Nancy Rushohora

Remembering the Majimaji Trauma in Tanzania

In: Jürgen Zimmerer/Julian zur Lage (eds): Global Memories of German Colonialism. Hamburg: Hamburg University Press, 2025, https://doi.org/10.15460/hup.269.2123, S. 55–80

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

IMPRESSUM

Bibliographische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek

Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über https://portal.dnb.de abrufbar.

Online-Ausgabe

Die Online-Ausgabe dieses Werkes ist eine Open-Access-Publikation und ist auf den Verlagswebseiten frei verfügbar. Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek hat die Online-Ausgabe archiviert. Diese ist dauerhaft auf dem Archivserver der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek (https://portal.dnb.de) verfügbar.

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

Remembering the Majimaji Trauma in Tanzania

Nancy Rushohora

Introduction

Silence enters historical production at four critical moments: in the making of sources, in the making of archives, in the making of narratives and in the making of history. Silence in African history is a common phenomenon, thus an African viewpoint on resistance to colonial rule has long been overdue. The process of making Majimaji history padlocked a big silence in sources, in archives, in narratives and in recounting the atrocities which the Germans committed between 1904 and 1908 in Tanzania and the inflicted traumas which have henceforth affected its communities. The simple definition of the Majimaji War explains it as an act of resistance to German colonialism in Tanzania initiated by the ritualistic leader Kinjekitile Ngwale, who provided water to spray, rub or bathe oneself with as immunity against the German bullet. The eastern and southern parts of Tanzania, the regions which were ignored by the colonialists became the battleground. From its inception, the term 'Majimaji' mimicked a cry of the Tanzanian warriors who were instructed by Kinjekitile Ngwale to scream the words 'Maji! Maji! Maji!' whenever the Germans shot at them. Allegedly, the scream would have turned the bullets to water (*maji* means 'water' in Kiswahili). It is from these words that the war acquired its name.

The German eyewitnesses to the war called the Majimaji a 'revolt', an 'uprising' and a 'rebellion'. These terminologies are unqualified as they allude to treason by a country's citizens. A true rebellion, for example, may occur if those who rise are a body of legally constituted citizens against a legally established government. This is obviously so, because it is unrealistic to expect that a freedom movement would be called as such by those it opposed.[1] From the affected communities' vantage point, however, evidenced in local languages, the Majimaji is described as *ngondo/vita* – both translated as 'war'. For example, *Ngondo ya Mase Mase in Kimatumbi* and *Vita ya Majimaji* in Kiswahili are both translated as 'the Majimaji War'. With the exception of the colonial period when

1 Gilbert Clement Kamana Gwassa, *The Outbreak and Development of the Maji Maji War, 1905–1907*, Dissertation (Dar es Salaam, University of Dar es Salaam, 1973).

calling the Majimaji a war was a punishable offence,[2] at no other point in Tanzania's history has the Majimaji been referred to as a revolt, uprising or rebellion.

The writing of the term 'Majimaji' was promulgated by colonial-era publications rather than the African oral testimonies which use it today. Different forms of writing have been adopted: as two separate entities 'Maji Maji'[3]; with an intervening hyphen 'Maji-Maji'[4]; and as a single word 'Majimaji'.[5] There are some languages in which its orthography and pronunciation are different while in others the two are the same.[6] English serves as a good example of the former, Kiswahili of the latter. 'Majimaji' as a term retains the Kiswahili meaning and identity while reflecting the original cry which the fighters in question articulated. This article abides by Kiswahili syntax where compounds are written as one word: in this case, Majimaji and not Maji Maji.

In remembering a contested African colonial resistance and inflicted trauma such as that of the Majimaji, which over time has been conceived as resistance, heritage and memorial, is very complicated. Such difficulties arise for three main reasons. First, remembering the Majimaji War involves memories, which are dynamic as they range from individual to collective forms of remembrance. Second, the Majimaji War heritage involves historicizing the power and agency which led to the formulation of memorials. Third, a significant part of resistance and war is intertwined with questions of political power and propaganda – phenomenon which do not necessarily immediately and directly generate material remains.[7]

Background

The Majimaji was not the only instance of colonial resistance in Tanzania, and the Germans did not win control of the latter on a silver plate. They had to destroy the power of

2 Yusufu Lawi, 'Pros and Cons of Patriotism in the Teaching of the Maji Maji War in Tanzania Schools', *Journal of Historical Association of Tanzania*, 6/2 (2010), pp. 66–90.

3 B. B. Mapunda, 'Re-examining the Maji Maji War in Ungoni with a Blend of Archaeology and Oral History.', in: James Leonard Giblin and Jamie Monson (eds), *Maji Maji. Lifting the Fog of War*, Jamie Monson (Leiden, Boston: BRILL, 2010), pp. 220–238; Felicitas Becker, 'Traders, 'Big Men' and Prophets: Political Continuity and Crisis in the Maji Maji Rebellion in Southeast Tanzania', *The Journal of African History*, 45/1 (2004), pp. 1–22.

4 Dominik Schaller, 'From Conquest to Genocide: Colonial Rule in German Southwest Africa and German East Africa', in A. Dirk Moses (ed.), *Empire, Colony, Genocide. Conquest, Occupation, and Subaltern Resistance in World History* (New York, NY: Berghahn Books, 2008), pp. 303–324; John p. Moffett, *Handbook of Tanganyika* (Dar es Salaam: Government Printer, 1958).

5 Elzear Ebner, *The History of the Wangoni and their Origin in the South African Bantu Tribes* (Peramiho: Benedictine Publications Ndanda, 2009).

6 John Lyons, *Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968).

7 Si Vencl, 'War and Warfare in Archaeology', *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology*, 3/2 (1984), pp. 116–132.

the chiefs and in the process encountered more than 50 instances of resistance between 1889 and 1896.[8] The earliest major ones occurred in the coastal region in three different chiefdoms, being led by Abushiri Salim, Bwana Heri and Hassan Omar Makunganya respectively. The coastal resistances led by Abushiri Salim and Bwana Heri occurred almost spontaneously in August and September 1888.[9] Thus, the Germans recognized the coastal resistances as the Abushiri War or *Araberaufstand,* meaning the 'Arab Revolt' (Pike 1986).[10]

The outbreak of the Abushiri Salim and Bwana Heri resistances resulted in the arrival of the Germans on the coast and establishment of their authority there. German occupation threatened the existence of Abushiri Salim's and Bwana Heri's power economically and politically. Abushiri Salim was an Arab and a plantation owner, while Bwana Heri was of the Zigua ethnic group and someone who collected tolls from the caravans which passed through the town of Muheza inland from Tanga. Hassan Omari Makunganya led the Kilwa coastal resistance in 1894, almost at the end of the Abushiri war. This made the coastal iterations look like a continuation of the same resistance covering almost the whole coast of mainland Tanzania, north to south. Sources informing us about these wars are mainly archival, ones presenting the aftermath of the war as tragic. Abushiri Salim was arrested and hanged in Bagamoyo on 15 December 1889, Hassan Omar Makunganya was arrested and hanged in Kivinje on 15 November 1895 while there is no evidence that Bwana Heri was either arrested or hanged[11] – although this is a form of information which one may expect from the archives. The fact that the latter are silent about the death of one of the prominent leaders of the resistance poses a major challenge to contemporary scholarship.

In the northern part of Tanzania, especially among the Chagga of Kilimanjaro, resistance was not the first reaction of the local chiefs. While hoping for material rewards, chiefs such as Rindi welcomed the Germans – who established their first residence on his land. Using this alliance, the Germans established their rule in Kilimanjaro and mounted their flags throughout all the Chagga chiefdoms. One of the famous and strongest chiefs of the Chagga was Sina Kisaro Masele of Kibosho, who resisted German rule and pulled down the German flag. In February 1891, the Germans laid siege to Chief Sina's fort for

8 Andrew Coulson, *Tanzania*: *A Political Economy* (2nd edn., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).
9 Isaria n. Kimambo, *A Political History of the Pare of Tanzania, c. 1500–1900* (Nairobi: East Africa Publishing House, 1969).
10 Charles Pike, 'History and Imagination. Swahili Literature and Resistance to German Language Imperialism in Tanzania, 1885–1910', *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 19/2 (1986), pp. 201–233.
11 Kimambo, *A Political History of the Pare of Tanzania,* (above, n. 9).

four days. His men fought back until he managed to escape. He was later induced into signing a treaty with the Germans to guarantee peace in his chiefdom.[12]

Similarly in the western part of Tanzania, there were small and scattered resistances all over the region. In 1885, the centre of resistance was in Tabora under Chief Isike who had built a good army and levied taxes from caravans passing via his chiefdom.[13] Chief Isike, who mobilized between 7,000 and 11,000 *askaris* ('police/soldiers'), made the Germans consider him one of the most dangerous chiefs in the entire colony.[14] During the resistance, Chief Isike confiscated property and forced out the White Fathers missionaries of Kipalapala before the Germans forces concentrated on breaking his power.[15] After years of sporadic conflict, the German army stormed Chief Isike's fortress in 1892. He either committed suicide by blowing up his gunpowder store or was hanged by the Germans after the explosion.[16] Other resistances occurred in Ugoro, Kilimatinde, Mwanza, Bukoba and Kigoma. An extremely important instance of the genocide committed against the Haya of northern Tanzania and concealed by the Germans is reported by Peter Schmidt.[17] Both the massacre and the testimonies of trauma inflicted on these people are missing in German records and Tanzania archives; these events have faded from memory in contemporary oral accounts, too.

More often than not, analyses of African colonial resistance have helped inform other investigations of indigenous responses to colonial rule beyond the continent for purposes of comparison and theorization.[18] Patterns of African resistance were complex. There were cases of successful integration in the early history of colonialism, where improved forms of co-operation and mobilization against the colonizers were developed, whereas other African resistances to the colonial invasion were mass reactions cutting across ethnic boundaries and being led by millenarian figures. Virtually every sort of African

12 Valence Valerian Silayo, 'Pre-colonial Ethnic Wars and the colonization of Northern Tanzania from 1800 to 1950 CE: The Case of Chagga of Kilimanjaro', *Archaeologies*, 12 (2016), pp. 163–181.

13 Stephen J. Rockel, *Caravan Porters of the Nyika, Labour, Culture, and Society in Nineteenth Century Tanzania*, Dissertation (Toronto, University of Toronto, 1997).

14 David Pizzo, 'Cunning Tactics. Indigenous Responses to the Imposition of German Colonial Rule In East Africa', *History Research*, 2/2 (2012), pp. 73–109.

15 Kevin Shillington, *Encyclopedia of African history*, 3 vols. (New York [u. a.]: Routledge, 2005).

16 Aylward Shorter, 'Nyungu-Ya-Mawe and the "Empire of the Ruga-Rugas"', *The Journal of African History*, 9/2 (1968), pp. 235–259, here p. 252.

17 Peter R. Schmidt, 'Contests between heritage and history in Tanganyika/Tanzania: Insights arising from community-based heritage research', *Journal of Community Archaeology & Heritage*, 4/2 (2017), pp. 85–100.

18 Peter J. Hempenstall, 'Resistance in the German Pacific Empire: Towards a Theory of Early Colonial Response', *The Journal of Polynesian Society*, 84/1 (1975), pp. 5–24.

society resisted colonialism.[19] Some African countries like Ethiopia were engaged in a severe struggle to protect their areas not only against imperialist encroachment by European powers but also against aggressive African neighbours like the Mahdist State of Sudan.[20] Examples of mass resistance in Africa include the Chimurenga in Zimbabwe, Asante in Ghana, Nama and Herero in Namibia, Zulu in South Africa, Giriama in Kenya and Chilembwe in Malawi. The archives remain the main sources of information about these encounters, although descendants' narratives have potential to shed light on this crucial past too.

'Ideology' is one of the key components of African resistance. The term relates to the exercise of specific group interests, associated with discourse or conscious management of ideation. Ideology is a matter of belief or conscious imagination which rationally mediates all action upon the world, while as a discourse it entails an essentialist theory of meaning in terms of which ideas are either true or distorted.[21] Most of the African cases of resistance were guided by ideology. For example, the Majimaji War was guided by the *maji* ideology. The Chimurenga had a Mwari (supreme creator) cult.[22] Samori Toure and the Mahdist war had Islamic jihad ideologies.[23] Ideologies were also influential among the Zulu, who referred to *umKhosi (the king)*.[24] These ideologies were sometimes borrowed from or influenced by the neighbours; for example, the Mahdist ideologies spread across a vast region encompassing the Islamic communities stretching from the Horn of Africa to West Africa.[25] The main function of ideology was the unification and mobilization of large masses of people from numerous political units.

Looking particularly at the Majimaji, Chimurenga and Samori Toure, societies which shared an experience of adversity achieved mass organization against colonialism. In the

19 Colleen Roach, 'Cultural Imperialism and Resistance in Media Theory and Literary Theory', *Media, Culture and Society*, 19/1 (1997), pp. 47–66.

20 Hassan Ahmed Ibrahim, 'Mahdist Risings Against the Condominium Government in the Sudan, 1900–1927', *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 12/3 (1979), pp. 440–471.

21 Jean Comaroff, *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance: The Culture and History of a South African People* (Reprint, Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2013).

22 Robert Ross, 'African Resistance to the Imposition of Colonialism: A Historiographical Review', *Itinerario*, 3/2 (1979), pp. 89–96.

23 Sengulo A. Msellemu, 'Common Motives of Africa's Anti-Colonial Resistance in 1890–1960', *Social Evolution and History*, 12/2 (2013), pp. 143–155; G. n. Sanderson, 'Conflict and Co-operation between Ethiopia and the Mahdist State, 1884–1898', *Sudan Notes and Records* 50 (1969), pp. 15–40.

24 John Laband, *Kingdom in Crisis: The Zulu Response to the British Invasion of 1879* (War, armed forces, and society, Manchester, New York, New York: Manchester University Press; Distributed exclusively in the USA and Canada by St. Martin's Press, 1992); Adrian Greaves, *Crossing the Buffalo: The Zulu War of 1879* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2012).

25 Ibrahim, 'Mahdist Risings Against the Condominium Government in the Sudan', (above, n. 18).

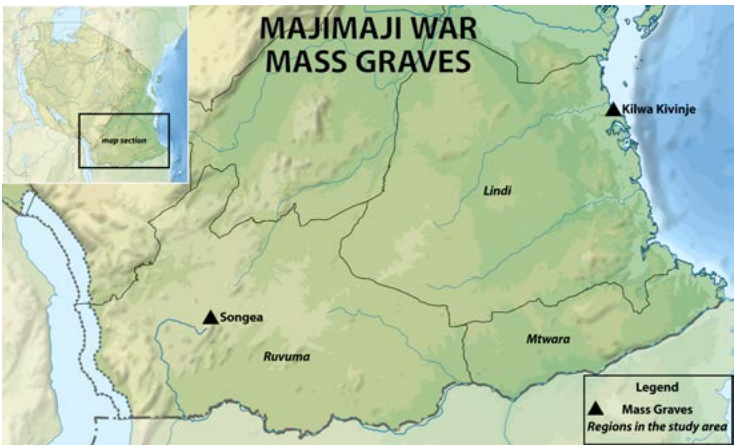

Fig. 5: Majimaji War mass graves. Based on research by Nancy Rushohora, Map of Tanzania (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tanzania_relief_location_map.svg) by Sémhur, CC BY-SA 4.0 https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/deed.de, Adaption for this volume by Maik Furmanek, University of Hamburg, CC BY-SA 4.0 https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/deed.de.

case of the Majimaji, the people of southern Tanzania spoke a number of different languages and were antagonistic to the Ngoni.[26] In Chimurenga, numerous traditionally hostile groups had fought together against the whites; the war itself had different names as the Ndebele call it 'Umvukela' while the Shona term it 'Chimurenga'.[27] Samori Toure's resistance grew out of his harsh regime, thus he forced his neighbour's collaboration in resistance against colonialism.[28] This was possible because of the ability of ideology and rituals of the area to motivate, facilitate and coordinate resistance.[29] In these great resistances, not only religious leaders were of importance but also African resistance was often expressed in messianic movements and religious upheavals.[30] Archival sources misrepresent these ideologies, and thus research into individual beliefs or cults is of paramount importance. German eyewitnesses, for example, thought that the sophisticated organization of the Maji-

26 James Leonard Giblin and Jamie Monson (eds), *Maji Maji*: *Lifting the Fog of War* (Leiden, Boston: BRILL, 2010).
27 S. Makuvaza and V. Makuvaza, 'Empty Promises and False Hopes: The Case of Matobo Hills Cultural World Heritage Landscape, Southwestern Zimbabwe', *Heritage and Society*, 5/1 (2012), pp. 9–34.
28 Brian J. Peterson, 'History, Memory and the Legacy of Samori in Southern Mali', *The Journal of African History*, 49/2 (2008), pp. 261–279.
29 Ross, 'African Resistance to the Imposition of Colonialism' (above, n. 22).
30 Donald Denoon and Adam Kuper, 'Nationalist Historians in Search of a Nation: The "New Historiography" in Dar es Salaam', *African Affairs*, 69/277 (1970), pp. 329–349.

maji War could not have come from Africans themselves in being unqualified for such an endeavour. Eduard Haber, the then chief secretary in German East Africa, claimed that the development of the Majimaji was controlled in a logical manner by experienced strategists. Arabs, Muslims, missionaries and German allies such as discharged *askaris* were credited with being the masterminds of the war instead (Gwassa 1969).[31] This implied that Majimaji societies could not have been capable of such a feat. Yet Haber was unable to explain why and how discharged *askaris* or individual Arabs might have decided to fight against the Germans and how they (or he) could mobilize such a vast population.

Memory

'Memory', 'memorial' and 'memorialization' are three important terms.[32] Although they may sound confusing and often stand for the same concept, 'memory', each of the three words presents a unique form of meaning which can neither be substituted for nor merged with the rest. 'Memory' is concerned with the ability to remember information, experiences and other people.[33] It is a cognitive device which, while used by particular individuals, can only be understood as a social process catalysing emotions, senses, participation, pain, joy and togetherness.[34] A 'memorial' is an object created for purposes of remembering a person or people who have died in a particular place. It is normally a statue, a stone, a building or a structure put in place to remind the viewer of people who died in an important past event or to mark a famous person's death.[35] A memorial can also be a landscape without any human-made feature but recognized by the community as a marker of a particular event. 'Memorialization' is the process of

31 Gwassa, Gilbert Kamana, 'African Methods of Warfare during Maji Maji War 1905–1907', *Social Science Council of the University of East Africa*, 1 (1969), pp. 256–272.

32 Wulf Kansteiner, 'Finding Meaning in Memory: A Methodological Critique of Collective Memory Studies', *History and Theory*, 41/2 (2002), pp. 179–197; Katharine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone (eds), *Contested Pasts: The Politics of Memory* (Routledge studies in memory and narrative; First issued in paperback, London, New York: Routledge, 2003); Alessandro Portelli, 'So Much Depends on a Red Bus, or, Innocent Victims of the Liberating Gun', *Oral History*, 34/2 (2006), pp. 29–43; Helen Alexandra Keremedjiev, *The Ethnography of On-Site Interpretation and Commemoration Practices. Place-Based Cultural Heritages at the Bear Paw, Big Hole Little Bighorn, and Rosebud Battlefields*, Dissertation (Montana, University of Montana, 2013).

33 Pierre Nora, 'Between Memory and History. Les Lieux de Mémoire', *Representations*, 26 (1989), pp. 7–24.

34 Mario I. Aguilar, 'The Archaeology of Memory and the Issue of Colonialism', *Biblical Theology Bulletin*, 35/2 (2005), pp. 60–66.

35 Debbora Battaglia, 'The Body in the Gift: Memory and Forgetting in Sabarl Mortuary Exchange', *American Ethnologist*, 91 (1992), pp. 3–19; Edmon Castell and Sònia Roura, 'The Thirty-Years War, 1914–1945: Mapping the Battlefields of the Past for the Construction of the European Future', in Peter Doyle and Matthew R. Bennett (eds), *Fields of Battle. Terrain in Military History* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2002), pp. 143–148.

remembering.[36] It is the act of creating agents which will continue to exist and remind people of somebody who died or something gone. An example of memorialization is a commemoration ceremony.[37]

Tanzania can be said to have experienced three broad colonial phases which ran for over 85 years between 1860 and 1945: the 1860–1890 period / pre-colonial phase; the 1890–1917 period / German colonial phase; and the 1917–1945 period / British colonial mandate. Among other things, the second phase was dominated by the brutal establishment of colonial rule and extensive warfare. A lesser-known mammoth of Tanzanian history is the majority societies that resisted German colonialism: the Abushiri coastal resistance of 1888; the Mkwawa-Hehe resistance of 1891; the Nyamwezi-Isike resistance of 1892; the Zinza-Rwoma resistance of 1892; the Makunganya-Kilwa resistance 1894; the Buha-Heru resistance of 1896; the Machemba-Yao resistance of 1899; the Nyiramba-Gidamausa resistance of 1902; and the Makongoro-Musoma resistance of 1905–1906. These wars were followed by the Majimaji one of 1904–1908, which was more extensive than its predecessors in terms of organization and area coverage. The Majimaji War covered more than 20 ethnic groups and seven regions of present-day mainland Tanzania: Lindi, Mtwara, Dar es Salaam, Pwani, Njombe, Ruvuma and Morogoro.

Colonialism severely and often times brutally disrupted the lives of locals. The wounds of colonialism among the people of Tanzania, especially those living in southern Tanzania, have remained permanent and awake. This is because most of those who died were never buried and their graves are absent in their communities. To the Tanzanian communities, graves are shrines. Taking care of ancestors' graves is a practice of family pacification. Many African burial rites begin with the sending away of the departed with a request that they do not bring trouble to the living, and they end with a plea for the strengthening of life on Earth and all that favours it. According to the Tanzanian theologian Anthony Chilumba, funerary rites simultaneously mourn for the dead and celebrate life in all its abundance. Funerals are a time for a community to be in solidarity and to regain its identity. In some communities, this may include dancing and merriment for all but the immediate family, thus limiting or even denying the destructive powers of death and providing the deceased

36 Mary Nooter Roberts and Allen F. Roberts, 'Memory. Luba Art and the Making of History', *African Arts*, 29/1 (1996), pp. 22–35; Gavin Lucas, 'Forgetting the Past', *Anthropology Today*, 13/1 (1997), pp. 8–14; Anna Green, 'Individual Remembering and 'Collective Memory': Theoretical Presuppositions and Contemporary Debates', *Oral History*, 32/2 (2004), pp. 35–44.

37 Elisabeth Domansky, 'Kristallnacht, The Holocaust and German Unity: The Meaning of November 9 as an Anniversary in Germany', *History and Memory*, 4/1 (1992), pp. 60–94.

with 'light feet' for the journey to the other world. The absence of graves for those forebears who died during the colonial wars can never be erased in Tanzanian minds. As told by local families, the Germans also repatriated bodies/ashes and everything that was buried in the Tanzanian soil. This not only reiterated the colonizer-colonized dichotomy but also emphasized that the period of imperial rule is unforgettable.

Missing graves aside, some remnants of the wars do still remain. Weaponry in existence across the country, like in Mikindani and Kilwa, remind people of the severity of the colonial encounters, hardships they had to endure and deaths that took their forebears. Some places became the scenes of battle. Nyangao, Lukuledi, Namabengo, Kibata and Mtumbei are some such sites which experienced both the Majimaji War and the First World War. These sites have ditches and trenches, which are typical features of the First World War, lying parallel to hills and escarpments. Their peoples consider the colonial wars both tragic and European calamities without exception. To them, the name of the war does not matter and they do not differentiate time or battle; they were colonial calamities! Whilst in Tanzanian history books emphasis has been placed on the political, economic, social and cultural impacts of colonialism, the contemporary societies consider the wars as the source of the droughts and environmental upheavals which prevail today. In Lukuledi, for example, before the colonial wars – especially the First World War – the area was irrigated by the Lukuledi River – a prominent waterway with a total length of 160 kilometres, rising from the boundary between the Lindi and Mtwara regions. According to the local people, in the course of the First World War the British bombed the area, which resulted in drought. The people demanded reparation, whereby a dam was constructed near Lukuledi mission to mitigate water shortages.

Colonial wars have continued to kill until very recently. During my own reconnaissance, I encountered a bullet casing (see Image 3) which was identified to me by a retired military officer (former head of the Geography department of Stella Maris Mtwara University College) as being from a British rifle. Although I intended to collect Majimaji memories and trace archaeological evidence of the war so as to document its battlefield sites, First World War memories in Nyangao surpassed those of the Majimaji War. Apart, for example, from the First World War weapons which have remained in the former German *boma* ('headquarters') of Mikindani and Kilwa (see Image 2) as memorials, the local people encounter bullet casings and even bombs in their agricultural activities. An instance was mentioned where an ironsmith took a bomb unknowingly of what it contained. To him it was a heavy metal which he intended to heat and smith. Upon heating, the bomb exploded and killed him on the spot. People wonder how to interpret the

Fig. 6: The German cannon at Kilwa Kivinje, 2020. Photo: Nancy Rushohora.

Fig. 7: Bullet casing, 2020. Photo: Nancy Rushohora.

cause of his death; is it the First World War still in progress? Or is it the after-effect of the war and the enemy unknown? Memories of the German wars in Tanzania are thus present and traumatic.

With or without memorials and commemorative ceremonies, the colonial-era wars affected Tanzanian lives tremendously. It is illogical to ignore this past, which is still eating away at the psychology and doings of Tanzanians on their soil. These wars devastated the landscape, caused hunger and brought annihilation. Memory is the last thing remaining in Tanzanian hands. Thus, distortion can result in half-truth or complete obliteration of their own stance on colonial warfare.

The Majimaji memories can be assigned to three levels of agents: the individual, the small group and the collective. Individual Majimaji memories are those formed by the remaining descendants of the leaders of the war, of the known warriors and of the *maji* agents. Small groups' memories involve villages, districts and the regional scale. Collective memory encompasses teachings about Majimaji as part of the national-history project and the creation of official commemoration days, activities and rituals. Jennifer Cole asserts that there is no spontaneous memory.[38] We must deliberately create archives, maintain anniversaries and organize celebrations because such activities no longer occur organically.

Majimaji War studies are far more important now due to the decline of actual memory.[39] Some families of the Majimaji warriors forget or ignore the war memories while

38 Jennifer Cole, *Forget colonialism?: Sacrifice and the Art of Memory in Madagascar* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

39 Jamie Monson, 'Claims to History and the Politics of Memory in Southern Tanzania, 1940–1960', *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 33/3 (2000), pp. 543–565.

others are keen to remember them. The family of Abdallah Mchimaye for example, who was the Majimaji warrior responsible for the killing of Bishop Cassian Spiss and his associates, did not appear to be aware of their grandfather's participation in the Majimaji War. In an interview in Liwale, Abdallah's grandson Hussein Mchimaye explained that he was unaware of the pivotal role that the warrior had played in the Majimaji War. According to Father Anthony Chilumba, the parish priest of Liwale, the family is probably hiding its identity due to fear that they may be hunted and killed by the bishop's family and the Catholic communities in seeking revenge. On the other hand, the family of Songea Mbano, the sub-chief and war general of the Ngoni, keeps alive memories of both the war and of their grandfather. According to his grandson Ally Songea Mbano, the family performs rituals at his refuge cave and participate in the Songea commemoration events every year.

Memorial

Memories of ancestors are created and sustained in what Pierre Nora called *lieux de memoire* or 'sites of memory'.[40] The latter are equivalent to memorials. The memorial treasures of the Majimaji War, which were intentionally placed for the purpose of commemoration, are very few in number. A survey of 26 Majimaji battlefield sites in Ruvuma, Lindi and Mtwara indicates only six memorials of the war in Nyangao, Mikukuyumbu, Nandete, Peramiho, Songea and Kilwa Kivinje. Yet, the available memorial obelisks pose a great challenge. With the exception of the Songea, Nandete and Kilwa Kivinje memorials which are government monuments, the rest are missionaries' memorials and pilgrimage sites for the purpose of commemorating individuals or groups of missionaries who died in particular areas. The Nyangao memorial, for example, was installed at the death site of Sister Walburga Diepolder OSB; Peramiho for Reverend Father Fransiskus; and Mikukuyumbu for Bishop Cassian Spiss, the two reverend sisters and brothers respectively. Obviously, the missionaries' memorials single out people with importance for them rather than all those who died there. With these memorials, the complete picture of the war is obscured.

Second, the memorial in Kilwa Kivinje is controversial. It is located at the exact point where there was a 'mango tree used for hanging fighters' (*mwembe kinyonga*) during German colonialism. According to the Antiquities Officer in Kilwa, Mohamed Chidole, the mango tree dried up and collapsed in 1996 and thus the memorial is the only identity

40 Nora, 'Between Memory and History', (above, n. 33).

marker remaining. While other Majimaji warriors – including Kinjekitile Ngwale – were hanged at Muhoro, the names of the people under the *mwembe kinyonga* memorial include those who died during the coastal resistances prior to the Majimaji War. One of them is Chief Hassan bin Omari Makunganya, who, as noted earlier, was executed in 1895. His death was then followed by the mass execution of Kilwa elites after he was found with numerous letters in his possession on his arrest which depicted his conversations with other Kilwa inhabitants.[41] Others who were executed and are memorialized at *mwembe kinyonga* are Abdallah Waziri, Maalim Mwitta, Mzee Mandanda, Bakari Kimbangwa Kipukuswa, Mzee Ahmad Wanjale and Mzee Malenganya. The Majimaji memorials have thus combined different heroes and wars into singular monuments. The Majimaji museum in Songea, for example, commemorates the Kagera war heroes of the Songea battalion who died on their way home after the Tanzania-Uganda war of 1978–1979. Thus, the available Majimaji memorials have collectively commemorated different but adjoining events.

The reason for incorporating Kilwa resistance warriors with the Majimaji ones is unknown. The commemoration memorials have sometimes been influenced by government officials. Arguably what is publicly memorialized is selected by those in power, which reflects the interests of official elites, of men rather than women and of dominant rather than subordinate groups.[42] However memorials can also embody instrumental interpretations of national myths, with different purposes and popular resonance because the initiative in commemorating military sacrifice in national terms is often taken from below by a variety of social groups.[43] Myth creation is also a recurring process, and there can be a considerable time gap between the end of a war and the crystallization of a hegemonic narrative in which episodes of cowardice, internal conflicts and acts of collaboration are forgotten or reinterpreted.[44] The Kilwa memorial's amalgamation of its warriors in the same monument is not recorded. The addition of information to the Kilwa memorial is, therefore, of paramount importance to enhance the memorial's meaning and purpose. The Kilwa Islamic community has secured a plot near the memorial and intends to establish a commemorative mosque. The addition of information to the existing and planned memorial is important to help better provide awareness of the appropriate meaning of it.

41 Becker, 'Traders, "Big Men" and Prophets' (above, n. 3).
42 John R. Gillis (ed.), *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994).
43 John Hutchinson, 'Warfare and the Socialization of Nations: The Meanings, Rituals and Politics of National Remembrance', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 38/2 (2009), pp. 401–417.
44 Ibid.

Third, the museum and memorial of Songea are affected by propaganda. Memorials on this scale are dictated in part by the media and government bodies, which can choose to represent a memorial as symbolic of the conflict in question in general.[45] The Songea museum and memorial offers strong evidence of the Majimaji War and it is well commemorated not only by the structures but also by the communities surrounding them who cherish these memories immensely. The Songea community initiatives to put up a war memorial resulted in the building of wooden memorial / hanging posts in 1980 and later a concrete memorial on the government's initiative in 2006. As it is the only well-organized memorial, however, the majority of Tanzanians have come to narrowly associate the Majimaji events only with their Songea dimensions. Nandete has a well-built obelisk which came into use in 2010, but the remoteness of the area and poor infrastructure have rendered it unknown. Ngarambi, the home of Kinjekitile Ngwale and source of *maji*, has no memorial. Communities' demand for such memorials is very high. It is therefore important to install these memorials for a comprehensive elaboration of the Majimaji War's scale and significance.

Memorialization

Telling the story of a nation's past is highly political, involving struggles over whose stories will be remembered and preserved and whose will be repressed or forgotten.[46] Individuals and groups contest who has the right to represent the past and whose memories will become institutionalized.[47] The Majimaji memorialization is facilitated by the Remembrance Day ceremony which has been conducted in the Ruvuma region since 1980. The event takes place on the 27th February annually, remembering the day when more than 68 leaders and warriors in Ungoni were publically hanged by the Germans. Symbolically, the event has been used as a commemoration of the Majimaji War throughout southern Tanzania. Regional representatives from the areas concerned also participate in the commemoration ceremony.

Another form of memorialization involves the use of songs in commemoration of particular battlefield sites. Archaeological monuments and battlefield landscapes have

45 Gabriel Moshenska, 'Sales of Memory in the Archaeology of the Second World War', *Papers from the Institute of Archaeology University of London*, 17 (2006), pp. 308–362.

46 Cheryl Natzmer, 'Remembering and Forgetting: Creative Expression and Reconciliation in Post-Pinochet Chile', in Jacob Climo and Maria G. Cattell (eds), *Social Memory and History. Anthropological Perspectives* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2002), pp. 161–180.

47 Ibid.

attracted folklore and songs which are important factors in the monuments' continuing histories.[48] Some of the Majimaji battlefield sites are thus remembered in song. For example, the Muhuru battlefield site of the Mwera is commemorated in their songs which accompany tribal dances. One goes as follows:[49]

Mwera/Literary meaning

Mwera	Literary meaning
Chorus: Shionako sho ndi?	Chorus: What do we hear over there?
All: Mauti ku Ng'ulu	All: Death at Ng'ulu
Mauti gagomba askari	Guns fired by soldiers
Kwia kwagombela Wamwera kuona hasara	At the Mwera ruthlessly
Mchunu kumtanduwanga,	We should not provoke Europeans
juna jwa ngomo	Because some are very cruel

Considering written literature an archaeological source is but a recent phenomenon.[50] In African societies, literary works which include folklore, songs, idioms and riddles suggest the structure of people's lives, actions, movements and use of the local landscape.[51] Songs can be representative of individual and collective agency in a particular setting.[52] Although the individual participants change and the song can thus be modified, they provide the structure of commemoration – having the ability to transcend generations,[53] while holding up the past as an example of how people should live.[54] As Jamie Monson writes, 'the legend of Majimaji is magnificent, but the truth is even more interesting'.[55]

48 Martin Brown and Pat Bowen, 'The last Refuge of the Faeries: Archaeology and Folklore', in Amy Gazin-Schwartz and Cornelius J. Holtorf (eds), *Archaeology and Folklore* (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 255–273.

49 Aidan K. Kalembo, 'An Account of the Maji Maji Rising in the Lukuledi Valley', *Maji Maji Research Project Collected Papers* 7/1 (1968).

50 James Symonds, 'Songs Remembered in Exile? Integrating Unsung Archieves of Highland Life', in Amy Gazin-Schwartz and Cornelius J. Holtorf (eds), *Archaeology and Folklore* (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 106–128.

51 Peter R. Schmidt and Jonathan R. Walz, 'Re-representing African Pasts through Historical Archaeology`, *American Antiquity*, 72/1 (2007), pp. 53–70.

52 Symonds, 'Song Remembered in Exile', (above, n. 50), p. 124.

53 Ibid., p. 123.

54 Paul A. Shackel and David A. Gadsby, '"I wish for Paradise": Memory and Class in Hampden, Baltimore?', in: Chip. Colwell-Chanthaphonh and T. J. Ferguson, (eds) *Collaboration in Archaeological Practice* (New York: Altamira Press, 2008), pp. 225–242, here p. 230.

55 Jamie Monson, 'War of Words: The Narrative Efficacy of Medicine in the Maji Maji War', in James Leonard Giblin and Jamie Monson (eds.), *Maji Maji. Lifting the Fog of War*, (Leiden, Boston: BRILL, 2010), pp. 33–69.

The Aftermath

Countless Tanzanians who were deemed guilty of resistance to the imposition of colonial rule between 1890 and 1912 were either killed without due process or handed over to the executioner following conviction by court-martial. In 1905, for example, the Dar es Salaam administrative headquarters, constructed in the 1860s, were converted into a jail holding 200 Abushiri – coastal-resistance prisoners. Corporal punishment – particularly whipping (*kiboko,* also stemming from the Germans use of hippo's skin, which is known as *kiboko* in Kiswahili), execution and incarceration – went hand in hand as instruments of the colonial state. These instruments affected both the bodies and minds of the colonized. Colonial punishments had a major impact, bringing about the destruction of the jurisdiction, culture, identity and dignity of local communities.

The fate of Hassan Omar Makunganya, who was, as noted, arrested and hanged in Kivinje on 15 November 1895, is important to bring up here. Up until the writing of this article, both oral and historical accounts of Makunganya stopped immediately after his execution. Nevertheless, a number of factors make the continuation of Makunganya's history relevant. First, the inscription of his name on an emancipation memorial constructed in the 1970s to commemorate the Majimaji War heroes and heroines of Kilwa, who were executed by the Germans almost ten years after his demise. Second, there is a story beyond Makunganya's execution involving the removal of his remains from Tanzania to Germany and later of their trade to the United States. Such exchange between the Germans and US museums – the former being the sellers and the latter the buyers who benefitted (and still do) from colonial plunder – enhances our understanding of colonial power. Moreover, the disappearance of Makunganya's memory in both Kilwa and Lindi among his descendants is attributed to the aftermath of such plunder, where mourning empty graves becomes insignificant and the loss of the loved one perpetual unlike where a decent burial is accorded and communication between the living and the dead warranted.

The Skull of Makunganya

Colonial records have it that after the execution of Makunganya remains were never buried but rather transported to Germany for racial studies. A military doctor known as 'Simon' examined Makunganya's body. His skull was then sent to Berlin to Felix von Luschan, who was the head of the Africa section at the Völkerkundemuseum (Ethnological Museum). Von Luschan held two different collections of human remains: the

Fig. 8: Opened grave at Kilwa Kivinje, 2022. Photo: Nancy Rushohora.

official collection of the museum called 'S-Sammlung' still in Berlin today. The second was his private teaching collection. After von Luschan's death, his private collection was sold to New York and is held by the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) as the 'Luschan Collection'. The skull in question was part of the private collection. It was given the number 4728, and is still held by the AMNH at present. The museum proves the availability of the remains. The related procedure and funding, however, remain the sole responsibility of the demanding country. This is contradictory, as the latter was never involved in negotiation for the removal of these remains in the first place. Why should the return then not be seen as an act of social justice – returning the remains to their original soil? Probably this is a question that will remain unanswered for many years to come.

Back home, the name 'Makunganya' is fading from the historical records owing to this bodily appropriation. Chief Makunganya's name is, though, inscribed on the emancipation monument created in the 1970s together with the Majimaji War victims of the same region (see Image 5). This inclusion is contested not only because it is misplaced but also due to having been used to cover up the trading of his skull, which is here argued to constitute a deliberate act of dehumanization and shaming of the African body. The memorial monument's construction was originally the result of the Chama cha Mapinduzi ('Party of the Revolution') political movement's attempts to commemorate specif-

Fig. 9: The Majimaji Memorial Monument in Kilwa, bearing the name also of Chief Makunganya, 2022. Photo: Nancy Rushohora.

ically the victims of German colonialism during the Majimaji War, which commenced almost ten years after Makunganya's demise. As such, his inclusion here contradicts the available chronological records of the coastal resistances' and the Majimaji War's respective participants.

War or Genocide

Article II of the United Nations Convention of 1948 defines 'genocide' as any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, national, ethnic, racial or religious groups.[56] These include killing members of a group; causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; and forcibly transferring children of the group to another group. During the Majimaji, German troops used a scorched-earth policy, 'gendercide' (killing of women), starvation and mass killings as weapons of war – all explicitly prohibited under the law.

56 K. C. Kamanga, 'The Maji Maji War: An International Humanitarian Law Perspective', *Journal of Historical Association of Tanzania*, 6/2 (2009), pp. 47–65.

The notion that local communities experienced 'genocide' at the hands of their white conquerors is not only dismissed but openly derided.[57] Colonial and imperial wars are not usually considered genocidal in intent, but they could nonetheless still be so in their effects. Although the aim of the colonizer was not just to defeat military forces but also to annex territory and rule over a foreign people, they often ended up waging war against the entire population because it was difficult to distinguish between civilians and combatants – especially when guerrilla-style resistance ensued.[58] For the case of Tanzania, it is often argued that the German military campaign in the country cannot be called 'genocide' because the murder of hundreds of thousands of people in the colony was never the end goal.[59] The Germans used the excuse that the killing of a large part of the indigenous Tanzanian population was a grave mistake. It endangered economic development in the colony and stood against the colonizers' aim of gaining control over African land and labour at the same time.

Historians accept that the people of southern Tanzania initiated the war whose target was German authority[60]; however, there is no scenario where genocide occurs as an act of self-defence.[61] The civilian population was, therefore, systematically targeted during the Majimaji War: entire villages, fields and granaries were burnt and starvation was used as a weapon of war to bring the guerrillas to their knees. The German counterinsurgency campaign in southern Tanzania presents an extreme case of colonial violence which fulfils the criteria for 'genocide'. There was intent to destroy the groups in question by killing, causing serious bodily or mental harm, and inflicting conditions calculated to bring about their physical destruction – all features of genocide.[62]

The question of whether the Majimaji should bear the name 'war' or 'genocide' induces mixed feelings not only among scholars (both German and Tanzanian) but also local communities. Recognition of the Majimaji as a 'war' dignifies the efforts and sacrifices of our forebears for Tanzania as a country. As a 'war', the Majimaji signifies a battalion-against-battalion encounter where Tanzanians won some battles. 'Genocide', contrariwise, would represent the Tanzanians as a completely weak group which had not the power, means or military tactics to counterattack – which was certainly not the

57 Tilman Dedering, 'The German-Herero War of 1904: Revisionism of Genocide or Imaginary Historiography?', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 19/1 (1993), pp. 80–88.
58 A. Dirk Moses (ed.), *Empire, Colony, Genocide*: *Conquest, Occupation, and Subaltern Resistance in World History* (New York, NY: Berghahn Books, 2008).
59 Schaller, 'From Conquest to Genocide', (above, n. 4).
60 Gwassa, 'The Outbreak and Development of the Maji Maji War', (above, n. 1).
61 Adam Jones, *Genocide*: *A Comprehensive Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2006).
62 Lynn Berat, 'Genocide: The Namibian Case against Germany', *Pace International Law Review* 5/1 (1993), pp. 165210.

case for the Majimaji. It should also be remembered that the Majimaji was initiated by the Tanzanians, with Germans defending themselves. Their self-defence, then, is what went to the extremes; this is the grounds now invoked by those Tanzanians affected in demanding an apology.

After the Majimaji War, the Germans were terrified by the extent of the violence – as were the local communities involved, too. The latter understood the strength of German military power and thus opted for surrender. The Germans set the terms and conditions of submission either for individuals or for the whole battalion as follows: First, the structure of ringleaders and witchdoctors had to be declared. Second, the surrender of all firearms, bows, arrows and spears. If necessary, pressure was exerted by arresting the leaders until the required weapons had been surrendered. Third, besides the tax which normally every person paid, all those who submitted were to pay a fine of three rupies. In cases where this was not available, the person was required to perform paid labour for a productive enterprise or a public corporation to pay off the fine. The requirement of fines did not prejudice the right of military commanders to still require especially refractory ethnic groups to perform compulsory labour, for example to construct fortifications.

Fourth, sultans and other influential ethnic leaders who declared the submission of the communities they ruled were required to provide contingents of several hundred men for punitive and compulsory labour for the government on the coast. The punitive labour would last three to six months for each contingent.[63] The ringleaders and witchdoctors who either willingly surrendered or were hunted down were executed without exception. About 100 Ngoni elders were executed in 1906 in order to eliminate the entire military and political elite.[64] The Germans carried out military expeditions and killed traditional healers (*Zauberer*). The term *Zauberer* in German is masculine and translates as 'magician/wizard'.\2 Traditional healing is the profession of a few experts.[65] The mass killing of traditional healers destroyed the Tanzanians' right to worship and cures.[66]

63 Gwassa, 'The Outbreak and Development of the Maji Maji War' (above, n. 1).

64 Heike Schmidt, 'Deadly Silence Predominates in this District: The Majimaji War and its Aftermath in Ungoni', in James Leonard Giblin and Jamie Monson (eds), *Maji Maji. Lifting the Fog of War* (Leiden, Boston: BRILL, 2010), pp. 183–219.

65 Filip de Boeck, 'Beyond the Grave: History, Memory and Death in Postcolonial Congo/Zaire', in: Richard p. Werbner (ed.), *Memory and Postcolony. African Anthropology and the Critique of Power* (London, New York: Zed Books, 1998), pp. 21–57.

66 B. F. Masele, 'The Unfought Majimaji Wars: The Lessons of History are Never Learnt', *Tanzania Zamani*, 7/1 (2010), pp. 76–103.

The surrender of weapons, on the other hand, perpetuated starvation, which affected southern Tanzania between 1907 and 1910. The aftermath of the Majimaji War saw the disarming of native fighters. The Germans demanded that they surrender weapons of all sorts to the government, so that the memory of their subjugation would be permanently alive.[67] Subsequently any engagement in weapons' manufacture was punished, rendering the country's technological development impotent.[68] What were so-called weapons in German eyes were, in fact, also instruments of labour: hoes, bush knives, axes, swords and spears. While the Tanzanian government urged the spirit of reconciliation to prevail among the populace, the communities of southern Tanzania cannot forget the suffering inflicted on them and their ancestors by the German colonizers.

Although the above terms of surrender were extremely harsh, and our forebears fulfilled them, they do not tell the true story of what happened after the Majimaji War. Perhaps, other forms of punishment involved thereafter were not official or as widespread as incarceration and execution. Yet, early collectors of the Majimaji narratives recorded a lot of inhumanity. In Upangwa, Kinyokola, the leader of the German *askaris* had inflicted grave cruelty. He ordered his fighters and a few captives to cut off the penises and testicles of all male Majimaji fighters killed in battle at Mlama. The *askaris* managed to fill seven big baskets with these male genital organs.[69] In Liwale, for example, one of the earliest historical scholars of the Majimaji War, R. M. Bell, explained two scenarios: first and foremost was that of mercenaries who cooked children alive together with beans, which their parents and other captives were after forced to eat. Then, second, Somali trader Hussein Said, who had arrived in Liwale three days after the last Majimaji leader had been hanged, was surprised on paying his respects to the District Officer to find a number of African skulls lying on the latter's table. The skulls were lying there openly, as if papers or cups.[70] The question of skulls from German East Africa is another puzzle that has never been tackled. The Germans collected more than 2,000 from the colony to be archived back home. The unavailability of these remains has traumatized the victims of the Majimaji War who turn to ritual sites, mass graves and memorial monuments for solace.

67 Thaddeus Sunseri, 'The War of the Hunters: Maji Maji and the Decline of the Ivory Trade', in: James Leonard Giblin and Jamie Monson (eds), *Maji Maji. Lifting the Fog of War* (Leiden, Boston: BRILL, 2010), pp. 115–147.

68 Masele, 'The Unfought Majimaji Wars', (above, n. 67), p. 83.

69 G. K. Mbeya, *The Majimaji war in Upangwa* (Research Paper, Dar es Salaam: University of Dar es Salaam, 1969).

70 R. M. Bell, 'The Outbreak of the Maji Maji Rebellion in the Liwale District', *Tanganyika Notes and Records*, 28 (1950), pp. 38–57.

The Majimaji trauma was also inflicted on the local landscape. Afterwards, the affected communities opted to live far away. The memories of execution and death were unbearable, to the extent that in some places population outflows were acute until 2010. The families of certain chiefs such as Songea Mbano relocated completely from their ancestral homes to new places – in his case Matimira, where his descendants live today. The displacement of sub Chief Songea's family and the trauma inflicted is still endured today for up to the fifth generation of victims of the war.

Numerous battles ended up with the wiping out of ethnic groups making up the Majimaji battalions and of their home villages. The Battle of Namabengo, for example, was fought on 21 October 1905 when the Ngoni warriors who had gathered for an assault on the German garrison were unexpectedly attacked by the colonial army. Ngoni warriors, 5,000 strong and with 200 guns under the leadership of both Chief Mputa and Chabruma, had assembled for a face-to-face battle with the Germans. The colonial forces consisting of 11 Europeans, 122 *askaris* and numerous auxiliaries managed to set up an ambush, however. The Germans planned for a night-time assault on the Ngoni camp. Very few survived the battle, and it was after this encounter that *Chief* Chabruma ended his involvement in the war.[71] The Battle of Namabengo changed the course of the war in Ungoni. The Ngoni reverted to guerrilla warfare with ambushes and running attacks by small mobile units rather than face-to-face battles.

Another battle was the Mahenge assault. The Mahenge *boma* was both the German headquarters and a fortified military station built in 1899.[72] The Ngindo and Luguru prepared for an attack on the Mahenge *boma* on 30 August 1905 during the early periods of the war. It was the first time that Majimaji forces had confronted a full military field company reinforced by reservists and African auxiliaries. The attack was intended to burn down the *boma*, but the German forces from south-western Tanzania managed to prevent this. The Ngindo and Luguru were killed mercilessly and many withdrew from the war as the *maji* medicine proved to be a lie.

71 Schmidt, 'Deadly Silence Predominates in this District' (above, n. 64).

72 Lorne Larson, 'The Ngindo: Exploring the Center of the Maji Maji Rebellion', in: James Leonard Giblin and Jamie Monson (eds), *Maji Maji. Lifting the Fog of War*, Jamie Monson (Leiden, Boston: BRILL, 2010), pp. 71–113.

Repatriation and reparation

Repatriation and reparation are two further important aspects for contemporary Majimaji communities. Although the German militants never acknowledged their looting of human remains as trophies during the Majimaji War, their *askaris*, as noted, apparently mutilated enemy corpses and cut off the genitalia of the dead to prove that they had killed these warriors.[73] The full nature of the subsequent disposal/retention of these body parts remains uncertain.

Sometimes repatriation is a symbol of autonomy.[74] It serves as a catalyst for processes of public and civic mourning, without which people living in societies torn apart by ethnic conflict and crimes against humanity may be unable to find healing.[75] The mass grave at the Majimaji museum does not represent southern Tanzanian burial rites. While the communities wish to have their forebears interred in their families' traditional burial places, the mass grave has become the symbol of all who died during the war. It is estimated that the mass grave holds 100 or so bodies of warriors who were hanged after the summary executions by Major Johannes on three dates: 27 February, 20 March and 12 April 1906. Among the Ngoni, scarcely a single family exists today that did not lose members either by execution or starvation between 1904 and 1910.

Reparation, meanwhile, is not just about money; it is not even predominantly about money. Reparation is, rather, mostly about making amends: self-made repairs on ourselves, mental repairs, psychological repairs, cultural repairs, organizational repairs, social repairs, institutional repairs, technological repairs, economic repairs, political repairs, educational repairs – repairs of every possible type.[76] The keeping alive of the memory of our ancestors whose bodies are in mass graves, their personal identities obscured and own cemeteries marginalized,[77] is a lifelong torment. The affected communities feel relief and a sense of responsibility when they are compensated for a miss-

73 M. R. Moyd, 'All People were Barbarians to the Askari… Askari Identity and Honor in the Maji Maji War, 1905–1907', in James Leonard Giblin and Jamie Monson (eds), *Maji Maji. Lifting the Fog of War* (Leiden, Boston: BRILL, 2010), pp. 149–179.

74 Larry Nesper, 'The Meshingomesia Indian Village Schoolhouse in Memory and History', in: Jacob Climo and Maria G. Cattell (eds), *Social Memory and History. Anthropological Perspectives* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2002), pp. 181–197.

75 Innocent Pikirayi, 'Public Involvement in Archaeological Excavations in Southern Africa', in: Peter J. Ucko, Qin Ling, and Jane Hubert (eds.), *From Concepts of the Past to Practical Strategies. The Teaching of Archaeological Field Techniques* (London: Saffron Books, 2007), pp. 305–320.

76 Brandon Hamber, 'Repairing the Irreparable: Dealing with the Double-Binds of Making Reparations for Crimes of the Past', *Ethnicity and Health*, 5/3–4 (2000), pp. 215–226.

77 Boeck, 'Beyond the Grave', (above, n. 66).

ing person, for a life annihilated or for mental anguish.[78] While the Germans may have paid symbolic reparation through scholarships and aid donations to the Government of Tanzania, according to the African tradition the demand for reparation should take material form – thus being physical rather than symbolic, for example cattle, goats or cash to restore a sense of justice to the injured party.[79] The Majimaji communities have not received such direct reparation, and thus continue to demand it.

Digitalization of the Majimaji Archive, Memories and Landscape – The Future Aspiration

The primary historical evidence regarding the Majimaji War comes from German documents. These are found in public, missionary and personal archives; the challenges vis-à-vis accessing them are acute. A few others are found in the Tanzania People Defence Force Museum (currently closed), the National Museum of Tanzania and the Majimaji museum. Published documents about the Majimaji War are archived in the library of the oldest university in Tanzania, the University of Dar es Salaam. This, however, is not without its issues as the collection of Majimaji research papers and publications has been left to decompose on shelves while audiotapes of interviews suffer from technological outdatedness. Colonial documents were published in the German language, and only a few have since been translated. On the other hand, there is a vibrant public interest in being involved in the discussion, memorialization and activities pertaining to honouring the heroes of the nation – particularly among the communities most affected by the war. According to the descendants of the latter's local victims, very little correct information is presented in textbooks where Majimaji is taught in History from primary schools to college level.[80] Narratives and memories at play in the home environment and through daily encounters with the battlefield sites have not been integrated into official textbooks. With the dawn of machine technology and increased urbanization, traditional oral storytelling at home is dying at an alarming rate – rendering it imperative to have a record of these memories in non-altered digital format.

78 Nancy Scheper-Hughes, 'The Politics of Remorse', in: Conerly Casey and Robert B. Edgerton (eds), *A Companion to Psychological Anthropology. Modernity and Psychocultural Change* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), pp. 469–494.

79 Richard p. Werbner (ed.), *Memory and Postcolony: African Anthropology and the Critique of Power* (Postcolonial encounters, London, New York: Zed Books, 1998).

80 Nancy A. Rushohora, 'The Challenges of Teaching the Majimaji War in Contemporary Tanzania', *Teaching African History in Schools* (2020), pp. 107123.

At the national level, the Majimaji has been a political pendulum used for sporadic government agendas. During the struggle for independence, the unity displayed during the Majimaji was emulated by political elites such as Julius Nyerere to emphasize the necessity of coming together in fighting for freedom.[81] After Tanzania achieved independence on 9 December 1961, regional politics emphasized the inclusion of the leaders of the anti-colonial resistance among those considered heroes of the nation. Memorials were also installed, mainly for purposes of political-identity formation. Such leaders include Kinjekitile Ngwale for the Majimaji War and Mkwavinjika Munyigumba (Mkwawa) of the Hehe resistance. The preliminary attempts to harness the archives and collections of oral narratives of the anti-colonial struggle to that end would be criticized for supporting a political agenda.[82]

Creating a documentary film, as aspired to by this project, is a vital initiative to take the archival sources and academic research to the wider public eye, particularly among the communities most affected by the war. Namely, for the formal written records to be accordingly criticized, debated or questioned. It is also an attempt to collect the affected communities' voices and record them in a more sustainable technology while allowing them to be heard across a broader spectrum of society. The country currently lacks, as such, a documentary film featuring the battlefields, memories and legacies of the Majimaji War that could help better inform cultural policies and classroom-learning resources.

It is my aspiration that the Majimaji project will end up with a documentary that captures transgenerational memories. Through this approach, the inflicted trauma that lies underneath contemporary landscapes and stories that would otherwise remain silent or forgotten will be unearthed. Prominent here, for instance, is the return of Songea Mbano's skull, which was taken by the Germans during the Majimaji War – with the Ngoni still demanding its return over 100 years later. The digitization of the Majimaji War is thus a form of public archaeology allowing a personal interaction with the past and airing demands and contestation over repatriation, reparation, genocide and remedy across the regions concerned – as well as seeking to counter the political appropriation

81 Julius K. Nyerere, *Freedom and Unity* (Dar es Salaam. 1966).

82 Elijah Greenstein, 'Making History: Historical Narratives of the Maji Maji', *Penn History Review*, 17/2 (2010), 60–77; Giblin and Monson (eds), *Maji Maji* (above, n. 26); Thaddeus Sunseri, 'The War of the Hunters: Maji Maji and the Decline of the Ivory Trade', in James Leonard Giblin and Jamie Monson (eds), *Maji Maji. Lifting the Fog of War* (Leiden, Boston: BRILL, 2010), pp. 115–147.

of the same.[83] It is also a form of healing where the affected communities will be able to grieve and be heard.

Filming has already started, but a lack of funds has hindered its production.[84] The documentary started with the museum where about 100 bodies and remains of those executed by the Germans are based. Between 25th and 27th February annually, people gather at the Majimaji Museum – where, as noted, a mass grave and previous execution site are located. The documentary therefore utilizes the same space to facilitate dialogue with the people in question on how colonialism continues to affect their lives and how they remember and reconstruct memories of the war. By displaying a visual documentary parallel to the Majimaji War objects, photographs, graves and sculptures, visitors to the museum will be given a sense of what happened through means of direct interaction – thus enhancing their experience of the site. The documentary will also be used as teaching aid given the fact that the Majimaji War is a topic of key interest in historical scholarship.

Intellectual Collaboration

The digitization of the Majimaji War project poses intellectual and political challenges. The intellectual one exists around the need to better contextualize the colonial atrocities, a prominent theme in the history of Africa. The role of the digitization project is to bring together the public, learners of African history and researchers to discuss colonialism as a past phenomenon – but also the future of the continent in light of those historical legacies. This brings attention to new voices, perspectives and stories that would otherwise remain unheard if history was to rely on formal archives and written documents alone. A documentary also factors in the possibility of allowing people to explain how interacting with the battlefield landscape in their everyday lives evokes painful memories and how the affected communities have adapted to the trauma imprinted on their daily environment.

It is believed that when the documentary is finalized, the dominant narratives of the Majimaji War will be interrogated, new knowledge will be created and the contemporary

83 Nancy A. Rushohora, 'Graves, Houses of Pain and Execution: Memories of the German Prisons after the Majimaji War in Tanzania (1904–1908)', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 47/2 (2019), pp. 275299.

84 See short version of the Majimaji War documentary https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r8myesAoe0Q (last accessed 27.7.2024) and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uWt4zleTfjg (last accessed 27.7.2024).

reconstruction of the sites by the affected communities will be made apparent. The documentary aspires to cover the eastern and southern Tanzania regions of Lindi, Mtwara, Ruvuma, Njombe, Morogoro, Dar es Salaam and Pwani. Specifically, 26 sites containing memories, memorials, memorialization activities and the landscape which constitutes the palimpsest of the Majimaji War. These sites contain two Majimaji War mass graves, seven memorials, refuge caves, forests, rivers (which were the erstwhile source of the ritual *maji* waters) and numerous commemorative toponyms. Colonial photographs, pictographs and cartographic records which can be used to further explain the ruthlessness encounters playing out between the Germans and Tanzania's local communities during the Majimaji War will also form part of the documentary.

Conclusion

Although the Majimaji War seems to have been over-researched, it is a topic that involves continuous re-interpretation. The use of a documentary film, for instance, for data collection and dissemination helps diversify research sources and contributes to knowledge enhancement. Nevertheless, from the preliminary filming a number of technical and epistemological challenges have already been observed. One of these is the involvement of the Tanzanian government – and particularly the army – in commemoration ceremonies. Filming of the army undertaking their responsibilities during commemorative activities requires a stricter permit. Ownership of the Majimaji memory and landscape are equally shared between the government and the affected communities.

Another challenge is the ideal approach for distribution of the documentary to history teachers throughout Africa and beyond, which is the main role of the project – namely, to enhance access to research output on what would otherwise remain at the local level, therewith contributing to knowledge production and dissemination. An online domain and a visual lab in Tanzania will thus host the project. Archives with German documents in Tanzania have not been very useful due to linguistic barriers. The Tanzania National Archive has no personnel who are linguistically capable of handling the German documents. The project has been well-received by the Majimaji community, whose attempts to move away from the archives and oral traditions to embrace also audio-visual material are already observable.[85]

85 Nancy A. Rushohora, 'German colonial missionaries and the Majimaji memorials in southern Tanzania', *Journal of Social History* 50/3 (2017), pp. 481–501.