CHIMA J. KORIEH (ED.)

FIGHTING FOR THE EMPIRE

COLONIALISM AND MOBILIZATION IN AFRICA IN THE WORLD WARS

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Fighting for the Empire:
Colonialism and Mobilization in Africa in the World Wars

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Edited by
Chima J. Korieh

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In memory of Gilbert Uzor and Cletus Iwuh,
two veterans of World War II from my hometown,
Ihitteafokwu-Mbaise, whose stories sparked my
interest in the African story in the world wars.

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PART I

BACKGROUND

CHAPTER 1

Resilience and Resistance of Africa in Twentieth-Century Global Conflict: An Introduction

Chima J. Korieh

The First and Second World Wars were undoubtedly two of the most significant global conflicts of the twentieth century. Both have received enormous scholarly attention, with accounts focusing on battles, war strategies, military leadership, and theaters of conflict.[1] Until recently, much of the attention focused on European experiences. Yet, both world wars resonated profoundly on a global scale. Their impact was enormous and drew people from all over the world. Both were genuinely global and imperial wars, with colonial soldiers seeing action in many more locations around the world than ever before. Yet written history has not reflected the wars' global effects. Most parts of the world, especially Africa, have been forgotten in the traditional Eurocentric narrative. As Paul Mulvey noted in the case of the British Empire, the contributions of European colonies and territories were anything but nominal. African societies were drawn into the war as part of Europe's global empire. The Allied war effort benefited from a diverse group of Africans. According to Michael Crowder, women and even children were recruited, often forcibly, as carriers to support armies whose supplies could not be moved by conventional methods such as road, rail, or pack animal. African soldiers carried supplies and ammunition, constructed camps, and dug trenches. The African campaigns "could not have been fought without the contributions of Africans on both sides."[2]

Africa in the World Wars brings together the work of scholars employing research methods in African history to explore the world wars as global conflicts, focusing on important themes related to the wars and the experiences of African societies. It specifically examines the roles played by African societies in the wars and how the two conflicts re-defined the relationship between African colonies and the European

empires. Attention is given to little but significant events within Africa that expand the debate and place the African experience in the context of regional, national, continental, and global politics, particularly in conversation with the world wars. This volume explores Africans as colonial subjects through the lens of culture, gender, identity, propaganda, resistance, and society, as well as their experiences during the wars and the effects of the latter on them. It recounts the extraordinary and often overlooked story of African peoples drawn into the wars, the enormous demands placed on their resources, and how the conflicts transformed their lives and societies. Crucially, this volume interrogates the vast demands on the people's resources and how these conflicts transformed Euro-American imperial relations with African societies.

Too often, existing works focus on one demographic—African combatants—while neglecting the role of the civilian population and its concomitant labor in the extraction of agricultural and mining resources.[3] Thus, the African "home front" remains largely unexplored, an omission this volume seeks to rectify, bringing a human face to the effects of war.[4] This focus on the African experience during the world wars fills a gap in the historiography of the wars, contributing to a deeper understanding of their international history. The three areas of inquiry relevant to this volume were developed within the conceptual framework of war and society within a colonial context. Although each stream—general overview, First World War, Second World War—provides a useful organizing principle, each shares a unique spatial, social, and economic context that accounts for the analytical overlap between the wars' demographic, economic, political, and intellectual characteristics.

We approach Africa's role in the world wars from the broad conceptual frame of war and society. Focusing on the societies, people, and events in both world wars reveals their impacts on societal transformations during the war and the postwar periods. The wars recast identity, space, urbanism, political organizing, labor movements, and mobility in Africa. The idea and practice of "crossing boundaries," which linked people to new politics, economies, and cultures, found complete expression in the experiences of people across the African continent. The mobility of the African population increased dramatically as urban areas attracted rural people to encounter the emergent urbanity, which was rapidly transforming politics and decolonization movements in the postwar period. Historian Chima Korieh, in his study of the Nigerian

home front, for example, has outlined how the Second World War affected marriage, masculinity, and dowry levels through the actions and tastes of returnee Africans who had joined the war to improve their educational experience, skills, and access to higher wages.[5]

Both the First and Second World Wars began in the original context of hostile struggles for dominance among the European powers of the twentieth century. However, Africa was drawn into these conflicts because the continent was under the imperial control of the European belligerents. During each of the great wars, Africans played a vital role, including in battles fought on the African continent. Throughout the Egypt and Palestine campaigns and the conflicts in West and East Africa, Britain, France, and Germany relied heavily on Africans for labor on the Western Front.[6] This European dependence on Africa to overcome wartime difficulties supports historian Joe Lunn's observation that the vast mobilization of African soldiers and workers during the world wars resulted from "an extractive imperial system" that commandeered the lives, labor, and resources of subject peoples worldwide.[7]

African soldiers played a crucial role in Allied campaigns. More than a million African soldiers were involved in the campaigns in Europe and Africa as soldiers, laborers, and porters.[8] Alan Wakefield notes, "African troops played a vital role fighting for the French on the Western Front in Europe because French troops suffered very heavy casualties early in the war."[9] More than twenty-five thousand black South Africans served in the South African Native Labor Corps. Although they endured racial subjugation under the white minority colonial rulers, they shored up Britain's acute labor shortage during the war.[10] Even the Allied victory against Germany in Cameroon and Togo depended on the critical role of thousands of West Africans who constituted the British and French colonial troops.[11] A campaign led by South African troops culminated in the seizure of German Southwest Africa, while African troops from East Africa helped to secure the Allied victory in that region. Thousands of Africans paid the ultimate price on the battlefields. Six hundred and seven black South Africans, for instance, died in a single incident of shipwreck in February 1917. The sinking of the SS *Mendi* was the "largest single loss of life for black South African non-combatants in the war."[12] Furthermore, the number of African soldiers and carriers who lost their lives during the war was more than 150,000, in addition to the many

wounded and disabled.[13] Just as the French relied extensively on the famed Tirailleurs Sénégalais of French West Africa, the King's African Rifles of British East Africa fought valiantly alongside their pro-French counterparts.[14] The First World War was particularly "an ordeal for hundreds of thousands of Africans whom Europeans conscripted as soldiers and laborers, as well as for those who suffered the war's devastating outcomes, including widespread famine, the influenza pandemic, and destruction of livelihoods."[15] Depicting the *askari* as soldiers and colonial intermediaries, historian Michelle Moyd reveals how wartime conditions placed the recruited African soldiers between two worlds. In the ensuing ambivalence, African soldiers helped to build the colonial state while utilizing their roles within the colonial structure/institutions to carve out new paths to local respectability, to the extent that their unique position in colonial society blurred the lines between the colonizer and the colonized.[16]

The Second World War was even more catastrophic in its impact. It drew an even more sizable portion of the world into the conflict. Africa's role in the Second World War was more extensive and its impact was more enduring than in the first. About half a million Africans were engaged in military service on behalf of the Allies. Timothy Parsons estimates that "one million sub-Saharan Africans served in some capacity during the Second World War."[17] The British Army, made up of 190,000 men, mainly from the West African Frontier Force and the King's African Rifles, supported by Ethiopian Freedom Forces and units from the Belgian Force Publique and the Free French, was responsible for the liberation of Ethiopia and Italian Somaliland in 1941. The North African campaign relied on troops from various parts of the British Empire, including Indian, Australian, New Zealand, and South African units, as well as African units from the Sudan and the Free French. African soldiers fought in decisive battles in Europe and Asia. African soldiers from West and North Africa were deployed along the Western Front in Europe. All too often used as "shock troops" by the French, West Africans were often massacred by the Germans if they surrendered because of Nazi racial ideology that "treated them as *Untermensch* (subhuman)."[18] The West African soldiers faced "higher losses among colonial troops, and especially the so-called Senegalese *Tirailleurs* … than among French metropolitan troops defending their homeland itself."[19] Although the British were loath to deploy African combat in Europe, they "used them to support their

imperial interests in Asia instead."[20] The British redeployed nearly 170,000 African soldiers to engage the Japanese in Burma, where they "helped the British drive the Japanese occupation forces from their prewar colonies in East Asia."[21]

The demand for African resources was unprecedented. African men, women, and children "produced vast quantities of food and strategic materials for the Allied war effort."[22] According to Chima Korieh, Britain systematically extracted unprecedented amounts of human and material resources from colonial Nigeria during the Second World War. The drive to produce agricultural products and minerals, combined with regulations aimed at controlling the local economy and meeting wartime requirements, created economic crises that the authorities often overlooked.[23] Judith Byfield asserts that the production of agricultural, forestry, and mineral resources in Africa played a central role in the prosecution of World War II.[24] Yet, the role played by Africans has been largely overlooked in the history of the war.[25]

The literature on African societies and their roles in the world wars has grown significantly in recent years, particularly that of the Second World War. Evan Mawdsley's *World War II: A New History* has deservedly drawn attention to the imperial impulses that lay at the root of the conflict.[26] The outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War, as Evan Mawdsley demonstrates, reveals that the origins of the war lay in a conflict between the old and new international orders, primarily fueled by imperial ambitions. The Italian occupation of Ethiopia in 1935 pushed the origin of the conflict even further back. Mawdsley draws attention to the critical globalization of the war as it spread through Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. However, African societies have not received significant attention in the historiography of the world wars, and the role and impacts of the war on Africans are rarely remembered, unlike their counterparts in both the Allies and Axis countries and across other regions of the world. African societies have received scant attention in the contributions of European colonies or the war's impact on the African continent. Such pervasive neglect of the significant role played by European colonies on behalf of the Allies and Axis powers is historically problematic, as it limits our understanding of the world wars and their general impact on all humanity.

David Killingray and Richard Rathbone's edited volume *Africa and the*

Second World War, the first continental overview of Africa's participation in the Second World War, was published in 1986. The book marked a critical attempt to explore the African experience, although it is a less-than-comprehensive survey of African society. The volume's geographical focus on the entire continent, its concentration on combat experience, and broad thematic approach mean that the book lacks an in-depth analysis of war on a specific society. For his part, historian Ashley Jackson devoted attention to the role of African colonies and dominions in the British war effort. In *The British Empire and the Second World War*, Jackson examines how the imperial power of Britain was applied to the British Empire and Commonwealth through a series of strategic actions and policies during the war.[27] In another volume, *Of Islands, Ports, and Sea Lanes: Africa and the Indian Ocean in the Second World War*, Jackson analyzes the strategic importance of ports and sea lanes in Africa and the Indian Ocean in logistics and troop movements during the war. Jackson highlights that the British Empire's logistical system, for example, shaped the interconnectivity of actions and events on land, sea, and air, and the indispensable role played by various parts of the empire in Africa and Asia.[28]

Other relevant literature includes Timothy Stepleton's overview of Africa's involvement in twentieth-century conflicts, which illuminates how, thanks to the colonial system, belligerents on all sides drew on African human and material resources to support their war efforts during both global conflicts.[29] A recently edited volume by Judith A. Byfield et al., *Africa and World War II*, offers a broader overview of Africa's military, economic, and political significance during the Second World War. These historiographic overview and case studies, which examine themes such as the combatant and noncombatant roles of Africans and the consequences of the war on their lives, are welcome. In a similar vein, Richard E. Osborne's work, *World War II in Colonial Africa: The Death Knell of Colonialism*, is a continental overview of Africa during the conflict, which, perhaps because of the continent-wide lens, lacks an in-depth analysis of the war's impact on specific African countries.[30]

The evaluation of Africa's participation in the war continues. New scholarship broadens our perspectives and understanding of the war and the complex relationship between European empires and colonial subjects. Attention has been paid to specific regional and country experiences. Ashley Jackson, *Botswana 1939–1945: An African Country at War*,

explores the social, economic, political, agricultural, and military histories of Botswana. Jackson's attention to the attitudes, aims, and actions of all levels of colonial society—British rulers, African chiefs, military officials, and ordinary African men and women—provides a historical narrative of the war that centers African contributions and the complex interactions between different elements of colonial society.[31] Historian Chima J. Korieh's *Nigeria and World War II: Colonialism, Empire, and Global Conflict*, although devoted to the Nigerian experience of World War II, is set within a broader context. While Korieh recounts the extraordinary and often neglected story of the Nigerian people drawn into a global war, its enormous demands on their resources, and how it would change their lives and societies they lived in, he places the role that African societies played in the war within the contextual and theoretical frameworks of colonialism, race, gender, identity, labor, intellectual, and social history and challenges the dominant perception that the Second World War was primarily a European conflict, revealing the global impact of ordinary Nigerians on the war effort.[32] Melvin E. Page's *Chiwaya War Voices: Malawian Oral Histories of the Great War in Africa* centers on African voices and experiences.[33] Page utilized oral testimonies from individuals who recalled the Great War in Malawi to offer a fresh perspective on African experiences of the war, providing a different narrative of the war—the African perspective that is often overlooked.

Following the trend of this emerging scholarship, this volume fills an essential gap in the historiography of the world wars. The collection brings the war experiences of a wider group of people (across locations and ethnicities) into conversation with one another. It draws on multiple contextual and theoretical frames, including colonialism, empire, diplomacy, race, identity, labor, colonial relations, and intellectual and social history. Such a narrative centers more broadly on the intellectual path of colonial history and its impact on African societies. Drawing on African sources, experiences, and perspectives provides a more comprehensive account of Africa's encounter with colonialism and the darker aspects of colonial war policies during the world wars, revealing the ambivalent nature of colonial policies, whose outcomes often do not align with local interests.

As should be evident by now, the two world wars significantly shaped Africa's relationship with European empires. African experiences of these conflicts intersected with the colonial encounter in ways that

subsequently shaped African self-assertion, politics, and varied paths to African decolonization. The conflicts were integral to the broader institutional and hegemonic structures of European colonialism. The administrative agents of the European empires and formulators of wartime policies did not overlook the far-reaching impact of colonies and their potential to aid the Allied powers. The emphasis on the symbiotic relationship between European colonial powers, particularly Britain and France, and their colonial possession in Africa defined this new relationship.

The Allied war effort was multidimensional. The European powers relied on colonial subjects as partners in the war effort, expressing ideas of universal citizenship, liberty, and self-determination while imposing a hegemonic ideology upon the colony in line with colonial ideology and objectives. Indeed, the European powers and their colonial subjects grappled with the challenges of fighting each other's enemies within an ambivalent colonial hierarchical order and context that cast Africans as inferior but essential implementing the ideals over which the wars were fought. Thus, the outcomes and effects of imperial policies in both conflicts were not solely the work of European powers. African responses also shaped them. African leaders mobilized their subjects and recruited the workforce necessary for the army and construction. African responses and the agency Africans displayed were critical in shaping these conflicts and their outcomes.

The wars had a significant impact on sociopolitical developments in the postwar period. Africa's wartime mobilization profoundly affected African lives and attitudes toward the empire, generating new discourses about rights, liberty, and democracy. It ushered in two differing ideologies: the empire's paternalistic ideology of "co-option" of Africa and the African commitment to human rights and self-preservation as ultimate rewards. Ideologically, colonial leaders viewed their policies in this period as key to increasing the production of much-needed raw materials and food, which were essential in winning the war. Although the African responses were ambivalent in some cases, colonial officials encouraged Africans not only to appropriate the notions of "liberty and self-determination" as universal human rights but also to perceive the war as a global effort to stop Germany's authoritarian desire to control the world and ultimately enslave them (Africans).

Africa and the World Wars: Overview

Until recently, studies of Africa's role in the world wars focused overwhelmingly on African soldiers. Moreover, the two conflicts have often been treated separately despite the colonial ties that shaped Africa's experiences of both conflicts. In both cases, the role of African societies was influenced by similar conditions: the colonial status of African societies, the demands made on them in terms of human and material resources, and the impact on African societies, even if the long-term effects varied. Yet, as Joe Lunn noted, "The destructive consequences of these wars were distributed unevenly across the continent."[34] Human losses and physical devastation in some parts of Africa "frequently approximated or surpassed the worst suffering experienced in Europe itself; yet, in other areas of the continent, Africans remained virtually untouched by these wars."[35]

To be sure, imperial powers in Africa employed colonial soldiers in and outside the continent before the world wars. The British employed Indian armies to conquer and "pacify" the subcontinent, and to serve as an imperial force in Asia and Africa.[36] For the first half of the twentieth century, Britain's major imperial force was the Indian Army, which numbered over two hundred thousand men in 1939. Unlike French subjects, they did not serve in Britain and only rarely in Europe, but they left the African continent and fought as far as the Middle East and East Asia. British colonial subjects from the four West African colonies—Nigeria, the Gold Coast, Sierra Leone, and the Gambia—joined the Royal West African Frontier Force (R.W.A.F.F.), which was expanded to protect the British colonies from Vichy-French attack, although this never materialized. By contrast, the volunteer forces in Africa numbered a few thousand, principally employed in maintaining the civil power and securing frontiers. Since 1912, France had conscripted tirailleurs from West Africa. It used them as garrison troops in Algeria, combatants in their colonies in the Levant and Indochina, and as frontline soldiers in the defense of the metropole in both world wars.[37]

The declaration of war on Germany during the First and Second World Wars drew in European African colonies as active participants in both conflicts. However, Ashley Jackson reminds us that the critical role of African colonies in European wars has consistently been undervalued.[38] Mel Page's case study of Nyasaland during the two world wars draws

attention to how the protectorate, like many colonial territories, was drawn into the orbit of the British Empire's wars. The case of Nyasaland reveals the long and continuous use of African soldiers in imperial wars. It was not a unique experience. Like other Africans, colonial troops from Nyasaland were sent across the continent to subdue other Africans on behalf of the British Empire in the Asante War. The British, the French, and other colonial powers used colonized peoples as instruments of pacification.[39] What was unique was the intensity of and spatial reach of colonial armies in the world wars. Their service in these conflicts would be more profound in scope and would change the relationships between Nyasaland Africans and the British Empire. Their role as colonial troops reveals the ambivalent role African soldiers played as colonial subjects.

The First World War represented the first major large-scale enlistment of Africans and colonial resources in European conflicts in the twentieth century. It marked a significant turning point in the relationship between European colonial powers and their African colonies. At its roots was the crisis fueled by European imperial and diplomatic wranglings. Although the war was a European conflict, its footprint extended to other parts of the world, including European colonial possessions. The first major global conflict between the Allies and the Central Powers took place in Europe, the Middle East, parts of Africa, and the Asia-Pacific region. The First World War drew Africans into the conflict as combatants for European empires and against other Africans. Africa was likewise a battleground. The war brought death and destruction, leading to an estimated ten million military deaths and over twenty million wounded. The large-scale movement of populations during this period also helped spread the deadly Spanish flu pandemic, including into Africa. However, it occurred within a larger context of European imperialism in Africa that began three decades before the war.

The First World War extended European colonial endeavors and the scramble to control people and space. Some essays in this volume focus on the First World War and its intersection with the politics of the European Scramble for Africa, as well as the changing geopolitical and socioeconomic conditions in Africa in the wake of New Imperialism dating to the late nineteenth century. Indeed, in the cases of both wars, African leaders were caught up in the diplomatic wrangling that

characterized the conflicts, as the wars shaped African diplomacy by intertwining colonialism with European conflicts and power rivalries. For example, in the chapter "Plots and Conspiracies, Patrick Gilkes and Martin Plaut describe the critical role of the Suez Canal as a vital link to the British imperial possessions in East Africa, India, Australia, and New Zealand, as well as to Germany's connections to German East Africa. Britain and Germany's struggle to control this crucial link to the Red Sea exacerbated tensions between them. The attempt to stir up revolts and policy changes among each others' allies and interests on opposite sides of the Red Sea—Britain to the east and Germany to the west—drew Africans into the fray. As Gilkes and Plaut reveal, the British, almost by accident, succeeded in organizing the Arab revolt in mid-1916, ultimately contributing to the destruction of the Ottoman Empire. When Germany and the Ottoman Empire attempted to attack Egypt directly, they failed. Instead, they sought to co-opt Ethiopia to threaten British Somaliland or Italian Eritrea, and the route to India down the Red Sea. Germany's effort to lure Ethiopia to its side and counteract British influence in the lower Red Sea revolved around the young Lij Iyasu, the designated emperor of Ethiopia, who had plans to break the power of the traditional ruling Christian Amhara nobility from the region of Shoa and involve other ethnic groups in governance to create a more inclusive imperial administration. Lij Iyasu was considered a potential threat by European colonial powers due to his apparent leaning toward the Central Powers (Germany and the Ottoman Empire), raising concerns that Ethiopia might join the war on their side. This ultimately led to a coup d'état that deposed him in 1916. The successful putsch, welcomed and encouraged by the Allied powers, meant that this threat disappeared. Significantly, it also laid the groundwork for the long rule of Emperor Haile Selassie (1930–1974) and the subsequent emphasis on ethnicized politics that continue to pose serious problems for Ethiopia.

While African leaders supported their respective colonial powers, they had limited agency. However, some, like Lij Iyasu, attempted to navigate the intricate diplomatic challenges of the period. Haji and Felepchuk's chapter examines the intricacies of Sayid Maxamed Cabdulle Xasan's diplomatic strategies in response to the diplomatic maneuvers of European powers and Italian colonizing authorities in Somalia during the First World War. His engagement with the major power reveals the intricacies of Xasan's understanding of the wider world and paints a

portrait of an African society that was not disintegrating due to European colonialism and the war. Before, during, and after the First World War, the principal challenge to the Italian-British alliance in Somalia was the long-lasting resistance fought by Sayid Maxamed Cabdulle Xasan. In 1917, the British accused Sayid of allying with the Ottomans and Germans; in his reply, Sayid Maxamed vehemently denied that he required such partnerships. He derided Britain, however, for what, in Sayid's view, was the weakness of British alliances with "Sudanese, and Kaffirs, and Perverts, and Yemenis, and Nubians … and Italians, and Serbians, and Portuguese, and Japanese and Greeks and cannibals," among others. Here, Xasan draws on his acute global awareness to mock his foes and position himself vis-à-vis the major powers. In this era, the Daraawish state communicated with the Central Powers, other Somali states, and Lij Iyasu in Ethiopia, causing anxiety among its foes, Italy and Britain, both of which were members of the Entente. Although Europeans tended "to deny agency to local leaders of the Islamic resistance" and to blame Indigenous resistance on outside agitation, Xasan was a masterful statesman with a strategy of his own and a broad network. His alliance-building shows that he was deeply aware of opportunities he could draw on in the global conflict. The anxiety this created for Italy affected their choices in consolidating their rule in Somalia.

As can already be seen, Africans found themselves on opposing sides of the conflict in different parts of the continent. Forced, in some cases, to defend the interest of the colonizing power, Africans recruited as soldiers were faced with the task of fighting other Africans. Events in Cameroon, for example, paint a rough picture of the reality that Africans faced as subjects of European colonial powers. The "Foolish Company" comprised soldiers from Dahomey, Togo, Senegal, and the Gold Coast Regiment who launched a decisive offensive to prevent the Germans from crossing the Rio Muni. In the process, the "Foolish Company" became a repressive machine that put the Cameroonian people and allies of Germany at odds with other Africans.

The war's effects were felt on other fronts. The declaration of hostility was followed by significant domestic policy changes, including restrictions on people and groups termed *alien enemies*. All natives, citizens, denizens, or subjects of Germany residing within Britain and its colonies fell under this categorization. The Allies waged economic warfare in the colonies to restrict Germany's access to vital goods necessary to prosecute

the war. Thus, economic policies restricted German firms and citizens from operating freely in Allied-controlled colonies. And so, Olisa Godson Muojama's chapter focuses on the treatment of German and Austro-Hungarian firms as enemy subjects and its impact on the Kwale uprising in the Sapele District of Warri Province of Southern Nigeria. Specifically, the promulgation of "Trading with the Enemy" legislation, which prohibited enemy subjects from trading in West Africa, upset the local economy and negatively affected local traders. The chapter reveals that the British were ambivalent about the strict implementation of the prohibition in Nigeria, following the social unrest it created among Nigerians in the Kwale area. The British authorities were compelled to amend the legislation in response to the local population's resistance. Yet, the amendment and the resumption of trade by enemy firms and subjects exacerbated social disturbances in Warri Province, as the local population interpreted the rescinding of the prohibition on enemy subjects and firms from trading as evidence that Germany had defeated the British, heralding the end of British power. German and Austrian propaganda among the natives heightened the uncertainties. The Kwale incidents reveal the complexity of the African homefront, the impact of propaganda, and how Africans made sense of the evolving relationships that the war created.

In the Second World War, one sees similar patterns. The primary strategic objectives of Allied economic warfare in 1942 included preventing Germany and Japan from establishing economic exchanges by blockade running and opening regular communications by land or sea. As one colonial report noted, Japanese successes "have already denied to the Allies important supplies of rubber, tin, wolfram, chrome, oil, and food." This left the Americas and Africa as "the Allies' only trans-oceanic sources of supply."[40] Indeed, in March 1942, the British War Office acknowledged that the Allies faced an "economic war of the same kind and scale as that which they have waged against Germany hitherto."[41] In response, the Allies sought to increase economic pressure on the neutral border states adjacent to German-controlled Europe and the Vichy French colonies to the "fullest extent which the military situation permits, with a view both to obtaining supplies and to denying to the enemy resources which are becoming more than ever essential to him."[42] The proposed strategy encouraged all forms of passive and active resistance to economic exploitation within the occupied countries in German-occupied Europe and the Far East. Minister of Economic Warfare

Roundell Palmer noted that metropolitan France and Vichy colonial possessions (French North and West Africa and Madagascar) "acquired greater significance as a link between two enemy worlds."[43] These conditions heightened the strategic importance of the West African colonies as sources of essential goods.

Resource Extraction, Race, and Society in World War II

The Second World War was more devastating than the First, and Africa's role in the second conflict was more extensive. African personnel and resources were mobilized at an unprecedented level. The intensive extraction of resources from European colonial territories, primarily through the mobilization of raw materials, strict regulation of colonial domestic economies, and rationing of available resources, fueled the Allied war effort. In addition, the Second World War exposed the adverse role played by race and ethnicity in shaping the post–Great War world. Negative racial discourse was not limited to Europeans, particularly the Nazi articulation of Otherness in Europe; such discourses extended to the ways Africans and African societies were perceived on both sides of the alliance. The intensification of resource extraction and the intersection of racial ideology, colonialism, and wartime policies shaped the unique role played by African colonial subjects as much as the specific nature of the African homefront. Numerous chapters in the volume address the African experience, African contributions toward the Allied war effort, and how the war reshaped local societies and relationships with colonial powers.

The financial cost of the war was partly borne by colonial subjects through taxes and other monetary contributions. It is estimated that approximately £23.3 million in gifts, £10.7 million in interest-free loans, and £14 million in low-interest loans were provided to support the British war effort at the expense of colonial subjects.[44] British official F. B. Carr, Province Resident and later Chief Commissioner in Eastern Provinces in 1943, recalled that raising money for war purposes "became a dominant feature of daily life, and the response was quite astonishing."[45] The impact of providing resources for the Allies was even more extraordinary. As Judith Byfield stated, "The production of agricultural, forestry, and mineral resources in Africa proved central to the prosecution of World

War II." The Allies relied so profoundly that especially after 1942, "without Africa's resources," Byfield argues, "Britain and the United States would not have been able to produce the technology or provide the transportation their armies required."[46] Indeed, West African colonies became critical to the Allied war effort after Japanese successes "denied to the Allies important supplies of rubber, tin, wolfram, chrome, oil, and food."[47] This increased the importance of Africa as one of the Allies' only transoceanic sources of supply. Chima J. Korieh's chapter focuses on the contributions of Nigeria's civilian population to the British and larger Allied war effort, as well as the enormous impact of colonial extraction on their lives. This chapter draws from unique sources—petitions and supplications written by ordinary Nigerian traders and farmers whose lives were affected by high levels of colonial control of local economies and new regulations. Often, these experiences are lost in the mega-narratives of the world wars, where little evidence of the African experiences exists. Korieh's analysis of petitions written by Nigerians recounts how Nigerian men and women responded to colonial wartime policies, painting a unique portrait of a rough-and-tumble world and elucidating how ordinary Africans negotiated the troubled times.

Colonial authorities responded to the economic crises caused by the conflict by radically changing policies, some of which regulated the prices of essential goods and restricted the free flow of trade. Abiodun S. Afolabi and Ugbogu Marklene's chapter explores British price control policy and local reactions and responses in Southwestern Nigeria. Although economic regulations were a global phenomenon during the war, their implementation in African colonial territories was often more hegemonic and abusive. Yet, despite the hegemonic nature of colonial control, the policies implemented by colonial governments sometimes provoked internal disturbances. Afolabi and Ugbogu Marklene's analysis of rural responses to wartime policies and regulations broadens our understanding of the political economy of the war and the contestation over African domestic economies and commerce.

Africans played a critical role in the Allied war effort beyond the home front. As soldiers, African soldiers served in Africa, Asia, and Europe. Most were recruited from the British and African colonies, and their experiences were not ordinary. While critical to the Allies' victory, their experiences were impacted by their race and colonial subjectivity. Otman Bychou's chapter explores the narratives of Moroccan veterans regarding

the motives behind their recruitment into the French army during both the Second World War and the Indochina War. Based on interviews with Moroccan veterans about their participation in a war that was not theirs, the chapter asserts that African soldiers played a decisive role in extending and maintaining the French colonial project in Africa. Moreover, French African soldiers from Morocco engaged in colonial endeavors both overseas and at home during the Second World War, when they were deployed to defend and liberate German-occupied France. Yvonne Tan's chapter extends the analysis of the experiences of French colonial soldiers in Asia, specifically examining the significant role of West Africans in Southeast Asia during the Second World War. Largely informed by the racial categorization of the "effeminate" Asian natives who could not defend themselves, the "warrior race" of West Africa was conscripted into the armed forces. *Belanda Hitam*, Malay for "Black Dutchmen," was the colloquial term used to describe the African recruits, mainly from the Ashanti and Akan peoples of West Africa, who joined the Royal Netherlands East Indies Army (KNIL). In contrast, the Tirailleurs sénégalais, also known as the Force Noire from Senegal, were recruited into the French Army to defend its colonies worldwide, including Indochina. After Indonesia and Indochina were quickly lost to Japan in 1942, most of the African soldiers were sent to POW camps, with some being allowed to live in a segregated African Village. Tan's chapter highlights the continuity of the racial imperialism of the colonial enterprise against the Japanese army and with the racial imperialism exercised by the Japanese against the West African soldiers, who were punished in the network of empires, experiencing layers of power on the most intimate plane.

Significant attention has focused on the close integration of French Equatorial Africa and French West Africa into the overall project of French colonialism. Eric Jennings has shown that Free French Africa relied extensively on African resources and labor from 1943 by "funneling natural resources to the allies, redirecting the colony's economy into an Anglo-American sphere, and imposing harsh colonial practices that they justified by involving the war effort."[48] These territories were of enormous significance in "battles as well as the strategies that made up WWII" as part of the French colonial empire. Cameroon and French Equatorial Africa (Afrique équatoriale française, or AEF), which included Gabon, French Congo, Ubangi-Shari, and Chad, were part of the Free French after the

fall of France in 1940. Meanwhile, the loyalty of the French colonies in the Maghreb (Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia) to Vichy complicated the position of French African colonies, as complex circumstances of the war that played out in Metropolitan France were exported to Africa. However, the triumph of the Free French would not have been possible without the support of the African people. Critical to this successful war were the famed Tirailleurs Sénégalais, the French colonial soldiers drawn mainly from Senegal.

The Senegalese tirailleurs played a crucial role in the French forces during the First and Second World Wars, as well as in the French imperial war in Indochina. Their role as part of the French colonial army in the two world wars, the discrimination they suffered within the army, and French ingratitude toward them after independence have been the subject of scholarly attention.[49] In her chapter, Ruth Ginio examines the tirailleurs' struggles for rights after the Second World War, focusing on their agency and ability to shape their destiny. Ginio explores the tirailleurs' spontaneous revolts and protests that erupted at demobilization, the much more calculated struggle of the leading veterans' journal in French West Africa, *La Voix des Combatants*, to advance the veterans' aims in the postwar decades, and a particular case of the struggle for equality waged by African veterans: the district guards' fight for better conditions in Ivory Coast and Senegal in the mid-1950s. She demonstrates that the tirailleurs were not just helpless victims of an exploitative colonial system but also managed to win equality within the army by invoking the sacrifices they had made for France during the two world wars.

One of the cataclysmic features of the Second World War was the Nazi-orchestrated annihilation of about six million Jews in Europe. The antisemitic rhetoric that emerged under Nazi Germany assumed a global dimension. Jews elsewhere, including Morocco, faced the same racist ideology and antisemitism they faced under Nazi Germany. The extension of Nazi racism and antisemitism in Europe to Africa played out in Morocco. Kingsley C. Ezeuwa explores how Sultan Mohammed V of Morocco negotiated the antisemitic rhetoric and pressure to subject Moroccan Jews to the inhuman treatment faced by Jews in Europe. Against all odds, Mohammed V provided a haven for Jews fleeing Europe after the German invasion of Poland, even as Nazi Germany extended antisemitic laws from Vichy France to every French North African sphere following the occupation of France in 1940. Historically, Morocco had

been a place of refuge for Jews dating back to 1492 when Jews were expelled from Spain. And despite pressures from Vichy France and the frightening realities in Poland, Mohammed V ensured that the Jews of Morocco, unlike their counterparts in parts of Europe, did not suffer to the point of deletion under the Nazi antisemitic regulations in French North Africa. Ezeuwa explores the contradictions that emerged as colonial powers, imperial officials, and African leaders negotiated the impact of France's fall on Europe and various parts of Africa.

African intellectualism and the articulation of African experiences of the world wars have not received significant attention. Yet Africans consumed and engaged in articulating ideas, ideology, and propaganda. Oliver Coates's chapter explores the critical impact of the *West African Pilot*, published by the foremost Nigerian nationalist, Nnamdi Azikiwe. Azikiwe's newspaper group, particularly his *West African Pilot*, played a significant role in publicizing the Allied war effort during the Second World War. At the same time, the "Zik" press was feared by the British colonial government and read by Nigerian soldiers as far afield as South Asia for its fiercely anti-colonial sentiment. While engaging in the global fight against fascism during, the *Pilot* simultaneously managed to become a byword for anti-colonial, nationalist radicalism. The *Pilot*'s editorial journalism about the war represents a development of earlier Igbo and Yoruba writing about moral notions of selfhood. Coates argues that Azikiwe, in harnessing the war effort as a badge of anti-colonial and anti-fascist credibility, drew on these longer-term moral and emotional discourses of subjecthood. He contends that the *Pilot*'s editorial writings on the war demonstrate a commitment to a "worldliness" and work through European ideological debates in light of their relation to African intellectual debates of the 1930s. He argues that Azikiwe's war editorializing and his account of the *Pilot*'s role in the war demonstrate that this journalism can be understood in terms beyond the traditional focus on African responses to war propaganda and instead represents a compelling performance and a form of intellectual worldliness. The chapter argues that Azikiwe, participating in the war, was driven by common ideological goals and demonstrated a moral commitment to public and worldly intellectual engagement, for which the press served as a central forum.

Furthermore, the Second World War had a profound impact on the decolonization movements in Africa.[50] For one, the wartime experience

transformed colonial discourses, African perceptions of themselves, and their relationships with European empires. Historian Rita Headrick has acknowledged that "what African soldiers did during the war will prove significant in the postwar period to the extent these experiences changed their opinions and broadened their outlook."[51] Moreover, African veterans came home to a changing political, economic, and social landscape. They faced the same challenges as the general population, including severe economic hardship. Yet, from West, East, and Southern Africa, African veterans shared a common characteristic—their service in the war imbued them with a sense of entitlement. According to historian Chima Korieh, African veterans demanded reparations from the colonial state for their service, but these demands were often not fulfilled.[52] As Hal Brands has shown, demobilized members of the King's African Rifles (KAR) in Kenya sought to "maintain the socioeconomic gains they had accrued through their wartime activities as part of the King's African Rifles (KAR)." Like their counterparts elsewhere, they sought middle-class employment and challenged existing relationships within the colonial state.[53]

Even so, the role of veterans in African decolonization was uneven and had limits. The killing of three veterans of the Gold Coast Regiment—Sergeant Adjetey, Corporal Attipoe, and Private Odartey Lamptey—on February 28, 1948, by British police during a peaceful protest heralded a more radical nationalist movement. The protest was rooted in the economic hardship of the postwar era, including inflation, as well as the British failure to fulfill the promises made to veterans; the Ghanaian nationalists used the incident to rally the general populace. As Adrienne Israel noted in the case of Ghana, the Ex-Servicemen's Union "articulated the common grievances of the returned soldiers," and their "potential for political influence was quickly recognized by nationalist leaders who helped to channel their dissatisfaction into demonstrations, including the "Positive Action" campaign.[54]

To understand the rapid decolonization of Africa in the postwar period, one must accept that although the Allies achieved the goal of destroying Hitler's Germany, the victory, as historian B. H. Lidell Hart wrote, "resulted in a Europe so devastated and weakened in the process that its power of resistance was much reduced in the face of a fresh and greater menace."[55] The rise of the United States and its increasing dependency on Britain and its European neighbours significantly impacted imperial

relations. The Second World War had significant political consequences, redefined colonial relationships, and fast-tracked the decolonization process and African self-assertion.[56] Beyond the changing global landscape, which was unfavorable to the continuation of colonialism, conditions within Africa had also changed at both the institutional and structural levels. The colossal changes in postwar Africa were rooted in the economic, political, and intellectual dynamics shaped by the Second World War and its aftermath.

The support from millions of African civilians and soldiers for the Allies led to a reevaluation of colonial relations. African veterans of the Second World War would play varied roles in redefining these relations and the decolonization movements in countries such as Kenya, Algeria, and Ghana. In this volume, Janet Achieng Ombima's chapter demonstrates that the Second World War was a pivotal event in the decolonization of Africa. Ombima analyzes how wartime experiences fueled the Mau Mau rebellion, an underground movement that fought for land claims and freedom from the British colonial administration. The participation of Africans in the war and the combat experiences of African soldiers affected postwar politics in the colonies. Focusing on Kenya, Ombima examines the impact of Kenya's veterans on the path to independence. In fact, colonial authorities in Kenya debated the reabsorption of former servicemen. Legislative Council officials "worried that disgruntled askaris would refuse to return to the 'tribal' reserves, fall prey to nationalist agitators, demand entry into trades to which their military service had introduced them, or engage in the violent crime that some had committed while on leave."[57] This concern was not far-fetched, as economic frustration could easily be channeled into political agitation. While the intensity of colonial domination and exploitation, particularly the loss of Kenya's white highlands to European settlers, was a catalyst for the liberation struggle, the experiences of veterans marked the turning points in the rise of local discontent. Their experiences on the battlefield were not just traumatic events but transformative moments that profoundly shaped their identities and influenced the anti-colonial movement in Kenya.

Several challenges still confront Africa's history and the historiography of the world wars. There has not been much attention focused on a gender analysis of the conflicts in Africa. Granted, the focus on military and political aspects of the war is well-deserved, but the battles were fought on several fronts. The domestic aspects of the war in Africa require greater

attention. The impact of the war on women's economic and social status, domestic relations, marriage, and cultural changes within African societies requires more historical attention. A more inclusive history of the war's impact on childhood will yield a more comprehensive social narrative of the wartime experience. Certainly, although it attempts to capture regional experiences, this book does not provide a comprehensive picture. More attention should be paid to the countries in the southern region of Africa. African participation in the global conflicts of the twentieth century made a radical rupture of the colonial system possible. Future research in this area will shed more light on the institutional frames that shaped African actions and responses. Although shaped by factors external to the continent, African leaders were no mere bystanders. Analyzing the diplomatic history of Africa's engagement with the wars, empire, and global changes in the war's aftermath will provide a fuller history of the international politics of the wars. We hope the articles in this volume open a new vista in studying the world wars as global conflicts.

Notes

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CHAPTER 2

The British Empire, *Dzikho la Nyasaland*, and Two World Wars

Melvin E. Page

Early in the twentieth century, before British Central Africa became the Nyasaland Protectorate, Africans in its colonial military—then the Central African Rifles—were increasingly drawn into the orbit of the British Empire. Sent across their continent to subdue other Africans on its behalf in the Asante War, a few of the *askari* were selected to meet King Edward VII soon after he ascended to the throne. They marched—barefoot—through London streets to St. James Park and into the gardens of Marlborough House. There, following a royal inspection, the king presented medals to the entire group.[1] A year later, another Nyasaland honor contingent proudly joined troops from the far-flung reaches of the empire to celebrate the king's formal coronation.[2] But experiences of the next half century, fueled by colonial demands for further military service through two world wars, in the then King's African Rifles (KAR), profoundly changed the relationships of Nyasaland's Africans within the British Empire.

Michael Crowder, noted historian of Africa, observed four decades ago that "until the late I970s the impact of the two world wars on Africa was a comparatively neglected area of its colonial history."[3] More recently, David Killingray added that even "historians of nationalism were not slow to claim, and with little evidence, that African soldiers' political consciousness was stirred by their experience of the Second World War."[4] Yet in the early 1960s, George Shepperson had confidently written "there can be little doubt the Second World War accelerated the nationalist tendency in Nyasaland," while also conceding that "as a whole, [it] was not the traumatic experience that the First had been."[5] The intervening decades, of course, have served to rectify omissions and modify historical perspectives about how colonial soldiers saw their experiences.

As recently as 2010, imperial historian John Morrow contended that "the voices of the West and East African soldiers are not available" to

illuminate their mid-twentieth-century wartime service, suggesting as an alternative that "British authors who served as junior officers with them during the campaign have rescued their soldiers from obscurity."[6] A corollary offered even more recently by archivist Daniel Gilfoyle suggests that in "the absence written accounts … by African soldiers," collected unit war diaries "constitute a key primary source on the soldiers' experience" despite the fact that "mention of individual soldiers other than British officers is unusual and … only in exceptional circumstances."[7] Unfortunately, both of these essentially passive options tend to relegate African voices to the sidelines. Alternatively, buried in the archives of former colonies, tucked away in little-read African newspapers, and infrequently popping up in other scattered publications and repositories, a few African recollections of such military service are also becoming available.

Even more valuable as historical sources—though unfortunately sometimes dismissed out-of-hand by a few historians—are efforts largely begun in the 1970s to seek out oral histories from Africans themselves. My own collected interviews with nearly three hundred Malawians regarding twentieth-century Nyasaland colonial military service were initially presented in my 1977 doctoral dissertation, as are several similar efforts by other scholars in the 1987 essay collection, *Africa and the First World War*.[8] Admittedly, at least in my experience, even the translated interview transcripts give voice to only a tiny fraction of those caught up in the two world wars. Nonetheless, such oral histories—now increasingly becoming publicly available—present the most wide-ranging testimonies revealing direct African impressions of how their world was altered by two global conflicts.[9]

There is no question those Africans saw connections between the two worldwide conflicts. For example, Dorothy Liwewe, who remembered as a girl seeing broken men struggling on their homeward journey after experiencing life as soldiers and military laborers in the First World War, was deeply concerned for her son in the Second. "Those who listened to their mother's instructions, that they should not join, did not. But those who refused the instructions"—including her own son who was an *askari* in the Second—"are those who faced hardships at war and some even died." Despite his having succumbed to recruiting temptations posed by the King's African Rifles Band, she was deeply thankful her son survived, fathering her grandson, Soloman Liwewe, who interviewed her for me.[10]

Only a very few men from Nyasaland actually served in the KAR

during both conflicts. One who did, Aibu Chikwenga, while recognizing the similarity between the enticements for enlistment during both, also summed up a common understanding among his countrymen:

> The Second World War was very different from the First, because, in the First, from start to finish we had to travel on foot; there were no cars and no aeroplanes (except one used for carrying mail), and no shoes and no tea. But the Second World War, although it was tiresome, it was interesting: every morning we started the day with a cup of tea; we did all our long-distance travelling in vehicles; … furthermore, we had shoes to wear.[11]

His were not idle distinctions. Over and over again veterans shared that same litany in the interviews I obtained.

One especially eager young Second World War recruit, Cinos Phiri, who "really wanted to join the army," was upset because on arriving in Zomba where "we started our training. There were no boots!" He had clearly expected to be issued what likely were his first pair of shoes, yet only "after doing our training for one week we were sent to Namadidi [where] … we were given the boots" before being sent on their way in modern trucks to join their units.[12] And Beaton Siliya, wanting to compare his father's experiences with his own, told me, "In 1914, they went to war on foot. The soldiers had no shoes." Yet his experience twenty-eight years later was decidedly different: "We used to go to the war in trucks or planes. We also had some shoes." He was sure, in that way, at least, "we were more comfortable than our fathers."[13] Yet without doubt, the two generations shared a common realization after both world wars that the nearly all-consuming conflicts changed their world.

It may have been true, as former Anglican Bishop of Likoma J. E. Hine suggested in 1924, that for Nyasaland "these recent years of war when native regiments … recruited from many different tribes, all united in one company against a common foe, have done much to break down old tribal jealousies and animosities."[14] For at least some, their collective achievements seemed to create a bond—"something akin to a 'national experience' well before the much later imaginative construction" of nationhood.[15] As former *askari* Sydney Chituta Nkanda remembered it, they were as one. "The lions of the Englishmen were the people of Nyasaland." So, with his KAR compatriots, "we sang this song … after defeating the Germans …

Nyasas are the lions,
The lions, the lions,
Of the Europeans."[16]

Conversely, it was equally true—not merely in the mind's eye of Nyasaland's postwar Acting Governor, Hector Duff—that the First World War exposed Nyasaland Africans to an almost transposed reality in which Europeans themselves "were merely tribes," and thus they "appeared to think that [the war] could be stopped by consent at any time." Furthermore, individual white men and women were seen as having personal frailties "just like any other" human beings.[17] Duff's conclusion was likely influenced after reading letters written by Africans that came into his hands at the time. One of these, KAR Corporal Elija Kimu's confession to his wife—"I killed one white German myself. A bad thing that; and now I am afraid because I did it and cannot sleep"—was removed from the post by military censors after the 1914 Battle of Kasoa in northern Nyasaland, in the belief it might adversely impact native opinion.[18]

It was a reasonable reaction, as after realizing that not only their African comrades but Europeans as well were dying on the battlefield, many in Nyasaland began to grow upset. Early on, the scope of Nyasaland's losses prompted American Baptist–trained pastor John Chilembwe to "hope in the mercy of Almighty God that some day things will turn out well and Government will recognise our indispensability and that justice will prevail." His appeal—suppressed and rejected by colonial authorities—was certainly intended as "an open letter to his countrymen."[19] Though his words actually reached few of them at the time, Nyasaland *askari*, *amtengatenga*, and their brethren believed their Great War engagement with the Empire changed their relationships with it, or at least its immediate representatives in Central Africa.

Even as memories began to fade, occasionally the simplest request for information—such as a query concerning "tribal history"—might elicit profound resentment concerning the cost Africans had paid during their own Great War. On one such occasion, G. M. Kayima Wavyengi simply wrote to the Mzimba district commissioner, insisting, "You should honor the owners of the country who have helped you fight. … We have died for you, but you have no gratitude. … Can't you give us something, say honour?"[20] Others insisted they had earned more practical consideration. For example, D. M. Bandawe, many years later, recalled how, in

1937, his father, evicted from a European estate, was unwilling to acquiesce and leave the land peacefully. "My father was a very hard nut to crack, perhaps because he fought the war on the battlefield. At midnight, he set off for Zomba to complain to the District Commissioner … [who] refused to see him." Undeterred, the old soldier persisted, invoking memories of his wartime service in order to make his case:

> My father went into the bush, unwrapped his military uniform, which he had preserved in a towel, and fitted on the war medals, and walked to the government house. Perhaps because of his uniform, he was allowed to see the Governor and returned home with the news that we were allowed to settle in the estate.[21]

Though the son's account is specifically unconfirmed, such small victories did not alter the general tenor of Nyasaland memories.

E. C. Banda—whose father was first conscripted for transport duty as *wamtengatenga* and later "changed to being a soldier"—told him of experiences with Europeans during the war: "He said they were all fools."[22] And Tambuli Mbepule, himself "recruited as *wamtenatenga*," was clear both he and those carriers and soldiers who also served "regretted having joined the war."[23] Another soldier's son, Karonga Nkhata—whose father was a long-serving colonial soldier—remembered being told "father was going … to work as he used to" in 1914, "but he never returned home." Though saying his father "was eager to go," why he did so "still remains a mystery to me." Despite his own family's distress, Nkhata believed people "did not hate the government after the war [as] … the government was powerful. It had defeated the Germans who almost everybody feared." Nonetheless, he concluded the First World War was merely "a shame to people's souls" since he was certain, as in all war, people "get nothing good out of it."[24]

Thus, for most Africans in Nyasaland, such as Amos Isaac, a schoolboy when the First World War began, the memory remained crystal clear. As did most of those interviewed, he was certain "we can't forget it, as many people died there. If it was natural death caused by god, we would forget it; but, not as it stands. … We still remember the war from 1914–1918; it's unforgettable."[25] Similarly, "the hugeness of the number of the dead" stood out to former *askari* Disi Katita as one of his outstanding battlefield memories.[26] Nonetheless, throughout the Protectorate, apart

from John Chilembwe's effort to instigate an anti-colonial war—or perhaps due to its abject failure in achieving that purpose—there was little overt expression of anti-imperial sentiment or direct political action.[27] Rather, a "reservoir of resentment" built up, one which might be relied upon in the future to sustain new challenges to Nyasaland's place as a British imperial dependency.[28] The resultant "transfer of grievances" was initially encouraged through a series of new disappointments, but additional discontents from the Second World War threatened to set that fuel ablaze, stoking a growing arsenal of anti-imperial sentiments.[29]

In the aftermath of the First World War, Britain and her empire almost immediately embarked on social reconstruction efforts meant to harness frustrations born out of the recent conflict. Many of these, not unexpectedly, were intended to improve the lot of discharged soldiers in Britain itself, including several schemes for settling ex-soldiers and their families in overseas possessions of the British Empire. In 1918, Nyasaland's Governor Sir George Smith largely took the Protectorate out of that game when he "prohibited the leasing of any more Crown Land to settlers in the Shire Highlands."[30] His concern was to reserve that acreage for Africans squeezed off existing European estates. But the colonial government subsequently agreed to settle a few white ex-soldiers in the agriculturally less desirable Central Province. At the same time, it made no effort to prevent the British Central Africa Company, with its vast prewar landholdings in the Southern Province, from actively encouraging ex-soldier resettlement through its own plans to bring British war veterans to the Protectorate.

The resulting appearance of new white planters by the dozens left many African farmers feeling threatened by the newcomers. Local colonial office officials worried into the mid-1920s that such African concerns might trigger serious discontent among an already somewhat aggrieved population. For those approving the new leases "the presumption appears to have been that the ability (of officers) to give orders in the army was adequate training for giving orders to native labourers on African farms." This was—as historian Robin Palmer wryly observes—"a naively optimistic view, found wanting in practice."[31] Thus the arrival of new estate holders in the Southern Province resulted in the unexpected "wholesale evictions of 1920–21," which frightened dispossessed African residents.[32] And in the Central Region lakeside district of Nkhota Kota widespread

reports that white settlers were "coming up on the next steamer and are going to take away all their gardens" panicked numerous Africans.[33] Woefully unprepared for the challenges they themselves faced, most of the new British veteran postwar residents abandoned their farms and left Nyasaland. While the soldier settlement schemes "had proved an almost complete failure," that result diminished the concerns of both the Africans whose lives they had unsettled and anxious colonial officials as well.[34]

Few disruptions to African communities during the next decade or so caused quite as much apprehension until, of course, the outbreak of the Second World War. In 1939, British officials in Nyasaland began calling back into active service *askari* who were enrolled in the King's African Rifles reserve. One of them, Ndala Nyungawa stoically understood: "We were repaying our debt!" After years of "receiving money for doing nothing" except appearing for yearly drill sessions, "we had therefore to do some service."[35] He was soon joined by others drawn in by numerous recruitment efforts, including missionaries who simply enrolled their pupils, such as John E. Mandambwe, "who were matured and looked like grownups" directly into the army.[36] Unstinting in further efforts to enlist ever more men—but only as soldiers and definitely not military laborers as were the *amtengatenga* in the previous war—the Empire drew half again as many soldiers from Nyasaland into the Second as compared to the First World War.[37] While they served initially in East Africa against Italian forces in Ethiopia, later deployments took many of them further afield to Madagascar, to Celyon for training, and eventually to confront Japanese troops in India and Burma.[38] Nyasaland KAR *askari* received particular imperial recognition for their service in defending British East Africa against Italian incursions and driving Japanese forces out of the Kabwa Valley in Burma.[39] Indeed, "the feeling for 'Kingi Georgi' among the *askari*" became a very "real thing … though to most of the *askari* 'Kingi Georgi' is a picture in a frame in the mess hall."[40]

When word of the Second World War reached Nyasaland, Africans expressed little surprise that the Germans were again an adversary. "It's always the Germans," Kalawi Jaulani reflected as he moved on after discussing the First World War. "The Italians, the Japanese are just new arrivals."[41] Even before recruiters reached his home near Chridazulu in 1940, Dominico Kalico had "heard that there was war in Kenya and we people from Malawi were asked to help." His motives for joining were

thus somewhat more practical, unlike those tempted by money or the glamor suggested in the KAR band displays. "We were afraid they might invade our country, and we could be in trouble in the future."[42] So too, Mcrae Store, already a ten-year KAR veteran whose long-serving *askari* father was a Great War casualty, rejoined "to defend my country."[43] They were not alone in feeling a sense of loyalty. Another early recruit was even more direct: Joswa Mahere openly admitted, "I would not mind to die for my country."[44] However, such incipient nationalism does not seem to have been widespread in the KAR as the new war got underway, nor perhaps even as it too continued almost interminably.

Some Nyasaland soldiers, though, did begin the Second World War expecting to receive "a lot of money and enough land to cultivate so that none of our relatives would ever be poor." That was what Beaton Siliya believed he was promised on enlistment, recalling "they also said that they would build us very good houses."[45] Such a promise—"we are going to build you very good houses"—was repeated in a number of interviews, although Bamusi Selemani insisted such pledges were "never told us when we were here," but only after they left Zomba and were deployed.[46] At least one old soldier was certain the government actually undertook to "construct houses with good electric lighting" for its successful *askari*.[47] The uncanny similarities in these oral histories—recorded so far apart in both time and distance—may well have a foundation based on the great disparity evident in Nyasaland's housing patterns, even in the mid-twentieth century. Africans were largely limited to "wattle and daub houses," while most of the European minority living among them resided in "buildings of brick, wood, or iron." This was certainly true in the few urban centers, where such distinctions were sometimes imposed by law, but it was the widespread practice throughout much of the countryside as well.[48]

These particular promises struck such a common chord, primarily due to their origin from similar sources, the "respected young bosses"—British officers and noncommissioned officers—whom Nyasaland askari encountered during their service.[49] These were men like George Shepperson, seconded from the Northamptonshire Regiment, who, as a junior subaltern, served with a Nyasaland KAR regiment in Burma. He was but one among "large numbers of British private soldiers" who commanded and fought alongside Nyasaland troops. And even if those young Europeans "had greater privileges and pay than Africans" whom

they joined on the battlefield, they had never shared "the privileged status of the white workers in South and Central Africa with whom many Nyasas had labored in peace time."[50] These more ordinary Englishmen had no doubt been captivated by the 1918 campaign promise "to build 'Homes for Heroes'" made by British Prime Minister David Lloyd George and to which he "returned time and again after the election." This assuredly was a "symbol of the Government's determination to build a better world" after the First World War.[51] And Shepperson—along with other men of his generation—grew up with such a vision, not only of social policy but also the expected treatment due to esteemed surviving military veterans.[52]

Their assurances naturally built up the hopes of a better postwar world in the minds of *askari* who had come to trust them. Men like Edward Marco Chisimba, who served alongside British soldiers from East Africa, gained confidence in such promises through their training in Ceylon and subsequent deployments to India and Burma. "We believed it being that we had been so long with these *bwanas*."[53] That such trust would be betrayed was indeed a disappointment. "I think their attitude changed," Simon Paulo decided. His experience was clear:

> When we were going off to the war the Europeans told us we were going to be very rich people, that they were going to build very good houses for us. But there was no gratuity, and they have never given us anything up to this day.[54]

Asked if the British Empire made good on the promises of "good houses," two other war veterans replied with exactly the same words: "No, they never did," setting out a specific new grievance, this from a second generation of imperial soldiers.[55] Understandably, such complaints did produce a good deal of cynicism among the *askari*. "You know the English people," Gilbert Jumbe complained, mocking the British imperialists, "they only *said* that after the war we would receive a lot of money," his account trailing away in obvious gloom.[56] As they had after the First World War, Protectorate officials rejected such claims of duplicity and "blamed military officials for making unwarranted guarantees to their troops."[57] Another soldier who felt he was similarly mistreated "tried to open up a case against the government but to no avail." Blinded in an Italian gas attack, Enoch Armitage "got nothing from my claims" apart

from a place at the Zomba Old Soldiers Home.[58] Such care may have been the most any among them ever received.

In other respects, however, the two decades following Britain's final victory in the Second World War brought perhaps a degree of hopefulness—at least in the minds of a few Nyasaland veterans—due to other notions planted by some of those very same "respected young bosses." Appearing to be heralds of a new era, they had seemed to be proclaiming the possibility that Nyasaland might earn a new place within the Empire. The *askari* were encouraged "not to lose heart," as Daniel Mawendo remembered it, "because in future we are going to have our own king!"[59] More explicitly, Robin Saidi was reassured, "you are also going to receive independence. Upon arrival at home, you are going to be a free people." His reaction was one of studied disbelief. "To say that we were going to be a free people was like building castles in the air!"[60]

Such incredulity may have been somewhat tempered—as George Shepperson suggested from his own experience—by influences tied to meeting for the first time "American Negroes serving in the United States forces" who took notice of them. "Once we met American negroes in some areas" and, after observing their manner in dealing with whites, Robin Saidi knew ultimately "the white man … was beaten."[61] Shepperson even recalled being told by an African NCO that "Nyasaland would be better off under the Americans rather than the British when the War was over."[62] Both Saidi and Denisi Jambo also took special notice that Europeans in their battlefield units "were marking themselves with black [shoe] polish so that they should look as blacks."[63] That reinforced the idea "there was no European or black men" in the mind of John Bwanali. "We were all Americans in Burma," he declared simply. "They called us Americans; we sat at the same table."[64] Such emerging notions of potential equality encouraged the often homesick Nyasalanders, especially in Burma and India, to discuss amongst themselves the status of their homeland, which—picking up a thread of experience from the earlier war—they came to acknowledge as *dzikho la Nyasaland* (the country of Nyasaland).[65] Learning from British soldiers about the Indian independence movement inspired by Mohandas Gandhi might have influenced some of them. Yet the oral history evidence suggests that what captured their imagination more likely was an awareness of the formation in 1944 of the Nyasaland African Congress (NAC) at home.[66] Edward Marco

Chisimba even insisted, "We had one chief clerk (whose name I have forgotten) who was trying to teach us everything" about the new Congress organization.[67]

Yet no such efforts, nor any discussions among *askari* compatriots, produced any committed Nyasaland soldier-nationalists by the end of the war.[68] The commandant of a major demobilization center at Ntodwe, near Zomba, did report general discussions among *askari* seeking grants of land in recognition of their service.[69] Any effort to seize such opportunities—or even articulate more specific grievances—were stymied as "there was no strong leader among us to do that."[70] Beaton Siliya's assessment was borne out by Titus Chimwere, who, as a senior clerk, met many demobilized *askari* passing through the Zomba depot after the war. He recalled none who spoke of the NAC or objected to British rule. Rather, "most of them were happy" and, he acknowledged, notions of military discipline may have subdued any discontents. He was firm: "You aren't supposed to argue, according to army history," or practice.[71]

No such constraints held back Isa Macdonald Lawrence, who had "served as a clerk with a Mechanical Transport Unit within the Protectorate" during the First World War—from boldly addressing *askari* concerns at the initial organizing meeting of the NAC:[72]

> Our soldiers have fought with the King's men all over chasing away enemies. When the enemies shall be defeated, we feel certain whatever privileges will be given to the victorious big nations of the world, the Africans will also have a share.[73]

Perhaps his advocacy led Congress to incorporate, among its dozen or so "secondary items" of concern to put before the Protectorate government, both "pensions and gratuities for ex-servicemen and their relatives" and the "land shortage" issues that were on the minds of returning veterans.[74] Despite this opening enthusiasm, the NAC "accomplished little" during its first year.[75] The April 1945 deaths of two key NAC elected leaders—President Levi Mumba and Treasurer I.M. Lawrence, who alone among Congress's founders had KAR connections—severely crippled the organization. And even though at its 1946 annual meeting, the NAC reconsidered veteran *askari* grievances, its minutes merely noted "that all promises made by Government about pensions, bonuses, etc. have not been fulfilled."[76] But sadly, unlike their steadfast performance on the

battlefield, there were no other former soldiers ready to step into the breach and provide new leadership for the struggling nationalist organization.

Those new grievances surfacing after the Second World War—coupled with the even more widespread generalized discontent remaining from the First—did provide ample cause for many Nyasaland Africans to join in protesting attempts to reconfigure the British Empire in Central Africa. That effort, recognized even by former British colonists in Nyasaland as an effort of "Rhodesian Europeans to try to secure control over Nyasaland" in order to "subordinate its administration to their requirements," nonetheless was pushed to fruition by a new conservative government in Britain.[77] Ex-soldiers were not the most vocal of those protesting this new Central African Federation, which included Nyasaland as a decidedly junior partner. But that does not diminish the fact the *askari*'s service in two world wars was instrumental in shaping how the people of Nyasaland viewed the British Empire in the 1950s, leading to their independence as the nation of Malawi in 1964. In fact, in an open appeal to British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan to dissolve the Central African Federation, two key nationalist leaders—Henry Chipembere and Kanyama Chiume—were explicit: "We shall remember those of our people who were butchered at the enticement of your country in the last two dastardly wars under the pretext of fighting for freedom."[78] The ultimate success of their appeal only underscores the importance of the two world wars for Nyasaland and its position in the British Empire.

Notes

1 A recreation of this event, closely based on Malawi Army historical records, is found in Melvin E. Page, *Distinguished Conduct: An African Life in Colonial Malawi* (Mzuzu: Luviri Press, 2019), 42–44.

2 Unlike the extant semiofficial accounts of the previous visit, "the Yao and Tonga soldiers who went with the King's African Rifles contingent to London in 1902 for Edward VII's coronation have left no record of their impressions;" George A. Shepperson, "External Factors in the Development of African Nationalism, with Particular Reference to British Central Africa," *Phylon: The Atlanta University Review of Race and Culture* 22, no. 3 (1961): 216.

3 Michael Crowder, "World War II and Africa: Introduction," *Journal of African History* 26, no. 4 (1985): 287.

4 David Killingray, "African Voices from Two World Wars," *Historical Research* 74 (2001): 428.

5 Shepperson, "External Factors," 219–20.

6 John H. Morrow, "Black Africans in World War II: The Soldier's Stories," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 632 (2010): 20.

7 Daniel Gilfoyle, "Researching the First World War in Africa at the National Archives," in *There Came a Time … Essays on the Great World War in Africa*, ed. Anne Samson, Ana Paula Pires, and Dan Gilfoyle (Great Britain: Great War in Africa Association, 2018), 346–47.

8 Melvin E. Page, "Malawians in the Great War and After: 1914–1925" (PhD diss., Michigan State University, 1977). Further interviews recorded later are also featured in Page, *The Chiwaya War: Malawians and the First World War* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2000), second edition in 2022 (Mzuzu: Mzuni Press). Details regarding collection all these oral histories, as well as consideration of their historical value, can be found in the latter volume, pages 261–68. Many of the 1970s interview recordings have now been donated to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and await processing for inclusion in its archive. See also Melvin E. Page, ed., *Africa and the First World War* (London: Macmillan, 1987).

9 For example, Melvin E, Page, comp., *Chiwaya War Voices: Malawian Oral Histories of the Great War in Africa*, 2 vol. (Rickmansworth: Great War in Africa Association, 2021); and *Chiwaya War Echoes: Malawian Oral Histories of a Second World War and After* (Rickmansworth: Great War in Africa Association, 2023). As some of the transcripts cited here are in both collections, complimentary citations are included when appropriate.

10 Dorothy Liwewe, interviewed by Soloman Liwewe on December 28, 1972, Penama Village, Nkhota Kota District, in *Chiwaya War Echoes*, 24; also, in *Chiwaya War Voices*, 324.

11 "Aibu Chikwenga: An Autobiography," trans. and ed. by C.A. Baker, *The Society of Malawi Journal* 25, no. 2 (1972): 18.

12 Cinos Malikiko Phiri, interviewed July 8, 1991, by Melvin E. Page and James Njoloma, Old Soldiers Memorial Home, Mzuzu, in *Chiwaya War Echoes*, 271.

13 Beaton Siliya, interviewed January 4, 1973, by Melvin E. Page and Yusuf M. Juwayeyi, Old Soldiers Memorial Home, Zomba, in *Chiwaya War Voices*, 338–39; also in *Chiwaya War Echoes*, 46, 48.

14 J. E. Hine, *Days Gone By* (London: John Murray, 1924), 307. Some postwar situations further contributed to this tendency; see Page, *Chiwaya War*, 2nd. ed., 232.

15 As suggested in the perceptive analysis of historian Bill Nasson, "British Imperial Africa," in *Empires at War: 1911–1925*, ed. Robert Gerwarth and Erez Manela (Oxford: University Press, 2014), 150.

16 Interviewed August 28, 1972, by Yusuf M. Juwayeyi, at his home, Chambe Court, Mulange District, in *Chiwaya War Voices*, 181–82. This song was recorded in *Chichewa*, but a nearly identical version was recorded in *Chiyao* by Anusa Makumba, interviewed April 2, 1973, by Sigele Chilole, Kakumba Village, T.A. Chowe, Mangoche District, in *Chiwaya War Voices*, 444.

17 Hector L. Duff, *Nyasaland in the World War*, ed Melvin E. Page (Rickmansworth: TSL Publications, 2025, 186, 199.

18 In Hector L. Duff, "White Men's Wars in Black Men's Countries," *National Review* (United Kingdom) 84 (1925): 905. A slightly different translation of this letter is found in Duff, "Nyasaland and the World War," appendix D.

19 George Shepperson, "A Major Chilembwe Letter," *Society of Malawi Journal* 68, no. 1 (2015): 1–2. Originally sent to the editor of the European newspaper *The Nyasaland Times*, Chilembwe's letter was first published, then censored by the colonial government and immediately withdrawn from circulation, only to languish in Protectorate archives and a few private collections for many years.

20 G. M. Kayima Wavyenji, untitled mss. with English translation, undated [1930s], Malawi National Archives [hereafter MNA], file NNM 1/14/6.

21 D. M. Bandawe, letter to the *Malawi News*, October 12, 1973.

22 E. C. Banda, interviewed August 15, 1973, by C.M. Manda, Mbamba Village, T.A. Fukamapiti, Nkhata Bay District, in *Chiwaya War Voices*, 552, 554.

23 Tambuli Mbepule, interviewed April 12, 1973, by Sigele Chilole, Mkuinja Village, T.A. Chowe, Mangoche District, in *Chiwaya War Voices*, 505, 507.

24 Karonga Nkhata, interviewed August 10, 1973, by C.M. Manda, Kanena Village, T.A. Zilakoma, Nkhata Bay District, in *Chiwaya War Voices*, 645.

25 Amos Isaac, interviewed July 14, 1973, by Solomon Liwewe, Chibwande Village, T.A. Kalumo, Ntchisi District, in *Chiwaya War Voices*, 588.

26 Disi Katita, interviewed August 13, 1972, by Melvin E. Page and Yusuf M. Juwayeyi, Old Soldiers Memorial Home, Zomba, in *Chiwaya War Voices*, 221.

27 See George Shepperson and Thomas Price, *Independent African* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 1958); also Melvin E. Page, "John Chilembwe's War: King's African Rifles *Askari* Recall a Colonial Crisis," *Society of Malawi Journal* 75, no. 1 (2022): 3–17, and 75, no. 2 (2022): 27–41.

28 Page, *Chiwaya War*, 2nd ed., 238; but also see 225–40 *passim*.

29 George Shepperson, review of *The Carrier Corps: Military Labour in the East African Campaign, 1914–1918*, by Geoffrey Hodges, *African Affairs* 87 (1988): 299.

30 Robin Palmer, "White Famers in Malawi: Before and After the Depression," *African Affairs* 84, no. 335 (1985): 222.

31 Palmer, "White Farmers," 222.

32 Provincial Commissioner, Southern Province, report for the year ending March 1926, MNA file NS 3/1/1.

33 District Commissioner, Kota Kota, report for the month of December 1920, MNA file S 1/572/20.

34 Palmer, "White Farmers," 244.

35 Ndala Nyaungwa, interviewed September 28, 1972 by Melvin E. Page and Yusuf M. Juwayeyi, Old Soldiers Memorial Home, Zomba, in *Chiwaya War Echoes*, 14; also, in *Chiwaya War Voices*, 307.

36 John E. Mandambwe, *Can You Tell Me Why I Went to War?* ed. Mario Kolk, (Zomba: Kachere Series, 2007), 16.

37 John Faithful—who began a long military career in Africa as a seconded British noncommissioned officer in 1942—was emphatic about that distinction, which set Nyasaland apart from other British dependencies in East Africa; interviewed January 12, 1973, by Melvin E. Page, his home, Zomba; in *Chiwaya War Echoes*, 88; also in *Chiwaya War Voices*, 364. See also Page, "Introduction," *Chiwaya War Echoes*, viii.

38 Their fitness to do so was stoutly defended by their then seventy-two-year-old former Acting Governor and Commander in Chief, Hector Duff, "East Africans in Burma," *The Times* (London) 9 December 1944, 5.

39 Melvin E. Page, "Escape from Moyale: Corporal Daniel Mawendo", *British Journal for Military History*, 12, 1(2026), 177–184. For a moving account of the Burmese campaign, prominently featuring Malawian askari, see Gerald Hanley, *Monsoon Victory* (London: Collins, 1946).

40 Gerald Hanley, "Bantu in Burma," *Spectator*, January 19, 1945, 8.

41 Kalawa Jaulani, interviewed July 3, 1991, by Melvin E. Page and James Njoloma, Old Soldiers Memorial Home, Lilongwe; in *Chiwaya War Echoes*, 236.

42 Dominico Kalika, interviewed June 29, 1991, by Melvin E. Page and James Njoloma, Old Soldiers Memorial Home, Zomba; in *Chiwaya War Echoes*, 164.

43 Mcrae Store, interviewed January 4, 1973, by Melvin E. Page and Yusuf M. Juwayeyi, Old Soldiers Memorial Home, Zomba, in *Chiwaya War Voices*, 329; also, in *Chiwaya War Echoes*, 30.

44 Joswa Mahere, interviewed January 4, 1973, by Melvin E. Page and Yusuf M. Juwayeyi, Old Soldiers Memorial Home, Zomba; in *Chiwaya War Voices*, 325; also, in *Chiwaya War Echoes*, 25.

45 Beaton Siliya, in *Chiwaya War Echoes*, 44.

46 Edward Marco Chisimba, interviewed July 8, 1991, by Melvin E. Page and James Njoloma, Old Soldiers Memorial Home, Mzuzu, in *Chiwaya War Echoes,* 247. Andson Saenda was another who remembered the precise "good houses" promise; interviewed January 4, 1973, by Melvin E. Page and Yusuf M. Juwayeyi, Old Soldiers Memorial Home, Zomba, in *Chiwaya War Echoes*, 37; also, in *Chiwaya War Voices*, 335. See also Bamusi Selemani, interviewed January 4, 1973, by Melvin E. Page and Yusuf M, Juwayeyi, Old Soldiers Memorial Home, Zomba, in *Chiwaya War Echoes*, 59.

47 Joswa Mahere, in *Chiwaya War Echoes*, 26.

48 John McCracken, "Blantyre Transformed: Class, Conflict and Nationalism in Urban Malawi," *Journal of African History* 39, no. 2 (1998): 250, quoting Blantyre Town records.

49 Daniel Mawendo, interviewed June 30, 1991, by Melvin E. Page and James Njoloma, Old Soldiers Memorial Home, Zomba, in *Chiwaya War Echoes*, 199.

50 Shepperson, "External Factors," 219–20.

51 Laurence F. Orbach, *Homes for Heroes: A Study of the Evolution of British Public Housing, 1915–1921* (London: Seeley Service, 1977), 42, 66, 7.

52 Although not making such views explicitly clear, in an autobiographical interview recorded by the Imperial War Museum, George Shepperson suggests his opinions at the time were almost certainly so inclined. See "Interview with George Albert Shepperson," September 14, 1999, https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/80018705.

53 Edward Chisimba, in *Chiwaya War Echoes*, 247.

54 Simon Paulo, interviewed February 3, 1973, by Melvin E. Page and Yusuf M. Juwayeyi, Old Soldiers Memorial Home, Zomba, in *Chiwaya War Echoes,* 100.

55 Beaton Siliya, in *Chiwaya War Echoes*, 44; Bamusi Selemani, in *Chiwaya War Echoes*, 59. To be fair, in Britain itself, just three years after the Great War, "the housing program was sacrificed" by Lloyd George's government, with budgetary constraints overcoming the Prime Minister's initial altruistic enthusiasm; Orbach, *Homes for Heroes*, 128.

56 Gilbert Jumbe, interviewed January 5, 1973, by Melvin E. Page and Yusuf M. Juwayeyi, Old Soldiers Memorial Home, Zomba, in *Chiwaya War Echoes*, 64; also, *Chiwaya War Voices*, 353.

57 Timothy Parsons, *The African Rank-and-File: Social Implications of Colonial Military Service in the King's African Rifles, 1902–1964* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1999), 229.

58 Enoch Armitage, interviewed June 29, 1991, by Melvin E. Page and James Njoloma, Old Soldiers Memorial Home, Zomba, in *Chiwaya War Echoes*, 186.

59 Daniel Mawendo, in *Chiwaya War Echoes*, 199.

60 Robin Saidi, interviewed July 3, 1991, by Melvin E. Page and James Njoloma, Old Soldiers Memorial Home, Lilongwe, in *Chiwaya War Echoes*, 227.

61 Robin Saidi, in *Chiwaya War Echoes*, 231.

62 George Shepperson, "America through Africa and Asia," *Journal of American Studies* 14, no. 1 (1980): 52.

63 Denisi Jambo, interviewed July 3, 1991, by Melvin E. Page and James Njoloma, Old Soldiers Memorial Home, Lilongwe, in *Chiwaya War Echoes*, 243; also see Robin Saidi, in *Chiwaya War Echoes*, 231.

64 John Bwanali, January 4, 1973, by Melvin E. Page and Yusuf M. Juwayeyi, Old Soldiers Memorial Home, in *Chiwaya War Echoes*, 42.

65 Shepperson is persuasive in suggesting both the detribalized character of Nyasaland KAR units in Burma, as well as their extraordinary distance from home, encouraged such a belief as never before; "External Factors," 220.

66 Simeon Jumbe, interviewed June 29, 1991, by Melvin E. Page and James Njoloma, Old Soldiers Memorial Home, Zomba, in *Chiwaya War Echoes*, 171; also, Robin Saidi, in *Ciwaya War Echoes*, 228.

67 Edward Chisimba, in *Chiwaya War Echoes*, 255. Usually frowned upon, such covert indoctrination was likely possible since KAR clerks were under instructions "to teach the soldiers how to read and write;" McPhail Issa Kadawere, interviewed February 3, 1973, by Melvin E. Page and Yusuf M. Juwayeyi, Malawi Army Headquarters, Zomba, in *Chiwaya War Echoes*, 107; also, in *Chiwaya War Voices*, 388.

68 In my collected interviews, none of the veterans, even when asked directly about the NAC, admitted being personally involved in the organization. Nor is there archival evidence of significant political activity within KAR regiments recruited in Nyasaland.

69 John McCracken, *A History of Malawi, 1959–1966* (Woodbridge: James Currey, 2012), 240.

70 Beaton Siliya, in *Chiwaya War Echoes*, 44.

71 Titus W. Chimwere, interviewed September 13, 1972, by Melvin E. Page and Yusuf M. Juwayeyi, Old Soldiers Memorial Home, Zomba, in *Chiwaya War Echoes*, 9. Major John Fathful, having served "over thirty years" with a wide variety of African colonial soldiers, agreed that Nyasaland (and later Malawian) askari "had this sense of discipline … which you don't find in other countries" of East and Central Africa; in *Chiwaya War Echoes*, 97–98, and also in *Chiwaya War Voices*, 371.

72 Melvin E. Page, "Isa Macdonald Lawrence's Keynote Address," in *Protests, Petitions, and Persuasion*, ed. David S. Bone (Mzuzu: Mzuni Press, 2023), 51.

73 "Isa Macdonald Lawrence: Keynote Address, First Organizational Meeting of the Nyasaland African Congress," in Bone, *Protests, Petitions, and Persuasion*, 49.

74 Joey Power, *Political Culture and Nationalism in Malawi: Building Kwacha* (Rochester: University Press, 2010), 47.

75 Robert Rotberg, *The Rise of Nationalism in Central Africa* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 195. More recent analysis confirms this conclusion, see Melvin E. Page, "A Century of Black Nationalism in Malawi: Echoes of Marcus Garvey, 1914–2020," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 55, no. 1 (2022): 126–27.

76 Nyasaland African Congress, Third Annual General Meeting minutes, September 23–26, 1946, MNA file PCC 1/4/1.

77 Frank Dupuis, "Nyasaland and Federation," *Land & Liberty* 66, no. 779 (1959): 58. As a very young man Dupuis was recruited to work on European estates and subsequently drawn into the First World War, managing Nyasaland *amtegnatenga* caravans from the Protectorate into German East Africa. He continued living in Nyasaland until the mid-1930s.

78 H. B. Masauko Chipembere and M. W. Kanyama Chiume, "Open Letter to Mr. Macmillan," *Malawi News*, December 3, 1960, 1.

PART II

POLITICS, WAR, AND SOCIETY IN WORLD WAR I

CHAPTER 3

Plots and Conspiracies: British and German First World War Strategies in the Red Sea and Horn of Africa

Patrick Gilkes and Martin Plaut

In the decade before 1914, the Suez Canal and the Red Sea had become increasingly vital for the British links to its eastern imperial possessions and colonies, to East Africa, India, Australia and New Zealand. They were also important to Germany's connections to German East Africa. Inevitably, as the First World War went global, Britain and Germany pursued similar strategies in the Red Sea, attempting to stir up revolts and policy changes among each other's allies and interests on opposite sides of the Red Sea, with Britain to the east and Germany to the west. The British succeeded, almost by accident, in organizing the Arab revolt in mid-1916, ultimately destroying the Ottoman Empire. Germany and the Ottomans first attempted to attack Egypt directly. When this failed, they tried to co-opt Ethiopia, to threaten British Somaliland or Italian Eritrea and, above all, the route to India down the Red Sea.[1] Germany's effort to lure Ethiopia to their side and counteract British influence in the lower Red Sea revolved around the young, uncrowned Emperor, Lij Iyasu, who had his own plans to break the power of the traditional ruling Christian Amhara nobility from the region of Shoa and involve other ethnic groups in governance, in particular Muslim elements including Oromos, Somalis, and Afars, aiming to create a more inclusive imperial administration. Together with the Ottoman Empire's moves against Aden, this posed a real threat to the British route to India. The successful putsch against Lij Iyasu in September 1916, welcomed and indeed encouraged by the Allied powers, meant that this threat disappeared. Significantly, it also laid the basis for the long rule of Emperor Haile Selassie (1930–1974) and the subsequent stress on ethnicized politics that have bedevilled Ethiopia.

Introduction

On January 3, 1916, the British Consul-General in Ethiopia sent a telegram to the Foreign Office in London.[2] Dispatched at the height of the First World War, the telegram revealed German plans to encourage Ethiopia to attack a British ally: Italy. Wilfred Gilbert Thesiger (Britain's Consul-General and Minister Plenipotentiary in Addis Ababa, 1909–1919) informed London that the German minister was urging the Abyssinians to seize Eritrea, promising that, if they attacked the Italians now, Germany would allow them to hold the colony as part of Abyssinia. In contrast, the German minister warned that if they did not take immediate offensive measures, then they must be prepared to see the Italian colony pass eventually under German control.

The Ethiopian government was certainly tempted. Eritrea, its pathway to the sea, would have been an enormous prize and was widely seen as highly desirable, if only to put an end to the perennial Italian interference in internal northern Ethiopian politics. The Emperor Menelik had failed to advance into the colony after his victory over the Italians at Adwa in 1896, but in Ethiopia, Eritrea was still regarded as part of Ethiopia. The then–British minister in Addis Ababa, Charles Doughty-Wylie, wrote in September 1914 that he believed that if France and Britain had declared war on Italy, Ethiopia would have moved against the Italian colony of Eritrea to oust the Italians. Italy, which frequently supported or gave asylum to dissident Ethiopian chiefs, seemed to believe in the possibility, building up its armed forces in the colony to eighteen thousand.[3]

Ultimately, no Ethiopian attack occurred, and the country remained neutral throughout the war. At the same time, the episode highlights the complex relationship between the First World War combatants as they sought to utilize this theater to further the global conflict. None had sufficient forces to engage in full-scale battles; rather, they turned to covert means. The exploits of Colonel T. E. Lawrence on the Arabian Peninsula are well known.[4] Less widely understood is that Germany had similar aims on the western side of the Red Sea. It deployed men like Leo Frobenius and Frederick Solomon Hall in an attempt to involve Ethiopia in the war. Berlin would have loved to set the Horn of Africa alight, drawing Italian, British, and French troops away from the major battlefields. Forces on both sides of the Red Sea were therefore mobilized, with consequences until the present day.[5]

War by Revolution

Germany had spent many years cultivating the Orient. Kaiser Wilhelm II had an almost obsessive interest in the Middle East, Islam, and Turkey.[6] The kaiser visited Constantinople in June 1889 and made a second visit in October and November 1898. Relations became so close that rumors were even circulated suggesting that the kaiser had converted to Islam—a story that had no basis in fact, although it was never denied.[7] The aim was practical: to woo Turkey away from its alliance with Russia and extend German interests in the region. Railways were proposed to link Germany to Turkey and then on to the Persian Gulf, with plans for an extension to Mecca.

German military missions were despatched to Turkey to reform and strengthen the sultan's army. At the same time, anti-British propaganda was spread across the Middle East, all the way to India's northwest frontier. By 1914, the kaiser saw an Islamic revolt against British rule as an important part of his strategy in the coming conflict. A German historian went so far as to describe the kaiser as having become an "emperor as revolutionary." This was not far from the truth. On July 30, 1914, the kaiser explained how subversion fitted into his plans for war against Britain. He scribbled on a diplomatic despatch from Russia: "Our consuls in Turkey and India, agents, etc. must inflame the whole Mohammedan world with wild revolt against this hateful, lying conscienceless people of hagglers; for if we are to be bled to death, at least England shall lose India."[8] Baron Max von Oppenheim, a renowned expert on the Middle East, was appointed head of the Nachrichtenstelle für den Orient (Intelligence Bureau for the East) after writing a "Memorandum for the revolutionization of the Islamic territories of our foes" in October 1914.[9] This called for a holy war against Britain and its allies. The campaign would embrace propaganda as well as military campaigns in the Middle East, including the Arabian Peninsula. These aims were clearly understood in London. British fears that such a revolt might come about inspired John Buchan's 1916 novel, *Greenmantle*.[10]

As we shall see, the "revolutionary emperor" was to attempt to employ this strategy in the Middle East and the Horn of Africa, but he was not alone. The British had similar war aims, and they too were setting about undermining their opponents by covert action. The reason was straightforward: not only was this another arena to confront the Germans and

their allies but it was of critical importance to London. This was undoubtedly the British view. The official history of the First World War in this region, published in 1928, concentrated on the situation in Egypt, which was described as being one of "particular complexity." Britain occupied the territory, but it was nominally part of the Ottoman Empire: "In theory … Egypt was still a province of the Turkish Empire; in practice, she was safe in certain minor matters, independent of Turkey … her importance in the Great War was immeasurable, mainly, though not entirely owing to the Suez Canal."[11] The canal was, indeed, in the popular German phrase, the "jugular vein" of the British Empire. Halfway between England and India, on the route which was to be taken by troops from that country and later from Australia and New Zealand, and already followed by the bulk of the trade between Europe on the one side and Asia and Australia on the other, it was the most vital focal point in world communications.

At the outbreak of the war, the situation was clear. Both the Allied and Central Powers viewed the region as crucial to their war aims and would do everything in their power to attack each other. On the other hand, both alliances were fully committed to confronting each other on the main battlefields in Europe. Despite the Suez Canal being a vital prize, neither the men nor the matériel was available to devote to a separate venture. This forced the antagonists to work through informal alliances and by unorthodox means. Both would scheme and plot to undermine each other at every opportunity. This meant, for the Germans, mobilizing the Turks and providing them with all the assistance that Berlin could spare—short of a major deployment of troops. For Britain, it meant bringing forces from India and the rest of the Empire.[12] At the time both sides sought local rulers with whom they could work.

The defence of the Suez Canal was the first priority for the British.[13] Two Indian infantry divisions and a cavalry brigade were ordered to Egypt as soon as war broke out.[14] British intelligence reported that Turkish forces were being moved into position and believed that "ere long 100,000 [Turkish] troops might be available in Syria and Palestine for action against the Canal." On October 30, 1914, war was declared between Turkey and Britain. The first, minor, attack came from irregular forces allied to the Turks.[15] Bedouin forces confronted Indian troops, who had little trouble in beating them off. However, the British had discovered

that their own allies—the Egyptian coastguards—were not particularly trustworthy and were only too willing to switch sides. The action, though not significant in itself, presaged what was to follow.

By early 1915, it was apparent that a major Turkish attack on the canal was imminent. It occurred from February 1 to February 10. The Indian troops, supported by British naval forces in the canal, repulsed the attack, with the loss of 2,000 Turkish soldiers.[16] British losses totalled 163. The Turks had used an Arab, rather than a Turkish division, in the first assault, and the German commander with the forces (Colonel Kress von Kressenstein) believed this was among the reasons for the failure. "The deep-seated, age-old hatred between Turk and Arab had been underestimated, and it had been thought that a Holy War would unite the two races. The Arab soldiers proved unreliable and went over, sometimes in formed bodies, to the enemy." Both alliances were learning that local allies could prove less than reliable.

The initial attack on the Suez Canal had failed, but this did not end the threat. The Turkish army maintained troops and outposts in the Sinai Peninsula and attempted to carry out raids on the canal. These culminated in a new campaign in April 1916 by German and Turkish troops led by Colonel von Kressenstein.[17] Some sixteen thousand soldiers were deployed against the Allied positions, culminating in the battle of Romani in August, in which the German and Turkish forces lost almost half their troops, killed, wounded or captured.

Egypt was also threatened from the west, and in early 1916, there was an attack by some five thousand Sanussi tribesmen.[18] South African forces, en route to France from England, were diverted to suppress the Sanussi, which they did by the end of March 1916. Recent research by John Slight has produced a more nuanced and complex view of the Sanussi, but as he concludes, "If the Ottomans, and to a lesser extent the Germans, had not applied pressure on the Sanussiyya to attack Egypt, the order would probably not have done so independently, and would have continued to focus on its on-going jihad against the Italians."[19]

While Egypt required guarding, the war in the region was concentrated on other fronts. On April 25, 1915, the Gallipoli campaign opened, and all eyes turned northward. Gallipoli proved to be a terrible mistake for Britain and its allies, and it was by no means the only one. By the summer of 1916, British efforts in the Middle East were what has been described as an "abject failure."[20] Gallipoli had been a major reverse. So had an

attack on Baghdad; attempts to break the Turkish lines in Gaza had also been unsuccessful.

Just as events seemed grim—from London's perspective—they took a much more auspicious turn. On June 10, 1916, Sharif Hussein, guardian of the holy city of Mecca, fired a shot from a window in his palace at the Turkish headquarters nearby. This marked the start of the Arab revolt against the Ottoman Empire. Negotiations between the British and Hussein and his family had been ongoing secretly since 1914. The execution of close allies of Sharif Hussein in Damascus and Beirut by the Ottoman government, and information that a four-thousand-strong German force was going to march through the western region of what is today Saudi Arabia, en route to Yemen, convinced the Sharif that he was about to be overthrown.[21] Lawrence was delighted. Two years of promises and plots had come to fruition. "This revolt," he wrote home, "will be the biggest thing in the Near East since 1550."

It is not the purpose of this article to rehearse the progress of the Arab Revolt, with the capture of the port of Aqaba in July 1917, the ultimate fall of Damascus in September 1918, and accusations of British duplicity. What is clear is that the British had managed to mobilize irregular forces on the Arabian Peninsula to considerable effect, tying down thousands of Turkish troops and resulting in a serious defeat for the Ottomans and their German allies. In this, the British were just one step ahead of Berlin. The Germans had sent a mission to the Hijaz area of the Arabian Peninsula under Major Othmar Freiherr von Stotzingen. Karl Neufeld, who had undertaken a prior fact-finding mission to Medina, assisted the major.[22] The Stotzingen-Neufeld mission, some 245 men and instructions to forge links with German East Africa, left Berlin on March 15, 1915, with 180,000 Marks in English gold coins and silver Maria Theresa thalers. After an eventful journey, Stotzingen and his men finally arrived in the vicinity of the port of Yanbu‘ on the Red Sea on May 22. There they decided to wait, to collect information about the situation in Jidda, to which they had sent a small company of men. The company had been attacked by Bedouin and killed, a fact that Stotzingen discovered. Soon, they also learned that Sharif Hussein had launched the Arab revolt in Mecca against the Ottomans. The Germans had been beaten to the punch. "On June 12, Stotzingen and his men were forced to quit Yanbu‘ with 'heavy hearts' and 'in haste,' leaving their entire baggage behind."[23] The Stotzingen-Neufeld mission had failed to achieve its goals.

Figure 3.1: The German secret expedition led by Frobenius crossing the Red Sea to land in Eritrea and try to reach Lij Iyasu in Ethiopia. Credit: "Frobenius Institute, Frankfurt"

If Britain had succeeded in stirring up revolt to the east of the Red Sea, Germany was also pursuing much the same strategy on the western shores of the Red Sea. Berlin was intent on doing all it could to undermine London's grip on Egypt, Sudan, Ethiopia, and Somalia. The kaiser's aim of "wild revolt" was given force in a memo from the Imperial Colonial Office (or Reichskolonialamt) dated December 29, 1915:[24]

> It is clear that the necessary requirements to instigate an insurgence are to be found in Sudan and also in the areas of Somalia that belong to British East Africa and in British Somalia. Such an uprising could, after initial success, take on a greater magnitude in Sudan and in any case could force the British to mobilise disproportionately large masses of troops to enter the area in order to suppress it [...]. If the insurgence of the Mohammedan tribes on the north, west and south borders of Abyssinia is successful the [...] English will be forced to deploy considerable number of troops, which would mean both that the Egyptian troops would be weakened and the pressure on the German East African troops would be relieved.

The memo declared that May or June 1916 were the months the German high command had for a mind for a "comprehensive attack."[25]

The first attempt to link Germany and Ethiopia had actually been

initiated by Addis Ababa a decade earlier. In 1905, Ethiopia and Germany established diplomatic relations, and Emperor Menelik requested German assistance in modernizing Ethiopia in 1909.[26] Kaiser Wilhelm sent a group of experts, one of whom became Menelik's personal physician, but no further aid was either promised or delivered.

When the First World War erupted, the German Imperial government recalled Menelik's requests. Attempts were made to get Ethiopia to join the German-Ottoman alliance. Communicating these aims was no easy task since the German Legation in Addis Ababa was almost cut off from the outside world. Britain, France, and Italy blocked most access by post and telecommunications and prevented travel by couriers.[27]

The isolation of the Germans in Ethiopia did not prevent the General Staff from having the most wide-ranging ambitions in the region. Their aims were: "To force the enemy to commit large forces in defending their colonies on the Horn of Africa, thus weakening their European front and relieving the German forces fighting in German East Africa."[28] This called for "insurrection" in Sudan with the aim of toppling British rule. Ambitious as this objective was, it was modest compared with German aims in Ethiopia:

> The colonial Italian and French possessions on the shore of the Red Sea were difficult even impossible to defend without [the] commitment of large forces: chances were that an Ethiopian blow against the shores of the Red Sea and Suez Canal would either succeed at once, or that Italy and France would voluntarily withdraw in view of the critical situation of the European front, where all men and rifles were badly needed after the initial military successes of the Central powers.[29]

In Berlin's view, the "double threat" of internal insurrection in Sudan and an Ethiopian offensive would pave the way for a successful attack on the Suez Canal by Turkish forces, supported by a German expeditionary force."[30] The loss of the canal would be a decisive blow against Britain and its allies, from which they would be unable to recover.

To achieve these aims, the German government attempted to send couriers to Addis Ababa. The explorer and anthropologist Leo Frobenius, who was a personal friend of the kaiser, led the first. The "Fourth German Inner-Africa Research Expedition," consisting of five Europeans and thirteen Turks and Arabs, set off in early 1915.[31] It included Frederick Solomon

Hall (the son of a Polish ex-soldier who joined a German mission in Ethiopia and an Ethiopian mother), whose family had connections with Ethiopia stretching back many years.[32] After a journey via Constantinople and Palestine, the expedition finally set forth on a dhow for the Eritrean port of Massawa. It was a difficult voyage, and French and British warships halted their vessel on several occasions. Finally, after forty-two days, they reached Massawa on February 15, 1915.[33] Frobenius reported to Berlin, but the communication was intercepted, and within eight days, a cable had arrived in London describing five German "agents" who had landed at the port. The Italians decided not to allow them to proceed, since Rome presumed that their aim would be to "agitate against us in Abyssinia."[34] The Italians proposed that the British remove the Germans from Massawa. In the end, Frobenius was allowed to visit Asmara, but he was under constant surveillance and was not allowed to proceed to Addis Ababa. Finally, after a month, the Germans were granted permission to leave Eritrea under a safe conduct agreement guaranteed by France and Britain. Traveling via Jaffa in Palestine, they proceeded to Naples and Rome before returning to Berlin.

The Frobenius mission had been a failure, but it was not the last attempt to reach Addis Ababa. In June 1915, Solomon Hall set off again, carrying secret documents and disguised as an Arab. Unfortunately for Hall, he failed to disguise his feet. Sharp-eyed Eritrean police spotted his corns—the result of wearing shoes rather than sandals—and he was uncovered. Hall and his colleagues were imprisoned first in Eritrea and then on an Italian island in the Mediterranean until the end of the war.[35] Hall managed to destroy most of the documents he was carrying, but copies in the German archive give a clear picture of what they contained. Although Hall was intercepted, the documents reached Addis Ababa by October 1915 (again by means that are unclear), and a reply was sent to Berlin, arriving in March 1916.[36]

The German envoy to Ethiopia, Frederick Wilhelm von Syburg, received instructions to do everything possible to convince the Ethiopian government to enter the war. Bairu Tafla writes that Syburg was to encourage the Ethiopians to invade "British, Italian and French colonies in northeast Africa."[37] This presumably included Sudan, and Eritrea, as well as the French, British and Italian Somalilands. These instructions were very much in line with the documents carried by Solomon Hall. The message for the Ethiopian government boasted of the "great victories"

Germany had scored against the allies and suggested that now was the time to act:

> The hands of the Allies are tied in desperately fighting off the progress of the German armies. Italy, England and France, pretending to be friends of Ethiopia, are insiduous [*sic*] false friends, who have tried to subdue Ethiopia in the past, and who have robbed Ethiopia of her borderlands. Now the time has come for Ethiopia to regain the coast of the Red Sea driving the Italians home, to restore the Empire to its ancient size, but also to bring under her control the railway and the Port of Djibouti, by which the French still are trying to strangle her connections with world trade. Germany commits herself to recognize any territory which Ethiopia may conquer or occupy in military action against the Allied powers as being her rightful and permanent property and part of the Ethiopian Empire after the war.[38]

Von Syburg was given another instruction: to try to contact the Sayyid, Muhammad Abdallah al-Hassan (called the "Mad Mullah" by the British), and to encourage his attacks on the colonial administration in British Somaliland.[39] The Sayyid, born in 1856 in what is today Somaliland, mobilized Somali clans in a twenty-year-long religious war against Christian forces in the Horn, which included Ethiopians as well as the British, French, and Italians. The Emperor Menelik and British troops had been attempting to crush his Dervish soldiers since the late 1890s.[40] Significantly, in August 1913, the Sayyid's forces had won a substantial victory at Dul Madoba, killing about half of the colonial police force and its British commander, Colonel Corfield. In March 1914, forty of his troops had attacked the then-capital of British Somaliland, Berbera, causing total panic. Indian and local Somali soldiers were sent to attack his strongholds in November 1914 and February 1915 but were unable to crush the six thousand troops the Sayyid had at his command. The British then instituted a policy of containment, with some success, eventually confining the Sayyid's control to a collection of forts in the Ogaden and his fortified capital at Taleh in the Sool region of Somaliland, with the strength of his Dervish army gradually declining from six thousand fighting men in 1913 to fewer than a thousand in 1919. Despite this, the Sayyid remained a constant threat until he died in 1920.[41]

German attempts to exploit the Sayyid's religious and anti-colonial struggle were unsuccessful. A German technician was sent to repair the

Sayyid's guns.[42] A mechanic, Fritz Kersten, arrived in Ethiopia in 1914 and was dispatched to work with the Sayyid, only to fall out with him. Kersten attempted to escape, but after walking through the desert, ran out of provisions and died of hunger, thirst, and fatigue. While the initial German attempts to support action in the Horn paid few dividends, Berlin had one further potential ally—the heir and de facto emperor to the Ethiopian throne, as shown below.

Germany and Britain were not alone in having ambitions in the region. Both Italy and France had important interests in the Horn. For the French, their colony of Djibouti was a source of troops, with a Somali Battalion being raised and approximately two thousand soldiers sent to fight in Europe, where they fought with distinction, participating in several battles, including Verdun, where around five hundred were killed.[43] The railway from Djibouti port to Addis Ababa, initiated by agreement with Emperor Menelik in 1894, was completed in 1917, cementing ties between the two countries. Before the war, Djibouti was particularly important for the arms trade, and most arms for Ethiopia were imported through the port prior to 1914, especially during 1913–1914, according to Thesiger, the British Minister in Addis Ababa.[44]

For Italy the Horn of Africa was even more significant. Rome saw the region as integral to its aims of expanding its African empire. The country's interest in the Horn dates back to 1869, when a shipping firm from Genoa purchased a strip of land at the port of Assab to take advantage of the benefits of transport via the Suez Canal.[45] The Ethiopian Emperor Yohannis (1871–1889) strongly objected but could do little about it, nor was he able to prevent Italy from taking over Massawa in 1885. Gradually, the port was transformed into the colony of Eritrea. Sometimes the Ethiopians and Italians clashed (as in the battle of Dogali in 1887 and, most famously, at the battle of Adwa in 1896). At other times, they ostensibly cooperated, with Italy providing weapons to Emperor Menelik, who used them for his extensive conquests and later at the battle of Adwa against the Italians themselves.[46] When the First World War broke out, Rome attempted to undermine the Ethiopian government by supplying weapons to a warlord in Tigray, but the central authorities soon put a stop to this.[47] Despite uneasy relations with Ethiopia, the Italian colony of Eritrea experienced steady growth and provided benefits to Italy, including the supply of troops before and during the First World War.[48]

In 1906, in preparation for the eventual death of Menelik, Britain,

France, and Italy concluded a treaty spelling out their interests in Ethiopia (without consulting the government in Addis Ababa, which would not have agreed).[49] Britain sought to control the source of the Blue Nile in Lake Tana, while France aimed to ensure the inviolability of its railway line from Djibouti to Addis Ababa. The Italians had far more ambitious aims. They sought to establish an Italian sphere of influence in the north, south, and east of Ethiopia, effectively joining their colonies of Eritrea and Italian Somaliland. These plans were incorporated into the Treaty of London of April 26, 1915, in which Italy joined the First World War on the side of France and Britain.[50] The treaty terms consolidated the Italian demands made in 1906 but went much further. Rome hoped to gain vast tracts of the Horn, including control over most of Ethiopia, Djibouti, and Somalia. Ultimately, most of these plans were frustrated. As Robert Hess puts it, "the ambitious colonial programme came to naught."[51]

Lij Iyasu and the Ethiopian Throne

Ethiopia was by no means a bystander as the great powers wrestled to control the region. As an independent, uncolonized nation, the only one in Africa, it ran its own affairs, despite all pressures from abroad. Yet the war could hardly have come at a more difficult moment. Emperor Menelik II had ruled since 1889 but as the war loomed was in failing health. On June 11, 1908, he suffered a stroke, and the following year, summoning his ministers, the aging emperor informed them that his grandson and only male descendant, Lij Iyasu, would succeed him.[52] The emperor suffered a further massive stroke on October 27, 1909, which effectively incapacitated him, though he did not die until December 1913.

Lij Iyasu's short reign (he was overthrown in 1916 and was indeed never crowned), has been the subject of much controversy and recent reevaluation.[53] The political infighting that followed Menelik's incapacitation led to a series of confrontations as leading figures in the empire struggled for influence and control, ultimately culminating in Iyasu's removal. This is not the place to recapitulate these, though it should be noted that Iyasu's opponents certainly spread the numerous rumours of apostasy and other alleged crimes that reached the ears of the foreign missions in Addis Ababa and affected the views of the British and French

ministers in the capital. After Iyasu's downfall and the success of his enemies, these allegations became the accepted version of Iyasu's reign.

Harold Marcus summed up the version of Iyasu's detractors:

> The youth was hardly ready to govern: during his adolescence, he had mostly abandoned the classrooms of the gibbi (Menelik's palace) for the capital's bars and brothels. Undoubtedly bright, he was, however ignorant about the running of an increasingly complex administration. He had a short attention span, and lacked political common sense, if not a grand vision. His idée fixe was a society in which religious and ethnic affiliation did not matter, a goal which contradicted the political situation in the empire. His insensitivity to this fundamental reality was left unchallenged by his advisers, a congeries of amusing but sycophantic courtiers.[54]

More recent studies have only provided a more nuanced and realistic understanding of Iyasu's aims and ideas in the last decade or so.[55]

Far from the claims of his critics, Iyasu demonstrated a genuine interest in potential policy and governance changes, encompassing both internal and external actions. One early attempt to strengthen his position was importing weapons from the Austrian Empire. His grandfather, Menelik, had signed a treaty between the two empires in March 1905, only days after a similar treaty had been signed with Germany.[56] Under Iyasu, these ties were strengthened through the exchange of gifts and letters, culminating in the conclusion of a deal for 120 cannons, which was finalized and paid for on July 27, 1914.[57] It was inauspicious timing: Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia the following day, and the First World War commenced. At the time, Italy was still an Austrian ally, only declaring war on its neighbour in May 1915.[58] So, as Rudolf Agstner makes clear, the sale of this weaponry to Ethiopia cannot be interpreted as an attempt to open a second front against Italy. Some—but not all—of the cannon arrived in Ethiopia, although they were already obsolete. What the deal did suggest was that Iyasu was keen to strengthen his own military and look beyond the foreign powers with the greatest influence and interests in the Horn of Africa: Britain, France, and Italy.

Indeed, this appears to have been a central factor in his subsequent interest in relations with the Central Powers and the Ottoman Empire following the outbreak of the Great War. Later in the twentieth century, Ethiopia very successfully played off the United States and the USSR

as sources of military assistance. It might be argued that Lij Iyasu's interest in and his responses to German and Ottoman overtures were a precursor of the policies more successfully implemented fifty or sixty years later.

Iyasu's primary concern was to expand his internal political power base. Rejecting the Shewan advisers of his grandfather, mainly Amharas, he aimed to encompass more than just the Christian Amhara and Tigrayan elite, who had provided the traditional rulers of Ethiopia. Using the traditional imperial approach of establishing power by "going on circuit," he spent much time outside of Addis Ababa, visiting people who had always been peripheral to the empire, notably in Muslim areas, among Oromos, Somalis, and Afars. His overtures included cementing ties by marriage with members of important Muslim local families.[59] He also took wives among the leading families of Christian groups, in Wallega, Gojjam, and Yajju, though his enemies ignored this. These relationships deeply worried the Shewan elite who had held power under Menelik. They were seriously concerned by Iyasu's attempts to replace them with Tigreans, Oromos, and others, and the threat this posed to their positions and privileges. They also persuaded the Orthodox Church to question Iyasu's faith.

In fact, Iyasu was born a Christian and educated as such by Menelik, but his father, Muhammad Ali, an Oromo, came from a line of imams and was said to be able to trace his ancestry back to the Prophet Mohammed himself.[60] After his submission to the Emperor Yohannis IV in 1878, Muhammad Ali was baptized a Christian, taking the name of Mikael, made a *Ras* (or duke) and confirmed in his rule of Wollo. Menelik made considerable efforts to highlight Iyasu's Christianity. Instructions were issued for photographs to be taken showing the prince in the presence of priests and reading from the Book of Psalms.[61]

Despite this, Iyasu's religious identity became a live question with his interest in improving relations with both Somalis and Afars in particular as well as with the Ottoman Empire. Whatever the prospects this offered, it provided ammunition for his opponents. Haggai Erlich provides this summary of the issue: "Young, inexperienced and ambitious, he worked to build new coalitions in defiance of the already entrenched 'Shewan nobility' created by his grandfather. Seeking new local allies, mostly in Ethiopia's periphery, Iyasu also flirted with Islam, as if returning to the faith of his ancestors."[62] This attitude prevailed until the outbreak of the

First World War, but then, suggests Erlich, the young prince's religious orientation changed. The Ottomans proclaimed jihad against Britain, France and Russia; and Iyasu, mixing caution with miscalculation, gambled on an Ottoman victory. In preparing for it, he worked to build an alliance with the Somali Sayyid and Islamic holy warrior, Muhammad bin 'Abdallah Hasan, hoping to have the Somalis included in his future empire. Iyasu apparently visualized a new order emerging after the war, under him, centred on Harar and stretching over the entire Horn of Africa, a wing of a renewed, Ottoman-oriented Land of Islam.[63]

This would have been an extraordinary project, which would have not only changed the orientation of Ethiopia from Christianity to Islam but vastly expanded the country's influence, sweeping aside the interests of Allied Powers. Irrespective of the realities of such a scheme, there is certainly evidence that Britain was deeply concerned about Iyasu's apparent conversion and his potential links to the Ottoman Empire. Wilfred Thesiger reported to London in June 1915 that "every week" there was fresh evidence of the prince's sympathy with Islam:

> I am coming to the opinion that the heir of the throne of Solomon is at heart a Moslem [*sic*] and is entertaining dreams of one day putting himself at the head of the Mohammedan Abyssinians, who considerably outnumber the Abyssinian Christians, and proclaim a Moslem kingdom, which will stretch far beyond the frontiers of his present empire … This intention is being probably strengthened by the conviction of an ultimate Turco-German victory.[64]

With the First World War gathering momentum in the region in 1916, the scene was set for a showdown. On the one side were the Allied Powers, including Britain, France and Italy, looking on nervously as Iyasu changed the country's foreign policy. They had allies among the Ethiopian clergy and nobility, who were also increasingly concerned at the potential impact of Iyasu's actions. The Allied Powers were attempting to maintain the security of Egypt and the Suez Canal, while also diverting troops away from Germany and the Ottoman Empire. On the other side were the Central Powers. As noted above, Germany had already dispatched some missions in an attempt to win Ethiopia to their cause. Their hand was strengthened by Iyasu's concern to win over the Muslims of the region, with the possibility of an important new alliance between

Iyasu and the Sayyid, whose war against encroaching British and Italian colonialism was well into its second decade.

Erlich, drawing on Turkish, Italian, and British archives, described the Ottoman efforts.[65] The key figure appears to be the Ottoman envoy to Ethiopia, Ahmad Mazhar Bey, who took up his office in April 1913, moving his residence from the capital to the center of Islamic influence in the country, Harar. There, he formed a close alliance with Abdallah al-Sadiq, the "Ras al-muslimin," or head of the local Muslim community. Al-Sadiq had long been in touch with Sayyid and was a close ally of Iyasu, who regarded al-Sadiq as a guide in his relations with the Muslim population. Al-Sadiq had also twice visited Constantinople as an agent of the Emperor Menelik and was deported from India by the British.[66] Erlich suggests that the relationship between these four men—the Ethiopian ruler, the Ottoman consul, the Harar leader, and the Somali warlord—was critical. After the outbreak of the First World War, this relationship would, he says, "develop into an axis around which the Islamic-Christian struggle over the future of Ethiopia and Somalia revolved."[67]

From Harar, the Ottomans pursued a three-pronged strategy to take control of the Horn: aiming to win Iyasu to their cause, arming the Sayyid, and finally encouraging an Ethiopian invasion of the surrounding Allied possessions of Somalia, Sudan, and Egypt. These aims were—as we have seen—in line with those of their German allies, and they came close to success. Iyasu himself left Addis Ababa in June 1915 and spent the next nine months touring Wollo, eastern Shewa, and the fringes of the Ogaden, consorting with his three key associates, Mazhar, Abdallah al-Sadiq, and the Sayyid. According to Thesiger, before leaving Addis Ababa, he visited the various legations to try to discover what either side in the European conflict might offer in terms of Ethiopian support.[68]

Mazhar reported to his Ottoman masters that Iyasu had sent an imperial letter to the Sayyid, with ten thousand cartridges, "advising the Mullah to push on against the Italians and British."[69] Mazhar said that Iyasu "supports us whole-heartedly" and predicted he would soon commit Ethiopia to the Ottoman cause. Further weapons and ammunition were sent from the Ethiopian ruler to Sayyid. The British believed that Iyasu had also provided the Sayyid with a Turkish flag to be used "when the Turkish troops land" in British Somaliland and "join hands with him and march on Berbera."[70]

By early 1916 Mazhar at least was sure that Iyasu appeared to have

ended any previous indecision and decided to throw in his lot with the Ottoman and German cause. He would have been reinforced in this view by the Turkish successes in 1916 in Gallipoli and in Mesopotamia. In May 1916 matters came to a head. Mazhar was instructed by Istanbul to promise Iyasu that if he entered the war on the side of the Central Powers he would be allowed to hold any territory he captured after the war ended. "If they want a document," Mazhar was told by his superiors, "you can satisfy them by saying 'whatever territories Ethiopians can take from the British, the Italians and the French, who captured these areas from the Ottomans in the past, we will support them even in peacetime to keep their conquest.' This suits the Ottomans, too."[71]

In September 1916 Iyasu travelled to Jijiga in the Ogaden for a rally of Somali chiefs from the Ogaden region and from British Somaliland. Giving them arms and money, he participated in some Islamic rituals and was reported to have declared that he was a devout Muslim.[72] While the latter assertion is highly unlikely, he indeed told the assembled Somalis that he had been ordered by the Ottoman Caliph to liberate the entire coastline from the Eritrean port of Massawa to the British Somali port of Berbera; he added that the Caliph had granted him sovereignty over these territories and he hoped to occupy them shortly. Erlich concluded, "All the evidence we examined supports the assumption that Iyasu was returning to Islam, expecting an Ottoman victory and a military alliance with the Sayyid's movement. His steps cannot be interpreted other than leading towards a new Ethiopia, centred on Harar as the capital of an Islamic, African empire, allied with Istanbul and under his rule."[73]

In fact, as we have seen, the interpretation of Iyasu's policies is hardly clear-cut, and whether Iyasu visualized this as an Islamic rather than an Ethiopian empire is certainly debatable. He always protested his Christianity and built churches as well as mosques, even in Harar. One of his closest advisers, the Syrian Hasib Ydlibi, in his diary for April 1916, quoted Iyasu at length:

> I have not changed my faith. I would never think of doing so. It is perhaps true that when I am in the country of my Muslim subjects, I might favour them, but I do the same to the Oromos when I am in their country. They are all my subjects and I believe that they are each entitled to every mark of favour in equal shares, be they Christian, Muslim or even heathen. All those who are not Christian have been persecuted in the past, but I intend

> they should all be treated alike. I would like to make my country a happy family … So long as I do not ask any of my subjects to change their faith they can have no ground for complaint. In time, I hope they will be able to grasp and understand my policy, and then they will thank me. I aim to unite my people regardless of religion.[74]

Ydlibi adds that Iyasu also said, "As regards the legations, they too are wrong. I am of no party; I wish to keep quite neutral and in peace. I would like to remain on friendly terms with them all." In her biography of her father, May Ydlibi notes that Iyasu also told her during his visit to Djibouti in 1915 that "I do not believe that any European power can be a real friend to our Ethiopia without ulterior motives, so that the weaker they become, the better for my country." She also noted that during this visit, Iyasu gave the concession to build a railway from Addis Ababa to Dessie, his father's capital, to the French railway company.[75]

The Italian minister in Addis Ababa, Giuseppe Colli di Felizzano, who told Rome in November 1915 that Iyasu intended to convert to Islam, sent a very different report after meeting Iyasu in May the next year. Iyasu, he said, had told him:

> The accusations levelled against him of sentiments favourable to Islamism and of intentions of converting to that religion are entirely unfounded and that his behaviour is meant solely to draw to his cause the Muslim people of his Empire, who have heretofore been abandoned and persecuted and who have been engaged in a state approaching open rebellion against the Ethiopian government; he assured me that he himself was convinced it would be the maddest of follies, on his part, even to think of converting to Islamism and to turn Abyssinia into a Muslim empire.[76]

Colli also reported that Iyasu said he did not trust Turkish and German agents.

It is not difficult to see why Iyasu might have come to a decision to support the German/Ottoman cause at this point. As outlined above, the Allied cause had suffered serious reversals in the Middle East and the attack on Gallipoli had gone catastrophically wrong. On the opposite side of the Red Sea the Ottomans had laid siege to the British colony of Aden in July 1915, going on to claim that they had driven the British back to the city of Aden itself in early 1916.[77] The Germans were also on the

offensive with their propaganda. By 1915–16 Berlin was doing all it could to encourage Muslims in the region to believe that they were their true allies. Proclamations, with green flags, were sent to French Sudan, Darfur and Eritrea, declaring "the *jihad* required of all true Believers not merely a passive, but an active resistance to the Entente; and promised, as a reward, the establishment of an Islamic Empire under benign German protection."[78]

Britain and her allies appeared weak, and the Germans and Ottomans seemed poised to triumph. A victory for the Central Powers also aligned with Iyasu's own vision of the changes required within the Ethiopian Empire, as well as the need to resolve the problems that Addis Ababa had with the peripheral peoples of the empire. In May, Iyasu had also explained to the Italian minister Colli that he needed to "pacify his Ogaden and Danakil Moslem subjects […] without having to recourse to force […] and once this was done he would then turn his attention to internal reform."[79] At the same time, in terms of the internal politics of the imperial court, Iyasu was concerned to break the power of the Shewan Amhara nobility and replace them at the centre of power by an alliance consisting of Oromos (notably his father, Michael, whom he had appointed Negus [king] of the North), Tigreans, Afars, and Somalis, but also including non-Shewan Amharas.

Yet just as the kaiser's "war by revolution" in the region seemed likely to succeed, it suffered a fatal blow. In June 1916, Sharif Hussein fired the shot that opened the Arab Revolt. The Arab army, supported by the British, won swift victories. Mecca surrendered on June 12, followed by Jeddah on June 16. In late July, Arab forces overran two more Red Sea ports, Rabegh and Yanbu. In late September, Ottoman troops at Ta'if, in the mountains southeast of Mecca, were captured together with the governor. The Hashemites had taken the main towns in the area, together with six thousand prisoners. Michael Asher, biographer of T. E. Lawrence, concludes that the Arabs had achieved much more than a military victory: "They had scored a brilliant propaganda success: Turco-German dreams of a Jihad or Holy War were dead."[80]

The British immediately set about capitalizing on these initial successes. Officials in Somaliland had assured London that most Somali tribes were loyal to Britain and did not support the Sayyid. The governor, Sir Geoffrey Archer, told the Foreign Office in July 1916 that "the general loyalty of our Somali tribes may be counted on at present […]. The mistake he [Lij

Yasu] and our enemies in Abyssinia make is that they believe the Mullah, Mahomed Abdulla Hassan, is held in veneration and respect by the Somali tribes."[81] To underscore the strength of the British position across the region, Sir Geoffrey decided in July 1916 to organize a trip to Egypt for a group of Somali elders. The objective was to demonstrate to the Somalis just how powerful the Allies truly were. During the voyage, it was noted that there was an abundance of Allied shipping, but no German vessels in the Red Sea. Once they arrived at the Suez Canal, the Somalis were taken to various prisoner of war camps, of which one at Kantara made the greatest impact. As the British officer reported, it "created the profoundest impression [...] it showed clearly how futile had been the attempt of a Muslim Power (i.e., Turkey) to question the British supremacy, and also the price paid for making that attempt."[82]

Nevertheless, the links between Iyasu and the Sayyid continued to worry London and the authorities in British Somaliland. Anti-British pamphlets were circulating in Harar in August 1916. Turkish propaganda leaflets were also distributed in Somali areas in 1916. These declared: "Be it known that the Abyssinian Government is not with our enemies and they are not in the war against the Government of Islam. They are friends and advisers of the Ottoman Government. The interests of Islam in this country concord with the Government of Abyssinian."[83] A few days earlier, Thesiger had reported to London that Iyasu had conceived the idea of making the Sayyid King of the Ogaden under Addis Ababa's sovereignty.[84] In August 1916, seventeen camel loads of rifles were sent from Harar to the Sayyid, and the British Vice-Consul in Harar, Major Dodds, was reporting on rumours that the supplies being sent to Jijiga were intended for the Sayyid to attack the city of Hargeisa, in British Somaliland.[85] Edward Paice concludes, "In August 1916, it was widely believed that Lij Iyasu was about to launch his joint Abyssinian-Dervish invasion of Somaliland (and marry the Sayyid's daughter.)"[86]

Conclusion

By September 1916, the forces ranged against Iyasu decided to act. There had been an abortive attempt by several leading nobles and ministers to persuade the head of the Orthodox Church in Addis Ababa, Abun Matewos, to excommunicate Iyasu in late August. Reports then began to

circulate that Iyasu had presented an Ethiopian flag with a Red Crescent and a quotation from the Koran to Somali troops in Dire Dawa. Iyasu himself, overconfident in the strength of his position as emperor, even if uncrowned, dismissed warnings that his opponents in Addis Ababa were about to take action.[87]

The outspoken concerns of the British, Italian, and French ministers over Iyasu's policies provided indirect support to Iyasu's opponents.[88] On September 12, the Tripartite powers sent a formal message to the foreign minister complaining that Iyasu was backing rebellion in Somaliland and demanded an immediate explanation.[89] Thesiger and Colli, who had made their lack of sympathy for Iyasu very clear, were informed in advance of the proclamation issued on September 27.[90] Iyasu was charged with apostasy.[91] This time, Abun Matewos agreed to the conspirators' demands, excommunicating Iyasu and releasing those who had taken an oath of allegiance.[92] Menelik's daughter, Zewditu, was proclaimed empress, and Ras Tefari, Iyasu's cousin and former governor of Harar whom he had attempted to isolate, was declared heir to the throne.[93] There is no evidence that Thesiger or Colli played any role in organizing the overthrow of Iyasu, though their openly expressed criticisms of his behavior and policies certainly carried some weight and would have encouraged the conspirators.

The putsch certainly came as an immense relief to the Allies.[94] As Thesiger informed the Foreign Office, "The Government is now in the hands of those who are friendly to our cause."[95] Iyasu attempted to respond by marching on Addis Ababa, but his forces were defeated at Meiso, halfway between Harar and the capital. His father, Negus Michael, led an army south from Dessie but was also defeated at Sagale, fifty miles north of Addis Ababa, after a bloody daylong battle. Negus Michael was captured and paraded in chains in Addis Ababa.[96] Iyasu himself evaded capture until January 1921, when he was finally arrested in a church and imprisoned.[97] Even while free, however, after his deposition, he posed no further threat to any of his key opponents: the new Empress Zewditu, the Regent and Crown Prince Ras Tefari (who was crowned Haile Selassie in 1930), or indeed to the Allies.

The attempt to set Ethiopia on a new course as part of Kaiser Wilhelm's dream of inflaming "the whole Mohammedan world with wild revolt" had come to nought. Yet it had been a close-run thing. If the Arab Revolt had not taken hold on the opposite side of the Red Sea and Iyasu had

not played his cards quite so poorly, if German and Turkish supplies of arms and ammunition had been delivered to the Sayyid in sufficient quantities, the outcome might have been somewhat different. At best, the German plans tied up considerable British resources at a time when they were in great demand on other fronts.

The implications of an Ethiopia favorable to Germany and the Ottomans would also have been very substantial, and not only for the Horn of Africa. An Ethiopian invasion of Eritrea, and possibly even Djibouti and Sudan, would have had considerable repercussions for the interests of the Italians, French, and British in the region. Badly needed troops would have had to be redeployed to secure the vital route between Europe and the East via the Suez Canal. But this is mere speculation. Ethiopia remained Christian and allied to the Triple Alliance; the Suez Canal remained open and the Arab Revolt undermined the Ottoman Empire's hold on the Middle East. From the perspectives of London, Paris, and Rome, this was an entirely satisfactory outcome—a sense of relief that was shared by the future Emperor Haile Selassie and his supporters in Addis Ababa.

Notes

1 Control of the Red Sea would also have meant greater support available for German forces in German East Africa and posed a direct threat to the British colonies in Kenya and Uganda as well as to the Belgian Congo. Edward Paice, *Tip and Run: The Untold Tragedy of the Great War in Africa* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2007); Hew Strachan, *The First World War in Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

2 Wilfred Thesiger to London, National Archive, FO 371/2593.

3 Charles Doughty-Wylie, National Archive, Addis Ababa Intelligence Report for August 1914, September 6, 1914, FO 1881.

4 There are intriguing, but quite unproven, suggestions that T. E. Lawrence even had a hand in events in Ethiopia. Richard Greenfield, *Ethiopia: A New Political History* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1965), 138, wrote: "Some writers go so far as to suggest that then the famous Colonel T. E. Lawrence came secretly to Ethiopia and was involved in the production of propaganda against Eyasu at the instigation of the British Government." Greenfield quotes Byron de Prorok "and others." Prorok writes that he went to visit Iyasu in a "mountain fastness" near Harar, where the prince was held in a "wood and iron cage." De Prorok claims he saw Iyasu: "Lidj Yassou was lolling against a pile of silk cushions, surrounded by ten or twelve naked women who were offering him champagne and drugs." A Greek (Zaphir) described to de Prorok how he a member of the British Intelligence Service "was closeted" with the British Minister in Addis Ababa just prior to Iyasu's overthrow. "My friend Zaphir's description of the man's abilities fitted

remarkably with that of the author of The Seven Pillars of Wisdom and Revolt in the Desert—Lawrence of Arabia," 162.

5 It is remarkable how little attention this has received in the general literature on Africa and the First World War. There is hardly a reference to the Horn of Africa in any of the following: Justin Cornfield, *The First World War in Africa: A Bibliography* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 2008); Andy McKinlay and Melvin Page, Africa *and the First World War* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1987); and Hew Strachan, *The First World War in Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). The exception to this is Paice, *Tip and Run: The Untold Tragedy of the Great War in Africa*, 212–23, who outlines the issue but notes that "remarkably little is known about Lij Iyasu," the heir to the Ethiopian throne.

6 Donald McKale, *War by Revolution: Germany and Great Britain in the Middle East in the Era of World War I.* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1998). McKale develops a detailed analysis of both German and British intentions before and during the war.

7 Jacob Landau, *The Politics of Pan-Islam: Ideology and Organization* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 47.

8 Fritz Fischer, *Germany's Aims in the First World War* (New York: Norton, 1975), 12; Martin Kroger, *Revolution als Programme. Ziele und Realitat deutscher Orientpolitik im Ersten Weltkrieg*. (Munich: Piper, 1994). Quoted in McKale, *War by Revolution*, 48.

9 Kroger, *Revolution als Programme*; Martin Strohmeier, "The 'Very Real Bogey'. The Stotzingen-Neufeld Mission to the Hijaz," *Arabian Humanities* 6 (2016).

10 John Buchan, *Greenmantle* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1916).

11 George MacMunn and Cyril Falls, *History of the Great War Based on Official Documents: Military Operations, Egypt & Palestine*, Vol. 1 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1928), 7.

12 In total, some four hundred thousand Australian, nearly one hundred thousand New Zealand and over one million Indian troops fought in the First World War in Europe, Egypt, Palestine, Gallipoli, and elsewhere. A majority of these would have passed through the Suez Canal.

13 MacMunn and Falls, *History of the Great War*, 13–14.

14 Although Egypt was nominally an autonomous state of the Ottoman Empire, it was effectively under British control. Its status was formalized as an independent Sultanate under a British protectorate in 1915 after Britain removed the then-Khedive because of his pro-Ottoman activities. The Sultanate lasted until 1922 when Britain unilaterally declared Egypt "independent," reserving control over four areas: security of communications for the British Empire (i.e. the Suez Canal); defense of Egypt; protection of foreign interest; and Sudan. British influence in effect remained paramount until the overthrow of King Farouk in 1952 and the establishment of the republic the following year.

15 "A patrol of 20 men of the Bikanir Camel Corps, under Captain A. J. H. Chope, was attacked at Bir en Nuss, 20 miles east of Qantara, by 200 Bedouin, who approached it under a white flag. The party extricated itself creditably, though with casualties amounting to more than half its numbers. Unfortunately, this affair proved that the loyalty of the camel troopers of the Egyptian Coastguards, several of whom accompanied the Bikanirs as guides, was extremely doubtful, since they allowed themselves to be made prisoners in a manner virtually amounting to desertion. MacMunn and Falls, *History of the Great War*, 20.

16 MacMunn and Falls *History of the Great War*, 50–51.

17 Anthony Bruce, *The Last Crusade: The Palestine Campaign in the First World War* (London: John Murray, 2002), 38 ff.

18 Paice, *Tip and Run*, 215.

19 John Slight, "British Understandings of the Sanussiyya Sufi Order's Jihad against Egypt, 1915–17" (The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs), 103, no. 2 (2014): 233–42.
20 Michael Korda, *Hero: The Life and Legend of Lawrence of Arabia* (London: JR Books, 2011), 290.
21 Korda, *Hero*, 291. The number of German troops was exaggerated (see below).
22 Strohmeier, "The 'Very Real Bogey'."
23 Strohmeier, "The 'Very Real Bogey'."
24 Paice, *Tip and Run*, 214.
25 Paice, *Tip and Run*, 214.
26 Heinrich Scholler, "German World War I Aims in Ethiopia: The Frobenius-Hall Mission," *Proceedings of the Fifth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, Nice, December 19–22, 1977, 303.
27 When the Frobenius and Hall mission to Ethiopia was halted by the Italians in Eritrea in March 1915 the mail that Leo Frobenius was carrying was eventually delivered to the German legation in Addis Ababa through Italian channels, though only through "vaguely known ways." Tafla Bairu, *Ethiopia and Germany: Cultural, Political and Economic Relations, 1871–1936.* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1981), 133.
28 Scholler, "German World War I Aims in Ethiopia," 310.
29 Scholler, "German World War I Aims in Ethiopia," 310.
30 Britain perceived that a threat existed from Darfur and sent a military force to suppress a jihad declared by Sultan Ali Dinar. But recent research suggests there is no evidence of German involvement in Darfur.
31 Rocio Da Riva, "Lawrence of Arabia's Forerunner: The Bizarre Enterprise of Leo Frobenius, aka Abdul Kerim Pasha, in Arabia and Eritrea (1914–1915)," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 99 (2009): 29–111; Paice, *Tip and Run*, 220.
32 Berger Holz, "The Hall Family and Ethiopia: A Century of Involvement," in *Proceedings of the 16th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies,* ed. S. Ege et. al. (Trondheim: Norwegian University of Science and Technology, 2009); Paice, *Tip and Run*, 220.
33 Rocio Da Riva, "Lawrence of Arabia's Forerunner," 76.
34 Ibid., 76.
35 Holtz, "The Hall Family and Ethiopia," 98. Hall settled in Dire Dawa after the war, where he traded in coffee and married an Englishwoman.
36 Paice, *Tip and Run*, 220
37 Bairu, *Ethiopia and Germany*, 133.
38 Scholler, "German World War I aims in Ethiopia," 312.
39 Ibid., 133.
40 Paice, *Tip and Run*, 217.
41 Roy Irons, *Churchill and the Mad Mullah of Somaliland, Betrayal and Redemption, 1899–1921* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Military, 2013), 173.
42 Bairu, *Ethiopia and Germany*, 132.
43 Laurent Jolly, "Le tirailleur Somali: le métier des armes instrumentalisé (début XX^{e} siècle - fin des années 60)" (PhD diss., Université de Pau et des Pays de l'Adour, 2013).
44 Thesiger: Memorandum March 16, 1916, FO 371/2595.
45 George Baer, *The Coming of the Italian-Ethiopian War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 1.
46 Ibid., 2.

47 Harold Marcus, *A History of Ethiopia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 113.
48 Tekeste Negash, *Italian Colonialism in Eritrea, 1882–1941* (Uppsala: Studia Historica Upsaliensia, 1987), 48. Italy first sent Eritrean troops, or *askaris*, to Libya in 1912. The Eritrean army was reorganized in October 1915 into fifteen battalions, with nine sent to Libya. A total of 7,350 troops were under arms.
49 Negash, *Italian Colonialism in Eritrea*, 6.
50 Bairu, *Ethiopia and Germany*, 132.
51 Robert Hess, "Italy and Africa: Colonial Ambitions in the First World War," *Journal of African History*, 4, no. 1 (1963): 105–26.
52 Hess, "Italy and Africa," 126. By the end of the war Britain and France were not weak, as they had been in 1915, while Italy's position was undermined by her failure to declare war on Germany until late in the war.
53 Haggai Erlich, "From Wello to Harer: Lij Iyasu, the Ottomans, and the Somali Sayyid," in *The Life and Times of Lïj Iyasu of Ethiopia: New Insights*, ed. Eloi Ficquet and Wolbert G. C. Smidt (Zurich,: Lit Verlag 2014), 135.
54 Marcus, *History of Ethiopia*, 113.
55 See, in particular, Eloi Ficquet and Wolbert Smidt, eds., *The Life and Times of Lïj Iyasu of Ethiopia: New Insights* (Zurich, Berlin: Lit Verlag 2014).
56 Rudolph Agstner, "Lij Iyasu, the Austro-Hungarian Consul in Addis Ababa and the Cannon Deal of 1914," in Ficquet and Smidt, *Life and Times of Lij Iyasu of Ethiopia*, 115.
57 Agstner, "Lij Iyasu," 127.
58 Ibid., 127.
59 Aramis Houmed Soule, "Lij Iyasu and the Afar," in Ficquet and Smidt, *The Life and Times of Lïj Iyasu*, 165–78.
60 E. Ficquet, "Understanding Lij Iyasu from His Forefathers: The Mammedoch Imam-s of Wello," in Ficquet and Smidt, *The Life and Times of Lïj Iyasu of Ethiopia*, 5.
61 Estelle Sohier, "Portraits of an Ethiopian Prince, Lij Iyasu," in Ficquet and Smidt, *The Life and Times of Lïj Iyasu of Ethiopia*, 53.
62 Erlich, "From Wello to Harer," 135. Others point to evidence that Iyasu had no intention of converting to Islam. See, for example, Richard Pankhurst, "The Reign of Lij Iyasu – as Avedis Terzian saw it," in Ficquet and Smidt, *The Life and Times of Lïj Iyasu of Ethiopia*, 91–100.
63 Erlich, "From Wello to Harer," 136.
64 Thesiger quoted in Erlich, "From Wello to Harer," 139.
65 Erlich, "From Wello to Harer," 139.
66 Marcus, *History of Ethiopia*, 266–67.
67 Erlich, "From Wello to Harer," 136.
68 Thesiger to Grey, April 14, 1915, FO 371/2228
69 Erlich, "From Wello to Harer," 139.
70 Ibid., 140.
71 Ibid., 141.
72 Ibid., 145.
73 Ibid., 146.
74 May Ydlibi, *With Ethiopian Rulers, A Biography of Hasib Ydlibi* (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 2006), 250–51.
75 Ydlibi, *With Ethiopian Rulers*, 245.
76 Colli to Italian Foreign Minister, *Documenti Diplomatici Italiani*, 5th Series, vol. 5 doc. 95 tel.

7789/92. Quoted in Angelo Del Boca, *The Negus: The Life and Death of the Last King of Kings* (Addis Ababa: Arada Books, 2012), 68.

77 See F. A. McKenzie, "The Defence of India," in *The Great War: The Standard History of the All-European Conflict*, vol. 7, ed. H. W. Wilson (London: Amalgamated Press, 2016); Eugene Rogan, "Rival Jihads: Islam and the Great War in the Middle East, 1914–1918," *Journal of the British Academy* 4 (2016): 13.

78 Landau, *Politics of Pan-Islam*, 142.

79 Quoted in Thesiger to Grey, May 24, 1916, FO 371/2593.

80 Michael Asher, *Lawrence: The Uncrowned King of Arabia* (London: Viking, 1998), 162.

81 Patrick Kakwenzire, "British Somaliland Colonial Rule in British Somali Protectorate, 1905–1939," vol. 1 of 2 (PhD diss., University of London 1976), 261.

82 Quoted in Kakwenzire, "British Somaliland Colonial Rule in British Somali Protectorate," 274.

83 Colli to Minister, June 9, 1916, ASMAI 37/11.

84 Thesiger to Grey, June 1, 1916, FO 371/2594.

85 Dodds to Law, August 19, 1916, FO 371/2594.

86 Paice, *Tip and Run*, 221.

87 Ydlibi, *With Ethiopian Rulers*, 256; see also Zewde Bahru, *A History of Modern Ethiopia 1855–1974* (London: James Currey, 1991), 127.

88 Ydlibi, *With Ethiopian Rulers*, 127. There were claims (uncorroborated) that Thesiger offered Abun Matewos one hundred thousand Maria Theresa dollars to release the conspirators from their oath of allegiance. See Richard Pankhurst, "The Reign of Lij Iyasu – as Avedis Terzian Saw It," in Ficquet and Smidt, *The Life and Times of Lïj Iyasu of Ethiopia*, 96.

89 Thesiger to Grey, September 14, 1916, FO 371/2595; Colli to Minister, September 21, 1916, ASMAI 37/11.

90 Thesiger to Grey, September 27, 1916, FO 371/2595.

91 Siegbert Uhlig, *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica, III: He–N*. Wiesbaden (Harrossowiz Verlag, 2007), 255.

92 The church was, in fact, divided. There were two Abuna, Matewos in Addis Ababa, and Petros in Axum, who had been earlier supported by Negus Michael in a theological controversy with Abun Matewos. Marcus, *History of Ethiopia*, 267.

93 Haggai Erlich, *Islam and Christianity in the Horn of Africa* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2010), 81–82.

94 Bekele Shiferaw Bekele, "Dire Dawa, Harer and Jigjiga in the Weeks before and after the Overthrow of Iyasu on 27 September 1916," in Ficquet and Smidt, *The Life and Times of Lïj Iyasu of Ethiopia*, 161, argues persuasively that given the scope of Iyasu's aims, this was more than a mere putsch.

95 Quoted in Kakwenzire, "British Somaliland Colonial Rule in British Somali Protectorate,: 282.

96 Del Boca, *The Negus*, 68.

97 Uhlig, *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, 255.

CHAPTER 4

Sayid Maxamed Cabdulle Xasan, World War I, and Italian Colonialism in Somalia

Abdiwahid Osman Haji and William Felepchuk

During World War I and the period immediately preceding and following it, the principal challenge to the Italian-British alliance in Somalia was the long-standing Islamic anti-colonial resistance led by Sayid Maxamed Cabdulle Xasan (1856–1920), known as the Daraawish, or Dervish, movement.[1] He was known by his foes in the tariqa Qadiriyya as *wadaadka waalan* (the Mad Mullah), which became the most common epithet used by the British to describe the Sayid.[2] He was a politically strategic leader, acutely aware of international dynamics, during World War I the Sayid maintained relationships with other states and sovereigns, including with the Central Powers, which caused anxiety to his foes, Italy and Britain, both members of the Entente. Although the Europeans "showed a willingness […] to deny agency to local leaders of the Islamic resistance" and to blame Indigenous resistance on outside agitation, the Sayid was a consummate statesman, with a broad network of communication and the ability to engage multiple colonial powers in a protracted war for over two decades, including during World War I.[3]

In 1917, the British worried that the Sayid had forged a formal alliance with the Ottomans and Germans. In response, the Sayid vehemently denied that he was in a position to require such alliances. He derided Britain, however, for what the Sayid viewed as the weakness displayed by the British in joining forces with, among others, "Sudanese, and Kaffirs, and Perverts, and Yemenis, and Nubians, and Indians, and Baluchis, and French, and Russians, and Americans, and Italians, and Serbians, and Portuguese, and Japanese and Greeks and cannibals and Sikhs and Banyans, and Moors, and Afghans, and Egyptians."[4]

Here, Hassan's global consciousness is on full display, and he invokes and then rejects a possible alliance with the Central Powers, using the idea to make a mockery of his foes. In his anti-colonial struggle, however,

he maintained contact with the Ottoman Empire, other Somali states, and Ethiopia under Lij Iyasu. Sayid Maxamed Cabdulle Xasan's war was also unique in terms of anti-colonial struggles as it was waged simultaneously on three foreign powers: the British, the Ethiopians, and the Italians.[5]

Sayid Maxamed Cabdulle Xasan strategically buttressed his efforts throughout World War I through the occasional threat of Turkish and German material support for his cause, support that largely did not materialize, except perhaps through connections with the Ethiopian prince Lij Yasu during the latter's brief reign and through correspondence with Ottoman authorities.[6] Though some might consider Somalia Italiana as largely untouched by the dynamics of World War I, this chapter argues that the campaign waged by the Sayid occurred in the context of deep awareness of, and drew upon, the global conflict; these connections caused intense worry to the Italian (and British) authorities.[7] The specter of the Sayid receiving material Ottoman support for his resistance was often present in the colonial mind, though for the Daraawish this potential support was more a source of promise or hope.

This chapter draws on two bodies of primary source texts, in addition to a variety of scholarship in Somali studies. These include the Sayid's own missives and poetry, both his Arabic letters and his Somali gabay.[8] We also examine Italian texts about the Sayid, with special attention given to texts emphasizing the anxieties of Italian colonial administrators and writers in relation to the potential of the Sayid's alliance building with Central Powers, including via Prince Lij Yasu.

It is essential to examine the presence of Sayid Maxamed Cabdulle Xasan in Italian texts and how he appears differently than in the more widely read British sources. This chapter is unique in its examination of Italian texts mentioning the Sayid during this period. This body of primary sources also provides an important example of how both Italian colonial power and resistance to it were influenced in Somalia by the supposedly far-off forces of global conflict during the First World War. This chapter further analyzes if and how the Sayid's resistance, and his rumored relationship with the Central Powers, affected the choices of Italian authorities in consolidating their rule in Somalia Italiana, as well as the commerce and administration of the Italian establishment there.

It is important to note that though the Sayid led an important

anti-colonial resistance and his Daraawish movement attracted a sizeable following among adherents of the Salihiya tariqa and certain Somali clans, he was by no means a unifying figure among Somalis of the era. This is evidenced by the aforementioned animosity between the Sayid and Sheikh Uways Al-Barawi (1847–1909), an extremely influential Somali leader of tariqa Qadiriyya, who was killed along with many of his followers by the Daraawish. The Salihiyya were bitterly opposed to the Qadiriyya on several theological issues. The Sayid referred to the Qadiriyya in one poem as "the backsliding apostates."[9] As mentioned later in this chapter, the sultanates of Hobyo and Majeerteen were also at times in conflict with the Sayid. Without diminishing the importance of the Sayid's resistance to colonial expansion in Somalia, it is also essential to understand the intra-Somali conflicts that ultimately limited the scope and longevity of his mission.

The chapter begins with some background on the advent of Italian colonialism in Somalia and the first fourteen years of the Sayid's struggle (1899–1913). The second part offers insight into the views of the Italian authorities toward the Sayid and vice versa. The third section discusses the specter (in the eyes of colonial authorities) or promise (in the eyes of the Daraawish movement) of alliance with the Central Powers, first through the relationship between Lij Iyasu and the Sayid and the anxieties this caused the colonial authorities during the former's brief reign as emperor designate, and then through the Sayid's attempts at allyship with the Ottomans. We conclude by offering some future directions for research. Ultimately, this chapter seeks to correct many historical and contemporary texts that, especially during the years of the First World War and like the colonial authorities themselves, fail "to discern the intricacies of Hassan's movement" and the complexity of his engagement with the wider world.[10]

Background (1889–1913)

The Beginnings of Italian Colonialism in Somalia (1889–1905) and Sayid Maxamed Cabdulle Xasan's Resistance (1899–1905)

Italian colonialism began in Somalia in 1889, when the Sultans of Hobyo and Majeerteen signed separate treaties with the Italians and agreed to

become Italian protectorates. The same year, the Sultan of Zanzibar leased the coastal Benadir region (which includes Mogadishu, Warsheikh, Merka, and Brava, among other towns).[11] From the onset of Italian colonialism in Somalia, Somalis tended to view Italy as an unwelcome aggressor, to be negotiated with begrudgingly at best and to be fought tooth and nail at worst. The first armed conflict between the Italians and Somalis took place in the spring of 1890, when the Italian "arch-colonialist" Vincenzo Filonardi landed a party at Warsheikh, north of Mogadishu, to demand the town submit to the rule of the Italians.[12] Hassan Omar Mahadallah notes that after the townsmen rejected their demands, one of the marines went back to the ship and fired a cannon over the city—perhaps to intimidate the interlocutors into submission. That unscrupulous action "precipitated the first armed conflict between the Italians and Somalis and thenceforth defined their relationship."[13]

It was during this era of nascent Italian colonialism in Somalia that the Sayid launched his first resistance to foreign domination. The resistance began in 1899, after a misunderstanding regarding the sale of a gun by British soldiers to the Sayid, which the British accused him of stealing. The Sayid was outraged by the accusation of theft and replied with a letter to the British refuting their accusation and outlining his general grievances with their presence in Somalia:

> From Mohammed bin Abdullah Hassan to the English – This is to inform you that you have done whatever you have desired. You have oppressed our ancient religion without cause. Further, to inform you that whatever people obey you they are liars and slanderers … Now choose for yourselves. If you want war, we accept it.[14]

The period of 1899 to 1905 was thus primarily one of fighting between the Sayid, the British, and the Ethiopians, and to a lesser extent, the Italians. This fighting was characterized by guerrilla war waged by the Sayid, frustration of the foreigners at being unable to subdue him, and colonial depredations against local populations. In May 1901, for example, the British Somali Field Forces raided "pro-Mullah" villages "and took some 3,500 camels, a fair number of cattle, and a vast quantity of sheep."[15] Similarly, in January 1904, an Ethiopian army of 2,000 combatants destroyed the Somali town of Lugh. Mahadallah notes that

> Very much like their British counterparts, every time the Ethiopians failed in their original purpose of engaging the rebel forces, they took it out on the general population. They looted and razed village after village in their path. In January 1904, at the height of the Dervish Movement, for instance, an Ethiopian party of 2,000 men descended on the town of Lugh and razed it to the ground. During their brief occupation of the town, the Ethiopians resorted to robbing, killing, and imprisoning many of the merchants.[16]

The period of 1899–1904 was a time of sporadic conflict between the Italians and the Daraawish. Several battles took place between the Italians and the Sayid's forces. Still, the openness shown to the Italians as diplomatic intermediaries in the subsequent period (outlined in the following subsection) suggests that hostilities were not as heightened between Italy and the Sayid in the early years of the conflict; alternatively, perhaps the Sayid was preoccupied with warding off the incursions of British and Ethiopian forces.

The Ilig Peace (1905–1909)

The Ilig Treaty of 1905 was negotiated between the Daraawiish and the British through the Italians acting as intermediaries.[17] This treaty, signed for Italy by Giulio Pestalozza, agreed to offer the Sayid leadership of a state in the Nugaal Valley, with the protection of the Italians and was signed by Britain, Italy, and the Sayid. The Ilig Treaty ended the Sayid's "initial phase of revolt," allowing for a "political compromise with the British and the Italians [...] under which he was allowed an autonomous area in the Nugal Valley and freedom of movement and religious practice."[18] The Italians, who worried that the Sayid's resistance to the north would instigate other anticolonial revolts in their more southern Benadir colony, hoped the Ilig Treaty and the autonomy it offered the Daraawish would dampen the resolve of clans in the Benadir region to rebel against their rule. Instead, the Wacdaan and Biyamaal clans rebelled soon after hearing of the Ilig Treaty, and Italy was forced to subdue them by shelling Merca.[19] The Ilig agreement, however, made the Sayid ostensibly neutral toward Italy and temporarily removed him as a threat to their domination in Southern Somalia.[20]

According to Abdi Sheik-Abdi, the respite offered by the Ilig Treaty opened a period of important diplomacy and state-building for the Sayid.

He communicated with various Somali tribes, including several in Italian-dominated areas such as the Bimaal, who were in revolt against Italy and were anxious for access to a port for trade overseas, especially for arms and ammunition, given the landlocked nature of his Nugaal Valley state.[21] For Italy too, the period of peace brought on by the Treaty of Ilig was a period of consolidation, but of their colonial hold on Somalia: Italy purchased the ports of Benadir in 1905, implementing direct governmental rule, and officially declared Somalia an Italian colony in 1908.[22] The period also allowed Italy to devote resources to "crush southern Somali resistance in the Gosha in 1907 and the Banadir and the Lower Shabelle in 1908."[23] The Sayid's resistance was thus not the only challenge to Italian domination in Southern Somalia. The Italians fought the Hiranian resistance (led by Sheikh Hassan Barsane, 1853–1924) as well as the Bimaal resistance, which began in 1888 and continued until 1924, causing the Italians considerable anxiety (further discussed below).[24] The Italians also began expanding territorially, which ended only in 1923 when they "penetrated the interior as far as Ethiopia's southern boundaries and established effective administration over the newly occupied regions."[25]

Italy viewed the Ilig Treaty as key to the success of its colony in Southern Somalia. In a March 1907 parliamentary discussion between foreign minister Tommaso Tittoni and members of parliament regarding the Anglo-Italian-French Convention on Ethiopia of December 13, 1906, member of parliament De Marinis connected the Ilig Treaty to the general ability of Italy to maintain and develop its colonial control in Benadir and to wider diplomatic events in East Africa: "I am confident that Mr. Tittoni, who has the good fortune and the honor of having agreed with the Mullah … will be able to start a bolder, peaceful, and commercial policy in southern Somalia."[26]

Intermittent conflict (1909–1913) and the Italo-Turkish War (1911–1912)

In 1909, the Sayid broke the Treaty of Ilig "in the name of a renewed call for jihad" against Britain and Italy, their Somali allies and protectorates, and Ethiopia.[27] The year also marked the Sayid's establishment of a permanent headquarters at Taleex, which later proved to be to his military disadvantage.[28] The period following the deterioration of the Ilig Treaty, between 1908 and 1912, was one primarily of the Sayid fighting other Somali states:

> For about four years [the period of the Ilig Treaty] things were quiet but in 1908 a new phase of violence began, again not targeting colonial troops but the coastal sultanate of Hobyo, the Majerteen clan in the northeast, the Hawiya area, and even the Rahanweynin the southeast. Only in 1912 did troops attack the British in Berbera.[29]

This intensification of conflict between the Sayid and the British began in 1912 when the British established the Somali Coastal Constabulary, which became the Camel Corps, and "harried Hassan from 1912 onward and engaged in 'desultory fighting' throughout the First World War. Hassan's switch from mobility to fixed defensive fortress [at Taleex] positions gave the Camel Corps greater military success against him."[30] However, the success of the Camel Corps was not complete until the defeat of the Sayid in 1920, "partly because from 1914 to 1918 the British were hindered by their commitments elsewhere during the First World War."[31]

The period also saw intermittent conflict between the Sayid and the nascent Italian colony in southern Somalia, although the Italians were preoccupied with another major colonial conflict with the Ottoman Empire in relation to Libya (1911–1912). They had declared war on the Ottomans on September 27, 1911.[32] This period of relative quiet in the relationship between the Sayid and Italy ended in 1913 with the ascension of Lij Iyasu as emperor designate of Ethiopia, outlined below.

Discourse between Talyaan (the Italians) and the Sayid

"del Mullah deve occupare e preoccupare la mente del Governo": Italian Views of Sayid Maxamed Cabdulle Xasan

Scholars have noted that the Italians, unlike the British, "never regarded the Mullah as an outlaw."[33] Indeed, Italian writings view the Sayid in a different, more admiring light: "One cannot hide a sense of admiration for this little barbarian who, for over twenty years, stood up to

many enemies without ever being struck, rising from the ashes, always, even when all seemed lost."[34] The British, on the other hand, were overwhelmingly negative in their view of the Sayid; Richard Corfield of the Somali Camel Constabulary thought of him as a cattle thief. Later killed in battle by the Daraawish, he wrote that the Sayid

was "a very troublesome border raider … who is a cattle thief first, a Somali second, and thirdly, and a long way last, a very indifferent Mohammedan."[35] Douglas Jardine, a Somaliland colonial official who later wrote a widely read account of the Sayid, wrote that the Sayid was a "tyrant and cut-throat, slayer of innocent women and children, cattle-thief, profligate, and libertine."[36] Of course, neither the romantic Italian assessment nor the more contemptuous British one adequately captures the complexity of the Sayid's views, actions, and life history.

Whatever his personal characteristics, like the British, Sayid Maxamed Cabdulle Xasan was a source of worry and political anxiety for the Italians. Even when not directly threatening Italian domination in Somalia, he appeared as a specter of anti-colonial resistance; Italian authorities also rightly worried that his resistance would inspire and influence similar movements further south. An example of such influence was the Sayid's *Risala lil-Bimaal* (Letter to the Bimaal), which played a role in the long-standing resistance of the Bimaal subclan of the Dir clan to Italian domination in the Shabelle and Jubba regions of southern Somalia.

The Sayid frequently appeared in the debates of Italian parliamentarians, who openly worried about the cost of defending their young colony in Somalia from his attacks. One particular 1908 debate offers insight into the complex Italian attitude toward the Sayid in the lead-up to World War I. In the "Debate on the draft Bill: Provisions for the Budgets of the African Colonies and for the State's Contribution to the Colonies' expenses," the Sayid makes frequent appearances. The politician Artom expressed the worry of many of his colleagues related to the fact that the "Mullah has sent a small aid of rifles to the Bimaal."[37] Chiesa observed that "from distant Northern Somalia, where the Mullah is, the Bimaal people are aware of him and follow his fanatical cry of revolt."[38] While Artom believed that "the Mullah will not leave his territory," he was concerned that "around the Mullah there are many fanatics [who] can continue to intervene and send more help to our enemy tribes. What are we going to do in case the Mullah intervenes even more effectively?"[39] He goes on to point out that "the Mullah has almost become master of northern Somalia."[40] Others cast doubts that an outright Italian war with the Sayid, who had already "exhausted England's colonial potential," would be winnable and felt that "the intervention, even latent, of the Mullah must occupy and worry the mind of the Government."[41] The

Italian parliamentarians were aware of the Sayid's influence in their core colony further to the south.

The politicians' assessment of the Sayid's character was mixed. Chiesa called the Sayid's neutrality during the Ilig period "dubious," arguing that maintaining such neutrality would "take more money, and a lot of it, like for the Negus [Emperor of Ethiopia]."[42] This view of the Sayid as someone with wavering principles, easily swayed by the exigencies of the moment, was a common trope among the Italians. This included casting doubt on the Sayid's commitment to hostility to the colonial powers. In the words of Di Scalea:

> I do not believe that it is absolutely an inescapable necessity for a warlike attitude with the Mad-Mullah … Among the followers of the religion of Islam, and especially among the Senussi, are men who have shown on various occasions sympathy for Italy and who may have a considerable moral influence on the soul and on the and conscience of the Mullah.[43]

Tittoni, for his part, similarly downplayed the Sayid's commitment, arguing that "it is not the Mullah who instigated the rebellion of the Bimaal, but it is the Bimaal who have sent messengers to the Mullah."[44] He also argued that the Sayid had sent the Bimaal inferior weapons ("since in the Mullah's clashes with the English, Englishmen have died, this shows that the Mullah has better weapons and ammunition; it means that he did not see fit to give them to the to the Bimals."[45]). These assertions question the Sayid's commitment to anticolonial solidarity between the Somali resistances. This attitude of undermining Somali conviction was echoed by later chroniclers, including a fascist-era text that points to some of the more racialized aspects of the Italian view of the Sayid, aspects that require further analysis that the space of this chapter does not afford. To Caroselli, the fascist chronicler, the Somalis were people who "could not understand the political consequences of a struggle, fought for causes that were incomprehensible to their mentality."[46] This condescending attitude denied Somalis even the ability to understand the motivations for their own struggles. Caroselli goes on to also condemn the "nefarious idea" of "the self-determination of peoples," which, in his view, led to the idea "of sending the Europeans out of the country and taking over everything they left behind. The more evolved natives even aspired to succeed in office as this or that official or officer!"[47]

"Talyan waa dadkaagiyo daayiciin ad wadataa": The Sayid's Discourse against Italians and Other Foreigners

Foreign imperial powers and their attempts to dominate Somalis were a frequent target of the Sayid's famed literary prowess. He wrote a wide variety of poems condemning *gaalka*, the infidels, for their incursions into Somali territory and for what the Sayid perceived as their brutality and disrespect for the religion of Islam. These works were negatively inspired by earlier experiences of European influence. In 1897, prior to launching his armed resistance, the Sayid encountered young Somali boys who had been in the care of French Roman Catholic missionaries. The Sayid asked the boys their name and clan, and one of the children answered that his name was "'John' Abdillahi of the clan of the 'Fathers'."[48] The Sayid was shocked and "perceived a threat to both Somali culture and creed in the Christian missionaries' activities."[49] Many of his literary works present this worry about the erosion of Somali culture.

The Sayid also wrote a variety of poems in which he derides specific foreign powers; his most frequent targets were the Ethiopians (the *amxaaro*), the British (the *ingiriis*), and to some extent, the Italians (the *talyaan*).[50] According to Keenadiid, this derision primarily takes the form of verses within longer poems rather than entire poems dedicated to condemnation of particular foreign nations.[51] This suggests that the Sayid viewed this discursive armory of verse as part of a wider strategy of diplomacy, propaganda, and strategic maneuvering.

The most significant poem in which the Sayid treats the Italians is "Dacwad Baan Ka Leeyahay, especially lines 47–64, as well as various other isolated mentions embedded in other works."[52] Keenadiid notes that "the Sayid, in his anti-European attacks, naturally did not spare Italy. Violent anti-Italian slurs, such as these, are found here and there in his 'gabay'."[53] In "Dacwad Baan Ka Leeyahay," which is generally addressed to the British, the Sayid objects to the capture of an elder of the Daraawish, Ciise Dhoollawaa, whom the British insist is not their responsibility due to him being a captive of the Italians: "To the protest of the Sayid, the English authority replied that the matter was not of its concern, since the elder had been captured by the Italian authority."[54] This is illogical to the Sayid, who insists that the British and Italians are allies and share responsibility for the return of the captive:

Doonnidii ma aan arag dacwaad baan ka leeyahay
Dakhalkiyo shiraaciyo badda yaa u dowlad ah
Talyan waa dadkaagiyo daayiciin ad wadataa
Haddi adan duqlaaleyn Dannood sooma aadeen
Diraac Doollo iyo Ciid duullaan kuma yimaadeen

"Of the elder I know nothing"; here is my rebuttal.
Who commands the vessels, the sailing ships and the seas?
The irresponsible Italians are of your race that you bring with you—
Without your solicitation they would never have left for Dannood
They would not fight in the warm winter in Doollo and Ciid

The use of the word *daayiciin* (irresponsible) to describe the Italians echoes the general Somali view that the Talyaan were "unscrupulous," dishonorable, and brutal.[55] The Sayid thus insists that the Italians are primarily subservient to the British and that as allied colonial invaders of Somali territory, their interests and, therefore, their responsibilities are one and the same:

Intaad delidhacayseen sow kulama daaleyn
Sow daraaddi kuma iman Hobyo wixii ka soo degey
Sow dab iyo xoolo iyo daabbad kuguma caawinin
War nin shalay damiin yohow igu diley daraaddaa
Berri haddaynnu dirirnana dusha iga wareentayn
Adigaw dammiin ahe sidee kaaga daayaa
Durrufleyda gaalaad adaa daaqsanaayee
Mawaan kala duwa hayaa adiga iyo duunka

Have they [the Italians] not participated in your labors and hardships?
Were not the landings at Hobyo their work?
Have they not given you help in arms, riches and mounts?
For a man who yesterday, O ignorant one, slaughtered me to please you
And if we fight tomorrow and he is ready to strike me in the back with his spear,
How can I not blame you, who are his guardian?
The pagans are your sheep and you are their shepherd.
And then, why should I make a distinction between you and your kind?

His threats to the British (and by extension the Italians), as a result of the capture of the elder, are clear. If their Italian associates do not return his follower, the Sayid will sow chaos:

> Dabarka Ciise lagu xiray anaa laygu dooniyoo
> Damiin baan waxgaranee digniin iima laabnoo
> Degdeg haddii an loo furin dunidaa fasaadiye
> War deeq igama juusee wax ma kala dullaallaa
>
> The chains with which Ciise' is bound,[56] are a challenge for me
> Now everything is clear, only the ignorant are slow to understand
> If immediately he is not freed, the world will fall into chaos.
> Since I have nothing to give, shall we negotiate?

In another poem, the Sayid attacks the Italians for yet another capture of a follower, this time "Calangube (Cali Faahiye Geeddi)," whose name also titles the poem.[57] This poem again echoes the view of the Italians as unscrupulous and cruel, and the Sayid is clearly disturbed by the suffering of his imprisoned subject:

> Ninka gaalka la siiyey
> Talyan loo garbadduubay
> Markab guudki la saaray
> Gacal sow ma lahayn?
> Waxa gaalada siiyey [...]
> Mowdku waa gar Ilaahoo
> Geeri Eebbe ma diidnee
> Waxaannaan ka gam'aynnin
> Cali Faahiye Geeddi
> Waa siday u galeenay.
>
> The man delivered to the unbelievers
> Given in chains to the Italians
> Imprisoned in the interior of a ship
> Has he no friends?
> Who has delivered him to the unbelievers? [...]
> Death is a divine norm
> We accept the death decreed by God

What we cannot bear is
Cali Faahiye Geeddi
How he has been mistreated!

The mistreatment experienced by Cali Faahiye Geeddi was also described more generally in a 1920 letter from the Sayid to C. F. Archer, the British governor of Somaliland, in which the Sayid protested his mistreatment by the Italians:

> Oh, Governor Archer! I am Seyyid Mohammed! I know you! When lately I was ill-treated by the Italian Government, who caused trouble between myself, the Mijjertein, the Hawiya, and the Ogaden by giving firearms to my enemies, I warned the Italian Government that I was offended with them on account of their ill-treatment, and that I had moved to the British side of the border to avoid all *fitna* (quarrels). [58]

In many of his poems, the Sayid also derided the Italians for treating with two Somali states, the Hobyo Sultanate and the Majeerteen Sultanate and their sultans Yusuf' Ali Yusuf and Uthman Mahmud respectively. Both these states agreed to become protectorates of the Italians. They were viewed by them as a buffer between the Daraawish state and the Italian colony further to the south. The havoc wrought by the Sayid on the Majeerteen and other Somali entities with whom the Sayid was at odds were an integral part of the family history of this chapter's coauthor, Abdiwahid Osman Haji. Abdiwahid's grandfather, Axmed Maxamed Haji Cadde, a member of the Silcis clan in Warsheikh, gave shelter to subjects of the Majeerteen sultanate fleeing in 1917 from the Sayid's incursions. One of these Majeerteen subjects was the coauthor's grandmother Aurala Abdulle of the Awrtable subclan of the Darod, who married Haji Cadde and gave birth to Abdiwahid's father, Osman Haji Ahmed.

The Sayid and Foreign Allies (1913–1918)

Sayid Mahamed, Lij Iyasu, and the World at War (1913–1916)

Many historical sources point to the correspondence between the Sayid and the young emperor-designate of Ethiopia Lij Yasu.[59] His ascension

as emperor designate in 1913 and his short-lived reign until his deposition in 1916 was a source of anxiety to the Italians on several fronts, the most obvious of which is their own domination in Eritrea and their long-standing interest in extending that domination over Ethiopia. However, due to the just-ended war between Italy and the Ottoman Empire and Italy's entrance into World War I on the side of the Allies in 1915, new anxieties arose about Lij Iyasu's sympathies toward the Muslim world. His father, Ras Mikael, was governor, and later Negus (or King) of Wollo and Tigray provinces and the principal power behind Lij Iyasu from his seat in the town of Dessie; he was also the son-in-law of the late Menelik II. Ras Mikael had been Oromo on his father's side and was born a Muslim with the name Mohammed Ali. Ras Mikael had converted to Christianity in 1875 and this was at the root of Lij Iyasu's ostensible sympathies toward the Islamic faith.

The exact extent of Lij Iyasu's Muslim sympathies is the subject of some debate; however, he indeed showed favor to his Muslim subjects and friends. This was profoundly unpopular both within the Amharic establishment of Ethiopia and with the European powers. Lij Iyasu's sympathies were not only sentimental—in 1914, he appointed Abdullahi Sadiq, a Harari Muslim, as governor of Ogaden. This move enraged both his royal advisors and the British and startled the Italians, who fretted about the influence of "the intrigues of Abdullai Sadik."[60] The latter appears to have played a central role in the exchanges between the young emperor designate and the Sayid, as well as other Somali resistance movements such as that of Sheikh Hassan Barsane.

With WWI's onset, the Italians and the British feared that Lij Iyasu's purported Islamic tendencies and the influence of Abdullahi Sadiq would lead to the entrance of independent Ethiopia in WWI on the side of the Ottomans and Germans. These were not the only fears of the colonialists, who also balked at "the prospect of an alliance of the Muslims of Ethiopia and northern Somalia to 'liberate' their lands from the Christians."[61] These fears preoccupied the Italians:

> Italian fears of a Muslim uprising were based, admittedly, on exaggerated news of events in Ethiopia. The evidence at the time seemed to justify the fears of the European Powers, and Lijj Iasu's actions after his deposition in maintaining sporadic contact with the Muslim elements of the eastern part of the Empire and of Somalia gave added life to European fears.[62]

In November 1915, shortly after Italy declares war against the Central Powers in the spring of 1915, the minister in Addis Ababa, Colli di Felizzano, wrote to the Minister of Foreign Affairs Sidney Sonnino: "The government of Addis Ababa is sincerely favourable to the Entente Powers, while the attitude of Ligg Jasu and Negus Mikael's attitude is more uncertain and obscure, and they are now attempting to use German-Turkish manoeuvres …"[63]

In another message between the two Italians, sent in May of 1916, just a few months before Lij Iyasu's deposition, fears around the young emperor designate's sympathies with the Central Powers also included mention of *intrighi col Mullah* (intrigues with the Mullah), suggesting an imagined potential Ethiopian-Daraawish-Turkish-German alliance was rearing its head in the minds of the Italian colonists. Lij Iyasu vehemently denied these suspicions, and it is important to note that there is little evidence that such an alliance between the Ethiopian ruler and the Sayid went beyond rumors confined to Italian correspondence. There is also little to suggest that such rumors led to a substantial change in Italian policy in the region. However, the existence of these rumors does point to the imaginative power that the Sayid held over the Europeans and the fact that he made efforts to exploit such fears. The letter recounts a conversation held between the Italian representative "with Ligg Jasu about the present situation and especially the question of Islamism and the maneuvers of the Turkish-Germans."[64] Di Felizzano stated to the Ethiopian ruler "in the clearest and sharpest terms my view of on the present situation in Abyssinia and the dangers both internal and external from his pro-Islamic stance and his intrigues with the Mullah […] and about the dangers arising from the [manoeuvres] of the Turkish-Germans" and that Lij Iyasu's diplomatic courtship with Italy's enemies "could be nothing but fatal both to him and to Abyssinia." Lij Iyasu, for his part, responded to these warnings by reassuring his interlocutor that "the accusation of pro-Islamic sentiments and of his intentions to convert to that religion has no foundation." He insisted that his extant relations with the Sayid were "instigated by the latter's insistence to demand Abyssinian protection," but that Abyssynia had not provided any. The emperor "openly acknowledged that the Turkish-German agents, in whom he declared that he had no confidence, are doing all they can to disturb their relations between Abyssinia and the Entente Powers"

but claimed that Abyssinia was firm in its commitment to neutrality and friendly ties with the Entente.

Colli di Felizzano goes on to state that he considers Lij Iyasu's statements "reassuring" and is confident in the support of the Ethiopians for the Entente. His letter indicates that Lij Iyasu's stated position on Muslims, at least to foreign representatives, was one of political expediency rather than personal allegiance. His favors toward his Muslim subjects were meted out primarily in order better to integrate them into the Ethiopian imperial power structure and to avoid insurrection. However, as also noted in the Felizzano's letter, such a position flew in the face of the long-standing norm among the Ethiopian elite, who had long "abandoned and persecuted" their Muslim subjects. Thus Lij Iyasu's sympathies, or at least overtures towards his Muslim subjects led to resentment from his and his father Ras Mikael's political rivals; rumors of his conversion to Islam, as well as a marriage alliance between himself and the Sayid's family, led to intractable opposition to his continued reign. On September 27, 1916, he was deposed by the Ethiopian ruling class and was forced to flee.[65]

Still, despite the likely exaggeration of Lij Iyasu's Islamic sympathies in the historical record and the emperor designate's own denials to Colli di Felizzano, it is certain he provided a certain degree of material support to the Sayid and the Daraawish movement, including "financial aid and arms to the Darwish, and sent a German arms technician, called Emil Kirsch, to Taleex to help the Darwish movement."[66]

The German gunsmith Kirsch appears to have been treated as a virtual prisoner by the Sayid and died of thirst trying to escape the Daraawiish headquarters. The story of a German who had fled internment in Djibouti and was sent by Lij Iyasu to aid the Sayid was one contributing factor in the anxiety of Britain and Italy surrounding the threat of the Sayid and his connections with the Central Powers, expanded further what follows.

The Sayid and the Ottomans

Despite the derisive stance taken by Sayid Maxamed Cabdulle Xasan toward speculation about his alliances with the Central Powers in his infamous 1917 letter to the British mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, there is ample evidence that the Sayid's sympathies and alliances

during World War I were with the Ottomans, and by extension the Germans. Upon their entry into the war, the Ottomans declared a holy war, or jihad, against the enemies of the Central Powers. The extent to which this affected Italian colonial administrations is debated, but it was undoubtedly on the minds of Italian authorities. As one Italian author from the fascist era put it, there was precedent for Italian worries about international allegiances between Muslim states, even if these threatened allegiances largely came to naught. The Italians "had to fear it for the first time, during the Italo-Turkish War of 1911–1912, when it was also proclaimed then and we were in a very delicate situation in Benadir."[67] However, from the Italian perspective, "nothing happened that disturbed the initiated cycle of territorial occupations and the strengthening of our authority over the protectorates of the North."[68]

Despite this denial of Ottoman influence, the Italians, as evidenced by the aforementioned correspondence concerning Lij Iyasu, still viewed Ottoman diplomacy as a threat. This was in no small part because, during World War I, the Italians considered the Sayid and the Daraawish movement a significant military menace to their colony in Somalia—this was not the case of an internal rebellion that they viewed as easily quashed but rather a competing sovereign in the region who posed an outside danger. This was displayed in one 1917 parliamentary debate in Italy, when Italian politicians were debating the boundaries of their colony. One parliamentarian argued against extending the boundary of the colony northward, both due to the limited Italian military resources during World War I, and the threat of the Daraawish, among other factors:

> And after all, even for those who are not military in military matters, it seems quite logical that it is more convenient to have extended the line of domination in such a way to include in our territory the various tribes […] subject to our sovereignty, instead of leaving them exposed to […] the tribes coming down from the north, from Ethiopia and from the territory of the Mullah and the Sultan of Hobyo[…] this occupation is dangerous, especially because the military forces are scarce, which have been reduced from 4,000 to 3,000.[69]

The Italian military and colonial forces, already stretched thin by major wars in 1911–1912 and 1915 onward, were harried by the Sayid and his followers throughout the war years, including the following battles

noted in just one 1929 history of Somalia published by the fascist Italian government.

Table 4.1: Conflict involving Italians and the Dervish Movement, 1916 and 1917

1916	
1 febbraio – Scontro dell'uadi Scilo coi dervisci	1 February – Uadi Scilo's clash with the dervishes
26 marzo – Scontro di Dubbo coi dervisci.	26 March – Dubbo's clash with the dervishes.
27 marzo – Attacco dervisci a Buloburti. Uccisione del cap. Battistella	27 March – Dervish attack on Buloburti. Killing of Capt. Battistella
21 giugno – Scontro di El Garas coi dervisci	21 June – Clash of El Garas with the dervishes
21 ottobre – Scontro di Gialalassi coi dervisci.	21 October – Gialalassi clashes with the dervishes.
1917	
16 febbraio – Scontro di Belet-Uèn coi dervisci (cap. Silvestri)	16 February – Clash of Belet-Uèn with the dervishes (Capt. Silvestri)

Source: Mario Grosso, *Cronologia della Somalia Italiana: Estratto dal N. 2 del Bolletino dell'Ufficio Storico* (Rome: Ufficio Storico del Comando di Stato Maggiore, 1929).

Throughout World War I, the Sayid waged such military attacks against both the British and Italians.[70] Thus, it was against the backdrop of this significant military anxiety about the threat of the Sayid's forces that Italy also worried about the support the Central Powers, particularly the Ottomans, could provide to exacerbate this threat. And though the dread of significant military support never materialized, Italian fears were not unfounded—the Sayid maintained an extensive correspondence with the Ottoman Empire, and was indeed appointed by the Ottomans as Emir of Somalia. This began in 1914, even before Italy had entered the war on the side of the Entente. The Sayid had heard the Ottoman call for Muslim jihad against the Entente. He "appealed to the Ottoman commander at Lehaj in Yemen for help, and an agreement signed by Hassan's envoy put his followers under Ottoman protection."[71] The Sayid also held "a

certain veneration for the Ottoman Sultan," and addressed him in a poem in which the Sayid refers to himself in the third person:[72]

> And he [the Sayid] turns to his dear friend
> Taking refuge with that pillar of religion
> Sultan of every victory
> Who lashes unbelievers
> Breaks their power.[73]

In 1917, this alliance was further confirmed when the Italians "apprehended Sheikh Axmed Shirwac Maxamed [a member of the Daraawish] and found a document from the Turkish government giving assurance of their support and nominating Sayid Maxamed as the Amir of Somalia."[74] However, as the late date of this occurrence suggests, the Sayid "over estimated the help he could receive [...] from Turkey who was at its declining time in history."[75] The Sayid was still discursively drawing upon his possible alliance with the Ottomans late into the war, when, for example, he wrote a letter to the Italian governor of Mogadishu containing references to the Central Powers and veiled threats meant to ensure Italian cooperation:

> I said to the dervishes: O dervishes, you know that between the Italians and us, there are oaths and their and our territory is near. The territory of the Germans and the Turks is far away. The good and the evil that the Italians can do to us is from nearby: the good and the evil that [the Germans and Turks] can do to us is from far, my brothers; reflect, as a rule, that it is better to keep what you have in your hands than to go in search of what you do not have.[76]

British intelligence in Sudan reported that the "Mullah is being incited to action by Turkish emissaries from Abyssinia."[77] Any discussion of the Sayid's wartime alliances, however, needs to take into account the agency and autonomy of the Somali movement and not exaggerate the involvement or influence of the Central Powers. The Sayid, it should be recalled, had been fighting since 1899, and his resistance (as well as that of other Somali leaders) during World War I was a strategic discursive maneuver on his part, rather than due to the instigation of "Turkish and German propaganda," as was so often argued by the colonial powers.[78] Indeed,

"because Hassan's movement had been active long before the War, officials could not manipulate the idea of Ottoman and German involvement with Hassan as much as they did with his co-religionists" in other regions. Of course, this agency was on full display in the infamous 1917 letter in which the Sayid offered a "half-denial … assert[ing] that he was a power in his own right":

> And you know, and I know, what the Turks have done to you and what the Germans have done to you, you of the British Government. The suggestion is that I was weak and had to look outside for friends; and if, indeed, this were true and I had to look for assistance, it is only because of the British, and the trouble you have given me. It is you who have joined with all the peoples of the world, with harlots, with wastrels, and with slaves, because you are so weak. But if you were strong, you would have stood by yourself as we do, independent and free.[79]

Finally, Italian official colonial correspondence is replete with speculations and anxieties about potential alliances between the Sayid and the Central Powers, as well as the Sayid's discursive prowess. While the Italians noted the lack of "reliable information to ascertain the existence of direct action by Turkey or Germany: to win the Mullah to their side, they note with worry and seriousness the Sayid's "propaganda," including his "main persuasive arguments [about] Ligg Jasu's conversion to Islamism and the support of Turkey, whose fantastic victories and imminent conquest of Egypt and Aden were announced."[80]

The records mention more than a few times the Sayid's discourse as a worry to the Italian officials, including his deft use of questionable news items, such as spreading "rumors that Ligg lasu's conversion to Islamism is near" as well as the impending unity of "all Muslims in Somalia and Ethiopia to come together to liberate territory from Christian domination" and "the news that Emperor William has become a Muslim."[81] In another 1916 letter, the Italians accuse the Daraawish of "intensive propaganda work of a predominantly religious nature, sending letters to chiefs, holy men and notables, with the well-known phrases of incitement against the Christians" as well as exaggerated accounts of "fantastastic victories of the Turks," of a mythical alliance between the Sayid, the Abyssinians, and the Central Powers, and the repeated tale of the emperors of both Germany and Abyssinia coming into the fold of Islam.[82]

Conclusion

This chapter aims to provide a preliminary overview of Sayid Maxamed Cabdulle Xasan's activities and interactions during World War I, with a focus on the Italian colonial venture in the Somali territories. We have focused on offering a broad outline of this understudied era and area of the Sayid's movement and sought to offer some of the equally understudied Italian perspective, which is often overshadowed by the more prominent British sources. This subject would benefit from a more in-depth and systemic study of the multilingual sources related to the Sayid's World War I activities, including Arabic, Turkish, Somali, German, and French sources related to the Daraawish in this period. Furthermore, further analysis of the Italian sources that take into account colonial ideologies of race, primitivism, and irredentism is required. Though the struggle of Sayid Maxamed Cabdulle Xasan is by far the best-known of anti-colonial Somali resistance movements, it is by no means the only one that took place in this era, and a more thoroughgoing examination of the many facets of anti-Italian struggles is needed, including the Bimaal resistance (1896–1926) and the Hiranian resistance led by Sheikh Hassan Barsane (1853–1924), both of which overlapped with World War I.

The conclusion of World War I was difficult for the Daraawish movement because it meant that colonialist military strength could now turn its attention to the colony. As Caroselli put it in decidedly triumphalist tones in a later text, "With the victorious end of the European war and the conclusion of peace, a period of waiting ended for Italian and British Somalia as well, in which the forces of the Colony alone had had to face the Mullahs and Dervishes."[83] However, Italian authorities at the time were still hesitant to expand their colonies until the Daraawish threat had been removed. This is evident from Italian correspondence in the postwar era. For example, a 1919 letter from Rossi, the minister for the colonies, to Tittoni, the minister for foreign Affairsaffairs, in the context of the Italian diplomatic disappointment in Paris (the Treaty of Versailles), expresses reluctance to expand the colony in Somalia further:

> Since Your Excellency, faced with the painful situation that you have found in Paris…I beg [you] to allow me to insist on the idea that, since we do not have French Somaliland, it is not convenient for us to buy British Somaliland, which is nothing but sand. Your Excellency knows that our

> protectorates in northern Somalia are for us exclusively a buffer between Benadir and Mullah territory, and that our happy sultanate policy is based on the concept of the almost complete defence of Benadir by protectorates. To buy only British Somaliland therefore means dangerously shifting the basis of our political situation in Somalia without adding any value to our possessions [...] Rather, therefore, than lose the good to acquire the bad, nothing is better.[84]

Thus, the Italians sought to maintain their policy of Somali protectorates as a buffer to their core Benadir colony, a policy motivated by the need to insulate Benadir from the Daraawish. This concern was not to last, however, as in 1919, the Sayid was defeated by a combination of British land and air forces and died of sickness shortly thereafter in 1920.[85] Thus, one of the most determined and long-standing resistance movements to European domination in the Somali territories ended, one which complicated colonial presence in Somalia throughout the twentieth century's first global war.

Notes

1 As with the Sayid's name, we have chosen to use the Somali name, Daraawish, for the Sayid's movement.

2 *A tariqa*, meaning "path" in Arabic, is an Islamic spiritual order practicing the spiritual or mystical dimensions of Islam, which are often called *tassawuf*, or Sufism in English. In the era of the present study, there were two major, and rival, branches in Somalia: the long-standing Qadiriyya, named after the Muslim saint Abdul Qadir Gilani (1078–1166), and the East African off-shoots of the order founded by the Moroccan Ahmad Ibn Idris al-Fasi (1760–1837), the Idrisiyya. In Somalia, the Idrisiyya became the Ahmadiyya, Dandarāwiyya, and Salihiyya. Sayid Maxamed Cabdulle Xasan was a proponent of tariqa Salihiyya, named after its founder, the Sudanese Sayyid Muhammad Salih (1854–1919). The Mad Mullah: Mohamed Haji Mukhtar and Margaret Castagno, Historical Dictionary of Somalia (Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2003), 196: "The first mention of this moniker was in an official report in 1899, in which Somaliland Consul-General J. Hayes-Sadler wrote, 'the Mullah has gone religious mad.'"

3 John P. Slight, "British and Somali Views of Muhammad Abdullah Hassan's 'Jihad,' 1899–1920," *Bildhaan: An International Journal of Somali Studies* 10, no. 7 (2011): 22–24.

4 Douglas Jardine, *The Mad Mullah of Somaliland* (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1923), 249.

5 Yaasiin Cismaan Keenadiid, *Ina Abdille Xasan e sua attivita letteraria* (Naples: Instituto Universitario Orientale, 1984), 40.

6 Robert Gerwarth and Erez Manela, eds., *Empires at War: 1911–1925* (Oxford: University Press, 2014), 47; Robert L. Hess, "The 'Mad Mullah' and Northern Somalia," *Journal of African History* 5, no. 3

(1964): 431, Alberto Giaccardi, "L'Italia ed il Mulla nel Paese dei Somali," *Rivista delle colonie italiane* 10 (1931): 790.

7 Gerwarth and Manela, *Empires at War*, 47–48.

8 Gabay are a Somali poetic form.

9 For more on the conflict between the Salihiyya and the Qadariyya see B. G. Martin, "Muslim Politics and Resistance to Colonial Rule: Shaykh Uways B. Muhammad al-Barawi and the Qadiriyya Brotherhood in East Africa," *Journal of African History* 10, no. 3 (1969): 471–86; F. Battera, "Le confraternite islamiche somale di fronte al colonialismo (1890–1920)," *Africa* 53, no. 2 (1998): 155–85; Scott Reese, *Renewers of the Age: Holy Men and Social Discourse in Colonial Benaadir* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 174–84; Scott Reese, "The Best of Guides: Sufi Poetry and Alternate Discourses of Reform in Early Twentieth-Century Somalia," *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 14, no. 1 (2001): 49–68.

10 Slight, "British and Somali Views of Muhammad Abdullah Hassan's 'Jihad,' 1899–1920," 22–24.

11 Abdiwahid Osman Haji, *Somalia: A Chronology of Historical Documents: 1827–2000* (Gloucester, ON: A. O. Haji, 2001), 35–39.

12 Hassan Omar Mahadallah, "The Origins and Essence of Somali Nationalism" (PhD diss., Tulane University, 1997), 40. Filonardi was the first Italian governor in Somalia, from 1889 to 1893, and was the leader of Societa' Filonardi, the company responsible for the early administration of the Benadir region on Italy's behalf.

13 Mahadallah, "Origins and Essence of Somali Nationalism," 40.

14 Roy Irons, *Churchill and the Mad Mullah of Somaliland: Betrayal and Redemption, 1899–1921* (South Yorkshire: Pen and Sword Military, 2013), 26.

15 Mahadallah, "Origins and Essence of Somali Nationalism," 72.

16 Mahadallah, "idem," 78.

17 Abdisalam M. Issa-Salwe, "The Battles between the Daraawiish and the Colonialists 1903–1920," in *The Collapse of the Somali State: The Impact of the Colonial Legacy* (London: Routledge, 1996), 31.

18 Abbink, "Dervishes, Moryaan and Freedom Fighters," 342.

19 Issa-Salwe, "Battles between The Daraawiish and The Colonialists 1903–1920," 32.

20 Mukhtar and Castagno, *Historical Dictionary of Somalia*, 113.

21 Abdi Sheik Abdi, *Divine Madness: Mohammed Abdulle Hassan* (1856–1920) (London: Zed Books, 1993), 159

22 Mukhtar and Castagno, *Historical Dictionary of Somalia*, 124; Haji, "Somalia: A Chronology."

23 Idem., 197.

24 Mahadallah, "Origins and Essence of Somali Nationalism," 78.

25 Mukhtar and Castagno, *Historical Dictionary of Somalia*, 124.

26 Atti Parlamentari, Camera dei Deputati, Legislatura XXII, 1e Sessione, March 15, 1907, 12858.

27 Mukhtar and Castagno, *Historical Dictionary of Somalia*, 197.

28 Idem.

29 Abbink, "Dervishes, Moryaan and Freedom Fighters," 342.

30 Slight, "British and Somali Views of Muhammad Abdullah Hassan's 'Jihad,' 1899–1920," 17.

31 Abbink, "Dervishes, Moryaan and Freedom Fighters," 342.

32 Thomas Nelson Page, *Italy and the World War* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920), 10.

33 . Hess, "'Mad Mullah' and Northern Somalia," 415–33.

34 Francesco S. Caroselli, *Ferro e Fuoco in Somalia* (Rome: Ministero delle Colonie, 1931), 300.

35 Slight, "British and Somali Views of Muhammad Abdullah Hassan's 'Jihad,' 1899–1920," 21.

36 Ibid..

37 Atti Parlamentari, Camera dei Deputati, Legislatura XXII, 1e Sessione, 20 marzo, 1908, 20601.

38 Ibid., 20603, 20601.
39 Atti Parlamentari, Camera dei Deputati, Legislatura XXII, 1e Sessione, March 20, 1908, 20601.
40 Ibid., 20601.
41 Ibid., 20608.
42 Ibid., 20604.
43 Ibid., 20610.
44 Ibid., 20616.
45 Ibid., 20617.
46 Caroselli, *Ferro e Fuoco*, 246.
47 Ibid., 247.
48 Sheik-Abdi, Divine Madness, 202.
49 Ibid.
50 Keenadiid, *Ina Abdille Xasan e sua attivita letteraria*, 115.
51 Ibid.
52 Ibid.
53 "Il Sayid, nei suoi attacchi anti-europei, non risparmio naturalmente l'Italia. Violente frecciate anti-italiane, como queste, si trovano qua e la nei suoi 'gabay'." Keenadiid, *Ina Abdille Xasan e sua attivita letteraria*, 148.
54 "Alla protesta del Sayid, l'autorita inglese rispose che la questione non era di sua comptenza, dato che il sambuco era stato catturato dall'autorita italiana." Ibid.
55 Mahadallah, "Origins and Essence of Somali Nationalism," 40.
56 "Ciise Dhoollawaa: Majerteen. of the Cismaan Maxamuud branch. He was for a long time a zealous Darwiish and married a sister of the Sayid … he was captured by the Italian authority who exiled him to 'Asab in Eritrea, from whence he was set free only after the disappearance of the Dervish Movement." In Keenadiid, *Ina Abdille Xasan e sua attivita letteraria*, 147.
57 "The Darwiish Cali Faahiye Geeddi, Majeerteen, of the Cali Saleebaan, known among the Daraawiish as 'Calangube' ('calan': flag; 'gube': the one who burns), had the order to burn the Italian flag in Qandala, in the former Sultanate of Migiurtini, then Italian Protectorate. He executed the order, was arrested and handed over to the Italians." In Keenadiid, 240–41.
58 Douglas James Jardine, *The Mad Mullah of Somaliland* (London: H. Jenkins, 1923), 302.
59 Sheik-Abdi, *Divine Madness*, 159.
60 *Stato maggiore esercito ufficio storico. Somalia: vol. 2*, dal 1914 al 1934. Rome: 1960, 333.
61 Hess, "'Mad Mullah' and Northern Somalia," 17.
62 Ibid., 17–18.
63 Ministero Degli Affari Esteri, *I Documenti Diplomatici Italiani Quinta Serie: 1914–1918*, vol. 5 (24 Ottobre 1915–17 Giugno 1916) (Rome: Instituto Poligrafico e Zecca Dello Stato, 1988), 70.
64 Il Ministro ad Addis Abeba, Colli Di Felizzano, al Ministro Degli Esteri, Sonnino, Asmara, May 25, 1916, Ministero Degli Affari Esteri, *I Documenti Diplomatici Italiani Quinta Serie: 1914–1918*, vol. 5, 633–34.
65 Hess, "'Mad Mullah' and Northern Somalia," 17.
66 Abdisalam Issa-Salwe, "The Failure of The Daraawiish State, The Clash between Somali Clanship and State System" (5th International Congress of Somali Studies, December 1993), 10. See also Sheik-Abdi, *Divine Madness*, 160.
67 Caroselli, *Ferro e Fuoco*, 216.
68 Ibid.
69 *Atti Parlamentari, Camera dei Deputati, Legislatura XXIV*, 1e Sessione, March 21, 1915, 7796–97.

70 See "Le operazioni italiane coutro i dervisci dal 1915 al 1920," in A. Gaibi, *Il Mullah. Breve storia di un falso messia* (Bologna: L. Cappelli Editore, maggio 1927), 222–23.
71 Slight, "British and Somali Views of Muhammad Abdullah Hassan's 'Jihad,' 1899–1920," 23–24.
72 Ibid.
73 Ibid.
74 Issa-Salwe, *The Darwish Resistance*, 10.
75 Ibid.
76 Caroselli, *Ferro e Fuoco*, 241–42.
77 Slight, "British and Somali Views of Muhammad Abdullah Hassan's 'Jihad,' 1899–1920," 22–24.
78 Ibid.
79 Abdi Sheik-Abdi, "Somali Nationalism," 659.
80 *Stato maggiore esercito ufficio storico. Somalia*, vol. 2, 360, 363, 371.
81 Ibid., 360.
82 Ibid., 363.
83 Caroselli, *Ferro e Fuoco*, 246.
84 Documento 130, Roma, 19 luglio, Rossi a Tittoni T., "Assenza di convenienza per l'Italia di acquisire territori come il Somaliland britannico, il Borcu, il Tibesti e l'Ennedi" [Lack of convenience for Italy to acquire territories such as British Somaliland, Borcu, Tibesti and Ennedi], Ministero Degli Affari Esteri, *I Documenti Diplomatici Italiani Sesta Serie: 1918–1922:*, vol. 4 (23 giugno–25 novembre 1919) (Roma: Istituto Poligrafico E Zecca Dello Stato, 2017), 112.
85 Sheik-Abdi, *Divine Madness*, 163–73.

CHAPTER 5

Treatment of Enemy Subjects and Social Unrest in Nigeria during World War I

Olisa Godson Muojama

Introduction

This chapter examines the treatment of enemy subjects and firms in British West Africa during the First World War. It focuses on how the treatment of enemy firms and subjects instigated the Kwale uprising in the Sapele District of Warri Province of Southern Nigeria during this period. To do so, the chapter examines the presence of German and Austro-Hungarian firms in Nigeria before the outbreak of the war to understand the impact of the promulgation of Trading with the Enemy legislation, which prohibited enemy subjects from trading in West Africa, on them and the local response. It highlights how the legislation's amendment, which allowed the resumption of trade by the enemy firms and subjects, resulted in social disturbance in Warri Province. It further argues that the disturbance stemmed from the belief among the natives that England had been beaten in Europe and that the British Government in West Africa was at an end. In addition, the propaganda and false information about the war spread among the natives by the enemy subjects heightened the uncertainties in the local population. This study fills a significant gap in the body of knowledge on the social movements in Nigeria. Furthermore, it enables us to rethink the impact of the First World War on non-European theaters, especially colonial territories, with implication for First World War studies and for our understanding of the treatment of enemy subjects in wartime and social unrest in Nigeria.

During the First World War, nearly all countries involved interned at least some enemy subjects within their territory and imposed extensive temporary restrictions on their property and economic activities.[1] According to Panikos Panayi, the war marked a major turning point in the relationship between minorities and majorities throughout the world,

legitimizing persecution of those seen as having connections with the enemy in particular.[2] Stefan Mans and Panikos Panayi have argued that during this period, not only was Britain the epicenter of global mass internment and deportation operations but the British Empire also played a key role in developing civilian internment as a central element of warfare and national security on a global scale.[3] Germans, Austro-Hungarians, Turks, and Bulgarians who had settled in Britain and its overseas territories were deemed to be a potential danger to the realm through their ties with the Central Powers and classified as "enemy aliens." A complex set of wartime legislation, such as the Trading with the Enemy Act and Alien Restriction Order, imposed limitations on their freedom of movement, expression, and possession. This wartime legislation was also implemented in British West Africa, which was not a theater of war.

Apart from altering the relationships between the belligerent nations, wars also occasion some internal dislocations in the economies and social well-being of the warring countries, sometimes leading to internal uprisings. In this vein, the economic contraction brought about by the First World War led to disturbances in some colonial territories, including Nigeria.[4] For instance, demonstrations occurred in Nigeria's cocoa belt due to the closure of the international cocoa markets in Central Europe, which affected Nigerian cocoa exports and reduced the earnings of local cocoa farmers.[5] Added to this was the Kwale uprising in Warri Province, instigated by the treatment of enemy firms (German and Austrian) and the intrigues and propaganda of enemy subjects on parole.

Studies on the treatment of enemy subjects in colonial territories during the First World War have omitted the British West African experience. Mahon Murphy has examined the treatment of enemy subjects in Germany's West African colonies of Togo and Cameroon.[6] Daniel Steinbach has dealt with South-West Africa (Namibia).[7] Similarly, Daniella Caglioti has examined various cases from Morocco to Angola and Mozambique.[8] Stefan Manz and Panikos Panayi have explored South Africa and India.[9] Work has yet to be devoted to British West Africa, where legislation on treating enemy subjects and property was implemented. A few studies that have dealt with the wartime uprising in Nigeria have tangentially mentioned the Kwale disturbance without devoting adequate attention to the incident.[10] How did the treatment of enemy firms and subjects contribute to the Kwale uprising in the Sapele

District of Warri Province of Southern Nigeria? What was the nature of the uprising? What were its causes and consequences? And what was the colonial Government's reaction to the incident?

German and Austrian Presence in Nigeria before the First World War

Understanding the German and Austrian activities in West Africa is essential to appreciating the presence of the enemy in Nigeria during the First World War. The German–West African encounter has been an agelong process. Even before the official announcement at Cape Town on April 25, 1884, that Germany had entered the colonial scramble, German-speaking people had operated in West Africa in various capacities as explorers, traders, and missionaries.[11] For instance, Courlanders, a major German enterprise in West Africa, operated on the River Gambia in the 1650s and early 1670s. The Brandenburg African Company had possessions on the Gold Coast between 1712 and 1714. Between the 1830s and 1840s, several Hamburg merchants and shipowners, notably J. Eppfenhausen and G. Wappaus, established regular commercial links with West Africa.

Similarly, the German firms of Adulf Woermann and Jantzen and Thormbahlen established chains of "factories" along the West African coast, from Liberia to Gabon. As a result, German commerce became so dominant in Cameroon that in 1882, Woermann initiated a regular shipping line in West Africa.[12] In the early nineteenth century, German missionaries and traders operated in West Africa. Apart from the Basel Mission, which began work in what is now southeastern Ghana in 1828, the Norddeutsche Missionsgesellschaft began working in the same location, just east of the Basel Mission, in 1849 and eventually spread into what later became southern Togo.[13] In the specific case of Nigeria, Hamburg merchants had begun to operate in Lagos, which constituted the center of their activities in 1848, even before Lagos became a British Colony in 1861.[14]

It was not until 1884, many years after the German presence in West Africa, that Germany officially entered the colonial race. For instance, on July 5, 1884, Dr. Gustav Nachtigal drafted a circular in which he informed the English gentlemen residing and trading in Cameroons that

a treaty with the King and Chiefs of the River had been concluded and carefully legalized by the German Council of Gabon, by Mr. Eduard Schmidt acting for Mr. C. Woermann and Mr. Jon Vans acting for Messrs. Jantzen and Thormahlen, both of Hamburg.[15] Nachtigal noted that the treaty's character had caused him to hoist the imperial German flag in that country and declare it under the sovereignty of his Majesty, the Emperor of Germany. According to Nachtigal:

> This act affects in no way the English trade, full provisions having been made for the same. I, therefore, venture to hope that the same cordial relations which have always existed among the English and German firms in this place will continue in the same friendly way.[16]

Similarly, Gottlieb Leonhard Gaiser, a Hamburg merchant, owned a trading presence in the British colony of Lagos and intended to expand his palm oil operations to the east along the coast and into the interior. As a result, he engaged some agents, notably the explorer Gottlob Krause, to negotiate with local authorities. Krause and Heinrich Bey, the German Consul and Agent for G. L. Gaiser, initiated amicable talks with the rulers of Mahin, a coastal region east of Lagos on the Bight of Benin, in May 1884. A trade station was subsequently established in Akpata. Bey visited Gustav Nachtigal, the Imperial Commissioner for German West Africa, in Lagos on August 23, 1884, and attempted to transform these amicable agreements into sovereign treaties. Bey towed the firm's steamer *Tender* into the Artijere lagoon on December 15, 1884, where it remained as a hulk.[17]

On January 8 and 29, 1885, the Agents for G. L. Gaiser obtained from Amapetu of Mahin a cession in perpetuity to the firm of an area covering 180 square miles of the Mahin coast and a request for the protection of the German Empire. In October 1885, the German emperor, having failed to ratify the treaty and having been compensated by Great Britain with a piece of land in the vicinity of Rio del Rey, Amapá, made a new treaty with the British Government, this time, and placed his country under its protection. The rights of G. L. Gaiser, such as they were, were specially preserved in this treaty.[18]

By 1914, there were nineteen German and Austro-Hungarian firms in Nigeria. These included: L. Pagenstecher & Co.; G.L. Gaiser; Witt and Busch, Woermann Linie, J.W. Jackel & Co., Ring & Company, Bey & Zimmer,

Niger Benue Transport Company, Deutsche Kamerun Gesellschaft, German West African Trading Co., Merterns & Co., Behrens & Wehner, Morin & Co., Sachse & Co., Paul Meyer & Co., Paul Guericke & Co., Holt Man & Co, Lohmann & Vielor Co.[19] Overall, German firms were a strategic and important factor in Nigeria's economy on the eve of the First World War. For example, the Annual Report on Customs and Trade of Nigeria for 1914 shows that Germany supplied over 11 percent of the imported goods, 44 percent of Nigerian produce was exported to German markets, and nearly 27 percent of the total trade was conducted with Germany.[20] One German firm exported 32 percent of the palm kernels, 45 percent of palm oil, 21 percent of cocoa, 12 percent of shea nuts, and 8 percent of the hides, and German ships carried over 20 percent of the actual tonnage of trade, amounting in 1913 to over 177,000 tons.[21] This was the situation when the First World War broke out in August 1914.

The First World War and the Prohibition of the German and Austrian Firms in Nigeria

A state of war existed between the United Kingdom and Germany from 11 p.m. on August 4, 1914, and between the United Kingdom and the Dual Monarchy of Austro-Hungary from midnight on August 12, 1914.[22] Thus, the Trading with the Enemy Proclamation was issued on August 5 in relation to Germany, followed by the Proclamation of August 12, 1914, which applied the Proclamation of August 5 to Austria-Hungary. The position of enemy properties and subjects in belligerent countries, as well as the prevention of intercourse between them and their citizens, was an important concern of the Trading with the Enemy Act. As a result, enemy subjects in Britain were prohibited from trading and were also rounded up and interned.

The Trading with the Enemy legislation was domesticated and implemented in the British colonies and Dependencies, including West Africa. Thus, on August 14, 1914, a circular was sent to Kano, northern Nigeria, stating that, as of 6:00 a.m. on August 15, Germans and Austrians in Kano were prohibited from trading. A similar circular was also issued in Lagos, such that, from 6:00 a.m. on August 15, 1914, Germans and Austrians in Lagos were prohibited from trading. The circular maintained that steps should be taken by the Inspector General of Police, Lagos, to seal and

lock up their respective stores. Once this instruction had been carried out, armed guards should be placed over the stores of each German and Austrian trading firm. The circular was also sent out for the guidance of the officers administering provinces throughout Nigeria.[23] For instance, the letter to the District Officer, Badagri, dated August 17, 1914, noted:

> No German firms are to be allowed to trade in any commodity. The factories should be closed and sealed and a Police Guard should be placed over them. Any foodstuffs which they may contain should be transferred to an English firm at a price to be approved by you, except such foodstuffs as you may consider it reasonable for them to retain for their own use. Immediate steps should also be taken by you to stop any launches or German River boats belonging to firms in your district from running.[24]

The German and Austrian subjects were not only prohibited from trading. They were also held as POWs and were confined to Zungeru and Kaduna in the northern part of Nigeria. At that stage, the internment camp in Ibadan had not yet been established. However, there were some exceptions to this prohibition, occasioned by the exigencies of the time, coupled with the petitions from some firms. For instance, on August 17, 1914, an agent of A. Sachse & Co in Lagos wrote to the Administrator F. S. James asking for permission to open his stores, arguing that they were simply an indent firm that took orders from the Natives on order sheets and against the deposit, and all these goods were sent out from home and invoiced direct to the respective customers so that he was only acting as a middleman by delivering the goods and taking payment. He begged to assure the administrator that his firm did not import any goods whatsoever for sale, either wholesale or retail, maintaining that such an indent business should not be placed on the same level as firms that imported goods to sell for their account. As a rule, they delivered directly from the Customs Warehouse, but of course, if clients were not ready to take them up, they were forced to store them, and for this purpose, they had several stores that contained nothing but goods for clients.[25] In response, the administrator noted that there was no objection to his store being opened to deliver goods that might be consigned to his clients at Lagos. It must, however, be understood that no retail business of any sort was to be undertaken, maintaining that goods shipped before the declaration of war to the order of a British subject

might be delivered, provided that the goods were of British manufacture and shipped from a British port.[26]

Similarly, on August 21, 1914, another German firm, Ring & Co., formerly Ring & Starcke, builders and contractors, wrote to Colonel Moorhouse, Government House, Lagos, asking to be granted an interview with their partner, Mr. W. Hartwig, who should like to see him with regards to a building contract for a British firm, Messrs. Paterson Zochonis & Co. Ltd. Zaria, and also about other agreements they had with the Nigerian Railway for Kaduna and Port Harcourt.[27] The administrator agreed to grant the interview at the Government House at 10:30 a.m. on the following day, August 22, 1914. After the interview, the company wrote another letter dated September 14, requesting the administrator instruct the Railway Authorities at Ebute Metta, in Lagos, as well as Port Harcourt, to pay monies due to the work company done in their workshops in Lagos and at Port Harcourt, to pay Mr. Gottlieb Reinann, the Swiss employee, whom the company left in charge of its business during the absence of Mr. Hartwig who had to proceed to Minna as prisoner of war.

In a letter dated August 22, 1914, the Governor's Deputy A. G. Boyle informed the lieutenant governor of Northern Provinces that permission had been given to Messrs. Ring & Co., a German firm, to continue a contract into which they had entered with Messrs. Paterson & Zochonis for certain buildings at Zaria, and that the work in question should be under the charge of an English foreman.[28] In a similar letter, F. S. James informed the general manager of Nigerian Railway, Ebute Metta, that the Government had granted Messrs. Ring & Co. permission to carry out their contracts with the Eastern Railway at Port Harcourt and Kaduna. It was understood that a sum of £200 was due to Messrs. Ring & Co. on a contract already completed. This amount should be paid over to Messrs. Russel & Co., who were authorized to receive it on behalf of Messrs. Ring & Co.[29]

Apart from these few exceptions, all enemy firms were sealed up and prohibited from trading and operating in Nigeria, and the enemy subjects were interned. However, realizing the economic implications of keeping German subjects and firms out of the Nigerian market, the colonial Government elected to review this policy, and after a month, German and Austrian firms and subjects were allowed to operate again under certain restrictions. This decision to allow the enemy subjects and firms to resume operations had some consequences, leading to its reversal.

The Resumption of Trade by Enemy Firms and the Social Uprising in Southern Nigeria

As has been seen, German firms were a strategic and vital factor in Nigeria's economy on the eve of the First World War, and one-third of Nigerian trade was in the hands of German traders.[30] Thus, goods paid for by British businesses, which German firms had not shipped before the war, were no longer shipped once it broke out. These enemy firms had been prohibited from trading and were also considered for liquidation. The affected British merchants began raising claims against the firms.[31] All these factors contributed to the review of the policy In this section, we look at the resumption of trade by the German and Austrian firms and subjects in West Africa after the initial prohibition and the social disturbance engendered by this policy reversal.

A proclamation titled "The Trading with the Enemy Proclamation no. 2" was issued on September 9, 1914. It contained an amendment to the Trading with the Enemy Proclamation of August 5 and paragraph 2 of the Proclamation of August 12, which applied the Proclamation of August 5 to Austria-Hungary. This amendment was published in the Nigerian *Gazette Extraordinary* on Friday, September 18, 1914. By this amendment, German and Austrian-Hungarian subjects in West Africa would no longer be regarded as enemies. On the face of it, the amended proclamation was the outcome of representations made by the British suppliers in the United Kingdom to whom enemy firms owed money. The critical feature of the new regulations to be considered locally is paragraph (2) on page 1, which describes "enemy" as:

> Any person or body of persons of whatever nationality resident or carrying on business in the enemy country, but does not include persons of enemy nationality who are neither resident nor carrying on business in the enemy country. In case of incorporated bodies, enemy character attaches only to those incorporated in the enemy country.[32]

Similarly, paragraph (5) of page 5 reads as follows: "provided always that where an enemy had a branch locally situated in British, Allied or Neutral territory, not being neutral territory in Europe, transactions by or with such branch should not be treated as transactions by or with an enemy."[33]

Notwithstanding this amendment, it must be acknowledged that under

the instructions received from the Secretary of State, all German "reservists" should be arrested because this class must be considered enemies who, if left undisturbed, would likely take up arms against the British. Thus, irrespective of the proviso relating to local branches by which they could continue trading, the individual employees who were German and Austrian reservists could not do so. Only those Germans who were not reservists but were detained in the country by orders from home could be allowed to continue trading under certain restrictions. Put differently, if the local branches of enemy firms could reopen their factories for trade, it would be necessary for specific steps to be taken to preclude the possibility of the proceeds of any realization of local stocks of merchandise finding their way indirectly to the enemy country, say either in the form of produce or cash to Rotterdam or another neutral port. This was expressly contained in the Secretary of State's telegram of September 14, 1914, which stated as follows: "You should consider whether any steps should be taken to control local branches of Sache's and other enemy firms not only to protect the British traders having dealings with such branches but also to prevent commercial intercourse either directly or indirectly with enemy territory."

No control could be considered adequate if it did not include complete supervision of the cash or produce receipts of the German or Austrian firms. This necessarily strict supervision could only be rendered feasible by appointing a British official at each trading factory to whom all cash receipts would be handed and who would take charge of any produce supplied to the enemy firm's Agent. Unless this were done, it would be possible for the foreign agents, either themselves or through a native, to send money to a correspondent doing business with the firm in Holland for transmission to the firm's principals in Germany or Austria. Or they could ship produce to Rotterdam with a view to the proceeds being remitted to the enemy country.

To ensure this safeguard and to put appropriate measures in place, a committee was appointed on September 25, 1914, to examine all the variables and determine whether the enemy subjects and firms should be allowed to resume trading and the conditions under which that could be carried out. The committee's report was ready on October 1, 1914. The committee had reason to believe that large sums of money were owed by natives in Nigeria to the local branches of enemy firms, and the question arose as to whether the collection of these debts could be

legally enforced. The committee suggested, among other things, that the advice of the Hon. Attorney General should be sought on this phase of the question. In the opinion of the members, the enemy firms should be allowed to collect debts owed to them so that they might be enabled to discharge their own liabilities.[34] The Secretary of State asked that, in the event of it being necessary to subject any class of business or any individual trader to special restrictions or supervision, special measures should be taken, and a telegraphic report should be sent to him stating the names of the firms and traders affected. If the Governor approved, in the main, of the suggestions put forward by the committee, it would be necessary to ascertain from the Germans and Austrians, now confined in Zungeru and Kaduna, whether they were prepared to resume trading under strict restrictions set forth. If so, they could be permitted to return to Lagos and other locations (i.e., Calabar, other parts, Zaria, Kano, and other Railway centers) where they had factories. The idea was that these people should be encouraged to resume trading to have a chance of their liabilities being discharged locally.[35]

Thus, forty German traders from Zungeru and Minna were scheduled to arrive in Lagos on October 8; ten others arrived from Kaduna. According to the Governor's decision, they were to be allowed to trade with the following restrictions: they could not transmit money or produce goods except to the United Kingdom; nor could they obtain goods and cargo except from the UK. Their movement should be restricted to certain areas. They should not proceed beyond Five Cowrie Creek and the MacGregor Canal, or the Railway area at Ebute Metta. They should report to the police twice, certainly once, a day, and they were not allowed out after 9 p.m.[36]

Following this decision, a telegram dated October 9, 1914, declared that enemy firms were now allowed to trade, provided they did not directly or indirectly trade with Germany or Austria. They could not remit money or produce except to the United Kingdom and could only import cargo from the United Kingdom. They were not allowed to have any arms, ammunition, or gunpowder, whether for trading purposes or not. Their stocks of gunpowder should be sold to English firms under the supervision of the Secretary of Southern Provinces. In terms spelled out by the telegram of October 12, Germans were not allowed to resume trade at places where the conditions for reporting could not be met owing to the absence of a British official. There was no objection to native clerks

taking charge of these small buying stations.[37] Germans on parole would not return to Calabar, so there was no question of their resuming trade at Calabar or Oron for the present.

The Kwale Uprising in the Warri Province of Southern Nigeria

The resumption of trade by the German and Austrian firms and subjects led to an uprising in Kwale, Sapele District of the Warri Province, on October 17, 1914, resulting in the murder of two native court clerks and other Government employees. The Abbi people killed the clerk first and then sent messengers to Owe, instigating the people there to do the same. The Bassas were instructed to withhold taxes for payment to the Germans. To suppress the rebellion, a section of infantry and fifty police, in addition to the local police forces, were at once detailed from Lagos.[38] An investigation was mounted to ascertain the causes of the uprising. Interviews were conducted among the local population, especially traders, German servants, and chiefs. The investigation revealed that the uprising was a product of the propaganda of the German POWs, who were released under parole and who had been allowed to resume trading in Nigeria.

According to District Commissioner H. Clarke, on the morning when the German factories were opened, he visited them for about half an hour. The general question from different natives conversing together was why the Germans were allowed to open shops. From what he could gather, the general impression was that England was about to be beaten and was now showing a good front to the Germans. It seemed that the Germans had noticed Reuters' arrival in Warri with war news, and, of course, it had become a story among the natives that the English had had reversed and that the Reuters received here were intended for the colonies. Clarke noted that he could not say who had spread this view of things, but it was an everyday topic that had become prevalent since the reopening of German factories.[39]

The district officer, F. B. Adams, agreed with the district commissioner that the presence of Germans and Austrians in Warri posed a danger in the existing circumstances, as they had spoken to their boys or others about the war from their point of view, probably also in an exaggerated tone. In this way, various ridiculous rumors spread throughout the

country.[40] He noted that the Sobos in the bush, as pointed out by Chiefs Skin and Egbe, did not quite understand what had led the Government to permit the German firms to trade after having their factories shut down for over two months. They did not unnaturally think there must be some definite reason for such a change. Still, would this be the case if the Germans were allowed to return before the end of the war? He strongly endorsed the opinions of every chief in Warri that no German must be permitted to live in this part of the country until peace had been restored.[41]

In the testimony of one of the natives, I. T. Palma, on October 16, a day before the uprising, he was in Mr. Olowu's bicycle shop. A German named Rohr was there. Rohr asked him if he knew anything about the war. He replied that he did not. Rohr then told him that he must not believe the English telegrams or papers, as they were untrue, and that Germany would soon crush the British. He said that the English had sent messages to get the president of the United States to interfere on their behalf, as they could not continue the war. Palma also noted that another German—Malitzky—had spoken to him in the same vein or worse, and endeavored to persuade him that the British news was false and that the Germans were conquering them and would wipe out the English. He had said the same thing to Grakow Simate. Palmer also noted that he had been informed that the Germans had been in the habit of holding night meetings at Messrs. Bey and Zimmer's factory. During these meetings, their servants were all cleared out of the house and made to sit under the trees some distance away. They had also been sending their servants about the place, stating that the Germans would soon win and that life under German rule would be much more pleasant for the natives.[42] According to Palma:

> On the re-opening of the German shops, some of the Sapele trading natives came to see me and said that, from what the German people told them, it appears that everything has been settled and the English has given in, the Germans having defeated them at home. Mr. Talih, a Syrian, also called to see me and told me, "what is this that I hear? I hear the war has been settled." I enquired from him where he got his information from, and he replied from a German factory.[43]

Palma's submission was corroborated by J. Taylor, a Government clerk, and Crakov, both of whom testified to the fact that Malitzky also told

them to disregard whatever they read from the British paper because the news was untrue, and that, as they were under British rule, they heard what the British wanted them to hear. Malitzky also told the natives that he had read the *Pioneer*, the colonial newspaper in Nigeria, and that the news was exaggerated; a man of sense should read between the lines. He said he knew everything about the war, that the Germans would never give in until the English begged them, and that the English were now regretting having taken part in the war, stating that it was shameful that the English should employ black men against white troops.[44]

Similarly, Ogene testified that thirteen days ago, the Germans had a meeting at night at Bey and Zimmer, around 10 p.m. That was their third meeting. They drove their boys out of the house when they held these meetings and thus the boys were unable to testify as to the meetings' contents. The day the ship with soldiers arrived, two of the German boys immediately jumped on their bicycles and rode in the direction of Warri. They had not yet returned.

In an interview on October 26, 1914, Chief Dore, at Sapale, noted that on the resumption of trading by the Germans, he heard on all sides that the Sobos were saying that the English were beaten and that the Germans were on the top and that was the reason why they had been allowed to resume trading and that the Itshekris and the Kwale people were also with the Sobos in this opinion. He held meetings with them and explained that it was through the kindness of the English Government that the Germans had been allowed to trade and told them not to believe any stories against the Government and that when a court messenger was sent to Ogidigbe town near Burutu, the people there said, "we don't recognize the Government, the Government is finished; we hear the Germans have beaten them." As a result, Chief Dore was summoned by the commissioner, Mr. Haikes, who also traveled to the town, arrested the man, and took him to Forcados, where he was tried and imprisoned. Chief Dore was convinced that the trouble in the Kwale country itself was caused entirely by how the Germans were openly talking at Warri and Sapele. Dore said he would be able to produce one or two men who overheard what they said and that he and his chiefs, in talking the matter over, discussed it in these words:

> We look German men walking about playing ball and net, and we know that Germans are at war with the English people and the English are killing

> them in Europe and we Sobos don't know why this Government allows German men walk about here and do what they like. Even in Court, we said that by and by, there would be big trouble in the bush because natives saw the German men walking about like gentlemen.[45]

Speaking on behalf of all the chiefs at Benin and Warri, Dore said that the only thing to do was to remove the Germans until the war was over.[46] According to him,

> When trade by the Germans was resumed, the natives throughout the Province were thunderstruck and it was convincing that only one idea presented itself to their minds, that the English had been beaten in Europe. The reason for the recent changes in administration the nature of which had not been understood, was now clear. The Government was in effect about to leave, the fear or expectation that this was to come to pass was now to prove true. This could also be the firm impression in the minds of the more intelligent natives, including the Native Staff. That this opinion had been inspired by the action and behavior of the Germans there was little doubt; by means of their native boys all sorts of stories had been spread. It was difficult to tie anybody down to a definite statement, but there was no doubt the idea emanated from Germans. Therefore on no account whatever should the Germans be allowed back in this part of the country until the war between England and Germany had come to an end.[47]

Similarly, the representatives of the British trading firms in Sapele wrote to F. J. James, bringing to his attention the false interpretation created in the native mind by the reopening of German establishments. They noted that had the Germans have been allowed to continue trading as in the time of peace, no objection could have been taken, but the fact that they had at one point been barred from dealing with the natives only to be allowed to resume trading had misleading effect regarding the position the British held in the war. Once permitted to trade, the Germans had not been idle in their endeavors to instill in the natives a sense of British weakness. They had used the fact of their resuming business to encourage the idea that the fortunes of war were going against the British. Thus, the representatives of British trading firms in Sapele thought that this idea was primarily responsible for the present

disturbances and wished their opinion to be conveyed to the Government in the hope that a false impression gaining ground might be checked.[48]

Government Reaction to the Uprising, its Justification, and the Enemy Response

Following the outcome of the investigation into the Kwale disturbance, the Governor of Nigeria Fredrick Lugard gave instructions for all German and Austrian firms in the Warri, Sapele, and Benin Districts to cease trading and for all subjects of those nations to be sent to Lagos. Mr. James, the acting lieutenant governor of the Southern Provinces, was immediately dispatched from Lagos to Warri and the disaffected districts to prevent the spread of the rising and to investigate and report on the causes that had led up to it. Subsequently, on November 4, 1914, Lugard received a telegram of October 30 from the Secretary of State, suggesting the complete prohibition of trading by German and Austrian firms in West Africa and indicating the procedure to be adopted. Consequently, Lugard took the following actions:

1. Notice was given to all German and Austrian firms to cease trading on the evening of Saturday, November 7, 1914.
2. All German and Austrian subjects in Lagos were ordered to be in readiness to proceed to the Prisoners of War Camp at Ibadan on Monday, November 9.
3. The Aliens Restriction Ordinance, which was already in draft, was amended to give powers for the appointment of a Receiver to realize the assets and pay off the liabilities of the enemy's firms. The Ordinance was passed in the Legislative Council on November 12, 1914.
4. The Banks were instructed not to operate the accounts of any German or Austrian firm except under the direction of the Receiver.
5. Arrangements were made in conjunction with the Governor of the Gold Coast (who desired to deport a number of prisoners of war captured during the war in Togoland) to obtain a Vessel for the deportations of all German and Austrian subjects in Nigeria to England.[49]

The proposed removal of the enemy firms and subjects was received with a cheerful disposition, especially by the British firms, who saw German firms as a threat. In a memo dated November 2, 1914, the Sapele

District Officer H. G. Swanston, on behalf of the Government Officials and British merchants in the Sapele District, expressed the general satisfaction that the Lieutenant Governor's action in removing German subjects from Sapele had caused, noting that it had been extremely difficult, with a European population consisting of nearly as many German as British subjects, to prevent friction. He considered that subjects of both nationalities behaved with great patience in order to avert any possibility of open animosity.[50] In addition to expressing their satisfaction, they justified their support for the Government's decision to prohibit and remove enemy subjects and firms.

First, they cited security and strategic reasons as justification for prohibiting enemy firms and removing enemy subjects. For instance, they noted that when two Marine officers came to Sapele (shortly after the declaration of war in August 1914) to lay mines in the river, this object was completely defeated by the presence of the enemy, who were at liberty by means of their servants, to obtain all information as to the whereabouts of these mines. The Germans admitted this themselves and were inclined to ridicule the British procedure. Secondly, the resumption of trade by German firms made an awful impression on the natives, who naturally imagined that the enemy was gaining the upper hand. It was unlikely that the enemy would discourage this idea.

Thirdly, the German firms enjoyed a monopoly upon their resumption of trade, considering that the British firms had exhausted their stock. According to Swanston, during the few days they were trading, the natives flocked to their establishments. When German firms were closed again, the District Officer arranged for the British to purchase their stock at a slight profit to the enemy so that no undue advantage should be taken of the enemy's position as POW. One firm demanded a very high price for certain articles, and before the D.O. could come to terms, this firm was allowed to resume trading, with the result that it was able to sell at a large profit owing to the fact that it held the monopoly, British firms having previously exhausted their stock.[51] Commissioner of Warri Province R. Raikes put it more graphically and arrived at the same conclusion:

> The resumption of trade by the German firms seemed to place the British firms at a disadvantage. The stock of the German firms had been sealed up since the outbreak of war, and they were now in a much better position,

> as far as stock in trade was concerned than the British firms, whose stock was much depleted.[52]

Fourthly, it was noted that several false reports had been circulated among the natives as to the weakness of the Government, owing to the withdrawal of troops for service in the Cameroons (the German colonial territory to the east of Nigeria). Although these reports could not be linked to any one individual, there was every reason to think that if the enemy did not start these rumors, it was quite natural that they would refrain from denying them. The District Officer, Swanston, noted that he was informed that when troops recently visited a certain town in the Kwale District, they found entrenchments similar to those used in European warfare, and this might have been due to outside assistance and most probably Germans.[53]

The fifth justification for removing Germans from Nigeria was the alleged insincerity on the part of the Germans. For instance, the District Commissioner noted that on one occasion, at the request of the Agent, the District Officer opened a German store in order to pay off a native trader who had money due from the firm. Immediately, the store was closed, and the Assistant District Officer had left; the goods were taken away from the native and placed in the Agent's private store so that he could trade privately with the stuff and convert the cash to his own use.[54] Again, while searching the dwelling house of Messrs. Bey and Zimmer, the District Officer found duplicate keys to both shops, although the Agent had assured the D.O. when handing over his keys that no duplicates were in his possession. Similarly, on two occasions, telegrams were sent between Germans asking for certain drugs and toilet requisites that could easily have been obtained locally, leading the D.O. to believe these telegrams were cyphers.[55] These instances showed that the Germans were not acting honestly toward the British Government and, should the occasion have arisen, would have been quite likely to cause serious trouble in the district.

All these considerations led the British Government in Nigeria to regard the presence of German traders in the Southern Provinces as dangerous to the province's best interests. Indeed, they constituted the justification for their prohibition and removal.[56] Given news regarding the Moslem invasion of Egypt, stopping these intrigues was imperative. Lugard considered it advisable to send the Germans to Sierra Leone or elsewhere pending their transfer to England.[57]

The enemy subjects received the news of the proposal for their removal from Nigeria with mixed feelings. On November 6, 1914, some Agents of some German firms wrote to the Governor-General of Nigeria requesting to be allowed to remain in Lagos under the prevailing conditions; alternatively, if the Government decided that they must cease to trade they asked that they, as the heads of their respective firms, be allowed to stay in their factories. They stated that they had strictly kept their parole both in the letter and the spirit and had conducted their businesses fairly and squarely, with the result that such of them as were indebted to the Government or British firms at the outbreak of war had cleared off most of their liabilities. While they were patriotic Germans, they had emphatically dissociated themselves from any persons of German nationality who might have sought to trouble or inconvenience the Government in any way and indeed had frequently indignantly remonstrated with such persons on their attitude.[58]

Similarly, on the morning of November 7, 1914, Governor Lugard received a letter signed by the Agents of the firms of Messrs Gaiser, Witt & Busch, Ring & Co., and Mr. Meyer asking that they might be allowed to stay in Lagos instead of going to Ibadan. The Governor regarded the document to be of value on account of its admission that certain German and Austrian subjects had broken the oath they had taken when they were allowed on parole. He eventually consented to the signatories to the letter being permitted to remain in Lagos until the arrangements for their deportation were completed.

The following morning, Mr. Irving, an English barrister practicing in Lagos, reported verbally to Major Moorhouse that Herr Gloede, the acting Agent of the Woermann Linie, had visited him and asked him to approach the Government with a view to his (Herr Gloede) being permitted to remain in Lagos instead of going to Ibadan; that Mr. Irving had replied that he would do so, but that he thought it unlikely that the request would be granted. Herr Gloede then said that if his request was refused, he would resist being sent to Ibadan and would burn or, in some way, destroy the big water tanks at Apapa. The matter was reported to the Governor, who instructed that Herr Gloede should be arrested and the water tanks guarded. The police quietly effected his arrest, and Herr Gloede was lodged in one of the European cells in the Lagos prison. Mr. Irving, at the Governor's request, recorded in writing what he had verbally told Major Moorhouse.[59] This he did in a letter dated November 9, 1914.

Conclusion

The German firms and subjects had traded in Nigeria since the pre-colonial times. Even after the territory was brought under British control, German and Austrian firms and subjects continued to trade peacefully, just as British firms did in the German colonial territories of Cameroon and Togo in West Africa. However, the declaration of the First World War significantly impacted this long-standing relationship among the citizens of various European powers in West Africa. Because Britain was at war with Germany and Austria-Hungary, the subjects of these countries were considered enemy nationals. Consequently, German and Austrian firms in British West Africa were prohibited from trading shortly after the declaration of hostilities. However, due to the significant position occupied by German traders in British West Africa, particularly in Nigeria, the Trading with the Enemy legislation was amended to divest German subjects in West Africa of their enemy character. This resulted in the lifting of the restriction and suspension on them. They resumed trading on October 9, 1914. Due to the social unrest caused by lifting their earlier suspension, they were again prohibited from trading as of October 30, 1914, and arrangements were made for their deportation.

The Kwale disturbance was due to the belief among the natives that, as the Germans had been allowed to trade again, England had been defeated in Europe and that the Government was at an end, coupled with the suspicion that the Germans had been intriguing with and spreading false reports among the natives. Put differently, the natives interpreted the resumption of German and Austrian firms as indicating the enemy's success in the war, and this idea was fostered by German and Austrian subjects who were on parole and permitted to trade.[60]

Thus, the presence of Germans, especially their resumption of trade, had disastrous effects on the native mind. If the theory that the Government's leaving the country had been growing in the minds of the people was accepted—an idea not confined to the ignorant Sabos and Kwales—the presence of the Germans had done everything possible to foster and confirm it. The native mind could not grasp how the English could be at war with Germany, yet German subjects were allowed to compete against their English rivals. That they were not allowed to trade seemed to the natives a natural presumption—they wondered why they were allowed

to remain at large. The liquidation of the enemy firms also followed the consequent prohibition and deportation of the enemy subjects.

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PART III

RACE, WAR, SOCIETY, AND WORLD WAR II

CHAPTER 6

Provisioning For War: Food Crisis on the Nigerian Homefront during the Second World War

Chima J. Korieh

During the Second World War, urban and rural dwellers in Nigeria, as elsewhere in British West Africa, experienced shortages of essential food items. The problem was exacerbated partly by import restrictions, but most importantly, by shipping difficulties resulting from German attacks on merchant ships at sea. The problem primarily affected imported food items and essential commodities, including rice, salt, and dairy products.[1] The shortage of imported goods increased the value of locally produced food items, which were essential staples for the urban population.[2] This chapter focuses on the Nigerian home front during the Second World War. It focuses on the food crisis in urban areas resulting from reduced food imports and colonial regulations imposed after the outbreak of the war. The chapter further examines the regulations to which Nigerians were subjected during this period and how the local population responded to both the food crisis and colonial control. Ultimately, the chapter demonstrates that the local population participated in the war as both subjects of the British Empire and as individuals whose personal assertions and engagement in the war effort were shaped by their status as colonial subjects and colonial regulations.

While historians of the Second World War have raised important questions in recent years that are significant for grasping a holistic understanding of the event, a particular version of the war narrative has prevailed. As Keith Lowe rightly points out, there is a tendency to imagine the Second World War as a single, unambiguous conflict between the Allies on the one side and the Axis on the other.[3] This global conflict has often been portrayed as a European conflagration, and study of its impact on the home front has been extensively focused on European populations and societies. This historiographical focus underestimates

the complex nature of the war, the strategically significant role played by European colonial possessions, and the effects of the war on their societies.[4] As Paul Mulvey has pointed out, the Second World War "was truly a global imperial war for Britain, with British and imperial soldiers, sailors, and airmen seeing action in far more locations around the world than ever before."[5] This claim can be extended to other European powers, most of which possessed colonies in Africa and Asia and drew these colonies into the conflict. The European colonial possessions contributed troops, resources, and labor. The war also affected their populations' lives, sometimes in unimaginable ways, all of which have been consistently undervalued.[6]

As Allan Winkler observed, today historians are looking at the effects of the war ever more closely than before in an attempt to capture the entire wartime experience.[7] Such scholarship has helped deconstruct the Eurocentric perspectives of the Second World War.[8] David Killingray and Richard Rathbone's continental overview of Africa's participation in the conflict, *Africa and the Second World War*, published in 1986, was the first significant attempt at a comprehensive continental overview, particularly in terms of the combat experience of Africans. A more recent volume, *Africa and World War II*, edited by Judith A. Byfield et al., offers a broader overview of Africa's military, economic, and political significance in the war. Richard E. Osborne's work, *World War II in Colonial Africa: The Death Knell of Colonialism*, offers a comprehensive and detailed survey of all aspects of the conflict in Africa.[9] David Killingray and Martin Plaut draw from oral accounts and personal testimonies to recount the combat experiences of African soldiers and the war's impact on them, their families, and postwar society.[10]

Still, while some attention has been given to the role of African combatants and other forms of labor on the war fronts, little attention has focused on the African home front, where the civilian population endured hardship and the systematic extraction of labor, agricultural, and mining resources.[11] To address this gap, this chapter explores the impact of the Second World War and of regulation on food supplies in Nigeria, one of Britain's most important West African colonies. How did the wartime uncertainties challenge everyday survival in Nigeria, especially concerning foodstuffs? How did ordinary Nigerians at home respond to the crisis engendered by the war? To do so, it will first provide an overview of the British colonial administration's prewar policy in Nigeria. This will be

followed by an examination of the urban food crisis and colonial response; the chapter argues that colonial officials directly shared their growing concerns about the war's impact on food supply with the people. However, the war had contradictory effects, stimulating new policies.

A growing body of secondary scholarship on the war's impact on the home front has expanded the historiography of the Second World War.[12] Our understanding of the home front, as reflected in the contributions of the civilian population and the impact of the war at home, necessitates attention to the interplay between state and civilian undertakings during the war. While the Second World War had a profound impact on participating societies worldwide, the concept of the home front has been primarily applied to the European experience. Yet, we can speak of many home fronts, influenced by or transformed by gender ideology, race, ethnicity, and colonialism. All these provide a framework for analysis that captures similarities and differences across regions and local contexts. At the comparative level, most societies involved in the global conflict across Europe, America, Asia, and Africa experienced mass mobilization, increased state intervention, and control over local economies and populations. Indeed, Paul Einzig, in *Economic Problems of the Next War*, written in early 1939, argued that war economies required "a certain degree of Government control in production and trade" to ensure the maximum output of armaments, a condition lacking in Britain and France before the war.[13]

In the American context, structural changes in society, as the government prepared for conflict, including the creation of a much more complex bureaucratic structure, affected all aspects of American life.[14] There was a massive growth in the labor force, as women joined the workforce, laboring in factories as symbolized by "Rosie the Riveter," and took new roles in various industries, from factories and shipyards to sports and entertainment.[15] Nevertheless, mobilization on the home front was not merely characterized by sacrifice and civilian effort in pursuit of victory in the war. In the United States, for example, some Americans faced discrimination at home because of their race or ethnicity. Driven by national security concerns, the United States government rounded up people of Japanese ancestry and placed them in internment camps after the Japanese attack on the American naval fleet at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Similarly, Italian citizens were removed from strategic coastal areas in California and forced to relocate due to

concerns about Fascist Italy. The mass migration of people from the poor South into munition industries in large cities such as Chicago, Detroit, and New York tapped into the contributions of African Americans at a time of great need. However, their movement into these cities exacerbated racial tensions that resulted in race riots in 1943. Thus, African Americans faced the dilemma of fighting fascism abroad or racial discrimination at home.

In Europe, the home front was shaped by state institutions and the state's organizational structure. Like the United States, Britain and France witnessed the mass mobilization of the civilian population. However, they also witnessed some of the realities of German aggression and the devastating impact it had on their cities and civilian populations. In addition to the rationing of food and other household items, which began in January 1940, British civilians endured the bombing of their towns and cities in the Blitz, as well as attacks from flying bombs and rockets.[16] It is estimated that 60,595 civilians were killed and 86,182 seriously injured.[17] In totalitarian states such as Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, the home front, as Earl R. Beck noted, was shaped by the capacity of these states to enforce "compliance of their citizens by a combination of propaganda and police action."[18] This tactic was also applied in Japan, where the state used its powers to compel citizens to perform duties that aided the war effort. [19]

It may often be tempting to generalize the home front experience, but this is simply not possible for colonial territories that fought on behalf of the imperial powers, especially Britain and France. If we agree that European colonialism was a factor in the Second World War, then the conflict was, in part, a war for empire, and its impact on colonized societies was quite different from the experiences of the imperial powers and the United States.

Colonial Prewar Policy

Examining the prewar economic policy is essential to appreciate the levels of colonial intervention in the local economy when the Second World War broke out. Until about 1938, the colonial authority in Nigeria, as elsewhere in Africa, encouraged the expansion and improvement of export crops.[20] Substantial progress was made in the export crop sector,

thanks to the positive response of rural peasants to market incentives. The government often recognized the need for increased local food production. However, it did not provide much direct incentive to peasants since officials were more concerned with encouraging peasant production for the market than with structural changes in the local economy. The government created only enabling conditions to promote peasant production in the export sector. As such, the food sector was left to evolve pragmatically. However, with a rapidly growing urban population, Nigeria also experienced increased importation of food. Before the war, Nigeria relied heavily on imported food items from Europe and Asia. The structure of the colonial economy facilitated the integration of rural food production with the food requirements of cities, which were supplemented by increased imports of foreign food items.

The food problem in Nigeria became more evident toward the end of the 1930s, mainly due to the Great Depression. The Nigerian press criticized the colonial authority for its failure to curb inflation and for pursuing an unbalanced agricultural policy.[21] In reality, the colonial authority had already begun to consider agricultural diversification to enhance local food production and the incomes of rural farmers on the eve of the Second World War. This new initiative had much to do with the worldwide depression, which deepened in this period. As the report on the agricultural department for 1938 clearly stated, "The production of export crops, important as this is to the wealth of the country and to the revenue of the government, must not be subordinated to the production of foodstuff for local consumption, for those who are underfed cannot do the maximum amount of work."[22] This need became more urgent when the war broke out in Europe, as both the colonial state and the metropolis struggled to support the war effort and feed their respective populations.

The Second World War and Colonial Food Policy

Many aspects of the Second World War combined to serve as a potent force for economic, social, and political change in Africa and have been the subject of detailed monographs and articles.[23] Most of the early literature, however, focused on the impact of the war on nationalism and the local contribution of personnel to the war effort, leaving many aspects

of the wartime political economy in Nigeria unexplored.[24] Exceptions include Toyin Falola's detailed account of the salt crisis during the war and the response of the colonial authorities in Nigeria to what they saw as a potential source of discontent and anti-colonial sentiment.[25] A. Olorunfemi has also explored how the war disrupted local economies in British West Africa. His exploration of the impact of the conflict on cocoa traders and producers in southwestern Nigeria clearly shows the "predicament of those farmers involved in the cocoa trade, most of whom had concentrated solely on cocoa production since the 1920s to the almost total neglect of other cash crops."[26] Changes in prewar colonial policies were widespread during this period and affected all aspects of the local political economy. New regulations were implemented to help the state address the emergent crisis, and different groups and individuals opposed colonial restrictions and regulations during the war, over issues both specific and general. Many petitions and supplications to colonial officials came from individuals or groups who believed that their participation in the productive and distributive economy contributed to both the war effort and their own survival as households and interest groups. Many, nevertheless, opposed the colonial regulation and management of the war economy because the new colonial interventionist policies directly threatened their survival and drained their resources.

The management of the war economy began with the implementation of the Nigeria Defense Regulation of 1939, which conferred additional powers on various colonial departments and created new ones to address the wartime crisis. Beginning in September 1939, the Department of Agriculture focused on increasing food production. The frantic urgency of the food production drive contrasted with the laissez-faire pace of prewar agricultural planning. This led to the creation of a marketing department in November 1939, with Mr. E. McL. Watson as a marketing officer. The position of marketing officer was created specifically to develop the internal and international markets for locally produced foodstuffs, in anticipation of increased production.

Among other things, the marketing department was tasked with conducting a comprehensive study of Nigeria's internal trade to make the country self-sufficient in essential foodstuffs. It was also tasked with studying the requirements of other West African colonies for Nigerian foodstuffs Nigeria to assist in the development of self-sufficiency in the subregion.[27] The establishment of a Supplies Department in September

1942, along with the creation of a chief supply officer post, complemented the marketing department's work. The supplies department was responsible for organizing food supplies for the army and the mines, ensuring that the government maintained ample food reserves. The tonnage purchased by the end of March 1943 included 10,300 tons of millet, 2,700 tons of rice, 7,000 tons of yams, 3,400 tons of maize, and 18,200 tons of guinea corn.[28]

How did this local drive to supplement the food requirements of the army and the metropolis affect the African population in the cities? The urban population relied mainly on two sources of food supply: locally produced food items and large quantities of imported food items that had become an integral part of urban consumer culture. When the war broke out in 1939, the agricultural policy, which had previously emphasized the export of cash crop production, underwent a radical shift to meet the food requirements of the British population, the army, and local people in the colonies. The importance of locally produced food items increased, and colonial officials intensified attempts to encourage local farmers to increase their production. The constraints on the importation of food items raised the prices of local food items such as rice, yams, and pepper, as well as the prices of imported items.

As the war raged in Europe, local colonial officials faced two interrelated challenges: how to support the British war effort and to ensure sufficient food supplies for both African and European populations. As the crisis and war overwhelmed Europe and Asia, local and metropolitan officials were tasked with feeding the army and civilian populations in Europe and the colonial territories. The colonial government and the agricultural department launched a vigorous propaganda campaign, emphasizing the importance of increasing food production and export products to support the British war effort. There was a tremendous outpouring of patriotic passion among the British. The Europeans somehow expected Africans to react similarly by producing more food and raw materials. This did not often happen, because peasants had other interests and were more concerned with matters of an immediate and practical nature–their own subsistence.

In Nigeria, urban households faced physical food shortages due to the war and constrained access to food and other essential goods. One scarce commodity was salt. The government responded to this scarcity by increasing its control over the local distributive trade.[29] Nevertheless,

despite the government's effort, the war had effects on the internal market for foodstuffs. The increased demand for garri and palm oil in northern Nigeria worked against external export. The increased quantity of food exported to northern Nigerian cities allowed peasants to expand production and, consequently, their incomes. However, exports resulted in price increases in the exporting regions. As a result, the colonial government was forced to adopt measures to regulate internal trade through various regulations, acts, and changes in the existing agricultural and food policy.

Beginning in September 1939, the Department of Agriculture concentrated on increasing food production. In 1940, the department was directed to concentrate its efforts on producing food staples to reduce imports.[30] The primary objective of the new agricultural policy was to make Nigeria self-sufficient in food production. At the outbreak of the war, Sir Frank Stockdale advised the director of the Department of Agriculture, J. R. Mackie, that Nigeria, like other colonial territories, should endeavor to be self-sufficient in food supplies.[31] The constraints of world shipping during the war made it urgently necessary to find alternative sources of supply.[32] The British looked to Nigeria to help meet these wartime needs because the country occupied a unique position among British colonial possessions in West Africa. Specifically, the country had enormous agricultural potential and was the most populous in British Africa. There was a perception that Nigeria could produce enough food to both feed the local population and meet Britain's import needs.

The duties of the agricultural department in this period were summarized in a circular issued to all agricultural officers. It required the department to assist the Imperial government by producing crops as requested and to ensure that Nigeria was self-sufficient in foodstuffs, including those generally imported from elsewhere.[33] Meanwhile, as already described, the department created the post of marketing officer, anticipating increased production and possibly developing an internal and international trade for food products. The marketing office was required to make a complete study of the internal trade of Nigeria to make the country as self-supporting as possible in essential foodstuffs; to study the requirements of other West African colonies for foodstuffs from Nigeria; to assist the development of self-sufficiency in essential foodstuffs in the West African colonies as a group; to help the Director of Agriculture in increasing production of certain commodities that Nigeria now imported; to organize markets in which they could be sold;

to investigate how commodities could be conveyed to and from those markets and to devise a means of transport accordingly.[34]

Colonial officials pursued these goals with great zeal. The view of one such official, J.A.G. McCall, perhaps summarizes the prevailing ideology. According to McCall, "The production business is our particular war effort, and surely that should come first, even if other duties of administration have to suffer."[35] To address short supplies, the agricultural department focused on increasing rice production, which had been increasingly imported into the country prior to the war. In the Onitsha Province, about 500 tons of rice were planted in 1943.[36] However, drought and poor management reduced yields to only 2,000 tons out of the 15,000 tons produced in the Eastern Region. This program was unsuccessful because the initial enthusiasm and response quickly died. Nevertheless, rice production was boosted in some parts of the region, such as Azumini, where swamp rice was grown.[37] By 1941, rice importation had virtually ceased, after reaching a peak of 14,900 tons in 1936.[38]

The emphasis on the production of food crops, such as rice, potatoes, and certain vegetables (including French beans, cabbage, cauliflower, tomatoes, lettuce, cucumber, carrots, and beetroots), was also related to disruptions in imports during the war. The production of vegetables, for example, was embarked upon to meet the needs of European residents and the army. For all of these efforts, the anticipated increase in local food production in this period did not materialize. Furthermore, imported rice was preferred over locally produced rice because of its higher quality.

The Department of Agriculture also focused its efforts on food crops with potential for export markets. In 1940, for example, the United Africa Company (UAC) purchased a consignment of chilies for export in the Niger Province. Competition with local users led to such a steep rise in prices that farmers began abandoning cotton cultivation in favor of chili cultivation. In January, before the UAC commenced buying chilies, the price was six shillings and four pennies per cwt, but it rapidly rose to fourteen shillings and six pennies per cwt because of UAC purchases.[39] Other staples also became prohibitively expensive, beyond the reach of many. In most of the Eastern region, for example, the increase in the price of food items, especially garri, was blamed for the export of the product to northern Nigeria. This led to the implementation of a series of schemes and measures to regulate the marketing of garri and other food items.[40]

The demand for local food imposed a heavy burden on the peasantry. Low production in certain parts of the country led to scarcity and high food prices. For example, the price of a ninety-pound bag of garri increased from four shillings at the beginning of July 1943 to seven by the end of the month.[41] The difficult economic situation in parts of the country contributed to many young men's willingness to enlist in the army. According to Gilbert Uzor, a veteran of the Second World War, "the war provided an opportunity to escape rural poverty."[42] In the end, due to the growing food crisis, the colonial government was compelled to implement measures to regulate internal trade through various regulations and acts.

Urban Food Crisis and Colonial Control

Before examining the evolution of the urban food crisis in Nigeria during the Second World War, it is helpful to briefly address the demographics of colonial cities. As elsewhere in Africa, the urban population in Nigeria grew at an astronomical rate of more than 15 percent annually in the first decades of the colonial period. Lagos Township, for example, grew from a population of 126,000 in 1931 to 272,000 in 1952. Enugu and Onitsha grew from a combined population of about 1.1 million in 1931 to about 1.77 million in 1952. Ibadan's population grew from 990,000 to approximately 1.651 million between 1931 and 1952.[43]

Table 6.1: Population of the Largest Towns, 1921–1963

Lagos	99,690	126,108	26	267,407	112	665,246	148
Ibadan	238,094	387,133	62	459,196	18	627,379	36
Ogbomosho	84,860	86,744	2	139,535	60	319,881	129
Kano	49,938	89,162	78	127,205	142	295,432	132
Oshogbo	51,418	49,599	-3*	122,790	107	208,966	70
Ilorin	38,668	47,590	23	40,994	-13*	208,546	408
Abeokuta	28,941	45,763	58	84,451	84	187,292	122

Port Harcourt	n/a	15,201		71,634	371	179,563	150
Zaria	22,680	21,953	-3*	53,974	145	166,170	207
Ilesha	n/a	21,892		72,029	229	165,822	130
Onitsha	n/a	18,084		76,921	325	163,032	112
Iwo	53,588	57,191	13	100,006	74	158,583	58
Kaduna	n/a	10,628		44,540	319	149,910	236
Mushin	n/a	n/a		32,079		145,976	355
Maiduguri (Yerwa)	n/a	24,359		56,740	132	139,965	146
Enugu	30,000	12,000	300	62,764	423	138,457	120
Ede	48,360	52,392	8	44,808	-14*	134,550	200
Aba	n/a	12,958		57,787	345	131,003	56
Ile-Ife	22,184	24,170	9	110,790	358	130,050	17

Source: *Ajaegbu, Urban and Rural Development 32.*
*Negative growth or decline; n/a: not available

The alarming growth rate during this period was driven mainly by rural-urban migration, as the rural poor sought opportunities in urban areas. The structure of the urban environment is closely linked to rural areas in many ways, particularly in terms of food supplies. Many colonial officials were tasked with providing city residents with food, shelter, and essential services. Given the colonial administration's overall laissez-faire attitude toward food production, the urban food supply for the African population developed pragmatically.

This large African urban population relied on very poorly paid, non-agricultural formal wage labor.[44] Food security in the metropolitan areas depended on the price of foodstuffs and wage levels. In 1933, for instance, Native Administration Road laborers received ten shillings per month. Railway track gangs receive a daily wage of eight pennies. Casual laborers received between three and four pennies a day, with no food provided.[45] In Lagos, arguably the most expensive city in Nigeria at the turn of the century, wages were low, ranging between nine pence and one shilling

per day.[46] Under these conditions, a substantial part of wages was spent on household food supply. Although the vicissitudes of the natural and physical environments that affected rural food supply did not affect urban food supply, the residents' food security, as Bryceson argues in a Dar es Salaam case study, was "by no means assured."[47] In colonial Nigerian cities, like their counterparts in other parts of Africa, the colonial economic system led to increased dependency on imported food items and a decline in the local food production system.

War and Food Shortages

Growing concern over urban and rural food insecurity in Nigeria prompted the colonial authorities to regulate the distribution of imported and locally produced foodstuff. On April 22, 1941, SAS Leslie, the colonial food controller, issued a circular outlining the general scheme for food control in Nigeria due to the war. In a seemingly arbitrary manner, the food controller was empowered to direct the distribution of available supplies while the deputy food controllers and their assistants initiated and administered such rationing for their local areas. Although the supply of food items in this period (except milk and flour, which were already rationed in Lagos) were not seriously threatened by the war, the government made plans to ensure that rationing of these items would follow periods of severe shortfall.[48]

Importing firms in Lagos, one of Nigeria's largest cities, were required to ensure that consumers only purchased supplies from one source. Customers were required to nominate the firm with which they wished to deal. This enabled the government to compile a list of customers, which would be circulated among firms. African consumers and retailers fell into two categories: those who bought from European firms and those who bought from African retailers. African consumers who purchased directly from European firms were to be supplied in the same manner as Europeans. In contrast, African retailers were provided by the trading firm in consultation with the deputy food controller.[49]

Controlled Price Regime

The bulk of urban food supplies came from local peasant production. The government's control of the local food supply was achieved by imposing price controls on locally produced goods. The Native Food Controller was given the authority to set the prices of food items in the market. However, not all communities accepted the government's regulation and price control without question. The imposition of price controls generated resentment among peasants due to the general economic decline and the high cost of living, creating problems for farmers. Some farmers refused to produce at government-fixed prices since imported items on which they spent their income were not on the control list.[50] On July 1, 1942, rice and bean traders in the city of Onitsha petitioned the Residents of Onitsha Province regarding the implementation by the police of government-imposed prices in the market on June 16, 1942. In a carefully detailed calculation, the traders estimated the losses they incurred due to price control.[51] An Onitsha garri trader and twenty others petitioned the district officer for Onitsha on July 17, 1942, requesting that the authorities reconsider the price imposed on garri in the market. In their petition, the traders noted that the recommended price of ten shillings per bag of garri was below the estimated delivery price of twelve per bag from Aba, where Onitsha trader bought their goods.[52]

Table 6.2: Control of Local Foodstuffs in Abakaliki Division

Articles	Qty	Pre-war price	Qty	Present price	Qty	Controlled price
Yams: Sept.-March April-August	12 large 15 medium 30 small 6 large 15 medium	1/- 1/- 1/- 1/- 1/-	6 large 10 medium 20 small 3–4 large 8–9 medium	1/- 1/- 1/- 1/- 1/-	9 large 12 medium 17 small 5 large 9 medium	1/- 1/- 1/- 1/- 1/-
Rice (local)	24	1/-	8 cups	1/-	10 cups	1/-
Garri	12	1d	6 cups	1d	8 cups	1d

Articles	Qty	Pre-war price	Qty	Present price	Qty	Controlled price
Egg (hen)	4	1d	2	1d	4	1d
Egg(duck)	2	1d	2	1d	2	1d
Pepper	2 cig. cups	1d	1 cig. cup	1d	2 cig. cup	1d
Plantain	10	1/2d	6	1/2d	8	1/2d
Banana (ripe)	12	1/2d	8	1/2d	12	1/2d
Oranges	10	1/2d	5	1/2d	6	1/2d
Okro	40 capsules	1/2d	15	1/2d	20	1/2d
Cassava	Large basket	3d	Large basket	6d	Large basket	5d
Coco yam	8	1d	8	1d	8	1d
Groundnuts	24 cups	1d	4 cups	1d	6 cups	1d
Palm oil	1 bottle	6d	1 bottle	9d	1 bottle	8d
Palm wine	cala-bash	2d	cala-bash	3d–4d	cala-bash	2d
Ideal Milk	6 oz tin	4d	6 oz tin	8d	6 oz tin	6d

Source: NAE, CALPROF 3/1/2329, District Officer Abakiliki, November 9, 1942.

Farmers in different parts of Nigeria protested the control of food prices. The purchase of garri by government agents at a price set by the government directly threatened the income of women, who controlled its production and sale.[53] In 1944, women in Owerri Province and Bende Division protested the colonial government's attempt to control the price of garri, the most imported staple in the area. Similarly, women in many parts of Aba Division protested the restrictions on garri export and the fixing of garri prices.[54] Similar protests were recorded in other parts of eastern Nigeria. In October 1944, for instance, a government agent came to Ikot Ekpene market and purchased garri at the government-imposed price. There were mass demonstrations by women armed with cassava

sticks and leaves at Nto Edino, Ikot Abia, Odoro Ikot, and Mbuso-all Ibibio areas near Ikot Ekpene.[55] The women saw the government's action as an attempt to take over their cassava farms. The conditions the state deemed necessary to ensure increased productivity were antithetical to those needed for the successful expansion of production.

Restrictions on the Movement of Products

Due to the war, a food crisis in some parts of Nigeria forced district officers to regulate the export of food items, such as yams, cocoyams, and garri, from one part of the region to another. These officials invoked the Nigerian General Defense Regulations (Law no. 75 of 1941), which came into effect during the conflict. Perhaps the most important consequence of these restrictions was the disruption of prewar food security arrangements that supported the urban population and several rural communities.

On August 2, 1941, the Aba Community League wrote to the district officer about the city's food crisis. The letter told the story of the city's inhabitants' real-life situation. The League expressed the "very grave danger of famine which is threatening this township consequent upon the present restriction of the railment of garri to the North, which has led to the adversely affected traders seeking other avenues of business and have tapped the scanty resources of the township of yams, plantains, cocoyams, corn, and other articles of food." These lines of foodstuffs entered the local market from Onitsha, Itu, and other places, which, along with local resources, barely met the township's requirements.[56]

In another petition to the British Resident of Owerri Province, the Aba Garri Traders Association expressed dissatisfaction with the District Officer's export quota system. They argued that "the method will annihilate the garri trade, and undoubtedly impoverish the average trader involved and render 'life not worth living'."[57] As free citizens of the Empire, the association wrote, "we have a right to live, and this right we pray for an amendment to the method or system of control of the railment [*sic*] of the commodity as advanced by the District Officer, Aba."[58]

The petition from Aba was not propaganda. Most of the letters and petitions from other cities and towns in the three years following the introduction of the Nigerian General Defense Regulations reflected the

nature of food shortage facing individuals and urban centers. These letters and petitions emphasized the danger to individual households and groups in urban areas. The emotions expressed in them show the local economy's dissatisfaction with the war measures. Ultimately, the policies implemented, based on the experiences of the urban population, imposed severe constraints on life and livelihood. The primary reason for the urban crisis was the interruption of the traditional relationships between the urban and the rural, upon which most of the urban population depended for their food supply.

Colonial restrictions and control were not always successful. Control was probably enforced on the railways because they could be policed. Archival records describe an informal market system that emerged due to government control. In August 1943, the secretary of the Aba Community League wrote to the district officer, Aba, regarding what he described as "unauthorized markets outside the township."[59] Indeed, some local traders were able to circumvent the officially approved channels. Some traders moved between different buying stations to maximize their profits and to increase the quota allocated to them. It was estimated that approximately two hundred tons of garri were exported to the North in July 1944, in excess of the permitted quota, under illegal conditions.[60]

Local Response to Wartime Regulations and Restrictions

The social history of Africa has enabled historians to capture the perspectives and feelings of ordinary people during colonialism. Historians are increasingly tracing Africans' responses to the changing social and economic structures of the colonial period. While capturing the perspectives of the lower class is challenging, especially among the rural and urban poor, who often did not commit their feelings to paper, historians today have fascinating forms of evidence available, offering glimpses into their lives. Some did write petitions and supplications. Colonial records, petitions, and supplications allow historians to historicize ordinary Africans and their concerns. Therefore, we must examine these petitions and supplications to determine how the rural and urban populations felt about colonial control and the food crisis during the war. The Second World War is a suitable period for analysis because, more so than any other period, it generated some of the most significant protests

against colonial policies and the impact of the international economy on colonized societies.

For example, on July 11, 1943, Mr. O. O. Muoma petitioned the District Officer for Aba titled "Injustice: Garri Railing to the North." In his petition, he informed the district officer that his name had been removed from the government-issued list of traders permitted to export garri (cassava flour) to northern Nigerian towns. He considered this development "abnormal" and an "injustice" since cutting him out of the trade deprived him of his livelihood and threatened the lives and subsistence of his two sons, who lived in the northern city of Kano.[61] Another trader, J. O. Okorocha, who in 1942 had exported 209 bags of garri to northern Nigeria, wrote to the district officer for Aba District, protesting the allocation to him of a meager quota of ten bags consequent upon the regulation and restriction of food exports from the district to northern Nigeria. Mr. Okorocha wrote, "My quota [ten bags] is too poor considering my intensive trade last year."[62] Like many others, Muoma's and Okorocha's war economy was not only a site of hardship and despair. It was also an opportunity for entrepreneurship, as the scarcity of imported food prompted the production of locally grown food. However, most rural and urban people remember the war as a period of chaos. Another petitioner summarized this perspective in a petition to the District Officer, Aba, on July 21, 1943. In it, A. Jamola expressed the impact of wartime restrictions on his family.

> You could, therefore, imagine our suffering, Sir, during this period for which I am restricted from exporting garri to the north, especially when the small profit accruing from the trade is being exhausted. I can assure you, Sir, that I do appreciate your point of view on this rather difficult question, but at the same time, I would very respectfully and humbly ask that in addition to your viewing the matter from the official stand-point, you may consider the lives of a family which may perish as a result of the measures which have been taken to restrict the garri trade.[63]

The above excerpts are revealing. They show that ordinary Nigerians contested colonial war policies, regulations, and restrictions. In addition, while very few sources available to historians allow us to hear the voices of the rural and urban populations during the colonial period, petitions and supplications such as these were common between 1939 and 1945.

These petitions provide a fascinating insight into a phenomenon that became a way of life during the Second World War. Their struggles to survive the depressed wartime economy and strategies for coping with the crisis were reflected in petitions and supplications, which evoke a feeling of what it was like to live through that era and offer a key connection between the war and the Nigerian people.[64] Letters of petition as a form of local agency provided alternative sources of information for exploring and understanding Nigerian agency, how Nigerians perceived the war, how they drew from their experiences, and vital details about the impact of the war on their lives. The richness of these petitions has allowed for a better understanding of the impacts of the war on African families and communities as they struggled with colonial regulations and control. These accounts situate Nigerian civilian experiences within the larger context of the war and colonial society, revealing much about the changing nature of imperial policy during the war and the immediate postwar period.

By using petitions to address their concerns, Nigerian men and women also created a space to participate in the larger discourse beyond their immediate survival needs. They were, by extension, entering the realm of public discourse on war, economic policy, imperial subjects, and race relations within the empire's boundaries. The content and context of these petitions suggest that the war's impacts were felt in both urban and rural areas, across classes and genders. Petitions linked local economic conditions and production systems to a broad range of ethnicities, classes, and spatial categories—a system that became even more connected during the war. Thus, war was fought in the spaces of everyday life, where many ordinary people, like the authors of the petitions, worked to achieve the Empire's goals abroad and give meaning to their daily lives at home. Local people's engagement with the politics of colonial control, especially on matters of everyday subsistence, drove a potential wedge between Nigerian men's and women's right to engage freely in economic enterprises and the colony's support for the war effort.

The image of crisis forged during war and deprivation is powerfully persuasive. Still, it must be analyzed in the context of Nigeria's prewar and wartime political economy, as well as the structure of daily life in urban and rural areas from the late 1930s to the mid-1940s. Although many towns and districts reported food crises during this period, these shortages defy simple explanations, for despite the restrictions on food

imports during the war, import difficulties are not sufficient to account for the scale of the urban food crisis. Indeed, the situation must be analyzed in terms of both production and supply.[65]

Conclusion

War transforms institutions and drives change more intensively than peacetime. The political economy of the war reveals that the colony of Nigeria, like its counterparts in Africa, made significant contributions beyond personnel and logistical support to imperial war efforts. The Second World War induced significant policy changes in agriculture and food policy in particular. The relative scarcity of basic needs highlights the extent to which the local economy had become directly linked to the global world and the economic crisis that followed as the war disrupted trade and commerce.

The direct intervention of the colonial government in the local production and supply mechanism during the Second World War disrupted life at all levels. Driven by the need to meet the government's food and raw material requirements, the agricultural policies pursued, along with the increased rate of commercialization, significantly altered the nature of peasant-state relations. The war generated contradictions, to which the colonial governments responded by imposing greater control over the distribution of trade and the rural food supply. The rural populations whose livelihoods depended on agriculture and trade were severely affected by the war. Yet, the local population in Nigeria, as elsewhere in the British colonies, was negotiating a dual world in which they expressed their loyalty and support for the Allies in the goal of defeating Hitler, but also sought to balance that goal with the attempt to protect their own interest. The petitions written by Nigeria remain a powerful expression of both goals. Thus, colonial wartime interventions, control, and restrictions did not always work. Smuggling, hoarding, and fraud were rampant, thereby rendering such measures less effective.[66] Despite the lack of incentives, farmers expanded production due to the country's more lucrative internal market.

Notes

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2 On the increased importance of cassava as a staple, see for example, S. A. Agboola, "Introduction and Spread of Cassava in Western Nigeria," *Nigeria Journal of Economic and Social Studies* 10, no. 3 (1968): 369–85; Phoebe V. Ottenberg, "The Changing Economic Position of Women among the Afikpo Ibo," in *Continuity and Change in African Cultures*, ed. William R. Bascom and Melvin J. Herskovits (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956), 205–23; Don C. Ohadike, "The Influenza Pandemic of 1918–19 and the Spread of Cassava Cultivation on the Lower Niger: A Study in Historical Linkages," *Journal of African History* 22 (1981): 379–91; Don C. Ohadike, *Anioma: A Social History of the Western Igbo People* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1994): 198–207; Ayodeji Olukoju, "The Cost of Living in Lagos," in *African Urban Past*, ed. David M. Anderson and Richard Rathbone (Oxford: James Currey, 2000), 127.

3 Keith Lowe, *Savage Continent: Europe in the Aftermath of World War II* (New York: St Martin's Press, 2012), 272.

4 Frans Coetzee and Marilyn Shevin-Coetzee's *The World in Flames: A World War II Sourcebook* has only a peripheral reference to African participation (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

5 Throughout the war, Britain its and colonial and dominion armies fought around the world—in Europe, West Africa, Middle East, and Asia. See Paul Mulvey, "The British Empire in World War Two (lecture)," Academia.edu, accessed January 1, 2019, http://www.academia.edu/444982/The_British_Empire_in_World_War_Two_lecture_.

6 Ashley Jackson, cited in Kwei Quartey, "How West Africa Helped Win World War II," *Foreign Policy in Focus*, June 6, 2012, http://fpif.org/how_west_africa_helped_win_world_war_ii/. See also John H. Morrow, "Black Africans in World War II: The Soldiers' Stories," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 632 (2010): 12–25.

7 Allan M. Winkler, "World War II Homefront: A Historiography," *OAH Magazine of History* 16, no. 3 (2002) 5. See also Allan M. Winkler, *Home Front, U.S.A.: America during World War II*, 2nd ed. (Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, 2000); John W. Jeffries, *Wartime America: The World War II Home Front* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1996); William L. O'Neill, *A Democracy at War: America's Fight at Home and Abroad in World War II* (New York: The Free Press, 1993).

8 See, for example, Michael Crowder, "The Second World War: Prelude to Decolonization in Africa," in *History of West Africa*, vol. 2, eds. J. F. Ade Ajayi and M. Crowder (London: Longman, 1974); Trevor R. Kerslake, *Time and the Hour: Nigeria, East Africa, and the Second World War* (London: Radcliffe Press, 1997); and G. O. Olusanya, *The Second World War and Politics in Nigeria, 1939–1945* (London: Evans Bros., 1973). On Nigeria, see O. N. Njoku, "Burden of Imperialism: Nigeria War Relief Fund, 1939–1945," *Transafrican Journal of History* 6/7 (1977–78): 79–99; O. N. Njoku, "Export Production Drive in Nigeria during World War II," *Transafrican Journal of History* 10, nos. 1–2 (1981): 11–22; Chima J. Korieh, *"Life Not Worth Living": Nigerian Petitions Reflecting an African Society's Experiences during World War II* (Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 2014); F.A.S. Clark, "The Development of the West African Forces in the Second World War," *Army Quarterly* (1947): 58–72.

9 Richard E. Osborne, *World War II in Colonial Africa: The Death Knell of Colonialism* (Indianapolis: Riebel-Roque, 2001).

10 David Killingray, with Martin Plaut, *Fighting for Britain: African Soldiers in the Second World War* (Rochester, NY: Boydell University Press, 2012).

11 Surveying recent literature on the Second World War reveals few references to the African perspective on the war. One exception is A. Olorunfemi, who details the significant disruption that local economies in British West Africa faced. His exploration of the impact of the war on cocoa traders and producers in southwestern Nigeria clearly illustrates the predicament of cocoa farmers, "most of whom had concentrated solely on cocoa production since the 1920s to the almost total neglect of other cash crops." See A. Olorunfemi, "Effects of War-Time Trade Control on Nigerian Cocoa Traders and Producers, 1939–1945: A Case Study of the Hazards of a Dependent Economy," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 13, no. 4 (1980): 672. For the more recent focus on the civilian population elsewhere, see Aaron William Moore, *Bombing the City: Civilian Accounts of the Air War in Britain and Japan, 1939–1945*, Studies in the Social and Cultural History of Modern Warfare (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

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25 Falola, "Salt Is Gold" 417. See also Toyin Falola, "Cassava Starch for Export in Nigeria during the Second World War," *Journal of African Economic History* 18 (1989): 73–98.

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28 Ibid.

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54 NAE File no. 1646 vol. 4, ABADIST 14/1/875, "Garri Control" Omuna Native Court to the District Officer Aba, November 1944.

55 Ibid.

56 The League represented a majority of unions, ethnic groups, and communities in Aba Township; see NAE ABADIST 1/26/958. File no. 668, "Foodstuffs: yams, plantains, cocoyam, etc, requested prohibition of railment or exportation of in future," Honorary Secretary, Aba Community League to the District Officer, Aba, 2 August 1943.

57 NAE, ABADIST, 14/1/873, File no. 1646 "A Resolution," Gari Traders Association, Aba to the Resident, Owerri Province, July 29, 1943.

58 Ibid.

59 NAE ABADIST 1/26/958. File no. 668. "Unauthorized Markets Outside the Township," Secretary Aba Community League to District Officer, Aba, August 2, 1943.

60 NAE File no. 1646 vol. 4, ABADIST 14/1/875, Export of garri to the North by garri traders will stop on 1st September," Nigerian Eastern Mail Press Representative to the District Officer, Aba, August 29, 1944.

61 National Archives, Enugu (NAE), ABADIST 14/1/872, File no. 1646, "Garri Control," O. O. Muoma to District Officer, Aba, July 1, 1943.

62 NAE, ABADIST 14/1/872, File no. 1646, "Garri Control," J.O. Okorocha to District Officer, Aba, July 7, 1943.

63 NAE, ABADIST, 14/1/873, File no. 1646 "Gari Control," A. Jamola to DO, Aba District, July 21, 1943.

64 For a recent examination of World War II related petitions, see Oliver Coates, "'The War, like the Wicked Wand of a Wizard, Strikes Me and Carry Away All that I Have Loved': Soldiers' Family Lives and Petition Writing in Ijebu, Southwestern Nigeria, 1943–1945," *History in Africa* 45 (2018): 71–97. See also Catherine Burns, "The Letters of Louisa Mvemve," in *Africa's Hidden Histories: Everyday Literacy and Making the Self*, ed. Karin Barber (Bloomington: Indiana

University Press, 2006), 78–112; Vukile Khumalo, "Ekukhanyeni Letter-Writers: A Historical Inquiry into Epistolary Network(s) and Political Imagination in Kwazulu-Natal South Africa," in *Africa's Hidden Histories: Everyday Literacy and Making the Self*, ed. Karin Barber (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 113–42.

65 See, for example, William A. Dando *The Geography of Famine* (New York: Wiley, 1980), 57–58.

66 See Falola, "Salt Is Gold," 431.

CHAPTER 7

British Price Control Policy and Internal Disturbances in Southwestern Nigeria during World War II

Abiodun S. Afolabi and Marklene Chinatu Ugbogu

Introduction

World War II profoundly impacted many aspects of the economies of African colonized territories. This chapter examines the far-reaching consequences of British colonial policy in response to food security/insecurity during the conflict (1939–1945). It reveals that the policies implemented by the British colonial government provoked internal disturbances in different parts of Nigeria, particularly in the southwest. The local Yoruba population played a significant role in these disturbances, responding to the food shortage crisis caused by the colonial price-control policy. This focus on the war's impact on African societies is historically significant. It centralizes the role of Nigerians in the war, the nature of imperial policies and their effects on local societies, and the reactions and responses of the African population to wartime conditions, particularly the food economy. The existing literature has focused on various themes, including the recruitment of indigenous West Africans, the activities of ex-servicemen, political developments, and decolonization. However, this chapter broadens the discourse on the political economy of World War II as it affected Nigeria, agriculture, and commerce during the war.

The colonial government's responses caused high food prices in urban centers. Consequently, the rural producers were unable to meet growing demands for foodstuffs. At the height of the war, indigenous traders, particularly the market women, played a pivotal role in resisting the British colonial government's resort to price control through native authorities. They viewed colonial wartime policies as an attempt to undermine their economic power and usher in another era of commercial

exploitation and expropriation. Their resistance, a testament to the importance of local economies, was a crucial factor in the failure of these policies. This chapter also finds that while the British colonial administration initiated some urgent policies to promote food security, these policies in fact exacerbated food scarcity across the country during World War II and even beyond.

During World War I, colonial powers were neither willing nor ready to mobilize Africans to fight against other European colonial powers. However, the situation changed during World War II, as colonialists mobilized and deployed African soldiers. One reason for this was that the metropole's economy was tied to the African economy, which supplied it with cash and crops.[1] Indeed, colonies and their resources were generally mobilized to support metropolitan countries. Due to the loss of the Empire's Far Eastern colonies, the British West African colonies also gained new strategic positions as suppliers of essential raw materials.[2] West African colonies supplied Britain with essential raw materials, including peanuts, palm oil, cocoa, rubber, cotton, and mineral resources such as tin and columbite.[3] In Nigeria, the production of foodstuffs such as rice, potatoes, and butter increased significantly, while wheat production also rose rapidly.[4]

War Mobilization: Involvement of Colonists and the Colonial Measures

The Allied powers declared war against Germany on September 3, 1939, after Germany invaded Poland.[5] Since colonies were designed to serve the interests of the colonialists, the British colonial government embarked on a propaganda measure to secure the loyalty and commitment of its colonies. In Nigeria, the propaganda goals were designed to enlighten the populace about the disastrous consequences (real or imagined) of the enemy's (Nazi Germany) victory.[6] The British propaganda was welcomed by the Nigerian elite, which perceived the war as a quest to preserve humanity from the forces of destruction. The Nigerian elite supported the British cause by promoting its propaganda through various media, including radio, newspapers, debates in the Legislative Council, and public lectures, affirming support for the course of the British Empire and its allies. Hebert Macaulay, a nationalist and an erstwhile critic of

British colonial administration in Nigeria, urged his countrymen to "rally round the Union Jack" in several radio broadcasts, for he believed that victory for democracy and the freedom of mankind depended on "our determination and loyalty."[7]

Nigeria's role in World War II was profound.[8] In Nigeria, as in other British West African colonies, there was a drive to generate revenue by establishing various war funds, including through the sale of Nigerian Savings Certificates (N.S.C.) and the War Fund. By September 1942, Nigerians had purchased certificates £289,539.15, and by October 1942, the fund had risen £296,820.00.[9] The Win-the-War Fund also received a significant commitment from individuals and groups within the country. According to Mordi, British military propaganda appears to have been favorably received by Nigerians. Nigerians' animosity toward German rule seems to have been exploited by the colonial authorities, as they engaged in an intense propaganda campaign urging everyone to join forces and defeat Hitler. Nigerians, therefore, surely believed that by helping to purchase war supplies, they were assisting in the fight against Hitler.[10] In August 1940, for example, Nigeria contributed over £79,936 toward the Win-the-War Fund.[11]

Agriculture received significant attention, and local farmers were encouraged to produce cash crops for export and food. Food was essential for the troops, the local people, and the metropolis.[12] The production of food crops received new attention. As Nigerian historian Chima Korieh has shown, the food sector got little attention before the war. Instead, at the time, colonial authorities focused on exporting agricultural products and commodities, commonly referred to as cash crops, including palm oil, cotton, and rubber.[13] Before the war, the Department of Agriculture, established in 1910 in Southern Nigeria and in 1912 in Northern Nigeria, focused on solving problems associated with export production, as did research centers such as the Moore Plantation in Ibadan (1912–1916).[14] An agricultural station in Samaru, near Zaria (1934) in Northern Nigeria, was established to identify specific problems related to cash crop production. Between 1940 and 1944, for example, Nigeria exported 102,379 tons of cocoa, 9,913 tons of cotton, and 181,901 tons of groundnuts.[15]

The issues related to food insecurity during World War II were primarily the result of the accumulation of British prewar agricultural policies and wartime developments. Despite the expansion witnessed in Nigeria's agricultural sector under colonial rule, the focus was on cash

crops to meet the raw material requirements of metropolitan centers and to facilitate potential capital accumulation.[16] Little attention was given to the foodstuff sector, but this policy began to change on the eve of World War II. From September 1939, the Department of Agriculture focused on local food production and export crops that would support the war effort.[17] The department was tasked with ensuring food production self-sufficiency, reducing imports, and conserving valuable resources that could be channeled into the war effort.[18] Its other duties were summarized as follows:

a. To assist the imperial government through the production of such crops as may be required.
b. To ensure that Nigeria was, as far as possible, self-supporting in foodstuffs, including those which were usually imported from elsewhere.
c. To do all that was possible to make the entire West African colonies self-supporting.[19]

One problem the British colonialists had to grapple with during World War II was food (in)security. However, the root of the food crisis was the result of structural problems associated with prewar agricultural policies. Generally speaking, the British colonial government's discouraging attitudes toward food crop production steered rural farmers toward cash crop production, thus risking food production in Nigeria. The decrease in the number of food producers and the high number of consumers resulted in inflation in the prices of foodstuffs and scarcity.[20]

Another constraint on the development of agricultural activities, particularly food production, was the colonial government's attitude toward the implements and tools used by producers, which left them with crude technology, limited knowledge of land use, and the associated problem of drudgery.[21] Rural-urban migration also had significant implications for food production as it deprived the hinterland of the virile workforce needed to meet the growing demands for foodstuffs. For instance, the workforce in approximately three thousand villages surrounding Ibadan continually moved in and out, thereby sharing urban and rural cultures.[22] The effect of migration on food-producing areas meant that cultivated areas could not increase, especially as thousands of young men left the farms to join the military or industries or were placed on the waiting list for enlistment in the army.[23] In effect, the

number of food consumers increased, while the number involved in local food production decreased, leading to a rise in the cost of foodstuffs.

Furthermore, transportation was sometimes unreliable and often expensive. The controlled prices of certain commodities in the northern part of Nigeria and other provincial centers did not cover the transportation costs incurred.[24] During this period, the railway service in Nigeria was on the verge of collapse due to overexertion, and the country also faced a crisis in infrastructural development to meet the demands of the time. Despite the vast role the Nigerian Railway had to play in Britain's interests during the war, it was poorly maintained and ill-equipped.

Transportation disruptions affected the supply and distribution of agricultural products. This was acutely experienced in the railway sector. Railway engine failures increased from the prewar average of failure after traveling 24,000 miles to just 17,707 miles.[25] At the peak of the war, the situation worsened even further, as some locomotives had to be completely withdrawn from service to prevent major disasters.[26] By the end of the war, the percentage of locomotive engines awaiting repairs in the Nigerian Railway workshop constituted about 30 percent of its holding stock.[27] Due to this challenging situation, pyramids of groundnuts and loads of palm oil and cocoa piled up, awaiting haulage to the coast by trains that either did not or could not run. The general transport situation was such that food supplies to Lagos were seriously jeopardized during the period under review. In the Western Province, towns such as Oyo, Ilesha, and Ijebu faced significant transportation challenges.[28]

The role of British firms during World War II also contributed to Nigeria's overall food insecurity. The newly established West African Produce Control Board monopolized the purchase of all export crops from the British West African colonies. The Board was established to eliminate competition among the firms and ensure a steady supply of raw materials to British industries. It was also responsible for stabilizing prices for local producers, serving as the sole link between producers and the metropolitan economy by buying all crops produced by indigenous farmers and selling them to the Ministry of Food in Britain. This advantage enabled the British to appropriate the farmers' surplus. For instance, the Board paid Nigerian farmers £16.15 for a ton of palm oil in 1946, while the Ministry sold the same measure for **£95** to the manufacturers at home.[29] Similarly, the Board offered **£** 15.00 per ton of groundnuts to the local producers and sold the same to the Ministry of

Food for **£110.**[30] The Board's monopoly over agricultural produce thus led to the plunder of farmers' surplus. Its fixed prices for agricultural produce were often below market rates, reducing farmers' profits and production incentives. Farmers were compelled to grow specific crops rather than those they preferred or that were more profitable, to boost subsistence consumption. These disincentives reduced agricultural productivity, decreased farmer motivation, led to food shortages and insecurity, and ultimately increased poverty, especially among rural populations.

Trade restrictions contributed to general food insecurity, which was later worsened by the British colonial government's attempt to control food prices. Indeed, the dwindling food supplies and the rising cost of living in the cities were not so much a crisis of production as a crisis of distribution.[31] Although the food situation in Nigeria up to 1942 was generally good, government policies created artificial scarcity, disrupted the local distributive system, and affected the incomes of many local traders, artisans, and farmers at a period when the market prices for food crops would have led to increased income for farmers and less reliance on income from cash crops. As will be examined below, wartime development led to inflation and scarcity, so by 1943, market traders responded by establishing black markets for foodstuffs. In 1943, farmers in Oyo Province, for instance, complained bitterly about trade restrictions. This was due to poor sales during the 1943 yam harvest, as they were prohibited from exporting to cities such as Ibadan, Lagos, and other urban centers. However, the appointed agents could not purchase all the harvests, and farmers held a large surplus that they could not legally dispose of.[32]

Colonial Government Regulations to Address the World War II Food Crisis

While the demand for local food and low production levels created scarcity, the soaring prices of foodstuffs sparked severe inflation in Nigeria. Inflation rose abnormally without any corresponding wage increase or profit margins for colonial government workers, market traders, artisans, and farmers. The Nigerian population was affected mainly by the rise in the cost of essential food items. For instance, whereas in 1938 a bag of local rice from Abeokuta sold for forty-five shillings, it

had increased to fifty by 1940. By 1944, the same was being sold for seventy shillings. Similarly, a bag of yam flour was sold for twenty-five shillings in 1940. By 1946, it was sold at forty-five shillings.[33] In Eastern Nigeria, the price of a ninety-pound bag garri rose from four shillings at the beginning of July 1943 to seven by the end of the same month.[34]

As the war progressed, food prices, including for yam tubers, yam flour, threshed corn, threshed maize, and garri, increased rapidly in Ilorin Province, from which large quantities of foodstuffs were traditionally exported southwards.[35] As a result of the increasing prices of commodities, many low-income earners experienced immense difficulties and hardships. For instance, the profit margin on a bag of local rice from Abeokuta, which was four shillings in 1935, dropped to two shillings by 1938. By 1940, a profit of one shilling was earnable on a bag of local rice; by 1944, the profit margin had drastically reduced to six pence.[36] The consequence was that "many traders were subjected to 'unbearable economic hardship,' hardship due to the British colonial government's price control scheme and monopolization of trade by the authorized firms." Most affected farmers and traders were forced to smuggle restricted goods.

In response to these challenges, the colonial government attempted to regulate inflation by setting prices for farm produce and other commodities in the markets between 1939 and 1945.[37] For example, Section 140 of the Nigerian General Defense Regulation, 1941, empowered relevant and competent authorities, including the courts, to regulate available food.[38] The regulation granted colonial departments the authority to address wartime developments, including crises in the colonies and the protection of British interests.[39] It colonial authorities to regulate or prohibit the production, treatment, keeping, storage, movement, transportation, distribution, sale, purchase, and use or consumption of "articles of food in any description and, in particular, controlling prices at which such articles may be sold."[40]

The government responded to the food crisis by requisitioning supplies through the native authorities to meet the needs of the army and urban centers.[41] Whether the colonial response— directed toward curbing the rising cost of living, managing scarce resources, and facilitating the management of the war economy, was genuine in its expression of care for the local population or not—it served British wartime interests and negatively affected the earnings of local farmers and traders. Indeed, the

government responded to the rising food insecurity by importing foodstuffs to alleviate the scarcity issue and adopted food price regulations, otherwise referred to as the Price Control Scheme.

This scheme, regulating prices for foodstuffs ordered, was introduced in 1941 under the direction of Captain A. P. Pullen, whose name was attached to the operations (Pullen Price).[42] It took effect on February 19, 1941, and directed smaller retail units to conform rigidly to the price limits per standard measure, as designated by the market women and their customers.[43] The *Comet* newspaper of February 22, 1941, presented the reasons for the British colonial government's introduction of the Price Control Scheme, thus:

> We are pleased to note that the government has, at length, found it expedient to fix the prices of local food products in view of the exorbitant prices that have been obtained in the Lagos market. As no fixed price previously existed, the market women were, for the most part, compelled to fix their retail prices in accordance with the demand of the producers or wholesalers … we have for a considerable time been familiar with this food condition. Still, being aware of the many other war difficulties of the Nigerian government, we refrained from adding to its many onerous burdens.[44]

Under the price control scheme, the colonial government regulated the prices of foodstuffs such as garri (farina), yams, maize, salt, and cassava. Similarly, only government-licensed firms and indigenous contractors were to serve as middlemen, and food and cash crops could be exported from producing centers by recognized government agents. Special permits were therefore issued to these exporters by the district offices, including to the United Africa Company (U.A.C.), military contractors, and agents of the Association of West African Merchants. For instance, only European firms and a few local companies, such as Messrs Odutola and Brothers, could purchase garri in Ijebu-Ode and transport it to Ibadan in 1940.[45] One primary characteristic of food price control was that it was constantly in flux as instabilities were often experienced in different provinces.[46]

In Lagos, the Price Control Scheme of 1941 effectively regulated the prices of key foodstuffs, such as peppers, garri, and beans, to mitigate the impact of inflation and ensure the population's access to essential goods.[47] Under the scheme, the price of peppers was fixed at 46s.

Coarse-grade garri was fixed at 3s, while fine-grade garri was priced at 3s. l0d retail and 4s. 4d at wholesale price. Retail prices for white beans from Northern Nigeria were priced at 8s–9d, with wholesale prices at 10s. Local beans were priced at 7s. 6d retail and 8s. 6d wholesale. The differential pricing between wholesale and retail reflected the attempt to ensure affordability for consumers while maintaining fair returns for suppliers, as the government aimed to balance the interests of both producers and consumers through this pricing mechanism. Commodities were regulated in retail prices, providing a basis for price control of various commodities and facilitated affordability and availability for consumers in the market.[48]

However, the scheme had little or no chance of success because it only attempted to peg prices in Lagos without giving equal attention to other areas. To this end, similar regulations were promulgated in January 1944 to arrest rising prices in different regions, including Ibadan and Abeokuta.[49] In Ibadan, the retail price of foodstuffs, for instance, for *egusi* (melon), when shelled, was priced at 16s per unit wholesale and 20s per unit retail. Local rice was priced at 2d per pound. Retail beef was priced at 6d per pound weight, while retail mutton (back legs) was priced at 9d per pound weight, and other parts of mutton at 7d per pound weight. Retail pork (back legs) was priced at 10d per pound weight, and other parts of pork at 8d per pound weight. The retail prices of foodstuffs varied across different regions, including Jos in central Nigeria and Abeokuta in the southwestern part of the country.

By setting fixed prices for staple food items such as garri, palm oil, and meat, authorities aimed to protect consumers from exploitation and ensure that necessities remained affordable for all citizens. Additionally, the prices of items such as melon seeds, yam flour, and native rice were regulated to prevent hoarding and ensure fair distribution across the population.[50] Concomitantly, the distressing challenges of food insecurity during World War II led to the importation of foodstuffs to supplement local staples—subsequently, these imported foods served as a base for local food production.

As shown in Table 7.1, imports decreased during World War II. Even so, during this period, the price control mechanism included imported foodstuffs. By May 2, 1941, vegetables, primarily consumed by European residents in Lagos, were also included in the price control scheme. The authorities issued public notices regarding the prices of imported

European vegetables. However, price regulations were not expected to remain static over the seasons; Captain Pullen and his team of price control officials would revise them at intervals and as necessary.

Table 7.1: Import quantities of the principal foodstuffs for the years 1939–1941

Foodstuff/year	1939	1940	1941
Salt, other than table, cwt	921,135	1,058,638	796,684
Sugar cwt	91,909	41,642	24,332
Cabin bread cwt	16,102	6,349	1,072
Flour (Wheaten) cwt	45,095	29,889	36,460
Milk condensed not sweetened, cwt	7,23	5,50	4,258
Total value of imported food cwt	£969,235	£754,851	£628,859

Source: NAI, Comcol. Series, File no. 2516, vol. 1, 116, March 16, 1942.

British Price Control Policy and Internal Reactions

While it is incontestable that the local people could not match the British colonial government in terms of military strength and power, they reacted to the unacceptable food and price control mechanisms through other means, including protests, civil disobedience, and hoarding. Significantly, their reactions to the myriad crises related to food control regulations were expressed through petitions, in which they vehemently rejected procedures that negatively impacted their social and economic well-being. Indeed, traders, farmers, artisans, and market women responded actively to the wartime directives, erecting stumbling blocks in the way of Pullen's efforts to control the prices of foodstuffs. Between 1941 and 1945, local reactions and criticism filled newspaper pages. They became the subject of debate in the Legislative Council, where Nigerians reflected on the gross implications of the scheme.[51] Crucially, the Pullen Price Control Scheme was rejected by women and retail traders, who traditionally controlled the prices of foodstuffs and who consequently felt no need to genuflect to alien impositions.[52]

The Cocoa Marketing Board (C.M.B.) was established during this same time. It was a period when the export produce drive was adopted to coerce foodstuffs producers, particularly resource-poor peasant farmers, to produce aggressively for export.[53] The Board not only exercised the sole right to purchase and export all cocoa produced in Nigeria but also determined the annual prices paid to farmers for their produce. Under the guise of price stabilization and equalization, the Board acted as the government's tax-gatherer and instrument of robbery, paying peasant farmers far less than the international market price for their produce.[54] As such, the C.M.B. epitomized a disincentive to local farmers who had invested in the cocoa industry at a time when bumper prices were returning, giving farmers good reasons to produce aggressively.

In a significant development, the World War II period saw the proliferation of associations, particularly the Market Women movement, which developed into a formidable campaign that opposed perceived or imagined colonial impositions. Before the war, the activities of market associations were limited. However, the development of schemes that threatened the economic power of traders revealed the need for establishing formidable trade associations, and these gathered momentum between 1939 and 1945.[55] Thus, foodstuffs associations were formed in response to the Pullen Marketing Scheme, which undermined the economic position of the market women.[56]

Indeed, the British wartime innovations threatened the economic stability of the Nigerian polity. In January 1941, a ton of maize was sold at Ilaro at **£1.16.0,** 6d per petrol ton of 32 to 34 lbs. net. The people of Ilaro, therefore, protested the new price differential and were unwilling to sell at the Abeokuta prices because buyers from Lagos were able, at the price fixed by the Assistant Food Controller in Lagos, to offer higher prices and still make a significantly high profit.[57] Farmers in Abeokuta Province, particularly in Ilaro, protested against the food control scheme. In a letter dated May 6, 1941, the Abeokuta Food Committee lamented the application of the Lagos Food Control Price to food-producing areas, as Lagos can hardly be described as a food-producing area. In 1942, the Maize Sellers' Association was established in Ibadan as a response to the unfavorable control price imposed by the British colonial government.[58] Additionally, in the Eastern Region, the Aba Community League in Aba Township submitted petitions to District Officer J. V. Dewhurst, regarding the policy on garri control.

Similarly, in Lagos, the Oyingbo Market Women petitioned the colonial government about the distressing cost of foodstuffs. In a memorandum dated May 21, 1942, addressed to the Food Controller, the Market Women Association condemned food price control in Lagos, labeling it a useless scheme that should be scrapped.[59] The Oyingbo and Stallholders argued that seasonal supply variations determined price fluctuations and that the price structure operating in Lagos reflected the cost at the producing areas, which the government had not dared to influence. They noted that:

> Since the prices have been fixed for some of the articles, they (Market women and stall holders) find it difficult to sell at exact prices fixed by the government and that the underestimated articles namely—*Garri*, Corn, Yam, Rice, Egusi, beans and oil are goods which they humbly say could not be controlled as there are no definite prices given in their cases because their prices may be higher or lower during the dry and rainy seasons.[60]

Indeed, resistance against the Pullen Price was most profound in Lagos. Under the auspices of the Lagos Market Women's Association, market women protested the Pullen Scheme, foodstuff regulations on essential goods, and trading items, which women had hitherto dominated. One of the foremost leaders of this agitation was Madam Alimotu Pelewura, the Market Women's Guild president.[61] The Lagos Market Women's Association petitioned the Commissioner on November 24, 1943, on twenty-six points involving 1,390 signatories, who signed on behalf of 8,000 market women. The agitations of these women centered on the implications of wartime developments for their sources of income. These petty traders had to eke out a living to augment the poor earnings of their unemployed men.[62] Without a doubt, the attempt to impose taxes on Lagos women in wartime, when they had to pay for their children's education and help their husbands and unemployed sons pay their taxes, was ill-timed.[63] As they succinctly put it,

> We … Market Women humbly … beseech your Excellency not to approve the Pullen Scheme, which is about to deprive us all of our hitherto exclusive trading rights through which we earn our honest livelihood, support our families, educate our children, and pay our lawful township and water rates.[64]

The protests were not limited to petitions. Riots by market women broke out in places like Ibibioland, including Nto Edino, Ikot Abia, Odoro Ikot, and Mbuso.[65] In Ibadan, market traders also refused to cooperate with the scheme, which they considered would jeopardize their economic interests. On these grounds, the market traders (foodstuffs sellers) in Ibadan petitioned District Officer Captain J. Wann, on the hostile price control policy, thus:

> The present controlled price for a bag of maize needs an amendment. We had gone to different towns and villages where bags of maize are brought to Ibadan. At Gbede, Ilorin Road, they sell one bag of maize for 17 shillings; the drivers are transporting a bag for 4 shillings to Ibadan, to reckon the expenses of labourers with cost, the price of one bag of maize is equal to 22 shillings—the same thing obtained in Gambari, Iseyin Road and Lanlate towns. We solicit on behalf of all other foodstuffs sellers in Ibadan to help us suggest and establish a suitable controlled price for a bag of maize and other foodstuffs.[66]

The instability in prices and ineffectiveness in using fixed prices to protect traders' profits without consideration for the addition of transportation and handling costs were another point of criticism. Notably, controlled pricing of local and imported products had economic consequences for the indigenous market, particularly for women traders and farmers. While it protected the interests of the consumers, it did not always safeguard the profits of the traders who employed their capital and energy and were equally entitled to a livelihood.[67] A newspaper report of 1942 informs us of a petition by bean traders in Lagos:

> At present, a bag of beans costs eight shillings in the North, while the freight to logos is seven shillings and three pence, and an empty bag costs from one shilling and three pence to one shilling and six pence. Let the controller add this to the handling and other charges and see how a bag could be sold profitably for anything less than a pound.[68]

The importation of garri from Aba, Eastern Region, to the North also received similar criticism.[69] In Aba, the price of garri per bag was six shillings in 1941. The freight from Aba to Kano was about seven shillings and six pence per bag, while each empty bag was bought at one shilling

and six pence. Transportation costs paid to the railway station increased by another three pence, while their handling charges, which could be at least one shilling per bag, were already in place by 1941. The price at Kano was now fixed at sixteen shillings, a situation that prevented sellers in the north from making a profit due to the government-controlled price.

The British government, for its part, turned a deaf ear to all of this agitation. Consequently, since the traders could not afford to sustain long-term losses, many of them began to take the law into their own hands, a situation that culminated in the emergence of black markets. A petition by Adio Olawale, directed to the Deputy Food Controller, Marina, Lagos, dated December 30, 1941, reported the rise in the market price of potatoes. Olawale also noted that the controlled price for a basket of potatoes of 168 lb., which should have been sold for thirty-eight shillings, nine pence, was being sold for fifty shillings. He observed that the Marine Department ship handler supplied potatoes at four pence per pound instead of the controlled price of 2 ¾ pence per pound or 12/-11d per ounce of 56 pounds.[70]

Rural market traders also participated in the black market trade; there was no other means of protecting their interests and profits, as their pleas to the government fell on the colonial authority's deaf ears. Black markets emerged for assorted goods in every nook and cranny of the colony. The prices of foodstuffs on the black market were higher than the controlled prices, indicating that the British price control mechanism was ineffective and detrimental to trade transactions. For instance, a bag of yam flour was sold on the black market for twenty-six shillings in 1944, while the controlled price was fifteen shillings. A bag of garri sold for twenty shillings in the black market, while the controlled price was ten shillings and eight pence. A bag of local beans sold for thirty-five shillings while the controlled price was twenty-six shillings.[71]

The reality was that as long as people had money to pay, they always went to the traders to obtain the necessary foodstuffs, where they were not subjected to prolonged waiting in long queues, unlike in the official market. The producers in the provinces hid many foodstuffs away from government agents who offered prices lower than equilibrium and made secret sales to local merchants who paid more. Many women evaded price control wardens by selling quietly in the black market. Since the parties to the secret deal stood to gain from it, people did not report each

other, and foodstuffs were thus poured into the hidden stores of the market women, who operated flourishing black markets.[72]

The British colonial government insisted that violators of the price control schemes must be severely punished. A newspaper report at the Ibadan National Archives shows that the inspector made several public announcements about prices against those who violated the price control scheme. For instance, in 1942, one Abigail Idowu, living at No. 13, Epe Street, Lagos, was charged with the offense of selling 10 oz. of tomatoes for $2^{1/2}$d instead of 16 oz. for ($2^{1/1}$d) controlled price. The court ruled that she either go to prison for a month or pay an indemnity of **£10.** Another petty trader, Wulemotu Agbeke, who lived at No. 109, Docemo Street, was charged for selling 8 oz of tomatoes for 2 1/2d instead of 16 oz. for 21/1d, the controlled price. She was sentenced to a month of imprisonment for hard labor or a fifteen-pound fine.

Companies found guilty of violating the price control scheme were also sentenced. For instance, in 1942, the French Conception et Fabrication Assistée par Ordinateur (C.F.A.O.), Marina Lagos, was found guilty of omitting to keep records necessary to check entries on ration cards. It was fined **£10.**[73] One Daniel Shumolohun of 129 Bamgbose Street, Lagos, was found guilty of selling one small tin of Ovaltine for one shilling and sixpence instead of the controlled price of one shilling and five pence. For his part, Paulinus Mabadeje of No. 35, Bamgbose Street, Lagos, was found guilty of refusing to sell sugar. Both individuals were, respectively, sentenced to two months' imprisonment or a fine of five pounds.[74]

Apart from the challenges of resistance, the black market, and violators, the price control scheme also faced impersonation issues; some individuals went as far as to impersonate the Inspector of Prices to annoy traders. In a public notice by the Inspector of Prices on 17 Thursday, 1942, the Inspector stated thus:

> Complaints have been received that there are certain people masquerading in the town and local markets as Assistant Inspector of Prices and these people are causing annoyance to traders who are carrying on their business in a peaceful and law-abiding manner. Should you be approached by any person who purports to be an inspector, it is quite a simple matter to satisfy yourself of his or her by requesting him or her to produce the authority with which each official inspector is provided.[75]

Officialdom itself agreed in 1944 that despite all efforts to paralyze the black marketers, about two-thirds of the people of Lagos got their supplies from them, while only about a third were fed by the control pool.[76] Still, even though the futility of removing the price system as the determinant of resource allocation was by now fully apparent, the price control scheme was allowed to linger until 1947. Meanwhile, the Inspector of Prices l embarked on propaganda against that the black market, proclaiming:

> These black markets are very harmful and those who used them are "pests." They are depriving you of your rightful share of commodities that are in short supply. Are you willing to stand by and lets others have their fill whilst you and your families have to go starve? It is not only in your own interest, but it is your duty as a citizen to bring to the notice of the authority … in case you can prove where these rouges are hiding themselves.[77]

The above shows that the British colonial government made concerted efforts to discredit local black-marketing activities through aggressive propaganda and the excessive use of judicial power. However, these efforts failed woefully as the local market women and traders remained entirely on top of the situation long after World War II had been concluded. In fact, at the end of the war in 1945, the Ladies Club collaborated with the Nigeria Union of Traders (NUT) by assisting women traders whose rice products had been confiscated by the government.[78] The government had decisively lost the battle.

Conclusion

This chapter historicized the British colonial policy and the food economy of Nigeria during World War II by bringing to the fore the Nigerian food insecurity issues, which arose from the price control policies initiated by British colonial authorities that in turn were detrimental to the survival interests of the indigenous people. These policies deflected the local economy from its natural growth path during World War II. Policies such as the 'Win-the-War Fund and the Pullen Price Scheme fundamentally disrupted the traditional food production and distribution profile, throwing it into crisis and destabilizing the preexisting local economic arrangement. This situation led to food shortages and the introduction

of the Pullen Price Scheme in particular led to widespread disaffection among the people. The policy sparked local reactions, including the emergence of black markets, generally patronized by the people for basic foodstuffs.

This chapter also demonstrates that World War II had a profound impact on Nigeria. The British efforts to promote food production through the formulation and implementation of new policies and propaganda did not address the challenges of food insecurity caused by poor policy formulation and management. Instead, it further escalated the already tense situation in the country. The British government's attempts to checkmate the market women and traders significantly impacted the freedom of people whose economic aspirations conflicted with the government's policies and goals. Thus, while the British colonial administration undertook some measures to alleviate the already depressed economy, particularly in response to food scarcity and insecurity during World War II, these same decisions and policies sparked a series of reactions and disturbances, ultimately revealing their abject failure.

Notes

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2 Crowder, *West Africa Under under Colonial Rule*, 495.

3 Clarke B. Peter, *West Africans at War, 1914–18, 1939–45: Colonial Propaganda and Its Cultural Aftermath* (London: Ethnographica, 1986), 19; Toyin Falola, *Key Events in African History* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002), 208; David Killingray and Richard Rathbone, eds., *Africa and the Second World War* (New York: St. Martins, 1986), 5.

4 National Archives Ibadan (hereafter NAI) *36378/S,24/I*, Food Production in the Colonial Empire during the War, 85.

5 For details, see Meshack Owino, "Africa and the Second World War,: in Martin S. Shanguhyia and Toyin Falola, ed., *The Palgrave Handbook of African Colonial and Postcolonial History* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 355–72.

6 Onwuka N. Njoku, "Export Production Drive in Nigeria during the Second World War," *Transafrican Journal of History*, 10, no. 1/2 (1981): 11–27.

7 See Chima J. Korieh, *Nigeria and World War II: Empire, Colonial and Global Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020). See also Njoku, "Export Production Drive in Nigeria," 11–27; Justin G. Nkem-Onyekpe, "Agrarian Crisis and Land Question in West Niger Igbo Area, c. 1886–1987" (PhD diss., University of Lagos, 1996), chap. 5.

8 For a discussion on African mobilization and deployments, See Meshack Owino, "Africa and the

Second World War," in Shanguhyia and Falola, *Palgrave Handbook of African Colonial and Postcolonial History*, 355–72.

9 *The Comet* (a weekly news magazine of West Africa), "Nigeria Savings Certificates," 15.

10 For a criticism of Win-the-War-Fund, see Emmanuel Nwafor Mordi, "In Defense of Empire: Government Press Collaboration in the British Win the War Efforts in Nigeria during the Second World War," *Jebat: Malaysian Journal of History, Politics & Strategic Studies* 44, no. 1 (2017): 58–88.

11 *Nigerian Daily Times*, August 1940, 5. See also Emmanuel Mordi, "In Defense of Empire," 58–88.

12 Judith A. Byfield, "Feeding the Troops: Abeokuta (Nigeria) and the World War II," *African Economic History* 35 (2007): 77–97.

13 Chima J. Korieh, *The Land Has Changed: History, Society, and Gender in Colonial Eastern Nigeria* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2010).

14 The Moore Plantations at Ibadan was founded by the British Cotton Growing Association (BCGA) in 1902 as an experimental cotton farm.

15 See *Nigerian Trade Reports 1939–45* (Lagos: Government Printer, 1946).

16 For discussion on other West African colonies, see Crowder, *West Africa under Colonial Rule*, 492; see Leonard Woolf, *Economic Imperialism* (London: Swarthmore Press, 1921); *V. I. Lenin, Imperialism, the Highest State of Capitalism* (Moscow: Progress Publishers 1983), 72–83.

17 National Archive Enugu (hereafter NAE), EKETDIST., 1/2/50, File no. 499, "Food Production" Memo: Agricultural Officer Abak to D. O. Calabar, July 12, 1940.

18 Korieh, *Nigeria and World War II*, 163–205.

19 NAI, 36378/S,24/I, Food production in the Colonial Empire during the War, 92.

20 Wale Oyemakinde, "The Pullen Marketing Scheme: Trial in Food Price Control, 1941–47," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 6, no. 4 (1973): 416.

21 Nkem-Onyekpe, "Agricultural Change and Development in 20th Century Nigeria," 110.

22 See Samuel Olalekan Oyedeji, "Ibadan: A Study in Spatial Distribution of Urban Public Service" (PhD diss., New York University, 1972), chap. 2.

23 Oyemakinde, "Pullen Marketing Scheme," 416.

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30 Ibid.

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32 NAI, Oyo Prof. I/1294: President, Oyo Province, to District Officer, Ibadan, May 1, 1940.

33 NAI, 1ba. Div. DW, 1/1/1984. Inspector of Produce to District Offices, Ibadan, August 10, 1946, 88.

34 NAE, ABADIST, 14/1/873, File no. 1646, "*Garri* Control", District Officer, Aba to Secretary, Northern Provinces, July 29, 1943.

35 Ibid.

36 NAI, 1ba. Div. DW, 1/1/1984, Inspector of Produce to District Offices, Ibadan, August 10, 1946, 90.

37 Adeyinka Theresa Ajayi, "Economic Crisis during the Second World War and the Response of the Market Traders in Ibadan, Nigeria," *An International Journal of Arts and Humanities* 3, no. 3, 2014: 15–25.

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42 NAI, Comcol. Ser," Chapters 2516, vol. 1, Prices of Local Foodstuffs, 65, 170; see also Oyemakinde, "The Pullen Marketing Scheme," 416.
43 Public Notice no. 15 of 1941, *Official Gazette*, February 20, 1941.
44 *The Comet*, February 22, 1941.
45 NAI, Oyo Prof. I/1294: President, Oyo Province, to District Officer, Ibadan, May 1, 1940, 122.
46 Note: At the National Archive, Ibadan, there are several public notices signed by A. P. Pullen between 1942 and 1945, given different market prices concerning the situation of food markets and the implications of the war on the colonies.
47 Public Notice no. 15 of 1941.
48 Public Notice no. 15 of 1941.
49 Oyemakinde, "The Pullen Marketing Scheme," 418.
50 NAE, Cal. Prof., 3/1/2329, District Officer, Abakaliki, November 9, 1942.
51 See for instance, *West African Pilot*, January 15, 1941; *The Nigerian Eastern Mail*, March 6, 1943; and *Legislative Council Debates*, 1945, 179–87.
52 Oyemakinde, "The Pullen Marketing Scheme," 413–23.
53 Njoku, "Export Production Drive in Nigeria during the Second World War," 10–22.
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56 Ibid.
57 NAI, Comcol Series File no. 2516, vol. 1, 29.
58 NAI, 1ba Div. DW 1/1/1984, Inspector of Produce to District Offices, Ibadan, August 10, 1946, 140.
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63 NAI. Comcol. File no. 23610 E/2, "Lagos Market and the Trading Women: Petition against taxation of women in Lagos."
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65 NAE, File no. 1646, vol. 4, ABADIST 14/1/875, "*Garri* Control," Omuna Native Court to District Officer, Aba, November 1944.
66 NAI, 1ba.Div. 1/1/1984, Inspector of Produce to District Offices, Ibadan, August 10, 1946, 140.
67 "Inefficient Price Control in Local Foodstuffs," *Daily Service*, January 7, 1943.
68 NAI, Comcol. Series File no. 2516, vol. 1, 14
69 The demand for garri and other food items also created opportunity for traders, some of whom entered the foodstuff retaining trade because of the opportunity for quick profit that existed,

especially in towns in Northern Nigeria. For instance, in Aba Division, garri export to the North increased from 4, 011 tons in 1938 to 5, 199.16 in 1941 and 21, 000 tons in 1942. See, NAE (National Archives, Enugu); ABADIST. 1/26/910.

70 NAI, Comcol Series File no. 2516, vol. 1, 123.

71 NAI, Iba Div. 1/1, 1944: Local Foodstuff prices control of and movement, 191.

72 Oyemakinde, "The Pullen Marketing Scheme," 423.

73 *The Comet*, "Broadcast by Inspector of Prices," July, 15, 1943.

74 *The Comet*, "Broadcast by Inspector of Prices," September 23, 1942.

75 *The Comet*, "Broadcast by Inspector of Prices, Marina, Lagos," December 17, 1942

76 Oyemakinde, "The Pullen Marketing Scheme," 423.

77 *The Comet*, "Broadcast by Inspector of Prices, Marina, Lagos," July 15, 1943.

78 *Daily Service*, November 12, 1945.

CHAPTER 8

Stories on the French Recruitment of Moroccan Soldiers during World War II: A History from Below

Otman Bychou

Introduction

This chapter explores the narratives of Moroccan veterans regarding the motivations behind their recruitment into the French army during World War II. It is based upon interviews with some Moroccan veterans about their participation in a war that was not theirs. During the colonial period, African colonial subjects were regarded as and, in reality, constituted a valuable human resource for Western colonial powers. The primary purpose of recruiting colonial soldiers for these European empires was to consolidate their hold on conquered territories or to expand into new ones.[1] The role played by this valuable manpower was of great importance, to the extent that the French colonial project in Africa, for instance, could not have been carried out without the assistance and commitment of the Africans. Moreover, these individuals were engaged not only in colonial endeavors overseas but also at home, particularly during the World War II, when the French army deployed a large number of African soldiers to defend and liberate France.[2] Moroccan soldiers were not an exception, as many enlisted in the French army.

Once the war began in 1939, the Allies brought the war to Morocco and transported a large number of colonial soldiers from French Morocco to Europe to join the French in their battle against the German occupation.[3] The French defeat at the hands of the Germans in 1940 pushed the French army to recruit many Moroccan youngsters to fight the Nazis. In January 1943, the Allies agreed to grant independence to colonized countries, including Morocco, in accordance with the Casablanca Conference.[4] The Western gift was conditioned by the participation of the colonized

peoples and countries in the war, demonstrating their conspicuous consent and commitment to save the world from Nazi expansion. Importantly, the tactic of enlisting Moroccan recruits into the French army had already been employed during.[5] Unsurprisingly, after World War II, the French military command again called for more Moroccan men to join its ranks in Vietnam, an important subject addressed elsewhere.

The focus on Moroccan veterans' experiences in World War II is motivated by the fact that this experience have not received due academic attention. In this vein, Maghraoui addresses the way colonial discourse appropriated these colonial soldiers and how nationalist discourse silenced their participation in the most famous war in the twentieth century. Maghraoui's article remains a significant endeavor, highlighting some Moroccan veterans' voiceless past. In the summers of 1995 and 1996, Maghraoui interviewed some Moroccan veterans about the reasons behind their participation in fighting under the French flag during the French colonization of Morocco. The veterans' narratives reveal the coercive methods that the French employed to force many Moroccans to join the French army. From the outset, Maghraoui states that his "ultimate goal is to use the oral accounts of some of these soldiers as narratives of contestation both to nationalist and colonial discourses, to legitimate their own place in history."[6] Observing that the Eurocentric vision of the written history of the world wars has denied other histories, namely of those colonial subjects who participated in them, Maghraoui relies on these Moroccan veterans' stories about their experiences in World War II and the French-Indochina War in an attempt to fill in the blanks in the historical memory of these wars.[7]

Personal, Social, and Family Problems as Motives for Joining the French Army

In contrast to many veterans' accounts about their recruitment in the French army, Leblida, a Moroccan veteran who joined his colonizers' army ranks during World War II, chose to fight the Nazis to exact revenge on his brother's killers, the Germans. The following story by Leblida remains revelatory:

> Filled with agony because of the death of my elder brother, who had been killed by the Germans in 1939, I enlisted in the army. The Germans held a parade in his honour at the presence of my father in Azilal. […] A German colonel affirmed that my brother was very courageous, and the colonel told the French that he wanted to see my brother's family; he also said that if the French had managed to get just one battalion of soldiers like that person, the Germans could not have occupied France because he was besieging us for several days in this mountain. The French informed my father through the caid Ouchetto, who told him to clean himself and leave together with the French from Tanant to Azilal because some German officers wanted to see him. The Germans brought my father all the papers found in my brother's possession, even his keys. The Germans made a parade in the presence of my father who presented himself. A German general and a French one also delivered their own speeches, but it was the German who controlled the event. The German told the French that if you had a battalion of soldiers like that person, we could not occupy France. The German general offered my father a lot of money and also told him to ask for what he wanted.

The story is about Leblida's motivation for enlisting in the French army. In joining it in reprisal for the killing of his elder brother by the Germans in 1939 in Belgium, Leblida presents a motive that could make any colonial soldier proud. Likewise, Leblida's sharp wit enables him to recount a magnificent story about his brother's death and the way he offered his father, a peasant farmer, a significant position in history. Whereas this story is particularly striking and deeply personal, what was the motive behind the other veterans' enlistment in the French army? How did the French convince so many young people to join the army and fight in Europe and Vietnam? Joining battlefields as colonial subjects, with no concrete pledges like the French themselves, is very striking in the narrative.

Leblida's story shows a free man's strong stance against French greed. Likewise, the elder brother's death at the hands of the Germans constituted a solid reason for the younger one's decision to fight for France. Most other veterans whose stories inform this chapter, however, refer to social and family problems as direct motives for joining the French army. Boukar, a veteran, recalled:

> I was born in 1929 in Boukaroun. Children in my village grazed lambs and young goats, while young men pastured sheep. There was a habit in

> Boukaroun; when a male became adult, he had to leave the village and search for a job. If an adult was 18 years old, old people castigated him for staying without employment, a custom which enticed young men to leave at the moment degrading phrases were spoken about them. […] Accompanied with two friends from my village, I went to Marrakesh to enlist in the French army.

Boukar had to leave the village because the other residents would not tolerate his presence. He saw joining the French army as a means to find employment and escape his countrymen's stern attitudes toward unoccupied youth. Like Boukar, Zayd, another veteran, describes the dire situation in which he lived: "Before I enlisted in the army, our countryside was in a bad situation, and everyone was trying to improve his situation." Alidrissi also recounts a similar story:

> Hardships in life and my familial situation made me an introvert. When I was sixteen years old, I escaped to a village called Buyahya so as to enlist in the French army. They turned me down because I was young and I asked for a man who had promised me to convince a French captain who had already refused my demand to join the army. The captain's name was Garro. He said that I was still young. The man told the captain that I was strong, like the Indians, and that I was unlike the city youngsters. Finally, I enlisted in the French army.

The same motive is manifest in Imaghri's narrative:

> My parents died early. I stayed in Ait Mhammed and in Ashkoul working as a shepherd till I became tired. I enlisted because I was orphan and because I was working as a shepherd for people. I was young and people did not take care of me. There was a friend of mine who was also grazing other people's goats and ewes. He enlisted and he came back after three months, wearing a uniform.

Poverty and deprivation prompted many young villagers to seek employment in order to improve their social status. And employment in the colonial forces was particularly attractive, as the infiltration of the French army into the countryside promulgated colonial ideas and encouraged enlistment.

Persecution as a Strategy of Colonial Soldiers' Recruitment

The narratives of other veterans, however, present yet more powerful motives for enlistment. Here, French persecution and the unpaid work the young men did for their French colonizers emerge as leading causes for donning the French uniform. In this regard, Karoun says:

> In the period before my enlistment in the French Army, people were forced to carry out the *corvée* which France imposed on Moroccan civilians. We were working in paving roads for the French at no cost. Although we suffered a lot from this coercive work, we felt that our effort would never be futile, and, one day, our country would profit from the importance of our forced labour. At that time, people who were not accustomed to penal servitude preferred to join the French Army. A lot of them did that; for that reason, I enlisted in the French Army.

Karoun joined the French army because the backbreaking work he was forced to do for his colonizers exhausted him. It can be inferred from this story that this was no accident: the French intended to entice the Moroccan workers to join the army as an alternative to working an unpaid job. Oubouhss also found the French army a good alternative to the *corvée*:

> At the age of sixteen, I was obliged to do the *corvée*.[8] After that, we were engaged in patrolling. We also brought letters and invitations from the caid Ait Chettou so as to give them to *lmqaddam and sheikh*. I got bored and I enlisted in the French army. We used to cut down trees, remove rocks and build tiny ways in the woods. My enlistment was due to my engagement in patrolling at the caid's house. After I had spent a week there, I went home in the morning. Once I went to sleep, they called for me again so as to prepare lime in Ait Atab. I was angry because I was supposed to cross the distance on foot from Tamnnayt to Ait Atab. My mother advised me to stay at home and not to go. After that, I went to Marrakesh so as to enlist in the 2ème RTM.

In this narrative, the *corvée* emerges as a strategy through which the French paved the way for creating an atmosphere of relief for the young villagers who chose to join the armed forces. After enlisting, Oubouhss

would be freed from doing the exhausting, coerced chores. The same motives are echoed in Dahman's narrative:

> We used to carry out the *corvée*. People were very poor. We worked in building roads like the road which leads to Azilal. I worked in it using axe and shovel. A lot of people came from Boukaroun and Bzou so as to work there. We used to cut down forest trees and to make coal. The caid took us in order to plough and collect olives and almonds without pay. The caids issued the orders which we carried out, even though the French maintained a militarily presence in the area. People at that time started to enlist in the French army. A friend of mine, who had already joined the army in Meknes, came and told me to enlist too. I decided to do that and we left to Meknes.

Many people were subject to humiliating tasks that prevented them from staying in their villages. The *corvée* they carried out for the French colonizers and the bad treatment they received from their own countrymen were direct factors that pushed Oubouhss, Dahman, and the majority of the veterans interviewed to join the French troops.

The recruitment of Moroccans into the French army was a significant issue in Franco-Moroccan colonial relations and a concrete manifestation of colonial obsession. For it to be successful, it was necessary to induce Moroccans who witnessed or heard about German inspectors' recurring visits to their country to fight for the French against the Germans. In *Beginning Postcolonialism*, McLeod explains that "under colonialism, a colonized people are made subservient to ways of regarding the world which reflect and support colonialist values."[9] At the moment of the French predicament in Morocco, they had no military means of ruling the colonized through military force; thus, they focused tirelessly on colonizing the colonized subject's mind. The process fostered French colonial stability in Morocco but negatively affected how colonized people saw each other. It was not enough to draw the Moroccans into unequal warfare between Nazism and democracy; it was necessary to push the colonized peoples in Morocco to yield to the French vision of themselves as inferior and their "uncivilized ways" as holding no worth. In this vein, Zaiter narrates an impressive story about how he joined the French army:

> I was born in 1923 in Taghrart, Bzou. During the French occupation of Morocco, the country was overwhelmed by high cost of living and forced

> labour. We used to work coercively in building roads at no cost. When a male reached the age of fifteen, he would be called to serve under the authority of the French occupation. Except for females, every male was expected to carry out the French chore. This tax could be from six to twelve days when the labor was double. Additionally, sheep, mules, wool, and wheat—in general, all that people and land produced—had been transported to France before the French defeat at the hands of the Germans in 1940. Still, what remained for the colonized were locusts and *eirny*.[10] Wonders that burst out from the land became ready to feed people's hunger. Families were reluctant to afford sugar and appropriate clothes, except for some woollen dresses that a few women made for children. However, the women who could not afford wool would not be able to make clothes for their family members. People wore woollen *qushabat* and *salhama* without undergarments.[11] Life in such a way pushed me to enlist in the French army in 1940. At that time, we used to take two dirhams a month. If a Moroccan family had a soldier in the French army, no caid, no *sheikh*, no *mqaddam* could dare to offend the soldier's family. The crooks [he means the French] were keen on praising the individual's enlistment in the army.

The French regarded the Moroccan soldiers' enlistment in the French army as highly important, since it consolidated the colonizer's ambitions in creating a colonial soldiery. However, this could not happen without disempowering the people under control. That is to say, the vicious trilogy represented by the absolute tyranny of the caid and his employees, the *sheikh* and the *mqaddam*, played an important role in reassuring the French that they would do all they could to help the colonizer preserve and propagate his dominion in Morocco. Indeed, the French colonizer convinced the Moroccan caids to unquestioningly accept their subservience and treason against their native people. McLeod suggests that

> colonialism is perpetuated in part by justifying to those in the colonising nation the idea that it is right and proper to rule over other peoples, and by getting colonised people to accept their lower ranking in the colonial order of things—a *process* we can call "colonising the mind."[12] (My italics)

It seems that the French successfully colonized people's minds; without this, the colonial ranking system would not have been highly respected. During the early years of World War II in Morocco, the Nazis were on

top of the colonial pyramid, as they successfully colonized the French themselves. They were powerful because they had succeeded in subduing Holland, Belgium, and France in twenty-four hours. The Moroccan colonized subject's acceptance of the third rank on this colonial scale would not be possible if he did not internalize its alleged truth. And it is here that we must acknowledge the success of the French in convincing the colonized of their own inferiority. Suppose the colonized people had refused to hand over their properties to the French colonizer. Would the latter have been capable of killing the insurgent people after taking everything away from them? Was it wise to ship dead bodies to France while French people were waiting for a variety of Moroccan crops, including wheat and barley, and not human flesh? For the French, then, resistance had to be tamed without shedding blood.

In their success, the French relied on their representatives, the caids. The French colonizer's abuse of Moroccan workers with the collusion of the caids was a significant factor pushing many youngsters to join the French army. As Zaiter reveals in his narrative, and as we shall see in Aztam's, Lachhab's, and Outqadoust's narratives in the forthcoming pages, this manner of employing Moroccans for no pay makes the French employers appear rude and devoid of any humanitarian feeling, unmasking their false claims to be the bearers of the *mission civilatrice*. The success of the French empire lay in its ability to postpone its civilizing mission as the main pillar of its grandiloquent apparatus by relegating this mission to the back burner, subduing the colonized peoples and maintaining the status quo instead of "civilizing" them. And not only were the colonial subjects deprived of food, drink, and clothes but they were further disempowered by learning to hold negative views of each other. The ten-year-old worker who dug the mountains and built the roads for the French in Morocco was not a French person. Look again at this narrative told by Aztam:

> Before joining the French army, I used to go to Tanant so as to work for four or five days at no cost. They employed us in paving roads with shovels and axes. I do not remember which road, but it is not the one people are using now to go from Tanant to Azilal. At that time, we also crossed the mountains in order to work for the caid Ouchetto in Tanant. We brought some supplies that could suffice till the end of the working days. *Lmqaddam* was the then supervisor who made us work until the four days finished

> and we disappeared. It was only our brothers, the Moroccans, who supervised our works, while the French remained far from us at their office. They did not even approach us. Their captain planned how our work must be carried out and the caid agreed about every decision. I was ten or eleven years old then. The time is past.

How Aztam perceived himself and the Moroccan men in authority perfectly reflects the subordinate ways they viewed each other. Aztam's disregard of and stern critique of his countrymen, "our Moroccan brothers," who collaborated with the French, is a fully expected outcome of the oppression he faced due to the negative treatment of the colonized people by the French. His feeling of inferiority resulted from his undesirable contact with the caid and mqaddam, who sided with the enemy against the rest of the colonized people. According to Aztam, his Moroccan bosses were nothing but traitors.

The French colonizer's attitude of forcing children to work in paving roads and making coal at no cost stems from a calculated greed that aimed to preserve the Moroccan colony from German intervention in North Africa. Lachhab also experienced the French strategy of pushing youngsters to join the French army:

> During World War II, the French colonizer imposed corvée labour on the Moroccan people. It was a seven-day coercive labour a year. The performance of the task could be at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end of the year. People arranged their personal supplies and headed for carrying out their forced labours elsewhere free of charge. When the seven days finished, every worker received a receipt, confirming his fulfilment of the task. If the labourer lost his receipt, he would be forced to carry out a new work. In my village, Tanant, the French army prepared a group of Moroccan laborers to send some of them to perform corvée labor in different places. While some of the workers stayed in Tanant, working in building roads and serving in French offices, I moved with others to the city of Azilal. It was Thursday, the day of the *souk* in Azilal. There, we met a French warrant officer who was calling for people to enlist in the French army. We were five men who complied with the call of the warrant officer who told us to come the next day at eight o'clock. Friday morning was the day of the appointment to undergo a check-up, and the day when the *corvée* came to a standstill, as the French told us.

Through this persecuted voice, one can clearly notice how skillfully the French colonizer deprived Lachhab and his comrades of power. It was a perpetual French plan to be an inevitable instrument not only to humiliate the colonized in front of his companions but also to push him to believe that the colonizer was a liberator of the colonized from an unfair social justice imposed on him by his own people. The French colonizers' methods of establishing the colonial order in Morocco were heavily based on a divide-and-rule approach. Zaiter and Aztam, among countless other workers, naturally hated the Moroccan torturer who warmly welcomed the French colonizer who bluntly despised them both. The colonizer, then, succeeded in getting colonized teenage workers to perceive themselves as the poor, unlucky inferiors in this colonial relationship, and thus (to use Fanon's words) as being robbed "of all worth."

Joining the French Army as a Pragmatic Affiliation with the Strongest

However, being deprived of wealth does not mean being "a parasite on the world," as Fanon would have it.[13] Colonial subjects had to look for opportunities where they could express their full potential with French support.[14] The most important goal for Zaiter, Lachhab, and Aztam was to be unchained from serving the enemy without wages. This made joining the army a way of rebelling against the native monster. The teenage, colonized youngster appeared helplessly overwhelmed with a passion for enlisting in the French army; however, this would not have happened without his countrymen's collaboration with the French colonizer to subdue, produce, and develop an inferior laborer who despised the cultural values of his tribe, hating the tribal chiefs above all others. The enthusiasm for enlisting emerged because of the amount of *care* the French provided to the little colonial subjects within a society where mqaddams, sheiks, and caids fed on propagating a permanent uselessness among their inferiors, the would-be warriors in the French army. For Zaiter and Aztam, the colonizer would not have fully achieved complete mastery over their villages without their countrymen's spiteful alliance with the French. It is as if they preferred becoming soldiers in the French army instead of passively accepting their employers' abusive behavior. So, tyranny and torture were employed as inevitable sanctions to indirectly convince the colonized to join the French army. The force of

circumstances enabled both the colonizer and the colonized to transcend their discontent.

The colonial discourse employed by the French and imposed on the native tormentors to turn their teenage colonial workers into meek subjects paradoxically inspired these humble people to join the French army. The French officer indeed skillfully played a double role. Predictably enough, ambivalence serves to anticipate the fate of this colonial relation. Its mechanisms involved offering the lowest ranked inferiors ample opportunities to leave the French servitude hideously arranged and directed by the wicked native trilogy and to instead join the French army, fashionably organized by the French colonial administration. Outqadoust's narrative is indicative here:

> I was born in a village called Agoudid in Azilal. During my stay in that village, people were forced to live in a miserable situation. It was the French colonisers who were the cause of our poverty. They investigated our houses several times and if they came across goods like sugar, olive oil, or some useful properties, they would send the house owner to prison. Frisking hungry people also took place on the way to our houses. The French also offered us receipts in order to get a few goods. At that time, locusts invaded a tribe called Taebdit in the region of Azilal. I still remember the exact year when it was overwhelmed by those insects; it was 1944. The people of my village headed for Taebdit to stop the movement of locusts towards other areas in the region. 1944 was also the year when I enlisted in the French army. I did not say anything to my family about my enlistment and I left the village by stealth. A *mqaddam* called Si Moha was always asking people about my surprising disappearance until some of them told him that I went to the Bureau Arab to join the French army.

The humiliation and robbery—at the level of material production—that the French colonizers carried out against their colonial subjects in Morocco was not an end in itself. It was a French plan executed with dexterity, designed to invite the ill-treated subject to observe what was happening from a purely French colonial perspective. In order to push the oppressed to deeply experience excessive rationalism, the French diligently stressed the need for the colonial subjects' emotional privation rather than material poverty. Strangely enough, the French warrant officer's call for colonial recruits to enlist in the French army showed

that the colonizer could not rule by military force, yet "the *crooks*," to take Zaiter's words, went beyond that: they succeeded in colonizing thousands of Moroccan teenagers' minds, offering ample opportunities to those laborers who wanted to enlist in the French army in hope of alleviating their sufferings. "A particular value-system," McLeod writes, "is taught as the best, truest worldview. The cultural values of the colonized peoples are deemed as lacking value, or even as 'uncivilized,' from which they must be rescued."[15]

We have seen, as illustrated in one of the narratives above, how the caid served as an omnipresent medium for arranging every order. Yet, according to Outqadoust, the mqaddam was not informed about the narrator's surprising disappearance. His pervasive interference in making the colonized workers appear under permanent surveillance came to a standstill. The poor informant, or perhaps the malicious agent in this colonial show, saw himself as being lacking authority over the destiny of his human resources. The unlucky subordinate Moroccan controller cracked down because the little subject, Moha, had betrayed him. The least sanction was to become unaware of his tormented people's intentions to turn the tables on their native oppressors and to put an end to their sufferings.

Conclusion

This chapter closely examines veterans' experiences with the aim of uncovering obscured voices and perspectives on the motives behind some colonial subjects' enlistment in the French army. Our reading of the veterans' stories offers a unique perspective on the war, providing additional insight into the French plans to persuade a large number of colonial soldiers to fight an enemy that was not their own. The recruitment appeal subjected Moroccan youngsters to colonial coercive methods in their country. In most of the veterans' narratives discussed here, the *corvée* emerges as a phenomenon that challenges all the assumptions about why Moroccans chose to fight for the French in World War II. This clearly contradicts the claim that they entered the war voluntarily. The veterans' narratives about the bad treatment and the unrelenting humiliation at the hands of callous and arrogant powers before joining the French army demonstrates the efficiency of the French methods of recruitment.

Notes

1 In 1762, Choiseul, a French diplomat and statesman who was recognized for his efforts in rebuilding French military reputation, affirmed that a foreign soldier was equal to three French soldiers: "one taken from the enemy, one gained by the French army, and one French man spared from death" (Driss Maghraoui, "The Moroccan Colonial Soldiers: Between Selective Memory and Collective Memory," in *Beyond Colonialism and Nationalism in the Maghrib: History, Culture, and Politics*, ed. Ali Abdullatif Ahmida, (New York: Palgrave, 2000), 52). «Un enlevé a l'ennemi, un gagné pour l'armée française, un français épargné.» Maghraoui's translation.

2 Important events paved the way for the Moroccan soldiers to directly participate in World War II. In *Aljaysh al-Maghribi 'abra at-Tarikh* (Maktabat Almaarif Aljadida, 1997), Abdelhaq Lamrini states that after the declaration of the war, the sultan of Morocco announced that the Sharifian Kingdom would support France unconditionally (305). The sultan openly advocated the French cause, calling for a solid mass of the population to support the Allies. In his book *Morocco since 1830: A History* (London: Hurst, 2000), C. R. Pennell states that "in September 1939 North Africans made up fifty-three per cent of the French colonial army: Moroccans formed three of the fourteen divisions, and one of five cavalry brigades. By the time the French government surrendered in 1940, 47,000 Moroccans had been recruited, of whom more than 2,000 were killed and 18,000 made prisoner. There were also 23,000 irregular troops—goumiers—some of them very irregular indeed" (255).

3 In *The French Empire at War: 1940–45* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), Martin Thomas states that three hundred thousand colonial troops were recruited between 1939 and 1940 in North Africa (12).

4 The conference took place in Casablanca. According to its terms, Roosevelt, Churchill, General de Gaulle and General Giraud agreed to have the Allies' armies landed in Morocco in order to attack the Germans in North Africa and enter Italy.

5 Different estimations surround the Moroccan contribution to the French war effort in the Great War. Paul Azan speaks of 34,000 Moroccans, while Augustin Bernard states that 40,398 Moroccans participated in the Great War. The same number also appears in Bekraoui's study. Maghraoui, however, refers to the striking number of 63,748 Moroccan conscripts (Qtd. in Maghraoui, "The Moroccan Colonial Soldiers," 7).

6 Maghraoui, "The Moroccan Colonial Soldiers," 50.

7 Ibid., 60.

8 A coercive task imposed by the French on Moroccan males during the French colonization of Morocco. With the exception of children, many men were driven in groups to carry out this forced labor in different areas of the country.

9 John McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 19.

10 A wild plant which grows in the Moroccan Atlas Mountains. People used to eat it when the French deprived them from their crops.

11 *Qushabat: cheap casual clothes; salhama:* a traditional Moroccan dress.

12 McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism*, 18.

13 Ibid., 73.

14 Not all people are parasites, but they can behave in a parasitical manner when they rob wheat, barley, sugar, and olive oil (the list is long) and transport all these supplies to France. This was partly a consequence of the French humiliation at the hands of the German army. If Fanon's "parasites" could give voice to their voiceless life, they would undoubtedly have had something

to say about Fanon's phrase, let alone his careless disregard for his own stated assumption that "when one approaches a problem as important as that of taking inventory of the possibilities for understanding between two different peoples, one should be doubly careful"(61). If a bomb suddenly falls on a neighborhood where mice and people live and naturally enjoy breathing the same air together, there will be a catastrophe on the one hand, as people die, while perhaps the mice survive only because this humble parasite, which is not like Fanon's one, knows where to hide. By disappearing quickly and quietly due to the quietest noise produced somewhere in the city, the little mouse has already developed an ability to resist the effect of the sudden attack, unlike Fanon's agent, who will immediately die or suffer the terrible pain of being a slave and dependent. And this will lead us of course to claim that the culture of the parasite is better and stronger than the culture of the human. In this case, it is really noticeable that the mouse will unquestionably accept the state of being a parasite rather than willingly put up with being a colonized person.

15 McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism*, 19.

CHAPTER 9

Black Skin, White Cause: Belanda Hitam and Force Noire in Indochina and Indonesia during World War II

Yvonne Tan

Introduction

Trapped in the colonial mimicry of refashioning the "violent savage" as a recognizable Other for imperialist causes, the African soldier is once again punished within the complex web of empires and nation-states, experiencing layers of power and oppression on the most intimate plane. This chapter, then, seeks to compare the colonial systems of Africa and Southeast Asia, focusing on military recruitment practices and the organization of African soldiers. Informed by Frantz Fanon's insights on the colonial condition, I offer a comparative analysis of the African soldier's experience in Indonesia and Indochina, both of which saw revolutionary uprisings against the colonial regime that resulted in their independence, and interrogate the figure that was caught in the crossfire, subjugated into wielding the weapon.

The Pacific War expanded World War II globally into a conflict that encompassed Asia and Oceania. The attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, is widely considered the beginning of America's direct involvement with World War II, with roots going back to the Second Sino-Japanese War, where in September 1940 French Indochina was seized by Japan. With early Japanese control of the region, the day after Pearl Harbor saw the launch of the Malayan Campaign, which led to Malaya's surrender on January 31, 1942, followed by the Dutch East Indies Campaign soon after, with the colony surrendering on March 9, 1942.

Colonial empires were only possible through indentured servitude in the plantations and mining. Concomitantly, consolidating and securing colonial capital, including keeping indentured workers in place, was only possible through military domination. West African troops played a

significant but underappreciated role in the colonial forces during World War II. As it relates to the Southeast Asian region, the conscription of the "warrior race" of West Africans into the armed forces was largely informed by racial categorization depicting the Asiatic natives as "effeminate" and therefore unable to defend themselves. The term *Belanda Hitam*, Indonesian for "Black Dutchmen" (Zwarte Hollanders), colloquially referred to the African recruits, primarily Ashanti and Akan peoples of West Africa, in the Royal Netherlands East Indies Army (KNIL: Koninklijk Nederlandsch-Indisch Leger). At the same time, the *force noire* was globally recruited into the French army to defend the empire's colonies worldwide, including Indochina.

Indonesia and Indochina came swiftly under Japanese control in 1942. Most of the troops found themselves in internment or POW camps alongside the civilian population of European and Indo-European ancestry. Others were allowed to live in segregated African Villages. Despite considerable interest in the Belanda Hitam since *The Two Hearts of Kwasi Boachi* (1997) and in the *force noire*, the image of West African soldiers during World War II, especially in their final defense of the imperial powers, remains largely obscured.

The outcome of the Pacific War might appear favorable to Southeast Asia, as it culminated in Allied victory and, more importantly, the substantial weakening of the European colonial powers that had long dominated the region. This set the stage for two pivotal events that followed the end of the Pacific War, resulting in direct clashes between the colonizers and the colonized—the First Indochina War and the Indonesian National Revolution. Japan played a significant role in fostering these conflicts as well, stoking the flames through its "Asia for Asians" policy, which was deeply imbued with anti-West sentiment.

Colonial Conscripts: Slaves with Militant Prowess and Possibilities of Freedom

As the Scramble for Africa gained momentum in the 1880s, the era of New Imperialism, characterized by fierce competition for the acquisition of overseas territories, extended its reach to Southeast Asia. In the Pacific Rim, this period initially witnessed the consolidation of ports along strategic maritime routes and a shift in trade dynamics. This shift was aimed

at regulating prices of sought-after commodities like spices to meet the demands of the European Industrial Revolution. Subsequently, there was an extension of jurisdiction, the establishment of elaborate plantation economy networks, and some investment in social development, all of which directly contributed to the accumulation of economic capital in the colonies. All of this was mostly done through the manpower of the colonies themselves. In the meantime, African colonies faced severe exploitation through the Atlantic Slave Trade, diverse forms of natural resource extraction, and military recruitment at an immense scale.[1] While both forms of colonial domination had enduring consequences, colonial land and labor systems in Africa incorporated military labor for the competing empires' global colonies with the formation of the "warrior tribes."

The Dutch East India Company, also known as VOC (Dutch: Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie), was a publicly traded company modeled after the British East India Company that began building its maritime empire on the Indonesian archipelago in 1619, with Batavia (modern-day Jakarta) as its capital. The nationalized colony was eventually named the Dutch East Indies by 1800 and continued to expand its sphere of influence. Due to the sheer size of the archipelago, VOC was still invading and securing territories throughout the nineteenth century, which was met with indigenous resistance and unrests such as the Padri War in Sumatra (1821–38), Banjarmasin War in Southeast Kalimantan (1859–1863), and the Aceh War (1873–1912). Whereas the subjugation of Northern Bali required continuous expeditions up till 1849 in Northern Bali, Lombok and Northern Sumatra came under Dutch jurisdiction in 1894 and 1895, respectively.

In Mainland Southeast Asia, French Indochina comprised modern-day Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, and parts of China in an imperial territory that emerged through a series of victories by the French colonial empire around the Mekong Delta against China in the Sino-French War (1884–85) and Thailand in the Franco-Siamese War (1893). By 1887, the French had established the Indochinese Union (French: Union Indochinoise), which set the stage for several anti-colonial movements to spring up, that of Phan Đình Phùng (1885–1895), the Holy Man's Rebellion (1901–1936), and the Thái Nguyên uprising (1917). Subsequently, the First Indochina War (1946–1954) saw the devolution of the union and escalated into the Vietnam War, involving the United States.

Racial logic underpinned the organization of both colonies, influencing inclusionary and exclusionary measures. The VOC initially banned Javanese people—the majority ethnic group—from living within Batavia's walls. In 1642, women were forbidden to pass beyond the city's limits due to "people lurking in the jungle, ruffians, Javanese, and others of our enemies."[2] From the Dutch perspective, there was a need "to be constantly on guard against the murderous Javanese."[3] Jacob van Klaveren, a Dutch-German economist who spent his childhood in Dutch Java (1919–1937), wrote extensively about the VOC's colonial system within the region. When writing on the abuses of coolie labor supply in Sumatra, he reveals some of the racial biases that the Dutch harbored and which continued to inform their increased labor distribution to Chinese indentured laborers in particular:

> The government watched the interests of the Javanese with a patriarchal eye, while the Chinese were only "foreign Asiatics" and considered clever enough to look after themselves. In 1889, the coolies were entitled to bring their families with them. Abuses, maltreatment, etc., about which there were rumors, were proved to be really rampant by the Median lawyer J. v. D. Brand, who published his results in a pamphlet (1902) […] The Chinese, though better and harder workers, were less docile, especially after the Chinese Revolution of 1911. They were always plotting and conspiring. Moreover, they were so full of initiative that it was more difficult to bind them to a contract than the more docile and less intelligent Javanese. In 1929, there were 235,000 Javanese and 26,000 Chinese contract coolies and 30,000 Javanese and 782 Chinese free labourers. In 1939, the Chinese had practically disappeared.[4]

The Dutch colonials organized the region as "an agrarian Indigenous population with an important and mostly Chinese lower middle class and Western big industry" rationalized by "why, it may be asked, should we still wait for the development of indigenous society?"[5] Thus, the VOC continued to bring indentured coolies from different parts of Asia, especially from China, just like the British East India Company. Forced African migrants were also widely employed, allocated to specific labor tasks throughout the colonies, where the men were tasked with hard, laborious jobs in agriculture while the women worked as maids and seamstresses.[6] The Dutch, just like the British, stressed the superiority of the Chinese

over African labor but saw that the Chinese were incapable of military service, unlike the martiality of the Africans.

What separated the VOC from British imperialism was the emergence of mestizos, as Dutchmen in the colonial company took Indonesian concubines, who bore Eurasian children.[7] The Dutch East Indies state experienced a significant rise in mestizos as a result of these relations, wherein by 1854, over half of the eighteen thousand Europeans in Java were said to have "the characteristic skin colour" of an Indo, while an additional fifty-six hundred Europeans born were also regarded as mixed blood. By 1930, 90 percent of legally classed Europeans were mixed blood mestizos and enjoyed relatively high social standing compared to their indigenous and migrant coolie counterparts.[8]

The recruitment of military labor from West Africa by the VOC to secure its most profitable empire, the Dutch East Indies, began with one of the archipelago's decisive wars. The Java War or Diponegoro War (1825–1830) began as a rebellion led by the Javanese Prince Diponegoro, who had been embroiled in a succession crisis over the Sultanate of Yogyakarta with his Dutch-backed half-brother Hamengkubuwono IV. Sparked in part by the VOC's plans to construct roads on Diponegoro's property where his late parents had died, of the conflict would emerge as one of the most significant moments in Indonesia's history. The rebellion expanded to encompass larger socioeconomic discontent involving the peasantry and fears over the erosion of tradition and religion, which eventually developed into a broader anti-colonial struggle. Diponegoro managed to garner so much support that one-third of the total population in Java was involved in the war, with casualties at two hundred thousand Javanese against eight thousand European troops and seven thousand Indonesian soldiers who fought on the side of the Dutch.[9] The casualties led to a severe shortage of manpower within the Dutch East Indies army, which was also spread thin in another significant conflict halfway across the world, the Belgian Revolution (1830–1831). Hence, there was a dire need to acquire new sources of manpower for the VOC's army in the East Indies.

In 1831 Major General De Stuers—who had prior experience with African police auxiliaries—supported The Hague's proposal for the recruitment of Africans into the Dutch colonial army, convinced that the potential soldiers would not only adapt to the tropics but would instill fear into the natives of the Dutch East Indies without forming any

meaningful relationships with them. Subscribing to the image of the untamable savage, The Hague stated a preference for "pure," "unspoiled," and "children of nature" who had hardly any contact with the outside world.[10] Between 1831 and 1872, the Dutch recruited three thousand West Africans from the Asante Empire, where they had established the Dutch Gold Coast (Dutch: Nederlandse Bezittingen ter Kuste van Guinea) since 1598, seizing Forts Elmina and Fort Komenda. The African recruits were given Dutch names, and most were under contract to serve for a twelve-year period, with the option to return to Elmina, settle in the Dutch East Indies, or reenlist in the army.[11]

Although the Anglo-Dutch Treaty of 1814 called for the cessation of slave trading, the Dutch formulated a system for recruiting Africans, mostly Ashanti and Akan peoples, into the Royal Netherlands East Indies Army (KNIL), with which they were taken to Indonesia. The recruitment system offered recruits the opportunity to achieve their freedom in exchange for military service. Upon payment, they received a certificate of manumission, which was then sent to the Asante Empire. The recruits were subsequently trained at Fort Saint Jago before departing on the long journey to Indonesia.[12]

This arrangement soon ended after British accusations that the recruitment was a form of slave trading and that the Ashanti king had been selling his slaves for enlistment (the British too drew most of their colonial forces from India, particularly from the Sikh population). By Royal Decree of December 17, 1841, African recruitment was halted, and several instances of armed revolt were reported in Sumatra and Central Java due to unequal treatment, including the deduction of soldiers' salaries to repay the costs of manumission, which were lower than those of their European counterparts.[13] In June 1841, African soldiers of the 10th infantry battalion refused to obey Dutch orders on the west coast of Sumatra, resulting in a confrontation that left two were dead and the rest taken prisoner. In another significant incident, at Kedong Kebo on April 16, 1840, the African garrison town protested for equal pay as their European counterparts. All of these events lessened the enthusiasm for recruiting African soldiers. The Dutch were quick to blame inherent racial characteristics rather than their own treatment of the soldiers, with General Cochius, commander in chief of the East Indies Army, citing Colonel Michiels, who commanded the expeditionary force on Sumatra,

> They should not send us any more Negroes, as they are only fit to be used as beasts of burden, ruled by the whip. Even in combat, they are not useful: they shout more than they have courage, are dirty, and will never act in a disciplined manner.[14]

Although most who were already recruited continued to settle in Java, forming Indo-African communities in the Javanese towns of Purworedjo, Semarang, Salatiga, and Solo, some African soldiers turned the army career into a family tradition, serving in the Dutch Army, known as "Belanda Hitam.[15]" As the VOC's finances took a substantial blow from the many wars throughout the Archipelago, the company responded by tightening its authority through Johannes van den Bosch's Cultivation System (1830–48), which required that 20 percent of village land be devoted to growing cash crops for export at government rates, which essentially transformed Java into a Dutch plantation after the Java War. The KNIL then decided to continue recruiting African soldiers, especially after the Third Expedition to Bali in 1849 and the Aceh War, reopening recruitment of West African soldiers in 1855 to consolidate control over more of the Archipelago.[16]

Meanwhile, the French racial hierarchy was divided among the more "ambitious" Vietnamese elites and the Cambodians and Laotians who comprised the major workforce of colonial offices as clerks, secretaries, and accountants. The French shared Dutch perceptions of the Chinese, portraying them as a conniving and clandestine lot that required close watch; the Chinese were also understood to be a race in opposition to the Vietnamese.[17] Henry Solus, president of the Society of Comparative Legislation and colonial law specialist, defined the jus solis, which meant "right of the soil," as taking precedence in conceptualizing what was "native," leading to the perception of the Chinese as "Asiatiques étrangers." Threatened by greater Thai and Chinese unity, Paul Beau, governor of Indochina (1902–1908), saw the Annamese (the former name for the Vietnamese) as key to a future of a united Indochinese citizenship as they "find neither in the Laotian plateaus nor in the Mekong Valley a race or a group [of people] capable of opposing" the Siamese and Chinese.[18]

In 1919, under Albert Saurrat, the preference for the Annamese was made into a policy, the Franco-Annamese collaboration (French: *Politique de collaboration Franco-Annamite*). The policy trickled down into colonial

education, as seen in the 1928 textbook, *The Five Flowers: Indochina Explained* (French: *Les cinq fleurs: L'Indochine expliquée*) by Jean Marquet. This widely read travelogue fiction narrates how French Indochina was formed into five sections: Cochinchina, Cambodia, Annam, Tonkin and Laos, informing the cartography of the area as representing the "Five Lands of Indochina."[19]

Unlike the Dutch, who responded to a specific conflict, leading to a spike in recruiting African soldiers to replace Dutch troops, the French army had historically levied African soldiers to fight wars within France itself and its global colonies. *Tirailleurs*, or light infantry skirmishers, have been used by the French army since the Napoleonic era; the term came to designate indigenous infantry recruited from the French colonies, namely Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Senegal, and eventually Indochina. From 1912 to 1960, the infantry was built up through mass conscription during peacetime, predominantly for intercontinental colonial campaigns. Nevertheless, the watershed moment in deploying specifically African conscripts can be traced to 1910, when General Charles Mangin published *La Force Noire* (Black Force), a strategy favoring deploying African soldiers as "shock troops" due to their inherent underdeveloped nervous system and hereditary fatalism. He advocated for colonial troops to fight in European wars, and soon after, in 1915, launched a recruitment campaign for half a million soldiers in the French colonies:

> Dans les batailles futures, ces primitifs pour lesquels la vie compte si peu et dont le jeune sang bouillonne avec tant d'ardeur et comme avide de se répandre, atteindront certainement à l'ancienne « furie française » et la réveilleraient s'il en était besoin.
>
> In future battles, these primitives for whom life counts so little and whose young blood is bubbling with so much ardor and eager to spread, will certainly reach the old-fashioned "French fury" and wake it up if it were needed.[20]

Mangin emphasized that the Africans' martiality, coupled with a primitive drive, made their life worth little outside of European-driven conflicts, continuously utilizing racial logic to justify how the black force would the best kind of soldiers. In the context of World War I, over 140,000 West Africans were conscripted. [21] Mass recruitment through conscription

and working with local chiefs to provide recruits resulted in soldiers who often came from the most disadvantaged social groups. Not all Africans were willing to join the European forces; while some fled, the conscription resulted in several armed revolts in Beledougou, Mali, Dahomey (now Togo), and Ghana.

In 1917, the French army enlisted around sixty-two hundred volunteers and twenty-six thousand conscripts; in the following year, there were fourteen thousand volunteers and thirty-four thousand conscripts.[22] And as European empires fiercely competed with one another, Germany was also recruiting colonial soldiers to fight on the Western Front. The German Foreign Office circulated a pamphlet titled "Employment, Contrary to International Law, of Coloured Troops upon the European Theatre of War by England and France" (1915), which referred to the colonial troops as "beasts" and blamed them for the atrocities committed against Germany.[23]

General Galienni, who commanded colonization campaigns in both Africa and Indochina, expressed the view that "the warriors' qualities of the Senegalese can no longer be contested, proud to serve under the orders of the French leaders, it is impossible to treat them as simple mercenaries; in the service of our flag they constitute, on the contrary, elite troops which it would be regrettable not to deploy."[24] Later, in the context of World War II, Charles de Gaulle, leader of the Free French, launched the "Free French Forces," later renamed "Fighting France" (France combattante), a call to arms from French territories occupied by the Axis Powers. By 1940, there were eighty thousand African troops in the French front line against Germany, with massacres of approximately fifteen hundred, though some suggest the actual number was probably twice as high due to underreporting. Most of these losses occurred during the German offensive along the Somme River, launched on June 5, and during the pursuit of the retreating French in the following two and a half weeks, as they fought for a European world of selective victors and victims.[25]

France emerged as the colonial power that enlisted the largest number of African soldiers.[26] The African colonial forces fought World War II on battlefronts worldwide, including Indochina, and on August 1, 1943, L'Armée d'Afrique was formally united with the Free French Forces to form L'Armée française de la Libération. Maurice Faivre estimated the death toll between 1943 and 1945 at 74,300 in campaigns of

Tunisia, Italy, France, and Germany, where the loss of 18,300 North Africans and 40,000 Blacks from colonial Africa were comparable to the 12,000 French from North Africa and 40,000 metropolitan French killed.[27] In contrast, in Indochina from 1945 to 1954 during the First Indochina War, the death toll of the colonial army was far more significant, standing at 3,000 to 4,000 Algerians, 7,000 to 8,000 Maghrebis, and 15,000 Blacks from colonial Africa, compared to the 12,000 metropolitan French lost.[28]

The colonial dynamics in Africa and Southeast Asia, particularly the recruitment of African soldiers into colonial armies to serve in Indonesia, Indochina, and globally, reveal the different kinds of colonialism employed in the African and Southeast Asian contexts, which are only briefly explored in this chapter. The mobilization of West and North Africans to secure colonial consolidation in Southeast Asia reveals the intertwined histories of military recruitment, economic exploitation, racial hierarchies, and mutinies as forms of resistance in a larger imperial system. But the reverse did not happen on a similar scale. Frantz Fanon argued that Black identity under colonialism did not develop in its own right, always having to exist in relation to the culture of the white colonial rulers and the degree of their cultural assimilation. The shaping of African identity as the preferred "warrior race" after the Atlantic Slave Trade was consistent across Dutch and French colonialism and resulted in the mass recruitment of African soldiers, typically of slave descent, with a promise of a better future in far-off lands. The extremity of this colonial alienation is the outcome of a double process "primarily, economic; subsequently, the internalization—or, better, the epidermalisation of this inferiority."[29] As the recruits were forced to wear the "White Mask" and adapt as a survival strategy, the second part of the chapter will examine the figure of the African soldier when another Asian imperial power is added to the mix.

World at War: The Land of the Rising Sun against Suns That Never Set

The Imperial Japanese Army (IJA) had moved into northern Indochina as an extension of the Sino-Japanese War in the early 1940s before the surrender of France to Germany on June 22, 1940. Taking advantage of

France's defeat, the Fumimaro Konoe–led government issued two ultimatums, demanding the closure of all supply routes to China and establishing a Japanese control commission. By August, the ultimatum had included additional conditions, such as the establishment of transit infrastructure and airfields in Indochina for Japanese troops fighting against China. France tried to stall for time and, in order to resist the Japanese invasion, began to build up its forces, although it was too late as Japan had chosen to invade on September 22, 1940.[30]

An hour before the ultimatum was to expire, the IJA had moved into the border near Langson, attacking the Gulf of Tonkin by the 24th and subsequently the port of Haiphong on the 26th, taking possession of airbases and railways leading to China. Only when foreign minister Paul Baudouin, a former general manager of the Bank of Indochina, appealed directly to the emperor did the latter issue a personal order to stop Japanese troops from advancing and apologize for the incident. "A Local Agreement re Japanese Garrisons in Northern French Indochina" was drawn up on September 22, 1940, which allowed Japan to station six thousand soldiers in Northern French Indochina across several control stations, waiting to invade Southern Indochina.[31]

The Japanese were also preoccupied with establishing their jurisdiction in other parts of Southeast Asia. When preparing to invade the Dutch East Indies, Japan lost almost all of its oil supply after the United States placed an embargo on all oil exports to Japan on July 26, 1941. The troops moved again to southern French Indochina on July 28, 1941. Negotiations with the Vichy government also continued, with the signing of another agreement on July 29, 1941, regarding the defense of Indochina. This agreement lasted until the Japanese coup d'état in March 1945, which effectively removed any remaining French claims over Indochina. It is worth noting that in July 1944, France attempted to make arrangements for additional reinforcements, particularly from North Africa. However, the Americans vetoed the proposal.[32] France favored the Africans against Indigenous soldiers, particularly after the Yen Bai Mutiny of 1930, an uprising by Vietnamese soldiers within the French colonial army. The French stationed *tirailleurs sénégalais* to fight in other colonies, as they were believed to have no commonality with the local populations, unlike their Dutch counterparts, whose experiences were similar in Madagascar, North Africa, Syria and Lebanon.

Nevertheless, there were already West African troops present in the

regular units of the French Army in Indochina, and they were identified as black French soldiers by the Japanese. The black soldiers were also largely disliked by the Vietnamese.[33] Depictions of West African troops by Indonesians were also not very favorable. Take, for example, the novel *Rafilus* (1988) by Budi Darma, which recounts the Dutch occupation of Surabaya, mentioning the elite area of Darmo where two Belanda Hitam named Van der Kooning and Jan Van Kraal lived, who were depicted as arrogant and unfriendly.[34] In Indochina, women had free movement outside their homes and public spaces, which allowed more contact between civilian women and the French military in Indochina, including with the black soldiers. Recorded instances included a woman demanding regulations against black troops' patronage of military brothels due to the "physical disparity of sexual organs."[35]

The intersectionality of oppression faced by the African soldiers, added on top of the Japanese Occupation, left them to fend for themselves, faced with the fact that their lives were not the same as those of their white counterparts. The *tirailleurs sénégalais* were largely reliant on personal relationships with the indigenous populations to escape internment during Japan's occupation. Dressed as a woman, Ibrahima escaped from Haiphong by swimming across the Haiphong River at night. He found a safe haven among his friend Ninh's relatives outside of town. Ninh and Ibrahima were reunited after Japan surrendered to Allied Forces in late 1945. They relocated to Senegal in 1947, when it was once again possible to travel between Southeast Asia and Africa.[36]

The non-European infantry already stationed during the Pacific War included the Algerian and Tunisian Rifles, North African volunteers, Moroccan Rifles, North African volunteers, Moroccan Goumiers, North African volunteer irregulars, often with local auxiliaries attached for recce tasks, and Senegalese and African Rifles, West and Central African volunteers.[37] Casualties in Indochina during World War II were estimated at 20,685 Frenchmen, 11,620 legionnaires, 15,229 North Africans, 7,540 West Africans, and 26,686 Indochinese troops killed or accounted for; totals for wounded were about three times higher. Although some 36,979 members of the Expeditionary Force were listed as missing or captured, some 4,700 were repatriated before and 10,754 after the ceasefire.[38]

Recalling that the United States placed an embargo on all oil exports to Japan by July 1941, Britain and the Netherlands soon did the same. By October, Japan had hosted a meeting in Singapore with the United

States, Great Britain, and the Netherlands to negotiate oil imports, which was not satisfactory. Hence, on December 7, 1941, the Japanese decided that their previous efforts to avoid war with the United States were no longer possible, carrying out surprise attacks on the US Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor and launching the Malayan, Philippines, and subsequently the Dutch East Indies campaign.[39] Part of "The Southern Operation Plan," its main goal was to gain control of oil reserves in the Dutch East Indies, with the sudden attack on British Malaya and American-occupied Philippines as a stepping stone.

On December 8, 1941, was also the day the Netherlands declared war on Japan and mobilized partially in Java, Madura, Bali, and Lombok. While the whole of Malaya was taken over by January 31, 1942, on January 11, Japan declared war on the Netherlands and began to seize oil refineries in Palembang by February 14. 23,500 troops from the Imperial Japanese Army faced 23,600 Dutch East Indies soldiers, although significant numbers of indigenous Indonesian troops deserted the army. As famed Indonesian writer Pramoedya Ananta Toer noted, "With the arrival of the Japanese, just about everyone was full of hope, except for those who had worked in the service of the Dutch."[40]

The Dutch East Indies Army comprised four infantry regiments (with three battalions each) as the core. There were three divisional headquarters, although the main force of the US, British, and Australian Armies was collectively referred to as the "Black Force" and consisted of two infantry battalions.[41] Nevertheless, KNIL troops surrendered throughout the archipelago in Ambon (February 1), South Sulawesi (March 3), Bandung (March 7), Java (March 9), and Sumatra (March 28). POW camps soon became representative of the Japanese Occupation, with Major H. L. Zweister concluding in 1978 that a total of 42,233 of the European soldiers in the Dutch East Indies had POWs during the Japanese occupation:

> Royal Netherlands Navy: 3,847 soldiers
> KNIL: 36,869 soldiers
> Auxiliary corps of the KNIL: 1,517 soldiers.
>
> Of the total of European prisoners of war (42,233), 8,200 died (19.4%):
> Royal Netherlands Navy: 648 killed (16.8%)
> KNIL and auxiliary corps: 7,552 killed (19.6%)[42]

Although Zweister never gave any figures for the Dutch indigenous troops and the "black force," the colonial army was consigned to detention camps, those who were considered European, were imprisoned together with the Chinese, Christian Ambonese, Manandonese while in alignment with Japan's Asia for Asians policy, they released the Muslim Indonesian soldiers who were part of the force.

The reports of the figures vary due to the high amount of deaths throughout the archipelago, where some reported 130,000 Europeans were detained, with 30,000 dead, while the United Nations' Working Group for Asia and the Far East settled for 3 million in Java and 1 million in the rest of Indonesia, which included not only those in detention camps but also those who succumbed to famine and forced labor.[43] Most notorious was the Burma Railway, better known as the "Death Railway," which was built between Thailand and Burma to support the ensuing Burma campaign in January 1942:

> Na de Japanse bezetting van Nederlands-Indie in maart 1942 waarbij alle Nederlandse scholen worden gesloten, keert ze gedwongen terug naar Salatiga. Haar moeder blijkt echter spoorslags naar haar inheemse familie in Pekalongan te zijn vertrokken waardoor de kinderen Bonimbie aan hun lot zijn overgelaten. Samen met haar zusjes vindt Adriana oderdak in het plaatselijke kindertehuis, terwijl haar broers door het Japanse leger geinterneerd zijn en als dwangarbeiders aan de Birmaspoorlijn tewerkgesteld worden.
>
> After the Japanese occupation of the Dutch East Indies in March 1942, when all Dutch schools are closed, she is forced to return to Salatiga. However, her mother appears to have left for her indigenous family in Pekalongan, leaving the Bonimbie children to their fate. Together with her sisters, Adriana finds shelter in the local children's home, while her brothers are interned by the Japanese army and are forced to work on the Burma Railway as forced labourers. [44]

Meanwhile, others were fortunate enough to claim their indigeneity, as seen in the case of Frans de Bakker, who fought alongside the Dutch, British, Americans, and Australians in preventing the Japanese fleet from landing on Java in February 1942. He managed to prove that his mother was of Indian origin, and that his children attended schools that had been taken over by the Japanese:

> Het gezin van de Indo-Afrikaanse marineman Fans de Bakker telt zeven kinderen. In batavia kan het gezin buiten het interneringskamp blijven op grond van de Indische afkomst van moeder Maria. Om aan geld te komen kookt ze maaltijden die door familieleden verkocht worden. Ook de jonge Benny gaat langs de huizen om perkadel met sambal en gebakjes te verkopen. Door de week zit hij bij de Zusters Ursulinen op de frobelschool waar hij's oschtends gymnastiekoefeningen moet doen onder leiding van een Japanse leraar en in het Japans leert tellen.
>
> The family of the Indo-African marine man Frans de Bakker has seven children. In Batavia, the family can stay outside the internment camp because Mother Maria has an Indian origin. To earn money, she cooks meals that family members sell. Young Benny also goes to the houses to sell percussion with sambal and pastries. During the week, he attends the Srubber School at the Sisters Ursulines, where he has to do gymnastics exercises in the morning under the guidance of a Japanese teacher and learn to count in Japanese.[45]

Those who survived the war would live on to see another decade of violence, just when they thought the ordeal was over, in both Indonesia and Indochina. The Japanese, during the occupation, promulgated their own version of Pan Asianism and imperialism, a form of liberation for the natives from the European powers, characterized by the "Asia for Asians" (*Ajia-shogi*) policy. In so doing they stoked the flames for the subsequent Indonesian National Revolution and First Indochina War, during which colonial troops played a significant role in defending the last vestiges of the empire. Unlike in Indochina, where the French introduced a rotation of different troops from North and West Africa after disbanding their *tirailleurs indigènes* in 1945 due to frequent mutinies, the situation was different in Indonesia. Many Africans there were able to claim an Indo-African identity due to their long presence in the region. Still, many wished to be repatriated to the Netherlands with the ensuing conflicts ahead:

> Over de oorspronkelijke Afrikaanse nam van KNIL-soldaat Herbig en diens geboorteplaats tasten de nazaten Herbig in het duister. Eddy zit in de vierde klas bij de Zusters Franciscanessen wanneer de Japanse bezetting uitbreekt. Op grond van Johanna Herbigs afkomst als belanda ido kunnen alle elf

> kinderen buiten het interneringskamp blijven, zij he dat een angstige tijd aanbreekt. "Terwijl wijl kinderen gedwongen thuis moesten blijven omdat alle scholen werden gesloten, is mijn vader als KNIL-soldaat krijgsgevangen gemaakt en aan de Pakan Baroespoorweg op Sumatra tewerkgesteld." Aan deze 'dodenspoorweg door het oerwoud' zijn 2.500 overwegend Nederlandse krijgsgevangenen omgekomen naast naar schatting 80,000 Javanese romoesja's. Pas in het najaar van 1945 ziet Eddy zijn vader Siegfried terug die hardnekkig zwijgt ervaringen als dwangarbeider [...] Na de capitulatie vervliegt alle hoop op herstel van de orde wanneer de Indonesische revolutie losbarst.
>
> Eddy is in the fourth grade with the Franciscan Sisters when the Japanese occupation begins. Based on Johanna Herbig's origins as a belanda indo, all eleven children can stay outside the internment camp, albeit at a frightening time. "While all the children were forced to stay at home because all schools were closed, my father was taken prisoner of war as a KNIL soldier and employed on the Pakan Baroes Railway in Sumatra." Two thousand five hundred predominantly Dutch prisoners of war died alongside an estimated 80,000 Javanese romoesja's on this "death railway" through the jungle. Only in the fall of 1945 does Eddy see his father Siegfried again, who stubbornly remains silent as a forced laborer [...] After the capitulation, all hope for restoring order disappears when the Indonesian revolution starts.[46]

Tonio Andrade argued that, in postcolonial scholarship, the VOC's intra-Asian trading networks have become increasingly important in comparison to Asia-Europe links.[47] Marx's idea of "Asian despotism," in which the British in the 19th century dismantled Indian society to mold it according to colonial capitalism, was similarly representative of the French role in constructing a united Indochina that, infamously, failed and heavily conscripted its colonies to fight its wars since the Napoleonic era. Meanwhile, the Dutch built upon existing structures of authoritarianism. This form of "piggy-backing despotism" was indeed an iniquitous combination wherein the lower class of the Ashanti Empire was incorporated into its slave trade networks to serve in the Dutch East Indies for generations. Japanese imperialism that came after allowed Japan to present itself as a liberator, directly attacking European colonialism and waging war on Europe. Within the context of this Japanese Asianism, the African soldiers were lumped together to be punished by the new

colonizer, together with the previous colonizer. Truly they were caught in the complex web of colonial loyalties that reveal racial subjectivities, resonating with Fanon's analysis of "colonial neurosis."

These systems of plunder created and imposed what Fanon called a divided sense of self-identification of what it means to be black, as coercively displaced from one's cultural origin, caught in a new home under the control of the colonizer who brought them to it: "Overnight the Negro has been given two frames of reference within which he has had to place himself. His metaphysics, or rather, his customs and sources on which they were based, were wiped out because they were in conflict with a civilization that he did not know and that imposed itself on him."[48] The African soldiers found themselves on the margins, in wars that were not their own, and yet ones that defined their fate for generations. Their dual identity, which produced the feeling of inferiority and also dependency, shaped by a variety of colonialisms and reinforced by Indigenous influences, became a battleground for self-assertion against the dehumanizing forces of war, as "this self-division is a direct result of colonialist subjugation is beyond question."[49] Yet the KNIL and Free French Forces, and their implied success, highlight the paradoxical nature of the non-recognition of African recruits in the colonial army.

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CHAPTER 10

Equality for Blood: African Soldiers' Struggles for Rights after World War II

Ruth Ginio

In 2004, then-president of Senegal Abdoulaye Wade established the 23rd of August as the Day of the Tirailleur. Throughout the years of Wade's administration, this day was marked by grand and widely publicized ceremonies in which he himself took part. The date chosen to mark this anniversary is interesting, for it can tell us a great deal about the way African participation in World War II is remembered in postcolonial Senegal. On August 23, 1944, the sixth regiment of African colonial soldiers, known as the tirailleurs sénégalais, had liberated the city of Toulon in the south of France. According to Wade, this date best symbolized "African participation in the liberation of France and in the struggle against Nazism."[1]

Interestingly, Wade's efforts to commemorate the *tirailleurs* and to rescue them from oblivion coincided with a growing body of academic research in France and elsewhere on the history of this unique military force during World War II. Studies have explored African soldiers' experiences on and off the battlefields, their imprisonment in German POW camps, the discrimination they suffered during their service, their encounters with French civilians—both men and women—and their participation in the liberation of France.[2] They have also paid much attention to French ingratitude toward and even betrayal of these soldiers during demobilization at the end of the war. The major event studied in this respect is the massacre of demobilized soldiers who were protesting and demanding payment of their wages in Camp Thiaroye at the end of 1944.

While these works shed important light on the history of the *tirailleurs* during World War II, my aim in this chapter is to highlight a different aspect of African soldiers' experiences during the conflict. I propose to examine the *tirailleurs*' struggles for rights during and after military service, as well as their successes in achieving equality—an achievement

that no other sector of colonial society had managed to attain in French West Africa (FWA). The focus on French discrimination and mistreatment of African soldiers is valid and important, but it tends to divert attention from the latter's agency and struggles after the war. At the end of the 1940s, these struggles led to massive military reforms and to the equalization of service conditions and pensions between African veterans and their metropolitan comrades, all of which greatly improved the military status of African colonial soldiers. The fact that these gains were lost with independence, when the French decided to freeze the pensions of African veterans, does not diminish the tremendous and unique accomplishment of the soldiers and veterans in winning equality from within the colonial and military system.

After a brief presentation of the *tirailleurs sénégalais* and a discussion of their experiences during the war, I focus on three examples of struggles fought by African soldiers during and after their military service. I begin by discussing soldiers' spontaneous revolts and protests at demobilization. Here, I deal not only with Thiaroye but also with smaller incidents that tend to be overshadowed by this major event. Second, I examine the much more calculated struggle of the main veterans' journal in FWA, *La Voix du combattant*. I specifically analyze the discursive strategies deployed by this journal to advance the veterans' aims in the postwar decades. Third and lastly, I explore a particular case of struggle for equality waged by African veterans: the district guards' fight for better conditions in the Ivory Coast and Senegal in the mid-1950s. This case study shows that recently demobilized soldiers continued to highlight their past military service in demanding their rights as civilians. With these three examples, I demonstrate that in spite of their subaltern position in the military and colonial systems and the patronizing and discriminatory treatment they received during their service in World War II, African soldiers and veterans strategically invoked their participation in the war to achieve equality.

The Participation of the *Tirailleurs Sénégalais* in World War II

The first battalion of the African military corps, later known as the *tirailleurs sénégalais*, was formed in 1857. This battalion was intended to assist the French in their conquest of African territories and to help

them maintain order in these after their "pacification," to use the favorite euphemism of the time. In their attempts to snatch the largest possible slice of the African "cake," the French chose to rely on Africans for three main reasons. First, they had had bad experiences with French troops in Africa, who often succumbed to diseases even before firing the first shot. Second, the use of African troops was much cheaper, as these could be paid meagre salaries and did not need to be transported all the way from Europe. Finally, public opinion in France generally objected to sacrificing French soldiers for the conquest of distant and unfamiliar lands but did not mind African casualties for that same purpose.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, when clouds of war were darkening European skies, Colonel Charles Mangin proposed to deploy African soldiers to defend the French motherland. In a 1910 book titled *La Force noire*, Mangin maintained that falling birthrates in France made it necessary to recruit African soldiers in order to protect the country's borders.[3] Drawing on the pseudoscientific racial theories of his time, Mangin claimed that Africans would make excellent soldiers due to several so-called natural attributes, including an underdeveloped nervous system that allowed them to withstand pain. African soldiers, he argued, would be extremely valuable as "shock troops" (*troupes de choc*), and their appearance on the battlefields of Europe would have a considerable effect on the enemy's morale.[4]

Following a heated debate in military and political circles, the French government finally adopted Mangin's proposal. African soldiers were recruited and sent to Europe from the start of World War I, but mainly after 1916, when French casualties became too heavy and mutinies began to spread among the troops. Over the four years of the war, FWA supplied 170,891 African soldiers to the French military forces. According to various estimates, one in five perished in the war.[5]

Sending African colonial subjects to defend the motherland dramatically changed the rules of the "colonial game," although the French did not seem to realize it yet. French military and administrative officials legitimized the idea of sending Africans thousands of kilometers away from their homes to fight a war that was not theirs by emphasizing what officials called the "blood debt." This was a debt that Africans supposedly owed the French for bringing them civilization and for saving them from local and ruthless tyrants. As we shall see, after World War II, African soldiers and veterans reversed this idea, and the blood debt became one

that France owed its colonial subjects for coming to its aid against the German enemy.

According to rough estimates, one hundred thousand soldiers from FWA were mobilized from the start of the war in September 1939 to the fall of France in 1940, not counting the standing army of fifty thousand men. After the signing of the Armistice, most of the soldiers who had survived the battles of 1940 were demobilized. Others remained in the military forces that the Vichy regime was allowed to keep to defend the Federation of FWA. After November 1942, the Free French recruited one hundred thousand additional soldiers from FWA and Equatorial Africa. In total, two hundred thousand Africans were recruited to fight in the war. Between fifteen and sixteen thousand of these men fell into German captivity, and between twenty and twenty-five thousand were killed.[6] Thus, Africans witnessed the defeat of France in 1940, spent considerable time in German POW camps, and, finally, participated in the liberation of France as part of the Free French. These experiences on and off the battlefields transformed their vision of French colonialism.

Figure 10.1: Senegalese-Tirailleurs. https://www.senegal-online.com/histoire/les-tirailleurs-senegalais/

The Vichy colonial administration, represented in FWA by Governor General Pierre Boisson from June 1940 to July 1943, and later the Free French authorities, were both highly concerned about the effects of African soldiers' war experiences on their attitude toward colonial rule. They were especially worried about the influence that returning soldiers might have on the colonial population. Africans who had participated only in the battles of May and June 1940 before returning to FWA were a particular source of concern, because it was almost impossible to counter the accounts of demobilized African soldiers who had witnessed France's defeat firsthand. But soldiers who returned to FWA toward the end of the war or in its immediate aftermath were also a source of worry:

insofar as these soldiers had witnessed the fall of Germany and had contributed to the French victory, they often saw themselves as liberators of France. From the colonial perspective, the presence of African subjects in the heroic forces of liberation, to which the civilian population in the metropole owed its gratitude, was highly disadvantageous. This was, in fact, the main motive behind de Gaulle's order to "whiten" the liberating forces that entered Paris in August 1944. De Gaulle ruled that the *tirailleurs* would not march the streets of liberated Paris because he worried that Parisians would perceive the sight of African liberators as a humiliation, which, in turn, would harm civilian morale. This decision enraged African soldiers and contributed much to their deep resentment of their French commanders.[7]

At the same time, the colonial administration was troubled not just by the military experiences of colonial soldiers but also by the warm relations some African soldiers had forged with French civilians. Soldiers were often invited to French homes, and civilians' attitude toward them was radically different from the racist and paternalistic treatment they had received from representatives of the colonial administration and other Europeans residing in the colonies. African soldiers developed friendly and even intimate relations with French women; some even married French women and had children with them.[8] The warm relations that often developed between French civilians—both male and female—and African soldiers threatened to blur the already precarious boundaries between colonized and colonizers. They were therefore seen by the colonial administration as a real threat to colonial stability after the war. As we shall see, these warm relations shaped African soldiers' perception of the treatment they received from the French military and colonial authorities. During the long process of demobilization, the soldiers grew impatient with the numerous obstacles they encountered due to neglect and discrimination. Oftentimes, colonial and military authorities linked soldiers' expression of discontent to the experiences they had undergone during the war. Official documents contain many references to the alleged connection between the defiant behavior of demobilized African soldiers and their relations with French civilians, especially women, who were portrayed as one of the catalysts for the questioning of colonial authority and of colonialism's rigid categories.[9]

Demobilized Soldiers' Spontaneous Protests

African soldiers were involved in serious incidents and protests before their repatriation at the end of the war. The chaos that reigned in France immediately after the liberation affected the ability of the military and civilian authorities to take proper care of the soldiers and to pay their military stipends. The delay in being sent home made the soldiers restless and impatient. The conditions in the French camps where the African soldiers were waiting to be repatriated were terrible: there was very little food to eat, and some soldiers bitterly complained that even in German prisoner camps conditions were better. In 1944 and at the beginning of 1945, several incidents and mutinies occurred in various French camps where African soldiers had been stationed, including in Morlaix, Versailles, and Fréjus. African soldiers disobeyed orders, organized protest marches, and sometimes had violent altercations with French soldiers and civilians.[10]

In 1943, right after the Free French Forces took over the Federation of FWA, Secretary General Léon Geismar reported that demobilized soldiers were causing disturbances in Senegal. He also reminded the governors that demobilized soldiers had similarly caused problems in the aftermath of the previous world war because of their difficulties in readjusting to their former lives. He requested them to do all in their power to prevent undesirable incidents, and asked the military authorities to inform the administration as soon as demobilized soldiers arrived in FWA.[11] Yet, in spite of such vigilance, it seems that no one in the French colonial administration or in the colonial army had predicted the scope of African soldiers' discontent or the tragic consequences to which their mistreatment in France and in FWA might lead.

The massacre of African soldiers in camp Thiaroye on December 1, 1944 is the most infamous example here. The soldiers had arrived in the military camp located outside Dakar one month earlier, following long stretches of imprisonment in German camps. Faced with poor conditions in the camp and with the French commanders' refusal to pay them the promised wages, they began to engage in spontaneous protests. On the morning of December 1, additional units, many of which consisted of African soldiers brought from other camps, entered camp Thiaroye to shoot at the protesting soldiers. Dozens were killed, and many others were wounded or arrested.[12]

One month before the revolt in camp Thiaroye, the Minister of the Colonies Paul Giacobbi had informed the Governor General of FWA that the African soldiers would receive only a quarter of their salaries in France and the rest in their villages. The plan, he explained, had been to give each of the demobilized soldiers some fabric as partial payment; however, this had failed because of the scarcity of fabric in France. In addition, the minister anticipated some kind of trouble not only due to the soldiers' long absence from their homes but also due to the habits and mentality they had acquired in France, which, according to him, had turned them into a "very special element." He paternalistically argued that the confusing situation in which African soldiers had been living since the liberation of France had made them extremely demanding, especially with regard to material conveniences like clothes and food. The best solution to the problem, he felt, was to send the soldiers back to their villages as quickly as possible.[13]

Military reports on the Thiaroye rebellion and the repression that followed reveal the extent of the French surprise at the level of discontent among African troops. Although the military and administrative authorities expressed no regrets over the decision to shoot at the soldiers, they did try to uncover the latter's true motives and suggested ways to prevent such occurrences in the future. Several hypotheses were put forward to explain the soldiers' behavior. One was the negative influence of German propaganda. The other was the close relations African soldiers had developed while in France with "naïve French civilians" who failed to understand the complexity of the colonial situation, and even worse with "irresponsible loose French women" who made the soldiers lose all respect for the white man. In order to prevent future revolts, the military and administrative authorities recommended placating the African soldiers—as had been done in the past—with all sorts of material goods like biscuits, cigarettes, and fabric. They also recommended sending them back to their villages quickly so that they could resume their lives and forget the marvels of the *metropole* and its women.[14]

To the great surprise of the authorities, most returning soldiers were dissatisfied with such measures. Only two days before the tragedy in Thiaroye, a report pointed to the low morale of the soldiers who had recently arrived in Dakar, some of whom had even thrown into the ocean the biscuits and cigarettes they had been given.[15] In another report, the commandant of the Bas-Senegal district expressed disappointment that

the six demobilized *originaires* from Saint-Louis who had received authorization to buy fifteen meters of fabric continued to express frustration over their existing conditions after their return.[16] The commandant remarked that people who returned home after five years of suffering could show themselves more cheerful and enthusiastic.[17]

Military and administrative authorities' bewilderment at the ostensible ingratitude of demobilized African soldiers toward such gestures reflected a deep misunderstanding of the latter's mindset. The experiences of African soldiers in France during the war had led them to demand true equality. No biscuits—not even ones made in France—could compensate for their return to a racist colonial reality.

The protests continued well into 1948, four years after most of the soldiers had been demobilized. It was difficult to continue blaming the situation on French civilians' warm welcome of African soldiers or on Nazi propaganda against the French. The military authorities began to realize that handing out biscuits and cigarettes was not going to work and that more substantial measures were needed to preserve the soldiers' loyalty. They therefore initiated a series of reforms that considerably improved soldiers' conditions, and they agreed to equalize pensions between African veterans and their metropolitan comrades.

The military reforms were a direct result of the protests. To maintain and further these achievements, however, the battle for rights needed to enter a second phase. African veterans soon took on this mission and began a more calculated, nonviolent struggle. This struggle unfolded in the pages of the main veterans' journal: *La Voix du combattant*.

Veterans' Struggle for Equal Rights: *La Voix du Combattant*

In his book *Native Sons*, historian Gregory Mann thoroughly analyzes the complex relations between France and its African veterans. In the chapter dealing with the postwar years, he explores the contested question of African veterans' role in the national struggle for independence. Mann maintains that African veterans were not interested in independence, because they feared that separation from France would undermine the achievements they were beginning to attain. They preferred to continue making demands on the military and administrative authorities by invoking the principle of mutual obligation between them and France

and by reminding them of the sacrifices they had made during the two world wars.[18]

Thus, after the initial phase of spontaneous, unorganized protests, African veterans began a much more calculated struggle for their rights. The first and most powerful veterans' organization, *Anciens combattants et victimes de guerre de l'Afrique occidentale française*, was created in Dakar a few months after the end of World War II, in October 1945, as a branch of the French veterans' association. In 1952, the Anciens combattants had seventy-five thousand members dispersed over a territory of 4 million square kilometers.[19] Its main means of communication with the military and administrative authorities and with veterans from other branches of the French veterans' association was its journal *Le journal du combattant*, established in 1948 (*La voix du comabattant* since August 1950).[20] The discourse expressed in this journal defended the veterans' interests by using a language centered on the notions of sacrifice and comradeship.

La voix du combattant aimed to provide its readers with practical information. It therefore included updates on veterans' rights (for instance, charts showing the pension amounts the veterans could expect to receive), as well as reports on the achievements of the *Anciens combattants*, the latter's ties with the French veterans' association, and the actions and speeches of African parliamentarians on behalf of the veterans. The journal also published commemorative articles on events related to the two world wars alongside demands pertaining to veterans' rights.

From its very first issues, the journal employed a discourse of "brotherhood in arms" that demanded equal rights for African veterans based on the sacrifices these had made during the two world wars. To this was added another discourse centered on the notion of "true France," illustrated by de Gaulle and the resistance during World War II, which had developed in FWA mainly after the Vichy episode.[21] According to this discourse, all cases of discrimination and racist behavior against African soldiers or veterans involved individuals who were acting against the principles of this so-called true France. In fact, the journal's editors saw themselves as leaders in an unprecedented battle for veterans' rights, as illustrated by a March 1949 advert inviting readers to persuade their friends to subscribe to the journal: "We are in full battle. To fight, one needs weapons. Our journal is a weapon. Make it stronger every day! Find new subscribers for the journal!"[22]

Most recurring complaints concerned incidents of discrimination or racism against soldiers and veterans. In one of the first issues, the journal published a letter by the President of the African Veterans' Organization, Papa Seck Douta, addressed to the High commissioner of FWA. Douta protested against the sentencing of a decorated Ivory Coast veteran to eight months of imprisonment for failing to salute a European. In a second letter published in the same issue, another veteran discussed the incident, stating that he could not imagine that those who had saved France would be attacked not by Germans but by their own countrymen. The colonial administration quickly responded to the two veterans in a letter that was published in this issue. The High Commissioner assured them that an investigation into this incident was already under way. He noted that the veteran was not arrested for failing to salute a European but rather for unlawfully donning a uniform with decorations. The case, he concluded, was transferred to the appeals court in Dakar, and the veteran was released pending the new trial.[23]

In this and other complaints of discrimination and racism, the journal distinguished between specific individuals responsible for discrimination and the general French vision. Colonial administrators who opposed the rights accorded to African veterans were defined as non-French on the premise that a "true Frenchman" could not be a racist.[24] Moreover, in all discussed cases of discrimination, the journal emphasized the heroism of the veterans. Thus, several articles about the participation of Africans in one of the two world wars were published next to reports on racist incidents against soldiers and veterans.[25]

Protests against discrimination often included the main demand put forward by the Anciens combattants: the equalization of pensions between African and French veterans.[26] When this demand was finally met in 1950, the tone of the journal softened considerably. Accusations of racism leveled at military and administrative authorities diminished, even if it did not disappear completely. The journal continued to complain about the bureaucratic obstacles that veterans living in remote areas had to overcome in order to receive their pensions, but it no longer accused the authorities of deliberate discrimination. This change of tone is interesting, especially in light of military reports from Indochina indicating that racism and discrimination against African soldiers were still quite common after 1950. Indeed, African officers who had been appointed to boost African troops' morale in the Indochina War reported

several incidents in which French officers engaged in racist behavior against Africans serving under their command.[27]

After this date, the journal changed its strategy. Instead of petitioning the colonial authorities to complain about specific incidents, it now directed all its energy toward African deputies in the French National Assembly. However, the general content of the veterans' discourse did not change. The participation of African soldiers in the two world wars remained the basis for making demands on African deputies.

The first appeal to African deputies was published on November 11, 1949—the thirty-first anniversary of the ending of World War I—just before pensions were equalized. It took the form of an article on the armistice written by Captain Michel Dorange, a French officer who had significantly contributed to the military reforms that gave Africans equality within the French army at the end of the 1940s. Dorange reminded African deputies of their duty to take care of those who had shed their blood for France, and who did not seek charity but justice.[28] From 1951 onward, a permanent rubric titled "The Activities of Our Deputies" was published on page 2 of the journal, in which all actions taken on behalf of African veterans were listed.[29] The journal also reminded African deputies of their duties every time a new parliamentary session opened in France.[30]

African deputies who advanced the rights of the veterans in the French parliament clearly won the journal's recognition and gratitude. Such was the case of Mamba Sano, the Guinean deputy who made an interminable speech in the National Assembly in support of his amendment aimed at increasing the budget of the colonial gendarmerie and, consequently, the gendarmes' salaries. Sano began his speech with a review of the gendarmerie in the times of the Roman Empire, with the clear intent of exhausting members of parliament until they voted for his amendment. This very long speech, which ultimately achieved its goal, was published in full in the journal along with a letter of praise from the National Gendarmerie.[31]

The veterans, however, did not always settle for the "carrot." They also occasionally resorted to the "stick." In September 1953, after seventeen African deputies voted in parliament against an amendment aimed at improving veterans' benefits, the journal published a blacklist of their names under the title: "Our adversaries." This list included well-known and influential African politicians like Félix Houphouët-Boigny from Ivory

Coast, Mamadou Konaté from French Sudan, and Joseph Apithy from Dahomey.[32]

The veterans' journal saw African deputies not only as a weapon to be used but also as a group to be emulated. To convince readers of the importance of joining the Anciens combattants, the editor imagined an encounter with a veteran angry at the fact that the salaries of African deputies had been raised, but not the veterans' pensions. The editor explained to the imaginary veteran that this was so because deputies were united and knew how to fight for their rights. Thus, instead of being angry at the deputies, African veterans should learn from them and should organize themselves.[33]

As we can see from the editor's response and the other examples above, the veterans' journal was fighting for equality from within the colonial system, as were various other interest groups in postwar FWA. This strategy was a direct result of French colonial discourse, which denied independence to the colonies but promised a new kind of colonialism in which equality would prevail. While France eventually granted autonomy and, later, independence to its colonies to avoid fulfilling this highly expensive promise, African veterans were highly successful in achieving their goals from within the system. This unique success was due mainly to the veterans' use of military language, and in particular to their invocation of the sacrifices they had made and the blood they had shed for France. This was no doubt an effective strategy—so effective, in fact, that demobilized soldiers employed in civilian administrative positions after the war continued to use it in fighting for their rights.

The District Guards' Struggle for Equality in Ivory Coast and Senegal

District guards (*gardes de cercle*) were a vital tool of the colonial administrative system. This force did not belong to the army but was employed by the colonial administration to assist the district commander with daily order maintenance tasks in his administrative unit. Unlike the gendarmes, who fell under the authority of the military, district guards were civil employees who answered only to the administrator above them, and who did not enjoy the benefits brought by the military reforms.

Following the massive demobilization that took place in FWA after the

end of World War II, many African soldiers chose to join this force, as their military skills made them suitable for the position. However, they soon found out that this administrative position did not provide them with the benefits they had successfully fought for during their military service. They also realized that other administrative employees, including police, water, forest, and customs workers, enjoyed much better conditions than they did. After years of struggle for their rights in the military, these demobilized soldiers decided to organize and to demand equality with military employees and with other administrative workers.

In November 1955, several district guards began protesting against the discriminations they faced, first in the Ivory Coast and then in Senegal. District guards had lost their benefits as soldiers, but they did have one advantage in their new position. As civilians, they enjoyed the right granted to all civil servants in FWA to form unions and to go on strike if necessary.

The military authorities were horrified at the idea that district guards, who were essential for maintaining order in the Federation, might form a union and go on strike. They were determined to stop this at all costs. The first solution proposed by the FWA military cabinet was to immediately incorporate the district guards into the army. Insofar as soldiers were not allowed to organize, this measure, it was hoped, would put an end to the district guards' growing movement. The Federation's Director of Political Affairs, Léon Pignon, fiercely rejected this proposal, because he did not wish to see the army grab any more power from the civilian authorities. In his view, the problem had to do with the working conditions of the guards, and so the solution was to improve these conditions, not to transfer the force to the army. Pignon acknowledged that the material situation of the guards was inferior to that of other forces like the gendarmes, and he emphasized that the guards' demands were related not just to the question of salaries but also to more symbolic issues like uniforms.[34]

The seemingly logical proposal to equalize the working conditions of the district guards with those of the gendarmes and other administrative workers was rejected. One likely explanation for this is that the solution was expensive. Another explanation is that the administrative authorities were confronted with several union struggles at the time. In this context, they feared that the district guards' success would increase the demands of other workers and sectors in the Federation. The only option left, they believed, was repression.

In a letter sent to the highest administrative level—the Minister of Overseas France—several of the protesting district guards complained that they were being harassed on a daily basis by military officials who tried to stop them from organizing. Such harassment included verbal threats, physical threats involving a pointed gun, confiscation of the funds they had raised, and arbitrary arrests. The district guards reminded the minister that they were all veterans whose only wish was to rest from the wars they had fought. They could not understand why the conditions of other administrative employees were so much better than theirs. These other employees were well dressed, they said, and lived in nice houses, whereas they were being treated like disgusting prisoners.[35]

As the movement began to spread to Senegal, it became clear that the district guards' protests would not be crushed with arrests and repression. The Federation's High Commissioner, Pierre Messmer, acknowledged that swift action was needed. The first administrative move to prevent the unionization of this force was to declare that the nature of the guards' job conflicted with their right to organize. However, it was difficult to prevent civilians from organizing in the 1950s, even when their work concerned the security of the colonies. Messmer ultimately recommended adopting the army's first solution, but with minor changes. Thus, the vast majority of the district guards were incorporated into the gendarmerie, and a few were kept under civilian control as detached personnel in the districts' brigade—where, it was hoped, they would be too few to organize and to demand their rights.[36]

The case of the district guards' struggle illustrates the advantages that soldiers and former soldiers enjoyed over other sectors of colonial society when it came to struggling for better employment conditions and for equality. Unlike other administrative employees, veterans could use the highly effective military language of sacrifice in their protests. Although the incorporation of the district guards into the gendarmerie put an end to their struggle, the guards had clearly achieved their aims. As gendarmes, they enjoyed better working conditions than they had as part of the colonial administration. While the latter had to give up control over one of its most important forces, this option was cheaper than giving in to the guards' demands; it also reduced the risk that other administrative workers would make similar claims. Indeed, the colonial administration could not afford to see its civil employees follow in the footsteps of the veterans.

Conclusion

On February 13, 2019, the Al-Jazeera network released a documentary entitled *The Forgotten Heroes of Empire*, about East Africans who had fought for Britain during World War II. The film's description on Al-Jazeera's website opens with the following paragraph: "During World War II Britain mobilized a huge, now forgotten, army of African soldiers from its colonies on the continent to fight against the Axis power in the battlefields across African, Asia, and the Middle East. But when peace came in 1945, the rapidly diminishing British Empire cynically betrayed these men, subjecting them to systematic discrimination and denying them the same post-war benefits as white soldiers."[37]

Following the release of this documentary, the British daily the *Guardian* published a series of articles on the subject. One of these articles cited the former head of the British army, General Lord Dannatt, who declared his support for compensating surviving veterans and called on the British government to apologize for its past discriminatory policy.[38] The newspaper also published a document that revealed the extent of the discrimination between white and black soldiers in the British army during and after the war.[39]

Clearly, then, the West African veterans discussed in this article were part of a much larger story—that of the Allied powers' colonial subjects who came to the colonizers' rescue during World War II. All of these subjects participated in a war against Nazi racism, even though they had experienced colonial racism at home on a daily basis. Feelings of frustration, rage but also hope were probably shared by most of the soldiers when they returned from the battlefields of World War II to their colonial reality. However, the actions they undertook after demobilization varied depending on their specific colonial situation.

Unlike the West African soldiers and veterans discussed in this article, East Africans did not wage an organized struggle for their rights in the aftermath of the war. Timothy Parsons, who studied disabled Kenyan veterans and the discrimination they suffered after the war, notes that the British government ignored African veterans in its development plans after the war. Around seventy-six thousand Kenyans fought in World War II. Some twenty-five hundred of them died from combat wounds, accident, or disease. When Kenyan soldiers returned home after the war, the colonial administration insisted that they swiftly go back to their

villages and objected to any kind of privilege that would set them apart from other colonial subjects.[40]

While such views were also dominant in the French colonial administration on the other side of the continent, the responses of demobilized soldiers were very different. The veterans of Britain's East African colonies did not fight for their rights as the West African veterans did. East African soldiers frequently refused to return to their home villages, and they often attempted to improve their situation in colonial urban centers by taking advantage of their former position in the military. But unlike their West African counterparts, they did not openly demand equality by invoking the sacrifices they had made on the battlefield. Thus, in the specific context of Kenya, veterans did try to organize and to establish themselves as a privileged elite. They sometimes even managed to access administrative positions—whenever the British authorities tried to appease them. But the British tightly controlled Kenyan associations and occasionally persecuted their leaders, and Kenyan veterans did not aspire to equality with their British comrades.[41]

This brief comparison with the East African case highlights the uniqueness of the West African veterans' struggles discussed in this article. The French administration was no less concerned about the state of mind of demobilized African soldiers than the British authorities in Kenya. In fact, they had even more reason to worry. Unlike East African soldiers in the British army, West African soldiers in the French army had witnessed the humiliating defeat of their colonizers. As we saw earlier, the spontaneous protests that erupted shortly after the war were met with repression and severe violence. The colonial administration's interpretation of the veterans' protests was that they were the result of foreign—Communist or Nazi—influences, or of the "naïveté" of French civilians who treated African soldiers with respect. After a few years, though, this paternalistic view gradually changed, and the army initiated real steps to address the veterans' grievances.

The reason for the differences between the activities of veterans in British and French colonies in the aftermath of the war lies in the way each colonial power construed military service. Discrimination and racism against colonial soldiers existed in both the French and the British armies. However, the French army developed over the years a discourse that presented its African soldiers as true "brothers-in-arms." Already in 1910, General Joseph Gallieni, who had led many of the colonization

campaigns in Africa and in Indochina, wrote the following lines about African soldiers: "They are proud to serve under the orders of French leaders. They cannot be treated as mere mercenaries; on the contrary, in the service of our flag they constitute elite troops which it would be regrettable not to deploy."[42]

This sort of discourse permeated the service of African soldiers in the French army, from the trenches of the Western Front to the Kasbah streets of Algiers. The end of World War II—that ultimate war against evil—was the moment when Africans demanded that France fulfill its side of this unwritten contract. For its part, France was too deeply entangled in the discourse of "brotherhood-in-arms" to continue suppressing soldiers' and veterans' struggle for equality. It also desperately needed the continuing support of African soldiers in the new wars it was waging throughout its empire. France managed to pull out of this contract only when the independence of its West African territories gave it the pretext to do so. In 1959, when independence had become inevitable, the French decided to freeze the pensions of African soldiers. African veterans began to feel the repercussions of this decision only later, when the value of their pensions started to fall. They then embarked on another battle, which is beyond of the scope of this chapter.

Thus, African soldiers and veterans were much more than the helpless victims of an exploitative colonial system. They were also highly skilled at turning the paternalistic discourse of the French army, as illustrated by Gallieni's praise of the *tirailleurs sénégalais*, into a bill that the French had to pay. It is important, then, to remember not only their courage and the sacrifices they made on European soil but also the struggles they waged at home against the oppressive colonial system.

Notes

1 Speech pronounced by Abdoulaye Wade on August 22, 2004, cited in Papa Dramé, "La journée du tirailleur Sénégalais: Une commémoration paradoxale," *Africulture*, August 13, 2016, http://africultures.com/la-journee-du-tirailleur-senegalais-une-commemoration-paradoxale-4559/.

2 See, for example, Julien Fargettas, *Les tirailleurs sénégalais: Les soldats noirs entre légendes et réalités, 1939–1945* (Paris: Tallandier, 2012); Ruth Ginio, "African Soldiers, French Women, and Colonial Fears during and after World War II," in *Africa and World War II*, ed. Judith A. Byfield, Carolyn A. Brown, and Ahmad Alawad Sikainga (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Armelle Mabon, *Prisonniers de guerre "indigènes": Visages oubliés de la France occupée* (Paris:

La Découverte, 2010); Raffael Scheck, *French Colonial Soldiers in German Captivity during World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Martin Thomas, "The Vichy Government and French Colonial Prisoners of War, 1940–1944," *French Historical Studies* 25, no. 4, (2002): 657–92.

3 Jean-Yves Le Naour, *La honte noire: L'Allemagne et les troupes coloniales françaises, 1914–1945* (Paris: Hachette, 2004), 16–18.

4 Joe Lunn, "'Les races guerrières': Racial Preconceptions in the French Military about West African Soldiers during the First World War," *Journal of Contemporary History* 34, no. 4 (1999): 521.

5 Marc Michel, *Les Africains et la Grande Guerre: L'appel à l'Afrique* Paris: Karthala, 2003), 192–93.

6 Myron Echenberg, *Colonial Conscripts: The Tirailleurs Sénégalais in French West Africa, 1857–1960* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1991), 88.

7 On the whitening of the army, see Le Naour, *La honte noire*, 247–48. Eric Jennings shows that this policy was implemented one year earlier in Algeria, see Eric Jennings, *La France libre fut africaine* (Paris: Perrin, 2014), 166–70.

8 On these relations, see Ginio, "African Soldiers, French Women, and Colonial Fears."

9 See, for example, a report on soldiers' loss of esteem for Europeans due to their relations with French women during the war: Archives Nationales du Sénégal (ANS), 4D 60, November 13, 1946.

10 Fargettas, *Les tirailleurs sénégalais*, 267–82.

11 ANS, 4D 60, October 15, 1943.

12 On the tragic events at Camp Thiaroye, see Myron Echenberg, "Tragedy at Thiaroye: The Senegalese Soldiers' Uprising of 1944," in *African Labor History*, ed. Peter Gutkind, Robin Cohen, and Jean Copans (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1978), 109–27. For a more recent account, see Martin Mourre, *Thiaroye 1944: Histoire et mémoire d'un massacre colonial* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2017).

13 ANS, 4D 60, October 31, 1944, Letter from the Minister of the Colonies to the Governor General of FWA.

14 ANS, 4D 60, Conakry, December 18, 1944; Dakar, January 4, 1945; December 6, 1945; November 13, 1946.

15 ANS, 4D 60, November 28, 1944, *Renseignement*.

16 The *originaires* were the inhabitants of the four communes of Senegal who had been granted French citizenship in the mid-19th century, and who enjoyed a privileged status within the colonial system. They served with French metropolitan soldiers in the same units.

17 ANS, 4D 60, November 1 [*sic*], 1944. The date handwritten on this document cannot be accurate since the letter focuses on the echoes of the Thiaroye events among the local population. This document was therefore clearly written after December 1, 1944.

18 Gregory Mann, *Native Sons: West African Veterans and France in the Twentieth Century* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 109.

19 Ruth Ginio, *The French Army and Its African Soldiers: The Years of Decolonization* (Lincoln: The University of Nebraska Press, 2017), 61–62.

20 Ibid., 192.

21 On the idea of "two Frances" in FWA, see Ruth Ginio, "Vichy Rule in French West Africa: Prelude to Decolonization?" *French Colonial History* 4 (2003): 205–26.

22 *Journal du combattant*, March 30, 1949, 1.

23 "Ils ont des droits sur nous!," *Journal du Combattant victimes des guerres: Organe de la fédération des anciens combattants de l'AOF et du Togo*, May 13, 1948, 1.

24 *Journal du Combattant*, May 29, 1948, 1–2.

25 See, for example, the story of an African officer who fought bravely to the death on the Somme in 1940, which was published next to a circular dealing with racism in the colonies by Coste Flore, Minister of Overseas France, *Journal du combattant*, November 17, 1948, 3

26 See, for example, *Journal du combattant*, February 22, 1949, 1.

27 On racist incidents in Indochina, see Ruth Ginio, "French Officers, African Officers, and the Violent Image of African Colonial soldiers," *Historical Reflections* 36, no. 2, (2010): 59–75.

28 Capitaine Michel Dorange, "Appel à nos députés," *Journal du combattant*, October 5, 1949, 1. On Dorange's activities in FWA, see Gregory Mann, *Native Sons*, 130–33.

29 See, for example, *La voix du combattant*, April 5, 1951, 2.

30 See, for example, *La voix du combattant*, January 19, 1956, 1.

31 "Brillante intervention de M. Mamba Sano, député de la Guinée," *La voix du combattant*, August 25, 1955, 3.

32 "Nos adversaires," *La voix du combattant*, September 14, 1953, 2.

33 *La voix du combattant*, May 7, 1952, 3.

34 Centre des Archives d'Outremer, Aix-en-Provence (CAOM), DSM/275, June 5, 1956 – Note de la direction des Affaires politiques au directeur du cabinet, 16 June 1956 – Note du directeur des Affaires politiques au directeur des Affaires militaires.

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36 Section d'Histoire Armées de Terre, Château Vincennes (SHAT), 5H/38, Dakar, June 29, 1956.

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CHAPTER 11

Mohammed V, Anti-Semitism, and the Moroccan Homefront during the Second World War

Kingsley C. Ezeuwa

Introduction

One of the cataclysmic features of the Second World War was the Nazi-orchestrated annihilation of about six million Jews in Europe, and any individual or society that opposed the shadows of the Holocaust deserves enormous attention, from scholars, policymakers, and all lovers of human equality.[1] Africa's Mohammed V was one such individual, and Morocco that humane society. Following the German invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939, the Kingdom of Morocco rapidly became a haven for thousands of stranded Jews.[2] Samuel Zygelbojm, a Jewish politician and human rights activist, would commit suicide on the eve of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising of April 1943, leaving a note of exasperation that depicted his death as the most vigorous protest against the silence of the world in the face of the destruction of the Jewish people.[3] Zygelbojm's self-immolation was one of the numerous private acts of despair and resignation during the worst days of the Holocaust in Poland and beyond. Relying on the qualitative method of historical analysis, this chapter considers how Nazi discriminatory laws and extermination policies affected Moroccan Jews in ways that spurred both commendations and criticisms from places such as the United States. I analyze newspaper reports of Jewish suffering in ways akin to Frantz Fanon's description of the psychiatric impact of violent imperialism on North Africans.[4] By shedding light on the traumatic repercussions of the Holocaust, such as the Nazi destruction of 532 synagogues in Stalinist Russia, the chapter contextualizes the nature of Jewish statelessness throughout the Second World War.[5] Specifically, this chapter explores how the shadows of the Holocaust were contained within the Moroccan home front and contends that, despite

pressures from Vichy France and the frightening realities in Poland, Mohammed V ensured that the Jews of Morocco survived the war in North Africa.

Moroccan Jews before the War

Many centuries before the Nazi German conquest of France in June 1940, what became the French Protectorate of Morocco was home to a huge Jewish community in North Africa. In the 1940s, Moroccans could be divided into five categories, which included about thirty thousand Berbers or Mountain Jews, town and village Jews, Sephardic Jews, European Jews, and refugees from the Second World War.[6] The so-called Mountain Jews lived impoverished and isolated lives, and "except for the tales of Jerusalem and Palestine that came down to them," this set of Moroccan Jews, despite their susceptibility to rituals, knew little about Judaism; they never possessed knowledge about the Books of Moses, the Babylonian exile, let alone the personality of Jesus Christ.[7] The urban Jews who filled the Mellahs—walled Jewish quarters—consisted of Jews who had migrated from the Moroccan mountains and desert to cities such as Casablanca, Fez, Rabat, and Marrakech. During the Second World War, around 160,000 still lived in crowded houses packed into unpleasant ghettos.[8] Upon his return to the United States in 1945, Dr. James Bernstein, executive director of HIAS-ICA Emigration Association, would declare as "appalling" the living conditions of Moroccan Jews.[9] According to the report, 35,000 of the 65,000 Jews who resided in Casablanca lived in miserably unsanitary conditions. Although the report failed to establish whether such an unhealthy environment reflected the generic city life of the bulk of Moroccans, the influx of European Jewish refugees must have had a profound effect on the situation of the "resident aliens."[10]

In 1978, newspaper columnist Philip Kleinman stated that Jews had lived in Morocco prior to the Arab invasion of North Africa in the seventh century CE. He, therefore, argued that the whole tribe of converted Berbers could be considered among the ancestors of today's Moroccan Jews within the country.[11] Large-scale immigration also occurred in 1350 from the Netherlands, in 1290 and 1403 from England and France, and in 1342 from Italy.[12] The dispersion of the Israelites out of their ancient ancestral homeland happened several centuries before the Common Era.

This suggests that those who settled in North Africa grew to comprise the bulk of the Berbers, described as a group of tribal and non-tribal peoples who, strikingly, demonstrated cultural similarities in the absence of a large-scale, articulated sociopolitical unit and religious organization.[13] But Islamic expansion in the Maghreb created "new conditions for Jewish political and legal existence, rabbinic culture, Arabic linguistic expression, and regional mobility."[14] Furthermore, sources from ancient civilizations, as well as existing literature on Morocco-Spain relations, portray contacts back and forth, primarily through the autonomous Spanish Mediterranean cities of Melilla and Ceuta.[15] But above all, the Jewish population in Morocco multiplied exponentially in the aftermath of the expulsion of Spanish Jews on May 31, 1492. In the words of a British historian, "figures for those expelled have varied between about 150,000 and about 400,000, with some estimates going very much higher."[16] The expulsion was justified by supposed heresy among the *conversos*, Jews who had converted to Christianity; upon uncovering the heresy, the Inquisition gave the Jews three months to vacate Spain.[17] The proclamation crowned the legacies of the violence of 1391, carried out against the Jews of Spain by Catholic groups in the kingdoms of Castile and Aragon.[18] The significance of 1492 transcended, therefore, the discovery of the New World: the state-sponsored removal of the Jews from Spain "represented the dissolution of a key component of [the] Hispanic civilization," and whether future generations of Jews accepted the plea to return to Spain in the nineteenth century is a subject for further research.[19]

The twentieth century brought new trials for the Jews of Europe. Among the 3.3 million Jews who lived in Poland before World War II, 3 million died in extermination camps.[20] Wartime survival continued to deteriorate, especially following the defeat of France on June 6, 1940, and the resultant formation of a pro-Nazi government in Vichy, southern France. Hitler's anti-Semitic laws began to permeate the African home front, through the assistance of powerful collaborationists such as Marshal Philippe Pétain.[21]

The Allies struggled to think up a practicable response to the spread of the Nazi regime across Europe and beyond.[22] The Casablanca Conference was held from January 14 to 24, 1943, to "decide how best to continue the war against the Axis powers."[23] As Driss Maghraoui observed, "it is often [this] famous meeting of Charles de Gaulle, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, General Henri Giraud, and Mohammed

V at Casablanca that takes the center stage in the memory" of the Second World War in Morocco. Yet Maghraoui's own work did not focus on the specific impact of wartime segregation on the Jews of Morocco; he instead examined World War II in the context of Moroccan colonial history, emphasizing how the French empire and its colonial troops became a symbol for the rejuvenation of the French army.[24] By October 1942, the French military contingent in North Africa comprised 21,598 Europeans and 22,676 Moroccans.[25] Yet the French Empire hardly considered the Jews as equal and honor-deserving participants in the Free French movement, which opposed the Vichy government. In this context, the compassion of Sultan Mohammed V toward the Jews is particularly striking, as was his ability to navigate the Nazi imposition on Morocco without risking his Jewish subjects' lives.[26]

Policy and Personality of Mohammed V

Mohammed V was born in 1910 in the northern Moroccan city of Fez.[27] Known also as Sidi Mohammed ben Youssef, he was the Sharifian ruler who negotiated the status of Jewish immigrants in the Second World War.[28] By this time, anti-Semitism had reached such heights that Jews within Morocco purchased wine only after the "Aryan Europeans have been assured ten and a half quarts a month under a new rationing system."[29] The paucity of standard biographies about the sultan remains a significant gap in scholarship, created partly by Sidi Mohammed's sacred character, which, to a large extent, may have minimized the number of self-revealing conversations he held with everyday people and journalists of the period.[30]

Mohammed ascended to the throne on November 18, 1927, approximately fifteen years after his father, Moulay Yousef, replaced his older brother, who had abdicated because of the strictures of European imperialism.[31] Indeed, Morocco's strategic location and enormous natural resources shaped its history, laying the early foundations for the scramble that culminated in its partition in the first half of the twentieth century.[32] Under the Treaty of Fez signed between Morocco and France on May 30, 1912, France occupied the southern three-quarters of Morocco, including Casablanca. The city of Tangier, on the coasts of the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean, became an international zone. At the same time,

the Spanish gained control over smaller northern and southern strips around the Mediterranean, Strait of Gibraltar, and Cape Juby. This uneasy territorial division among the competing European powers became possible only after centuries of resistance by the Alaouite ruling dynasty.[33] According to Philip Naylor, "expansionist French colonialism in Algeria especially pressured the [Moroccan] sultanate [but] throughout the nineteenth century, the Alawis relied on the friendship of the British as a useful counterweight."[34] Throughout much of the Second World War, Morocco was neither an open enemy nor a genuine ally of the Allied forces. However, as imperial France controlled most of the lands and peoples of North Africa—from Morocco through Algeria to Tunisia—the fall of France in the wake of the German blitzkrieg would inevitably signal some Moroccan involvement.[35] Moreover, the ubiquity of Jews in the French Moroccan territories deepened concerns among the Allies about the North African situation, given Hitler's genocidal intentions.

Nazi Policy toward the Moroccan Jews

The long understanding of anti-Semitism as strictly a European tragedy has been challenged by rich evidence that "the Holocaust's reach extended far beyond the traditional boundaries of continental Europe to the Muslim world of North Africa."[36] In 2014, Mohammed Kenbib provided a reasonable overview on the situation of Moroccan Jews before and during the period of the Second World War, the increasing social stratification of the Jewish community during the interwar years, Jewish solidarity with Muslim liberals, and their devotion to a pro-French ideological unity, particularly before France's defeat in 1940.[37] I am, however, more interested in the historical context of the Spanish origins of the bulk of Moroccan Jews, the personality of Sultan Mohammed V, and how his passion for social diversity and protection of the Jews of the Kingdom constituted distinct features of the African home front. When Mohammed became sultan at the tender age of eighteen, Theodore Steege, who succeeded Hubert Lyautey as French resident-general in October 1925, "supported his candidacy in the conviction that the young and naïve Mohammed would remain removed from the workings of colonial politics."[38] However, it was "not long before Mohammed V showed flashes of independence … his support for the nationalist cause eventually

became a nettlesome thorn in the side of the French."[39] Significantly, the sacking of Lyautey stemmed from his inability to quell the Rif War, which was waged by Arab nationalists who proclaimed the independence of the Rif Republic in April 1925 under the leadership of Abd el-Krim. The insurrection culminated in an unexpected and short-lived Franco-Spanish alliance, leading to the ultimate suppression of the Arabs the following year.[40] Nevertheless, Mohammed's reign came to symbolize not only anticolonialism but Moroccan cosmopolitanism and African respect for human lives. Although some have identified him as responsible for hindering Morocco's development by preventing the emergence of a lack of real political voice, failing to solve economic difficulties, and exercising monarchical power, it must be stated that, as the sovereign of a French protectorate, Mohammed V merely reigned but did not rule in Morocco.[41]

Figure 11. 1: Mohammed, Roosevelt, and Churchill at the 1943 Casablanca Conference. Prince Hassan is shown standing behind his father. Source: Public domain via Wikimedia Commons

The sultan and his advisers confronted a sociopolitical quagmire of unprecedented proportions in Moroccan history. By August 1941, both Nazi soldiers and French police had begun to conduct massive raids against the Jews in Paris. While Nazi troops blocked off the Eleventh Arrondissement, a working-class district in the eastern part of Paris, French police, accompanied by Gestapo agents, conducted a six-hour house-to-house raid. The policy was quickly extended to North Africa, as "The Vichy regime, acting as agent of Nazi Germany, swiftly instituted a

series of anti-Semitic laws across France and its colonies, extending its malignant reach to Morocco, which was colonized starting in 1912."[42] Before their publication in the *Journal Officiel* in November 1940 and August 1941, the new collection of Vichy laws revising the legal status for the Jews of France was presented to Mohammed for approval on October 3, 1940. Meanwhile, the Vichy government under Petain "ordered the full implementation in Morocco of the *numerus clausus* (quota system) and the Aryanisation of Jewish property and assets."[43] At some point, the actual number of Jews in Morocco was even allegedly inflated by the agents; while the Jewish population in the Protectorate was said to exceed 150,000, the secretive Nazi officials insisted that Morocco harbored no fewer than 300,000 Jews.[44] As historian Robert Satloff has demonstrated, Vichy anti-Jewish laws generally declared people to be Jewish if their parents were Jewish, regardless of whether they professed the Jewish faith. And so, "Not only did the new French edicts offend whatever sensibilities Mohammed V may have had … regarding his Jewish subjects, but they also insulted the sultan's generations-old role as a descendant of the Prophet and 'Commander of the Faithful'."[45]

Under the watch of General Charles Nogues, the Resident-General in wartime Morocco and commander in chief of French North Africa, the laws undermined the profound relationship that existed between the Muslim majority and the minority Jewish population. From that point on, "Moroccan Jews, who are subjects of the sultan of Morocco, will be treated the same as all others insofar as they are prohibited from holding offices or engaging in professions [as] doctors, lawyers, or teachers."[46] The *Jewish Press* reported that "the elimination of Jews from various branches of commerce in Morocco … seriously disrupted the colony's economy." To be sure, "almost all Jewish-owned and controlled firms now have Moroccan Muslims or non-Jewish Frenchmen as directors and managers."[47] All Jews in Morocco were required to register for a census within the next three months, starting on August 22, 1941. They received permission to work as artisans and engage in retail trades, but could neither borrow nor lend money for any reason.[48]

In Poland, where the restrictions on Jews were first implemented, a crisis associated with a shortage of labor eventually prompted the Nazi regime to create some economic breathing space.[49] The anti-Semitic authorities in Germany "decided to urge German manufacturers to place their orders with Jewish artisan cooperatives in the Warsaw ghettos."[50]

A circular letter from a special German office revealed that 40 percent of the half-million Jewish population in Warsaw were skilled artisans, particularly tailors, joiners, leather-workers, tilers, and other craftsmen, who could be "used, within limits, to remedy the labor shortage."[51]

In Morocco, Sidi Muhammed was startled by the suffocating laws against his Jewish subjects, especially because, by September 4, 1939, the sultan had enthusiastically declared unconditional support for the French war effort. "From this day forward," he stated, "until the banner of France and its allies is covered in glory, and we owe them our unreserved support. We will drive no bargains about supplying them [the French] with our resources, we will stint them no sacrifice."[52] In rhetoric that ignored initial Arab rebellions against the Treaty of Fez, Mohammed V's letter added, "We were joined to them in times of peace and plenty and it is only right that we should remain at their side during the trials that they are undergoing, from which they will emerge … both victorious and great."[53] As noted earlier, many of the Allied soldiers boosting the sultan's military promise to imperial France were Jews, "powerful, glamorous men who bore arms in a victorious army."[54] Mohammed detested the Vichy policy toward the Jews, particularly because the system "based its anti-Jewish laws on race (how much Jewish blood someone had) rather than religion (whether someone professed to be Jewish, Christian, or Muslim)."[55]

Virtually all scholars of North Africa attest to the upstanding nature of Mohammad V's leadership in Morocco. Phillip Naylor writes that "his astute political skill and his appealing personality would be missed."[56] Mohammed V is often credited with telling Robert Saint-Yves, the German consul who demanded a list of Jewish residents, that "There are no Jews in Morocco. There are only Moroccan citizens." Richard Hurwitz therefore singles him out as "the young sultan of Morocco" who "protected his millennia-old Jewish population from Vichy France and its Nazi overlords."[57] Although not offering any detail, Hurowitz considered Mohammed's actions to be ranked alongside those of "the circus ringmaster Adolf Althoff and his wife Maria, the Portuguese diplomat Aristides de Sousa Mendes, the Italian cycling champion Gino Bartali, the Polish social worker Irena Sendler, and the Japanese spy Chinue Sugihara, who provided hiding places, participated in underground networks, refused to betray their neighbors, and secured safe passage."[58] Aside from their near-universal modesty about such commendable

actions, these rescuers of the Jews repeatedly defied authorities, risking their lives and livelihoods to save the helpless and persecuted.[59] Hurowitz, in the *Los Angeles Times*, reckoned that Mohammed was simply an unlikely ruler from the start and certainly an unexpected hero. "At a time when anti-Semitism and Islamophobia are on the rise globally," he notes, "we should honor this overlooked but remarkable [epitome] of enlightened leadership."[60]

Concerning the feelings of everyday Moroccan Muslims toward their embattled Jewish neighbors, Peter Drucker, in his study of the "fraught triangle of Christian/Muslim/Jewish relations," ponders that Morocco's age-long position as North Africa's largest Jewish enclave always positioned it as the absolute focus for debates on Muslims as "Jews' brothers and enemies."[61] According to Satloff, "The Arabs watched over the Jews" of North Africa during the Holocaust. He drew on the testimonies of informants such as Mirella Hassan, a Tunisian Jew, who was a little girl during the war, to demonstrate that at every stage of the persecution, Arabs provided food, shelter, sacrificial protection as camp guards, and declined to partake from the spoils of the Jewish confiscated positions and properties.[62]

More than that, by 1943, when acute anti-Semitism had rekindled Zionism, there were calls for a binational unity between the Arabs and Jews. Specifically, Dr. Judah L. Magnes, then president of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, offered some ecumenical suggestions in the January 1943 issue of *Foreign Affairs*. First, he called upon the United States to join with Great Britain in finding a "reasonable compromise between Jewish and Arab aspirations in Palestine."[63] Magnes further suggested that the lands in the contested Middle Eastern region belonged to a single geographic unit and constituted an economic and political union at several times between ancient Semitic days and the First World War. Hence, the Hebrew University administrator proposed a union between the Arabs and Jews within a binational Palestine, namely the Union of Transjordan, Palestine, and Lebanon, in fraternity with an Anglo-American Union that was expected to emerge "out of the ruins of the decaying world."[64] Magnes's thoughts deeply echoed the visions of Kurt Blumenfeld, the famous German Zionist and father of post-assimilationist Zionism, who strongly advocated "compromise with the Palestinians, either territorial or through establishing a joint, secular binational state."[65]

The debates about Jewish immigration complicated the pressures of

Vichyism in Morocco, an example of which was an article in the Paris paper *Appeal*, which sought to pit Muslims against the Jews. "Moroccans must be made to understand that their only enemy is the Jew," it declared, "[and if] they want a 'holy war,' France will supply them with the opportunity in making them drive out the Moroccan Jews who exploit and rob the country."[66] As more than 350,000 Jews in Morocco, Algiers, and Tunis anxiously watched the developments in the Arab countries of the Near East, it was not long before the authorities in Casablanca began, in May 1941, to arrest and deport numerous alien Jewish families to special camps.[67] In these circumstances, Mohammed V stymied the efficacy of chronic anti-Semitism through unwavering commitment to essential diversity, a trait recently applauded by Israel's eleventh president, Isaac Herzog. In his words, "When millions of Jews faced the horrors of the Holocaust in the 20th century, King Mohammed V provided a safe haven for his Jewish subjects."[68] This speech was delivered during the two-year commemoration of Israel's renewed ties with postcolonial Morocco, with the president concluding that both the people of Israel and Morocco will remain grateful, with pride and affection, for the memory of the African leader's humanity.

Indeed, Mohammed—credibly believed to be a direct descendant of the Prophet Mohammed through his daughter Fatima— was "a spontaneous antiracist" and a broadly intelligent leader.[69]—This could be seen, for example, in how he educated his children: at age thirteen, Moulay Hassan, Mohammed V's son and heir to the throne, would be fondly described by the *Morning Herald* as the "Studious Prince" who loved geography.[70] More seriously, in 1941, shortly after the anti-Semitic laws went into effect in Morocco, Mohammed V, for the first time, "made a point of inviting senior representatives of the Jewish community to the annual banquet celebrating the anniversary of his sultanate and placing them in the best seats next to … French officials."[71] His reinforcing message to the imperial officials was this: "I absolutely do not approve of the anti-Semitic laws and I refuse to associate myself with a measure I disagree with … I reiterate as I did in the past that the Jews are under my protection and I reject any distinction that should be made among my people."[72] In 2006, Shana Cohen and Larabi Jaidi summed up the personality and legacies of the revered African king who rejected, in the simmering nationalist fervor of the twentieth century, the Vichy order to deport Moroccan Jews to Nazi extermination camps.

By and large, Mohammed's nationalist negotiations with the French authorities ended in stalemate, and in 1952, he was exiled with his family to Madagascar. From November 16, 1955, when he returned from exile, Mohammed's fame grew; however, it was not until May 2, 1956, when he finally achieved sustainable independence for Morocco, that his fame truly took hold.[73]

Conclusion

This chapter reflected on a history of Moroccan Jews that was predicated on refugeeism, Zionism, and the politics of survival in French North Africa. Mohammed V's tepidity towards the brutal anti-Semitism of the Second World War positioned him as a most heroic leader of the African home front. The sultan's seeming escape from the fatal wrath of Nazism, "The Theory and Practice of Hell," only to die of heart failure on February 26, 1961, owed more to his diplomatic flexibility than the distant promises and gestures of support from the Allies, especially the United States.[74] Alongside the sultan's unyielding solidarity with the Allied campaign, Mohammad's partial commitment to certain anti-Jewish regulations played the perfunctory role of shielding his image from the status of a "complete enemy" of the Germans. With Mohammed's acquiescence, "The Sultan of Morocco, acting on the suggestion of the Vichy Government, issued an order providing for the removal *with the least possible delay*, of all Jews in Morocco into Jewish quarters."[75] The actions of the monarch reportedly coincided with the arrival of Xavier Vallat, the Vichy Commissar for Jewish Affairs, who commended the sultan for his commitment to the aim of eliminating "the Jewish influence" in Morocco.[76] These apparent contradictions occurred in a period when Adolf Hitler's intense wartime propaganda appeared in as many as "43 official anti-Semitic Nazi party newspapers, 65 weekly periodicals like the *Stuermer*, 24 illustrated magazines, 72 monthlies, 95 bi-weeklies, 11 quarterlies ad 112 miscellaneous anti-Semitic periodicals," all of which covered large swaths of Nazi occupied territories beyond Europe.[77]

Hatred for the Jews was historically alien to the country of Morocco. A survey of Medieval Spain showed how institutionalized anti-Semitism helped to deepen the social memory of persecution, which shaped the wartime responses of Sultan Mohammed V, the Arabs, as well as the Jews

themselves. As Mohammed Kenbib concludes, the Nazi/Vichy decrees in Morocco were enforced within a relatively short span of time, and the recorded enforcement witnessed a generally slow tempo of implementation, despite the vociferous insistence of the Croix de Feu and the Foreign Legion.[78] Despite the initial clampdown from General Nogues, the resident French authority, the American landings of November 1942 paved the way for greater Jewish freedom in North Africa. Barely seven days before the Casablanca Conference of January 1943, the universities of Algeria and Morocco decided to abandon their *numerus clausus* against all students of Jewish descent.[79] Besides the restoration of removed Jewish instructors, the administrative councils of those universities established a special committee that oversaw adequate academic compensations for previously rusticated Jewish students in recent years.[80] When the liberal Allies emerged victorious from the Second World War, even Spanish Moroccan Jews, in the early hours of September 1945, expressed vivid gratification over the termination of the tyrannical regime of General Francisco Franco.[81]

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CHAPTER 12

West African Soldiers' Voices in World War II: Between Texts, Oral History, and Digital Culture

Oliver Coates

The voices of African soldiers in World War II represent a significant yet largely underexplored archive for scholars of the war in Africa. Although our understanding of the role of African soldiers in the conflict has grown over the past two decades, the voices of combatants themselves are often interpreted through a handful of well-known cases. To fill this gap, we will illustrate the scope of African soldiers' written and oral sources as they relate to World War II in British and French Africa. In addition to archival and academic sources, we examine some of the media and digital materials that have grown exponentially during the last decade. Building on previous surveys of African voices and contributions to World War II, this chapter differs from the existing literature in several respects.[1] Firstly, it includes material from both Francophone and Anglophone West Africa. Secondly, it explicitly addresses the formal, textual, and methodological issues associated with such accounts, and thirdly, it reviews the voices of African soldiers in documentary film and digital culture. It does not represent a historiographical survey of the military or civilian dimensions of the war, and it will not consider the critical subject of African accounts of wartime captivity, which has been surveyed elsewhere.[2]

Historians have examined diverse aspects of African military service, ranging from the motivations for enlistment to the lives of ex-servicemen, and from combat troops to military bureaucrats and laborers.[3] Continent-wide perspectives have increasingly been accompanied by a resurgence of histories of individual colonies and specific regional military units such as the Royal West Africa Frontier Force (R.W.A.F.F.).[4] Within this work, there is a growing interest in assessing texts written by African soldiers, as well as their oral accounts of military service. African soldiers'

writings and oral memoirs constitute a complex source base, in which purportedly first-person discourse produced by African soldiers varies significantly across archival document type, format, and periodization, as well as textual characteristics such as scholarly mediation and narrative voice.

African soldiers' voices must be distinguished from the distinct field of African civilian commentary on the war.[5] Although the distinction between "civilian" and "military" was often ambiguous in practice, for example, when military laborers became drawn into armed combat, there are nonetheless major distinctions between the sources produced by individuals in military service away from their home colony and those produced by civilians on the "home front." These included the effects of military censorship and discipline, which differed considerably from civilian life, as well as the impact of military education and training. In Anglophone West Africa, this was particularly true of English-language education.[6] Many servicemen who had previously only had very limited educational opportunities in colonial West Africa benefited from training in a functional language termed "basic English," with more advanced students being encouraged to compose essays and debate topical subjects assigned by their officers. Sometimes these topics fell far outside those questions that the colonial government considered acceptable for Africans to debate and discuss, particularly concerning political and economic development.[7]

African Soldiers in Civilian and Military Newspapers

Newspapers provide a significant archive for the study of African soldiers, particularly their letters and essays. These materials have figured only sporadically in military histories of the war, but they have begun to be studied more frequently by historians of the colonial African press. These scholars have situated newspapers within a wider "print culture," encompassing readerships, circulation, and the material production of pamphlets, magazines, and newspapers, while drawing attention to the polyvocal nature of even seemingly homogeneous publications.[8] A particular focus within this literature is to move beyond simply drawing on newspapers as "conveyances of data" and rather focus on them as "subjects of historical study" in their own right.[9] Although not primarily

concerned with World War II, this scholarship nonetheless contains important implications for historians of that conflict.[10]

Forces' Newspapers

Newspapers published by European colonial militaries form a distinct body of sources and have rarely been used in African histories. However, a recent digital database of Anglophone publications has made them more accessible.[11] These publications often contained letters and contributions by African soldiers. Historians have begun to examine them in terms of their overall textual and physical structure, as well as their circulation among troops. Even though these publications included a considerable amount of material written or designed by European military officials, Africans still played a frequently anonymous role as translators into local languages.

Military newspapers sometimes provided fictional portraits of African soldiers that nonetheless reveal attitudes toward servicemen and colonial attempts to influence them ideologically. In 1940, *La Gazette du Tirailleur* appeared fortnightly from January to June, including a comic strip entitled *Mamadou s'en va-t'en guerre* (Mamadou Goes to War). In this comic strip series, anonymous authors tell the tale of how Mamadou moved from his village in West Africa to northern France, as well as his interactions with his friend Ibrahima in Dakar and the friendship he shared with a French family.[12] "Essentially consistent with the realities experienced by African soldiers," *Mamadou* also introduced a series of issues to the comic's readers, including Nazi plans for African colonies, Hitler, and the role of Africans in defending France.[13] The strip had a clear instrumental goal: to encourage African recruitment to the French Army. Although not a narrative of lived war experiences penned by African soldiers, *Mamadou* nonetheless reflects the importance of military newspapers in the cultural history of the war. In Anglophone Africa, as Echenberg points out, *Mamadou* could be compared to the recruitment booklet of the East African Military Labour Service, *A Spear for Freedom*, published in Nairobi during the war, possibly in 1943.[14]

Historians of the British Army's King's African Rifles (KAR) in East Africa have explored several of forces' publications in detail. Osborne has shown how the publication *Jambo*, published by British East Africa Command from 1942 to 1945, represented "an agglomeration of political

articles, general interest stories, propaganda, cartoons, cross-words" and other material.[15] Reflecting a preference for material from troops serving far from home, for example, in Madagascar or Ceylon (Sri Lanka), *Jambo* was a "forum for African troops."[16] *Jambo* offered neither a stable nor uncontested forum: letters to the editor penned by Africans vanished after 1943, and racial prejudices surfaced within the publication's pages. Despite this, it offers an unusual space where African soldiers could articulate their concerns.[17] A parallel case can be found in Bromber's analysis of the Swahili-language troop press.[18] Catering to East African troops across the globe, these publications represented "a mediascape of heretofore unknown geographical scope."[19] Focusing particularly on Ceylon, Bromber reveals the way that *Heshima* (meaning "respect," "honour," or "good reputation"), the weekly of the 11th East African Division (KAR), contained material by African troops showing that they realized their mail was being censored and included a story section entitled *Hadithi*.[20] The publication carried news in distinct languages for different East African regions, including Kiswahili for Tanganyika, Kenya, and Uganda, Chinyanja for Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia, and English.[21] Even the English-language newspaper *Rhino* carried a news section in Swahili entitled *Habari ya Swahili* or "News in Swahili."[22]

The Royal West African Frontier Force (R.W.A.F.F.) published *R.W.A.F.F. News* from 1943, a publication that featured letters and articles written by West African soldiers stationed in Asia and the Middle East.[23] The *News* convened a news landscape that spanned events in West African colonies, as well as soldiers' leisure activities in Asian cities such as Jerusalem and New Delhi. It covered West African tours of historical monuments such as the Taj Mahal or the Pyramids at Giza outside Cairo. Articles in the *News* were often illustrated by photographs, sometimes taken by African soldiers.[24] The West Africa–facing dimension of the *News* presented regionalized news items organized by colony. In line with the colonial administrative focus on traditional rulers and chiefs during the interwar years, the publication covered the efforts of chiefs and emirs in northern Nigeria to encourage their troops. Coverage of the Emir of Katsina's visit to India in 1944 exemplifies this type of political focus.[25] Closer to the fighting front in South-East Asia, the *News* included photographs of West African soldiers socializing with Indian villagers.[26]

Francophone African Ex-Servicemen and Veterans' Publications

World War II soldiers' newspapers must not only be understood as limited to the war years themselves: after 1945, ex-servicemen began organizing their own associations to lobby the colonial state. Several of these veterans' organizations had their own newspapers, which represent a major source for understanding the lives and priorities of veterans. These publications are more prominent in the historiography of French West Africa (FWA). Following extensive mistreatment and delays in resettlement, veterans' organizations grew up across FWA. The most influential of these was Anciens combattants et victimes de guerre de l'Afrique occidentale française (Former combatants and victims of war in French West Africa) founded in Dakar in October 1945. With seventy-five thousand members by 1952, the organization boasted a publication entitled *Le journal du combattant* (The Combatant's Journal) established in 1948, which later became *La voix du combattant* (The Voice of the Combatant) from August 1950.[27]

La voix provided a platform for veterans to voice their interests and mount critiques of West African deputies in the National Assembly in Paris. Within the newspaper's pages, veterans drew on "notions of sacrifice and comradeship" that have been identified as integral to ex-servicemen's claim-making since the Allied Liberation of France in 1944. This discourse, Ginio contends, asserted that cases of racism faced by African troops "involved individuals who were acting against the principles of this so-called true France."[28] One 1949 advert invited new subscribers, stating that "our journal is a weapon," and called on its readers to "make it stronger every day' by finding new subscribers.[29] Inevitably, veterans themselves played a key role in the publication's pages, with one veteran discussing events such as the sentencing of an *Ivorien* veteran to 8 months imprisonment for not saluting a European. In addition to voicing the key veterans' demand for parity in pension allowances with French ex-soldiers, the newspaper actively lobbied African deputies. From 1951, *La Voix* ran a recurring feature on page 2 entitled "The Activities of Our Deputies", which listed the deputies' actions on behalf of African ex-servicemen.[30] Some deputies received praise, such as the Guinean deputy Mamba Sano, who "made an interminable speech" at the National Assembly supporting his amendment to increase colonial gendarmerie budgets and salaries. However, the paper could take a

critical line on deputies whom it believed had failed to advocate on behalf of African veterans. In September 1953, it listed the names of seventeen deputies who had voted against an amendment improving veterans' benefits under the title "Our Adversaries"; among those identified were Félix Houphouët-Boigny and Mamadou Konaté (French Sudan) and Joseph Apithy (Dahomey).[31]

African Soldiers and Civilian Newspapers

The African press provides unparalleled insights into local perspectives on both world wars. Historians of colonial Africa have drawn on the African-owned press both as an object of historical analysis and as a way of researching African responses to and appropriations of colonial rule. During World War I, newspapers published serializations that recorded individual African experiences of the war and provided a forum for the voices of ex-servicemen after the November 1918 Armistice.[32] By World War II, the press had assumed a different role, particularly due to the growth of African news media during the interwar years and the unprecedented increase in colonial propaganda during the early war years.[33]

Newspapers played a central role in the war effort and became crucial to colonial governments' propaganda policies as part of the Allied war effort. Many colonies began employing public relations officers, and District Officers in Nigeria were encouraged to send public relations reports to the Residents of their respective provinces.[34] War news summaries were compiled at broadcasting stations in Lagos, Abeokuta, Onitsha, Zaria, and Kaduna, with a focus on the serious consequences of an Axis victory.[35] Newspapers carried notices informing their readers of colonial defense regulations, civil defense precautions, and the pay rates for military laborers.[36] After the war, Azikiwe would point out the considerable free space that his *Pilot* had allotted to the government to publish war propaganda. More generally, newspapermen, regardless of their later political radicalism during the war, were initially loyal to the British war effort and fearful of a German conquest of West African territories.[37]

Letters by serving soldiers appeared with regularity in wartime newspapers. In Hausa-speaking Northern Nigeria, Philips has observed the presence of such correspondence in the pages of the Hausa-language *Gaskiya Ta Fi Kwabo* (Truth Is Worth More Than a Penny), itself partly conceived to combat the potential influence of German propaganda in

Northern Nigeria.[38] "The early years of *Gaskiya*," Philips argues, "represent a unique documentation of African understanding … and attitudes toward" the war.[39] In addition to publishing soldiers' letters from overseas theaters, the *Gaskiya* also answered war-related questions. Fatalities in the East Africa campaign were reported in some wartime issues of the newspaper "as the deaths of martyrs," establishing a pattern of reporting war deaths that would continue in the publication throughout the war.[40] It also reported on foreign fighters, including the role of female Italian partisans.[41]

The *Gaskiya* was not exceptional in publishing letters from soldiers, as African-owned newspapers routinely featured such letters.[42] The tone of these letters could differ markedly from British propaganda accounts of soldiers' activities that appeared in the pages of wartime newspapers. The *Pioneer* and the *Pilot*, in particular, printed letters that contained direct criticism of colonial rule.[43] Even though soldiers' letters had been subject to military censorship, they nonetheless offered a rare perspective on the views of serving soldiers regarding West African politics. Not all soldiers' letters appearing in African newspapers dealt with political issues, and some expressed the desire to receive more letters from home or contained travelogue-style reports of the countries where the men were based.

Soldiers' correspondence in the West African press poses interpretative challenges on several grounds, particularly because they were often emphasized in the journalism of civilian nationalists. While nationalist historiography was keen to stress that pro-nationalist letters were indicative of broader political sympathies among West African troops, there is little evidence to suggest this was, in fact, the case.[44] Radical newspaper editors such as Nnamdi Azikiwe, owner of the *Pilot*, among others, were keen to project a specific image of serving African troops as closely allied to the anti-colonial nationalist cause and, therefore, gave prominence to soldierly voices that endorsed this perspective.[45] The attitude of individual publications toward servicemen also changed dramatically over time; the *Pioneer* later criticized ex-servicemen for having a "Burma complex" and being convinced of their own superiority.[46] More generally, it is difficult to discern the identity of soldier letter-writers, either because they chose to write anonymously or because military censors demanded the removal of identifying location details at any level more specific than "South East Asia Command" or "Middle East Command."

Soldier letter-writers and essayists who address themes other than

nationalist politics have often been ignored. Potential ways in which their writings may be analyzed in the future can be found in recent cultural-historical studies on colonial travelers, such as those of Northern Nigerian emirs. This literature has stressed the value of colonial travelogues, connecting these texts to processes of cross-cultural translation and self-legitimation by colonial intermediaries.[47] Although they come from very different social and educational backgrounds, similar insights can be drawn on when analyzing soldiers' writings about their time in the Middle East or South Asia. Servicemen often had significant leisure time between combat or maintenance assignments, and Allied commands in both regions invested more money in leisure opportunities for African soldiers than was the case in Africa itself.[48]

African World War II Memoirs

Published African World War II memoirs remain rare. Newspaper, magazine articles, and serializations are more common but rarely studied, while other memoirs survive in the archives. In terms of cultural, literary, or historical prominence, there are no direct parallels with African World War I memoirs such as Blaise Diagne's *Force Bonté* (Strength and Goodness).[49] In any case, World War II African memoirs have rarely been discussed by non-Africanist scholars and remain absent from most general academic or popular narratives of the war. This situation contrasts markedly with that pertaining to other regions of the world. In South Asia, for example, we have a relatively detailed understanding of the letters of soldiers in World War I and a smaller but growing discussion of soldiers' writing from World War II.[50]

Soldiers' memoirs have been situated within the context of military history, but also more recently in relation to literary critical studies of life and travel writing. Civilian travel writing offers a direct and informative comparison point. During the 1930s and 1940s, travel diaries to European countries were relatively common in West Africa. In Hausa literature, for example, Aminu Kano's essay *Motsi ya fi zama* (Moving is better than sitting) describes his first journey to Europe in 1946, Malam Dauda Haruna's *Yawo a Turai* (Journey to Europe) chronicles a visit to London in 1953 and is aimed at a general Hausa reader, and Abubakar Imam's *Tafiya Mabudin Ilimi* (Travel is the gateway to knowledge)

recounts his visit to London as part of a delegation of West African journalists in 1943.[51]

Travel accounts also formed a rich seam in Yoruba language journalism of the period. However, it is unclear whether the authors had ever left their own colony, and some travel writers contented themselves with describing other areas of Nigeria.[52] Prominent examples of World War II memoirs across Africa include R.H. Kakembo's *An African Soldier Speaks*, and *The Story of Martin Kayamba Mdumi by Himself*, anthologized by British Africanist Margery Perham, and the letters and articles by African soldiers contained in Kenneth Dower's *Abyssinian Patchwork*.[53] Much of this material remains an untapped mine of historical information, revealing not simply Africans' attitudes toward the war but their responses to the areas of the world where they fought and how their military service informed their social and intellectual worlds.

Osei-Poku has studied several African travelogues of the Burmese war.[54] Gold Coast soldier Sergeant Frederick Siegfried Arkhurst's "Jeep Road to Victory: African Engineers Carve a Way into Burma" was published in the *West African Review* in June 1945.[55] Serviceman Moses Danquah, Osei-Poku, returned from Burma and wrote about the growing Port City of Takoradi. Danquah was already familiar with Takoradi, but his experience of the port was challenged by its expansion during the war years while he had been away in Burma.[56]

One of the best-studied West African soldier memoirs is Isaac Fadoyebo's "A Stroke of Unbelievable Luck."[57] Fadoyebo was born on December 5, 1925, in Emure-Ile, a part of modern-day Ondo State, in southwestern Nigeria. Despite professing to be from "a humble origin," he was educated at the Anglican schools of St George's and St Patrick's in Owo; such schools were important vectors of English linguistic and cultural education in colonial West Africa.[58]

Fadoyebo enlisted in January 1942, at a time when the Nigerian soldiers had already fought for the British in East Africa, and within a year, preparations were underway for ninety thousand Africans to participate in the renewed efforts of the Fourteenth Army to drive the Japanese out of Burma's jungles and back down the Malay peninsula.[59] He was one of twenty-five thousand West Africans who served in the 81st West Africa Division of the RWAFF, operating in the Northwest of Burma and encountering ten-thousand-foot summits such as Mount Victoria. Under the maverick command of General Orde Wingate, the troops undertook

experimental guerrilla warfare. Those in the twenty-eight-thousand-strong 82nd Division fought in the south of Burma around the Akyab River. Most of these Nigerians fought small actions involving individual patrols, companies, and platoons in what has been termed "a subalterns' and sergeants' war."[60] Away from the front, West Africans saw Indian cities such as Bombay and Calcutt and have often been credited with returning to Africa with newly radical and anti-colonial political views. The story of these soldiers is often told in general terms, and very little survives in the form of individual accounts and detailed sources describing African activities in either Burma or India.

A memoir such as Fadoyebo's is sophisticated in its structure, moving between the narrative present and the remembered world of the 1940s. It deploys a narrative framing in which Fadoyebo actively seeks to earn the trust of his reader; his use of language mediates between multiple idioms, as well as repeatedly glossing Yoruba terms for an unfamiliar reader.[61] These are not simply stylistic observations or points of textual analysis. They are indispensable to the historical importance of the memoir. They allow Fadoyebo to weave associations that immerse the reader in his mental world. This is brought to life on the page through the attentive way he crafts his narrative. It is this "mentality" or subjectivity, as much as the factual content of the narrative, that is of historical importance. As historian Ginzburg avers in a different context, "the *Mémoires* of Saint-Simon or the lives of the early medieval saints reveal not so much empirical material, as illuminate the mentality of the writers of those texts."[62]

The chronological complexity of Fadoyebo's memoir is critical to appreciating its narrative quality. Writing began in the 1950s or 1960s but was not completed until the 1980s. In addition, Fadoyebo was explicitly aware that he was writing for an historically interested audience. He received early encouragement in the project from historian Michael Crowder. This awareness informs Fadoyebo's prose, and he at times aspires to what Guha has termed "the prose of history," actively aware of its historical readership and making claims for its larger-scale significance.[63]

J. O. Ariyo's memoir *Oju mi ri ni India* or "What My Eyes Have Seen in India" also recounts African service in the Burma war.[64] Predating the publication of Fadoyebo's memoir by several decades, Ariyo's memoir was published in the 1950s by the Education Board of the Western Region of Nigeria. Its publication was part of a drive to increase the dissemination

of Yoruba-language printed books, particularly as educational material for schools, and Ariyo's memoir fulfilled this purpose in Yoruba-speaking classrooms. The memoir follows Ariyo across his military service, from enlistment to deployment in India and combat in Burma. While African war memoirs provide a key resource for understanding soldiers' perceptions of conflict and the global world of the 1940s, they are nonetheless consciously and carefully constructed and, in some cases, written with an eye to their own role within historical discourse.[65]

Soldiers' Correspondence in Colonial Archives

A considerable amount of correspondence from soldiers and ex-servicemen survives in the archives of West African states. Killingray, for instance, cites the existence of a file in the Ghanaian archives containing letters from six hundred ex-servicemen with "most … concerned with domestic and social matters.'[66] Other categories of correspondence, particularly letters of petition, entered the colonial archives because servicemen and veterans deliberately attempted to engage the assistance of colonial officials to resolve marital, family, and business problems or, in the case of ex-servicemen, to access financial or medical assistance.[67] Some letters were written directly to major nationalist figures by soldiers serving in Asia.[68] These sometimes expressed political and social critiques of West African colonies, particularly at an industrial and educational level, as well as observations about soldiers' travels.

West African Soldiers and Oral History

Oral research promised a rich body of source material on African participation in World War II, particularly in the later decades of the twentieth century. Although now constrained mainly by the horizons of living memory, oral accounts have informed both academic histories of the war and popular books, documentaries, and media. This latter body of material, ranging from online news stories to documentaries, constitutes some of the most widely available contemporary materials on Africans and World War II, although they are rarely collected or analyzed in the historiography of the war.

Oral Accounts and the Historiography of West African Military Service

Historians of World War II West Africa have relied on groups of interviews conducted during the 1970s to 2000s. It must be appreciated that oral accounts do not reveal unmediated access to "authentic" experiences and voices, as seductive as this possibility may seem. In reality, they are influenced by multiple factors, including the positionality of the researcher and the priorities of the informant.[69] Zimmerman, reflecting on oral research undertaken in Senegal between 2006 and 2011 with veterans and their families, notes that contemporary conditions changed her informants' priorities. During the time of Zimmerman's research, a long-standing controversy about veterans' pensions had come to fresh media and public attention. This meant that "women and men were primed to speak about the injustices of paltry pensions, widows' allocations, and the negative legacies of colonial rule."[70] The practical needs of the present thus played a role in shaping the claims of those being interviewed. Oral sources ultimately represent one among a series of research strategies for historians of African soldiers.

Historians of Francophone Africa have generally relied more frequently on the oral accounts of veterans. Lunn's study of *tirailleur* service in the Great War analyzes "Senegalese impressions of their experiences at the front" to reveal a range of attitudes toward France, death, injury, and Islam.[71] Scholars of World War II in Francophone Africa have also utilized oral accounts, particularly to examine the lives of veterans.[72]

Lawler's interviews with Ivorian *tirailleurs* form the body of a dedicated study on World War II service in the Ivory Coast, as well as informing Echenberg's analysis of *tirailleurs*' military service in World War II.[73] Echenberg demonstrates how soldiers' oral recollections complement existing archival sources, including contemporary research accounts, particularly in contexts where military files remained closed. He combines these sources with the firsthand account *Noblesse d'Afrique* (Nobility of Africa) by camp inspector Hélène de Gobineau's. In her work, de Gobineau visited work camps in German-occupied northeastern France and who had extensive contact with African POWs.[74] Recalling his treatment at the hands of German captors after the fall of France in June 1940, Ivorian *tirailleur* Lielourou Tou claimed that "the Germans aren't men," and that "they gave us nothing to eat on the road."[75] Echenberg draws on interviews

with *tirailleurs* to elucidate soldiers' critiques of individual French officers, as well as their attitudes towards combat. Another *Ivoirien*, Edmond N'Guetta, recalled how:

> In the region one day we were completely encircled by the Germans. We tried to make a stand—there were planes, bombardments all day. Tanks, cannons. Many were wounded. We had no more cars, no more trucks, nothing. We couldn't advance or retreat. We waited all day. Towards the evening of June 6th, a great cavalry attack was made against us. Tanks and planes. They opened fire. We couldn't do anything. Our unit was separated. We were all separated. We tried to resist but we were submerged all at once. One could not resist, could not see—they were everywhere.[76]

The Ivoirian veterans provided an account of African fighting against the German attack on France in 1940 that was not readily available elsewhere.

Lawler, too, draws on the testimony of Ivorian veterans, gathered from interviews conducted in the mid-1980s. Focusing on *tirailleurs* sent to the Levant in the spring of 1940, she includes soldiers' descriptions of serving in the Middle East. Around four thousand Tirailleurs Sénégalais became part of the twenty-thousand-strong Army of the Levant, along with fourteen thousand North African *tirailleurs*.[77] Veteran Donipoho Sekongo recalled taking part in fighting in Damascus, alongside French soldiers:

> We were in a line—Sénégalais—all in a line. The white drove. I was alone. The others were dead in the tank. We couldn't stop to take their bodies off … We kept going just to the village. We fired until about 4 o'clock. Then we stopped at Damascus. Then we took our bayonets at night and starting slashing. They had subterranean houses. In the night you don't shoot. We entered the houses and killed everyone found there. You cut their heads off … There they had no defense. We killed them all. Killed them like ants. Everyone—all the men. Not the women or the very small ones.[78]

Other veterans contextualized the violence in terms of the political situation in Lebanon. Namongo Ouattara, who fought in the same action as Donipoho, argued that:

> In 1945, the Lebanese wanted their independence, but the French didn't want to give it to them. So, the war began again. We started shooting in Damascus. The firing was crazy. Then we really bombed Damascus—destroying so many things. Yes, there were problems about being a Muslim. There was no time to pray, but I shot. The houses there were levelled. Anyway, the rebels were all mixed up—they weren't just Muslims. It did bother me, but it was an obligation …[79]

Ouattara also situates Lebanese demands for independence in terms of his later belief in Ivorian nationalism: "Anyway, I didn't know what it was to be independent-to be free. In those days, I didn't know." It was only later, "when I came home and listened to Houphouët [the Ivorian nationalist leader Houphouët-Boigny]", that Ouattara "realized that they [the nationalists] had been right."[80] In Lawler's samples of veterans' testimony about French military operations in Levant during the war, we gain a sense of the diversity of subjects covered in soldiers' recollections of the war. Fighting and violence remain an inevitable and core part of their memories, but at the same time, they incorporate comparisons between Lebanon and the Ivory Coast and political commentary.

Turning to Anglophone West Africa, a significant collection of 340 interviews with Ghanaian veterans was made by Holbrook and was subsequently deposited in the library of Bryn Mawr College.[81] Holbrook examined the material from the interviews in terms of core themes, including enlistment, motivations for military service, political loyalty, and the experiences of demobilization and veterans.[82] Some of his findings enforce longer-term assumptions in historical research, such as connecting enlistment to economic motives, with fewer interviewees citing 'political identification with the British imperial government and broader issues' emphasized in recent historiography on wartime imperial loyalty.[83] Contrary to assumptions in nationalist historiography of the 1970s, which saw veterans as supporters of nationalist movements, Holbrook reveals that political loyalties among veterans turned "toward the traditional leadership." He argues that they had therefore been framed in "local terms," extending to a more general conceptualization of military service as being subordinate to "traditional community responsibilities."[84]

The life of Maiduguri serviceman Hama Kim presents a complex example of an oral source available to us in a heavily mediated textual

form, written in academic prose and historically contextualized by British scholar G. W. Graham. This overlapping of an oral source with subsequent textualization and crafting into Graham's prose presents specific challenges. Kim, originally from modern-day Chad but had received secondary education in Kano, served in the Nigerian Army in Burma and the Civil War.[85] The narrative is rarely voiced in the first-person, apart from in extracted quotes, but Graham adopts an oral historical methodology to create a prose account of Kim's life.

The "Life" is a complex textual source that has rarely been analyzed in detail by historians. Graham's narrative voice generally mediates Kim's account, but there are passages when Kim's own voice is presented seemingly directly, and without mediation. This material is based on Kim's later recounting of his experiences. On living conditions in Burma, Graham presents a quote from Kim in the following manner:

> It is still difficult to imagine the daily life of the soldiers in Burma. According to Hama Kim the life was hard:
>
> "… but we did not mind… we were soldiers, we did not worry since everything was prepared for us. Unlike the soldiers from East Africa who worried about their wives and children, we didn't. We were very young. We used to tell them not to worry about your wives since tomorrow you will die—they, in turn, accused us of irresponsibility."[86]

Graham's direct quote of Kim's words is distinguished from an overarching framing narrative provided directly by the author (Graham). This difference in voicing between both narratives presents one example of the textual challenges for historians seeking to work with the rich and underutilized source of Kim's life narrative. Kim's oral history functions at a remove in Graham's prose. One clue to this can be found in the way that Graham's third-person narrative presents "the Nigerians" in a way that makes it unclear whether this is Graham's description or Kim's own. Ironically, Kim himself appears as in the third person in Graham's narrative, while, on other occasions, the text also reconstructs Kim's own words: "clearly, Hama Kim had already marked himself out as a soldier who could be relied upon."[87]

Kim recounts his enlistment, training, and military service in Burma, indicating his belief that "Frenchmen made the best soldiers." Kim's uncle

also served in the W.A.F.F.[88] Enlisting in the army, Kim trained in Sierra Leone before returning to the Ede Camp near Lagos, where he practiced "single file movements through the jungle" in preparation for manoeuvres in the Burmese rainforest.[89] Before he departed for Burma, Kim returned to Maiduguri to witness the transformation of the town into a major American military air hub on the so-called Takoradi trans-Saharan supply route.[90] Embarking for Burma in July 1943, Kim spent a month traveling to India, braving sea sickness and storms. A vivid picture of the maritime convoy appears in Kim's recollections: "Every night a submarine—the silent and hidden guardian of the convoy—would surface and the Nigerians would gather on deck to exchange greetings with the crew."[91]

Kim also communicates the degree to which soldiers were unaware of the overarching events of the global war at various junctures. Arriving in India, Hama Kim and his comrades heard little of what was going on, being only informed that they were bound for Burma during the voyage to India.[92] Although Kim was more seriously wounded during the subsequent Nigerian Civil War, he also sustained injuries in Burma:

> It was during one serious engagement that Hama was seriously wounded. He had been firing at the enemy when a grenade suddenly exploded behind him, wounding him in the back. He tried to stand up, but the wound was deep, and his legs were weak. He fell, tumbling down a slope, vomiting as he rolled …[93]

Subsequently, Kim found that three bullets had lodged in his Bible, likely saving his life.[94] This Bible was later deposited in the Zaria regimental museum. Despite its textual complexity, Kim's "Life" marks a major and largely unexplored resource for the study of West African soldiers' experiences in Asia.

African World War Two Military Service in Media and Online Sources

Since the 1980s, there has been growing media interest in African contributions to World War II soldiers' voices, especially as reflected through interviews, and, increasingly, photographic images. Like memoires, these

materials again offer the alluring possibility of a seemingly direct and authentic access to the past. Despite this, they present significant challenges. These include the risk of extrapolating too far on the basis of individual experience. In addition, there is a tendency of some media accounts to frame African participation in the war in terms of an uncritical narrative of "contribution" or "participation," which risks minimizing the substantial discrimination faced by these troops. This has been identified and analysed in both Western and African contexts.[95] Visual materials and film remain largely outside the scope of the present essay, but it should be noted that images superficially offer the deceptive opportunity of an unmediated access to the past.[96] It is all too easy to ignore the material relations that informed the production, dissemination, and circulation of photographs or film.[97]

Contemporary Media and World War Two West African Veterans

Digital culture has seldom been studied by historians of World War II West Africa, although with increased interest in historical memory and popular history, this situation is changing. As Owino points out, publications on World War II and African countries increasingly "take into account newspapers and magazines and the newly emerging digital social media."[98] Visual media, including film and digital video, contain their own processes of representing and framing oral interviews that require independent consideration.

The BBC World Service, in conjunction with journalist Martin Plaut and historian David Killingray, collected a valuable store of interviews and transcriptions for a series of programs on Africa and World War II, broadcast by the BBC World Service in 1989.[99] Plaut later devoted a further program in 2009 to the subject.[100] The materials collected for the 1989 series are now held at the Imperial War Museum in London and are a key source base for Killingray's 2010 study, *Fighting for Britain*.[101]

The 2010s saw a growth in digital media relating to Africa and World War II. Several documentaries presented Nigeria's contribution to the global war.[102] Nigerian veterans were interviewed by documentary maker and academic Oliver Owen, with a trailer for the subsequent documentary being widely covered in news media.[103] Stories and news film about individual World War II veterans from the region have become increasingly common on websites such as BBC News. Sometimes, these are based

on a contemporary event, as in the case of one Ghanaian veteran who became a popular fundraiser during the COVID-19 pandemic.[104] In 2021, *Al Jazeera* reported on Ebou Janha, a 102-year-old ex-serviceman and veteran of the 1st Gambia Regiment, who had fought in Burma. Recalling a Japanese grenade attack while fighting at Pagoda Hill in Burma, Janha remarked that "the grenade was powerful! It made me like this. My eardrums were burst. But thanks God I'm alive."[105] In addition to his recollections, Janha was able to show the wounds to his chest caused by grenade shrapnel to reporters, with an image of the injuries, along with archival images of Gambian and Nigerian soldiers being included in the online news report.

Journalist Barnaby Phillips's documentary and book on Isaac Fadoyebo generated significant interest in the mid-2010s.[106] Phillips brings Fadoyebo's account to life by retracing the soldiers' journey to Burma, as well as speaking to his surviving family in Nigeria. Although focused on East Africa, *Al Jazeera* broadcast a documentary on "Forgotten Heroes of Empire" in 2019, covering the unequal treatment of African soldiers who fought in the British Army, which in turn triggered a series of articles in Britain's *Guardian* newspaper, exploring historical and continuing inequalities in the treatment of African veterans.[107]

Africa's World War II and Social Media

Social media has also augmented our understanding of African participation in World War II. This has encouraged the development of historically focused websites and social media accounts, both in West Africa and among the diaspora. A well-known example of this trend is the "Nigerian Nostalgia Project," which focuses on distinct historical periods, including the precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial eras.[108] Created on October 2, 2010, by Etim Eyo, the group seeks to explore history and nostalgia in Nigerian social media and digital culture.[109]

Social media has also served as a forum for contesting the legacy of African military service during World War II. The cultural controversy between Senegal and France over the legacy of the Thiaroye Massacre of December 1, 1944, forms a key example of the way in which social media plays a mediating role in historical memory. In an atmosphere where basic details remain disputed, including between a death toll of between thirty-five at the lowest estimates and a more likely number of

between three and four hundred, Senegalese politicians have used social media to critique French responses to Thiaroye.[110] At the same time, digital media has become a conduit for controversy surrounding allegedly disrespectful statements about the *tirailleurs* and Thiaroye. Senegalese politician Cheikh Oumar Diagne's branding of the *tirailleurs* as "traitors" in an interview on Senegalese channel Fafa TV provoked widespread criticism on social media and elsewhere.[111]

Beyond Thiaroye, political attempts to appropriate the legacy of the *tirailleurs sénégalais* have become sources of contention in digital culture. This could be seen as the development of a longer-term cultural interest in the *tirailleurs* in cartoons and film.[112] An extreme right-wing social media backlash in 2016 followed rapper Black M's (Alpha Diallo) decision to challenge critics who had successfully prevented him from appearing at an event linked to the centenary commemoration of the World War I Battle of Verdun.[113] Diallo responded by posting a photograph of his grandfather, a World War II *tirailleur*, on his social media accounts. This provoked a false accusation by far-right bloggers, who wrongly asserted that the rapper's claim was fabricated. Archival evidence became key to resolving the matter in Diallo's favor, and the newspaper *Le Monde* published a military record attesting to the military service of one Alfa Diallo.[114] The case revealed the ongoing political controversy surrounding the legacy of the *tirailleurs* in France, as well as the degree to which the issue had become integrated into contemporary debates about race and racism in French culture.[115] If, as Mourre contends, Thiaroye has symbolic associations which cannot be neglected in contemporary Franco-Senegalese relations, this point might be extended to the figure of the *tirailleur* in general.[116]

A key strength and a major risk of social media coverage of the past is its reliance on visuality. This enables the histories of African soldiers to reach new audiences. However, it also risks collapsing the historical and political context behind individual images and even opens up the possibility of artificial enhancement or manipulation of historical photographs or film. At a more general level, social media can provide a forum for amplifying or challenging competing claims about the contemporary significance of World War II military service.

Conclusion

Many popular accounts of African military service in World War II continue to describe the subject as involving "forgotten" combatants and geographical regions. This well-meaning description points to the continued marginalization of African military service in more general academic and popular narratives of World War II, as well as the racial discrimination faced by African servicemen both during the war and afterward.[117] However, as this chapter has shown, this moniker of being "forgotten" should not be accepted at face value. A significant body of academic scholarship and media coverage has grown over the past three decades, greatly contributing to our understanding of Africans' role in World War II. Considerable inequalities remain, including in the availability of research on Africa and World War II, which may languish behind online paywalls. Despite these challenges, firsthand accounts of African veterans are now more accessible to a wider public than in the past, whether in scholarship, the news media, or online.

Significant gaps remain in our knowledge of World War II West African military service; the key role of Africans in overseas theaters outside West Africa remains poorly understood in many cases, while the role of Africans in the British Merchant Navy and the Air Force remains underexamined.[118] Finally, there remains little differentiation in our understanding of African troops, for example, in terms of specialized workers that became important during World War II, such as signals technicians, engineers, medical staff, and translators.

As with any field of historical research, the study of African combatants in World War II is not static and continues to evolve. Older work was often dedicated to collecting and analyzing oral accounts, assessing the links between ex-servicemen and nationalism, or demonstrating the very existence of African contributions to World War II. More recent historiography has begun to analyze African soldiers' lives in relation to questions such as cultural contact and religion.[119] Gender has become a central focus within this historiography, including the role of women in relation to colonial militaries, wartime sex work, and masculinities in wartime West Africa.[120] The leisure activities and sporting achievements of African troops have become subjects of research.[121] In recent years, there has been a growing interest in utilizing African-authored textual sources, particularly newspapers and letters, to research histories of the

war that do not rely solely on the files of colonial government departments or military command structures. At the same time, there has been increased interest in exploring colonial and military archives in relation to new research questions and using these materials in different ways from the past.[122] All of these perspectives illustrate the multiple ways in which historians can draw on African soldiers' life narratives, whether oral or written, in creating social, economic, cultural, gender, and intellectual histories that connect with the broader changes in West Africa during the 1940s.

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CHAPTER 13

Second World War Veterans and the End of Colonialism in Kenya

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The Second World War was a pivotal event for Africa, ushering in a period of political change that eventually led to African independence. The impact of Africa's role in combat on behalf of the Allies is of particular significance. British and French authorities recruited a large number of African soldiers.[1] The participation of Africans in the war and the combat experiences of African soldiers, in particular, affected postwar politics in the colonies. This chapter examines the influence of Kenya's Second World War veterans on the country's path to independence. It focuses on how their wartime experiences contributed to the Mau Mau rebellion, an underground movement that fought for land rights and freedom from the British colonial administration. While the intensity of colonial domination and exploitation, particularly the loss of Kenya's white highlands to European settlers, formed the backdrop to the liberation struggle, the experiences of World War II veterans marked the turning points in the rise of local discontent. They intensified the path to Kenya's independence. While historian Rita Headrick has challenged the assumption that "most histories of postwar Africa is that African soldiers became politically galvanized against colonial rule as a result of their wartime experience," the case of Kenya was unique.[2] Kenya's settler status, the alienation of land predominantly from the Kikuyu ethnic group, and the emergence of the Mau Mau as an anti-colonial movement gave the participation of Kenya's ex-soldiers its unique character.

The experiences of Second World War veterans on the battlefield were not just traumatic events but transformative moments that profoundly shaped their identities and influenced the anti-colonial movement in Kenya. Their military training and expertise, honed during the war, were pivotal in the fight for independence. The chapter argues that the combat experience of Kenyan soldiers who fought on behalf of the British and other Allies radicalized them, helping to unleash Kenya's anti-colonial struggle and accelerating its decolonization.

Soldiers of Change Home at Last

Hal Brands has noted that about twenty-five thousand Kenyans, of whom more than 20 percent wore the uniform, had been discharged by the end of 1945. The last of these soldiers returned in 1947.[3] The return of ex-soldiers from the Middle East and Burma after the war made headlines.[4] They had been away from home for several years, having spent only brief periods there on leave, and only occasionally received letters from their families. David Killingray pointed out that the families of the veterans feared "long silences" and "absence," which suggested that the soldier may have perished on the battlefield. About 2,476 soldiers had been killed, and a few survivors had been seriously wounded. It is estimated that 90 percent of the "wounded soldiers" demanded to be discharged and left to return to their homes, which explains why many army men in Kenya did not receive treatment.[5] Mixed sentiments filled the air as veterans' families welcomed them home. While there was jubilation at the return of survivors, the villages were thrown into confusion and melancholy as some families received their sons "disabled and maimed," faced with challenges of "coping with psychosis" and "mental health."[6]

Returning veterans faced unique challenges upon their return. Their experiences varied across Africa. Korieh has noted that some soldiers received a hero's welcome on their return to Nigeria. The war helped them forge a new identity and achieve respectability.[7] Yet, the specter of war followed these soldiers home and sometimes affected their families. For example, while in Malawi a family celebrated the return of the veteran Alick Chintu, Mustafa Bonomali, who served with KAR in East Africa and Burma, surprisingly, had to prove his identity to convince his family that he was who he said he was.[8] He dealt with a trauma that impacted his sense of belonging, as relatives who had imagined he had died on the battlefield were to see him return. Nuera Opiya, another KAR veteran, wrote a poignant letter to his friends in Kenya about the number of soldiers from East Africa who had succumbed to the war's bombing campaigns, which scared the relatives of the veterans. His letter claimed that "forty people died in the same moment, and many people were not counted, but dead bodies were as many as sand."[9] Opiyo's letter caused anguish among relatives of those in combat. These types of letters heightened the sense that "many African soldiers had succumbed during the battle," which was traumatic to the soldiers, their families, and their

communities. [10] A Congolese veteran, Albert Kunyuku, returned home in 1946. When asked if he was proud of his military service, he paused with tears flowing down his prominent cheeks, and said, "No." His grief for his fallen comrades was so great that he hardly spoke. Only a few of the twenty-five thousand African soldiers who accompanied him to the front in Southeast Asia returned home.

Returning veterans were often confronted with the challenges of coping with the reality of their home environment. Military life had exposed them to "new experiences and ideas that transformed most soldiers' perspectives and expectations."[11] Some found their wives to be older and withdrawn due to their absence; families had suffered years of separation. Rus Osakwe, a former soldier from Nigeria, dreamed of the hostility and suspicion some former soldiers encountered when they returned to Nigeria. In his dream, he realized that some Nigerians were skeptical of the returning soldiers and complained that they were returning from India with "contagious diseases." Others complained that the ex-soldiers had turned into criminals, and would disturb the peace of the citizens. Osakwe found his dream turning into reality when he saw Nigerian ex-soldiers being charged with committing crimes, and many of them became the "laughingstock" in the village.[12] Even before the war ended, Mrs. R. Fane "doubted" that the ex-soldiers would quickly "revert to civilian life" after being accustomed to the "comfort" and "security" of the military.[13] She questioned whether former soldiers would find employment opportunities, considering the elevated lifestyle they lived serving in the structured confines of the military.[14] Indeed, as ex-soldiers reverted to civilian status, some found themselves ill and unable to provide for their families.

Conditions were particularly bad for Kenyan veterans, some of whom had nothing to return to in terms of access to land. Like their counterparts elsewhere in Africa, Kenyan veterans were neglected upon returning home. Decades later, Kenyan members of the KAR complained during the country's fiftieth independence anniversary celebration that they had "never received any form of pension despite having fought for the British locally and abroad."[15] James Birgen, Timotheo Songok, and Kipkemboi Kijo, former veterans from Kenya, complained of neglect by the British colonial government upon their return home. They neither received a pension nor gratuity.[16] Songok remembered how the British recruited young men in his village: "They came to our village in Nandi and ordered

for young men; nobody was to turn down their call; together with my age mates, I obliged."[17] Many ex-soldiers like Songok faced issues with post-traumatic stress and received little attention from the colonial government on their return.[18] Songok regretted returning home impoverished. He became frail due to old age, suffered unrelenting pain in his legs, and lost eyesight due to injuries sustained during the war.

Some former soldiers languished in poverty. James Birgen Arap Rotich, a veteran who had joined the KAR in 1943, returned home in 1948, lived in a heavily "leaking" grass-thatched house, and argued that it would be appropriate for the government to build him a modern home.[19] All James had to show his grandchildren about his pride as an ex-soldier were the medals of honor strapped on the khaki coat the British officers gave him while in combat. The neglect of these soldiers would motivate some to join the liberation movements in Kenya, particularly the Mau Mau. Karigo Muchai, an ex-soldier and a member of the Mau Mau movement, recalled how the colonial state ignored their demands: "We Africans were told repeatedly that we were fighting for our country and democracy and that when the war was over, we would be rewarded for the sacrifices we were making … For my part, I was only looking forward to being given a small piece of land somewhere and being treated a little more decently by the Kenyan colonial administration and white settlers. These hopes and dreams of mine were quickly crushed on my return home." Muchai complained that the African soldiers were given false hopes during enlistment: "They intended only to get Africans like me to risk their lives for Britain and the white settlers of Kenya." He returned to the life he had left four years earlier find himself landless, jobless, and without dignity.[20]

The Role of Ex-Soldiers in the Liberation Movements in Kenya

Historian Michael Crowder argued that the combat experience raised the African consciousness of African veterans and destroyed "the myth of European invincibility and superiority" and the self-confidence over colonial hegemony.[21] Historian Chima Korieh has noted that African ex-soldiers returned home with "novel ideas," fresh perspectives, and new expectations, with the idea of the white man's invisibility and racial superiority destroyed by the war.[22] Killingray notes that the combat "widened the 'worldview' of the ex-soldiers beyond their immediate

surroundings.[23] The veterans' global experiences altered their worldviews to the extent that they engaged in political discussions that questioned the legality of imperial control over African colonies.

The military skills acquired by soldiers during training and in combat became critical during the Kenyan liberation struggle. Historian Shiroya Okete asserts that military training instilled in veterans "resilience," "tactics," and "skills" for self-defense in victorious warfare, and that they employed the "skills learned during warfare in anti-colonial liberation."[24] The ex-soldiers' competency in handling weapons and military tactics moved easily into armed resistance against oppressive colonial regimes. Already literate military men gained more skills and knowledge as "lorry drivers, signallers, radio engineers, and medical orderlies."[25] Basic military training and knowledge of simple command rules made the veterans physically capable of enduring the strain of anti-colonial contestation. Proficiency in hand-to-hand combat, unarmed combat, bayonet training, and specialized skills such as building rafts were vital during the Mau Mau movement.[26]

Furthermore, the Second World War was characterized by the use of innovative military technology, which influenced the training of soldiers and combatants. African soldiers benefited from this military innovation and the technological skills acquired during training. Historian Tarak Barkawi notes that "infantry combat" became more complex in "techniques" and "technology."[27] The soldiers no longer fought shoulder to shoulder, but in small groups or pairs, often under cover, out of sight, and out of hearing of their officers. The curriculum for Indian soldiers, for example, was rigorous and challenging, particularly for recruits from rural backgrounds, many of whom lacked skills. During their training, the instructor emphasized the importance of every soldier becoming "proficient in tactics to thrive on the battlefield."[28] Like their Indian counterparts, African soldiers learned to operate complex equipment, ranging from automatic weapons and grenades to mortars, vehicles, and radios. They had to master fieldcraft, including understanding how to navigate and survive in various terrains and tactics for laying or responding to ambushes and effectively controlling machine guns. These skills proved valuable for the Kenyan veterans of the Second World War as they joined the Mau Mau to fight against the British. Some Kenyan ex-soldiers, like Waruhiu Itote, were trained in wartime tactics in India. The African soldiers in Burma, for their part, faced numerous obstacles

and challenging landscapes on the battlefield, giving them experience in navigating "geographical challenges."[29] All of this background proved valuable for the Kenyan veterans who adopted guerrilla warfare tactics in their fight against a more formidable enemy.

Military service and overseas experiences "broadened the perspectives" of African soldiers.[30] They developed political consciousness, an awareness of the colonial order, and a desire to decolonize African countries. The experience fostered a sense of national identity and service, a sense of belonging to a territory. During their time in service, soldiers developed deep ties with people of African descent, leading to strong Pan-African sentiments and a desire for the decolonization of African countries. For instance, Waruhiu Itote, later the "General of China," recalled the first time he thought of his identity as a Kenyan in 1943, which happened in the Kalewa trenches on the Burma front after having a conversation with a British soldier.[31] An English soldier there challenged Itote: "I don't understand you Africans who are out there fighting."[32] The English soldier explained that he was "fighting to preserve his culture and British independence, and even if he died in the war, he would die for his own country." [33] A week later, the Briton was killed, away from home. Itote always remembered the British soldier's words: "What he'd told me never left my mind."[34] Wartime service provided young men like Waruhiu Itote with new experiences and opportunities. Yet, folks like Itote were continuously reminded of the old and new grievances, which encouraged them to challenge colonial dominance. The sense of nationalism was so strong that Itote rejected a promotion to "sergeant" and instead opted to help with the liberation movement's military training program.[35]

In addition to their interactions with British soldiers, some Kenyan soldiers serving overseas encountered African American troops, from whom they also learned political consciousness and an awareness of the colonial order. The narrative of pan-African sentiment promoted the idea that Americans and African soldiers had something in common. Waruhiu Itote's autobiography confirmed "the conversations and meetings between soldiers of African descent and the sentiments of pan-Africanism." Itote and Bildad Kaggia described how their conversations with African Americans instilled a sense of national consciousness and identity.[36]

Many African veterans of the war have fond memories of India, as Indians and Africans fought alongside each other. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Indian decolonization movement inspired Africans in

turn. Some recalled meeting Gandhi, who spoke of Indian support for Africa.[37] Although some historians argue that India's wave of national consciousness hardly inspired the African soldiers, their interaction with Indians and the nationalist movement during their time of service in India must have influenced their consciousness. The interaction between the African soldiers and Asian nationalists spread political consciousness among the African soldiers in India. Israel M. Adrienne's informants shared that they met and chatted with Indian and Burmese "intellectuals." Medu Fulani recalled meeting the Burmese but did not understand what they shared.[38] Nigerian ex-soldiers recounted having heard Gandhi speaking in Madrassa; later, the Nigerian soldiers wrote letters to their families happily sharing how Mahatma Gandhi had treated them respectfully. In fact, the British were concerned about the effect a prolonged stay in the region could have on the Africans. The British military restricted communication between African and Indian troops to prevent Indian political "infectiousness" from inspiring African soldiers.[39]

At the same time, Africans perceived Indians negatively. African soldiers from Natal and East Africa, familiar with Indians living in their neighborhood, considered Indians idle and poor. Ghanaian ex-servicemen on the battlefield in India were "shocked at the poverty they saw in the Indian cities of Bombay, Calcutta, and Cairo."[40] The African soldiers experienced antagonism from Indian shopkeepers who refused to serve them. "Letters from the ex-soldiers in India seeking repatriation of Asian migrants" confirmed the rift that existed between the African soldiers and the Indians.[41]

The dynamics were indeed complicated. An Indian soldier named "Dreamer" Signaller, championed the "African Continental Union" in his writings.[42] Seeking to instill in veterans a sense of African unity, he proposed the formation of the Pan-African movement, which would unite people of African descent to support decolonization efforts and African welfare. In this context, the ex-soldiers deliberated on a united Africa, fostering a stronger sense of African identity than ever before. Sylvia Leith-Ross indicated in a "memoir that some British soldiers shaped the African soldiers' perception of the superiority of the Europeans."[43]On the one hand, African soldiers across the continent encountered "racial discrimination" in the military from the Indian and British soldiers.[44] On the other hand, they also encountered "non-xenophobic Europeans" who changed their perceptions of white supremacy.[45]

Literate soldiers, meanwhile, found their aspirations evolving due to information material supplied by the Army Bureau of Current Affairs (ABCA). Initially, "official" groups organized by chaplains and interested officers avoided political discussions as the group leaders sought to guide the interpretation of books and magazines sent to the African soldiers.[46] These materials were vetted, but it was impossible to control the minds of the soldiers completely. In the Middle East, various types of literature circulated among African soldiers. At the culmination of the war in 1945, the veterans discussed radical ideas, including political issues such as colonialism and the political future of Africa.

The significance of outside influences was not always clear. For example, Killingray downplays the role of Americans in stirring a sense of political consciousness in African soldiers on the battlefield. He argues instead that radical British officers and Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs), who served part-time, played a crucial role in "stirring a sense of political consciousness," denying the importance of Asian and African American inspiration claimed by earlier writers.[47] Be that as it may, wartime experiences and interactions with Indians, African Americans, and other African soldiers had a significant impact on the Kenyan soldiers who fought in the Second World War. Perhaps unsurprisingly, these ideas were consciously channeled toward militant nationalism in Kenya.

Ex-Soldiers and the Armed Struggle

Ex-soldiers' expectations of a hero's welcome and recognition after their military service were mere fantasy. The ex-combatants expressed "disappointment" after some of them were denied pensions and gratuities and asked to return to their "tribal life."[48] They were dismayed to find that the lives of Kenyans had steadily worsened while they were away, feeling the full brunt of colonial exploitation. The veteran Bildad Kaggia, shared his changed perception of European superiority after the war: "We who served in World War II had evidence that the Europeans were just like us; we saw them being killed in the war and working in every job we did."[49] Kaggia explained that after "having risked their lives to help free Europe from fascism, African soldiers came home to their countries and were shocked to face colonial oppression."[50] For instance, returning soldiers were denied passes and the right to vote, and the wounded

soldiers were not paid their pensions and gratuities. Eusebio Mbiuki, an ex-soldier who enlisted in 1944 and served in Burma, returned home demoralized because he was not paid his gratuity.[51] According to Kaggia, he received the same pay as whites of the same rank while serving abroad. He was shocked on his return to Kenya that black soldiers were underpaid in comparison to white soldiers. Disillusioned to find Kenya still a "white man's country," with three thousand European families owning more land in the Kenya Highland, some veterans rebelled against the colonial government.[52] They were also angered at the fact that some established small businesses, where they reasonably expected to find employment, lacked sufficient capital to compete in the market. Mrs. Fane, a Nairobian, rightly noted that the "Asians had taken the jobs that the returning soldiers could have occupied."[53]

Veterans from the Kikuyu community, where most of the settlers had taken the land, had no option but to join the rebellion seeking to liberate their land..[54] The loss of large tracts of land in the highlands to white settlement turned the residents of Kikuyu into the leading adversaries of the colonial regime. Ngugi wa Thiongo's novel *Weep Not, Child* offers a classic model of "the alienated and rootless Kikuyu veterans in the character of Boro, a young ex-soldier who despised his father's advice and joined the Mau Mau and murdered his Chief and District Commissioner."[55] The Kiyuku veterans joined the ranks of unemployed youth in Nairobi, forming a "resistance movement" that later evolved into the Mau Mau uprising.[56]

The returning soldiers demanded an "equitable distribution of land" since they had learned to challenge colonial authority and utilize violence to meet their demands.[57] Mau Mau field commanders, such as Waruhiu Itote and Stanley Mathenge, utilized their combat experiences to organize Mau Mau units, modeling them after the structure of the King's African Rifles. Other ex-servicemen, such as Karigo Muchai and Dedan Kimathi, brought "military expertise from their service in units like the East African Service Corps and as army hygiene instructors, respectively."[58] Once a soldier is always a soldier; Dedan Kimathi, revered in the history of Kenya's independence, briefly served as a sweeper in the East African Military Labour Corps before being dismissed from the military. Kimathi's resilience and perseverance earned him lasting respect as a true nationalist and defender of Kenya's freedom.

Some ex-soldiers, such as Gakaara wa Wangau, a member of the KAR

who joined the military after being expelled from Alliance High School, sought to find a political outlet for their discontent. After interacting with soldiers from different parts of the metropole, Gakaara realized that although the "black people were shedding blood for the British cause," the British persistently treated them as enslaved people.[59] Gaakara wa Wanjau and some ex-soldiers, including Bildad Kaggia, Paul Joseph Ngei, and Waruhiu Itote, joined the Kenya African Union (KAU) in 1947, hoping it would be more militant under Kenyatta's leadership. Kaggia's hopes were shattered when he realized that "Kenyatta's meetings always aroused people, but KAU, as an organization, had little success; it was lifeless."[60] Cristiana Pugliese argues that the KAU was transformed by the "vibrant radical nationalists" and that a conscious generation different from older people captured leadership positions.[61] The older generation could not comprehend the youthful generation's political demands and concerns, believing that "ex-servicemen" had lost direction.[62] Meanwhile, the former soldiers raised awareness among the masses, encouraging them to participate in the anti-colonial movement. The radicalized nationalists controlled the Nairobi branch of the KAU and transformed its youthful participants into active militants, which led to conflict between moderates and radicals within KAU throughout 1951–952.

Historian Timothy Parson appreciated the "influence and intellectual skills" of Second World War veterans, which were vital in the liberation movement.[63] Notably, the ex-soldiers Gaakara wa Wanjau and Bildad Kaggia emphasized the importance of reclaiming African cultural identity and the liberation struggle through writing. Gakara promoted "Roho ya Kiume na Bidii kwa Mwafrika" (Male Spirit of Manhood and Perseverance for Africans), writings that emphasized self-determination and inspired individuals to take an active role in the struggle for independence.[64] In 1951, Gakaara published his work of fiction, *Ngwenda Unjurage* (I Want You to Kill Me), and in 1952, published a political creed modeled on the Christian Creed. Gakaara's "political writings" led to his arrest and detention on October 20, 1952, at the Kajiado, Manda Island, and Tawka detention camps when the state of emergency was declared.[65] He was among the first ex-soldiers arrested and detained alongside the *Kapenguria Six*, a term used to refer to the initial six political leaders arrested on the accusation of being involved in the Mau Mau uprising. Initially, they were detained at Kapenguria.

The writings of ex-soldiers fostered a sense of pride, intellectualism,

unity, and resilience among the Kenyan people as they endured the liberation struggle. Additionally, ex-soldiers contributed to the intellectual discourse surrounding independence, motivating individuals to challenge colonial narratives of Western education. Kaggia's and other ex-veterans' writings, like those of John Gatu, an editor of *Mumenyereri*, "The Giguyu National Bi-weekly," articulated the injustices of colonial rule. Through writing articles, speeches, and pamphlets, Kaggia highlighted the "economic exploitation, social discrimination, and disenfranchisement experienced by Kenyans under colonial rule."[66] Veteran's writings exposed the injustices of land dispossession, forced labor, and racial segregation, thereby galvanizing support for the anti-colonial struggle. Bildad Kaggia advocated for armed struggle. He confessed to having strangled a "traitor" in a taxi in 1951, manifesting resentment and rebellion against the colonial government in Kenya.[67] He was convinced about the need to liberate Kenyan minds. After discovering fundamentalist Protestantism, Kaagia denounced the Orthodox Church, which he associated with "Europeans."[68] For Kaggia and Waruhiu Itote, the army brought growth and change, ending with a dedication to resist colonialism. "In my enthusiasm, I felt charged by God to liberate Kenya, just like Moses was commanded to liberate the Israelites from the Egyptians in bondage."[69] Kaggia drew the colonial government's attention because of his religious activities and radicalization. He was arrested four times to answer to charges of belonging to an outlawed group.

Donald Barnett's account of the Mau Mau argues that "cosmological beliefs" were significant to the growth of the movement, wherein the oath-takers swore their commitment to "God" (Ngai) and allegiance to Mau Mau leaders.[70] "The oath-taking ceremony reflected commitment and readiness to support and serve the Mau Mau movement," he notes.[71] Mau Mau administered oaths of allegiance, "forcing the youth to declare support for Mau Mau's activities."[72] Cofield argues that oaths taken in the Kikuyu community instilled "power, discipline, cohesion, and loyalty among Mau Mau fighters for land and freedom."[73] By pledging loyalty to the cause and swearing oaths of secrecy and solidarity, individuals strengthened their dedication to the enduring support of the Mau Mau movement and a commitment to remain loyal to Mau Mau even when facing interrogation by the security forces.

Ex-soldiers "utilized their military experience to train skills in guerrilla warfare tactics and ideologies, transforming them into Mau Mau

fighters."[74] The training process enabled the Mau Mau to resist police intimidation and torture as they retreated to Mount Kenya and the Aberdare Range. The Mau Mau recruits employed "guerrilla warfare tactics," such as "camouflaging" similar to army training drills and military training. Mau Mau diehards secretly staged attacks on the white settlers and the colonial loyalists, employing intelligence and ambush skills in retaliatory attacks on the white settlers, the security forces, and the Kikuyu loyalists. Unsurprisingly, Mau Mau leaders who served during "World War II in Southeast Asia leveraged military experiences to organize and lead troops in the forest of Kenya."[75] Although the veterans did not adhere to strict military guidelines during the Mau Mau rebellion, they employed British military ranks and titles, such as marshal, general, colonel, and lieutenant. Throughout, they instilled strict discipline acquired during military training. Elkins noted that the Mau Mau Special Branch engaged in various clandestine activities that included "intelligence gathering, sabotage," providing "firearms" and "supplies to the forest fighters."[76]

Despite facing arrest and detention, the veterans became more resilient in the struggle for land and freedom. Even though Kenyatta did not support violence as a means of decolonizing Kenya, the Kikuyu women who had joined the Mau Mau movement declared Kenyatta a "Martyr" who would save them from colonial oppression.[77] Mary Nyambura, like the adulterous woman brought before Jesus Christ, shared her dream about Jomo Kenyatta "liberating her from the colonial district officer who was scolding her and forcing her to work on the plantation."[78] Elsewhere, Hunja Njuki thought Kenyatta was the leader fighting to give her "the rightful share of land," while Magayu Kiama believed "Kenyatta would destroy the local chiefs."[79]

In detention, political prisoners managed to find time for political discussions. The pipeline of Mau Mau detainees transformed the experience of exile into a classroom for anti-colonial politics and planning future actions. The political detainees discussed the imbalances of colonial administration, the hypocrisies of loyalists, rewards, and the need for land legislation free from colonial self-interest. Eric Kamau, a political detainee at Athi River, narrated their political plans: "We were planning to take over the country and implement the ideas we were putting together in the camps after our release from detention."[80] The detainees were indeed a threat to the British trusteeship in Kenya. The Kapenguria

captives, believed to have been the hardcore masterminds of Mau Mau, were securely locked up in the desert of Lokitaung. It was there that Judge Thacker convicted the Kapenguria six for employing their "power and influence to manipulate the less educated Africans, a scheme meant to drive the Europeans out of Kenya."[81]

Kenya's New Dawn: The Realization of Independence

A rocky and violent journey marked Kenya's path to independence. Historian Branch Daniel notes that under Lennox Boyd's constitution, "Africans and European settlers similarly retained 14 elective legislative seats, while 2 Arabs represented the coastal region."[82] However, the 1957 constitutional amendment increased African representation in the legislative council. "The Kenyans were given a Paltry eight parliamentary representatives, which Africans were allowed to contest."[83] It was the first time Africans in Kenya participated in electoral politics, and it emerged as a pivotal moment in Kenya's march toward independence. Jaramogi Oginga Odinga and Tom Mboya spearheaded a campaign that promised not to assume office until Jomo Kenyatta was released from detention. Their pledge resonated with Kenyans, leading to Kanu's resounding victory over KADU in the first general elections held in Kenya involving Africans. Kenyatta received the news of impending independence with anticipation while in detention at Lodwar. Tom Mboya, Oginga Odinga, and KANU-elected parliament members negotiated for the release of political detainees, especially Jomo Kenyatta.

Josiah M. Kariuki's memoir sheds light on the experiences of detainees in the fight for land and freedom. Kariuki advocated for the "pleas," "rights," and "complaints" of political detainees to be respected.[84] The Hola Camp massacre of 1959 not only gave rise to an exhaustive report but also provided answers to many questions in Parliament. Based in the rhetoric of the Declaration of Human Rights, international jurists pressured the British colonial government over the "death of the eleven detainees of the Hola Massacre." The event drew the attention of the global community, who pressured the British to grant emancipation to Kenya.[85] Prior to his death in 1975, Eliud Mutonyi, the chairman of Mau Mau Central Committee, narrated the horror of the Hola Massacre on March 3, 1959. The "echoes of agony" and "ghastly screams of detainees"

tortured to death by the security forces remained firmly "etched in the memory" of Mutonyi.[86] Mutonyi constantly dreamt of Hola's horrors of torture and beatings even after being released from detention. The Red Cross doctor working at the dispensary at Hola, "traumatized by the battered bodies of Mau Mau diehards," could hardly control his tears at the sight of buttered bodies.[87] The doctor and an assisting nurse rescued the living veterans, but were disheartened that they could not treat the dead bodies. Ultimately, "The report from the Red Cross doctor and the nurse confirmed that the cause of the homicide of the eleven Mau Mau diehards was a result of torture and beatings in detention camps."[88] The British government was embarrassed, and the public was shocked at the murder of detainees by the wardens. Hola Massacre investigations and discoveries marked the end of the "State of Emergency in Kenya in November 1959" and hastened the process of Kenyan independence.[89] The arrival of Iain Macleod, the new colonial secretary, and Sir Patrick Renison, the new governor, augured change and reinforced the "new thinking," allowing Kenyans to put "the darkness behind us."[90] Kenyatta and other political detainees who had been in detention for their involvement in the Mau Mau uprising were released from custody as part of the transition to independence.

Macleod and Renison provided a "path for Jomo Kenyatta's dignified presence at the dawn of December 12, 1963," which marked the inauguration of a new era.[91] Kenyatta became Kenya's first president, in the "culmination of decades of struggle and the birth of a sovereign nation."[92]

The formation of the nation was clear-cut in the minds of radical historians, but the reality was more complicated. Kenyatta's administration assured the "British loyalists" and "white settlers" that his administration would forgive the injustices of the past and would not confiscate their land.[93] In Nakuru Kenyatta encouraged the white settlers to continue farming in Kenya. Despite the assurance by the founding fathers, "thousands of white settlers headed to South Africa where apartheid policies had segregated the people of color, [while] some Kenyan white settlers went to Britain."[94] The birth of the new nation, it turned out, presented "contradictions" and "ambivalences" the freedom fighters did not expect.[95]

Conclusion

At the independence of Kenya on December 12, 1963, the elites and loyalists were portrayed as the shepherds the nation's freedom. Yet, both external and internal factors catalyzed the decolonization process in Kenya, with the ex-soldiers playing a crucial role in the political reawakening of the masses. The interconnectedness of the ex-soldiers was pivotal for the rise of mass nationalism and the decolonization of Kenya. The support of veterans and the collective resilience, determination, and solidarity of the Kenyan people at home and abroad ultimately ushered in a new era of sovereignty. Ironically, the ex-soldiers and Mau Mau adherents were demoralized after Kenya gained independence. Despite their sacrifices, Mau Mau veterans were hardly employed by the new government. They were denied the opportunity to serve in the military and police forces because of suspicion by the Kenyatta regime. While postcolonial nationalism presented the nation as a sanctified entity that could not be questioned or contested, the postcolonial government contested the memory of the "Mau Mau as the narrative of liberation," the "consciousness of the nation's truths in the face of the colonial attack."[96] In the postcolonial period, a new narrative of liberation—Uhuru—emerged, replacing the focus on land and freedom. The Mau Mau narratives were declared outlawed in Kenya up to forty years after independence. It is therefore high time that we recognize the key role of Second World War veterans in fostering national consciousness and in forming the liberation movements that led to decolonization.

Notes

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2 Ibid., 501–26.

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4 Caroline Elkins, *Imperial Reckoning*: *The Untold Story of Brittain's Gulag in Kenya* (New York: Henry Holt Press, 2005), 24.

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7 Chima Korieh, *Nigeria and World War II: Colonialism, Empire and Global Conflict* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020).
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26 Ibid., 93.
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32 Ibid., 9–10.
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34 Ibid., 10.
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36 Ibid.
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44 Killingray and Plaut, *Fighting for Britain*, 210.
45 Leith-Ross, *Stepping-Stones*, 116.
46 Killingray and Plaut, *Fighting for Britain*, 211. The authors confirmed the connection of African soldiers to their home countries during the Second World War. The soldiers read leveraged magazines, including *Chaplain was a Jungle Wallah*, by Moses Danquah, a writer for *Ghanaian World Magazine*, January 1–February (1959), 33–39.
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53 Fane, "The Returning Soldiers," 58.
54 Itote, *"Mau Mau" General 1922–1993*, 4, 30.
55 Monthly Report of the CEB, 5 June 1946, KNA, DEF 10/41/26; Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Weep Not, Child* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1989).
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57 Ibid., 232.
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76 Elkins, *Imperial Reckoning*, 37–38.
77 Ibid., 36.
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92 Ibid., 255.
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Afterword

Melvin E. Page

The works collected in this volume demonstrate that by the mid-twentieth century, colonialism had become a pervasive, schizophrenic, and yet unequal burden placed on Africans across the length and breadth of their vast continent. This is clearly illustrated in considering the impact of the two world wars on African societies. These essays—some individually, but certainly when considered collectively—establish the importance of the First and Second World Wars for Africans. The first war brought modern military conflict to the continent and moreover sent many thousands of African soldiers far from their homes in defense of empires that had subjugated their peoples, often not too many years before. This practice actually "began in Asia and America during the Seven Years' War of the mid-eighteenth century and by 1918 became the final defence not just of empires, but of European nations themselves."[1] That scenario was then replicated a mere twenty years later.

This was especially true of the French Empire, whose formation of a *force noire* led to Africans being sent to France on three occasions: first, reinforcing a faltering army in the homeland during the German invasion in 1914, doing so again twenty-five years later, and finally joining Charles de Gaulle in liberating a conquered France. Some in the British defense establishment similarly argued that a colonial "African army should be created parallel to, or as a replacement for, the Indian Army."[2] That idea, however, met with a great deal of opposition, and Britain steadfastly refused to send Africans en masse to engage in battle on the European continent, even during the darkest days of the 1940s Battle of Britain and in the liberation of the continent which followed. Still, in 1916, the British Empire had called upon Africans for associated, noncombatant labor service, with more than twenty thousand recruits from across southern Africa sent to France as part of the South African Native Labour Contingent. Though never pressed into combat, many of their number faced the rigors of war on both land and sea with unexpected, yet still significant, casualties.

Such service was not the only irony of the fraught history of Africa during the global conflicts of the twentieth century. Africans were not only fighting *for* European empires, they were also engaged in military actions *against* them. The obvious symptom of this duality was the employment of African soldiers by the principal European adversaries as they opposed each other in both major wars. Thus, Africans were embroiled in combat against other Africans, in battles that sought to maintain imperialism on the continent! But in at least three cases, indigenous African armies—trying to preserve their independence from external imperial control—were also fighting directly against Africans serving in European colonial forces.

Two of these circumstances are touched on in essays offered in this book. Ethiopia, unwaveringly independent under Lij Iyasu, emperor designate since 1911, toyed with a German and Ottoman alliance, as well as participating in the anti-imperial efforts of Sayid Maxamed Cabdulle Xasan (more widely known as Muhammed ibn ʻAbdallāh Hassan, but disparagingly referred to by the British as the Mad Mullah). Although Iyasu was deposed—with British and Italian connivance—scarcely a decade later, an Italian invasion threatened the country's independence. Unfortunately, "Ethiopia lacked the military and industrial technology to fight a modern war, and more importantly, the administrative and logistical support to back it."[3] An Italian victory was thus assured. Meanwhile, the fiercely independent Daraawish movement of Muhammed Abdullah, had been engaged in protecting its independence for more than a decade before the outbreak of the Great War. Then, with Ethiopia defeated and European nations focused on one another, Muhammed Abdulla sent his followers to attack both the British and Italians, who were each threatening their independence. Only after the 1918 armistice, however, were the British at last successful in defeating them, while the new regent of Ethiopia, Ras Tafari, proved unwilling to provide sufficient support to sustain Daraawish independence.

Another independent Islamic movement (though not discussed in these essays) was the Senussi Islamic order in North Africa, which was fighting to maintain its independence during the same period. "By the dawn of the First World War, the Sanussi had already been involved in years of hard fighting," primarily against Italian forces intent on establishing an imperial colony in Cyrenaica. Germany, seeking to strike at British colonial interests, enlisted the Senussi to invade nearby Egypt by providing

arms and other support. Eager to defeat colonialism at all costs, Sanussi forces advanced into Egypt, making "proclamations for the direction of resistance issued in the name 'al-Hakuma al-Sanusiyya', the Sanussi Government."[4] British troops—few if any of them African—successfully turned back the threat.

A few Africans also found themselves pressed into colonial military service elsewhere in the Islamic world during the First World War, with a Nigerian contingent sent to defend British colonial claims in Mesopotamia, while other Africans were engaged in Palestine. And of course, during the Second World War, Africans also found themselves in similar colonial military service, recruited as drivers for the extensive convoys required to defeat Axis armies in protracted warfare across North African deserts. Many others were deployed further afield, with mainland African troops serving in Madagascar, Ceylon, India, and Southeast Asia. Notable among the latter were the King's African Rifles regiments, which were committed to jungle warfare in Burma against the Imperial Japanese Army. There are numerous other examples—some of them discussed in these essays—of Africans more than grudgingly accepting service out of a sense of duty to defend colonial institutions originally created to subjugate their own peoples. Even a few Ethiopians, after the Italian conquest of the 1930s, were recruited to defend the new Italian administration.

Such wartime deployments occasionally prompted African protest, though perhaps none as profound as John Chilembwe's unsuccessful 1915 attempt to launch his own anti-colonial war in Nyasaland, in major part due to his objection to Africans being recruited for service during the First World War. Yet neither his nor any of the other protests fundamentally altered the trajectory of continuing military service on the continent. Another worldwide war merely increased calls—from northwest to southeast across the continent—for African participation. And nothing served to alter other established colonial dynamics in Africa, especially as Europe, along with its subject peoples, twice shifted into a wartime economy, particularly after 1939, as articles in this collection illustrate. Localized economic warfare of a popular sort also put Africans in a position of fighting *against* the manifestations of imperial control within the colonies that were their homes, even as their countrymen in Europe created armies that fought *for* the same imperial overlords.

There can be little doubt that the ironies of fighting with the various empires were evident to Africans involved in those conflicts. By the end of the Second World War, particularly, such realizations brought to the fore a sense of increased expectation, if not entitlement, in shaping their own futures. Such demands became increasingly urgent, especially for those directly called upon to defend the French metropole; by the 1940s, similar anticipation had grown exponentially across the continent. While it is easy to suppose that those expectations alone gave rise to the wave of independence demands that swept the continent in the second half of the twentieth century, it is foolhardy to reach such a conclusion without clear evidence—best drawn from African testimony—in each specific case. Indeed, these essays also make clear the value of seeking out such African voices; that, surely, is one of the key conclusions to be drawn from the carefully presented historical works here.

Notes

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The First and Second World Wars were pivotal events in modern global history. Although colonial empires were involuntarily drawn into both global conflicts, most studies of the World Wars have given scant attention to the contributions of colonial societies or the wars' profound impact on their populations. This pervasive neglect of the significant role played by European colonies on behalf of the Allies is not only historically problematic but also hinders our comprehensive understanding of these wars and their broader impact on humanity. Adopting a global intellectual history lens, this volume examines the influence of African societies and ideas on these two major global conflicts. In doing so, it expands the historiography of both World Wars by offering fundamental new insights. The essays in this collection explore various themes related to both wars and societies within the empire, with a focus on the African experience and its intersection with European empires, colonialism, race, economy, and global conflagrations.

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This anthology evidences the crucial place of Africa in understanding the World Wars, as it adeptly closes the gaps in the historiography of the major global conflicts of the 20th century and explores African agency through the intersection of politics, colonialism, imperial ambitions, and African experience.
Apollos O Nwauwa, Bowling Green State University

This volume provides rare insights into Africans' responses to the two major global wars and their impacts on colonial subjects. The focus on ordinary people, their human and material sacrifices, and the sense of loyalty shared by the colonized and the colonizers is a welcome addition to the WWI and WWI historiographies.
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