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Colonial warfare: Hehe and World War One, the wars besides Maji Maji in south-western Tanzania

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**Colonial Warfare:
Hehe and World War One,
the wars besides Maji Maji
in south-western Tanzania**

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Contents

Abstract	4
Introduction	5
Uhehe	7
German rule in East Africa	8
Wahehe	10
Clearing Uhehe	10
Eating the land of Mkwawa	11
Empty lands	12
Maji Maji in Uhehe	13
After Maji Maji, settlers and labour	13
World War One	15
The War in the Southwest	16
War and soldiers	19
Carriers	20
Smallpox, peace, and influenza	20
Civilian administrators and the mandate	21
In summation	22
Endnotes	24

Abstract

In the early 1920s the British colonial mandate authorities believed and argued that the Iringa Highlands of south-western Tanzania were being under-utilised, and thus recommended that the area be settled by European settlers. This paper indicates that there are specific historical reasons as to why the highlands were under populated and appeared to be under-utilised when British mandate authorities first surveyed the area. In particular the paper draws attention to the impact of a consecutive series of wars that ravaged the area between 1890 and 1918. In so doing the paper implicitly argues for a re-evaluation of the centrality of the Maji Maji war 1905 - 07 in Tanzanian historiography, and seeks to draw attention to the importance of a number of regional wars that characterised the years of German colonial rule prior to Maji Maji. Furthermore the paper highlights the importance of the First World War in coming to an understanding of events in south-western Tanzania.

Colonial Warfare: Hehe and World War One, the wars beside Maji Maji in south-western Tanzania¹

Colonial warfare must be seen as a major cause of the destruction of the local economies of Tanganyika.²

Lord Delamere ... was the moving spirit in attempting to establish “white settlement” in the highlands around Iringa. After a personal visit to that area ... he encouraged settlers to apply for land in the almost uninhabited downs between Iringa and Sao Hill and sponsored the erection of a bacon factory at Ulete as a focal point.³

Introduction

In essence this paper deals with and seeks to present historical explanations as to why the Iringa Highlands appeared to be and were perceived of as being under-utilised by the British colonial mandate authorities of Tanganyika in the early 1920s. The paper seeks to draw attention to the import and impact of forms of colonial warfare other than Maji Maji in coming to an understanding of Tanzania's historical past. It can be and has been argued that the domination of Maji Maji in Tanzanian historiography has effectively veiled and obscured events that had an equally great, if not greater, impact and influence on Tanzanian societies than Maji Maji.⁴ Indeed, as Jamie Monson has noted, oral testimony collected in the Kilombero valley suggests that:

Maji Maji represents a larger complex of political relationships, tensions and grievances that spanned the late pre-colonial and early colonial periods. This complex was characterized by shifting alliances and identities, the gendered experience of war and conflict, and the devastation of agricultural and environmental resources in affected areas.⁵

Maji Maji appears to have become an effective shorthand that encompasses an extended period of conflict and population dispersal that extends from the late pre-colonial period through to the establishment of the British colonial mandate in the aftermath of World War One. It is in seeking to disentangle this collapsing of many and varied conflicts into one single event that this paper has been written. In so doing the paper draws attention to a.) the war that led to the destruction of the polity that had been established by Chief Mkwawa, b.) touches upon the Maji Maji proper, c.) and examines the devastation wrought by the First World War One in south-western Tanzania.

With the beginning of formal British administration of the bulk of former German East Africa as the League of Nations mandated territory of Tanganyika, the

Iringa highlands was an area that had been largely denuded of its human population, and where the bush had reclaimed extensive tracts of land. Beginning in the 1920s the highlands were made available to European settlers, many of whom were Germans who had been repatriated to Germany after WWI.⁶

James Ellison has shown how anthropological analysis conducted by the Wilsons in south-western Tanganyika overlooked the devastation wrought by the influenza epidemic, and that the structures found by the Wilsons were not the norm but had to a large extent been determined by the Influenza epidemic.⁷ Following on from Ellison's work, which is effectively a clarion call for the importance and necessity of further historical research and understanding, this paper is an unapologetic fleshing out of Kjekshus's argument that colonial wars formed a break point in African history in terms of environmental collapse and societal upheaval.⁸ Of late it appears to have become fashionable to seek to dismiss the import and impact of colonialism, let alone colonial warfare, on the Africa of the present.⁹ Yet any person looking at the Iringa highlands, and attempting to explain what happened there, would have to examine why it was that colonial authorities believed and argued that Africans were unable to utilise and make use of the agricultural potential of the area. Beliefs and arguments that were used by colonial authorities to justify the expropriation of African lands for the settlement of white settler farmers. Fertile and under utilised land, so the argument went, was to be taken out of the hands of unproductive primitives and made available to settler farmers with productive modern farming methods. White settlers would, so it was believed, bring prosperity to the region by virtue of their farming skills. Unfortunately these views were flawed on two counts. i.) They lacked historical insight, which would have explained why the land was being under utilised. ii.) 'Modern' white settler farmer methods were not necessarily more productive, and hardly environmentally sound.¹⁰

Prior to the establishment of colonial rule, people had consistently and extensively occupied the Iringa highlands of south-western Tanzania. In the years between 1860 and 1925 the inhabitants of what is currently the Iringa district in south-western Tanzania experienced more than a fair share of warfare and armed violence, as well as political, economical, and cultural changes.¹¹ In the first twenty years of colonial rule wide-ranging wars were fought in which the original inhabitants of the Iringa highlands were either killed or driven off the land and forced into servitude with settlers. Following the defeat of Imperial Germany in World War I, the territory of Tanganyika came to be administered by Great Britain. From 1924 onwards the new

colonial administration began establishing free hold commercial farms in the Iringa highlands and allowing European settlers to settle there. This paper seeks present an historical overview of the colonial wars other than Maji Maji that led to clearance of African inhabitants from the highlands, and allowed for the development of the idea of uninhabited and underutilised lands fit for the establishment of European settler farms in the area.

Uhehe

Broadly speaking mainland Tanzania can be said to have experienced three broad historical phases in the 85 years between 1860 and 1945:

- 1.) 1860 - 1890: Pre-colonial phase, which saw the continuing expansion of the slave trade, the increasing political and economical centralisation of some societies, and the coming of German colonial rule.
- 2.) 1890 - 1917: German colonial phase, which was dominated by the brutal establishment of colonial rule, extensive warfare, and major transformations in the economies of Tanganyika.
- 3.) 1917 - 1945: British colonial mandate occupation, characterised in the expansion of settler farming.

The inhabitants of the Iringa district anticipated, influenced, and reacted in different ways at different times to these major historical phases.¹² More often than not the people of the south-western highlands of Tanzania have been ethnically defined as being associated with the Wahehe. However, as has become increasingly clear both within and without academia, ethnic identifications are not hard and fast, but situational particulars that have a tendency to change over time and location.¹³ That is, today's Hehe in Iringa, may very well be yesterday's Socialist or tomorrow's Tanzanian, or a combination of all three at the same time. This situational tendency of identity is something that has greatly vexed social scientists and historians, particularly those who have attempted to concentrate on seemingly fixed and immutable social identities. Thus, for example, historians dealing with ethnic categories such as, the Herero, the Zulu, the Pedi, and so forth, have been hard pressed to allow for and include historical actors in their narratives that did not confirm or confine themselves to the narrow identities chosen by the historian.¹⁴ A way out of this conundrum has been suggested and demonstrated by the work of Ranger, who has concentrated on geographically defined localities as opposed to constructed ethnic parameters. Thus, though the Iringa district

has generally been described as being ethnically homogeneous, or at least dominated and defined by one ethnic group, the Hehe, a historical overview of the area emphasises the continually changing political, cultural and ethnic, identity and affiliation of the district's inhabitants.

The highlands of south-western Tanzania that currently comprise the bulk of the Iringa district are characterised by a moderate climate, good rainfall, and relatively fertile soils suitable for small scale agriculture, consequently the area has long been occupied by people and has always been comparatively densely populated. Beginning in the 1830s, the Iringa highlands, which lay athwart the trade routes that led from the African interior of what is today Zambia to the Indian Ocean, came to be directly affected by the demand for slaves emanating from the ever expanding slave-plantations along the East African coast. The demand for slaves, the desire for safety and security, coupled to attempts to control and regulate the trade led to the ever-increasing centralisation of societies in the Iringa highlands. From the early 1840s onwards a highly centralised polity, centred around the increasingly fortified settlement of Kalenga, came into being. This polity, initially under the leadership of a chief named Munyigumba, and later, Chief Mkwawa, came to be known as *Uhehe*, and its people as the *Wahehe*. By 1885, when the mainland of present day Tanzania was declared to be a German protectorate, Chief Mkwawa led one of the most powerful and still expanding polities in the newly established territory of German East Africa.¹⁵

German rule in East Africa

In early 1885 the German Emperor issued a charter of protection to a "German Colonisation Company" declaring that he placed the territories that it claimed under his suzerainty and protection and granted to the company the management thereof subject to the superintendence of, and further regulations by, the German Government. In effect this meant that lands claimed by the company on the basis of dubious agreements concluded with African leaders in East Africa would henceforth be subject to official German interference.¹⁶

In 1888 relations between German officials and Africans living in the coastal settlements of Tanzania came to a head. In 1889 the German government dispatched Hermann Wissmann to East Africa with orders to bring the Tanganyikan coast under German control. Previously Wissmann had travelled and fought extensively in Africa. Between 1880 and 1882 he crossed the continent from west to east, after which he had

undertaken a number of expeditions in the Congo basin on behalf of the Belgian King Leopold.¹⁷ Selected by Bismarck and the new Kaiser Wilhelm II, as an experienced traveller and soldier in Africa, Wissmann was sent off to East Africa with the advice, “Siegen Sie!” [be victorious!].¹⁸ Wissmann arrived off the Tanganyikan coast in 1889 with a force of 600 sudanese mercenaries, recruited in Egypt, and 400 Shanga mercenaries recruited in Mozambique. These recruits, some of whom had fought with Wissmann in his expeditions in Congo, came to form the basis of the *Schutztruppe* [protectorate force] as it came to be established in Tanganyika.¹⁹

Upon arriving in Tanganyika Wissmann launched his assault on those who were allegedly in revolt. German historian Helmuth Stoecker described what happened in the following manner:

In all the captured territories the new masters initiated their authority through the unleashing of terror. Countless Africans who were considered guilty of resistance were killed without process, or were handed over to the executioner following a conviction by court martial.²⁰

Historian of the Swahili coast, Jonathan Glassmann wrote of Wissmann as the young protégé of the German Kaiser, and noted:

The expedition was one of the first occasions on which Europeans used the fully automatic Maxim machine gun, ... Wissmann wrote glowing letters informing his royal mentor of the ‘effectiveness’ with which the Maxims mowed down hundreds of fleeing warriors.²¹

For his activities in Tanganyika Wissmann was promoted to the nobility by the Kaiser, awarded the Royal Crown of the Order of the Red Eagle in 1894, and the University of Halle provided him with an academic gloss by awarding him an honorary doctorate.²² Upon his return to Tanganyika Wissmann engaged in numerous punitive expeditions in the south and around Kilimanjaro, and was appointed governor of German East Africa in 1895, although he resigned in 1896, partly because he could not control the *Schutztruppe* which had been placed under the command of von Trotha, who outranked him. Upon his return to Germany Wissmann, who was by this stage heavily addicted to morphine was elected as president of the Berlin Geographical Society in 1897. He died as a result of a “hunting accident” in Germany in 1905, and was buried in Cologne.²³

Wahehe

After having established some measure of control along the coast, imperial Germany sought to expand its influence further in land, and came up eventually against the forces of Mkwawa. On the first of April 1891 the German government took direct control of the territories claimed by the German East Africa Corporation (*Deutsch-Ostafrikanische Gesellschaft* DOAG), and the mercenary force of Wissmann became the official German protectorate force of German East Africa under the command of Emil von Zelewski.²⁴ No less than four months later a telegram from Zanzibar informed the German foreign office that Hehe forces routed a German expeditionary force under the command of von Zelewski.²⁵ This heralded the beginning of a sustained German campaign to destroy the Wahehe and its leaders.

Clearing Uhehe²⁶

Following the defeat and destruction of the Zelewski column in 1891, Mkwawa maintained his position of power in south-western Tanganyika. To this end emissaries of Mkwawa continued to collect and demand tribute on caravan routes leading to and from the coast and passing through his area of influence.²⁷

In October 1894 German forces under the command of Colonel von Schele attacked, overran, and sacked Kulenga, the main residence of Mkwawa. In this attack the Germans captured no less than 1.500 women and children, 30.000 pounds of gunpowder, hundreds of rifles and guns, as well as over 2.000 head of cattle and 5000 head of small stock. Mkwawa was able to escape. The German authorities then proceeded to divide Uhehe into two separate “kingdoms” which came to be placed under two Wahehe opponents of Mkwawa. For four years, between 1894 and 1898, German forces pursued and harried Mkwawa and his followers.²⁸ In the euphemistic language of administrators describing war, a German official noted of the pursuit of Mkwawa:

Mkwawa always moved between our patrols. He was supplied with information and food in the very localities where our troops operated, but the inhabitants declined to give our forces any information and denied all knowledge of his presence. When we were hot on Mkwawa’s trail, food and liquor would often be found placed in the pathless bush; his people always knew where to find him, the direction he had taken and the points he would traverse. Altogether, it was

certain that Mkwawa exercised an inexplicable influence over the natives, who, when the pursuing troops surprised his camp, would, time after time, blindly hurl themselves on the soldiers, sacrificing themselves merely to give Mkwawa the chance of escape. No scheme for his capture was possible and no one ever knew even what he looked like.²⁹

Eating the land of Mkwawa³⁰

During the years between 1891, when Zelewski was killed, and 1898 when Mkwawa was killed, German methods of warfare were transformed considerably in Tanganyika. No longer were German patrols fitted out as if they were about to patrol the Alsace, instead the German army developed strategies and tactics which would guarantee success in Africa. German governor Liebert, commander of German forces in German East Africa 1898 – 1900, was personally involved in the war in Uhehe and wrote:

In Bohemia and France I learnt about war in practice. For thirty years I have been continually engaged in the study of war and in the history of war in particular. But, what I experienced in Uhehe existed beyond the parameters of all that had existed previously. It was truly African.³¹

The conditions which Liebert describes as existing beyond the parameters of that which had existed before and being “truly African”, were wholly created by his orders and by soldiers operating under his orders. Writing to the German Foreign Office in 1898 Liebert did not mince his words when he noted:

Dem Hauptmann Prince habe ich meine anerkennung für die erreichten Erfolge ausgesprochen und ihn dringend ermahnt, fortgesetzt mit gleicher Strenge gegen alle mit den Waffen in der Hand gefangenen Wasagira (Tod durch Hängen) und Wahehe (Tod durch Erschießen) vorzugehen, damit das Raubgesindel, das sich nicht unterwerfen will, ausgerottet wird.

Eine Fortziehen von Truppen aus Uhehe wird, so lange Kwawa noch am leben ist, nicht stattfinden.

Liebert.³²

In seeking to fulfil their orders German forces began to operate by sector. In the war that developed German forces moved through the highlands, from one valley to the next. Each valley would be surrounded, all food resources and water sources within the valley destroyed, where after any surviving elders and men would be killed, while young women and children were taken into custody and put to work as concubines or

labourers.³³ In effect this resulted in the development of warfare that is now referred to counter-insurgency (Coin). The systematic and relentless move across the highlands, valley by valley, sector by sector, resulted in the effective depopulation of the lands. Agricultural activities could not be undertaken, and when they were the produce was destroyed.³⁴ People were expected to provide unconditional allegiance to German forces, and to accede to all their demands; failure to do so resulted in death. Given these circumstances it is hardly surprising that those choosing to continue to oppose the Germans should choose to fight to the death rather than surrender.

Eventually harried from valley to valley, bereft of food and followers Mkwawa committed suicide. Mkwawa was decapitated and his skull displayed as a trophy in the house of Tom von Prince where after it was sent to Germany.³⁵

Empty lands

By 1900 Chief Mkwawa's head had been chopped off and sent to Berlin as a memento, whilst his surviving subjects were put to work on the farms that German settlers had begun appropriating in the Iringa highlands.³⁶ Having cleared the land, and being faced by food and labour shortages, activities were undertaken to "develop" the land.³⁷

For this purpose a forester named Ockel was recruited from South Africa and employed to establish a research station in Dabagga in Uhehe.³⁸ Six months after his arrival in Dabaga *Förster* Ockel reported on the research station in the following military terms, "Dabaga, ten hours south of Iringa, is a bullet-proof and for Natives unattainable palisade *Boma*".³⁹ Within the palisade there was a large two-roomed mud house, for the European inhabitants, and a number of *tembe*⁴⁰ [houses] for the Native Askari associated with the research station. In the immediate vicinity of the research station two villages inhabited by Wahehe who had submitted to German rule were established. The research station and the villages in its immediate vicinity acted as a magnet in drawing Wahehe survivors. Living within the ambit of recently established German military control these Wahehe survivors were, with remarkable speed, able to re-establish productive agriculture. It appears to be the case that this concentration of human occupation coupled to German fire-power was sufficient to provide a modicum of stability necessary for agricultural production, as well as limit the depredations of wildlife and raiders in the fields of the Wahehe.⁴¹ Tom von Prince⁴² reported in August of 1898 that food shortages had decreased somewhat in the area and that it was possible once again to purchase meal fairly easily.⁴³

Maji Maji in Uhehe

Cowed into submission by the policy of scorched earth and German military might, it might appear to be the case that the Maji Maji simply by-passed the Iringa highlands between 1905 and 1907.⁴⁴ In November of 1905 the 2nd Field Company under the command of Nigmann advanced out of Iringa against Wahehe who were allegedly taking part in the Maji Maji war. However, although the bulk of fighting did not take place in the highlands, the inhabitants of the Iringa district were most definitely affected by the Maji Maji. In the conditions of heightened tension as they existed in the colony German military and civilian authorities definitely considered the possibility that the Wahehe could come to be involved in the war. Consequently administrative steps were advised and undertaken to prevent this from occurring.⁴⁵ Furthermore, considering that the 2nd Field Company, which was based in Iringa, was actively involved in the war, the war will have had a direct impact on people living in Iringa district. Though it is unlikely that the *Askari* [African soldiers] serving in the company would have been locally recruited, the 2nd Field Company, going off to battle will have left behind its local dependents in the highlands. A number of these will have become destitute when their patrons failed to return or returned invalided or wounded from war. The 2nd Field Company will have been fed with food requisitioned in the highlands. And finally, and most importantly so, the 2nd Field Company will have been dependent on carriers and porters, young men and women in the prime of their lives and dragooned into hard and extremely dangerous work. All in all agricultural labour and agricultural produce will have been taken away from a region that was already over-stretched.⁴⁶

After Maji Maji, settlers and labour

Writing on labour migration in the Iringa region of Tanzania, Lwoga argues that Iringa was established as a labour reserve in the German colonial period. This does not appear to be in keeping with the historical developments of the area.⁴⁷ By the time that the Maji Maji had come to an end, there was an extreme shortage of labour in the Iringa district, and the district did not form one of the principal extraction areas for the plantations that were being developed in the lowlands along the coast. Never the less, this is not to deny that there was labour recruiting in the Iringa highlands. Following Maji Maji German settlers and authorities scoured the highlands for primary export products, one of these, with a guaranteed return on investment, was labour.

There was throughout German East Africa a successful if disastrous extraction of Labour from the African population in the German Colonial period. Biermann indicates that in 1913, the last year before the outbreak of World War One, no less than a quarter of the adult male population had come to be employed as wage labourers:

The Germans were highly successful [in labour recruitment] given that the total recruitable male work force comprised c. 800.000. In 1913, approximately 172.00 qualified as permanent wage labourers to what added the seasonal peak demand. Therefore, the annual work force exceeded 200.000 and equalled more than a quarter of the adult male population. This transfer imposed a heavy toll on the peasant reproduction nexus..⁴⁸

How was this remarkable level of extraction realised?

It depended crucially upon continued use of coercion. Taxation, pernicious forms of recruitment, depressed wages and various other techniques to extort labour were reinforced through the administration of colonial justice: between 1901 and 1913 64.600 Africans were sentenced to corporal punishment, and average of five a week at every district office. Despite administrative reforms and the introduction of supposedly pro-African labour legislation restricting some recruiting abuses, 1911 – 12 a minimum of 5.944 official floggings were given. Further, in the same year courts and/or district officers sentenced 16 Africans to death, imprisoned 11.845, and fined 3.518 individuals. The vast majority of sentences were labour-related offences, e.g., abscondment, insubordination, etc. and underlined in no uncertain terms the political cum class dimension inherent in the administration of “justice”.⁴⁹

Who were the settlers and administrators that settled in Iringa, and became involved in the export of primary produce and labour from the highlands in the hope of quick profits and high returns? In her excellent PhD dealing with south-eastern Tanzania Felicitas Becker refers to the “Mecca letters affair”, which took place between 1908-1910. This affair related to a series of letters, allegedly written in Mecca, which “contained a warning that the end of the world was nigh, and a call for a Muslim revival. The commandments to be kept included that of avoiding contact with infidels”.⁵⁰ One European settler in Iringa learned about the letters when his African mistress declared that she no longer wished to defile herself with a European.⁵¹ Why this should be so is

to some extent made very clear by the examples of other settlers who were to be found in Iringa. One of these was the settler Heinrich Langkopp.

Langkopp initially immigrated to the South African Republic where he developed a taste for looting whilst serving with Boer Commandoes involved in conflict in the northern Transvaal. Following his involvement in the Anglo-Boer War, in which he fought with Republican forces, he made his way to German East Africa. After dabbling in cattle trading, labour recruitment, butchering and business, Langkopp set about establishing himself as a settler farmer near Iringa. To supplement his income Langkopp continued recruiting labour.

To say that Langkopp's recruiting methods were unconventional is to understate the case. Claiming to be operating on behalf of and with the mandate of the colonial state, Langkopp engaged the services of men as sub-contractors. These men, believing that they had been employed by the colonial state, then travelled to local leaders in the outlying areas of the Iringa highlands to demand labour for the construction of government works. Confronted by the authorities Langkopp denied all knowledge of the affair and allowed the arrested sub-contractors to be sentenced to 3 months in chains and 25 lashes. In later years Langkopp described the beauty of this scheme in his autobiography.

In Iringa Langkopp's life appears to have revolved around physical violence, and access to and control of labour. The importance of this aspect of colonial life in Iringa becomes evident when one realises that of the eight court cases in which he was involved at the time, six dealt specifically with the issue of labour, and four of the cases involved violence initiated by Langkopp. In 1912 Langkopp assaulted the highly respected Jamadar bin Mohamed, a man who was in his sixties at the time, and who in the past had been a local government official. Initially Langkopp was found guilty, though on appeal he was cleared of the charges by the court which stated, 'no White person need tolerate physical contact by a Native, and ... is entitled to violent defense'.⁵²

World War One

In 1914 War broke out between Imperial Germany and a number of other colonial powers. This war was to have devastating consequences for the inhabitants of East Africa.⁵³ For no less than four years competing armies were to move through and disrupt the societies and communities of south-western Tanzania and beyond. How many people died as a direct result of the war in Tanzania has not been calculated or estimated, but that it should lie in the hundreds of thousands is beyond dispute.⁵⁴ In

1957 Lettow Vorbeck, the officer commanding German forces, spoke of 8 million Africans in German East Africa of whom one-fourth served in his army in some capacity, either as askari, or as porters or as peasants growing food for the army.⁵⁵ The agricultural potential of eastern and central Africa was depressed as thousands of men and women were dragooned into service as porters or otherwise, and the land was stripped of its agricultural produce.⁵⁶ The south-western highlands of Tanzania were particularly hard hit by the war.

In south-western German East Africa the main protagonists were British forces commanded by Major-General Sir Edward Northey⁵⁷ and German forces commanded by General von Lettow-Vorbeck.⁵⁸ The *Feld Abteilung* Field Company formed the basic unit of German forces in East Africa consisted of:

15 to 20 European German officers and N.C.O.s with 200 trained African askari and two or more machine-guns. These companies were self-contained mobile units, each with its train of enlisted African carriers who were partially trained to bear arms. Such a company in the field would be accompanied by a force of irregulars (*Rugaruga*), armed with firearms or spears. The total ration strength might amount to normally about 400.⁵⁹

Operating out of Kenya, British, Indian and South African forces under the command of General Jan Smuts and General van Deventer sought to bring pressure to bear on Lettow-Vorbeck from the North.⁶⁰ These South African forces were of European descent, in contrast to the German forces facing them, yet their carriers were all Africans recruited throughout east Africa.⁶¹ In the four years of war, German and British forces withdrew and advanced no less than four times through the south-western highlands of the Iringa district. The mass movements of the two opposing armies were guided by the principle that the most effective form of waging warfare was to engage in offensive activities, whereby the initiative could be seized from the opponent. 'Northey, like von Lettow-Vorbeck, believed that offensive action alone secured defences'.⁶² However, in so doing, it was, as in all wars of the modern age, the civilian population that suffered the most.

The War in the Southwest

In August 1914 German forces operating out of Neu Langenberg (Tukuyu) were repulsed with serious losses at Karonga, Nyasaland (Malawi). Belgian forces drawn from Katanga in southern Congo were deployed with forces under British command

along the Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) border.⁶³ In November 1915 British forces massed on the south-western frontier of German East Africa came under the command of General Northey.⁶⁴ In May 1916 British forces advanced into GEA. German forces withdrew ahead of them in the direction of Iringa. By late June German forces had abandoned their regional bases in south-western GEA, in some cases with massive loss of supplies; in Njombe British forces found about ten tons of wheat and three tons of maize.⁶⁵ By July 1916 Northey's forces were disposed in two groups some 40 miles apart round Njombe and Buhoro. They had cleared the Nyasaland and Rhodesian frontiers and occupied some 4,000 square miles of German territory thereby depriving the German forces of the major part of the Southern Highlands granary.⁶⁶

Anxious to recoup these losses, German force under Captain von Braunschweig advanced south from Iringa, and clashed with the Northey's forces at Malangali on 23 July 1916. Fearing that he would be cut off from Iringa following rumours of a Hehe chief at his rear who had crossed over to the British, with "all his people and cattle", Braunschweig withdrew to Wasa. At the same time another German force moved from Iringa to occupy Lupembe, an important rice-growing area for Mahenge, to which a further German force was withdrawing.⁶⁷ In August German forces were driven from Lupembe. And in late August Braunschweig moves from Wasa to Iringa, and then on towards the bulk of the German forces heading for Mahenge.

South African forces under van Deventer entered Iringa in mid-October, by which stage this force was down to half rations and half had been invalided out.⁶⁸ At the same time German forces under the command of Major-general Wahle, estimated to be 400 Germans, 3,200 askari, 1,100 irregulars and an unknown amount of carriers, withdrew from Tabora and clashed with British forces 12 miles North of Iringa on 25 October 1916. From there the Germans moved into the Highlands and attacked Lupembe on 12 November before withdrawing and joining the main body of Germans at Mahenge.⁶⁹ On 25 October 1916 Germans operating out of Mahenge cut the line of communications south of Iringa and inflicted heavy losses on British forces under Baxendale and the British post at Igominyi was forced to surrender.

In other words, in the run up to the planting season of 1916 as well as in the rainy season when weeding was absolutely necessary the whole of the Iringa Highlands were over run with opposing forces living off the land and recruiting labour, precisely when it was most needed.

In late November 1916, following analysis of the situation, Van Deventer was ordered to move out from Iringa to attack the German forces and to ensure that they were driven beyond the Ruhudji and Lulanga rivers. Van Deventer found that it was impossible for the forces under his command to fulfil the demands of Smuts. Already on half-rations and desperately short of supplies, van Deventer found it impossible due to the heavy rain to build up supplies to feed his whole force. He had been forced to reduce his force and send half his men to Dodoma where they could be supplied via rail.⁷⁰

By 1917, the war had convulsed all aspects of social and political life in occupied southwest GEA. Germans had conscripted porters and soldiers and requisitioned food and livestock. Fighting occurred throughout the countryside. The 1916 British invasion brought further requisitioning by a new European power and African forces from other territories.⁷¹ Reporting on the difficulties encountered by porters, Northey wrote:

All this time the supply difficulties have been getting greater; many carriers desert on the road over the Livingstone range and many die of cold.⁷²

In 1917 the British sought to establish administration in the south-western regions of Tanganyika under their control. To this purpose the Political officers assigned to the Southern Occupied territory were headed by Hector Duff, Chief Secretary of the Nyasaland Government. However, “given the manner in which official attitudes ... had hardened in the aftermath of the Chilembwe rising”, Duff’s insistence on control and policing will be evident.⁷³ Insistence on the supply of porters from the Rhodesian and Nyasan frontiers to and through Iringa. The British began collecting taxes in 1917, including crops necessary for feeding troops in the campaign.⁷⁴

Germans move through south-western corner of GEA in October and November 1918, after having left Mozambique. This move leads to the further requisitioning of stores and crops in the area. 14 October Von Lettow-Vorbeck had reached Yagobi just south of Njombe. ‘In the Ubena country around Jacobi, von Lettow was able to gather supplies including what he describes as his ‘mobile food reserve’ of cattle’⁷⁵ The German forces and their train of porters and dependents, pursued as ever by the British forces and their porters and dependents, once again moved through the highlands of which Lettow-Vorbeck noted:

our further march passed through Brandt and led us through a district well stocked with cattle and at Ruiwa we found a large English depot.⁷⁶

War and soldiers

The strenuous nature of the war can be gathered from the fact that in January 1917 some 15.000 European troops were withdrawn and evacuated to South Africa.

Commenting on conditions in Tanganyika, W.W. Campbell, a lorry driver with literary ambitions stated:

Distressed and depressed beyond measure, we felt that death and ugliness lurked everywhere. It was in the air we breathed, the water we drank, the sun that warmed our bodies; it crawled on the ground, dropped heavily from rain-sodden trees, hung suspended in the humid, reeking atmosphere. Every living thing went in fear of its life, or turned upon another in self-preservation. Human life itself was an embodiment of ignorance and suspicion. It permeated our very souls, turned bright thoughts into dark, and made one long for the fate that he feared.⁷⁷

African soldiers serving in East Africa in the King's African Rifles also suffered terrible casualties, not so much on account of military action as on account of disease.

Deserters, returnees, and those invalided out of service accelerated the spread of diseases in host communities into which they entered. A medical report for 1917 notes the following with regard to the impact of servicemen:

There is no doubt that the consequence of the military operations in the native reserves can only be likened to those produced by a disastrous epidemic of not a temporary character ... It is indubitable that these men return to further scatter throughout the country the seeds of dysentery, tropical relapsing fevers and other protozoal diseases, bacillary diseases, helminthic affections, infections granulomata, skin diseases; and the less regarded mumps, chicken-pox, measles and influenza.⁷⁸

Writing nearly half a century after the event, British government official Hatchell noted with understatement of a German column that passed into the Iringa highlands in the campaign of 1916 - 17:

The intervening country from Tabora to the Ruaha is barren of supplies but on crossing the river Wahle (the German commander) entered a land of plenty and it can be certain that his foraging parties made the most of their opportunities. It can be equally certain that Wintgens on his return to Tabora through the same

area collected as much food as would carry him to the railway. The disturbance to the civil population must therefore have been considerable.⁷⁹

Carriers⁸⁰

Incapacitation through disease among the British was 31.4 to one for the troops and 140.8 to one for the followers.⁸¹

Recruitment for service in both colonial armies, either as soldiers or as carriers, was a very direct affair. Mel Page refers to one of his informants who noted: “They used to chase people as if they were chasing chickens”, and cites a former German Askari who stated, “if they were short of soldiers they forced anyone they saw to join their forces”.⁸²

Dr. Horace R.A. Philp who served as government medical officer during the war but was a missionary CSM doctor in peace time, has given us a stark picture of human destruction. The men of the Carrier Corps were believed to have died at the rate of 400 per month during part of the campaign. “Large numbers have died in base hospitals, on the roads and in the reserves after reaching home.

Further, the men left for active service well and fit. Those repatriated have returned mostly physically unfit, bringing with them diseases innumerable.⁸³

Carrier corps made up the bulk of the armies moving through East Africa, and it has been estimated that no less than 1.5 million people operated as carriers in WWI in Tanganyika alone. It needs to be borne in mind that carriers were young men and women in the prime of their lives, whose productive capacity was withdrawn, often with disastrous results from their home communities. The work of Mel Page⁸⁴, Geoffrey Hodges⁸⁵, David Killingray and others has brought to the fore the central role played by African porters in World War One in Africa. These authors have detailed the enormous sacrifices incurred by these Africans, and have, to some extent, dealt with the impact of these hordes of non-combatants.

Smallpox, peace, and influenza

Deserters spilled into villages where people had prepared fields for planting and were anticipating the associated hunger and heavy labour of the season. Ironically, deserting troops and porters, who had survived smallpox in military camps and tested vaccines made by German field doctors, brought viruses to their sanctuary, creating epidemic conditions.⁸⁶ Several thousand people continued with the German led forces, and they

and the pursuing British forces engaged in the 'bulk acquisition of local African livestock'.

It was during this pillage of October November 1918 that tens of thousands were struck down by the rapidly spreading second wave of the Spanish influenza, ... 10 per cent of the population -mostly young adults- died.⁸⁷ The rains were not met by people planting as they were sick and dying. Those who had planted could not weed due to the disease. Influenza epidemic that swept through the territory, remembered in association with the "Famine of Corms".⁸⁸ The famine followed the influenza epidemic and lasted for two years. The name derived from women's use of banana corms as famine food to feed families.⁸⁹

The immediate aftermath of the war was felt severely by the Africans and their new British protectors in Tanganyika. In Iringa in the southeast the death rate rose to 3 percent in 1919. The chief medical officer reported that the influenza epidemic of 1918 – 1919 affected half of the population of Tanganyika and had caused more than 50.000 deaths.⁹⁰

Not surprisingly the first British administrators in the district observed rituals directed at alleviating the crises surrounding the influenza pandemic. The extent of the influenza can be gathered from the fact that the newly established colonial administration collapsed for 6 weeks between December 1918 and January 1919. In addition to the high death rate, recovery brought a post-flu fatigue characterised by mental apathy, depression, subnormal body temperatures and low blood pressure, which could last for weeks or months. These post-flu conditions would have been devastating to agricultural communities desperately needing to plant and weed and who had already suffered substantial losses to the able-bodied population.⁹¹

Civilian administrators and the mandate

The area of the south-western Tanganyika only fell under the control of the civilian administrator in Dar es Salaam with effect from 1 march 1919.⁹² Shortly thereafter the bulk of what had been German East Africa was transferred to the British Empire as a mandated territory of Tanganyika.

In 1921 there were in Tanganyika 4.142.500 people whereas ... there had been 4.183.900 nine years before. The Chief Medical Officer attributed this overall decrease to several causes, among them being:

- i.) Death from disease of many porters during the war.

- ii.) The influenza epidemic of 1918 – 19, which affected half the population and resulted in more than fifty thousand deaths.
- iii.) The famine in 1920 in central Tanganyika, many Wagogo in particular dying before they could reach the food distribution centres based on the Central Railway.
- iv.) A great increase in venereal disease due to the war and tribal dislocation.
- v.) The usual medical causes of mortality that had always been present in the country, exemplified by an infant mortality of 300 per 1.000 live births.⁹³

With the beginning of formal British administration, the Iringa highlands was an area that had been largely denuded of its human population. An area where the bush had reclaimed extensive tracts of land. In the second half of the 1920s the new British administration sought to gather information regarding the territories that it had come to occupy, this resulted in 1927 in the presentation of reports to the colonial office.⁹⁴ These reports were followed up by land development surveys in 1930.⁹⁵ Which in turn resulted in recommendations regarding the development of the Iringa highlands. Amongst other things, it was recommended that further agricultural investigation be carried out. To facilitate this it was decided to establish a Tobacco station in the area.⁹⁶ The emphasis on Tobacco betrays an interest in ensuring European settlement in the area, or rather preconceived ideas that white settlement, which was equated with modern farming methods, would be able to bring to the fore the true wealth and productivity of the land.

Beginning in the 1920s the highlands were made available to European settlers, many of whom were Germans who had been repatriated to Germany after WWI.⁹⁷ Once again the African inhabitants of the highlands were expected to give up their lands and submit themselves for employment as labourers on the newly established settler farms. Writing on the history of the first World War in south-western Tanzania British colonial official Hatchell commented that:

By 1930 a fully organised administration was functioning and the disorganisation of war had been forgotten.⁹⁸

In summation

The argument of this paper is that though there may well have been a functioning colonial administration in place by 1930, which may have forgotten about the ‘disorganisation of war’, the long term impact on land use and land distribution was a

direct result of the wars, famines and epidemics that had swept the land since 1880. In effect, between 1880 and 1930, Iringa and the south-western highlands had truly been visited by the four riders of the apocalypse.

The ruthless devastation wrought by German forces in the 1890s was such that, when Maji Maji began in 1905 it appeared to bypass the Iringa highlands, its African inhabitants having already long since been cowered into submission. Though the Iringa highlands largely escaped the brunt of the Maji-Maji and its aftermath, the area did experience some of the most intense fighting of the First World War as it was fought in Africa. German forces, and later South African and allied British forces passed through the highlands no less than four times and stripped it, not only of its foodstuffs and commodities, but also, to a large extent of its people, who were press-ganged into acting as porters or soldiers for the opposing armies.⁹⁹

The Iringa highlands were hardly the untouched and under-utilised garden of Eden that colonial administrators believed it to be. World War One had not merely spilled over the area with little effect, furthermore, WWI was but one in a series of successive environmental disasters that befell the area. In 1944, Christine Leubuscher could blissfully declare that by 1924 Tanganyika had recovered from war damages, thereby conveniently forgetting the labour cost, let alone the human and social costs of the war.¹⁰⁰ Furthermore, though Leubuscher was not to know, twenty years prior to the spectacular groundnut scheme failure in South Eastern Tanganyika, White settler farmers in the highlands had already failed miserably in transforming their lands into fertile, productive and cost effective farms. By 1935 the majority of farmers in the Iringa highlands were heavily indebted and scouting, ever more desperately, for the scheme, farming or otherwise, that would prove to be productive.¹⁰¹

Endnotes

- ¹ This working paper was first presented at the symposium, *The Maji Maji War 1905 – 1907: Colonial Conflict, National History and Local Memory*, held at the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin, March 30 – April 1 2005. I would like to thank the symposium participants, Jamie Monson in particular, for comments and suggestions.
- ² Helge Kjekshus, *Ecology Control and Economic Development in East African History The Case of Tanganyika 1850 - 1950*, (London 1977 reprinted 1996), p. 144.
- ³ Government of Tanganyika, *Handbook of Tanganyika (second edition)*, edited by J.P. Moffett, Dar es Salaam: Government printer, 1958, p. 94.
- ⁴ Jamie Monson, “Relocating Maji Maji: the politics of alliance and authority in the southern highlands of Tanzania, 1870-1918” in *The Journal of African History*, 1998, vol. 39, no. 1, p. 95-120. For a recent historiographical critique of Maji Maji see, Thaddeus Sunseri, “Statist narratives and Maji Maji ellipses”, in *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 2000, vol. 33, no. 3, p. 567-584.
- ⁵ Monson, “Relocating Maji Maji”, p. 96.
- ⁶ Bundesarchiv Berlin. Reichkolonial Amt (BA. RKA)1001. 36 – 44, Ansiedlung im Iringa-Bezirk und im weiteren südwestlichen Hochland. 1926 – 1929
- ⁷ James G. Ellison, The epidemic in southwest Tanzania, in *The Spanish Influenza Pandemic of 1918 - 19: New Perspectives*, edited by Howard Phillips and David Killingray, London 2003.
- ⁸ Helge Kjekshus, *Ecology Control and Economic Development in East African History The Case of Tanganyika 1850 - 1950*, (London 1977 reprinted 1996), p. 144.
- ⁹ A fine, if rather unsettling example of this approach, has been the recent revisionist literature that has been emerging in Namibian history, in which the impact of Herero and Nama genocides have come to be trivialised. For an excellent overview and stinging critique of this approach see, Christoph Marx, “Entsorgen und Entseuchen: Zur Diskussionskultur in der derzeitigen namibischen Historiographie – eine Polemik“, forthcoming. For a further example of the *salonfähig* nature of this revisionist approach by historians see, Niall Ferguson, *Empire: How Britain made the modern world*, London: Penguin 2003, and Roel van der Veen, *What went wrong with Africa: A contemporary history*, Amsterdam: KIT Publishers, 2004.
- ¹⁰ The failure of settler farmers in Iringa in the period prior to 1945 forms the theme of a follow-up paper of which the working title is: ‘Of Chinchillas and Bacon: The economic failure of settler farmers in Iringa 1900 -40’.
- ¹¹ A fine, and as yet unsurpassed introduction to the Iringa highlands is to be found in, Alison Redmayne, “Mkwawa and the Hehe wars” in *Journal of African History*, IX, 3 (1968), pp. 409 - 436. “The Wahehe People of Tanganyika” (Oxford, 1964) D. Phil.
- ¹² This interest has to a great extent been inspired by the following work: Jocelyn Alexander, Joanne McGregor, and Terence Ranger. *Violence & Memory: One Hundred Years in the ‘Dark Forests’ of Matabeleland*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2000. Reviewed by J.B. Gewald in, *African Studies Review*, vol. 44.
- ¹³ Leroy Vail (ed.). *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa*. London, James Currey 1989; Anderson. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, New York: Verso, 1983.
- ¹⁴ See in this regard the discussion on the limitations of ethnically defined historical research in Namibian historiography in, J.B. Gewald, ‘Near death in the streets of Karibib: in *Journal of African History*, 44 (2003), pp. 211 – 39.
- ¹⁵ Alison Redmayne. “Mkwawa and the Hehe wars“ in *Journal of African History*, IX, 3 (1968), pp. 409 - 436. & “The Wahehe People of Tanganyika” (Oxford, 1964) unpublished D. Phil.
- ¹⁶ Thomas Pakenham, *The Scramble for Africa*, Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball publishers, 1992, p. 282. Those seeking a detailed overview of German colonial rule in Tanzania are advised to read, John Iliffe, *Tanganyika under German rule, 1905-1912*, Cambridge : University Press, 1969. For a contemporary perspective on developments see, Paul Reichard, *Deutsch-Ostafrika. Das Land und seine Bewohner, seine politische und wirtschaftliche Entwicklung*. Leipzig, Spamer 1892
- ¹⁷ Hermann Wissmann, Ludwig Wolf, Curt von Francois, Hans Mueller, *Im Inneren Afrikas: Die Erforschung des Kassai während der Jahre 1883, 1884 und 1885*, Leipzig 1888. & Hermann von Wissmann, *Unter deutscher Flagge quer durch Afrika von West nach Ost: Von 1880 bis 1883 ausgeführt von Paul Pogge und Hermann von Wissmann*, Berlin 1902.
- ¹⁸ Martin Baer & Olaf Schröter, *Eine Kopffjagd: Deutsche in Ostafrika, Spuren Kolonialer Herrschaft*. Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag. 2001, p. 41.

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- 20 Stoecker, Helmuth (hrsg.): Drang nach Afrika. Berlin 1991, s. 90. JBG's translation.
- 21 Wissmann to Kaiser, 28 Nov. 1889 and *idem*. 15 June 1889, ZstA 743, 53 – 62, and RKA 739, 48. Cited in Jonathon Glassman: Feasts and Riot: Revelry, Rebellion and Popular Consciousness on the Swahili Coast, 1856 – 1888, London 1995, p. 250.
- 22 Baer & Schröter, *Kopffjagd*, p. 42.
- 23 L.H. Gann & Peter Duignan, *The Rulers of German Africa: 1884 – 1914* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1978. p. 67.
- 24 Thaddeus Sunseri, *Vilimani: Labor Migration and Rural Change in Early Colonial Tanzania*, Oxford: James Curry, 2002, p. 13. Baer und Schröter, *Kopffjagd*, p. 45.
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- 26 Those seeking a detailed yet accessible introduction to events in Uhehe are referred to, Baer & Schröter, *Kopffjagd*.
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- 31 Liebert, *Neunzig Tage*, p. 28.
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- 33 BA. RKA 1001.1039, Iringa, 5/4/1898, Bericht über ereignisse im Bezirk Iringa vom 19/12/97 bis 5/4/98 (Prince).
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- 35 The skull of Mkwawa came to be mentioned in § 246 of the Treaty of Versailles. For further information regarding Mkwawa and Versailles see, <http://www.mkwawa.com/treaty.asp>. For a full text of the treaty see, <http://www.greatwar.nl/frames/default-treaty.html>.
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- 37 By far the most detailed overview and analysis of German developmental plans and activities in mainland Tanzania is that completed by Juhani Koponen, *Development for Exploitation: German colonial policies in Mainland Tanzania, 1884 – 1914*, Helsinki: Finnish Historical Society 1994.
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- 42 Tom von Prince, *Gegen Araber und Wahehe* (Berlin, 1914)
- 43 BA. RKA 1001, 8648 Versuchstation in Uhehe (Dabagga) Jan 1898 – juli 1900. Tom von Prince in Iringa, 1/8/98, to AA.
- 44 There is a large and detailed overview of material dealing with Maji Maji. A good introduction is John Iliffe, "The organization of the Maji Maji rebellion", in *The Journal of African History*, 1967, vol. 8, no. 3, p. 495-512; Monson, "Relocating Maji Maji" in *The Journal of African History*, 1998, vol. 39, no. 1, p. 95-120. For a recent historiographical critique of Maji Maji see, Thaddeus Sunseri, "Statist narratives and Maji Maji ellipses", in *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 2000, vol. 33, no. 3, p. 567-584
- 45 H.A., Tomaschek, "Der Aufstand in Deutsch-Ostafrika und die Wahehe", in *Deutsche Kolonialzeitung*, Bd. XXII, Nr. 39, 30.09.1905, 410 – 411.
- 46 Anonymous, "Aus der Kolonie. Gefechte der 2.Kompanie Iringa vom 3. September 1905 bis 17 November 1905, in *Deutsch-Ostafrikanische Zeitung*, Bd. VIII, Nr. 8, 24.02.1906; see also, Gefechte der 2.Kompanie Iringa vom 17 November 1905 bis 8 Januar 1906, in *Deutsch-Ostafrikanische Zeitung*, Bd. VIII, Nr. 9, 03.03.1906.

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- 48 Werner Biermann, *Tanganyika Railways – Carrier of Colonialism: An Account of Economic Indicators and Social Fragments*, Münster: Lit Verlag, 1995, p. 11.
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- 52 Norbert Aas and Harald Sippel, *Koloniale Konflikte im Alltag: Eine rechtshistorische Untersuchung der Auseinandersetzungen des Siedlers Heinrich Langkopp mit der Kolonialverwaltung in Deutsch-Ostafrika und dem Reichsentschädigungsamt*, Bayreuth: Bayreuth African Studies Series, 1997, p. 49.
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- 57 G.W. Hatchell, O.B.E., "The British Occupation of the South-Western Area of Tanganyika Territory, 1914 – 1918", in *Tanganyika Notes and Records*, 1958, Number 51, pp. 131 – 155.
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- 60 James Ambrose Brown. *They Fought for King and Kaiser: South African's in German East Africa 1916*. Johannesburg: Ashanti publishing. 1991.
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- 64 NA, WO 95/5329, East Africa Brig Gen E. Northey's War Diary 4 Dec 1915 – 8 Apr 1916. CAB 45/20 East Africa Campaign: The Rhodesian Column on the Northern Border 1915 – 1917. Later to become Sir Edward Northey, governor and Commander-in-chief in Kenya. Hatchell, "British Occupation", p. 138 – 41.
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70 Hatchell, British Occupation, p. 149.
71 Ellison, epidemic, p. 223.
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