

Myth and Religion: A Comparative Analysis of the Ideologies of the Mahdist and Maji Maji Anti-Colonial Resistance Movements in Sudan and Tanganyika (1881-1907)

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Abstract

The second half of the nineteenth century witnessed European massive expansion and colonization of Africa. Based on its nature, African reaction to European colonial expansion can broadly be divided into non-violent and violent armed resistance movements. Mahdist and Maji Maji movements were among the famous African armed responses against colonialism. They were inspired and guided by traditional ideologies of religion and myth. Comparative analysis on the traditional ideologies of African resistance movements is scant. This study aims at comparing the ideological attributes of the Mahdist and Maji Maji anti-colonial resistance movements in Sudan and Tanganyika. Its main purpose is to give insights into the underling features of the ideologies of the two African resistance movements. This work entirely depends on secondary sources. Qualitative approach is employed to collect data. An integrated qualitative data analysis approach (thematic and chronological) and exposition, complimented by narrative and descriptive, mode of historical data synthesis is used in this paper. An investigation of the available sources indicates that Africans had well developed traditional ideologies, mainly mixes of local and regional experiences and beliefs, whereby they efficiently reacted to colonial domination. The ideologies were strong enough to unite and mobilize the Sudanese and Tanganyikan diverse ethnic, tribal, religious, social, and economic disparities. The two movements share common features as manifested in motivations, methods of ideological reconstruction, and mobilization. However, they are quite different in their vision, level of implementation, and end results. The research work is expected to give new insights for further research works aiming at decolonizing European racist literature that depicts the African anti-colonial resistance movements as spontaneous, barbaric, uncivilized, and primitive troubles to European civilized mission towards Africa.

Keywords: Myth, Religion, Maji, Mahdist, Anti-Colonial, Prophetic cult, millenarian

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1. Introduction

The historic contact between Europe and Africa witnessed dramatic changes in the second half of the 19th century.² The imperialistic attitude of western nationalists, explorations, and missionary activities stirred European colonial interest in Africa since the 1870s. The conquest of Africa was facilitated by two incompatible ideologies: racist scientific justification of brutality on the one hand and preaching Christianity as a “civilizing mission” on the other hand. In preaching the gospel to the natives, missionaries emphasized the idea of mankind’s sameness in Christ whereby they were able to make various land concessions with local chiefs.³

On the other hand, the colonization of Africa was justified by the racist ideology that advocated white Europe’s natural right to rule over the uncivilized world. Charles Darwin’s publication, *On the Origin of Species* (1859), came up with the concept of “natural selection” from which Herbert Spencer, the father of Social Darwinism, developed the idea of “the survival of the fittest.” Now the two concepts eventually revolutionized Europe’s philosophical explanation on the relationship between Europe and the rest of the world. Social Darwinists canonized the Anglo-Saxons as superior race that had natural rights and moral responsibilities to “civilize” the unfit race.⁴ The annihilation of Non-Anglo-Saxons was interpreted as the just struggle to eliminate the unfit in the best interest of human progress. Eugenist and Francis Galton propagated death, for instance, as advanced eradication of the unfit,⁵ while Von Bernhardt went

²A.Adu Boahen (ed.), *General History of Africa(VII): Africa under Colonial Domination, 1800-1900* (California: California University press, 1985),p.1;Samuel Oni & Segun Joshua, “Colonial Africa and its Emerging Cultures,” in Osuntokun, Akinjide and others (eds.), *Peoples, Cultures and Civilization* (Ede: The Directorate for General Studies Programme, Redeemers’ University, 2014),1.

³ Andrew Deas, “Germany’s Introspective Wars Colonial and Domestic Conflict in the German Press Discourse on Race 1904-1907 ” (M.A Thesis: Comparative History Department, Brandeis University, 2009),p.17; John Iliffe, *Tanganyika under German Rule* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1973),pp.10-11; Jamie Monson, “Relocating Maji Maji: The Politics of Alliance and Authority in the Southern Highlands of Tanzania, 1870-1918,”*The Journal of African History, Vol. 39, No. 1* (1998),p.120;Andrew Deas, p.17; Iliffe, *Tanganyika*, pp.10-11; Monson, p.120.

⁴ Rutledge Dennis, “Social Darwinism: Scientific Racism and Metaphysics of Race,” *Journal of Negro Education, Vol.64, No.3* (1995), p.244; Lisa Nollet, “Social Darwinism in Thomas Hardy’s *Jude the Obscure* and *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*” (M.A Thesis: Faculty of Arts & Philosophy, Ghent University,2013),pp.18, 20, &32; Geoffrey M Hodgson, “Academic Journals: A Contribution to the History of the Term,” *Journal of Historical Sociology Vol. 17 No. 4* (2004),p.430.Gloria Mc Connaughey, “Darwin and Social Darwinism,” *Osiris, Vol. 9* (1950), pp.397 & 398.

⁵Hodgson, p.434; Richard Weikart, pp.327-328 &331-333. Social Darwinists applied the concept of “natural selection” to human society. Connaughey best explains it as “... the use of natural selection to justify the more brutal aspects of late nineteenth century society. To the Anglo-Saxon imperialists, or to the rising capitalist produced by the industrial revolution,

a step to justify war as biological prime concern of man that gives merit based judgment for both the winner and the loser.⁶

Europe believed that Africans were too primitive to respond with structured ideology to colonialism. African ideological reaction to colonialism was destabilized as ‘the magic of despair’ that would end in a state of failure. This racist European idea is challenged by Boahen who argues that Africans had developed either secular or religious ideologies in the anti-colonial resistance movements. The secular ideology was perception on state power, what he calls “sovereignty.” The extent of African sense of sovereignty was manifested in traditional leaders’ hostility to intruders. Ajayi describes the Maji Maji uprising as the best example of African reaction to this loss of power.⁷

Leaders of the Maji Maji and Mahdist movements relied on myth and religion as unifying and confidence building ideologies in the struggle against colonial domination.⁸ Shared ideological elements and differences of the Mahdist and Maji Maji anti-colonial resistance movements are unstudied. This paper tries to fill some of the gaps by conducting a comparative analysis on the ideologies of the two armed uprisings in east Africa. Motivations and justification, indoctrination of the ideology, mobilization of forces, and limitations of the resistance movement are some of the major themes in which traditional ideologies are manifested.

2. Motivation and Justification of the Resistance Movement

Following the Berlin Conference (1884-1885), Europeans made extensive colonial conquest of Africa. Inspired by the principle of “effective occupation,” a devastating ground rule put at the

natural selection meant the survival of the fittest competitor. This survival value was given ethical connotations; those men who reached the top of the industrial ladder, and those nations which wielded the biggest sticks were therefore best by virtue of having been naturally selected.” Gloria Mc Connaughey, “Darwin and Social Darwinism,” *Osiris*, Vol. 9 (1950), p. 397.

⁶Friedrich V. Bernhardt, *Wilhelmine Germany and the First World War, 1890-1918: The Inevitability of War* (Stuttgart-Berlin, 1912), pp. 54-60.

⁷J. F. Ajayi, “Colonialism: An Episode in African History,” in L. H. Gann and P. Duignan (eds) *Colonialism in Africa, Vol. I: The History and Politics of Colonialism, 1870-1914* (1969), pp. 506; Boahen, pp. 48 & 49.

⁸ Boahen, p. 37.

conference, intruders showed utmost brutality to effectively claim colonies in Africa.⁹ Because of the development of maxim guns, medical technology, and organized political system in Europe and lack of solidarity among Africans, Europe subdued the continent, except Ethiopia and Liberia, within a couple of decades. While Sudan had already been brought under Turko-Egyptian rule in 1821, Tanganyika came under German protectorate in 1891.¹⁰

The Mahdist movement (1888-1889) that opposed the Turko-Egyptian misgovernment, the ban on slave trade, heavy taxation, removal of hereditary rulers, and the subordination of Sudanese religious leaders to the Cairo *Ummah* broke out in Sudan in 1881.¹¹ Likewise, cotton plantation, corvee labor, taxation, land alienation, and loss of political power led to the outbreak of the Maji Maji armed uprising in Tanganyika (1905-1907).¹²

While the Mahdist movement was purely initiated and mobilized by Islamic messianic/*mahdist*/religious ideology, the Maji Maji uprising was inspired by the ideological mix of traditional prophetic cult and messianic beliefs. The two terms: *mahdi* and *maji* (water in Swahili) bear the

⁹Junta Bolt, p.5; Oni & S Joshua, p.1; Chris Nwachukwu Okeke, "The Second Scramble for Africa's Oil and Mineral Resources: Blessing or Curse?" *The International Lawyer*, Vol. 42, No. 1 (2008), p.194; J.M Makenzie, *The Partition of Africa, 1800-1900* (New York: Methuen, Inc., 1983), pp. 12 & 13.

¹⁰Jutta Bolt, pp.1, 3, & 4; A. G. Hopkins, "The Victorians and Africa: A Reconsideration of the Occupation of Egypt, 1882," *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (1986), pp.367, 373 & 391; Andrew R. Mcgrego, "The Circassian Qubbas of Abbas Avenue, Khartoum: Governors and Soldiers in 19th Century Sudan," *Nordic Journal of African Studies*, Vol.10, No.11, (2001), pp.31-33 & 37-38; Mohamed S. Al Gadal, *Belonging or Not: Studies and Essays in Modern History of Sudan* (Beirut: Dar Al Jil, 1992), pp. 95-96. Indeed, Turkish influence in Sudan traces to the 16th century. While the Sha'iqiya people of northern Sudan was subjugated after a fierce struggle in 1820, the conquest of the Funji kingdom and Khordofan regions was achieved in 1821. The kingdom of Darfur was annexed to Sudan, after half a century, in 1874; Jigal Beez, "Gilbert Clement Kamana Gawassa 1939-1982: A Tribute to the Founder of Tanzanian Maji Maji Movement," *Habari Infobrief des Tanzania Network 2008*, No. 4 (2008), p.8. The ground work for the conquest of Tanganyika was paved by German missionaries and geographical societies through evangelization and land concessions. Andrew Deas, "Germany's Introspective Wars Colonial and Domestic Conflict in the German Press' Discourse on Race 1904-1907" (M.A Thesis: Comparative History Department, Brandeis University, 2009), p.17; John Iliffe, *Tanganyika under German Rule* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1973), pp.10-11; Jamie Monson, p.120. The Society of German Colonization (the later East African Society), founded by Carl Peters in 1884, was instrumental in this case. It made expeditions in Tanganyika and secured land concessions from local chiefs. Thanks to the 1888 peasant uprising in Tanganyika, what was known as German East Africa, the government of Germany took over its administration in 1890.

¹¹Mcgrego, pp.33, 37, & 38; Mohamed S. Al Gadal, pp. 95-96. Led by the *mahdi* Muhammad Ahmad, *mahdists* defeated the Anglo-Egyptian force at Khartoum in 1885 and established the messianic and theocratic Mahdist State of Sudan (1885-1898). It was brought under the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium rule in 1898.

¹²Andrew Deas, pp.12 & 14; William H. Dawson, *The German Empire, 1860-1948* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1966), 213; Jigal Beez, p.9; Boehn, p.37; John Iliffe and G.C.K Gwassa, *Records of the Maji-Maji Rising* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1967), 6.

idea of expecting a savior. The indigenous people of Tanganyika believed that the “medicinal water,” which had been administered by “Prophet” Kinjikitile Ngwale in the Rufiji valley, would save them from German attacks by turning bullets into water. Therefore, the phrase *maji maji* was adopted from the rebels’ cry: “*maji!*, *maji!*...,” while colonial soldiers fired machine guns against rebels.¹³ The messianic ideology of *maji maji* movement was reflected in Tanganyikans belief that prophet Kinjikitile was send by God to save them from German brutality. They were also told that their ancestors were to resurrect at Ngarami, main shrine of Kinjikitile Ngwale. In the later periods, the movement took the millenarian ideology that aimed at eradicating the original medicinal and prophetic ideas, particularly sorcerers. The idea was contradictory with the traditional prophets and local leaders.¹⁴

The Mahdist movement in Sudan was similarly initiated and shaped by a more consolidated messianic religious ideology that propagated the coming of a *Mahdi*, which mean a “divinely guided savior of humanity.”¹⁵ Shiite Muslims believe that the Mahdi would come, just before the Final Judgment, to save the Muslim Community from oppression and redeem them from religious decay.¹⁶ Saving the community from some sort of crisis was a shared rationale for the *mahdi* messianic religious and *maji* prophetic cult ideologies.

The ideology of the Maji Maji movement was originated from the established African witchcraft tradition, prophetic cult, and millennial idea which were familiar to the people of Tanganyika. The idea of the magic water was initiated by the indigenous kolelo spirit ministers (witchdoctors) at Ngarambi in the Rufifji valley. Kolelo spirit cult had been widely practiced in Tanganyika and it was the Kolelo spirit ministers at Matumbi hill that urged the people to

¹³ *Ibid*; Mselemu,p.147.

¹⁴S. Albert Msellemu, “Common Motives of Africa's Anti-colonial Resistance in 1890–1960,” *Social Evolution & History*, Vol. 12, No. 2, (2013),p.147; John Iliffe,” Organization of the Maji Mai Rebellion,” *Journal of African History*, Vol.8,(1967),pp.502 &512.

¹⁵ Abba Idris Adam, “ The Intellectual Tussle between the Sudanese Mahdi and Muslim Soldiers,” *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, Vol.21, Issue 9 (2016),p.31;Anthony Celso, “The Islamic State (IS) and the Sudanese ‘Mahdiyyah’: A Comparative Analysis of Two Failed Apocalyptic Jihadist States,” *International Journal of Political Science*, Vol.4, Issue 2 (2018),p.29.Mahdi is derived from an Arabic word to mean guide or savior from crisis or internal spiritual impurities.

¹⁶ Mselemu,p.147; Anthony Celso,p.30.

give up the payment of tax a year before the outbreak of Maji Maji uprising in July 1905.¹⁷ The use of prophetic cult as an important mobilizing ideology of a resistant movement had been practiced by the Xhosa of South Africa (1890) and the Shona of Southern Rhodesia (1896) before the Maji Maji incidence in Tanganyika. For example, the Shona people of Rhodesia were enormously motivated by prophetic teachings during the anti-colonial uprisings. Makana, a well-known Xhosa prophet, synthesized his prophetic ideology of resistance to domination from the Khoisan and Xhosa traditions, and Christian elements that inspired the people of South Africa from the early 19th century to 1890.¹⁸

The diffusion of beliefs and ideas from South Africa and Rhodesia to Tanganyika was predictable because the Ngoni ethnic group, the most heroic participant in the resistance movement, had migrated from South Africa in the 1820s and settled in Tanganyika in the 1850s. Whether Kinjikitile Ngwale drew lessons from the Xhosa prophet or not, the Maji Maji movement adopted prophecies from the indigenous cult centers of Tanganyika and the Islamic millenarian tendency of eradicating sorcerers and medicine from the coast.¹⁹

The same analogy is prevalent in the Sudanese Mahdist movement. The concept of messiah (Mahdi in Islam) was common in the ancient faiths of Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, and Christianity. Despite the absence of the idea of the *mahdi* in Qur'an, in Islam, it has been described in the works of the three 9th century compilers of the *Hadith*: Ibn Majah, Abu Da'od, and al-Tirmidhi. The absence of the concept in the Quran and reliance on the interpretations of the words of the Prophet (tradition), resulted in variations between the Shiite and Sunni perceptions of the Expected Mahdi. Slight difference between the Sufi order and the aforementioned major sects is also frequent.²⁰

The millenarian idea of the Shiites' was the believe in the reappearance of the Hidden Mahdi. While the Shiite of Kufa believed that Muhammed all-affiyya had hidden himself in the Jabal

¹⁷ James Giblin and Jamie Monson (eds.), *Maji Maji: Lifting the Fog of War* (Boston: Brill,2010),p.209; Iliffe, "Organization",p. 504.

¹⁸Boahen, p.52.

¹⁹Iliffe, "Organization....,"pp.84 &503; Boahen, pp.52, 53 & 55; Msellemu, p.147.

²⁰Adam, p.31; Abushouk, "The Ideology of.....,"p.44; Anthony Celso, p.30.

Rawa and would return when necessities come, Twelve Shiites believe that Muhammad al-Hassan al-Askara (al-Mahdi), the twelfth *imam*, went into “occultation” until God return him when the world reaches at the worst of its crisis. The Shiites described the features of the Hidden *Imam* such as descending from the Prophet (line of Fatima), claiming religious and political authority driven by the explicit designation of the previous *Imam*, and ability to understand and interpret the inner and outer meanings of the Qur’an. They also listed a number of attributes of the Prophet with which the Mahdi would fit. This implies Shiites’ unprecedented reverence to religious leaders.²¹

The Sunni differed from the Shiites and believe that the Mahdi is one or more than one person who would be chosen for office whenever necessities come. The Sunni did not believe in the incarnation and return of Hidden *Imam*. The Sunni believe that the *Mahdi* would destroy the infidels through jihad. The 13th century Sufi (mystic offshoots of the Sunni sect) scholars shared the attributes of the Expected Mahdi set by the Shiites. As an extension of the Sunni sect, the Sufi believed that He is a divinely guided leader expected to enforce the words of the Qur’an through the use of swords.²²

The Wahhabi, 18th century movement in the Arabian Peninsula, had extended to Sudan in the form of Salafi in the early 19th Century. The Wuhhabi attributed the “moral decay” of the Islamic World to the Ottoman Turks’ integration of western secular ideas into Islamic laws. Interpreting the moral crumble as a sign leading to the end of the world, they eagerly expected the coming of the “Expected Mahdi” who would restore Islam. Therefore, careful analysis of the ideology of the Mahdist movement reveals that Muhammad Ahmad of Sudan integrated this Wahhabi ideology with Sunni idea of fundamentalism and jihad, Sufi mystic concepts of divinely guided leader and devotion to faith, Shiite idea of fanatical reverence to religious leaders, and the indigenized local Islamic orders of Sudan. The ideological mix enabled him to

²¹ Abushouk, “The Ideology of...” pp.46-49. The three Shiite religious pillars that precede waiting for the Expected Mahdi include believing in the unity of God, prophecy, and Day of Judgment.

²² *Ibid*, pp. 149-51; John Voll, “The Sudanese Mahdi: Frontier Fundamentalist,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (May, 1979), p.153.

come up with a strong messianic/Mahdi/ ideology that mobilized the Sudanese across ethnic, cultural, political, and social boundaries.²³

Besides, Mahdist movements in West Africa led by Shehu Uthman Dan Fodio of Sokoto (1803), Sheik Abadu Bara of Masina(1818), and al-Hajj Umar Tal of the Tukolor Sultanate(1854) accelerated Sudanese anticipation of the Expected Mahdi. West African emigrants to Sudan had disseminated the news of the approaching of the time for the appearance of the Mahdi to Sudan. Because of His devotion to religion and amazing teachings, many people began to attach the Mahdi with Muhammad Ahmad. It was also believed that a certain Sheikh al-Quarash had prophesized that Muhammad Ahmad was the true Mahdi. Muhammad Ahmad collected local prophecies made on the coming of the Mahdi and claimed himself al-Mahdi.²⁴ Similar to the Maji Maji revolt, the messianic ideology that inspired the Mahdist movement was synthesized from the already developed beliefs and ideas.

Prophetic cult often emerged when there were crisis and intense personal anxieties. Aimed at accelerating change, benefiting from the changing opportunities, and enhancing the society's capacity to overcome challenges, prophets came with innovative and creative ideas. Kinjijile Ngwale came to the scene when Tanganyika was at a severe discontent against German brutal and exploitative administration and the inward expansion of coastal Arabs.²⁵ Colonial export oriented cotton plantation, forced labor, land alienation, and the heavy tax imposed in 1898 alarmed native Tanganyikans against colonial domination.²⁶

Becker holds that the Maji Maji movement was inspired by twofold tensions: inter-group competitions over the dominance of trading networks and resources and fundamentally the brutality of colonialism. The rebellion was initiated as an attack of the interior on the coast. He holds that Kinjikitile used the magic water to turn the ripen stress into action.²⁷

²³ Anthony Celso, pp.3, 4&5.

²⁴Abushouk, "The ideology of.....",pp.51&53.

²⁵Boahen, pp. 54 &56.

²⁶Iliffe, "The Organization.....," p. 199.

²⁷Becker,p.22.

Pre-colonial local rulers in Tanganyika, what Becker calls “big men,” were “self-made power brokers” who controlled the office of leadership because of their ability to manipulate support, inborn intelligence to lead, and sometimes their skill to possess traditional medicine which was believed to have given them power. The big men were involved in slave raids, controlled the smuggling of powder from Portugal East Africa, charging tributes from traders along the trade routes leading to Lindi and Kilwa, and also controlled the movement of guns and traded with the coast in German East Africa. The colonial administrative reforms antagonized the big men by alienating them from power. German colonialists effectively broke the network of big men through loyalty and group rivalries or divide and rule strategies. They also brought the less powerful groups to office who threatened the power of the big men.²⁸

The rivalry among the different socio-economic groups over control of trade, land, and other resources considerably accelerated the tension in the region that erupted as a peasant grievance in July 1905. Prophet Kinjikitile Ngwale came up with the idea of *maji* (water) and prophetic cult ideology that united the peasant revolt across more than twenty tribal and ethnic groups. It was the multidimensional crisis in Tanganyika that gave Kinjikitile Ngwale an opportunity for waging a united armed struggle against the common enemy. The ultimate goal of reconstructing the *maji* ideology was to eradicate alien forces.²⁹

Like the *maji* prophetic cult, the title of the *Mahdi* was claimed when there were tensions and “intra-confessional antagonisms.” The claim on divinely guided one traces back to 66/686 A.D, when the Shiites in Kufa (Iraq), under their leader Mukhtar b. Ubayd(d.67/687), revolted against the maladministration of the Umayyad dynasty. Mukhtar’s followers proclaimed *Imam* Muhammad al-Anafiyya(d.700A.D) as their *mahdi*. Mukhtar and his followers denied the death of Muhammad al-Anafiyya in 700 and believed that he had hidden himself in Jabal al-Rawa and would appear to liberate them from Umayyad brutality. Influenced by the belief in a Hidden Mahdi, the Twelvers claimed that Muhammad al-Hassan al-Mahdi(d.874), the twelfth

²⁸*Ibid.*,pp.1,6 &7. *Ibid.*

²⁹ Andrew Deas,p.20; Iliffe, John Iliffe and G.C.K Gwassa, p.6; “The Organization....,”p.495; Becher,p.22;

imam, went into “occultation” until God returns him when the world enters into the worst crisis.³⁰

In spite of slight differences, followers of the Sunni sect and Sufi Islamic order believed that the *Mahdi* would emerge when Muslims encounter severe crisis.³¹ Karmer, as cited by Abusouk, notes that ‘the Sunni notion of a *Mahdi* came to represent more a restorer of faith than the Shiite manifestation of God, and one would be chosen for office rather than returning from hiding.’³² Abushouk argues that the growing widespread belief in the Expected *Mahdi* was the result of the crisis of the Islamic world since the fall of the Abbasid Caliphate in Bagdad in 1258. The worsening situation stirred Muslims to expect the coming of the *Mahdi*.³³

European domination of the Muslim world was interpreted as the sign of the coming of the *Madhdi* that motivated the emergence of *Mahdist* claimants in West Africa and Egypt. All these external developments in the Islamic World had contributed for Muhammad Ahmad’s claim to the title of *Mahdi*.³⁴ Anthony Celso argues that the *Mahdist* movement in Sudan fundamentally emerged as a discontent against the Sunni Muslims religious decay brought by the Turko-Egyptian “infidel” administrators’ secularization of Islam.³⁵ The ban on slave trade, heavy tax, assignment of European Christians in administrative posts and removal of hereditary rulers, unequal treatment of Shaqiya and Khatimiya tribes, and natural calamities like draught and famine also stimulated the people to aspire for a divinely guided leader who would liberate them from Turko-Egyptian domination and redeem them from internal religious impurities.³⁶

Nomadic brokers of the slave trade, the Baqqara and Kababbash, and their slave soldiers, who relied on allegiance to a master for survival, opposed the ban on slave trade. Many farmers too

³⁰ Abushouk, “The Ideology of...”p.45; Douglas S. Crow, “Islamic Messianism,” *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, Vol.9 (1987), p.478;Mustafa Biyik, “Regarding the Origin of Mahdi Understanding in Sunni Islamic Thought,” *The 2014 Wei International Academic Conference Proceedings* (New Orleans, USA,2014),p.156.

³²Abushouk, “The Ideology of...,”p.48.

³³John Voll, “The Sudanese Mahdi: Frontier Fundamentalist,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (May, 1979),p.153.

³⁴Abushouk, “The ideology of.....”,p.51.

³⁵Anthony Celso, p.30.

³⁶ Lidwien Kapteijns, “Mahdist Faith and the Legitimizing of Popular Revolt in Western Sudan,” *Journal of the International African Institute*, Vol. 55, No. 4(1985),p.392; Hassan Q. Murad,pp.156, 158,161 &164; Celso, p. 30.

resented against the abolition of the slave trade for fear of rapid increase in the price of daily laborers. Khedive Ismail's attempt to enforce Islamic laws over the non-Muslim peoples of southern Sudan also provoked tensions in the region. Moreover, the conquest of the medieval kingdom of Darfur in 1874 aggravated resistance from the Kayara ruling families and the Fur sedentary agriculturalists who furiously demanded the restoration of their medieval kingdom.³⁷

The great gap between Tuko-Egyptian secularity and the indigenized and mystic Islamic tradition developed in Sudan brought the most serious discontent that contributed to the birth of a millenarian ideology to eradicate the so called infidels. Sudanese Sunni religious leaders were holy men who indigenized Islam in Africa. The hierarchical appointment of Islamic administration that brought Sudanese religious leaders under the Cairo *Ummah* produced a serious discontent among the Muslims of Sudan.³⁸ All the disgruntled groups increasingly demanded the deliverance of the Expected *Mahdi*. It was at this fragile situation that Muhammad Ahmad (1844-1885), a Sufi Sheik who earned the "reputation of piety and integrity," claimed himself al-Mahdi.³⁹

The Mahdists and the Maji Maji were motivated by prophetic ideology. Muhammad Ahmad developed a myth that his Mahdiship was approved by the Prophet Muhammad in a "prophetic assembly."⁴⁰ Like the Maji Maji in Tanganyika, prophetic ideological response to problems predated the declaration of Mahdism in Sudan in 1881. The Nuer and Dinka peoples of Sudan were best examples who had practiced prophetic ideology to overcome challenges prior to the appearance of Muhammad Ahmad as Mahdi. Douglas notes that even the concept of Mahdi was familiar with the Dinka because the term *Maadi*, "prototype of *Mahdi*," has been reflected in Dinka hymns. Mahdism in Sudan was the product of the local mentality and social reality.⁴¹

³⁷ Murad, p.169; P.M. Holt & M.W. Daly, *A History of the Sudan from the Coming of Islam to the Present Day*, 4th ed. (London and New York: Longman, 1989), pp.88-89; Murad, pp.168-169; Abushouk, "The Ideology of..." ,p.53.

³⁸Gabriel R Warburg, *Islam, Nationalism, and Communism in a Traditional Society: The Case of Sudan* (London: Frank Cass, 1978),p.9; M.W Daly, *Empire on the Nile: The Anglo Egyptian Sudan, 1898-1934* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986),p.22; Murad,pp. 158,161 &164.

³⁹ Kapteijns, p. 391; Abushouk, "The Ideology of," pp.54-55.

⁴⁰Celso, p.7.

⁴¹Johnson, pp.47 & 51.

The two movements justified the revolt as a just struggle against alien domination. While the ideology of the Maji Maji movement narrowly envisioned to get rid of alien domination and securing the access to land and resources, the *Mahdist* movement aimed beyond the expulsion of the foreign domination and worked hard to restore Islam and establish theocratic messianic Islamic state. *Mahdists* justified the jihad as a holy war for their religion had been overdue and their ancient kingdoms had been lost by the Turko-Egyptian infidels. The leaders of the two famous anti-colonial resistance movements indoctrinated the rationale behind the movement to their respective peoples across varied socio-economic, cultural, and political dividing lines.⁴²

3. Communication and Mobilization

The Mahdist and Maji Maji movements acquired ideologies to unite, manipulate, and mobilize the discontented groups in the struggle for eradication of foreign domination. Leaders were able to effectively disseminate prophetic cult, myth, and millenarian thoughts among their followers. Direct teaching, dispatching written/oral/ messages and emissaries, performing rituals, arranging pilgrimages, and building image and personality cult were the most important indoctrination and mobilization tools of the Mahdi and Maji Maji resistance movements.⁴³

According to Shiraz Durrani, Kinjikitie Ngwale carefully observed the crisis in Tanganyika since 1904 and convinced the discontented groups to rebel against the unconditional dominance of German colonialism and the encroachment of coastal Arabs into the interior of Tanganyika. He noted that the movement was initiated by Kinjikitile's indoctrination of the demand for resistance.⁴⁴ On the other hand, John Iliffe and Jamie Monson argue that Kinjikitile Ngwale spread his ideology of the magic water among the already rebelled peasants transforming the small scale revolt into popular resistance movement against the Germans and coastal Arabs. Whether Kinjikitile initiated the peasant grievance or transformed the already erupted uprising,

⁴²Mostly his followers claimed for the restoration of the recently lost Islamic kingdom of Darfur.

⁴³Shiraz Durrani, "Maji Maji: The Tanzanian Peoples War of National Liberation against German Colonialism, 1904-1907," *Sauti ya Kamukunji* (1984), p.4; Rossi, 21; Murad, p.391.

⁴⁴Durrani, p.4.

the authors emphasized on how he spread his idea to mobilize the aggrieved peasants towards the intended armed struggle.⁴⁵

Kinjikitile Ngwale was able to indoctrinate the people with his idea of magic water and prophetic messages through direct teachings, sprinkling water on peasants, and performing rituals. To easily access the masses, he called for pilgrimage to Ngarambi, his main shrine, where he disseminated his ideas among the pilgrims. Kinjikitile also constructed a myth that the dead ancestors of Tanganyika would resurrect at Nagarambi. Some propagandists went a step further to claim that they had met their resurrected ancestors at the Ngarambi shrine site. In addition, it was said that all the participants would be freed from domination after visiting the shrine and participating in the uprising. This enabled Kinjikitile Ngwale to meet a large number of people. He urged them to unite and fiercely stand against German domination and coastal peoples' political and economic intervention in the hinterlands of Tanganyika.⁴⁶ The medicinal water, myths, rituals, and prophetic messages were ultimately employed to build confidence among the participants of the resistance movement.⁴⁷

In a similar vein, Muhammad Ahmad indoctrinated the unifying messianic religious zeal through direct preaching, dispatching written messages and emissaries as well as building trust and personality cult among his followers. He travelled distance area such as Chad, Wadi, and Darfur where he preached to the people about the brutality and infidelity of Turko-Egyptian rulers. He interpreted the Turko-Egyptian bad administration as a sign of the coming of the Mahdi and urged them to unite for the restoration of Islam into its purity.⁴⁸

The people of Tanganyika gave Kinjikitile Ngwale a messianic character by claiming that he was sent by God to liberate them from the German brutal domination. This motivated him to build personal cult for which he was regularly visited by many of the rebels. He was the

⁴⁵Iliffe, "The Organization,"p.496; Monson, p. 97.

⁴⁶Mselemu,p.148.

⁴⁷Beez, p.20; Nancy A. Rushohora, "An Archaeological Identity of the Majimaji: Toward an Historical Archaeology of Resistance to German Colonization in Southern Tanzania." Pretoria:Department of Anthropology and Archaeology,University of Pretoria, Undated),p. 3. Available at. nrushohora@gmail.com

⁴⁸ Kapteijns, p.391; Mahmaoud, pp.177 & 178.

highest “priestly” figure entitled to minister the water cult over all the rebels. The right to repeat the ritual on individuals who had been administered by junior *hongos* (prophets and messengers) was exclusively held by him and his senior *hongos* like Selemani Mamba. It was a deliberate act devoted to build personality cult, to access the majority of the rebels, and easily disseminate his idea repulsing the common enemy.⁴⁹

To legitimize his claim, Muhammad Ahmad al-Mahdi also developed personality cult. He reconstructed a mythological narrative that his title of *mahdship* was revealed and approved by Prophet Muhammad at a “prophetic assembly.” The Prophet chaired over the four caliphates at the supposed meeting.⁵⁰ Muhammad Ahmad devoted to adopt the attributes of the Expected Mahdi which had been set in the Hadith or described by the Shiite sect. His name and his father’s name were similar to the Prophet’s name and the Prophet’s father name respectively. He claimed descent to Prophet Muhammad.⁵¹ Much greater than Kinjikitile of Tanganyika, Muhammed Ahmad al-Mahdi demanded his followers’ undivided allegiance to him. He abolished tribal and religious beliefs like the Dervish order, which showed enormous loyalty to the Sheikh, to establish unshared loyalty to him. He also invited “true Muslims” to visit his shrine by which he was able to build personality cult among his followers.⁵²

The two resistance leaders used emissaries to indoctrinate their ideologies. Kinji kitile’s *hongo* cadres were dispatched to distance areas to disseminate the message about the protective nature of the medicinal water and the rationale for the resistance against colonialism. The messengers urged the people to give up the payment of tax to the government. There were also self-envisioned prophets who considerably devoted to the dissemination and indoctrination of the ideas of the resistance movement to remote areas of Tanganyika.⁵³

⁴⁹ Becker, p.21; Monson Jamie, p. 96.

⁵⁰ Trimmingham, p.53; Warbarg, p.11.

⁵¹ Murad, p.170; Rossi, p.21.

⁵² Trimmingham, p.53; Warbarg, p.11.

⁵³Boahen, p.52; Becher, p.20.

The myth on the protective capacity of the medicinal water and confidence on prophetic millenarian promises to the new world united more than twenty tribal groups in Tanganyika. The revolt was pioneered by two individuals of the Matumbi tribal group who implanted cotton plantations at Nandete in Lindi district, in mid July 1905. It was also simultaneously erupted in Madaba.⁵⁴

Unlike the magic water and the prophetic cult, the messianic Islamic ideology of the Mahdist movement had already won acceptance among religious, tribal, ethnic leaders as well as the various social groups because of Muhammad Ahmad's exciting preaching and interpretations of Islamic scripts. Muhammad was able to mobilize even non-Muslim followers in Southern Sudan who showed their allegiance by embracing Islam. The acceptance of his idea won among the different groups of the society and his vision inspired the confidence that he was a Mahdi.1881.⁵⁵

He dispatched letters and emissaries to the powerful religious and tribal leaders in Sudan, Morocco, West Africa, and Libya claiming that he was the Expected *Mahdi*. He also urged them to unite under the *Mahdi* against the infidels and internal religious impurities brought by the Turko-Egyptian domination.⁵⁶He envisioned establishing a Messianic and theocratic Islamic state in Sudan which would be free from brutality and spiritual impurities. Branding the Turko-Egyptians as corrupt Muslims who were illegitimate to rule over the Sudan, he abandoned Khartoum as a city of infidels and founded Omdurman as his seat of power in

⁵⁴Ilfie, "The Organization," 496. From the Matumbi hill, the revolt spread to Lindi, Matwandi, Ruvuma, Morogoro, Lukuledi, Kilombero, Njob, Luguru, Mahenge, Songae, Njombe, Pawni and Dar es-Salaam. The most important tribal groups who were united in ritual treaties and actively participated in the Maji Maji movement were the Matumbi, Pogoro, Ngoni, Makonde, Mwera, Ngindo, bena, and Zaram. The early stage of the expansion of rebellion passed through three phases. During the first phase, the revolt expanded from Madaba to Uzaramo and southwards to Liwale in August 1905. Then, it spread from the Lukulendi valley to Kilombero valley. During the last phase the Ngoni tribe extended the rebellious to Ungoni district in September 1905. Rushohora, 1, 3, 5, & 6; Durrani,p.5; Becher,pp.21 &22.

⁵⁵Lidwien Kapteijns, p. 391;Abushhouk, "The Ideology of.....," pp.54-55.

⁵⁶Hassan A. Ibrahim, "Mahdist Risings against the Condominium Government in the Sudan, 1900-1927." *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (1979), p.441;Rossi,p.20.

1885.⁵⁷ Muhammad Ahmad al-Mahdi, a man of over ambition, aspired to liberate Constantinople, Damascus, Jerusalem, Egypt, and Mecca.⁵⁸

All his efforts demonstrate his vision to follow examples of Prophet Muhammad. First he aimed at molding his theocratic state along the model of Medina. Muhammad also made a *hijira* to Jabal Godir, what his followers called Jabal Musa, a place traditionally believed to be the origin of the Expected *Mahdi*. The *hijira* was the replica of the Prophet's flight to Medina. He also urged his followers to make pilgrimage to his shrine which was intended to create personality cult and getting the access to large people to indoctrinate the messianic ideology and the rationale behind his *jihad*. The name *ansar* (lit. helpers) was also directly copied from the name of the eight clans of Medina who first accepted the teachings of Prophet Mohammed during his *Hijira* from Mecca to Medina in 622 A.D. The *ansar* constituted the largest group of clans who constituted the first Islamic community (the *Ummah*) of the Prophet Mohammed.⁵⁹

4. Major Limitations and Differences

The leaders of *Mahdist* and *Maji Maji* movements over indoctrinated the ideologies over their followers to absolutely rely on the prophetic promises without enough training and strategies that would reduce the death of thousands in single engagements. The Mahdist and Maji Maji rebels were slaughtered in the tens of thousands by British and German maxim guns respectively.⁶⁰ From the Maji Maji rebels, an estimated 100,000 to 300,000 deaths occurred. They fought with incompatible firearms like swords, spears, sticks etc, while Europe was well equipped with modern guns.⁶¹ The technological gap between Europe and Tanganyika was extremely incomparable. As quoted by Andrew Deas, Iliffe notes how a native participant

⁵⁷Ibrahim,p.441; Abushouk, "The Ideology,"p.53

⁵⁸Celso, p.29; P.M. Holt, *The Mahdist State in the Sudan*, 2nd ed. (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1970),112; Abushouk,p.54.

⁵⁹Rossi,pp.14, 16, 19& 20.

⁶⁰Iliffe, "The Organization.....,P.56.

⁶¹De Duan Alexander, "Extraction and Violent Resistance in Early Phases of State Building: Qualitative Evidence from the Maji Maji Rebellion, 1905-1907," *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol.49, 3(2016), pp. 293-294; Deas,p.21

lamented about the technological difference at the Mahenge engagement in Tanganyika in 1905: “Oh so many people died that day!Far too many people died that day.”⁶²

Likewise, Muhammad Ahmad manipulated his followers to fight against the well equipped and better armed Anglo-Egyptian army with spears, swords, and stone, from Abba Island (18;81) to Khartoum (1885). Although his *ansar* (lit. helper) soldiers were victorious over the Turko-Egyptian and the Anglo-Egyptian forces because of their courage and bravery, they were slaughtered in tens of thousands within a single battle field. Relying on prophecy that promised victory, Muhammad Abdullah (successor of the Mahdi) preferred conventional day attacks that took the lives of 11,000 *ansars* at the battle of Omdurman in 1898.⁶³

Kinikitile Ngwale was inexperienced and shortsighted ordinary peasant who envisioned mainly to get rid of the Germans and the Arabs that had affected his group’s economic and political interest. He did not plan for the fate of Tanganyika after the removal of foreign intruders. He could not also enforce a centralized leadership over the ideology and the armed resistance. As the revolt was extended to wider areas, both the prophetic message and the administration of the water ritual were taken over by numerous self-claimed prophets. Since the magic water and prophetic cult ideologies were poorly managed and remained unfit for the wider scale, the movement deviated first to millenarianism and then to kinship and ethnic based organization. The magic water and other medicines used to protect crops were out of the control of both the spirit ministers and military leaders.⁶⁴ The shift to millenarian ideology that aimed at eradicating sorcerers clashed with the interest of witchdoctors, traditional prophets, military leaders and Kolelo spirit ministers. Military leadership was from the outset decentralized and taken by local tribal leaders and bandits that led to the development of ethnic based groupings. The ethnic grouping that produced security dilemma was gradually transformed into alliance formation. Therefore the Germans used one disappointed group against its rival and destroyed the resistance movement and its ideology in 1907. They had already hanged over its leader.⁶⁵

⁶²Deas,p.21.

⁶³Celso,p.13.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*

⁶⁵Iliffe, “The Organization.....,”p.512.

Likewise, Mahdism in Sudan gave Islam a limited local character and failed to unite all the Muslims of the country. The anticipation of the coming of the Expected Mahdi alienated non-Muslim communities, labeled as the non-“faithful” or “infidels” from the movement.⁶⁶

Unlike Kinjikitile, Muhammed Ahmad al-Mahdi was a charismatic leader acquainted with the knowledge of Islamic messianic/Mahdi/ idea and the skill of preaching. He efficiently indoctrinated his ideology, mobilized his force, and was at the head of his followers. Although Muhammed had no military training and experience, he was traditionally active in managing the armed struggle. Without participating in conventional fighting, he was able to defeat first the Turko-Egyptians and then the Anglo-Egyptian forces in many engagements. He was envisioned to establish a messianic theocratic state and did indeed establish the Mahdist state of the Sudan (1885-1898). Unlike Kinjikitile, his ideology was well indoctrinated that enabled him to produce relatively better successor.⁶⁷

While Kinjikitile’s idea ended up in a state of failure, Muhammad Ahmad al-Mahdi efficiently managed his ideology. The two leaders witnessed quite different historical experiences concerning the confines of leadership. While the former had only a very limited idea of ascending the governorship of a tribal group, the latter envisioned reorganizing the historic state of Sudan an Independent theocratic Islamic state. In other words Sudan was one of the lands of Africa where state formation had roots in antiquities where as Tanganyika was poorly experienced in the context of state formation. He strived to implement what he had promised to clean internal religious impurities and reform administrative problems. Robbery and other illegalities were absolutely banned. Unaccompanied women were forbidden to attend public spaces and market places. The ban put on slave trade was suspended and became an important economic sector. The shift of his seat of power from Khartoum to Omdurman was partly aimed to integrate his ideology with economic, social, religious, and political realities.⁶⁸ Unlike al-

⁶⁶Hafeezur Rehman Khan, “The Sudanese Egyptian Relations,” *Pakistan Horizon*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (1959), p.56.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸Rossi, 72.

Mahadi, Kinjikitile failed to take reforms, strengthen the economic base and sustain unity among rebel groups.⁶⁹

In fact, Muhammad's death destroyed the revolutionary idea of the movement. The "universal religious aspiration" on the restoration of Islam was changed into "worldly sovereign over the Sudan." Obsessed on apocalyptic ideology, Muhammad Abdullah also envisioned to liberate Jerusalem, Damascus, and Constantinople, and disastrously tried to conquer Egypt.⁷⁰ European colonial expansion was misinterpreted as a sign of the approaching of the rise of the Mahdi, victory over the infidels, rather than understanding the global situation and setting up strategies to defend domination. Relying much on the promised victory, he sent a warning to England, Egypt and Ethiopia to "show their submission" to the Mahdist state.⁷¹

5. Conclusion

The Mahdist and Maji Maji anti-colonial resistance movements in Sudan and Tanganyika demonstrate that black Africans were capable of developing ideologies and effectively responding to European colonialism. The Mahdist movement was inspired and guided by Islamic messianic/Mahdi/ religious ideology. In the same fashion, the Maji Maji rebellion was transformed into widespread popular revolt by traditional myth and messianic ideologies.

The leaders, Muhammad Ahmad and Kinjikitile Ngwale, synthesized ideologies to efficiently mobilize the popular revolts. Kinjikitile of the Maji Maji integrated local and regional prophetic cult systems, the magic water ritual, and later millenarian religious ideologies. Similarly, Muhammad combined messianic Islamic ideologies from traditions and beliefs of Shiite and Sunni sects as well as Wahhabi and Sufi orders. He had also integrated these ideas with Sudanese indigenized Islamic taught about the Expected *Mahdi*.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Hassen Qasim Murad,p.156, Anthony Celso,.2&11

⁷¹ Robert N. Rossi, "The Mahdist Revolution," M.A Thesis: USA Army Command and General Staff College, B.S. Florida Atlantic University, 1980),p.70; Abushouk, "The Ideology.....",p.58.

The ideologies of the two resistance movements were also originated as a result of local or regional tensions. The *Mahdist* idea in Sudan was inspired by the combined effects of the decay of the Islamic world and the internal crisis brought by the colonization of Sudan. The *Maji Maji* revolt was too motivated by the combined effect of colonial burdens and internal socio-economic pressures. The concepts of “*maji*” and “*mahdi*” signify the demand for a savior or liberator.

The leaders of the two movements integrated different methods to disseminate and indoctrinate their ideas among their followers. The two leaders, with little variations in magnitude, were also engaged in building personality cults, through myth creation, pilgrimage invitation, and ritual administration to get the acceptance of their ideas.

However, the idea of the magic water ceased to effectively work at larger scale and was replaced by millenarian ideology that led to the creation of tribal rival groupings. Similarly, the *Mahdist* movement lost its revolutionary universal idea with the death of Muhammad Ahmad in 1885 and failed to unite non-Muslims by focusing on millenarian ideology of eradicating the decayed. The ideologies of the two movements also varied in vision, manipulation, and management. Unlike the Mahdist movement, Maji Maji did not develop centralized leadership. While the Mahdist movement envisioned the establishment of a theocratic state, the Maji Maji movement shortsightedly planned to eradicate foreign domination. In spite of these limitations, the ideologies of the Maji Maji and Mahdist resistance movements played significant role in inspiring, uniting, mobilizing, and building confidence among the fighters of these popular revolts.

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