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ABSTRACT

When studying the Boxer Uprising in Northern China in 1900 as well as the Majimaji War in German East Africa between 1905 and 1907, some notable similarities between them come to attention. Both have seen involvement by the German Empire, and both conflicts have until today been characterized by the supposed superstitious rites that involved varying degrees of medicinal use and invulnerability rituals by members of those anti-colonial resistance movements. These portrayals, while not necessarily incorrect, uncritically repeat discourses that were historically developed by western actors like missionaries, military personnel or journalists on the ground. I show how the narratives of local missionaries create a distinction between the good Christian colonialist "self" and a superstitious, barbaric resisting "other" to aid violent repression of these movements, as well as support colonial narratives and the "civilizing mission" in general. I compare writings of the German Catholic Steyler Missionary Society in China, mainly its newspaper "Stadt Gottes" and those of the Lutheran Berlin Mission Society in East Africa in the "Berliner Missions-Berichte" to shed a light on how these processes played out discursively and were publicized to a wider readership in the colonial metropole.

BY

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Introduction[1]

> All non-Europeans were firmly in the grip of religion, and "Oriental" or "primitive" societies could best be described and understood in terms of religion. […] This approach, shallow as it might seem to us, made some sense in the nineteenth century. On the one hand, these societies […] revealed themselves to Western scholars mainly through texts of a religious character […]. On the other hand, it seemed to Europeans that the most threatening resistance to colonial conquest came from religious dignitaries and religiously inspired movements. The thesis of the primacy of the religious in non-Western societies contributed to a lasting dematerialization, dehistoricization, and depoliticization of the way in which those societies were understood in the West.[2]

Two examples for such apparently "religiously inspired movements," as Jürgen Osterhammel described them in his seminal work "The Transformation of the World," are the Yihétuan, or "boxers," a popular anti-foreign movement who in 1900 brought large parts of northern China under their control, provoking a punitive military expedition by eight imperial powers under German leadership. Similarly, the Maji movement, also a popular resistance movement, fought a war against the German colonial empire in German East Africa (modern day Tanzania) from 1905 to 1907. The similarities between both anticolonial resistance movements are so notable that Thaddeus Sunseri has already put forward the thesis that "the Boxers might have directly inspired German perceptions of Majimaji."[3] Both narratives on these movements contain magic, invulnerability rituals, spirit possession, a ritual significance of water as medicine and "female pollution" among other aspects. These characterizations, are a result of the endeavors of missionaries to portray the associated anticolonial resistance movements of the Yíhetuan and the Maji movement as inferior, superstitious and at times dangerous, to justify their suppression by colonial and imperial forces, as well as to justify the missionaries' role in "civilizing" the resistors and advancing their own religious goals.

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1 The editors wish to acknowledge the similarity of the title of this paper with another recently published paper, Sean F. McEnroe, "Cross-Cultural Perceptions of Technology and Magic in the Ghost Dance, Boxer Uprising, and Maji Maji Rebellion," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 66, no. 1 (October 25, 2023): 81–105, https://doi.org/10.1017/s0010417523000336. However, not only are the source base for the two papers very different, but the editors also hereby affirm that this paper is a modified, shortened and translated version of Anna Zoë Klos's bachelor's thesis submitted at the University of Düsseldorf in 2022.

2 Jürgen Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World*: *A Global History of the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton University Press, 2014), 876–77.

3 Thaddeus Sunseri, "Majimaji and the Millenium: Abrahamic Sources and the Creation of a Tanzanian Resistance Tradition," *History in Africa* 26 (1999): 71, https://doi.org/10.2307/3172146.

To analyze this justification, this paper utilizes the analytical frameworks of historical myths, Osterhammel's three d's — "dematerialization, dehistoricization, and depoliticization" — as well as Sebastian Conrad's concept of global integration to analyze the similarities of historical discourses on both conflicts in missionary writings. Firstly, I will use and understand "Myth" in this paper according to Paul Cohen and in tradition of Roland Barthes, as a narrative with a particular function to the mythmakers and their present, that is not necessarily untrue but certainly ideological.[4] This functionality is tied, secondly, to the three d's, as the mythmakers, the missionaries in this case, construct narratives of superstition, invulnerability and spirits to dematerialize, dehistoricize and depoliticize — to "other" in another term — these movements to justify the civilizing mission and their own presence on scene.[5] Resistance becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, that further justifies the colonial oppression. Thirdly, global integration provides a framework to understand the possibility of the emergence of such widespread narratives by understanding colonial Christian mission as an integrated endeavor, that due to ideological structures, can lead to similar discursive outcomes in different far-away places.

The source basis of this paper consists of missionary publications, in particular the newspaper *Stadt Gottes* (City of God) published by the Catholic mission society *Steyler Missionare* (*Societas Verbi Divini/SVD*) for the Boxer Uprising, as well as the *Berliner Missions-Berichte* (Berlin Mission Reports) published by the Lutheran *Berliner Mission* for the Majimaji War. Both organizations were exceptionally close to the theaters of these wars, their representatives experienced them directly and wrote extensively about them to their audiences in the colonial metropole. As Thoralf Klein noted, "Missionary periodicals, like their secular counterparts (newspapers and magazines), had the potential to create and sustain media events."[6] Thus, they are perfectly suited for this examination of their discursive make-up as their articles often explicitly deal with the religious characters of the movements.

This paper consists of three main chapters. The first chapter serves as a general introduction into the different historical contexts of the two distinct locations that this story takes place in, northern China and southern German East Africa. Here, I examine the different Colonialisms, and how they structurally influence missionary thought and thus the analysis. The second chapter then delves into the Boxer Uprising, the Steyler Mission and how narratives of magic,

4 Paul A. Cohen, *History in Three Keys*: *The Boxers as Event, Experience, and Myth* (Columbia University Press, 1997), xii; Roland Bernhard et al., "Was Ist Ein Historischer Mythos? Versuch Einer Definition Aus Kulturwissenschaftlicher Und Geschichtsdidaktischer Perspektive," in *Mythen in Deutschsprachigen Geschichtsschulbüchern: Von Marathon Bis Zum Elysée-Vertrag*, ed. Roland Bernhard et al. (Vandenhoek & Ruprecht, 2017), 11–12.

5 Osterhammel, *Transformation*, 826–27.

6 Thoralf Klein, "Media Events and Missionary Periodicals: The Case of the Boxer War, 1900-1901," *Church History* 82, no. 2 (2013): 399.

medicine and invulnerability were created there, while the third chapter examines the same for the Majimaji War[7] and the Berliner Mission. I conclude with a comparison of the two discourses.

Colonialisms and Missionary Thought

Despite the similarities in narrative, both the Boxer Uprising and the Majimaji War developed and were fought under vastly different circumstances. Both occurred under a prevailing atmosphere of colonial invasions, but China and East Africa were in vastly different stages of the "race against time" to modernize and resist the respective invasions.[8]

In China, different colonial powers exercised their influence in an informal way, through unequal treaties, economic power and missionary enterprises, while competing with each other since the Opium Wars. The country is thus generally assumed to be part of an "Informal Empire," as it was not directly colonized .[9] Leading up to the uprising, the country was politically and militarily weakened, made evident by the defeat in the first Sino-Japanese war in 1895,[10] and the Juye Incident and subsequent German occupation of Jiaozhou Bay in 1897.[11] In response to these losses, the court in Beijing tried to enact sweeping reforms — known as the Hundred Days' Reform — to bring the country out of its visible crisis. The uprising can be understood as an opposing force to these foreign supported reforms. After her reactionary coup against the Guangxu-Emperor in 1898, empress-dowager Cixi became if not a direct ally to the Boxer Movement at first, certainly an indirect supporter, as their views and goals were complimentary. Both wanted to contain the foreign influence, whether for practical and religious concerns or for reasons of ongoing power struggles at the court. The race against time was still fought intensely between the reformist Chinese southerners and the conservative Manchu northerners led by Cixi.[12] The Boxer uprising then came to play a major part in this particular episode of the "race against time" in China.

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7 In this paper, I will use the term "Majimaji" instead of the more common English name "Maji Maji" to describe the conflict, except when quoting sources or literature. On this spelling see: Nancy Rushohora, "An Archaeological Identity of the Majimaji – Toward an Historical Archaeology of Resistance to German Colonization in Southern Tanzania," in *Archaeologies* Vol. 11, (2015): 246-271, 250.

8 John Darwin, *After Tamerlane*: *The Rise and Fall of Global Empires, 1400-2000* (Penguin Books, 2008), 224.

9 Susanne Kuß and Bernd Martin, "Einleitung," in Susanne Kuß and Bernd Martin, *Das Deutsche Reich Und Der Boxeraufstand*, 11.

10 Darwin, *After Tamerlane*, 351–53.

11 Cohen, *History in Three Keys*, 20–21.

12 On the power struggles at the Qing court between the Hundred Days' Reform and the uprising see: Xiang Lanxin, *The Origins of the Boxer War*: *A Multinational Study* (Routledge, 2003), 17–24.

On the other hand, the region of the Majimaji War, had been an "official" part of the German colony *Deutsch-Ostafrika* since 1890. As opposed to the Informal Empire in China, German East Africa was subjected to direct colonial authority and violence. Although this colonial authority's power was practically limited, often times to an area encompassing little more than a day's march from a military outpost – a concept described by Michael Pesek as *Inseln von Herrschaft* (islands of rule)[13] – it nonetheless made for a very different situation in which familiar patterns developed. Local groups and governances had lost their "race against time" in 1898, when German colonial forces ended the successful long running resistance movement known as the "Hehe War" after Chief Mkwawa's final military loss and subsequent suicide. Mkwawa's troops were not easily defeated, having wiped out almost an entire company of the euphemistically named German *Schutztruppe* (Protection force) in 1891.[14] In this sense, the Majimaji war was not an attempt to act against growing colonial influence, but an attempt to resist the colonial structures that had already been placed on people. Despite these fundamentally different Colonialisms, both conflicts were a part of or in close proximity to the "race against time." The race against time and its counterpart, European imperial rule, characterized by violence and suppression are the kind of "regular and sustained"[15] interactions in Conrads's sense of global integration.

The setting of the race against time is not the only integrated phenomenon that is present in this story. Religion and the colonial mission that facilitated the construction of narratives are not more important ones, but certainly more concrete examples. Paul Cohen points to several factors that made possible the expansion of Christian missionary enterprises, naming Christianity's "universalist pretensions," long distance travel becoming less of a hurdle in the 19th century, and most importantly, a specific growing ideology.[16] The (at first primarily Protestant) missionary societies that had developed out of the Pietist Revival Movement and the Awakening movements since the late 18th century,[17] were structurally independent from both church and state.[18] In the same way, decades later the reappearing Catholic mission was a result of popular piety. Missionaries

13 Michael Pesek, *Koloniale Herrschaft in Deutsch-Ostafrika*: *Expeditionen, Militär Und Verwaltung Seit 1880* (Campus, 2005), 244.

14 David Pizzo, "To Devour the Land of Mkwawa: Colonial Violence and the German-Hehe War in East Africa c. 1884-1914" (PhD diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2007), 86–104,, https://cdr.lib.unc.edu/downloads/df65v7991.

15 Sebastian Conrad, *What Is Global History?* (Princeton University Press, 2016), 9.

16 Paul A. Cohen, "Christian Missions and Their Impact to 1900," in *The Cambridge History of China: Late Ch'ing, 1800-1911*, ed. John K. Fairbank (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1978), 544.

17 Winfried Speitkamp, *Deutsche Kolonialgeschichte* (Reclam, 2005), 91. Important early missionary societies include the London Missionary Society (founded in 1795), the Church Mission Society (founded in 1799) and the Basler Mission (founded in 1815).

18 Osterhammel, *Transformation*, 890.

that later went into contemporary (and future) colonized regions, were for the most part, not well educated and found themselves in the same ideological tension as people in the metropole. As a result, they brought this tension with them, going into the colonies. Some missionaries rejected the colonial state or remained neutral towards it,[19] while others became accomplices to colonialism and the colonial invasion. The Steyler Missionaries in China for example, bore a "catholic-fundamentalist, antiliberal and antimodernist spirit,"[20] combined with exceptional German nationalism.[21] The Lutheran *Berliner Missionsgesellschaft* had similar tendencies, evidenced by the role of their inspector Alexander Merensky in the colonial labour regime.[22] With these tendencies came a certain view of the subjects of proselytization. Missionaries viewed themselves as "saviours of the souls of the heathens,"[23] while their counterparts were seen as "idol worshippers."[24] This thinking reveals a dichotomy of true faith and superstition that had to be continuously constructed and reaffirmed in the practice of mission.[25] Defining what religion *was* led to a simultaneous definition of what it *was not*. In constructing the self, missionaries constructed the other.

The Genesis of Narratives of the Boxer Uprising

Missionaries were the first Europeans that encountered the growing Boxer Movement. Due to their presence in Shandong province, the birthplace of the Yìhetuan, they became the movement's first European victims. The "foreign" in the popular phrase "Support the Qing, destroy the foreign" primarily addressed the foreign religion (*yang-jiao)* of Christianity.[26] Both Catholic and Protestant missionaries were present in Shandong, the latter in far greater numbers in the east of the Shandong peninsula, the former mostly concentrated in the western inland parts of the province. Despite their lesser numbers, the Catholics in the form of French Jesuits and the German Steylers were far more successful in their attempts to convert the local populace. Esherick attributes this in part to their more aggressive efforts, which included frequently taking the side of Christians

19 Majida Hamilton, *Mission Im Kolonialen Umfeld*: *Deutsche Protestantische Missionsgesellschaften in Deutsch-Ostafrika* (Universitätsverlag Göttingen, 2010), 59–60.

20 Klaus Mühlhahn, *Herrschaft Und Widerstand in Der "Musterkolonie" Kiautschou*: *Interaktionen Zwischen China Und Deutschland, 1897-1914* (Oldenbourg, 2000), 326.

21 Joseph Esherick, *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising* (University of California Press, 1987), 79.

22 Sebastian Conrad, *Globalisation and the Nation in Imperial Germany* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 2010), 85–90.

23 Mühlhahn, *Kiautschou*, 327.

24 Horst Gründer, "Die Rolle Der Christlichen Mission Beim Ausbruch Des Boxeraufstandes," in Susanne Kuß and Bernd Martin, *Das Deutsche Reich Und Der Boxeraufstand*, 25. Both examples refer to Johann Baptist von Anzer SVD, the Apostolic Vicar of Southern Shandong.

25 Karolin Wetjen, *Mission Als Theologisches Labor*: *Koloniale Aushandlungen Des Religiösen in Ostafrika Um 1900* (Franz Steiner Verlag, 2021), 24.

26 Joseph Esherick, *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising*, 68.

in local conflicts and trials.[27] Locals used this to their advantage, to the point where the perceived distinction between bandits and Christians became blurred for the leaders and members of heterodox[28] community self-defense organizations like the so-called "Big-Sword Society."[29] As Bandits converted to Christianity, violence against Christians was the result.[30] Thereby missionaries facilitated an important cause of the atmosphere of persecution of Christians that engulfed the region in 1896 and later from 1898 to 1899.[31]

Christenverfolgungen or persecutions of Christians was the term or the motif through which Steylers attempted to make sense of what they saw and how they then described it to their audiences in the metropole, using allusions to the perils Christians had faced during the times of the Roman Empire.[32] Missionary Anton Wewel does not spend much time discussing the perpetrators of violence against Chinese Christians in one such particular piece published in the monthly newspaper *Stadt Gottes* (City of God). Rather his focus is on their suffering and pain, in an attempt to mobilize the readers into making donations to the mission.[33] Where the attackers do appear, Wewel plainly describes them in alternating terms: bandits, robbers, rebels, insurgents or heathens. The mention of the Boxer motto, here archaically translated as "*Zum Schutze der kaiserlichen Dynastie und zur Ausrottung der europäischen Nation*" ("For the protection of the imperial dynasty and the extermination of the European nation" as opposed to the modern "Support the Qing, destroy the foreign"), makes these "bandits" conclusively identifiable as Boxers.[34] This identification however was not so easily discernible for the Steylers themselves. In practice they frequently conflated especially Big Swords and Boxers.[35] After the 1896 incidents, Yu Xian, the governor of Shandong province started successfully suppressing the Big Swords by executing its leadership.[36] Despite that, the Steylers attributed the murders of their missionaries Richard Henle and Franz Xaver Nies in the so-called

27 Ibid, 77–79.

28 On Heterodoxy in the Chinese religious and state life see: Richard Shek, "The Alternative Moral Universe of Religious Dissenters in Ming-Qing China," in *Religion and the Early Modern State: Views from China, Russia, and the West*, ed. James D. Tracy and Marguerite Ragnow, (Cambridge Univ. Press, 2010).

29 Cohen, *History in Three Keys*, 19.

30 Esherick, *Boxer Uprising*, 113.

31 Thoralf Klein, "Aktion Und Reaktion? Mission Und Chinesische Gesellschaft," in *Kolonialkrieg in China: Die Niederschlagung Der Boxerbewegung 1900-1901*, ed. Mechthild Leutner and Klaus Mühlhahn (Ch. Links, 2007), 39–40.

32 Anton Wewel SVD, "Die Jüngste Christenverfolgung in Südschantung," *Stadt Gottes*, 1899.

33 Thoralf Klein, "Media Events and Missionary Periodicals," 402.

34 Anton Wewel SVD, "Die jüngste Christenverfolgung in Südschantung," 553.

35 Esherick, *Boxer Uprising*, xvi.

36 Ibid. 120.

Juye Incident of November 1897 to the Big Sword Society.[37] Even after the Boxer uprising had come to an end, missionary Georg Stenz – survivor of the Juye Incident and its actual target – continued the conflation in an article entitled *Die Gesellschaft "vom grossen Messer" (Boxer)* (The Society of the "Big Knife" (Boxers)).[38] The conflation of these fundamentally different movements by missionaries is the first large complex that influences discussions of magic, medicine and invulnerability in the context of the Boxer uprising. In fact, invulnerability rituals become a major reason for the conflation.

Esherick has made it clear that invulnerability rituals and spirit possession are the key to understanding the organization of the Yìhetuan, instead of martial arts as the name "Boxers" might suggest.[39] After the uprising, Georg Stenz gave us an insight into the development of these rituals:

> They [the old brothers, predecessors to the Big Sword Society according to Stenz] surrounded themselves with a mysterious darkness and thereby won over the superstitious people of Shandong [*Schantunesen*]. They wanted to be invulnerable; puncture- and bulletproof, they could dare to oppose the impudent robbers. […]. Throughout a long time they had to practice, in the beginning by hitting parts of their bodies continuously with bricks, later with knifes, all the while emitting a groaning "hm" to preserve their "power" ["*Kraft*"]. Smaller wounds could be healed by the heroes of the knife [*Messerhelden*] by blowing over the wound [*Überblasen*].[40]

Stenz's use of words like *abergläubisch* (superstitious), and *Kraft* (power/strength) or neologisms like *Messerhelden* (heroes of the knife) shows how his religious worldview corresponds to the dichotomy of true faith and superstition. Practitioners of these rituals become the "other," they are dematerialized, dehistoricized and depoliticized by Stenz' attitude and snippy choice of words that remove the described ritual from its material and spiritual context and function. Herein lies the root of the conflation of Big Swords and Boxers. It did not come from their actual historical genesis and organizational structure that

37 Johann Baptist von Anzer SVD, "Jahresbericht Über Die Mission Von Südschantung," *Stadt Gottes*, 1899, 224.

38 Georg Stenz SVD, "Die Gesellschaft 'Vom Großen Messer' (Boxer)," *Globus: Illustrierte Zeitschrift für Länder- und Völkerkunde*, 1901, 1.

39 Esherick, *Boxer Uprising*, xiii.

40 Georg Stenz SVD, "Die Gesellschaft 'Vom Großen Messer' (Boxer)," 10. Translation by the author. Original: "*Sie umgaben sich mit einem geheimnisvollen Dunkel und gewannen dadurch die abergläubischen Schantunesen. Sie wollten unverwundbar sein; stich- und schussfest, konnten sie es wagen, den frechen Räubern entgegenzutreten. […] Längere Zeit hindurch mussten sie dann Übungen machen, indem sie sich anfangs mit Ziegelsteinen, später mit Messern fortwährend an bestimmte Teile des Körpers schlugen, dabei aber immer ein ächzendes 'hm' ausstiessen, um ihre 'Kraft' zu behalten. Kleinere Wunden konnten die Messerhelden durch Überblasen heilen.*"

was in some cases observable[41] which were quite different, but from their similar ritualistic practice; a mistake that Yu Xian also made during his early attempts to supress the Boxers as judicial commissioner in Shandong.[42] Big Swords and Boxers were the same to Stenz (and by extension to Yu Xian), because from his perspective they acted the same; they persecuted Christians and practiced invulnerability rituals.

Taking this perception into account, it becomes less surprising that the first mention of the term "Boxers" in *Stadt Gottes* did not come from a printed missionaries' letter or from a yearly report on the state of the mission, but from an ordinary news report on *Die Wirren in China* (The Turmoil in China). It read: "This time the secret society of the Boxers *(Icho-tschuan)* is mainly involved in Zhili [*Tscheli*], in Shandong [*Schantung*] it is the Cult of the Big Knife *(Dadauchui)*, namely during the Christian persecutions of 1898 and 1899 […]."[43] It appears as if to the editors, at the time Boxers were a Zhili province phenomenon and Big Swords a Shandong province one, even though all organizations that used variations of the name "Boxers" — The Boxers United in Righteousness (*Yihequan*) in Guan county, the Red Boxers near Jining and the Spirit Boxers in northwestern Shandong — originated in Shandong province.[44] In some cases, groups were also differentiated,[45] showing how these editorial reports at the time, had to rely on incomplete and unreliable information.

The reports in the *Stadt Gottes* on the Boxers, both by missionaries and by editors, were for the most part not much concerned with their rituals, but transported a political narrative, that centered the Qing court and the Mandarins. The Boxers were mostly seen as puppets of the politicians, thus depoliticizing the movement itself. As such, the first mention of rituals in the newspaper did

41 Anton Volpert cites a different unnamed missionary: *"'Die Sekte vom großen Messer' so schreibt ein Mitbruder aus Zhauchiän, 'ist viel zahlreicher als früher und übt immer mehr Rekruten ein. Mit ihren langen Messern sieht man sie überall herumspazieren. Indessen fehlt ihnen ein fähiges Haupt, und so lassen sie uns in Ruhe. […],'"* Anton Volpert SVD, "Von Der Jüngsten Verfolgung in Südschantung," *Stadt Gottes*, 1900, 495.

42 Joseph Esherick, *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising*, 120.

43 *Stadt Gottes, "*Die Wirren in China," 1900, 515. Translation by the author. German original: "*Diesesmal ist in Tscheli hauptsächlich der Geheimbund der Boxer (Icho-tschuan) beteiligt, in Schantung die Sekte vom großen Messer (Dadauchui), namentlich bei den Christenverfolgungen von 1898 und 1899* […]."

44 Esherick, *Boxer Uprising*, 153, 195, and 206. Esherick also mentions an equation of Yihequan and Big Swords by Franciscan missionaries local to Guan county.

45 The same article making the Zhili-Shandong differentiation separated Big Swords and Red Boxers, the latter ones being situated very close to the Steyler's area of proselytization, as follows: "*Von den Sekten 'vom großen Messer' und 'von der roten Faust' (Boxer) steht es ja durch zahlreiche Zeugnisse fest, daß sie fremdenfeindlich sind […].*" *Stadt Gottes,* "Die Wirren in China," 517.

not come in the form of a missionary letter or a news report, but in form of a translation of a proclamation by the governor of Shandong in poetry form:

> Since they boasted of magic formulas,
> How did it happen that their strength left them?
> Since they were safe from blows and bullets,
> How could their bodies be destroyed?
> All this shows how vain their boasting,
> which only had the purpose of deceiving the crowd.[46]

Here rituals are framed through Chinese actors' viewpoints, but the translation makes this proclamation difficult to interpret. While Mandarins certainly see these rituals of heterodox origin, just like Christian missionaries do, as superstition,[47] it is very likely that we also find the views and biases of translator Josef Freinademetz in the above quote. Translation as a concept and process must be acknowledged as playing an enormous part in synthesizing two very separate belief systems which both have the same outcome: the othering of the Boxer movement as superstitious. However, only one of these belief systems spread this narrative around the world and into the colonial metropole. Another example of such a translation problem appeared in *Stadt Gottes* in 1901, in a citation of report by a Dutch missionary:

> According to my Mandarin, the uprising originated among the people themselves. Among them, stood some outstanding heroes (the Boxer leaders), who, as they believe, could smash European cannons and warships with their hands and fists. They enjoy the protection and assistance of the spirits of the underworld, so that European bullets bounce off their impenetrable bodies […].[48]

46 *Stadt Gottes,*"Proklamation Des Gouverneurs Von Schantung: Ermahnung an Das Volk, Ruhig Seinen Geschäften Nachzugehen Und Von Dem Verwerflichen Sektenwesen Abzulassen. Ein Gesang," 1900, 519–20. Translation by editor. Original: "*Da sie doch rühmten sich der Zauberformeln,* Since they boasted of magic formulas, *Wie kam es, daß die Kraft von ihnen wich?Da sie doch sicher waren gegen Hieb und Schuß, Wie konnte sinken hin zum Tod ihr Leib?Das alles zeigt, wie eitel ihr Geprahl, Das nur den Zweck gehabt die Menge zu bethören.*"

47 This is exemplified by a mandarin's report on an invulnerability ritual in Zhili in 1826. Cited in: Joseph Esherick, *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising*, 56; Richard Shek, "The Alternative Moral Universe of Religious Dissenters in Ming-Qing China," (Cambridge University Press, 2010).

48 Dr. Faber, "Die Wirren in China," *Stadt Gottes*, 1901, 106. Translation by the author. Original: "*Nach meinem Mandarin entstand der Aufstand beim Volke selbst. Unter demselben standen einige ausgezeichnete Helden (die Boxerführer) auf, die, wie sie glauben, mit Hand und Faust die europäischen Kanonen und Kriegsschiffe zertrümmern können, die den Schutz und die Hilfe der Geister der Unterwelt genießen, so daß die europäischen Kugeln von ihrem undurchdringbaren Körper abspringen […].*"

Again, the magical powers of the Boxers are framed through a Chinese perspective, namely that of a Mandarin. This perspective was first translated into Dutch and then German. It is thus difficult to attain the nature of what was originally said, and we again must assume a high degree of European translators' perspective in this quote. On a textual level, the quote again speaks of invulnerability against bullets but also adds new powers into the mixture, like the Boxers ability to destroy ships and cannons with their fists. Through the *Stadt Gottes*, "one of the most popular and widespread catholic newspapers in the German Empire" and "possibly the only source of information on China for artisans, peasants and shopkeepers in rural regions"[49] this narrative on magic and invulnerability became a part of the German imagination, the picture of the conflict and of China in general.

When talking about myths and narratives about China, it is important to recognize perhaps the most important cultural myth that pervaded western discourse at the time: The "Yellow Peril." While the racial classification of the Chinese as "Yellow" dates back to the "race-science" and Sinophobia of the late 18th century,[50] the term developed in the United States in the 1870s as a reaction to the presence of Chinese laborers in California. However, it only became common spread after the first Sino-Japanese War of 1895, and later through the Boxer Uprising.[51] One of its most important discursive features is its "dialectical relationship [to superiority]: the insecurity of the imperialists and their fear of the subjugated and colonized peoples."[52] This dialectical relationship however is not as clearly visible in the missionary discourse. While a sense of superiority permeates articles in the *Stadt Gottes*, fear or peril is rarely to be seen, particularly in discussions of rituals. As I showed in the numerous quotes, whether they came from missionaries directly, or were framed through Chinese intermediaries, efficacy — or rather inefficacy — is a recurring theme. In one news story, the *Monatsschau* from July and August 1900 — the height of the conflict, this becomes particularly clear: "In these costly battles with the foreigners, the Boxers' superstitious faith in their invulnerability had proven to be a fraud, and the Boxers' troops partially disbanded afterwards […]."[53] Explaining inefficacy is very much in the playbook of othering on the basis of superstition, but it does not

49 Mühlhahn, *Kiautschou*, 322.

50 George Steinmetz, *The Devil's Handwriting*: *Precoloniality and the German Colonial State in Qingdao, Samoa, and Southwest Africa, Chicago Studies in Practices of Meaning,* (The University of Chicago Press, 2007), 385–88.

51 Thoralf Klein, "The 'Yellow Peril,'" in *Europäische Geschichte Online,* (Mainz, 2017), http://www.ieg-ego.eu/kleint-2015-en.

52 Ibid.

53 Dr. Faber, "Monatsschau: (Von Mitte Juli Bis 12. August)," *Stadt Gottes*, 1900, 571. Translation by the author. Original: "*In diesen verlustreichen Kämpfen mit den Fremden hatte sich der Aberglaube der Boxer an ihre Unverwundbarkeit übergenug als Schwindel erwiesen, die Scharen der Boxer lösten sich danach zum Teil auf[…].*"

conjure up images of threatening Chinese peasants. At this point in the war the Steyler missionaries were far away from any fighting, which was mainly concentrated in Zhili province. What was there to fear about? Accounts from missionaries closer to the fighting differed, such as from the Apostolic Vicar of Beijing, Alphonse Favier, who was under siege in the imperial city and who was quoted in the *Stadt Gottes* as follows:

> The Boxer cult appears to be under diabolical influence; their incantations, a kind of possession, and miraculous facts [*wunderbare Thatsachen*] indicate this. Scholars in Europe, however, will surely explain this with magnetic and hypnotic states.[54]

"Diabolical influence" and "possession" are definitely more fearful and in line with a proper "yellow peril" narrative. But the Stadt Gottes added the following to Favier's statement:

> The "miraculous facts" [*"wunderbare Thatsachen"*] mentioned by Mgr. Favier are certainly cases of invulnerability and the like; for it would be inexplicable that the belief in the invulnerability of the Boxers had become so widespread and so deeply established if some such cases did not exist. This is in fact possible through hypnotic and similar states in which insensitivity to blows and shocks and, in the case of wounds, lack of bleeding and very rapid healing, thus apparent invulnerability, have been observed. […] We find it quite understandable, however, that an old missionary, who in all his work is so accustomed to looking at the supernatural, explains them, in view of the magic formulas [*Zauberformeln*], the summoning of spirits [*Geisterbeschwörungen*], the hatred against Christianity, by demonic influences.[55]

The Stadt Gottes paired technocratic explanations for invulnerability with paternalistic empathy for Favier, essentially rationalizing the "yellow peril" away.

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54 Dr. Faber, "Die Wirren in China," 107. Translation by the author. Original: "*Die Sekte der Boxer scheint unter teuflischem Einfluss zu stehen; ihre Beschwörungen, eine Art Besessenheit und wunderbare Thatsachen weisen darauf hin. Die Gelehrten in Europa werden dies freilich mit magnetischen und hypnotischen Zuständen erklären.*"

55 Ibid. Translation by the author. Original: "*Die von Mgr. Favier erwähnten 'wunderbaren Thatsachen' sind jedenfalls Fälle von Unverwundbarkeit und ähnliches; denn es wäre unerklärlich, daß sich der Glaube an die Unverwundbarkeit der Boxer so weit verbreitet und so tief festgesetzt hätte, wenn nicht manche derartige Fälle vorlägen. Dies ist in der That durch hypnotische und ähnliche Zustände möglich, in welchen Unempfindlichkeit gegen Schlag und Stoß und bei Verwundung Mangel an Blutung und sehr rasche Heilung, also scheinbar Unverwundbarkeit beobachtet worden sind. […] [W]ir finden es aber ganz begreiflich, wenn ein alter Missionar, der in seinem ganzen Wirken soviel auf das übernatürliche zu schauen gewohnt ist, sie in Anbetracht der Zauberformeln, der Geisterbeschwörungen, des Hasses gegen das Christentum durch teuflische Einflüsse erklärt.*"

This shows the complexity of the construction of narratives, taking place both "on the ground" and in Europe, and suggests that the Steyler's had a reduced impact on the overall *Deutungshoheit* (interpretive authority) over the conflict.

The Genesis of Narratives of the Majimaji War

As a direct colony, the relations between the colonial mission and the colonial authorities during the Majimaji War were fundamentally different from the situation in China. Despite representatives of Protestant Missions' criticism of the colonial invasion and their ambivalence toward their future role inside the colonial system,[56] their self-given role as "arbiters of peace" instead of "colonial administrators"[57] was a fictional distinction. The missions were in many cases seen as the "extended arm of the German administration"[58] by the locals. This is not limited to the aforementioned role of Alexander Merensky in the colonial labour regime, but even mission stations were designed to serve as military outposts. This made missionaries, as in the Boxer Uprising, direct targets of anticolonial resistance. One of the first German victims after the start of the war in July 1905, was Bishop Cassian Spiß as well as other missionaries and mission sisters of the Catholic *Benediktinerkongregation von St. Ottilien* (Benedictines) who accompanied his caravan.[59] Despite their differences, missionaries supported the actions of the colonial administration and provided them with their stations, probably out of a sense of self-preservation.[60] Across the whole area of the war, mission stations of all confessions were left abandoned, raided and plundered.[61] This left missionaries, again, as the first Europeans to be exposed to the movement and their beliefs and ritualistic practices.

Similarly to the Boxer uprising, the narrative of Majimaji is riddled with tales of magic, medicine and invulnerability. Jamie Monson describes them: "These stories come down to us in their most primary form through the lens of German observers and participants in the rebellion, who learned most of what they knew about medicine during the war from their own African representatives (akidas

56 Hamilton, *Umfeld*, 59–60.

57 Ibid.

58 Hans-Joachim Niesel, "Für Kreuz Und Krone: Die Deutschen Missionen Im Kriegsgebiet," in *Der Maji-Maji-Krieg in Deutsch-Ostafrika 1905-1907*, ed. Felicitas Becker and Jigal Beez (Ch. Links, 2005), 101.

59 James Giblin and Jamie Monson, "Introduction," in *Maji Maji: Lifting the Fog of War, African Social Studies Series 20*, ed. James Giblin and Jamie Monson, (Brill, 2010) 6.

60 Karl Axenfeld, "Der Aufstand in Deutsch-Ostafrika," *Berliner Missions-Berichte*, September 1905, 359.

61 Giblin and Monson, "Introduction," 7.

and askari), accused prisoners and mission converts."[62] According to Thaddeus Sunseri, the single most influential person regarding the construction of the Maji narrative was Martin Klamroth, a missionary of the Berlin Mission Society. Before and after the war, he examined religious belief systems in the Uzaramo region and shared his findings with the colonial administration.[63] Klamroth's reports are the basis of not only the earliest knowledge the administration had on what was going on, but also of what was printed about the war in the *Missions-Berichte*. In October 1905, they described the religious worldview of the Maji movement as follows: "The unrest in Maneromango, like that among the Matumbi, is linked to a stronger revival of the Koleo (Kolelo) worship (snake cult) […]."[64] This narrative, specifically the mention of the god Koleo or Kolelo, seems to be specific to the region of Uzaramo, close to the capital of the colony, Dar es Salaam. In other regions, such as in the Rufiji Delta another god by the name Bokero dominated the understanding of the war, who Klamroth was also the first one to connect to the Maji movement.[65] This is the narrative that was later proliferated, first by Gilbert Gwassa,[66] and later by Jigal Beez,[67] but has now undergone considerable reevaluation. In Klamroths account, water (Maji) and invulnerability make their first appearance:

> Kolelo is said to have forbidden further payment of taxes to the white foreigners. In the middle of July [1905] a great flood would come and destroy all whites and their adherents; later the earth would open up and engulf them, from the guns of soldiers water but no bullets would come, seven lions would come and destroy the foreigners, "fear not, Kolelo spares his black children."[68]

Sunseri calls this interpretation, "the Ur-Majimaji tradition on which later interpretations were built."[69] Just like Monson, he emphasizes the involvement

62 Jamie Monson, "War of Words: The Narrative Efficacy of Medicine in the Maji Maji War," in *Maji Maji: Lifting the Fog of War, African Social Studies Series 20,* ed. James Giblin and Jamie Monson, (Brill, 2010), 35.

63 Sunseri, "Majimaji and the Millenium," 372.

64 Karl Axenfeld, "Über Die Unruhen in Deutsch Ostafrika," *Berliner Missions-Berichte*, October 1905, 408. Translation by the author. Original:"*Die Unruhen in Maneromango hängen ebenso, wie die unter den Matumbi, mit einem stärkeren Wiederaufleben des Koleo (Kolelo)-Dienstes (Schlangenkult) zusammen* […]."

65 Sunseri, "Majimaji and the Millenium," 372–73.

66 Gilbert Clement Kamana Gwassa, *The Outbreak and Development of the Maji Maji War 1905 - 1907*, with the assistance of Wolfgang Apelt, InterCultura 5 (Rüdiger Köppe, 2005), Dar es Salaam, Univ., Diss., 1973.

67 Jigal Beez, *Geschosse Zu Wassertropfen*: *Sozio-Religiöse Aspekte Des Maji-Maji Krieges in Deutsch-Ostafrika (1905-1907),* (Rüdiger Köppe, 2003).

68 Martin Klamroth, "Beiträge zum Verständnis, " 140, cited in: Thaddeus Sunseri, "Majimaji and the Millenium," 373.

69 Sunseri, "Majimaji and the Millenium," 373.

of intermediaries in the creation of the narrative and states the influence it had on the interpretation of the colonial government as evident in the *Denkschrift über die Ursachen des Aufstandes in Deutsch-Ostafrika 1905*. But despite having the most influence on officials, it is noteworthy that the first mention of invulnerability in the *Missions-Berichte* did not come from Klamroth's reports but from his colleague Hermann Krelle at Maneromango station in Uzaramo:

> Koleo's servants need not fear; they could beat their enemies with sticks, for water would flow from the guns of the whites, and if heathens were really killed, they would be resurrected from the dead within a few days, with the power of the medicine with which the sorcerers wanted to anoint them.[70]

This report centers the apocalyptic and other religious tales of the "Koleokult" rather than its immediate effects on warfare. Unlike in the *Stadt Gottes*, the *Missions-Berichte* let the Maji movement appear fearful: "The fanaticism and fatalism with which the natives have plunged themselves into this revolt stem from their blind faith in the power of Koleo and the promises of his priests."[71] This reflects the character of Klamroth's examinations, the narrative changed with time, was revised, but was never one solely about war. While the war was certainly present in Uzaramo, it was not its main theatre, mostly due to preceding famine in the region.[72]

Until December 1905, almost half a year since the beginning of the war, the *Missions-Berichte* clung to the Koleo interpretation from Uzaramo, with some mentions of medicine and water in between. This only changed when reports from other regions of the colony slowly made their way to Berlin, hindered by the extensive fighting. The most important ones for the Berliner Mission came from their second area of proselytizing in Ubena, between Songea and Lake Malawi. Fighting was common in this region, and it is here that we see discourses about efficacy enter the consciousness of the missionaries and their audience. One report from Kidugala station is strongly reminiscent of the Boxer Uprising: "Since the enemy has seen that fire, not water, comes out of the guns, and many have already fallen, they spread a new lie. They say the fallen will come back to

70 Karl Axenfeld, "Der Ostafrikanische Aufstand," *Berliner Missions-Berichte*, November 1905, 463. Translation by the author. Original: "*Koleos Diener brauchten sich nicht zu fürchten, sie könnten ihre Feinde mit Stöcken schlagen, denn aus den Gewehren der Weißen werde Wasser hervorkommen, und wenn wirklich Heiden getötet werden sollten, so würden sie in einigen Tagen wieder auferstehen in Kraft der Medizin, mit der sie die Zauberer bestreichen wollten*. "

71 Ibid, 462. Translation by the author. Original: "*Aus dem blinden Glauben an die Macht Koleos und die Verheißungen seiner Priester stammt der Fanatismus und Fatalismus mit welchen die Eingeborenen in diesen Aufstand gestürzt sind*."

72 Thaddeus Sunseri, "Famine and Wild Pigs: Gender Struggles and the Outbreak of the Majimaji War in Uzaramo (Tanzania)," *Journal of African History* 38 (1997): 255–256.

life, and so everyone fights with fanatical courage."[73] Again, talks about efficacy explicitly serve the myths of superstition, backwardness and danger. (In)efficacy was an important talking point for missionaries, as they used it to prove the truth of Christianity to their local allies, as the Superintendent of the Berlin Mission, Schumann explained in a report: "In front of everyone, I took my pocketknife and said: 'You who have used the medicine are invulnerable, aren't you? Even the tip of a spear breaks before it penetrates the flesh?' Then I took his arm and cut into it a little. When blood soon came out, all the blacks erupted in cheers."[74] The same report on the attacks on Yakobi station also mentions medicine and invulnerability in detail:

> The whites try to defend themselves with their rifles, but when they try to shoot, water comes out instead of a bullet. […] The most important thing in everything, however, was the new medicine that the Lord [*der Herr*, as in sovereign, not necessarily a god. The source is ambiguous in its terminology] brought. Whoever takes the medicine becomes invulnerable, both to bullets which turn into water and to spears that would meet a rock-hard body. The medicine is sprinkled onto the chest. […] Over time, the medicine became the main thing, and the new god became secondary. No one waited for him anymore, but countless medicine men appeared and brought the mysterious medicine. Whoever has taken the medicine becomes wild and brave; he cannot do anything else; he must wage war.[75]

This quote is evidence against Klamroth's Koleo narrative as the origin of the whole Maji narrative, as Sunseri claims. It points to large spatial differences in what missionaries observed, integrated into their ways of thinking and then

73 Karl Axenfeld, "Der Aufstand in Deutsch-Ostafrika," *Berliner Missions-Berichte*, December 1905, 508. Translation by the author. Original: "*Da die Feinde gesehen haben, daß nicht Wasser, sondern Feuer aus den Gewehren kommt, und schon viele gefallen sind, verbreiten sie eine neue Lüge. Sie sagen, die Gefallenen werden wieder lebendig, und so kämpft jeder mit fanatischem Mut.* "

74 *Berliner Missions-Berichte,* "Die Schreckenstage Auf Der Missionsstation Jakobi: Bericht Von Superintendent Schumann," February 1906, 67. Translation by the author. Original: "*Vor aller Augen nahm ich mein Taschenmesser und sagte: 'Ihr, die ihr die Medizin gebraucht habt, seid ja wohl unverwundbar? Sogar die Spitze eines Speers bricht eher, als daß sie ins Fleisch dringe?' Darauf nahm ich seinen Arm und schnitt etwas hinein. Als nun bald Blut kam, war bei allen Schwarzen der Jubel groß.*"

75 *Berliner Missions-Berichte,* "Die Schreckenstage auf der Missionsstation Jakobi," 63. Translation by the author. Original: "*Zwar versuchen die Weißen mit ihren Gewehren sich zu verteidigen, aber wenn sie schießen wollen, kommt statt der Kugel Wasser heraus. […] In allem die Hauptsache war aber die neue Medizin, die der Herr brachte. Wer die Medizin genommen hat, wird unverwundbar, sowohl für Kugeln der Gewehre, die sich in Wasser verwandelten, als auch für Speere, die einen steinharten Körper träfen. Die Medizin wird gegen die Brust gespritzt. […] Mit der Zeit wurde die Medizin die Hauptsache, und der neue Gott wurde die Nebensache. Auf diesen wartete keiner mehr, aber Medizinleute ohne Zahl tauchten auf und brachten die geheimnisvolle Arznei. Wer einmal die Medizin genommen hat, wird wild und tapfer, er kann nicht anders, er muß Krieg führen*."

constructed the narratives out of. The narrative from Ubena seems to be a lot closer to the one that later became dominant. The problem is that the "War of Korosani," as the attack on the Yakobi mission station is locally known, is not considered to be a part of Majimaji in the recent historiography, but is rather attributed to local factors.[76] This was of course hard to differentiate for the missionaries on scene, Gröschel and Schumann. But even the Maji narrative becomes inconsistent as James Giblin explains:

> Similarly, we must doubt that the maji medicine played a part in the "War of Korosani." From Yakobi there is a striking lack of direct evidence for the use of new war medicine. Groschel may not have heard of new war medicine until after he evacuated Yakobi. We have seen, however, that the circumstances of the missionaries predisposed them to believe rumors of a new medicine.[77]

This form of Maji narrative which prominently appears here for the first time and in this specific space is not a local one like Koleo is to Uzaramo. It was diffused from other regions and then adapted by the Ubena missionaries. Schumann was not personally in Yakobi at the time like Gröschel, but in close by Lupembe, from where he corresponded with Gröschel. In his report from the 9th of September, before the evacuation of the station took place, Gröschel mentions that Schumann informed him about medicine: "Through Superintendent Schumann, Lupembe, we heard that the natives, who had previously been on the fence, but rebels as well, were becoming doubtful in their belief in their mysterious medicine, which was supposed to make them bullet- and stab-proof […]."[78] It is unclear whether this timeline contradicts James Giblin, or whether it falls into the rumors he mentions. With the sources from the Berlin Mission, I am unable to determine from what region this "Ubena-narrative" originated, but both local examples from Uzaramo and Ubena show a clear local and temporal differentiation in the construction of the narrative.

The interpretation of the conflict by missionaries was of a religious nature and framing from the beginning. In October of 1905, the *Missions-Berichte* made a clear point about the role paganism played in their perspective, in this challenge of the colonial order:

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76 James Giblin, "Taking Oral Sources Beyond the Documentary Record of Maji Maji: The Example of the "War of Korosani" at Yakobi, Njombe," *Maji Maji: Lifting the Fog of War, African Social Studies Series 20*, ed. James Giblin and Jamie Monson, (Brill, 2010), 260.

77 Ibid, 289.

78 *Berliner Missions-Berichte,* "Die Schreckenstage Auf Der Missionsstation Jakobi: Bericht Des Missionar Gröschel," February 1906, 84. Translation by the author. Original: "*Durch Superintendent Schumann, Lupembe, hörten wir, daß die Eingebornen, die bisher schwankend standen, aber auch wohl Aufständische, zweifelhaft werden im Glauben an ihre geheimnisvolle Medizin, die sie kugel- und stichsicher machen solle* […]."

> We now draw attention to only two things. First, the role that the sorcerers with their Koleo (snake) cult and the drunkenness of the natives undoubtedly played in this rebellion. Here, therefore, not only socio-legal factors, but also, to a significant extent, religious-moral factors come into consideration. If paganism, as a religious power, constantly carries within itself the seeds of disobedience [*Unbotmäßigkeit*], then the government must work towards overcoming this paganism.[79]

In this, they used the conflict as an opportunity to advance their own goals and push the colonial administration towards recognizing the role the mission plays in the prevention of such challenges by using a clear dichotomy between superstitious and inherently dangerous heathens, versus good Christian subjects of the emperor. However, this is not merely an observation, but a deliberate construction of a narrative to aid the civilizing mission. It is of note, that through the years 1905 and 1906, the *Missions-Berichte* not once mentioned the term under which this war became popular: Majimaji. According to Sunseri, it in of itself was "a product of colonial-era publications rather than African oral testimony,"[80] that possibly first appeared in the *Denkschrift über die Ursachen des Aufstandes in Deutsch-Ostafrika 1905* by Governor Gustav Adolf von Götzen. While "water" had appeared throughout the missionary coverage of the event, the reverse translation into Kiswahili as "maji" was a political maneuver that von Götzen latest performed in his 1909 book *Deutsch-Ostafrika im Aufstand 1905/06*,[81] and that was equally designed to serve as a tool to other the Majimaji fighters.

Similarly to the Boxer Uprising, the construction of the narrative of Majimaji was a temporal process, as well as a very localized endeavor. Missionaries observed different variations of beliefs and rituals of medicinal use and invulnerability in different places, or simply constructed their narratives based on rumors. Contrary to the Boxer Uprising, the construction of narratives of Majimaji was not an international project, which makes the results of this part of the analysis more representative. Unlike the Steyler Mission, the Berliner Mission had its stations in more than one region affected by the conflicts subject to this paper. Again, the role of intermediaries, be they Mandarins or African

79 Karl Axenfeld, "Über die Unruhen in Deutsch Ostafrika," 412. "*Wir machen jetzt nur auf zweierlei aufmerksam. Nämlich zuerst auf die Rolle, welche die Zauberer mit dem Koleo (Schlangen) - Kult und die Trunksucht der Eingeborenen bei diesem Aufruhr unstreitig gespielt haben. Hier kommen also nicht nur rechtlich-soziale, sondern in hervorragendem Maß religiös-sittliche Faktoren in Betracht. Wenn das Heidentum als religiöse Macht die Keime der Unbotmäßigkeit dauern in sich trägt, so muß der Regierung daran gelegen sein, daß dieses Heidentum überwunden wird*. "

80 Sunseri, "Majimaji and the Millenium," 370.

81 Gustav Adolf Graf von Götzen, *Deutsch-Ostafrika Im Aufstand 1905/06,* (Dietrich Reimer, 1909), 42.

Christians was highlighted, although the missionaries in the African context did not make this as clear as those in China.

Conclusion: Comparing the Boxer Uprising and Majimaji

Both the Boxer Uprising and the Majimaji War are conflicts that have been characterized by narratives of magic, medicine, and invulnerability. Their construction was a complicated project, in which the missionary societies of the Steyler Mission and the Berliner Mission were not the only actors involved. In the case of the Boxer Uprising, the construction was an international effort, while in the case of the Majimaji War, the Colonial Administration was heavily involved. Constructions in both cases were heavily dependent on locality as well as temporality; it was a process. In China, this could be observed by the differences in terminology. Missionaries used names of organizations that were related to the Boxers but were fundamentally different in organizational structure. The reason for this was their interpretation of Anti-Christian incidents in Shandong province in 1898 and 1899, as well as the "proper" Boxer Uprising in Zhili province in 1899-1900, as *Christenverfolgungen*. The name große Messer, or Big Swords initially became the standard German term for the Boxers, despite referring to a different organization. It was only later replaced by the English term "Boxers," evidence of the international nature of the process. Missionaries portrayed the Boxers as superstitious due to their own preconceptions of Christianity as the true faith. In contrast to common narratives about the "Yellow Peril," to which the Boxer Uprising is generally regarded as a catalyst, Steyler missionaries rarely portrayed the Boxers as dangerous, possibly due to the distance that developed between them and the fighting as the conflict went on. Narratives of danger came solely from those missionaries close to the fighting. The analysis also revealed, that missionaries were heavily reliant on local intermediaries like mandarins, with which they shared a similar worldview about superstition.

In case of the Majimaji War, the construction of narratives was rather similar. Again, the process was characterized by local and temporal differences. The first narrative that developed was the tale of the god Koleo or Kolelo in Uzaramo. Due to its close proximity to the capital of Dar es Salaam it spread widely early on in the war and was thus widely publicized in the newspapers of the Berliner Mission. Ubena on the other hand, was not the origin of the later developing narrative of medicine, but it became the place from where it spread to the colonial metropole. The missionaries in Ubena heard rumors about medicinal use and created discourses about the inefficacy of the invulnerability it was supposed to create. This was done to secure local alliances and solidify their position and the position of Christianity in opposition to the perils they faced. In their narrative, the Maji movement was a lot more dangerous and displayed fanaticism; evidence of their close proximity to fighting which was probably not even related to Majimaji.

Their thought processes however were. While this happened only two months after the beginning of the war, due to the disconnectedness of the Ubena region, it took almost seven to eight months for this narrative to find its way to Germany and to the Missions-Berichte.

If the narratives of the Boxer uprising truly influenced later perceptions of Majimaji cannot be answered by this limited comparison of missionary writings. Despite their fundamental differences in location and circumstance, the narratives constructed by the Steyler Missionare and the Berliner Mission are very similar in their portrayals of magic, medicine and invulnerability in the context of colonial conflict. Their goals were similar, in that they used the conflicts as opportunities to justify their civilizing mission by dematerializing, dehistoricizing and depoliticizing the anticolonial opponents of the German Empire in these two specific cases, creating a picture of the "other" in separation of the "self."

Beyond just the German colonial context, the study of discourses on magic, medicine and invulnerability contexts of anticolonial resistance could be expanded onto different colonial contexts. As both cases examined in this study highlight, temporarily and locally highly differing phenomena of magic practice, medicinal use and invulnerability rituals connected to anticolonial resistance movements were amalgamated into a singular narrative. Especially the case of the Boxer Uprising has already briefly highlighted the globality of this narrative process beyond German actors. Further examples could shift this particular story beyond being a purely German one.