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MINERALS AND THE MAJI MAJI WAR

ON EVENTS PRECEDING THE DINOSAUR FOSSIL EXCAVATIONS AT TENDAGURU IN GERMAN EAST AFRICA

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The partition of Africa took place largely in the years between the Berlin Conference of 1884/85 and the outbreak of World War I in 1914.¹ As nationalism intensified across Europe in the late nineteenth century, the appetite for colonial territories in Africa grew. Many nations—their citizens as well as their governments—considered the possession of colonies crucial for their prestige, and possibly for their very survival. This led in the 1880s to a fast-moving and brutal race among rival European colonial powers for territories in Africa, and it was at this time that the expression “scramble for Africa” was first coined.² Explorations of the continent quickly resulted in expansive claims being made to territories which, it was argued, had to be ruled in order to “protect Africans from their own violence ... and secondarily to create economic opportunities on the continent for Europeans.”³ This was despite the fact that, in 1884/85, there was scant tangible evidence of local resources that would reward these efforts. The race for territories in Africa was always “a sort of bet on the future”⁴ that would not pay off until more was known about the continent, its natural environment and its inhabitants. To acquire that knowledge, Europe continued its campaign to ‘open up’ Africa to its explorers and scientists.

SCRAMBLE FOR DINOSAURS

The expression “scramble for Africa” was employed frequently in twentieth-century political and popular writing, and it has inspired a variety of similar phrases in recent decades. American cultural anthropologist Enid Schildkrout deliberately echoed it in 1998 when she identified central and western Africa as the site of a “scramble for art” and a “scramble for objects”—that is, a place where European colonial powers vied among each other and against the United States for art and artifacts.⁵ German ethnologist Larissa Förster was later inspired by Schildkrout to refer to turn-of-the-century southern Africa as the site of a “scramble for skulls,” i.e., a competition among Western anthropologists for human remains.⁶ The fierce competition for finds in this period swept a flood of art, artifacts and specimens—alongside thousands upon thousands of human remains—into public museums and private collections in large European and North American cities. Shipments from Africa were generally a mishmash of finds, which on their arrival were divided among ethnological museums, natural history museums, biological collections

Fig. 2.1, left

Bernhard Sattler (left), Eberhard Fraas (holding a rock hammer), and unnamed African workers at the excavation pit where Skeleton A, *Gigantosaurus africanus*, was found, September 1907. This is one of several photographs of Berlin’s Tendaguru dig held in a collection created by Leipzig-based colonial geographer Hans Meyer. (Nachlass Hans Meyer, Af 046–125, IfL, © Leibniz-Institut für Länderkunde Leipzig, Archiv für Geographie.)

* This chapter was translated by Patricia Newman, who also translated all quotations from German sources unless otherwise noted.

- 1 Cooper, “Conditions Analogous to Slavery.”
- 2 The phrase “scramble for Africa” appeared in print for the first time in *The Times*, a London newspaper, on September 15, 1884.
- 3 Eckert, “Die Berliner Afrika-Konferenz,” 140.
- 4 Eckert, 141; Wirz and Eckert, “Scramble for Africa.”
- 5 Schildkrout and Keim, “Objects and Agendas,” 21–25.
- 6 Förster, “Face of Genocide.”

and anthropological collections. This made the museums of the day effectively, and sometimes in name, colonial museums, and some of them remain so to this day. The collecting of objects and information in colonial territories was almost always a multidisciplinary effort. The number of items arriving from the colonies often ran into the thousands, sometimes even the tens of thousands. Many of these objects were exhibited in national museums to bolster public support for continued expeditions, launched for the purposes of conquest and collection.

The German Tendaguru Expedition was one of the largest African research expeditions to be undertaken by Germany in the pre-WWI era. Unusually, it was the focus of two different and overlapping rivalries among the Western nations: a colonial scramble for Africa and a paleontological scramble for dinosaurs. The latter was sparked off by the Bone Wars waged by American paleontologists in the 1880s, which in turn led to the Second Dinosaur Rush around the turn of the century.⁷

LINDI PROSPECTING COMPANY

The German Empire's colonial project in Africa was born of a complex amalgam of political, economic, military and scientific ambitions. These sectors were closely intertwined, as personal, institutional, governmental and commercial networks overlapped, with the initiatives and activities of one spurring on the others. The events that led to the finding of dinosaur fossils at Tendaguru, and that constitute the prehistory of the Tendaguru Expedition, show these interconnections clearly. An excellent example can be found in a brief summary of the expedition written in 1914 (a year after its return) by Wilhelm von Branco, director of Berlin's Geological and Paleontological Museum and Institute:

Mr. W. B. Sattler, then director of operations for Lindi Prospecting Company, made regular inspections of the area around the garnet mining operations near Namwiranye on the Mbemkuru River. One day, when he was walking around the base of Tendaguru Hill, he came across enormous fossilized leg bones blocking his path.⁸

This narrative of a happy accident leading engineer and operations manager Wilhelm Bernhard Sattler to a momentous discovery was based on information about the dinosaur site that made its way to Germany in early 1907 and was shortly afterward discussed in political, colonial and museum circles. Sattler's 'discovery' remains a key part of the Tendaguru narrative to this day.⁹ In the next several pages, we will examine just how well this narrative holds up by taking a closer look both at the players involved in events leading up to the expedition and at the larger contexts in which those events took place.

The most important institutional player in the events leading up to the Tendaguru Expedition was a colonial mining company. Founded in Koblenz, Germany, in 1904, Lindi Prospecting Company (Lindi-Schürfgesellschaft) was dedicated to "discovering and extracting minerals, in particular in German East Africa."¹⁰ It was especially interested in precious and semi-precious stones, and graphites. Among its subscribers were members of the landed gentry, military officers, physicians, mining companies, municipal politicians and bank directors, as well as two experts on eastern Africa: Dr. Carl Velten, a lecturer on Swahili at the School of Oriental Languages (Seminar für Orientalische Sprachen) in Berlin, and Dr. Wilhelm Arning, a retired surgeon who had served as a senior medical officer in the colonial army (Kaiserliche Schutztruppe)¹¹ of German East Africa from 1892 to 1896. Two of the company's major shareholders were themselves commercial enterprises: the German East Africa Company (Deutsch-Ostafrikanische Gesellschaft)

7 Brinkman, *Second Jurassic Dinosaur Rush*.

8 Branco, "Allgemeines über die Tendaguru-Expedition," 3.

9 Most recently in Mogge, *Wilhelm Branco*, 201.

10 "Gesellschaftsvertrag," December 17, 1903, R 1001–503, p. 31, BArch.

11 *Kaiserliche Schutztruppe* (Imperial defense troops) was the official name of the German colonial army, which in German East Africa consisted of 200–300 German officers, non-commissioned officers, administrative and medical personnel, and 2,000–3,000 African soldiers. Bühner, *Die Kaiserliche Schutztruppe für Deutsch-Ostafrika*; Ernst, "Schutztruppen," 321–324.

Lindi-Schürfgesellschaft m. b. H.

Sitz und Adresse: Berlin NW. 7, Schadowstr. 12/13.

Gegründet und in das Handelsregister eingetragen am 17. Dez. 1903.

Gründer: Dr. W. Th. Arning, Hannover; Geh. Bergrat Dr. M. Busse (†), Berlin; Dr. O. Hecker, Groeningen; v. Osterroth-Schönberg, Oberwesel; Generaloberarzt Dr. Redecker, Koblenz; Dr. P. Wesenfeld, Barmen.

Zweck und Tätigkeit: Die Schürfgesellschaft ist keine Erwerbs-, sondern eine Erschließungsgesellschaft, aus der eine Erwerbsgesellschaft hervorgehen soll. Gegenstand des Unternehmens ist Aufsuchung und Aufschliessung von Mineralien, insbesondere in Deutsch-Ostafrika, Verwertung der Funde, Erwerbung von Grundbesitz, welcher den erwähnten Zwecken dient, sowie Beteiligung an ähnlichen Unternehmungen.

Der Gesellschaft wurde am 16. Jan. 1904, bezw. 19. März 1904, seitens des Reichskanzlers eine Konzession erteilt, welche die ausschliessliche Berechtigung zur Aufsuchung und Gewinnung von Edelsteinen, Halbedelsteinen und Graphit, für 5 Jahre gewährt in dem Gebiet, welches begrenzt wird im Süden durch den 10° 30' südlicher Breite, im Norden durch den 9° 15', im Osten durch den indischen Ozean und im Westen durch den 38° 30' östlicher Länge von Greenwich.

Niederlassungen und Besitztümer: Das dem Mitbegründer von Osterroth-Schönberg vom Reich 1903 verliehene Schürfkonzessions-Gebiet bei Lindi und die Gruben der Lindi-Handels- u. Pflanzungs-Gesellschaft in diesem Gebiet.**Kapital:** 100 000 M., eingeteilt in 200 Anteile à 500 M., voll eingezahlt. Durch Beschluß der Gesellschafterversammlung vom 30. Juni 1905 wurde das Kapital von 50 000 M. auf 100 000 M. erhöht.**Stimmrecht:** Jeder Anteil eine Stimme.**Geschäftsjahr:** 1. Jan. bis 31. Dez.**Generalversammlung:** Bis Ende Juni.**Bilanz:** Wird nicht veröffentlicht.**Direktion:** Geschäftsführer Dr. O. Hecker, Berlin und Dr. W. Arning, Hannover. — Auswärtiger Leiter: Plantagenbesitzer Kayser, Lindi.**Aufsichtsrat:** Dr. Benzinger, Hannover; Bankdirektor Dr. Endemann, Hannover; v. Osterroth-Schönberg, Oberwesel; Kommerzienrat W. Oswald, Koblenz.**Zahlstelle:** Hannoversche Bank in Hannover.

and the Lindi Trade and Plantation Company (Lindi-Handels- und Pflanzungsgesellschaft). This had the effect of closely integrating Lindi Prospecting Company into an existing network of commercial colonial companies in German East Africa.¹² Wilhelm Arning was appointed one of the firm's two managing directors; in the years that followed, he was the man who ran the business and made the important decisions.

In January 1904, the Office of the Imperial Chancellor granted Lindi Prospecting Company an exclusive five-year concession to "prospect for and extract precious stones, semi-precious stones and graphites in an area bounded to the south by a latitude of 10 degrees, 30 minutes S; to the north by a latitude of 9 degrees, 15 minutes; to the east by the Indian Ocean; and to the west by a longitude of 38 degrees, 30 minutes E of Greenwich."¹³ The concession stipulated that "a prospector must be actively employed in the concession area at all times, and at least 10,000 marks must [be spent] per year on prospecting activities."¹⁴ By laying down these conditions and requiring evidence that they were being met, the office meant to ensure that the concession was actually being used for prospecting and not just for keeping out rival developers. Starting in June 1904, there were three prospectors in the area, which covered several hundred square kilometers. Arning was the head of operations; the prospectors working for him were engineer Wilhelm Bernhard Sattler, geologist Oskar Hecker and mining engineer Wilhelm C. Kegel.¹⁵ After Arning returned to Germany in May 1905, Sattler acted as head of operations and continued to do prospecting work.¹⁶

THE MAJI MAJI WAR

The Maji Maji War started in July 1905, when fighting broke out in the hinterlands of Kilwa, a coastal town located north of Lindi. In part, it was a response to the German colonial government's introduction of a much more repressive system of administration, including a harsh penal code and a new hut tax. The more immediate cause was the forced labor and abuse that the local African communities were subjected to on a daily basis. These conditions had created feelings of extreme resentment, and with this resentment came an increasing willingness to resist occupation.¹⁷

In August 1905, shortly after the war began, fighting spread south from Kilwa to neighboring Umwera, the home of the Wamwera and the area where the Lindi Prospecting Company had been granted a concession.¹⁸ It was here, in the middle of the war zone, that the dinosaur bones lay and that, roughly four years later, the Tendaguru Expedition would begin its excavations.

Many Wamwera fought in the two-year war of resistance against German colonial occupation. Selemani Mamba, one of their military leaders, was taken prisoner in January 1906 and hanged.¹⁹ Over the course of the war, which ended in 1907, the German colonial army not only defeated the rebels militarily but also used scorched-earth tactics to punish the entire population. It destroyed seed reserves, causing tens of thousands of people to die of famine and disease even after hostilities had ended.

Fig. 2.2

Entry for Lindi Prospecting Company (Lindi-Schürfgesellschaft) in *Von der Heydt's Kolonial-Handbuch. Jahrbuch der deutschen Kolonial- und Uebersee-Unternehmungen* (Von der Heydt's Colonial Manual. Annual Listing of German Colonial and Overseas Companies), 1912.

¹² "Gesellschaftsvertrag," December 17, 1903, R 1001-503, pp. 30-31, BArch.

¹³ Concession for Lindi-Schürfgesellschaft, issued by the Imperial Chancellor, January 16, 1904, R 1001-503, pp. 42a-42b, BArch.

¹⁴ Concession for Lindi-Schürfgesellschaft, pp. 42a-42b.

¹⁵ Sattler to Bezirksamt Lindi (copy), May 25, 1905, R 1001-503, p. 66, BArch.

¹⁶ Osterroth-Schönberg to Kolonial-Abteilung des Auswärtigen Amtes, n.d. [August 1905], R 1001-503, p. 70, BArch.

¹⁷ Becker and Beez, "Ein nahezu vergessener Krieg," 11.

¹⁸ Becker, "Von der Feldschlacht zum Guerillakrieg," 76-78; Iliffe, *Modern History of Tanganyika*, 168-202.

¹⁹ Becker, "Von der Feldschlacht zum Guerillakrieg," 85.

Arning first learned how fierce the fighting was in September 1905, when a letter from the colony arrived at his home in Hanover. Citing the contents of this letter, Arning later reported that “our representative, Mr. Sattler, has formed an opinion of the seriousness of the uprising which exceeds even my own not insignificant fears, and Mr. Sattler is a calm and circumspect man who has resided in Africa for a decade and whose experience in the Boer Wars stands him in good stead.”²⁰ In fact, Sattler himself had fought on the side of the German colonial forces. When he was recommended in 1912 for a decoration from the Kingdom of Prussia, the accompanying citation read as follows:

Sattler actively took part in the suppression of the rebellion (East Africa, 1905–07), taking up arms to do so. At the start of the uprising, he volunteered his Wanyamwesi workers as an auxiliary force and put them at the disposal of the Lindi District Office. Accompanied by a white man, he led a small contingent [of the Wanyamwesi] and ten askaris to the north of the district in order to prevent the rebels from making further incursions into the outskirts of Lindi. Sattler fought a fierce, successful skirmish with the rebels at Ubekuri.²¹

The war had a devastating impact on the East African population. Estimates of African casualties range from 200,000 to 300,000; casualties on the German side, on the other hand, were counted to a man: 15 Europeans and 389 African mercenaries.²² The Maji Maji War thus claimed more than twice as many lives as the genocidal colonial war fought against the Herero and Nama at approximately the same time in German South West Africa.²³ German East Africa’s Maji Maji War, however, has largely faded from Germany’s public memory of its colonial past. And in the historiography of the Tendaguru excavations, the Maji Maji War has also been largely ignored.

This defeat at the hands of the German occupiers essentially crushed the anti-colonial resistance movement in German East Africa. The areas in which there had been uprisings were now depopulated wastelands.²⁴ When paleontologist Eberhard Fraas traveled from Lindi to Tendaguru in September 1907, two years after the outbreak of the Maji Maji War, he saw a landscape that had been emptied of people:

The land between Lindi and Mbemkuru is now only sparsely populated, but the many abandoned and overgrown *Schamben* (settlements), which it takes hours to traverse, prove that the land had been extensively cultivated and populated before the uprising in 1905, and that the sole causes of this depopulation are the famine and the war, which tore through here with particular violence.²⁵

African communities in the south of the colony experienced a long-term decline in living conditions in the aftermath of the war. Famine, depopulation and labor shortages became major obstacles to development in the region.²⁶ Lindi, for example, was faced with famine in the spring of 1907, leading the district council to “dispense seed grain and food to the needy.” The council stipulated, however, that “only those among the needy that are fit to work [may be] fed.”²⁷

Lindi Prospecting Company also felt the effects of the war and suffered severe losses. As Arning reported to the colonial administration in December 1905, the fighting had:

destroyed the company’s facilities in their entirety. The engineer working there, Mr. Sattler, barely escaped with his life; the best of the black miners, whom we had gone to great efforts to train, were murdered by the rebels; the rest were scattered in all directions. Virtually everything the company built up has been lost.²⁸

20 Arning to Kolonial-Abteilung im Auswärtigen Amt, September 12, 1905, R 1001–503, p. 80, BArch.

21 Preußisches Kultusministerium to Reichskolonialamt, November 18, 1912, I. HA, Rep. 76, Va, Sekt. 2, Tit. X, no. 21 adh AI, p. 194, GStA PK.

22 Iliffe, *Modern History of Tanganyika*, 165, 199–200.

23 Zimmerer and Zeller, *Völkermord in Deutsch-Südwestafrika*.

24 Bald, “Afrikanischer Kampf,” 45.

25 Fraas, “Ostafrikanische Dinosaurier,” 108–109. German colonists used the word *Schamben* to refer to the communal village croplands that were common at the time.

26 Bald, “Afrikanischer Kampf,” 45; For more on labor shortages, see “Eingabe der Pflanzervereinigung Lindi an den Gouverneur von Deutsch-Ostafrika,” 1912, G 8/199, TNA.

27 “Protokoll des Bezirksrats Lindi,” March 4, 1907, G 4/75, p. 19, TNA.

28 Arning to Kolonial-Abteilung des Auswärtigen Amtes, December 4, 1905, R 1001–503, pp. 82–83, BArch.

In a further blow, the confidence of the company's shareholders "in the stability of our colonial development," i.e., in the security of their investment, was evaporating. The desperately needed increase in capital the shareholders had promised half a year earlier, in June 1905, failed to materialize.²⁹ There were serious doubts about whether Lindi Prospecting Company would be able to survive. On December 8, 1905, a small delegation of company representatives consisting of Arning, Sattler and Max Busse (a member of the board of directors) traveled to Berlin to meet with Ernst II, Prince of Hohenlohe-Langenburg, then head of the Foreign Ministry's Colonial Department. This brought the company a temporary respite but no solution to its existential problems.³⁰

It was not until July 1906, when conditions in the concession area had stabilized, that Sattler returned and resumed his prospecting work.³¹ The company's difficulties were not over yet, however: unable to satisfy the stipulation that 10,000 marks be invested in prospecting annually, they risked losing the concession. During the war, the drilling station at the company's headquarters in Nambiranji (also called Namwiranye,³² a settlement located near the Mbemkuru/Mbwemburu River) had been destroyed, along with all of the equipment and supplies that had been stored there. The losses amounted to 3,800 marks.³³ Nor did Sattler's prospecting efforts offer much hope for the future. Arning summed up the situation in a later memoir:

I should say at the outset that while our prospecting activities were not entirely unsuccessful, they were not economically productive. There were huge amounts of graphite and the [beds] were of superb quality, but what [we found] at the surface was graphite gneiss, and that wasn't worth exploiting because the shortage of running water made it impossible to separate out valuable material from the primary rock. Attempts to get at pockets of pure graphite by drilling and then using shafts and tunnels proved to be difficult and uncertain, like any venture that goes below ground. A single such pocket was found, but otherwise fortune was not on our side. We did not cease working, however, since this one find presented the prospect of other pockets, and besides, we found and extracted almandine, a semi-precious garnet that gave us hope we would be able to cover our costs even if we failed in our primary objective. ... The mining engineer Bernhard W. Sattler ... continued to slog away, drilling in the dense bush, but once he reached a certain depth, the drill stem would break before he hit any graphite.³⁴

WHO 'DISCOVERED' THE FOSSILS?

If Lindi Prospecting Company wanted to keep the concession—in fact, if it wanted to survive as a commercial enterprise at all—it had no choice but to step up its efforts to find new deposits. In Arning's memoir, written toward the end of his life in the characteristic style of an old veteran of the colonies, he described the circumstances that led to the finding of the dinosaur fossils:

Sattler had been in South Africa for a long time, had fought in the Boer War, and could deal with the blacks splendidly. So they may have sympathized, after a fashion, with his unceasingly fruitless labors, and one day a black man [*Mohr*] came to him and said, 'Sir, it's terrible, you are constantly searching and never finding anything. Come, I want to show you something you might be able to use.' He led him to a place where enormous bones had been washed free by the rain and could be seen sticking out of the earth. Sattler was artistically talented, and he sent me a drawing of what lay before him. It was, as he said himself, bones of the limbs of mighty primeval animals.³⁵

²⁹ Arning to Kolonial-Abteilung des Auswärtigen Amtes, December 4, 1905, R 1001-503, pp. 82-83, BArch.

³⁰ Arning, "Besprechung am 8.12.1905 in der Kolonial-Abteilung" (minutes of the meeting), R 1001-503, pp. 90-92, BArch. Ernst II was only head of the Colonial Department for a short time in 1905/06.

³¹ Arning to Richard von Spalding (Kolonial-Abteilung des Auswärtigen Amtes), June 4, 1906, R 1001-503, p. 118, BArch.

³² There were no fixed spellings for place names at this time.

³³ Arning to Reichskolonialamt, June 3, 1908, R 1001-504, pp. 23-25, BArch.

³⁴ This excerpt was taken from the chapter "Urvorzeit in Deutsch-Ostafrika" in the following unpublished manuscript: Arning, "Politik und Afrika," Nachlass Wilhelm Arning, 6:6-1, p. 4, SUB.

³⁵ Arning, "Politik und Afrika," Nachlass Wilhelm Arning, 6:6-1, p. 4, SUB.

This account of Arning’s sheds much-needed light on the circumstances of the ‘discovery’—that is to say, on the chain of events that led German mining manager Wilhelm Sattler to learn of the fossils.

First, however, we must assess how reliable Arning’s memoir is as a historical source. And to do this, we must fast-forward several decades. Wilhelm Arning wrote this account in the late 1930s, toward the end of his life and about 30 years after the events he is describing actually happened. A few years previously, in the spring of 1934, Arning had been forced to cede his position as director of the German Colonial Academy³⁶ (an institution he had led since 1927) to an administrator considered better able to implement Nazi reform plans.³⁷ From that time on, he traveled in Southwest Africa, South Africa and East Africa, and made his living by giving talks on colonial history.³⁸ Already benefiting from a reawakening of public and state interest in the colonies under the ‘Third Reich,’ in 1937 he expanded his subject matter and began shifting his focus to the dinosaur finds. It was a natural fit, as his activities in German East Africa had been closely tied to the discovery—or, more accurately, the finding—of the fossils at Tendaguru. It was a popular topic, too, particularly after the unveiling of the mounted *Brachiosaurus brancai* skeleton at Berlin’s Museum für Naturkunde in November 1937, an event which Arning attended. He had stayed in touch over the years, if only sporadically, with the old expedition leaders: Edwin Hennig, Werner Janensch and Hans Reck. Reck died in August 1937, but ties with the two others, who were living in Tübingen and Berlin, respectively, were rekindled. Arning agreed with Hennig that the *Brachiosaurus* “promises to become something akin to a second Pergamon Altar for Berlin.”³⁹ And he had played an important part in acquiring the finds—a pterosaur had even been named after him (*Pterodactylus arningi*).

Arning spent considerable time after that writing lectures and collecting material; eventually he incorporated them into an autobiographical book about his experiences in Africa and other parts of the world. The manuscript, titled “Politik und Afrika,” contained a section on the “Prehistory of German East Africa.” The term “prehistory” (*Urvorzeit*) was a reference both to the region’s prehistoric era and to its early colonial period, in particular the time from 1892 to 1896, when Arning was stationed in German East Africa as a military surgeon. Not least, the book was an opportunity to emphasize the role he played in the discovery of the dinosaur skeletons.⁴⁰ Arning finished writing it in 1942, but the Foreign Ministry, which was charged with vetting it prior to publication, had objections to other parts of the manuscript. Not long afterward, in January 1943, the Nazi leadership abandoned their colonial war objectives; as a result, there was no longer any need for colonial memoirs. Arning died in Hanover in November 1943, and his manuscript was soon forgotten.

When Arning wrote his memoirs, 30 years after the events in question, a number of books and articles had already been published about the Tendaguru Expedition. Some were quite detailed, covering events leading up to the expedition and containing general background information as well as discussions of the findings. His account, however, is superior in one key respect: Although Arning was not directly involved in events on the ground, his position as director of the Lindi Prospecting Company meant he had been very near the top of the information chain. He was presumably the second German (after Sattler)—and in any case, the first person actually in Germany—to learn of the bones and the circumstances of their discovery. His account may therefore be ascribed a greater degree of authenticity than any that came after it. The detailed descriptions and use of quotations indicate that Arning had access to Sattler’s letter when writing his memoirs. This letter, a first-hand account and primary source of information regarding fossils in German East Africa, probably no longer exists. It was most likely destroyed, along

36 The German Colonial Academy (Deutsche Kolonialschule), located in Witzzenhausen, Hesse, prepared young men aged seventeen to twenty-seven for farming careers in the colonies or in the tropics generally. Instruction lasted two to three years and covered liberal arts, natural sciences, agriculture, basic veterinary medicine, surveying and trades such as carpentry, masonry, etc.

37 Baum, *Dabeim und überm Meer*, 101–3, 116–18.

38 Linne, *Von Witzzenhausen in die Welt*, 121.

39 Hennig to Arning, November 19, 1937, Nachlass Wilhelm Arning, Acc. Mss. 1950.6, 10:3 Mss., p. 113, SUB.

40 Arning to Paläontologisches Institut Berlin, November 24, 1942, Nachlass Wilhelm Arning, Acc. Mss. 1950.6, 5:5 Korrespondenz, p. 11, SUB.

with many of Arning's other documents, when his house in Hanover was bombed in an air raid in the spring of 1945.⁴¹ As a result, we do not know the details of the information Sattler communicated to Arning, and we have no definite dates for the discovery or for Sattler's letter to Arning. We can only narrow it down to late 1906 or early 1907. Nevertheless, and despite the decades that passed between the events and Arning's recording of them, we must conclude that of all the accounts still available to us, this historical source comes closest to the actual events.

Arning's account also prompts us to reexamine the question of who actually deserves recognition for 'discovering' the fossils. Arning's résumé of Sattler's report reads like a classic tale of failure and redemption: Even if the mining operations head and his workers had no luck extracting anything of value from the mineral deposits in the faraway colony, at least they found these bones that benefited science. It is almost in passing that Arning mentions an interesting detail that corrects the narrative of the fossils' discovery, already well-established by the time of his writing. As he relates it, this was not the story of a colonial man of action happening upon the find, but of local African workers leading their German manager to a site they had presumably long known of, revealing to him the enormous bones that lay there, open to the sky, albeit in a spot that was difficult to access.

As time passed, the key role played by Africans in these events was completely expunged from the narrative of how the dinosaur bones were found. Far from being an isolated case, this was one of countless other stories of discovery in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in which local, indigenous contributors to events disappeared from accounts of the 'discoveries' recorded by Europeans. In reality, the European 'discoverers' were simply following in the "footsteps of the non-Europeans who went before them" and "found only what was unknown to themselves."⁴² Not uncommonly, they gave their 'discoveries' European names. An especially striking example of this from eastern Africa is the story of Mount Kilimanjaro's 'discovery.' On May 11, 1848, Johannes Rebmann, a missionary from the southern German town of Gerlingen in Württemberg, was traveling to the Chaga communities when he spotted the snow-capped peak of Kilimanjaro. He was the first European to set eyes on it. Ever since, he has been credited as the 'discoverer' of Africa's highest mountain.⁴³ When Leipzig-based geographer Hans Meyer climbed the mountain in 1889, the event was described as a "first ascent," and he himself characterized it as a "conquest" (*Eroberung*).⁴⁴ Atlases and reference books subsequently recorded the mountain as Germany's highest peak, and it was called Kaiser Wilhelm Peak (*Kaiser-Wilhelm-Spitze*) until 1961.⁴⁵

WHO IN IMPERIAL GERMANY WAS INTERESTED IN THE BONES?

Sattler's letter about the fossil finds reached Arning in Hanover on March 22, 1907. Occupied at the time with negotiations over new concession terms that would hopefully provide compensation for the losses that Lindi Prospecting Company had suffered during the Maji Maji War, Arning passed on the news of Sattler's find to the Foreign Ministry's Colonial Department:

It would appear that some time ago our Mr. Sattler made an extremely important find—fossil animal bones of tremendous size. I have provided Professor Hans Meyer of the Geographic Commission with Sattler's notes. He, too, considers the finds to hold extraordinary scientific significance, and plans to propose to the Commission that they be excavated. May I suggest that the Colonial Department might want to take similar action, so that the finds can be put on display while the Colonial and Navy Exhibition is still on.⁴⁶

41 Elke Kümmell (daughter of Wilhelm Arning) to Dr. Haenel (head of the Manuscripts Department, Niedersächsische Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Göttingen), January 2, 1964, SUB.

42 Matthies, *Im Schatten der Entdecker*, 12, 18. For more on this topic, see Sow, "Entdecken."

43 Roller, "Gerlingen," 230.

44 Hamann and Honold, *Kilimandscharo*, 92.

45 Hamann and Honold, 92.

46 Arning to Kolonial-Abteilung des Auswärtigen Amtes, March 23, 1907, R 1001–503, p. 145, BArch. The Foreign Ministry in turn informed the Royal Geological Institute (Königlich Geologische Landesanstalt) in Berlin about the fossil finds. Dernburg to Arning, April 16, 1907, G 8/442, p. 33, TNA.

Arning's initial plan had indeed been to have the fossils sent to Berlin as soon as possible in order to present them at the German Army, Navy and Colonial Exhibition (Deutsche Armee-, Marine- und Kolonialausstellung).⁴⁷ The exhibition, a kind of trade fair held from May to September 1907 in the Friedenau district of Berlin, was open to the public and offered a colorful mix of exotic animals, colonial wares, militaria and naval equipment. The colonial section was organized under the patronage of Johann Albrecht, Duke of Mecklenburg, who in 1908 became the honorary chairman of the Tendaguru Committee, the expedition's fundraising body (see "On Donors and Sponsors," pp. 84–97).⁴⁸

Hoping to display the finds as quickly as possible, Arning also approached the Commission for the Geographic Exploration of the German Protectorates (Kommission für die landeskundliche Erforschung der deutschen Schutzgebiete, commonly known as the Landeskundliche Kommission). This was a multidisciplinary body that had been formed in 1905 to provide information and advice to the Foreign Ministry's Colonial Department and later to the Imperial Colonial Office (Reichskolonialamt).⁴⁹ In addition to furnishing knowledge that advanced the exploration of German colonial territories, the commission also administered the government's Africa Fund and had already financed (and lent political support to) several expeditions to German colonies in Africa and the South Seas.⁵⁰ In 1907/08, its members included Hans Meyer (chairman); the explorers and Africa specialists Georg Schweinfurth and Paul Staudinger; geologist Karl Schmeisser; publisher Ernst Vohsen;⁵¹ Foreign Ministry representative and later governor of Cameroon, Karl Ebermaier; and lastly, geographer and editor of *Mittheilungen aus den deutschen Schutzgebieten* (Dispatches from the German Protectorates), Alexander von Danckelmann. When the Geographic Commission met on March 26, 1907, to debate Arning's proposal to launch an expedition to the hinterlands of Lindi, they found that "funds for an expedition of this sort are not available," and explained:

It is not possible on the basis of the drawings to determine whether the bones do indeed stem from a prehistoric era. It would be advisable, if Dr. Arning could undertake to organize it, for a few fossils ... to be sent here. Should this not be possible, we suggest that Dr. Arning's representative contact the district officer of Lindi as his involvement may facilitate the procurement of some of the finds.⁵²

Clearly, the experts had little confidence in what they saw as unverified claims being made by a layman from the colonies. Their skepticism weighed heavily with the majority of the commission members and was doubtless a key factor in the decision to reject the proposal. Even zoologist Franz Stuhlmann, director of the Imperial Institute of Biology and Agriculture (Kaiserlich Biologisch-Landwirtschaftliches Institut, located in Amani/Usambara in northeastern German East Africa), recommended that "before any further action [is taken], one of the bones be packed up properly and sent to Berlin, since, after all, it is conceivable that [the finds] are just the old bones of an elephant or giraffe that was killed and left to lie there."⁵³ Stuhlmann did make an additional recommendation, however: "A thorough examination of the site would therefore be of the greatest interest, and the results should remain within the colony and not end up in foreign hands."⁵⁴ What he meant by this was that the excavated fossils should remain in German East Africa and not be taken to Germany or anywhere else abroad—a statement that anticipated later controversies and claims on the finds (see "Colonial Crown Land and the Export Ban," pp. 31–45). The suggestion made by the Geographic Commission that Sattler "dig up the bones and send them over here" so that they could be examined in Berlin was rejected by Arning "because this type of unscientific approach could possibly do great damage."⁵⁵

- 47 Arning, "Vorgeschichtliche Tierfunde," October 5, 1907.
- 48 Stella-Verlag, ed., *Offizieller Katalog und Führer für die Deutsche Armee-, Marine- und Kolonialausstellung: Berlin 1907, 15. Mai bis 15. Septbr.*, Berlin 1907.
- 49 A decree issued on May 17, 1907, expanded the Foreign Ministry's Colonial Department into an independent agency named the Imperial Colonial Office (Reichskolonialamt), which reported directly to the Kaiser.
- 50 Gräbel, *Die Erforschung der Kolonien*, 64–69; Brogiato, *Meyers Universum*, 250; Danckelmann, "Landeskundliche Kommission."
- 51 At this time, Ernst Vohsen (1853–1919) was the owner of Dietrich Reimer Verlag, a publishing house specializing in colonial literature that he had bought in 1891. Before that, he had been the German consul in Sierra Leone and head of the German East Africa Company.
- 52 "Protokoll der 13. Sitzung der Kommission für die landeskundliche Erforschung der Schutzgebiete," March 26, 1907, Nachlass Hans Meyer, 17-53/K 176, IfL.
- 53 Franz Stuhlmann to Kaiserliches Gouvernement in Daressalam, July 16, 1907, G 8/442, TAN: "Acta des Kaiserlichen Gouvernements von Deutsch-Ostafrika betr. Geologie," vol. 1: 1900–1906, p. 49.
- 54 Franz Stuhlmann to Kaiserliches Gouvernement in Daressalam, July 16, 1907, p. 49.
- 55 Arning, "Politik und Afrika," Nachlass Wilhelm Arning, 6:6–1, p. 5, SUB.

Arning was still determined to safeguard and excavate the finds, however, and, unswayed by the Geographic Commission's lack of enthusiasm, he continued to use his connections in other political and colonial bodies to further these aims. In the federal elections held on January 25, 1907 (referred to at the time as the "Hottentot elections"), Arning ran on the National Liberal Party ticket and won a seat in the Reichstag representing the constituency of Hanover-Nienburg. In this new post, he worked on colonial issues and was an active member of the Budget Committee (Budgetkommission). The committee's official purview was to oversee the federal budget, but starting in 1906, at the initiative of the Centre Party politician Matthias Erzberger,⁵⁶ it was effectively turned into a forum on colonial reform, where "year after year, the colonial budget would be discussed down to the last detail and plenary debates and votes would be prepared."⁵⁷ As a result, the Budget Committee was the focus of considerable parliamentary conflict. More importantly for Arning, it was an information hub for news from the colonies and had direct connections to the government's colonial departments and officials. At a Budget Committee meeting on April 16, 1907, Arning raised the subject of the fossilized animal bones found in southern German East Africa. This raised greater awareness of the issue among politicians, if not yet among the public, and meant that news of the find at last reached the level of the Imperial government. In May 1907, after Bernhard Dernburg, head of the Imperial Colonial Office and thus the highest colonial official in the German Empire, got involved, communications between Berlin, Dar es Salaam and Lindi gained momentum. These exchanges initially concerned the safeguarding of the finds and ultimately ended with the site and its environs being declared Crown land in March 1908 (see "Colonial Crown Land and the Export Ban," pp. 31–45).⁵⁸



FRAAS VERIFIES THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE FINDS

Meanwhile, efforts continued to be made to verify Sattler's claims on-site. Various experts in the colony (among them a Dr. Wolff, a senior medical officer in the colonial army) offered to travel to Tendaguru and examine the fossils.⁵⁹ When Dernburg notified the government in Dar es Salaam that he would be undertaking an official visit to German East Africa in July 1907,⁶⁰ he informed them that he would be accompanied by Eberhard Fraas,⁶¹ a Stuttgart-based paleontologist that both Arning and Meyer agreed had the necessary scientific expertise to conduct a proper assessment of the site. Fraas was going to the colony mainly as a geological consultant and prospecting advisor to two German businessmen, textile manufacturer Heinrich Otto and Stuttgart-based banker Albert Schwarz, who were planning to establish a cotton plantation and a shipping company at Victoria Nyanza (Lake Victoria).⁶² Otto and Schwarz represented a Württemberg-based consortium created at Dernburg's urging in spring 1907 to "exploit our colonies for agricultural and other purposes," in particular areas located "on the German banks of Lake Victoria."⁶³

That politicians and scientists active in German colonial circles had a keen interest in having the site properly examined is further supported by the fact that, in addition to Paul Staudinger of the Geographic Commission asking Dernburg to

Fig. 2.3 Paleontologist Eberhard Fraas at Tendaguru, September 1907. (Nachlass Hans Meyer, Af 046–124, IfL. ©Leibniz-Institut für Länderkunde Leipzig, Archiv für Geographie.)

⁵⁶ The Centre Party (Zentrumspartei) was a large political party that existed from 1870 to 1933. It represented the views of Roman Catholic clergymen and landowners and had widespread support from the Catholic lower middle class, agricultural laborers and parts of the working class in western and southern Germany.

⁵⁷ Grohmann, *Exotische Verfassung*, 176.

⁵⁸ G 8/443, TNA; R 1001–6112, BArch.

⁵⁹ ten Brink (Bezirksamt Lindi) to Kaiserliches Gouvernement in Dar es Salaam, July 20, 1907, G 8/443, p. 46, TNA.

⁶⁰ Pesek, "Praxis und Repräsentation."

⁶¹ Dernburg to Kaiserliches Gouvernement in Dar es Salaam, July 5, 1907, G 8/443, p. 51, TNA. Dernburg decided to postpone his trip at the last minute.

⁶² Maier, *African Dinosaurs Unearthed*, 3.

⁶³ Fraas to Königliche Direktion der wissenschaftlichen Sammlungen des Staates (Stuttgart), April 8, 1907, Nachlass Fraas, folder III, SMNS.

secure Fraas for a preliminary study of the site,⁶⁴ Meyer and Arning each tried to persuade the paleontologist to conduct an expert assessment of the finds.⁶⁵

Once he had concluded his consulting work for the Württemberg consortium in the north of the colony, Fraas traveled south to Lindi, arriving there on August 30, 1907. He then set off for the Tendaguru fossil site, accompanied by the acting district officer, Mr. ten Brink (first name unknown); a senior medical officer with the colonial army, Dr. Wolff; and several African bearers provided by the Lindi Prospecting Company.⁶⁶ They reached the site, located about 60 kilometers from the coastal town of Lindi, after a six-day march. The three Germans, whose number rose to four when they were joined by Sattler, spent a week there with the African crew, conducting “thorough examinations of the terrain, along with digs.” They took measurements and documented their finds in drawings and photographs in order to “acquire as much material as possible that would be of the right sort for the study.” Fraas quickly realized that they were dealing with “the remains of colossal dinosaurs and consequently one of the most important geological finds in Africa.” The finding of “animals in equatorial Africa” that had been “previously only known [to exist] in Europe and America” promised “to deepen our knowledge not only of their geographical distribution” but also “of entirely new, evolutionarily significant species.”⁶⁷

Over the course of the week-long examination, Fraas managed to amass drawings, several photographs and a substantial number of individual bones and partial skeletons representing various genera of Saurischia and Ornithischia.⁶⁸ The fossils included remains from *Barosaurus africanus*, *Janenschia robusta* and *Dysalotosaurus lettowvorbecki*, although they were not actually identified as such until the species were later described by Berlin paleontologists.⁶⁹ Transporting the finds to Lindi proved troublesome, as a single thigh bone could weigh as much as 175 kilograms (about 385 US pounds). This problem was aggravated by the difficulty of “rounding up a sufficient number of bearers in these depopulated areas.”⁷⁰ Fraas described the results of his short visit to Tendaguru in several more or less identical reports. These were sent to the district office in Lindi; the Institute of Biology and Agriculture in Amani; the head of the Geographic Commission, Hans Meyer; Fraas’s own employer, the Royal Collection of Natural History (Königliche Naturaliensammlung) in Stuttgart; and the Imperial Colonial Office in Berlin. Information about the find and the site—now confirmed by Fraas, a qualified scientist—was spreading further. And after excerpts from Fraas’s reports appeared in the German and German East African press (Fig. 2.4), the “monster lizards” from Africa became the topic of the day, fascinating the public, the media and academia alike.⁷¹

By 1908, Fraas had conducted a detailed scientific study of the material brought back from Tendaguru, described two new dinosaur species (*Gigantosaurus africanus* and *Gigantosaurus robustus*) and published his findings.⁷² At this point, his mentor and close colleague, Wilhelm von Branca, director of Berlin’s Geological and Paleontological Museum and Institute, at last showed an interest in the African dinosaurs. Though it may have been long in coming, that interest, once piqued, never waned.⁷³ As the following pages will show, Branca took up the cause from here, using his contacts in the political, commercial, colonial and academic circles of the German Empire to successfully mount an expedition to German East Africa for long-term and wide-ranging excavations at Tendaguru. The Museum für Naturkunde could now embark on its study of prehistoric life in eastern Africa, opening a new chapter in the global scramble for dinosaurs. ■

Fig. 2.4, left

The *Deutsch-Ostafrikanische Zeitung* (German East Africa Newspaper) published excerpts from one of Fraas’s reports on October 2, 1907.

64 “Protokoll der 14. Sitzung der Kommission für die landeskundliche Erforschung der Schutzgebiete,” June 10, 1907, Nachlass Hans Meyer, 17-63/K 176, IfL.

65 Notes taken by an anonymous member of the Colonial Department July 8, 1907, R 1001–503, p. 166, BArch.

66 Arning, “Politik und Afrika,” Nachlass Wilhelm Arning, 6:6–1, p. 5, SUB.

67 Fraas to Königliche Direktion der wissenschaftlichen Sammlungen des Staates, October 17, 1907, Nachlass Fraas, folder III, SMNS

68 These are the two basic groups or ‘clades’ of dinosaurs, whose names translate to “lizard-hipped” and “bird-hipped,” respectively.

69 Wild, “Die Ostafrika-Reise von Eberhard Fraas.”

70 Fraas to Königliche Direktion der wissenschaftlichen Sammlungen des Staates, October 17, 1907, Nachlass Fraas, folder III, SMNS.

71 *Deutsch-Ostafrikanische Zeitung*, “Interessante Funde,” October 2, 1907; Arning, “Vorgeschichtliche Tierfunde,” October 5, 1907; *Tägliche Rundschau*, “Näheres über den Dinosaurier-Fund,” October 12, 1907. These newspaper articles were based on excerpts from Fraas’s reports. See also Fraas, “Auf Saurierjagd in Ostafrika,” October 26, 1907.

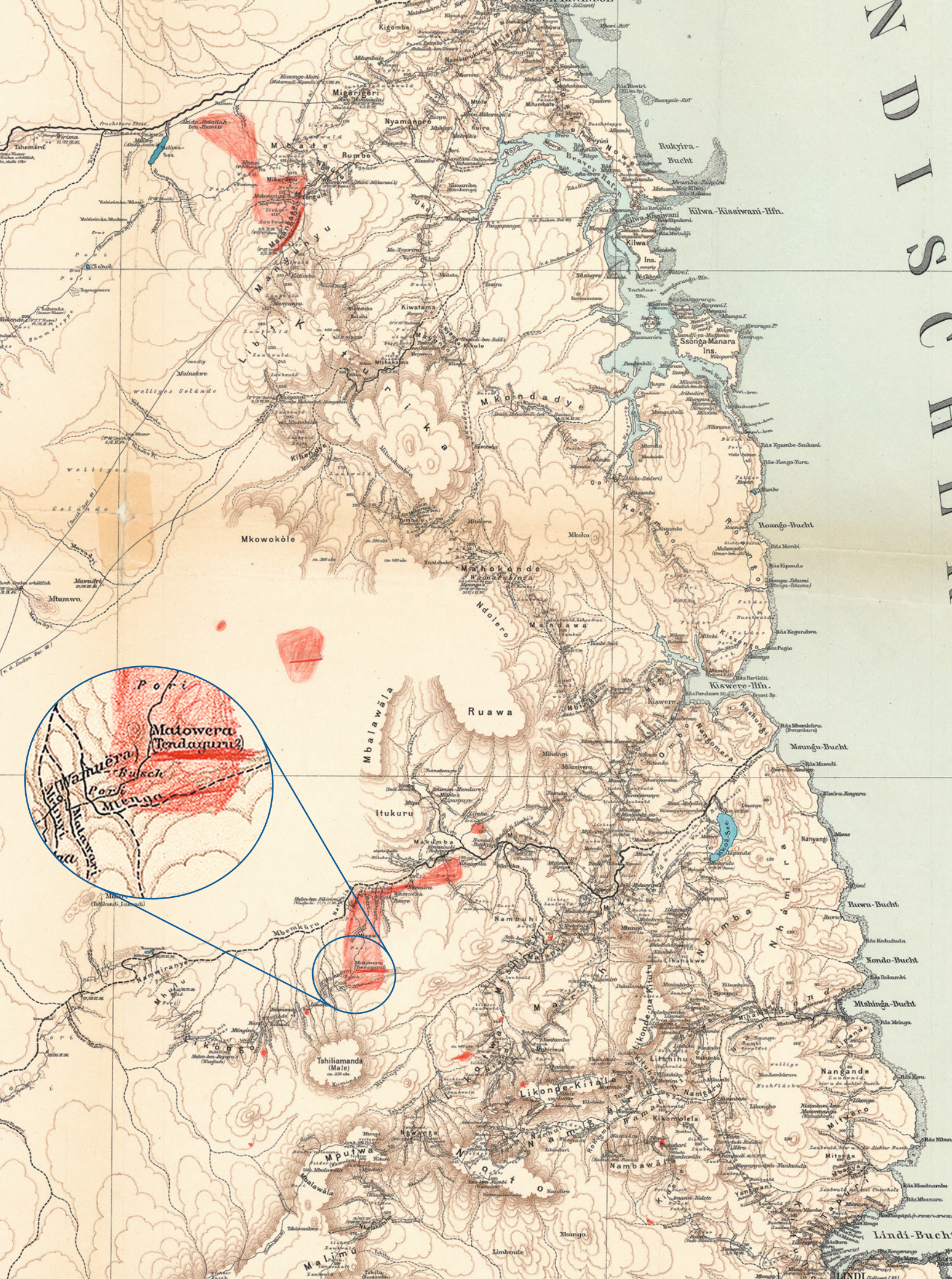
72 Fraas, “Ostafrikanische Dinosaurier.”

73 Branca to Preußisches Kultusministerium, July 10, 1908, I. HA Rep. 76, Va, Sekt. 2, Tit. X, no. 21adh A I, pp. 3–5, GStA PK.

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