

Joint German / Swiss - Tanzanian conference in Dar es Salam, Tanzania, 2025

Date: July 18-19, 2025, Dar es Salaam Tumaini University

Title: Connected, Entangled, or Shared History? The Legacy of Colonialism and Mission from Tanzanian, German, and Swiss Perspectives.

Host: Dar es Salaam Tumaini University (DarTU)

Conference Theme:

The German colonial conquest of East Africa began in the 1880s as a deeply violent endeavour that quickly assumed devastating and even genocidal dimensions. Military violence was accompanied by cultural and epistemic violence aimed at undermining the creative and artistic power of the colonised and destroying their local religious and cultural resources and knowledge systems. In this context, the involvement of Christian missionaries in the colonial endeavours of the European powers was particularly ambiguous. Missionary attitudes and actions ranged from a purely positive attitude of the missions towards the colonial idea to an emphasis on resistance as an inherent logic of the Christian faith.

European colonialism and Christian mission have shaped colonial memory in Tanzania, Germany and Switzerland in different ways: they are present in individual and collective narratives, ranging from romanticism to trauma, and are passed on to subsequent generations. Rural and urban spaces are still marked by the lingering presence of colonialism; some of these sites are still declared national monuments and serve as reminders of a troubled past that continues to influence contemporary society. Churches, mission schools and mission hospitals have profoundly changed the landscape of traditional religious, educational and medical knowledge practices in Tanzania. German colonialism – and the German and Swiss missions in particular – left an indelible mark on Tanzania, and the legacy of this difficult and violent past must be acknowledged today.

The conference aims to bring together researchers from different disciplines, churches and civil society to analyse and discuss the intertwined colonial and missionary (his)stories between Germany, Switzerland and Tanzania (Tanganyika). The aim is not to harmonise points of view, but to identify points of difference as well as points of connection in the respective memories. The conference also seeks to test the thesis of a "shared history", taking into account that the different perspectives, experiences and memories of colonisers and colonised continue to manifest and materialise in very different ways to this day. While the search for a "shared" or "common" history could be seen as an attempt to come to terms with feelings of guilt (i. e. on the part of researchers, administrators and politicians etc. from the former colonising nations), the discussion remains open as to the most appropriate conception of this history from the German, Swiss and Tanzanian perspectives, whether it is "connected", "entangled" or perhaps "intertwined", or even "shared" or "joint".

The conference will discuss the role of Christian missionary organisations in colonisation and its legacy in contemporary Tanzania, Germany and Switzerland. Speakers have been invited from a wide range of institutions, including Tumaini University Dar es Salaam, the University of Dar es Salaam, the Universities of Hamburg, Rostock and Basel, as well as from churches, museums and NGOs involved in the critical examination of the colonial and missionary history between Tanzania, Germany and Switzerland. The conference will also open up a space for young scholars to contribute to the conference, as their fresh perspectives and innovative research are essential in deepening our understanding of the complex legacies of colonialism and mission history.

Conference Program:

Day 1: July 18, 2025

9.00 - 9.45 Official Welcome & Opening

Time	Activity	Facilitator / Responsible
09:00 – 09:10	Devotion	Rev. Godfrey Walalaze
09:10 – 09:15	Introduction	Prof. Andrew Mollel
09:15 – 09:25	A Word from DarTU	Prof. Burton Mwamila
09:25 – 09:35	A Word from Partner Universities	Prof. Claudia Jahnel
09:35 – 09:45	Speech from the Guest of Honor	Bishop Dr. Alex G. Malasusa

Panel	Topic	Facilitator / Responsible
09.45-11.45 Panel 1: Whose History is it?: Revisiting Colonialism and Mission as Shared History	Entangled and Contested: Colonial History, Christianity and Islam	Prof. Issa Ziddy (The State University of Zanzibar)
	Colonial Memory, Land Tenure Systems: A Case Study of Ugogo, Central Tanzania	Dr. Marco Magassila (Dar es Salaam Tumaini University)
	Shared and Entangled History of the Moravian Church	Rev. Angetile Musomba (Moravian Church in Tanzania)

10.30 - 11.00 Coffee break

11.45-13.00 Panel 2: The “Restitution Debate” as a Prism of Modalities of Dealing with the Past: Society and Churches	Returning back the Human Remains and Traditional Tools: Positive/Negative Attitudes Towards Tourism Industry in Tanzania?	Prof. Dr. Falres Ilomo (University of Iringa)
	Churches’ Reactions to Restitution	Rev. Dr. Elieshi Mungure (Tumaini University Makumira)
	Response	Prof. Dr. Ulrike Schröder (University of Rostock)

13.00 - 14.30 Lunch break

Panel	Topic	Facilitator / Responsible
14.30-16.00 Panel 3: History, Memory and Affection	Colonisation and the Body: Perspectives on Lutindi and the Bethel Mission, or: how to study colonial history today?	Prof. Dr. Claudia Jahnel (University of Hamburg)
	Response	Rev. Godfrey Walalaze (Dar es Salaam Tumaini University)
	Group Discussion	All

16.00 - 16.30 Coffee break

16.30-18.00 Panel 4: Landscapes of Colonial Memory: Materialising Colonial History in Tanzania, Germany and Switzerland – Case Studies	Visual and Material Colonial Memory in Tanzania	Dr. Reginald Kirey (University of Dar es Salaam)
	Tracing Colonial Memory in European Cities	Dr. Dominika Hadrysiewicz (University of Rostock)
	Faith and Memory: Confronting Colonial Legacies in Hamburg's Churches	Sarah Ntondele (University of Hamburg)

Evening: Dinner & Socializing

Day 2: July 19, 2025

09.00-10.30 Panel 5: Practices of Sharing History: Archives, Media, and Education	Transgenerational Memories of the Majimaji War in Tanzania	Dr. Nancy Rushohora (University of Dar es Salaam)
	Decolonization Through Museum Collections? [via Zoom]	Dr. Lars Frühsorge & Stella Barsch (Sammlung Kulturen der Welt, Lübeck)
	Colonial History: Media, Archives and Mission	Dr. Lois-Singa Metili (Dar es Salaam Tumaini University)

10.30 - 11.00 Coffee break

11.00-12.30 Panel 6: Comparative Discussion of Papers on Restitution and Decolonizing Mission	Papers from Tanzania	Dr. Nehemia Moshi (Tumaini University Makumira)
	Papers from Germany and Switzerland	Dr. Anton Knuth (Mission Academy Hamburg)

12.30 - 14.00 Lunch break

Panel	Topic	Facilitator / Responsible
14.00-16.00 Panel 7: International Case Studies on Mission and Colonial History – Poster Session	Sanctuary Above Suffering: The Chapel over the Slave Dungeons at Elmina and Cape Coast 'Castles' (Ghana) as a Symbol of Colonial Contradictions and Postcolonial Legacies	Angelina Lartey (Ghana / Ruhr University Bochum)
	Locating Visible Colonial Imprints on Christianity in Nagaland: Reimagining Christianity	Kerio Wetsah (India / University of Hamburg)
	Rewriting the Story: Disrupting Colonial Narratives in German Christian Children's Books	Dr. Alena Höfer (Germany / University of Hamburg)
	Contested Rememberance: Colonialism in New-Right Metapolitics in Germany	Dr. Philine Lewek (Germany / University of Rostock)
	Faith, Borders, and Decolonial Identity Formation: How Myanmar Refugees and Faith-Based Organizations Challenge Colonial Legacies—From White Saviorism to Mutual Aid, from Divided Borders to Collaborative Boundaries, and from Being Seen as Victims to Empowered Identities.	Su San (Myanmar / University of Rostock)
	From Past to Present: How Colonial Landmarks Enrich Tanzania's Heritage	Ms. Christina Mwingire (Tanzania / TUMAINI University Makumira / University of Hamburg)
	Practices and Narratives of Postcolonial Memory in Rostock	Niss-Jannes Jargstorff (Germany / University of Rostock)
	Continuities and Discontinuities of Colonial Legacy in Theological Education – Evolving Hybridity or Unfinished Decolonization?	Valentin Spaeth (Switzerland / University of Basel)

16.00 - 16.30 Coffee break

Panel	Topic	Facilitator / Responsible
16.30-18.00 Panel 8: Decolonizing the Future: A Challenge for Teaching Theology and History	Decolonizing the Future in Academic Curricula	Prof. Andrew Mollel & Dr. Kassim Nihuka (Dar es Salaam Tumaini University)
	Decolonizing Theology?	Prof. Dr. Andreas Heuser (University of Basel)
	Decolonization of Christian Theology Education in Africa Through the Lens of Pneumagogy Theory	Dr. James Kazoka (Dar es Salaam Tumaini University)
	Final Discussion & Brainstorming: Collaboration for Envisioning a Reconciled Future? (Practices, Future Plans, Cooperations etc.)	All

18.00 Farewell

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