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Andreas Eckert

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ANDREAS ECKERT

Introduction: Colonialism and Slavery in Cameroon

The 'slow death for slavery',¹ the complex and regionally very different ways in which slaves were emancipated during the colonial period, has received much attention in recent scholarship. So far the historiographical debate has more or less omitted the former German colonies. Among these, the issue of slavery was by far most important in German East Africa. In this territory, there were slave plantations on a major scale as well as a considerable trade in slaves, both visible to European travellers and early colonial administrators. Anti-slavery rhetoric played an important part during the colonial conquest.² In Cameroon, as in the other German territories³ in Africa, slavery was never the great issue that it was in German East Africa. During the conquest of Cameroon, anti-slavery arguments only played a minor role.⁴ It was the general feeling in Germany as well as among most Germans in Cameroon that slavery was no great evil in this territory and would solve itself in time.⁵ The first governor, Julius von Soden, for example believed that the introduction of a money economy would result in its abolition, for Africans would soon discover that it was simpler to hire workers for the transport of goods into the interior than to rely on recalcitrant slaves.⁶ In numerous other reports on slavery in Cameroon various colonial governors recommended that it was sufficient to let time pass and slavery would disappear by itself.⁷ Von Soden's successor, Governor Eugen von Zimmerer, stated in 1892 that in many societies slaves were already a powerful force that masters found impossible to control. The Germans half-heartedly launched a number of ordinances against slavery and the slave trade,⁸ but only occasionally made sure that these legal measures were translated into action.

Though contemporaries played down or even neglected the problem of slavery in colonial Cameroon, slavery was not a negligible quantity, but an important element of the transformation of local societies and sometimes even a factor in colonial politics. In many regions of what later became Cameroon, various forms of slavery played a critical role during the pre-colonial period.⁹ Slavery remained an important feature in the early colonial

period and was never seriously attacked by the Germans or by the subsequent French and British colonizers. The present article attempts to link the scattered literature on slavery in colonial Cameroon with my own research findings in order to provide an outline of a still very much under-researched topic. As will be shown, until the 1930s legal measures only had limited effects on the ground, even in coastal areas where the European presence and influence were comparatively strong. This chapter will include a discussion of legal measures and practical steps against slavery as well as an analysis of changes at the grassroots level, which were often little related to anti-slavery legislation and operation but which had a profound impact on the ground. Two regions will serve as main examples: the Littoral and Adamawa in the North of Cameroon. During the nineteenth and the first decades of the twentieth centuries, slavery was central to political, social and economic life in these areas.

Slavery in the Nineteenth Century

Various forms of slavery played a critical role in the historical development of the Duala of the Cameroon Littoral. Duala functioned as a minor but steady supplier to the Atlantic slave trade until the 1830s.¹⁰ The Duala view of their own way of life and its relationship to outside groups is intricately bound up with conceptions of servitude. Historical evidence also makes it clear that servile groups constituted important sectors of Duala social, economic, and political organization. Slavery was an important part of a very complex precolonial system in the Littoral which Ralph Austen has accurately described as 'hegemony without control'.¹¹ Within nineteenth-century Duala society, slaves were at once the key element in the construction of an effective commercial organization and the exploited victims of such enterprises – exploited either indirectly through limiting their avenues of advancement, or directly as victims of petty warfare, ritual sacrifice or plunder. The slaves functioned, as Austen has put it, as 'productive capital and negotiable chattel'.¹² There were severe limits to the impositions which could be placed upon Duala slaves. By most counts slaves constituted a majority of the population in Douala throughout the nineteenth century and the only groups among them to be under close surveillance were those in relatively privileged positions as household retainers and crews of trading expeditions. The majority worked in agriculture or as auxiliary fishermen in relative autonomy from their masters. 'Household' (as opposed to 'field') slaves acted as the major agents of inland trade and other affairs where kinsmen could not as easily be relied on. Slaves in this position usually came from distant areas – in particular the Cameroon Grassfields – as children and consequently

maintained no ties with their home areas, but they were still identified within Douala as a somewhat foreign element wielding considerable power. Some individuals of slave origins could rise to high positions in Duala society. The most striking example is David Mandessi Bell, a Grassfields child who was brought into the household of King Ndumbe Lobe Bell during the 1870s and eventually became a very successful entrepreneur and one of the most powerful figures in this dominant clan. His slave origins, however, prevented him from aspiring to the actual Bell chieftaincy.¹³

In the case of nineteenth-century Adamawa with its centre Ngaoundere in the North of Cameroon we are dealing with slavery on a major scale.¹⁴ The Adamawa *jihad*, an extension of Usman dan Fodio's conquest of the Hausa states of Nigeria, was undertaken in the early nineteenth century by small groups of Fulbe who established a Muslim emirate and a number of lamidates. The Fulbe, however, were substantially outnumbered by the local 'pagan' groups of the region. Ngaoundere was no exception in this regard; and the rapid integration of conquered Mbum and other peoples into the Fulbe state, which transformed large numbers of former enemies into effective elements of the state political and economic apparatus, is remarkable. In addition to locally conquered 'pagan' peoples, the size of the servile population at Ngaoundere was further enlarged by slaves captured at distances of 200 to 500 kilometres from Ngaoundere town itself. These captives were brought back for resettlement at Ngaoundere either as domestic slaves or as farm slaves in slave villages.¹⁵ This long-distance raiding, which was a regular occurrence from the 1850s up until the first decade of the twentieth century, was a large-scale phenomenon. European observers at the end of the nineteenth century estimated that as many as 8,000 to 10,000 slaves were taken on these raids annually. Those captives who were not settled at Ngaoundere were sold to Hausa or Kanuri traders, and Adamawa soon gained a reputation as a 'slave traders' Eldorado'.¹⁶ By the second half of the nineteenth century, Adamawa had become the main source of supply for the Sokoto Caliphate.¹⁷ The demographic situation at Ngaoundere in the nineteenth century can be summed up as follows: At no time following the establishment of the Fulbe state did the proportion of slaves and vassals to freemen ever fall below a one-to-one ratio, and for most of the period the ratio was probably more like two-to-one.

Whatever the exact number and proportion of slaves in the pre-colonial period, they were not all of uniform social and legal status.¹⁸ Even among the slave population at Ngaoundere itself, there were marked variations in status. Slaves could be owned by private owners or by the state. In the case of private ownership, slaves normally performed farming or herding work or could serve as domestic slaves in the master's household. The state-ruler owned substantial numbers of farm slaves, but there was also a category of

court slaves linked to the office of the ruler. Many of the latter performed domestic tasks in the ruler's compound while others served as officers in the government or military. One problematic issue with regard to the Fulbe system of slavery at Ngaoundere is the question of increasing rights enjoyed by at least some of the slaves who had been born in captivity. Some form of progressive modification of slave status was only logical in a situation where slaves might hold important public office and where, in theory at least, masters were under the obligation to convert their slaves to Islam. Although the full details of the practice are not clear, it appears that in the case of household and court slaves who had been raised as Muslims in their masters' households, their owners were morally, although not legally, barred from selling them. On the other hand, farm slaves in Ngaoundere were subject to a more severe regime, and they and their children were sold at their masters' will.

The structure of slavery in Adamawa in the nineteenth century was determined primarily by military and commercial factors. The involvement of slaves in production in Adamawa, while undoubtedly the source of much of the food on which the Fulbe states subsisted, was of relatively minor structural importance. The slave-raiding activities of Ngaoundere had their own inbuilt and self-perpetuating rationale. The majority of the slaves taken in raids were traded to other Fulbe states, and it was more as a means of exchange than as means of production that slaves constituted the principal source of Ngaoundere's wealth.

Slavery in the Cameroon Littoral during the Colonial Period

The internal traffic in slaves and domestic slavery slowly diminished with the imposition of colonial rule, but it did not cease. The influence of the authorities was limited to the coasts and around the few military posts in the interior.¹⁹ Until the turn of the century there was no real effort on the part of the Germans to abolish the internal slave trade and slavery. Even in areas like Douala and the Littoral where the German presence and influence were comparatively strong, slavery was far from being suppressed. The German rulers of Cameroon not only hesitated to interfere with Duala slavery but for a time unwittingly encouraged its expansion. German policy up to 1902 was officially aimed at undermining slavery by indirect measures. Many Germans did not believe that legislation could or should be used to promote profound changes in the Duala social order. Theodor Seitz, the District Commissioner in Douala during the 1890s, retrospectively stated that the 'transformation of the entire native economy ... must, by itself, bring about the disappearance of slavery'.²⁰ The officials of the new German administrative court at Douala were willing to disturb local customs only

when they directly affected European interests (for instance in trade); they therefore rendered numerous judgments enforcing property in slaves.²¹ It was only in 1895 that Seitz announced that the government court would no longer entertain appeals for the restoration of slaves. But no such restriction was placed upon the purely African courts of first and second degree, officially established by the Germans from 1892 onward among the Duala and neighbouring peoples.²² Moreover, an 1895 decree outlawing the internal Cameroon slave trade seems to have received little enforcement or even publicity for some years. As late as 1901 Manga Bell, the leading Duala chief, successfully persuaded the government to pardon two convicted slave traders because no native really understood that such transactions were illegal.²³

The economic situation created by the German presence on the Cameroon coast even appears to have stimulated an increased demand for slaves among the Duala. The little data available on early colonial slave sales suggest that the demand for slaves may have gone down during the first decade of German rule but rose again around 1900. From the interior to the coast the value of a slave rose. A slave cost 5,000 cowries in Fouban and 10,000 in Bangou in 1900.²⁴ A slave bought among the Babimbi in 1901 valued at 6 marks was worth 50 marks further along the Ndogobesol river towards the coast, and 100 in Edea.²⁵ In Douala, an adult male slave cost between 100 and 160 marks, or even 200, a women 200 to 300, and a young man or a young girl half the price charged for an adult of the same sex.²⁶

The shift in the internal Cameroon slave market coincided with the beginning of Duala commercial cocoa farming at the turn of the century.²⁷ There is some evidence that at least the early stages of Duala commercial cocoa-planting depended upon the labour of slaves. Slave settlements established by the Duala at various inland points for producing and helping with the trade in palm products were converted into centres for growing cocoa. More slaves were again purchased from the interior. Only towards the end of the German period did slave labour diminish in favour of paid workers, although this was not the result of deliberate intervention by the colonial state. When on 21 February 1902 the German colonial authorities, embarrassed by a couple of damning missionary reports on slavery and slave-dealing,²⁸ finally promulgated an ordinance for the gradual abolition of internal slavery in Cameroon, they presented themselves 'as virtual spokesmen for Duala institutions'.²⁹ The first article stated that 'the customary law established among the Duala people, whereby the children of domestic slaves are regarded as half-free, is to be applied throughout the Protectorate'. The second said that 'children born to half-free individuals after the promulgation of this ordinance are free'.³⁰

These measures did not interfere much with Duala social relations. The

only direct effect the German government probably could have upon servile institutions at this point was to hinder further recruitment of slaves from the hinterland. The increasing effectiveness of colonial rule in general must have made procurement of slaves far more difficult. In general, imposition of colonial rule provided new resources to the local 'bargaining process' between slaves and their Duala owners. Previously, flight was an option open only to comparatively few slaves. Desertion was extremely hazardous because of the danger of re-enslavement and of the violence this often entailed. When, however, the German colonial administration gradually undermined the coercive power of Duala slave owners and reduced the risk of re-enslavement in areas under its control, flight probably became more common. This in turn forced Duala slave owners to improve increasingly the treatment of their slaves. This was especially true of working conditions, in order to strengthen the tenuous ties of reciprocity and retain at least some measure of control over the lives of their slaves. More and more slaves obtained a greater measure of personal autonomy. When he created his first plantation, Duala chief Manga Bell faced the refusal of his slaves to plant cocoa, as it was unknown to them and its profitability compared to trade was not guaranteed.³¹ Governor Jesco von Puttkamer stated in 1901 that Duala slave masters had to provide gifts in order to get their slaves to do specific work.³² In many cases, slaves became dependent farm workers for their former owners, but this was an improvement of their former marginal social position. Oral evidence suggests that during the first decades of colonial rule, relations between master and slave still had a strong paternalistic aspect. The Duala word *sango* means father or head of the family, and this was what a slave called his Duala owner. Each slave working on a Duala plantation had some autonomy as he had the use of a patch of land sufficient to produce what he needed. Everything he could produce on his land during his leisure time belonged to him. As he would do for his own children, the *sango* paid the dowry for each of his adult slave's wives. However, the slaves' families could be dismantled at any time, notably by giving one or more members away as compensation for a debt.³³

From 1908 on, German accounts of the Duala plantation system became more open. This may be because it had by this time become possible for Duala farmers to attract free labour. Most Duala planters employed workers who were apparently not part of their household units. Pastor Modi Din employed eight Bali people on his 60 hectares plantation near the Mungo. David Mandessi Bell, Manga Ndumbe and Paramount Chief Duala Manga employed several hundred people on their large estates. A list of Mungo plantations and their labour force compiled in October 1913 indicates that most of the workers came from traditional *bakom* groups. Bamileke are

even cited as 'Bakumkum' (little slaves). But only two workers are specifically mentioned as slaves.³⁴ The rest of the people are listed according to their villages of origin, but that does not give a clue to their social status. All in all there is very little evidence available to reconstruct in detail the slow death of Duala slavery and the shift from slave labour to other forms of labour in the Duala agrarian enterprise.

In theory there should have been competition for labour between big German plantations around Mount Cameroon and Duala farmers: the Germans drew most of their workforce from inland regions, particularly the 'Grassfields', which had previously supplied slaves for Duala agricultural and trading efforts.³⁵ But the Duala do not seem to have experienced any labour problems, because they could mobilize slaves they already owned and draw upon sources of indentured labour not accessible to Europeans. Also relevant was the fact that employment on their farms offered a more attractive means for free labourers to earn cash for taxes and other purposes than the notoriously harsh German plantations, which were often regarded by Africans as a new form of slavery and on which labourers were known to die like flies.³⁶ Despite this enlarged Duala commercial agriculture, labour relations, especially on older plantations, kept a paternalistic ethos that recalled the period of slavery. Duala planters continued to give a plot of land to their workers, where the latter could produce what they needed for subsistence. Methods of recruitment were still far from any model of a true labour market. When they needed men, Duala planters went to a village in the interior and talked to the chief, to whom they offered presents such as soap. In exchange, the chief authorised recruitment of labourers, providing that the planters paid their head tax. Men either came alone or with their families, if they already had one, and most of them did not return home, because life on these plantations was allegedly better than in their villages of origin. Some married locally and had children who became 'Duala children', being absorbed into Duala society.³⁷

World War I ended German rule in Cameroon, which was then divided into British and French Mandates. Douala and most of the Dualas' plantation areas became part of the latter. During the first decade of the mandate period, the French government consciously promoted the type of rural capitalism already practised by the Duala. Their plantations were most important for France's aim of a *mise en valeur* of the Cameroon territory, as the huge former German plantations were in British Cameroon. In the 1920s, Duala planters almost exclusively used non-Duala labour on their expanding cocoa farms. These outside labourers were not slaves, as the Protestant Mission (Société des Missions Evangéliques) asserted, but freely recruited male labourers who were fed and – irregularly – paid. The living conditions of these labourers, who still came for the most part from the

former slave-recruiting areas of the Duala – the Grassfields and Bamileke Highlands – are difficult to determine. According to some French administrative reports of 1925, labourers had a tolerable existence. Later reports, however, insisted that their situation was hardly better than that of slaves.³⁸ In any case, the Duala planters seem to have had no difficulty obtaining manpower, probably because, as in the German period, Bamileke migrants and others preferred work on Duala plantations to work for European plantations or other European enterprises. The French came to depend far more than the Germans on direct taxation of the Cameroon population to balance the colonial budget. Duala planters initially benefited from new pressures on interior groups to enter the labour market. In this context, some contemporaries complained that the French forced labour policies enforced or at least helped to maintain slavery.³⁹ The French administration in Cameroon considered it necessary to explain to the Colonial Ministry in Paris that forced labour in Cameroon had nothing to do with slavery.⁴⁰

In the Depression of the 1930s, Duala agricultural enterprise experienced a crisis from which it has never really recovered. The key reason was that the Duala, faced with falling cocoa prices, could not successfully maintain a paid working force of the size needed for their commercial farming.⁴¹ However, there is some evidence that slavery was still a feature in Duala society in the 1920s and later. For instance, David Mandessi Bell provided in his will (probably drafted in the early 1930s) for payment for 'the children of women bought'.⁴² Paramount Chief Richard Manga Bell wrote in his will that his daughter 'shouldn't be sold'.⁴³ In the immediate post-World War I period, French administrative reports had already stated that the only slaves still coming into Douala were young children 'adopted' into urban households, where they performed domestic tasks.⁴⁴ Informants in Douala also told me that some of their neighbours came to Douala in the 1920s as children who had been snatched in the Grassfields and then worked in the households of wealthy Duala. In this context we also have occasional complaints during the 1920s and 30s (mainly from missionaries) about the practice (not only in Douala) of old men buying girl babies at a low price and selling them when they come to maturity at a large profit.⁴⁵ Moreover, in the 1940s and 1950s the accusation of slave origin was used by Duala individuals to prevent persons of servile origin from claiming 'customary' rights to urban land plots.⁴⁶ In Duala society, the stigma of slave origin could never be fully erased. Even to this day it is considered highly impolite, even dangerous, to speak openly about the servile origins of any Douala resident, although everyone knows that a large part of the 'indigenous', i.e. Duala-speaking, population is descended from imported slaves.

Slavery in Colonial Adamawa

As to the suppression of slavery, there was even less colonial engagement in northern Cameroon. A statement by Governor von Puttkamer in his memoirs is very characteristic of German policy towards slavery in the Adamawa region: 'The German resident in Adamawa should rule as little as possible, he should leave it to the local rulers. In this context I also gave an order that the extremely mild domestic slavery should continue to exist unhindered'.⁴⁷ The recollections of Kurt von Morgen, leader of the first German expedition into Cameroon's hinterland, also offer some insight into German thinking. Morgen pointed out that slavery in Adamawa was not as cruel as most Europeans believed and was merely 'a kind of serfdom'; that slaves were happy; that masters drew their confidants from among the slave population; that the only cruel aspect of slavery was the slave raid, which ought to be stamped out; and that if a slave were set free he would regret his manumission!⁴⁸

Germany got the biggest part of Adamawa (even though its capital, Yola, fell under British rule) and a small area of Bornu.⁴⁹ All in all, there was relatively little German economic interest in this area. The main aim of the Germans was to divert part of its trade (mainly in ivory) to southern Cameroon. Hence the political and military influence of the Germans in northern Cameroon remained fairly weak, even after some successful military expeditions around 1900.⁵⁰ Although von Puttkamer in general disapproved of slavery, he claimed that it would be better for the Germans not to interfere. In a letter to Chancellor Otto von Bismarck in 1889 he asked Bismarck to consider that slave owners had made free trade possible for everybody 'by subjugating the fetish-negroes, cannibals and other savages who before were completely shut off from the outside world.'⁵¹ What is striking in von Puttkamer's arguments is his barely concealed admiration of the perceived absolutism/despotism of the Adamawa state, which – according to von Puttkamer's interpretation – had established law and order instead of an impenetrable chaos. Consequently he saw slavery as an 'admittedly somewhat cruel process of development', the fight against which should be left to the Africans.

According to the existing German anti-slavery legislation, it was part of the duty of German district officers to stop slave raids and the slave trade. But that was it. The colonial government kept to Bismarck's advice '*Noli tangere*' and when they published reports dealing with the situation in Adamawa they carefully deleted those passages where the existence of slavery was mentioned.⁵² In 1907 the German district commissioner in Adamawa wrote: 'To punish each person who buys or sells a slave would mean to punish the whole of Adamawa.'⁵³ Governor von Puttkamer himself

was convinced that slavery formed the basis of the political and economic position of the Fulbe and therefore had to be tolerated, otherwise 'they would be ruined'. Von Puttkamer also stressed that in order to promote a 'successful development' it was sufficient to stop the slave raids; according to him it would not be wise to interfere either in religious or in social matters.⁵⁴

In view of this German policy, it is no surprise that for British Northern Nigeria, 'German Kamerun was a notorious source of slaves in the first decade of colonial rule'.⁵⁵ Adamawa had been a major source of slaves in the nineteenth century, not only for the Sokoto Caliphate but also for Borno and adjacent areas to the south and southwest. This vast region continued its traditional role under colonialism.⁵⁶ However, the numerous cases of slave trading were only recorded when the British or French in the neighbouring colonies were affected in one way or another and therefore there was a risk that the colonial administration would be accused of allowing slave dealing. In 1907 a clerk of the Royal Niger Company uncovered a lively trade in slaves from Ngaoundere to Bamun in western Cameroon whereupon the German administration reacted by cautioning the Lamido. However, the Englishman who had brought this inconvenient affair to light was criticized by the responsible German district officer Strümpel: 'As many Englishmen he doesn't take into consideration that an ancient custom such as the trading in slaves cannot be brought to an end overnight.'⁵⁷ German officials tended to turn down and even tried to make British complaints about slave dealing in German territory seem stupid. For instance, in February 1903, the British Resident in Yola wrote to his German counterpart in Garoua: 'Sir, I have the honour to inform you that slave dealing and raiding appears to be going on unchecked at Gaundri in German Adamawa where there is a large slave market. Numbers of slaves are constantly being purchased in Gaundri and brought into Yola Province. I am given to understand that the Chief of Gaundri makes periodical raids upon Sakka and neighbouring tribes for the purpose of keeping the slave market stocked'.⁵⁸ The German Resident responded in a laconic way: '... a place named Gaundri doesn't exist in German Adamawa, consequently at a place called like this there can be no slave market.' To the Governor the Resident wrote: 'Gaundri means without any doubt Ngaoundere. I have warned the Sultan Mai that he should stop slave raids and the trade in slaves.'⁵⁹ In 1906 the German district commissioner in Garoua noted with regret that there was a divergence in the views of British administrators in Northern Nigeria and the German administration in Cameroon about slavery, something which would cause constant frictions between the two colonial powers. The Germans considered the very strict British policy 'of severely punishing every trade in slaves' as 'inappropriate'. They agreed that professional slave traders

should be punished but saw no need to proceed against 'minor cases'.⁶⁰ In essence, it is very difficult to say how much influence the German colonial regime had on slavery in Adamawa. However, it may be that slave dealing was at least made more difficult. Slave traders learned not to draw the colonial power's attention to themselves, as this would have restricted their freedom of action.

However, German northern Cameroon (especially the border area) produced even more slaves during World War I. The 'disturbed state of the Cameroons', as one British official observed, made it 'the happy hunting ground of the Hausa trader who does not care where he goes and what he deals in, provided he gets a large profit.'⁶¹ As a result of the war, Hausa traders flocked to the Cameroons in search of slave children. In the course of the post World War I division of Cameroon into French and British Mandates, large parts of Adamawa fell under French administration and some areas or districts (those adjacent to Nigeria) were transferred to the British. The Treaty of Versailles in 1919 provided for a League of Nations which would oversee the administration of Cameroon and other ex-German territories as the representative of the international community. The agreement between Britain and France and the League over Adamawa called for the development of good administration and a speedy end to slavery and related ills. However, both French and British administrations had little impact on the ongoing slave trade in Adamawa. Especially in the British zone, slave dealing continued apace, especially in children. Kidnappings along the Cameroon frontier were reported regularly. By the mid 1920s, Adamawa local officials were more cooperative in suppressing the trade, even though children were still smuggled through for another decade at least.⁶² British reports to the League of Nations in the period up to 1927 contained the encouraging news that slave dealing and slavery in Northern Cameroon were becoming extinct.⁶³ However, doubts must be entertained about the veracity of these reports. At least until the late 1920s, the British effort, if there was any, to abolish slavery in the Adamawa area was a failure.⁶⁴ During this period, the British needed the Fulbe 'slavocrats' to help implement and operate the colonial system. A good example of the ongoing existence of 'slavocrats' is Hamman Yaji, the District Head of Madagali. He remained a steadfast practitioner of slave raiding and continued to extend not curtail the slave regime in his district before he was removed from office by the British in 1927.⁶⁵ However, slowly but surely the quest for a workable system of local administration in the Adamawa Districts led to a more serious anti-slavery campaign. It is difficult to determine the role of the League of Nations in this development. The agencies of the League exercised a watchdog role and made recommendations to and exerted moral pressure upon Britain, but in the

end, the League was never able to directly promote change. The real impetus for administrative change, which encompassed an attack on slavery, came from Britain itself. The British were anxious to further the commerce of Adamawa but recognised that unless slavery and slave raids were eliminated neither production nor exchange could flourish.⁶⁶ Similar things could probably be said about French Adamawa, even though the evidence is still far too thin to establish a comparative perspective.⁶⁷ However, in spite of colonial anti-slavery efforts, slavery remained a major issue in the Adamawa region until the post World War II period. According to Froelich in 1950 there were approximately 23,000 Fulbe living in the Ngaoundere state as compared with 35,000 non-Fulbe who were still identifiable as ex-slaves or servants of the Fulbe.⁶⁸

Conclusion

In the areas which are now Cameroon, slavery was the most important institution of labour mobilization during the pre-colonial period and remained important in many places during the first decades of colonial rule. Although it issued numerous decrees, the German colonial government was very reluctant to emancipate the slaves. Many officials seemed convinced that slavery would disappear by itself. Moreover the Germans recognized that the emancipation of slaves – especially in Adamawa – would bring significant social upheaval. Moreover, the desire to make their government in Cameroon as inexpensive as possible and to utilize cheap African labour encouraged them as well as the colonial powers who succeeded them, France and Britain, to turn a blind eye to slavery. The slow death of slavery in Cameroon was mainly unrelated to their efforts, but was primarily – as shows especially the Duala case – the result of changing economic and political conditions. However, in northern Cameroon the institution of slavery survived on a considerable scale until the 1950s.

NOTES

1. Paul Lovejoy and Jan S. Hogendorn, *Slow Death for Slavery. The Course of Abolition in Northern Nigeria, 1897–1936* (Cambridge, 1993).
2. Both archival evidence and secondary literature on slavery in German East Africa are comparatively rich, as the chapter by Deutsch in this volume demonstrates. See also Thaddeus Sunseri, 'Slave Ransoming in German East Africa, 1885–1922', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 16 (1993), pp.481–511; Jonathan Glassman, *Feast and Riots. Revelry, Rebellion, and Popular Consciousness on the Swahili Coast, 1856–1888* (London, 1995); Klaus J. Bade, 'Antisklavereibewegung in Deutschland und Kolonialkrieg in Deutsch-Ostafrika 1888–1890', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 3 (1977), pp.31–58. For a contemporary text, see F. Weidner's very interesting semi-official study, *Die Haussklaverei in Ostafrika* (Jena, 1915).

3. For slavery in Togo, see Donna J.E. Maier, 'Slave Labour and Wage labour in German Togo, 1885-1914', in Arthur Knoll and Lewis Gann (eds.), *Germans in the Tropics. Essays in German Colonial History* (New York, 1987). The literature on German Southwest Africa (Namibia) occasionally mentions the problem of slavery in the colonial period. Helmut Bley, *Namibia under Colonial Rule* (Hamburg, 1996, German original 1968) briefly mentions the campaign of missionaries to free slaves (p.123).
4. One of the few anti-slavery statements made in connection to the conquest of Cameroon was made by Adolf Woermann, one of the Hamburg businessmen who pushed Bismarck to annex Cameroon. Woermann argued in 1888 a debate in the Reichstag that slavery should be abolished because free workers were better workers. See *Stenographische Berichte*, 7. Legislaturperiode, 4.Session, 15.Sitzung, 14.12.1888, p.305.
5. Again, in comparison to East Africa, archival evidence in colonial Cameroon is very weak.
6. Letter v.Soden to Bismarck, 29 August 1885, quoted in Harry Rudin, *Germans in the Cameroons 1884-1914. A Case Study in Modern Imperialism* (New York, 1968 (1938)), pp.389ff.
7. *Bundesarchiv Berlin* (formerly Potsdam, hereafter BB), R. Kol. Amt 7367: Material zur Beurteilung der Sklavenfrage in den deutschen Schutzgebieten: Kamerun, 1886-1898.
8. Legislative pieces can be found in *Die deutsche Kolonialgesetzgebung. Sammlung der auf die deutschen Schutzgebiete bezüglichen Gesetze, Verordnungen, Erlasse und internationalen Vereinbarungen*, ed. Riebow et al. (Berlin, 1893ff). See also Arthur Wege, 'Die rechtliche Bestimmung über die Sklaverei in den deutschen afrikanischen Schutzgebieten', *Mitteilungen des Seminars für Orientalische Sprachen*, 18, 3 (1915). For a detailed discussion of ordinances see Leonhard Harding, 'Die deutsche Diskussion um die Abschaffung der Sklaverei in Kamerun', in Peter Heine and Ulrich van der Heyden (eds.), *Studien zur Geschichte des deutschen Kolonialismus in Afrika* (Pfaffenweiler, 1995).
9. A recent issue of *Paideuma* (Vol.41, 1995) contains a number of articles dealing with slavery and slave-dealing in different regions of Cameroon in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.
10. 'Duala' is used here to refer to the ethnic group, 'Douala' to the city. The best account of Duala slavery is Ralph A. Austen, 'Slavery among Coastal Middlemen: The Duala of Cameroon', in Suzanne Miers and Igor Kopytoff (eds.), *Slavery in Africa. Historical and Anthropological Perspectives* (Madison, Wisconsin, 1977), pp.305-33. A slightly revised version of this article is 'Slavery and Slave Trade on the Atlantic Coast: The Duala of the Littoral', *Paideuma*, 41 (1995), pp.127-50. The following paragraphs draw heavily on Austen's work.
11. Ralph Austen and Jonathan Derrick, *Middlemen of the Cameroon Rivers. The Duala and their Hinterland, c. 1600-c.1960* (Cambridge, forthcoming).
12. Austen, 'Slavery', p.313.
13. Ibid. The *David Mandessi Bell Papers*, Douala, provide some good general information about Mandessi Bell's life and career. I thank his granddaughter, Evelyne Mandessi Bell, for giving me access to these papers. For more on Bell, see Andreas Eckert, *Grundbesitz, Landkonflikte und kolonialer Wandel. Douala 1880-1960* (Stuttgart, 1998).
14. On Adamawa slavery, see Philip Burnham, *The Politics of Cultural Difference in Northern Cameroon* (Edinburgh, 1996). For background, see among others Wendy James, 'Perceptions from an African Slaving Frontier' in Leonie J. Archer (ed.), *Slavery and Other Forms of Unfree Labour* (London, 1988), pp.131-41; Ulrich Braukämper, *Der Einfluss des Islam auf die Geschichte und Kulturentwicklung Adamauas. Abriss eines afrikanischen Kulturwandels* (Wiesbaden, 1970); Barbara Blanckmeister, 'Di:n wa dawla! Islam, Politik und Ethnizität im Hausaland und in Adamaua' (Emsdetten, 1989); Philip Burnham and Murray Last, 'From Pastoralist to Politician: The Problem of a Fulbe Aristocracy', *Cahiers d'études africaines*, 34 (1994), pp.313-58; Thea Buttner, 'Die sozialökonomische Struktur Adamauas im 19. Jahrhundert', in *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Karl-Marx-Universität Leipzig, Gesellschafts- und Sprachwissenschaftliche Reihe*, 15, 4/5 (1966), pp.603-26; Anthony Kirk-Greene, *Adamawa Past and Present* (London, 1958).
15. On categories of slaves, see Paul Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery. A History of Slavery in Africa* (Cambridge, 1991).

16. Siegfried Passarge, *Adamaua. Bericht über die Expedition des Deutschen Kamerun-Komitees in den Jahren 1893/94* (Berlin, 1895), p.480.
17. Paul Lovejoy, 'Slavery in the Sokoto Caliphate' in Paul Lovejoy (ed.), *The Ideology of Slavery in Africa* (Beverly Hills, 1981), pp.201-41.
18. Philip Burnham, 'Raiders and Traders in Adamawa: Slavery as a Regional System', *Paideuma*, 41 (1995).
19. On German rule in Cameroon, see Rudin, *Germans in the Cameroons*; Karin Hausen, *Deutsche Kolonialherrschaft in Afrika. Wirtschaftsinteressen und Kolonialverwaltung in Kamerun von 1914* (Zürich, 1970); Helmuth Stoecker (ed.), *Kamerun unter deutscher Kolonialherrschaft*, 2 vols. (Berlin 1960/68).
20. Theodor Seitz, *Vom Aufstieg und Niederbruch deutscher Kolonialmacht*, Vol.1 (Karlsruhe, 1927), p.64.
21. In the *Archives Nationales du Cameroun, Yaoundé* (henceforth ANY) for the first four years of the Douala District Court, there are records of 21 cases dealing with restoration of slaves.. In one (1895/15), a defendant was forced to sell a slave for whom he had already been paid. See also Austen, 'Slavery.'
22. Gotthilf Walz, *Die Entwicklung der Strafrechtspflege in Kamerun unter deutscher Herrschaft, 1894 bis 1914* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1981).
23. ANY FA 4, 1901/352. See also Austen, 'Slavery.'
24. J.J. Chandjou-Nganso, 'Les Bamiléké de l'Ouest-Cameroun: Pouvoirs, Economie et Société: 1850-1916', Unpublished thesis (Paris-I, 1976), Table 4.1.
25. Lauffer, 'Sklaverei und Sklavenhandel in Kamerun', *Afrika. Monatszeitschrift für die sittliche und soziale Entwicklung der deutschen Schutzgebiete*, 8 (1901), p.133.
26. For slave prices in Douala, see H. Bohner, 'Sklaverei und Sklavenhandel in Kamerun', *Evangelisches Missions-Magazin*, 37 (1893), pp.16-29; idem, 'Die Sklaverei in Kamerun', *Afrika*, 7 (1892), pp.513-21; BB R.Kol.Amt 7367: *Material zur Beurteilung der Sklavenfrage in allen deutschen Schutzgebieten, 1886-1898*.
27. We have no direct account of when and how the Duala committed themselves to extensive cocoa cultivation. Some German reports suggest a date around 1900. See Yvette Monga, 'Les entrepreneurs Duala, c.1890-c.1930' (Unpublished thesis, Aix-en-Provence, 1996); Andreas Eckert, 'Cocoa farming in Cameroon, c. 1914-c.1960', in W.G. Clarence-Smith (ed.), *Cocoa Pioneer Fronts since 1800. The Role of Planters, Smallholders and Merchants* (Basingstoke, 1996), pp.137-53.
28. See for example *Basel Mission Archives* (hereafter BM), E-2.14,17: (Missionary) Dietrich, 'Sklavenhandel und Sklaverei in Kamerun', January 1901. When the German Parliament (Reichstag) debated the issues of slavery and slave-dealing at length in 1901, the Social Democrats, probably fuelled by reports from missionaries, attacked the 'salutary neglect' of the colonial administration in Cameroon. See *Stenographische Berichte, 10.Legislaturperiode, 2.Session 1900/01*, 65.Sitzung, 11.3.1901; 71.Sitzung, 19.3.1901.
29. Austen, 'Slavery'.
30. 'Verordnung, betreffend die Haussklaverei in Kamerun', *Deutsches Kolonialblatt*, 13, 5 (1902), pp.107-8.
31. See Seitz, vol.2 (Karlsruhe, 1929), p.60.
32. BB, R.Kol.Amt 7736: 'Report von Puttkamer', 27.8.1901.
33. See interviews in Douala with Prince Rene Douala Manga Bell (5.2.1993); Maurice Doumbe-Moulongo (10.11.1992); Gaston Kingue-Jong (12.5.1992); Léopold Moume Etia (19.9.1992).
34. ANY FA 4/926: 'Report by Gardens' Officer Frommhold', 26.10.1913.
35. There is a considerable literature on German plantations and their labour recruitment. See Adolf Rüger, 'Die Entstehung und Lage der Arbeiterklasse unter dem deutschen Kolonialregime in Kamerun (1895-1905)' in Helmuth Stoecker (ed.), *Kamerun unter deutscher Kolonialherrschaft*, vol.1 (Berlin, 1960), pp.149-242; W.G. Clarence-Smith, 'Cocoa Plantations and coerced Labour in the Gulf of Guinea, 1870-1914', in Martin Klein (ed.), *Breaking the Chains. Slavery, Bondage and Emancipation in Modern Africa and Asia* (Madison, Wisconsin, 1993), pp.150-70.
36. Ralph A. Austen, 'The Metamorphosis of Middlemen: The Duala, Europeans and the

- Cameroon Hinterland, c. 1800–c.1960', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 16 (1983), pp.16ff. On forced labour, working and living conditions in Mount Cameroon plantations see various reports in BB, for example R. Kol.Amt 7813: 'Report Bezirksamtmann v. Krosigk', 16.12.1908; R.Kol.Amt 3232: 'Report Dr. Pfister' Sept. 1913; see also numerous reports of Basel Mission, for example BM E-2.17: 'Kamerun 1904 I.' Mark W. DeLancey, 'Health and Disease on the Plantations of Cameroon, 1884–1939', in Gerald W. Hartwig and K. David Patterson (eds.), *Disease in African History. An Introductory Survey and Case Studies* (Durham, NC, 1978), pp.153–79; W.G. Clarence-Smith, 'Plantation versus Smallholder Production of Cocoa: The Legacy of the German Period in Cameroon', in Peter Geschiere and Piet Konings (eds.), *Itinéraires d'accumulation au Cameroun* (Paris, 1993), pp.187–216.
37. Interviews in Douala with René Douala Manga Bell (5.2.1993); Emilien Bell (21.9.1992); Maurice Doumbe-Moulongo (10.11.1992); Isaac Eyobé Essawe (12.11.1992); Henri Manga (1.12.1994); Léopold Moume-Etia (19.9.1992).
 38. For further details, see Eckert, 'Cocoa-farming'.
 39. Raymond Leslie Buell, *The Native Problem in Africa*, Vol. 2 (New York, 1928); Léon Kaptué, *Travail et Main d'Oeuvre au Cameroun sous Régime Français, 1916–1952* (Paris, 1986).
 40. Archives Nationales, Section d'Outre-Mer, Aix-en-Provence (hereafter ANSOM), Affaires Politiques 2689/1: 'Commissaire Cameroun to Ministre des Colonies', 21.8.1926; 2689/5: idem to idem, 18.6.1928. It is difficult to clearly delineate the connections between slavery, forced labour, French policy and the pressures from the League of Nations. More work is needed on these complex issues.
 41. See Eckert, 'Cocoa farming'; Austen, 'Metamorphosis'.
 42. Archives David Mandessi Bell, Douala.
 43. BB R.Kol. Amt 4431: Will Richard Manga Bell', 6.7.1932.
 44. ANY APA 11282: 'Douala administration to Government Yaoundé', 25.12.1922.
 45. ANSOM, Série géographique Togo-Cameroun, C.30, Dos.271: Ministre des Colonies to Directeur de la Congrégation des Pères du St. Esprit, n.d. (April 1934); Buell, *Native Policy*, vol.2, p.314.
 46. See for example *Archives Service Provincial des Domaines du Littoral, Douala*. Dossier Litre Foncier 1109: 'Tribunal du Deuxième Degré de Douala. Jugement N.70, 26.7.1951'; Dossier Titre Foncier 1415: 'Tribunal du Deuxième Degré de Douala. Jugement N. 55/54, 20.5.1954. See also Eckert, *Grundbesitz*, ch.5.
 47. Jesco von Puttkamer, *Gouverneursjahre in Kamerun* (Berlin, 1912), p.307.
 48. Curt von Morgen, *Durch Kamerun von Süd nach Nord. Reisen und Forschungen im Hinterlande, 1889–1891* (Leipzig, 1893). For similar judgments of other German travellers, army officers and administrators, see Eldridge Mohammadou, 'Les sources de l'exploration et de la conquête de l'Adamawa et du Bornou allemand (1893–1903): Passarge, Dominik, Bauer' in A.S. Kanya-Forstner and Paul E. Lovejoy (eds.), *The Sokoto Caliphate and the European Powers, 1890–1907* (Stuttgart, 1994), pp.37–66 (*Paideuma*, vol.40).
 49. For diplomatic details, see Albert Wirz, *Vom Sklavenhandel zum kolonialen Handel. Wirtschaftsräume und Wirtschaftsformen in Kamerun vor 1914* (Zürich, 1972); Monika Midel, *Fulbe und Deutsche in Adamawa (Nord-Kamerun) 1809–1916. Auswirkungen afrikanischer und kolonialer Eroberung* (Frankfurt am Main, 1990); Martin Z. Njeuma, *Fulani Hegemony in Yola (Old Adamawa) 1809–1902* (Yaoundé, 1978). On slavery in Yola, see excellent article by Catherine VerEcke, 'The Slave Experience in Adamawa: Past and Present Perspectives from Yola (Nigeria)', *Cahiers d'Études Africaines*, 34 (1994), pp.23–53.
 50. Albert-Pascal Temgoua, 'L'Hégémonie allemande au Nord-Cameroun de 1890 à 1916' (unpublished thesis, Yaoundé, 1990).
 51. BB, Nachlass von Puttkamer, 8: 'Report von Puttkamer to Bismarck', 15.5.1889.
 52. ANY FA 1/67: 'Annual Report Adamawa-Bornu 1905/06; FA 1/68: 'Annual Report Adamawa-Bornu 1906–07'.
 53. BB R.Kol.Amt 6580: 'Manuscript of Annual Report for Cameroon 1906–07', incl. 'Annual Report Adamawa'.

54. BB R.Kol.Amt 3308: 'Report Von Puttkamer on his expedition to Lake Chad in 1903', 7.4.1904. His remarks on slavery were not included in the version of the report subsequently published in the *Deutsches Kolonialblatt*.
55. Lovejoy and Hogendorn, *Slow Death*, p.267.
56. Information about enslaved people during this period is given in Gudula Kosack, 'Aus der Zeit der Sklaverei (Nordkamerun). Alte Mafa erzählen', *Paideuma*, 38 (1992), pp.177-94; Brian L. Oswald, 'Vers la Libération. R.P. Jean Bocquene et les Kwanja', unpublished manuscript (Nyamboya, 1994); Emily A. Schultz, 'From Pagan to Pullo: ethnic identity change in Northern Cameroon', *Africa*, 54 (1984), pp.46-64.
57. BB R.Kol.Amt 4229: 'Monthly Report Adamawa-Bornu, July to mid-August 1907'.
58. ANY FA 1/74: 'Angebliche Duldung von Sklavenjagden des Lamidos Mai von Ngaoundere durch die deutschen Behörden. Britischer Protest und deutsche Antwort', 20.2.1903.
59. Ibid.
60. ANY FA 1/67: 'Annual Report Adamawa-Bornu', 1905-06.
61. Quoted by Lovejoy and Hogendorn, *Slow Death*, p.267.
62. Ibid.
63. See various *Annual Reports to the Council of the League of Nations on the Administration of the Cameroons under British Mandate*.
64. Richard A. Goodridge, 'The Issue of Slavery in the Establishment of British Rule in Northern Cameroon to 1927', *African Economic History*, 22 (1994), pp.19-36.
65. Anthony Kirk-Greene and James Vaughan (eds.), *The Diary of Hamman Yaji. Chronicle of a West African Ruler* (Bloomington, Indiana, 1995).
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67. For an overview on French administration, which ignores the problem of slavery, see Daniel Abwa, 'The French administrative system in the lamidate of Ngaoundéré, 1915-1945', in Martin Z. Njeuma (ed.), *Introduction to the History of Cameroon in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (London/Basingstoke, 1989), pp.137-69.
68. J.C. Froelich, 'Le Commandement et l'Organisation Sociale chez les Foulbé de l'Adamawa', *Études Camerounaises*, 45-6 (1954), p.25; Akam Motazé, 'Contribution à l'étude sociologique du milieu rural dans le Nord du Cameroun' (Unpublished thesis, Yaoundé, 1984), pp.60-61.