



# **Violent Intermediaries: African Soldiers, Conquest, and Everyday Colonialism in German East Africa (New African Histories)**

*Michelle R. Moyd*

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**“Overcoming methodological challenges posed by translation, memory, and frankly a scarcity of documents disclosing askari voices, Moyd sought to understand these soldiers on their own terms. As a result she explores the everyday life of the askari, from within their households to their official and unofficial roles within colonial society, and she recovers a past widely misunderstood due to German praise and Tanzanian denunciation for their loyalty to the Schutztruppe (the official name of the German colonial army)... *Violent Intermediaries*, like other books in Ohio University Press’s New African Histories series edited by Jean Allman, Allen Isaacman, and Derek R. Peterson, expands the boundaries of African history in new and exciting directions.”** —Canadian Journal of History, Sept. 2015

The *askari*, African soldiers recruited in the 1890s to fill the ranks of the German East African colonial army, occupy a unique space at the intersection of East African history, German colonial history, and military history. *Violent Intermediaries* recovers and reconsiders the origin and role of these men, and of colonial soldiers more generally. Lauded by Germans for their loyalty during the East Africa campaign of World War I, but reviled by Tanzanians for the violence they committed during the making of the colonial state between 1890 and 1918, the askari have been poorly understood as historical agents. *Violent Intermediaries* situates them in their everyday household, community, military, and constabulary contexts, as men who helped make colonialism in German East Africa.

By linking microhistories with wider nineteenth-century African historical processes, Michelle Moyd shows that the construction of the German East African colonial army resulted from convergences and collisions among differing conceptions of masculinity, radical reconfigurations of socioeconomic, political, and military structures, and European imperial incursions. As soldiers and colonial intermediaries, the askari built the colonial state while simultaneously carving out paths to respectability, becoming men of influence within their local contexts. Yet their positions as clients of German officer-patrons also exposed their dependency on a particular political order, which in the case of German East Africa proved ephemeral.

Through its focus on the making of empire from the ground up, *Violent Intermediaries* offers a fresh perspective on African colonial troops as state-making agents and critiques the mythologies surrounding the askari by focusing on the nature of colonial violence.

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