

War and military strategy during the maji maji war and its impacts on non-combatant vulnerable groups: women and children in Songea district

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This study analyses war and military strategies during the Maji Maji War in Songea District and the way it affected non-combatants, vulnerable groups, especially women and children. It also examines the way non-combatants maintained food, health and family security. The study was guided by three theories: the Just War Theory with an assumption that, the Maji Maji war started by the restrictive strategy that avoided targeting civilians. Secondly, it employed the Just and Unjust War Theory with an assumption that, war and military strategies may affect untargeted groups due to desire of victory in the process. Finally, the study employed Empathetic War Fighting Theory with an assumption that, non-combatants are the most affected groups in the war and they get involved indirectly. Both written records and oral accounts were used in collecting information for this study. The archival sources for this study were limited but this was not a big challenge because the main idea was to understand local people's agency in the war that was fulfilled by use of field interviews. Most archival sources consulted had the colonial view on the war while less is said about the local people. Another challenge on the archival sources was the fact that many of them were in German language that the researcher was not conversant with. However, all the shortcomings of historical sources were handled through corroboration and triangulation of sources that in the end helped to make informed conclusions. The findings of the study revealed a number of issues associated with the Germans' war and the military strategies during the Maji Maji War in Songea District. First, the German colonial power employed revenge and hanging of leaders as their main military strategy. They did not target civilians partly because they believed that they would suppress the Maji Maji fighters in a short period. Such a belief was due to their modern military equipments and techniques compared to traditional military methods of the Ngoni during the war. The Ngoni military strategies that used short stabbing spears and involved ambush and raiding contained the Germans for a long time. Although the Ngoni used traditional weapons such as chinjenje, mgoha, chikopa and chishango, they had good discipline to their Chiefs who acted as military commanders. The Ngoni of Mshopwere were also good at guerilla

type of war as their military strategy against the Germans. After they saw the power of the Ngoni in fighting, the Germans employed a very disastrous military strategy - the scorched earth policy that included burning villages and farms in order to create famine to force the Ngoni to surrender. They burnt all food stuff that helped both combatants and non-combatants to survive. Famine became the most tragedy causing thousands of non-combatants to die. Famine brought genocide than even the way the war itself affected people. Non-combatants were displaced as a result of the war. Some were forced while others decided to run and stay away from Songea fearing the German regime. Displaced families experienced difficulties regardless of their family backgrounds. They struggled to overcome the challenges by maintaining food, health and family security through collecting food clandestinely, especially at night due to the fear of the German soldiers. They also used traditional food collected from forests such as fruits and roots. Similarly, they used traditional ways of curing diseases and snake bites. Generally, the military strategies especially the scorched earth policy during the Maji Maji War affected the non-combatants just like the way it affected the combatants in the pitched battle.