Letter from the Governor of East Africa, Julius von Soden, to the President of the German Colonial Association, Hermann zu Hohenlohe-Langenburg (1891)

Abstract

This letter of request illustrates the ties among the bureaucratization of knowledge, the instrumentalization of learning, the development of middle-class society, and the pursuit of nationalist ambitions—all crucial elements of the history of knowledge in the nineteenth century. The governor of East Africa wanted a school in Dar es Salaam to educate successive generations of subaltern functionaries, who would go on to staff the offices of the German colonial authority. To raise the necessary funds, he turned to the German Colonial Association, a bourgeois interest group with a history of pressuring the state into foreign entanglements troublesome to both domestic and international affairs. Here one sees how centrally knowledge figured in Germany's quest to achieve world power status.

Source

The Imperial Governor of German East Africa
To
The President of the German Colonial Association, Hohenlohe-Langenburg

March 30, 1891

Most Gracious Prince,

Your Serene Highness will please excuse me if now, even before I have arrived at the place of my posting, I come forward with requests and plans that I had in mind before but could not put forward in the short time I had the honor of spending together with Your Serene Highness.

During my first visit to East Africa, I already decided to establish, if at all possible, a government school in Dar es Salaam to groom a cadre of natives who, in time, would be employed in the subaltern functions of the governorate as clerks, police officers, customs officials, etc., etc. I thought that the school should be set up like the one in Cameroon, above all nondenominational; it is to be left to the missionaries to select their victims from among the students, if the parents are in agreement. To get the project started, the following would be required initially: 1) a schoolhouse, 2) a residence for the teacher, 3) the teacher himself, and 4) his salary, which should start at 4,500 marks with annual raises of 500 marks up to a maximum amount of about 6,000 marks. Unfortunately, upon my return to Berlin I learned that, in light of the necessary austerity measures, no funds are available for this purpose and that adding a sum for this purpose to the budget would make no sense because, given the anticipated income, the plan would only exist on paper and never become a reality. I therefore had to devise other ways and means to raise the required sum. After on-site consultations with the natives and the Europeans who know the natives and their circumstances, there is a well-founded prospect that the funds required to build a schoolhouse and a teacher's residence can be raised from the richer East Indians or even from the local inhabitants. In any case, I will

immediately take steps in this direction. Hence, only the teacher himself and his secondment and pay remain, and in this regard my hopes rest with Your Highness and the German Colonial Association, that perhaps through efforts from your side the outlays for employing a teacher could be covered, at least for the first three or four years. My experience in Cameroon speaks for the choice of a person from Württemberg, and that individual should not come from the cohort of cronies; there will probably be no lack of applicants, and I believe that Your Highness would have the choice. Caution, however, is recommended; above all, it should be a fresh, free, and cheerful youth, and piety should only be the fourth consideration. It might also be advisable to have the man attend the Oriental Seminar in Berlin for a half year before his posting so that he becomes at least adequately familiar with the grammar of the Swahili language before his arrival.

If Your Highness is willing to attend to this matter, I will for my part guarantee the school and the teacher's residence; in one way or another I will bring this about, and the Colonial Association can be assured that I will have met this condition. I reserve the right to provide Your Highness with very specific information on this subject over the course of the next few months; however, I cannot take any definite steps without being certain of support from the Colonial Association.

I would just like to address one objection that may perhaps be raised against my plan, namely, that it is the job of the missions to perform the task laid out here. Assuming that the missions would even allow their family members to receive the kind of education required for the purpose described here, they would still likely use their students for themselves and their purposes, that is, in the service of the missions themselves, for decades to come, and would not surrender any part, and certainly not the useful part, to the government.

In thus submitting this idea for the benevolent consideration of Your Highness, and requesting to be informed as soon as possible about the position of the German Colonial Association toward it, I remain, with assurances of sincerest respect, Your Highness's most obedient

von Soden
Imperial Governor

Source: Bundesarchiv R 8023 / 968, Bl. 6f; reprinted in Christel Adick and Wolfgang Meinert, eds., with the assistance of Thea Christiani, *Deutsche Missions- und Kolonialpädagogik in Dokumenten. Eine kommentierte Quellensammlung aus den Afrikabeständen deutschsprachiger Archive 1884–1914.* Frankfurt am Main: IKO-Verl. für Interkulturelle Kommunikation, 2001 (Historisch-vergleichende Sozialisations- und Bildungsforschung 2), no. 122, pp. 379–81. Available online at: http://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0111-pedocs-116941

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Recommended Citation: Letter from the Governor of East Africa, Julius von Soden, to the President of the German Colonial Association, Hermann zu Hohenlohe-Langenburg (1891), published in: German History Intersections, <https://germanhistory-intersections.org/en/knowledge-and-education/ghis:document-140>

[October 12, 2024].