

Melanie Boieck and Reginald Elias Kirey
**Colonial Heroism in German, British and
Tanzanian Commemorative Culture**

In: Jürgen Zimmerer/Julian zur Lage (eds): Global Memories
of German Colonialism. Hamburg: Hamburg University
Press, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.15460/hup.269.2122>,
S. 37–54

Hamburg University Press
Verlag der Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg
Carl von Ossietzky

IMPRESSUM

Bibliographische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek

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DOI <https://doi.org/10.15460/hup.269.2088>

Gedruckte Ausgabe

ISBN 978-3-910391-02-4

Layoutentwicklung

In Zusammenarbeit mit dem Verlag durch Sascha Fronczek, studio +fronczek, Karlsruhe (Deutschland), <https://saschafronczek.de>.

Cover und Satz

Hamburg University Press

Druck und Bindung

Books on Demand GmbH

In de Tarpen 42, 22848 Norderstedt (Deutschland), info@bod.de, <https://www.bod.de>

Verlag

Hamburg University Press

Verlag der Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg Carl von Ossietzky, Von-Melle-Park 3, 20146 Hamburg (Deutschland), info.hup@sub.uni-hamburg.de, <https://hup.sub.uni-hamburg.de>

2025

INHALT

	Preface: Global Memories of German Colonialism	7
	<i>Jürgen Zimmerer and Julian zur Lage</i>	
I	INTRODUCTION	
	Challenging Eurocentrism in Memory and Historiography	13
	<i>Julian zur Lage</i>	
II	CASE STUDIES: MEMORIES, MEMORIALS AND ORAL HISTORY	
	Colonial Heroism in German, British and Tanzanian Commemorative Culture	37
	<i>Melanie Boieck and Reginald Elias Kirey</i>	
	Remembering the Majimaji Trauma in Tanzania	55
	<i>Nancy Rushohora</i>	
	German Colonial Memory in the Gbaya Oral Tradition	81
	(Bertoua, East Region, Cameroon)	
	<i>Amina Djouldé Christelle</i>	
III	ARTISTIC INTERVENTIONS: REMEMBERING COLONIALISM	
	Shadow Work in Ovizire-Somgu: From Where Do We Speak?	101
	<i>Vitjitua Ndjiharine and Nashilongweshipwe Sakaria</i>	
	Basters	125
	<i>Mercia Kandukira</i>	
IV	OUTLOOK: HISTORIES AND METHODOLOGIES	
	Epistemological Silences in Tanzania-Germany Entangled Histories	141
	A View from Hamburg's Twin City, Dar es Salaam	
	<i>Oswald Masebo</i>	
	Contributors	159

Colonial Heroism in German, British and Tanzanian Commemorative Culture

Melanie Boieck and Reginald Elias Kirey

Remembering heroic figures in one country's history is often a sensitive procedure. Usually myths and legends are generated around these historic figures and it can be a difficult endeavour to try looking behind the embellished stories. Sometimes it can be necessary to dismantle the myths and tell the true and sometimes unheroic story which lies behind the legend. In its comparatively short colonial history, Germany has spawned a lot of so-called colonial heroes who were supposed to be role models of strong, adventurous and smart men, exploring and securing new territories for their home country. Most times these men became heroes after their death, while society forgot their mistakes or scandals and treated them as god-like. In a lot of cases, these positive receptions last until today. Many 'colonial heroes' were depicted in monuments and put on buildings or pedestals, where they stood – albeit not in every case – undisturbed.¹ Tanzania, too, has proud and powerful men who fought against the colonial oppressors, like Abushiri bin Salim and Mkwavinyika Munyigumba Mwamuyinga (Mkwawa) or who led the country into independence, like Julius Kambarage Nyerere. And finally Great Britain, one of the biggest colonial powers, has its own fair share of heroic figures of course.

This article intends to look at the symbolism of these monuments. Who were these colonial heroes and under which circumstances did the monuments get built? What was their message and how were and are they perceived throughout history? Since this topic alone could fill books, we decided to concentrate on two examples which are coincidentally related. One is the Wissmann monument, first built in Dar es Salaam, then rebuilt in Hamburg. In its place in Dar es Salaam the British colonial rulers erected the Askari monument which has lasted until today, while the Wissmann monument was torn down by students in 1968.

Both monuments exemplify places of colonial remembrance. The approach is partly taken from Pierre Nora's concept of the *lieux des memoires*, which defines places of remembrance – or in this case colonial remembrance, like monuments, rituals or memo-

1 See Winfried Speitkamp, 'Der Totenkult um die Kolonialheroen des Deutschen Kaiserreichs', *zeitenblicke* 3/1 (2004), <http://www.zeitenblicke.de/2004/01/speitkamp/Speitkamp.pdf> (last accessed 27.7.2024).

rial days as part of a nation's collective memory. In our case, three nations share this colonial memory, with the common denominator being the Tanzanian people who were ruled by German and British colonialists successively. Both monuments share another theme. The Wissmann monument not only depicts its eponymous figure but also an *askari*,² which is also the theme of the Askari monument. The perception and history of both places of colonial commemoration are intertwined and in need of critical rehabilitation, as are many topics on German colonial history and its remembrance today.³

On 14 October 2016, *the Deutsches Historisches Museum (German Historical Museum)* in Berlin opened the Exhibition 'German Colonialism – Fragments Past and Present'. Among the 500 artefacts featuring is the monument of Hermann von Wissmann.⁴ His monument exemplifies German colonization in East Africa and its remembrance throughout German history. It was built in 1908 by sculptor Adolph Kürle during the height of German colonization. It posthumously honours the 'Explorer of Africa' and 'Reich Commissioner of German East Africa'. The conqueror and victor of the 'Abushiri War' – which was falsely called the 'Arab Uprising' in Germany – was depicted on a pedestal wearing the governor's uniform with a sabre and tropical helmet. Additionally, Wissmann was depicted with an *askari* and a lion at his feet looking up at him. The monument was inaugurated on 3 April 1909 in Dar es Salaam, in what was then German East Africa. Wissmann gradually came to be idolized as a 'colonial hero' after his death in 1905. Many monuments were built, for example in his hometown Bad Lauterberg, and colonial products were advertised with his picture on.⁵

The German Empire had acquired its colonies comparatively late, and with the support of mostly private organizations. It was the 'German East African Company'⁶ which was supposed to govern German East Africa in 1888. The multi-ethnic population in the area had had its social difficulties before, but the arrival of the German colonists cul-

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- 2 The *askari* was the lowest rung among the German colonial troops (*Schutztruppe*), which consisted of German officers and African mercenaries and/or soldiers. See Stefanie Michels, *Schwarze deutsche Kolonialsoldaten: Mehrdeutige Repräsentationsräume und früher Kosmopolitismus in Afrika* (Histoire, 4, Bielefeld: transcript, 2009), pp. 20–21.
 - 3 Jürgen Zimmerer, 'Kolonialismus und kollektive Identität: Erinnerungsorte der deutschen Kolonialgeschichte', in Jürgen Zimmerer (ed.), *Kein Platz an der Sonne. Erinnerungsorte der deutschen Kolonialgeschichte* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2013), pp. 5–36.
 - 4 See Deutsches Historisches Museum (ed.), *Deutscher Kolonialismus: Fragmente seiner Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Sebastian Gottschalk, Heike Hartmann, and Irene Hilden (Darmstadt: Theiss Verlag, 2016), p. 188.
 - 5 See Gordon Uhlmann, 'Das Hamburger Wissmann-Denkmal: Von der kolonialen Weihstätte zum postkolonialen Debatten-Mahnmal', in: Ulrich van der Heyden (ed.), *Kolonialismus hierzulande. Eine Spurensuche in Deutschland*, (Erfurt: Edition tempus, 2007), pp. 281–285, here p. 281.
 - 6 See Thomas Morlang, *Askari und Fitafita: 'farbige' Söldner in den deutschen Kolonien* (Schlaglichter der Kolonialgeschichte, Bd. 8, Berlin: Links, 2008), pp. 10–14.

minated in an uprising and then a war.⁷ Local governance was supposed to be handed over to the Germans, but in many places the inconsiderate and insensitive approaches taken resulted in the uprising, which spread throughout the colony. The company was overstrained and had to ask Chancellor Otto von Bismarck for help. Bismarck opted for a fast and inexpensive military solution. At that time, Wissmann was known for his travels to and in Africa and considered an expert. According to his plan, he wanted to hire 600 African mercenaries. The latter were supposed to be hired outside of the colony, however, in order to prevent them from joining the enemy's lines. The Reichstag therefore granted two million *Reichsmark* for recruiting and training these mercenaries.⁸ Wissmann was promoted to 'Imperial Commissioner for East Africa', leading his so-called Police Troops⁹ into battle against the inhabitants of the new German colony.

The German public and press portrayed the Abushiri War as retaliation against Arab slave traders in order to justify the military intervention, which is why, as noted, it is still called the 'Arab Uprising' in Germany today. In addition to the Arabs, Indian and Swahili colonial inhabitants also fought against the Germans. The war became one of liberation for the East African people, with Wissmann and his troops fighting it rigorously.¹⁰ After the war ended in 1890, the temporarily assembled troops were to be dispersed because Chancellor Bismarck still favoured a government led by the German East African Company. He wanted to avoid a permanent, and therefore costly, military presence in the colonies. However, continued resistance by the locals made a standing military unit and thus Wissmann necessary. The Imperial Commissioner had free rein commanding his troops and *de facto* supervision of the German East Africa Company. He chose his officers personally. The mercenaries were mostly hired in Sudan and their training was completed in only a few weeks, while the equipment was distributed by the German Imperial Army.¹¹

After the German East African Company was eventually deemed unfit to govern the colony – due to the fact that it could not rule without the aid of military – civil servants and clerks from Germany took over. However, the military was still needed, which resulted in the *Schutztruppengesetz* ('Colonial Army Law') of 1891. The newly founded 'Imperial Colonial Army for German East Africa' was still called the *Wissmann-Troop* by

7 See Michael Pesek, *Koloniale Herrschaft in Deutsch-Ostafrika: Expeditionen, Militär und Verwaltung seit 1880* (Frankfurt a. M.: Campus Verlag, 2005), pp. 185–189.

8 See Morlang, *Askari und Fitafita* (above, n. 6), pp. 15–19.

9 *Ibid.* p. 19.

10 See Pesek, *Koloniale Herrschaft in Deutsch-Ostafrika* (above, n. 7), pp. 188–189.

11 See Tanja Bühner, *Kaiserliche Schutztruppe für Deutsch-Ostafrika: Koloniale Sicherheitspolitik und kulturelle Kriegführung 1885–1918* (Beiträge zur Militärgeschichte, 70, München: Oldenbourg Wissenschafts Verlag, 2011), pp. 55–63.

the general public.¹² Because he had trouble to align his troops with the German Imperial Army, Wissmann was not considered for the new posts of Commanding Officer or Governor (of the colony). Nevertheless, he was ennobled and honoured for his services, but under the rule of Chancellor Leo von Caprivi he never took an official office.

Only when Chlodwig Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst became chancellor, who looked more favourably on Wissmann's career, was he offered the governance of German East Africa in 1895. However, Wissmann was not satisfied. His position was a bureaucratic one and the morphine-addicted governor was not up to the task of his civic duties and bureaucratic rule. After only one year, he resigned and retired back to Germany. He later died in a hunting accident in 1905, rumoured by contemporaries and historians alike to have been suicide.¹³ His legacy was his title of nobility and his reputation as a founder of the Imperial Colonial Army for East Africa and suppressor of the 'Abushiri Revolt'. His morphine addiction and conflicts with the government were forgotten. His monument stood in Dar es Salaam until the Germans left the city and the colony was dissolved. After World War I, the British, who took over most of the former German colony, dismantled it in 1919 and brought it back to London where it was stored in the Imperial War Museum.¹⁴ The Wissmann monument was not the only colonial-era one to be taken down: statues of Hans Dominik¹⁵ and Carl Peters¹⁶ were similarly dismantled.

British colonial documents provide information on the granite base on which Wissmann's statue previously stood. Surprised by this massive pedestal, the director of the Imperial War Graves Commission (IWGC) asked the Department of Works in Dar es Salaam to furnish him with any available German records on the 'working plans of the Wissmann memorial', probably hoping to learn from them, 'but was informed that records of this nature were not available locally'.¹⁷ Due to this, the director did not allow the granite pedestal to be removed to give space for the Askari Monument before photos and measurements of it had first been taken for 'future records'.¹⁸ In fact, the director hesitated about demolishing the granite base before he was absolutely sure that the Germans did not need it; as he clearly stated:

12 *Ibid.*, pp. 87–90.

13 *Ibid.*, pp. 82–86.

14 See Uhlmann, *Das Hamburger Wissmann-Denkmal* (above, n. 5), pp. 281–282.

15 Colonial officer in Cameroon.

16 Founder of the 'Society for German colonization', for which he bought the land which later became the colony 'German East Africa'. He became an imperial commissioner but was dismissed because he arbitrarily hanged Africans. That prompted his nickname 'Hänge-Peters'.

17 TNA, 3300/11, From the Imperial War Graves Commission to the Chief Secretary, 19.2.1923.

18 *Ibid.*

[T]he Commission would naturally prefer to take over an unencumbered site but as the statuary, which during the German regime was in position on the existing granite base, has now, I understand, found a new and suitable setting in Germany, I am prepared [...] to recommend to the Commission that this site be now finally adopted.¹⁹

The removal of the Wissmann statue and its derelict pedestal was indispensable because, having been entrusted to rule Tanganyika as a mandate territory by the League of Nations, the British wished to entirely erase German heroic memories and replace them with those which would suit their interests. As a matter of fact, 'the process of bringing the former German colony [Tanganyika] into line with other British colonies and protectorates in Africa [...] called for the gradual elimination of the vestiges of German influence'.²⁰ Therefore, the Wissmann memorial was to be replaced by the Askari monument, as that would temporarily make Africans have a more tolerant attitude towards British colonial rule.

As mentioned earlier, after the end of World War I in Tanganyika the Wissmann monument, together with other such statues, was safely shipped to London as a war trophy for public display. In 1921, however, the British government put the three monuments up for sale. A senator from Hamburg called Justus Strandes,²¹ who was a member of the Senate Commission for Internal and Foreign Affairs in Berlin, answered immediately. He wrote to his fellow commissioners in order to encourage the acquisition of the monuments²²:

A little while ago, the Duke Adolf Friedrich von Mecklenburg and F. F. Eiffe visited him [State Secretary Müller from the Rebuilding Ministry], and advised him to purchase the monuments for Hamburg, which is Germany's primary overseas gateway. One condition would be that the country would not be bearing the costs for the reconstruction, since the aforementioned gentleman has ensured private funding for the reconstruction. He is awaiting the respective applications from private citizens.²³

19 Ibid.

20 Peter A. Dumbuya, *Tanganyika under International Mandate 1919–1946* (Maryland: University Press of America, 1995), p. 103.

21 Strandes used to be a merchant for Hansing & Co. on Zanzibar between 1879 and 1890. He was a member of the *Kolonialrat* ('Colonial Advisory Board') and a member of the Hamburg Chamber of Commerce. He was also an elected member of parliament in Hamburg (*Bürgerschaft*), a senator and an envoy in Berlin.

22 See Justus Strandes, *Hamburgische Gesandtschaft*.-No 3292, 23.7.1921 (authors' own translation).

23 Ibid. (authors' own translation).



Fig. 1: Unveiling of the Wissmann Monument in Dar es Salaam, 3. April 1909. Photo: Bildbestand der Deutschen Kolonialgesellschaft, Universitätsbibliothek Frankfurt am Main, 004-1081-24, <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:hebis:30:2-771275>.

The senator guessed that the money for the monuments would be funded by private citizens. He was right: the Association of Colonial Germans and Citizens Interested in Colonialism agreed to collect the money for and fund the reconstruction of these monuments:

Yesterday the local division's board of the 'colonial society' decided to collect and fund the money for the restoration of the colonial monuments in Hamburg. Soon after their meeting they went to the Hamburg Stock Exchange, where they successfully collected the necessary sum. According to an expert estimation the Wissmann monument will need 170,000 [Reichsmark], the other monuments will need roughly the same. If the monuments can be bought for Hamburg, then the Senate couldn't possibly refuse them and will presumably commission us to rebuild the monuments. According to the monetary restrictions, that could take two to three years. The first restoration (Wissmann) should be executed this spring.²⁴

24 StA Hamburg, *Wissmann Denkmal soll nach Hamburg*, Briefe Schreiben vom 'Reichsverbands der Kolonialdeutschen und Kolonialinteressenten' an Ministerialrat Dr. Ruppel in Berlin vom 9.1.1922.



Fig. 2: The Wissmann Monument in front of the University of Hamburg main building. Photo: Bildbestand der Deutschen Kolonialgesellschaft, Universitätsbibliothek Frankfurt am Main, 018-0092-09, <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:hebis:30:2-786076>.

The above correspondence confirmed Hamburg as the best possible city to rebuild the monuments, as other big German cities had not actually attempted to buy them.²⁵ During the year 1922, the Wissmann monument was rebuilt next to the University of Hamburg, which was only three years old by then. The choice of location was no coincidence. The building had hosted the ‘Colonial Institute’ before the war. The Institute had been founded in 1908 and was no longer needed, since Germany did not have any colonies after World War I. Since the building already provided lecture halls and other infrastructure, the University of Hamburg was founded on this site in 1919.²⁶ On 4 November 1922, the newly erected Wissmann monument was officially unveiled. The chosen date was the anniversary of the Battle of Tanga in 1914, where outnumbered German colonial troops, under the command of Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck,²⁷ had beaten back the British colonial army. The

25 Ibid. Informationen über Wissmann und den Denkmalsstandort.

26 For more information about the ‘Colonial Institute’ see: Jens Ruppenthal, *Kolonialismus als „Wissenschaft und Technik“: Das Hamburgische Kolonialinstitut 1908 bis 1919* (Historische Mitteilungen im Auftrag der Ranke-Gesellschaft, 66, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2007).

27 Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck was an officer in the colonial army in the Herero-Nama-War in German Southwest Africa and became commander of the colonial troops in German East Africa in 1914. For more information

inscription referred to the original monument's site: 'The monument's pedestal had the following inscription: "Built in Dar es Salaam 1908–1918 / Rebuilt in Hamburg 1922 until [...]." It implied the aspiration to return the monument to its original site.'²⁸

The reference to the original site in the former colony is not the only significant part of the inscription. The university was not intended to be the monument's final resting place, with the idea being to return it at some point to its home in Africa. This is an example of the colonial fervour which (re)awoke after the Versailles Treaty of 1919. The so-called *Schmach von Versailles* ('Humiliation of Versailles') not only meant that Germany was to pay reparations and give up certain border territories, it also stated that the country was not fit to rule or govern colonies responsibly. Therefore, it stated that the German colonies would be administered by other European powers. The Germans were offended by that statement and called it a lie. Out of that sentiment grew the wish to regain their colonies. Colonial enthusiasts organized themselves in societies and met with other former inhabitants of the German colonies. The so-called colonial heroes, mostly former explorers or Imperial Army veterans, published books or gave speeches about their experiences. In the following years, many streets, schools and barracks were named after them. Later, those same veterans were recruited by the Nazis, who promised them the colonies back in return for their help with election campaigns.²⁹

Every year the 'colonial societies' would celebrate reunions and other memorial festivities at the Wissmann Monument, usually on the anniversary of the Battle of Tanga.³⁰ For example, the Stahlhelm, or 'Union of Former Front-Line Soldiers', celebrated 'in memory and honour of our great colonizer'³¹ the 9th annual *Reichsfrontsoldatentag* in June 1928.³² That numerous festivities occurred celebrating the country's former imperial glory exemplifies how there was no reconditioning or even debate of Germany's colonial legacy in postcolonial Hamburg.

The Wissmann monument did not stand next to the university undisturbed. In 1943, the government planned on melting down the monument and using the material for the war effort. The rector of the university ultimately intervened and prevented that happening. Two years later, however, a bomb hit the monument and tore it down. Again, the

see: Eckard Michels, *Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck: Der Held von Deutsch-Ostafrika. Ein preussischer Kolonialoffizier* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2008).

28 Uhlmann, *Das Hamburger Wissmann-Denkmal* (above, n. 5), p. 282.

29 For more information about colonialism and the Nazis see: Jürgen Zimmerer, *Von Windhuk nach Auschwitz?: Beiträge zum Verhältnis von Kolonialismus und Holocaust* (Periplus-Studien, Münster [u. a.]: LIT Verl, 2011).

30 See StA Hamburg 361-5 II Wg 14.

31 *Ibid.*

32 *Ibid.*

university administration intervened and had it reconstructed in 1949. The monument and all that it stood for was finally questioned only a full 20 years later.³³ Students in the late 1960s revolted against the establishment, parents and their teachers and started to ask questions about German history and World War II, urging society to discuss the Nazi dictatorship among other things. In this regard, colonialism was also discussed and the students in Hamburg started to make the university's history as a 'colonial institute' a subject of discussion. Officially the eponymous institute had been closed down, but many of its departments and chairs lived on.

Some professors saw themselves as teaching in the tradition of the 'Colonial Institute'. Between 1938 and 1945, the historian Adolph Rein had actually been in charge of another 'colonial institute' at the university. That had also been in light of the National Socialists' policy of expansion. For that reason, students gave their university the nickname the 'permanent colonial institute'.³⁴ In August 1967, they attempted to bring down the Wissmann statue for the first time, but the police prevented it. A couple of months later, the students were now successful, but the administration again rebuilt it. So, when the students finally succeeded in bringing down the statue during the night of 1 November 1968, they spray-painted it red and displayed it in front of the campus dining hall. Because the statue had been vandalized and taken away the administration did not attempt to put it back on its pedestal, but stored it, along with the statue of colonial officer Hans Dominik, in the cellar of the observatory in Bergedorf.³⁵

The disassembly of the two colonial monuments had another effect: once they were again in public view, they needed to be dealt with. As long as they were standing on their respective pedestals, their existence was not an issue in the public eye. The protest and the deconstruction by the students caused a media coverage and put the monuments back into public consciousness. The students, on the other hand, freed themselves of the university's colonial past symbolically and broke with the tradition of honouring the so-called colonial heroes while doing it. It was the first time in the history of Hamburg that its citizens openly criticized and actually removed colonial images from the public eye. This also proves that at least some parts of German society dealt with the question of colonial legacy as early as the 1960s.³⁶

33 Uhlmann, *Das Hamburger Wissmann-Denkmal* (above, n. 5).

34 For further information on that term see: Allgemeinen Studierendenausschuss, *Das permanente Kolonialinstitut: 50 Jahre Hamburger Universität* (Hamburg, 1969).

35 Uhlmann, *Das Hamburger Wissmann-Denkmal* (above, n. 5), pp. 283–284.

36 See Winfried Speitkamp (ed.), *Denkmalsturz: Zur Konfliktgeschichte politischer Symbolik* (Kleine Vandenhoeck-Reihe, 1581, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997), pp. 6–9.

Both monuments were stored in the basement of the Hamburg Observatory until 1986, when an art show organized by the *Museumspädagogischer Dienst* (Museum Education Service) displayed the Wissmann monument in Hamburg. A few years later, it was used for an artistic performance in Hamburg's harbour. Wissmann was displayed there in full, including the lion and the *askari* from 2004 until 2005. While displaying the Wissmann Monument, the artist launched a website³⁷ on which interested citizens could discuss the topic and vote for the monument's theoretical future. Traffic on the homepage was high during its 14-month running time. Some 35,000 users visited the site and left about 1,000 comments in total.³⁸ The results of the vote were unmistakable according to the operators:

Ninety-five per cent of the voters opted for not storing the monument in a cellar again. Unpopular monuments should not be hidden, but displayed openly for discussion. Many people want to remember and discuss the monuments critically. According to city regulations, the monument had to be taken down and stored in the cellar again. The confrontation between Hamburg's commemorative culture and an adequate postcolonial handling of the dismantled monuments will therefore be continued.³⁹

Since then, the Wissmann monument has only twice been taken out of the cellar. In 2013, director Eva Knopf reconstructed the downfall of these monuments by students for her documentary *Mahjub's Journey*.⁴⁰ Up until May of 2017, the Wissmann monument was on display as part of the exhibition in Berlin's aforementioned Deutsches Historisches Museum.

It may perhaps be worthwhile, at this stage, to turn to the Askari monument which was erected by the British in Dar es Salaam nine years after the removal of the Wissmann one. As will be shown, the Askari monument was built on the site formerly occupied by its Wissmann predecessor. The Askari Monument was put up by the IWGC in the 1920s, and with no major changes having ever been made it is still to be found *in situ* in Dar es Salaam's city centre today. Its construction was meant to commemorate Africans and Arabs who fell in World War I while serving the British Army. The official records provided by Lord Alfred Milner in April 1920 provide a figure of 5,000 known

37 See <http://www.afrika-hamburg.de> (last accessed 27.7.2024).

38 Uhlmann, *Das Hamburger Wissmann-Denkmal* (above, n. 5), p. 284.

39 See <http://www.afrika-hamburg.de/willkommen.html> (authors' own translation) (last accessed 27.7.2024).

40 Deutsches Historisches Museum (ed.), *Deutscher Kolonialismus* (above, n. 4), p. 188.



Fig. 3: The Wissmann Monument displayed at the Deutsches Historisches Museum 2016. Photo: Jürgen Zimmerer.

graves of the *askaris* and 50,000 unknown graves of the African carriers who were to be commemorated by the monument in question.⁴¹ This figure, nevertheless, excludes a considerable number of people who died in the campaign but whose records could not be established at the time the monument was constructed.⁴² Initially, the government proposed that for the *askaris* whose graves were already known headstones would be placed on them. This was challenged by the IWGC, which argued that Africans were too ignorant to know the value of the headstones and would therefore not appreciate such an honourable government gesture. The Commission also thought that if such an idea was put into practice many people whose graves could not be identified would automatically lose the right to commemoration.

Finally, the government reasoned that three separate African memorials should be erected in the three major towns of Dar es Salaam, Nairobi and Mombasa.⁴³ In 1921, the IWGC expressed the hope that a African memorial would be built in Dar es Salaam, Tanga

41 Tanganyika National Archives hereafter TNA, AB/754: From Milner to Tanganyika Territory, 8.4.1920.

42 TNA, AB/754/2, Director of Imperial War Graves Commission to governments of Kenya and Tanganyika, 17.2.1921.

43 Ibid.

and Tabora, but this turned out to be unrealistic.⁴⁴ In 1923, for example, the IWGC was busy working on a plan to start the construction of the African memorial in Dar es Salaam, but nothing of a similar kind was being done in Tanga and Tabora. At the initial stage of the African memorial's construction in Dar es Salaam, a number of issues were raised. First, there was the one of selecting an appropriate site for the memorial; in this regard, the key question was whether it was right to erect an African memorial on the site of the former Wissmann monument. The second issue concerned the kind of inscription to be included on the memorial and the language to be used. Third and finally, the issue of the structure of the monument – that is, what the memorial should even look like.

The government's expectation was to have as simple memorial as possible so that it could be 'readily understood by the natives'.⁴⁵ To this end, the monument had to 'take the form of a pedestal with bronze panels and a life-sized figure or larger of a King's African Rifles soldier on top' and 'the panels depicting groups of African Soldiers and Carriers on active service'.⁴⁶ It was previously proposed that the monument should bear English and Swahili inscriptions which the Africans could easily read and understand, but before this was finally approved the government issued a further instruction that a similar inscription in Arabic should also be included.⁴⁷ The English version of the inscription was supposed to read thus: 'This is to the memory of the Native African troops who were the hands and feet of the army: and to all other men who served and died for their King and country in eastern Africa in the Great War 1914–1918. If you fight for your country even if you die your sons will remember your name.'⁴⁸

To ensure that the sculptor, Mr. J. A. Stevenson,⁴⁹ did the job of designing the monument properly, the pieces of equipment used by the African troops and carriers were sought from Kenya and Tanganyika for his use. Among these were the materials formerly used by the *askaris* like a leather belt, braces, a haversack and a round water bottle. In this list was also a 'photograph of a machine gun in action taken from the right-hand side' and 'manned by Askari equipped as in the war'.⁵⁰ By April 1927, the African memorial was all but completed; a bronze figure of a King's African Rifleman had already been erected on top of the stone pedestal and a bronze panel bearing the inscriptions in

44 Ibid.

45 TNA, AB/754/3, From Commanding Troops Tanganyika Territory to Chief Secretary, 9.4.1921.

46 Ibid.

47 Ibid.

48 TNA, No. 23428/2, Report by Deputy Director of Works, East Africa, 4.11.1927.

49 Ibid.

50 TNA, No. AB/754/15, Deputy Director of Works to Chief Secretary, 28.12.1923.

Swahili and Arabic placed on the latter's front side.⁵¹ A similar bronze panel bearing the English inscription occupied the pedestal's rear side. The only thing yet to be fixed was the decorative panels of African soldiers on the battlefield, which were to be placed on either side of the pedestal but had not arrived from England yet.

Construction of the African memorial was completed in November 1927; the unveiling ceremony was scheduled for the 11th of that month, but, for reasons unknown, was suspended until 14 March 1928.⁵² The monument was, however, inaugurated without a ceremony, much to the surprise of the Officer Commanding Troops who did not hesitate to drop a line to the chief secretary expressing his disbelief: 'I beg to request that I may be informed of the reasons which led to the memorial to Native African Troops being uncovered without the ceremony'.⁵³ The chief secretary responded accordingly: 'I am directed by the governor to inform you that the Imperial War Graves Commission left it to His Excellency's discretion whether the memorial should be revealed with or without ceremony and that His Excellency chose the latter alternative'.⁵⁴

The officer in question was definitely troubled having seen the unveiling of the African memorial at Mwembe Tayari in Mombasa in May 1927, accompanied by a ceremony which was even attended by the governor of Kenya, but nothing similar was organized for Dar es Salaam.⁵⁵ The selection of the memorial site engendered conflicting opinions among the Europeans living in Dar es Salaam at that time. A section of the European population in Tanganyika, most definitely those of German origin, was deeply concerned about the decision to erect an African memorial in the same place where the Wissmann monument had stood. This move was interpreted as a way of humiliating the people who had previously considered Wissmann their heroic leader. In reporting to the governor the complaints Mr. Howe Browne had forwarded to the British colonial government in Tanganyika, the chief secretary wrote:

He [Mr. Browne] said that there was a strong body of opinion which held that it was a most unnecessary insult to the memory of Dr von Wissmann, who might be regarded as

51 Ibid.

52 See TNA, No. 23428/26, from Deputy Director of Works to Chief Secretary, 14.3.1928 and No. 23428/27 from Kings African Rifle's office to Mr. Scott, 14.3.1928

53 TNA, No. 23428/30, from the Officer Commanding Troops Tanganyika Territory to the Chief Secretary, 28.3.1928.

54 TNA, No. 23428/32, from Chief Secretary to the Officer Commanding Troops, 5.4.1928.

55 TNA, No. 23428/4, 'His Excellency and Native Fallen: Striking Tribute to K. A. R. and Other Troops: A Native V. C. Some Astonishing Figures of African Service, Mwembe Tayari Speech', *The Mombasa Times*, 26.5.1927.

a great and distinguished German, that a statue of a native soldier should be put up in the place where his statue had stood. Those we represented regarded it as right and proper that the von Wissmann Statue should be removed, but considered it most improper and insulting to replace it with a statue of a native Askari when there was all the rest of Tanganyika in which to erect such a statue. He expressed the hope that before the statue was unveiled, it might be removed to a more appropriate site in front of the Boma.⁵⁶

Despite this public outcry, the British government turned a deaf ear. The chief secretary was overwhelmed at the thought that such grievances had existed in the colony all along and yet nothing had been reported of them.⁵⁷ Opposition to the location of the monument resulted from the fact that the public was not involved in giving their opinions as to where it should be erected, as this was entirely left to the respective government departments to decide. To give but one example, in 1921 the Town Planning and Building Committee had suggested to the government that the monument be erected either at the place where the bust of Kaiser William I had been or where the Wissmann statue had hitherto stood.⁵⁸ In the end, under Sir Horace Byatt's governorship, the decision was taken in favour of the latter location.⁵⁹

The refusal to change the site of the African memorial created a strong sense of solidarity among the Germans, who had such a keen memory of their departed that they were highly motivated to build memorials to them. In December 1936, for instance, the German community in Morogoro, Tanganyika, expressed their desire to the governor, through the acting regional commissioner, to erect a war memorial in the cemetery existing for their fellow Germans who had fallen during World War I.⁶⁰ The memorial was expected to take the shape of a German Iron Cross Medal, on which's body the following dedication would feature: *UNSEREN HELDEN, Die fuer Deutschlands GROESSE starben* ('Our Heroes who died for the greatness of Germany').⁶¹

56 TNA, No. 2342/7, From Chief Secretary to the Governor, 31.10.1927. *Boma* here means 'headquarters'.

57 *Ibid.*

58 TNA, AB/754/6, from Chairman, Town Planning and Building Committee to Chief Secretary, 22.6.1921.

59 Seen in TNA, No. 23428/10, A letter to the Chief Secretary, 19.12.1927. see also TNA, AB/754/7, from Chief Secretary to the Assistant Director of Works, 13.7.1921.

60 TNA, No. 24678, Erection of War Memorial; Morogoro Cemetery of Germans, 1936.

61 *Ibid.* In a somewhat similar incident, the Germans expressed their happiness about the decision taken by the district commissioner of Bagamoyo in 1931 to renovate their monument. See, for example, Robert Heussler, *British Tanganyika: An Essay and Documents on District Administration* (USA: Duke University Press, 1971), pp. 14–15.



Fig. 4: The Askari Monument in the Center of Dar es Salaam. Photo: Reginald Elias Kirey.

The history of the two monuments outlined above takes us to a further necessary level of discussion. Judging by what we have outlined so far, two interpretations can be made. First, the colonial monuments represented a symbol of victory to the imperial powers. The ability to engage Africans in colonial wars and to make them totally submissive and loyal was a sign of imperial greatness. The Wissmann monument in Dar es Salaam was toppled not because it occupied an important space but because it glorified German imperialism. Second, Africans were, with the help of these monuments, described as beings of inferior intelligence. The panel of the *askari* placed just below the Wissmann statue was presumably meant to describe Africans as the latter's loyal subjects.⁶² As indicated earlier, the unveiling of the Askari monument in Dar es Salaam

62 The issue of Africans being loyal to Germans in colonial Tanganyika has been widely dealt with in many studies. German *askaris* and porters are described as people who, wholeheartedly, fought on the side of Germany during World War I. 'The porters', argues R. F. Eberlie, 'did a difficult and vitally necessary task without a murmur ever having been recorded'. This is what he calls 'the coming together of ruler and subject'. Such comradeship is thought to have blossomed after the suppression of the MajiMaji War. Historians like John Iliffe have written that the period after the latter was a peaceful one in Tanganyika, as no further African uprisings were reported. However, it is historically incorrect to assume that Africans were loyal to Germans for the sake of it. The systematic suppression of African resistances by the Germans starting from the late nineteenth through the early twentieth century was extremely violent. Executions, widespread as they were, served the purpose of instilling fear in the colonial subjects – thus forcing them

did not receive any serious attention from the British government, as it saw no need to organize an unveiling ceremony. Soon after the monument became a thing of the past, as no efforts were made to preserve it.

A writer in the *Tanganyika Times* lamented: '[S]urely a small sum might be allocated by the government to erect a railing round the monument. Such a railing would not only protect, *but would lend dignity to a work of art.*'⁶³ The derogatory tone of this writer speaks for itself. Though the writer of the article was well-aware that it was a monument to the memory of the Africans who died during World War I, he/she did not see anything wrong with such a comment. It is therefore absolutely true that the African memorials were not only intended to honour those Africans who, willingly or unwillingly, fought on the side of warring imperial groups, but also they were beautifully designed to instil a sense of dependence or inferiority in the colonial subjects. One more example illustrates this point. The governor of Kenya, when inaugurating the African memorial in Mombasa on 26 May 1927, delivered a speech with such an air of contempt that we are left with no doubt there was a hidden agenda behind its erection:

Let us today give a special thought to what the Arab and African did for us in the Great War. Let us see in this monument a tribute to those fine qualities of infinite patience, loyalty and devotion, which were displayed by the men to whom this monument is raised. There is an African proverb that iron is not much used without wood. The proverb was exemplified in the war when the successes to which the valour of the Arabs and Africans, which I have endeavoured to describe to you, contributed could not have been secured had it not been for the leadership of the European officers under whom they served.⁶⁴

To stress his point, the governor referred to these *European officers* as 'intelligent men'. This example provides a broader understanding of the colonial ideologies which were implicitly or explicitly attached to such African memorials. To assume that they were only meant to convey messages of honour, affection, commemoration, dignity and com-

to co-operate. As J. K. Nyerere puts it: '[M]emories of the Hehe and MajiMaji wars against the German colonialists, and their ruthless suppression, were deeply engrained in the mind of our people'. See for example, John Iliffe, *Tanganyika Under German Rule 1905–1912*, (London: Syndicate of the Cambridge University Press, 1969) p. 5; R. F. Eberlie, 'The German Achievement in East Africa', *The Journal of Tanganyika Society: Tanganyika Notes and Records*, September (1960), pp. 210–211; J. K. Nyerere, *Freedom and Unity: A Selection from Writings and Speeches, 1952–1965* (Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 2.

63 TNA, No. 23428/33, *Tanganyika Times*, 6.2.1930 (italics added for emphasis).

64 TNA, No. 23428/4, *The Mombasa Times*, 26.5.1927.

radeship vis-à-vis Africans is to definitely make a sweeping and ultimately erroneous generalization. The monuments were officially, of course, said to communicate these kinds of sentiments, but it is also true that there was more to this than met the eye. Colonial monuments in Tanganyika were, wittingly or unwittingly, erected not only for the purpose of perpetuating hegemonic memories of imperialist wars or of colonialism in general, but also of portraying Africans who fought in these battles and who were the victims of Western imperialism as loyalists or stalwarts.

The question which still remains unanswered is: Does current Tanzanian society consider the *askaris* who fought either on the side of the Germans or of the British heroes or not? If the answer is affirmative, then in whose interests were the *askaris* and carriers actually fighting? It should be borne in mind that other forms of anti-colonial heroism have emerged in Tanzania since the end of imperial rule. The inherited colonial institutions were given new names to glorify African heroism. In 1963, for example, the former Princes Margaret Hospital and its ward, Twinning Block, were renamed Muhimbili National Hospital and Kibasila Block, respectively.⁶⁵ Chief Kibasila was among the MajiMaji fighters hanged in Dar es Salaam. The decision to rename the hospital marked a new era of colonial commemoration as other public facilities were later named after anti-colonial heroes. No wonder that the chiefs who fought against German colonial penetration were honoured and commemorated in a similar way. For example, Sina Lane and Sina Secondary School in Moshi commemorate the bravery shown by Chief Sina of Kibosho; in the same way, Mkwawa University College of Education (formerly Mkwawa High School) in Iringa commemorates the heroic deeds of Chief Mkwawa of Kalenga. Over and above this, new memorial sites were established or rather upgraded soon after independence – like Kalenga Memorial Site in Iringa for Chief Mkwawa and MajiMaji Memorial Site in Songea for the fallen heroes of the MajiMaji War.

This chapter has examined colonial heroism as reflected in the erection of monuments in Tanganyika and in post-World War I Germany. We have endeavoured to provide background information on the Wissmann and Askari monuments in Dar es Salaam, and to explain the course of events which preceded the erection and then subsequent removal of the former to Hamburg (eventually). What is apparent from the preceding discussion is that World War I, which ushered in Germany's loss of Tanganyika to Great Britain, led to the removal and re-erection of colonial monuments. This, however, did

65 Raia, *Gazeti la Wilayaya Geita*, May 1963, Toleo No. 38. Kibasila and his colleagues were the MajiMaji fighters who were hanged in Dar es Salaam by the Germans.

not kill the spirit of colonial heroism among Germans who, in the course of the 1920s and 1930s, expected to get their colonies in Africa back. Meanwhile British colonial officials, happy as they were after having been granted Tanganyika as a mandated territory, were determined to do away with monuments glorifying Germany's erstwhile imperial rule there and to erect their own in their place.

As we have shown, this objective was not easily achieved nor did it go unchallenged. The erection of the Askari monument on the former site of the Wissmann one was heavily contested by the German community in Tanganyika. As a matter of fact, the majority of Germans living in the mandated territory supported colonial revivalism.⁶⁶As a result, the Wissmann monument's re-erection in Hamburg revived the spirit of colonial heroism among the Germans living in Tanganyika. However, some 46 years after its inauguration a series of protests by University of Hamburg students demanding its removal bore fruit, in 1968. It was apparent by this time in Germany that any form of colonial glorification could not be tolerated any longer. With the independence of Tanganyika in 1961, the Askari monument remained as a key relic of colonial heroism. While its Wissmann counterpart became the object of extensive scholarly discussion on anti-colonial heroism and at the same time a subject of opposition in Germany, the Askari monument has remained an inherited colonial memorial preserved by the Tanzanian government for its historic value and symbolism.

66 See Michael S. Macoum, *Wrong Place, Right Time: Policing the End of Empire*, (London: The Radcliffe Press, 1996), pp.115–133.