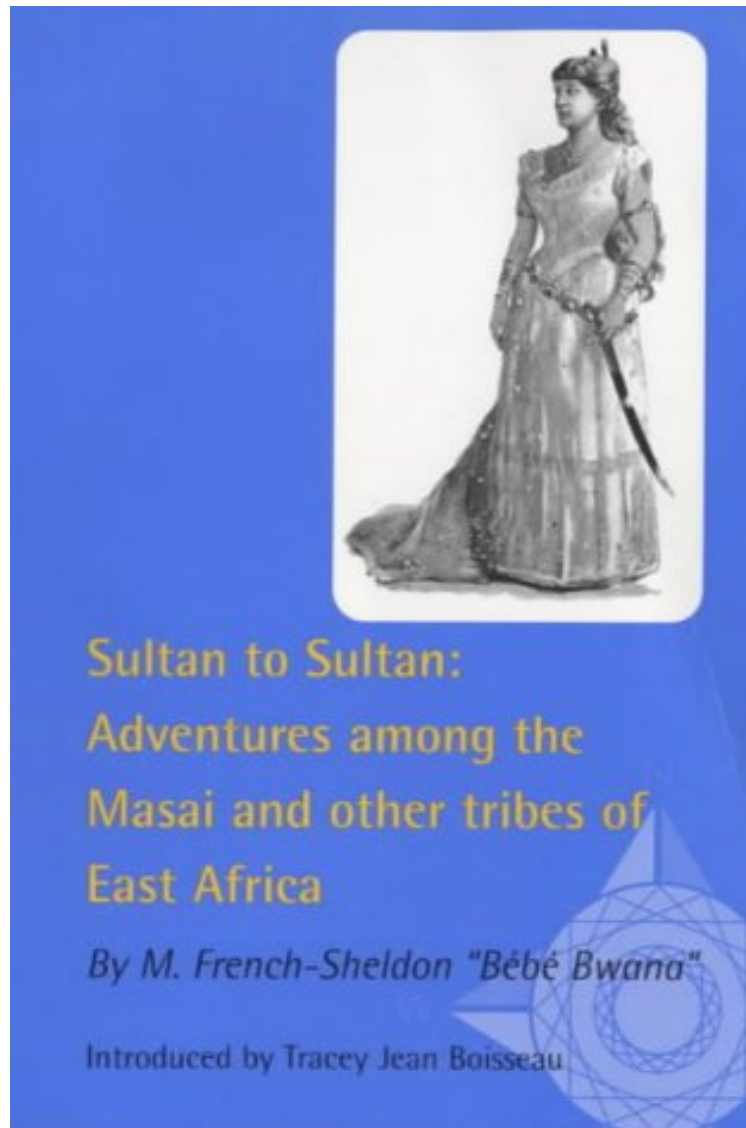


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Africa; By M. French-Sheldon, 'Bebe Bwana' (Exploring Travel):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A fascinating taleBy Kevin C. DunnThis newly reprinted edition of May French-Sheldon's travel narrative is a fascinating historical document for those interested in exploring the intersection of gender, class, nation, and race within the colonial context. Boisseau's excellent introduction to the volume unpacks why French-Sheldon, her discourses, and her practices/performances are worthy of historical inquiry. French-Sheldon's text provides a fascinating look at how gender and racial boundaries were being defined, policed and contested during the rise of colonialism, feminism, and an expanding capitalist system. Bousseau's introduction and notes are superb.

First published in 1892 but still of interest to the contemporary reader, M. French-Sheldon's book dramatically describes her famous 1891 expedition that took her from the court of the Sultan of Zanzibar to the Mount Kilimanjaro region of East Africa. Unlike most women travelers of this period, the American-born French-Sheldon dressed extravagantly on her thousand-mile expedition, greeting African chiefs or "sultans" dressed as a "White Queen"--in a long white court dress bedecked with large jewels and wearing a waist-length blonde wig and sparkling tiara on her head. Consistently portraying herself as "alone," French-Sheldon was accompanied by a retinue of African porters numbering over one hundred and forty men whom she claimed to control through the whip, the pistol, and the injunction "Noli me tangere" (touch me not) which emblazoned a banner she flew from her walking stick. This sensationally written African adventure narrative is accompanied by a new critical introduction that explores the cultural context within which this text appeared and the political implications of the "imperial feminism" French-Sheldon espoused.

About the AuthorTracey Jean Boisseau has recently received her Ph.D. in U.S. Women's History from Binghamton University in New York.