

Chapter 7

Summary and Conclusion

This study examined the collective memories of German colonialism in Tanzania as reflected in imperial politics, nationalist struggles, commemorations, oral narratives, school curricula, archives, and memorials. The study has shown that, apart from being communicative, collective memories of the Germans in Tanzania are functional, in the sense that they involve rituals, commemorations and ceremonies, and are topographical, meaning that they are represented by buildings, gardens, urban spaces, monuments, statues, cemeteries, archives and museums.¹ By doing so the study has therefore reaffirmed the fact that “memories are not limited to oral information and the personal remembrances of individuals.”²

With the colonization of East Africa in the last quarter of the 19th century, Tanganyika experienced tremendous political, economic, and social restructuring, the impacts of which are long-lasting. By the late 19th century, the German colonial administration had been established to supervise colonial production in the newly founded colony of *Deutsch Ostafrika*. To achieve this, corporal punishment and the use of other coercive instruments became the major way of maintaining discipline among the Africans. Memory narratives and documentary sources employed in this study showed that the Germans demonstrated their strong political domination by crushing local uprisings and establishing their imperial state with its imperial symbols. They transformed African societies by introducing Christianity, western education and several other western cultural values, the legacy of which is observable in Tanzania today. Added to this they came with alien technologies and established modern urban areas that currently exist as a tangible reminder of the German cultural legacy.

The study has also shown that the immediate political ambition of the British, after acquiring Tanganyika as a mandate territory after the First World War, was to dismantle the legacy of German imperialism by replacing monuments, renaming the territory itself (from *Deutsch Ostafrika* to Tanganyika) and by changing the existing street and place names that seemed to glorify German imperial rule. Assmann and Shortt have explained why this move could not have been avoided by the British, as they argue below:

¹ As classified by Schreiner, “Histories of Trauma”, p. 272. See also Podoler, “Monuments”, p. 11; Carrier, “Places, Politics and Archiving of Contemporary Memory”, pp. 40–47; Cole, “The Work of Memory in Madagascar”, p. 614.

² Davian-Smith and Hamilton, “Introduction”, p. 3.

Political regime change enforces an abrupt reorganization of memory by ushering in a new value system. Its most obvious external signs are the renaming of streets, along with the selection of new obligatory reference points that were common in the past for history textbooks and public commemorations.³

Like the British, the independent government of Tanzania renamed colonial streets and introduced commemorations, which honoured national heroes and heroines, and completely suppressed colonial commemorations that had thrived under British colonial rule. School history textbooks were produced to achieve just that.⁴ Of course, African remembrances of German colonialism, as shown in this study, started in colonial times when, for example, the Ngoni venerated the Maji Maji war spirits secretly or when nationalist leaders like Nyerere invoked memories of resistance to colonialism to support the struggle for independence in Tanganyika.⁵ However, in Uchagga, some attempts were made to preserve the German colonial sites existing there.

Although the British managed to suppress memories of German imperialism in Tanganyika, at the same time they manipulated some of them for their political benefit. This was explained in chapters two and three, respectively, concerning the use of German colonial records and of the Maji Maji War. Chapter six also explained how the British and later the Tanzanian government benefited from the buildings erected by the Germans in the city of Dar es Salaam, which had hitherto served as the capital city (*Hauptstadt*) of German East Africa. The British set out to obliterate the political legacy of the Germans in Tanganyika, but, for some reason, they could not completely destroy their buildings, which after independence the Africans inherited as their cultural heritage.

To find out how the Germans are remembered locally, this study interviewed several people from different places in Tanzania, whose memory narratives have, in addition to the documentary sources used, revealed various ways in which the German colonial period is remembered today in Tanzania. The findings have shown that the collective memories of German colonialism have promoted anti-colonial heroism and the commemoration of war heroes and heroines in areas where Africans rebelled against German colonization. These anti-colonial heroic memories, as explained in chapters three and five, are multidimensional. They are embedded in the monuments erected to honour war heroes and are also represented by the streets and public institutions named after African chiefs who fought

³ Assmann and Shortt, "Memory and Political Change", p. 7.

⁴ Assmann and Shortt, "Memory and Political Change", p. 10. Change of political regimes also affect change of educational programmes.

⁵ Visiting a cemetery in memory of those buried there or for veneration of dead spirits is an act of remembering. See for example, Danziger, *Making the Mind*, p. 1.

against German colonial penetration and exploitation. Sites such as these prompt communities in present-day Tanzania to remember the past and the experience of German colonialism. It should be known that naming buildings after African chiefs who fought against the Germans is widespread in Tanzania. In most government boarding schools, for instance, the dormitories commemorate African chiefs who resisted German colonial rule.⁶

The study also revealed that memories of the Germans reside in the social memory as communicative narratives of anti-colonial heroism because German colonialism was violent. In Tanzania, as in other African countries where traumatic memories of the colonial past exist, the memory narratives are used to 'justify' and 'legitimize' the claims for reparation and restitution.⁷ For example, the study has shown the extent to which commemorative initiatives, which were scaled up after independence in places like Songea and Moshi, led to collective claims for reparation and restitution by local people and individual government leaders like members of parliament and ministers. It is not difficult to account for this, but Karl Hack reminds us that "the collective memory of suffering and loss can stir powerful emotions, ranging from private grief to patriotic fervour."⁸ Assmann and Shortt add that collective memories of past violence "can contribute to reconciliation and new forms of co-existence," and may involve, in my view, resolving issues relating to claims for reparation and restitution.⁹ Memories of the Germans, as shown in this study, are also connected with the preservation of African war graves, which are often used as sites for ancestor worship by their owners and as places of national commemoration, as in the case of the Maji Maji War graves in Songea.

This study also explained that memories of the Germans in Tanzania are also reflected in the museums and archives acting as repositories of artifacts, such as files, documents, photos and ethnological objects relating to the German colonial past, which are part of the country's shared past.¹⁰ German colonial records are important sources of information for the reconstruction of Tanzania's history, which have certainly benefited both local and foreign researchers and, as shown in chapter three, these materials are symbolic for the nation's identity. The study

⁶ This information is based on the researcher's personal observations.

⁷ Evidence of how memory narratives can be used in this way is provided by Straub, "Telling Stories", p. 65.

⁸ Karl Hack, "Contentious Heritage", in Tim Benton (ed), *Understanding Heritage and Memory* (UK: Manchester University Press, 2010), p. 89.

⁹ Assmann and Shortt, "Memory and Political Change", p. 4.

¹⁰ Donald E. Polkinghorne, "Narrative Psychology and Historical Consciousness", in Jürgen Straub (ed), *Narration Identity and Historical Consciousness* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2005), p. 9.

also indicated another way in which the German colonial past shapes national identity. For example, rebellions against colonialism by African chiefs are widely covered in primary school history textbooks and are always mentioned in official government speeches as events symbolizing African heroism, patriotism, and solidarity. The study has shown that communicative and cultural memories of the resistance to colonialism promote what Tim Benton and Penelope Curtis call “a sense of shared identity,”¹¹ which usually transforms the “nation’s self-image as an imagined community” or “imagined idinties.”¹² Historians like Koponen have gone further by arguing that Tanzania as “a geographical region bounded by arbitrary imperialist borders” could not have been formed without the Germans.¹³ He further argues elsewhere:

colonial development laid the foundation for today’s Tanzania as a political, economic and social entity [. . .] It is now widely agreed that the processes which were set in motion by the colonial intervention transformed the political, social and economic relations in the area, forging it into a social whole which, eventually, was taken over by the African nationalist government.¹⁴

Does this argument find expression in Tanzanians’ collective memories discussed in this study? It has shown that the Germans are remembered somewhat nostalgically in present-day Tanzania and examples have been cited from different parts of the country to show how nostalgia for the German legacy features in both communicative and cultural memories.¹⁵ There is no doubt that nostalgia for German colonialism, besides the numerous tangible German cultural memorials preserved as national monuments, supports Koponen’s argument above. It is equally true that German colonialism laid the foundations for the post-colonial remembrance of anti-colonial heroism exemplified in commemorations and monuments which, as already known, owe their origins to German colonial acts of violence.

The study has shown that German colonial knowledge and heritage have roused traumatic memories while at the same time awakening nostalgic memories

¹¹ For this concept see Tim Benton and Penelope Curtis, “The Heritage of Public Commemoration”, in Tim Benton (ed), *Understanding Heritage and Memory* (UK: Manchester University Press, 2010), p. 44.

¹² Assmann and Shortt, “Memory and Political Change”, p. 8. See also, Allan Magil, “From History, Memory, Identity”, in J.K. Olick, V. Vinitzky-Seroussi and D. Levy, *The Collective Memory Reader* (Madison: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 195.

¹³ Koponen, *Development for Exploitation*, p. 559.

¹⁴ Koponen, *Development for Exploitation*, p. 663.

¹⁵ Documentary evidence of nostalgia for German colonialism can also be seen in Schilling, Post-colonial Germany, p. 119; Theobald A. Mvungi, *Mashairi ya Chekacheka* (Dar es Salaam: Educational Publishers Ltd, 1995), p. 23.

of the German colonial past. This point has been thoroughly explained in this study. For example, in Moshi and Dar es Salaam, collective nostalgic memories co-exist with traumatic memories, whereas in Songea only the traumatic memories exist, as a result of the Maji Maji War. Traumatic memories, wherever they exist, have heightened the feelings of the need to provide reparation or compensation to the victims of German colonial violence and have prompted similar demands to those raised by the Namibians for the return of human objects (skulls) that were appropriated from African communities. Although similar politics of 'negotiating the past' have featured in Tanzanian memory culture, they are not as pronounced as in the former German colony of Namibia. Two reasons would seem to account for this. First, Maji Maji war did not end up in killing as many people as those killed in the Namibian genocide, where a massive number of Nama and Herero resistance figures were slaughtered in the early 20th century.¹⁶ Second, until recently there has not been much public awareness of the German colonial past, nor has there been much discussion on memories of the German colonial period in historical scholarship. Danziger wrote:

Ways of remembering are affected by changing *mnemonic values*: culturally grounded assumptions about what is most worth remembering, what ought not to be or need to be remembered, how the shards of memory should fit together, what kinds of tasks memory should be expected to serve. Such mnemonic values always imply certain conceptions of the nature of memory and sometimes these conceptions are made explicit in texts that address the topic.¹⁷

However, the current campaigns for reparation and restitution stem from two major developments. In the first place, the country has experienced a commemoration boom in recent years and in the second place the campaigns for reparation and restitution in other African countries, such as Namibia and Kenya, have encouraged similar campaigns in Tanzania. These belated movements can also be explained by "a general notion that a certain interval of time has to pass before a society is ready to address issues of its violent past."¹⁸ They can also result from changing social attitudes, which is an outcome of generational change.¹⁹

Three major reasons account for the existence of the nature of collective memories of German colonialism analyzed so far. First, German colonialism was imposed with such violence that it seared into the minds of Tanganyikans who attempted

¹⁶ Between 50 percent and 80 percent of Nama and Herero were exterminated respectively. Seen in Jan-Bart Gewald, "Herero Genocide in the Twentieth Century: Politics and Memory", Abbingk, Jde Bruijn, M and van Walraven, K, *Rethinking Resistance: Revolt and Violence in African Memory*, (Leiden: Brill, 2003), pp. 281–282.

¹⁷ Danziger, *Making the Mind*, p. 8.

¹⁸ Assmann and Shortt, "Memory and Political Change", p. 6.

¹⁹ Assmann and Shortt, "Memory and Political Change" p. 7.

to oppose it, but to no effect.²⁰ The Maji Maji War in particular left them with traumatic memories, which live on in the minds of Tanzanians to this day. The Germans generally responded to African resistance and wars by using excessive military force and by hanging those chiefs who refused to co-operate in the aftermath, with the result that these events engendered collective trauma and agony, which lingered in the minds of those who were either witnesses or victims. Stories of these events have survived in the social memory and have been passed down to the present generation as trans-generational collective trauma and are manifested in different forms of remembrance that started in different parts of Tanzania after independence.

Second, German colonialism introduced western cultural values such as Christianity, education, and architecture, which have survived down through the generations and have served to preserve and promote the remembrance of German colonialism. For example, it has been explained that the Germans constructed buildings, which were used for various activities, and their architectural value and qualities appealed to those who inherited them. These buildings existing in the form of bomas, churches and schools are still used for their original purpose and, above all, stir up memories. They are currently protected as shared German cultural heritage, thus triggering collective recollections of the German colonial past.²¹ As one study has shown: “People tend to imprint memories on places, and buildings [...] which bear witness to the passage of time. . .”²² Third, most German sites of memory possess the value which qualifies them to be part of the national heritage, because, as the law demands in Tanzania, they are old enough to be declared monuments. As most of them are over a hundred years old, they automatically become national monuments, unlike those constructed in the post-German colonial period.

However, conservation of German sites in Tanzania, as discussed in this study, cannot be justified based on their intrinsic value alone. As a matter of fact, their value goes beyond that, as they have what Tim Benton and Clementine Cecil classify as evidential, commemorative, symbolic, historical, aesthetic and communal

²⁰ A.J. Temu, “Tanzanian Societies and Colonial Invasion 1875–1907”, in Kaniki (ed), *Tanzania under Colonial Rule* (London: Longman Group Limited, 1980), p. 93.

²¹ A paper by Wazi Apoh has eloquently analysed the influence of German colonial heritage sites on the colonized societies. See Wazi Apoh, “Ruins, Relics and Research: Lasting Evidence and Perceptible Consequences of the Prussian and German Colonial Past in Ghana” in Deutsches Historisches Museum, *German Colonialism: Fragments Past and Present* (Berlin: Deutsches Historisches Museum, 2017), pp. 92–99.

²² Benton and Cecil, “Heritage and Public Memory”, p. 40.

value.²³ The historical and aesthetic value of a cultural heritage is determined by professional historians or archaeologists, but communal and social value is usually determined by the public.²⁴ Monuments and places connected with German colonial violence, like those in Songea and Moshi, have therefore been preserved for their commemorative, symbolic and evidential value. Such cultural sites have given birth to a particular memory culture characteristic of the concepts of 'narrativisation' and 'cognitivisation', which are explained by Benton and Cecil. The former refers to the tendency to turn memories into 'interesting stories', whereas the latter involves contested actions of "fixing meanings over time by attaching them to physical monuments or places, and by repetition and restructuring in rituals of remembrance."²⁵ The study has also indicated that German cultural sites, like those found in Dar es Salaam, are preserved as national monuments basically because of their communal, historical, and aesthetic value.

This study has revealed cases in which memory contradicts official rendering of the First World War and has provided some information that is not easy to find in current history books. Whereas studies have shown that the Askaris were loyal to German soldiers and willing to fight on their side during the First World War, oral memory in Moshi describes or seems to suggest that the Africans who joined the war were actually forced to do so.²⁶ Chapter five showed how German soldiers invaded Kilema church and forcefully conscripted the men inside into the *Schutztruppe*. The chapter also revealed how the Askaris fought on the front line using their poor M/71 guns, which exposed them to the high risk of death. Such collective memories suggest that military operations during the First World War in Moshi were carried out along racial lines, because, unlike the German soldiers who were equipped with better weapons and who employed defensive warfare, the African soldiers were subject to inferior war strategies and tactics using sub-standard guns, which meant that they were certainly likely to die.

To conclude, the nature of German colonial events or activities outlined in different chapters of this study shaped the nature of the memories of colonialism, which have survived down through generations of Tanzanians. In Moshi, where missionary activities were widespread, narrative memories of evangelization and of individual German missionaries dominate other memories. Likewise, in Dar es Salaam, where the legacy of German culture is concentrated, the shared cultural

²³ Benton and Cecil, "Heritage and Public Memory", pp. 7–10.

²⁴ Benton and Cecil, "Heritage and Public Memory", p. 8.

²⁵ Benton and Cecil, "Heritage and Public Memory", pp. 18–19.

²⁶ The point of African soldiers being loyal to the German soldiers is elaborated by Eberlie, "The German Achievement", pp. 210–211.

memories of the Germans have appeared in the form of increased public awareness of the conservation of German buildings in the face of mounting pressure to demolish them. In Songea, which is described in this study as an epitome of colonial violence, traumatic memories are manifested in commemorations, ancestor worship, the erection of war monuments and the construction of war museums.