

**WAR AS A FAMILY AFFAIR: THE ROLE OF AFRICAN WOMEN IN WORLD
WAR ONE IN GERMAN EAST AFRICA, 1914-1918**

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YOVITA ALBERT VAKOLAVENE

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Declaration

I hereby affirm under oath that this thesis is my own original work. It has not been submitted and will not be submitted to any other University for similar or any other degree award. The works of other people consulted in this dissertation are acknowledged in footnotes and bibliography.

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Dedication

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Abstract

This study explores the role of African women during WWI in German East Africa in the period from 1914 to 1918. Historically, like women in other parts of the world, African women have contributed to the war efforts in their communities. In the colonial period, in German East Africa, women offered their support in various campaigns either as *askaris*' women or as wives, daughters or mothers of the warriors. They also offered support during WWI either as *askaris*' women at the war front or as mothers, wives or daughters of the men who had gone to war at home front. However, compared to men, African women participation in WWI is overlooked. Thus, this study examines women's participation in this war either as *askaris*' women at the war front or as wives, sisters or mothers of men at the home front.

This study relies mainly on primary, secondary and oral sources. Primary involves archival sources and accounts of pre-colonial explorers, missionaries, travellers and WWI participants. The archives visited includes, Tanzania National Archives, British National Archives, Belgian Foreign department archives, archives of Imperial War Museum of London and Central Africa archives in Africa Museum of Tervuren, Belgium. Secondary sources involve library survey. The oral interviews were done in two regions namely Ruvuma and Lindi. This study relies on two theories in explaining its data; one is gender theory (African feminism) and two, is military theory (trinity).

The research findings show that African women participated in WWI directly and indirectly, willingly and unwillingly. They also show that, throughout the war, women's activities either complemented or substituted the activities of men. This study argues that women in German East Africa played a major role at the war front by encouraging and maintaining German *askari* morale, which gave the *askari* the strength and courage to continue fighting. At the German East African home front, women maintained their families. Women's social cultural responsibilities enabled women at the war front to be an anchor to *askari* whose morale to fight depended on women's support and encouragement. While at the home front, the survival of families depended on women's labour in agriculture and other economic activities. In some cases, women's social cultural status caused them to be victims of the war. However, as victims, they continued to play their role until they were able to escape the ordeal of being victims of war.

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CHAPTER ONE

1.0 African Women and the History of World War I in German East Africa

1.1 Introduction

World War One (WWI) refers to the war which began in 1914 and ended in 1918 and involved European imperialist powers. The war was between two allied forces. One allied force comprised major powers such as Britain, France and Belgium including their respective colonial territories and dominions, and Russia, Japan, Serbia and the United States of America. The other allied force included Germany (and its colonies), Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire. At the beginning of the war, Germany thought Africa would remain a neutral ground (based on the Congo agreement). But, the fighting in the WWI involved Africa since the two warring sides had colonies in Africa. Thus, Africans were involved in WWI depending on the European power that colonized a given territory. It should be noted that, in Africa, as it was in other continents that participated in WWI, African men and women were involved in the war either directly or indirectly.

This thesis examines African women's contribution to the WWI in German East Africa which was a German colony in East Africa. The war involved today's Mainland Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi. In this part of Africa, the war was fought from 1914 to 1918. The contribution of women in the war is of two kinds: the military support that women provided at the "war front" as *askari* (African soldiers) and the socio-economic support they provided at the "home front" as wives and mothers.¹ Generally, so far in Africa this war is perceived from a masculine perspective. This is because most scholars have discussed WWI in Africa as war that involved mainly African men. Very few historians such as Michael Pesek and Michelle Moyd² have paid some attention to women's participation in WWI as part of troops in German East Africa. However, they have discussed them more as passive victims than active participants. Historians such as Charles Miller, Geoffrey Hodges, Hew Strachan and Ross Anderson have written on WWI in relation to Africa without paying enough attention to African women's role in the war. Consequently, this has resulted in a biased and inaccurate account of WWI in Africa. This is

¹Women at the front refers to the women known as *askari* women who accompanied their *askari* "husbands" throughout the war. While women at the "home" front refers to those left in their households in different villages or communities.

² Michelle Moyd, *Violent Intermediaries: African Soldiers, Conquest, and Everyday Colonialism in German East Africa* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2014); See also, Michael Pesek, *Das Ende eines Kolonialreiches: Ostafrika im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2010).

because a comprehensive understanding of any war requires acknowledgement of the participation of both genders in the war.

Evidence shows that, in Africa in general and in German East Africa in particular, WWI was organized differently than in Europe. In Africa, the armies and logistics were organized differently since it all depended on human labor. Therefore, for the organization to be effective, both men and women were required to participate in it actively. In other words, African men could not participate fully in the war without women's support. For this reason, women had to be present among the troops throughout the WWI campaign. Some marched with the troops and gave direct support to men by performing various duties such as cooking and fetching water at the "war front" while others worked at the "home front" by taking charge of family responsibilities. The women at the "home front" were far from the battlefields, but they sustained their families through the provision of care and enough food to their children and the elderly without men's support.

Historically, women's participation in war in Africa did not start at the time of WWI, but had also taken part in wars for many centuries before WWI. In other words, in Africa and in German East Africa in particular, women were active in various wars since the pre-colonial era. Except for a few communities which had female combatants, generally direct combat was men's responsibility. Women's responsibility was mainly maintaining households and, therefore, communities. Therefore, during a war, women's responsibilities included doing domestic chores, providing sexual and emotional comfort, carrying goods, providing agricultural labour and caring for children and the elderly in their families. These duties were important in maintaining households and, therefore, holding communities together. According to Sjoberg and De Pauw, during a war, even though, men are often responsible for combat and women perform supportive responsibilities, the latter's responsibilities are as important as the former's.³

In the pre-colonial era, African men and women both participated in wars, since the wars were regarded as family affairs. More often, women and their children accompanied their husbands or fathers to the battlefields.⁴ However, their responsibilities were prescribed based on gender. In most cases, the role of able-bodied men was to fight as warriors and that of women was to

³ Laura Sjoberg, *Gendering Global Conflict: Toward a Feminist Theory of War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 6; *see also*, Linda Grant De Pauw, *Battle Cries and Lullabies: Women in War from Prehistory to the Present* (Oklahoma: University Press, 1998), 13-17.

⁴ Bruce Vandervort, *Wars of Imperial Conquest in Africa 1830-1914* (Indiana: University Press, 1998), 5-9.

help their men and husbands. Thus, they helped in carrying food, pots and, sometimes, military gear. These activities were very important as they helped to solve logistic and food-related problems. Most African armies had problems in general organization of logistics.⁵ The presence of women at the war front assured warriors of having well-cooked meals which gave them the strength to continue fighting. Sometimes men went to war without their wives. In such cases, women prepared enough food which their men (husbands, fathers or brothers) carried with them to wars.⁶

In the colonial period, colonial armies followed the pre-colonial cultural pattern that allowed African women to accompany troops. The authorities permitted women to join their *askari* husbands at the insistence of the *askari* themselves. Military commanders had to accommodate African women in their troops in order to gain *askaris'* loyalty. Therefore, women were involved in the war campaigns and in military stations. In German East Africa, such women were commonly known as *askaris'* wives or women.⁷ The women's presence in military settings was beneficial to the *askari* and to the colonial state in the sense that, in peace and campaigns, the colonial armies had *askari* women/wives who provided free labour in military settings. At the same time, the same women fulfilled certain responsibilities to their own *askari* husbands. That is, women also had to care for their individual families and households. The presence of *askari* women in campaigns was also important to the military authority, since male African *askaris'* positive attitude towards soldiering in the colonial armies depended on women's presence. It was a common knowledge to the colonial authority that the African male *askari* were on their best in terms of discipline when their women were near.

However, evidence indicates that the importance of women to men and their involvement in warfare both during the pre-colonial and the colonial periods had its negative repercussions. In the pre-colonial era, during and after the wars, there was violence against women. Often, the women and children of the weaker or the fallen chiefdoms were taken as captives who ended up either in the winners' homes as slaves or on slave markets. Consequently, in those situations, women became war victims. Normally, the participation of women that belonged to the winning chiefdom was never acknowledged as all credit went to the male warriors who participated in combat and to chiefs. The importance of women's participation in wars was only "seen" in terms of the services they provided. Correspondingly, that happened in the colonial era but

⁵ Vandervort, Wars of Imperial Conquest in Africa, 9.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ In this project, the term "Askari women/wives" will be used for all women that belonged to African soldiers (*Askari*) as wives.

before WWI. Some women participated in colonial armies' campaigns by providing free labour and those outside the armies participated in resistance wars by supporting their warriors who fought against the colonial administration. Nevertheless, before WWI, African women became vulnerable to exploitation by both the colonial armies and local ethnic warriors. Both took women and children as their captives. Even though women have always become victims of war, it does not mean that their contribution in many different wars was less important as their support to the men was crucial and it had high social value.

This study demonstrates that in German East Africa the African *askaris*' women participated in WWI as part of the colonial armies. They were part of both the German force and the allied forces. As mentioned above, women's presence in colonial armies started long before WWI. Therefore, when WWI broke out, the military culture of putting African women at the centre of a war had already taken root in the anti-colonial campaigns. European military officers were fully aware of the importance of African women or *askaris*' families to the *askaris*' will to fight. Before WWI, many times *askari* either threatened mutiny, mutinied or deserted colonial armies whenever their women were not with them. Women's presence reduced desertion, prospects of mutiny and improved *askaris*' discipline. Therefore, the WWI military officers were aware of women's importance in terms of logistics.

Furthermore, this study reveals that there are many African women who got involved in the war willingly or unwillingly in order to survive it. During WWI in German East Africa, many African men and women were continuously involved in the war for a longer time than in any other war before. This is because among the troops fighting in German East Africa, the male participants were mainly African *askari* and carrier corps. Many times African women's presence in the military settings of the Germans and in some of the allied forces was central in the troops' organization. That is, *askari* and carrier corps were on one side whereas the European soldiers, doctors and other white administrators were on the other, but women were always at the centre of their operations. Military authorities placed African women at the centre in order to attract the *askari* and bind them to their cause. They did this because they knew women influenced *askaris*' attitude towards wars and general behaviour. On their part, the *askari* put women at the centre of their negotiations with the authorities. As a result of these negotiations, not all women became *askaris*' wives willingly; some were forced into the war. *Askari* used force whenever they felt that they needed increase the number of women in their households.

WWI was a war with great demands and, therefore, increased the demand for African women. As mentioned earlier, the presence of women among troops began long before WWI. By the time WWI broke out, it was already a way of waging war known to most of African colonial armies. As Clausewitz argues, in any warfare, a people's prevailing cultural preconceptions and norms influence their decisions on how they wage war.⁸ However, the difference was that during WWI campaigns, the demand for *askaris'* women increased because the campaign was very different from all the other campaigns that Africans had ever participated in. It was different in terms of magnitude, suffering and the length of the fight. All these made women's presence among the troops even more indispensable to the *askari*. At the same time, the women at the "home front" cared for their families alone and for a longer time than before while their husbands were at the front as carrier corps or labourers. These women endured much suffering but they did not abandon their families.

This study argues that, in the WWI that was fought in Africa, particularly in German East Africa, African women sustained *askaris'* will to fight and the society's ability to endure the hardships of the war and other forms of suffering. On the one hand, *askari* women at the war front boosted the male *askaris'* morale, courage, discipline and willingness to fight. Even though it was a war full of suffering, they worked hard day and night to make the lives of their *askari* husbands in the four years of the war as comfortable as possible. Their free labour included carrying *askaris'* personal belongings and performing domestic chores and providing them with sexual comfort. On the other hand, the women at the home front worked even harder for the sustenance of their families and communities. Therefore, the history of African women's role in WWI reconstructed in this study elevates the women in the WWI as historical actors and important participants rather than as victims. The purpose is to create a better understanding of gendered distribution of responsibilities in WWI in Africa in general and in German East Africa in particular. This goes hand in hand with Sjoberg's argument that, to understand any war, one needs to "know gendered values reflected in the making and fighting of war."⁹

The general objective of this study is to evaluate the contribution of African women in German East Africa to WWI. The study, therefore, sought to attain the following specific objectives: First, to examine African women's participation in pre-colonial wars. Secondly, to review African women's participation in colonial wars before WWI; thirdly, to explore African

⁸ Thomas Waldman, *War, Clausewitz and the Trinity* (London: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2013), 59.

⁹ Laura Sjoberg, *Gendering Global Conflict: Toward a Feminist Theory of War* (New York: Colombia University Press, 2013), 6.

women's participation and its importance in WWI in German East Africa; and finally, to find out the challenges that African women faced after WWI.

Thus, this study sought to answer the following research questions: First, what were Africans' attitude towards women's participation in pre-colonial wars? Secondly, how did African women participate in colonial wars before WWI? Thirdly, how did African women participate in WWI? Fourthly, what did women experience during WWI? Fifth, what challenges did African women face as a result of their participation in WWI?

1.2 Background to the Study Area

This study focused on German East Africa (GEA). The region comprised today's Mainland Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi. It was bordered by different territories under different colonial powers. Its neighbours were the following: To the northern side, it was bordered by the British territories of Uganda and British East Africa (Kenya). Belgian Congo was on the western side and in southwest were the British territories of Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) and Nyasaland (Malawi). On the southern side, it was bordered by the Portuguese East African territory (Mozambique) and the Indian Ocean on the eastern side.

Historically, GEA was officially a German colony from 1891 to 1918 when WWI ended. From 1916 onwards, as WWI raged on, German East Africa was partly occupied by the British and partly by the Belgians. However, fighting continued until November 1918 when an armistice was reached in Europe. Germany had lost the war. Therefore, German East Africa army (*Schutztruppe*) surrendered on 25 November 1918. Furthermore, Germany lost its African colonies. Consequently, the Treaty of Versailles which was signed in June 1919 and enacted in January 1920 gave to the British and the Belgians the mandate to administer German East Africa. The British administered the larger part of the colony that was later named Tanganyika and the Belgians administered Ruanda-Urundi. After independence, the former German East Africa formed three independent countries, namely Tanganyika, Rwanda and Burundi. But in 1964, Tanganyika united with Zanzibar to form Tanzania. Ever since, Tanganyika has been known as the Mainland Tanzania.

The study was done on German East Africa mainly because WWI was fought longer in the region than in any other part of Africa. In other parts of Africa, the war ended early. In Togo, it ended on 26 August 1914, in German Southwest Africa on 9 July 1915 and in Cameroon in

February 1916.¹⁰ But in German East Africa, war activities that included mobilization, troop movement and combat began in August 1914 and ended in November 1918. This study underscores the fact that, because of the length of the time that German East Africa faced the war, the role of African women at the war front and at the home front was greater than in it was in the other parts of Africa.

There are different reasons as to why the war lasted longer in German East Africa than in any other African colony. One of the reasons for that was that the Germans got more support from Africans in German East Africa than from its West African colonies. The *askari* and their families, carrier corps and other followers were with General Lettow-Vorbeck up to the end of the war despite the suffering they faced. Even though there are studies that do not agree with this claim about Africans' loyalty to Germans,¹¹ which I do not intend to discuss here, the fact is that, just like the allied forces, the Germans would not have fought for a long time without Africans' support in the German East Africa. The second reason is the natural conditions of German East Africa such as the coastline which is 30 miles wide, mangrove swamps, dense scrubs, lakes and mountains that acted as a blockade against the allied forces.¹² However, all these natural conditions did not seem to matter much, after the joining of the South African troops under General Smuts on the Allied forces. Soon after their arrival, they crossed the border of Germany East Africa. Therefore, natural conditions were not the main reason why the British failed to enter German East Africa. It was, instead, lack of good planning and organization of their troops that made it difficult for them to do so, although they had a bigger army and better war resources than the Germans in East Africa. The third and final reason was the military skills of General Lettow-Vorbeck,¹³ which enabled him to avoid the allied forces for four full years by allowing the fight to happen only at his own terms. At the time, General von Lettow-Vorbeck's intention was to keep the allied forces away from the European theatre of war as long as possible, even if it meant Germany not winning the war.¹⁴ He succeeded in keeping the forces away from the main theatre. Thus, although German East Africa was surrounded by colonies such as Uganda, Kenya, Congo, Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia

¹⁰ Helmuth Stoecker, "The First World War," in *German Imperialism in Africa: From the Beginnings until the Second World War*, ed. Helmuth Stoecker, trans. Bernd Zöllner (London: C. Hurst and Company, 1986), 271-272; *See also*, Hew Strachan, *The First World War in Africa* (Oxford: University Press, 2004), 16, 56.

¹¹ Stoecker, "The First World War," 273-278.

¹² G.M. Wrigley, "The Military Campaigns against Germany's African Colonies," *Geographical Review* 5, no. 1 (Jan. 1918): 58; *See also*, Ross Anderson, *The Forgotten Front: The East African Campaign, 1914-1918* (Stroud, Gloucestershire Tempus: Spellmount, 2014).

¹³ Stoecker, "The War in Africa."

¹⁴ Paul Emil von Lettow-Vorbeck, *My Reminiscence of East Africa* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 2007); *See also*, Koenig, *A Note on World War 1*, 14.

which belonged to the allied forces, the allied forces failed to defeat the Germans in German East Africa until the war ended in Europe and until General Lettow-Vorbeck and his troops surrendered. However, the above reasons alone are not enough to account for the protracted war in the territory as there was another factor on those who were involved in the war which has been overlooked by history scholars. This is the African women as a contributory factor in the war. Therefore, this study shows that African women's participation in the war (both directly and indirectly) was a significant factor that made the German East African army (*Schutztruppe*) to be undefeated in WWI.

1.3 Literature Review

The theoretical framework adopted in this study builds on three strands of literature: the history of women's involvement in wars, the gender history of the colonial era and the history of WWI in Africa. This study sought to find out the relationship between the colonial state and Africans in relation to gender in order to set a background for women's social, political and economic status before, during and after WWI. In a study of this kind, it is necessary to reflect on colonial ideology in relation to African women's gender position in comparison to African men. This is because it was the same ideology that determined women's history from the time of the colonial occupation to the time of independence. To clarify African women's history in WWI, this section will start with the history of gender relations among Africans in the colonial era which will encompass African gender issues from East, West and Central Africa. These areas were chosen because the African men from these parts of Africa are the ones who fought in German East Africa. It will be followed by the history of WWI in Africa. The section will end with an examination of the history of women in relation to WWI.

1.3.1 African Gender Relations in the Colonial Era

The history of women in East, West and Central Africa like that of women in other parts of Africa was neglected for a long time. The writings on the history of African women started as late as the mid-1970s. The main reason for that was the belief that women did not contribute much to the making of history. The belief stood out because information about women's experiences in pre-colonial Africa is very scanty. In relation to the colonial time, studies focused more on African men than women. Even after independence in the 1960s, women's history was not a priority either since African historians were busy writing a nationalist kind of history that fitted the new era. The demand to study African women was a discourse that surfaced in the mid-1970s with the introduction of United Nations Women's Decade of 1975-1985 and became

more popular from 1990s onwards. Therefore, to understand the reasons behind the absence of African women's contributions to war histories, particularly WWI, first, one must understand the position of African women in history over time.

To understand the position of African women in history over time, it is important to start by examining pre-colonial history. It should be noted, however, that most works on pre-colonial histories by African historians¹⁵ were written after independence, that is, from the 1960s to the present. The reason behind this was the fact that, in the pre-colonial time, most African societies were illiterate, thus written records from Africans themselves about their societies were rare. As a result, most works, especially those written after independence, were based on oral sources. Furthermore, pre-colonial oral sources have scanty information on women's daily lives, except for information on important women such as queens, queen's mothers or female chiefs.¹⁶ This has reduced the possibility of getting information on the lives of women who did not wield power. Furthermore, much of what was known about African societies, particularly about women, came from little information compiled by early explorers and from anthropological studies done during the colonial era. In this period, there were many times when anthropologists had to work backwards from the time of study, that is, from the colonial time, to the pre-colonial time in order to identify the traditions of the societies concerned. The assumptions made based on the few societies studied were generalized to all other African societies. However, their studies are still relevant as they provide a glimpse on life in African pre-colonial societies. Anthropologists such as Godfrey Wilson, W. Bryant Mumford, G.W.B. Huntingford, G.M. Culwick and A.T. Culwick and Monica Wilson have written anthropological works on many societies from East and Central Africa. These anthropologists have written about women, but most of their writings on women are skewed.

The anthropological works that were written during the colonial time indicated that there was gender inequality in African societies that negatively affected women's status. Women's status was portrayed as lower than that of men. For example, the division of labour between men and women among the Bena, Hehe and Sangu of Tanganyika was such that annually men did few but the heavy work of building, breaking new ground for farming and protecting their families. On the other hand, women did all domestic chores, took care of children and worked on the

¹⁵ African Historians here means all Historians that wrote African history regardless of the continent they are coming from.

¹⁶ Margaret Strobel, "African Women's History," *The History Teacher* 15, no. 4, (Aug. 1982): 510.

farm to produce food for their families.¹⁷ In this case, women worked throughout the year while men worked only seasonally. Since the economy of the time was mainly for subsistence purposes, it was women's work that sustained the lives of family members. However, the authors put more emphasis on men's responsibilities and overlook the importance of women's activities. The insistence was on women's dependence on men, that is, they needed men's support and protection.¹⁸ From this, one can argue that women's activities were less important culturally, economically and politically compared to men's. But that was not the case, since women worked harder and longer than men to sustain the lives of their family members.

The same view on men's work as being more important was given on the division of labour among the Nyakyusa of Tanzania. In this instance like many others, women were associated more with domesticity, which according to Godfrey Wilson, does not have much economic and/or social value. Wilson writes:

Their wealth [Nyakyusa] is founded on hard work and the fertility of the soil. In the low-lying parts of the country the men, young and old, rise at 5 a.m. and hoe their fields for four hours or so, till the sun gets hot; this, they do most days of the year, and often a few men will hoe again for a couple of hours in the late afternoon. In the higher parts, the men begin hoeing later and continue till noon or beyond. The women fetch firewood and water, cook the food, plant and weed the fields, and carry bamboos and thatching-grass when their menfolk are building new huts. The boys, between the ages of about six and twelve years, herd the cattle from an hour after sunrise until sunset, with a break of two hours in the early afternoon. The girls help their mothers, from an early age, particularly in the care of babies, which they carry on their backs.¹⁹

Furthermore, in many cases, women were portrayed as being inferior to men. Some studies have described the relationship of men and women as that of adult and child type. For example, one author described the husband-wife relationship as follows: "The wife has definitely to submit to, and to obey her husband and is not by any means considered to be the man's intellectual equal."²⁰ Such a description could only mean that African women were compelled to be under men's control for their own good, since intellectually they were considered not to be well developed. At the same time, the description of men implied that they were strong, powerful and dependable. This was notable in the description of "a father": "From birth, a child looks to the father as a power greater even than his mother. The pattern of behavior of

¹⁷ W. Bryant Mumford, "The Hehe-Bena-Sangu Peoples of East Africa," *American Anthropologist* 36, no. 2, (April-June 1934): 207-208

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹ Godfrey Wilson, "Introduction to Nyakyusa Law," *Journal of the International African Institute* 10, no. 1, (Jan. 1937): 19.

²⁰ Mumford, "The Hehe-Bena-Sangu 207-208.

obedience, respect, and even awe that was accorded the father concept is projected to the chief and to the government.”²¹

The above kind of interpretation of African gender relations was based on Victorian ideology which perfectly fitted into colonial ideology. This is because in the early colonial period most anthropological work was done by European men with Victorian ideology. Secondly, as men it was not easy for them to talk to African women or to watch them while performing their duties, since women were occupied mainly with the domestic chores. Therefore, much information they had about women was from chiefs or male respondents. This problem was obvious in Culwick’s work on the Bena;²² in which he admitted that the information about women was obtained from male members of the royal family. Unfortunately, colonial administrators and missionaries used the above information to interpret gender relations in African societies. As a result, the interpretation of the division of labour in African societies was patriarchal oriented.

Early colonial literature defined African women’s image on the basis of a racist ideology which affected the perception of African women for a long time. In racial hierarchy, Africans relegated to a lower class in the colonies. Unfortunately, for African women, most missionaries and colonial officials considered women’s intellectual ability to be lower than that of African men. For instance, in Uganda, because of the traditional treatment of a newborn baby, colonial officials and their wives perceived African women to be clumsier, stupider and dirtier than African men.²³ Even the royal women in the Buganda Kingdom did not fare well, especially during the early colonial encounter, because their behaviour and actions and probably the respect they showed men as well were thought to be “bizarre, capricious and amusing.”²⁴ Because of this assumption, the political power and status of the royal women in the Buganda Kingdom was overlooked.

Furthermore, in many parts of colonial Africa, women were not regarded as free citizens. For example, the Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) Ordinance 16 of 1901 provided registration only

²¹ Ibid.

²² Arthur T. Culwick, Geraldine M. Culwick and Mtema T. Kiwanga, *Ubena of the Rivers* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1935).

²³ Carol Summers, “Intimate Colonialism: The Imperial Production of Reproduction in Uganda 1907-1925,” *Signs* 16, no. 4, *Women, Family, State and Economy in Africa* (Summer 1991): 799-800.

²⁴ Holly Hanson, “Mapping Conflict: Heterarchy and Accountability in Ancient Capital of Buganda,” *The Journal of African History* 50, no. 2, (2009):183.

for African males as natives.²⁵ In essence, women were not “natives”; therefore, they were not allowed to move freely outside their rural areas. Secondly, women were not regarded as a significant part of the Zimbabwean population. In Zimbabwe, even European women had the same perception of African women. This is confirmed by one Mrs Chattaway who said in front of a Native Domestic Labour Committee in 1932 that “Our African girls in Southern Rhodesia are mentally inferior to those from other natives. They are merely accustomed to be regarded as goods and chattels . . .”²⁶ This is not very different from the perception of Kenya’s colonial administrators who viewed African women as “oppressed and of an inferior status to African men . . .”²⁷ Therefore, from the beginning, the colonial officials and missionaries had placed African women (regardless of their status in their societies) below African men. This inferior position of African women affected women even after the colonial period.

The introduction of a cash economy in colonial Africa affected African women economically and socially. In the pre-colonial subsistence economy, women were the main food producers and the most common mode of transaction was barter trade. In the colonial period, barter trade was replaced by monetary exchange. Therefore, money became the main means for exchange. Colonial administrators and missionaries gave African men access to cash through wage labour and commercial agriculture. In most cases, women were prohibited to work and were not trained in commercial farming. After attaining the knowledge of commercial farming, men refused to help women in food production activities. Instead, they focused on cash crops.²⁸ However, since women were the main producers, they continued to produce food for their families and were expected to assist their husbands in producing cash crops without being paid or given any benefits. Women, consequently, became the ‘beasts of the burden.’

The negative perception of African women in the colonial time affected women in acquiring western education. Education was almost exclusive for African men. African women had no or very little access to schools and different training programs. Lack of access to ‘proper’

²⁵ Lynette A. Jackson, “‘When in the White Man’s Town’: Zimbabwean Women Remember Chibeura,” in *Women in African Colonial Histories*, eds. Jean Allman, Susan Geiger, and Nakanyike Musisi (Bloomington Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2002), 191.

²⁶ Jackson, “When in the White man’s Town,”

²⁷ Tabitha Kanogo, *African Womanhood in Colonial Kenya 1900-50*, East African Studies (Oxford: James Currey, 2005), 22.

²⁸ Getrude Mianda, “Colonialism, Education and Gender Relations in the Belgian Congo: The Evolve Case,” in *Women in Colonial Histories*, eds. Jean Allman, Susan Geiger and Nakanyike Musisi (Indiana: University Press, 2002). 149-150, 157. [144-163] See also, Barbara Yates, “Colonialism and Work: Sex Differentiation in Colonial Zaire,” in *Women and Work in Africa*, ed. Edna G. Bay (Boulder: Colorado: Westview Press, 1982), 131-133. [127-152]

education prevented women from getting better paying jobs so that they could earn some money. In wage labour, African men were given the priority. Because of lacking money, women depended on men and their status became lower than that of African men. This was present even in Tanganyika (Mainland Tanzania), where the colonial government placed African women at the bottom on the list in relation to access to school.²⁹ In other words, colonization improved men's gendered position by bestowing on them more economic and social privileges than on women.

The few African women who had access to western education did not benefit from it the way men did. In most colonial African territories, the education of women focused mainly on domesticity. It was the same in today's Congo (DRC), Mainland Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya where men's education aimed at producing African skilled workers whereas women were to be merely wives to the male elites. For this goal to be achieved, the colonial education policy always favoured men. For example, in Congo, women were educated in Lingala and their education concentrated on home-making skills, while men were educated in French so that they could do white-collar jobs.³⁰ 'Educated women' were not allowed to work; instead, they were prepared to be full-time homemakers. In addition, 'educated women' were never assimilated into white society.³¹

African women's education was not meant for their own improvement. It was for the improvement of the lives and status of African men, particularly the elites, or for improving production in the colonies. That was the reason why in Uganda African girls' education began after that of boys. Missionaries and colonial officials blamed women for Buganda's failure to 'advance' in health and moral behaviour, which allegedly caused depopulation in the kingdom. The perception was that 'women were ignorant and diseased'. Therefore, they needed education and proper medical examinations.³² The perception that African women were sick was also

²⁹ Marjorie Mbilinyi et al, "'Equity is not enough!' Gendered Patterns of Education Employment, and Aid" in *Education in Tanzania with a Gender Perspective*, eds. Marjorie Mbilinyi and Patricia Mbughuni (Dar es salaam: Ministry of Education, 1991), 28

³⁰ Gertrude Mianda, "Colonialism, Education, and Gender Relations in the Belgian Congo: The Evolve Case," in *Women in African Colonial Histories*, eds. Jean Allman, Susan Geiger, and Nakanyike Musisi (Bloomington Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2002), 114.

³¹ Barbara A. Yates, "Colonialism, Education, and Work: Sex Differentiation in Colonial Zaire", in *Women and Work in Africa*, ed. Edna G. Bay (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1982), 131.

³² Nakanyike Musisi, "The Politics of Perception or Perception as Politics? Colonial and Missionary Representation of Baganda Women, 1900-1945" in *Women in African Colonial Histories*, eds. Jean Allman, Susan Geiger, and Nakanyike Musisi (Bloomington Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2002), 97.

observed in Zimbabwe,³³ but that did not help the girls to acquire education as early as it did to Ugandan girls.

The colonial government intended to involve African men in economic activities more than African women. They succeeded in doing so by denying women access to many economic activities. Most jobs and other economic activities were given to men. Women were even not allowed to migrate to town centres. The few women who migrated to urban centres worked under African male's supervision. The supervisor was a male guardian who had control over his *protégée's* salary. A good example is in Kenya where African women migrated from their rural areas to other parts of Kenya and worked under male guardians.³⁴ In Zaire (Congo - DRC) women's access to commercial agriculture was prohibited through education whereby boys were given a different kind of education to that for girls. Even though traditionally women were the main food producers, they were trained to keep gardens and the barnyards while African men were trained in commercial farming and given free seeds to start farming.³⁵ Consequently, men refused to cultivate traditional food crops and concentrated on new cash crops such as rice and potatoes for commercial purposes.³⁶ However, their wives were expected to grow these new crops under their husbands' supervision which increased labour demand on wives. The same happened in Namibia, especially in the Kaoko pastoral society. In this society, some women owned cattle, but colonial officials imparted knowledge on cattle curative methods to only men. They ignored female cattle owners because they viewed the pastoral economy as men's domain.³⁷ In the end, women's traditional power, which was based on the control of food production and distribution, diminished. Real power in the colonial economy was in cash control which, only African men, who controlled commercial crops and the financial returns, had.

In their quest to control women economically, colonial administrators and African patriarchs did not want women to migrate to town centres, mines or plantations. In many cases, in towns African women were blamed for being immoral and practising prostitution that was destroying the male workforce through the spread of venereal diseases. In the early 1920's Zimbabwe, the

³³ Lynette A. Jackson, "When a White Man's Town: Zimbabwean Women Remember Chibeura," in *Women in African Colonial Histories*, eds. Jean Allman, Susan Geiger, and Nakanyike Musisi (Bloomington Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2002), 192. [191-215]

³⁴ Kanogo, *African Womanhood*, 19.

³⁵ Yates, "Colonialism, Education, and Work," 131.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Lorena Rizzo, *Gender and Colonialism: A History of Kaoko in North-Western Namibia, 1870's-1950's* (Basel: Namibia Studies Series 14, 2012), 254.

anti-venereal measure which was facilitated by a law which was enacted in 1918, prohibited African women from entering cities without being examined for venereal diseases.³⁸ Women were only allowed into towns or cities after going through the *Chibeura*³⁹ process. The Public Health Act of 1925⁴⁰ tightened rules for African women even more as it prohibited infected persons to be given any kind of work or continue with any kind of work. The same happened in Uganda where, before the 1930s, African women were not allowed to do any work apart from being babysitters. In towns, even domestic servants or local beer brewers were African men.⁴¹ This made many women to remain in rural areas. Only women with employed husbands could afford living in towns without work. In addition, the Ordinances of the 1930s and the 1940s in Zaire prohibited any African woman from entering cities without permit. But permits were granted to only women with authorization from their male guardians.⁴²

Colonial officials used excuses such as combating prostitution in towns to prohibit women from entering towns. They worked hard to make sure that women stayed in rural areas and economically depended on men. Many a times, in the excuse of prostitution, they forced women out of towns and made them remain in villages. However, they did not do that in order to combat prostitution, but rather to compel the African women to produce food for their families, while men engaged in wage labour in towns so as to maximize the exploitation of Africans. In rural areas, women were an asset as they produced food, while in towns women were a liability, since they were 'idle'. Thus, combating prostitution was used as an excuse to control women's movement. By the time colonialism ended, the image of African gender was that African men constituted the dominant class while the African women, the oppressed and dominated class. Men oppressed and dominated women because they had much control over women's labour power.

Therefore, misinterpretation of African women's status in different societies was the result of an interpretation of African culture which was based on Eurocentric assumptions. Such assumptions led to an erroneous interpretation of women's behaviour and their position in society, as well as a biased distribution of the few resources the colonial state would allocate to Africans. Most of the anthropologists and missionaries who wrote much about Africans during

³⁸ Jackson, "When in the White Man's Town," 197.

³⁹ Chibeura means open by force, is the name for venereal diseases examination process as defined in Jackson, "When in the White Man's Town," 192

⁴⁰ Ibid. 200.

⁴¹ Grace Bantebya Kyomuhendo and Marjorie Keniston McIntosh, *Women, Work and Domestic Virtue in Uganda 1900-2003*, Eastern African Studies, (Oxford: James Currey, 2006), 54.

⁴² Mianda, *Colonialism, Education and Gender*, 152-153.

the colonial period were European men who followed Victorian ideology,⁴³ which was popular at the time. Whatever African women were doing was not regarded as important as what African men were doing. Even after the anthropologists and or missionaries had witnessed some of women activities, their judgement was clouded by Victorian ideas. Furthermore, most anthropologists assisted the colonial government in understanding Africans' supposedly 'primitive' culture so that the latter could exploit Africans with minimum conflict. Consequently, as mentioned earlier, this misinterpretation of women's status had a tremendous repercussion for women during and after colonial period, since the perception of women's position remained the same for more than three decades after colonialism had ended.

The history of Africa written after independence, from the 1960s to the 1970s, was not about African women. Most historians such as John Iliffe,⁴⁴ Isaria Kimambo,⁴⁵ Anord Temu,⁴⁶ E.S. Atieno Odhiambo,⁴⁷ Bethwell Ogot, William Ochieng' and Martin Kaniki⁴⁸ concentrated on criticizing colonial historiography that had distorted the image of Africa and its people in order to justify colonial domination. The types of historical writings produced in this period were about various African heroes, pre-colonial political organizations, other issues concerning pre-colonial societies and colonial resistance. The aim was to show how Africa had been developing before colonialism and how Africa was affected by colonialism in order to encourage Africans to build their independent nations. Even though the topics were about African societies, of which women were a part, women's contribution to economy or politics was not part of the discussion. Women's contribution was included even in the writings about colonial resistance.

Social scientists in East Africa only started to research on African women in the mid-1970s. Their aim was to understand the plight of the African woman in order to emancipate her and improve her life. Historians such as Juhani Koponen⁴⁹ began writing on African women from the pre-colonial to colonial time in the mid-1980s and such writings gained momentum by the mid-1990s. Historians' main objective was to restore the women into African history since they

⁴³ Victorian ideology state that men have natural supremacy over women.

⁴⁴ John Iliffe, *A Modern History of Tanganyika*, African Studies series no. 25 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

⁴⁵ Isaria N. Kimambo, *The Political History of The Pare People to 1900*, Northwestern: Northwestern University Press, 1967).

⁴⁶ Isaria N. Kimambo and Anord J. Temu, ed. *A History of Tanzania* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1969.)

⁴⁷ E. S. Atieno Odhiambo, T.I. Ouso and J.F.M. Williams, *A History of East Africa*, (Longman, 1977).

⁴⁸ Martin H.Y. Kaniki, ed., *Tanzania under Colonial Rule*, (Longman, 1980).

⁴⁹ Juhani Koponen, *People and Production in Late Precolonial Tanzania: History and Structures*, (Coronet Books Inc.).

had mainly been portrayed as ignorant and passive victims of male domination. Through research on African women's history by both social scientists and historians, it was realized that real oppression and exploitation of African women had begun with colonialism. As Mbilinyi argues, colonial policies contributed to changing gender relations among Africans in order to match "bourgeois forms of male supremacy."⁵⁰ Colonialists' image of 'proper behavior' was for a woman to be submissive to a man. Therefore, missionaries and colonial officials had the same views on African women. Hence, the domination of African women by men intensified. African women were seen as 'beasts of the burden' with nothing to add to the economic growth of society. Therefore, women's access to such things as education, employment and land ownership was minimal.

It should be noted that research on African women shows that women have always been active actors or participants in making history but not passive victims of male domination. During the colonial time, in order to survive, African women were always ready to choose whether to adjust to or negotiate or resist colonial policies which oppressed them. Women resistance came in different forms, depending on the prevailing situation. As mentioned earlier, unattached African women (single, widowed or divorced) in various colonial territories had difficulties in going to towns and getting employment. Therefore, women opted to practise prostitution and/or opened petty businesses in towns or on the outskirts of towns. For example, in Zimbabwe, through petty businesses and prostitution unattached African women owned their own homes. According to Jackson, by 1914 African women "owned 106 of the 115 rented stands on the Bulawayo (Makokoba) location."⁵¹

Women passively resisted colonial policies that affected them but were punished severely by the colonial rule. For instance, as mentioned earlier, African women in Zimbabwe had to go through the *chibaura* process to get work permits. The 1925 Anti-Veneral Policy banned the infected women from entering or staying in towns, but they were not treated. Therefore, the infected women became mobile prostitutes with changed names to avoid being apprehended, which led to more spread of venereal diseases.⁵² Furthermore, in Tanganyika, African women were not allowed to work in towns such as Dar es Salaam. Therefore, women were compelled to be involved themselves in prostitution and/or petty businesses. They brewed and traded in

⁵⁰ Marjorie Mbilinyi, "Research Priorities in Women's Studies in Eastern Africa," *Women Studies Forum* 7, no. 4, (1984): 289.

⁵¹ Jackson, "When in the White Man's Town," 192

⁵² *Ibid.* 199.

illegal alcohol (local beer). Also, they sold cakes, doughnuts, other kinds of food and firewood. In addition, even though they lacked education, they started highly organized traditional dance (*ngoma*) groups.⁵³ The colonial government responded by making sure that African women's businesses were heavily taxed. Yet, women paid tax and employed others so that they could assist them in business and accumulate enough capital to buy property. As a result of such social and financial independence by 1956, about 11.2 per cent of all households in Dar es Salaam were headed by women and women owned one-fifth of the 12,000 African-owned houses in the town.⁵⁴ They also contributed to the struggle for the independence of Mainland Tanzania by organizing meetings, carrying TANU membership cards and using their traditional dance (*ngoma*) groups as a cover for political meetings.⁵⁵

Furthermore, African women resisted male domination by moving to towns or just running away from their husbands. They ran away because the expectation of the men on them was too much with no returns. Also, they were expected to be under male guardians throughout their lives and, therefore, lacked freedom of choice. They were mainly expected to stay in rural areas and produce and reproduce for the well-being of their husbands' families and the continuation of their lineages, with very little control over what they produced. Furthermore, in most patrilineal societies women were not allowed to own land or any productive property. Therefore, they ran away from their male guardians. Most runaway women ended up in towns, mines or plantations. With no other means of supporting themselves as single women without male guardians, they ended up in prostitution or various forms of petty trade.⁵⁶ They also ran away from unhappy, arranged marriages. For example, in Rungwe region of Tanganyika, male guardians always arranged marriages and demanded high bride price for their dependent females. This led to many unhappy marriages. As a result, the unhappily married wives either ran away from their husbands or opted for divorce through court.⁵⁷ They opted for towns and mines or plantation farms in search of a better life and in order to be free themselves from male domination. Therefore, this shows that women reacted to colonial policies that had negative effects on their lives. It further shows that women were not passive victims of circumstances as

⁵³ Mbilinyi, "City and Countryside," WS-94; *See also*, Susan Geiger, *TANU Women: Gender and Culture in the Making of Tanganyikan Nationalism, 1955-1965*, (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1997).

⁵⁴ Susan Geiger, *TANU Women: Gender and Culture in the Making of Tanganyikan Nationalism, 1955-1965*, (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1997), 37.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ Marjorie Mbilinyi, "Women's Resistance in 'Customary' Marriage: Tanzania's Runaway Wives." in *Forced Labour and Migration: Patterns of Movement within Africa*, ed. Abebe Zegeye and Shubi Ishemo (London: Hans Zell Publishers, 1989), 224.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* 219-238.

they have been portrayed in various studies on colonialism. They always knew when and how they could negotiate, adjust to or resist social and economic systems that burdened their lives.

1.3.2 WWI in Africa

WWI was a war which involved the imperialist powers and was extended to Africa for imperialistic reasons. Who Africans supported in the war and how they did so depended on who ruled a given part of Africa. That is, Africans had no say in it. Generally, like everywhere else during this war, there were two warring sides in Africa: The side of Britain and her allies and the side of Germany. In Africa, the actual combat occurred mainly in Germans' colonial territories. At the time, Germany had only four territories in Africa, namely Togoland, German Southwest Africa (Namibia), the Cameroons and German East Africa (Tanganyika, Rwanda and Burundi). Accordingly, all four territories fought on Germany's side. While other colonies under Britain, France, Belgium and Portugal such as Nigeria, Gold Coast (Ghana), East Africa Protectorate (Kenya), Uganda, Nyasaland (Malawi), Northern Rhodesia (Zambia), Belgian Congo, Portuguese East Africa (Mozambique) and South Africa fought on the side of Britain and her allies. At the beginning, Africa was not expected to be involved in the war, but its involvement came shortly later.

There were many reasons for Africa's involvement in WWI. However, the quest for colonial expansion among the colonial powers seemed to be the major reason for it. It was so because of the imperial powers' desire to expand their tentacles for further exploitation of Africa. This quest was witnessed on both sides. The Germany Imperial Government had accepted a plan to annex African colonies to form German Central Africa as one of the WWI aims as per a memorandum dated 28th August 1914 which was submitted by colonial secretary Wilhelm Solf.⁵⁸ In this war, Germany planned to take over most of the African colonies which belonged to the British, Belgians, French and Portuguese which were located between Angola, Northern Rhodesia and Northern Mozambique in Southern Africa to Mali, Niger, Chad and Sudan in Northern Africa so to form one huge Germany colonial empire.⁵⁹ However, they concentrated on winning the war in Europe because they knew that their plan could be easily executed in peace negotiation with the Entente powers after Germany had won the war. At the same time, the British and their allies sought to take away Germany's African colonies if they won the

⁵⁸ Helmuth Stoecker, "The First World War," in *German Imperialism in Africa: From the Beginnings until the Second World War*, ed. Helmuth Stoecker, trans. Bernd Zöllner (London: C. Hurst, 1986), 280-285.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* See also, Stoecker, *The War in Africa*, 283-294.

war.⁶⁰ In order to get Germany's colonies successfully, the British decided to involve Africa in the war as a part of their war strategy.

The British military strategy of involving Africa in the war was the result of their eagerness to maintain their naval supremacy. They had realized that they could succeed by disrupting Germany's communication system and its principal ports in Africa. They feared that Germany could use them to attack the naval communication system of the allied forces.⁶¹ This is confirmed by the order the British government gave to Brigadier General Howard Gorges, the commander of the British West African troops, to ruin or seize Germany's high-power wireless telegraphy station at Kimina in Togoland. The British knew that "the installation was one of the most powerful station then in existence, being able to communicate directly with Berlin, South West Africa and German East Africa thus forming the vital link in the enemy's scheme of communications."⁶² Henceforth, the British did this in all other German African territories. To some extent, the strategy worked since even General Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck said that it had impacted German East Africa. He stated that the loss of Dar es Salaam, Lindi and Tabora was a disadvantage to the German troops in German East Africa as they were the major posts and communication centres for the *Schutztruppe* in the colony.⁶³ However, it did not deter the Germans from continuing with the war. Even without a good communication network, the Germans continued to fight in East Africa until two weeks after the armistice, when they officially surrendered.

1.3.2.1 WWI in German East Africa

In East Africa, WWI began in the morning of 8th August 1914 when the British attacked the German wireless tower which had been erected at the Dar es Salaam coast.⁶⁴ Even though this attack failed, the Germans retaliated by entering the British and Belgian colonial territories. Up to early 1916, the allied forces were on the defensive, while the Germans were on the offensive. By February of 1915, Germany's Force, which was occupying Taveta had fortified itself on Mount Oldorobo, seven and half miles east of Taveta.⁶⁵ This was a big threat to the British as German East Africa *Schutztruppe* was threatening Nairobi. On 23rd January 1916, General

⁶⁰ Michael Crowder, "The First World War and its Consequences," in *General History of Africa: Vol. VII: Africa Under Colonial Rule 1880 – 1935*, ed. A. Adu Boahen (California: Heinemann UNESCO, 1985), 285.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Edmund Howard Gorges, *The Great War in West Africa* (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1930), 50-51.

⁶³ Duane Koenig, "A Note on World War 1: General Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck in German East Africa," *Military Affairs* 34, no. 1, (1970):14.

⁶⁴ Lettow-Vorbeck, *My Reminiscence*, 27; *See also*, Anderson, *The Forgotten Front*, 40

⁶⁵ Lettow-Vorbeck, *My Reminiscence*, 63; *See also*, Wrigley, "The Military Campaigns,"58.

Smuts arrived in British East Africa with his troops from South Africa to give support to the British.⁶⁶ After General Smuts' arrival, the situation changed for the Germans, and for the first time, the allied forces were on the offensive. By September 1916, under Smuts, the allied forces had, at a very high cost in terms of men and supplies, occupied a large part of German East Africa without defeating Lettow-Vorbeck, who had retreated to the southern part of German East Africa.⁶⁷

Once German East Africa's position had turned defensive, it had to fight the allied forces from many African territories on different sides of its borders. The territories involved included East Africa Protectorate (Kenya), Uganda, Nigeria, Ivory Coast, Nyasaland (Malawi), Northern Rhodesia (Zambia), Portuguese East Africa (Mozambique) and Belgian Congo (DRC). Also, in German East Africa, there were Indians and Boers from India and South Africa respectively, who were fighting the Germans.⁶⁸ The Germans were not able to recruit more soldiers apart from those they had access to inside German East Africa.

WWI campaigns in African territories, except for German Southwest Africa, involved Africans in all stages of the war, that is, from mobilization to war operations. The use of Africans in the war was necessary for various reasons including the small number of Europeans in Africa and their poor knowledge of their African territories as well as of Africans. For example, when WWI broke out, German East Africa *Schutztruppe* enlisted combatants and non-combatants totaling about 3000 Europeans in a force of about 13,000 men.⁶⁹ This means that the rest in the force were Africans. The same applied to the other African territories under the allied forces. However, evidence from war statistics indicates that hundreds of thousands of Africans of German East Africa worked with both sides.⁷⁰ Therefore, this war affected Africans in German East Africa more than those in other parts of Africa, since it was not only fought in the land but also involved many people of German East Africa in terms of conscription.

⁶⁶J.P Cann, "Mozambique, German East Africa and the Great War," *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 12, no. 1, (2001): 125.

⁶⁷ J.P. Cann, "Mozambique, German East Africa and the Great War," 131

⁶⁸ Geoffrey.W.T. Hodges, "African Manpower Statistics for the British Forces in East Africa, 1914-1918," *The Journal of African History* 19, no. 1, *World War 1 and Africa*, (1978): 101-116.

⁶⁹ Lettow-Vorbeck, *My Reminiscence*, 23.

⁷⁰ William Otto Henderson, "The War Economy of German East Africa, 1914-1917," *The Economic Review* 13, no. 1/2, (1943): 104-110.

1.3.2.2 Recruitment of Africans into WWI

The colonial authorities recruited Africans as either *askari* or followers. Others participated in the war indirectly. They participated in agriculture, from which the food for the troops ate was obtained. Others provided labour in different factories that produced different kinds of items such as clothes, sugar and shoes that the troops and other European civilians needed. However, since Africa was under colonialism, in this war, the Africans were exploited, racially arranged and somehow coerced into direct or indirect participation in the war.

The most needed group of Africans was that of soldiers (*askari*). However, *askaris'* pay and ranking had some influence occasioned by racism and exploitation. *Askari* were the main combatants who were expected to participate in all war operations, which included actual fighting, patrolling and reconnaissance. However, *askari* in both German East Africa *Schutztruppe* and the allied forces' armies continued to hold lower ranks and, practically, very few reached the rank of a sergeant. At the same time, the sergeant was the lowest rank among European soldiers.⁷¹ This arrangement was based solely on the races of those involved. They did not want any African to be above the Europeans no matter how experienced the African was how or how inexperienced the European was.

Furthermore, *askari* were exploited by being paid lower salaries than those for Europeans. This was the same in German East Africa *Schutztruppe* and in the allied forces that fought in German East Africa. For example, in the Rhodesia Native Regiment, a European sergeant was paid 180 shillings a month and a lieutenant 250 shillings. But an African sergeant was paid 30 shillings a month and a private 25 shillings a month. In addition, at the end of service, the *askari* expected to be paid 15 shillings a month as deferred pay, 10 shillings' one-time payment for a partial disability and an annual pension of 3 pounds for a permanent disability. In case an *askari* died, his family would be paid 10 shillings.⁷² The recruitment package for Africans might have looked attractive to Africans at the time, but compared to that given to European soldiers, it is apparent that the *askari* were grossly underpaid. Furthermore, given the high risk of death rates at the war front caused by combat and diseases, *askari* deserved more than what they were given.

⁷¹ Tim Stapleton, "Military Hierarchy, Race and Ethnicity in the German East Africa Campaign: The Case of the Rhodesia Native Regiment (1916-1918)," *War and Society* 24, no. 2, (Nov. 2005): 4.

⁷²Tim Stapleton, "Military Hierarchy, Race and Ethnicity in the German East Africa Campaign: The Case of the Rhodesia Native Regiment (1916-1918)," *War and Society* 24, no. 2, (Nov. 2005): 4.

Another group of Africans who were more exploited than *askari* were the members of the carrier corps who did head portage. This kind of work was exclusive for Africans. Many were conscripted as followers who did various activities, but many worked as carriers. The payment for their labour was low for those recruited by the allied forces or the *Schutztruppe*. For example, in East African Protectorate (Kenya) unskilled labourers, including food carriers, were paid as little as Rs. 5 a month and frontline carriers Rs.10 a month for more risky work such as carrying machine-guns and bombs to the front.⁷³ Being an ammunition, machine-gun, bomb or mountain battery carrier was very risky because one had to be with the combatants even during a battle. Those who worked as food carriers sometimes worked as labourers, supporting combatants and non-combatants.⁷⁴ In general, being a carrier was a difficult job, hence, they should have been paid better than they were. Africans realized it. That was why the Africans in Nyasaland called WWI the war of *Thangata*, meaning work without any real benefits.⁷⁵ This bitter feeling resulted from suffering in the war, low pay and forced conscription⁷⁶ to labour as a *tengatenga*.⁷⁷

Many carriers loathed carrier work because of mistreatment and neglect caused by racism and misuse of power. Mistreatment came from European officers and even the *askari* who supervised the carriers, but negligence was mainly by European officers. The work itself involved marching for a long distance with a load on one's head. The problem was that these long marches were often done without food to eat or proper clothes.⁷⁸ Consequently, many died as a result of the brutality of officers, hunger and diseases. Unfortunately, carrier went under fire and sniped at like *askari*, but unlike *askari*, carriers had no prospect of any reward for the job even when they did it very well.⁷⁹

⁷³Geoffrey Hodges, Kariakor: The Carrier Corps, ed. Roy Griffin (Nairobi: Nairobi University Press, 1999), 216; see also, Donald C. Savage and J. Forbes Munro, "Carrier Corps Recruitment in the British East Africa Protectorate 1914 – 1918," *The Journal of African History* 7, no. 2, (1966): 321.

⁷⁴Geoffrey Hodges, Kariakor

⁷⁵ Melvin E. Page, "The War of Thangata: Nyasaland and the East African Campaign, 1914-1918," *The Journal of African History* 19, no. 1, *World War I and Africa*, (1978): 87.

⁷⁶ Ibid. 93.

⁷⁷ A term *Tengatenga* refers to a person who worked as carrier or head portage, as translated by Page, *The War of Thangata*, 89.

⁷⁸ Page, "The War of Thangata

⁷⁹ David Killingray and James Matthews, "Beasts of Burden: British West African Carriers in the First World War," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 13, no.1/2, (1979): 11 as cited from H.C.J. Biss, *The Relief from Kumasi* (London, 1911):92; See, Hodges, Kariakor; See, Hodges, "African Manpower Statistics,"; See also, Savage and Munro, "Carrier Corps Recruitment."

To the Africans, WWI was different from all other wars that African societies had witnessed and participated in. In the pre-colonial times, African wars were mainly for expansion or consolidation of their chiefdoms, competition for kingship or resources or defence.⁸⁰ In the colonial era, especially during colonial conquests, even with some Africans employed as *askari* or mercenaries, Africans in different societies knew the cause of their fights. That is, they were fighting to resist colonial occupation.⁸¹ This indicates that Africans fought while knowing whom they were fighting, why they were fighting and what the benefits of fighting were. In WWI, however, to most Africans, “the only goal seemed to be the destruction of the enemies,”⁸² with high death rates and casualties. This confusion caused much agitation among Africans since they were not familiar with such kind of goal of war. Therefore, for Africans, WWI had no tangible benefits that the pre-colonial and pre-WWI wars had.

The colonial authorities in German East Africa and in the allied colonies used direct or indirect coercion in recruiting Africans into the war. Most Africans did not work willingly, especially as carriers, an occupation which was known to be more difficult than that of being an *askari*. They had many reasons not to work willingly, but the major reason was the fear of going very far from their own land and their loved ones.⁸³ Another reason was the fear that they would not get “proper” food or would be taken to a country with a “bad” climate.⁸⁴ The reasons might seem ridiculous today but they made much sense at the time since different African ethnic groups had different kinds of staple food. Eating wrong staple food was a serious problem that could cause stomachache that could lead to death. The issue was that those who ate rice as their staple food, their stomachs could not accommodate whole maize meals. The same was the case for those who ate plantains (bananas); their stomach could not accommodate rice or maize.⁸⁵

Moreover, Africans were reluctant to participate in WWI because they feared to die in distant lands, in a war which was not their own. Africans knew that it was Europeans’ war. Even though they did not understand why the Europeans were fighting, they did not want to die for them. Many people in different parts of Africa had this kind of attitude towards the war. For example,

⁸⁰ Godfrey N. Uzoigwe, “Pre-colonial Military Studies in Africa,” *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 13, no. 3, (Sept., 1975): 480; See, Richard Reid, *War in Pre-colonial Eastern Africa: The Patterns and Meanings of State-level Conflict in the nineteenth Century* (Nairobi: British Institute in Eastern Africa, 2007); See also, Keith F. Otterbein, “The Evolution of Zulu Warfare,” *Kansas Journal of Sociology* 1, no. 1, (Winter, 1964): 27-32.

⁸¹ Kevin Shillington, *History of Africa*, 3rd Ed. (Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), 96-113.

⁸² Page, “The War of Thangata,” 95.

⁸³ Hodges, Kariakor.

⁸⁴ Joe Lunn, “Male Identity and Martial Codes of Honor: A Comparison of the War Memoirs of Robert Graves, Ernest Junger and Kande Kamara,” *The Journal of Military History* 69, no. 3 (July 2005)

⁸⁵ Hodges, Kariakor.

a father who was a chief in the French West Africa (Mali) implored his son not to enlist into the war by saying “[Enlisting] is stupid and ridiculous, to volunteer for war you do not understand and to go to another country to fight.”⁸⁶ However, the son enlisted in order to avoid dethronement and save his family from shame since the French colonial government had promised that the slaves who had gone to the war would become chiefs on their return. Therefore, this was one form of indirect coercion, since the son enlisted to prove that, as the eldest son to his father, he was capable of holding the chieftain title in his father’s chiefdom.⁸⁷ He also enlisted because he feared that his family would lose the chieftain title if he did not. Otherwise, he would not have enlisted. The same happened in Nyasaland (Malawi) where because of forced conscription and the suffering the war caused, one educated African called John Chilembwe wrote a letter of complaint in November 1914 to the *Nyasaland Times*. Part of the letter reads:

We understand that we have been invited to shed our innocent blood in this world's war which is now in progress throughout the wide world. . . .A number of our people have already shed their blood, while some are crippled for life. And an open declaration has been issued. A number of Police are marching in various villages persuading well-built natives to join in the war. The masses of our people are ready to put on uniforms ignorant of what they have to face or why they have to face it. . . . If it were a war . . . for honour, government gain of riches, etc., we would have been boldly told: Let the rich men, bankers, titled men, storekeepers, farmers, and landlords go to war and get shot. Instead, poor Africans who have nothing to own in this present world, who in death leave only a long line of widows and orphans in utter want and dire distress, are invited to die for a cause which is not theirs.⁸⁸

Africans’ reluctance to join the war was known to the colonial authorities. Thus, they used various techniques to make Africans join the war. The British colonial government adopted various ordinances in their colonies in order to conscript Africans ‘legally’. For example, the Native Followers Recruitment Ordinance was adopted in Kenya on August 1915.⁸⁹ This ordinance gave the government the power to conscript Africans as carriers and others for doing manual jobs. The same was done in Nyasaland (Malawi), where the Nyasaland Defense Ordinance was adopted in December 1914 so that the Governor could conscript anyone for the defence of the protectorate.⁹⁰ Furthermore, the colonial government used tricks such as marching the KAR (King’s African Rifles) band in villages to make men join the band while in

⁸⁶ Joe Lunn, “Male Identity and Martial Codes of Honor: A Comparison of the War Memoirs of Robert Graves, Ernest Junger and Kande Kamara,” *The Journal of Military History* 69, no. 3 (July 2005): 728.

⁸⁷Ibid.

⁸⁸ Melvin E. Page, “The War of Thangata: Nyasaland and the East African Campaign, 1914-1918,” *The Journal of African History* 19, no. 1, *World War I and Africa*, (1978): 90.

⁸⁹ Munro and Savage, “Carrier Corps Recruitment,” 319-320.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

fact they were joining KAR as *askari*.⁹¹ To conscript porters, they used various tricks and/or force. In some cases, tax defaulters were forced to become porters. If men hid themselves, their wives were taken as hostages until their husbands came out of hiding. Police officers used a press gang method to capture men at night.⁹² Nyasaland chiefs were threatened that they would be removed from their positions or face heavy fines if they did not produce enough recruits.⁹³ The same happened in Kenya where chiefs and headmen could be imprisoned for 6 months or fined up to Rs 600, or both.⁹⁴ As the war continued in German East Africa, the demand for more conscripts increased, and therefore, recruitment techniques became more inhuman. It reached a point where the techniques used to do so were equivalent to those used in capturing slaves during slave trade.

On their part, Africans resisted to join the war service. There were more incidences of hiding and when they were caught they deserted whenever possible; some even crossed the borders of their territories to avoid recruitment. For example, 200 young men belonging to the Mende ethnic group of Sierra Leone ran to Liberia to avoid recruitment.⁹⁵ Other people feigned illness or disability while others rebelled against the colonial government. For instance, in January 1915, John Chilembwe led a rebellion to resist recruitment of Africans in Nyasaland.⁹⁶ However, their resistance did not deter the colonial government from recruiting more people by whatever means necessary. In the end, for WWI in German East Africa alone, it was estimated that they recruited one million or more Africans as non-combatants.⁹⁷

1.3.3 Women in WWI History

1.3.3.1 WWI and Women in Europe and America

In different parts of the world, women's participation in WWI did not mostly involve combat. In Europe, where the war started, and America, women's participation in the war was strictly supportive. Women in both Europe and America did not have a say on how they should

⁹¹ Page, "The War of Thangata," 89, 92.

⁹² Ibid., 92; Killingray and Matthews, "Beasts of Burden," 13.

⁹³ Ibid., 92.

⁹⁴ Donald C. Savage and Forbes Munro, "Carrier Corps Recruitment in the British East Africa Protectorate 1914-1918," *The Journal of African History* 7, no. 2, (1966): 322.

⁹⁵ Killingray and Matthews, "Beasts of Burden," 15.

⁹⁶ Page, "The War of Thangata," 90.

⁹⁷ Richard J. Reid, *A history of Modern Africa 1800 to present* (London: Wiley- Blackwell, 2009), 192.

participate in the war. Their participation in it was decided for them by men who had the power to make decisions. At the time, powerful men such as Winston Churchill who held various cabinet positions during WWI, believed that women could not withstand the horrors of war. Hence, they were not suitable for performing military duties at the war front.⁹⁸ Therefore, women gave support but away from the battlefields. The few women who were allowed to provide medical services to soldiers stayed at the very rear of the army or in permanent hospitals away from the battlefields.⁹⁹As a result, in both Europe and America, women participated in WWI mainly from the home front.

Most women in the Western world, including Britain and USA, contributed to WWI from home by ‘doing their bits’.¹⁰⁰ During the war, there were many job vacancies as a result of those left behind by the men who had enlisted. Furthermore, more vacancies were available following the establishment of new factories and more farms that were opened to meet the demands of the war. Authorities faced a shortage of labour since many men had been enlisted in the war. Therefore, women had to fill all the vacancies then available.¹⁰¹ They embraced the opportunity because it allowed them to serve their countries and earn some income which enabled them to support their families since their men, the main breadwinners, were not around.

During the war, the number and the income of employed women in the Western world increased tremendously. Before the war, most women, for example British women, worked as unskilled workers in textile industries, mines and homes, earning about a third of men’s weekly wage.¹⁰² However, during WWI, they also did men’s work in armament production, transportation system, offices, on farms and other areas which then paid them higher wages than before. By the summer of 1916, women in Britain constituted almost half of the total workforce in the country.¹⁰³ Women’s participation in work was important because industries and farms continued with production throughout the war. Therefore, in these cases, women played a major role in maintaining the economies of their countries.

⁹⁸ Leneman, L., Medical Women in The First World War: Ranking Nowhere, *British Medical Journal* 307, no. 6919, (1993): 1592-1594.

⁹⁹ Leslie, A., Women in War-Hospital, *The British Medical Journal* 2, no. 862 (1978): 21.

¹⁰⁰ Maggie Andrews and Janis Lomas, eds., *The Home Front in Britain: Images, Myths and Forgotten Experiences since 1914* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); *See also*, Alan G.V. Simmonds, *Britain and World War One* (London: Routledge, 2012); *See also*, Celia Malone Kingsbury, *For Home and Country: World War I Propaganda on the Home Front* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 2010).

¹⁰¹ Maggie Andrews and Janis Lomas, eds., *The Home Front in Britain*

¹⁰² Alan G.V. Simmonds, *Britain and World War One*, (London: Routledge, 2012), 129.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 138.

In addition, women reduced war hardships in their families because they used their wages to meet family financial needs. This reduced their government's burden of caring for the people who had been left behind by the men who had been enlisted in the war. Furthermore, women gave emotional support to men in combat by sending letters and small parcels to them. That way, women enabled men at the war front to keep ideas and ideals of home more alive in their minds.¹⁰⁴ Furthermore, women in Europe and the USA saved food by reducing wastage. Food shortage and the need for food conservation forced women to learn new methods of cooking and housekeeping. The idea was, if women became more economical in their homes, it would be easy for their governments to curb food shortages. For instance, in the USA, because of wheat shortages, the government encouraged women to learn how to make potato bread since potatoes were plentiful. The aim was to replace wheat with potatoes so that the wheat produced in the country would be mainly for export.¹⁰⁵ In a nutshell, authorities in the Western world ensured that their women participated in the war. Women did not join war in combat but all women's activities were geared towards supporting men at the front and their governments in order to win the war. The good thing about the history of WWI in the Western world is that the participation of women in WWI was recognized and their contribution to the war was put to light. This is different from the history of WWI in Africa where women's contribution to the war has been overlooked.

1.3.3.2 WWI and African Women

As mentioned earlier, the history of WWI in Africa has been extensively studied, but most studies have overlooked African women and their contribution to the war. Many scholars have examined the history of WWI in Africa but, contrary to what happened, they have concentrated mainly on the war operations and masculine activities performed by men. They forgot that participating in a war does not mean participating in combat alone. This is because there are other different activities, besides fighting, which the people at the war front and those at home front could do to support the combatants. It should be noted that WWI in Africa involved many women at the home front and a share of women were at the war front with their husbands. Surprisingly, WWI literatures hardly mention African women activities, and when they do, they mention them in general terms.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Maggie Andrews, "Ideas and Ideals of Domesticity and Home in the First World War," in *The Home Front in Britain: Images, Myths and Forgotten Experiences since 1914*, eds. Maggie Andrews and Janis Lomas (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

¹⁰⁵ Kingsbury, *For Home and Country*, 27

¹⁰⁶W. O. Henderson, "The War Economy of German East Africa, 1914-1917," *The Economic History Review* 13, no.1/2, (1943): 107-108; *See also*, Lettow-Vorbeck, *Reminiscence*, 69-71. *See* Hodges; Illife; Stepletone.

The few studies that mention women's participation in WWI do not portray African women as historical actors but as war victims. In her book *Violent Intermediaries*, Michelle Moyd has discussed the involvement of German East Africa *askari* extensively. However, she has acknowledged African women's participation in WWI by only commenting on the *askaris'* act of incorporating women and children into their columns under dire war circumstances. She adds that German officers accommodated *askaris'* dependants for logistical, disciplinary and moral reasons.¹⁰⁷ Similarly, in his book *Das Ende eines Kolonialreiches* Michael Pesek discusses extensively the involvement of Africans in WWI in German East Africa, but scarcely acknowledges the presence of women at the war front and the suffering they encountered. Moreover, he refers to the improvement of *askaris'* morale as one of the advantages of women's presence amidst the troops.¹⁰⁸ However, both of these studies have portrayed women at the front as passive victims; hence, have not explained how women improved *askaris'* morale and their importance as supporters in the war. In addition, they overlooked the activities African women did at the "home front". They overlooked them despite the fact that the people of German East Africa were mobilized for WWI soon after the news of the war broke out in Europe. With the naval blockade that Germans faced, it was necessary for German East Africa to depend on itself, rather than waiting for Berlin's army to arrive. Therefore, much had to be done in the colony so as to survive the war. The economic activities in this period ranged from farming, manufacturing, manual flour grinding to the carrying of war supplies for the troops.¹⁰⁹ In all these activities, African women's contribution was indispensable.

Most studies that have included official statistics for those who were involved in WWI in Africa have unfortunately not included statistics for women's role. This is because the records available indicate bias with respect to what was perceived important at the time. They mainly show how many men were involved in combat, carried loads or did other war front activities. The records on men are very specific as to where they came from and what their duties were. For instance, Hodges mentions that the carriers from Northern Rhodesia were 50,000, among whom 12,000 were canoe men, 30,000 communications men and 8,000 fighting men.¹¹⁰ This does not mean that women never performed such activities. Though they did not actively

¹⁰⁷ Moyd, *Violent Intermediaries*, 145.

¹⁰⁸ Pesek, *Das Ende eines Kolonialreiches*, 196-201

¹⁰⁹W. O. Henderson, "The War Economy of German East Africa, 1914-1917," *The Economic History Review* 13, no.1/2, (1943): 107-108; *See also*, Lettow-Vorbeck, *Reminiscence*, 69-71.

¹¹⁰Hodges, "African Manpower Statistics,"104.

participate in combat, women performed other activities such as carrying loads without pay. During General Lettow-Vorbeck's surrender, the number of women followers who had accompanied the *Schutztruppe* up to the end of the war was indicated as 427;¹¹¹ however, their involvement in the war was neither officially recognized nor recorded. Therefore, statistically, the African women followers were not mentioned as *askari* women, carriers or any other kind of followers. In the end, it is difficult to say with certainty how many women performed which activity at the war front.

Furthermore, although Hodges¹¹² mentioned that women in British allied force gave direct support to the combatants, he was not clear as to what exactly women did. This resulted in making the activities of women to remain unknown and therefore it is hard to understand the role of women among the troops. Instead most literatures underscore how African men were involved as demonstrated, thus:

Gun Porters includes all front-line carriers of machine guns and their accessories, ammunition, signal equipment, mortars, bombs, shells or even parts of mountain guns; 'Carrier' covers load bearers, general laborers, cooks, grooms, personal servants, sweepers, interpreters, armed scouts, canoe men, tailors, carpenters, . . . and Carrier Police to prevent desertion.¹¹³

Obviously, women *askari* at the front performed some of such activities but their involvement in the war has been ignored. Consequently, the importance of women's involvement in the WWI is missing from the literature of both, the allied forces and the German force.

The status of African women followers in WWI has always been ambiguous or unknown. It is ambiguous in the sense that some studies portray them as prostitutes while others as *askaris'* wives. For example, the women who accompanied the Rhodesia Native Regiment (that belonged to the allied forces) to German East Africa have been discussed as 'prostitutes' who also performed other tasks such as cooking, laundry, fetching water and firewood.¹¹⁴ However, Iliffe refers to the women who accompanied the *Schutztruppe* during their surrender as '*askaris'* wives' who carried "huge loads, some with children born during the campaign."¹¹⁵ Hodges calls the female followers among the Nyasaland troops as food carriers,¹¹⁶ but it was not clear whose food they were carrying. Generally, the interpretation of the presence of female followers in the war has one dimension, that is, women were there to give male soldiers sexual comfort,

¹¹¹ John Iliffe, *A Modern History of Tanganyika*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 245.

¹¹² Hodges, "African Manpower Statistics,"

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 107.

¹¹⁴ Stapleton, "Military Hierarchy, Race and Ethnicity in the German East Africa Campaigns," 5.

¹¹⁵ Iliffe, *A Modern History of Tanganyika*, 245.

¹¹⁶ Hodges, "African Manpower Statistics," 107.

regardless of how many other duties they performed or how important their duties were. Again, even the act of providing sexual comfort to soldiers was not given any significance. This kind of interpretation has lowered the importance of women's activities in WWI.

1.3.4 Theory

It should be pointed out at the outset that studies on gender in war or women in war are still at their infancy. For this reason, there is no direct or readymade approach or theory that can be used to explain the issue of gender in war or women's participation in war. For this reason, this study uses a combination of a war theory and a gender concept to explain African women's participation in WWI. Therefore, this study employs Clausewitz's theory of trinity. This theory has three central conceptual levels: a primary level or objective trinity, which involves tendencies like chance, passion and policy that manifest within a society during war; the secondary level or subjective trinity, which involves the people, the commander and his army and the government during war; and the third level, which is the level of context.¹¹⁷ This study uses the third level known as context to explain African women's participation in WWI. This level of trinity is more about the social phenomena of war than political or economic components. It suggests that there is a relationship between the actions of individuals and groups (actors) in a war and the context in which they are fighting. The social aspect of war which has been examined in this study relates to the individuals and groups in the WWI in Africa and German East Africa in particular. That is, their own position, norms, culture and ideology as well as those of their opponents and allies.¹¹⁸ In any war, the human element is the most enduring. Humans have different preconceptions, attitudes and views of the world which are shaped by culture, religion and social norms. Therefore, societies or nations, individuals or groups of people belong, and constitute an important element of the conditions of war. The conditions being talked about here are those related to societies' and nations' cultural forms which represent the most important factors that affect how a war is fought. This refers to the way human social conduct produces and reproduces the changing context within which people are fighting wars. Consequently, the relationship between the context of a war and warfare itself is both reciprocal and dynamic.¹¹⁹ Therefore, when groups of people are at war, their decisions are influenced by their cultural preconceptions and norms.

¹¹⁷ Thomas Waldman, *War, Clausewitz and the Trinity* (England: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2013).

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ Waldman, *War, Clausewitz and the Trinity*, 58.

In examining the aspect of gender, this study uses the African feminists' approach to gender relations in Africa, which states that there is complementarity and co-operation between African women and men. This concept of complementarity and co-operation is against individualism and conflicts between men and women as seen in Western feminism.¹²⁰ It was introduced in the 1980s and gained popularity in the 1990s. African feminists, including scholars such as Ifi Amadiume, Mary Modupe Kolawole, Obiama Nnaemeka and Oyeronke Oyewumi, place African feminism under the broader umbrella of global feminism. However, they critique the ideas of Western feminism with respect to African gender relations. Western feminists interpret African gender relations as being based on an oppositional binary structure which has been translated into theories that emphasize struggle and disharmony between men and women without taking into account the histories of African women.¹²¹ As a result, their conclusions on African gender relations are replete with generalisations and sweeping assumptions.

Western feminism portrays African women in relation to African men more as victims, especially on the question of women's labour burden and submissiveness to men.¹²² In other words, Western feminists interpret African gender relations using Western lenses. They turn a blind eye to the fact that in different contexts and cultures, gender is experienced differently.¹²³ To address the problem, African feminism proposes that there should be specificity when one is looking at African gender relations. Their argument is based on the specific history of Africa and the achievements of its women, which prove that African women are assertive and self-reliant heroines who pose threats to normative conjugal and family relations. Furthermore, African women share specific concerns that give them a joint outlook on expressing their interests not adequately captured by other feminists' positions.¹²⁴ They further argue that African women's relationships with men are peripheral to women's self-perceptions and in making sense of their own lives and desires.¹²⁵

¹²⁰ Andrea Cornwall, "Introduction: Perspectives on Gender in Africa," in *Reading Gender in Africa*, ed. Andrea Cornwall (London: SOAS, 2005): 4 [1-19].

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² *Ibid.*, 1-3.

¹²³ Laura Sjoberg and Sandra Via, "Introduction," in *Gender, War and Militarism: Feminists Perspectives*, eds., Laura Sjoberg and Sandra Via (Santa Barbara, California: Praeger, 2010): 4.

¹²⁴ Lahoucine Ouzgane and Robert Morrel, "Introduction," in *African Masculinities*, eds. Lahoucine Ouzgane and Robert Morrel (New York: Palgrave Mac Millan, 2005). [1-20]; *See also*, Cornwall, "Introduction," 1.

¹²⁵ Andrea Cornwall, "Introduction: Perspectives on Gender in Africa," in *Reading Gender in Africa*, ed. Andrea Cornwall (London: SOAS, 2005): 4 [1-19].

This study uses the above two theoretical approaches because war is a social activity¹²⁶ and gender is based on socially constructed expectations,¹²⁷ and both relate to the culture of the people concerned. The approaches explain the importance of cultural norms, attitudes, expectations and preconceptions to human actions: one in relation to gender in Africa and the other in relation to war. This study believes that the two approaches have facilitated adequately the interpretation of African women's participation in WWI and, in particular, their role in the war in German East Africa.

This study looks at African women's participation in WWI. As applied to this study, the term participation means war activities. For this reason, it is defined as direct or indirect involvement of different groups of people in observable activities connected to warfare from preparation to implementation of war strategies in order to meet their purposes. Their involvement in war can be psychological as well as physical. In general, war involves many activities other than combat. The activities include movement of goods, tending to animals, food production and preparation, food and ammunition supply, caring for the wounded, laundry and sexual comfort. As far as this study is concerned, anyone who does these activities during any war would have actively participated in it. This is because soldiers, like any other human beings, need support in performing the mentioned activities. They could be provided either on or outside the battlefield. Such women's activities are important in war as they give soldiers physical and moral support to fight. Therefore, this study shows the importance of African women's activities in and during WWI in German East Africa. Furthermore, in this study, the term "women" refers to females with the ages that range from menstruating young girls to the late middle aged women. This means the study excludes children. This choice of the age range is based on the normal age of human beings who are able or strong enough to perform various activities in society.

1.4 Research Methodology

This study employed a qualitative approach. The choice of this approach is based on Mason's argument that qualitative research is very effective in cultural studies, oral historical studies, media studies, women studies, and health studies among others.¹²⁸ In particular, this approach is useful in acquiring specific information about cultural values, opinions, behaviour and the

¹²⁶ Waldman, War, Clausewitz and the Trinity.

¹²⁷ Sjoberg Laura, *Gendering Global Conflict: Toward a Feminists Theory of War* (New York: Colombia University Press, 2013), 5.

¹²⁸ Jennifer Mason, *Qualitative Researching*, (London: SAGE, 1996), 9.

social context of any population. Furthermore, its methods are useful in identifying intangible factors such as social norms, socio-economic status and gender roles. The study used different research techniques to collect the data so as to grasp a good understanding of African women's involvement in WWI and the consequences of their participation in the war. Specifically, this study reviewed pictorial images and documents and conducted in-depth interviews with the elderly of southern Tanganyika. Thus, the study analyzed both secondary and primary data.

1.4.1 Review of Documentary Records

To identify African's women activities during WWI in German East Africa, this study examined several written documents. The documents examined included archival records written by mainly colonial officials and other Europeans involved in WWI in Africa, since most Africans at the time were illiterate. The documents were obtained from various institutions including the university libraries of Goettingen and Leipzig in Germany and University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. More documents from university archives such as Frankfurt University Archives in Germany and Oxford University (Bodleian Library Archives-Weston house) in the United Kingdom were also reviewed. Additionally, documents from state archives including the Belgian Federal Public Service Foreign Affairs in Brussels, Belgium, and the British National Archives in London, the United Kingdom were analysed. Documents were also obtained from the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren, Belgium, and the Imperial War Museum in London, the United Kingdom.

Therefore, the researcher consulted various historical sources in the libraries, archives and museums. They included district reports, annual reports, war notes, war diaries, war reports, operational reports, private files, soldiers' memoirs, and personal and administrative correspondence. The contents of different reports gave vital insights into what was happening in different parts of German East Africa in terms of combat, people's movements and sufferings, and the human activities done by both men and women. Personal letters revealed the feelings of those involved in the war, their observations and their encounters as far as Africans were concerned while the administrative letters revealed conflicting ideas, agreements, disagreements and debates between commanders, between commanders and officers, between officers and *askari* or between commanders and *askari*. The documents showed the activities done daily during the war, gender roles and the records of soldiers' and carriers' attitudes towards African women. The analysis of the documents is presented in the subsequent chapters of this dissertation.

It should be noted that the researcher faced a number of difficulties in obtaining data on African women during the war. At the beginning, the researcher thought that much data was available in the Tanzanian archives and more in German, British and Belgian archives. However, contrary to the researcher's expectations, the Tanzanian archives did not have any records or information on African women during WWI. The archives visited included the Tanzania National Archives in Dar es Salaam and zonal archives, namely the Southern Zonal Archives in Mbeya and the Central Zonal Archives in Dodoma. However, none of these archives had records on African women during WWI. The Missionary Benedictines' Archives in Peramiho, Songea, in Tanzania, were also visited but they were closed at the time. Therefore, the researcher spent much time and funds on visiting all these archives without getting any relevant data.

Language was another challenge that limited the undertaking of the study in Germany's state archives. Most colonial records in the archives were in the German language. The problem was that, as a researcher, my German was not good enough to help me read the records and identify the relevant documents. This to some extent affected data collection since the voices of the Germans who were present in German East Africa during the war could not be heard as clearly as those of the allied forces' side. To address the problem and reduce bias, this study consulted war accounts written by German commanders such as General Lettow-Vorbeck and the then governor of German East Africa Dr. Schnee, who was with the German forces throughout the war. Therefore, as far as the archival documents are concerned, this study benefited mainly from records found in archives and museums in Belgium and the United Kingdom.

The Tanzanian National and Zonal Archives and the Benedictines' archives in Peramiho were visited during the first phase of the fieldwork. This phase started in August 2016 and ended in January 2017. The permission to access the archives was obtained through introductory letters from my employer, Dar es Salaam University College of Education (DUCE), and from my supervisor Professor Rebekka Habermas of Goettingen University. The second phase of the study was done in Belgium and the United Kingdom between January 2018 and April 2018. The permission to access the archives was obtained through email communication between me and the people in charge of the archival sections I was interested in and the letters from Professor Habermas.

The records obtained from the Tanzanian National Archives records were mainly about African women before and after WWI. However, those on the period before WWI mainly related to court proceedings of women who had been raped and very few reports on women war captives. With regard to the period after WWI, a few records such as annual district reports which

indicated the lives of Africans in German East Africa were obtained. These records improved the researchers' understanding of lives of women before WWI (Chapter Three) and provided data for the effects of WWI on African women (Chapter Six). As mentioned earlier, it should be noted that the visits to both zonal archives did not yield the expected results. This is because most of the records in the zonal archives cover the period from the late 1930s to the present.

The Belgian archives and museum, namely the Belgian Federal Public Service Foreign Affairs Archives and the Royal Museum for Central Africa, had various documents. The documents included war reports, notes, correspondence between commanders and between commanders and officers. The researcher also read soldiers' personal memoirs such as letters and war diaries, which contained information about the general perception of the war from the soldiers' point of view. The contents of the files provided better insights into Belgian women *askaris*' role and the importance of their role to their *askari* husbands. They contained information on the atrocities committed by the allied forces (Belgians and British) to women and men in German East Africa. They also provided insights into the relationship between Belgian officers and their *askari* and *askaris*' families. They contained much information on agreements, disagreements and debates between military officials concerning African women within the troops and outside. Some of the private files in the Royal Museum for Central Africa Archives were exclusive files for Belgian *askaris*' women who participated in the war. They embodied a number of names of the women who were in some of the military camps in the Belgian occupied area of German East Africa and women's attitudes and other issues concerning women in the war zone. The analysis of these documents is done in chapters four and six which are concerned with the role of women in the war and the effects of the war on women, respectively.

Various documents in the British National Archives, the Bodleian Library Archives and the Imperial War Museum in the United Kingdom included war correspondence, personal memoirs, war diaries, orders and reports on the war. The contents of these documents revealed important information on troops' activities and movements, the activities of African men and women, African men's and women's war-related troubles, their coping strategies and their ways of resisting against certain oppressive war practices. They also give insights into the effects of the war on Africans in German East Africa. However, on the atrocities the allied forces troops committed against women and men in German East Africa, they contained more information about Belgian forces' atrocities during the war than those of the British forces. For example, the raping and abduction of African women by Belgian *askari* during the occupation of German East Africa was discussed intensively and extensively. They also revealed the atrocities of

German forces before and during the war, while at the same time presenting British troops as the well-behaved troops. To reduce bias, this study obtained other sources to scrutinize the behaviour of the British troops. The analysis of the above documents is done in chapters three, four and six.

1.5.2 Other Written Documents

This study has benefited from several written accounts by early European missionaries and explorers. The early explorers and missionaries who visited Africa in the pre-colonial period and documented what they observed included David Livingstone,¹²⁹ Archibald Dalzell,¹³⁰ Richard F. Burton,¹³¹ Antonio C. P. Gamito,¹³² J. Frederick Elton,¹³³ Donald Fraser,¹³⁴ Joseph Thomson¹³⁵ and Horace Waller.¹³⁶ Their published reports were specifically written for a European audience and therefore they are Eurocentric and replete with racist connotations. However, they are the only detailed written accounts that provide a glimpse into the lives of Africans in the pre-colonial period. They provide vital insights into gender relations, different societies' expectations of women during peace and war times and socio-economic parameters of women's participation in wars during the pre-colonial era. The analysis of African women's participation in wars during the pre-colonial era is discussed in chapter two of this dissertation.

Ethnographic accounts were also important in this study. The ethnographic works consulted were those done around German East Africa. They include the works of Godfrey Wilson,¹³⁷ Arthur Culwick¹³⁸ and Bryant Mumford.¹³⁹ These ethnographers studied some of the

¹²⁹ David Livingstone, *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1870).

¹³⁰ Sir Richard F. Burton, *The Lake Regions of Central Africa, Vol. II* (New York: Horizon Press, 1961).

¹³¹ Archibald Dalzell, *The History of Dahomey: An Inland Kingdom of Africa* (London: Spilsbury, 1793).

¹³² Antonio C.P. Gamito, *King Kazembe and the Marave, Cheva, Bisa, Bemba, Lunda, and other people of Southern Africa, Vol. II*, Trans. Ian Cunnison, (Lisboa, 1960).

¹³³ J. Frederick Elton, *The Lakes and Mountains of Eastern and Central Africa*, ed. H.B. Cotterill (London: John Murray, 1879).

¹³⁴ Donald Fraser, *Winning a Primitive People* (New York: E.P. Dutton and Company, 1914).

¹³⁵ Joseph Thomson, *To the Central African Lakes and Back, 1878-1880: Vol. 1* (London: Gilbert and Rivington Printers, 1881).

¹³⁶ Horace Waller, *The Last Journals of David Livingstone in Central Africa: From 1865 to his death* (New York: Harper and his Brothers Publishers, 1875).

¹³⁷ Godfrey Wilson, *The Constitution of Ngonde* (Livingstone, Northern Rhodesia: Livingstone Institute, 1939); *See also*, Godfrey Wilson, "Introduction to Nyakyusa Law," *Journal of the International African Institute* 10, no. 1 (Jan. 1937).

¹³⁸ G. M. Culwick and A. T. Culwick, 'The Functions of Bride-Wealth in Ubena of the Rivers', *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 7, No. 2 (1 April 1934).

¹³⁹ Bryant Mumford, "The Hehe, Bena, Sangu Peoples of East Africa," *American Anthropologist* 36, (1934).

communities in German East Africa. Even though they wrote for European audiences, their accounts give insight into gender relations, the role of gender in war rituals, what was considered as morally correct during wars and the whole perception of war and its organization, especially in the less-organized or weak societies. Much of the information provided by ethnographers is one sided in terms of gender, since their works are based on what they observed among men or what they were told by men. They did not have direct access to women who mostly occupied the domestic space which was not accessible to European men. However, their accounts are still important since they at least show how women were perceived by men in their own societies. The analysis of these ethnographic accounts is done in chapters two and five.

1.5.3 Pictorial Records

This study has included pictorial images as a source of information that gives insights into the role of women in war. In this study, pictorial records refer to historical images such as paintings and photographs. As a source of materials, pictorial records are often overlooked, but, when incorporated with written records, they become significantly informative. In these images, it is possible to see what was not readily available in the written records, especially when it is about groups of people that written documents have less focused on.¹⁴⁰ African women during WWI belonged to the group that received less focus in written accounts. The pictorial images consulted include paintings and photographs that covered the period between 1900 and 1922. The images were obtained from various archives, institutions and historical websites. They include the Frankfurt am Main University (colonial archives) in Germany, the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Belgium, the Imperial War Museum in the United Kingdom and from websites such as the International Missionary Photographic Archives (IMPA) and *Lebendiges Museum Online* (LeMO). The images have provided vital insights into women's participation in WWI and the effects of the war on Africans. The analysis of these images has informed the content of chapter five of this thesis.

1.5.3 Oral Sources

This study also collected data from oral sources. This is because most of the data which had been collected from archives came from Europeans who participated in WWI in Africa. Even the voices of the few Africans who talked about the war were heard through Europeans. At the same time, the documents obtained were written by European men. To address this challenge,

¹⁴⁰ Christraud M. Geary, "Photographs as Materials for African History Some Methodological Considerations," *History of Africa* 1, no. 13, (1986): 91-92, 100.

this study collected data from Africans themselves to get their views on the war. Oral sources such as personal accounts are accounts of past events as remembered by the individuals concerned. Also eyewitness accounts are important source of information about the events that occurred in the past as remembered either by an eyewitness him/herself or subsequent family members of the eyewitness. They are part of oral history that can be used in historical reconstruction.¹⁴¹ The study takes the oral interview as the only method that could be used to get Africans' views on the war with respect to women's role or participation. Since the people who were involved in the war are dead, it was not possible to find such people. It was thought that interviews should be conducted with the relatives of German *askari* and other elderly people in different areas of Mainland Tanzania that were affected by the war. By *askaris'* relatives, the researcher means the children and grandchildren of *askari* who belonged to the *Schutztruppe* that fought in WWI. It was thought that information about the war might have been passed on to them. Furthermore, by elderly people the researcher means the elderly indigenous Africans in the villages of Southern Mainland Tanzania aged 70 and over. This age group was chosen because they might have heard about the war from their parents or grandparents.

However, in the field, the researcher could not interview *askaris'* relatives mainly because of the absence or difficulty in finding a list of German *askari* who were involved in WWI and their location. It was thought that the list would be available at the Tanzania National Archives since it is said that the *askari* received their pension up to the 1960s.¹⁴² However, it was not found. For this reason, it was impossible to find the relatives of the WWI *askari*. Therefore, the only alternative was to interview some of the elderly people in the southern part of Mainland Tanzania. The regions selected were Lindi and Ruvuma. The districts selected in Lindi were Nachingwea and Liwale, and Songea in Ruvuma. The researcher conducted in-depth interviews with the selected elderly people.

1.5.3.1 Individual Interviews

The study conducted individual interview which is one of the instruments used in qualitative studies. The researcher conducted personal face-to-face interviews with the elderly people. In the personal interview method, the interviewer or researcher asks the interviewee (respondents or informants) questions orally in a face-to-face situation. As a method, individual interviews

¹⁴¹ Vansina, Jan, (1985). *Oral Tradition as History*, Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, Wisconsin.

¹⁴² Moyd, Violent Intermediaries.

were done because the respondents were living at a larger distance from each other. The respondents were purposely selected. Since the research was on war, the researcher sampled old men who participated in WWII. They were selected because these men and their wives might not have been born during or before WWI but were presumably born immediately after it. Therefore, they heard about the war from their parents and grandparents and had witnessed the effects of the war. This was made possible with the help of the Directorate of Reserve Forces (DRF) which is part of the Tanzania People's Defence Force (TPDF). This directorate has close contact with the soldiers who fought in WWII. Through it, the researcher got 15 WWII *askari* who were still alive. Only five of the soldiers were still living with their old wives. The important variable used was age and one being indigenous to the respective villages. The *askari* and their wives aged 70 or over were interviewed face-to-face. The information obtained from the respondents was recorded using mainly a voice recorder, and also a notebook. The reason for using mainly a voice recorder was that some of the respondents were very old and had a hearing problem. They needed time and much repetition of questions for them to understand the questions. They spoke very slowly in a low voice.

Before going to the field, the researcher prepared structured guiding questions of which the key theme was in harmony with the specific objectives. The researcher asked for permission to record the interviews and verbal permission was granted before recording. The researcher first asked them to provide their credentials as WWII *askari* and their experiences of WWII. Then, the researcher asked them about life before WWII before asking them about WWI and what they had heard about WWI. Further questions about WWI differed according to the answers a respondent had given. After each interview, each respondent was given a small gift such as a few kilograms of sugar and some tea leaves.

The researcher began analyzing the data in the field. Every evening, the researcher listened to and transcribed the information and documented it. The responses were examined in order to identify patterns, themes, biases and meanings of the collected data. The responses were categorized according to the key concepts in the specific objectives. Further re-categorization of the concepts was done to identify themes and sub-themes. For example, the responses from male respondents were grouped differently from those from female respondents.

The in-depth interviews provided information mainly on general suffering that was caused by WWI, but not on women as *askaris'* wives or *askari* victims. The respondents were not keen to talk about what they heard had happened to women as a social group during the war. Instead, they gave general information about what they heard or witnessed in their villages as young

people in the period before WWII. They provided information in relation to the hiding places during the WWI, famine and other forms of hardships such as lack of clothing after the WWI. The researcher identified information mostly on experiences and the consequences of war on women at the home front. The information is presented in chapter six which discusses the effects of the war. Lack of interest in questions about women in relation to *askaris*' behaviour during the war might mean that either *askari* did not cause chaos in the sampled villages or the respondents were too embarrassed to talk about it.¹⁴³

1.5.4 Ethical and Legal Requirements Associated with Data Collection

As mentioned earlier, data collection was done in three phases. The first phase began in August 2016 and ended in January 2017 in Tanzania. During this phase the researcher reviewed various documents. The second phase of the research began in mid-January 2018 and ended in mid-March 2018 in Belgium and the United Kingdom. In this phase, the researcher reviewed various documents and visual images. During the third phase which began in April and ended in June 2018 in Tanzania, the researcher collected data from mainly oral sources. The research was done only after permission had been granted. In the first and second phases of the study, the researcher was given access to materials found in the archives of Tanzania, Belgium and the United Kingdom after presenting the letters of introduction from the employer, Dar es Salaam University College of Education (DUCE), and a letter from the supervisor, Prof. Rebekka Habermas of Goettingen University. During the third phase, however, research clearance was sought for two regions, Lindi and Ruvuma, in which the interviews were conducted. As an employee of Dar es Salaam University College of Education, which is a constituent college of the University of Dar es Salaam, the research clearance was granted by the University of Dar es Salaam. According to the research regulations pertaining to Tanzania, the University of Dar es Salaam is mandated to provide research clearance for its academic staff and students. Furthermore, because the target respondents were WWII *askari*, their records were in the Directorate of Reserve Forces, which is under Tanzania People's Defence Force. To access records of the intended respondents and interview them, the researcher obtained a research permit from the Headquarters of the Directorate of Reserve Forces in Dar es Salaam.

The permits enabled the researcher to obtain research clearance from Lindi and Ruvuma regions. The Regional Administrative Secretaries (RASs) and the Office of the Regional Reserve Forces submitted research clearance to the District Administrative Secretaries (DASs)

¹⁴³ The list of interviewees, dates and places can be found

and to the Office of the District Reserve Force, respectively. The Office of the District Reserve Forces communicated directly with the respondents or their relatives. In addition, they provided transport and assistants who knew the respondents and their locations. However, before the researcher interviewed the respondents, she had to contact and introduce herself to the local officials in each village of the respondents. The respondents were told the purpose of the interview and how the information would be used. They were also assured of confidentiality. Each respondent gave verbal consent (which was recorded) to be interviewed.

1.6 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is organized into seven chapters. Chapter one introduces the topic of this study and presents the argument of the study. It also presents the research objectives and questions. Furthermore, the chapter describes the areas where the study was conducted and gives a short history of German East Africa. It has reviewed relevant studies. In the reviews, the history of gender during the colonial era, WWI in Africa and women in WWI have been discussed. The position of African women in this era, which explains the reason behind their absence in the history of WWI as active participants, is presented. This was followed by a discussion of the methods used to collect data.

Chapter two examines African women's participation in pre-colonial wars. The chapter stands as a historical foundation of women's participation in different wars over time. It looks at women in different parts of the world in terms of their participation in wars. To understand women's position in wars, this chapter examines female followers who accompanied troops from early years (before Christ) to the late 19th century. It looks at the status of female followers in different parts of the world and makes a comparative analysis of societies' attitudes towards female followers over time. The intention is to identify the difference in attitude between Africans and Europeans in the onset of colonialism since the colonialists encouraged female followers in colonial army as discussed in chapter three.

Chapter three assesses African women's participation in colonial wars before WWI. It looks at African women in colonial troops and in different African communities that resisted colonial invasion. It discusses different kinds of the roles played by African women in the colonial armies and those played by women in different communities in support of their warriors. In addition, it looks at the colonial troops' attitude towards 'other' women who were not part of the colonial armies. The aim of colonialism was to exploit the colonized. Thus, the colonial governments used large auxiliary armies without paying the soldiers, but paid themselves

through war booty. Therefore, this chapter looks at the effects of such a policy on ‘other’ women, their children, as well as the families and communities concerned.

The fourth chapter explores African women’s participation in WWI in German East Africa and its importance. It looks at how African women participated in the war directly or indirectly. Women participated directly by being part of the troops at war front and indirectly by participating in war effort in different factories and plantations and by supporting their families at the home front. Logically, at the war front, women supported their husbands and encouraged them to fight, while those at the home front took care of their families. Furthermore, women participated in the war by being part of the group of couriers, load carriers, spies, domestic service providers and the like. The chapter argues that women’s support was very crucial to the success of the war on both sides, but even more so to the German force, the *Schutztruppe*.

The fifth chapter uses pictorial images including photographs and paintings to show women and men in different activities related to campaigns and the daily activities in the household. The images cover the colonial period between 1900 and 1922. The period covers between colonial consolidations to the period after the WWI. This chapter looks at how women’s and men’s activities complimented each other. The chapter also looks at the war and its effects on both men and women. This chapter underlines the importance of women in relation to giving support to men during the war. It argues that, women’s activities in times of war and peace were as important as men’s.

The sixth chapter analyses the challenges that Africans, particularly African women, faced after WWI. Africans, including women, faced various challenges from the time the war started. During the war, women faced challenges in terms of losing men’s labour, protection and support in taking care of their families. This affected women in terms of production and reproduction. Many families faced food shortages because they did not have enough labour power in agriculture and many other families were displaced by the war and others found themselves in a precarious situation as a result of rape and abductions by *askari*. After the war, the major effect was contracting of diseases; hence, as a result, women had to take care of their sick husbands and other members of their families.

Chapter seven concludes the thesis. It gives a summary of the main themes discussed in this study.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 Pre-colonial African Women and Warfare

2.1 Introduction

Throughout the world, women have been part of various wars since time immemorial. Except in the contemporary armies in which women are combatants, in the past, women participated in wars by supporting men and encouraging them to fight.¹⁴⁴ It was only when it was absolutely necessary for women to participate in wars as combatants they did so.¹⁴⁵ However, until recently, military historians have overlooked women's contributions in warfare. For many decades, the general attitude towards women's involvement in wars has been negative. This attitude has mostly been built by men who, for many decades, have dominated historical military discussions in terms of being subjects of scholarly writings. The reasons behind this state include, firstly, women have been regarded as the 'protected' group, therefore, cannot participate in combat, and secondly, because giving support to men during war was not seen as direct participation. Many military historians have focused on the participation in wars through combat which is mostly done by men. As a result, the role of women as war supporters has been overlooked. Many discussions on women in different wars have portrayed them as victims of wars.¹⁴⁶ The dearth of discussions about women's role in wars has affected the understanding of many wars and conflicts. Bearing this in mind, women in this study are regarded as part of the society contributed actively in the making and fighting war.¹⁴⁷ This is to say that the history of many wars is incomplete owing to the fact that the aspect of gender is not included in it.

This chapter discusses the role played by African women during the pre-colonial era. It examines the involvement of African women in warfare before the colonial period, that is, before 1884, the year in which the imperial powers started to partition the African continent. The objective is to examine the involvement of African women in different wars during the pre-colonial period. This chapter, therefore, seeks to answer the following question: What were

¹⁴⁴ Linda Grant De Pauw, *Battle Cries and Lullabies: Women in Wars from Pre-history to the Present* (Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 2014), 13-17.

¹⁴⁵ Bruce Vandervort, *Wars of Imperial Conquest in Africa 1830-1914*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 3; See, Jorit Wintjes, "Keep the Women Out of the Camp!": Women and Military Institutions in the Classical World," in *A Companion to Women's Military History*, Ed. Barton C. Hacker and Magreth Vining (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 71-76; See also, Andre Corvisier, *Armies and Societies in Europe, 1494-1789*, Trans. Abigail T. Siddall (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), 3-6.

¹⁴⁶ Laura Sjoberg, *Gender, War and conflict* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014), 26-29.

¹⁴⁷ Laura Sjoberg, *Gendering Global Conflict: Toward a Feminist Theory of War* (Colombia: University Press, 2013), 6.

Africans' attitudes towards involving women in wars during the pre-colonial period? To answer this question, the chapter extracts examples from mainly West, Central and East Africa, since it was from these parts of Africa that the allied forces took the Africans who fought in WWI in German East Africa. In addition, the chapter discusses a number of different societies from West, Central and East Africa as a balanced representation of all African societies. Furthermore, in answering the question about men's attitude towards women's participation in war, the chapter discusses the kinds of support which women gave to men. Both men's and women's actions towards each other and towards commanders during war are examined.

Before examining African men's attitude towards women during a war, one has to understand the general status of African women in relation to African men. Africa has many communities with different cultures and traditions that support and enable them to survive in their environment. However, there are certain core cultural characteristics found in societies with different traditions. One of such cultural characteristics has to do with gender relations between men and women. In most societies, activities were divided amongst members on the basis of gender. Physically tough work such as forest clearing, war fighting, hunting, animal herding, and homestead management belonged to men while domestic chores, wild fruit and plant gathering and much of repetitive agricultural work were performed by women.¹⁴⁸ Thus, their various activities complemented each other and made it easy for the whole community to survive. Even in societies where men were good at repetitive agricultural activities, gender-based division of labour was complementary. Therefore, the social status of men and that of women did not constitute a fixed hierarchy. It was more complex and involved more factors than gender. In general, an individual's status comprised such things as gender, age and social standing. First, women's reproductive contribution earned them much respect in society. In addition, women performed many other production activities such as pottery, weaving and trade which put them in different social economic positions. Some women belonged to royal families, which gave them a higher status than that of most men.¹⁴⁹ Generally, in many African societies women's status in the pre-colonial period was not always lower than that of men. In other words, in most of African communities, not all men had better social standing than all women.

¹⁴⁸ John Illife, *A modern History of Tanganyika*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 16; *See also*, Horace Waller, *The Last Journals of David Livingstone in Central Africa: From 1865 to his death* (New York: Harper and his Brothers Publishers, 1875), 88.

¹⁴⁹ Heike Schmidt, "Negotiating Marginality: The Maji Maji War and Its Aftermath in South-western Tanzania, ca. 1905-1916," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 43, no. 1 (2010), 36-39.

Therefore, African women in the pre-colonial era cannot be regarded as docile or as oppressed compared to men.

To understand the position of African women during any war, it is first important to understand the different views about women and their involvement in warfare throughout the centuries. To be able to grasp the worldview on women and warfare, the chapter begins by showing the position of women in relation to men, as far as the history of warfare is concerned. Then, it gives an analytical description and comparison of women's role in pre-modern warfare with respect to different geographical settings of Europe. This helps to understand that, as part of society, all over the world women have always participated in wars. In most cases, their role was almost the same, since it mainly relates to domestic duties and logistics regardless of the differences in culture and geographical setting.

Then, the chapter gives a detailed historical account of wars in pre-colonial Africa and women's participation in warfare. The chapter ends by exploring the importance of African women's participation in warfare and men's reliance on women. By identifying women's importance and how men depended on them, African men's attitudes towards women's involvement in warfare is exposed. Furthermore, the position of African women in warfare before colonialism is compared to European women with respect to the same period. The comparison is important, since, in the following chapter, the discussion centres on the colonial era, with European men and their intermediaries on one side and African men and women on the other and how the two sides interacted during colonial wars. In addition, the chapter also looks at a mid-19th century differences in attitude between African and European men in terms of women's involvement in wars. This will set premises for the next chapter which deals with African women and warfare during the colonial period but before WWI. In this period, the colonial authorities involved African women in the military which was contrary to their European moral standards.

2.2 Women in military history

In the history of wars and warfare, women's contributions have until a few decades ago been overlooked. Studies on military history have generally concentrated on the contribution of only one gender, the male gender. This has been so because most military historians regarded combat as the only way whereby one could participate in warfare. In most wars, men were, and still are, the main participants as combatants. As a combatant, a man could fight the enemy to death to protect his family, his community and strengthen his position in the society in terms of power. In pre-colonial African societies, like in European societies, during wars, women were expected (even though it was not always the case) to stay at home. Maintain farms and care for children

and the elderly, while men were on the battlefield. At the time, the universal idea was that aggression and ambition were part of men's behaviour.

In most societies in Europe and Africa, being a soldier was for centuries an activity reserved for men. This is owing to the fact that it had a positive impact on the male individual economically, socially and politically. The perception was that women were too irrational and emotional¹⁵⁰ to participate in violent activities such as wars. Others believed that allowing women to participate in combat would cause social disorder which might lead to social chaos and destruction.¹⁵¹ For example, from the 15th century to the 18th century the idea that women should be submissive, caring and meek was common in European societies.¹⁵² Additionally, from the 19th century to the early 20th century, it was socially enforced that a woman has to be submissive, caring and meek.¹⁵³ Thus, in regular armies, women's engagement in combat was out of the question.

Despite the above-mentioned biased attitude towards women, women have for centuries participated in warfare as both combatants and non-combatants. For example, in the classical Europe (between 8th century BC to 5th Century AD) to the mid-17th century, women participated in combat during a siege or defended their local communities when most of their men had gone to war or when men were in desperate need of help.¹⁵⁴ In the circumstances mentioned above, women had to join in the defence of their communities as supporters as well as combatants when the situation was critical. There were many instances when women saved the day.¹⁵⁵ In addition, because of lack of trust in women's capabilities in combat, for many centuries, female political leaders and regents in Europe had to be very canny and used different tactics to lead the defence of their territories without drawing attention to themselves as combat leaders.¹⁵⁶ In this way, they maintained large armies in wars and came out victorious.

¹⁵⁰ Elizabeth D. Leonard, *Yankee Women: Gender Battles in the Civil War* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1994), xxii.

¹⁵¹ Mary Elizabeth Ailes, "Camp Followers, Suitlers and Soldiers' Wives," in *A Companion to Women's Military History*, eds. Barton C. Hacker and Magreth Vining (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 63.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Richard Daniel Altick, *Victorian People and Ideas, First Edition* (New York: Norton and Company, 1973), 53-54; *See also*, Peter N. Stearns, "Imperialist Ideas About Women" in *Cultures in Motion: Mapping Key Contacts and Their Imprints in World History book* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2001), 86.

¹⁵⁴ Ailes, "Camp Followers", 69; *See*, Jorit Wintjes, "'Keep the Women Out of the Camp!': Women and Military Institutions in the Classical World," in *A Companion to Women's Military History*, Ed. Barton C. Hacker and Magreth Vining (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 71-76; *See also*, Andre Corvisier, *Armies and Societies in Europe, 1494-1789*, Trans. Abigail T. Siddall (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), 3-6.

¹⁵⁵ Wintjes, "Keep the Women Out of the Camp!" 32-42.

¹⁵⁶ Ailes, "Camp Followers," 63-68

The attitude of men and women towards the masculinity of combat had a certain effect on the history of war. Combatants' war efforts counted more than that of other people in a community. Consequently, all other activities including acts of supporting the combatants have been regarded as irrelevant or feminine. Although for many centuries, as non-combatants, women have supported the male combatants in warfare, but for long time military historians have ignored women's supportive role in war in their studies. The reason behind this neglect is that military men and military historians see the support women gave to soldiers as their obvious responsibility, but not as a military support to combatants. That is why Sir James Turner, a Scottish officer in the Swedish army during the European Thirty-Year War (1618-1648), commented on the soldiers' wives who had gone to the war with their husbands as: "A woman was created to be a helper to a man, so women are greater helpers in the armies to their husbands . . . they provide food, buy and dress their husbands . . ." ¹⁵⁷ To him and many others who have supported the idea of having soldiers' wives at the war front, women's presence was regarded as a way of forming a home to which soldiers could go and be comforted. Secondly, there has not been enough attention given to the few women combatants, especially those in Africa. As a result, for many centuries, societies have perceived women's participation in combat as an abnormal activity because a real woman should be at home and not actively fighting at the war front. That is, physical combat should not be for "her" but only for "him."

The presence of women at the war front in Africa, for example, has been ignored as a crucial subject by military historians. This could be as a result of insufficient and scattered evidence. However, the long presence of male historians in African military history, with very few, if any female military historians, seems to be the major reason for the lack of interest in women's participation in war. In addition, the presence of few female military historians might have contributed to the gender bias that exists and foregrounds masculinity on the one hand and looks down upon or devalues the aspect of femininity in warfare on the other. As a result, most wars were, and still are, analyzed mainly with respect to one gender, which is the male gender. This has obscured the understanding of many wars, since, according to Laura Sjoberg, without showing the contribution of both genders, one cannot "conceptualise what counts as war, who are the actors in war and what gendered values are reflected in the making and fighting of a war." ¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 76-77.

¹⁵⁸ Laura Sjoberg, *Gendering Global Conflict: Toward a Feminist Theory of War* (New York: Colombia University Press, 2013), 6.

Recent studies have established that women have participated in warfare as both combatants and supporters. According to De Pauw, throughout history, women have played different roles in the military, for instance, as instigators, viragos, combat supporters and warriors.¹⁵⁹ As instigators, they encourage men to fight or continue to fight; as virago, they lead in battles or form rear guard units to guard their families and property; as combat supporters, they act as spies; and as warriors, they fight in combat. Although women's performance of their functions has been great, it has not attracted the attention it deserves from military historians. According to M.C. Devilbiss, there is always a "yes, but . . ." to most listeners when it comes to women's participation in war.¹⁶⁰ The "yes, but . . ." surfaces whenever there is proof of women's important military contribution for the purpose of downplaying its relevance.

In addition, in spite of women's support to combatants and direct combat, social perception towards female followers especially in Europe was different compared to that of male followers. The perception of females' participation has been negative for centuries. All female followers were considered to have one status, that is, as prostitutes, only because some women followers gave sexual comfort to men in exchange for money. This negative attitude has greatly clouded the actual role of women followers, and therefore, women have not been regarded as female combat supporters. Strangely, male followers who provided almost the same services were perceived in a positive way. The continued negative perception of women has resulted from military historians who have given a positive interpretation to the activities of male combat supporters but not those of female supporters. This bias is well described by De Pauw, who observes:

A military participant may at one time lead troops against enemy position and at other times peel potatoes, dig latrines, polish boots, or treat a buddy's frostbitten feet. Conventional military history will describe a man who does these as a 'soldier'. If a woman does the same things, historical sources, if they notice her at all, will probably refer to her as a 'nurse'. If the male soldier has a lover it will make no difference to the historical record, but the woman will be placed in a sexually defined category to the exclusion of any others.¹⁶¹

2.3 Women and War

In different parts of the world, women have always been involved at the war front. They have provided support to men and fought together with men. In Europe and North Africa, for example, evidence shows women were involved in different wars for centuries even before the

¹⁵⁹ Linda Grant De Pauw, *Battle Cries and Lullabies: Women in Wars from Pre-history to the Present* (Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 2014), 18-23.

¹⁶⁰ Personal communication as cited in De Pauw, *Battle Cries and Lullabies*, 2.

¹⁶¹ De Pauw, *Battle Cries and Lullabies*, 17.

first century A.D.¹⁶² In other parts of Africa, the few studies conducted on pre-colonial African warfare indicate that African women were involved in wars as supporters. According to the argument mounted by some of African historians on the lack of studies on women in the military history of Africa, there are few studies done on pre-colonial militarism.¹⁶³ However, this explanation for the omission of women is not persuasive, since, if men fought, definitely there were women who supported them. Therefore, the main reason for this omission has more to do with the tendency of regarding war only as a masculine activity. This attitude was promoted by historical sources that show male warriors as being heroic fighters while women are portrayed as mere war victims. In pre-colonial African warfare, for example, after a battle, women and children were part of the booty for the winner.¹⁶⁴ The same occurred in European wars of up to the early 19th century.¹⁶⁵ As a result, the idea that in war women can only be victims has taken root rather than presenting them women as being actively involved in war as supporters or combatants.

Moreover, the available historical studies done on women in the military have indicated that not only both men and women participated in wars, but also women's roles differed very little across the continents. Even with geographical and socio-cultural difference between people of different continents, available evidence indicates that, up to the mid-19th century, soldiers in Europe and America went to war with their families¹⁶⁶ and that, in Africa and Asia, the practice continued up to the early 20th century.¹⁶⁷ In the periods mentioned, women were mainly part of the war entourage. In these entourages, women were expected to do various domestic activities, encouraging men to fight, assisting in logistics, giving sexual comfort to men, caring for casualties and entertaining troops. Furthermore, in some societies, women participated in combat by either guarding the rear or fighting side by side with men. As family members accompanying soldiers to war regardless of the communities women came from, one can easily

¹⁶² De Pauw, *Battle Cries and Lullabies*, 33-54; *See also*, Wintjes, "Keep the Women out of the Camps," 23-25, 27.

¹⁶³ G. N. Uzoigwe, "Pre-colonial Military Studies in Africa," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 13, no. 3 (1975), 470.

¹⁶⁴ Robert S. Smith, *Warfare and Diplomacy in Pre-colonial West Africa* (Norwich: Methuen & Co Ltd, 1976), 55-58; *See also*, Richard Reid, *War in Pre-colonial Eastern Africa: The Patterns and Meaning of State-Level Conflict in the Nineteenth Century* (Nairobi: British Institute in Eastern Africa, 2007), 66.

¹⁶⁵ Wintjes, "Keep the Women Out of the camps," 24.

¹⁶⁶ De Pauw, *Battle Cries and Lullabies*, 136-137; *See also*, Barton C. Hacker, "Reformers, Nurses, and Ladies in Uniform: The Changing Status of military Women (c.1815-c.1914)," in *Companion to Women's Military History*, Ed. Barton C. Hacker and Magreth Vining (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 139; *See also*, Oliver Knight, *Life and Manners in the Frontier Army* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1978), 39-70.

¹⁶⁷ Smith, *Warfare and Diplomacy*, 65.

notice that women performed almost the same duties as during peaceful periods. Although Goldstein claims that “women’s war roles vary considerably from culture to culture . . . ,”¹⁶⁸ in reality women’s duties in times of wars were almost the same irrespective of the races involved. The slight differences were based on the status of women in a camp and the social environment. A woman’s status mattered in the sense that the duties of a troop commander’s wife were different from those of a common soldier’s wife. In most cases, commanders’ wives served as an intermediary between their husbands and other members of the community.¹⁶⁹ There were also differences in the duties of a soldier’s wife in Africa or the Middle East or Europe brought about by the social environment. In general, according to military history, all women who followed soldiers to wars were regarded as camp followers.

2.4 The History of Women as Camp Followers

2.4.1 Europe

Camp followers are a group of civilians who follow soldiers for different purposes including working for them or selling merchandise to them. Camp followers, who were also known as combat support, included male and female civilians. In most armies, camp followers behaved according to the military codes that governed an army and had a military supervisor who oversaw the whole baggage.¹⁷⁰ Most activities done by camp followers were aimed at giving support to war combatants. Normally, the number of camp followers exceeded the number of the soldiers. This is because camp followers had long entourage of different subgroups which included women (soldiers’ widows and soldiers’ wives), men, children, personal servants and labourers.¹⁷¹ The same applied in pre-colonial Africa where different societies had different ways of organizing warfare. However, for those who went to war with a baggage train, their camp followers included mainly warriors’ wives, children and personal attendants or slaves.¹⁷² Those who saw camp follower trains observed that women were always more than men. This observation contributed to wrong claims about female camp followers. The claim that female camp followers were prostitutes arose from the huge number of women in the baggage train. In

¹⁶⁸ Joshua S. Goldstein, *War and Gender: How Gender Shapes the war System and Vice Versa*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 10.

¹⁶⁹ Ailes, *Camp Followers*, 118.

¹⁷⁰ The term baggage train in this work has been used in a military context to mean a train of wagons following the army while carrying the army supplies and ammunitions.

¹⁷¹ Ailes, “*Camp Followers*,” 76.

¹⁷² Smith, *Warfare and Diplomacy* 65; For more information on pre-colonial slave’s ownership see, R. Gray and D. Birmingham, ed., *Pre-Colonial African Trade* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970).

fact, their large number could well have been the result of the fact that many women were needed to provide various services for the interest of the armies.

Combat supporters were called camp followers because of the services they gave to the armies. As mentioned earlier, in Europe, as in Africa, camp followers performed supportive functions, some of which were performed in exchange for money or other forms of payment. Camp followers sold food, liquor and other kinds of goods that soldiers needed. This was different from the domestic responsibilities performed by soldiers' wives which were basically unpaid work. In Europe, soldiers' wives or widows were paid in some occasions especially when they performed domestic duties for others in the army or if they were officially employed. In other words, during campaigns, soldiers' wives mostly provided unpaid labour which was very beneficial to the army and the state in general.¹⁷³ As mentioned earlier, in addition to performing domestic responsibilities, soldiers' wives and widows in Europe carried out small trading activities. Trade was very important to women since it helped the wives to supplement their husbands' income and for the widows to support themselves financially.¹⁷⁴ At the same time, it helped in limiting the shortage of supplies caused by lack of proper support from the states.

As camp followers, women have been important to the army and that is why they have been present in armies for centuries. The nature of their importance lies in the fact that soldiers need female followers to do domestic duties and help them release stress. The domestic services catered by female followers during wars were like those catered elsewhere; therefore, soldiers were more relaxed when female followers accompanied them than when they did not. For the same reason, when female followers were few, some European commanders encouraged prostitutes to accompany armies to the warfront.¹⁷⁵ They expected women to give soldiers emotional support which they would otherwise lack. Women were also fundamental in solving the problem of logistical requirements since most armies did not get enough supplies from the state. The emotional support from women's military activities improved soldiers' well-being which was very important to the success of a war. In addition, during the Hellenistic period (between 323 BC and 31 BC), it was known that the soldiers' spirit and morale was very high when their families were with them as a part of followers and when the safety of the latter was

¹⁷³ Frank Tallett, *War and Society in Early-Modern Europe 1495-1715* (London: Routledge, 1992), 133.

¹⁷⁴ Ailes, "Camp Followers," 77; *See also*, John A. Lynn II, "Essential Women, Necessary Wives, and Exemplary Soldiers," in *Companion to Women's Military History*, Ed. Barton C. Hacker and Magreth Vining (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 99 – 100.

¹⁷⁵ Ailes, "Camp Followers," 80.

assured.¹⁷⁶ Therefore, although in the 17th century some commanders were not comfortable with the presence of women in European armies as camp followers, they had to tolerate it.¹⁷⁷ Some of these women were born and raised in military camps and married soldiers in the military camps.¹⁷⁸ As a result, most of them performed their responsibilities proficiently.

To understand how a soldier's family can boost his morale and discipline or quash it, one should refer to the battle of Gabiene of 323 B.C. According to Wintjes,¹⁷⁹ after the death of Alexander the Great, two generals, Eumenes, a very capable general, and Antigonos Monophthalmos, a skilled and experienced general, fought over his vast empire. After many battles, these two generals met in a town called Gabiene for combat. At the beginning of the fight, Eumenes killed 5000 soldiers belonging to Antigonos but lost only 300 soldiers. However, tables were turned when Eumenes could not guard the rear where baggage train was, and therefore, Antigonos successfully captured Eumenes' baggage train, which included his soldiers' wives and families. Even though Eumenes was a victor, the soldiers changed sides after realizing their families had been captured. The soldiers conspired against their commander, Eumenes, and literally handed Eumenes to Antigonos, who executed him. The war ended and Antigonos became a victor. Antigonos was losing the war, so he knew that he could only win it if he broke the spirit of his opponent's soldiers. He knew that he had to strike where it pained the soldiers most, and that was the baggage train, where the women and soldiers' families were.

Soldiers' love for their women and families has changed the course of wars many times throughout the centuries. The change could be positive or negative. It could be a planned war tactic as the case of Antigonos and Eumenes above, or by chance as the following example testifies. During the battle of Jankow (Jankau) between Swedish forces and Imperial forces in the 17th century (1645),¹⁸⁰ the Swedish lost the fight. As the Imperial forces chased the Swedish soldiers, they ran into Swedish baggage train. Instead of continuing with the chase, the Imperial forces stopped the chase and started to loot the Swedes' supplies and took their women as prisoners. After seeing their women being taken, the Swedish soldiers regrouped and counter-attacked the Imperial forces as they looted their property. In the end, the Swedish managed to take back their women and stopped the looting. In other words, the Swedish won the fight.

¹⁷⁶ Wintjes, "Keep the Women Out of the Camp", 31-32.

¹⁷⁷ Tallett, *War and Society*, 132-134.

¹⁷⁸ Ailes, "Camp Followers," 87.

¹⁷⁹ Wintjes, "Keep the Women Out of the Camp", 32.

¹⁸⁰ Ailes, "Camp Followers," 86-87.

Under such circumstances, commanders always lost control of their armies. The loss of control meant loss of their combat.

Having soldiers' families as camp followers had its disadvantages as well. Sometimes women, especially soldiers' wives, can affect soldiers' effectiveness and discipline. Family troubles and marital problems can also dampen the soldiers' morale. Because of the intimate relationship between a husband and a wife, it was difficult to keep soldiers in good spirits while their wives were not in good spirits. Sometimes soldiers fought over women.¹⁸¹ Most commanders were aware that soldiers' loyalty was skewed towards their families. Therefore, commanders were worried that, in the heat of a battle, a soldier's urge to protect his family might exceed the urge to fight the enemy. In addition, attacks on the baggage train can change the course of fighting, since a soldier will fight to rescue his family instead of fighting to win the battle.¹⁸² But fighting for the families did not guarantee the safety of the families. The army could lose the fight, the supplies and all members could end up being prisoners. This happened in the battle of Nördlingen in 1634 between the Protestant and the Catholic armies. The German and Swedish army (the Protestant) led by Bernard of Saxe-Weimar and Gustav Horn fought against the Roman Imperial forces (Catholic) under the Ferdinand of Hungary and the Cardinal-Infante Ferdinand. The Swedish army lost the fight and their baggage train was captured. One of the mercenary soldiers from the Imperial forces commented on the baggage train as follows:

There wee got all their Canons and other field-pieces which were above fiftie in number and all their Amunition Wagons and Baggage-Wagons above fower thousand with all their Colours: and withal wee found such a number of Ladies and Commaunders Wives that I cannot count them, and all of them taken Prisoners.¹⁸³

Furthermore, a baggage train which was full of families was a burden to the army as it slowed down the movement of the army. The slow movement had more effect on some logistics and defence of the rear. Thus, various laws and regulations were passed to minimize the size of the baggage train.¹⁸⁴ However, soldiers' families continued to be part of the armies until when technological improvement solved the problem of supplies and services.

In Europe, women's presence at the war front continued although there were certain changes in warfare technology. The introduction of firearms in the 16th century completely changed

¹⁸¹ De Pauw, "Battle Cries and Lullabies," 102.

¹⁸² Ailes, "Camp Followers," 86; *See also*, Wintjes, "Keep the Women Out of the Camp", 46, 48.

¹⁸³ Ailes, "Camp Followers," 86.

¹⁸⁴ De Pauw, "Battle Cries and Lullabies," 97 – 100.

combat behaviour.¹⁸⁵ Maintaining armies became very expensive as it needed more foot soldiers with expensive new weapons. Having more foot soldiers meant having larger armies. A good example was a Spanish army which had about 20,000 soldiers in the 1470s, but the number had risen to 300,000 by the 1630s.¹⁸⁶ The same kind of army enlargement occurred in other European states such as France and the Dutch Republic. As a result, they struggled to support their forces. In addition, by the early 17th century, European states had not been equipped psychologically and administratively to meet the demands of larger armies. The armies were large but lacked standard training, equipment and discipline.¹⁸⁷ Soldiers' pay was low as well. For example, by the end of the 16th century, the salary of a foot soldier was lower than that of an unskilled labourer. However, in the first quarter of 17th century a siege of one stronghold could cost up to 40 million livres (the French currency at the time), at a time when agricultural labourer's daily pay was about 10-12 half a livre.¹⁸⁸ By 1597 Spain was almost bankrupt, followed by France and England who were in difficult financial positions.¹⁸⁹ As time went by, they struggled to maintain their armies and it was almost impossible to feed, clothe and pay the forces.¹⁹⁰ It was as if wars were expected to pay for themselves. Armies had to force the inhabitants of occupied territories to meet all their needs. Thus, most soldiers depended on pillage and plunder. Up to the mid-18th century, the officers oversaw recruiting and paying soldiers, and as a result, states did not have control over soldiers' recruitment or their number on the battlefield. This gave officers the opportunity to cheat their soldiers as well as the states in terms of wages and supply, hence, they enriched themselves.¹⁹¹ Officers' habit of cheating was very common in different armies of different European states. Accordingly, it was a hard time for soldiers. Therefore, women followers were needed to reduce the soldiers' hardship.

European states faced difficulties in meeting logistical demands to supply army needs. States could not supply the needs because of the difficulties involved in organizing the supply system. This was still a problem in the 18th century. It made armies to depend on looting and plundering while in the enemy or friendly territories. Women, too, took part in stealing and pillaging. Stealing and pillaging was common and, sometimes, women did it with the permission of the

¹⁸⁵ Torbjorn L. Knutsen, "Old, Unhappy, Far-Off Things: The New Military History of Europe," *Journal of Peace Research* 24, no. 1 (March 1987): 89; *See also*, Mathew Smith Anderson, *War and Society in Europe of the 1618-1789* (Leicester: University Press, 1988), 40.

¹⁸⁶ Anderson, *War and Society* 17.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 17 and 20.

¹⁸⁸ Knutsen, "Old, Unhappy, Far-Off Things," 89-90; *See also*, Anderson, *War and Society*, 41.

¹⁸⁹ Anderson, *War and Society*, 17.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 39.

¹⁹¹ Anderson, *War and Society*, 48-49. *See also*, Corvisier, *Armies and Societies*, 64-67.

commander, since troops' payment was very infrequent and irregular.¹⁹² After plunder, women carried the booty as part of their luggage. In other words, women were solving the logistical problem that armies faced. In addition, they teamed up with their husbands in pillaging so as to get more valuable property for sale.¹⁹³ Interestingly, soldiers' women were proud of and boastful about their capacity to pillage and plunder. In most cases, husbands entrusted the money they obtained from selling valuable property to their women for safe keeping. The money was used in times of need to provide foodstuff to families. Clearly, soldiers regarded their women or wives as their personal mules and partners who had to carry and guard their property. They also depended on women for their domestic needs and emotional support.

The importance of women as a solution to the logistical problem facing armies only increased women's sufferings. Most women had to march on foot since carts were full of booty plundered in various towns. They carried on their backs what could not fit into carts, which was still a lot for one to carry. One German officer's manuscript, dated 1612, describes the predicament of women in the army as follows:

Seldom did the woman carry less than 50 or 60 pounds. Whenever the soldier provided himself with victuals or similar portable goods, he piled it with straw or wood on top, not to mention that the woman already carried one or two or more children on her back. In addition the woman usually carried on her person the man's clothing consisting of one pair of pants, one pair of socks, one pair of shoes; for herself, the same number of shoes and stockings, one skirt, two shirts, one pan, one pot, one or two bowls, one bedsheet, one cloak, one tent, and three poles. Furthermore, if she could not get wood in their quarters, she collected it on the way, and piled it up on her back. And as though that were not enough, she usually leads a small dog on a cord, and if the weather is bad, she even carries the animal.¹⁹⁴

Women's behavior during plundering incidents did not differ from their husbands'. The excuses for their habit varied, so were the priorities with respect to what to plunder. Few women plundered things that would enable them to care for their husbands well, but many prioritized food stuff. To obtain food, women first pillaged local gardens and farms, then domestic animals such as pigs and fowls and finally alcoholic drinks.¹⁹⁵ In pillaging activities, women were as aggressive as men. In some cases, they even fought over who was the first to find what. The fighting could be amongst soldiers' women or between women and soldiers. Sometimes

¹⁹² As cited in Ailes, "Camp Followers,"77-78; *See also*, Lynn II, "Essential Women,"93-99; *See also*, De Pauw, *Battle Cries and Lullabies*, 101.

¹⁹³ John A. Lynn II, *Women, Armies, and Warfare in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: University Press, 2008), 147, 161.

¹⁹⁴ De Pauw, *Battle Cries and Lullabies*, 103; *See also*, Lynn II, *Women, Armies, and Warfare*, 160-162.

¹⁹⁵ Lynn II, *Women, Armies, and Warfare*, 148-150.

property owners died or were badly wounded as they tried to stop the plunder.¹⁹⁶ Therefore, pillaging was a serious business. It was a way of getting foodstuffs and money quickly, especially if one was fast enough to find and loot money or valuable property for sale. Foot soldiers considered pillaging as a source of wealth. However, it was very rare for them to get rich as they sold their booty at a very low price.

From the 16th century to the late 18th century, the soldiers' attitude towards civilians was poor. Soldiers were very cruel and caused much terror among civilians. It did not matter whether the army was friendly or foreign. A slight provocation or late salary payment could lead soldiers to ransack the whole area.¹⁹⁷ Soldiers could steal and burn towns without consequence for their actions. At the time, the laws of warfare supported plundering of any town that refused to surrender.¹⁹⁸ The objective was to cause complete devastation to a town using 'scorched earth' tactics, torture and systematic execution of its dwellers. A good example was what happened during the Thirty Years' War.¹⁹⁹ In 1631, the Imperial forces butchered 25,000 people in the town of Magdeburg (Germany) which had 30,000 people. In Bohemia (modern-day Czech Republic), two-thirds of the population died from fighting. Consequently, some of the villages and towns disappeared. The same happened in the 1775-83 war in North America between the American continental army and the British Empire army. In the years 1776 and 1778, the British had an acute shortage of supplies. Therefore, they resorted to scorched earth tactics, looting and pillaging to obtain their needs from civilians.²⁰⁰ The soldiers plundered property and raped women.²⁰¹ Having women or wives with them did not stop them from raping other women in occupied territories.

The routes followed by the armies were not safe either as they were left in unimaginable destruction caused by soldiers,²⁰² consequently, the soldiers from the 'enemy' armies faced civilians' wrath and were always in danger of dying cruel deaths. Soldiers on retreat perished in large numbers because of civilians' negative reactions towards them and hunger. In 1644, for instance, the Swedes forced the Imperial forces to retreat from north Germany to Bohemia.

¹⁹⁶ Lynn II, *Women, Armies, and Warfare*, 151-152.

¹⁹⁷ Ailes, "Camp Followers,"74; *See*, Corvisier, *Armies and Societies*, 3-6; *See also*, Anderson, *War and Society*, 43

¹⁹⁸ Corvisier, *Armies and Societies*, 5; *See also*, Ailes, "Camp Followers,"73-75.

¹⁹⁹ Corvisier, *Armies and Societies*, 5, *See*, De Pauw, *Battle Cries and Lullabies*, 101 *and see also*, Anderson, *War and Society*, 68-70.

²⁰⁰ R. Arthur Bowler, *Logistics and the Failure of the British Army in America, 1775-1783* (Princeton: University Press, 1975), 75 and 80.

²⁰¹ Lynn II, *Women, Armies, and Warfare*, 153-155.

²⁰² Corvisier, *Armies and Societies*, 5.

Out of the 18,000 soldiers of the Imperial army that had begun the retreat, less than 1000 finished the retreat alive.²⁰³ The spread of diseases was another problem that large armies caused to civilians in the areas they traversed. In 1627, for example, 6,000 French soldiers who were marching across Europe from La Rochelle (a city in France) to northern Italy spread diseases that killed about 1,000,000 civilians.²⁰⁴ In the 17th century, many more civilians and soldiers died of epidemics such as typhus, bubonic plague, dysentery and small pox which killed more people than the actual fighting did. These diseases were spread through the armies' endless movements.

As mentioned earlier, logistics of supply was a major problem that armies faced in Europe. The problem persisted up to 19th century as states continued to struggle to organize proper structures for supplying troops with their needs. Up to the first quarter of the 19th century, most European states did not have specialized and uniformed personnel for caring for soldiers. Therefore, women had to fill the vacuum. The problem of supply logistics continued to face different states at different levels. For example, in the Napoleon wars between the French and the British that began in 1808 and ended in 1809, on retreating from Napoleon advances, the British army survived on looting and pillaging. Unfortunately, there was not enough food to loot, but there was much wine which added to the problem of hunger and fatigue to the soldiers and their families.²⁰⁵ Many British soldiers as well as followers died from hunger and fatigue. The presence of women in armies continued to have relevance in that period as women were needed to perform their traditional responsibilities of supporting armies by plundering economies and performing domestic duties.

There were various reasons for women to follow troops as wives or otherwise. One of the major reasons was lack of support for the families of soldiers that remained behind while their husbands were at war. In the middle ages, those who participated in combat were not given formal payments. However, standing armies started to emerge in the 16th century when combatants began being paid in cash. The armies comprised mercenaries who spent most of their lives in the army as professionals.²⁰⁶ Civilians administered these armies until the 18th century when military administration began.²⁰⁷ However, despite these changes, the position of women as camp followers never changed. Women continued to follow troops whose main

²⁰³ Anderson, *War and Society*, 64.

²⁰⁴ Knutsen, "Old, Unhappy, Far-Off Things," 90.

²⁰⁵ Christopher Hibbert, *Corunna* (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd, 1961), 101-121.

²⁰⁶ Corvisier, *Armies and Societies*, 11.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 11-12.

means of survival was based on looting and plundering economies. Women followers continued to play a major role in plundering economies for the purpose of meeting the needs of troops in terms of supplies.

Furthermore, soldiers' wives did not have any options, apart from following their husbands as camp followers. Remaining behind while their husbands had gone to war was not the best option, since, up to the late 19th century the wives and even soldiers' widows at the home front had no formal support from the state.²⁰⁸ If left behind, they had to fend for themselves while at the same time got worried for the lives of their loved ones at war front. In addition, women abhorred the hardships associated with trying to maintain family farms or businesses without male partners. It was very difficult and sometimes impossible for women to provide family's needs.²⁰⁹ Furthermore, the distance between soldiers' homes and the battlefield as well as irregular pay made it difficult for women to remain behind. Actually, most soldiers came from poor backgrounds and nobody could support their families while the husbands were in war campaigns. Hence, wives and widows had to support their families on their own. Therefore, for many centuries, the best option for most soldiers was for their families to accompany them to war. In that case, the soldiers could share with their families whatever little they obtained. In some cases, the death of family patrons and lack of food forced women to assume military responsibilities.²¹⁰ As part of camp followers, at least food was not a big problem to them and, as for the armies, plundering and looting was the norm.

Women as camp followers had difficult life too. It was not easy for civilians to live alongside soldiers since the latter had undergone military training and were physically capable of facing the challenges of war. Women as civilians had no military training yet they had to face the same challenges as the soldiers. Apart from endless marching while carrying heavy loads,²¹¹ they faced other problems such as contracting diseases, hunger, and even deaths or capture. According to Anderson, in 1620 the Catholic League army lost 24,000 members during its campaigns in the Austrian provinces and Bohemia from diseases. The same happened in Silesia (Poland) where, in 1633, the Wallenstein army lost 8000 members.²¹² The list is long. Although the number of women in any army was unknown, due to their high numbers in these armies it is logical to say that a good number of women died along with their husbands. The women and

²⁰⁸ Ailes, "Camp Followers," 74-75.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

²¹⁰ De Pauw, *Battle Cries and Lullabies*, 101.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 103, 120.

²¹² Anderson, *War and Society*, 64.

men who followed armies risked their lives for the sake of their loved ones or for the purpose of obtaining money. Often, they travelled under very harsh conditions. The situation was more precarious for women than men as observed by Robert Monroe, a Scottish colonel in the Swedish army, in the European Thirty Years' War (1618-1648). He observed that "a sergeant's wife . . . without help of any women was delivered of a Boy . . . the next day, she marched neere foure English mile, with that in her Armes."²¹³ This observation gives a glimpse into the lives of soldiers' wives as camp followers.

The same happened to women in the early 19th century wars. In the war between France and Britain, at the end of 1808, the British troops retreated to Corunna. A retreat involved a long march under very bad weather, without enough supplies for soldiers and their families. Although the sufferings were for all those involved at the war front, soldiers' families suffered the most. Because of fatigue, mothers could no longer carry their children. They dragged them through the snow. Other women died while or after giving birth and others died along the road from hunger, diseases and exhaustion.²¹⁴ Consequently, the number of women and children that died exceeded that of the soldiers who died. In addition to all these sufferings, women also suffered brutal domestic violence from their husbands and other soldiers. The judgment of any misbehaviour was based on martial law among the British, French and Germans. Punishment included flogging, shaving heads, imprisonment, or a husband could punish his wife the way he saw it fit.²¹⁵

As camp followers, women were a source of labour for commanders. Taking advantage of their large number, commanders often used camp women as laborers whom they assigned various duties. Women cleaned the camps including latrines and streets. They did strenuous work such as digging pits, filling ditches, and carrying wood.²¹⁶ Also, they helped men during attacks.²¹⁷ The women worked as men to survive and escape punishment since whoever tried to avoid work received harsh physical punishment. As 16th century writings show, women's activities in campaigns (at the time such women were referred to as 'whores,' meaning women of low social status), were not valued, hence, they were not paid for being engaged in those activities. A German soldier expressed the feelings of the foot soldiers' wives regarding their tasks, thus:

²¹³ As quoted in Ailes, "Camp Followers," 85.

²¹⁴ Hibbert, Corunna, 129-130.

²¹⁵ De Pauw, Battle Cries and Lullabies, 103-104.

²¹⁶ De Pauw, Battle Cries and Lullabies, 103; *See also*, Lynn II, "Essential Women," 100-101.

²¹⁷ Lynn II, Women, Armies, and Warfare, 163.

We, whores and rogues in the wars
Care for and wait on our masters
With the best of our skills.
We are whores direct from Flanders;
While we change one foot-soldier for another
We are useful in the army nevertheless.
We cook, sweep, and him who is ill
We nurse until he is well again.
We whores and rogues, we are a pack;
And even if we are often badly beaten;
We do it all for the soldier's sake;
It is pleasant for him to be lifted up by us.
When cleaning or digging is to be done,
Is wood to be carried we are the ones,
And if we don't do it, beatings are ours.²¹⁸

The women camp followers of the early centuries led a hard life just as the women followers of the late 18th century did. Their hard life was revealed by their appearance which looked attractive only to the soldiers themselves who knew the value of their presence in their armies. Their poor appearance caused by drudgery made many people to despise them. They faced the humiliation in silence and defiance. When the British army surrendered to the Americans at Saratoga in 1777, they surrendered with their 2,000 women followers. According to one observer, a Boston woman who had seen the soldiers and their women followers being sent to prison, described them as follows:

I never had the least Idea that the Creation produced such a sordid set of creatures in human Figure-poor, dirty, emaciated men, great numbers of women, who seemed to be the beasts of burden, having a bushel basket on their back, by which they were bent double, the contents deemed to be Pots and Kettles, various sorts of Furniture, children peeping thro' gridirons and other utensils, some very young infants who were born on the road, the women bare feet, clothed in dirty rags, such effluvia filled the air while they were passing, had they not been smoking all the time, I should have been apprehensive of being contaminated by them.²¹⁹

Though women and other camp followers occupied the baggage train at the rear, they were not kept away from the dangers of the war zone. The women at the rear experienced the same fear of death as soldiers because they could hear the battle as clearly as the soldiers did. They

²¹⁸ Leonhard Fronsperger in his *Kriegsbuch* as quoted in Lynn II, *Women, Armies, and Warfare*, 162.

²¹⁹ DePauw, *Battle Cries and Lullabies*, 120

camped in the open as soldiers did and shared the makeshift huts with their soldier husbands. Additionally, they attended to their men during battle. With all that, they were subjected to military discipline and, therefore, were susceptible to a military kind of punishment. They were imprisoned for wrongdoing during combat no matter how courageous they were in trying to give support to their husbands and other soldiers at the battlefields.²²⁰

The immorality of female camp followers was one of the concerns of the authorities and the public in late 17th century Europe. It came about as a result of many years' efforts to control prostitution and ban the activities that promoted it. During the Reformation and Counter-Reformation periods in Europe, religious elites demanded social purity by urging people to lead a moral life. The emphasis was placed on family and marriage institutions. Women's domestic role was being wives and mothers, and as husbands and fathers, men were required to enforce their will in their families. A moral woman was any woman who was properly married and cared for her family.²²¹ In many ways, camp life contradicted the notion of an ideal and moral woman. Therefore, women in camps seemed to lead immoral lives. The idea that female camp followers fostered prostitution and downgraded the marriage institution bothered states and religious elites. As a result, the number of women camp followers started to decrease in many European states in the mid-18th century.

The public opinion on women camp followers (wives or not) became low because of the new principles of morality. They did not fit into the dimension of respectable women. Since the family was central to a better community and women played a major role in raising a good family, civil and military elites were determined to combat prostitution. Regulations intended to ban prostitutes in military camps were frequently employed and only soldiers' legally married wives were free to stay in camps. For instance, various regulations were made in France from the 17th century to the late 18th century to prohibit prostitutes from getting near troops' camps. Punishment ranged from beatings to removal of ears and noses.²²² Consequently, by the late 18th century, even though female followers were still present, their number was far smaller than it was in the early 17th century. The reason for the continued presence of soldiers' wives in European armies was that the armies' economies somehow still depended on women.

²²⁰ Lynn II, "Essential Women," 119-120.

²²¹ Lynn II, *Women, Armies, and Warfare*, 56-58.

²²² *Ibid.*, 71-72.

By the mid-19th century, however, most European soldiers' families ceased to be part of armies during war campaigns. These changes were the result of a long process of removing soldiers' families and all other types of women who occupied the baggage train.

The process began in the mid-17th century when states began to centralize the means of supplying and caring for soldiers, coupled with the Reformation and Counter-Reformation. In that period, the states started to have direct control over armies and, therefore, could pay and supply the needs of troops more regularly. Therefore, by the mid-18th century, plundering was no longer a major means of survival. Consequently, the essentiality of women to the economy of the army and to the existence of campaign communities was decreasing.²²³ However, women continued to be part of the war campaign communities regardless of the many regulations that had been put in place in order to minimize their number as camp followers. Therefore, state control and regulations alone did not stamp out completely the soldiers' families presence.

Great changes regarding the presence of women as camp followers in campaigns occurred in the mid-19th century. The changes occurred after a great revolution in technology. This revolution led to a revolution in the transport system and the production of goods or supplies that troops needed. The new transport system was faster and more efficient, which solved the problem of moving large armies. It could transport soldiers and their supplies in large quantities and deliveries faster than ever before.²²⁴ Soldiers' needs in any war were easily met. Thus, soldiers' wives were no longer as important as they were before as most European armies no longer needed to survive through plunder. At the same time, industrialization gave women more options in terms of new employment opportunities which were more attractive than following the armies.²²⁵ Therefore, in many parts of Western Europe, military elites ensured that the soldiers' families and the unprofessional camp followers were disappearing from the war front and campaign communities for good. Furthermore, the efficiency of the transport system "changed traditional assumptions about time, distance and logistics."²²⁶ The only women who accompanied armies to wars were professional women. Employed professional women performed most of the activities that had been part of soldiers' wives' responsibilities previously. In addition, from the mid-19th century, European armies increased the use of male

²²³ Lynn II, "Essential Women," 102.

²²⁴ De Pauw, *Battle Cries and Lullabies*, 142-143; *See also*, Ailes, "Camp Followers", 62

²²⁵ Barton Hacker, *Reformers, "Nurses, and Ladies in Uniform: The Changing Status of Military Women (c.1815-c.1914)"*, in *A Companion to Women's Military History*, Ed. Barton C. Hacker and Magreth Vining (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 138.

²²⁶ De Pauw, *Pauw, Battle Cries and Lullabies*, 135.

support staff in giving services to soldiers. For instance, hospitals used more male orderlies than females.²²⁷ By the late 19th century, European armies were more professional and women from different classes enlisted to provide various services as professional army supporters.

2.4.2 Summary

The history of female camp followers, particularly in Europe, went through tremendous changes. Their positions and status changed according to the needs of the armies. States and military elites turned a blind eye to their presence in the campaigns for many centuries mainly because it was advantageous to their armies. However, soon after they were able to meet the needs of their soldiers in terms of technical logistics, domestic chores and regular wages, soldiers' women were forbidden to take part in war campaigns. The situation was different in African armies. In the first place, many African war commanders did not have the urge to control the presence of warriors' families in campaigns. Chapter three will discuss colonial armies. The presence of soldiers' families in the colonial armies and the behaviour of the colonial armies were very similar to that of the armies of Europe before the mid-19th century.

In Africa, all depended on the military organization of the ethnic groups concerned. To understand Africans' attitude towards women's involvement in wars, one must understand the organization of the pre-colonial African communities politically, socially, culturally and economically. Military organization always depended on these factors, and so was the attitude towards women's involvement in wars. Therefore, the history of women camp followers in early modern Europe is useful in the next chapter. The reason for that is that, in colonial Africa, European military commanders encouraged *askaris*' wives to be part of the "baggage train" in the colonial armies. They did so although they knew that it was against European moral standards.

2.5 Warfare in Pre-colonial Africa

The map of pre-colonial Africa had a very different face to that of colonial Africa. The division of Africa and the boundaries gave the continent a very different outlook. Although pre-colonial historiography of Africa is still poor, it is a known fact that pre-colonial Africa was not the same as the colonial Africa. Pre-colonial Africa was different in the sense that only people of the same ethnic backgrounds with the same customs and traditions lived together and shared a territory as an independent social group or society. The organization of these social groups or

²²⁷ Hacker, "Reformers, Nurses, and Ladies in Uniform," 138

of society as an entity changed over time for various reasons such as population growth, production, invention and innovation, exchange of goods and migration. These factors differ from place to place and from society to society, hence the differences in political organizations. Consequently, at the onset of colonialism, different African communities had different forms of organizations; therefore, they differed socially, economically and politically. Some societies were classless and owned property in a communal way. Others had small polities with classes while others had established kingdoms.

African pre-colonial societies' differences in political organization stemmed from differences in economic development. Economic development led to social stratification in many societies, in turn, resulting in acts of exploitation of the lower class by the upper class. Also, there was exploitation, alienation and inequality in some classless African societies among their members. Societies such as the Gamo of Ethiopia, which had developed economically, did not until the end of the 19th century have classes because of its collective control over surplus redistribution. Gamo society developed economically through its system of alienating non-citizens (artisans and slaves) politically and economically by prohibiting them to own land or participate in politics. To survive, non-citizens had to provide cheap labour to citizens, hence, entrenching their alienation and exploitation.²²⁸ This corresponds with Jewsiewicki's observation that "social classes take place along many different lines of historical development and do not necessarily result, in each case, in the formation of a bipolar society of antagonistic classes."²²⁹ Exploitation between classes occurs mainly when the formed classes have tendencies of domination between them.

The base of kinship relations in African societies was (and still is in some societies) lineage. Stewart defines a lineage unit as "a group of families that express their relation to one another in terms of kinship that have three to five generations in depth."²³⁰ Most societies in sub-Saharan Africa use lineage as an economic, juridical and ideological unit.²³¹ In simple terms,

²²⁸ Marc Abeles, "In search of the Monarch: Introduction of the State among the Gamo of Ethiopia," in *Modes of Production in Africa: The Pre-colonial Era*, ed. Donald Crummey and C.C. Stewart (Beverly Hills, California: Sage Publications, 1981), 39-41.

²²⁹ Bogumil Jewsiewicki, "Lineage Mode of Production: Social Inequalities Equatorial Central Africa," in *Modes of Production in Africa: The Pre-colonial Era*, ed. Donald Crummey and C.C. Stewart (Beverly Hills, California: Sage Publications, 1981), 94.

²³⁰ C.C. Stewart, "Emergent Classes and the Early State: The Southern Sahara," in *Modes of Production in Africa: The Pre-colonial Era*, ed. Donald Crummey and C.C. Stewart (Beverly Hills, California: Sage Publications, 1981), 77.

²³¹ Stewart, "Emergent Classes," 77.

only the lineage which could identify itself as strong and successful economically, ideologically and juristically could dominate other lineages, hence, enhancement of the formation of social classes. In western Uganda, for instance, around the late 17th century, the dominant class which later became the ruling class, got stronger through ‘tributary’ relations²³² which enabled it to get wealth from other lineages. This means the ruling class collected surplus wealth from the majority who were the producers. The producers had to pay tribute to the ruling class since ideologically the means of production (land and cattle) belonged to the ruling class, thereby leading to the formation of kingdoms such as Kitara, Bunyoro and Nkore.²³³

Trade was also a factor in stimulating production in many African societies. The stimulation of production occurred because of the demand for goods in the internal and foreign markets. In states such as the Congo kingdom, production was stimulated by internal markets because they owned goods such as salt, iron, copper, raffia palm textile and pottery which were in high demand. As the market institution became well established, it was easy to exchange their products with other societies. Therefore, by the 15th century, Kongo had a currency with standardized units of *nzimbu* shells as a means of exchange.²³⁴ Overseas demand for goods also stimulated production in some African societies. In sub-Saharan Africa, the introduction of overseas goods stimulated trade which, in turn, enhanced the production of goods for export. For example, among the Lozi of Central Africa, overseas demand stimulated the production of goods and foodstuffs and ivory hunting. These were exchanged with overseas products. Thus, cloth became the principal medium of exchange; it replaced the barter system.²³⁵ The communities around the caravan routes and trade centers were able to develop economically because of the high demand for local goods which, in turn, led to specialization in production. The same was the case with West African kingdoms such as Mali and Ashanti where trade was important for economic development. As a result, such states ensured that traders were safe by providing them with security, defence and transport. This was further reinforced by establishing safe markets and a judiciary system for settling commercial disputes. In return, traders paid tax

²³² Tributary meant a valuable gift such as cattle or harvested crop given to a strong chief to show allegiance in exchange with protection from the same.

²³³ Edward I. Steinhart, “Herders and Farmers: The tributary Mode of Production in Western Uganda,” in *Modes of Production in Africa: The Precolonial Era*, ed. Donald Crummey and C.C. Stewart (Beverly Hills, California: Sage Publications, 1981), 116, 130-31; *See also*, Semakula Kiwanuka, *A History of Buganda: From the Foundation of the Kingdom to 1900* (London: Longman Group Ltd, 1971), 96-102 and 138-143.

²³⁴ Richard Gray and David Birmingham, "Some Economic and Political Consequences of Trade in central and Eastern Africa in the Pre-Colonial Period," in *Pre-Colonial African Trade*, ed. R. Gray and D. Birmingham (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), 9.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 7-8.

to the king.²³⁶ The importance of overseas trade in relation to warfare was in terms of the introduction of guns and gunpowder. The introduction of guns and gunpowder increased the intensity and frequency of wars between societies which wanted to acquire slaves who were an important and valued commodity in overseas trade.

Like other continents, Africa had its share of warfare even before colonialism. As a continent, it has a long history of wars and warfare. With its many different communities, Africa was bound to experience many conflicts. However, most of the conflicts were resolved through diplomacy between the communities involved. But some conflicts led to wars between communities. Most of the time, peaceful conflict resolution led to the signing of agreements or treaties by the parties concerned. The agreements were based on the 'African customary law,' which involved measures such as swearing oaths as tradition demanded. For example, leaders of the warring communities could seal an agreement by dropping saltwater into the eyes of members in both parties or by giving back hostages.²³⁷ However, some societies went to war and some wars protracted for many years.

Africa has seen many wars, but the when, why and how did war occur differ from region to region. The period when warfare started in Africa is not yet known, but the earliest warfare had some association with societies' internal development, especially economic development. Economic development differed from place to place and, therefore, from region to region, and so was the beginning of warfare in different regions. Economic differences between states had more to do with development and control of trade than with any other factors. Through trade, many communities exchanged what they had in excess for what they did not have. The increase in the demand for goods for exchange led to the increase in specialization in the production of goods, hence wealth accumulation. For example, in the Kongo kingdom the availability of important products, namely salt, iron and palm cloth, differed from region to region in the kingdom. Each region specialized in a product which was in high demand so as to improve its production.²³⁸ As the centre of the exchange system in the kingdom, the king controlled trade by establishing custom posts in all markets for tax collection purposes.²³⁹ Trade control was

²³⁶ Gray and Birmingham, "Economic and Political Consequences," 13.

²³⁷ Smith, Warfare and Diplomacy, 30-31.

²³⁸ John K. Thornton, *The Kingdom of Kongo: Civil War and Transition 1641-1718*, (Madison: Wisconsin, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), 33-34.

²³⁹ Thornton, *The Kingdom of Kongo*, 34

possible mainly by controlling the trade centres and/or trade routes. However, states which controlled trade, especially the routes of the long-distance trade, were the most powerful.

Studies have confirmed that in North Africa, particularly in Egypt, warfare began earlier than the other parts of Africa. In Egypt, warfare began long before 32 B.C. when a Roman Caesar called Octavian declared war on Queen Cleopatra VII.²⁴⁰ The exact dates that show when early warfare began in other parts of Africa are generally unknown. However, with respect to West Africa, evidence shows that, by the 11th century, warfare was common in some parts of West Africa as it was influenced by external forces such as Islam (*jihad* wars).²⁴¹ In East and Central Africa, the dates are not known either, but early political organization began at around the 13th century.²⁴² Probably warfare began at the same time. In general, the earliest wars recorded in sub-Saharan Africa, were between Nimi a Nzima, the founder of Kongo kingdom, and his neighbouring states in the last quarter of the 14th century.²⁴³ This indicates that warfare has a long history in Africa as most wars were not recorded in writing. This makes it difficult to have much information about warfare in Africa.

In Africa, conflicts that developed into inter-society wars always had various reasons which were either minor or major ones. The minor reasons included boundary disputes or ill-treated travelers that could cause war while the major reasons were succession disputes, territorial expansion, and extorting payment in trade routes among others. The major aim of wars was always wealth accumulation for the king and his royal subjects. Most ambitious leaders of polities wanted more territories, hence, they waged wars to expand their territories. Territory expansion was possible mainly by conquering weaker states or societies. Conquering other states was very advantageous to the conqueror because it enabled one to expand his territory, acquire captives as war booty, extract tribute from the conquered and even get more control of trade in the area concerned.²⁴⁴ Thus, wealth accumulation was very much possible for the conqueror's state. For instance, the Kongo Kingdom was formed in the mid-14th century by Nimi a Nzima through conquest and alliances. Between 1350 – 1375, Nimi a Nzima conquered his neighbours to gain territory and, therefore, became very strong. Then, he made an alliance

²⁴⁰ De Pauw, *Battle Cries and Lullabies*, 74.

²⁴¹ Smith, *Warfare and Diplomacy*, 8.

²⁴² Brian M. Fagan, "Early Trade and Raw Materials in South Central Africa," in *Pre-colonial African Trade: Essays on Trade in Central and Eastern Africa before 1900*, eds., Richard Gray and David Birmingham, (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), 27; See, Kiwanuka, *A History of Buganda*, 31-44.

²⁴³ John Thornton, "The Origins and Early History of the Kingdom of Kongo," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 34, no. 1, (2001), 89-120.

²⁴⁴ Smith, *Warfare and Diplomacy*, 45; See also, Kiwanuka, *A History of Buganda*, 64-90.

with Mpuku a Nsuku's polity called Mbata to form the Kongo Kingdom.²⁴⁵ The kingdom continued to expand and prosper through conquests, tribute collection and control of trade. It reached its peak in terms of expansion and strength in the 16th century. However, in the last quarter of the 17th century it started to collapse. Its collapse was a result of two things: the kingdom's failure to meet the demands of external trade and persistent civil wars caused by succession struggles.²⁴⁶ Similar expansionist campaigns applied to other African kingdoms such as Dahomey in West Africa, Buganda in East Africa, Loango in West Central Africa and Zulu in South Africa.²⁴⁷

The intensity of trade activities on the continent went hand in hand with the increase in warfare activities. In the early years, before the continent encountered overseas traders, that is, before the 15th century, there were fewer wars, especially in the sub-Saharan Africa, than in the later years. Before the contact in question, the commodities involved and their value were different from the commodities and value after the contact. The contact between African societies and overseas traders, particularly with European traders, began as early as the 15th century in West Africa and the 16th century in Central Africa. In other words, this was the beginning of the Trans-Atlantic Trade which was started by the Portuguese traders. In this early trade contact, Africans imported manufactured commodities which consisted mainly clothes, metal ware, rugs, cowry shells and beads, and exported raw materials such as ivory, spices, gold, animal skins, carvings, redwood and a small number of slaves.²⁴⁸ Nevertheless, this early trade did not cause much havoc in Africa in terms of warfare. It did not do so probably because the trade contact of this period stimulated the economies of the societies concerned by intensifying the existing trade activities without creating new trade patterns.²⁴⁹ However, the situation changed when other European traders such as the French and the British joined in and increased the demand for slaves who were exchanged for guns.

By the mid-17th century, Europe had already established intensive contact with Africa. In this time, there was a high demand for slaves to work in the plantations which had been opened in

²⁴⁵ Thornton, *The Origins of Kongo*, 89-120.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 72-83.

²⁴⁷ Smith, *Warfare and Diplomacy*; *See*, Richard Gray and David Birmingham, eds., *Pre-colonial African Trade: Essays on Trade in Central and Eastern Africa before 1900* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970); *See also*, Kiwanuka, *A History of Buganda*.

²⁴⁸ Phyllis Martin, *The Trade of Loango in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, in *Pre-colonial African Trade: Essays on Trade in Central and Eastern Africa before 1900*, ed. Richard Gray and David Birmingham, (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), 139-173.

²⁴⁹ Martin, "The Trade of Loango," 140.

the Caribbean Island and America. Thus, the Trans-Atlantic Trade intensified consisting largely of slave trade. In exchange for slaves, European traders brought, among other things, large quantities of firearms for sale on the West African coast.²⁵⁰ The growth of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade meant the need to strengthen the slave hunt to meet the demand for slaves in Europe. Therefore, as suppliers of slaves, African chiefs and traders had to acquire more slaves. Most chiefs and traders resorted to warfare and raided weaker states to obtain captives whom they turned into slaves for sale. From the mid-17th century onwards, the slaves were among the major commodities for export from Africa, while guns and gunpowder were the major commodities for import from Europe. The availability of guns meant that it was possible to win battles and get captives for sale as slaves. Although the slave trade stimulated the economies of the societies that succeeded in making high profits from it, but it also caused other societies much devastation. Devastation was mostly caused by endless wars which were waged in order to capture captives for sale, since culturally, prisoners of war were the property of the victor. After winning any battle, the king took his share of the booty, including captives, and gave the rest to the war chiefs who had led the campaign.²⁵¹ This means that, besides the king, royal subjects could also own slaves and sell them for their own benefit. As a result, other members of the ruling class accumulated wealth. Thus, between the 17th and 19th centuries, slave trade caused endless wars amongst African communities or states.

As a source of wealth, slave trade instigated much competition between African states. The hostility within and outside the states increased as the need to control trade increased. In the 18th and 19th centuries, the best way of controlling trade for most kingdoms such as Dahomey and Ashanti was to expand their kingdoms towards the coast and to have direct relations with Europeans and other merchants along the coast.²⁵² This kind of expansion triggered many wars in West Africa. Some of these wars went on for years. Good examples include the Ekitiparapo war among the Yoruba which began in 1877 and ended in 1893, the wars between the Oyo and the Dahomey in the 18th and 19th centuries, and the wars between the Fante and the Ashanti during the same period.²⁵³ These prolonged wars had many effects on the political stability of

²⁵⁰ Robin Law, "Horses, Firearms, and Political Power in Pre-colonial West Africa," *Past and Present*, no. 72, (Aug. 1976), 112-132.

²⁵¹ Archibald Dalziel, *The History of Dahomy: An Inland Kingdom of Africa* (London: Spilsbury, 1793); *See*, Kristin Mann, *Slavery and the Birth of an African City: Lagos, 1760-1900* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 52 *See also*, J.F. Ade Ajayi and Robert Smith, *Yoruba Warfare in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: University Press, 1964), 14-15.

²⁵² Smith, *Warfare and Diplomacy*, 182-183.

²⁵³ Dalziel, *The History of Dahomy*, 77-78; *See*, Smith, *Warfare and Diplomacy*, 47; *See*, Mann, *Slavery and the Birth of an African City*; *See also*, Ajayi and Smith, *Yoruba Warfare*, 10-11.

some kingdoms. The power of any state was determined by its ability to conquer others and maintain authority and control over its people and those it conquered. The only way to maintain control over them all was through military power. In order to maintain military power, it was important to change warfare organization. In most societies, all free able-bodied men were expected to join armies in times of war. Hence, in most powerful kingdoms, kings had to have strong control of the generals and war chiefs who controlled the able-bodied men under their wings.

Warfare in the interior of East Africa intensified in the mid-19th century due to the high demand of ivory and slaves. In late 19th century, trade in slaves for export and firearms as a commodity for import, intensified more in East Africa than in West and Central Africa. As a result, firearms became more important for increasing territorial power and expansion of chiefdoms. The main traders were Arabs from Zanzibar and a few African traders who exchanged commodities with powerful chiefs or wealthy individuals in the interior. Sometimes Arabs raided defenseless communities and took away young people. This does not mean that there were no wars before slave trade. It only means that, in this period, the frequency of wars and raids increased.

In East Africa, the major exports were ivory and slaves, while the main imports were clothes and firearms. The imported firearms were mostly outdated weapons which had been discarded by Europeans. These firearms included smoothbore muzzle-loaders and rifle muzzle-loaders. By the 1880s, the number of guns transported from Zanzibar to the interior of Tanganyika alone were about 100,000 guns per year.²⁵⁴ Compared to the number of people at the time, the number of guns that entered the interior was significant. Powerful kingdoms and chiefdoms fought their weak neighbours. Militarized societies raided stateless societies. All these raids and fights occurred in order to get captives and sell them as slaves. For example, many wars between different Nyamwezi chiefdoms made free women and children into war captives who ended up as slaves.²⁵⁵

Before slaves became a commodity for export, wars produced captives who became domestic slaves for the victors. These slaves worked on farms or as livestock herders and some were used as domestic helpers in wealthy families, especially in the royal families.²⁵⁶ In this period, war captives were used to meet internal needs. In addition, war prisoners were a quick addition to the population of the winner's society by thousands through the annexation of the territories

²⁵⁴ John Illife, *A modern History of Tanganyika*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 51.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 67

²⁵⁶ Reid, *Wars in Precolonial Eastern Africa*, 132; *See also*, Illife, *Tanganyika*, 73.

that had been conquered.²⁵⁷ Slaves were expected to be loyal to their masters and worked in exchange for their “protection”. In many societies, relatives of slaves could redeem their enslaved relatives or the slaves could redeem themselves.²⁵⁸ In most cases, it was only healthy young women and children and a few young men who were taken as slaves. Most young men were killed along with the old captives while the few left alive were compelled to work as slaves. This applied to Ethiopia’s wars which began in the 18th century and ended in the early 19th century as well as those between Buganda and its neighbours before 1850. It was the same in the Ngoni wars, the war between the Nyamwezi and their neighbours, the Hehe and the Sangu or the Bena, and the Ngoni and the Ndendeuli.²⁵⁹

During the long-distance trade, most kings and chiefs sold some captives as slaves for export and retained others for use in the kingdoms or chiefdoms. In the Buganda kingdom, for example, up to the 19th century, some women captives were used as concubines and did production and reproduction activities in the kingdom.²⁶⁰ Slavery was common in East Africa throughout the 19th century. After the abolition of slave trade, slaves continued to be bought for domestic use, especially on farms. Up to the time of German rule, societies such as the Ngoni, Nyamwezi, Gogo, Yao, Zaramo, Makonde, Meru, Ngindo and Haya continued to buy and own slaves for personal use.²⁶¹ The same happened in West and Central Africa where the habit of taking war captives, especially women and children, as domestic slaves continued up to the onset of colonialism.

Although long-distance trade increased the need to acquire slaves for exchange with firearms, it did not change societies’ perception in terms of preferred weapons during war. In many cases, traditional weapons were much preferred over firearms because most people did not know how to operate guns efficiently. Those who tried to use firearms paid a painful price by losing a significant number of battles. The problem was lack of efficient firearms, professionalism and knowledge of the discipline and organization required for armies to fight efficiently using firearms. A good example was the Buganda kingdom, which, even with its might, lost several campaigns because of using firearms without properly training its soldiers.²⁶² With time, some

²⁵⁷ Kiwanuka, *A History of Buganda*, 143.

²⁵⁸ Iliffe, *Tanganyika*, 17-18, 72-74; *See*, Marcia Wright, *Strategies of Slaves and Women*, 48-50; *See*, Elmslie, *Among the Wild Ngoni*, 82-83; *See also*, Reid, *War in Pre-colonial Eastern Africa*, 69-70.

²⁵⁹ Iliffe, *Tanganyika*, 54-58; *See*, Wright, *Strategies of Slaves and Women*; *See also*, Richard Reid, *War in Pre-colonial Eastern Africa*.

²⁶⁰ Reid, *Wars in Precolonial Eastern Africa*, 132.

²⁶¹ Iliffe, *Tanganyika*, 73-74

²⁶² Kiwanuka, *A History of Buganda*, 145.

societies improved their use of firearms in battles, but most had difficulty in maintaining them owing to their poor quality and lack of proper gun powder. Up to the end of the 1880s, firearms were the best weapons for scaring away people before real battles in which traditional weapons such as muskets, bows and spears predominated.²⁶³ This does not mean that the firearms were not valuable as owning a firearm brought sense of power and prestige to individuals and states alike. Improvement in the use of firearms in East African societies was apparent in the 1890s because of the experience acquired through time and access to better quality firearms.²⁶⁴ As they gained experience of using firearms, the fighting became more ruthless and involved more deaths than before. The tactics some societies used involved burning of enemy villages caused havoc and destruction.²⁶⁵ In such war situations, it was mostly women and children who ended up being taken as captives to be used as slaves.

The increase in warfare led to the increase in the size of armies in some of the African kingdoms. As the availability of firearms increased, so was the number of the combatants involved. The increase in the size of the armies brought about professionalism in the way wars were fought using firearms. This military expertise based on the use of firearms started to appear in West Africa around the 18th century. The firearms used were handguns such as smoothbores, muzzle loading and flintlocks which were many along the coast of West Africa.²⁶⁶ Therefore, the base of military power of the coastal kingdoms such as Dahomey and Asante in this century was more on firearms than bows and arrows.²⁶⁷

By the 19th century, most kingdoms had large armies which consisted mainly of young men. The West African armies from powerful states went to war with a very large number of combatants. For example, in the Ijaye war of 1860-1865 in Yorubaland, the combatants in the armies of Ibadan, Ijaye and Abeokuta were over 60,000, over 30,000 and about 20,000 respectively. In the sixteen years of the Kiriji war of 1877-1893 among the Yoruba, Ibadan had between 40,000 and 30,000 combatants on the battlefield against the Ekitiparapo army, which had between 27,000 and 20,000 combatants. Additionally, in the battlefield, Bornu's army had more than 7,000 equestrians and a large number of the infantry.²⁶⁸ In the battle of Mbwila (29 October 1665) between Kongo and the Portuguese, Kongo's army had 380 musketeers and

²⁶³ Iliffe, *Tanganyika*, 51-52, 58-61.

²⁶⁴ Kiwanuka, *A history of Buganda*, 145; *See also*, Iliffe, *Tanganyika*, 50-51, 52, 59-61.

²⁶⁵ Reid, *War in Precolonial Eastern Africa*, 61-69.

²⁶⁶ Law, "Horses, Firearms, and Political Power," 112-132.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 112-132

²⁶⁸ Smith, *Warfare and Diplomacy*, 64-65.

thousands of infantry, while mid-19th century Buganda had thousands of warriors ready for battle.²⁶⁹ The same was the case with the Ethiopian army of the 1870s which had up to 40,000 troops, while in the mid-1880s it had 145,000 soldiers.²⁷⁰ Although the numbers might not be exact, still they reflect the huge armies formed by the states in question. Such huge armies were a source of devastation across the villages they crisscrossed owing to their habit of living off the land.

Some kingdoms such as Dahomey became stronger through wars; however, these wars had certain effects on the both sides involved. To the winner, heavy losses of warriors through death in the battle deprived the state of its stronger male population which could jeopardize its strength. At the same time, to the loser, it could lead to the end or decline of the chiefdom or kingdom. High loss of lives caused depopulation. Some villages even disappeared completely because of the ruin caused by war.²⁷¹

In areas where firearms were used for a long time, the increase in the size of armies went hand in hand with improvement on military strategies and tactics. As mentioned earlier, firearms contributed to the increase in military expertise. According to Kea, in some parts of West Africa, before the increase in the number of firearms, the organization of warriors in the battle was almost impossible and army commanders had no control over battlefields,²⁷² but with the use of firearms, war strategies had to change. In addition, the outdated firearms which were brought to Africa at the time were unreliable with low range and accuracy. Therefore, to make firearms useful different societies used different skills. For instance, Dahomey and Asante changed their tactics of fire from random to firing by ranks. They employed the countermarch and used tactics such as covering fire, frontal attacks and flanking movements.²⁷³ Consequently, to maximize the use of firearms, some communities such as the Nyamwezi developed skills on how to repair them and produced gunpowder locally.²⁷⁴ Therefore, states that made changes in keeping with the new technology of using firearms survived and were very strong until the time of colonial invasion.

²⁶⁹ Thornton, *The Kingdom of Kongo*, 75-76, *See also*, Richard F. Burton, *The Lake Regions of Central Africa*, Volume II, (New York: Horizon Press, 1961), 189.

²⁷⁰ Reid, *Pre-colonial Eastern Africa*, 58, 81-82.

²⁷¹ Ajayi and Smith, *Yoruba Warfare*, 51-53.

²⁷² R.A. Kea, "Firearms and Warfare on the Gold and Slave Coasts from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Centuries," *The Journal of African History* 2, no. 2, (1971), 208.

²⁷³ Kea, "Firearms and Warfare," 211-213.

²⁷⁴ Iliffe, *Tanganyika*, 51.

Treatment of the dead and the wounded warriors was one of the less developed areas in most African societies. Using herbs, traditional healers treated soldiers even when one had lost limbs. Among the Luba-Lunda, for example, traditional healers could cure any type of wound.²⁷⁵ However, during wars, most armies did not plan well in terms of treating the wounded. A few armies such as the Ashanti army used to have a group of traditional healers who accompanied it to the battle ground. Their main task was to care for the wounded and remove the dead from the field.²⁷⁶ Ngoni warriors never left the dead or wounded fellow warriors in the field; their war culture encouraged brotherhood in battle. They removed their wounded and the dead quickly while fighting or retreating.²⁷⁷ That way, it was easier to care for the wounded as quickly as possible. The same applied to the dead who were buried humanly as soon as possible. However, up to the last quarter of the 19th century societies such as the Hehe, Sangu and Makonde of East Africa, and the Dahomeans, Dagomba, Ibo and Yoruba of West Africa did not bury their dead.²⁷⁸ The dead were left where they fell or in the forest. The treatment of the wounded was mainly done using herbs²⁷⁹ that cured only to a certain extent. Therefore, for those with severe wounds, death was inevitable. In some societies, it was old men who cared for the wounded while in others the soldiers' wives took over as soon as the wounded were returned to war camps or their homes.

2.5.1 African Women in Pre-colonial Wars

The participation of women in pre-colonial African warfare is still a new subject probably because men were the main combatants in warfare. In addition, primary data on women and their participation in wars are scarce and rare. Most published works do not discuss African women in pre-colonial warfare as the main theme. However, the information available shows that women participated in warfare. They participated in different wars in different ways including as commanders, combatants or military supporters.

²⁷⁵ Antonio C.P. Gamito, *King Kazembe and the Marave, Cheva, Bisa, Bemba, Lunda, and other people of Southern Africa*, Vol. II, Trans. Ian Cunnison, (Lisboa, 1960), 88-90.

²⁷⁶ Bruce Vandervort, *Wars of Imperial Conquest in Africa 1830 1914*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 16.

²⁷⁷ Reid, *War in Precolonial Eastern Africa*, 209.

²⁷⁸ Dalziel, *The History of Dahomy*, *See*, J. Frederick Elton, *The Lakes and Mountains of Eastern and Central Africa*, ed. H.B. Cotterill (London: John Murray, 1879), 350, 358; *See also*, Joseph Thomson, *To the Central African Lakes and Back, 1878-1880: Vol. 1* (London: Gilbert and Rivington Printers, 1881), 237-238.

²⁷⁹ Smith, *Warfare and Diplomacy*, 54-55; *See also*, Elton, *The Lakes and Mountains*, 350, 358.

2.5.2 African Female Chiefs /Commanders

A few women participated in wars as commanders since in the pre-colonial period rarely women served as chiefs of their kingdoms. Most of the histories of these female chiefs were undocumented; therefore, only a few are available. Among the few documented female chiefs of the 17th century were those in Central Africa where the Portuguese had settled as early as the 15th century. One of the female chiefs was Queen Nzinga (1583-1663), also known as Njinga Mbande or Dona Ana de Souza, queen of the Mbundu people of Angola in the Ndongo and Matamba kingdoms in West-Central Africa. As a daughter of the king of Ndongo called Ngola a Kiluanje Kia Samba, she accompanied her father in campaigns from a very young age. Therefore, she had much experience in combat, politics and diplomacy which enabled her to rule her kingdom for forty years.²⁸⁰ Her experience enabled her to get much support from the army when she decided to crown herself in 1624 and started fighting the Portuguese in 1626. She fought the Portuguese on and off for about forty years.

The coming to power of Queen Nzinga, however, had certain controversies since her opponents died very conveniently. In 1622, after being defeated by the Portuguese, her brother King Mbande a Ngola, sent her to Luanda to negotiate peace with the Portuguese government on his behalf over Ndongo borders. To show her capacity in negotiation, the Portuguese governor proposed that King Mbande should pay annual tribute to the Portuguese. Queen Nzinga responded to the governor that “[people] talk of tribute after they have conquered, but not before; we come to talk of peace, not of subjection.”²⁸¹ In the end, she succeeded in drawing an agreement with the Portuguese. However, the Portuguese never honoured the agreement. In 1623, her brother, Mbande a Ngola, died suspiciously. It was believed that he had committed suicide. After the death of her brother, Nzinga took the throne as a regent of her brother’s son of about eight years old. In 1624, her brother’s son also died. The people suspected her of killing him, and in the same year, 1624, she declared herself a queen.²⁸² Her ascendance to the throne caused conflicts with other lineages, since the Mbundu of Ndongo were patriarchal, so, women were not expected to lead the kingdom. One of her greatest opponents called Hari a Ndongo, joined the Portuguese to remove her from the throne. The Portuguese allied with Hari a Ndongo and Imbangala mercenaries (Imbangala: highly trained mobile warriors) and started a war

²⁸⁰ Hettie V. Williams, “Queen Nzinga (Njinga Mbande),” in *Encyclopaedia of African American History*, eds. Leslie M. Alexander and Walter C. Rucker (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, 2010), 82.

²⁸¹ David Livingstone, *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1870), 459.

²⁸² John K. Thornton, “Legitimacy and Political Power: Queen Njinga, 1624-1663,” *The Journal of African History* 32, no.1 (1991), 38.

against Queen Nzinga in 1626. This was the beginning of forty years of an on-and-off wars between Queen Nzinga and the Portuguese. In the battle of 1628 against the Portuguese, her Imbangala mercenaries changed sides while still fighting and moved on to the side of the Portuguese.²⁸³ Consequently, she lost the battle and retreated with the remaining army. Queen Nzinga exerted her authority in the chiefdom of Matamba in 1629 after conquering it, and as her new base, she continued to rule as a queen and fight the Portuguese and her other neighbours.²⁸⁴

Queen Nzinga fought her neighbours and traders alike in order to strengthen her authority from her new location and to take control of the slaves and slave trade routes. She was aware of the importance of the slave trade routes. In a few years, she became one of the major slave traders in the west of Central Africa, and by the 1640s, she was exporting up to 13,000 slaves a year.²⁸⁵ Through slave trade, she accumulated enough wealth to make her one of the richest rulers in the region. The wealth enabled her to build a strong army to meet her endeavours. At the time, one of the characteristics of a strong kingdom was a big population. Because other factors such as agricultural production and internal trade depended on the population of a kingdom, and so were the royal taxes which were important for generating income. Therefore, to ensure that her kingdom had a big population, she replenished her warriors and increased the population by changing the status of some of slaves to free men/women who could live in the kingdom as such. These slaves were those who had been captured in wars and obtained from slave traders.²⁸⁶

As a warrior, Queen Nzinga led the army and participated in combat. She fought surrounded by her female soldiers who were also her personal bodyguards²⁸⁷ and organized guerrilla armies commanded by her sisters. The training of her army was the responsibility of Imbangala warriors. Therefore, she and her warriors used the Imbangala style of fighting.²⁸⁸ As a warrior, she led many battles and held her ground. For instance, she fought with the Portuguese on and off and blocked their influence in the region from 1630 to 1657 when they signed a peace treaty. At the same time, through war, she managed to expand her authority to a wider area in the region. As a diplomat, she obtained support from Mbundu village chiefs, the Dutch and Imbangala warriors. Moreover, as a politician, she was ready to denounce her traditional

²⁸³ Thornton, "Legitimacy and Political Power," 32; *See also*, Joseph C. Miller, "Nzinga of Matamba in a New Perspective," *The Journal of African History* 16, no. 2 (1975).

²⁸⁴ Miller, "Nzinga of Matamba," 202, 211.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 211

²⁸⁶ Miller, "Nzinga of Matamba," 209-211; *See also*, Thornton, "legitimacy and Political Power," 38

²⁸⁷ Thornton, "Legitimacy and Political Power," 39

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 32

religion and convert to Catholicism twice, that is, in 1622 and 1657 to gain trust from the Portuguese and the Dutch. With the Portuguese, the conversion helped her to have an equal footing in negotiating peace treaties, and with the Dutch, it helped her to form an alliance against the Portuguese. Therefore, from the biography of Queen Nzinga, it is obvious that women played an important role within and outside politics. That was why her brother entrusted her with the responsibility of negotiating with the Portuguese on his behalf.

2.5.3 African Women as Combatants and Non-combatants at the War Front

In pre-colonial Africa, women supported and participated in wars in different ways, depending on the traditions of the community concerned. They performed supportive functions more than they participated in combat. In some communities, women were camp followers who followed their husbands to war front. In other communities, women remained at home to care for the farms and homes. In some societies, women performed rituals that protected troops and in others, men stayed away from women for days before the beginning of a battle for spiritual cleansing purposes. Every society reacted to women according to its beliefs on the status of women as far as war was concerned. However, regardless of a society's reaction, women were important and participated in wars in different ways within the boundaries of the traditions that guided them.

In southwest Africa, societies such as the Mbundu (Angola), women's presence in battlefields was not strange even before the 16th century. They participated in war as both combatants and non-combatants. The biography of Queen Nzinga indicates that, as a young girl, she used to accompany her father in his campaigns, which implies that women were part of those who participated actively in war campaigns. Probably it was through these experiences that she built the courage to face her enemies. In the 17th century, the involvement of Queen Nzinga and many other women in the kingdom in combat²⁸⁹ suggests that there were no strict taboos that forbade women's participation in combat. Therefore, it is fair to say that in the war circumstances, Mbundu women participated in both combat and non-combat activities.

Other evidence from Central Africa indicates that, in some societies, women participated in war as combatants or non-combatants who followed troops as camp followers. A good example is the Kongo Kingdom where, in the 16th century, women participated in war as both. As

²⁸⁹ De Pauw, *Battle Cries and Lullabies*, 180.

combatants, they were brave and tactical. According to a Report by a Portuguese official called Duarte Barbosa written in 1591, women as combatants are depicted as follows:

In battle they resort to very warlike manoeuvres, retiring at times as if put to rout, and taking flight, yet turning around to assail their adversaries with arrows; and, on seeing the enemy elated with victory, already beginning to disperse, they suddenly turn and repulse them with great slaughter. So, on the account of their wiles and cunning as well as rapidity of action in battle, they are held in great dread in those regions.²⁹⁰

In the late 19th century, the history Kongo Kingdom shows some changes in the mode of women's participation in war. Women accompanied by their children followed their soldier husbands as non-combatants. They provided domestic services such as cooking and fetching some water during the day and at night they provided sexual services to their husbands. They also carried food for their families that included their soldier husbands. Carrying food was an important activity that was meant to solve the problem of logistics that many African armies faced at the time.²⁹¹ According to Vendervort, women and their children were always following the Kongo army. To speed up the cooking process, women carried on their heads, earthenware pots containing lighted tinder.²⁹²

West African pre-colonial armies also involved women in wars. Like in other parts of Africa, West African women helped to solve logistical problems and did domestic chores. Normally, in war campaigns, warriors had personal servants (boys) who carried their weapons. Kings were the ones that provided each warrior with one boy as a servant.²⁹³ During the march, these boys carried warriors' shields. However, warriors expected their families to carry provisions and other kinds of personal belongings. As non-combatants, West African women just like those in Central African kingdoms such as Kongo Kingdom were carriers while marching and, after arriving in camps, they became warriors' companions and helpers by doing domestic chores. They performed all duties as they did in their homes during peacetime. In addition, they cared for their warrior husbands when they were sick or wounded. Warriors' wives cooked not only for their husbands but also for the bachelor warriors. During battles (especially in the siege), women also supported their husbands by taking water, ammunition and food to them.²⁹⁴

In West African certain armies of the 19th century had more than 20,000 warriors. The number of non-combatants, however, was double that of the armies. In the sixteen years of the Kiriji

²⁹⁰ Duarte Barbosa Report as quoted in De Pauw, *Battle Cries and Lullabies*, 181.

²⁹¹ Vendervort, *Wars of Imperial Conquest*, 9-10 and 97.

²⁹² *Ibid.*, 6.

²⁹³ Dalzel, *The History of Dahomy*, 48.

²⁹⁴ Ajayi and Smith, *Yoruba Warfare*, 39.

war, the number of Yoruba warriors and their attendants, children and wives reached 60,000 at the Ibadan camp and 40,000 at the Ekitiparapo camp.²⁹⁵ However, the families' importance for campaigning had always overridden other problems of families that accompanied warriors to wars. In order for a warrior to fight, he needed some food to eat, and not just any kind of food, but the staple food of the warrior's ethnic group. Food preparation took much time, which warriors did not have, and it was a female activity. Carrying cooked food was not an option for long campaigns since the food would be spoiled. Among the Yoruba, the head of women chiefs and the civil line among chiefs (*iyalode*) organized supplies from farms and markets. In addition, when siege was expected to take longer she organised women to cultivate farms around camps.²⁹⁶ Therefore, the presence of wives allowed warriors to have settled minds and adequate time to concentrate on campaigns. Also, women leaders ensured that the whole army and its followers had enough food which reduced the burden on other male chiefs who had to deal with war strategies.

In most of West African societies, except for the Dahomey Kingdom (modern-day Benin), combat was a masculine activity. In Dahomey, women started to participate in combat probably before the 18th century. Their presence at the war front was reported for the first time by a slave trader called Captain William Snelgrave in 1727. According to him, women became warriors because of the small number of male warriors caused by endless wars that led to high mortality of male warriors.²⁹⁷ Women formed their own regiments but fought alongside their men. They comprised mostly local women and a few female slaves who were captured from different royal families' homes of their enemies. By the last quarter of the 19th century, female combatants constituted one-third of the Dahomey army. For example, in the battle of Abeokuta (1851) between Dahomey and the Yoruba (Egba people), Dahomey's army was estimated to have about 6,000 female combatants and 10,000 male combatants.²⁹⁸ The female combatants were highly trained and, therefore, physically fit and strong. Their courage equalled and sometimes exceeded that of men. In combat, female warriors were dependable and could fight to the end without running away from the battle ground. In 1840, female warriors prevented the occurrence of disaster. Their male counterparts fled, and only female warriors stayed to fight

²⁹⁵ Smith, *Warfare and Diplomacy*, 63

²⁹⁶ Ajayi and Smith, *Yoruba Warfare*, 87.

²⁹⁷ Joshua S. Goldstein, *War and gender: How Gender Shapes the War System and Vice Versa*, Second ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 2004), 61; *See also*, De Pauw, *Battle Cries and Lullabies*, 181.

²⁹⁸ Ajayi and Smith, *Yoruba Warfare*, 37; *See also*, Goldstein, *War and Gender*, 63.

the enemy. However, this same habit cost the lives of many female warriors in 1892 when Dahomey fought against the French who had superior weapons.²⁹⁹

Dahomey female warriors' armies were easier to maintain and hold under control. This is because during war, they were independent and needed fewer camp followers. Except for female veterans who went to battle with servants who carried weapons and ammunition for them, others carried their own weapons. Furthermore, on the march to war, they carried their own bedding and other provisions.³⁰⁰ This means that it was easier and cheaper to maintain and strategise female armies than male armies who moved around with many camp followers. The female combatants participated in many wars and were a threat to neighbouring societies. Their final battle with the French in 1894 marked the end of their superiority in battle³⁰¹ and the end of their kingdom when Behanzin, the last king of the Dahomey Kingdom, capitulated.

In East and Central Africa migrations such as that of the Ngoni brought new ideas about military organization to many societies. Before the arrival of the Ngoni, the rules of fighting and brutality that came with war were very different from those introduced by the Ngoni. A good example was the people of the Ngonde Kingdom (modern-day Malawi) in the early 18th century. Before the coming of the Ngoni, the Ngonde way of making war was peaceful and considerate of the enemy. First, a message would be sent to the enemy informing them about the intention to fight with them. The message indicated the time of fighting. If the causes of the war were not dealt with, then a war took place. The enemy was free to negotiate the day and time when the war should start. They fought only during daytime. According to the customs of Ngonde, it was cowardice to attack someone without giving him prior notice, or at night.³⁰² Among the Ngonde, only men participated in combat.³⁰³ Ngonde women remained in the villages probably because combat did not last more than three days. Therefore, logistics of the war was not a problem. However, the Ngoni way of making war was the opposite of the Ngonde's. The attacks took place at night without giving the enemy prior notice. As such, the Ngonde had to adopt to a new method of fighting. Nonetheless, after many battles, the Ngoni overpowered the Ngonde. To make peace, the Ngonde provided a royal female to the Ngoni chief. From then onwards, the

²⁹⁹ V. G. Kiernan, *Colonial Empires and Armies 1815-1960* (Gloucestershire: Sutton Publishing Ltd, 1998), 87-88; *See also*, Goldstein, *War and Gender*, 63; *See also*, De Pauw, *Battle Cries and Lullabies*, 183-184.

³⁰⁰ Goldstein, *War and Gender*, 61; *See also*, De Pauw, *Battle Cries and Lullabies*, 182-183.

³⁰¹ Kiernan, *Colonial Empires Armies*, 87-88; *See also*, Bruce Vandervort, *Wars of Imperial Conquest in Africa 1830-1914* (Indiana: University Press, 1998), 5.

³⁰² Godfrey Wilson, *The Constitution of Ngonde* (Livingstone, Northern Rhodesia: Livingstone Institute, 1939), 60, 62

³⁰³ Wilson, *The Constitution of Ngonde*, 29

wars between the Ngonde and the Ngoni stopped. In other regions of East Africa, many ethnic groups adopted Ngoni weapons, especially the assegai or hand spear.

In East Africa, the warriors of some societies had their families with them in campaigns for the same logistical reasons, while others did not. The Buganda kingdom, for example, was among those which allowed women to accompany their warrior husbands to war front. Buganda fought many wars against kingdoms such as Nyoro and Soga. In the early 19th century, during war campaigns, warriors' wives and children were part of the baggage train accompanying the warriors to the war front. During the march, a warrior carried his own spear, two assegais, a long dagger and a shield. Therefore, wives and children carried other weapons, provisions and water.³⁰⁴

In the early nineteenth century, the Ngoni dealt with the problem of logistics in a different way. The preparation for war started more than a week before the war. During that period, all women pounded flour for the campaign and men attended to their armament and war attire. During the march, troops of warriors marched in parallel single files, which extended up to a mile in width. The lines of boys and girls were at the centre; boys and girls carried goatskin full of provisions. At the end of the march, girls did the cooking and other domestic chores, while warriors built temporary camps.³⁰⁵ Warriors did not go to campaigns with their immediate families, but chiefs organized a group of young girls and boys who served as carriers and who performed all other domestic chores for the warriors. In the later years, some Ngoni groups changed their way of organizing war. The Ngoni of East Africa, for example, went to campaigns accompanied by their families.³⁰⁶

In Ethiopia, soldiers had their wives as followers. The women performed domestic chores and were responsible for issues of logistics. Since their armies were huge and food shortages was a chronic problem, these women participated in the looting and seizure of booty. Some of the Ethiopian commanders of the 19th century such as Tewodros of Amhara Empire selected some women to form a plundering band.³⁰⁷ Some of these women sometimes participated in fighting the enemy. In Ethiopian armies, women followers did not differ much from the women among

³⁰⁴ Sir Richard F. Burton, *The Lake Regions of Central Africa*, Vol. II (New York: Horizon Press, 1961), 189.

³⁰⁵ Donald Fraser, *Winning a Primitive People* (New York: E.P. Dutton and Company, 1914), 29-38.

³⁰⁶ Heike Schmidt, "Negotiating Marginality: The Maji Maji War and Its Aftermath in South-western Tanzania, ca. 1905-1916," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 43, no. 1 (2010), 53.

³⁰⁷ Reid, *War in precolonial Eastern Africa*, 156.

some Ngoni groups who assisted their husbands to carry weapons and who, sometimes, joined the fight.³⁰⁸

Up to the epoch of colonialism, the main problem in African warfare was war logistics. Feeding the army in the campaign was a decisive factor in whether to continue fighting or not, and one of the determinant factors in winning or losing a war. To solve the problem, they used human portage to move supplies, and that is where warriors' women came in. However, for huge armies it was hard to live off the land by pillage and plunder as they passed through various villages. To live off the land was not always easy as getting enough food for all was a problem, since there was not enough food to pillage and plunder. Therefore, hunger and fatigue were major problems for most armies. In Central Africa, the armies belonging to Africans and the Portuguese faced the same problems in terms of logistics. The same applied to East Africa because of low density and uneven distribution of population.³⁰⁹ Therefore, women support was very important in most of African armies.

To avoid hunger in their own chiefdoms, some societies opted to leave women behind and formed moderate armies. For example, among the Nyamwezi, using women as carriers of supplies was out of the question. As far as Chief Mirambo was concerned, women and old men were supposed to stay at home and farm. To compensate for the absence of women support in the field, his moderate army could assemble and manoeuvre at extraordinary speed and cover a large distance by running up to 16 miles without resting and attack the opponents by surprise. Then, they marched again so as to capture another opponent, living off the land and the spoils of the war.³¹⁰ With such war tactics, his army seldom faced food shortages.

Troops without women followers faced problems including starvation due to poor logistics which was a common problem among big armies. To avoid plunder, the peasant communities that were settled along the line of troop's movements had to hide food and valuables they had. For example, in the 19th century, Ethiopian communities hid grain in underground granaries so that moving armies could not see it. The same was done in Central Tanzania where pastoral communities hid their cattle once they heard armies were approaching their villages.³¹¹ Once

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

³⁰⁹ Iliffe, *Tanganyika*, 75-76.

³¹⁰ Reid, *War in precolonial Eastern Africa*, 63-64; *See also*, Chris Peers, *Warrior Peoples of East Africa 1840-1900* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing Ltd, 2005), 33.

³¹¹ John K. Thornton, "Firearms, Diplomacy and Conquest in Angola. Cooperation and Alliance," in *Empire and Indigenes: Intercultural Alliance, Imperial Expansion and Warfare in the Early Modern World West Central Africa, 1491-1671*, ed. Wayne Lee, (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 167, 172-178; *See also*, Richard Reid, *War in precolonial Eastern Africa*, 127-131.

troops faced starvation, the whole campaign came to a halt. In Ethiopia, there were several cases where troops died of starvation or a whole army was brought to its knees by hunger as even plundering did not help.³¹² As a solution, many states avoided long campaigns since it was not possible for them to maintain troops in the field beyond few weeks.

Furthermore, chiefs and their war commanders used women as spies so to get first-hand information on the enemy's plans. The women used were those who were familiar with the enemy's cultural ways so as to minimize the risk of capture. This was because it was not easy for a completely stranger to enter the enemy's camp unnoticed. People in the war camp were always in the lookout for spies, therefore, once one was suspected to be a spy, the suspicion could lead to death. It did not matter whether one was a male or female.³¹³ In societies like the Nyamwezi, a woman who was suspected of being a spy was normally killed. Therefore, using someone familiar with the enemy was a reasonable option. The procedure for recruiting a spy are not clear, but sometimes captured women who escaped the enemy war camp were used as spies. In the war between the Sangu under Chief Merere and the Machinga of the mid-19th century, the Sangu had a hard time as the Machinga were winning the battle. To gain the upper hand, Chief Merere used a Sangu female escapee to infiltrate the Machinga. She was one of the captives whom the Machinga had taken from the villages of the Sangu. There is not much information about the status of the woman before she was taken captive. However, she kept moving secretly back and forth between the camps so as to provide to the Sangu the much-needed information about activities in the Machinga camp, their strength and offensive plans. According to Elton, the 'spy' was "thin and cut about with thorns."³¹⁴ Probably, the thorn cuttings were the result of her secret movements in the bush. In Ethiopia as well as among the Manyema in Eastern Congo, women were vital in gathering information about enemy movements and plans.³¹⁵ It was easy for women to spy the enemy because women looked less threatening to men, therefore, women could easily portray themselves as innocent passers-by and could move around easily.

The presence of women in the makeshift war camps made life easier to all concerned and therefore it was like a small village. War commanders made sure that the warriors' spirit was always high and they were ready for the task ahead. To this end, commanders made sure that women entertained the warriors and brew traditional local beer for chiefs. Apart from providing

³¹² Reid, War in precolonial Eastern Africa, 128-130.

³¹³ Burton, The Lake Regions of Central Africa, 190

³¹⁴ Elton, The Lakes and Mountains, 345-348.

³¹⁵ Reid, War in precolonial Eastern Africa, 156

entertainment, women also operated trade. They had small businesses inside war camps that used the barter system as a means of exchange. The exchange was important as it enabled the people in the camps to get what they did not have in exchange for what they had in excess. For Central Africa's Ngoni, normally, on reaching the makeshift war camps, girls brewed local beer for the chiefs and elders who accompanied the warriors. This is because, according to the Ngoni traditions, young warriors were forbidden to drink alcohol or have sexual relations with women.³¹⁶ In most societies, entertainment, including dancing and singing, was normally deferred to the end for victors. Women sang for chiefs and warriors by praising the warriors for their strength and the paramount chief for his might in war.³¹⁷

2.5.4 African Women at the Home Front

Not all societies, however, allowed women to accompany warriors to war. Some states valued the role of women in agriculture; therefore, they were left to occupy the home front in order to continue with farm work. This ensured continuity in food production at home. In these societies, warriors carried food which had been prepared by women at home. When the food was finished, they foraged in the villages they passed through. In such circumstances, armies survived by plundering and looting. In the early 19th century, the Luba-Lunda kingdom under King Kazembe (Mwata Kazembe) went to war, leaving their women to continue with agricultural production.³¹⁸ Mwata Kazembe conscripted thousands of his men for war, knowing that there was no impact on food production as the main workforce in agriculture was women and their slaves. For the same reason, the armies of Mirambo and Nyungu ya Mawe recruited only young bachelors who did not have attachments to wives and children.³¹⁹ The Pare of Kilimanjaro did not allow women to be part of the army either. According to Kimambo, during wars, Pare women continued to farm and kept their families safe, while at the same time shouldering all other responsibilities in the society.³²⁰ As a result, they had armies which were loyal and committed to their course. Because of their undivided commitment and loyalty, they were ready to give everything and fight to death.

The women who remained at home gave moral support to their men at the front. Their support was shown in different ways. One would compose a chant through which they wished the

³¹⁶ Fraser, *Winning a Primitive People*, 32-33.

³¹⁷ Elton, *The Lakes and Mountains*, 362.

³¹⁸ Gamito, *King Kazembe*, 114-115.

³¹⁹ Iliffe, *Tanganyika*, 62-64.

³²⁰ Isaria Kimambo, *A Political History of the Pare of Tanzania 1500-1900* (Nairobi: East Africa Publishing House, 1969), 59.

enemy dead. All the women sang the chant repetitively while performing various activities. They also constantly sang songs that praised their warriors and commanders at the front. In addition, in the evenings, women sat together, pondering on their hopes and wishes of the continued war and encouraged each other while waiting for news from the war front.³²¹ In the end, women generated a positive attitude in the community that created the hope of winning the war and of their loved ones' safe return. Such an attitude was very important for the society in war as it built social unity. Such activities were common among the Nyamwezi women who were under Mirambo.³²² At the end of the war (on the victor's side), it did not matter whether or not women had accompanied the warriors to war front, women took over the celebrations by cheering, singing and dancing around the warriors.³²³ In every song they sang, they made sure that the name of the commander-in-chief was mentioned.

2.5.5 War Captives and Booty

As part of war booty, war captives and prisoners were sometimes used for rituals that involved human sacrifice. The captives who were used for rituals could be men, women or children. As mentioned earlier, there were many uses of captives depending on the culture of a given society. In the wars before and after the slave trade, getting captives was one of the main objectives of war. During the slave trade besides exporting captives as slaves, people chose some of them for various activities, including religious sacrifices and domestic work. Powerful and big states such as Dahomey have made human sacrifices for centuries as part of their religious practices so to please the ancestors of the royal family and get their blessings. In 1772, King Adahoonzou of Dahomey heard about the abolition of the slave trade from Governor Abson, who governed William's Fort, located within his kingdom. He replied by giving a two-hour speech on the importance of war captives to his state with or without slave trade. Part of his speech reads:

In the name of my ancestors and myself I aver [state] that no Dahomean man ever embarked in war merely for the sake of procuring wherewithal to purchase your commodities. I, who have not been long master of this country, have, without thinking of the market, killed many thousands, and I shall kill many thousands more. . . . neither silk nor coral, nor brandy, nor cowries, can be accepted as substitutes for the blood that ought to be spilt for example sake...

We do, indeed, sell to the white men a part of our prisoners, and we have a right to do so. Are not all prisoners at the disposal of their captors? . . . You have seen me kill many at the Customs [sacrificial place]; and you have often observed delinquents at Grigwee [one of provinces in his kingdom], and others of my provinces tied, and sent up to me. I kill them, but do I ever insist on being paid for them? . . . This give grandeur to my Customs, far beyond

³²¹ Reid, *War in precolonial Eastern Africa*, 157.

³²² *Ibid.*, 157.

³²³ *Ibid.*, 215, 217; *Also see*, Kimambo, *Political History of Pare*, 59.

the display of fine things, which I buy. Besides, if I neglect this indispensable duty, would my ancestor allow me to live in peace, while I have sent nobody to serve them?³²⁴

The making of human sacrifices to please royal ancestors happened in other West African states such as Oyo³²⁵ and Central Africa such as the Lunda Kingdom and the Ngola Kingdom which were ruled by King Kazembe and Queen Njinga, respectively.³²⁶ As far as the belief was concerned, the royal family had to perform a ritual that required plenty of human blood in order to satisfy the royal ancestors. Such societies believed their ancestors had power over the kingdom; therefore, pleasing them was for the betterment of the societies. The kings also believed that human sacrifices were important in maintaining their kingships.³²⁷

In most societies, before and during the long distance (slave) trade, captives were a source of wealth. The idea of free labour in production and profitable exchange in the slave market made captives irresistible objects for self-enrichment. In most cases, the victor took away captives as war booty, but also the loser could retreat with captives taken while retreating from war. To exert control over wealth, the king took all those who were captured as war booty. Then, the king could redistribute the booty to the commanders, brave soldiers and royal officials. All royal officials and some of the subjects in kingdoms owned slaves. In Bunyoro Kingdom, for instance, brave warriors were rewarded with slaves, cattle and women.³²⁸ Among the Yoruba and Asante of West Africa, Lunda and Mbundu of Central Africa, and the Hehe, Ngoni, Nyamwezi and Sangu of East Africa, the paramount chief distributed some of the captives, ivory and livestock to his chiefs and warriors as rewards for their bravery and service.³²⁹ Some sold few of the acquired slaves while the rest became domestic slaves.

Domestic slaves performed domestic chores and provided free agricultural labour, which in the end, added wealth and improved the economic status of the owner. Women and children were always the target in wars mainly because of their centrality to agricultural production and reproduction.³³⁰ In the Uhehe community, most of the women who provided labour to the chiefs were captives who were obtained from war and raids.³³¹ Children were equally important because of their long-life span. On the other hand, old captives were regarded as a burden

³²⁴ Dalzel, *The History of Dahomy*, 217-221.

³²⁵ Ajayi and Smith, *Yoruba Warfare*, 80.

³²⁶ Gamito, *King Kazembe*, 65-70; *See also*, De Pauw, *Battle Cries and Lullabies*, 180.

³²⁷ Smith, *Warfare and Diplomacy*, 48.

³²⁸ Reid, *War in precolonial Eastern Africa*, 211.

³²⁹ Smith, *Warfare and Diplomacy*, 55; *See also*, Schmidt, "Negotiating Marginality," 44.

³³⁰ Monson, "Relocating Maji Maji," 115; *See also*, Wright, *Strategies of Slaves and Women*, 62-64.

³³¹ Monson, "Relocating Maji Maji," 114.

because they could not work as domestic slaves or easily sold as slaves as very few people would be willing to buy them.³³²

Pre-colonial wars affected much individuals and states generally. Although some societies such as the Hehe formed strong states,³³³ many did not. With time, the endless wars became brutal to the losers. Most male members ended up dead while women and children were taken captives. The wars and raids of the time involved burning villages, plundering grain, livestock and destroying harvests. In the wars between the Hehe and their neighbours, Uhehe got many women captives, livestock and ivory.³³⁴ The same happened when Tewodros, the king of the Amhara Empire, who campaigned against the Wollo in Ethiopia. He said:

In spite of the weather, the depth of the rivers, and the lances of the *Gallas* had cost him a good number of troops: but, as he had captured six thousand women and children sheep and oxen, and horses and mules in proportion, he thought the death of his own troops amply revenged on the hated . . .³³⁵

Some commanders such as Tewodros did not mind sacrificing their soldiers in order to get a lot of wealth. Most commanders did not campaign in the rainy season as it was too risky to cross flooded rivers. However, it was easy for the callous to win war as most did not anticipate war during the rainy season.

Most wars and raids occurred during the harvest period and the results were devastating to survivors. Without a home, food and kin members they could hardly survive. Taking women and children as captives left many survivors of war or raids emotionally broken. Endless wars led to high mortality rates, and high mortality rates combined with the slave trade, left many areas depopulated. To be a war captive did not ensure one's safety at all since the captor could kill his captives at any time if he so decided. In the war between the Sangu and the Machinga, when the Machinga lost the war, they killed all Sangu captives.³³⁶ Endless wars and slavery had huge consequences for the society especially stateless societies which were prone to raids. For example, the Ndendeuli were frequently raided by the Ngoni and weaker states such Nyoro and Soga were frequently attacked by the Baganda.³³⁷ In some cases, especially in the 19th century, the affected people reacted negatively to the armies that had been stationed nearby or the armies that crisscrossed their villages or the victor who continued to live off the land in the conquered

³³² Wright, *Strategies of Slaves and Women*, 50.

³³³ Iliffe, *Tanganyika*, 56-58.

³³⁴ Monson, "Relocating Maji Maji," 115.

³³⁵ Reid, *War in precolonial Eastern Africa*, 71.

³³⁶ Elton, *The Lakes and Mountains*, 350.

³³⁷ Iliffe, *Tanganyika*, 54-55; *See also*, Burton, *The Lake Regions*, 189.

village. A good example was in 1832 when the peasants of the Adigrat area (Ethiopia) joined and moved against their own Tigrayan army in the nearby military camp and recaptured some of their stolen property.³³⁸ They were tired of the troops' tyranny. The same occurred in the 1880s when armed villagers decided to defend their property against troops that were travelling across Tigray villages. The troops demanded too much from villagers in terms of food and lodgings.³³⁹ However, such reactions were not common because many communities were too afraid to react to such armies.

Furthermore, wars caused stagnation of development in most of the areas affected. Development stagnation was mainly the result of endless wars and the long-distance slave trade which led to loss of work force and collapse of local industries. A good example is the weaving industry of the Fipa of East Africa.³⁴⁰ In addition, strong states became stronger at the expense of the weak ones that declined or even disappeared. The bases of political leadership also changed from ritual powers and royal blood to economic and military prowess which led to, for instance, Merere I to become the paramount chief of the Sangu who before the 1830s had only clan chiefs. Also, Chief Sina of Kibosho became chief because the warriors of Kibosho chose him.³⁴¹ This trend of warfare continued even during the colonial period whereby the colonial armies such as the *Schutztruppe* of the Germans of East Africa behaved in the same way as pre-colonial armies, only with more destruction as will be seen in the next chapter.

2.6 Conclusion

Women involvement in wars has existed for many centuries as established in this chapter. Societies involved women according to their needs in fulfilling the aims of war. The reasons for involving women might differ based on environment, economic or socio-political power but the roles of women at the war front or home front were very similar. The roles of women in pre-modern European wars and the roles of women in pre-colonial Africa were the same. The difference is slightly seen in the attitude of the societies towards women's involvement in wars, especially at the war front. The attitude of European societies on female camp followers was negative compared to that of pre-colonial African societies. Nevertheless, for both Africa and Europe, having women at the war front was a necessity. European societies mainly associated it with immorality while in pre-colonial Africa it was the norm and was looked at positively.

³³⁸ Reid, War in precolonial Eastern Africa, 154.

³³⁹ Ibid., 154.

³⁴⁰ Iliffe, Tanganyika, 60.

³⁴¹ Ibid.

This could be due to the fact that African societies embedded the idea of women involvement in the war into their culture.

In pre-colonial African societies, men's attitude towards women's participation in war was very positive. Women and their participation in warfare were valued in all African communities. African communities looked at women mainly in three dimensions: women as food producers, caregivers and peacemakers. With respect to women as food producers, their responsibilities in warfare depended on a given society's level of economic and political development, military organization and environmental conditions. In regions where soil did not yield enough food, societies left women behind so that they could continue with farming activities and care for their homes and families while their men were at war. In that kind of military organization, warriors depended on themselves or on their slaves to meet their domestic needs and other war logistics. They lived off the land by pillaging the villages they passed through and the booty obtained from the communities which had been conquered.

In other areas, women accompanied their love ones to war as camp followers since their absence from home seemed not to affect food production. Furthermore, the women were more beneficial to the warriors at the front than at the home front. In that case, women accompanied their warrior husbands to the war front, carrying food which helped the warriors to solve the problem of logistics and domestic chores. The women who accompanied soldiers cared for their husbands and families as they did during peaceful times. Thus, warriors could fight for a long time because they knew that their families were safe. Troops' level of tolerating war hardships was also higher.

In addition, most kings and chiefs used women to make peace with enemies and form alliances. In this regard, the societies concerned looked at women as pacifiers. In negotiating a peace agreement, the person seeking peace had to provide a close female relative to be married to the chief or king of the other side. Once that was done, the sides concerned became relatives and, therefore, there were no more wars between them. Otherwise, the one who wanted to start war had to return the woman or request her to be returned. This practice was a common way of securing friendships in many parts of Africa. It guaranteed harmony between and within communities. Although, in some areas, conflict resolution through intermarriages prevented war only temporarily, it still helped to pacify those concerned. Therefore, the attitude towards women in pre-colonial African warfare was positive and, in many ways, African men depended on their women for their success in times of war or peace.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 African Women in Wars during the Colonial Period before WWI

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the participation of African women in wars during the colonial period but before WWI. In some parts of Africa, conflicts between European/imperial agents such as France and African societies started before the formal onset of colonialism that is, before the partition of Africa. Their presence in Africa caused clashes between them and Africans. For this reason, they formed armies to safeguard their interests. For example, the British and the French had armies in Africa before the continent was partitioned. During these early days of colonial armies, although the official combatants recruited were men, women became part of the armies either as soldiers' wives or as part of the people who lived around the camps or garrisons. At the same time, in different African societies, women participated in resistance wars against foreign invaders (colonial governments), with whom their men were fighting. Therefore, African women participated both in conquests as part of conquering armies and in resistance as part of anti-European African resistance. The role they played and the side in which they participated depended on the men they supported.

The main objective of this chapter is to examine African women's participation in colonial wars before WWI. The purpose is to identify the role women played in warfare in this period. To meet the objective, the chapter addresses the question: how did African women participate in colonial wars before WWI? To respond to this question, the role of both genders in the wars will be examined. This is important because, as mentioned earlier, women's part and how they participated in war depended on their men. In this context, the word man refers to a husband or father or any other male relative on whom a woman as an individual depended on.

Traditionally, in many African societies, gender relations had mutual benefits to both men and women as they were complementary. In addition, human activities were divided according to gender. As regards the division of activities, men were responsible for family or community protection. Therefore, in war time, women supported their men based on what their traditions demanded. During the colonial period, women's position in war was as it had been in the pre-colonial period. That is, some were on the side of the aggressor while others were on the side of the retaliator; however, their role was to give support to men. The only difference was which side a woman supported. In the pre-colonial time, the aggressor and the retaliator were both

African societies, while in the colonial period, it was between colonial armies and African communities. To understand the participation of women in campaigns in German East Africa, this study further discusses African women in other colonial territories under different imperial powers. In addition, as mentioned earlier, the discussion will cover the period beyond the beginning of formal colonial administration. This is important as it will capture the history and reasons for women's participation in war, especially in African colonial armies. Therefore, for the sake of clarity, the chapter begins by examining the involvement of women in colonial armies in different parts of Africa before focusing on German East Africa.

The chapter starts with a short history of different colonial armies under different colonial powers. This gives an overview of how and why certain people in African societies were recruited first. Also, the attitude of Africans towards early recruiters of colonial armies will be revealed. The challenges faced by military officers in maintaining recruits will be discussed as well as the importance of women *askari*. The chapter further discusses women's inclusion in the armies of different imperial powers. It will equally discuss women's role in supporting their husbands in the military as well as in different societies that resisted colonial conquest.

3.2 African Colonial Armies

The partition of Africa among the imperialist powers took place during the Berlin Conference of 1884 to 1885 organised by Chancellor Bismarck of Germany. The partition of Africa was mainly done on paper, so the actual or physical partition of Africa continued up to the 1890s. Historical evidence indicates that, by 1898, except for Liberia and Ethiopia, the physical partitioning of sub-Saharan Africa had been concluded.³⁴² The penetration and conquest of Africa followed soon after. To exert its power, a colonial government had to conquer Africans first since each African society had its own political organization under its own ruler. Therefore, colonial governments used different methods to conquer different societies, depending on how a given society resisted the establishment of colonial rule. For societies that resisted colonial rule passively, peaceful means were used, while those which did so actively, aggression was used. Aggression was mostly used to pacify resisting states. The need to use aggression to conquer Africans and the need to secure territorial borders made colonial armies necessary. Colonial armies were also required for dominating Africans who were ready to resist whenever possible. However, one must note that the British and the French had armies in some parts of Africa even before the continent was partitioned.

³⁴² John M. Mackenzie, *The Partition of Africa 1880-1900* (London: Methuen and Co, 1983), 18

Except for a few, most African colonial armies in African territories started at the onset of colonialism so as to conquer and consolidate colonial rule. In these colonial armies, Africans were more in number than Europeans. Two main reasons accounted for the disparities: high death rates of Europeans because of diseases and the intention to reduce expenses of maintaining many European soldiers in Africa.³⁴³ At the beginning, different colonial masters had almost the same methods of getting recruits for their armies. For instance, they recruited slaves into their armies. The French in West Africa formed an army that included African recruits as early as in the late 18th century. The recruits were ransomed African slaves.³⁴⁴ The French were the first to recruit Africans soldiers into their armies.

In the early 19th century (1819), France authorized the Governor of Senegal to pay a recruitment bonus to enlisting soldiers. The French used the same bonus to buy male slaves in the territory through a system known as *rachat*, which meant redemption or re-purchase.³⁴⁵ They used the same slaves ransomed (practically bought) from their African masters to form colonial troops. However, having volunteers was difficult for various reasons. These included the low wages paid by the French and the harsh discipline involved in one becoming a soldier. Local people generally despised the chores and fatigue involved in military labour. They regarded the labour involved as suitable only for slaves.³⁴⁶ Free Africans were not interested in becoming soldiers, so freed, ransomed slaves had to be accepted, since it was easy to recruit them, and they readily accepted low salaries. In addition, it was easy to mould them into acceptable standards of soldiers. At the time, these ransomed slaves who became soldiers were known as *engages a temps* (indentured military labourers).

The French ransomed slaves from their African masters for 300-400 Francs each. In return, the ransomed slaves had to accept the offer and become soldiers under long-term contracts; the minimum period being fourteen years.³⁴⁷ As *engages a temps*, they fought in Madagascar in 1827 and Guyana in 1831.³⁴⁸ The freed slaves formed the core of the French army even after

³⁴³ Bruce Vandervort, *Colonial Wars 1815-1960*, in *European Warfare 1815-2000*, ed. Jeremy Black (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 152-153 [147-171].

³⁴⁴ Martin Klein, "Slaves and Soldiers in the Western Soudan and French West Africa," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 45, no.3, (2011): 569-570.

³⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 570; *See also*, J. Malcom Thompson, "Colonial Policy and the Family Life of Black Troops in French West Africa, 1817-1904," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 23, no. 3 (1990): 425-426.

³⁴⁶ J. Malcom Thompson, "Colonial Policy," 425; *See also*, Myron Echenberg, "Slaves into Soldiers: Social Origins of the *Tirailleurs Senegalais*," in *Africans in Bondage*, ed., Paul E. Lovejoy (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1986), 311-334, and 312.

³⁴⁷ Shelby Cullom Davis, *Reservoirs of Men: A history of the Black Troops of French West Africa* (Geneve: Kundig, 1934), 23; *See*, Echenberg, "Slaves into Soldiers," 313; *See also*, Klein, "Slaves and Soldiers," 570.

³⁴⁸ Klein, "Slaves and Soldiers," 570.

Africa had been partitioned and were referred to as *tirailleurs Senegalais* during that period. The French used them to conquer and occupy other parts of the expanding French Empire. Besides conquering Africans in West Africa, the *tirailleurs Senegalais* also fought in Madagascar, Sudan and Equatorial Africa.³⁴⁹ After the partitioning of Africa, that is, from the 1880s to 1890s, the French recruited soldiers from a pool of war captives who had been captured in the former campaigns of conquest.³⁵⁰

During the period of partitioning of Africa, the Congo Free State (modern-day Democratic Republic of Congo) was given to King Leopold II of Belgium. The Belgian king ruled the Congo Free State as in a personal capacity. It took until 1908 when it was annexed by the Belgian government.³⁵¹ In order to conquer and consolidate power in the Congo Free State, an army was formed in 1886. In this part of Africa, the Belgian colonial army was called *Force Publique*, meaning a Public Force. For the reasons mentioned earlier, this colonial army, like others in Africa, had more African soldiers than European ones. At the beginning, the African men recruited were few. They were about hundred mercenaries recruited from West coast of Africa and Zanzibar. The men were of different origins who included Hausa, Somalis, Gold Coasters, Dahomeans and Sierra Leoneans.³⁵² These mercenaries had seven years' contracts and, therefore, played a major role in the occupation of Congo Free State. In addition, few Congolese men were coercively recruited into the Belgian army.

The Congolese recruits were obtained mainly through annual conscription. Annual conscription was based on the Governor's instructions that included a directive on the districts from which new recruits were acquired and the number of recruits to be obtained from each district.³⁵³ Then African chiefs in the chosen districts had to provide conscripts to the District Commissioner according to the number requested. Therefore, most recruits did not volunteer for the service; they were coerced into it. In addition, chiefs selected mainly unwanted slaves and all undesirable men in their areas as recruits.³⁵⁴ Chiefs used the opportunity to clean up their societies by removing the people with undesirable character. It is highly possible that chiefs also sent away their rivals' sons as conscripts. Once in the military post, recruits were put in

³⁴⁹ Davis, *Reservoirs of Men*, 26-28, 72-79; *See also*, Echenberg, "Slaves into Soldiers," 313.

³⁵⁰ Thompson, "Colonial Policy," 425, 438-440.

³⁵¹ W.L. Ferguson, "The Present Situation in the Congo," *The Journal of Race Development* 1, no. 4. (April 1911): 410.

³⁵² Lewis H. Gann and Peter Duignan, *The Rulers of Belgian Africa 1884-1914* (New Jersey, Princeton: University Press, 1979), 73.

³⁵³ Ferguson, "Situation in Congo," 407-408.

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.*; *See also*, Gann and Duignan, *The Rulers of Belgian Africa*, 76-77.

chain gangs. Those who seemed unpromising faced frequent harsh discipline and punishment, mainly in the form of flogging. To worsen things for the new recruits, food was poor and the environment dirty. The method of acquiring recruits was brutal, and so was their treatment. Many new recruits died from hardships. Furthermore, chiefs were coerced to supply troops with carriers and free provisions.³⁵⁵ As a result, food was not enough for recruits owing to constant wars and high taxes. King Leopold did not want to incur such expenses and, therefore, the civilians who were already under subsistence economy shouldered the burden.

Despite the hardships, the pay for the Belgian *askari* was poorer than that of other employed Africans. The pay in the first enlistment contract was 9 francs a month while it was 16.50 francs for the second enlistment contract.³⁵⁶ Such wages equalled a one-third of what was paid to railway labourers in the same territory at the time. As a result, low pay turned many reluctant recruits into uncommitted *askari*. Some of them deserted the army while those who remained *askari* became undisciplined and prone to mutiny. They mutinied and killed their Belgian officers as well as fellow soldiers in many instances between 1895 and 1908. For example, the Shinkakasa mutiny which began in the mid-1890s was the bloodiest and longest. It covered a large area and lasted longer than any other mutiny in colonial army history. The final mutineers were apprehended in 1908.³⁵⁷ In spite of these difficulties, the army still expanded. For example, there were 3,186 soldiers in 1891 and about 16,800 by 1910. Up to 1914, a total of 66,000 men had passed through the ranks of the *Force Publique* (Belgian Congo colonial army).³⁵⁸

The German colonial army was known as the *Schutztruppe*, which means a Protective Force. At the beginning of the *Schutztruppe*, two main methods of recruitment were used in different colonies. The first involved recruiting African ex-soldiers as mercenaries and the other involved ransoming (buying) slaves from their African masters. Germany had four colonies in Africa, namely Togo, Cameroon, German South-West Africa and German East Africa. However, not all these colonies had a *Schutztruppe* with African soldiers. In German South-West Africa, Africans were not part of the troops. In Togo, there was no *Schutztruppe*; instead, there were only armed police who were answerable directly to the governor.³⁵⁹ The police, known as

³⁵⁵ Gann and Duignan, *The Rulers of Belgian Africa*, 73, 77.

³⁵⁶ Mwelwa C. Musambachime, "Military Violence against Civilians: The Case of the Congolese and Zairean Military in the Pedicle 1890-1988," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 23, no. 4 (1990): 647.

³⁵⁷ Gann and Duignan, *The Rulers of Belgian Africa*, 77-79.

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 67, 79.

³⁵⁹ Lewis H. Gann and Peter Duignan, *The Rulers of German East Africa 1884-1914* (California, Stanford: University Press, 1977), 115.

Polizeitruppe, was small but highly trained in building roads and railways and in discharging infantry duties. The first recruits were labour migrants from outside Togo, mainly Hausa, Grussi, Mossi, Dahomeans and Wey. The Germans recruited these labour migrants because they worked under long-term contracts, something which was new to the Togolese.³⁶⁰ The Togolese were recruited later. Therefore, German East Africa and Cameroon were the only colonies with *Schutztruppe*.

The first *Schutztruppe* recruitment methods used in these two colonies differed from each other. In Cameroon, the Germans bought (ransomed) slaves from their African masters and established their army. The first *Schutztruppe* in Cameroon was formed in 1891 by Captain Freiherr von Gravenreuth. His first recruits were slaves. He purchased 370 slaves from King Behanzin of Dahomey.³⁶¹ In the first few years, they were the core of the Cameroon military force. German officers treated these ransomed soldiers very harshly including flogging them. After the 1893 revolt, which was mainly caused by mistreatment of African women (soldiers' 'wives') who were also ransomed slaves, their work conditions improved.³⁶² Later on, the Germans recruited soldiers by offering them five years' contracts. This was given mainly to the men from outside Cameroon including the Hausa, Yoruba and Wey, who had volunteered to join the army. Local Cameroonian men began to volunteer to join the army in the years after 1900.

In German East Africa, at the beginning of 1889, Major Hermann von Wissmann made the first recruitment, which was different from that of Cameroon. He recruited about 600 Sudanese mercenaries from Egypt (the ex-soldiers of the Egyptian army) and recruited 400 Shangani warriors from Portuguese East Africa³⁶³ to form *Wissmanntruppe* (as named later in his honour). He recruited African mercenaries from outside German East Africa in order to have more control over the soldiers and to avoid any indiscipline. The *Wissmanntruppe* was formed according to the German parliamentary ruling of 2nd February 1889 that allowed the formation

³⁶⁰ Gann and Duignan, *The Rulers of German East Africa*, 115.

³⁶¹ Helmuth Stoecker, *Kamerun Unter Deutscher Kolonialherrschaft* (Berlin: Rütten and Leoning, 1960), 103-104; *See also*, Gann and Duignan, *The Rulers of German East Africa*, 116.

³⁶² Stoecker, *Kamerun Unter Deutscher*, 113-130; *See also*, Gann and Duignan, *The Rulers of German East Africa*, 116.

³⁶³ John Iliffe, *A Modern History of Tanganyika* (Cambridge: University Press, 1979), 95; *See*, Albert F. Calvert, *German East Africa* (New York, Negro: Universities Press, 1970), 9; *See*, Kirsten Zirkel, "Military Power in German Colonial Policy: the Schutztruppen and their Leaders in East and South-West Africa, 1888-1918," in *Guardians of the Empire: The Armed Forces of the Colonial Powers c. 1700-1964*, eds. David Killingway and Davis Omissi (Manchester: University Press, 1999), 96 [91-113]; *See also*, Herrf, *They Walk Through the Fire*, 50-51.

of special colonial troops in German East Africa.³⁶⁴ The *Schutztruppe* was formed later in 1891, six months after German East Africa had become a protectorate. German East Africa became a protectorate on 20th November 1890.³⁶⁵ The *Wissmanntruppe* changed its name to *Schutztruppe* with the same soldiers, but it needed more recruits. However, among the African soldiers (*askari*) who had been recruited, the Sudanese formed the core of the army. In the mid-1890s volunteers from within were recruited; they included the Nyamwezi, Sukuma and Manyema, with the Nyamwezi and Sukuma as the core among the local recruits.³⁶⁶ The pay was between 20 to 30 Rupees a month for privates and up to 150 Rupees for native non-commissioned officers (NCOs)³⁶⁷ while their servants, known as *askari boys* were paid 2 Rupees a month.³⁶⁸ *Askari* wages were relatively higher than those of other employed Africans. Up to 1907 official wages of plantation labourers was 15 Rupees, while railway labourers received 8 Rupees with food and shelter.³⁶⁹ In addition, a German East Africa *askari* received a relatively higher pay than that of an *askari* in Belgian Congo or British East Africa. The Sudanese continued to serve, with most of them holding higher ranks among the *Schutztruppe askari*, however, their number was diminishing with time.

The British had depended mainly on the Indian army to safeguard their interests in Asia and Africa since the 1860s. Only a small African infantry was maintained in African colonies.³⁷⁰ Up to the end of 1902, British armies in all African colonies had about 11,500 men.³⁷¹ This was a very small number in comparison with the several colonies they had. It is small when it is compared to the armies that belonged to the other imperial powers such as the Belgian colonial army, which, in 1898, had about 19,028 African men.³⁷² In British West Africa, the recruits of

³⁶⁴ John Iliffe, *A Modern History of Tanganyika* (Cambridge: University Press, 1979), 95.

³⁶⁵ Kirsten Zirkel, "Military Power in German Colonial Policy: the Schutztruppen and their Leaders in East and South-West Africa, 1888-1918," in *Guardian of Empire: The Armed Forces of the Colonial Powers c. 1700-1964*, eds. David Killingray and David Omissi (Manchester: University Press, 1999), 96; See, Iliffe, *History of Tanganyika*, 97-98; See, John Iliffe, *Tanganyika under German Rule, 1905-1912* (Cambridge: University Press, 1969), 11; See also, Gann and Duignan, *The Rulers of German East Africa*, 117.

³⁶⁶ Gann and Duignan, *The Rulers of German East Africa*, 118; See also, Michelle R. Moyd, *Violent Intermediaries: African Soldiers, Conquest, and Everyday Colonialism in German East Africa* (Athens, Ohio: University Press, 2014), 38.

³⁶⁷ Albert F. Calvert, *German East Africa* (New York, Negro: Universities Press, 1970), 11.

³⁶⁸ Herrf, *They Walk Through the Fire*, 84.

³⁶⁹ Ann Beck, "Medicine and Society in Tanganyika, 1890-1930: A Historical Inquiry," *The American Philosophical Society* 67, part 3 (March 1977): 24-25.

³⁷⁰ David Killingray, "The Ideal of a British Imperial African Army," *The Journal of African History* 20, no. 3 (1979), 421.

³⁷¹ Lewis H. Gann and Peter Duignan, *The Rulers of British Africa 1870-1914* (London: Croom Helm, 1978), 84.

³⁷² Gann and Duignan, *The Rulers of Belgian Africa*, 79.

the 1870s to 1900s included mainly former slaves who “volunteered” to be colonial soldiers. Up to 1914 the volunteers were men from the lowest class in the societies. To improve their social status, they did not participate much in hard labour such as construction work as the French or Belgian African colonial soldiers did. Instead, they used more of their time in drill parade.³⁷³ However, their status was high among the illiterates and remained low in front of literate Africans.

In East and Central British Africa, between the 1880s and 1890s, mercenaries were the first recruits. The British recruited Makua and Zanzibari mercenaries for Central Africa and Sudanese, Somali and Swahili mercenaries East Africa.³⁷⁴ The mercenaries were accompanied by their families and other followers. In the 1890s, the British paid a private mercenary 5s. 4d. a month and an officer 4 pounds, 5s a month. At the same time, in most districts, mercenaries were not paid in cash but in the form of clothes.³⁷⁵ Furthermore, African auxiliaries such as the Massai were paid through war spoils that they could carry home, including women who had been captured.³⁷⁶ The mercenaries were angered by the low pay as they knew that their colleagues in German East Africa were getting more pay than they did. They knew that in German East Africa, a private was paid 20s. a month. British African mercenaries were also angry because field service kept them away from their wives and families for a long time.³⁷⁷ As a result, they had poor discipline and, to compensate for their low pay, they captured livestock and pillaged grain in the name of forcing the enemy to surrender. Moreover, the scorched earth policy, seizure of livestock and the random killing of adult men and women were used against those who showed signs of resistance or insubordination.³⁷⁸ In the end, the mercenaries mutinied.

In 1902, the British colonial army for East and Central Africa was named King’s African Rifle (KAR) and was under a colonial office that was supervised by an inspector general.³⁷⁹ However, nothing changed in terms of British officers’ and soldiers’ attitude towards Africans. It was said that, the 1905-1906 campaigns against the Nandi in today’s Kenya, the war cost the Nandi “10,000 heads of cattle, 70,000 sheep and goats, and 500 warriors killed with unknown number of the wounded. ... 917 huts, 239 granaries and 46 stock enclosures burned; 145 acres of

³⁷³ Gann and Duignan, *The Rulers of British Africa*, 108-109.

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 117-118.

³⁷⁵ Gann and Duignan, *the Rulers of British Africa 1870-1914*, 118.

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 118-119 and 146.

³⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 119.

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 118 and 121.

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 120.

standing crops destroyed; eight Nandi captured and 51 killed.”³⁸⁰ This was just a fraction of the total loss the Nandi suffered in the two years of war.

3.3 Women in Colonial Armies

As far as women were concerned, the small British infantry that was maintained in Africa up to the early 20th century behaved in the same way as those under the French, Germans and Belgians. The only difference was that many British officers did not want to state openly the fact that their soldiers kept captive women. Some even claimed that women were never abducted during campaigns but came to camps or barracks at their own accord since they loved soldiers’ uniforms.³⁸¹ Even if that was partially true in some areas,³⁸² the fact is that some British colonial officers distributed captured women to African soldiers. Even if they did not abduct and distribute women as systematically as, for example, the French did, the British used women as an incentive to attract recruits. For example, British officers in Uganda distributed captured women as part of the booty to the most deserving of their men. The women in question were forced to live with their new ‘husbands’ as ‘wives.’³⁸³ In many ways, British African soldiers behaved in the same way as other soldiers. They plundered, seized goods, stole civilians’ property, beat men and raped women, just as other African colonial soldiers did.³⁸⁴ Also, British *askaris*’ wives joined their husbands in military posts. The British officers knew that it was advantageous to incorporate *askaris*’ families into the military stations because married *askari* were more stable and easier to discipline than those who were bachelors. General Dimoline, who was in British East Africa Protectorate (Kenya) observed that:

When their families are present with them, *askari* are contented and of good nature. The reverse applies when separated, and they tend to get into mischief. The morale of the unit is directly dependent (in normal peace condition) upon whether families are present.³⁸⁵

The women in the British colonial armies performed the same duties as those in the other African colonial armies in the French, Belgian and German territories.³⁸⁶

³⁸⁰ Gann and Duignan, *The Rulers of British Africa*, 150.

³⁸¹ David Killingray, “Gender Issues and African Colonial Armies,” in *Guardian of Empire: The Armed Forces of the Colonial Powers c. 1700-1964*, eds. David Killingray and David Omissi (Manchester: University Press, 1999), 227-228.

³⁸² Timothy H. Parsons, *The African Rank-and-File: Social Implications of Colonial Service in the King’s African Rifles, 1902-1964* (Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann, 1999), 150.

³⁸³ *Ibid.*, 148-149.

³⁸⁴ Gann and Duignan, *The Rulers of British Africa*, 109.

³⁸⁵ Timothy Parsons, “All Askari are Family Men: Sex, Domesticity and Discipline in the King African Rifles, 1902-1964,” in *Guardians of the Empire: The Armed Forces of the Colonial Powers c. 1700-1964*, eds. David Killingray and David Omissi (Manchester: University Press, 1999), 166. [157-1789].

³⁸⁶ Killingray, “Gender Issues,” 228.

As previously indicated, *askari* in the colonial armies had different backgrounds with one objective of making some money in the form of wages. Economically and socially, this was very important since it enabled them to meet the demands of the monetary economy and gain new status in their societies. To maintain these armies, different colonial authorities used diverse methods to satisfy their *askari*. The major incentive in all the colonial armies was women. Therefore, to make *askari* loyal to the colonial officials, they were allowed to have families with them in garrisons and even in campaigns.³⁸⁷ As a result, women were present in the colonial armies of French West Africa, German East Africa, Belgium Congo as well as in the British West, East and Central Africa. In many cases, *askari* kept female captives as wives, who became part of baggage train in expeditions. Consequently, the number of women and children in colonial troops exceeded the number of soldiers.

In colonial armies, the presence of women was not as formal as it was for *askari*. Most women became part of the colonial troops through African men, particularly *askari*. They became part of the colonial armies both willingly and unwillingly. On the one hand, the *askari* cherished women in their midst and their morale depended much on their presence in the armies. To the *askari*, these women meant many things including continuation of home and family, assistance with domestic chores and as sexual partners. On the other hand, even though the colonial military elites did not appreciate the presence of African women in their troops, they encouraged the habit in order to maintain their soldiers' loyalty. They also encouraged it since it was economically viable as it reduced the expenses of maintaining their troops.

3.3.1 African Women in the French Colonial Forces

The history of French armies and the African women's involvement in them makes the participation of women in the colonial armies more clear. In West Africa, the French began to encourage their soldiers to acquire wives from the war captives long before Africa was partitioned. The habit of taking captives did not develop overnight; instead, it was the result of a long process of trying to attract African recruits into military service. The French African soldiers, whose name was officially changed from *engages a temps* to *tirailleurs Senegalais* in 1857³⁸⁸ had 'close relationships' with women since 1820s.

The core of the *tirailleurs Senegalais* was "freed slaves" who's only best option to survive and acquire better social status was to become soldiers for the French. Before 1857, the recruitment

³⁸⁷ Thompson, "Colonial Policy," 423.

³⁸⁸ Davis, *Reservoirs of Men*, 47.

of *engages a temps* was involuntary and they had a long-term contract of a minimum of fourteen years. In addition, they were paid low wages and, to maintain discipline, were not allowed to marry. Desertion was low among the freed slaves who had become soldiers, but so were their spirits in acquiring military skills and high levels of discipline.³⁸⁹ As a result, they were unreliable as soldiers and were less dependable in war. However, even with marriage restrictions, *engages a temps* had relationships with civilian women without establishing permanent households because the regulations strictly forbade soldiers to sleep outside the barracks.

Engages a temps had relationships with civilian women whom the French employed as cooks since the 1820s. These women worked as full-time or part-time cooks in the military station. The French had to employ these women as cooks since *engages a temps* refused to cook for themselves. Even when the French expelled female cooks from the Fort, *engages a temps* looked for their own female cooks. Their argument was that, their tradition stipulated some activities involved in food preparation such as grinding millet to be female tasks.³⁹⁰ This was the same as in the other parts of Africa including East and Central Africa in which certain kinds of work such as millet grinding belonged to the women's domestic sphere.³⁹¹ To men, such tasks were tiresome and time consuming. However, the contacts between *engages a temps* and female cooks encouraged sexual encounters.

Engages a temps lacked military spirit something which weakened their army. To induce military spirit and good soldiering the French from 1830s to 1840s decided to recruit free African men as volunteers. They recruited some non-slave volunteers known as *laptots* into African soldiers' garrisons. These *laptots* were armed boatmen who used to guard and protect traders' commercial vessels. The new volunteers or *laptots* joined the French troops accompanied by their wives, slaves and animals, something which the ransomed soldiers (*engages*) were not allowed to do.

To make *laptots* stay in service, the French gave them a different kind of contract and line of discipline compared to *engages a temps*. They allowed *laptots* to have their families in the garrisons or French posts. Also, their contracts lasted only for seven years.³⁹² For most

³⁸⁹ Thompson, "Colonial Policy," 426.

³⁹⁰ Thompson, "Colonial Policy," 427

³⁹¹ Ibid.; See, Iliffe, History of Tanganyika, 16; See also, Horace Waller ed, The Last Journal of David Livingstone in Central Africa from 1865 to his death (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1875), 88.

³⁹² Thompson, "Colonial Policy," 428; See also, Davis, Reservoirs of Men, 31.

commandants, the trouble with *laptots* was their refusal to accept military discipline to be extended to their wives.³⁹³ Whenever their family members were punished according to military regulations, they became very troublesome. To please them, the French gave in to their wishes. On the issue of military discipline for *laptots*' families, in 1833, the Governor cautioned one of the commandants as follows:

The difficulties that you experience with the men of the post probably stem from some of the changes you have made in their habits. . . The women of the *laptots* have been tolerated in the post in order to prevent the latter from jumping over the walls during the night. One has permitted them to have cows to improve their position. In your opposition to all this, you have upset their confidence and submission.³⁹⁴

This experience was not said with respect to the habits of ransomed soldiers who were not allowed to marry while they were in the army. However, the presence of households in garrisons increased the interaction between bachelor soldiers and civilian women. It did not matter much whether a soldier concerned was a ransomed slave or not. *Laptots*' wives did domestic duties such as millet grinding and cooking and assisted the bachelor soldiers with cooking as well.³⁹⁵ In this way, the bachelors met unmarried women in senior *laptots*' households.

Presence of *laptots* in the French army did not improve military discipline of African soldiers. The interaction between the soldiers and nearby villagers increased with time because as *laptots*' families grew, so were their relationships with the villages. This was caused by the garrisons' inability to accommodate the ever-increasing families as a result of inadequate space. By the end of the 1840s, most *laptots* maintained families or households in the villages close to the French military stations. The French blamed it on the women who resided near the fort by saying, "Most of the personnel has a house, an animal hut, a wife, and a mattress in the village. They are always nosing around in there, sometimes even during the day when one has a need for them. One can only collect them (soldiers) after having recalled them with a drum . . ." ³⁹⁶ The effect of the interactions, as far as the French were concerned, was that, it affected soldiers' ability to stand as agents of the colonial authority. The effect was due to the fact that a friendly relationship between a soldier and a civilian always affected the former's ability to use coercion against the latter. In other words, soldiers became sympathetic to people, and this was not what the colonial authority wanted.

³⁹³ Thompson, "Colonial Policy," 428.

³⁹⁴ Ibid.

³⁹⁵ Ibid.

³⁹⁶ As quoted in Thompson, "Colonial Policy," 429

By 1848, army commandants could no longer differentiate the households of their *laptots* from those of the villagers since they were very close to each other and to the military posts in some French posts. One could no longer see the boundary between the military posts and the villages. One combatant complained that “the houses of our cooks as well as those of the *laptots*’ wives are too close to the post and will prejudice our defence if we are attacked, especially now that the barrier between us and the village no longer exists.”³⁹⁷ It was clear to the French colonial officials that, to maintain the security and the power of the colonial army, they needed to reduce the level of the interaction between African soldiers and women. Thus, the French took different measures ranging from burning soldier’ houses to transferring garrisons annually.³⁹⁸ Unfortunately, the move did not prevent *laptots*’ from establishing households of some sort near new garrisons. In the end, French commandants had to tolerate the behaviour of the *laptots*.

On 21 July 1857, the French government in the metropolis decreed a change in the status of African soldiers from indentured military labourers (*engage*) to fully-fledged regular combat soldiers known as *tirailleurs Senegalais*.³⁹⁹ The lives of both ransomed slaves and *laptots* changed. African soldiers no longer did hard labour and the mandatory service contract changed to four years for both. Their living conditions improved and the wages, other incentives and bonuses doubled. They had flashy uniforms of their own and a pension after retiring from the army.⁴⁰⁰ However, the above did not guarantee that *tirailleurs Senegalais* would re-enlist for another contract. Most did not.

The French had difficulty in obtaining enough new volunteers to meet their conquest demands. Improvement in salaries, living conditions and others did the trick only for a short period of time. In order for their army to survive, they had to devise a way to motivate the soldiers they already had. The solution they came up with was using war spoils. This was done in the mid-19th century when African societies perceived war spoils as a source of wealth. In the wars between African societies, the victor went home with the spoils. In African societies, it was one of the ways of accumulating wealth that was detested by the weaker state but accepted and favoured by the more powerful state. At the time, there were enough campaigns against the indigenous societies that were resisting the French. Therefore, to motivate African soldiers and encourage the formerly enlisted soldiers to re-enlist, the French officers distributed war spoils

³⁹⁷ Ibid.

³⁹⁸ Ibid.

³⁹⁹ Davis, *Reservoirs of Men*, 47; *See also*, Echenberg, “Slaves into Soldiers,” 314-115.

⁴⁰⁰ Thompson, “Colonial Policy,” 430; *See also*, Klein, *Slaves and Soldiers*, 570.

such as captives and other war booty as incentives to their African soldiers.⁴⁰¹ Of course, in the process, the officers, too, kept some of captives for themselves. According to Klein, French officers took the prettiest women.⁴⁰² This incentive attracted many African men but was not a permanent solution as most people deserted or refused to re-enlist when there was no war which would produce spoils. Even a large lump sum of money given to those who agreed to re-enlist during peacetime did not play the trick as most of them deserted immediately after receiving the lump sums.

In trying to retain African soldiers, the French changed their attitude towards *trailleurs senegalais*' households in the 1860s. They had all along viewed soldiers' wives as provocative, parasitic and a threat to health and security. However, they were compelled to appreciate the importance of families and households to their soldiers. Instead of despising them, they assisted soldiers in acquiring wives (especially for the former slaves) and assisted all African soldiers in maintaining their families.⁴⁰³ Once the *tirailleurs senegalais* were sure of the support, desertion was minimal, commitment improved and military discipline was enhanced as well. Thus, this was a permanent solution to their challenges.

The status of women as soldiers' wives changed with the new policy of giving support to soldiers' families. The French began to conquer the interior of West Africa in the 1860s. In this period, they needed more troops with which to occupy new territories. Volunteers were hard to come by; therefore, the French "ransomed" slaves in large numbers and conscripted them into four years' mandatory service contract. The act of ransoming slaves continued up to 1896.⁴⁰⁴ The increase in conscripts meant an increase in expenses to maintain troops. To economize, French commanders allowed all *tirailleurs* to live outside forts. To guarantee *tirailleurs*' survival outside forts, they increased their daily pocket money and gave them wage subsidies of up to 80 percent, rather than giving them food. In addition, the canteen was only for the French officers and was not for the *tirailleurs*.⁴⁰⁵ As a result, the interaction between African soldiers and women increased greatly.

The changes in *tirailleurs*' economic and social status led to their having multiple relations which produced multiple households. Women provided cooked food and sleeping space in

⁴⁰¹ Thompson, "Colonial Policy," 430

⁴⁰² Klein, "Slaves and Soldiers," 572

⁴⁰³ Thompson, "Colonial Policy," 430

⁴⁰⁴ Thompson, "Colonial Policy," 431-432.

⁴⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 132.

exchange for the *tirailleurs*' salary subsidies. By the end of 1870s, the *tirailleurs* had more households than before. Also, the multiple relationships with women in adjacent towns or villages increased prostitution and the spread of venereal diseases such as syphilis.⁴⁰⁶ However, the *tirailleurs* continued living with their families outside the military station. Consequently, *tirailleurs*' morale improved but at the expense of military discipline. For the French, it was an excellent move economically as it reduced the cost of maintaining African troops and the cost of their lodgings.

African soldiers maintained relationships with women because women played a major role in their everyday life during peacetime as well as their campaigns. During peacetime, women provided to their soldier men or husbands' sexual satisfaction. They fulfilled household responsibilities and gave *tirailleurs* a stable home life. However, soldiers' multiple relationships caused them to be prone to wasting their allowances.⁴⁰⁷ This affected their commitment to military duties. The *tirailleurs*' spirits fell sometimes, and so was their discipline because it was not possible to control them once they were outside the barracks. However, it did not bother the French officers much because most commandants regarded this kind of domesticity as being cheap and were happy with the morale of their soldiers.

The *tirailleurs* used women to gain extra income. To supplement their wages, they had private farms in which their wives and other family members worked on. This means that the wives performed more responsibilities than just those related to household chores. They made sure that farms were cultivated.⁴⁰⁸ The *tirailleurs* looked for suitable land in their neighbourhoods to farm. Fertile land was always hard to come by, and when found, it was too expensive for *tirailleurs*. As competition for land was always high, the *tirailleurs* used force to procure fertile land from villages.⁴⁰⁹ Thus, they owned large portions of land and used free labour (from war captives living in their households) to cultivate the land. The wives were supervisors of the work that was supposed to be done. Having captives to work on the farms as slaves meant cultivation was done for free. This increased profit since the surplus harvest ended in the nearby market. The *tirailleurs* benefitted tremendously because, as heads of households, they owned family coffers. In the long run, the *tirailleurs* were well off economically and their social standing improved.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid., 431-431.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid., 433.

⁴⁰⁸ Klein, "Slaves and Soldiers," 573

⁴⁰⁹ Thompson, "Colonial Policy," 444.

In the 1880s and 1890s, the process of conquering western Sudan, under the French, the *tirailleurs senegalais* fought and won many campaigns. In Sudan, soldiers' living conditions improved very much. The army lived in an isolated camp which was located far from civilians. The idea was to improve soldiers' health, discipline and moral integrity in order to enhance the status of the army that was affected by ransomed recruits.⁴¹⁰ The ransomed recruits made the *tirailleurs senegalais* very unpopular among Africans up to the 1890s.⁴¹¹ In Sudan, married *tirailleurs* had better houses and lived with their families and captives inside the camps. The bachelors lived in walled forts. Therefore, the intimate relations between *tirailleurs* and women in the villages were not possible since the camps were in secluded locations. As a result, the French encouraged bachelor *tirailleurs* to capture wives from the villages they passed through.⁴¹² They also distributed female captives to soldiers and obtained new recruits from male captives. The male captives recruited were mainly the defeated soldiers who had been taken as prisoners.⁴¹³ As an incentive, the newly recruited captives were given 'wives' from among the female captives. This increased soldiers' loyalty to their officers. The distribution of female captives not only benefitted the *tirailleurs* and their French officers, but also encouraged the *tirailleurs* to return to villages, make more raids and abduct more women. An anonymous witness in the capture of Sikasso in 1898 by Lieutenant-Colonel Audeoud said:

All the captives, about 4000, are gathered. . . . Each European receives a woman of his choice. Captain M-, not wanting any, gave one to his orderly, *tirailleur* first class Moussa Tarore. All the *tirailleurs* received at least three each. *Tirailleur* Mendoy received nine.⁴¹⁴

Sometimes the *tirailleurs* received more captives than they needed. In such cases, they kept one or two as wives. Children became house servants. Other captives, particularly old men and women, were either redeemed by their families or sold at the slave market.⁴¹⁵ The same happened to the wives they had at home, whom they considered to be more of a liability than an asset for one reason or another.⁴¹⁶ Thus, selling or ransoming captives was another way the *tirailleurs* used to earn more money.

Many times, *tirailleurs* struggled to support large households but had to continue to maintain them. Moreover, it was not easy for their wedded wives to be neglected or divorced quietly without compensation. The wives knew how to fight back divorce or neglect from their

⁴¹⁰ Ibid., 437.

⁴¹¹ Echenberg, "Slaves into Soldiers," 324.

⁴¹² Thompson, "Colonial Policy," 438; See also, Echenberg, "Slaves into Soldiers," 327

⁴¹³ Echenberg, "Slaves into Soldiers," 319

⁴¹⁴ Thompson, "Colonial Policy," 439

⁴¹⁵ Thompson, "Colonial Policy," 439; See also, Klein, "Slaves and Soldiers," 573

⁴¹⁶ Ibid.

husbands. Commandants accepted such wives as legally wedded wives; so, to maintain stability in the garrison, they tried to make the *tirailleurs*' domestic lives as harmonious as possible. To maintain such harmony, they took wives' complaints about their husbands very seriously. For example, if a *tirailleur* refused to provide enough money for feeding the family, the wife could take the matter to the commandant. When that happened, the commandant withheld the soldier's pay and gave it to the family by buying food for it.⁴¹⁷ Up to the 1890s, lack of enough income for supporting families stemmed from many factors. The first factor was having large families that included captives and servants.⁴¹⁸ Many struggled to feed their households, however, the problem was endless since they always acquired new members as part of war spoils. The second factor was that 50 percent of *tirailleurs*' pay was withheld by the state and deductions (for meeting uniform costs and others) were made from the amount that remained.⁴¹⁹ What remained as salary was too little to support large households. To solve most food problems, *tirailleurs*' families resorted to farming or engaged in other income generating activities.

Women had a responsibility to care for their families and ensure that the meagre salaries and rations stretched as far as possible for the survival of the family. During campaigns, the same women had to accompany their husbands as camp followers. They had to march on foot, carrying their husbands' personal effects and food, while the *tirailleurs* carried only their rifles. On arrival, under the supervision of a French officer, women formed labour teams and worked according to the instructions the officer gave them. Then, they pitched camp and continued with other responsibilities.⁴²⁰ The women collected firewood, fetched water and prepared meals for their children, husbands and the husbands' bachelor friends. To complete the daily routine, they cleaned and cared for the children before they could rest. In the evening, women also served as singers and dancers. At night, they were the source of sexual comfort.⁴²¹ Wives were present in battles and supplied munitions to men during heavy gun fire moments. For example, in the battle of Adrar, Sudan, in June 1905, the carriers fled in panic therefore, women had to supply munitions to their husbands.⁴²² In the same battle, when most *tirailleurs* fell in action,

⁴¹⁷ Thompson, "Colonial Policy," 443.

⁴¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 442.

⁴¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 443.

⁴²⁰ Thompson, "Colonial Policy," 445.

⁴²¹ Echenberg, "Slaves into Soldiers," 328.

⁴²² Thompson, "Colonial Policy," 446; *See also*, Echenberg, "Slaves into Soldiers," 327.

women took their rifles and continued with the fight.⁴²³ Therefore, *tirailleurs*' wives worked harder than even carriers or soldiers themselves.

Nevertheless, life was not all gloomy for *tirailleurs*' wives, especially the wives of high-ranking African officers and the long-enlisted *tirailleurs* who pillaged and plundered in many expeditions to amass wealth. All *tirailleurs*' wives enjoyed several state benefits including health care. However, the wives of African officers and of the long-enlisted *tirailleurs* had more of everything from war spoils. They had more captives in their households who provided free labour. In addition, the wives benefited from the wealth that had been accumulated because the long enlisted *tirailleurs* owned private houses and other valuables such as high-quality jewelry and cloths.⁴²⁴ Wives wore the said jewelry and cloths. They displayed the wealth for all to see and admire. In return, these women gained respect in the areas they traversed. They were envied by many and were regarded as important people.

In different campaigns, the *tirailleurs* raped and took women as captives. The habit of taking women for granted continued even in their garrisons. In the garrisons, there were numerous households of *tirailleurs*. *Tirailleurs* of different ranks and their families interacted freely. In these interactions, clashes were inevitable. Many were solved amongst themselves. They only involved the French officers when the clashes were very serious. Two of the major problems that were hard to solve quietly were adultery and rape. In most cases, African officers and sergeants abused their powers by coercing the wives of those in the lower ranks to have sexual relationship with them. These African officers knew that they were valuable to the French and, therefore, nothing could happen to them in terms of punishment. The cases reached commandants, but unfortunately, in most cases, high-ranking African culprits stayed only for a few days in jail.⁴²⁵ When an act of rape or adultery occurred, the woman concerned was the most affected. She could end up being beaten or divorced by their husbands. A divorced woman in a remote military post faced the same difficulties as widows,⁴²⁶ that is, they did not have shelter, food and military protection. In explaining how African men viewed rape and adultery, in 1911, a French officer had the following to say:

The real cause of certain unexplained, ill-disciplined acts are adultery and rape. In the eyes of the natives, those who take advantage of someone else's wife commits an act more reprehensibly vile than theft. The thief has locks and bolts against him whereas the profligate only has to play on the vanity or the timid passivity of the woman. This is how [their] minds

⁴²³ Thompson, "Colonial Policy," 446.

⁴²⁴ Ibid., 446-447.

⁴²⁵ Thompson, "Colonial Policy," 449.

⁴²⁶ Ibid.

work and one ought to recognize that their conception of adultery does not lack a certain merit.⁴²⁷

The French campaigned in Morocco in 1908. As usual, their forces included *tirailleurs senegalais* and their wives. The French located *tirailleurs'* households in their own camps. In the camps, women did domestic duties and cared for their husbands and families. They accompanied their husbands to campaigns and performed supporting responsibilities. In campaigns, women marched at the rear. According to the *tirailleurs'* interviewed by Sara Zimmerman, it was certain that women in campaigns sacrificed greatly as they endured hunger, thirst, fatigue and other kinds of suffering while supporting their husbands.⁴²⁸ Their men were happy as the women cooked staple food in the way their husbands' lifestyle was accustomed to. They also laundered their uniforms and other clothes which made men's life easier during campaigns. They did the same in camps in addition to doing other camp work and fatigue duties which left their husbands free to fight. In addition, in the absence of their husbands, women defended camps against any intruders.⁴²⁹ The kind of gender relations practised in West Africa was the same as the one in Morocco. Women made men's lives in camps and in campaigns to be a replica of life at home (West Africa). In this way, women's support improved *tirailleurs'* morale and their spirit to fight.

Although the French were much satisfied with women's functions in the army, in Morocco, they looked at their presence in the military stations as a burden. They regarded expenses for *tirailleurs* women's baggage, household supplies and family care as unnecessary additional expenses. To minimize costs, in 1910, the French decided that, in every four *tirailleurs*, only one wife in four men could go to Morocco and, by 1913, only one child in four women could enter Morocco.⁴³⁰ These women were not allowed to go to Morocco with more than 35 kilograms of luggage while their children could have not more than five kilograms. In terms of food rations, since 1908, *tirailleurs'* wives share of rations was half of that of active soldiers' rations without any other form of payment.⁴³¹ Therefore, to survive, they had to live depending on the salaries of their military husbands which were barely enough to feed the whole family, taking into consideration the activities done by the women. The French made conditions more unfavorable for these women when the husbands had been repatriated or evacuated for medical

⁴²⁷ Ibid., 449-450.

⁴²⁸ Sarah Zimmerman, "Mesdames Tirailleurs and Indirect Clients: West African Women and the French Colonial Army, 1908 -1918," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 44, no. 2, (2011): 307.

⁴²⁹ Zimmerman, "Mesdames Tirailleurs and Indirect Clients," 307-308.

⁴³⁰ Zimmerman, "Mesdames Tirailleurs and Indirect Clients," 308.

⁴³¹ Ibid., 309

reasons. If that occurred, wives and their children were in trouble, since, if not forgotten to be repatriated as well, they would be repatriated to the capital city without the means with which to get to their villages.⁴³² In either way, many families of the evacuated or repatriated *tirailleurs* were left stranded somewhere. This proves that the French valued *tirailleurs*' wives only when it suited them. That was only when the French were able to benefit by exploiting these women in terms of free labour. Once that was not possible, their support ceased almost instantly.

Compared to other French colonial soldiers, the *tirailleurs Senegalais* were exploited and racially discriminated against. Between the French soldiers (Europeans), namely *tirailleurs algeriens* (Algeria Arabic *tirailleurs*) and *tirailleurs Senegalais* (Black Africans), *tirailleurs Senegalais* received the lowest pay, and yet the French expected more from them. In 1909, it was estimated that a *tirailleur* cost the French about 550 francs per year, while an Algerian cost them 810 francs. In 1911, the cost was 675 francs, while for the Algerians, it was 872 francs.⁴³³ The payment difference was even higher because *tirailleurs Senegalais* were accompanied by families, but the Algerians were not. They had to purchase provisions more than Algerian soldiers in order to feed their families. Compared to the French officers, the difference was even huge. The French officers were accompanied by their families to Morocco, but their dependents remained at the military bases near the ports. They never followed the troops during campaigns. Yet, they were paid travel and maintenance allowances. The families of the French infantrymen did not go to Morocco, but were paid three times more than the active *tirailleurs Senegalais* in Morocco.⁴³⁴ As a result of this disparity, compared to others, *tirailleurs Senegalais* and their families led a poor life which was full of economic hardships.

To survive in Morocco, *tirailleurs Senegalais* wives had to find ways of improving their lives through earning extra income. They cooked and washed for the *tirailleurs* who had no wives in exchange for money. They also did other prohibited activities such as selling cheap alcoholic beverages like adulterated liquor, which sometimes made soldiers end up in hospital.⁴³⁵ Moreover, these families had poor access to health care which led to high mortality rates, especially among the children and women.⁴³⁶ Therefore, the poor standards of living among the *tirailleurs* in Morocco affected women and their children very much. Most of the *tirailleurs*' malnutrition-related diseases could have been avoidable, with little improvement in health care.

⁴³² Ibid., 308

⁴³³ Ibid., 309-310.

⁴³⁴ Zimmerman, "Mesdames Tirailleurs and Indirect Clients," 310

⁴³⁵ Ibid.

⁴³⁶ Ibid.

But the French military administration, due to racial prejudices, was more concerned with the French and the Algerian soldiers than with *tirailleurs Senegalais* and their families.

Furthermore, *tirailleurs'* families received support from the French colonial government only when the *tirailleur* was alive and he performed his military duties. The state provided clothing and other needs to children. As part of *tirailleurs'* families, drummer boys had salaries and rations almost equal to their fathers.⁴³⁷ The veterans had a range of benefits for themselves and for their families. The state exempted *tirailleurs* and their families from paying taxes, provided free health care to soldiers and their families, sent their children to special schools, provided a good pension to the retired and allowed them to have access to low-level bureaucratic jobs.⁴³⁸ In addition to receiving pensions, veterans could be mobilized in different campaigns whenever necessary. Once mobilized, they could take war spoils as much as they could carry, in addition to food rations and money which they were paid every day.⁴³⁹ Although they were paid some money, the promise of war spoils was a major incentive for the veterans. To them, the spoils were a source of wealth that they could not afford to live without.

Tirailleurs' wives produced new generations of *tirailleurs* who emulated their fathers easily. Daughters became wives of bachelors, while sons had the guarantee of becoming *tirailleurs*. Veterans lived in villages specially established for them, which gave them a direct connection with the army and a possibility of continuing to reap the benefits of being *tirailleur*. As a result, the wives of surviving veterans continued to reproduce new generations of *tirailleurs*, knowing that the children would end up in the army. In this way, veterans' loyalty to the French continued until they died. However, the French never supported *tirailleurs'* widows. They accepted wives married under customary law only when their husbands were alive but refused to support widows because they lacked formal marriage licence. All benefits ceased immediately after the death of a *tirailleur*.⁴⁴⁰ It did not matter how long he had worked in the army or which rank a *tirailleur* held.

3.3.2 The Belgian Congo Colonial Army (*Force Publique*) and African Women

From its beginning in 1886 to 1904, the force concentrated much on non-military duties such as the construction of government stations in remote areas or roads to various stations. In this period, the *Force Publique* officers that led platoons and companies acted as foremen,

⁴³⁷ Davis, "Reservoirs of Men," 52.

⁴³⁸ Echenberg, "Slaves into Soldiers," 329.

⁴³⁹ Thompson, "Colonial Policy," 451-452.

⁴⁴⁰ Thompson, "Colonial Policy," 446.

architects, engineers, rubber collectors, storekeepers, and census takers among others.⁴⁴¹ The Belgian military officers were more like jacks of all trades. In addition, they fought whenever necessary. During that period, platoons or companies did not differ much in terms of appearance, however, they differed in military discipline and loyalty. The reason for the difference was that there was no cohesion in training. It all depended on the personality of an individual commandant and how he led his men.⁴⁴² As a result, his *askari* had much respect and were mainly loyal to their commander, and not to other officers. Furthermore, their camps were isolated and *askari* were never posted close to their villages or communities of their origin so that their loyalty was not divided. The idea was to make them unsympathetic to their fellow Congolese. In this, the Belgian officers were successful because their *askari* always behaved like foreigners in front of their fellow Congolese.

From the beginning, the *Force Publique* fighting columns had a train of non-combatants that included women, servants and slaves. The women were mostly soldiers' wives. These non-combatants survived by pillaging the villages they marched through or conquered communities. In most cases, the number of non-combatants exceeded the number of troops. Therefore, once they started plundering an area, it was impossible to stop them, bearing in mind that *askari* participated in plundering of properties of their victims. Their way of pillaging involved burning settlements, killing the people who resisted to be pillaged, plundering provisions and taking captives who included women, children and slaves. In most cases, male captives were incorporated into the army while the female ones were taken by soldiers and spearmen (auxiliaries) as part of the spoils.

The fighting columns sometimes could be accompanied by spearmen (auxiliaries) who were recruited along the way. The number of spearmen exceeded that of soldiers. They could be in their thousands or hundreds depending on the prevailing circumstances.⁴⁴³ Spearmen, like camp followers survived by looting supplies and were paid through what they could carry as spoils which included women captives. Few Belgian officers refused to campaign accompanied by women or any other camp followers.⁴⁴⁴ However, they allowed spearmen and carriers who lived off the land and paid them with booty. Therefore, whether the troops were with their wives and

⁴⁴¹ Gann and Duignan, *The Rulers of Belgian Africa*, 65.

⁴⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴⁴³ Gann and Duignan, *The Rulers of Belgian Africa*, 73-74.

⁴⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 75

other camp followers or not, did not make any difference to the people in the different communities they traversed since troops looted and plundered just the same.

The relationship between *Force Publique askari* and African civilians was very poor because of the atrocities caused by the former. *Askaris'* lack of discipline led to all manner of excesses. Up to 1908, *askaris'* responsibilities included conquering resisting societies, protecting Europeans and their property and doing other supervisory activities like collecting firewood for steamers, collecting taxes and enforcing levies on rubber, ivory and food.⁴⁴⁵ To Africans, these *askari* were a symbol of terror. To make matters worse, some of the laws encouraged *askari* to be tyrants, since they participated in enforcing ambiguous laws unsupervised. A good example was the 1903 taxation law which demanded that tax be paid through labour or produce.⁴⁴⁶ This taxation method was a forced labour tax because it forced people to pay tax by providing labour. Also, the law seemed to aim at exploiting resources such as rubber from the colony, bearing in mind that during that time, there was no currency in which taxes could be paid.⁴⁴⁷ Also, it was not clear how much of labour or produce that one was required to perform or present. As a result, the amount varied from district to district. If the quantities of produce, especially rubber, did not reach the desired amount, then inhabitants were held hostage under *askaris'* supervision until other family members brought the required amount of rubber or worked long enough. In most cases women and children were the ones who were taken hostage.⁴⁴⁸ As hostages, they suffered much abuse from the *askari* including rape.

Military expeditions to villages that defaulted on taxes were common. In such operations, *askari* were mostly on their own because the French officers were too few to supervise them.⁴⁴⁹ Usually, they found villages empty on arrival as villagers ran away as soon as they heard or saw them coming. To catch tax defaulters, *askari* occupied an empty village and waited for them to return. As expected, the villagers could not stay in the bush for long, even if they wanted to, because *askari* had a tendency to search for them in the bush.⁴⁵⁰ Hence, the people returned to their villages. After their return, the abuse by *askari* began. *Askari* imposed themselves on the chief, took women by force and demanded for food.⁴⁵¹ Killing and constant punishment of

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid., 79.

⁴⁴⁶ Ferguson, "The Present Situation in Congo," 403.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid., 411.

⁴⁴⁸ Ferguson, "The Present Situation in Congo," 404.

⁴⁴⁹ Gann and Duignan, *The Rulers of Belgian Africa*, 103-104.

⁴⁵⁰ Ferguson, "The Present Situation in Congo," 404.

⁴⁵¹ Gann and Duignan, *The Rulers of Belgian Africa*, 79,104.

people accompanied by pillaging became the norm in the conquered villages.⁴⁵² The chiefs as well as other villagers suffered in the same way. However, running away was not an option since some of those who ran away ended up being shot dead.⁴⁵³

Constant wars of conquest, endless expeditions, forced labour and other problems such as diseases like sleeping sickness and smallpox led to high mortality rates. By around 1908, the Congolese population had decreased by about half of its population before the partition of the continent as frequent expeditions resulted in many deaths in communities and, to an extent, some communities disappeared.⁴⁵⁴ Many women and men were levied for labour purposes and were exposed to all sorts of hardships which led to early death and reduced birth rates.⁴⁵⁵ The drafting of able-bodied men and youth as carriers contributed to the increase in mortality rates as many did not return to their communities alive.

According to Leopold II's decree of July 1890, children under the age of 12 were set free from slave caravans, while those abandoned and orphans had to be placed under the guardianship of the state until they reached 25.⁴⁵⁶ In Congo, the decree was a cause of much abuse and exploitation to both boys and girls. These children were placed under the care of the state and the Roman Catholic Church. Unfortunately, for the orphans, the orphanages were a source of cheap labour for the colonial army and administrative staff. When they reached the age of between 11 and 12, they were given three years' basic education. At the age of 14, boys were assigned to service in the army, the police, or to the administration as clerks, interpreters and artisans of all kinds, while girls mainly became soldiers' wives.⁴⁵⁷ The boys were either paid very low wages or nothing at all. These shows that there was tendencies of abuse and exploitation of the young girls and boys.

Congo Free State was taken over from King Leopold II by the Belgian government in 1908, after paying King Leopold two million sterling pounds.⁴⁵⁸ After this transaction, Congo Free State became Belgian Congo. Two years after the annexation, military and civil administrative reforms started to take place to address some of Africans' grievances over mistreatment and injustices. Among the reforms were changes in soldiers' responsibilities and benefits. The

⁴⁵² Ferguson, "The Present Situation in Congo," 404-405.

⁴⁵³ *Ibid.*, 404.

⁴⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 406.

⁴⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 407-408; *See also*, Gann and Duignan, *The Rulers of Belgian Africa*, 77.

⁴⁵⁶ Ferguson, "The Present Situation in Congo," 406.

⁴⁵⁷ Ferguson, "The Present Situation in Congo," 406-407.

⁴⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 410.

Force Publique was reformed and reorganized. Also, military training increased to improve military discipline. In addition, *askaris*' chances of being promoted increased. As a result of these changes, some *askari* were promoted to NCOs or sergeants, which motivated others to do better. As NCOs, they were entitled to accommodation in the barracks.⁴⁵⁹ Furthermore, all *askari* were given enough rations by the military.⁴⁶⁰ Their wives and children received food allowances and were accommodated with their husbands within the barracks. In addition, wives received regular wages when their husbands re-enlisted.⁴⁶¹

However, the difference in pay, rations and other allowances between African officers and other European rank and file was huge. Compared to other fighting men in other parts of colonial Africa, Belgian Congo's rank-and-file *askari* received the lowest pay.⁴⁶² Low pay made them the most undisciplined and least efficient *askari*. Thus, with all reorganization and modernization, Belgian *askaris*' negative attitude towards civilians and their property did not disappear. They continued to drink excessively and supplemented their meagre wages by stealing civilians' valuables, plundering villages and extorting food, livestock and beer. Bribe-taking was also a common practice.⁴⁶³ They continued to mistreat civilians up to the time of WWI and beyond. Despite all these misbehaviour and gross misconduct, Belgian officers never took action against the *askari*.⁴⁶⁴ Officers were incapable of enforcing discipline and, therefore, *askari* became uncontrollable and violent.

Belgian *askari* did not mistreat the Congolese alone; they also mistreated foreigners who crossed their territory. From 1902 to the time of WWI and beyond, the foreigners, mostly from Northern Rhodesia (Zambia), crossing Congo pedicles as mail runners, traders, migrant labourers, carriers, Europeans or Africans, received harsh treatment from Belgian *askari*. Some were beaten to death and their property stolen or confiscated. The unlucky ones were arrested and jailed for a month and did hard labour for minor offences such as lack of a proper pass.⁴⁶⁵ The district commissioners found along the borders filed many complaints on this issue but no action was taken against the *askari* involved.⁴⁶⁶ Consequently, in spite of their low pay, most

⁴⁵⁹ Gann and Duignan, *The Rulers of Belgian Africa*, 79-82.

⁴⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 113

⁴⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 82.

⁴⁶² *Ibid.*

⁴⁶³ Musambachime, "Military Violence against Civilians," 649-650.

⁴⁶⁴ Musambachime, "Military Violence against Civilians," 649-650.

⁴⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 654

⁴⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 652-656.

askari lived luxurious lifestyles.⁴⁶⁷ Some scholars have argued that the unruly behaviour of Belgian *askari* was the result of the small number of Belgian officers who could not control such a huge number of *askari*.⁴⁶⁸ However, their behaviour had more to do with creating better social status without the right means to do so. To achieve their aim, *askari* sought to enrich themselves by whatever means and lived a luxurious life.

3.3.3 The German Colonial Army (*Schutztruppe*) and African Women

As mentioned earlier, in West Africa, the Germans had a colonial army (*Schutztruppe*) only in Cameroon. The Cameroon colonial army involved African women from the time of its establishment. The first African soldiers in the Cameroon *Schutztruppe* were slaves who were bought from the king of Dahomey. Female slaves were among the first and were bought at a cheaper price than the male slaves. Female slaves were bought at 280 Mark each, while their male counterparts were bought at 320 Mark each.⁴⁶⁹ The intention was to make the women wives of the male slaves who became soldiers. These women participated in expeditions just like the wives of *tirailleur Senegalais* or the wives of Belgian *askari*. They were companions and carriers and did domestic chores for free. However, the military officials mistreated ransomed soldiers and their slave wives, which led to mutinies. Mistreatment included poor rations for their households, frequent unjust and humiliating punishments, rape of the wives and the appropriation of their share of war booty. Therefore, on 15 December 1893, wives and their soldier husbands refused to work. This resulted in a mutiny.⁴⁷⁰ Afterwards, their lives improved but women continued to do the same activities as before, only that they had better prospects of booty and their husbands' pay.

What happened in Cameroun was very different from what was happening in German East Africa. The main difference was in the method used to recruit *askari*. The origins and history of the first recruits differ in these two colonies, even though women were present in both. The Germans, like other colonial officials in other African colonies, at first, did not want to recruit locals because they were worried that if they armed them, they would turn against them. Like others, they needed African soldiers (*askari*) who did not sympathize with the locals. Therefore, they looked outside German East Africa for African mercenaries to recruit. The Germans recruited Sudanese mercenaries who were ex-Egyptian soldiers and Shangani. The hired *askari*

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid., 650.

⁴⁶⁸ Gann and Duignan, *The Rulers of Belgian Africa*, 65

⁴⁶⁹ Stoecker, *Kamerun Unter Deutscher*, 103.

⁴⁷⁰ Stoecker, *Kamerun Unter Deutscher*, 113-116.

travelled from Egypt as well as from Portuguese East Africa to German East Africa. The distance from Egypt to German East Africa is more than 3700 km. Therefore, they insisted that they bring their families along with them to German East Africa. Hence, in 1888, with permission from *Schutztruppe* officers, Sudanese troops transported their families to German East Africa. This was the beginning of German *bomas* (garrisons) to have *askaris*' wives and other dependents. From then onwards, *askaris*' families were part of the *bomas*.⁴⁷¹ All other *askari* that followed lived with their families in the *bomas*.

Before the Maji Maji war (1905-1907), most *bomas* in German East Africa functioned as both military garrisons and civil administrative centres. *Schutztruppe* commanders also functioned as district administrative officers. This affected their concentration on military duties since, as administrators, they had many administrative responsibilities to perform. From 1907 onwards (after the Maji Maji war), most military districts were transferred to civilian administrators. By 1912, out of 24 districts 19 were under civil administration, 3 under residence and 2 – Iringa and Mahenge – were under military administration.⁴⁷² With civilian administrators in the *bomas*, military stations were close but separate from the *bomas*. Only a few *askari* stayed in the *bomas* while the rest remained in the garrisons nearby. *Askari* and their households had their own space in the garrisons different from that of European officers.

Colonial armies were organized in a hierarchical way that was determined by racism. In German East Africa, Europeans ranked as officers and very few had the lowest rank of sergeant. Few *askari*, especially the Sudanese, ranked beyond the sergeant level, while very few also ranked as lance corporals. Others were rank-and-file *askari*, who until 1900, performed several responsibilities besides doing military work.⁴⁷³ From early years, military officers used rank-and-file *askari* and their households as a source of labour. They provided free labour in government construction activities including the construction of military stations. *Askari* and their families worked together. To the colonial authorities, *askari* and their dependents were an asset. Military stations were important to the establishment of European centers nearby since, from them, labour force was available and easily accessed. For example, in the first phase of the construction of *bomas* and military settlements, *Schutztruppe* officers made sure that *askari*

⁴⁷¹ Michelle Moyd, "All the People were Barbarians to the Askari . . .": Askari Identity and Honor in The Maji Maji War 1905-1907," in *Maji Maji: Lifting the Fog of War*, eds. James Giblin and Jamie Monson (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 168

⁴⁷² Naval Intelligence, *A handbook of German East Africa*, (London, University Press Oxford, 1920), 17; *See also*, Iliffe, *History of Tanganyika*, 118.

⁴⁷³ Michelle Moyd, "Making the Household, Making the State: Colonial Military communities and Labor in the German East Africa," *International Labor and Working-class History* no. 80, (Fall 2011): 68-69.

and their families participated fully in building *bomas* and *askaridorf* (*askari* accommodation).⁴⁷⁴ They made bricks, laid them and plastered walls.⁴⁷⁵ They provided this labour for free. Therefore, their free labour contributed to the reduction of construction costs which was very important to the colonial government which had to run the colony on tight budget.

In the military stations, *askari* worked for the good of the army and their own households. *Askaris'* wives performed their daily chores in the *boma* and supervised others in the households in order to make sure that all domestic chores were done. In the daytime, domestic chores such as cooking and laundry were common activities in the day-to-day life of a household. At night, wives were sexual partners who gave comfort to their *askari* husbands.⁴⁷⁶ They created a peaceful household environment that made *askari* more relaxed and motivated them to perform their duties diligently. Commitment was important because it improved discipline and morale which, in turn, improved *askaris'* spirits to the cause. On the other hand, *askaris'* wives and families were an asset to the state and the army in the sense that they were the source of free labour. In peacetime, with the excuse of keeping soldiers busy, *askari* themselves became laborers in other state projects in which they worked without extra pay. For example, rank-and-file *askari* participated in constructing railways and bridges.⁴⁷⁷ The colonial authorities depended so much on *askaris'* free labor that, sometimes, construction work stopped temporarily, since there were no *askari* to spare.⁴⁷⁸

German commandants were committed to making their military stations self-sufficient, even though it was not always easy for them to achieve that. Normally, a military station had one company with 160 *askari*, their families, military officers and other colonial officials. To make the station self-sufficient, the authorities started different projects including rearing cattle herds and food cultivation. The main cultivators were, however, the families of the rank-and-file *askari*.⁴⁷⁹ The food produced was consumed by the army. This reduced the expenses of buying everything from the local markets since local traders purposely increased prices of goods at their own will. So, the women and children of *askari* provided cheap labor which was beneficial

⁴⁷⁴ Michael von Herrf, "They Walk Through the Fire Like the Blondest German: African Soldiers Serving the Kaiser in German East Africa (1888-1914)", (M.A. thesis McGill University, Montreal, July 1991), 78.

⁴⁷⁵ Moyd, "Making the Household," 62.

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid., 55, 64 and 67.

⁴⁷⁷ Moyd, "Making the Household," 62-63.

⁴⁷⁸ Moyd, "Making the Household," 62.

⁴⁷⁹ Herrf, They Walk Through the Fire, 87.

to the economies of the military station and of the army in general. A good example was the military station in Mwanza, which became self-sufficient through agriculture.⁴⁸⁰

The rank-and-file *askari* had big households without enough means to support them. Their households consisted of their wives, children, extended family members and captives or servants.⁴⁸¹ A private was paid between 20-30 German Rupees a month and had a five years' contract. The wage increased to 45 Rupees a month for a lance corporal and 150 Rupees for a non-commissioned officer. At the time, the highest civil wage earner was a railway labourer who earned between 17 and 25 Rupees a month.⁴⁸² Therefore, *askari* had relatively higher salaries than that of the other Africans. However, with a long line of dependants, their wages were not enough. According to Moyd, *askari* were always in debt. As soon as they received their pay, they became penniless. Thus, they bought goods on credit again for the rest of the month.⁴⁸³ Although Moyd argues that being in debt was the result of *askaris'* recklessness in spending that cannot have been the only reason because they also had big families to support.

Thus, to improve their families' economies and livelihoods, wives did other economic activities. Most wives cultivated their private farms to improve families' diet. To increase their income, they sold excess produce in nearby markets. Other wives involved themselves in other activities such as weaving and selling mats. *Askaris'* wives and other women from outside the stations competed in marketing their goods and services inside and outside the stations.⁴⁸⁴

Furthermore, *askari* and their families worked together to increase the household income. Together with their families, they participated in trade by opening small shops. Because of the availability of customers, some *askaris'* wives brew traditional beer (*pombe*) in their households within the garrisons. In the evenings and on weekends, families grouped together and entertained themselves by singing songs and dancing to traditional dances (*ngoma*).⁴⁸⁵ This was a great opportunity for those who were in the *pombe* business. Again, household members assisted a wife in running such a business. It is highly likely that women did business after securing their husbands' permission. Therefore, big households helped to make the lives of the *askari* easier by increasing their income through other sources other than wages.

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁸¹ Ibid., 82-83; See also, Moyd, "Making the Household," 54.

⁴⁸² Naval Intelligence, German East Africa, 202.

⁴⁸³ Moyd, "Making Household," 65.

⁴⁸⁴ Moyd, "Making Household," 65.

⁴⁸⁵ Herrf, They Walk Through the Fire, 84-85.

Like all other women at the time, *askaris'* wives worked hard. Colonial officials described *askari* wives' status in their own households as not much better than that of housekeepers.⁴⁸⁶ Yet, these women had a voice in their homes and controlled their labour. It was so in a sense that, they had a say in what they could do or not. They were not just mules who could be pushed to do anything and about everything. The wives of senior *askari*, for example, had no problem doing activities such as cooking and weaving mats for sale. However, they refused to labour intensively in farms or fetching firewood.⁴⁸⁷ Therefore, their husbands used other means to ensure such activities were done. This was when the use of servants or slaves became very important. Moreover, wives had control over their husbands' wages since they controlled the households through their position as cooks, care givers and family accountants.⁴⁸⁸ This gave them some form of autonomy in their households.

The *Schutztruppe* allowed women to participate in campaigns and expeditions as companions and labour force. The women who were allowed to do so belonged to the families of *askari* and carriers. These women went together with their children on these long marches, carrying loads on their heads. In the group of non-combatants in the column, there were other dependents of *askari* and personal servants known as *askari boys*.⁴⁸⁹ European officers also had their own servants and carriers. During the march, non-combatants carried much of the baggage so that soldiers could use their guns more freely whenever necessary.⁴⁹⁰ At the end of the march, non-combatants were responsible for providing soldiers' needs. The wives prepared meals for their husbands and performed other domestic chores such as fetching water and firewood.⁴⁹¹ Although women did not accompany their *askari* husbands to the actual combat, they had almost the same experience as their husbands. This was because women too experienced the same hardships in terms of hunger owing to food shortages, the danger of being attacked by animals and ambush, or fatigue because of long marches and attack by diseases.

In the campaigns to conquer African societies or curb resistance to colonial rule, *Schutztruppe* used very brutal fighting strategies. Their favorite strategy was scorched earth, which was accompanied by looting and plundering. They burnt the villages of 'rebels' and destroyed their farms. The army fed from the land; therefore, the destruction of farms was only done after the

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid., 80.

⁴⁸⁷ Moyd, "Making the Household," 64-65.

⁴⁸⁸ Magdalene von Prince, *Eine Deutsche Frau im Innern Deutsch-Ostafrikas: elf Jahre nach Tagebuchblättern erzählt* (Berlin: Mittler, 1908), 62.

⁴⁸⁹ Herrf, *They Walk Through the Fire*, 83-84; *See also*, Moyd, "Making the Household, Making the State," 66.

⁴⁹⁰ Herrf, *They Walk Through the Fire*, 81; *See also*, Moyd, *Making the Household, Making the State*, 66

⁴⁹¹ Herrf, *They Walk Through the Fire*, 80; *See also*, Moyd, *Making the Household, Making the State* 66-67

askari had taken what the army needed. In addition, all livestock was part of the booty for *Schutztruppe* and its allies or *rugaruga* (auxiliary troops).⁴⁹² The aim was to destroy the source of livelihood for the ‘rebels’ so that the ‘rebels’ would surrender. When rebels surrendered, they often became homeless and faced starvation.

Schutztruppe officers encouraged their *askari* and *rugaruga* to take war booty which included captives. *Rugaruga* participated in campaigns without expecting any pay other than the war spoils. As part of the spoils, many captives, mainly women and children, were captured. The act of capturing women and children started at the very beginning of *Wissmanntruppe* in 1889. Before the formation of *Schutztruppe* in 1891, *askaris’* pay, apart from food rations, was not monetary. *Askari* were mainly paid in kind because there was no official currency. Those who were paid money, they were paid in the local currency, for example, in terms of cowrie shells. Others were paid in luxury items like tobacco, colored beads, soap or European cloths which *askari* traded with local merchants.⁴⁹³ Payment-in-cash became a standard means after the introduction of the German Rupee as the colonial currency when German East Africa became a protectorate in 1891. Payment-in-kind encouraged plundering, looting and the keeping of captives as a form of additional payment. The habit continued long after this period, that is, until the time of WWI. The officers encouraged it in order to retain their *askari* and *rugaruga* in their colonial army. For example, in the late 1890s’ punitive expedition in Mahenge District, Von Hassel allowed his *askari* to take women and children as captives.⁴⁹⁴ The same continued during WWI when *rugarugas’* payment was only in the form of war spoils.

In the process of conquering the interior, *Schutztruppe* left defeated societies devastated and their villages depopulated. In all campaigns, flying columns made sure that the societies concerned had been destroyed. Often it took the destroyed societies a long time to get back to normal. Many women and children who could regenerate societies through production and reproduction became the property of *Schutztruppe* soldiers and their allies.⁴⁹⁵ In addition, the army confiscated livestock.⁴⁹⁶ Consequently, these war campaigns destroyed civilians and

⁴⁹² Herrf, *They Walk Through the Fire*, 29-31 and 39-43.

⁴⁹³ *Ibid.*, 71.

⁴⁹⁴ Jamie Monson, “Relocating Maji Maji: The Politics of Alliance and Authority in the Southern Highlands of Tanzania, 1870-1918,” *The Journal of African History* 39, no.1, (1998): 115.

⁴⁹⁵ Monson, “Relocating Maji Maji,” 114.

⁴⁹⁶ Moyd, “Making the Household,” 61-62; *See*, Monson, “Relocating Maji Maji,” 115; *See also*, Moyd, *Violent Intermediaries*, 123.

warriors alike. *Askari* and *rugaruga* were just like slave raiders. They left people either dead, refugees or taken as captives. Those who survived the ordeal were left in abject poverty.

The brutality of the *Schutztruppe* created so much fear that chiefs or the whole village could run away just after hearing of their presence in a nearby place. For example, in 1903 one chief Mkulwe hid for three weeks because he had heard that an *askari* were approaching his chiefdom.⁴⁹⁷ From the history of *Schutztruppe* war campaigns and expeditions, one discovers that many societies were affected in the same way. In 1896, Uzigua villages were attacked and cattle and captives were taken away. In the same year, Rungwe settlements were burnt down and cattle confiscated.⁴⁹⁸ The same happened in the 1894-1898 war against Mkwawa when the *Schutztruppe* burnt the villages which were supporting Mkwawa.⁴⁹⁹ *Schutztruppe* soldiers and Sangu warriors both took war booty.⁵⁰⁰ According to Heinrich Fonck, in January 1897 hundreds of Hehe women, men and children, as well as their livestock were captured.⁵⁰¹ In the same year, Tom von Prince ordered the same in Usangu, where many women who had been captured around Njombe were enslaved by the Sangu.⁵⁰² *Askari* got some of the captives from their German commanders as a reward. The others were taken by the ally (the Sangu) who participated in the campaign. After campaigns, German-appointed headmen or chiefs were given their share of captives and livestock, which they distributed to their subordinate warriors as a reward for their participation in the campaign. In 1897, the German colonial government issued a circular that prohibited *Schutztruppe* from taking women and children as war captives.⁵⁰³ But this circular did not deter commanders from letting the behaviour to continue even after the Maji Maji war. Up to 1912, whenever high-ranking officials such as governor enquired about the existence such behavior, *Schutztruppe* authority would state that the practice did not continue after the 1897 circular and that all the captives who had become slaves had been freed.⁵⁰⁴ Consequently, up to 1913, some *askari* still had captives who had been captured in the Maji Maji war.⁵⁰⁵

⁴⁹⁷ Iliffe, *History of Tanganyika*, 119.

⁴⁹⁸ Monson, "Relocating Maji Maji," 115.

⁴⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 114; *See also*, Iliffe, *History of Tanganyika*, 113-116.

⁵⁰⁰ James Giblin, "Victimisation of Women in the Late Precolonial and Early Colonial Warfare in Tanzania," in *Sexual Violence in Conflict Zones: From the Ancient Era of Human Rights*, ed. Elizabeth D. Heineman (Pennsylvania: University Press, 2011): 90, 93-95.

⁵⁰¹ Giblin, "Victimisation of Women," 93.

⁵⁰² *Ibid.*

⁵⁰³ Schmidt, "Negotiating Marginality," 50

⁵⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 50-51.

⁵⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 54

Less-organized societies were not spared by the *Schutztruppe*. Societies like the Sandawe were subordinated by forced under other ethnic groups which were more organized. If they refused, the *Schutztruppe* enforced the decision of the colonial state. For example, a Nyamwezi man called Mtoro was imposed on the Sandawe as their headman. The Sandawe reacted by expelling all the Nyamwezi from their area and confiscated their cattle. To maintain state authority, in 1902 under Lieutenant Kohlermann, *Schutztruppe* attacked the Sandawe. They left about 800 Sandawe men dead and took away 1,100 heads of cattle which were mostly distributed to the Nyamwezi who had allied with the Germans.⁵⁰⁶ Sometimes, even tax-collecting expeditions had the same effect on the people, since those who could not pay tax had their settlements burnt and livestock confiscated. In addition, women became captives or hostages and rape victims.⁵⁰⁷ Any sign of defiance to the authority was squashed with brutal force.

During the Maji Maji war (1905-1907), the same occurred since the *Schutztruppe* took many captives and livestock from the areas affected. According to Nyagava, the Maji Maji war caused the death of 340 people, 40 prisoners and 1400 women captives among the Bena community. The women were added to those who had been captured in Songea. In 1906, the women and children were so many at the Songea military station that they could not neither march out with all of them nor feed them because *bomas* did not have enough food to give to the captives.⁵⁰⁸ Therefore, several women captives were given to an Arab who lived nearby. All other captives and many cattle were distributed as war booty to the Sangu warriors who were fighting on the Germans' side and to the *askari*.⁵⁰⁹ To avoid capture, families fled their villages and moved to uninhabited forests. According to an interview done in Njombe in 1968, the witnesses said that, during the Maji Maji war when the soldiers and their Sangu allies found nobody in the villages, they took what they could carry and the rest ended up in ashes.⁵¹⁰ The act of taking of captives was persisting, since slavery and slave trade existed in German East Africa until after WWI.

The captives' hard time started right after their capture. Most of the old and sick were left to die along the road as only strong and healthy captives were taken. In addition, women, children

⁵⁰⁶ Iliffe, Tanganyika, 117-118.

⁵⁰⁷ James Giblin, "Taking Oral Sources beyond the Documentary Record of Maji maji: The Example of the 'War of Korosani' at Yakobi, Njombe," in *Maji Maji: Lifting the Fog*, eds. James Giblin and Jamie Monson (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 278-281.

⁵⁰⁸ Schmidt, "Negotiating Marginality," 50.

⁵⁰⁹ Seth I. Nyagava, "Were the Bena Traitors? Maji Maji in Njombe and the Context of Local Alliance made by Germans," in *Maji Maji: Lifting the Fog*, eds. James Giblin and Jamie Monson (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 251.

⁵¹⁰ Giblin, "Victimisation of Women," 94.

and boys were preferred over adult men. If not killed, adult men were imprisoned.⁵¹¹ During the march, women captives were forced to carry heavy loads of food for their captors, while boys looked after the livestock that had been captured.⁵¹² At the end of their destination, the livestock and captives were distributed to both *askari* and *rugaruga* (mercenaries). In the households of their captors, the captives were slaves. Some women were married to their captors or other people in the captors' communities and therefore changed their status.⁵¹³ As wives they had autonomy in their households and build their own social support networks. Most of such women never attempted to return to their old families for good, since they could not leave their children behind.

As an auxiliary in the *Schutztruppe*, the major benefit of *rugaruga* was war booty, which included captives. Therefore, German officers purposely turned a blind eye towards the captivity of humans and their livestock.⁵¹⁴ Throughout the German period in German East Africa, *rugaruga* thrived by taking captives. For example, in Umatengo and Songea alone, *rugaruga* took 4,000 captives by 1906.⁵¹⁵ In addition, *rugaruga* had no share in the rations given to soldiers; therefore, they had to feed themselves off the land. They had to depend on what they could seize in the areas they passed through.⁵¹⁶ This habit resulted in large areas facing suffering due to wars for no reason, since even those who were not part of the targeted rebels were also affected.

In German East Africa, as in other African colonies such as Portuguese Central Africa or in the French Sahara, the slave trade and slavery did not end after the beginning of colonialism. The colonial authorities suppressed the long distance, export oriented commercial slave trade, but within the colony slave trade amongst Africans and slavery continued.⁵¹⁷ Instead of abolishing it, they introduced various pieces of legislation to regulate the relationship between slaves, their owners and European employers in German East Africa. According to Deutsch, the first Ordinance issued by Governor von Soden in September 1891 specified the conditions for slaves to receive a *Freibrief* (a freedom letter). The second Ordinance issued by Chancellor von Bülow

⁵¹¹ Ibid., 94-95.

⁵¹² Ibid., 95

⁵¹³ Ibid., 96, 101.

⁵¹⁴ Ibid., 90.

⁵¹⁵ Schmidt, "Negotiating Marginality," 50.

⁵¹⁶ Giblin, "Victimisation of Women," 94

⁵¹⁷ Jan-Georg Deutsch, "The Feeing of Slaves in German East Africa: The Statistical Recor, 1890-1914," in *Slavery and Colonial Rule in Africa*, eds. Suzanne Miers and Martin Klein (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 1999), 109 (109-132)

in November 1901 transformed the relationship between slaves and slave owners into serfdom. The third Ordinance issued by von Bülow in December 1904 stated that the children of slaves who were born after 31 December 1905 would be free.⁵¹⁸ The first Ordinance allowed Africans to trade in slaves and this affected the war captives much, especially women and children, who were mostly preferred. In captivity, women worked as slaves without any interference. The only way for them to be set free was through ‘redemption,’ stipulated in the third paragraph of the second ordinance of November 1901 which allowed slaves to be redeemed by European plantation owners or African employers (who could own them until they had repaid the ransom through labour). They could also redeem themselves or by their relatives.⁵¹⁹

Redemption payment and slaves’ free labour made captives very valuable to *askari*, *rugaruga* and other German allies who could get captives through campaigns. By law, the *askari*, German plantation owners, military officers and civilian administrators were not allowed to own slaves, but they still owned them. For unclear reasons, young female slaves fetched more money than young male slaves. For example, in 1895, a German plantation owner in Usambara redeemed 61 slaves (30 men and 31 women) by paying 55 Rupees for each female and 50 Rupees for each male.⁵²⁰ Interestingly, evidence shows that, in the mid-1890s, most of the redeemed slaves were not from African or Arab slave owners.⁵²¹ Therefore, it is highly likely that they were war captives sold in the name of redemption. The 55 Rupees paid for the females and 50 for the males were very low compared to the wages paid at the time. For example, domestic servants were paid between 8 and 12 Rupees a month. Redemption contracts demanded that redeemed slaves work on plantations for free for 18 months. They were given only free food and shelter so that they could repay the ransom before being given a freedom paper.⁵²² If one compares the redemption payment and a number of slaves redeemed against the time, one notes that the slaves had to work in order to be free, and that they worked longer for them to be set free. Therefore, redeeming slaves was beneficial to plantation owners and those who had ‘slaves’ who needed redemption.

War booty in the form of captives was very important to *rugaruga*. This is because the captives increased their social status as slave owners. Possession of many slaves assured the owner that he could cultivate large acreage of land. The same applied to *askari* who took captives into their

⁵¹⁸ Deutsch, *The Freeing of Slaves in German East Africa*, 109-111.

⁵¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 112.

⁵²⁰ *Ibid.*, 122-123.

⁵²¹ *Ibid.*, 123

⁵²² Deutsch, *The Freeing of Slaves in German East Africa.*, 123

household and turned them into servants or laborers without paying them. Captive owners could sell them if they chose to do so, but they sold them quietly. *Askari* too sold their captives in a hushed manner as they were not allowed to sell them without the captives' 'consent'.⁵²³ Captives could only gain freedom and return to their families by paying ransom (redemption). By 1900s the amount for ransom ranged from five to ten Rupees for each year of captivity; hence, it did not exceed 50 Rupees. However, up to 1912, captives were still with *askari*.⁵²⁴ Probably, the price was too high for some families or relatives to pay it. It was difficult to know the fate of those who had been taken by *rugaruga* as even German colonial officials could not trace them.

The warriors fighting the Germans during the Maji Maji war were not innocent either. They attacked civilians regardless of gender, social position or race. They had no mercy for those they attacked. They burnt villages, killed inhabitants, plundered and looted whoever they raided.⁵²⁵ The tactics the Germans used in terms of destroying villages were almost the same as those that the warriors used in the pre-colonial era. The only difference was that the Germans and their troops were more organized and had more advanced weapons than those in African communities. The warriors continued with the pre-colonial habit of taking captives and the livestock of their victims. For example, during Maji Maji war, the Sagara who attacked Hehe homes took food and women as captives. Likewise, the Mbunga and Pogoro raided the Hehe around the Uzungwa escarpment in order to capture livestock and get food.⁵²⁶ These attacks involved burning homes and food stores. Therefore, warriors' actions added to the suffering of the people in the areas affected by the colonial wars.

3.3.4 Women's Participation in Resistance Wars

In different African societies, women also participated in different campaigns against colonial occupation. Their participation in the campaigns was mainly supportive, except in Dahomey, where they were part of the army even during the resistance against the French from 1890 to 1894.⁵²⁷ Other African women supported their men by performing various functions including spiritual functions. In some societies, they were the spiritual medium trusted by the people. A good example was Nyakasikana Charwe (1840-1898), the medium of Mbuya Nehanda. She was the spiritual medium of the Hwata people who belonged to the Shona ethnic group in

⁵²³ Giblin, "Victimisation of Women," 93.

⁵²⁴ Schmidt, "Negotiating Marginality," 51.

⁵²⁵ Nyagava, "Were the Bena Traitors?" 251.

⁵²⁶ Monson, "Relocating Maji Maji," 116.

⁵²⁷ Bruce Vandervort, *Wars of Imperial Conquest in Africa 1830-1914* (Indiana: University Press, 1998), 5.

modern-day Zimbabwe. She had much spiritual influence on her people and, therefore, she encouraged warriors in her area to resist colonial occupation in 1896 during the first Chimurenga War of 1896 -1897. She told them that the white man's bullet would not harm any Shona who fought the whites. Her people believed her and, therefore, fought harder and longer than before with devastating damages to their enemy. In retaliation, the British colonial army captured her and others in 1897. She, her husband and other male leaders were hanged in 1898.⁵²⁸ The British also confiscated her land, converted her children to Christianity and took them to a missionary orphanage. To ensure such resistance did not re- recur, her people were moved to the crowded Chiweshe Native Reserve.⁵²⁹ Almost the same occurred during the Maji Maji war in German East Africa. At the time, the ideology that was spread by the movement was that the medicine (*Hongo*) would turn the white man's bullet into water and, therefore, no warrior would be harmed as long as he was anointed with the blessed water.⁵³⁰ Some women, who were either spiritual mediums or chiefs were involved in the war by applying the blessed water on warriors. The most well-known women were Bibi Nawanga, a spiritual medium from the Matumbi ethnic group and, Bibi Nkomanile, the Ngoni Nduna (chief). Their participation encouraged men to fight by believing in their power as their spiritual leaders. Both were hanged as a result of their participation in the resistance war.⁵³¹

During the campaign, women supported their men in many ways. The support differed according to the circumstances of the war. Among the people of Mahenge in German East Africa, in support of the Maji Maji warriors, women were involved in many supportive activities in secrecy. They organized themselves in groups called *makazini*. Each *makazini* had its own forest and a leader known as *Kapitano*. As a leader, *Kapitano*'s main responsibility was to supervise the work done by women in the forest. To avoid destruction of their farms by the *Schutztruppe* and allies, women farmed in the forest or bush in secrecy according to their groups (*makazini*). They managed men's work such as clearing land for cultivation by cutting down trees. They planted mixed crops on the farms in order to harvest a variety of crops from small

⁵²⁸ D.E. Needham, E. K. Mashingaidze and N. Bhebe, *From Iron Age to Independence: A History of Central Africa*, New Edition (London: Longman, 1984); 122-129; *See*, Mhoze Chikowero, *African Music, Power, and Being in Colonial Zimbabwe* (Indiana: University Press, 2015), 27; *See also*, Norman H. Murdock, *Christian Warfare in Rhodesia-Zimbabwe: The Salvation Army and African Liberation, 1891-1991* (Eugene: Oregon, Pickwick Publications, 2015), 29.

⁵²⁹ Murdock, *Christian Warfare in Rhodesia-Zimbabwe*, 29.

⁵³⁰ Schmidt, "Negotiating Marginality," 97.

⁵³¹ Juan Kaponen, "MajiMaji in the Making of the South Tanzania," *Zamani: A Journal Of Historical Research and Writing*, 7, no.1, (2010); *See also*, Bertram B.B. Mapunda, "Re -examining the Maji Maji War in Ungoni with a Blend of Archaeology and Oral History," in *Maji Maji: Lifting the Fog of War*, eds. James Leonard Giblin and Jamie Monson (Leiden: Brill, 2010)

pieces of land. They pounded grain and cooked food for the warriors in the forest⁵³² and their own families. In this way, they fed both the warriors and their families. They also treated wounded warriors using traditional herbs, buried the dead warriors who were left behind and kept the whereabouts of their men secret. In addition, they assumed men's activities such as iron smelting. To ensure weapons were available, women produced weapons such as spears and poisoned arrows.⁵³³ Among the Matumbi and Zaramo, women had the same role in supporting their men in terms of food supplies.⁵³⁴ The same was the case with West African societies in which women prepared food, acted as spies, managed supplies and maintained the agricultural activities in their societies.⁵³⁵ Thus, African women were engaged in many activities that were meant to keep their societies well and healthy in the absence of men.

Moreover, women encouraged men to fight and made sure that their societies survived the horrors of war. To encourage their men, women sang various songs. Through these songs, they indirectly participated in war as the songs tended to reinforce and motivate men to take up weapons and go to war. Among the Ngoni, women sang songs that provoked or bullied men who refused to join others in fighting against colonial rule. The following is an example of the Ngoni verse:

Nyie mabwana kazi kutuchungachunga tu,

Wakati wenzenu wamekwenda vitani,

Nyie mnatuchunga na kunywa pombe tu,

Lini mtaenda vitani?⁵³⁶

Literal meaning:

“You men, instead of going to war, you keep your eyes on us,

And drink local brew, when will you go to war?”

Furthermore, women encouraged their warriors who were ready to go and fight against colonialism through songs. On the day of battle, Ngoni women awakened their men through songs with verses such as:

Amkeni muende vitani,

⁵³² Rehema Abdule Ramole, *The place of Women in the Maji Maji War 1905-1907: Case Study of Mahenge Ulanga District*, (Unpublished MA Dissertation, University of Dar Es Salaam, 2012), 81-82.

⁵³³ Ramole, *The place of Women in the Maji Maji War*, 81-82.

⁵³⁴ *Ibid.*, 78.

⁵³⁵ Falola Toyin, *Colonialism and Violence in Nigeria*, (Indiana: University Press, 2009), 49.

⁵³⁶ Ramole, *The place of Women in the Maji Maji War*, 77.

*Jana mlisema leo asubuhi mtajihimu kwenda vitani,
Sasa mbona bado mmelala nakuvuta shuka? Amkeni!*⁵³⁷

Literal meaning:

*“Wake up and join in the fight,
Yesterday you said today you would wake up early to fight,
Why are you still sleeping? Wake up!”*

Culturally, in many societies, women were no war combatants because their responsibilities were mainly domestic ones. Men were supposed to fight to protect their women. Thus, women harassed those who stayed at home and called them cowards. They also used chants to make those men who refused to fight feel ashamed of themselves. Among the Zaramo, during the Maji Maji war, women sang songs for that purpose. For example, they chanted verses like,

*“Nipeni Umbwigalo wa Baba nikapigane Vita.”*⁵³⁸

Literal meaning:

“Give me my father’s manhood so that I can go to war and fight.”

These kind of chants forced reluctant men to take up arms and go to war.

Women’s support during the Maji Maji war made it difficult for the *Schutztruppe* and allies to have an upper hand in the war. It took longer for the German troops to subdue the people of southern German East Africa. To make sure they overpowered them, the Germans used brutal tactics, including taking women hostage and burning villages and farms in order to starve the warriors.⁵³⁹ The war ended in June 1906 leaving the women who had been taken as hostages to be treated as captives. The hostage women were distributed to *rugaruga* as booty. Once distributed to *rugaruga* or *askari*, they could not return home unless their relatives redeemed them with money. Captured warriors were imprisoned while leaders were executed. The men who surrendered were not spared either as some were forced to dig their own graves before being shot dead or flogged seriously. Some had their limbs or genitalia amputated, and so on and so forth.⁵⁴⁰ For example, among the Ngoni, Major Johannes hanged hundreds of Ngoni

⁵³⁷ Ibid., 77.

⁵³⁸ Ramole, *The place of Women in the Maji Maji War*, 76.

⁵³⁹ Heike Schmidt, “‘Deadly Silence Predominates in this District,’ The Maji Maji and its Aftermath in Ungoni,” in *Maji Maji: Lifting the Fog*, eds. James Giblin and Jamie Monson (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 206; *See also*, Bruce Vandervort, *Wars of Imperial Conquest in Africa, 1830-1914* (London: UCL Press, 1998), 203.

⁵⁴⁰ Nyagava, “Were the Bena Traitors?” 250-253; *See also*, Giblin, *Victimisation of Women*, 94-95.

elders in 1906.⁵⁴¹ The men and women who were not loyal to the colonial establishments were imprisoned and subjected to hard labour in prison.⁵⁴² In this period, hard labour meant working in chained gangs in construction works, on plantations and in military posts. The German's starvation strategy caused famine which had the death toll increase to over 300,000 Africans. Most of those who died belonged to three ethnic groups, namely Vidunda, Matumbi and Pangwa.⁵⁴³ *Schutztruppe* war tactics created constant terror over large areas which ultimately ended the anti-colonial resistance in German East Africa.

3.4 Conclusion

The foregoing discussion shows that African women played an important role in different wars that took place between the 1890s and 1910s. In African resistance campaigns, African women assisted their men in solving logistical problems and did domestic chores the same way they did in the pre-colonial period. On the other hand, African men fought foreign invaders to protect their societies while their women maintained the cohesion of their societies and cared for their families. Women's activities had the same importance as men's activities whether or not they accompanied their men to campaigns, or they remained behind to do farming and care for their families. Therefore, during the colonial period, African women in different societies gave different forms of support to men as they had always done prior to the advent of colonialism. Although not all societies allowed women to join in war campaigns, women supported the warriors in keeping with their traditions.

African women were members of the colonial armies from the very beginning. Women's involvement in colonial armies was not accidental, but rather was the result of the colonial authority's intention to exert their power and protect themselves in the cheapest way possible. Based on the traditions and customs of many African societies, African male recruits, although most were slaves, refused from the very beginning to do domestic duties such cooking, since culturally such chores were the responsibility of women. To lighten African soldiers' spirit, women became part of the camps and garrisons as wives who did all domestic duties for free in their households, in the garrisons and in war camps.

The colonial authorities took advantage of African war culture to exploit women although they knew that they were supposed to pay them for their labour. Using women labour for free was

⁵⁴¹ Schmidt, "Deadly Silence Predominates in this District," 206.

⁵⁴² Ibid.

⁵⁴³ Vendervort, Wars of Imperial Conquest in Africa, 203.

not a completely new thing in the European military history. However, during the colonial occupation of Africa in the 19th century, in Europe, the habit was already shunned and considered unethical. Instead of using soldiers' families, Europeans involved European women in campaigns as paid support staff. The colonial military authorities were aware of the changes that took place in Europe, but purposely, continued to use women or soldiers' wives and families as a source of free labour in both camps and campaigns. Women's free labour was used throughout WWI which is discussed in the next chapter. The 'good excuse' given for this exploitation was that they were following African war culture. However, the said African war culture had different intentions in and for African societies contrasting with the colonial war aims. The intentions were different because in African armies, men fought because it was their duty to protect their societies while women supported their husbands during campaigns because it was their duty to care for their families. However, in colonial armies, the main intention of their involvement was exploitation of the territories.

The benefits women that got such as medical care and protection were tied to their husbands' duties in the armies and were only a minor form of compensation for the benefits the colonial armies reaped from African women. Women played their roles as wives and were supporting their husbands as culture demanded. As a consequence women's free labour was readily available and accessible to the colonial army. Wives supported their husbands morally in their households and campaigns, thereby giving them more time to commit themselves to their employers in peacetime. Women's presence in war campaigns was, therefore, advantageous to the colonial military authority since their support always enhanced the *askaris'* morale and spirit to fight. This, in turn made acts of desertion rare. At the same time, women were financially advantageous to the colonial campaigns because wives were like unpaid personal carriers who carried food for *askari* or providers of free domestic services. However, once a soldier husband died, all the benefits that were extended to his family were stopped. This was different from the "African war culture". Normally, in African societies, a community and the deceased husband's family took care of the war widows and orphaned children.

The colonial military authority, in German East Africa and other parts of Africa such as Belgian Congo, victimised African women who were not part of the colonial army for their own economic interests. They allowed the armies to take war captives who were mainly the women and children. The pretext was that it was an "African war culture" just because the same happened during the pre-colonial period, hence, the practice should be continued in the colonial time. However, one could easily notice that African war culture was not the real reason for

women's victimisation in colonial wars. Instead, colonial military authority used it as cheap way of exploiting labour from male warriors (mercenaries) who were given war booty, rather than being paid in cash. The mercenaries had different names in different territories such as spearmen in Congo or *rugaruga* in German East Africa. Their number was usually bigger than the number of *askari*, which was an additional economic advantage to the colonial authority. The mercenaries were good at terrorizing victims and plundering communities to acquire as much booty as possible. As part of war booty, women became the mercenaries' slaves with permission from the colonial authority. Therefore, the colonial authority did not pay the mercenaries as they did *askari*, and chose to let them take war booty, which included war captives, in order to make their war campaigns cheaper. The practise of ransoming captives and transform them into plantation labourers added to the economic exploitation of the colony which was often hampered by labour shortage. Therefore, the colonial authority interpreted gender relations in African war culture according to their needs. As far as military needs were concerned, they chose African cultural traits that benefited them and ignored all those which did not. In short, women's presence in the colonial armies had more to do with economic advantages for the colonial authorities rather than adhering to "African war culture" as the colonial officers claimed.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 African Women and WWI

4.1 Introduction

This chapter examines African women's contribution to WWI that took place from 1914 to 1918. The chapter is concerned with African women in German East Africa and Portuguese East Africa, regardless of where these women originally came from. Portuguese East Africa is included in this study because, for almost a year, troops from both sides, that is, German troops and those of the allied forces entered and fought within the boundaries of that colony. In addition, some of the women who were involved in WWI in German East Africa belonged to the African territories from which the allied forces came. This chapter seeks to answer two main questions: How did African women participate in and contribute to WWI? What did women experience during the war, while contributing directly or indirectly to it? It is important to understand women's direct and indirect involvement because, though to some extent they were victims, they willingly or unwillingly performed certain functions.

However, women's participation in WWI depended mainly on, firstly, the traditional traits of the people involved in the war and, secondly, the exploitative relationship of those involved in the war. Exploitative relationships denotes the relationships between Africans and the colonial state (Europeans) whose main aim was to exploit the colonized territory and societies economically, socially and politically to its own end and by using oppressive means. In any case, all Africans were exploited although one might argue that women were more exploited than men during the war. The traditional traits of the people involved, Africans' cultural practices as one group were different from those of the Europeans. This study foregrounds Africans' traditions and customs rather than on that of the Europeans since it focuses involvement of African women in the war. Before WWI, most of Africans' political, economic and cultural activities were gendered according to customs and traditions of the respective African communities. These gendered remained influential during WWI, although gender lines were crossed in some African cases and the exploitation of women intensified, as both the colonial state and African soldiers (*askari*) exploited women. To make this relational aspect clear, the chapter discusses the activities of both genders.

In analysing the events that involved African women in this war, this study uses two theories, namely trinity theory, which is a military theory, and gender theory. Trinity theory is relevant to this study in its tertiary level, which concentrates on the cultural context of warfare and, more

specifically, the relationship between war and those engaged in it on the one side, and the context within which they wage the war on the other.⁵⁴⁴ War is not a state of complete exception. Human actions continue to reflect cultural attitude in trying to control and maintain social, economic and ecological balance in a society. In other words, the theory suggests the uniqueness of war cultures and practices of war, inasmuch as they differ according to place and depend on the cultural outlook of those who are involved in the a war. War is believed to be a social and political activity. Therefore, in war, humans are always shaped by pre-war socio-political elements, including the culture of the groups involved. According to Waldman, when groups go to war, they do so while possessing “unique sets of assumptions, predispositions and habits.” Therefore, their decisions are influenced by the “prevailing cultural preconceptions and norms.”⁵⁴⁵ The point here is that the presence of African women in the troops of the Germans and those of the allied forces did not start with WWI, but rather it was to a great extent a continuation of what happened before (as discussed in Chapter Three). Since it was accepted before as the ‘way of waging war,’ it continued during WWI but in a bigger magnitude as will be shown in this chapter.

Regarding African women’s participation in WWI, the chapter analyses their activities following argument of African feminists that Africans gendered relations are based on complementarity and cooperation between women and men.⁵⁴⁶ That is, for the survival of individuals and societies, a gendered division of labour was an important factor in the lives of Africans. It did not necessarily promote women’s oppression but was meant to meet the realities of day to day life. Therefore, a gendered division of labour was expected to prevail in any circumstances, including in warfare. For this reason, during war, men maintained their “masculine” roles while the women were expected to perform the “feminine” ones. Traditionally, in most societies, the respect for men and their self-worth depended on the gendered division of labour in which men performed masculine duties that required great strength compared to those that were considered to be feminine in nature. At the same time, women’s socio-economic status was maintained by their ability to keep their domestic position in relation to men. These ideas on gender roles were applicable also during wartime; therefore, women’s participation in the domestic domain was maintained throughout the war.

⁵⁴⁴ Thomas Waldman, *War, Clausewitz and the Trinity* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2013), 58-59.

⁵⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴⁶ Andrea Cornwall, “Perspectives on Gender in Africa,” in *Reading Gender in Africa*, ed. Andrea Cornwall (London: SOAS, 2005), 4.

The hypothesis of this study, and particularly of this chapter, is that, during WWI the presence of African women in the colonial troops in German East Africa increased African soldiers' (*askari*) morale to fight. The *askari* fought willingly when they knew that their women were waiting in the rear of the troops' marching trains or battle ground. The term 'morale' relates to confidence, enthusiasm and discipline at a given time.⁵⁴⁷ In the context of a military setting, it has to do with 'soldiers' morale, which is a core element of military capability.⁵⁴⁸ The importance of soldiers' morale has been known to intelligent war commanders since the 4th century.⁵⁴⁹ The French Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte (who was military genius), believed that morale is greater than war materials such as arms. He believed that real soldiers do not die just for money or petty distinction, but he needed to speak to their souls in order to electrify themselves and arouse their morale.⁵⁵⁰ In short, soldiers' morale is about the will to fight. In any war, victory or defeat rests on the morale of the troops.⁵⁵¹ It gives victory to a poorly equipped army fighting against the impossible odds. In relation to WWI in German East Africa, women played a major role in improving *askaris'* morale. Therefore, without African women in the WWI troops, the result would have been different for the Germans who fought in German East Africa for four years against mightier forces and surrendered only because of the armistice signed in Europe.

In Africa, especially in the German territories, where the war raged, it was difficult to differentiate between the war front and the home front because there was a very thin line between the two. The war was fought almost everywhere; therefore, today's home front was yesterday's war front. In this chapter, the home front refers to villages or towns where African civilians lived while the warfront were the places where the troops operated, be it in camps, on the battlefield or on marches. Therefore, one can argue that, in German East Africa, women participated in both fronts.

The organization of the chapter is based on the two major operation modes adopted by the German army during the war: the offensive mode and the defensive mode. This is necessary because whatever was happening to women and the people of German East Africa at the time, had to do with these two positions. This was true throughout the war, from mobilization to the

⁵⁴⁷ Sean Childs, "Soldier Morale Defending a Core Military Capability," *Security Challenges* 12, no. 2 (2016): 43.

⁵⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴⁹ Godfrey Hutchinson, *Xenophon and the Art of Command* (London: Greenhill Books, 2000), 60.

⁵⁵⁰ David G. Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon* (New York: Macmillan, 1966), 155.

⁵⁵¹ Arthur Upham Pope, "The Importance of Morale," *The Journal of Educational Sociology* 15, no. 4, *Civilian Morale* (Dec. 1941): 195.

fighting. That is, in German East Africa, the events during German offense in terms of mobilisation and fighting were much different from the events during German defense. Consequently, the kind of support and the experience of women and men in both stages differed profoundly.

The chapter begins with what happened at the beginning of the war, that is, the offensive stage in terms of mobilization and the involvement of African men and women. The experiences of women at this stage are explored before a discussion of the second stage of the war. Then, the chapter examines the defensive stage which began in March 1916. The chapter analyses the contributions of both African women and men to the war. The discussion of women's experiences is followed by the discussion of women's crucial role in WWI.

4.2 German East Africa Population during the Offensive: The Home Front

German East Africa was on the offensive from August 1914 to March 1916 when General Smuts took over as commander-in-chief of the allied forces. Up to March 1916, the whole of the colony was in the hands of the Germans. In this period, the German troops entered the territories of the allied forces and attacked their opponents. The allied forces could not counterattack them effectively, and German troops occupied parts of their territory. In the British East Africa Protectorate (Kenya), for example, the German troops were threatening Nairobi which was the capital of the colony. During that period, within German East Africa, war mobilization continued for the purpose of fighting and winning the war.

As a colonial territory, German East Africa was in a state of war immediately after receiving a telegram from the imperial government on 2nd August 1914. The war had broken out in Europe and mobilization had to start immediately.⁵⁵² Mobilization was ordered although it was not clear whether the war would extend to overseas possessions. At the time, the actual enemies of the colony were not yet known because even Britain was listed only as among the probable enemies of Germany.⁵⁵³ To all those involved in the war, the hope was that Africa would remain neutral and, therefore, would not be affected by the war. However, as time went on and circumstances unfolded, the importance of early mobilization was obvious.

The nature of war mobilization in German East Africa, as everywhere else, was determined by the political and cultural life of the people in the territory before the war.⁵⁵⁴ Politically, the

⁵⁵² Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck, *My Reminiscence of East Africa* (London: Hurst and Blackett Ltd, 1920), 18.

⁵⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵⁴ John Horne, "Introduction: mobilising for 'Total War', 1914-1918," in *State, Society and Mobilisation in Europe during the First World War*, ed., John Horne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 1.

relationship between Germans and Africans in the colony was exploitative in nature. Thus, the Africans had no say or decision on the what, how, and why of the mobilization process. It was all decided and organized by the Germans while the Africans bore the burden of the whole process. At the same time, mobilization was conditioned by the lifestyle and cultural traits of the people in the colony. Before the war, as conceived of from a European point of view, the society was divided along racial lines. Europeans were at the top and Africans at the bottom. Whatever one was able to do depended on one's position in the colony. During the war, most activities were for the benefit of the colonizers and very few for the benefit of the colonized. At the same time, since Africans were many, their cultural traits in relation to gender had a certain effect on the way the war was mobilized and fought.

Furthermore, German East Africa's way of mobilising the colony depended much on the means of transportation available at the time. To fight any war, a dependable transport system for moving supplies should be available since there are no troops that can fight without supplies. The transportation of troops and other goods to where they were needed was crucial. However, at that time, the transport system had not been well developed in many parts of the colony. There were railways that connected some parts, and a few main roads which connected a few others. This meant more roads were needed to improve the lines of communication. In addition, there were inadequate numbers of vehicles to carry what was needed and animals were not the best option because of their vulnerability to sleeping sickness transmitted by tsetse flies. Hence, using human carriers became indispensable and Africans had to be mobilized to bear the burden.

In the early months of the offensive, mobilization was characterized by both persuasion and coercion. To fight in this war, Germans, like other colonial governments in Africa, needed Africans' cooperation. On the other hand, Africans cooperated fully with the colonial government only when they sensed that colonial authority had power and control over the colony. During this offensive period, the Germans had full control of German East Africa and could pay for whatever they needed. Therefore, most Africans were involved out of the need to get money or fear of what would happen to them if Germany won the war. Coercion was mainly used against those who were not cooperative enough.

4.2.1 European Soldiers and *Askari*

The immediate concern during the period was on military strength because the colonial force (*Schutztruppe*) was not strong enough to fight a foreign enemy in a modern battle. It lacked

enough modern war equipment and had a small number of troops. Consequently, the military strength of the territory was worrying. Therefore, military mobilization was necessary for improving the strength of the army. Military mobilization involved recruiting and training troops, recruiting carriers and formulating good lines of communication to form a dependable system to supply armament and other provisions. On the issue of modern armament, the British blockade prevented Germans from easily receiving assistance from their homeland. Therefore, the Germans in East Africa had to depend on capturing the enemy's modern guns, ammunition and other war equipment. In this, they were successful as evidenced by the large quantity of the allied forces' war equipment surrendered by the *Schutztruppe* after the armistice.

Recruitment of more soldiers started immediately in order to increase the number of combatants in the small army to meet the needs of the impending war. In 1914, the German forces in East Africa had only 2,540 *askari* in the *Schutztruppe*, 2154 *askari* in the police force and only 261 German-commissioned and non-commissioned officers.⁵⁵⁵ Furthermore, there were about 3500 German and Austrian male civilians who could be called to colours.⁵⁵⁶ Therefore, in the recruitment of troops, the largest number of soldiers were African men as combat was typically a male activity. The 2154 *askari* from the police force were ordered to join the military force. A good number of former *askari* were called upon to join the force which enabled the *Schutztruppe* to form four new additional military companies. German reservists were also mobilized so that they could lead the companies. Within a short time, there were about 18 companies, each with 16 Europeans, 160 *askari* and 2 machine guns.

The mobilization of *askari* recruits continued in order to meet the war demand. The recruitment process was intense. At first people volunteered but later conscription was done by force. Patrols took men by force at night in their homes or organized raids on plantations at the time of sowing seeds. Every new *askari* received a gift of 20 Rupees as soon as he was incorporated into the *Schutztruppe*.⁵⁵⁷ The non-trainable men received superficial instructions and became policemen. During the 1915 expansion of the *Schutztruppe*, the army expanded to about 60 companies, each with at least 200 combatants. The companies enrolled more *askari* whenever possible.⁵⁵⁸ However, not all depots enrolled enough recruits so that all the companies could

⁵⁵⁵ von Lettow-Vorbeck, My Reminiscence, 19.

⁵⁵⁶ W.O. Henderson, "The War Economy of German East Africa, 1914-1917," *The Economic History Review* 13, no. 1/2 (1943):105.

⁵⁵⁷ FP 2659/1154, Lt. Lallemand report, a Belgian officer captured by Germans at the border town called Kivu at the beginning of the hostilities and released at Newala in November 1917, page 1 of the report.

⁵⁵⁸ von Lettow-Vorbeck, My Reminiscence, 22.

reach the target of 200. By the end of 1915, the total number of those enrolled into the force were about 3,000 Europeans and 11,300 *askari*.⁵⁵⁹ Most of the *askari* were Nyamwezi and Sukuma from Tabora and Mwanza as well as from villages around the Northern Railway. Auxiliary African soldiers known as *rugaruga* were also drafted.⁵⁶⁰ As explained in the previous chapter, *rugaruga* were irregular soldiers who were recruited on a temporary basis. They were African mercenaries hired only when necessary. However, with time, because of the shortage of manpower some of them ended up being *askari* while a few worked in colonial stations.⁵⁶¹ However, many continued to function as *rugaruga* whose payment throughout the WWI was war spoils.

4.2.2 African Carriers

Military forces can never work without putting in place proper supply systems for troops.⁵⁶² The transport of armament and provisions to the front was a big headache which needed to be dealt with. The lack roads and vehicles in the areas not covered by railway was an immediate concern. By the time the war broke out, the territory had only two railways lines: the one from Tanga to Kilimanjaro, known as the northern railway, the other from Dar es Salaam to Kigoma known as the central railway. Also, there was a port in Lake Tanganyika. A few more main roads and bridges were constructed in order to improve connections within the territory as the use of the sea was out of the question because of the blockade. However, the move only helped to improve connections and the problem of transport persisted. The few roads and railway lines were ineffective also due to lack of military vehicles. Worse still, the use of animals was out of the question because of tsetse flies. This made the movement of supplies a huge problem. Consequently, human carriers became the common means of transport. However, few women worked as carriers and the majority were African men.

Depending on carriers to move supplies meant that there was no military force in East Africa and other parts of Africa that could function without human carriers. At the time, military strength included having a big number of carriers for supporting the troops. The demand for human carriers affected Africans and their families more than the demand for *askari*. This was

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid., 72.

⁵⁶⁰ von Lettow-Vorbeck, *My Reminiscence*, 99; *See also*, Michael Pesek, "The History of an African Profession, 1820-1918," in *German Colonialism Revisited: African, Asian, and Oceanic Experiences*, eds. Nina Berman, Klaus Mühlhahn and Patrice Nganang (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2014).

⁵⁶¹ Michel R. Moyd, *Violent Intermediaries: African Soldiers, Conquest, and Everyday Colonialism in German East Africa* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2014), 129.

⁵⁶² Sun Tzu, *Art of War: The Oldest Military Treatise in the World*, Trans. Lionel Giles (Leicester: Allandale Online Publishing, 2000), 26.

caused by the act of taking away of a lot of manpower from African homes. The act of taking away strong men impacted on families, especially on the women who remained behind, and in terms of food production. This was because, according to division of labour in African communities, men played a major role in agricultural production. To make matters worse, most of those who joined WWI as carriers never returned home.

In the case of German East Africa, each company had to have its own carriers. The number of carriers varied from company to company, but each company had an average of 250 carriers. In addition, each European in a company needed personal carriers and servants for his comfort. Normally, the personal carriers and servants for each European were not less than 11 Africans.⁵⁶³ They carried the Europeans' belongings and food. During the war, the number was reduced to less than 11 carriers and two to three personal servants. At the same time, the *askari* were entitled to one boy servant.⁵⁶⁴ The number of servants and carriers for each European in the force was the same for more than two and half years. The groups of carriers and servants stuck with the troops for a long time, and worked closely with the troops. Some were at the front, carrying ammunition and other military supplies and the others were at the rear, carrying foodstuffs and other provisions.

Military mobilization did not end with only recruiting troops and carriers, but also involved creating a dependable system of communication lines. The lines of communication meant moving supplies from one point to another so as to reach troops wherever they were in the course of fighting. Such a system was established by experienced military officers. In German East Africa, the lines of communication were under Major General Kurt Wahle. He was a retired officer from Germany. He went to the colony with the aim of visiting his son and to attend the Dar es Salaam exhibition, but did not return home as he was stuck in the colony because of the war.⁵⁶⁵ Therefore, in the offensive stage, Major General Wahle mobilized military logistics which included recruiting, in von Lettow-Vorbeck's words, hundreds of thousands of carriers⁵⁶⁶ who needed food and health care. The first to be recruited as carriers were labourers working for Europeans in different enterprises such as plantations. The number of labourers who were turned into carriers was about 100,000.⁵⁶⁷ With time, German authorities recruited African men

⁵⁶³ von Lettow-Vorbeck, *My Reminiscence*, 24.

⁵⁶⁴ Heinrich Schnee, *Deutsch-Ostafrika im Weltkrieg* (Leipzig: Quelle and Meyer, 1919), 125.

⁵⁶⁵ von Lettow-Vorbeck, *My Reminiscence*, 23.

⁵⁶⁶ von Lettow-Vorbeck, *My Reminiscence*, 24.

⁵⁶⁷ Anselm Tambila, *A History of the Rukwa region (Tanzania) ca 1870-1940: Aspects of Economic and Social Change from Pre-Colonial to Colonial Times*, (Hamburg, 1981), 207.

from almost every part of the colony. The carriers came from all walks of life and included teachers, deacons and even *jumbes* who were close to the British missionaries.⁵⁶⁸ However, most of permanent carriers were recruited from the then districts of Mwanza and Tabora.

Organizing the lines of communication was a complex business because the British had placed a naval blockade against the Germans in East Africa almost immediately after the war broke out in August 1914. It prevented them from using the sea as a means of transport. Thus, the Germans used only land as a means of communication within the territory. They were cut off from the outside world almost completely. Consequently, they depended much on the cooperation of Africans.

In organizing the lines of communication, food supplies were a priority. The lines of communication during the war meant establishing routes that connected the military units and the supply base so that supplies and reinforcement could be transported efficiently. The Germans ensured that enough food was available for the troops and European civilians. In order to feed the troops and European civilians throughout the war, it was important to collect and store enough food. At the time, the Europeans in the territory depended mainly on imported food. Under the circumstances of war and naval blockade, it was impossible to import any kind of products. Fortunately for the German troops, before the war began, German officials had planned a great Dar es Salaam exhibition and celebrations for the completion of the central railway which were to begin on 12th August 1914. For the grand celebrations, two large steamers arrived in Dar es Salaam with large supplies of various kinds of foodstuffs.⁵⁶⁹ In addition, many distinguished visitors from Germany and elsewhere were in the colony to participate in the celebrations. Hence, when the war broke out, the colony had large supplies of various kinds for the Europeans and had German personnel to recruit. Since the celebrations were cancelled because of the war, the supplies and the Germans who came for the celebrations were mobilized into the military. Furthermore, the colonial government requisitioned European provisions from European and Indian traders. Therefore, in the early months of the war, European troops and civilians lacked little in terms of their familiar diet.

There was need to collect and store African foodstuff for the purpose of feeding the troops and carriers. The diet for African troops was different from that of the Europeans. Africans preferred grain such as corn or millet (grounded flour) or rice. Such grain could be eaten with meat and

⁵⁶⁸ BNA CO 691/29.

⁵⁶⁹ J. H. Briggs, "German East Africa during the War," *Journal of the Royal African Society* 16, no. 63 (April 1917): 193-194; See also, Henderson, "The war Economy," 107.

vegetables. To make sure African troops were well fed, mobilizing their food, especially corn, began immediately after the start of the war. Governor Schnee enquired about the availability of food in the territory. It was established that, except for Lindi Province, which had been poor rains in the 1913/1914 season, there was surplus food in every other province in the territory. District officials were ordered to set up depots and buy as much food as possible from Africans, as well as to stimulate food production.⁵⁷⁰ As a result of the order, many corn depots were opened.

To collect enough corn in central depots, its collection was organized in such a way that it involved district officials as well as local chiefs or headmen. In addition, they made sure that corn was delivered to the stores. The said stores were located after every 5 to 6 hours' march and were supervised by Europeans. An officer had a command of three or four of these stores and directed the food to a central depot.⁵⁷¹ Chiefs used force to acquire food from people and sometimes police were involved in requisitioning.⁵⁷² Within a short time depots were full of corn which had been requisitioned from Africans. Furthermore, the colonial government bought corn from planters. Statistics showed that about 10 per cent of the corn collected along the railways was from plantations.⁵⁷³ Plantation owners made sure that their corn directly reached the depots located along the railways at their own cost. To ensure corn reached the depots, planters used their own labourers to carry corn as carriers.

To ensure troops had access to a diet with meat, many cows were bought from Africans almost from all regions including Dodoma, Kondoa-Irangi, Tabora, Kilimanjaro, Arusha and Mwanza.⁵⁷⁴ Hunting activities further supplemented meat from livestock so as to meet the troops' needs. European elephant hunters with African teams also supplied smoked meat to troops. However, with time, settlers' communities devoted their energy to provide more foodstuff to Europeans in the *Schutztruppe*.⁵⁷⁵ Sausages, butter, cheese, smoked meat and others were produced. With encouragement from the government, farmers grew more food crops for internal use. As a result, crops such as coffee, potatoes, rice, wheat and fruits like bananas and pineapples were supplied from the plantations. It was possible for planters to produce all with the assistance of African labourers who were toiling in the plantations.

⁵⁷⁰ Henderson, "The War Economy," 106.

⁵⁷¹ FP 2659/1154, Lt. Lallemand report, 4.

⁵⁷² Ibid.

⁵⁷³ Henderson, "The War Economy," 106.

⁵⁷⁴ Briggs, "German East Africa," 195; *See also*, von Lettow-Vorbeck, *My Reminiscence*, 23

⁵⁷⁵ von Lettow-Vorbeck, *My Reminiscence*, 52; *See also*, Henderson, "War Economy," 107

The carriers recruited in every district transported the collected foodstuff and other provisions from the stores in the interior to the central depots located along the railway lines or in town centres. In addition, they took provisions to wherever troops camped. To meet the demand, the authorities recruited thousands of Africans on a permanent or temporary basis. These carriers were different from those who were on the war front with the troops or those with crop growers on plantations. Their work involved carrying supplies to depots along the railway lines or by road to places which could not be reached by rail or roads. Many participated in carrying loads and it became normal to find all African adult males in a district engaged in load carrying.⁵⁷⁶ Men were preferred over women because the activity was regarded as masculine and all supply movements were conducted under military discipline supervised by soldiers.

4.2.3 African Women at the home front

As mentioned before, women were involved in this stage of mobilization. The home front activities in which women were involved were those that did not require one to be absent from home for many days. This was an important factor during WWI because women were needed at their homes to take care of their families. Thus, male carriers and labourers could afford to stay away from their families for a long time. Many women performed their war supporting responsibilities from their homes or close to their homes. In that way, they could manage their homes and took care of their families while supporting the war. As carriers, women carried loads in short distances, especially from their homes to a chief's residency or from the chief's residency to a nearby depot.⁵⁷⁷

According to tradition, most ethnic groups in Africa regarded food processing such as corn grinding done by hands as a domestic chore and a responsibility of women. To ensure good food supply for African troops at the front, German district administrators ensured that enough millet and corn were collected in central depots located along the railway lines. However, these locations did not have enough mills for grinding corn and millet into flour. Since the Germany colonial authority needed to make flour in the shortest time possible, African women were recruited for that job.⁵⁷⁸ These women exchanged their labour for money in food processing, an activity which normally was done for free in their homes.

⁵⁷⁶ Briggs, "German East Africa," 196.

⁵⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁸ Henderson, "War Economy," 106.

Women and their children also provided labour in factories located in different towns in the German East African territory. Before the war, Europeans depended totally on imported foodstuff like rice, sugar and cotton which were imported from India, while tinned foodstuff were imported from Europe.⁵⁷⁹ After the blockade, in order to survive, economic mobilization was necessary. Germans were forced to depend on what they could find inside their territory. After some research, they realised that raw materials were plenty inside their colony. All that was needed was the ingenuity to convert them to finished products. Therefore, various factories were established for producing formerly imported items. To make the new venture work, African women and children were important as a source of labour for the factories since most men were already involved in WWI as combatants, carriers or labourers.⁵⁸⁰ Women's involvement in factories as labourers increased the production of the needed supplies for the troops and whites.

The first effects of the blockade were seen through the shortage of cotton cloth in the second half of 1915. The available cotton cloth was not enough even for making the troops' uniforms and the civilians. Also, there was a shortage of bandages and blankets, items that were for those at the war front. Thus, mission stations and private workshops built spinning wheels and looms to produce cotton cloth. The government also set up factories for spinning and weaving cotton by hand. The largest factories were built at Tabora, Morogoro and Miombo Cotton Institute (near Kilosa).⁵⁸¹ African women were fully involved in these factories. To dye the uniforms, African women used roots of *Ndaa (Mdaa)* trees. Also, cotton hand spinning was exclusively done by women and children.⁵⁸² In Lukuledi alone about fifty African boys and girls were employed to spin cotton for bandages, while women beat the bark of certain trees in order to use them as bandages.⁵⁸³ However, blanket production was rendered impossible because of lack of appropriate technology. The troops also needed footwear which had to be produced from within the colony. Footwear was made from cattle and game skin.⁵⁸⁴ The skin was tanned by materials from mangrove trees and the soles of leather shoes were made from buffalo hide. To support transportation, Germans vulcanized rubber with sulphur to produce efficient tyres for

⁵⁷⁹ Henderson, "The War Economy," 107; *See also*, Briggs, "German East Africa," 195.

⁵⁸⁰ von Lettow-Vorbeck, *My Reminiscence*, 69; *See also*, Henderson, "The War Economy," 108.

⁵⁸¹ von Lettow-Vorbeck, *My Reminiscence*, 70; *See also*, FP 2659/1154, Lt. Lallemand report, 6.

⁵⁸² von Lettow-Vorbeck, *My Reminiscence*, 69. *See also*, Henderson "The War Economy," 108.

⁵⁸³ FP 2659/1154, Lt. Lallemand report, 5

⁵⁸⁴ *Ibid.*; *See also*, Briggs, "German East Africa," 196.

vehicles, motorcycles and bicycles, while motor fuel, known as trebol, was produced from cocos.⁵⁸⁵

More factories were opened to curb the shortages of various items needed in the colony. Sugar refineries were established and, therefore, brown sugar was produced in districts such as Pangani, Rufiji, Lukuledi and Mwanza. Such factories were established even in remote districts such as Rufiji, which was far from the railway line. Salt was gotten from the Gottorp salt works which was a major salt supplier in German East Africa.⁵⁸⁶ Adequate supplies of medicines for different tropical diseases were also produced within the colony. Medicines such as quinine were very important, especially for curbing malaria which was a major threat to the health of the troops. Formerly, quinine was imported from Java but by 1915 it was produced at Mpapua under the government chemist Dr Schulze and at Amani Agricultural Institute under Dr Marx, the institute's chemist. Quinine tablets were produced from the barks obtained from the north part of the territory (Kilimanjaro and Arusha).⁵⁸⁷ It has been noted that half of the quinine used by Germans in East Africa during the war were locally produced.⁵⁸⁸

As time passed, the Germans found solutions for the shortages of many other different articles. Shortage of sacks affected the process of carrying and storing food. To solve the problem, sacks for carrying and storing provisions were manufactured locally from different tree barks. To satisfy the needs of the European population, cigarettes were manufactured from tobacco grown within the territory. Alcoholic beverages were also produced as many distilleries were established to manufacture all kinds of spirits from local produce that included palm wine and grain. Amani Agricultural Institute played a major role in producing foodstuff and other products for the European population. It was reported that the institute produced large quantities that comprised "16 varieties of foodstuffs and liquors, 11 varieties of spices, 12 varieties of medicines and medicaments, 5 varieties of rubber products, 2 of soap, oils and candles, 3 of materials used in making boots, and 10 miscellaneous substances."⁵⁸⁹ In addition, enough fat and vegetable oils from groundnuts and coconuts were locally produced.⁵⁹⁰ Women participated in providing labour to most of those factories activities.

⁵⁸⁵ von Lettow-Vorbeck, *My Reminiscence*, 70.

⁵⁸⁶ von Lettow-Vorbeck, *My Reminiscence*, 52; *See also*, Henderson, "The War Economy," 107.

⁵⁸⁷ von Lettow-Vorbeck, *My Reminiscence*, 71.

⁵⁸⁸ Henderson, "The War Economy," 107-108.

⁵⁸⁹ As quoted in: *ibid.*, 108 from Report of the East Africa Commission 1925.

⁵⁹⁰ FP 2659/1154, Lt. Lallemand report, 5.

The shortage of banknotes and coins hampered most of the economic activities since the administration had no ready money because of the blockade. It was therefore difficult to pay troops' salaries and different activities. The administration tried to print low quality banknotes for small denominations instead of coins. But Africans rejected them as they preferred coins to notes. After long trials, new brass coins were minted and accepted.⁵⁹¹ The new money enabled the administration to pay the troops, carriers and other labourers. They also paid for foodstuffs and other needs. In this way, the German colonial government continued to function until 1916 when the allied forces began their offensive operations.

To increase the availability of food in the German East Africa colony, instead of producing cash crops, the settler community concentrated on food production for local use. The blockade stopped foreign trade; therefore, settlers produced foodstuffs and sold them to the government, since they knew that the colonial government would pay them. African women and a few men available provided labour on these plantations. Crops such as coffee, wheat, potatoes and fruits were grown for the local market. Dairy products came from Europeans' and Africans' farms. Large quantities of sausages and cooked meat were delivered from factories, located in the Usambara area.⁵⁹² Plantation owners established farms in which they cultivated vegetables and dried their produce before selling it to the government. Furthermore, teams of European hunters accompanied by African men hunted wild animals and supplied wild smoked meat to the troops and civilians.⁵⁹³

However, the demand for such products by the Europeans was high and it was not always easy to feed the European troops and civilians at the same time owing to the shortage of some produce. Always proper measures were taken to make sure that the European population did not suffer. For example, when Morogoro, which was an important civil and military administrative centre, had an acute shortage of dairy products, the authorities decided to move all the European women and children to where such products were available.⁵⁹⁴ The only problem was that they had no control of the shortage of vegetables because of not having enough seeds. Dried vegetables produced by some planters⁵⁹⁵ could not satisfy the vegetable market.

⁵⁹¹ von Lettow-Vorbeck, *My Reminiscence*, 256; *See also*, Henderson, "The War Economy," 109.

⁵⁹² von Lettow-Vorbeck, *My Reminiscence*, 70-71; *See also*, Henderson, "The War Economy," 107.

⁵⁹³ FP 2659/1154, Lt. Lallemand report, 4

⁵⁹⁴ Henderson, "The War Economy," 107.

⁵⁹⁵ FP 2659/1154, Lt. Lallemand report, 4.

African communities also took advantage of the high demand for different articles by selling what they could produce. The shortage of sugar increased the demand for honey, which was a good substitute amongst the Europeans and Africans who had been accustomed to the use of sugar. In the circumstances, honey was a good source of income for many African families since, at the time, it was common to find hives on trees near villages. Also honey was obtained from numerous forests around the villages.⁵⁹⁶ Furthermore, Africans in Mwanza and Mahenge produced more rice to meet its demand. Those in the highlands between Lake Tanganyika and Lake Nyasa produced more wheat and rye, while milk and butter were produced by Africans in districts which had not been infested by the tsetse flies.⁵⁹⁷ Furthermore, European civilians bought from Africans as many fowls, sheep, goats and cows as they could so that they could have enough eggs, butter, milk and meat all the time.

The economic mobilization carried out in the territory was very important in supporting the war. The economy of German East Africa was able to adapt to the hard conditions of the war easily without outside support. Such a success was possible only because the whole population cooperated in production. This includes competent civilian administration, innovative scientists, technicians, officials⁵⁹⁸ and Africans who constituted the labour force. Since a big number of those in the population were Africans, it is logical to argue that it was mainly due to the cooperation of the Africans that such successful war economy was upheld. Moreover, since most men were absent, African women and their children participated fully in upholding the war economy and therefore made economic mobilization possible. The cooperation of the Africans was essential; hence, regardless of their gender or age, they provided manpower in all economic sectors.

4.2.4 Challenges Facing Germans during the Offensive Period

The economic success in the colony did not happen without encountering any challenges. With all the activities on plantations, factories and workshops, there were still shortages of foodstuff owing to its high demand and transportation problems. The demand for foodstuff was high since most workshops and factories produced to meet mostly the needs of troops. Military needs had priority over civilian needs. When it came to civilians, Europeans' needs were prioritized over those of Africans. In terms of Africans' needs, there was no consideration given at all even though Africans were the ones who provided the much needed labour force. Another challenge

⁵⁹⁶ Briggs, "German East Africa," 195.

⁵⁹⁷ Briggs, "German East Africa," 195; *See also*, Henderson, "The War Economy," 107.

⁵⁹⁸ Henderson, "The War Economy," 110.

was food transportation. Food had to be transported from far away to where Europeans were.⁵⁹⁹ Carriers were already overworked for carrying the troops' requirements; therefore, it was difficult to have enough carriers to transport food for the European civilians.

All Europeans, *askari* and their families were given food rations. The regular ration per week comprised 3 kg of sugar, 1kg of wheat flour, 6 kg of "native" flour, 7 kg of rice, 4 kg of beans, 1 kg of grilled coffee, 1kg of elephant fat or oil (for the war front only), dry vegetables, smoked meat and meat extracts, tobacco, candles, dry cakes (for the front) and other little things.⁶⁰⁰ It was not easy to maintain this ration owing to the scarcity of food that led to high demand for different kinds of produce. Consequently, the cost of living increased. To control prices, the Governor fixed the prices of tinned foods and cloth at 25 percent of original price, but with time the same products could be obtained only through the black market.⁶⁰¹

Although much was done to boost the economic situations of the people in the colony, hardships were inevitable. The extent of suffering differed according to race and social position of an individual. The Africans suffered more than Europeans, but the *askari* and their families were better off than other Africans. Again, *askaris'* uniforms, for example, were thin Khaki cloth which was not durable and got torn beyond repair after a short time, leaving an *askari* almost naked.⁶⁰² At the same time, Europeans had better uniform cloth but did not have proper footwear and stockings.⁶⁰³ The shortage affected troops at different levels and extent. For example, the shortage of cloths affected troops and civilians, Europeans and Africans alike, as it was hard to obtain any cloths material. Most of cloth was produced for the army. However, it was easier for the Europeans to buy one when it was available than for the Africans. This was caused by the high price of cloths. Consequently, most African men and women turned to traditional old style of dressing.

Furthermore, the shortage of cloths affected carriers tremendously because as far as the administration was concerned, they were not a priority compared to the *askari*. Carriers needed cloth and blankets to protect themselves from the cold. In February 1916, more than 2000 carriers died in the cold areas of Arusha and Kilimanjaro because they did not have blankets.⁶⁰⁴

⁵⁹⁹ Henderson, "The War Economy," 107.

⁶⁰⁰ FP 2659/1154, Lt. Lallemand report, 4.

⁶⁰¹ Henderson, "The War Economy," 108.

⁶⁰² Dr. Taute, A German Account of the Medical Side of the War, 4

⁶⁰³ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁴ von Lettow-Vorbeck, My Reminiscence, 52-53; See, Henderson, "The War Economy," 107; See also, Strachan, The First World war.

Throughout the war in the rainy season, more carriers died as a result of cold because Germans could not produce blankets as they lacked technology.

In addition, mosquito nets were very important for troops' survival in the bush as they could help to protect them from mosquito bites that caused malaria. At the time malaria was a major killer disease of both Europeans and Africans. However, the German administration had a problem in producing mosquito nets. Therefore, the available mosquito nets were supplied only to Europeans. To justify their action, even though they knew it was not true, German officials argued that *askari* and carriers (Africans) were more immune to malaria than Europeans.⁶⁰⁵ In general, always Europeans had priority over *askari* and carriers. As a result, in spite of the presence of medical officers in every company and in camps along the lines of communication,⁶⁰⁶ malaria killed many carriers throughout the war period.

4.2.5 Carriers, *Rugaruga* and *Askaris*' Wives, at the Warfront

4.2.5.1 Carriers

Carriers were divided into two main categories: those who accompanied troops to the front during active war and those who were behind the lines, working on communication lines. Those who accompanied troops to the war front worked with combatants during different operations. In this group of carriers, there were those who accompanied troops in war operations and those who remained at the rear with women and other followers, carrying food and other provisions. Both groups of war front carriers were very important to troops because without them troops could not move or fight effectively. Normally, war front carriers had different pay depending on where they were, but both had longer and better formal contracts with better pay than carriers who worked on the communication lines. As war front carriers, they carried war equipment, ammunition and other provisions to the front. They provided the same services also in active war by ensuring that combatants had enough ammunition. These carriers faced the same risks as combatants, but their status did not equal that of the *askari*. Their system of work and pay was better organized before WWI. Therefore, during WWI, the colonial authority in German East Africa was aware of what was required for this kind of carriers. Many worked throughout the campaign, with a spirit of passive obedience.⁶⁰⁷ The major problem which arose was how to organize a healthy and efficient portage system on the communication lines.

⁶⁰⁵ von Lettow-Vorbeck, *My Reminiscence*, 24.

⁶⁰⁶ *Ibid*, 53.

⁶⁰⁷ FP 2659/1154, Lt. Lallemand report, 1-2.

One major problem which the military authority faced regarding carriers was how to feed the carriers working on the communication lines. These were carriers whose tasks were to carry supplies either from depot to depot or depots to the troops. It was calculated that a carrier needed 25 kilogrammes of food a month to survive a month-long march. At the same time, he had to carry a load of provisions of the same weight for a month or more.⁶⁰⁸ This meant, in a month, food for a carrier equalled the weight of the load he was carrying. To solve the problem, military authority suggested that the communication lines should pass through populated and fertile districts so as to preserve the value of loads carriers transported.⁶⁰⁹ However, the suggestion did not work. Carriers often were exhausted by long marches and hunger. To improve their service, military authorities abolished the long-distance march for the carriers and, instead, a kind of relay system of the march was introduced.⁶¹⁰ In the new system, carriers used 4 to 7 hours to go and return to one station.⁶¹¹ Therefore, they reached different carrier camps within a day while they were less exhausted than before.

The organisation of carriers' camps followed strict military discipline. Carriers were permanently quartered and their health monitored. Hygiene orderlies and medical staff travelled to carrier camps to check on the status of their health and hygiene in the camps to prevent typhoid and dysentery.⁶¹² The system was well organized, but carriers were still affected by cold, contaminated water and infectious diseases due to poor hygiene. In addition, *askaris'* poor attitude towards carriers contributed to the suffering of carriers⁶¹³ as sometimes they were forced to carry very heavy loads and were frequently beaten.

Commanders knew the importance of the carriers who accompanied the troops at the war front and those on the communication lines, but their priority was accorded the soldiers. As the main combatants, soldiers had higher food rations and better health care than carriers. Although soldiers could not move or fight without carriers, carriers were the most neglected members. The difference between the carriers at the war front and those in communication lines was not much in terms of what their work entailed. Both transported the needs of troops in terms of supplies. Both were treated as the beasts of burden who had to face endless march every day.

⁶⁰⁸ von Lettow-Vorbeck, *My Reminiscence*, 50-51.

⁶⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 53.

⁶¹¹ FP 2659/1154, Lt. Lallemand report, 1.

⁶¹² von Lettow-Vorbeck, *My Reminiscence*, 53.

⁶¹³ BNA CO 691/29:169-183, Reports on Attitudes of Germans to the Africans.

The main difference they had was in terms of payment and the dangers they faced. War front carriers had more pay but faced more danger than those in the communication lines.

4.2.5.2 Rugaruga

As mentioned earlier, even with the increase of the number of *askari* to about 11,300 in the *Schutztruppe*, the German commanders used *rugaruga* throughout the war period. In some cases, a fighting company had more *rugaruga* than *askari* and German officers put together. A good example are the troops under a German officer captain called Max Wintgens, who was the Resident of Ruanda Province. He attacked the Belgians' position at Lake Kivu in early 1915. His troops included 11 German officers, 46 *askari* and more than 60 *rugaruga* from the Ruanda Kingdom.⁶¹⁴ In Iringa, several hundred Hehe *rugaruga* were mobilized to fight the British who had been stationed at Karonga in the British Nyasaland territory.⁶¹⁵ Although the British War Office estimated the number of *rugaruga* who fought on the German side to be more than 12,000,⁶¹⁶ the exact number of the *rugaruga* involved in the WWI is not known as their number and involvement were rarely recorded.

Commanders with few *askari* at their disposal relied on African chiefs for support of their war effort. Chiefs' support came always in the form of providing *rugaruga* and carriers. In return, chiefs expected payment in the form of war booty. A good example was an officer who commanded troops along Lake Nyasa, Konrad von Falkenhausen. He had few *askari*, so he depended heavily on *rugaruga* from the local chiefs when fighting the British and the Belgian side of the border. In return, he distributed to his allied chiefs the cattle they seized and possibly allowed *rugaruga* to take women into captivity as part of the booty. In this way, Falkenhausen was assured of chiefs' full support in the form of supply of *rugaruga*, foodstuffs for his troops and information on enemy movements.⁶¹⁷

However, *rugaruga* were not always dependable as they did not have the same aims as that of the commander they supported. Their major aim was to benefit from the war. When they went to fight, they looked for what would benefit them regardless of whether the commander won the war or not. Wintgens attacked the Belgian position at Chahafi with a view to capturing the post, while the *rugaruga* who accompanied him wanted to capture cattle. In the end, Wintgens

⁶¹⁴ von Lettow-Vorbeck, *My Reminiscence*, 91-92; *See also*, Pesek, "The History of an African Profession," 94.

⁶¹⁵ von Lettow-Vorbeck, *My Reminiscence*, 99.

⁶¹⁶ Pesek, "The History of an African Profession," 94.

⁶¹⁷ *Ibid.*

failed to capture the post, whereas *rugaruga* returned home with enough cattle and captives.⁶¹⁸ Most likely there were more women and children than men among those captured by the *rugaruga* because the *rugaruga* preferred women and children as captives. Equally, for *rugaruga* to benefit from the fighting, they had to be alive, so whenever fighting was too tough, they disappeared from the war front. Often, the Germans faced such situations. In 1916 when the Belgians and British crossed the borders for major offensive operations, German resistance collapsed quickly. One of the reasons was *rugarugas'* tendency of disappearing at critical moments. For instance, when facing the Belgian troops who were many in numbers, more than 700 Ruandan *rugaruga* who were hitherto supporting the Germans returned home without putting up a fight because they feared death.⁶¹⁹

4.2.5.3 *Askaris'* Wives

During WWI in German East Africa, the *Schutztruppe askari* had their families close to them. A normal *askari's* family consisted of a wife or wives, a domestic helper (mostly a girl) and children, and possibly other relations of the *askari* or those of his wife/wives. However, this study concentrates mainly on *askaris'* women or 'wives' as they were commonly referred to. In WWI, most of these women stayed with their husbands. Their general attitude towards WWI was the same as it was during other campaigns before the war. They supported their soldier husbands the same way they used to do before this war.

The life of German *askaris'* wives during the offensive operations and before the retreat was almost the same as before WWI. The German officers in charge took care of the well-being of *askari* and their families. Even though the war limited the authorities' ability to support *askaris'* families, they nevertheless did their best. Families had access to good medical treatment whenever necessary. The wives had part of their husbands' salaries for meeting their daily needs as it was before the war when their husbands travelled on duty.⁶²⁰ In a way, German officers pleased these women so as to make their husbands more committed to their cause. The officers knew that those *askari* could not take it lightly whenever their wives complained. The wives would disturb their husbands so much that their efficiency would deteriorate. The happier the wives, the better and loyal were the *askari*.

⁶¹⁸ Pesek, "The History of an African Profession," 94.

⁶¹⁹ Ibid., 95.

⁶²⁰ FP 2659/1154, Lt. Lallemand Report, page 2 of the report; *See also*, Michael Pesek, *Das Ende eines Kolonialreiches: Ostafrika im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Frankfurt, Campus Verlag, 2010), 197.

The soldiers and carriers that assisted soldiers by carrying war supply in communication lines and at the war front were mainly males. During offensive operations, carriers and servants were the only non-combatants at the war front. This meant that the German war camps were different from the war front. *Askaris* went to the front and returned to the camps. To please the *askari* and their wives, during an offensive, officers sometimes allowed *askaris'* wives to accompany their husbands close to the war front.⁶²¹ The *askari* and carriers would go to the battle to fight and the women would be waiting closely for their return. Possibly, they did not just wait for their husbands, but performed their duties as wives by cooking for them. After the fight and when it was dark, the *askari* would go back to the camps accompanied by their wives.

4.2.6 Summary on African Women during the German Offensive Position

In their various villages and towns African women were mobilized to support the war. Women gave various kinds of support but not in terms of combat. For the first time, many women worked in various factories established and in plantations for the purpose of mobilizing economic support within the territory. Before the war, very few African women were employed since most jobs were preserved for African men. Most factories and recruit depots were in towns and other populous areas such as Morogoro, Tabora and Mwanza districts as well as along the northern railway.⁶²² This means that most of the men in these areas were recruited as *askari* or carriers; they left their families behind. Through factories, African women left behind had for the first-time access to employment and money which was important for the well-being of their families. So far, it is not clear which employment criterion that was used to employ African women; whether it was in terms of religion or skills preferred by the missionaries or government was not clear. However, having an access to employment in towns and other populous areas was a great opportunity for African women from all walks of life to earn some money and provide for their families.

Women worked in grinding grain in the central depots. These depots were in remote areas, that is, in rural areas. Before the war, African women in such areas could not get work easily because such opportunity was hard to come by and when it did, mainly the men were considered. However, the outbreak of the war gave women an opportunity in such rural areas to work and get paid for doing part of what they normally did in their homes for free. Because work such as

⁶²¹ FP 2659/1154, Lt. Lallemand Report, page 2 of the report; *See also*, Pesek, *Das Ende eines Kolonialreiches*, 198.

⁶²² von Lettow-Vorbeck, *My Reminiscence*, 72; *See also*, FP 2659/1154, Lt. Lallemand Report, page 1 of the report.

grinding grain was gender specific, it could be done by any African woman. Many central depots were close to plantations which needed women labour as well. Also women had more work opportunities in the production of processed food products such as sausages and roast meat. All this meant that, for the first time, many women were able to work and gain their own income which they used to support their families. This was important to women since they lacked the usual male support as they had before the war.

Access to employment was a welcomed development to all African women involved, but the amount paid for labour was highly likely to be lower than the usual pay for men. Before WWI, women's wages in the few jobs available to them were lower than those of men. African men were regarded as bread winners and tax payers; therefore, their wages were higher than those for African women.⁶²³ This study was not able to find information on how much the Germans paid women in this war period. In any case, the salaries most likely did not equal men's salaries and women were still not paying tax as men did.

Women who were not in formal employment continued doing their usual economic activities while taking advantage of the increased demand for their produce. The demand for butter, eggs, rice and wheat increased.⁶²⁴ Before the war, such products were mainly produced for domestic consumption but owing to the high demand production of the same increased in order to feed the market and obtain the much-needed money. The increase in production on farms or in small home-based industries meant more work for women besides their daily activities. However, it is difficult to assess the impact of selling to Europeans more milk, eggs and the fowls that were kept for domestic use. In any case, some of these activities had a double-edged impact on families. That is, on the one hand, families had access to the much-needed money while on the other hand, families had a shortage of nutritious food after selling such nutritious products in large quantities.

4.3 African Population under Germans Defensive Position

The allied forces began a major offensive operation against German East Africa in March 1916 after the arrival of General Smuts. The British had transferred the war command to a South African commander from February 1916 after realizing that the British commanders were not competent enough to tackle the troops in German East Africa. In East Africa, General Smuts had at his disposal a superior force in terms of numbers and armament compared to the forces

⁶²³ Marjorie Mbilinyi "'City' and 'Countryside' in Colonial Tanganyika," *Economic and Political Weekly* 20, no. 43 (October 1985): WS 91 [WS 88-WS 96].

⁶²⁴ Briggs, "German East Africa," 195.

under German. Among the soldiers under Smuts were Boers from South Africa who were said to be more experienced in bush fighting than Indians.⁶²⁵ However, according to the *Schutztruppe* commander-in-chief, Lettow Vorbeck, they were quite ignorant of the dangers of the tropical climate warfare.⁶²⁶ The Boer soldiers were too careless to take precautions against tropical diseases. Nevertheless, a few weeks after the arrival of Smuts and his troops in the war field, German troops changed their mode of fighting, from an offensive to a defensive one. By the end of the same month (March 1916), the allied forces entered and took position in the north of German East Africa. The Germans who used guerrilla tactics while retreating to the interior of the colony had, by September 1916, lost six-sevenths of the territory and nine-tenths of the population.⁶²⁷ In September 1916, only the far southern part of the colony, that is, Kilwa, Lindi, Rufiji and Mahenge districts, remained under German control. In November 1917, German troops were forced to cross the border into Portuguese territory.

In the period between the time when the Germans defended the colony and crossed the border into Portuguese territory, much was happening to the people in German East Africa. German troops were retreating while fighting and the allied forces were fighting and advancing while occupying the areas they captured at the same time. This chapter is about what happened to Africans, specifically the African women. However, to understand women's roles, the subsequent subsections concentrate on Africans of both genders at the war front and at the home front. The activities and experiences of African men and women at the war front was different from those at the home front. Therefore, in the subsequent subsections Africans activities have been discussed based on the two: the war front and the home front.

4.3.1 Allied Forces Carriers

The forces on both sides needed the same kind of means to survive and succeed. They needed carriers and food besides arms. To start with, there was great need for carriers. Like in any war, military operations depended much on the availability of supplies and transport. In the case of East Africa, as mentioned before, the war depended on African carriers for transporting supplies. The British went to German East Africa with their own carriers. However, their carriers faced a lot of problems while in the colony. The problems were caused mainly by the distance between the British territories and German East Africa. Because of distance, the organization of carrier units became poorer as the communication lines became longer.

⁶²⁵ Godfrey Hodges, Kariakor: The Carrier Corps, ed. Roy Griffin (Nairobi: University Press, 1999), 78.

⁶²⁶ von Lettow-Vorbeck, My Reminiscence, 139.

⁶²⁷ Henderson, "War Economy," 109.

Consequently, deaths occurred owing to attacks by preventable diseases which increased as communication lines lengthened. More deaths resulted from the neglect and cruelty of military personnel.⁶²⁸ As the war raged on, the allied forces had to use many more carriers from German East Africa who faced almost the same problems. However, with time, the British military labour unit improved its organization.

4.3.1.1 Carriers in the British Forces

The carriers attached to the British forces worked under six to nine months' contracts. However, the contracts changed once the carriers entered German East Africa. The British military labour authority did not maintain such contracts because the communication lines were much longer than before crossing the border. During the advance, it became impossible to terminate their contracts.⁶²⁹ Furthermore, their working conditions worsened as the troops advanced. They worked under difficult conditions and walked long distances, mostly with poorer rations of food than before. The worst working conditions existed during the rainy season. The Watkins Report stated:

On short rations, the men were already debilitated and overworked. As final torture the rains broke early and converted large areas into swamps, throwing still more work onto a carrier who in one stretch on the Dodoma - Iringa road had to carry load for nine miles mostly in waist-deep water much of it on raised duck-walks made of undressed poles laid side by side . . . The sufferings and casualties of this period from September 1916 to March 1917 will never be fully known.⁶³⁰

Lack of sufficient food made British carriers weak after a few months. As a result, most of them died as they were forced to work for many months under unfavourable conditions that included starvation.

In many ways, getting enough and proper food was a big problem for carriers. Before the war, most Africans' diet was limited only to what they ate at home as staple food, which differed from one ethnic group to another. The assumption of many in the administration in Nairobi was that all Africans ate the mealie meal and beans.⁶³¹ This wrong assumption caused carriers much suffering since a sudden change of diet affected their metabolism so much that some carriers died of its side effects. One of the major possible side effects of an affected metabolism was dysentery; a disease that killed many carriers.

⁶²⁸ Hodges, Kariakor, 80.

⁶²⁹ BNA CO 533/216, 471 Director of Military Labour to the British East Africa expeditionary Force 1914-1919, Lt-Colonel O. F. Watkins report, page 4 of the report.

⁶³⁰ BNA CO 533/216, 471-472, Watkins report, page 4 to 5 of the report.

⁶³¹ Hodges, Kariakor, 151, 154.

The unvaried mealie rations given to carriers were always substandard since mealie was coarse and contained grit. The bad flour came from mills in East Africa Protectorate (Kenya) where the owners were more concerned about making profit than caring for human lives. The military legitimization for the bad food quality was the claim that Africans supposedly ate bad mealie in their own homes.⁶³² Their defence was illogical as any coarse, dirty or grit meal took longer to be cooked and caused gastric irritation which led to diarrhoea and dysentery. To reduce coarseness in mealie, carriers used sieves to sift the flour, but it was impossible to remove grit using sieves. Consequently, many carriers suffered from dysentery caused by the grit in the flour. The unvaried and poor diet led to poor health, which made carriers susceptible to other diseases. Poor health, combined with cold weather and exhaustion, led to pneumonia which was another killer disease among carriers. For example, the British military labour office recruited 790 stevedores and harbour men from Seychelles to work at the coast of German East Africa. They arrived in December 1916 but had to be repatriated in April 1917 owing to high mortality rates caused by “unsuitable climate”.⁶³³ According to Hodges, among the 790 stevedores from Seychelles, 776 were employed at the port of Kilwa. Within a short period, 222 men died of diseases and a poor diet. As a result, they protested and had to be withdrawn from German East Africa.⁶³⁴ The poor diet affected the labour force. That was the main reason for Seychelles’ labourers’ failure to survive at the port of Kilwa although they were used to the coastal climate. The same occurred among West African carriers whose death rates had, by 1918, reached over 200 per a thousand carriers.⁶³⁵

The standard of food storage was also low. During the rainy season, the British could not keep food dry in many of their stores, which lowered the quality of the stored food. There were times when carriers rationed damp and fermented flour. The problem with mealie was that when fermented, it became coarser and took longer to be cooked. The same happened to most of the beans and mealie which were more than six months old. It was difficult for carriers to cook such food as they did not have enough time to cook. There were times when they had to abandon pots and put out fires because enemies were approaching. According to carriers interviewed by Hodges, it was difficult for them to cook with the enemy about, during the periods of bad weather and inadequate time to find water or firewood.⁶³⁶ In such war environment, cooking

⁶³² Hodges, Kariakor, 154.

⁶³³ BNA CO 533/216, 472, Watkins report, page 5 of the report.

⁶³⁴ Hodges, Kariakor, 159.

⁶³⁵ Killingray, Labour Exploitation, 493

⁶³⁶ Hodges, Kariakor, 156.

properly was difficult even with the best kind of flour and beans available. Therefore, most ate food which was not properly cooked which resulted in their suffering from diarrhoea and dysentery. It was estimated that 50 per cent of those admitted in carrier hospitals had dysentery. Therefore, dysentery was the cause of death for more than one-third of the carriers who died.⁶³⁷

Medical services for carriers were poor from the beginning of WWI as more attention was given to combatants. At the beginning of the war, colonial authority decided that one doctor should serve 1,000 carriers. However, with time, the number of carriers increased while that of doctors decreased because more doctors were transferred to attend combatant units. Consequently, the shortage of medical staff in overcrowded carrier camps led to poor sanitation. It was hard to maintain a sanitized environment because a big number of carriers were sick as a result of poor cooking and feeding. The major sickness, dysentery, worsened the problem of poor hygiene in the camps. In addition, long-settled camps had a problem with clean water as streams were easily polluted since carriers contaminated wide areas. Apart from diarrhoea and dysentery, diseases such as pneumonia and malaria were also rampant.

To maintain the communication lines, the British authorities recruited many carriers from within German East Africa. They recruited men from German East Africa so to work in different fields in support of the war from the end of 1916. Statistics indicate that up to the end of 1916, for example, the British recruited 2000 men as *askari*, 44,031 men as special carriers supporting combatants at the front, 191,719 men as carriers in the communication lines and 125,817 men as casual labourers.⁶³⁸ Due to poor food rations, by 1917 many carriers had deserted British communication lines. As a result, the working load of the remaining carriers increased while food rations remained low and of a poor diet.⁶³⁹ Carriers who worked closer to their villages were lucky as they were fed by their families. Their women brought food from their homes to wherever these men worked. This means women fed their husbands, fathers or brothers at their own cost.⁶⁴⁰ At the same time, women were expected to sell their surplus food to the British through headmen and chiefs who supervised the process.⁶⁴¹ Practically, under the British many Africans in German East Africa had to shoulder the burden of providing food. The food was requisitioned under the supervision of the same chiefs who had contracts to deliver requisitioned food on daily basis. This meant the available men and women had to carry

⁶³⁷ *Ibid.*, 160.

⁶³⁸ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁶³⁹ BNA CO 533/216, Lieut-Colonel Watkins Report, page 14; *See also*, Hodges, Kariakor, 165.

⁶⁴⁰ BNA CO 533/216, Lieut-Colonel Watkins Report, page 13.

⁶⁴¹ *Ibid.*

food supplies from their villages to the allocated depots, however, such carriers had no rations and, therefore, while on the road, they had to fend for themselves. Generally, British activities burdened women even more.

However, even though allied forces' *askari* seemed to be better off than carriers, they too suffered. The main causes of their suffering included insufficient uniforms and poor diet. A good example was the British Nyasaland *askari* who, just like Germans *askari*, had one khaki uniform each. Many had no boots but were expected to campaign for months barefoot and in the same one pair of uniform each.⁶⁴² At the same time, hunger was a constant problem such that many Nyasaland *askari* referred to WWI as the "hungry war." Consequently, owing to hunger, and long marches many became susceptible to diseases which led to high death rates among allied forces *askari*.

4.3.1.2 Carriers of Belgian forces

As part of the allied forces, Belgians had no clear plans on how to handle the problem of carriers for their troops. However, just like others, they needed carriers for their troops to function. To start with, they had only 5,000 Belgian Congo carriers,⁶⁴³ which forced the British to provide them with 5,000 carriers from Uganda.⁶⁴⁴ In total, they had 10,000 carriers. Within the colony, General Tombeur had a force of about 15,000 soldiers comprising mainly of *askari* and few Belgian officers.⁶⁴⁵ Most soldiers (*askari* and officers) expected to go to war accompanied by their families. To strengthen Belgian Congo force, the Belgian government in the metropole sent 700 Belgian officers and other war equipment such as rifles and airplanes.⁶⁴⁶ As a result, Belgian Congo force had almost 16,000 soldiers with only 10,000 carriers to support them. Obviously, the number of carriers was too low to meet the demands of 16,000 soldiers. For such an army to move, carriers had to carry more than they could handle which led to suffering and even high death rates of carriers.

The military authority in Belgian Congo failed to recruit more than 5000 carriers for an offensive in German East Africa because the authority could not force them to cross the border.

⁶⁴² Page, *The Chiwaya War*, 96.

⁶⁴³ Pesek, *Das Ende eines Kolonialreiches*, 172.

⁶⁴⁴ Sir Charles Lucas, ed., "Uganda," in *The Empire at War, IV: Africa* (Oxford: University Press, 1924), 238; *See also*, Hodges, Kariakor, 89.

⁶⁴⁵ David Killingray, *The War in Africa*, in *World War I: A History*, ed. Hew Strachan (Oxford: University Press, 1998), 96: *See also*, Michael Pesek, "The Force Publique in the First World War," (Unpublished paper): 5.

⁶⁴⁶ Pesek, "The Force Publique," 5.

For a start, through force, Belgian military authority recruited about 120,000 Congolese carriers who carried supplies from within the territory to the border with German East Africa.⁶⁴⁷ In Congo, Africans felt that the portage was extremely heavy as, by 1916, it had already shown its impact economically. As a result, there was much unrest among the Africans,⁶⁴⁸ and therefore it was difficult to force carriers across the border. Thus, only 5000 Congolese carriers crossed the border.

After the occupation of Ruanda and Urundi in German East Africa, the Belgian military authorities began recruiting carriers and continued to do so throughout the war. To meet the need for more carriers, the Belgian forces forced men and women in German East Africa to become carriers. They coerced Africans in German East Africa into carrier work since most of them were reluctant and feared the Belgian *askari* based on unfounded rumours that they were cannibals.⁶⁴⁹ Through force, the number of carriers in the Belgian Force increased tremendously. Many did portage for the Belgian force and some of them were never paid. The actual number of the carriers from German East Africa who worked under the Belgians is not known. However, owing to their huge force and very few Congolese carriers, some scholars have estimated that Belgians used more than 150,000 Africans from German East Africa as carriers.⁶⁵⁰

However, the Belgian military authorities did not establish a well-organized supply system that considered the welfare of the few carriers they had. Consequently, the carriers under them suffered the most. One of the reports of a battalion commander explained the physical condition of the carriers from Urundi to be like “real human rags of pitiful, sick and over-exhausted human beings” because they had been marching for three days and covered 60 km carrying heavy loads without proper rest.⁶⁵¹ He insisted that his junior commanders should care for the carriers and ensure that they did not march for days without rest. Nevertheless, the Belgian *askari* continued to force carriers to carry extremely heavy loads.⁶⁵² In addition, Belgians did not organise rations for carriers. They had many mouths to feed, including the families of their *askari*. Therefore, carriers were never a priority. It was up to the unit combatant to find a way of feeding his

⁶⁴⁷ Pesek, “The Force Publique in the First World War,” 5.

⁶⁴⁸ Ibid, 5.

⁶⁴⁹ Byron Farwell, *The Great War in Africa, 1914-1918* (New York: Norton, 1986), 256; See also, Hodges, Kariakor, 188-189.

⁶⁵⁰ Tambila, *A history of Rukwa Region*, 207.

⁶⁵¹ FP 2659/1155, Commander Lagneux Report, VI battalion Operations, 4th to 13th June 1917.

⁶⁵² BNA 691/10, 628, Lt. Lawson Walton memo to Captain Owen.

carriers or the carriers had to fend for themselves.⁶⁵³ As a result of such neglect, many carriers died from hunger and exhaustion.

4.3.2 Women and Other Africans at Home Front during German Defensive

Once on the defensive, German troops slowly retreated to the centre of the colony. That way, they lost much of the ground where they had the means with which to support their troops. The means included running plantations from which they could obtain extras such as coffee or delicacies such as sausages and butter for the European troops. They lost factories from which they could get sugar and clothes. Also they lost depots in which much of the corn was stored. The loss of the ground happened slowly and the troops, especially the main force, moved without cutting themselves off from the lines of communication. However, they faced many challenges; one of them being that troops moved faster, leaving their supply baggage train far behind. At other times, urgently needed supplies from the lines of communication took very long to reach the troops. Thus, they got food from locals but did not always use money to pay for food as when they were on the offensive.

4.3.2.1 Looting, Plundering and Scorched Earth Policy

Germans' patrol units moved around with little supplies; hence, they expected to get more supply from the land through looting. The same was the case with the other companies which tried to connect with the main force while they were disconnected from the lines of communication. In many cases, living off the land meant taking foodstuff that belonged to the locals (civilians) by force. It literally meant looting and plundering the locals' farms and food stores. This was detrimental to the African population because, at the time, most local people were producing for subsistence purposes. Their low production became even lower owing to the reduction of the size of manpower as many men were conscripted as carriers. As a result, the locals did not have plenty of food to spare and, hence, did not want to part with the little they had for their families. To make matters worse, the German troops consisted of European officers, *askari*, carriers and *askaris'* families. Always the number of non-combatants exceeded the number of combatants, and all of them needed to be fed at the expense of the locals. Normally, the combatants were responsible for ensuring that foodstuff were available for both combatants and non-combatants. However, in the war circumstances, all were involved in

⁶⁵³ Hodges, Kariakor, 88.

looting without regard for welfare of the locals.⁶⁵⁴ Their way of pillaging and looting left the farms bare.

To avoid the suffering caused by food shortages, the troops preferred marching through populated areas. The idea was to have access to as much foodstuff as possible. The troops' demand for food was endless because many troops were crossing the same populous areas repeatedly. In the end, people had nothing more to give willingly or unwillingly. Sometimes even fighting occurred in the middle of the farms as both sides preferred marching across villages and towns. A good example was what occurred in the villages of Kondoa in 1916 when the British forces and the German main force were not far from each other and therefore fighting ensued. The local cornfields became the battleground, hence, destroying the harvests which locals depended on for their survival.⁶⁵⁵

One of the worst war tactics used in German East Africa by both sides was "scorched earth." Through this tactic, both burnt villages, depots or enemy stores which had plenty of provisions even after intensive looting had been done.⁶⁵⁶ What they could not carry was always burnt. The idea was that the troops of the enemy should not have access to food and remaining arms. The same happened to farms, depots or food stores along the lines of communication. Troops burnt farms, which left many people without food. Therefore, villagers had to move to other areas in search of food and shelter. Some of those affected, especially young people, had to join the troops as carriers or servants to ensure their security and survival.

The German troops and the allied forces, as one was retreating and the other advancing, burnt most of their own depots that were about to fall into the hands of the enemy. Sometimes the burning policy was very dangerous as the fire persisted for days. A major German depot at Kondoa, for example, was burnt by Germans when leaving Kondoa, the fire went on for days as ammunition continued to explode.⁶⁵⁷ They did the same to all of their stores in small and major depots located between Morogoro and Kisaki. The burning of depots was sometimes risky even on the part of the officers themselves as two German officers died from the same fire they had started.⁶⁵⁸ The same was done to the captured stores whose contents they could

⁶⁵⁴ Hodges, Kariakor, 138-139.

⁶⁵⁵ Captain Chas J. Bagenal, *Personal Diaries: 1915-17*, Unpublished Manuscripts (Weston Library Archives, Oxford University), 64.

⁶⁵⁶ *Ibid.*; *See*, von Lettow-Vorbeck, *My Reminiscence*, 143, 152, 223; *See also*, Tambila, *A history of Rukwa Region*, 205.

⁶⁵⁷ Bagenal, *Personal Diary*, 64.

⁶⁵⁸ von Lettow-Vorbeck, *My reminiscence*, 152.

not take away.⁶⁵⁹ Although this kind of destruction seemed to help the forces to deny their enemy access to foodstuff, it aggravated hunger as the enemy, who was denied access to food, coerced the locals to provide them with food which they could not spare.

The British troops also faced a food shortage since their lines of communication stretched too much and sometimes were far behind. According to British officers, hunger was common among their troops. In most patrols, they carried very little food and, therefore, they had either to live off the land or to requisition food from locals. Since they needed food and the locals were not willing to part with theirs, they used force. Food requisitioned was either paid by cash or a receipt was issued to be paid at a later date (mostly after the war). For those who were paid in cash, the price was determined by the soldiers based on the demand of the item in question. Most of the time the price was very low. For example, 8 gallons of milk a day for the whole month went for 3 Rupees, 8 fowls for 1 Rupee, a duck for 1 Rupee, one gallon of honey for 1 Rupee and a sheep or a goat for 2 Rupees each.⁶⁶⁰ They also looted the farms of the locals and vacated plantations.⁶⁶¹ The price of food did not appeal to many Africans to sell their products and, therefore, most of those around the war camps refused to part with what they had. Thus, there were times when the soldiers had to forage far from the camps.⁶⁶² The British soldiers, like other soldiers marching around the territory at the time, did not consider local people's interests. They forced people to offer the little food they had though they knew that many troops had passed through the same villages with the same kind of demands.

4.3.2.2 Abduction of Women

The *Schutztruppe* culture of war allowed *askari* to go to war with their families and even abduct women and make them part of their households. This culture started before WWI and continued during the war. When retreating, some *askari* and carriers marched, accompanied by their families, while others such as those under Captain Wintgens did not have such opportunity. On the night of 18th to 19th September 1916, they left Tabora in a haste leaving their families behind.⁶⁶³ When *askari* were on their own, they abducted women along the way so as to form new families. Though some of the women who were abducted were very young (practically children), they became *askaris'* wives. Some of those who had been abducted continued being their wives even after the war. For example, in 1919 in the Kondo District, a former German

⁶⁵⁹ von Lettow-Vorbeck, My reminiscence, 193.

⁶⁶⁰ Bagenal, Personal Diary, 75-76.

⁶⁶¹ Ibid., 71-72.

⁶⁶² Ibid.

⁶⁶³FP 2659/1154, Lt. Lallemand report, page 2 of the report.

askari (under Boeckmann) was caught at Mbulu with four very young girls whom he had abducted during the war. He lived with them as his wives.⁶⁶⁴ The girls were taken by force from somewhere within German East Africa, but unfortunately, they did not know or remember where their homes were. According to the *askari* concerned, further women were abducted whenever the abductees in *askaris*' custody escaped. Abducted women escaped, especially when troops were still in the vicinity of their villages. Because of this, the *askari* continued to abduct other women, regardless of the number of women they already had taken.

4.3.2.3 Spies

Winning any war has to do with more than just fighting; therefore, understanding the position of one's enemy is very important.⁶⁶⁵ In this war, just like in any other war, one of the ways to understand the enemy's position was by spying on the enemy. Both sides used different spying techniques at different stages of the war so as to gain knowledge of the enemy's position, movement and strength. Both men and women were involved in this activity. Both sides preferred local spies whom it was hard to detect. Some of the spies volunteered to do the job. Others were incited by their chiefs to show allegiance to the side that could benefit them in one way or another while others worked as spies in order to get some money. Both sides were aware of all these kinds of spies. In 1915, the British in present-day Kenya recruited hundreds of African spies who entered and left German territory undetected.⁶⁶⁶ They were responsible for reporting on the Germans' military operations circulating counterfeit German money so as to sabotage the economy. It was through the activities of the same spies that an Arab spy employed by Germans was discovered in Uganda.⁶⁶⁷ This Arab spy rendered his services during the Germans' offensive by informing the Germans of all the unguarded railway stations along the Ugandan railway line.

Some of the Arabs in the British territories volunteered to be German spies, hoping that they would benefit from it after the war. At the time, the Germans were on the offensive and, therefore, they were on the winning side. Arabs were in favour of the Germans since it was common knowledge that they were doing better under Germany rule. The Germans favoured the Arabs as they considered them to be more civilised than Africans. Therefore, to some of the

⁶⁶⁴ BNA CO 691/29, 113, Kondo Political Officer report, Occupied Territory, German East Africa, 14.05.1919; *See also*, Tambila, A History of Rukwa Region, 205.

⁶⁶⁵ Sun Tzu, Art of War, 60.

⁶⁶⁶ Charles Miller, Battle of the Bundu: The First World War in East Africa (New York: MacMillan Publishing Co, 1974), 98.

⁶⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 99.

Arabs, this was a chance for them to do away with the British. One of the letters caught by the British in Zanzibar before it crossed to German East Africa partly read:

I have to inform you that several [ships] have arrived full of dead and wounded and took two days to land them and they are still dying. Over a thousand have died. Two days ago 200 Indians arrived from Mombasa, they do not look like a fighting man at all, not a single one has appearance of a fighting man, perhaps the Indians and English are not in good terms. Yesterday another 900 wounded and dead have arrived from Mombasa. They are European, Indians and Swahilis . . . The steam launches are constantly keeping watch one at Chukwani and the other at Chuini. All Arabs pray for the speedy landing of the Germans here . . . The English here are senseless donkeys, they know nothing and are all quite confused.⁶⁶⁸

The same happened in Portuguese East Africa where some of the locals supported the Germans against the Portuguese or British troops. Probably, they supported them because several chiefs from the Portuguese territory had migrated to the German territory as they ran away from Portuguese oppression. In addition, some Africans from the Portuguese territory worked on German plantations.⁶⁶⁹ Therefore, to a certain extent, they preferred the Germans over their Portuguese colonisers. German spies and supporters in Portuguese East Africa did not write letters as Arabs did, but instead they sabotaged allied forces' communication system by destroying the British telegraph lines and murdering dispatch runners.⁶⁷⁰ Generally, the Portuguese locals who lived along the border between the German territory and the Portuguese territory rebelled against the Portuguese in support of the Germans whom they regarded as their liberators.⁶⁷¹

The Germans suspected that the missionaries who belonged to the enemy's nationalities were spies. They believed that those missionaries were supporting their countries of origin. The local people who worked or resided near the mission stations were also suspects. This suspicion was not unjustified as, according to General Lettow, Germans captured many correspondence from the White Fathers in Tanganyika, which indicated they involved themselves in propaganda against the German administration.⁶⁷² At the same time, the British imprisoned the German priests immediately after the occupation of German East Africa. The local teachers who belonged to German mission station too had a hard time to prove their innocence of being German spies even after the war. Some were beaten and imprisoned even when there was no

⁶⁶⁸ BNA CO 691/75, Zanzibar Resident Report, 24.11.1914, page 2.

⁶⁶⁹ von Lettow-Vorbeck, *My Reminiscence*, 190.

⁶⁷⁰ BNA CO 691/16, Brigadier G. Hawthorn, *War Diary: Nyasa/Rhodesia Field Force Commander, 1st - 30th September 1918*; *See also*, BNA CO 691/15, Major Gen. E. Northey, Report: Nyasa Rhodesia Frontier Force Commander, 1st - 30th June 1918.

⁶⁷¹ BNA CO 691/15, Northey, Report, March 1918.

⁶⁷² von Lettow Vorbeck, *My Reminiscence*, 14-15.

evidence showing that they were spies.⁶⁷³ Therefore, the Germans as well as the British were worried about all those with connections to the enemy's missions.

The Germans' treatment of African teachers and priests who belonged to the enemy's mission station was not good. They forced them to work as labourers, carriers, clerks or shoemakers. There was no permanency in any of the sections of work; one could be a shoemaker in one month and a carrier or clerk or servant in another month. However, heavy loads and lack of enough food made most of them attempt to escape. Once captured, they were either hanged or flogged. One could receive as many as 50 lashes by *kiboko* and be coerced to work in chain gangs for up to three months.⁶⁷⁴ At the same time, the teachers or priests who remained in carrier camps were beaten and tied together with ropes around their necks, regardless of whether they knew anything about the those who escaped or not.⁶⁷⁵ The U.M.C.A. (University Mission to Central Africa) lost 14 African teachers and two deacons who died because of the mistreatment they had received while working in chain-gangs.⁶⁷⁶ What some German officers did not know was that, like other local people, the mission employees were afraid of the war and could only tolerate the hardships to a certain extent. They had to escape the hardships through desertion in order to go home.

Both sides used African women as spies. The recruitment of such women especially by the Germans was not clear since the information was limited. The little information available is based on the photography of an African woman accused by the British to be a German spy.⁶⁷⁷ The British seemed to be certain that she was a German spy and the photograph was taken before she was hanged. It is not known which evidence was used to prove beyond any reasonable doubt that she was a spy, since the photograph caption did not give such information. However, the photograph showed how women spies used to disguise themselves. The woman dressed herself in the traditional clothing of the people of the area where she was caught. In addition, she looked young, very innocent and strong. With such a look, she could enter and leave camps, and march long distances without any problems. The Germans caught British spies, too. Those caught had the same innocent look as the woman captured by the British. The caught British spies had parts of the permanent fixtures of the Usambara Railway, as a proof to

⁶⁷³ PA A46, Benedictine Mission Peramiho, Chronicle: Lituhi Mission Station, The case of teacher Cassian Gama, 1919.

⁶⁷⁴ BNA CO 691/29, 187-198, Teacher Stafano Sebahari interview dated 9.01.1919.

⁶⁷⁵ BNA CO 691/29, 187-198, Teacher Stafano Sebahari interview dated 9.01.1919.

⁶⁷⁶ M. Louise Pirouet, "East African Christians and World War I," *The Journal of African History* 19, no. 1, World War I and Africa, (1978): 124.

⁶⁷⁷ IWM photographic Unit, Cat. 2012-02-21.

the British that they reached as far as the railway line in German East Africa reached.⁶⁷⁸ To the German officers, it meant that the enemy was making a detailed investigation of the Usambara Railway and the way to reach it.⁶⁷⁹ Later on, it was not difficult for the British to recruit spies from within German East Africa as locals knew the Germans were retreating while the British were advancing.

Being a spy was a risky business since, under martial law on both sides, the spying offence was punishable by death. Any person caught or suspected to be a spy was hanged. The punishment for being indirectly involved in spying was long imprisonment with hard labour.⁶⁸⁰ It was the same for both, the British and the Germans, and it did not matter whether the perpetrator was a man or woman. Many were hanged out of suspicion that they supported the enemy in person or their community supported the enemy. The Germans hanged some locals in Tanga for supporting the British.⁶⁸¹ Also, in March 1915, the Belgians arrested and hanged several residents of Ubwari town that was located in the Belgian Congo bordering the German territory, for being friendly with and showing support to the Germans.⁶⁸² It is highly likely that the residents who were arrested and hanged were men and women. The Portuguese in Portuguese East Africa killed people, captured men, women and children (for forced labour) and burnt the villages that supported the Germans.⁶⁸³ At the same time, the Germans burnt the villages that did not support them.⁶⁸⁴ Some of the actions of both forces against Africans labelled as spies were very extreme. One can conclude that the fear of being spied on and the anger caused by the failure to fend off the enemy by both forces led to much frustration that reached the levels of paranoia. Their anger and frustration always ended in the deaths of the locals. The line between being a spy or not was very thin and it was very easy for Africans to cross it.

The British in Nyasaland (Malawi) recruited African women as couriers and spies. Some of the women were wives of their *askari* while the others were from some of the villages in Nyasaland. Their main known task was to carry messages for the British troops.⁶⁸⁵ However, they also

⁶⁷⁸ von Lettow-Vorbeck, My reminiscence, 108.

⁶⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁸⁰ BNA CO 691/75, Military Court Report, 31.12.1914.

⁶⁸¹ IWM photographic Unit Cat. PC 1338 (HU 92761).

⁶⁸² von Lettow-Vorbeck, My Reminiscence, 99.

⁶⁸³ BNA CO 691/16, Hawthorn, War Diary, 1st - 31st August 1918; *See also*, BNA CO 691/15, Northey, Report, March 1918.

⁶⁸⁴ BNA CO 691/16, Hawthorn, War Diary, 1st - 31st August 1918.

⁶⁸⁵ Abitishindo, Malawian woman interviewed by Melvin Page on 4th April 1973 in Margaret R. Higonnet, ed., *Lines of Fire: Women Writers of World War I* (Harmondsworth: Middlesex, Plume, 1999), 323-324.

spied on behalf of the British.⁶⁸⁶ The British did not have much trouble in getting recruits as women volunteered in order to gain income. According to the women involved as couriers, this work fetched a better salary. All courier women worked under the supervision of a superintendent of native affairs in Nyasaland.⁶⁸⁷ Before starting work, they were indoctrinated and given basic knowledge of camouflage in case the enemy tried to attack them.⁶⁸⁸ Such knowledge was important as it made women couriers believe in the legitimacy of what they were doing and made them feel that the work was for their own good. To make their appearance less suspicious and lighter, the British forbade them to carry any goods, apart from the messages and small cash for buying food while being on the way to their destinations. As couriers, they were overworked. They marched long distances constantly without much rest or leave. They were preferred over men since, as couriers, they were less suspected than men.

The British depended much on the locals' reports on the movements of German troops. In the areas occupied by the British, chiefs were instructed to report any movement of the Germans troops. To avoid detection, German patrols, once in allied forces' occupied areas, had to pretend to be British. This helped to confuse the locals. Because they could not tell the difference in their uniforms easily due to prolonged active service which changed the colour of the uniforms. Secondly, both avoided wearing coat uniforms because of the hot weather. In terms of arms, it was difficult for most locals to tell the difference as some of the Germans soldiers carried British rifles.⁶⁸⁹ The pretence helped German patrols to do reconnaissance with little fear of the locals who could expose their movements to the British. On the other hand, the British were very active, especially in ensuring that Africans in German East Africa felt their presence in the colony and gave them enough support against the Germans. They were able to succeed through propaganda, which started as early as mid-1915 and continued throughout the war.⁶⁹⁰ Therefore, in some areas, the locals were incited against the Germans. In 1918, the same kind of propaganda reached German *askari* and led to some desertion.⁶⁹¹ On one occasion in January 1918, 112 *askari* and 150 carriers deserted the Germans as a result of British propaganda.⁶⁹²

⁶⁸⁶ Report from German Officer Dr. Gothein, British prisoner up to May 1915, in von Lettow-Vorbeck, My Reminiscence, 99.

⁶⁸⁷ Abitishindo, Malawian woman interviewed by Melvin Page on 4th April 1973 in Margaret R. Higonnet, ed., Lines of Fire: Women Writers of World War I (Harmondsworth: Middlesex, Plume, 1999), 323.

⁶⁸⁸ Ibid., 324.

⁶⁸⁹ von Lettow-Vorbeck, My Reminiscence, 137.

⁶⁹⁰ Ibid., 86-87.

⁶⁹¹ BNA CO 691/15, Northey Report, March 1918.

⁶⁹² Ross Anderson, The Forgotten Front: The East African Campaign 1914-1918 (Stroud: Tempus, 2004), 260.

4.3.2.4 Desertion and Punishment

Some German *askari* began to find the fighting too much by the end of August 1916 when the allied forces were in the Morogoro area. This was the time when they started to desert the *Schutztruppe*. As deserters, they were highly undisciplined and uncontrollable, hence, an additional pain to the African population in the territory. On their way home, they created much havoc. They pillaged food and other valuables from big plantations and small farms.⁶⁹³ Some villages were burnt down while food and other valuables were looted and women abducted. As deserters, they used violence to get what they wanted.

The carriers' and *askaris*' desertion was a serious crime in all the forces that were involved in the war. Once caught, a deserter had a hard time and was handled in a very rough manner. Deserter faced punishment, whether he or she was caught by the enemy or by his own side. An *askari* caught by the enemy as a deserter was imprisoned and interrogated, while those caught by their own side were killed.⁶⁹⁴ The carriers caught deserting faced severe punishment, too. For example, a carrier caught deserting the German communication lines faced punishment such as imprisonment for up to six months and was flogged up to 50 lashes. Some of the unlucky deserters were hanged. One carrier, who was caught deserting German communication lines, had the following to say:

I and four others decided to desert but while in the bush, we were caught by ten *askari* who were following us. They tied our necks together with ropes. The *askari* robbed me of my 42 rupees. On reaching the camp, Mr. Schultz decided that I should be flogged 26 lashes on that day, and in the next two days when we arrived in another camp, I was flogged again 26 lashes. He told me that I was a British spy, therefore, he could be friendly with me. I received frequent beatings and humiliation of all sorts from him and he ordered *askari* and carriers to do the same to me. We remained with ropes in our necks all the time.⁶⁹⁵

A missionary teacher, who was caught deserting the Rufiji carrier camp that belonged to Germans explained his ordeal after being caught by German *askari* as follows:

My legs were tied together and my arms were also tied behind my back for fourteen days. After ten days I felt that I was going to die. I gave 20 rupees to Sergeant Swedi. After having given him the 20 rupees he went to ask Lieut. Emigh to loosen my arms and legs. I was taken to court . . . I was given 50 lashes and had to remain behind iron bars for 90 days.⁶⁹⁶

Being a prisoner meant working in chain gangs, which was the hardest way of providing labour. It involved working and sleeping while one was being chained to others. Prisoners remained in

⁶⁹³ von Lettow-Vorbeck, *My Reminiscence*, 152.

⁶⁹⁴ Ross Anderson, *The Forgotten Front: The East African Campaign 1914-1918* (Stroud: Tempus, 2004), 260.

⁶⁹⁵ BNA CO 691/29, 185-186, Interview of Kijazi bin Hiza, a jumbe in Bonde, Pangani District. 3.01.1918.

⁶⁹⁶ BNA CO 691/29, 191-192, Interview of Teacher Stefano Sebahari, 9.01.1919

chains throughout their time of imprisonment.⁶⁹⁷ They had to do everything together, including going to the toilet or taking bath.

4.3.2.5 Africans' Resistance

In German East Africa, the war hardships and maltreatment were intolerable to many Africans. The response towards the cause of the suffering differed according to the circumstances of the people concerned. The reaction to dissatisfaction about non-payment of salaries or forced requisition of food was either passive or violent. In passive reaction Africans just buried their food to conceal it from troops. Additionally, they refused to carry loads to any place. The refusal was done quietly. In Shinyanga, Africans refused to sell their milk to Misungi Hospital, which was in the British occupied territory to make the Belgian troops stop mistreating them.⁶⁹⁸ In another instance, several men promised the Germans that they would carry loads from the Morogoro central depots to the Kisaki depots. However, they did not turn up on the day of moving the provisions. The same happened in Kisaki when provisions needed to be moved to the Behobeho depots. In Kisaki, men simply ran to the bush, and even being offered presents such as cotton cloths, which was highly valued, could not make them comply.⁶⁹⁹

A lone soldier in uniform from the forces involved in WWI, was not totally safe before the angry African population. Africans' reaction to *askari* differed, depending on the circumstances. Some reacted by handing over a caught soldier to the nearest camp. For example, one German soldier was handed over to the British. In this incidence, a lost German patrol leader reached a village where he was greeted in a friendly manner and given eggs. As he bent down to pick them, the villagers fell upon him, bundled him and handed him over to the British patrol nearby.⁷⁰⁰ At the same time, the Belgian *askari* who were very violent towards locals faced much retaliation from Africans. Once angry villagers cornered a lone Belgian *askari*, they would beat him up before handing him over to the British.⁷⁰¹

4.3.3 Women at the Home front in Belgian Occupied Areas

The Belgian *askari* took advantage of their superiority in front of the civilians. They were superior as they had weapons such as guns while the civilians had none. The mistreatment was

⁶⁹⁷ BNA CO 691/29, 169, Interview of Hussein bin Kibwariga, 9. 02. 1919.

⁶⁹⁸ BNA CO 691/10, 589, G.O.C. Lake Shinyanga Priority Message to Captain Nugent, 14.09.1916.

⁶⁹⁹ von Lettow-Vorbeck, My reminiscence, 151-153.

⁷⁰⁰ von Lettow-Vorbeck, My reminiscence, 164.

⁷⁰¹ BNA CO 691/10, 58, General Crewe Letter to Captain Nugent (British Liaison Officer in Belgian Forces), 4.10.1916.

done to all African civilians including the elderly, men, women, children and even chiefs. It ranged from killings, wounding, raping or kidnapping the locals. It also involved much pillaging, looting and stealing. This mistreatment began immediately after their occupation of part of German East Africa and continued long after. However, African women under Belgian occupation suffered the most. Their suffering had more to do with their gender than with anything else. Most of the Belgian officers were young and powerless and therefore could not control their *askari*.

Belgian *askaris'* wives were part of the troops and the military authority recognised their presence among the troops. The Belgian commanders knew that *askari* wives helped to improve their husbands' spirit to fight the enemy.⁷⁰² *Askaris'* families joined the troops even though the troops had shortages of food and other kinds of provisions. The shortages resulted from the Belgian military authority's failure to organise proper lines of communication. In short, they expected their troops to live off the land. Living off the land would have been better if the Belgian forces paid for what their soldiers took. However, the opposite was the case. Consequently, women in German East Africa paid a high price in terms of war suffering caused by Belgian troops.

Though they were accompanied by their wives, the *askari* working for Belgium used the opportunity to get more wives from German East Africa in a very barbaric way, which worsened the suffering of the women in German East Africa. According to one of the Belgian officers, *askari* had between two and four local women (German East African women) as wives. He added that the wives of the German *askari* left in Tabora were the first victims of abduction.⁷⁰³ The girls and women that the *askari* took were mostly in their mid-teens and as old as their early forties. Most of the young victims were either already married or about to get married. The age of women suggests that *askari* targeted women who were strong enough to carry loads for them and also were able to reproduce.

However, it was not only women that the Belgian *askari* wanted or needed; they abducted boys and men too. The only difference was that they took more women than men and boys. *Askari* took men and young boys from their homes by force and killed those who resisted.⁷⁰⁴ The boys

⁷⁰² BNA CO 691/10, 58, General Crewe Letter to Captain Nugent (British Liaison Officer in Belgian Forces), 4.10.1916.

⁷⁰³ BNA CO 691/10, 597, Conversation between Rev. Owen (British Captain) and Belgian Captain at Senefu village, Igalula District, 30.09.1916.

⁷⁰⁴ BNA CO 691/10.

became their personal servants while the men became carriers. These men and young boys filled the gap because the Belgian troops did not have enough carriers. The carriers, even when obtained through proper channels, deserted soon owing to the mistreatment and hunger they encountered. As a result, the *askari* lacked carriers to carry their booty and therefore they abducted the said men.

Women abduction left many families in German East Africa brutalised. In many cases, the husbands and parents of the victims of abduction were beaten or killed. The killings were often done through shooting them or bayoneting their heads.⁷⁰⁵ Also, husbands were severely beaten for objecting to the abduction of their wives, pregnant or not.⁷⁰⁶ Women faced the same when they tried to resist abduction. In some cases, they were shot and killed for demanding that their stolen property be returned.⁷⁰⁷ In these circumstances, civilians were always at the receiving end when they tried to put up some resistance against the *askari*.

Women were not safe from Belgian *askari*, regardless of who and where they were. As long as they were within the reach of the *askari*, they were taken away by force. In addition, it did not matter whether they belonged to chiefs or commoners. *Askari* succeeded to abduct many women because their victims were too terrified to speak out. Once abducted, they would just follow whatever their abductor said. Women's experiences in the abduction were well explained by two of the abducted women who were lucky to be rescued by a Belgian officer who ordered their abductor (*askari*) to release them. One of the two women worked as a cook for a Greek man. Part of her abduction experience reads:

I was going to buy meat when a Belgian *askari* caught me. [On the way,] he pretended to ask for the way to Tabora. The *askari* threatened me with his rifle several times and I was told if I dared to complain against him to anybody, he will shoot me. We stayed together for five days like that before I was rescued. I hate the *askari* and I want him punished for his deeds.⁷⁰⁸

The other woman was a wife, who happened to be alone at her home. She explained her abduction as follows: "Five days before my rescue I was sitting in my house alone when a Belgian *askari* entered the house and forced me to go with him. He threatened to shoot me with his rifle. He was taking me to Tabora when I was rescued."⁷⁰⁹ Both women refused to go back to their villages, fearing another abduction. Instead, they chose to live together in their hut along the British line of communication where they felt safe. Women who belonged to the local

⁷⁰⁵ BNA CO 691/10, 556, Rev. W.E. Owen Report on Belgian Troops Atrocities, 1.11.1916.

⁷⁰⁶ BNA CO 691/10, 574, Lt. Colonel J. S. Wilkinson Report, 1.10.1916.

⁷⁰⁷ BNA CO 691/10, 556, Rev. Owen, Report, 1.11.1916.

⁷⁰⁸ BNA CO 691/10: 567, Interview of Tabu, A Sukuma woman from Makurundi, Nzega, 5.10.16.

⁷⁰⁹ BNA CO 691/10: 567, Interview of Choma, A Sukuma Woman living at Nyanumbi, Ngalia, 5.10.16.

chiefs' families were also victims of abduction. *Askari* took chiefs' women even in the presence of the chiefs. Chiefs complained bitterly about the abduction of their wives and daughters or nieces, and their powerlessness to protect their families and communities.⁷¹⁰ In Shinyanga, two chiefs and four other men who tried to defend their people or women from being abducted were killed.⁷¹¹ The locals, regardless of their status, could not defend themselves against soldiers who had rifles.

In the process of abducting women, *askari* never chose who to abduct. They abducted regardless of whether the woman in question was pregnant or had an infant. For some reason, many *askari* did not want the latter to take the infant. Probably, they feared the infants would disturb their mission, since the abducted women were their personal carriers. If an abducted woman had an infant, the *askari* would kill the infant or give it to an old woman in the village. One of the witnesses to such atrocity confirmed this by giving evidence as a witness on a toddler who was killed and its mother taken as a wife.⁷¹² The infants of those who were fortunate were given to old women in the villages. In one of such cases, an *askari* allowed a woman to leave her child with its grandmother (the mother of the husband).⁷¹³ The separation of an infant from its mother was traumatising to both the mother and the child. However, for a mother to witness the killing of her infant was beyond imagination.

At other times, Belgian *askari* raped or killed those who tried to resist abduction. In September 1916, immediately after entering villages in Igalula District, which is close to Tabora town, some Belgian *askari* raped women. Rape decreased only after the girls had gone into hiding.⁷¹⁴ A woman testified of her rape, which forced her to run naked across the village. Part of her testimony reads:

Yesterday morning, October 3rd [1916], 4 Belgian *askari* came to my village. One of them took one of my clothes, another one had sex with me by force. Afterwards they took my remaining garments together with 8 rupees. I ran naked to Chief Ali and told him what had happened.⁷¹⁵

Rape was common in Belgian occupied areas and caused much confusion among both men and women. It must have left many scars in the families of those affected. Unfortunately, there was

⁷¹⁰ BNA CO 691/10: 574-576, Wilkinson Report, 1.10.1916.

⁷¹¹ BNA CO 691/10: 622, G.O.C. Lake Shinyanga telegram to Captain Nugent, 14.09.1916.

⁷¹² BNA CO 691/10: 556, Rev. Owen Report 1.11.1916.

⁷¹³ BNA CO 691/10: 586, Interview of Mbega bin Msengesi from Senefu (A Husband of abducted woman), 1.10.16.

⁷¹⁴ BNA CO 691/10: 556, Rev. Owen Report 1.11.1916.

⁷¹⁵ BNA CO 691/10: 579, Interview of Nyamizi from Songeza, Ndala, 4.10.1916.

no evidence of the number of broken marriages and the children who were born as a result of the rapes.

The men who were affected by abductions, rape, thievery and other atrocities were greatly frustrated by their inability to protect their property and loved ones. The feelings of powerlessness and hopelessness were of same impact among both men and women. Men did not know what to do to save their families and themselves. The Belgian *askari* seemed to be above the law. The mental stability of those who survived the atrocities was not good and the ordeal left them miserable. To some men, confusion was the same even when a wife was rescued after abduction. In one case, a wife was rescued and handed over to her husband. On their way home, the abductor (*askari*) defied the order and brought back to the camp both the husband and the wife. He even threatened to kill the wife in front of her husband. Luckily they were rescued for the second time. Reverend Owen reported on the man's confusion: "The husband's mental condition was pitiable. At one moment he wanted to run away and in the next he vowed to die by his wife's side. He started to run, was pursued by two [British] *askari*, and myself [Rev. Owen] and when he was caught he whipped a knife from his waistband and attempted to commit suicide . . ."716

The Belgian *askaris'* attitude towards the locals in German East Africa caused people to live in terror. Most people ran for their lives whenever they heard that the Belgian troops were nearby. However, the act of running away was the best option only when troops were far away from a particular village. It was not easy to get away when they were in the village already. Since their entrance into a village was always accompanied by shooting, the resultant noise caused many to paralyse with fear. Those who tried to run away while *askari* were in their village paid a heavy price. Many times, women and children became victims. Probably, it was not easy for women to run away and leave their children behind. Consequently, they got killed.⁷¹⁷ Nevertheless, people continued to run away whenever they had a chance to do so. Villagers deserted their homes and stayed away as long as possible. Many opted to live close to the British posts or closer to the British lines of communication.

The greed of Belgian *askari* enhanced their ability to maintain their families. Their families were increasing constantly as a result of continued abductions. Thus, to acquire enough food for their ever-increasing families, *askari* kept on looting and pillaging foodstuff and other

⁷¹⁶ BNA CO 691/10: 607, Rev. Owen Report, 1.10.1916.

⁷¹⁷ BNA CO 691/10: 555, Rev. Owen Report 1.11.1916.

properties from villages. They were always in search for more property, food, money and women. They stole cattle, goats, chickens, ducks, clothes, blankets, bed sheets, pots and money. When they started looting and pillaging an area, they never stopped until there was nothing more to loot. Furthermore, looting went hand in hand with incidences of raping of women, abduction of boys, and the killing or wounding of men or anybody who dared to challenge them. One woman explains the *askaris*' actions as follows:

News reached this village that some 300 Belgian *askari* were coming in this direction. All the inhabitants at once deserted the area with the exception of myself and two old women. I stayed behind as I had several articles belonging to [Chief] Maganga and I could not carry them all away, therefore, I buried them instead. At about midday the Belgian *askari* arrived and went through all the houses in the village and stole all the food in them. They then found the fresh turned earth where I had buried Maganga's belongings, dug them all up and took them away with them. In one hole I had buried a box, whose contents I did not know. In four other holes I buried clothes and cooking utensils.⁷¹⁸

The above explanation does not differ much from what another woman from another village said about the Belgian *askari* who said: "A white man (Belgian officer) and many *askari* came to my village. *Askari* stole everything they could lay their hands on including abducting five women. The white man saw this . . ." ⁷¹⁹ The looting and pillaging got so bad that nearly all house owners along the Tabora road within 5 miles from Tabora District put their empty tin trunks in front of their houses to show that there was nothing more to take.⁷²⁰ However, the *askari* continued to ransack their houses to make sure that there was nothing more to take.

Too much force was used to force people to give the *askari* whatever they had. It was not always the case that people had what the *askari* demanded, but it was not easy to convince them that there was nothing to give. Depending on the mood of the *askari*, some paid with their lives for having nothing to give them. In one case, the *askari* killed one old man by tying him tightly to a tree. The ropes around his abdomen were so tight that they cut into his flesh, which led to his death.⁷²¹ The reason behind his severe punishment was his inability to give the *askari* Rupees. Even women were shot for failing to give *askari* girls that they did not have.⁷²²

The major challenge that the families of the abducted relatives faced was how to get back the abductees. Once *askari* took the abducted women out of their villages, it was difficult for their families to get them back. The *askari* behaved as if the abducted women were their 'personal property' and, therefore, they protected them. Aware of this difficulty, some of the husbands of

⁷¹⁸ BNA CO 691/10: 583, Interview of Sita of Bujubi, Ndala. 1.10.1916.

⁷¹⁹ BNA CO 691/10: 567, Interview of Chogu, Nyamwezi woman of Magengati, Ndala, 5.10.1916.

⁷²⁰ BNA CO 691/10: 604, Captain L. Handley Memo, 30.09.1916.

⁷²¹ BNA CO 691/10: 556, Rev. Owen Report 1.11.1916.

⁷²² BNA CO 691/10: 556, Rev. Owen Report 1.11.1916.

the abducted women decided to use the courts of law which were established in the British occupied areas in order to get their wives back. In many cases, the court sent a letter to the officers in the Belgian camps so that they could help the husbands get their wives from their *askari*. However, it was not a simple matter, as one of the husbands whose wife had been taken states:

About 4 days ago 2 Belgian *askari* came to our village and took away my wives named Sela and Kasinde . . . Barrister Ishmael gave me a letter to recover my wives. I took this letter to Ulaya camp [Belgian camp]. I looked for my wives and found both of them. I was taking the letter to the Europeans when I was surrounded by *askari* [who] took away the letter from me and tore it up and then I followed captain of K.A.R to Tabora. He took me to a British officer who gave me another letter to take to the Belgian officer in charge of the police at Tabora. The latter gave me a letter to take to Ulaya camp. This letter was also taken from me and destroyed.⁷²³

The Belgian *askari* did not terrorise only local civilians; they terrorised British troops as well. They attacked the British communication lines whenever they got the chance. They interfered with the lines of communication so as to steal provisions and carriers.⁷²⁴ Food depots which belonged to the British force were not safe either, as Belgian *askari* stole all food from some of the depots in Tabora.⁷²⁵ Furthermore, Belgian *askari* attacked British isolated posts and camps. For example, in 1916, Belgian *askari* entered the Indians' barracks that belonged to the British forces and stole their belongings. In another occasion, they attacked and stole properties of Indian soldiers who were retreating from the battle of Malongwe.⁷²⁶ Among the stolen belongings were money, clothes, utensils and blankets. The same happened in the small remote British post of Isikiza in Ndala District, where Belgian *askari* abducted a young servant boy at night.⁷²⁷

The British troops who occupied areas closer to the Belgians, especially the Lake force under Brigadier General Crewe, did not keep quiet on Belgian *askaris'* atrocities. There were times when fights erupted between British soldiers and Belgians' *askari*. In most cases, fights erupted because the British soldiers tried to defend the local population. When terrorizing the locals, the Belgian *askari* took orders from the Belgian officers only with difficulty, and therefore, they never accepted British soldiers' interference. For example, one a village chief described one of the incidences as follows:

⁷²³ BNA CO 691/10: 586-587, Interview of Mbega bin Msengesi, 3.10.1916.

⁷²⁴ BNA CO 691/10: 608, Brigadier General Crewe letter to Captain Gilbert Nugent (British Liaison Officer), 30.09.1916.

⁷²⁵ Ibid.

⁷²⁶ BNA CO 691/10: 564, C.E. Sullivan letter to British Liaison Officer, 2.10.1916.

⁷²⁷ BNA CO 691/10: 564, C.E. Sullivan letter to British Liaison Officer, 2.10.1916.

Two English *askari* came to my village at 10.00 yesterday morning. They were talking to me when a naked woman from a village ran and said that 4 Belgian *askari* were creating a disturbance, seizing men and women . . . I went with the English *askari* and the woman and found 4 Belgian *askari* with a large number of [local] men and women they had captured. One English *askari* said, “Why are you seizing people?” and the Belgian replied, “We don’t want to exchange any words with English *askari*” and put a cartridge in his rifle. The English *askari* then said, “Why should we quarrel? We are not enemies” and the Belgian replied, “We don’t want any more talk” and almost at once fired his rifle while pointing it at the English *askari*. The Belgians then fired several shots and the English *askari* lay down and fired . . . The Belgian *askari* then ran away and were pursued by the English *askari* . . .⁷²⁸

British officers repeatedly complained about the indiscipline among Belgian *askari*, but there were no changes. There were many occasions when even Belgian officers had no power over their men. According to British officers, such lack of discipline resulted from the Belgian officers’ failure to punish or reprimand their *askari* for the wrongs they committed. Even when evidence was presented, Belgian officers rarely acted upon the atrocities of their *askari*. They always said the evidence of their *askaris*’ atrocities was exaggerated,⁷²⁹ especially the evidence concerning women and boys’ abduction or rape cases.

One of many cases that were reported to the Belgian military headquarters in Tabora, was that Belgian *askari* were accused of bayoneting, shooting and beating up women. It happened a few miles from Tabora town, in villages along the main road to Tabora (Sikonge Road). In this event, the *askari* killed and wounded several women, few men and children. Many victims were shot and bayoneted up to six times. As a result, some died while the others were badly wounded.⁷³⁰ The event was reported to the Belgian authorities, but they did not carry out proper investigations even after identifying the camp that the accused *askari* came from. Consequently, there were no arrests and there was never any sort of compensation given to the victims or their relatives. It was this kind of reaction which made Belgian *askari* feel like they were untouchables and that they could do whatever they wanted.

The Belgian *askari* also defied the orders of their commander-in-chief. For example, though General Tombeur had given the order to all Belgian soldiers that under no circumstance they should enter into the British occupied territory, Belgian *askari* continued to enter British occupied territories as they pleased. In one of the telegrams from General Crewe (a British commander in charge of the Lake forces) to the Belgian authorities, Crewe complained about

⁷²⁸ BNA CO 691/10, 579, Interview of Ali husband of Chieftainess Nsabi of Songeza, 4.10.1916.

⁷²⁹ BNA CO 691/10, 569, Captain Nugent letter (British Liaison Officer) to Brigadier Crewe, 5.10.1916.

⁷³⁰ BNA CO 691/10, 555, Rev. Owen Report 1.11.1916.

the Belgian *askari* who entered a village under British occupation to reclaim local women.⁷³¹ The said women were former abductees of Belgian *askari* who, under General Tombeur's order, were returned to the said village. It seems that, although the *askari* adhered to the General's order, they were not pleased. Hence, they went to the village, caused much havoc as a reprisal and took back the women.

The Belgian commanders failed to control their *askaris'* tendency of increasing the number of women in the war camps. The main reason was that whenever commanders objected, the *askari* threatened to mount a mutiny. This was a threat which no officer wanted to experience. For example, when Belgian soldiers entered Mwanza District, they took a large number of women from the areas near a Catholic mission in the Usuwu area. As a result, it was reported that "every soldier collared a woman before leaving the St. Michael area, and marched forward in that state . . . One battalion commander ordered that the women should be sent back and the men declined to march, and to avoid mutiny, they permitted their rabble to continue with this harem . . ."⁷³²

The exact number of women abducted by the Belgian *askari* was not known, but the British reckoned that the women could be in their thousands. The basis for their estimation was the fact that in the neighbourhood of their Lake Zone headquarters, at Ndala District alone, hundreds of women and many boys were taken by force.⁷³³ In addition, in many villages the number of young women was so low that one could see only late middle-aged women.⁷³⁴ The British were worried, since they knew at the demobilisation stage that the Belgian *askari* would go with the abducted women and boys to Belgian Congo. They knew that the removal of such high number of young women from areas concerned could lead to depopulation which would take long time to recover. Also, to transfer such a big number of women to another territory would affect families of the abducted women that remained behind. Additionally, to force such a great number of abducted women to cross border would amount to slavery. For these reasons, they demanded the Belgian military authorities in Tabora to act on the allegations and release the women who had been abducted. Furthermore, the British suggested that the locals affected by the atrocities of *askari* should be compensated for their loss.

⁷³¹ BNA CO 691/10, 590, General Crewe telegram to Captain Nugent (British Liaison officer), 3.10.1916.

⁷³² BNA CO 691/10, 611, Captain Sullivan letter to Brigadier General Crewe, 30.09.1916.

⁷³³ BNA CO 691/10, 589, General Crewe letter to Captain Nugent, 4.10.1916.

⁷³⁴ BNA CO 691/10, 592, Lt. Colonel Wilkinson Report, 2.10.1916

4.3.4 Women at the Home front in British Occupied Areas

The British soldiers were hardly innocent in their relations with the local communities even if the extent of their atrocities did not reach that of the Belgian troops. The K.A.R. *askari* had their own share of vices they directed at the locals. Complaints about the British soldiers included taking forcefully the locals' property such as clothes, money, goats, honey jars and hens. Local people's houses (*tembe*) were destroyed and women raped. The total loss caused by destruction and theft was unknown, but, according to the political office of Mwanza District, in his area alone, the loss was said to amount to 100,000 Rupees.⁷³⁵

Furthermore, available evidence indicates that British *askari* did not abduct women, but they raped them. They raped many women in the villages located near their camps and other villages they passed through.⁷³⁶ Although many British officers were strict with their *askari* and expected them to follow orders, it was not always the case. Women filed many complaints to the British military authorities, but it was not always easy for them to provide the evidence that showed that they had been raped.⁷³⁷ However, some of the complaints were investigated and *askari* found guilty were punished. However, the punishment did not deter the British *askari* from mistreating people. This is because, once they were on their own, they behaved as they pleased.

The complaints about the abduction of women from German East Africa forced the allied forces to form a commission to investigate. The commission consisted of officers from both sides, that is, the British side and the Belgian side. The objective was to collect evidence of the allied force soldiers' atrocities and identify the victims. If possible, the abductees and properties such as cattle and goats were to be returned and affected parties be compensated for whatever happened to them. In addition, all those found guilty of the atrocities deserved punishment. The investigation began at the end of October 1916 when more than 75 per cent of the territory was occupied by the allied forces.⁷³⁸ The end of the investigation was not clear as there was no information on how many *askari*, British or Belgian, were court martialled for their offences against the locals. Likewise, there was no information on how many women or boys were returned to their villages before the first phase of the demobilisation of the Belgian troops which

⁷³⁵ RMCA HA.01.0219.2.5, Desire Thomas, Commission Report, page 5, 7, 9.

⁷³⁶ Ibid., page 10-11.

⁷³⁷ Ibid.

⁷³⁸ BNA CO 691/19, 49, Commander in Chief East African Force Letter to the Secretary War Office, 12.02.1918.

occurred at the beginning of 1917. It is highly likely that many women and boys who had been abducted ended up in Belgian Congo.

However, another commission for investigation was formed in the last quarter of 1917. It combined British and Belgian officers. The investigation was done in the areas located north of the railway where the Belgian and British troops traversed in pursuit of German troops under Captain Naumann. In those areas, many locals complained about troops concerning looting, and rape among others. The aim of this investigation was to identify the affected people so that British and Belgian colonial governments could pay compensation. At the end of the investigation, the payment was done promptly. It was reported that some Africans were awarded compensation amounting to Rupees. 10,460/25 only.⁷³⁹ British colonial government compensated very few people compared to the number of complaints raised and atrocities committed. The Belgian colonial government did not compensate anybody.

4.4 Women Accompanying Troops to the Warfront

Women participated in the army as *askaris*' wives or as part of the *askaris*' families. They were present among the German troops and the allied troops. The reason for that was "the culture of the Africans that demanded women to accompany troops."⁷⁴⁰ An *askari* needed to have his family with him when he was going for war. Therefore, during WWI in Africa, women were part of the Germans, French, Belgians and British troops. Their number was not known since many were not recorded and those recorded, such as the Belgian officers, did not always record the number of all the women in their columns.

In all troops that had women as part of *askaris*' families, the number of women exceeded the number of *askari* since most *askari* had more than one woman or wife as part of their families. The numbers of *askari* involved in WWI in Africa were in thousands. If one calculates the number of *askari* who were in the German and Belgian colonial forces that fought in WWI, the total number could reach to about 33,000. The two colonial forces were chosen because their *askari* had women as companions during WWI campaigns. The 33,000 figure was obtained after adding the German *askari* in Cameroon (8000) and in German East Africa (12,000) to the

⁷³⁹ BNA CO 691/19: 51, Commander in Chief East African Force Letter to the Secretary War Office, 12.02.1918.

⁷⁴⁰ BNA CO 691/29: 113, Boekman reply on the issue of German *Askari* taking women; See also, FP 2664/1214, Tombeur statement on Belgian *Askari* having women while campaigning.

Belgian *Askari* who fought in German East Africa (13,000).⁷⁴¹ Most of the *askari* had from two to four wives. Therefore, in these two colonial forces alone a minimum of 66,000 women were involved as *askaris*' companions during the campaign. Some of the *askari* belonged to the British and the French had women. For example, in West Africa, Gold Coast, the *askari* that belonged to the British colonial forces who eventually occupied Togo had 800 women.⁷⁴² On the basis of these calculations, it could be correct to estimate that the African women who participated in WWI as *askaris*' companions were more than one hundred thousand.

4.4.1 Askari Women in Belgian Troops

There were two phases in the Belgian offensive in German East Africa. The first phase under General Tombeur as a commander-in-chief began in May 1916 when the Belgian forces started their offensive and entered the territory. By September 1916, they had reached and occupied Tabora. It was a big victory for the Belgians. Tombeur had lived in Belgian Congo for some time and, therefore, he understood his *askaris* very well, for instance, that women who amplified their morale to fight and were key to the success of a campaign. Therefore, he allowed women to accompany his troops to German East Africa. Belgian forces occupied an area that extended from Ruanda and Urundi to Tabora up to early 1917. Then troops were demobilised and repatriated to Belgian Congo. From then onwards, only Ruanda, Urundi and some parts of Ufipa and Kigoma were under Belgian administration. Up to the time of demobilisation, women were part of the Belgian troops.

African women in the Belgian troops were referred to as 'wives' of the *askari* even though servants, carriers and Europeans had their 'wives' as well.⁷⁴³ Most of the Belgian soldiers entered German East Africa accompanied by their families. The women had legitimate relationships with the men they accompanied and had a right to rations and other benefits as wives. The Belgians started the offensive in May 1916 with about 15,000 soldiers and 5,000 Congolese men as carriers. In addition, they had 5,000 Ugandan carriers.⁷⁴⁴ At least half of these men had their families with them and all were expected to live off the land.

⁷⁴¹ Charles Lucas, ed., "The Cameroons Campaign" in *The Empire at War, IV: Africa* (Oxford: University Press, 1925), 67; See, von Lettow-Vorbeck, *My Reminiscence*, 72; See also, Pesek, "The Force Publique" (unpublished paper), 5.

⁷⁴² David Killingray, "Gender Issues and African Colonial Armies," in *Guardian of Empire: The Armed Forces of the Colonial Powers C. 1700-1964*, eds. David Killingray and David Omissi (Manchester: University Press, 1999), 228.

⁷⁴³ FP 2664/1213, Lt Colonel Desire Thomas Note, page 7, 10.07.1918.

⁷⁴⁴ Pesek, *Das Ende eines Kolonialreiches*, 172.

The second phase of the Belgian force's offensive began in February 1917. This offensive was a result of the British request for help. They needed help to fight German forces because Captain Wintgens' force had changed its movement. Instead of moving towards south of the colony as expected, Wintgens moved back North. The Belgians agreed to come back. The second phase was under a commander-in-chief called Colonel Huyghe. His phase had about 8000 soldiers and their mission was to stop Wintgens' force from advancing.⁷⁴⁵ Unlike Tombeur, the new commander-in-chief (Colonel Huyghe) was not in favour of women accompanying troops. Therefore, he did not support the presence of women in his troops. He ordered his junior commanders not to allow the presence of women in the Belgian columns. He concluded that the presence of women in the campaign was a burden to the military authorities because they caused his soldiers to be inefficient and undisciplined. Also they were a cause of shortage of food.⁷⁴⁶ Not all commanders agreed with the order. Others could not let women live without rations and fend for themselves. The situation was complicated by the fact that some of the women involved belonged to the same Belgian officers.

Colonel Huyghe was very determined to remove women from all his columns. To ensure there was zero tolerance towards women, he ordered to end women's rations, which were available during his predecessor's command.⁷⁴⁷ To some, it was insane to throw soldiers' families into destitution or death so that troops might have enough food.⁷⁴⁸ After long deliberations, he instructed commanders to gather all the women who belonged to the Belgian troops at one base located in Sikonge,⁷⁴⁹ on the outskirts of Tabora. More of such temporary camps were created for soldiers' families to stay in while their husbands were in operations. Always, such camps were located some miles far from fighting areas.

The women who accompanied troops to war had the same responsibilities as those who stayed at home. The only difference between them was in the circumstances they found themselves in. The war's circumstances, which forced her to move all the time, while the other was in normal circumstances. In the case of the wives in the Belgian troops, just like those in the German troops, their responsibilities mainly involved caring for their husbands and families in general. It included doing all domestic chores such as cooking, cleaning and caring for children. Also, they cared for their husbands and served as their husbands' personal carriers during the march.

⁷⁴⁵ Pesek, Force Publique (Unpublished paper), 8.

⁷⁴⁶ FP 2664/1213, Lt Colonel Desire Thomas Note, page 4, 10.07.1918.

⁷⁴⁷ Pesek, Das Ende eines Kolonialreiches, 200.

⁷⁴⁸ FP 2664/1213, Lt Colonel Desire Thomas Note, page 4, 10.07.1918.

⁷⁴⁹ Ibid., page 3.

They carried their husbands' personal property, food and other family belongings, besides their own. They even carried booty taken from various churches, plantations, traders, local chiefs and local people. Sometimes they carried all such things while pregnant. The presence of wives in the mobile columns made their soldier husbands more comfortable and satisfied. The *askari* depended on women's presence in war camps so much that they practically could not function without them.

For example, the Belgian *askari* in the Malagarassi Camp threatened to abandon the fight because of the absence of their wives in their camp. They had nobody to carry their personal belongings and do their domestic chores.⁷⁵⁰ As far as they were concerned, even during war, they should live in the same way as they lived during peacetime. They should return home to find their wives waiting for them and all domestic chores already done. The absence of women in their war camps always triggered complaints. Their complaints were a result of doing domestic chores such as preparing food and fetching some water and firewood. Insofar as they were concerned such activities and others were supposed to be done by women.⁷⁵¹ Their complaints were so much that they threatened mutiny.

However, the relationship between *askari* and their women somehow was that of give and take basis. Women were to perform their duties while the *askari* supported and provided for their families. The kind of support that women needed during the war depended on the availability of rations. The Belgian lines of communication were not well organised to support combatants and non-combatants; therefore, they constantly had food shortages. The second phase commander, Colonel Huyghe, instead of dealing with the problem of the supply system, he dealt more with the presence of women in his troops.⁷⁵² Therefore, to fulfil their obligations to their families, *askari* looted and plundered local communities.

Women who accompanied the Belgian German troops had the same behaviour. In both forces, women preferred to be close to the fighting troops even when combatants were in operation. In active war, husbands would be fighting at the front, while women were a few miles in the rear, doing their daily chores. Once an area was occupied, women participated in looting and plundering towns or villages or farms. Once plundering began, it did not stop until there was

⁷⁵⁰ FP 2664/1213, Lt. Colonel Desire Thomas: Women with Mobile Columns, Mobile Column I/VIII Commander, Special Report, 17.5.1917.

⁷⁵¹ FP 2664/1213, Lt. Colonel Desire Thomas: Women with Mobile Columns, Mobile Column I/VIII Commander, Special Report, 17.5.1917.

⁷⁵² FP 2664/1213, Lt. Colonel Desire Thomas: Women with Mobile Columns, Colonel Huyghe Instruction on soldiers' women, 10.05.1917.

nothing more to plunder or loot.⁷⁵³ By looting and plundering, they got enough food and other kinds of property, which could enhance their cash flow. However, plunder and loot worked well only when their side succeeded, and it was a disaster when their troops failed to defeat the enemy.

The presence of women among the troops was a problem to commanders. Troops mainly moved by marching. Women, children and their baggage were at the rear of the troops' marching line. In such circumstances, the main problems with the presence of women among the mobile troops were related to food supplies, mobility, security and health.⁷⁵⁴ In all cases, the number of non-combatants exceeded that of the combatants. To provide for all was a problem, especially when the supply system was not working. In addition, women and children slowed down the mobility of troops. A march which ordinarily should have taken combatants only two or three days could take up to a week when women were involved. This made the troops inefficient. In addition, it was difficult to ensure their safety when the troops were fighting as the rear could be attacked and families could be at the centre of the battle.⁷⁵⁵ In such cases, some family members died. Furthermore, it was difficult to maintain the health of the troops because of the presence of non-combatants who also needed medical attention in the group.

In view of the above problems, an order was given to the Belgian troops which required that women and their families be separated from the soldiers.⁷⁵⁶ The idea was that they should camp in an area far from active war. They were supposed to be registered and watched, and most of their needs were supposed to be met. Their husbands went home to them when fighting ceased. The *askari* and their women in all Belgian mobile units refused to comply with the order. Whenever unit commanders gave the order, women rejected the thought to leave their husbands while the husbands refused to be separated from their families.

In one of such instances, the Belgian soldiers of VI Battalion entered German East Africa with their families and resided in one of the Belgian camps in Kigoma. Their commander was ordered to send all women to the Guta camp, which was a few miles from Kigoma before the troops left for Tabora. The commander instructed the women to separate themselves from their

⁷⁵³ BNA CO691/15, Bukoba District Political Officer Note dated July 1918.

⁷⁵⁴ FP 2664/1213, Lt. Colonel Desire Thomas: Women with Mobile Columns, Colonel Huyghe Instruction on soldiers' women, 10.05.1917

⁷⁵⁵ FP 2664/1213, Lt. Colonel Desire Thomas: Women with Mobile Columns, Colonel Huyghe. Note on women in the columns during the 1917 Campaign, 15.03.1918.

⁷⁵⁶ FP 2664/1213, Lt. Colonel Desire Thomas: Women with Mobile Columns, Colonel Huyghe. Instruction on soldiers' women, 10.05.1917

soldier husbands, as ordered. The women refused to do so even after the commandant threatened to kill them. To emphasise their position, all the women sat on the ground and refused to get up. At the same time, they furiously shouted insults to all the officers leading the battalion.⁷⁵⁷ The women from Belgian Congo complained bitterly that they had travelled with their husbands from Congo, only to be abandoned among the hostile population. In support of their wives, the *askari* refused to let their wives go to Guta camp.⁷⁵⁸ With their husbands' support, women rebuffed orders, in spite of the threats from the commandant. In the end, the battalion's commandant failed to force the women to join the Guta camp. In many cases, when women defied the commanders' orders to leave their husbands, the commanders failed to enforce the order.⁷⁵⁹

Belgian *askaris*' reaction gave their officers a hard time to execute the order. *Askari* kept on insisting on having women. They claimed that they were not comfortable fighting without their wives' company. They threatened to throw their guns at the feet of their unit commanders.⁷⁶⁰ In other words, they were ready to revolt against the order. *Askaris*' threats were a problem to most Belgian officers as they could not force the *askari* to fight without meeting their demand. The officers expressed their concern on the issue to their top commander, Col. Hugye who, in turn, continued to insist on women removal from the troops in active war. He stated that soldiers' families would be safe, if they were away from active war and mobile columns. However, the *askari* resisted the order. In one case, for example, commander Weilar, who commanded VIII Battalion, on arriving at Usoke, was ordered to send all women to the Katundu camp while the soldiers searched for Germans. His *askari* became furious and decided to demonstrate. Consequently, commander Weilar allowed the women to re-join their husbands.⁷⁶¹ This case was not unique as the same happened in various camps that belonged to different battalions which were under different commanding officers. In many cases, commanders ended up allowing women to join their husbands so that peace could reign, with or without permission from their senior officers.

⁷⁵⁷ RMCA HA.01.0219.2, page 44 and 219, Desire Thomas Papers: Operation Naumann, Battalion VI Commander Letters, 11.07.1917 and 12.07.1917.

⁷⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁵⁹ RMCA HA.01.0219.2, Desire Thomas Papers: Operation Naumann, Battalion III Commander Letter, 11.07.1917; *See also*, PF 2664/1213, Lt. Colonel Desire Thomas: Women with Mobile Columns May to June 1917.

⁷⁶⁰ FP 2664/1213, Lt. Colonel Desire Thomas: Women with Mobile Columns, A letter from Captain Weiler: Mobile Column Commander for 1/VIII, 5.5.1917.

⁷⁶¹ FP 2664/1213, Lt Colonel Desire Thomas Note, Page 6, 10.07.1918.

Colonel Huyghe regarded his commanders' failure to enforce the order of zero tolerance to women as a violation of his offensive manoeuvres. A violation of such an order could not be forgiven. As a sign of zero tolerance to any weakling, some officers were punished for defying their superiors. One of those who were punished was Captain Gouttiere, an officer in Hubert's columns that were pursuing the Germans in Mahenge.⁷⁶² He was supposed to have left women in Dodoma, but he had them in his mobile columns up to Ifakara, which was more than 300 miles away from Dodoma and a few miles to Mahenge, where the German force was expected to be active. He was court martialled for allowing women to go as far as Ifakara.⁷⁶³ However, Huyghe did not seem to be aware of the fact that many of his officers were not much used to *askari* and their ways and were newcomers from Belgium, which made them fear their rank-and-file soldiers. Therefore, it was not easy for them to enforce the order. In many cases, they ended up being drunkards or having their own women or wives in their mobile columns.

4.4.2 Askari Women in German Forces

During the war, most of the German *askari* women stayed with their husbands. Few did not, mainly because of the circumstances of their husbands' departure. A good example were the women in Tabora whose husbands were under Captain Wintgens. They had to leave them behind as they withdrew from Tabora while moving to the south of the colony. As war raged on, these *askari* took in other women as they retreated while moving towards the northwest and the northeast of German East Africa.⁷⁶⁴ Some of the permanent carriers too had 'wives'. The officers never rebuked this behaviour even when an *askari* had more than one wife already. The women marched from the rear of the troop as a luggage train. The soldiers were always at the front with war front carriers and then followed by the servants, road labourers, and wood and food carriers together with women and children.⁷⁶⁵ Women were like the unpaid carriers who carried the *askaris'* personal belongings and food for families.

The fight between the Germans and the allied forces created fear among the population that was in the crossfire. Normally, villagers ran away as soon as they heard firepower. They left behind their harvests on the farms and stores. In these cases, troops just walked into farms and harvested all the crops which included millet and other grains. The German's main force under

⁷⁶² FP 2664/1213, Lt Colonel Desire Thomas: Women with Mobile Columns, Captain Gouttiere, 19.01.1918.

⁷⁶³ FP 2664/1213, Lt Colonel Desire Thomas: Women with Mobile Columns, Colonel Huyghe, 05.02.1918.

⁷⁶⁴ Tambila, A History of Rukwa Region, 205.

⁷⁶⁵ Hodges, "African Manpower Statistics," 107.

Lettow found such farms in Kondoa where the locals had run away in fear.⁷⁶⁶ The millet which they harvested had to be grounded into flour using stones or wooden mortar (locally known as *kinu*). The work of grinding or stamping millet to make flour was done by women. Therefore, in times like this, women or ‘wives’ made flour for the troops. They performed such activities as part of their unpaid responsibilities. Obviously, such unpaid activities done by women were beneficial to the force.

German troops traversed the territory passing through areas with different kinds of environment and climate. Often they found themselves in areas with sparse settlements and with nothing much to offer in terms of food. Owing to the nature of war, they sometimes settled temporarily in such areas without enough food supply. In October 1916, while in the Rufiji area, the German main force found themselves in that situation with little food. The supplies available could support them only for six weeks and with no prospects of getting more anytime soon. At the same time, they needed to settle in the area for some time since the rainy season was near. It was very hard for them to march during the rainy season due to floods and mud. To address the food shortages, the German main force under Lettow took drastic measures including engaging in farming. The force grew maize in the fertile land of Logeloge and Mpanganya.⁷⁶⁷ They got good harvests.⁷⁶⁸ Women and children participated fully in this activity as some of the *askari* and their frontline carriers had other combatant duties to perform.⁷⁶⁹ In this case, women’s free labour in farming helped to end food shortage and, therefore, increased food rations for the whole force.

Owing to food shortage, general Lettow gave an order to remove every man who was not very crucial to the operation. Thus, thousands of carriers and labourers in the communication lines, including depots, had to go home.⁷⁷⁰ Each European officer was allowed to have only five attendants, instead of more than thirteen whom they normally had. Accordingly, the force was reduced in number, but the food shortage did not decrease as the supplies could not go around. Therefore, in January 1917, two months before the farmed maize could be harvested, the cereal rations went down to six hundred grams a day.⁷⁷¹ For *askari*, the little amount of food meant starvation, since they had families that needed to eat too.

⁷⁶⁶ von Lettow-Vorbeck, My Reminiscence, 138-139.

⁷⁶⁷ Ibid., 160.

⁷⁶⁸ Ibid., 175.

⁷⁶⁹ Ibid.; See also, FP 2659/1154, Lt. Lallemand Report, page 5 of the report.

⁷⁷⁰ BNA CO 690/29: 196, African Teachers and priests turned Carriers allowed to go home too.

⁷⁷¹ von Lettow-Vorbeck, My Reminiscence, 176.

To reduce the burden of feeding many mouths, Lettow decided to let go of *askaris*' women. Before they marched out of the camp, women were given enough food to last several days. However, after three days' march, they refused to march any further. Instead, they demanded to be taken back to their husbands. Some even attacked and beat the Europeans in charge of their march.⁷⁷² The reactions of the women forced Lettow to withdraw his order and allow them to return and join their *askari* husbands. From then onwards, food shortages were dealt with through other means such as hunting and harvesting unripen maize. The removal of women from the camps was put on hold. The unripen maize was dried until the end of March, which was the time to harvest maize.

The resourcefulness of the Germans and their troops made life in the camps almost like in the stations. The only difference was in terms of shortages of supplies. Soldiers obtained most of their needs such as necessary kits and equipment from the stores they captured. They repaired the soles and heels of boots from pieces of captured horse saddles. Wild honey replaced sugar, since it was available in large quantities. They obtained fat from hippopotamus and elephants.⁷⁷³ Looted salt covered most of the troops' needs, but when salt was completely lacking, troops used local people's technology of making salt. The locals in different districts in the south of the colony used plants to make salt. Therefore, troops collected and burnt salt yielding plants and also obtained salt from ashes through lixiviation.⁷⁷⁴ A shortage of quinine and bandages never occurred because the Deputy Staff Medical Officer called Teute sent a large consignment of the Peruvian bark, which produced better quinine, to the south of the territory at the beginning of the war. The soldiers nicknamed the quinine *Lettow-Schnaps*.⁷⁷⁵ Bandages were obtained from the stock of disinfected linen and other kinds of cloth, which had begun to wear out. More bandages were obtained from the bark of the *Myombo* tree. This technology was taken from the local communities who had been making clothes and sacks out of the same bark for many years.

It was not easy for combatants and non-combatants or Africans and Europeans to have a balanced diet. To compensate for lack of proper diet and improve their meals, officers kept hens to get eggs and chicken meat. They marched with these roosters whenever it was necessary for them to do so.⁷⁷⁶ According to a Belgian prisoner, many of the German soldiers and *askari* had

⁷⁷² von Lettow-Vorbeck, *My Reminiscence*, 177-178.

⁷⁷³ *Ibid.*, 160, 162.

⁷⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 194.

⁷⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 195.

⁷⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 194.

five to six good egg-laying hens.⁷⁷⁷ Von Lettow found the act of carrying around of chickens to be problematic as they made much noise that betrayed the position of their troops to the neighbouring villages.⁷⁷⁸ Since not all local people were friendly to the German troops, it increased the possibility of the locals informing the British about their whereabouts. The order that 'forbade' cocks to crow before 9 a.m. did not help as troops continued to have chickens that could not be told not to crow before 9 a.m. This shows how frustrated the commanders were. They understood not only the difficult position the members of their troops were in, in terms of food, but also the dangers of carrying along additional baggage such as chickens.

By November 1917, however, German main force faced a lot of shortages. They had food shortage, and also, quinine and ammunition supply had dwindled. Due to these shortages, it was decided that the force should move further south and enter into the Portuguese territory. In order to make the move easier, more people had to remain behind. This time some of the European soldiers and administrators, as well as some of the *askari* and their families and carriers remained at Nambindinga and more in Newala. The idea was to reduce the number of the mouths to feed. Some of those who were left behind were not happy but had to follow the order. Others such as prisoners celebrated the move.⁷⁷⁹ The final official troops with whom Lettow intended to enter Portuguese East Africa included 268 Europeans, 1,700 *askari* and 3,900 carriers and 370 servant boys.⁷⁸⁰ In addition, more non-combatant Africans joined the *Schutztruppe* in the understanding that they would find their own food. The non-combatants included 700 *askari* boys and several *askaris'* women.⁷⁸¹

The march to the Portuguese territory was very slow. Most of the non-combatants who accompanied the German troops were not yet used to the long marches without or with very little rest. Among those who were not used to long marches were carriers and *askaris'* women. For most of the women, it was their first time to face a long march accompanied by their children. According to Anderson, there were about 600 *askaris'* wives and their children.⁷⁸² As a result, the march was slowed down and marching lines were very long. *Askaris'* women marched singly and several hundred yards apart from each other.⁷⁸³ Most likely, the women

⁷⁷⁷ FP 2659/1154, Lt. Lallemand Report, p. 7.

⁷⁷⁸ von Lettow-Vorbeck, *My Reminiscence*, 194.

⁷⁷⁹ BNA CO 691/29, 187-198, Teacher Stafano Sebahari interview dated 9.01.1919.

⁷⁸⁰ von Lettow-Vorbeck, *My Reminiscence*, 224; *See also*, Ross Anderson, *The Forgotten Front: The East African Campaign 1914-1918* (Stroud: Tempus, 2004), 260.

⁷⁸¹ Anderson, *The Forgotten Front*, 260.

⁷⁸² *Ibid.*

⁷⁸³ *Ibid.*, 225.

marched slowly because they had to carry heavy loads on their heads and children on their backs because many carriers remained in German East Africa.

The presence of *askaris*' families close to the frontline reduced the reliability of young *askari* in combatant duties. Many of the *askari* for Portuguese territory were strong and young, but they did not have the long experience like the older *askari* who were well seasoned in terms of the ways of war as they had been in the force longer than the young *askari*. Unfortunately, officers did not select many of the older *askari*. They regarded them as 'unsuitable' and were replaced by the stronger ones who seemed to be 'suitable'. But according to Lettow Vorbeck, the young *askari* were not suitable because they cared more about their families than they did their duties.⁷⁸⁴ He came to that conclusion because many *askari* went into battle with their children on their shoulders, something the older *askari* never did. For this reason, families became a burden to the troops. However, Lettow and other German officers had to continue tolerating *askaris*' families as there was no other options.

On 25th November 1917, the German force crossed the Ruvuma River and entered Portuguese East Africa (Mozambique). The *askari* and some of the carriers entered the new territory accompanied by their wives/women. At that time, the force had a severe shortage of provisions such as food, medicine and armaments. They expected to live off the land by confiscating arms and food from the enemy and getting more food from the locals. The first action against the Portuguese camp with more than 1000 soldiers occurred within two days of crossing the Ruvuma River. The German force attacked the Portuguese post while the final troops were still crossing the Ruvuma River. General Vorbeck explained the behaviour of the *askari*, carriers and other members of the troops as follows:

Again and again our *askari* troops, in search of booty, threw themselves ruthlessly upon the enemy, who was still firing; in addition, a crowd of bearers and boys, grasping the situation, had quickly run up and were taking their choice of the pots of lard and other supplies, opening cases of jam and throwing them away again when they thought they had found something more attractive in other cases. It was a fearful melee. Even the Portuguese *askari* already taken prisoners, joined in the plunder of their own stores.⁷⁸⁵

As a commander, he tried to stop the loot and plunder, but it took him a long time to succeed and maintain order and discipline among his troops. This was the beginning of looting and plundering for survival in Portuguese East Africa. On this occasion the force did not get supplies for Africans, however, it got enough medical stores, European supplies, many arms and horses.

⁷⁸⁴ von Lettow-Vorbeck, My Reminiscence 225.

⁷⁸⁵ Ibid.,231.

From then onwards, the long marches of six hours a day and 30-minute rest every two hours had begun. The objective was to look for more supplies for Africans in the force.

At the beginning in Portuguese East Africa, marching continued to be harder for the women, however with time, they learnt to keep up with the pace of *askari*. They were able to march about 25 km a day, in a 30 km long caravan.⁷⁸⁶ In 1918, single-line march was changed to three to six lines, about twenty yards apart moving through the bush so as to reach the resting camp together and less tired.⁷⁸⁷ Most of the carriers and *askaris'* women marched through the bush barefoot. They had babies on their backs and carried family belongings and those of their husbands on their heads. Women were always at the end of the baggage train. They were protected and kept in order by the trustworthy older non-commissioned officer who was assisted by a few *askari*. The women were always showing off after a good loot by dressing up in what they had looted. Since they liked gay colours, the whole convoy looked like a carnival procession.⁷⁸⁸

In Portuguese East Africa, the tendency of taking on new wives continued. Some women were married with the consent of their parents while others without their consent. The wives joined the troops and stayed with their *askari* husbands throughout the time of the war.⁷⁸⁹ The children born on the way went along and grew up with others.⁷⁹⁰ Whenever troops stayed in a resting camp for some days, carriers threshed corn and women ground it to make flour. Each African had to carry personal food.⁷⁹¹ Due to war circumstances, many times, they had to march for more than two weeks without a full day's rest. During a short rest or at the camp after a day's march, women cooked for their families. Once in the camp, all were busy doing their respective activities. *Askaris* set up the camp and built their own grass huts in which they could live with their families. Thereafter, they rested. Women pounded corn and fetched firewood and water. They attended to the needs of their children and did all other domestic chores. At night women were sexual companions. Therefore, women had hardly any time to rest, hence, they worked almost all the time.

⁷⁸⁶ von Lettow-Vorbeck, *My Reminiscence*, 233; *See also*, Dr. M. A. Teute, "A German Account of the Medical Side of the War in East Africa, 1914/1918," *Tanganyika Notes and Records* 8, (1939), 6.

⁷⁸⁷ Teute, "A German Account of the Medical Side," 6.

⁷⁸⁸ von Lettow-Vorbeck, *My Reminiscence*, 234.

⁷⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 299.

⁷⁹⁰ Teute, "A German Account of the Medical Side," 6.

⁷⁹¹ *Ibid.*

The shortage of food was always a problem. Because of constant moving while living off the land, the force often found itself in unfertile and unpopulated land. Once again, the use of local knowledge (from *askari*, carriers and women) protected the force from hunger. Different kinds of wild fruits, vegetables and nuts were gathered from the bush by women and carriers.⁷⁹² The leaves of manioc from local manioc farms served as additional, useful green vegetable.⁷⁹³ Meat was gotten from the hunting parties and, occasionally, fish from nearby rivers. Once in populated areas, the *askari* looted the locals' food.⁷⁹⁴

4.5 Surrender of German Force

The German main force surrendered after the armistice had been concluded in Europe. The news reached General Lettow-vorbeck and his officers on 13th November 1918. At the time, the German force was in the Kasama area in Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) getting ready to fight the British forces. The news of armistice reached the German officers by accident after they captured a motor cyclist who was taking the news to the British troops in Northern Rhodesia.⁷⁹⁵ Thereafter, it was understood that the force had to surrender to the British at Abercorn in Northern Rhodesia. The German force surrendered on 25th November 1918. At the time of surrender, the German force had only 155 European officers, 1168 *askari* and 3248 followers.⁷⁹⁶ According to the British report, there were 1522 carriers in the force.⁷⁹⁷ Among the mentioned statistics, women were part of the 1726 remaining followers. To be exact, there were 427 *askaris'* wives, 428 labourers, 282 officers' boys (servants) and 392 *askari* boys.⁷⁹⁸ In a nutshell, 155 Germans and 4416 Africans remained in the force until the end of the war.

On the day of surrender, the German force was in a very poor condition in terms of clothing. Between the Africans and Europeans, the Africans were more ragged than Europeans. However, the women were the most pitiful. Part of a statement by an eyewitness, published in the *Bulawayo Chronicles*, reads:

Europeans and *askari*, all veterans of a hundred fights, the latter clothed with every kind of headgear, women who had stuck to their husbands through all these years of hardships,

⁷⁹² Teute, "A German Account of the Medical Side," 5.

⁷⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹⁴ von Lettow-Vorbeck, *My Reminiscence*, 242.

⁷⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 315.

⁷⁹⁶ von Lettow-Vorbeck, *My Reminiscence*, 318; *See also*, BNA W.O. 32/5829, Brigadier General Edwards Report on Surrender of German force, 25.11.1918.

⁷⁹⁷ BNA W.O. 32/5829, Brigadier General Edwards Report on Surrender of German force, 25.11.1918.

⁷⁹⁸ Ludwig Boell, *Die Operationen in Ostafrika: Weltkrieg 1914-18* (Hamburg: Dachert, 1952), 424.

carrying huge loads, some with children born during campaign, carriers coming in singing in undisguised joy at the thought that their labours were ended at last.⁷⁹⁹

After the surrender, German officers were transported to Morogoro before they could go back to Germany. *Askari* and carriers were interned as they waited for their fate to be pronounced. Some of the *askaris*' women who surrendered with their husbands came from Portuguese East Africa while the others were from German East Africa. However, the fate of those women is unknown. It is not known what happened to them after the surrender because this study could not find any records regarding the women after the surrender. The following questions remain unanswered: What happened to the *askaris*' women after the imprisonment of their husbands? Where did they go? How did they return to where they had come from?

4.6 Conclusion

During WWI, African women in German East Africa participated in the war from its onset. They did not participate in it as combatants; instead, they supported the war through their labour. Their support was in two different positions: the home front (in villages and towns) and the war front (*askari* women). In both cases, the forms of their support was determined by Africans' traditions and customs related to a gendered division of labour since the majority of those who were involved were Africans. It should be noted that in any war, human beings are the decisive factor on how to fight the war.⁸⁰⁰ Therefore, since the largest population involved in WWI in the German East Africa were Africans, the African customs dominated especially in relation to gender and division of labour among Africans. Logically, different African communities' social forms, cultural norms, attitudes and traditions influenced the decisions of the German authorities regarding Africans' participation in WWI.

African men and women participated in the war according to the conditions of the war, one's status in the colonial system and one's gender. The activities performed also varied. Men's activities were more visible than those of women. In addition, most of the activities done by men such as combat were part of masculine activities that historically and traditionally were regarded as men's responsibilities. Military historians put more value in combat by men than the supportive roles performed by women. As a result, women's participation in WWI as war supporters has not been accorded serious enough consideration in studies despite the major supportive role women played in the war.

⁷⁹⁹ Miller, *Battle for the Bundu*, 325-326.

⁸⁰⁰ Waldaman, *War*, 58.

During the Germans' offensive, women were mobilised. Their participation in the offensive was mainly by providing labour. Those close to the focal centres such as towns, depots and mission stations worked in those same focal areas. On the other hand, those in the villages participated in agricultural activities with the support of the men available in order to increase food production. Some women also worked in newly established factories, especially in cloth-making factories where they worked as cotton weavers. Additionally, they worked in depots, where they ground grain such as corn and millet in order to make flour. In the villages, also, they worked as temporary carriers, carrying requisitioned food from their homes to chiefs' homes and/or from the chiefs' homes to the food collection points. As the main food producers, they produced food that fed the whole population throughout the war.

During the German defensive and the British offensive, many homes in the villages and towns lacked men because they had joined the war as carriers or *askari*. Carrying heavy loads and fighting in combat were men's activities because such activities required much physical strength. The cultural norms pertaining to the division of labour in Africa dictate that activities that require much physical strength were done by men while those that do not by the women. Therefore, women's work, even in war circumstances, tied them to their homes and families. The situation was different on the part of men. Their work tied them to the outside world, that is, outside their homes. Women's work included caring for the elderly and the young or children. Women also made sure that food was available for the family by playing a major role in food production. As a result, the presence of women at the home front, even in the absence of men, ensured the continuity of the family. In this way, women's activities complimented the activities done by men. Thus, the survival of societies depended on the cooperation of men and women. This was the case before, during and after the war.

Some women joined the troops as *askaris'* women in the defence of the colony. They joined the troops, since it was the pre-WWI culture that allowed women, as part of *askaris'* families, to accompany the troops to the war front. Women were important in many ways, but most importantly they improved the morale of the *askaris* involved in direct combat. This supports the hypothesis mentioned at the beginning of the chapter that during WWI the presence of African women in the colonial troops in German East Africa boosted African soldiers' (*askari*) morale to fight. *Askaris'* major demand was to have their women accompany them to the war front so that they could be comfortable while fighting the enemy. Once they were comfortable, their spirit to fight was enhanced, and so was their morale. In the absence of women, complaints and dissatisfaction arose and, therefore, *askaris'* morale decreased.

The participation of women at the war front did not differ much from women's participation at the home front. In the war camps, women performed almost the same duties as the women in the villages. The difference lay in the long marches done by women at the war front. WWI military strategies involved long marches. Therefore, women at the war front had to march all the time during active operations, be it advance or retreat, while carrying loads of food and personal property. In addition, there was a difference in terms of the war hardships between women at the war front and those at the home front. Women at the war front faced dangers such as attacks from enemy or animals, hunger, exhaustion and disease. However, the two groups performed the same daily activities that involved domestic chores and taking care of their families. In their long stay in war camps, on top of domestic chores, women participated in food production just like women at the home front. However, at night, those at the war front gave men the ultimate and the greatest support: they provided sexual comfort that reduced men's tension and relaxed their minds. Sexual comfort impacted positively on *askari* psychological status and reduced their fears and other forms of negative anxieties. Therefore, at the war front women participated in production and reproduction. Out of sexual relationships children were born. Their participation in production and reproduction was as important as African men's participation in the war, since a large number of *askari* from both sides would not fight without women's support.

As male figures, the *askari* performed certain duties for their women. The war did not change their responsibilities to their families. *Askari* continued to play the role of being heads of their families and breadwinners. They had to provide for their families. Besides receiving food rations, *askari* hunted, looted and plundered to get food for their families. Also, they protected their families by making sure that they were safe behind the war lines. Also, they made sure that officers did not substitute their women with troop's carriers. As a result, women were involved in carrying food and other luggage only for their husbands. This symbiotic relationship between men and women strengthened their dependence on each other.

War circumstances were always hard and risky, but women refused to leave their *askari* husbands. The *askari* did not also want their women to leave either. Whenever women were told to go back home, *askari* threatened to stage mutinies. In the absence of women, *askari* seemed to be unsettled; hence, acts of desertion increased. Therefore, the German commanders allowed *askari* to have their women with them during the war. They understood that the presence of women in the camps would boost the morale of their *askari* and their loyalty. As a result, even without getting their pay, *askari* fought for the Germans with high spirits and

enhanced morale until armistice forced the whole force to surrender. This proved that the presence of women in the *Schutztruppe* helped the Germans to fight in the war successfully.

However, allowing *askari* to have women or their wives with them during campaigns had its disadvantages on women. The *askari* on both sides abducted women constantly and forced them to become their wives. They expected to get sexual favours from women with or without their consent. Hence, this situation resulted in making the women at the home front to be victims of rape. Women were raped by both those who could keep women in their columns and those who could not. Whether a woman was abducted or raped, the impact on her, her family and her community was huge.

Askaris' acts of abducting women during WWI was as an act of violence against women. In the colonial period before WWI, in most of the conquest campaigns, the women who belonged to the "enemy" were captured by the colonial armies. The captured women were used either as hostages to induce the surrender of the warriors who were resisting colonial rule or as a payment to *rugarugas* or as a reward to *askaris*. The nature and logic of WWI campaigns differed from pre-WWI wars in Africa. That is, the war was fought between European powers for European aims and therefore the warring sides involved were not fighting Africans but were fighting each other. In that context and from an African perspective, during WWI, African women were not considered as the "enemy" that needed to be defeated. Therefore, *askari* were not supposed to victimize women the way they did.

Furthermore, *askaris'* acts of abducting women was a result of their greed for more women; hence, the abducted women were treated more like slaves than wives. *Askaris* abducted women even when they had more than two wives. For example, Belgian *askari* abducted up to five wives/women. They needed such a high number of abducted women as their wives because, out of greed, they had large quantities of pillaged property and kept on pillaging and plundering for more. The colonial military authority did not provide carriers to carry such looted property. Therefore, *askari* chose to abduct enough women in order to carry their looted property.

During WWI in Africa, military authorities took advantage of African women and exploited them. The authorities used women to solve both logistical and financial problems. At the home front *askari* abducted and raped African women without facing any punitive consequences for their actions. The war commanders were fully aware that the abducted women were incorporated into their colonial troops but turned a blind eye to that oppressive act.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 Images of African Military Life before, during and after WWI

5.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the evaluation of pictorial records of Africans, with emphasis being on the images of women, specifically the *askaris*' women in German East Africa and some of the WWI allied forces. The images were produced before, during and after WWI. The chapter seeks to examine the images of African women that capture them while performing various activities. The aim is to reveal the roles they performed and the importance of those roles to those *askari* who were directly involved in combat during the war. The images of African women allow to explore, what they did and experienced before, during and after WWI. This concern has been examined in the previous chapters and next chapter mainly based on written documents. This chapter examines the images to corroborate and expand the written record. As a researcher, I am aware that historical images carry specific types of information, which is not present or not clear in written historical records. Thus, images depicting women's activities enable one to have greater insights into the discourse on the role of women in WWI; hence, enhancing our knowledge on the complex human relations in terms of gender roles and power during the war.

The pictorial images selected for this chapter are mainly of African women and men, and few Europeans. The images were picked based on the main activities they depict, as well as gender, places and dates. The activities depicted on the images were an important criterion for selecting the images because this study is about African women's role and position at both, the war and home fronts. Place is an important criterion because this study is about WWI in German East Africa. Therefore, the areas of interest are either those which were under German rule or under the allied forces who fought in German East Africa. Moreover, date was important, since the images, especially of women, show their roles before, during or few years after the WWI. Others that depict African men and European officers are also presented because their actions or roles during WWI affected African women in one way or another.

The images presented in this chapter were extracted from various sources, including archives (at physical and digital locations) and published works. The physical archives visited were the British National Archives (BNA) in London and the Photographic Archival Department of Imperial War Museum (IWM) in London. The digital libraries were IMPA (International Mission Photography, ca. 1860-ca. 1960),⁸⁰¹ In IMPA website, images from different mission

⁸⁰¹ IMPA: digital library under University of Southern California (USC) library.

archives were obtained. The said archives were Basel mission, Centre for World Christianity, National library of Scotland and Morovian archives. Also, German Historical Museum website known as LeMO (*Lebendiges Museum Online*),⁸⁰² Frankfurt am Main University's colonial archives website DKG (*Deutschen Kolonialgesellschaft*),⁸⁰³ and RMCA (the Royal Museum of Central Africa)⁸⁰⁴ were visited. The paintings were taken from the Website of a private collector who specialises on imagery for German colonial contexts,⁸⁰⁵ created especially for the paintings of Walter Rehfeldt, titled *BildervomKriege in Deutsch-Ostafrika*. The paintings are based on his experiences as a member of *Schutztruppe* during WWI in German East Africa. He was captured by the British in the summer of 1917. It is not clear whether he drew the sketches before his captivity or not, but he painted them while being a war prisoner in Egypt. I have included these paintings because they portray a vivid reflection of what the written records of WWI in German East Africa have documented. Since he was one of the participants in WWI, I believe his paintings provide the closest picture of what was experienced during the war.

The images were all produced by Europeans during the colonial period. At the time, photography technology, especially in African colonies, had many technical restrictions. The restrictions were related to the photographic equipment used at the time. Photographs needed a very long time in exposure and many times portraits had to be orchestrated for them to have satisfactory appearance. The size of photographic equipment was huge and the camera was placed on tripods which had a box with a black cloth cover under which a photographer had to crawl.⁸⁰⁶ To many Africans, the whole process of being photographed was a fearful episode. Many times, they vanished into the bush before the photograph was taken. Also, due to technical restrictions, most of the photographs taken in Africa before the WWI involved frozen pose,⁸⁰⁷ therefore, in this period, this chapter has very few photographs of human activities that involved movement. However, there were significant changes in photographic technology in Africa and

⁸⁰² LeMO is an online exhibition on German history curated by the Stiftung Haus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Deutsches Historisches Museum and Das Bundesarchiv.

⁸⁰³ DKG: *Bildarchiv der Deutschen Kolonialgesellschaft, Universitätsbibliothek Frankfurt am Main.*

⁸⁰⁴ RMCA have online collection namely Human Sciences Online Collection Database

⁸⁰⁵ Arne Schöfert: *Walter Rehfeldts Bilder vom Kriege in Deutsch-Ostafrika* (first published 1920), www.reichskolonialamt.de/inhalt/rehfeldt/rehfeldt.htm.

⁸⁰⁶ Christraud M. Geary, "Photographs as Materials for African History Some Methodological Considerations," *History in Africa* 13, (1986), 93 [89-116]; *See also*, T. Jack Thompson, *Images of Africa: Missionary photography in the nineteenth century, An Introduction* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, 2004), 16 [89-119].

⁸⁰⁷ Geary, "Photographs as Materials for African History," 94-95.

German East Africa in particular, during the WWI period and thereafter as there were many photographs of human activities that involved movement.

As mentioned before, visual images in this chapter were created by Europeans for the Europeans, therefore, genres chosen were according to the interest of Europeans audience. Genres in colonial photographs and paintings differed according to the photographer's aims. Sometimes, their aims overlapped, but common genres were missionary, colonial, anthropological and or ethnographic.⁸⁰⁸ According to Geary, "photographs are social artefacts influenced by the norms and conventions of the time in which they were created."⁸⁰⁹ That is why one can easily notice that historical pictorial images in the colonial time were taken or drawn for different purposes which ranged from curiosity towards the culture of the people encountered to the propaganda fit for the mother countries in Europe. Many used different themes of images as the primary means or additional focal point in the reports written for propaganda purposes.⁸¹⁰ They aimed at rallying positive public opinion and for obtaining financial support.⁸¹¹ The visual images were the best in convincing people since it was easier for the European public to see whatever the photographer intended them to see. For example, some missionaries believed in the propaganda value contrasting African photographic images of "pagans" with good Christians attending church supposedly demonstrating the transformations which occurred among Africans as a result of their "modernising mission." This could inspire the believers in their home countries and therefore gain financial support.⁸¹² Also, in keeping with colonial propaganda to justify colonialism, representation of the "inferior races" in the pictorial images was purposely dehumanising so as to fit the colonial ideology for the same aim of gaining more support from the metropole.⁸¹³ Not only representation but also interpretation of pictorial images was according to colonial ideology.⁸¹⁴ At the time, such biased

⁸⁰⁸ David Maxwell, "Photography and the Religious Encounter: Ambiguity and Aesthetics in Missionary Representations of the Luba of South East Belgian Congo," *Cambridge Studies in Society and History* 53, no. 1, (2011): 45 [38-74]

⁸⁰⁹ Geary, "Photographs as Materials for African History, 95.

⁸¹⁰ David Maxwell, "Photography and the Religious Encounter: Ambiguity and Aesthetics in Missionary Representations of the Luba of South East Belgian Congo," *Cambridge Studies in Society and History* 53, no. 1, (2011): 45 [38-74]; See also, Geary, "Photographs as Materials for African History," 94

⁸¹¹ Maxwell, "Photography and the Religious Encounter," 45-46; See also, Geary, "Photographs as Materials for African History, 101

⁸¹² Maxwell, "Photography and the Religious Encounter," 42.

⁸¹³ Rachel Ama Asaa Engmann, "Under Imperial Eyes, Black Bodies, Buttocks, and Breasts: British Colonial Photography and Asante 'Fetish Girls,'" *African Arts* 45, no. 2 (2012): 46 [46-57]

⁸¹⁴ Kokou Azamede, "How to use Colonial Photography in Sub-Saharan Africa for Educational and Academic Purposes: The Case of Togo," in *Global Photographies: Memory – History – Archives*, eds. Sissy Helff and

representation and interpretation worked on their favour as expected. Therefore, due to these different desires, some of the photographic images were arranged to meet European standard of interpretation or depicted activities which were no longer in existence, at the time when a photograph was taken.⁸¹⁵ In other words, the possibility for photographs to be manipulated was very high in all stages of their making, from the time they were taken to the printing stage and the archival stage.⁸¹⁶ In addition, most photographs and other visual images in archives lack sufficient or have no descriptions that indicate the cultural realities they illustrate.⁸¹⁷ However, despite all these challenges, the fact remains that these manipulations and lack of descriptions in today's archives do not erase or change all the (unintended) information from the photographs. This means that still there is much information which allows these visual images to speak more than was expected. Consequently, the reality of the activities depicted can be interpreted more critically especially when associated with written records and the oral tradition of the people concerned. Kokou Azamide was correct when he argued that the images should be “interpreted according to the culture and social context in which they were taken.”⁸¹⁸

Most of the visual images selected for this study were taken by colonial officials and a few by ethnographers or travellers. The images portray different aspects of colonial experiences in peacetime and during WWI in German East Africa or in the territories governed by the allied forces. As mentioned earlier, more emphasis is put on the activities of *askaris*' women in order to show their role at the war and home fronts. Women involvement in the colonial armies was very important since it influenced the *askaris*' morale and, therefore, their discipline depended on it. In order for any army to function well, morale and discipline are always very important. Furthermore, *askaris*' women maintained the physical and mental wellbeing of the *askari* which, in turn, increased and retained their morale to fight.

As pointed out, some of the women that accompanied the *askari* did not become *askari*'s wives at their own free will. The *askari* kept on abducting and raping women. Some of the women deserted them but others continued to be part of the troops. Unfortunately, it was not possible

Stefanie Michels (Transcript Verlag, 2018), 57 [57-68]; *See also*, Engmann, “Under Imperial Eyes, Black Bodies, Buttocks, and Breasts,” 54.

⁸¹⁵ Geary, “Photographs as Materials for African History, 95; *See also*, Maxwell, “Photography and the Religious Encounter, 52-53.

⁸¹⁶ Thompson, *Images of Africa*, 16-20; *See also*, Geary, “Photographs as Materials for African History,” 93.

⁸¹⁷ Azamede, “How to use Colonial Photography in Sub-Saharan Africa,” 57, 60

⁸¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 57, 61

to get photographs or visual images which show African women as they were being raped or abducted. Instead, there is only a photograph of abducted girls that was taken after the war.

Images of other Africans such as those of women at the home front, carriers at the front and German *askari* are presented as part of the Africans who were involved in WWI. The women at the “home front” in German East Africa contributed to the war effort in different ways, including working as food processors in various depots. As support of the combatants, carriers are included in this chapter, since their participation in the war in large numbers affected the survival of women and their families at the home front. The impact of their participation in the war was huge because of the different diseases affected them and led to many deaths. They left many widows behind. The visual images of officers, *askari*, *rugaruga* and servants of the combatants are also examined since the activities of these groups make the history of this war more complete.

5.2 *Askaris’ Women before WWI*

The *askaris’* wives/women were present in most of the colonial armies in Africa. They stayed with their husbands in both peacetime and war time. The following are pictorial images of women in both times. They show their activities and their lives in general. This sub-section presents women who belonged to different colonial armies. The images do not cover all the colonial armies that included women, but can be taken as a fair representation of the African women who were part of the armies.

Askari women in the East Africa Schutztruppe



Plate 1. German East Africa *askari* and their wives. [Stefanie Michels, *Schwarze deutsche Kolonialsoldaten* (Bielefeld: Transcript-Verlag, 2009), 201.]

The above photograph shows German *askari* and their wives. It is highly likely that this photograph was taken by a colonial official because all the *askari* are dressed in their uniforms and are standing behind their wives. The number of *askari* exceeds that of the wives; probably, one of the *askari* was unmarried. Except for one wife, all the wives are smart and fully dressed in a mixture of European and African clothing. One woman (third from left) is holding a child. The photograph is in frozen style, which was very common until a few years before WWI. The arrangement of the people in the photograph is in Victorian style and therefore fits the colonial ideology, in the sense that the men standing behind the women reflects the power that men have over the women.

Furthermore, the neat appearance of the women implies civilisation. In any case, the photograph perhaps represents the hard work the colonial authorities had in creating a new class of African elites out of the “natives.” It is a new class of strong men who are ready to defend colonial interests. The half-clothed woman might represent the “primitiveness” of Africans which the colonial authorities had to work hard on. This is because, at the time, the colonial interpretation of the African ways of life held only one word: primitive. The child most likely represents an *askari* as family men.

However, the same photograph represents the reality of the time. According to the written records discussed in the previous chapter, when *askari* joined the *Schutztruppe*, they were accompanied by their families. As a result, women became part of this colonial army. They did not participate in combat but were involved in other activities in support of their husbands. In that sense, the women and the child in the photograph are proof of existence of *askaris*' families in the colonial army.



Plate 2. German East Africa: *Askaris*' wives. (Photographer: Julius Herman Schott, German East Africa, 1910-12). Source: *Bildarchiv der Deutschen Kolonialgesellschaft, Universitätsbibliothek Frankfurt am Main*, (DKG). 11408040.

The photograph above portrays *askari* wives in a camp. It is highly likely that the photo was taken by an official photographer. The photography style is not 'frozen pose' since the women appear relaxed and are looking in different directions. Some of them are looking at the camera, while others are looking downwards or sideways. On the roof of one of the tents, is the Germany's flag. All women have a younger look and are well covered, dressed in African clothes. The presence of the tents means that the women were part of an expedition.

***Askaris*' Women in the Belgian Congo Force Publique**

The military authorities of the Belgian Congo army and the *Force Publique*, recognised the families of their *askari*. They encouraged the bachelors to get married because they had realised that married *askari* were more disciplined than those who were not. The families had access to welfare benefits. Women's benefits differed according to the ranks of their husbands. The higher the rank of one's husband, the better the benefits.



Plate 3. A Belgian *askari* and his family. (Photographer: Phillipe Tits, at Bandundu, Mai-Ndombe, 1913-14). Source: RMCA photographic Unit, AP.0.0.14145.

In this picture, the family is standing in front of a traditional house, most likely their own house. They are in a frozen pose and arranged in the Victorian style. The standing *askari* is dressed in a uniform, holding a trumpet. The wife is seated and surrounded by children who are most likely hers. According to Victorian interpretation, a husband has power over his family. The wife is submissive to her husband and she takes care of his children.

The three children and their mother are well dressed, a sign of status and good living. The mother (wife) is dressed in European clothes while the children are dressed in a mixture of European and African clothes. However, this photograph also shows the life of Belgian *askari* in terms of their accommodation. Although they are portrayed as part of African elites of the day, their life, including their houses, were not that different from those of the other non-elite Africans. Often, the *askaris'* accommodation was built using local materials, mostly because colonial authority intended to cut expenses of running the colonial army.

Askaris' Women in the West African Schutztruppe

The first Cameroon *Schutztruppe askari* were ransomed slaves. The first women to be part of this colonial army were also ransomed. The military authorities expected those women rather to perform more domestic duties than participate in combat. At the time, ransoming slaves was an easy way of finding recruits in West Africa. Most were ransomed from Dahomey, others in further West African kingdoms.



Plate 4. Cameroon *Schutztruppe* (Photographer unknown, Cameroon, Duala, ca 1895-1901).
Source: Basel Mission Archives, E-30.02.028.

In the above photo, German *askari*, officers and women are in front of a building. The *askari* and the officers are dressed in uniform while others are dressed in African and European clothes. The arrangement in the photograph is confirming colonial ideology. The white officer is standing on top of the stairs, while the Africans are standing on the ground or sitting on the stairs. This suggests that the white officer was above all the Africans. According to colonial ideology, the white officer was superior and therefore a master of the rest in the photograph. One *askari* is sitting very close to the white officer. It is possible that he was a high-ranking *askari*. The woman, second from right, is standing between the *askari*. It is possible that the status of the woman was the same or closer to that of the *askari*. That is, she might have been one of the ransomed slaves whose responsibilities were closer or equalled to those of the *askari*. Some of the ransomed female slaves had responsibilities such as being the supervisors of the other female ransomed slaves, a responsibility which was almost the same as that of the *askari*. The other women and children in the photo are standing as a group on the left-hand side.



Plate 5. German *askari* in Cameroon with his wife and boy servant (photographer unknown, Buea, 1891-1905). Source: Basel Mission Archives. BMA E-30.02.030.

In the above photo, the *askari*'s wife is dressed in European clothing and is sitting, while the uniformed, barefoot *askari* is standing at attention close to a bayoneted rifle. Beside the *askari* is an *askari* boy. The three are in a frozen pose, looking straight into the camera. The arrangement of the people in the photograph is Victorian and meets the colonial ideology in which the focal point of interest is the *askari*, who is standing in the middle. Photographs such as this could indicate two ideas: one is cultural concepts of family and the power relations in terms of gender and two, an illustration of "racial types," that is, the type of "natives", popular in the field of physical anthropology at the time. As discussed in the previous photographs, when men are standing while women are sitting, it indicates the power of men over women. In addition, the sitting position of the wife and the standing position of the *askari* and his boy servant (*askariboy*) could mean that as far as the colonial state was concerned, the *askari* and his servant were considered to be more important than the wife and that *askari*'s boy was part of the *askari*'s family. The *askari* is standing close to the bayoneted rifle and his height equalled to the height of the bayoneted rifle. In this case, probably the idea behind this arrangement was to show the "types of male-natives" that were selected to become *askari*. That is, they were tall and athletic.

According to written records, *askaris*' boys lived in the *askaris*' household and received salaries paid by the colonial state. The activities of *askari* boys in the household equalled the activities of any servant. However, in the campaigns, they were very important to the *askari* and the colonial military organisation since they were the personal assistants of the *askari*. At the same

time, in the household women had power over the *askariboys* who resided in their homes. *Askaris'* wives regarded the boys as servants, therefore, they had to help them in doing domestic chores. In addition, the power of *askari* over their wives was not absolute since the *askaris'* women/wives had control over their kitchens. Control over kitchen means control over food eaten in the household.

5.2.1 European Officers and African Women

In the early days of colonialism, many European men went to Africa as single men. In most African colonies, European women were hard to find. As a result, many European men ended up living with African women as their wives. Both European administrators and military officers had African women as wives or concubines. According to Walter, up to the early 20th century, the colonial authorities in Africa encouraged sexual relationships of mixed race as a way of exerting masculine authority over Africans, their own households and colonial territory in general.⁸¹⁹ Some of the colonial officers had more than two African women as wives. For example, in Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) and British East Africa Protectorate (Kenya), some British officers had up to three “wives.”⁸²⁰ This habit was also very common among the French, Belgians and Portuguese officers who continued with such relationships even after WWI. In fact, up to the 1900s mixed-race sexual relationships were acceptable because they encouraged European men to stay in the colonies. Also, African women were cheaper to sustain than European women. In addition, the authorities preferred such relationships over prostitution.⁸²¹ Hence, in the period many Europeans had such relationships with African women. The attitude of the colonial authorities towards African women changed from 1905 for German Southwest Africa⁸²² and 1906 in German East Africa.⁸²³ This was the time when marriages or concubinage between Europeans and Africans were banned. The same happened in the British territories after the introduction of the ‘Crewe circular’ of 1909, which condemned concubinage. It referred to it as an “injurious and dangerous evil.”⁸²⁴

⁸¹⁹ Daniel J. Walter, “Gender Construction and Settler Colonialism in German Southwest Africa, 1894-1914, *Historian* 66, no. 1, (2004): 9 [1-18].

⁸²⁰ Ronald Hyam, *Understanding the British Empire*, (Cambridge: University Press, 2010), 382, 420-421.

⁸²¹ Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press, 2007).

⁸²² Walter, “Gender Construction and Settler Colonialism, 9.

⁸²³ Phillipa Söldenwagner, *Spaces of Negotiation: European Settlement and Settlers in German East Africa 1900-1914* (Munich: Martin Meidenbauer, 2006), 188.

⁸²⁴ Hyam, *Understanding the British Empire*, 419.

In Belgian Congo, some of the officers of the *Force Publique* also married African women. The officers' wives sometimes accompanied their husbands to campaigns, just as the *askaris*' wives did. However, because of the scarcity of records on this issue, it is hard to identify their exact responsibilities as officers' wives or the kinds of relationship they had with other African women such as the *askaris*' wives. In any case, these women attained a higher status than African women married to *askari*. In addition, they enjoyed more benefits as officers' wives than the *askaris*' wives.

According to Thomas' reports,⁸²⁵ the presence of some of the officers' wives in the Belgian troops that fought WWI contributed to the reluctance of some of the officers to stop women from following troops to active war. Thomas thought that they defied General Huyghe's order so that they could be closer to their own wives/women. However, this was not totally true since there were several times when Belgian *askari* threatened mutiny if their women were removed from the columns.



Plate 7. Belgian officer commander Leopold Louis Joubert (1842-1927), his wife Agnes Atakao and their three children. (Photographer: Francois Leopold Michel, Katanga, 1899). Source: RMCA photographic Unit, AP.0.0.1387.

In the above photograph, the European officer and his family are in informal type of dressing. The officer and the children are dressed in European clothing while his wife is dressed in African clothing. They are in a frozen pose. But the portrait is different from other family portraits of *askari* and their families. In the photograph, the European father, the African wife and the children are arranged differently. The husband and the wife are standing close to each other, which could mean a sign of affection or equality between the husband and his wife. The

⁸²⁵ PF 2664/1213, Lt. Col. Desire Thomas Confidential Note to Col Huyghe, note titled: women in the mobile columns during 1917 campaign, dated 10 July 1918, Ujiji, page 7.

father is holding the hand of his child, which indicates affection. Written record states that in their life together, the couple had a total of ten children. Behind them are palm trees, which could mean that the family was in their own palm tree farm. Economically, palm trees were one of the important cash crops in Belgian Congo. However, although the male figure was a Belgian commander, in the photograph he is portrayed as a civilian with a farm, which could mean that he was also a settler who engaged in farming in Belgian Congo.

5.2.2 African Woman in a Polygamous Household

Polygyny

The tendency of having more than one wife was common in the patrilineal societies of pre-colonial and colonial Africa. In some parts of Africa, polygyny is still common even today. Until recently, many rural Africans considered polygamy to be an economically beneficial practice. To men, polygamy was beneficial because women engaged in production and reproduction. For example, among agricultural societies, women provided more labour in subsistence crop production than men. That is, having more wives meant more food production. At the same time, more children would be produced and therefore, they increased family labour and ensured physical security.⁸²⁶ Thus, polygamy improved a man's economic status. It also increased wealth and kinship relations, especially after receiving the bride price when one married off his many daughters. In addition, for men, marrying more than one wife suggested that one had adequate wealth and was of high status because a poor man could not afford to pay the bride price for more than one wife.⁸²⁷

Furthermore, in the pre-colonial period, women were a target for capture in war campaigns. Many of the women captured ended up as slaves. They were in high demand and fetched better prices because of their role in production and reproduction. Young female slaves were a huge benefit with respect to the provision of free agricultural labour. In addition, the children born of a slave belonged to the slave master. This means that the master gained additional labour force through reproduction.

⁸²⁶ Ian M. Timaeus and Angela Reynar, "Polygynists and their Wives in Sub-Saharan Africa: An analysis of Five Demographic and Health Surveys," *Population Studies* 52, no. 2, (July, 1998): 146 [145-162].

⁸²⁷ Ibid., 147; See also, Alfred O. Ukaegbu, "Fertility of Women in Polygynous Unions in Rural Eastern Nigeria," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 39, no. 2, (May, 1977): 399 [397-404].

Domestic Activities

For many generations, there was a gendered division of labour in African homes. In a family, each member, that is, the man, the woman or the women and the children played their part, but there was always a clear boundary between males' and females' duties. The actual activities varied from society to society, but domestic activities were the preserve of women.⁸²⁸ From childhood, a girl looks up to her mother and learns chores by doing and when she is old enough, she assists her mother. At the same time, a boy looks up to his father and learns men's responsibilities from him. When he is grown enough, he helps him with his activities.⁸²⁹ Nevertheless, mostly, women belonged to the kitchen and it was their duty to care for their families. Men regarded female duties as uninteresting and tedious because of their repetitive nature and they took a longer time to accomplish a result.

Women activities in any household



Plate 8. German East Africa: women at work. (Walter Rehfeldt, Mafiome, German East Africa, 1914-15). Source: www.reichskolonialamt.de/inhalt/rehfeldt/rehfeldt.htm

The painting above portrays household activities that were performed by women. It depicts one large polygamous family consisting of more than two generations. The women are working, while the men are idle. This fits into the colonial stereotype that African men liked to lie around

⁸²⁸ Bryant Mumford, "The Hehe, Bena, Sangu Peoples of East Africa," *American Anthropologist* 36, (1934): 207-208.

⁸²⁹ *Ibid.*; See also, Godfrey Wilson, "Introduction to Nyakyusa Law," *Journal of the International African Institute* 10, no. 1 (Jan., 1937): 19 [16-36].

their homesteads doing nothing. However, this is just a fraction or a small window of time that shows what happened in a household or a community.

The painting shows two women who are carrying large buckets on their backs which contain food, probably cassava, they have harvested. Two women are kneeling, busy grinding flour using grinding stones. Four women are pounding grain or dried cassava using wooden mortars. On the right, a girl is carrying a toddler, which suggests that she is participating in performing her responsibilities as a female. In the far end, a boy is herding goats; hence, he is also learning his responsibilities as a male member of the family. A young man is carrying a shield in one hand and a long spear in the other. He is talking to man, probably his father. They are not doing any work, but their presence, shield and spear reflect male responsibilities of protecting their families and property.

5.2.3 Women in *Askaris*' Households

Polygamy

During the colonial period, there were few job opportunities for Africans. The few Africans who succeeded in obtaining such opportunities had a change in their status since they belonged to the class of the colonial African “elites.” In the early days of colonialism, most of those who took the opportunities did not have alternatives. They had low or no status at all (social and/or economic) in their communities. By taking these opportunities, they changed their status. The changes occurred to the Africans who were supporting colonialism in one way or another. Among them were African colonial soldiers (*askari*). The African men who joined the colonial forces raised their status socially and economically. For example, Belgian *askari*, most of whom were rejects in their communities, raised their status by being recruited as *askari*. They joined the army and, after the training, they were encouraged to get married. However, during war campaigns, women abduction was not forbidden. Therefore, most of the *askari* had more than one wife. Women abduction was also common in German East Africa and the French West African colonies. The habit was encouraged by the social and cultural viewpoint that having more than one wife indicated that one was wealthy. In addition, the quest for acquiring more slaves led *askari* in different colonies to abduct more women in order to raise their own economic status. The habit was encouraged by European officers since they paid the auxiliaries (*rugaruga*) with war booty that included war captives. As a result, the practise was common among both the *askari* and *rugaruga*. European military officers did not consider the well-being

of African women. To them all was well as long as their *askari* and *rugaruga* were happy and content even if that happiness was experienced at the expense of women.



Plate 9. Belgian *askari* and his wives. (Philip Tits, at Bandundu, Mai-Ndombe, 1913-14).

Source: RMCA photographic Unit. AP.0.0.14209

The photograph above shows a family that is standing beside a house, probably their home. They are in a frozen pose, staring straight into the camera. A barefoot, uniformed *askari* is standing between his two wives. He is holding a musical instrument. Both his wives are dressed in African attire. The wife to his left is also holding a musical instrument, probably to show support to her husband's responsibilities in the army. The other wife is holding a baby, a future member of the army. The row of the houses in the background indicates a military post.

Domestic Activities

As a custom in many ethnic groups, the gendered division of labour was one of the reasons for the presence of women in the colonial armies since the *askari* refused to do feminine work such as domestic duties. *Askari* always insisted on having women (wives) closer to them in order to assist them with domestic duties. As men, they were more content when women performed domestic duties while they performed theirs as soldiers. The women in *askaris'* households provided not only domestic services but also engaged in various economic activities such as farming, local beer brewing and selling, and mat making. These activities helped to make their life economically easier. Thus, the bigger the number of women was in a household, the more the work was done. Women were a source of unpaid labour. The photographs below show a few of the *askaris'* women's activities in their household. They are showing an important part of food preparation, which involved making flour.



Plate 10. A Belgian *askari*'s women preparing food (Philippe Tits, Kinshasa, 1913-1914).

Source: RMCA photographic Unit, AP.0.0.12344

The above photograph shows women and children dressed in a mixture of European and African clothing. Two are standing but three are sitting. Two women are holding children and one is holding a pounding stick, which is in a wooden mortar. All are in a frozen pose and are staring straight into the camera. In front of the women, there are two winnowing plates (*nyungo*), dried cassava on one winnowing plate (*ungo*) and a sieve on the other. In the background there are rows of huts, which indicate that it is a military post. The ground is not very clean probably because of the activities associated with food preparation. The purpose of the photograph seems to be ethnographic, that is, depicting African women's domestic activities. This photograph could be used to show Africans' "primitive" way of processing food. The main activity is manioc grinding using a wooden mortar (*kinu*). However, the photograph suggests that the activity was staged in order to capture the indicated activity. It could be so because the position of some of the women indicates pre-arrangement. Also most of the women in the photograph are not doing anything apart from staring into the camera.

Nevertheless, the *askaris*' wives in the photo have all the instruments required for making cassava flour. In this process, flour is made by grinding dried cassava using a wooden mortar (*kinu*). Then, the cassava that has been pounded is sieved in order to have soft and clean flour. Sieving is very important in a flour-making process because flour that is coarse and has grit which is not healthy. It causes stomach irritation, which can lead to dysentery. Many African communities processed dried cassava in the same way in order to have clean cassava flour.



Plate 11. German *askaris*’ women
(unknown photographer and date in
German East Africa).
Source: DKG. 11508489.

The above photograph depicts three *askaris*’ women dressed in African clothing. Two women are standing, one with a child on her back while the other one is sitting. The women are in a frozen pose staring at what they are holding. The two standing women are holding long pestles (*mchi*) and between them there is a wooden mortar. The one sitting is holding a winnowing plate (*ungo*) in which there is a cup. The photograph portrays one of the women’s domestic activities, namely corn grinding using a wooden mortar. The photograph could have been taken for ethnographic purposes. Perhaps it was intended to show a “primitive” African way of making cornmeal. The environment and their posture suggest that the activity depicted in the photograph was staged. That is, the women were not really grinding corn.

Nonetheless, the instruments depicted normally were used to make maize flour (cornmeal). The grinding of dried maize to make flour took longer than cassava grinding. Due to the actions of the two standing women that are holding pounding pestles, one has to assume that there was dried maize in the wooden mortar. The logic behind the assumption is the presence of the sitting woman who is holding a winnowing plate with a cup inside which normally should contain water. The cup containing water is important in the process of making cornmeal. In the first stage of maize pounding, one has to add little water now and then while pounding in order to hasten the process of removing husks from the maize grains. The *ungo* itself is used for winnowing maize in order to separate the husks and the broken maize (the first stage of making cornmeal is to break dried maize into smaller pieces). Then the winnowed maize can be pounded into cornmeal. Traditionally, the activity depicted was done by women as it belonged to the domestic sphere.

Activities of *Askari*'s Women besides Domestic Chores

Farming



Plate 12. *Askaris*' wives in a small military post, South Cameroon, ca 1913-14. (Michels, *Schwarze deutsche Kolonialsoldaten*, 206).

In above photograph, the young woman in the middle is dressed in European clothing while the other two are in African attire. The woman on the left-hand side is topless. The women are arranged in line according to their height. All are in a frozen pose, and two of the three are staring straight into the camera. Two of the women portrayed are pregnant,⁸³⁰ the one on the right and the other on the left-hand side. The arrangement suggests that the photograph was taken for anthropometry purposes. The background portrays a cocoa farm. According to the inscription in the photo, the three women were *askaris*' wives in a remote military post in South Cameroon.

This photograph indicates that *askaris*' women participated in generating income either through their labour or by running small businesses. In that period, cocoa farming was mainly done on African smallholdings.⁸³¹ It was common for *askari* and their families to own land. Wives and other dependants worked on farms in order to produce food. They sold the surplus. In addition, whenever possible, cash crops were also grown. Therefore, it is highly likely that the cocoa farm behind belonged to the people in the military post. In Cameroon, German colonial authority launched *Volkskultur* project in 1906. The said project encouraged Africans to practise

⁸³⁰ According to the description written under the picture in Michels, *Schwarze deutsche Kolonialsoldaten* 206

⁸³¹ Andreas Eckert, "Cocoa Farming in Cameroon, c. 1914.c. 1960: Land and Labour," in *Cocoa Pioneer Fronts since 1800: The Role of Smallholders, Planters and Merchants*, eds William Gervase Clarence-Smith (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996): 137 [137-153]

small scale cash crop production using family labour.⁸³² In any case, as African elites, the *askari* in colonial state would not miss the opportunity to earn more income.

Mat Weaving



Plate 13. German East Africa: *Askaris'* women weaving a mat. (Otto Haeckel, German East Africa, 1906). Source: Deutsches Historisches Museum. LeMO F66/876.

In the above photograph, five African women are sitting in front of an African hut. The women are dressed in African clothing. One of the women is holding a child. On the far right, a European man dressed in European clothing is holding a camera, which is on a tripod. Beside the European is an African man, who is dressed in Arabic clothing, probably a servant of the European man. The African man has a bag on his back. The arrangement of the people in photograph is very different from that in other photographs. In this photograph, a European cameraman was included in the photograph to show the kind of camera which was used then in taking pictures. This is important in relation to the technological advancement in photography in colonial Africa. Three women and camera man are looking straight to the camera. The second woman on the right-hand side is looking at the mat she is weaving while the first woman on the left-hand side is looking away from the camera. The servant is looking at the women in front of him. The background portrays African huts with the same appearance. This suggests that the photograph was taken in a military post.

The photo depicts one of the *askaris'* women weaving a mat. Mat weaving was among the extra activities done by some of the *askaris'* women in German East Africa. At the time, just like

⁸³² Yvette D. Monga, "The Emergence of Duala Cocoa Planters under German Rule in Cameroon: A case Study of Entrepreneurship," in *Cocoa Pioneer Fronts since 1800: The Role of Smallholders, Planters and Merchants*, eds William Gervase Clarence-Smith (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996): 120 [119-136]

today, mats were valuable and marketable. Mats had many uses in households and in gatherings. Women used the money they earned from selling mats to supplement their husbands' salaries.

5.2.4 *Askaris'* Women in War Campaigns

Before WWI, German *askari*, like the French or Belgian *askari*, went to different war expeditions or campaigns accompanied by their wives/women and other dependants. *Askaris'* women participated in the duties performed in camps, and therefore they were useful to the colonial armies. European officers accepted *askaris'* women to be part of troops because of their support. In German East Africa, the women did not participate in war operations instead they stayed in the war camps. However, this never dampened German *askaris'* attitude towards war operations. Their morale and discipline remained high during operations. When *askari* left war camps, women and their children would escort them as far as they were allowed. The women would say goodbye to them with a series of shrilling wails and ululations.⁸³³ At this point, women put a brave face, but deep down knew that their well-being depended on the safe return of their husbands. They were worried but kept themselves busy by taking care of their families, giving each other support and maintaining war camp security.



Plate 14. A German *askari* saying goodbye to his family at a military station (*askaridorf*). (Michels, *Schwarze deutsche Kolonialsoldaten*, 198)

The above photograph depicts an *askari* in full military uniform with a gun on his shoulder. The *askari* is holding the hand of an African woman who is dressed in African attire. The woman is holding a child. Three other children are standing beside the woman with their hands stretched towards the *askari*, while the *askari* is holding his wife's hand. The background

⁸³³ Michael von Herff, "They Walk through the Fire like the Blondest German": African Soldiers Serving the Kaiser in German East Africa (1888-1914) (MA thesis, Montreal: McGill University, 1991), 81.

contains a row of huts which indicates that the photograph was taken in a military station. This photograph most likely shows how the *askari* says goodbye to his family and how the family members respond. This photograph was taken by a colonial official probably to show the western world that an *askari*, as a family man, is affectionate towards his family and the affection is reciprocated by his family. Also, it indicates that the *askari*'s family is monogamous like that of the Europeans.

The *askari*'s family comprised more than just a wife and children. It consisted of members of the extended family, servants and even other wives. In addition, an *askari* had many official duties outside the station away from his family including war expeditions, tax collection or escorting colonial dignitaries. For instance, some of his duties forced him to stay away from his family for a certain period. However, in his absence, his family received part of his salary.

Women's Lives in Campaigns

Askari women's lives in the war camps did not differ much from their lives in their homes in the military stations. In the war camps, they performed the same duties of maintaining households. The only difference is that those in the camps often got worried due to their husbands being at the war front. Women understood that their husbands were at risk of getting wounds or dying. In addition, living in a hostile war environment restricted free movement of families. Therefore, families were forced to adhere to the tight military discipline for the safety of all. During the marches, however, women played a major role in solving logistical problems by working as unpaid *askaris*' personal carriers.

Housing

Plate 15. A German *askari* and his wife.
(unknown photographer, German East Africa, unknown date),

Source: Unitätsarchiv Herrnhut:
LBS.1334.



In the above photograph, an *askari* is in full uniform, holding his gun. A woman (his wife) is sitting, dressed in an African attire. Both are in a frozen pose, staring straight into the camera. Their arrangement in the photo is Victorian. The background portrays a temporary African hut. The couple is beside this temporary hut, which suggests that it belonged to them. This kind of temporary accommodation was built during expeditions, which means the woman had accompanied her husband to the expedition.

Domestic duties



Plate 16. Women in a camp: German *Askaris*' women working together in food preparation. (Julius Hermann Schott, German East Africa, 1910-12). Source: DKG. 11407705.

In the above photograph, four women dressed in African clothing are busy working. All are facing towards what they are doing; therefore, none of them is facing the camera. The arrangement of women and their postures show a lot of movements, which suggests that the activities depicted were not staged. It means the photo was taken while they were busy performing their domestic duties without paying attention to the photographer.

Each of three standing women is holding a pounding pestle (*mchi*). They are pounding in one wooden mortar (*kinu*) in turns. In cases like this, to avoid confusion of whose turn is to pound, women normally sing while pounding. The rhythm from the pounding coupled with the song makes the work more bearable. The woman sitting close to the ones involved in pounding seem to be holding the *kinu*. This stabilizes the *kinu* due to the movement of the pounding pestles (*michi*). The woman bending on the right side is working with her winnowing plate (*ungo*), probably winnowing the pounded corn. All these activities are done while a pot is on fire, which

indicates that the actual cooking has started. The activities suggest that the photograph was taken for the purpose of sharing a colonial experience in the metropole with respect the “native” women’s role of food preparation.

The background in the photo indicates that the *askaris*’ women are in a temporary enclosure, not at their usual military station. Most likely, they were part of an expedition. *Askaris*’ women in expeditions performed domestic duties which included food preparations as depicted in the photograph. However, in this photograph, four women are preparing food together, therefore, one cannot tell the relationship amongst them. It is hard to tell whether they were part of one family, or wives of different *askari* working together.

Socialising time



Plate 17. German *askaris*’ wives having leisure time for themselves. (Julius Hermann Schott, German East Africa, 1910-12). Source: DKG. 11407703.

In the above photograph, three women dressed in African clothing are sitting in front of tents. Children and an *askari* can be seen in the background. The two women sitting close to one another are plaiting their hair. The other woman is working on something which could be weaving a mat. In front of them, bush-meat is roasting on a fire. All the women are busy with what they are doing. None of them is looking into the camera. The posture and sitting arrangement suggest that the activities shown were not staged. The background depicts tents and temporary huts, which indicate that it is a military camp. Most likely, the photo was taken for the purpose of sharing the colonial experience to show the other activities done by “native” women who accompanied or lived with the *askari*.

The activities depicted in the above photo indicate that life in the war expeditions was much like that in the station. *Askaris*’ women, after doing domestic chores, socialised with others and

attended to their personal needs such as plaiting hair or pursuing their other interests like weaving mats. However, even when socialising, they continued with their domestic responsibilities such as roasting meat for use as food.

5.3 Africans during the WWI

5.3.1 German East Africa “Home Front” Women

Mobilisation in German East Africa began immediately after the war broke out in Europe. Depots were set to buy food. In these depots, grains and other food produce were collected. African women participated in war mobilisation in many ways including processing grains such as corn and millet to make flour. In many cases, women’s activities were related to their usual domestic chores such as pounding grain to make flour. Because of the shortage of mills, many women were employed to make flour for the African troops. Women performed this activity in different depots under German control until the time when the allied forces occupied the areas concerned, which marked the end of their employment.⁸³⁴

Mobilisation of provisions

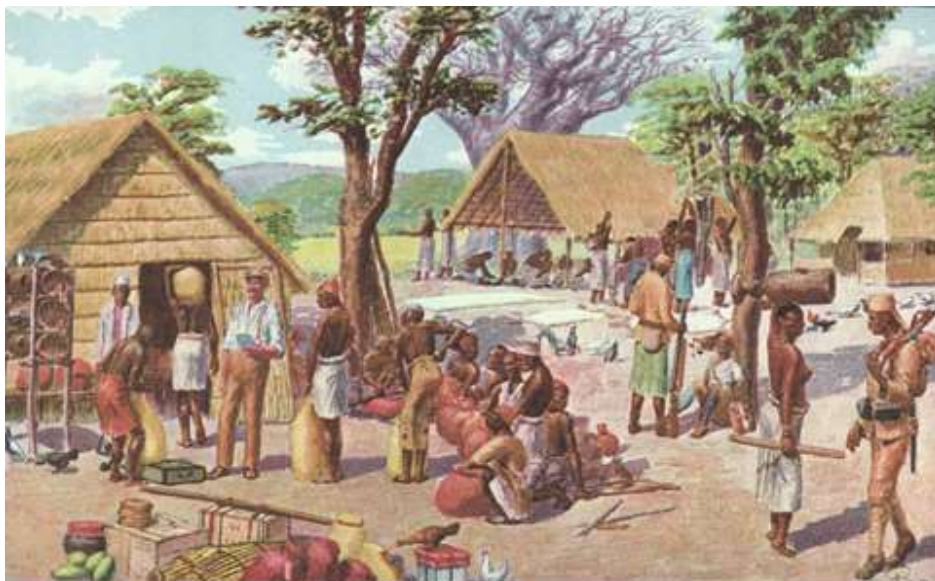


Plate 18. Activities at a German East Africa depot. Walter Rehfeldt, 1914-17. Source: www.reichskolonialamt.de/inhalt/rehfeldt/rehfeldt.htm

The above painting depicts mobilisation activities done during WWI in German East Africa. The painting shows that, on the left, the carriers dressed in different kinds of African attire have

⁸³⁴ There is no evidence that indicate women continued with the same line of work in depots after the Allied forces occupation.

brought provisions to the depot. They are queuing so that they can present their loads to the European in front of them. The European examines the quantity of the loads before being stored in the depot. On the right-hand side, a woman who is partially dressed in African clothing is carrying a wooden mortar (*kinu*) on her head and holding a wooden pounding pestle (*mchi*) at the same time. The woman is talking to an *askari*. Probably, she has finished her work and is ready to return home. At the rear, there are many women who are half-dressed (topless); their bottoms are covered in African attire. The women are busy working and are in different working positions. Some of them are standing while winnowing grain, and the others are in a squatting position, grinding grain. Some are also pounding grain in wooden mortars. At the foreground in the left corner, there are different provisions that range from fruits to birds such as chickens. This painting shows many activities, hence, implying that the painter intended to show how the “natives” of German East Africa supported WWI. The painting was intended for the people in the metropole to see the “love” and support that “natives” had to the Germans.

During WWI, men and women worked in depots, as the painting displays. Many women were employed in the depots because of the shortage of the mills that could make enough cornmeal or millet flour for the African troops at the war front. For women, it was an opportunity to earn income. Carriers sent by chiefs to take the collected food to the nearby small depots were not entitled to any form of payment. However, when they carried provisions to the depots located far away, they got paid. All the depots were guarded by *askari* as shown in the above painting and each had at least one European officer, as shown in the painting, who supervised the activities in the depot and kept records of the depot’s provisions.

5.3.2 Home front during Germans defensive

German East Africa was in the defensive position from March 1916 onwards. The situation changed for both men and women. The relations between Africans and Europeans also changed. The change depended on the Africans’ own understanding of the war, with regard to who was in control of the colony and therefore, who had power over them. Most Africans allied themselves with whoever they believed to be in control of the colony. Some of them were on the German side while the others on that of the British. Both armies knew the Africans always supported the side they believed to be in control of the colony. As a result, both sides hanged the Africans they identified as traitors with the lucky ones ending up in prison. It did not matter whether the accused was a man or woman; both received the same kind of punishment.

Hanged Africans



Plate 19. Execution of African “spies”. (Harris L.H. Collection, Tanga, 1914-1916) Source: IWM photographic Unit Cat. PC 1338 (HU 92761).

The photograph above shows lifeless bodies of half-dressed Africans which are hanging from poles. Uniformed German officers and *askari* are standing in front of the hanged bodies. The writings under the photo indicate that the Germans hanged the deceased because they accused them of spying on the Germans on behalf of the allied forces (the British). The photo was produced from a photograph negative found by the British in 1916 after the taking over of Tanga.

The British exposed the above photograph for propaganda purposes. They wanted to show the Western world the atrocities of the Germans against the colonized. The idea was to ensure that the Germans did not get back their colonies. However, at the time, both the Germans and the British (the allied forces) behaved in the same way towards the Africans who were suspected of espionage. The Africans could easily meet such a fate, for example, for not giving the expected support, for working in British or German mission for being a member of the British or German church or for having illicit materials such as British or German propaganda pamphlets.

Women Spies



Plate 20. A German spy under guard.
(Tetley Francis (MR) collection, German East Africa, ca 1916-1918). Source: IWM photographic Unit, Cat. 2012-02-21.

The above photograph portrays a woman dressed in African clothing with beads around her neck and bangles on her hands. The woman's hands are tied. The woman is standing between two uniformed African men. The writings below this photograph state that the two African men were guards of the allied forces (British). The British alleged that the woman was a German spy. She was under guard, as she awaited her fate. It is highly likely that the photograph was taken to show the appearance of women spies. That is, the innocent look and their dressing style matched the local people's dressing. The sentence the woman above received for her alleged crime is not known since its records were not found. But in any case, she did not go scot-free.

The photo shows other women war activities besides domestic support. Even though women did not participate in combat directly, they supported the war in other ways (in this case by spying the 'enemy'). Women employed as spies were paid and, therefore, agreed to be spies in order to earn income. In this work, women were preferred over men because they were not easily suspected. Both sides employed African women as spies. When caught, both forces punished women spies the same way they did to male spies.

Women's Abductions

Abductions and rape of women was very common during WWI. The main perpetrators were the German and Belgian *askari*. The evidence available shows that the British *askari* also raped African women.⁸³⁵ The abducted women were added to the several women that the *askari* had already acquired. Therefore, as *askari* went on with expeditions, they were followed by more than one woman/wife.

Abducted Girls



Plate 21. An ex-German *askari* and the girls he abducted. (Unknown photographer, Mbulu, 1919). Source: BNA CO 691/29: 113 photo number 111.

The above photograph depicts five people. All of them are standing. Four are girls dressed in African attire. An African man (a former German *askari*) is standing in the middle and is dressed in European clothing. All are barefoot. The German *askari* depicted served under Capt. Bockmann (German officer in the *Schutztruppe*). He claimed that the girls were his wives. He admitted having abducted them but did not remember the village from which he took them. The girls did not remember where they had come from either. He was caught with the girls at Kondoia Irangi, where it was alleged that he used the girls for prostitution in order to gain income.⁸³⁶ Mbulu's district officer left the girls with a liwali in Mbulu until their relations were found. The photograph was taken by a British district officer after the war. Most likely the photograph was taken for propaganda purposes against the Germans.

⁸³⁵ BNA CO 691/29.

⁸³⁶ BNA CO 691/29: 113.

The atrocities against women such as rape and abduction during WWI in German East Africa were committed by the *askari* of both sides. Once a woman was abducted, it was not easy for her to return to her family. In cases such as this, it was not easy for the young girls abducted to remember where they came from because they marched through many different villages. Captain Bockmann and his troops were taken prisoners in October 1917. This means that, by the time of their rescue, the girls had been with the *ex-askari* for at least two years. This gives a glimpse into the lives of the women who were abducted; especially those who were too young or could not remember where they came from. Their options were very limited and, therefore, had to follow the wishes of their abductors.

Living off the Land

For different reasons, the troops belonging to both armies lived off the land. The patrol units depended on villagers for their survival. The reason behind this habit was their tendency of travelling with little food that could last only for a few days. Consequently, they were always in need of more food. Once they arrived in a village with their guns, villagers, willingly or unwillingly, gave them whatever they needed. If they did not provide what the soldiers needed, the latter took whatever they could lay their hands on by force. In many cases, young women and even girls were taken away by the *askari*.

Askari in the Village

The painting below depicts an African family standing in front of a house, probably their home. They are with German *askari*. The painting portrays four fully uniformed German *askari* with their rifles and war gear (most likely it is a patrol unit). The *askaris* are mingled with four young African women and an old man. The Africans are dressed in African clothing. Three women and the old man are half naked (topless). Five African children are also depicted in the drawing. One of the children is totally naked and is holding her mother's legs from behind, while the same woman is carrying another child on her back and a load of cassava on her head. There is yet another child who is holding a pounding pestle (*mchi*) and standing close to a wooden mortar. At the rear, on the right, two children are playing.



Plate 22. German *askari* patrolling a village. (Walter Rehfeldt, unknown village, 1914-17). Source: www.reichskolonialamt.de/inhalt/rehfeldt/rehfeldt.htm

The women in the drawing indicates that they are doing their daily chores. Two of the women are carrying cassava: one on her head and the other in her hand. Another woman is pounding dried cassava using a wooden mortar. Another woman far on the right-hand side is carrying a pot for fetching water. In the right-hand corner, there are grinding stones and grounded flour placed on the mat to dry. On the same side, chickens are pecking the ground. The *askari* seem to be interacting peacefully with the three women and the old man. One *askari* is chatting with the old man. Behind him another *askari* is taking uncooked cassava from a woman. Another *askari* is sitting and drinking some water from a *kata* (a traditional cup specific for drawing water). He is using the *kata* to draw some water from a local pot close to him. Next to the sitting *askari*, another *askari* is standing eating cassava while chatting to a young woman holding a pounding stick placed in a wooden mortar. The background indicates that they are in a village. The environment looks very friendly. Most likely, the painting was intended to show people in the metropole that “natives” liked and respected the German *askari* and that the feeling was mutual. Perhaps, the Germans used a painting like the one above to retaliate to the British propaganda which concentrated on portraying the atrocities the Germans committed in German East Africa during the war.

However, the painting gives a glimpse into the realities of the lives of African families during the war. The household depicted in the painting indicates that the family had only women, children and an old man. There are no young men around. This was true for many households

in many villages. The young men were probably hiding or had gone to the war as carriers or *askari*. The soldiers who seem not to be in a hurry are busy eating food from the household. It is also apparent that the painter did not hide the feelings of the African women and the old man. The postures of the members of the household suggest that the situation is tense; it is highly likely that the people are intimidated by the presence of the *askari* with their guns. They are aware of their vulnerability and know that the *askari* could do whatever they want. For example, they could take away their food and/or abduct the women.

5.4 Allied Forces and Women

Women were present in the allied forces. They accompanied Belgian troops to German East Africa. Other troops of the allied forces such as Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia troops had their wives with them up to a certain point, before entering German East Africa. However, evidence shows that some of the troops had women even in German East Africa. The Belgian *askari* and their commanders mentioned this fact repeatedly, when counter-attacking Col. Hugye's order of not marching accompanied by women.⁸³⁷ It is not clear whether the women in British forces came from German East Africa or they crossed the border with the *askari*. According to Hodges, the women who were in the Nyasaland Kings African Rifle (KAR) troops were said to be "carriers who carried food for the carriers who carried the food . . .".⁸³⁸



Plate 23. A KAR Nyasaland *askari* and his wife, (MacKay, Malawi, ca. 1914-918), Source: Centre for the study of World Christianity Archives, University of Edinburgh. CSWC47-LS13-14.

The above photograph portrays a KAR *askari* who is wearing a long coat and a KAR hat. He is standing with a woman (his wife) dressed in African attire. The woman is carrying a baby on her back and a large straw basket on her head. They seem to be going somewhere. The

⁸³⁷ PF 2664/1213, Lt. Col. Desire Thomas Note to Col. Huyghe (Belgian Commander in Chief), page 2, 10th July 1917, Ujiji; See, Lt. Col. Desire Thomas Urgent Telegram to Col. Huyghe, May 1917; See also Lt. Col. Desire Thomas Special Report, dated 17th May 1917, Manakatwa.

⁸³⁸ G.W.T. Hodges, "African Manpower Statistics for the British Forces in East Africa, 1914-1918," The Journal of African History 19, no. 1, World War 1 and Africa (1978), 107 [101-116].

photograph was taken in order to show the activities of the KAR during the war. The *askari* seems to be happy with his wife and untroubled, although many Nyasaland *askari* went to the war front to fight the *Schutztruppe* force. It is likely that the photograph was intended to demonstrate the willingness of Nyasaland *askari* to serve the British.

Nevertheless, this photograph shows the responsibilities of *askaris'* women and other African women in relation to their husbands. Most likely, the woman is carrying some food in the straw bucket. As food providers, women always made sure that there was food for their families during the long or short journeys. At the same time, as mothers, they cared for their young children and had to move around with them at their backs. While women carried loads on their heads and backs, *askari*, like other men, walked without carrying anything other than a rifle.

***Askaris'* Women in Nyasaland Camps**



Plate 24. Nyasaland *askari* and their families, (J.W. MacKay, Malawi, ca. 1914-1918), Source: Centre for the study of World Christianity Archives, University of Edinburgh. CSWC47-LS13-17.

In the foreground of the above photo, a woman is shown dressed in a mixture of European and African clothing. While carrying a baby on her back, she is pouring some water into a small pot. Probably, she is preparing some food. Squatting close to her is a KAR *askari*. In the middle, other *askari* are sitting or standing close to the women and children. At the far end, on the right, there are *askari* boys. The KAR *askari*, their families and servants seem to be resting. The photograph was intended to show the activities of KAR *askari* during the war. However, this photograph confirms the presence of women among the Nyasaland troops.



Plate 25. A Nyasaland KAR *askari* woman (MacKay, Malawi, ca. 1914-1918), Source: Centre for the study of World Christianity Archives, University of Edinburgh. CSWC47-LS13-33.

The above photograph portrays a woman dressed in an African clothing. She is standing near a grass-thatched hut. The grass-thatched houses in the background show temporary housing, which indicates she was in a temporary war camp. Also she is standing next to a small, cultivated patch, possibly a vegetable garden. Gardening was one of the women's activities in war camps that aimed at improving family diet. The photograph was intended to show the activities of KAR troops during the war.

The cultivated patch shows the resourcefulness of women in their quest to give proper meals and general care to their families. Under war circumstances, vegetables were hard to obtain. Plots like the one depicted in the photograph is an evidence that women cultivated such small gardens to ensure availability of enough vegetables for their families. The same also suggests that, even in the WWI military camps, *askaris'* women continued with their usual activities to ensure that their families had adequate meals to eat.

Women in a British camp in German East Africa



Plate 26. Women in the Nigerian brigade standing camp. (Lt. Col. Mann Collection, probably in Ruvu, 1917-1918). Source: IWM.

In the above photo, the four women dressed in African clothing are sitting in front of tents. The women seem to be chatting to each other. In front of them there is a pot on a fire, which means they are cooking some food. Also, there are other cooking pots, a winnowing plate and bowls. One bowl is full of flour. According to the inscription at the back of the photograph, the women were described as “boys’ wives,” which means they were the wives of carriers or laborers of the British forces obtained in the German East Africa. It is highly likely that the photograph was taken with the intention of showing that the “natives” of German East Africa supported the British.

However, the presence of the women in the British camp was a result of poor treatment of carriers. The women had to prepare food for their husbands or fathers because food was a major problem for carriers of British forces. Most of them went hungry or were not given proper or palatable meals. To solve the problem, some women in German East Africa prepared food for their husbands in or outside the war camps. If a camp was near their homes, women prepared food in their own homes and carried it to the camp where their husbands, fathers or brothers were working. But if the camp was far away, the women prepared the food within the camp.

The photo suggests that the women were at ease, something that could only mean that they were used to the environment of this military camp probably because they lived with their men within the camp.

Women in Belgian Troops



Plate 27. Belgian Commander-in-chief General Tombeur in the marching break. (Pesek, *Das Ende eines Kolonialreiches*, 85)

The above photograph portrays Belgian officers, *askari*, carriers and an African woman. The Belgian officers and *askari* are wearing military uniforms, while the carriers and the woman are dressed in African clothing. The child on the woman's back is dressed in European clothing too. The Belgian officers, *askari* and carriers are in different positions, some are standing while others are sitting on boxes and on the grasses. Their positions suggest that they are resting. The woman is in a bending position, with a child on her back. She is very close to General Tombeur (Belgian forces commander in chief). The arrangement of the people in the photograph could indicate equality. Perhaps, the photo was intended to show the people in the metropole that the value of Africans in the war was immeasurable. Therefore, there were no differences between the races in the Belgian forces, that is, there was mutual respect.

In addition, the photograph portrays the role of African women in the *Force publique*. While the men are resting, the woman seems to be busy getting something from her load. Most likely, she is getting some food out of it, as there is a bowl very close to her foot. Since she is carrying a baby, perhaps the food was for the baby. In addition, her position in the photograph confirms the Belgian officers' acceptance, tolerance and value of *askaris'* women in their midst.

5.5 German *Askaris*' Women during WWI

The German troops began very long marches in March 1916. They were accompanied by their wives and families. This was the period of the allied forces' offensive and German East Africa's defensive position. In defending their territory, the Germans withdrew while fighting. Because of their circumstances (few soldiers and few war equipment) and a navy blockade, the German commander, General Lettow Vorbeck, opted to use guerrilla tactics. Thus, they had to take long marches across the territory. In these long marches, the wives and families of the *askaris* followed from behind. However, the women suffered all kinds of hardship, just as their husbands did. They did not participate in combat but they carried heavy loads and did all domestic chores. Sometimes, the women found themselves in the middle of the fighting, especially when the allied forces attacked the rear of the marching troops.

Women in Cameroon Troops



Plate 28. German Cameroon *askari* and their women during WWI (Michels, *Schwarze deutsche Kolonialsoldaten*, 199).

The above photograph portrays a group of Cameroons *askari* (probably and carriers) with their women. Some men are dressed in uniforms and others in informal European clothing. The women are dressed in African clothing. One young woman at the centre is almost naked. The background indicates temporary accommodation, most likely of the *askari* and their families. The photograph suggests that the focus was on the nude woman at the centre and the *askari* (on

the right-hand side), whose hand is placed around a woman which suggests love and affection to the woman. Furthermore, the hand of the *askari* around the woman suggests they are in a sexual relationship. Also, the focus on the nude “native” woman shows the photograph intended to show the “types of natives.” That is, different types of women that followed the *askari*. However, the presence of women in the photograph confirms the presence of women in the Cameroons troops during WWI. The women in the photo, therefore, could be wives or the abducted young women who were forced to become *askaris’* wives.

***Askaris’* Women Marching**



Plate 29. German *askaris’* women marching (Unknown photographer, German East Africa (Tanzania), 1916-1918). Source: DKG. 11508628.

Plates 29 and 30 portray German *askaris’* women at the rear of marching troops, marching with the male food carriers. The women are dressed in African clothing and carrying loads on their backs and heads. In plate 29, there are male carriers behind the women, while in plate 30 there are herds of cattle behind the women. On the left-hand side, there are male carriers and a donkey. Behind the donkey, there is an *askari*. In the war circumstances, the presence of *askaris* at the rear was important in order to ensure not only the safety of the *askaris’* women and carriers but also to prevent desertion. Normally, women were guarded by few *askari* supervised by a European overseer who usually was an old man and a former NCO. Both photographs were intended to show the support German forces received from Africans of German East Africa.



Plate 30. German *askaris*' women marching (Unknown photographer, German East Africa (Tanzania), 1916-1918). Source: DKG. 11452357.

Hardships during Marching



Plate 31. German troops crossing the Wami River, (Walter Rehfeldt, Wami 1916-17).
Source: www.reichskolonialamt.de/inhalt/rehfeldt/rehfeldt.htm

The above painting depicts many uniformed soldiers, carriers, women, children and animals. It portrays the rainy season during which the heavy rains have swept away a bridge at the Wami

River. Therefore, the troops are crossing the river by taking the risk of entering into the raging water. Some of the German officers and *askari* have already crossed the river; some are putting on their shoes while the others are standing, observing the procession. The women and carriers are crossing the river too, carrying loads on their heads. One *askari* is carrying a child on his shoulder. On the left-hand side, an *askari* and a carrier are guiding a horse. At the far end, across the river, many more officers, *askaris*, carriers, families and horses are waiting to cross the river. The painting was intended to show the public in the metropole the war hardships that *Schutztruppe* faced and how they acted during such circumstances.

The painting shows a woman carrying a single load that looks small. Also, it shows an *askari* helping women by carrying a child on his shoulders without his rifle in order to make things easier for women. However, this is contrary to what was happening at the time. During the marches, an *askari*'s first responsibility was his rifle and war gear while the women were responsible for taking care of their children. If they needed help, they could get it from their extended families, fellow women, carriers or servants such as *askari* boys.

***Askaris'* Women in Entertainment**



Plate 32. Dancing (*ngoma*): German *askaris* and their women singing and dancing around a fire. (Walter Rehfeldt, place unknown, 1914-17). Source: www.reichskolonialamt.de/inhalt/rehfeldt/rehfeldt.htm

The above painting portrays *askari* and their women dancing around a fire. The *askari* are in their uniforms while the women are dressed in African clothing. On the right-hand side, the *askari* in their uniforms are in different dancing moves around the fire. At the far end, in the centre, women are also in dancing moves, and most likely singing too. On the left side, more

askaris and carriers are watching the dancers, and most likely cheering them on while enjoying the dance, songs and rhythm. The background indicates they are in the forest. Perhaps, the painter of the painting intended to show the public in the metropole that *askari* and their families were also granted some time to enjoy themselves despite the war.

During the WWI campaign, there were times when combat stopped for some time for different reasons such as heavy rainfall. In such circumstances, in the evenings, the *askari* and their women danced (*ngoma*) to entertain themselves and enjoy life in spite of the precarious circumstances they were in. In such circumstances women played a major role in entertaining the troops by singing and dancing.

5.6. Other Africans at the War Front

The Africans at the war front in both armies were mainly men. Men were combatants, carriers, laborers or servants. However, most of the men were involved as carriers. To the women at the home front, the impact of men joining the military service as carriers was huge. Some men volunteered to work as interpreters or *askari*, but many were forced to work as carriers. There were no major differences in terms of the methods used to get recruits since the authorities on both sides used almost the same methods.

WWI jobs adverts



Plate 33. A WWI KAR job advert in the *Nyasaland Times*. (Mackay, Malawi, ca. 1917). Source: Centre for the study of World Christianity Archives, University of Edinburgh. CSWC47-LS13-5.

The above advertisement was placed by the chief recruiting officer of the KAR named of Lt. Colonel I. H Soames. This was one of the methods both sides used to get volunteers. In such cases, better pay attracted more volunteers than carriers' work ever could. However, hardships started once recruits were deployed since food was always a problem and the marching/expeditions were endless.

Forced labour in German East Africa



Plate 34. Collected labour (Lt. L.A.W. Powell, Ruvu, April 1917). Source: IWM. Q15584.

In the photograph, a group of male Africans are standing in two lines. Two uniformed British *askari* are standing in the middle of the front line. One of them is holding a gun in his right hand and a stick in the left, while the other is holding a stick in his right hand. The other men are dressed in African clothing. The three men in the front line are holding two chickens each. According to the inscription behind the photograph, the Civil Administration near Ruvu river sent to nearby villages British *askari* (two uniformed men in the middle) “to collect labourers.” The word collect implies that they could get labourers easily. However, it was not the case, many people did not want to provide labour during WWI. Many ran away soon after seeing *askari*. It did not matter to which force the *askari* belonged to. This photograph confirms this because some of those “collected” Africans were young boys (three on the right-hand side). Some of them are in chains (three men on the left-hand side). This indicates that they were

taken by force. Three of them are holding fowls which could have been taken by force as well. It is highly likely that the men served as carriers or labourers for the British troops.

Carriers



Plate 35 Front line carriers. German troops in the battle. (Walter Rehfeldt, Chunya, German East Africa, 1914-17). Source: www.reichskolonialamt.de/inhalt/rehfeldt/rehfeldt.htm

The painting portrays fully uniformed German officers and their *askari*. Some of them are carrying war gear on their backs. A Howitzer gun is positioned in front of the soldiers. The officers and *askari* are ready for battle. They are watching the enemy's movement. Behind them, one officer and *askari* are preparing ammunition. Two war front carriers can be seen in the rear. They are taking an ammunition box closer to the soldiers. Carriers played a very important role for the army. However, it was very risky and dangerous for them because they were non-combatants. To attract people into becoming war front carriers, the employment package was more attractive than that of other carriers. Many who worked as war front carriers saw it as an opportunity to make money.

Marching Carriers



Plate 36. German carriers marching (Unknown photographer and place, ca 1916-1918). Source: DKG. 11452353.



Plate 37. British carriers carrying supplies, (MacKay, Malawi, ca 1914-1918). Source: Centre for the study of World Christianity Archives, University of Edinburgh. CSWC47-LS13-6.

Plates 36 and 37 show carriers who belonged to both sides. Their dressing style and the loads carried look the same. The photographs were intended to show the support of the Africans during WWI. The troops used the carriers to transport war equipment and other provisions. They were the feet and arms of the troops. However, it was the most loathed work due to low pay and the hardships associated with the carrier job.

Sickness among Carriers



Plate 38. Sick Parade for British carriers (Photographer unknown, Cabo Delgado, Portuguese East Africa, April –July 1918). Source: National Library of Scotland. 97048530-1.

The above photograph portrays an officer sitting at a table on which his hands are resting. Two African men are standing in front of the officer and listening to his instructions. Behind the two African men, there is a long line of African men who are sitting on the ground. The background shows that the area is enclosed. According to the inscription on the photograph, the officer is a British medical officer called Capt. Irvine, who was with the 4/4 KAR Nigerian Brigade. In the marches, carriers rested after every 12-20-mile walk. The photograph shows that, while resting, Capt. Irvine who had 800 carriers under his charge, attended to the carriers' medical needs. The photograph was intended to show the hard work medical officers did and the challenges they faced during WWI in German East Africa.

During WWI, medical officers were in short supply in the British forces. The above photograph proves that one medical officer had very many carriers under his charge. The shortage of medics led to many deaths. The medical officers were overworked and, therefore, it was hard for them to provide enough services to carriers.

Sick Carriers



Plate 39. Lesions on a carrier's feet, (Dr Archibald Clive Irvine, Dodoma, Tanzania, July-November 1917). Source: National Library of Scotland. 97047777-1.

The above photograph portrays a carrier's legs. The photograph indicates that the man (patient) is wrapped with a piece of cloth. The patient was in the carrier corps hospital in Dodoma. His left foot is wrapped under a bandage and there is an open lesion around the toe on the right foot. The photo was intended to show the types of sicknesses which the carriers had. However, most of the diseases were caused by poor diets and long marches. Lesions were common among the carriers.

Auxiliary Troops (*Rugaruga*)

Rugaruga were African warriors who supported troops in combat. They were additional, auxiliary soldiers who were recruited as mercenaries. They provided support only when they were sure that there were benefits to be gained from doing so. The benefits, in most cases, came in the form of booty. Chiefs supported the side that was stronger or more beneficial to them. In these circumstances, supporting the right side at the right time mattered much, since siding with the wrong side at the wrong time could result in one being hanged or deposed. The same happened to the individuals or communities that supported the wrong side. Some Africans changed sides according to the prevailing situation. In this way, they succeeded in getting the best of both sides. Women were affected by the presence of *rugaruga* among the troops because they became part of the booty to be taken by those *rugaruga*.

Rugaruga



Plate 40. *Rugaruga* on watch (photographer and date unknown, German East Africa).
Source: DKG. 11518571.

The above photograph portrays two African males dressed in African clothing. One man is on his knee, holding a gun. The other has leant forward a bit. He is wearing a hat with a feather on it. Each has a traditional water container known as a *kibuyu* (calabash) which is hanging from their shoulders. Both are looking away from the camera. Their hands show muscles, which is an indicator of male strength. This photograph suggests that the intention was to show the people in the metropole that *rugaruga* were strong “native” males who volunteered to work for the colonial authority. However, *rugaruga* agreed to work for the colonial armies only because of the benefits they accrued from the colonial administration.



Plate 41. German *rugaruga* ready for battle (Paul Hoffmann, German East Africa, ca. 1914-1918).
Source: Deutsches Historisches Museum. LeMO 75/289 1(1507).

The above photograph portrays a group of African men standing in front of a camera. All are dressed in African traditional attire. Four men in the front line are holding shields while the others long spears. The first man on the right-hand side is holding a gun. The men in the front line are wearing head gear made from animal skins of different kinds. The third man on the right-hand side, who looks like their leader or chief, is dressed in white cloth (*mgolole*). Behind him there is a man who is wearing a European hat; probably, he is a sub-chief. This photograph was taken to show the support that the Germans had from the “natives” of German East Africa despite their intention to acquire wealth and other benefits.

Boy Servants

During WWI, both armies had servant boys. The boys worked as personal servants to officers and *askari*. Each officer had at least one boy servant. Their responsibilities were the same as they were during campaigns or expeditions in the pre-WWI. They performed different duties such as cooking, ironing and carrying gear for their masters. Many boys were attracted to this employment opportunity, especially those who were used to the army life such as the sons or relatives of the *askari*. To work as boy servant was an opportunity for young boys to earn a steady income. Also, as grownups, it was easy for *askaris*' boys to join the army as *askari*.

Officers' boys



Plate 42. KAR officers' boys Ironing, (MacKay, Malawi, ca. 1914-1918). Source: Centre for the study of World Christianity Archives, University of Edinburgh. CSWC47-LS13-18.

The above photograph portrays four boys who are dressed in white attire. Their dressing is a mixture of European and African style. One of the two boys in the middle is ironing something on a table while the other one is looking on. Two other boys are looking straight at the camera. There are temporary huts in the background, which indicates that this was a temporary military camp. The photograph was intended to show one of the responsibilities of boy servants.



Plate 43. KAR officers' boys buying beer for troops (MacKay, Malawi, ca. 1914-1918). Source: Centre for the study of World Christianity Archives, University of Edinburgh. CSWC47-LS13-15.

The above photograph portrays three boy servants who are dressed in white clothing and three African women and a child who are dressed in African clothing. The woman in the middle is carrying a straw bucket and the other two women are carrying pots. According to the inscription on the photograph, the boys are buying beer from the women who most likely are not part of those in the military camp. This means that the women who were close to such war camps did business with the troops in the camp by selling to them whatever they could.

Askaris' Boys (Servants)

An *askari* boy was an important member of an *askari's* household. Most of the boys, at least those who were in the *Schutztruppe*, were captives who had been captured in different campaigns. In the expeditions or campaigns, an *askari* boy served as a personal assistant to the *askari*. As an *askari's* servant, he did different activities ranging from cooking, assembling tents in camps to carrying gear and firearms during marches. However, in peace time *askari* boys provided other services as required in the military stations and became servants in the households, to which they belonged. They performed duties such as laundering, fetching water, gardening or cooking as instructed by the *askari's* wife.



Plate 44. A German *askari* boy during the war (Ruppert, German East Africa (Mainland Tanzania), 1914-18). Source: DKG. 11518686.

The above photograph portrays a boy dressed in European clothing. He is holding a stick in one hand and on the shoulder of the other hand is carrying some items, including bowls. On his head he is carrying what looks like a cloth, probably a blanket. This photograph was intended to show the kind of support that *askari* had from their servant boys. *Askari* boys, just like the officers' boys, were paid for their labour.

Prisoners

Besides the war prisoners who were captured during battles, there were prisoners who were captured while deserting their troops. Deserters' suffering, once captured, intensified regardless of which side captured them. However, it was worse when one was captured by the side one was deserting. The deserters who were caught were normally interrogated and imprisoned. Those who were caught by the opposite side were hanged if they were judged as spies. Others ended up as prisoners. The carriers who were imprisoned for deserting by the Germans, for example, were chain-ganged and worked while in chains.

Captured Carriers



Plate 45. A captured German carrier (Archibald Clive Irvine, Ancuabe, Portuguese East Africa, March-April 1918). Source: National Library of Scotland. 97048248-1

The above photograph portrays an African man dressed in African clothing. The man is leaning on a tree. On his neck there is a rope that ties him to a tree and his hands are on his back, which indicates that they are also tied to a tree. A roof of a temporary hut can be seen beside the tree. There are some *askari* in the background. According to the description of the photo, this was a British military camp and a carriers' hospital. The man is a war prisoner who was a German carrier but was captured by British troops.

The man was imprisoned because he carried provisions of the other side in a war that he knew nothing about. Many carriers did not want to carry things for either side. They were forced to do so under difficult conditions. Both sides used almost the same coercive technique to get carriers and treated them in the same way. However, when a carrier was caught by the "enemy", he was treated like someone who had volunteered to work for the "enemy" side.

War Prisoners



Plate 46. Chained prisoners under German police guard. (Becker, German East Africa, date unknown). Source: DKG. 11518563.

The photograph above portrays a uniformed *askari* holding a gun in one hand and *mboko* (whip) in the other. The *Mboko* was used to flog prisoners. Other men (prisoners) are standing in a semi-circle around the *askari*. Except for one, all other prisoners are half naked. Only the first prisoner on the left-hand side is fully dressed. All prisoners have rings around their necks, from which chains that connect them together are hanging. This is what is called a chain-gang. The men in the above photograph were war prisoners, but it is not clear whether they were captured during the WWI or not. However, the German carriers who were caught deserting during WWI were chain-ganged in the same way as those shown in this photograph. They had to do all activities including going to toilet while being chain-ganged and were frequently caned or flogged for small mistakes.

***Askaris'* Hardships**

In the painting below, one barefoot *askari* is wearing a toned uniform. Two of the three *askari* are not dressed in proper uniforms; they are wearing hats which are different from those of the regular *German askaris'*. When Germans were defending German East Africa and most of the territory was occupied by the allied forces, they had many shortages including uniforms for their *askari*. German defensive period started in March 1916 and by September 1916 more than 70 percent of the colony was under the allied forces' control. The shortages were a result of the fact that many German factories and plantations were located in the occupied areas. Therefore, they did not have access to them. Consequently, *askari* dressed differently depending on what they could access from the enemy.



Plate 47. German *askari* (Walter Rehfeldt, German East Africa, 1916-17)

Source:

www.reichskolonialamt.de/inhalt/rehfeldt/rehfeldt.htm

The above painting portrays three German *askari*. The *askari* on the right-hand side who is facing the other two has a red mark on the sleeve of his left hand. This means that he is either a sergeant/NCO, also known as a *Schausch/Effendi*, or a corporal, also known as an *Ombascha* who normally led a group of ten *askari*. As a leader, he is portrayed to be smartly dressed in his uniform and with complete war gear. The uniforms of the other two *askari* who are facing the leader are in a very poor condition. They are not dressed in proper German *askaris'* uniform and, except for the guns, their war gear is not as proper as their leader's. For example, their hats are not proper *askaris'* uniform. In addition, one of them is smoking his pipe. The posture of all the *askari* indicate that they are highly relaxed, and they have time to smoke. This painting implies that *askaris'* leaders were the smartest, no matter the circumstances, and that there was a very good comradeship among the *askari* of all ranks. However, this painting also shows some of the hardships *askaris* faced. The only difference between the painting and reality is that the hardships affected all the *askari* despite one's rank. For example, all of them suffered from diseases, hunger and other kinds of shortages caused by the war.

Life in Germans War-front Resting Camps

Askari and carriers



Plate 48. German *askari* playing cards (Walter Rehfeldt, place unknown, 1914-17) Source: www.reichskolonialamt.de/inhalt/rehfeldt/rehfeldt.htm

Most of the German *askari* in the above painting are not dressed in proper uniforms. Except for the *Effendi*, the others are dressed in uniforms that are not in good condition. Some are wearing hats with different designs. The *askari* on the left is sitting with his back on the tree and “admiring” the holes on his torn shirt. In the corner on the left side, there are cooking stones with ashes and few firewood. In addition, there is a pot, bowl and extra firewood beside the cooking stones which indicate that cooking food for the *askari* was done in the resting camps. In the middle near the tree, two men are standing close to each other. They are chatting, while one is pointing a finger at the game of cards. Four men are sitting on what looks like a mat and are playing cards. On the right-hand side, the *Effendi* is standing, watching the cards game with interest. On the far right-hand side in the background, an *askari* is talking to two carriers. In the middle of the background, three men are chatting. Generally, *askari* in this painting are depicted as a happy and comfortable group as implied by their smiling faces. The background indicates that it is a temporary military camp. The camp is full of camouflage as suggested by the tree branches on top of the roofs of huts. The painting was intended to show the people in the metropole the activities of *askari* and the general atmosphere in the camps. It also indicates that there was a difference between *askari* and carriers. They did not relate much outside work.

Officers



Plate 49. German officers' playing cards in a resting camp (Walter Rehfeldt, German East Africa, 1914-17) Source: www.reichskolonialamt.de/inhalt/rehfeldt/rehfeldt.htm

The above painting portrays three uniformed German officers sitting under a huge tree. They are sitting on chairs and playing cards on a table between them. The table is covered with a piece of cloth. There are also two servants; one is holding a kettle and pouring tea into a cup. The other servant is holding a bowl full of snacks. This means that the servants are serving tea and snacks to the officers. On the left corner, ducks are drinking some water from a large bowl. One soldier is sitting on a 10.5-cm German howitzer gun. The background indicates that German troops were good at camouflage. The painting was intended to show the German public the activities officers in the war camps.

However, when compared to the painting in plate 48 which depicts *askaris*' activities in the same kind of camp, one can notice the differences between the two groups of people presented. The *askari* and officers are both playing cards, but their environment of playing cards are very different. *Askari* are sitting on the mat close to cooking place, while the officers are at the table where servants are serving them some tea. The *askari* cook for themselves, while the German officers have servants who cook for them. The officers could move around with ducks (carried by their personal carriers), but the *askari* could not. In general, the two paintings suggest that, no matter the circumstances, the difference in social status between the European officers and the "natives," (in this case *askari*) was maintained.

Also, the two faced different kinds of hardships. For example, it was true that there was a shortage of uniforms because of lack of cloths. The two paintings indicate that the problem of uniforms affected the rank and file *askari* than it did the European officers. This is because, in the provision of needs, the Europeans were given the priority.

Germans top officers in WWI



Plate 50. Governor Schnee (unknown photographer and place, 1916-1918).
Source: DKG. 11508562.

The photograph portrays the German East Africa governor in uniform. He is standing near his tent. He is holding something in his right hand. Behind him is his servant, also in uniform. The background shows that he was in the bush. This photograph was intended to show the German public that the governor of German East Africa participated in WWI and that he lived in the bush and slept in tents just like any other soldier who participated in this war. Although it is true that he moved around with the troops and that he stayed with the main force to the end, he was moving with a good number of servants and carriers whose sole job was to serve him. He did not participate in combat. Therefore, he did not suffer as much as the *askari* or other combatants or non-combatants did.



Plate 51. General Lettow Vorbeck in the field (Unknown photographer and place, 1916-1918). Source: DKG. 11508631.

The above photograph portrays two uniformed European men. The man who is sitting on the iron case and who is holding a hat in his right hand is General Lettow Vorbeck. The other officer, whose name is not known, is sitting on the ground. The background indicates that this photograph was taken in the forest. This photograph was intended to portray Lettow Vorbeck as an able commander, who participated in actual combat. In fact, as a soldier and commander, he was the very best, since he managed to lead his small army, which had many shortages, to the end against a huge army that was equipped with modern war equipment.

Towards the End of WWI

German Carriers near Surrender



Plate 52. German machine gun carriers and *askari* belonged to 21 Field Company after four years of war (Captain Ruckteschell, place unknown, 1918). Source: DKG. 11518664.

The above photograph portrays a group of war front carriers dressed in a mixture of European and African clothing and two *askari* in uniform. The two *askaris*' uniforms are not the 'usual' German *askaris*' uniform. The first carrier on the left-hand side is carrying a small bag, which is hanging from his shoulder, while the second carrier is carrying what looks like two calabashes. All the carriers are wearing load support (*ngata*) on their heads. The *ngata* are helpful in balancing the load on the head and reducing friction when a person is carrying something on his or her head. On the right-hand side, there are two *askari*; both are carrying guns. All men look strong and healthy. The background indicates that the photograph was taken in the forest. The photograph shows the strength and determination of carriers to continue with the fight even after the four years of fighting.

***Askari* near surrender**



Plate 53. German *askari* belonged to 21 Field Company after four years of war (Captain Ruckteschell, place unknown, 1918). Source: DKG. 11508658.

The above photograph portrays uniformed *askari*. All the *askari* in the front line are holding their guns. On the right hand side, one *askari* is carrying binoculars. All are wearing bullet porches. Although all are in some sort of uniform, their uniforms cannot be easily recognised as German *askaris*' uniform. Furthermore, all are wearing hats that look different from the original German *askaris*' hats. All the *askari* look strong and healthy. The arrangement of the people in this photograph like the people in plate 52 seem to show that *askari* were strong and could continue with combat even after four years of war.

The above two photographs (plates 52 and 53) depict carriers and *askari* at their very best in terms of loyalty, morale and health. It is true that the morale of the *askari* who were still with the force was high and that they were ready for further combat. However, there were also *askari* who were weak, sick, tired or wounded as a result of the long fighting.

5.7 Women under Occupation

Vaccination



Plate 54. Women assembled for vaccination Mann (Lt Col) Collection, German East Africa, 1917. Source: IWM.

The above photograph shows many African women and children who are dressed in traditional African clothing. The women in front are sitting, while those behind are standing. The background indicates that the women were in front of a European building. The description of the photo indicates that the women were gathered in order to receive vaccination. The photograph was taken by the British during their occupation of German East Africa. The arrangement of the people in the photograph was intended to show the "natives" who came forward for vaccination. This kind of photograph was good for propaganda purposes in order to show the medical needs of the "natives" and how the British were committed to fulfilling them.

However, the war led to the collapse of many social services, including medical services. In addition, it led to hunger, and made many people weak. As a result, there were many different diseases such as smallpox and diarrhoea which spread across German East Africa. The diseases affected the whole population. It is not known what kind of vaccination the women were waiting for. However, the photograph reflects the magnitude of the problem at a time when medical services were still more inadequate than before the war. Medical services were inadequate because there were very few British or Belgian medical officers compared to medical officers who were there during German colonial rule.

5.8 After the WWI

To the people of German East Africa, WWI did not end with a ceasefire. Families continued to suffer in different ways after the war. Major causes of many deaths were the diseases that affected people for many years after the war ended. Most were new kinds of diseases which were spread by the continuous movement of many people and animals across the territory. As carers of their families, women took care of their loved ones but some of them died of the infections protracted from the patients they took care of.

Sleeping Sickness



Plate 55. Sleeping sickness (Dr. Walter Otto Fischer, Nyasa, Tanganyika, 1929), Source: Unitätsarchiv Herrnhut: LBS.8748.

The above photograph portrays a man lying in bed. The bed is made of wood and hide or bast. The man's body is partly covered with a piece of cloth. Beside the bed, there is a woman, probably his wife. She is dressed in African clothing. According to the description of the photograph, the man is dying of sleeping sickness. The photographer intended to show the effects of sleeping sickness. The presence of the woman close to the sick man shows how the

women took care of the sick. After the war, there were many men who returned from the war front sick. Women took care of both their sick men and families.

Smallpox Sickness



Plate 56. Infectious diseases: Smallpox (Dr. Walter Otto Fischer, Nyasa, Tanganyika, 1929), Source: Unitätsarchiv Herrnhut: LBS.8748.

The above photograph shows the face and shoulders of a man that are covered with small pustules. The photographer intended to show the effect of smallpox on the African “natives.” This was one of the infectious diseases that killed many people in German East Africa. It began to kill people in high numbers in 1918 and it continued to kill many years afterwards.



Plate 57. Hookworm sickness (Dr. Walter Otto Fischer, Nyasa, Tanganyika, 1929), Source: Unitätsarchiv Herrnhut: LBS.8746.

The photograph above portrays an emaciated African man who is half dressed in African clothing. He is so thin that his ribs and collarbones can be seen very clearly. He is holding a long stick in his right hand. He looks very weak; probably, that is the reason he is carrying the walking stick. According to the description of the photograph, the man was suffering from hookworm. The photographer intended to show the effect of hookworm on “natives.” It was one of the diseases that affected many people due to their low immune system caused by war hardships.

Shortage of Cotton Cloth

The shortage of cotton cloths in German East Africa began as early as in the year 1915 because of the British blockade. The newly established factories for making cotton clothes were making clothes mainly for troops. However, by the end of the war, many Africans were in dire need of clothes. To solve the problem, those who had traditional technology for making cotton cloths made them. However, the technology was not accessible to all communities. Communities which had the technology sold cotton cloths at a very high price which was unaffordable to many. For that reason, people began wearing barks or skins. In some societies, the use of barks continued for years after the war.

Bark Cloth Making

The photograph below portrays three women and five children who are sitting under the canopy of banana trees. The women are almost nude. One of the women, who is sitting at the foreground with her back to the camera, is wearing a strip of bark cloth, which is held in place by a string. The woman on the left-hand side is nursing a toddler, while at the same time using a small hammer to beat a piece of bark laid on a piece of wood to soften it. The view of the third woman is half blocked; therefore, it is not easy to see what she is doing. The women are surrounded by bark materials and tools for making bark cloths. On the right-hand side, four children are watching the women, probably learning the skill. Although the women are almost nude, their nudeness is covered. The women’s arrangement suggests that the photograph intended to show “natives” making bark cloths.



Figure 58. Bark-cloth making among the Konde (Nyakyusa), (Dr. Walter Otto Fischer, Nyasa, Tanganyika, 1929), Source: Unitätsarchiv Herrnhut: LBS.8693.

5.9 Conclusion

The above images of *askaris*' women and other Africans who were involved in the war in German East Africa give further evidence of the role women played in the war. In general, women performed almost the same activities before, during and after the war. That is, there was a continuation of performing the women activities between peace time and war time. However, the meaning and significance of the same activities differ according to circumstances and needs of the communities. The images of African households before the WWI depict women performing their daily domestic chores such as flour making. The photographs have helped to describe the process involved in making flour. The making of cassava flour entails different procedures as compared to the making of maize flour. Also, the images have shown the differences between grinding and pounding grain in terms of the equipment used and process involved. In short, the images have improved the understanding of the fact that food preparation needed time, patience and effort. These made the *askari* demand for women/wives at the war front. *Askaris*, as men, knew that in order to have a good meal one must follow the whole process in flour making. Also, they knew that women mainly had such patience and time to do such repetitive and tiring work. During the war, *askari* needed more time to concentrate on the fighting ahead rather than on preparing meals. At the same time, they needed to eat well in order to stay healthy and maintain their strength to fight. In general, women activities were

complementing men's activities at the war front. Therefore, women's supportive activities at the war front, especially in the domestic sphere, played a role in the health and strength of *askari* during the war, particularly in WWI.

Women at the war front had to march with the troops while carrying loads. Images of women marching have revealed these women's appearance and type of loads they carried. *Askaris'* women carried the *askari* personal property and food for their families. This means that the *askari* were marching while carrying mainly war gear and rifles, which enabled them to be ready for battle all the time. This is important in war because then, an *askari* could manoeuvre and attack or fight back quickly to avert danger. Also, an *askari* preferred that his personal property be carried by his wife to get the assurance of its safety. In addition, by carrying loads, women assisted the military in logistics especially regarding carrying provisions for *askari*. Therefore, in the marching, women's activities such as carrying *askari's* personal property and food complemented the *askaris'* activities of protecting the troops.

Women at the home front lived in the constant fear of abduction. The images have shown the reaction of women in the presence of *askaris* whom they feared. Also, the images of the abducted girls show how young the abducted women could be and how helpless they looked. These images of women have effectively shown their war experiences through the emotions that women had concerning abductions in a way that written documents alone could not show. Also, the images of the sick during and after the war have exposed the impact of war in terms of diseases. It is not completely effective for written documents to explain the appearance of the sick the way photographs can. Also, the presence of women closer to the sick men underscores their role as carers. Therefore, these images have succeeded in complementing written documents.

Furthermore, visual images can produce information which one has failed to ascertain in written documents. In the case of WWI, British officers' accounts indicates that all British troops did not have women in their camps or mobile columns. However, a photograph that shows women in the British camp that are cooking suggests otherwise. In this context, it does not matter whose women they were. This is because, they were in the British camp and the British officers allowed their presence in the camp, which means accommodating them was not a strange idea to the British. The presence of the women in the British camp indicates that women's participation at the war front was important in all forces that were involved in WWI in German East Africa.

CHAPTER SIX

6.0 The Impact of WWI on African Women

6.1 Introduction

This chapter assesses the overall impact of WWI on women in German East Africa and sums up the situation in other African territories. The impact of the war on women started to be felt from the time when the war began and intensified during time when the Germans in East Africa were on the defense against the allied forces, that is, from 1916 onwards. Women in German East Africa were affected in all stages of the war which included during the WWI campaign, during the occupation of German East Africa by the allied forces, after the armistice and even after the establishment of the League of Nations' mandate, which put German East Africa under the British and the Belgians. This chapter seeks to answer the question: What challenges did African women face after the war? To answer the question, this chapter looks at the short-term and long-term effects of the war on women in various parts of German East Africa. The reason for doing that is that the information on women relating to this period is both scanty and scattered. In addition, this chapter looks at the impact of the war on African men in the territory. This is an important issue to examine because, in order to understand the impact of the war on women, one has to understand first how the war affected other members in the communities concerned. This knowledge is important because, although women were the main actors in production and reproduction, to ensure continuity of their communities, men's support was very important. Women have always depended on their men for protection and support, especially in activities that require much strength. Therefore, regarding the wartime, it may be appropriate to argue that the more negatively war impacted men, the heavier the women's burden became.

The chapter starts with a general discussion on war. The discussion is followed by an examination of how Africans in different territories participated in WWI and the general challenges they faced during and after the war in the African territories that belonged to the Germans and the allied forces. The objective is to show why German East Africa had more consequences of WWI than any other territory in Africa. The discussion of Africans' involvement and the outcome of their involvement in WWI in German East Africa starts from the mobilisation period immediately after the war was declared in Europe. The discussion will be on both those who were involved in the war directly as part of the troops and those who were not at the war front. Then, the chapter will discuss the impact of WWI in the aftermath of the war. The impact of the war on women will be examined throughout the discussion.

6.2 WWI in Africa and Its Impacts

In Africa, actual combat during WWI mainly took place in four territories, namely German East Africa, Cameroon, Togoland and German Southwest Africa. All the four territories were part of the German colonial empire. However, looking at WWI in Africa, there were other territories that were involved in the war. To meet the demands of the war, the allied forces used the Africans in their territories to fight the Germans. As a result, besides the Africans in the three German territories, more than ten African territories which belonged to the allied forces were involved in the war and the war affected more than the three German territories. Africans' participation in this war was both direct and indirect. In their direct participation in the war, Africans were part of the troops in the campaign as *askari*, servants, carriers, labourers and *askaris'* wives. They provided the required workforce in the allied territories such as Senegal, Nigeria, British Protectorate (Kenya), Uganda and Belgian Congo. Most of the men who participated directly in the war worked as carriers and *askari*.

The number of carriers must have been large, but it is unknown because of poor recording and the methods used to obtain the carriers. The estimated number of carriers and other followers used by the British and their allies throughout the war in German East African campaign alone was about one million.⁸³⁹ It included 321,567 followers from German East Africa.⁸⁴⁰ At the same time, by the time the war ended the allied forces had used about 100,000 combatants.⁸⁴¹ To these combatants, the British had contributed more than 60,000 men, the Portuguese about 10,000 men and the Belgians more than 15,000 men. They were used to fight the Germans in German East Africa alone.⁸⁴² More than three quarters of the allied forces' combatants were Africans. The high number of Africans involved in WWI, applied to Cameroon and Togoland, where the British, French and Belgians recruited Africans from Nigeria, Gold Coast, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Guinea or Congo. In short, this was the largest mobilisation of labour that Africa had ever seen, and the methods used to get Africans to work as carriers/labourers were similar to those of slavery.⁸⁴³ Killingray has reported:

⁸³⁹ John Iliffe, *A Modern History of Tanganyika* (Cambridge: University Press, 1979), 249; *See*, David Killingray, "The war in Africa," in *History of the First World War*, ed. Hew Strachan (Oxford: University Press, 1998), 98; *See also*; Geoffrey Hodges, *Kariakor: The Carrier Corps*, ed. Roy Griffin (Nairobi: University Press, 1999), 34.

⁸⁴⁰ Hodges, *Kariakor*, 34.

⁸⁴¹ Killingray, "The war in Africa," 93 and *see also*, Hodges, *Kariakor*, 34.

⁸⁴² Iliffe, *A Modern History*, 243-244; *See also*, Hodges, *Kariakor*, 34.

⁸⁴³ Killingray, "Labour Exploitation," 485; *See also*, Page, *The Chiwaya War*, 49.

African recruiters . . . extorted labour for the Belgian supply-lines operating through to Lake Tanganyika and the escalating war in East Africa. Forced recruitment of labour stripped bare large areas of eastern Belgian Congo, Uganda, Kenya [East African protectorate], German East Africa, Northern Rhodesia, Nyasaland and Northern regions of Portuguese East Africa. The heaviest burden fell on German East Africa, . . . where both sides conscripted manpower for carrying. The total number of people forced into the Great War as labour is beyond accurate calculation.⁸⁴⁴

The recruitment of strong male Africans to work as soldiers and carriers had many consequences for the communities involved. In West, East and Central Africa “the only people you [could] see in the village were old people and women.”⁸⁴⁵ Most of the carriers and *askari* were men on whom the African families depended. They were taken away from their villages to go and labour in campaigns within their territories or in foreign lands irrespective of the demands of their families, required agricultural labour or economic demands of their communities.⁸⁴⁶ Fighting in a foreign land had more negative effects on most African men than fighting within their territories. Evidence shows that the farther men were from home, the higher the death rates among them. It was argued that, for most men, when they were far from home, they lost the hope of ever returning home alive, and therefore once sick, they lost the will to continue living.⁸⁴⁷ It means that, of those who fought in foreign lands, few returned to their homes alive as compared to those who fought in war close to their communities. Many homes felt the impact of the war for a long time because of the loss of their loved ones. The gap caused by their absence affected their families and societies in general in terms of the shortage of labour. The shortage of labour lowered production which consequently affected a family’s economy.⁸⁴⁸ Heavy burdens relating to agriculture and other activities in the villages fell on women. Women performed difficult duties which were normally done by men. For example, they trapped wild animals to prevent them from ravaging farms.⁸⁴⁹ A Malawian woman, who witnessed the impact of WWI summed up the situation as follows:

After men went to war, most of the land was sparsely populated. There were very few people. Women were in trouble here in the villages. They were worried and said there were no men to dig in the fields for them. How were we to survive? . . . Many people who went to war died there. The few who came back, were mostly very thin and hungry. If they found you in the farm digging cassava they would ask for a lot of cassava. Even if the cassava was bitter, they would still chew it as they went their way. They died as they went along When they went to war they were many and in big groups but when coming back they came in small groups of four or five and they would not all get home, since some died on the way due to

⁸⁴⁴ Killingray, “Labour Exploitation,” 489.

⁸⁴⁵ Joe Lunn, Male Identity and martial Codes of Honor: A Comparison of the War Memoirs of Robert Graves Ernst Junger, and Kande Kamara, *The Journal of Military History* 69, no.3 (July, 2005),716.

⁸⁴⁶ Killingray, “Labour Exploitation,” 488.

⁸⁴⁷ Hodges, Kariakor, 17; *See also*, Killingray, “Labour Exploitation,” 492.

⁸⁴⁸ Killingray, “Labour Exploitation,” 495-496; *See*, Tambila, A History of the Rukwa Region, 208; *See*, Pesek, “The Force Publique,” 5; *See also*, Page, The Chiwaya War, 135-138.

⁸⁴⁹ Page, The Chiwaya War, 134.

the long distance they trekked home. Those who reached home were treated well by their relatives so that they could easily regained their health. . . Most relatives knew of the deaths of their relatives after seeing the other men coming back while theirs did not.⁸⁵⁰

Therefore, to this effect, WWI affected both men and women in other territories apart from those in which the main fighting occurred.

6.3 Impact of WWI in German Colonial Territories

In German African territories, where the actual combat took place, circumstances differed from territory to territory, and so was the effect of the war. Except for German Southwest Africa, all German territories used Africans to fight allied forces. The Germans in Southwest Africa did not use Africans out of their fear of possible uprisings from the Africans in the territory.⁸⁵¹ Instead, the all-white *Schutztruppe* and the settler community organised themselves and fought the allied forces, which in their case, was the South Africa force. The food stocked in the territory for the *Schutztruppe* was enough to last for more than a year, which reduced the possibility of troops living off the land. This is not to say that the Africans were never affected by the war, but that direct and indirect effects of the war on Africans were fewer than those that affected the Africans in other territories where combat took place. The main kind of suffering for Africans in the territory was the famine that was caused by shortage of harvests in 1914/1915 as a result of poor rains. The situation was complicated further by the lack of imported grains because of the blockade.⁸⁵² The blockade was the result of the war. Since Africans in German Southwest Africa colony depended on grain as their source of food, its shortage meant hunger and suffering to most of them.

6.3.1 Impact of WWI in Togoland

The three remaining German territories in Africa that were involved in WWI were German East Africa, Togoland and Cameroon. To start with, in Togoland, WWI ended earlier than it did in Cameroon and German East Africa because of its weak position in terms of defence and armament. Togoland had no *Schutztruppe*. It had only *Polizeitruppe* (police force). The police force comprised 152 paramilitary police officers, 416 local police officers and 125 border guards. In addition, there were only four machine guns, fourteen 1898-pattern rifles and many outdated rifles 1871 pattern *Jäger* carbine.⁸⁵³ The force was well equipped to maintain peace

⁸⁵⁰ Gogo Dorothy Liwewe, as interviewed by Melvin Page on December 28, 1972 in Margaret R. Higonnet, ed., *Lines of Fire: Women Writers of World War I* (New York: Plume, 1999), 321-322

⁸⁵¹ Hew Strachan, *The First World War in Africa* (Oxford: University Press, 2004), 63, 76

⁸⁵² Strachan, *The First World War*, 77.

⁸⁵³ Strachan, *The First World*, 14.

within the territory, but not to confront the regular soldiers of the allied forces. Furthermore, the enemy was on both sides, Gold Coast (Ghana) under the British on one side, and Dahomey (Benin) under the French on the other. Therefore, it was difficult for Togoland to defend itself against the stronger, external enemy. To avoid the war, the deputy governor, Major von Doering, appealed for neutrality, but the British and the French rejected his appeal. The French invaded Togoland on 6 August 1914 and occupied a small town called Little Popo. The British did the same and, by 12 August, the coastal city of Lomé was under their total occupation. The allied forces occupied both towns without facing any resistance as the Germans had moved towards Kamina. The German military commander, Captain Georg Pfähler, died in action on 16 August 1914.⁸⁵⁴ This affected the troop's morale and organisation, and Major von Doering's confidence in facing the allied forces. Therefore, Germans waged a short but strong fight at the Chra River near Kamina on 22 August 1914. They destroyed the Kamina wireless station on the night of 24/25 August 1914 and surrendered unconditionally on 26 August 1914.⁸⁵⁵ In about three weeks, WWI was over in Togoland.

The Africans in Togoland were less affected by active war than those in Cameroon and German East Africa, because in Togoland the war was fought for a short time. The largest part of the colony was not touched by actual fighting, something that made Africans not to suffer much from the war. The main destruction was on two German colonial government projects which were the wireless station and the railway. Therefore, it would be correct to argue that WWI affected Africans in Togoland less than it did on those in the other two colonies. However, WWI continued to affect Africans in Togoland while Togo was under British occupation, since the British used them as a source of labour for the WWI campaigns in Cameroon and German East Africa.

6.3.2 Impact of WWI in Cameroon

Unlike Togoland, Cameroon had a *Schutztruppe*. By 1914, Cameroon's *Schutztruppe* had 205 German officers and NCOs, and 1650 *askari*. More soldiers were recruited to meet the demands of WWI. By 1915, the number of recruits had increased to 1,460 Europeans and 6,550 Africans which formed 34 companies.⁸⁵⁶ In the end, the number of the Cameroon *askari* who crossed the

⁸⁵⁴ Frederick James Moberly, *Military Operations Togoland and the Cameroons: 1914-1916* (London: Macmillan, 1931), 31; *See also*, Strachan, *The First World war*, 17.

⁸⁵⁵ Strachan, *The First World war*, 16; *See also*: Byron Farwell, *The Great War in Africa* (London: W.W. Norton and Co., 1986), 27-28.

⁸⁵⁶ Strachan, *The First World war*, 22.

border with the Germans and entered Spanish Guinea did not exceed 8,000.⁸⁵⁷ Due to the high number of soldiers, thousands of African labourers supported the troops as carriers. However, the allied forces were superior to the Germans in terms of their number and arms.

To face the allied forces and defend their territory, Cameroon's *Schutztruppe* changed their fighting strategy. They fought using Africans' combat manoeuvres which were common in the pre-colonial and colonial periods. A good example was the Ashanti traditional battle tactics which were common among several African armies. Under this strategy, the forward units had to carry out fighting, withdrawal and coaxing the enemy forces deep into the territory. A strong defensive position would be in a certain village, where the enemy would be pinned in place.⁸⁵⁸ The pre-colonial armies used strategic methods such as open order and frontal attack by all-round defence in order to prolong warfare.⁸⁵⁹ These methods enabled *Schutztruppe* soldiers "to avoid intense fighting, to limit its own casualties while inflicting losses on the enemy, and to give up ground rather than hold it."⁸⁶⁰ Consequently, the war lasted longer in Cameroon than in Togoland. In Cameroon, the war started with the French invasion of 6th August 1914 and the occupation of two small posts near the border. It was followed by the British who invaded Cameroon on 25th August 1914, only to find Germans ready for battle. The war continued for almost a year and a half before it ended. The war officially ended on 18th February 1916, when the Germans, their troops and other African supporters crossed the border and entered the Spanish Guinea territory.⁸⁶¹ At the time of crossing the border, there were 1000 Germans who were accompanied by about 6000 *askari*, 7,000 *askaris'* families and followers, and more than 15,000 people.⁸⁶²

WWI affected Africans in Cameroon in more ways than it did in Togo. Both the Germans and the allied forces conscripted young men. Germans recruited 8,000 African combatants,⁸⁶³ and an unknown number of able-bodied men to serve as carriers and labourers. The number of carriers was more than that of the soldiers in the army since many were needed to carry arms, medical supplies and provisions. At the time, the normal number of carriers to support a soldier in any African campaigns was roughly six or more carriers in order for a soldier to survive at

⁸⁵⁷ Sir Charles Prestwood Lucas, ed., *The Cameroons Campaign*, in *The Empire at War*, IV: *Africa* (Oxford: University Press, 1924), 67; *See also*, Strachan, *The First World War*, 54.

⁸⁵⁸ Bruce Vendervort, *War of Imperial Conquest*, 97.

⁸⁵⁹ Strachan, *The First World War*, 24.

⁸⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶¹ Frederick Quinn, *An African Reaction to World War I: The Beti of Cameroon*, *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines* 13, Cahier 52 (1973): 725-726; *See also*, Moberly, *Togoland and the Cameroons*, 421.

⁸⁶² Strachan, *The First World War*, 54; *See also*, Quinn, "An African Reaction," 726.

⁸⁶³ Sir Lucas, ed., "The Cameroons Campaign," 67; *See also*, Moberly, *Togoland and the Cameroons*, 421.

the war front.⁸⁶⁴ The combatants in the colonial African armies needed that support to function. In the case of Cameroon, both forces recruited carriers from within the territory. The number of soldiers in the allied forces was about 13,000 soldiers.⁸⁶⁵ If one added that number to that of the soldiers in German forces, the total number which is 21,000 soldiers, implies that the demand for carriers in Cameroon was huge. In any case, the demand for carriers drained important labour force from agriculture on which the lives of Africans depended.

Although the total number of the carriers recruited by both the Germans and the allied forces in Cameroon is not known, judged from the number of soldiers, the carriers who moved with the troops must have been in thousands. The removal of that number of able-bodied men from food production had a significant effect on the families that were left behind. Women and children alone could produce much. As a result, food production, especially in 1915/1916, was much affected. In addition, many people died because of the war. According to Quinn, when Africans in Cameroon compared the effect of WWI with their own pre-colonial wars, “they spoke with horror of the White man’s war. They had never seen anything like it. Their own wars involved only a few people over a short period of time and were consequently less destructive.”⁸⁶⁶

The Germans had enough food in different depots for their troops, which added to the demand of carriers, since more were needed to transport provisions in the communication lines. However, in the war circumstances, it was not always possible for troops to have access to the provisions stored in different depots. This means that it became difficult to feed the soldiers, carriers and other non-combatants who were at the war front. As a result of this difficulty, some of the German troops lived off the land while advancing or retreating.⁸⁶⁷ The food obtained from the land was not always enough for all. In such cases, carriers were on the receiving end but were still expected to carry heavy loads resulting in many deaths and suffering.⁸⁶⁸ To avoid deaths because of hunger and/or disease, many opted to desert, though desertion was a risky act that was not always successful since carriers were under guard. Once caught, one could be sentenced to death. In addition, by deserting one was sacrificing the wages one had already laboured for.

⁸⁶⁴ Pesek, “The Force Publique,” 5.

⁸⁶⁵ Strachan, *The First World War*, 32.

⁸⁶⁶ Quinn, *An African Reaction*, 725.

⁸⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 55.

⁸⁶⁸ Killingray, “Labour Exploitation,” 493.

The allied forces went to war with Cameroon accompanied by their own carriers. The major problem they had was feeding their troops. The communication lines were too long and extended to the remote areas, which affected the organisation and control of the supply lines. This led to failure on the part of the allied forces' administration in forwarding the supplies to the front.⁸⁶⁹ To add to the problem, many carriers were either deserting or dying of neglect and the diseases that reduced their ability to move supplies. To solve the problem of carriers, the allied forces recruited more carriers from within Cameroon. The move did not solve the problem of desertion and disease among their troops, but only aggravated the problem of food shortages. The troops depended on meagre rations; hence, several lives of the allied troops depended on what they could obtain from the villages, that is, by living off the land.⁸⁷⁰

The act of the troops living off the land meant taking harvests by force in the name of requisition or by pillaging. All the actions deprived those who owned the farms of their harvests. The troops living off the land caused hunger in the areas concerned, since villagers were left with nothing or very little food. The allied forces had 13,000 soldiers and thousands of carriers who needed food. Therefore, much food was taken from the people who produced for subsistence purposes. Some villages were empty due to the troop's habit of living off the land, a habit which forced residents to leave their villages.⁸⁷¹ The displacement of many Africans from their villages affected food production even further.

The effects of the war were felt differently by different African communities in Cameroon. Unlike the carriers, *askari* had their wives and children with them in the campaign.⁸⁷² *Askaris'* families had fewer problems in terms of food shortages but had more hardships because they were closer to combat activities as moving with troops posed many risks to all those who were involved. The risks ranged from fatigue because of constant long marches to many deaths. Many non-combatants who were part of the troops died from fighting and disease.⁸⁷³ At the same time, those at home experienced the hardships associated with hunger which were caused by the troops on both sides who were living off the land and looted food from villagers, thereby leaving most people without food.⁸⁷⁴

⁸⁶⁹ Killingley, "Labour Exploitation," 493.

⁸⁷⁰ Strachan, *The First World War*, 38.

⁸⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 55.

⁸⁷² Strachan, *The First World War*, 22.

⁸⁷³ *Ibid.*, 46.

⁸⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 45, 55.

After the war, the British and the French occupied Cameroon. A number of African men died during the war. Many more men, women and children had difficulty in getting enough food; therefore, more people died of hunger. The actual number of the dead in Cameroon is not known, but were in thousands. The same happened to the troops of the allied forces who fought in Cameroon. For example, of the 4,000 Nigerians who fought in Cameroon, about 1000 soldiers died.⁸⁷⁵ The death of men affected the women at home as they had to take care of their families alone. This impact was felt by the women in both Cameroon and the allied forces' territories.

In some Cameroonian communities, women were affected much by the breakdown of both colonial and traditional authorities. During occupation of Cameroon by allied forces, there were a few colonial officers and very few police officers in the country. Taking advantage of the situation, many individuals committed crimes that led to anarchy and insecurity. As a result, the crimes associated with robbery and extortion increased, especially in the villages and in remote areas.⁸⁷⁶ Many people became unruly including chiefs. Africans who owned any type of uniform, for example, uniformed police boys who were supposed to work mainly as messengers looted from people whatever they could put their hands on.⁸⁷⁷ In such cases, the women who lost their men to war, were the victims who were easy target, since they lacked immediate support and protection from their men. The former German *askari* who were left behind also took advantage of the situation and roamed various villages, raiding compounds, seizing women and looting goods. They also took livestock and other properties in the name of requisition.⁸⁷⁸

The absence of missionaries and European doctors in Cameroon contributed further to the breakdown of the colonial authority. German doctors crossed borders with the *Schutztruppe*, while German Catholic priests were interned and evacuated.⁸⁷⁹ The two had social authority in terms of people's education and health. The absence of doctors and missionaries had immediate effects on some communities, especially in terms of the treatment of various kinds of sicknesses caused by the war. To fill the vacuum, traditional healers regained dominance; hence, an increase in the number of accusations of witchcraft and witch-hunt in the affected villages. The

⁸⁷⁵ Sir Lucas, *The Cameroon Campaign*, 119.

⁸⁷⁶ Quinn, "An African Reaction," 725.

⁸⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 728.

⁸⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷⁹ Strachan, *The First World War*, 60.

witchcraft offence was punishable by death.⁸⁸⁰ In many African societies, witchcraft hunt affected women more than men as many old women were associated with the vice.⁸⁸¹ Once a person was accused of witchcraft, it was difficult for him or her to argue against the imaginary offence of the accuser. To make matters worse for the accused, one's accuser did not need to provide any evidence other than his or her word; he or she would be believed. In witchcraft cases, evidence has never been a priority, probably because many believe witchcraft to be a psychic thing.⁸⁸² Normally, chiefs would intervene in the matter, but in their absence the accused who were mostly women ended up being severely punished.

Furthermore, some chiefs and their followers went to the Spanish Guinea territory with the *Schutztruppe*. Their absence led to the breakdown of traditional authority. For instance, 72 chiefs of the Beti of Yaounde and several thousand followers left Cameroon with the Germans.⁸⁸³ In the absence of their traditional leaders, some of those who remained behind formed their own secret societies. For example, to fill the vacuum in the belief system, some of the Beti people of Cameroon formed a secret society called Leopard Society, which tried to influence metaphysical order.⁸⁸⁴ Such societies used intimidation and sorcery to overpower people psychologically. In that situation, women were the most affected because they were an easy target for victimisation.

Slavery and the slave trade, which were practised in Cameroon during German rule, intensified during and after WWI. Cameroon became a producer of slaves. Hausa traders got slaves from Cameroon. They raided societies along the borders in order to catch slaves. In the circumstances many young women became victims. The Africans who lived in the Adamawa area were the most affected. The Hausa raided them even in the post-war period. Cameroon was re-divided into two territories and mandated under the British and the French. In this re-division, Adamawa was divided into two and a large part was under the French while few districts were under the British. According to the League of Nations' Agreement, both were supposed to end slavery and related ills in Adamawa. However, they failed to do so. On the British side, slave dealings and kidnappings continued up to the 1920s. But slaves continued to be smuggled out of Adamawa up to the 1930s. It was hard to abolish slavery and slave trade completely because some powerful Africans in administration in Adamawa such as Hamman Haji, who was the

⁸⁸⁰ Quinn, "An African Reaction," 725

⁸⁸¹ E.G. Parrinder, "African Ideas of Witchcraft," *Folklore* 67, no. 3, (Sept., 1956): 143-144 [142-150].

⁸⁸² *Ibid.*, 144.

⁸⁸³ Quinn, "An African Reaction," 725.

⁸⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 725-726.

district head of Madagali in Adamawa, were involved in slavery and slave raids. The British removed him from his position in 1927.⁸⁸⁵ His removal marked the end of slave raiding in Adamawa.

6.3.3 Impact of WWI in German East Africa

In German East Africa, the war began in August 1914 and ended in November 1918 with the surrender of General Lettow-Vorbeck and his army. The war lasted more than four years, much longer than in any of the other three African territories which were under German rule. The fact of the matter was that the longer the war lasted, the severer the consequences were. Therefore, German East Africa had many war effects of different forms and magnitude. In addition, the effects of the war spread to both combatants and non-combatants. However, the effects were worse for non-combatant Africans, since they were not a priority in terms of access to resources and treatment compared to the *askari* and their families.

German East Africa contributed the largest number of non-combatants Africans which affected availability of labour power in the territory. German East Africa was a source of manpower to both the Germans and the allied forces. The latter conscripted Africans in German East Africa mainly as non-combatants, that is, labourers and carriers. It is estimated that 1,000,000 non-combatants laboured in German East Africa under the allied forces. During the same time, the Germans conscripted an unknown number of carriers to assist their force. Although the actual number of carriers/labourers used by the Germans is not known, most of those who participated in the war confirmed the information about the high numbers of carriers involved in general terms. For example, Governor Schnee noted that “the largest part of the capable native male population of German East Africa, was involved in transport at least for a short time.”⁸⁸⁶ In addition, General Lettow-Vorbeck said that there were hundreds of thousands of German East African carriers that worked for his force.⁸⁸⁷ In some cases when there was a shortage of men, women became the forced, unpaid labourers. However, more men provided labour to the war effort than women.

High recruitment of men for carrier work left many villages with only the elderly, women and children. The Germans conscripted as many men as they could. Non-combatants were from

⁸⁸⁵ Andreas Eckert, Slavery in Colonial Cameroon, 1880s to 1930s in Slavery and Colonial rule in Africa, eds. Suzanne Miers and Martin Klein (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 1999), 143 (133-148).

⁸⁸⁶ Heinrich von Schnee, *Deutsch-Ostafrika im Weltkriege: wie wir lebten und kämpften* (Leipzig: Quelle & Meyer, 1919), 124.

⁸⁸⁷ von Lettow-Vorbeck, *My Reminiscence*, 24.

different walks of life. They included peasants, teachers, deacons and even *jumbes* who happened to belong to or were closer to the British missionaries.⁸⁸⁸ The allied forces conscripted those who escaped German recruitment or those who returned home after pottering for the Germans. However, most of the people who were conscripted were unskilled men from farming societies.⁸⁸⁹ The recruiters affected many villages in the territory. As a result, men were almost absent from most villages. Bishop Lechaptois, who was in the western part of the territory (near lake Tanganyika), observed with respect to the absence of men from the villages: “The majority of grown-up men and even young boys . . . have been involved in portorage by force, some for this side, some for the other.”⁸⁹⁰ Recruitment of men for portorage affected both the men who worked far from home and the women who remained behind.

In the allied forces, hunger and improper clothing caused many deaths to both the combatants and non-combatants. However, the concern here is more on the treatment of non-combatants such as carriers than combatants, since most of them came from German East Africa. The carriers under the British had very little in terms of clothing and food. Each was given a single blanket for the entire service.⁸⁹¹ For different reasons, it was difficult for carriers to get well-cooked meals. The reasons for that were many, including flour going bad because of rainfall.⁸⁹² In addition, the rations were very meagre. For example, between late 1917 and early 1918, British carriers in the southern part of German East Africa got under 1,000 calories a day. The same happened in Turiani, where the allied forces halted on account of food shortages. Food rations were reduced to half and consisted of only hard tack and mealie.⁸⁹³ However, the carriers were expected to carry heavy loads under such harsh conditions. To compensate the lack of food, some carriers ate wild fruits and roots, which led to the death of many due to alkaloidal poisoning.⁸⁹⁴ Also, the poor living conditions and poor nutrition resulted in many diseases among the carriers. Hence, deaths resulting from diseases were common throughout the war.

Rainfall and cold weather affected the health of many carriers. In war camps, the rainy season was a problem because during that period it was difficult to enforce good hygiene. For example, in the rainy season of 1916 (March to May), carriers under the Germans were transporting

⁸⁸⁸ BNA CO 691/29, 184-198, Pangani District Political Officers Report, January 1919.

⁸⁸⁹ Killingray, *Labour Exploitation for Military Campaigns*, 498.

⁸⁹⁰ Bishop Lechaptois as quoted in Anselm Tambila, *A history of the Rukwa region (Tanzania) ca 1870-1940: Aspects of Economic and Social Change from Pre-Colonial to Colonial Times*, (Hamburg, 1981), 208.

⁸⁹¹ Page, *The Chivaya War*, 108.

⁸⁹² *Ibid.*, 19-110; *See also*, Hodges, *Kariakor*, 156-157.

⁸⁹³ Killingray, *Labour Exploitation*, 493; *See also*, Strachan, *The First World War*, 146.

⁸⁹⁴ Strachan, *The First World War*, 167.

supplies from Kilosa to Handeni. Within a period of three months, 20,000 male carriers died from various diseases.⁸⁹⁵ The major diseases that affected them were dysentery, malaria and pneumonia.⁸⁹⁶ This kind of loss repeated itself many times in different areas and on both sides because of the poor health care given to the carriers. The lack of proper food and long marches, coupled with the carrying of heavy loads, weakened the immune systems of the carriers. Most of them became weak and, therefore, were prone to diseases. Therefore, many deaths of carriers resulted from diseases rather than bullets.

Many families of the dead carriers never received compensation due to the biased regulations put in place by the colonial authority. For example, the British colonial military authorities paid compensation only if the dead carrier was a Christian or Muslim; hence, compensation was not paid to “pagans”. As casual labourers, carriers had wages, in the event of death, relatives had to claim the unpaid wages. Often, they had to mention where the person died, and the required evidence could be obtained from a fellow carrier who had witnessed the death.⁸⁹⁷ However, the whole process was very complicated even to those who returned alive, since most carriers were not properly registered. The British rejected many claims for the dead and even the carriers who returned alive.⁸⁹⁸ For example, up to August 1930, more than ten years after the WWI, the unpaid wages for missing carriers were as follows: 10,301 from Kenya, 27,422 from Tanganyika, 855 from Uganda and 645 from Zanzibar and Mafia. A total of 39,223 claims worth 150,586 British Pounds were made.⁸⁹⁹ After a long struggle, in 1934, the British agreed to pay only the Kenyan porters the amount due, while Tanganyika’s porters (and probably the rest) were never paid.⁹⁰⁰ The non-payment of carriers was a great injustice not only to the carriers concerned, but also to their families who suffered much as a result of the absence of their loved ones. Consequently, among the families of the dead and the carriers who returned alive, the pain of working without pay was dearly felt. In addition, the gap left behind by the dead carriers in terms of work force was hard to fill.

Askaris’ women at the war front suffered more than male non-combatants. The women who participated at the war front as *askaris’* wives or *askaris’* women had lower military status compared to the male non-combatants. These women were present on both sides that is, on the

⁸⁹⁵ Schnee, *Deutsch-Ostafrika*, 143-144; *See also*, Strachan, *The First World War*, 144.

⁸⁹⁶ Strachan, *The First World War*, 144.

⁸⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 179-180

⁸⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 182-183

⁸⁹⁹ Hodges, *Kariakor*, 182-183.

⁹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

allied forces side and on the German side. *Askaris'* wives marched, carrying their husbands' personal property and food for their families. However, their status, as members of the campaign, differed according to the force to which they belonged and the situation in which the force was. The status of the women in the Belgian *Force publique* was slightly above the status of the carriers, while the status of the women in the Rhodesia Native Regiment which belonged to the British allied forces was below that of the carriers. However, the status of women in the *Schutztruppe* changed according to the situation in which the troops were. Generally, as non-combatants, women suffered more than men because of their position as wives of the soldiers. In most cases, when things were tough, army commanders never considered *askaris'* families. For example, in 1917, an acute shortage of food forced the *Schutztruppe* commanders to reduce food rations. The daily normal *askari'*s food ration was one kilogram of flour or rice, in addition to meat or other relish. *Askari boys* (servants) and families had different food rations. However, the 1917 food shortage made Lettow-Vorbeck reduce *Askaris'* rations to 600 grams of flour or 400 grams of rice, without additional food for *askaris'* servants and families.⁹⁰¹ Hunger was a constant problem to the families, which increased their dependence on pillaging. Living off the land by pillaging affected communities found in the areas where the army passed. However, not on all routes there were communities to pillage. On many occasions, they passed through depopulated areas. In these cases, women faced because a higher risk of hunger and fatigue. Staying behind in the bush was risky due to a possible attack from wild animals.

Troops lived off the land, which had its disadvantages on the part of troops. Normally, troops from both sides preferred passing through populated areas in order to live off the land. However, not all the areas the troops passed through were fertile enough to produce good harvests which the troops could plunder. For example, in 1917, the southern part of German East Africa was a major theatre of war. However, due to two successive years of drought there very low harvest.⁹⁰² In addition, the districts occupied by the *Schutztruppe* had wide stretches of barren land.⁹⁰³ Therefore, food was not easily available even to the villagers in the districts. In this case *askaris'* violence and threats did not yield the expected results because villagers did not have any food to give them. This resulted in hunger in the *Schutztruppe* war camp.

Food shortages forced *askaris'* women to search for additional food in the environment they were in. They gathered roots, wild fruits, vegetables and honey from forests. Women gathered

⁹⁰¹ M. Taute, "A German Account of the Medical Side of the War in E. Africa, 1914-1918," *Tanganyika Notes and Records* 8, (Dec. 1939): 5-6.

⁹⁰² Strachan, *The First World War*, 120.

⁹⁰³ Lettow-Vorbeck, *My Reminiscence*, 175, 190.

vegetables such as wild spinach and mushrooms and roots.⁹⁰⁴ Some of the roots and leaves of plants such as bitter manioc were poisonous because of high prussic acid or alkaline, which was fatal.⁹⁰⁵ For bitter manioc to be free of prussic acid, its preparation needed long time, which could not be available under the war circumstances. Also, the gathered food was not enough, since it could not replace grain such as millet or maize. At the time, grain was a very important part of their diet, since marching required much physical energy which could easily be obtained from millet and maize. Consequently, lack of proper nutrition affected the health of *askaris*' wives and children. Moreover, a shortage of clean water was another problem for women. The leaves, roots and fruits were hard to clean as getting enough clean water was very difficult. Medically, any dirty meal can cause gastric irritation, which may lead to diarrhoea and dysentery.⁹⁰⁶ This means that women and their families were all the time in the constant risk of contracting such diseases.

Food which had gone bad also affected the health of many combatants and non-combatants at the war front. In German East Africa, most food was stored in the early days of the war, which is between 1914 and 1916. Grain flour stayed in good condition only for six months, while beans took between six months and one year. After that period, they started going bad. In 1917 when German troops needed provisions stored in the depots located in the south of the colony, most of it had gone bad.⁹⁰⁷ Due to food shortages, the troops were given rations of bad food. Eating such food, even if well-cooked, leads to diarrhoea and even dysentery.⁹⁰⁸ Therefore, many combatants and non-combatants got sick. At the time, among leading killer diseases, dysentery was the most dangerous, since it was hard to treat and most of the precautions taken did not work because of the poor conditions which people in camps and on the march had.

The rainy season came with many problems to the troops involved in the WWI campaign. One of the major problems was the hygiene of troops. At the time, the latrine system was not well organised; therefore, due to poor sanitation water was easily polluted, especially during the rainy season. Most of the Germans in the *Schutztruppe* drank boiled water that prevented them from contracting water-borne related diseases. But Africans preferred raw water to boiled water.⁹⁰⁹ As a result, many Africans including women were affected. Low temperature, which

⁹⁰⁴ Taute, A German Account, 5.

⁹⁰⁵ Ibid., 17.

⁹⁰⁶ Hodges, Kariakor, 153.

⁹⁰⁷ Taute, A German Account, 17; *See also*, von Lettow-Vorbeck, My Reminiscence, 216.

⁹⁰⁸ Taute, A German Account, 17.

⁹⁰⁹ Ibid., 7.

was common in the rain seasons, worsened the situation due to acute shortage of blankets and other kinds of appropriate clothing. Among Africans, only a few *askari* were given one blanket each whereas most of them did not get any.⁹¹⁰ The same applied to the mosquito nets which were mostly given to the Europeans.⁹¹¹ The shortage of blankets and nets affected *askaris'* women more than others, since the provision of clothing was never extended to the *askaris'* families. This increased women's and children's susceptibility to different ailments associated with mosquitoes, low temperatures and unclean water.

Floods resulted in the drowning of many of the *askaris'* families including women. The rains of February and March 1917 were very heavy and caused floods in most of the valleys in Rufiji District. Therefore, the main *Schutztruppe* force, which camped in the same area, was threatened by floods. The troops were ordered to move out of the area before the rains, but still quite a good number of them were caught up by the floods. Some of those who were caught by the floods were *askaris'* families and the Europeans who were still in the area. Some of the Africans drowned as they escaped from the floods through the woods. European women, children and the sick were moved to high ground areas. They had to wait for assistance in terms of food and transport to arrive from the allied forces so that they could be moved to safer areas.⁹¹² Several African women and children were drowned. Also, a few *askari* and carriers drowned as they tried to rescue their families.

As non-combatants followers, women were in constant danger of death or imprisonment because of their presence in active operations. Fighting occurred any time during marching or while they were in camps. Women were always at the rear during a march or with their husbands if they were in camps. During operations, sometimes the rear was attacked and, therefore, women found themselves in the middle of fighting. Being in the middle could lead to deaths or capture. Some of the women followers died during fights and those who were captured became prisoners. In one of these instances that occurred in October 1918, two companies of women were marching in the dark. The British cavalry patrol surprised them and opened fire. They killed several women.⁹¹³ This shows how, as non-combatants, women risked their lives for the sake of their husbands who were in the army.

⁹¹⁰ Taute, A German Account, 4.

⁹¹¹ Ibid.

⁹¹² von Lettow-Vorbeck, My Reminiscence, 180.

⁹¹³ FP 2659/1154, Lt. Lallemand Report, page 8 of the report.

A major cause of suffering for women and their families at the home front was military mobilisation of labour, which forced many men to leave their homes. The constant absence of men from their homes and in huge numbers affected women's lives in the short term and eventually the long term. This was because the non-combatants who were far from the war front also suffered more than those who participated in combat. In different villages, women felt the pinch from the start of WWI as their men became part of the portage system and their food was requisitioned. The German authorities requisitioned tons of food from 1914 to 1915 to feed the troops. They paid for the food and some of it was obtained from European plantations. More than 90% of the food came from Africans and only 10% was from the plantations.⁹¹⁴ After selling the surplus food, it was still difficult for most Africans to buy other local products in the market since local trade was in the hands of the Indian shopkeepers. Therefore, prices went up uncontrollably. In addition, in 1915, the Germans increased taxes for Africans and tax payment was made in cash instead of farm or animal produce as it was before the WWI. This was done to improve cash flow that had gone down because of the blockade.⁹¹⁵ However, it was a huge burden to Africans. Therefore, at the home front life began to change for the worse as early as 1915.

The intensive and extensive effect of the war began to be felt in 1916 after the allied forces launched an offensive. Food requisition by both forces was more intensive than ever before WWI. In addition, moving troops of both forces lived off the land. According to Schnee, the attitude of the Africans who lived in the areas where the armies passed through was peaceful, although soldiers requisitioned corn and animals.⁹¹⁶ However, he forgot that his soldiers were requisitioning food while holding guns. In any case, Africans had to appear peaceful and happy to part ways with the confiscated cattle and grain. The allied troops did the same. For example, the Belgian troops entered German East Africa without adequate food supplies because they expected to live off the land. In addition, Belgian *askari* had their women with them, which increased their demand for food by 20 per cent.⁹¹⁷ Therefore, they pillaged food and property in many villages and on the plantations of German East Africa, from Ruanda and Urundi to Tabora.⁹¹⁸ The consequence of their behavior was severe food shortage to many people of

⁹¹⁴ Strachan, *The First World War*, 121.

⁹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹¹⁶ Schnee, *Deutsch-Ostafrika*, 385.

⁹¹⁷ Hodges, *Kariakor*, 88.

⁹¹⁸ BNA CO 691/10, 548-645, Reports on Belgian Troops Atrocities from September 1916 to August 1917; *See also*, BNA CO 691/15, A Note from Political Officer, Bukoba District, July 1918.

German East Africa. Food shortages became a problem to most families since their food had been pillaged.

As mentioned earlier, young able-bodied men were absent from many villages. As a result, women took care of the children and the elderly and produced food to feed their families. Though the burden of food production was too huge for women, they struggled to produce enough food to feed their families. However, the moving troops of both forces took away much of the food they produced. One of the witnesses among the women who struggled to survive during WWI noted: “The labors of cultivation have fallen again on the women who on top of that have to provide the largest part of the supplies for the troops. The children help their mothers within the limit of their strength.”⁹¹⁹ To make matters worse, the armies of both sides, after taking away what they could carry, burnt the rest. Although villagers tried to hide their harvests by burying or hiding them in the bush, most of the harvests were taken away or burnt.⁹²⁰ The purpose was to deprive the enemy troops of food. Troops regarded food pillaging as a matter of the survival for the fittest, but forgot that the civilians’ lives depended on the same food they pillaged or burnt. In fact, both did not care about the effects of their actions on the well-being of the families concerned. As a result, most families had nothing much to eat.

During the war, all imports to German East Africa were cut off because of the blockade. Lack of imports caused important goods such as cotton cloth and iron products to be hard to find. In areas such as Moshi, the effects of the blockade on Africans began to be felt as early as 1915, when stocks of cotton clothing in Indian shops ended and left people with few clothing to wear.⁹²¹ To alleviate the problem, the German colonial authorities opened small factories to produce different kinds of products, including cotton clothes. But most of the cotton clothes produced were geared towards meeting the needs of the combatants and the European population. However, it was difficult for non-combatant Africans. To solve the problem, some Africans reverted to traditional technology of weaving and iron smelting. For example, the Fipa revived their traditional technology of iron smelting and weaving. Women used their traditional weaving craft to produce cotton cloths. One piece of cotton cloth (called *seketa*) was sold at a price between 3 to 4 Rupees. Cotton cloth was expensive to many, since money was hard to come by because of the war. Yet, the demand exceeded the supply of *seketa*; therefore, many

⁹¹⁹ Bishop Lechaptois, as quoted in Tambila, A history of the Rukwa region, 208.

⁹²⁰ BNA CO 691/16, Brigadier General Hawthorn Diary, August to November 1918; *See*, BNA CO 691/10, 583, Report from Lt. Foster; *See also*, Tambila, A History of Rukwa Region, 205.

⁹²¹ von Lettow-Vorbeck, My Reminiscence, 69.

people reverted to bark clothes or wore animal skins.⁹²² The income from weaving activities helped those who could weave to cater for the needs of their families.

Constant fear of being attacked by German, British or Belgian soldiers was another major problem to non-combatants. Women were in constant danger of being attacked by soldiers for different reasons. When Soldiers demanded for food and it was not forthcoming, they turned violent and most of the time their aggression was directed to women rather than men. In such cases, women were held to ransom until their husbands or fathers brought what the soldiers had demanded.⁹²³ Furthermore, men were tied to trees and beaten. These kinds of atrocities happened in many areas. One of such atrocities was witnessed in the villages around Utete, near Rufiji. In this case, the British forces' scouts under Captain Woodhouse demanded food from villagers. When nothing was given out, they tied male villagers to trees and held women to ransom until villagers gave them some money for their release.⁹²⁴ These kind of atrocities increased fear among the non-combatants. Thus, they ran away from the villages. Sometimes, a whole village moved to a new safe place. In the long run, the abandoned villages turned into bush.

Both the German and allied troops caused mayhem for women. The German *askari* abducted women as they moved towards the southern part of German East Africa. At the same time, the Belgian *askari* were notorious for abducting many women while advancing and during occupation of German East Africa.⁹²⁵ Both aimed to add more women to their households. However, the status of the abducted women in the *askaris'* households was not clear. It is not known whether the abducted women became wives, slaves or servants in the *askaris'* households. Generally, all African women in the colonial troops were referred to as wives, regardless of her status in the *askaris'* households. The abductions destroyed many families since the abducted women were wives, mothers or daughters in their own communities. Furthermore, the abductions destroyed food production and reproduction systems in the areas affected since many young women were removed from the villages leaving behind mainly old men and women, as well as children. According to the British report on the Belgians' atrocities,

⁹²² Tambila, A History of the Rukwa Region, 216.

⁹²³ BNA CO 691/36, 467-469, British Claims Commissioner letter to War Office, November 1920.

⁹²⁴ Ibid.

⁹²⁵ BNA CO 691/10, 589, Brigadier Gen. Crewe letter to the British Liaison Officer in Belgian Forces Headquarter in Tabora, 4 October 1916.

there were many women in many villages in Igalula District, but none of them was younger than late middle ages.⁹²⁶

Furthermore, women were subjected to rape and beatings. Records show that Belgian and British *askari* raped many women as they advanced and during the occupation of German East Africa.⁹²⁷ Rape was a difficult issue to handle for the affected women and their families. In most societies, the blame or shame of rape fell on the women affected as if being raped was their own fault. It took a long time for people to forget such incidents. In addition, rape and abduction of women affected men in the families of the women who were confused and did not know how to deal with the women who were raped.⁹²⁸ In other words, both men and women became victims of the incident. In many ways, rape broke up families and left women terror-stricken. Therefore, atrocities such as rape affected women's lives both physically and emotionally. Moreover, the victims lived with the stigma of rape for a long time or even for the rest of their lives. It was worse for the women who got pregnant out of rape or the escapees of abductions who came back to their communities already pregnant. Probably, that was the reason some of the women who were abducted, as reported by some Belgian officers, refused to return to their villages.⁹²⁹ Some of the women had children and had already forged new social ties. Therefore, they accepted their fate.

The war also caused much destruction of property, theft and disruption of normal economic activities. Both armies lived off the land. However, most of the times, troops not only plundered fields and confiscated livestock, but also maimed animals and burnt villages so that their enemy could not have access to food. The scorched-earth policy used by both sides destroyed many farms.⁹³⁰ Both the Belgian and British troops stole property such as clothes, axes, blankets, goats, fowls and money. In addition, they caused much destruction of villagers' houses (*tembe*), especially in the villages which were close to military camps so that they could use the same materials to construct their own temporary huts.⁹³¹ The robberies staged by the allied forces' *askari* destroyed the whole system of life and caused more havoc than requisition ever did. This is because such incidents were accompanied by the beating of men and the raping or abduction

⁹²⁶ BNA CO 691/10, 592-593, Lt. Colonel Wilkinson report, 2.10.1916.

⁹²⁷ BNA CO 691/10, 548-645, Reports on Belgian Troops Atrocities from September 1916 to August 1917; See also, MRCA HA.01.0219.2.5, Desire Thomas Commission report, page 5 -11.

⁹²⁸ BNA CO 691/10: 607, Rev. Owen Report, 1.10.1916.

⁹²⁹ MCRA HA.01.0219.2, Operation Naumann, Desire Thomas Commission Report dated 17.07. 1917

⁹³⁰ Tambila, A History of the Rukwa Region, 205, 209, 211; *See also*, Richard J. Reid, A History of Modern Africa 1800 to the Present, (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 192.

⁹³¹ MRCA HA.01.0219.2.5, Desire Thomas Commission report, page 5 -10.

of women.⁹³² The robberies left people in abject poverty. Hence, perpetual food shortages and famine were common in German East Africa, and some families became homeless. In addition, bridges, railways and roads were blown up to slow down the enemy's movement. Regardless of the logic that was behind the actions of the commanders and their troops during the WWI, their actions left many Africans destitute and, therefore, caused misery and economic stagnation.

After the war, the War Office in London decided to pay those whose livestock or food was requisitioned and would provide the evidence for their claims. However, more livestock and food were either looted or taken by force. Those whose food and livestock were taken by force were not paid anything. In addition, the money that was looted from Africans was never reimbursed. The commissioner paid only a few of those whose money was taken by force and there was evidence for it. They included those in the Utete area (as explained above) whose story was documented by European officers.⁹³³ In short, the people who were paid were those whose plights reached the War Office through the British officers who had witnessed the incidents. The War Office refused bluntly to pay others (the majority), even after the Governor of the territory and the British claims commissioner requested it to pay them. The reasons given for the refusal included lack of proof that the people had that amount of money (a small amount) and that it was the claimants' duty to make sure that their money was secure, and if they did not do so, then it was their problem.⁹³⁴ The refusal to pay was very heartbreaking to those who were not paid as they knew others had been paid. The argument that it was their duty to safeguard their property was very unfair as soldiers were violent to non-combatants and took whatever they wanted by force. However, there was no evidence as to whether the Belgians compensated the Africans in German East Africa for the atrocities committed or for the food that was requisitioned. It is highly likely that they never paid for what they owed. The Germans bluntly refused to pay for what they had requisitioned or to compensate people because of the atrocities committed by their troops. They only paid owed wages to their *askari*.

The war ended in November 1918 and left the territory depopulated. During the war, the death rates in the territory increased among both combatants and non-combatants. The war had spread widely and touched even those in small villages. It caused suffering to the general population and the combatants. The death rates among the non-combatants, especially the carriers that

⁹³² Ibid.; *See also*, BNA CO 691/10, 548-645, Reports on Belgian Troops Atrocities from September 1916 to August 1917.

⁹³³ BNA CO 691/36: 464-469, British Claims Commissioner letter to War Office, November 1920.

⁹³⁴ Ibid.

moved with the troops, were high because of extreme exhaustion, hunger and disease. As mentioned before, many of the carriers on both sides were from within German East Africa.⁹³⁵ Most migrant laborers who went to work on plantations before the war never returned to their homes or communities as they were the first to be recruited by the Germans as carriers. It was estimated that in every five carriers one died from diseases.⁹³⁶ Most of those who returned were weak and sick. Some of the troops, especially the troops from Portuguese East Africa, were detained for health checkups before the demobilization process. However, the British authorities were more concerned with sleeping sickness than with other diseases such as smallpox. The infectious diseases that the carriers and laborers brought with them affected women and other family members who were waiting for their arrival from war. It was easy for infections to worsen as most people were already weak because of food shortages.

Depopulation affected many areas as a result of constant movements of people in search of safer areas. Their movement was caused by the fear caused by the actions of both armies and the atrocities they committed against civilians at the home front. The atrocities forced people to abandon their villages, hence, leaving them depopulated. In addition, the areas with newly established allied forces' military posts were depopulated as they were centers for the recruitment of carriers and laborers.⁹³⁷ The increase in the death rates, especially the deaths of the men who were supposed to give support to their families as breadwinners, affected many African families. It was not easy for women alone to give proper support to their children. Hence, many boys and girls opted to search for waged labor in order to survive.⁹³⁸ This further broke up many more families.

The high death rates among men affected women for a long time, socially and economically. Many families of the followers who died while providing labor to WWI troops were never compensated. Many carriers who returned home alive did not receive their unpaid wages. The reasons given for the unpaid wages included claims that there was a mix-up of names because many carriers provided "false names" or the names of the claimants were not in the register.⁹³⁹ By March 1919, the Dar es Salaam headquarters of the East African campaign had 120,000 names of carriers on their rolls to whom money was owed but physically those carriers could

⁹³⁵ Hodges, Kariakor, 34.

⁹³⁶ Richard J. Reid, *A History of Modern Africa 1800 to the Present*, 2nd ed. (West Sussex: John Wiley and Sons Ltd, 2012), 96.

⁹³⁷ BNA 691/10, 592-593, Lt. Col. Wilkinson Report, October 1916; *See also*, von Lettow-Vorbeck, *My Reminiscence*, 82.

⁹³⁸ BNA CO 691/36, Tanganyika report from armistice to 1920.

⁹³⁹ Hodges, Kariakor, 182.

not be located.⁹⁴⁰ The names belonged to carriers/laborers of all the territories involved in WWI in German East Africa, and probably most of them belonged to men of German East Africa, where most of the carriers had come from. Furthermore, the claims for the missing men were not paid even after it was confirmed that they had gone missing while in action. Up to 1930, Tanganyika had 27,422 men who were missing and whose unpaid wages amounted to 90,470 pounds.⁹⁴¹ Hence, it was a total financial loss to the dead, the widows and their families. Also, the absence of such men affected women economically, in terms of their inability to produce surplus food. It was difficult for women alone to do so because some stages in farming needed men's participation. For instance, they were needed in opening up new lands for farming (a necessity in shifting cultivation) and in preventing wild animals from invading the farms.

Furthermore, the war had a big impact on the social composition of local communities as many women became widows. This means that widows and young women had to share the few men who were available. It is highly likely that, owing to availability of more women than men in some areas, the bride price for newly married women became low. For example, some Ngoni men decided to abandon the Christian faith, which prohibit polygamy in order to marry many wives.⁹⁴² They knew that having many wives was advantageous to them in terms of the requisite labour for agricultural production.

After the surrender of Lettow-Vorbeck and his *Schutztruppe*, all German officers, *askari* and carriers were interned in different camps. Women were among those who surrendered. But it is not clear what happened to them as they were not detained and there is no evidence showing that they were transported back to where they had come from. Most likely, they were told to disperse as they were not mentioned in the negotiations of the unconditional surrender which involved the British and Germany commanders.⁹⁴³ It was known that the German officers would be repatriated to Germany. The interned *askari* and carriers would spend a few months in prison, before being released to go back to their homes. Since Germans' *askari* and carriers had not been paid their wages for many months, the British colonial office instructed the provisional government to pay each of them between 100 and 150 Rupees as an advance payment from the German government.⁹⁴⁴ The money was given to the *askari* and carriers for

⁹⁴⁰ Page, *The Chiwaya War*, 163.

⁹⁴¹ Hodges, *Kariakor*, 182-183.

⁹⁴² A46 Benedictines Peramiho, *Chronicle Lituhi Mission Station*, Statement from Ngoni Christian man, 7 August 1917.

⁹⁴³ In the Protocol of surrender of the German Forces file (W.O. 32/5829) women were not mentioned.

⁹⁴⁴ BNA CO 691/16, 422- 426, Telegram communication between Sir H. Byatt and Colonial office.

the purpose of making peace with them. The provisional government feared that they might cause much havoc and unrest out of anger and the frustration of not being paid their dues. They had fought for a long time without pay, therefore, they had nothing to live on after the war ended. However, money they were given was very little compared to what the German government owed them.

In 1964, more than four decades after WWI ended, the *askari* and carriers received their wages from Germany. Among the 1156 *askari* who surrendered with General Lettow-Vorbeck, only about 300 *askari* were still alive and could receive their pay.⁹⁴⁵ The German government paid 300,000 pounds to the *askari* and carriers in Tanganyika.⁹⁴⁶ For those who died while fighting or while waiting for their wages to be paid by the German government, their families were never paid. The loyalty of the dead *askari* to the *Schutztruppe* was never reciprocated. To the dead and their families, WWI was a war without any benefit. Also, women who accompanied *Schutztruppe askari* and suffered so much with their husbands, in the end had nothing to show for it. They gave their labour to the *Schutztruppe* without benefit.

Famine affected many people in the territory, especially from 1917/1918 to 1919. Mostly, it was the result of extensive food requisition and looting by 'passing troops' and those who were in the military posts of the allied forces. Also, low production was caused by the absence young able-bodied males who were recruited as military carriers. In addition, in 1917, German East Africa experienced severe draught in many areas and floods in others. Thus, the 1917 harvest was affected and therefore was low in many communities.⁹⁴⁷ Low harvest combined with excessive pillages by troops and food requisition caused many people to lack seeds to plant on their farms. Under normal circumstances, the peasants would hold back a reserve of seeds for next planting season.⁹⁴⁸ However, during WWI, it was not possible to hold back anything. The lack of seeds meant a complete lack of food for the whole year. Furthermore, in British occupied areas, Africans were forbidden to sell or buy food from each other; instead one could sell it to the British colonial authority only.⁹⁴⁹ This worsened the problem of famine since those who did not have food could not buy it from their neighbours. Under these circumstances, women suffered more as they had to find other means of providing for their families. This included

⁹⁴⁵ Charles Miller, *Battle of the Bundu: The First World War in East Africa* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Co, 1974), 333.

⁹⁴⁶ Hodges, Kariakor, 181.

⁹⁴⁷ BNA CO 691/16, 484-488, Sir H. Byatt Famine relief report, December 1918.

⁹⁴⁸ BNA CO 691/16, 484-488, Sir H. Byatt Famine relief report, December 1918.

⁹⁴⁹ A46 Benedictines Peramiho, *Chronicle Lituhi Mission Station, Hunger in Matengo Villages, 1917 – 1918*.

gathering fruits, roots and leaves from the bush, or selling whatever they had, including their labour to those who could pay for it. However, due to war circumstances, the payment for any activity or services was always meagre and inadequate to buy one's own seeds.

In some districts, there was acute famine; therefore, the provisional government had to intervene. Districts such as Lindi, Bagamoyo, Kondoa-Irangi Mahenge and Tabora received hunger relief provisions in terms of foodstuffs and seeds.⁹⁵⁰ However, the relief food was not given for free; they had to pay for it. Payment was either in cash if one could afford or in kind for those who could not afford to pay. Payment in kind meant that eventually they had to return the seeds and foodstuffs after the harvest season.⁹⁵¹ Thus, women worked hard on their farms so that they could repay the seeds and foodstuffs. For various reasons, most families failed to repay what they owed the British colonial government.⁹⁵² The lack of enough support in opening new land and diseases contributed to their failure to repay back the seeds. Also, the price of food produced was not stable and was lower compared to the value of seeds that were given to them as relief. For example, in 1921, the price of 100 kilos of millet (*mtama*) was 4 Rupees or less while in 1920 the same was at a maximum price of 12 Rupees.⁹⁵³

Women's passive resistance towards the troop's behaviour caused famine in some areas of German East Africa. As mentioned earlier, the troops pillaged people's farms. This caused women in communities of Urundi and Ruanda to refuse planting new crops in the year 1917/18.⁹⁵⁴ They did not see the point of planting food crops as they knew that the Belgian *askari* would pillage their harvests. This passive resistance led to a prolonged shortage of food in the area that eventually became a serious famine. However, the Belgian provisional government never provided hunger relief in their areas of occupation and this worsened the problem. Instead, the Belgians imposed tax system in which women had to pay the necessary amounts on behalf of their husbands who were at the war front.⁹⁵⁵ Women paid tax for their men without being sure of whether they were alive or dead at the war front. This kind of taxation burdened women who were already overburdened by family responsibilities.

During the campaigns, there was an increase in people and animal movement which led to the spread of diseases in German East Africa. Troops moved in large numbers with different

⁹⁵⁰ BNA CO 691/16, 489, Sir H. Byatt Famine relief report, December 1918.

⁹⁵¹ Ibid., 484-488.

⁹⁵² Ibid.

⁹⁵³ BNA CO 691/75, 254, Major Hastings Report.

⁹⁵⁴ BNA CO 691/15, 343-344, Bukoba District, Political Officer Note on Belgian Administration.

⁹⁵⁵ Tambila, A history of the Rukwa region, 215.

animals including cattle, horses and donkeys. The troops also involved many people from outside the territory who came in with different diseases. The spread of diseases followed the lines of transport and communication that carried troops and supplies from the metropole to the African ports. From African ports, diseases spread along the line of communication to the interior villages.⁹⁵⁶

Firstly, new human diseases such as influenza that came to Africa from Europe killed a huge number of people during and even after the war. Spanish influenza was one of the most dangerous diseases that originated from Europe and spread to Africa.⁹⁵⁷ In East Africa, it was confirmed to be in Kenya in October 1918, and one month later, it spread to the inland of German East Africa.⁹⁵⁸ By the time of the Armistice, influenza was already a pandemic in several districts. The disease claimed many lives as it struck repeatedly from 1918 to late 1920s. Reliable figures of Africans who died within the whole of German East Africa was hard to compile since most of the sick died at home far from hospitals.⁹⁵⁹ Therefore, the total number was unknown. However, in the few figures collected from ten villages in Rukwa region, from December 1918 to March 1919, showed that influenza alone wiped out 30% of the population.⁹⁶⁰

Smallpox was another endemic disease throughout the territory that affected Africans during and after the war. Its spread was attributed to the increase of peoples' movements during war. This disease affected both German and British troops. Among the most affected regiment was Rhodesian Natives Regiment that had to be quarantined in Portuguese East Africa for several weeks before proceeding back to Rhodesia.⁹⁶¹ The German *Schutztruppe* while in Portuguese East Africa faced the same calamity. It was a pandemic that was difficult to trace as it was everywhere in the territory. The vaccination that was provided proved to be of no value as hoped. It was difficult to maintain the activity of the vaccine due to the reluctance of most Africans to receive the vaccination.⁹⁶² Thousands of people perished due to Smallpox as all districts were infected and cure was hard to come by.

⁹⁵⁶ Richard J. Reid, *A History of Modern Africa 1800 to the Present* (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 192.

⁹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵⁸ BNA CO 691/16, 257 & 320, Telegram Communication between Sir H. Byatt and colonial office; *See also*, BNA CO 691/36, 370, Tanganyika report from armistice to 1920.

⁹⁵⁹ BNA CO 691/36, 370, Tanganyika report from armistice to 1920.

⁹⁶⁰ Tambila, *A history of the Rukwa region*, 212 - 213.

⁹⁶¹ BNA CO 691/16, 323, Telegram Communication between General Hawthorn and Colonial Office; *See also*, Rhodesia Defence Journal no 4, Vol. 5, (Feb. 1919), 10.

⁹⁶² BNA CO 691/36, 371, Tanganyika report from armistice to 1920.

Other major killer diseases were dysentery, cerebro-spinal meningitis, pneumonia and venereal diseases. The three killed many people just like smallpox and influenza. Cerebro-Spinal Meningitis was more endemic in Bukoba district because the district bordered Uganda where the disease was more prevalent.⁹⁶³ Venereal diseases especially syphilis and gonorrhoea were spreading faster across the territory. These venereal diseases had infected many people around Lake Victoria (Mwanza and Bukoba districts) all the way to central Tanganyika around Dodoma district.⁹⁶⁴ This is more than a half of Tanganyika's territory. Most of those infected did not seek treatment in hospitals, an act which worsened the impact. However, the number of those who attended hospitals was alarming. By 1922, its effect was clear to many, therefore, some tribal courts started to punish men, as they were the main spreaders of venereal diseases. In Dodoma District, the tribal courts imposed fines of 10 herds of cattle for any man found and proved to have transmitted syphilis.⁹⁶⁵ The disease had a significant impact on women as it affected their reproduction system and reduced their ability to bear children.

Other infectious diseases such as hookworm spread widely but had more impact in some areas than others. In areas between Moshi and Tanga, hookworm disease infected many people than any other area. Tick fever also affected people of Mwanza and Tabora districts than it did in the rest. There was also unknown plague in areas of Iringa, Singida and Shinyanga in the years from 1918 to 1921.⁹⁶⁶ This plague killed hundreds of people in those areas.

Sleeping sickness was another disease that spread because of high movement of people, animals and livestock. The movement of animals and livestock during the operations spread tsetse flies to new areas that had none before. Most areas were depopulated as a result of people abandoning their farms and moving away because of not only war and its atrocities, but also the effects of diseases. For example, by 1918, the area between Morogoro and Handeni, which is about seventy-five miles wide, was thickly infested by tsetse flies. The same happened in Kilosa and Shinyanga.⁹⁶⁷ However, these areas had had no tsetse flies before. In 1918, the British troops returning from Portuguese East Africa had cases of sleeping sickness, with different kinds of virus from the ones in German East Africa.⁹⁶⁸ The fear that gripped people was that if such new kind of virus would infect tsetse flies in the territory then a new strand of sleeping sickness

⁹⁶³ Hodges, Kariakor, 129.

⁹⁶⁴ BNA CO 691/56, 18-19, Tanganyika Annual Medical and Sanitary Report for 1921.

⁹⁶⁵ BNA CO 691/62, 572, Tanganyika annual report, 1922.

⁹⁶⁶ BNA CO 691/36, 372, Tanganyika report armistice to 1920.

⁹⁶⁷ BNA CO 691/16, 184 -186, Wilhelmstal District report on sleeping sickness, October 1918

⁹⁶⁸ BNA CO 691/16, 188-189, Medical Report on demobilised Followers, 2 September 1918.

disease would be introduced in German East Africa. Once tsetse flies were infected, they could spread this new kind of sleeping sickness all over the place. To prevent the spread, the provisional government tried to quarantine soldiers, carriers and labourers from Portuguese East Africa,⁹⁶⁹ but it was difficult to have full control of the situation since some troops were already demobilised. Also, they had little control over the movements of other troops such as those who belonged to the Germans. Consequently, the troops brought and spread sleeping sickness in the new areas that had had no such a disease before the war.

Before the war, infected tsetse flies were common in few sub districts such as Shinyanga. However, during the WWI campaigns, ox and mules transported and mounted columns criss-crossed the fly belts, hence, the distribution of tsetse flies extended to other areas. Consequently, there was a steady rise in trypanosome infection amongst the flies themselves along the main route, as the lines of communication and transport trains passed to and from those areas. The infected tsetse flies killed herds of cattle quite quickly. It was reported that approximately 200,000 square miles or one half of Tanganyika territory was infested with tsetse flies.⁹⁷⁰ Therefore, it was rendered unsuitable for animal husbandry. Unfortunately, most of the infested districts were fertile and conducive for animal husbandry and crop farming. These areas attracted many people who ended up living closer to the fly-infested belts. They were dangerous areas to occupy since once the tsetse flies with trypanosomiasis attacked the animals, few cattle could escape the infection. In the beginning, the outbreak of sleeping sickness was common in the dry season when people grazed their animals too close to the infested bush. However, with time, the outbreak occurred in all the times and spread to large areas especially in districts that bordered tsetse fly belts.⁹⁷¹ The impact of tsetse fly was huge to cattle owners as some lost the entire herds of cattle that they owned; hence, all their means of wealth accumulation.

War operations also increased people's movements that made the outbreaks of diseases to become prevalent. Cattle disease known as rinderpest spread throughout the territory by early 1917, and reached as far south as Northern Rhodesia (Zambia).⁹⁷² Before the war, rinderpest was common in the northern part of the territory but by early 1917, most of the southern parts of the territory were infected with the disease. As a result, there was tremendous loss of cattle in most of the affected areas. Mbeya was one of the areas affected in terms of heavy losses of cattle. For instance, in Mwakiembe village alone, about 1690 heads of cattle died and in Kiwira-

⁹⁶⁹ BNA CO 691/16, 190-191, Medical Report on Demobilised Followers, 3 September 1918.

⁹⁷⁰ BNA CO 691/56, 192, Annual Veterinary Report 1921.

⁹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷² *Ibid.*, 163.

Songwe about 2,220 heads of cattle died.⁹⁷³ These are only two villages in a district with a large number of cattle in its various villages. The loss was too much to most people bearing in mind that they had lost many cattle in the campaign through military requisitions and that the few remaining cattle were dying because of infection by diseases. In despair, the chiefs asked the district administrative officer to provide them with a veterinary officer and complained openly that if the German government were still in power, they would not let their cattle to die.⁹⁷⁴ The District Administrative Officer tried his best to request for one, however, due to circumstances at the time, the provisional government had no veterinary officer; therefore, the deaths of cattle continued to take place.

There are other contagious animal diseases that affected livestock especially cattle though to a lesser extent than rinderpest. These were pleuro-pneumonia and East Coast fever. Pleuro-pneumonia disease was noticed for the first time in 1916 along the border with today's Kenya from where it was introduced. Then, it spread through Arusha and Kilimanjaro where it was confined for some time. However, by the end of the war, it had spread as far as the eastern shores of Lake Victoria in Mwanza district. The same happened to the East Coast fever, which was common along the coast, but spread to Tanga and Kondo. ⁹⁷⁵ The two killed many cattle in the areas that were affected.

Due to war, from the last quarter of 1916, the German police system in the territory was completely broken and the police dispersed. The few European police brought in by General Smuts concentrated mainly in the districts where there were European settlements. They were mainly where the interned Germans settled and where provisional government placed their administrative officers in their occupied areas.⁹⁷⁶ The new district officers had to re-enlist former German police (*askari*) to keep order in the areas taken over from military control. The enlisted African police force continued to practice the bad habits of the former *askari* against other Africans such as looting, extortion of bribes, and torturing of prisoners and witnesses.⁹⁷⁷ The new administration tried to prevent the *askaris'* habits from happening but change in the *askaris'* attitude towards those in their charge was very slow. Consequently, in most of the occupied areas, the presence of *askari* was never a relief to Africans. In addition, the force was too small to maintain order in the vast areas involved, and therefore, after the armistice, in most

⁹⁷³ BNA CO 691/15, 142-146, Rungwe District rinderpest report, 10 February 1918.

⁹⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁷⁵ BNA CO 691/56, 186-187, Annual Veterinary Report 1921.

⁹⁷⁶ BNA CO 691/62, 574, Tanganyika annual report, 1922.

⁹⁷⁷ Ibid.

areas, security was still low and there was an increase of incidences of crime. Africans from other territories who came to German East Africa as camp followers or for military services and were left behind after demobilization, perpetrated most of the crimes. Most of them became destitute and turned to crime for survival.

In September 1919, Portuguese *askari* took advantage of the situation as well. They crossed the border to Lindi district, abducted some women and few men, leaving one dead.⁹⁷⁸ Even though some of the abducted women and men returned to Lindi after more than a year, the families of those missing and those murdered during the incursion were never compensated by the colonial government of the Portuguese East Africa. The *akidas* (Overseers of the local chiefs) who were the main tax collectors also took advantage of the unsettled provisional administration and there was an increase in embezzlement of the hut and poll tax collected. Some of the *akidas* and their clerks, for example in Sengerema, Mwanza district, were imprisoned for two years and their properties sold to recover the embezzled funds.⁹⁷⁹

Lack of male support to women in rural areas coupled with war hardships forced more women to move to townships as independent individuals. Lack of employment for women in townships made them to look for other means of survival. Many turned to prostitution. British colonial officials in Tanganyika allowed prostitution by accepting it as a means of providing services in towns otherwise missed by male wage laborers. During the 1920's, Dar es Salaam Township Authority tried to regulate prostitution by licensing brothels and medical inspection for prostitutes but the central government rejected the act based on the high cost of medical expenses.⁹⁸⁰ Women practiced prostitution freely up to 1930's when, due to economic crisis, Townships Removal of Undesirables Persons Ordinance (Cap 104) was passed and implemented. Its aim was to remove unemployed Africans from towns, most of whom were women.⁹⁸¹ Therefore, prostitution was no longer tolerated townships.

Some societies took advantage of the chaos caused by war circumstances to enrich themselves in terms of land and pasture. A good example was the Masai who started to extend the area reserved for them from 1916 when Germans withdrew towards the interior. By 1917, they had

⁹⁷⁸ BNA CO 691/36, 510- 523, Lindi District Political Officer report on Portuguese atrocities.

⁹⁷⁹ BNA CO 691/52, 97-109, 138-139, Communication between Treasury chambers and Colonial Office, October 1921; *See also*, CO 691/ 36, 74-75, Communication between Treasury chambers and Colonial Office, December 1920.

⁹⁸⁰ Marjorie Mbilinyi, "'City' and 'Countryside' in Colonial Tanganyika", *Economic and political Weekly* 20, no. 43, (Oct. 26, 1983), WS-91.

⁹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, WS-95.

increased pastoral land to today's Kenyan boarder. Chagga, Meru and Arusha also, took over the abandoned European plantations and even invaded forest reserves.⁹⁸² Absence of European control increased insecurity especially to the militarily weaker societies. The Masai used the opportunity to terrorize neighboring agricultural and pastoral communities such as the Iraqw, Iloikop and Mbugwe. The Datoga too raided the Nyaturu in order to acquire herds of cattle.⁹⁸³ Absence of European missionaries also forced Africans to look for other means in spiritual matters. For support, some chiefs turned to traditional spiritual beliefs and resumed blood brotherhood acts in order to avoid more calamities. For example, the Chagga resumed blood brotherhood with the Masai as early as 1916 when Europeans started to lose control in German East Africa.⁹⁸⁴

After the war, new associations of peasants emerged among the Africans because of cash crops farming. Due to high demand for some products such as coffee, some Africans in the German East Africa seized the opportunity and produced more coffee. For example, the Chagga of Kilimanjaro and the Haya of Bukoba embraced coffee farming. To meet the demand, those with seedlings practiced intensive coffee cultivation and influenced others in their communities to do the same. In 1916, Chagga coffee pioneers had 100,000 trees but due to the rise in coffee prices by 1925, there were 6,716 Chagga coffee growers with six million trees.⁹⁸⁵ Coffee farming was very profitable and it increased land value, hence, the increase in the number of land related conflicts. The former kind of relationship in which the weak relied on the stronger or important men started to disappear and, instead, the weak started to rely on their employers for support.⁹⁸⁶ Many of those without enough land sought for employment, something which was not common before the war. This led to the emergency of a new kind of economic relationship that was based on capital ownership. According to Iliffe, it was the beginning of rural capitalism in Tanganyika.⁹⁸⁷

The above changes that led to intensive coffee production had an impact on rural women. Research on the effect of coffee production on Chagga women at this particular period is unknown. However, research in other areas of Tanganyika and outside Tanganyika has indicated that the introduction of cash crops such as coffee increased the burden to women. The

⁹⁸² John Iliffe, *A modern History of Tanganyika* (Cambridge: University Press, 1979), 252.

⁹⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸⁵ John Iliffe, *A modern History of Tanganyika* (Cambridge: University Press, 1979), 274.

⁹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 275-276.

⁹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 273-274.

burden increased in the sense that men stopped assisting women in efforts geared towards food crops production. Instead, they expected women to produce food and assist them in cash crop farming. The change in perception regarding food production against cash crop production started to appear after African men realized the benefits of cash crops in terms of providing more cash and wealth. They regarded food as part of domestic sphere that belong to women, therefore, women have to be responsible for its production. On the other hand, men, as “bread winners”, focused on the rest of the activities that generated income for their families. According to women interviewed in Southern Highlands of Tanganyika (today’s Tanzania mainland), when coffee farming was introduced, their burden increase as revealed in the following:

I was responsible to cultivate food crops for the consumption of my children. My co-wife also cultivated her farm for her children. When we finished cultivating our separate food crop farms, we were responsible to work together on the coffee farm, which belonged to our family. Our husband participated mostly in the coffee farm . . . We weeded the coffee farm three times in one season. We participated also in coffee picking and all other activities up to the end . . .⁹⁸⁸

Women who were assisting in cash crops farming were not always guaranteed of their wellbeing or that of their children as their husbands promised. Men seemed to care about their needs than the needs of their families. This forced other members in a family to find other ways of survival such as looking for employment in order to obtain cash. The following statement from one of the affected women from Tanzania Southern Highlands attests to this:

During the introduction of coffee farming in our area, our father travelled frequently to learn how to develop the coffee farm. Most of the time, he was absent from home. He kept on emphasizing that coffee production was very important for him and for our wellbeing . . . He was very busy dealing with it. All his money and efforts were directed to the coffee production. . . . We, as children, also worked on the coffee farms of other farmers for payment, but did not do so on our father’s farm. The money we obtained from the work helped us in various ways, like purchasing our clothes, among others. . .⁹⁸⁹

The former German East Africa, under the League of Nations, was divided between the British and Belgians without involving Africans. Formally, from June 1919 according to Versailles Treaty article 2, Rwanda and Burundi were assigned to the Belgians and the rest of German East Africa was assigned to the British under the mandate of the League of Nations. The British

⁹⁸⁸ Women in Tanzania Southern Highlands as quoted in Nives Kinunda, *Negotiating Women’s Labour: Women Farmers, State and Society in the Southern Highlands of Tanzania, 1885-2000* (PhD thesis: Goettingen University, 2017), 154.

⁹⁸⁹ Women in Tanzania Southern Highland as quoted in Nives Kinunda, *Negotiating Women’s Labour: Women Farmers, State and Society in the Southern Highlands of Tanzania, 1885-2000* (PhD thesis: Goettingen University, 2017), 154.

territory was named Tanganyika, which like the rest of the former German territories practically became a colony under the mandate of League of Nations. Therefore, for the Africans in Tanganyika, nothing changed in terms of oppression and exploitation.

The British introduced a taxation system which was very exploitative and oppressive to the Africans which was payable only in terms of cash. This system was different from that of the Germans who also accepted payment of tax in kind. The new taxation system in Tanganyika affected lightly the Europeans and Asians but was heavy on Africans whom less expenditure was spent on.⁹⁹⁰ Africans had to pay hut and pole tax, and railway tax which was heavily charged on African products and the imported goods which were used by Africans and Indians. Sea customs duties were levied mainly on imported goods for Africans and Asians, even though Asian traders paid the levied duties, but they passed on the expenses to Africans who were the main consumers. In the end, Africans were paying more than the rest of the other races.

Furthermore, Europeans were exempted from tax even though they had the largest income.⁹⁹¹ This was due to tax exemption in income derived from salaries, professions, plantations and industries. These sorts of incomes mainly belonged to Europeans. In other words, Europeans paid only sea customs and railway rates. However, in terms of expenditure, Europeans received the highest benefit. For example, in 1922, their expenditure was up to 1.8 million sterling pounds, while Africans in Tanganyika received a trifling amount on medical and sanitary services and about eight thousand sterling pounds on education.⁹⁹² European population derived more advantages directly and indirectly from the government's expenditure even though the burden of taxation was heaviest on Africans.

6.4 Conclusion

In German East Africa, WWI affected many Africans, both men and women, but it had more impact on women. Africans in German East Africa provided labor power to German forces and the allied forces involved. Also, Africans in German East Africa accommodated troops, faced death, destruction of property and the disruption of their daily activities. During the war, men were recruited to work far away from home as carriers while women took care of their families on their own since most men were absent. Women worked hard to produce food to feed their families while waiting for the return of their loved ones of whom they had no news. At the same

⁹⁹⁰ BNA CO 691/75, 247-251, Memorandum from Advisory committee on Taxation system in Tanganyika.

⁹⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹⁹² BNA CO 691/62, 578, Annual report 1922.

time, the food produced by women was always at the risk of being confiscated, pillaged or burnt down by the troops.

During WWI, the exploitation of African women labor in German East Africa was intensive. They were exploited both at the war front and home front. At the war front, African women worked in the domestic domain without pay while accompanying their husbands who were *askari* in the colonial army. These women faced danger and many other war related hardships at the war front, but they never received any compensation for their labor or for the deaths of their husbands. *Schutztruppe* commanders knew the importance of these women to their *askari* but were not included in any form of payments even when their unpaid *askari* husbands died in action. At the home front, women were exploited in many ways. They were abducted in order to assist in carrying *askaris'* personal property without pay and forced to give sexual favor to the *askari*. Therefore, African women had to work hard in agriculture in order to feed their families and pay tax in cash on behalf of their absent husbands. This was exploitation of the highest form because the same colonial authorities allowed their troops to take by force what women and their families owned, and forced women to pay tax for their absent husbands. Most women were already destitute as they did not have access to adequate cash. Also, some women were forced to sell what they owned while others ended up in prostitution.

Deaths and diseases that affected men who went to the war front worsened women's burden on family care. The life of African women before the war was difficult, but it became worse during and after WWI. During the war women suffered because of the absence of their men, but after the war they suffered even more because their men either died at the war front or came back infected with diseases. Many women became widows since their husbands died in the war. This meant a lifelong suffering because as widows they had to depend on themselves or their male relatives for support. However, relatives could not assist the widowed women because the war had affected them too. Moreover, men who returned home alive came back weak and tired due to malnutrition and diseases. Consequently, the women had to take care of their sick husbands. This was a burden to women because, in addition to taking care of their children, the elderly and being responsible for farming, they had to take care of the sick husbands as well. Some of the men who returned had infectious diseases such as influenza which put many families at risk as most family members had low immunity to this new disease worsened by malnutrition. Many women who cared for such husbands got infected and died. Therefore, it is apparent that the WWI had a significant impact on women in several ways.

CHAPTER SEVEN

7.0 Conclusion

This dissertation has examined the role of African women in WWI in German East Africa which took place from 1914 to 1918. It has avoided the hitherto prevalent male gaze on the history of warfare in Africa and adopted an African feminist perspective on interpreting wars. This revealed that African women participated in the war by providing support at both the war front and the home front. This study has also adapted a cultural approach to interpreting and explaining wars and has, as a consequence, situating WW I in Africa within a long-term trajectory of African cultures of war. In most African societies, the cultural division of labour made women play a supportive role during wars. Women supported men, who as protectors of their communities, had to fight the enemy since it was their responsibility. They supported the fighters, their families and their communities in general. The importance of women's support at the war front was that it raised the African men's morale and spirit to fight. And at the home front, women's support was important since they took care of their families and were the anchors in their communities. They united their families and their communities since they discharged their responsibilities as well as that of men, who were absent from their homes and communities due to the war.

This study has indicated that there was a continuation of African women's activities and responsibilities in peace and war times, as well as in different eras (from the pre-colonial to the colonial era). In peacetime, women's activities were mostly domestic. They participated in food production and perpetuation of their families through reproduction, took care of families and performed domestic chores. They did the same activities during times of war. At the war front, women provided domestic services and for the sexual needs to their husbands. At the home front, they continued to provide domestic services and produce food. By performing their usual responsibilities, their men fought without worrying about food for those they had left at the home front. Therefore, the supportive activities of women at the home front and the war front were significantly important for the continuation of their families and communities.

In addition, women's participation in wars from the pre-colonial to the colonial periods was more or less the same. Their participation in wars did not start during WW1 but began long before that. Research on their role in the pre-colonial period has concentrated on the way different African societies involved women in wars. These studies show that, in pre-colonial Africa, women's involvement in wars was either at the war front or at the home front, depending on the socio-political organisation of their communities, the climatic environment and war

strategy of their respective societies. For example at the end of the 19th century in Central Tanzania, Chief Mirambo forbade women go to the war front because his war manoeuvres required warriors to march very fast.⁹⁹³ Employing such a war tactic made the presence of women among the troops a hindrance to success. Therefore, Mirambo instructed women to stay at home and produce enough food. The women at the home front ensured that food production and other activities in their community continued to be effectively done in the absence of their men. For the societies that allowed women to accompany men to the war front, the women solved some problems related to domestic logistics, provided domestic services and participated in war as spies. During that time, crucial logistics and food were major issues that could determine the result of the war. In addition, at the war front, women sang and danced to encourage the warriors to continue fighting. Consequently, the societies that allowed women to be camp followers valued women's presence at the war front almost to the same degree as they valued the presence of warriors. These societies knew the importance of women's support to the psychology of male warriors who at the end of the day were the main war heroes. Therefore, in pre-colonial wars, African women played an important role in their societies by carrying out their activities and some of those of men in order to maintain stability, unit and continuity in their families and communities.

In addition, this study has compared pre-colonial African women's participation in wars with that in other parts of the world including Europe. In many African societies, just like in other parts of the world, women's activities during peacetime and in wartime were according to the socially-ascribed gender roles and, therefore, they were rather similar. For example, when one compares women's presence at the war front in Europe before the mid-19th century and that of women in pre-colonial Africa, one notes that it was comparable in many aspects. In both contexts, as camp followers, women mainly provided free domestic services in peacetime as well as in wartime. However, because of the war, they also provided unpaid labour for logistical purposes. This means that, in wartime, women's participation or their expected responsibilities were interconnected with their position in the society they belonged to, as far as division of labour was concerned. In both cases, the general difference between men and women in terms of their participation in war was that men were paid whereas women were not. However, in Europe during the mid-19th century, the system of having women as unpaid camp followers was abolished. Instead, European women participated as supporters at the war front as paid

⁹⁹³ Reid, *War in precolonial Eastern Africa*, 63-64; *See also*, Peers, *Warrior Peoples of East Africa*, 33.

professionals whereas African women continued to look at war as a family affair in which they were required to provide labour without being paid anything. This is an important observation by this study since, during the colonial period, the same Europeans who stopped unpaid women from following armies in Europe encouraged those in Africa to follow their husbands who were conscripted into the war as *askari* to different colonial campaigns and expeditions. This study concludes that, in the colonial period, the “African war culture” was used by the colonial authorities to exploit women. They knew that women’s free labour could reduce the financial burden of maintaining their colonial armies.

Furthermore, this study indicates that, in the pre-colonial era, women did not accept the supportive role passively. Some women challenged the notion that, in wartime, their main responsibility was to support men. This means that, in some African societies, there were female warriors at the war front. They were also combatants and commanders in some cases. Although, division of labour placed women in the position of supporting men in wars, sometimes they crossed the boundary and became combatants or war commanders. The reasons for crossing the boundary included personal ambitions and one’s ability to lead others (for example, Queen Nzinga, 1583-1663, of Matamba, part of modern-day Angola), and the need to protect their societies, (for example, the female warriors of the kingdom of Dahomey in West Africa). However, female warriors were not easily allowed to join war. Before their communities allowed them, female commanders as well as warriors faced many challenges and resistance from their political institutions, and male warriors among others. They had to prove their might by winning many wars. In such cases, the role of women became equal to that of men in protecting their communities. Some of the women’s ability to fight equalled or even exceeded the men’s. Therefore, female warriors fought among male warriors and had female followers, just as the male warriors did. In some communities, female commanders led both male and female warriors during inter-communities wars. In such cases, both the female and male warriors benefited from the spoils of war.

Research on African women in pre-colonial wars is very important because it shows the role they played and its importance to the societies concerned. Although a significant number of historical studies on gender have been done, few, if any, have examined women’s role or African gender relations in pre-colonial African warfare. The absence of such studies has left a significant gap in the military history of Africa, particularly in Tanzania, which was part of the former German East Africa. To understand any war, one needs to understand the gender

relations in that war. Knowledge on African women's participation and roles in war, especially in WWI, is a significant historical area of inquiry.

The findings on the precolonial period indicate that women's responsibilities in wars were almost the same during the colonial period. The analysis of African women involvement in colonial wars concentrated on the reasons behind the presence of *askaris'* women at the war front as compared to the presence of other African women at the war front and/or in the communities at war. This study concludes that, in German East Africa, the reasons for the presence of *askaris'* women at the war front as part of the colonial army (*Schutztruppe*) were slightly different from those for women who accompanied African resistance warriors. The slight difference was the result of the difference in the need for women's support. The colonial authorities allowed women to be part of their armies only because they were a source of free labour. At the same time, *askari* and their women demanded their women's presence at the war front due to "cultural requirements." According to this study, *askari* emphasised the presence of women at the war front mainly because they wanted to stretch their masculinity in front of other Africans, while their women wanted to secure their position as *askaris'* wives. Such a conclusion was based on the fact that the colonial authorities, if they wanted, could employ enough followers to take care of the needs of the *askari*. However, they opted to use the "African war culture" as an umbrella to acquire free labour. This was different from the African societies' reason for women's presence at the war front. African societies involved women because, firstly, they were members of those societies and, therefore, had to participate in providing for their protection. Secondly, the nature of the war strategies in most societies had to consider division of labour according to gender. In this sense, women's support at the war front and at the home front was very necessary in ensuring that the warriors' manoeuvres in war were effective. Therefore, in German East Africa, during the colonial period, women gave men the same kind of support that they offered during the pre-colonial era. Within the framework of the colonial army, this resulted in a considerable exploitation of women for colonial ends.

Research indicates that, during WWI in German East Africa, African women played a significant role at the war front as well as at the home front. With regard to this period, this study concentrated on the activities of African women in relation to African men, the colonial authorities and the *askari*. At the war front, women were *askaris'* wives who played the same role as they did in the colonial campaigns and expeditions. Because of the nature of WWI, there was an increase in the importance of women to the *askari* in the German force and to some of

those in the allied forces. *Askaris'* morale and spirit to fight depended significantly on the presence of African women to the extent that, for most of the German and Belgian *askari*, it was as if without the women's presence, there would be no effective fighting. This study concludes that the presence of women among the German troops contributed to the improvement of German *askaris'* spirit and morale to fight to the end under extreme hardships and without being paid. At the same time, the presence of women at the war front enabled Belgian *askari* to fight more fiercely and reach Tabora before the British did. Moreover, at the home front, African women supported their families in the absence of men. They worked in factories, on plantations and on their own farms so as to earn some money or produce food for their families. They tried hard to hide their harvests from *askari* so that their families could survive during periods of food shortage. In this period, their focus was on the survival of their families by whatever means possible. Therefore, regarding the women at the home front, this study concludes that they played a significantly major role in keeping their families and communities together against all odds.

It should be noted, however, that this analysis indicates that from the pre-colonial period to the time of WWI, women were also war victims. Their woes were as a result of their value in the production and reproduction processes. Furthermore, politically, societies used women as pawns with which to form or break alliances and to make peace or war. In the pre-colonial wars, women were the ones who were captured as part of the war booty which winners took away. The women who were captured were either incorporated into the captors' families as unpaid agricultural labourers or wives. Alternatively, they were sold as slaves at a better price than enslaved men. Either way, it was beneficial for warriors to capture women as part of their war booty. In German East Africa's colonial wars, this victimisation of women continued. In this regard, again the German colonial authorities used the African "culture" to their advantage. In campaigns, they used captured African women as a payment method to *rugaruga* and as an incentive to their *askari*. Financially, it was beneficial to the colonial authorities. The same habit continued during WWI when women were captured arbitrarily by German and Belgian and British *askari*. During WWI, the captured women were taken as "wives" of *askari*. In fact, they functioned both as *askaris'* personal unpaid carriers or wives. This study concludes that, during WWI, women's socio-political value had its risks despite its value. Being victims of war in different forms was one of the disadvantages that they faced.

Furthermore, the findings of this study have indicated that, after the WWI, African women had to strive to consolidate their families after experiencing the traumatising impact of the war itself.

This study concentrated on the effects of war on the African communities and women's activities as they encountered the problems of war around them. In this period, women continued to support their families by any means possible as hunger and diseases ravaged their families and communities. Some women died in the process while others merely survived. Despite all the challenges they faced, women in different communities went back to their usual kinds of work and roles which included caring for their families, farming and providing domestic services. Conversely, in peace-time formal employment in the colonial system was only available to African men.

However, this study could not trace what happened to German *askari* women who participated at the war front of the *Schutztruppe*. Information about them seems to have disappeared after the surrender of the *Schutztruppe* or was never recorded. It seems that they were not paid because their names were not included in the payment lists of the British or the Germans. Most probably, after the surrender, the British let them go on their own way without any financial assistance. At the same time, after the surrender, German officers did not bother anymore about the welfare of the *askaris'* women. Therefore, this study concludes that in WWI, African women's effort at the war front was not duly acknowledged or rewarded.

WWI ended in December 1918 and it marked the end of the women followers in colonial armies in German East Africa. For the Africans in German East Africa, it was the end of German colonial rule. In the transition period, the British worked relentlessly to affirm that the Germans were the worst colonisers while they were the best. In the end, German East Africa was divided between the British and the Belgians. Tanganyika (today's Mainland Tanzania) was mandated to the British by the United Nations. To Africans in Tanganyika, the British colonial rule was not better than that of the German colonial regime. After all, the main aim of any form of colonial rule is the exploitation of the colonised which eventually leads to suffering of the colonized.

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9.0 Appendix

9.1 Oral Interviews

Lindi, Nachingwea district.

Mzee Otomali, 15 March 2018, 18 March 2018, 24 March 2018, and 26 March 2018.

Mzee Njolowa, 10 March 2018, 16 March 2018, and 20 March 2018.

Mzee Mchukwa, 12 March 2018, 17 March 2018, 22 March 2018, and 28 March 2018.

Ruvuma, Songea district.

Mzee Chaya, 12 April 2018, 15 April 2018, and 18 April 2018.

Mzee Lifa, 14 April 2018, 19 April 2018, and 22 April 2018.

Mzee Zavemba, 13 April 2018, 24 April 2018, and 26 April 2018.

Mzee Ipengili, 16 April 2018, 20 April 2018, 23 April 2018, and 28 April 2018.