

THE KILIMANJARO, A GERMAN MOUNTAIN? DISCOURSES AND PRACTICES OF IMPERIALISM IN THE GERMAN COLONIAL PERIOD

Delphine Froment, PhD candidate – delphine.froment@ens.fr

École Normale Supérieure de Paris (IHMC) – Université Paris Nanterre

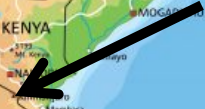
Afrikakolloquium IAAW – February 24th, 2021



Institut d'histoire moderne
et contemporaine
UMR 8066



Kilimanjaro



The European history of the first explorations of Kilimanjaro (1843-1884)

1843 : the German missionary Ludwig Krapf (*Church Missionary Society* – British institution) arrives on the East African coast and settles near Mombasa. In the next years, he starts to investigate on the East African geography

1848-1849 : three expeditions are led to the Kilimanjaro by Krapf's colleague, Johannes Rebmann. Rebmann becomes the first European to observe and describe the snow-capped summit of Kilimanjaro

1849-1861: huge geographical controversy in Europe about the existence of the snows of Kilimanjaro → incentive for the exploration of Kilimanjaro

1861-1862 : double expedition to Kilimanjaro by the German baron Carl Claus von der Decken (first one with the British geologist Richard Thornton, second one with the German chemist Otto Kersten): he confirms the existence of the snows of Kilimanjaro

1871 : expedition to Kilimanjaro by the British reverend Charles New: he becomes the first European to reach the snow line

1883 : two rival expeditions are led by the German explorer Gustav Adolf Fischer (geographical society of Hamburg) and by the British explorer Joseph Thomson (Royal Geographical Society and British Association for the Advancement of Science) in the surroundings of Kilimanjaro and Victoria Lake

1884 : botanical expedition to Kilimanjaro by the British explorer Harry H. Johnston (Royal Geographical Society and British Association for the Advancement of Science): he stays here 6 months

The Scramble for Kilimanjaro (1884-1890)

1884-1885: arrival of the *Gesellschaft für deutsche Kolonisation* in East Africa

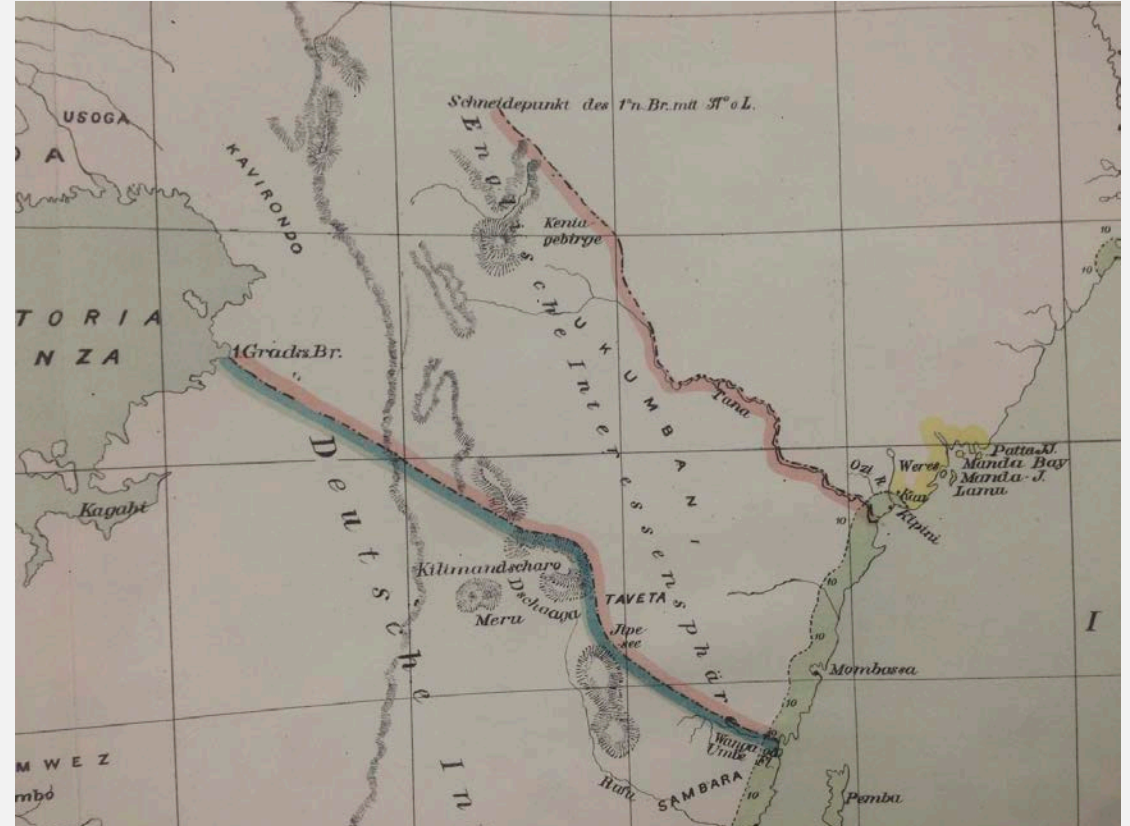
February 1885: imperial charter signed by Otto von Bismarck and intended to establish a German protectorate in the region

Summer 1885: two rival expeditions to Kilimanjaro in order to get the signature of territorial concession treaties on the south-eastern slopes of Mount Kilimanjaro with the local populations:

- an Anglo-Zanzibari expedition on the one hand
- a German expedition on the other hand

1885-1886: negotiation for the appropriation of the East African territories, and delimitation of two spheres of influence in Africa: a British one and a German one → Kilimanjaro is incorporated into the German sphere of influence

1890: Heligoland-Zanzibar Treaty: it confirms the territories of the German East Africa



German map showing the border defined by the Anglo-German Agreement of 1886, delimiting the British and German spheres in East Africa.
National Archives in Kew,
MPK I/160.

Kilimanjaro, a “German mountain”?

→ Academic work:

Hamann Christof and Honold Alexander (2011), *Kilimandscharo. Die deutsche Geschichte eines afrikanischen Berges*, Berlin, Klaus Wagenbach

→ In the media:

- Marc von Lüpke-Schwarz, « Als Deutschlands höchster Berg in Afrika lag », *Deutsche Welle*, 25 octobre 2013. Online: seen on: 04/01/21. URL : <https://www.dw.com/de/als-deutschlands-h%C3%B6chster-berg-in-afrika-lag/a-17171342>
- « Ein “deutscher” Berg in Afrika », *Spiegel*, 24 juin 2014. Online: seen on: 04/01/21. URL : <https://www.spiegel.de/sptv/wissen/der-kilimandscharo-ein-deutscher-berg-in-afrika-a-977230.html>

→ For a first insight into the long construction of this discourse of Kilimanjaro as a “German mountain”, see:

Schröder Iris (2005), « Der deutsche Berg in Afrika. Zur Geschichte und Politik des Kilimandscharo », *Historische Anthropologie*, 2005, 13, p. 19-44.

Main question of this paper:

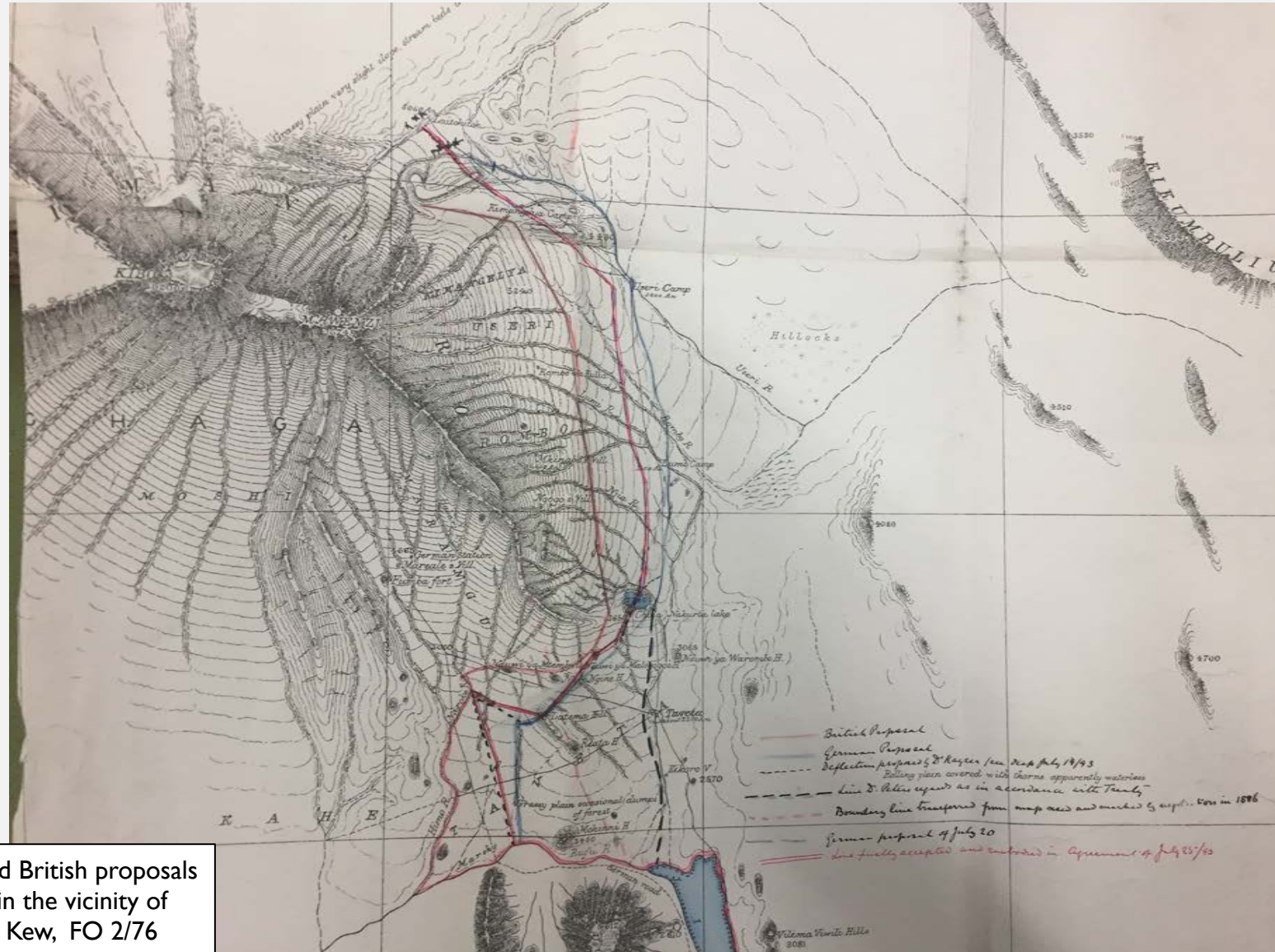
If Kilimanjaro was claimed as a German mountain in discourses, what can we say, in fact, about its territorial and political appropriation?

- 1) The German conquest of Kilimanjaro: history, discourses and practices of imperialism
- 2) Which German appropriation of Kilimanjaro? The limits of colonial domination
- 3) Kilimanjaro during the German colonial period: the first milestones of a global mountain?

I) The German conquest of Kilimanjaro: history, discourses and practices of imperialism

→ 1891-1894: delimitation of the boundary between German East Africa and British East Africa “in the vicinity of Kilimanjaro in conformity with the terms of Art. I Sec 9 of the Anglo-German Agreement of 1st July 1890 [Heligoland-Zanzibar Treaty]”

1st issue to be raised:
What is “Kilimanjaro”? What are the limits of the mountain?

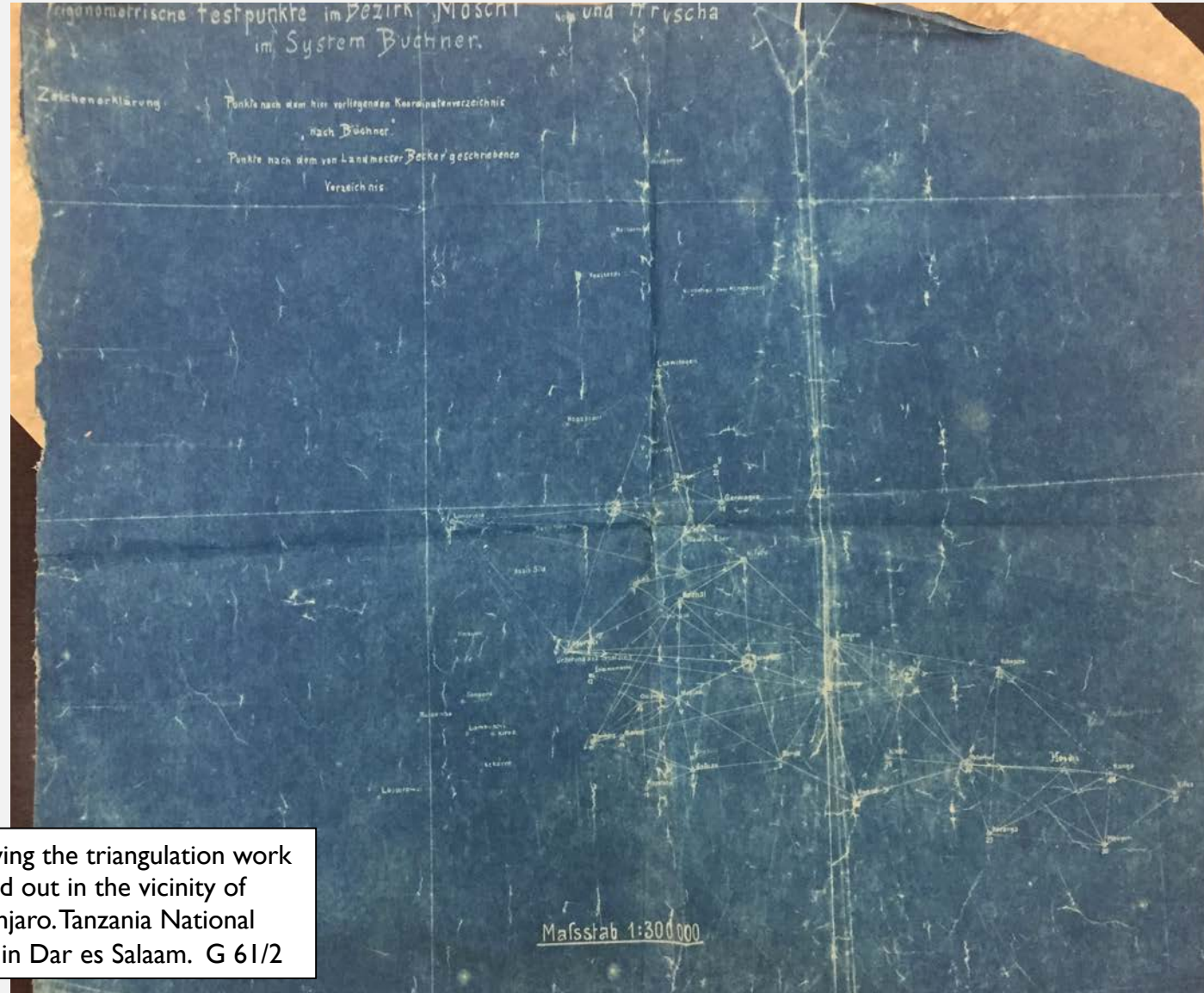


British map showing the German and British proposals for the delimitation of boundary in the vicinity of Kilimanjaro. National Archives in Kew, FO 2/76

I) The German conquest of Kilimanjaro: history, discourses and practices of imperialism

→ Administrative reorganisation and spatial restructuring:

- Neu-Moshi, new administrative centre of the district
- Triangulation work carried out for cadastral issues in German East Africa → reached Moshi in 1911-1912

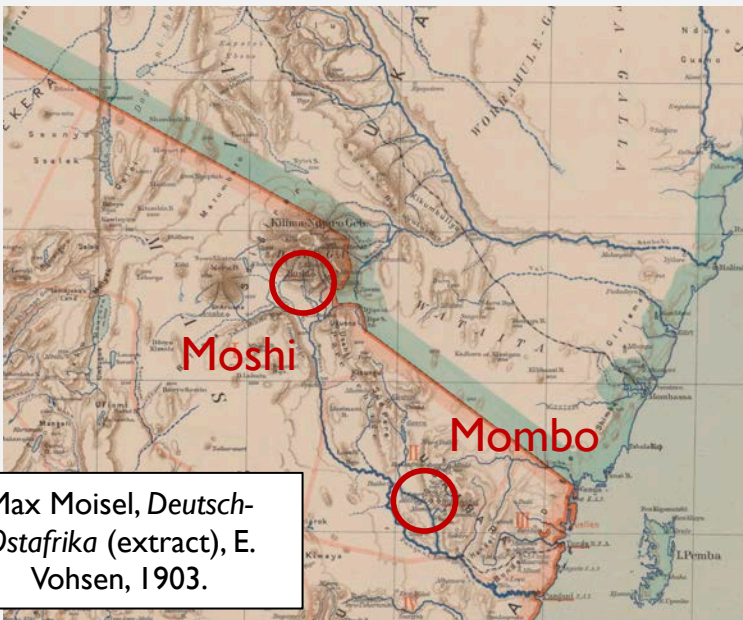


Map showing the triangulation work carried out in the vicinity of Kilimanjaro. Tanzania National Archives in Dar es Salaam. G 61/2

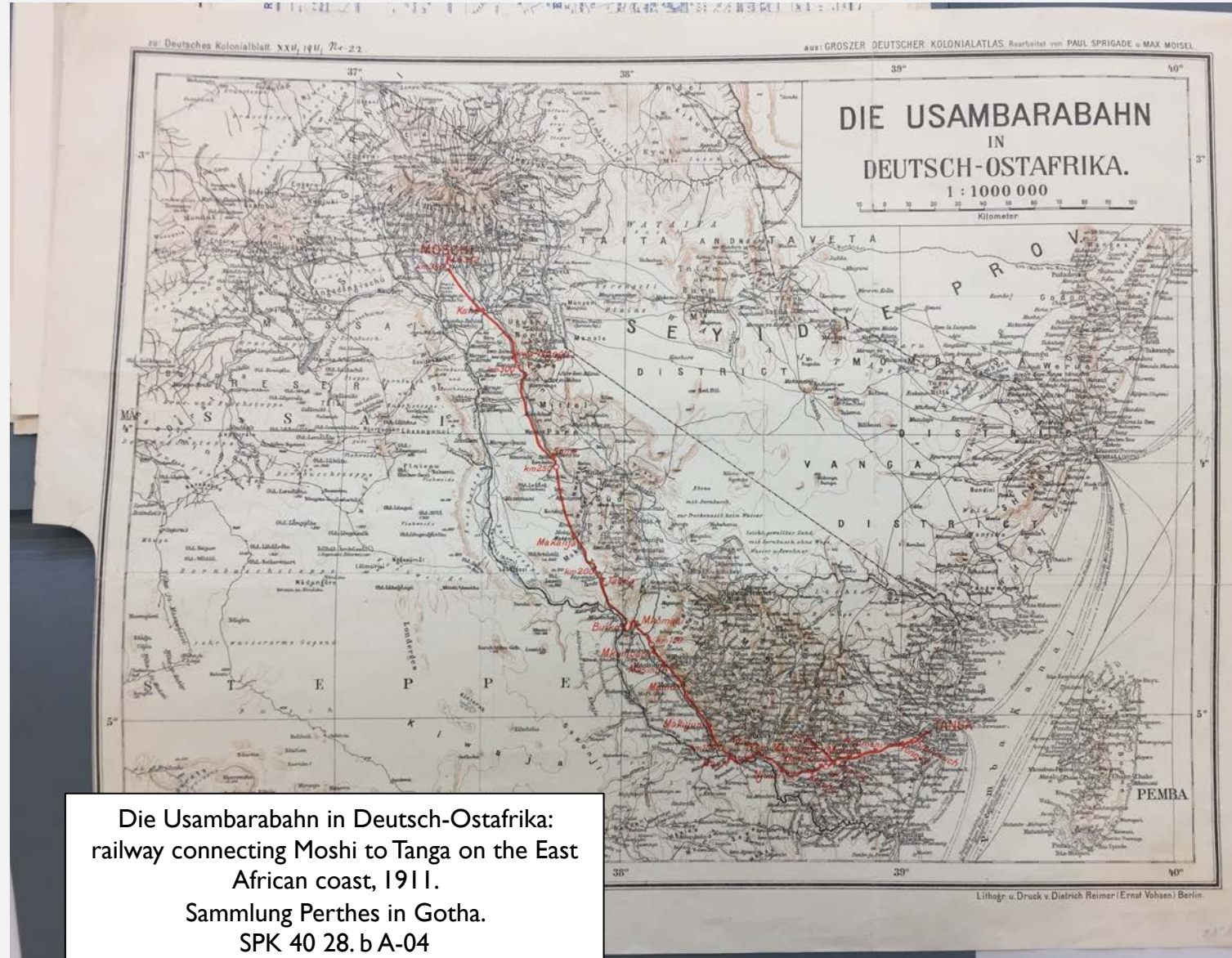
I) The German conquest of Kilimanjaro: history, discourses and practices of imperialism

→ Administrative reorganisation and spatial restructuring:

- Neu-Moshi, new administrative centre of the district
- Triangulation work carried out for cadastral issues in German East Africa → reached Moshi in 1911-1912
- *Usambarabahn*
- New road from Mombo to Moshi



Max Moisel, *Deutsch-Ostafrika* (extract), E. Vohsen, 1903.



Die Usambarabahn in Deutsch-Ostafrika:
railway connecting Moshi to Tanga on the East
African coast, 1911.
Sammlung Perthes in Gotha.
SPK 40 28. b A-04

I) The German conquest of Kilimanjaro: history, discourses and practices of imperialism

→ Implementation of a *Wald-Reservat* or forest reserve on Kilimanjaro (starting 1911)
– the mountain being perceived as a natural environment to be preserved.

→ First milestones to the actual Kilimanjaro National Park



Map showing the limits of the *Wald-Reservat des Kilimandjaro*.
Tanzania National Archives in Dar es Salaam. G 8/910

I) The German conquest of Kilimanjaro: history, discourses and practices of imperialism

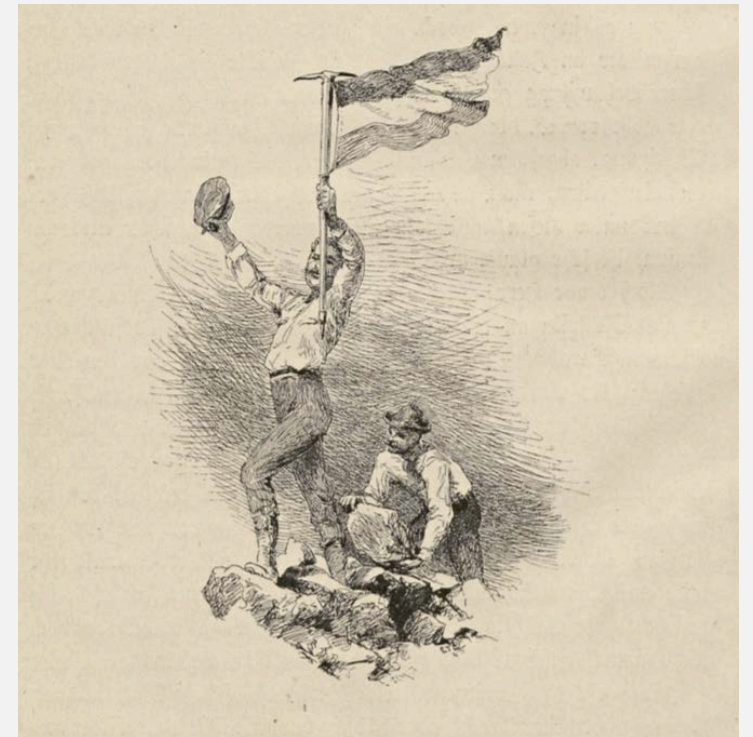
Hans Meyer and the alpine conquest of Kilimanjaro:

“Ich pflanzte auf dem verwetterten Lavagipfel mit dreimaligem, von Herrn Purtscheller kräftig sekundierten “hurra” eine kleine, im Rucksack mitgetragene deutsch Fahne auf und rief frohlockend: “Mit dem Recht des ersten Ersteigers taufe ich diese bisher unbekannte, namelose Spitze des Kibo, den höchsten Punkt afrikanischer und deutscher Erde: Kaiser-Wilhelm-Spitze.”

Hans Meyer, *Ostafrikanische Gletscherfahrten. Forschungsreisen im Kilimandscharo-Gebiet*, Leipzig, Duncker und Humlot Verlag, 1890, p. 134.

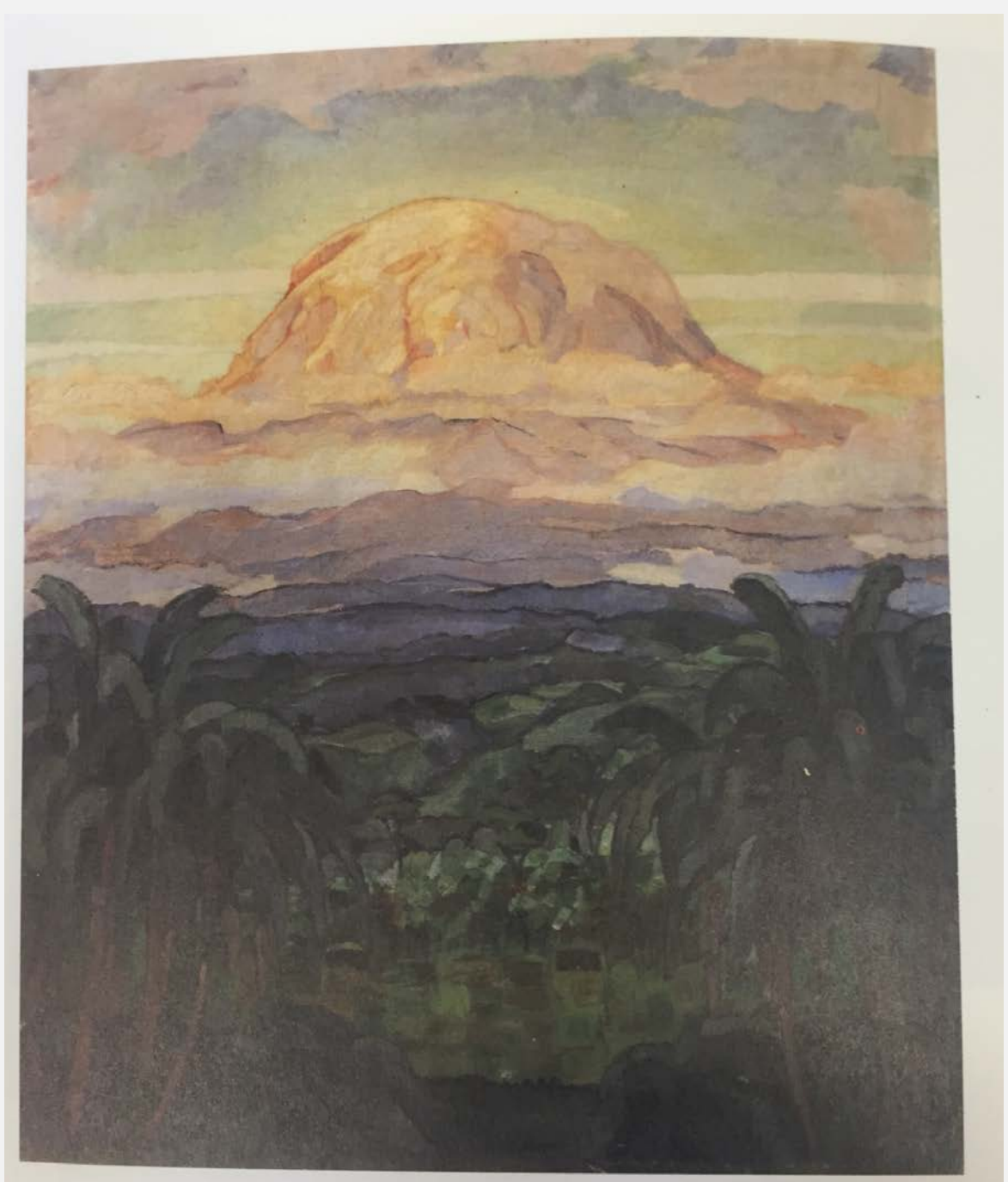
“Daneben erschien es mir fast als eine nationale Pflicht, dass der Gipfel des Kilimandscharo, warscheinlich des höchsten afrikanischen und zweifellos des höchsten deutschen Berges, der von einem Deutschen (Rebmann) entdeckt und von einem Deutschen (von der Decken) zuerst näher untersucht worden ist, nach allen Bemühungen englischer Reisender doch zuerst von einem deutschen Fuß betreten werde.”

Hans Meyer, *Ostafrikanische Gletscherfahrten. Forschungsreisen im Kilimandscharo-Gebiet*, Leipzig, Duncker und Humboldt Verlag, 1890, p. viii.



I) The German conquest of Kilimanjaro: history, discourses and practices of imperialism

Walter von Ruckteschell,
Kibo-Kilimandscharo, 1914
(Oil painting – Deutsches
Historisches Museum, Berlin)



I) The German conquest of Kilimanjaro: history, discourses and practices of imperialism

**Kilimanjaro, an example of
the Nazi nostalgia for the
German empire?**

Nazi propaganda poster calling
on the public to visit a
“colonial commemorative
exhibition on raw material” in
Dresen, Berlin 1937.
Deutsches Historische
Museum, Berlin



2) Which German appropriation of Kilimanjaro? The limits of colonial domination

Implementation of a *Wald-Reservat* or forest reserve on Kilimanjaro (starting 1911)

→ Necessity for the administrators to negotiate with the chiefs and local inhabitants

+ Letters sent to the central colonial administration show the need for reinforcement of the forestry staff in order to take care of the reserve and its surveillance

The Anglo-German border

→ Remained porous:

- fires starting in the British territory that could set fire to the northern slopes of Kilimanjaro
- cross-border arms trafficking
- invasions of Masai people from the British territory...

Spatial restructuration

→ did not prevent the permanence of cross-border exchanges and trafficking between the inhabitants (African people or European settlers) and the British territory: products resulting from agriculture, like coffee, were preferably traded through the roads going to Mombasa and tended to avoid those going to Dar es Salam, Tanga or Pangani.

3) Kilimanjaro during the German colonial period: first milestones of a global mountain?

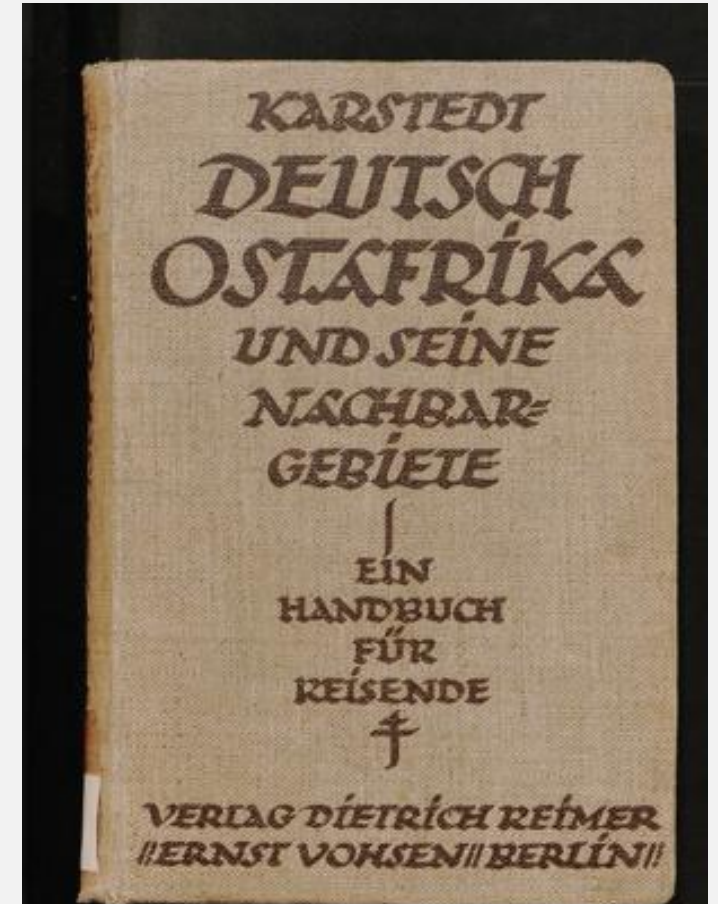
→ Kilimanjaro, an important stage of a new East African *Grand Tour*?

+ The Germans developed mountain tourism:

- guidebooks, advertisements, etc.
- Kilimanjaro Alpine Club, 1913
- setting up of shelters and mountain huts
- construction of paths towards the summit

→ Formation of native guides and bearers → the Africans reappropriated European practices of mountaineering

+ Development of a new economic system, based on tourism connecting Africans and Europeans



Oskar Karstedt, *Deutsch-Ostafrika und seine Nachbargebiete. Ein Handbuch für Reisende*, Berlin, Dietrich Reimer, 1914.

Conclusion