

*A Handbook of German East Africa*, Admiralty War Staff – Intelligence Division,  
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Extracts covering (i) population descriptions of the Batwa in Ruanda, all populations in Urundi as general notes cover all three designations; (ii) an analysis of military capacity, tactics and strategy of both native and German forces in German East Africa; and (iii) roads and travel times in Ruanda and Urundi.

Population

Ruanda:

Batwa or Watwa (pygmies) scattered among the Wahutu. Only two tribes on the Mrushasi swamp, population about 5,000 (1,000 men fit for bearing arms). Particularly warlike, violent and cruel. The Batwa of the chiefs Bossebya and Grue have terrorised the neighbourhood over distances of two or three day's march, in spite of their small number. They desolated large tracts and lived by robbery and plunder. Manner of warfare: sudden attack, skilful driving of cattle, quick retreat to inaccessible regions (caverns, swamps, and bush). Hostile attitude towards the German rule. The influence of the Administration is non-existent. No tribal organisation. A few chieftains have submitted to the Sultan of Ruanda. They speak Kinyaruanda and are agriculturalists, hunters, potters and smiths.

The earliest inhabitants of the country are supposed to have been a reddish-yellow pygmy people who seem in some respects akin to the Bushmen and Hottentots. They are supposed to have come in pre-historic times from India. To this stock the Wahi, Wanege and Wakindiga (round Lake Eyasi), the forest Batwa in Urundi and Ruanda, and the Wasandawi north of Ugogo are supposed to belong, but they are mixed with their neighbours and have no special language or civilisation of their own.

Urundi:

Batwa or Watwa, possibly aboriginal; are despised and disunited. Porters and carriers; about 3-5% of the population

Wahutu, probably have migrated from the S. Belonging to the Bantu tribe; 90% of the population.

Watusi' have penetrated from the north; a Hamitic pastoral race; the ruling class about 5-7% of the population. Collective name for Watusi and Wahutu is Warundi. Warundi, on the coast of Tanganyika, partly mixed with Wabwari from the Belgian Congo. Most thickly settled on the coast strips and the valleys of the bordering mountains in Central Urundi, Lusokosa and Banzabugabo, and the south of Muyaga.

For all three: 1,500,000 to 3,000,000 population. Muzzle loaders and other arms: On the coast and in the Rusisi Valley, 800 muzzle-loaders; a few muzzle-loaders in East Urundi. Probably a few Watwale possess some breech-loaders obtained from deserters from the Congo. In 1905 five breech-loaders were taken from them. Spears, bows and arrows with smooth, long tips, not poisoned, rarely sickle-axes. Weapons are made in the country, chiefly in North Urundi.

Numerous early wars, mostly of no importance; but they have always repulsed the inroads of strangers. The conquest of Mirambo in the South-East Urundi and their successful stand against Rimaliza are well-known. They have shown hitherto small capacity for war. They attack in close formation, but have hitherto not been able to carry it out against breech-loaders. It is possible, however, that they may lose in time their dread of white men and breech-loaders. In wartime they drive their cattle to other friendly tribes and hide their wives and children, provisions and household utensils in the swamp thickets. Cattle that have been taken from them try to recover by night. They have very little power of enduring other climates or different food and are particularly subject to malaria.

German policy since 1909 has had for its aim to create several independent sultanates, and play them off against each other. Present Head Sultan Mutaga (born about 1900). He has in reality very little influence. The real rulers are the party of the elder sons of Kisabo, Serushanya at the head, born about 1885. Real influence only in Central Urundi and in a part of the south, where Kisabo's sons reside. The Watwale in the north, north-east, south-east, on the coast of Tanganyika and in the Rusisi valley, are inimical or at least passive to Mutaga. Now quite independent of the Mtwale Kilima in the north of Uzumbura. As long as there is no residency in the interior of the country, the influence of the Administration is small. The parties of Mutaga and of Southern Urundi are the most opposed to German rule.

Language is a Bantu language very like Kinyaruanda. In and around Uzumbura there are many Warundi speaking Swahili; otherwise Swahili is spoken only in the mission stations.

Light straw huts with large or small kraals according to the number of cattle. Not very defensible. The fencing round kraals mostly green Milumba trees joined with plaiting.

Watusi are only cattle-breeders. Sustenance entirely meat, milk and *pombe*. Wahutu are industrious field labourers. Much fish in the Tanganyika Lake, bananas, manioc. In the Rad Mts principally bananas. Other produce: beans, peas, millet flour, sweet potatoes; much *pombe*. Large numbers of cattle, 100,000-150,000, as many sheep and goats.

## Military Forces

### The Native Enemy

The native population of the Protectorate, numbering in all between 7 and 8 million, is divided into many tribes of various fighting strengths and characteristics... Not one of these tribes in 1911 was regarded by German authorities as completely trustworthy; and it may be remarked that in the rising 1905 tribes which had for long been at feud with each other combined against European rule.

The East African negro is of great bodily activity, and can move easily in difficult country. He may prove a determined, bold, and dangerous enemy, especially when under the influence of magical 'medicine' and in the hands of good leaders. His methods of warfare, which are connected with tribal characteristic and weapons, depend also on the nature of the country, are subject to constant variation. The native has besides been learning lessons from the trained troops of the German Government. It is necessary, therefore, to be prepared for surprising changes in the tactics of a tribe in each new campaign it undertakes.

Arms. Very few of the natives not in the service of the German Government are equipped with breech-loaders, but numerous muzzle-loaders are to be found in certain parts of the Protectorate. Yet the native spear, shield, bow and arrows, still predominate, and are in many regions the only weapons in use. The Masai and some of the neighbouring tribes are also armed with short swords.

A muzzle-loader in the hands of an experienced native hunter may be fairly reliable up to about 200-220 yards. But this is exceptional; and the muzzle-loaders when used by men who are little accustomed to fire-arms show very poor results even at close range, being often less effective than bows and arrows. Their smoke and flash often betray the position of their users. Their chief importance lies in their moral effect on the natives, to whom they impart a sense of power, and whose courage and determination they may thus increase.

Arrows have among some tribes a range of over 200 yards. If not poisoned they may cause death up to 100-170 yards; but poisoned arrows are dangerous up to 220 yards; as even a small scratch may prove mortal. Up to 55 yards the native bows are very reliable and effective.

Throwing spears can produce good results up to 20-35 yards.

The stabbing spear is a very effective weapon in the hands of strong and agile natives, if they can find the opportunity to use it when attacking in superior numbers.

Preparations for War. A native outbreak may come very suddenly. Thus in the widespread rebellion of 1905-6, the natives kept their preparations so secret, that the rising took the Germans by surprise at all points it was carried out. The plan of action is generally known only to a few leaders, and its secrecy jealously guarded. The Germans found by experience that the natives whom they most trusted might be plotting against them.

On the other hand, signs of a coming war have often been detected, especially when it was to be on a considerable scale and therefore involved long preparations. Such signs might be a number of vague floating rumours, desertion of work by native labourers or servants, the carrying of stores of food into the bush, the withdrawal of women, children and cattle to secure hiding-places, etc. Special importance was attached by the Germans to the careful watching of medicine men, as nearly all tribes make 'war-medicine' before a rising, but have often succeeded in keeping the performance of such rites from the knowledge of the authorities.

Methods of Warfare. The Germans found themselves opposed by an enemy who troubled himself little about a base of operations, and not at all about lines of communication. His stores of food are usually well hidden in inaccessible and unknown places in the bush, and are easily shifted if need arise. His advance needs to be looked for from all quarters, for his mobility and, almost incredible marching powers, coupled with accurate knowledge of the country, make him able to carry out apparently impossible detours. He has no fixed line of retreat, for after a defeat his forces break up into small parties, which may retire in all directions, and concentrate again at points previously agreed upon, often in the rear of the victorious troops. The natives think themselves beaten in a fight only when they have suffered great losses; flight and escape with small losses a success. The spread of news, etc., among the natives is exceedingly organised, and gives them great advantage in war. Only in exceptional cases has it been possible for the Germans to take them by surprise.

With regard to the constantly changing tactics of the enemy, the Germans found that the only safe course was to expect him to employ his most dangerous methods, which are in general (i) in dense country (bush, tall grass, etc.) a sudden attack from an ambush at close quarters delivered against a marching column, (ii) in open country, a sudden attack at night, or in the twilight or mist of dawn.

The tribe armed with muzzle-loaders have (or had) a fairly uniform tactical method. They begin by opening fire from an ambush, at as close a range as possible, on marching troops. Positions are frequently prepared beforehand with felled timber, thorn-zariba, etc., and obstacles (felled timber, sharpened stakes set in the grounds, etc.) are placed across the road of an advancing force. Behind this prepared position paths are left clear to facilitate a flight into the bush. The native's fire, which may be opened from the front, flank or rear, or from all quarters at once, is directed especially against the officers and other Europeans with the column. After discharging their fire arms, the natives retire hastily to reload, and to get ahead of the column so that they may repeat their attack in the same fashion at a point further along the road. By constantly harassing their enemy in this way, they hope, while avoiding serious losses on their own side, to tire him out, compel him to expend his ammunition, and gradually reduce his power of resistance till he can be finally overwhelmed by an energetic spear attack. The natives usually shoot too high with their muzzle-loaders, a fact of which they are well aware. They therefore generally choose positions on ground lower than the road along which their enemy's column is moving. By this means their fire becomes more effective; also they have come to learn that the German native troops, when firing down a slope, usually sent their bullets over the head of the enemy.

Spear-attacks are sometime made with great boldness and determination, especially at the beginning of a campaign, while the natives have not yet suffered serious losses, and are still fanatically confident under the influence of recent 'war-medicine'. The spear attack on a column on the march from an ambush close to the road is the most effective of the enemy's methods.

In dense country (as may be expected) it is often the plan of the natives to draw their enemy into pursuit which will eventually lead him into an ambush.

The natives have apparently learnt that the moments when their enemy is pitching or leaving his camp may be favourable for an attack. The morning mist which may occur when a column is breaking up camp increases the chance of surprise.

In the earlier campaigns in the Protectorate the natives very frequently relied on the stubborn defence of strongholds and fortified positions. Such tactics are no much more rarely practiced as their uselessness against superior weapons of the Germans has become generally recognised. The strongholds of many chiefs have been destroyed by the Germans and their reconstruction forbidden. Most of them, however, could easily be rebuilt in a very short time. Stone walls were found in earlier campaigns; but the dense of native strongholds are generally more or less similar to the German permanent camps. The Germans apparently learnt a good deal from the natives with regard to obstacles, etc. Inside native village-compounds (*tembes*) there is usually found a confused collection of smaller compounds and streets. In many regions the tribes have natural strongholds in great rock or earth caverns, often with many ramifications which make their capture a matter of some difficulty when they are held by a determined enemy. Such caves have several air-shafts.

Usually the natives show more boldness and determination, more readiness to deliver a serious attack (especially in dense country), at the beginning of a campaign, for reasons mentioned above. After the enthusiasm produced by magical rites has begun to wear off, and after they have suffered considerable losses, they are apt to grow more cautious and wary, are not to be provoked in exposing themselves, watch for their chances more carefully, and gradually come to limit their efforts to guerrilla operations, such as attacks on small parties or on convoys, continual sniping from the bush, etc. Such guerrilla methods may be kept up for a long time and prove very exhausting for the troops which have to deal with them.

### German Methods

General. Owing to the fact that no tribes in the Protectorate could be fully trusted by the Germans, the whole area of the colony had to be considered enemy country, even when the overt rising was confined to certain regions. Full reliance could be placed only on those points and lines of communication that were occupied by troops and strongly secured. The only completely secure base for German operations against the natives was the sea-coast, which could easily be held with the assistance of warships and white troops. Secondary bases were to be found in the two railways, and (as neighbouring Powers permitted the transport of supplies through their territories) in the three great lakes of Victoria Nyanza, Tanganyika and Nyasa. The important German strategic points included all the fortified stations, which were made impregnable to a native enemy. Between the stations there were other points marked out to be occupied at once in case of war for the protecting of the connecting roads. All railway bridges of any considerable size, and all important railway stations were to be occupied in war-time, even if the area of operations was at some distance from the railway line, as a rapid spread of the revolt was always possible.

Among the first objectives of German punitive expeditions were the fortified positions of the enemy, the hiding places of his women and children, his crops, cattle and stores of food, and, in regions where water was scarce, his watering places. All points strategically or politically important to the enemy were to be as soon as possible occupied, fortified, garrisoned, and used as *points d'appui* for further operations. The enemy was further to be forced to fight under conditions which made him suffer heavy losses; but this was found extraordinarily difficult. It needed columns as mobile as possible and as independent as possible of their bases or of fresh supplies. In order to tempt a wary adversary to fight, recourse had to be made to such stratagems as the disguising of Askaris as porters etc. It was found that at the end of a long rising the enemy, when his crops had been destroyed and his stores of food in the bush discovered or exhausted, suffered very heavily from starvation. His women and children, especially, died of hunger in great numbers. The German military authorities seem, at least in later wars, to have practiced the removal and feeding of the women and children when these could be found, while that accepted famine as their ally against the men.

Though cavalry, mounted infantry, and artillery could be used effectively in certain parts of the country, the formation of corps of these arms was eliminated, chiefly on the ground of expense. The Protectorate Force (raised from a strength of about 1,450 to about 2,500 between 1889 and 1914) had machine guns (at first 1, and later 2-3, to each company) and some light artillery, and the regular troops were supplemented if necessary by detachments of the trained police (a force which increased gradually: strength in 1905, 640; in 1913 2,200)

The position of numerical inferiority (often very great) in which the Protectorate troops found themselves in every considerable expedition, made it a principal concern of German officer to prevent the enemy

from pushing home his attack as far as a hand-to-hand melee. For this reason all military posts and permanent camps were surrounded by elaborate constructed obstacles, which might hold up the enemy's rush, leaving him exposed to the fire of the defence. But the danger of a hand-to-hand fight against great odds proved much more serious in the field, owing to the exceedingly desolate nature of much of the country, that had to be traversed. Especially exposed in a column on the march, advancing (as may be unavoidable) in single file, and encumbered by a train of porters along a road enclosed by thick bush or tall grass.

Military Posts: Permanent Camps. These forts and permanent camps were only meant to repel an uncivilised enemy with poor fire-arms. But from the construction of obstacles out of material supplied by the country, the Germans probably gathered experience which they would find useful in warfare against the troops of a civilised Power. The choice of position for posts, etc., has been partly determined by political and hygienic considerations.

The neighbourhood of termite heaps would be avoided as far as possible. Stores, ammunition boxes, equipment, etc., are soon eaten away by termites. Termite heaps are often spread over areas of thousands of square yards; their destruction is then practically impossible.

As regards defences, the purpose of these was not simply to give protection against the missile weapons of the natives (muzzle-loaders and bows), but mainly to prevent a sudden assault in which the post might be rushed by a numerically superior enemy.

The size of each post was determined, on one hand, by the fact that it was meant to shelter in time of war the Europeans in the neighbourhood, the non-European foreign traders (Indians, Arabs, etc.) and the families and dependents of the native troops, and on the other hand by the consideration that it should be defensible for some time by the force likely to be available for holding it. Garrisons of posts had to be reduced as much as possible in time of war in order to leave sufficient forces for field operations, and the withdrawal of native regulars had to be made good by the use of the native police. Even these, however, might have to be used in the field, and the defence would be entrusted to invalids, European civilians, discharged native soldiers and traders (Indians were considered poor, Arabs good, material). The typical East African fort for uncivilised warfare is surrounded by a stone wall, with two bastions at diagonally opposite corners, which are intended to flank the curtains with rifle or machine gun fire. These bastions frequently have the form of towers. The walls would be sometimes loopholed, but against an enemy with inferior missile weapons a platform enabling the garrison over the top of the wall was preferred by the Germans. Unburnt bricks may take the place of stone as the material used. The walls may have revetments of earth.

Permanent camps (for the duration of a campaign or period of unrest) would usually take the same square form with two bastions at diagonal corners. The material used would be, where possible, timber (lopped trees left without being uprooted are less liable to be damaged by fire or insects). The earth of the ditch round the palisade would be thrown up against it. Where no timber was procurable, shallow trenches might be made with high parapets (suited to the enemy's inferior weapons). If corrugated iron was available, a wall consisting of double sheets with earth between them might be constructed.

Round military posts and permanent camps obstacles of various kinds would be placed, but always so as to give a field of fire of some 220 yards. Besides barbed wire (which might be fastened to growing tree

stumps), use might be made of hedges of thorn-bush, agave, and cactus (these soon became a home for snakes and other poisonous creatures), zaribas of felled thorn, felled tree branches, pointed stakes or bamboos set deep in the earth and hidden with leaves or grass, concealed pits, etc. Thorn-zaribas can be effectively and easily made. Near permanent camps, obstacles such as pits with hidden stakes might be placed on the roads or paths which the enemy were most likely to use, even in the bush.

Lines of Communication. Off the railways, porters have been mainly used, supplemented by camels, mules, donkeys, as pack animals, or, on better roads by bullock-or donkey cart; but the use of animals is made difficult by presence of tsetse. Motor-traffic has been possible only on a few of the best roads. Unless circumstances made it necessary to place a field-force in a disturbed district as quickly as possible, the organisation of lines of communication up to the area of operations was carried out before the expeditionary force was moved.

The German text-book makes the following suggestions: Posts along the line of communication in enemy country not to be more than about 35 miles or two long marches from each to the other: in areas still quiet, 60-120 miles' distance between the posts might be suitable: where possible they might also serve as protection to important military points. Hygienic considerations, water, etc., as usual.

Garrisons of posts would draw supplies from the neighbouring country. The strength of the garrisons would be reduced as far as possible: but as each would have to provide an escort for convoys to the next post, and the minimum strength of such an escort is reckoned at 15 men, the garrison of a post in enemy country is put at a minimum of 1 or 2 Europeans and 30 men.

#### Ruanda District

Roads. There are only native tracks, of fairly good quality. The country near the roads is generally traversable.

Timetable (days)	Caravans	Runners
Kigali-Uzumbura	14	7
Kigali-Ishangi	11	5
Kigali-Kisenyi	8	4
Kigali-Mruhengeri	5	2
Kigali-Mpororo (Kisiliwombo)	5-6	3
Kigali-Ishangu Ferry	4	2
Kigali-Ishangu Ferry-Bukoba	11	6
Kigali-Migera Ferry	6	3
Kigali-Kaseke Ferry	6	3
Kigali-Kaseke Ferry-Usuwi	12	6
Kigali-Nyanza (residence of Sultan Msinga)	3	2

Ishangi-Uzumbura	7	3
Ishangi-Uhiwitoke	4	2
Ishangi-Kisenyi, by boat, 22 hours		
Ishangi-Kisenyi, by road	8	4

Animal Diseases. It was reported in 1911 that there were many tsetse flies along the Kagera between the mouth of the Ruwuwu to the Kayonza ferry in Mpororo, but it was still uncertain whether they had communicated the disease. There was a catarrhal fever among the cattle of the district.

Obstacles, etc. On the mountains, the going is impaired in the rainy season by the slipperiness of the paths on the steep slopes. The virgin forest and bamboo woods are scarcely penetrable in the rainy season. The Mrushasi swamp can be forded only at the N end. The larger rivers must be crossed by ferry-boats. On the upper courses of the rivers and on Lake Kivu there are many reliable canoes. The larger of them carry about 7 men and 7 loads. On the middle course of the Kagera, and on the lakes in the interior and in volcanic craters, there are only small and poor boats to be had. At the Ishangu Ferry on the main route to Bukoba there is a European boat, which carries 30 persons and 30 loads, the property of the Sultan Kahigi (1911), in the Bukoba District.

On the Akanyaru, Nyawarongo, and middle course of the Kagera, there are canoe ferries at short intervals. On the lower course of the Kagera, from the mouth of the Ruwuwu to Kayonza, ferries are to be found only at Migera, Ishangu and Kayonza. In peace time, ferry boats, etc., could be obtained through the Sultans.

An aluminum boat at the German Residency. Bamboo and papyrus for building ferry-boats and bridges are to be found everywhere. Very strong floating bridges for crossing papyrus swamps can be made with layers of papyrus

Porters, etc. The Wanyaruanda are only capable of serving as porters for 1 or 2 days. They are unwilling to leave the immediate neighbourhood of their homes, and they suffer from fatigue on longer marches. The pay for short distances is in beads: for marches of 5-6 days it is 1 *upande Americano*. In case of need they may be engaged through their chiefs for a prearranged pay. They frequently desert. The giving out of plentiful meat rations is recommended,

For large caravans it is advisable to procure porters from the Waheia in the Bukoba District, or from the Wanyaamwezi or Manyema of Ujiji or Uzumbura.

### Urundi District

Roads. The formation of the mountains, which are often rugged, and the numerous marshes make movement generally difficult. The use of riding-animals is often impossible. 5-6 hours march must be reckoned as the longest possible for porters.

Many native tracks, skilfully adapted to the country. Good road from Uzumbura to Ishangi. Wide road from Uzumbura to the E nearly as far as the summit of the pass (about 5 hours). Roads about 2 yards

wide, kept cleared, run from Uzumbura by Mtara to Kigali, and from Uzumbura by the Mugeru and Rugali Missions to Bugufi ferry.

Timetable (days)	Caravans	Runners
Uzumbura-Mugeru Mission	5	3
Uzumbura-Bukoba	29	14
Uzumbura-Inbuye (Sultan Mutaga)	4	2
Uzumbura-Kifumbiro	28	14
Uzumbura-Kaninya Mission	9-10	5
Uzumbura-Mwanza	18	14
Uzumbura-Kagora Ferry (Kisaki)	12	6
Uzumbura-Tabora	28	14
Uzumbura-Chiwitoke	3	1
Uzumbura-Ishangi	7	3
Uzumbura-Kigali	14	7
Uzumbura-Usuwi (Byarammulo Post)	19	9
Uzumbura-Urambi, by boat, 1 day		
Uzumbura-Rumonge, by boat, 2 days		
Uzumbura-Nyanza, by boat, 3 days		
Uzumbura-Ujiji, by steamer, 1½ days		
Uzumbura-Ujiji, by land	11	5
Uzumbura-Uvira, by steamer, ½ day		
Mugeru Mission-Myaga Mission	5	2
Mugeru Mission-Rugali Mission	4	2
Mugeru Mission-Kaninya Mission	4	2
Rugali Mission-Kaninya Mission	3	1
Rugali Mission-Bugufi Ferry	3	1
Muyaga Mission-Rugali Mission	4	2
Muyaga Mission-Tabora	20	10

Animal Diseases. No information

Obstacles, etc. The Ruwuwu, Kagera and Mlagarasi are generally only passable by boat or ferry, (Capacity of ferry boats at principal crossings of Ruwuwu, 4-10 men; small boats at Kagera ferry). Boats may be always reckoned on in peace time. Ferry-boats can be made from papyrus and banana-stems. Swamps generally passable by papyrus causeways. Collapsible boats too light in rainy season for the strong current of the large rivers. It is well to take a long rope, with which to tow boats, and to give support against the stream in deep fords. It is very difficult, especially in the rains, for porters to ascend the Tanganyika mountains (Randberge), elsewhere than on the main road.

Porters, Guides, etc. At Uzumbura there are always enough Warundi for porters, some of them professional bearers who come willingly. They are said to be good if loads are not too heavy (not over 55lbs), and when it is only a question of transport for short distances, or from Uzumbura to Ruanda, or from Uzumbura to the Kivu lake. The Warundi are very unwilling to go outside the District.

Pay: for a journey to Bukoba, 6-7½ rupees, to Kigali, 3-4 rupees; to Chiwitoke, 1¼ rupees; to Ishangi, 2½ rupees. Payment by days is reckoned at 23 (?), inclusive of posho.

The armed guards of the Watwale in the Rusizi plain can be employed as runners. Guides are often difficult to get. In peace, in case no guides can be enlisted, each Mtwale can provide guides to the neighbouring Mtwale.