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# The Impact of Economic Changes through German Colonialism in Tanzania

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**ABSTRACT**

This paper explores the lasting economic impact of German colonialism in Tanzania, focusing on resource exploitation, forced labour, and the disruption of traditional social systems. The colonial policies, which prioritized the extraction of raw materials like sisal and coffee, left Tanzania economically dependent, impoverished, and underdeveloped. The Maji Maji Rebellion (1905-1907) symbolized resistance against German oppression. Despite post-independence efforts to address these legacies, such as industrialization and economic liberalization, Tanzania still struggles with poverty, inequality, and environmental challenges worsened by climate change. The paper calls for international cooperation, particularly Germany's responsibility in aiding Tanzania's recovery.

**Keywords:** German Colonialism, Tanzania, Economic Exploitation, Maji Maji Rebellion, Resource Extraction, Forced Labour, Colonial Legacy, Poverty and Inequality, Post-Colonial Development.

## Introduction:

Abdulrazak Gurnah is a writer from Tanzania. His works often focus on the experiences of immigrants and refugees uprooted during and after colonial rule. He received the 2021 Nobel Prize in Literature. Memories of Leaving (1987), Pilgrim's Way (1988), Paradise (1994), The Last Gift (2011), Gravel Heart (2017), and Afterlives (2019) are all works of fiction by Gurnah (2020). He left his country at a young age, and this experience has given him much to write about regarding alienation and displacement. There is a strong sense of his birthplace, culture, and recollections across all of his works. Gurnah's article "Writing Place" from 2004 states, "I was writing from recollection, and how vivid and intense that memory was..." That peculiarity heightened the sense of a life discarded, of individuals ignored without a second thought, of a house and a way of life gone to me forever. When I first started writing, I focused on recollections of that vanished existence (26, 2004).

The first part of the twentieth century is the principal setting for Gurnah's *Afterlives*, an engaging book. Many reviewers have praised this work. Maaza is all over the depiction of psychologically fragile relationships and the narrative themes of colonialism. Meanwhile, David Pilling, a critic for the Financial Times, describes it as a "novel of quiet beauty and sadness." In her critique of "Afterlives," Gurnah challenges us to consider the long-lasting effects of colonialism and conflict among successive generations. The novel delves into the aftermath of widespread devastation caused by these historical forces. "Afterlives" confronts head-on the brutality of German colonial dominance in Africa, focusing on themes of tyranny, genocide, rebellion, and retribution. The narrative revolves around the notorious and oppressive German presence in East Africa during the early twentieth century.

In 1904, Germany initiated a ruthless extermination campaign to suppress a rebellion in Namibia. This aggressive military approach extended to East Africa, referred to as Deutsch-Ostafrika. Gurnah's acclaimed work, "Afterlives," meticulously recounts the atmosphere of fear that gripped Tanzania and its profound impact on those compelled to abandon their homes. The narrative of "Afterlives" unfolds just prior to the outbreak of World War I. Tanzania, once part of East Africa, was colonized by Germany, which later transitioned to British rule before achieving independence. The story tracks the trials faced by its characters, emphasizing the individualized effects of colonialism. The portrayal of tragedy and the range of psychological reactions it elicits is central to the story. Some people, like Biashara Asha, live with bitterness and hatred, while others, like Hamza, manage to move past their circumstances and create the lives they want. "Afterlives" investigates the experiences of African nationals forced into fighting in World War I—a significant fallout from both the impending battle and colonialism—by following the path of Ilyas, a boy kidnapped by German colonial soldiers. Returning home after a prolonged absence, Ilyas is met with the heartbreaking discovery of his deceased parents and the adoption of his sister, Afiya. The book's other two major characters, Afiya and Hamza, have narratives that are not intertwined until the second half. After the conflict, Hamza returns to the neighbourhood where he and Ilyas had resided in hopes of finding work. He eventually confides in Ilyas' sister, Afiya, who provides him with stability and affection. Gurnah uses Hamza to illustrate the toll that war had on the German troops, whether they were conscripted or enlisted. However, Afiya shows how the conflict devastatingly affects even non-combatants.

Namibia, Cameroon, Togo, sections of Tanzania and Kenya were all formerly a part of the German colonial empire on the African continent. Although all colonial endeavours were violent and oppressive, Germany's extermination campaign against the Herero and Nama revolt in Namibia in 1904 is often regarded as the first genocide of the 20th century. Germany's military strategies were just as lethal in Ostafrika (East Africa) on the other side of the continent. *Afterlives* is set against the background of these horrors and is both expansive and personal. It begins with a soft and unassuming sentence: "Khalifa was twenty-six years old when he met the trader Amur Biashara." The story takes place in what was then Tanganyika, now mainland Tanzania.

In 1907, while the Maji insurrection was "in the dying throes of its brutalities," Khalifa married Asha, Biashara's niece. Gurnah returns to the daily lives of the newlyweds after describing the horrific consequences of defying German rule. When the confident, jovial, German-speaking Ilyas arrived at the nameless beach town where Khalifa and Asha reside, the story had already moved past the uprisings and colonial retaliations. Instead of focusing on the bigger sweeps of colonial history, Gurnah zeroes in on the lives of people who have found some tranquillity among the chaos. However, the relative calm of their existence belies the fact that they have not suffered the psychological and physiological consequences of colonization. "The Germans have slain so many people that the land is strewn with skulls and bones, and the soil is sticky with blood," a character says. After Ilyas, who had grown up working on a coffee plantation owned by Germans, was transferred to a mission school, he spoke out in defence of the colonizers. "My buddy, they have devoured you," someone ultimately responds.

Ilyas is eager to join the Schutztruppe Askaris, a group of local troops with a reputation for inflicting horrific cruelties on fellow Africans on behalf of the German empire as the Germans prepare for what would become the First World War. His younger sister, Afiya, develops while he is away. After being taken in by a strict family, she is punished so severely for her literacy skills that she runs to Ilyas's friend Khalifa for aid. She will be moving in with the pair as soon as possible. Hamza is a mild-mannered Askari volunteer who swiftly comes to terms with his error. When it comes to the personal interaction between oppressor and victim, Hamza's narrative is the most captivating and unsettling because it exposes the harsh and complicated motivations at play. Hamza is warned by his fellow Askari that the Oberleutnant's servant position is fraught with danger since "these Germans, they adore toying with handsome young guys. " Hamza is informed by the commander that he is "working with backward and primitive people, and the only way to dominate them is to instil dread into them." To enable Hamza to appreciate Schiller, he is dedicated to teaching him German as well. Their interactions become more and more emotionally fraught, and Gurnah does not try to avoid the tension. As he follows Hamza through the conflict, he guides us skilfully into deeper contemplations of the role of Christianity in the urge to construct and preserve a colonial empire, using the same patience and care he provides to all his characters. Moreover, he demonstrates the repairing power of trust and love through Hamza and Afiya.

Gurnah, whose book Paradise was a 1994 Booker Prize finalist, is famous for downplaying Europe's historical significance. In Afterlives, he mulls the legacy of colonialism and war through generations and urges us to do the same. When one effect of colonialism is the intentional erasure of an African point of view from historical records, what may be saved? How can we restore what was forgotten if we do not know what was forgotten? In a world where terrible wars are used as historical markers, Gurnah presents a worldwide battle from the perspective of the people who choose to look beyond their differences and go on with their lives. Perhaps this explains why the ending was so sudden. The last chapters build to a gripping and emotionally devastating finale, as Gurnah's bold act of reclamation achieves its moving end. However, the change comes too quickly. It is hard not to wish the plot would slow down so we could get a more in-depth look at Ilyas's latter years and spend as much time with him as we do with the other characters. Regardless, Afterlives is a captivating read because it brings together and resists erasing the lives of individuals destined to be forgotten.

## Conclusion:

It is set in post-colonial Africa and serves as a record of colonialism's bloody history, one of many that Europeans have yet to face. Like Chinua Achebe, Gurnah fills the African experience with an intuition that is older, more primordial, and more comparable to a sense of belonging to the place where life started. However, unlike Achebe, the impact here is muted and lacks Achebe's fiery intensity; it is as if Gurnah is holding back, trying to maintain his voice objective and uninvolved. Could this be a result of your early life experience of having to leave Zanzibar for the United Kingdom? What the Nobel committee calls "compassionate penetration of the ravages of colonialism," does this qualify? His photographs of people of different backgrounds reflect his alienation, serving as a counterargument to the current trend of using people's ancestry and religious affiliation to assign them a sense of "belonging." His preferred setting is the gritty portside and shanty town, where sailors, merchants, and soldiers from around the world congregate. The four lives of Khalifa, Afiya, Hamza, and Ilyas become bridges between the brutal German army on the one hand. The average African conscripted to fight against his people on the other as he recounts the sweep of 'big' history via their 'small' histories, between the massive colonial plunder program and the few local traders who profit from it. The Germans were brutal enough ("They chopped off the head of the Wahehe chieftain Mkwawa and brought it to Germany as a trophy"). Still, the Schutztruppe Askari, an African mercenary unit led by German soldiers, was even more ruthless.

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