Zum Deutschen Hause served „exquisite drinks”, together with a European cuisine,<sup>33</sup> while Paul Müller’s Restaurant zur Eiche had “excellent beers and wines” on offer.<sup>34</sup> Next to this, a Bayrische Bierhalle attracted all German colonist as the Austrian

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<sup>27</sup>See Obst, „Aus Deutsch-China“, 377.

<sup>28</sup> Irene was the name of the wife of Prince Heinrich, the brother of the German Emperor Wilhelm II. Prince Heinrich and Princess Irene visited Qingdao in 1899.

<sup>29</sup> See Schnee, *Deutsches Koloniallexikon*, 268.

<sup>30</sup> See Mohr, *Handbuch für das Schutzgebiet...*, 136; 139.

<sup>31</sup> The German sailors also regularly visited the *Seemannshaus* (Seamen’s-Club), where German beer was sold at a much lower price than in German pubs. See Krüger, *Von Potsdam nach Tsingtau*, 94.

<sup>32</sup> See *Die Woche*, 2, Nr.9, Berlin 1900, 377. A list of hotels, restaurants and cafés that had been established by 1904 can be found in: Behme und Krieger, 1904, 26f.

<sup>33</sup> See *Amtsblatt für das Deutsche Kiautschou-Gebiet*, 1, nr.5, Tsingtau, 4. 8. 1900, 43.

<sup>34</sup> *Adressbuch des Kiautschou-Gebiets* 1902, Advertisement-Inlay.

diplomat and travel writer Ernst von Hesse-Wartegg observed in 1898: „Even a Bavarian beer hall with a bowling alley is already present and on Sundays, it is great fun to be there.”<sup>35</sup>

Restaurants and guesthouses began to open outside Qingdao to cater for German and other European day-trippers who explored the surrounding Laoshan Mountains. The nearby village Syfang was one such popular destination where several guesthouses were established, such as the Paradiesgarten.<sup>36</sup> A main attraction was the traditional Chinese temple in its vicinity. A number of German guesthouse operators settled close by. In later years, German barkeepers and restaurateurs were experiencing growing competition from Chinese and also some Japanese providers.<sup>37</sup> Whereas Chinese-operated pubs of the early years targeted predominantly German soldiers and sailors, this new wave of Chinese and Japanese enterprises aimed at German civilians and the growing number of European holidaymakers in Qingdao.<sup>38</sup> Consequently, German guesthouse operators feared for their existence and tried to become more competitive and resilient by establishing the “Tsingtau Hotel AG”, a public limited company that included the colony’s most successful hotels, pubs and guesthouses.<sup>39</sup> As a direct result of this lively competition, alcohol became increasingly available and, by 1913, there was no longer any shortage of restaurants and pubs in Qingdao.<sup>40</sup> This was not least due to increasing alcohol imports. Between 1906 and 1910, the amount of beer imported to Qingdao increased nearly threefold and the quantity of wine doubled.<sup>41</sup> A look at the advertisement sections in the *Tsingtauer Neueste Nachrichten* reveals that the range of imported alcohol varieties was expanding steadily. In April 1905 for example,

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<sup>35</sup> „Auch eine bayrische Bierhalle mit einer Kegelbahn ist schon vorhanden, und sonntags geht es dort sehr lustig zu.“ Hesse-Wartegg, *Schan-tung und Deutsch-China*, 11

<sup>36</sup> See *Adressbuch des Deutschen Kiautschou-Gebiets* (1902), Advertisement-Inlay.

<sup>37</sup> For example, the Chinese Hsü Tsai Mau opened the guesthouse “Tengyau” in Syfang. See *Tsingtauer Neueste Nachrichten*, 10.5.1914, 8.

<sup>38</sup> By 1906, Qingdao welcomed more than 600 summer guest. See Ehlers: *Im Osten Asiens*, 168.

<sup>39</sup> See Biener, *Das deutsche Pachtgebiet Tsingtau*, 159.

<sup>40</sup> *Eine Reise*, 1913, 38. Especially the *Friedrichstraße* was home to a string of pubs and restaurants. See Winter, *Tsingtau*, 6.

<sup>41</sup> See Mohr, *Handbuch für das Schutzgebiet...*, 461.

advertisements for Ober Ingelheimer Rotwein (a German red wine variety), Weißbier complete with “echt Berliner Weissbiertgläser” (wheat beer with original Berlin wheat beer glasses) and Henkel Trocken (a brand of German sparkling wine) can be found among many others.<sup>42</sup>

### **Alcohol consumption among Germans in Qingdao**

The largely separate drinking environments of German soldiers and sailors on the one hand and of middle-upper and upper class Germans on the other hand are indicative of the general separation between the lives of these two groups. German soldiers and sailors were not permitted to join the annual grand beach party, which was held at the end of the bathing season and was according to the navy sailor Karl Krüger only intended for “high society”, namely German civilians, officers, and their families, and European visitors spending their summer holiday in Qingdao.<sup>43</sup> Krüger found that German navy soldiers had to bear quite a high level of snobbery from the German civilian population.<sup>44</sup> Social gatherings were frequent among civilians and the consumption of alcohol was the norm like at the weekly meetings of the large number of “Vereine” (clubs) that were held in Qingdao’s German pubs and restaurants.<sup>45</sup> “Bierabende”, “Männerabende” and similar men-only events were also common, and at other festivities, men would stay on longer than their wives to indulge in the more ‘boozy’ part of the evening.<sup>46</sup>

However, German women took an active part in most recreational pursuits. Typical leisure activities included tennis, hiking in the Laoshan Mountains and horseback riding. The annual social calendar included regular horse races, sailing regattas, an annual sports week and several beach summer parties, all of which were usually rounded off with a grand dinner party. Elisabeth von Schoeler, who lived with her

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<sup>42</sup> See TNN, 1.4.1905, supplement.

<sup>43</sup> Krüger, *Von Potsdam nach Tsingtau*, 113.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> For a list of social clubs, see *Adressbuch des Kiautschou-Gebiets* (Qingdao: Otto Rose, issued annually 1905–1913)

<sup>46</sup> See BSB, Neukamp-Sammlung, Ana 517, letter from Elisabeth von Schoeler to her mother, 14.3.1900: [...], *daher zog ich mich früher zurück, da nun wohl der Saufteil des Festes beginnt.*

family in Qingdao between 1901 and 1908, complained in her letters to her mother about the social pressure she felt to participate in the never-ending cycle of social events, which would often last into the early hours: „Next week we will be quite besieged with invitations. Waldemar is now booked for farewell dinners for departing gentlemen 10 evenings in a row; then yesterday polo club, then the hotel, then the casino, then three private banquets – it is really bad!”<sup>47</sup> Every invitation had to be answered by a counter invitation and the success of these social gatherings was crucial for securing and maintaining one’s status and position within the colonial hierarchy. The role of German women was predominantly to participate successfully in this relentless round of invitations with the aim to further the family’s standing and the husband’s career.

Due to the high number of banquets, tiredness and exhaustion were common among Germans.<sup>48</sup> However, since many could not avoid taking part in social activities, German colonists found themselves in a situation where they would drink more regularly and consume higher amounts of alcohol than they would have back in Germany. Lilli Leibbrand for example, who arrived in 1902 to join her husband Eugen, hoped in vain to be able to continue her newly adopted teetotal lifestyle. She found it an impossible undertaking to remain abstinent in Qingdao’s busy social scene<sup>49</sup> and her letters are full of examples of merry dinners, which resulted in the unavoidable “Brummschädel” (sore head).<sup>50</sup> This active party circuit received even further momentum by the fact that Qingdao developed into a health resort of sorts

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<sup>47</sup> See BSB, Neukamp-Sammlung, Ana 517, letter from Elisabeth von Schoeler to her mother, 19.2.1907: *Nächste Woche stürmt überhaupt viel auf uns ein in gesellschaftlicher Beziehung. Waldemar hat jetzt 10 Abende hinter einander besetzt, lauter Abschiedsessen für jetzt scheidende Herren; gestern Poloclub, dann Hotel, dann Casino, dann 3 Privatgesellschaften, es ist schlimm.* See also similar letters from 28.7.1901 and 3.8.1906. See also Biener, *Das deutsche Pachtgebiet Tsingtau*, 321; Heise, *Deutsche Frauenin ...*, 82.

<sup>48</sup> See TNN, 19.6.1909, *Sprechsaal*.

<sup>49</sup> Private archive Yixu Lü: Letter from Lilli Leibbrand to her parents in law, 12.11.1902.

<sup>50</sup> Private archive Yixu Lü: Letter from Lilli Leibbrand to her parents in law, 4.10.1903, see also letter of 20.6.1903.

and a popular holiday destination for Europeans living in other parts of East Asia from 1902 onwards.<sup>51</sup>

Apart from the Pilsner from the Germania Brauerei, which was mostly consumed in German restaurants, beer gardens and pubs, Germans showed a strong preference for Sekt (German sparkling wine). It was also common for families back in Germany to supply them with wine varieties from their home region (for example, Mosel and Riesling) and for them to order wine and hold private wine tasting parties for their neighbours, friends and colleagues when a new delivery had arrived.<sup>52</sup> One drinking habit that higher-ranking German officers and members of the middle-upper classes adopted from the British was the consumption of whisky-soda.<sup>53</sup> It was commonly served at the Tsingtau-Club, which was established in 1903 and intended to merge elements of a traditional British club with those of a typical German “Stammtisch” (regulars’ table).<sup>54</sup>

The frequent social gatherings indicate a strong urge for social bonding in the colony. However, this society was not stable but rather in constant flux due to high staff turnover rates and redeployments. In the early years, most Germans socialised in one single circle, which was according to the veterinary officer Moritz Pfeiffer like “one big family”.<sup>55</sup> With time, this circle became more and more fragmented. This was driven by a diversification of professional affiliation combined with class divisions, which became increasingly important as the number of Germans settling in Qingdao increased.<sup>56</sup> In a letter to her mother, Elisabeth von Schoeler emphasised how crucial it was that she and her husband, a high-ranking officer, fulfilled their social duties in Qingdao. She stressed that they were expected to live up to a certain standard and display “Styl” or flair in every respect.<sup>57</sup> This could result in financial

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<sup>51</sup> See FN 38.

<sup>52</sup> Private archive Yixu Lü: Letter from Lilli Leibbrand to to her parents in law, 4.7.1903; see also letter of 21.1.1903.

<sup>53</sup> Weicker, *Kiautschou. Das deutsche Schutzgebiet*, 118.

<sup>54</sup> See Biener, *Das deutsche Pachtgebiet Tsingtau*, 320.

<sup>55</sup> See Pfeiffer, *Die Welt des fernen...*, 8.

<sup>56</sup> See Weicker, *Kiautschou*, 134; Kroebel, *Wie ich an den...*, 91.

<sup>57</sup> BSB, Neukamp-Sammlung, Ana 517, Letter from Elisabeth von Schoeler to her mother, 1.2.1900.

pressure for some German colonist, who were expected to serve Sekt next to other costly imported beverages and food items from Germany.<sup>58</sup> Festivities that had been relaxed in nature during the earlier period became increasingly prim and formal. More attention was paid to who was to be invited and seating plans had to reflect guests' status accordantly. An error in this regard was seen as a breach of social etiquette.<sup>59</sup> As has been the case in writing on social life in other European colonies, the blame for these developments has usually been directed at upper-class women who were seen to be keen on emphasising their elevated position and on maintaining social distance from those they considered inferior.<sup>60</sup>

### **Alcohol consumption in Qingdao in the crossfire**

The strong emphasis on keeping up appearances and on being a competent socialite who regularly participated in banquets, dinners and balls was not to everybody's taste. Emma Kroebel concluded that while pleasure and sociability were „in full bloom” in Qingdao, „more serious things would come off badly because of it”.<sup>61</sup> Similarly, the marine vicar Hans Weicker feared that Germans in Qingdao, who had not many meaningful distractions apart from endless social gatherings and sports events, would eventually experience mental decline and be reduced to exchanging mere gossip instead of engaging in more serious conversations.<sup>62</sup> The Catholic missionary Joseph Freinademetz went so far as to compare the social life in Qingdao with a *sodoma* (a hotbed of sins).<sup>63</sup> Freinademetz and other missionaries were concerned that the hedonistic lifestyle that many Germans in Qingdao

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<sup>58</sup> See, Leonard, „Kiautschou“, 701; BSB, Neukamp-Sammlung, Ana 517, Letter from Elisabeth von Schoeler to her mother 13.7.1906; Heise, *Deutsche Frauen in...*, 81.

<sup>59</sup> Kroebel, *Wie ich an den...*, 91.

<sup>60</sup> On the situation in German colonies in Africa, see for example: Mamozai, „Einheimische und „koloniale“ Frauen“, 21.

<sup>61</sup> Kroebel, *Wie ich an den...*, 86: „...daß darüber die ernsten Dinge ein wenig zu kurz [kamen].“

<sup>62</sup> See Weicker, *Kiautschou*, 128f.

<sup>63</sup> Letter from Joseph Freinademetz to Arnold Janssen, 28.4.1904, cited from Mühlhahn, *Herrschaft und Widerstand in ...*, 312f.

displayed was so far removed from a Christian model that it would prevent local Chinese from joining their churches.<sup>64</sup>

This criticism was often interconnected with the debate around the “Alkoholfrage” (alcohol question), a moral and medical discourse on alcohol (and abstinence). As in other Western cultures, the Alkoholfrage was debated heatedly in Germany and peaked around 1900. Within Germany’s newly emerging modern industrial society, alcohol use was no longer perceived as a personal habit but as having a bearing on society as a whole. Especially drinking among the working classes was scrutinised and targeted by social reformers. One of the most prominent advocates of the anti-alcohol movement was the physiologist Gustav Bunge. In his lecture of 1886 titled “Die Alkoholfrage”, Bunge highlighted concerns about the negative impact alcohol had on mind and body alike and linked its regular consumption directly to poverty, criminal behaviour, insanity and family breakup in Germany. This debate eventually reached the colonial context, where it was linked to the imperative that German colonists had to represent moral values in order to influence the indigenous population by leading an exemplary lifestyle.<sup>65</sup>

It was further argued that the acclimatisation process Europeans were expected to undergo after arriving in tropical areas would be severely undermined by alcohol. Lieutenant Max Fiebig, a sanitary officer, believed that Europeans who consumed alcohol in colonial situations would sweat more excessively, experience a higher degree of nervousness and, eventually, could even fall prey to the much-feared “Tropenkoller”, a form of ‘tropical madness’.<sup>66</sup> He and other experts of tropical medicine advised against alcohol use in colonies altogether, since they were convinced that regular consumption would not only destroy the health of coloniser and colonised alike but also be counterproductive to the cultural aims colonisers were hoping to achieve and, ultimately, damage their reputation.<sup>67</sup> These concerns were echoed in the colonial literature on Qingdao. The missionary Hans Weicker, for

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<sup>64</sup> See Gerber, *Von Voskamps ‚heidnischen Treiben‘ ...*, 112;120.

<sup>65</sup> See Fiebig, *Die Bedeutung der Alkoholfrage*, 5.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 8f.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 14; see also Hans Paasche: *Was ich als Abstinent...*, 12.

example, advised that alcohol should only be consumed in “homeopathic amounts” to support the acclimatisation process and ensure general wellbeing.<sup>68</sup> And even an advertisement for the German sparkling wine Kupferberg Gold in the *Tsingtauer Neueste Nachrichten* tapped into this debate by highlighting that Kupferberg Gold is “especially light and elegant in nature” and therefore popular in foreign climates and preferable to a “sweet and heavy French champagne”.<sup>69</sup> The debate around the Alkoholfrage may not have had much of an impact on the alcohol consumption of Germans in Qingdao, but as this advertisement shows, the issues raised by it were omnipresent and at times even used in the marketing of alcohol.

A much greater concern than the effect of alcohol on the physical health of Europeans abroad was the potential for aggressive behaviour following consumption. Hans Weicker pointed out that Europeans felt “freer” and consequently adopted a “Herrengefühl” (sense of superiority) when they lived among “coloured people”.<sup>70</sup> He observed that Qingdao’s Germans would often use harsh language and show little patience and respect towards their Chinese domestic staff. “Even somebody who would never consider striking someone else back in Germany”, Weicker observed, “was here hardly able to restrain himself from using his riding whip on a human once in a while”.<sup>71</sup> This condition of “nervous irritation” that Germans were believed to experience in Qingdao was expected to be aggravated by alcohol consumption.<sup>72</sup> A series of articles in the *Kölner Volkszeitung* of 1898 suggested that German civilians behaved just as badly in this respect as German soldiers and sailors. The articles claimed that members of civilian society next to German soldiers took part in carousals that resulted in cases of rape of Chinese

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<sup>68</sup> See Weicker, *Kiautschou*, 118.

<sup>69</sup> See TNN, 10.5.1014, advertisement-inlay.

<sup>70</sup> See Weicker, *Kiautschou*, 125.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 126.: [...] *selbst mancher, dem es zu Hause nie in dem Sinn kommen würde, jemand zu schlagen, kann sich oft nur mit Mühe beherrschen, seine Reitpeitsche auch mal an Menschen zu gebrauchen.*

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.



women.<sup>73</sup> However, in subsequent years, such incidents were mainly linked to German soldiers and sailors.<sup>74</sup>

Local newspaper articles, private documents and official court files show that German civilians became increasingly intolerant of the reportedly high number of drunken German sailors roaming the streets of Qingdao. Lillie Leibbrand complained in a letter to her parents-in-law that one would always know when it was Sunday, because so many drunken sailors could be seen in Qingdao that day.<sup>75</sup> That alcohol was ubiquitous is also evident from photographs of colonial Qingdao. For example, an image from 1908 shows a group of eleven German navy soldiers celebrating Christmas in their barracks with no fewer than eight of them nursing a glass of beer or a bottle of wine (see Image 2).

[Insert Image 2 here](#)

The noisy behaviour of drunken soldiers and sailors presented an ongoing problem that resulted in several legal cases and newspaper reports.<sup>76</sup> Nevertheless, as long as the drunken men did not break the law, the authorities could not intervene.<sup>77</sup> A regulation intended to control alcohol use had been introduced as early as 1899. It stipulated that bottles of *Schnapps* could only be sold to German sergeants and soldiers who had a written permit from their supervising officer.<sup>78</sup> However, the many complaints by civilians indicated that this regulation was mainly honoured in the breach. In official representations, the problem tended to be played down or ignored. German navy soldiers were at times even portrayed as responsible and well

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<sup>73</sup> See Mühlhahn, *Herrschaft und Widerstand*, 312.

<sup>74</sup> See BSB, Neukamp-Sammlung, Ana 517, Letter from Elisabeth von Schoeler to her mother, 14.3.1900; Deutsch-Asiatische Warte, 5.4.1899, *Eine Sensationsnachricht*.

<sup>75</sup> See private archive Yixu Lü: Letter from Lilli Leibbrand to her parents in law, 22.7.1901.

<sup>76</sup> See *Ruhestörender Lärm*, TNN v. 29.9.1907. See also Biener, *Das deutsche Pachtgebiet Tsingtau*, 243.

<sup>77</sup> The most common offences were lack of discipline, leaving one's post, stealing and participating in a fight. See Biener, *Das deutsche Pachtgebiet Tsingtau*, 242f.

<sup>78</sup> Mohr, *Handbuch für das Schutzgebiet...*, 136.

behaved, as was the case in the article, “Germany in Shantung”, by the superintendent of the Berlin Mission in Kiautschou, Carl Johannes Voskamp. The article was aimed at an international readership.<sup>79</sup> Voskamp mused:

The German soldiers also, coming as they do from all ranks and classes of the people (owing to universal conscription), by their discipline and good behavior (a drunken soldier is seldom seen in the streets) make the colony secure, which is much appreciated even by Chinese themselves...<sup>80</sup>

Similarly, there was silence on the part of the German administration on the lucrative sex trade industry in Qingdao connected with alcohol consumption among German sailors in order “to avoid giving cause for undesirable debates in the press”.<sup>81</sup> A clear divide between Qingdao’s carefully constructed official image and its reality is evident.

### **German-Chinese relations and alcohol**

Unlike the situation in other German colonies, alcohol abuse by the indigenous population did not draw much attention from colonial officials.<sup>82</sup> This was due to the fact that it was uncommon for Chinese labourers to drink – they were more likely to indulge in opium smoking if their financial situation allowed them to do so.<sup>83</sup> While it was illegal to grow opium in *Kiautschou* from 1902 onwards, trading was permitted until May 1911.<sup>84</sup> The German administration introduced a tax on imported opium and attempted to further control consumption by issuing permits for opium dealers,

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<sup>79</sup> Voskamp, “Germany in Shantung”, 131-137.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 134.

<sup>81</sup> See Leutner, *Musterkolonie*, 220 [Doc. 55]: [...] *zu unerwünschten Erörterungen in der Presse Anlass geben* [könnte].

<sup>82</sup> See exemplarily the quite different situation in Cameron: Diduk, *European Alcohol, History and...*, 1993.

<sup>83</sup> Find an overview on opium use in Qingdao in: Biener, *Das deutsche Pachtgebiet Tsingtau*, 144ff.

<sup>84</sup> See Mohr, *Handbuch für das Schutzgebiet...*, 183f.; Crusen: “Die rechtliche Stellung der...”, 53.

but otherwise developed a relatively relaxed approach to opium.<sup>85</sup> According to the Chinese customs office,<sup>86</sup> opium consumers within the colony did not exceed five percent in 1906, while the number for the surrounding area in the province of Shandong was estimated at more than 30 percent.<sup>87</sup> Frank Dikötter has pointed out that although China as a 'slave to opium' had been a well-known image in the late nineteenth century, consumption by most Chinese was light to moderate.<sup>88</sup> Nevertheless, the late Qing dynasty in China itself developed an uncompromising stance on opium, which continued until well after the Chinese revolution in 1911. Due to the growing pressure from the Chinese side to make opium trade illegal, the colonial government followed suit and enacted an ordinance to that effect, which became effective in 1912.<sup>89</sup> In general, Germans did not refer to opium use by their servants in memoirs and letters. If they did complain about any addiction among their Chinese servants, it was gambling. Opium use did not seem to have presented much of a problem.<sup>90</sup>

While Chinese servants and labourers were not in the habit of regular alcohol use, the Chinese elite did consume alcohol on a more regular basis. A variety of warmed, flavoured and naturally fermented rice wine were the most widely consumed beverages. At the beginning of the twentieth century, wine made from grapes was not produced in China and beer was not known before it was introduced and produced there by Europeans. The Chinese name for beer *bi jiu* is a direct transliteration from the German word *Bier*.<sup>91</sup> Alcohol was considered 'spiritual' and played an important role in religious life and festivities. It was attached to a different cultural understanding than in the European context. Toasting practices for example,

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<sup>85</sup> See Mohr, *Handbuch für das Schutzgebiet...*, 183ff.; Biener, *Das deutsche Pachtgebiet Tsingtau*, 144f.

<sup>86</sup> *Kiautschou* obtained the status of a duty free zone in September 1898. Since 1906 however, only the harbour remained a duty free while all other customs policies were transferred to the Chinese Custom office.

<sup>87</sup> See Biener, *Das deutsche Pachtgebiet Tsingtau*, 146.

<sup>88</sup> See Dikötter, Laamann and Zhou, "China, British Imperialism and ...", 21.

<sup>89</sup> See Mohr, *Handbuch für das Schutzgebiet...*, 188.

<sup>90</sup> See Crusen: "Die rechtliche Stellung der..", 53.

<sup>91</sup> See Smart, "Cognac, Beer, Red Wine...", 110.

were closely connected to showing somebody respect ('giving face') and to reconfirming existing hierarchies.<sup>92</sup> These different meanings and contexts of drinking alcohol provided a platform for experiencing cultural diversity for those Germans and Chinese who would socialise at festivities. German missionaries and officials had the most regular contact with the Chinese elite in Qingdao. The missionary Richard Wilhelm, who met there with Chinese scholars and members from the Chinese elite on a regular basis during the time of German occupation, provided a vivid description of the drinking habits in these circles and the cultural meaning attached to them. He noted that the Chinese banquets he attended were men-only affairs, which would allow for a relaxed atmosphere while at the same time the rules of etiquette were still in place.<sup>93</sup> Young women might be included for entertainment ("Sing Song girls") but otherwise did not participate directly in such social gatherings.<sup>94</sup>

Another characteristic that Wilhelm noted was that groups met for food and drink in closed-off areas. Even outside the private home, restaurants would provide larger rooms for groups, which allowed them to socialise while being separated from other restaurant guests. Concerning the consumption of food and alcohol, Wilhelm remarked on how much self-discipline a foreigner needed to display in order to make it through a Chinese banquet, which would normally consist of a high number of courses and several rounds of Chinese wine. During his time in Qingdao, he witnessed several other Germans who would eat and drink too much early on instead of taking small samples of each course and small sips of their wine. Consequently, they found themselves unable to conclude the festivities, ending up intoxicated and overly full, while "every Chinese knows exactly how much he can tolerate and acts accordingly".<sup>95</sup>

In a similar fashion, Chinese officials and members of the Chinese elite could experience a culture shock when they were invited to social events organised by the

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<sup>92</sup> See Li, *Chinese Wine*, 72.

<sup>93</sup> Wilhelm, *Die Seele Chinas*, 398.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 401: *Jeder Chinese weiß, wieviel er davon vertragen kann, und richtet sich danach ein.*

German administration in Qingdao. They were surprised by the presence of German women, who actively participated in get-togethers, and particularly by the way they dressed. The missionary Wilhelm observed one Chinese Mandarin asking another: “What is actually the purpose of them being so bare at the upper body and so covered up below?”<sup>96</sup> Chinese officials who were not used to Germans who would “fight out many diplomatic debates with the Sekt glass in hand” could become so intoxicated that they were in need of a good strategy to get out of this debacle without losing face.<sup>97</sup> This could involve a servant who would interrupt with a ‘timely’ telegram that announced the death of a close family member. Behind this façade, the Chinese official was able to depart supposedly in the depths of despair while being supported by his servants.<sup>98</sup> However, when a Chinese was able to hold his drink at a festivity, it was highly appreciated by his German hosts. The former district attorney Ernst Grosse remembered fondly “Herzog Kung”, the Chinese official Kong Lingyi, who proved himself a “tremendous boozier” at a dinner party given by the German Governor of Qingdao, Oskar Truppel in 1910.<sup>99</sup>

## Conclusion

It has been argued that the role of alcohol within the colonial society of Qingdao was manifold. Alcohol became widely available in Qingdao due to commercial and private imports even before a brewery (Germania Brauerei: Tsingtau Bier) was established in the territory in 1903. Social gatherings were frequent and characterised as especially ‘merry’ by German colonisers. At the same time, the acclimatisation of German colonisers to a new environment was seen as challenging and medical experts advised against alcohol consumption within colonial settings. Alcohol was believed to not only impair the acclimatisation process but also to overstimulate the

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 208: *Was hat das eigentlich für einen Sinn, daß sie am Oberkörper so nackt und am Unterkörper so verhüllt sind?*

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 209: *...wurden auch manche diplomatischen Kämpfe mit dem Sektglas in der Hand ausgefochten.*

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> See Grosse, *Ostasiatische Erinnerungen*, 105: „gewaltiger Zecher“.

nerves and result in aggressive behaviour patterns. Nevertheless, these concerns did not change the fact that the majority of Germans in Qingdao consumed alcohol on a regular basis. Alcohol was embedded in various practices of different groups of Germans in Qingdao and tied to social relations among themselves and with Chinese living in Qingdao. German beer was an evocative ingredient in images and representations of the German presence in China in the early days of colonial rule and a substance that German colonisers felt they needed as soon as they had arrived in Qingdao. In an environment that lacked common cultural attributes in the early days after occupation, the availability of German alcoholic beverages, together with food from home, was crucial for the development of feelings of belonging. Germans in Qingdao did not show much eagerness to experiment when it came to their drinking habits – clinging to the familiar was more agreeable and reassuring than negotiating the unknown. Letters and memoirs demonstrate that the introduction of German food and drink in shops, restaurants and pubs and their use at home anchored them in China and allowed them to develop a colonial self-image that was interconnected with their former lifestyle and built on a cultural consensus with fellow colonisers.

Qingdao saw the development of a lively social life, which over time became increasingly fragmented. While German civilians and German soldiers and sailors maintained separate drinking cultures throughout, social differentiation among these groups increased later on as a result of a gradually more acute awareness of class associations that was driven by the upper classes and aimed at distancing themselves from an aspiring middle-upper and middle class.

The Alkoholfrage, which was debated in Germany around 1900, did not have much impact on actual consumption patterns in the colony. In general, Germans in Qingdao consumed alcohol in higher quantities and more regularly than back in Germany. Still, aspects of the alcohol debate were echoed by critics of the hedonistic lifestyle that many Germans led in Qingdao. German missionaries feared that their compatriots gave a poor example of Christian morals and consequently would discourage Chinese from joining their churches. Others were concerned that the consumption of alcohol would facilitate aggressive behaviour towards Chinese.

For many Chinese in Qingdao, drinking alcohol was not a regular practice. Rarely did German and Chinese socialise outside the circles that were developed by scholars and officials. Within these circles, the different drinking cultures provided a platform for cultural exchange and, at times, mutual misunderstanding. In the meanwhile, Chinese entrepreneurs recognised the existing demand for German beer and wine with an expeditiousness that German businessmen failed to match. While early on, their target group consisted of German soldiers and sailors, later years saw Chinese pub and guesthouse operators in close competition with their German counterparts. Most Chinese in Qingdao may not have taken to the consumption of the 'colonisers' tipples' but trading them was another matter.