

Background to the Annexation of Cameroon, 1875-1885

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1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this research is to determine, through private and official letters, minutes and memoranda of conversations, treaties and actions, the roles played by missionaries, traders, officials, chiefs and natives of the Cameroon coast in the events that led up to the scramble for and the annexation of the coastal district of Cameroon in 1884. Special emphasis will be given to missionary sources since missionaries were more numerous, more widely spread, settled in remoter areas, tended to live longer in their stations, wrote home frequently, and had a more adequate knowledge of the territory than did traders and officials. In addition, missionaries were good informants because they tended to write about everything in their territories, commerce, evangelism, education, politics — many of their letters being published in missionary journals in whole or in extracts. It is hoped that this attempt to piece together and analyse information from relatively unutilized sources will give us a better understanding of the story of the annexation of Cameroon.

The period 1875 to 1885 can justifiably be described as one of transition in the history of Cameroon, between the eradication of the overseas slave trade from along the Cameroon's coast and the slow but effective establishment of legitimate commerce; between tribal independence and colonial rule. It was during this transition that « new » Europeans with a sense of their own attribute, determined as missionaries and teachers to

teach, to civilize, to convert and to open up Africa for development, or as business-men and speculators to explore, exploit and export were arriving the Cameroon coast in increasing numbers. (While the missionaries were inspired by genuine idealism and did valuable evangelical and educational work among the inhabitants, commercial men were spurred by profits). Both groups included individuals from various European nations, particularly Britain, France and Germany. Tensions aroused by the activities of these Europeans, coupled with their strong sense of patriotism, led to pressure in the 1880s for annexation of the district by a European power which would take control of the activities there and maintain peace and order. By 1883 the scramble for annexation along the coast had begun. In 1885 it was already clear to the British and the French that the Germans were the victors and were the power to be in the Cameroon coast and its eventual hinterland. 1875 to 1885 in the history of Cameroon may be said to be a period during which the three important European powers took stock of their activities in the « Cameroon District », appreciated the need for annexation, and together began to scramble for it.

« Cameroon » is of Portuguese origin meaning « prawns » which the Portuguese found in the Cameroon estuary and named it Rio dos Cameroes. Later, in the nineteenth century, the native settlements of Douala on the river were known as « Cameroon », and the mountain behind ambas Bay as the « Cameroon Mountain ». To avoid any confusion in the use of names, all settlements or villages referred to in the nineteenth century as « Cameroons », unless quoted, will be called by their tribal or present names. The name « Cameroon District » will be used to refer to the entire Cameroon coast from Rio del Rey on the Cameroon-Nigeria boundary in the west to the campo river on the Cameroon-Rio Muni boundary in the south. « Cameroon » will be used to designate the modern state of Cameroon.

The Cameroon District is topographically divided into the coastal swamps and the thick rainy forests. The climate is

very warm and very humid, and the entire district, except for the mountain region, abound with malaria-carrying mosquitoes which were responsible for the high death rate among early Europeans to the Cameroon District. The territory is traversed here and there by streams and rivers, a few of them navigable for a few miles inland. The heavy forests behind the swamps and coastal villages were not easily penetrable and, as Rudin observes, barred the way for the first white traders into the interior, « proving a powerful ally to the native monopolists who wanted to confine whites to their trade on the coast ».¹

The Cameroon Mountain rises sharply on the west of the coastal region to a commanding height of 13,370 feet. The mountain climate is cool and misty, and the annual rainfall is high. It is known to be the healthiest climate in the whole of the West Coast of Africa. The mountain is of volcanic origin (last active in 1958) and the rich soil, together with the moderate climate, is suitable for cultivating European vegetables and for rearing cattle for meat, milk, cheese and butter. In 1901 the German Governor Von Puttkamer built their colonial capital at Buea, 3,000 feet on the slopes of the mountain.

The villages and settlements of *Bota*, *Victoria*, *Tiko*, *Douala*, *Batanga* and *Campo*, are located along the Atlantic seaboard of the Cameroon District (some 250 miles long) and were important ports and centres of trade in the nineteenth century. Of these Douala and Victoria (in the 1860s) contained larger European populations and were head-stations for most European firms in the District. The two towns also had better anchorage, were served by many waterways, were closer to and influenced by the mountain climate, and had a cluster of villages in their immediate neighbourhoods. The natives of Douala were the most active middlemen of the Cameroon District, dominating native and foreign trade.

1. H.R. Rudin, *Germans in the Cameroon, 1884-1914* (New Haven, 1938), p. 103.

At the beginning of the 19th century the indigenous society of Duala was united under one king, *king Bell*. By 1814 Bell had lost the hegemony of Duala, when *Akwa*, the head of a large lineage in the kingdom, defected and set himself up as king. Other lineages soon followed suit, declaring themselves as chiefdoms. By the beginning of the 1840s there were already two kingdoms and three chiefdoms in Duala, namely, *Bonanjo* (Bell), *Bonaku* (Akwa), *Bonabela* (Deido), *Bonabéri* (Hicory), and *Bonapriso* (Joss). It appears that at this time the importance of kings and chiefs among their peoples was determined by their wealth, their role in the local trade, and the support they obtained from white traders and European officials.²

Europeans became increasingly active on the Cameroon coast from the 1840s following the signing of a series of treaties between British officials and various kings and chiefs of the Cameroon District abolishing slave trade and human sacrifices, prohibiting the removal of slaves and other persons whatever from the District into any country, and encouraging legitimate commerce. Most of these treaties were undertaken by commanders of British cruisers patrolling the coast and supervising the abolition of slave trade in the Bight of Biafra and Fernando Po. Some were undertaken by traders. In March 1840, British merchants trading to the Cameroon coast entered into agreement with kings Bell and Akwa that no trader, master, mate or any part of the crew of any vessel would be molested, and that the English factory at Duala and all property in it would receive special protection from chiefs and natives.³ They also agreed that in case of the death of any

2. See Annual Report of the Baptist Missionary Society 1879, p. 102 where George Grenfell describes the styling of kings and chiefs by white traders and European treaty makers Also, Consul Burton to Earl Russel, April 15, 1864, F.O. 2/45, Read, Edwin Ardener, *Coastal Bantu of the Cameroons* (London, 1956), pp. 18-20 and 79-80, chieftaincy in Duala.

3. Agreement with kings Bell and Akwa, March 18 1840, *Hertslet's commercial Treaties*, VII, 1850, pp. 4-5.

trader all trust given out by him must be paid to the person succeeding him.

In June 1840 the kings of Duala declared their readiness to give up slave trade and to report the presence of slave vessels in their areas, if the British Government gave them an annual stipend of 60 muskets, 100 pieces of cloth, 2 barrels of powder, 2 puncheons of rum, 1 scarlet coat with epaulettes, and 1 sword.⁴ In 1841 Lt. Commander W.S. Blount of the Steam-vessel « Pluto » formerly signed treaties with king Bell and king Akwa accepting their declarations.⁵ A year later the British declared that should it appear at any time, or be discovered, « that Slave Trade has existed, the presents will in such case be discontinued », and the kings « will incur the severe displeasure of Great Britain, by whom the slave trade will be put down by force ».⁶ *Captain William Allen* of H.M.S. « Wilberforce » also signed treaties with several chiefs in the Cameroon District in 1842. In a dispatch reporting on the treaties, Captain Allen informed that lawful trade was increasing and that the chiefs and people of the Cameroon District were occupied with the palm oil trade.⁷ He advised that the interference of the Government would be very salutary as it would establish the regulation of trade and offer protection to both the merchants against the extortion of the natives, and the natives against the arbitrary proceedings of whites. Captain Allen praised the climate of the mountain region which « soon restored » the crew of H. M. S. *Wilberforce* to health. They had hastened to Amba Bay for safety after fresh cases of fever occurred in the ship. Following these treaties, Europeans began to settle permanently and to establish closer contact with the natives of the Cameroon District.

4. Declaration of Kings Akwa and Bell, June 10, 1840, *Ibid.*, p. 6.

5. Treaty with King Bell, May 7, 1841, *Ibid.* pp.19-20. Treaty with King Akwa (sic) May 7, 1841, *Ibid.*, pp. 21-22.

6. British Declaration, April 25, 1842, *Ibid.*, p. 20.

7. Copy of a dispatch from Her Majesty's Commissioners of the Expedition to the Niger to Lord Stanley, 19th May 1842, *British Parliamentary Papers, Colonies Africa*, 1840-47 63, (I.U.P.): p. 61; *Treaties with Kings Bell and Akwa* on pp. 62-63.

In 1844 Rev. Joseph Merrick, a black Jamaican of the English Baptist Mission at Fernando Po, crossed the Cameroon channel and arrived at Bimbia where he opened the Cameroon station and school in Cameroon. A year later the first European settlement was started at Duala by the English Baptist Missionaries on the initiative of Rev. Alfred Saker. This Duala settlement was attached to the native town and was an outstation for missionaries and other Europeans whose property were still at Fernando Po. A second and more permanent settlement again initiated by Saker in June 1858, was sited on the sheltered Ambas Bay, Bimbia territory, at the foot of the Cameroon Mountain. The settlement was named Victoria. The founding of Victoria was necessitated by the occupation of Fernando Po by the Spanish authorities and the expulsion of Protestant missions from the island in favour of Roman Catholicism. It appears that the BMS missionaries wanted to establish an independent settlement, on land purchased and owned by them,⁸ which would become the new headquarters of their West African Mission. With the founding of Victoria a number of other peripheral hamlets were established and grew, as the missionary settlement began to offer trade opportunities and employment for natives. Saker was enchanted with Victoria which he saw in his mind as a sanatorium and also as « a centre of freedom, of light, of education, and of commerce. »⁹

The majority of the inhabitants of Victoria came from Fernando Po and included missionaries, traders and liberated slaves and their families. (Some of these ex-slaves were later to serve as local missionaries and school teachers, and solicitor for British protection). The Victoria township grew as more liberated slaves were settled and traders built shops and factories

8. A copy of an Agreement between Saker and Chiefs of Bimbia, August 6, 1862, in which King William and chief Isubu acknowledge receipt of a new house built by Saker as a completion of the payment for territory and district known as Ambas Bay, is to be found in Box A/6 BMS Archives.

9. E.B. Underhill, Alfred Saker, A Biography (London, 1884), p. 93.

and employed the natives. Although the township was disappointingly slow to grow during the first five years of its establishment (just over 40 adults and an equal number of children in 1862), the settlement eventually attracted inhabitants from the surrounding villages. Victoria became a new home for the Baptist Mission in West Africa, and a sort of « Freetown » or « Libreville », as the missionaries continued to accept and resettle liberated slaves brought there by British men-of-war, or by slavers caught by British authorities and ordered to surrender their slaves to the senior missionary.¹⁰ But Duala (an older settlement and larger township with many business opportunities) attracted more settlers than did Victoria. Consul Burton estimated that there were from 150 to 200 white businessmen in Duala in 1863, and that the number may have doubled from February to July 1864, the export season along this length of the coast.¹¹

Through the late 1850s and early 1860s, administrative institutions were evolved at both Duala and Victoria to maintain law and order and regulate trade. In Duala in 1856, a *Court of Equity* (a sort of international court) was set up to handle all commercial and related disputes between black and white merchants. Membership of the Court initially was composed of white and native traders, supercargoes, and chiefs, but eventually reduced to one supercargo belonging to each house in the river and four kings and chiefs representing native traders.¹² The British Consul who resided at Fernando Po was the final authority. The Court sat monthly, but could be summoned at any time in special cases. The chairmanship of the Court rotated among supercargoes in their order of seniority, and the report of each meeting was to be forwarded to the British Consul. Any three members of the Court had

10. Consul Burton to John Scott, March 4, 1862, ordering him to surrender his slaves to Alfred Saker and give up his claims over them, Box A/3, BMS Archives.

11. Consul Burton to Earl Russell, April 15, 1864, F. O. 2/45.

12. Treaty with kings, chiefs and traders of Cameroon, Jan. 14, 1856 and Jan. 6, 1869, Hertlet's *Commercial Treaties X* 1859 pp. 30-33 and XIII, 1877, pp. 21-22.

« the power » to appeal against the Court's decisions, « which appeal [was] to be deferred till the Consul's next visit. »¹³ In the event that the appeal failed before the Consul, the Court had the power and right to fine the appellants. The Court was responsible for hearing serious matters whenever he was available and, besides receiving monthly reports of the Court meetings, also annually checked the Court records. The Court House, built by community efforts and contribution, was regarded as British property.¹⁴ Clause VIII of the Treaty setting up the Court of Equity was an undertaking by the kings and chiefs that they would respect the decisions of the Court, remain faithful to the anti-slave treaties signed in the 1840s, and report the presence of any slave trader in their town to the British authorities. Although the Court of Equity was not *per se* a governing body, through its British influence in the Cameroon River districts was predominant. As Latham has demonstrated in the case of Old Calabar,¹⁵ Britain very gradually, perhaps unwillingly or without being aware of the fact, became embroiled in Duala internal politics through making treaties with the chiefs which committed her to intervention.

In Victoria the government was run by the Baptist Mission, and the Senior Missionary became *de facto* « governor » under British protection. The missionaries had hoped that the British Government would declare the settlement a colony and assume authority. « Saker would have passed it over to the Government at the beginning, but the Foreign office refused ». ¹⁶ The Mission was therefore forced to carry on both the Church and State affairs. Thomas Lewis who was « governor » in 1883-85 was to observe that this union did not find favour with the Baptists. In 1865 Commodore A.P.E. Wilmot visited Victoria as a representative of the British Consulate at Fernando

Po and appointed a black trader resident there. Mr. Thomas Horton Johnstone, « head » of the colony, awaiting confirmation from the Foreign Office.¹⁷

Mr. Johnstone was empowered to « make laws for the well being of the settlement » and to attend to « all disputes relative to public as well as private matters ». His decision in every matter would be considered final. When the Foreign Office refused such direct commitment, Mr. Johnstone's administration re-organised as a *Court of Justice*,¹⁸ under Saker's administration, to enforce law and order and impose fines. « For ordinary breaches of the law fines were imposed, as money was needed for the treasury, but for flagrant offences [the Court] depended on the corrective powers of a heavy strap ». ¹⁹ The whipping was generally done by a special constable, but sometimes by the chairman of the Court, in front of the tribunal. Membership of the Court was made up of the original settlers of the township, although « several of the younger numbers of the community... were assumed as members » as older people died.²⁰ It appears that the original Court elected its own president or chairman since it is said to have been « self-elective ». Later the missionary governor of the « colony » attended the Court every Saturday and took down all cases, keeping a full record of fines and punishments : « so many fines and so many strokes ». ²² The British Consul also received reports of the administration in Victoria and inspected Court records about once a year.

By comparison it appears that the government of Victoria was more effective than the Court of Equity at Duala where frequent violation of rules, tribal wars and rivalry among traders threatened peace and security. Evidence from treaties

13. Clause VI of the Treaty of January 14, 1856. In May 1862 it was agreed that 'any one member' of the Court could appeal against its decisions.

14. Clause II of the Treaty of January 14, 1856.

15. A.J.H. Latham, *Old Calabar 1600-1891* (Oxford, 1973), pp. 134-145.

16. Thomas Lewis, *These Seventy Years* (London, 1930), p. 52.

17. F.O. 2/46, Letter 12 and inclosures.

18. An undated letter to George Thomson Box A/7, BMS Archives.

19. Thomas Lewis, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

20. An undated letter to George Thomson, *op. cit.*

21. *Ibid.*

22. Thomas Lewis, *op. cit.*, pp. 44-53, *passim*.

renewing bye-laws for the better regulation of trade and the Court of Equity, for example, allows for the interpretation that neither the Court's decisions were regularly accepted nor all trade disputes which ought to come before the Court were brought to it. The chiefs complained bitterly about whitemen beating and killing natives without fault.²³ In 1864 Consul Burton reported that although all the traders and supercargoes signed the treaty setting up the Court of Equity, no one adhered to it.²⁴ He said Duala was perhaps the most troublesome place on the coast. In 1872 the British Government issued an Order in Council which was to serve as a code of conduct for all British subjects in the Bight of Biafra. The punishments were laid down for various offences and crimes which might be committed by British subjects, and the procedure for claiming redress out-lined. For any violation of the stipulations of any treaty, convention or agreement, or any regulations appending them, a British subject could receive a maximum sentence of £ 100 or banishment for three months.²⁵ For breaches other than those relating to treaties, £ 40 or banishment for one calendar month. Until then the white traders remained a law unto themselves.

Duala, unlike Victoria, was a multi-tribal or multi-ethnic town, with many kings and chiefs. The Court of Equity, as explained earlier, was concerned only with matters affecting trade, not with local tribal affairs which remained in the hands of chiefs who retained their sovereignty. Until the late 1860s and 1870s (when many treaties of security and friendship were signed) many firms, for reasons of safety, dared not settle on shore at Duala, but preferred to hold their business in anchored hulks on the river.

23. King Bell to Consul Burton, 16 May, 1862, F.O. 84/1176. In this letter King Bell lists six people who have been killed by British traders and several molested, beaten or wounded; Also F.O. 2/47 complaints from the natives about white activities.

24. Consul Burton to Earl Russel, April 15, 1864, F.O. 2/45.

25. Rules and Regulations framed under Her Majesty's Order in Council, by Her Majesty's Consul, April 29, 1872, *Hertzel's Commercial Treaties*, XIII, 1877, pp. 50-66.

By the 1870s the white traders had come to terms with the environment and recognized that the bye-laws which had been established to regulate trade with the natives were accepted by the latter as having the force of established custom. Accordingly they felt sufficiently secure as to settle permanently on land, building factories in different towns and villages, and sailing their house-boats along the coast and up the rivers. Most of these were English boats. The first German firm to settle in Cameroon District was C. Woermann²⁶ with established posts in Duala and Victoria in 1868. By that time there were already five English firms operating in the District and virtually in control of the whole import and export trade of Cameroon. The second German firm was that of *Jantzen and Thormählen* in 1875. (In 1874 the firm of C. Woermann requested that the German Government establish a consulate in Duala but Bismarck turned down the request). *French firms* joined the Cameroon trade in the 1870s, and soon opened trading stations at Malimba, Big Batanga and Campo²⁷.

The Baptist missionaries were the most prominent and influential group of Europeans in the Cameroon District throughout this period, particularly in the Duala and Victoria regions. By 1875 they had opened more than ten mission stations in the towns and villages, nine of them with schools²⁸. The number of literate natives had grown enormously and there were already many converts. Both chiefs and their subjects were beginning to look upon the patronage of missionaries and (white) school teachers as a matter of prestige, and many were beginning to hanker after them. « As early as 1864 the Duala king, Bell Honesty, had addressed a letter to Queen Victoria requesting permission to visit England for the purpose of becoming an enlight-

26. R. R. Kuczynski, *The Cameroons and Togoland* (London, 1939), p. 3.

27. N. Rubin, *Cameroon* (London, 1971), p. 24.

28. There were schools in Bethel, Bell, Akwa, Victoria, Dido, Hickory-Mortonville, Bots, Bojongo and Mspanja, the school at Bimbia having been closed down for health reasons.

tened »²⁹. Indeed many chiefs were beginning to rely more on missionaries and white traders for political advice than on their headmen and traditional councils. In fact Consul Burton in his detail report of April 1864 informed that each of the five native kings of the villages of Duala had an English trader for an adviser and a missionary for a consultant. While « his English trader must support him at all « palavers », he also consulted the missionary « when legal defence against the violence and arrogance of the European (was) required »³⁰. Besides, a comparison of letters and petitions for annexation by both missionaries and chiefs leave no doubt for the conclusion that the two were close collaborators. Missionaries had opened and led the exploration of the Cameroon District and wrote home about the areas in which they settled, if only to their secretariat in London.

In 1862 Alfred Saker, accompanied by Captain Burton, the British Consul to the Bight of Biafra, M. Gustave Mann, a Hanoverian botanist, and Senor Calvo, the Spanish Judge at Fernando Po, climbed the Cameroon Mountain to its 13,370 foot summit. The team were impressed and agreed by common consent that the slopes of the mountain were very suitable for a sanatorium or colony. Saker expressed the hope that Victoria and the mountain region would be annexed by the British Government and made « the centre of civilization and Gospel light for this part of the continent »³¹. In the years following to 1875 many more explorations were undertaken by different missionaries in the mountain region of the Cameroon and reports were full of admiration, and heartening to whitemen in this part of « the whiteman's grave ». Some described the region « as the most beautiful and most healthy part of the West Coast of Africa for some 3,000 miles »³². Rev. Quinton W. Thomson observed after going up the mountain that « the real proof of the pudding must be in eating it », and was « in

favour » of the healthiness of the region and the absence there of fatal tropical epidemic³³. Other explorers of the Cameroon District included three German scientists — Buschholz, Reichenow, and Luders — who are said to have made important zoological discoveries between 1872 and 1875.³⁴ All these explorers furnished their governments, directly or indirectly, through their reports or correspondence, with information about Cameroon.

By 1875, therefore, European involvement and activities in Cameroon had begun to bring the region to notice in major European capitals. Many changes had taken place for the inhabitants of the Cameroon District; Pidgin English had become the *lingua franca* of the region.³⁵ The establishment of the Courts of Justice and Equity in Victoria and Duala respectively had robbed the local kings and chiefs of some of their authority and right to punish their own subjects and greatly interfered with their independence, although no European power had annexed the territory and assumed sovereignty. Beginning in 1875 events in the Cameroon District began to follow the trend towards the scramble and annexation of the territory.

2. NEW EUROPEANS AND THEIR ACTIVITIES, 1875 - 1880

From 1875 on the Cameroon District was to be subjected to increased European influence in the way of civilization and development. Among the 'new Europeans' who arrived in Cameroon as apostles of enlightenment and improvement

29. H. R. Rudin, *Germans in the Cameroons*, p. 20.

30. Consul Burton to Earl Russel, April 15, 1864, F.O. 2/45.

31. *Missionary Herald of the Baptist Missionary Society* 1863, p. 35.

32. *Missionary Herald of the BMS* 1869-70 p. 106, 1873, p. 214.

33. *Missionary Herald of the BMS* 1873, p. 214.

34. A.F. Calvert, *The Cameroons* (London, 1917) pp. 5-6. Also H.R. Rudin, *op. cit.*, p. 76, for explorers of the interior of Cameroon, among whom was Gustave Nachtigal — the German annexation Commissioner in 1884.

35. Thomas Lewis, *These Seventy Years*, p. 51. Lewis states that the language spoken was 'pidgin' English, and implies that it was used for preaching in the Church, although not suitable for expressing 'deep religious thought. Also, Edwin Ardener, *Coastal Bantu of the Cameroons*, pp. 37-38, for the origin and spread of Pidgin English on the Cameroon coast.

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were *George Thomson* and *George Grenfell*. *George Thomson*, a Scottish architect from Glasgow, had come to Cameroon with an ultimate object of building a sanatorium on the mountain « for the benefit of missionaries labouring on the West Coast of Africa, as well as other persons who [might] desire to seek its benefit ». ³⁶ He had chosen to come to Cameroon, it is said, after reading *Captain Burton's* article about the Cameroon Mountain, and was also influenced by his brother who died serving as a missionary in Sierra Leone. In 1873 he had bought land on the mountain slopes at Mapanja for the scheme.³⁷ Unfortunately his project for a sanatorium did not progress as he had hoped, having failed to discover water in his exploration of the mountain. *George Thomson* was not a missionary and was not serving the BMS although his benevolence (building 'excellent' houses as presents for missionaries and teachers ³⁸) made it possible for missionaries and teachers to live comfortably while they preached the Gospel and educated the natives. By 1875 *George Thomson* had become a well established man in Cameroon and was involved in many administrative duties and trade—acting as president of the Court of Justice in Victoria, building factories and mission houses, and opening schools in the new villages around the region of Victoria and the Cameroon Mountain. He engaged missionaries to take care of his wealth 'fixed or moveable' in their stations,³⁹ recruited teachers for the new schools, house-servants and labourers for his sanatorium projects. He paid natives in cash or kind or both, according to the nature of their job: house-servants, for example,

with « sufficient food and lodging during the term of service ». ⁴⁰ *Mr. Richard Cooper* who was employed as teacher, preacher, servant and assistant on the sanatorium project at Mapanja was to be fed sufficiently, provided with free lodging, and paid a monthly salary of £2 : 10s Od. for the duration of service.

In 1876 (when political unrest was reported at Duala and other villages) *George Thomson* successfully attempted to assume sovereignty over certain territories hoping to maintain peace by controlling events there. He accepted to build factories for the chiefs of Bimbia and other villages in the Amba Bay territory on condition that he would be the overlord of the areas where the factories were built. His terms for building a factory on Nichool Island were that there would be no molestation of any person whatever on the island; that « any person seeking refuge » in the island would be under his protection until the trial from which he was escaping be duly investigated; that any person charged with witchcraft who chose to settle on the island would remain unmolested for as long as he remained on the island, and that no person or persons carrying arms would be allowed on the island ⁴¹. If *George Thomson's* efforts were aimed at preventing any action that might precipitate Bimbia into war and perhaps ruin his business (a fair assumption), such efforts appear to have been fairly successful as only isolated reports to the contrary came from this area. *George Thomson's* stay in Cameroon was cut short by his untimely death at the end of 1878, by which time he had built many houses for missionaries and teachers, and became one of the greatest philanthropists to have lived in the Bight of Biafra.

George Grenfell, on the other hand, arrived in Cameroon in 1875 as a young missionary in the company of *Alfred Saker*

36. An Agreement between *George Thomson* and *R. Cooper*, 1st July, 1874, Box A/8, BMS Archives.

37. Agreement between *George Thomson* and the headmen of Bimbia, 29, Sept. 1873, Box A/8 BMS Archives.

38. Also, Agreement with *R. Cooper*, 1st July, 1874, in which *Thomson* is offering free accommodations. Box A/8 BMS.

39. A note of appointment of *Rev. Q.W. Thomson* residing at Bojongo and *Rev. R. Smith* residing at Victoria, 15th March, 1875, Box A/8, BMS Archives.

40. *George Thomson* : several notes of appointments and recruitments Box A/8, BMS Archives.

41. Minutes of Agreement between *George Thomson* and chiefs of Bimbia, 27th Sept., 1876; A similar Agreement with the trader and chief of Dicolo, 2nd. Oct., 1876, Box A/8 BMS Archives.

who was returning from leave. Grenfell had decided to join the « African Mission », it is said, after reading about David Livingstone who became his « hero » and « remained ever present in his mind ». ⁴² During his three years in Cameroon, Grenfell explored almost the entire Cameroon District proving to be the greatest explorer of the territory before annexation in 1884. Shortly after arriving in Cameroon he commenced on his missionary and geographical excursions, and made reports in missionary and public journals about places he visited. Some of these excursions were undertaken to find out possible sites for new mission stations; others out of curiosity, to meet the people, understand them, and know their environment. By 1878 he had traversed the entire navigable length of the Wuri River, discovered the lower course of the Sanaga, surveyed the mountain region, recorded temperatures at certain heights on the mountain, and explored several smaller rivers. ⁴³ He observed that the mountain breeze was very invigorating especially when the mountain was capped with snow. (Grenfell left Cameroon in 1878 to establish the Congo Mission).

Between 1875 and 1880 information reaching Europe (from Grenfell and other missionaries) about the political situation in the Cameroon District implied a trend towards a gloomy outlook for the future. The Kings and chiefs were said to be finding it increasingly difficult to govern their people. Grenfell reported that rivalry between tribes, and between white and indigenous traders were causing instability in the District, making it difficult for chiefs to rule their people. He informed that as a result rulers were beginning to seek the protection of a stronger and firmer power that would hold local passions in leash, and were making « frequent overtures to British representatives to annex the country ». ⁴⁴ In 1877 Grenfell described the plight of the Kings and chiefs as

quoted by his biographer : « The headmen in the river are anxious to be under Her Majesty's control... They are evidently getting tired of their attempts to govern themselves. Every dispute leads to war, and often great loss of life ». ⁴⁵ This somewhat exaggerated account was evidently meant to induce the British Government to annex Cameroon and guarantee the security of the BMS from future expulsion by another power which might annex the territory. It might also have been an attempt to secure Government support for evangelism in the Cameroon District. Such British annexation would be on moral and humanitarian grounds. In the same year the chiefs of Duala are said to have written to the Queen offering to surrender their territory to her. ⁴⁶

Until he left Cameroon Grenfell never relaxed his campaign for British annexation. In a letter to a friend he expressed the strong desire that Britain might annex the Cameroon District. He said the rulers of the tribe were quite powerless in pursuing what they knew was right in the face of the « wicked and unruly » majority. « I have no ambition », he wrote, « to see England take possession of Western Africa simply that she may enlarge her empire, but I must devoutly hope, she may do so for the sake of the poor people who are unable to rule themselves ». ⁴⁷ He reported that the crises were spreading in the coastal villages and that the people of Bimbia had broken their treaty with the British and raided Tiko, some twenty to thirty miles away. The weakness in Grenfell's reports about the political chaos in the District is his failure to give reasons why there were wars and why the people were not following their rulers. It may be that since trade was increasing rapidly many natives were joining it as middlemen and quarrelling over profits. Some may have been attempting to corrupt the trade by fowl means. In 1878 *Consul Hopkins* visited

42. H.L. Hemmens, *George Grenfell, Pioneer in Congo* (London, 1927), p. 48.

43. *George Grenfell, « The Cameroons District, West Africa », op. cit., p. 591.*

44. H.L. Hemmens, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

45. *George Hawker, The life of George Grenfell* (London, 1909), p. 86.

46. H.R. Rudin, *Germans in the Cameroons*, p. 20.

47. Grenfell to Rev. B. Bird, 28, February, 1879, extracts published in the Annual Report of the Committee of the Baptist Missionary Society 1879, p. 102.

Duala to punish some native traders for adulteration and fined the Hickory people for the same reasons.⁴⁸ Rivalry between the kings and chiefs may also have been the reason for the continual fission and fury within the Duala chiefdoms. Grenfell reported that king Akwa was unpopular among his older chiefs, « over whom he tries to exert an obnoxious amount of authority », and also that he (king Akwa) was jealous of king Bell who was receiving £80 per annum as trading dues for each of the vessels trading at their beaches, while he received only £60.⁴⁹

During Consul Hopkin's visit in 1878 *Rev. J. J. Fuller* took the initiative to consult with him, and pointed out to him that unhealthy rivalry among traders and frequent wars were the two chief curses of the District which missionaries, traders and natives would like to see eliminated. He expressed the hope that the British would take control of Cameroon as they were doing in Calabar, and implied that this was the only satisfactory way of establishing law and order in the region.⁵⁰ Actually in Calabar Consul Hopkins intervened in the Efik affairs in 1878 and negotiated a settlement between the warring Henshaw Town and Duke Town people, as well as a treaty confirming the abolition of the killing of twin babies and human sacrifices, thus necessitating British intervention.⁵¹

In 1879 the chiefs of Duala wrote a personal letter direct to Queen Victoria, asking that an « English Government » be established in Cameroon as in Calabar, and that « every » law and custom be altered (presumably to English law). They regretted that their earlier pleas through British officials had received no attention, and so « we wish [ed] to write you our-

selves ». ⁵² This letter of the chiefs has been seen as the « Cameroonian » reaction to the rival expatriate interests who were pressing their governments to take some form of control of the trading areas, and the chiefs anxious to get the most advantage, or the least disadvantage for themselves and their peoples, began to seek formal association with Britain.⁵³ It may also be that the chiefs were persuaded by either missionaries or English traders to write to the Queen. Although there is no direct evidence suggesting that this letter and others of its type were faked up by traders or missionaries, there is circumstantial evidence allowing for the interpretation that the chiefs were persuaded to write them. In March 16 and 17, 1880, Commander Richards visited Duala to inquire from the merchants whether they knew anything about an application by the natives some time ago for British annexation of their country, and the merchants did not know.⁵⁴ Professor Dike has commented that some petitions from the Cameroon chiefs for annexation « were sometimes inspired and instigated by British traders » in effort to influence the Foreign Office in favour of traders' request.⁵⁵ British traders and missionaries wanted the British Government to establish a colony in Cameroon, and the nature of missionaries' letters reporting affairs in the District leaves no doubt that they were ready to do anything to bring this about.

Although available evidence allows for the belief that political unrest was confined to Duala and neighbouring districts, there is no evidence suggesting that other centres of trade like Malimba, Batanga and Campo were more peaceful. It is only that there were fewer missionaries and fewer British traders in villages and towns south of Duala, and so few reports.

52. Cameroons chiefs to Her Majesty the Queen, August 7, 1879, F.O. 401/18.

53. Shirley G. Ardener, *Eye-Witnesses to the Annexation of Cameroon, 1883-1887* (Buea, 1968), p. 19.

54. *Fall Mall Gazette*, March 10, 1885.

55. K.O. Dike, *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, 1830-1885*, (London, 1956), pp. 216-217.

48. *Fall Mall Gazette*, March 10, 1885.

49. Grenfell to Rev. B. Bird, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

50. *Missionary Herald* 1879, p. 40.

51. A.J.H. Latham, *Old Calabar*, pp. 138-139.

Meanwhile trade and commerce in the Cameroon District continued to prosper in spite of reports of frequent disturbances at Duala. There were three groups involved in the Cameroon trade: the Europeans, the local middlemen, and the inland producers of primary products. European traders were chiefly from Britain, Germany and France. Their share of trade was dominated by the British, although the Germans were fast covering the gap between them and the British. Although the British and the Germans cooperated very well in their trade policies towards the middlemen and the French seemed to keep away from the Anglo-German areas, there were no apparent ill-feelings among them at this time. The French concentrated their trading activities in villages south of Duala, closer to « Ga-boon ». The British and Germans controlled the trade of the towns and villages westward from Duala to the Calabar river. Their articles of trade included cotton goods, glass-ware, firearms, tobacco, rice, dried-fish, salt, beer and wine. They sold these articles to the inhabitants in their shops, factories or house-boats, or in bulk to middlemen who traded them inland for palm-oil, palm-nuts, ivory, and coffee. Some settled Europeans, like George Thomson for example (and even some missionaries), also owned stores, grew vegetables and reared livestock which they sold to other whites.

Perhaps the most active and most controversial participants in the Cameroon trade were the go-betweens of coastal tribes. Their chief service was bulking, transporting goods to and from the interior, and extending credit. In turn they seized every opportunity to benefit from whatever the Europeans imported or exported from Cameroon. It is clear that they erected two boundaries as it were between them and the interior peoples on the one hand and with Europeans on the other, and resisted every attempt by the whites to by-pass them and trade directly with their 'bush' people. Among the leading middlemen were the Bimbians, the Dualas and the Malimbos whom Grenfell observed sustained for themselves the right of trading with the whitemen. They were very suspicious of every whiteman — missionary or explorer — who

ventured into the interior, and warned such men not to engage in any trade whatever with the inland peoples. « So determined are [the middlemen] to preserve these boundaries », Grenfell wrote », that I was brought back by a party of eight armed men from a point 20 miles from the Mungo towns past which I managed to creep in the darkness of night ». ⁵⁶ The middlemen therefore had two markets where they traded with the whites and the natives.

On the "white" markets these intermediaries received goods from European trading houses on credit and bartered them in the interior for local products. These they brought to their creditors and exchanged them for new goods, the original credit being paid only slowly in the course of many years. Carl Scholl, a German trader, explained in a letter to his family that there were fixed market days on which these transactions were done. He said the native traders knew very well how to conduct their business and were not stupid; they knew the value of all goods « and cannot be duped by us ». Carl Scholl explained that every trader knew what he was entitled to and became hostile if he got « only a little less ». He explained to his family that local goods from the interior passed through several middlemen before reaching them at the coast. « These local products... mostly pass, not just through two, but often through many hands until they reach the coast, and thus increase in price as everyone takes a share of it ». ⁵⁷

George Grenfell, who observed the interior trade between the coastal middlemen and the interior peoples, also reported that the immediate interior peoples acted as middlemen between coastal villages and those further inland and also profited from the trade. He noted that the Bimbian middlemen gathered local goods mostly from the mountain markets, the Bell people from the Mungo and Abo markets, and the Akwa people from the whole Wuri and Dibamba towns; Bakoko country was com-

⁵⁶ George Grenfell, *The Cameroons District*, op. cit., p. 593.
⁵⁷ S.G. Ardener, *Eye-Witnesses to the Annexation* op. cit., p. 28.

mon ground for the Malimba, Akwa and Bell peoples. Grenfell observed that trade was the chief occupation of the coastal tribes, their chief source of income and they either did it profitably or spent their lives in idleness. In fact Grenfell remarked that « idleness » was the greatest vice of the coastal inhabitants who were the opposite of the skilled men of the interior.⁵⁸ He regretted that although the land was rich and suited for cultivation, the people did not make use of it. The situation, he wrote to a friend, was unlike in other parts of Africa where the people were « blessed less bountifully and where people are compelled to work or starve ».⁵⁹ This rather misrepresented account of the coastal people only goes to emphasize the fact that the coastal middlemen were seriously committed to their trade, and worked hard for their money. Their services to white traders and interior peoples, not seen or appreciated by Grenfell, were immense.

As has been shown earlier, European trade with the coastal middlemen was regulated by the Court of Equity at Duala set up specifically for that purpose. For native traders to qualify to obtain goods on credit (initially) from trading houses they had to pledge that they would always pay their debts. In fact Clause V of the treaty setting up the Court of Equity specifically stated that « the native kings and chiefs pledge themselves not only to pay their own debts, but to use their influence, each with his respective traders, to do the same, and that for their neglect of this they be subject to fine, to be settled by the Court ».⁶⁰ At this time membership of the Court had been reduced and consisted of one supercargo belonging to each trading house and four chiefs representing native traders. Each member of the Court (not three as originally stipulated) now had the power to appeal against the Court's decision to the British Consul.

58. George Grenfell to Rev. B. Bird, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

59. George Grenfell to Rev. B. Bird, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

60. Treaty with the kings, chiefs and Traders of Cameroons, January 14, 1856, Hertelet's Commercial Treaties, X, 1859, p. 31.

In matters of Christianity and education, attempts were made by missionaries to open more new stations and schools in the District. Rev. Quinton Thomson reported attempts made in 1880 to open new stations in the interior, and the success achieved when they reached *Bakundu* and opened a station there, some forty to fifty miles inland from Victoria. He commented on the importance of *Bakundu* as a station. It was near the (Mungo) river and therefore directly linked to Victoria. It was large in size.⁶¹ In their new stations a closer relationship was established with the inhabitants through the churches and schools. Mr. Fuller reported that emphasis was being placed on education as this would enable the people to obtain God's truth and to read and understand His word. The natives however may have attended these mission schools for reasons other than those of being able to read and obtain God's truth, in spite of Fuller's strong belief that literacy was essential for conversion. He himself had reported that although several places had been visited and « the seed feebly sown », « the enemy seems to have been awakened, for all the evil propensities of the people seem to be on the move ».⁶² For the natives the ability to read and write was the chief sign of civilization, and literacy appeared to be the easiest whiteman's « magic » to be learnt without betraying one's traditions. Those who could read and write could conduct their trade easily with Europeans, and also could keep record of their debts, debtors and creditors. It would appear that it was more for business than for religious reasons that the people attended mission schools. Nevertheless missionaries continued to gain the admiration of the natives wherever they went, and Grenfell's elementary knowledge of medicine and possession of drugs had made him a popular « doctor » with the people.

It can therefore be concluded that the major issues in the Cameroon District during the five years to 1880 were political and commercial. The political instability at Duala and other

61. Annual Report of the Committee of the BMS 1880, p. 117.

62. Annual Report of the Committee of the BMS 1878, p. 112, also p. 76.

villages had strengthened campaigns for British annexation. On the commercial front the middlemen maintained their monopoly over the interior trade against pressure from the whites. Among European traders divisions were becoming apparent in their commercial relations with native traders, although competition between groups had not yet shown any hostile impact among the whites. The British and German traders cooperated as before in their attitudes towards middlemen, and established trading stations apart from those installed by the French. Beginning in 1881 politics and commerce were to continue to divide European traders and to bring foreign powers closer to a collision over the annexation of Cameroon.

3. GROWING INTEREST AMONG THE POWERS FOR ANNEXATION, 1881 - 1883

Correspondence and reports from the Cameroon District during the years 1881 to 1883 continued to indicate political instability. In 1882 Jackson Fuller reported that civil war had broken out at Duala, Bell Town. One man had died, and another accused of poisoning him. A quarrel between the relatives of the deceased and those of the accused had degenerated into a shooting war.⁶³ Fuller regretted that while king Bell was doing all he could to encourage trade and further the interests of his people incidents like these were making it hard for him and his chiefs to govern their people. From Victoria Quinton Thomson made known the murder of king William of Bimbia by a gang of armed Bakwerians, recruited by their chief.⁶⁴ The Bakweri chief had felt that he and his people were being unfairly treated by the Bimbians (possibly over trade matters) and decided to kill a Bimbian man after seeking redress in vain. The armed men were therefore instructed to go down to Bimbia to waylay and kill any Bimbian man. The Bimbian

chief who happened to be the first man to come their way was shot dead before the Bakwerians knew the status of their victim. This incident led to war between the Isuwu of Bimbia and the Bakwerians of Mokunda.⁶⁵ These wars and riots continued to provide further grounds for European campaigns for annexation. It was probably because of them that Consul Hewett invited both the German and British traders to discuss matters affecting trade in the Cameroon District. They unanimously agreed that they would « be better off were we taken under British protection ».⁶⁶

The impact of these disorders in coastal trading centres was particularly hard on the established British whose trade continued to decline while that of the rival Germans (surprisingly) continued to flourish. British domination of the Cameroon trade came to an end during this time when they were overtaken by the Germans in spite of their numerically inferior position compared with the British. Available evidence does not provide definite elucidation for this state of trade. Consul Hewett inaccurately attributed the decline to the « trifling quarrels between intriguing native kings, in the absence of any external authority, [which] had led to something like chaos ».⁶⁷ He failed to explain why tribal disturbances were affecting only British commerce. There are, however, a number of possible reasons why German trade was doing better than English trade. It may be that the Germans were buying established British and independent businesses which were closing down and therefore controlling the trade that would normally flow into the hands of the British. This argument is based on evidence—an isolated instance, it might be—showing that the firm of C. Woermann purchased the estate of the late George Thomson in 1881.⁶⁸ Another possible explanation might be the effect of the transition from the supercargo system to agent system. La-

63. Edwin Ardener, *Coastal Bantu of the Cameroons*, op. cit., p. 29.

64. Treaty with the kings and chiefs of Cameroons, April 1883, F.O. 403/32.

65. H.R. Rudin, *Germans in the Cameroons*, op. cit., p. 22.

66. Acknowledgement receipt from the Royal Insurance Office, Glasgow, to Rev. Q.W. Thomson, 3rd June, 1881, Box A/8 BMS.

63. Rev. J.J. Fuller to Mr. Baynes, 9th June, 1882, Box A/5 BMS.

64. *Missionary Herald* 1882, p. 407.

tham demonstrates in the case of neighbouring Calabar that the fall in prices after 1862 made it uneconomic to maintain the supercargo system; « firms who wished to remain in business had to adopt the agent system ». ⁶⁹ This may have been the case in the Cameroon District in the 1870s and 1880s, and the British who had more supercargoes than the Germans suffered in the transition. Although there were only two German firms, compared to six English firms, the Germans had factories all over the Cameroon District and were well organized. ⁷⁰ Also, the fact that German merchants had always worked on friendly terms with British traders allowed them much freedom under British leadership, and so were able to turn their maximum attention to trade. In fact when Bismark, about this time, instructed the Hambourg Senate to consider what measures were necessary for the protection of German commerce in the Cameroon District and elsewhere in Africa, he was informed that the Senate was satisfied with German commerce in Cameroon under British leadership. ⁷¹

Hewett's statistics comparing British and German trade showed that the Germans exported 1,317 tons of oil to Britain, 1,283 tons; 903 tons of palm-kernels to 897 tons; 10,310 lbs of ivory to 7,610 lbs; 2,000 lbs of cocoa to zero; 1 ton of copra to 10 tons; 800 lbs of ebony to zero; and 100 lbs of beans to zero. ⁷² Hewett said his information on exports was not very complete; the figures were for annual exports from Duala.

But the Germans were less satisfied with the treatment they received in the areas dominated by the French, and together with the British, resented them. The French, as stated earlier, joined the Cameroon trade in the 1870s and soon

69. A.J.H. Latham, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

70. *Pall Mall Gazette*, March 10, 1885.

71. S.E. Crowe, *The Berlin West African Conference 1884-1885*, (London, 1942), p. 37.

72. *Command Papers*, C-4279 (1885), p. 13.

established stations in several places north of the Campo river, continuing their northward advance towards the areas dominated by the British and the Germans. What offended the British and the Germans about the French was that they were « establishing factories, claiming territory, and introducing tariffs so high and so discriminatory as to result in the virtual exclusion of all non-French goods ». ⁷³ The British and the Germans were particularly alarmed when it was learnt that the French were about to annex territory just below Duala, at Big Batanga. It appeared as if the French were taking advantage of British indecision over the annexation question and might themselves annex Cameroon. This thought would have troubled German and British nationals more when it was well-grounded that some chiefs were enthusiastically signing away their sovereignty to the French official, Godin, who remarked on the easiness with which a treaty with Malimba was accomplished. ⁷⁴ King William of Big Batanga also renewed his earlier treaty with the French, this time recognizing the sovereignty of France over his country. These treaties, while they alarmed the British and the Germans, established the French more firmly in the Cameroon District.

The continuous disorders in the major trading areas and the French advance from Campo towards Duala seem to have increased the number of petitions from several quarters for the British Government to annex the territory. In 1881 King Bell and Akwa appealed to Mr. Gladstone, in his capacity as « the chief man in the House of commons », that they would like to be governed by the British. They said they were tired of governing the country themselves and thought it was best « to give up the country to you British men who no doubt will bring peace, civilization and christianity in the country ». ⁷⁵

73. H.R. Rudin, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

74. R.F. Betts, *The Scramble for Africa: Causes and Dimensions of Empire* (London, 1966), p. 45.

75. King Bell and King Akwa to Mr. Gladstone, November 6, 1881, F.O. 403/18. (incl.).

The two kings prayed the Prime Minister to show the mercy of a good Christian and lay their request before the Queen and other members of the British Government. Between 1881 and 1883 petitions were received from the peoples of Victoria, Duala and Bimbia, all seeking British protection, many of them addressed to the British Consul for onward transmission to the British Government. King Bell also wrote to Consul Hewett informing him of his several unsuccessful attempts to convince the British Government to take over his country. He expressed the hope that the Consul might successfully lay his request before the British Government. Kings Bell and Akwa, together, protested against the presence of the French anywhere in the Cameroon District, arguing that they wanted the entire District to be annexed by Britain, so that the tribes may continue to maintain the relationships that had always existed among them.⁷⁶

Complaints about the French advance were also received from missionaries, traders and officials. *Rev. W. Collings*, in a letter to the Earl of Derby, warned about the danger posed by the French advance from Gabon, and said the French were dreaded for their aggression by all in the Cameroon District.⁷⁷ *Rev. Quinton Thomson* also reported the French threat to the Senior Naval officer at Fernando Po, who in turn reported the same in a dispatch to the Secretary to the Admiralty. In 1882 Consul Hewett advocated that the territory from Benin to Cameroon be annexed, or the French would step in.⁷⁸ It appears that although the British Government remained suspicious of French activities in the Bight of Biafra, they did not regard French attempts to displace them from the Cameroon District to be imminent. Consequently the Foreign Office did not consider it necessary to act fast enough to halt the French, or to annex Cameroon.

76. Bell and Akwa to Hewett, April 23, 1883, F.O. 403/20. KING William of Big Batanga later complained about the treaty with the French June 14, 1883, F.O. 403/32.

77. *Rev. W. Collings* to the Earl of Derby, August 22, 1883, F.O. 403/20.

78. Hewett to Granville, 14, January 1882, F.O. 403/18.

The petitioners for annexation, having failed in their use of political disorders and French advance as evidence for annexation, began to pressure the Foreign Office with the advantages of a British protectorate in the Cameroon District. Grenfell, in his article published by the Geographical Society, pointed out the advantages that would accrue to the British upon annexation. He said the soil of the Cameroon District promised the most magnificent results if only the natives could be induced to cultivate either coffee or cocoa. He argued that the expense of annexation « would be for a few years, for the increased trade would soon produce sufficient revenue to cover it ». Grenfell said he was patriotic enough to wish that the British would annex Cameroon, impressed as he was « that it is the most beneficent⁷⁹ ». Messrs Jackson Fuller and Quinton Thomson also wrote from their mission stations arguing that there was something to gain from the annexation of Cameroon. Mr. Fuller pointed to the commercial advantages, informing that the new station of Bakundu was already linked to the coast by King Bell. He had opened trading markets in the towns and on the beaches along the river⁸⁰. Quinton Thomson also wrote praising King Bell who was doing all in his power to improve the Cameroon trade. He confirmed Fuller's report that the king had opened the river the whole way to Bakundu for trade, which was quite twice as far as the Cameroon traders had ever gone before⁸¹.

At home, in England, *Rev. W. Collings* who had served the Baptist Mission in Cameroon launched the annexation appeal from the home front. « The Cameroon district », he wrote in a letter to the Earl of Derby referred to earlier, « is the healthiest on the whole coast, the Great Cameroons Mountain, ... affording every advantage from a sanitary point of view... On the upper slopes of the mountains all European

79. George Grenfell, « The Cameroons District », op. cit., p. 594.

80. Fuller to Baynes, June 9, 1882, Box A/5, BMS Archives.

81. *Missionary Herald* 1883, p. 22.

vegetables and fruits may be grown and a home climate enjoyed». ⁸² Mr. Collings added that the acquisition of Cameroon would save many valuable lives in West Africa and the expense of home journeys as all would go to the sanatorium in Cameroon. In another letter to Mr. Gladstone, Mr. Collings emphasized the above points and added that the physical characteristics of the Cameroon District were more favourable to European life than in any colony on the west coast.⁸³

Consul Hewett, when requested by the Foreign Office to make a full study of the Cameroon District and report it to the Government for consideration, seized the opportunity to express directly his long desire to see Britain annex Cameroon. The Consul was instructed to take an early opportunity to visit the Cameroon River and make « inquiries as to the feeling of the Kings and Chiefs » in regard to the petitions for British protection, « their power over the natives, the trade, harbours, climate, and characteristics of the district, and any other details which will enable Her Majesty's Government more fully to consider the proposition put forward by King Bell ». ⁸⁴ In his report Consul Hewett informed that it would not only be the territory which Her Majesty's Government would acquire by establishing a protectorate over, or annexing, Cameroon, but they would also obtain « the great influence in the interior now exercised by the kings and chiefs of Cameroon ». ⁸⁵ He said the annexation would push the white traders into the interior and get rid of the services of the middlemen who would thus be « forced into the cultivation of their own rich soil, and so increase the amount and variety of the exports ». As regards customs duties that would be levied after annexation, he said

⁸² Rev. W. Collings to the Earl of Derby, August 22, 1883, F.O. 403/20. — (83).
Rev. W. Collings to Mr. Gladstone, Sept. 27, 1883, F.O. 403/20.

⁸³ Rev. W. Collings to Mr. Gladstone, September 27, 1883, F.O. 403/20.

⁸⁴ Mr. Lister to Consul Hewett, June 1, 1882, *Command Papers*, C—4279, p. 4.

⁸⁵ Consul Hewett to Earl Granville June 7, 1883, F.O. 403/18.

« it would be difficult to levy them without also obtaining Victoria and Bimbia on the north and Malimba to the southward ». Consul Hewett stressed that the nature and fertility of the Cameroon soil appeared « well adapted for the growth of cotton, coffee, tobacco, and other tropical productions ». With regard to the local policy, he found « the people were constantly having trifling quarrels among themselves owing to the intrigues among the chiefs », but that « there would be no difficulty in governing them ». ⁸⁶ He said the settled people only required someone to deal out impartial justice. At the request of Kings Bell and Akwa, he had gone up the river and settled some dispute among some tribes up country to the satisfaction of all interested. As to the climate and ports facilities, Consul Hewett reported that the Cameroon River had « the credit of being the least unhealthy of any of the Oil Rivers », and that the anchorage up the river was safe. He said he had made many notes during his inquiries but lost them when his house was destroyed by fire. Earlier, in 1882, Consul Hewett had advised the Foreign Office that all the territory commencing southward of the Cameroon District and extending westward to Benin be taken as a protectorate, or given to a British Chartered Company for administration. ⁸⁷

There is no doubt that the instruction given to Consul Hewett by the Foreign Office were aimed at ascertaining whether the benefits of annexation consistently spelt in various correspondence and petitions were exaggerations or truths. All along, until Hewett's report, the British official attitude towards annexation had been one of indecision and reluctance. Only when the benefits of annexation began to be analyzed (than repeated) did the Government begin to think in favour of annexation. In 1882 the Foreign Office had replied to Kings Bell and Akwa's letter of 1881 thanking them for « begging » that their country be taken under British protection, but letting them know that the Government was not yet prepared to

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ Consul Hewett to Earl Granville, Jan; 1882, F.O. 403/18.

undertake the protectorate of their country, but would further examine the matter and write to them again. Three months later the Foreign Office instructed Consul Hewett to make his inquiries and report to the Government. In 1883, after Consul Hewett's report, the British Government was convinced that the time had come when it was « desirable that Her Majesty's Government should decide in what way they can best protect British trade in the present, and encourage and secure it in the future, in those parts of the West Coast of Africa, which comprise the healthy regions round the Cameroons and the rich districts of the Niger and Oil Rivers ». ⁸⁸ Yet the Foreign Office did not see any reason for a rush, perceiving no serious threat from any quarters.

Apparently the British had not given thought to how their trade collaborators, the Germans, felt about the possibility of German annexation of Cameroon, or to Germany's colonial interests. Though supporting British annexation from the beginning, the German traders were slowly but firmly becoming patriotic. Secretly they began to make plans as to what they would do in the event that Britain did not annex Cameroon, but rather let it slip into French hands. The German explorers and traders in the West Coast began to voice their desire to see the territories extending from the Cameroon District to the Congo annexed by Germany. Sir Harry Johnstone informed that when he visited Congo in 1882-1883 the German explorers there, under the service of the king of Belgium, made no secret of their desire to see Germany take control of the Upper Congo. ⁸⁹ In 1883, A. Woermann, president of the C. Woermann firm in Hamburg, who had interests in the Cameroon District, submitted a memorandum to the German Government calling for the cession of Fernando Po and Rio Muni by Spain to Germany. In the same memorandum Woermann urged the German Government to annex Cameroon. He request-

ed that the Government consider seriously the advantages of annexation, among which were: the expansion for German shipping line, « the circumvention » of the middleman monopoly of Duala, the assurance of a market for Germany's surplus goods and a fertile area for producing needed raw materials, the establishment of plantations and profits from land speculation. ⁹⁰

Besides efforts by individuals or business groups with stakes in the Cameroon District to influence the German Government to take interest in colonization, organisations and societies also formed and began to rally the public to influence Government thinking. As early as 1873 an International African Association was formed at Berlin for the purpose of opening up Africa to culture and trade, and to combat slavery. In 1882 the German Colonial Society was formed at Frankfurt, its chief purpose being more practical: to arouse Germans to an interest in the acquisition of colonies. This organisation, Rudin found out, grew rapidly to become the most influential of the colonial organisations, multiplying its initial membership of 2,500 in 1882 five times to 12,500 and 21 branches in 1886. ⁹¹ The pressure on the German Government from these organisations and individuals, no doubt, convinced Bismarck to agree in November 1883 to support the establishment of a Consular Service, a warship patrol, negotiation for a coaling station at Fernando Po, and trade treaties with the natives of the Cameroon District. Jantzen had earlier asked Bismarck in vain for Consular protection in the Bight of Biafra.

It is therefore clear that during the years 1881 to 1883 the situation in the Cameroon District had provided for the need of each of the three major powers to aspire to annex the territory. The French had established themselves firmly in major towns south of Duala and stood to lose commercially (and territorially)

⁸⁸ Mr. Lister to Mr. Bramston, October 5, 1883, F.O. 403/18.

⁸⁹ Sir Harry Johnstone, *The Colonization of Africa* (Cambridge, 1899), p. 250.

⁹⁰ H.R. Rudin, *Germans in the Cameroons*, p. 34. Also pp. 157-158 for the role of A. Woermann in the annexation procedure. Also S.G. Ardener, *Eye-Witnesses to the Annexation*, op. cit., p. 22.

⁹¹ H.R. Rudin, op. cit., pp. 31-32.

if uprooted from the District. The Germans had surpassed the British in trade and were discriminated against by the French. Consul Hewett's earlier suggestion that the District be annexed and given to a British Chartered Company for administration allowed for the suspicion that foreign businesses might not be allowed the freedom they were already enjoying in the area. The British who for many years were informal masters in the Cameroon District saw their position threatened commercially by the Germans, and politically and territorially by the French. Their fear that French annexation might lead to the expulsion of British nationals (missionaries and traders) and restriction of British trade in Cameroon gave rise to the urge that they should formally declare their sovereignty over the territory. By the beginning of 1884, the scramble for Cameroon had begun.

4. THE ANNEXATION, 1884 - 1885

A German note on the proceedings concerning *Angra Pequena*, following Prince Bismarck's telegram to Count Münster, early in 1884, stated that the German Government desired to ascertain what provisions England possessed on the spot, in areas where the British Government neither possessed nor claimed sovereign rights, « for the protection of German subjects in their commercial enterprises and lawful acquisitions; so that the German Empire might consider itself exempted from the duty of providing its subjects in that territory by direct means with the protection of which they might stand in need ». ⁹² All the German note appeared to say was that Germany was not yet prepared for annexation, although she had a duty to protect German trade and nationals. Yet an imperial commissioner already on his way on a mission to the West and South-West Coast of Africa was soon to be given definite and final instructions to annex not only *Angra Pequena*, but also Togo and

Cameroon—especially the latter, where major German interests were said to lie. This contradictory attitude in German policy towards colonization—public reluctance and secret assent—has left historians with no clear acceptable account as to when and why Germany became converted to the bid for annexation.

It has been argued that the Anglo-German misunderstanding over *Angra Pequena* encouraged Bismarck to proceed to seize more valuable 'booty', the Cameroon District, Togo, and others.⁹³ German missionaries and traders in *Angra Pequena* had renewed their complaints about the treatment they suffered at the hands of the natives and the lack of protection from the British. These complaints might have frightened the German authorities that the same might occur in their more valuable trading area, the Cameroon District and Togo, providing an excuse for annexation. With regards to the Cameroon District proper, Rudin has argued that since some native Cameroon Kings owed the Germans very large sums of money and would be unable to pay their debts in the event of their overthrow by rebellious tribesmen, the German Government decided to avoid this contingency by occupation.⁹⁴ But trade was evidently the first concern of the German Government (as of any other Government) in Africa, particularly in the Cameroon District, the single most valuable area « for trading purposes ». *Bismarck's* policy therefore avoided any public controversy over Cameroon, and so acquired it without difficulty.⁹⁵

Various assessments of British and German commerce confirmed that the Germans had taken over the number one position from the British in both the import and export trade of the Cameroon District. Notoriously inaccurate as these statistics were they had their impact in the discussions for annexation. A British daily calculated in 1884 that the two German firms were buying 180-200 tons of oil monthly, while

⁹² Prince Bismarck to Count Münster, May, 25th, 1884, *German Diplomatic Documents, 1871-1914*, Vol. 1 (1928), p. 174.

⁹³ S.E. Crowe, *The Berlin West African Conference*, pp. 38-39.

⁹⁴ H.R. Rudin, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

⁹⁵ A.J.P. Taylor, *Germany's First Bid for Colonies 1884-1885* (London, 1938), pp. 32-33.

the six English firms not quite so much; the Germans, up to 200 tons of palm-kernels per month, while the English bought hardly any at all. The ivory trade about 50,000 lbs. per annum, was almost exclusively in the hands of the Germans.⁹⁶ The paper also provided statistics which showed that German commodities now sold better and larger than English products:

GERMAN AND ENGLISH TRADE IN CAMEROON 1883 AND 1884

COUNTRIES	1883				1884			
	ARRIVED		CLEARED		ARRIVED		CLEARED	
	SHIPS/TONS	SH./TONS	SH./TONS	SH./TONS	SH./TONS	SH./TONS	SH./TONS	
GERMAN STEAMERS	15	20,035	14	19,309	27	37,791	26	37,901
ENGLISH STEAMERS	15	20,963	13	18,229	27	29,450	20	28,898
GERMAN SAILING VESSELS	2	726	1	398	1	1,600		
ENGLISH SAILING VESSELS	6	2,052	3	1,049	7	2,005	6	1,836

With statistics like these it was clear that Germans no longer felt content to leave their interests in Cameroon in the hands of the British. Moreover, the relationships between British and German traders began to weaken, and English opposition to German traders generally and especially in the Court of Equity at Duala began to grow.⁹⁸

Dr. Gustave Nachtigal was the commissioner appointed to undertake a mission to West Africa to study German trade,

examine the prospects of a coaling station in the Bight of Biafra, and conduct negotiations on certain specific questions. He was accompanied by Dr. Buchner and Herr Moebius.⁹⁹ The German Government informed and appealed to the British Government to give Dr. Nachtigal assistance and cooperation in his work in Cameroon. But Dr. Nachtigal's real mission was a secret, not even disclosed to him until much later when he was already on his way to West Africa. It has been argued and accepted that at the time Nachtigal left Berlin Bismarck had no definite idea of what he wanted the commissioner to do in West Africa and that the instructions given him were the only one possible.¹⁰⁰ On the contrary it is also possible to argue that as early as April 19th, if not much earlier, when Bismarck requested England to aid Nachtigal in West Africa he already had an idea what his final instructions to the Commissioner would be. There is reason to believe that Nachtigal, before he left Berlin, was made aware that the instructions given him were not final and that he should wait in Lisbon for the final mandate. Otherwise Nachtigal had no reason to wait for up to a month in Lisbon for final instructions from Berlin, given the publicised versions of his mission.¹⁰¹ Four days before final instructions were sent to Nachtigal, Bismarck proclaimed a German protectorate over South-West Africa, on April 24th. This action took place barely five days after Bismarck informed the British of the friendly mission he was sending to Africa. The point here is that Bismarck's proclamation of a protectorate over S.W. Africa, a territory of less value for many purposes compared to the Cameroon District and Togo, appear to have been a well calculated move to divert Britain's attention from West Africa, and so seize Cameroon and Togo without difficulty. That definite annexation instructions were not given Nachtigal much earlier can be explained

96. *Fall Mall Gazette*, March 10, 1885. Also Earl Gray, *The Germans and Africa*, p. 131, for other calculations.

97. *Fall Mall Gazette*, March 10, 1885.

98. A leading Hamburg business man listed increasing German trade and English opposition to German traders among the five reasons for German annexation of Cameroon. H.R. Rudin, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

99. Dr. Buchner was described as an African traveller, and Herr Moebius as Secretary at the German Consulate-General in London, Lord Ampthill to Earl Granville, April 23rd, 1884, *British Parliamentary Papers, Colonies Africa*, 51, (IUP), p. 372.

100. H.R. Rudin, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

101. Count Vitzthum to Earl Granville, April 19, 1884, F.O. 403/20.

that Bismarck had to come out with an idea that would divert Britain's attention from West Africa and make the way clear for Germany's annexation there: that is, without giving Britain any chance to instruct their officials in West Africa and ruin the purpose of their mission.

The secret instructions sent to Dr. Nachtigal by confidential dispatch on April 28th and received by him on May 19th at Lisbon, were that he should make arrangements that would leave Germany in control of territories acquired before or after his arrival, hoist the German flag, and « declare that the German firms had closed treaties with the chiefs ». ¹⁰² Instructions were then sent to German traders in Cameroon to prepare for Nachtigal's arrival. They were to obtain from the chiefs the cession of their sovereignty for the German Government, and to demonstrate to them the advantages they would have under German protection. ¹⁰³ On receiving these highly confidential instructions the traders began to make secret proposals to the native kings that they sell portions of their lands to Germany and accept a German protectorate.

Meanwhile the German press began to leak out the real purpose of Dr. Nachtigal's mission. The semi-official *Nord-Deutsche Zeitung* reported that Nachtigal's mission was necessitated by the happy increase in the commercial relations of Germany with the West Coast of Africa, and the feeling that the interests of German commerce should not be left in the protection of trading consuls. ¹⁰⁴ On April 22, the *Kölnische Zeitung* reported that Nachtigal was on a mission to establish a coaling station at Fernando Po, and hoist the German flag in the Bay of Biafra. ¹⁰⁵ The British, not sensing any ulterior

¹⁰² S.G. Ardenner, *Eye-Witnesses to the Annexation of Cameroon*, p. 22. Also, H.R. Rudin, *op. cit.*, pp. 37-39.

¹⁰³ S.G. Ardenner, *op. cit.*, Appendix C. for Translation of instructions of A. Woermann to E. Schmidt, 6th May, 1884.

¹⁰⁴ Lord Ampthill to Earl Granville, April 23, 1884, *op. cit.*, p. 372.

¹⁰⁵ Minute by Lt. Colonel Bell, April 23, 1884, *British Parliamentary Papers, Africa Colonies*, 51 (IUP), p. 373.

motives in these reports, sent word to their nationals—officials, traders, missionaries—to accord Dr. Nachtigal « proper reception ». Bismarck had also informed French authorities of the friendly nature of Nachtigal's mission. On July 11th, Nachtigal and his companions arrived at Cameroon « to be received with honour by all, and only their fellow countrymen suspected that there was anything in the way of a political coup to be enacted ». ¹⁰⁶ The representatives of the two German firms had succeeded in concluding a number of secret treaties with the chiefs before Nachtigal's arrival. In them, the chiefs accepted to give up their sovereignty, the legislation and management of their country « entirely » up to the agents of the firms, acting as for the firms in Hamburg, and for many years trading in the District. They, however, reserved the right of the third person, the full power of all treaties signed earlier with other foreign governments, ownership of lands, plains and towns occupied by them, and that German traders would continue to pay « all the dash as before ». ¹⁰⁷

While the Germans kept their plans for the *coup* confidentially secret, else the British become suspicious and hasten up, the British, still suspicious of French intent, began their own moves to annex the Niger and the Cameroon Districts, and dislodge their enemy. They allowed no room for pessimism and envisaged no contest, falsely believing that the whole of the Cameroon District and Oil Rivers were still generally considered as under their influence and protection. In May Consul Hewett, then on leave in England, was instructed to return to his post « without delay » to implement arrangements for strengthening the Consular staff in the Niger and Oil River districts, express to the kings and chiefs « the desire of Her Majesty to maintain and strengthen the relations of peace and friendship which have for a long time existed », and to inform

¹⁰⁶ Thomas Lewis, *These Seventy Years*, p. 70.

¹⁰⁷ Draft Treaty between Chiefs of Bimbia and Agents of German firms, 11 July, 1884, F.O. 403/32.

them that the Queen is willing to extend her favour of protection over them if requested. Hewett, however, was not to accept the cession of the Cameroon river districts at this time, but was to ask the chiefs « to undertake that they would, if required, cede such portions of their territory as it may be thought desirable to acquire ». ¹⁰⁸ He was to proclaim Ambassador a British protection and fix his residence in the neighbourhood of Duala. As Hewett approached the Oil Rivers, stopping and holding meetings with chiefs, British intelligence reported a German ship steering towards the Cameroon river, and instructions were issued to Commander Moore to communicate with Kings Bell and Akwa that Consul Hewett was coming shortly « with a friendly message from Her Majesty the Queen », and that they should not make any treaty with any other government until his arrival. ¹⁰⁹ When Commander Moore reported on the situation in Duala and how time was running out, Captain Brooke sent word to Consul Hewett and himself left for Bimbia and Batanga with instructions to sign treaties with the chiefs taking their countries under British protection, subject to approval by Her Majesty's Government. He arrived « too late », after the Germans had already concluded treaties with the chiefs.

German secret campaigns and treaties of annexation had progressed as planned. On the 12th July, a day after Nachtigal arrived, the chiefs of Duala presented a memorandum to the German officials which they insisted must be included in the treaty of annexation. In the memorandum they demanded that whitemen would not trade directly with the interior tribes, that their laws on marriage remain as they have always been, that their cultivated grounds remain in their possession, that no duties be levied on their livestock, and that natives should be punished only for crimes committed. ¹¹⁰ These hardened

conditions might have been aimed at obtaining from the Germans better conditions than they probably would have received from the British. Or, perhaps, the chiefs became suspicious of the Germans' eagerness to annex their lands and wanted to test their sincerity. Whatever the reasons, the Germans accepted the terms of the treaty, and on Monday, July 14, Nachtigal officially annexed the Batanga territory, the Cameroon river district and Bimbia, and hoisted the German flag. On the 15th, Nachtigal abolished the Court of Equity, and established the « Cameroon Council » under the presidency of a German representative.

Consul Hewett arrived in Cameroon on July 19th, five days « too late ». On being told at Victoria about the German annexation, he decided to sail straight to Duala to find out for himself. He instructed the missionary, Thomas Lewis, to proclaim the settlement of Victoria annexed as an integral part of Her Majesty's dominions, and handed him some proclamations to fix on a public place. ¹¹¹ At Duala he held meetings with German officials and with the chiefs, but failed to make King Bell change his mind against the Germans. He eventually returned to Victoria to hoist the British flag and complete the annexation. In August he addressed a letter to each of the Kings of the German-annexed territories expressing surprise and dismay that after their application for British protection they should have accepted another power: « Of Germany you knew nothing and she has never given any indication of interest in you... It appears from all I hear as though you sold your country for a few chattels and guns, and that you felt no obligation to the Queen such as you formerly considered you had ». ¹¹² King Bell replied that he signed the treaty because he and his chiefs received no definite answer to their several requests for British protection. In a letter to the Earl of Derby the King explained

108. Letter to Consul Hewett, May 16, 1884, *Command Papers*, C—4279, pp. 16-17.

109. Orders to commander Moore, July 10, 1884, *Command Papers*, C—4279, p. 20.

110. S.G. Ardener, *op. cit.*, 57 notes.

111. Thomas Lewis, *These Seventy Years*, p. 71. Also, *Hertzel's Commercial Treaties*, XVII, pp. 57-58, fort the proclamations.

112. Extract from the *Cologne Gazette*, Box H/23, BMS.

that after inquiring anxiously for over five years to know if the British Government would annex his country without favourable replies, he was despaired in the end, and « induced to accept the offer of the German Government for annexation ». ¹¹³ The other kings explained that they had been duped by the Germans into signing a treaty whose nature and terms were not clearly explained to them. ¹¹⁴

Reactions to German annexation by missionaries, British traders and officials, and some natives were unfriendly and violent. Revs. Thomas Lewis and Samuel Silvey wrote several letters condemning the German intrigue. Lewis implored the BMS Secretary to set before the British Government, on behalf of the BMS, « the rightful claims of England and English subjects on the River Cameroons » and turn back the hands of the clock. « We do not deem it too late », he wrote, « to place the district and the river in the hands of the British Government, although three German flags have been hoisted here ». ¹¹⁵ Silvey reported in December 1884, confirmed by Lewis, that since the hoisting of the German flag the towns on the river had been « in a very unsettled condition », and that the Germans were unpopular with the people. He said German men-of-war were arriving and firing on the towns « without the least warning ». ¹¹⁶ Lewis (who had moved to Bell Town station shortly after German annexation) described what happened on a Saturday before Christmas 1884 :

« At about ten o'clock... we saw two small river steamers, that had gone down the day before, returning, accompanied by about a dozen boats filled with German soldiers... We wondered

113. King Bell to the Earl of Derby, Sept. 30, 1884, F.O. 403/32.

114. See copies of statements taken down by Commander Craigie from the Head Chiefs of Dicolo Town, Money Town, and William Town, on Sept. 13, 1884, Command papers, C—4279, pp. 46-49.

115. Thomas Lewis to Mr. Baynes, Sept. 3, 1884, F.O. 403/32.

116. Silvey to Baynes, Dec. 1884, Box A/1, BMS.

as the procession passed Bell Town and again Akwa Town, but were not kept long in suspense, for when they arrived opposite Hickory Town they suddenly opened fire on some fishing canoes, and killed several men. It was now clear that they had come to punish the people who had destroyed the town of King Bell and objected to the German occupation ». ¹¹⁷

A Cameroonian clergy-man, Pastor Joshua Tundi, reported that war had broken out between the natives and the Germans, and that the Germans killed about four natives, but suffered heavy casualties themselves. ¹¹⁸

British traders on their part strongly protested against the German annexation which they said was negotiated in the dark, and constituted a violation of a treaty signed with the chiefs in 1883 and witnessed by both the British and the German traders and the missionary Jackson Fuller. The treaty of 1883 had affirmed that they, that is everyone, would be better off were they taken under British protection. ¹¹⁹ The BMS Committee, happy with the news of the annexation of Victoria requested the Foreign Office to confirm whether the action of Consul Hewett had received sanction, and « whether the action of the German Government with regard to Cameroons has been approved by Her Majesty's Government ». ¹²⁰ The Foreign Office confirmed the annexation of the settlement of Victoria.

On the part of the indigenous people violence is said to have erupted between the pro-and the anti-German treaty signatories. King Bell's people « rose against him », and he and

117. Thomas Lewis, *These Seventy Years*, pp. 74-75.

118. Pastor Joshua Tundi to Mr. Fuller, Box A/5, BMS.

119. British traders to Earl Granville, July 24, 1884, F.O. 403/32.

120. Mr. Baynes to Lord Fitzmaurice, Sept. 22, 1884, Command Papers, C—4279, pp. 36-37.

his family were reported to have considered it wise to seek refuge in the bush.¹²¹ Several missionary letters and reports confirmed this state of affairs in Duala throughout the remaining months of 1884 after German annexation, although the casualty figures differed from one informant to another. In January 1885 Bismarck told the Reichstag sitting at Berlin about the war between the natives and the Germans which resulted to « loss of many killed and wounded on the German side and with one man killed and several wounded on the German ».¹²² The German Chancellor warned the Reichstag that Germany must either give up business in Cameroon or « make haste to establish our authority ». He said he had facts to prove that the British were insinuating hostility between the natives and the Germans. Dr. Busch, Bismarck's Secretary, said he found complaints of German intrigues were based on the language of the British Consul and other officials. Consul Hewett had written to the natives referring to them as « great fools for selling themselves to Germany », and warning that « they would find out later that they would have done better to accept English rather than German protection ».¹²³

German authorities decided to act immediately to put an end to all anti-German activities in Cameroon. Bismarck had warned a few weeks after annexation that London was not showing the consideration to German trade, to which it was entitled. He said if Germany failed to push her rights with energy, she risked « letting them sink into oblivion, falling in position inferior to England's and strengthening the unbounded arrogance shown by England and her colonies to us... Seeing the want of consideration shown in British colonial policy, modesty on our part is out of place and is not the

121. Thomas Lewis *These Seventy Years*, p.71 Also Silvey's letters of December 1884 to Mr. Baynes, Box A/1, BMS.

122. *Pall Mall Gazette*, January 12, 1885.

123. Memorandum by Mr. Meade, December 14, 1884, Command Paper, C—4290, *Memoranda on Conversation at Berlin between Mr. Meade and Prince Bismarck and Dr. Busch* (1885), p. 8.

way to maintain good relations with England »¹²⁴ German authorities denied missionary propaganda that they were unpopular with the natives, and claimed that they found natives just as anxious to become subjects of the *Emperor William* and averse to the English, as English accounts claimed they were 'burning' to acknowledge *Queen Victoria* and opposed to the Germans. This was a clear conflict within the native society, and there is no simple explanation for the fragmentation of the community. Certainly missionaries and traders' propaganda had much to do with it. Those who had committed themselves to the treaty stayed put, perhaps as a matter of probability, and those who had not were incited, a natural occurrence. What ever the explanation the native society was divided, and only firm action by the Germans would stabilize the situation and reunite the groups. In any event the Germans were not as unpopular, even at the beginning, as missionaries tried to show. Young men appear to have supported them, and many entered the German army and were sent abroad for training.¹²⁵ Thomas Lewis even noted that Dr. Buchner whom Dr. Nachtigal left in charge of the colony 'was well liked' and quite friendly.

The German authorities threatened (as any other power would have) to banish all foreigners — missionaries and traders — if they sided in any way with the hostile natives. Missionaries houses were searched, some of their stations destroyed, and loaded pistols and rifles pointed at them by German soldiers. Silvey and Lewis wrote reporting that the Germans were trying to make their position as uncomfortable as possible in the hope of driving them away from Cameroon.¹²⁶ The Germans also began to show anxiety to obtain possession of the British settlement of Victoria, and began

124. Prince Bismarck to Count Munster, August 12, 1884, *German Diplomatic Documents 1871-1914*, Vol. 1, p. 182.

125. Miss E. Saker to Mr. Baynes, January 30, 1885, Box A/3, BMS.

126. See Lewis and Silvey to Baynes, Dec. 24, 1884, Box A/1; Silvey to Baynes Dec. 30, 1884, Box A/1; and Notes of Conversation between Mr. Baynes and Lord Edmond, 20 March, 1885, Box H/23, BMS Archives.

to talk about sending German missionaries to replace the British. This attitude began to encourage the feeling among BMS circles that their days in the Cameroon District were numbered.

The annexation of the Cameroon River districts and the Settlement of Victoria by the Germans and the British, respectively, began the major race for other territories, which, literally, brought the two powers together in the scramble for Cameroon. The Germans aimed to annex the Cameroon Mountain. The British began to sign treaties in territories behind German protectorates in effort to girdle the German settlements and cut them off from the interior.¹²⁷ Prince Bismarck informed Count Münster that British agents were busy cutting German acquisitions from the mountains and the eastern hinterland. He said the British were led by a Slav, named Rogozinski, and were determined to hamper the German inward extension and injure German prestige.¹²⁸ Germans in West Africa also wrote home complaining about the activities of Rogozinski.

Stephen S. Rogozinski, a Polish national, had come to Cameroon in 1883 on an expedition which he organized as an independent undertaking. When he arrived in Cameroon, he acquired a « valuable » stretch of territory on the slopes of the mountain, and built his home on Mondoleh Island where it was « more convenient for him to treat the crowds of « sick people » who went to him from the mainland to get the necessary medicine for their numerous diseases ». ¹²⁹ In this way Rogozinski gained tremendous respect and influence with the chiefs and natives of the mountain regions. After the Germans annexed

^{127.} Memorandum by Mr. Meade, Dec. 24, 1884, Command Papers, C—4290, pp. 3-11.

^{128.} German Diplomatic Documents, Vol. 1, p. 188; and *Pall Mall Gazette*, January 12, 1885.

^{129.} Thomas Lewis, *These Seventy Years*, p. 70. Also, *Pall Mall Gazette*, January 21, 1885; and a newspaper cutting in Box H/23, BMS, for information about S. Rogozinski.

Bimbia, Duala and Batanga, Rogozinski decided to use his influence to frustrate the endeavours of Germany, a nation which he had no sympathy. Through treaties he was able to obtain « the Cameroon Mountain and the whole of the coast stretching from the mouth of the Niger to the German settlement on the Cameroon river », for the British.¹³⁰ In 1885 Vice-Consul White, acting « ultra vires », appointed him Chief Civil Commissioner, with full powers of Governor in his (Vice-Consul's) absence. This appointment was strongly protested against by the missionaries in Cameroon and the BMS at home, and was quickly terminated by the British Government.

One of the high lights of the scramble occurred on the slopes of the mountain, north of the river, wherein lay independent villages about equal distances from Bimbia, Victoria and Duala. « Among these villages », wrote a special correspondent of the *Cologne Gazette*, himself a participant, « a sort of three-cornered annexing match has been going on between certain persons from Victoria on behalf of England, the correspondent of the *Cologne Gazette* on behalf of Germany and the Pole Rogozinski... on behalf of himself. And a rare scramble it seems to have been ». ¹³¹ This incidence must have occurred before Rogozinski was able to convince British officials to allow him transfer the overignty of the tribes with which he had signed treaties to the British. It looked as though a major clash would erupt between the British and the Germans in the Cameroon District, but this was avoided.

The British authorities took the initiative in keeping the situation under control, once they realized they had lost Cameroon, if only for the safety of their nationals who were more numerous than citizens of other European countries together. They had to feel content that German annexation had kept the French out—a thing to be happy about. The British, however,

^{130.} *Pall Mall Gazette*, January 21, 1885.

^{131.} *Pall Mall Gazette*, March 10, 1885.

expressed the hope that the status quo under which trade was carried before annexation would be maintained.

In January 1885 the Foreign Office replied to King Bell's letter regretting his action, but advising him to « remain loyal to the country under whose protectorate you have placed yourself ». ¹³² At Berlin Mr. Meade assured the German Government that the British would not stand in the way of Germany's endeavours to extend their territories inland, and that the BMS were ready to offer their cooperation in facilitating the establishment of German rule in Cameroon. The Ambassador advised his home Government to instruct the British Consul in Cameroon to use « whatever influence he may possess with the natives to accept their new masters », and the English traders, « to keep quiet and not raise difficulties ». ¹³³ In March the German Ambassador in London, Count Bismarck, informed Prince Bismarck that the British were ready to make liberal concessions in Cameroon « to prove the good will of England », and that they had accepted the German position « fully and loyally ». ¹³⁴ Given the controversy over the role of Rogozinski, the British Government refused to press any territorial claims on the treaties signed by him, letting the Germans have the territories in question.

Rather than wait and be expelled, the BMS began to find ways of reaching a settlement over the lands they owned in the Amba Bay region and other parts of the Cameroon District, and to withdraw peacefully from Cameroon. This step was taken when it was known that the Germans were very anxious to obtain Victoria, and had continued to regard BMS missionaries with bitterness. The BMS therefore advised that the British and German Governments should negotiate for the sale

¹³² Mr. Lister to King Bell, Jan. 12, 1885, F.O. 403/32.
¹³³ Extract from a private letter from Mr. Meade to Earl Granville, and Enclosure I, « Memorandum », December 13, 1884, *Command Papers*, C—4290, pp. 3-7.
¹³⁴ Count Bismarck to Prince Bismarck, March 7, 1885, *German Diplomatic Documents*, Vol. I, pp. 191-192.

of Victoria, on the understanding that the Germans would fairly compensate the BMS for the outlay they had expended upon the settlement, and for the original purchase money thereupon ¹³⁵ By the end of 1885 it was already clear that the Germans would soon be the sole power in possession of the whole Cameroon District and its « undetermined » hinterland.

5. V. CONCLUSION

This research has clearly shown us the conduct of the « men on the scene » in the events that led to the scramble for Cameroon from 1875 to 1885. As informants these participating observers kept their countries well posted with circumstances in Cameroon. In this way the British missionaries and traders were able to break the ingrained reluctance of the British Government to the annexation of Cameroon, although the belated action to annex proved abortive. The French threat (which was in fact no threat) was posed by the activities of French traders and officials who signed treaties with chiefs and enlarged their trading territories. Germany's success in Cameroon would not have been possible without the success of her traders who also took the initiative to diligently and confidentially sign the treaties of annexation. The success of any of the three powers in the Cameroon District must be attributed to these traders, missionaries and officials on the scene, and the failure to the governments.

The analysis has also shown why Germany, and not Britain or France, became the annexing authority. First, the increase in German trade threatened the security of her commerce under British leadership, and also allowed for the understanding that the increase could be maximized by inviting more German firms. Both could only be fulfilled through the occupation of the territory. Second, there was the need to break the barrier between the native markets in the interior and white

¹³⁵ Notes of Conversation between Mr. Baynes and Lord Edmond, op. cit. —

traders on the coast, which barrier reduced both the rate of increase in trade and the profits from it. It would be observed that the three territories initially annexed by Germany were those where the middlemen monopolists were most active, and where German trade was concentrated.

Third, the British reluctance to annex and provide the security which both British and German traders badly needed encouraged the Germans to act at once. The suddenness of the German action can be attributed to the threat posed by the French who were evidently seen to be ready to annex Cameroon. Fourth, the Germans may have also annexed the Cameroon District as an attempt to balance the power situation in the Bight of Biafra—the British on the Niger river, the French on the Gabon river, and the Germans on the Cameroon river. Finally, the Germans annexed Cameroon because of the relentless pressure from her traders, business organisations and colonial associations that Germany must have colonies. When Bismarck finally yielded to these pressures, his attention was directed to areas worth having.

As for the indigenous societies they lost their traditional identity in the events that led to the annexation of their lands. They had responded enthusiastically to the demands of international economics, adjusted to western norms, albeit imperfectly, but failed to understand the people with whom they were dealing. Consequently they failed in the face of every temptation, ended up losing what they requested and giving away what they wished to preserve—their rights and their independence.

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