Giblin, James, and **Jamie Monson** (eds.): Maji Maji. Lifting the Fog of War. Leiden: Brill, 2010. 325 pp. ISBN 978-90-04-18342-1. (African Social Studies Series, 20) Price: € 75.00

Conventional East African history describes the Maji Maji War as a widespread and somewhat unified attack against German colonial rule which occurred in 1905–07 in southeastern German East Africa (present-day Tanzania). It is often portrayed as the first important and widescale native revolt against European colonial rule in sub-Saharan Africa. This impressive collection of essays attempts to supplement and broader the historical data on this important event, extending the period of the study of the war to as early as 1902 and as late as 1910, and broadening the area of conflict far beyond the area earlier studied, most notably far to the west of its purported centre of origins. The new and richly detailed information its contributors provide alters our earlier understanding of the war, not only in terms of new material, but important in terms of showing how much more complex and varied are the questions still to be asked about this conflict. Even our understanding of the name of the war is changed. Maji Maji (water water) comes from the fact that some African fighters thought they could secure magic that would turn the bullets of the colonialists into water, thereby making them invincible. Some of the contributors to this work argue that not all who fought held such ideas and furthermore that the kinds of indigenous beliefs about magic involved at the time were mainly more associated with rites of ancestral propitiation and fertility, and hence reflect conservative African activities rather than radical change and violent protest.

The book is the outcome of academic workshops and conferences held in the United States, Tanzania, and Germany as well as fieldwork, interviews, and new archival research in Germany and Africa. The contributors are all historians of East Africa: Felicitas Becker, James Giblin, Lorne Larson, Bertram B. B. Mapunda, Jamie Monson, Michelle Moyd, Seth I. Nyagava, Heike Schmidt, and Thaddeus Sunseri. The volume opens with a very thoughtful and valuable essay by the two editors. This surveys and evaluates past publications, research projects, and theories about Maji Maji. This essay alone is worth the price of the volume. It adds little new theories or information but places previous work in valuable perspective, both in terms of what we know and do not know about Maji Maji, as well as pointing out the relations of such research and analyses to broader political, nationalist, and academic disciplinary agendas. Following this introduction, there are nine essays by the contributors, each focused on a particular geographical area or special social group. The essays all avoid any broad and general approach, but instead concentrate on social particulars, and this is their value. Unfortunately, the bibliographical information is embedded in footnotes to each chapter and only the authors' names and their works' dates of publication are provided after the first citation. This makes scholarly use of the invaluable bibliographical information exceedingly inconvenient. While the information in this collection should be of great interest to all social scientists working in East Africa, there is surprisingly little actual use of the theories or writings by scholars in either anthropology or sociology. The names of two anthropologists, Peter Lienhardt and E. E. Evans-Pritchard are misspelled.

In recent decades the Maji Maji War has been presented by Tanzanian scholars as evidence of a united, even nationalistic protest of African unity against colonial oppression and exploitation. In most of these preceding accounts, aspects of African ethnic divisions, conflicting motives and interests amongst Africans are underplayed or omitted entirely. In short, Maji Maji increasingly became an historical icon of East African political propaganda and nationalistic mystique. Such views were readily understandable during the euphoria of national independence, but they have often obscured the actual complexity and diversity of groups and motives involved in such a wide and important conflict. In more recent studies, both African and non-African scholars have begun to revise such generalizing ideas. All the contributors here seem eager to reassess and revise these earlier interpretations of Maji Maji, not to minimize its importance but rather to draw out more diverse and complex readings of the data, interpretations that will tell us even more about Tanzania's rich historical past. These new motives are reflected in the collection's subtitle, "Lifting the Fog of War," clarifying materials which previously were far too homogenized and simplified in the more "nation-building" accounts that reflected a population and society less in keeping with what commonsense would tell us early twentieth-century East Africa was actually like. The contributors mainly rely on the diversity and detail of their new data to make their cases.

While all of these essays are absorbing and useful, for me four particularly stand out, those by Monson, Sunseri, Moyd, and Giblin. Monson focuses on the early charismatic leaders and purported beliefs in water medicine. She shows how much of the supposedly historical data is derived not from firsthand informants but from the myriad rumors that spread from both local Germans and Africans fearful and alarmed by the revolt. Sunseri describes the key roles of African elephant hunters in the unrest and how disruption of their lively local ivory trade disturbed the local economy and political relations. Moyd's essay describes the key roles of African troops (*askari*) in quelling the revolt. She emphasizes the strong esprit de corps of these troops but also their own fierceness and personal agendas in settling their conflicts with local Africans toward whom they were rarely related or sympathetic. Finally, Giblin's essay provides a rich and detailed account of how Maji Maji reflected local ethnic struggles for power among the Njombe, an important ethnic group to the far west of the regions usually studied by researchers of Maji Maji. Giblin shows how the Njombe interpreted the conflict according to their own ideological agenda in ways quite different from how other Africans and the Germans saw it.

In earlier historical writings, the Maji Maji War was repeatedly portrayed as a united effort by East Africans to resist German colonial oppression. Historical data were

shaped and selected to minimize ethnic and regional differences that would conflict with any picture of a nascent unified Tanzanian nation-state. The Maji Maji war or wars have consequently taken on symbolic political importance that has distorted much of what has been subsequently reported. The most controversial and valuable side of this historical collection is its attempt to work toward a more accurate and detailed set of accounts of this important historical movement or movements. None of these essays diminishes the importance of Maji Maji, but all combine to provide a far more credible and diverse picture of what occurred. History can be diverse and accurate and still inspire cultural interest and inspiration to Africans. Illusions about the unitary values of a nation-state are not necessarily more important than memories about ethnic identities and local cultural pride which value diversity.

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Gieler, Wolfgang: Afrika-Lexikon. Geographie, Geschichte, Kultur, Politik und Wirtschaft. Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2010. 541 pp. ISBN 978-3-631-59568-8. Preis: € 69.80

"Afrika-Lexikon – Geographie, Geschichte, Kultur, Politik und Wirtschaft" expands the breadth and depth of our understanding of the African continent. This edited collection builds upon previous works that have dealt exclusively with the social and economic realities of Africa. Lucidly written, the lexicon serves as a compendium not only for political science students and NGOs working in African countries, but anyone, including nonacademics, seeking current and compact information about African countries and their geographical, political, and economic set ups.

"Afrika-Lexikon" begins with a brief preface by the editor, which is then followed by a detailed list of abbreviations and maps depicting sociopolitical facts about various states of modern Africa. The lexicon presents individual countries in alphabetical order with an affable layout for the reader, allowing for a synoptic view of relevant information about each state. The greatest strength of the lexicon is precisely its breadth of coverage in terms of different themes intended to differentiate the continent – its manifold societies and political systems. To make such a differentiation intelligible to the reader, the authors present a consistent layout of topics facilitating a quick glance at the contemporary situation of each country. This presentational clarity culminates in portraying the social and political meanings of the national flag of each country, despite some minor typographical errors found on pp. 230, 225, 339, and a few others. Besides, some few inconsistencies found may end up confusing the reader as in "Windhuk" on p. 328 and "Windhoek" on p. 329. The same goes for the population figures mentioned on pp. 189 and 192.

The lexicon presents a high quality of data mainly from the perspective of political science, and in most instances, the authors convey their own analysis of this data. However, from a Social Anthropological perspective, the lexicon would have been more complete if the contributors had also given ample information on local history revealing cultural practices, rather than dwelling more on the political and economic ones. Such information can be obtained more from local informants than computer animated statistical analysis. Hence, the relevance of oral history may become more manifest. My impression in relation to history is that the contributors prefer written to oral history for lack of documentary evidence. For example, about Burundi, it is stated on page 108 that "the original settlement of presentday Burundi and the exact ancestry of the three main groups (Twa, Hutu, and Tutsi) is controversial for lack of sources in the scientific literature." Exactly the same argument about Ruanda is found on page 355. Due to this lack of clarity in written history both authors resort to assumptions: "It can be presumed that …". In such a context, Social Anthropological analysis, by contrast, would favour oral history by taking especial account of the information provided by local (elderly) informants about who their ancestors are and where they had come from. Such information can be found in their mythical narrations and ritual performances, which demands of course doing field research over a long period. Today, however, oral history depicting the precolonial past of many African societies is increasingly receiving the attention of modern historians. In addition, by giving identical and partly verbatim accounts about the historical developments and social composition of both Burundi (108 ff.) and Ruanda (355 ff.), the authors seem to suggesting a synchronic analysis that neglects cultural specificities of these states.

Social Anthropologists may argue that the choice and employment of concepts such as dialect instead of language, *Stamm* (tribe), *Naturreligion* (natural/primitive religion), *Schwarzafrika*/*Schwarzafrikaner* (black Africa / black Africans), may be no longer politically and scientifically correct as they may portray conventional ideas about Africa, which could disparaging nowadays. These words are found especially on pp. 132, 273, 477, 264, 268, and 306, respectively. These concepts further indicate a well-known paradigmatic model of the difference between "Us and "Them." "Society" instead "tribe" or "ethnic groups" is much more common today among Social Anthropologists because it points to differentiated cultural, social, and ritual complexities as opposed to the classical understanding of the "simpleness" of social groups who merely adapt to their natural environments. The term 'sub-Saharan Africa' is much more common today among academics rather than the more classical form "black Africa."

Regarding religion, the authors correctly mention the coexistence of the three main religions (Islam, Christianity, and traditional religions) in African countries without giving adequate reference to Judaism. This religion is also present, though on a small scale, in 13 African countries (Ethiopia, Ghana, Cape Verde, Libya, Malawi, Mali, Morocco, Sao Tome, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Tunisia, and Uganda).

The practice of Judaism on the African continent belongs to the aspects of social life not widely known about the continent, since there is a general tendency to portray Africa in negative terms such as catastrophes and pan-