

# THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL STUDIES

## 1914-1916 in World Historical Perspective, Agricultural Labour Reallocation for Military Service in Cameroon: Economic and International Conflict Study

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### **Abstract:**

*As astronomical sums in funds have been forked out by world economies to curb the spread of the Corona-virus pandemic, the events of World War I remain a topic of enormous intellectual interest. Yet, despite the immensity of the literature, historiographical and International Relations debates remain mired on the variegated character of war-time labour. The paper considers how the 1914-16 cataclysmic war led to fundamental changes that morphed labour from agriculture into military services. It is worth recalling that clashing views and bitter rivalries among European powers drove Germany, France and Britain against each other; and one of the results was the First World War in Cameroon. German, French and British Africa provided a reservoir of manpower that was heavily exploited during the war to aid the imperial war effort. Cameroonians, were recruited as labourers on the Western Front, and, more importantly, staffed the vast logistics organization that sustained multiple campaigns in Africa. Mobilizing Cameroons' subjects, this campaign raised difficult questions about the state of labour supply for its agriculture. Voluntary recruitment was the model espoused by the colonial state; but in reality, local systems of governance were exploited to dislocate men from agriculture into military service. Once on campaign, displaced persons suffered from high casualty rates as disease ravaged the lines of communication. Mobilization of an agrarian class for the imperial war reveal the extent to which indigenous manpower was viewed as an exploitable resource; an attitude that would leave a complex post-war legacy in the Cameroons. The paper submits that the swing of labour from agriculture to military service by belligerent forces during the global war, bartered production in the colonial state.*

**Keywords:** Agricultural, labour, reallocation, Cameroon, World War I

### **1. Introduction**

The colonization of Cameroon was a calamity for the nation and its agricultural potential. The First World War was an even bigger calamity for the territory's agricultural work force and food supply. But without both events, there would be no shift in agro-industrial labour for military services between 1914-1916. Part of the debate in today's Africa about Cameroon goes back to its contributions in World War One. Thousands of books have been written about the 1914-16 conflict with many seeking to apportion responsibility for the outbreak of the war and others the contribution of African soldiers in the war. The renowned German historian, Fritz Fischner, caused a sensation in the 1960s when he published a book *Griffnach der Weltmacht* claiming that Germany was primarily responsible for starting the war as it had secret ambitions to annex most of Europe.<sup>1</sup> In more recent times, historians such as Margaret Macmillan in *The War that Ended Peace: How Europe Abandoned Peace for the First World War* and Christopher Clark in *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe went to War in 1914* have adopted more nuanced arguments<sup>2</sup>. Another famous historian, Niall Ferguson, has argued in *The Pity of War* that Britain should not have become involved as the stakes were too low and the ultimate costs too high.<sup>3</sup> For Russia, it has always been the heroism and sacrifice of the Great Patriotic War of 1941-45 that remain uppermost in the national psyche rather than the devastating reallocation of Cameroon's untapped agricultural labourers for war by European predators including Germany, Britain and France during the same war. President Putin has recently lamented the changes after the First World War that left millions of Russian speakers in the Soviet Republic of Ukraine. Niall Ferguson adds that for Britain, the Second World War was the 'good war' whereas the rights and wrongs of Britain's participation in the First World War were less clear - and are still debated today.<sup>4</sup> Oswald Masebo in *African Soldiers dragged into Europe's War* lambasted that a million people died at the East African inferno during World War one as some soldiers were forced to fight members of their own families on the battlefield because of the way borders were drawn up by the European colonial powers.<sup>5</sup> Meantime, Moberly, recounting the World War I skirmishes in Cameroon, has echoed

<sup>1</sup> Fritz Fischner (1960), *Germany's Aims in the First World War*, New York, W.W. Norton and Company Inc.

<sup>2</sup> Christopher Clark (2012), "The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914", The New York Times Book Review.

<sup>3</sup> Niall Ferguson (2012), *The Pity of War: Explaining World War I*, Oxford, Penguin Uk Release.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Oswald Masebo (2015), *The African Soldiers Dragged into Europe's War*, London, Oxford.

that with the onslaught of the war, the majority of German troops and the civil administration fled to the neighbouring neutral colony of Spanish Guinea (Rio Muni).<sup>6</sup> Far from that, when Africans look back at the Great War of 1914-16, they should be reflecting not only on the diplomatic blunders and the enormous waste of lives, but also the reallocation or shift of agricultural labourers to war lords epitomized by the belligerent forces in Cameroon. The First World War destroyed empires, created numerous new nation-states, encouraged independence movements in Europe's colonies, forced the United States to become a world power and led directly to Soviet communism and the rise of Hitler.

For Cameroon, the war virtually exhausted and displaced its farming potentials. As Cameroonians and Africans reflect on the titanic struggle of 1914-16, it is important to recall the labour mobilizations made between 1914 to 1916 that did not escape an agrarian-class labour to redouble war efforts and old colonial rivalries in the former German Cameroon colony. The holocaust of this Great War remains hotly debated today with very little interest on the brute displacement or overthrow of Cameroon's agricultural labourers and instant recruitment for military services (porters, carriers, and soldiers) of the war accentuated by the various European powers. What is incontestable was the revolutionary changes (decline) in the demographic structure of agro-labourers and production that occurred as a result of the 1914-16 wartime reallocation of human labourers in Cameroon as the colony was at the epicenter of European conflicting interests. The aristocracy was overthrown or its role greatly diminished. As the world recounts on the 1914-16 menace, it is important to recall the stress marks meted by this great War on the agricultural labour force of this former German possession. The focus of the paper is on Cameroon; a developing West African country found at the extreme north eastern end of the Gulf of Guinea. It lies between longitudes 8 degrees and 13 degrees east of the Greenwich Meridian and Latitudes 2 degrees and 13 degrees north of the equator. The country is bordered to the south by Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and Congo; to the west by Nigeria; to the east by Central Africa Republic and Chad and to the Northeast by a portion of Lake Chad. With about 250 ethnic groups, and a population of about 21.7 million persons spread over a total surface area of 475,000km square, making an average density of about 41 inhabitants per kilometer square of land unevenly distributed over the ten regions. Its geographical bearing served as a plain field for old rivalries to be settled during the First World War. Under such conditions, the labour potential of this agrarian economy became exposed for exploitation. The exposure of the human potentials of the colonial state during the war provoked an overthrow of seasoned planters and farmers from the fields and their services greatly deployed to support allied war efforts. But Cameroon and the World has not forgotten the savage of this greedy triple (German, French and British) experiment over the indigenous population of Cameroon between 1914-1916 and hence the burden of history weighs more heavily on the difficulties of the agro-industry to produce than on any other sector in the country. But how this wartime trajectory occurred and drifted labourers from farm fields to military services can only be understood within the context of exposing Cameroon's labour economy on the eve of the war.

## 2. Understanding Cameroon's Labour Economy on the Eve of World War 1

The need for imperialist countries to export capital in order to produce cheap manufactured goods led to competition among the countries in looking for colonies culminating in the Berlin Conference of 1884. At this time, the scramble for Africa was sealed in a number of treaties including the Congo Basin Treaties of 1890 and the convention of St.-Germainen-Laye of 1919 under which Britain, Belgium, Japan and Portugal guaranteed each other equality of access to the raw materials and markets of Africa with the establishment of plantation agriculture through which indigenous labour was utilized to tap raw materials for European industries. Cameroon's colonial economy (1884-1914) therefore fell under the second phase of imperialism, which was euphemistically termed the period of the legitimate trade where tropical capitalist agriculture took center stage. The inaugural of this era witnessed a dichotomy of labour between traditional and modern capitalist plantation agriculture in Cameroon.

Colonial labour in the Cameroons prior to the 1914 catastrophic war was dominantly tailored towards agriculture. Deprived of political and economic independence before World War I, the Cameroons colony was governed by the Germans on the basis of this special regime. In pursuing a colonial policy, the metropolitan Germans foisted their rule upon the indigenous Cameroonian labour for the setting up of European plantations that drew away large amounts of capital and raw materials for the European markets. Colonial policy was a policy of enslavement and labour exploitation of the Africans through agriculture and economic coercion of its peoples, hinterlands, and territories. The pioneers of German plantation penetration in Cameroon were so-called explorers and Christian missionaries. David Livingstone is known to have opened Africa for capital penetration when he said: 'I beg to direct your attention to Africa. I know that in a few years, I shall be cut off in that country which is now open; do not shut it again. I go back to Africa to try to make an open path for commerce and Christianity; do carry out the work which I have begun. I leave it with you.'<sup>7</sup> Cecil Rhodes outlined the main purpose of colonial economy, which was pioneered by early imperial companies, as follows: 'We must find new lands from which we can easily obtain raw materials and at the same time exploit the cheap slaves.' As a follow to Cecil Rhodes' citations, 'colonial labour was thus diverted into coastal plantations in Cameroon for the main purpose of obtaining raw materials including rubber, cocoa and palm oil for European industrial capital; labour that is available from the natives of the colonies. The colonies would also provide a dumping ground for surplus goods produced in our factories.'<sup>8</sup>

The so-called treaties by Carl Peters in 1884 with the Sultan of Zanzibar were the forerunner for German colonialism in Cameroon. Through Carl Peters and the Deutsch-Ostafrikanische-Gesellschaft, a plantation economy was

<sup>6</sup>Moberly F.J. Military Operations Togoland and the Cameroons 1914-1916 (Imperial War Museum and Battery Press ed., London.

<sup>7</sup> David Livingstone (reprint 1997), Cambridge University Address, 5th December 1857 in Thoms Pakenham, The Scramble for Africa, Abacus, London, p.xxv.

<sup>8</sup> David Stamp (1992), Development as Enclosure: The Establishment of a Global Economy: The Ecologist, 22 (No.4) pp. 31-47.

established in Cameroon. The history is well documented by German and African historians.<sup>9</sup> A new plantation economy began; Tea, Rubber and Cotton were introduced. Cameroonians were forced to work on these plantations under fierce overseers. In view of the foregoing labour demands for plantation agriculture on the eve of World War I, Cameroon's grassfields Lauret Nkwi in fine fashion has affirmed that by mid-June 1892, while Zintgraff's work continued in Bali, he left for South Africa in 1893 only to return in 1896 with Dr. Max Esser, manager of the Victoria Plantation Company. He accompanied him to Bali, to make arrangements with Galega concerning the supply of labour. The labour agreement with 'Westafrikanische Planzungsgesellschaft Victoria' (W.A.P.V.) permitted hundreds of Bali young men to travel to the coast as plantation labourers.<sup>10</sup> The country was then ruled with a heavy hand by the colonial state to secure the labour needs of the German colony for the plantations for the production of these tropical cash crops that were highly needed in Europe. In order to force people to work, the government worked via chiefs and sub chiefs and introduced taxes. Those who could not pay taxes were punished. In order to pay taxes, the people had to work in plantations. Chilver contends that the administration of the Bamenda 'Bezirk' had passed from military hands to civil administrative officials who were more concerned with the only 'thing' they found economically profitable - human resources. As these German firms found the Grassfields disappointing, Chilvers further intimates that this state of affairs was dictated by the fact the region was 'devoid of worthwhile surpluses of palm oil' and was 'not significantly blessed with resources of ivory and rubber except kola which repaid the heavy cost of collection and transport to the coast'.<sup>11</sup> Manpower was therefore now the only exploitable commodity for the coastal plantations. Labour was thus obtained in three forms: - volunteer labour, penal labour rounded up in punitive expeditions or labour provided by chiefs under contracts. It is reported that from 1896 onwards, labour was provided under contract to the *Westafrikanische Planzungsgesellschaft Victoria* (WAPV) by the Fon of Bali. The Gesellschaft Nordwest-Kamerun (GNK) Company relied on the Grassfields for labour supply.<sup>12</sup> By 1913/14, nearly 11,000 men had been recruited as labour through regular channels of whom 2,000 were destined for the plantations and railways.<sup>13</sup> The various punitive expeditions in Cameroon's hinterlands and the Bamenda Grassfields which we have tried to analyze in the foregoing pages unpacks the whole ideology of the use of force by Grassfielders as European capitalist lured them out of their subsistence crop culture in favour of the more Westernized capitalist plantations scheme at the coast. During this period, most agricultural commodities were exported to Germany. The economy was not aimed at developing the people but rather to serve the colonial government and the plantation owners. This historical allusion depicts that the labour demands on the eve of the Great war was directed towards imperial development. Reading history backwards will further give a detailed grasp of this agricultural labour-oriented economy prior to the world war saga that occasioned a reallocation of agriculture's manpower for militia services in the Cameroons. What's more, the declaration of Cameroon as a German protectorate witnessed, the rest of the country except the coastal regions remain undisturbed. Dankier maintains that Cameroon had been Germany's for 23 years (1884-1907), reiterating that, for the moment, however, their ownership (of Cameroon) was nothing more than political. His echoes meant that they still had to conquer it economically and culturally as the majority of the inhabitants were only nominally subjected and he was right. For years, the hinterlands remained the monopoly of the middlemen. The Western coastal region had become, from 1896, the main centre of a highly capitalized plantation system which had radically changed the initial pattern of economic penetration from the coast by European trading houses.<sup>14</sup> Four years earlier (1892), Zintgraff had proposed the involvement of natives in large scale plantation economy. He believed this was the best way his African development policy 'Africa for Africans and Africans for us (Germans)' could be implemented. That meant Africans would be used for any exploitation strategies to benefit the Germans. For Zintgraff this required pain, patience and calmness for the policy to work over the years. He proposed ways and means by which natives could involve themselves in the large-scale state plantation farming.<sup>15</sup> Penal labour could be used for the clearing and preparation of plantation estates. The prisoners could learn agricultural techniques which they could implement later or teach others. Zintgraff also thought debtors could pay their debts by having their slaves work on the plantations. Instead of imposing individual tax, family tax based on the number of wives and slaves could be paid through slave labour on the plantations.<sup>16</sup> According to Zintgraff, the control of plantations by State Inspectors, the supply of seeds and the renting of tools were necessary conditions for the full implementation of the policy.<sup>17</sup> Because of the more profitable plantation industry on the coast, a policy of gradual and deliberate penetration of the hinterlands by Europeans was developed. The Grassfields that lay to the north of the inland forest divided by a dramatic escarpment remained unexplored.<sup>18</sup>

Economically, the colony's manpower became more closely tied to the metropolitan German industries through the development of plantations. Peasant labour in the Cameroons was transformed into appendages that supplied the metropolitan countries with agricultural goods and raw materials. Their agricultural development was based on a one-crop system, and they became markets for industrial products and sources of raw materials for the growing capitalist

<sup>9</sup>(See Martin Baer and Olaf Schröter, *EineKopfjagd, DeutchOstafrika*, Ch. Links Verlag (2001), Berlin. See also Felistas Becker and JigalBeez (Hg.) *Der Maji-Maji -Krieg in Deutsch -Ostafrika, 1905-1907*, Ch. Links Verlag, (2005), Berlin.

<sup>10</sup> P. N. Nkwi (1989), *The German Presence in the Western Grassfields, 1891-1913*, African Studies Centre Leiden, The Netherlands Research Report (No.37).

<sup>11</sup>Chilver, E.M. (1967), 'Native Administration in the West Central Cameroon', 1902-1954', In: *Essays in Imperial Government*, Blackwell, Oxford, pp. 89-139 'Zintgraff's Explorations in Bamenda, Adamawa and the Benue Lands', Buea, 1966

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 91

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 97

<sup>14</sup>Chilver, E.M. (1966), 'Native Administration West Central Cameroon', pp. 89-139 'Zintgraff's Explorations in Bamenda, Adamawa and the Benue Lands',

<sup>15</sup>Nkwi, German Presence in the Western Grassfields, pp. 14-24.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Chilver, E.M. (1966), 'Native Administration West Central Cameroon', pp. 89-139 'Zintgraff's Explorations in Bamenda, Adamawa and the Benue Lands'.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

industry of the metropolises. The spread of new methods of labour exploitation, the need to create special colonial government bodies capable of reinforcing the exploitation of labour of the enslaved peoples and the rivalry of different strata of the bourgeoisie in the metropolitan countries led to the conscription of more and more labour for the monopolistic colonial trading companies in Cameroon towards the development of capitalist agricultural schemes. Changes in the forms and methods of labour conscription of the colony was not accompanied by a decrease in its intensity. Enormous manpower was exported from the colony, and the use of these labourers led to the accelerated development of mono-cultural plantation agriculture in Cameroon and increased exports for the European markets. The intensified exploitation of labour for export agriculture in the colony and its African equivalents was made more plausible by commodity-money relations which could only be obtained by engaging the indigenes in export agricultural cultivation and the inclusion of the colony in the emergence and development of bourgeois relations. Although the colonialists had an interest in increasing the marketable surplus of peasant farming billed on the indiscriminate exploitation of human labour for agricultural production, they impeded economic progress in the colony in every way possible, maintaining and strengthening feudal and prefeudal relations and regarding the feudal and tribal elites in the enslaved country as their labour supporters in colonial society. It was on this context that the labour economy of the indigenous Cameroonians was pegged to colonial agriculture prior to the holocaust of World War I in 1914. Having in mind the potentials of the colonized state, the outbreak of the great war became the guiding principle for labourers to be mobilized in the hinterlands where the agricultural industry was victimized.

### 3. Mobilization of Cameroon's Manpower: An Agricultural Labour and Productivity Shock

At its simplest, mobilization entails the redirection of an entire society to the prosecution of a war. In this sense, the First World War affected nearly every aspect of life in Cameroon, German West and East Africa, but the meaning and impact of this redirection was substantially and inherently different from what occurred in wartime Europe.<sup>19</sup> Cameroon's experiences during the Great War thus qualify and challenge accepted paradigms of mobilization and total war. Most governments, particularly those who shared a border with a German colony, declared some form of martial law. This did not go well with the German Cameroon colony which was bordered by several colonial states controlled by the French and the British who had old colonial rivalries to settle with the Germans in the Cameroons.<sup>20</sup> Beyond that, the dominated colony and other protectorates had to raise local forces for its own defense. This was an expensive proposition, and a number of former colonial officers suggested African units as inexpensive replacements for regular British troops in Cameroon. Citing the effectiveness of raising an inexpensive African force to replace British combatants for the war in Cameroon and Africa, P. A. Silburn urged imperial defence planners to follow the Natal Defence Commission's recommendation to raise native African naval garrison units.<sup>21</sup> But when it received a similar question from the KAR's Inspector General about using native levies as an inexpensive prop for the defense of the West African (Cameroon) Protectorate, the Committee of Imperial Defence ruled emphatically against deploying irregular African troops in a war that might involve Europeans. Declaring that the practice damaged the «prestige of the white race» and that it was «undesirable to drag natives into our quarrels unless it was absolutely necessary», the Colonial Secretary, Lord Crewe, directed colonial military advisors not to include native levies in their defence plans.<sup>22</sup>

This sounded grand, but the colonial authorities also believed that allowing Africans to kill Europeans would expose the bluff that made British rule in Africa possible. This mentality within the British colonial office that did not favour the use of nonwhite fighters at the beginning would have saved the plight of African indigenous labourers who were predominantly agricultural producers from being mobilized into a white man's war. At the initial stages, it seems this British decision would save the plight of African indigenous labour which was immensely deployed towards agricultural production. As a colonial army officer acknowledged: «The inviolability of the white man must be maintained if a few hundred whites were to continue to impose their authority in governing many thousands of blacks in safety.»<sup>23</sup> Yet the committee's ruling included a number of loopholes that opened the door for African recruiting during the First World War. Commenting aptly on the wartime deliberations on whether to utilize African labourers, Moberly states clearly that with British regular and imperial troops committed to the battlefields of Western Europe and defending the larger empire, mobilizing African manpower was a top priority. In both West and East Africa, pre-war economic retrenchment had led the British colonies to drastically reduce the WAFF and the KAR. Referring to the security of the East African Protectorate (which became Kenya in 1920), the KAR's Inspector General alluded to the role of African soldiers in imperial defence: «Our position at the present time is [...] not only unsatisfactory but dangerous. Putting aside altogether the question of a native rising on a large scale which, however improbable, is too serious a factor to be altogether ignored, there are many situations which might [...] become very dangerous if not promptly dealt with.»<sup>24</sup> Consequently, when war came in 1914, it took a crash mobilization programme to mount offensive operations against the remaining German colonies. In West Africa, the Gold Coast battalions of the WAFF and Tirailleurs from French Dahomey overran Togoland within the first

<sup>19</sup> P. Fendall, *The East African Force, 1915–19*, London 1921, 22–23. <sup>9</sup> TNA, CAB38/15, Committee of Imperial Defence, «Employment of Armed Native Levies».

<sup>20</sup> Elango, L.Z. (1985). 'The Anglo-French Condominium' in Cameroon, 1914-1916: The Myth and the Reality". *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*. Boston, MA: Boston University African Studies Center. XVIII (4): 656-673.

<sup>21</sup> Silburn, Colonies, 174–175. <sup>11</sup> C. F. Wicker, *Neutralization*, London 1911, 34. <sup>12</sup> M. Page, *The Chiyawa War: Malawians and the First World War*, Boulder, CO 2000, 97.

<sup>22</sup> Henry, H.B. (1915). *Cameroon on a clear Day*. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library.

<sup>23</sup> Bryce, J.B.; Thompson, H.; Petrie W.M.F. (1920). *The Causes of the War: The Events of 1914-1915*, *The Book of History, A History of all Nations from the Earliest Times to the Present, With Over 8,000 Illustrations*. XVI. New York: The Grolier Society. Retrieved 9 May 2014.

<sup>24</sup> J. F. Moberly (1931), *Military Operations: Togoland and the Cameroons, 1914–1916*, London, 255. 33

month of the war. Seizing Kamerun, however, was much more difficult. The acute shortage of manpower as combatants, served as a prelude for black labourers to be conscripted and channeled into the battle fields to support wartime efforts for the Germans, British and French in Cameroon.

It was within this context that colonial powers gave the latitude for Cameroonian labourers to be exploited in the form of human conscriptions thereby participating in World War I on equal pedestals with the white man on different war theatres. How this labour mobilization in Cameroon for participation in the alien war was detrimental for agri-business through the reallocation of human cargoes from agriculture fields to war zones remains unanswered by historicist. Emmanuel Aloagamo has asserted that the general pattern of colonial investments was mainly for the exploitation of raw materials to feed the industries in the mother country. The system relied on cheap raw materials and cheap labour.<sup>25</sup>

While this debate goes on, it is but glaring and we cannot wade-off the fact that these indigenous Africans prior to the perturbed wartime atmosphere were an agrarian people with almost every one tilling the soil for a living;<sup>26</sup> and deploying them for war meant a draw back on their agricultural economy which could be measured in terms of the number of farmers lost, output and the number of hectares of land that could have been cultivated in these war years in the hinterlands where the militia was unleashed in the colony. Extant literature on the colonial history of Africa shows that the mobilization of Black Africans into the 1914 debacle of a war which triggered the brutal reallocation of the agricultural peasantry labourers in the hinterlands of Cameroons for a global war as military men, carriers and porters was billed (tele-guided) on the colonial praxes of the capitalist West in the different colonial spheres of Africa which revoked for the exploitation of colonized peoples, land, raw materials and labour for the development of the colonial mother countries. Perhaps, Aloangamo, in conformity to this orthodoxy, has rightly articulated that there is scarcely any colony that was acquired either for philanthropic or humanitarian reasons; colonies were acquired principally for economic reasons. Colonization and empire building were all promoted by economic needs. Colonies thus became nothing other than economic satellites of the metropole, lying on the periphery of international trade, suffering from economic and social stagnation, while contributing to the development of the already developed metropole.<sup>27</sup> The impression this leaves us with is that the colonial protagonists were not interested in the welfare of the colonized people (Cameroonians). That was probably why the abrupt extinction of the African peoples' agricultural labour by the Germans, French and the British to aid the war efforts of these metropolitan states was met without worries of the negating effects these redeployments had on their native agricultural economy. Instead, Aloangamo has hailed those railways and road were constructed with primary aim to exploit agricultural and mineral resources as well as to mobilize cheap labour,<sup>28</sup> further stating that limited medical facilities were provided, largely to ensure a healthy and productive labour force. That is why he maintained that only areas with rich natural resources were comparatively more developed. The colonial picture was glaring as cited by Aloangamo that the Germans and other Europeans in Cameroon never took an interest in the development of African agriculture but were concerned with the development of the metropole states. In explaining this disinterest in the development of the colonized Cameroonian state especially agriculture in relation to the Germans, French, British and, to a lesser extent, the Belgians between 1914 to 1916, this must be understood against the backdrop of the indiscriminate human redeployments for war against the agricultural preferences of the Cameroonian peasantry. This state paints a clear picture why these Europeans showed no remorse in transforming the African people's agrarian (subsistence and plantation) labour force into a military regime. Plantation labourers became the prime target arena where labourers were mobilized for war. The absence of autonomy, lack of protection as a people in the midst of a colonially masterminded war left the indigenous Cameroonians with servitude from a brutally imposed labour conscription on an agricultural class geared towards mitigating the German, French and British military deficiencies for the catastrophic World War I of 1914. Though many war scholars like Elango have held that this wartime mobilization for manpower caused Cameroonians to be mixed with the Europeans on the same pedestals, it would be apt to argue that in this inter mingling of a developing agricultural economy with the more advanced industrial and military Western imperialists as did the World War I scenario, it was the regime of the indigenous Cameroonians that was being battered and not so much that of the Germans and ally powers who forcefully caused these peasant farmers to become military labourers without any formal military training. Moreover, as the studies of Myint and Myrdal has evoked, any economic relations between an undeveloped and an advanced nation will always be to the greater benefit of the latter. This is also true of a similar relationship between two regions within the same nation but which are economically and socially at different levels of development. Myrdal points out that in any such relationship, the more economically developed nations or regions, 'will exert a strong agglomerative pull, accelerating their rate of growth and bringing increased stagnation or decline' to the under developing nations or regions. That is why the impact of diffusion has been to increasingly shift the advantages of economic development and social progress from the poor to the rich nations.<sup>29</sup> Basing on this colonial debate, the reallocation of the Bali, Bafut, Mankon, Nso, Bangwa, and Bakweri agrarian work force who were poor native farmers to join forces with rich Western powers by 1914 in a super imposed war on them led to the progress of the Western powers with France and Britain gaining further access into the colony that same year, meeting an already stationed German administration in the colony with the outbreak of the World War I and continued the brutal exploitation of the people's rich agricultural work force for

<sup>25</sup> Emmanuel Aloangamo A, *The British Southern Cameroons, 1922-1961*, p. 7.

<sup>26</sup> Fanso, V.G., *Cameroon History for Secondary Schools and Colleges*, Vol. 1, From prehistoric times to the nineteenth century, London and Oxford, Macmillan Education Ltd, 1989.

<sup>27</sup> Emmanuel Aloagamo A (2002), *The British Southern Cameroons 1922-1961, A Study in Colonialism and Underdevelopment*, Platteville Madison, Nkemnji Global Tech, p. 7.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Emmanuel Aloangamo A, *The British Southern Cameroons*, p. 8.

wartime ventures, serving as soldiers, spies, porters, and carriers while their subsistence agricultural economy become further impoverished.

Admittedly, the mobilization of war lords as carriers and soldiers from the Cameroons which was conflicting with the agricultural labour economy came on the heels of responding to the pressing wartime demands. Meantime, to keep these Africans in check, the Germans and the ally powers raised and transformed Cameroonian farmers into war lords. This scenario begs us to pose the question as to why Africans were excluded from military service in their own homelands until the spasmodic outbreak of the war that they were called into military service to wade-off the debacle of the First World War. While the answer to this question looms, it is clear that the dawn of 1914 saw indigenous Cameroonians from Douala, Beti, Mora, Ngaoundere, Victoria, Kumba, and Garoua become suddenly conscripted and absorbed into the military regiments to serve both German and allied (British and French) military regiments. The employment of soldiers and carriers for the war effort was an unprecedented mobilization of the African labor force, with important social and economic consequences. The most significant mobilization was that of soldiers and porters from Cameroon for the different theatres in Cameroon and the East African campaign.

The demand for laborers for the war induced people to flee to avoid conscription in Cameroon. This increased the number of squatters on European plantations and therefore the availability of laborers for settlers' enterprises.<sup>30</sup> This was another dilemma for the German agricultural industry as well as subsistence economy of Cameroon as work force declined. France recruited the most substantial number of African soldiers for the Western front and Cameroon was not exempted.<sup>31</sup> The indiscriminate recruitment of Cameroonian indigenes as labourers, potters, and carriers begs us to question why an economy whose labour force was predominantly reserved for capitalist plantation demands for German industry in Europe was suddenly re-organized to respond to a war-time effort in an arms race. Perhaps, this economic policy framework in the face of a devastating war probably laid Cameroon's war-time (1914-15) economy on a brink of collapse as greater manpower was being utilized to less productive ventures (military) of the economy unlike crop production among which were cocoa, rubber, and banana production that could be exported for more colonial revenues and the profits used to pay Cameroonians who worked in these plantations. Similarly, as the entire territory had been plagued by military skirmishes, and maneuvers which witnessed Cameroonians from Bakweri and Douala recruited as porters and carriers, land on which agricultural production was carried became transformed into battle fields for the war. The foregoing scenario leaves us with the conclusion that the collision of this catastrophic war with agricultural land ultimately reduced crop production with a resultant food scarcity shock during those years (1914-16) stemming from the destructive effects of the warring militias on properties and agricultural fields where the battles occurred in the territory.

From the above events, evidence show that the colonial government in Cameroon at the apex of warring hostilities was spending more on the arms race and making less revenue from the territory's plantations. In French West Africa, tensions developed between the large recruitment of men and the need to increase food production in the colonies, especially sorghum, maize and beans, to feed the troops and the civilian population in Europe.<sup>32</sup> This broad recruitment created many problems in the organization of agricultural work and the division of labor, leading to a decline in food production as well as disruptions to some industries.<sup>33</sup> Military mobilization diverted animals and men from agriculture, contributing to famine by 1915. In this vein, the Germans lacked a decisive and imaginative military leader who might have made optimal use of what strengths they had, such as a central railway line.<sup>34</sup> It is arguable that the lack of economic control in the midst of the war obviously meant ineffective rule and that was exactly what the territory suffered between the war with turbulence for the economy and its peoples. The compounding wartime demands, the duty-free labour recruits for war, and the exodus of male and female farmers for almost no compensation led to the ruin and impoverishment of the native farming system, the dismembering of colonial plantation labour in the colony that had originated prior to the outbreak of World War I, and the decline of the agricultural economy of the colony and that of the exporting European masters.

Therefore, it should come as no surprise that all of the imperial powers cast their ideals aside so easily when wartime necessity dictated that they raise large African armies. Yet they went about it differently. Faced with the enormous manpower demands of waging a continental war with a numerically larger Germany, the French unapologetically conscripted 134,310 of their African subjects for service with combat units in France.<sup>35</sup> This was easier to justify for the French because their assimilationist policies opened the way for a small number of Westernized Africans to become citizens. Trusteeship, by comparison, made it much harder for British colonial administrations to use similar tactics, particularly when the metropolitan British forces did not resort to conscription until 1916. Following the doctrine of «indirect rule», and in contrast to the French, they declared their aim was not to produce African Englishmen but to help primitive peoples «evolve» along their own lines by governing them through «traditional native authorities».<sup>36</sup> This meant that it was much harder to justify turning tribesmen into useful soldiers. Whatever the methods of conscription used in Cameroon, it was a shielded fact that an agricultural population was conscripted from the hinterlands by both the Germans, British and French as the war evolved to mitigate an acute shortage of war soldiers.

As a matter of fact, this sudden colonial development that witnessed the demobilization of labourers from Cameroons plantations and subsistence agricultural societies (among whom were Douala, Yaoundé, Nsanakang, Mora, the

<sup>30</sup> J. Overton (1986), 'War and Economic Development: Settlers in Kenya, 1914-1918', in: *The Journal of African History* 27/1, 79-103.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> C. Lucas (1924), *The Empire at War: Volume IV*, London, 136-137.

<sup>33</sup> K. David (1987), *Military and Labour Policies in the Gold Coast during the First World War*, in: Page (ed.), *Africa*, p. 165.

<sup>34</sup> Quinn (1987), *The impact of the First World War in: Page (ed.), Africa and the First World War*, 177-178.

<sup>35</sup> A. Clayton, France (1988), *Soldiers and Africa*, London, 16, 340. 18 F. Lugard (1965), *The Dual Mandate in Tropical Africa*, London, 193-194. 19

<sup>36</sup> Quoted in D. Killingray / J. Matthews (1979), «Beasts of Burden: British West African Carriers in the First World War», in: *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 13 (1/2), 14.

Bamendagrass fields, Kribi, Bakweri, Tiko and Tombel) with a simultaneous but swift transformation and redeployment of an agricultural class society (from Cameroon) into war lords without any formal military training as did their European counterparts begs us to argue that these Africans must have exhibited a lot of strength, power and resilience as a people while serving as labourers in the European-owned plantations of Tiko and Victoria, and must have won and changed the perspective of these savage Europeans into believing that agriculturally based labourers in Cameroon were more than qualified for military service and required no formal training to join forces with the whites (Europeans) at the different war theatres including the East African and West African fronts where Cameroonian labourers, dominantly of an agricultural heritage, joined French and British African troops engaged in the war against the Germans. One will further argue that the transition of these indigenous Cameroonians from agricultural fields into war lords without difficulty was showcasing flexibility and greater ability to adapt to sudden changes and environments. This therefore meant they were not stereotype but dynamic as a people, reason why they could be easily conscripted and transferred from season subsistence and capitalist agricultural labourers into carriers, porters and soldiers between 1914 to 1916.

While the French openly acknowledged that their African troops were conscripts, British civil and military officials insisted that the infantrymen in the KAR, WAFF, and other wartime African combat formations were volunteers who made the willing and informed choice to defend the British Empire.<sup>3738</sup> Writing after the war, Sir Charles Lucas, a senior Colonial Office expert on Africa, declared that in West Africa, «no compulsion was used; to the very end it was a matter of free will».<sup>39</sup> Lucas was correct that there were no formal conscription laws for combat troops in any African colony, and in 1917 the Colonial Office dismissed proposals from the War Office and various colonial governors to relieve the severe imperial manpower shortage by conscripting Africans. But this was only half the story.<sup>40</sup> Leaning heavily on romanticized notions that «native laws and customs» gave chiefs absolute authority over their tribes, British field administrators simply ordered their African clients (who were usually colonial appointees) to round up set numbers of men.<sup>41</sup> The outcome of these harsh activities on men was evidenced in a deliberate subtraction of the farming populace with every male labourer conscripted for the war (either towards the Germans, French or British in Cameroon), equated as a significant loss of agricultural manpower in Cameroon's colonial state. This representation brings us to the conclusion that every conscripted male labourer further reflected a loss and or reallocation of land tenure given that in this African sphere, land tenure was vested in the hands of the male subjects and where such men were victims of the surprise conscription from the belligerent forces or colonial masters and owned landed property, the fallout was that which the land acre was left idle without a cultivator and ultimately went uncultivated, leading to an agricultural production shock which must be understood against the background of an agricultural labourer in the Cameroon colony given an invitation for war by European predators..

Moreover, initially, this «invitation» was modest, for the British colonial demand for African manpower was relatively light. Following the pre-war template laid out by Committee of Imperial Defence, governors and their military advisors looked first to the security of their own colonies and then to seizing Germany's African ports and wireless stations in Togoland (Togo), Kamerun (Cameroon), German South West Africa (Namibia), and German East Africa (Tanzania).<sup>42</sup> The much smaller German *Schutztruppe*, which consisted also primarily of African units were in no position to mount offensive operations. However, German commerce raiders operating out of Lome, Douala, Windhoek, and Dar es Salaam posed a tangible threat to British shipping. In the opening months of the war, the cruiser *Königsberg*, which was based in German East Africa (GEA), managed to sink a British merchant ship and cruiser before the Royal Navy blockaded and destroyed it in Rufiji River. Knowing fully well that British sea power would leave them precariously isolated once war broke out, German commanders hoped to hold out long enough to force Britain to divert military resources from Europe to Africa.<sup>43</sup> Consequently, the initial focus of British colonial mobilization was to raise sufficient local forces to seize the coastal regions of German Africa as rapidly as possible. This appeared to be a relatively easy proposition which sardonically increased the displacement of able-bodied seasoned farming Cameroonians by the French and British African regiments for the war to crush German efforts in the colonies. The Douala natives, as Rudin recognized, had been noted for farming and fishing and resisted German plots to expropriate their land for the erecting of permanent European settlements and thus became readily disposed from the art of agriculture for the French West African Frontier Force against the Germans in German West Africa especially as these native Dualas were not pleased with the Germans for expropriating their land.<sup>44</sup> They needed a perfect opportunity to air their grievances against the Germans and the August 1914 holocaust gave them one on Cameroonian soil. By rendering their services as soldiers for the allies in Cameroon and being an agricultural people caused the number of cultivators in the locale inducted into the military to wind up during the inter-war years.

As a continuation, this terrifying class war hit Cameroon and many countries in Africa as agrarian societies. These countries were never supported to develop their own agricultural industries and hardly was their transfer of technology from their former colonial masters to these colonies to improve the performance of these indigenous African labourers on the farm theatres. Conversely, it beckons our imagination that these egocentric Europeans, having failed to improve African agriculture, desperately needed these indigenous Africans to support their selfish wartime efforts that further

<sup>37</sup> A. Clayton (1988), *France, Soldiers and Africa*, London, Mansfield Press, 16, 340.

<sup>38</sup> C.P. Fendall (1921), *The East African Force, 1915-19*, London, Springs Press, 22-23.

<sup>39</sup> F. Lugard (1965), *The Dual Mandate in Tropical Africa*, London, Oxford, 193-194.

<sup>40</sup> T. Proctor (2010), *Civilians in a War, 1914-1918*, New York, Yale Press, pp 3-5.

<sup>41</sup> W.C.G. Heneker (1907), *Bush Warfare*, London, Oxford; R. Meinertzhagen (1984), *Kenya Diary 1902-1906*, New York, Yale Press.

<sup>42</sup> G. Shepperson/ T. Price, *Independent African*, Edinburgh, Victoria Press, 1958, 235.

<sup>43</sup> B. Nasson (2007), *Springboks on the Somme: South Africa in the Great War, 1914-1918*, Johannesburg, 2, 12.

<sup>44</sup> Harry Rudin, *Germans in the Cameroons*,

diminished the vital labour force in the battle fields. The chaotic war and the brute reallocation of an agricultural community's labour force into military skirmishes drained the little income this country and other African countries needed to develop themselves. This phenomenon led to a scenario of hunger and growing inequalities in the hinterlands as many native agrarian farmers were displaced into war zones since their services were regarded as cheap and easy to afford by the belligerent forces. This can be called neo-economic slavery.

Without war having been introduced by the Germans, French and British upon this agrarian society and their African counterparts, we would not talk about rising death tolls and war-time agricultural shocks (famines) in these colonies and agriculture (capitalist plantations) was that one main contributor to the colonial economy of Cameroon. After the war, these agricultural labourers from Cameroon and other African colonies who were recruited into the war became referred to as ex-soldiers, not ex-farmers or agriculturist which was their initial preoccupation before the 1914 holocaust of a war. Paradoxically, these Cameroonian labourers dominantly of farming leanings became popularly referred to as ex-soldiers. It would appear they had become military slaves in war for their white masters against their life-saving agricultural labour economy which was a life-engine for the colonial economy that made their agricultural roots (identity) a forgotten story upon their return from the war. In reality, deploying an agrarian economy for a global war was a systematic approach to integrate Cameroon's human potentials into the global economy. From the start of the war in August 1914 to the period of German expulsion from the colony in 1916, on balance of costs and benefits had been a disaster for the agricultural economy of the warring territory in terms of declining human numbers due to rising death tolls from the war. The defects of these were evidenced on the economy envisaged as a slump on the colonies available farm producers, a vital prerequisite for sustainable agricultural production while developing the natural environment during the winter war years. Here, an element of ecological debt comes up. This was evidenced through the conscription of able-bodied men caused by a capital-led global war in the colonial state who were given to agricultural development. Their conscriptions and eventual exodus for war rendered their natural environments less supplanted for agricultural ventures. That could be cherished as a 'solution' to Africa's hunger problems, namely a more productive use of land by a standing larger labour force not conscripted and channeled for war.

Furthermore, when British officials did admit to mass conscription in the colonies, they justified it on the grounds that the impressed men were only non-combatant labourers. This was in keeping with pre-war practices where colonial administrators, merchants and company employees, and settler farmers employed a wide variety of coercive tactics to compel Africans to work for little or no money. Claiming that forced labour was necessary for the moral and economic development of the colonies, they reconciled by claiming that primitive tribesmen needed to learn the value of regular work. Consequently, labour conscription was equally legitimate in wartime. These crafty policies yielded dividends for the warring Europeans to brutally tap Africa's agrarian labour which they termed primitive for military service. Arguably, this mass human exodus reduced the labour force that initially carried out agriculture and resulted in what we could term the 'hungry war years' in the Cameroons. But what the colonial authorities failed to acknowledge was that distinctions between combat troops and non-combatant labourers that legitimized conscription were meaningless because it was impossible to conduct large-scale military recruitments in Cameroon involving thousands of indigenous porters (carriers) to move ammunition and supplies without reducing an agricultural population. Elango's rhetorical maintains that the Allied forces that advanced from Douala required over 30,000 African porters.<sup>45</sup> The fate of most of these porters, many of whom were farmers, was to be a journey of no return either by death or displacements in foreign territories as a dark side to the available human numbers to take to agricultural theatres. Hodges, Page and Osuntokun in affirmation to this fact have rightly argued that large-scale offensive military operations required tens of thousands of labourers, but British civil and military authorities gave virtually no thought as to how they would care for these people who were almost entirely conscripts in the unhealthy regions where the fighting took place.

While their inability to provide for the carriers' basic human wants was partially a legacy of the peacetime practice of running the African colonies on a shoestring, colonial military officers also believed that native tribesmen needed less food and could endure greater hardship than European troops.<sup>46</sup> The myth behind this was arguably an alarming human casualty with agricultural working potentials hardest hit. Casualties during the campaign occurred from tropical diseases, especially malaria, as well as combat.<sup>47</sup> The hardships of war and military parades fell not only on the troops but with differences as to areas that induced loss of human lives. This official indifference which often disguised base incompetence produced staggeringly high mortality rates. In 1922, the War Office acknowledged that 42,318 East African non-combatants died during the war,<sup>48</sup> but according to Geoffrey Hodges's more plausible estimates, 100,000 of the approximately one million men who provided labour for the East African campaign (half on short term contracts, half as carriers) lost their lives in the service of the empire.<sup>49</sup> In a Cameroon deprived of many male labourers through conscription, a gender imbalance was ultimately imposed upon the colonial state with more men than women. Taking note that women are generally of the weaker sex, and dominantly escaped this wartime conscription than men because of their weaker laboring output than men, we are left with no option than to conclude that agricultural land acre cultivated during

<sup>45</sup> T. Osuntokun, Akinjide (1931), *Nigeria in the First World War*, London 1979, 193-194; Moberly, *Official History of the War*, 427.

<sup>46</sup> A. Osuntokun (1971), «Disaffection and Revolts in Nigeria During the First World War, 1914-1918», in: *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 5, 1; J. Matthews (1987), «Reluctant Allies: Nigerian Responses to Military Recruitment 1914-1918», in: M. Page (ed.), *Africa and the First World War*, New York, 101-102; G. Hodges (1986), *The Carrier Corps: Military Labor in the East African Campaign, 1914- 1918*, Westport, 100.

<sup>47</sup> Elango, L.Z. (1985). 'The Anglo-French Condominium' in Cameroon, 1914-1916: The Myth and the Reality". *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*. Boston, MA: Boston University African Studies Center. XVIII (4): 656-673.

<sup>48</sup> J. Matthews, «Reluctant Allies: Nigerian Responses to Military Recruitment 1914-1918», in:

<sup>49</sup> G. Hodges (1986), *The Carrier Corps: Military Labor in the East African Campaign, 1914- 1918*, Westport, 100. 26 Lucas, *Empire*, 260.



these wartime conditions declined as women naturally could not release more energies than the men; and coupled by the rampant export of male subjects to the battle fields.

In the same vein, Cameroonian indigenes who doubled as subsistence and cash crop farmers definitely of the French and English military contingents formed part of the East African campaign and were excluded from human casualties registered in this battle front. In essence, the raw material that fueled large-scale colonial military operations was human life with unreserved energies tailored towards the soil for plant growth and survival. This reality explains why wartime agricultural manpower dragnets from the Cameroons and Africa generated far more hostility and resistance than the colonial authorities were willing to admit. Douala and Bafut experienced a wave of wartime recruitment riots in the coastal and southern half of the colony in the early years of the war that police and military forces put down with considerable loss of civilian life. These unprecedented loss of lives with the First World War could be envisaged as a continuation of what John Lonsdale has termed the «dreadful mortality» of the new imperial era to the destruction of agricultural manpower. The defects of this dreadful mortality after these indigenous Cameroonians endured the prolonged warfare were famines and epidemics resulting from the European conquest between 1914-1916. The people of much of Cameroon's hinterlands could have understandably perceived the Great War as a deadly, lengthy and ultimately more barbaric bush war whose end was to result in a siege of absenteeism for seasoned farm workers from their farm culture after they were conscripted into the war. Many colonial officials were privately questioned but only admitted to the scope of tragedy in private inter-departmental correspondence: «Of course before the end of the East African campaign [...] the rate of mortality in East Africa only stopped short of a scandal because the people who suffered most were the carriers – and after all, who cares about native carriers?»<sup>50</sup> Bluntly putting, there is no escaping the reality that the German, British and French colonial armies in Cameroon all ran on human life with direct effects on the agro industry. Certainly, none of these super powers planned for this to happen, but while it was relatively easy to mobilize thousands of black farming labourers in the colony and Africa, it was not very easy to take care of them. This conflagration could be examined as a watershed experience that shifted civilian labour from agricultural ventures to carriers, porters, spies and soldiers; a de facto auxiliary of mass agricultural exodus. On this score, their propagandistic mobilization efforts in the territory were aimed at convincing the metropolitan countries that it was necessary and morally acceptable to mobilize «primitive peoples» for total war which was never their business.

However, in contrast to Great Britain and France who employed human cargoes from their colonies to boost the war effort and to reinforce their armies fighting on the Western and other fronts in Europe, Germany was confined to using colonial resources to support the war effort in Cameroon itself.<sup>51</sup> The war also created opportunities for the displaced Cameroonian recruits to replace European workers and settlers who left for the war fronts. The mobilization of Europeans forced the government of French West Africa to review its policy towards the training of Africans for positions previously filled by Europeans like agricultural supervisors, postal officials, custom officers and mechanics, among other professions.<sup>52</sup> This development in the French colonial office proved evidently an acute shortage of agricultural staff in the colonies provoked by the wartime conditions and Cameroon that played host to some of the key battle grounds could not be exempted from this freeze in agricultural personnel that was exemplified in the colonies at the time.

In all, when the Allies resumed their advance, not only were the Germans outnumbered, but their severe shortage of ammunition meant they could neither counterattack nor mount a sustained defense. They abandoned Yaoundé in January 1916, and in a well-executed maneuver retreated into the Spanish colony of Rio Muni. They were shortly moved to the neighboring island of Fernando Po (present day territory that forms Equatorial Guinea). The Spanish promised the German forces would be interned, but they lacked the military strength and will truly to do so.<sup>53</sup> News of the German retreat finally led to the surrender of Mora in February 1916. The fighting in Cameroon was over although the Allies remained anxious about the intentions of the troops on Fernando Po.<sup>54</sup> Allied officials discussed administering occupied Cameroonian territory as an Anglo-French condominium, but rival imperialist ambitions led them to abandon the idea.<sup>55</sup> Instead, an interim division of the colony favored French interests, frequently disregarding local ethnic loyalties in the process. Territories in the south and east of Cameroon (that the French had ceded to Germany in 1911) were rejoined with French Equatorial Africa.<sup>56</sup> Neither of the Allied powers, however, had sufficient wartime colonial resources to adequately administer their new spheres of Cameroon.<sup>57</sup>

African troops from the WAFF and Sierra Leone's West Africa Regiment captured the capital of Douala relatively easily, but it took sixteen additional months of hard fighting for the Allies to force the German surrender in early 1916. Having lost control of the coast, the Germans successfully defended the colony's underdeveloped and inhospitable hinterlands. Seizing Douala eliminated the threat to British shipping, but imperial strategists decided that the German forces in the interior remained a threat. This may or may not have been true, but France's declaration that it intended to

<sup>50</sup> CO Minute by A. J. Fidden, May 1934, in Killing-ray/ Mathews.<< Beast>>, 17.e

<sup>51</sup>See, among others, C. Michael (1985), *The First World War and its Consequences*, in: Boahen, A. Adu (ed.): *General History of Africa*, VII, Paris, especially 301-304.

<sup>52</sup> D. Meneses, F. Ribeiro (2014), *ThePortoguese Empire*, in: Gerwarth, Robert/Manela, Erez (eds.): *Empires at War 1911-1923*, Oxford, 184-186.

<sup>53</sup> O. Akinjide (1979), *Nigeria in the First World War*, London, 193-194.

<sup>54</sup> F.J. Moberly (1995), *Military Operations Togoland and the Cameroons 1914-1916* (Imperial War Museum and Battery Press ed., London: HMSO, [1931]

<sup>55</sup> T. Osuntokun, Akinjide (1979): *Nigeria in the First World War*, London, 1914-1918; Moberly (1931), *Official History of the War*, 427.

<sup>56</sup> V.J. Ngoh (2005), *Cameroon ( Kamerun): Colonial Period: German Rule*, Kelvin Shellington. *Encyclopedia of African History*. I, New York: Fitzroy Dearborn.

<sup>57</sup> E. Lovett (1985), 'The Anglo-French 'Condominium' in Cameroon, 1914-1916', *The Myth and Reality*, in: *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 18/4, 673.

retain captured German territory was also a factor in the British decision to continue offensive operations.<sup>58</sup> African labourers paid the heaviest price for these imperial ambitions. Bad weather, disease and the tenacious German defense virtually wiped out the original 3300 carriers, who were mostly from Sierra Leone and Nigeria that supported the capture of Douala. Lacking the means to continue offensive operations, the British Commander, Major-General Charles Dobell, halted the advance in the summer of 1915 to allow his forces to recover and await reinforcements. These took the form of another Nigerian infantry battalion and a battalion from the Indian Army. The civil authorities in West Africa also obligingly swept up 7500 more men to carry their supplies, but this time conscription had become much more difficult because able-bodied men had learned to avoid the chiefly press gangs. British officers scathingly referred to the new carriers as a «herd of cripples», and not surprisingly half the force became too sick from malnutrition, ulcerated feet, malaria, and other «wasting diseases» to carry on. The War Office later calculated that almost 9000 of the roughly 14.000 carriers who served in the Kamerun campaign were either missing or invalid cases. The official casualty figure of 515 deaths was unquestionably too low. Sir Charles Lucas tried to pass off the mortality rates for carriers as not much higher than South African mine labour<sup>59</sup> but it was impossible to deny that German, French and British mobilization of Cameroonian labour for the great war extinct more Cameroon agricultural producers than German, French and English bullets.

German rule came to a swift end in 1915, when the circumstances of the First World War meant their defeat at the hands of the French and English. English troops entered Cameroon from Nigeria, aided by Belgian troops from the Congo and French troops from Chad, Ubangi and Gabon.<sup>60</sup> The Germans off course were unable to receive any reinforcements and by September 1915, they had to evacuate Douala. Early in the next year, the English entered Yaoundé. The capitulation of the German garrison at Mora in February 1916 marked the end of the Cameroon Campaign and of the German Kamerun protectorate.<sup>61</sup> Campaigns in Cameroon took a terrible human toll. Ultimately, Allied victory over the Germans in Cameroon in Africa led to the partition of Cameroon between France and Britain and the persistence of colonial rule.<sup>62</sup> We thus notice that World War I was spasmodic and interrupted the pre-existing labour structure in the Cameroons. Although this was a world problem, the repercussion on Cameroon's agricultural labour was far more severe with three warring colonial powers in the territory. The abrupt departure of the Germans meant the breakdown of all economic schemes hitherto effected by the Germans in the colonial state; <sup>63</sup>and since the territory was not formally handed over but just seized from the defeated Germans, the British and French had to explore for themselves where to continue and where to make new schemes.<sup>64</sup> It was in the perturbed atmosphere that Cameroon's agricultural labour economy was placed by 1916.

#### 4. Conclusion

In a synopsis, the first world in the Cameroons devised a means whereby labourers were shifted from this agrarian economy for military services in strange lands. Many Cameroonians who were conscripted and forced out of their indigenous farming culture to become war carriers, porter, and even soldiers as a result of the devastating war between 1914 to 1916, ended up losing their lives at the theaters where hostilities were manifest. In an Africa deprived of many male labourers through conscription, a gender imbalance was ultimately imposed upon the colonial state with more women than men occupying its territorial space as a result of the brutal extraction of indigenous man-power for war. As more and more men were being conscripted, this also meant that land acreages cultivated during wartime conditions, declined as more women than men, arguably took the centrality of indigenous cultivation as the weaker sex. To offset this loss that decimated Cameroon's agricultural regime, the colony should have put behind them their complex of inferiority before their predatory European aggressors, which failing to do so, opened a corridor for the French, British and Germans to barter its human potential that history's book makers have not ceased chronicling this dark legacy that is past, for the worlds' people.

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<sup>58</sup> Moberly, *Military Operations*, 65–66, 315–317; Killingray / Matthews, «Beasts», 8, 18; Matthews (1960), «Reluctant Allies», 99–100. 35 R. Meinertzhagen, *Army Diary, 1899–1926*, Edinburgh, 82.

<sup>59</sup> Charles Lucas, *Empire*; Moyse-Bartlett, *King's African Rifles*, 413, Lucas, *Empire*, 272; Watkins, «Report by the Director of Military»; Hodges, «African Manpower Statistics», 115

<sup>60</sup>Ngoh, *History of Cameroon*, 95.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., 95.

<sup>62</sup> B. Digre (2017), *Colonial Warfare and Occupation (Africa)*, *International Encyclopedia of the First World War, 1914-1918*, ed. by U. Daniel, P. Gatrell, O. Janz, H. Jones, J. Keene, A. Kramer, and B. Nasson, issued by Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin.

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

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