

**Soldiers of their Own: Honor, Violence, Resistance and Conscription in Colonial
Cameroon during the First World War**

by

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Dedication

My mom, Fientih Kuoh, who never went to school;
My wife, Esther;
My kids, Kelsy, Michelle and George Jr.

Acknowledgments

When in the fall of 2011 I started the doctoral program in history at Michigan, I had a personal commitment and determination to finish in five years. I wanted to accomplish in reality a dream that began since 1995 when I first set foot in a university classroom for my undergraduate studies. I have met and interacted with many people along this journey, and without the support and collaboration of these individuals, my dream would be in abeyance. Of course, I can write ten pages here and still not be able to acknowledge all those individuals who are an integral part of my success story. But, the disservice of trying to acknowledge everybody and end up omitting some names is greater than the one of electing to acknowledge only a few by name. Those whose names are omitted must forgive my short memory and parsimony with words and names.

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conceive of my project. My thinking has been greatly influenced by his cutting-edge scholarship and tutorship. I am truly thankful to him.

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I must admit that without the masterful assistance of the staff of scholarspace at the Hatcher Graduate Library, this dissertation would still be in separate chapters. They helped me combine the chapters into a dissertation and directed me on all formatting issues, which on account of my most amateurish knowledge on Microsoft word, sounded to me almost like rocket science.

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I intentionally decided that the last names to appear here will be those of family, as there is an African saying that he who 'laughs last laughs best.' My brother Cyrus Njung in Canada, his wife, Mercy, and their lovely kids, Sheridan, Maya and Cyrus Jr., were very supportive. Cyrus showed concern and provided me with all encouragement needed to push on. He worried about my safety each time I was off to Nigeria doing research.

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List of Acronyms

ANSOM – Archives Nationales, Section d’Autre-Mer, Aix-en-Provence, France

CNAB – Cameroon National Archives, Buea

GR – The Gambia Regiment

GCR – The Gold Coast (Ghana) Regiment

F.E.A – French Equatorial Africa

TNA – The National Archives, Kew-Richmond, UK

NANE – National Archives of Nigeria, Enugu

NANI – National Archives of Nigeria, Ibadan

NCO – Non-Commissioned Officer

NR – Nigerian Regiment

SNO – Senior Naval Officer

SLR – The Sierra Leone Regiment

STAMPS – Saint Thomas Aquinas Major Seminary and Library, Bambui, Cameroon

WAEF – West African Expeditionary Force

WAFF – West African Frontier Force

WWI – World War 1

Abstract

The dissertation reconstructs two sidelined aspects of the Cameroon campaign of the Great War; it examines the campaign in its own right, and it provides a peopled account of the campaign by evaluating both the collective and individual performances and experiences of West African soldiers in the campaign. Existing accounts of the African campaigns, treating them as 'sideshows,' and leaving African soldiers nameless and faceless, have been effective erasures of Africans and their history. "Soldiers of their Own" investigates named Africans who fought in the Cameroon campaign: why, how, and where they fought.

Germany colonized Cameroon in 1884, and until the outbreak of war in 1914, unleashed spectacles of colonial violence. Colonial violence, gendered in nature, mainly targeted women, in addition to men and children. The violence was internalized by Cameroonians, who then responded with wars of resistance. When the 1914 war broke out, both the Allies who invaded Cameroon and the Germans mobilized and recruited Africans for military services. Africans were attracted by some material and intangible factors to fight in the campaign, but the majority were conscripted. Among the many factors responsible for German defeat was the increasing support that Cameroonians gave to the Allies.

The social costs of fighting the Great War in Cameroon included the intentional killing of civilians by the occupying German army and their African soldiers, as well as the unprecedented refugee crisis that wartime activities generated. War atrocities in Cameroon must be understood within the context of the ones elsewhere in Europe, and in line with the military cultures of the

Allies and the Germans which led to their conflicting interpretations of the international laws of war.

Although Africans fought and determined the outcomes of the Cameroon campaign on the battlefield, their attempts to influence the form of the partition of their post-war territory came to naught, as Britain and France undertook an arbitrary and self-serving interest partition of post-war Cameroon. Once again, the war had provided an opportunity for the second European partition of Africa, in much the same way as the first partition.

Chapter 1

Introduction: Sidelined Histories, Histories of Colonial Africans.

Situating African World War 1 Campaigns in the Historiographies of the Great War

Most histories of colonial Africans (roughly 1884-1961) that intertwined with, or occurred in tandem with activities of the Europeans, have been overshadowed by histories of the Europeans in Africa during that period. When, for example, the African campaigns of the Great War are narrated, they look more like Europeans fighting in Africa. Two historical problems are identifiable here. The first is that African campaigns, in general, have been considered sideshows as a result of which they have been neglected. The second is that the campaigns when represented in scholarship, are ‘strangely unpeopled.’¹

As evidence that African campaigns have been abysmally represented in the academic and non-academic worlds, the Cameroon West African campaign, in particular, does not feature in major text books or major scholarly works on the subject of the 1914 war. When African campaigns are mentioned, they are measured with European theaters, in which case the number of soldiers involved and deaths often dwarf those of Africa. Sometimes, when alluded to in

¹ Phrase borrowed from Professor Derek R. Peterson, who observes in his African History Graduate course blurb how pessimist African History scholars in the 1970s wrote strangely unpeopled books on African ‘modes of production.’ For scholarship on African campaigns of the Great War, this pattern has continued to date. The title of the course is “New directions in African History.” The course helped shape in many ways my conception of African history, including my awareness of its shifting patterns, and areas deserving of scholarly attention. Particularly helpful was Peterson’s advice during a workshop on my grant proposal in the fall of 2014 that I should consult John Iliffe’s book on *Honor in African History*. Evidently, the book has helped frame my discussions in some parts of this dissertation. I am truly grateful to Professor Peterson.

major works on the First World War, they are often equated to wars of colonial resistance, with respectable historians on the Great War declaring that "the Cameroon campaign differed little in character from those by which the British and French had subdued the warrior tribes during the original conquests."²

The practice of either completely sidelining the Cameroon campaign or of treating it almost as a foot note in the history of the Great War started during and immediately after the war, and has lingered through the decades, succeeding one era of historical scholarship after another. This has been the case with the Cameroon campaign more than even other campaigns in the continent.³ "Of all the expeditions and campaigns which were conducted in different parts of the world during the period of the Great War," wrote Major-General Charles Dobell (1922), the commander of the Allied troops in Cameroon, "probably less is known of the operations in West Africa than those which took place in other theatres."⁴ Two decades later in 1942, W.O Henderson regretted that the campaigns in Africa had been neglected and dismissed by both historians and official histories as 'side-shows' while the Western Front in France and Belgium stole popular attention. He noted how the defense of its African colonies posed a grave problem for the Germans, distracted them, and may have contributed in one way or the other to Germany's loss of the Great War in general.⁵ Writing in 1986, World War I historian Byron

² John Keegan, *The First World War* (New York: Vintage Books, a Division of Random House, Inc., 2000), 207.

³ While African campaigns have been generally understudied, the German East and South-West African campaigns have received relatively more attention than the Cameroon West African campaign. On the East African campaign alone, some of the major works include; Anne Samson, *World War I in Africa; The forgotten Conflict the among European Powers* (London & New York: I.B Tauris & Co Ltd., 2013); Giles Foden, Mimi and Toutou go Forth: The bizarre battle of Lake Tangayika (London: Penguin, 2005); Ross Anderson, *The Forgotten Front: The East African Campaign, 1914-18* (Stroud: Tempus, 2004); Edward Paice, *Tip and Run: The untold tragedy of the Great War in Africa* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2007).

⁴ Major-General Sir Charles Dobell, "The Campaign in the Cameroons, 1914–1916," *Journal of Royal United Services Institution* (1922): 697.

⁵ W.O Henderson, "The Conquest of the German Colonies, 1914-1918," *History*, 27 (Sept. 1942): 124. The stated aim of the German Commander in East Africa was to divert as many Allied military efforts and personnel in Europe

Farwell lamented that "many books on the First world War do not even mention the African campaigns."⁶ Slightly over a decade ago, Hew Strachan (2004) made a similar observation, while comparing the importance of the African campaigns in relation to the outcome of the Great War.⁷ To date, the situation lingers on. A very recent multiple author 2010 publication on the experiences, perspectives from Africa and Asia in the two world wars does not even have a single chapter on Cameroon.⁸

In 1998, David Killingray had claimed that "the campaigns in Africa were minor sideshows" because "compared to people in Europe, most Africans hardly felt the direct impact of the war, other than in East and Central Africa where the death toll and devastation were high."⁹ Such historical yardstick of measuring the war and labeling it a sideshow in one continent because its effects in that continent were comparatively less devastating than as in the other continent has the effect of undermining history for one while exaggerating it for another. It is more intellectually enriching to assess the importance of a historical event on a society in relation to other historical events in that same society. For Africa, the Great War occupies top tier stage in the continent's history, alongside the slave trade and colonialism. In terms of numbers killed, it parallels the slave trade. Amongst many other things, it removed men, women, and children from their homes. Given the relatively shorter period of those killed - within four years - the war is by far the most devastating historical event or process in the continent. For

as possible. But in the Cameroons, the Germans had no such aim, and simply wanted to hold on to the colony while the war in Europe came to an end hopefully with German victory.

⁶ Byron Farwell, *The Great War in Africa, 1914-1918* (New York. London: W.W Norton & Company, 1986), 13-14.

⁷ Hew Strachan, *The First World War: The First World War in Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 7.

⁸ Heike Liebau et al, eds., *The World in World Wars: Experiences, Perceptions and Perspectives from Africa and Asia* (Leiden & Boston, Brill, 2010).

⁹ David Killingray, "The War in Africa," in *World War 1: A History*, ed. Hew Strachan (Oxford: University Press, 1998), 92.

especially the civilian populations who suffered the agony of the war in their affected communities, the war compares to nothing else in their widest memory or imagination.

For Cameroon and Africa and the people, therefore, and in absolute terms, the 1914 war was no sideshow. We can understand the different campaigns of the war across the globe in comparative terms not by trying to weigh in on which ones were major or central and which ones were minor or sideshows, but rather by focusing on the transnational implications of the war across the globe; how the campaigns affected and transformed nations and places where they occurred; and what historical landmarks each campaign left on its own continent or region? For a better appreciation of the African campaigns, therefore, they must also be considered as campaigns in their own right. Anne Sampson has asserted that “the advent of the centenary of the outbreak of the Great War seems an opportune moment for the campaigns in Africa to be reconsidered and acknowledged in their own right, not as sideshows of the European war,” noting that while each campaign of the war might actually be individually regarded as a sideshow, “collectively they achieve a significance not usually associated with the African campaign.”¹⁰ Several other factors projected the importance of the African campaigns: many parts of the continent through their colonial status became involved in the war by having their men dragged into the fighting in and outside the continent; the war altered the colonial and political destinies of all African colonies formally held by Germany.

To not pay adequate attention to such an important and impactful historical event as the Great War in a continent is a disservice to both the history of that continent and the sacrifices of the historical subjects involved. Europeans who started the war and determined the nature of

¹⁰ Ann Sampson, *World War I in Africa: The Forgotten Conflict among the European Powers* (London & New York: I.B Tauris & Co Ltd., 2013), 3-4.

peace came to control not only how the war entered history books, but equally decided on which campaigns were more important than which. The importance of any war should be determined not by those who engineered it and determined its peace terms, but also by those who shed blood in the war and determined outcomes on the battlefield. Even from the prism of European officers involved in the campaign, it was no sideshow. Colonel Haywood and Brigadier Clarke, who participated in the campaign, wrote in 1964 that “the conditions of service, the climate, and the extent of the operations covering a territory about one and a half times the size of the German empire, . . . , made the undertaking [of the Cameroon campaign] one of considerable magnitude.”¹¹

What accounts for this treatment of the Cameroon campaign as a mere sideshow? In 1922, the British Admiralty, Sir H.B Jackson suggested that the reasons why little was known about the Cameroon campaign were because the campaign was successful, was overshadowed by great events on the Western front, but more so also because there was no "regrettable incident" in that campaign to cause the British or the European public in general to demand any enquiries.¹² The campaign was so successful that it not only boosted the morale of the Allies to fight on but enhanced Anglo-French military cooperation in further campaigns. This success was gladly acknowledged by key European figures. Addressing parliament on 15 February 1916, the then British Prime Minister Asquith referred to the “very successful and well-organized campaign in the Cameroons,” stating that “it was one of the most satisfactory and complete episodes so far in the history of the [Great] War.”¹³

¹¹ Colonel A. Haywood and Brigadier F.A.S Clarke, “Togoland and the Cameroons campaign,” in *The History of the Royal West African Frontier Force* (Aldershot: Gale & Polden Ltd., 1964): 173.

¹² Admiral of the Fleet Sir H.B Jackson, Chair of Major Charles Dobell's Lecture on "The Campaign in the Cameroons, 1914-1916," delivered to the Royal United Services Institution, on Wednesday, 4th October 1922, *Journal of the Royal United Services* (1922): 697.

¹³ Quoted by Sir Charles Lucas, “The Cameroons campaign,” in *The Empire at War*, Vol. IV (London: Oxford University Press, 1925), 114.

It is an irony that a campaign which was so successful as to boost the morale of the Allies thereby deserving of attracting a world of attention turned out to produce the opposite effect. Perhaps, it is understandable that this campaign produced no "regrettable incident" in Europe. According to the commander of the Allied forces in Cameroon, the reason why less was known about the Cameroons was "largely due to the fact that there were comparatively small forces engaged, and that only native troops, British, French and Belgian, were employed, and consequently few Europeans had any personal interest in the operations."¹⁴

In the African campaigns, mainly Africans fought and mainly Africans died. Sir Jackson's declaration lends credence to the hard truth that African loss of life especially during the colonial era was never as inherently tragic (or even interesting) to Europeans as European loss of life. Because "only native [African] troops" were in charge of the conduct of the Cameroon campaign, there were few Europeans involved, whose loss of life would have been cause to "regrettable incidents" in Europe. Here, "no regrettable incident" occurred because it was Africans killing each other for their European masters. In the words of the German historian Ute Rösenthaller, "African troops fought for the Germans against African troops fighting for the British, possibly even brothers against brothers" killing one another. This was particularly the case in border areas as in the Cross River area where groups such as the Ejagham lay on both sides of the border.¹⁵ In the words of Sir Charles Lucas, the Cameroon campaign was fought almost entirely by West Africans, except that they were led by white officers.¹⁶ Here then lies a

¹⁴ Major-General Sir Charles Dobell, "The Campaign in the Cameroons, 1914–1916," *Journal of Royal United Services Institution* (1922): 697.

¹⁵ Ute Rösenthaller, "The Submerged History of Nsanakang: A Glimpse into an Anglo-German Encounter," in *Encounter, Transformation and Identity: Peoples of the Western Cameroon Borderlands, 1891-2000*, ed. Ian Fowler and Verkijika G. Fanson, with a Preface by Martin and Dorothy Njeuma (New York . Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2009), 125-126.

¹⁶ Sir Charles Lucas, "The late Campaigns in Africa," in *The Partition and Colonization of Africa* (Oxford: Clarendon press, 1922), 178.

cynical but regrettable reason why the Cameroon campaign easily passed into oblivion; it was fought by Africans, and it is Africans who shed blood in that campaign.

African campaigns sank into oblivion in large part also because they occurred simultaneously with fighting in Europe. In the words of a British officer in 1918, "our measure of military operations is chiefly determined by the events that have happened and are happening in Europe on the Western front."¹⁷ Byron Farwell ascertains that African campaigns would have excited the interest of the world if taken on their own terms and not always in comparison with European campaigns that happened at the same time.¹⁸ Had these campaigns taken place alone, they would have occupied front line pages on world news. When twenty years earlier, for example, the Boer War was being fought in South Africa, it absorbed the attention of the world and held the front line pages of the newspapers for three years. And although the African campaigns of the 1914 war dwarfed the Boer War into insignificance, they occupied for the most part only occasional paragraphs on the Western newspapers.¹⁹

Against all the odds, some Europeans at the time personally thought that African campaigns deserved serious attention, more so because of the special challenges posed by those campaigns, including their arduous nature. Edmund Dane noted in 1919 that the campaigns presented aspects of the Great War associated with varied, and often strange, adventure.²⁰ He regretted that military event in Africa had been dealt with as a kind of poetic history and felt that there was no reason why "they should not be narrated at once truthfully and lucidly." The

¹⁷ G.M Wrigley, "The Military Campaigns against Germany's African Colonies," *Geographical Review* 5 no.1 (Jan., 1918): 44.

¹⁸ Farwell, *The Great War*, 13-14.

¹⁹ J.D Taylor, "Some Effects of the War on Africa," *The Missionary Review of the World*, 42 (1919): 439.

²⁰ Edmund Dane, *British Campaigns in Africa and in the Pacific, 1914-1918* (London. New York: Hodder and Stoughton, 1919), vii.

Cameroon campaign presented some of the hardest military problems of the war and the manner in which those problems were tackled renders the campaign one of the most instructive. "It is a mark of these campaigns in Africa," he wrote, "that no one of them was in its features a repetition of another. Each was distinct."²¹ Herbert O'Neil thought in 1922 that "the conquest of Germany's colonies rank[ed] among the most stirring exploits in history." African campaigns presented challenges naturally absent in other theaters of the war. Four years earlier, around the end of the Great War, one British officer wrote:

Here, in German South-West Africa, as also in the other African campaign areas, we find warfare on a different plane, controlled by profoundly different conditions. We are here concerned with the geographical aspects of these conditions. The force of geographic control in military operations has been amply demonstrated on the European battlefields. In the African theaters that control has been still more pronounced, though exercised in a different manner. In Europe topographic detail has played a dominant part. In Africa, where man sinks to insignificance by the side of nature, the influence of, climatic circumstances and of the vegetative covering of the land has been supreme.²²

The second major identifiable problem – arguably a more serious one for scholarship - is that existing accounts on African campaigns are strangely unpeopled. When referring to African soldiers, the accounts talk instead about numbers, not people. Although many of the African soldiers led others during the campaign, undertaking military actions that factored powerfully into outcomes, their names, and individual experiences are never mentioned, let alone incorporated into the larger narratives. Ironically, and although less than ten percent of European military officers and soldiers participated in the Cameroon campaign, their individual actions and performances in the campaign have taken central stage in narratives on the subject. How is it that the experiences of the over 90 percent African soldiers in the campaign have been sidelined?

²¹ Dane, *British Campaigns*, vii & 164.

²² Wrigley, "The Military Campaigns," 44. It is contentious that topographic details may have played a more dominant role in European campaigns than as in African campaigns. Yet, Wrigley's chief observations are not so far apart from the facts.

There were about 20,000 or more West African soldiers who fought in the Cameroon campaign for Britain and France. On the other hand, the Germans, then the colonial powers in Cameroon, conscripted an army of over 10,000 Africans to defend the territory for eighteen months against the invaders. West Africans fighting for Britain in that campaign came from the four British West African colonies of Nigeria, Gold Coast (now Ghana), Sierra Leone and the Gambia, with Nigeria contributing by far the largest number, while France brought soldiers from their West and Equatorial Africa, generally called the *tirailleurs Sénégalaise*.²³ Belgium, which supported Allied war efforts in the Cameroons, brought about 600 African soldiers from the Belgian Congo. A few of the Africans defending the territory for the Germans had come from various West African colonies, but the majority came from Cameroon, especially from the central region. These West African soldiers conducted a successful but arduous and challenging campaign, which involved long distances of marching and fighting in the hills and mountains, swamps, dense forests, with mostly flank attacks, surprises and ambushes, from concealed positions and use of trenches. Because of the sacrifices of these Africans, the Allies were able to achieve one of their first victories in the war, victories which boosted their morale by signaling that the German military drive could be finally halted. As fascinating and captivating as it may be, nothing is known of individual African soldiers in the campaign, nor of their specific experiences and how those experiences form part of the larger experiences of the Great War.

Narratives on the African campaigns and post-war partition focus more on the Europeans than on Africans. Although every work on the subject recognizes that the campaign was fought

²³ These were African colonial soldiers raised from all the French Equatorial and West African colonies, with which France was able to expand its African empire and to fight its colonial wars, including having the soldiers fight for France in Europe during the First World War. The majority of these soldiers came from French Sudan (modern day Mali) and Upper Volta (modern day Burkina Faso).

almost exclusively by Africans, no effort has been made to present both the collective and individual performances of these African soldiers. When not elaborating on the activities of those few European officers, major works painstakingly examine the differences, mutual suspicions and diplomatic wrangling between the European military officers and their respective governments during the campaign instead. Some of the most detailed accounts of the campaign, spanning several decades, have followed the same pattern. All of them talk about numbers, but none is able to identify African names and make their story part of the larger one. Although writing on Nigeria (and Nigerians) in the Cameroon campaign, Akinjide Osuntokun, for example, devotes attention to the activities of European military officers in the campaign, detailing the disdain, suspicions and mistrusts that existed between British officers on the one hand and the French on the other. He also devotes much attention to the conflict between British and French officers in the North of Cameroon during the war.²⁴ Surprisingly, no mention is made of individual Nigerian soldiers and their experiences and specific performances, although the title of his book suggests otherwise.

Other historians, with more detailed accounts of the campaign, have followed the example of Osuntokun. Byron Farwell's account reduces the campaign to a British affair, overwhelmed with concerns of some British officers, and detailing their adventures while at the same time exorcising the campaign.²⁵ In a similar fashion, Hew Strachan, although detailing both German and Allied military strategies, as well as providing careful details on the battles and even weaponry, does not recognize the military experiences of Africans in the campaign. His analysis of the motives of the British, and particularly those of French, on whose local initiatives German

²⁴ Akinjide Osuntokun, *Nigeria in the First World War* (London: Longman Group Limited, 1979), 190-1

²⁵ Farwell, *The Great War*, 49-71.

Cameroon was invaded, is welcoming. France's concerns, he argues, were fundamentally territorial, while those of Britain were maritime or strategic. Like others, Strachan's account markets the notion of a European war in Africa.²⁶

Understandably, some problems, factors, and forces have influenced the form of the narratives above. The low literacy rate of Africans employed in the campaign and the subsequent lack of their own personal memoirs on the war has made it difficult for existing accounts to specifically track down individual African soldiers' experiences. The documentation process of tens of thousands of Africans being recruited for the campaign was faulty, reminiscent of the practice of naming slaves during the time of the African transatlantic slave trade. The majority of those recruited to fight never had their last names on record. Names of African recruits appearing on recruitment records come to us as Alabi Ibadan, Makinde Abeokuta, Ibrahim Kano, to name but these, the last names being those not genuinely the names of the recruits but of the towns or places where they were recruited.²⁷ As European recruiters went from village to village, town to town, with the compliance of the Chiefs, the process of proper identification and documentation was undermined. When a bunch of new recruits was handed to recruiters by their Chief, the recruiting officer simply asked their name, and once a single name was given, it was considered

²⁶ Hew Strachan, "The Cameroons," in *The First World War: The First World War in Africa* (Oxford; University Press, 2004), 19-60. This is one of the most detailed conventional account on the Cameroon campaign.

²⁷ Others, especially those whose experiences and individual actions are incorporated into this study included; Alao Ibadan, Morakinjo Ibadan, Adeokin Ibadan, Ojo Ibadan, Durowotu Ibadan, Adeyomi Ibadan, Dangana Abeokuta; Sumanu Sokoto, Moma Zaria, Ali Kano, Salumi Yola, Musa Zonga, Moma Kano, Osuman Yola, Musa Bauchi, Namadu Bauchi, Awdu Kano. There were others whose last names were not necessarily names of towns or villages. These were mostly those recruited and formed part of the colonial army prior to the war, and called upon to serve when war came. Examples include; Dangana Arongunda, Moma Fika, Awdu Sakadade, Sali Tassawa, Ademuro Rogo, Moma Jima, Mamu Zozo, Moma Shira, Agbi Owo, Adegbite Offa, Bolai Garra, Garuba Gaya, Arri Kukawa, Awadu Bakano of Gold Coast, Ige Offa, Jatto Dagarti of Gold Coast, Belo Akure, Mama Gujiba, Musa Godibowa, Maifindi Shua, Musa Kata of the W.A.R, Maida Musa, Braima Sare, Corporal Palpuke Grumah of Gold Coast, Amadu Fulani of Gold Coast.

the first name, and the name of the place, village or town from where that recruit was obtained automatically became the last name of the recruit.

In addition to the problems above, the storage of records relating to the African campaigns has further complicated the situation for scholarship. Immediately following the campaign, vital records pertaining to the campaign were moved from the very society that ought to keep the records. The campaign had hardly ended in March 1916 before records collected by British officials and military men were quickly evacuated to London in April of that year. When asked to provide records for the purpose of writing a more 'deserving' role of Nigerians in the Cameroon campaign, a British colonial official in the Northern Nigerian Headquarters, unable to find those records, quickly replied that “you will recollect... that all the Headquarter records in connection with these operations [the Cameroon campaign] were taken to England early in April 1916,....”²⁸ This has made most of the records of the war inaccessible, especially to researchers in Africa, who do not always have the means to travel to the archives in Europe.

Another factor that has dictated the ways in which African campaigns have been narrated is that for a very long time, even before African history was born, they were narrated by regimental and official voices. Such official accounts did intentionally make it seem like a European war in Africa, fought by the Europeans. Anne Sampson notes how “reading the Belgian official history of the war [in Africa] makes the reader wonder if it is the same war that is being spoken about” because in the account, “written to the glory of ‘little’ Belgium fighting against the superpowers and succeeding,” little, if anything is “recorded of the Indian, black and

²⁸ National Archives of Nigeria, Ibadan (hereafter NANI) CSO 19/6, From Headquarter Office, Nigeria Regiment, Kaduna, to the Central Secretary's Office, Lagos, 8 April 1918.

coloured involvement in the East and Southern theatres despite these groups contributing the greatest proportion of man power.”²⁹

Notwithstanding the problems, the above approach to African soldiers’ role in the war may well have contributed to the lack of African public histories and memorials on the tens of thousands of Africans who sacrificed in that war to make the world a better place. Were the pattern (from which the two problems above have resulted) to continue, one could consider the African chapter of the war as endangered histories. And over time, the African campaigns could sink into oblivion and disappear, making it impossible for distant future generations even to remember that Africa was home to some of the Great War campaigns. Over time, the numbers rather than people which now seem to matter more in accounts on the subject could as well dwindle into insignificance. And when such happens, and given that there are no names, it would be as if African campaigns never happened, or that if they did, they were peopled by Europeans in Africa.

Study Objectives and Significance

The objectives and significance of this dissertation will mitigate the aforementioned problems in the historiography of the Great War, as well as contribute alternative approaches and understandings of African history during the colonial period. Specifically, the study aims to reconstruct a peopled narrative of an African campaign (the Cameroon West African campaign) of the Great War, focusing on the collective and individual performances of West African soldiers. In formulating an African peopled narrative of an African theater of the war, I intervene not only in the War’s modern historiography but equally in understandings of the colonial history

²⁹ Samson, *World War I*, 2.

of Africans. It has easily eluded the attention of historians that the tendency of sources to speak exclusively of European officers and soldiers in the war, leaving African participants whether in the campaigns in Africa or Europe and Asia both nameless and faceless is an effective way of further erasure of Africans and African history in world history. At the same time, and while expanding the historiography of the war, this formulation provides localities, territories, and nations deemed to be at the peripheral of the Great War a resource base from which they could begin to re-represent the war in their local, national and public history projects. Local and public history projects do not emerge from fiction. They are the material present of the past. For them to make sense, they need to emerge from a story that is accurately narrated. This study tells the story of the Cameroon campaign of the Great War as it happened.

Furthermore, the study examines the campaign in its own right, understanding reasons why Africans fought, and how they fought, as well as the specific implications of the campaign on Cameroon. It is a history of recovery and inclusion. But, by examining African campaigns in their own right, the overall objective goes beyond a mere recovery and inclusion of Africans and their campaigns into the historiography of the Great War. It brings together both the local and global events of the war into a conversation. For a century now, historical scholarship has focused mainly on the global events and activities of the war. They see bombs falling, airplanes, battleships, missiles; they see Germany, Great Britain and France, Russia and so forth; they see battles pitting battalions of soldiers against each other, in a line up face-to-face killing. If scholarship tried to understand the link between the local and the global in the war, it would be seen that far from being peripheral sideshows, Africans, and their campaigns, in fact, remain central to the expansion of the scope and boundaries of the war in unique ways. Without them, it would be a misnomer even to refer to the 1914 war as a world war. At best, it would just be a

European war. The perception of campaigns in Africa and Asia as ‘sideshows’ cages our understanding of the 1914 struggle as a global war. A study and inclusion of African campaigns of the Great War in the manner as suggested in this dissertation forces a reconsideration of the larger historical issues and forces behind the Great War and enhances our understanding of how a local incident like the assassination of an archduke in the Balkans led to the collapse of international diplomacy and plunged the entire world into a global conflagration. This study contributes a significant effort toward a transnational research on the Great War by demonstrating that a productive understanding of the 1914 conflict must consider both its long reach into, and its link with Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and the Americas.

The third objective of the study is that it examines colonialism, colonial violence and issues of honor, marrying the concepts as they interacted together and animated the colonial history of Cameroon before and during the 1914 war. The nature and practices of violence in colonial Cameroon are examined, and their link to the 1914 war established. To do this, I start with a working definition of colonial violence. Violence is understood here as a physical infliction of pain or death as well as “assaults on the personhood, dignity, sense of worth or value of the victim.”³⁰ The colonial violence being referred to deals mainly with all physical acts of killing, maiming, flogging, raping, forced labor, and other physical forms of pain infliction that happened in the colonial spaces. Colonial spaces in this sense involve the entire Cameroon territory that was ‘officially’ under German rule from 1884 till the outbreak of the 1914 war. Violence is also conceived and used here as in the form suggested by Ned Blackhawk, who sees the perpetration of violence by the colonizer as crucial to our understanding of the history of the

³⁰ Michelle R. Moyd, *Violent Intermediaries: African Soldiers, Conquest, and Everyday Colonialism in German East Africa* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2014), 6.

colonized.³¹ Where violence is used or discussed, pain, as experienced by Africans, remains its implied subject. Although “pain remains an uncommon subject in historical inquiry, particularly because of language’s inability to capture the experiential nature of another’s pain,” the violence of colonialism put countless African bodies in pain, so that violence and pain – however destabilizing or troubling to understand, remain prerequisites in understanding the unfolding of African history during the colonial era.³²

While there were different and multifaceted forms of colonial violence, the study focuses specifically on violence between the colonizers and the colonized. It works on the premise that violence in colonial Cameroon was mostly perpetrated by the German colonial authorities and military officers, together with their trained and managed African soldiers and that many Cameroonians responded with violence as well, in the form of armed resistance to colonialism. In 1884, Germany suddenly outflanked Britain and France to proclaim a formal protectorate over the Cameroons. German colonialism had been born in the turmoil of violence and intrigues, and the necessity to achieve a hostile colonial agenda unleashed spectacles of violence in the colony that predated the 1914 war. For analyzing colonial violence, colonialism is understood in this study as a power relationship that “used violence to impose the direct and formal dependence of the occupied region and control over the indigenous populations.³³

The study adds to the literature on colonial violence in Africa.³⁴ But it goes beyond that literature to suggest that scholarship should look beyond available motives behind some of the

³¹ Ned Blackhawk, *Violence over the Land: Indians and Empires in the Early American West* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2006), 5-8.

³² Blackhawk, *Violence Over the Land*, 8. Blackhawk contends how pain and violence remain prerequisite to understanding the colonial history of the Indian West in North America.

³³ See Sebastian Conrad, *German Colonialism: A Short History*. Trans. Sorchá O’Hagan (Cambridge: University Press, 2012) 12.

³⁴ The literature generally posits motives of conquest and subjugation, pacification, racialization, dehumanization and communicative purposes, as explicative tools for colonial violence. Examples include, Timothy Weiskel, *French*

spectacles of colonial violence in Africa, particularly the case of colonial Cameroon. Besides the available concepts of conquest and subjugation, racialization, dehumanization serving as analytical tools, historians of colonial violence must also realize that certain spectacles of violence did ‘over achieve their goals,’ sometimes attaining moments of irrationality. All episodes of colonial violence began with defined or implied objectives and purposes. Cultural anthropologists Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Philippe Bourgois have declared that most violence is ‘not senseless’ at all,³⁵ but by using the word ‘most,’ they also seem to imply that some violence may be ‘senseless’ or irrational. At what point then, does violence get irrational, if it does? There were moments in colonial Cameroon when many of the physical acts of violent killings were described by both the perpetrators and the European neutral witnesses on the scenes as senseless. Of course, no victim of violence thinks that the violence he or she has suffered is justifiable. But how did some of the neutral observers of German violence and the perpetrators see some of the spectacles of the violence? Did they always have an explanation for the violence or a rational that fits squarely into today’s historians’ rationalizations? At the oral presentation of this dissertation, one of the members of the dissertation committee, suggesting the inadequacy of always attributing historically ‘conceptual motives’ for colonial violence, stated that colonialism and violence provided opportunities for psychopaths. I am prone to agree with him. But I must state clearly that I do not use ‘senselessness’ or ‘irrationality’ as a tool to

Colonial Rule and the Baule Peoples: Resistance and Collaboration, 1889-191 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980); Jonathon Glassman, *War of Words, War of Stones: Racial Thought and Violence in Colonial Zanzibar* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2011); Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1965); Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 1963); Raffael Scheck, *Hitler’s African Victims: The German Army Massacres of Black French Soldiers in 1940* (Cambridge: University Press, 2006); and Jeremy Silvester and Jan-Bart Gewald, *Words Cannot Be Found, German Colonial Rule in Namibia: An Annotated Reprint of the 1918 Blue Book* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2003).

³⁵ Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Philippe Bourgois, “Introduction: Making Sense of Violence,” in *Violence in War and Peace: An Anthology*, ed. Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Philippe Bourgois (n.p: Blakwell Publishing, 2004), 3.

explaining violence in colonial Cameroon. At the same time, I question the existing concepts as to whether they can account for each episode of violence in colonial Cameroon, from start to finish. While there was always a rationale at every initial stage of the violence, a strong and consistent historical argument cannot be made for that rationale from start to finish. Perhaps historians and scholars are too cautious to not find a conceptual justification for historical events, including episodes of violence in colonial Africa.

From start to finish, colonial authorities showed little or no sympathy for the colonized, conceiving of them as enemies of the colonial agenda. Colonial violence seemed to have begun spasmodically and haphazardly, but soon became systemic and an everyday experience. Colonial officials characteristically asserted that it was impossible to go on in the colonies without violence. Many of the top colonial officials began with a perception that Africans were ‘savages’ and ‘bloodthirsty,’ and that before the colonial agenda could be set to success, Africans needed first of all to “be taught a bloody lesson.”³⁶ They entertained violently racialized views of Africans, with the possibility of ethnic cleansing, in which a whole polity could preferably be exterminated. In fact, the longest serving German colonial Governor after retiring in 1906 later remarked of the most dominant coastal group of people in Cameroon that they were the “laziest, falsest, and meanest rabble on whom the sun ever shone, and it would certainly have been best when the country was conquered in 1884 if they had been, if not exterminated, at least expelled from the land.”³⁷ With such views on Africans, colonial perpetrators of violence began to

³⁶ Quoted by L.H Gann, “Economic Development in Germany’s African Empire, 1884-1914,” in *Colonialism in Africa 1870-1960: The Economics of Colonialism*, Vol. 4. ed. Peter Duignan and L.H Gann (London: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 139.

³⁷ Jesco Von Puttkamer, *Gouverneursjahre in Kamerun* (Berlin, Verlag von Georg Stilke, 1912), 52. Von Puttkamer was the German Governor of Cameroon from 1895 to 1906 and his administration was reputed for most of the violence and brutalities against the colonized.

organize endless punitive expeditions where people were killed in numbers, homes and villagers set on fire, leaders captured and executed, or given some form of similar punishment. The result was that communities organized themselves under various leaders to retaliate, leading to what Franz Fanon and Paul Satre have called the ‘continuum’ of violence.³⁸ Under the circumstance, armed resistance movements proliferated in all parts of the colony, and up to 1914 when war came, there was a sort of a national resistance movement spearheaded by some of the most aggrieved coastal peoples in the Cameroon colony, the Duala.

Violence in Colonial and later wartime Cameroon, the study argues, was gendered in nature. According to Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois, “it is difficult to conceive of violence without addressing its almost inevitably gendered contours.”³⁹ When it targeted men, it affected both men and women; when it targeted women, it was meant – and it did - personally harm the women, but also affected the men, and the society as a whole. Women were specifically targeted, abused, dishonored, sexually assaulted, raped, flogged and killed. In some places, they were used to perform forced labor, and when they were less compliant, they were beaten and abused. They suffered double violence in the hands of their perpetrators. This gendered nature of colonial violence had much to do with African masculinities of honor. Europeans used African gendered conceptions of protection and mutual obligations that created the bonds between African men and their women in African communities to try to break down those very communities. What

³⁸ Franz Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1963), supported by Paul Satre, argues that colonial violence perpetrated by the colonizer was being internalized by the colonized; he suggested that this internalization of violence would culminate in a revolution, in which the colonized would use greater violence to overthrow the violence of the colonizer. He called that internalization and response with greater violence a ‘continuum’ of violence.

³⁹ Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois, “Making Sense of Violence,” 22.

accounts for this gendered nature of violence in colonial and wartime Cameroon, in which women were primary targets?

So far, the paucity of scholarship on the gendered nature of violence in colonial Africa is sobering. Of the scanty literature on the issue of gendered colonial violence, some have viewed it as part of the colonial agenda, in which the colonizers sought to extend their hegemonic power, conquest, and control over African colonies through the bodies of African women.⁴⁰ David Kenosian specifically sees colonial gender violence as a manifestation of ‘mastership’ in which Germans sought to exercise their status as “Herr” or master in the colonial landscape.⁴¹ Having compartmentalized and racialized the colonies, with whites at the top and blacks at the deep bottom, the colonizers saw in the bodies of African women another means to control and stabilize the colonial world. Public rape and sexual assault on African women, including married women, royal princesses, women of revolutionary soldiers, and even minors by colonial officials sought to traumatize, stigmatize and humble both the victims and their men and parents who were placed at the deepest bottom and were expected only to obey and submit. In other parts of the racialized world just like Africa, sexual violence and dishonoring of women of the downtrodden races aligned well with the need to dehumanize, assert authority and masculinity, on the part of the privileged races. Hannah Rosen has observed how prior to emancipation in North American southern states, “one demonstration of white male dominance of southern

⁴⁰ Daniel J. Walther, “Sex, Race, and Empire: White Male Sexuality and the “Other” in Germany’s Colonies, 1894-1914,” *German Studies Review* 33, no. 1 (February 2010): 46.

⁴¹ David Kenosian, “The Colonial Body Politic: Desire and Violence in the Works of Gustav Frenssen and Hans Grimm,” *Monatsshefte* 89, no. 2 (Summer, 1997): 185.

society had been the virtual legal impunity with which white men sexually abused African American women.”⁴²

Perhaps, one of the best examples of the gendered contours of colonial violence is the account of Amina Mama, who argues how colonialism saw an increased vulnerability of African women to various forms of violence. She provides instances where violence against women in colonial Africa was often meant as punishment against resistant societies. “Where there was resistance,” she argues, “rape and sexuality abuse were inflicted on women and the same treatment was meted out to wives, mothers, daughters, and sisters of men who were suspected of being members of the resistance movements simply to humiliate them.”⁴³ This study adds to the literature on the gendered nature of colonial violence. It does so by particularly analyzing the gender contours of much of the violence in colonial Cameroon.

The study shows how Cameroonians responded to the violence of colonial authorities through armed resistance. From the South to the North, the West to the East, various groups engaged the colonial administration in bloody fights. However, armed resistance wars were met with greater ferocity from the colonial authorities. The situation was such that the 1914 war came at a hostile colonial moment. It was under these circumstances that Europeans needed to mobilize and recruit Africans for combat activities in Cameroon. The study thus examines mobilization and recruitment of Africans for combat activities in Cameroon and argues that while there was a multiplicity of factors that attracted Africans into military service for the

⁴² Hannah Rosen, ““Not That Sort of Women”: Race, Gender, and Sexual Violence during the Memphis Riot of 1866,” in *Sex, Love, Race: Crossing Boundaries in North American History*, ed. Martha Hodes, (New York and London, New York University Press, 1999), 267.

⁴³ Amina Mama, “Sheroes and Villains: Conceptualizing Colonial and Contemporary Violence against Women in Africa,” in *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*, ed. M. Jacqui Alexander and Chanddra Talpade Mohanty (New York and London: Routledge, 1997), 48 & 51.

Cameroon campaign, the recruitment process remained largely coercive. One of the most intangible factors in the recruitment process was how Europeans manipulated African notions of masculine honor for military purposes. While this worked, together with several other material factors, the study establishes that the majority of the Africans who served in combat activities in Cameroon were conscripted.

As part of the activities of the Great War, Allied nations (Britain and France) elected to invade German Cameroon in 1914. In doing so, the Allies needed to recruit Africans in their respective West African colonies as well as later on in Cameroon to fight the war. Similarly, the Germans were confronted with the difficult question of mobilizing the same populations they had so antagonized, to defend the colony against the Allied invaders. Generally, when Europeans began enlisting Africans for military services, a conglomerate of motives and interests determined how some men –both recruited before the war and in wartime - opted to serve as soldiers. These motives and interests were both tangible and intangible. Materialistically, some Africans accepted combat services to benefit from the attractive packages offered them by the colonizers, such as monetary pay and looting.⁴⁴ The Germans particularly gave their recruits a blank check to loot under the guise of war, and commit other atrocities such as seizing women for sexual pleasures. Such practices and expectations attracted Africans to fight for the Germans. In connection with such material gains, traditional authorities in charge of providing the Germans with massive recruits did so for political gains. The rulers of the center region whose political status had been elevated by the Germans became the greatest provider of recruits for the

⁴⁴ The best and most recent account which examines the motivations of African soldiers in the European colonial military services in German East Africa is that of Michelle R. Moyd, *Violent Intermediaries*, already cited.

Germans.⁴⁵ Leaders who counted on personal gains, who had personal scores to settle with some young men in the villages, used the opportunity to provide recruits. They bundled up those of their subjects considered as political subversives, hoping that they might be killed in the course of fighting. Such political punishment made it too easy for many recruits to desert while on the battlefield whenever the opportunity availed itself. In the Southeast of Cameroon, a large number of the *askari* who deserted the Germans and joined the French confessed how they had been handed to the German recruiters by their Chief because they had questioned the authority of the said Chief.⁴⁶

Besides, or in addition to material and personal considerations, honor, I argue, played a fundamental role in the European military mobilization and recruitment of Africans. Simplified claims by Europeans that their African soldiers were mostly either ‘royalists’ or mercenaries fail to capture the complex historical forces and factors, including the element of honor, behind such massive involvement of Africans in the fighting. Some Africans often relished such characterizations and claims, reminding Europeans that they too had complex reasons for fighting. Notions of honor – military, religious and political – were used both by the Germans and the Allies as key to luring Africans to fight. The majority of studies on the subject have failed to consider the place of honor in African history. However, John Iliffe tracks how notions of honor over the centuries and across various historical epochs have been central to African militarism. He asserts how honor has been the Chief ideological motivation of African (military) behavior before, during and after colonial rule. Generously viewing honor as "a right to respect,"

⁴⁵ Frederick Quinn, "The Impact of the First World and its Aftermath on the Beti of Cameroun," in *Africa and the First World War*, ed. Melvin E. Page (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987).

⁴⁶ Archives Nationales, Section d'Outre-Mer, Aix-en-Provence, France (hereafter ANSOM) TGO 8/76, Confidentiel, Merlin, a Monsieur le Ministre, le 18 Août 1915.

including the willingness and ability of the individual to enforce such respect, he demonstrates how it incited war between men and political leaders.⁴⁷

I use the concepts of honor and respect in African history interchangeably. The first edition of the Oxford English Dictionary defines honor to mean something like ‘esteem’ or respect,’ and John Iliffe has rejected Paul Spencer’s attempt to make a sharp distinction between honor and respect in sub-Saharan African history in suggesting that honor should revolve more about something to be defended and respect more about something to be competed for, because many accounts of honor elsewhere in Africa have equally stressed its competitive character.⁴⁸ Although honor and respect did mean different things to Africans at different times who spoke multiple languages and dialects, both terms did converge at one point or another in the minds and behaviors of Africans, so that attempting to make a sharp distinction between the two will be counter-productive as a tool of historical analysis, at least for this study. The study demonstrates that honor was key to African military services in the campaign not only because of what the concept meant for Africans but perhaps more so because of what Europeans thought it meant for Africans. To the extent that Europeans manipulated what they saw as African conceptions of masculine honor and respect as recruiting tools.

The exploitation of notions of honor to recruit Africans was used both by the Germans and the Allies. In a desperate move to entice Cameroonians into combat on their side, and cognizant of the grievances of the people against German colonialism, German colonial authorities began to make concessions of intangible benefits to the people; they began making promises that those willing to support German war efforts would be treated in more respectable

⁴⁷ John Iliffe, *Honor in African History* (Cambridge: University Press, 2005).

⁴⁸ Paul Spencer, *The Samburu: A study of gerontocracy in a nomadic tribe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965); Iliffe, *Honor*, 5.

ways than the rest. A circular letter from the German Governor on the outbreak of war promised the colonized that “he who faithfully serves the Germans will be treated more & more like a German and will share in the privileged position of the Germans.”⁴⁹ Sharing in the ‘privileged position of the Germans’ no doubt conveyed some respectable status in the colonial apparatus. Michelle Moyd has illustrated how African soldiers’ motivation for military service in German East Africa revolved around reasons of respectability, where they sought to become ‘big men’ or respectable men in the society.⁵⁰

The Germans mainly targeted two aspects of honor- honor associated with slavery, and honor pegged to the Islamic religion. Islamic leaders and Muslims in the Northern part of the country were urged to fight for the honor of Islam, and protect their religion from the invading Allies. Those Islamic leaders, together with influential leaders in the highly centralized political areas in the Western Cameroon grasslands, were told that they must fight for their honor and prestige. They were told that to avoid enslavement, they needed to provide their male subjects to fight for Germany. Otherwise, Britain and France would come in, take the country and enslave them and their people. If that happened, their political fame would be lost. Such fear mongering messages entangled in the senses of honor were useful to the extent that Islamic leaders and political leaders in parts of Cameroon donated as many men as possible to fight in support of the Germans, and save their kingdoms.⁵¹

⁴⁹ The National Archives, Kew-Richmond, United Kingdom (hereafter TNA) WO 158/552, Impl. Governor Ebermaier to the Natives of the Protectorate, Duala, 8 August 1914. See, also, *Kamerun Post*, Extrablatt No. 12, 12 August 1914.

⁵⁰ Michelle Moyd, *Violent intermediaries*, 92-3. Moyd’s study does not treat respect and honor interchangeably. She specifically argues for ‘respectability’ as one of the key intangible motivations for African colonial military service in German East Africa.

⁵¹ Cameroon National Archives, Buea (hereafter CNAB), G.V Evans, Bikom Assessment Report, Ad-2, 59/29, 1927.

Material and intangible factors as used in Cameroon were also in play with regard to the process of military recruitment in Allied West African colonies, for military services in Cameroon. In most parts of Northern Nigeria, for example, Islamic rulers counting on extensions and guarantee of their political terrains and interests did not hesitate to provide the British with men under arms. The Emir of Yola, desiring to regain control over the Islamic Adamawa, most of which was in the Cameroons, offered as many recruits as possible for the British cause.⁵² In Western Nigeria, the Alaafin of Oyo, the Oba of Benin, all hoping to make political gains and strengthen their personal powers opted to swell the British fighting unit with their own subjects. Hoping to strengthen Oyo and make it the center of Yorubaland with himself as the highest beneficiary, the Alaafin insisted to the British how he was capable of raising for them up to 30,000 military manpower.⁵³

The Political and religious honor was used widely in the recruitment process in Nigeria. In southeastern Nigeria for example, the British urged the Ibos that if they wanted respect, high esteem, and honor, they should fight and that the war afforded them an opportunity to come forward and prove themselves 'men.'⁵⁴ Ibo Chiefs were reminded how their pre-colonial societies had fought for honor, and that it was time to fight for even greater honor under the highly 'civilized' British flag.⁵⁵ Also, and just like the Germans were doing in some parts of Cameroon, the British went as far as positioning the narrative of the war as a choice between 'slavery and freedom,' with the understanding that dishonor was associated with slavery and honor associated

⁵² TNA CO 583/33/26209; Frederick Lugard, Governor General of Nigeria, to the Colonial office, Lagos, 2 December 1916.

⁵³ James K. Mathews, "Reluctant Allies: Nigerian Responses to Military Recruitment 1918," in *Africa and the First World War*, ed. Melvin E. Page (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), 97.

⁵⁴ National Archives of Nigeria, Enugu (hereafter NANE) RIVPROF, 8.5.77, Anglo-German War, Enlistment Records for WAFF, 1 August 1917.

⁵⁵ NANE RIVPROF., 8.5.77, Anglo-German War.

with freedom. In the Northern territories, as well as highly Islamized regions, they tailored their messages to religious honor. The Governor-General gathered Muslim leaders and Muslim subjects in emergency meetings, reminding them of the need to defend the honor of Islam against the Germans and their Allies. He assured them how one of the major war aims of the Allies was to protect the honor and existence of Islam, against assault from the Germans and their war Allies.⁵⁶ I should note, particularly, European consciousness and conviction that to successfully have African leaders and their people support their military efforts with men under arms, they had to fine tune their messages on special appeals for honor.

On the whole, and in spite of all the numerous factors and forces behind soldiers' motivation for military services in Cameroon, conscription came to constitute an integral part of how those soldiers were acquired. Records of recruitment in Allied colonies have established plenty of evidence of conscription methods. Most males were just bundled up by their Chiefs and colonial recruitment agents and handed over for military service. Both in French and British colonies, recruits testified how they were simply caught and handed to the white man. Many were never told what their mission would be. Many thought they were being sent to work some little labor for the white man, only to discover later that they had actually just been conscripted for war services in faraway lands. In Southeastern Nigeria, a man testified how they came back from their yam farm one night and were called by their Chief who handed them to a government messenger, simply informing them that the white man had sent for them. When they reached the white man's compound, their names were written down and they were given blankets and food,

⁵⁶ *The Nigerian Pioneer*, 13 November 1914.

and days later, they found that they had just been conscripted for services in the Great War.⁵⁷ In the French colonies, men who called at the duck were simply conscripted.⁵⁸

The German recruitment drive was not as successful as that of the Allies, in large part because of the hostile colonial situation that predated the war in Cameroon. As this study argues, the Germans were forced to fight a two-front-war. This was the result of German colonial violence, whereby during the war, the majority of Cameroonians not only responded negatively to German military recruitment efforts but opted to actively support the invading Allies in the fight to defeat the Germans in Cameroon. This atmosphere of a two-front war was deeply regretted by the Germans themselves. As soon as the war began, German officials realized that they were fighting a war in an enemy territory.⁵⁹ Cameroonians, the study shows, thus used the 1914 as a general armed resistance against German colonialism. I argue that this resistance to German rule constituted one of the decisive factors for the German defeat in Cameroon. Throughout the war, several Cameroonians who had been conscripted into the *askari* not only deserted but went on to join the Allies, a situation that made soldiers in one war to switch camps at some points. When not fighting against the Germans as soldiers, Cameroonians supported the Allies in other forms such as guides, as spies, as carriers and porters, and with food supplies and other war logistics. The result was that coupled with other factors such as Allied African soldiers' numerical superiority and the general shortage of arms and ammunition for the *askari*, the Germans after eighteen months of resistance were forced to surrender Cameroon in February

⁵⁷ James K Mathews "Reluctant Allies: Nigerian Responses to Military Recruitment 1918," in *Africa and the First World War*, ed., Melvin E. Page (New York: Macmillan1987), 97.

⁵⁸ Melvin Page, "Introduction: Black men in a White Man's war," in *Africa and the First World War*, ed., Melvin Page (London: Macmillan, 1987), 4.

⁵⁹ TNA WO 158/552, Private Letter (translated) from Oberlt. Engelbrechten to Hauptmann Gaisser, Camp Mbanga-Mujuka, 24 October 1914.

1916. This outcome of the war in Cameroon reveals a striking irony for the end of German colonialism. It had fed on, and thrived on violence. But when confronted with greater violence, it failed its own basic test. This reveals the precariousness of colonialism as a system that incited and promoted internal violence but had the highest potential to collapse when confronted with external violence, especially if joined by the aggrieved colonized peoples. The Cameroon example validated Fanon's thesis on the answer to colonial violence, but from a different context and with its own complications.⁶⁰

What was the social impact of the Cameroon campaign? The study equally examines the social and humanitarian costs of the campaign, by concentrating on the campaign's violent atrocities on civilians and the original refugee problem it generated. Once the Allies invaded Cameroon and the Germans judged a sense of general unfriendliness, they doubled down on violence, women once again being the primary victims, many of whom were bayoneted. The fact women should suffer such trauma, agony and death in the context of an internationally acclaimed war presumed to be a masculine activity represent a humanitarian problem that is deserving of scholarly attention. But it also poses the difficult question of the plight of vulnerable populations in areas occupied by soldiers in both peace and wartime. What kind of civil-military relationships evolve during a brief military occupation of a locality, and what does that reveal about vulnerable populations? This question is even more crucial in situations where the occupying military seems to think that the local peoples are somehow less entitled to the 'civilized' rule of a modern war.

⁶⁰ Cameroonians had already started a sort of a 'revolutionary' war against German colonialism prior to the outbreak of the 1914 war (chapter 2), but the war itself provided them the opportunity to continue with that war by collaborating with the invading Allies to end German colonialism. The difference here was that it was one colonialism being ended in favour of another.

Atrocities such as the intentional killing of civilians – men, women, and children – during the Great War have been relatively well studied in the case of Europe, particularly the cases of Belgium and France. But, this troubling humanitarian crisis of the war as it occurred in African campaigns has so easily eluded the attention of scholarship. The scant literature on African campaigns of the war, and particularly on the humanitarian cost of the campaigns, has focused almost entirely on the combatant persons or soldiers, as well as carriers and porters. Although having one of the most detailed accounts of the Cameroon campaign, Strachan makes no mention of the murdering of civilians especially women and children as one of the severe impacts of the war in Cameroon.⁶¹ David Killingray, examining the social implications of the war in Cameroon on British West Africa, has focused on human labor, where the British employed tens of thousands of carriers and porters.⁶² Specifically, on human casualties, scholarship has documented numbers, while Thiemo Mouctar Bah contends that more carriers and porters died than of soldiers.⁶³ This study focuses on the intentional killing of civilians. In doing so, it also tackles the twin refugee problem. As a result of wartime atrocities, the Cameroon campaign generated an unprecedented refugee problem. Tens of thousands of women and children, as well as weak men, fled their homes into hiding in the bush, others fled across the borders to the neutral territory of Spanish territory of Guinea. In addition to starvation and homelessness, some of the refugees who came in contact with hostile soldiers were shot at and killed. The Cameroon districts mostly affected by the refugee problem included mainly Douala,

⁶¹ See chapter 3 “The Cameroons,” of his book, *The First world War*, 19-60.

⁶² David Killingray and James Matthews. "Beasts of Burden: British West African Carriers in the First World War," *Canadian Journal of African Studies / Revue Canadienne des Études Africaines*, 13, no. 1/2 (1979): 5-23.

⁶³ Thiemo Mouctar Bah, “L’Arique dans la Première Guerre Mondiale: Le Cas du Cameroun,” in *L’Afrique et L’Allemagne de la Colonisation à la Coopération 1884-1986 (Le Cas du Cameroun)*, ed. Kum’a Ndumbe III (Yaounde-Cameroon: Editions Africavenir, 1986), 280-1.

Kribi, Campo and Edea, where land activities of the German soldiers were most intense.⁶⁴

Arguably, these civilian murders, together with the refugee problem, constitute some of the most sidelined aspects of the African campaigns.

I try to understand civilian atrocities in Cameroon committed by the occupying German army in line with the international laws of war as they operated and were known by the belligerents at the time. In doing so, I argue that wartime atrocities in Cameroon must be comparatively understood within the larger transnational context of the differences between Germany and the Western Allies about the international rules of law. I use this African example to add to the conversation led by Isabel Hull who argues that civilian atrocities caused by occupying German soldiers in Belgium and Northern France in the first months of the war are to be explained by radically different German views and interpretation of the international law. Unlike the Allies, German understanding and interpretation of the laws of war were caged by the German military culture and war necessity, which took priority over everything else. With German military culture and the ‘necessity of war’ taking precedence over all else, the Germans regarded the treaty on the rules of war as nothing more than a scrap of paper.⁶⁵ I argue that German military officials in Cameroon, like those in Belgium, were guided by the same beliefs about the necessity of war and the use of laws of war, and about the fate of ‘weaker peoples’ under the guise of war. On the other hand, Allied military officials used similar arguments as they did in Europe, to criticize German atrocities, and to incite international attention.

⁶⁴ Details of the atrocities and the areas affected were published by the Allies in *European War Papers Relating to German Atrocities and Breaches of the Rules of War in Africa* (hereafter EWP) (London: Her Majesty Government, 1916).

⁶⁵ Isabel V. Hull, *A Scrap of Paper: Breaking and Making International Law during the Great War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014 ebook); see, also, by the same author, “‘Military necessity’ and the laws of war in Imperial Germany,” in *Order, Conflict, and Violence*, ed. Stathis N. Kalyvas, Ian Shapiro, and Tarek Masound (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 352-377; John Horne and Alan Kramer, *German Atrocities, 1914: A History of Denial* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001).

To be clear, wartime atrocities in Cameroon received international publicity nowhere near the examples of Belgium and France in Europe, for obvious reasons of neglect and exclusion, already alluded to. But, I should add that the two contexts of the atrocities (Africa and Europe) equally differed; not only were Belgium and France independent nations in Europe, but they also belonged to the Allied camp, which was responsible for bringing the world's attention to the breaches of the rules of war by Germany. On the other hand, Cameroon was a colony, and a German one and story lines there about wartime atrocities made a far lesser global impact. Although the level of publicity and world's attention to atrocities in the two continents differed, the atrocities themselves were contested and understood (at least by the Allies) within the same rubrics of and context of the international laws of war. Thus, understanding the 'transnational-ness' and 'global-ness' of these atrocities as they cut across Europe and Africa helps situate African campaigns in the historiography of the Great War in ways that have before now not been contemplated. In useful ways, it also raises the important question of the necessity for the international community of nations to try to synchronize their understandings, interpretations, and application of the laws of war, as a requirement for civilians not to suffer the violence of war more than the professional army.

For many communities affected by the 1914 war across the globe, the violence of intentional killing of non-combatant populations in occupied places, including targeted violence on women, was something new and unprecedented in the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. On the contrary, and for many parts of Africa affected by campaigns of the war, such violence was more or less a continuity of an encounter. Understanding brutal wartime atrocities in the context of the Great War but as more or a less a continuum of what had been going on in colonial Africa elevates our understandings of colonial violence in the continent.

There is, of course, another difference between wartime atrocities in Cameroon compared to those in Belgium; the situation in Cameroon was far more gendered in nature, replicating in some ways the colonial or prewar situation. Once again, and as happened in the years leading up to the war, the German army in wartime Cameroon targeted more women for sexual and physical violence.⁶⁶

So far, from my analysis of colonialism, colonial violence, and its gendered nature, through wartime recruitment activities, and then wartime atrocities, I demonstrate a tight relationship between colonialism, gendered violence, and masculine honor. This analysis is particularly useful for the fields of history, cultural anthropology, and other related fields. By demonstrating the interplay of these three concepts, and how Europeans exploited African masculinities of honor both for sexual violence and as an appeal to gain African military services, the study shows that colonialism was not always a top-down process or a one-way traffic where Europeans sought to impose their ‘civilization’ on Africans. Colonial practices built on European ideas of superiority as well as on African historical and cultural processes. Aspects and notions of African masculine honor were precisely the reasons that colonialists used sexual violence to try to break down the sense of obligation and protection within the colonized and vulnerable communities. This knowledge is crucial to historians, anthropologists and other scholars’ understandings of the everyday practices of colonialism.

⁶⁶ Horne and Kramer who are experts on civilian atrocities in Belgium and Northern France by occupying German army have observed that sexual violence by the occupying army was not as rampant; that it was mainly semi-secret, although it occasionally was made public when the perpetrators wanted to humiliate the men such as the husbands, parents and even children of the victims. The authors do suggest that sexual violence and rape of women in Belgium (by German soldiers) was usually perpetrated in semi-secret, but occasionally in public when meant to punish and humiliate the entire community.

The final objective of this study is its examination of the political aftermath of the Cameroon campaign. The majority of Cameroonians especially the Duala who had supported Allied war efforts had certain expectations. Many thought, or were made to believe, that in helping to put an end to German colonialism through the war, they would be participants in the new political dispensation and in how the political future of their colony would be decided. They were to be disappointed. African efforts of trying to influence the future of their country were overwhelmed by the larger and more complex politics of a war too complicated for Africans to influence beyond the battlefield. The departure of the Germans in 1916 had quickly rekindled the international imperial politics that paid no attention to African interests. Following the defeat of the Germans, Britain, and France immediately partitioned Cameroon among themselves. The partition followed the same kind of international politics and diplomacy that had animated the first partition of Africa in the last quarter of the 19th century in which little regard was paid to African interests. Again, and on the subject of this post-war partition of Cameroon, existing scholarship has paid attention to the activities of the partitioners (Europeans), excluding the role of those who were being partitioned (Africans), especially how they resisted. How are historians to understand the complicated story of the European repartition of post -1914 war Africa by silencing the 'role' of those being partitioned? In framing the discussion on the post-war partition of Cameroon therefore, I have stayed mindful to John Gallagher's assertion that "partitions are interesting to the historian because they tell him about the priorities of the partitioners, and sometimes about the resistance of the partitioned."⁶⁷ In other words, if we want

⁶⁷ John Gallagher, "The Decline, Revival and Fall of the British Empire," in *The Decline, Revival and Fall of the British Empire: The Ford Lectures and other Essays*, ed. Anil Seal (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 87. While borrowing this frame, I must state at once that I disagree with one of the major arguments in the book by Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, on European partition of Africa (chapter 1, 19-72), an argument I find quite ahistorical, misleading and counter factual. They claim that European imperialism was never the driving force for

to understand partition better, we should focus on the role of the victims of that partition. I show how Cameroonians resisted the fashion in which Britain and France chose to partition the colony after thousands of the inhabitants had facilitated the ousting of the Germans and the conquest of the territory.

It is understandable that decisions on the partition were all taken in Europe, yet concentrating on those decisions and activities to the neglect of African resistance only adds more pages to European history in Africa on an African subject. A discussion that considers the 'role' of Africans, especially their attempt to participate in the process, places all historical forces and actors together, thereby yielding a more holistic appreciation of the chain of events. History cannot be confined to a tale of the victor alone, any more than to the experiences, agonies, and frustrations of the vanquished. Even the story of the victors in isolation from that of the vanquished is a lopsided history that does little to a full understanding of the subject matter. These histories must be told, irrespective of whether they failed or succeeded.

In examining the Anglo-French arbitrary partition of Cameroon, I concur with Brian Digre, who has observed how "African interests, proclaimed in public as the basis of Allied policy, were widely disregarded in private" and, of course, in substance. Empty and propaganda promises by the Allies that they had invaded German Africa in the interest of Africans failed to pass a basic test when it came to deciding on how to dispose of conquered German African territories. The paramountcy of French desires became the decisive factors. Consequently, the result of the nature of partition was that "despite attempts to cloak Allied aims in altruistic terms, inter-Allied rivalry produced a division of Germany's tropical African colonies that reflected not

colonization of Africa, but rather that it was the side effect of partition, and although they cherry pick evidence, their evidence is super weak, and does not pass historical scrutiny.

African desires but European colonial priorities."⁶⁸ And while this was the case, scholarship on the post-war partition of Cameroon, instead of detailing the resistance posed by Cameroonians to that partition, has painstakingly documented diplomatic activities of British and French officials in charge of the process. The nonchalance with which the post-war Cameroon was partitioned has haunted the country's history for a century now. When informed Cameroonians look back at their history, turned upside down by European powers from as far back as the end of the First World War, they have more to regret than rejoice about.

Sources and Methods

Research work for this dissertation was completed in multiple archives in four different countries; United Kingdom, France, Nigeria and Cameroon. All four participated in the campaign and now house its vital records. Records collected from The National Archives, Kew-Richmond, United Kingdom (TNA) top the category of archival sources used, followed, in that order, by records from the *Archives Nationales, Section d'Outre-Mer*, in Aix-en-Provence, France (ANSOM), the Nigerian archives, and then the archives in Cameroon.

Records from TNA came from four main categories of files: War Office (WO), the Colonial Office (CO), the Admiralty Office (ADM) and the Foreign Office (FO). These are records formerly held by the Public Records Office (PRO) in London. War Office (WO) records provided details of military operations. Most were reports that followed a chain of military command, from one military officer to another. Senior British military commanders such as Captains and Colonels commanding columns and battalions in various places in Cameroon forwarded weekly reports to the general commander of Allied military operations Cameroon,

⁶⁸ Brian Digre, *Imperialism's New Clothes: The Repartition of Africa, 1914-1919* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1990), xii, 197 & 199.

Major-General Charles Dobell, whose headquarters was in Douala.⁶⁹ Some of the most useful records from the WO files were the War diaries of soldiers, which provided powerful insights into the campaign. Most importantly, there were war diaries of German soldiers and officers captured during the war, many of which were translated into English, thus making my work much easier. The use of these diaries made it possible for a critical and multi-source account. From them, I was able to narrate events from the perspectives of both the Allies and the Germans and to cross-check details.⁷⁰

Admiralty record files (ADM) served a similar purpose as the WO files, except that they were mostly reports and correspondences between naval officers and the Governor-General of Nigeria and the Secretary of the Admiralty in London. Some of the Cameroon operations, especially those around the coastal towns of Douala, Victoria, Edea, Kribi, were carried out in collaboration with the Navy. In fact, the landing of the joint Anglo-French force in Douala and the eventual seizure of the town in September 1915 was only made possible by the role of the British-Nigerian navy, commanded by the British senior naval officer, Captain Cyril Fuller. Some coastal operations were described as ‘amphibious’ because they involved both a land and a

⁶⁹ Accounts by Major-General Dobell were forwarded to the Governor-General of Nigeria in Lagos and to the British Secretary of the Colonies and later, of War, in London. Before 1 April 1915, military operations in the Cameroons came under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of the Colonies, but after that, the Secretary of War took over. This was so because the British West African colonial troops used in the Cameroons constituted a service unit under the Secretary of the Colonies. But it also explains, in part, the colonial motives behind the British and French invasion of Cameroon.

⁷⁰ Because most of the war diaries were personal notes and the authors may not have anticipated that they would be captured and their diaries made public undiluted, the officers often made self-confessions and revealing statements on African soldiers under their care. One German officer, for example, recorded how he baffled at the fighting skills and tactics of some of the Cameroon soldiers under his command, many of whom had received no European military training at all. Elsewhere, he compared the fighting skills and military alertness of an African soldier with a white German officer, passing a verdict in favor of the former. Many of the self-confessions in the diaries provided evidence on how Cameroonians used the war as an occasion to get rid of German colonialism and that had it not been for the active involvement of those Cameroonians on the side of the Allied invaders, the Cameroon colony would never have fallen into the hands of the Allies. Although this is a subjective statement, statements of this nature by an officer on the ground provide firsthand knowledge of why and how the majority of Cameroonians got involved in the war on the side of the Allies.

sea force. The naval record files also provided striking details on landed military operations, as well as contained captured documents from the Germans.

Colonial Office records files (CO) were also consulted. The Governor-general of Nigeria, Frederick Lugard, was the most senior colonial official overseeing military operations in the Cameroons. As a result, reports by all military officers in command of various operations ended up in the colonial office headquarters in Lagos-Nigeria, and eventually in the Secretary of the Colonies' office in London. Besides these files providing details on military operations, they also provided me with a good part of the material on colonial territorial matters and desires, material that has been used fairly in chapters three and seven.⁷¹ Supplementing evidence from the colonial records, although the IEast used, were records of the Foreign Office (FO). Not many of the FO files were used.⁷²

The *Archives Nationales, Section d'Outre-Mer in Aix-en-Provence*, France (ANSOM) is the branch of the French national archives that houses all French colonial records in Africa and other parts of the world. I consulted the section that particularly relates to former French West and Equatorial African colonies. The section is cataloged as *Ministère des Colonies, Série géographique Togo-Cameroun*, and for citation purposes, the acronym (ANSOM) TGO is used. The TGO file series records are stored in cartons, all of which are numbered. Thus, evidence from carton nine, number eighty-four is typically referenced as ANSOM TGO 9/84. Evidence obtained from ANSOM is used mostly in the chapter detailing some of the atrocities of war

⁷¹ Specifically, the records provided evidence on the Anglo-French post-war partition of Cameroon, such as territorial arguments advanced for the British retention of certain parts of the country, the desperate attempts by the French to have certain parts come under their rule, as well as evidence on how several Cameroonians resisted the fashion in which their lands were being divided.

⁷² Researchers interested in the European repartition of West Africa and matters relating to the Paris Peace Conference of 1919 will find FO 608/215 particularly useful.

directed against civilians, and fairly well in other chapters. Some of the French military records are exchanges between senior French military officials and senior British military officials, as they undertook joint operations. Slight discrepancies and judgments were revealed in how French archival and British archival sources reported on some of the events, on Allied military calculations, and on *askari* military calculations. Read side-by-side, records of British and French military officials in the two separate archives reveal striking conflicts, suspicions, distrust and often disdain arising mostly from differences in military cultures, language, between the British and the French officers commanding in the Cameroons, although on the surface, the Anglo-French military cooperation in the colony worked out for a common good.⁷³

I consulted two locations of the National Archives of Nigeria, in Ibadan in the Western part of the country and Enugu in the East, the two towns being about 325 miles distance apart.⁷⁴ Nigerian archives have more records on military operations in the Cameroons and on Cameroon colonial matters than do the Cameroon archives. This is so because the Cameroon portion that came under the British following the war was administered as an integral part of British Nigeria up to the time of independence in 1961. At independence, part of it reunited with the former French part of the Cameroons while part finally remained with Nigeria, and their colonial records remained in Nigeria. Most of the files gotten at the Ibadan branch are records of the Chief Secretariat Office, the office of the Governor-General which was based in Lagos. They are commonly labeled as NANI CSO. These records provided evidence on British military

⁷³ This observation will interest mostly historians on the subject more interested in highlighting European activities in an African war, and Byron Farwell (1986) and Hew Strachan (2004) have particularly made use of it.

⁷⁴ For more on the National Archives of Nigeria, see the following three articles by Simon Heap, 'The Nigerian National Archives, Enugu: An Introduction for Users and Summary of Holdings,' *History in Africa*, 21 (1994): 435-440; 'The Nigerian National Archives, Ibadan: An Introduction for Users and Summary of Holdings,' *History in Africa*, 18 (1991): 159-172; and 'The Nigerian National Archives, Kaduna: An Introduction for Users and Summary of Holdings,' *History in Africa*, 20 (1993): 395-407.

recruitment in Nigeria during the Cameroon campaign; including details on how British recruiters exploited African male masculinities of honor for military purposes. They also revealed a striking use of force and methods of conscription. At the Enugu branch, colonial records and records on military operations are also contained in CSO file. But most of the records are reclassified following the different states in the Eastern region. Records on River state, for example, are cited as RIVPROF, while those on Calabar state are cited as CALPROF. Full citation of a River state record at the Enugu branch archive, therefore, appears as NANE RIVPROF, followed by the file number. I used files from this branch location for evidence on mostly how southeastern Nigeria responded to British military recruitment.

In Cameroon, I visited the Cameroon National Archives location in Buea (CNAB), plus one missionary archive location in Bambui.⁷⁵ The Buea location in the Southwest English-speaking part of the country houses files in English, relating mainly to the history of that part of the country. The archive is disorganized, and, to say the least, endangered. Given this disorganized nature, coupled with the way that political bureaucracy infuses and imposes itself on all aspects of public institutions, many of the files at the Buea archive location that could have been useful to my work had been recalled for good by the central government. I was told by the archivist that when Cameroon and Nigeria were making their separate cases for their boundary disputes at the Hague, government officials from Yaounde (the capital city of Cameroon) came to the archives and withdrew for good all files relating to the Cameroon-Nigeria boundary issues. However, I was able to find and use a few records here such as intelligence reports, Annual

⁷⁵ For more on the Cameroon Archives, see Ralph A. Austen, "The National Archives of Cameroon," *History in Africa*, 1 (1974): 153-5; Robert Benga, "Ce Pays n'a pas d'archives," *Génération*, 12 (26 October 1994); Eldridge Mohammadou, *Catalogue des Archives Coloniales Allemandes du Cameroun Yaoundé*. Goethe Institute, 1972; David Gardinier, "African Archives: Cameroon," *Africana Newsletter* 1, 3 (1963).

reports, and military operations reports that were made by British officials in that part of the Cameroons during the war and immediately after that. Most of them are labeled as (CNAB) Ad and Ba files.

It turned out that a good chunk of the records I used was instead gotten from the Saint Thomas Aquinas Major Seminary and Library (STAMPS), a Roman Catholic Institution, situated in the Northwest part of Cameroon, precisely in the small town of Bambui, some ten miles from the regional headquarters of Bamenda. These were mostly assessment reports on some ethnic groups of the Cameroons, providing me with evidence on how they responded to German colonial violence, such as waging wars of resistance. Ironically, these files had been duplicated and certified from the national archives branch of Buea, and are better kept and preserved in Bambui than as in their original government location.

The problems, however, of using the records above, generated by European officials, to write an African history in general, and in this case particularly the African campaign of the war with particular attention to African soldiers' collective and individual experiences are enormous. First of all, the sources are explicitly about European officers in the campaign. As European officers themselves made the reports, they provided every detail about their personal experiences, while silencing the names of African soldiers, even if those soldiers individually led some of the military operations. Extracting, therefore, information from the sources directly on the actions and military performances of particular African soldiers was as problematic. My advisor always used to say that you cannot force the archive to tell you a story it doesn't know, but my experience with the archives has proven that you can get the story from the archive if it knows it and is not telling you the story or hiding something in the story from you. If you are patient and dig hard enough, the archive will tell you the story the way it is and ought to be

understood. That is what I tried to do. I remained patient, paid multiple visits to the same archives, digitized the records, read the same and multiple files over and over. Then I got the archives to tell me the story as it happened. The archives admit that the Cameroon campaign was conducted exclusively by African soldiers. But, when referring to African experiences in their numerous reports, they prefer to talk about numbers, not people. They treat Africans only as a collective, as either their royalists who stood with them through thick and thin or as mere mercenaries. On the other hand, they report more about the adventures of European military officers in the campaign, naming names and providing details. They go on to pay tribute to individual European officers and soldiers. When a European soldier or officer dies in a military operation, space is devoted in the report for his eulogy and military exploits in Africa.

Had I simply read and taken the sources as plainly as they were narrated, I would have ended up with a narration of Europeans fighting in Africa. So I read the sources critically, continually interrogating them. I also read them in context; I tried to imagine and visualize the environmental history of the Cameroons where the operations took place, and on which they were reporting. Given the geography and topography of the fighting ground and problems of logistics and adaptation, military strategies and tactics differed fundamentally from what was applicable in Europe. Thus, most fighting was undertaken by smaller forces, both manned and led by Africans. European officers did mostly the paperwork. So when an archival record, written by a European officer is reporting on an operation, I interrogate the source with questions such as, where did the activity take place? Who led it? How did the troops get to a hill, a dense forest or a mountain top? Who dug the trenches and mounted barricades? Who organized the ambush? Which unit of African soldiers was involved in that operation? In doing so, I had to

read multiple reporting on each incident to make sense of specific roles of Africans, from the report of the smallest officer to the most senior.

While European officers did not specifically mention African names, nor specifically included in the body of their report actions undertaken by named African soldiers, it turned out that requirement for military awards for each African soldier must detail on the specific activity of that soldier, for which the soldier was being recommended. Forced to mention African names being awarded, European officers chose to do this in the appendix of their reports. And while doing so, they often did not provide enough details for a researcher to match that action with the main one. I, therefore, had to read the appendix sections of all military reports carefully. I took careful notes of the dates and places of the event and tried to match them with the initial reports. Only in this way was I able to come out with a narrative that incorporates both Africans soldiers' collective and individual experiences into the body story. I cannot say that I got everything right. But this must be a good beginning.

Besides archival records, I have also used a range of English and German published or printed primary sources, including newspapers and magazine reporting during the campaign, official gazettes, regimental histories written by soldiers who were directly involved in the campaign, other biographical accounts by European officers who served and commanded units in the campaign. During the campaign, a day-to-day reporting of the fighting and the performances of African soldiers appeared in some newspapers at the time. Some of the newspapers included: *Detroiter Abendpost*, *Jahrbuch uber die Deutscher Kolonien*, *Kamerun Post*, *Lagos Standard*, *Lagos Standard*, *Lagos Weekly Record*, *London Gazette* *Nigerian Gazette*, *The Nigerian Pioneer*, *The Nigerian Pioneer*, *The Nigerian Pioneer*, *The Times History of the War*, *The Times*

of Nigeria. Specific editions and volumes used are referenced in the study and included in the bibliography section.

I found it necessary to make footnotes an integral part of the dissertation. I think that footnotes are not mere citations of sources. They also serve as a place for clarifications and precisions while allowing for a consistent read of the body narrative. Thus in some of my footnotes, I have provided explanations, elaborations, interjections, as well as engagement with some existing literature. Also, where a quotation on the body text features in a foreign language, its English translation is found in the footnote as referenced. I recommend a close attention to footnotes while the body text is being read. If footnotes are not read together with the body texts, it subtracts nothing from the understanding of the content. But if on the other hand they are read in conjunction, it not only enhances understanding, it adds a whole lot to it.

Organization

The dissertation is organized into eight chapters, including chapter 1 for the introduction and chapter 8 for the conclusions. Chapter 2 examines the trademark of German colonialism in Cameroon, violence. It explores the gendered contours of German colonial violence, explains it, highlighting the central actors and instances. It shows how Cameroonians responded to the violence of colonial authorities by mounting multiple wars of resistance. Chapter 3 picks up from the sudden outbreak of the 1914 war, and its extension to Cameroon by Allied powers. It examines how Europeans mobilized and recruited Africans both in Cameroon and in other West African colonies, for the conduct of the Cameroon campaign. While it discusses both material and intangible forces at play, it concludes that the majority of the African soldiers were conscripted. Chapters 4 and 5 examine the conduct of the Cameroon campaign, particularly highlighting how Africans fought. They conclude with an examination of the reasons why the

Germans lost the war, including particularly the fact that most Cameroonians elected to support Allied war efforts. Chapter 6 then examines the social costs of the campaign, particularly the intentional killing of civilians, and the refugee problem that the campaign generated. Chapter 7, the last chapter, examines the political consequences of the campaign, specifically the Anglo-French partition of the Cameroon colony following the departure of the Germans. It shows the arbitrary nature of the partition, and how it defied the interests and wishes of Cameroonians. It concludes that although Africans had been able to influence the outcome of the war on the battlefield, they were unable to do same in decision making, as a result of the paramountcy of European interests. The study ends with a general conclusion which threads together the objectives and arguments that have run through the dissertation.



Figure 1.1 Map of Africa showing German African Colonies. Cameroon sits in the middle

Courtesy of: Brig.-General E. Howard Gorges, *The Great War in Africa* (London: Hutchinson, 1931).

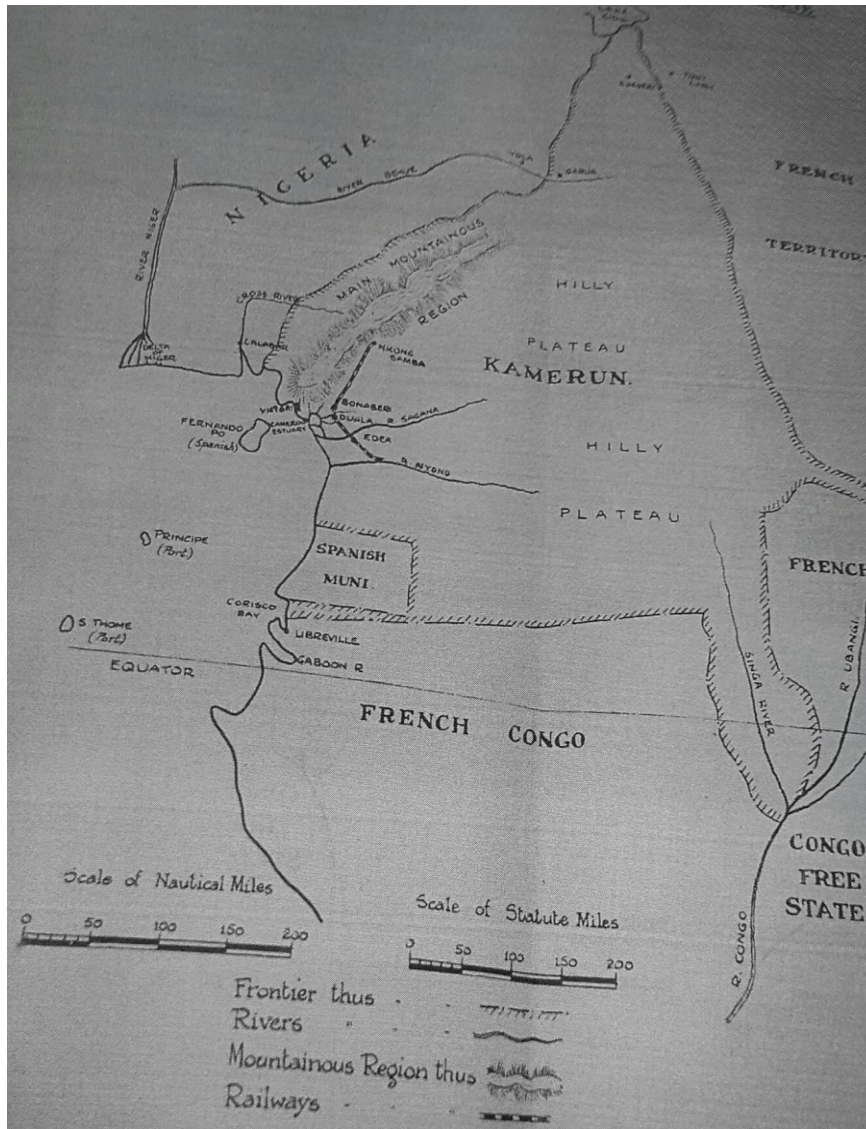


Figure 1.2 Sketch Map of Pre-War German Cameroon

Courtesy of: The National Archives, Kew-Richmond, United Kingdom (TNA) ADM 186/522

The sketch map shows pre-war German colony of Cameroon measuring slightly over 300,000 square miles in surface land area. But it was hemmed by British and French West African colonies. British Nigeria bordered it in the Southwest, Northwest, and North, while French Equatorial Africa bordered it in the South, Southeast, East, and North. This made it easy for British and French West African troops to invade the Cameroon colony ubiquitously through the border areas (Chapter 4). But it also complicated military cooperation between the British and the French, allowing for separate, uncoordinated fighting, over extremely long distances.

Chapter 2

Violent Encounters

Introduction:

[The people of Douala in Kamerun are the] laziest, falsest, and meanest rabble on whom the sun ever shone, and it would have been best when the country was conquered in 1884 if they had not been exterminated, at least expelled from the land.¹

The real journey for the Cameroon campaign of the Great War seems to have begun in 1884 when Germany abruptly colonized the territory. From that year to the outbreak of the 1914 war, the German Cameroon colony was bedeviled with spectacles of violence as well as colonial and anti-colonial wars. This chapter examines the violent aspects of German colonialism in Cameroon, to establish the pre-World War 1 situation in the territory. I show that German colonial violence was racialized and gendered. While it sought to dehumanize, subjugate, pacify and turn Africans into a pliable colonized, I argue, it often attained excesses that outplayed its motives. At such moments, violence seemed to be an end in itself, rather than a means to an end.² The violence was such that women became primary and double targets when they were abused, sexually assaulted, flogged, raped and then killed. This excessively brutal violence pushed Cameroonians into a more anti-German position on the eve of the 1914 war. Also, the chapter

¹ Jesco Von Puttkamer, *Gouverneursjahre in Kamerun* (Berlin, Verlag von Georg Stilke, 1912), 52. Von Puttkamer was the German Governor of Cameroon from 1895 to 1906 and his administration was reputed for most of the violence and brutalities against the colonized. The original German language version of the quote reads: “danach sind die Duala das faulste, falscheste und niederträchtigste Gesindel, weches die Sonne bescheint, und es wäre sicher am besten gewesen, wenn sie bei Eroberung des Landes im Jahre 1884, wenn nicht ausgerottet, so doch ausser Landes verbracht worden wären.”

² This argument is elaborated in one of my graduate research seminar papers under the guardianship of the chair of my dissertation committee, Butch Ware. I am very grateful to him for helping me develop the argument. Much of the information contained in that seminar paper is now being used for this dissertation chapter.

selectively examines some of the wars of resistance waged by some Cameroonian peoples against the Germans, in an attempt to resist colonial rule. In some of these wars of resistance, honor once again played some key roles.

The relevance of this chapter to this dissertation cannot be missed. Violence occupied central stage with the inception of German rule in Cameroon. It was this same violence that was to define much of the activities of the Great War campaigns in Cameroon from 1914-1916. It is true that war in itself is already a violent activity, but when such violence intentionally targets non-combatant populations, then it degenerates into a humanity problem that warrants the attention of studies of different persuasions. By detailing on the theme of violence, this chapter lays the basis for a better appreciation of the World War 1 moments in Cameroon as described in the chapters ahead. Also, by presenting some of the cases of anti-colonial wars in Cameroon before the 1914 war, it helps to establish the tense and often hostile relationship with which the colonized and the colonizer were to face an invading enemy in the territory in 1914. This hostile relationship itself is already portentous of how Cameroonians would react to the plight of the Germans once the Allies would be attack them in 1914.

Violence is understood here as the physical infliction of pain or death as well as “assaults on the personhood, dignity, sense of worth or value of the victim.”³ It includes acts of killing, maiming, flogging, raping, and other physical forms of pain infliction. Colonial violence thus includes any or all of these acts of pain that took place in the colonial spaces. Colonial spaces in this case specifically refer to the entire Cameroon territory that was under German colonial rule up to 1914 and throughout the period of the Cameroon campaign. Colonial violence was

³ Moyd, *Violent Intermediaries: African Soldiers, Conquest, and Everyday Colonialism in German East Africa* (Atehs, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2014), 6.

multifaceted and involved all moments of violence that were related to the kinds of social relations produced by or shaped by colonialism. All forms and types of violence that occurred in colonial spaces, whether perpetuated by the colonizer against the colonized or vice versa, and whether just between and among the colonized themselves, fall under the rubrics of colonial violence. For the purpose of this study, I focus more on the violence that came from the colonizer, as well as the return violence from the colonized.⁴

All violent encounters discussed in this chapter and the study are intended to convey both physical and psychological pain as experienced by Africans. Pain remains an uncommon subject in historical inquiry, particularly because of language's inability to capture the experiential nature of another's pain.⁵ But, the violence of colonialism put many African bodies in pain, so that violence and pain – however destabilizing or troubling to understand, remain prerequisites in understanding the unfolding of African history during the colonial era.

Understanding Colonial Violence and Anti-colonial Wars

Historians have sought to understand the concept of colonial violence. Regarding causation, they have mostly postulated the concepts of pacification, dehumanization and racial prejudice as analytical tools for understanding it. Timothy Weiskel shows how in seeking to pacify the La Baule resisters in Central Ivory Coast, French colonial military officials dehumanized the people by killing them, chopping off the heads of fallen victims and displaying them on spears.⁶ Another historian, Jonathan Glassman, projects, among others, racial prejudice

⁴ I am grateful to Professor Joshua Cole for our discussion on colonial violence during my preliminary examinations and during the oral defense of my dissertation. But I must say that in order to stay focused on some of the goals of this study, I have not examined colonial violence in the most sophisticated and multifaceted ways as suggested by Professor Cole. I leave this to future research on the subject.

⁵ Ned Blackhawk, *Violence over the Land: Indians and Empires in the Early American West* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2006), 8.

⁶ Timothy Weiskel, *French Colonial Rule and the Baule Peoples: Resistance and Collaboration, 1889-1911* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 3.

as responsible for colonial violence in Zanzibar in the 1960s. Racially perforated minds and thoughts had generated hatred for one another, leading to ritualized and theatrical killings of one another, with senseless mutilation of the bodies of fallen victims.⁷ In some cases, however, as in German South West Africa for example, colonial violence got to the point of seeking to exterminate an entire population. The gruesome story of German colonial violence in South West Africa is told by Jeremy Silvester and Jan-Bart Gewald where violence on the Herero had degenerated from pacification to extermination, defeating the very essence of colonialism.⁸ Between 1904 and 1905, the Herero resistance to German colonialism had resulted to the colonizer almost wiping out an entire population, with only about 15,000 people surviving out of 80,000-90,000.⁹

The above example supports the case that colonial violence had the potential to outserve its purpose. So, while the concepts of pacification, dehumanization, and racial prejudice were generally behind most of the spectacles of colonial violence in many parts of Africa, they do not always capture the ‘excess’ of the violence. Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois are certain that most violence is ‘not senseless’ at all.¹⁰ However, it is possible to perceive a stage of ‘senselessness’ in an episode of violence. This is obvious from the prism of the victim, although it is unlikely that any one would see any sense at all in the violence for which that person is the victim. But it is

⁷ Jonathon Glassman, *War of Words, War of Stones: Racial Thought and Violence in Colonial Zanzibar* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2011), 18-19.

⁸ The successful execution of the colonial agenda required African populations to perform forced labor in mines, farms and plantations and other extractive places. Thus seeking to decimate those very African populations was counter productive.

⁹ Jeremy Silvester and Jan-Bart Gewald, *Words Cannot Be Found, German Colonial Rule in Namibia: An Annotated Reprint of the 1918 Blue Book* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2003), 113-122. Being simply a reprint of the “The Report on the Natives of South-West Africa and their Treatment by Germany,” produced by the Union of South Africa in 1918, Silvester and Gewald merely reproduce the evidence, mostly in the form of testimonies of witnesses and survivors of the German massacres of the Hereros, with very minimal side comments.

¹⁰ Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Philippe Bourgois, “Introduction: Making Sense of Violence,” in *Violence in War and Peace: An Anthology*, ed. Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Philippe Bourgois (n.p: Blakwell Publishing, 2004), 3.

possible to suggest that colonial acts of violence which outlasted their purposes had somehow attained a degree of ‘irrationality’ even if this cannot serve as a dependable explicatory tool for a historical analysis of colonial violence.

Why study colonial violence and/or anti-colonial wars? Anti-colonial wars or wars of colonial resistance are important to the historian because they cut so deep into the very heart of colonialism. As implicit and explicit in this chapter, colonialism was a violent enterprise. Which better way can historians understand the substance of this colonial enterprise other than examining the moments and circumstances that provided fertile grounds and justifications for the implantation of this violence? African armed resistance to colonialism during anti-colonial wars invited a response from a violent enterprise. That response, no doubt, made use of maximum brutality and violence. Such brutality and violence often took the form of setting ablaze properties and homes of defeated victims and violently publicly hanging their leaders where possible and necessary, to even desiring and attempting to decimate an entire population. Once in the Northern parts of Cameroon, a German envoy gladly observed to his countrymen in the territory how the refusal by the people to bow to colonialism had made a war of extermination of the local population inevitable.¹¹

Violent by nature, colonialism often took by force what Africans wanted to preserve: their political sovereignty, and their natural resources, including their lands.¹² The entire colonial agenda was a violent one, in so far as it aimed to conquer Africans, take over their sovereignty, and exploit their natural resources for the gains of the colonizers. This agenda could not be

¹¹ Martin Z. Njeuma, *Fulani Hegemony in Yola (Old Adamawa) 1809-1902* (Mankon, Bamenda: Langaa Research and Publishing, 2012, reprint), 180.

¹² This is not to claim that there were not several parts of Africa that ‘willingly’ gave up their territories and sovereignties to the colonizers.

accomplished without opposition. And because the colonizers were obdurately resolved to accomplish their agenda, they would have to do so by force of arms in the face of any opposition. Here then was a conducive terrain for violence. To achieve their colonial agenda, the colonialists had to, first of all, pacify what they saw as stubborn Africans. As Martin Njeuma has noted, the pattern of colonialism, practiced by all the colonial powers, was a strong feeling that for a colonial rule to be firmly established, colonial wars were necessary, even inevitable.¹³

The urge to wage colonial wars on a particular people was strongest if the region was economically promising, with trade prospects, and if the people showed signs of standing in the way of the colonialists. It was also very strong if the people had a firmly established political system, which was often matched with the presence of an army. In fact, in Cameroon, as in other African territories, areas with strong political leaders who had fame and prestige were most likely to face the violent acts of the colonizers. “Wherever an indigenous ruler proved strong and unbending to the whims and caprices of the colonizers,” observes one historian, “his territories became the object of an invasion.”¹⁴ On the other hand, not all leaders and groups opted for armed resistance against colonialism. There were varying reasons why some African leaders took up armed resistance against colonialism while some did not. Maurice Mveng Ayi in his doctoral dissertation found out that in the case of South-central Cameroon where too many armed resistances occurred between the 1880s and up to 1907, “all the leaders of the rebellion had already won prestige, fame, and were able to gather a large following by the time of German

¹³ Njeuma, *Fulani Hegemony*, 179.

¹⁴ Njeuma, *Fulani Hegemony*, 179.

intrusion.”¹⁵ The prestige and recognition associated with all the leaders certainly instilled in them a sense of honor, which they felt obliged to defend.

Colonial wars, like colonial violence, could be categorized into two types, with the colonizer and the colonized taking turns as both victims and perpetrators, depending on who was waging war on who. The two types can roughly be termed pro-colonial and anti-colonial wars. Pro colonial wars were those waged by the colonizer, or his supporters, against any particular group of the colonized, to extend, consolidate, impose or enforce colonial rule. Here, the colonized and his African supporters were on the offensive. Anti-colonial wars were waged by a group of the colonized, to resist, repel, or prevent the imposition of colonial rule on their territory. Apparently, these two categories provide a somewhat narrow definition of colonial wars. The colonizer was aware that the only way to successfully impose colonial rule on Africans was by using African themselves to fight and defeat each other. Thus as it turned out, both pro-colonial and anti-colonial wars were fought predominantly by Africans, the latter exclusively by Africans. For the former, one, two or more European military officers or commanders led their African organized and often briefly trained soldiers into battles against resisting groups. Because of this typology, three categories of soldiers existed during the colonial wars; the white German soldier, the 'native' colonial soldier fighting alongside the German colonialists, and the 'native' anti-colonial soldier (warrior), fighting to end German colonialism.

Colonization and Perception

On 12 July 1884, the coastal territory of Douala was suddenly colonized by the Germans via a treaty entered with the kings of the region. With this agreement, endorsed for Germany by

¹⁵ Maurice Mveng Ayi, “Colonial Rebellions in South-Central Cameroon, 1887-1907” (Ph.D diss., University of London, n.d), 242.

Dr. Gustav Nachtigal (1834-1885), the German government later proceeded to annex the whole of Cameroon.¹⁶ Topmost in the minds of the colonizers were Cameroon's economic potentials. Cameroon was expected to satisfy German economic needs to include establishing mass plantations and employing forced labor. The Woermann firm which had been instrumental in the annexation process had its economic interests fully covered up, on account of Adolf Woermann's closeness and direct contact with Bismarck. Such high economic needs accorded the colonizers a lopsided mind where they saw things only from their self-serving interests: how to maximize economic gains. Any stumbling blocks on the way, both real and imagined, were to be dealt with accordingly. Stumbling blocks included ethnic groups who felt that those of the Germans quarantined their economic interests. It was against this backdrop of anti-economic interests that the colonizers began to perceive of the colonized. Specifically, the economic interests, which aimed at establishing plantations, put the acute need for laborers on the table. A way to obtain them was through force.

The necessity of the colonial agenda, and at the same time the mindset that the colonizers had of the colonized lay the grounds for violence. The colonizer's view of the colonized is best encapsulated in the block quote that opens this chapter, where the colonized was regarded as lazy and not worthy of life. This perception necessitated the use of force and thus helped lay the foundation for German violence. When Jesco Von Puttkamer who had served as the Governor of Cameroon (1885-1906) published his autobiographical account on his governorship in Cameroon, he was categorical that the Douala people were the "laziest, falsest, and meanest rabble on whom the sun ever shone, and it would certainly have been best when the country was

¹⁶ The National Archives, Kew-Richmond, United Kingdom (hereafter TNA), FO 608/215.

conquered in 1884 if they had been, if not exterminated, at least expelled from the land.”¹⁷

Writing in 1912, he regretted that it was too late that the Duala then had not been killed as he had wished.¹⁸ Puttkamer’s violent and dehumanized view of the people was symptomatic of the general picture.¹⁹

The above perceptions and views, when placed in their true historical context, provide powerful lenses into the historical circumstances of colonial violence. Although several other accounts and officials attempted to debunk such violent perceptions about Cameroonians, they lingered on and constituted the bedrock of the mindset of many governing German officials in Cameroon.²⁰ This perception, violent as it was, came to inform Puttkamer’s administration in Cameroon which went on record as the most scandalous and the most violent. Puttkamer saw nothing wrong in using sanguinary punitive expeditions against Cameroonians as a way to pacify them and make them a pliable labor force to be utilized by the colonial administration to realize the full economic potentials of Cameroon. “Before the negroes become reliable subjects,” he

¹⁷ Jesco Von Puttkamer, *Gouverneursjahre in Kamerun* (Berlin, Verlag von Georg Stilke, 1912), 52. Dr. Buchner, Puttkamer and Thomählen, indulged in the same rhetoric about Cameroonian “laziness.” Paradoxically, these same officials depended solely on the labor of those Cameroonians to run plantations and construct roads and other labor-intensive projects.

¹⁸ Puttkamer, *Gouverneursjahre*, 52.

¹⁹ The list is endless, but one of the earliest German economic interest personnel, Thomählen, also already started off with the belief that Cameroonians were lazy and therefore should be forced to work. Thus he favored in 1902 a taxation policy that compelled Cameroonians to work for whites.

²⁰ For other Germans’ officials’ view of the people as lazy, refractory, greedy, dull etc, see Erik Halldén, *The Culture Policy of the Basel Mission in the Cameroons 1886-1905* (Lund: Berlingska Boktryckeriet, 1968), 59-60; Some Germans, including Dr. Eugene Zintgraff, the greatest German explorer of the Cameroon grasslands during German colonial rule, debunked accusations about Africans being lazy. They charged that Africans were not lazy but hardworking; that they wanted to make sure that they got paid for their labor. Zintgraff’s article (“Dr Zintgraff’s Memorandum on the Future of Cameroon”) to this effect appeared in the German colonial journal that published colonial reports and other matters; *Deutsches Kolonialblatt* (hereafter DKB) (Berlin: Berlag von, 1892): 131-136. The article is translated and cited by Paul Nchoji Nkwi, *The German Presence in the Western Grassfields, 1891-1913: A German Account* (Leiden- the Netherlands: African Studies Centre, 1989), 31-2. Further references to the named article are the English translations by Nkwi. I am thankful to him. Other private German expatriates in the colony who rejected such accusations were Hutter, who specifically defended Africans, asserted categorically that just like Europeans Africans made sure they worked for their daily bread p. 11; DKB 1892, 134.

once charged, “they first have to be taught a bloody lesson.”²¹ To accomplish his mission, Puttkamer’s governorship from 1896 was followed in the coming years by a surge in the German military force in the territory. Before his era, there was only a nucleus of a police force made up mainly of Kru boys, Hausa, and Dahomeans.²² As soon as he took over, he enlarged and transformed the military force, strengthened it with trained and well-equipped men, on the model of the Schutztruppe, created in 1891 for East Africa. By 1900, the Cameroon colonial army (the “Imperial Protective Force”) already comprised 40 German officers, fifty-three African soldiers, and 900 African mercenaries.²³ By 1906, there were already sixteen garrisons, three armorers, 1350 soldiers, twenty-two machine guns, seven cannons, forty-four officers, thirteen medical officers, 84 sub-officers and one paymaster.²⁴ This colonial army was well trained and better equipped for the purpose of crushing any resistance. It comprised primarily of persons from Cameroon, Togo, Ghana, Monrovia and Dahomey. Europeans in the formation possessed the M/98 Rifles, African soldiers the special M71/84 Rifles while a small part of the troops carried the M71 Rifle. The Douala Company had the best soldiers, who, like most soldiers, served two to three years, receiving thus a salary and free clothing.²⁵ This type of composition, coupled with how colonial wars and wars of resistance were conducted, already favored the colonial state. The groundwork of violence had been laid, and Governor Puttkamer signed a blank check for the

²¹ Quoted by L.H Gann, “Economic Development in Germany’s African Empire, 1884-1914,” in *Colonialism in Africa 1870-1960: The Economics of Colonialism*, Vol. 4. ed. Peter Duignan and L.H Gann (London: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 139.

²² Paul Tuh Kiawi, “The Kom-German War 1905-5: The Kom War Tactics” (MA Thesis, University of Buea-Cameroon, 2001), 66.

²³ Helmuth Stoecker, “The Conquest of Colonies: The establishment and Extension of German colonial rule,” in *German Imperialism in Africa : from the beginnings until the Second World War*, ed. Helmuth Stoecker, trans. Bernd Zöllner (London: C. Hurst & Company, 1986), 79.

²⁴ Paul Nchoji Nkwi, *The German Presence*, 16.

²⁵ DKB, 1907, 212; Nkwi, *The German Presence*, 16.

colonial army to reduce an entire village to ashes if they called round to recruit villagers for forced labor and found out that those villagers had escaped.²⁶

The strong aversion to which German colonial officials perceived of Africans often afforded the colonizers the urge to seek “to disparage the native and look down upon him as the white man’s drudge”, and German officials were delighted to flog Africans as brutally as possible.²⁷ This aversion was enforced at all times and by both the officials in Cameroon and those in Germany who arbitrated on reports from Cameroonian local authorities that dared to protest against German violence. German judicial officials who handled reports on the injustices and violence of colonial officials often stressed the master-servant relationship between Europeans and Africans. They validated the way that the colonial official conceived of, and treated the African. In 1906 when a German judge back in Germany reviewed appeals from the Douala local authorities on German violence and injustices in Cameroon, the official, while making minor adjustments on the cases, cited two political reasons for his decision: “recognition of a master-servant relationship between the white race and the black race.” He further charged that the Cameroonian kings, in complaining against colonial officials, had committed a punishable offense because “the Negro, despite his inferior status....” was trying to pose as a judge of his behavior, in which case he thus demonstrated an utter lack of subordination.²⁸ This helps throw light on the way Africans were represented in the view of the colonial officials in

²⁶ Victor Julius Ngoh, *Cameroon, 1884-1985: A Hundred Years of History* (Yaounde: Navi-Group Publication, 1987), 54.

²⁷ W.A Crabtree, “German Colonies in Africa,” *Journal of the African Society* XIV, no. LII I (Oct. 1914): 12.

²⁸ Adolf Rüger, “Die Duala und die Kolonialmacht 1884-1914. Eine Studie über die historischen Ursprünge des afrikanischen Antikolonialismus,” in *Kamerun Unter Deutscher Kolonialherrschaft. Studien. Band 2*, ed. Helmut Stoecker (Berlin: Verlag der Wissenschaften, 1968), 203-4.

Cameroon and in the eyes of those back home in Germany who had the judicial powers of moderating things in the colonies.

The Violence and the Anti-Colonial Wars, 1884-1914

Given the colonial agenda – the perception, the aversion – violence in colonial Cameroon began immediately with the conclusion of the July 1884 treaty, often staged against ‘resistant’ as well as against groups that were not actively posing any resistance to the Germans, but simply constituted German “ruthless attack of defenceless natives”²⁹ that usually led to massive slaughtering of those defenceless Cameroonians all in the name of pacification. Symptomatic of what was to come, the German Cameroon colony began, practically speaking, more or less as a military state, and remained so throughout German rule. Once the annexation treaty had been concluded, Dr. Nachtigal entrusted the administration to the physician Max Bucher. But just months later after the first Douala resistance to German rule in December 1884, a uniform officer, Admiral Knorr, commander of the West African squadron, took charge of the colonial administration until July 1885, when the first colonial Governor in the person of Julius Freiherr von Soden, arrived at Douala.³⁰ And throughout German colonialism, the Cameroon colony would remain virtually a military state, with military stations and garrisons established all over the colony, with military officials exercising considerable administrative powers.

The first introduction to colonial violence and the fatality of violent colonial encounters came in December 1884 when two royal towns – Hickory town and Joss town – dissenting from the annexation treaty, made war with King Bell and his people. Although there were other explanations for the conflict, the leaders of Joss town had decided to make annexation treaties

²⁹ See the German colonial report titled the “Mbo Expedition,” DKB, (1906):773-777.

³⁰ Ralph A. Austen and Jonathan Derrick, *Middlemen of the Cameroons Rivers: The Duala and their Hinterland, c. 1600-c.1960* (Cambridge: University Press, 1999), 97.

with the English instead, and Hickory town rejected German rule.³¹ With this open defiance of German rule, the German colonial administration quickly supported Bell town, crushing the dissidents in an encounter that resulted in twenty-five Duala lives, forty-one wounded and only one German death and one wounded.³² A German gunboat with well-armed soldiers had invaded Hickory town and opened fire on unarmed fishermen in their canoes, then proceeded to burn down the town and plunder the houses. After Hickory town, the soldiers then attacked Joss town, and annihilated the resisters, also killing their leader.³³

The December 1884 incident was a signal to how bloody colonialism would be. With the 1884 treaty handy, the primary target was penetration into the Cameroons hinterlands and bringing all those areas under colonial rule, and then being able to exploit the full resources of the Cameroons. Aware of the difficulties at hand, German firms first urged the colonial government to create a regular mercenary military force. Supporting this request in 1891, Deputy Governor Leist pointed out that “experiences here have shown that without a Protective Force it will not even be possible to maintain authority in the immediate vicinity of the Governor’s residence.”³⁴

Violence on the Bakoko

In June 1891 an uprising against colonial rule occurred in the Abo area. This revolt accelerated the creation of the mercenary force requested earlier. The preliminary batch of the

³¹ Account of a Duala inhabitant, Joshua Tundi, 9 January 1885, published in Shirley Ardener, *Eye-Witnesses to the Annexation of Cameroon, 1883-1887* (Buea- West Cameroon: Government Press, 1968), 36.

³² Ardener, *Eye-Witnesses*, 60, endnote 90.

³³ Eye-witness account of Thomas Lewis (a Missionary), Collected and Published by Ardener, *Eye-Witnesses*, 31-34.

³⁴ Report by Leist to the Colonial Department, 1 May 1891; Translated and quoted in Rudi Kaeseelitz, “Kolonialeroberung und Widerstandskampf in Südkamerun (1884-1907),” in *Kamerun unter deutscher Kolonialherrschaft. Studien*, ed. Hellmuth. Stoecker, Band 2, (Berlin: Veb Deutscher Verlag Der Wissenschaften, 1968), 20; Stoecker, “The Conquest,”⁶⁴.

force was some 370 male and female slaves that a certain Captain Gravenreuth bought in Dahomey. With the aid of this colonial ‘police force’ Wehlan, succeeded in 1892-3 to subjugate the Bakoko and the Mabea through several ferociously cruel military expeditions that established the first major inroads into the hinterlands of Southwest Cameroon.³⁵ This early colonial violence on the Bakoko as led by Wehlan is vividly described by the German historian Adolf Rüger. A notorious colonial official, Wehlan, led a punitive expedition against the Bakoko and the Mabea where he conducted military operations with appalling ferocity and cruelty. He ordered many villages to be burnt down; captives tortured to death in an appalling fashion. Some men who had been taken prisoner were “cut up with knives, hacked to pieces and mutilated....His [Wehlan’s] men chopped off the heads of their fallen opponents [enemies?] to keep them as “souvenirs”³⁶ Wehlan had specifically asked that the soldiers not use guns in killing, only knives, and cutlasses. For some of the captives, Wehlan ordered the to be chained and dragged to the prison cell. While in prison, three of them died of hunger. Later, the rest were tied to the rails, tortured and then shot to death like animals.³⁷ The simile here that victims were shot to death like ‘animals’ is suggestive of killing for sport. In the words of Edwin Ardener, it was ‘as a kind of [sport] exercise...[that] Gravenreuth and his fellow-officers, von Volkamer and von Stetten, set out in October to punish the Miang people [with their newly drilled African soldiers.”³⁸ It is well implying that the newly drilled African soldiers were used on the Miang people to engage in shooting exercises. In most parts of Africa, Europeans considered the hunting and shooting

³⁵ Stoecker, ‘The Conquest,’ 64.

³⁶ Adolf Rüger, “Der Aufstand der Polizeisoldaten (Dezember 1893),” in *Kamerun Unter Deutscher Kolonialherrschaft, Studien*, ed. by Helmuth Stoecker, vol 1, (Berlin: Rütten & Loening, 1960), 144.

³⁷ Rüger, “Der Aufstand der Polizeisoldaten,” 144.

³⁸ Edwin Ardener, *Kingdom on Mount Cameroon: Studies in the History of the Cameroon Coast, 1500-1970*, ed. Shirley Ardener (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1996), 80.

down of animals and birds as a kind of sport. In any case, this fashion of colonial brutality and violence threw major parts of Southwest Cameroon open to direct German trade.³⁹ It was only the beginning.

Violence on Women

A huge part of colonial violence in Cameroon was gendered in nature, sometimes specifically targeting women for varying purposes. This gendered nature was always meant to serve as physical violence on women, but sometimes, as social and psychological violence on men. Amina Mama, arguing how colonialism saw an increased vulnerability of African women to all forms of violence, has elaborated instances in which violence against women in Africa equally sought to punish resistant societies. “Where there was resistance,” she argues, “rape and sexuality abuse were inflicted on women and the same treatment was meted out to wives, mothers, daughters, and sisters of men who were suspected of being members of the resistance movements simply to humiliate them.”⁴⁰ This argument is tested positive in many of the instances of German violence on women in colonial Cameroon.

A certain Lieutenant Dominik, when in charge of a punitive expedition against the Bakoko in Cameroon, attacked a small neighboring village and had several women killed. Lieutenant Dominik had ordered his soldiers to cut off the private parts of fallen foes, many of whom were women. Deputy Bebel of the Reichstag reported on 1 December 1906 that Dominik’s “order had been given to cut off their [men’s] ears, but the soldiers cut off the women’s ears also to increase the number of fallen foes artificially. To overcome this, Dominik

³⁹ Stoecker, “The Conquest,” 64.

⁴⁰ Amina Mama, “Sheroes and Villains: *Conceptualizing Colonial and Contemporary Violence against Women in Africa*,” in *Feminist Genealogy, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*, ed. M. Jacqui Alexander and Chanddra Talpade (New York and London: Routledge, 1997), 48 & 51.

gave orders for their heads [women] to be cut off, but this proved inconvenient.”⁴¹ Although Germans almost took delight in killing African women, all acts in the colony that were unfriendly towards German women met with the toughest response possible. During the 1914 war in Cameroon for example, when one Lieutenant Wieneke, being shipped from Cameroon to England alongside German women and children protested about Allied ill-treatment of German prisoners of war, he drew particular attention to the way German women and children were treated.⁴² Paradoxically, Lieutenant Wieneke during ‘peacetime’ in Cameroon had earlier personally participated or sanctioned untold violence on African women.

Violence on women commonly took the form of sexual assaults and rape. As early as 1893 the Acting German Governor, Heinrich Leist, began to force the women of slave-like recruited Dahomean soldiers as sexual toys for both himself and to entertain his guests. Leist repeatedly and forcibly had sex with six of the women and later forced fifteen of them to have sex with his guests. Leist blithely informed the Dahomean soldiers that if they needed extra income, they should prostitute their wives with black and white men in need of women. Leist went on to force the women to perform unpaid labor in the German coffee plantations in Douala. When on 15 December 1893 some of the women decided to strike on account of Leist’s violence, the Acting Governor elected to deal with the women, resorting to physical violence and humiliation through flogging. He called them “lazy” and ordered some of the women to be flogged cruelly under the watchful eyes of their husbands.⁴³ By ordering the women to be

⁴¹ European War: Correspondence Relating to the Alleged Ill-Treatment of German Subjects captured in the Cameroons (hereafter EW), Lieutenant Otto Wieneke, “A Petition Addressed to the Colonial Office or other Competent Authority by Lieutenant Otto Wieneke (of the Res.), Imperial District Commissioner, to the Commandant of the Holyport Camp for German officer prisoners of War” (London: Stationary Office, November 1915), 37.

⁴² EW, Correspondence Relating, 9.

⁴³ Rüger, “Der Aufstand Der Polizeisoldat,” 118.

flogged right in front of their men, Leist also aimed to pass on a message to the men, whom he thought were becoming too stubborn for his liking. On his orders, the women were stripped naked, placed over barrels, and beaten in the presence of their husbands, who were made to stand in formation.⁴⁴ Several whips were landed on the women's bare buttocks. As the women were being flogged, the pain was so unbearable that they screamed their throats out, to the horror of the entire neighborhood.⁴⁵

Leist's act posed an affront to the masculine senses of honor of the Dahomean soldiers. In many parts of Africa, Africans serving in the colonial army remained 'loyal,' but they did not hesitate to rebel on account of honor. As Illife has observed, "African colonial troops used mutiny both as collective bargaining and to defend their honour."⁴⁶ So, while the other issues like underpayment and disrespect of contract may have been causing mutiny, the flogging of soldiers' women under their soldier's husband's watchful eyes ripped them off of any iota of potency so that the only way to redeem themselves was to call the colonial administration to order. As soon as Leist had ordered the flogging of the women of those soldiers, one soldier cried out that 'enough is enough' and the soldiers resolved to kill the governor, capture the armory, and expel the whites. The soldiers invaded the government property looking for Leist to kill, and they held the colonial administration hostage for days until reinforcement eventually saved the colonial state from collapse.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ David Simo, "Colonization and Modernization: The Legal Foundation of the Colonial Enterprise; A Case Study of German Colonization in Cameroon," in *Germany's Colonial Pasts*, ed. Eric Ames et al (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 104.

⁴⁵ Adjai Paulin Oloukpona-Yinnon, *La Revolte Des Esclaves Mercenaires, Douala, 1893. Bayreuth African Studies Series* (Bayreuth-Germany: Bayreuth University Press, 1987), 34.

⁴⁶ John Iliffe, *Honour in African History* (Cambridge: University Press, 2005), 241.

⁴⁷ EW, Correspondence Relating, 13.

The Acting Governor escaped, but some forty-seven mutineers and forty-three women held the Government House for a week before German marines dispersed them. One must appreciate why the flogging of soldiers' wives immediately led to a mutiny. Control and protection of women was central to male masculinities of honor. So was resentment of the humiliation of flogging, standard in all colonial armies before 1918 and practiced illicitly in some until independence.⁴⁸

From the above incident, Leist refused to learn his lessons. As the dust settled, he proceeded to clamp down on the women for daring to go on strike against their European superiors. He began the bloodiest phase of his violence against women. He hanged three of the women that had participated in the strike and for those women who had fled into the bushes following the rebellion, he offered 20 German marks (currency) for each of their heads. Leist and his military patrols chased after the women in the forest, and a total of thirty-four women were captured by 31 January 1894.⁴⁹ In his report in the official journal of colonies in 1894, Leist gladly admitted how he had placed a sum for the heads of women and men and how many of them had been captured.⁵⁰ It was to Leist's greatest pleasure that he had punished not only the women but most importantly their men. This incident shows how one of the most brutal and violent responses of colonialism to an African resistance followed an opposition that arose from motives of honor.⁵¹ Men and women were punished in the most brutal fashion, for attempting to uphold their senses of honor.

⁴⁸ Rüger, "Der Aufstand," 97-147; Oloupona Yinnon, *La révolte*, 35; Iliffe, *Honour*, 242-3.

⁴⁹ Oloukpona-Yinnon, *La Révolte*, 40.

⁵⁰ *Deutsches Kolonialblatt* (4-6 Februar 1894), 91-93.

⁵¹ Iliffe, *Honour*, 245.

Shortly after the rebellion by Dahomean soldiers in 1894, and in spite of the fact that the aggrieved Duala had remained neutral and calm, Leist, instead of going after the revolutionary soldiers who had fled into the bushes, unleashed violence on Douala neighborhoods, reducing buildings to ashes and killing innocent people. After this naked violence, Leist admitted that the buildings and people he had exercised violence on were innocent, but that he needed to do it simply as a forewarning to others that they would be treated mercilessly if they dared followed the example of the rebellious soldiers.⁵² Here then was an example of colonial violence serving a communicative purpose, indicating that colonial spaces and the colonized were subject to episodes of violence that sometimes had little or nothing to do with the specific and targeted victims.

If Leist did not go far enough on violence against women, Governor Von Puttkamer did. Puttkamer, alongside other early German colonial officials, indulged in the practice of using African women for sexual gratification. Puttkamer particularly held that German officials and nationals in the territory were entitled to every bit of comfort, including force sex with African girls. He then encouraged and defended the practice of giving German troops seized women for sexual exercises and as concubines. He seemed to have a special interest in married women, perhaps because violence on them served the intended purpose. He went as far as building a special house for his African concubines and encouraged other German officials to follow his example.⁵³ This alone was an incentive for German officials to use every opportunity to obtain as many girls as possible, including forcing conquered ethnic groups to pay indemnity in the form of women, or compelling African convicted authorities to pay fines in kind with women. When

⁵² Oloukpona-Yinnon, *La Revolte*, 39-40.

⁵³ Klaus Epstein, "Erzberger and the German Colonial Scandals, 1905-1910," *The English Historical Review* 74, no. 293 (Oct., 1959): 641.

once King Kwongu of Bum in the Bamenda grasslands was unable to meet up with his German-imposed fine of 1,500 marks, the German military commander of Bamenda, Adamitz, forced him to supply, for the use of German soldiers, eight young girls (mostly teenagers) at only sixty marks each. This would count towards the completion of war indemnity, particularly the amount for which the defeated King had been fined.⁵⁴ In neighboring Ngie, a German militia raided and destroyed houses, after which many young girls were seized and distributed amongst the raiding soldiers.⁵⁵

Puttkamer's example resonated well with the rest of his staff and other colonial staff in the territory so that seizing African wives and making them concubines was a common practice with the colonial administration during his reign and after. In fact, sexual violence and rape on African women by colonial officials were practices common among all the officials. In defense of charges of sex with 'native' women brought against him, Leist merely said that "all white men in the colony indulged in the practice."⁵⁶ Similarly, Puttkamer contended himself by saying that the practice of keeping a 'native' woman was general among the whites in the colony. He went on to defend interracial concubinage that it kept a girl out of a cruel harem and gave her a healthy living, and on the basis that it made for friendly relations between whites and blacks.⁵⁷

As evidence that sexual violence on women was also meant to emasculate their men, the Germans targeted women and young girls already betrothed to their African men. This was a

⁵⁴ Cameroon National Archives, Buea (hereafter CNAB), Cb 1916/10, 6, G.S Podevin "Bamenda Division Annual Reports 1916-1917."

⁵⁵ CNAB, Cb 1918/2, L.S Ward, "Bamenda Division Annual Reports 1918-1923."

⁵⁶ E.P Abanime, "The Image of the White Man in African Francophone Literature: The Case of the German in Pre-World War I Cameroon," *Africa: Rivista trimestrale di studi e documentazione dell'Istituto italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente* 40, no. 2 (GIUGNO 1985): 310; Harry R. Rudin, *Germans in the Cameroon, 1884 – 1914: A Case Study in Modern Imperialism* (London: Jonathan Cape Ltd., 1938), 212.

⁵⁷ E.P Abanime, "The Image," 310; Rudin, *Germans*, 304-5.

common practice with many German high officials.⁵⁸ When some Chiefs in Douala made a complaint to Reichstag in the early 20th century, they accused Justice Dr. Meyer and Regierrunsrat for forcibly taking two young girls, betrothed to the natives, as their concubines.⁵⁹ Recall, for example, Leist's earlier target on wives of Dahomean soldiers. Of course, there were enough unmarried girls and women in the territory that if the German problem was simply one of perversion, they could have gone for those.

Sexual violence against women was sometimes specifically directed against royal blood, to both pacify and humiliate the powerful local leaders who mostly led their people against colonial rule. The colonial administration often concluded that by specifically targeting princesses of influential leaders who sought to challenge colonial authority, not only would such leaders be humiliated and never dare the Germans again, but their neighboring colleagues would be humbled to submitting to the Germans so that similar humiliation was not extended to their own daughters. Having witnessed it, the Germans needed no lectures on how much authority traditional rulers commanded amongst their subjects and how humiliating it would have been to have girls of royal blood violated. So the practice of sexual violence on royal blood was intended to humiliate and pacify local leaders and forewarn their colleagues. This could not have been better expressed when sometimes before or around 1904 for example, the German military station (*Bezert*) commander in Bamenda ordered the fierce King of Kom, *foyn Yuh*, to send his daughter over to be of sexual help to German officials. To this, *foyn Yuh* not only rejected German orders but threw down his gauntlet at the Germans.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ EW, Correspondence Relating, 30.

⁵⁹ EW, Correspondence Relating, 40.

⁶⁰ Paul Nkwi, *Traditional Government and Social Change: A Study of the Political institutions Among the Kom of the Cameroon Grassfields* (Fribourg-Switzerland: The University Press, 1976), 139-140. Details of how this attempt at sexual violence on a royal blood led to anti-colonial resistance are ahead, on the Kom resistance.

As a form of visual violence and torture, how were the women flogged? Rhinoceros whips were used to flog women and children. This was so alarming that in 1907, a German Deputy at Reich condemned the act. Several other German Deputies at the Reich frowned at the practices and called upon the colonial officials to stop. Earlier at the Reich in 1906, another deputy, Rören, had described the whole process of flogging of women and children (and men) in German Africa as “a form of torture.” He noted that:

The native, after having been completely stripped, is strapped across a block on a barrel that has been fixed firmly, his [her] hands are bound in front, his [her] feet behind, so that he [she] cannot move, and then he [she] does not get a few blows with an ordinary stick held in one hand, but the strongest among the black soldiers has to wield a plaited rope or a corresponding thick stick with both hands and with all his strength, and that with such violence that each blow must whistle in the air. Sometimes, *if the blow does not whistle, it has to be repeated, and if this is not done the Hausa [black soldier] gets it himself* [emphasis mine].⁶¹

However, such concerns and outright condemnations usually came to naught, with top ranking colonial officials, including ex-Governor-General Von Liebert of German East Africa, blithely maintaining that such brutal, violent acts as flogging were necessary to “open up a black continent to civilization” and that “it was impossible in Africa to get on without cruelty.”⁶²

Although in the throes of violence, the colonized was often ready to respect and protect their women against the violent colonizer. When for example two representatives of German commercial depots sexually assaulted the wife of a Chief on the streets of Akwa in broad daylight, the local inhabitants ran to her rescue and set her free. They did not only end there. They launched a legal complaint to von Brauchitsch, who ostensibly decided that the two representatives of commerce should be punished. As expected, no punishment was ever recorded anywhere to this effect. Rather, the two officials were seen by the town inhabitants a few days

⁶¹ Recorded in EW, Correspondence Relating, 11.

⁶² Recorded in EW, Correspondence Relating, 8. My emphasis on the quote above reveals that the African was compelled to carry out violence against his counterpart, or else he faced the music of violence himself. Details are provided on the section on African complicity, in this chapter.

later having a very social meeting with von Brauchitsch.⁶³ This is a clear indication that German colonial legal officials worked hard to protect Europeans, irrespective of their violent crimes against African women.

Children sometimes came under the crossfire of violence. Dominik, who earlier had killed several women, oversaw the putting of fifty-two little children, who remained alive after the general massacre, into baskets with the result that they were thrown into a River to die unattended.⁶⁴ How can one explain this gruesome violence against children? Babies posed no trouble for the Germans. One could speculate that children whose mothers or parents were alive and needed by the Germans to perform forced labor might have been perceived as an inconvenience. This gruesome killing of children in Cameroon parallels a story about German colonial violence in German South West Africa. The story is told of a group of German soldiers who played games with a nine months old baby, and after forming a circle and tossing the baby among themselves in the air several times, bayoneted the baby to death with stunning amusement.⁶⁵ The baby was leaving helplessly in the bush, waiting to die, the Germans probably killed the parents. Also, the fifty-two children whom Dominik threw in the River to drown were already orphaned and were not of any inconvenience to the Germans.

Violence on Buea

When the Germans began to move further inland from Douala, the town of Buea (about 50 miles Northwest of Douala) on the Cameroon Mountains became one of the early sites of

⁶³ Reported in EW, Correspondence Relating ,41.

⁶⁴ Her Majesty Government, "Treatment of Natives in German Colonies: Handbook Prepared under the Direction of the Historical Section of the Foreign Office" (London: H.M Stationary Office, 1920), 37.

⁶⁵ Sworn Testimony by Jan Cloete, recruited and commandeered by General von Trotha to act as a guide for them to the Waterberg district of Herero. This is reported in, Union of South Africa, "Report on the Natives of South-West Africa and their Treatment by Germany. Prepared in the Administrator's Office, Windhuk, South West Africa, January 1918 (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1918), 230.

violence. In German colonial imaginations, the Bakweri people of Buea under their Chief Kuva were a menace to peace and an obstruction to colonial expansion. The Buea were painted on colonial narratives as bellicose and savage. A report by Acting Governor Schuckmann in 1891 claimed that the Buea had warred on smaller villages, had instigated an uprising among the mountain people (against the colonial administration) and were a menace to peace in that part of the colony.⁶⁶ The justification was then established for the pacification of the Buea people. In the meantime, Gravenreuth's expedition on the Miang people had served as a kind of exercise, so that as soon as it returned to base in Douala, Leist and Gravenreuth recommended it to take on the Buea. Thus in 1891, Gravenreuth, and in the company of the Acting Governor Schuckmann led the colonial army (mostly composed of the Dahomean soldiers of slave origin) against the Buea, passing through Victoria, a neighboring and coastal town some 15 miles away from Buea. Aiming to pacify the Buea and subjugate them to colonial rule, the well-armed expedition was surprised by the people of Buea. The people, who had prepared to defend themselves against the invaders, had barricaded the main entrance to their town, estimated to be the path for the invading army, and then anchored a few yards away from the barricades on their shooting positions. In the words of Schuckmann, the invading colonial troops came in contact with "a double barricade of stakes with stones piled up to the height of 2 feet."⁶⁷ The guards on the barricade had no weapons. This may well have been a perfect trap because it appears that Buea warriors mandated to shoot at the enemies were a stone through from the barricades waiting for action. It is unclear who opened fire. Schuckmann only claims that the Buea warriors in their hideouts behind the barricade suddenly started shooting on the colonial army.⁶⁸ At the end of this

⁶⁶ See the Acting governor's report in DKB III, 1892, 14-18; Translated and published by Ardener, *Kingdom*, 81-5.

⁶⁷ DKB III, 1892, 81.

⁶⁸ DKB III, 1892, 81.

first violent encounter between the Buea and the Germans, the leader of the colonial expedition, Gravenreuth was killed. The encounter proved to be a disaster for the German government, and the colonial army was forced to retreat to Victoria and later to its base in Douala.

The defeat of the Germans in the Gravenreuth tragedy made the German government back home to begin to contemplate whether peaceful means of conquering the Cameroons were not cheaper and preferable than military expeditions. Berlin therefore promptly wrote to Acting Governor Schukmann, rebuking him that instead of giving into military adventurism, he should focus on a peaceful opening of the Cameroon interior. The letter correctly noted that:

It seems as if the conception has gained ground that our colonial policy should be mainly oriented towards the acquisition of military honours against *wild tribes* [emphasis mine], while on the contrary a Governor will mainly contribute to the flourishing (*Auschwung*) of his territory when he knows how to maintain peace, calm and security.⁶⁹

It is interesting that both the German officials on the ground and even those back home in Berlin contemplating a more peaceful approach towards Africans all entertained these images of Africans as savages and “wild tribes.” How would a Governor maintain peace with a “wild tribe” without treating them as savages? And how would a home government advocate a peaceful approach against a ‘wild tribe’?

In 1894 therefore, the colonial government decided that it was ready for the “savage” people of Buea. It sent a military expedition against Buea even though the people clearly preferred peace and despite an appeal from the missionary official in Buea to Acting Governor Leist that “[he] would like to request [the Acting Governor] to refrain from sending a military expedition to Buea” as he believed that peaceful methods and diplomacy with the people was the

⁶⁹ Cited by Peter Geshiere, “Von Gravenreuth and Buea as a Site of History: Early Colonial Violence on Mount Cameroon,” in *Encounter, Transformation and Identity: peoples of the Western Cameroon Borderlands, 1891-2000*, ed. Ian Fowler and Verkijika Fanso (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2009), 81.

best approach.⁷⁰ In that year, von Stetten led an expedition against the peaceful Bakweri. They shot and killed both armed and unarmed people, burnt down villages and set the palace ablaze, forcing the king and the people to surrender.⁷¹

The Germans seemed to have contended themselves that maximum violence against Cameroonians such as burning down their houses and palaces would command respect. The German commander who finished up the battle with the Bakweri made suggested that the violence on Buea was meant in part to pacify and deter and in part for communicative purposes when he remarked that “the fact that the very powerful Buea people had been punished, their stronghold taken and their royal compounds reduced to ashes, would certainly inspire more respect for the government amongst other Bakweri.”⁷² The burning of the Bakweri houses and the palace could not have been judged as a mere reaction to the killing of Gravenreuth and the need to command respect for the colonial government. The burning post-dated the Bakweri capitulation. A neutral expatriate in Buea, Knut Knutson, who witnessed the violence firsthand attributed to it an imagery of animal hunting when he described it:

At Christmas time, when the church bells were ringing in peace and joy at home in England, Sweden and Germany, the town of Buea was burnt down and the inhabitants, men, women and children were killed by the [German] soldiers. The poor natives were hunted like animals and killed everywhere they found them.⁷³

Knutson again details how “poor children who tried to hide themselves in the grass” had been (hunted and) killed.⁷⁴ According to Knutson, the Buea people confessed that they did not understand for what reason the Germans had killed them, but concluded on their own that

⁷⁰ Quoted in Ardener, *Kingdom*, 103-104. The letter was written to acting Governor Leist by P. Viester, the apostolic prefect, missionary official in Buea who was negotiating peaceful relations between Buea and the colonial Government.

⁷¹ P. M Kale, *Brief History of Bakweri* (Buea: n.p, 1939), n.p.

⁷² Cited by Geshiere, “Von Gravenreuth,” 78

⁷³ Knut Knutson, *Swedish Ventures in Cameroon 1883-1923: Trade and Travel, People and Politics; the memoir of Knut Knutson with Supporting Material*, ed. Shirley Ardener (New York. Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2002), 162.

⁷⁴ Knutson, *Swedish Ventures*, 163.

Puttkamer most certainly wanted his newly drilled African soldiers to “have some exercise and experience in killing black men.”⁷⁵ From the point of view of the victims, not only was the killing unjustifiable, it was ‘ritualistic.’ It is unlikely that victims of violence, like the Buea people, would find it justifiable in any way. But measured against its objective of intending to pacify the Buea people, the post-war burning of houses, hunting, and killing of children in Buea certainly went beyond that goal.

In spite of the often unprovoked violence that the early colonial paramilitary state carried out against the colonized, colonial officials’ reports characteristically presented the colonized as the offender and a warmongering people who deserved punitive expeditions. Immediately after the first violence against Buea in 1891, the Acting Governor von Schuckman, himself part of the expedition that had marched on Buea presented a lengthy report of the incident in which he falsely blamed the Buea people whom he said had been waging wars of terror against neighboring groups. In his claim, “the Buea people were the terror of all other villages on this side of the mountain, as they began disputes and wars at every opportunity...”⁷⁶ He went on to say that bloodshed for the Buea people was almost an everyday matter. Later in March 1893 when Governor Herr Zimmerer himself visited the villages and inhabitants of the Buea people, and although he did not have to carry any weapons around and was very peacefully received, he went on to write in his official report that for the “mountain fold...bloodshed is almost an everyday matter.”⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Knutson, *Swedish Ventures*, 163.

⁷⁶ Schuckman ‘Besuch des Gouverneurs von Kamerun in Buea’, DKB, IV, 1893, 288-289. Translated and published in Ardener, *Kingdom*, 288-9.

⁷⁷ ‘Besuch des Gouverneurs von Kamerun Buea,’ DKB, IV, 1893, 288-89; Translated and published in Ardener, *Kingdom*, 98-100.

Schuckman's report, in particular, had earlier claimed that the over 150 soldier man expedition that had set out to Buea was out for peace only to be attacked by the Buea people. It is doubtful that a peaceful expedition would require over 150 soldiers with Maxim guns, ammunition, and other weapons, just to visit a people. Edwin Ardener is not convinced of the colonial rhetoric of the "supposed peaceful intentions" of the German marching column against Buea.⁷⁸ Colonial official reports on violence against Africans often presented a different picture of the real facts of the matter. I note that the reports were however quite instructive, not necessarily for what they said, but most importantly for how they said it and for what they did not say. For example, shortly after the 1893 violence in Douala that erupted as a result of inhuman treatment of the Dahomean mercenaries and violence on them and their women, Leist's official report only remembered that the Dahomean soldiers were moron slaves, hungry and most repulsive, and ungrateful to have been redeemed from slavery at a very high price. He thought that the people should have considered themselves to be in paradise in Cameroon in their services for the colonial government, and charged that this "negro still lives in the present and forgets the past."⁷⁹ The stigmatization of Africans as bellicose and bloodthirsty by the colonizers was meant only to justify punitive expeditions on them. Contrary to the representations in colonial narratives, Africans were not as warlike. As evident from colonial reporting which I have cited, the rhetoric about 'savage' and 'warlike' had far more to do with the analogy of giving a hated dog a bag name to hang it.

⁷⁸ Edwin Ardener, *Kingdom on Mount Cameroon: Studies in the History of the Cameroon Coast, 1500-1970* (Providence and Oxford: Berghan Books, 1996), 85.

⁷⁹ *Deutsches Kolonialblatt* (4-6 February 1894): 91-93.

Violence on the Cross River Peoples

The Cross River peoples are various Bayang ethnic groups spread out and inhabiting the Cameroon Western borders with Nigeria. In 1904, these people were subjected to violence from German colonial authorities.⁸⁰ Colonial authorities viewed these people as a stumbling block to their trade practices, especially as they often refused to work in German plantations and also refused to let the Germans bypass their middleman monopoly. On 14 January 1904 in what was codenamed the “Mpawmanku wars,” the German military station leader at Ossidinge led an expedition of forty-men against Chief Mpawmanku’s Bachama Village for threatening GNK traders. Passing through the Boki villages of Abonando and Kajifu, Count von Pückler-Limpurg and his team reached Basho on 19 January 1904. Chief Yaya of Ketuya-Basho granted the District officer and his team a hectic reception. Excitedly flippant, one of the soldiers revealed their mission to the Chief.⁸¹

The mission in question was the German plan to pacify the people. The Chief immediately informed others that the Germans were in for war. Here were the Germans invading a people without cause, and not even a declaration of war, and even the hospitality of the ignorant Chief was not enough to restrain the Germans. In any case, Basho people ambushed the colonial army at River Mawne on 22 January 1904 and killed half of the soldiers, including the leaders of the expedition himself, von Pückler-Limpurg.⁸² The first gunshot had come from the Germans on 22 January, and by February, the Anyang had inflicted a heavy defeat on the

⁸⁰ For details of the violence and the wars of resistance these people fought against the Germans, see, Wilson Ebi Ebai, “The Anyang and the Mpawmanku Wars, 1904-1906-1906,” in *La Politique de La Mémoire Coloniale Allemagne et au Cameroun – The politics of Colonial Memory in Germany and Cameroon: Actes du Colloque à Yaoundé, Octobre 2003-Proceedings of a Conference in Yaounde, October 2003*, ed. Stefanie Michels. (Münster; Lit Verlag, 2005), 65.

⁸¹ CNAB, Ba/1916/2, 330/17A.

⁸² Ebai, “The Anyang,” 65.

Germans on what was only the first phase of the war. Months later in August 1904, the Germans launched a surprise attack and unleashed a chain of violence on the Cross River inhabitants. The colonial army poisoned food crops in the farms, burnt houses and hunted the heroes of the first phase, then hanged captured/surrendered soldiers. Eyongetah and Brain capture strongly the image of German violence during this period:

Throughout 1905, the whole country Mamfe to Basha was terrorised, villages were burnt, crops destroyed and men and women shot down unmercifully. At Obonyi six men were hanged and at Basha and Kekpani more.⁸³

The German brutality and deliberate attempt to annihilate the Anyang population obliged the people to rush for peace when the notables quickly surrendered themselves to the Germans. Even though the Chiefs surrendered, had not caused the war (they had justly defended themselves against German invasion), the Germans proceeded to execute the Chiefs alongside notables, who the Germans considered to have led the resistance.⁸⁴ To keep the postbellum Anyang villages permanently humbled, the Germans then established a military post at Basha therefore. Akin to the report of Acting Governor Schuckmann earlier on the impact of the German punitive expedition on the Buea, the British Resident of Ossidinge Division, Hunt, in 1916 saw the military post as serving to humble the Anyang people and make them cooperative.⁸⁵ When the British district officials later reported about the region in 1924, they were also of the opinion that the Germans had pacified the cross River people through the Mpawmanku wars. Ironically, they noted that German brutalities and violence on the Cross River people had turned them against the Germans during the war of 1914-1916.⁸⁶ Mr. Hunt,

⁸³ Tambi Eyongeta and Robert Brain, *A History of the Cameroon* (London: Longman, 1974), 93.

⁸⁴ Ebai, "The Anyang," 70.

⁸⁵ CNAB, 1916/3, 1034, W.E Hunt, 1916. Annual Report on Ossidinge Division, Cameroon Province, 1916.

⁸⁶ CNAB, E.P 512, B.E Sharwood Smith and L.L Cantle, "Assessment Reports on the Anyang and Manta Tribes of Mamfe division, Cameroon province, 1924.

then the serving British District Officer to Ossidinge in the newly conquered territory of Cameroon from the Germans reported that the people were happy to have been relieved from German rule and placed under the British.⁸⁷

War with the Kom or the Kom Resistance⁸⁸

In 1904, an anti-colonial war broke out between the Kom ethnic grouping and colonial administration in the Bamenda Western grasslands. The *causa belli* for the war hinges on motives of subjugation on the one hand and elements of respect and honor on the other. A certain German station commander in Bamenda made a blunder that was regarded by the Kom leader and his people as an affront to the honor of the King. It began with an incident to that effect. Besides colonial reports that make reference to this incident, the story was narrated to me in its entirety by one Prince Henry Mbain.⁸⁹ I later corroborated the story with some several notables of Kom, and during conversations with many others who possessed knowledge on the subject. According to the narrators, and in line with the available written records, sometimes in 1904, the German Colonial administration was becoming increasingly impatient and offended over what it perceived to be the recalcitrance of the ruler of Kom and his outright refusal to submit to colonial authority. The German military commander at the Bamenda military station then resolved that he

⁸⁷ CNAB, Ba/1916/2, 330/17A, Annual report on Cameroon Province, 1916. Correspondence and Report attached. Mr. Hunt was then the serving District Officer of Ossidinge. Excerpts of his report are reproduced here in first person by E.C Duff, at the time Resident of Cameroon province in 1916. Duff was making his annual yearly report of the Cameroon Province, which often built on reports of individual District Officers of the various districts. One can notice from Mr. Hunt's report that though it was suggestive of the ruthlessness of the Germans over Cameroonians, words like 'native,' 'bushmen' and so on, conveyed to the British images of the people of Cameroon in similar ways as was the case with the Germans.

⁸⁸ The account of the Kom-German war of resistance is brilliantly detailed by Paul Tuh Kiawi, 'The Kom-German War, 1904-05: The Kom War tactics.' (MA Thesis, University of Buea-Cameroon, 2001). I am particularly grateful to Kiawi, for making the thesis available to me for use here, and for the productive conversations I have had with him on the subject.

⁸⁹ He was a long time serving archivist in Cameroon National Archives in Yaounde and later before. He was a Prince of the Kom kingdom and granted interviews to many researchers in Cameroon a Master Degree program course paper on the Germano-Kom War. The story was later repeated to me in 2011 by other Kom notables when I interviewed them in respect to a UCLA History Conference paper I wrote on Social and Cultural Change in Kom.

would demonstrate the invincibility of the German colonial might by humiliating the Kom ruler. Word was sent to the Kom ruler that he should send food stuff and laborers, alongside one of his daughters to the German station in Bamenda.⁹⁰ He must make sure that his daughter accompanied the laborers, such was the firm instruction. On receiving this news, King Yuh of Kom is quoted to have “roared” in anger that:

The Germans will not *dishonor* me [emphasis mine]. They want to do to my daughter what they have done to daughters and women of weaker fons [kings]. I am fon [King] of Kom and I command many other fondoms [Kingdoms]. No one has ever dared my power. Go to the Germans and tell them that they can never *dishonor* me.⁹¹

Part of the responsibility of men of honor – a very important one – was the protection of their women against harm of any type. Even ordinary men enforced honor by standing up to their women and protecting them. Thus it became almost certain that an affront on the daughter of a powerful ruler like the one of Kom was doomed to result in armed confrontation. The Kom leader was adamant that the German request for his daughter to carry food to the Germans was insulting, disrespectful and dishonorable to his person.⁹² Thus he hastily sent a firm message to the Germans, inviting them to war. He sent wood ash, and in an attempt to understand the meaning of wood ash as a response message within the grassland customs, the Germans were told that it meant an invitation to war, precisely that the Germans would be blown off like ash if they dared the Kom in war.⁹³ In Kom, a usual way to declaring war against an enemy was when two bundles, one containing ash and the other containing wood, were sent through special envoys to a potential adversary. If the potential adversary chose the bundle of camwood, it was

⁹⁰ Interview with Prince Henry Mbain, Buea, March 1999. See also, CNAB, G.V Evans, Annual Reports, Bamenda Division, Cameroon province, 1925; Nkwi, *Traditional Government*, 139-140.

⁹¹ Prince Mbain, Interview.

⁹² See Kiawi, "Kom-German War," 2001:72-73; Nkwi, *Traditional Government*, 139; Paul Nchoji Nkwi, *Traditional Diplomacy: A Study of Inter-Chiefdom Relation in the Western Grassfields, North West Province of Cameroon* (Yaounde: SOPECAM, 1987), 85.

⁹³ Nkwi, *Traditional Diplomacy*, 85.

regarded as a sign of submission and war booties or demands would be requested from the ruler. If on the other hand, the ruler had chosen the bundle of ash, then he would have settled for war.⁹⁴ In the case of this incident with the Germans, no room was given to a choice. Only a bundle of ash was sent, meaning already a declaration of war. This helps to situate the gravity of the German offense, asking the leader of Kom to send forth his own daughter for sexual gratification of the colonists. What then followed was a fierce war between the colonial army and the Kom warriors.

The German colonial army comprising mainly of Bali, Ewondo, and Sierra Leonians left Bamenda for an attack on the Kom. As the enemies approached, the Kom adopted the strategy of poisoning the waterways at the fords, from which many advancing *schutztruppe* members drank and died.⁹⁵ With largely rudimentary weapons and comprised of swords, spears, lances, clubs, stones, catapults, slings, cutlasses, iron-tipped arrows, Dane guns, and shields, manufactured in the local industries in Kom by blacksmiths⁹⁶ the Kom people engaged the multifarious, well drilled and well equipped colonial army in a seventh month fight. And as the British official was later to observe in the 1920s, the Germans found the Kom a ‘hard nut to crack.’⁹⁷

The Kom incorporated topography in their war strategies. To understand how one needs first a brief knowledge of this topography which became an important feature of planning warfare in Kom. As one British official saw it in the 1920s, “the whole [Kom] country is extremely rugged and broken, with rolling uplands of an average altitude of from 4,000 to 6,000

⁹⁴ Kiawi, “The Kom-German War,” 72.

⁹⁵ Christraud Geary, “Ludwig Brandl’s Historical Notes on the Kingdom of Kom (Cameroon), *Paideuma* 26 (1980): 68.

⁹⁶ Kiawi, “The Kom-German War,” 77; D.O Evans in 1927 observed from his interview with the Kom leaders that the weapons they used to fight the Germans were mostly spears, matchets, Dane-guns etc.

⁹⁷ Saint Thomas Aquinas Major Seminary Archives and Library, Bambui, (hereafter STAMPS), Ad/2, Mr. G.E Evans, District Officer, An Assessment Report on the Kom (Bikom) Clan of the Bamenda Division, Cameroons Province, (copy from Buea Archives Office), British Cameroons, 1927.

feet...” In part for strategic reasons, the capital of Kom, Laikom, was located on top and around some of the highest points. In fact, “in the vicinity of Laokom [sic] and actually at Laokom [sic] itself, which is 6,300 feet above sea level, some of the highest points in altitude in the Division are attained.” This circumscribed Laikom area of 6,300 feet up, situated on the top of a rugged tableland, had been chosen by the original Kom settlers “as a place where they would probably be immune from attacks by their then enemies.” In part because of the ability of the people to incorporate their topography into their military planning, they posed the Germans “a certain difficulty in subduing them.”⁹⁸

Given the forested nature of some of the parts of the land, the first strategy was to make their leader inaccessible to the enemies by hiding him in one of the thickest and hidden forests. This posed a serious problem for the attacking colonizers who often tagged victory by capturing and humiliating the leader of the resisters. In the seven-month long war of resistance that ensued, the Germans entered Kom villages, burning houses in ruthless fashion, and “appointing men of their own selection to look after various villages after the inhabitants had been subdued.”⁹⁹ Most Kom men joined in the fight against the Germans, making the capture of Laikom a very difficult task for the Germans. When the Germans finally captured Laikom, they burnt it down, together with the burial ground of the previous Fons. This act, considered by the Kom a desecration, was unforgivable, such that the Kom remained passive resisters to German authority, and were only kept in check by colonial militarism. This resistance would quickly resurface during the 1914 war. In a nutshell, The Kom resistance led to the death of too many old men, not through gunfire but through hunger and starvation. During the war, the Germans burnt down the houses of the

⁹⁸ STAMPS, Ad/2.

⁹⁹ STAMPS, Ad/2.

old men, causing them to take refuge in the bush, during which time they died, on account of lack of food and the cold they endured. The truth is that during that war, more men perished in hunger and cold than were ever actually killed in battle.¹⁰⁰

In spite of their war losses, the Kom felt that they had upheld their honor by fighting against the Germans. Foyin Fuh particularly assembled his council of elders at the end of the war, and told them that by not letting the white man defile his daughter, and by not letting the white man capture him, and by challenging a multiplicity of colonial soldiers of different ethnic formations fighting for the white man, he had defended his prestige and honor that he was unconquerable.¹⁰¹

The Northern Resistance and Conquest

The 1884 treaty with the coastal Duala did not empower the Germans over the Cameroon inland peoples, but on account of the so-called principle of effective occupation agreed on by the colonizers at Berlin in 1884/85, the Germans were poised to conquer, subjugate and rule all inland Cameroonians. The urge to wage colonial wars on a particular people was strongest if the region was particularly economically promising, with trade prospects, and if the people showed signs of standing in the way of the colonialists. It was also very strong if the people had a firmly established political system, which was often matched with the presence of an army. The Adamawa region in the North of Cameroon fitted this prescription in its entirety. The German Colonial Society particularly urged the effective occupation of Adamawa through the establishment of a military station in Garoua. Once the well politically established rulers of Adamawa showed signs of reluctance to surrender their sovereignty to the colonizers, the

¹⁰⁰ STAMPS, Ad/2.

¹⁰¹ Prince Mbain, Interview.

colonizers resolved that wars of colonial subjugation in that region were inevitable. In fact, the first German envoys to Yola and parts of Adamawa, seeing that the rulers were not willing to bulge, told their countrymen that European intrusion in Adamawa had made "a war of extermination between Fulla and European civilization inevitable."¹⁰²

Thus in January 1899, two companies of the colonial army, one from Douala and the other from Yaounde, all totaling over 300 black soldiers led by white German officers, undertook to attack and subjugate the North. The first target in Adamawa were the Njilla people, whose town the colonial army found well-fortified by a wall and moat, and a picket fence that ran over the wall.¹⁰³ Njilla people mobilized, and defended their town by spreading arrows, spears, and missiles against the advancing colonial army. But the colonial army with their superior weapons, training and skill overcame the people, and Njilla town was burnt. Much was looted by the colonial army.¹⁰⁴ Much of that which was looted, including precious cultural artifacts of the region, was later used to enrich the Berlin Ethnographical Museum.¹⁰⁵

After Nilla, the colonial army launched a surprise attack at Tibati in April, while at least a part of its army was away on a campaign in the Tikar country. With part of his army away, Lamido Muhammad of Tibati could do little. With news of advancing enemies, he stationed some of his troops at various regions of the route to Tibati to defend the town at all costs. But the enemies advanced, and after five days of forced marches with porters bearing the brunt of the hardship, overcame the Tibati troops and forced the Lamido to flee and entrench himself in the

¹⁰² Njeuma, *Fulani Hegemony*, 179.

¹⁰³ P. Müllendorff, "The Development of German West Africa (Kamerun) (Delivered at the Ordinary General Meeting of the African Society on October 28th 1902)," *Journal of the Royal African society* 2, no. 5 (October 1902): 81-2.

¹⁰⁴ Njeuma, *Fulani Hegemony*, 184.

¹⁰⁵ Müllendorff, "The Development of German," 82.

well-fortified town of Sanserni. Once again, the colonial army looted accordingly. Not even with the strongest army of an estimated strength of ten thousand Infantry and three thousand Horsemen had the Lamido been able to prevent the colonial army from seizing Tibati. However, his entrenchment at Sanserni with such an army continued to pose a real threat to the colonizers.¹⁰⁶ How is it that the colonial army succeeded to take Tibati? Amongst many others, the cooperation of the Hausas was paramount. The Hausas who formed the core of the German colonial troops had told their kinsmen involved in a trade that with Tibati under German rule, all trade restrictions would disappear. Thus Hausa cooperation was guaranteed, as well as many of the village Chiefs who were under Tibati had been, for fear of destruction, denouncing Tibati and submitting to the Germans.

The colonizers later attacked the Lamido in his entrenched position, shooting and killing all his body guards and capturing him. They took the Lamido to the market place where he declared his deposition and the Germans got someone ready to submit to their authority and take instructions from them to replace him. The new ruler, Muhammad's second cousin, Yerima Chiroma, was installed as 'sultan of Tibati in the name of his Majesty the Emperor and King of Germany.¹⁰⁷ The Germans had the practice of treating their defeated victims to death, with indignity, including even persons who had been highly dignified rulers of people. After the defeat of Lamido Muhammad of Tibati for example, von Kamptz subjected the deposed Lamido to all forms of indignity, including making him walk on barefoot so that he fell sick and died on the way.

¹⁰⁶ Njeuma, *Fulani Hegemony*, 184, 185-6.

¹⁰⁷ Njeuma, *Fulani Hegemony*, 188.

The success of the Germans in Tibati, one of the strongest military powers in the entire Adamawa emirate, sent a strong signal to others, effectively removing potential Fulani resistance to German rule in the south of the emirate, including Ngaoundere and Banyo. And as by its very nature the Adamawa Emirate or the entire Sokoto Caliphate did not have an established system of coordinated military action against external enemies, and as the Germans gained knowledge of the fact that the emirate would not unite in a military action against them (the colonizers), they proceeded in a systematic fashion to break down by force Fulani authority in all districts, except the district of Rai whose isolated position in the heart of the stretches of woodland country made it virtually impossible to take and retain by force until 1910.¹⁰⁸

In August 1901, the colonial army attacked Lamido Aba of Ngaoundere and his people for resisting colonial rule, and after two and half hours of fighting, killed the Lamido, burned the Royal Palace, and forced the people under colonial rule.¹⁰⁹ After Ngaoundere, the colonial army of conquest marched on to Garoua, conquering it in November 1901, after serious engagement with Fulani cavalry and foot soldiers.¹¹⁰

Up to 1907 in the North and even beyond, the Muslims there were still resisting German colonial rule. In that year, a radical Muslim Cleric – Goni Wadai – who had spent more than five years providing military training to his followers in Ngaoundere, mounted a well-armed resistance against the German colonizers, who he and his followers saw as infidels. Drawing his support predominantly from the Muslim population, Wadai aimed to put an end to German colonialism and reinstitute radical Islamic rule. Against the odds of German colonial brutality

¹⁰⁸ Njeuma, *Fulani Hegemony*, 189 & 191.

¹⁰⁹ John Leland Ausman, "The Partition, Conquest, and Occupation of the Emirate of Adamawa, 1885-1926" (Ph.D diss., Dalhousie University, 1973), 139.

¹¹⁰ Ausman, "The Partition," 140.

and violence, Wadai led an army against the German stronghold in Garoua on 19 July 1907. As had been the fate of other resistance movements, the superiorly armed and better led German colonial army crushed Wadai's resistance movement, massacring almost all his entire army.¹¹¹

Let me be clear. On a case by case analysis, and measuring specific periods, colonial wars proved to be far more devastating and humanly costly than pre-colonial wars in Cameroon. With the exception of the slave trade era and raids, but most specifically in the nineteenth century, most inter-ethnic wars in the Northwest region of Cameroon deemed to be the most warlike, lasted for only a couple of days. What was judged to be a 'full-scale' war between two major ethnic groups usually lasted one-five days, with the number of deaths on both sides usually not exceeding ten persons. Specifically, major groups in the region like the Kom, Nso, Bali, and Bafut had occasionally been involved in wars against each other, over issues of land, hegemony, and so forth. But all those wars put together in the nineteenth century hardly killed hundreds of persons.¹¹² On the other hand, the number of persons killed in colonial wars with the Germans for only during a period of thirty years must have been far greater than the dead for over the century preceding German rule. A tip of the iceberg! On 19 November 1901 a well-equipped German mercenary force consisting of five Europeans and 117 African soldiers killed 300 of the Emir of Garoua's troops in an attempt to subjugate him to colonial rule. Not long afterward, on

¹¹¹ Martin Z. Njeuma, 'The Usmanuya System, Radicalism and the Establishment of German Colonial Rule in Northern Cameroon, 1890-1907,' *Paideuma* 40, The Sokoto Caliphate and the European powers, 1890-1907 (1994): 126.

¹¹² See, for example, most accounts that touch on the subject of some of the interethnic wars in Cameroon in the nineteenth century, such as those of, Paul Nkwi, *Traditional Government and Social Change: A Study of the Political institutions Among the Kom of the Cameroon Grassfields*. Fribourg-Switzerland: The University Press, 1976); Verkijika V. Fanso and B. Chem-Langhee, 'Nso' Military Organisation and Warfare in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries,' in *African Crossroads: Intersections between History and Anthropology in Cameroon*, ed. Ian Fowler and David Zeitlyn (Providence and Oxford: Berghan Books, 1996), 101-114.

20 January 1902, Lieutenant Hans Dominik's small and well-drilled contingent armed with modern weapons killed again 500 of the Emir's troops in Maroua. And after the engagement and on Dominik's orders, the Emir's wounded soldiers left behind on the battlefield were slaughtered.¹¹³ These numbers, killed in only two engagements, certainly dwarfed the total number of soldiers killed in Cameroon in the so-called inter-tribal wars in the nineteenth century before the Europeans showed up. Earlier in the Bamenda grasslands, the two expeditions against the Bafut for example alone registered 1,062 dead.¹¹⁴

The Duala Resistance, 1910-1914

The group that posed one of the most challenging and troubling resistance to German colonialism was, interestingly, the people who had signed a treaty of annexation in 1884. The Duala resistance to German colonialism is of utmost importance in so far as it caps up the anti-colonial atmosphere that reigned in Cameroon on the eve of the 1914 war. In fact, the German historian Adolf Rüger, who has done the most extensive study of Germano-Duala relations, has viewed the Duala resistance against the Germans as a truly nationalist resistance movement that lay the foundation for even post-WWI resistance movements against colonialism in Cameroon.¹¹⁵ It, therefore presents a classical example of one of my arguments in this study that during WWI, Cameroonians would seize the opportunity to continue to resist colonial rule as they had done over the years.

The trouble which the colonial administration had with the Duala takes us into an understanding of the relationship between violence and the colonial agenda. In this, colonial

¹¹³ Stoecker, "The Conquest," 70.

¹¹⁴ Nkwi, *German Presence*, 17.

¹¹⁵ See, for example, his work, Adolf Rüger, "Die Duala und die Kolonialmacht 1884-1914. Eine Studie über die historischen Ursprünge des afrikanischen Antikolonialismus," in *Kamerun unter deutscher Kolonialherrschaft, Band 2 ed. Helmut Stoecker*, (Berlin: Veb Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften, 1968).

violence can be viewed from the basis of the agenda of the colonial paramilitary state which “derived its characteristics to a great extent from the fundamental assumption that the protectorate was being run for the immediate and ultimate benefit of European capitalists and settlers, and that the natives were entitled to consideration only in so far as they served this purpose.”¹¹⁶ It is therefore not surprising that the Germans were resolved to deal ruthlessly with all Africans who stood on the way to achieving this goal. To realize its economic and separatist agenda, the colonial government in 1910 drew up a plan meant to expropriate parts of the Duala lands exclusively for white use. Even though the 1884 Germano-Douala treaty had given the Duala the right to hold on to their lands, the colonial government profited from the ambivalence of its dictated treaty terms to argue that the treaty had given them the right of management, including land. Land was the last thing the colonized hoped to hold on to: “For a colonized people, the most essential value, because it is the most meaningful, is first and foremost the land: the land, which must provide bread and, naturally, dignity.”¹¹⁷

Arguing, amongst many others that the expropriation contravened the terms of the 1884 treaty, the Duala resolved to resist. One of the Duala Kings – Dika Akwa, appeared at this time to be leading the Duala in protesting against colonial practices and injustices against the colonized. He was joined in 1910 by his son, Prince Mpondo Akwa, who had just returned from Germany where for the past seven years he had been leading the fight in the Metropole against the practices of the colonial government.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ CNAB, Ba/1916/3, 1039, Reports on various matters relating to the Cameroons, 1916.

¹¹⁷ Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Coonstance Farrington (New York: Grove Press, 1963), 9.

¹¹⁸ Emmanuel Ghomsi, “Resistance Africaine a L’imperialisme Europeen: Les Cas des Douala du Cameroun,” *Afrika Zamani*, 4 (1975): 169.

When this expropriation plan was officially announced in late 1911, King Rudolph Duala Manga Bell, then the new leader of the resistance movement, rallied his people and publicly protested against the plan. The protest fell on the death ears of the colonial authorities. Given the overwhelming influence of the German parliament, the Reichstag, in German colonial affairs, King Bell then petitioned the Reichstag through his private secretary, Ngoso Din, who traveled to Germany in February. Assisted by three German lawyers and two Social Democrats, Din presented in February 1914 a Duala petition in the Reichstag.¹¹⁹ The German Colonial governor, Ebermaier, who was in Germany at the time of the Duala petition, was invited by the Reichstag to respond to the petition. In the end, it seems that Reichstag recommended for the Governor to return to Cameroon and resolve the matter to the satisfaction of both parties. Instead, when the Governor got back, he decided to crush the Duala resistance in a brutal fashion.¹²⁰

At the point, the Duala resistance was beginning to snowball into a national one in which King Bell aimed at rallying all the traditional rulers in Cameroon for a national anti-colonial resistance. King Bell was resolved to solicit allied assistance for the overthrow of German colonialism.¹²¹ First, Bell contacted one Martin Paul Samba, leader of the Bulu in South Cameroon who had attained the rank of German Army Captain but had fallen out with the Germans and was in the process of mounting an anti-German colonial resistance. Bell and Samba agreed to seek foreign assistance to overthrow the Germans. Bell was to obtain assistance from the English and Samba from the French.¹²² Bell then sent a messenger who was to enter

¹¹⁹ Ghoms, "Resistance Africaine,"169.

¹²⁰ Ghoms, "Resistance Africaine,"169-70.

¹²¹ Ghoms, "Resistance Africaine," 170.

¹²² Magdaleine Mbono Samba Azan, *Martin Samba Face a la Penetration allemande au Cameroun* (Paris: ABC, 1976), 79-92.

Nigeria and obtain the support of the British colonial government there. The German colonial authorities, however, intercepted the messenger.

Second, the Duala leader contacted Madola, leader of the Grand Batanga, south of Douala.¹²³ To be clear, Bell succeeded in convincing others of the need for national resistance against the Germans.¹²⁴ This was evident as some Chiefs and clan elders or headmen as well as the Association of “Botiko ba Ngeke” began to organize others for a united front. During a Duala assembly in April 1914, a secret letter was circulated detailing their plans, fighting spirit and unity of action.¹²⁵ As observed by a German official, this unified resistance was already spreading beyond Douala into neighboring places such as Bassa, Wouri, Abo and Pongo, the Abo particularly supporting the Duala.¹²⁶ In continuation of realizing a national movement, envoys were sent to other parts of Cameroon including Balong, Susa, Yabassi, Ngaoundere, Dschang, Yaounde, Bali and Bamum, to rally every one against the German colonial authorities. From the district of Yabassi, one influential Mfomu of Bodiman participated in a Duala gathering in April 1914.¹²⁷ Rudolf manga Bell even succeeded in a passionate speech to convince the people of Muyuka, some 70 km North of Douala, to donate money in assisting in fighting against the German colonial government.¹²⁸

The Duala tried to ignite a fear monger among potential supporters; that they should rally against colonial rule otherwise, the colonialists were going to deal with them one by one.

¹²³ Ghomsi, “Resistance Africaine,” 170

¹²⁴ RKA Nr. 4430, Bl. 120 f, Protokoll der Versammlung der Duala vom 12.4.1914; Adolf Ruger, “Le Mouvement de Resistance de Rudolf Manga Bell au Cameroun,” in *L’Afrique et L’Allemagne de la Colonisation à la Cooperation 1884-1986 (Le Cas du Cameroun)*, ed. Kum’a Ndumbe III (Yaounde-Cameroon: Editions Africavenir, 1986), 167.

¹²⁵ Ruger, “Le Mouvement,” 167.

¹²⁶ RKA Nr. 4430, Bl. 119, Geheimbericht des Bezirksamtmanns Röhm vom 16.4.1914; Ruger, “Le Mouvement,” 168.

¹²⁷ RKA N0. 4430, Protokoll der Versammlung der Duala vom 12.4.1914; Ruger, “Le Mouvement,” 169.

¹²⁸ RKA N0. 4430, Protokoll der Versammlung; Ruger, “Le Mouvement,” 169.

They sent other envoys to the grasslands. The German colonial authorities speculated that King Bell had sent someone to contact the Fon of Bali, but they were unable to obtain proof.¹²⁹ They contacted Chief Tata of Bagam as well as the Sultan of Bamum.¹³⁰ One Ndane was sent to the King of Bamum, Sultan Njoya, to convince him to support King Bell and the Duala people in their anti-colonial struggle. The King of Bamum was briefed by Ndane on the Duala plans, which included plans to seek the support of England against Germany, so as to push out the German colonizers and replace them with the English. Not only did the King of Bamum turn down his colleague's request for a national resistance against the Germans, he quickly betrayed his colleague to the colonizers, and turned over Ndane's message to the Germans via German missionaries in Fumban.¹³¹ Njoya's betrayal led to the arrest of Rudolf Manga Bell, Ngoso Din, Mfomu and others in May 1914.¹³² In any case, it can be said that for the very first time in the history of the Cameroon colony, the Duala resistance attempted, and perhaps with a fair amount of success, to organize a national anti-colonial movement in Cameroon where the country would be delivered of the violence and misery of German colonialism.¹³³ The outbreak of the 1914 war and the invasion of Cameroon would provide just that opportune moment for Cameroonians to show such wide hostilities and resistance to German rule.

¹²⁹ Ruger, "Le Mouvement," 170.

¹³⁰ RKA Nr. 4430, Bl. 199f, Aussage des Häuptlings Tata bei seiner Vernehmung am 15.5.1914 in Bagam; Ruger, "Le Mouvement," 170.

¹³¹ Sultan Njoya, *Histoire et Coutumes de Bamum, rédigées sous la direction du Sultan Njoya*, trans. Henri Martin (Yaounde: centre du Cameroun Série Population, 1952), 214; Njoya reported Duala plans to a German Basel missionary in Bamum who passed on the information to the colonial authorities. Njoya's betrayal of the Duala is fascinating, and can be used to further analyse colonial rule, during which time people lived in fear. Njoya must have been scared of the Germans, and thought that if he did not report the Duala and the Germans got news of it later, he Njoya would be implicated. It is interesting to note that when the Allies would attack the Germans in Cameroon and once the tides of war were moving against the Germans, Njoya gave his full support to the Allies. And when the Germans were finally defeated, Njoya called them names.

¹³² Ruger, "Le Mouvement," 171.

¹³³ Ruger, "Le Mouvement," 168.

Upon the outbreak of the 1914 war, the colonial authorities, wanting to maintain political peace by all means possible decided on a summary treatment of King Bell. He was accused of high treason and complicity with the enemies – Britain and France, then together with Ngoso Din and Martin Paul samba, summarily tried and found guilty on 7 August 1914, then quickly executed the following day.¹³⁴ Bell's execution happened against appeals for clemency from the foreign missionaries in Cameroon.¹³⁵ Contrary to colonial calculations, this violent termination of the life of a Duala King and other important Cameroonian leaders would make matters worse, turning the Duala madly against the Germans in the course of the 1914 war, as would be seen in subsequent chapters.

Meanwhile, Prince Akwa who had been arrested in 1911 in Douala and deported to the Northern part of the country had continued to lead the fight against colonialism and was convincing the Sultans of Mindif, Ngaoundere, Kousseri and other dignitaries in Garoua to mount a national resistance movement against the colonizers. Accused of subversion, colonial authorities shot him in August 1914.¹³⁶

Reaction from Germany

German violence and atrocities in the colonies did alarm some individuals at home. Members of the Socialist Party in particular frequently evoked colonial issues in the Reichstag in which they unleashed attacks at colonial officials, alluding particularly to their brutalities against

¹³⁴ TNA, WO 158/552, Extract from Letter of a German Officer. The German district Commissioner in Douala stated that they wanted to conclude the trial process of Doauval Manga before the expected Allied attack on Douala. See, RKA No. 3991, Bl. 6 ff, Bericht Wienekes über das Verhalten der Duala-Bevölkerung während der ersten Kriegszeit. Herisau, 24.6.1916; Ruger, "Le Mouvement," 173.

¹³⁵ J.R Brutsch, "Autour du procès de Rudolf Duala Manga," *Études Camerounaises*, 51 (Mars 1956), 50; Ghomsi, "Resistance Africaine," 170; Ruger, "Le Mouvement," 173.

¹³⁶ Ghomsi, "Resistance Africaine," 169.

Africans.¹³⁷ But by far the most troubling were the attacks of Erzberger, who was elected deputy into the Reichstag in 1903 under the Zentrum party. Erzberger was “aroused by ... the brutality of incompetent colonial administrators...the extermination of native populations...” that he led an unending crusade against the format of German colonialism in Africa, unleashing as many assaults as possible against colonial administrators, in both his Reichstag speeches and his pamphlets.¹³⁸ But it must be stated that Erzberger was not against the abandonment of colonialism. He only sought to make it better and perpetual. In any case, specifically on the issue of German brutality, Erzberger opined that the German “colonial civil service was in many ways a disgrace to Germany.” While recognizing the value of the work done by Socialist and Liberal critics of colonial abuses, Erzberger undertook upon himself to research and assemble an edifying collection of individual colonial scandals, including those of Puttkamer in Cameroon.¹³⁹

Erzberger felt that there was a need for special training schools for colonial officials to prepare themselves systematically for colonial services, including an end to brutality. He missed the point. The issue was not one of the competent or incompetent colonial administrators. It was one of pacification, dehumanization, racialization and killing for sport. Little wonder, this attack on German colonial scandals by a Reichstag deputy and the quest for better treatment of Africans sparked off bitter criticisms from the German audience because “many Germans sincerely believed in the superiority of the white race over the black” and suggested “the corollary that

¹³⁷ Austen and Derrick in *Middlemen* note that the too much attention which the Reichstag paid to colonial issues stemmed more from organizational rather than substantive considerations. The German political system which gave too many powers to the emperor and less powers to the legislature made that body to be idle whereupon it busied itself by constantly discussing colonial issues which came under its jurisdiction. As for members of the Socialist party, they often suffered discrimination and dispise in Germany, a thing that made them more considerate to the plight of German subjects in the colonies. See his book, *Middlemen*, 94-95.

¹³⁸ Klaus Epstein, “Erzberger and the German Colonial Scandals, 1905-1910,” *The English Historical Review* 74, no. 293 (Oct., 1959): 639.

¹³⁹ Epstein, “Erzberger and the German,” 641.

negroes were the natural brewers of wood and drawers of water,” and that social Darwinism of the survival of the fittest “provided an intellectual pseudo-justification for many [German] brutal policies [against Africans].” Thus when in 1908 Erzberger made a speech at the Reichstag that the African should not merely be regarded as a supplier of labor but should be looked “upon as a human being possessing an immortal soul and a divinely appointed destiny identical with our own,” many Right Wing honorable Reichstag members were outraged at such a disrespectful attempt of trying to compare them with Africans, and a journalist in the press gallery broke into loud laughter, since there was a widely held view in the Reichstag that “[African] negroes were a higher type of monkey, devoid of real human attributes.”¹⁴⁰ When Erzberger and his supporter, Adolf Gröber, were outraged at the journalist’s and others’ views of the African, the Reichstag broke into a pandemonium until the presiding officer called for order. The offending journalist declared himself insulted and demanded an apology. The parliamentary sessions remained mute for several days until a compromise formula of half-apology was found. This incident alone underscores the impossibility of even a few Germans trying to convince the majority of their countrymen that violence against Africans was indeed an act of inhumanity.

On African Complicity

It may not have escaped the reader’s attention that not only were Africans the majority in the colonial army, but they were very involved in the violence meted out against fellow Africans. In some instances, Africans acted more in excesses against their own than the European Germans. How then do we blame the violence so described largely on the colonialists, and not on the Africans themselves? True, the German colonial army that terrorized the Cameroon colony

¹⁴⁰ Epstein, “Erzberger and the German,” 646- 647.

comprised more Africans than Germans. In fact, and statistically speaking, as of 1905, the Protective Force, which had been renamed “Imperial Protective Force” since 1895, comprised only some 60 German officers, 70 NCOs but up to 1, 150 Africans.¹⁴¹ This was the force responsible for much of the early colonial violence in Cameroon. Consequently, many colonialists, as well as pro-colonialist historians have quickly shifted the blame for much of the colonial violence on the Africans themselves. In doing so, they point to the general character of Africans serving in the colonial army. According to one historian on German Cameroon, “natives have an almost innate tendency to exploit their fellows and to use to that end whatever authority and powers they have.” He then claims that “guns and uniforms gave [African colonial] soldiers all too frequent opportunity to abuse their authority and to commit acts of violence against unarmed natives, especially women.”¹⁴²

The above claims fail to consider the complicated context of the colonial army, for which the African rank and file, although being the majority, were drilled by European officers. For an analysis of the product of the colonial army specifically in colonial Cameroon, let me start with the following observation of a British colonial official in 1913:

The German native soldier is recruited from the whole West African Coast. He is well paid, supplied with an excellent Rifle and equipment and is well fed and housed. He ... is trained to a very high pitch to act individually, on his own responsibility....He joins the Schütztruppen for the pay and more especially for the loot. The latter is an understood thing and he is encouraged to expect it. He is periodically told on parade that he is a member of the greatest army in the world, that everything he does is done for the Emperor, 'whose soldiers are as the sands of the sea, and far superior to the soldiers of all other nations.' He is told that there is only one flag, the German flag - that all others are as dirt. He is told that he is invincible and can do no wrong. This he firmly believes. His word is always taken before the word of any number of other natives. I have often heard him making a report to his Officer, which I have known to be a tissue of barefaced lies. The worse of it is he is always implicitly believed. The German idea is that a German soldier is 'ex officio' above suspicion.

¹⁴¹ Stoecker, 'The Conquest,'79.

¹⁴² Rudin, *Germans in Cameroon*, 197.

According to my experience ... the average German native soldier is an absolutely unscrupulous liar, thief and murderer....¹⁴³

First of all, the charge that “the average German native soldier is an absolutely unscrupulous liar, thief and murderer,” does not seem to suggest an inherently precolonial African character attribute, but rather a combination of the old and the new. Secondly, while the African colonial soldier was “trained to a very high pitch to act individually, on his own responsibility,” he was equally assured by his European officers that as a member of “the greatest army in the world,” everything he did was done ‘for the emperor.’

Historians have offered insights into the violence of the colonial army, and specifically of the role of African soldiers in the colonial military services. Michelle Moyd, for example, in her study of East African soldiers (*askari*) as *Violent Intermediaries* in the making of Colonialism in German East Africa, establishes that the violent colonial army was a product of both European and African military cultures. While drilling their African soldiers, German officers were equally informed by the *askari* precolonial ideas and ways of war. The African colonial soldier thus became both a blend of his pre-colonial military experiences and activities and European military drilling. Specifically, Moyd points out, practices of African soldiers of plundering villages and expropriating goods from civilians in war and peace predated German arrival in East Africa.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ National Archives of Nigeria, Enugu (hereafter NANE) From Captain W.V Nugent. Royal artillery. Chief British Commissioner. Anglo-German (Nigeria-Cameroons) Boundary Demarcation Commission, to His Excellency, Colonel Sir Frederick Lugard G.C.M.G. C.B. D.S.O Governor and Commander in Chief, Southern Nigeria. File # CSE 1/86/114.

¹⁴⁴ Michelle R. Moyd, *Violent Intermediaries: African Soldiers, Conquest, and Everyday Colonialism in German East Africa* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2014), 91. All of Moyd’s chapters 2 and 3 (pp88-147) are on the *askari* ways of war, their military training and socialization, and how they were a product of both the German and their own (*askari*) military cultures.

Moyd further points out that training their African soldiers and letting them be responsible for certain types of violence, colonialists sought to exonerate their guilt in some ways. Particularly regarding the punishment of flogging and execution of askari men punished for non-military and military crimes, senior African soldiers were made to perform the punishments, a thing that in theory allowed German personnel to “create the appearance of being above the fray, or as neutral adjudicators in cases against their askari.” Given this exercise of independent action in the field by junior military officers, notes Moyd, “the excessive violence of conquest and consolidation of authority in German East Africa must partly be attributed to the premium placed on officers’ and NGOs’ abilities to decisively plan and execute operations without supervision or approval.”¹⁴⁵

There is no denying Moyd’s analysis. Still, understanding the situation within both the physical and mental training that the Germans gave to their senior African soldiers still implicates European colonialists in some ways in the violence of the colonial soldiers. As the block quotation above attests, many of the African senior officers had been mentally groomed to believe they occupied a special status in the colonial apparatus, and that their independent actions had both the explicit and implicit approval of their German officers and officials. Many of them while acting independently, without any such explicit approval, genuinely believed that they were acting in the interest of the colonial authorities. Also, we must consider the problem of obeying military and administrative orders. So while Europeans sought to exonerate themselves by letting their African senior soldiers take charge of most of the violent acts like flogging, those soldiers were still under obligation to obey their European officers and administrators, who must therefore still take most of the blame for the violence. Scholarship on violence in general, and

¹⁴⁵ Moyd, *Violent Intermediaries*, 109 & 94.

more especially racial and genocidal violence has argued strongly on the responsibility of officials and officers who either give orders to their subordinates to undertake acts of killing or let their subordinates take independent actions. Moyd observes ways in which German officers and colonial officials took responsibility for actions of soldiers under their care, whereby soldiers who disobeyed military orders, or violated military discipline, were likely to face harsh punishments, ranging from “extra duty, confinement with or without chain-gang labor, flogging, fines, dismissal from the Schutztruppe, or some combination thereof.”¹⁴⁶ Of course, some of those acts of military discipline did also include unsanctioned soldier’s injustices and violence against colonial subjects. If therefore acts of soldiers’ indiscipline, injustices, and brutal violence against the colonized as in Cameroon went unpunished or were allowed to occur again and again, then the onus of responsibility must fall on the colonial authorities and officers.

Although the precolonial African soldier had often equally been a terror to the civilians, protecting certain social interests, the African colonial soldier had undoubtedly undergone significant transformations that played a role in how he went about violence on civilian Africans. Specifically, the creation of a colonial army introduced civil-military relations that were either absent or less obvious in precolonial Africa. Having been drilled by his European masters, putting on a foreign and distinct army attire, made to occupy a special social status, and separated from the civilian population, the African colonial soldier lived in a world easily in hostility with the African civilian world. Colonialism, Claude Welch argues, “introduced tensions between the army and the society, differing qualitatively from the intra-societal tensions of military organization.”¹⁴⁷ With colonialism, African political structures became more

¹⁴⁶ Moyd, *Violent Intermediaries*, 108.

¹⁴⁷ Claude E Welch Jr., “Continuity and Discontinuity in African military Organization,” *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 13, no. 2 (Jun. 1975): 230.

differentiated and specialized, and the standing African colonial armies that were raised to buttress political power with coercive control became clearly separated from the very societies in which they were implanted. Note that for the most part, pre-colonial African societies did not have a standing army, combat men often drawn from all able male so that there were no sharp lines of cleavage or delineation that separated a society from its military arm.¹⁴⁸ On the other hand, the colonial state assembled a standing army made up of Africans, giving rise to civil-military relations, infused with tensions and often time terror. "The word 'relations' suggests the existence of two entities, distinct in their functions, personnel, and perspectives, within a single over-arching framework. The study of civil-military relations involves the analysis of how a government directs the policy of its coercive branch, while none the less permitting it to have certain areas of decision-making autonomy."¹⁴⁹

In creating an African colonial military, European powers selected what they thought to be war-like classes in Africa, recruited soldiers from those classes either by direct force of action or through the complicity of their Chiefs, then elevated both the complying Chiefs and the soldiers to a highly privileged position as against the bulk of their own people, thereby enabling the soldiers to assume a lordly and oppressive superiority over the rest of Africans. Having done this, Europeans were able to secure the attachment and loyalty of this very small and insignificant African minority, whose interests stood opposed to those of the larger population. They were made to feel that somehow they were part of the European nations.¹⁵⁰ This was only a

¹⁴⁸ Welch, "Continuity and Discontinuity," 238.

¹⁴⁹ Welch, "Continuity and Discontinuity," 238.

¹⁵⁰ For example, Lloyd George made this argument in 1918 with regard to the German Askaris in East Africa who stood by the Germans beyond the conclusion of war in Europe. See, Lloyd George David, British war aims; statement by the Right Honourable David Lloyd George, January fifth, nineteen hundred and eighteen. Authorized version as pub. by the British government (New York: George H. Doran company 1918), 13.

fantasy. But it fulfilled its purpose. This new hostile civil-military relationship was once painted by Nigerian Emir at the time when he described the German African soldier as “privileged caste of native soldiers, infected with the arrogant militarism of Germany,” and designed to make “the life of the [African] people an unlovely existence.”¹⁵¹ With the creation of a colonial army, the African colonial world was acrimoniously divided into soldier and civilian. The image of the colonial soldier was such that in East Africa, for example, local inhabitants who had committed no crime and had even paid their taxes still fled into the bush at the mere sight and arrival of an askari.¹⁵² Confirming this separation of the African colonial soldier from his own people, and representing their ‘terror’ image, a German Protestant missionary noted that the African colonial soldiers themselves became despised and feared by their people, and were: "die ärgste Landplage, die grössten Räuber, die frechste, unverschämteste schändlichste Sorte von Menschen, die mir in meinem Leben begegnet sind."¹⁵³

African soldiers’ complicity in the killing of other Africans was facility by the practice of cultural and ethnic difference. To have the African colonial soldier effectively pose as terror and be an intermediary in realizing the colonial agenda, the colonized adopted the practice of using African trained soldiers of different cultural and ethnic extractions against civilians of other extractions. Some historians writing on and about Africa have erroneously conceived of Africans as one homogenous family as if to say that there exist no cultural and genealogical differences amongst them. This cannot be a helpful tool for analyzing African history. If nothing else, the

¹⁵¹ Quoted by Charles Lucas, “The Cameroons campaign,” in *The Empire at War*, Vol. IV (London: Oxford University Press, 1925), 63.

¹⁵² Moyd, *Violent Intermediaries*, 183.

¹⁵³ Quoted by Karin Hausen, *Deutsche Kolonialherrschaft in Afrika: Wirtschaftsinteressen und Kolonialverwaltung in Kamerun vor 1914* (Freiburg: 1970), 136 fn. 237. Translation: (something like) “The German African soldiers are the worst plague, the greatest robbers and the most outrageous group of people I have ever met in my life.”

practice of using Africans of different origins on other Africans is a powerful challenge to assumptions of homogeneity. This practice validates Andreski's thesis that greater ferocity and savagery was more likely to occur amongst groups that exhibited great cultural and ethnic differences. One can only imagine that this truth was well known by the Europeans. In Cameroon, the initial recruits of Africans to serve as German colonial soldiers came from neighboring African countries like Dahomey, Togo and the Sudan.¹⁵⁴ Not sharing any cultural affinities with other Cameroonians, the task of using these soldiers to terrorize the people was much easier. When, for example, the Germans began to recruit Cameroonians, they commonly used soldiers recruited from different regions against ethnicities that were different from them, like using soldiers of Northern origins against the southern peoples and vice versa, or soldiers of the Central region against Southern and Eastern peoples and vice versa, and soldiers from the grasslands against the coastal peoples. When in 1891 Gravenreuth bought the first set of soldiers that formed the colonial force in Cameroon, he made them sign a contract to accept to be used as mercenaries in the Cameroons. They were made to understand that they would do whatever they were instructed to do, including killing Africans in punitive expeditions. Their lives, they were told, depended on the phrase 'obey and do as instructed.'¹⁵⁵

Even when Governor Puttkamer later enlarged the colonial army, the majority of them were mercenary Africans, coerced into violence against Africans. For them, the Whiteman's order was more than law. Africans serving in the colonial army either killed or they were

¹⁵⁴ Rudin, *Germans in the Cameroons*, 192-3.

¹⁵⁵ Leist's report on the 1894 rebellion by the Dahomean soldiers showed that they were simply supposed to take instructions from their German masters and do as instructed. See, *Deutsches Kolonialblatt* (4-6 Februar 1894): 91-93.

killed.¹⁵⁶ Not only were they coerced into accomplices of violence, but they also had firm murder targets to meet. I noted earlier in this study how Dominik's African soldiers cut off women's ears to meet their given target. Also, when a German deputy Rören described in 1906 violence on Africans through flogging, he stated that African soldiers responsible for the flogging had to do a perfect job. If not, they were themselves flogged.¹⁵⁷ A story is told of the German Station Director of Yaounde, Lieutenant Schennemann who once got a rumor that his black wife was too intimate with certain "natives." Based solely on this rumor, Schennemann ordered a certain Cameroonian sergeant named Duara, to root out and punish the three suspects in such a manner that they should not have the power to repeat the offense. Cutting off their manhoods was one of the ways by which they could be rendered powerless. The Sergeant, however, landed in the wrong village. Fearing that if he could not give proof of having obeyed his orders he would face the music of violence himself, he arbitrarily seized the first three "negroes he met, threw them to the ground, and, as lying as they were, had them mutilated in the fashion ordered by [his master] Schennemann, and left to their fate."¹⁵⁸ This story underscores the plight of African-German soldiers who came short of meeting their assigned targets of violence as instructed.

Furthermore, the violence of African soldiers on other Africans could be traced to the specific personalities of the European officers who trained the Africans. Colonial European senior military officers who drilled Africans into elements of terror were persons of questionable morals. The truth is that many if not most of them "had broken the code of military discipline in Germany or otherwise made themselves unacceptable to their own circles but were still

¹⁵⁶ For circumstances of African complicity in the violence, see Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*; Memmi, *The Colonizer*.

¹⁵⁷ Her Majesty Government, "Treatment of Natives," 11.

¹⁵⁸ Reported in Her Majesty Government, "Treatment of the Natives," 38.

considered fit for service overseas."¹⁵⁹ That many of these European officers, as well as colonial administrative officials, who after drilling their first recruits of black soldiers quickly engaged them in wars against other Africans for less obvious reasons or justifications somehow fits this personality context. One European expatriate who witnessed one of the early colonial violence in Cameroon cried out that African soldiers killing other Africans had been "drilled by men [German white officers] who never thought of humane treatment [of Africans]."¹⁶⁰

In sum, continuous resistance against colonial rule was such that up to 1911-12, the Imperial office openly admitted that "considerable sections of the population had not accepted German rule."¹⁶¹ Up to 1907, a German - Dankler - confessed the precariousness of German colonial grip on Cameroon when he stated that the majority of the people had only been "nominally subjected" to German rule.¹⁶² On the whole, the German period was characterized by fear, uncertainty, and violence. Both the local people and their leaders lived in perpetual fear, not knowing when death would come. As one Bamenda grassland leader was later to tell a British District Officer in the 1920s, "we never knew in German time when we would be murdered in our beds and our houses burnt..."¹⁶³ A Bangwa man did not know when he would be shot or hanged by the Germans, and could not sleep safely in his bed during the days of the Germans.¹⁶⁴ It was under these circumstances that the Great War broke out in 1914, with the Allies invading Cameroon. As such it was to be expected that the Germans would have a hard time galvanizing

¹⁵⁹ Helmuth Stoecker, "The German Empire," 204.

¹⁶⁰ Knutson, *Swedish Ventures*, 163.

¹⁶¹ Helmut Stoecker, "Cameroon," 170.

¹⁶² DSA 1907,107; Nkwi, *German Presence*, 13.

¹⁶³ STAMPS, A/2, Fon of Kom to British District Officer.

¹⁶⁴ STAMPS, Af 13, 20, H. Cadman, An assessment Report of the Bangwa Tribal Area in the Mamfe Division of the Cameroons Province (copy); Original file No. CNAB, Af 13, E.P 6859, 19 December 1922.

local support. Instead, the majority of the Cameroonians would use the war as an opportunity to show their opposition to German rule by massively supporting the invading army.

Conclusion

The chapter has explored German colonial violence in Cameroon from 1884 up to the eve of the Great War. The gendered nature of violence was analyzed, demonstrating that in many instances, gender was targeted. While violence on women inflicted physical pain and death on them, it was often meant to be violence on the entire society. The sexual violation and flogging of women under the watchful eyes of their men, the special sexual targets on girls of royal descent, were meant to emasculate the men and the royal authorities who were real and imagined adversaries of the colonial apparatus. By physically inflicting pain and sexual assault on women, often under the watchful eyes of men, the colonizers aimed at breaking the social bonds that kept the society intact. The dismantling of societal bonds, bringing men and women to their knees, rendering them inactive and completely pliable, were the intertwining logics of colonialism. On its face value, however, colonial violence sought to racialize, demonize, subjugate and pacify Africans into a pliable colonized. While this was often the case in Cameroon, later stages of specific violent episodes assumed forms that outplayed the very essence of the violence. Such included the moments of excessive hunting down and killing of men, women, and children in a manner reminiscent of killing ‘animals.’ This being the case, I suggest that more research into the explicatory tools of colonial violence is required. Although visually all the violence served specific purposes, including communicative, the notion and practice of extermination that seemed to linger among the colonizers was counterproductive to the colonial agenda, and seem more likely to defy the existing explanations for colonial violence. So too was the practice of violence on ‘peaceful’ and non-rebellious groups, or attempts of extermination of groups long

after the wars of resistance in which they were involved had ended. This colonial violence was going to hurt the Germans very seriously in their quest to mobilize and recruit Cameroonians for combat activities against the Allied invaders in 1914.

Chapter 3

Soldiers of Honor: War Conscripts and Preparation for War

Introduction:

Humanity's wars have revealed multiple motivations behind soldier's intent to fight. Still, many soldiers commonly enlisted in wartime were simply forced. This applied, mostly, to soldiers who refused to come to terms with why they should fight at all, especially in a war they thought wasn't theirs. Military and colonial administrative records collected from the British, Nigerian and Cameroonian archives, as well as wartime newspapers, have unveiled interesting twists about how Africans came to be recruited and conscripted by European belligerents to conduct the Cameroon campaign of the 1914 war. Based on those records, this chapter demonstrates how a fusion of historical forces - tangible and intangible motivations - readied tens of thousands of Africans for combat activities in that campaign, but that majority of the soldiers were anything but willing soldiers. Amongst the chief intangible impulses that pushed these soldiers into the war, is what has been earlier identified by historian John Iliffe as martial honor. European belligerents used messages coded in the senses of honor to enlist these African soldiers so that in the end they were, arguably, soldiers of honor.

Part of the task of this chapter has been facilitated by the evidence presented in chapter two. Considering the hostile relationship between the German colonial administration and majority of the Cameroonian populations before the outbreak of war, the general response of Cameroonians to European mobilization and enlistment as would be demonstrated in this chapter

was predictably and expectedly pro-Allied and anti-German. The scope of the chapter includes only the first few months of fighting in Cameroon. No attempt is made to examine details of the fighting – the subject of the next two chapters.

The chapter first introduces the start of the Cameroon campaign, situating how and why the country came to be involved in the war. It does so by highlighting the significance of Africa in general, and of Cameroon in particular, in the 'total war.' The chapter relates several issues. First, although the Allies quickly declared war against German African colonies and prepared to invade German Cameroon by September 1914, the invasion was to depend solely on the goodwill and availability of Africans as combat men. Similarly, the Germans were to rely exclusively on Cameroonian soldiers for the defense of the colony. In all, therefore, the Cameroon campaign boiled down to Africans fighting Africans. Second, the chapter demonstrates that the 'success' of European efforts to conscript Africans and Cameroonians for the conduct of the campaign in Cameroon was due in large part to the propaganda messages on slavery, tailored to tweak Africans' senses of honor.

The Great War Comes to Africa

On 28 June 1914, Archduke Francis Ferdinand, heir to the Austrian throne, was assassinated by a Serbian nationalist. This assassination debacle quickly plunged the two Balkan countries (Austria and Serbia) into a state of war, and through a complex alliance system with opposing European powers backing either Austria or Serbia, all of Europe also quickly degenerated into war. The historical circumstances leading to the 1914 war and the causes of the war itself, as well as the details of the opposing nations, are irrelevant to this study, but suffice it to say that Africa soon became entangled in the war due to the involvement of Britain, France, and Germany which held colonies in the continent.

Although European powers had agreed in Berlin three decades earlier to keep Africa and particularly the Congo Central Basin area out of a future 'European war' it was not to be. Once war broke out, Germany soon fell into the long awaited trap of the Allies. Arguing for military convenience, the German Kaiser broke a Belgian neutrality agreed upon long before the war. He hastily invaded Belgium, using it as a passage to invade France. The Germans in East Africa also assaulted Belgian posts found within the Belgian Congo Africa neutrality axis. Capitalizing on the German breach of Belgian neutrality, the Allies found a pretext to invade German African colonies. Germany quickly protested diplomatically and vehemently to Allied decision to extend the war to Africa, as if wanting to 'eat its cake and have it back.'

The importance of Africa was such that the European belligerents could not do without involving the continent in the war. Long before the outbreak of war in Europe, Africa, especially because of colonialism, was at the center of European everyday life and diplomacy for many years. In the words of one British observer in 1919, Africa had been, equally with the Balkans where the immediate spark for war occurred, "the powder magazine of the world."¹ In several occasions, war seemed imminent in Europe because of what the agents of European governments were doing in Africa. The African continent remained decisive in European power relations and in losing or winning a European war. Africa thus might have well caused the Allies to lose, for once war broke out, European belligerents turned desperately to Africa for the supply of combat men. Some historians have argued that European imperial interests in the African continent constituted some of the major tensions that led to the Great War.² This suggests an under-looked significance of the African continent in the war, in which some Europeans sought to use the war

¹ J.D Taylor, "Some Effects of the War on Africa," *The Missionary Review of the World* 42 (1919): 439.

² See, for example, Brian Digre, *Imperialism's New Clothes: The Repartition of Africa, 1914-1919* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1990).

as an opportunity to increase their African colonial possessions. In fact, in the *Times of Nigeria* newspaper issue of 7-18 March 1916, one British colonial administrator particularly opined that the main cause of the war "lay in Africa and the conflict of colonising ambitions" on the continent. Lloyd George himself quickly noted the significance of Africa when he declared that the war was an imperialist war, with one of the Allied aims being to secure German colonies in Africa.³ Also, the Allies regarded the conquest of German Africa to serve as "valuable assets for barter at the end of the war" should it become necessary.⁴

Most important, however, the significance of the African continent in the war hinged on the willingness of some of the European belligerents, notably France, to use African soldiers to fight some of the battles of the war in Europe. Significantly, therefore, the Allies, even more than the Germans, needed to involve the African continent in the war by all means possible. In particular, France's hope of winning the war relied on its ability to mobilize African soldiers on a scale yet unknown in the continent's history. Other than the general importance of Africa, however, Cameroon itself presented a distinct significance in the Great War.

Cameroon's Significance in the War

News of the outbreak of war was first received by the German population in Cameroon, at I East unofficially, on 1 August 1914, at which time the German nationals who were having a concert began to celebrate.⁵ In the words of one German woman in Cameroon at the time, they transformed their concert into a jubilant demonstration, with speeches given, and enthusiastic

³ See, C. Seymour (ed.), *The papers of Colonel House* Vol. III (London, 1926), 240.

⁴ Charles Lucas (Sir), "The late Campaigns in Africa," in *The Partition and Colonization of Africa* (Oxford: Clarendon press, 1922), 176.

⁵ "Kriegs-Erlebnisse in Kamerun," *Detroitter Abendpost*, 22 March 1915. I am grateful to Helena Ratte, for digging out this article in the German language, and very generously transcribing it to English.

cheers chanted for the "Kaiser and the Reich." They sang the German national hymn all night.⁶

This general celebrant behavior of the Germans also appeared in print media, when a German newspaper, *Deg Tag*, during the first month of the war, authored a celebratory song: "Herr Gott, Sind diese Tage schön."⁷

It is interesting that German nationals in Cameroon should celebrate the outburst of war.⁸ In any case, official news of war meant for both their Cameroonian "subjects" and German nationals in that colony came on 7 August 1914, through a German Cameroon local newspaper, "Kamerun-Post," which published a "flaming invocation from the German Governor Ebermaier, in which he gave news of the outbreak of war with England, France, and Russia, and called on all Germans to bind together."⁹ But, of what significance was Cameroon to the Great War? Why should this German West African colony be host to some of the challenging battles of the 1914 war?

Cameroon's significance in the war ranged from the strategic importance of the country to its colonial trajectory. As a European colony, Cameroon formed part of the global politics of the Great War. The Allies, particularly Britain, centered their entire war calculus and strength on enemies' extended territories. This British war strategy revolving around Cameroon's significance as an enemy colony was well summarized in *The Times* of 9 August 1914:

Our [British] invariable practice in a great war against a Power possessing territories overseas has been to occupy these territories as soon as practicable, not only, and sometimes not mainly, in a spirit of acquisitiveness, but in order to have in our hands something with which we can bargain in case our enemy conquers territory in Europe and refuses to release it at the peace...

Germany aims at throwing the whole of her manhood into the field in order to destroy her enemies speedily, and if a peace comes soon, we have not in our hands the means of bargaining, we are too late.

⁶ "Kriegs-Erlebnisse in Kamerun," *Detroit Abendpost*, 22 March 1915.

⁷ Meaning, O Lord, how delightful these days are. Quoted in *The Nigerian Pioneer*, 28 May 1915, 8.

⁸ This German celebration of war may have well exposed them to some of the Allied accusations that Germany had wanted war all along, worked for it, caused it.

⁹ "Kriegs-Erlebnisse in Kamerun," *Detroit Abendpost*, 22 March 1915.

The strategic calculus of Cameroon served a dual purpose to the Allies; one to use it as a bargaining chip, the other to use it in fighting and winning the war. On this second objective, the Allies sought to invade Cameroon so as to deprive the Germans of vital communication systems. Colonial records held in African and European archives make no mistake in stressing this. The Germans had constructed in Cameroon's coastal town of Douala a very powerful transmission station, on which hinged the strategic relevance of the country in war-time around the Atlantic. As such, the Allies desired to cut off German communications by seizing the transmission stations.¹⁰ Seizing these stations frustrated German naval operations while helping the Allies; it was an act that was crucial for the global outcome of war.¹¹ Four years after the campaign, one of the European military officers in the Cameroons summarized the strategic importance of the territory to general Allied war efforts as follows:

The strategic importance of the Cameroons to the enemy consisted in the possession of one of the finest natural harbours on the West coast of Africa, Duala [sic]. Most of the harbours on the West coast of Africa have a bar in front of them so that they are so difficult to navigate by coasting steamers, but Duala [sic] was better situated in that respect. Secondly, the strategical importance to the enemy consisted in the possession of the wireless station at Duala, and thirdly, there was the value of the Cameroons as a whole in forming a connection between East and West Africa in the German project of trans-continental Railway from German East Africa to German West Africa which they hoped to complete sometime or another by absorbing the Congo. In order to deny the benefit of these advantages to the enemy, it was necessary to send out an Allied expedition whose objective was, first of all, Duala.¹²

This strategic significance of the Cameroons on account of the transmission station had appealed to the British for years leading to the war. Shortly after the outbreak of war, an editorial of a British-owned newspaper, *African World*, of 19 December 1914 noted that "it was always clear that if war did come between ourselves and Germany, a very desirable stroke in the general

¹⁰ The National Archives, Kew-Richmond, United Kingdom (hereafter TNA), ADM 186/607, Naval Operations in the Cameroons, 1914.

¹¹ TNA, ADM 186/607, Naval Operations in the Cameroons.

¹² Col. A.H.W Haywood, "The Cameroons Campaign, 1914-1916: A lecture delivered at the Royal Artillery Institution, on Thursday, 12th February 1920" *Journal of the Royal Artillery* (April 1920): 1-10.

strategy, especially affecting marine hostilities, was early capture or destruction of the German wireless stations." Further clarifying that Cameroon's significance in the war and to the British hinged on this, and little or nothing on imperial gains, the editorial stated that such strategic significance "was the cause impelling prompt action" and had nothing to do with any British "impatient hurry to secure the German possessions" given that the "ultimate ownership of them [German possessions] would be decided on the battlefields of Europe and by the fleets at sea."¹³

Indeed, the cynicism¹⁴ of the strategic importance of the Cameroons that fell short of the British future retention of the territory was the opinion of political authorities in the Foreign Office in London, and unfortunately, their opinion overrode all others. Nevertheless, British colonial officials in neighboring Nigeria and naval military officials considered that the strategic importance of Cameroon went beyond merely depriving Germany of the territory. For example, a British senior naval officer leading operations in the Cameroons firmly believed in this strategic importance in the event of a future Anglo-French war at the Atlantic after the Great War must have come and gone. Thinking past the Great War itself, the officer argued that Britain would have to keep the Duala area in the event of war with France after the joint efforts must have suppressed the Germans in the Great War.¹⁵ This officer thought that "with the British in possession, Duala would make a highly efficient Naval Base." He then warned: "should France be given Duala, and at some future date England found herself at war with France, she would find Duala an impregnable naval base and fortress, from which cruisers and armed merchantmen

¹³ Excerpts reproduced by *The Nigerian Pioneer* of 15 January 1915, 3.

¹⁴ A secret British memorandum emphasized the importance of Douala-Cameroon, to the Germans, rather than to the British. See, TNA, WO 158/908, Memorandum regarding an attack on the Cameroons, (August 1914?).

¹⁵ TNA ADM 137/162, Captain Fuller (Senior Naval Officer), Douala-Cameroon, to the Secretary of the Admiralty, London, October 5, 1914.

could attack our South African trade."¹⁶ While for the British the strategic importance of Cameroon was near everything, for the French, it was just part of the whole. France had imperial scores to settle with Germany over West African territories. Taking Cameroon became part of settling those scores. It is fair to say that even Great Britain, which considered strategic reasons as paramount, had an imperial ax to grind with Germany over Cameroon as well. Only thirty years ago, Germany had sneaked behind England's back to annex Cameroon in 1884.¹⁷

Cameroon was equally significant in so far as it provided the first practical test of an Anglo-French military cooperation and how that would play out for the rest of the war. Since Allied propaganda projected the Prussian army as poised to conquering, enslaving and dominating the world, a concerted action was deemed necessary to stop Germany. Cameroon then, like Togo, provided a testing ground for such action. But Togo was much smaller and vulnerable, presenting no serious qualms for a test of joint military action. If this joint military action succeeded in Cameroon, it would be a morale blow to the German army, but a boost to the Allies. It came to pass. The morale significance of Cameroon was not unrelated to the morale factor in winning wars. Historians may have neglected the place of the morale factor in the outcomes of war. But it should be born in mind that war morale has often been the unperceivable force that accounted in great ways to the defeat of nations at war.¹⁸ In the case of Cameroon, the Allies were convinced that conquering and depriving Germany of the larger of its two West African territories would damage Germany's morale in war, besides cutting it off from vital supplies necessary for the conduct of war. As it came to pass, forcing the Germans out of

¹⁶ TNA ADM 137/162, Fuller to Secretary of the Admiralty.

¹⁷ TNA FO 608/215, Cameroons - A Sketch of Past and Recent Events, 1884-1885.

¹⁸ For example, much of the scholarship on US role in the war suggests that the greatest impact of America's entry into the war in April 1917 on the side of the Allies was the morale effect it created, which boosted Allied capabilities and demoralized German spirit.

the Cameroon would serve a double edge sword; it would damage German morale in the war on one hand while helping to build that of the French on the other.¹⁹

Finally, Cameroon was also famous for the part it played in European colonial rivalry, which some historians have suggested, constituted part of the events leading up to the 1914 war. In 1911 for example, the French had been forced to cede parts of its Equatorial Africa to German Cameroon - an event that greatly expanded the German Cameroon colony in size and population.²⁰ This event gained notoriety in French political and diplomatic circles, with the French Governor-general in Equatorial Africa, M. Merlin, lamenting that this ceded territory "[is] our Alsace-Lorraine."²¹ Like Alsace-Lorraine therefore, it provided the French nation with a diplomatic scar and thus a vengeful spirit and may have contributed to tensions that culminated in the Great War. Not only a diplomatic blow, the 1911 ceded territories weakened France strategically in Equatorial Africa, by giving Germany a foothold on the Congo River and the common frontier with the Belgian Congo. This made German Cameroon have open windows on the Congo and Oubangui.²²

Given thus its significance, Cameroon became a contested battleground for the European belligerents. This called for unprecedented military mobilization, recruitment, and conscription of African populations for combat activities in Cameroon.

¹⁹ After the Allied successful eviction of the Germans at the end of the Cameroon campaign, Britain allowed France a larger part of the Cameroons in part so as to boost France's morale in the war, hoping that morale boosting would play a role in the total defeat of Germany in Europe.

²⁰ For details of the 1911 incident that compelled France to surrender large parts of its West African territories to German Cameroon and created some of the tensions that may have contributed to the 1914 war, see Digre, *Imperialism's New Clothes*.

²¹ *The Times History of the War*, "The Conquest of Cameroon and Togoland," 8 (1916): 283.

²² Akinjide Osuntokun, *Nigeria in the First World War* (London: Longman Group Limited, 1979), 174.

Mobilization, Recruitment and Conscription

Historians Peter Clarke, Richard Fogarty, and Melvin Page have asserted, in separate studies, the preponderance of African soldiers in the African campaigns. Page specifically notes how the Cameroon campaign, like other African campaigns, was primarily fought by Africans, while the few Europeans involved in the African encounters were mostly officers and Non-Commissioned Officers (NCO) of African battalions.²³ But historians on the subject are yet to realize the full degree to which Africans executed the Cameroon campaign in particular. The Cameroon campaign presents unique lessons for scholarship on the African campaigns of the War. First, it was fought exclusively by Africans and Cameroonians, as opposed to other African scenes of war where although also fought mostly by Africans, made far more use of European and Asian soldiers. More than any other African action, the Cameroon campaign presents a real experiment in the military potentials of Africans. Second, political, religious and martial honors played a decisive role in the Cameroon campaign. Throughout their mobilization, recruitment and conscription process, Europeans evoked messages of the various aspects of honor to appeal to African recruits.

Beginning with the first point raised above, Allied military officials bear testimonies to how the Cameroon campaign differed from other African campaigns like the ones in German South-West and East Africa in that it was conducted almost exclusively by West African soldiers. Although the East African campaign, for example, was also fought largely by African soldiers, there was a reasonable number of non-Africans fighting in that campaign. This was unlike the case in the Cameroon campaign. Asked by an audience at the end of his presentation

²³ Melvin E. Page, "Introduction: Black Men in a White Man's War," in *Africa and the First World War*, ed. Melvin Page (London: Macmillan Press, 1987), 10.

in 1920 whether the German force in Cameroon had a large proportion of black troops or not, Colonel Haywood who had led one of the Allied columns in the campaign quickly replied: "well sir, practically all the German troops were blacks...."²⁴ Then two years later, Brigadier-General Charles Dobell who had commanded the joint Anglo-French force in the Cameroons also asserted that "only [British, French and Belgian] native [African] troops...were employed...."²⁵ The British official history of the war contends that the rank and file of the British forces that fought in the Cameroons were exclusively Africans.²⁶

How is it that the Cameroon campaign came to be fought exclusively by Africans? This chapter turns now to an examination of European conscription of Africans for the Cameroon campaign, beginning, first, with the Germans.

Cameroonians for Germany

The German Cameroon colony before 1914 presents an aberration to the assumption that colonial African armies were largely an extension of European armies.²⁷ On the eve of the war, the German defense force in Cameroon numbered only 185 Europeans, 1550 soldiers of West African and Cameroonian origin. The German Government was only intending to form an additional force of Mounted Infantry, to establish a study farm for the breeding of troop horses, and to arm all the troops with 98.3 carbines.²⁸ Also, there was an armed police force of thirty

²⁴ Haywood, "The Cameroon Campaign," 10.

²⁵ Major-General Sir Charles Dobell, "The Campaign in the Cameroons, 1914–1916," *Journal of Royal United Services Institution* (1922): 697.

²⁶ Brig.- General F.J Moberly, *History of the Great War based on official Documents: Military Operations, Togoland and the Cameroons, 1914-1916* (London: The Imperial War Museum, 1931), 53.

²⁷ G.N Uzoigwe, "Pre-Colonial Military Studies in Africa" *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 13, no. 3 (September 1975):473; See also W.F Gutteridge, *The Military in African Politics* (London:1969), 2; who declares that "The armies of Africa today are...direct descendants of the colonial forces raised in their territories by imperial rulers"

²⁸ *Jahrbuch uber die Deutscher Kolonien*,1913, 6; See also, NA ADM 186/607, *Naval Operations in the Cameroons*. To this number should be added the fact that probably every German in the Cameroon colony was a trained soldier,

Germans and 1,500 Africans. Most of the African soldiers and police force were of the Hausa and Yaounde ethnicities. The fact, therefore, is that throughout their colonial moments in West Africa, the Germans, unlike the British and the French, had not deemed it necessary to adopt the policy of building a large African army in those colonies.²⁹ Part of the reason why the Germans had not raised a large Cameroonian army was that they had difficulties raising such a colonial army from populations that were anything but friendly, with most of them effectively engaged in wars of resistance against the Germans.³⁰ In fact, a senior British official who visited German Cameroon from neighboring Nigeria in 1910 reported that the Germans thought it unsafe to have more than twenty-five percent of Cameroonian soldiers in a company, the result being that they had to bring Africans from elsewhere to fill up their military force in the Cameroons.³¹ Whatever the justifications, this reality placed the Germans in a precarious military situation when the Allies decided to invade Cameroon, thereby warranting an intense wartime recruitment drive. This was no easy task, given that, as we saw in the previous chapter, the Germans had antagonized a larger portion of the Cameroonian populations.

Regardless, the Germans did marshal all available forces towards the conscription of Cameroonians. And the success of this exercise depended on the machinations at play, by hook or by crook. As will be discovered, the Germans would recruit the majority of the Cameroonian

considered a reservists, and was eventually called upon for service. Another British source stated figures to be 205 military officers (white Germans), 1650 NCOs and rank and file (obviously Africans), thirty police officers (white Germans) and 1450 Police men (obviously Africans). See, NA WO 158/908, memorandum regarding an attack on the Cameroons, (August 1914?).

²⁹ Although the Germans did not build up an African army in their African colonies prior to the war, the Allies unjustly accused them of the crime, a crime for which the Allies and not the Germans were clearly guilty of.

³⁰ An account in *Der Grosse Krieg, 1914-1918* claims instead that the Germans did not raise a large army in their West African colonies and had not even prepared a plan for mobilization in expectation that in the event of war, the neutrality of African dependencies would be adhered to.

³¹ TNA WO 106/637, K.V Elphinstone, 3rd Resident, to the Secretary to the Administration, Zungeru, Northern Nigeria, 20 September 1910.

soldiers who defended the territory against the Allies in a war-time situation. This conscription of and dependence on Cameroonian combatants during the war became the more dramatic and acute when the British maritime blockade, imposed immediately after the outbreak of the war, prevented Germany from obtaining military support from the homeland. The forced labor policies of the pre-war period were easily adapted to military conscription of Cameroonian men. In the process of military recruitment, some Cameroonians, but few indeed, volunteered for service in the German armed forces, attracted by the relatively high wages, prestige, and health care, but more often than not recruitment was involuntary, and Cameroonian support for the German effort was, on the whole, minimal.³² In the end, what the Germans got were unwilling soldiers. That these soldiers would not hesitate to desert the German camp and join the Allies speaks volumes. And given the unorthodox methods used to gain those recruits, and the 'blank checks' of a wide range of benefits and privileges which the German colonial administration accorded them all in an attempt to have them stay on, the soldiers became anything but good fellows to their people. That the Germans were able to get these recruits at all in wartime was remarkable. How and from where they did so, what training the recruits were given, how Cameroonians responded to this German frenzy of recruitment, are the concern of the following pages.

In August 1914, the German Governor in Cameroon, Karl Ebermair, was confronted with a conundrum of raising a befitting and large enough local army to defend the territory against the projected Allied invasion. This was a particularly precarious task for the governor, given the general hostile relations with the local populations, and the fear that Cameroonians, most of

³² Jacqueline de Vries, *Catholic Mission, Colonial Government and Indigenous Response in Kom (Cameroon)* (Leiden: African Studies Centre, n.y.), 18.

whom were still resisting German rule, would seize the opportunity of war to rise against the Germans.³³ This apprehension compelled the German colonial administrative and military officials in Cameroon to immediately try to come out with a workable plan of recruitment in the most trying circumstance. Governor Ebermaier quickly settled for a stick and carrot policy, mixed with propaganda. Most importantly, appeals were to be made to Cameroonians that they should fight for their honor. This was deemed to serve as a key to raising the much-needed army. How these measures were undertaken and how Cameroonians responded can be systematically illustrated.

The first measure adopted by Ebermaier was that he chose to make a somewhat belated concession as regards the hitherto violent and antagonizing German treatment of Cameroonians before the war, especially with regard to the aspect of flogging. He quickly issued a declaration that was presumably regarded as a magnanimous and liberal piece of policy and a volte-face.

Taking the bull by the horn, the governor's declaration read:

You natives, who have lived together with Germans for a generation know that the Germans, though strict, are just, strict against the bad, but just to the good. He who from among you helps our enemies will feel our severity. But he who remains true to us will be rewarded. I, therefore, order that for the soldiers of the Police Force and for the coloured employees of the Government, since they have show [sic] themselves faithful, the punishment of flogging is abolished, as well as for all who have left our service with honour. The same has been ordered for the regular troops by the Commander.

You are to understand this in this way that he who faithfully serves the Germans will be treated more & more like a German, and will share in the privileged position of the Germans.

People of Kamerun! I am advised from the BULU country that thousands of Bulus will join with the Germans to fight against the French and Belgians. All of you stand firm in the hour of danger beside the Germans.

You will find that you have acted wisely.³⁴

³³ TNA WO 158/908, Secret, from Downing Street, to the secretary, offensive Sub-Committee, Committee of Imperial Defense, 16 August 1914.

³⁴ TNA WO 158/552, Impl. Governor Ebermaier to the Natives of the Protectorate, Duala, August 8, 1914. File contains Ebermaier's declaration in the original German version with an English translation. See, also, *Kamerun Post*, Extrablatt No. 12, 12 August 1914.

Ebermaier's declaration, half-wooing, half-threatening, half propagating, could be regarded both as an apology to hitherto German policies, as an enticement to have Cameroonians support the Germans, and as a wooing strategy, however intimidating it appeared.³⁵ It, coupled with the propaganda that Germany would win the war and that many Cameroonians were already on the side of the Germans, certainly earned some followers who would soon enlist in the German camp. The effects of this declaration on conscription, therefore, were enormous.

In Ebermaier's declaration, one cannot miss some of the benefits promised to Cameroonians who opted to provide the Germans with military service. It is also in this that one finds a blend of soldiers' motivations to include being forced to fight, the need to be in the good books of the Germans, or on the winning side. Even when traditional rulers chose to cooperate with the Germans by providing them with men to fight, those rulers counted on certain self-fulfilling interests. Regarding how support for the Germans came to be distributed, the people of the Beti area in central Cameroon, many of whom were already serving in the German colonial army, responded most favorably to German wartime recruitment pressure. Under their paramount Chief, Charles Atangana, who personally remained loyal to the Germans till even after German defeat in 1916, the Betis would be enlisted *en masse* for the Germans. Atangana's loyalty to the Germans that involved providing them with soldiers stemmed from the elevated status as the paramount ruler of the Beti people, a status he gained thanks to the whims and caprices of the German colonial officials.³⁶ There were other scores of benefits and motivations

³⁵ A British official described the proclamation as a 'somewhat belated concession as regards' the German mistreatment of Cameroonians prior to war. See, TNA CO 879/117, W.F Gowers, The German Administrative Organisation of the Cameroons, 10 July 1915.

³⁶ For unswerving loyalty of the Beti under Chief Charles Atangana, see Frederick Quinn, "The Impact of the First World and its Aftermath on the Beti of Cameroun," in *Africa and the First World War*, ed. Melvin E. Page (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987).

that naturally attracted the Betis to combat services with the Germans. The Germans had found favor in them, allowing them a whole range of privileges in trade dealings as well as giving them the status of being the next most important folks in the colony after the white man. This practice and expectation of Africans in the colonial military services assuming a new social and economic status next to the white man was common in many parts of the continent in the colonial days. Michelle Moyd has examined how material and 'intangible' benefits that elevated their status into 'big men' were pivotal to how East Africans joined the German colonial military service.³⁷ The advantages that came with this kind of status were sometimes unlimited.

On account of Beti support for the Germans, recruits from this area and their surroundings filled up German ranks throughout the war. In January 1915 for example, the Governor of French Equatorial Africa observed that the Germans had just recruited 600 men from mostly amongst the Beti in the Yaounde and Ebolowa area.³⁸ For his part, the British Senior Naval Officer (SNO) in Douala, Fuller, observed that "most of the German native troops were recruited, in the main, from the tribes between the Sanaga and Nyong Rivers, the best being the Babati."³⁹ Around the same time, 500 men were grafted to the German Banyo Company to oppose the British troops there and another 1000 in the south to fight against the French column under Colonel Meyer. Recruits, therefore, were almost immediately engaged in war fronts.

The stick and carrot policy of recruitment came with benefits. Although for the most part forced by the Germans into combat services, Cameroonian draftees received encouragements from their German bosses in several forms, as a way to keeping them for combat activities. At

³⁷ Michelle R. Moyd, *Violent Intermediaries: African Soldiers, Conquest, and Everyday Colonialism in German East Africa* (Athens, O.H: Ohio University Press, 2014), 36-87.

³⁸ TNA ADM 137/224, The Governor of French Equatorial Africa to the Minister for the Colonies, 19 March 1915.

³⁹ TNA ADM 137/380, Captain Fuller, Letter from the Senior Naval Officer, Duala, 28 January 1916.

one point in the Edea region between Douala and Yaounde, the Germans offered their new recruits rewards such as slaves, pillage, allowing them a free hand to raping seized women. This appeared to entice males from certain groups around the region to enlist into the German army.⁴⁰ There was general nervousness and sometimes panic amongst the Allies of German recruitment methods and their apparent successes. Terrified by German recruitment methods and 'successes' the Allied Commander Charles Dobell stated in April 1915 that the Germans were setting up new recruiting grounds and that the new recruits constituted "an addition to the hostile fighting strength" of the Germans.⁴¹ Earlier in March, he had worried that the "Germans have recruiting centres at Jaunde [Yaounde] and Bamum and Ebolowa and probably elsewhere."⁴² He was right. The strength of German levies, which Dobell could not estimate, was employed from chiefly about Edea, Kribi and Nyoung River and they were armed with elephant and other guns, old Rifles, spears, bows and arrows. Dobell also noted that at Eseka, the Germans had a military headquarters, a large supply depot, and a small wireless station.⁴³ Similarly, and earlier in January 1915, Brigadier-General Pineau, Commander in Chief of French troops in West Africa, had reported to the French Minister of Colonies the unexpected arduousness of the Cameroon campaign thanks to German mobilization and recruitment of Cameroonians in war time.⁴⁴ Around 1915 ending, in the Yaounde area alone, the Germans again successfully recruited 120 fighting men in preparation for an Allied attack on the city.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ TNA ADM 137/224, Fuller to the Secretary of the Admiralty, 6 February 1915.

⁴¹ TNA ADM 137/224, Dobell, Summary of the Existing situation throughout the Cameroons, From Dobell to the Secretary of the War Office, London, 21 April 1915.

⁴² TNA ADM 137/224, Dobell to War office, 26 March 1915.

⁴³ TNA ADM 137/224, Dobell to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 6 April 1915.

⁴⁴ TNA ADM 137/224, Brigadier General Pineau, Commanding in Chief the Troops of French West Africa, to the Minister of the Colonies, 22 January 1915.

⁴⁵ TNA ADM 137/224, Dobell to War Office, 8 July 1915.

Besides the stick and the carrot, the Germans used smear propaganda against the Allies, which yielded a positive effect on securing Cameroonian draftees. Such propaganda messages were tailored to evoke a strong sense of honor among Cameroonians. Two aspects of honor were particularly targeted; honor associated with slavery, and honor pegged to the Islamic religion. Ethnographic interviews conducted in the Kom area in the grasslands of Cameroon revealed how German appeals to the Kom ruler warned that should he not send his best soldiers to help defeat the Allies, the British would come in and enslave the Kom Kingdom. Informants said the Germans told the Fon that "the British were coming all the way...to destroy all kingdoms and fondoms and make slaves out of every body, the fon inclusive."⁴⁶ This was too much for the fon, so that he immediately sent out a recruiting squad, the result being that he was able to provide the Germans with recruits, willing or unwilling. This is a classic example of an appeal to the ruler's sense of political honor. The Germans knew the Fon just too well. Be it recalled that a German attempt back in 1904 to hurt the Fon's honor by forcing slave labor on his daughter and his subjects had provided a casus belli for a stiff armed resistance. No doubt, this cynical but intelligent appeal paid off. The Fon generously provided the Germans with 500 soldiers.⁴⁷ Informants in Kom stressed on the pride of men as soldiers, by which they insinuated honor. They spoke of a tradition of martial honor, in which men, when called to war, must fight to either victory or defeat, not only in defense of their land but for their honor.⁴⁸ They thought that a man who refused to fight, or ran away from war, was a 'woman.'⁴⁹ They recanted a story of one of

⁴⁶ Aloysius Ngomng, Interview by de Vries, Kom-Cameroon, 16 August 1994, Book, *Catholic Mission*, 37, fnt 3.

⁴⁷ Cameroon National Archives Buea (hereafter CNAB), G.V Evans, Bikom Assessment Report, Ad-2, 59/29, 1927.

⁴⁸ F. C Ngam; Aloom Peter; Yuh Chia; interview by author, Kom, 20-27 July 2012.

⁴⁹ There is an adage in Kom that 'only women run away from a fight,' the literary explanation being that war gives men an opportunity to exercise honor. This is not necessarily a denigration of the woman folk, as there are other behavioral expectations from women through which their own honor is projected in the society.

their most successful soldiers, who, when being sent by the Fon to the German army, boasted that he was going to fight "like a man."⁵⁰

In Bali, still in the Bamenda grasslands, similar messages of the need to fight against being enslaved proliferated. My Bali informants claimed that Bali leader had provided the Germans with soldiers at the beginning of the war because he was too proud to allow his kingdom to be enslaved. But that once the British arrived Bali in 1915 following German retreat, and told the people that the Germans were the ones who had treated them as slaves, and that this time around they were to have a much better master, they found new favor in the leader who now turned his back against the Germans, providing the Allies with soldiers and much more.⁵¹

Closely related, was the German use of religious honor to win Cameroonian recruits from the country's Muslim community.⁵² In the Muslim Northern parts of Cameroon, extending to Northern Nigeria, the Germans littered places with pamphlets in major languages, including Arabic, as well as tracts, treaties, maps, newspapers, telegrams, calendars, plays, songs, and films, with huge sums of money spent in editing, distributing and producing.⁵³ In those sources of religious propaganda, Germany presented itself to Africans as the defender of Islam and the protector of the Moslems all over the world.⁵⁴ The Germans claimed in their propaganda messages that the war was a religious war pitting Christianity against Islam, with they (the Germans) fighting for the cause of Islam. They circulated letters in Northern Cameroon as well as Northern parts of Nigeria claiming to be from the Sultan of Turkey in which he called upon

⁵⁰ Ngam; Chia; Interview.

⁵¹ Lima Adolph; Galega Ngwayim, Bobga Sam, interview by author, Bali, 10 July 2012.

⁵² There are multiple conceptions of Muslim honor, but here I will be referring broadly about the defense of Islam as one of those, and the notion of giving in to 'infidels'.

⁵³ F.J Dupre, "The Holy War That Failed," *The Moslem World* 8 (1918): 172.

⁵⁴ Dupre, "The Holy War," 173.

Muslims of the Sudan to stand behind Germany, fight and die for the honor of Islam.⁵⁵ *The Nigerian Pioneer* issue of 24 December 1914 reported German propaganda against the Allies, with attempts to convince Muslims in North Cameroon that the war had everything to do with the honor of the Islamic religion. It read:

On October 8 [1914] the Resident of British Bornu was in possession of a German proclamation in Arabic addressed to the Chief of Marua, an important town in the North of Cameroon, mentioning the Sultan of Turkey as the friend of the Germans and the Chief of the Faithful, and giving the cause of the war as the desire of the English to take Constantinople and give it to the pagans.

Contrary to Dupre's thinking in 1918 that the Germans were unsuccessful in their attempts to infuse Africans with Islamic religious sentiments,⁵⁶ efforts were quite successful in some parts, especially in the North, at least during the early stages of war. Just before the commencement of confrontations, Hauptmann von Crailsheim, the German Resident of North Cameroon employed such religious honor to solicit the aid of the Muslim leader of Garoua, informing him that the Germans desired the Fulbe of German Adamawa to help them in the impending fight against the Allies.⁵⁷ The result was that the Lamido of Garoua provided the German recruiters with hundreds of warriors armed with Rifles. I must state here that authority and gains in socio-economic power were certainly some of the chief motivating factors behind the Lamido's decision to provide the Germans with combat forces. In fact, the German propaganda and wooing efforts had promised the Lamido that if he supported the Germans with fighting men, he would be given the much contested Emirship of Yola.⁵⁸ Also, in the Islamic

⁵⁵ TNA WO 158/543, Translation of Arabic document received by natives of Muir Province from a German Officer, 10 April 1915; See also, Helmut Stoecker, "Loyalty to Germany in Cameroon 1914-1930" in *Africa and Germany from Colonisation to Cooperation 1884-1986 (The Case of Cameroon)* ed. Kum'a Ndumbe 111 (Yaounde: Editions Africavenir, 1986), 332.

⁵⁶ Dupre, "The Holy War," 172.

⁵⁷ Bawuro M. Barkindo, "The Mandara Astride the Nigeria-Cameroon Boundary," in *Partitioned Africans: Ethnic Relations Across Africa's International Boundaries 1884-1984*, ed. A.I Asiwaju (London: C. Hurst and Co. Ltd., 1985), 36.

⁵⁸ Kennedy Eyong Tabe, "Kamerunian Participation in the First World War, 1914-1916" (Master's thesis, University of Buea-Cameroon, 2001), 107 & 108.

religious Mandara region in August 1914 where the German appeals on religious honor were making gains, they recruited about 135 local Muslim fighters into their fold under Captain Von Raben in addition to those that had been conscripted prior to the war. The importance of the Mandara recruits would be appreciated in the next chapter, where the Allies faced a formidable enemy in their attempt to capture the area.⁵⁹

By presenting the issues at stake as a religious war in which the Germans were on the side of Islam and the Allies on the side of Christianity, the Germans were once again appealing to the Islamic religious sense of honor. Germans had done their homework on the Islamic religious honor amongst African Muslim societies. The surge of Islam in West Africa via the Jihads in the nineteenth century had adopted African notions of honor, in addition to classical Islamic codes of honor. As Iliffe explains, one of the Islamic Jihad apostles in the middle Niger during the first quarter of the century, Shehu Amadu, "made his small following the spearhead of a widespread Fula insurrection, blending Islamic principles and Fula notions of honour into an amalgam" that resulted in the firmly established religion in the region. He shows how both Islamic honor clashed with pagan honor during the time of the jihads, so that when Islam was finally established in the region, it built on both honors. Thus "Islam triumphed in nineteenth century Hausaland," notes Iliffe, "as in Masina, not only by contesting heroic values but also by absorbing them into a new synthesis of honour and virtue."⁶⁰ Because Muslims held notions of honor in very high esteem, and because just being a Muslim was considered honorable, and more important because the most honorable thing to do was to defend the Islamic religion against Christians, often called infidels, the Germans were not mistaken in what stories of the Allies

⁵⁹ CNAB, Ba 1919 91), 53/1920, Annual Report General File, 1920.

⁶⁰ Iliffe, *Honour*, 35, 36 & 38.

coming to destroy Islam would do to Muslims' thinking. The melange, therefore, of these two forms of honor created a psychological ethos embedded in Islamic practices that knew no bounds. To fight for Islam, defend the religion against all others, particularly the infidels, was considered an act of honor. Threats against the religion, imagined or real, were considered to threaten the very honor of the followers of that religion.

Further down in the Bamenda Western grasslands of the North West of Cameroon, the Germans found a trump card in political honor. They looked to traditional authorities who had differences with the new Christian converts in their kingdoms, whom they regarded as subverts flaunting political authority. Political honor often assumed two forms; horizontal- a right to be respected by one's equals, and vertical – a right to special respect enjoyed by those of superior rank.⁶¹ Vertical political honor thus emphasized the need for populations (often considered as subjects) under the control of a ruler or other traditional figures to show maximum respect to their leaders and superiors. Where such respect was not forthcoming was considered a taunt on the political honor of the leader in question. Ever since the inception of Christianity in Cameroon, there had been serious contestations between new converts and their traditional authorities, in which converts were thought to taunt the honor of their traditional authorities. Traditional leaders and rulers were convinced that their subjects who had converted to Christianity had become disrespectful to traditional authority. German colonial authorities had been witnesses to such contestations of political honor, and the war presented them the opportunity to exploit the situation. They commonly contacted traditional authorities who had issues with their new converts, as these were most likely going to be the first set of recruits to be donated. Informants in Kom insisted that in providing recruits to the Germans, their Fon singled

⁶¹ Iliffe, *Honour*, 4.

out new Christian converts because they had been a 'torn in his flesh,' not hesitating to challenge the tradition of which he was the custodian. But they thought that the biggest challenge to the Fon was at a personal level, which badly affected his sense of personal honor. Those informants concluded that the war and German appeals for recruits presented the Fon the best opportunity to dispose of those of his rebellious subjects.⁶²

German propaganda also focused on the potential outcome of the war. German successes, especially at the initial stages of war, were hyperbolized. Africans were told again and again that Germany was winning the war. This was a targeted attempt to have Africans side with the winning side, so as to pre-empt history. This type of propaganda was worldwide. In the US, for example, a German Detroit newspaper published in March 1915 an eye witness testimony of a German woman taken Allied prisoner of war in Cameroon. This testimony sheds light on the propaganda activities of the "Kamerun Post" in Cameroon, whose reporting in the early days of the war obviously aimed at convincing Cameroonians and other Africans who cared to listen that Germany was making gains. On 30 August 1914, this "Kamerun-post" published an account claiming that "seven first-class English battleships and the Flagship had been destroyed in a night time attack by German Torpedo subs; whereby the English had been blinded by the spotlights of two Zeppelins at a height of 3000 meters."⁶³ Then on 26 September 1914, the same paper announced the siege of Paris, and that Versailles was burning."⁶⁴ It is hard to estimate precisely how such propaganda would have influenced Cameroonian thinking and enlistment on the German side, with the hope of falling on the right side of the historical equation when the war must have been over. But it must be speculated that it might just have been as effective as

⁶² Ngomneng, Interview.

⁶³ "Kriegs-Erlebnisse in Kamerun," *Detroit Abendpost*, 22 March 1915.

⁶⁴ "Kriegs-Erlebnisse in Kamerun," *Detroit Abendpost*, 22 March 1915.

the Allied propaganda against Germany. A British official was later to observe that Africans and their rulers were in the habit of supporting whichever side was winning at any particular point in time. If this was the case, then Africans must have been very thoughtful in how they weighed in on the immediate and long-term benefits of fighting for one side or another at any point in time during the campaign. Switching sides in the middle of fighting must have been a well-calculated move to prepare to be in good terms with whichever European power became the new colonial boss.

Besides propaganda, the Germans took practical measures towards recruitment. They simply upgraded existing Police divisions into military detachments during the war. Once war broke out and the British began to threaten the Cameroon-Nigeria Cross River axis, the Germans upgraded the Police Division at Dschang into a military detachment under Lieutenant Klimowitz. This upgrade was facilitated by the establishment of a training station at Dschang in which new recruits received very brief training before being sent to reinforce the German troops at the bloody Nsanakang encounter.⁶⁵ After military assignments in Nsanakang, this detachment, which comprised only the Lieutenant himself and 50 West African soldiers quickly marched in from Ossidinge in October 1914, in time to reinforce the German Company 4 Stationed near Mbanga station.⁶⁶ Lieutenant Klimowitz's detachment of West African recruits joined with Company 4 to attack the British near Kake Railway Station and near Susa, forcing the British back to retreat

⁶⁵ TNA WO 106/656, Danicken, Report from Danicken, NCO in Cameroons Protectorate Troops (Reserve) on Experiences of War in the Cameroons, 13 November 1916. Report in German, but translated into English at the British archives.

⁶⁶ TNA WO 106/656, Bode (German captured prisoner of war), Non-commissioned officer Bode's short Notice from recollections of experiences in the war in the Cameroons, 15 February 1916. Report in German, but translated into English.

with heavy losses, after which the detachment again landed on the Cameroon Mountain to reinforce Captain Gaisseur's Company.⁶⁷

Wartime Cameroonian recruits for the Germans received emergency training sessions. The Germans set up wartime training centers, with quite very limited training that was offered to the new recruits who for the most part had to have their own skills. From Feb-March 1915 for example, the Germans in the grassland area spent time training recruits at the military station in Bamenda.⁶⁸ A German NCO who participated in the training of new recruits in Bamenda but provided no details on training later claimed that so many Cameroonians presented themselves for training and conscription.⁶⁹ He gave no probable cause of Cameroonians showing up massively for enlistment. Given the historical reality and the very bitter relations between the Germans and some of the peoples in the region, this claim must now be seriously discounted. Earlier further up in the North, the Germans had established a training center at Banyo. When war broke out, the Germans in Banyo had only 16 Europeans and 74 Cameroonian soldiers there, but within 2-3 weeks into the war by the middle of September, the Germans had conscripted and briefly orientated about 100 Cameroonian soldiers in the area.⁷⁰

The historical reality is that for obvious reasons, the Cameroonian population at large was either hostile or indifferent to German recruiting efforts, preferring for the most part to side with the Allies. The case of the Duala has already been mentioned. In fact, German historians have elaborated on the hostility of Cameroonians towards the Germans during the war, and their

⁶⁷ TNA WO 106/656, Bode, recollections of experiences.

⁶⁸ TNA WO 106/656, Bode, recollections of experiences.

⁶⁹ See TNA WO 106/656, Danicken, Report on Experiences.

⁷⁰ TNA WO 106/656, Armourer Woydask, Report by armourer Woydask on Warfare in the Banjo district, 13 February 1916.

refusal to fight for the German cause.⁷¹ They have recounted numerous instances of disobedience and desertion, even by those Cameroonians that the Germans had successfully conscripted, notwithstanding all the measures taken by the Germans to make their services worthwhile.⁷² Cameroonians were so both unwilling to perform military services for the Germans and willing to support the Allies that a German district commissioner cried out that it was as if the Germans were confronted with a war in an enemy's territory.⁷³ A German military officer who led combat forces in Cameroon during the war later wrote in 1936 how Cameroonians had refused to serve in the German army, preferring to enlist with the Allies, and he attributed this as one of the major reasons for German defeat in the territory.⁷⁴

In spite of the general hostility of Cameroonians towards the German recruitment efforts, and although German mobilization and recruitment of Cameroonians undoubtedly failed in relative terms, the number of Cameroonians that the Germans were able to muster on account of their extraordinary and often unorthodox measures is astonishing, going by the stakes against them in the territory during war. That the Germans, in war time, would raise an army from less than 2,000 men to over 10, 000 was somewhat phenomenal. It is accurate to say that an appeal to Cameroonian sense of martial, political and religious honor, plus a stick and carrot policy, combined to produce a commendable army that was to help the Germans extraordinarily resist the Allies in Cameroon for eighteen months, against all the odds. And it is also fair to say that German generosity and granting of 'blank checks' to their African soldiers to make illegal gains played a role. In fact, British military officials were of the opinion that West African troops

⁷¹ Hausen, *Deutsche Kolonialherrschaft*, 95-135; Stoecker, "Cameroon 1906-1914," 275.

⁷² See, also, de Vries, *Catholic Mission*, 18.

⁷³ Rüger, "Die Duala und die Kolonialmacht," 254.

⁷⁴ See Heinrich Mentzel, *Die Kämpfe in Kamerun, 1914-1916, Vorbereitung und Verlauf* (Berlin: Junker und Dünhaupt Verlag, 1936).

fighting for the Germans were usually dissatisfied and always ready to desert but that the Germans made life pleasant for them by giving them the leeway to "pillage and murder."⁷⁵

Interestingly, the Allies were often guilty of similar deeds in varying degrees.

Indeed, one must recognize that the seemingly loyalty shown the Germans by some Cameroonian Chiefs was crucial in how they were able to raise and maintain an army in wartime. Besides the Betis whose Chiefs ensured their loyalty to the Germans beyond the very end, the Bamenda grassland rulers were loyal - at least superficially - to the Germans, who had considerably enhanced their authority. Some adapted their allegiance to changing conditions: Fon Ngam of Kom was judged by the British to have played a "dubious" role during the war, supporting the winning party.⁷⁶ With only a few exceptions, the Fons provided the Germans with the labor and provisions demanded, perhaps because of the threat of severe sanctions should they refuse to comply.⁷⁷

It was one thing for soldiers to get motivated by numerous factors to take up military services for the Germans. It was another for those soldiers to be forced into service through the actions, self-interests and loyalties of their traditional rulers. This complex blend of circumstances and factors that landed Cameroonian soldiers into German military services often produced unfortunate results such as numerous desertions once the fighting was underway and many of the soldiers had the opportunity to desert. For the most part during the campaigns, many of these soldiers dragged in to fight for the Germans would not miss an opportunity to desert. At one point, inhabitants of the Bamum region in the Cameroon Western grasslands told their approaching British troops that "all the Bamum and Bamenda soldiers were deserting from the

⁷⁵ TNA ADM 137/162, Dobell to Harcourt, 23 November – 26 December 1914.

⁷⁶ CNAB, Ad-2, 59/29.

⁷⁷ De Vries, *Catholic Mission*, 18.

Germans."⁷⁸ And during the preparations for an allied attack on Yaounde by 1915 ending, Cameroonian soldiers were deserting from the German forces and surrendering to the British and the French almost on a daily basis.⁷⁹

West Africans for the Allies

The response of West Africans to Allied recruitment efforts was mixed, and depended largely on historical circumstances, the relationships that the Allies had with various Chiefs and ethnicities in their West African territories, as well as the methods used, including Allied propaganda messages. Cameroonians responded positively to Allied recruitment efforts, perhaps more so as a show of resistance against German colonialism. This section of the chapter examines, first, Allied recruitment in some of their West African colonies in preparation for the Cameroon campaign and how Africans in those colonies responded to the recruitment efforts, and second, Allied military recruitment efforts in Cameroon once they got in and the response of Cameroonians.

At the outbreak of war, most West African colonies belonged either to Britain or France. Colonial subjects in all these colonies had to respond in one way or another to their colonial masters' recruitment frenzy. Unlike as had been the case with Germany in Cameroon where there had not been any reasonable standing African army, a significant number of West Africans was already trained and served as career soldiers in the British and French colonial formations. In fact, British West Africans served in the British colonial forces of the West African Regiment in

⁷⁸ TNA ADM 137/380, Summary of Recent Military Operations in the Cameroons, 1 January 1916.

⁷⁹ TNA ADM 137/380, Fuller to secretary of the Admiralty, 30 May 1916.

Sierra Leone and the West African Frontier Force (WAFF).⁸⁰ Officers of these units were whites or British.

To break down, the British WAFF rank and file consisted of: The Nigeria Regiment (NR) which comprised of four battalions of Infantry, one battalion of Mounted Infantry, two batteries of man-transported guns, The Gold Coast (Ghana) Regiment (GCR), The Sierra Leone Regiment (SLR) and the Gambia Regiment (GR).⁸¹ Numerically, the Allied force that would initially invade Cameroon in September 1914 consisted of over 7,000 West African soldiers, 3,000 of whom came from French West Africa, the rest came from the Gambia, Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast and Nigeria. This number was augmented to 9,700 West Africans and a few Indians by 1915.⁸² Also, 3,000 Infantry from French West Africa under the command of Aymerich would invade Cameroon from the Southeast. Then in October 1914, some troops from the Belgian Congo would be incorporated into Aymerich's force, and another 1,000 soldiers recruited in Chad and under the command of the French Generals Largeau and Brisset then attached to the Nigerian Regiment under the British General Cunliffe. In sum, therefore, the total number of West African soldiers that would comprise the Allied troops to initially invade Cameroon in 1914 was about 13, 000 West African soldiers.⁸³ The NR came to comprise the majority of the WAFF soldiers in the Cameroons. In the course of the war, the Allies would have more re-

⁸⁰ The West African Frontier Force had been raised by the then Colonel F.D Lugard (later Governor General of the British colony of Nigeria) on the Niger beginning 1887. Consisting of West Africans, the British had used this unit to conquer and subjugate what became British West Africa. The official British opinion of the character of the West African soldier in this unit was that he was a "cheerful, willing, and courageous soldier with great endurance," and though "seldom able to read or write, he had responded well and rapidly to training" and his "devotion and loyalty [to the British] had been shown by his consistent readiness to follow them in action." See Moberly, *Military Operations*, 42-3. For a detail study and understanding of this unit of West African soldiers, see, especially, A. Haywood, and A. S. Clarke. *The History of the Royal West African Frontier Force* (Aldershot: Gale & Polden LTD., 1964).

⁸¹ TNA ADM 186/607.

⁸² Fourth Supplement to the *London Gazette*, Tuesday, 30 May 1916.

⁸³ Peter B. Clarke, *West Africans at war, 1914-18, 1939-45: Colonial propaganda and its Cultural aftermath* (London: Ethnographica, 1986), 10 & 11.

enforcements from their West African colonies and the Cameroons, leading to a total of around 20,000 troops.

How did these West Africans become soldiers in the Allied formations? How did they react to recruitment efforts? What role did propaganda messages play in influencing their responses? Up front, the historical reality is that majority of these West African soldiers were unwilling recruits. Besides those who were already serving in the Allied colonial military formations before the war, the majority of the recruits gotten in wartime for immediate military assignment in the Cameroons were enlisted under duress, with the active collaboration of their traditional leaders. These leaders were themselves recruiting or conscripting their subjects for military service under duress from the European colonial administrations. Given this, the answer as to how these Africans ended up fighting for the Allies can only be found in Allied wartime recruitment efforts in West Africa. These recruitment efforts took the form of enticements, threats, coercion, propaganda, the complicity of traditional authorities for varying political, selfish and religious reasons, to name but these.

For the relevance of this study, the discussion of British recruitment activities and the response of West Africans will be limited to the example of Nigeria. Nigerian soldiers constituted the largest number of British West Africans in the Cameroon campaign. Also, British recruitment efforts in Nigeria and the ways in which Nigerians responded epitomizes what prevailed in the rest of British West Africa, where similar methods and responses were replicated. Finally, following the campaign, the part of Cameroon taken over by Britain would be integrated into the colony of Nigeria, and when colonialism died, part of the British Cameroons would sink into the new modern Nigerian nation, extending both the land mass and the population of today Africa's most populous country. Thus from the commencement of the

Cameroon campaign, both the history of Nigeria and what became British Cameroons would be intertwined in such a way that neither seems complete without the other.

Wartime military recruitment in Nigeria and Nigerian responses is one area that has been quite fairly studied. Among the leading studies on this are John Barret, James Mathew, and Akinde Osuntokun.⁸⁴ All three have examined military recruitment and local responses in Nigeria for the Cameroon and other African campaigns and demonstrated that there was an element of conscription in how Britain recruited Nigerians for services, it resulting in widespread resistance by Nigerians. My discussion here draws from the same sources consulted by these authors.⁸⁵ Therefore, I must state my historiographical input. None of these authors considers the place of propaganda messages for both the European recruiters and the Africans being recruited. A closer attention to such messages which frequently appealed to the African senses of honor can help expand the discussion on the subject. Also, because their studies end with recruitment activities in Nigeria⁸⁶ and do not follow up on the activities of the African soldiers in the Cameroon campaign - they miss the military solidarity, sense of one mission, and the performative spirit of martial honor that grabbed the soldiers once they found themselves on the battle front, whether they got there willingly or unwillingly. Once at the battlefront, soldiers must kill to stay alive. Still, being at the battlefront and killing to survive, or being killed while fighting, elevated soldiers' martial honor in one way or another.

⁸⁴ Osuntokun, *Nigerians*; James K Mathews, "Reluctant Allies: Nigerian Responses to Military Recruitment 1918," in *Africa and the First World War*, ed. Melvin E page. New York 1987; John Barret's Posthumous article, "The rank and file of the colonial army in Nigeria, 1914-18," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 15, no 1 (1977).

⁸⁵ Osuntokun, a Nigerian, used exclusively sources from the British archives, while Barret, a British, used exclusively sources from the Nigerian archives. I use both.

⁸⁶ Only Osuntokun's study extends to Nigerians fighting in the Cameroons, but the account is rather general and unpeopled with regard to Nigerian soldiers in the campaign in Cameroon.

Nigerians became the major group of British West Africans confronted with the choice of fighting or not fighting the British war against the Germans in Cameroon. This was due to the obvious fact that Nigeria bordered Cameroon extensively, and if any prospects were to be made against the Germans in Cameroon the support and collaboration of Nigerians as combat men was most crucial. Also, Nigerians, notably people of Hausa and Yoruba origins constituted by far the majority of the career soldiers in the WAFF, so that on the outbreak of war, the British already had a fair number of Nigerian soldiers to threaten the German Cameroon colony. In addition, Nigeria's proximity to Cameroon made it vulnerable to attack from the Germans. In many occasions in the early days of the state of war in August through September 1914, German threats to enter Nigeria destabilized it and almost plunged the British colonial authorities in disarray.

On account of the above, the colony of Nigeria is a good place here to test the efficacy of British recruitment efforts, and how West Africans responded to such efforts. First, the British colonial administration in Nigeria decided to make full use of the policy of Indirect Rule instituted earlier in Nigeria, by using cooperative Chiefs to obtain recruits. The British Governor-General of Nigeria, Frederick Lugard, reported to the Secretary of State for the Colonies in December 1914 that "the Chiefs have been permitted to furnish men [soldiers], materials and money to assist His Majesty's Government in carrying on the war."⁸⁷ Traditional rulers who had specially been projected, protected and promoted via the Indirect Rule system were called upon to show their gratefulness and loyalty by making available their people for military service. Lugard did not hesitate to transmit to his London boss messages of unflinching support, loyalty

⁸⁷ National Archives of Nigeria, Ibadan (hereafter NANI) CSO 1-32, 1914, Governor-General Lord Lugard to the Right Honourable Lewis Harcourt, Secretary of State for the Colonies, 31 December 1914.

and gratefulness and personal efforts of such rulers. The Sarkin Musulmin Attahiru II, as well as the emirs of Cando, Argungu, to name but these, were among the list of loyal rulers supporting British war efforts. Such support included giving the British fighting men.⁸⁸

Traditional rulers who already possessed too many powers given to them by the System of Indirect Rule,⁸⁹ and still wanted political or financial gains took it upon themselves to profit from the situation by providing unsolicited help to the colonial administration in the recruitment business and making pledges way beyond expectation. One example was that of the Alaafin of Oyo who on the outbreak of war in August 1914, excitedly pledged to a British resident that he could raise 30,000 military workforce. And he insisted that the British should "not treat this as an idle boast" because he "said it from [his] heart and meant it."⁹⁰ The entire wartime recruitment process was to put the Alaafin's pledge to a good test when he personally and enthusiastically supervised recruitment of soldiers in his Kingdom wishing to please the British in return for which Oyo should be empowered as the political center of Yorubaland.⁹¹ Amongst other leaders in line to willingly enlist their men and gain favor from the colonial authorities was the Oba of Benin in southern Nigeria, who, in October 1914 told the Resident that he would do everything possible to meet recruitment demands, including a willingness to enlist his sons and servants.⁹² Other cooperative traditional rulers like the Emir of Yola provided troops besieging Garoua in 1914 and 1915. Evidently, and as indicated earlier in the case of military recruitment in German

⁸⁸ NANI CSO 1-32, Lugard to Harcourt.

⁸⁹ Indirect Rule was a system designed by British colonial authorities to administer Africans through their Chiefs. The system made African Chiefs to assume certain overbearing powers on their subjects than the traditional African political and administrative systems naturally allowed. Plus, the system made African traditional authorities accountable to European colonial administrators, and therefore not subjected to the internal traditional checks of use of power as existed in some of the precolonial African polities.

⁹⁰ Quoted by Mathews, "Reluctant Allies," 97.

⁹¹ TNA CO 445/51, G.T Mair, Commandant, to Governor General, 14 June 1920; Mathews, "Reluctant Allies," 97.

⁹² Mathews, "Reluctant Allies," 97.

Cameroon, power and wealth also played a fundamental role in how some Nigerian soldiers ended up in the British military formation. For, the chief motivating factor behind the Alaafin of Oyo, the Oba of Benin, and now the Emir of Yola to swell the British fighting unit with their subjects had much to do with strengthening their powers and obtaining political gains. Specifically, in the case of the Emir of Yola, he desired to regain control over the Islamic Adamawa, most of which was in the Cameroons.⁹³

The British colonial administration and recruitment officers decided to furnish the Chiefs with talking points, as a way to not only getting the Chiefs on their side but most importantly getting new recruits. Some of these talking points were propaganda messages centering on slavery. It was declared at once that there was a risk of re-enslavement of Nigerians should they not join the war to fight for Britain and should Germany be allowed to take over Nigeria. Nigerians and their rulers were told by British recruitment officers that Germany intended to conquer and enslave the whole world; that if they did not assist the British against the Germans in neighboring Cameroon, the Germans would enter Nigeria, send away the British, then colonize and enslave Nigerians.

Later in 1917, an angry British Resident in charge of recruitment lashed out on the unwilling and fleeing Ibos. He warned that "the Ibos must appreciate the fact that they owed their very existence to the protection enforced them by Hausa and Yoruba soldiers under British officers and that had it not been for such protection their country would at this moment be in the hands of the Germans...."⁹⁴ The Ibos were told that if they wanted respect, high esteem, and honor, they should fight; that the war afforded them an opportunity to come forward and prove

⁹³ TNA, CO 583/33/26209; Lugard to Colonial Office, 2 December 1916.

⁹⁴ National Archives of Nigeria, Enugu (hereafter NANE) RIVPROF, 8.5.77, Anglo-German War, Enlistment Records for WAFF 1 August 1917.

themselves 'men.'⁹⁵ Both Europeans and Africans had entertained this notion of war as a masculine activity in varying degrees. This gendered prism of war was often used in different occasions to evoke men's honor; once a man was told that war was a vital part of manhood. This practice often undermined the crucial part that women played in warfare in some parts of precolonial Africa, and even colonial Africa. In any case, Europeans went on to remind the Ibo Chiefs that as their people had fought for honor in their 'primitive' pre-colonial societies, it was time now to fight for even greater honor under the highly 'civilized' British. And in return for their show of martial honor, they would be awarded the prestigious King of England's Medal. The officer then reported a positive response to his recruitment message by the Oloko Native Court area where the Chiefs gave him assistance in recruitment efforts.⁹⁶

Many Nigerians in the South and Southeast especially felt that the war was no business of theirs. Some appeared to have decoded the British messages of honor as a 'trojan horse' meant to hoodwink them into fighting the white man's war for him, whereas the white man who claimed to be fighting for Nigeria, was indeed fighting for his country. Against this backdrop, certain Nigerians began to mobilize others against British recruitment efforts.⁹⁷ Still, the British did not bulge. Through all the leading newspapers, they sent propaganda messages to their populations in the metropolis and the colonies. A letter that appeared newspapers in the United Kingdom on 21 November 1914 and was made to appear also in all leading newspapers in British colonies read: "By the side of our Allies, the British nation...we fight for...the right of small nations to enjoy the same freedom..⁹⁸

⁹⁵ NANE, RIVPROF, 8.5.77, Anglo-German War.

⁹⁶ NANE RIVPROF., 8.5.77, Anglo-German War.

⁹⁷ NANE RIVPROF., 8.5.77, Anglo-German War.

⁹⁸ *The Times of Nigeria*, 1-22 December 1914.

Centering the narrative of the war on the question of 'slavery and freedom' and advising Africans that the war was about defending their freedom was inflammatory. Ever since the legal abolition of slavery in Africa in the first half of the nineteenth century, the issue of slavery, and the shame that was associated with slaves or persons of slave origins had continued to hang over former intensely African slave societies like the sword of Damocles. Martin Klein, for example, has shown how the image and memory of slavery in modern day Senegal, Guinea, and Mali remained in people's discourse and behavior into the colonial and early postcolonial periods long after its institutional and structural abolition. He demonstrates how the daily language of slavery in those places, with references to the noble-slave contradiction, continued to valorize some persons while symmetrically reducing others to contempt.⁹⁹ Images of slavery, Klein and others argue, continued to cast a long shadow into the colonial period, affecting in some ways the social, economic and political lives of Africans.¹⁰⁰ Thus, the European idea of exploiting African fears and realities of slavery must be understood in context, and its effectiveness measured as such.

Related to slave honor, or the honor of not being enslaved at all was an appeal to Islamic religious honor. This occupied the crucial content of propaganda messages in an attempt to have Islamic leadership and Muslims in Nigeria stand with the British. In fact, the question of Islam, and of the Muslims, became crucial, especially as the Germans were trying to turn them against the Allies. *The Nigerian Pioneer* of 13 November 1914 reported on the speech of a panic-stricken Governor Lugard, who quickly assembled representatives of Mohammedans in Lagos to

⁹⁹ Martin Klein's "A question of honor," in *Slavery and Colonial rule in French West Africa* (Cambridge: University Press, 1998), 237-251.

¹⁰⁰ Klein, "A Question of Honor," 237-248; See, also, Martin Chanock, *Law, Custom and Social Order: The Colonial Experience in Malawi and Zambia* (Cambridge: University Press, 1985), 15.

dispel German propaganda and 'lies.' He assured them that England had always been in support of Turkey, had defended Turkey on many occasions, but that it was false lies by Germany that pushed Turkey to take sides with it against England in the war. He assured them that "the king of England as you know has more Mohammedan subjects than any other Emperor in the world." As proof that England was on the side of Muslims and in defense of Islam, he stated that "thousands of Mohammedans had already come from India to join [England] in the war against Germany and they are now fighting in France with the Allies." He gave instances of Muslims in North Africa and other countries across the globe who were firmly supporting the Allies with men and money. He warned them that if Germany succeeded in the war, the German Kaiser would take over Turkey and the Islamic Holy Cities. He tried to discredit Turkey, which had been the trustee of Islam, but had become a German tool by joining to fight an unholy war on the wrong side, and that Turkey had not gone to war for the cause of Islam nor the defense of its independence. He called upon the Muslims of Nigeria to remain loyal, faithful and obedient.

Lugard further stressed that "our beloved King [of England] desires it to be known to all his Mohammedan subjects that in every part of the world that the trouble with Turkey involves no religious question.' Then he added that "all the Holy places in Arabia and Mesopotamia will be safe from any attack by the Allies, and respected equally with Christian churches."¹⁰¹ He assured them again that England would protect the pilgrims. He told them that "there is no need for me to tell you that England is a friend of Mohammedans and she never interferes with the creed of Islam, for you have seen for yourselves both here in Lagos and throughout Nigeria that you are perfectly free to build Mosques and teach in your schools, which are encouraged and

¹⁰¹ *The Nigerian Pioneer*, 13 November 1914, 7.

protected by Government." He urged them not to be deceived by German lies and methods which were 'unworthy of a great nation.'¹⁰²

The response of Nigerian Muslims to the Governor's message was pretty positive. An issue of *The Nigerian Pioneer* of 24 December 1914 later reported that the Muslim population in the North had remained mainly loyal, and that many messages of loyalty had been received that the Tripoli Arabs at Kano were dissociating themselves from the action of the Turkish Government and that 36,000 Lagos and 5,000 Jebu Muslims were praying for victory for the Allies.¹⁰³ A euphoric Lugard sent a detailed report to the Secretary of State for the Colonies in December 1914 regarding the success of his meeting with representatives of Muslims in Lagos.¹⁰⁴ He reported on the loyalty of the Mohammedans, providing the Secretary letters from the leading Moslems of Lagos, "conveying spontaneous expressions of loyal devotion to His Majesty."¹⁰⁵ Even extending to the Northern part of the German Cameroons in the abode of Islam, Muslim Chiefs pledged allegiance to Lugard. As early as late August 1914, the Muslim Chiefs of vast areas of the districts of Gulfei and Mandara declared their allegiance to the British in Nigeria.¹⁰⁶

No doubt, the propaganda appeal for the so-called defense of Islam convinced the Muslim community to throw both spiritual and material support for the British cause. Muslims swore that the honor of Islam would be saved and that they supported the nations that were fighting against the infidels, for the defense of Islam. In Jebu Ode in 1914, the Lemonu and

¹⁰² *The Nigerian Pioneer*, 13 November 1914, 7-8.

¹⁰³ See, also TNA, ADM 137/162.

¹⁰⁴ Lugard reported that there were 35,000 Mohammedans in Lagos, it being half of the population of Lagos by 1914. See TNA ADM 137/162, Lugard to Harcourt.

¹⁰⁵ TNANI CSO 1-32, Lugard to Harcourt, 31 December 1914.

¹⁰⁶ TNA ADM 137/162, Lugard to Harcourt, 8 October 1914.

Chiefs representing 5,000 Muslims sent messages to the Governor offering "earnest prayer to Allah for speedy victory to British arms."¹⁰⁷ The Chiefs of Abeokuta offered their services and their men for the defense of Lagos, lest the Germans should come in and enslave them or defile Islam. In Northern Nigeria, the Shehu of Bornu quickly expressed his loyalty to the British, aiding them with remounts, escorts, gifts and combat men. The Resident of the Northern provinces reported that he had an army of Mallams praying in his courtyard for the success of the British arms. The Emir of Yola and his Council of Chiefs, though placed in a precarious position on the Cameroons frontiers where the Germans were striking easily, indicated his support for the British cause, for the sake of Islam.

The extent to which British propaganda messages hinged on Islamic honor made the Muslim community of Nigeria stand behind the British can be gauged by the following statement which Lugard made to the Secretary of State for the Colonies in 1915:

It will...be seen that in the Northern Mohammedan states, where there are some five million Mohammedans spread over an area of 160,000 square miles from Sokoto to Lake Chad and southwards to the Niger and Benue Rivers, the native population is unaffected by the action of Turkey and is heartily loyal to the British cause.¹⁰⁸

The moment that the Ottoman Empire joined the war on the side of the Central powers, and the Germans began to infuse the Muslim community with letters that Islam was at risk in the war, the threat of the unity of Muslims in Northern Nigeria against the British and of the possibility of a Muslim fanatic seizing the opportunity to declare a jihad against the British began to hang over the British administration in Nigeria like the sword of Damocles.¹⁰⁹ To win support among the deposed Muslim Chiefs of Northern Nigeria, German residents had promised those Emirs and other Chiefs out of office a speedy return to power should the Germans be

¹⁰⁷ TNANI CSO 1-32, Lugard to Harcourt.

¹⁰⁸ NANI CSO 1-32, Lugard to Harcourt; Osuntokun, *Nigeria*, 100-101.

¹⁰⁹ *Lagos Weekly Record*, 7 November 1914.

successful locally.¹¹⁰ This was threatening enough to the British administration in Nigeria. But it was most threatening to the British-backed Emirs in power in Northern Nigeria, who concluded that it was in their interest to see that the Germans should not succeed.¹¹¹ Power politics was, therefore, a huge factor in how Nigerian Islamic leaders responded to British war needs in terms of man power.

Generally speaking, many recruits were obtained from the Northern provinces. Although Barret in his posthumous article¹¹² advanced economic and other reasons why this was so, it is logical to suppose that the ability of the British colonial administration to obtain most of the new African recruits in wartime from the Northern provinces of Nigeria was due in large part to the prevalent system of Indirect Rule there, in which traditional authorities had overbearing control over their subjects, and in large part to the effectiveness of the propaganda messages. The idea of honor, be it religious, slave related or martial honor, was very strong among Africans, and constituted a core motivation why they would go to war. In the *Lagos West Africa* newspaper issue of 27 January 1915, an article appeared stating that the African soldiers were fighting and dying in Europe because they wanted to "uphold the honour and dignity of Belgium" and that the "black man [African] by nature knows and appreciates all who recognize and appreciate him."

While the British colonial authorities in Nigeria provided their superiors in London with pledges of loyalty from the traditional rulers, and while many of these pledges of the rulers of the Northern provinces may have been their individual choices for personal gains, there is evidence that British colonial authorities did induce and author some of these letters. Wanting to impress

¹¹⁰ TNA CO 583/63/14785, H.R Palmer, attitudes of the Muslim provinces of Nigeria, 2 March 1917.

¹¹¹ Osuntokun, *Nigeria*, 143.

¹¹² Barret, "The Rank and File," 109-110; article published after the death of the author in 1975. The article here cited was slightly edited by Robert Smith, made available to him by Mrs Patricia Barret.

their superiors, and placing too much military value on obtaining public pledges of loyalty especially in the wake of German propaganda, British administrators sent duplicated pledges of loyalty printed in Hausa and Arabic, to British Residents in Northern provinces, instructing them to persuade the Emirs and other rulers to sign.¹¹³ To entice Emirs and rulers, the officers in charge of garrison troops were instructed to turn out a military guard to present arms to Emirs who presented Residents. Also, Emirs "were further to be identified with the army by giving them the 'honour' of being greeted by a military salute."¹¹⁴

Allied propaganda also took the form of a smear campaign against, and demonization of Germany, proposing to Africans a better treatment in the hands of the British. This propaganda was spread mostly through newspapers controlled and published in Allied countries or by Allied nationals, and accessible to Africans. The *African Telegraph and Gold Coast Mirror*, an addition newspaper published in England, published a propaganda editorial in December 1914 under the title "German Atrocities in West Africa." It read:

To the [German colonizer], the African...whose home he has left his far-off land to occupy, is considered nothing but an animal to be used for labour and shot down like a mad dog when he has the temerity to assert his claim manhood. Britain, France, and the other cultured European countries are surprised at the barbarities which the Germans are perpetuating in the present campaign to such an extent that France, the home of culture and courtliness, has been compelled to declare that the prisoners of war whom she holds will be only assured their lives since they cannot claim treatment as men in the light of the amazing heartlessness of their comrades-in- arms [sic].¹¹⁵

Needless to say that this was nothing but mere propaganda because the claims made about French and British treatment of Africans do not pass the scrutiny of French and British colonialism in the continent.¹¹⁶ On the whole, and despite the often trumpeted loyalty of

¹¹³ Barret, "The Rank and File," 113; NANI CSO 20/4 N.C. 115/16.

¹¹⁴ NANI CSO 20/5, N.C. 121/17.

¹¹⁵ *The Lagos Standard*, 16 December 1914, 4.

¹¹⁶ In fact, the Nigerian Press around this time was of the opinion that the British were often as brutal in some instances as the Germans, and that the British treated Africans in similar ways as did the Germans. Particularly critical of Governor Lugard and his style of administration, the Nigerian Press, which represented fairly the

Nigerians to recruitment efforts, the British recruitment policy in Nigeria contained elements of conscription. Although Nigerians were not confronted with a formal British policy of conscription as did Africans in French West Africa, a large number of Nigerians found themselves abducted by the British for military services during the war. Many recruits designated as volunteers were anything but that name. In fact, the designation of volunteers referred to men unwillingly 'volunteered' by their Chiefs for military services. As key proponents of the policy of Indirect Rule, traditional rulers were simply called upon by their British colonial overlords to 'volunteer their people for military service, and in doing so, coercive methods, intrigues, and deceptions were employed by the Chiefs to produce the so-called volunteers. A man recruited later in Eastern Nigeria for military service gave a first-person account of how Nigerians were 'volunteered' by their leaders:

We came back one night from our yam farm, the Chief called us and handed us over to government messenger. I did not know where we were going to, but the Chief and the messenger said that the white man had sent for us and we must go. After three days we reached the white man's compound. The white man wrote our names in a book, tied a brass number ticket round our neck and gave each man a blanket and food. Then he told us that we were going to the great war...We left and marched far into the bush. The government police led the way and allowed no man to stay behind.¹¹⁷

Given the often coercive methods of 'volunteering' and forced recruitment procedures, the general response of Nigerians, on a balance sheet, was negative. This is well documented by Mathew, Barret, and Osuntokun. Nigerians resisted recruitment efforts both passively and violently. Passively, some simply fled into French or German territory when threatened with conscription, and only returned when they thought it was safe to do so, or when colonial recruiters from their new hide out colonies came looking for recruits. As part of passive resistance also, some Nigerians who could afford simply bribed their Chiefs with money to look

aspirations and opinions of educated Nigerians, compared Lugard with the *Kaiser Kultur*, arguing that Lugard was often as autocratic and as brutal as the Germans were in their colonies.

¹¹⁷ Quoted by Mathews, "Reluctant Allies," 97.

elsewhere in want of men for military service. In Igboland in particular, many Chiefs took advantage to enrich themselves by taking money from men who could afford and exempting them from military service for the white man.¹¹⁸ About violent resistance to military recruitment, several cases could be cited throughout Nigeria. But one particular case was in Northern Nigeria, where in the Sokoto Emirate, peasants rebelled in 1915 because they believed the army was going to conscript them in large numbers, a revolt that was only suppressed by a combined force of Nigerian troops and police and the Emir's personal bodyguard.¹¹⁹ But according to Mathews, "some of the bloodiest recruitment-related disturbances took place in south-Western Nigeria," with one example being the 'Okeogun rebellion' sparked off in part by the question of who held ultimate power over military recruitment. Protesting against their unpopular Chief maintained in office by the British and collaborating in recruitment efforts, the warrior class of the people of Okeho, the institution in charge of raising an army, ordered in 1914 against the recruitment of anyone for military service. This resulted in tensions between the Chief backed by the British, on the one hand, and his warrior class on the other that was to culminate in a terribly bloody incident later into the war.¹²⁰

Also, in August 1914, a violent revolt occurred in Egbaland that was not unconnected to wartime conscription.¹²¹ Many traditional rulers refused to be part of the project of compelling

¹¹⁸ Elizabeth Isichei, *A History of the Igbo People* (London & New York: Macmillan Press, 1976), 216; A.E Afigbo, *The Warrant Chiefs: Indirect Rule in South Eastern Nigeria 1891-1929* (London: Longman, 1972); Mathews, "Reluctant Allies," 101.

¹¹⁹ Mathews, "Reluctant Allies," 101; Osuntokun, *Nigeria*, 148. But Osuntokun adds that on the whole, few of the revolts in the North of Nigeria were caused by resistance to military service.

¹²⁰ Mathews, "Reluctant Allies," 101-2.

¹²¹ Mathews, "Reluctant Allies," 102.

Nigerians against their will to do military and other war-related services. This applied to some Chiefs in and around Zungeru and along the Cross River, including many Bani Chiefs.¹²²

Unwilling recruits who found the opportunity to desert quickly embraced it. Large numbers of Nigerians deserted. Desertion was common everywhere in Nigeria. In September 1914, several Nigerians recruited through the Emir of Bauchi for war-related services deserted *en masse* for fear that they would be impressed and sent to the war front.¹²³ And in September 1914, large numbers of Nigerian recruits used for a garrison at Birnin-Kebbi in Northwest Nigeria deserted their military unit, crossing into Niger during the night.¹²⁴ The general attitude of Nigeria was, therefore, one of unwillingness and rejection of British recruitment efforts. An official British account published later in 1931 observed that Nigeria ended up being "obviously unable to spare as many troops as [the British] had previously arranged," so that the British colonial administration was compelled to limit the "Nigerian contingent of the Expeditionary Force to No. 1 Battery and Nos. 1 and 2 Battalions."¹²⁵

In retrospect, Nigerians resisted military recruitment and had to be forced into service. In the end, they were recruited as unwilling soldiers. And, in spite of how these unwilling soldiers found themselves dragged in to fight the British war in the Cameroons, Lugard was to write in 1922, rather disingenuous, but in a characteristically European officials' fashion of reporting on their activities and events in Africa, that during the war, Nigeria was able to recruit even more than the troops requested for services overseas without any form of conscription.¹²⁶ Lugard knew

¹²² NANI, CSO 19/3, H.S Goldsmith, Resident Zungeru to Central Secretary, 17 August 1915; TNA WO 95/5285, Captain J. Crockenden to Commandant, August 1914.

¹²³ Mathews, "Reluctant Allies," 103.

¹²⁴ NANI CSO 20/2, H.S Goldsmith to Central Secretary, September 1914.

¹²⁵ Moberly, *Military Operations*, 120.

¹²⁶ Frederick Lugard, *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa* (Edinburgh: 1922, London: 5th edn., 1965), 575.

too well the disparity between what happened and what he was claiming to have happened.¹²⁷ He had been at the helm of British recruitment policies that utilized indirect conscription, giving the Chiefs incentives and overwhelming powers to trick their people into military service. He had stated that "in order to promote recruiting, Residents should ask the cooperation of the paramount Chiefs who could, no doubt, select influential popular and persuasive messengers to aid them in their endeavors to find eligible men for enlistment."¹²⁸ He had also instructed all his Lieutenant Governors in line with the British wartime policy about African (Nigerian) manpower, "the war office wants everyman who can be obtained."¹²⁹

These general recruitment policies in British Nigeria and Nigerian responses was replicated in the French colonies, as France tried to recruit West Africans to undertake the joint military venture in the Cameroons with the British. France undertook to mobilize and prepare a large army from their West African possessions. So, West Africans in French-controlled territories were confronted with recruitments, in perhaps more acute ways than was even the case with British West Africans. While most British West Africans became unwilling soldiers, the situation of French West Africans was worse. On the outbreak of war, about 31,000 West Africans were already serving as soldiers in the French colonial military formation. This number alone was already more than the total number that the Germans would marshal in Cameroon throughout the war. But because France needed as many West Africans as possible to serve in both African and European campaigns, French West Africans were gripped by a serious wartime

¹²⁷ Historian Michel-Rolph Trouillot in *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995) has termed the disparity between what really happened and what is said to have happened in history as Historicity 1 and Historicity 2. He has demonstrated the extent to which authorities who controlled how historical records entered the archives were able to misrepresent history.

¹²⁸ Quoted by Barret, "Reluctant Allies," 111. Again, this particular example concerned recruits meant for the East African campaign, but it can be imagined that similar cases had been applicable during recruitment of soldiers for the Cameroon Campaign.

¹²⁹ NANI CSO 20/5 N.C. 64/17.

recruitment saga. Most French West Africans who would be recruited were unwilling, given that they were simply coerced, coercion itself being an integral part of French methods, often channeled through colonial administrators and African intermediaries.¹³⁰ Unorthodox and punitive methods were employed, with colonial officials often imprisoning uncooperative Chiefs and taking the parents or other relatives of potential recruits hostage. Villages which refused to comply risked having their crops and livestock destroyed by the colonial government. However, monetary incentives were also given to Chiefs and recruitment agents for meeting recruitment targets.

By 1914, Europeans in West Africa had identified men from certain areas as warlike and suitable for combat. In Senegal, for instance, these were mostly the people of the interior. Over 90 percent of West Africans recruited in Senegal during the war were from the so-called warlike races. France's great losses in the early days of the war intensified recruitment, so that from August 1914 to October 1915 over 32,000 more West Africans were recruited. General Charles Mangin (1866-1925), the chief advocate of recruiting West Africans, told the French Minister of War in August 1915 that France could raise 300,000 more recruits from West Africa. In October 1915 the French government decreed that the colonial administration provides 50,000 new soldiers.¹³¹

¹³⁰ According to Richard Rathborne in "World War 1 and Africa; Introduction," *The Journal of African History*, 19, no.1; World War 1 and Africa (1978): 1-9, few of the French recruits in West Africa were "volunteers in any of the accepted sense of the word, and the methods employed in impressing men both by administrative officers and Chiefs rank alongside some of the worst horror stories of the epoch."

¹³¹ Richard S Fogarty: *Race and War in France: Colonial Subjects in the French Army, 1914-1918* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 27-30.

Cameroonians Respond to Allied Recruitment Efforts

Before the Allies entered Cameroon, and in spite of the general unwillingness of Africans to enlist, they already had a numerical advantage of African soldiers against the Germans. And while in the Cameroons, it appeared not to be Allied policy to recruit soldiers from the local populace.¹³² But they quickly realized the indispensability of local soldiers and levies. If not for anything, Cameroonian soldiers were required for logistic functions, for garrisoning and for helping the Allies traverse and navigate such an unfamiliar terrain. And as opposed to the response of Allied West Africans, Cameroonians responded positively to Allied war efforts. Whereas the majority of the African soldiers brought by the British and the French from their various West African colonies to fight in Cameroon had been coerced, the same cannot be said of those Cameroonians who joined the Allied cause. Thus, Melvin page's observation that "Cameroon natives ... were conscripted by whichever force was operating in their locality"¹³³ appears simplistic, and belies the stark differences in how the Allies and the Germans raised Cameroonian recruits. While the majority of the Cameroon soldiers in the German force had been coerced, for those who joined the Allies as levies and recruits, they were volunteers, and their actions had much to do with an act of resistance against the Germans.

The most classical example of the positive response of Cameroonians to Allied war efforts was from the inhabitants of the coastal territories, notably the Duala, where the Allies first landed. These were the first people to have contact with the Allied force, even before the start of confrontations in the inner parts of the Cameroons. Once the Allied troops concentrated at the Cameroon borders and prepared to invade, the Duala were almost unanimous in their support for

¹³² Tabe, "Kamerunian Participation," 110.

¹³³ Page, "Introduction," 10.

the Allied war cause. This is hardly surprising, considering the very tense Germano-Duala relations on the eve of war, and the general atmosphere of resistance. It is accurate to view the Duala show of support to the Allies as a further demonstration of colonial resistance. In fact, when the British were invading the Cameroons from the coastal territories, they estimated that the entire Duala population would seize the opportunity to rise against the Germans. As Henderson notes, "in the [coastal Douala] region first selected for attack the Allies could hope, with some confidence, for support from the sorely oppressed Duala tribe, which had never settled down under German rule."¹³⁴ However, the Duala did not fall among the category of Africans that Europeans considered as 'martial races.' In the eyes of the Europeans, the Duala never made good soldiers. But, those of them who were willing and capable to be recruited by the Allies served mostly as 'navy soldiers,' in their role as sea pilots navigating Allied naval forces from one coastal area to another, in preparation for a land attack against the Germans.¹³⁵

The hostile and violent relations between the German colonial administration and the Duala which started since 1902 had culminated in the execution of the Duala leader in August 1914, then followed by a stern effort to decimate the entire royal family, and rip it off possible future leaders that were likely to follow in the footsteps of Manga Bell.¹³⁶ Under the circumstance, one of King Bell's nephew, himself a legible to the throne, also going by the name King Bell, had escaped German onslaught on the royal family, finding himself in Nigeria and appealing for British protection. He then stroke a deal with the British colonial authorities in Nigeria, to the effect that he was to mobilize his people *en masse* in support of the Allied cause. A British naval crew that arrived Victoria from Nigeria in August 1914 found King Bell and the

¹³⁴ W.O Henderson, "The Conquest of the German Colonies, 1914-1918," *History*, 27 (Sept. 1942): 128.

¹³⁵ TNA ADM 137/162, Dobell to Harcourt, 6 November 1914.

¹³⁶ See chapter 2.

Duala population most useful. The efforts of the de facto new Duala leader resulted in the British crew in Victoria obtaining Duala volunteers as naval 'pilots' for the British invading unit. A British officer reported that the Duala 'natives' threw their support behind the British, "only too willing to assist in restoring their country to a Power with more reasonable ideas of controlling it."¹³⁷ The Duala populations were 'so keen ...on paying the Germans on their own coin that they asked to be given [by the British] a Rifle and allowed the chance of taking a prisoner [a German]."¹³⁸ The Great War historian, Byron Farwell, has noted of the strong positive response of the Duala and other Cameroonian populations to Allied invasion, and the bearing of such strong support on the outcome of the Cameroon campaign.¹³⁹

Why did Cameroonians, with all their diversities, variations, and differences, find a commonality in the way they responded to the Allied invasion of their country by going against the Germans in almost complete unity? Grievances against German colonialism and the need to stamp it out stands out as the uniting factor. One of the Allied commanders in the Cameroons wrote that:

The attitude of the natives was friendly and the Chiefs of local tribes with many followers trekked in from the countryside bringing presents of food for the troops. One wizened white-haired old gentleman who came to pay his respects kept on muttering a curious jargon in melancholy tones ...the interpretation thereof being that he desired eternal friendship with the British and offered his tribe en masse as labourers and carriers.¹⁴⁰

Not only British and French sources provide evidence of the majority of Cameroonians responding positively to Allied recruitment and war efforts. German sources also do. Personal diaries of captured German soldiers made prisoners of war by the Allies bore testimonies to

¹³⁷ Q.F.C Guns, "Doing her Bits," *Blackwood Magazine* (December 1915): 738-9.

¹³⁸ Guns, 'Doing her Bits,' 739.

¹³⁹ Byron Farwell, *The Great War in Africa, 1914-1918* (New York. London: W.W Norton & Company, 1986), 59.

¹⁴⁰ Gorges, *The Great War*.

Duala inhabitants rallying behind the Allies and turning against the Germans.¹⁴¹ One of the German commanders in the Cameroon campaign who later elaborated in an autobiographical monograph in 1932 on the Cameroon campaign thought that one of the major setbacks of the campaign against the Germans was the general rebellion of the Duala against the Germans in wartime and their rallying behind the Allies. Accusing the Duala as having betrayed the German colonial government, Henreich Mentzel, appeared to lay the major blame of German defeat on them. The accusation of betrayal certainly lay on an assumption that colonial subjects had no right to resist colonial policies, but it signals a complete oblivion on the part of the Germans to the historical circumstances of what they considered a Duala betrayal, as well as a sheer degree of ignorance to the fact that the German colonial administration may have been the first of the two parties to betray the Duala by taking over their land against the clauses of the annexation treaty.

So far, the Duala example of how Cameroonians responded to Allied war efforts is one of the best examples, but it has its problems. While it represents the initial response without having to go into the details of the war, it also represents an extreme example. And it is the worse example with regard to response as combat men. The Duala themselves never had an army like the inland groups, and so they served little purpose to the Allies as soldiers. To appreciate how Cameroonians responded to Allied war efforts as soldiers, one would have to discuss the response of the inland groups. This cannot be done without going into the details of the campaign and actual fighting, the subject of the next two chapters.

¹⁴¹ I found several of these diaries in the British National Archives. They have been translated from their original German language to the English language, with original manuscripts enclosed. See TNA, W.O 106/656.

The difficult circumstances of the invasion of Cameroon by the Allies and the wartime situation in which the character of the German and their African soldiers became a matter of concern helped drive some martially conscientious Cameroonians into the Allied fold. Scores of Cameroonians, especially refugees displaced from their homes by the advancing Germans, rushed to the advancing Allies for protection. In doing so, several of them became recruits in the Allied camp. At one point in January/February 1915, about 4000 refugees displaced from their homes by the Germans converged at Allied outposts in Edea, 2000 or more at Kribi, a large number at the Nyong River entrance and another large number at Campo. The British especially took advantage of the situation that while protecting the refugees, they recruited and armed a handful of them to fight the Germans.¹⁴² This often reduced German military pressure on the Allies. At another point, the Allies recruited in one place 200 partisans from refugees fleeing from the Germans and armed them to carry out roles such as protective scouts, guides, and messengers. Some were given a distinguishing badge and some provided with uniforms.¹⁴³ The Allies set up emergency training centers to take care of new Cameroonian recruits offering their services. During the advance on Yaounde in January 1916 for example, it became imperative for the Allies to provide training reinforcements for the forces already on the field and for those newly recruited as rapidly as possible. Thus a small training depot was established in Douala. This depot immediately received about 200 recruits for the Nigerian Regiment from Lagos. The recruits received a modified musketry course on the German range which had been reconstructed for the purpose.¹⁴⁴ Earlier in April 1915, some British naval officers at Dipikar had inspected

¹⁴² TNA ADM 137/224, 16, Fuller, Report on naval and military operations in Kribi and Edea, Great Batanga and the Nyong, Campo, Garua, Dschang, Ekok, Harman's Farm, (1915?).

¹⁴³ TNA ADM 137/224, Dobell to the Secretary of the Admiralty, 28 April 1915.

¹⁴⁴ TNA ADM 137/224, Dobell to the Secretary, War Office, London, 22 May 1915.

thirty Cameroonian levies composed of Kribis and Pangwes, then armed with nineteen French and eleven British obsolete Rifles. These levies were made to garrison Allied blockhouse defenses in the area in case a German attack.¹⁴⁵

Evidently, and unlike as was the case with German recruits, many of the Cameroonian recruits in the Allied fold volunteered for service. This is not to deny that the Allies sometimes specifically requested friendly Chiefs for support with men. A case in point is given when the British forces who entered Bamum in 1915 requested leader Sultan Njoya to donate soldiers to help fight the Germans at Nku Foulum.¹⁴⁶

In retrospect, and in Allied preparation and mobilization for the Cameroon campaign, not a single source - primary or secondary, French, German or English, is able to provide a reliable figure on the number of Africans and Cameroonians who would be engaged in battles in Cameroon on behalf of the Allies, or of Cameroonians who would fight for the Germans. A fairly good French source, however, states that for the duration of the campaign, some 8,000 Africans fighting for the British, and some 10,000 Africans fighting for the French, as well as some 600 Belgian Congo Africans, were engaged in the hostilities on the side of the Allies, together with at least 40,000 porters.¹⁴⁷ This source, however, does not take into account the number of Cameroonians who would be recruited in wartime on the side of the Allies, as well as the thousands of Nigerian soldiers whose activities would be limited to border security and skirmishes with the Cameroon German soldiers threatening to invade Nigeria.

¹⁴⁵ TNA ADM 137/224, Dobell to the Secretary of the Admiralty, 28 April 1915.

¹⁴⁶ Isaac Pare "Les Allemandes a Fouban," in ABBIA, *Cameroon Cultural Review*. (Yaounde, 1966): 229.

¹⁴⁷ Eugène-Jean Duval, *Le Sillage militaire de la France au Cameroun 1914-1916* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2004), 51.

Conclusion

Tens of thousands of West Africans and Cameroonians ended up as draftees for the Cameroon campaign. Conscription notwithstanding, a multiplicity of factors and forces had drawn these soldiers into European military services. That Europeans designed all means possible to enlist Africans for military service demonstrates in some ways the desperation of the proponents of the 1914 war, who began the war and extended it to the African continent based on the calculus of using Africans to fight 'their' war. It also reveals the nature of the relationship between the colonialists and the colonized Africans, in which the latter were considered subjects with extremely limited rights, to the extent of being used as per the whims and caprices of the former. In any case, Africans demonstrated their unwillingness through acts of desertion. The unwillingness notwithstanding, these soldiers and their African leaders responded in some way to European propaganda messages that carried with them provocations of honor; religious, social, martial or otherwise. Such intrigues used by European belligerents to recruit these soldiers were phenomenal. Exploiting African notions of religious and political honor for military purposes was troubling enough. But even far more disturbing, and perhaps outright provocative and cynical, was the European threats to Africans of potential enslavement should Africans not help in combat roles. Consciously or unconsciously, this represented not only a self-confession by the Europeans of their centuries-long enslavement of Africans but a self-confession and recognition of the ingloriousness of slavery. Still, this is precisely what Europeans chose to do. It served the purpose. How Africans responded depended on what they made of those cynical messages. But once on the battlefield, Africans would defend their martial honor; they would fight to kill or be killed. How they fought, where they fought, are some of the concerns of the proceeding chapters.

Chapter 4

Soldiers of their Own: Fighting in the North, Northwest, South, Southeast and Southwest Regions

Introduction:

In August 1914, Britain and France, with their West African conscripts, invaded German Cameroon. With stiff resistance from the Germans and their African soldiers, fighting then ensued, lasting some eighteen months. This chapter and the next detail combat activities in Cameroon between August 1914 and February 1916. Focusing on the experiences of African soldiers as a collective army, the chapter incorporates individual African soldiers' experiences and performances into the larger historiography of the Great War. The pattern so far has been for historians to lump African soldiers into one body, while over-emphasizing the individual roles of European military officers in command. While scholars have tended to treat the Cameroon campaign as a sideshow to the Great War, my scholarship suggests it as an essential part of the War narrative. Fighting in the Cameroons presented unique challenges, ranging from the use of flank attacks and ambushes to other forms of guerrilla war tactics, in which lessons in the science of warfare, including lessons of adaptation, could be learned by even the European officers. In the course of the fighting, resistance to German colonial rule was rekindled, constituting, in the end, one of the major factors against German military efforts. Given the extended fighting over a large territory, this task is accomplished in two chapters. This chapter specifically examines combat activities in the North, Northwest, South, Southwest, and Southeast regions of the country, most of which occurred in and around the border areas. For a better appreciation of the

Cameroon campaign, it is important first to rehearse some of the historical realities of that campaign.

Some Historical Realities of the Cameroon Campaign

Although the entire war – from the declaration to fighting, to the conclusion of peace - was all determined by the Europeans, combat activities in Cameroon were carried out almost exclusively by Africans, fighting each other on behalf of either the Allies or the Germans. As seen in chapter 3, Britain and France drew forces from their various West African colonies. Belgium supported Allied war efforts in the Cameroons by bringing about 600 African soldiers from Belgian Congo. Commenting on the conquest of the Cameroons by the Allies being the handy work of Africans, *The Times History of the War* notes that “apart from the very valuable help given by British and French warships and marines, some 7,000 British [Africans], 11, 000 French [Africans], and 600 Belgians had been employed, the rank and file, save for the Indian 5th Light Infantry, being all natives of West or Central Africa.”¹

While the British and French West African forces were used to invade German Cameroon from border areas, a combined Allied African force known as the Cameroon Expeditionary Force undertook the task of invading the coastal and central region of the Cameroons (chapter 5). This Expeditionary Force was composed of British and French African soldiers’ contingents. British official sources give the total strength of the Expeditionary Force to be 4,300 West Africans.² According to records at the French archives, the two Allied contingents started off with 1,865 soldiers for Britain, and then 1,080 covering from behind. For France, it

¹ *The Times History of the War*, VIII, “The Conquest of Cameroon and Togoland,” (London: “The Times” Printing House Square, 1916): 311. Thus *The Times* put the total number of Allied West African soldiers at 18,000. According to Major General Dobell who commanded the Allied troops in the Cameroons, “only native [African] troops were employed” in the Cameroon campaign.

² *The Times History*, 287.

was 1,880 soldiers, with 720 left behind to cover the main force. Thus, a total of 2,948 West African soldiers for Britain and 2,600 for France, making a total of 5,548 troops. This number, added to the British and French African forces invading the Cameroons in most border towns, brought the initial distribution of Allied troops invading the Cameroons to 6,318 for British West Africans and 8,061 French West African. In sum, 14,379 West African soldiers fighting for Britain and France initially invaded the Cameroon colony by August/September 1914. Added to this number were continuous reinforcements from their West African colonies obtained throughout the campaign, plus the Indian Infantry soldiers who joined in the middle of the campaign, plus the thousands of Cameroonian men who rose up against the Germans during the campaign. The Allies, therefore, would have engaged over 20,000 African soldiers in total.³

Against these Africans invading Cameroon for the Allies were thousands defending the colony for the Germans. Pre-war British intelligence report established the strength of the German African soldiers – called varyingly here as the *askari*, the *Schutztruppe*, the Protective Forces, or simply the Germans – as follows: Twelve Infantry Companies, totaling 1,500 soldiers, 120 Mounted Infantry, 1,200 Police, 800 Europeans trained to arms, all totaling 3,620 men. These soldiers possessed artillery of 4.9cm guns, 2.6cm guns, 3.3cm guns, and thirty machine guns.⁴ A German source from 1921 claims that the *askari* at the start of confrontations totaled only 200 Europeans (Germans) and 3,200 Africans but, at the time of German surrender in 1916, those numbers were up to about 6,000 African and 500 German combatants who exited

³ Colonel Haywood who took part in the campaigns estimated the number as of November 1915 to 16,750. All the numbers are official figures, failing to take into account the many reservists and locally recruited Cameroonians, which would have summed up to well over 20,000 Allied West African soldiers.

⁴ The National Archives, Kew-Richmond, UK (hereafter NA) WO 106/643.

Cameroon to Rio Muni.⁵ This, in addition to whatever casualties that were incurred, shows the extent of wartime recruitment and expansion of the *askari* to include all the remaining few eligible German males in the Cameroons and the local populations. Another source notes that by March 1914, only six months into the campaign, the number of Africans fighting for the Germans stood at 6,100, backed by only 700 Germans.⁶ A British source, published in 1922, thought that the original German force comprised “1,800 whites and 7,000 native regulars and police.”⁷ The *Times History of the War* believed that “in reality, the [Cameroonian] soldiers employed by the Germans were about 20,000, and fully 3,000 Germans were under arms.”⁸ The fact is that it seems almost impossible to give even an approximate estimate of the numbers which the Germans had at their disposal at the start of fighting, or were eventually able to conscript as fighting went on.⁹

According to the British official history of the War, as well as to testimonies of German officers in the Cameroons, lack of ammunition and Rifle limited the German ability for enlisting, training and employing Africans. A French archival source notes that just in Douala, while there were about 300 Germans there on the eve of its invasion, only 80 of them could be incorporated into the Protective Force on account of lack of firearms.¹⁰ Also, there were about 1,600 German males in Cameroon possessing sporting and hunting Rifles, who eventually served as reservist

⁵ Max Scharte, ed., *Der Grosse Krieg, 1914-1918*, Vol. III (Leipzig: J.A. Barth, 1921), n.p; cited by Colonel A. Haywood & Brigadier F.A.S Clarke, “Togoland and the Cameroons Campaign,” in *The History of the Royal West African Frontier Force* (Aldershot: Gale & Polden Ltd, 1964), 105.

⁶ Röschenthaler, “The Submerged Histor of Nsanakang: A Glimpse into an Angloo-German Encounter,” in *Imagined Power Contested: Germans and Africans in the Upper Cross River Area of Cameroon, 1887-1915*, ed. Stefanie Michels (Münster: LIT VERLAG Münster, 2004).

⁷ Lucas, “The late Campaigns,” 180.

⁸ *The Times History*, 285.

⁹ Observation by Charles Lucas, “The Cameroons Campaign,” in *The Empire at War*, Vol. IV (London: Oxford University Press, 1925), 66.

¹⁰ ANSOM, TGO 7/68, La Guerre dans les Colonies Allemandes, (gazette de Cologne de du 15 Janvier 1915), Cameroun, 1915.

forces.¹¹ For Hew Strachan, with the German reservists brought under arms by January 1915, the maximum *askari* force achieved at any one time throughout the war amounted to 1,460 whites and 6,550 blacks, being a total of thirty-four Companies.¹² Although slightly close, this figure is inaccurate. Strachan fails to consider the several conscripts and other homemade Cameroonian soldiers who became part of the *askari* military campaigns. Strong historical evidence suggests that during the war, the Germans conscripted thousands of Cameroonians, ending up with a figure of not less than 10,000 (see chapter 3). We know this because following the German defeat in 1916, and discounting all those who may have died fighting, as well as those who deserted over the course of the campaign, there were still over 6,000 Cameroonian soldiers left who followed the defeated Germans to Spanish Guinea.

Since the Germans ended up with over 10,000 men, and yet had not enough guns for them, it does suggest that the majority of the fighters relied on locally made weapons like spears, bows and arrows, and Dane guns.¹³ In fact, the total of guns in the Cameroons came up to 3,861 1898 pattern Rifles and carbines and 2,920 older patterns – a figure smaller than the total number of soldiers, notwithstanding the fact that the Germans had local arms factories in Yaounde and Ebolowa which were manufacturing guns and ammunition.¹⁴ Arguably, men using homemade weapons and not drilled by European military officials fitted well into the type of warfare in

¹¹ Brigadier-General F.J Moberly, *Military Operations, Togoland and the Cameroons, 1914-1916* (Official History of the Great War) (London and Nashville, Tennessee: The Imperial War museum and the Battery Press, 1931), 55 & 65.

¹² Hew Strachan, "The Cameroons," in *The First world War in Africa: The First World War* (Oxford: University Press, 2004).

¹³ Dane gun was a term used by Europeans along the West African coast to generally describe any African made firearm, which assumed the shape of a long-barreled flintlock musket imported into West Africa by the Danish prior to the mid-nineteenth century.

¹⁴ Heinz Mentzel, *Die Kämpfe in Kamerun 1914-1916, Münchener historische Abhandlungen: zweite Reihe: kriegs- unds heeresgeschichte, 1. Heft* (Munich, 1932), 18-19; Strachan, "The Cameroons," 23. The locally manufactured guns and ammunitions were defective. For example, when fired, the ammunition smoke betrayed the position of the gunner, and the bullet rarely ranged more than twenty yards.

Cameroon, which for the most part was guerrilla warfare, fought in dense bush and forest, devoid of open field confrontations.

On the whole, the ratio of Cameroonian (African) soldiers to the white German soldiers in the Cameroon Protective Force stood at something like 1:15, meaning that slightly over ninety-five per cent were Cameroonians or other Africans. This gap widened with the progress of the campaign, as those further enlisted in wartime activities to defend Cameroon were exclusively Cameroonians. Another factor that caused the gap to widen was that as the War progressed, some German whites in the colony captured by the Allies were evacuated as prisoners of war (POWs) to Europe. Only in the first three months of War, 309 white German combatants and another 622 capable of carrying arms had been captured and sent to England as POWs. Plus another 32 (not capable of bearing arms) and 127 females, raising the total number of deported Germans to 1,090.¹⁵ Under the circumstance, the number of Africans fighting in the Protective Force further dwarfed that of Europeans. The historical reality, therefore, is that regarding the combat force, this war was not a mere extension of a European war in Africa, with African soldiers helping out or assisting. Colonel Haywood told the chairman of a lecture on the campaign in 1920 that “Well Sir, practically all the German troops were black...”¹⁶ Sir Charles Lucas wrote in 1922 that the Cameroon campaign was fought almost entirely by West Africans, except that they were led by white officers. He went on to explain how in the course of the War, the ratio gap between the African soldiers and the few whites further contracted when many of the few white officers were incapacitated by decease or illness, by climatic conditions, and when some were recalled for military operations elsewhere, making the fight to become ‘more and

¹⁵ ANSOM, TGO 8/74.

¹⁶ Colonel A.H.W Haywood, “The Cameroons Campaign: 1914-1916: A lecture delivered at the Royal Artillery Institution, on Thursday, 12 February 1920” (London, 1920), 10.

more a coloured [black] men's fight."¹⁷ Africans, thus, must claim the African campaigns as their campaigns where they led the fighting and determined results.

Like other African campaigns, the Cameroon campaign was adventurous, arduous and daring. Its conduct differed fundamentally from the conventional Western fronts. With its unique topography, rugged and mountainous terrain, swamps, inadequately navigable waters, dense bush and often impenetrable forests, Cameroon presented unique challenges to European military generals and senior personnel in charge of logistics. Observed by one British historian, African campaigns, in general, were the "the antithesis of the stagnant trench warfare on the Western front."¹⁸ For the most part, flank attacks in the dense bush were the norm. Guerrilla war tactics were standard, as the Germans and their African soldiers – seeing that they were outnumbered by the Allies and their African soldiers – opted to avoid open and face to face confrontations. There was an extraordinary difficulty in getting supplies across, even to the Allies. According to a British colonel in the campaign, the Cameroon campaign was "not like on the Western front or in some of the larger campaigns of the war, where supplies were always coming."¹⁹

Unlike as in the Western front, the Cameroon campaign also presented difficulties of communication as "there were three main expeditions operating at distances of 500 to 600 miles apart through a country where there were practically no roads, and only two short Railways, each about one hundred miles long, and practically no telegraph lines and no wireless."²⁰ Taken on its terms, therefore, the Cameroon Campaign was no side-show business as has been cavalierly suggested by existing scholarship on the War. Its depth was most unprecedented. Even by

¹⁷ Sir Charles Lucas, "The late Campaigns in Africa," in *The Partition and Colonization of Africa* (Oxford: Clarendon press, 1922), 178.

¹⁸ Byron Farwell, *The Great War in Africa* (New York & London: W.W Norton & Company, 1986), 14.

¹⁹ Colonel Austin Haywood, "Side Comments," 711.

²⁰ Col. Haywood, "Side Comment," 711; The word 'wireless' was the period term for radio.

European measurement, it still was no light show. The English Commander of military operations told the Secretary of State for War in March 1916 that the conquest of a country measuring some 306,000 square miles in area, “or roughly one and a half times the size of the German Empire, defended by a well-led and well-trained native force, plentifully supplied with machine guns, was no light task.”²¹

Given the problem of logistics and transportation, the nature of the terrain and guerrilla warfare tactics, the brunt of the fighting in Cameroon was not only carried out by Africans but also directed by them. Unlike in mainland Europe where huge army divisions could just line up in formations face-to-face against each other and commence head-on shooting, in Cameroon, small units, piquets, patrols, and sections of African soldiers led mostly by their own soldiers carried out the fighting. As Europeans limited the award of ranks and promotions to Africans, such soldiers leading sections and piquets were of extremely low ranks like Sergeants, Sergeant Majors, Corporals, Lance Corporals and even Privates, as long as they had proven their worth and demonstrated bravery and willingness to lead. With such stakes, one historical reality, which is easily missed by historians on the subject, is that the Cameroon campaign was fought largely as an adaptive warfare. The "difficulties of employment and the thick bush" observed General Dobell, “rendered Cameroon particularly adaptable for rearguard tactics, and minor surprises.”²² Of course, this was a sharp contrast to warfare tactics on the Western scenes. At one point another British Colonel testified how the nature of the country forced him to adopt a system of tactics applicable both to bush and mountain warfare.”²³

²¹ TNA ADM 137/380, Dobell to Secretary of State for the War, Cameroons (Enclosure, Fourth Supplement to the London Gazette, Tuesday 30 May 1916) 1 March 1916.

²² TNA ADM 137/224, Dobell to Secretary of State.

²³ TNA ADM 137/224, Dobell to Secretary of State.

The military challenges of the Cameroon campaign were exacerbated by the size of the territory. It measured 292,000 square miles. It extended from the Gulf of Guinea North to Lake Chad, West to the Benue, and East and south to the Congo basin. It presented many varying types of land.²⁴ It shared an extensive Southern, Eastern and Northeastern borders with French Equatorial Africa (F.E.A). It shared its Northern, Northwestern and Southwestern borders with Nigeria. It was practically hemmed by British and French Africa, its total border lines with those colonies measuring some thousands of miles. This very expansive borders with Allied colonies was a double edge sword. It made it easy for the Allies to launch attacks against German Cameroon and vice versa. Plus, it required too many forces to be able to secure the borders. And the expansive size of Cameroon allowed for very extended distances between the invading forces, making coordination difficult. Broadly generalized, the Northern third of Cameroon was flat and open, save on the Western border, where there were the Mandara Hills. The central region is a broken plateau, mostly covered with long grass and mountainous in its Western section. The Southern third is also mountainous in the West and is mostly covered with primeval forest which in the East grows thinner, becomes park-like, and finally gives place to the low and marshy valley of the Sanga.²⁵

The above strategical, tactical, geographical and logistical demands of the Cameroon campaign made it the more convenient for African soldiers to be at the forefront. A British Lieutenant Colonel in the campaign drove home the point that both the Germans and the Allies used only West Africans to fight the war because “the West African soldier is very mobile and can generally live on the country.”²⁶ Another historical reality was that the majority of the

²⁴ *The Times History*, 279-280.

²⁵ *The Times History*, 280.

²⁶ Colonel A.H.W Haywood, “The Cameroons Campaign,” 3.

Africans who conducted the Cameroon campaign, especially those engaged by the Germans, and even those brought by the Allies, were not regular soldiers, nor had undergone any European colonial form of training. Rather, they had been conscripted in wartime with readily possessed military skills.²⁷ On the part of the Germans alone, a French officer reported that during the war, and in addition to the regular *askari* force, the Yaounde leader, Charles Atangana,²⁸ was able to marshal 8,000²⁹ partisans for the Germans. These irregular soldiers used spears and poisoned arrows against the Allies.³⁰ For the Allies, most of the Mounted Infantry soldiers in the North were donated by local leaders. For example, the Emir of Yola in Nigeria provided the Infantry Companies of the British Nigerian forces with hundreds of men and horses and Rifle slings.³¹ This explains in part why I view the African soldiers in the Cameroon campaign as soldiers of their own. The recruiting and immediate engagement of Africans into military services in the Cameroons would mean that they did not receive sufficient training at the hands of their European military officers, so that for the most part, men had to rely on their military experiences and skills obtained within the framework of African military schooling. At the end of the Cameroon campaign, the Deputy to the Governor General of Nigeria confessed to the Colonial Secretary in London that “three months [were] needed before a native [could] be classified as partially trained.” But he admitted that many in the Cameroons campaign had not

²⁷ ANSOM, TGO 8/74, General Dobell, West African Expeditionary Force (Military Report), Douala, 2 December 1914. The point General Dobell was making, and confirmed by other European officers, was that most of the Africans conscripted in wartime had not undergone colonial military training, but depended on their precolonial military experiences, skills and capabilities.

²⁸ He was considered the most ‘loyalist’ supporter of the Germans, both before and during the war.

²⁹ This number is certainly an exaggeration, given the total populations under Atangana’s control, and the males there capable of acting as war partisans.

³⁰ Armand Annet, *En Colonne dans le Cameroun: Notes d’un Commandant de Compagnie, 1914-1916* (Paris: Editions René Debresse, 1937), 120; Osuntokun, *Nigeria*, 187.

³¹ Osuntokun, *Nigeria*, 189.

had such time for training.³² There are, however, other reasons for which these African soldiers are soldiers of their own. As already indicated, first, they fought their campaigns themselves, though these were started and ended by the colonial masters. Second, by the nature of the warfare, most operations were carried out by small parties of soldiers, commanded by Africans themselves. Third, the guerrilla-type warfare tactics with which the campaign was conducted fitted well with what the soldiers had been used to doing during the colonial wars of resistance. Lastly, Europeans were forced to resort to an adaptive warfare, almost duplicating the African ways of fighting, so that even European senior military officers often relied on the Africans for guidance.

To be clear, the Cameroon campaign was not an exotic fight. Like other theaters of the Great War, it merely presented its own idiosyncrasies. In fact, it also did resemble in some ways some of the theaters in mainland Europe. A French archival source noted that “the war in Cameroon has taken the same forms as the theaters of war in Belgium and North of France. Here, as in Europe, the Germans are relying on trenches and barb wires, and machine guns seconded by heavy artillery.”³³

Cross border Fighting

As Cameroon bordered both British and French territories, Britain and France first separately invaded it from their respective borders in August 1914 long before the two carried

³² TNA CO 445/36, Telegram, Boyle, the Deputy Governor-General of Nigeria, to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 5 November 1916.

³³ ANSOM TGO 8/75, La Guerre au Cameroun. The original French version of the quote reads: “La guerre au Cameroun a revêtu les mêmes formes savantes qu'en Belgique ou dans le Nord de la France. Les Allemandes emploient en Afrique comme en Europe les tranchées, les fils des fer barbelés et surtout les mitrailleuses, les tout appuyé d'artillerie.”

out a combined operation a month later.³⁴ The areas invaded included the border places with British Nigeria in the North and Southwest, the Northern and Southeast borders with French Equatorial Africa. As soon as the War was declared in Europe, Colonel Carter, the Commandant of the Nigeria Regiment, acting in the absence of the Governor-General,³⁵ ordered three columns of Nigerian soldiers (part of WAFF) to concentrate at points close to the Cameroon border, two in the North and one in the Southwest. These three columns concentrated near the Nigerian borders with Cameroon as follows: The Maiduguri Column at Maiduguri under Captain R.W Fox; the Yola column at Yola under Lt. Col. P. Maclear; and the Cross River Column at Ikom in the Southwest under Lt. Col. G.T Mair. The plan was that when the combined Anglo-French force would invade the coastal and central part of the Cameroons in September (chapter 5), the role of the three frontier columns would be confined to mainly defensive postures, with the objective of deceit, distracting the attention of the *askari* from the main coastal and central target, and obtaining information.³⁶ To all intents and purposes, therefore, the primary objective of these early columns was defensive. Overtly ambitious,³⁷ however, all the columns crossed the German frontier on 25 August and undertook offensive military operations.

The Cross River Column

From the Cross River region of Nigeria, bordering the Cameroons on the Southwest emerged a column called the Cross River Column. Led by Lt. Col. G.T Mair from its base in

³⁴ German Cameroon was practically hemmed in the middle by enemy Allied African colonies. British Nigeria bordered it on the West and North-West, the French Congo and Equatorial Africa bordered it on the south, East and North, while at two extreme points of the colony, only a River divided it from the Belgian Congo.

³⁵ Governor-general Lugard was at home in Britain at the time. His deputy back in Nigeria, A.G Boyle, was generally regarded a weak man to deal with such a serious situation.

³⁶ TNA WO 32/5320, Report of Cunliffe, Lagos, 16 March 1916.

³⁷ The overtly ambitious British attack on the North, especially on Garoua, had strategic military considerations. It was expected to clear the North and have as many of British troops available for the main objective on Douala, in the southern part of the country. See, BNA CO 537/123, Telegram, Boyle to the Secretary of State, 12 August 1914.

Ikom, a close border town, this column crossed over and invaded the Southwest border of Cameroon. The Nigerians had made a small reconnoitering party and obtained information on the strength and movement of the *askari* across this border. Aiming to trick the Germans into believing that a major forward movement was about to invade Ossidinge across the Cameroons borders, the Commander of the Cross River column (consisting of six companies) ordered Captain Crockenden who crossed the River with one company of Nigerian soldiers on 24/25 August and, with bravery and great military skills by some individual Nigerian soldiers like Corporals Makinde Abeokuta and Dangana Abeokuta, and Privates Sumanu Sokoto and Alabi Ibadan, captured an important border village called Nsanakang, with only 8 casualties.³⁸ Commander Hopkinson with two more Companies of Nigerian soldiers replaced Crockendem in Nsanakang and the Nigerians held on to the place, entrenching themselves on the two most elevated positions there, known as Factory Hill and Custom Hill. Not long after, it became obvious that holding on to an advanced position like Nsanakang inside the German Cameroon territory so far removed from the main Nigerian column and neighboring town at Ikom separated from a swift and unfordable River with no proper line of retreat and no possible way of being quickly reinforced was an ambitious and a tactical military mistake, one which the *askari* quickly exploited via a counter attack.³⁹

³⁸ TNA WO 158/517, Cunliffe, Commandant, Nigeria Regimentto Lugard, Governor-General of Nigeria, Lagos, 16 & 31 October 1914.

³⁹ See Cunliffe's opinion, NA WO 158/517, Cunliffe to Lugard. It was Cunliffe's opinion that the Nigerians didn't have a proper line of retreat and no possible way of re-enforcements, but Lt. Col Mair offered a rebuttal, insisted that there were two lines of retreat, which the Protective Forces cut off during fighting; via main road to Nsara Arati where there were canoes to transfer troops to Insonya on the opposite bank, and via the bush path along the left bank of the River to Obokun. This path was used by the majority of the stragglers who returned after the action. He also insisted that contrary to Cunliffe's opinion, there existed ways of reinforcements as there was half a company at Nsana Arati about five miles distance from Nsanakang and there were three Sections at Obokum, one hour by launch from Nsanakang, and again half a Company at Abia. See the following file, NA WO 158/517, Lt. Col. Mair, Commanding the Troops on the Cross River, to Cunliffe, Lagos, (two separate reports for) 29 September 1914 and 2 November 1914.

Re-enforced, an *askari* Western detachment of three Companies led by Hauptmann Ramstedt on 6 September surprised the Nigerians at Nsanakang.⁴⁰ From inside the bush at a distance of between 200 and 300 yards, they opened Maxim gun and Rifle fire on the right and center of the Nigerian forces at their held positions. A section of the Nigerian forces was advantageously positioned on the Factory Hill, a high ground close to the River by another hill, Customs Hill. Aiming at this position, and not being able to make progress on the immediate front of the Customs Hill, the *askari* made a flank attack by walking round to the right flank of the Nigerian forces behind the bush to conceal their movements. Having gained a flanked position, they poured a heavy enfilade and reverse fire into some of the Nigerian-held trenches on Customs Hill and the Factory Hill. As the Nigerians ran out of ammunition and faced an increasingly desperate situation, their forces on Customs Hill began falling back towards Factory Hill, at which point the *askari* killed the British Commander of the Nigerians.⁴¹ As the Commander fell, some Nigerians, including Sergeant Makinde Abeokuta, Lance Corporal Dangana Arongunda, Privates Moma Zaria, Ali Kano and Moma Fika, continued to direct fire against the advancing *askari*. But the *askari* charged and occupied Customs Hill, the main position then being evacuated by the Nigerian forces, who fell back on the more precarious position on Factory Hill.⁴² At this point, the majority of the trenches initially held by the Nigerians were exposed to enfilade and reverse and deadly fire. As the trenches were all exposed to a galling fire, some of the Nigerians undertook a fixed bayonet charge on the *askari*

⁴⁰ Ute Rösenthaller, "The Submerged History of Nsanakang: A Glimpse into an Anglo-German Encounter," in *Encounter, Transformation and Identity: Peoples of the Western Cameroon Borderlands, 1891-2000*, ed., Ian Fowler and Verkijika G. Fanzo (New York and Oxford; berghan books, 2009), 126.

⁴¹ TNA WO 158/517, Mair to Cunliffe, 29 September 1914.

⁴² TNA WO 32/5320, Report by Cunliffe, 16 March 1916; TNA WO 158/517, Mair to Cunliffe, Ikom, 29 September 1914; Mentzel, *Die Kämpfe in Kamerun*, 44. Mentzel claims that they (the Germans) captured from the British Nigerians all two of their artilleries, five machine guns, and killed or took prisoner more than a hundred men.

in the bush, in the course of another British Lieutenant was killed. Meanwhile, less than ten of the Nigerian soldiers who had remained in the trenches on the Customs Hill were desperately firing against any *askari* soldier who came closer. But the *askari* in large numbers poured into the defenses of the Nigerians from all sides, so that those few Nigerians remaining on Factory Hill retired towards the hospital, which was itself under heavy Maxim and Rifle fire from the *askari* and inside of which a British Doctor was attending to the wounded. In the face of complete helplessness, some remaining three British Lieutenants, and eight Nigerian soldiers surrendered to the *askari*.⁴³

The remaining Nigerians undertook a bayonet charge, went through the *askari* and escaped into the bush, reaching Ikom on 10 September. Two of the Nigerian fugitive soldiers who had spent six days in the bush without food before being discovered on the British Nigeria side of the border were poetically described by an official British source:

You never saw two such bedraggled specimens of British officers. They were wet, dirty, and torn, but they had smiles on their worn faces and loaded revolvers in their belts. They had evaded the enemy when they could, shot him where they could not, slept in the dense bush, cut their way at the rate of eight miles a day, swum a River, and finally brought up on British territory....⁴⁴

Notwithstanding their gallant resistance, the Nigerian force was practically annihilated. Only two officers (British) and ninety Nigerian soldiers survived. Two officers, one British NCO and ninety-five Nigerian rank and file fell, and another officer and sixteen Nigerians were wounded. Also, three British officers, one British NCO, and forty-nine Nigerians were taken as POWs, making for a total casualty of 168. Some British official sources claimed that “the German losses in personnel were even heavier than those of the British,” yet noted that this exchange was a ‘marked victory’ for the Germans. A British official who visited the Nsanakang

⁴³ TNA WO 158/517, Mair to Cunliffe, 29 September 1914.

⁴⁴ *The Times History*, 300.

scene a few days afterward thought “the trenches were piled up with dead.”⁴⁵ On *askari* losses, a private diary entry by a German officer on 9 September 1914 reads: “Nsanakang has been recaptured but with heavy losses, Rausch, Glock, and 2 others killed, Ramslut, ... wounded and unable to fight more. The English lost rather more in whites killed and captured, 8 machine guns and 2 guns captured.”⁴⁶

Later the Cross River column reorganized, reoccupied Nsanakang, then advanced to and seized Ossidinge.⁴⁷ Its operations against the *askari* stretched from Ossidinge and were aimed at pushing through Widekum to Bamenda, in the Northwest part of the country. For coherence, I will return to these operations towards the end of the chapter.

The Yola and Maiduguri Columns

The Yola column under Lt.-Col. P. Maclear crossed the frontier on 25 August. Its Mounted Infantry drove a party of Protective Forces from the village of Tepe after a sharp fight and heavy losses. During the fight, a wounded British Major lay unconscious on the ground. Sergeant Chiroma and Private Awdu Sakadade of the 5th Battalion Nigeria Regiment under hot fire took cover over the fallen Major, and began to fire effectively across his body on the advancing Protective Forces, repulsing them and getting the Major to safety. Further, Lance Corporal Sanni Zozo and Private Sadicke stood over another wounded British Lieutenant laying on the ground. The *askari* fired across the fallen Lieutenant, but Zozo, covering him, shot and killed one German and two *askari* rank and file, repulsing the rest and fleeing with his

⁴⁵ *The Times History*, 300.

⁴⁶ TNA WO 158/552, Translation of Private Diary of Lieut. Nothnagel, 30th July/27 Sept. 1914. Lt Col. Mair however reported that casualties of German Protective Forces included; 3 officers killed, 1 officer and three under officers wounded, about 50 rank and file killed, and about 110 rank and file wounded. See, TNA WO 158/517, Mair to Cunliffe, 29 September 1914.

⁴⁷ *The Times History*, 300.

Lieutenant into the bush for safety. After the success on 25 August, the Nigerian force comprising up to twenty Officers, twelve British NCOs and 585 rank and file made an attack on Garoua on 30/31 August. During the attack, Sergeant Tookuru, a section Commander of the 3rd Battalion Nigerian Regiment, led his men on a charge against the *askari*, occupying strategic positions.⁴⁸ At daybreak (31 August), however, a force of 150 *askari* counter-attacked, sending the Nigerians into flight, who retired to Yola with their wounded, including Sergeant Salumi Yola.⁴⁹ The wounded Sergeant managed to march the whole way back from Garoua to Tepe with his colleagues.⁵⁰ At this success of Protective Forces, they took some Nigerians as POWs, including one Private Ojo.⁵¹ This preliminary incident dealt the Allied military prestige a severe blow. In fact, the *askari* had killed three British officers, including the column commander, Lt. Col. Maclear himself. They also took two military Doctors as POWs, killed many British Africans causing the rest to desert and flee while losing only one Lieutenant, two Sergeants and what the German Governor considered an 'insignificant' number of African soldiers.⁵²

In the meantime, the most Northerly Maiduguri column had its own reverses. Starting from Maiduguri under Captain Fox, the column attempted to conquer the German town of Mora by assault. But on 27 August 1914, an *askari* force under Captain von Raben repulsed the Nigerians, capturing one maxim and 12,000 rounds of ammunition.⁵³ Incorporating

⁴⁸ TNA WO 32/5320, Report by Cunliffe, 16 March 1916; TNA CO 537/124, Paraphrase Telegram, The Deputy Governor-general of Nigeria, to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 27 August 1914; TNA CO 583/20, Major Lord H. Seymour, to S.O Headquarters, Lokoja, 15 September 1914.

⁴⁹ TNA CO 537/124, Paraphrase telegram, The Governor-General of Nigeria to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 4 September 1914; NA WO 32/5320, Report by Cunliffe, 16 March 1916.

⁵⁰ TNA WO 32/5320, Report by Cunliffe.

⁵¹ He later escaped from the Protective Force prison camp, rejoined his colleagues and provided vital intelligence information. See, NA WO 95/5386, War Diary of Yola Column, Nigeria Field Force, From 15 December 1914 to 14 April 1915.

⁵² ANSOM TGO 7/68, Cameroun (rapport du Gouverneur Allemande).

⁵³ *The Times History*, 299; TNA WO 158/552, Lt-Col Zimmermann, (Translation) German Imperial Troops, Situation Middle of October (1914), Edea, 18 October 1914.

environmental and geographical features into their military plans, the askari had quickly abandoned the Mora town and entrenched themselves on the Mountain. It was one complete oblong mountain running down to the valley on three sides, North, East, and West. At the southern end, Spurs ran down from it, but they were overlooked by the highest point of the mountain. That point was held by the *askari*, whose position was among the higher Spurs immediately North of it. That position appeared to be almost impregnable. It was only breacheable by sheer weight of numbers and great loss of life. Captain Fox reconnoitered the mountain and found no good position within 2,500 yards except upon the mountain itself where Protective Forces were entrenched.⁵⁴ Guided by two inhabitants, Fox and his men strenuously climbed a certain distance and reached a point called Molugve, about 1,500 yards from manned askari trenches who had kept a steady fire with two machine guns. The *askari* started shooting, and the Nigerians fell back.⁵⁵ Under the circumstance, the Nigerian forces, joined later by the *tirailleurs*, contented themselves for the time being by taking up position on the south of Mora, with the objective of preventing the *askari* force entrenched on the Mountain from connecting with the ones at the Garoua garrison.⁵⁶ The F.E.A Governor concluded rather prematurely that with 590 Allied troops (French *tirailleurs* and British Nigerians) blockading Mora, the surrender of the place by the Germans was only a matter of time.⁵⁷

While contending themselves with the blockade of Mora for the remainder of the war, the Nigerians occasionally made futile attempts to take the Mora fort. On one occasion, a foothold

⁵⁴ TNA WO 95/5382, Captain R.W Fox, Commandant, Maiduguri Column, to the Commandant, Nigeria Field Force in Lagos, Sava, North Cameroons, 18 August & 18 October 1914.

⁵⁵ Haywood and Clarke, "Togoland and Cameroons," 107.

⁵⁶ TNA WO 158/552, Zimmermann, German Imperial troops; TNA WO 32/5320, Report by Cunliffe, 16 March 1916.

⁵⁷ ANSOM TGO 8/76, Confidential, Merlin, Le Gouverneur Général de L'Afrique Equatoriale Française a Monsieur le Ministre des Colonies, Brazzaville, le 18 Août 1915.

was gained on the summit, and part of the 1st Nigerian Regiment attempted a flanked bayonet charge. Within sixty yards of defenses, the *askari* aborted the charge. Although the Nigerians had held on to gained position for forty-eight hours without food or water, every effort to furnish them with supplies flopped, and their strength petered out, compelling them to withdraw. After that, and everywhere in the North - Mora, Garoua, Maroua, Banyo, Ngaoundere, Tibati - Protective Forces were taking positions on the hills or in the trenches in preparedness for a guerilla-type war activities.⁵⁸

Around the same time that the Nigerians had a setback at Mora, the French from their Chad colony were also invading. The newly promoted General Largeau, Commander of the French African forces (*Tirailleurs Senegalaise*) in Chad, had ordered his forces to concentrate around Kousseri, and take back “La tête de canard” territory (duck bill territory).⁵⁹ From Fort Lamy, he dispatched a detachment under Captain Ferrandi with the view to effect a junction with the British Maiduguri Column. While on its way, military expediency dictated that it first seized Kousseri.⁶⁰ This detachment, 250 Rifles strong, attacked Kousseri on 24-25 August but suffered some twenty-three casualties and was forced to withdraw. The *askari* garrison at Kousseri, with only two Germans and thirty-five Cameroonians, engaged the superior French force in the morning of 25 August, in an action that drove the *tirailleurs* back. Withdrawn, Ferrandi let his troops join up with the Maiduguri column. Having returned later to Fort Lamy and re-enforced, on 21 September, a second attempt by the *tirailleurs* under Lt. Colonel Brisset led to the capture

⁵⁸ *The Times History*, 299; TNA WO 95/5382, Captain R.W Fox, Commandant, Maiduguri Column, to the Commandant, Nigeria Field Force in Lagos, Sava, 3 miles S.E of Mora, German Kameruns, 29 August 1914.

⁵⁹ ANSOM TGO 8/75, *La Guerre au Colonies*. This was part of the territories ceded to German Cameroon by France in 1911.

⁶⁰ Moberly, *Military Operations*, 117.

of Kousseri after fierce fighting.⁶¹ In that attack, the *tirailleurs* undertook a bayonet charge at the *askari*, whereby the white German officers abandoned in their flight everything – guns, ammunition, horses and luggages.⁶² As Kousseri fell, a handful of Cameroonian soldiers there under their German commander Karlmeier who had lost half of his party at Kousseri and *en route*, successfully broke away, joining the *askari* force entrenched earlier on the Mora Mountain. They had been able to evade an attempt by a British detachment to intercept and capture them.⁶³

Following success at Kousseri, the Brisset column took a Southwest route towards the Mandara Mountains. The column was largely composed of young African recruits from Mossi, the country North of Ashanti which had raised a levy to help in the conquest of Togoland. Capturing three or four small German posts *en route* the column camped south of Mora and later on 13 October, it finally joined Fox's column south of the Mora fort. The column carried several positions in night attacks but was in each repelled by the small Protective Force under Hauptmann von Raben holding on to the fort. According to British official report, the "fighting [here] was so severe that the Germans sought an armistice to bury their dead." Decidedly, Captain Fox's column and some *tirailleurs* remained to blockade Mora while Col. Brisset's column marched south towards Maroua.⁶⁴

Around 22 November 1914, the combined French and English forces around Mora area comprised some 1000 men while the *askari* were holding on to the Mora Mountain with just 120 men strong. Then at Maroua, the strength of the *askari* under Von Doring was five Europeans,

⁶¹ Moberly, *Military Operations*, 114-5 & 118; ANSOM TGO 8/75, La Guerre au Cameroun; TNA WO 32/5320, Report by Cunliffe, 16 March 1916.

⁶² *The Times History*, 297.

⁶³ NANI CSO 19/6, G.J.F Tomlinson, 2nd class district officer, Report, Bornu in the War, 29 June 1918.

⁶⁴ *The Times History*, 299; TNA WO 32/5320, Report by Cunliffe, 16 March 1916.

175 Africans strong, eighty of whom were Mounted Infantry. At this point, the strategy of the Allies was to have Major Webb-Bowen commanding some of the Nigerian troops concentrate all his troops at Garoua to, first, prevent reinforcements for the *askari* from coming up to Maroua, and second, cut Von Düring's lines of communications. Also, by confining the remaining German forces at Garoua, the British hoped to give the inhabitants the "impression that...the Germans had no power in the country."⁶⁵

It should be noted that the entrenched positions of the *askari* on the less accessible points in the North like bush hills and forest mountain tops facilitated a guerrilla-type warfare in the region, as elsewhere in the Cameroons. From their entrenched positions, the *askari* staged raids and surprise attacks. They occasionally descended to get supplies, at which point skirmishes occurred. Once on 24 November 1914, a Protective Force descended the Mora Mountain with carriers to a village called Gadadema for supplies. Lt de Fürst, with twenty-five *tirailleurs*, who had occupied the village for two days, opened fire at short range. The *askari* returned up the Mountain to Molougwe. Afterward, two *askari* units descended from the summit, one to the right, the other to the left, set fire on the village, then started heavy firing on both sides. One of the groups of huts occupied by the *tirailleurs* caught fire, and as they tried to get out, all entrances to the compound were met with heavy fire from the *askari*. Lt Furst and his men, confined to one wall, were all annihilated. This encounter represented "one of the incidents of guerrilla warfare" that had been going on in Mandara since the middle of August 1914.⁶⁶

So far, the invasion of the North by British Nigerian troops in collaboration with the French *tirraileur* had attained fewer successes, most of them suffering reverses. These reverses

⁶⁵ TNA WO 95/5382, Telegram, Lt Col Brisset, Commanding the North Kamerun Column, to Captain Fox, Commanding the British Troops at Gayae, Gayac, 22 November 1914.

⁶⁶ TNA WO 95/5382, Report by Brisset, Sava, 25 November 1914.

called for re-strategizing and re-organizing in the region. Consequently, Allied forces were reorganized, the defenses of Yola strengthened with soldiers from the British colony of Sierra Leone, and the troops there placed temporarily under Lt.-Col. W.I Webb-Bowen.⁶⁷ Later the overall command of the combined Allied forces in the North which numbered about 4,000 by December 1914 fell to Lt.-Col. Cunliffe.⁶⁸ He took over command in February 1915, by which time the situation here was almost stagnating. Although conducted in general conformity with the plans of the Allied forces operating in the coastal and central regions of the Cameroons (chapter 5) these Northern operations were separate and independent.⁶⁹

Re-inforced with a couple of 12-pounder and 95 mm. guns, Cunliffe's combined force (Nigerians and *tirailleurs* under Brisset) launched its first attack on Garoua in mid-April 1915.⁷⁰ The plan was to take Garoua and prevent the *askari* from uniting with those further south on the Ngaoundere Plateau, after which a southward movement would be effected, and eventual cooperation with the forces that were invading the Cameroons from the coastal and central regions.⁷¹ Cunliffe's force at Garoua consisted of eleven Companies of Infantry (eight British Africans, three French Africans), one Company of Mounted Infantry (British Africans) and one Squadron Cavalry (French Africans).⁷² Given the guerrilla war tactics, the nature of the terrain, much of the actual day-to-day fighting and patrols were carried out by smaller units of forces such as Company sections, under the leadership of 'decorated' African soldiers themselves. In these Northern operations alone, accomplished Nigerian soldiers such as Corporal Esar Saye,

⁶⁷ TNA WO 32/5320, Report by Cunliffe, 16 March 1916.

⁶⁸ He had replaced Colonel Carter as Commandant of the Nigeria Regiment following the so far military reverses under the latter. Shortly after taking control, and while made to lead all Allied troops in the North, he would be promoted to Brigadier-General.

⁶⁹ TNA WO 32/5320, Sir Charles Strachey to the Secretary, war Office, Downing Street, London, 8 May 1916.

⁷⁰ ANSOM TGO 8/75, La Guerre au Cameroun; *The Times History*, 301.

⁷¹ TNA WO 32/5320, Report by Cunliffe, 16 March 1916.

⁷² TNA WO 32/5320, Report by Cunliffe (Appendix A) 16 March 1916; *The Times History*, 301.

Lance Corporal Sali Tassawa, A/L. Corporal Ademu Rogo, Corporal Musa Zonga, Sergeant Ibrahim Kano, Corporal Osuman Yola, Sergeant Moma Kano, were among some of the section, piquet or patrol commanders in charge of the day-to-day fighting, for which they received military awards and distinctions.⁷³

Facing the avalanche of Allied forces in Garoua, the strength of the *askari* under one Hauptmann von Crailsheim, stood at about forty Europeans and 500 Africans. But the British official source views the defensive strength of the *askari* in Garoua to be great, in the sense that Garoua lay on the Benue, which protected it from the south, in the hilly country, plus it had been turned into an entrenched camp thereby giving the *askari* a vantage position.⁷⁴ The preparedness of Garoua against a potential attack was described by Private Ojo of the 2nd Battalion Nigerian regiment, upon his escape from an *askari* held prison camp in Garoua:

There are 25 white men [Germans] and about 800 rank and file in Garua. Spear heads have been placed some distance outside the trenches at Garua to prevent our soldiers lying down to shoot. The main roads have been spiked and made to go in a zig-zag fashion and railed in. Bomb proof shelters have been erected inside the [Garoua] fort and dummies placed in many trenches.⁷⁵

With firsthand information on the situation at Garoua, Cunliffe's forces prepared to take the town by military assault. By the night of 30 May, the bulk of the troops entrenched some 35,000 yards from the Garoua Fort. The Nigerians began advancing and entrenching under cover of darkness, and by 10 June, had a line of trenches with 400 yards frontage within 1,000 yards of the Fort. They brought up their heavy artillery and began bombarding the fort. The *askari* defending this fort under von Crailsheim, comprised of "317 'real' soldiers, 187 'recruits,' and ten machine guns, together with three wretched mountain guns.⁷⁶ As this force comprised such

⁷³ TNA WO 32/5320, Report by Cunliffe (Appendix A), 16 March 1916.

⁷⁴ *The Times History*, 301-302.

⁷⁵ TNA WO 32/5320, Report by Cunliffe.

⁷⁶ TNA CO 583/35, Letter from Oberleutenant Surén of the Cameroons Schutztruppe, to his Mother, Yola, 24 June 1915.

large amount of ‘recruits’ it can only be speculated that they were conscripted, which then explains the reason for their easy desertion later on. The *askari* commander had misjudged the situation and thought the Allies would not be able to bring up such artillery on Garoua.⁷⁷

Helpless in the face of heavy artillery from a numerically superior force, Crailsheim, and his African troops attempted to withdraw to the south on the night of 9-10 June but failed as the Benue was so swollen that they could not cross it. Some of the deserting askari soldiers in trying to cross the Benue were drowned, and as many as fifty dead bodies counted in the River.⁷⁸ At the retreat, many askari deserted, joining the Allies. To make matters worse, the *askari* had refused to continue the fight and appeared to be in a mutiny. Helpless, Crailsheim unconditionally surrendered Garoua on 10 June.⁷⁹

When Garoua Fort surrendered, the Nigerian soldiers and the French *tirailleurs* captured thirty-seven white Germans and 212 Cameroonian rank and file, plus five guns and ten maxims and a good deal of ammunition. The fall of Garoua was, to undoubtedly influence the course of the campaign for the Allies.⁸⁰ It sent shocking waves and panic amongst German officers. One German Commander lamented in his war diary that “the North is [now] in the hands of the enemy...[and] if there is not peace soon, the enemy will soon have us.”⁸¹ Although Garoua fell, British military officials were impressed by the gallantry of the askari, especially how the forces

⁷⁷ TNA CO 583/35, Letter from Hauptman v. Crailsheim to Hauptman v. Perbandt, Yola, 24 June 1915.

⁷⁸ TNA CO 583/35, Crailsheim to Perbandt. An archival report by the French Governor gives different figures. It states that the *askari* force that defended Garoua comprised of 37 Germans or Europeans and 480 Africans. And when the town fell, 37 Europeans and 210 Africans were taken prisoners, while for 270 *askari* who tried to escape, 80 of them were drown in the Benue while 190 were massacred by the Allied cavalry force and the people of Kerdis. See, ANSOM TGO 8/76, Confidentiel, Merlin, Le Gouverneur Général de L’Afrique Equatoriale Française a Monsieur le Ministre des Colonies, Brazzaville, le 18 Août 1915, 6.

⁷⁹ TNA WO 32/5320, Report by Cunliffe, 16 March 1916; *The Times History*, 302; Dobell, “The Campaign,” 706.

⁸⁰ TNA WO 32/5320, Report by Cunliffe, 16 March 1916; TNA WO 158/516, Dobell to the Governor General of Nigeria, Military Situation in the Cameroons, Douala, 30 June 1915.

⁸¹ TNA WO 158/552, War Diary of Sergt. Major Jütersonke, Protective Troops in the Cameroons, 11th Company, 1915.

carried out a daring maneuver. With a few Europeans, 100 African Mounted men and 170 Infantry, the *askari* broke out of Garoua and were joined by another *askari* force of some fifty men strong from Ngaoundere. On the contrary, French archival sources claim, inaccurately, that this fight completely wiped out the German Garoua garrison of any further military operations; and that if any Germans and *askari* had been able to escape down south towards Kotscha Banyo or Tibati, they would have done so without any weapons or ammunition at all.⁸² As it turned out, the converged *askari* force mentioned by British archival sources attacked a British outpost, but failed to capture it, and by avoiding all roads and making a wonderful march of twenty-eight hours without a halt, succeeded in avoiding all the Allied troops pursuing them, and made their way safely back to Garoua.⁸³

Immediately following the fall of Garoua, a strategic military plan caused sections of the Allied troops, precisely Brisset's column of 810 men strong including 210 British Africans under the orders of Lieutenant Webb Downen and joined later by Major Umaque column of 610 men from Kotscha, to move on and successively occupy Ngaoundere and Tinere. The move to secure the edge of the Ngaoundere Plateau, in particular, was aimed to prevent a Protective Force from concentrating on a valuable strategic line. In total, the Allied forces in the Tibati-Banyo region already numbered about 1,500 men, against the *askari* forces under Rammstedt and Haedicke, numbering about 800 men strong.⁸⁴

On 28 June 1915, an advance guard troops of Col. Webb-Bowen's column surprised *askari* outposts holding the steep paths leading up to the edge of the Plateau. In the midst of a

⁸² TNA WO 32/5320, Report by Cunliffe, 16 March 1916; ANSOM TGO 8/76, Confidentiel, Merlin, Le Gouverneur Général de L'Afrique Equatoriale Française a Monsieur le Ministre des Colonies, Brazzaville, le 18 Août 1915.

⁸³ *The Times History*, 302; TNA WO 32/5320, Report by Cunliffe, 16 March 1916.

⁸⁴ ANSOM TGO 8/76, Merlin a Monsieur le Ministre des Colonies.

disturbing tornado, those *askari* outposts were taken, facilitating the way for occupation of Ngaoundere. The *askari* counter-attacked in the night but were repulsed and forced to retire on Tibati.⁸⁵ Again, and like Garoua, the fall of the Ngaoundere Plateau was a great blow to the Germans, for, on account of its position and topography, the Germans considered it favorable for them to undertake an offensive. In a secret letter dated 12 January 1915, the commander of Protective Forces told Captain Von Crailsheim in Garoua that if the Ngaoundere Plateaus were captured, it would “completely upset the protection of the whole territory” because “as the enemy appears on all sides in the same superiority of numbers, it will only be possible on the Ngaoundere plateau, by using the inner line to concentrate a sufficient force for a favourable (1) counter attack, (2) offensive.”⁸⁶ But the Plateau fell easily given the plight of the Mora Coy of the *askari* who were entrenched on the Mora fort and could give little or no assistance to the Northern detachment (Column) in defense of the Plateau.

In the summer of 1915, with the fall of the Ngaoundere Plateau and as the rains had halted fighting in the south, Cunliffe decided to give another try on Mora, especially as the rains did not hinder fighting in the North as they did in the south. He aimed at conquering Mora thus releasing the investing force there to take part in the impending planned offensive in the south when the rains must have seized. Thus from Yola, some of the Nigerian soldiers arrived Sava on 23 August, a place four miles from the Mora Mountain. The Mountain had the best natural defenses; it had a base perimeter of about thirty miles, it rose precipitously to a height of 1,700 feet, its sides were so steep that they could be accessible only in a few places to men using both hands and feet, and they were covered with huge boulders, affording excellent cover to the

⁸⁵ TNA WO 32/5320, Report by Cunliffe; *The Times History*, 302.

⁸⁶ TNA WO 158/552, Secret, Colonel Zimmerman to Captain Crailsheim in Garoua, Eseka, 12 January 1915.

Protective Forces on the defense. Cunliffe decided that his best chance of success lay in launching an attack from a hill called Ouatchke, a place already held by Nigerian troops, the summit of which was nearly level with, but separated by a deep valley 600 yards wide, from the Northern end of the Mountain, whose end went by the name of Dabascoum.⁸⁷ From Ouatchke, the Nigerians made three separate attacks on Dabascoum. Although the third attack succeeded at length in gaining a foot hold on the summit, it found further progress barred by a redoubt. Also, shortage of artillery ammunition and food rendered the gained-position untenable for another day, so that they were forced to initiate a partial withdrawal on 8/9 September 1915. Then a portion of the 1st Nigerian Regiment attempted to carry the work with the bayonet but was stopped by fire within sixty yards of the defenses of the Protective Forces. The Nigerian soldiers held on to the position they had gained for 48 hours without food or water, and failing to get them, and sustaining some serious casualties, withdrew.⁸⁸ While the *askari* in this attack inflicted about forty casualties on the Allies, killing a British Captain, the Nigerians purportedly killed one German, ten *askari*, taking some POWs, including possibly a Cameroonian *askari* Sergeant Major, Nyako.⁸⁹

Learning, however, on 15 September that the Allies were resuming offensives in the south as early as October (chapter 5), Cunliffe abandoned the Mora enterprise, leaving behind troops equal in numbers as the original investing force. His immediate and main focus was Banyo. He planned the advance as follows; French forces under Brisset to move from Ngaoundere on Tibati on 15 October; the Webb-Bowen column to move from Tingere on Galim on 15 October; one Company from Takum on Kentu on 12 October; the Cross River Column

⁸⁷ TNA WO 32/5320, Report by Cunliffe.

⁸⁸ TNA WO 32/5320, Report by Cunliffe.

⁸⁹ TNA WO 95/5382, Report by Major Wallace Wright, Ouatchke, 9 September 1915.

under Major Crockendem from Ossindinge via Widekuum on Bamenda on 12 October; and Cunliffe's own advance from Konstcha on 14 October.

On 24 October, Major Mann's troops from Gashaka occupied the European settlement of Banyo, one hour ahead of Cunliffe's advance guard.⁹⁰ The *askari* had prepared to withstand a prolonged siege on Banyo, counting on its natural defenses and topography.⁹¹ The town laid between Bamenda and Tibati. While Allied forces easily took the European settlement of the town, the garrison had been entrenched on an isolated Mountain rising steeply 1,200 feet from the surrounding country. The Mountain itself was broken up by small hills, the slopes very stiff and covered with large boulders which had been linked together by some sangars. The *askari* had strengthened every prominent commanding point by a small fort; they constructed cement reservoirs for water on the summit. They had also constructed, on the summit, brick houses with glazed windows erected to accommodate the Europeans and stocked the place with enough food supplies. The Mountain was a rallying point for the garrisons of Banyo, Dschang, and Bamenda.⁹² In the words of a British soldier, the Banyo Mountain had "huge rocky boulders standing out prominently right up to the very top, and the sides of the mountain bristl[ed] with strongly built 'sangars.'"⁹³ A German soldier noted the defenses as follows: "Round the hill was a wall made of piled up stones about 70-80 cm. thick.... Dug-outs were built during the last 3-4 days."⁹⁴

⁹⁰ TNA WO 32/5320, Report by Cunliffe.

⁹¹ *The Times History*, 308.

⁹² ANSOM, TGO 12/93, Report, Douala, 30 November 1915; *The Times History*, 308.

⁹³ Quoted in *The Times History*, 308.

⁹⁴ TNA WO 106/656, Non-Commissioned officer Bode's short Notes from recollections of experiences in the war in the Cameroons, to the Imperial Colonial Officer, Berlin, 15 February 1916.

The Allied force that undertook combat activities on the Banyo Mountain under the general command of Cunliffe comprised five Companies of Infantry on the under-features of the Mountain, and one Mounted Infantry in a wide circle on the uninhabited plain-rolling grass land, to give notice of any of the garrison trying to break out. Three 2.95 inch guns supported the attack.⁹⁵ Once again, the strength of the two opposing forces was very unequal, the *askari* force defending the place numbering barely 167 men and two machine-guns.⁹⁶ The fight began on 2 November. The Nigerians, benefiting from the thick fog that shrouded the Mountain, made progress up. Under cover of fog, the British Captain Bowyer Smijth led a Company of Nigerians right up to the summit. The Company came under fire from all directions, and the *askari* killed Bowyer, then forcing the Company to retreat to the foot of the Mountain.⁹⁷ By the noon of 4 November, the remaining Companies of the Nigerian forces were about half way up the slope, holding on stubbornly to thirty yards of an entrenched position by the *askari*, and unable to make further progress in daylight. During the night of 4/5 November, the *askari* expended a large amount of dynamite bombs on the climbing Nigerians, but that night and throughout the following day, they fought their way upwards, turning sangar after sangar, so that by dusk on 5 November, they were within 1000 yards of the top.⁹⁸ Using their knowledge of warfare on the hills and Mountains, the Nigerians had managed to crawl up with heavy guns, unnoticed by the *askari*.⁹⁹ One Corporal Moma Shira was in charge of an advance post when he noticed that the firing from one of *askari*'s main sangars was slackening, at which point he crawled with one

⁹⁵ TNA WO 32/5320, Report by Cunliffe; *The Times History*, 308.

⁹⁶ TNA WO 106/656, Non-Commissioned officer Bode's short Notes from recollections of experiences in the war in the Cameroons, to the Imperial Colonial Officer, Berlin, 15 February 1916.

⁹⁷ TNA WO 32/5320, Report by Cunliffe.

⁹⁸ TNA WO 32/5320, Report by Cunliffe; ANSOM, TGO 12/93, Report, Douala, 30 November 1915.

⁹⁹ TNA WO 106/656, Report by Armourer Woydask on Warfare in the Banjo district, 13 February 1916.

other soldier who was killed and found a way into the Fort. He then enabled the Company to get a footing on the corner of *askari* position, which was then threatened by the advance of his Company.¹⁰⁰ A British officer who participated in the attack in the fight conveyed a vivid description:

We began our attack early on the morning of November 4 [1915]. The infantry, covered by the fire from our three guns, worked their way up slowly and dogged foot by foot, climbing over rocks and tearing their way through the thorny scrub and long grass, under a heavy Rifle and maxim-gun fire from the enemy's "sangars" and concealed snipers among the rocks. By the evening most of the companies had managed to struggle half-way up the hill, there getting what shelter they could from the incessant fire of the enemy, aided by the light of fireballs and rockets. Officers and men, exhausted and drenched with rain, hung on determinedly to the ground gained.¹⁰¹

While the Company of Nigerians was being enfiladed by sniping fire as described above, Sergeant Ajaja of the 3rd Battalion Nigeria Regiment moved to one of the flanks of his advancing Company, and from a cleft in a rock, protected the flank, enabling the Company to continue its advance.¹⁰² But the first Company of Nigerian troops advancing the Mountain as described by the soldier above got a setback when their Commander was killed, at which point senior Nigerian soldiers in the Company, including individuals soldiers probably such as Sergeants Gimba, Moma Jima, Corporal Jimba, Sergeant Mamu Zozo, Private Awutu Kano, Private Momadu Katagum, Private Imoru Ibi, led a retreat down the slopes of the Mountain, and mobilized to advance again the following day.¹⁰³ This second advance is again conveyed by the officer:

At dawn on the morning of the 5th they started climbing once more. Our troops having got directly under the first line of "sangars," the enemy, in addition to rifle and maxim-gun fire, started rolling down rocks and throwing dynamite bombs. All that day, our men gradually worked their way up, capturing a small stone redoubt and "sangar" here and there. Owing to the paucity of gun ammunition, the covering artillery fire could not afford the infantry the assistance so imperatively necessary on these occasions. Fortunately, a convoy arrived on the afternoon of the 5th bringing with it 200 more rounds of gun ammunition which, hurriedly sent out, enabled the guns to fire somewhat more rapidly till the upward advance of the infantry rendered it too dangerous to continue their fire.

¹⁰⁰ TNA WO 32/5320, Report by Cunliffe, 16 March 1916

¹⁰¹ Quoted in *The Times History*, 308.

¹⁰² TNA WO 32/5320, Report by Cunliffe.

¹⁰³ TNA WO 32/5320, Report by Cunliffe.

Darkness set in early that evening – at 5 p.m. An hour or two later a terrific thunderstorm burst over the mountain. Heavy firing and the explosion of bombs and fireballs continued. A misty morning prevented our seeing what was happening as dawn broke on the 6th, but as the mist dispersed a white flag could be seen on the top of the hill and our men silhouetted against the sky-line.¹⁰⁴

By 6 November, a group of Nigerians, including Moma Jima, Sergeant Mamu Zozo, Sergeant Alao Ibadan, Corporal Moma Shira (i/c of an advance post) had reached the summit of the Mountain and occupied it.¹⁰⁵ The *askari*, completely demoralized by the determined advance of the invading African army, and despite the heavy losses they had inflicted on this army, had during the night of the 5-6th broken into small scattered parties and taking advantage of the darkness of the night, the noise of rain and thunder, and most importantly their knowledge of the country, majority of them had managed to sneak their way down the hill without the interception of the climbers.¹⁰⁶ But their intentions having been betrayed by the inhabitants, the fleeing *askari* ran into the detached posts of the Allied Mounted Infantry guarding all roads in the vicinity. The *askari* then fired a few wild shots, scattered and disappeared into the ten feet high grass.¹⁰⁷

The *askari* at Banyo had fought bravely. A German NCO said of them, “our black German troops did magnificently, and we must admire them...”¹⁰⁸ At one point on the summit after having lost their commanding German officers, the *askari* went on to kill two Allied temporary Lieutenants.¹⁰⁹ In Cunliffe’s assessment, the Banyo Mountain fight was “one of the most arduous ever fought by native African troops.”¹¹⁰ What Cunliffe quickly forgot, however, was that this was a typical warfare battle in that region, and Cameroonian Foot and Mounted

¹⁰⁴ Quoted in *The Times History*, 308-9.

¹⁰⁵ TNA WO 32/5320, Report by Cunliffe.

¹⁰⁶ TNA WO 32/5320, Report by Cunliffe; *The Times History*, 309; ANSOM, TGO 12/93, Report, Douala, 30 November 1915.

¹⁰⁷ *The Times History*, 309.

¹⁰⁸ TNA WO 106/656, Non-Commissioned officer Bode’s short Notes from recollections of experiences in the war in the Cameroons, to the Imperial Colonial Officer, Berlin, 15 February 1916.

¹⁰⁹ ANSOM, TGO 12/93, Report, Douala, 30 November 1915.

¹¹⁰ TNA WO 32/5320, Report by Cunliffe.

Infantry in that part of the country were well accustomed to such fights, especially after their armed encounters with colonialism. What was different this time around, if at all it was, was the number of machine guns and artillery fire involved. What was also different too, was that the enemy force, filled with Nigerian soldiers, were also well accustomed to combat activities on the hills and Mountains. There were specific examples of Nigerian soldiers who skillfully sneaked their way onto the summit of the Mountain and surprised the *askari*, forcing them into defeat and flight. Those on the offensive were just as experienced in that kind of warfare as those in the defensive, with the additional advantages that the former had the numerical superiority and more sophisticated weaponry.

On the whole, the Banyo fight had resulted in three British Officers and NCOs killed, forty-two rank and file killed/wounded. For the *askari*, casualties included thirteen Germans and 103 Cameroonians killed, wounded and/or taken POWs.¹¹¹ The natural defenses of the Banyo Mountain and the fortified positions of the *askari* and their vantage point on the Mountain from where they shot at advancing enemies should naturally have produced different results. For their defeat, therefore, we must consider the overwhelming number of Allied African troops, the presence in their midst of African Mounted Infantry men, their strategic knowledge of warfare in that area, and the shortage of ammunition for the *askari*. Also, whereas the Allies were having continuous reinforcements in men and supplies, the *askari*, entrenched on the Mountain, could not boast of similar advantages.

The fall of Banyo liberated Cunliffe for his next objective, an advance to the line Yoko-Ngambe-Ditam, thence to move on the Nachtigal Rapids – a point about forty miles North of Yaounde down south. In these advances, with the *askari* still putting up stiff and steady

¹¹¹ TNA WO 32/5320, Report by Cunliffe.

resistance and destroying the bridges over the Rivers in their process of retreat, Cunliffe ordered troops at Kentu to move on Bamenda. He also ordered Major Crockendem at Bamenda to move on Fumban with a strong force. Another column under Major Uniacke left Banyo for Fumban via Gorori and Lt.-Col. Cotton cooperated from Dschang on Fumban.¹¹² I will now examine the conclusion of the Northern forces under Cunliffe concurrently with the remaining activities of the Cross River column which I began this chapter with.

Final operations of the Cross River Column and other Forces

As mentioned earlier, and as of November 1914, the Nigerians of the Cross River column had moved in and established their headquarters at Ossidinge, with the objective of marching through Widekum to Bamenda, in conjunction with other columns. Along this line - Ossidinge-Bamenda axis - the Nigerians were engaged in several fights and skirmishes with the *askari*. For the most part, the inhabitants of the area provided the Nigerians with intelligence information on the movement of the *askari*. Around 23 January 1915, inhabitants reported of the movement of some *askari* who had entered the village of Eshobi, near Mamfe. Based on this information, Lance Corporal Agbi Owo "F" Company, in charge of a party of soldiers, crawled through the bush to a rest house in Eshobi to reconnoiter. He saw two white German officers, but judging that the rank and file of the *askari* were all round the bush, he quietly withdrew to his base post. Shortly afterward, he saw a strong patrol of Protective Forces marching along the road, with flankers in the bush. The Lance Corporal strategically allowed the *askari* to advance past a certain distance, after which he and his men started a gunfire, repulsing the *askari* and forcing them to retreat along the road to Mfato.¹¹³

¹¹² TNA WO 32/5320, Report by Cunliffe.

¹¹³ TNA WO 95/5382, Mair to the Commandant, 26 January 1915.

Based also on reports from the inhabitants of Protective Forces entrenching at Mbayjo (eighteen miles south of Mamfe) where the Mamfe -Tinto and Ossing – Tinto roads converged, a group of soldiers of the 3rd Battalion Nigeria Regiment, including Lance Corporal Agbi Owo, Adeokin Ibadan and Ojo Ibadan on 28 January 1915 undertook a patrol along the Mamfe – Tinto road and located Protective Forces advancing from Basho Ntai. The Nigerians then withdrew a short distance, selecting a suitable place for an ambush. When the *askari* advancing from the main road came within a few yards of shooting range, the Nigerians directed gunfire on them, killing one white German officer and two rank and file. Protective Forces again retreated.¹¹⁴

The Cross River column sent out hunters and others to locate the *askari* and provide information for ambushes. On 8 February 1915, inhabitants again gave information on a sixty-three men strong *askari* force (three white and sixty Africans) which had entered Kembong. On the 9, a party of “B” Coy 3 Nigeria Regimentsurprised the *askari* on a bush path, killing one white German.¹¹⁵ Further information obtained from an inhabitant on 10 February who had been a cook to a German, Mr. Bofink for five months, revealed that the strength of the *askari* stood at; four whites and 100 rank and file on Ossing – Tinto road, four white men and 100 rank and file on Mamfe – Tinto road, four white men and 100 rank and file in the vicinity of Eshobi, and four white men and 100 rank and file under a certain Captain Von Somerfeldt between Tinto and Mbo River.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ TNA WO 95/5382, Mair to the Commandant, 4 February 1915; NA WO 32/5320, Report by Cunliffe (Appendix A).

¹¹⁵ TNA WO 95/5382, Mair to the Commandant, 10 February 1915.

¹¹⁶ TNA WO 95/5382, Mair to the Commandant.

The strategy of the *askari* in that area was to occasionally visit towns and villages one or two day's march, losing parties of soldiers to engage in patrols and ambushes.¹¹⁷ But they often kept away, giving the Nigerians much trouble to look for them far away in the bush before engaging them in a fight. The Commander of the Cross River column once lamented that "the enemy...keep so far away that one or two nights have to be spent in the bush to get into touch with them."¹¹⁸ This classical guerrilla-type warfare, as in other parts of the colony, was by far disturbing to the Allies, who had to rely mainly on their African soldiers leading their men in patrols and sections to dash into the dense bush and forest after the *askari*.

On 25 March 1915, Company Sergeant Major Adegbite Offa of "F" Coy in charge of a patrol of twenty men, came under attack by a Protective Force with a strength of sixty men. He managed to extricate his patrol from the precarious situation, forcing the *askari* into retreat.¹¹⁹ At this point, the strength of the *askari* was estimated at forty white men and 200 Africans at Bakumba, fifteen miles North of Tinto.¹²⁰ Bakumba was a large entrenched *askari* camp, with 800 yards clear all round.

On 14 October 1915, the Cross River column under Major Crockendem began an advance on Bamenda. Before this advance, military planning led the 5th Light Infantry on the Northern Railway commanded by Lt.-Col. Cotton to move a force of about 300 strong and 800 carriers at Bare towards Dschang near the Ossindinge-Bamenda axis, with the intention of diverting the attention of the *askari* in that area, thus easing Crockendem's passage.¹²¹

¹¹⁷ TNA WO 95/5382, From Captain John Crockendem, Commanding Cross River Column, to the Commandant, Nigeria Regiment, Ossindinge, 10 March 1915.

¹¹⁸ TNA WO 95/5382, Crockendem to the Commandant, 6 April 1915.

¹¹⁹ TNA WO 95/5382, Crockendem to the Commandant, 1 April 1915.

¹²⁰ TNA WO 95/5382, Crockendem to the Commandant.

¹²¹ TNA WO 158/516, Dobell to the Secretary, War Office, Secret, Report on Operations 8 November 1915.

Subsequently, the Nigerians pushed the smaller *askari* forces across Bakumba, Widekum, Bali towards Bamenda. Opposed to the Nigerians' advance on this line was the Western detachment of the Protective Forces under Captain Rammstedt which undertook the task of blocking the ascent at Widekum-Bali-Bamenda right wing, and that at Dschang central and left wing roads, leading to Bamum in the Bamenda district, while the third reserve detachment in Bekom occupied the points of Esu and Kentu.¹²² Notwithstanding, the Nigerians pushed on amidst some fighting, reaching Bali near Bamenda on 21 October. The Nigerians were received by a Bali King, who according to Crockendem, "seemed friendly." Crockendem warned the Bali leader that while he had done a lot to help the Germans with soldiers and supplies, "it would be better for him now to help the English," because "any hostile acts would be severely dealt with."¹²³

From Bali, the Nigerians moved on Bamenda. Crockendem observed that before the occupation of Bamenda, the Germans had recruited largely there in the past. He also observed that "the occupation of Bamenda seems to have made an enormous impression on the natives, who are grouped in large towns under influential "Kings," somewhat in the manner of the Emirs of the Northern provinces of Nigeria."¹²⁴ After seizing Bamenda, the Nigerians focused on consolidating their position and collecting information, then making the place capable of being held by a minimum of 100 men with room for further employment of many.¹²⁵ The next target was an advance towards the Northern Railway from Bamenda, to converge with the Allied forces coming from the other end. Advancing thus, and from 28 October, the Nigerians pushed Protective Forces at the strength of eight Europeans and 105 Africans away from Bali Bagum

¹²² TNA WO 158/552, Telegram, Colonel Zimmerman to Captain Crailsheim in Garoua, Eseka, 10 February 1915.

¹²³ TNA WO 95/5382, Crockendem to the Commandant 25 October 1915.

¹²⁴ TNA WO 95/5382, Crockendem to the Commandant.

¹²⁵ TNA WO 95/5382, Crockendem to the Commandant.

and subsequently from Bagum. The fighting at Bagum, a mostly straggling and bush grown area, cost the British Nigerians the life of Private Abubakarro Yoni, while a British Captain (G.N Heathcote), Lance Corporal Bolai Garra and Private Adeyomi Ibadan were wounded. The Nigerians captured one wounded German and reportedly killed fifteen-twenty *askari*.¹²⁶

Meanwhile, taking advantage of the departure of the Nigerians from Bali, a party of *askari* who had gone into hiding suddenly raided Bali on 11 November, capturing food. A large straggling bush town, Crockendem had risked not garrisoning it after capture because he “was not certain then of the friendliness of the inhabitants of Bali, who could have led an enemy party into the town without our knowing it” and also because he “had no sufficient troops to hold it to any purpose in view of the closed nature of the country – and the position of the town made a raid extremely risky for the raiders, standing as it does in a big re-entrant, entailing a 10 hours march from the nearest point where the enemy were reported.”¹²⁷

On 21 November, Crockendem’s column entered Bagum from the North while the Bare Column under Lt.-Col Cotton entered from the East. The *askari*, strength of about twenty Germans and 200 Africans, had been a night faster, having evacuated the town. On 22 November, the two columns and that of Crockendem forming advance guard moved on Galim-Bagum. After intense fighting, Protective Forces swam 100 yards over the River Nun. Pursuing them, Crockendem’s column marched round by the main Bamenda-Banyo road, covering 110 miles in five days. On 30 November, Crockendem’s column met with the Bare column again near Jitabo, after having crossed the River Nun on the 28, dispersing a party of Protective Forces strength of one German and thirty Africans, then retreating by Banso road, and a similar number

¹²⁶ TNA WO 95/5382, Crockendem to the Commandant 30 October 1915.

¹²⁷ TNA WO 95/5382, Crockendem to the Commandant.

by the Fumban road.¹²⁸ From here, Crockendem's column moved on Kuti and Cotton's on Fumban. Moving by Bagum, Crockendem's column was opposed by about 200-300 *askari* across a deep valley. The column reached Bafole on 3 December, and then the junction of Kuti and Baigum roads, where they stopped a party of Protective Forces attempting to retire by Baigum.¹²⁹ The column entered Kuti unopposed on 4 December. The *askari* there, being two Companies under Adametz and Von Sommerfeldt, had deserted the place, retiring south by small bush roads. On 6 December, Crockendem went to Fumban, meeting up with the Sultan who gave him useful information. On 8 December, Crockendem moved against a Protective Force, which had a strength of seven Germans and 230 Africans at Banga Fonkem, to cut it off from joining with the ones who evacuated Kuti on the 4th. Another party of Crockendem's forces under Lt Jerrim captured a German officer (Herr Sopp) near Baigam on 8 December. But the main Protective Force of two Germans and forty rank and file was found to be on the right bank of the River Nun.¹³⁰

Fighting in the South and Southeast

While the British Nigerians had invaded the North, also supported by the French *tirailleurs*, the invasion of the entire South and Southeast region was left in the hands of the French and their African soldiers. These regions comprised large territories that had only been ceded to German Cameroon by the French in 1911.¹³¹ France showed a great desire to invade these South and East border territories (*neu Kamerun*), as early as August 1914.¹³² French

¹²⁸ TNA WO 95/5382, Crockendem to the Commandant, 22 December 1915.

¹²⁹ TNA WO 95/5382, Crockendem to the Commandant.

¹³⁰ TNA WO 95/5382, Crockendem to the Commandant, 22 December 1915.

¹³¹ See chapter 3. They included Muni, parts of Congo, Oubangui and Chari. They had been ceded to Germany in return for some concessions in Morocco.

¹³² ANSOM TGO 7/68, La Guerre dans les Colonies Allemandes, Cameroun, Decembre 1914.

Equatorial Africa, sharing an extensive boundary with German Cameroon of almost 2,000 miles, formed the basis from which the French and their African soldiers undertook the invasion of the South, East and parts of the North of Cameroon.¹³³ The prime objective was to recover the ceded territories, especially as they were yet to be marched with effective occupation.¹³⁴ At the time of the invasion, the regular military forces in the four French territories bordering these territories were under the orders of General Joseph Aymerich, the Commander-in-Chief in F.E.A. His headquarters was at Brazzaville in Middle Congo. In Chad, the total strength of the forces (the 4th Regiment) was 220 French and 2,300 Africans, organized in three battalions of cavalry and Infantry. In Ubangui-Shari, there were 90 French and 1,160 *Senegalese tirailleurs*, organized into six Companies. In the Middle Congo, there were 115 French and 1,190 *Senegalese trailleurs*, also organized into six Companies. Finally, there was the 1st Regiment of Gabon comprising 150 French and 1,370 Africans, organized into eight Companies.¹³⁵ This summed up the total strength of regular French forces in F.E.A to 575 French and 6,020 Africans.

Preparing to invade *neu Kamerun*, the French on 1 August 1914 sent a detachment to Mossaka to command the Sanga-Congo Confluence thereby securing the Congo and the frontier of Middle Congo.¹³⁶ Part of the forces in the four French colonies was assigned for defenses of

¹³³ ANSOM TGO 8/75, *La Guerre au Cameroun*.

¹³⁴ Marc Michel, *Le Cameroun Allemand aurait-il pu rester unifié? Français et Britanniques dans la conquête du Cameroun (1914-1916) Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains*, No. 168 (Octobre 1992), 13; ANSOM TGO 8/75, *La Guerre au Cameroun*, 72; A memoir that gives a fine account of French military operations in this region, although outrightly glorifying the French, is that of Joseph Aymerich, *La Conquête du Cameroun 1er août 1914-20 février 1916* (Paris: 1933). The author was Commander in Chief of the French forces in the Cameroons. ANSOM, TGO 4/51, L. Famechon, *Étude Politique, Géographique, Économique et Administrative de la Colonie Allemande du Cameroun au début de 1914*, Brazzaville, le 15 Avril 1916. Governor General Merlin however later claimed that the prime objective of the French when they invaded these places was strategic, in which they aimed to prevent the Germans from occupying the Sangha and cutting off their lines of communication with mainland France. See, ANSOM TGO 8/77, *Confidentielle*, Le Gouverneur General de l'Afrique Equatoriale Française, Merlin, a Monsieur le Ministre des Colonies, Brazzaville, le 20 Mai 1915.

¹³⁵ Moberly, *Military Operations*, 114-5.

¹³⁶ Moberly, *Military Operations*, 115.

these colonies while others were to carry out offensives against German Cameroon. For the offensive forces, the *tirailleurs* from the area in the Middle Congo near Zinga were placed at the disposal of Lt.-Col. Morisson commanding in Ubangi-Shari while General Largeau commanding in Chad was allowed to act as if he were in an independent colony.¹³⁷

Guided by significant interest to maintain free communication with the mainland, F.E.A forces immediately directed an attack on the most vulnerable points Bonga and Zinger at the mouth of Sangha and Oubangui.¹³⁸ From the Middle Congo, a detachment of 130 Infantry surprised the German post at Bonga on 6 August 1914, occupying it without a fight, the Germans here yet to learn of the declaration of war in Europe.¹³⁹ At the capture of Bonga, documents captured from the Germans here revealed that they had instructions to invade F.E.A. In itself, this betrayed earlier proposals made by the Germans to maintain the neutrality of the Congo basin and to not extend the war to Africa. In any case, this detachment reinforced to 375 Rifles by 19 August, and with several steamers, decided to make a rapid advance up the Sanga to Wesso.¹⁴⁰ Meanwhile, in the beginning, and on 23 August 1914, a small police/army group of nineteen French men and twenty Africans in Wesso rushed three miles across the German side to occupy a German post at M'biru. Although they seized the post, their hold on it did not last. Protective Forces soon surprised them, killing all but one French man, who then fled to Wesso that had been hastily evacuated by its small garrison. So, before this detachment of Morisson's Sangha column reached Wesso (a French post in the Southeast), the party of Germans occupying

¹³⁷ Moberly, *Military Operations*, 116.

¹³⁸ ANSOM, TGO 8/77, Le Gouverneur Général à la Afrique Équatorial Française à son Excellence Brigadier Général Dobell, Commandant le Corps Expéditionnaire Anglo-Française à Duala, Brazzaville, le 27 Février 1915.

¹³⁹ ANSOM TGO 7/68, La Guerre dans les colonies Allemandes (rapport du Gouverneur Allemande), Decembre 1914. The German Governor of Cameroon was disappointed that the French were using the ignorance of the Germans in that region about the outbreak of war to quickly attack and seize German border posts.

¹⁴⁰ Moberly, *Military Operations*, 116.

the place heard of their advance and evacuated, so that Wesso was occupied on 31 August, without opposition.¹⁴¹ The F.E.A forces then began to take post after post, company after company, with what the French Governor called a well-defined objective.¹⁴²

While Bonga was occupied on 6 August, that same day, a detachment from Bangui also occupied Zinga, at which point the Germans became alarmed of the declaration of war. After these initial bloodless successes, Aymerich organized two columns under Col. Hutin and Col. Morisson. Hutin's column was to advance North up the Sangha valley while Morisson's was to advance West along the Lobaye, which joins the Ubangui near Zinga. On 12 August, three Companies of Senegalese Infantry under Morisson occupied the fortified German military post of Mbaiki, just evacuated precipitately by headquarters of the German 6th Company which had only learned of the declaration of war after the loss of Zinga.¹⁴³ Morisson pursued the *askari* rapidly, and by August ending when lack of carriers stagnated his advance, had established posts along the banks of the Lobaye River extending as far North as Kolongo. In the meantime 100 Police Rifles were detached towards Yakonendji to take charge of communication Northward from Bangui from attacks by the German 5th Company at Bouar.

It should be noted that at this very initial invasion of the Cameroons, a coordinated action by even the forces of A.E.F was not possible due to its expansive borders with German Cameroon, with the *askari* scattered on the borders.¹⁴⁴ Later these French forces were joined by African troops from Belgian Congo. At this time, French officials estimated, rightly so, that the

¹⁴¹ ANSOM TGO 8/75, La Guerre au Cameroun; *The Times History*, 304; Moberly, *Military Operations*, 11-7.

¹⁴² ANSOM, TGO8/77, Le Gouverneur Général à la Afrique Équatorial Française à son Excellence Brigadier Général Dobell, Commandant le Corps Expéditionnaire Anglo-Française à Duala, Brazzaville, le 27 Février 1915.

¹⁴³ Moberly, *Military Operations*, 117; ANSOM TGO 8/75, La Guerre au Cameroun, 72; *The Times History*, 304.

¹⁴⁴ ANSOM, TGO 8/77, Le Gouverneur Général à Dobell, le 27 Février 1915.

Protective Force was made up of almost exclusively Cameroonian soldiers, with less than 2000 mobilized Germans.¹⁴⁵

By 3 September 1914, the columns at Wesso and on the Lobaye River had each been reinforced to between 500 and 600 Rifles. With instructions from Paris that the troops under his command should be containing the Germans in the interior while facilitating the Allied attack on Douala, Aymerich decided on an offensive by the Wesso and Lobaye columns towards the Upper Sangha. While fulfilling his mission, such offensives would also help cover the frontier of Ubangi-Shari and Middle Congo. Meanwhile, the Wesso column had advanced towards Molundu, and after a failed mission to capture on 11 September a strongly entrenched German position at Ngoko, it retreated to Wesso. The Commander then received instructions from Aymerich to co-operate with the Lobaye Column in an advance towards Nola. During the third week of September, before cooperation of the Sangha and Lobaye columns (both with a total strength of over 1,500 men) took off, the German 6th Company which had originally retired from Mbaiki, and the 5th Company from Bouar attempted in vain to force a crossing of the Lobaye River whose passages from Kolongo to Loko were defended by the Lobaye column.¹⁴⁶

On 4 October, the Commandant of the Sangha column left 310 Rifles at Wesso to hold off the German force at Molundu, and with a strength of 360 Rifles, he advanced up the Sangha River. That day, his advance guard captured a small German post at Djembe and left behind sixty Rifles to hold the post while the main column continued its advance, and after several minor engagements with hostile *askari* detachments, captured Nola on 17 October. Captured at Nola were several German officers and NCOs, a small cannon, four machine guns, and a large

¹⁴⁵ ANSOM, TGO 8/75, La Guerre au Cameroun, 1914.

¹⁴⁶ Moberly, *Military Operations*, 118-119 & 157.

quantity of ammunition.¹⁴⁷ However, a Protective Force coming from Molundu on the N'goko cut Hutin's (Sangha column) line of communication by seizing the post of N'Zimu, midway between Bonga and Nola. At this juncture, the Belgian Africans came to the aid of the French, placing their River steamers and their artillery at the disposal of Aymerich. They also sent 180 rank and file with the force which attacked N'Zimu, their boat, the Luxembourg, conveying part of the troops. The Belgian contingent later increased to 580 Rifles (Africans).¹⁴⁸ With their work, N'Zimu was retaken on 29 October after three days of obstinate fighting. The Belgian African soldiers in these operations "behaved with the utmost gallantry."¹⁴⁹ In fact, once within a distance of 150 yards, Protective Forces steered the Luxembourg under heavy fire, but the Belgian Africans sailed to victory with their small guns.

The Morisson Lobaye column continued its advance, effecting a crossing and occupying Carnot on 18 October 1914. The column had left some hundred Rifles on the Lobaye River, and its right flank towards Yakonendji had been covered by a detachment of about 100 men, then later re-enforced by a company from the interior of Ubangi-Shari.¹⁵⁰ By November ending, 457 of the Lobaye column Rifles were at Gaza and Naho, another 210 about Binge, while in front of them, about sixty miles south-Westward of Gaza, the *askari* 5th and 6th Companies were holding a position covering Batouri. To hold and occupy the *askari* in front of him, Morisson and his men undertook an offensive against Bartouri, advancing on three converging lines from Binge, Gaza, and Naho. With a total strength of 610 Rifles and three guns of three, Morisson commenced his advance on 3 December, and after some opposition occupied Bartouri on the 9th.

¹⁴⁷ Moberly, *Military Operations*, 157; *The Times History*, 304.

¹⁴⁸ ANSOM TGO 8/75, *La Guerre au Colonies*; *The Times History*, 304.

¹⁴⁹ *The Times History*, 304-5; ANSOM TGO 8/75, *La Guerre au Cameroun*.

¹⁵⁰ ANSOM TGO 8/75, *La Guerre au Cameroun*; Moberly, *Military Operations*, 157.

Finding their flanks threatened by the French converging movement, the 5th and 6th *askari* Companies had cleverly evacuated Bartouri without a fight.¹⁵¹ On 10 December, Morisson advanced to Kadei, and after opposing his further advance for the next ten days, the *askari* were forced to retire in the face of movements against their flanks. Then on 22 December, another French column occupied Molundu driving back the 9th German company and Police Company.¹⁵² As at that point, a German officer reported German losses in the South to be twenty-seven Europeans (including two officers) killed, fourteen Europeans (including four officers) taken POWs, while no mention was made of African deaths in the Protective Force.¹⁵³ The lack of reporting of African casualties on the German camp throughout the war was a common and widespread practice and has made it difficult for research to quantitatively appreciate the military sacrifices of Africans to the German war efforts in the Cameroon campaign.¹⁵⁴ In any case, the occupation of Molundu forced the *askari* unit there to retire towards Lomie. The last German steamers fell into the hands of the French, making it possible for them to block the Sangha basins and its confluences.¹⁵⁵

Confronting such large numbers of French African soldiers, the total number of the *askari* force in East Cameroon operating around the corners of N'goko and Kaddei by February 1915 under the general command of Captain Von Eymael came up to 590 men. This force comprised the 6th Company engaging Colonel Morisson since M'Baiki, the 5th Company opposed to Hutin's column at Nola, and to Morisson's column at Gaza, Bartouri, and Bertoua;

¹⁵¹ Moberly, *Military Operations*, 211-2; TNA ADM 137/224, Dobell to Harcourt, 26 January 1915.

¹⁵² Moberly, *Military Operations*, 212; ANSOM TGO 8/75, La Guerre au Cameroun; TNA ADM 137/224, Dobell to Harcourt.

¹⁵³ TNA ADM 137/224, Dobell to Harcourt.

¹⁵⁴ Only Allied archival and official sources have reported on the number of African casualties on both their side and on the German camp, but have admitted that the figures are not as accurate, especially for the latter.

¹⁵⁵ ANSOM TGO 8/75, La Guerre au Cameroun.

the 9th Company coming from Dume-Station, and the 11th company at Akoafim, composed mainly of a police force and new recruits.¹⁵⁶

A further advance by the Lobaye column - the ultimate destination being Yaounde – continued on two lines. On 26 December, the Northern column (360 Rifles) made a frontal attack on an *askari* held position at Bertoua. After several hours of fighting in which the Northern column threw all their forces into the fight and made repeated rushes, they were beaten off by the *askari*. In the evening, the *askari* attacked and took some positions, claiming to have blown the Allies ‘completely to pieces’ although they failed to carry out pursuit on account of darkness.¹⁵⁷ The *askari* undertook a bayonet charge, but the *tirailleurs* kept them at bay the whole day with machine gunfire.¹⁵⁸ Finally, on the 29 December, the three days fighting with heavy casualties resulted in the *askari* giving off Bertoua which was now taken by the Northern column of Morisson’s *tirailleurs*. The other column went on to seize Nyassi on 2 January 1915.¹⁵⁹ The *askari* then marched off from Bertoua on 29 December 1914, advancing on Dang-Dang-Joka to protect the Yaounde road and to harass the Allied communication in the rear – ‘a feat resembling Lutzour wild goose chase.’¹⁶⁰

Given the German re-capture of Djembe, Lt.-Col. Hutin, commanding the Sangha column, started back from Nola on 23 October, to re-establish his line of communication. He had left behind a Company with two guns to hold on to Nola. Also, a Belgian detachment with a steamer (*Luxembourg*), three guns, a machine gun and 136 Rifles led by Lieutenant Bal had

¹⁵⁶ ANSOM TGO 8/76, Confidentiel, Merlin, Le Gouverneur Général de L’Afrique Equatoriale Française a Monsieur le Ministre des Colonies, Brazzaville, le 18 Août 1915.

¹⁵⁷ TNA WO 158/552, War Diary of Sergt. Major Jütersonke, Protective Troops in the Cameroons, 11th Company, 1915.

¹⁵⁸ TNA WO 158/552, War Diary of Sergt. Major Jütersonke.

¹⁵⁹ Moberly, *Military Operations*, 212.

¹⁶⁰ TNA WO 158/552, War Diary of Sergt. Major Jütersonke.

come up the Congo from Leopoldville and on 21 October was near the mouth of the Sangha River. On 26 and 28 October, a French detachment from Wesso attacked the Germans, who had moved from Djembe to a well-fortified post at Dzimou. The attack failed. A second attack on 29 October carried out in combination with Hutin's column succeeded, forcing the Germans to retire on Molundu. The Germans at Molundu then comprised the 9th Company and a Police Company, with a strength of 400 Rifles with machine guns. But the Sangha column alone had a strength of 720 Rifles (two French Companies and a Belgian Company) with four guns and was holding Wesso and advancing against Nola.¹⁶¹ To attack Molundu, this Sangha column arrived there on 24 November, and carefully prepared for an envelop attack. The *askari* at Molundu, comprising 140 men, counter-attacked, drove back a portion of the Franco-Belgian Force, then threatened the security of their River transport. Hard pressed, Hutin withdrew his whole column down the Ja River, but the *askari* pursued him as far as Ngoko, where some fierce fighting occurred, and the *askari* were forced to retreat. Afterward, a reinforcement of 225 Belgian African troops reached Ngoko, enabling Hutin to advance again on 17 December, this time, forcing the *askari* to evacuate Molundu after two days of fighting.¹⁶²

In the South and Southeast areas – from Lolodorf to Ebolowa to Sangmelima and Yaounde – the Germans had a mere police force, given the relatively peaceful nature of these areas where their Chiefs had led the people on the side of the Germans during German colonialism. So on the outbreak of war, the *askari* Oyem Company had only 125 men while the police detachments in Lolodorf, Ebolowa and Yaounde and others numbered only 300 men,

¹⁶¹ Moberly, *Military Operations*, 174-5.

¹⁶² ANSOM TGO 8/75, La Guerre au Cameroun; Moberly, *Military Operations*, 211.

making the total number of the *askari* in the South and Southeast to be 425 men.¹⁶³ By the month of February 1915, the *askari* here numbered 1,085 men (including 660 men recruited in peace time) distributed as follows; 285 around Oyem, 400 men of the Batanga column under Von Hagen, and 400 men of the Kele and Yaounde column under Dickmann. This *askari* force was later re-enforced with 200 recruits from Yaounde. In total, about 1000 new recruits came to re-enforce the *askari* forces under Eymael operating in this region. From all probability, the French estimated the remaining German troops in Cameroon as of August 1915 to number 3, 049.¹⁶⁴ They were seriously mistaken.

Earlier, and from Gabon, a column of three Companies under Commandant Dubois de Saligny had prepared for an offensive on Oyem. Called the Oyem column, it concentrated at Midsik in the Southern Cameroons frontier by 28 August, then crossed the German frontier and on 6 September, attacked a strong *askari* detachment at Mibang. But the *askari* killed De Saligny. His carriers all fled and the column forcibly retired to Midsik, arriving on the 9th. By 15 September, the three other Companies of the Gabon Regiment concentrated at Ndjole (two) and Mvahdi (one).¹⁶⁵ On 20 September, the one Company that crossed the frontier from Mvahdi attacked a portion of the *askari* 11th Company at Minkebe but was repulsed. Simultaneously, a part of the same *askari* company from Ngara Binzam made an equally failed attack on Mvahdi, then held by forty French African Infantry.¹⁶⁶

On 26 October 1914, some *askari* columns attacked an outpost held by forces of the Oyem column at Elom. At the head of one of the *askari* units appeared to be one African

¹⁶³ANSOM TGO 8/76, Confidentiel, Merlin, Le Gouverneur Général de L'Afrique Equatoriale Française a Monsieur le Ministre des Colonies, Brazzaville, le 18 Août 1915.

¹⁶⁴ ANSOM TGO 8/76, Merlin a Monsieur le Ministre.

¹⁶⁵ Moberly, *Military Operations*, 119.

¹⁶⁶ANSOM TGO 8/75, La Guerre au Cameroun, 74, Moberly, *Military Operations*, 156.

Corporal Herringe. As Herringe and his men and other white German-led columns arrived the Oyem column held outpost at Elom, the *tirailleurs* opened fire, but the bullets went over the heads of the *askari* into the trees. The *askari* then fired the machine gun, causing the *tirailleurs* to flee from their entrenched position at the outpost into the thick bush. As the *askari* marched on against them, the *tirailleurs* opened fire from their concealed positions in the thick bush. The *askari* then opened machine gun on the *tirailleurs*, who had dug themselves in the bush. After hours of gunfire, the *tirailleurs* repulsed the *askari*, capturing one German officer and about thirty German African soldiers.¹⁶⁷

In October 1914, Miquelard advanced Eastward through German Muni and arrived Essone on the 28th, with orders to take over command of the Oyem column. At this time, the 10th and 11th Companies *askari* had returned to Oyem, so that in addition to the two Companies, the *askari* force in Oyem area comprised NO. 1 Reserve detachment and about 115 police.¹⁶⁸

Later in November 1914, the Oyem column under Miquelard at Midsik was re-enforced by an Infantry Company, a draft of 280 recruits from Gabon and a section of Nordenfledt guns borrowed from the Belgian Congo but manned by the *tirailleurs*.¹⁶⁹ Throughout December, the Germans about Oyem were holding the line of the Wola River, and Miquelard remained in his position, awaiting further reinforcements to assume the offensive. While awaiting re-enforcements, one of the detachments of the Company at Mvahdi on 24 December occupied Minkelle and reconnoitered towards Akoafim, ascertaining the presence there in a strong position of a Protective Force about 140 strong with three machine guns.¹⁷⁰ In January 1915, the

¹⁶⁷ TNA WO 158/552, War Diary of Sergt. Major Jütersonke.

¹⁶⁸ Moberly, *Military Operations*, 174.

¹⁶⁹ Moberly, *Military Operations*, 188.

¹⁷⁰ ANSOM TGO 8/75, La Guerre au Cameroun; Moberly, *Military Operations*, 210-211.

Miquelard column reinforced to five Companies commenced an advance on Oyem where the *askari* were reported to have 2-3 Companies.¹⁷¹ During the month, it re-established communication with the Sangha column.

On 6 February 1915, the Council of Defence of F.E.A decided on a general policy of the French troops operating in the South and Southeast Cameroons, for the troops to continue to advance without undue risk, pending cooperation with the forces under Dobell. This policy determined that the line of advance should be the Ntem River North of Oyem-Akoafim-Lomie-Dume. Thus on 9-10 February, the Oyem column under Miquelard forced the passage of the Wola River, after incurring casualties. It occupied Oyem on 16 February, evacuated by the *askari*. They stayed here for many weeks. The Mvahdi column under Lieutenant-Colonel Le Maillour pushed forward in the middle of February, regrouping with its advanced detachment at Minkebe. From here, a column of 250 Rifles attempted to advance on Akoafim on 5 March but was forced by rain and supply difficulties to retire Minkele.¹⁷²

At the beginning of February, the *askari* pressed hard on Morisson's Lobaye column occupying the line Bertoua-Nyassi that it called for reinforcements from the Sangha column. But, they proved insufficient, and at the end of the month, the column was forced to retire to the line of the Kadei River.¹⁷³ In March, the *askari* facing the Lobaye column went on the offensive, attacked its right flank and threatened Carnot, forcing Morisson to remain on the defensive. Supply difficulties further prevented this Morisson column of 925 men from resuming the offensive, remaining on the Kadei River line throughout April.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷¹ Moberly, *Military Operations*, 231.

¹⁷² Moberly, *Military Operations*, 249.

¹⁷³ ANSOM TGO 8/76, Rapport au Conseil de Défense; Moberly, *Military Operations*, 249-50

¹⁷⁴ Moberly, *Military Operations*, 250.

In March and April, these Franco-Belgian African forces fighting in the South and Southeast made far less progress than expected. The Oyem column, despite having driven back a hostile advance during March, remained stationary, as well as the Mvahdi column at Minkele on its return from the Akoafim direction. The three groups of the Sangha column made progress in the advance towards Lomie, one reaching Eta by the end of March. But then, supply difficulties halted the activities of all the three groups throughout April.¹⁷⁵ Plus, they were constantly harassed by *askari* patrols. In fact, on 22 March 1915, after the French had taken Eta, some *askari* forces led by Marwit arrived at Kundong, advanced and attacked the French who were some four miles to the south of the place. The *askari* attack shattered with terrible losses, including both leaders of the force - Hauptmann V.D Marwitz severely wounded, and Oberlieut Henner killed, four German African soldiers killed and fifteen wounded.¹⁷⁶ The French, however, failed to press home their advantage, never going further than Nundong in the immediate days ahead.¹⁷⁷

In early May, Aymerich, based on information from the Governor-general of F.E.A that Dobell was starting his advance on Eseka on 1 May, issued instructions to the Sangha column to accelerate its advance, and for the Lobaye column to co-operate by moving on Nyassi and Ngangela. Thus, the Lobaye column of almost 1000 men strong, and with its headquarters at Bartouri, split its strength along the Kadei River into three, from North to South. It was opposed here by four *askari* Companies. Following instructions from Aymerich, Morisson on 22 May dispatched his southern group to occupy Nyassi and Ngangela, so as to gain touch with the

¹⁷⁵ ANSOM TGO 8/76, Rapport au Conseil de Défense; Moberly, *Military operations*, 265.

¹⁷⁶ TNA WO 158/552, The Eastern Column, to the Banjo detachment, Bertoua, 30 March 1915.

¹⁷⁷ TNA WO 158/552, Oberst Lieut. Zimmermann, Commandant, German Imperial Forces Kameruns, Position at end of May 1915, Yaounde, 10 June 1915.

Sangha column. In several actions at the beginning of June, this group suffered considerable losses without success from the strongly entrenched *askari* in the region of the forest and swamps. In fact, between 3-7 June, the column attacked Moopa but failed to break through the cleverly constructed defenses of the *askari*. On 23 June, the Morisson column, reinforced with a mountain gun of 80 mm, made another attack, and after six hours of bombardment followed by a bayonet charge the column captured Moopa. Morisson then re-enforced this southern group to four companies (470 Rifles), with a mountain gun and two machine guns. He then took over command of the group himself, resumed the offensive, and after a series of successful actions, took Ngangela on 30 June, and on 2 July, he gained touch with the Sangha column. On 22 July, Morisson's column again occupied Bertoua, and on 25 July, it entered Dume, which the Protective Forces had set on fire on their retreat. By the end of July, Brisset from Ngaoundere maintained communication with Morisson using a French Company detached from Ngaoundere to a point about forty-five miles to the Southeast whence it kept up the connection with a flank detachment of the Lobaye column at Kunde.¹⁷⁸

Also responding to Aymerich's instructions was the Sangha column. Before its advance, and unable to obtain any carriers locally from a country so devastated by the Germans, the column had 3,000 carriers recruited and brought in from the Middle Congo. In the advance, the column split into three groups. The right group consisted of one French and one Belgian Company. It was roughly half way between Yukaduma and Lomie, with a section and a party of 100 Belgian Rifles detached to try and gain touch with the Lobaye column about Ngangela. The center group, at Ngato, consisted of 400 Rifles (French and Belgians). The left group, *en route*

¹⁷⁸ Moberly, *Military Operations*, 292-294 & 307; *The Times History*, 305.

from Eta to Ngato, was composed of 270 Rifles (French and Belgians).¹⁷⁹ Commencing its advance from Ngato, the center group after three days of fierce fighting with a well-entrenched *askari* force, seized the German Monso post in the Lomie district on 1 June 1915. Some German officers and NCOs of the *askari* were taken POWs, and about thirty (all Africans) killed.¹⁸⁰ But the center group of the Sangha column here lost sixteen French killed and many wounded. The easy fall of this German Monso post was due to a mutiny of a detachment of Protective soldiers of the Southern Division, thereby leaving the German commander helpless.¹⁸¹ The mutinied *askari*, taken prisoners by the French, were happily re-enlisted on the French side so that the Germans now became their new enemies. The soldiers explained that they had never wanted to fight for the Germans, but had been forced into the *askari* by their Chief.¹⁸² These soldiers now re-enforced the French force and having first fought for the Germans knowing, therefore, their military plans and movements, constituted a great blow to German military efforts in the region.

At the taking of the Monso post, the *askari* razed Lomie to the ground and retreated. Then, fearing that the *tirailleurs* might surround the Eastern Division (Dume and neighborhood) from the side of Lomie through the Nordnjam and Mensime territory and also attack from the south and West, the Southern Division of Protective Forces gave up their strong position at Dume, so that the Sangha column took Lomie on 24 June 1915. The Division then retreated via Dume-Abengbang-Akenelinga to the North of Njong. But as the *tirailleurs* pushed on again from the south via Abongbang, the Southern Division of the Protective Forces again fell back

¹⁷⁹ Moberly, *Military Operations*, 293.

¹⁸⁰ TNA WO 158/552, Ebermaier, Governor Kameruns, continuation of Dispatch No. Kr 11062 of 31 May 1915, Jaunde, 14 June 1915; ANSOM TGO 8/76, rapport, Columns Hutin et Morisson.

¹⁸¹ TNA WO 158/552, Translation of Report (of a German officer) on recent events in the Cameroons, Bata, 5 September 1915.

¹⁸² ANSOM TGO 8/76, Merlin a Monsieur le Ministre.

to the south of Njong, after much resistance.¹⁸³ Meanwhile, the right group had reached Assobam on 22 June, almost around the same time with a detachment from the center group.¹⁸⁴

Meanwhile in the South, on 6 July, the command of the Oyem column - its strength about 850 Rifles - was taken over by Lt.-Col. Meillour and its designation changed to South Cameroons Force. By 17 July 1915, the Meillour column had successively taken Oyem and Bitam.¹⁸⁵ A French force advanced from the port of Campo, parallel to the Northern Spanish frontier, to cut off the Germans and their *askari* should they attempt to escape into neutral Spanish territory. It failed in its objective, in part because the Campo force and that of Col. Meillour were unable to join hands in time, and in part because of the absence of a big enough force to guard a frontier extending 130 miles long.¹⁸⁶ Throughout September, this French South Cameroons Force - five Companies strong - remained in the vicinity of Bitam and at Mimwul.¹⁸⁷ It was expected to advance on Ebolowa and get in communication with the French column from Campo which was to attempt to gain Njabesan so as to cover Le Meillour's left flank. It established communication with Le Meillour in the middle of September. At the beginning of October, the *askari* attacked the Allied post at Moloko but withdrew. Le Meillour with his South Cameroons Force, after much challenges, succeeded on 20 December in forcing the passage of the Ntem River. From here, he pushed on and captured Ambam on 31 December. From Ambam, part of the *askari* retired on Ebolowa and another part Westwards towards Ngoa.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸³ TNA WO 158/552, Translation of Report (of a German officer).

¹⁸⁴ ANSOM TGO 8/76, Rapport au Conseil de Défense; Moberly, *Military Operations*, 293.

¹⁸⁵ ANSOM TGO 8/76, Merlin, La Guerre en Afrique, La Conquête du Cameroun; *The Times History*, 306.

¹⁸⁶ *The Times History*, 306.

¹⁸⁷ ANSOM TGO 8/76, Merlin a Monsieur le Ministre; Moberly, *Military Operations*, 338.

¹⁸⁸ Moberly, *Military Operations*, 338 & 382.

The Lobaye column, its strength then 930 Rifles, beat back a vigorous *askari* attack between 14 and 16 July. The column under Morisson then resumed its advance, taking Bertoua on 22 July, and occupying Dume without opposition on 25 July. It moved forward to the Southwest in expectation of co-operation with the Sangha column and took Abong-Mbang on 29 July.¹⁸⁹ Before August 1915, the Franco-Belgian-African force in East Cameroon totaled 2,700 men, including 587 Belgian Africans. It was opposed here by 900 *askari*, grouped under Von Eymael and Von Heigelin.¹⁹⁰

At the end of August 1915, the *askari* launched a counter-offensive forcing the Morisson Lobaye column to retire some distance. But by 18 September, Morisson halted the *askari*, reorganized his troops. His main force was then on the line Bertoua-Dume, with advanced posts to the Westward and a detachment at Kunde to maintain touch with Brisset at Ngaoundere. Meanwhile, orders received at Dume on 1 September constituted the East Cameroon force under the command of Morisson. It included the Lobaye and Sangha Columns under the new titles of Right and Left Columns respectively. On 3 September, a French Company from Minkebe occupied Akoafim, evacuated by the *askari* after setting it on fire.¹⁹¹

The Sangha (or Left) column also met with a German offensive that lasted until 24 September. After some serious fighting, the Franco-Belgian troops were forced out of Abong-Mbang for a short distance and were also compelled to give off the ground to the Northwest and the Southwest of Lomie. Aymerich arrived Dume on 18 October 1915 and assumed personal command of the East Cameroon Force. He then commenced his forward movement on 28 October, his force disposed as follows: 100 Rifles under Captain Staup at Dengdeng, in touch

¹⁸⁹ ANSOM TGO 8/76, Merlin a Monsieur le Ministre; Moberly, *Military Operations*, 313.

¹⁹⁰ ANSOM TGO 8/76, Merlin a Monsieur le Ministre.

¹⁹¹ Moberly, *Military Operations*, 337-338.

with Brisset; his right column of 1,000 Rifles (eight Companies) under Morisson in the Bertoua vicinity, and his Left Column of 350 Rifles (one French and one Belgian Company) under Commandant Thomas at Dume.¹⁹²

By 4 November, after some stiff fighting, Aymerich's Right and Left Columns forced a passage of the Long River from Tina southward and made good its Western bank. Then in the second week of November, Aymerich forced the crossing of the Ayong River after hard fighting and pushed towards Nanga Eboko. Failing, however, to continue his advance by road westward to the Nachtigal Falls due to a series of attacks from the askari, Aymerich reconsidered his plans. Calling off his Westward movement, for the time being, he turned southwards to deal with the German threat and constant menace. He then occupied Lembe after 30 November, driving out the *askari* there whereby a portion of their troops retired towards Yaounde and the remainder towards Akonolinga. On 17 December, Aymerich heard that Cunliffe and his forces had occupied Yoko and Ngambe. He then decided to move his Right Column Westward to get in closer touch with the Northern Column, and to have his Left Column advance southward from Lembe to clear up the situation on the Akonolinga road. Both his Right and Left Columns joined up by 28 December, and the *askari* retired so rapidly that the next day all contact with the *askari* was lost. Thus by 1 January 1916 when Yaounde fell (chapter 5), Aymerich's main force was in the vicinity of Lembe East of Yaounde, and in the south, Le Meillour's force was at Ambam, in the neighborhood of the Muni border. The French column from campo was close to Akak.¹⁹³

Some of these forces would enter Yaounde while others would pursue the Germans on their

¹⁹² Moberly, *Military Operations*, 337-338.

¹⁹³ Moberly, *Military Operations*, 338, 365-366, 384 & 395.

retreat across Spanish Guinea. This last fighting will be addressed in the next chapter, which sees the complete defeat and eviction of the Germans from the Cameroons.

Conclusion

The historical realities of the Cameroon campaign demonstrate how a global war was fought locally. This local execution of a global campaign took the form of flank attacks, guerrilla tactics, ambushes and surprises, entrenchment in hills and mountains, for which African soldiers themselves had the best experiences and skills. Thus, the conduct of the Cameroon theater of the 1914 war was the undertaking of the Africans. Their collective and individual experiences form part of the larger historical narratives on the war. But this is only part of the fighting in Cameroon. The other part and perhaps the most important is the subject of the next chapter.

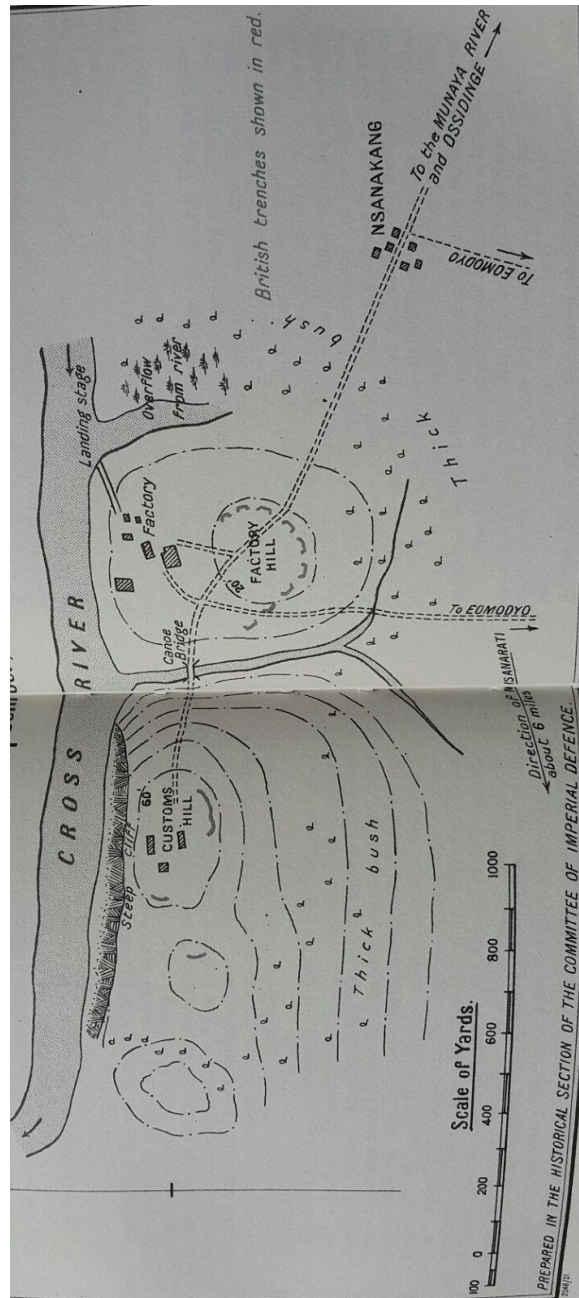


Figure 4.1 Illustration of Nsanakang Battle, 6 Sept 1914

Map courtesy of: The National Archives, Kew-Richmond, United Kingdom (TNA) WO 300.

The map illustrates the Nsanakang battleground where one of the fiercest fights occurred on 6 September 1914 between British-Nigerian soldiers and the *askari* (Chapter 4). Nigerian soldiers who had occupied this cross border town in August 1914 were surprised by the *askari* in flank attacks in early September. As shown on the map, Customs Hill and Factory Hill were Nigerian-held positions. The *askari* in the surprise attacks killed the white British Commander in charge of the Nigerians, leaving them to fight for their lives. Brave Nigerian soldiers here undertook a bayonet charge through the forest to get to Ikom, a Nigerian border town about twenty miles across. Casualties for the Nigerians (killed, wounded or taken POW) reached almost 200, including less than five British officers. The battle here was one of the greatest early blows to British war efforts.

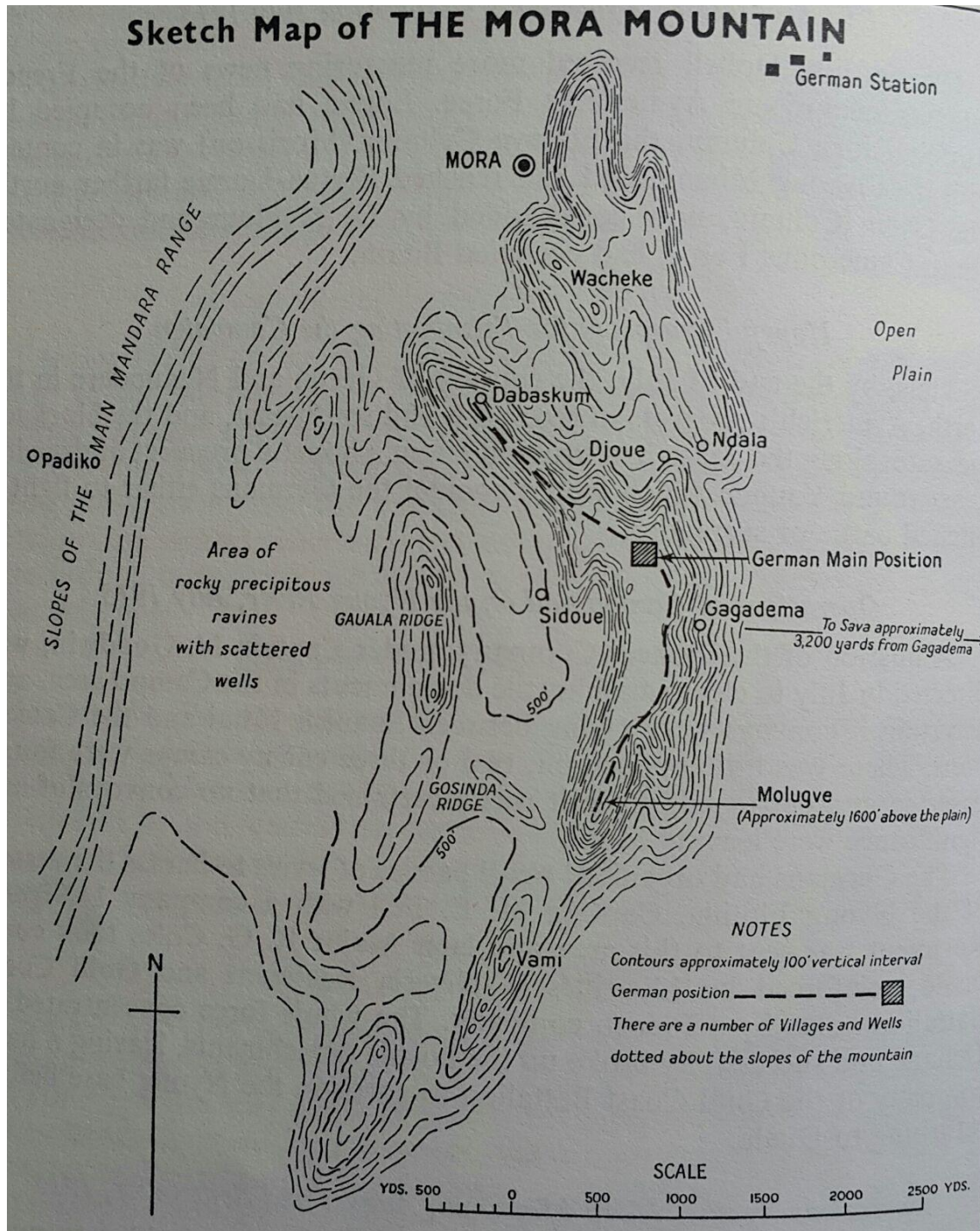


Figure 4.2 Sketch map of the Mora Mountain

Map courtesy of: Colonel A. Haywood and Bigadier F.A.S Clarkke, *The History of the Royal West African Frontier Force* (Aldershot: Gale & Polden Ltd., 1964).

The map illustrates the topography and geography of the Mora Mountain and its surroundings. An *askari* unit entrenched itself on the highest point of the Mountain (Dabaskum). In the course of the fighting, several attempts by Allied African forces to defeat the *askari* here failed. It was the one place that was never taken from the *askari*, and after all other *askari* troops had surrendered in Cameroon, the slightly over 100 of them occupying the Mountain were offered generous terms on which they surrendered on 18 February 1916.



Figure 4.3 The Banyo Mountain; geography and topography

Photo courtesy of: Brig.-General F.J Moberly, *Military Operations, Togoland and the Cameroons, 1914-1916* (*History of the Great War based on official documents*) (London: The Imperial War Museum, 1931).

The Mountain above hosted one of the most arduous battles in Cameroon in early November 1914. It is a classical representation of the dense forested, hilly, Mountainous, and grassy terrain on which the battles took place, although situated in the Northern part of the country which had relatively more open fields than the rest of the country. The highest point of the Mountain was about 1,200 feet from the surrounding country. Broken up in small hills, the Mountain had very stiff slopes, covered with large boulders linked together by some Sangars right up to the top. The *askari* had strengthened every prominent commanding point by a small fort; they constructed cement reservoirs for water on the summit. They had also constructed, on the summit, brick houses with glazed windows erected to accommodate the Europeans and stocked the place with enough food supplies. This Mountain was a rallying point for the other *askari* garrisons in the North. The fight here was symptomatic of the imbalance of forces, where just 167 *askari* although on the vantage point of an entrenched position on the Mountain top, faced over 500 Allied West African Infantry and Mounted Infantry. The Allied West African soldiers using flank attacks and manoeuvres to climb the Mountain faced dynamite bombs and pouring firing from the *askari* entrenched at the top. When the *askari* were finally defeated, it lay the southward movement open for the Allies. Casualties here included, for the Allies, three British Officers and NCOs, and forty African rank and file killed, wounded and/or taken POWs; and for the Germans, thirteen white Germans and 103 Cameroonian *askari* killed, wounded and/or taken POWs. Some of the Allied West African soldiers who distinguished themselves at the battle on this Mountain, in leading others and reaching the Mountain top first included: Privates Awutu Kano, Momadu Katagum, Imoru Ibi; Corporals Moma Shira, Jimba, and Sergeants Alao Ibadan, Gimba, Moma Jima, Mamu Zogo, to name but these.



Figure 4.4 Mountain gun, operated by the Nigerian Artillery

Courtesy of: Brid.-General Howard E. Gorges, *The Great War in West Africa* (London: Hutchinson, 1931).

The Mountain gun showed above comprised artillery pieces designed for use in Mountain warfare and areas where usual wheeled transport was not possible in colonial West Africa. It resembled an Infantry support gun, but was bigger and generally broken down into smaller loads and carried from one place to another by mainly the African gun carriers. Most African gun carriers were able to mount and operate the guns, as demonstrated above by the three soldiers (probably Nigerians), in the company of only one white (British) officer. The Allies and their African soldiers used these guns in most of the battles in Mountain places in Cameroon where the *askari* had entrenched themselves at the tops. The sound was relatively high and intimidating, and its devastating morale effect felt wide. Some newly conscripted African soldiers who had received no training and had not been in war front abandoned their weapons and fled the top of the Mountain merely on the sound of the gun coming from the advancing enemy. The Allies possessed these guns more than the Germans and used them to fight the Mountain wars where the Germans and their *askari* had positioned themselves on the Mountain tops. The Germans complained that these guns had a serious impact on the defeat of the *askari* in most of the Mountainous battles.



Figure 4.5 Nigerian Artillery in action

Courtesy of: Brig.-General F.J Moberly, *Military Operations, Togoland and the Cameroons, 1914-1916 (History of the Great War based on official documents)* (London: The Imperial War Museum, 1931).

The photograph above shows the Nigerian Artillery in action, somewhere in one of the bushes in Cameroon around 1914/15. From their positioning, the soldier on the left, in front, appears to be passing some instructions. He is probably one of the senior soldiers leading some of the operations. The white (British) officer on the right is positioning himself at the back, and appears to be taking some 'instructions' as well from the Nigerian soldier.

Chapter 5

Soldiers of their Own: Fighting from Douala to Yaounde, and the Northern Railway

Introduction

It was not until towards the end of September 1914 that a combined and well-coordinated Allied (African) military force invaded the coastal region of the Cameroons, from where coordinated military operations followed. Whereas fighting from the border regions had been largely uncoordinated and independently undertaken by the British and the French with their African soldiers, and with often conflicting aims and objectives, military operations from the Cameroon coastal towns to the central region remained coordinated, and with a single objective – the taking of the German capital of Yaounde. With the same approach and objective as in chapter 4, this chapter details fighting in two main directions; from Douala towards the East and Center via the towns of Kribi and Edea, with the aim of taking the German capital of Yaounde, and fighting from Douala towards the Northwest along the Northern Railway line with the aim of defeating the *askari* in the Cameroon interior.

Joint Anglo-French Invasion of the Cameroons

While separate British and French African forces were already in the Cameroons fighting the *askari*, a sub-Committee of War held in London in August 1914 to consider a larger and more coordinated military operation. The committee advised the War Office on the military, strategic and logistics considerations of the attack. The French were contacted if they would like to co-operate. The proposed combined Anglo-French force was to be called the West African Expeditionary Force (WAEF), its proposed commander being a British Major General Charles

Dobell, then Commander in Chief of the British West African Frontier Force (WAFF). The French happily assented on 10 August 1914. Then on the 23rd, the French also notified the British of their acceptance of the proposal that Dobell should command the Expeditionary Force in Cameroon but stressed that it should not prejudice in any way the future division of colony.¹ So as early as this date, the French were already debating the future spoils of war in a potentially seized Cameroon. The British contingent of the expeditionary force, mostly Nigerians, then followed by soldiers from the Gold Coast, Sierra Leone and the Gambia, was led by Colonel Gorges while the French Contingent, mostly the Senegalese and other French West Africans, was led by Colonel Mayer.

The Invasion of Douala

Sailing through the Atlantic, the Expeditionary Force² disembarked on the Douala coast in August 1914. Its primary objective was to take Douala, Victoria, Buea (the seat of German government) and the telegraphic lines and the transmission stations. To facilitate and complement the operation, a Nigerian Marine Force commanded by British Naval Captain Fuller landed off the Cameroon coast on 31 August 1914.³ Against all the odds, and overcoming sea blockades and barriers, the Nigerian marines by 24 September had carried out reconnaissance of the Cameroon and Dibamba Rivers and cleared the way for a successful ground military operation in the town. Safely anchored thus on the Douala waters, the commander of the Expeditionary Force sent an ultimatum to the German Governor that unless he unconditionally

¹ The National Archives, Kew-Richmond, United Kingdom (hereafter TNA) WO 106/644, Precis of correspondence relating to French Claims in Kamerun, Command of Allied Forces in Kamerun, 1914.

² The specific strength of the force is stated to be, for the British contingent, 154 British officers, 81 British NCOs, 2,460 African rank and file, 3,563 carriers; and for the French contingent, 54 European officers, 334 other Europeans, 1,859 African rank and file (Senegalese *tirailleurs*), 1000 carriers, 200 animals (mules). See, TNA WO 95/5382, General Dobell's force.

³ TNA ADM 137/162, Captain Fuller to Secretary of the Admiralty, Douala, 27 September 1914.

surrendered Douala, the town would be bombarded. The ultimatum was in line with the suggestion of the Sub-Committee of War in London on 16 August 1914 that before an attack on Cameroon, a *parlementaire* should be sent to the Germans to surround Douala because, first, given the recent local unrest there, “any appearance of the British [would] possibly bring about a native rising, in which there must be a grave danger of Germans being massacred,” and second, “owing to the large proportion of Europeans in Duala an attack against that place will, in a great measure be a conflict between black and white, and from an ethical point of view should, if possible be avoided.”⁴

Available historical evidence suggests that Cameroonians were going to use the war – and they did – as an occasion to rekindle a general resistance against German colonialism. A representative of the John Holt Trading company in Cameroon had reported to London on 3 August 1914 that “a certain amount of excitement exist[ed] amongst the natives [of Cameroon] who...got into their heads that the English [were] coming to take over their Colony” and the German authorities were alarmed that Cameroonians would rise to assist the Allies. He added that “the natives throughout the colony are in an excited state, and they will revenge themselves on the Europeans, who have, in the past, caused them so much misery – if they see the least chance of doing so.” He predicted that in the event of an Allied invasion, “the whole of the South Kamerun will be in revolt.”⁵

⁴ TNA WO 158/518, Secret, The Secretary of State for the Colonies, to the Secretary of Offensive Sub-Committee, Committee of Imperial Defence, London, 16 August 1914. See also, and under the same title, TNA WO 158/908. Information received from a British resident in the Cameroons revealed that on the eve of the war, Douala Chiefs had held a meeting and resolved to ask England to take over the government of the country, meaning they were likely to rise and kill all Germans if the opportunity presented itself.

⁵ TNA CO 537/124, Letter, Jonathan C. Holt, Director of John Holt and Co. Ltd, Liverpool, 9 September 1914.

The Allied ultimatum came to naught, and on 26 September 1914, the Expeditionary Force bombarded Douala, followed by a land demonstration being made by way of a neighboring creek.⁶ Just before the bombardment, the commander of the protective force, Col. Zimmermann, together with the German Governor had abandoned the town, leaving behind a German Lieutenant, Nothnagal, as commandant there. The new German commandant reported in his diary thus: “at six o’clock the first shot. The Commandant goes to Edea. Slow bombardment, various buildings destroyed, but no loss of life. At noon news that large bodies troops are landing..... I am now Commandant of Douala.”⁷

Nothnagal and *his askari* men then surrendered Douala on 27, after having destroyed all war materials and marched off.⁸ Allied expedition immediately began its disembarkation, benefitting from all abandoned shipping in the estuary by the fleeing protective force, including some of the neWest and best boats engaged in the West African trade, many other boats, the Governor’s yacht, and liners with a total tonnage of 30, 915.⁹ The surrendering of Douala was followed with that of the town of Bonaberi, whose importance to the invading army cannot be under estimated.¹⁰

As a war strategy, the *askari* who fled Douala quickly moved into the interior to mount a guerilla-type warfare. The Germans genuinely believed that on account of their knowledge of the interior and of guerrilla-type warfare, they could defeat the Allies if they ventured into the

⁶ ANSOM, TGO 7/68, La Querre dans les Colonies Allemandes, 15 Janvier 1915.

⁷ TNA WO 158/552, (Translation of) Private Diary of Lieut. Nothnagal, 30th July/27 Sept. 1914.

⁸ TNA WO 158/552, Private Diary of Lieut. Nothnagal.

⁹ *The Times History*, 287.

¹⁰ Bonaberi was the sea terminus of a Railway running North – in the direction of Nigeria and it provided access to the cultivated regions on the Eastern slopes of Mount Cameroon. Besides being the Chief Sea port of colonial Cameroon and even now, Douala was the starting point of another Railway line running Eastward for about 100 miles, in the direction of the Congo. Douala and Bonaberi thus provided the Expeditionary Force safe and convenient bases for further operations.

interior. One German soldier noted in his diary entry for 15 October 1914 that “the English and French are now in possession of the whole Cameroon coast but were they to press on into the interior they would be beaten.” He mocked that “the English believe the occupation of the hinterland to be as easy as the bombarding of the coast with their battleships.”¹¹

Interestingly, the German defensive war plan was reminiscent of that adopted earlier by many of the Cameroon populations during colonial wars, in which they quickly abandoned their village centers and traditional abodes to move into the bush and forests and await their invaders in a guerrilla warfare. Overnight, the tables of war were being overturned in the Cameroons. The Germans, who had been on the offensive against rebellious peoples, were for the first time taking the defensive in the face of an invading army. The fact of the matter is that fighting in Cameroon, while being part of a global war, narrowed down to adaptive, localized military experiences, for which the African soldier must be fully credited. This tactical and strategical manner of the conduct of that campaign is finely encapsulated by Strachan:

Limited in men and munitions, restricted in objective to protracted defence, the Germans were constrained to adopt manners of fighting very different from those used either by the *Schütztruppen* in the past or by the armies of Europe on the Western front. In essence, the askari now had to wage war as his tribal opponent had done. ...his main endeavours were to ... give up ground rather than to hold it. Close-order tactics ...were replaced by open order....The terrain, the force-to-space ratio, and the extended lines of communication of the British and French forces all suited the tactics of guerrilla warfare. The opportunities for outflanking the enemy or for threatening his rear were abundant, and envelopment was the normal mode of attack. ...But though the style of small wars became the means of fighting, position war remained at its core. The *Schütztruppen* were still committed to the protection of specific areas and their points of entry; River crossings, jungle clearings, and – in the North – the forts guarding the highland plateau were the scenes chosen by the Germans for their encounters with the enemy.¹²

Throughout the campaign, the Allies and their African soldiers would have to resort to similar tactics used by the *askari*, except that their strategy remained offensive while that of the *askari* was defensive.

¹¹ TNA WO 158/552, War Diary of Sergt. Major Jütersonke, Protective Troops in the Cameroons, 11th Company, 1915.

¹² Strachan, “The Cameroons,” 24.

In reality, the loss of Douala marked the first major cracks on German colonialism. To the extent that the German Governor felt it expedient to make some counter stroke and propaganda. He addressed a circular letter to concerned officials that since the loss of Douala could not be concealed and in order to guard against “damaging perversions and exaggerations” should the circulation of the news be left to “native gossip”, he authorized colonial district authorities in Cameroon to announce the fact in a form “suited to the circumstances of each district.”¹³ He claimed to his Cameroon colonial subjects that the Germans were winning the war in Europe; that they had only abandoned Douala to the overwhelming Allied troops because “there were so many white women and children there to whom, according to the law of the whites, nothing can happen if no fighting takes place in a town.”¹⁴ He insisted that they- the Germans - had only allowed the Allies a short distance into the interior, but that as soon as they were within it, the Germans and their brave and well trained and well behaved African soldiers were able to drive the Allies and kill many of them. He also claimed that most of the people of Cameroon, including those of Bulu, Yaounde, and Sultan Njoya of Bamum and his people had offered their services in the *askari*, although for the time being they could not be recruited.¹⁵

Propaganda or no propaganda, Douala had fallen, and a nervous German Governor was on the run. The capture of Douala naturally meant that the Expeditionary Force had attained its primary objective, but military expediency forced the Allies to set about the conquest of the entire Cameroon colony. In further operations beyond Douala, the British contingent of the expeditionary forces under the general command of Colonel Gorges and the French African contingent under Colonel Mayer would move from there into separate places in the Cameroons

¹³ ANSOM TGO 7/68, Letre du government Allemande, 20 Decembre 1914.

¹⁴ ANSOM TGO 7/68, Letre du government Allemande.

¹⁵ ANSOM TGO 7/68, Letre du government Allemande.

to engage the *askari*. These contingents were further split into Columns, Companies, Sections, and Patrols, and other smaller units giving room for Africans themselves to lead their own men into military operations against the *askari*, who were also split into smaller parties of African soldiers and led by Africans.

Starting from Douala, the complete conquest of the Cameroons followed two main directions, one Easterly towards Yaounde, and the other Northerly along the Northern Railway. These directions were dictated by the movement of the *askari*. After evacuating Douala, the main *askari* forces had retired to Jabassi and Edea, with smaller detachments scattered about in the neighborhoods of the creeks in the Cameroons River while there was a force of some importance on the Northern Railway in Nkongsamba.¹⁶

Easterly Military Operations

Before fleeing from Douala, the Germans wrecked the Midbahn Railway, breaking in two places the bridge, 900 yards long, by which the Dibamba Creek was spanned at Yapoma. The Germans then held on to the left bank of the creek. The first move of the invaders from Douala thus comprised securing the other bank of the Creek and ensuring reconstruction of the bridge. On 6 October 1914, severe fighting occurred between the *askari* and the *Senegalaise tirailleurs* around this creek. On the other side of the Dibamba creek, the Protective Force was led by one Captain Hauptmann Haedicke.¹⁷ A section of the British contingent (mostly Nigerians) of the Expeditionary Forces under Col. Gorges was on 5 October 1914 detailed to combat the *askari* on this side of Yabassi.¹⁸ On 8 October 1914, some of the Nigerians went up the Wouri River and

¹⁶ TNA ADM 137/162, Brigadier-General Charles Dobell to the Rt. Honourable Lewis Harcourt, Secretary of State for the Colonies, Douala, 3 October 1914.

¹⁷ TNA WO 158/552, Translation of Private Letter from Oberlt. Engelbrechten to Hauptmann Gaisser, Camp Mbanga-Mujuka, 24 October 1914.

¹⁸ TNA ADM 137/162, Dobell to Harcourt.

launched an amphibious attack¹⁹ on Yabassi but the heavy machine gunfire of the 1st Depot Coy of the *askari* under Haedicke, supported by the local German European and police detachment warded them off.²⁰ In the words of a German officer, the Protective Forces here “defeated the ... Englishwith guns, River gunboats and native troops after a fight lasting 7 hours.”²¹ Lack of accurate information on the nature of the country and the strength of the Protective Forces, plus difficulties of the terrain and failure of its flank attack partly explained the failure of the Nigerians to seize Yabassi during this first attack on 8 October.²² But the Nigerians reorganized, renewed their attack on 14 October. In a well-coordinated action, with the maxim gun operated by Private Osuman Gombe (N0 1 Battalion, N.R WAFF), brought into good effect, the Nigerians this time around took the town and occupied both banks of the River.²³

The Protective Forces then withdrew towards Nyamtam on the East and Njanga on the West.²⁴ The success of the second Allied attack on Yabassi was attributed to the skillfully executed turning movement of N0 1 battalion, Nigerian Regiment.²⁵ But Allied victory also depended largely on the inability of Protective Forces to offer any major resistance, having perhaps been shaken by the failed attack on October 8. As Col. Gorges himself noted, “had the [Protective Forces] offered any serious resistance on the 14th, especially on the left bank, our casualties would undoubtedly have been heavy & it is highly improbable that Jabassi would have fallen in one day.”²⁶ In this fight, as would be the case with most of the encounters in the

¹⁹ So described because Allied armed River craft co-operated in the attack.

²⁰ TNA WO 158/552, Translation, (German) Imperial Troops, Situation middle of October (1914), Edea, 18 October 1914.

²¹ TNA WO 158/552, German Imperial Troops.

²² TNA WO 95/5382, Col. Gorges, Report on the Operations of the Jabassi Expedition, Douala, 20 October 1914.

²³ TNA ADM 137/162, Dobell to Harcourt, Douala, 28 October 1914; BNA WO 158/516, Dobell to Lugard, Douala, 22 February 1915.

²⁴ TNA WO 95/5382, Col. Gorges, Report.

²⁵ TNA ADM 137/162, Dobell to Harcourt, Douala, 28 October 1914.

²⁶ TNA WO 95/5382, Col. Gorges, Report.

territory, the *askari* missed an opportunity to push on their gains, a factor to be considered in their eventual capitulation. It can be conjectured that in several instances, the Protective Forces may have overestimated the strength and capabilities of the invading army. But most importantly, the local factor constituting the hostile nature of the inhabitants was always present and influential in most decisions by the Protective Forces to retreat in places invaded by the Allies. A German officer noted that the 'natives' of Yabassi were very supportive of the English, actively preparing wide roads for them.²⁷

The Advance on Edea

The fall of Yabassi cleared the way for an advance on Edea, an important town about thirty miles from Douala, on the road to Yaounde. This advance was to proceed in three directions; the main column of the expeditionary forces under Col. Mayer was to move via Njong River as far as Dehane and then by road. This column of 1000 men (only 150 of them European) had four mountain guns. An armed craft of one and a half British African Companies with three machine guns would move by the Sangha River and Kwakwa Creek, so as to divert the *askari's* attention from the main force. Finally, the third force comprising 400 Rifles and led by a senior French officer would leave Yapoma and move East by the Railway line. This force was equipped with two mountain guns and one Naval 12 pounder.²⁸

The main column, composed mostly by the *Senegalaise tirailleurs*, reached Dehane on 23 October. From there, they continued by road to Edea, passing through the very thick forest that made it impossible to throw out flank parties. On the way, the advance was attacked by Protective Forces, and after the encounter, the column bivouacked at nightfall only after seven

²⁷ TNA WO 158/552, Engelbrechten to Gaisser.

²⁸ TNA ADM 137/162, Dobell to Harcourt.

and a half miles coverage. On 23 and 24 October, more fighting occurred on the way, and the Senegalese killed twenty-three Europeans and twenty Africans from the German side.²⁹ But the casualties sustained by the Senegalese were higher. Fighting in thick bush territory where only purely frontal attacks were the norm and rarely any endeavors to turn the enemy's flank had exposed the military limits of the Senegalese troops who were more accustomed to fighting in the open country.³⁰ However, the Senegalese finally reached and occupied Edea in the morning of 26 October, the *askari* having evacuated the town.

On 26 November 1914, a combined Allied military and amphibious expeditions started to attack the *askari* at Dehane, Edea, and Kribi. A French *tirailleurs* column from Edea tried to cross the Nyong River to Dehane to march on the *askari*. The column met with a reverse at Swiss Farm, on the Edea-Dehane road. Here, the *askari* killed two white French officers, one NCO, twenty-nine Africans and wounded one French officer, two French soldiers, and thirteen Africans.³¹ The *tirailleurs* were almost annihilated, but a black sergeant of a section carried out a brilliant flank attack that drove the *askari* off. The success of the *askari* in this encounter was marked by the trepidation of the French forces, which decided to back off from the original plan of action, retreating under a new officer in command to Edea. This incident disrupted the planned combined operation on Edea, so that boats were recalled from the Njong River and Commandant Mathieu's detachment which had landed at Longji in preparation for Edea attack instead proceeded and occupied Kribi on instructions.³²

²⁹ TNA ADM 137/162, Dobell to Harcourt.

³⁰ TNA ADM 137/162, Dobell to Harcourt, 28 October 1914.

³¹ TNA ADM 137/162, Fuller to Secretary of the Admiralty.

³² TNA ADM 137/162, Dobell to the Secretary of State, Douala, 14 December 1914.

The first, and perhaps the only major offensive of the *askari* under Zimmermann in the Edea area came in January 1915. But the *askari* had suffered the misfortune that their planned offensive on the *tirailleurs* had leaked, so that the French post at the Kopongo Station on the Midland Railway, between Douala and Edea, had been strengthened on 4 January by ninety men sent from Edea. Thus when 150 *askari* assailed it on 5 January, they lacked the element of surprise and were beaten off.³³

Almost simultaneously with the Kopongo outpost attack, an *askari* column of 800 men attacked Col. Mayer's main force at Edea but was repulsed with great losses. In this attack, the *askari* lost twenty-two white Germans (six of them officers) dead, seventy-one Cameroonian soldiers dead and nine German African soldiers taken Prisoners of war.³⁴ Also, the *askari* left behind a machine gun, a quantity of ammunition, and many Rifles. Meanwhile, the French lost four Europeans and three Africans killed, then eleven Africans wounded.³⁵ Certain factors favored the Edea attackers; the buildings there were scattered, lying close to the dense forest, and the ground broken up. But the *tirailleurs* there had so skillfully constructed their defenses that, coupled with their accuracy of their marksmanship, were able to ward off the *askari* who retired with considerable losses. Also, French African forces at Edea, which already consisted of 1,300 troops and five machine guns at the time, had the default numerical advantage.³⁶

Despite their success, the *tirailleurs* failed to take the offensive, owing to lack of men and heavy guns. Thus operations in Edea, as well as those in the North, and the Southeast

³³ TNA WO 137/224, Fuller to Secretary of the Admiralty, Douala, 6 February 1915.

³⁴ Colonel Haywood later claimed in 1920 that the *askari* lost 200 killed and wounded. See, Haywood, "The Cameroons Campaign," 6.

³⁵ TNA WO 137/224, Fuller to Secretary of the Admiralty. Dobell later reported to Harcourt on 7 January 1915 that German losses were 20 Europeans and 64 Africans killed, and 9 Africans captured.

³⁶ TNA WO 137/224, Fuller to Secretary of the Admiralty, Douala, 6 February 1915.

stagnated. At this point, the Allies appealed for reinforcements, reorganization, and coordination of Allied African forces. In February 1915, reinforcements arrived Douala from West African colonies.³⁷

As the advance on Edea was taking place, other *tirailleurs* were operating in the Kribi area, trying to clear it of the *askari*. On 6 and 9 December 1914, the *askari* under Ober-Leut Hoppe, commanding No. 1 Reserve Coy, lunched heavy attacks on the two *tirailleurs* companies at Kribi. But after serious engagements and in both they were driven off. After that, the companies were reinforced by eighty more men. But the *askari* in Kribi at this time were reported to be growing stronger, after arming a considerable number of inhabitants there, with arms probably smuggled in through Muni, a thing that caused Allied Naval authorities to station vessels in the waters to prevent the Germans and their African troops from obtaining food and contraband of war from exterior sources.³⁸

The First (abortive) Advance on Yaounde

When the *askari*, their commander and the German Governor had fled Douala in September 1914, they first settled at Eseka, and Yaounde became the new headquarters of the German colonial government. As the capital is usually the ultimate target in war, all Allied operations came to be planned towards the seizure of Yaounde.³⁹ In French military calculus, Yaounde constituted the core, and at the same time the last of the Protective Forces' defense, with the Sanaga as the line of retreat towards the North, and the posts of Dume station, Lomie

³⁷ *The Times History*, 293.

³⁸ TNA ADM 137/62, Captain Fuller to Secretary of the Admiralty, Douala, 15 December 1914.

³⁹ Called Jaunde by the Germans, and thus spelt as such in most archival citations hereafter. Osuntokun, *Nigeria*, 191, inaccurately states that it was not until December 1915 when Dobell received news that the German Governor was going towards Yaounde that several columns of the Allied force began to advance towards the town. Thus he misses the point that the advance towards Yaounde had begun as early as the first quarter of 1915, and was merely resuming later in October that year.

and Ebolowa, and Lolodorf as advance line of security towards the East, North and West.⁴⁰ Military intelligence also revealed that the plan of the Germans was to concentrate all their forces in Yaounde finally, and failing to hold the town, from there exit the territory to Spanish Guinea. And as Allied military plans were contingent on German plans, Yaounde thus became the ultimate point at which the various Allied forces planned to converge.

Besides being the new capital, another importance of Yaounde for the Germans lay on the fact that the district was their main recruiting area so that its occupation by the Allies was certainly going to not only have a great morale effect but result in a general demoralization of their Cameroonian troops.⁴¹ If Yaounde was ever captured, cautioned one German officer, “the [Cameroon] colony will be at once lost, on account of the numerous Jaunde soldiers whom we have enrolled.”⁴² Yaounde also became the Chief objective of the Allied forces because it was the center from which the Germans were organizing their resources for distribution of imports coming through Spanish Muni.⁴³

In March 1915 in Douala, a plan was forged for the expeditionary forces to advance on and seize Yaounde. Edea formed the base of the advance, which would be undertaken under the command of Colonel Mayer, but in anticipation of General Aymerich’s troops (chapter 4) from the East arriving at a striking distance to the town and therefore cooperating in the attack.⁴⁴

Though generally commanded by Mayer, Col. Haywood was in charge of the British African

⁴⁰ ANSOM TGO 8/76, Confidentiel, Merlin, Le Gouverneur Général de L’Afrique Equatoriale Française a Monsieur le Ministre des Colonies, Brazzaville, le 18 Août 1915.

⁴¹ ANSOM TGO 8/77, Confidentielle, Le Gouverneur des colonies, Lucien Fourneau, a Monsieur le Gouverneur Général de L’Afrique Equatorial Française, Merlin, Brazzaville, le 4 Avril 1915; TNA WO 158/516, Dobell to Lugard, Military Situation in the Cameroons, Douala, 30 June 1915.

⁴² TNA WO 158/516, Letter from Ober-Leut Hoppe, 20 May 1915. See also TNA WO 158/552, which contains mostly captured documents from German military officers. It’s mostly in French, with some of the documents translated into English.

⁴³ TNA WO 158/516, Dobell to Lugard.

⁴⁴ TNA WO 158/516, Dobell to Lugard.

section of the force. Realizing the implications of this advance on Yaounde, Protective Forces concentrated fully 1000 men to resist. Such number included detachments from Rammstedt's troops, Haedicke's and von Hagen's detachments from Yabassi and Lorlodorf districts respectively, and a considerable number of Yaounde recruits.⁴⁵

The three-pronged advance officially commenced on 11 April 1915. A French force proceeded along the Midland Railway, to make good the crossing at Kelle River, the Germans having destroyed the bridge there. Then a British force commenced its advance along the Edea-Yaounde road. The two forces were scheduled to converge at Eseka, and from there make a joint advance. Aiming to cause a diversion of Protective Forces in the early stage of the advance, other Allied naval and military units made demonstrations at Kribi, Longji, Nyong, Campo, Dehane, and Etjane.⁴⁶ As this advance commenced, the Germans still maintained forces in Dehane and Campo district, due to the possibility of getting contraband from Fernando Po, and in the hope of some units of the German fleet coming to their assistance. It meant therefore that while the Yaounde advance was going on, confrontations were still occurring in other nearby districts.

On 14 April 1915, Col. Haywood's force defeated a German force at Ngwe and established there while Commandant Mathieu for the French African force also defeated an *askari* force at Kelle River and established there as well.⁴⁷ The defeat of the *askari* at Ngwe River was in large part attributed to the military brilliance of some of the Nigerian soldiers. For a while, Protective Forces had occupied the far bank of the River, opening fire on Haywood's forces. At that point, Privates Garuba Gaya and Oseni crossed the River and succeeded in reaching the trenches of the Protective Forces, where they opened fatal fire on them, forcing their

⁴⁵ TNA WO 158/516, Dobell to Lugard.

⁴⁶ TNA ADM 137/224, Fuller to Secretary of the Admiralty, Douala, 14 April 1915.

⁴⁷ TNA ADM 137/224, Fuller to Secretary of the Admiralty, Douala, 29 May 1915.

retreat. This action coincided with those of machine gun carriers Arri Kukawa and Musa Bauchi who brought up ammunition and distributed it while within 150 yards of the position of the Protective Forces who were throwing heavy fire in the open. In the same action, Sergeant Mama Kemberi led eleven men on a charge against the *askari*.⁴⁸

With the success of the Ngwe River action, a small British column then moved to Sakbajeme, found and removed a colony of missionaries there. The main body of Commandant Mathieu's force returned to Edea, and on 28 April 1915, left Edea for Eseka. The British column continued its advance on 1 May 1915, the Haywood column of 600 along the Yaounde road, with instructions to proceed as far as Wum Biagas, where an advance base was to be established, and a French force of 1,000 under Commandant Mechet to Eseka. The Haywood column on 3 May 1915 came face to face with a formidably entrenched position occupied by the *askari* on the left bank of the Mbila River, a tributary of the Sanaga, at Wum-Biagas. A heavy fire ensued between the two hostile camps. As the *askari* killed Lieutenant Marham-Rose, Company Sergeant Major Ebrima Jalu of the Gambia Company of the WAFF, led his men on heavy counter fire against the *askari*, fighting throughout the day.⁴⁹ Led at the Mbila River by Haedicke, the *askari* and hundreds of locally forced labor had dug a trench, and the *askari* positioned itself in a front that extended some three miles. On 3 May, Corporal Durowotu Ibadan was directing a scout of Nigerian soldiers when it came under a sudden attack from the *askari* on the Mbilia River. The Corporal and his men maintained effective fire until re-enforced.⁵⁰ A unit

⁴⁸ TNA WO 95/5382, Lt. Col Haywood, Commanding British Column, to the Chief staff officer, general headquarters, Douala, Final Report operations of British Jaunde Road Column, 11 April 1915 to 10 June 1915, Jaounde Road, June 1915.

⁴⁹ TNA WO 158/516, Dobell to Lugard, 6 July 1915.

⁵⁰ TNA WO 158/516, Dobell to Lugard, 6 July 1915. NA WO 158/552, Oberst Lieut. Zimmermann, Commandant, German Imperial Forces Kameruns, Position at end of May 1915, Yaounde, 10 June 1915.

of the British Africans launched a flank attack on the askari who were entrenched on the Mbila River that lasted some 16-18-hour fighting, both belligerents incurring serious losses. But Haywood's men finally stormed the trench, and Wum Biagas fell on 4 May 1915.

Meanwhile, the *tirailleurs* engaged the *askari* at a strong position at Sende, but were forced to retreat on 6 May, after heavy fighting in which they lost twelve men killed and thirty-six wounded. But the French later captured Sende, then pressed forward and captured railhead, after slight losses. From here, the French force then moved forward to Wum Biagas, and joined with the British force. Then on 7 May 1915, Commandant Mechet took Eseka, and, in accordance with Mayer's plan, after clearing up the situation round Eseka, effected a junction with Haywood column on 19 May 1915.⁵¹ Meanwhile, on 18 May 1915, a surprise Protective Force flank attack on a British held position on the East of River Mbila had flopped after the outflanking Protective Forces sent against the right flank and rear of the British had been betrayed by the inhabitants in that area.⁵²

On 20 May 1915, Col. Mayer, left Edea, arriving Wum Biagas on the 23rd. After leaving 200 *tirailleurs* and 100 British Rifles at Wum Biagas for work on the L. of C. between Ngwe and the column, Mayer's forward movement from here comprised 751 *tirailleurs*, 570 British Africans, 4 Mountain guns, and one naval gun.⁵³ From here, and from 25 May, the French and British decided to advance as one column (under Mayer and Haywood), both French and British forces acting alternately as advance guard. The advance was extremely slow, met at every turn of the road with machine gunfire from Protective Forces in concealed positions in the impenetrably

⁵¹ TNA ADM 137/224, Fuller to Secretary of the Admiralty, 29 May 1915; TNA WO 158/516, Dobell to Secretary of the War Office, Government house Douala, 8 July 1915.

⁵² TNA WO 158/552, Zimmermann, German Imperial Forces Kameruns.

⁵³ TNA WO 158/516, Dobell to the Secretary of the War Office, 8 July 1915.

dense forest. On 27 May, for example, Mayer's advance was stopped by a prepared Protective Force position at Njok, and a breakthrough was only made on the 29th. From Njok, the advance towards Yaounde was again very slow, owing to the thick bush, which made the use of artillery practically impossible, as well as the terrain which afforded the Protective Forces many rearguard positions. So by 4 June 1916, Allied advance which commenced since 11 April had only covered some ten miles. At that point, Col. Mayer then communicated Dobell that owing to sickness and numerous difficulties, he considered it unwise to advance much further, unless the French column from the Southeast under General Aymerich could afford him some assistance. At this point also, *the askari* were concentrating at Yaounde from different quarters of the Cameroons, and continuously interfering with Allied lines of communication, making it difficult to send up the necessary convoys, and causing losses to the Allies *en route*.⁵⁴

As of the second week of June 1915 therefore, when Allied forces had already reached fifty miles away from Yaounde, but with General Aymerich's forces still 150 miles away (chapter 4), it became imperative for Dobell to call off the advance on Yaounde and order a retreat of expeditionary forces. The advance had been strenuously opposed by Protective Forces who had disputed every mile of the road, hard fighting occurring in dense and difficult country. Protective Forces made several attacks on Allied bivouacs and hostile raids against Allied lines of communications. Other factors that made the advance be called off included the serious depletion of Allied column by sickness – chiefly dysentery, both among Europeans and Africans. Also, the failure of Aymerich's troops to get near Yaounde and cooperate with Mayer's troops, the very strong resistance of Protective Forces against Mayer's force made up of about 600 men,

⁵⁴ TNA WO 158/516, Dobell to the Secretary of the War Office; TNA ADM 137/224, Fuller to Secretary of the Admiralty, 7 July 1915.

plus Adametz's and Engelbrechten's companies from the North, Von Hagen's detachment from the Kribi-Lolodorf district and 120 recruits from Yaounde, making the total Protective Forces opposing Mayer to be not less than 1200 men, further complicated things for the Allies. These, added to the Protective Forces' great advantage of fighting in prepared positions, rendered any further advance on Yaounde unjustifiable.⁵⁵ From commencement to the retirement of this advance, Allied casualties amounted to fourteen Europeans killed, and six wounded, eighty-three Africans killed and 199 wounded.

Unknown to Dobell however, *askari* resistance in the Edea area just before the suspension of the advance was already on the brink of collapse, and had the Allies pushed further even with the forces at hand, their Yaounde target might have been reached in the coming days. In fact, as one Protective Force officer confessed on his diary entry for 31 May 1915, "this is the 8th day we have been fighting; our troops and especially the Europeans cannot hold out much longer."⁵⁶ Called off, a retirement began in the second week of June. Mayer's forces were to retire to the line of the Ngwe-Kele. Before retiring, a garrison post at Wum Biagas with one of its sections commanded by Corporal Timbila Busanga Gold Coast was left for guard and patrol duties.⁵⁷ Even this retirement, was met with fierce fighting. On 12 June 1915, some 200 *askari* about under Serjeant Major Jütersonke attacked a French convoy of 500 loads between Wum Biagas and the head of the British column, capturing all the loads (mostly French wine and brandy) as the carriers threw them and bolted. That same day, another Allied convoy was attacked between Wum Biagas and the main column by a numerically superior Protective Force

⁵⁵ TNA ADM 137/224, Fuller to Secretary of the Admiralty, 28 August 1915; TNA WO 158/516, Dobell to the Secretary of the War Office, 8 July 1915.

⁵⁶ TNA WO 158/552, Extracts from Diary of Lieut. Distler, 31 July 1915.

⁵⁷ TNA WO 158/516, Dobell to Lugard, 30 June & 6 July 1915.

under Hauptmann Adametz. Although the Allied escort put up brave resistance, all their carriers bolted and threw down their loads. In the end, the escort fell into the hands of Adametz's force.⁵⁸

The main column reached Ngwe on 17 June 1915, the retirement having been harassed the whole way, except that the arrival of two British companies and one French Company at Njonjok relieved the pressure. Leaving a garrison of about 1,000 British and French troops at Ngwe, the remainder of the main column reached Edea on 19 June, on which day a French Company led by Captain Thibout operating East of Ngwe, carried out a successful attack on a German camp at Mbokolen, about six miles along the Edea-Yaounde road to the West of Ngwe, against a Protective Force of some 200 men strong, wounding one German officer (Lieutenant Distler) and killing twenty-four Africans.⁵⁹

On 20 June 1915, an advance British patrol force commanded by Sergeant Awadu Bakano of Gold Coast came under heavy machine gun, and Rifle fire at about thirty yards range near Ngwe. The Sergeant and his men held efficient fire against the *askari* with about 300 men strong, until the main column approached, forcing the *askari* to retire. The British, together with French troops, then decided to hold the line of the Ngwe and Sobibanga.⁶⁰

Once settled at Edea, units of expeditionary forces continued to carry out skirmishes with the *askari*, in their attempt to clear the area. In July 1915, a Company of NO 1 Nigerian Battalion under Captain Fell left Douala and traveled by sea to the River Nyong and cleared camps at Edea, Etima, Mammong and Dehane which had been occupied by troublesome partisans under German leadership. After that, more 120 troops from Douala joined Captain Fell, and another

⁵⁸ TNA WO 158/516, Dobell to Lugard, 30 June 1915; TNA WO 158/552, War Diary of Sergt. Major Jütersonke. German soldiers divided the wine and brandy, drank and many got drunk.

⁵⁹ TNA WO 158/516, Capt. E. Davidson, Intelligence Officer, Intelligence Summary, Douala, 30 June 1915.

⁶⁰ TNA WO 158/516, Dobell to Lugard, 6 July 1915.

one Company of the *tirailleurs* from Edea joined at Dehane and the whole force, under Major Coles of No. 1 N.R advanced and took the Protective Force camp at Etjahe on 14 July 1915. The camp, which was found to be strongly entrenched, and surrounded by barbed wire entanglements, was destroyed without German opposition. Again, another missed opportunity for the *askari* as Dobell himself remarked that “had the enemy stood it would have presented great difficulties to the attack.”⁶¹

Anxious to clear Sakbajeme from Protective Forces who from there might act as a threat to Ngwe and the road between Ngwe and Edea, Mayer sent out a strong reconnaissance force of 300 strong under Commandant Mathieu which arrived Sakbajeme on 21 July 1915, drove away a small hostile Protective Force there. The force then left Sabajeme for Ngwe, reaching Nkonjok, 14 miles East of Ngwe, on 24 July 1915. The force patrolled to the East of Nkonjok, and Protective Forces there fought a rearguard action until the Allied force reached Ndupe River. Commandant Mathieu’s forces then engaged a Protective Force of a strength of two Companies led by Major Haedicke at the Ndupe River, and although he drove them off, his losses were comparatively heavy.⁶²

Combat Activities along the Northern Railway

While a contingent of the expeditionary forces marched after the *askari* in the Yabassi-Kribi-Edea direction, another was in pursuit of the *askari* on the Northern Railway direction. This contingent, comprising mostly the WAFF, was dominated by Nigerian soldiers, although it also had a reasonable portion of soldiers from the Gold Coast, Sierra Leone and later the Gambia. One battalion of troops under Col. Haywood was stationed at Bonaberi, reinforced later

⁶¹ TNA WO 158/516, Secret, Dobell to the Secretary of the War Office, Operations in Cameroons, Douala, 21 July 1915.

⁶² TNA WO 158/516, Dobell to the Secretary of the War, 18 September 1915.

by two companies W.A.F.F forces, to enable a force to be detached to drive the *askari* out of the districts of Maka and Mulanga. The troops took Maka on 3 October. From Bonaberi a unit of the Nigerian Regiment began systematically advancing up the Northern Railway, and in some weeks, established at Suza, some thirty miles up from Douala.

Allied advance on the Northern Railway from Bonaberi to Kake and Susa had been opposed by the *askari* commanded by Oberlt. Engelbrechten. Once around a mile in a thick bush North of Kake, Engelbrechten, and his men had ambushed a group of Nigerian soldiers. The British officer in command was killed, but Sergeant Namadu Bauchi operating the Maxim gun practically saved the rest of his team from annihilation. He drove back the *askari*, killing three Germans, twelve Africans, and taking four others POWs.⁶³ In a private letter to Hauptmann Gaisser, Engelbrechten went on to boast about his successes:

My success of arms has brought them [the British] to a standstill. In a month, they have only advanced 30 kilometers, from Bonaberi to Kake; were it only the Northern Railway,...it would last much longer, and in another month we should not be further up than Mbanga, but now the Jabassi position threatens us.⁶⁴

But Engelbrechten also admitted that his force of 120 men had been seriously exhausted that he was too weak to “attack again” especially as he had no reserves to fall back on, unlike the British who were having continuous reinforcements. He admitted having lost ten soldiers already killed), plus three wounded and an undisclosed number missing (probably captured or deserted).⁶⁵ At the time, a section of his force of over 40 Rifles was engaged from Njanga towards Yabassi. Judging perhaps rather correctly, Engelbrechten wrote, “their road appear to be - if Haedicke cannot hold them - the Northern Railway, and I believe their goal and object is the direction of Bana.”⁶⁶

⁶³ TNA ADM 137/62, Dobell to Harcourt, 28 October 1914.

⁶⁴ TNA WO 158/552, Engelbrechten to Gaisser, 24 October 1914.

⁶⁵ TNA WO 158/552, Engelbrechten to Gaisser.

⁶⁶ TNA WO 158/552, Engelbrechten to Gaisser.

To all intents and purposes, German strategy was also one of delay and protracting confrontations in the Cameroons in wait of the final results of the war in Europe.⁶⁷ German officers in Cameroon were on the constant alert of what was going on in Europe, anxiously hoping for Germany to prevail. “The news from home” lamented Engelbrechten, “is always better; ...If [the war] would only soon come to an end [in Europe]”⁶⁸

After taking Suza, an action undertaken by Nigerian soldiers in Haywood’s force saved them from annihilation. On 19 October 1914, a strong reconnaissance left Suza camp, to clear the area towards Kake and Northward. On their return to the camp, the party fell to an ambush of the 4th Coy of Protective Force, losing their British officer in command, and sustaining heavy casualties. In a running fight for about two miles, Lance Corporal Ige Offa of N0 2 battalion N.R in charge of the machine gun covered the retreating party with continuous fire, enabling it to extricate itself from a dangerous situation and reach the camp without heavy losses.⁶⁹

The taking of Buea, Muyuka and Victoria

With the taking of Suza, the expeditionary forces began to further progress towards the Mountainous town of Buea, some 30 miles away from the Bonaberri base. The declared aim of the *askari* force under Engelbrechten opposing the expeditionary forces along the Northern Railway and having its main camp at Mbanga, was to delay the Allies from Bonaberi along the Northern Railway towards Bare, Nkongsamba and then Dschang, by holding on to Kake-Susa. Its tactics were the use of flank attacks, and the strategy was to remain at Muyuka, then send out

⁶⁷ This strategy, however, as observed by Strachan was “motivated not by any German desire to draw Entente troops from Europe, not by a wish to use sideshow for a wider strategic purpose” as the German general leading the *askari* in East Africa was doing, but “by the fact that colonization mattered as an end in itself.” Thus the Germans in Cameroon wanted to be able to keep Cameroon at all cost after the war, by making an argument that they had continuously and effectively occupied the colony even throughout the war.

⁶⁸ TNA WO 158/552, Engelbrechten to Gaisser, 24 October 1914.

⁶⁹ TNA WO 95/5382, Lt. Col Haywood, Recommendation for Meritorious and Gallant Conduct, Douala, 3 July 1915.

two sections to launch a surprise attack on the advancing British at Mbonjo, after which the Sections would return to Muyuka.⁷⁰

There were important towns and places along the way that needed to be taken and cleared before the Buea target. On 1 October 1914, three Companies of West African Regiment from Douala cooperated with naval reconnaissance to Tiko and Moewe Lake, one of them effecting a landing at Tiko. Another captured 13 male prisoners. On 13 November 1914, a detachment of Royal Marine Infantry under Captain Hall landed at Victoria after the town had been bombarded by the guns of the French warship 'Bruix' and the Government 'Ivy.' Thus without any resistance, Victoria fell. The Allies took two mines at Victoria, which the Germans had not exploded on their retreat. Lieutenant Col. Haywood's column then reached Muyuka but found that the *askari* had fled their trenches, retiring in the direction of Mundek. The column occupied Bombe on 18 November and advanced on Mundame to cut off any *askari* parties that might have eluded Major's Rose's column.⁷¹

A column, being part of Col. Gorges' forces led by Major Rose advanced on Buea. It first advanced from Mbonjo to Mpundu by moving troops on both banks of the Mungo River. On 13 November, it drove off a small detachment of Protective Forces from Mpundu and the whole column then concentrated on the right bank of the River. Half the company stayed back to garrison Mpundu while the other pushed on Ekona, in the course of which it was subjected to a considerable amount of 'sniping' and resistance from Protective Forces. Capturing nine German Europeans near Ekona, Major Rose's forces reached the small town on 14 November. At this

⁷⁰ TNA WO 158/552, Engelbrechten to Gaisser, 24 October 1914.

⁷¹ TNA ADM 137/62, Dobell to Harcourt, 28 October 1914.

point, the force split into two detachments one at Lisoka with orders to hold Botewa, and the other at the Ekona plantation.

On 15 November, Major Rose established communication with the main column (Gorges) so that his two columns from Lisoka and Ekona marched in and took Buea on 16 November. After that, small columns patrolled around the North of the Cameroon mountain, clearing the country of Protective Forces. In the conquest of Buea, the casualties of the Protective Forces were three European officers and eight Africans killed, one European wounded. Also, the Allies took twelve officers as POWs, including Hauptman Gaisser (captured near Lisoka) – military Commander of Victoria and Buea districts – while thirty-two German African soldiers surrendered. They also took charge of 173 Germans in Buea; 105 male, forty-five female, and twenty-three children.⁷²

Further Fighting up the Northern Railway

After the capture of Buea, a general advance up the Northern Railway was planned, in which the Cross River and Ibi columns (chapter 4) were to cooperate with a vigorous parallel advances. This advance started off at Muyuka, under the general command of Col. Gorges. It included mostly Nigerian Companies, Gold Coast Company and Sierra Leonians.⁷³ Col. Gorges was to march generally along the Northern Railway towards Dshang, and to gain communication with Col. Mair, commanding the Cross River Column and who was marching on Tinto. This advance commenced on 3 December 1914, with two flank detachments advancing up either bank

⁷² TNA ADM 137/62, Dobell to Harcourt; ANSOM TGO 7/68, rapport par les Allemandes, 15 Mars 1915. The German report claimed that the Allies invaded Buea with about 2,000 African soldiers, although the very small number of *askari* (150-200) in Buea were not defending the town against invasion but merely meant to protect the German civilian population there, mostly women and children.

⁷³ Moberly, *Military Operations*, 198-9.

of the Mungo River.⁷⁴ The main column reached Mundek on 3 December. One of his flank detachments on the Dibombe River under Captain Browne, with a machine gun whose operation was aided by Privates Alpha Kuyah and Akabu Turay of the W.A.R, surprised and drove out an *askari* force of about fifty Rifles at Nyanga.⁷⁵ On 4 December, the main column camped at Penja station, and the Mungo River detachments advanced without much trouble. From Nyanga a patrolling detachment moved up the Dibombe River.

The main column after hours of March in dense bush bivouacked at Lum on 5 December, and a company of the 1st Nigerians under Captain J.W Chamley, accompanied by a patrol party of R.E under Lieutenant H.H Schneider went forward and reconnoitered the bridge and Dibombe River crossing at Nlohe. The party fell into an *askari* ambush, who with machine guns had occupied skillfully selected positions, for the most part on the further bank of the River. Lt Schneider was killed, and many wounded, including the Assistant Commander of the Patrol, Lieutenant Luxford of the Nigeria Regiment who was seriously wounded. As the *askari* tried to advance to get the wounded Lieutenant, Private Jatto Dagarti of Gold Coast took cover of the Lieutenant, and directed heavy fire on the advancing *askari*, who then retreated.⁷⁶ The *askari* failed to press on their gains, and some 1st Nigerians were brought in as reinforcements. The reinforced detachments bivouacked a night at Etam and at Nsuke, on the West and East banks of the Nlohe River. Then the party from Nyanga moved up to Nsake.⁷⁷

The main column occupied Nlohe on 6 December 1914, with a covering detachment gaining the Northern bank of the Dibombe River. The same day, on the Mungo River, the East

⁷⁴ Moberly, *Military Operations*, 199-200.

⁷⁵ TNA WO 158/516, Secret, Dobell to Lugard, Enclosure to Despatch, West African Expeditionary Force, Douala, 22 February 1915.

⁷⁶ TNA WO 158/516, Dobell to Lugard, 22 February 1915.

⁷⁷ Moberly, *Military Operations*, 201.

bank detachment reached Ngushi while the detachment on the West bank drove small *askari* parties and on 7 December, crossed over and united with the other detachment at Ngushi, the two now under Captain C. Gibb. On 8 December, the main column marched to Manengole which had been evacuated by the *askari*, whose force, retiring Northward in front of the two British columns was estimated at a total of about 30-40 Europeans and 150-200 Africans. From Ngushi, Captain Gibb's detachment moved Eastwards over the foothills of the Kupe Mountain to within four miles of the Railway, while on the right flank the detachment on the Dibombe River remained halted, having completed its task. On 9 December, the main column advanced through hilly and difficult country and occupied Ndunge after slight opposition. While the camp was being entrenched, the *askari* opened fire from the surrounding hills, but were repelled.⁷⁸

On 10 December, when the main column, flankly covered by Captain Gibbs' column from Ndunge, began to march on Nkongsamba, the *askari* under Lieutenant Von Engelbrechten sent in a message under a white flag, surrendering Nkongsamba and the country up to and including Bare.⁷⁹ As Col. Gorges occupied Nkongsamba, he was joined by Captain Gibbs' column. Captured at Nkongsamba by the Allies were: the railhead and many spoils including two airplanes. Also, the Allies took in Nkongsamba and Bare sixty white German prisoners of war, including women and children. The two planes captured were the first that had ever arrived West Africa, and the Germans had yet to unpack them. After this success, the Nigerian troops under Col. Gorges pushed North to Dschang, some fifty-five miles beyond railhead, and destroyed the fort there on 3 January 1915, before retiring to Nkongsamba and its outpost Bare. After

⁷⁸ Moberly, *Military Operations*, 201-2.

⁷⁹ TNA ADM 137/162, Dobell to the Secretary of State, 14 December 1914.

surrendering Nkongsamba, Protective Forces fled northwards towards Dschang, where they were further pursued.⁸⁰

The strategical importance of Nkonggsamba was such that the Allies resolved to keep it.

As Dobell communicated the Secretary of War in March 1915:

The strategical position of Nkongsamba, protecting as it does all the Cameroon Mountain and to some extent the country to the East of the Railway must, I consider, if possible, be retained by us. The Germans have established a force which has been reinforced from time to time and now numbers between six and seven hundred native troops with a very large proportion of Europeans and many maxims and is within four miles of our post at Bare. It appeared that this force was too great a menace to our communications to allow it remain, and this has been the cause of the recent fighting which has gone constantly against our troops. With the object of dealing adequately with the situation I place under Colonel Gorges over thirteen hundred Rifles and six guns with many machine guns and lent him the services of Colonel Turner as Staff Officer.⁸¹

The nature of the country in the area between Nkonggsamba and Dschang forced Colonel Gorges to “adopt a system of tactics applicable both to bush and mountain warfare.” The area was described to be particularly difficult, and “it speaks well for the adaptability of our native troops in achieving such good results with comparatively small losses.”⁸² Many of the Allied African troops came from places with similar terrain, and therefore were far more accustomed to fighting on that type of country than ever did their European counterparts. By this reckoning, the Cameroon campaign could only best have been conducted by the Africans themselves. Here Dobell quickly realized the biggest bait of the Germans when they had quickly given up the coast and retreated into the interior in September 1914. “There can be but little doubt,” he told Harcourt, “that the enemy considered it beyond our power to overcome the natural difficulties of the country between Railhead and Dschang and regarded the attack on later places as highly improbable.”⁸³ This German strategy was not unrealistic, except they quickly forgot that the

⁸⁰ TNA ADM 137/162, Fuller to Secretary of the Admiralty, 15 December 1914; See, in the same file, Dobell to the Secretary of State, 14 December 1914.

⁸¹ TNA ADM 137/224, Dobell to the Secretary, War Office, Douala, 5 March 1915.

⁸² TNA ADM 137/224, Dobell to the Secretary.

⁸³ TNA ADM 137/224, Dobell to the Secretary.

Allies invading the territory were not Europeans, but African soldiers. As Dobell himself admitted to Harcourt, the African “native soldiers” were very adaptable to the nature of the terrain in Cameroon.⁸⁴ What was even more intriguing for the Cameroon campaign, however, was that the European officers had to resort to adaptation, and fight the war in the manner of African military tactics. The face to face line-up and open fighting common in Europe had no place in Africa.

Marching on Dschang

Following the fall of Nkongsamba, Col. Gorges took a party of Nigerians under Col. Haywood, and in December, went on to occupy Melong, a road junction fourteen miles North of Nkongsamba where they established supply depots there and at Bare, and constructed defensive posts at the two places and Nkongsamba, began reconnaissance Northwards, then prepared to advance on Dschang. On 23/24 a general advance on Dschang commenced from Melong, the strength of the column being 780 Nigerians, with 1,400 carriers. The Nigerians were divided into two columns. The main column which included Lt.-Col. Cockburn’s battalion moved along the main road up the high grassy Nkam valley, while the second or left flank column under Lieutenant Colonel Haywood, advanced by the alternative much steeper road, between rugged and thickly timbered heights, proceeding via Mbo, a fortified post on a spur of the Manenguba Mountains.⁸⁵

On 25 December 1914, the main column bivouacked at Lelem while Haywood’s column bivouacked two and a half miles south of Esaku. On 26 December, the main column moved to Mhu River, patrolled into Fongwang and drove a Protective Force across Nkam River. But

⁸⁴ TNA ADM 137/224, Secret, Dobell to Harcourt, Douala, 26 January 1915.

⁸⁵ Moberly, *Military Operations*, 205; TNA ADM 137/224, Secret, Dobell to Secretary of War, 7 January 1915.

Haywood's column was seriously checked at Sanschu before it bivouacked half a mile south of the place Col. Gorges reported as follows: "The country here is mountainous and densely wooded, making turning movements extremely difficult. Fighting an invisible enemy on a narrow front, his presence revealed only by periodical and sudden bursts of Rifle and machine gunfire made our progress slow."⁸⁶

On 30 December 1914, the main column's advance guard, with one of its sections directed with unusual aplomb and coolness by Company Sergeant Major Belo Akure (2nd Battalion, NR) outflanked Protective Forces and gained Fondola, forcing the Protective Forces to retreat towards Dschang.⁸⁷ The main force then occupied good positions on the hills some two miles North of Fondola, while Haywood's force drove the *askari* from an entrenched position some 2,000 yards south of Mbo Fort. Then on 31 December, Lt.- Col. Cockburn with two Companies occupied the hills on the south West of Dschang. On 2 January 1915, Haywood's column, having bivouacked at Fosson Wentschen, joined the main column at the crossroads, and they began to advance on Dschang with all available troops.⁸⁸ As they approached Dschang fort and prepared to take it by assault, the *askari* from their entrenched positions in the surrounding hills fired on the advance guard of the main column. Desultory fighting followed, after which the Nigerians seized the fort. Allied patrols pushed out in all directions gathered that the *askari* were holding positions in some strength on the Bamenda road, about 9 miles North of Dschang. On 4 January, a column of two Companies Nigerians under Lt.- Col. Cockburn scattered the *askari* on

⁸⁶ TNA WO 95/5382, Col. E.H Gorges, Commanding British Contingent, to the General Staff Officer, Headquarters, Report on the Operations of the Dschang Column, 21 December 1914 to 10 January 1915, Nkongsamba, 12 January 1915.

⁸⁷ TNA WO 95/5382, Gorges to the General Staff Officer, 12 January 1915; TNA WO 158/516, Dobell to Lugard, 22 February 1915.

⁸⁸ TNA WO 95/5382, Gorges to the General Staff Officer, 12 January 1915.

the North of Dschang, estimated at thirty Germans and 200 Cameroonians. The scattered force then retreated towards Bamenda. The tactics used by the Nigerians in the conquest of the Dschang and Bare districts was a combination of bush and Mountain warfare, necessitated by the nature of the country.⁸⁹

The fall of Dschang was judged by a British officer to have caused a serious morale effect on the *askari*, and their determination to continue the fight in any major scale, since because of its natural defenses, they had not imagined that it was ever to fall so easily. Even in the eyes of the inhabitants, it seriously discredited the *askari*, making the inhabitants more likely to rally behind the invading force. Thus Col. Gorges noted with confidence that given the fall of Dschang, "I do not anticipate further operations to the North of the Railway on an extended scale."⁹⁰ Dobell told Harcourt that:

It would appear that the natives of the Cameroons regard Dschang as being only second in importance to Jaunde and its destruction has no doubt produced an important morale and political effect, its fall combined with the loss of Ossidinge indicates that German troops, to the North of the Railway, do not seem likely to undertake much more in the nature of serious active operations.⁹¹

Meanwhile, as Dschang was being taken, the Allies received intelligence information on 31 December of the presence of an *askari* force of some 300 strong, East of Bare and in a position to operate against Col. Gorges' line of communication. This force was judged to be Sommerfeld's Company having retreated from the Nsanakang area. Thus from Douala, Dobell dispatched re-enforcements, a W.A.R Company to Nkongsamba to neutralize the *askari* threat, and Col. Gorges was to return speedily to base at the railhead in Bare. Thus by 10 January 1915, the Nigerians from Dschang had withdrawn to Nkongsamba, a Company left to garrison Bare. While some were holding Bare and Nkongsamba, others were garrisoning the line of

⁸⁹ TNA WO 95/5382, Gorges to the General Staff Officer.

⁹⁰ TNA WO 95/5382, Gorges to the General Staff Officer.

⁹¹ TNA ADM 137/224, Secret, Dobell to Harcourt, 26 January 1915.

communication back to Bonaberi. Col. Gorges and his staff and all units of his columns on the line of communication returned to Douala in early January 1915.⁹²

From mid-January 1915, attacks and raids in the Bare and Nkongsamba areas revealed a renewal of fighting by the *askari*, so that Dobell was forced to send more forces there to completely clear the area. Thus between 30 January and 2 February 1915, four Companies of Sierra Leone Battalion (400 strong) who had lately arrived from Sierra Leone under the command of Lt.- Col. Newstead, reached Bare.⁹³ Throughout the months of January, February and March of 1915, constant fighting occurred around Bare. On the night of 2-3 February 1915, the Nigerian troops under Col. Cockburn who had received intelligence of the presence of some *askari* camping near Mbureku, some five miles West of Bare, decided on a surprise attack. But units of the *askari* made an ambush.⁹⁴ After severe fighting, sixteen Nigerian soldiers and others were killed, plus forty-nine wounded. Three Nigerians had distinguished themselves during these Operations, two of them, Lance Corporal Mama Gujiba and Private Musa Godibowa directing fatal fire on the *askari* and rescuing the only maxim gun of the team from capture by the enemy. The other, Corporal Maifindi Shua, bravely carried and distributed ammunition to different units of his men under heavy fire. Eleven *askari* from a force commanded by Captain Rammsdet fell. The *askari*, realizing the importance of that place to the British for tactical reasons, were determined to continue opposing the British there. But, on account of shortage of ammunition, Rammstedt decided to discontinue the fight in that district. The Nigerians seized the

⁹² Moberly, *Military Operations*, 219-222.

⁹³ Moberly, *Military Operations*, 228.

⁹⁴ TNA ADM 137/224, Dobell to Secretary of State.

camp, plus 10,000 rounds small arms ammunition, tents, equipment, stores, European supplies, and livestock.⁹⁵

On 3 February, the Sierra Leone Battalion instructed by Cockburn but led by Lt.- Col. Newstead arrived Harman's Farm from Bare to attack a unit of a Protective Force well entrenched in a position behind a field of fire cleared for about 600 yards. The Sierra Leone troops initially captured the place with minimal losses. Re-enforced from Melong, however, the *askari* staged a vigorous counter attack, inflicted severe casualties on Newstead's Sierra Leonian troops, forcing them to withdraw to a more easily defensible position on a ridge near Bare. In this counter offensive, one Monde Yeraia charged through the Protective Force in two futile attempts, to rescue a fallen British lieutenant. Having retreated to Bare, the Sierra Leone troops united there with the West African forces under Cockburn, which had also returned to Bare, on his way to Harman's Farm, after its successful action near Mbureku.⁹⁶

As the Sierra Leone troops prepared to renew the offensive, they faced several difficulties; a terrible weather caused by incessant rain as well as many of the soldiers limping from jiggers.⁹⁷ From this point, Col. Gorges from Douala was sent back to resume control in the area, plus two companies W.A.R withdrawn from Kribi arrived Nkongsamba, as well as another section of West African troops, arriving on 8 February to take charge of further operations. At Bare and Nkongsamba by mid-February, a total force of 900 soldiers, mainly Sierra Leonians and other men of the W.A.R was assembled under Col. Gorges. Units of the troops carried out

⁹⁵ TNA WO 158/516, Dobell to Lugard, 6 July 1915; TNA ADM 137/224, Dobell to Secretary of State; TNA WO 158/552, Extract from a letter to the Commandant in Eseka (Captain Rammstedt, Commandant of Western Column, to Zimmermann in Eseka), Dschang, 5 March 1915.

⁹⁶ TNA ADM 186/522, Operations of Sierra Leone Troops in the Great War, 1914-1918; TNA, ADM 137/224, Dobell to Secretary of State.

⁹⁷ This is a local flea that burrows into the flesh, mostly under toe-nails to lay its eggs, then sets up sores and ulcers, causing serious pain and discomfort unless ejected.

strong reconnaissance and by the 23rd estimated the strength of the *askari* at and south of Melong to be 500-600 strong, plus other units around Herman's Farm.⁹⁸

While Col. Gorges prepared to take Melong from the *askari* main force, he assigned a unit of Sierra Leone and West African forces led by Col. Vaughan to attack and seize Mbureku, where a growing concentration of the protective troops threatened Bare. Thus on 27 February, units of African British troops left Nkongsamba, others left Ekom, all towards the direction of Mbureku and joined with other units of Sierra Leonians from Bare. After a vigorous resistance, the African troops seized Mberuku, but the *askari* launched a counter-attack against their right flank, then worked round under cover of the high grass to also attack the left flank and the rear.⁹⁹ The *askari* opened machine gunfire from a concealed location. As a British officer tried to bring a maxim gun into action, he and the gun carrier were killed. The *askari* then threatened to decimate the Allied force, but Corporal Musa Kata of the W.A.R under heavy hostile fire moved the machine gun to another position, recovered lost ammunition and opened steady fire on the *askari*, thus repelling them for a while.¹⁰⁰ A larger part of the Allied troops then retreated to Nkongsamba, while a smaller part retired to Bare. Here, the British African soldiers had sustained eighteen casualties.

Re-enforced, Col Gorges' main column commenced its advance on Melong on 4 March 1915. One column left Nkongsamba to seize Mbureku while the main column comprised of two and a half Companies soldiers of the W.A.R and four Companies of the Sierra Leone Battalion. The main column advanced at Harman's Farm, with a small flank detachment operating against

⁹⁸ TNA ADM 186/522, Operations of Sierra Leone Troops.

⁹⁹ TNA ADM 186/522, Operations of Sierra Leone Troops.

¹⁰⁰ TNA WO 158/516, Confidential, Dobell to the Secretary, War Office, Mentioning Services of Officers, Douala, 22 July 1915.

Ekom.¹⁰¹ An advanced guard comprising two of the Sierra Leone companies under Col. Newstead engaged an *askari* force at Stoebel Farm, a little to the Southeast of Harman's Farm, on 4 March 1915. Sergeant Major Maida Musa of the Nigeria Regiment was at the first gun position, operating it at the beginning of the action, when a British Captain operating the forward gun was wounded, at which point the *askari* began to charge in. Musa moved forward and opened gunfire on a closely advancing *askari* force. Then Corporal Awdu Kano took over the forward gun, firing seven rounds at the advancing *askari* and repulsing them.¹⁰² Before long, the *askari* were repulsed, and Stoebel Farm fell to the Nigerians.

A group of *askari* made up of German officers, some hundreds of yards North and West of Harman's Farm, had taken concealed positions behind a deep and densely wooded gully with at least three machine guns. They skillfully posted a detachment of some African rifle men in front. When an Allied force commanded by Col. Newstead approached, the posted detachment fell back, and the concealed Germans opened fire, wounding Col. Newstead who later died of his wounds.¹⁰³ The Allied casualties, mostly soldiers of the Sierra Leone Battalion, numbered twenty-seven, including officers. Col Gorges' main column then withdrew to Bare.¹⁰⁴

The next few days, before 10 March, saw the redistribution of troops on the Northern Railway. The Sierra Leone Battalion withdrew to garrison posts between Nkongsamba and Bonaberi, the Gold Coast Artillery Section and two Companies of the Gold Coast Battalion commanded by Colonel Rose was posted to Bare, while the headquarters and four Companies

¹⁰¹ TNA ADM 186/522, Operations of Sierra Leone Troops.

¹⁰² TNA WO 158/516, Dobell to Lugard, 6 July 1915.

¹⁰³ TNA ADM 186/522, Operations of Sierra Leone Troops; Moberly, *Military Operations*, 240-1.

¹⁰⁴ TNA ADM 186/522, Operations of Sierra Leone Troops.

W.A.R, one Company Gold Coast Battalion and a Section of Sierra Leone Battery were stationed at Nkongsamba where Col. Gorges established his headquarters.¹⁰⁵

By 10 March, British reconnoitering parties found Mbureku-Harman's Farm-Stoebel's line abandoned and evacuated by the *askari*, and on 13 March, a strong detachment found Melong also cleared. On 16 March, a British party drove an *askari* observation post of about 100 Rifles out of Melong without difficulty. From here, Col. Gorges used patrols and local armed partisans to continue to maintain touch with the *askari* around the area who had retired northward. By 18 March, the armed partisans provided Col. Gorges with information regarding strength and positions of the *askari* in the vicinity as follows; *askari* main body was at Fondonera with a covering detachment patrolling as far south as Melong; there were *askari* detachments at Sanchu covering Mbo and the Tinto road, and at the bridge over the Nkam River near Ekom covering a force based at Bana. The total *askari* forces at the south of Dschang were estimated at 80-100 Germans, 600 Africans and 7 machine guns. All the *askari* detachments were reported to be short of provisions and to be living on the country. The local Chiefs provided the British much useful information, and the many inhabitants who had taken refuge at Nkongsamba and Bare from the *askari* were being employed on work on roads and other services by the British. The 'fire tactics' of the German Africans troops were reported to be excellent.¹⁰⁶

Fighting on the Northern Railway was limited to patrol activities and skirmishes from March till October 1915 when a general plan was made to complete the conquest of the Cameroon from all directions. Thus the completion of the Northern Railway operations was to be

¹⁰⁵ Moberly, *Military Operations*, 242.

¹⁰⁶ Moberly, *Military operations*, 243-4.

carried out concurrently and in possible cooperation with the activities of the Northern columns and the Cross River and Ibi columns. On 2 October 1915, the general commander of the forces in those areas, General Cunliffe, decided to move against Bamenda, Banyo, and Tibati, setting all his troops in motion so as to threaten the *askari* simultaneously from every direction.¹⁰⁷

According to the plan, Major Crockendem was to move from Ossidinge via Widekum against Bamenda in October, the Company at Takum to advance against Kentu. To assist Crockendem and enable him to push subsequently on Funbam, Col. Cotton would move from Bare, with a column against Dschang. In October, British troops on the Northern Railway and in the Bare area consisted of the Sierra Leone battery, the 5th Light Infantry (now organized in six Companies of 100 strong each), and the W.A.R, the whole under the command of Lt.- Col. W.L Cotton of 5th Light Infantry.¹⁰⁸

On 12 October, Cotton moved out with a Bare column of about 500 strong (three Companies 5th Light Infantry, two Companies W.A.R and one Section Sierra Leone Battery) and 800 carriers with four machine guns, from Bare towards Dschang. He camped the night at Melong, then started on 13 October towards Dschang by the Westerly road leading past Mbo. On 14 October 1915, Cotton and his forces overcame Protective Forces at Mwu River and on the 15th, forced a crossing of the Nkam River.¹⁰⁹ On 18 October 1915, they took a strong position at Sanschu, and on the 20th Protective Forces evacuated Mbo. Leaving a garrison at Mbo to continue his advance on Dschang on 24 October, Cotton's column attacked an *askari* force position covering the Bare-Dschang road junction. The *askari*, estimated at 200-300 strong, with two machine guns, inflicted thirty casualties on Cotton's column, including killing Lieutenant

¹⁰⁷ See chapter 4.

¹⁰⁸ Moberly, *Military Operations*, 341.

¹⁰⁹ TNA WO 158/516, Secret, Dobell to the Secretary, War Office, 8 November 1915.

E.F Fielding, W.A.R.¹¹⁰ The *askari* then retired to Dschang, but Cotton and his men advanced and took Dschang without loss and almost without opposition on 6 November.¹¹¹

Meanwhile, the Nigerian Cross River column under Crockendem had swept through Bamenda, and was marching on Fumban.¹¹² They converged with Cotton's forces at Bagam on 21 November. When the enlarged force reached Nun River waiting to march on Fumban, Sultan Njoya of Bamum sent the column a vital message, advising on the state of the *askari* at Fumban and on the route for the column to take to enter Fumban. It informed that the Germans were leaving Fumban, and urged the British to advance immediately by the River crossing at Bangetabe, five miles upstream, so as to elude the attention of the *askai*.¹¹³ Given marshes, the swampy forest paths obstructed by waist deep and holes, dense undergrowth and low overhanging branches, this five-mile distance to the crossing lasted seven hours. Then the crossing by local rafts, capable of carrying only three men at a time, took three days. British forces had an engagement with the *askari* at Matapits on 2 December, captured the whole of the baggage and equipment of the *askari* and entered Fumban. They had been assisted by British detachments advancing from Gorori Kentu on Fumban. Shortly after occupying Fumban, which has an outer and inner wall, British troops were faced with an attack by the Protective Forces, an attack they drove off with the use of the bayonet. Some prisoners of war were taken, plus military equipment. Bamum inhabitants welcomed the arrival of the British, and stated that "all the Fumban and Bamenda soldiers were deserting from the Germans."¹¹⁴ Thus far, fighting on the Northern Railway from Buea through Nkongsamba, Dschang, and Fumban, was complete.

¹¹⁰ TNA WO 158/516, Dobell to the Secretary of War Office.

¹¹¹ Moberly, *Military Operations*, 343.

¹¹² Moberly, *Military Operations*, 343.

¹¹³ TNA ADM 186/522, Operations of Sierra Leone Troops.

¹¹⁴ TNA ADM 137/380, Fuller, Summary of recent Military operations, 1 January 1916.

Also, the Cross River column had achieved its objective, clearing its line of operations and converging with the Northern Railway forces. These forces began to return to the main base in Douala, and the attention was turned towards Yaounde.

The Final Advance on and fall of Yaounde

When the first Yaounde attack had been called off, Dobell held that any advance on Yaounde must be made in such a strength as to render the movement independent of any expected co-operation. That would necessitate a force of at least 2000 arriving in front of Yaounde and a further 200 for maintaining the lines of communication. He recommended the repairing of the Railway to Eseka, and the improvement of the Yaounde road as far as Wum Biagas to enable motor transport to be used, in order to maintain the required force. He asked for large numbers of carriers to be brought from British and French West African colonies.¹¹⁵

Also, before the recommencement of the battle for Yaounde, and given its importance, the British contemplated using airplanes for the bombardment of the town. But this whole idea was defeated when Dobell observed that “it does not appear probable from the point of view of tactical information that the value of aircraft will be very great. It will be almost impossible to locate troops in this thick bush country”¹¹⁶ This interesting observation adds to the unique challenges confronting the Cameroon campaign, including putting military officials on their toes regarding strategizing and designing tactics and making it impossible for the use of certain military logistics. The nature of the territory – a mass of bush and forest, and some swamps – prevented the safe use and landing of military planes.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ TNA WO 158/516, Dobell to Lugard, Military Situation in the Cameroon, Douala, 30 June 1915.

¹¹⁶ TNA WO 158/516, Secret, Dobell to the Secretary of the War Office, Aeroplanes, Douala, 17 August 1915.

¹¹⁷ TNA WO 158/516, Secret, Dobell to the Secretary of the War Office, 21 July 1915.

As had happened before during the initial advance, on 25 and 26 August 1915 in a conference in Douala between Governor General Merlin of F.E.A, General Aymerich and Dobell, the Allies arrived at a plan. They would resume a most vigorous offensive in all side in September, in anticipation of an improved weather.¹¹⁸ The expeditionary troops would advance to the line Eseka-Wum Biagas (Mbili River), repair the Railway to Eseka and make the Yaounde-Edea road fit for motor traffic as far as Wum Biagas, then continue into Yaounde.¹¹⁹ They were expected to complete the capture of Yaounde by themselves, although Aymerich with a force of 2000 men was to advance in three columns from the line Bertoua-Dume, the right column following the road along the Sanaga River, the center and the main column along the Bertoua-Nanga Eboko road, and the left column along the Dume Station –Mendang road. He hoped to effect a junction of all three columns on the Yaounde-Joko road, and then approach Yaounde from the North. In addition to those columns, Col. Meillour's (late Colonel Miquelard's) column of 1,000 men strong which was already near Amban at the time would make efforts towards Ebolowa.

In the summer of 1915 re-enforcements came from the British Indian Army and two companies of the W.A.R from Sierra Leone. Thousands of porters (1,500 a month each to replace the casualties alone)¹²⁰ were arranged to be brought from Allied West African colonies.

¹¹⁸ Rains in Cameroon were very heavy in July and August, and September was deemed to be better.

¹¹⁹ TNA WO 158/516, Dobell to the Secretary of the War Office, 7 September 1915.

¹²⁰ The difficult question of the recruitment and use of carriers and porters in African campaigns, the Chief means of transportation, needs further historical inquiry. Their recruitment process was reminiscent of the slave trade era, and constitute an important subject in African history during the period of the Great War. In addition, their casualty rate far exceeded that of the soldiers. I am currently conducting a separate research on this subject, with regard to the Cameroon campaign. In the meantime, helpful pieces of research on the subject are, G.W.T Hodges, "African Manpower Statistics for the British Forces in East Africa, 1914-1918," *The Journal of African History*, 19 no. 1, World War I and Africa (1978): 101-116; David Killingray and James Matthews. "BEasts of Burden: British West African Carriers in the First World War," *Canadian Journal of African Studies / Revue Canadienne des Études Africaines*, 13, 1/2 (1979): 5-23; Geoffrey Hodges' two books, *The Carrier Corps: Military Labor in the East African Campaign, 1914-1918* (New York and London: Greenwood, Press, 1988), and *Kariakor: The Carrier Corps* (Nairobi: Nairobi University Press, 1999); Donald C. Savage and J. Forbes Munro, "carrier corps Recruitment

Also, a Rolls-Roy Armoured car, a Ford van Company were ordered from England. The Allies began constructing a motor road from Edea which was completed as far as their covering troops at Ngwe. By 1 September 1915, the strength of the Expeditionary Force alone stood at 7,555 Africans and just 324 white officers. Thus set, the Yaounde offensive resumed on 22 September 1915. The British African column followed a narrow bush track about 100 miles long, via Ngwe-Wumbiagas-Ndog, while the *tirailleurs* were to move by the line of the Railway, and consequently to the south of the British African force. Both forces met with strenuous fighting against the *askari* every stretch of the way. The British Africans were forced to convert their track into a motor road while the *tirailleurs* spent time re/constructing several important bridges to be able to transport themselves and have supplies by rail. In fact, 7,000 carriers were employed to bring up supplies via the completed motor road rail head.¹²¹

As a preliminary operation, a British detachment moved in and took Sakbajeme on 3 October 1915 without opposition, established a defensive post there, and denied the *askari* the River crossing. Then on 7 October, the Haywood column destined for Wum Biagas occupied Ndupe, meeting with little opposition, albeit the *askari* having impeded its march by felling trees across the road. On the 8th, the column arrived in front of an *askari* position on the Mbila River, a mile West of Wum Biagas. Covered by a Column under Lt.- Col Rose, which was moving towards the *askari* right flank from the direction of Sakbajeme, Haywood column comprising one Section Artillery Nigeria Regiment, one Gun Artillery Gold Coast Regiment, and portions of No. 2 Battalion Nigeria Regiment, and Gold Coast Regiment, with machine gun Section, India

in the British East Africa Protectorate, 1914-1918," *The Journal of African History* 7, no. 2 (1966): 313-342; and Melvine E. Page, "The War of Thangata: Nyasaland and the East African Campaign, 1914-1918," *The Journal of African History* 19, no. 1 (1978): 87-100.

¹²¹ Major-General Charles Dobell, "The Campaign," 706.

Regiment, on 9 October 1915 assaulted an *askari* position on the Mbila River.¹²² Company Sergeant Major Morakinjo Ibadan of the Nigeria Regiment led a section across the River. With severe fire from the *askari* trenches, he and his men counter fired, ejecting the *askari* from their trenches, and laying the Mbila River area open for seizure.¹²³ The convergent movements of Haywood and Lt.- Col. Rose columns forced the *askari* to withdraw. Here, Allied casualties numbered thirty-one killed. The Allies could not fully ascertain *askari* casualties, in part because of the density of the bush in which the fallen could be concealed, and in part “due to the rapidity with which the Germans remove [d] their wounded.”¹²⁴

Meanwhile, a French force under Commandant Mechet had left for Dibanga on 6 October 1915. It met with obstinate opposition during its progress, but kept driving the *askari* from the southern flank, then effected the crossing of the River Lingen on 20 October 1915. On the 25th, it occupied Sende after a short bombardment, so that the *askari* withdrew to the East towards Eseka. Then on the 30th, Lt.- Col. Rose and his forces assisted Commandant Mechet and his forces in an attack against Eseka, from where they edged out the *askari*. In these encounters, French casualties amounted to 116 killed and wounded. With Eseka taken, Lt.- Col. Fouson proceeded there with reinforcements and took over the augmented French force from there.¹²⁵ At this point, the French were occupying Eseka and the British Wum Biagas.

By early November 1915, Allied West African troops, numbering twelve separate columns, operating in converging directions towards Yaounde, were closing in on the Germans. At this point, Dobell confidently assured the Secretary of War that “the German forces will either

¹²² TNA WO 158/516, Secret, Dobell to the Secretary, War Office, 8 November 1915.

¹²³ TNA WO 158/516, Dobell to Bonar Law, Secretary of State for the Colonies, West African Expeditionary Force (enclosure), General headquarters, Cameroons, 15 March 1916.

¹²⁴ TNA WO 158/516, Secret, Dobell to the Secretary, War Office, Report on Operations, 8 November 1915.

¹²⁵ TNA WO 158/516, Secret, Dobell to the Secretary, War Office, 8 November 1915.

stand and fight or see the futility of further resistance,” because “there seems but little chance of their being able to break through the cordon of troops which is gradually closing round them.”¹²⁶

The preliminary advance having completed a general and final advance commenced on 23 November. The British lines of communication started off from their posts at Ngwe, Nkonjok, Ndupe, and Wum Biagas. The Allies had converted the ‘bush track’ into a motor road, and there was a regular service of supply wagons between Edea and Wum Biagas, and 3500 men were employed as carriers to transport food supplies from Edea and Wum Biagas. Dobell selected Dschang Mangas and a point on the Kribi-Yaounde road as the first target of the British and French columns. A French force was to be astride of the Kribi-Yaounde road before the commencement of British advance from Dschang Mangas. The Commanders were given a certain latitude of action regarding their future movements, to ensure that no column should be delayed on account of the other.¹²⁷

An Expeditionary Force main column under Col. Gorges moved via Njok, Matem, Omog, and the Puge River on Ngung. They overcame stiff resistance from the *askari* in their trenches. On 25 November, Sergeant Braima Sare of the Nigeria Regiment led a section with pluck through a swamp at Matem, where he and his men charged a well-positioned *askari* trench, forcing the *askari* under a hot fire to abandon it and flee.¹²⁸ Continuing in their advance, and four days later on 29 November 1915, Corporal Palpuke Grumah of the Gold Coast Regiment led six scouts up to a position held by sixty *askari* Rifles. He and his men got to within fifty yards of the *askari* position when the *askari* opened machine gun and Rifle pits fire, killing one of Grumah’s men and wounding another. Grumah led his men into a gunfire charge against the party of the

¹²⁶ TNA WO 158/516, Secret, Dobell to the Secretary, War Office.

¹²⁷ TNA WO 158/516, Secret, Dobell to the Secretary, War Office.

¹²⁸ TNA WO 158/516, Dobell to Bonar Law, 15 March 1916.

askari, repulsing the *askari*. His actions, coupled with others, including one by Sergeant Amadu Fulani V still of the Gold Coast Regiment who led some of his men into a bayonet charge against the *askari* retreating from Ngung cleared the area of the *askari* forces, for occupation by the British on 30 November 1915.¹²⁹

After the British column from Wum Biagas fought its way through the forest and reached the open tableland at Mangas, Dobell, without waiting for the French column under Mayer, directed it to push forward to Yaounde. On 6/7 December 1915, the position of the British troops was such that the advance detachment was near Sege, the main column at Ngung, the right flank guard at Nkog, and the left flank guard at Ssong Maal. Col. Gorges decided to continue his advance in the morning of the 7th. His forces continued to edge out pockets of *askari* forces from trench to trench, forcing them to retreat continuously. Allied military intelligence showed that all the Protective Forces were gradually withdrawing from all directions towards Yaounde. On 8 December, Col. Gorges' main column, including a detachment of the 26th Sierra Leone Company R.E left Ngung and covered roughly three miles, its advance detachment driving the *askari* out of their position about one and a half mile further on. On 9 December, Sergeant Braima Sare again, in sole control of his section at Belok Nkonjok established a firing line within forty yards of the *askari* trenches and maintained steady and heavy fire with the *askari* for four hours, after which the *askari* were again forced to give up their position.¹³⁰ On 9 December, Col. Gorges' right flank column under Lt.- Col. Haywood attempted all day without success to gain the vantage position of the Protective Forces covering the crossing of the Manjei River. But then, Col. Gorges' left flank column under Captain Butler succeeded on 11 December 1915, in placing

¹²⁹ TNA WO 158/516, Dobell to Bonar Law.

¹³⁰ TNA WO 158/516, Secret, Dobell to the Secretary, War Office, 8 December 1915, & Dobell to Bonar Law, 15 March 1916. See also, in the same file, Operations of Sierra Leone Troops.

his force between the Cameroon protective troops at Nguge and their supports on the main road. This caused the *askari* to break so that the Allied force captured from them numerous weaponry and supplies. The operation cleared the way for the main column, which advanced to Sege and as the *askari* resistance became weaker, the line of the Kele River was occupied on 15 December 1915.¹³¹

The main British column continued its advance, but covered only seven and a half miles in three days, its progress being hampered more by terrain and topography and broken bridges than by the *askari*. By this time, and on account of casualties, mostly African NCOs were now in charge of the machine guns. Aided by the successful work of its flank detachments, the column marched unopposed into Chang Mangas (over half way to Yaounde from Wum Biagas) on 17 December, and the more open and cultivated Yaounde country was reached.¹³² During those British operations so far from 6-22 December 1915, their casualties included three Lieutenants, and three Sergeants (British) wounded, twenty Africans killed and fifty-one wounded, and seven carriers wounded.

At Chang Biagas, Col. Gorges paused for five days to ready for the final stage of the advance. The British, while resting the troops at Chang Biagas, formed an advance depot there, and cleared the hospital. Five companies of the Sierra Leone Battalion were at this point on the line of communication between Edea and Ngung. The other Company was withdrawn by Dobell from Douala to reinforce Col. Gorges' forces. Resuming the final advance on 22 December, the British force moved forward in practically similar formation to that previously adopted, except

¹³¹ TNA WO 158/516, Confidential, Dobell to Kitchener, Report on operations, The Cameroons, 6 January 1916.

¹³² TNA ADM 186/522, Operations of Sierra Leone Troops; TNA WO 158/516, Dobell to Kitchener, 6 January 1916.

that by this time the right flank column was composed of troops of the Gold Coast Regiment under Lt.- Col. Rose.¹³³

On 23 December, the Field Section 36th (Sierra Leone) Company R.E with the center column advanced about four miles, driving out of two positions a Protective Force of about the strength of a Company. But on the 24th, the *askari* presented a stiffer resistance, so that Col. Gorge's force advanced only two miles. On Christmas day, Gorges' column reached Nkomenka, then Ngobo on 26 and Unguot on the 27th. One Company of the Sierra Leone Battalion was withdrawn from the line of communication to the General Reserve, and on the 29th, it joined the left flank detachment which, by the 30th, had crossed the Mopfa River. The center column also crossed the River that same day, so that British forces were now less than 6 miles away from Yaounde. To all intents and purposes, from 22 December onwards, *askari* resistance to the advancing British African forces was already petering out, so that by the evening of 31 December 1915, Yaounde was reached. In this last one week advance, the British casualties included one Lieutenant wounded, eight Africans killed and forty-three wounded, and one missing, and four carriers and stretchers wounded.¹³⁴

On 1 January 1916, the British column under Col. Gorges marched into Yaounde unopposed but found the town deserted. Patrols moved out on all roads leading from Yaounde, but the country within a radius of ten miles appeared to have been deserted. Governor Ebermaier, Col. Zimmermann and their followers had evacuated Yaounde some days earlier, then moved to Wemenge, from where they made southwest for Spanish Guinea, the nearest point of neutral territory being 125 miles distant.¹³⁵

¹³³ TNA ADM 186/522, Operations of Sierra Leone Troops; TNA WO 158/516, Dobell to Kitchener.

¹³⁴ TNA ADM 186/522, Operations of Sierra Leone Troops; TNA WO 158/516, Dobell to Kitchener.

¹³⁵ TNA WO 158/516, Dobell to Kitchener; *The Times History*, 310.

Meanwhile, the French main force met with serious opposition during its advance by the line of the right Railway to Mangeles, sustaining casualties for the period 21 Nov-22 Dec 1915 of four Europeans killed and twenty-one wounded, fifty-three Africans killed, and 190 wounded. On 7 December, the French main column crossed the River Mpobe and took Badog. It crossed the Great Malume on the 14th and from there onward to Mangeles faced obstinate resistance from Protective Forces. It occupied Mangeles on 21 December after five days of fighting, then rested and established an advance base there. On the 31st, a French advanced party moved eastward, followed on 2 January 1916 by the main column. The French captured Makak on 4 January, after some losses.¹³⁶ It got to Yaounde days after the British force had already seized the town.

When Yaounde was taken, all remaining Allied troops across the country, including the columns of Brisset, Morisson and Cunliffe (previous chapter) were only a few days distance from the town. These troops soon flooded in. Brisset's column, which entered on 8 January, had been on an active campaign for over fifteen months and marched and fought over 1,000 miles of territory. Cunliffe column was already at the Nachtigal Falls, on the Sanaga River. Units of this force, as well as units of the *tirailleurs* under Aymerich, amongst them two companies of Belgian African Infantry commanded by Captain Marin. The troops under Aymerich commenced arriving Yaounde from 8 January, while General Aymerich himself arrived on 9 January 1916. Aymerich then took over command of the Allied forces at Yaounde. Dobell from Douala arrived on 10 February.¹³⁷

¹³⁶ TNA WO 158/516, Dobell to Kitchener.

¹³⁷ ANSOM TGO 8/76, La Guerre en Afrique, La Conquête du Cameroun; TNA WO 158/516, Dobell to Kitchener, 22 February 1916.

Beyond Yaounde

The escape of the German Governor and his following from Yaounde just before the arrival of the Allies was quite disappointing and frustrating for the Allies, for they had failed to capture the Governor and the Commander of the Protective Forces who had given them such trouble. Thus, the pursuit of the fleeing Germans to the south. On 5 January, Haywood column, containing the Field Section 36th (Sierra Leone) Company R.E, set out from Yaounde in pursuit of the askari, whose southern direction aiming to cross over to Spanish Muni had been revealed to the Allies by deserters. The column reached Widemenge on 8 January, pushed forward to Nyong River, crossing at Kolmaka. Haywood then arranged an armistice on 9 January for the purpose of taking over from the Protective Force thirty-four Europeans and 180 African POWs. On 13 January, a detachment from Haywood column occupied Bidegambala. After consolidating his position on the left flank of the Njong, Haywood continued his advance on 15 January 1916, being followed by a French force of 850 Rifles. They met several strongly entrenched positions between Kolmaka and Ebolowa, which were all evacuated by the Germans who were retiring precipitately.¹³⁸

Continuing his advance, Haywood column marched forty-six miles and occupied Ngulemakong on 19 January. That day, a French column (under Morrison) entered Ebolowa, Haywood column arriving there on the 22nd. On 23 January, Haywood column made a long march of eighteen miles but learned in the evening that a Protective Force of 500 strong was near Mafub covering the main retirement on Ngoa. On 24 January, Haywood's force fought the Protective Forces at Mafub, driving them out of their position at the cost of twenty-two British

¹³⁸ TNA ADM 186/522, Operations of Sierra Leone Troops; TNA WO 158/516, Dobell to Kitchener, 27 January 1916.

white casualties and twenty British African casualties mainly the rank and file and carriers of the Nigeria Regiment.¹³⁹ On 25 January, Haywood's force occupied Abang with little opposition but met with stubborn resistance from the Protective Force South of Abang. On the 26th, Haywood column arrived at Nkam to find that the Protective Force had retired towards Ngoa. Haywood received reliable reports that German Governor and his followers had already concentrated at, or passed over the Spanish frontier. Disappointed, Haywood marched his column through Efulen to Kribi, arriving on 7 February 1916.¹⁴⁰ Thus far, and having eluded all attempts to stop him, Governor Ebermaier and about 900 Germans, together with 6,000 Cameroonian soldiers, and 9,000 civilians, completed their retreat into Spanish Guinea by 16 February 1916 and surrendered to the Spanish authorities there, and the Cameroon campaign came to what the British described as a "triumphant end." Once in Spanish Guinea, and interned by the authorities, the German Governor had been permitted to send an open telegram in French to the Colonial Minister at Berlin, announcing that "want of munitions and compels me to leave the Protectorate together with all troops and staff."¹⁴¹

Mora, the end.

Although the German Governor and his followers had fled Cameroon, the Mora Mountain Fort in the North was still being held by some *askari* who had entrenched themselves on the Mountain. These *askari* were a constant menace to the Allied troops mounting a blockade of the place from the southern flap. Once on 4 January 1916, for example, two small parties of Nigerian soldiers one led by Sergeant Sulieru Ilorin and the other by Corporal Moma Busa had

¹³⁹ TNA ADM 186/522, Operations of Sierra Leone Troops; TNA WO 158/516, Dobell to Kitchener, 22 February 1916.

¹⁴⁰ TNA ADM 186/522, Operations of Sierra Leone Troops; TNA WO 158/516, Dobell to Kitchener.

¹⁴¹ TNA ADM 186/522, Operations of Sierra Leone Troops; ANSOM TGO 8/76, La guerre en Afrique; *The Times History*, 310.

engaged a unit of the *askari* who from their position on the hill opened fire, killing Private Adamu and slightly wounding Private Adenji Ibadan.¹⁴² Thus with the departure of the Germans in the south, political negotiation offered the best prospects to serve military honor in Mora. Seeing no further rationality for an armed conflict, and doubting whether the Nigerian soldiers would even be willing to fight again after such “a very arduous campaign,” the British Governor-General of Nigeria suggested to General Cunliffe that it was “advisable to offer them terms if they would surrender.”¹⁴³ Cunliffe thus sent the following words to the Commander of the British troops at Mora to deliver to the Commander of the *askari*:

Honour to inform you that all German forces in Cameroons have been defeated and all survivors have retired into Muni. All German troops are being shipped by Spanish authorities for internment in Spain, the blockading ships having been instructed to permit this. If you are prepared to surrender Mora now, officers will be allowed to retain swords, native ranks will be released and given safe passages to their home. All Europeans will be sent to England as prisoners of war.¹⁴⁴

The Commander of the Nigerian forces at Mora was advised that when presenting the message, “it should be accompanied by a letter from you stating that on your word of honour as a British officer, the telegram is genuine.” On receiving the telegram and while accepting the terms, *askari* Commander at Mora, took the advantage to request from the British Governor some money to pay off his gallant African soldiers. The Governor General who very generously acceded, endeavored to assure his London boss that the money was “not asked as a condition for surrender.”¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² TNA WO 95/5382, J. F Badham, O.C Maiduguri Column, to the G.S.O Northern Cameroons, Sava, 4 January 1916. Captain Badham took over command of the Maiduguri column from Major Fox on 29 April 1915 while Fox proceeded to join the Yola column on promotion.

¹⁴³ TNA WO 158/517, Lugard to Bonar Law, 21 February 1916.

¹⁴⁴ TNA WO 158/517, Lugard to Bonar Law.

¹⁴⁵ TNA WO 158/517, Lugard to Bonar Law, 21 February 1916. The Governor added to Von Raben that he was advancing him a sum of 2000 pounds from the credits of German firms in his hands, for which von Raben would be responsible.

The *askari* garrison at Mora then surrendered on 18 February 1916. This capitulated garrison consisted of von Raben (the commander), Carl Meyer, nine other Europeans, 145 Africa soldiers and 232 women and servants. This capitulation was very ‘gratifying news’ to Dobell and the Allies as “it not alone meant the complete conquest” of the Cameroons but obviated the necessity for the British of organizing an expedition with troops from Nigeria who had already “valiantly fought and marched for nearly seventeen months.”¹⁴⁶ All of Cameroon was now in the hands of the Allies. What they would do with it is the subject of chapter six.

The list of Allied casualties entered for the campaign as of 19 February 1916, summed up to 4,235 soldiers and carriers killed or wounded.¹⁴⁷ *Askari* casualties, obviously supposed to be higher, might have been around 5000-6000. In total, therefore, casualties in the Cameroon campaign amounted to well above 10,000. If we add the civilian casualties, the figure is frightening for the young colony.

Financially, the successful campaign, in which Africans had been used to conquer themselves for the Europeans, had been “attained with the least possible drain on Imperial resources” because on the part of the British, “the troops employed were, with few exceptions, all drawn from [British West African] neighboring colonies...”¹⁴⁸ One British colonel who had participated in the campaign marveled that “it is rather a remarkable thing to my mind that the campaign cost only 2,700, 000 [to the British] although it lasted for about eighteen to twenty months. I think it is rather marvelous.”¹⁴⁹ He concluded that this was the most economical of all

¹⁴⁶ TNA WO 158/544, J.F Badham, Report, 2 March 1916; TNA WO 158/517, Lugard to Bonar Law; TNA WO 158/516, Dobell to Kitchener of Khartoum, 22 February 1916.

¹⁴⁷ TNA WO 158/516, Dobell to Kitchener; See also, from the same file, Statement of Casualties with General Cunliffe, including Troops under General Brisset, General Headquarters, Cameroons, 22 February 1916.

¹⁴⁸ Major-General Charles Dobell, “The Campaign,” 707.

¹⁴⁹ Haywood, “The Campaign,” 711.

the campaigns. The truth is that even in the midst of the campaign, the British were tapping revenue. They tapped revenue from the cocoa plantations, which were made to pay for war expenses. Also, the British made use of German captured shipping for trooping, for armed craft, for transport of cocoa and other produce to Europe and for carrying German prisoners. They even sent two German captured ships from Cameroon to German South West Africa to assist in the trooping there.¹⁵⁰

How an achievable aim became unachievable

The ultimate war aim and plan of the Germans in Cameroon was not to defeat the invaders nor force them out of the colony. It was simply to hold the colony long enough to survive the end of the war in Europe, at which point the evocation of the principle of continuous occupation would lead potentially to the survival of German colonialism in Cameroon beyond the war. This was naive thinking, in so far as it negated the fact that the Cameroon campaign was part of the wider campaign of the Great War so that the fate of the colony was thus tied to the global fortunes and outcome of the War. Whoever lost the war would have the fate of its African colonies decided by the victors, and any such colonial claims standing alone would be but wishful thinking. Although in itself naive, this war aim and plan were both tenable and achievable. If anything, the Germans had a better knowledge of the terrain, especially the interior; their African troops were better prepared and accustomed to the type of guerrilla warfare tactics they settled on; communications and transportation was a big problem for the invaders; the strategy of the Germans and their African troops was one of defense, and the geography and topography of the Cameroons made it, as observed by one British colonel in the campaign, “well

¹⁵⁰ Dobell, “The Campaign,” 707.

suiting for an active defence.”¹⁵¹ How then did an achievable aim become unachievable? What historical forces and factors suffered the Germans the inability to achieve their war aim? Some of these forces and factors have already been alluded to in the narrative above. But for more historical clarity and appreciation of the situation, and for the fact that some of the forces and factors strengthen some of the objectives in this dissertation, a quick rehearsal in this concluding section of the chapter is necessary.

First, the Germans were forced into a two-front-war, one against the invading Allies and the other against the inhabitants of Cameroon. As a result of the hostile colonial relationship the Germans had with the majority of the people of Cameroon, those people used the occasion of the war to stage a sort of a general rebellion. The leaders of this general resistance were undoubtedly the people of Douala whose King had been executed by the Germans on the eve of war (chapter 2). During the war, the Duala turned effectively into an internal enemy of the Germans. They cooperated in all ways possible with the Allies against the Germans.¹⁵² Joined in that general war against the Germans, were other neighboring and further away peoples. Once the Allies entered Douala in 1914, the Duala and the Malimba immediately sided with them and, by serving them as pilots, guides and scouts, enabled them to penetrate into the River mouth and occupy the coastal settlements.¹⁵³ The hostility of the Duala people and others as a factor in the inability of the Germans to defend the town must be wholly appreciated, in view of the fact that under normal circumstances the town could have been “easily defended by a small mining detachment, two Forts at Suellaba and Cape Kamerun, and perhaps a couple of old tornado boats of the

¹⁵¹ Haywood, “The Cameroons Campaign,” 3.

¹⁵² Akinjide Osuntokun, “Nigeria and the War in German Cameroons, 1914-16” in *Nigeria in the First World War* (London: Longman, 1979), 187.

¹⁵³ Helmut Stoecker, “The First World War,” 275.

nineties, ...and a mere presence of a large sea-going cruiser would have prevented [the] capture of Duala.”¹⁵⁴ The German Commissioner in Douala reported that German authorities realized after the arrival of the first British warships that they were fighting a war in an enemy territory.

In the Dume area in the south, the inhabitants gave the French maximum cooperation. As one German soldier lamented in his diary entry for 15 January 1915, “the French are greatly assisted through the fact that all hidden roads and tracks and every German detachment are reported to them in detail by the natives.”¹⁵⁵ When the French took N’Zimou, captured letters written by German officers explained the degree of local hostility towards the Germans and their cooperation with the invaders as a factor responsible for the fall of that place into the hands of the French.¹⁵⁶ This general support of the Allies by Cameroonians was reported by one German NCO as one of the reasons for the futility of their military efforts, concluding that although the coastal peoples were “still ostensibly German, they were really English and behaved accordingly.”¹⁵⁷ Assisting the Allies as spies and guides across the difficult terrain very often neutralized the *askari* advantage of the better knowledge of the terrain. Advancing on the Northern Railway along the Mbonjo-Susa-Muyuka line, the British were aided by local inhabitants as guides. Along that area, a German officer remarked, “the English know the country; they have the natives on their side, and have cut roads for themselves for safety.”¹⁵⁸

Such instances of Cameroonians and their leaders supporting Allied war efforts and frustrating the Germans were endless. The whole of the Mora area where the Allies positioned

¹⁵⁴ TNA WO 158/552, Extracts from the Diary of N. Schumacher, Chief engineer of S/S ‘Kamerun’, up to the Surrender of Duala, 1 August 1915; TNA WO 158/552, Private diary of Lieut. Nothnogel.

¹⁵⁵ TNA WO 158/552, War Diary of Sergt. Major Jütersonke.

¹⁵⁶ Joseph Aymerich, *La Conquête du Cameroun 1er août 1914-20 février 1916* (Paris: 1933), 45.

¹⁵⁷ TNA WO 106/656, Adler, Report sent to Imperial German Embassy, Washington, 24 Feb 1916.

¹⁵⁸ TNA WO 158/552, Engelbrechten to Gaisser, 24 October 1914.

themselves to blockade the fort, was reported to be supportive of Allied war efforts. The cooperation of the people of Tibati frustrated German military efforts there the most, enabling the Allies to seize the place. The Fulani inhabitants there kept the *askari* held garrison in complete ignorance of the approach of the French forces. Not only that, they led the invaders into the town, thereby helping to break the last line of the German defenses in the North and saving the Allies at least several days of difficult fighting.¹⁵⁹ Sultan Bokhar of Mandara specifically passed on secrets of *askari* military movements to the British in Maiduguri and had to flee to Borno around 1914 ending, so as to avoid German wrath.¹⁶⁰

In some places, Cameroonians who had resisted German colonial rule before the Allied invasion reorganized themselves and went after the *askari*. In some villages, the fight was just between the Germans and other Cameroonians. Once in the village of Kambo, at the approach of the *askari*, several inhabitants launched a surprise attack on them, with bows and arrows and spears.¹⁶¹ Earlier in the war the entire Yabassi people in the Douala area organized themselves, attacking *askari* messengers and men with knives, spears, and Dane guns, contributing in large part to the withdrawal of the *askari* from that region of the country.¹⁶²

Support for the Allies also took the form of providing them with food supplies and logistics while denying the *askari* the same. In war, the availability of food or the lack of it has often been a decisive factor in outcomes. One of the ways by which Cameroonians demonstrated their disapproval of the Germans was by starving the fighters to inactivity or even death while

¹⁵⁹ John Leland Ausman, "The Partition, Conquest, and Occupation of the Emirate of Adamawa, 1885-1926" (Ph.D. diss., Dalhousie University, 1973), 347.

¹⁶⁰ Lieutenant-Colonel Jean Ferrandi, *Conquête du Cameroun-Nord, 1914-1915* (Paris: Charles-Lavauzelle & Cie, 1928), 50.

¹⁶¹ TNA WO 158/552, War Diary of Sergt. Major Jütersonke.

¹⁶² TNA WO 106/656, Non-Commissioned Officer Bode's short Notes from recollections of experiences in the war in the Cameroons, to the Imperial Colonial Officer, Berlin, 15 February 1916.

furnishing the invaders with as much food as possible. In the North, the Sarikins (Chiefs or sultans) of Rei Buba and Ngaoundere worked very closely with the British, supplying them information, cattle, food, large quantities of other supplies and carriers, in addition to the never ceasing and almost impossible demands of the French who subsisted their Northern columns from these two districts. Obviously, these two persons were very much keen on staying in power after the war and having their territories controlled by the British.¹⁶³ But in doing so, their actions had specific negative implications on German war efforts. The Sarikin Mandara – the Chief of all the country round Mora collected large supplies of grain for the Allies.¹⁶⁴ The Sarikin of Garoua also provided them with grains. In Bama, Shehu Sanda of Dikoa was forced to give up his support for the Germans and provided the British Maiduguri column with 17 good horses as remounts, 513 guns, thirty-three revolvers and his wands of office. He also provided sandals for many of the soldiers who already had sore feet owing to the mountainous and rocky country.¹⁶⁵ In the Dschang and Bare districts on the Northern Railway, hundreds of inhabitants gave the Allies food and others accepted the role of carriers.¹⁶⁶

In addition to the material and physical support given the Allies by Cameroonians, there was, of course, the morale factor. The morale factor has often been decisive in every warfare in ways not seriously considered by historians.¹⁶⁷ That the Germans conceived, rightly so, of the entire populations rising against them or being indifferent to their war efforts, was itself a major

¹⁶³ TNA WO 95/5386, Lt. Col. Webb-Bowen, Notes on the Ngaoundere Plateau, 1915.

¹⁶⁴ TNA WO 95/5382, Captain R.W Fox, Commandant, Maiduguri Column, to the Commandant, Nigeria Field Force in Lagos, Sava, 3 miles S.E of Mora, German Kameruns, 29 August 1914.

¹⁶⁵ TNA WO 95/5382, Fox to the Commandant.

¹⁶⁶ TNA WO 95/5382, Gorges, Report of Operations, 20 December 1914.

¹⁶⁷ Most American historians of the war for example stress that perhaps the greatest contribution of America's entry into the war on the side of the Allies in April 1917 was the morale effect it had on the willingness of the German soldiers and their allies to fight on.

blow to their war efforts. Their willingness, determination and ability to fight were all affected by this lack of morale. As the French Governor of Equatorial Africa rightly observed:

Il y a lieu d'observer que des tous les renseignements concordants parvenus soit Nord (Colonel Brisset) soit de L'est et du Sud-Est (Colonel Morisson et Lieutenant-Colonel Hutin) soit de Sud (Commandant Miquelard) les troupes allemandes vont se démoralisant tandis que la les populations ses prononvent de plus en plus pour nous.¹⁶⁸

Outright desertions and mutinies from the German force constituted one of the death blows to their military efforts. And this explains in part the coercive manner in which the Germans had recruited Africans into the *askari* during the war. What made the situation particularly hard for the Germans was the fact that many deserters went on to join the Allies, thus making the Cameroon campaign one of the rare campaigns in the war where some soldiers easily switched camps in one war.¹⁶⁹ When Yaounde was taken, 255 *askari* men quickly deserted into the Allied African force, fifty per cent of whom brought in their arms and equipment.¹⁷⁰ Many of these desertions followed mutinies and refusal to fight. The fall of Garoua on 10 June 1915 was attributed, in large part, to the insurrection and mutiny of the *askarri*. Where men of the *askari* mutinied and refused to fight, German white officers leading the force became demoralized, helpless and faced mostly with one choice of capitulation.¹⁷¹ When the French captured the German post of Monso in the East, some *askari* who had earlier mutinied and who became prisoners of war for the French, were happily re-enlisted on the French side, so that the Germans now became their new enemies. The soldiers explained that they had never wanted to

¹⁶⁸ ANSOM TGO 8/76, Confidentiel, Merlin, a Monsieur le Ministre, le 18 Août 1915. Translation: "It should be noted that in the military engagements in the North, East and Southeast of Cameroon, German troops became demoralized as the entire populations of those places supported us (Allied troops)"

¹⁶⁹ This appears to have happened only in the African campaigns, including the East African campaign, with, perhaps, lesser intensity.

¹⁷⁰ TNA WO 158/516, Dobell to Kitchener, 27 January 1916.

¹⁷¹ TNA WO 158/552, War Diary of Sergt. Major Jütersonke.

fight for the Germans, but had been forcibly conscripted by their Chief, working for the Germans, because their Chiefs had considered them their enemies. Thus their Chiefs had conscripted them with the aim of having them killed in battle.¹⁷² This example is reminiscent of the manner of military recruitment (chapter 3) which was largely coercive, with the collaboration of traditional leaders, who did so either for personal interests and gains or because they were themselves compelled by colonial authorities.

At one point, the Allied commanding, evoking the African sense of military honor, noted that "though a great number of [Cameroonian soldiers] are tired of war and possibly lose no opportunity to return to private life, no serious disaffection exists among their troops."¹⁷³ The truth, however, is that soldiers who upon their sense of military honor stayed together with the Germans all through the War were the regular *askari* who were there even before the commencement of the War. This strong sense of military honor applied less to those conscripted during the war, and who felt no obligation or desire to support German war efforts.

Lack of ammunition did play a major role against the military efforts of the *askari*, and was used widely by the Germans as a justification for their capitulation. The shortage of ammunition and guns caused the Germans the inconvenience of being unable to arm and equip more Africans, as well as German nationals in the Cameroons, which might have significantly influenced the course of the campaign. "In consequence of this want," cried out one German, "it was not possible to equip the European detachment in Duala with modern weapons. From the Bulus, the Jaundes and from Njoja, thousands of natives have offered themselves for services,

¹⁷² ANSOM TGO 8/76, Merlin a Monsieur le Ministre, le 18 Août 1915.

¹⁷³ TNA ADM 137/224.

but could not be engaged through the want of Rifles....”¹⁷⁴ “Had we had a larger arms reserve,’ lamented another German soldier in his war diary, “we could put up a larger force” and resistance.¹⁷⁵ As early as 2 January 1915, he was already observing that the Germans would not be able to hold on to Cameroon for long “as munitions are getting scarce” – a fact which he observed the Allies were already capitalizing on. Then he noted on 12 August 1915 that the general situation was becoming hopeless on account of lack of ammunition and that if peace was not soon declared, the Germans must surrender. “We cannot deliver any great attack” he said, “owing to lack of ammunition and have to surrender position after position. We have not one gun with which to oppose to those of the enemy. The enemy everywhere are in great preponderance.”¹⁷⁶ According to Strachan, “the lack of munitions became the major German explanation as to why their defence of the Cameroons had not been protracted.”¹⁷⁷ A German soldier asserted that “as the first ever difficulty met with in operations in the Cameroons, I would give the well-known shortage of munitions, and the complete lack of artillery.”¹⁷⁸

Interestingly, in spite of such shortage of arms and ammunition, the Germans seemed to have done very little to mitigate the problem. At one point, Dobell, while admitting that lack of ammunition was a serious question to the Germans, was befuddled at their lavish expenditure, which did not make it appear that they feared any shortage at all.¹⁷⁹ On the wastage of

¹⁷⁴ TNA WO 158/552, Eye-Witnesses’ statements, Report on the course of the war in Kamerun up to date (October 1914).

¹⁷⁵ TNA WO 158/552, War Diary of Sergt. Major Jütersonke.

¹⁷⁶ TNA WO 158/552, War Diary of Sergt. Major Jütersonke.

¹⁷⁷ Strachan, “The Cameroons,” 56; Also see Osuntokun, *Nigerians*, who has highlighted the lack of ammunition and the lack of local support for the Germans as key factors used by the Germans to explain their failed military objective in the Cameroons.

¹⁷⁸ TNA WO 106/656, Non-Commissioned Officer Bode’s short Notes.

¹⁷⁹ TNA ADM 137/224.

ammunition in Garoua, one German cried out, “big fights take place daily when a great deal [of ammunition] has to be shot away.”¹⁸⁰

Finally, the actions of individual German officers also undermined their own military efforts. Many of them did not do the fighting, letting instead the African soldiers and the European NCOs at the front. As one German soldier once noted of his officers in his diary entry for 22 September 1915, “the officers stop behind, an unparalleled disgrace for these folks. I never see them in the firing line in any fight.”¹⁸¹ This situation was exacerbated by the fact that the German military officers and their *askari* hardly undertook any offensive, even when they had the advantage to do so. Most often, they made ambushes. While such military strategy was quite workable given the nature of warfare and the terrain, many of the ambushes were quite unnecessary, and never materialized. Most of the German military leaders, once they heard of an enemy in large strength being around, preferred to wait in an ambush. Col Zimmermann criticized the practice in a circular issued to all stations, reserve Companies and leaders of North, West and East Divisions on 17 October 1914 as being unproductive, noting that military leaders wasted days and weeks in waiting forgetting that in “military undertakings inactivity is equal to retreat” He charged that “even on the defensive one must try and impose one’s will on the enemy and defeat him in detail before he joins up his force” because inactivity had a “disorganizing influence on the willingness to fight and the discipline of the troops.” He cited how even while acting on the defensive, vigorous and offensive actions by the Protective Forces had led to ‘decisive and gratifying results’ at Garua, Nsanakang, and elsewhere.”¹⁸²

¹⁸⁰ TNA WO 158/552, War Diary of Sergt. Major Jütersonke.

¹⁸¹ TNA WO 158/552, War Diary of Sergt. Major Jütersonke.

¹⁸² TNA WO 158/552, Circular letter issued by Lt-Col. Zimmermann, Edea, 17 October 1914.

Conclusion

The conduct of the Cameroon campaign was the responsibility of the African soldiers, for which they must claim full credit. The German African soldiers' guerrilla warfare tactics, characterized by surprises and ambushes, as well as occasional entrenchment in hills and mountains, in alignment with topography and geography, and the general mobility of the soldiers, forced the invading Allies into an adaptable war, in which their African soldiers had the most suitable experiences and skills. These experiences and skills guide us to names of West African soldiers like Company Sergeant Majors Bello Akure, Ebrima Jalu, Sergeants Mama Kemberi, Awadu Bakano, Namadu Bauchi, Lance Corporal Mama Gujiba, Corporals Durowotu Ibadan, Timbila Busanga, Maifindi Shua, Privates Jatto Dagati, Musa Godibowa, to name but these, which deserve representation in accounts of the 1914 war. Their individual and collective experiences of participating in and leading others in an African campaign as part of the Great War efforts to 'save' mankind and thwart Germany's efforts of conquering the world remain pivotal to how we understand campaigns of the Great War outside their European epicenter. Providing a detailed account of the African campaigns, with particular attention to alternative ways of fighting the Great War other than what European campaigns tell us is a novel insight into the history of the war. Recovering, including and incorporating the experiences of Africans and their campaigns in the war in Africa, as well as other campaigns of the war outside Europe into existing historiographies of the war expands not only scholars' knowledge but the world's scope and outreach of such a disaster that befell the world in 1914. Such is the contribution of the above two chapters to scholarship.



Figure 5.1 Tirraileurs arriving at Wum Biagas on 20 May 1915

Photo courtesy of: Brig.-General F.J Moberly, *Military Operations, Togoland and the Cameroons, 1914-1916 (History of the Great War based on official documents)* (London: The Imperial War Museum, 1931).

The photo above shows the *tirraileurs* (French West African soldiers) arriving Wum Biagas which is near Edea, along the Douala-Yaounde road, on 20 May 1915. There were hundreds of *tirraileurs* that occupied the place on that day, in cooperation with British West African soldiers. The *tirraileurs* had fought their way through the dense forest, marching over a fifty miles distance, towards Yaounde, their ultimate target. They still had over a hundred miles to cover. The area on which they are marching has been cleared of enemy *askari* troops, and the *tirraileurs* are marching with a bit of certainty. The soldier by the side appears to be the leader of the group.

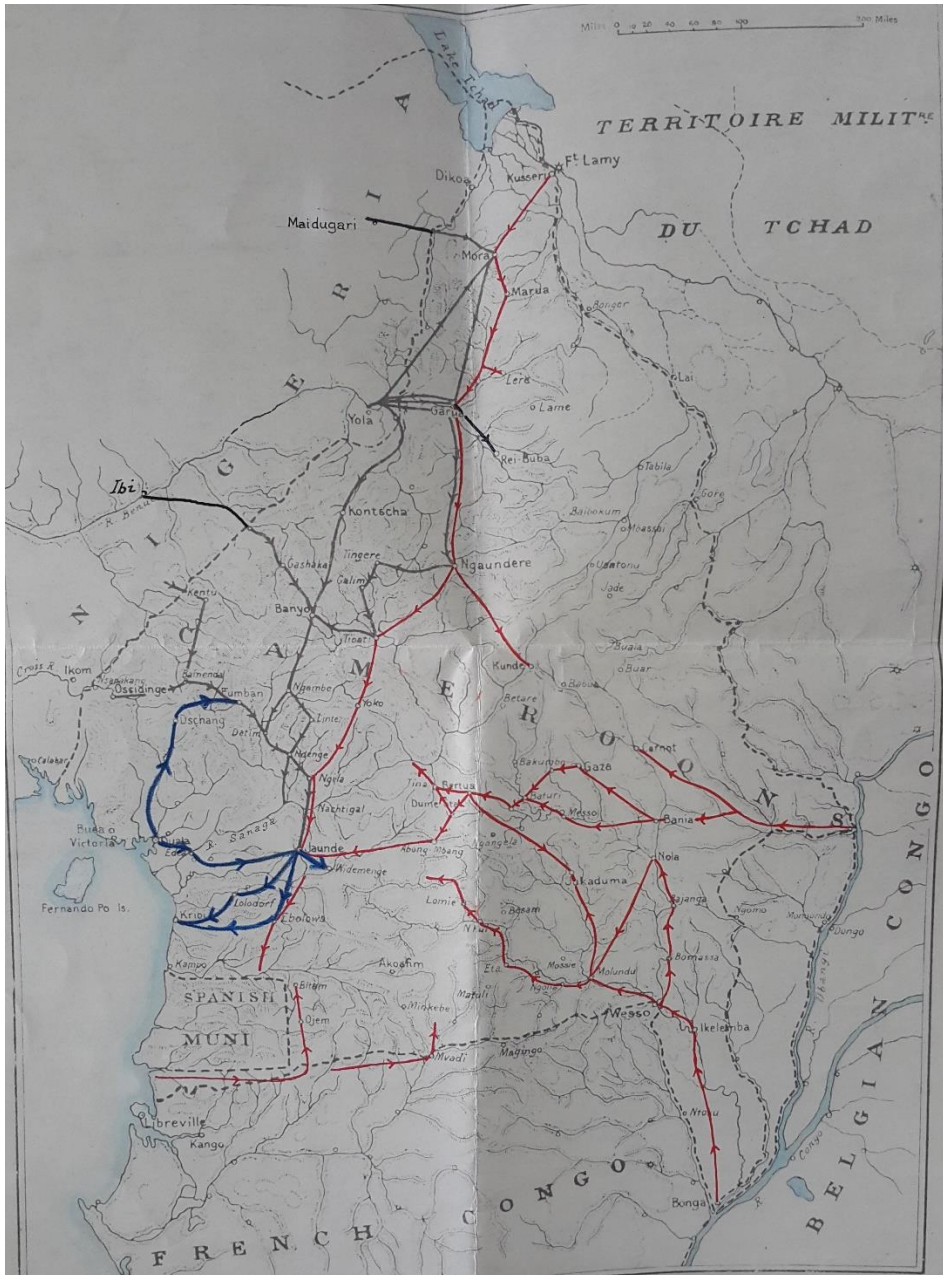


Figure 5.2 Map of Cameroon showing movement of Allied African troops

Map courtesy of: The National Archives, Kew-Richmond, United Kingdom (WO) 32/5320

The map above shows the general movement of Allied West African troops in Cameroon. The blue arrow line shows the movement of the combined Anglo-French Force (WAEF) from Douala to Yaounde and along the Northern Railway; red shows the movement of the French African Forces under General Aymerich around the South and Southeast of Cameroon; and black shows the movement of the British and French West African forces from the North under the general command of Cunliffe. All three converged in Yaounde in January 1916 to effect final defeat of the Germans and their askari forces.

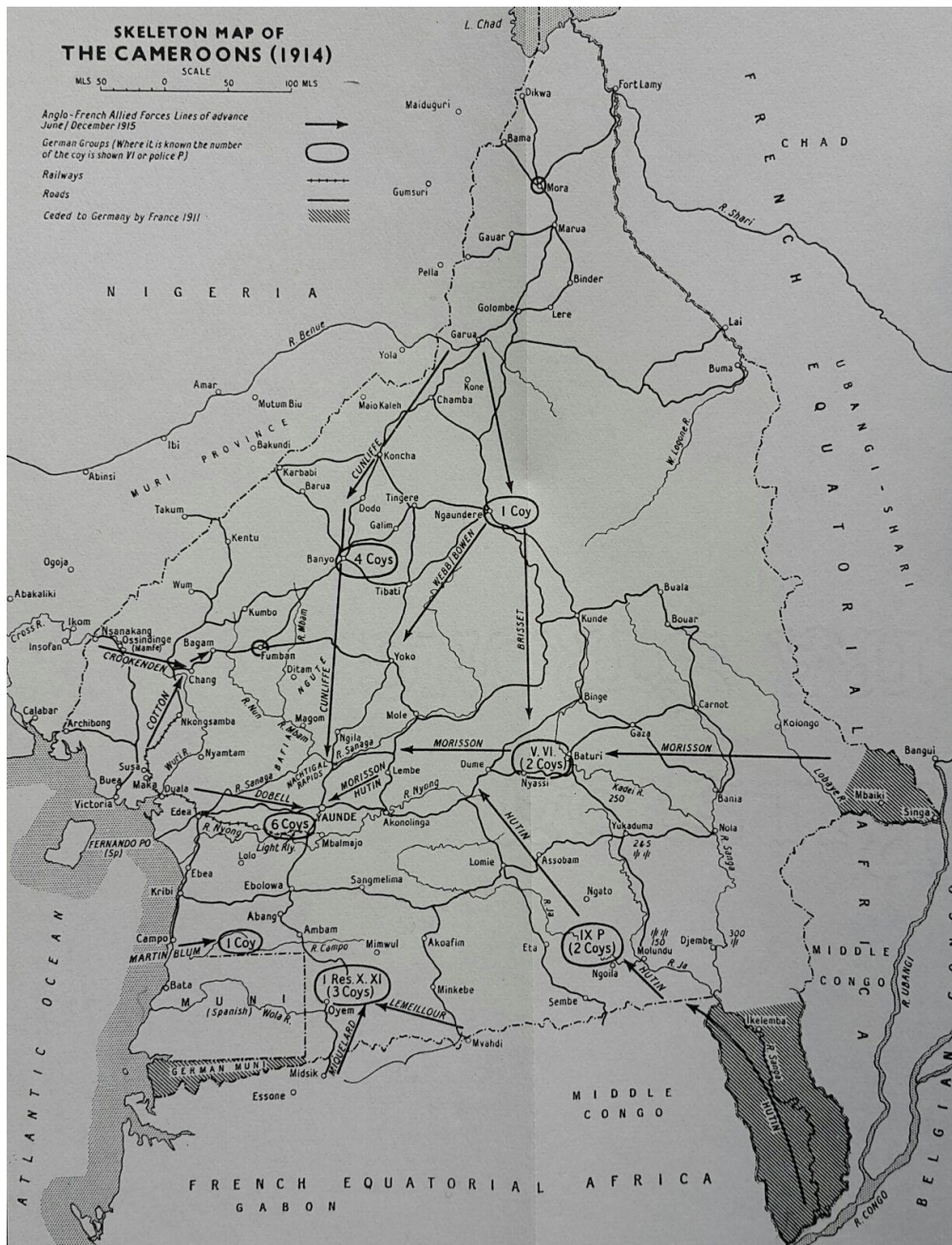


Figure 5.3 Movement of Allied African troops

Photo courtesy of: Col. A. Haywood and Brigadier F.A.S Clarke, *The History of the Royal West African Frontier Force* (Aldershot: Gale & Polden Ltd., 1964).

The Map above details movement of Allied African troops in Cameroon. It shows the mobile nature of the campaign, with troops moving several hundreds of miles of distances against the askari. The bolded arrow lines detail the movement of specific columns, named after their commanders. As shown on the map, the entire Cameroon territory of slightly over 300,000 square miles of the land surface was affected by the fighting, as the Germans and the *askari* moved from one place to another, pursued by the Allies.



Figure 5.4 Askari arms collected following capitulation at Mora

Photo courtesy of: Brig.-General F.J Moberly, *Military Operations, Togoland and the Cameroons, 1914-1916* (*History of the Great War based on official documents*) (London: The Imperial War Museum, 1931).

The photo above shows the capitulation of the *askari* at the garrison on the Mora Mountain, after being offered generous terms by the Allies, on 18 February 1916. Here, about ten white German officers, 145 Cameroonian rank and file (in the company of 232 women and children), gave up their weapons, shown in the photo. This is the one askari unit that was not 'defeated' in the Cameroon campaign, almost reminiscent of the group of askari under General Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck in German East Africa who surrendered in late November 1918 after the end of Great War and the signing of the Armistice in Europe.



Figure 5.5 Askari man drilling a new recruit

Photo courtesy of: Brig.-General Howard E. Gorges, *The Great War in West Africa* (London: Hutchinson, 1931).

The photo above shows an askari recruit, being drilled by another askari. The majority of the wartime recruits had to be drilled by senior African soldiers. The gun is held close to the ear, across the shoulder, and the target on sight is carefully aimed at, and the trigger released. This appeared to be standard drilling exercises for new recruits.



Figure 5.6 Group of askari men

Photo courtesy of: Brig.-General Howard E. Gorges, *The Great War in West Africa* (London: Hutchinson, 1931).

The three photos above are a display of some askari in colonial Cameroon. The top most photo shows an askari unit, with a white officer in their midst. They appear to be getting ready for a military operation. The photo in the middle shows askari lined up in the forest. There is no white officer in their midst. The background is an example of the forested nature of some of the terrain on which operations were carried out. The photo at the bottom displays askari in official military attire, seemingly being drilled by the commanding askari soldier.



Figure 5.7 Sergeant Major Akure Bello of the Nigeria Regiment.

Photo courtesy of: Col. A. Haywood and Brigadier F.A.S Clarke, *The History of the Royal West African Frontier Force* (Aldershot: Gale & Polden Ltd., 1964).

Akure Bello was a Nigeria Regiment Company Major Sergeant who led some of the Nigerian troops on the Northern Railway military operations (Chapter 4). He particularly distinguished himself in many operations and received some of the highest European military honors reserved for African soldiers in the colonial military services. We can see that even as a Company Major Sergeant, one of the top ranks ever attained by Africans then, he is barefooted. The issue of military boots was often contested among different European African soldiers. The French provided their African soldiers with boots, and they laughed at British African soldiers who often did not wear boots. But the British often claimed that Africans moved better in the bush without boots; that boots obstructed the smooth and quiet movement their African soldiers who were so accustomed to maneuvering in the bush without them.



Figure 5.8 A soldier of the Nigeria Regiment

Photo courtesy of: Brig.-General F.J Moberly, *Military Operations, Togoland and the Cameroons, 1914-1916 (History of the Great War based on official documents)* (London: The Imperial War Museum, 1931)

The photo above is an unnamed soldier of the Nigeria Regiment. It was common for Europeans not to pay attention to proper name identification of the African soldiers they recruited to fight. But the soldier must have distinguished himself in some ways to have his photo specially taken by a British Colonel. Once again, the soldier is without boots. His facial features suggest he is of the Hausa ethnic group, one of the main recruiting groups for British-Nigerian colonial military services.



Figure 5.9 Three askari men

Photo courtesy of: Brig.-General F.J Moberly, *Military Operations, Togoland and the Cameroons, 1914-1916* (*History of the Great War based on official documents*) (London: The Imperial War Museum, 1931).

The photo above displays three unnamed askari. Like the Allies, and perhaps worse so, the Germans did not care about proper identification of the African soldiers who defended the Cameroon colony for them for eighteen months, many of them dying in the process. Like many of their counterparts in the British African military services, they are not wearing boots. The Germans did provide boots to their askari, but not all. The problem of boots was particularly acute during the war in Cameroon as African males were conscripted for military service, with inadequate military materials. Many of the soldiers with bare feet suffered jigger attacks (Chapter 4).



Figure 5.10 Barricaded shooting position of Nigerian soldiers

Photo courtesy of: Brig.-General F.J Moberly, *Military Operations, Togoland and the Cameroons, 1914-1916 (History of the Great War based on official documents)* (London: The Imperial War Museum, 1931).

The photo above shows a military barricade mounted by the Nigerian soldiers in Cameroon around 1914/15. Barricades were fortified structures often built with stones, and trees to block passages of enemy soldiers into a town, place or village. Once made, soldiers took cover from behind the barricades, from where they were able to direct gunfire on an approaching enemy. Barricades were used widely in the Cameroon campaign, by both the askari and the Allied African soldiers.

Chapter 6

War Atrocities

Introduction:

[The British] may conquer the country, but they will find no inhabitants left.¹

All Dualas met on the roads...are to be shot.²

Before the Germans withdrew into the interior of the country a great number of Douala were shot or hanged.³

[German black soldiers in some places in Cameroon had been instructed to] kill every native they saw.⁴

What happens when an occupying army receives instructions from their commanding officers to shoot and kill all civilians met on the road, to wipe out entire villages so that if their enemies conquer the territory, they will find no one left, or to seize women, rape, and bayonet or shoot them to death? The story deserves to be told. All four quotations above were put into practice by the Germans retreating into and occupying villages and towns in war-torn Cameroon, with women once again being double targets. Although news of these German atrocities did not occupy center stage as did the case in Belgium and Northern France, they were later fairly well documented by the Allies in the 'European War Papers' and contained in the archives in the United Kingdom and France. While these atrocities were a continuum of the violence that had

¹ Expressed statement of Duala people to a British officer, in, *European War Papers* (hereafter EWP), 7.

² EWP, Dobell to Secretary of State for the Colonies (Translated letter captured from a German soldier), 16 October, 1914, 9

³ Helmut Stoecker, "Loyalty to Germany in Cameroon 1914-1930," in *Africa and Germany from Colonisation to Cooperation 1884-1986 (The Case of Cameroon)* ed. Kum'a Ndumbe 111 (Yaounde: Editions Africavenir, 1986). 332.

⁴ EWP, Report from a German Soldier (Native), 17 October 1914, 5.

rocked the Cameroons during German colonialism, the fact that they were happening alongside other theaters of the 1914 war in Belgium and Northern France in Europe provided a transnational prism, with which they must be understood. This chapter examines those civilian atrocities in Cameroon that resulted from the military occupation of vulnerable communities. The chapter contends that atrocities of occupying German soldiers must be understood within the transnational larger context of the differences between Germany and the Western Allies about international law. German military officials in Cameroon, like those in Belgium, were guided by the similar beliefs about ‘the necessity of war’ and the use of international rules of war, and about the fate of ‘weaker peoples’ under the guise of war. On the other hand, Allied military officials here used the same yardstick – the Hague Convention – as did their counterparts in Belgium and France to criticize German atrocities. The chapter also examines a related humanitarian problem – the refugee problem that was generated in Cameroon by the mayhem of war. It concludes with the rhetorical and diplomatic exchanges between German and Allied military officials on the atrocities, showing striking differences in how both parties understood and applied the international laws of war contained in the Hague Convention, in Cameroon, in a similar fashion as was happening in parts of Europe.

I argue in this Chapter that the German disregard for the laws of war in line with its idea of military necessity had far-reaching implications for vulnerable civilian populations. The chapter adds to Isabel Hull and John Horne and Alan Kramer’s historical inquiry of the difficult question of what happens to civilians caught up in the vortex of war.⁵ While scholarship has limited this inquiry to the situation in Europe, it is important for the historiography of the Great

⁵ Isabel Hull, *A Scrap of Paper: Breaking and Making International Law during the Great War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014, ebook), 95-6; John Horne and Alan Kramer, *German Atrocities, 1914: A History of Denial* (New Haven and London: 2001).

War to extend this inquiry to all the places and regions that were affected by the 1914 war fighting. Viewing wartime atrocities in Cameroon as part of the Great War atrocities as happened in Europe allows for a transnational understanding of the dark pages of the Great War. But it also raises the important question of the necessity for the international community of nations to try to synchronize their understandings, interpretations, and application of the laws of war, as a requirement for civilians to not suffer the violence of war more than the professional army.

On Sources

Sources used here were mostly generated in wartime by the British and the French, at a time when propaganda and slander were just as important – if not more - in winning the war.⁶ How reliable then? To mitigate the problem of credibility, I approach the sources critically and within their relevant historical context: besides what was presented, what was or was not possible? I note, first that Allied powers sought to prove a point that the Germans were cruel, brutal and atrocious. The Allied officials who made the reports were themselves interested parties, aiming to use the records against the Germans in the event of a Peace settlement.⁷ But, just because someone is an interested party doesn't mean that what he is recording isn't true. Of course, there are reasons to ascertain the reliability of the sources when read in context. Because the Germans were losing the war in Cameroon, they were the ones to be offended. They were the ones to rage anger on Cameroonians in the midst of their frustration for losing the war. Even

⁶ The records and statistics collected by the Allies were published in European War Papers Relating to German Atrocities and Breaches of the Rules of War in Africa (hereafter EWP). The entire document contains individual reports made by Allied officials and officers in Cameroon, as well as sworn testimonies made by Cameroonians and victim survivors.

⁷ They intended to use the records during the post war settlement, which happened later in Paris, to prove a point that the Germans were incapable of having colonies, and so under no circumstance should German colonies seized during the war be returned to Germany.

more than that, German officials in Cameroon since 1884 had expressed disdain for the people and had wished for their extermination. Allied invasion of the town of Douala in September 1914 took place on the heels of an anti-colonial rebellion against the German colonial administration by the people of Douala. And the hanging of the Douala King resulting from that resistance was expected to, and it did cause a longing for revenge if the opportunity availed itself. This, no doubt, was one of the biggest reasons why the Germans evacuated Douala without a fight, and in many instances, the Germans saw the people of Douala as more of an enemy than the invading Allied army.

Some of the wartime letters and testimonies recorded often spoke with each other, rather than being merely the voices of German foes. Letters and memoranda written by the Germans themselves were included in the collections, and they revealed much about what the Germans called the “savageness” of an African warfare. German responses to some of the letters and claims made by Allied officials provide a clear reading into the facts. For example, when once the Allied commander sent an official letter to the German Governor in Cameroon drawing his attention to the massacres of civilians, the Governor in his reply did all but refute the specific accusations.⁸ A close contextual scrutiny of the sources, therefore, with other corroborative evidence, shows that their credibility can be ascertained. Lest we forget, German war time atrocities were more or less a continuation of the colonial violence that predated the war. And the Germans never really denied the atrocities. Instead, they offered justifications. When the German historian and ex-Governor of East Africa, Heinrich Schnee, undertook in 1926 to offer a scholarly rebuttal to these Allied-engineered reports, he indulged in rhetoric and counterfactual

⁸ See details of letter exchanges between General Charles Dobell and Governor Ebermaier, EPW, “Dobell to Governor Ebarmeier,” 23 December 1914, 15.

arguments. Failing to defend and discredit accusations of German colonial and wartime atrocities on civilians, he made rather a fairly just claim that all colonial powers including Germany, Britain, France, Belgium, and Portugal were guilty of “acts of cruelty” against “the natives” and that it was impossible to determine whether a particular colonialism committed more atrocities and cruelty against “the [African] natives” than the other.⁹ In a similar fashion, German officials in Cameroon merely tried to justify the atrocities, arguing mainly that Cameroonians were staging a ‘people’s war’ against Germany. As in Belgium, Germany never denied its actions of fighting a ‘barbaric war’ but ‘contended throughout the war and afterward that Belgian civilians had illegally engaged in hostilities against the German occupation,’ and that it had been a “criminal ‘peoples’ war against which Germany was entitled to respond by reprisal. Thus, “reprisal was Germany’s earliest legal claim and remained its main cover.”¹⁰

Understanding the Atrocities

To understand the 1914 war atrocities in Cameroon in the context of atrocities in Europe, one needs to review scholarship on the subject. One of the best, and well-contextualized accounts on the Great War atrocities is that of John Horne and Alan Kramer.¹¹ These authors examine how within days of the occupation of places in Belgium and Northern France in August 1914, the German army unleashed a chain of brutal atrocities, intentionally killing over 5,000 civilians in Belgium and another about 1,000 civilians in France from August through October 1914. They also show how during the war, violence occurred in all geographic regions in European spaces occupied by Germany. They make a case that “violence against enemy civilians was endemic

⁹ Heinrich Schnee, *German Colonization, Past and Future: The Truth about the German Colonies, with an introduction* by William Harbutt Dawson (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1926), 105-112.

¹⁰ Hull, *A Scrap of paper*, 55.

¹¹ Horne and Kramer, *German Atrocities*.

throughout the German army,” and followed a similar pattern and characteristic. Wartime violence against the civilian population, they conclude, was a trademark of German military tradition, with German troops falsely blaming all their violence on a “peoples’ war.”¹² German atrocities often took the form of indiscriminate shooting and killing of civilians, of bayonetting civilians to death, of opening fire on a fleeing group of civilians or on a group of war refugees, random searching of towns of civilians capable of carrying weapons and executing them, and rape of women in occupied places.¹³ Justifying their atrocities, the Germans commonly cited a right of self-defense, deterrence through collective punishment, or military necessity. They also mentioned the defiance attitude of the civilians, the need for reprisals, and acts of treason committed by civilians of occupied places.¹⁴ In reality, German motives for killing civilians had also to do with factors such as their frustration for losing the war, a mere fantasy and entertained delusion that civilians of an occupied territory were not cooperative, less friendly or were likely to give support to the enemy.¹⁵ German atrocities in Cameroon, as chapter shows, tended to replicate all of the above.

Isabel Hull offers a fine explanation of the German army atrocities in the 1914 war, in line with the German military culture prior to the war and what she calls German ‘military necessity,’ and of the German interpretation and understanding of the international laws of war in ways sharply contrasted to how the Western Allied powers understood and applied the laws. German military necessity was the view that the German army anywhere in the world must use all necessary means to fight and win, including regarding their enemy civilians, or civilians

¹² Horne and Kramer, *German Atrocities*, 74, 76, 77

¹³ Horne and Kramer, *German Atrocities*, 14, 16, 33, 40, 199.

¹⁴ Horne and Kramer, *German Atrocities*, 15, 17-18, 33, 53, 163; Hull, *A Scrap of paper*, 55.

¹⁵ Horne and Kramer, *German Atrocities*, 15, 17, 18, 48-51,

judged to be sympathetic to their enemies, as being part of the enemy. It allowed the German army to treat enemy civilians or civilians as combatants. If part of fighting and winning the war included killing civilians, so be it. Another author's point of view suggests that German military necessity and perception of war assumed that "war, more often than not, is between an army and the people, not between two professional armies."¹⁶ This military necessity idea practically erased the non-combatant status of civilians in the eyes and mind of the German army. One other aspect of this military necessity was that all laws of war could be violated in anticipation of an enemy action.¹⁷ According to Hull:

Almost every aspect of Imperial Germany's military culture increased the intensity of warfare: ... the willingness to sacrifice one's own troops and to instrumentalize civilians, the inability to conceive of anything less than total success or to recognize defeat. In short, the Imperial German military ... planned for, anticipated, and actually created situations where everything was at stake from the very first blow. The dire straits of its own creation made it seem that military necessity was the ubiquitous conditions of war.¹⁸

Hull finely analyzes how, pitted against military necessity, the Germans interpreted international law, including the Hague Convention's articles protecting civilians in occupied places during the war as something not more than a 'scrap of paper,' the title of her book. For military necessity, German viewpoint did not, and could not distinguish non-combatants from soldiers.¹⁹ All through the years leading to the 1914 war, this German notion of military necessity pervaded German views of international law, in sharp contrast to the view of the Western Allies. The Western Allies, therefore, attached far more importance and respect of the laws of war than did the Germans. These contrasting interpretations and importance attached to the laws of war explains brutal German atrocities on civilians during the war, which far exceeded

¹⁶ Karma Nabulsi, "Traditions of Justice in War: the modern debate in historical perspective," in *Order, Conflict, and Violence*, ed., Kalyvas et al, (Cambridge: University Press, 2008), 120.

¹⁷ Isabel V. Hull, "Military necessity" and the laws of war in imperial Germany," in *Order, Conflict, and Violence*, ed. Stathis N. Kalyvas et al. (Cambridge: University Press, 2008), 367.

¹⁸ Hull, "Military Necessity," 372.

¹⁹ Hull, *A Scrap of Paper*, 55.

any form of atrocities that the Western Allies were capable of, or ever carried out on civilians in occupying territories. Concurring, Horne and Kramer contend that given German military culture and behavior of the German army in occupied territories, and its indifference to the laws of war, “the German army had no intension of accepting the provisions of Convention IV [Hague rules of land warfare] in spirit or in letter.”²⁰ Most justifications for German atrocities in Belgium centered around claims that there was a ‘people’s war’ in which Belgian and French citizens took up arms against Germany. But they had to do mostly with the fact that Germany’s military culture predisposed its leaders to interpret setbacks encountered in militarily inferior countries as a result of perfidy, in which case the high premium placed on victory by that culture allowed German officers to readily sacrifice civilian lives for military convenience. Also, that military culture allowed Germany to purposely launch a reign of terror to cow potential resistance wherever they faced or suspected one.²¹ All of these were at work in Cameroon. The belief that in Cameroon some civilians were mobilizing and arming themselves against the Germans validated their claim of a ‘peoples’ war. In addition, the situation in Africa was much easier and exacerbated by the fact that colonial wars in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries had provided prolific arenas for brutality between soldiers and civilians.”²² Colonial conflicts and violence were part of the Great War campaigns and manifested themselves remarkably in campaigns fought in Africa. Understanding it this way makes even more sense of the civilian atrocities in the continent during the war. The situation for Africa was also peculiar because, as Hull has observed, all acts of German atrocities during the war were not only justified in terms of military necessity, “but they were conceived of and acted on out of the assumptions about the nature of

²⁰ Horne and Kramer, *German Atrocities*, 149; Hull, *A Scrap of Paper*, 59.

²¹ Hull, *A Scrap of Paper*, 55.

²² Horne and Kramer, *German Atrocities*, 422-3.

war, self-preservation, the just use of extreme force, and consequent military duty, that had developed under this rubric.”²³ As I show in this chapter, German conception of African campaigns was that they were ‘savage’ wars fought by ‘African savages.’

Wartime atrocities in Cameroon are best understood through the prism of a transnational (military) cultural history in so far as those events, same with the ones in Europe, “unfolded through interaction between nations in a dynamic that proved more than the sum of its parts. Only such an approach can explain why the issue mesmerized contemporaries and helped shaped the meanings and memories of the Great War.”²⁴ In Cameroon, they took place through interaction and intersection of military cultures and nationalities such as those of Britain, France, German and colonial Cameroon.

In spite of the above, studies on African campaigns have failed to pay attention to this important issue of civilian murders, although arguably compared to Europe, the ratio of intentional civilian versus combatant deaths in African campaigns outnumbers that in campaigns in Europe.²⁵ Hew Strachan, with one of the most detailed studies on the African campaigns including the Cameroon campaign, makes no mention of the murdering of civilians as one of the disturbing impacts of the war in Cameroon.²⁶ Like Strachan, most other authors have turned attention elsewhere. Even where scholars examine the impact of the war on specific Cameroonian communities and regions, the vital issue of civilian casualties remains unaddressed. Frederick Quinn, for example, focusing on the effects of the campaign on the Beti

²³ Hull, “Military Necessity,” 374.

²⁴ Horne and Kramer, *German Atrocities*, 5.

²⁵ According to Edward Paice, *World War 1: The African Front* (New York: Pegasus Books, 2008), 392-3, over 100,000 civilians were killed in the East African campaign through soldiers’ bullets and other causes compared to just slightly over 20,000 soldiers.

²⁶ See chapter 3, “The Cameroons” of his book, *The First World War in Africa: The First World War* (Oxford: University Press, 2004).

of Cameroon, pays attention to the political and administrative impact, especially how the departure of the Germans affected the political status quo of the Beti people and their loyal leader.²⁷ Those who have come close to addressing the impact of war on the African civilian populations have been attracted by the issue of human labor like carrier corps and porters. Killingray and Matthews for example, have focused on the use of carriers, who came from various British West African colonies. The impact of the Cameroon campaign on human labor, they show, was that the Allies recruited almost 15,000 carriers from their West African colonies and another 10,000-15,000 Cameroonian carriers and porters to be able to sustain combat activities in Cameroon.²⁸ This was in addition to the thousands of Cameroonian civilians impressed by the Germans as carriers and porters. Thus the agony of war felt by most Africans during the Cameroon campaign lay mostly on human labor as carriers and porters.²⁹ Viewing the impact of the Cameroon campaign from the prism of those serving as combatants and their loved ones, Page writes that:

for these African combatants, and for the families and villages they left behind, the Great War was not merely a European civil conflict. It was instead a maelstrom of gigantic proportions, one which pulled them - many for the first time - into a world of diverse races and experiences, wreak havoc with the societies of their ancestors in which they felt at home.³⁰

This chapter offers an opportunity to speculate and imagine the physical pain and psychological agony of not the soldiers and their loved ones and families, but instead of the innocent unarmed civilians caught up in the atrocities of war in Cameroon. To not tell this story,

²⁷ Frederick Quinn, "An African Reaction to World War I: The Beti of Cameroon (Une réaction africaine à la Première Guerre Mondiale: les Beti du Cameroun), *Cahiers d'Études Africaines* 13, no. 52 (1973): 726-730

²⁸ David Killingray and James Matthews, "BEasts of Burden: British West African Carriers in the First World War," *Canadian Journal of African Studies / Revue Canadienne des Études Africaines*, 13, 1/2 (1979), 8. They note that the original carrier force in Cameroons in August 1914 numbered 3,670 British and 1,000 French.S

²⁹ Some authors note how in Cameroon, this practice led to death of more carriers and porters than soldiers. See, for example, Thiemo Mouctar Bah, "L'Arique dans la Première Guerre Mondiale: Le Cas du Cameroun", in *L'Afrique et L'Allemagne de la Colonisation à la Coopération 1884-1986 (Le Cas du Cameroun)*, edited by Kum'a Ndumbe III (Yaounde-Cameroon: Editions Africavenir, 1986), 280-1.

³⁰ Melvine E Page, "Introduction: Black Men," 1-2.

no matter how depressing the picture looks, or precisely because of that, is both a disservice to scholarship and humanity, particularly the victims.

Background of Wartime Violence on Civilians

When on 27/28 September 1914 a combined Allied force occupied Douala, the Germans quickly opted on a military strategy of retreating into the surrounding neutral villages where they hoped to make use of their better knowledge of the terrain and to resist the Allies by every military means possible.³¹ The areas immediately occupied by these retreating German soldiers were the interiors and the suburbs of Douala, as well as villages around Jabasi and at Edea.³² But to ensure that their occupation of Douala was secured, Allied forces decided to attack and drive out German forces from those places which were near Douala.³³ The Allied pursuit of the Germans and latter's presence and seeking of refuge among surrounding neutral villages and places would constitute around the most brutal activities of the war in Cameroon. It was while present in these neutral territories - needing refuge from the Allies, needing food and other provisions from the inhabitants, needing to force the inhabitants to carry their war materials from one part to another, and yet perceiving of the inhabitants of places as uncooperative and sympathetic to the enemy, that the Germans would commit a maelstrom of civilian murders.

The circumstances of the Allied invasion of Douala put the inhabitants in a precarious situation, exposing them to extreme brutality from the Germans. Allied invasion, it should be remembered, had coincided with the Duala anti-colonial resistance against German colonialism. This hostile colonial situation, which had been going on for a couple of years, resulted in the

³¹ Heinrich Mentzel, *Die Kämpfe in Kamerun, 1914-1916* (Berlin: Junker und Dünhaupt Verlage, 1936), 79-84

³² TNA ADM 186/607, Naval Operations in the Cameroons, 1914. Jabassi and Edea are approximately the same distance from Douala.

³³ TNA ADM 186/607, Naval Operations in the Cameroons, 1914.

violent hanging of the Duala King and others.³⁴ Such a hostile situation led the German colonial authorities to conclude that the Douala would seize the opportunity of an Allied invasion to settle scores with the Germans in the town. Given this, and other considerations, once the Allies invaded Douala, the Germans quickly and easily abandoned the town. The Germans then moved in to establish their military headquarters in Edea from September 27, and then the seat of Government in Yaounde since 1 October 2014.³⁵ In doing so, “the Germans adopted a systematic policy of extreme brutality towards those natives who they considered might favour the Allied forces.”³⁶ The people of Douala and their surroundings like Edea and Kribi turned out to be “those natives” listed in the bad books of the German colonial authorities. The Allied commander would later observe that “the principal massacres appear to have taken place among the Duala people, against whom special threats were always directed” by the Germans.³⁷ The perception of the inhabitants of occupied territories as ‘unfriendly and hostile,’ and the German delusion about and anticipation of a potential uprising fit into the circumstances under which the German occupying army unleashed atrocities on Belgian civilians as observed by Horne and Kramer.

To fully appreciate the aversion with which the Germans held the Duala on the outbreak of war, and then the basis of the wanton murdering of unarmed civilians in the Duala area during the campaign, mention must be made of a letter written in September 1914 by Lieutenant von Engelbrechten to Hauptmann Gaisser.³⁸ The letter gave firm instructions that the people of Duala

³⁴ Details of the Duala anti-colonial resistance are treated in an earlier chapter of my dissertation in-progress.

³⁵ TNA WO 158/552, Letter by Lt. Colonel Zimmermann, 18 October 1914.

³⁶ EWP, Dobell to War Office, 28 January 1916, 17.

³⁷ EWP, Dobell to War Office, 28 January 1916, 18.

³⁸ Lieutenant von Engelbrechten before taking up active military service during the war in Cameroon appeared to have served as private secretary to the German Governor in Cameroon, thus the apparent weight of the letter. Hauptmann Gaisser was the commander of the German troops at Buea and Victoria but was captured by the British, whereupon they lay hands on the letter in question.

and their interacting compatriots on the Mungo, Abo, and Dibombe Rivers should be treated as rebels and traitors. Engelbrechten further “ordered the destruction of all Duala villages,” and that “all Dualas met on the roads carrying weapons are to be shot.”³⁹ Engelbrechten then placed limits to taking prisoners of war, especially the Duala, meaning that captured African soldiers or persons deemed to be enemies of German war efforts were to be summarily executed. Although the initial instructions were to shoot those “carrying weapons,” it turned out that in practice, many of those who would be shot and bayoneted were not carrying weapons. In fact, it appears that elsewhere, and in the course of the fighting, there were firm instructions to kill unarmed civilians. As early as October 1914, an intercepted letter from a German prisoner of war bore instructions from a German military officer that they (German European and African soldiers) should “kill every native they saw.”⁴⁰ Engelbrechten’s instructions to treat Duala civilians as traitors, indiscriminately shoot all those carrying or suspected to be carrying weapons or suspected, or of killing all captured civilians deemed to be enemies of German war efforts, parallel the type of military orders and explanations made in Belgium around the same time that led to intentional killing of civilians. Horne and Kramer, as well as Hull, explain how within days of German military occupation of the Belgian towns of Visé, Liège, Louvain, Dinant and others, in August 1914, a certain German General Emmich and other senior officers issued orders for soldiers to kill civilians on account of their defiance, suspected treason and possession of weapons, or simply posing as stumbling blocks to German military efforts.⁴¹

³⁹ EWP, Dobell to Secretary of State for the Colonies (Translated letter captured from a German soldier), 16 October, 1914, 9.

⁴⁰ EWP, J. Brough “Report from a German soldier (native), 17th October, 1914,” 5.

⁴¹ Horne and Kramer, *German Atrocities*, 15, 17-18, 33; Hull, *A Scrap of Paper*, 55.

In the observation of one Allied Commander, Engelbrechten's message truly serves "to indicate the attitude of mind of the Germans towards the native inhabitants of Cameroon."⁴² Lieutenant Engelbrechten's letter epitomized bitterness against the Duala, whom he accused of helping the British by taking over from their safety and outpost services and showing them the roads and movements leading to the whereabouts of the Germans. In fairness, this accusation was partly true. But what is most important was the Lieutenant's call that Duala and their interacting compatriots of the Mungo, Abo, and Dibombe should all be considered as combatants in the war, rebels and traitors. To the extent that the Lieutenant admitted having ordered for the destruction of those villages, including the shooting and killing of the people.⁴³ This perception of the Duala as combatants in war fits the German idea of military necessity before the 1914 war, which, as Hull has pointed out, failed to distinguish between enemy civilians and soldiers in the throes of war.⁴⁴ In the eyes of the Germans, and following the events that had transpired, the Duala were often regarded as a greater enemy in the war. Somehow, for the duration of the Cameroon campaign, the Germans often thought their real enemies were not the invading Allied army, but the Duala in particular and Cameroonians in general. The idea that the Duala and other neighboring groups were the real enemies of German military efforts in Cameroon had been articulated by the German District Commissioner of Douala shortly after the arrival of the British warships in September 1914. According to the commissioner, German authorities in Douala realized that their situation in the Great War in Cameroon was like fighting a war in an "enemy territory." Later, official reports by German officers stressed how upon the arrival of the Allies in

⁴² EWP, Dobel to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, NO. 2. 2nd December 1914, 9.

⁴³ EPW, From Kake, 7th October, 1914. Translated letter from Engelbrechten to Hauptmann, 9.

⁴⁴ Hull, "Military Necessity," 366-9.

Douala, the Duala and Abo people had celebrated and mocked at the retreating German troops.⁴⁵ Convinced therefore that Cameroonians in Douala were their real enemies, a large part of the already limited German military resources came to be directed towards what the German district commissioner called "controlling and neutralizing the Douala population."⁴⁶ The attitude of the Duala people viewed through the prism of German military necessity allowed for their treatment as 'combatants' in war. Thus, "before the Germans withdrew into the interior of the country a great number of Douala were shot or hanged."⁴⁷ Just as in a Belgian town of Liège, a German force retreating through Hermée killed eleven civilians and burnt houses claiming the entire population in Liège to have participated in the fighting against the Germans.⁴⁸

The Atrocities

The above circumstances quickly translated into a chain of brutalities on civilians in Cameroon. In this maelstrom of wartime atrocities, women once again were particularly targeted. The plight of women in wartime was the more pathetic as some fell victims to some sort of double violence – rape and murder. Although guns were also used to kill unarmed civilians, the most common weapon appeared to be the bayonet. A bayonet is a sword-like stabbing blade. It is usually fixed to the muzzle of a Rifle for use in hand-to-hand fighting by soldiers when the occasion arises. The occasion may arise when a soldier runs out of ammunition

⁴⁵ RKA Nr. 3928 Bl. 106 : Erlebnisbericht Von Dr. G. Vöhringer; RKA Nr. 3935, Bl. 11: Bericht des ältesten offiziers der Europäerabteilung in Duala, Lieutenant Nothnagel, über die Verhältnisse in Duala Vor und bei der Übergabe, October 12, 1916; Adolf Ruger, "Le Mouvement de Resistance de Rudolf Manga Bell au Cameroun," in L'Afrique et L'Allemagne de la Colonisation à la Cooperation 1884-1986 (Le Cas du Cameroun), ed. Kum'a Ndumbe III (Yaounde-Cameroon: Editions Africavenir, 1986), 177-8.

⁴⁶ TNA WO; Ruger, 254; Helmut Stoecker, "'Loyalty to Germany' in Cameroon, 1914-1930?" in L'Afrique et L'Allemagne de la Colonisation à la Cooperation 1884-1986 (Le Cas du Cameroun), ed. Kum'a Ndumbe III (Yaounde-Cameroon: Editions Africavenir, 1986), 331; Adolf Rieger, Die Duala und die Kolonialmacht 1884-1914. Eine Studie über die historischen Ursprünge des afrikanischen Antikolonialismus," in Kamerun unter deutscher Kolonialherrschaft, ed. Helmut Stoecker, Band 2 (Berlin, 1968), 254.

⁴⁷ Stoecker, "'Loyalty to Germany,'" 332.

⁴⁸ Horne and Kramer, *German Atrocities*, 14.

or is able to lurk in and attack the enemy before there is room to use the gun. This weapon is not ideally meant to be used on civilians. As a military weapon, it is meant to be used on enemy soldiers. It may inflict more pain on the victim than is usually inflicted by gun shots which for the most part kill instantly. On the other hand, a bayonet kills slowly and painfully. Its pain is excruciating. Thus one can only imagine the type of pain it would inflict on civilian victims before their death. While the German army was also sometimes using the bayonet to kill civilians in Belgium mainly to avoid the panicking sound of the gun which often caused its own soldiers to shoot at each other in a desultory fashion as explained by Horne and Kramer,⁴⁹ the preferred use of this weapon on civilians in Cameroon appeared to indicate killing out of racial prejudice, which was often ritualized. It also had to do with the fact that the Germans considered the use of bullets on civilians a waste, given their acute shortage of it.

Beginning 29 September 1914, a German reserver detachment No. 2 under Oberlt. Bachmann, reinforced by a section of the Police Depot under Hauptmann Dickmann was clashing with Allied forces near a place called Japoma.⁵⁰ At this point, and seeing that they were losing the war, the Germans resolved that “the British may conquer the country, but they will find no inhabitants left.”⁵¹ This unfortunate decision by the Germans resulted into what a British Captain would describe as “the wholesale shooting of the natives.”⁵² On 2 October 1914, a British Major observed in his diaries that while around Japoma the “Germans seem to be

⁴⁹ Horne and Kramer, *German Atrocities*, 33-44.

⁵⁰ TNA WO 158/552, Letter by Lt. Colonel Zimmermann, 18 October 1914, 475.

⁵¹ EWP, Captain Gwynne Howell to Charles Dobell, 7. This was the expressed statement of the inhabitants of Douala, including Andreas Jengelli of Bell town, to Captain Howell, one of the general staff of the WAEF charged with assembling testimonies from Cameroonians on German atrocities.

⁵² EWP, Captain H. Gwynne Howell, Report No. V, on Board S.S “Mowe,” 16 October 1914, 7.

butchering natives as they go along.”⁵³ On 8 October, there was seven hours fighting between the German *askaris* and the Africans on the Allied-occupied side of Yabassi.⁵⁴ The initial confrontations in Yabassi, some forty miles up the Wouri River from Douala, took place from 6-14 October 1914 when the Allies captured the town from the Germans on 14 October.⁵⁵ Then the confrontations at Edea happened from 20-26 October 1914, the Allies having attacked Edea from three directions; by the Sanaga River, by the Njong River and thence overland from Dehane and by the Midland Railway from Japona.⁵⁶ The capture of Edea from the Germans was completed on 9 November 1914.⁵⁷

Murdering of unarmed civilians increased with the tides of war turning against the Germans. As in Belgium, the stakes of losing a fight and the frustrations of the German army were often causes for German intentional killing of civilians in occupied territories.⁵⁸ Once the Allies began to force the Germans out of held areas and to take over control, it was then that the fleeing army increased their attacks on civilians. A black German soldier taken prisoner of war in Douala by the English confessed that initially when the Allies were invading, he had been instructed by the white commander of his company unit not to shoot unarmed civilians, but the moment the British had taken over Jabassi, that same commander gave instructions to his black soldiers to “kill every native they saw.”⁵⁹

⁵³ Some Side Lights on the Cameroon Expedition: Being Extracts from the diary of the late Major Walter Meyer-Griffith, T.F., Croix de Guerre, F.R.G.S., F.R. Hist.S., F.S.A. (Scot) *Journal of Royal United Service Institution*, 64 (1919: Feb/Nov), 413.

⁵⁴ TNA WO 158/552, Letter by Lt. Colonel Zimmermann, 18 October 1914.

⁵⁵ TNA ADM 137/224, Fuller to Secretary of the Admiralty (Cameroon Expeditionary Force Naval and Combined and Military Operations), 28 August 1915.

⁵⁶ TNA ADM 137/224, Fuller to Secretary of the Admiralty.

⁵⁷ TNA ADM 137/224, Fuller to Secretary of the Admiralty.

⁵⁸ See, Horne and Kramer, *German Atrocities*, 15.

⁵⁹ EWP, Report from a German Soldier (Native), 17 October 1914, 5.

Village raids and civilian murders by fleeing soldiers was already a constant practice as early as October 1914. One Chief Mfomu of Bodiman witnessed how German soldiers raided a village at the top of a small creek, shot and killed five unarmed villagers.⁶⁰ Another witness, one Ndumbe Toko of Akwa town, reported on the murdering of many women and children of Dibamba by a group of German soldiers led by some German officers whose names were given as Damkohler and Bruno Schmidt. According to the testimony, these German soldiers, chased out of Japoma by the French and crossing over the bridge to retreat into Dibamba, “shot four [unarmed] men, besides making prisoners of all Duala men, women, and children they [could] find.”⁶¹ Many of the surviving women are likely to have died of starvation after the burning of their homes sent them into flight in the bush, where they had no food.⁶²

Testimonies of civilian massacres came from both Cameroonians, especially surviving victims, as well as from mostly senior Allied military officers who witnessed the scenes first hand. In the Edea area, a French military commander reported numerous cases of the Germans murdering unarmed civilians, mostly women, and children.⁶³ The Commander observed that since their occupation of Edea, a day never passed without news of new deaths of unarmed civilians. And that majority of those killed were women, including children.⁶⁴ Evidence of this reporting was buttressed by the report of the Allied ambulance military section in Edea where women who had survived German attacks were being admitted for treatment, and for the list of those wounded and admitted on 17 December 1914, there were ten women, a child, and two

⁶⁰ EWP, Report by Lieutenant McCallum, 12 October 1914, 7.

⁶¹ EWP, Statement of Ndumbe Toko, 16 October 1914, 7.

⁶² EWP, Statement of Ndumbe Toko, 16 October 1914, 7.

⁶³ EWP, Le Colonel Mayer, Commandant les troupes françaises, á Quartier-General anglais, Duala, 17 December 1914, 11.

⁶⁴ EWP, Le Colonel Mayer, 13.

men.⁶⁵ Some or most of the women became victims of sexual violence in the hands of the soldiers.

That women mostly topped the list of victims underscores the implications of military occupation on vulnerable communities. One possible explanation as to why women are usually the most vulnerable populations in occupied places is that after killing their men, or when their men flee, these are usually the majority of the persons to be met in those occupied places by the invading army. This explains the gendered nature of the relationship between the invader and the invaded as posited by Horne and Kramer. “If male civilians were more likely to be shot,” they argue in the case of Belgium, “only girls and women ... were raped, so that the invader’s absolute power to violate the body was expressed in different, gendered ways.”⁶⁶

Horne and Kramer also observe that although sexual violence and rape of women in Belgium was “usually perpetuated in semi-secret, there were occasions on which the desire to humiliate and punish was expressed publicly.” In such cases, “the presence of the husband, parents, or children during rape was a double humiliation.” They cite how at Connigis (Aisne) “a woman was raped at gunpoint in the presence of her mother-in-law, her father-in-law being held by another soldier just outside the door.”⁶⁷ Rape before a captive audience indicates that the invasion as a gendered process was a three-way-relationship – between the perpetrator, victim, and the victim’s male compatriots. As in chapter two of this study, this practice was just too common during moments of colonial resistance and colonial conflicts during which the Germans and their African soldiers sought to punish and humiliate African men through sexual violence

⁶⁵ EWP, Colonne Expéditionnaire du Cameroun, Section d’Ambulance de campagne; rapport Relatif aux blessés indigènes admis à l’ambulance le 17 Décembre 1914, 11.

⁶⁶ Horne and Kramer, *German Atrocities*, 199.

⁶⁷ Horne and Kramer, *German Atrocities*, 199.

on their women. Women's vulnerabilities in the vortex of war heighten when soldiers specifically single them out. In early December 1914, seven women were bayoneted to death in Ekola, Edea. An eye-witness in the person of a French military commander painted a graphic picture of the spearing and bayoneting to death of these seven women as follows: "Les femmes étaient toutes tuées percées de coups de lance ou de coupe-coupe. Elles étaient horriblement mutilées."⁶⁸ Commenting further on what he described as the "actes monstrueux" of the Germans, the commander noted that the scene of slashing and cutting of women and children who had taken refuge in the bush was so horrifying to behold.⁶⁹ The only instrument used in this particular scene of murdering appeared to be the bayonet, as the victims had been cut and slashed in pieces. Later in May 1915, French medical military officers saw, on the road between Eseka and Wumbiagas, the bodies of a woman and her child only a few months old, bayoneted to death in an appalling fashion, with sensitive parts of their bodies cut.⁷⁰

In November 1914, a *Schutztruppe* unit comprising six Germans (German Europeans) invaded a town called Bonasongali and killed nine people, including two young girls. The two girls killed included a small teenager named Mbule Nkake and another young girl Kunga Ngale. These two girls had actually been chased, caught and bayoneted to death. Later in May 1915, a party of German soldiers entered Ndogbonon village, shot several people, killing four men and four women, looted and burnt some houses and carried away six women. The women taken away were possibly meant to be raped, as this had been a standard practice in the thirty years of German colonial rule prior to the outbreak of war in 1914.⁷¹ Why, in the context, were the

⁶⁸ EWP, Colonel Mayer to Dobell, 18 December, 1914, 13; Translation (mine): All the women had been either speared or bayoneted to death. Their bodies had been awfully mutilated.

⁶⁹ EWP, Le Colonel Mayer, Colonne Expéditionnaire du Cameroun, 10-11.

⁷⁰ EWP, 69.

⁷¹ See chapter 2.

women preferably taken away instead of being killed like others? According to one witness, Nye, the women were tied with ropes round their necks. One could hear them screaming as they were being taken away. These women were never seen again.⁷² That the women were never seen again is a strong possibility that not only were they raped, they were killed after that.

A few years after the war in 1918/19, French officials, then temporarily administering the larger portion of seized Cameroon, collected numerous sworn testimonies and declarations from Cameroonian individuals, village heads, headmen, Chiefs, on the subject of pre-war and wartime German atrocities on the populations of Douala, Edea, Kribi and their environs. Although at this point there was a clear tendency to exaggerate and even trump up charges in preparation for a case against the Germans in the future peace talks at Paris, many of these pieces of evidence still stand the test of historical credibility.⁷³ As part of this process, an ex-Cameroonian *askari* by name Itondo Samuel later testified to a French administrator in 1919 that in one small subdivision in Edea in 1914, at one point, eighty-seven men, thirty-seven women and a child were killed by the Germans.⁷⁴ At M'pembo village, twenty-seven women, and a child had once been brought as porters for the Protective Forces. Of this number, only eighteen were able to return, the rest having been raped and possibly killed by the German African soldiers.⁷⁵

A pattern of bayoneted victims was found in most military medical reports and military officers' testimonies of both fallen and survived victims, which mentioned the cutting of throats of victims. Another medical reports on the survivors on 6 September 1915 painted a graphic

⁷² EWP, Le Colonel Mayer "Déposition du nommé et...., de Edea, qui a été envoyé le 17 Décembre pour enterrer les habitants tués par les allemands, Edea, le 18 Décembre, 1914, 13.

⁷³ The procedure of collection was relatively fair and meticulous, with real names as eyewitnesses and real names of victims produced.

⁷⁴ Archives Nationales, Section d'Outre-Mer, Aix en Provence, France (hereafter ANSOM), TGO 22/195, Rapport de Lieutenant Perret chef de la Circonscription d'Edea sur les atrocities, exactine brutalites commisès par les Allemandes tant pour la periode d'avant-guerre que pendant la Guerre, Edea, le 10 Janvier 1919.

⁷⁵ ANSOM TGO 22/195, Rapport de Lieutenant Perret, le 10 Janvier 1919

picture of a Bakoko inhabitant – N’Gouapé. It described the bayonet wounds on the head as follows: “semi-circular wounds on the head, 4 cms long, and with scalps on the left latero-occipale region.”⁷⁶ Given that civilian victims were killed mainly by use of the bayonet, their bodies were also commonly mutilated. A villager of Mbonjo, Nobi Ewani, testified in August 1915 how the Germans bayoneted his brother Penda Ewani to death and cut off his genital organ. Interestingly, and in those sadistic moments of civilian murders, some villagers still managed to comically satirize the acts. They did this by pretending to cut their throats as they jubilated on the arrival of Allied soldiers and the ousting of the German. During the first Allied operations at Yabassi where the Germans were sent out, and the Allies took over the town, and as one senior Allied military officer passed through various villages, he observed local inhabitants who came out to cheer on the Allies. While doing so, these inhabitants mimicked German atrocities as many of them shouted cheerfully to the Allies, “and holding their heads with one hand [and] pretended to cut their throats with the other.”⁷⁷ This was meant, perhaps to be a comic relief of an irredeemable situation. In other instances, Cameroonians simply resorted to name calling in referring to the Germans. In this name calling drama, the inhabitants of the Edea area sometimes referred to the Germans as “les Hommes-Pantheres.”⁷⁸ Thus, while Horne and Kramer argue that in most cases of German atrocities in Belgium, there were no provocations by the civilians as claimed by German military officials, this was usually not the case in Cameroon. Such civilian

⁷⁶ EWP, Rapport du Médecin Aide-major de 1^{re} classe Bauvallet, Médecin Traitant à l’ambulance, au sujet d’un indigène bakoko blessé par les allemandes, 6 September 1915, 16. Original French version; “plaie semi-circulaire, de 4 cms. de long, de la région latéro-occipitale gauche, ayant intéressé seulement le cuir chevelu.”

⁷⁷ EWP, A Report by Captain A. Giles, 1st Battalion Nigerian Regiment, 7 June 1915, 60.

⁷⁸ ANSOM TGO 22/195, Rapport de Lieutenant Perret, le 10 Janvier 1919. I am not sure about the exact translation for “Les Hommes-pantheres” but it conveys an imagery of violence for the Germans being something like man eaters or killers.

provocations of the Germans, although justified by the brutalities and injustices of German colonialism, constituted serious bases for German atrocities.

There were all sorts of excuses that resulted in civilian murders. Most of these excuses fit into the rubrics of German military necessity. They ranged from failure of the villagers to provide carriers and or food, to their inability or refusal to provide fighting men, to a show of sympathies for or open support in one way or the other for the invading army, to deference, to deterrence, to frustrations of the Germans, and generally to the notion of a 'people's war.' Once in October 1914, a certain King of Bomking around Njanga near Douala was violently hanged by the Germans and several of his unarmed males shot to death because they rejected German requests to take up arms for the Germans against the English.⁷⁹ Later in June 1915, an inhabitant of Dschang area who also demurred to take up arms when forced by the Germans to do so paid a heavy penalty whereby he was ordered by a White German officer to be taken into the bush and bayoneted to pieces.⁸⁰ Villagers suspected of having British sympathies or showing some kind of support were frequent targets. In October 1914, one Andreas Jengelli of Bell Town testified that in Mbongo, a company of German troops, comprising roughly about ten whites and 100 black soldiers, opened gunfire on the inhabitants, killing about thirty, including men and women and burnt the countryside.⁸¹ In that same month, a British Captain collected reports and testimonies from inhabitants to the effect that German troops destroyed farms and houses on the Dibamba, killing four Dualas, and in the Ndonga district, the Germans shot down the inhabitants, accusing them of British sympathies. One Ebangisi Editea from Dibamba testified that while there, German troops arrived at the Dibamba Beach and fired randomly on inhabitants, then warned

⁷⁹ EWP, Testimony by Toko Masombwa of Bonaberi, 10 October 1914, 7.

⁸⁰ EWP, Report by Giles, 60.

⁸¹ EWP, Testimony, 6.

that “they [the Germans] intended killing all the Dualas on account of their English friendship.”⁸² In early October 1914, the Chief of Dikomba, Joke, was shot and killed by a German Reserve Officer on the officer’s mere suspicion that the Chief had British sympathy. And in continuation of killing unarmed civilians for suspected English sympathies, German soldiers on 9 October 1914 attacked, shot and killed seven Bonamatei (Douala) inhabitants.⁸³ Senior Allied military officers in Cameroon were often terrified at the level of “atrocities perpetrated by the Germans and natives under their command on the helpless and innocent inhabitants of this country [Cameroon].”⁸⁴ But, they may have been unaware that according to the code guiding ‘German way of war’ prior to 1914, civilians caught engaging in treasonable acts or acts of unfriendliness towards the Germans in wartime were prescribed to receive summary justice including killing them.⁸⁵

Other killings of civilians in one village, Bewang, were reported to be food related. In September 1915, the headman of Yabassi, Njaka, testified that the Germans often descended on the poor villagers with shootings and killings especially when they failed to obtain food. On Njaka’s failure to provide food to the Germans as requested, the German army began to shoot and bayonet to death as many people as they could find until the Allied patrol attacked early enough to save the lives of the villagers. As noted by a British Chief Political Officer, a German military officer told the party of villagers caught and brought before him that “they would be killed as they had not provided the [German] troops with food.”⁸⁶ These murders, happening immediately after the German retreat and withdrawal from Yabassi testifies to an understanding

⁸² EWP, Testimony, 6.

⁸³ EWP, Report, 6.

⁸⁴ EWP, Dobell to the Secretary of the Colonies, 9-10.

⁸⁵ Horne and Kramer, *German Atrocities*, 162.

⁸⁶ EWP, Elphinstone, Memorandum, 47- 48.

of the context and circumstances where these atrocities took place. It was the German policy to constantly retreat into immediate neutral areas once defeated and ousted by the Allies from contested areas.⁸⁷ A published account of a German military officer on fighting and retreat at Jabassi during this period corroborates this evidence. Not only does the account corroborate the Allied attack on the Germans at Jabassi on those dates, but it also laments how the shortage of food was one of the greatest problems that faced the German soldiers, and it claims that while this was the case, Cameroonians were gladly aiding the British invading army with varieties of food.⁸⁸ I should note, of course, that the Germans had some basis of accusing the local people of providing food to the enemy, although this could never be a justification for the pathetic murdering of unarmed civilians. The headman of Nyangwa, Ngo Esenge admitted that he gave the British eggs, bananas, and pineapples which empowered them to fight the Germans and that this attracted enough indignation from the Germans who shot and killed his father and five other villagers.⁸⁹

Some villagers and their headmen were told that they would be spared only if they provided the Germans with carrier labor. But there was bound to be terror and murders if that condition was not met. Headmen of villages who failed to produce the required number of carries were shot dead.⁹⁰ One Obam Elum of Makalat in Ebolowa district was reported to have been tied up to a tree by the orders of Von Hagen and shot dead simply because he was unable to supply enough carriers.⁹¹ Some leaders and Chiefs who could not provide carriers or fighting men, or show full support to the German cause simply fell victims, and were killed; some by

⁸⁷ Mentzel, *Der Kampf in Kamerun*, 76-80.

⁸⁸ Mentzel, *Der Kampf in Kamerun*, 79.

⁸⁹ EWP, Elphinstone, Memorandum, 49.

⁹⁰ EWP, "A Report by Giles," 60.

⁹¹ EWP, Statements by Ex-prisoners of War, 28 January 1916.

hanging, some shot, and some bayoneted. Examples of Chiefs killed included those of Manengoteng, Ndunge and Melong and Dschang in 1915.⁹²

Sometimes, the Germans simply accused villagers of having provided intelligence information to the Allies regarding the movement and where about of the Germans. Based on this accusation, these villagers were sure to be hanged. One civilian survivor in one village testified that “I saw Iloilo taken out ...after a white man [German] outside had shouted that ‘Iloilo had told the English where the Germans were and he was going to be hanged.’”⁹³ Another witness, testifying on the conversation between the German officer giving instructions on Iloilo to be hanged had this to say, “I heard a white man [German] shouting ‘to bring out the man who had helped the English as he was going to hang him.’ Iloilo was taken out by eight soldiers. I heard him say, ‘I worked for the Germans at Essosong.’ The white man said, ‘No, you have cloth you got from English.’”⁹⁴ This conversation is quite revealing: the Germans did not always base their accusations on evidence but mostly on assumption and belief. That Iloilo was simply wearing an English dress already made him a target, and the Germans considered it as evidence that he had provided the British with help. Such, was part of how the Germans applied their idea of the necessity of war.

The maelstrom of attacks and murdering of civilian populations in those parts of Cameroon during the Great War turned the affected communities into a reign of terror. In the observation of the Allied commander, the Germans created a reign of terror during the war, “firing on peaceful inhabitants to terrorize them, and shooting natives without trial.”⁹⁵ A

⁹² EWP, A Report by Giles, 61.

⁹³ EWP, WM Corsellis, An Enquiry, 53.

⁹⁴ EWP, WM Corsellis, An Enquiry, 54.

⁹⁵ EWP, Dobell to War Office, 28 January 1916, 18.

Nigerian official in Cameroon during the war reported that the Germans “created a reign of terror in the neighbourhood of any German garrison.”⁹⁶ A British Colonel observed that in an attempt by the Germans to maintain order and force colonial subjects unto their side, “a policy of terrorism appears to have been resorted to; number of villages were pillaged and burnt and the burnings were accompanied by wholesale executions.”⁹⁷ The pattern was that an alarm was raised on the approach of German soldiers towards a village, and then unarmed villagers fled into the bush, and on returning, dead bodies were found either shot or bayoneted by the Germans.⁹⁸ French officials established that on the approach of Allied forces, villages simply abandoned their villages which were still in German hands and ran to the Allied forces for their protection. Such occasions which only infuriated the Germans made them open gunfire on the fleeing villages, with the result that the unfortunate ones fell.⁹⁹ They found that many of the brutalities on the villages around Edea area were the responsibilities of the Germans such as Major Hoedike, Captain Schlosser and Dr. Langue who commanded Protective Forces in the Edea environs.¹⁰⁰ A British official found it befuddling that the Germans resorted to wanton killing of civilians of a country they were supposed to have been administering and protecting. “It should be borne in mind,” he wrote, “that the civilians killed by the Germans are the natives of a country under their protection, whom they had ruled for many years.”¹⁰¹ What indeed was happening in wartime was more or less a coronation of live experiences of Cameroonians under German colonialism in that part of the universe. The bloody wartime reprisals, as observed by one

⁹⁶ Quoted in *The Times History of the War*, “The Conquest of Cameroon and Togoland,” Vol. VIII (London: *The Times* Printing House Square, 1916), 311.

⁹⁷ E. Howard Gorges (Brigadier General), *The Great War in West Africa* (London: Hutchinson & Co. Ltd., 1931), 121.

⁹⁸ EWP, Memorandum by Mr. K.V Elphinstone, January 1916, 18-19.

⁹⁹ ANSOM TGO 22/195, Rapport de Lieutenant Perret, le 10 Janvier 1919.

¹⁰⁰ ANSOM TGO 22/195, Rapport de Lieutenant Perret.

¹⁰¹ EWP, Elphinstone, memorandum, 19.

German historian, were the last acts of over thirty years of violent German colonialism.¹⁰² Horne and Kramer provide insight as to why the German army should kill civilians deemed to be under their own protection, linking it to how military necessity was applied. As they argue, German atrocities did not differentiate in terms of the legal ownership of territories the army occupied, focusing rather on the attitude of the inhabitants; whether they were perceived to be unfriendly. They cite the example of Alsace and Lorraine which was German territory, but where the German army “treated the population as uncooperative and unpatriotic, and liable to help the enemy or even engage in armed resistance.”¹⁰³ In fact, when some populations welcomed the brief French invasion of Upper Alsace, it led to maltreatment of the civilians by the returning Germans. As in Cameroon, whenever retreated Germans returned to a village that appeared to have welcomed the arrival of Allied soldiers, the villagers were subjected to increased maltreatment and punishment.

In the face of the above, a British Chief political officer stated in 1915 that by early October 1914, Cameroonians were already “so terrified of the Germans that the mere rumour of their approach was sufficient to make them run away.”¹⁰⁴ During one of those nights of terror in one Babenga village sometimes in 1915, eight German soldiers arrived the village at night, knocked at the door of the headman, then instructed him to get all the villagers together. Even though the Germans told the gathered villagers they had instructions to keep watch over the village and probably do no more, the petrified villagers, not willing to trust the German soldiers,

¹⁰² Ruger, “Le Mouvement de Resistance,” 177.

¹⁰³ Horne and Kramer, *German Atrocities*, 22.

¹⁰⁴ EWP, Elphinstone, Memorandum, 27.

but most importantly terrorized by their very presence, began to scatter pell-mell into the bushes. The German soldiers opened fire on the fleeing villagers, killing four in a row.¹⁰⁵

In sum, and unlike the cases in Belgium and France, it is difficult to establish an accurate statistics for the number of civilian deaths deliberately shot, hanged or bayoneted during the war in Cameroon. The Great War events in Africa were completely overshadowed by those in Europe that much that happened in Africa passed into oblivion. While there were meticulous efforts to document all forms of civilian atrocities in Europe and use them against the Germans in the international community, no such efforts were made in Africa. Efforts to document such atrocities in the African campaigns were mostly 'localized' and got into the fore only when the Allies needed to use them at the end of the war as part of the justification for confiscating German African colonies. In fact, the lack of knowledge, or perhaps the deliberate silencing of the situation in Cameroon was such that six years following the end of the Cameroon campaign, Sir Henry Jackson, an English Admiralty stunningly declared while chairing a lecture delivered by Major General Charles Dobell in London that "no regrettable incident" occurred in the Cameroon campaign to "cause the public to demand any enquiries."¹⁰⁶

While not able to provide statistics on civilian atrocities in Cameroon, evidence suggests that there were hundreds or thousands. Allied officials who undertook to document the atrocities could not be present in all the places where the civilians were killed to take stock. A single figure appears once in a German report whereby as of 1 December 1915, "Lieutenant von

¹⁰⁵ EWP, Elphinstone, Memorandum, 27 & 30.

¹⁰⁶ Sir Henry Jackson, Introducing a lecture by Major-General Sir Charles Dobell, "The Campaign in the Cameroons, 1914-1916," *Royal United Services Institution, Journal* (1922): 697-716.

Engelbrechten had hanged 180 Douala.”¹⁰⁷ This number seems to apply only to those Duala that were hanged. It does not include those Duala and non-Duala shot and or bayoneted. Were full statistics to be made available, it would be seen that the situation of Cameroon with less than three million people at the time compared less favorably with that of Belgium or Northern France.

The Allies were also guilty?

Although atrocities against Cameroonian civilians was committed largely by the Germans and their *askaris*, the Allies were also slightly guilty. Violent acts on civilians committed by the Allies also built on excuses such as targeted persons being pro-German and anti-Allies, such that some Cameroonians found themselves in a quandary where if they were pro-Allies, they faced retaliation from the Germans and vice versa. Around Mora on 9 December 1915, a certain British Captain, Fox, led eighty men of the Nigerian Regiment to burn down the villages of Palata and most of Wuldumi for their support to the Germans, after which the Nigerian forces went on to kill a “certain number of pagans.”¹⁰⁸ After that, Captain Fox concluded that “a lesson will be useful in preventing [the people] helping the Germans in the future.”¹⁰⁹ Besides such acts led by British officers themselves, it does appear that several other instances of violence against civilians were carried out by British African soldiers out of control. After the campaign, the Governor General of Nigeria confessed to the Colonial Secretary in London in a secret telegram that their Sierra Leone troops while in the Cameroons “committed [crimes] against the natives,

¹⁰⁷ RKA Nr. 3929, Bl. 224: Bericht über die Organisation und Tätigkeit des militärischen Hafengewachtkommandos Duala Von Steuermann Durfvng; Translated into French and quoted by Ruger, “Le Mouvement de Resistance”, 177.

¹⁰⁸ TNA WO 95/5382, From the O.C Maiduguri Column, to the G.S.O Northern Cameroons, Sava, 4 January 1916.

¹⁰⁹ TNA WO 95/5382, O.C Maiduguri Column to the G.S.O Northern Cameroons.

even including murder and rape...wherever they were employed under General Dobell....”¹¹⁰

The situation was so bad that they could not be used for post-Cameroon campaign garrison duties. How the Allies did not document these atrocious acts carried out by their own soldiers against women and other civilians while carefully documenting all acts associated with the Germans is befuddling. But it does speak volumes about the process of the production of history, and those who have the power to fill up the archives with records. Today, historians can walk into the archives in Britain and France, and get all that relates to the dark pages of Germany’s colonial past, while getting only unlimited and carefully mediated stuff on the dark pages of British and French colonialism in Africa, and especially as it relates to wartime atrocities.¹¹¹

To be clear, whatever atrocities the Allies may have committed in Cameroon were certainly far less severe than those of the Germans. As Hull has so brilliantly shown, the Allies attached far more importance and adherence to the laws of war than did the Germans. Besides, the odds of war in Cameroon were clearly against the Germans, placing them in desperate situations that so easily played into their idea of military necessity. While the Allies in Cameroon were using both naval and land forces’ facilities, German inability to fight a naval war and their exclusively land forces’ operations gave them more day to day interaction with civilian populations, making it so easy for them to perpetuate atrocities on those civilians.

The Refugee Problem

Atrocities and other wartime activities in Cameroon generated an unprecedented refugee problem. Specifically, the factors that triggered off the refugee crisis were, attempts by

¹¹⁰ TNA CO 445/36, Secret, Lugard, the Governor-general of Nigeria to Bonar Law, Secretary of State for the Colonies, Nigeria, 22 November 1916.

¹¹¹ See, for the bias nature of the production of history, Michel Trouillot’s book, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995).

Europeans to conscript Cameroonians for combat activities normally which compelled those unwilling to serve to flee; the sound of the guns and machines firing which frightened the local people to abandon their homes; the war time atrocities of mostly Germans and their African-led soldiers where they kidnapped, raped and or killed women and children thereby causing many to flee once they got wind that the Germans were approaching their villages; the burning down of some villages by mostly the Germans and their African soldiers which rendered many people homeless, sending them far away to look for new homes; and, Cameroonian inhabitants who supported the Germans or those forced as carriers for the Protective Forces followed the defeated Germans to Spanish Guinea at the end of the war and became refugees in their numbers.

Most, if not all armed conflicts generate a refugee problem because people are forced to flee their homes. But the problem is perhaps more acute when people are forced to flee their homes not because those homes become part of the collateral destruction of war, but precisely because the homes become targets of intentional military attacks and the people become targets of unrestrained military attacks and murders. The behavior of the Germans during the war where they decided to not destroy most of the properties believing that they would soon return to the territory but resolved to destroy the inhabitants and their houses mercilessly believing that these inhabitants were perhaps more responsible for their failing military efforts than the Europeans accentuated the refugee problem. Under the circumstance, refugee camps began to proliferate in some parts of the colony. In the testimony of an Allied official, a huge refugee camp had been formed in Kribi, protected by the Allies. But when the Allies decided that Kribi could be of no value in future military operations and thus prepared to evacuate the place, all the inhabitants begged to be taken away to remain under British protection. As far as the shipping allowed this was done, but many were left. The scene from the departure of the last steamer from Kribi was

tragic, as many refugees, making frantic efforts to board the ship, were drowned by the swamping of canoes in the struggle.¹¹²

In the testimony of Dobell, as of 26 December 1914, the situation in the Douala area had produced “many thousand refugees living in the small areas” captured and held under Allied control.¹¹³ And as is often the case, refugees suffered from lack of food. This food shortage was accentuated by the amount of intentional destruction of farms and crops during the war. Refugee camps were built in several places by the Allies to host helpless civilians chased out of their homes. As of 6 February 1915, Allied officials already identified the refugee problem in the territory as becoming serious and a humanity problem. The British Senior Naval Officer wrote:

The refugee problem is becoming serious, as the Germans are allowing their soldiers to go about in small gangs to forage for their own food, with the result that these gangs are pillaging the villages, murdering the inhabitants, and raping the women, besides maiming them and their children.¹¹⁴

At one point in the early stages of the war, there were already about 4,000 odd refugees at Edea, 2,000 or more at Kribi, a large number at the Nyong River entrance, and before February 1915, another large number at Campo.¹¹⁵ Then at a point at Bare, five miles North of Nkongsamba, a refugee camp hosted 5,000 refugees seeking British protection.¹¹⁶ On 12 June 1915, fifteen men and eight women and three children arrived at the Nyong refugee camp. They had come from Mbakahe, a place in the bush about 12 hours walking distance North East of Mbea where they had lived in hiding for about six months until the Germans attacked them on 8 June killing two men and taking away five women and a child.¹¹⁷ Around or after 5 July 1915, a

¹¹² *The Royal Geographical Society* (with the Institute of British Geographers), "Notes on the Cameroons: By a Member of the West African Expeditionary Force," *The Geographical Journal* 48, no. 5 (Nov., 1916): 404-5.

¹¹³ EWP, Dobell to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 26 December 1914, 10.

¹¹⁴ TNA ADM 137/224, Fuller to Secretary of the Admiralty, 6 February 1915.

¹¹⁵ TNA ADM 137/224, Fuller to Secretary of the Admiralty.

¹¹⁶ *The Royal Geographical Society*, 404.

¹¹⁷ EWP, extract from Report by Lieutenant Carter, R.N., Commanding Nyong Flotilla, June 1916, 60.

Company of the 2nd Nigerian WAFF, working together with a British Flotilla at the Nyong River, undertook the task of moving from the Dehane district up to 4,000 refugees to the Victoria district.¹¹⁸ Later in the year, a party of refugees numbering 150 from a district near the coast town of Batanga was reported by Allied officials to have arrived at Campo on 11 October 1915. A German force had arrived their territory, opening fire and killing many, including women and children, so that the poor villagers melted away in fright, then becoming refugees. Those refugees were all seeking Allied protection, as they were fleeing from German wartime atrocities and the terror so generated.¹¹⁹

The challenges facing the refugees were almost insurmountable. Many were starving. Many died of diseases such as dysentery. Either there was not enough food to be given them by their Allied host, or the Allies feared that if they kept providing the refugees with food, their numbers would only increase, thereby posing uncontrollable accommodation and logistics problems.¹²⁰ Even while in their camps under Allied protection, some of the refugees became targets to further German attacks. On 22 January 1915, an *askari* unit attacked the refugees at the Campo camp, killing some, in which case the rest of the petrified refugees in the Campo District migrated across Campo River into the Spanish colony of Muni.¹²¹ While in Spanish Guinea, thousands of the refugees, including Cameroonian soldiers who had fought for the Germans, ended up as plantation laborers in the labor-needy Fernando plantations.¹²² The practice of the German army attacking refugees was not exclusive to Cameroon. Horne and Kramer have

¹¹⁸ TNA ADM 137/224, Fuller to Secretary of the Admiralty, 12 June, 1916.

¹¹⁹ TNA ADM 137/224, Fuller to Secretary of the Admiralty, 30 May 1916.

¹²⁰ TNA ADM137/224, Fuller to Secretary of the Admiralty.

¹²¹ TNA ADM137/224, Fuller to Secretary of the Admiralty.

¹²² Ibrahim K. Sundiata, *From Slavery to Neoslavery: The Bight of Biafra and Fernando Po in the Era of Abolition, 1827-1930* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996), 125.

observed how a column of Belgian refugees expelled from Aarschot on 28 August 1914 reached Louvain and was fired upon.¹²³ And the thousands of Cameroonian refugees employed in plantations in Spanish Guinea parallels millions of Belgians deported by the German army to Germany during this same time to perform forced labor in the production of war materials.¹²⁴

Immediately following the end of fighting, the Allies were confronted with the dilemma of dealing with the refugees and rehabilitating them. One of the most challenging issues was the repatriation of refugees from Spanish Guinea as well as transporting those scattered in various places in Cameroon to their original homes. In fact, German activities in border towns and villagers had sent a wave of refugees into Spanish Guinea. Also, when exiting Cameroon following their defeat, the Germans had gone along with thousands of Cameroonian carriers who then became refugees in Spanish Guinea. A few from Muni arrived at the basecamp at Campo on 2 February 1916. A week later, they commenced arriving in numbers. By March 1916, an estimated number of 21,000 refugees had arrived Campo from Muni, apart from some 10,000 others estimated to have returned through other crossings.¹²⁵

The above were refugees detailed to have been taken by the Germans as carriers during the retreat from Yaounde to Bata. All they wanted was to return to their country and their homes. As they arrived, British officials directed them to proceed to their Kribi or Yaounde homes by road. But those of Douala origin and the North were given sea transport to Douala and thence by rail to Nkongsamba for those who required it. The state of the returning refugees was a sorry one. “The majority of the refugees,” observed one British official, “arrived in a destitute and

¹²³ Horne and Kramer, *German Atrocities*, 40.

¹²⁴ Horne and Kramer, *German Atrocities*, 24-40.

¹²⁵ TNA ADM 137/380, Fuller to the Secretary of the Admiralty, 12 June 1916.

famished condition, there being several deaths from dysentery and exhaustion.”¹²⁶ For those who stayed alive, especially carrier refugees of Douala, Bamum, and Bakoko origins, their starvation had put them in a state of collapse when they arrived at Campo. Even the majority of those who had served the Germans well and deserved payment were “simply ... given worthless promissory notes or nothing at all.” Only about twenty of them, mainly the Hausas, had received a pony each, in payment for their services.”¹²⁷ To alleviate the sufferings of these returning refugees, British authorities established food depots at Campo, Kribi and Douala.¹²⁸

After 23 January 1916 till the end of February that year, more streams of refugees were found returning from Spanish Guinea through Bata. On 10 February 1916, both male and female refugees from Spanish Guinea began to arrive Campo in their numbers. The British officials in charge ferried the refugees across the Campo River by a British flotilla at Campo and started a food depot for them.¹²⁹ In time, larger portions were dispatched to their home towns via Kribi and Yaounde, while the remainder (about 3,000) belonging to Douala or the Northern Cameroons were given sea transport to Douala, and rail transport if necessary to Nkongsamba, from where they were expected to find their way to their various homes. Many arrived to find their homes destroyed by war so that they remained homeless for some time to come. The British also struggled in rehabilitating refugees originating from other parts of Cameroon. The repatriation of refugees of Kribi district from Buea district, for example, was commenced on 11 February 1916, and about 5,000 of them being conveyed by sea transport.¹³⁰

¹²⁶ TNA ADM 137/380, Fuller to Secretary of the Admiralty.

¹²⁷ TNA ADM 137/380, Fuller to the Secretary of the Admiralty, 30 May 1916.

¹²⁸ TNA ADM 137/380, Fuller to Secretary of the Admiralty, 12 June, 1916.

¹²⁹ TNA ADM 137/380, Fuller to the Secretary of the Admiralty, 30 May 1916.

¹³⁰ TNA ADM 137/380, Fuller to the Secretary of the Admiralty.

As is the case with the number of civilian deaths, the total number of refugees generated by wartime activities in Cameroon remains a matter of historical conjecture and estimation. But English archival sources have figures for the number that specifically followed the fleeing Germans to Spanish Guinea in January 1916. As recorded:

Commencing on 23rd January 1916, a constant stream of German convoys, proceeding from Ngoa [Cameroon] to Bata [Spanish Guinea], started to pass through Milong on the Spanish side of the frontier. A record was kept, as nearly as possible, of the numbers comprising the convoys, and they were found to amount in all, to 900 Europeans and 40,000 natives, including troops.¹³¹

This number that entered Bata initially stayed in Muni. Efforts were made to move them further, so that in March 1916, about 16, 000 of them were transported from Muni to Fernando Po. This number included 6,000 Cameroonian soldiers, 6,000 women and 4,000 servants and carriers to the Germans interned in Fernando Po.¹³² The sources say nothing about children, although it is unlikely that there could be men and women without children. Understandably, therefore, these sources may have simply included children in the numbers given for women and soldiers and carriers. Cameroon history textbooks and research monographs and theses frequently talk of 16,000 Cameroonians migrating into Spanish Muni with the fleeing Germans. This is incorrect. As seen, this is the number recorded by British officials that were transferred in March 1916 from Muni to Fernando Po.

In any case, the above-recorded number of 40,000 does not include tens of thousands scattered in many different places in Cameroon. Thus, a conservative figure suggests that perhaps up to 100,000 people fled their homes permanently or temporarily as a result of the war in Cameroon.¹³³

¹³¹ TNA ADM 137/380, Fuller to Secretary of the Admiralty, 12 June, 1916.

¹³² TNA ADM 137/380, Fuller to Secretary of the Admiralty.

¹³³ In the Douala, Edea and Kribi areas alone, tens of thousands fled their homes. And throughout the campaigns of the war all over Cameroon in the center, south, East, North and Western grasslands, people were forced out of their

The International Laws of War and Diplomatic Concerns and exchanges Over the Atrocities and other Forms of Wartime Misconduct

To determine the laws of war and war crimes, a series of international conventions had held among European powers including the 1907 Hague Convention. Articles 25, 28, 44, 45, 46, 47 and 50 specifically addressed issues of humanity. Bombardment of undefended towns, villages and dwelling places, as well as pillaging had been strictly prohibited. Restrictions and prohibitions were placed on attacks on civilians in war-torn societies and on other forcible acts against inhabitants of occupied territories in wartime. German carnage on the inhabitants of war-torn Cameroon and pillaging and destruction of villages were, therefore, in the opinion of the Allies, clear violations of the spirit and letter of the Hague Convention. Why, it may be questioned, did the Germans so easily violate the terms of the Hague Convention on this subject? A persuasive answer to this question is found in Hull's *A Scrap of paper*, in which German military tradition and military necessity in the years prior to 1914 took precedence over all else, including breaking the laws of war, and viewing them more like a scrap of paper. In the course of German atrocities, diplomatic exchanges both in Europe and Africa between the Germans and the Allies did show marked differences to how they interpreted and understood the laws of war. While German military necessity was key to violating the laws of war both in Europe and Africa, the Germans specifically stretched their argument in war atrocities in Africa to say that warfare in "uncivilized" territories involving what the Germans called African savages was exempted from the scrutiny of international laws and norms.¹³⁴ In such savage African territories, the

homes. There are later instances of the Germans burning down houses and palaces in places in the Bamenda grasslands where the people were suspected of rendering support to the enemies.

¹³⁴ Some of these German officials repeatedly warned their Allied Prisoners of war captured in Cameroon against mentioning the Hague Convention. See, for example, EWP, Testimony, 64.

Germans maintained, warfare did not have the benefit of coverage and protection by the Hague Convention. A German commander by name Hauptmann von Crailsheim once lashed out at his Allied prisoner of war in Cameroon that “war in the colonies was uncivilized and did not come under the Hague Convention.”¹³⁵ German officials insisted that Africans had no knowledge of the international laws and customs of war, and did not observe such in how they conducted warfare. There is a striking paradox in such claims and accusations; it implicates German officers themselves for being participants and accomplices in what they considered ‘uncivilized’ warfare.

The historical reality, however, is that the German rhetoric that warfare in Africa was ‘uncivilized’ and not subject to conventional laws ran contrary to evidence. Whether Africans were aware of such laws on war or not, they had their own noble laws on warfare that aligned well with whatever international laws that existed on the practices of war. Only one example here will suffice. Silvester and Gewalt, in comparing the manner and attitude of German and Herero war fares in German South West Africa, have noted that while the Germans killed women and children, armless civilians and wounded soldiers in battle and massacred prisoners of war, the Herero Chiefs had ordered their soldiers that before a shot was fired, they should make sure they spared the lives of all German women and children and non-combatants.¹³⁶

Besides the cynical claim by the Germans about warfare in Africa having to be subjected to a different kind of laws, many of their arguments and justifications for their atrocities in Cameroon paralleled the ones they were making for similar situations in Belgium and France. Those arguments are insights into German understandings of the laws of war and their idea of

¹³⁵ EWP, Elphinstone, Memorandum, 65.

¹³⁶ Jeremy Silvester and Jan-Bart Gewalt, *Words Cannot Be Found, German Colonial Rule in Namibia: An Annotated Reprint of the 1918 Blue Book* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2003), 121.

military necessity. Similarly, Allied military officials who protested against German atrocities in Cameroon based their protests on the laws of war, in the similar way they were doing for cases in Belgium and France. These are all represented in the exchanges that follow.

The first diplomatic exchange regarding atrocities in Cameroon appeared to have come from the Germans, and although it did not touch on the killings of unarmed civilians, the British in their response used the opportunity to address the issue. In this exchange, Spain acted as the mediator.¹³⁷ On 26 November 1914, Governor Ebermaier from Yaounde-Cameroon first wrote to Dobell and the British Governor of Nigeria through the Spanish Governor in Santa Isabel, Guinea. Although at this time the issue of the murder of unarmed civilians was supposed to be center stage, the German Governor chose to concern himself with what he considered to be the plight of white German prisoners of war, especially women, and children, in the hands of the Allies. He queried:

I am informed that in Duala white women and children have been made prisoners of war and taken away to English and French Colonies. It is even said that time has not been allowed to pregnant and lying-in women to take away the most wanted necessities for themselves and their children. Further, the prisoners of war who have been taken away have not been allowed the necessary time to secure the property that they were leaving behind against robbery and plundering; these goods, so left behind, are said to have been plundered. ...I protest against these violations of the conditions of articles 43, 46, and 47 of the 4th Convention of the Second peace Conference at the Hague.

In reference to the same conditions I may express the expectation that commanders of forces in the places occupied will regard the conditions of Articles 55 and 56 of the said Convention in their treatment of buildings and agricultural undertakings.¹³⁸

Governor Ebermaier concluded his query by urging the Governor of Spanish Guinea that “by forwarding these communications to the proper addresses your Excellency will have done a

¹³⁷ During the war, Spain, apparently a neutral country at the time, appeared to have acted as a medium of exchange for diplomatic exchanges between the Allies and the Germans.

¹³⁸ TNA ADM 137/224, Translation of certified true copy of a document in charge of Don Luis Daban Y Ruis, Secretary General for Spanish Guinea, 7 December 1914; EWP, Governor Ebermaier to Dobell and Governor of Nigeria, 7 December, 1914, 14.

great service to humanity, and have earned the gratitude of many helpless women and children.”¹³⁹

It is interesting that the Germans were the ones who first commenced war time diplomatic exchanges with the Allies on this subject, but rather than discuss the ‘native issue’ or the atrocities against unarmed Africans, they completely ignored it. What they saw was the plight of white German women and children. This plight was not that they were being bayoneted as was the case with Africans. It was just that in the opinion of the German Governor, they were not receiving fair treatment. How this so-called unfair treatment compared to the outright killing of African civilians is striking.

Responding to the German query, however, Dobell intelligently evoked the real issue at state - the “native issue”. In this response to Ebermaier dated 23 December 1914, Dobell debunked the governor’s claims. Dobell urged Ebermaier that after being “acquainted with the true facts” he would find that accusations made against forces under his command for violating certain articles of the Hague Convention and for mistreating German women and children in Douala “are without foundation” and “are completely false.”¹⁴⁰ He explained that once the Allied forces seized Douala, all German women were given the chance to either remain in the town or depart with their husbands, who were POWs. All women chose to remain with their husband prisoners of war and declared themselves very fit, and steps were taken to have them take along a considerable amount of baggage.¹⁴¹ He advised the Governor that POWs had been considerably treated, and that “officers in charge of the Prisoners of War Bureau have received numerous

¹³⁹ EWP, Ebermaier to Dobell, 14.

¹⁴⁰ EWP, Dobell to Ebermaier, 23 December, 1914, 14.

¹⁴¹ EWP, Dobell to Ebermaier, 14.

letters from the prisoners and deported persons expressing their thanks for the way in which they have been treated and the kindness and consideration shown them.”¹⁴²

After carefully explaining himself out that German accusations of mistreatment of their women were baseless, Dobell stunned the German Governor with a diplomatic diatribe. He turned squarely on the ‘native issue’ to protest against wartime atrocities on women. To fully appreciate this diplomatic diatribe, I take the liberty to generously quote parts of Dobells’ response to the governor:

I now turn to another subject, and take this opportunity to bring to your Excellency’s attention the barbarous manner in which German troops are carrying on warfare, especially in the Edea districts. With regard to this, I enclose a report of the cases treated by the French medical authorities, which removes any doubt as to the facts of the case. This report can only contain a small proportion of the unspeakable atrocities actually committed by your troops.

It requires no reference to the Hague Convention to point out that the brutalities which have been committed against unarmed non-combatants and innocent women and children are contrary to every principle of civilized warfare and against every dictate of humanity.

I am unable to believe that such acts could be perpetrated without the sanction of your military authorities, and in some cases I have reason to think that [German] Europeans were actually present directing operations.

In the name of humanity I request your Excellency to put an instant stop to such proceedings.¹⁴³

To appreciate the gravity of the problem, the Allied Commander ended his letter to the Governor with firm threats that “should they continue I shall be obliged to give directions that any German soldier captured and found guilty of taking part in these atrocities shall be deemed to have forfeited his right to be regarded as a prisoner of war and will be dealt with accordingly.” As if to remind the Governor of his failing duties on the laws of war in that part of the universe, Dobell ended his diatribe by telling the Governor that “I need not point out to your Excellency that for my part I use the utmost endeavour that the laws and customs of war are respected by the

¹⁴² EWP, Dobell to Ebermaier, 15.

¹⁴³ TNA ADM 137/224, Dobell to Ebermaier.

troops fighting under my command and expect your Excellency to take similar measures.”¹⁴⁴

Dobell’s threat captured German soldiers found guilty of violating the laws of war would be stripped off their own entitlements to those laws echoed threats and protests issued by the French Ministers of War and the Interior on 20 August 1914 to the Germans over Belgium, accusing the Germans of systematic barbarism toward women, children, the old, and wounded soldiers and threatened to bring the German army and even peoples to justice.¹⁴⁵

The key to understanding Dobell’s concern with the laws of war for all peoples lies in some of the statements made by senior Allied authorities. At the very start of the war in 1914, Prime Minister Herbert Asquith had declared before the British Parliament that Britain was fighting, among other things, to ‘defend international obligational’ and ‘international good faith,’ both words being synonymous for the rules of war, or international law, and aims which remained the same during the entire war.¹⁴⁶ This British war aim had been re-iterated by Sir Graham Bower (formerly of the Admiralty) that the Allies were “engaged in the defense of international law and justice” and by Frances Louis Renault, the most renowned French lawyer in 1917 that one of the goals of the war was to destroy “the German theory that necessity justifies the violation of all the laws of war.”¹⁴⁷ When in the first weeks of the war the German invading army in Belgium began to grossly violate international law, Allied leaders were greatly alarmed, alerting the world’s attention.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁴ EWP, Dobell to Ebermaier, 15.

¹⁴⁵ Horne and Kramer, *German Atrocities*, 176.

¹⁴⁶ J.A Spencer and Cyril Asquith, *Life of Herbert Henry Asquith, Lord Oxford and Asquith* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1932), 2:114; Hull, *A Scrap of Paper*, 1.

¹⁴⁷ Hull, *A Scrap of Paper*, 1-2.

¹⁴⁸ Hull, *A Scrap of Paper*, 2.

Strict adherence to the laws of war and its application to all places where the war was being fought was, therefore, the main concern of senior Allied military officers, whether in Europe or Africa. Still, while the evidence of German atrocities against unarmed Africans was almost superfluous, and while the German government officials were reminded of it again and again, the Germans remained indifferent. Instead, in further recorded diplomatic correspondences with the Allies, German officials behaved as if the situation was the other way round. As if trying to divert attention from the real issues, they trumped up accusations of the Allies mistreating white German prisoners of war, especially women and children, and of inciting Cameroonians against white Germans. This time around, German authorities decided to use the American diplomatic channel to make their case to the British. As the US was yet to join the war and was therefore still a neutral country, the German Imperial Office dispatched a protest to the US Embassy in London, dated 31 May 1915, for transmission to the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. According to the note:

The [German] Foreign Office begs the Embassy of the United States of America, through the agency of the American Embassy in London, to address the strongest protest with the least possible delay to the British Government against the behaviour of the British troops in the Cameroons, which is contrary to all sentiment of race and civilisation, and to urge most forcibly upon the British Government, who can hardly approve this sort of warfare against the white race on African soil, that they should send clear instructions to Brigadier-General Dobell, Commanding the Franco-British Forces in the Cameroons, to issue the necessary orders to prevent the repetition henceforth of similar acts of violence against the Germans in the Cameroons and against their private property.¹⁴⁹

The specific acts in question against white Germans in Cameroon which the German government regarded as violence included non-respect of private property of the Germans, arrest of German nationals in Cameroon, systematic looting of property of German nationals by the inhabitants of Cameroon stirred up, according to the Germans, by the Allies, letting Allied Africa soldiers take charge of German POWs instead of putting those prisoners under the charge of

¹⁴⁹ EWC, Foreign Office to Colonial office, 28 June 1915, 29.

white soldiers, and hiring of Cameroonians by the Allies to hunt down white Germans and drag them into captivity.¹⁵⁰ From these charges, one finds the German accusations of Cameroonians hunting down the Germans as suggestive of a ‘people’s war’ and general hostility towards the Germans as justifications for German atrocities, all of which come under the rubrics of military necessity. Although the Germans were making this cynical argument about Africans not entitled to benefit from the laws of war, they had shown just as much inability to apply and respect the laws in Belgium and Northern France, justifying everything away on military necessity, and blaming virtually all the civilian victims for being involved in anti-German war activities.¹⁵¹

While the Germans easily violated the laws of war with regard to the treatment of civilians in occupied territories, justifying it on military necessity, they appeared to show an understanding and expectation of these laws in ways as understood by the Allies, as long as it worked out in their favor. For example, when the Germans had abandoned Duala in September 1914 without a fight to the Allied invading army, the Governor had issued a circular letter to the colonized peoples, reassuring them not to panic because “there were so many white women and children there [in Douala] to whom, according to the law of the whites, nothing can happen if no fighting takes place in a town.”¹⁵² But, there was no fighting or resistance in many of the places in Cameroon where German soldiers unleashed violence on civilians. Even in Belgium, “combat was not the only setting in which German soldiers might attack civilians,” as on 8 August 1914 in a village near Liège where the Germans killed fourteen men and women amidst calm and when villagers were adamant that there had been no provocation at all, a German officer retorted

¹⁵⁰ EWC, Foreign Office to Colonial office, 29.

¹⁵¹ Hull, *A Scrap of paper*, 53-5.

¹⁵² ANSOM TGO 7/68, Letre du government Allemande.

that “it doesn’t matter, at Liège you kill our men. We also have the right to kill you.”¹⁵³ Such justifies Hull’s observation that all acts of German atrocities during the war were not only justified in terms of military necessity, “but they were conceived of and acted on out of the assumptions about the nature of war, self-preservation, the just use of extreme force, and consequent military duty, that had developed under this rubric.”¹⁵⁴

London fully understood what appeared to be a German double-standard, and false accusations and rhetoric on laws of war, which by the way was interpreted by the Germans to fit their own idea of military necessity. Probably placing the German diplomatic query of 31 May under this double standard and false claims, therefore, London’s reply to Berlin was laconic. The Foreign Secretary called German accusations “entirely untrue” and concluded that it is “therefore, quite unnecessary to send Major-general Dobell any instructions on the subject” as requested by the German government.¹⁵⁵ There were no more exchanges on the subject, as shortly after this last one, the Germans were defeated and ousted from the Cameroons.

Conclusion

Although occurring at the same time, and in the context of the same war, the intentionally killing of civilians in Cameroon as in most parts of Africa did not receive as much publicity and accurate statistics as did the case of Belgium and Northern France in Europe. Still, these civilian murders and the ensuing refugee crisis are some of the darkest pages of the Great War campaigns in Africa, and the story deserves to be heard even if it is a depressing one. While these atrocities were not limited to Africa, the continent’s situation was exacerbated by the fact that the shedding of African blood by Europeans was already a common place practice, and predated the

¹⁵³ Horne and Kramer, *German Atrocities*, 17.

¹⁵⁴ Hull, “Military Necessity,” 374.

¹⁵⁵ EWC, Sir Grey to Mr. Page (United States Ambassador), 2 November 1915, 47.

campaigns of the Great War. Understanding and examining this particular bloodshed in the context of it happening in Europe as well during this time elevates our understandings of the dark pages of European colonialism in Africa and the dragging of the continent into the global war of 1914. The violent atrocities of the Germans in wartime Cameroon are interpreted in the context of the German military culture and necessity, and its disregard thereof of the laws of war, in contrast to other belligerents like the Allies. Because International Law or the laws of war is one of the chief ways through which states have tried to limit the violence of war,¹⁵⁶ the conflicting and dangerous interpretation of these laws by nations at war could be extremely damaging for humanity as it happened during the Great War. It is, therefore, important that the world makes frantic efforts at synchronizing the laws of war, as one of the major steps towards protecting vulnerable communities in occupied places during any war.

¹⁵⁶ Hull, "Military Necessity," 352.

Chapter 7

Partition

Introduction

When the Germans were here they drove us from our town and order us to go and build in the bush, but [we] were wandering all this time and wouldn't go in the Bush as the Germans wish, until the war broke out. Now we want to return but the French wouldn't allow us to return to our ground which the Germans have unlawfully taken from us. Is not this from frying pan to the fire? [sic] – Joseph Bell, Douala-Cameroon, 1919.

Despite attempts to cloak Allied [war] aims in altruistic terms, inter-Allied rivalry produced a division of Germany's tropical African colonies that reflected not African desires but European colonial priorities.¹

The cruelest irony in the Cameroon campaign was that those who fought to guarantee victory for the Allies were ultimately left out in how the fate of the conquered territory came to be decided. After thousands of Africans and Cameroonians had made chivalrous sacrifices, many of them dying in the process, to oust the Germans and deliver Cameroon to British and French, once the territory was taken, the Allies went on to arbitrarily partition it in ways that starkly ignored the interests and opinions of the people. Once again, as had been the case in the European conquest of Africa, Africans were used to fight a war engineered and dictated by the Europeans, and after fighting and winning that war, they were left out in its spoils, and in how their future relationship with Europe came to be redefined.

Between 1916 and 1919, Britain and France implemented different stages of the partition of Cameroon. In doing so, both Cameroonians and British colonial and trading personnel in the Cameroons opposed the manner and content of partition in several ways, including petitions. In

¹ Brian Digre, *Imperialism's News Clothes: The Repartition of Tropical Africa, 1914-1919* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1990), 199.

the end, all opposition came to naught. This chapter examines the Anglo-French arbitrary partition of Cameroon between 1916 and 1919 but most especially the opposition to that partition, and the lack of attention paid by the partitioners to the voices that really ought to matter. I posit that the nonchalance and the self-serving interests with which the Allies bifurcated the territory of Cameroon after World War 1 represents in some degree a betrayal of trust and support from the people of Cameroon, notably the coastal inhabitants of the Douala area. The process and manner of this European repartition of Cameroon represent a classical example of European-African relations in the era of African partition and re-partition - a relationship viewed by some historians to be filled with intrigues, hypocrisy, and manipulation.

On the European Re/partition of Africa (Cameroon)

The general subject of European partition of Africa at the dawn of the nineteenth century and its later repartition following the end of WWI campaigns of the twentieth century is relatively superfluous, compared to other aspects of the continent's history. Still, historians, using similar or same sources, have offered conflicting interpretations and interests.² With particular reference to the case of the Cameroons in West Africa, existing scholarship mainly views territorial ambitions to have enticed the Allies into extending World War 1 campaigns to the region. Brian Digre demonstrates how the intention to seize and repartition German African colonies including the Cameroons were paramount to British and French war aims in the continent. He asserts that during the partition, African interests proclaimed in public as the basis of Allied policy, were largely

² This is especially the case with regard to how historians analyse the European repartition of Africa following the 1914 war. André Kaspi for example, using similar sources as Brian Digre (British and French colonial and metropolitan archives), argues that the repartition of Africa was never France's main concern during the initial stages of the extension of WWI hostilities to the continent. But Brian Digre uses similar sources to take a contrary view; repartition was France's as it was Britain's pre-occupation from the start of the African campaigns to finish. See André Kaspi, "French war Aims in Africa, 1914-1919," in *France and Britain in Africa: Imperial Rivalry and Colonial Rule*, ed., Prosser Gifford and WM. Roger Louis (New Haven and London; Yale University Press, 1971), 369-396.

disregarded in private while the paramountcy of French desires were the decisive factors in determining the partition of Cameroon. “Despite attempts to cloak Allied aims in altruistic terms,” Digre concludes, “inter-Allied rivalry produced a division of Germany's tropical African colonies that reflected not African desires but European colonial priorities.”³ Peter Yearwood vividly and graphically conveys the arbitrariness with which the Cameroons territory came to be partitioned. But, examining the partition through the prism of power relations in Europe, Yearwood, like Digre, fails to address major Cameroonian concerns for and against the partition. He focuses on the dynamics of British imperialism in Africa during the World War 1 period, during which time decisions made by British metropolitan political authorities always overrode, but often conflicted with the interests of colonial authorities as well as the interests of Africans. For Yearwood, Africans were unable to remarkably influence the partition arrangements because they lacked access to the British metropolitan political system from which major decisions emanated. “Local considerations,” notes Yearwood, “had little influence on British [African] policy at the highest level.”⁴

The problem with existing scholarship so far on the subject of European partition and repartition of African territories is that although many recognize how much self-serving European interest trumped local African interests, and bemoan the practice, their analyses are still overwhelmingly geared towards the activities of the partitioners, dominated by the diplomatic meetings in faraway Europe. African voices, especially the dissenting ones, are being sidelined. My major historiographical input on this subject is the election to focus more on the resistant activities of those who were being partitioned, and less on the partitioners. If “partitions are

³ Digre, *Imperialism's New Clothes*, 197, 199 & xii.

⁴ Peter J. Yearwood, ““In a Casual Way with a pencil”: British Policy and the Partition of Kamerun, 1914-1919” *Canadian Journal of African Studies / Revue Canadienne des Études Africaines* 27, 2 (1993), 221 & 222.

interesting to the historian because they tell him about the priorities of the partitioners, and sometimes about the resistance of the partitioned,"⁵ then it would be a missed opportunity for historical scholarship to talk about the Anglo-French partition of Cameroon without adequately elaborating on the reaction of Cameroonians and other forces that were against the content of that partition. By viewing and representing African voices and interests in European partition arrangements that involved Africans, I introduce an intricate of relationships in the partition process and demonstrate that the Anglo-French partition marked some sort of betrayal of a people.

Prelude to the 1916 Partition: Position of Colonial Office and Admiralty Officials

Once the Allies began to seize Cameroonian territories beginning with the all-important Douala area from September 1914, the need for some form of administration to be implemented over these areas was being considered. For the time being, and specifically over the Duala area, the British and French succeeded to carry out a joint-administration, although it was overwhelmingly British in terms of man power and resources.⁶ But most of the areas, especially those conquered separately, were largely under the control of the individual forces (British or French) that had conquered the places. Initially, the French had favored a condominium over Cameroon, essentially because they found themselves to be in a weaker position after the British had played such a big role in the conquest of the colony and British personnel were already

⁵ John Gallagher, "The Decline, Revival and Fall of the British Empire," In *The Decline, Revival and Fall of the British Empire: The Ford Lectures and other Essays*, ed., Anil Seal (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 87. I must state at once that I find the argument and analysis of Gallagher and Ronald Robinson on European partition of Africa (chapter 1 of the just cited study, pp19-72) to be ahistorical, and misleadingly counterfactual; they claim that European imperialism was never the driving force for colonization of Africa, but rather that it was the side effect of partition, and although they cherry pick evidence, their evidence is super weak, and does not pass historical scrutiny.

⁶ For a joint Anglo-French administration of the conquered places of the Cameroons before 1916, see, Lovett Elango, "The Anglo-French 'Condominium' in Cameroon, 1914-1916: The Myth and the Reality," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 18, 4 (1985): 656-673.

administering important and strategic areas, including Douala.⁷ But the temporary joint administration implemented over the Duala area came to present too many problems that it was quickly abandoned.⁸

Because between 1914 and 1916 the joint administration was presenting too many problems, and given the high probability that the Germans would eventually be defeated, British and French officials began to contemplate the partition of a potentially conquered Cameroon. At this point, British colonial and Admiralty officials began to weigh in on the possible British take. As early as 8 October 1914, the Allied Commander in Cameroon, Major-General Charles Dobell, wrote a very private letter to the Colonial Secretary in London, Lewis Harcourt, advising that in the event of an Anglo-French partition of Cameroon, Douala and Victoria must fall to the British because “the natural strength of Duala makes it imperative that it should never be in the hands of a possible future enemy.”⁹ He further suggested that given its geographical position, Victoria must also remain with the British if Douala did. That although Victoria could also be defended, it could never be sufficient, so it needed to be possessed alongside Douala. Suggesting that the British should keep Douala and Victoria and the French Batanga and Kribi, he stated: “Small Batanga and Kribi are both capable of improvements as ports and they tap a very rich hinterland and I hope the French would be content with them.”¹⁰ In the administration of the conquered

⁷ Digre, *Imperialism's New Clothes*, 42.

⁸ Elango details the temporary Anglo-French Condominium over the Douala area, and the problems that it faced, until it was finally abandoned, and the partition of the territory settled at. According to him, while the British had dominated the temporary condominium, two fundamental issues made it to be unworkable. These were the Authority Issue and the Territorial Issue. For the Former (Authority Issue), the British and the French disagreed on the future successor of the British pioneer Head of the Condominium, Dobell, whether he should be another British man or possibly a French man. And for the Territorial Issue, both disagreed on the conquered Cameroon territories that should be jointly administered; whether it should be the territories conquered both jointly and separately by British and French forces or it should only be the territories conquered jointly.

⁹ The National Archives, Kew-Richmond, UK (hereafter TNA) ADM 137/162, Private letter from General Dobell Government House, Duala, to Harcourt, 8 October 1914.

¹⁰ TNA ADM 137/162, Dobell to Harcourt.

areas so far, Dobell who thought that "the French took no part in the capture of Duala" decided to restrict French activities to the Eastern area. And he suggested that in the event of partition, the rough line of "demarkation should follow the Sanaga River as far as [illegible] and then run due North to Lake Chad."¹¹ But he advised that using a River to demarcate should only serve as a rough line, probably for the time being.

Shortly after Dobell's advocacy, and on 24 October 1914, the British-Nigerian Governor, Frederick Lugard, who was entertaining interest in a potentially seized German Cameroon, and had bought over the opinions of British military and naval officials in the Cameroons regarding how it should possibly be partitioned proposed to his London boss as follows:

I propose to suggest to French Governor-General that British [sic] should temporarily administer Northern and Western portions of Cameroons, the French taking the Southern and Eastern parts. The dividing line would be from mouth of River Sanaga to its intersection of latitude 5 North thence to Mbassi and along Lagone to Lake Chad; this leaves to French 163,000 square miles and 139, 000 to British, and cutting up the tribes as little as possible.¹²

This proposal, in so far as it would minimize the splitting of tribes, was going to be the fairest, if the partition must be effected. Admiralty officials in the Cameroons had also begun to advocate the retention of certain parts of the colony by Britain as early as 9 October 1914. That day, the British naval Captain, Fuller, commanding the Allied navy, wrote in his report to the Admiralty in London that:

Owing to the natural defenses of Duala, and the ease with which the entrance between Suellaba and Cameroon point and also the channel from there up to Duala could be fortified, it is considered essential that Great Britain should retain possession of the Cameroons to the North of the Sanaga River on conclusion of peace.¹³

¹¹ TNA ADM 137/162, Dobell to Harcourt.

¹² TNA ADM 137/162, The Governor-General of Nigeria (Frederick Lugard) to the Secretary of State for the Colonies (Harcourt), October 24, 1914.

¹³ TNA ADM137/62, Captain Fuller to Secretary of the Admiralty, 9 October 1914

In again another private to the Secretary of the Admiralty letter dated 5 November 1914, Fuller doubled down on the case for a British retention of Douala. "Everybody at home," he wrote, "is necessarily so fully engaged that little attention can be paid to the expedition here, and Duala with the Northern half of this colony may slip out of British hands for a second time, for which there will be many regrets in the future."¹⁴ Inadvertently revealing the real intentions of the British government over the future of Cameroon, Fuller stated that "rumour hath it that the British Government are not keen in taking over any of this Colony, except small pieces to round up the Nigerian frontier." Based on this, he warned that:

if our Government does not take Duala and the Northern half, they will make a grave error, which they will be made to pay for in years to come. At present the Navy has won for them Duala, its magnificent harbor, wharfs, town, and so forth; a prize which seldom falls to a nation, as Duala will make an excellent naval base, coaling station, harbour of refuge, etc., etc., at little cost; and at the same time it has an immense potential commercial worth, the soil of the country being peculiarly prolific, presumably to the volcanic action which has taken place in prehistoric ages.¹⁵

Playing advocacy for Cameroonians in the Douala area, Fuller declared that "the natives all talk good English, far better than others along the coast where we have possessions; they expected us to rule them before the advent of the Germans. They have loathed the Germans during the time they have occupied the place, and they now look to us as their future masters." Predicting that England could be at war with France in ten years-time, Fuller warned that if that happened and with France having Douala, it could use Douala as a base to operate cruisers to harry British West Coast possessions and trade. "I would not have written at length," he added, "but I do not

¹⁴ TNA ADM 137/162, Extracts of Private letter from Captain Fuller, (receiver not specified but certainly for the Secretary of the Admiralty), November 14, 1914.

¹⁵ TNA ADM 137/162, Extracts of private letter.

want it said in time to come, why did you [Fuller] not point out the importance of Duala, etc., to us [British]."¹⁶

Claiming to speak for the Duala people, Fuller stated that anyone who had lived among the coastal people of the Cameroons and knew the people of the Douala district as he did and coming in contact with them could not have failed to remark their keen desires for British administration. He noted how throughout the Cameroon colony, trade had always been carried on through the medium of English while practically not a single 'native' understood anything of French. "The natives," he continued, "in conversation have not hesitated to express their keen satisfaction with the idea of being under the British flag, and at the same time their antipathy towards the French. This latter has been remarked and pointed out to me by several French officers who have been inclined to wrongly attribute these to British intrigues."¹⁷ Fuller also evoked commercial and political justifications for a retention of Douala:

I am naturally looking at the question from a commercial point of view. The heavy losses to British firms which have [resulted?] though the war naturally makes us very anxious to see the natives to normal conditions again, and I am personally convinced that this can only be brought about through administration under which the natives will be content. If one looks at the political aspect of the question, it must be highly desirable that commercial relations should be re-established so that the natives will have something to occupy their minds and keep them from plotting all kinds of mischief."¹⁸

In continuation, he stated that the re-establishment of commercial relations so as to keep the people busy and void of mischief applied particularly to the Northern half of the River Nyong in Douala, which he believed was rich:

It is hardly necessary to point out that this part of the Kamerun Colony, i.e., North of the River Nyong, is extremely rich in natural products, principally the oil palm Mahogany and [sic] Ebony, and that the soil is extremely fertile as shown by the success of the many plantations established by the Germans. That this

¹⁶ TNA ADM 137/162, Extracts of private letter.

¹⁷ TNA ADM 137/162, Extracts of private letter.

¹⁸ TNA ADM 137/162, Extracts of private letter.

would prove a valuable acquisition to the British Crown there can be no shadow of doubt in the mind of anyone thoroughly conversant with its possibilities, and if only from a patriotic point of view I should be extremely sorry to see it fall into any other hands than the British.¹⁹

Apparently, the Colonial Secretary was in agreement with naval, military and colonial officials' advocacy. On 18 November 1914, H.R Reed transmitted Harcourt's reply to the concerns and proposals of Lugard:

Mr. Harcourt has given careful consideration to the views expressed by the Governor-General in his secret dispatch of the 8th of October ...[and] has come to the conclusion...that the best policy for His Majesty's Government to pursue is to administer temporarily as large a portion of the conquered territory as may be possible without causing undue friction with the French Government in order that if it should eventually be decided to retain it there may be no question of compensation to the French Government, and if it is decided to cede it to France the amount of compensation to be obtained elsewhere may be as large as possible.²⁰

The transmission noted that if Sir Grey, the Foreign Secretary, concurred, then the French should be communicated and a proposal made that if the Germans were eventually sent out of Cameroon:

the general principle to be followed...is that the part adjacent to Nigeria should be administered by the British and the parts adjacent to French territory by the French, the line of division being drawn so that the spheres of administration of Allied powers should be approximately equal in area upon a line following tribal boundaries or any suitable geographical features. The arrangement would of course be without prejudice to the settlement at the end of the war.²¹

So far, the advocates on the possible share of the British in the event of the partition of Cameroon thought that Cameroonians were somehow entitled to a voice in the arrangement. For example, when Fuller had written on 5 November 1914, he had thought that Britain was “under a kind of a moral obligation to carry out the wishes of the Duala by retaining control of their administration.”²² And later on 4 December 1914, the Secretary of the Admiralty had minuted the Under Secretary of State for the Colonies that the people of Douala were somehow entitled to British gratitude. ‘The natives,’ he wrote, “are more friendly to us than to other European

¹⁹ TNA ADM 137/162, Extracts of private letter.

²⁰ TNA ADM 137/162, H.J Read, for the Under Secretary of State, response letter, 18 November 1914.

²¹ TNA ADM 137/162, Read, response letter.

²² TNA ADM 137/162, Extracts of private letter.

colonizing powers; and their spontaneous allegiance to us on the outbreak of war deserves some acknowledgment and serious consideration as to their welfare.”²³

The way that the British policy on imperial matters operated was, unfortunately, too convoluted for colonial, military and naval officials on the ground to comprehend or even influence. Decisions regarding the British colonial policy, what part of Africa to take and what part not to take, lay in the hands of politicians in London, particularly those in the Foreign Office and the War Department, who had overwhelming powers on such matters. As we shall see in the following paragraphs, the partition of Cameroon came to deviate fundamentally from the proposals made earlier by the military, naval and colonial authorities on the ground because it was the handy work of officials in the foreign office in London in collaboration with their French counterparts.

The Partition

Discussions regarding the partition of the Cameroons began in February 1916, the temporary administration over the territory having proven troublesome enough. Given this, the British settled for a quick partition, not willing to have more friction as had occurred under the temporary joint administration arrangement. The French had not wanted the partition to happen earlier, preferring it to wait until the end of the war when they would have had a stronger bargaining power.²⁴ But once it was becoming clear to the French that the Cameroons would be partitioned, French officials, including Doumergue, Picot and de Peretti agreed at a meeting in Paris on 11 February 1916 to demand the whole of the Cameroons save for a vaguely defined zone on the Nigerian border which they were prepared to concede to Britain. So once Picot began the West

²³ TNA ADM 137/162, Minutes, The Admiralty, to the Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, 4 December 1914.

²⁴ C.M Andrews and S. Kanya-Forstner, *France Overseas: The Great War and the Climax of French Imperial Expansion, 1914-1924* (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1981), 97.

African negotiations with Britain, he hinted that "unless French claims in West Africa were met, "it might become necessary for the French to participate in the East-African campaign" with a clear implication that France would also claim a share of German East Africa.²⁵ This French threat, although lacking in substance, was scary enough that when an inter-departmental committee (war committee) of Foreign Office, Colonial Office, War Office and Admiralty met on 22 February to consider the line of partition, it was shocked to hear Sir Walter Langley of the Foreign Office announce that the War Council (the group of Ministers charged with the conduct of the war) had sat that morning and decided "to give the whole of the Cameroons to the French."²⁶ More precisely, Grey had decided to give the French the Cameroons. To the extent that two days later, he recorded his conversation with Cambon, the French Ambassador, who had told him that "the French Colonial party were very excited" about the Cameroons.²⁷ In the end, this inter-departmental committee agreed, as did even Bonar Law later (Harcourt's successor as Colonial Secretary) to give the French all the Cameroons "provided that we got a *quid pro quo* in the fact that they made no claims to East Africa."²⁸

Accordingly, Foreign Secretary Edward Grey informed a leading member of his staff, Lancelot Oliphant, to communicate the French diplomat Georges Picot that the British Government had decided to give France the whole of the Cameroons as a means of raising France's morale. Instead, Oliphant obtained permission to do things slightly differently. He invited Picot in a meeting on 23 February, and using a small scale map of Cameroon brought to him by Mr. Charles Strachey of the Colonial Office, asked Picot to show him on the map exactly what part of

²⁵ Andrews and Kanya-Forstner, *France Overseas*, 97-8.

²⁶ WM. Roger Louis, *Great Britain and Germany's Lost Colonies, 1914-1919* (Oxford; Clarendon press, 1967), 60.

²⁷ Louis, *Great Britain*, 60-61.

²⁸ Quoted by Andrews and Kanya-Forstner, *France Overseas*, 98.

Cameroon the French would like, supposing he were in a position to meet French wishes.²⁹ Picot, a former Consul-General in Beirut, and with little knowledge of Africa, and on this small scale War Office map of Cameroon, chose a point to the East of Victoria and another to the south of Yola. He then began to join the two points “in a casual way with the pencil.”³⁰ Strachey, who did not know about Cameroon either, “managed to get the line drawn a few ‘kilometres’ East of the only road in the North running North and South, and to make it follow as many of the German provisional boundaries as could be utilized without departing from M. Picot’s general scheme.”³¹ This provisional line of partition was fondly called the “Picot Line,” and it gave France the territory East of it and Britain the territory West of it.³² The British portion was a mere strip of land amounting to 34,000 sq miles, marching with the whole Eastern frontier of Nigeria.³³ Reacting to this line of partition, Strachey had to confess “that it is a very bad line to define, for practical purposes, over a great part of its length.”³⁴ Oliphant later commented sarcastically that:

[I] laid out the maps...[of Kamerun and asked Picot] what part of the Kamerun the French would like, supposing I were in a position to meet their wishes...it never dawned on him to ask for the whole of the Kamerun.³⁵

In any case, the deed had been done. Grey readily validated the partition agreement. The provisional Anglo-French partition was formalized by exchange of notes on 3-4 March 1916.³⁶ The French rejoiced over their share, and Doumergue told a parliamentary commission that France's share was more extensive than they could have either foreseen or hoped.³⁷ Many other

²⁹ V.H Rothwell, *British War Aims and Peace Diplomacy*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 11.

³⁰ Yearwood, “In a Casual Way,” 225.

³¹ Yearwood, “In a Casual Way,” 225.

³² Victor Julius Ngoh, “Anglo-French Rivalry over the Missellele Plantations, 1916-1920: A Case Study in the Economic Motives for the Partition of Africa,” *Journal of Third World Studies* 12, no. 2 (1995):277.

³³ Andrews and Kanya-Forstner, *France Overseas*, 98

³⁴ TNA FO 608/215, Minutes, Charles Strachey, Foreign office.

³⁵ Quoted in Rothwell, *British War Aims*, 11-12.

³⁶ Andrews and Kanya-Forstner, *France Overseas*, 99

³⁷ Andrews and Kanya-Forstner, *France Overseas*, 99.

French officials thought that they got more than they deserved, it not occurring to them that the French share of the Cameroons could easily have been more extensive still. The British had given out far more than the French ever expected, especially the inclusion of the Douala area in the French portion. For, Fuller had noted in his 5 November private letter that 'the French themselves who are out here have quite made up their minds that Great Britain is to have Duala and the Northern half, whilst they get the Southern half of the Colony, including the pieces Germany stole from them after Agadir. In fact, the campaign has been worked on these lines, to a great extent."³⁸

It is hard to explain Oliphant's actions and diplomacy that ended up not giving the whole of the Cameroons to the French as decided by his superiors. But it may be that Oliphant did not personally think that satisfying the French required giving them out all of the Cameroons which they never deserved anyway. Oliphant only later wrote that "whether owing to [his] ancestry, [his] time in oriental bazaars or sheer cussedness [he] can't say, but [the] idea [of giving the whole of the Cameroons to the French] did not appeal to [him]"³⁹ When years later Oliphant discussed the partition, he stressed that the lion's share for the French was meant as a gesture to boost France's morale in the war, at a time when the unfavorable course of the war on the Western front was having a "most depressing effect" on France. In his words, the British cabinet had resolved to grant France all of Cameroon "in the hope that such action would act as a stimulating tonic."⁴⁰ On this, Grey had surmised that giving much of the Cameroons to the French might enable them say "we may still have the Germans on our territory in the North of France, but on the other hand we are running the German colony of the Kameruns."⁴¹

³⁸ TNA ADM 137/162, Extracts of private letter.

³⁹ Lancelot Oliphant, *An Ambassador in Bonds* (London: Putnam and Co., 1947), 34.

⁴⁰ Oliphant, *An Ambassador*, 34.

⁴¹ Quoted by Digre, *Imperialism's New Clothes*, 50.

At the start of March 1916, London and Paris made an exchange of notes regarding the provisional partition. The administration of the British sphere was then assumed by the Governor-General of Nigeria under the authority of a Commission dated 23 March 1916.⁴² On 29 March, Generals Dobell and Aymerich signed the transfer agreements and on 1 April 1916, both countries assumed administration of their respective portions of the Cameroons. The British further split their sphere into two - one portion lying between approximately 7⁰ North latitude and the other lying between 7⁰ and the coast. The former was temporarily administered by the Residents of Muri and Yola Provinces in the Northern Provinces of Nigeria, and the latter constituted into a new province under the Lieutenant-Governor of the Southern Provinces and was divided into four divisions, viz, Victoria, Bamenda, Ossidinge and Dschang.⁴³ The Governor-General of Nigeria then proclaimed the boundary line between the French and British spheres of influence as follows:

From a point on the Bimbia River East of Tiko along this River to the Mungo River thence along the boundary between Victoria, Joham Affrechtshohe and Dschang districts on the one side and Douala and Bare districts on the other to a point on the southern boundary of Dschang district immediately south of Fongwans, thence in a North Easterly direction to the Kun River at a point where the district boundaries of Bamenda, Dschang and Fumban meet.⁴⁴

In this, the British representative, moved by Anglo-French power relations, and by Britain's colonial interests elsewhere, dashed out 4/5 of the Cameroons to the French including the Douala area. To this British disregard of the interests of Cameroonians in the partition arrangement, Yearwood has illustrated the paramountcy of European imperial interests in the partition of African territories and stated that once Britain's interests were taken care of, whatever

⁴² Nigerian National Archives, Enugu, Chief Secretariat's Office (hereafter NANE CSO) 19/6, Southern Provinces, General attitudes of Chiefs and People, 1 January 1919; Nigerian Gazette, No. 19, 27 April 1916.

⁴³ NANE CSO 19/6, General attitudes of Chiefs and People, 1 January 1919.

⁴⁴ NANE CSO 19/6, General attitudes of Chiefs and People.

France wanted the British gave them, whatever they did not want, the British kept, irrespective of local interests.⁴⁵ Although this is slightly hyperbolic, considering how the British and the French later clashed over a certain Misselle plantations,⁴⁶ it is evident of Britain's flexibility in satisfying France's desires in the Cameroons.

The 1916 provisional partition, as rightly regretted by one British official in the Cameroons, failed to rectify the arbitrary partition of various ethnic groups of Cameroon between regions as had been the case when the first partition of the territory was made between the British, Germans and the French in the 1880s and 90s. The partition line divided up ethnicities in Northern Cameroon in Bornu, and in the south, the line across the district of Chang (Dschang), “drawn by M. Picot with a blue pencil on a small scale map... split up no less than nine tribes.”⁴⁷

In response to perhaps the arbitrariness of the 1916 partition, and as a strategy to mute possible agitations by the Africans and other interested parties, the 1916 British partitioners maintained that the handing of Douala in particular to the French during the 1916 partition was provisional. British decision makers knew that this was mere rhetoric, meant for public consumption. In fact, when Harcourt (now out of Colonial Office) wrote to Prime Minister Asquith in dissent of the British giving away of the Douala to the French, and Asquith and Grey contended that the settlement was merely 'provisional,' Harcourt did not believe them. Instead, he pointed out Grey's cabinet memorandum of March 1916 in which Bonar Law, the new Colonial Secretary, admitted to him that the provisional partition was indeed a final cession of Douala to the French.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Yearwood ""In a Casual Way""

⁴⁶ For a detail account of the Anglo-French rivalry over the said plantation, see Ngoh, "Anglo-French Rivalry"

⁴⁷ TNA FO 608/215, Note on the Defects of the Present provisional Division of the Cameroons, (1916?).

⁴⁸ Harcourt Papers, Cabinet memorandum by Grey dated 'March 1916'; Memorandum by Harcourt, 'The Cameroons', Secret, 1 Mar. 1916.

Among other British officials, it was known beforehand that after the 1916 partition, a major revision was unlikely. Little wonder, a Colonial Office official stated that if he gave a dog a bone, he did not "whatever formula [he] may use - expect him to give it back to [him] later."⁴⁹ This stark discrepancy between what was professed in public and what was intended to be was in line with the sheer hypocrisy with which the British took advantage of Africans whom they deceived to fight the war for them, after which they deceived during the process of the repartitioning of their territories. And as Yearwood has aptly noted, British imperialism in the era of the Great War, as in the earlier phases of the scramble, "combined policies of strategic, political and economic advantage with a principled rhetoric involving some humbug and hypocrisy, and much self-delusion."⁵⁰ It was thus to be expected that when post-war peace conference did hold, it, for the most part, simply transferred territories as already partitioned and agreed to by the Allies.

The nonchalance with which Europeans dealt with African colonies seized from the Germans during the war can easily be explained by what Europeans believed was at stake in Africa, compared to other continents, like Europe itself. In deciding the fate of conquered African territories, Europeans took for granted that Africans were helpless and did not have the resources and the means to steer their own history. In fact, as the war was winding up, and peace was on sight, L.S Amery, the assistant secretary to the British cabinet, argued that while Central Europe would not be constrained by "whatever artificial ethnographic barriers" to be put in place, the fixing and remarking of boundaries in places such as Africa and Asia was going to be different, given that in these places, "internal forces [had] less direct say in moulding their destiny."⁵¹

⁴⁹ Quoted by Yearwood, "In a Casual Way," 225.

⁵⁰ Peter Yearwood, "Great Britain and the Repartition of Africa, 1914-1919," *The Journal of Imperial and Common Wealth History* 18, no. 3 (1990): 336.

⁵¹ Quoted by Yearwood, "In a Casual Way," 218.

Precisely the point. Yearwood again notes that although at the time of the repartitioning of Africa after WWI European powers were already established in the African hinterlands and local African interests were likely to play some role in the repartitioning, "internal forces [Africans and African interests] would be much weaker than external ones [Europeans and European interests] in the final determination of African frontiers."⁵²

Even the French knew that whatever arrangement forged in 1916 would eventually be made permanent. In fact, as early as 6 October 1915 when the provisional partition was being contemplated, the French Governor General of French Equatorial Africa, M.H Merlin, had cautioned his colonial ministry that whatever provisional partition arrangement would be made would prejudice the future. And he noted that:

To accept provisionally a division, in reality, is to tacitly admit the principle of a definitive division. At the time of the final settlement of the question, the interested party will not fail to invoke the existing condition and to establish a precedent against which it will be difficult to resist.⁵³

It is therefore not surprising that the French representatives did all in their power to get the best deal possible during the so-called temporary arrangement, as they knew that whatever they got in that temporary arrangement would more or less be final. In this, they first made sure that they retook the territories ceded earlier to German Cameroon in 1911 under the principle of "simple restitution."⁵⁴

Opposition to the Content of the Partition, Foreign and Local

Two types of opposition to the form of the partition of Cameroon emerged; local and foreign. The former were Cameroonians themselves, while the latter were British trading personnel

⁵² Yearwood, "In a Casual Way," 220.

⁵³ Quoted by Digre, *Imperialism's New Clothes*, 43.

⁵⁴ Digre, *Imperialism's New Clothes*, 43.

in the Cameroons. The most vociferous group of Cameroonians opposed to the arrangement were the people of the Douala region. Historical records on the reaction of many other Cameroonian groups to the partition are lacking. But analyzing how the Duala resisted epitomizes the general reaction of Cameroonians, given that as far as Europeans were concerned, Douala itself was representative of the entire Cameroon. This European perception of the Chiefs and people of Douala is very important for the purpose of any historical analysis that seeks to address a European-Cameroonian post-war relationship. The Douala were the lone group of the Cameroons most 'respected' by the Europeans. For many Europeans, including the British, Douala was synonymous to Cameroon.

As seen, the provisional partition placed the Duala squarely under French rule. On 1 April 1916, Britain had assumed administration of its allocated portion while France did same over its portion that comprised the Duala. The fact that the Duala area was the one most affected instantly by the partition makes their reaction the most important, and truly representative.⁵⁵ According to Austen and Derrick, the first formal Duala appeals on the partition arrangement were made in June 1918. And in the months ahead, the Duala Chiefs continually resisted French pressure for a statement of support and approached British representatives in Douala as well as the British administration in Buea to explore the possibility of coming under British control. But Austen and Derrick note that "the metropolitan British position was made very clear in a dispatch from the Colonial Secretary instructing his Douala Consul to "avoid any risk of appearing to encourage the natives against the French administration." Austen and Derrick thus conclude that "by the time

⁵⁵ This was the only area that was already effectively well administered by the joint Anglo-French Condominium, dominated by British officials, in the course of the campaign, long before the partition. Thus the partition made for the sudden departure of British administrators from the area, while French administrators suddenly took charge. The change was too sudden.

Duala made their first formal petitions...the European power not only settled among themselves the disposition of Cameroon but also completed the diplomacy needed to establish the groundwork of the post-war world order."⁵⁶

Although I concur with much of the analysis of the two authors, I must take a contrary opinion to some of their assertions. Newly uncovered records document Duala reactions and protests (both formal and informal) in the period immediately following the 1916 partition. Austen and Derrick seem to pay undue attention to the word 'formal' although not only 'formal appeals' can be considered as sources of history weighty enough to form an historical analysis. Even as these authors note, in 1916, a certain Doo Dayas, a government interpreter and brother-in-law to Duala Manga Bell, predicted that the French would grant Cameroon self-government.⁵⁷ It is not reported on what basis such predictions were made, but it may have been that Dayas was hoping that the Duala rejection of and protest against the French would be enough trouble for the new colonists, however naive he may have been in his thinking.

To be clear, Anglo-French negotiations over the future of the Cameroons since around 1915/16 were kept under wraps from the people being partitioned. But once the Duala began to get a whiff of the possibility that their territory would pass unto the French, they began outright protests. Opposing the possibility of being placed under the French, the Duala held that they had the right to decide in the partition arrangement, especially considering their efforts in assisting the Allies to conquer the territory. "When the rumour was first heard at the end of the campaign that Duala and nine-tenths of the country was to fall under French administration" reported Captain

⁵⁶ Ralph A. Austen and Jonathan Derrick, *Middlemen of the Cameroons Rivers: The Duala and their Hinterland, c. 1600- c. 1960* (Cambridge: University Press, 1999), 147 & 148.

⁵⁷ Austen and Derrick, *Middlemen*, 145

Fuller, “there was great uneasiness...which developed into something like panic when they [the Duala] found that the story was true.”⁵⁸ At this point, one way by which the Duala registered their protest to French rule was that following the transfer on April 1, 1916 “every [Douala] native that could travel seemed to have transferred his home to the part of the Cameroons which remained under British Administration.”⁵⁹ Fuller held the conviction that if a plebiscite were conducted, the Duala would unanimously vote to be under British administration.⁶⁰

In the years following the provisional partition, and given Cameroon protests, the French on the other hand adopted a stick and carrot policy to salvage the situation. This began with efforts to lure some Chiefs into friendship and use them to obtain the approval of others. Sometimes in late 1918, the French Administration had called one Mandessi Bell, the successor of the executed Manga Bell, and tried to work out a deal with him to visit the Duala Chiefs to influence them to sign a letter pledging their support for French rule.⁶¹ For two weeks, the French mounted pressure on Bell to sign approval letters and persuade others, but to no avail.⁶² The importance of Bell’s signature to the French lay in the fact that it would have made other Chiefs to follow suit. Fuller even reported how “a Chief in Malimba...had been subjected to solitary confinement until he signed after the third day.”⁶³ But, the Malimba Chief came to be the only one to have signed the document, and under duress. Due to increase pressure, Mandesi Bell elected to return to the

⁵⁸ TNA FO 608/215, Captain Fuller to the the Admiralty, the Cameroons, 10 March 1919.

⁵⁹ TNA FO 608/215, Fuller to the Admiralty.

⁶⁰ TNA FO 608/215, Fuller to the Admiralty.

⁶¹ TNA FO 608/215, Report of the Cameroon Natives as regards self-choice of a governing nation, May 1919.

⁶² TNA FO 608/215, Report of the Cameroon Natives; See also, Bouopda Pierre Kamé, *Cameroon du Protectorate vers la Démocratie, 1884-1992* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2008), 40.

⁶³ TNA FO 608/215, Report of the attitude of the Cameroon Natives as regards self-choice of a Governing Nation, 17 January 1919.

Mungo, to avoid the Duala area. Also, “a new King Akwa was made by the French, and the natives understood that it was because of the previous Chief’s refusal to sign that he was removed.”⁶⁴

When the Duala Chiefs had been pressed by the French to sign documents professing a desire to be under French rule, they had demanded time to consult their people. After consulting their people in an all-night out meeting, it was decided that “the natives did not wish the French to govern the Cameroon, and at the same time, according to the half promise of self-determination read by many natives in the English papers, it was agreed that the natives should take over the country.”⁶⁵ Once the French administrator received the news of the “point blank refusal” by Cameroonians to sign the document, he very ‘unwisely threatened the natives.’⁶⁶ Such threats caused many to contemplate a full rebellion against the French administration, and also the possibility of bringing economic pressure to bear on the French by deserting the country to the point where the French may no longer be able to sustain their presence, on account of lack of man power.⁶⁷ Cameroonians also contemplated unanimously signing a document that would ask the scheduled Peace Conference to consider their right of choosing a governing nation of their choice.⁶⁸

As Austen has observed, this was the one documented moment in the history of the segmentary Duala society when at least two of the major Chiefs concerted.⁶⁹ The general unity manifested among the politically segmented Duala people with numerous autonomous Chiefdoms and Kingdoms in opposing the passage of their territory under French rule and preferring British

⁶⁴ TNA FO 608/215, Report of the attitude of the Cameroon Natives.

⁶⁵ TNA FO 608/215, Report of the attitude of the Cameroon Natives.

⁶⁶ TNA FO 608/215, Report of the attitude of the Cameroon Natives.

⁶⁷ TNA FO 608/215, Report of the attitude of the Cameroon Natives.

⁶⁸ TNA FO 608/215, Report of the attitude of the Cameroon Natives.

⁶⁹ Austen, "Ngondo"

rule emphasizes the importance of the situation. In fact, segmentary politics had kept the Duala autonomous and divided even under circumstances where they could have been united and moved towards centralization.⁷⁰ Only in the face of a German expropriation of the Duala land had they been able to put up the first united front against a colonizing power. In no way, therefore, can one underestimate the importance that the Duala attached to their political future in these post-WWI arrangements.

The attitude of the French administrators to compel Cameroonians to accept their rule even by force was vividly conveyed by a British official in December 1918 when he visited the Duala area and had a tour with the French governor, Monsieur Fourneau. “It appears,” reported the official, “that the French Government are very anxious for an expression of goodwill from the natives and have endeavoured to make the Chiefs and headmen sign a paper stating they wish the French to remain in possession,” but that “all the local Chiefs in the vicinity of Duala have absolutely refused to do.”⁷¹ He added that even when the Chiefs were “treated with considerable harshness and threatened with loss of title and deportation, and also when offered money, they persist [ed] in their refusal.”⁷² He added that:

Mr. Holder, a trader, at present British Government Agent, who has been in Duala for 35 years, states that the Chiefs have on many occasions been to him for advice and to make complaints of the harshness of their treatment. They have also tried to prepare and pass in a petition to the English Government that they may be taken under the British rule. A certain number of natives are at present moving into the English occupied territory, and a large influx is possible if the French Government definitely take over Douala.⁷³

⁷⁰ Austen and Derrick, *Middlemen*, 85.

⁷¹ TNA FO 608/215, Anonymous, 11 March 1919.

⁷² TNA FO 608/215, Anonymous.

⁷³ TNA FO 608/215, Anonymous, 11 March 1919. The official is most likely Fuller, then based in Victoria in the British portion of the Cameroons.

Comparing the attitude of Cameroonians towards French and British officials, he stated that “all the natives were very cordial and welcoming in their manner, and made matters awkward by their marked difference of manner to myself and French officials, with whom I was in company at the time.”⁷⁴ Eight days after the 11 November 1918 armistice, Douala leaders gathered together and sounded the following authoritative voice and opinion on their role in the war and on their preferences regarding their political future:

Nous les chefs de tout duala, soussignés, nous nous joignons aux allies pour fêter la victoire et les remercions de nous avoir délivrés de l’esclavage et de injustice où nous trouvions...
Le pays duala refuse de se choisir une nation qui sera la protectrice du pays avant d’avoir vu les représentants des allies qui ont battu les Allemandes.⁷⁵

Following the above declaration, the Douala leaders notified the Allies of the existence of an autonomous traditional body that desired to partake in defining a new political status of Cameroon.⁷⁶ But this came to naught, as the Allies gave no ear.

Opposition to the form of the partition also came from Britons in the Cameroons. They spoke both for themselves and for Cameroonians. These were British trading interests, and as earlier stated, some naval, military and colonial officials. On 22 December 1918, the British Consul in the Cameroons, Edward C. Holder, wrote to the Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, to remind him that the Duala preferred the British, since according to them, the French were as bad as the Germans.⁷⁷ He reported that the Cameroon Chiefs had refused to sign a

⁷⁴ TNA FO 608/215, Anonymous.

⁷⁵ Kamé, *Cameroun: Du Protectorate*, 40. Meaning: we the undersigned leaders of Douala join the Allies in celebrating the victory over the Germans in Cameroon, and we thank the Allies for having delivered us from the injustices of German colonialism in which we found ourselves. We however refuse to be placed under the protectorate of a nation before we have had time to talk with the representatives of the Allies who defeated the Germans.

⁷⁶ Kamé, *Cameroun*, 40; René Gouellain, *Douala, Ville et Histoire, Enquête Réalisée dans le cadre de l’Orstom-CNRS* (Paris: Institut d’ethnologie – Musée de L’Homme, 1975), 172.

⁷⁷ TNA FO 608/215, Letter, From Edward C. Holder, British Consulate, Duala, Cameroon, to Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, December 22, 1918.

declaration imposed on them by the French, with monetary incentives, to the effect that they would be placed under French administration. Consulate Holder, apparently offending his superiors, had cautioned the Duala Chiefs to “sign nothing” with the French yet, promising that “everything will have to be settled at home.”⁷⁸ At the start of January 1919, Holder again wrote to report on some disturbances in the Cameroons. On the request of the Secretary of State for the colonies, G.V Fiddes transmitted the letter to Mr. Balfour of the Foreign Office on 9 January. The letter noted that “the Native Chiefs of Cameroons [were] being compelled by French Authorities to sign petition in favour of French Government” and even when threatened with deportation, the Cameroon Chiefs “absolutely refuse[d] to do so...” because “they only want[ed] British Government.”⁷⁹

Embarrassed at the attitude of Holder, an official at the Foreign Office (possibly Lord Balfour, or someone signed the letter on his behalf) advised His Majesty’s Government on 19 February 1919 that “in view of the provisional arrangement with the French Government in regard to the administration of the Cameroons”, he considered it most important that “His Majesty’s Government should avoid any risk of appearing to encourage natives against the French administration.”⁸⁰ The official felt that Holder’s “action ... lays His Majesty’s Government open to the danger of receiving a complaint from the French to the effect that the loyalty of the Duala Chiefs” was “being checked by the British agent” who was “dissuading them from signing addresses testifying their adherence to France.” He then urged His Majesty Government to warn

⁷⁸ TNA FO 608/215, From British Consulate, Duala, Cameroons, to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 22 December 1918.

⁷⁹ TNA FO 608/215, Telegram, Holder, Government Agent at Duala, 3 January 1919.

⁸⁰ TNA FO 608/215, from the Foreign Office.

Mr. Holder “to give no advice to the Chiefs which would possibly be interpreted as encouraging them to ask for British rather than French protection.”⁸¹

Other British interests in the Cameroons weighed in on the partition saga. On 25 January 1919, John Holt and Company Liverpool Limited representatives in Douala wrote to Balfour, the principal secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, claiming to pass on the wishes and interests of the Cameroon coastal peoples. Castigating the French for being mindless of the desires and wishes of Cameroonians, this trading interest claimed that:

having been established both in the Cameroons and the French Congo for upwards of forty years, we have...had excellent opportunities of ascertaining the desires and wishes of the Native tribes and have no hesitation in saying that the whole of the population North of the Nyong River are keenly desirous of coming within the British sphere of influence. This River, which in itself forms a natural boundary, is also the Northern limit of the large and important Native tribe of Mpangwes, probably the most important tribe in the French colony.⁸²

When in February 1919 rumors spread that the French Minister of Colonies, M. Simon, was planning to demand for all of the Cameroons during the final partition talks, the Association of West African Merchants lambasted the said French Minister and addressed a protest letter to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in support of the consideration of the wishes of Cameroonians. The Association interestingly advised that:

the natives of the territories [Cameroon] in question should at any rate be consulted as to their future Government and protectors. It is a matter of history that, as far back as 1884, the principal Chiefs of the Cameroons in no uncertain terms expressed their desire for British rule and protection; and that this is still the desire [which] the Natives [have] ... shown most strongly during the past few months.⁸³

Many of the Association’s members carrying on with trade at the coast were “convinced that the interests of the Natives of conquered territories [would] best be served under the

⁸¹ TNA FO 608/215, from the Foreign Office.

⁸² TNA FO 608/215, Letter, From John Holt and Company Liverpool to Rt Honourable Balfour, His Majesty’s Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Liverpool, 25 January 1919.

⁸³ TNA FO 608/215, From the Association of West African Merchants (AWAM), to the Secretary of State for Foreign affairs, Liverpool, 13 February 1919.

Government of Great Britain.”⁸⁴ After citing the desires of Cameroonians to be under British rule, the Association determined to “urge upon the [British] Government the necessity for using every effort to acquire as large a portion of the conquered German territories [especially the Cameroons] as possible for British rule”⁸⁵ Their trust was on the British Foreign Office to transmit their views to the appropriate quarter. The Association challenged potential French claims to the Cameroons, threatening to publish their letter in the press to prove that the French were not entitled to the claims they were making, especially claims over Douala. The Foreign Office, which was treating the matter in secrecy, appealed to the Association on 27 February 1919 to not publish the letter in the press "since this matter is receiving careful attention at Paris, & is of some delicacy."⁸⁶ Once again, the Foreign Office displayed a blithe determination to let the French have their way in the Cameroons, against dissenting voices who were the most affected by the partition. The point about the carefulness to maintain amicable European-European relations on the backs of the locals was further driven home by G.S Spencer of the Foreign Office on the same day of 27 February. Advising against the publication of the Association's letter in the press, Spenser wrote that “I am directed by Earl Curzon of Kedleston to state that this matter [of the French wanting control over the Duala] is receiving careful attention at Paris, and as it is one of such delicacy, His Lordship would suggest that in the general interest of Anglo-French relations it would be advisable that it should not be published.”⁸⁷ On 28 February 1919, the Association consented to the request of the Foreign Office and on 5 March, the Foreign Office lauded its decision.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ TNA FO 608/215, AWAM.

⁸⁵ TNA FO 608/215, AWAM.

⁸⁶ TNA FO 608/215, Foreign Office to AWAM.

⁸⁷ TNA FO 608/215, From G.S Spicer, Foreign Office, to Secretaries of the AWAM, London, 27 February 1919.

⁸⁸ TNA FO 608/215, Foreign Office to AWAM, London, 5 March 1919.

Meanwhile, the Association of West African Merchants had enclosed in their memorandum three opinion based letters from some British nationals and officials in the Cameroons. One of such enclosures was the 25 January letter from Director of the John Holt Company at Liverpool, just alluded to above. John Holt had written another letter on 1 February 1919, to the Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, stating categorically that the people of Cameroon “will be much upset if the administration of their country is placed in the hands of any nation other than the British.”⁸⁹ Besides Holt's enclosure was another one by a British observer who felt that in the face of French machinations, it was important to gauge the impulse of Cameroonians and the Duala on the issue of the partition of their territory. He wrote that "I have been given the impression that the wishes of the natives themselves would be first considered and the natives...given an opportunity of having a say as to who shall future govern them.”⁹⁰ Observations of this nature were important on several scores. First, from the point of view of a British national, they suggest that the British had given the impression that they were going to guarantee the wishes of the people of Cameroon in the post-war arrangements. This thus places the overwhelming support of Cameroonians for the British during the war in context and within the bounds of certain expectations. Second, such observations suggest that many Cameroonians, especially the Duala, entered the war with expectations far different from those of their European allies; that at the end of war, they would have a choice regarding the political future of their territory. In fact, the British observer stated that the Duala "thought they would be permitted to send delegates to a Conference to voice the views of their people.”⁹¹ The notion that Cameroonians would have a say in their political future and would be allowed to send delegates to the Peace

⁸⁹ TNA FO 608/215, AWAM to Secretary of State (Enclosure).

⁹⁰ TNA FO 608/215, AWAM to Secretary of State (Enclosure).

⁹¹ TNA FO 608/215, AWAM to Secretary of State (Enclosure).

Conference underscores the fact that they entered the war and fought for the British with expectations that ran contrary to what the victorious European belligerents in the Cameroons had.

Against all the odds, the two Allied governments remained undeterred. Thus, on 6 March 1919, after London had skillfully tried to mute protests from Britons regarding the provisional partition arrangement of 1916, an Anglo-French meeting over the matter held. Sadly, Minister M. Simon and Duchêne, director at the French Ministry of the Colonies, indicated France's wish to retain all that they held at the moment in the Cameroons, subject to any slight modifications. For the slight modification, the French had decided to extend to Garoua their existing Railway that ran from Bare, and also request the town of 'Djang' (Dschang) for the purpose of being on the route of the Railway. As per this new development, the French now required the British to cede to them a small piece of territory near Dschang.⁹² The British representative, Lord Milner, readily consented to French desires, the quid pro quo being that France would rectify tribal boundaries elsewhere in Africa in favor of the British.⁹³ Lord Milner, while expressing a view that it was not within his competence to grant French desires remarked that if as part of a general boundary settlement in Africa and elsewhere France were to have her desires granted by His Majesty's Government and having the lion's shares of Togoland and the Cameroons, France would certainly be expected to settle 'all minor points, such as rectification of tribal boundaries, in our favour.'⁹⁴

Meanwhile, Lord Milner had blithely assured the French delegation that his government would be found very accommodating in the Cameroons. Exercising unwarranted generosity, Milner quickly stated that the British generally desired just to retain what they had got under the

⁹² TNA FO 608/215, C. Strachey, Cameroons and Togoland, 7 March 1919.

⁹³ TNA FO 608/215, Strachey, Cameroons and Togoland.

⁹⁴ TNA FO 608/215, Strachey, Cameroons and Togoland.

1916 provisional partition of the Cameroons and were willing to add more territory to the French in the Garoua area. His only desiderata were stated to be a readjustment in the extreme south, so as to allow the frontier to coincide with the Mungo River to its mouth and thence, to be drawn across the Bimbia flats. And this desideratum still kept Douala clearly outside the British sphere. It was not surprising that Milner wanted the 'provisional' arrangement of 1916 to stay intact, plus even add more territory to the French. Besides calling the 1916 arrangement provisional for reasons of not wanting to raise the dust and to give their other international partners the false impression that the fate of German colonies was really only going to be decided at a postwar Conference (it had long been settled before the Conference), it had been the British who had insisted in 1916 that the arrangement be termed provisional, because, in fact, the compensation that they were to obtain in East Africa would only be possible if the region was eventually conquered by the Allies.⁹⁵ At the time of the arrangement in 1916, East Africa was not yet conquered, but once the war was over and East Africa had fallen to the Allies, validation of the 1916 provisional arrangement into a permanent one was a fair accompli.

As indicated, Milner quickly exercised extreme flexibility and generosity in the Cameroons once East Africa which he had an eye on was already conquered. He impressed that in return for 'extreme accommodation on our part in the Cameroons...Great Britain would undoubtedly get German East Africa and German South West Africa (the former of which was the most important German colony) not to mention further concessions outside Africa."⁹⁶ In all these nonchalance and arbitrariness of partition, when Milner was confronted with a question "as regards the natives, he was told that we attached particular importance to the inclusion within the British sphere of the

⁹⁵ Digre, *Imperialism's New Clothes*, 48.

⁹⁶ TNA FO 608/215, Strachey, Cameroons and Togoland

Dagomba, Mamprusi and Kratchi lands, and also of some lands in the south."⁹⁷ At the end of the meeting, and in response to Milner that concessions in the Cameroons were meant to keep the French off other areas of Britain's covetousness, the French representatives promised to consider the matter further and to communicate their views.

Viscount Milner's attitude in the partition arrangement was little surprising. Among the many officials who cared less about West Africa was Milner, a man "who took his departmental responsibilities lightly and was far more concerned with Eastern than with Western Africa."⁹⁸ This is not an indictment on Milner as an individual. Rather, it is a mere observation of the general, but sometimes the obtuse policy of the British government in the era of African partition and repartition. Relying solely on European interests, Milner was just too quick to exercise flexibility in the division of the spoils of war when it came to deciding on the political future of the Cameroons, just because in traditional European fashion of exchanging African territories during the period of the scramble and repartition, Milner was exchanging the Cameroons for territory elsewhere. Milner would have still been able to achieve his aims without sacrificing an unduly large portion of the Cameroons to the French. Togo, for example, had been taken without much ado, and without the people of Togo rendering as many sacrifices and shedding as much blood for the British as did the people of Cameroon, yet Milner opted to be more rigid in British demands in Togo than as in the Cameroons. I am not suggesting that the British would have been more arbitrary in the partition of Togo and less so in the case of the Cameroons any more than I am suggesting that African interests could still be taken care of simultaneously with European imperial interests. The two were not always incompatible. After all, during the temporary Anglo-French

⁹⁷ TNA FO 608/215, Strachey, Cameroons and Togoland.

⁹⁸ Yearwood, "Great Britain," 334.

condominium over the Duala and its surrounding areas from September 1914 to March 1916, the British were at the helm of affairs and could have easily retained control over the area, in conformity with the wishes of the people, without offending the French that much.

In any case, Milner's generosity in March 1919 and stark disregard to earlier protests was to ignite more fire, from both Cameroonians and others who claimed to represent 'native' voices. Many Cameroonians believed, either through reading publications and newspapers by European decision makers, rumors, or through reading the papers, or through assurances by individual English men and women, that their interests and wishes would be taken into consideration with regard to the country's political future. A few days after the arrangement, and on 19 March 1919, one Joseph Bell, a member of the Royal family in Douala, wrote to Lloyd George, stating that "I am constantly hearing and reading it in newspapers... that you have repeatedly declared that the matter of the German Colonies are to be held at the disposal of a Conference whose decision to [will?] have primary regard to the wishes and interests of the native inhabitants of such colonies...."⁹⁹ He then went on to express concerns to the Prime Minister that "we were expecting all this time that the Allies will send delegates here to ascertain our wishes according to what you and President Wilson said, but you have not done so yet."¹⁰⁰ He hoped that the British Prime Minister would "send the delegates out quick to ascertain our wishes." Protesting the attitude of the French authorities he noted that "the French people are compelling the Chiefs of this country"

⁹⁹ TNA FO 608/215:375, Joseph Bell to Lloyd George, March 19, 1919. Joseph Bell, like other Cameroonians, must have read, or been told of the contents of Lloyd George's manifesto on British war aims which had proclaimed national self-determination as the principle on which British policy towards the German colonies would be based, stating categorically that "government by the consent of the governed must be the basis of any territorial settlement in this war." See, Lloyd George David, British war aims; statement by the Right Honourable David Lloyd George, January fifth, nineteen hundred and eighteen. Authorized version as published by the British government (New York: George H. Doran company 1918), 7.

¹⁰⁰ TNA FO 608/215, Joseph Bell to Lloyd George, 19 March 1919.

to sign letters endorsing their administration, but that the Chiefs had refused to do so. He added categorically that the Cameroons did not want to be governed by the French. The French had so intimidated and terrorized the people that they were afraid to write letters to the British to express their concerns, for fear that “if the French [found out] they...[would] massacre the whole country because they [were] doing everything [there] with a very high hand.”¹⁰¹ Consequently, Cameroonians waited that if the British delegates turned up, they would tell them their wishes, in which case they would be protected, and the French would be unable to hurt them. He added that “I am constantly hearing that we the inhabitants of German colonies are now free but we are not free here at all the French people have held us or rather our country in degrading servitude.”¹⁰² According to Bell, if the intention of seizing the territory from the Germans was to deliver Cameroonians to the French, then clearly, they had moved from bad to worse. He lamented as follows:

When the Germans were here, they drove us from our town and order us to go and build in the bush, but [we] were wandering all this time and wouldn't go in the Bush as the Germans wish, until the war broke out. Now we want to return but the French wouldn't allow us to return to our ground which the Germans have unlawfully taken from us. Is not this from frying pan to the fire? [sic].¹⁰³

There is no evidence that the British ever cared about the agony and dissenting voices of the people they were dividing. On 1 May 1919, one Mr. James Irvine, on behalf of the entire body of Liverpool Merchants, lettered the Foreign Office to vehemently protest against the trend of events and Britain's decision to dash out the Cameroons to the French.¹⁰⁴ While insisting on the British to retain mostly the Douala area, he called the attention of the Foreign Office to the fact that the

¹⁰¹ TNA FO 608/215, Bell to Lloyd George.

¹⁰² TNA FO 608/215, Bell to Lloyd George.

¹⁰³ TNA FO 608/215, Bell to Lloyd George.

¹⁰⁴ TNA FO 608/215, From Irvine and Dundas, to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, London, Liverpool, 1 May 1919.

Duala people were "seething with discontent because they were being handed over to the French Nation, of which they knew nothing."¹⁰⁵ Irvine was one of the few to strongly use the word 'betrayal' to allude to the manner in which the British had treated their Cameroonian supporters and 'loyalists.' He stated unequivocally that the "entire Dualla [sic] country was seething with discontent because they were being handed over to the French nation," and that the people "shall consider they have been betrayed if they are passed [to the French] over without their consent."¹⁰⁶ Irvine and Dundas then declared that the case of the Cameroons and notably the Duala should be "just one of the outstanding cases when a country shall be given the exercise of their opinion [self-determination]."¹⁰⁷

It should be made clear at once that while these Britons in the Cameroons claimed to speak on behalf of Cameroonians – and they often did – they were first and foremost using it only as a means to achieving their own interests. After all, on 21 July 1919, Gerald Spicer, who signed on behalf of Earle Curzon (of the Foreign Office), specifically transmitted a copy of a letter from the Association of West African Merchants to the Rt Honorable A.J Balfour "enquiring what steps have been taken to protect the interests of British firms trading with the Cameroons and Togoland, in view of the arrangements whereby the greater portion of these colonies will be assigned to France."¹⁰⁸ To this, Eyre A. Crowe replied on 30 July on behalf of Balfour that irrespective of the status of those colonies, whether they would fall under the Mandates Administrations or not, and whether by the French or the British, "the interests of British firms in these parts of West Africa would appear to be adequately safeguarded and it does not seem necessary in my opinion to raise

¹⁰⁵ TNA FO 608/215, Irvine and Dundas to Secretary of State.

¹⁰⁶ TNA FO 608/215, Irvine and Dundas to Secretary of State.

¹⁰⁷ TNA FO 608/215, Irvine and Dundas to Secretary of State.

¹⁰⁸ TNA FO 608/215, Gerald Spicer to Balfour, 21 July 1919.

the matter with the French Government. . . .”¹⁰⁹ Even when the Incorporated Chamber of Commerce of Liverpool had expressed deep frustration and disappointment earlier in July “over the transfer of large sections of the Cameroons and Togoland to the French Mandate, seeing that it is well known that the Natives prefer a British Protectorate,” they still “expressed the earnest hope. . . .that the interests of British firms, established there now or likely to be established there in the future, shall be adequately protected and that they may be guaranteed the enjoyment of equal trading terms with all other Nationals.”¹¹⁰ And one of the interests who suggested in May 1919 that the division of Cameroon should be adjusted in ways to give Britain a larger portion of the Cameroons including the Duala area stated that “the above division would. . . .satisfy the just aspirations of British merchants.”¹¹¹ However, such British interests that required a greater portion of the Cameroons to come under British administration coincided with the interests of most Cameroonians. As these interests and wishes were therefore not incompatible, and as the British interests spoke out, it can be said that they spoke the voices of most Cameroonians.

Whatever the case, all opposition proved unavailing to the British government, even though Lloyd George had proclaimed national self-determination as the principle on which British policy towards the German colonies would be based. This had only been designed to appeal to American opinion and to rule out any return of colonies to Berlin.¹¹² “It had no effect on the negotiations between London and Paris.”¹¹³ Representations from British interests had no impact on British policy as far as territorial questions were concerned.¹¹⁴ Consequently, on 10 July 1919, Lord

¹⁰⁹ TNA FO 608/215, Eyre A Crowe (For Mr. Balfour), to Earl Curzon of Kedleston, 30 July 1919.

¹¹⁰ TNA FO 608/215, From the Incorporated Chamber of Commerce of Liverpool, Liverpool, to Secretary of State, Foreign Affairs, London, 16 July 1919.

¹¹¹ TNA FO 608/215, Irvine and Dundas to Secretary of State.

¹¹² Yearwood, “Great Britain,” 328-29

¹¹³ Yearwood, “In a Casual Way,” 232.

¹¹⁴ Yearwood, “In a Casual Way,” 232.

Viscount Milner, British Secretary of State for the Colonies, and M. Henry Simon, French Minister for the Colonies, signed a declaration on the partition of Cameroon, to be submitted to the League's Mandate Commission for approval. The declaration placed the larger portion, about 4/5 of the Cameroons under the French and a smaller portion, about 1/5, under the British. The British southern portion comprised important peoples West of the Mungo River, including the Bamenda area. But the French southern portion, East of the Mungo, comprised the Duala, the Bamum, Dschang etc. Many ethnicities were split between British and French portions, although the declaration stated that:

It is understood that if the inhabitants living near the frontier should, within a period of six months from the completion of the local delimitation, express the intention to settle in the regions placed under French authority, or inversely, in the regions placed under British authority, no obstacle will be placed in the way of their so doing, and they shall be granted the necessary time to gather in standing crops, and generally to remove all property of which they are the legitimate owners.¹¹⁵

It is easier said than done. One wonders how Europeans expected Africans of genetic and cultural affinities living together for generations, and having accumulated landed and fixed properties, and having so hastily been split between countries, to just so easily switch across new borders and resettle.

The decision to make the arbitrary partition of Cameroon permanent in July 1919 prompted newspaper after newspaper in neighboring Nigeria to protest against the European disregard of the wishes of West Africans. Dissenting African voices were once again represented in those newspapers. Already, *The Nigerian Pioneer* as early as 1917 had used the basis of the Nigerian support to urge that 'African opinion should be sought on every matter that concerned Africans.'¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ TNA FO 608/215, Le Cameroun, Déclaration Franco-Britannique du 10 Julliet 1919 (Cameroons, Franco-British Declaration, July 10, 1919), July 10, 1919.

¹¹⁶ See Osuntokun, *Nigeria*, 89.

As this was not happening, and given the developments so far up to July 1919, it was the turn of the *Lagos Standard*. In August 1919, a column of the *Lagos Standard* titled “The late German Colonies” attacked in the strongest terms possible the way in which the British were disposing of seized German colonies. Haranguing the hypocrisy of the British in their dealings and relations with Africans, the column wrote that “the British share in the disposal of the late German Colonies, without the previous consent of the peoples concerned, [filled] all Africans with painful displeasure.”¹¹⁷ It noted how “the unratified promise of the British Prime Minister (Mr. Lloyd George) to consult [Africans] before the disposal of their countries, [had] evoked strong criticisms” from both Africans and ‘honest Englishmen’ in West Africa.” The column insisted that even if Europeans had not made promises to Africans, it still would have only been fair and just to consult the wishes and respect the feelings of the partitioned in the fashion that they were being partitioned. The paper wondered whether if European powers had really desired to create a new world order, peace, and harmony as they had claimed in fighting the war, then there was any justification for “deciding by themselves what sort of government the [seized German] colony should have or under the control of which [European] power that colony should be, at the very time when these [European] powers were hammering at the right of small ... Nations to settle their own affairs?”¹¹⁸ It stated categorically that “the question of the late German colonies in Africa is an African question and British West Africans regard it practically as a national question,” meaning that it was up to them to decide on their preferences of their political future. It noted that the people of Cameroon “prefer British government over and above any other.”¹¹⁹ It noted, sarcastically, that “[Europeans] would commit anything to understand one another even though a whole people, tried

¹¹⁷ *Lagos Standard*, “The Late German Colonies,” 13 August 1919.

¹¹⁸ *Lagos Standard*, 13 August 1919.

¹¹⁹ *Lagos Standard*, 13 August 1919.

'loyal subjects,' should suffer thereby. It can cause them [Europeans] no pang [pain?], for Africans are theirs [Europeans] to be treated as they deem to their best interest....We [Africans] are still what we have always been, mere chattels."¹²⁰ This very powerful diatribe on the European manner of the disposal of the Cameroon colony, reminding them of continuously treating Africans more like slaves or their personal property, was yet to fall on deaf ears. At best, it was just cry over some spilled milk.

The 1916-19 partition arrangement of Cameroon was completely contrary to the stated aims of Lloyd George with regard to the future of the African territories when he stated that:

With regard to the German colonies, I have repeatedly declared that they are held at the disposal of a conference whose decisions must have primary regard to the wishes and interests of the native inhabitants of such colonies....The inhabitants [of the African colonies] should be placed under the control of an administration, acceptable to themselves....The natives live in their various tribal organizations under Chiefs and councils who are competent to consult and speak for their tribes and members and thus to represent their wishes and interests in regard to their disposal. The general principle of national self-determination is, therefore, as applicable in their cases as in those of occupied European territories.¹²¹

But, in blatantly refusing to consider the wishes of Africans, and in turning down the request of the Duala to include them on the British sphere rather than the French sphere, a British official at the 1919 Peace Conference sarcastically stated that "we cannot hope to take into the British sphere all the people in the world who would doubtless like to enter it."¹²² Interestingly, it did not occur to this official that at the beginning of the African campaigns, the British had desperately solicited the assistance of those same people, assuring them that they were out to deliver them from German-

¹²⁰ *Lagos Standard*, 13 August 1919.

¹²¹ Lloyd George David, *British war aims; statement by the Right Honourable David Lloyd George, January fifth, nineteen hundred and eighteen. Authorized version as pub. by the British government* (New York: George H. Doran company 1918), 12.

¹²² TNA FO 608/215, G.S Spicer, minutes, 29 January 1919.

imposed slavery. And yet when the people had responded positively to British appeals, the British now felt that they had the sole right to dispose of the people the way they deemed fit.

Because the pleas and opposition of Cameroonians and British traders since 1916 after the provisional partition up to 1919 had no effect on British policy in Africa, "the definitive partition of 1919 resembled the provisional partition of 1916."¹²³ Once again, the French drew a line which the British accepted, but with only little haggling:

The broad lines of the partition of Kamerun were determined by what London saw as the imperatives of European diplomacy. In 1916 and again in 1919 the French drew lines on the map, and these were accepted by the British. The recommendations of local officials had slight impact on British policy, while the representations of the coastal trading companies had none. The clearly expressed wishes of the Dualas,...were summarily overridden.¹²⁴

African opinions affected British policy only to the extent that strengthening the alliance with the emirs which had served the colonial administration so well in the war seemed to call for reunification of Borno and expansion in Fombina. This became the main aim of the Colonial Office. To the extent that it was not opposed by the French, it was achieved. Where it was opposed, it was abandoned, to the disgust of the Lamido.¹²⁵

The Allies, notably Britain, used the rhetoric of African interests only as a means to manipulate world opinion, especially American opinion against Germany and the possible return of German colonies. And although British politicians genuinely trusted that Africans who preferred to be under their rule would be greatly disappointed if placed under the authority of a different European power, they were undeterred in following that path. Indeed, many of these Britons "felt uneasy about suppressing evidence of indigenous preference for British over French rule and over the 'bad faith' which Great Britain had kept with the 'native.'¹²⁶ At the same time, many of their compatriots knew right from the start that they had extended the war in Africa

¹²³ Yearwood, "In a Casual Way," 232.

¹²⁴ Yearwood, "In a Casual Way," 234.

¹²⁵ Yearwood, "In a Casual Way," 234; Osuntokun, *Nigeria*, 285-286.

¹²⁶ TNA FO 608/215, Minutes, British Under Secretary of State, London, May 1917.

solely for their own interests. It was never about Africans. In May 1917, the British undersecretary of state for foreign affairs had been honest enough to confess that “I do not pretend we have attacked the German colonies in order to free the natives from an oppressive government. We did it as part of the war against Germany.”¹²⁷

Justifications

From the above, ironical situations prevailed where Cameroonians preferred the British to the French, the French desperately wanted the Cameroons, and the British were completely uninterested in having the Cameroons. This situation is explicable. For France, Cameroon represented the best opportunity for African colonial compensation, in which case French colonialists resolved to get as much a portion of the country as possible during partition arrangements.¹²⁸ Amongst others, Doumergue also argued that France needed Cameroon to tidy up its Equatorial African map, as Cameroon geographically intruded into its map of Equatorial Africa.¹²⁹ On the other hand, and although moved by strategic considerations to invade Cameroon in 1914, and while the Admiralty and Colonial offices desired the Cameroons respectively for strategic and territorial motives, British Foreign officials and the government of the day had a high-minded distaste for further colonial land-grabbing in West Africa.¹³⁰ Ironically, the Cameroons had sustained a *longue duree* relationship with the British since from the time of trade pre-dating German annexation, such that they came to admire the British more than either the Germans or the French. Some of the gains of this relationship were the development of the English language and pidgin English which the Duala gained a mastery of. This kept alive sentiments for the British. On

¹²⁷ Quoted by Kaspi, “French War Aims,” 376.

¹²⁸ Digre, *Imperialism's New Clothes*, 42.

¹²⁹ Digre, *Imperialism's New Clothes*, 45.

¹³⁰ Yearwood, “In a Casual Way,” 221.

the other hand, the Duala people spoke no French and took no delight in liking France.¹³¹ In fact, during the German era, the Germans had to learn English in order to give orders to their plantation laborers in the Duala and other coastal areas.¹³² In May 1919 when one of the British interests protested against giving out the area to the French, he noted that one of the main reasons why the Duala were opting to be placed under the British was their claim to English connection, with its language and its customs and its business habits.¹³³

Finally, the tactlessness of French administrators in handling the Duala dissenting voices during the era of provisional partition leading up to 1919 was unhelpful. Headed by Founeau, French administrators had resorted to threats and punishments. Threats and retaliation against dissenting voices boomeranged, pushing them further away. While this was happening, the British had not made things any easier, when they had led the campaigns for the seizure of the Duala area from the Germans and had gone on to impose Dobell's image everywhere during the provisional joint Anglo-French administration of the area, during which preference for the British grew stronger and stronger. During this period, it was a sharp contrast to the Germans and seemed to vindicate the Duala in their preference for the British. The British, therefore, had a responsibility in making things further difficult for both the Duala and the French.

Conclusion

Throughout the process of the European partition of Cameroon, not only was there no adherence to the promises made to Africans, but all attempts by Africans and interested Europeans in Cameroon to oppose the manner of partition came to naught. The process revealed

¹³¹ TNA CO 879/117, NA WO 106/656, s.s "Appam" Enclosure to the report of the Imperial Embassy in Washington No. 102 of 24.2.16. Report sent to Imperial German Embassy.

¹³² TNA FO 608/215, 299b

¹³³ TNA FO 608/215, Irvine and Dundas to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 1 May 1919.

the paramountcy of European interests and diplomacy over African issues, and the difficulty faced by Africans during the era of colonialism to steer the course of their history. In this process, the manner of the Anglo-French partition of Cameroon following the 1914 war had made worse the political status of the colonized peoples of Cameroon. As one Cameroonian notable saw it, they had moved from the “frying pan into the fire.” By detailing Cameroonians’ vehement protestations to the partition – a protestation that came to naught, this chapter has demonstrated that there was nothing Cameroonians did or did not do that could have averted their political fate as had already been determined by Britain and France. This suggests a general helplessness of Africans who often lacked the means – military and otherwise, to define their destiny in the face of European interests and machinations. The fact that this happened at the time when Africans had fought and determined the results of the Great War on the battlefields in their own territory is particularly revealing.

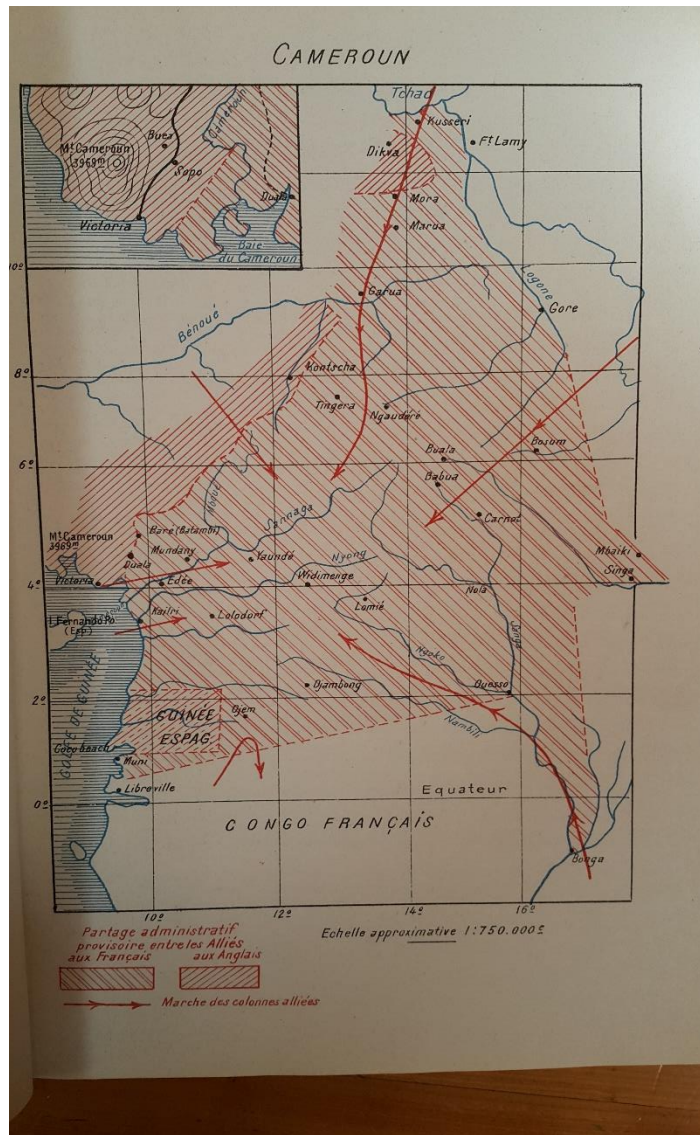


Figure 7.1 The Anglo-French Partition of Cameroon

Map courtesy of: Archives Nationales, Section d'Outre-Mer, Aix-en-Provence, France (ANSOM) TGO 18/166.

The map above shows the uneven arbitrary Anglo-French partition of post-WWI Cameroon as finalized in July 1919. The rectangular box on the left-hand side bottom of the map represents the French portion while the one to its right represents the British portion. The British portion comprised two disjointed lands measuring just about one-fifth and bordering Nigeria in the Southeast and Northeast, while the French portion measured slightly over four-fifths. The British administered their portion as an integral part of British-Nigeria and in 1961 the section in the North permanently integrated with an independent Nigerian Nation while the one in the South reunited with the larger portion that had been administered by the French and which became independent in 1960. Meanwhile, the French in 1916 had simply re-annexed all of the neu Kamerun territories to French Equatorial Africa. So the total land surface area of the modern Cameroon nation today is at least 100,000 square miles less than the pre-WWI German Cameroon.

Chapter 8

Conclusions

It is now one century after the end of the Great War in which Africans made countless sacrifices, yet the majority of Africans in places where campaigns of the war were fought remain unaware of their history. Most Africans still remember the war as a “white man’s war.” If this memory were based on the understanding that Europeans imported the war into the continent and determined its politics, it would be accurate. However, that memory includes an utter lack of knowledge of the fact that African campaigns were conducted by their own ancestors, whose stories must be viewed as central to the understandings of the Great War. That lack of knowledge comes from the ways in which African history as it relates to the war has been effectively misrepresented, silenced and even erased over the years. While I was conducting research for this project, I visited Nsanakang in 2012 in the Western borders between Cameroon and Nigeria, where in September 1914, over a hundred African soldiers perished in a battle there and were buried. When the history of Nsanakang and its people as it relates to the Great War is remembered, it belongs to the Europeans. This has to do with the ways in which the graves of the fallen soldiers there were represented. While over a hundred African soldiers perished here compared to less than ten Europeans, only graves of European soldiers were marked and the names of the Europeans carefully inscribed on the graves. This is part of the reason how Africans in Nsanakang, who have grown up seeing graves marked with only European names, have come to know and remember the war as “white man’s war.”

Africans attach some importance to graves. When they can point to graves of particular persons, they remember the persons and their history that much. The putting in place of graves of fallen Europeans on African soils while failing to put graves of fallen Africans in those places

equally has one of the most effective ways of erasing the place of African soldiers in the campaigns, replacing their history with the role of European soldiers. Because only graves of Europeans were inscribed at Nsanakang, the people grew up to see those graves and think of the war as a European war. A Chief's wife at Nsanakang grew up witnessing officials from German embassy pay occasional visits to the graves of buried white German soldiers there. When the Germans stopped visiting, she wrote a letter to a German researcher reminding him of how important it was for the Germans to visit the graves at least once every year, to make libations over the graves of those fallen German soldiers. How will it be for this woman to know that more Africans perished at Nsanakang than whites and that their graves are there? The story as told by this dissertation, putting Africans at the center of the fighting is one of the ways by which that woman may begin to understand the proper history of Nsanakang, remember and appreciate it. It may just be that many of the fallen soldiers there whose graves are untraceable, were indeed her close ancestors. The woman may begin to understand that the 1914 war on the African soil was not just some kind of a "European war" but that it was indeed a world war, and that not only is her village Nsanakang an integral part of that world, it occupies an important place in the history of that world.

Before now, the accounts of nameless and faceless African soldiers who conducted the African campaigns of the war have been one of the most efficient erasures of a history. It has in some ways backtracked African history to the 1970s whereby pessimist African History scholars wrote 'strangely unpeopled' books on African modes of production. This study thus undertook to reverse this trend, making it possible for the first time to detail an African campaign of the war led and conducted by identified and named Africans, thanks to newly classified sources on the African campaigns of the war in European archives. Details have thus been narrated as to why,

how and where specific African soldiers fought in the Cameroon campaign. Their individual and collective experiences in the campaign are just as important as those of other soldiers in other parts of the world, in the same campaign. While this has been a history of recovery and inclusion in the historiography of the Great War, it has gone further, in suggesting a transnational understanding of the history of the war. The falling of bombs and missiles in Europe, use of airplanes and battleships, line up formations of military battalions and face-to-face shooting and killing of each other were all in context, in the same way as small military patrols, ambushes, flank attacks, and guerilla war tactics in Africa. Both were campaigns of the war and geared towards the same objective; the defeat of an enemy or the victory of the victor. A fallen soldier in Europe, Africa, Asia, or the Americas, fell in the same war, for the same reasons. There may have been specific military objectives in each continent, but the overall aims of the war everywhere were the same. Thus, the perception of campaigns in Africa and Asia as ‘sideshowes’ cages our understanding of the 1914 struggle as a global war. A study and inclusion of African campaigns of the Great War in the manner as suggested in this dissertation forces a reconsideration of the larger historical issues and forces behind the Great War and enhances our understanding of how a local incident like the assassination of an archduke in the Balkans led to the collapse of international diplomacy and plunged the entire world into a global conflagration.

The study was also able to examine colonialism, colonial violence, and events leading up to the outbreak of war in Cameroon in 1914, linking the events together. Three decades of German colonialism had been characterized by ubiquitous violence. Motivated by racialized hateful views of Africans, by the urge to conquer and subjugate, by the necessity to pacify Africans and make them pliable colonial subjects, colonial violence often assumed physical forms of pain infliction ranging from flogging, maiming, forced labor, rape on women, gun

shooting, physical harm of human beings with weapons such as bayonets, to name but these. Many of those physical forms of violence resulted in deaths. Sometimes, colonial violence sought simply to communicate a message of deterrence to other Africans. While adding to the literature on colonial violence, the study has suggested the inadequacy of available concepts in explaining the excesses of episodes of colonial violence that often appeared to ‘overachieve’ its motives. Attempts by certain colonial officials to decimate entire groups of the colonized sometimes defied the very logic of colonialism whose economic agenda relied on African populations before it could be successfully executed. A statement, for example, by a German Colonial Governor about one of the most important groups of people at the Cameroon coast that they were the “laziest, falsest, and meanest rabble on whom the sun ever shone,” and should have been “exterminated” or at “least expelled from [their own] land” show the height of racial hatred and contempt that the colonizer had for the colonized. While this explains in part the racial foundations for some of the violence unleashed on the colonized, it also raises questions about the whole essence of colonialism, and its sometimes apocalyptic contours with regard to the existence of Africans, the very people whose labor was required for the success of the colonial enterprise. While most violence, including colonial violence, is “not senseless at all,” some instances of violence in colonial Cameroon raised questions that did not immediately seem to be answered by the current explicatory historical concepts.

The study established that colonial violence in Cameroon was gendered in nature, validating the claim by Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois that “it is difficult to conceive of violence without addressing its almost inevitably gendered contours.” The result of this gendered nature of colonial violence was that women almost always became the primary and double targets in all violent encounters, where they were maimed, flogged, sexually assaulted, raped, and in many

cases shot or bayoneted to death. While in such instances women were the primary victims of physical and psychological violence, the perpetrators also intended for it to serve as a social and psychological violence on the men, and the society as a whole. This quite easily validated Amina mama's thesis of how colonialism saw an increased vulnerability of African women to all forms of violence. To the extent that the greater the society and their men tried to resist colonialism, the greater acts of violence, including sexual violence, were inflicted on women, including wives, mothers, daughters, and sisters of men who were suspected of being members of the resistance movements simply to humiliate them.

The gendered character of colonial violence animated some of the greatest tensions and worst violent encounters between Africans and the Europeans. While it was based on Europeans' subjectivities and ideas of racial superiority, it was equally rooted in their understandings of African male masculine notions of protection of their women folk. Here then was a clash of two masculine cultures, one assuming racial superiority, the other assuming its inherent role of protection. By demonstrating the interplay of these cultural contestations, the study showed that colonialism was not always a top-down process, or a one-way traffic where Europeans sought to impose their 'civilization' on Africans. Colonial practices built on European ideas of superiority as well as on African historical and cultural processes. Aspects and notions of African masculine honor were precisely the reasons that colonialists used sexual violence to try to break down the sense of obligation and protection within the colonized and vulnerable communities. This knowledge is crucial to historians, anthropologists and other scholars' understandings of the everyday practices of colonialism.

The sudden outburst of war in 1914 placed German colonialism in Cameroon on a cliff. The Allied powers (Britain and France) immediately decided to invade German Cameroon, and

the German colonial authorities found the necessity to mobilize and recruit from the same hostile colonial populations they had produced, to defend the colony against the invaders. While Britain and France had the luxury of tapping military man power from their numerous West African colonies, the Germans had to rely solely on Cameroonians. Both belligerents – the Germans in Cameroon and the Allies in their respective West African colonies and then later Cameroon – put in place material and intangible motivations to entice Africans into combat services. With particular regard to the intangible factor, Europeans had to manipulate African notions of honor. The Germans had to remind traditional authorities that they had their political status, title, and kingdoms to defend; that if they did not contribute their people to fight for the Germans and defend the colony, the invaders would take over and enslave everyone; that their political future was at stake. Muslim leaders were urged that they had a religion to defend against the invaders. Many were promised to have their powers and territories extended and expanded, only if they helped the Germans defeat the invading Allies. In their respective colonies, the Allies used similar messages. The defense and protection of Islam or the defense of freedom and avoidance of a return to enslavement so easily became talking points of honor, as justifications why Africans should fight. Thus, British colonial authorities and recruitment officers readily insisted to Muslim leaders the urgency to enter the war against Germany in defense of Islam; that if Germany took over Nigeria or the world, it would be at the peril of Islam; the Ibos in Eastern Nigeria were told that if Germany were allowed to take over, they would be enslaved.

The study established that despite all of the above, and while many Africans supported the war for various material and intangible reasons, the majority of African soldiers found their way into the Cameroon campaign by conscription. Too often, European messages, coupled with personal interests of African traditional leaders allowed the victimization of both young and

adult male many of whom were simply bundled up and forcibly recruited into combat activities in Cameroon. Political leaders including the Alaafin of Oyo, Oba of Benin, and the Emir of Yola, who needed favors from Europeans such as increasing their powers and expanding their kingdoms in a post-war arrangement simply forced many of their subjects into military service.

In all, the Germans in Cameroon got far fewer partisans than enemies, on account of the hostile colonial atmosphere that had immediately predated the war. While there were about 20,000 or more regular African soldiers who fought the war in Cameroon for the Allies, the Germans had to contend with about half that number, in addition to almost the entire civilian population involved in a sort of a general resistance war against their colonial master. The imbalance in the number of forces engaged, and particularly of the general resistance against the Germans was found to be one of the greatest factors that worked against German military efforts, thereby contributing to the defeat of Germany and the end of German colonialism in Cameroon by 1916.

In view of the overwhelming anti-German war activities by Cameroonians, the 1914 war had provided an opportunity for another form of active resistance in Cameroon that is often absent in the rest of colonial Africa; here it was a form of armed resistance in which Africans were collaborating with one or more European powers against another European power. The study of the Cameroon chapter of World War 1 has thus provided a rare and complex angle of armed resistance to colonialism. The German simplified labelling of Cameroonian support for and collaboration with the Allies as 'betrayal' rather than see its bigger picture as a continuation of colonial resistance which had been going on in the colony long before the outbreak of war in 1914 shows, in part, a lack of knowledge of the historical reality that colonialism had created; viz, the unpopularity of colonialism and its potential to collapse like a pack of cards in the face

of an external challenge. Before the war, Europeans easily assumed and were certain that the only challenge to colonialism could come, and did come, from pockets of ‘savage’ Africans using inferior weapons that were no match to the arsenal of weapons possessed by the colonized. The 1914 war proved the fallacy of this assumption. It exposed some degree of ignorance and naivety on the part of the Germans to appreciate the precariousness of colonialism. And yet, the desperation of the Germans, their wishes, and hopes that somehow the colonial enterprise in Cameroon could survive independently of the outcome of war in Europe exacerbated this ignorance. Created, constructed and sustained solely on violence, colonialism in Cameroon failed its own test during the war. In the face of greater violence, it yielded. Institutionalized violence often creates too many enemies from within so that once the opportunity avails itself to bring down the system, the internal enemies turn against it with even greater violence. The war had accorded most Cameroonians the opportunity to turn against their oppressors with even greater violence. Thus, as the war proved, colonialism was a precarious and hateful enterprise whose chances of surviving in the face of external challenger supported by the internal enemies were almost zero, at least as revealed in the case of Cameroon.

The study also examined the social costs of the Cameroon campaign, notably the loss of civilian lives and the precipitated refugee crisis in the colony. As part of the atrocities of the Great War, fueled in Cameroon particularly by what the Germans blamed on a ‘people’s war’ against them, the German army in Cameroon had undertaken the intentional killing of a mass of civilians caught in the vortex of war. The study argued that war atrocities on civilians in Cameroon should be understood in the context of the Great War atrocities in other places, although on account of lack of the same publicity accorded to Africa, statistics of civilian murders in Cameroon could not be established. The study of civilian deaths was identified as one

of the East studied aspects of the African campaigns of the war, although compared to Europe, African civilian deaths in the war far outnumbered combatants' deaths, and constituted one of the darkest pages of the war for humanity. By detailing this aspect of the war in Cameroon, and telling the story as it happened, no matter how depressing, the study helped establish some of the worst humanitarian problems of the Great War, and of war in general. Also, war atrocities in Cameroon were analyzed in the context of the conflicting interpretations of, and the importance attached to the international laws of war by the different European belligerents, especially Germany whose concept of 'military necessity' as it predated the war trumped everything else, thereby making it possible for a stark violation of the laws of war by intentionally murdering civilians in ways that stunned humanity. By seeking to understand some of the dark pages of the war that stemmed from conflicting interpretations of the laws of war, the study urged the need for a synchronization of the laws of war, as one of the pre-emptive steps towards saving the lives of civilians in occupied territories during the war.

The study ended with an examination of the major political consequence of the Cameroon campaign. Although on the battle field Africans had determined the outcome of the Cameroon campaign, it came to pass that the politics of the war and the final arrangement on the international scene of the political future of their territory was done in ways that frustrated and disappointed them. Once Cameroon was conquered, Britain and France went on to partition the colony in ways that defiled all local opposition. Against consistent local opposition, the lion share of the Cameroons was allocated to France to add to its Equatorial African Empire while Britain contented itself with a one-fifth disjointed portion that bordered its colony of Nigeria. Repeated protests by the people of Douala regarding the form and substance of the partition came to naught. Their wish had not been just to cease from being ruled by Germany to being

governed by France. As they saw it, they had moved from the 'frying pan to the fire.' That African resistance to the manner of partition came to naught reveals what was really at stake in the European extension of World War 1 activities to Africa and then the repartition of affected parts of the continent following German defeat. It also demonstrates - perhaps more importantly - the general difficulties of Africans trying to chart the course of History for themselves once Europeans took control of the continent in the era of colonialism. During that time, international forces proved to be stronger than local forces in how African history unfolded.

What is Left?

While this dissertation has made significant contributions on the subject of the Great War in Africa, and in other fields, much remains to be studied. How, for example, within the context of war, could African military technology have contributed to the science of warfare? The first (unseen) drafts of this dissertation included a chapter on Cameroon's pre-colonial military that would have examined pre-colonial African ways of war, including military technology. Had that chapter come to fruition, I would have been able to take this dissertation in another direction, by showing ruptures and continuities in precolonial and colonial African military, and the impact of colonialism on the enterprise and vice versa. I would have been able to significantly demonstrate what colonialism and Europe benefited from African military cultures and technology during the African campaigns. Significant lack of primary sources to foreground that chapter made me look elsewhere. But Michelle Moyd has shown how in the era of colonialism, Europeans did not only have to teach Africans the ways and practices of war but equally had to learn from them. While providing the drilling, training, and a collective military identity and discipline to their askari in East Africa, she shows, German officers and NGOs had much to learn from Africans themselves about fighting in East Africa. In the end, the product of the colonial army in East Africa was a

melting pot of German and African military cultures. There is no better way to dig into the impact of colonialism on the development of the science of modern militarism and warfare, and vice versa – that is, the contribution of African warfare into the development of modern ways of war in the twentieth century, in and outside the African continent.

Another important area that needs to be thoroughly investigated in the Cameroon campaign has to do with transportation and logistics. Like other African campaigns, the Cameroon campaign could never have been possible without the porters and carriers; they were the “feet and hands of the army.” In East Africa alone, over a million male were used as carriers, for an army of about a little over a hundred thousand men. Some of the archival records suggest the indispensability of carriers and porters in the Cameroon campaign, with several thousand used during the second advance on Yaounde alone in the fall of 1915. There could have been no military operations at all without them. But, the most unfortunate thing about this non-combatant unit of the war was that far more of them perished on the battle field than the regular soldiers. Just like the soldiers, and perhaps worse, the carriers and porters were conscripted. Their manner of recruitment was reminiscent of the slave trade era in Africa. Villages were simply raided, men rounded up, and transported through similar or same methods used for capturing and transportation of slaves in precolonial Africa. And while these persons made the African campaigns possible, their history too, like that of the soldiers, has been silenced. I suspect that in the future I would be undertaking a research project on porters and carrier corps in the Cameroon campaign, with questions such as; who were they? How were they recruited? What were their activities? What did they go through? What is their significance in the history of the Great War?

Also, and about the implications of military occupation on vulnerable populations during the campaigns of the Great War in Africa and Asia, much remains to be done. Much of what first

alarmed world's attention during the initial stages of the war was the atrocities of German military occupation in France and Belgium. These were used by the Allied powers to marshal the world's anger against Germany and its Allies. This was one of the reasons why America, even before it got its military involved in the war, was already long involved by providing humanitarian relief to the suffering peoples in France and Belgium who were being occupied by enemy soldiers. But, other than using military occupation as a form of propaganda and of attracting world's attention (as was the case with the campaigns in Africa), the implications of such occupation should be an imperative subject for research in the social sciences. We need to understand and draw parallels across the globe, of what occupied populations go through in time of peace and war. What forms of military-civilian relations emerge? With or without acts of violence like sexual rape and assaults on women of occupied territories, are there long term social and cultural consequences of such occupations? If soldiers rape and pregnant women during brief moments of occupation, only for them to disappear shortly leaving the women behind, what are the foreseeable and unforeseeable consequences? When massive human contact take places between soldiers in times of war across territorial boundaries, countries, and continents, what are the likely health and medical consequences, such as deceases? Edward Paice has narrated how an influenza epidemic related to the Great War developed in Southeastern Africa immediately following the end of the campaign, claiming civilian lives in hundreds of thousands. Further research on African campaigns needs to establish if and how such mishaps were some of the consequence of military occupation and resulting inter-social relationships with the vulnerable populations.

Looking Back

What have been the long-term political consequences of the seizure, repartition and redistribution of ex-German colonies since the end of the Great War? While this question is outside the purview and scope of this dissertation, it is important to mention the case of Cameroon very briefly. In modern times, historical, political science, anthropological and sociological studies on Africa quickly conceive of and view the continent as bedeviled with problems of ethnicity, political crises, politics of marginalization, failed political cultures and experimentation. Cameroon presents a classical example where to understand the roots of such problems, scholarship must look back to the post-World War 1 arrangements. As we saw in chapter 7, the Anglo-French partition of ex-German Cameroon disregarded local preferences and opposition, giving a much larger part to the French and a much smaller one to the British. Had African opinion been taken into consideration, the entire territory would have gone British, or at least half French and half-British. By all accounts, it would have averted the present political dispensation of modern Cameroon.

With the unsatisfactory arrangement in place, a quarter of the Cameroons remained under British colonial tutelage and culture for four decades till 1961, while slightly over four-fifths were nurtured by the French until 1960. In the era of decolonization in 1960/1, British Cameroons were further split, a part integrating with newly independent Nigeria and the other 're-uniting' with the newly independent former French Cameroon. Such led to the establishment of an uneasy and unequal political union, between a significantly minority 'English Cameroonians' and a substantially majority 'French Cameroonians.' That experiment, whose roots must be traced to the post-World War 1 arrangements, has led to the shape of the present modern Cameroon state, with minority English-speaking populations and majority French-speaking

populations at each other's throat. The political fragmentation and authoritarian form of governance in the country are such that the English speaking populations have increasingly accused the Francophone central government of marginalization and treatment of the Anglophones as second class citizens. In several occasions, the English-speaking peoples have attempted to secede; they have filled in petitions in international bodies, including the UN and the International Court at the Hague calling for secession. Political crisis in the country has resulted in military-civilian encounters, with the army of a non-democratic government killing many civilians. Looking back, Anglophones have too easily scapegoated their problems on some of their nationalist politicians in the 1950-60s for not making smarter choices during the political plebiscite of 1961, particularly for not ensuring that they gained independence without strings of integration or reunification. The ways in which the British and the French lay the foundations for the modern problems of the country since the post-World War 1 arrangement and imposed a political and historical agenda that has created all sorts of problems for the modern nation are not fully appreciated. I am not suggesting that African countries should, with complacency, look back and blame all their problems on European colonial powers any more than that an insufficient understanding of their colonial past which allows for certain of African nationalists politicians to be scapegoated as in Cameroon appears to be counterproductive for nation building.

The above extremely brief presentation suggests the wider implications of the Great War for some of the modern African nations in ways that have so easily eluded the attention of scholarship. I suggest a closer study of the long reach political impact of the Great War on seized German African colonies if Africans are to make full sense of the present history of their countries. The history of the present tells us much about the history of the past. And if we are to

make better the history of the future, it is important that we fully understand and appreciate the history of the past and the present.

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