

4 “The Machine” Defeats an Engine: The *Otto* Plantation in Kilossa

4.1 There Is Something Rotten in the State of the ‘Empire of Cotton’

[The Empire of] Cotton [. . .] brought seeming opposites together [. . .]: slavery and free labor, states and markets, colonialism and free trade, industrialisation and deindustrialisation [as well as] plantation and factory, slavery and wage labor, colonizers and colonized, railroads and steamships – in short, [. . .] a global network of land, labor, transport, manufacture and sale.

Sven Beckert. *Empire of Cotton*. 2014.¹

Analysing the history of cotton, the “nineteenth century chief global commodity”, in his *New History of Global Capitalism*, Sven Beckert observes that cotton was first cultivated and manufactured over 1,000 years ago. Ever since, the production of cotton textiles had been the most important industry in Asia, South America and Africa. In contrast, the role of cotton was negligible in Europe, where sheep wool and linen were the major fabrics and where textiles made from cotton remained a scarce luxury item for centuries. From 1600 onwards, the production of cotton and its global circulation was significantly altered by violent European economic agitation, which was termed ‘war capitalism’ by the historian Sven Beckert: independent networks of cotton production and distribution all over the world were integrated by European military agitation, thus amalgamating Asian textile manufacturing with European capital and American raw material production. Slavery was at the heart of this system of ‘war capitalism’ as Indian textiles were the currency to buy slaves in West Africa, who were deported to the Americas subsequently. With these deported slaves working on cotton plantations all over the Americas, the widespread resource scarcity in cotton textile production in Europe was slowly but surely overcome, which enabled as well as fuelled the ‘industrial revolution’ in the northern hemisphere. As the invested European capital was hedged by guarantees on raw material supplies like cotton or by mortgages on slaves, the initially multi-polar global network of cotton and textile production was turned into a unipolar network centering on the British trading hub of Liverpool and the textile producing region of Lancashire.²

¹ Beckert. *Empire of Cotton*, pp. xix–xx.

² Cf. Beckert. *Empire of Cotton*, pp. 3–28. Cf. Rösser, Michael et al. ‘Baumwolle, die Firma Joh. Anton Lucius aus Erfurt und der koloniale Kapitalismus’. 9–12. *Heimat Thüringen*, 27. Jahrgang,

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, textile factories had become the backbone of the entirety of western European industry and therefore, also of the national income. For example, in 1830s Britain every sixth worker was employed by the textile industry where he or she processed cotton that had been grown on slave plantations, especially those in the US southern states. By increasing the industrialisation and mechanisation of textile production in Europe, 'war capitalism', marked by slavery and industrial capitalism and characterised by large-scale investments, mutually reinforced each other, leading to a steady rise in global economic activity until the American Civil War between 1861 and 1865. The American Civil War disrupted this early global economic system as it challenged the core and central economic element of the global production of cotton: slavery. The resulting first world-wide economic resource crisis left thousands of workers in Europe unemployed. This so-called 'cotton famine' engraved itself into the memory of all Europeans involved in cotton processing, and made businessmen and state dignitaries alike aware of their dependency on cheap raw materials that had predominantly originated from slave plantations in the US South. With the 'Reconstruction Era' ending slavery in the South of the USA after the Civil War, old-established forms of slave labour gave way to other exploitative forms of work such as sharecropping. This mode of cotton cultivation secured the supply of raw cotton on the one hand but posed other challenges to the textile industry on the other. As the price level of raw cotton would never return to antebellum levels, textile production became more costly, and industrial capitalism thus sought new alliances to produce cheap raw materials for the sake of a flourishing European textile industry. This new ally of industrial capitalism was the modern European nation states that had emerged in the course of the 'industrial revolution' and now provided industrial production with an efficient bureaucracy to lower production costs once again. The new bureaucratic tools such as a sophisticated legal system and a reliable bureaucracy was enabled by and centred on a formal colonisation that had been typical for the last third of the 'long nineteenth century'. Instead of the privately run colonising enterprises, the modern nation state now sought to expand its administrative system to its overseas territories and attempted to rule these territories accordingly. Flooding the markets of the Global South with European industrial textiles led to a wave of deindustrialisation in Asia and Africa and radically rearranged the Global South's agriculture. There, millions of people abandoned old-established occupations such as hand spinning and hand weaving, and Euro-

Heft 1. Weimar: 2020, pp. 9–12. Cf. Rösser, Michael. 'Knotenpunkte des Kolonialen'. *Vorstudie 'Kolonialistisches Denken und Kolonialkultur in Stuttgart'*. Ed. Stadtarchiv Stuttgart. Stuttgart: 19 July 2021. Web. https://archiv0711.hypotheses.org/files/2021/07/Stadtarchiv_Stuttgart_Kolonialistisches-Denken-Stuttgart.pdf (10 September 2021), pp. 11–12, 25–26.

pean trading houses replaced old-established sales networks, formerly dominated by local merchants. Meanwhile, the European imperial states pushed for cotton monocultures in their overseas territories, which were increasingly incorporated into formal colonial administrations. The German *Reich* and her colony, German East Africa, also played their part within this ‘empire of cotton’ at the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth century.³

In fact, Beckert’s master narrative of western ‘war capitalism’ slowly but surely ousting the cotton production of the Global South needs some historical adjustment. Regarding the ‘big picture’ of the history of globalisation, Beckert’s master narrative is certainly correct.⁴ But with Jonathan E. Robins having demonstrated that the ‘empire of cotton’ also witnessed ‘failed states’ within its realm, it must be stressed that the history of the Global North as the dominator of global cotton and textile production also includes histories that do not entirely fit Beckert’s master narrative. Although the general trend in the global history of cotton proves Beckert right in the long run, Robins’ study about the failure of the British Cotton Growing Association (BCGA) in British colonial Africa, for example, proves that individual cotton production schemes did not necessarily confirm the narrative of the steady rise of the ‘empire of cotton’. As in the case of the BCGA, which sought to boost African colonial cotton production for the profits of the British Empire, many individual cotton production schemes, or individual enterprises like cotton plantations, failed or had very limited economic success.⁵ This holds true not only for the BCGA, but also for German East Africa and the history of the textile producing company of *Otto*, which established a cotton plantation in the town of Kilossa in 1907. Formal colonisation and an alliance between the imperial state and cotton producing companies *à la* Beckert serves as a significant historical background for the history of the *Otto* plantation in Kilossa as well. But as the cotton production of the *Otto* plantation failed comprehensively, the entrepreneurial history of *Otto* and German cotton colonialism rather points to Robins’ findings. With Beckert providing the grand narrative of global capitalism and Robins showing an individual case of a failed colonial cotton production scheme,

3 Cf. Beckert. *Empire of Cotton*, pp. 29–378. Cf. Rösler. ‘Baumwolle’, pp. 9–12.

4 For another study explaining the rise of the western world as the major cotton supplier besides that of Beckert (and others) centring particularly on the fall of India at the expense of the west cf. Riello. *Cotton*.

5 Cf. Robins. *Cotton and Race*, pp. 1–29, 72–115. Cf. Pepijn Brandon: Review on: Robins, Jonathan E.: *Cotton and Race Across the Atlantic. Britain, Africa, and America, 1900–1920*. Martlesham. Web. *Connections. A Journal for Historians and Area Specialists*. 29 September 2019. www.connections.clio-online.net/publicationreview/id/reb-26130 (21 October 2019). Cf. Dernburg. *Südwestafrikanische Eindrücke*, pp. 60–61.

the two studies are complementary. Their combination shows, on the one hand, the 'empire of cotton' was on the rise globally, while on the other hand, this rise was not linear and all encompassing but also took various forms of dead ends and diversions.

In any case, both studies neglect the perspective of the many individuals who peopled the 'empire of cotton' and both lack a detailed analysis of the phenomenon of labour. That is why this case study seeks to focus on the protagonists of the history of global cotton production and their agency, relationships, contradictions and conflicts in the context of labour in German East Africa. This is especially important because influential research about the global history of cotton has "given little space to labour"⁶, so far. Only the historian of Africa Thaddeus Sunseri stressed comparatively early that the German colonial "*Arbeiterfrage* and the *Baumwollfrage* – the labour question and the cotton question – [were] the two most pressing issues in the political economy of German East Africa."⁷ Accordingly, he investigated the agency of East Africans when growing and harvesting the cash crop cotton on colonial plantations and on their own petty farms in German East Africa. As his work was published before the rise of the global history approach, it is therefore limited in its scope. Even though Sunseri's research results in general, and about the *Otto* plantation in Kilossa in particular, are very precious for the present study, he nevertheless fails to notice the broader dimensions of the history of cotton and (German) colonialism at the turn of the nineteenth century. Sunseri therefore misses the entanglements of the history of cotton, German colonialism and the global history of labour as they go far beyond East Africa and Germany. Besides the German *Reich*, German East Africa, and the local history of Unterboihingen, this study encompasses many regions of the world: especially German colonies such as Togo, but also the US American South, southwest India, as well as the British colonial Nigeria and Uganda. Hence, this global labour history reinvestigates the history of the *Otto* cotton plantation in Kilossa, and the relationships of the individual protagonists involved in the context of labour at this enterprise.

⁶ Riello. *Cotton*, p. 11.

⁷ Sunseri. *Vilimani*, pp. 2–3.

4.2 Cotton Between Alabama, Africa, India and Unterboihingen

We can learn extraordinarily much from our neighbours about the introduction of suitable cultivation to our colonies. [. . .] Questions about cultivation suitable for the production of textiles matters most in Württemberg and I have been told that people are fairly surprised that only a very small amount of [German colonial] cotton is in our market..

State Secretary Bernhard Dernburg. Speech in Stuttgart, 23 January 1907.⁸

The cultivation of cotton was one of the most important issues discussed in the course of German colonialism. Like the other European imperial powers, the German *Kaiserreich*, as a relatively recent colonial Empire, also sought cheap raw materials for its significant textile industry that employed a large share of the entire national workforce. Simultaneously, the southwestern German textile company *Otto*, from Unterboihingen near Stuttgart, wanted to emancipate itself from British and US American cotton imports. The complementary interests of the German *Reich* and the Swabian textile company thus intersected in the colony of German East Africa at the southwestern town of Kilossa located in the *Kilwa* district. As the German *Reich* was the third largest producer of cotton yarn and the second largest textile exporter in the world, by the turn of the nineteenth century, ideas to increase raw cotton production were central to German colonial policies. Throughout this century, the high fluctuation of raw cotton prices in general as well as major political crises like the Napoleonic Continental System (1806–1813) and the American Civil War (1861–1865), repeatedly posed major challenges to the German textile industry. To provide the significant German textile industry, which employed one-tenth of the entire German industrial working class, with a stable amount of raw cotton at reasonable prices had thus become one of the major long-term goals of many German textile companies. At the same time, it had also been a matter of national interest for the *Reich* and its individual member states. The idea to produce cotton in territories controlled by Germany gained renewed momentum at the beginning of the twentieth century. The idea to become a significant raw cotton producer was also inspired by many influential Germans who had lived and worked in the USA and who later became central to German colonial cotton policies in Africa. Besides German textile companies and senior German colonial representatives, the idea to produce German colonial cotton to overcome global fluctuations of raw cotton prices and the dependency on the USA as the major producer of this raw material was further pushed by German lobby associations. These groups demanded colonial expansion, fostering the self-controlled pro-

⁸ Dernburg, *Koloniale Lehrjahre*, pp. 12–13.

duction of raw cotton in these overseas territories. The most important association in terms of German colonial cultivation was the colonial economic committee (*Kolonialwirtschaftliches Komitee* – *KWK*), founded by the Nuremberg businessman Karl Supf. It supported the idea of German cotton autarky through increased colonial production in her territories overseas. Since its foundation in 1896, the *KWK* had lobbied both the *Reich*'s administration and German textile businesses to pursue this goal accordingly. Indeed, many colonial cotton schemes – in Togo and other German colonies in Africa – bore the *KWK*'s handwriting.⁹

In this respect, Andrew Zimmermann has first revealed the global connections between the *KWK*, the economies of cotton in the US American South, German colonialism in West Africa's Togo, and German domestic policies and its territories in East Prussia. In the same speech quoted above, Bernhard Dernburg expressed his admiration for post-Reconstruction US American cotton cultivation, as he regarded it as a 'role model' for corresponding German policies in her colonial territories. Besides German East Africa, he noticed "keen interest" especially in "West Africa" in the textile manufacturing "circles of Stuttgart"¹⁰, not only deriving from the century-long tradition of West African indigenous cotton cultivation, but also from the well-known joint project of the German *KWK* and Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee colleges in the USA. German colonialism, the US American cotton cultivation and the conservative ideas of the Afro-American civil rights leader Washington intersected first in German colonial Togo in 1900. There, German colonial policy makers attempted a more systematic and sustained approach to stir the economy of colonial Togo, intending to make cotton the number one cash crop in the colony. German governmental officials and the *KWK* took a look across the Atlantic in search of inspiring methods of cultivation that would promote the planting of cotton in Togo. America's way of cultivating cotton in its southern states, in cooperation with Washington's Tuskegee colleges, appeared promising to the members of the *KWK* and the German colonial administration:

The German interest in the Tuskegee graduates was rooted in the conviction that race relations in the American South might offer a model for Germany's African colonies. German bureaucrats and social scientists [around Max Weber] were particularly taken with Booker T. Washington, [. . .] who had [. . .] his conception of natural hierarchies of race. Washing-

9 Cf. Beckert. *Empire of Cotton*, pp. 3–378. Cf. Haller, Lea. Review on Beckert, Sven: *King Cotton. Eine Geschichte des globalen Kapitalismus*. München: 2014. *H-Soz-Kult*. 29 January 2015. Web. www.hsozkult.de/publicationreview/id/rezbuecher-23097. (16 July 2019). Cf. TECHNOSEUM – Landesmuseum für Technik und Arbeit in Mannheim (LTA). 871.1-otto-233. Chronik, pp. 69–71. Cf. Demhardt, Imre Josef. *Deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft. 1888–1918. Ein Beitrag zur Organisationsgeschichte der deutschen Kolonialbewegung*. Wiesbaden: 2002, pp. 70–71.

10 Dernburg. *Koloniale Lehrjahre*, p. 9, cf. pp. 4, 11, 13.

ton assumed that there would be a need – after the abolition of slavery – first to ‘educate’ the African Americans in a Christian life, manual labor, and small-scale farming, so that gradually over time they might acquire the status of full citizens. His conservative views on social and racial relations were well aligned with the European imperialist understanding of control and segregation. [. . .] Washington for his part supported imperialism, for he regarded Africa as backward and in need of a civilizing mission – and he was convinced that the Germans were particularly well suited for the task.¹¹

It therefore appeared only logical, for both the *KWK* and Washington, to send Afro-American Tuskegee graduates from the American south to German colonial Togo, as German scholars in the emerging subject of sociology had insinuated a similarity between Togo’s colonial economy and the US America’s ‘New South’. As pious Afro-(American) Christians ‘properly educated’ in the manual skills of small-scale cotton cultivation, the Tuskegee graduates’ task as experts in the cultivation of cotton was to pass their knowledge on to the African inhabitants of Togo. It was hoped that the global transfer of knowledge by black Americans to black Africans would ultimately lead to a flourishing Togolese colonial economy, with cotton as its major cash-crop. When arriving in Togo, the Afro-American Tuskegee experts James Calloway, John Winfrey Robinson, Allan Burks and Shepard Harris attempted to avoid the mistakes made in the US American south and rejected the German colonisers’ idea to push for cotton monocultures in the colony. Instead, the Tuskegee experts recommended the “joint development of cotton and food crops [for individual subsistence] in ‘harmonious ways’”.¹² They thus rejected the increasing coercion exercised by German colonial officials and planters towards the local population in Togo. But all in vain: Calloway, Robinson, Burks and Harris’ appeals were increasingly ignored by the German colonial administration that finally imposed their policies, against the advice of the Tuskegee representatives. Ignoring the deficiencies of US-cotton production, and transplanting a defective scheme from Alabama to a German colony soon proved to be as disastrous as the previous German colonial policies in Togo. One major reason for this failure was the fact that the German colonial policies of cotton cultivation in Togo met the fierce resistance of the Ewe people, who were the dominant ethnic group in Togo’s south, who fiercely opposed urgings to change the division of labour among the sexes, for example. Likewise, they rejected labour recruitment practices and the so-called ‘education for work’ approach, not to mention the imposed labour conditions on German colonial cotton plantations – often characterised by corporal punishment and policies of forced labour.¹³

¹¹ Conrad, Sebastian. *What is*, p. 138.

¹² Beckert. *Empire of Cotton*, p. 373.

¹³ Cf. Conrad. *What is*, pp. 137–139. Cf. Zimmerman. *Alabama in Africa*, pp. 112–172, 237–250.

The German *Reich* was not alone in its failed colonial cotton schemes: likewise, British colonialists, associated with the British Cotton Growing Association (BCGA), also failed in Nigeria and Uganda almost simultaneously. Although not a quasi-state-sponsored association like the German KWK, but rather a privately run ‘semi-philanthropic’ endeavour, the BCGA regarded the ‘Alabama in Africa’ approach as a role model to follow in British colonies as well. It is therefore not very surprising that their approach also failed because of local African resistance and ignorance towards the economic realities of British colonies in Africa.¹⁴ Yet, experimental cotton schemes were not only pursued in Togo, Nigeria or Uganda, they were also integral to colonial policies in German East Africa. Again, US American cotton cultivation served as a corresponding role model and influenced the policies of significant representatives of the German (colonial) administration.

4.3 German Colonial State Dignitaries and Their Admiration for US Cotton Policies

Cotton is in the foreground of interest. [. . .] The extraordinary demand of the home country on the one hand [. . .], and on the other hand the concern which has been carried into domestic circles by price manipulations in the main producing country, the United States, have made the supply of cotton a burning question. [. . .] [W]e may today speak of well-founded expectations that we will succeed in covering a very considerable percentage of our imports of raw textiles from our own colonies within a foreseeable period of time.

Bernhard Dernburg. Public Speech in Dresden, 17 January 1909.¹⁵

Stakeholders in the German cotton trade, financial institutions and textile producers in places such as Bremen, Hamburg, Frankfurt o.M. or Barmen had strong ties to US raw cotton production throughout the nineteenth century.¹⁶ When Germany had finally become a colonising nation in the 1880s, US American cotton production remained a focal point for top-ranking German colonial officials. In German East Africa it was Gustaf Adolf Götzen, Governor from 1900 to 1906, who first decidedly pushed for expansive colonial cotton policies. He thus intended to enhance the production of cotton in German East Africa by urging the local African population into the cultivation of this crop. Having worked as German Military Attaché in Washington D.C. between 1896 and 1898, Götzen’s experience in

¹⁴ Cf. Robins. *Cotton and Race*, pp. 116–164.

¹⁵ Dernburg. *Südwestafrikanische Eindrücke*, pp. 56–57.

¹⁶ Cf. Gaul, Patrick. *Ideale und Interessen. Die mitteleuropäische Wirtschaft im Amerikanischen Bürgerkrieg*. Stuttgart: 2021, pp. 15–32, 291–296.

the USA seems to have influenced his (economic) policies in German East Africa significantly. When Governor of German East Africa, Götzen’s cotton plans were probably further fuelled by the Empire Cotton Exhibition organised by the BCGA in London in 1904, the *Landwirtschaftliche Ausstellung* (agricultural exhibition) in Zanzibar of 1905 and the Louisiana Purchase Exhibition of St. Louis in 1904 (St. Louis World’s Fair), where cotton from German East Africa won a gold medal for its quality.¹⁷

Given this background and having lived in the USA, Götzen’s subsequent colonial policies as Governor of German East Africa thus centred on the idea of boosting German colonial cotton production. By increasing taxes, fostering railway construction and introducing *Kommunalschamben*¹⁸ to the colony, Götzen attempted to increase the cultivation of cotton there. The *Kommunalschamben* required every man of a particular village who was not employed at a European estate to work twenty-four days a year on such fields. The profits would be distributed among the *Akida* or *Jumbe*, and the village and its population. However, payment was only delivered months later, once the produce had been shipped to and sold in Europe. Sometimes, the African planters did not receive any payment at all and therefore resented the *Kommunalschamben*.¹⁹ Whereas Götzen’s taxation policies and the cotton *Kommunalschamben* had become notorious as being the major reasons behind the Maji Maji War (1905–1908), the Governor’s unsuccessful lobbying for the so-called *Südbahn* (southern railway) or *Nyassa Railway* is less known.²⁰ Götzen intended this railway to give the colony’s south an economic boost by providing the infrastructure necessary for increased agricultural, that is primarily cotton, production and transportation. Attempting to

17 Cf. Robins. *Cotton and Race*, pp. 60–61. Cf. Kolonialwirtschaftliches Komitee e.V. (Ed.). *Wirtschaftsatlas der deutschen Kolonien*. Berlin: 1906, n.p. cf. instead ‘Ergebnisse’ and ‘deutsch-koloniale Ausstellungen im Auslande’. Cf. German Imperial Commissioner (Ed.). *Official Catalogue of the Exhibition of the German Empire. International Exposition St. Louis 1904*. Berlin: n.Y., p. 488. Regarding world fairs and international exhibitions cf. Geppert, Alexander C.T. ‘Weltausstellungen’. *EGO – Europäische Geschichte Online*. Web. <http://ieg-ego.eu/de/threads/crossroads/wissensraeume/alexander-c-t-geppert-weltausstellungen> (29 June 2020). Cf. Schröder, Iris. *Das Wissen von der ganzen Welt. Globale Geographien und räumliche Ordnungen Afrikas und Europas 1790–1870*. Paderborn: 2011, pp. 6–8, 51.

18 *Kommunalschamben* = ‘community field’ cf. Klein-Arendt, Reinhard. ‘Ein Land wird gewaltsam in Besitz genommen. Die Kolonie Deutsch-Ostafrika’. *Der Maji-Maji-Krieg in Deutsch-Ostafrika 1905–1907*. 28–48. Eds. Felicitas Becker and Jigal Beez. Berlin: 2005, pp. 46–48. Cf. Gründer. *Geschichte*, p. 158.

19 Cf. Klein-Arendt. ‘Ein Land’, pp. 46–48. Cf. Gründer. *Geschichte*, p. 158.

20 Where to build colonial railways first was contemporarily hotly debated in German politics and among experts. Cf. section 3.1. Cf. Beese. *Experten*, pp. 77–104.

stir economic activity particularly in the southern half of the German colony, Götzen's view in favour of a colonial railway traversing the colony's south at the expense of a *Central Railway* must indeed be regarded in this light.²¹ Although Götzen's railway plans never materialised, his cotton policy was nevertheless one major reason for the outbreak of the Maji Maji War against German colonial rule and its cotton policies in East Africa. Alongside the war against the Ovaherero and Nama (1904–1907) in German South West Africa, the Maji Maji War and the German general elections of 1907 increased the awareness and interest of both the German public and the German industry in the colonies and their economic potentials. Of course, the German textile industry was very interested in the considerations about the German colonies' potential to produce cotton. Thus, the issue remained at the heart of German policies towards colonial (East) Africa, despite – or even because of – the very costly colonial wars.²²

Analogical to the project in Togo, Götzen and other German colonial officials also sought US American expertise and the support of the *KWK* to boost cotton cultivation in German East Africa.²³ The *KWK* thus hired a German-Texan cotton expert team in 1904 to transfer their knowledge about American cotton cultivation to the Mpanganya cotton school located near the Rufiji River in German East Africa. The Mpanganya cotton school was founded by the *KWK* to promote cotton cultivation among the local East African population, primarily in the period preceding the Maji Maji War. The German Texan cotton expert team was “headed by the German-American cotton farmer and former County Commissioner in Texas J.H.G. Becker. He [was] assisted by a cotton farmer, H.J. Wiebusch, also from Texas, as an agricultural assistant, and Karl Sasse, a master machinist with a background in cotton machinery.” Especially in the Rufiji area, “the German-American cotton expert F.A. Holzmann, who had previously been in charge of an experimental and teaching station in Texas in the service of the American government, was chosen. Among other things, a cotton school for the training of cotton instructors [was] established in this area.” Furthermore, “Imperial Deputy Consul

21 Cf. Wegmann. *Vom Kolonialkrieg*, pp. 278–280. Cf. Götzen, Gustav Adolf. *Deutsch-Ostafrika im Aufstand 1905/06*. Berlin: 1909, pp. 18–20, 80–83. Cf. Wilhelm, Friedrich. ‘Götzen, Adolf Graf von’. *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, 6, 1964, pp. 593–594. Web. <https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd11907253X.html#ndbcontent> (21 October 2019). Cf. HADB. S 1514, pp. 141–159. Cf. Fuchs, Paul. *Die wirtschaftlichen Erkundungen einer ostafrikanischen Südbahn*. Berlin: 1905.

22 Cf. Giblin and Monson (Eds.). *Maji Maji. Lifting the Fog of War*. Cf. Becker, Felicitas and Beez, Jigal (Eds.). *Der Maji-Maji Krieg in Deutsch-Ostafrika 1905–1907*. Berlin: 2005. Cf. Becker. ‘Die Hotentotten-Wahlen’, pp. 177–189.

23 At the same time, similar strategies were also pursued by the British in Nigeria, Sudan, and Uganda. Cf. Robins. *Cotton and Race*, pp. 72–164.

Scheidt in Galveston [made] a point of engaging cotton experts. [. . .] [T]he Imperial Consulate ha[d] also taken over the protection of German farmers to be sent to the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas.”²⁴ The abovementioned Wiebusch later also became the director of the Mpanganya cotton school. As constant cross-references to Togo’s cotton schemes were not only made in the specialist journal *Der Tropenpflanzer*, but also at other occasions by representatives of the KWK, it is obvious that something similar to the Togo-Tuskegee peasant cotton system was believed to be promising not only for West Africa, but also for East Africa. Yet, there were also differences to be found between German colonial Togo and Mpanganya: Instead of recruiting Afro-American Tuskegee graduates for East Africa, German-Texan cotton experts were employed to educate “‘intelligent’” East African “‘natives’, literate in Swahili”, in Mpanganya for the task. They were sent to the surrounding areas of the *Rufiji* district to teach the ‘proper way’ to cultivate cotton to the local African populations. Mpanganya was thereby not the only institution established to educate local Swahili cotton experts, but it was the only agricultural school that existed over a longer period. From ca. 1904 onwards, that is prior to the Maji Maji War and until the end of the German colonial rule in East Africa after WWI, there were ca. five institutions like Mpanganya. Before taking up work in Kilossa, the *Otto* company’s boss, Heinrich Otto, and his local plantation manager in Kilossa Ranga Kaundinya visited such experimental cotton plantations run by the KWK in early 1907. These cotton schools remained an important focal point and resource of knowledge for *Otto*’s cotton cultivation until WWI: for instance, in summer 1913, Fritz Otto – one of the leading men of the family business – visited not only the *Otto* plantation itself but also institutions strongly related to and very similar to Mpanganya cotton school. Among these was the Miombo governmental agricultural research centre, which was intended to boost, particularly, cotton cultivation in German East Africa.²⁵

24 Supf, Karl. ‘Deutsch-koloniale Baumwoll-Unternehmungen 1903/1904’. 411–417. Ed. Kolonialwirtschaftliches Komitee. *Der Tropenpflanzer. Zeitschrift für Tropische Landwirtschaft*, no. 8, August 1904, pp. 414–416.

25 Sunseri. *Vilimani*, p. 119. Cf. Stadtmuseum Wendlingen am Neckar. Konrad Steinert’s private document collection, “Tagebuch von der Reise nach Kilossa. 26.6. – 18.9.1913 von Fritz Otto, Abschrift”, p. 22. Cf. Kaundinya. *Erinnerungen*, pp. 18–20. Cf. Demhardt. *Deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft*, pp. 70–71. Paasche reports that Mr. Wiebusch was head of the school for cotton cultivation. Cf. Paasche, Hans. “Der Aufstand” und “Gefechte am Rufiji” aus: “Im Morgenlicht. Kriegs-, Jagd- und Reise-Erlebnisse in Ostafrika”. *Hans Paasche. Das Verlorene Paradies. Ansichten vom Lebensweg eines Kolonialoffiziers zum Pazifisten und Revolutionär*. 48–86. Eds. P. Werner Lange and Helga Paasche. Berlin 2008, p. 51. Cf. Paasche, Hermann. *Deutsch-Ostafrika. Wirtschaftliche Studien*. Hamburg: 1913, pp. 111–113, 340–358. Cf. Supf. ‘Deutsch-koloniale Baumwoll-Unternehmungen 1903/1904’, pp. 412–417. Cf. Supf, Karl. ‘Deutsch-koloniale Baumwoll-

In fact, it was not only Götzen's cotton policies before the Maji Maji War between 1905 and 1908 that were embedded in this context. German colonial cotton policies in East Africa, also after the Maji Maji War, bore a significant US American background. These post-war cotton policies were developed by Bernhard Dernburg, who took office as Colonial State Secretary in the Foreign Ministry in 1906, and who became head of the Colonial Department from 1907 onwards. Dernburg, himself a trained banker, had spent his formative years in the USA. In total, Dernburg visited the United States seven times and kept up strong relationships with the country throughout his entire life. As early as the 1890s, he had spent a substantial part of his training as a banker and as an investor in New York. Furthermore, he had contributed to the organisation and functioning of the German exhibition at the World's Fair, taking place in Chicago in 1893, of which Friedrich Dernburg, Bernhard's father, was a member of the German commission responsible for the German exhibition at the fair. In Chicago Friedrich Dernburg was, furthermore, the German press representative, and reported about the World's Fair repeatedly. Apart from these close connections, Bernhard Dernburg was employed by *Ladenburg & Thalmann & Co.* in this period. This bank was strongly associated with the influential German banking dynasty of the *Bankhaus S. Bleichröder* that had numerous investments in North America during Bernhard Dernburg's initial stays in the USA. Furthermore, the future German Colonial State Secretary had established close ties with the German American railroad magnate Henry Villard (Heinrich Hilgard), who as a senior figure of numerous major American railways (e.g. *Northern Pacific Railroad*) had channelled major investments of leading German banks into US American railway construction and was to inspire Dernburg's colonial railway policies in Africa in the future.²⁶

Other people Dernburg had met in the USA would also become important men in the colonial administration of German colonies in Africa. Freiherr Bruno von Schuckmann, for instance, whom Dernburg had met in the USA in the 1890s, was later even appointed Governor of German South West Africa in 1907 by Dernburg.

Unternehmungen Bericht IV (Herbst 1904)'. 615–621. Ed. Kolonialwirtschaftliches Komitee. *Der Tropenpflanzer. Zeitschrift für Tropische Landwirtschaft*, no. 11, November 1904, pp. 615–621. Cf. Delegated Representatives of Master Cotton Spinners' and Manufacturer's Association. *Official Report of the Proceedings of the First International Congress*. Manchester: 1904, pp. 20–24. Cf. Schanz, Moritz. 'Der koloniale Baumwollanbau und Deutschland'. 160–172. Ed. Internationaler Verband der Spinner und Webervereinigungen. *Offizieller Bericht des Achten Internationalen Kongresses der Baumwoll-Industrie*. Manchester et al: 1911, pp. 167–171. Cf. Dernburg. *Zielpunkte*, pp. 5–21. Cf. Naranch. 'Colonised Body'.

²⁶ Cf. Schiefel. *Bernhard Dernburg*, pp. 17–24. Cf. Dernburg, Friedrich. *Aus der weißen Stadt. Spaziergänge in der Chicagoer Weltausstellung und weitere Fahrten*. Berlin: 1893, pp. 1–8, 31–38, 101–109.

Given his close ties and admiration for both Schuckmann, Villard, and the latter's railway empire, it is therefore not very surprising that Dernburg regarded railway construction as the most decisive tool of any colonial economy. Yet, Governor of German East Africa, Albrecht von Rechenberg (1906–1912), also exerted significant influence on the Colonial State Secretary as far as the economy of the colony was concerned. Rechenberg emphasised the incorporation of small-scale African cash-crop production into the colonial economy. Having observed how the *Uganda Railway* had improved the sales and transport opportunities of East African farmers in British East Africa, Rechenberg was convinced that railways would boost the economy in the neighbouring German colony, too. Dernburg agreed and it seems that, to him, not only were Rechenberg's arguments decisive, but so also was the fact that he regarded the US economy as a role model for any successful politics and a thriving economy. To Bernhard Dernburg's father, there was no doubt that for “the way a patriotic man does his duty to the fatherland, [his son Bernhard] had in mind the American statesmen as masters”.²⁷ As railways had been the backbone of the US westward expansion, Dernburg's colonial policies centred on railways analogically. Not only in German East Africa, but also in German South West Africa, railway construction was thus reinforced as a priority after Dernburg had taken office in the *Reich's* colonial department from 1907 onwards. Besides railways, the US production of cotton was a subject of Dernburg's admiration as well: to study the southern Afro-American cotton economy more closely, Dernburg visited Texas in 1909 only shortly after his inspection tours to German East Africa, German South West Africa and South Africa, between 1907 and 1908. This was certainly no coincidence as Texas was the largest raw cotton exporting region in the world at that time.²⁸ Clearly, it appears that the combination of US raw cotton production and US railway infrastructure must have made a lasting impression, not only on Governor

27 Dernburg, Friedrich. ‘Aus Bernhard Dernburg's Werdegang’. 402–407. *Koloniale Rundschau. Monatsschrift für die Interessen unserer Schutzgebiete und ihrer Bewohner*, no. 7, Berlin: July 1910, p. 406.

28 Cf. Rösser. *Forced Labour*, pp. 22–24. Cf. Iliffe. *Tanganyika under German Rule*, pp. 71–80. Cf. Schiefel. *Bernhard Dernburg*, pp. 17–24, 30–62, 66–80, 90–100. Cf. Dernburg, Bernhard. *Baumwollfragen. Vortrag, gehalten auf Veranlassung des Deutschen Handelstages am 14. April 1910*. Berlin: 1910, pp. 2–5, 9–10. Cf. Jöhliger, Otto. ‘Bernhard Dernburg. Ein kaufmännischer Minister’. *Der Kaufmann und das Leben. Beiblatt zur Zeitschrift für Handelswissenschaft und Handelspraxis*. 1–13. Eds. Arthur Schröter and Heinz Rühl. Leipzig und Kassel, no. 5. Mai 1911, pp. 1–4, 6–8, 11–13. Cf. Schumacher, Martin. ‘Hilgard, Heinrich’. *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, 9, 1972, p. 139. Web. <https://www.deutschebiographie.de/pnd119068605.html#ndbcontent> (05 February 2020). Cf. “Schuckmann, v.”. *Deutsches Koloniallexikon*, 1920, Band II, p. 306. Web. *University of Frankfurt o.M.* <http://www.ub.bildarchiv-dkg.uni-frankfurt.de/Bildprojekt/Lexikon/Standardframesite.php> (05 February 2020). Cf. “Eisenbahnen”. *Deutsches Koloniallexikon*.

Götzen but also on Colonial State Secretary Bernhard Dernburg. Both men had had significant experiences in the USA and pushed for corresponding policies, equally stressing cotton and railroads in German East Africa and in other colonies of the *Reich*. Dernburg's statement made to the southwestern German textile producers quoted above must be seen precisely in this context. His corresponding policies can be differentiated into two major phases: Before the end of the Maji Maji War, that is between ca. 1906 and 1908, Dernburg laid his emphasis on the support of large-scale cotton plantations like *Otto*'s that intended to cultivate large-scale cotton monocultures, with modern steam machines. Afterwards, the Colonial State Secretary switched and focussed on small-scale peasant cotton cultivation, centring on African farmers. Simultaneously, he decreased his support for capital-intensive European monoculture plantations. Delivering his election speech in Stuttgart in 1907 on his proposed colonial policies, Dernburg was still supporting large-scale cotton plantations for East Africa. On this occasion, he addressed various high-ranking representatives of the German textile industry in an attempt to encourage investment in the cultivation of cotton in German colonies in Africa. His request met with interest indeed, as various corresponding endeavours were started afterwards by several German textile companies. Amongst others, one of the companies taking up the colonial quest for cotton was the German textile company *Otto*. This enterprise, based in the Swabian town of Unterboihingen near Stuttgart, had been founded in 1816, and began to plan a cotton plantation in German East Africa, right after Dernburg's speech in 1907.²⁹

4.4 The *Otto* Company: From Unterboihingen via America to East Africa

Dernburg [. . .] came to Stuttgart during a series of lectures in winter 06/07 and gave a lecture to the entire Württemberg industry [. . .] on the expansion of the colonies and the opportunities offered there [. . .] in which a large part of the Württemberg cotton industry took part. Dernburg had mainly recommended German East Africa [. . .] for the cultivation of cotton. Experiments initiated there had been successful. More details can be found in the 1906 Economic Atlas of the Kolonialwirtschaftliche Komitee in Berlin.

Company Chronicles of *Otto* in Unterboihingen by Fritz Otto. Compiled 1937–1943.³⁰

The *Otto* company's history encompasses the regions of southwest as well as northern Germany, Britain, the USA and colonial Africa. Before the company's

²⁹ Cf. Sunseri. *Vilimani*, pp. 2–17. Cf. Bleifuß and Hergenröder. *Die "Otto-Plantage"*, pp. 14–26.

³⁰ LTA. 871.1-otto-233. Chronik, p. 69.

global expansion, its actual foundation around 1813 was only made possible by Napoleon’s Continental System, which kept cheap British cotton textiles away from Europe’s mainland markets. As a result, German textile entrepreneurs like *Otto* were able to produce competitive textiles for the first time. However, as soon as peace was settled, as a consequence of the Congress of Vienna in 1815, all German textile companies faced recurrent competition as British products entered the markets of mainland Europe.³¹ The *Otto* company thus turned to British methods of industrial textile production. Simultaneously, *Otto* distanced itself increasingly from economic links to Switzerland, which previously had been the traditional textile trading partner of southwestern German textiles companies. Given the increasingly unipolar system of global cotton and textile production centring around the southern US American states and Great Britain from 1815 onwards, the leading figures of the *Otto* company attempted to incorporate Anglo-Saxon expertise that would slowly but surely supplant their older business relationships with Switzerland’s Basel. Almost all senior figures of the *Otto* company as well as their most important employees were thus sent to the USA or Great Britain to get acquainted with the cotton business at the very heart of the ‘empire of cotton’. Especially in the wake of the political and economic crises like the German Revolution of 1848 and the strengthening movement of Social Democracy in Germany in the second half of the nineteenth century, *Otto* was worried about its business in Germany and was ready to expand to overseas territories. Even emigration from its motherland to the USA was considered for the sake of the family business: “I.F. Otto was very anxious about such proceedings [the German Revolution and Social Democracy] [. . .] and it gave him little cause for optimism regarding Germany’s future. This led partly to his decision to send his third son Robert as a colonizer to America for the younger generation.”³²

Besides the UK and the US as the focal points of their business, German textile centres like Barmen (today’s Wuppertal) were the most preferred educational institutions for the important men of the *Otto* company. Another destination for gathering expertise in cotton and textiles was the German northern city of Bremen with its cotton exchange founded in 1872. Likewise, Bremen’s cotton trading harbour was also an important educational institution for most of the members of the *Otto* company throughout the ‘long nineteenth century’. Most leading men of *Otto* would receive training in Barmen and Bremen before they were allowed to take up any significant post in the family business. Afterwards, they often stayed several

31 Cf. Bleifuß and Hergenröder. *Die “Otto-Plantage”*, pp. 9–14. Cf. Beckert. *Empire of Cotton*, pp. 157–158, 167.

32 LTA. 871.1-otto-233. Chronik, p. 11. For interconnections between the US American Civil War and the (German) revolution(s) of 1848 cf. Gaul. *Ideale und Interessen*, pp. 33–58.

months or even several years in global cotton centres like New Orleans in the US American South or in England's Liverpool. Their grand tour of cotton went primarily through the company networks of the partner and through the Engels family's also related textile corporation, *Pferdmenges-Pryer & Co.*³³ It seems that the Otto company particularly valued their US contacts throughout the 'long nineteenth century'. For example, Georg Schurz, nephew of the famous German American '48er revolutionary' Carl Schurz, was a long-serving personal secretary of the company's owner Heinrich Otto between ca. 1900 and 1913. Precisely in this period, Otto started its plantation in German East Africa's Kilossa. Moreover, Georg Schurz himself would even be sent to the German colony on the Indian Ocean to manage the bookkeeping of the cotton enterprise from 1910 onwards. According to the files consulted, he apparently remained in German East Africa until WWI, became a British POW and died in custody in early 1918.³⁴

33 LTA. 871.1-otto-233. Chronik, pp. 11, 15–16, 21, 25, 57, 60, 69, 79, 107, 114. Probably run by the textile entrepreneur, Wilhelm Albert Pferdmenges. Pferdmenges' son Robert, a banker, became an important figure for Konrad Adenauer's first governments in the newly established Federal Republic of Germany in the 1950s and 1960s. As Adenauer's close friend, he was the Chancellor's senior economic advisor. Besides economics and banking, Robert was well-known for his Protestant faith. Furthermore, he was a member of the supervisory board of numerous leading German banks and industrial companies, ranging from the heavy industries to textile producers. In 1930, when Britain annexed the Mandate Tanganyika Territory to British East Africa, Robert Pferdmenges – alongside many pro-colonial associations and leading German industrialists like Carl Duisberg – signed a petition that demanded the restitution of East Africa to the German Reich publicly. Cf. Teichmann, Gabriele. "Pferdmenges, Robert". *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, 20, 2001, pp. 331–332. Web. <https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd118791729.html#ndbcontent> (18 July 2019). Cf. Bach, Christine. "Pferdmenges, Robert". *Konrad Adenauer Stiftung*. Web. <https://www.kas.de/web/geschichte-der-cdu/personen/biogramm-detail/-/content/robert-pferdmenges-v1> (18 July 2019). Cf. Treue, Wilhelm. 'Das Porträt. Robert Pferdmenges (1880–1962)'. 188–210. *Geschichte im Westen*. N.P.: 1990, no. 2, pp. 188–205. Web. http://www.brauweiler-kreis.de/wp-content/uploads/GiW/GiW1990_2/GiW_1990_2_TREUE_PFERDMENGES.pdf. (18 July 2019). Cf. Koloniale Reichsarbeitsgemeinschaft Berlin – Afrikahaus. *Protest der deutschen Wirtschaft gegen den Raub von Deutsch-Ostafrika*. Berlin: 1930, p. 24. Cf. N.A. 'Pferdmenges: Geld aus dem Fenster'. *Der Spiegel*, 5/1954, 27 January 1954. Web. <https://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-28955044.html> (02 July 2020). For the Bremen cotton exchange cf. Bärwald, Annika. 'Bremer Baumwollträume. Bremer Wirtschaftsinteressen und das Streben nach Rohstoffautarkie im kolonialen Togo'. 1–30. *Bonjour Geschichte. Bremer online Journal*, no. 5, 2017, pp. 1–11. For the significance of US raw cotton produced by slaves for the German textile industries and financial centres and trading hubs before the foundation of the German Reich cf. Gaul. *Ideale und Interessen*, pp. 33–242.

34 Cf. LTA. 871.1-otto-233. Chronik, p. 74. Cf. Kaundinya, *Erinnerungen*, p. 103. Carl Schurz actively participated in the democratic 1848 March Revolution in Baden (southwest Germany) and subsequently emigrated to France, Switzerland, Britain and finally to the USA. There, he first worked as a lawyer and author. Later, he became Minister of Domestic Affairs in the USA as a member of the Republican Party under President Rutherford B. Hayes. Cf. Nagel, Daniel. *Von republikani-*

Keeping the Togolese and British colonial dimensions in mind, the case of the *Otto* plantation in German East Africa's Kilossa had some similarities to the ‘Alabama in Africa’ project. In the first place, similarities between German East Africa and Togo are to be found in the colonisers’ conviction that the so-called ‘modern’ or ‘scientific’ means of colonisation were key for any successful colonial endeavour. When starting the cotton plantation near Kilossa, the *Otto* company had been decisively influenced by Bernhard Dernburg’s promotion of ‘reformed’ and ‘modern’ colonial policies, particularly right after his assumption of office. With the colonial warfare in German South West Africa (1904–1907) and German East Africa (1905–1908) causing criticism amongst sections of the German public, Dernburg rejected Götzen’s policies as outdated and irrational, and attempted to pursue colonial policies that would instead ‘preserve’ and not ‘destroy’ the most important economic asset of the German colonies. To Dernburg, the most important economic asset was the local African population, who should be ‘educated to work’ and produce especially cash-crops for global markets.³⁵ Another similarity between Togo and German East Africa is the fact that colonial officials in both cases sought US American expertise and the support of the *KWK* to boost cotton cultivation – a strategy also pursued by the British in Nigeria, Sudan and Uganda.³⁶ In the East African colony, the *KWK* thus hired a German-Texan cotton expert team that would transfer their knowledge about cotton from America to institutions like the Mpanganya cotton school located near the Rufiji River in German East Africa in 1904.

It was not only the attempted transfer of knowledge about cotton cultivation from the South of the US to the German colony in East Africa that was similar to the case in Togo. The Mpanganya cotton scheme, intended to promote the cultivation of cotton among the local population, also met fierce African resistance in German East Africa. The colonisers’ demand to grow cotton as a monoculture contradicted the traditional inter-cropping cultivation methods in East Africa, which mixed the cotton crop with corn cultivation, for instance. Inter-cropping cultivation was done on purpose and for a good reason, as famines could be avoided if the cotton crop failed in a season or when low cotton prices prevented making a living by exclusively selling cotton. In analogy to Togo and the British cases in

schen Deutschen zu deutsch-amerikanischen Republikanern. Ein Beitrag zum Identitätswandel der deutschen Achtundvierziger in den Vereinigten Staaten 1850–1861. St. Ingbert: 2012. Cf. Gaul. *Ideale und Interessen*, pp. 55, 113–115, 159–161. Cf. LTA. 871.1-otto-199. Vergleichsregelung zwischen Fa. Otto und dem deutschen Reich. Letter by the Otto company to the Verband der württembergischen Kolonialdeutschen (association of south west colonial Germans), Unterboihingen, 19 April 1919.

35 Cf. Dernburg. *Koloniale Lehrjahre*. Cf. Esp. Dernburg. *Zielpunkte*, pp. 5–9.

36 Cf. Robins. *Cotton and Race*, pp. 72–164.

colonial Africa, the local population also resented recruitment by force, penal labour and the general colonial intrusion into their social environment that was characteristic of Governor Götzen's economic cotton policies until 1906. This is also why the peasant cotton scheme encouraged by the *KWK* and the colonial administration, and subsequent similar programmes, would neither become very successful nor popular amongst the local population during European colonialism in East Africa and beyond.³⁷

But there were also differences between Togo and German East Africa as far as the company of *Otto* and its plantation in Kilossa is concerned. *Otto's* approach differed also from that of the Mpanganya cotton school in German East Africa. First of all, the gist of Dernburg's 'reformed' colonial policies was not only about the application of allegedly improved 'modern' and 'scientific' cotton cultivation like Tuskegee's, as a means to improve German colonial cotton production. At the heart of Dernburg's policies were also the promotion of the latest technologies. As Dernburg highlighted the importance of modern infrastructure, railways in particular, technology and machinery for the colonial economy were also central to his colonial policies. This focus on modern technology and machinery, fused with another difference between cotton plantations in German colonial Togo and East Africa, right after Dernburg became the most influential German policy maker: the matter of scale. Especially in the very beginning of his career as Colonial State Secretary in the first phase of his cotton policies, Dernburg promoted large-scale plantations like *Otto's*, and discouraged Tuskegee-like peasant cotton cultivation programmes under the direct control of the colonial government. Certainly, Dernburg readjusted his policies after his official tour to German East Africa in 1908 and highlighted small-scale cash-crop production by individual East African farmers at the expense of large-scale cotton monocultures. But when Dernburg and *Otto* first met in 1907, the Colonial State Secretary still emphasised his desire for gigantic monocultural cotton plantations. Of course, such vast plantations had to be organised differently than individual cash-crop production by East African small-scale farmers. With an increasing area under cultivation, manual labour had to be replaced with industrialised means of agricultural production. Hand in hand with Dernburg's vision of large-scale plantations went thus the use of the most modern steam technology of the industrial age. In this respect, Dernburg's approach agreed with *Otto's* company tradition. Having always applied the latest technology to their factories back home in Germany, the vision of vast cotton

³⁷ Cf. Sunseri. *Vilimani*, pp. 119–127. Cf. "Mpanganya". *Deutsches Koloniallexikon*, 1920, Band II, S. 595. *University of Frankfurt o.M.* <http://www.ub.bildarchiv-dkg.uni-frankfurt.de/Bildprojekt/Lexikon/Standardframeseite.php> (18 June 2019). Cf. Demhardt. *Deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft*, pp. 70–71.

fields in Kilossa worked with steam engines appeared not only promising to the State Secretary but also to the *Otto* textile company. Like Dernburg, *Otto*’s leading men expected much from the anticipated construction of the *Central Railway* as well as from the use of steam locomobiles and steam ploughs.³⁸ This was even more the case for senior family like Fritz Otto, with the abovementioned economic atlas issued by the *KWK* in 1906 advertised the usage of modern steam ploughs made by the company *Fowler & Co.*, with its German branch in Magdeburg, for colonial cotton cultivation. Moreover, the atlas already projected the *Central Railway* to pass nearby Kilossa, where – according to the economic atlas, too – soil conditions promised rich cotton harvests in the future. Indeed, the steam ploughs made by *Fowler & Co.* were ultimately used by both the *KWK*’s cotton plantation in Saadani and by *Otto* in Kilossa.³⁹

In the end, another important difference between *Otto*’s cotton cultivation and the case in Togo must be stressed regarding the phenomenon of labour at the *Otto* plantation in Kilossa: although the *Otto* company had traditionally also had strong links to American and British cotton cultivators and textile companies, no connection either to the Tuskegee colleges or Texas was ever established between Unterboihingen and Kilossa. Instead, the most significant connection beyond the German *Reich*, German East Africa and Swabia would not be to the USA’s south but India. This fundamental connection between the textile company of *Otto*, German East Africa and India is predominantly revealed by the family background, biography and employment of Ranga Kaundinya as manager of the *Otto* plantation in Kilossa.⁴⁰

38 Cf. Dernburg. *Zielpunkte*, pp. 5–21. Cf. Naranch. ‘Colonized Body’, pp. 299–338. Cf. Sunseri. *Vili-mani*, pp. 136–159. Cf. Iliffe. *A Modern History*, pp. 144–147. Cf. Kaundinya. *Erinnerungen*, pp. 18–20. Cf. Dernburg. *Südwestafrikanische Eindrücke*, pp. 56–58.

39 Cf. LTA. 871.1-otto-233. Chronik, p. 69. Cf. Kolonialwirtschaftliches Komitee e.V. (Ed.). *Wirtschaftsatlas*, pp. no. 7–8, cf. Appendix (*Anhang*) advertisement of steam ploughs produced by John Fowler in Magdeburg & co. and ‘Kolonialmaschinenbau Theodor Wilkens’. Cf. “Aus unserer Kolonie. X. Kilossa”. *DOAZ*, X, no. 63. Daressalam: 19 August 1908.

40 For connections between the *KWK* and India cf. Berkhout, A.H. ‘Ziele, Resultate und Zukunft der Indischen Forstwirtschaft’. 303–313. *Der Tropenpflanzer. Zeitschrift für Tropische Landwirtschaft*. 13. Jahrgang, no. 7. Berlin, July 1909. Cf. Roeder, Georg. ‘Aus Indiens Kolonial-Technik’. 403–428. *Der Tropenpflanzer. Zeitschrift für Tropische Landwirtschaft*. 13. Jahrgang, no. 9. Berlin, July 1909. Cf. Tholens, R. ‘Zum Baumwollbau in Ägypten’. 567–573. *Der Tropenpflanzer. Zeitschrift für Tropische Landwirtschaft*. 13. Jahrgang, no. 7. Berlin, July 1909. Cf. Schanz, Moritz. ‘Die Negerfrage in Nordamerika’. 573–585. Ed. Kolonial-Wirtschaftliches Komitee. Beiheft zum ‘Tropenpflanzer’, Jahrgang XIII, no. 3, March 1909. Cf. Kolonial-Wirtschaftliches Komitee. ‘Unsere Kolonialwirtschaft in ihrer Bedeutung für Industrie und Arbeiterschaft’. 45–56. Beiheft zum ‘Tropenpflanzer’, Jahrgang XIII, no. 3, March 1909. Cf. Kolonial-Wirtschaftliches Komitee (Ed.). *Unsere Kolonialwirtschaft in ihrer Bedeutung für Industrie und Arbeiterschaft*. Berlin: 1909, pp. 9–16.

4.4.1 From Conversion to Plantation and Beyond: The Kaundinya Family and the *Otto* Company

[. . .] [T]he Family is also an economic entity while the company appears to be a social entity that is highly influenced by traditions and emotions. [. . .] [I]t was precisely this combination of family and entrepreneurial sphere that paved the way for a family firm [. . .].⁴¹

Christof Dejung. *Commodity Trading, Globalization and the Colonial World*. New York: 2018.

Despite *Otto's* connection to the Anglo-Saxon cotton world, its most significant connection beyond the German *Reich*, German East Africa and Unterboihingen was to India. India's cotton cultivation within the 'empire of cotton' was also an area of general interest for the *KWK*.⁴² However, the most important connections between the *Otto* company, German East Africa and India are notably revealed in the biography of Ranga Kaundinya. As plantation manager, he became the central figure of *Otto's* plantation in German East Africa's Kilossa. His life and work were decisively embedded within the global Pietist networks of the *Otto* company, which remained loyal to the plantation manager despite profound setbacks in Kilossa. Ranga Kaundinya was born in India, raised in Swabia and Basel (Switzerland), and later worked in India and in German East Africa. Although Sunseri mentions Ranga Kaundinya's Indo-German background and his central role in the *Otto* plantation, he disregards the history of the Kaundinya family, which goes beyond the period of formal German colonial rule.⁴³ In fact, the history of the Kaundinya family links the period of formal German colonialism (1884–1919) to the more inconspicuous facets of Germans involved in European colonialism before the Berlin Conference of 1884 and after the Treaty of Versailles in 1919. It also links the local history of the town of Unterboihingen and the story of the *Otto* company as an economic heavyweight to the global and colonial economy of the 'empire of cotton'. Moreover, the history of the Kaundinya family further

⁴¹ Dejung. *Commodity Trading*, p. 135.

⁴² Cf. Berkhout, A.H. 'Ziele, Resultate', pp. 303–313. Cf. Roeder. 'Aus Indiens Kolonial-Technik', pp. 403–428. Cf. Tholens. 'Zum Baumwollbau in Ägypten', pp. 567–573. Cf. Schanz. 'Die Negerfrage in Nordamerika', pp. 573–585. Cf. Kolonial-Wirtschaftliches Komitee. 'Unsere Kolonialwirtschaft', pp. 45–56.

⁴³ Cf. Sunseri. *Vilimani*, p. 151. Cf. Kaundinya. *Erinnerungen*. Ranga Kaundinya's Indian background receives little attention also in Bleifuß and Hergenröder. *Die "Otto-Plantage"*, pp. 37–39, 61–62. Sven Beckert dedicates only a minor remark on Kaundinya's background and also does not mention his name. Cf. Beckert. *Empire of Cotton*, p. 377. For general remarks about the post-colonial dimensions of German history cf. Zimmerer, Jürgen. 'Kolonialismus und kollektive Identität: Erinnerungsorte deutscher Kolonialgeschichte'. *Kein Platz an der Sonne. Erinnerungsorte der deutschen Kolonialgeschichte*. 9–40. Ed. Jürgen Zimmerer. Bonn: 2013.

highlights the significance of this (Pietist) mission and the company’s networks to German colonialism.

The southwest German region of Swabia or rather the Kingdom of *Württemberg* cannot be analysed historically with regard to colonialism without taking into account Pietism and its worldwide connection with Christian missions overseas. Likewise, the *Otto* company cannot be thought of without their Pietist company or rather their family networks. Similarly, the Basel Mission from neighbouring Switzerland, which was active in the colonies of various European colonial powers, cannot be thought of without considering the Swabian area around *Württemberg*’s capital Stuttgart. After all, since the foundation of the Basel Mission in 1815, more than half of all its missionaries were born in Swabia and “all inspectors and most theological teachers [were] from *Württemberg*[.] [S]econdly, over half of the trained missionaries came from the Swabian region”. In addition, one of the very first Basel missions was established in southwest India, reflecting the Kaundinya family’s involvement with Christianity, Swabia and the *Otto* company.⁴⁴

It does not come as a surprise that the Kaundinya family’s historical interconnections with India, Switzerland, Unterboihingen and Germany can be traced to the beginning of the nineteenth century. In fact, its history was decisively connected to the beginnings of the Basel Mission to India. Ranga Kaundinya’s father, Hermann Anandrao Kaundinya, was born in Mangalore, southwestern India, in 1825 to a Brahmin family. As Hermann Anandrao’s father worked for the British colonial high court as a lawyer and therefore had good connections with the British administration, Anandrao Kaundinya attended an English language missionary school in Mangalore from 1840 onwards. At this mission school, he first met Basel Missionaries who would become central for his future life. It was particularly Kaundinya’s close friendship with the Missionary Hermann Mögling that ultimately led to Hermann Anandrao’s baptism. Still a young man, Hermann Anandrao Kaundinya converted to Protestantism in 1844 and as his baptism was carried out by Mögling himself, Kaundinya adopted his godfather’s first name ‘Hermann’. As Kaundinya appeared a promising convert to Mögling, Kaundinya was ultimately accepted as a student at the Basel Missionary School in Switzerland in 1846. There, Herrmann Anandrao Kaundinya graduated as the first – and for a long time also the only – Indian-born Christian missionary in 1851. Returning to India only a few weeks after his graduation in Basel, he remained in India until his death in February 1893. There, he became one of the most important figures of the Basel Mission to India, teaching at

⁴⁴ Konrad. *Missionsbräute*, p. 465, cf. 465–467. Cf. Gleixner, Ulrike. *Pietismus und Bürgertum. Eine historische Anthropologie der Frömmigkeit*. Göttingen: 2005, pp. 13–25. Cf. Rösler. ‘Knotenpunkte des Kolonialen’, pp. 11–12, 39–42.

several missionary schools, working as an itinerant preacher and founding the Christian community of Anandapur in the district of Kodagu. To finance the settlement of Anandapur and to meet his own expenses, Kaundinya started rice and coffee plantations. As his plantations never became a very profitable business, his budget was constantly strained and therefore did not allow him to travel outside India. Anandrao Kaundinya therefore never returned to Europe, except on one occasion for his own wedding.⁴⁵

Like in many other Pietist societies, Basel missionaries did not choose their wives on their own. Instead, the board of the Basel Mission sorted requests of women who sought to marry a missionary and approved a wedding if both parties agreed. Regarding Kaundinya's marriage, it was again his close relationship to Hermann Mögling that played the decisive role, as Mögling's wife arranged Kaundinya's marriage to the German Marie Reinhardt from Swabia. The wedding of Hermann Anandrao and Marie took place in 1860 and right after their marriage, Hermann Anandrao and Marie Kaundinya travelled to India in the service of the Basel Mission and they stayed there together for over thirty years. Only after her husband's death in 1893 would Marie Kaundinya finally leave India. She subsequently lived near Stuttgart, until her death in 1919, close to the home of one of her and Hermann Anandrao's sons.⁴⁶

In total, Marie and Hermann Anandrao had eleven children who were born between 1861 and 1883. All of them spent most of their childhoods and teenage lives far away from their parents, either in Germany, Switzerland or in Britain. In Europe, the Indo-German children went to school or pursued other kinds of training. Keeping their children in Europe was a common procedure for Pietist missionaries in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For this purpose, the Basel

45 Cf. Frenz, Albrecht. *Freiheit hat Gesicht. Anandapur – eine Begegnung zwischen Kodagu und Baden Württemberg*. Stuttgart: 2003, pp. 41–56. Cf. Becker, Judith. *Conversio im Wandel. Basler Missionare zwischen Europa und Südindien und die Ausbildung einer Kontaktreligiösität, 1834–1860*. Göttingen: 2015, pp. 13–18, 663–682. Cf. Stadtmuseum Wendlingen am Neckar. Konrad Steinert's private document collection, "Zum Stammbaum von Kaundinya".

46 Marie Reinhardt was Kaundinya's second wife. With his first wife, Lakshmi, he shared a household for a very long time. Lakshmi herself, and her family, were not ready to accept Hermann Anandrao's conversion to the Christian faith for a long time. Lakshmi died a short period after their reconciliation. Cf. Kaundinya, H.A. *Die Lebensgeschichte des in Mangalur bekehrten Brahminen Hermann Anandraja Kaundinja*. Basel: 1854, pp. 17–23. Also quoted by Frenz and Becker. Cf. Frenz. *Freiheit*, pp. 50–52. Cf. Konrad. *Missionsbräute*, pp. 30–32, 45–46, 56–78, 87–88, 469–470. Cf. Stadtmuseum Wendlingen. Steinert's collection, "Zum Stammbaum von Kaundinya". Cf. Becker. *Conversio*, pp. 15, 51, 150, 163, 542, 581, 609, 648, 655–666. For a general introduction to the history of Pietism and the bourgeoisie in the southwest German Kingdom of Württemberg cf. Gleixner. *Pietismus und Bürgertum*, pp. 13–28, 392–408.

Mission even maintained a special children’s home to board the missionaries’ sons and daughters in Basel. To protect their children from the influences of the ‘outer world’, as the missionaries would call it, the Pietist community in Europe educated the Kaundinya children with corresponding Christian ideals; although a common practice for all the children of Pietist missionaries, the case of the Kaundinyas was also special. Despite being regarded as “converted 100 per cent”, Hermann Anandrao Kaundinya, the first Indian Christian missionary of the Basel Mission, met with reservations in Switzerland as his fellow but European Basel missionaries sometimes doubted his devotion to Christianity. Likewise, the Kaundinyas children also had “sort of a special status as ‘half-Indians’”, although most of them spent a considerable part of their childhood and youth in the mission’s children’s home in Basel.⁴⁷ Besides staying in Basel, first-born Ananda Kaundinya (1861–1914) and second-born Ranga Kaundinya (1863–1919) – later manager of the *Otto* plantation in Kilossa – also spent some of their teenage years in Esslingen am Neckar near Stuttgart, which was not far from Unterboihingen and where the head office of the textile company of *Otto* was located. In Esslingen, they were taken care of by Hermann Mögling and his family, the abovementioned close friend of Herman Kaundinya, who had retired from (missionary) work in 1869 and lived in southwest Germany until his death in 1881.⁴⁸ Later generations of the Kaundinyas would also be raised in the southwest German region around or in the city of Stuttgart. Among them was Ananda Kaundinya’s son, Otto Günther Kaundinya (1900–1940), who would later become the first star of handball – a sport that had become very popular in Germany in the first half of the twentieth century.⁴⁹

It was probably during his stay as a teenager and young adult in southwest German Esslingen am Neckar when second-born Ranga Kaundinya first met members of the *Otto* company. According to the company chronicles written between 1937 and 1943, Ranga had done an apprenticeship in nearby Nürtingen around 1885 at the tree nursery of Emanuel Otto. Emmanuel Otto was the grandchild of the founder of the *Otto* textile company in Unterboihingen, which was started in 1816.

47 Konrad. *Missionsbräute*, p. 338.

48 Cf. Konrad. *Missionsbräute*, pp. 329–340. Cf. Stadtmuseum Wendlingen. Steinert’s collection, “Zum Stammbaum von Kaundinya”. Cf. Stadtmuseum Wendlingen am Neckar. Konrad Steinert’s private document collection, “Ranga Reinhardt Rao Kaundinya (1863–1919). Leiter der Otto-Pflanzung Kilossa (1907–1916)”, “Zum Stammbaum von Kaundinya”. Cf. Ledderhose, Karl Friedrich. “Mögling, Hermann Friedrich”. *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, 22, 1885, pp. 47–52, Web. *Neue Deutsche Biographie*. <https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd119490633.html#adbcontent> (20 June 2019).

49 Cf. Eggers, Erik. ‘Porträt. Otto Kaundinya – der erste Star des Handballs’. *Handball. Eine deutsche Domäne*. 73–76. Ed. Erik Eggers. Göttingen: 2007, pp. 73–76.

After his apprenticeship at this tree nursery in Nürtingen and school education in Basel, Ranga Kaundinya travelled to India and lived with his parents for some time. In Anandapur, the Christian village his father had founded, he was involved in his father's coffee plantation and received further (unspecified) training in agricultural business. When Ranga Kaundinya returned to Germany as a "plantation owner"⁵⁰ in 1894, he came there to marry the German Thekla Sophie Faisst in Stuttgart through the Basel Mission networks. Shortly afterwards, the recently married couple returned to India and started a cotton plantation in India, probably in a town named Ferok in southwest India.⁵¹ Unfortunately, there is no further information about their lives or their business in India to be found in the sources under investigation.⁵²

Furthermore, the sources also fail to provide a clear picture of the reasons why Ranga Kaundinya ultimately became the manager of the *Otto* plantation in German East Africa's Kilossa in 1907. According to his own autobiographical accounts, Ranga had sold his own cotton plantation in India after twenty-three years of business, in early 1907, and was simply looking for a new challenge. With the *Otto* company offering him the opportunity to become "the manager of a large business in the midst of the wild jungle" and to start such a "pioneering business [. . .] from scratch", an allegedly long-cherished dream had become a reality.⁵³ In contrast, the company chronicles of the *Otto* company paint a less rosy picture: After losing all his fortune in the course of a banking crisis in spring 1907, Ranga sent a letter of application to the *Otto* textile company, as he had known the family since his apprenticeship at Emmanuel Otto's tree nursery back in 1885. Apparently, Kaundinya had read about *Otto*'s plan to take up cotton cultivation in German East Africa in a newspaper article and offered his services as an experienced cotton planter accordingly.⁵⁴ Known by senior company members since the apprenticeship in his youth, Ranga Kaundinya was accepted as a future

⁵⁰ Stadtmuseum Wendlingen. Steintert's collection, "Ranga Reinhardt Rao Kaundinya (1863–1919)".

⁵¹ LTA. 871.1-otto-233. Chronik, p. 72.

⁵² Cf. Maybe, some insights will be provided in the future by the contemporary research project about migrant children of the nineteenth century, conducted by Sandra Maß. It features the Kaundinya family. Cf. her website at the University of Bochum. <https://www.ruhr-uni-bochum.de/transhistory/ueberuns/prof/index.html.de> (15 October 2019). Cf. private mail correspondence with Sandra Maß 26 September 2019. Recently published cf. Maß, Sandra. 'Constructing global missionary families: Absence, memory, and belonging before World War I'. 340–361. *Journal of Modern European History*, Vol. 19, 3. N.P.: 2021. Web. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/16118944211019933>. (03 March 2022).

⁵³ Kaundinya. *Erinnerungen*, p. 22.

⁵⁴ Cf. Stadtmuseum Wendlingen. Steintert's collection, "Ranga Reinhardt Rao Kaundinya (1863–1919)". Cf. LTA. 871.1-otto-233. Chronik, pp. 30–31, 70–73. Cf. Konrad. *Missionsbräute*, pp. 338–340.

manager of *Otto*’s plantation near Kilossa immediately. Shortly after his letter of application was read by senior members of the company, Kaundinya received a telegram ordering him to “take the next steamer to Dar es Salaam for a meeting with [the company’s owner] Heinrich Otto”, who was currently on his way to German East Africa. Accompanied by Colonial State Secretary Bernhard Dernburg, and the famous German palaeontologist Eberhard Fraas as geological advisor, Heinrich Otto intended to inspect suitable land for future cotton cultivation in the German colony and therefore wanted to talk to his future plantation manager Kaundinya on the same occasion.⁵⁵

Recalling the history of the Kaundinya family and the rapid decision of the *Otto* company to start a cotton business in German East Africa, the evidence suggests that *Otto*’s company chronicles are more plausible than Kaundinya’s autobiography. It is more likely that Kaundinya was searching for new employment as he had just turned bankrupt with his unprofitable plantations in India. The speedy meeting of Heinrich Otto and Kaundinya in German East Africa further supports this argument. As the company of *Otto* must have been in urgent need of an experienced plantation manager, they were ready to employ Kaundinya as the first who came along. Not much more than four months had passed since senior figures of the Otto family had listened closely to Dernburg’s speech in Stuttgart at the end of January 1907 (see above), and Heinrich Otto and Bernhard Dernburg’s joint journey to German East Africa in May of the same year. It appears that the *Otto* company started its colonial cotton business very hastily, and Ranga Kaundinya’s application letter arrived to Unterboihingen just at the right moment. The textile company had not had a lot of experience running colonial business in Africa and was therefore lacking the trained staff for such an endeavour. In analogy to the Togolese case, where the German colonial administration hired cotton experts from Booker T. Washington’s Tuskegee colleges in the US to boost the colonial cotton production in West Africa, “[e]xpertise was in high demand”⁵⁶ in German East Africa. *Otto* had found this supposed expertise in India. In the overall context of the ‘empire of cotton’, Kaundinya probably appeared as the perfect candidate for a colonial business in East Africa as his personal profile combined the colonial discourse about ‘fitness for service in the tropics’, with the ideal of a European school education in line with Christian values, and professional experience at coffee and cotton plantations in India. India, which had been the centre of global cotton cultivation and manufacturing before the subsequent

55 LTA. 871.1-otto-233. Chronik, p. 72, cf. pp. 70–74. Cf. Kaundinya. *Erinnerungen*, pp. 18–25. Cf. Bleifuß and Hergenröder. *Die “Otto-Plantage”*, pp. 21–26. Cf. Sunseri. *Vilimani*, pp. 2–18, 136–138. Cf. Maier. *African Dinosaurs*, pp. 1–3, 6–26.

56 Beckert. *Empire of Cotton*, p. 362.

global ‘European domination’, had traded cotton and textiles with East Africa for centuries and was still well-known for this industry.⁵⁷ Although at that moment on the decline,⁵⁸ this reputation of India being a sub-continent of decent cotton production complemented Kaundinya’s biography as an Indian planter and his corresponding family background. Kaundinya’s positive impression was probably reinforced as he had married the German Thekla Faisst of a good family, originating from nearby Ludwigsburg and Stuttgart. Finally, Ranga Kaundinya had already worked for a member of the Otto family and was thus not unknown to the most important contacts of the Swabian Pietist textile producer.⁵⁹

Anticipating the difficulties of the *Otto* plantation in Kilossa throughout its entire existence, the hasty planning as well as the company’s lack of experience and Kaundinya’s previous poor performance as a plantation manager must have had significant influence on the ultimate failure of *Otto*’s endeavour in German East Africa. Although he had probably been as unsuccessful as his father as a plantation manager in India, Ranga Kaundinya’s failure in Kilossa was not only the result of his lacking skills and fortune; it was also a result of German East Africa’s societal atmosphere that disadvantaged and discriminated against him as a so-called ‘half-caste-man’.

4.4.2 *Otto*’s Pietist Textile Networks and Ranga Kaundinya’s Employment in Kilossa

Besides constant investment in the latest technology, another significant characteristic of the *Otto* Company and the family behind it was its Protestant Christian faith. With southwestern German Unterboihingen being primarily inhabited by Roman Catholics, the Otto family consciously lived in the Protestant diaspora and sought to maintain as well as support their Pietist denomination. They sent their own sons for further education in the textile business to other entrepreneurs who pursued their faith consciously: Robert Otto, born in 1849, for example, did his apprenticeship at the company *C.F. Klein-Schlatter* in Barmen, a hotspot of the

⁵⁷ Beckert. *Empire of Cotton*, pp. 18–28, 312–340.

⁵⁸ Cf. Robins. *Cotton and Race*, pp. 77–79, 180.

⁵⁹ Cf. LTA. 871.1-otto-233. Chronik, pp. 71–72. Cf. Stadtmuseum Wendlingen. Steintert’s collection, “Ranga Reinhardt Rao Kaundinya (1863–1919)”. Belifuß and Hergenröder summarise Kaundinya’s application and employment but do not compare the sources critically. Cf. Bleifuß and Hergenröder. *Die “Otto-Plantage”* p. 61. Kaundinya himself sustains the discourse about the ‘fitness for the tropics’ and recommends living an ascetic life, strongly reducing the consumption of meat, tobacco, alcohol and to strictly limit sexual intercourse. Cf. Kaundinya. *Erinnerungen*, p. 96. Cf. Dejung. *Commodity Trading*, pp. 56–79.

German textile industry. His stay in Barmen served several purposes. Besides fostering a friendly relationship to this company, the Ottos were convinced that “the religious attitudes of the owners of the company, *F.W. Röhrig und C.F. Klein*, entirely resembled those of the Otto family” and they would send young Robert Otto back to southwestern Germany not only equipped with skills and knowledge about the textile business, but also “internally strengthened” in his faith. This was also the reason why Robert was neither the first nor the last member of several *Otto* generations who would receive their training for these very purposes in Barmen.⁶⁰ Apart from maintaining such Pietist entrepreneurial networks, in Unterboihingen itself, the family organised and actively participated in Bible studies and financed several institutions to support the Protestant faith, such as a Protestant church and a school for Protestant children.⁶¹ As Pietist entrepreneurs, the Ottos probably had friendly relations with other Pietist circles, like the Basel Mission. It is thus very likely that the shared Protestant faith between Kaundinya and *Otto* was an important part of Ranga Kaundinya’s first working experience with *Otto*, as an apprentice at Emmanuel Otto’s tree nursery in 1885. Considering the ongoing support for their faith at home and strong links to other Pietist textile company owners like *Röhrig and Klein*⁶² as well as the abovementioned *Pferdmenges, Pryer & Co.*, it is very likely that the Otto family was also sympathetic to the Pietist Basel Mission overseas and therefore also towards the Kaundinya family, whose children were educated and brought up nearby Unterboihingen. In a nutshell: hiring Ranga Kaundinya for the cotton plantation in Kilossa as its manager was not only a matter of perceived skill and experience, but equally – if not primarily – a matter of faith. To the leading men of the Pietist *Otto* Company, Kaundinya appeared to be a devout Indo-German Christian, and he continued to be employed and trusted by *Otto*, despite the eventual poor economic performance of the company’s plantation in Kilossa.

60 LTA. 871.1-otto-233. Chronik, pp. 7, 21, 57. Cf. Hergenröder, Gerhard. *Wendlingen am Neckar. Auf dem Weg zu einer Stadt. Die Geschichte von Wendlingen, Unterboihingen und Bodelshofen*. Wendlingen am Neckar: 1992, pp. 251–261, 291–298, 312, 378.

61 Cf. LTA. 871.1-otto-233. Chronik, pp. 28, 36, 51, 54–55.

62 Carl Friedrich Klein was the son of a vicar in nearby Nördlingen (southwest Germany). Born in 1803 in Württemberg, he became involved in the cotton business first in Augsburg and then in Munich. He later founded his own business in Barmen after his arrival there in 1828. His wife Christine Schlatter was from St. Gallen (Switzerland), a Protestant town surrounded by a Catholic countryside. Analogically to the Otto family, the couple also financed and supported Protestant schools and youth associations. Cf. Schreiner, Hanna. ‘Carl Friedrich Klein und Christine Klein’. 56–61. *Wuppertaler Biographien*, 5. Wuppertal: 1965. Cf. Klein, Jochen. “In Unruhe und Arbeit”. *C.F. Klein-Schlatter. 150 Jahre Weberei. 1828–1979*. Ratingen: 2001, pp. 1–63.

Yet, such a comparatively supportive environment, characterised by a shared religion, does not automatically mean that Protestant Christians of German Indian descent did not face prejudices and racist discrimination. Quite the contrary: many members of the Kaundinya family experienced reservations even in Pietist circles, but especially beyond. As far as the sources can tell, most Kaundinyas faced discrimination throughout their lives. Although Hermann Anandrao Kaundinya proved himself a devout Christian missionary in India and was a close friend of German missionaries like Hermann Mögling, he had to fight for equal status as a missionary on several occasions. Many of his fellow missionaries of European descent as well as Basel's mission board occasionally doubted Hermann Anandrao Kaundinya's equal status as a missionary and disregarded his judgments or opinions on various issues.⁶³ But Hermann Anandrao was not the only Kaundinya who experienced discrimination in his life. Like his father, Hermann Anandrao's firstborn son, Ananda Kaundinya, faced obstacles when starting his career as well. Seeking employment as a government official in India, Ananda's application was rejected as the British colonial government of India did not want to employ so-called 'Eurasians'.⁶⁴ Despite his experience and education in Germany, Switzerland, India and (probably) Great Britain, and his Christian denomination, Ananda Kaundinya, therefore, had to take up employment as an overseer of a saltworks in India,⁶⁵ because the British colonial authorities did not regard him as equal to a British citizen. Apparently, it took many years until Ananda Kaundinya ultimately became a British government official and it seems that he later worked in the British Indian public sector until the beginning of 1914.⁶⁶ Other family members experienced similar discrimination, as the analysis of the files reporting on Ranga Kaundinya's work as a plantation manager in German East Africa's Kilossa illustrate.

Although produced in 1936 during the period of National Socialism in Germany, *Otto's* company chronicles – celebrating 120 years of its existence – do not utter one negative word about Ranga Kaundinya's work in Kilossa. This fact is par-

⁶³ Cf. Becker. *Conversio*, pp. 28–30, p. 682. Cf. Frenz. *Freiheit*, pp. 40–56.

⁶⁴ Konrad. *Missionsbräute*, p. 338.

⁶⁵ Cf. Ebay Offer by second-hand bookshop *Tucholsklavier* (Theodor Schmidt, Berlin). 'Handball-Nationaltrainer OTTO KAUNDINYA: 3 Briefe von 1913 (u.a. über Zukunft)'. 04 August 2018. Web. <https://www.ebay.de/itm/Handball-Nationaltrainer-OTTO-KAUNDINYA-3-Briefe-von-1913-u-a-uber-Zukunft/302442788301?hash=item466afeb5cd:g:tCwAAOSwa4FZsCPW> (19 July 2019).

⁶⁶ Cf. Konrad. *Missionsbräute*, pp. 337–339. Cf. Eggers. 'Porträt Otto Kaundinya', p. 73. Cf. Ebay Offer by second-hand bookshop *Tucholsklavier* (Theodor Schmidt, Berlin). '36 dt. Briefe (188 S.) von 1902 aus INDIEN //Ananda H. & Helene KAUNDINYA'. 21 June 2018. Web. <https://www.ebay.de/itm/36-dt-Briefe-188-S-von-1902-aus-INDIEN-Ananda-H-Helene-KAUNDINYA-/152825391361> (19 July 2019).

ticularly important as the chronicles do occasionally reveal the zeitgeist of the NS-Regime: they portray Bernhard Dernburg’s Jewish family background disrespectfully, for instance. One would thus have anticipated corresponding discriminatory remarks about Ranga Kaundinya’s Indo-German descent and negative remarks about his unsuccessful work in Kilossa twenty years before the company chronicles were produced, too.⁶⁷ Besides the shared Pietist faith of the Kaundinyas and *Otto* that might have served as a ‘spiritual tie’, preventing a negative image about their cooperation in the sources, another aspect has to be considered when reading the company chronicles. With the company chronicles being written from the middle of the 1930s onwards, their positive portrayal of Ranga Kaundinya also may have been influenced by his ties to someone else: namely Ranga’s nephew, Otto Günther Kaundinya, who was a very famous person in the 1930s. As mentioned above, Otto Kaundinya was the first handball star in the history of the sport. Handball had become one of the most popular sports in Germany since the early 1900s and Otto Kaundinya was not only the best handball player in the world in the 1920s and 1930s, but he later also became an influential trainer, sports functionary, and theoretician of handball. Considered as a legend at the beginning of the 1930s, Otto Kaundinya also trained the German Olympic handball team, which subsequently won the Olympic Games in Berlin in 1936 – an event loaded with National Socialist propaganda. In general, Otto Kaundinya was considered as “politically reliable”⁶⁸ by the Nazis, and even published pamphlets featuring racist political considerations about the sport of handball, in line with the ‘racial thinking’ of National Socialism.⁶⁹ While Otto Kaundinya’s contemporary fame might have been one reason why the *Otto* Company’s chronicles are sympathetic towards his uncle, Ranga Kaundinya, other sources chronologically closer to the actual events still illustrate discrimination against Ranga. This is particularly the case for the files produced by the German colonial administration, which are held in Tanzania’s National Archives today. This discrimination faced by the Kaundinya family because of their Indian background, experienced in both German and British colonial environments, is particularly important as it influenced Ranga Kaundinya’s work in Kilossa significantly.

⁶⁷ Cf. LTA. 871.1-otto-233. Chronik, pp. 69, 87. Cf. LTA. 871.1-otto-229. [Firmenjubiläum am 12. November 1936].

⁶⁸ Eggers. ‘Porträt Otto Kaundinya’, p. 75.

⁶⁹ Eggers. ‘Porträt Otto Kaundinya’, pp. 73–75. Cf. Eggers, Erik. ‘Handball im Nationalsozialismus’. *Handball. Eine deutsche Domäne*. 63–92. Ed. Erik Eggers. Göttingen: 2007, pp. 63–90. Cf. Kaundinya, Otto. *Die sportliche Leistung. Ihre biologischen, rassischen und pädagogischen Voraussetzungen*. Leipzig: 1936. Cf. Kaundinya, Otto. *Das Handballspiel. Technik, Taktik, Spielregeln, Training*. 1. & 2. Edition. Leipzig 1935 and 1941.

Although obtaining a prestigious job position as *Otto's* plantation manager, he was discriminated against by both the German colonial administration and other Germans living in the colony. His attributed position in the colonial society as a white subaltern certainly influenced his work performance at the cotton plantation negatively.

4.5 Managing a Plantation in a German Colony

It is however inexcusable that Otto had made a half-caste-man the leading figure of the endeavour. Although he had proved himself incompetent as a manager throughout his employment, Otto kept him in this position despite numerous warnings.

Governor Rechenberg to the German Colonial Department. Dar es Salaam, 1 October 1910.⁷⁰

Ranga Kaundinya worked and lived as a white subaltern in German East Africa. Congruent with the racist colonial environment there, several files suggest that Ranga's colleagues, the German colonial lobby and the colonial administration were prejudiced against him as a person and judged his work performance accordingly. As revealed by the quotation above, Ranga Kaundinya's family background was judged to be one of the major reasons why *Otto's* plantation in Kilossa experienced mismanagement. The source quoted above, in which Governor Rechenberg called Kaundinya an 'incompetent half-caste man', was a reaction towards an article published by the *Kölnische Zeitung* on 28 October 1910. In this German newspaper's article, Heinrich Otto, the company's head, admitted the shortcomings of his plantation in Kilossa but blamed the colonial administration for the difficulties.⁷¹ Investigating the issue of whether the accusations against the colonial administration in the newspaper were justified, the Governor of German East Africa produced a corresponding report about the plantation and sent it to the German Colonial Office in Berlin in October 1910. The report listed not only the shortcomings of *Otto's* company managers in Germany but also the mistakes of its personnel in Kilossa. Although acknowledging Kaundinya's industriousness and eagerness when first arriving at the *Otto* plantation in Kilossa in 1907, besides disparaging his ancestry, Rechenberg also doubted Ranga Kaundinya's work experience: "K[au]ndinya had never planted any cotton before coming to Kilossa.

⁷⁰ This statement is crossed out in the original document and replaced by milder terminology of similar content. TNA. G8/894. [Angelegenheiten der Pflanzung des] Kommerzienrates Heinrich Otto [Kilossa, Bez. Morogoro]. Bd. 1, p. 111.

⁷¹ Cf. TNA. G8/894, pp. 121, 136–138.

Hence, he had absolutely no experience in this field.”⁷² On top of Rechenberg’s doubts about Kaundinya’s self-portrayal as an experienced plantation manager, the publicly appointed agricultural expert of the *Gouvernement*, Dr Paul Vageler, who examined the *Otto* plantation and the soil conditions surrounding it, also criticised Kaundinya’s “low expertise” in a confidential report to the Governor in Dar es Salaam in 1909.⁷³

According to the sources, in addition to Kaundinya’s unsatisfactory family background, it was his lack of experience as cotton plantation manager that had led to a number of serious mistakes. First of all, Kaundinya was held responsible that the contracts of the first African workers recruited had ended too early and no substitutes had been hired in time. The result was a shortage of hands and the plantation had therefore come to a standstill shortly after its foundation. Furthermore, the work processes were organised deficiently: allocating the workers to the plantation’s numerous sites of operation was allegedly done randomly and the workers therefore had to move constantly around the plantation. The result was that work was not done fast enough, as the workers spent many hours walking from one end of the vast plantation to the other every day. Moreover, the construction of both the houses of the European staff as well as the grass huts of the African workforce had not been supervised properly and they either collapsed or turned out to be built at the wrong locations. Hence, the accommodations had to be rebuilt from scratch periodically and cost the *Otto* Company a fortune. Similar mistakes had been made regarding the construction of costly roads and drinking fountains. The latter were so far away from the houses of the European personnel’s settlement that up to thirty African workers, who had actually been employed for cotton cultivation, daily had to carry drinking water and water for domestic use half an hour uphill, as the *white* personnel wanted to have a constant water supply at their disposal. One of the major cost-intensive calamities resulted from deficient personnel management. Besides himself as plantation manager and a newly recruited German commercial manager, Kaundinya had employed ten to eighteen other Europeans, who worked primarily as overseers of the African workforce.⁷⁴ These European overseers, sometimes even younger

⁷² TNA. G8/894, p. 118. Cf. also p. 113.

⁷³ TNA. G8/894, p. 84. Cf. “Vageler”. *Deutsches Koloniallexikon*, 1920, Band III, S. 598. Web. *University of Frankfurt o.M.* <http://www.ub.bildarchiv-dkg.uni-frankfurt.de/Bildprojekt/Lexikon/Standardframeseite.php?suche=Vageler> (23 July 2019).

⁷⁴ After WWI, the *Otto* Company listed twelve former employees besides Kaundinya and Schurz, the commercial manager. Cf. LTA. 871.1-otto-199. Letter by the *Otto* company to the Verband der württembergischen Kolonialdeutschen (association of southwest colonial Germans), Unterboihingen, 19 April 1919. *Otto*’s company chronicles report about 11 Europeans working for *Otto*

than twenty-two years, received 300 Rp. a month (1 Rupee = 1.33 German Marks), roughly twenty-five times the wages of an African worker. As they were each responsible for the supervision of only twenty African workers or twenty-five hectares under cultivation, the *Otto* plantation was overstaffed and lost a lot of money on wages. According to the judgement of the Governor, six European employees would have been enough to do the job, meaning that Kaundinya could have saved up to two-thirds of his overall European personnel expenses.⁷⁵ More importantly, these European employees were, according to the Governor's report, recruited without considering their individual biographies and therefore regarded as "low-quality material", whose activities quickly earned the *Otto* plantation the reputation of being a "gangster colony", soon enough.⁷⁶ Besides, the *Gouvernement's* report sent to the German Colonial Department, published reports by the *KWK* about the *Otto* plantation also complained that "some of the [eleven] European employees [. . .], ha[d] often not met [. . .] the expectations; a fact which has primarily to be attributed to the consumption of alcohol."⁷⁷

Despite their dubious character, these 'gangster' employees, primarily of German descent, challenged the authority of Ranga Kaundinya as a plantation man-

in July 1909 Cf. LTA. 871.1-otto-233. Chronik, p. 83. Kaundinya mentions one Greek overseer working for him and also 10–12 other Europeans working for Otto's plantation Kilossa besides himself and Schurz. Cf. Kaundinya. *Erinnerungen*, pp. 72, 142. In a petition filed by Kaundinya on behalf of the Otto plantation ca. in February 1909 and signed by eight other enterprises in the Kilossa district, urging the colonial administration to employ a doctor for the Kilossa district, Kaundinya lists 15 European employees at his plantation. Cf. TNA. G5/38. Bemühungen um Entsendung eines Stationsarztes nach Kilossa (Petition der ansässigen Europäer), pp. 1–4. Clement Gillman, who worked as a route section engineer in Kilossa for some time, met Kaundinya and his wife and also visited the plantation himself. He even mentions up to 28 Europeans working at the Otto plantation in January 1910, attributing the large number of three European managers and 28 assistants as the major reason for the plantation's failure. Cf. Gillman Diaries. Mss. Afr. S. 1175/1,2_2. June 1908 bis September 1913, no. 13, pp. 10–13. Given the conflicting numbers, the average of these numbers has to be presumed. Moreover, the *DOAZ* reported in May 1909 that Indians and Goans would have been employed as plantation assistants. Cf. "Aus unserer Kolonie. Kilossa". *DOAZ*, XI, no. 37. Daressalam: 12 May 1909.

⁷⁵ Cf. TNA. G8/894, pp. 112–118, 137. The engineer Grüninger employed by the Otto plantation, who was primarily responsible for the irrigation in Kilossa, rejected the Governor's and *DKG's* allegations in a letter to the Governor in 1911. In fact, he only addresses his alleged personal shortcomings in detail. Grüninger's responsibilities are not part of this paragraph, however. Besides the article of the *Kölnische Zeitung*, there are no documents revealing the company's opinion on the issue. Cf. TNA. G8/904 [Angelegenheiten der Pflanzung des] Kommerzienrates Heinrich Otto [Kilossa, Bez. Morogoro]. Bd. 2., pp. 9–12. Cf. Kaundinya. *Erinnerungen*, p. 97.

⁷⁶ TNA. G8/894, p. 119.

⁷⁷ Supf, Karl. 'Deutsch-Koloniale Baumwoll-Unternehmungen. Bericht XI (Frühjahr 1909)'. 161–162. Ed. Kolonial-Wirtschaftliches Komitee. Beiheft zum "Tropenpflanzer", Jahrg. XIII, no. 5,

ager constantly. Although the *whiteness* of *Otto's* European employees appears to have been of 'precarious' character, as they were judged as 'gangsters' or 'low-quality material' by the colonial administration, they still felt entitled to challenge Kaundinya's status as plantation manager, because he had "Indian blood in his veins".⁷⁸ This racist colonial environment certainly made Kaundinya's work in Kilossa a difficult endeavour. This fact is also confirmed by other sources. Besides the files of the Tanzanian National Archives, the chronicles of the *Otto* Company report that Kaundinya faced various obstacles because of his ancestry as well. Accordingly, despite "his competence and his experience in the tropics", Kaundinya had, as "half-Indian, [. . .] difficulties to assert himself against the German employees under his authority as well as against the [colonial] government".⁷⁹ According to the chronicles of the *Otto* Company, it was the constant discrimination of the colonial society in German East Africa, which disturbed Kaundinya's work significantly. Occupied by fighting against the disadvantaging environment, Kaundinya was in effect not able to manage the plantation's bookkeeping properly and was subsequently restricted in his responsibilities. He was thus degraded to the post of agricultural manager of the plantation only, while the board of the *Otto* Company sent two German accountants to Kilossa to take charge of the financial affairs. One of them, Mr Sandleben, had been in Dar es Salaam previously, but had failed to check Kilossa's accounts properly as he had relied on mail and telegraphy only. The plantation's financial distress and conflicts with the colonial government must have been severe indeed, as the boss of the family business, Heinrich Otto, even sent his personal secretary, Georg Schurz, all the way to East Africa to restore the budget's order after the results of the initial planting seasons had turned out to be a significant financial loss. While Georg Schurz, the nephew of the famous German American '48er revolutionary', Carl Schurz, seemed to quickly assume authority over his precarious white German 'gangster' employees, and organised the further expansion of the plantation's buildings properly, it was Heinrich Otto's partner, Fritz Engels, in place of Kaundinya, who would negotiate successfully with the colonial government for further land leases for the plantation in Kilossa. In the face of Kaundinya's problems as a white subaltern plantation manager, expansion was considered to be the only way to make the cotton fields profitable.⁸⁰

May 1909. Cf. TNA. G8/894, p. 112. Kaundinya himself explained that the European plantation assistants had "difficulties" getting acquainted with the workload and the climate. They used to complain a lot, particularly in the beginning. Cf. Kaundinya. *Erinnerungen*, pp. 97–98.

⁷⁸ TNA. G8/894, p. 119.

⁷⁹ LTA. 871.1-otto-233. Chronik, p. 84.

⁸⁰ Cf. LTA. 871.1-otto-233. Chronik, pp. 84–85, 89–91, 94–95.

Although the files under investigation feature racist discriminatory remarks against Kaundinya indeed, some criticism against his work performance was certainly justified. It was not only the fact that Kaundinya could not assert himself against the colonial administration in German East Africa that delayed the expansion of the land under cultivation at *Otto's* plantation, the *Gouvernement* repeatedly noted that Kaundinya had neither provided the territory's maps nor the land survey reports needed for further land leases on several occasions. As far as the correspondence between the colonial administration and Heinrich Otto can be reconstructed, Heinrich Otto must have been well aware of this fact and the resulting delays for almost one year. Otto remained nevertheless loyal to Kaundinya – at least as far as the field of agricultural management is concerned – although Kaundinya's difficulties in Kilossa appear to have endured at least until summer 1913.⁸¹

Ranga Kaundinya himself reports nothing about his life as a white subaltern in German East Africa. Although discrimination against people who were not perceived as German – or rather considered as non-central European men not belonging to the middle and upper classes – was common in all German colonies in legal and societal terms, Kaundinya himself does not mention any incident of such discrimination himself. Although all other sources consulted in this chapter clearly show that there were at least some reservations towards his ancestry, Kaundinya's autobiography published in 1918 is generally silent on the issue. Regarding the strained financial situation of the *Otto* plantation around 1910 and the company's decision to withdraw any financial authority from him, Kaundinya succinctly mentions in his autobiography that because of the "multifaceted tasks" and the ever-increasing bureaucracy, it "had turned out impossible to manage the always increasing paper-work".⁸² Hence, an extra hand exclusively in charge of bookkeeping was required, and subsequently also employed. Even more important in terms of racial discrimination is the fact that Kaundinya describes himself as a "decent and respectable middle-European"⁸³ in his autobiography, repeatedly. Although his entire family had experienced racist discrimination in various colonial environments and for two generations at least, not only in German East Africa but also in India, Britain and Switzerland, his autobiography remains silent on both racism and any personal experiences of discrimination. What is more, as a 'decent and respectable middle European', Kaundinya even portrays himself in his autobiography as a plantation manager who had done his part to 'educate the uncivilised African people to work'. As 'education to work' was one of the major

⁸¹ Cf. TNA. G8/894, pp. 5–54. Cf. Stadtmuseum Wendlingen. Steinert's document collection, "Tagebuch Fritz Otto", p. 22.

⁸² Kaundinya. *Erinnerungen*, pp. 103, 142.

⁸³ Kaundinya. *Erinnerungen*, pp. 96, 142.

necessities of every ‘civilised’ European nation, Kaundinya therefore promoted the importance of further expansion by the German *Reich* and glorified the topos of ‘German work’.⁸⁴

It is impossible to identify Ranga Kaundinya’s real intentions behind his autobiographical accounts. The reader is thus left to speculate on the reason why he publicly praised German colonialism and concealed the racism he had experienced himself. Some reasons may derive from an interest in future occupation in the German colonial plantation business, or an attempt to raise his autobiography’s sales figures among the German readership. It is however also plausible to assume that Ranga Kaundinya regarded himself as a ‘proper’ middle-class German citizen who simply wanted to share his plantation experience with the German target audience. Despite all the discrimination against him, he might have perceived himself, nevertheless as a full member of German society with work experience in the colony of German East Africa. Legitimising his own employment in Kilossa and maybe seeking future colonial employments, he might have strategically supported Germany’s ‘civilising mission’ overseas as well. Needless to say, given his family background, his German wife and close connections to southwest Germany as well as his past employment in a German colony, he probably felt more at home in Germany than in Britain or India, anyway. In this respect, the date of publication of Kaundinya’s autobiography is significant as well. Published in Leipzig in 1918, Ranga Kaundinya must have started his book during WWI. With wars generally hardening attitudes and his brother working as a British colonial state official in India simultaneously, Kaundinya might have felt the urge to take Germany’s side publicly to protect himself and his family from German jingoist hostilities. As an Indo-German, who had already experienced racism by German (colonial) societies, he might have attempted to fend off any allegations accusing him of support for the British Empire. This last argument is reinforced by the fact that Kaundinya’s autobiography about his life in German East Africa was not his only publication during WWI. In 1916, using the pen name Ganga-rao Brahmputr,⁸⁵ he published a pamphlet about India’s role during WWI,

⁸⁴ Cf. Kaundinya. *Erinnerungen*, pp. 7–17, 30–42, 70–73, 96–111, 142–143.

⁸⁵ With thanks to the sociologist, Juhi Tyagi, who used to work at the Max-Weber-Centre of the University of Erfurt, Germany. She made me aware of the fact that Ganga and Brahmaputra are two rivers that flow from the west and east of the Himalayan range before meeting. While Ganga is the sacred river for the Hindus, of course, the Brahmaputra flows through China, India and Bangladesh. Perhaps, Kaundinya might be trying to suggest some synchronicity regarding his Hindu-German background. Rao is a Hindu upper caste surname. To Juhi Tyagi, the three names suggest sacredness, power and extensiveness. Moreover, ‘Ganga-Rao’ refers to his own biography and upbringing in missionary circles in southern India, Switzerland, and Germany. The time spans of his

and India's suggested role in global politics after the war. In this pamphlet, Kaundinya explains to the interested German reader why the huge and powerful country of India had become an English colony and why there was no significant anti-British agitation there. Taking a decidedly pro-German standpoint in this book, Kaundinya alias Ganga-rao suggests that the Indian population would pursue a subtle evolution instead of a rapid revolution, which would ultimately throw off the yoke of the British colonisers. Apparently, Kaundinya also toured throughout Germany and delivered corresponding speeches on the issue until the end of 1920, when he finally died. To strengthen Germany's global position, Kaundinya alias Ganga-rao recommended a close German relationship with an independent India of the future. As one of the benefits of independence, Germany and India should seek a strong alliance to create a new *Indogermania*, stretching from the North Sea via the Balkans and the Persian Gulf all the way to India. To his mind, the resulting *Indogermania* would ultimately prevent global conflicts and guarantee world peace – and ensure that Kaundinya as an Indo-German could live a peaceful life within German society, with less discrimination.⁸⁶ In this respect, Kaundinya aka Ganga Rao largely echoed many voices heard, especially in the last third of WWI. With the increasing importance of Erich Ludendorff, among others, and his and other geopolitical plans to expand the *Reich* massively into Eurasia, Kaundinya's final writings reveal the societal atmosphere of WWI, illustrating how widespread such ideas were in German society also amongst white subalterns like Kaundinya at that time.⁸⁷

Be that as it may, it is impossible to pinpoint the genuine intentions of Ranga Kaundinya's autobiography and his other writings. Nevertheless, his biography as well as his book about his work in German East Africa do certainly illustrate that the *Otto* plantation in Kilossa has to be regarded as a contested place of labour. At this contested place of labour, the areas of conflict were not only to be found in Kaundinya's relationship to his European employees, the German colonial ad-

stays at the different places equal those of Ranga Kaundinya. This means that Ganga-Rao and Kaundinya are certainly one and the same person. Cf. Brahmputr. *Indien*, pp. 9–10.

⁸⁶ Cf. Brahmputr. *Indien*, pp. 3–11, 45–50, 60–63. Cf. LTA. 871.1-otto-233. Chronik, pp. 132–133.

⁸⁷ Cf. Nebelin, Manfred. *Ludendorff. Diktator im Ersten Weltkrieg*. Munich: 2011, pp. 173–216, 283–400. Cf. Murphy, David T. *The Heroic Earth. Geopolitical Thought in Weimar Germany, 1918–1933*. Kent (Ohio) and London: 1997, pp. 1–24. Cf. Tooze, Adam. *The Deluge. The Great War and the Remaking of the Global Order. 1916–1931*. London et al.: 2014, pp. 33–172. The MAN railway engineer working in China, Dr. Gerdung, also urged Ludendorff, *Krupp* and *MAN* to expand massively into Eurasia via railway construction cf. HA Krupp WA 4/2589. Cf. Rösser, Micheal. 'Von Afrika nach Eurasien? Deutsche Unternehmen zwischen kolonialem Eisenbahnbau und geopolitischer Planungsphantasie während des Ersten Weltkriegs'. 183–204. *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial und Wirtschaftsgeschichte (VSWG)*, vol. 110, no. 2. Stuttgart: 2023. doi.org/10.25162/vswg-2023-0005.

ministration, the board of the *Otto* Company and the African workforce. Other areas of conflict were also to be found between the *Otto* Company, the colonial administration and the railway construction company, *Philipp Holzmann*. Setting aside Kaundinya’s unclear publication intentions, what remains clear is the fact that the failure of the *Otto* plantation in Kilossa was not only Ranga Kaundinya’s fault. The ultimate failure of *Otto* in Kilossa was also the result of general management errors by the leading figures of the *Otto* Company, their inexperience in the cultivation of colonial cotton and its disadvantageous behaviour towards the German colonial government.

4.6 Venture Capital, Modern Technology and Comprehensive Failure

To those who [. . .] wish to set up their own plantations [. . .] it must be said that, as a rule, this involves not inconsiderable assets, which must be managed sparingly, since it can be expected that, for several years, money will have to be spent until the plantation becomes profitable, and since failure is often to be expected in the first few years as a result of ignorance, the necessary reserves must be available.

Ranga Kaundinya. *Erinnerungen aus meinem Pflanzernjahre*. Leipzig: 1918.⁸⁸

After its foundation in the early nineteenth century, the *Otto* Company had always been a forerunner in the implementation of modern means of technology in their production in the German-speaking areas. Besides decent training of the leading family members at home in Swabia and in northern Germany, Britain, and the USA, implementation of the latest technologies available for textile production was also always central. Just like in other quickly industrialising areas of the ‘empire of cotton’ the success of *Otto*’s textile business and the resulting wealth in the region of Swabia enabled and stirred other industries in the course of the nineteenth century.⁸⁹ With increasing economic success and the resulting political influence, the relationship between the *Otto* Company and the monarchs and governments of *Württemberg* and the German *Reich* changed its character over time. In the beginning of the nineteenth century, by advocating Anglo-Saxon machinery, the company challenged the policies of the King of *Württemberg*, who regarded English-style industrialisation with scepticism and favoured the agricultural sector instead. In the long run, *Otto*’s approach proved successful, however: By the end of the

⁸⁸ Kaundinya. *Erinnerungen*, p. 8.

⁸⁹ Cf. Beckert. *Empire of Cotton*, pp. 83–174. Cf. Hergenröder. *Wendlingen*, pp. 291–298.

nineteenth century, the *Otto* Company had become the leading textile manufacturer in southwestern Germany and could even compete with other leading German companies originating primarily from Saxony and Bavaria.⁹⁰

When industrial capitalism sought an alliance with the recently established modern nation states in the ‘empire of cotton’, the *Otto* Company’s relationship to the German government changed as well. As one of the largest employers and one of the strongest regional players in the textile business, the Otto family sought to establish and cultivate good relationships with German governments at all levels. Whenever the German *Kaiser* or the King of *Württemberg*, who had, like many members of the royal family, himself become a member of the colonial lobby organisation *Deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft (DKG)* since 1899,⁹¹ visited the region around Unterboihingen, leading figures of the *Otto* company would dine with the dignitaries and discuss the latest policies behind closed doors. Likewise, leading men of the company, such as Heinrich Otto, were prominent members of influential German lobby associations – such as the *Verein Deutscher Industrieller* (Association of German Industrialists), *Verein süddeutscher Baumwoll-Industrieller* (Association of South German Cotton Industrialists), the *Hansa-Bund* or the *Deutscher Flottenverein* (German Navy League) – which either fostered the interests of large-scale companies or promoted German *Weltpolitik* (world politics). Likewise, the German governments also embraced significant economic players like *Otto*, as cotton imports and German textile production had become both a matter of national (economic) interest and a matter of national prestige by the end of the nineteenth century.⁹² It is therefore no coincidence that close connections between the *Otto* Company, the Colonial Office in Berlin and the *Gouvernement* in Dar es Salaam were equally important when the *Otto* Company attempted to expand their business overseas to German East Africa. Besides shared economic interests between the German *Reich* and the textile producer, *Otto* regarded their expansion to German East Africa also as a contribution to the German *Reich*’s international standing. Kaundinya, too, called his occupation in Kilossa a “satisfaction of patriotic duty” – a view shared by the board of the *Otto* Company, whose media-friendly company strategy included announcements in German newspapers about the progress of the plantation in Kil-

⁹⁰ Cf. Bleifuß and Hergenröder. *Die “Otto-Plantage”* pp. 9–20. Cf. Hergenröder. *Wendlingen*, pp. 248–261, 291–298. Cf. LTA. 871.1-otto-233. Chronik, pp. 44, 47, 55, 57, 61, 66.

⁹¹ Cf. Deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft Abteilung Stuttgart. *Mitgliederverzeichnis 1899*. Stuttgart: 1899, p. 1. Cf. Deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft Abteilung Stuttgart. *Kurzer Rückblick auf die Tätigkeit der deutschen Kolonialgesellschaft und des kolonialwirtschaftlichen Komitees seit seiner Gründung 1881 u. 1896*. Stuttgart: 1912, pp. 19–20.

⁹² Cf. Beckert. *Empire of Cotton*, pp. 312–378. Cf. LTA. 871.1-otto-233. Chronik, pp. 20, 25, 31, 35–36, 45, 62, 86–87, 161, 164.

ossa. In German East Africa, too, the *DOAZ* reported repeatedly about *Otto*’s large-scale plantation as well.⁹³

Apart from the cotton plantation in Kilossa, the *Otto* Company had two other affiliated enterprises in German East Africa. Principally, Fritz Otto, alongside his partner Fritz Engels, and other southern German textile entrepreneurs, became involved in a smaller cotton plantation and founded the *Baumwollpflanzungs-Gesellschaft Kilwa G.m.b.H.* – the Kilwa Cotton Plantation Limited – in the southern coastal region near Kilwa in German East Africa. This region had already been made famous for the cultivation of cotton. Moreover, a regular steamship service between Kilwa and Dar es Salaam provided cheap and fast transport facilities to the *Otto* Company. Even more promising for the cultivation of cotton appeared the northern region around Mwanza near Lake Victoria where the other *Otto* business had started before the plantation in Kilossa. This largest lake in Africa – the size of Ireland or the contemporary Kingdom of Bavaria – had been connected to the Indian Ocean by the *Uganda Railway* in British East Africa since the 1890s. Given this good connection to a railway, the *Otto* Company founded a subsidiary transport enterprise to reach the British colonial railway, from the company’s very beginning. To cross the huge Lake Victoria, Heinrich Otto thus bought an old *Alster* river steamer from Hamburg, sent it to East Africa and remodelled it into a cotton transport ship, intended to take cotton from German East Africa to neighbouring British East Africa in the future. Heinrich Otto’s resulting *Victoria-Nyanza-Dampfschiffahrts-Gesellschaft m.b.H.* – Victoria-Nyanza-Steamship Corporation Limited – was joined by his brother Fritz Otto, their partner Fritz Engels and finally Albert Schwarz, who owned a banking business in Stuttgart. The manager of the *Victoria-Nyanza-Dampfschiffahrts-Gesellschaft* was Carl Jungblut, who had worked in German East and German South West Africa before. Although partly successful in a side business of rice plantations around Mwanza, both the *Victoria-Nyanza-Gesellschaft* as well as *Otto*’s plantation near Kilwa cast long shadows into the future of other business run by *Otto* in German East Africa. Like the *Otto* plantation in Kilossa some years later, neither the *Baumwollpflanzungs-Gesellschaft Kilwa G.m.b.H.* nor the *Victoria-Nyanza-Dampfschiffahrts-Gesellschaft m.b.H.* ever turned into profitable businesses, and Jungblut and the *Otto* Company had long lasting legal disputes over responsibilities and mismanagement as far as the *Victoria-Nyanza-Gesellschaft* was concerned.⁹⁴ Moreover, the transportation of the *Alster*

⁹³ Kaundinya. *Erinnerungen*, p. 21, pp. 18–22. Cf. LTA. 871.1-otto-233. Chronik, pp. 69–75. Cf. editions of the *DOAZ*, IX, no. 48; X, no. 53; X, no. 63; X, no. 88; X, no. 70; XI, no. 9; XI, no. 37 XI, no. 20; XII, no. 18; XII, no. 39; XII, no. 78; XII, no. 11; XIV, no. 69.

⁹⁴ Cf. LTA. 871.1-otto-233. Chronik, pp. 70–72. Cf. Bleifuß and Hergenröder. *Die “Otto-Plantage”*, pp. 44–50. Cf. LTA. 871.1-otto-195. Deutsche Nyanza-Schiffahrtsgesellschaft. Cf. LTA. 871.1-otto-197. Geschäftskorrespondenz über die Baumwoll-Pflanzungsgesellschaft “Kilwa” im ehemaligen

steamer to Mwanza turned out to be more difficult than expected. It left Europe for East Africa on the same day as Heinrich Otto left for German East Africa alongside Dernburg in 1907. The ship should have been transported via the British *Uganda Railway* from Mombassa's port to Nyanza ('Lake Victoria'), but experienced several setbacks on its journey. The railway company at first rejected its transportation because of the *Alster* steamer's huge weight, and it took *Otto* an official request to the British Colonial Office to ultimately transport the steamer to Port Florence.⁹⁵

The problems related to the *Victoria-Nyanza-Dampfschiffahrts-Gesellschaft m.b.H.* were the result of *Otto*'s management errors and their lacking experience in colonial business. For their initial colonial enterprises, senior board members of the *Otto* company decided to start businesses in Kilwa and at Nyanza ('Lake Victoria') on their own. They thus had no official support from the German colonial authorities. For Kilossa, the situation was different however: the colonial administration, especially Governor Rechenberg, would strongly advise *Otto*'s board members to abandon the company's plan to cultivate cotton in the northern Mwanza region and to start their business ca. 700 km south in Kilossa instead. Officially, the colonial administration urged cotton plantation further south as it judged the soil quality in the northern Mwanza region as poor and regarded the regional climate unsatisfactory for cotton cultivation. Instead, they favoured southern Kilossa for several reasons: with the colony's north already having a comparatively high number of colonial plantations, it was hard to find any workers there and, above all, the small *Alster* river steamship of the *Victoria-Nyanza-Schiffahrtsgesellschaft* could not manage the heavy swell of the Nyanza, frustrating the attempt to reliably connect with the *Uganda Railway* in British East Africa. Hence, transporting raw cotton from Mwanza via Nyanza to Europe for further manufacturing turned out to be almost impossible for *Otto* because they had underestimated the naval challenges of Nyanza. In contrast to the deficient transport facilities in the colony's north, starting the plantation near Kilossa promised to solve such infrastructural deficiencies, because the expected arrival of the *Central Railway* to Kilossa guaranteed cheap and fast transportation of cotton to Europe in the future. Besides the anticipated arrival of the railway, there was already a telegraph and telephone line as well as a road that connected Kilossa to coastal Dar es Salaam. Moreover, a military station provided security in a region that had seen severe fighting recently in the Maji Maji War. As proper infrastructure had always been an important concern for the *Otto* company in all their businesses back home in southwest Germany – they had always built their factories close to the latest rail-

Deutsch-Ostafrika. Cf. Kaundinya. *Erinnerungen*, pp. 20–22, 25–27, 37–40. Cf. Jungblut, Carl. *Vierzig Jahre Afrika. 1900–1940*. Berlin: 1941, pp. 14–18, 41–69. Cf. Ettlich, Guido. *Konsul Schwarz. Bankier, Bürger & Bahá'í in Stuttgart und Bad Mergentheim*. Berlin: 2019, pp. 328–343.

95 Cf. LTA. 871.1-otto-233. Chronik, pp. 72–75.

way lines and sometimes even also built rails, canals or minor bridges themselves if they promised to facilitate their own business – Governor Rechenberg ultimately convinced *Otto* to start the cotton plantation in Kilossa rather than in the colony’s northern region.⁹⁶

Whereas the focus on proper infrastructure was one of the strengths of the *Otto* textile enterprise in Germany, their overseas business policies regarding infrastructure were mindless. Analogically to the *Victoria-Nyanza-Schiffahrts Gesellschaft*, the *Otto* plantation’s success seems to have suffered from overhasty management decisions, particularly in the field of infrastructure. As a result, the leading company figures had several disputes about these issues with the colonial government and the railway building company *Philipp Holzman* right up until the end of the formal German colonial rule in East Africa. In contrast to this view, historians of local history, Bleifuß and Hergenröder, have called the *Otto* plantation in Kilossa a ‘visionary’ endeavour that primarily failed because the German colonial authorities in Dar es Salaam and Berlin were not supportive enough towards the textile manufacturers from Unterboihingen.⁹⁷ In fact, more comprehensive studies have already shown that the colonial authorities generally treated the *Otto* plantation benevolently. This view was even shared by Heinrich Otto himself in a letter to the Governor in 1910.⁹⁸ In this respect, a closer investigation of the sources reveals that some company decisions appear incomprehensible and suggests that the planning and management of the *Otto* plantation was anything but visionary. It rather seems that *Otto*’s board was in good company with many other colonial enterprises that simply started their businesses without any proper consideration of fundamental parameters. Ignorant of essential preconditions required for a profitable plantation, such as good soil conditions, infrastructure capacities, or labour supply, they naively assumed that the latest modern agricultural technology would automatically provide for successful colonial cotton economies of scale. Moreover, they appear to have been convinced that cotton was the ‘black man’s crop’, thinking that the local African population would happily embrace European large-scale cotton schemes without any hesitation.⁹⁹ Soon, the opposite turned out to be true. Yet, the leaders of the colonial businesses kept clinging stubbornly to their ill-considered assumptions for years.

⁹⁶ Cf. LTA. 871.1-otto-233. Chronik, pp. 70–72. Cf. Bleifuß and Hergenröder. *Die “Otto-Plantage”*, pp. 44–50. Cf. Hergenröder. *Wendlingen*, pp. 269–272. 291–299. Cf. LTA. 871.1-otto-233. Chronik, pp. 38, 44–45, 47, 51–57, 61, 66. Cf. Dejung. *Commodity Trading*, pp. 51–56.

⁹⁷ Cf. Bleifuß and Hergenröder. *Die “Otto-Plantage”*, pp. 44–46, 51–54, 69–71.

⁹⁸ Cf. Koponen. *Development*, pp. 292–293, 408–409. Cf. Sunseri. *Vilimani*, pp. 151–156. Cf. TNA. G8/894, p. 116.

⁹⁹ Cf. Robins. *Cotton and Race*, pp. 74–81. Cf. Rösser. ‘Baumwolle’, pp. 9–12.

4.7 Puffing Engines: The Steam Ploughs' Odyssey to Kilossa

The *Otto* Company committed two far-reaching management failures in regard to infrastructure in German East Africa. Just as the *Victoria-Nyanza-Schiffahrts Gesellschaft* had sent the wrong type of ship from Germany to Africa, leading men of *Otto* could not delay themselves until the *Central Railway* arrived in Kilossa. Both decisions ultimately led to great financial losses. Moreover, the previous transportation problems of the *Alster* steamer across British East Africa via the *Uganda Railway* proved to be not the last occasion on which the *Otto* company had difficulties regarding the transportation of heavy machinery via rail and, in general. Although the extension of the railway to Kilossa had been a key element in the company's decision to place its plantation site in the southern part of the colony, whether the railway really existed or not did in effect not matter to the *Otto* Company's decisions. It seems that *Otto* attempted to solve any problem related to the cotton plantation in Kilossa either merely by money or by blind faith in technology, or both.

Symptomatic and symbolic for this reliance on exuberant investment and the naïve belief in modern machinery was the export of two steam ploughs and a steam locomobile to German East Africa's Kilossa. While the locomobile was intended to generate power needed for raw material processing machinery like a cotton gin, both steam ploughs were intended to maximise cotton yields primarily in two respects: First of all, the ploughs should speed up the turning of the soil while simultaneously curbing labour costs. With mechanised digging, fewer workers would be required for this work stage and a large amount of labour costs would be saved. Secondly, using modern machinery would enable the plantation owners to cultivate vast areas of land that would consequently further lower the overall production costs. However, the company had no experience in transporting heavy steam machinery through the African countryside at all. As Kilossa had not been connected to the *Central Railway* yet, the machinery's transportation posed a big challenge. The *Otto* Company had furthermore neither investigated if steam ploughs were at all suitable for the soil in Kilossa, nor had the company sufficiently investigated the exact traffic and transport facilities in the German colony. The only thing the company appears to have known was the fact that it was roughly 350 km from Dar es Salaam's port to Kilossa, and that the *Central Railway* had just reached the district capital Morogoro. From there, it was still around 100 km from the railhead to *Otto*'s intended destination of Kilossa. Even if the railway had been finished entirely and if Kilossa had thus been connected to modern infrastructure, the steam plough's whole transportation via rail would have been easier, but would still have borne enough challenges. Already between Dar es Salaam and Morogoro, the transportation of the heavy machin-

ery via rail caused problems. Only when the ploughs arrived in Dar es Salaam, did *Otto* first realise that the *OAEG* had no waggons at their disposal that could manage the ploughs’ large size. Moreover, many of the structures of the railway’s bridges and tunnels were too small for the heavy machinery and had to be modified accordingly to prevent any damage to either the railway or the machines or both. As a result, it took the railway company months to do away with the major obstacles, causing *Otto* to keep their ploughs in Dar es Salaam for several months from 18 August 1908 onwards. Although railway tunnels were enlarged and the capacity of the railway bridges enhanced, the machinery was still too big and the machines had to be dismantled, put into boxes, and finally loaded onto the railway waggons. Despite all these complications, the first 200 km of transport to Morogoro was comparatively easy as the railway was ready for use on this route. Yet, other major obstacles remained: only small trails connected Morogoro to the 100 km distant Kilossa and it was obvious that it was impossible that human portage could transport the heavy machinery on this last stretch. One plough worth 80,000 marks weighed sixty-one tons in total, while the heaviest individual parts, the steam boilers, weighed six tons each.¹⁰⁰ With an average human porter being able to carry a load of thirty kg over long distance, it would have required over 2,000 porters to lift just one steam boiler. Such an undertaking was simply impossible and there remained only two options: either wait for the *Central Railway* to arrive in Kilossa for further railway transport or reassemble the individual parts of each steam plough in Morogoro, fire their engines and send them the last 100 km using their own power. For whatever reason, *Otto*’s leading men chose the second option.

Sending the steam ploughs to Kilossa using their own power appears incomprehensible. Given the fact that the approval of the railway extension to the colony’s central town of Dodoma had already been passed by the *Reichstag* in the beginning of 1908 and Kilossa would fairly soon receive its railway connection, there was no sound reason to send the ploughs there earlier. This is even more so as the *Gouvernement* had explicitly warned *Otto* not to take such risks, precisely because of the poor transport facilities. Instead, the colonial administration had strongly recommended avoiding any premature action, but all in vain. Having already considered driving the ploughs the entire way from Dar es Salaam to Kilossa before the machinery’s arrival to East Africa, *Otto* was clearly too impatient to wait another year for the railway to arrive in Kilossa by the end of 1909. Heinrich Otto thus ordered his European engineers to reassemble the individual parts of the steam ploughs in Morogoro and drive them to Kilossa. Meanwhile, various prepara-

100 Cf. “X. Kilossa. Dampfpflüge”. *DOAZ*, X., no. 63. Daressalam: 19 August 1908.

tions remained essential before the ploughs' odyssey to Kilossa could begin: As the small caravan path's marking trenches along the colony's woods were too small, aisles wide enough for the heavy machinery had to be cut through large parts of the East African forests. Remaining tree stumps had to be removed and uneven passages had to be levelled out to let the ploughs pass. Furthermore, as the steam engines required constant power supply to move forward, their drivers had to gather firewood and fresh water every second kilometre. To avoid fuel shortages, caches of both water and firewood had to be readied before the beginning of the trek, of course. Finally, there were several rivers to cross, requiring the erection of minor dams or improvised bridges that would sustain extremely heavy loads. Although all necessary preparations eventually appeared to have been taken, unexpected incidents could not be avoided entirely. As illustrated by figure 5 on one occasion, one plough even sank in the Mukondoa River. Fortunately for the *Otto* enterprise, plantation manager Ranga Kaundinya succeeded in rescuing the machine. This saved the company a huge sum of money.¹⁰¹

Besides other comparatively minor difficulties on the way, the decision to drive the ploughs to Kilossa using their own power cost the *Otto* Company a good deal of money in general. Furthermore, it led to conflicts with the colonial government and the railway constructing company *Philipp Holzmann*. Whenever possible, the plough trek avoided clearing its way through the African bush and tried to use the sparsely existing infrastructure of German East Africa. Therefore, the ploughs primarily drove on simple caravan routes or roads built either by the colonial administration or *Holzmann*, if possible. Yet, at the same time, these tracks were also fundamental to the colonial administration officials and the railway construction company. Both urgently needed them to transport building material for the railroad's construction sites and objected to the ploughs' passing through for the following reasons: As the caravan routes were made primarily for human portage, they could not sustain *Otto's* heavy machinery and the steam ploughs simply destroyed the roads when travelling on them. With the sixty-one-ton heavy ploughs devastating the existing infrastructure, the *Otto* Company therefore provoked a quarrel with the railway construction company and local colonial government officials. On 25 October 1908, when realising the destruction of his road, Morogoro's district commissioner sent a telegram to the Governor urging Kaundinya's trek to stop. Only when *Otto's* employee, Sandleben, guaranteed that his company would pay for the necessary repairs of the caravan routes did the steam ploughs receive

¹⁰¹ Cf. "Eisenbahnen". *Deutsches Kolonial-Lexikon*. Cf. "Kilossa". *DOAZ*, X, no. 65. Daressalam: 26 August 1908. Cf. "Kilossa". *DOAZ*, X, no. 90. Daressalam: 21 November 1908. Cf. Sunseri. *Vilimani*, pp. 151–156. Cf. LTA. 871.1-otto-233. *Chronik*, pp. 80–81. Cf. Kaundinya. *Erinnerungen*, pp. 85–98. Cf. TNA. G8/894, pp. 77, 106.

permission to move forward. When, only a few days later, the railway constructing company *Holzmann* realised that the repair works necessary to make the simple roads passable again would take longer than expected, they increasingly resented the ploughs' moving on. Even worse for the railway company, repairing the damaged roads themselves not only tied up *Holzmann's* lorries, but also consumed important building material like concrete that was urgently needed for railway construction. For the sake of rapid railway construction, the ploughs had to be halted. Hence, only four days after the district commissioner's telegram of complaint from Morogoro to Dar es Salaam, *Holzmann's* government building official Allmaras also protested and likewise sent a telegram to the Governor, urging that Kaundinya's trek stop. Allmaras, who was responsible for the rapid progress of the railway, demanded the interruption of the ploughs' journey and urged *Otto* to wait for the completion of the railway instead. Again, Governor Rechenberg stopped the trek for some days. Yet, *Otto* was determined to resume their quest and leaned on the good relationship between the company's owner Heinrich Otto and State Secretary Bernhard Dernburg. After many unsuccessful telegrams and pleadings by *Otto* to the Colonial Office in Berlin, Dernburg finally ordered Governor Rechenberg on 6 November 1908, via telegram, to let the trek pass. On their part, *Otto* promised to pay for *Holzmann's* repair works once again. Finally, the district commissioner of Morogoro also bowed to the order and the ploughs started moving again on 10 November. They ultimately arrived in Kilossa one month later in December 1908.¹⁰²

It is doubtful whether *Otto's* transportation effort was worth it. At 35,000 Rps. (ca. 46,000 marks), the entire endeavour cost the *Otto* company more than half of a brand-new steam plough. In addition, the journey on the rough 'roads' certainly did not improve the quality of the heavy machinery either. Even worse, when the steam ploughs finally reached Kilossa on 3 December 1908, the rainy season was about to start. As the ploughs were too heavy for the cultivation of wet soil, sinking into the soaked ground, their use had to be postponed to the end of April 1909, when the rainy season would slowly come to an end. In any case, the usage of the ploughs remained unsatisfactory and never provided any advantage in terms of cotton cultivation at all. Proving disastrous for the profitability of the cotton plantation in Kilossa, the steam ploughs dug too deeply into the soil and unearthed layers of the ground that were unfertile for the cotton crop. Briefly, the steam ploughs ruined the fields, lowered the cotton yields, and did not make manual plantation labour redundant. It

102 Cf. TNA. G8/894, pp. 42–48. Cf. LTA. 871.1-otto-233. Chronik, pp. 80–81. Cf. Kaundinya. *Erinnerungen*, pp. 85–98. Cf. Sunseri. *Vilimani*, pp. 151–156.



Figure 5: Steam Plough Sunk in Mukondoa River.

Source: Stadtmuseum Wendlingen am Neckar. Diashow Kilossa 1907–1916. 20 Min. 151 Bilder mit Musik.

is said that Heinrich Otto even attempted to sell both steam ploughs to other planters because they were of no use to his plantation in German East Africa at all.¹⁰³

As the company's chronicles report, *Otto's* investments in East Africa were burdensome indeed:

The large new ventures of the year 07 naturally required more capital than we had available from current income, especially as [. . .] no income could be expected from Kilossa [. . .] in the first few years. The open bank credit of M 685,000 (Stahl & Federer, W. Bankanstalt, Stuttgart and Deutsche Bank Frankfurt each M 200,00 [. . .]) which we have had at our disposal since then had now mostly been fully utilised to finance our cotton purchases. [We were also] forced to increase our long-term debts.¹⁰⁴

103 Cf. LTA. 871.1-otto-233. Chronik, pp. 80–81. Cf. Kaundinya. *Erinnerungen*, pp. 85–98. Cf. TNA. G8/894, pp. 77, 106, 110. There were also other companies sharing the fate of *Otto*. Like *Otto*, the *Leipziger Baumwollspinnerei* in Bagamoyo tried to sell their useless steam ploughs, while the Mgothi cotton plantation in the Rufiji district attempted to sell their plough equipped with a combustion engine. Cf. Sunseri. *Vilimani*, pp. 12, 18. Cf. Rösser. 'Baumwolle', pp. 10–11.

104 LTA. 871.1-otto-233. Chronik, p. 78.

Whether the *Deutsche Bank* also had direct investments in any of *Otto's* other businesses or even in Kilossa is not conveyed in the sources, but worthwhile to investigate, given the financial institution's involvement in the *Central Railway*, the *Bagdadbahn* and the Tendaguru Expedition. In any case, to compensate for the financial losses caused by the steam ploughs and their transportation, *Otto's* board turned to other business strategies to make the cotton plantation in Kilossa profitable. As the modern machinery had not yielded any cost advantages in cotton production, the company tried to lower its average costs by expansion. By September 1908, that is even before the actual arrival of the steam ploughs at Kilossa, Heinrich Otto had already sent a letter to the *Gouvernement* in Dar es Salaam demanding further land leases to expand the *Otto* plantation dramatically. By his own accounts, Heinrich Otto had already invested over one million Marks in the plantation and sought returns on his investments, of course. Excluding the significant funds needed for the erection of the houses for the Europeans, a warehouse and a cotton ginnery, *Otto's* investment so far had been spent merely on machinery, the shipping of the ploughs from Europe and materials for an anticipated irrigation system. Facing the exploding costs of his endeavour in German East Africa, *Otto* urged the Governor to grant him 25,000 ha of land to make his plantation ultimately profitable.¹⁰⁵ Given the fact that the entire amount of cultivated land (cotton, sisal, and other crops) on the *Otto* plantation counted ca. 1,400 ha by 1913, this demand was nothing but excessive. As all the cotton-producing European plantations in German East Africa taken together cultivated only 6,400 ha in 1913 (!), *Otto* was demanding the quadruple for only this one plantation. Of course, not all land was used for cotton, but also for housing, foodstuffs, and other cash crops, but the discrepancy of the dimensions speaks for itself.¹⁰⁶ The *Gouvernement* and the district commissioner reacted correspondingly and remained lukewarm on the issue. Cordially but determinedly, Governor Rechenberg wrote to the representatives of the *Otto* plantation in May 1909 discouraging *Otto's* request: “I would like [you] [. . .] to allow me the comment [. . .] that it [. . .] seems impossible, even for the best founded enterprise, to cultivate and work an area as big as 25,000 ha.”¹⁰⁷ Several fruitless negotiations about further land purchases followed, but given the *Gouvernement's* general attitude of benevolence towards *Otto*, the colonial administration finally agreed to lease 15,000 ha of land for a very decent price. Leasing, rather than selling, the land to *Otto* was the largest concession possible. Selling the land would have been hardly justifiable to

¹⁰⁵ Cf. TNA. G8/894, pp. 38, 61–62.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Bleifuß and Hergenröder. *Die “Otto-Plantage”*, pp. 69–71, 90. Kaundinya. *Erinnerungen*, pp. 120–144.

¹⁰⁷ TNA. G8/894, p. 73.

smaller settler enterprises and the German public that had always resented the colonial administration's advantaging of large-scale businesses. Furthermore, Rechenberg had generally become more sceptical towards *Otto* as the latter appeared to be losing its interest in planting cotton in Kilossa at all. At this point in time, *Otto* seemed to be attempting to cover its financial losses by real estate speculation in East Africa. To prevent *Otto* from starting such a speculative real estate business, Rechenberg insisted on land lease, which was the most common format for real estate business in German East Africa. Frustrated by his unsuccessful undertaking in Kilossa, and also being criticised publicly by the *Kölnische Zeitung* in an article on 16 October 1910 for his mindless business endeavours in East Africa, *Otto* apparently tried to exert his influence within the inner circles of the German textile-producing industrialists in the *Reich* to discourage them all from further cotton investments in German East Africa.¹⁰⁸

With *Otto* finally turning to the public and blaming the colonial administration for his lack of success, Governor Rechenberg lost his patience and attempted to confront *Otto* sharply as a draft of a letter reveals:

It is not true that we intend to minimize the amount of Europeans migrating to the country and any success of any corporation is warmly welcomed by the Gouvernement. ~~But it would not be any loss to the colony, if those [companies] returned back home soon, who spend their money purposelessly and aimlessly, who are unsatisfied with the prevailing regulations and who constantly cause massive amounts of work by filing petitions devoid of any substantial reasons repeatedly.~~¹⁰⁹

It is not clear which content the final letter of Governor Rechenberg to *Otto* contained. But this draft of the letter, (probably) written in 1910 clearly shows that Rechenberg's patience was wearing thin. The Governor was simply fed up with *Otto*'s stubbornness, as well as its constant and recurring demands for further concessions. It is not entirely clear how the negotiations between Rechenberg and *Otto* were finally settled, but as far as the sources reveal, further negotiations between the colonial administration and the *Otto* plantation were less strained. The textile firm appears to have realised that their previous business policies in Kilossa had really been unsatisfactory. Without any proper experience in colonial business and without any knowledge about the soil and water conditions necessary for cotton cultivation in German East Africa, the *Otto* company had not only failed in Kilossa, but also at its other two colonial enterprises at *Nyanza* and in *Kilwa*. Facing the disaster caused by the introduction of the steam ploughs in Kilossa, *Otto* turned from large-scale cultivation using heavy modern machinery to a

¹⁰⁸ Cf. TNA. G8/894, pp. 84–143. Cf. Kaundinya. *Erinnerungen*, p. 62.

¹⁰⁹ TNA. G8/894, p. 137.

style of agriculture that centred the human labour of the African population – just like any other successful planter in the German colony.¹¹⁰ Of course, the necessity to keep employing African workers had significant influence on the labour relationships between representatives of the *Otto* Company of Unterboihingen, its European personnel and the African workers and their families on the spot.

4.8 White Subalterns, Precarious Whites and African Labour at the Cotton Plantation

4.8.1 The Beginnings of Labour in Kilossa

‘Mais, monsieur le directeur [. . .] aux Indes vous aviez des hommes, des hommes très intelligents; mais ceux-ci, ils sont des singes, monsieur, ils sont des singes, des bêtes, des singes, des bêtes[!]’

Greek Plantation Assistant Kosmetos to Ranga Kaundinya ca. 1907.¹¹¹

Otto’s labour policies were not well adapted to the East African environment. Having successfully manoeuvred between their workers’ policies, the agitation of trade unions, increasing German governmental social security policies, demands of social democracy and their own business strategies back home in Germany,¹¹² *Otto* had difficulties adapting to the colonial business environment. Recruiting, maintaining and managing a reliable and efficient workforce well in an overseas territory were aspects the *Otto* company was barely acquainted with, or had never cared much about, before starting the business in German East Africa. Whereas Governor Rechenberg regarded Kilossa’s plantation manager Ranga Kaundinya as inexperienced and incompetent (cf. above), the *Otto* company valued their employee’s experience as a plantation manager ‘in the tropics’ and his Pietist faith. In fact, there was no such simple thing as ‘the tropics’ even though colonial discourses might suggest otherwise. Even Kaundinya himself stressed in his own autobiography that he had to get acquainted with the German East African environment and its inhabitants first. To him, there was hardly any similarity between India and the German colony: “The most important and most valuable

¹¹⁰ Cf. TNA. G8/904. Cf. Sunseri. *Vilimani*, pp. 148–159.

¹¹¹ Translated into English: “But sir, Mr Manager, in India, you have human beings, very intelligent human beings; but these here, they are apes, sir, they are apes, they are beasts, they are apes, they are beasts!” Kaundinya. *Erinnerungen*, p. 72.

¹¹² Cf. Hergenröder. *Wendlingen*, pp. 291–297, 299–310, 312–318. Cf. LTA. 871.1-otto-233. Chronik, pp. 20, 25–27, 41, 62, 65–68, 98.

discovery was that, despite twenty-three years of experience as a tropical planter, I had to completely retrain myself in many respects in Africa, because these conditions could not be compared with India.”¹¹³ In contrast to the *Otto* Company and many officials of the colonial administration, Kaundinya did indeed observe a difference between southern India and German East Africa. In his autobiography, Kaundinya explicitly warned his readers that the life of a planter in German East Africa was far from a bountiful *Herrenmenschentum* that promised quick riches. Instead, starting a plantation entailed a life full of privation for most aspiring colonialists. Hence, before starting work in Kilossa, Kaundinya himself went to the central districts of Bagamoyo and Saadani to observe the usage of steam ploughs at an experimental plantation run by the *KWK*. Of particular importance was to get an idea about the “labour relations [. . .], on the position which the German East African government took on this important question, the treatment of negroes, the clearing of African forests, the wage relations, the establishment of labour recruitment and their catering etc.”. At Saadani, Kaundinya also enticed a “Greek plantation assistant” to join *Otto*’s plantation in Kilossa, who had previously worked as a “trainee” at a Greek plantation in the central district.¹¹⁴ With some other Greeks of the Egyptian diaspora owning smaller plantations also in the *Lindi* district, for example, whether this Greek plantation assistant was the abovementioned Kosmetos, who in the end worked many years at the *Otto* plantation, is not clear. In any case, all these efforts show that Kaundinya at least tried to include some kind of ‘East African expertise’ at the new planation in Kilossa. Kaundinya himself also tried to acquire some relevant knowledge, including basic Swahili language skills, which he started to learn right after his arrival in Dar es Salaam before he took up working in Kilossa. Yet, he regarded learning this language as “very hard” in the beginning, which certainly inhibited his ability to communicate with his African workers in Kilossa.¹¹⁵

In contrast to plantation manager Kaundinya, the leading men of the *Otto* Company did not consider the local conditions relevant for their overseas investments. Besides general mismanagement, one of the reasons why the budget of *Otto*’s plantation in Kilossa was strained was the high wages for the many Europeans employed. As indicated above, half the number, or approximately six Europeans, would have been enough to run the entire plantation more profitably. Although Kaundinya probably had significant influence on the question of whom

¹¹³ Kaundinya. *Erinnerungen*, p. 42, cf. pp. 7–8, 17.

¹¹⁴ Kaundinya. *Erinnerungen*, p. 42.

¹¹⁵ Kaundinya. *Erinnerungen*, p. 35, cf. pp. 25–37, 44, 68–73. Cf. Dernburg. *Südwestafrikanische Eindrücke*, pp. 58.

to employ, he certainly must have acted in accordance with the attitudes of his bosses when hiring many more Europeans than necessary at the cotton plantation in Kilossa. Despite Kaundinya's background, it appears that *whiteness*¹¹⁶ and European descent were the most important qualifications for prospective employees at the *Otto* plantation. Reflecting primarily the German settler community's sentiment, just as in the case of railway construction, the work of Germans was glorified. The *DOAZ* praised *Otto's* human resource management in East Africa in September 1907 as patriotic: “Manager [of the plantation] is Mr Kaundinya [. . .] [and in] the course of the entire endeavour no foreigners shall be hired, but only Germans will be employed.”¹¹⁷ Besides the fact that the *DOAZ's* report was simply wrong – given Kaundinya's Indian background and the fact that Kaundinya also employed the Greek assistant Kosmetos¹¹⁸ at *Otto's* cotton plantation – the policy to employ primarily Germans proved unsatisfactory.

Especially, the selection of the European personnel further illustrates the mindlessness of the entire colonial business in Kilossa in several ways. First of all, if *Otto* had employed African overseers instead of numerous Europeans, the textile company would have saved a fortune: Africans would not only have received a fraction of the Europeans' wages, but they would also have had sufficient language skills and genuinely known the East African environment to the necessary degree. Both aspects would have been helpful to obtaining a reliable workforce for the cotton plantation. Despite these simple facts, there is no evidence that *Otto* had ever given any thought to any staffing choices when starting their plantation. Instead, *Otto* simply had the naïve belief that European colonisers were superior employees than Africans. Reflecting these naïve assumptions, *Otto* even had the lofty plan to send “100–150 [German] farmer and weaver families to settle in the surroundings” of the plantation in Kilossa.¹¹⁹ Although this plan never materialised, and there is no further archival evidence that could tell whether *Otto* was serious on the issue, it shows that the *Otto* Company was also

116 Regarding the concept of *whiteness* in a colonial environment cf. Natermann, Diana Miryong. *Pursuing Whiteness in the Colonies. Private memories from the Congo Free State and German East Africa (1884–1914)*. Münster and New York: 2018, pp. 11–41, 217–230. Cf. Rösser, Michael. Review on ‘Natermann, Diana Miryong: Pursuing Whiteness in the Colonies. Private Memories from the Congo Free State and German East Africa (1884–1914)’. Münster: 2018. *H-Soz-Kult*. 15 March 2019. Web. www.hsozkult.de/publicationreview/id/rezbuecher-30169 (26 July 2019).

117 “Aus der Kolonie. Die Riesenplantage bei Kilossa”. *DOAZ*, IX, no. 48. Daressalam: 07 September 1907. Cf. Bleifuß and Hergenröder. *Die “Otto-Plantage”*, pp. 61–65, 69–72.

118 Cf. Kaundinya. *Erinnerungen*, p. 72. Cf. Stadtmuseum Wendlingen, “Tagebuch Fritz Otto”, p. 17.

119 “Aus der Kolonie. Die Riesenplantage bei Kilossa”. *DOAZ*, IX, no. 48. Cf. Bleifuß and Hergenröder. *Die “Otto-Plantage”*, pp. 61–65, 69–72.

ill-prepared regarding the recruitment of labour in German East Africa. When *Otto's* thoughts about the German weavers' emigration were published by the *DOAZ*, the company was still occupied with sending their steam ploughs to German East Africa. As this modern machinery was intended to replace human workers at the cotton plantation by the mechanisation of plantation labour, *Otto* apparently devoted no deeper considerations to the employment of (African) workers. Yet, the latter were indispensable to clear the land and to plant as well as harvest the cotton cash crop.

Despite such mindlessness regarding the recruitment of workers, labour supply was not a problem in the first dry season when Kaundinya was able to hire 150 men quickly. Unfortunately, there is not much information available about these workers' backgrounds. Examining the sources, it is not entirely clear how Kaundinya succeeded in recruiting these first 150 workers, necessary to clear the land intended for cotton cultivation. In his autobiography, Kaundinya only explains that these initial workers had previously worked for *Holzmann* sub-contractors at the railway construction sites between 1905 and 1907 and that Kaundinya succeeded in taking these men on for his own purposes.¹²⁰ As historians have repeatedly suggested that East Africans preferred railway labour to plantation labour, it appears that Kaundinya was simply able to take advantage of the interrupted railway construction process between 1907 and 1909. With the completion of the railway home line between coastal Dar es Salaam and inland Morogoro in 1907, at this moment in time, the German *Reichstag* had not decided if it would pass further financial means for the *Central Railway's* extension further west. Hence, actual construction work stopped and was only resumed in the dry season in the beginning of 1909. During this interruption of railway construction between 1907 and 1909, workers initially occupied at the railroad were indeed available to be employed by Kaundinya at the *Otto* plantation. Instead of competition for workers between *Holzmann* and the *Otto* plantation, there might have even been cooperation between the two colonial employers between 1907 and 1909 as far as the labour supply was concerned. After *Holzmann* had stopped railway construction in 1907, the construction company might have urged their sub-contractors to deliver their workers to the *Otto* plantation. Yet, whether the workers had been previously hired by freelance labour recruiters for railway construction or whether they were instead provided by the colonial administration is difficult to assess. This question is especially relevant because some of the railway workers between 1905 and 1907 were Maji Maji POWs forced to work at the railway construction sites, about whom only limited traces are left in the archives. Although sources are particularly scarce regarding

120 Cf. Kaundinya. *Erinnerungen*, pp. 43.

labour at the *Central Railway* between 1905 and 1907, the few existing documents indicate that a significant number of these initial railway workers were recruited by force, and there were also a considerable number of war convicts being punished for having fought the colonial government during the Maji Maji War.¹²¹

Given this background, there may have been another reason why Kaundinya might have had to initially employ former railway convict workers or other forced labourers for the plantation in Kilossa. The devastating effects of the Maji Maji War remained relevant for his labour policies in the initial two years. As the region around Kilossa had been destroyed by the German colonial military's ‘scorched earth’ policies during that war, the local population was generally hostile towards any new colonising intruders. The people living in the area were thus reluctant to take up any work at *Otto's* new cotton plantation. This was even more so as the colonial administration's rigid determination to plant cotton had been one of the major reasons why the Maji Maji War had in fact started. In evidence of this, upon arriving in Kilossa for the first time, Kaundinya's porters attempted to run away after the local population told them about their experiences during and after the war. It took the German Indian plantation manager, several incentives like immediate and extra pay to persuade his African employees to stay in Kilossa and start the plantation in the first place.¹²²

In any case, in order to obtain workers for the cotton plantation, the *Otto* Company was prepared to use not only the carrot, but also the stick. For instance, the company's boss Heinrich Otto pressured the colonial administration to enforce the supply of workers in a letter to the colonial office in February 1908, even if he avoided the word ‘force’ itself when mentioning the problems of labour supply.¹²³ But such views did not only exist in faraway Unterboihingen, but also on the spot in Kilossa. There, corporal punishments were as ordinary as at similar colonial enterprises. Public whippings or enchained imprisonments were “small scenes that occurred several times a week” in Kilossa, as Fritz Otto noted in his diary when visiting the family-owned plantation in Kilossa in 1913.¹²⁴ Kaundinya himself also did not refrain from the use of force regarding labour. Only when he first arrived in Kilossa did he refrain from violence as it “was not diplomatic to

121 Cf. Koponen. *Development*, pp. 398–400. Cf. Gillman Diaries. Mss. Afr. S. 1175/1,2_1, no. 10, pp. 11–12. Cf. Koponen. *Development*, pp. 398–400. Cf. Allmaras. ‘Ich baue 2000 km’, pp. 42–44. Cf. Wegmann. *Vom Kolonialkrieg*, p. 169.

122 Cf. Kaundinya. *Erinnerungen*, pp. 60–62. For agency and bargaining power of porters in German East Africa cf. Greiner. ‘Permanente Krisen’, pp. 187–200.

123 Cf. Bleifuß and Hergenröder. *Die “Otto-Plantage”*, pp. 40–43, 60–64. Cf. Wegmann. *Vom Kolonialkrieg*, pp. 112–184. Cf. TNA. G8/894, p. 9.

124 Stadtmuseum Wendlingen, “Tagebuch Fritz Otto”, p. 18.

take coercive measures right from the beginning”.¹²⁵ Initially, he hoped to establish friendly relationships with the local population in the course of establishing the plantation in Kilossa. Despite such comparatively benevolent labour policies, Kaundinya was generally not satisfied with the work performance of the first African workers he succeeded to employ and complained about it correspondingly. Comparing the East African workers’ allegedly low performance with the experiences he had supposedly had with Indian ‘coolies’ in Asia, Kaundinya scolded his Greek plantation assistant Kosmetos for having failed to accomplish the demanded workload, together with his cohort of African workers. Confronted with such allegations, Kosmetos rejected any personal criticism and blamed the African workers instead: “But sir, Mr Manager, [. . .] in India you have human beings, very intelligent human beings; but these here, they are apes, sir, they are apes, they are beasts, they are apes, they are beasts [!]”¹²⁶ Recalling that Greeks in German East Africa were vilified as ‘half Orientals’ by German colonialists in East Africa, this utterance appears grotesque, especially because Kosmetos uttered it wholeheartedly to Kaundinya of all people, who had faced anti-Indian discrimination himself. Besides illustrating remarkable confluences of racist colonial discourses, Kosmetos’ statement nevertheless points to the much more important question of the role of African workers at the *Otto* plantation in Kilossa, and their perspectives on the issue. The African workmen and -women were not only indispensable for *Otto*’s plantation in Kilossa, they also managed to subvert and resist colonial labour policies and eked out advantages in the context of the high demand for workers by many colonial businesses. They further enhanced their standing when proving to be skilled and experienced cotton planters.

4.8.2 Obtaining and Organising the ‘Living Machine’

African labour was always central in Kilossa. By the time *Otto*’s plantation fields had been cleared and the soil was ready for cotton cultivation by the beginning of 1909, the *Reichstag* had already approved the funds to extend the *Central Railway* from Morogoro to central Tabora. As the first sections of the route passed through the Kilossa region, the railway’s construction sites absorbed all the workers available there. Thus, almost no worker was to be found for Kaundinya. It therefore must be stressed that *Otto*’s impatience not only made the transportation of the steam ploughs very costly, but it was also very bad timing as far as the recruit-

¹²⁵ Kaundinya. *Erinnerungen*, p. 61.

¹²⁶ Kaundinya. *Erinnerungen*, p. 72.

ment of African workers was concerned. By the time Kaundinya had actually started cultivation after the arrival of the steam ploughs in the dry season of 1910, the railhead had finally reached the area around Kilossa and the *Otto* plantation suddenly found itself in competition for workers with the railway constructing company *Philipp Holzmann*. Even worse, the steam ploughs intended to save the costs of a significant number of workers did not live up to *Otto*'s expectations. Quite the contrary: as the steam engines had to be constantly fuelled with water and firewood, the machinery even created more labour demand. Instead of saving labour, the ploughs needed a larger number of workers: many workers were busied collecting water and cutting trees for the firewood needed to generate steam to keep the engines running. Instead of saving labour, the usage of the steam ploughs required five to six times more labour than needed for the old-established hoe agriculture devoid of the latest technology. Besides their costly transportation and the fact that the ploughs ruined the soil, the great effort necessary for their maintenance was the final blow for most modern machinery at *Otto*'s plantation in Kilossa. “Within a few years Otto realized that he was just as dependent on African labor as any other plantation in the colony [. . .].”¹²⁷ As a result, Kaundinya turned to hiring migrant workers who had been recruited by freelance labour recruiters, primarily in the central regions around *Iringa*. Apparently, hiring workers from *Iringa* was not enough in the following years and turning to workers originating from the even more distant district of *Tabora* became necessary. For the subsequent recruitments, “several [labour] recruiters were constantly on their way”¹²⁸ to procure enough workers for planting cotton in Kilossa. Modern machinery was thus replaced by African manual labour at the cotton plantation in Kilossa.¹²⁹ What Kaundinya termed the ‘living machine’ would slowly but surely completely replace the steam engine by 1912. For cultivation, Kaundinya divided the vast cotton fields into smaller sectors, with each sector amounting to an area of ten meters squared. Then, the ‘living machine’ worked these squares systematically (cf. figure 6):¹³⁰

Using African overseers for every cadre of twenty-five workers, rows of workers were bound together with rope or chain to poke seed holes in regular, straight rows [. . .]. Behind a lead row of men, a row of women deposited cotton or grain seed. Overseers attempted to regulate worker motions through call-and-response singing.¹³¹

127 Sunseri. *Vilimani*, p. 153. Cf. Kaundinya. *Erinnerungen*, p. 102.

128 LTA. 871.1-otto-233. Chronik, p. 83.

129 Cf. Kaundinya. *Erinnerungen*, pp. 102–113. Bleifuß and Hergenröder. *Die “Otto-Plantage”*, p. 64.

130 Cf. Kaundinya. *Erinnerungen*, p. 105.

131 Sunseri. *Vilimani*, pp. 153–154; Sunseri quotes Kaundinya. *Erinnerungen*, p. 107. Cf. Sunseri. *Vilimani*, pp. 150–154. Cf. Kaundinya. *Erinnerungen*, pp. 104–112.

This 'living machine' was part of an overall strategy that many colonial plantations pursued. In terms of labour, the 'living machine' had defeated the steam engines at *Otto's* technically equipped plantation in Kilossa.

As 'modern' colonisers¹³² devoid of useful modern machinery, it was felt that at least the African labour force should follow a daily routine that resembled the rhythm of an industrial factory. After the failure of the steam ploughs at the cotton plantation in Kilossa, the organisation of African labour there was done differently compared to the *Central Railway* and the Tendaguru Expedition. Whereas piece work dominated the *Central Railway's* construction sites, workers at the Tendaguru had a fixed number of daily work hours from morning to the afternoon. In Kilossa, the plantation management combined the two systems and fused the 'labour card system' with elements of piece work. The labour card system, which was originally termed the *Wilhelmstal* labour card system, was first introduced in the colony's northern districts where many European planters had settled. Its legal prerequisite was Governor Götzen's *Verordnung, betreffend der Heranziehung der Eingeborenen zu öffentlichen Arbeiten* (regulation concerning the attraction of the natives to public work), issued on 1 April 1905. This law effectively required the African population to construct, repair, and clean public roads without any payment.¹³³ The labour card, created in the mountainous *Usambara* area in the west of Tanga named *Wilhelmstal* (today's Lushoto), aimed at providing sufficient workers, particularly for large-scale plantations, but also for mission plantations and for small-scale settler agriculture. The significance of the latter was increasingly important as migration statistics show a comparably high influx of European settlers to German East Africa from the turn of the century onwards. When most of them settled in the cooler climate of the mountainous regions of the country, where many missions and most plantations were also located, competition for workers increased. Consequently, the former strategies of (forced) labour supply by pressuring African leaders to provide workers collapsed in 1905. As a solution, Protestant Bethel missionaries proposed the introduction of a labour card system, and Governor Götzen approved it. Every man, except those who were working for the colonial administration, had to obtain a labour card containing thirty squares. These squares symbolised thirty days of work, which were filled according to the number of days worked for European employers. These could be plantations, missions or settlers. Salaries were set around the average wages and the thirty working days had to be fulfilled within four months. If not completed by that time, or refused entirely,

132 Cf. Kundrus, Birthe. *Moderne Imperialisten. Das Kaiserreich im Spiegel seiner Kolonien*. Cologne et al: 2003, pp. 281–294.

133 Cf. Klein-Arendt. 'Ein Land wird', p. 47. Cf. Tetzlaff. *Koloniale Entwicklung*, p. 86. Cf. Koponen. *Development*, pp. 401–402. Cf. Sippel. "Wie erzieht man", p. 327.

the card holder could be sent to public works where they received less or no payment at all. After Götzen's introduction, Governor Rechenberg and State Secretary Dernburg also agreed on the usage of the labour card system in 1907 as it provided several advantages. First of all, labour was supplied by indirect means of force, which freed the local authorities from constantly using direct means of coercion. In turn, the African workers could choose their employer themselves and accordingly shunned those notorious for treating workers most violently. Evidence cannot clarify if the labour card system was limited to the densely settled area of northern *Wilhelmstal*. Believing that it was economically unsuitable for the regions without a considerable number of German settlers, Rechenberg and Dernburg might have intended to keep it within *Wilhelmstal*, but remaining documents suggest that very similar labour card systems were introduced in many of the northern districts. Even though documents cannot entirely prove area-wide use in the north, at least in the northern district of Kilimanjaro in 1913, a “colonial investigator [. . .] did not meet a single *Chagga* man without a labour card [. . .]”¹³⁴ and various forms of the labour card system had spread from *Wilhelmstal* southwards into the central districts of Bagamoyo and Morogoro from 1910 onwards. Whether it was intended, willy-nilly tolerated or introduced to other districts without the colonial authority's consent due to a lack of administrative means of control, must remain uncertain.¹³⁵

In any case, for those located in the Morogoro district, a labour card system was indeed introduced. As Kilossa was located in this district, it was also in use at the *Otto* cotton plantation. Thus, an ideal typical workday using this system had the following characteristics: Workers and their families would be woken up early in the morning by drums and were called to work. Subsequently, they had to line up and their so-called ‘labour cards’ were checked. The system in Kilossa was very similar to that used in the northern region of *Wilhelmstal*: Each labour card had thirty squares, each indicating one day of labour. As soon as a worker had completed one day of labour, one box was checked. After the card's completion, the worker would receive his or her payment at a central pay dock. Work was scheduled roughly from sunrise to sunset, working ten hours on average, lunch break excluded; so much for the theory. In practice, workers often simply refused to come to work daily, and it was typical for a worker to take several months for the completion of one thirty-day labour card. Moreover, workers often decided unilaterally when a six-months-contract had ended and wanted to

¹³⁴ Koponen. *Development*, p. 404.

¹³⁵ Cf. Koponen. *Development*, pp. 400–407. The passage about the labour card system was already used in my *Zulassungsarbeit*. Cf. Rösser. *Forced Labour*, pp. 37–39.

leave Kilossa after a week or two, instead of six months. Resistance towards the industrialised work regime occurred also on the job: During a workday, workers attempted to extend their breaks, did not return to work after lunch break or left the workplace immediately as soon as the *ngoma* rang out calling for closing time, without returning their hoes and other tools to the magazine. The engine of the 'living machine' also sputtered frequently as Africans working in Kilossa sometimes acquired key positions in the labour process and transformed the intended factory-like work into a mode of work that followed their own principles: "[. . .] [W]ork rhythms were under the control of African singers. [. . .] [And] workers broke ranks and 'hoed back and forth in all directions,'" thereby breaking the intended industrialised labour discipline.¹³⁶

To break resistance and *Eigen-Sinn*, Kaundinya tried to fuse the labour card system with piece work and set up a very bureaucratic combination of both labour regimes. Consequently, Kaundinya's labour policies required the supervision of numerous overseers:

We decided to work for ten hours a day, if possible on daily tasks: i.e. every morning the supervising assistant or head of department determined the amount of work that had to be done. Those who worked diligently were finished earlier and allowed to go home. [. . .] This system entailed that in each department the Europeans in charge of supervising the staff had to stay with the department from the start until the end [. . .]. [. . .] When a worker has finished his day's work [. . .], he brings his card to the head of department, who checks it himself [. . .] and then enters his initials on the card. Only then is the card fully valid for the day. After everyone has finished their task, a note with a short report on the workers under his supervision, indicating the type of work, number of workers and amount of piece work, is written out and handed in at the office. In the evenings after work is finished, all the [European overseers] usually gather here to report [. . .] and to discuss with the management the disposition for the next day.¹³⁷

If the workload was not met as required, Kaundinya chose from several punishments. He threatened the workers, demanded extra work in the evening, or denied their payment or the food ration – *posho* – after work.¹³⁸ The necessity to establish such a sophisticated and bureaucratic system of labour control already indicates that enforcing the colonial labour regime in Kilossa proved to be very difficult for plantation manager Kaundinya. These difficulties to establish, maintain and impose such a comprehensively controlled work system – in line with European standards of 'modern' factory-like work rhythms – on the African workers appears to be the major reason

¹³⁶ Sunseri. *Vilimani*, pp. 153–154; Sunseri quotes Kaundinya. *Erinnerungen*, p. 107. Cf. Sunseri. *Vilimani*, pp. 150–154. Cf. Kaundinya. *Erinnerungen*, pp. 104–112.

¹³⁷ Kaundinya. *Erinnerungen*, pp. 94, 100.

¹³⁸ Cf. Kaundinya. *Erinnerungen*, pp. 72–73, 94, 119.

why Kaundinya had to employ so many Europeans. Without constant European supervision, the workforce followed their own ideas about labour and once again proved *Otto*’s assumptions about labour in East Africa wrong. In the end, not only the inefficient steam ploughs cost *Otto* a lot of money, but also the high number of Europeans required to enforce labour discipline was very costly, and contributed to the plantation’s economic failure. All in all, the imagined dominance by means of modern work discipline was rather the fantasy of the colonisers and not the reality at the plantation in Kilossa. Finally, Kaundinya also tried to enforce colonial command in another manner: Just as at the labour camps at the *Central Railway*’s construction sites and at the palaeontological excavation camp at the Tendaguru Mountain, the *Otto* plantation management intended to establish a colonial topography as far as the residential areas of Europeans and Africans were concerned. Although attempting to separate black from white and to supervise the workforce residences at the plantation more comprehensively, nevertheless, the residential areas of the workers, that is the labour camps, bore many opportunities to challenge colonial rule at *Otto*’s plantation as well.

4.9 Contesting Labour at the Workers’ Camp

4.9.1 The Labour Camp in Kilossa

The Indian, Arab and Negro neighbourhoods [in Dar es Salaam], which form special districts on their own, are of particular interest to the foreigner. I found the Negro neighbourhoods to be particularly curious. I knew Indians and Arabs sufficiently from India.

Ranga Kaundinya. *Erinnerungen aus meinen Pflanzejahren*. Leipzig: 1918.¹³⁹

Kaundinya’s utterance about the colony’s capital is intriguing. Having stressed that Kaundinya had the self-image of being a ‘decent’ central European of middle-class origin indeed, his comment about Dar es Salaam’s topography appears to be somewhat inverted. Kaundinya is certainly correct in observing that the colonial capital’s different neighbourhoods were curious to most Europeans coming to German East Africa for the first time. Kaundinya, too, found Dar es Salaam’s different quarters fascinating indeed, albeit with some restrictions: The only quarter that mattered to him was that of the East African, which Kaundinya described in his autobiography in detail.¹⁴⁰ In contrast, despite having lived for over twenty years in India, both the Indian and the Arabic quarters were of no interest to

¹³⁹ Kaundinya. *Erinnerungen*, p. 30.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. Kaundinya. *Erinnerungen*, pp. 30–34.



Figure 6: Planting cotton in Kilossa.

Source: Stadtmuseum Wendlingen am Neckar. Diashow Kilossa 1907–1916. 20. Min. 151 Bilder mit Musik.

him. This indifference to the Indian and Arab quarters is precisely the difference between Kaundinya's descriptions about German colonial Dar es Salaam and similar descriptions by other European people devoid of a bi-ethnic background. Contrary to his perpetuated public self-image as Central European, his Indian family background appears to have mattered to him. Obviously, it was a relevant horizon of experience to him at least. Although Kaundinya rarely mentioned this explicitly, he did call India his homeland once in his autobiography.¹⁴¹ Despite this rare show of appreciation for one of his motherlands, as far as the labour camps in Kilossa are concerned, Kaundinya attempted to reproduce the topography of colonial command. Thus, the topography of the labour camps in Kilossa was in line with his dominant self-image that classified himself into the European sphere. Overall, the face of the *Otto* cotton plantation in Kilossa changed significantly between 1907 and 1914. Besides the ever-expanding fields under cultivation, the changes applied to the housing facilities as well. The living and working area were surrounded by the foothills of the Uluguru Mountains in the east and the Udzungwa Mountains in the west. In the beginning of the plantation, both the accommodation of the European staff and the houses of the African workers lay next to

¹⁴¹ Cf. Kaundinya. *Erinnerungen*, p. 23.

the cotton fields in the plains of Kilossa, near the banks of the Mukondoa River. From the very start, plantation manager Kaundinya separated the quarters of the African workers from himself and the other European personnel. In line with the colonial topographies of major colonial settlements and comparatively small labour camps like those at the *Central Railway*, Kaundinya ordered his European employees to settle centrally and close together when arriving in Kilossa in the beginning: “we Europeans [sic!]” (per Kaundinya) lived in a “small guest house” provided by the local colonial district officer. As this guest house was not big enough, there were also tents located right next to the local governmental *boma* “until temporary dwellings, grass houses and corrugated iron barracks were built for us”.¹⁴² The African workers, too, lived in simple grass huts in the beginnings of the *Otto* plantation, but separated from the Europeans (cf. figure 7). According to their habits from home, the East African workers erected either rectangular or round huts on a cleared field using bundled branches for the structures and afterwards covered their roofs with grass. In such houses, four to six people or rather one to two worker families lived during their employment in Kilossa. For both parties, European and African, this accommodation was used until the end of the first rainy season. Afterwards, new housing was built for each group as the initial settlement in the lowlands turned out to be an unhealthy area. Located close to the Mukondoa River, the humid environment with its swamps and ponds was the perfect breeding ground for mosquitos. It therefore led to a high infection rate of malaria and other diseases among all people at the *Otto* plantation:

Soon, however, we had the bad experience that the lowlands were unhealthy because of many swamps and ponds. Our European supervisors and black workers were often down with malaria and dysentery. So, we decided to clear [. . .] a narrow strip of land up the mountain, where more advantageous housing was available for the workers’ village, the farmyard and even higher for the officials’ housing.¹⁴³

The situation must have been severe indeed, as not only were the European staff unable to work due to their sickness, but also numerous African workers, supposedly better accustomed to the climate, needed to rest because of their diseases.

As this loss of working hours was not only a health concern but also a big monetary loss to the already strained financial situation of the plantation, something had to be changed urgently. Kaundinya therefore decided to relocate all settlements onto a nearby mountain to distance the African workforce and the

¹⁴² Kaundinya. *Erinnerungen*, p. 65.

¹⁴³ Kaundinya. *Erinnerungen*, p. 75.



Figure 7: First workers' camp in Kilossa.

Source: Stadtmuseum Wendlingen am Neckar. Diashow Kilossa 1907–1916. 20 Min. 151 Bilder mit Musik.

European personnel from the malaria-prone areas. Once again, the newly erected labour camp was modelled around the ideal typical colonial topography. Although everybody involved in the plantation moved upwards, the Europeans took the highest located accommodation, separated from the other buildings. On the next lower level, the buildings frequented by Europeans and Africans alike such as the market hall, the slaughterhouse, the warehouse and the farmyard were located. These were followed by the African workers' village on the lowest level. This design privileged the Europeans as they received the most spacious, airy, and therefore, the supposedly healthiest locations for their settlements, whereas the Africans had to settle at a comparatively 'lower' and, therefore, unhealthier level. This hierarchy was also reflected in the consideration of medical services. Kaundinya had urged Undersecretary of State of the Colonial Department Friedrich Lindequist and Governor Rechenberg to employ a doctor for the Kilossa district when the two officials visited the *Otto* plantation on 15 January 1909. To strengthen his appeal, Kaundinya even filed a petition on behalf of the *Otto* plantation management ca. in February 1909, which was also signed by eight other companies of the Kilossa district, *inter alia* also *Philipp Holzmann*. The sources do not reveal whether his appeal was heard by the colonial administration, but the petition shows that Kaundinya was primarily, if not exclusively, concerned about

professional medical treatment for his “15 European” employees at the Kilossa plantation; the necessity to provide professional medical care for the African workers was never mentioned in the petition.¹⁴⁴

The architecture of the newly erected houses further reflected the lower status attributed to the African workers. The African workers continued to dwell in houses made of bundled wood, clay and grass roofs while the European staff houses were improved constantly. Over time, even stone houses, equipped with solid roofs, were built for them.¹⁴⁵ Moreover, the allotment of the African village reflected Kaundinya’s approach to enforce a topography intended to put colonial command into architectural practice:

In the new workers’ village, paths and spaces for the individual houses were marked out with measurements and guidelines. Soon the settlement got a decent appearance, not without some misery for the negroes, who had no sense of order and direction at all and preferred to build houses in the middle of the road, preferably of the size and height of doghouses instead of decent living quarters.¹⁴⁶

Apparently, the African workforce had their own views regarding their settlement and did not care much about Kaundinya’s topographical plans. Furthermore, living separately from the European sphere also allowed the African workers and their families several freedoms that helped in evading colonial command. Overall, social life in the workers’ residences tended to subvert ‘modern’ colonial labour discipline, instead of reinforcing comprehensive control.

Around *Otto*’s plantation in Kilossa, migrant workers and workers originating from the Kilossa region settled either alone or with their families, and thereby created worker villages. According to *Otto*’s files, on average, between 500 and 1,000 male workers settled permanently in the direct environs of the plantation before WWI. Together with their families, a village of up to ca. 2,000 inhabitants emerged. Of course, the actual number of the population fluctuated as it was decisively influenced by economic activity. Moreover, like at the *Central Railway* or at the Tendaguru, the climate of the Indian Ocean Area was crucial to the labour conditions in German East Africa. Whether it was the rainy or dry season strongly influenced the number of workers present in Kilossa. Given the provided numbers of men working in Kilossa, and an unknown number of children living in

¹⁴⁴ TNA. G5/38, appendix, cf. pp. 1–4. Friedrich Lindequist became Bernhard Dernburg’s successor as Colonial State Secretary from 1910 onwards. He resigned by the end of 1911. Cf. Gründer, Horst. “Lindequist, Friedrich von”. *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, 14, 1985, p. 601. Web. <https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd117025259.html#ndbcontent> (08 July 2020).

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Kaundinya. *Erinnerungen*, pp. 63–67, 75–76. Cf. Stadtmuseum Wendlingen, “Tagebuch Fritz Otto”, pp. 14–21.

¹⁴⁶ Kaundinya. *Erinnerungen*, pp. 75–76.

the labour camp of the *Otto* plantation, one can assume that up to one-third of the inhabitants were female. Enabling their husbands or partners to take up wage labour at the *Otto* plantation, the women were generally occupied with care work, such as cooking, childcare, and the collection of firewood. Apart from these, fetching water needed for the workforce's survival and the irrigation of fields was incumbent on the women (as well as a few men). This duty also included ensuring large amounts of water for the running of the steam engines in the two ploughs and the locomobile. Yet, women were also involved in (cotton) seed planting as part of the 'living machine' for up to eight to ten hours a day: as the men hoed, the women followed, putting seeds into the furrows and covering them with soil.¹⁴⁷

Analogically to the railway construction sites, but on a smaller scale, the *Otto*'s labour village also attracted other people from the surrounding villages who were not directly involved in plantation labour. Petty traders supplied the workmen and workwomen with foodstuffs, clothing and other items of daily use. At the same time, especially single women, sold locally brewed beer or worked as sex workers. With the constant arrivals and departures of many people every day, the labour camp in Kilossa could not be controlled comprehensively by the plantation management. Often, it followed the rules of the East Africans living there for most of the time:

The ongoing interaction between workers and local villages was a double-edged sword for planters. While plantation social life attracted workers, many planters complained that ngomas and pombe drinking subverted labor discipline. After a ngoma with heavy drinking, workers might not show up for work for several days, whiling away the time in neighboring villages. Villages furthermore offered refuge to contract breakers, since planters did not have a good sense of their workers' identities.¹⁴⁸

On top of this, these workers' settlements were not only a refuge for 'contract breakers', they also appeared as an untapped source of labour to (European) free-lance labour recruiters or employees of other plantations. There, they could lure *Otto*'s workers away to other enterprises – especially when such recruiters knew the environment, its workers, and the workers' preferences well, a plantation like *Otto*'s in Kilossa was the perfect target for recruitment.

¹⁴⁷ Cf. TNA. G8/904, p. 33. Cf. Kaundinya. *Erinnerungen*, pp. 45, 46–66, 90, 103, 106, 135.

¹⁴⁸ Sunseri. *Vilimani*, p. 155.

4.9.2 Skilled Plantation Labour Wanted: The Legal Case Against Walter Grund

The trained worker hacks 1600–2400 square meters in six hours, i.e., 267–400 square meters per hour, the untrained 200–400 square meters in 10 h, i.e., 20–40 square meters per hour. The performance of the former is thus ten times that of the latter, the wage difference at most 25 percent. A well-trained worker is therefore not only often worth ten times the performance of newcomers, but also serves as a role model and proof that higher performance can be achieved.

Ranga Kaundinya. *Erinnerungen aus meinen Pflanzernjahren*. Leipzig: 1918.¹⁴⁹

Planting cotton is no simple form of agriculture. It took Kaundinya a considerable effort of time to train workers who had never worked on a plantation before. Keeping qualified and skilled workers the longest time possible at a plantation was thus one of the top priorities to make any plantation a profitable business, as Kaundinya explains above. Undoubtedly, other planters knew about this fact as well. They were thus ready to compete at all costs for skilled African plantation workers. In this respect, the local historian Bleifuß is certainly wrong when he states that there was no competition about African labour for *Otto* in Kilossa.¹⁵⁰ Besides the competition of the railway constructing *Holzmann* Company in the second dry season after the foundation of the *Otto* plantation, other planters also attempted to lure away workers from Kilossa. In this respect, many African workers were happy to leave *Otto*'s plantation as they had experienced harsh treatment by at least some of *Otto*'s German employees. A well-documented case is the criminal proceeding against the German planter Walter Grund from Pugu near Dar es Salaam. The case opened in February 1914 and sheds light on the general characteristics of labour at *Otto*'s plantation in Kilossa, the African workers' agency and relationship with the European employees, as well as competition for labour at *Otto*'s plantation. According to the file, the authorities accused Grund of violating the *Anwerbe-* and *Arbeiterverordnung* (recruitment and workers ordinance) when hiring workers who were contemporarily employed by *Otto* in Kilossa.¹⁵¹

The German Walter Grund was born in Tilsit in East Prussia on 17 September 1879, and had probably arrived in German East Africa around 1900. When *Otto* started its plantation in Kilossa, he was one of the first Europeans Kaundinya had employed. The files report that Grund left *Otto*'s plantation in Kilossa after some years in 1911 and subsequently worked as railway sub-contractor between Dar es Salaam and Morogoro (cf. 3.2). When prosecuted by the German colonial

¹⁴⁹ Kaundinya. *Erinnerungen*, pp. 110–111, cf. p. 116.

¹⁵⁰ Cf. Bleifuß and Hergenröder. *Die “Otto-Plantage”*, p. 64.

¹⁵¹ Cf. TNA. G21/545. Strafsache gegen den Pflanzungsassistenten Walter Grund, Pugu, Bez. Daresalaam, wegen Vergehens gegen die Arbeiter- und Anwerbeverordnung [vom 5.2.1913.] 1914.

authorities in 1914, Grund was working as a planter and entrepreneur in Pugu, close to Dar es Salaam. Nevertheless, Grund used to travel the 300 kilometres from Pugu to Kilossa occasionally to purchase cattle there. When visiting Kilossa, he also used to pay his former colleagues at *Otto's* plantation a visit and spend some time with them. As far as the court files reveal, Grund also used these visits to Kilossa to seek hands for his own plantation. Occasionally, some workers would leave Kilossa, joining Grund to go to his plantation in Pugu instead. As Grund apparently also hired some workers who were already employed by *Otto* at the time, the plantation management around Kaundinya increasingly resented Grund's visits and his labour recruitment. When three African workers attempted to leave the *Otto* plantation for Grund's in Pugu, despite their valid contracts with *Otto*, Kilossa's plantation management opened a case against him.¹⁵²

As a German colonial planter, Grund certainly had the intention to recruit as many workers as possible for his own business. It is however wrong to assume that the labour poaching occurred exclusively because of Grund's initiative. In this particular legal case, it was rather the initiative of the three plantation workers – Wagodi, Malikwisha¹⁵³ and Kapanda – who had come from northern *Ussukuma* and central *Unyamwezi* to work at the *Otto* plantation in Kilossa and who attempted to leave it for good. The major reason for these Wassukuma and Wanyamwezi men to abandon Kilossa was the bad labour conditions they faced at the *Otto* plantation. The three East Africans had already worked for years in Kilossa. According to their labour cards, Kapanda and Malikwisha had started working there in August/September 1911. Wagodi must have even been one of the very first migrant workers in Kilossa, as he had been there since April 1909, when *Otto* was in competition for workers with the railway construction company *Holzmann*. All three, Kapanda, Malikwisha and Wagodi, had been allocated to the labour section of the German plantation assistant, Paul Wörz, who supervised them with the help of two African *Wanyamparas*, Kapembe and Nusu Rupia.¹⁵⁴ In 1914, *Otto's* German overseer Wörz was still a young man, who had just started working for *Otto* two or three years before. As far as the files can tell, Wörz had planned to leave East Africa for Germany by autumn 1914, but WWI ultimately ruined his

¹⁵² Cf. TNA. G21/545, pp. 1–5, 22.

¹⁵³ Malikwisha is certainly a nickname, the worker had given to himself. The name consists of the two Swahiliian Words, *mali* = property/wealth and *kwisha* = has ceased/has come to an end; i.e. Malikwisha probably took up working at the *Otto* plantation due to financial distress or an emergency.

¹⁵⁴ Analogically to the nickname Malikwisha (s.a.), Nusu Rupia is also very likely a nickname. Nusu = half and Rupia = the currency of German East Africa. Hence, the meaning is “half a Rupee”. This name may indicate Nusu Rupia's demand for decent wages or the minimum wage he would demand. *Wanyampara* = overseer (here).

plans as the war stranded him in the colony. Before WWI, while employed in Kilossa, Wörz was on good terms with the leading European men of the plantation such as Schurz and was valued as a competent member of staff accordingly.¹⁵⁵

Apparently however, Paul Wörz was less popular among the African workers. According to their court testimonials, the three East African workers who had been working for years at the *Otto* plantation had already attempted to leave their employment repeatedly. The reason why they had not been successful was Paul Wörz. Wagodi stated that Paul Wörz had forced him to stay at *Otto*’s plantation in Kilossa:

I have completed 23 labour cards at the Otto plantation. As I wanted to return home, I demanded my dismissal. Mr Wörz, assistant at the Otto plantation, refused to dismiss me. He said I should go home by the time he would leave for Europe. I had asked for my dismissal three times, but in vain. I only took the 24th labour card as I did not dare to resist Mr Wörz. One day, I saw Mr Grund in Kilossa and together with Malikwisha and Kapanda, I went to him. I had known him from former times, because he had also been at the Otto plantation in Kilossa once. Mr Grund asked me, whether I had completed my kipande [labour card]. I replied that I had completed 23 cards and that the 24th had been forced (kwa nguvu) [by force] on me against my will. [. . .]. He [Grund] asked me whether I had ruhusa [permission to leave the plantation] [and] I said ‘no’; whenever we had asked for ruhusa, Mr Wörz would make matata [problems; difficulties]. Mr Grund then said that he would employ me.

Further reasons for Wagodi to leave Kilossa in order to work at Grund’s plantation in Pugu were that Wagodi had “already worked under Grund” and regarded him as a decent employer, and that his “mother had already been living in Pugu for a long time”.¹⁵⁶ Four other African witnesses and Grund himself confirmed at court that it was a common practice at the *Otto* plantation to refuse the workers their dismissal. One worker testified that Wörz had withheld his wages to keep him at the plantation. Among the four witnesses was also Maganya, who said that he was once beaten when he asked Wörz for his dismissal on another occasion and was detained at the plantation in Kilossa when he attempted to complain at the governmental *boma*: “I demanded *ruhusa* from Mr. Wörz, but was not given permission to leave, and was slapped in the face by Mr. Wörz. I wanted to sue Mr. Wörz at the *boma* in Kilossa but was prevented by him by force.”¹⁵⁷ Wörz himself was not questioned during the entire proceedings, but his German superior and

¹⁵⁵ Cf. TNA. G21/545, pp. 1–5. Cf. LTA-871.1-otto-202. Schriftwechsel über die Planung einer Pflanzung in Deutsch-Ostafrika. 1926–1928, pp. 20–23.

¹⁵⁶ TNA. G21/545, pp. 6, 16.

¹⁵⁷ TNA. G21/545, p. 17.

Kaundinya's co-plantation manager Schurz denied the charges against his European colleague, of course.¹⁵⁸

Apart from the incident and the legal case as such, the file provides further information about labour in Kilossa. It reveals its contested characteristics at the *Otto* plantation, and the relevant protagonists involved. As far as the file can tell, it was not Grund alone who had lured away workers from the cotton plantation in Kilossa repeatedly. Apparently, in this very case, but also on previous occasions, he was assisted by his *boy* Meli, a Myamwezi from Tabora, who was also questioned in the legal proceedings. At court, Meli testified:

I accompanied Mr. Grund to Kilossa where he was buying up cattle. There, three workers from the *Otto* plantation came to my master and asked for work. Mr Grund asked them if they had finished their cards, to which they replied that they had finished some cards, but Mr Wörz had refused to dismiss them. The next day the three people went with us to Pugu. They spent the night with me in the kitchen house of the hotel.¹⁵⁹

Interestingly, before becoming Walter Grund's personal servant¹⁶⁰ as a *boy*, Meli had himself been an ordinary cotton worker at the *Otto* plantation in Kilossa. He had apparently left Kilossa and subsequently joined Grund's plantation in Pugu. Whether Meli had initially worked as an ordinary worker at Grund's plantation there for some time or whether he had become Grund's *boy* immediately after leaving Kilossa, is not provided by the sources. Yet, having been employed as an ordinary plantation worker by *Otto* first, it seems that Meli quickly assumed larger responsibilities in Pugu as he was not only Grund's second *boy* but also his personal de facto labour recruiter. At least *Otto's* co-plantation manager Schurz accused Meli of having come to *Otto's* plantation on several occasions to lure away workers to Pugu. Confirming Meli's role, Schurz reported at court:

Grund used to work on the *Otto* plantation and of course knows our long-serving and good workers. His boy Meli is also a former worker of the *Otto* plantations. He [Meli] has [. . .] come to the *Otto* plantation camp several times and has [tried] to persuade mainly long-serving, good workers to join Grund against promises of particularly high wages. In some cases he succeeded; the people concerned first worked off their cards, then asked for dismissal and then went to Grund in the end.¹⁶¹

Although the court was not able to conclude that Meli was occupied as Grund's labour recruiter in this case but also in general as "an order on his part could not

¹⁵⁸ Cf. TNA. G21/545, pp. 6–9, 15–25.

¹⁵⁹ TNA. G21/545, pp. 6–7.

¹⁶⁰ The role of personal servants in German East Africa is made more explicit in the chapter about the Tendaguru Expedition.

¹⁶¹ TNA. G21/545, p. 8, cf. pp. 8–10, 16, 20.

be established”,¹⁶² it seems that the court largely accepted Schurz’s statement. Accordingly, it believed Schurz’ allegation that the *boy* Meli had previously come to Kilossa for labour recruitment. Unfortunately, this question must remain uncertain as there is neither more information available about Meli’s life nor information about his work at Grund’s plantation in Pugu as a *boy* or as his labour recruiter. Yet, Meli’s case hints at the central role of personal servants such as *boys* who often obtained influential positions in German East Africa. In this respect, Meli’s occupation at Walter Grund’s business foreshadows the central role of personal servants at the Tendaguru Expedition that will be dealt with in the chapter to follow. Moreover, this case against Walter Grund reveals that particularly skilled labour was in high demand. Like at the *Central Railway*, skilled plantation labour was also essential to the cultivation of cotton and other colonial cash crops.

As far as Paul Wörz’s employment as an overseer of the *Otto* plantation is concerned, the court file under investigation does not provide much more information. As the legal proceedings did not target Wörz’s treatment against his employees as such, the questions about corporal punishments or denying the workers their dismissal did not matter much to the court official’s ultimate judgment. Relevant was only whether Grund had violated the *Anwerbe-* and *Arbeiterverordnung* that prohibited anybody of one district the recruitment of workers in another district. This violated colonial law, especially if those recruited workers were currently employed by somebody else. As Schurz confirmed that Grund had repeatedly lured away workers from Kilossa to employ them at his own plantation in Pugu, and all the African workers who testified and most of the other witnesses had also confirmed this fact, the court sentenced Walter Grund to a fine of twenty Rupees. This comparatively mild penalty derived from the fact that Wagodi, Malikwisha and Kapanda had left the *Otto* plantation on their own accords and had themselves offered their service to Grund. Indeed, two other aspects also contributed to the judge’s mild sentence. First, the judge acknowledged that the workers wanted to leave Kilossa in order to live closer to their families. Secondly, the court also considered that Wagodi, Malikwisha and Kapanda had left the *Otto* plantation because of maltreatment and because they had been refused dismissal. In this respect, although Schurz had denied the allegations against his employee, Wörz, the colonial court indirectly confirmed Wörz’s violent behaviour against the African employees by its decision.¹⁶³ As Paul Wörz did not get the chance to speak in the files for this case, his motivation or thoughts on the issue must remain obscure. Other docu-

¹⁶² TNA. G21/545, p. 20.

¹⁶³ Cf. TNA. G21/545, pp. 23–25.

ments nevertheless shed some light on his character, his precarious life during and after WWI, and the *Otto* Company's opinion about their plantation assistant and his treatment of the workforce.

4.9.3 Precarious White Labour in Kilossa and Colonial East Africa

In the German homeland, the life and work of the planters is often judged quite incorrectly. Many a young striker believes in golden mountains and is tempted by the hope of easily attainable wealth to leave home and try his luck outside, and then experiences severe disappointments.

Ranga Kaundinya. *Erinnerungen aus meinen Pflanzernjahren*. Leipzig: 1918.¹⁶⁴

Moving to a colony did not automatically entail abundance. Indeed, by falling into a poor standard of living, the prestige of *white* people could be severely blemished. Recalling both (Greek) sub-contractors at the *Central Railway* and Ranga Kaundinya's contested standing as a plantation manager at *Otto's* cotton plantation in Kilossa, it has to be stressed that *whiteness* was especially challenged in German East Africa if a *white* person had no exclusive Central European ancestry or if he or she had no middle- or upper-class background. If he or she thus lacked the financial means to provide for a middle-class existence, even a German citizen was threatened with expulsion from the colony. This was also the reason why many of the early European employees at Kilossa were regarded as 'gangsters' by the KWK and the colonial administration, as they had become notorious, primarily because of their extreme drinking habits. As Paul Wörz took up work in Kilossa from ca. 1911 onwards, it is not entirely clear if he was one of those 'gangsters' at the *Otto* plantation. As Kaundinya's standing as plantation manager remained challenged all throughout his occupation in German East Africa, it is very likely that Paul Wörz had indeed been one of those European overseers employed at the *Otto* plantation in Kilossa who had discriminated against Ranga Kaundinya because of his Indo-German ancestry. In any case, Wörz later experienced for himself how his status as a *white* person could be threatened as his lifestyle acquired an increasingly precarious character.

In the first place, the colonial courts opened a legal case against Paul Wörz. Besides the allegations made against him by the East African witnesses during the legal proceedings against Walter Grund, Paul Wörz was separately prosecuted in another manner by the district court of Dar es Salaam. He was accused of having

¹⁶⁴ Kaundinya. *Erinnerungen*, p. 7.

mistreated the farmer Georg Buzello, who lived close to the *Otto* plantation.¹⁶⁵ The sentence must have been rather mild, as correspondence kept in *Otto*’s company archives reveals that Paul Wörz was released from their employment and conscripted as early as August 1914. Subsequently, WWI had a profound influence on his life. Wörz first fought for the German colonial army led by Lettow-Vorbeck in German East Africa, until the end of 1917 at least. By February 1918, Wörz had become a British POW and was detained, together with four of his former European colleagues from Kilossa, in Egyptian Maadi, near Cairo. It appears that Wörz returned to Germany together with his four fellow detainees by the end of 1918 and lived in Stuttgart at first. He later moved to the nearby town of Ulm. After his return to Germany, it seems that he nursed a plan to return to East Africa as soon as possible, although German citizens were denied entry to what had become, by 1922, Tanganyika Territory, a mandate under British administration after WWI. Consequently, his former existence in German colonial East Africa had abruptly come to an end and his return to the British Mandate was very unlikely in the first years after the war. In fact, immigration restrictions for German citizens as well as investment restriction for German companies eager to invest in the colonies softened again in the mid-1920s. Wörz, thus applied for the role of a cotton plantation manager at *Heinrich G. Oppermann K.G. Import-Export* at the end of 1925. This Hamburg-based company, which had primarily traded with Angola’s *Loanda* region, now attempted to expand its business to East Africa and tried to purchase 8,000 ha of land in the former German colony. When *Oppermann* asked the *Otto* Company for a reference regarding Wörz’s work performance in Kilossa, *Otto*’s company board replied: “we can highly recommend Mr Wörz to your new endeavour. [. . .] We may say that, during his employment, he was one of the most capable assistants. He was also very competent in treating the negroes correctly”.¹⁶⁶ Whether this assessment of Wörz’s employment as plantation overseer either reflects the company board’s ignorance towards the realities at the *Otto*

¹⁶⁵ Cf. TNA. G21/89. Strafsache gegen den Pflanzungsassistenten Paul Wörz, Kilossa, Bez. Morogoro, wegen Mißhandlung des Landwirtes Georg Buzello. 1914–1915. Cf. Eckhart, Franz G. and Geissler, Peter (Eds.). *The United Republic of Tanzania. National Archive of Tanzania. Guide to the German Records. Vol. II. Prepared by National Archives of Tanzania and Archivschule Marburg – Institut für Archivwissenschaft. Second Edition.* Dar es Salaam and Marburg: 1984, p. 468. When visiting the Tanzania National Archives between August and November 2018, the file could not be found.

¹⁶⁶ LTA-871.1-otto-202. Schriftwechsel, p. 20. Cf. LTA-871.1-otto-202. Schriftwechsel, pp. 20–23. Cf. LTA-871-otto-198. 8 Schreiben mit Kriegsnachrichten aus Kilossa, Ostafrika. 1915–1918. Cf. LTA-871-otto-199. Vergleichsregelung. Cf. Clasen, Sönke. *Die Angehörigen der Kaiserlichen Schutztruppe für Deutsch-Ostafrika zur Zeit des Ersten Weltkriegs. Ein biographisches Verzeichnis.* Nordstedt: 2021, p. 364.

plantation or acknowledges the widespread violence on German colonial cotton plantations is not clear. Moreover, it is also uncertain whether Wörz or *Oppermann* succeeded in their plans, as the files consulted do not reveal whether Wörz was hired or not, or whether *Oppermann* did indeed expand its business to East Africa at all. The remaining files do however tell the story of a precarious white man, who struggled to restart his colonial life in a former German colony but failed to succeed for many more years to come. By the late 1920s, Wörz had started several short-lived colonial businesses. For financial support, he and other former colleagues of the plantation in Kilossa had turned several times to *Otto* seeking assistance. Despite these attempts, his life remained torn between Germany and East Africa for many years.¹⁶⁷ In fact, by 1936, it seems that Wörz had finally succeeded in taking his wife to Tanganyika Territory as the *Deutsches Kolonial- und Handelsadressbuch* lists him as a “married” cotton planter living in Ngerengere, a town located at the *Central Railway* line.¹⁶⁸ Afterwards, his traces disappear in the archives consulted.¹⁶⁹

As far as the company of *Otto* itself is concerned, its board generally refrained from renewed colonial business after WWI, even though such endeavours were considered repeatedly.¹⁷⁰ In any case, *Otto* was not unsympathetic towards its former employees like Paul Wörz, or towards other former German colonialists throughout the 1920s and 1930s or towards German colonialism. Heinrich Otto generally answered the letters of his former Kilossa employees, provided them with several references as well as established and kept close contact with them. Moreover, the company became a member of revisionist German colonial societies like the *Kolonialer Zentralverband e.V.* or the *Deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft (DKG)*. In summer 1928, the company *Otto* participated in the German colonial exhibition

¹⁶⁷ Cf. LTA-871.1-otto-202. Schriftwechsel, pp. 22–23. Cf. LTA-871.1-otto-202. Chronik, p. 18. Cf. LTA-871-Otto-199. Vergleichsregelung. Cf. LTA-871-otto-203. Kriegsentschädigung für Kolonialbesitz. 1926–1934, Letter Wörz to Otto Kidete, 10 August 1927 and letter Wörz to Otto Kidete, 15 November 1927.

¹⁶⁸ Marcus, August and Kolonialwirtschaftliches Komitee (Eds.). *Kolonial Handels- und Adreßbuch. Mandatsgebiete in Afrika. 1936. 19. Jahrgang*. Berlin: 1936, p. 313.

¹⁶⁹ Marcus. *Kolonial Handels- und Adreßbuch*, p. 285, cf. p. 276. Cf. *Handbuch der deutschen Aktien-Gesellschaften: ein Hand- und Nachschlagebuch für Bankiers, Industrielle, Kapitalisten, Behörden etc.* Berlin and Leipzig: 1943, p. 5218. Cf. *Report by His Britannic Majesty's Government on the Mandated Territory of Tanganyika for the Year 1960*. London: 1960, p. 105. Cf. Authaler, Caroline. *Deutsche Plantagen in Britisch-Kamerun. Internationale Normen und lokale Realitäten 1925 bis 1940*. Cologne: 2018. For the longevity of colonial thought in Germany after WWI. Cf. Schilling, Britta. *Postcolonial Germany. Memoirs of Empire in a Decolonized Nation*. Oxford: 2014, pp. 13–40, 68–89, 157–194.

¹⁷⁰ Cf. LTA. 871.1-otto-233. Chronik, p. 157.

held in Stuttgart, which attracted ca. 200,000 visitors. In this context, numerous voices spoke of reclaiming the previously owned colonies and *Otto* proudly presented the history of their cotton plantation in Kilossa.¹⁷¹ On top of this, *Otto* also financed colonial revisionist political rallies and donated money to former German colonialists whom they had not necessarily known in person.¹⁷² Among them was the previously mentioned farmer, railway sub-contractor, and labour recruiter Heinrich Langkopp, who had lost his colonial existence as a result of WWI, just like Wörz. After Langkopp had worked for *Holzmann* and established himself as an independent cattle trader and farmer in the *Iringa* region, he became a soldier of the *posse comitatus* of the German colonial forces during WWI. Like Wörz, he was captured by the British, became a POW and finally returned to Germany after imprisonment in Egypt. Returning almost penniless to the Republic of Weimar from his pugnacious life in colonial East Africa, Langkopp faced tough times. After his return to Europe, he tried unsuccessfully to receive compensation for his lost property in German East Africa from the German *Reichsentschädigungsamt*.¹⁷³ After eight years of unsuccessful attempts and a life on the poverty line, not in East Africa but in Germany, he went with his gun to the governmental buildings in Berlin and fired several shots in the auditorium of the building. As a result, Langkopp was taken into custody and indicted with having attempted an assassination. The incident reached a wider public in Germany and stirred general sympathy towards Langkopp's biography. It also found its way to the *Otto* Company. Together with many other fellow Germans, Fritz Otto participated in a donation appeal issued by the *Kolonialer Zentralverband e.V.*, which organised rallies advocating in favour of Langkopp's case, and paid Langkopp's lawyer for his work on the case as well. For both purposes, Fritz Otto was ready to pay 100 Marks each.¹⁷⁴

171 Cf. Kolonialausstellung Stuttgart 1928. *Amtlicher Ausstellungsführer*. Stuttgart: 1928, pp. 7, 12, 41–56. Cf. Rösser. 'Knotenpunkte des Kolonialen', pp. 126–128.

172 Cf. Nöhre, Joachim. *Das Selbstverständnis der Weimarer Kolonialbewegung im Spiegel Ihrer Zeitschrift*. Münster: 1998, pp. 142–144. Cf. LTA-871-otto-203. Kriegsentschädigung. Cf. LTA-871-Otto-202. Schriftwechsel, Cf. LTA-871-otto-204. Korrespondenz Karl Oskar Kübel, Deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft, Cannstadt. 1928–1936.

173 Cf. Hainbuch, Dirk. *Das Reichsministerium für Wiederaufbau 1919–1924. Die Abwicklung des Ersten Weltkrieges: Reparationen, Kriegsschäden, Beseitigung, Opferentschädigung und der Wiederaufbau der deutschen Handelsflotte*. Frankfurt o.M.: 2016.

174 Cf. Langkopp. *22. Jahre*, pp. 3–4, 119–122. Cf. Aas and Sippel. *Koloniale Konflikte*, pp. 79–138. Various unnumbered and often undated newspaper articles, e.g. by the *Montag Morgen* or *Tägliche Rundschau* reporting about Langkopp's trial. Furthermore, correspondence between Fritz Otto and Dr. N. Hansen, head of the *Kolonialer Zentralverband*. All dated – as far as provided – from January to August 1928. Cf. LTA-871-otto-203. Kriegsentschädigung. Whether Fritz Otto or

In fact, *Otto's* support for Langkopp links the case study of the *Central Railway* to the history of the *Otto* plantation in Kilossa. Moreover, the third case study of the present research into the global history of labour – the palaeontological excavations at the Tendaguru Mountain in the *Lindi* district – is also linked to the *Otto* plantation. When the textile company's head, Heinrich Otto, first visited German East Africa in 1907, State Secretary Bernhard Dernburg was not his only company. The famous German palaeontologist Eberhard Fraas had joined them as a geological advisor, examining the soil quality in the northern regions around Mwanza and investigating whether *Otto* could expect coal or other valuable deposits ready to exploit in German East Africa. Heinrich Otto and Fraas were both born in the areas around or in Stuttgart and had known each other for many years. Moreover, both were close to German Protestant circles and therefore trusted each other. Yet, as soon as Fraas had finished his job with *Otto*, he was urgently called to the colony's south: An East African employee of the German Bernhard W. Sattler's *Lindi Schürfgesellschaft* had found "something curious in the African bush".¹⁷⁵ It seemed that gigantic dinosaur fossils had been discovered. As the only professional palaeontologist then present in German East Africa, Eberhard Fraas hurried several hundred kilometres south from Mwanza to the *Lindi* district. There he confirmed the palaeontological sensation: the initial bones were indeed dinosaur fossils. Subsequently, the Tendaguru Expedition would become the largest paleontological excavation the world had seen so far.¹⁷⁶

the entire company generally played a significant role in any of Weimar's numerous revisionist colonial associations is beyond the scope of this study, but certainly worthwhile to investigate.

175 Maier. *African Dinosaurs*, p. 1, cf. pp. 3, 6–26. Cf. Quenstedt, Werner. "Fraas, Eberhard". *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, 5, 1961, pp. 307–308. Web. <https://daten.digital-e-sammlungen.de/0001/bsb00016321/images/index.html?id=00016321&groesser=&fip=eayaqrqrseayaenfsdrfsdrxsxdsydenxs&no=3&seite=323> (6 July 2020).

176 Cf. Stoecker, Holger. 'Maji-Maji-Krieg und Mineralien. Zur Vorgeschichte der Ausgrabung von Dinosaurier-Fossilien am Tendaguru in Deutsch-Ostafrika'. *Dinosaurier Fragmente. Zur Geschichte der Tendaguru-Expedition und ihrer Objekte 1906–2008*. 25–38. Eds. Ina Heumann et al. Göttingen: 2018, pp. 35–37. Cf. Kaundinya. *Erinnerungen*, pp. 20–22.