

FOREWORD BY THE EDITORS

Christian Lautherborn is not a well-known historical person, but one of the many rather anonymous agents of imperial colonisation of Africa in the late 1800's and early 1900's. Christian Lautherborn went to East Africa as a plantation manager hired by the German East African Company (DOAG) in 1888, at twenty-eight years old. He wrote letters home to his family until his death in 1906, first and foremost to his sister Caroline Carlsen. Thanks to Caroline Carlsen the letters were preserved and ended up in The Royal Library in Copenhagen. The letters, translated into English, appear here for the first time in a printed edition.

The letters are fuller and longer during the first years of Lautherborn's stay in Tanzania; the many new impressions and experiences had to be related to somebody. Moreover, Caroline's husband, the editor of the *Vendsyssel Tidende*, the Hjørring newspaper of the period, urged Lautherborn to send letters about his adventures that would interest the North Jutland reading public. Hence, many of especially the earlier letters were published in that newspaper. As the years went on and his life in East Africa became more of an everyday experience, the letters were fewer and shorter, but they are, in general, very instructive and substantial. Christian Lautherborn is a good narrator and a perceptive observer. This alone might have justified an edition of Chr. Lautherborn's letters from Africa. But besides, we do not have many eye witness accounts related, not from the point of view of the missionary, adventurer or colonial officer, but from the everyday viewpoint of a manager of colonialism. Christian Lautherborn writes from the point of view of a practical imperialist, bent on introducing modern agricultural methods and producing goods for a profit. Indeed, he was the first to prove that sisal could be grown commercially in German East Africa (GEA)—a crop that was to become the region's leading export. Yet, Lautherborn also provides an interesting double vision—as a Dane working for a German institution, his letters reveal some of the tensions around class, national identity and culture that permeated the colonial enterprise. Much has been written about the colonial-indigenous encounter; these letters remind us that relations within the colonial community were often complicated and power-laden as well. Finally Lautherborn writes in a period that is poorly documented, particularly in English, as many original sources were destroyed during World War I. All of these reasons, along with his careful observations of daily life and his interest in African attitudes and perceptions (enhanced by his early fluency in Swahili) provide ample justification for making these letters from Africa known and accessible to a wider audience.

We have had the privilege to edit the letters, but numerous people have helped us along the way. One person, however, deserves thanks more than

all others—a graduate student, Anna Marie Knudsen, Aalborg University, who discovered the letters during a trainee-ship at Vendsyssel Historiske Museum in Hjørring. Before Anna Marie enrolled as a history major, she and her husband had worked more than ten years in Tanzania. This was the reason why the director at the museum in Hjørring asked Anna Marie if she would be interested in taking a look at their East African collection, stored away in a corner of the museum's magazines. Anna Marie started to dig into the history of why artefacts from German East Africa had ended up in a provincial museum in Northern Jutland, Denmark. It is thanks to her dedication and ability as a detective that the letters and photos were retrieved and, almost like a film being developed into negatives in a dark room, a fascinating story began to surface.

Anna Marie moved to Greenland to take up a teaching job and left the letters and substantial additional information about Christian Lautherborn for us to continue work on, to bring, at least when we speak of Denmark, an almost forgotten part of history back to memory. In addition we would like to thank the staff at the museum in Hjørring for their willingness to provide information and help us along the way. The photos in the book have been reproduced by courtesy of Niels Carlsen and Vendsyssel Historiske Museum.

Special thanks also goes to Steven Fabian, a PhD student from Dalhousie University in Halifax, Canada, where Jane Parpart is a professor. Steven is writing a thesis on the history of Bagamoyo, and has provided important data and insights from the field. Thanks to the wonders of email, we have been able to send out questions to Steven that could then be checked in the Tanzanian National Archives—a rare treat and an important contribution to our understanding of the letters and the accuracy of the footnotes. We also are grateful to helpful comments from and the scholarship of: Jan-Georg Deutsch (Oxford University), Stephen Rockel (University of Toronto), Jim Brennan (SOAS, University of London), Thaddeus Sunseri (Colorado State University and Juhani Koponen (University of Helsinki). As non-specialists on Tanzania, we have been overwhelmed by the support and interest of Tanzanian specialists in this project and hope that the letters and background chapters reflect their generosity and assistance. Chapter two has also been presented at a number of seminars, where insightful and challenging questions have helped to hone our thinking. Any shortcomings in the editorial notes of the letters and the background chapters reflect our own limitations and not those of our many helpful advisors.

Of course, without libraries and archives, a work such as this would not be possible. Bits and pieces of information have been gathered from The Royal Library in Copenhagen, Stadsarkivet (The City Archives) in Aalborg, Vendsyssel Historiske Museum og Arkiv in Hjørring and the library at Aalborg University. Thanks also goes to the staff and the director of the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, School of Advanced Studies, London

University for generously hosting us the three times we met for a couple of days to coordinate the editing and discuss the introductory chapters. For a professor from Aalborg University, Denmark and from Dalhousie University, Nova Scotia, Canada, London was the ideal place to meet. Moreover, the libraries at the School of Oriental and African Studies (University of London) and Institute of Commonwealth Studies were well suited to our search for background information, and have been extensively used. We are grateful to all of these institutions for their assistance.

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