



MKWAWA: HEROIC CHIEF OF THE HEHE TRIBE

Jiří Hlaváček

African nations, like nations in other continents, search for great personalities in their history with a view to enhanced their national pride and integrity. This in its turn is to contribute to the solution of present day problems in their socio-economic and political development. Such personalities distinguished themselves in the struggles for preserving freedom of aboriginal African tribes, and later on, for achieving national independence from colonial powers. In history of Tanzania, such figures are exemplified by the supreme chief - mutwa - of Hehe tribe, Mkwawa I (1855-1898).

During the 19th century, Hehe tribe was, together with Ngoni, Chagga, Sambara and Nyamwezi tribes, one of the few tribes that were able to unite members of numerous clans and form tribal unions, and consequently to stand up resolutely to European colonial invasion of the interior of the African continent. Thanks to the fact that mutwa Mkwawa became its leader, the Hehe tribe succeeded in consolidating its unity and demonstrated its resistance to German expansion.

At present, Hehe tribe is the seventh largest Tanzanian tribal group (almost 800,000 people). Like the majority of Tanzanian population, the Hehe fall within the Benue-Congo group of sub-Saharan Niger-Congo family of languages. The Hehe tribe is part of the Bantu subgroup.¹ Ban-

¹ Joseph H. Greenberg, article in *Continuity and Changes in African Cultures*, p. 15: "Africa as a Linguistic Area", University of Chicago Press, 1963.

tu tribes now form almost 94 % of Tanzanian population. The Hehe, with Sukuma, Gogo, Haya, Chagga, Nyamwezi, Makonde and Nyakusya tribes, are principal representatives of the Bantu language subgroup in this nation.

The Hehe tribe inhabits a substantial section of the south-western part of Tanzania's central mainland: Tanganyika. The territory inhabited by the Hehe tribe spreads across several present - day administrative units: namely the districts of Iringa and Mufindi, in the region of Iringa. Its area covers approximately 40,000 square kilometres. Situated in the river basins the territory was from ancient times suitable for human settlement, for fruit gathering, hunting and fishing, and later on for the development of primitive forms of agriculture and livestock breeding. Still later, the Hehe tribe settled in neighbouring highlands which had sufficient amount of rainfall. The Hehe inhabited mainly the environs of the Great Ruaha River, an area benefitting by a very pleasant climate. The rich alluvial soil around the Great Ruaha River made this area "one of the most fertile spots in Africa".² At the same time, the area where the Hehe have traditionally lived reaches at places an elevation of between 1,500 and 2,000 metres above sea level.

The Bantu ethnic group, to which the Hehe belong, came to the present Tanganyika territory during the migration of African ethnicities probably in the 12th and 13th centuries. The Bantus partly absorbed the remnants of the aboriginal population (Bushmen and Hottentots) whose majority was forced to retreat to other parts of the African continent, most particularly the south-west. This process of resettlement was likely completed before the end of the 15th century.³

The Hehe tribe come into existence by separation from a larger Bena group which was very close and similar to it in terms of both language and culture, and which had originally settled in the area north of the source of the Ruhuje river. The Bena group became the basis for the family of Bantu tribes, a large group showing a high degree of lexical similarity:

The Hehe, today totalling about 800,000, who settled in the upper basin of the Great Ruaha river; the Bena, now amounting to almost 600,000,

² H. Kjekshus, *Ecology Control and Economic Development in East African History: The Case of Tanganyika, 1850-1950*, London: Heinemann, 1977, pp.32-33.

³ P. Oliver, chapter 12, "L'Afrique d'Est", in *Histoire générale de l'Afrique noire des origines à 1800*, Paris, 1970, pp. 308-329.

who remained in the basin of the Ruhuje river; the Pangwa, now 220,000, living to the south-east of Lake Malawi; the Sangu, (90,000), who inhabited the lower part of the Great Ruaha river basin; the Kinga, (about 65,000), settled to the north of the Ndandu mountains; and the Wanji, (about 70,000), living between the lower reaches of the Great Ruaha river and the Kinga territory.

This accounts for the fact that present – day Hehe language shows a 65 % lexical similarity with the Bena language, 59 % with Pangwa, 56 % with Sangu, 50 % with Kinga, and 48 % with Wanji.⁴

The Hehe tribe's name derives from the expression "He! He!", denoting excitement and astonishment, originally used in battle campaigns. The Hehe expanded territorially in the centuries following their emancipation. Inside the tribe steadily developed patrimonial territorial clans and absorbed not only the remnants of aboriginal population, but also new groups, resettled from other localities of the East African region that had no previous close connection with this Bantu ethnicity.

For several centuries the principal Hehe clans mainly as Igawilo were defined (there were more than thirty clans altogether), after the locality of the same name. The Ilongo clan settled in the Ndembele river valley. The Hafiwa clan inhabited the localities of Tanangozi, Welu, Kalenga, Ntsihi, and Iringa, closer to inland. The Nyandewelwa clan occupied the territory north-west of Iringa in the direction of Dodoma and Dar es Salaam. The Tegeta clan was dominant in today's localities of Usungwa and Usagala. The Kilwa, originally living on the Indian Ocean coast, in the region surrounding the present-day port of Kilwa, moved at the beginning of the 16th century into the area of what today is the district of Mufindi.⁵

There were naturally many armed internal conflicts between Hehe clans during the 17th and 18th centuries and in the first half of the 19th century, mainly over land and homesteads. Livestock was considered, even among predominantly agriculturally and gathering oriented Bantu tribes, a symbol of welfare and social prestige. Only in the 18th century did the Hehe begin to establish a broad family community structure, and by the second half of the same century new, higher structures evolved: the process of unification into a single tribal union began. This process was also induced by external pressure. Hehe clans were forced to defend them-

⁴ Ethnologue, Summer Institute of Linguistics, 13th edition, 1996, part Africa – Tanzania.

⁵ Michael Musso, *Mukwava na kabila lake*, Eastern Africa Publication Limited, Dar es Salaam, 1968, pp. 8-9.



Mutwa Mkwawa I.

selves effectively not only against attacks by another African tribes, but were likewise already confronted with Arab caravans penetrating further into the heart of the African continent in search of new trade opportunities and conducting highly lucrative slave and ivory trade.

The road to the unification of the Hehe clans was interspersed with long internal struggles for dominant positions between many different principal clans and their chiefs. The unification process has not been captured with sufficient lucidity by historiography. The main sources of information available are tribal tales and legends. There is a lack of reliable historical documents. As with the majority of Bantu tribes, according to oral legends the Hehe ruling dynasties came from the North and won the dominant position by outstanding acts and heroic deeds. New leaders from the North (in the vast majority of cases members of different ethnicity) distinguished themselves by taller stature and lighter complexion, emphasizing the new rulers' exceptional line of descent.⁶

The start of the process of establishing a ruling dynasty of the future tribal union of the Hehe can arguably be situated to the beginning of the 18th century. According to legends, at that time the fighters of the herdsmen Nilo-Saharan Nyangologo tribe, originally settled in present-day Kenya, set out on their journey towards the Hehe area. At the same time, one of the chiefs of the Tigri tribe, from the Afro-Asian family of Ethiopian-Semitic languages, was passing through the present Kenyan territory. Nowadays the Tigri tribe inhabits Eritrea and northern Ethiopia. The Tigri chief then married a woman of the Kamba, a Bantu tribe (currently the fifth largest tribe in Kenya). They had three sons who, as adults, reached the territory of the Bantu tribe Zigua, in north-east Tanganyika, close to the Indian Ocean coast. (The population of the Zigua tribe currently amounts to about 400,000). The sons married girls of the Zigua tribe and then followed the trail of the Nyangologo tribe, eventually to reach an area inhabited by the small Bantu tribe of Sagala (65,000), east of Hehe territory. The sons and their families settled in the locality of Ikombagulu and became the founders of the Mombe dynasty. Later on, more of their relatives from the Zigua tribe joined them and the whole clan got stronger. The dynasty received a new name, Nyamsigula, among the Hehe. Ac-

⁶ P. Oliver, chapter 12, *L'Afrique d'Est*, in *Histoire générale de l'Afrique noire des origines à 1800*, Paris, 1970, pp. 324-329.

cording to legends the most famous of the three brothers was Mubunsugulo. He and his successors were distinguished by a lighter complexion than the aboriginal population. This can be explained by Mubunsugulo's possible descendancy from a Portuguese father and a Tigri mother. The Portuguese had come to the territory of present-day Ethiopia from the Indian Ocean coast when to help Christians in Ethiopia in their fight against Islamic invasion.

Mubunsugulo's sons subsequently founded three major chiefdoms on the territory inhabited by the Hehe tribe. The first-born son, Nguluchawangi (also named Manga), settled in the south, in Masagati, touching upon or even possessing enclaves in Bena tribe territory. The second son, Mufwimi, became the father of a future dynasty, which in the first half of the 19th century dominated the whole Hehe tribe and its neighbouring smaller tribes. The third son, Ngwira, inherited his father's subjects in the south-east in the Ikombagulu-Ifakara area.⁷

As stories have it, Mufwimi, an outstanding hunter, lost his way during one of his hunting safaris in Ng'uluhe area, whose ruler was one of the chiefs of a smaller Hehe clan named Mududa. Because of his hunting experience admired by Mududa, Mufwimi was hosted by the chief Mududa for many days. In accordance with the favourite subject of African stories, the future of the Hehe tribe was influenced by love affairs. The eldest daughter of Mududa fell in love with Mufwimi. As a result of this secret love a child was conceived. But Mufwimi was afraid of Mududa's wrath. Therefore, he decided to return to Ikombagulu, but unfortunately on his way back he was killed. The daughter of Mududa gave birth to a boy named Mwamuyinga. He, too, became a famous hunter and fighter, taking after his father. The chief Mududa loved his grandson and appointed him to be his successor. After his death Mwamuyinga ruled as Mwamuyinga I. Thus, around the year 1760, was opened up the way to the establishment of the rule of a single Muyinga dynasty over the Hehe tribe territory.

Up to the first half of the 19th century, Mwamuyinga I was succeeded by chiefs Mwamuyinga II, Kitowa, Mudegela and Kilonge.⁸

⁷ Michael Musso, *Mukwava na kabila lake*, Eastern Africa Publication Limited, Dar es Salaam, 1968, pp. 15-24.

⁸ J.E.F. Mhina, *Mashujaa wa Tanzania*, Longman Tanzania Ltd., Dar es Salaam, 1981, pp. 1-3.

The chief Kilonge, who lived in the first half of the 19th century, died around 1855. During his rule (with Ng'uluhe as the centre), Kilonge was confronted with the threat of intertribal wars stemming from a new wave of tribal migration, mainly from southern and central Africa, at the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th centuries. The southern part of today's Tanganyika was invaded before 1845 by a new warlike Bantu tribe, the Ngoni, who came from the territory of present-day Swaziland, and later on from Malawi and Mozambique. From 1820-1830, more intense journeys and expeditions of Arab traders under the protection of the sultans of Oman and later Zanzibar, started to penetrate into the heart of the African continent, crossing the territory of the Hehe tribe in search of sources of not only ivory but also of slave trade. The spare of violent hunting of slaves for Arabian markets became a nightmare for the African tribes. After 1840 began the penetration of European explorers into African interior and the discovery of the black continent for Europe.⁹

After the death of Kilonge, his first-born son Mugawanalupembe took over Ng'uluhe. His rule was short, as he was killed in a brawl after getting drunk an banana ale. He was succeeded by Kilonge's second son, Binini, later named Munyigumba. He was an experienced fighter tested by battles with neighbouring tribes. He used his experience in solving disputes with chiefs of other Hehe clans and tribes. Munyigumba expanded his rule from Ifwagi to the heart of the territory inhabited by the Hehe, Bena and Sangu tribes.

Chief Munyigumba, who ruled in the years 1855-1879, started the process of complete unification of the Hehe tribe under a single supreme ruler: the "mutwa". The name of the supreme Hehe chief, "mutwa", originates from the Bena word "mutwe", meaning "head". The head was considered by Benas to be the most important part of the human body. That was why they chose the word as the name for the ruler of the whole tribe. Thanks to the two tribes' close lexical similarity, the Hehes adopted the word and began to use it in a somewhat transformed sense to designate their supreme chief.

Munyigumba forcibly united Hehe clans into a single tribal union. In 1875 he attacked the neighbouring tribe of Sangu and dethroned its chief, Merere. To rule more efficiently over his conquered territories, Munyigumba

⁹ V.E. Ovchinnikov, *Istoriya Tanzaniyi v novoye i noveysheye vremya*, Moscow, 1986, pp.66-80.



----- Present national boundaries of Tanzania
 Boundaries of maximum tribe unions' influence
 • Names of major today's cities and towns
 Tribe unions: Hehes (ruler Mkwawa I.)

drew up plans for the division of the territory into several administrative regions headed by administrators appointed personally by him ("msagila"). The msagilas' responsibilities included not only administering the territory, but also taking command of armed forces during wartime campaigns or in defence of their administrative regions and ensuring prompt communication with the mutwa's armed forces.

The need of a common strong defence against the attacks of the Ngoni tribe contributed to the definitive unification of the Hehe tribe. The Ngonis had become stabilized in new settlements in south-western Tanganyika on the banks of Lake Malawi in the 1860s. The first attack of this warlike tribe on Hehe territory occurred in 1878. By that time Muniyumba, could rely on the support of his first born son Mkwawa (born around 1855), who actively participated in the fight against the Ngoni and contributed to their defeat. In 1879 Muniyumba died. He left Hehe tribe relatively united and strong.

As in the history of other tribes and nations, the death of its autocratic ruler had a negative impact and consequences for the hitherto united tribe. In the late mutwa's family conflict arose over succession and rule of the whole Hehe territory. Before his death, Munyigumba had transferred a significant part of his powers to his favourite wife, Mwanakimamule (Pokavilonga). She manipulated and abused Munyigumba's decision preventing the first-born Mkwawa from succeeding him. Instead, she promoted one of the administrators (msagila), Mwamubambe, as the successor of Munyigumba. Mwamubambe became a puppet in her hands.

Nor did Mkwawa receive support from his uncle, chief Mhawile, the younger brother of mutwa Munyigumba. Chief Mhawile took over the northern part of Hehe territory and forced Mkwawa to flee in search of an asylum on the territory of the neighbouring Gogo tribe. Later, Mwanakimamule conspired against Mhawile too, and arranged for his killing. She installed her relative Muhenga as the new ruler of the northern part of Hehe land.

After some time discontent over the rule of Mwanakimamule's installed puppets prevailed among the Hehe clans. They decided to call on Mkwawa to return and confront Mwamubambe and Muhenga. Mwamubambe was defeated in the battle of Usawila and fled. In exile, he organized sporadic attacks against Hehe territory and Mkwawa. In 1883 Mwamubambe's armed units were crushed in the battle of Luvaha, near the present-day Iringa. Mwamubambe was killed in the battle. Mwanakimamule was wounded, escaped from the battle-scene and died of her injuries near Mapogolo.

Another puppet ruler, Muhenga, was defeated by Mkwawa in 1880 and was forced into exile. By 1880, Mkwawa became the de facto supreme chief of both parts of Hehe territory: he became mutwa.

After the defeat of his internal opponents, Mkwawa could start the enforcement of his tribe's unification and consolidation of its military preparedness to defend Hehe territory against external attacks, and could even to endeavour to expand the scope of his rule. Mkwawa set up a military type of government, based on the action of military chiefs appointed by Mkwawa in each administrative unit of the union. In 1880 Mkwawa established his headquarters, a fortress – "ivaha" – in Kalenga, on the banks of the Little Ruaha river, only 15 kilometres from the present-day town of Iringa. This fortress, originally surrounded by a protective fence of wood and thornbush, was later reinforced by stone and mud walls. In

its time the fortress was a structure unique in the territories of the East African tribes.

In 1881 Mkwawa and the Hehe were once again confronted with an armed conflict with the Ngoni tribe under the command of its new chief Chabruma, in the Upangwa mountains. The conflict ended without a victor. Both rulers agreed to divide between them the territory of the Bena tribe. Mkwawa was given the neighbouring northern part of Bena land. From 1883-1886, Mkwawa had to face up to further attempts at overthrowing him. That was why he decided to launch attacks on neighbouring tribes in 1884 and 1886, particularly on the Gogo, Sagara and Sangu tribes who were providing assistance to his opponents and who also wanted to invade certain parts of the Hehe tribal union. As a result, Mkwawa conquered several parts of neighbouring territories. However, this conflict did not exceed the scale of routine operations of its kind, involving the limited material and technological capacities of locally warring tribes, compared with their subsequent confrontations with German colonial invaders.

Mkwawa, from 1880 an autocratic ruler, succeeded in stabilizing his government and until 1886 expanding his sovereignty over neighbouring territories. At the peak of his absolute rule, his tribal union stretched over an area from the coast of the Indian Ocean to the central and south-western parts of Tanganyika. His union was the second largest in size after the union of the chief of the Nyamwezi tribe, Mirambo, on the territory of the present-day Tanganyika. Mkwawa's territory occupied an area of about 150,000 square kilometres (parts of modern-day Tanzanian regions: Coast Region, Lindi, Morogoro, Dodoma, Iringa and Mbeya). The population was occupied not only by gathering and hunting, but also by cultivating land and breeding livestock. The level of technology used in agriculture was generally low. Therefore, higher yields and prospective surpluses depended on such factors as increase in land fertility and irrigation. Commodity exchange with Arab traders and with other tribes was less developed. The commodity exchange was small in terms of volume of products involved and was still at a very rudimentary stage of development. Arab caravan traders employed large numbers of hired African porters on a temporary basis.¹⁰

The only form of slavery existing in African tribes including the Hehe was domestic slavery. A person could become a slave upon being cap-

¹⁰ J. Illife, *A Modern History of Tanganyika*, Cambridge University Press, 1979, pp. 18-19.

tured in a war. In times of famine, children might be sold for food. Another way of turning free men to slaves was gambling. People also used to offer themselves as slaves in order to obtain protection. However in all of those cases, a slave could be bought out. This type of domestic slavery resembled adoption. Domestic slavery was officially abolished in Tanganyika on 16 June, 1922.¹¹

In the 1880s, Mkwawa's empire was crossed by routes of Arab traders from the ports on the coast of the Indian Ocean (Bagamoyo, Pangani, Tanga and Kilwa) and from the island of Zanzibar. Across his territory passed the two main slave trade routes: one leading from Zanzibar through Kilwa and Lake Malawi, also passing through the territory of the Ngoni tribe; and the other from Bagamoyo through Dodoma, Tabora and Ujiji, to Kigoma on the banks of Lake Tanganyika, also crossing the territory of the Nyamwezi tribe. Along these routes, about 50,000 – 70,000 slaves were transported annually to Zanzibar and from there to Arab countries. In the years of the busiest slave trade in East Africa, in 1862-1867, as many as 97,000 Africans were exported per year. Zanzibar, which split away from Oman in 1856, strove to receive maximum profit from slave and ivory trade until the colonial powers put a radical end to the slavers' cruel practices in East Africa. Kilwa, on the coast of the Indian Ocean, became a major centre of gathering slaves captured by armed caravans or bought by them from local chiefs in the interior of Africa. The slave market in Kilwa was the symbol of a long and tragic journey for thousands of Africans on their way to the biggest slave market in Zanzibar.¹² Only in 1873 was sultan Bargash of Zanzibar forced by Britain to sign a decree prohibiting slave trade and closing down the slave market in Zanzibar. That notwithstanding illegal slave trade continued. Finally, in April 1897, sultan Hammoud agreed to sign a decree authorizing slaves to appeal for freedom.¹³

Having consolidated his power in the frame of his tribal union, Mkwawa attempted to exercise his authority also towards Arab traders and German expeditions, that were steadily preparing the establishment of colonial administration, penetrating further to the hinterland of East Afri-

¹¹ E. A. Alpers, *The East African Slave Trade*, published for the Historical Association of Tanzania by East African Publishing House, Nairobi, 1967.

¹² Abdul Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices and Ivory in Zanzibar*, Tanzania Publishing House and James Currey Publishers, 1987, pp. 223-230.

¹³ B.F. Mrina and W.T. Mattoke, *Mapambano ya Ukombozi Zanzibar*, Tanzania Publishing House, Dar es Salaam, 1981, pp. 26-27.

ca. Mkwawa demanded the payment of tolls, only to meet with refusal and resistance from the traders and German armed expeditions.

After the Berlin Congress (1884-1885) and later the Helgoland Treaty (1890), East Africa was considered the sphere of influence of Britain and Germany. Arab traders who had until then operated under the protection of the sultan of Zanzibar, and still independent African tribe unions, no longer wielded powers and authorities enabling them to stand up to the invasion of European colonial superpowers in a long-term perspective. The supremacy of the European invaders in both military and technological terms was indisputable. African tribes, relying only on their traditional arms (arrows, bows, spears, pikes, knives), and on rare occasion using the few fire arms bought from Arab traders, could not resist the new pressure put up by the invaders, without an alliance struck between hitherto now rival tribes.¹⁴

Responding to permanent threat of armed attacks by neighbouring tribes and the potential danger from the part of Arab traders, and increasingly concerned at action of the Germans, Mkwawa decided to build up his fortification system in Kalenga and in the administrative centres of his empire. In Kalenga, the military fortress was enlarged and eventually resembled an early medieval, 10th century European fort. Elsewhere in East Africa, such African fortresses existed only in the territory of the Nyamwezi tribe and in the kingdoms on the territory of modern-time Uganda. Original Swahili-Arab cities with centuries-long tradition, on the coast of the Indian Ocean, such as Kilwa, Pangani, Mombasa, Lamu or Zanzibar, cannot be compared with the projects of Bantu tribes. The construction of permanent Bantu settlements involving the use of materials other than palm or banana leaves, tree branches and trunks, had no tradition at that time. Unfortunately, the construction of Kalenga fortress was not fully completed until 1894.

Mkwawa's Kalenga fortress (originally named Kwilenga, "having water") was built on the confluence of the Little Ruaha and Lunguya rivers, to provide sufficient reserves of water for the fortress population. The inhabitants of the fortress consisted of warriors and Mkwawa's body guard initially, his wives and children also lived there. Later on, he moved the residences of his numerous wives and children to a nearby place, in

¹⁴ See the Berlin Act of 26 February, 1885, and the Treaties between German Agents and East African Chiefs, 1884-1885, in Earle E. Seaton and Sosthenes T. Maliti, *Tanzania Treaty Practice*, Nairobi, Oxford University Press, 1973, pp. 125-144.

order not to be disturbed from his government and military duties. The confluence of the rivers was surrounded by mountains in the north. The fortress was protected by mud walls ("kidunda").

The following principal military units were stationed within the fortress:

The "watengule": young Hehe tribesmen who were trained in fighting tactics and were designated to be a nucleus of the tribal union's military strength.

The "wigendo" were young fighters, members of the Mkwawa clan, who permanently accompanied mutwa Mkwawa and resembled today's body guard. New commanders of Hehe military units were recruited among the "wigendo", who received the best training to be merciless and disciplined.

Hehe fighters were not closely acquainted with modern European and Arab weaponry (i.e., chiefly firearms). Psychologically, they had no confidence in that type of arms and regarded them as outlandish. Therefore, Mkwawa bought a small quantity of firearms from the Makua tribe and even had to hire Makua fighters (living near the coast and frequently involved in Arab caravans) for service in Hehe war campaigns.

In May 1887 the Germans entered Dar es Salaam. Sultan Bargash of Zanzibar offered the whole coastal strip to the German East Africa Company in July 1887, in the same way as he had given the northern part of the coast to the British East Africa Association in February 1887. Arab traders very quickly realized the impossibility to stop the aggressive action of the German invaders.¹⁵ They informed Mkwawa and advised him it was high time to prepare for confrontation with the new enemy. Mkwawa's new fortifications of Kalenga fortress consisted mainly of stones walls almost 13 km long and 4 metres high.¹⁶ Every section of the Hehe tribal union was to provide labour force and construction materials. Consequently, each administrative centre constructed its smaller fortresses.

Under these new circumstances Mkwawa endeavoured to make his military forces more efficient and more specialized. His armed forces were divided into units of 200 men and consisted of six categories of warriors:

The "kitengelemutwa" were units formed by the bravest fighters who permanently accompanied the mutwa and acted as a kind of shield against

¹⁵ Carl-Erik Sahlberg, *From Krapf to Rugambwa, A Church History of Tanzania*, Evangel Publishing House, Nairobi, 1986, pp. 58-59.

¹⁶ R.N. Ismagilova, B.Y.Katzman, Y.V. Lukonin, *Nations of Eastern and Southern Africa*, in *Istoriya Afriki v XIX - nachale XX v.*, Moscow, 1984, pp. 370-375.

attack and injury during war actions. The same type of unit was at the disposal of each head of the empire's individual administrative units.

The "walambo" consisted of "wigendo", the first to engage in surprise assaults. Before attack they would smoke certain species of grass to enhance their performance (shock troops).

The "walaya" were dressed in red, the colour of blood (this was considered unusual by most African tribes) and accompanied the "walambo" in the initial surprise assaults (crack troops).

The "wanyambwe" and the "wakanyulalo" were in charge of pursuing the attacks by most merciless ways and means, including the severing of enemies heads.

The "wanyamwani" were support armed forces destined for assaults on walls and thorn fences and for plundering and burning down villages (sapper units).

The "watandisi" were reconnaissance and espionage units.¹⁷

Despite the fact that these measures introduced by Mkwawa represented thus far unprecedented preparations in the history of confrontation between African tribes and a colonial power, in the long run these steps could not prevent German troops from penetrating further into the interior. Very early on the German presence met with opposition from both the Arab and African populations. Between 1888 and 1890 the Germans successfully put down an uprising in the coastal zone, led by Arab trader Bushiri bin Salim. Unfortunately, mutwa Mkwawa was not able to provide Bushiri with significant assistance. It was evident that the German East Africa Company alone could not handle the revolt of the African population. The German government itself took over administration from the company. By then the Germans had already initiated a transformation of indigenous African agriculture from subsistence peasant farming through the development of large plantations. Pressure was exerted on peasants to produce cash crops, and the labour used on the large plantations was African, more or less forced. The violent opposition that was put up against the Germans during the ten years in which they consolidated their hold on the country (1888-1898) was not sufficient to shake off the yoke of the aggressive colonial system.¹⁸

Mkwawa sent his "watandisi" to the then developing Dar es Salaam

¹⁷ Michael Musso, *Mkwawa na kabila lake*, Eastern Africa Publications Limited, Dar es Salaam, 1968, pp. 48-53.

¹⁸ J. Hiffe, "Tanzania under German and British rule" in L. Cliffe and J.S. Saul (eds), *Socialism in Tanzania*, Nairobi, East African Publishing House, 1972.

harbour (from 1891 the capital of German East Africa). Fearing for their lives, however they did not provide Mkwawa with true information about the strength and capacities of the German troops. As almost every local African ruler Mkwawa was generally known to be very strict, ruthless, and even cruel towards those of his subjects whom he disliked or with whose services he was not enough satisfied. Learning some useful lessons from their contacts with other tribes living closer to the Indian Ocean and to the borders with Kenya in the area around Kilimanjaro, in the process of forming their colonial administration the Germans did not want to underestimate local tribes, including the Hehe. In February 1889 the German Reichstag adopted a law on the military suppression of resistance of African tribes in East Africa. Consequently, still at the end of the 1880s Germans promptly constructed military fortresses in close neighbourhood of Hehe territory, in Kilosa, Mpwapwa and Lilimatinde. The Germans were particularly reticent to pay tolls granting them free passage through Mkwawa's territory, a duty which was still more or less respected by Arab and European traders and expeditions.

Mkwawa tried to find allies among other African tribal unions. But the Nyamwezi tribe was by then in a state of collapse and was virtually controlled by the Germans, due also to Mkwawa's unwillingness to assist chief Mirambo and his successors in their struggle against Arab traders in 1880. Mkwawa had to rely on possible help from his regional rival, the Ngoni tribal union. But the latter's supreme chief Chabruma was short-sighted and refused to co-operate with Mkwawa. Ten years later he himself became a victim of German expansion, with the vanquished Hehe fighting on the German side.

Mkwawa was forced to use the stick and carrots tactics. He sent gifts to the commander of the German garrison in Mpwapwa. The gifts were accepted and further passed on to Governor Wissman who was at that time not entitled to engage in direct political negotiations with local African chiefs. The governor did not instantly reciprocate Mkwawa's gifts, thereby failing to show proper traditional respect for the mutwa of the Hehe. Only after some time did he invite Mkwawa to visit Dar es Salaam. This inadequate show of respect towards the mutwa convinced Mkwawa that the reaching of a mutually acceptable arrangement with the Germans would be difficult. Finally, he refused the invitation to visit Dar es Salaam.

From 1890-1891, attacks against trade routes to Tabora passing through Hehe territory or close to it were very frequent. The Arabs and

the Germans started to blame for these attacks not only the Gogo tribe but the Hehe as well. Thus the Germans eventually also prepared for a military expedition against the Hehe. They anticipated an easy victory over the poorly armed African tribe. Near Hehe territory, German soldiers shot by mistake Hehe envoys sent by Mkwawa to meet the Germans to discuss mutual relations. Military conflict between Mkwawa and the Germans was now inevitable. The battle took place on 17 August, 1891, in the valley of the river Lugalo. The battle, participating in which on Mkwawa's side were about three thousand fighters, ended by a surprising Hehe victory. The German commander von Zelewski was killed in action.

For the Hehe the battle was their first confrontation with modern-age firearms and their devastation effects. In the battle, almost one thousand of the best Hehe fighters lost their lives. This was to have negative impact on the Hehes' future capacity to conduct an effective resistance against the German offensive. Mkwawa realized his soldiers' incapacity to use abandoned German military equipment including guns. Therefore, he decided to have the bulk of them thrown into the river.

During the following two years Mkwawa tried to renew his troops' military power. He partially succeeded in attacking small German garrisons in Kilosa and Iseke in 1893. During the Kilosa attack, however his troops were infected by smallpox, an epidemic that had tragic consequences for Hehe villages and fortresses after the soldiers' return.

The German colonial administration speeded up its preparations for a new military expedition. The administration began to use anti-Mkwawa feelings among some of the local Hehe chiefs and chiefs of neighbouring tribes. Without much trouble German troops reached the Uluguru mountains and headed for their final destination: Mkwawa's ivaha in Kalenga. The battle started on 28 October, 1894 and continued for two days. During that time Hehe fighters were in a position to defend the fortress and to resist. On 30 October, German troops received reinforcements and once again attacked Kalenga with new strength. The Hehe defenders were defeated. Mkwawa with his guard escaped and avoided of captivity. From that moment on, he was on permanent run and in hiding. The Germans set up a new garrison in Iringa to be able to organize new expeditions in search for Mkwawa.

For over three years mutwa Mkwawa kept escaping capture, thanks to solidarity of the majority of his tribe. The Germans managed to seize his son and heir Sapi, then 16 years old. Sapi was sent to Dar es Salaam and

from there to Germany, where he studied at a school of the Roman Catholic Benedictine Order.

The Hehe tribe and its settlements were meanwhile devastated by the German invaders searching for Mkwawa. The German set a reward of 5,000.- rupees for information about his whereabouts.¹⁹ On 19 June, 1898 the Germans encircled Mkwawa and his personal guard in Mlambalasi. Having realized there was no way to escape, Mkwawa committed suicide by shooting himself in the head. Unlike other Bantu tribes, the Hehe do not regard suicide as an act of cowardice but as a form of combat and a solution to a hopeless situation.²⁰ A German sergeant named Merkl, who was the first to discover Mkwawa's body, cut off his head so that the colonial administration could prove to the Hehe that their mutwa had been defeated.

All chiefs of the Hehe tribe were ordered to gather in Iringa, where Mkwawa's head was shown to them in evidence of the tribe's total defeat. The mutwa's corpse was buried according to Hehe traditions in Mulambasi. In those days the Hehe buried only their chiefs and outstanding military commanders who were typically positioned on the laps of their living servants. The corpses of ordinary tribesmen were left in the bush, to be devoured by wild animals.²¹

Mkwawa's head was transported to Germany and deposited in the Anthropological Museum of Bremen for the purposes of "scientific research", together with skulls of other Hehe warriors.

The death of the mutwa of the Hehe tribe was yet another episode in the process of eliminating the independent development of the few major tribal unions in East Africa. The consequences of European colonization proved to be tragic for the African population. Colonization interrupted their authentic social and economic development. All tribal unions were defeated by political pressure or military might. Thus was opened the way for German colonization of the western hinterland in Tanganyika and present-day Burundi and Rwanda. The Germans responded to discontent among the local population by harsh retaliatory measures. The latter, coupled with the fact that certain African chiefs were willing to co-operate

¹⁹ H. Mapunda, *Historia ya Mapambano ya Mtanzania*, Tanzania Publishing House, Dar es Salaam, 1980, pp. 70-71.

²⁰ P. van Pelt, *Bantu Customs in Mainland Tanzania*, T.M.P. Book Department, Tabora, 1971, pp. 227-228.

²¹ P. van Pelt, *Bantu customs in Mainland Tanzania*, T.M.P. Book Department, Tabora, 1971, p. 230.

with the Germans in pursuit of their own opportunistic ends, ensured that the colonial system was maintained even in the face of popular opposition.

After the 1898 defeat, the Hehe tribe kept its repute as brave fighters. Many Hehes were economically compelled to join the ranks of the German colonial army in battles against other African tribes (e.g. against the Ngoni tribe uprising in 1904-1906, and against the famous Maji Maji rebellion in 1905-1907), as well as against the British troops during the First World War. Before the First World War, Tanganyika was Germany's second most important colony. In 1912 Tanganyika produced 20 % of all the goods imported by Germany from its colonies and bought some 16 % of the goods exported to them by Germany. During the German era, the foremost monopoly corporation was the German East Africa Company (DOAG), founded in 1885. DOAG, and later on more than 50 German firms, developed a large plantation sector in Tanganyika producing rubber, sisal, coffee and copra operating also on Hehe territory, they used forced labour of the local African population.²² The Germans introduced the colonial hut and tax system, forcing African tribesmen to seek employment on plantations run by the German companies or European settlers.

The skull of mutwa Mkwawa became one of the topics discussed at the Versailles peace conference of 1919. According to the final text of the peace treaty, Germany, which had been defeated in World War I, was to hand over to the British Government, as the new administrator of Tanganyika, within six months of the treaty's coming into force, the skull of Mkwawa.²³ The skull was to be returned to the Hehe tribe. In fact, however, Mkwawa's skull was not removed from Germany until 19 June, 1954 when it was handed over to Mkwawa's grandson, mutwa Adam Sapi Mkwawa II. The skull was deposited and is currently displayed at the Mkwawa Museum in Kalenga.

After the defeat of Germany Great Britain as the new authority under the League of Nations Mandates System (1920-1945) recognized the claim of Mkwawa's son Sapi to succession as the head of the Hehe tribe. Sapi (1877-1952) became mutwa. In 1940 he stepped down in favour of his son who was proclaimed new mutwa under the name of Adam Sapi Mkwawa II (born 1920).

Hehe warriors contributed significantly to the defeat of Italian forces in Ethiopia and Somalia during the Second World War. They constituted

²² J. Illife, *A Modern History of Tanganyika*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1979, pp. 16, 146-147.

²³ Versailles Peace Treaty, Article 246, of 28 June, 1919.

almost 40 % of local British troops. Following the Second World War, the transition from the Mandate System to the Trusteeship System of the United Nations brought about major changes concerning the participation of Africans in the political life of Tanganyika. The new mutwa was very actively involved in Tanganyika's political life. In 1945 he became member of the Legislative Council and in 1951 of its Executive. He participated in political negotiations on Tanganyika's independence alongside other tribal chiefs in the 1950s. In 1958 he refused to be a member of the United Tanganyika Party conceived by the British governor as representative of Tanganyika's principal chiefdoms. Adam Sapi Mkwawa openly supported Julius Kambarage Nyerere (born in 1922 as a member of the small Bantu tribe Zanaki - about 70,000 strong) in his aspiration to be the indisputable chief representative of Tanganyika's political struggle for freedom.²⁴

Tanganyika obtained independence on 9 December, 1961, and on 26 April, 1964 united with Zanzibar and Pemba in one state, several months later named the United Republic of Tanzania. In 1962 the institution of chiefdom - including the post of the Hehe mutwa - was abolished. As a recognized and distinguished personality Adam Sapi Mkwawa II long held the post of Speaker of National Assembly of Tanganyika (1962-1964) and of the United Republic of Tanzania (1964-1973 and 1980-1994).

After independence Hehe soldiers became the main support in the building of new Tanzanian armed forces. Thus Mkwawa's struggle became not only a symbol and inspiration in resisting German colonization, but continued to serve as an inspiration for the independence endeavours efforts of Tanganyika and for the building of a united and strong Tanzanian nation.

Jiří HLAVÁČEK

JUDr.; graduated in 1982 from Moscow State Institute of International Relations, specialized in Eastern African Studies and Swahili language. In 1982-95 in Czechoslovak and later on Czech diplomatic service in the Eastern African countries (Tanzania, Somalia, Kenya). Since 1995 he has been active in international relations with emphasis to the developing countries and Africa too. Author of many articles on African affairs and Czech foreign policy towards African countries.

²⁴ H. Mapunda, *Historia ya Mapambano ya Mtanzania*, Tanzania Publishing House, Dar es Salaam, 1980, p. 94, 166-167.