

Decolonising the First World War: The Case of the Northern Rhodesian Askari, 1914-1918

by

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Abstract

Studies have been done on African soldiers in former British colonies such as Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), Nyasaland (Nyasaland) and South Africa. However, Northern Rhodesia has remained largely outside the scope of historical studies. Therefore, Northern Rhodesia's important role in the First World War has received little attention. This article, therefore, highlights the incorporation of Northern Rhodesia's askari (soldiers) into what was essentially a European war. In this way, it attempts to decolonise the history of the First World War which has viewed African theatres as marginal and unimportant on the global scale. It also brings out the experiences of Africans in this global war and their reactions to these experiences. The article uses the rich primary data in archives and museums in Zambia. It argues that Northern Rhodesia was an important player in the East Africa campaign; its soldiers had negative experiences in the war and reacted in various ways to these experiences. This article highlights the wider importance of African colonial troops to the Allied war effort.

Key words: Decolonisation, First World War, Northern Rhodesia (Zambia), askari (soldiers), and East Africa campaign.

Introduction

This article explores the extent of Northern Rhodesia's (Zambia) incorporation into the First World War. Within the context of existing colonial relations, African actions in global events were downplayed, trivialised and erased outright. These issues have been noted by Tim Stapleton when examining the very "significant part" played by the Rhodesia Native Regiment (RNR) of Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe).¹

In examining this African regiment, Stapleton observed that there was a deliberate effort by Europeans at the time to 'downplay the role that Africans played in the war.'² They either minimised African involvement or ignored it in an effort to neutralise this important history. Writing about the *askari* in Nyasaland (Malawi), Melvin Page also noted that settler accounts minimised the participation of indigenous people, particularly those from Northern Rhodesia.³ Northern Rhodesia therefore, is a lens through which we can attempt to decolonise the history of the First World War by focusing on how one particular colony participated in it.

¹Tim Stapleton, *No Insignificant Part: The Rhodesia Native Regiment and the East Africa Campaign of the First World War* (Ontario: Wilfrid Lavrier University Press, 1990), 134.

² Stapleton, *No Insignificant Part*, 5.

³ Melvin Page, *The Chiwaya War: Malawians and the First World War* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2000), 77.

Using primary sources from the National Archives of Zambia (NAZ) and the Missionaries of Africa Archives (FENZA), this article localises the First World War to show its reach in a local African setting. The article aims to discuss three main objectives: first, it examines the three geographical spheres in which the local people participated. Second, it discusses the experiences of the *askari* (soldiers). Last, it analyses the reactions of the *askari* to their wartime experiences. By incorporating the imperial context into the broader history of the First World War and highlighting the roles of colonial peoples, the article goes some way in integrating Zambian history into a decolonized history of the First World War.

The extent of Northern Rhodesia's incorporation into the war, 1914-1918

When Britain entered the First World War on 4 August 1914, it had no plans to use African soldiers. This was because it believed that this would be a European war fought with predominantly European troops.⁴ Therefore, deploying African troops in such a war would damage 'the prestige of the white race.'⁵ Underlying this rationale was the genuine fear that Africans would know that Europeans were destructible. Thus enlightened, they would become politically conscious and demand independence after fighting in the war.⁶ These fears solidified Britain's resolve not to use African troops in Europe. However, on 8 August 1914, two British light cruisers, *Asteria* and *Pegasus*, fired at the German wireless tower in Dar-es-Salaam. This caused the war to spread to East Africa. It was at this stage that Britain discarded its initial prejudices about African troops because it was unable to send European soldiers to defend all its interests. It only had enough labour to send the Royal Force to defend strategic ports and wireless stations.⁷ Therefore, each colony had to raise its own local forces for defence when attacked. This brought the war to East Africa and began the East Africa campaign.⁸ It was in this campaign that Northern Rhodesia participated by virtue of its status as a British colony.

In the history of the East Africa campaign, South Africa and its leaders, Jan Smuts and Jan van Deventer have become prominent. Their heroic actions have been the subject of several historical works.⁹ Hew Strachan produced perhaps the most international history on the First World War which looked at all the theatres of battle. However, his approach meant that he could only write on areas that had an existing historical database. Hence, South Africa,

⁴ Michael Pesek, 'The war of legs. Transport and infrastructure in the East African campaign of World War 1', *Transfers*, 5, 2 (2015): 101-123.

⁵ Timothy H. Parsons, 'Mobilising Britain's African Empire for War: Pragmatism vs Trusteeship', *Journal of Modern European History*, 13, 2 (2015): 184.

⁶ FENZA, Chilonga Mission Diary Vol. II: 1915-1925, 11 June 1917.

⁷ Parsons, 'Mobilising Britain's African Empire for War', 186.

⁸ W. G. Mills, 'World War I and its Effects' (Available at <http://stmarys.ca>, accessed 20 June 2018).

⁹ See for instance, Anne Samson, *World War One in Africa: the Forgotten Conflict among the European Powers* (London: LB Tauris, 2013), 3-4; Hew Strachan, *The First World War in Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 13-21; and Albert Grundlingh, 'The impact of the First World War on South African Blacks', in M. E. Page (ed.), *Africa and the First World War* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 1987).

Belgium and Germany took a centre stage in his work.¹⁰ There have been several studies on military units that participated in the East Africa campaign. In these case studies, the African troops from Northern Rhodesia have been mentioned. Hubert Moyse-Bartlett, for instance, looked at the Kings African Rifles (KAR) in general.¹¹ He noted that thousands of Africans from Northern Rhodesia joined the KAR from 1916. Ross Anderson wrote about Major General Edward Northey, commander of the Northern forces (Norforce). Just like his earlier work which focused on the exploits of military commanders and civilian officials¹², this article likewise fixated on Northey and his leadership skills. Anderson stated that the war in Africa was marginal to the war in Europe and concentrated on Northey's achievements.¹³

In 1950, former colonial official, Vernon Brelsford, edited the first volume of the Northern Rhodesia Journal (NRJ). Several more volumes appeared in the 1950s and 1960s which carried several articles pertaining to the First World War.¹⁴ Many of the contributors to the NRJ either participated in the war, or served in government in some capacity. However, these works are not well known outside the University of Zambia Special collections and the National Archives of Zambia, and are consequently rarely consulted. In 1954, Brelsford wrote about the Northern Rhodesia Regiment (NRR) that succeeded the Northern Rhodesia Police (NRP). He detailed the origin of the NRP and showcased the gallantry of the Africans and Europeans who fought against Lettow-Vorbeck's forces.¹⁵ However, the African agency was underrepresented in this account.

Daniel Phiri documented the role of *askari* from Abercorn (Mbala) in the First World War. He also discussed the local theatres of battle in which they were engaged.¹⁶ This study continues this discussion by also incorporating geographical areas beyond Abercorn. Victor Simukonda and Jethrow Chipili produced a manuscript on soldiers in the First and Second World Wars.¹⁷ Being military officials, theirs was broadly focused on the activities of general garrisons and their commanders. It therefore, did not provide detailed analysis on actions and

¹⁰ Strachan, *The First World War in Africa*, 13-21.

¹¹ Hubert Moyse-Bartlett, *The Kings African Rifles: A study in the Military History of East and Central Africa, 1890-1945* (Aldershot: Gale and Polden Ltd, 1956), xvii.

¹² Ross Anderson, 'World War I in East Africa, 1916-1918', PhD thesis, University of Glasgow, 2001, 1.

¹³ Ross Anderson, 'Norforce: Major General Edward Northey and the Nyasaland and North Eastern Rhodesia Frontier Force, January 1916 to June 1918', *Scientia Militaria*, 44, 1 (2016): 47-80.

¹⁴ See for instance, W. V. Brelsford, 'Historic Cannons at Kasama', *The Northern Rhodesia Journal*, 1, 4 (1950-52): 31-37; R. W. M. Langham, 'Memories of the 1914-1918 Campaign with Northern Rhodesian Forces', *The Northern Rhodesia Journal*, 2, 1 (1953-55): 49-60; George S. Tasker, 'Naval Occasions on Lake Tanganyika in the 1914-1918 War', *The Northern Rhodesia Journal*, 3, 1 (1956-59): 57-68; J. M. Wareham, 'Childhood Memories of the 1914-19 Years', *The Northern Rhodesia Journal*, 3, 3 (1956-59): 171-175; Gordon Lobb, 'The Transport Depot at Chiwutuwutu, 1914-1918 War', *The Northern Rhodesia Journal*, 3, 1 (1956-59): 197-199; and G. A. M. Alexander, 'The Evacuation of Kasama in 1918', *The Northern Rhodesia Journal*, 4, 5 (1959-61): 440-442.

¹⁵ W. V. Brelsford, *The story of the Northern Rhodesia Regiment* (Lusaka: The Government Printer, 1954).

¹⁶ Daniel Phiri, 'The Role played by Africans in the British War Effort in Abercorn District, Northern Rhodesia during the First World War', *Southern Journal for Contemporary History*, 45, 2 (2020):104-124.

¹⁷ Victor Simukonda and Jethrow Chipili, *Soldiers of the Forgotten army: Northern Rhodesian Askari and the two Great Wars* (Lusaka: UNZA printer, 2020), 64-69.

the motives for such actions. The existing works show that Northern Rhodesia participated in the war. Some have even gone so far as to mention some theatres of battle. However, they do not provide an ample account of the country's participation.

This article redresses this by providing a sustained account of Northern Rhodesia's participation in the war. The incorporation of the local population into the First World War was done in three separate geographical clusters between 1914 and 1918; in the Caprivi Strip on the South-west, on the Northern border, and in German East Africa (GEA). The local people in the Northern Rhodesia Police (NRP) and the KAR participated in these campaigns.

The Occupation of the Caprivi Strip, 1914-1915

The first geographical sphere in which the local people of Northern Rhodesia participated was in the Caprivi Strip. The Commandant General in Southern Rhodesia gave the order to invade German South West Africa (GSWA) from the Northern Rhodesian side in September 1914. The interest of the British South Africa Company (BSAC) was the Caprivi Strip – a 32-kilometre corridor bordering Northern Rhodesia, Angola, Bechuanaland and GSWA. The Caprivi Strip gained prominence during the war because it had a German fort at Schuckmansburg (Luhonono). It was also close to the Northern Rhodesian town of Sesheke. Before 1890, the Caprivi Strip belonged to Northern Rhodesia under the Lozi kingdom. However, Britain exchanged it with Zanzibar because Germany wanted to have access to the Zambezi River.¹⁸ The invasion of the Caprivi Strip was considered in relation to the larger operations that the South African Union forces were undertaking in GSWA and not as a separate Northern Rhodesian advance.¹⁹ This was because Northern Rhodesia fell under the control of the British High Commissioner (HC) in South Africa and could therefore not launch independent offensives. Therefore, a combined NRP-BSAP team carried it out.

On 21 September 1914, three indigenous Northern Rhodesians went with Sergeant Stevens to Schuckmansburg. Of the three locals, one was a Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO), another, a bearer of a white flag and the last, a trumpeter.²⁰ Their mission was to deliver an ultimatum to the German Resident at Schuckmansburg, Herr von Frankenburg. The ultimatum stated that he was to surrender within one hour of receiving it. The party must have presented an intimidating image because Frankenburg accepted the terms of the ultimatum and agreed to surrender peacefully and immediately. The surrender of Frankenburg could also be explained by the fact that the Germans were not prepared for a war in the Caprivi Strip and

¹⁸ L. F. W. Trollope, 'The Eastern Caprivi Zipfel', *The Northern Rhodesia Journal*, 3, 2 (1956-59): 107-118.

¹⁹ Livingstone Museum (LM): *The Livingstone Mail*, 18 September 1914; and NAZ, BS3 (A3/7/6/7/206): letter from the Resident Commissioner in Salisbury to the CG, 13 September 1914.

²⁰ NAZ, BS3 (A3/7/6/7/206): letter from Sergeant Essex Capell to the German Resident, 21 September 1914.

had been merely maintaining a defensive position. Frankenburg realised that with only twenty-three *askari*, the NRP-BSAP alliance severely outnumbered him.²¹

The small Allied party returned to Sesheke on the same day of 21 September. When they communicated the news of the surrender, Capell sent a force of fifty NRP, assisted by thirty BSAP, to formally invade Schuckmansburg and take control of the area. This was the first Allied occupation of enemy territory in Southern Africa. At Schuckmansburg, they took Frankenburg, and twenty-three African police into custody. They also captured grain stores and twenty-three hawsers. The Union Jack was hoisted at Schuckmansburg at 08:00 hours the following day on 22 September 1914. The Sesheke District Commissioner (DC), MacKinnon, took over the civil administration of the territory and it was re-added to Barotse district.

Michael Crowder has asserted that no African troops participated in the “Namibian campaign”. This was because the South African generals were reluctant to arm their African population while the Germans did not dare to after the Nama risings of 1904-1907.²² However, even though the occupation of Schuckmansburg was peaceful, local Africans from Northern Rhodesia and Southern Rhodesia undertook it under the control of British officers. As discussed above, they eliminated a German fort which threatened Northern Rhodesia and took back Germany’s access to the Zambezi River. That there was no blood shed points to a commendable and successful use of diplomacy.

The Defence of the Northern Border, 1914-1916

In the second geographical area along the northern border, Northern Rhodesia provided its labour simultaneously with the capture of the Caprivi Strip. German commander Oberarzt Westhofen attacked Ikomba village in Abercorn - an important border town - on 5 September 1914. He was with four German officers, fifty-two *askari*, 250 *ruga-ruga* (irregular troops who served as mercenaries or local auxiliaries along with regular *askari*) and sixty armed porters.²³ The Germans also burnt the government house and the Africa Lakes Company (ALC) stores at Ikomba and Musansa, 16 kilometres west of Fife (Nakonde).²⁴ In addition, they cut the telegraph line between Abercorn and Fife that ran along the Stevenson Road, at least five times.²⁵

²¹ Kirsten Zirkel, ‘Military power in German Colonial policy: the Schutztruppe and their leaders in East and South-West Africa, 1888-1918’, in David Killingray and David Omissi (eds), *Guardians of Empire: The Armed Forces of the Colonial Powers c.1700-1964* (Manchester: MUP, 1999): 104.

²² Michael Crowder, ‘The First World War and its Consequences’, in A. Adu Boahen (ed.), *General History of Africa VII: Africa under Colonial Domination 1880-1935* (California: University of California Press, 1985): 289.

²³ NAZ, BS3/108 (A2/3/2): letter from John F. Sealy, NC for Fife to the DC in Abercorn, 24 November 1914.

²⁴ NAZ, BS3/108 (A2/3/2): letter from Hugh G. Jones to Sealy, 26 November 1914.

²⁵ LM, 2/4/58/1 G69/1: Defence of Abercorn; and Phiri, ‘The Role played by Africans in the British War Effort in Abercorn District’, 108-124.

Northern Rhodesia immediately adopted a defensive position. Abercorn Native Commissioner (NC), Christian Chesnaye, at very short notice assembled twelve local district police. The district police were the civil section of the Northern Rhodesia Police.²⁶ They were used as *askari* and their day jobs taken up by *Boma* (government) messengers. The twelve locals were joined by forty NRP military *askari* under Lieutenant McCarthy. However, they were no match for the German force. Noting the critical shortage of manpower, Chesnaye promptly asked for additional military support from the NRP in Livingstone. In response, over 100 *askari* were organised under Major Henry March Stennett.²⁷ They reached Abercorn in the night on 9 September 1914. Their arrival reinforced the troops at Abercorn, making the strength of the NRP at the border to increase to 230 NRP, six officers and three maxim guns from the initial fifty-two. This forced the Germans to retire the following day, pursued by McCarthy and ninety NRP. In this first German offensive, two local *askari* were killed; these were Privates Chasesa and Madi. The Germans also kidnapped forty local women.²⁸

Mobilisation in towns near Abercorn began in order to send further reinforcements. For instance, eighty-three NRP officers in Kasama and seven at Mporokoso were sent to Abercorn.²⁹ These numbers did not meet the needs of the military and the other Companies were also asked to mobilise. Altogether, the NRP had five companies of about 100 men each. Apart from Company D at Kasama, there were four more companies; Company A based in Livingstone, B in Mongu, C in Kasempa, and E in Fort Jameson (present day Chipata).³⁰ Both the military and civil police from these districts were sent to Abercorn in 1914.³¹

The Northern Rhodesia War Memorial at Victoria Falls shows that 1,839 Northern Rhodesians of the NRP served as soldiers in the war.³² Edmund Yorke placed the number at 1,500.³³ Vernon Brelsford – a colonial government official - wrote that by March 1915, the NRP had 2,813 Northern Rhodesian NCO's, ninety-three special police, four officers, two warrant officers, six British NCO's, nineteen European volunteers and four British constables.³⁴ All these figures were understatements as the Fort Jameson (Chipata) District notebook shows evidences that over 12,000 *askari* were recruited from north-eastern Rhodesia alone.³⁵ If

²⁶ Wrigley, 'The Military Campaigns against Germany's African Colonies', 44-65.

²⁷ FENZA, Chilonga Mission Diary vol II, 1915-1925.

²⁸ Available at <http://www.kaiserscross.com/188001/363401.html>, accessed 02 March 1920.

²⁹ Eugene P. J. Pomeroy, 'The Origins and Development of the Defence forces of Northern and Southern Rhodesia from 1890 to 1945', MA Diss., Portland State University, 1994, 30.

³⁰ Pomeroy, 'The Origins and Development of the Defence forces of Northern and Southern Rhodesia from 1890 to 1945', 30.

³¹ NAZ, ZA7/1/2/1 Chinsali sub-District annual report for year ending 31/03/15; and NAZ, ZA7/1/2/1 Luwingu sub-district annual report for year ending 31/03/15.

³² NAZ (RC 667): Northern Rhodesia War memorial of Victoria falls.

³³ Edmund J. Yorke, *Britain, Northern Rhodesia and the First World War. Forgotten Colonial Crisis* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015), 78.

³⁴ W. V. Brelsford, 'Events and Developments', in W. V. Brelsford (ed.), *The Story of the Northern Rhodesia Regiment* (Lusaka: Government Printers, 1954), 27-36.

³⁵ NAZ, KDG 5/1: Fort Jameson District Notebook, Vol. II.

Northern Rhodesia had the greatest percentage of *askari* of all the British colonies in Africa, as R. W. M. Langham has asserted, and the Fort Jameson District notebook confirms, then there were more than 12,000 Northern Rhodesian *askari* in the war.³⁶

The NRP *askari* were not permitted to launch any offensive attacks. This was because the military officers were under strict instructions from the Colonial Office in London to maintain a defensive position. Despite Northern Rhodesia being under the BSAC administration, the British government remained in charge of its military.³⁷ Therefore, the military leaders were only permitted to use force when attacked by the Germans. Two reasons seem to have influenced this decision. First, the Colonial Office did not want the colony to remain unprotected after the exodus of the soldiers into German East Africa. They feared that Africans in Northern Rhodesia would use this vacuum to stage an uprising against the BSAC. Second, the BSAC also favoured a defensive strategy because it saw no justification in using company money to pursue the Germans beyond Northern Rhodesian borders. Their interest was in defending the borders of the colony with as little expense as possible.³⁸

Throughout 1914, Abercorn and Fife received the brunt of the German attacks. By February 1915, the NRP had grown to encompass 813 African NCOs, ninety-three special African police, twenty-three European volunteers/constables and twenty-six officers, and six NCOs in response to these attacks.³⁹ In 1915, the Germans launched several attacks on the Northern border. For instance, they attacked Saisi on 28 June 1915, cutting the telegraph wires connecting Fife to Abercorn.⁴⁰ They attacked Saisi again on 29 June and 27 July 1915. In this final attack, there were nineteen African civilian casualties, twenty-six African and five European soldiers, one servant, four porters and eight Belgians wounded or killed.⁴¹ In accounting for such a heavy loss, the officer in-charge – Joseph J. O’Sullivan - argued that British inefficiency caused the losses at Saisi as the side was not prepared for battle.⁴² Despite these intense attacks, the Germans failed to defeat the British force at any of the engagements on the border. Nevertheless, they succeeded in tying down the Allied forces. Failing to capture any of the border towns, the German troops retired to Lake Tanganyika.

³⁶ R. W. M. Langham, ‘Memories of the 1914-1918 Campaign with Northern Rhodesian Forces, Part 3’, *The Northern Rhodesia Journal*, 3, 3 (1957): 253-268.

³⁷ NAZ, BS3 (A3/7/4/205): letter from the Secretary of the BSAC to Lambert, 10 November 1914.

³⁸ NAZ, BS3 (A3/7/4/205): letter from the Secretary of the BSAC to Lambert, 10 November 1914; and Langham, ‘Memories of the 1914-1918 Campaign with Northern Rhodesian Forces, Part 1’, 49-60.

³⁹ Available at <http://www.kaiserscross.com/188001/363401.html>, accessed 02 March 1920; Lettow-Vorbeck, *My Reminiscences of East Africa*, 96; and Gann, *A History of Northern Rhodesia*, 159.

⁴⁰ NAZ, BS3/108 (A2/3/2): letter from the Commandant to Wallace, 09 July 1915. Note that Phiri, ‘The Role played by Africans in the British War Effort in Abercorn District’, 108-124 placed this attack on Saisi on 29 June 1915. The account produced here is from a telegram written by the Commandant who was at Saisi and it clearly stated that the attack occurred on 28 June 1915. Apart from the date, all the other details are consistent.

⁴¹ NAZ, BS3 (A2/3/2): letter to the Staff Officer in Salisbury from Colonel F. A. Hodson, 13 August 1915.

⁴² NAZ, BS3 (A2/3/2): letter from Major O’Sullivan to the Officer Commanding Northern Forces, 05 August 1915.

The British responded to the German attacks by launching the Lake Tanganyika Naval Expedition using the Her Majesty's Ships (HMS) Mimi and Toutou in July 1915. A hunter and labour recruiter in Northern Rhodesia, Lee, had suggested this plan to the Colonial Office and they adopted it.⁴³ Since the beginning of the war, the British and the Germans wrestled for control of Lake Tanganyika. The Germans had placed ships like the Kingani, the Graf Goetzen and the Ludwig von Weismann on Lake Tanganyika, effectively controlling it.⁴⁴ To overcome this handicap, a British naval officer, Geoffrey Spicer-Simpson, transported Mimi and Toutou from Cape Town to the Congo River. He passed through Livingstone and updated the colonial administrator, Lawrence Wallace, that Britain was proceeding with the plan to attack Germany from Lake Tanganyika. Wallace nursed the hope that this invasion would end the war in Africa.⁴⁵ Mimi and Toutou secured Lake Tanganyika for the British in December in an attack that saw the Kingani captured and renamed Fifi. The British gunned down the Hedwig von Weismann and removed the Graaf Goetzen from the Lake.⁴⁶ Even though Northern Rhodesian *askari* did not participate in this offensive, it had a direct impact on them. Britain decided to change its stance from defence to a full-on Allied offensive, meaning that the Northern Rhodesian *askari* would leave their borders.

Northern Rhodesians in East Africa, 1916-1918

The third way in which Northern Rhodesia participated in the First World War was by sending its *askari* into East Africa. The Northern Rhodesian *askari* formed part of the multifarious Allied military unit that invaded German East Africa in May 1916. The fact that the Allies were suffering heavy losses in Europe largely motivated this decision; a victory in Africa seemed more possible. In addition, increased German attacks on the Northern Rhodesia border made Britain realise that doing the bare minimum was no longer sufficient. Consequently, the British Imperial Committee on Defence appointed General Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien to lead the African forces in East Africa.⁴⁷ However, Dorrien fell ill and South African Lieutenant General Jan Christian Smuts replaced him. On March 1916, Smuts launched an attack on the Germans from the north, forcing them downward.⁴⁸ The military command quickly realised that they should raise another force from Rhodesia and Nyasaland to envelope the Germans from the south. To command the troops from the south and protect the interests of the two territories, another senior British officer was appointed in November

⁴³ Jan-Bart Gewald, *Forged in the Great War: People, Transport, and Labour, the Establishment of Colonial Rule in Zambia, 1890-1920* (Leiden: African Studies Centre, 2015)109.

⁴⁴ R. W. M. Langham, 'Memories of the 1914-1918 campaign with Northern Rhodesian Forces, Part 2', *The Northern Rhodesia Journal*, 2, 4 (1953): 79-92.

⁴⁵ NAZ, BS3/108 (A2/3/4): letter from Wallace to the Secretary of the BSAC, 20 July 1915.

⁴⁶ Gewald, *Forged in the Great War*, 109.

⁴⁷ Spencer C. Tucker, 'Morogoro Offensive', in Spencer C. Tucker (ed.), *World War I: The Definitive Encyclopedia and document Collection* (California, 2014), 1124-1125.

⁴⁸ Tucker, 'Morogoro Offensive, 1124-1125.

1916. The man was Brigadier General Edward Northey of the King's Royal Rifle Corps (KRRC).⁴⁹ Northey arrived on the northern border in March 1916 and took over the Allied forces; these were dubbed as "Norforce".⁵⁰ It was in Norforce that the local population of Northern Rhodesia participated.

On 5 May 1916, two columns left Northern Rhodesia for German East Africa. One column was made up of the NRP with five service companies; four of these under Colonel Murray and one under Colonel Rodgers.⁵¹ In Murray's column, there were 450 Northern Rhodesians of the NRP and 250 BSAP from Southern Rhodesia. Rodgers' column had 300 Northern Rhodesians of the NRP, and 200 South African Rifles.⁵² There was also a column of 800 KAR under Lt. Col Hawthorn of the BSAP. Altogether, Norforce numbered about 3,000.⁵³ Therefore, 750 Northern Rhodesians joined the Norforce team that invaded German East Africa in 1916. Other members of the NRP remained in the country guarding the northern border with strict instructions not to cross the border into GEA.⁵⁴

The NRP in Murray's column pursued the Germans up to Bismarcksburg and occupied it. However, they had to pull back because they had out-distanced their supply column. After clearing Bismarcksburg, Northey formulated a plan where he would concentrate troops at key points along the northern border and in Malawi, creating a loose barricade which would prevent the enemy from escaping. Therefore, he deployed three columns between Fife and Lake Nyasa, and sent a fourth to Abercorn. However, the Germans, determined not to be pinned down, broke out of the barricade by 29 May, withdrawing into Nyasaland.⁵⁵ The NRP thus began its pursuit of the German Forces, which would take two long years. Between 1916 and 1918, more *askari* were recruited from Northern Rhodesia into the Kings African Rifles (KAR), particularly from the north-eastern part of the country. They engaged in battles with the Germans in places such as Luwiwa, Namena, Neu Langenburg (Tukuyu), Iringa, Malangali, Njombe, Sylvester Falls Road, Pinto, Muesi River, St Moritz and Songea.⁵⁶

As German Commander Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck was pursued by Smuts and his forces, he retreated downward into German East Africa and then Portuguese East Africa. This gave Norforce a platform to engage the heart of the German forces. According to Hew Strachan, Lettow-Vorbeck's retreat into GEA gave the British advance from Northern

⁴⁹ Anderson, "Norforce: Major General Edward Northey," 47-80.

⁵⁰ Brelsford, 'Events and Developments', 27-36.

⁵¹ Brelsford, 'Events and Developments', 27-36.

⁵² Gann, *A History of Northern Rhodesia*, 160.

⁵³ Moyse-Bartlett, *The Kings African Rifles*, 326.

⁵⁴ Langham, 'Memories of the 1914-1918 campaign with Northern Rhodesian Forces, Part 2,' 79-92.

⁵⁵ NAZ, BS3 (A2/3/3/793/198): letter of Wallace to the Secretary of the BSAC in London, 05 June 1916: and Anderson, 'Norforce: Major General Edward Northey', 47-80.

⁵⁶ NAZ (RC/666, 1918-1927): War Graves; NAZ, BS3 (A2/3/3-793-198): telegram from Defence in Salisbury (Harare) to the Secretary in Livingstone, 29 May 1916; 3 May 1916; and N. F. 360: from Northey to the Secretary in Livingstone, 29 May 1916.

Rhodesia international significance.⁵⁷ In essence, Norforce was able to play a prominent role in the pursuit of Lettow-Vorbeck than Smut's forces who were descending from the north. The *askari* from Northern Rhodesia was so vital to the Allied offensive that First World War veteran, G. M. Wrigley, noted that the chief action in GEA and PEA devolved on them.⁵⁸

Experiences of Northern Rhodesian askari

Jan-Bart Gewald and Edmund Yorke studied the First World War in Northern Rhodesia, focusing on the political impact of the war. However, they looked at the impact on the colonial administration rather than on the colonised people. Gewald argued that the war effectively established colonial rule while Yorke argued that it threatened it and almost caused its collapse. Despite their focus, both scholars touched on the *askari*.⁵⁹

The *askari* from Northern Rhodesia began suffering as soon as Abercorn was attacked in September 1914. When Oberarzt Westhofen attacked Abercorn with a force of over 300,⁶⁰ twelve *askari* immediately responded.⁶¹ This must have been a traumatizing engagement as the British side was severely outnumbered. Due to persistent German attacks, over 800 Africans were turned into soldiers to defend border towns. They learned how to loop-hole walls, perforate iron sheets and erection of rests for sand bags.⁶² At Fife, the *askari* erected forts, trenches and underground passages.⁶³ The British side was usually ill-equipped and understaffed. For instance, in the July attack on Saisi, there were 19 African civilian casualties.⁶⁴ In accounting for such a heavy loss, Officer-in-charge O'Sullivan argued that the British had not prepared for the battle and had no trained *askari* who could use modern technology such as heliographs or helios.⁶⁵

The First World War also complicated relations among previously related groups as they were forced to fight each other. The mapping of Africa did not take into account ethnic boundaries.⁶⁶ Many Mambwe, Lungu, Iwa and Namwanga in the northern part of the country were denationalised when they found themselves on the German side. But these distinctions were superficial and often ignored on both sides. When war broke out between Britain and Germany, these boundaries became real; family members could no longer visit each other freely and became enemies overnight. Additionally, they had to spy on each other and even

⁵⁷ Strachan, *The First World War in Africa*, 156.

⁵⁸ Wrigley, 'The Military Campaigns against Germany's African colonies', 44-65; See also NAZ, BS3 (A1/1/36/171): Oct-Dec 1918.

⁵⁹ Gewald, *Forged in the Great War*; and Yorke, *Britain, Northern Rhodesia and the First World War*, 78.

⁶⁰ NAZ, BS3/108 (A2/3/2): letter from John F. Sealy, NC for Fife to the DC in Abercorn, 24 November 1914.

⁶¹ Wrigley, 'The Military Campaigns against Germany's African Colonies', 44-65.

⁶² NAZ, Box 86 ZA7/1/2/9: Abercorn sub-District Annual report for 1914.

⁶³ Langham, 'Memories of the 1914-1918 Campaign with Northern Rhodesian Forces, Part 3', 253-268.

⁶⁴ NAZ, BS3 (A2/3/2): letter to the Staff Officer in Salisbury from Colonel F. A. Hodson, 13 August 1915.

⁶⁵ A helio was an early version of the typewriter that could transmit wireless messages. NAZ, BS3 (A2/3/2): letter from Major O'Sullivan to the Officer Commanding Northern Forces, 05 August 1915.

⁶⁶ For a detailed discussion, see Matthew Crave, 'Between Law and History: The Berlin Conference of 1884-1885 and the logic of free trade', *London Review of International Law*, 3, 1 (2015): 31-2015.

engage in warfare.⁶⁷ Therefore, the war severely tested family relationships and caused members to turn against each other in service of Britain.

Modern technologies of fighting like armoured cars and warplanes further affected both the participants and spectators. In 1917, the British dropped rifle grenades from the British Royal Flying Corps (RFC) planes in German East Africa, shocking all who saw them.⁶⁸ Specifically, *askari* witnessed many horrific scenes at the warfront in East Africa. At Fusi's village, *askari* watched as scouts 'had their brains blown out' by the Germans.⁶⁹ One local veteran recounted the following:

I was twice fired at by the Germans who were digging and preparing defence walls at Tambalika. Each time the bullet whined past my feet to hit the ground in front. I crawled, pulling my bicycle along ... suddenly the Germans opened fire; a volley of bullets split one bag and the soil hit an *askari* in the chest. The poor fellow just screamed once and fell...⁷⁰

Screams of the mutilated, bangs of guns and constant fear of death accompanied the *askari* on their military tours.⁷¹ As Richard S. Fogarty and David Killingray soberly noted, 'soldiers returned home bearing physical and mental scars.'⁷² Similarly, Edmund Yorke asserted that *askari* had traumatic experiences in the First World War.⁷³ Even in Europe, poets such as Wilfred Owen expressed trauma from the war by writing poems about mutilated bodies, fear of death and hallucinations.⁷⁴ However, in Europe, neurosis was a recognised medical condition and 80,000 victims were awarded pensions.⁷⁵ No such regard was extended to veterans from Northern Rhodesia as no special commission was ever established to tend to the psychological health of ex-servicemen. Alfred Tembo asserts that First World War ex-servicemen still suffered from the psychological impact of service as late as 1939. He notes that many Northern Rhodesians refused to enlist in the Northern Rhodesia Regiment (NRR) – the successor of the NRP - during the Second World War because they still had personal and inherited negative memories from the First World War.⁷⁶

⁶⁷ Yorke, *Britain, Northern Rhodesia and the First World War*, 129-30.

⁶⁸ Langham, 'Memories of the 1914-1918 Campaign with Northern Rhodesian Forces, Part 3', 253-268.

⁶⁹ Gilbert Howe, 'Memories of abandoned Bomas No. 14: Nsumbu and Kawena', *The Northern Rhodesia Journal*, 3, 6 (1958): 520-522.

⁷⁰ *Zambia Magazine*, November, 1968, 32.

⁷¹ Michael Pesek, 'Making Sense of the War (Africa)', in Ute Daniel et al (eds), *1914-1918 Online International Encyclopedia* (Berlin: Freie Universität Berlin, 2017), 1-11.

⁷² Fogarty and Killingray, 'Demobilization in British and French Africa at the End of the First World War', 102.

⁷³ Yorke, *Britain, Northern Rhodesia and the First World War*, 230.

⁷⁴ Brandt, 'Memory of the War', 1-22.

⁷⁵ Fiona Reid, 'War Psychiatry and Shell shock', in Ute Daniel et al (eds), *1914-1918 Online International Encyclopaedia* (Berlin: Freie Universität Berlin, 2019).

⁷⁶ Alfred Tembo, *War and Society in Colonial Zambia, 1939-1953* (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2021), 143.

The British officers generally expressed disinterest in the welfare of African *askari*.⁷⁷ Jack McCallum noted that the East Africa campaign had the highest incidence of disease than any other campaign in the war.⁷⁸ The diseases and maladies were devastating on Africans because of a combination of poor diet, overwork and lack of basic hygiene.⁷⁹ In the face of inadequate support from the colonial government, the local people responded to these experiences by using their own indigenous knowledge to deal with their failing health. Whenever they had wounds from gunshots and other injuries, they used materials from their natural environment to treat them. For instance, they used herbs such as *Ng'ansa* for wounds, *umupundu* for pneumonia and *citupi* for diarrhoea. They also made bandages *ifilundu* (bandages) from the barks of medicinal trees and used them to dress wounds.⁸⁰

One of the diseases that affected soldiers because of walking bare foot was jiggers. *Askari* were never issued with shoes because military officials feared that their natural mobility would be hindered.⁸¹ Yet these men travelled long distances beyond what they were used to. Consequently, many people such as the Ila became crippled due to jiggers.⁸² Many people in the Bangweulu swamps also had jiggers, locally known as *matakenya*. In extreme cases, people were rendered immobile and had to crawl to get from one place to another.⁸³ In 1915, a large number of *askari* in Abercorn were reported to be off duty due to sore feet.⁸⁴ Other diseases suffered during the war were pneumonia and dysentery.⁸⁵ The prevalence of these diseases was extreme, a convalescent hospital was opened at Fife to examine returning servicemen and it had 1,156 patients in 1918. Most of these died from dysentery and pneumonia. White Father Missionary, Father Tanguy, however cautioned against taking the figures at face value. He noted that these figures were understated because many people tried to hide their illnesses for fear that their return home would be delayed. He did however note that in same year, he was burying an average of six porters per day.⁸⁶

The suffering of *askari* continued after the war as they succumbed to the Spanish Influenza which mostly impacted young men between fifteen and forty years.⁸⁷ It was brought

⁷⁷ Yorke, *Britain, Northern Rhodesia and the First World War*, 99, 129-30.

⁷⁸ Jack McCallum, 'Medicine in the War', in Spencer C. Tucker (ed.), *World War I: The Definitive Encyclopaedia and document Collection* (California, 2014), 1062-1065.

⁷⁹ Anderson, 'World War 1 in East Africa, 1916-1918', 154-55.

⁸⁰ Motomoto Museum First World War exhibition

⁸¹ Timothy John Lovering, 'Authority and Identity: Malawian Soldiers in Britain's Colonial Army, 1891-1964', PhD thesis, University of Sterling, 2002, 163.

⁸² NAZ, BS3 (HC/1/3/5): letter from the Acting Abercorn DC, C. R. B. Draper to Administrator Lawrence Wallace, 19 January 1919.

⁸³ Lobb, 'The Transport Depot at Chiwutuwutu, 1914-18 War', 197-199.

⁸⁴ NAZ, BS3, 108 (A2/3/2): letter from Officer Commanding, Colonel F. A. Hodson, to the Chief Staff Officer in Salisbury, 14 May 1915.

⁸⁵ Francis Lungu, 'Untold story of the African 'Tenga-tenga' in WW1', *Zambia Daily Mail*, 15 November 2018.

⁸⁶ FENZA: Petit Echo No. 01-577: Extracts on Northern Rhodesia and Zambia, 1912-1967.

⁸⁷ NAZ, KDA, 2/1, Vol I: Broken Hill District Notebook.

into the country by returning porters and soldiers serving in East Africa.⁸⁸ Some towns such as Abercorn, Ndola and Livingstone received a large population of returning soldiers and porters, which only exacerbated the spread of the Spanish flu.⁸⁹ Mwelwa Musambachime noted that the Influenza pandemic ‘was the single largest demographic disaster of the twentieth century’ as between 10 and 30 per cent of the Northern Rhodesian population was infected; out of these, between three and 12 per cent died.⁹⁰ This the best estimate available as district tours came to a halt during the war in many areas. We do not have definite numbers of Africans affected by the pandemic. However, some district notebooks recorded some deaths. In Livingstone, 145 people died from the disease while Mwinilunga experienced 500 deaths in 1919.⁹¹ The following table provides further details.

Table 1: The prevalence of Influenza in selected districts in March 1920

	Sub-District	Cases reported		Total
		Africans	Europeans	
1	Livingstone	562	26	588
2	Broken Hill	175	0	175
3	Ndola	30	0	30
4	Mongu	20	0	20
5	Lusaka	0	2	2
6	Kasama	2	0	2
	Total	789	28	817

Source: NAZ BS3 (A2/1/30): Medica Departments report, 1920.

In his 1994 article, Musambachime noted the lack of empirical data on infections and deaths and the situation has not altered since.⁹² Even though missionaries did not provide figures, their sentiments hint at the scale of the pandemic. In Kasama, White Father missionaries recorded that ‘it would be easier to count those that are spared than those that have been struck down.’⁹³ While in Batoka District, Methodist missionaries observed that only young women and children survived.⁹⁴

First World War soldiers are commemorated at the NRP Memorial in Livingstone which lies at the entrance to the police camp. However, only ninety-nine African privates and corporals are mentioned by name. The NRP memorial has the following caption engraved:

⁸⁸ NAZ, RC/666: letter from the Imperial War Graves Commission (IWGC) to the Secretary in Livingstone, 13 February 1922; and G. Mann, *Native sons: West African Veterans and France in the Twentieth Century* (London, Duke University Press, 2006), 75.

⁸⁹ FENZA: Chilubula Mission Diary, 04 January 1920.

⁹⁰ M. C. Musambachime, ‘African reactions to the 1918/1919 Influenza Epidemic in Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland’, *Zambia Journal of History*, 6, 7 (1994), 1-24.

⁹¹ NAZ, No. 12: Livingstone District Notebook; and NAZ, No. 52: Mwinilunga District Notebook.

⁹² Musambachime, ‘African reactions to the 1918/1919 Influenza Epidemic in Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland’, *Zambia Journal of History*, 6, 7 (1994), 1-24.

⁹³ FENZA Chilubula Mission Diary, 27/12/18; and 04/01/20.

⁹⁴ NAZ BS3 (HC/1/3/5): letter from Draper to Wallace, 19/01/19; NAZ, BS3, (A2/1/26): Drapers Report on the activities of the Watchtower in Tanganyika District 19/01/19; and United Church of Zambia Synod Documentation Centre (UCZ)/MM 15b/1-6: Annual report for Namantombwa station, 1918-19.

To the eternal honour and undying fame of the officers, Europeans and Natives Non-commissioned officers and men of the Northern Rhodesia Police who gave their lives for their king and country during the Great War, 1914-1918, this memorial is erected by their comrades in Arms and friends of the Regiment in memory of distinguished services rendered. 'As men, we are all equal in the presence of death.'⁹⁵

This serves as a reminder of the sacrifice that was made by Africans in Northern Rhodesia to the First World War.

Reactions of veterans to their wartime experiences

The First World War armed thousands of Africans with guns; guns which they were commanded to use to kill Europeans. Two questions arise from the participation of Africans in what essentially, was a European war. First, did ex-servicemen return to their homes and pick up where they left off after the war? Second, how did Africans deal with the experience of fighting with Europeans and at times, killing them? In responding to the first question, demobilised ex-servicemen struggled to re-submerge themselves into the local social setting. Some had been away for four years and had visited other countries like German East Africa and Portuguese East Africa. They were therefore affected by their travels and could not easily re-enter the society they had left. Men struggled with coming to terms with the reversal of gender roles resulting from women's entry into the labour market during the war. Until 1914, only men could become labour migrants. This changed during the war when women enlisted as porters, consequently earning considerable sums of money. Therefore, some men refused to accept the reality of their lost status and regressed into nonentities, drinking beer and becoming violent.⁹⁶

Upon their return to Northern Rhodesia, *askari* were given their back pay but the increase in prices due to inflation quickly dissipated this money.⁹⁷ This forced many ex-servicemen to return to the life of migrant labour in the mines in Southern Rhodesia, Belgium Congo (Democratic Republic of Congo) and South Africa. Some ex-*askari* were absolved into the system as police. The Bemba men particularly, on account of their war service, were sent to Lundazi and Fort Jameson as district police and prison warders.⁹⁸ Others were employed in junior positions in the colonial government. For instance, Private Abel Mulenge

⁹⁵ NRP Memorial at the entrance to the Livingstone Police Camp, Livingstone town, Zambia.

⁹⁶ FENZA, Chilubula Mission Diary: 14/11/18.

⁹⁷ NAZ, ZA7/1/4/4: Lundazi annual report for the year ending 31 March 1920.

⁹⁸ NAZ, ZA7/1/4/4: Lundazi annual report for the year ending 31 March 1920.

became a dip tank supervisor after the war.⁹⁹ These *ex-askari* became state functionaries and consequently led conservative lives. This is consistent with Michelle Moyd's findings in Tanganyika (Tanzania) where she noted that ex-servicemen did not become politically aware and played largely conservative roles in post-war Tanganyika.¹⁰⁰

Some returning *ex-askari* tried to hold on to remnants of the war. Missionaries in Kapatu village observed that *ex-askari* kept souvenirs of the war such as water bottles, haversacks and knives.¹⁰¹ Others tried to recreate the war time life they had led. Some Bemba men created a village in the outskirts which had a whole barrack with beautiful buildings comprising two or three rooms, kitchen, bedroom, dining room with chairs and a table covered with cloth. This setting was reminiscent of a wartime barrack.¹⁰² Other *ex-askari* created dance societies such as the Mbeni, dance troupe. The Mbeni dance was first performed by servicemen during the war in East Africa. Returning soldiers and porters brought it back home and introduced it in their villages. The Mbeni became the Kalela in Luapula and the Malupenga and Muganda in Abercorn.¹⁰³ The dance routines re-enacted the war and comprised of military drills and battles. In one way, these dramatized dances communicated to the people who never participated in the war the brutality and horror that survivors could not voice in a normal way. In another, they preserved the history of the participation of Africans in the First World War.¹⁰⁴

These findings resonated with those of Albert Grundlingh who argued that war experiences of Africans in South Africa had no direct impact on politics in the country.¹⁰⁵ Similarly, Richard S. Fogarty and David Killingray argued that African ex-servicemen did not emerge from their experiences to roil the political landscape with discontent and violence.¹⁰⁶ However, some scholars such as Lewis Greenstein noted that the Nandi of Kenya came to play an important role in post-First World War politics.¹⁰⁷ In Northern Rhodesia, examples can be found of veterans who became politicised. Not all of them led conservative lives, some became radical and joined the emerging Watchtower Movement. The Movement first emerged

⁹⁹ See National Archives of Zimbabwe (NAZ), B3/7/1: RNR orders, 25/07/18; and S138/42: Pension Awards, cited in Stapleton, *No Insignificant Part*, 154-57.

¹⁰⁰ Moyd, 'Radical potentials, conservative realities', 88-107.

¹⁰¹ FENZA, Kapatu Mission Diary (St Leo of Kaliminwa), 1914-1920.

¹⁰² Yorke, *Britain, Northern Rhodesia and the First World War*, 238.

¹⁰³ Momoto Museum Exhibit on the First World War.

¹⁰⁴ A. B. K. Matongo, 'Popular Culture in a Colonial Society: Another look at the *Mbeni* and *Kalela* dances on the Copperbelt, 1930-64', in S. N. Chipungu (ed.), *Guardians in their Time: Experiences of Zambians under Colonial Rule, 1890-1964* (London, MacMillan, 1992), 180-217; T. O. Ranger, *Dance and Society in Eastern Africa: The Bans Ngoma* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1975), 5.

¹⁰⁵ Albert Grundlingh, 'Black Men in a White Man's War: The Impact of the First World War on South African Blacks', *War & society* (May 1985): 1-31.

¹⁰⁶ Fogarty and Killingray, 'Demobilization in British and French Africa at the end of the First World War', 102.

¹⁰⁷ Lewis J. Greenstein, 'The Impact of military Service in World War 1 on Africans: the Nandi of Kenya', *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 16, 3 (Sep 1978): 495-507.

in Nyasaland in 1908 under Elliot Kamwana. From Nyasaland, it spread to Southern Rhodesia, PEA and Belgium Congo. Hanoc Simpungwe Shindano, Leviticus Kanchele and Shadrach Sinkala were among the Africans from Tanganyika who became exposed to the Watchtower's teachings while working at Que-Que Mine in Southern Rhodesia. These men brought the new religion to Fife when they returned in September 1917, later spreading it to Abercorn and Tanganyika sub-Districts.¹⁰⁸

The movement was an important platform for communicating African defiance towards both traditional and European authorities, making it political. As one missionary noted in 1918, the members of this "sect" were fearless of European authority and disrespected chiefs. They also taught that missionaries were teaching them half-truths.¹⁰⁹ Moyd advised that we should consider how religious 'perspectives might fruitfully serve as starting points for revisiting or reframing history.'¹¹⁰ Seen from this standpoint, the Watchtower Movement can be understood as one way in which ex-servicemen attempted to make sense of their war experiences.¹¹¹ It was the first inter-ethnic organisation which included the Namwanga, Mambwe, Iwa, Chewa, Lala and Bemba. 'For the first time in the colonial history of the Northern Province, a congeries of ethnic groups, once engaged in incessant internecine wars, found common ground for unity against colonial rule.'¹¹² This early form of political expression became the foundation for the establishment of welfare societies in Northern Rhodesia in the 1920s.

Conclusion

This article is in no way a conclusive account of Northern Rhodesian *askari* in the First World War. It is a first step in decolonising the history of global events. In this article, Northern Rhodesian *askari* has been put forward as a major player in the East Africa campaign, showing that its reach was beyond the national borders. The defeat of the Germans in GSWA has also only been understood in terms of South Africa's role. The peaceful occupation of Schuckmansburg is largely unacknowledged, implying that bloody battles are glorified over peaceful occupations. Northern Rhodesia was attacked by GEA in September 1914 and was the scene of heavy German attacks between 1914 and 1916. Northern Rhodesian troops then joined the multifarious Norforce from May 1916 to November 1918.

This article has shown the different ways in which Africans from Northern Rhodesia experienced the war. Many failed to return to their normal lives, opting to become migrant labourers. A few still found relevance in the colonial system. Having served in the war, many

¹⁰⁸ Sholto Cross, "The Watch Tower Movement in South and Central Africa, 1908–1945," PhD thesis, Oxford University, 1973, 194-195.

¹⁰⁹ FENZA, Chilonga Mission Diary Vol: II 1915-1925, December 1918.

¹¹⁰ Michelle Moyd, 'Centring a sideshow: local experiences of the First World War in Africa', *First World War studies* 7, 2 (2016): 123.

¹¹¹ Pesek, 'Making Sense of the War (Africa)', 1-11.

¹¹² Meebelo, *Reaction to Colonialism*, 138.

askari wanted to hold on to the memories which had signified their relevance. Therefore, some soldiers held on to mementos from their war service. Others joined dance societies to not only communicate about their experiences, but also to remain connected to the war. There was a radical sector that became disillusioned with all established authority. They had become emboldened by holding guns and killing Europeans. These *askari* thus realised that European superiority was merely a myth. Interestingly, they also turned against the traditional authorities. This could have been because of the role that the latter had played in forced recruitment.

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