

Submission Guidelines

Collaborate with your team on your case study presentation. When it is complete, the team leader is responsible for submitting it in the Assignment Lab, or for making sure that another team member submits it. Please note that all learners should visit the assignment lab and provide feedback on at least 2 other team presentations, before the deadline.

As a reminder, your presentation should:

1. Be limited to no more than 750 words
2. Engage the materials in the case studies, lectures, and text.
3. You are free to import material from outside the course, but this is not necessary and may detract you and teammates from the task. Don't go overboard!

Instructions

Step 1: Read the case study introduction, background information, and the primary sources below.

Step 2: Work with your team to answer the challenge question for this case study.

Step 3: Go to the Assignment Lab to post your response, and to read and comment on other learners' submissions.

Track C, Case study 6: Guns and prophets: The Maji-Maji Uprising

STEP 1

Case Study Introduction

In the nineteenth century, technological disparities with the West widened sharply. While the coasts of Africa, Arabia, Asia, and Oceania had already seen the establishment of European trading colonies, during the nineteenth century imperial powers pushed ever deeper into the interior. Central to this process was superior weaponry. Resistance was the flip-side of social, technological, and political change and threats to traditional ways of life. As we have heard in the lectures, prophetic movements sprung up across the world. These movements often centered on an explicit rejection of symbols of Western modernity and exploitation (guns, railways, religious impositions, and Western schools). In this case study, we look at how beliefs in spiritual protections lead to a rebellion against an aggressive European colonizer whose technological prowess made victory certain. See Lecture 11, segments 3 and 4.

Background Information

The Maji Maji rebellion against German colonial rule in German East Africa from 1905-07 was part of an ongoing response to colonial encroachment, and to social and ecological change. During the scramble for Africa Germany had sought to expand its colonial empire, including in the area of East Africa currently known as Tanzania. Unhappiness with German administration in what was then a German protectorate and anger at German taxes, brutal punishments, and attempts to force unpaid cotton farming in the region led to the uprising in then-southeastern Tanganyika. Maji Maji was one of a number of prophetic movements that emerged around the world during this period of aggressive colonial expansion.

The Maji Maji uprising was not well organized. Yet, it united diverse people from different backgrounds, spreading fast across the region, before the German administration fully suppressed it in 1907. The Ngoni, Matumbi, and other people were integral to leading the fight and suffered especially harsh reprisals. Faith in the power of 'Maji' (special water) given by prophets such as Kinji kiteli Ngwale to protect warriors from the weapons of the German army led to a belief in the power of local communities to conquer German colonizers.

This was further supported by faith that not only the “maji ya uzima” (water of life), but the ancestors would protect the rebels.

The German military response and guns were harsh and efficient, undermining not only the rebellion but the belief systems that underpinned it. A 'scorched earth' policy led to widespread famine and depopulation in the rebellion's wake. This in turn reinforced German power and influence in East Africa, strengthening relations with loyalist chiefs and enhancing their power with a weakened African population. It also resulted in new policies and systems of control, for example the establishment of the Colonial Department in 1907, and a shift to administrative rather than militaristic government by the Germans.

The Case Study

Here we consider how beliefs in prophecy and tradition led to disastrous consequences for people with legitimate grievances but technologically disadvantaged. The case study brings up questions of tradition and change, how spiritual belief can serve as a uniting force for diverse communities but can also thwart effective planning and yield ruinous decision-making; and how colonial powers used force and technological advantage to entrench power.

Primary Sources

Here are the primary sources in this case study:

1. Primary Source One: G.C.K Gwassa, *Interviews with Maji Maji Revolt Survivors, 1967*
2. Primary Source Two: The weapons of the Maji Maji forces
3. Primary Source Three: German military resources in Africa
4. Primary Source Four: The besieged Boma at Mahenge
5. Primary source Five: The battle at Mahenge, August 1905
6. Primary Source Six: Imprisoned Maji Maji leaders, 1906

Primary Source One: G. C. K. Gwassa, *Interviews with Maji Maji Revolt Survivors*

Background

The Tanzanian scholar G.C.K. Gwassa conducted a series of oral history interviews with the survivors of the 1905–1908 Maji Maji Revolt in what was then German East Africa. Germany had gained control over this territory (what is now Tanzania) in the wake of the Berlin Conference of 1884. At that conference, the European powers had formally divided up areas of influence in Africa. Germany, which had only come together as a nation in 1871, was a late-comer on the imperial scene and wished to acquire colonies as quickly as possible. In an effort to extract more profit from its East African colony of Tanganyika, the German government instituted head taxes on all adult men and conscripted labor to cultivate cotton for export. The need for people to shift to wage labor in order to earn cash to pay taxes, labor conscription, and the effects of land allocated away from food crops to cotton created economic hardship and social change. The material and social consequences of colonial exploitation led to a millenarian response in East Africa, as it did with the 1890 Ghost Dance in the United States, the 1856-1857 Xhosa Cattle Killing in South Africa, and the 1900 Boxer Uprising in China, among others.

In 1905 Kinjikitile Ngwale experienced a spirit possession. Word spread quickly that those who went to see him would receive war medicine that could turn German bullets to water (*maji* in KiSwahili). The ensuing Maji-Maji Revolt (1905-1907) was brutally suppressed by the German colonial military. Some scholars assert the famine that followed was partly engineered by colonial officials to keep an unruly populace from recovering. The Maji Maji revolt reflected this rising discontent.

G. C. K. Gwassa, *Interviews with Maji-Maji Revolt Survivors* (1967)

After independence in 1961, Tanzanian historian G. C. K. Gwassa began asking elders about their memories of Maji-Maji. From the fragments of information collected from people in various locations a narrative of events is reconstructed.

MZEE NDULI NJIMBWI OF MTUMBEI KIPATIMU. INTERVIEWED SEPTEMBER 24, 1967
During the [cotton] cultivation there was much suffering. We, the labour conscripts, stayed in the front-line cultivating. Then behind us was an overseer whose work it was to whip us. Behind the over-seer there was a jumbe [official], and every jumbe stood behind his fifty men. Behind the line of jumbes stood Bwana Kinoo [a German settler named Steinhagen] himself. Then, behold death there! And then as you till the land from beginning to end your footprints must not be seen save those of the jumbe. And that Selemani, the overseer, had a whip, and he was extremely cruel. His work was to whip the conscripts if they rose up or tried to rest, or if they left a trail of their footprints behind them. Ah, brothers, God is great - that we have lived like this is God's Providence! And on the other side Bwana Kinoo had a bamboo stick. If the men of a certain jumbe left their footprints behind them, that jumbe would be boxed on the ears and Kinoo would beat him with the bamboo stick using both hands, while at the same time Selerhani lashed out at us labourers.

MZEE ELISE: S!MBANIMOTO OF NANDETE. INTERVIEWED SEPTEMBER 4, 1967

They [the people] waited for a long period because they were afraid. How could one clan face the Germans alone and not be wiped out? There had to be many.

SEBASTIAN UPUNDA OF NANDETE. INTERVIEWED SEPTEMBER 5, 1967
It is true they were ruled for a very long time before they rose in arms against the Germans. The problem was how to beat him really well. Who would start? Thus they waited for a long time because there was no plan or knowledge. Truly his practices were bad. But while there were no superior weapons should the people not fear? Everywhere elders were busy thinking, "What should we do?"

MZEE NDUNDULE MANGAYA OF KIPATIMU. INTERVIEWED AUGUST 7, 1967

The message in Njwiywila [secret communication] was like this: "This year is a year of war, for there is a man at Ngarambe [Kinjikitile] who has been possessed. ... Why? Because we are suffering like this and because ... we are oppressed. ... We work without, payment. ...It [the Njwiywila message] spread quickly throughout Matumbi country and beyond. In the message of Njwiywila was also the information that those who went to Ngarambe would see their dead ancestors. Then people began going to Ngarambe to see for themselves.

MZEE MOHAMEND NGANOGA OF NGARAMBE RUMNGO INTERVIEWED AUGUST 31, 1967

It was like a wedding procession, I tell you! People were singing, dancing, and ululating throughout. When they arrived at Ngarambe they slept there and danced likinda, everyone in his own group. The following morning they received medicine and returned to their homes.

SEBASTIAN UPUNDE OF NANDETE. INTERVIEWED SEPTEMBER 5, 1967

The song of Mpokosi [a representative of Kinjikitile] during likinda was in the Ngindo language. He used to take his fly-whisk and his calabash container for medicine, and he went around sprinkling them with medicine. It was like military drilling with muzzle-loaders, and under very strict discipline. Thus Mpokosi would say:

"Attention!"

"We are at attention."

"What are you carrying?"

"We are carrying peas."

"Peas? Peas of what type?"

"Creeping peas."

"Creeping?"

"Creeping."

And so on as they marched, until Mpokosi ordered: "Attention!"

"We are at attention."

"Turn towards Donde country [inland]."

(The warriors turned.)

"Turn towards the black water [the ocean]." (They obeyed.) "Destroy the red earth?"

"Destroy!"

"Destroy?"

"Destroy!"

And so on as they advanced as if to shoot.

During that time they were dressed in their military attire called Ngumbalyo. Further, each one was told where to go or the day to start drilling. Thus all gathered at Nandete for this type of likinda. The song was entirely in riddles. Thus the question "what are you carrying?" meant "what do you want to do?" The answer "we are carrying peas" meant "we are carrying bullets", and they used peas in their guns during drilling. "Creeping peas" are those that creep, and it meant that they were marching to the battlefield. "Creeping, creeping"- that was walking, that is military marching. "Destroy the red earth"- that meant tear the European apart or destroy him.

Source: G.C.K Gwassa, "Interviews with Maji Maji Revolt Survivors," in Kenneth L. Pomeranz et. al., Worlds Together, Worlds Apart: A Companion Reader, Volume 2 (New York: Norton, 2011), pages 254-257 from Records of the Maji Maji Uprising, Part 1, edited by G. C. K. Gwassa and John Iliffe (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1967), pp. 5, 8-12.

COMPASS POINTS

- Look for instances of fact and instances of belief in the text: experience and faith were intertwined in shaping the local response to foreign intrusion.

- Think about how the Maji Maji rebels reacted to European technology in organizing their revolt.
- Note how precolonial African practices and military strategy combined in the rebel movement.

Primary Source Two: The weapons of the Maji Maji forces



Source: Maji-Maji warriors, 1905, source unknown. Public domain.

Primary Source Three: German military resources in Africa

East African Schutztruppe 1897 with the World Standard Maxim Gun

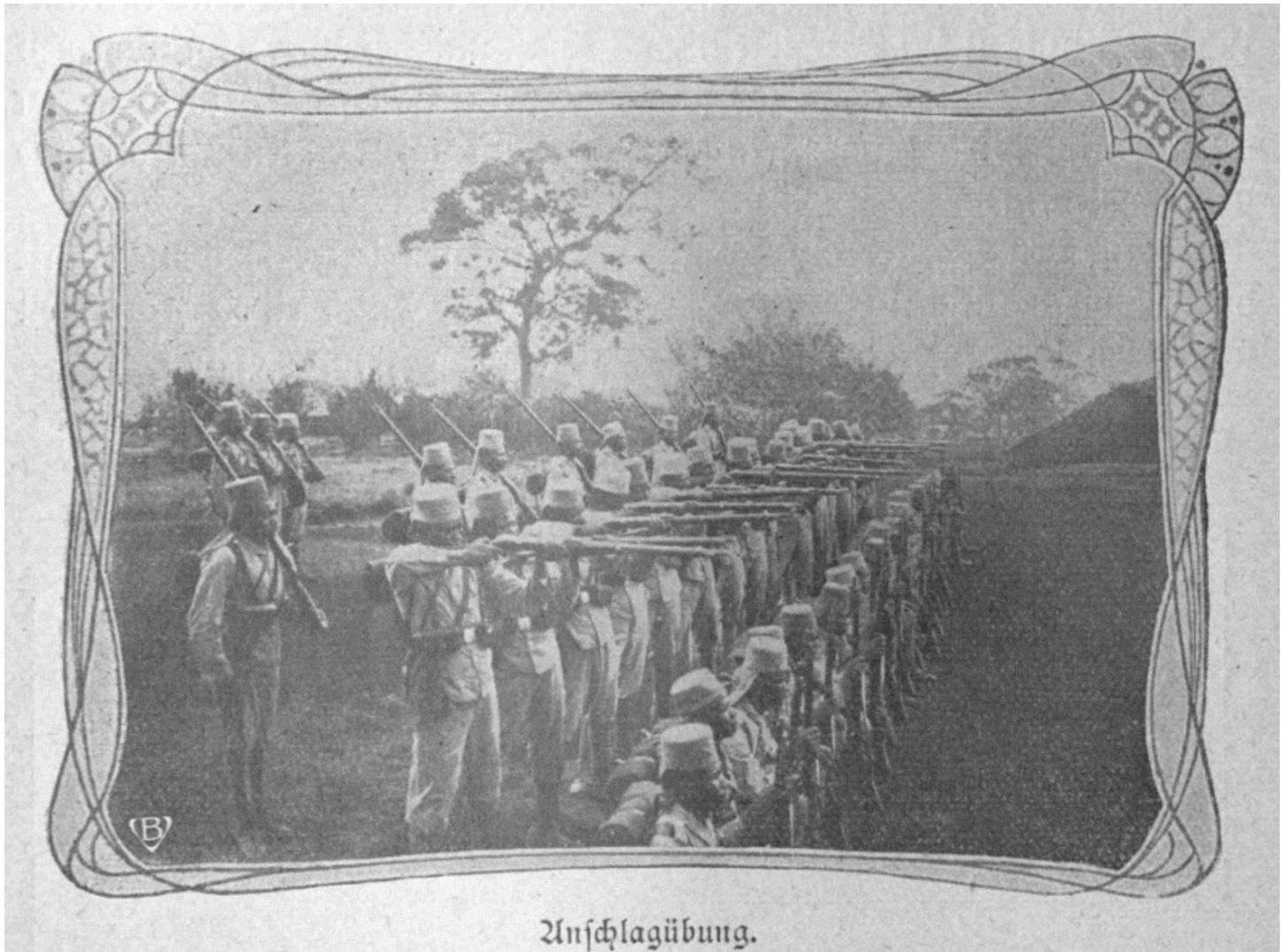
A demonstration of some German military equipment to Ungoni Chiefs by Premier Lieutenant Engelhardt.



Source: Werner Haupt, *Die Deutsche Schutztruppe 1899-1918*, (Eggolsheim, Germany: **Dörfler** Verlag GmbH, 2001). Public domain.

Heinrich Fonck, military organization, and the 'askaris'

Heinrich Fonck was a German military commander and a documenter of German experiences in East Africa. He wrote particularly on 'askariboys' (African collaborators) in his book, *Deutsch Ost-Afrika: Eine Schilderung Deutscher Tropen nach 10 Wanderjahren* (Berlin: Vossische Buchhandlung, 1910).



Source: Heinrich Fonck, 'Commander Fonck's troop exercising', before 1910 (Heinrich Fonck, *Deutsch-Ost-Afrika. Eine Schilderung deutscher Tropen nach 10 Wanderjahren*. (Berlin: Vossische Buchhandlung, 1910): 19.

COMPASS POINTS

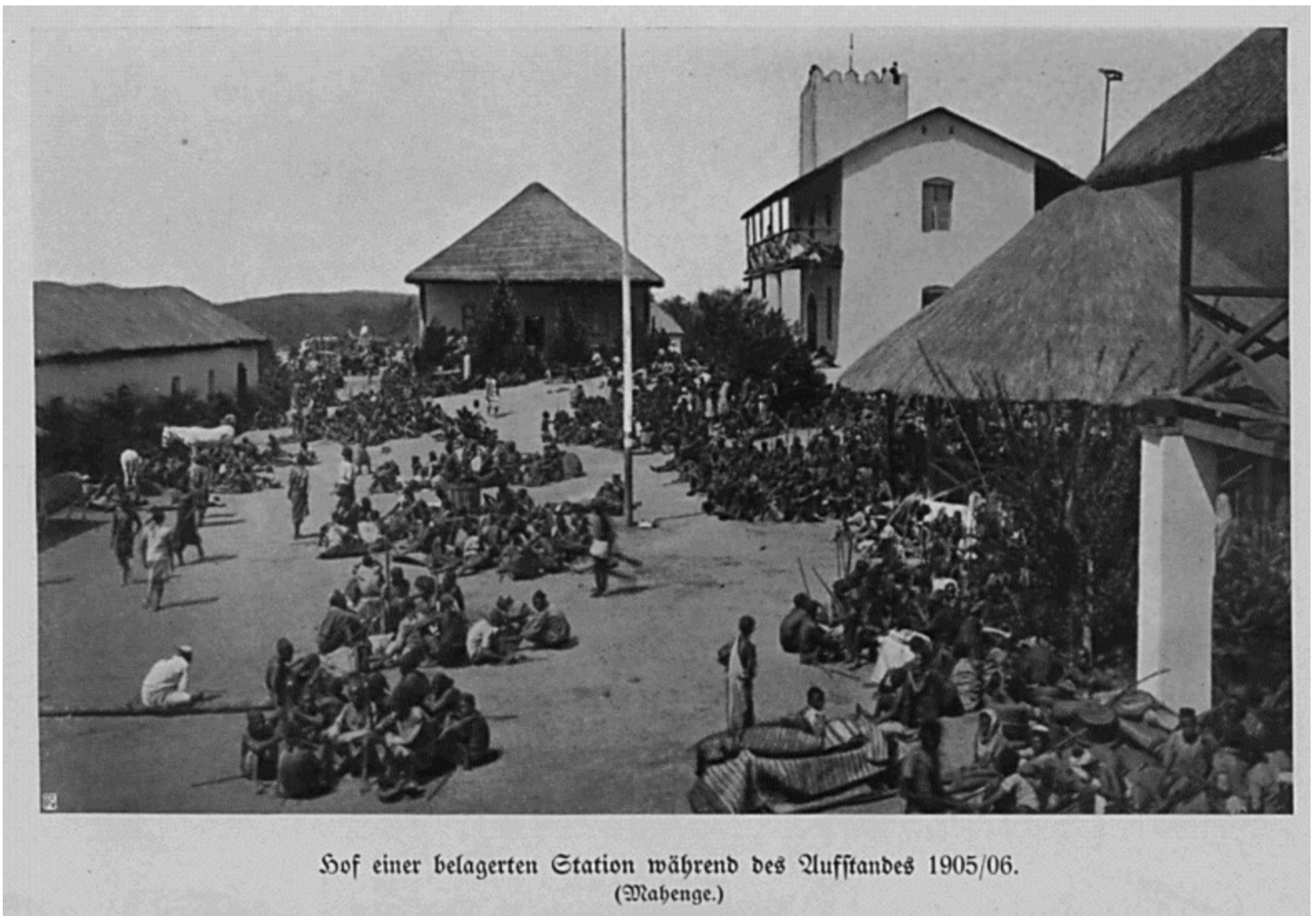
- The first image shows Germany's first World Standard Maxim gun presented to the Wissmantruppe by Kaiser Wilhelm II.
- Note the African collaborators assisting the Germans and using their guns and other equipment. Think about why people may have decided to work with foreigners rather than local insurgents.

Primary Source Four: The besieged Boma at Mahenge

Background

August 1905 was a high point for Maji Maji fighters: German forces were pushed to coastal areas and German garrisons at Songea, Iringa, Kilosa, and Mahenge. For the uprising to succeed, these encampments needed to be defeated. The account given here describes the storming of Mahenge.

Thousands of Maji Maji warriors attacked the German cantonment. German Lieutenant Theodor von Husserl, armed with two machine guns, defended the garrison with approximately sixty native soldiers and a few hundred loyal tribesmen. Lack of coordination between the attackers proved disastrous, and their assegais and shields were no match for German machine guns. Mahenge is viewed as a key battle in the Maji Maji uprising: The Germans were victorious. As the rebellion progressed, the Maji-Maji forces began a retreat. Germany sent a unit of an additional thousand soldiers to East Africa which, paired with armies of African collaborators, marched through rebel territories exacting terrible revenge on civilians and insurgents alike.



Source: Unknown photographer, 'Courtyard of a besieged *boma* during Majimaji 1905/06 (Mahenge)', in E. Nigmann, *Geschichte der Kaiserlichen Schutztruppe für Deutsch-Ostafrika*, (Berlin: Ernst Siegfried Mittler und Sohn, 1911): 106.

Primary Source Five: The battle at Mahenge, August 1905

Account given by a German Missionary

Scarcely were the five condemned men hanging on the trees when a messenger rushed in with the news that the enemy were approaching. ... Shortly after seven o'clock they advanced on the boma in close columns. There must have been over a thousand men. Since they came to make an end of all of us, we had to defend ourselves and take part in the firing, which opened on the attackers at about a thousand metres. Two machine-guns, Europeans and soldiers rained death and destruction among the ranks of the advancing enemy. Although we saw the ranks thin, the survivors maintained order for about a quarter of an hour, marching closer amidst a hail of bullets. But then the ranks broke apart and took cover behind numerous small rocks. Now and again a group rushed out on to the road, lifted one of the fallen, and quickly fled again behind the rocks. ... [Then a new column of 1200 men approached on the flank] The first attackers were only three paces from the firing line when they sank to the ground, struck by deadly bullets. Those behind them lost courage, turned and scattered. ... When no more enemy could be seen, the Station Commander climbed down from the top of the boma tower, from which he had "commanded the defence," and distributed champagne.

Source: Robert O. Collins, *Eastern African History: African History in Documents*, (Princeton: Marcus Wiener Publishers, 1997): 135.

COMPASS POINTS

- Note that a boma is a central enclosure usually shared as a communal area for meetings and decision-making.
- Note the differences in manpower and capacity: the Maji Maji rebels outnumbered the Germans and their African Allies, but the Germans had guns.

German artist William Kuehnart's depiction of the battle at Mahenge



Source: Wilhelm Kuhnert "Battle at Mahenge, 1905", German East Africa, (1908). Public domain.

COMPASS POINTS

- Note the romanticism of Kuhnert's depiction of the battle of Mahenge: he situates it on the African savanna when in fact it occurred at the boma of a German cantonment.
- Note the contrast in Kuhnert's portraits of the clothing and weaponry of the German-aligned troops and the rebels.
- Note the African askaris/collaborators working with the German leader.

Primary Source Six: Imprisoned Maji Maji leaders, 1906

„Glaubst du an einen Gott und drei Personen?“ „Widerstehst du dem Teufel und (ein Aufwiegler) zugrunde gerichtet.“ Die Stimmung der Verurteilten war verschieden.

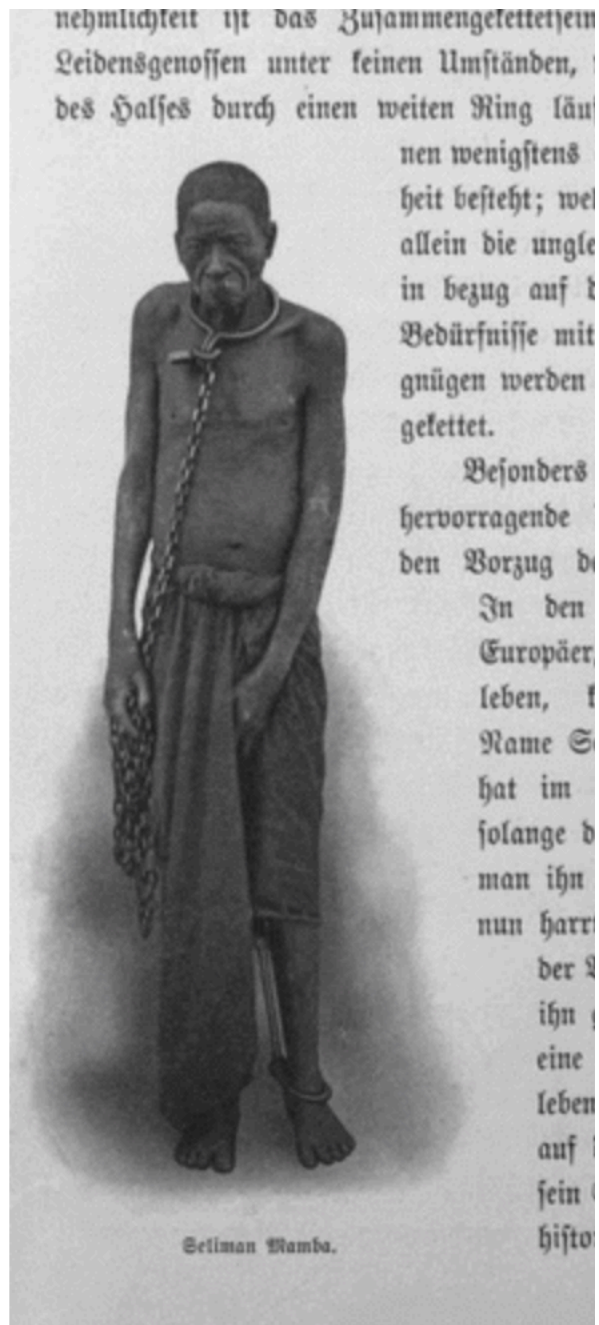
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1. Sultan Mputa, 2. u. 3. Söhne des Songea, 4. Fratera, 5. Maji ha kuhanga, 6. Pambalioto, 7. Songea.
Gefangene Häuptlinge in Songea.

feinen Werken?“ „Bereust du deine Sünden?“ „Willst du getauft werden?“ Nach Einige trösteten sich damit, daß sie nicht allein sterben, sondern daß viele beisammen

Source: Fr Häfliger, 'Imprisoned leaders in Songea,' 1906. Public domain.



Source: Karl Weule, 'Selemani Mamba', Lindi, July 1906 (Karl Weule, *Negerleben in Ostafrika. Ergebnisse einer Ethnologischen Forschungsreise*. (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1909): 45), in Nancy Rushohora & Eliane Kurmann (2018) "Look at Majimaji! A plea for historical photographs in Tanzania," *African Studies*, 77:1, 87-104.

COMPASS POINTS

- Note the use of neck-irons on imprisoned Maji Maji fighters: think about how this would have reinforced German claims to power.
- Think about the positioning of the subjects and their gaze at the photographer: record-keeping through photographs and identity documents were also a part of the German colonial apparatus, and technologies of modernity.

Case study challenge question

Please answer the following question (750-word response):

Did faith in spiritual powers help or hinder local people resisting German military power in East Africa?