

Université de Montréal

**Une comparaison entre l'utilisation des troupes africaines par la France et l'Allemagne
pendant la Première Guerre mondiale**

par Marco Antonio Buitron Trindade

Département d'histoire

Faculté des arts et des sciences

Mémoire présenté à la Faculté des arts et des sciences
en vue de l'obtention du grade de ..Maîtrise..... en.....Histoire.....

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août 2013

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Résumé

Pendant la Première Guerre mondiale, les puissances occidentales étaient obligées d'utiliser toutes leurs ressources afin de vaincre. Dans les colonies allemandes, les troupes coloniales, la Schutztruppe, la plupart étant des Africains noirs, avaient la responsabilité de défendre les colonies contre tout envahisseur. Pour sa part, la France craignait, depuis la fin de la guerre franco-allemande, l'écart démographique vis-à-vis de l'Allemagne. Elle a finalement pris la décision de renforcer ses troupes par des soldats africains, les Tirailleurs sénégalais étant les plus nombreux. Ce mémoire vise à analyser et à comparer le recrutement et le déploiement dans les deux cas, particulièrement l'idéologie qui soutenait ce recrutement, les relations entre Africains et Européens pendant la guerre, la contribution des Africains à l'effort de guerre, ainsi que les conséquences de la visibilité accrue des Africains dans la société européenne. En général, nous pouvons remarquer d'importantes ressemblances entre les deux cas, en particulier le fait que l'utilisation de troupes coloniales a eu pour fonction de justifier leurs politiques coloniales et de condamner celles de leur adversaire.

Mots clés: Tirailleurs, askari, France, Allemagne, Première guerre mondiale

Abstract

During World War I, the Western powers were forced to deploy every resource available to prevail. In the German colonies, the defence was conducted by the *Schutztruppe*, the protectorate forces composed mainly by black Africans. France, for her part, feared the demographic imbalance with Germany and so decided to reinforce her forces with African troops, the *Tirailleurs Sénégalais* being the most numerous. The present thesis aims to analyze and compare the recruitment and deployment of both countries, particularly the ideology that buttressed each case, the relations between Africans and Europeans during the war, the contribution of Africans to the war effort, as well as the implications of the increased visibility of Africans in European society. Overall, it is possible to observe remarkable similarities between France and Germany, particularly the fact that their utilization of colonial troops served to justify their own colonial policies and to demonize the opponent's.

Keywords: Tirailleurs, askari, France, Germany, First World War

Table of contents

Resume/Abstract.....	iii
Table of contents.....	v
Introduction	2
Chapter 1	18
1.1 The colonial context	18
1.1.1 France: The aftermath of 1870	18
1.1.2 Germany: a late place in the sun.....	21
1.2 The creation of African units.....	25
1.2.1 France: the Tirailleurs Sénégalais.....	25
1.2.2 Germany: the Schutztruppe	27
Chapter 2	30
2.1 The setting: from Chemin des Dames to the Kilimanjaro	30
2.2 The soldiers: conflict and accommodation.....	35
Chapter 3	44
3.1 Memory and the manipulation of the role of Africans after the war	44
3.2 The “Black Shame” controversy	49
3.3 Soldiers’ memories and their impact on French and German society	51
3.4 Colonial troops in postwar France and Germany	58
Conclusion.....	60
Bibliography	64

Introduction

Among the most potent images of France during the Great War was the portrait of the uniformed *Tirailleur Sénégalais*, a colonial soldier with a friendly smile and ready to aid France in its time of need.¹ As Richard S. Fogarty has argued, the image of black soldiers fighting alongside whites in Europe convinced the French that their *mission civilisatrice* to bring civilization to Africans was indeed bearing fruit. Moreover, the fact that African Americans fought in segregated units reassured the French of their moral superiority over the United States and of the positive role of colonialism. Thus, the role of Africans in the French war effort buttressed the image of the French colonial empire against its critics at home and abroad.²

Eastward across the Rhine, in the newly-born German republic, defeat in the First World War provided a devastating blow to the morale of the armed forces.³ The *Dolchstoßlegende*, the idea that the seemingly undefeatable German army had been betrayed by conspiring politicians, became widespread in the postwar years and served to discredit the republican regime. In the face of national humiliation after the armistice, the “forgotten front” of East Africa suddenly reappeared.⁴ The undefeated *Schutztruppe* led by General Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck had surrendered only after receiving news of the armistice from Berlin. With a numerically inferior force, von Lettow-Vorbeck and his forces had consistently fended off the British, and had even managed to inflict substantial

¹Marc Michel, *Les Africains et la grande guerre : l'appel à l'Afrique, 1914-1918* (Paris : Karthala, 2003).

²Richard S. Fogarty, *Race and war in France: colonial subjects in the French army, 1914-1918* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008).

³Winfried Speitkamp, *Deutschkolonialgeschichte*, (Stuttgart: Reclam Universal-Bibliothek, 2005).

⁴Michael Pesek “German Colonial Identities in Wartime, 1914-1918” in Jürgen Zimmerer and Katy Heady (eds.) *German colonialism and national identity*, (New York; London: Routledge, 2011).

losses on the enemy at the Battle of Tanga in 1914. Furthermore, according to *Schutztruppe* officers, most of the *askari* or native African soldiers did not desert and remained the key element in the successful German campaign.⁵ In March 1919, the German remnants of the *Schutztruppe* paraded through the streets of Berlin in their ragged campaign uniforms, and were warmly received by Berliners. The loss of Germany's colonial possessions in the aftermath of the Treaty of Versailles, German colonial apologists argued that the alleged loyalty and fighting proficiency of the *askari* demonstrated the benefits of German colonisation and a model to be imitated by other European powers.⁶

However, this paternalistic image of Africans in Germany was soon forgotten when French West African troops stationed in the Rhineland in 1919 became the target for nationalist politicians who accused Africans of savagery and blamed France for "polluting the heart of Europe" with uncivilized soldiers. Africans were furthermore accused of rape and of cruelty during the occupation. These prejudices increased the discrimination and the isolation of the small African German minority, and during the Third Reich many Africans were sterilized and stripped of their civil rights.⁷

Similarly, on the French side, the distinguished participation of Africans on the Western Front did not lead to an improvement in the overall status of Africans in the French Empire. Only a select few among the political elites in French Africa enjoyed political rights after the war, but discrimination continued. Africans remained in the eyes

⁵ Speitkamp, op. cit.

⁶Susann Lewerenz, "'Loyal Askari' and 'Black Rapist' Two Images in the German Discourse on National Identity and their Impact on the Lives of Black People in Germany, 1918-45" in Jürgen Zimmerer and Katy Heady (eds.) *German colonialism and national identity*, (New York; London: Routledge, 2011), 173-183.

⁷Ibid.

of the French colonial authorities as simple-minded, brave but untrustworthy of any important duties or responsibilities. This same image of the child-like African was promoted in France through the use of racial caricatures that reminded the French public of the status of France as a colonial power and of the vast resources it possessed.

Decades after the end of colonial rule in Africa, the discussion of the role of the *Tirailleurs* and the *askari* and the larger issues of the colonial legacy have been a matter of debate by scholars. While in France the debate about the colonial era has provoked a longstanding debate about colonial history, in Germany, the narrative of the victorious Von Lettow Vorbeck and his loyal *askari* has only recently been challenged by authors such as Winfried Speitkamp and Michael Pesek, who consider German resistance in East Africa as futile and disastrous to the African native population.

Historiography

Generally, the scholarly works pertaining to the present thesis can be divided into two basic categories. The first includes historians who have an overall positive view of the use of colonial troops by the French and the Germans during World War I, and who argue that conscription brought tangible benefits regarding military discipline and assimilation into European customs. In addition, these authors usually focus on the role of individuals such as Charles Mangin, Blaise Diagne and Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck and on particular military engagements that helped to shape the myth of the loyal Africans valiantly led by tenacious European commanders. More recently, however, these views

have been challenged by more nuanced studies that delve into issues of identity, racism and downplay the heroic vision of the war.

In *From Adversaries to Comrades-in-Arms*, Charles John Balesi subscribes to the former point of view, wherein the war effort was a success and brought France and its colonies closer.⁸ Furthermore, Balesi argues that Africans, as martial peoples, were naturally fitted to serve in the army. His work emphasizes the military accomplishments of African troops, and the acceptance they received in France during the war. On the other hand, Marc Michel's *Les Africains et la Grande Guerre*, one of the most authoritative works pertaining to the use of colonial soldiers by France during World War I, provides a far more complex view of the subject. First of all, the mention of the Tirailleurs on the 11th of November, Veteran's Day, when France remembers the sacrifices made by its soldiers, remains largely a token gesture. Furthermore, unlike Balesi, Michel focuses on the troops from the A.O.F. (Afrique occidentale française or French West Africa), since the A.E.F. (Afrique équatoriale française, French East Africa) provided mainly troops for the conquest of German colonies in Africa. Marc Michel's work explores the extent to which the First World War changed the relationship between Africa and France and the French people, and the consequences of the Great War for Africans in the French colonies. In effect, the African participation was not limited to the military aspect, but also included an unprecedented economic contribution, which strained the resources of the A.O.F. On the military side, while voluntary enrolment did exist, forced recruitment and resistance on behalf of Africans provided the general pattern.

⁸ Charles J. Balesi, *From adversaries to comrades in arms: West Africans and the French military, 1915-1918*. (Waltham, Mass: Crossroads Press, 1978).

Most Africans resisted conscription, but in a variety of ways not limited to overt rebellion.⁹

The war did change the perception of Africans by the French. No longer was there a political debate pertaining to the use of colonial troops, since it was now considered a reality. Furthermore, German right-wing propaganda of the “Black Shame” of having French troops occupying the Rhineland did not deter the French from employing colonial troops, and in fact might have reinforced the French self-image as the bearers of civilisation. Among the French people, the image of the “black savage” was replaced by the less offensive but still superficial caricature of the “good fez-wearing *tirailleur*.”

In a similar vein, Richard S. Fogarty has argued that the use of colonial troops by the French during World War I involved a tension between French republican values and racial prejudice. In effect, while on the one hand colonial troops were considered a valuable asset in the Great War, they suffered institutionalized discrimination in the army. Despite a genuine commitment to the republican idea of equality by some French officers and politicians, such as the African delegate Blaise Diagne, that emphasized the shared brotherhood of Africans and native-born Frenchmen, in reality there were only limited advances in the acceptance of colonial soldiers as fellow comrades in arms. Fogarty also adds that the myth of the “Black Shame” wherein Germans accused the French of stationing “uncivilized” Africans on the Rhine was merely propaganda, which exaggerated the misconduct of a few individuals to denigrate French colonial troops.¹⁰

⁹ Michel, op. cit.

¹⁰Fogarty, op. cit.

Regarding the German and British military effort during the war in East Africa, Charles Miller's *Battle for the Bundu* provides a highly readable, if romanticized, day-to-day account of the conflict. In effect, Miller praises the role of Paul Emil Von Lettow-Vorbeck, the commander of the *Schutztruppe's* (Germany's colonial troops) as vital to understanding the almost heroic German resistance in East Africa during the Great War. In this way, von Lettow-Vorbeck and his African troops provide a model of military efficiency and gallantry, as well as an example of the devotion to the Fatherland and the Kaiser. The fact that in 1964 the German republic agreed to assign back pay for the surviving *askari* ends Miller's account on a high note, arguing that the sacrifice of the *askari* was rewarded in the end.¹¹

Furthermore, Miller suggests that it was the German combat experience against African rebellions such as the Maji Maji uprising that shaped the tactics in East Africa during the war. Rather than engage the British directly with a numerically inferior force, the Germans employed the guerrilla hit-and-run tactics that they themselves had suffered at the hands of the Wahehe in East Africa. Overall, Miller does provide a rather idealized vision of the German colonial period, which lavishes praise on German contributions to education and science in East Africa. However, while admitting that his account of the war is largely influenced by "literary license," Miller also explains the effects of the war on the African population, criticizing the abuses committed by both Africans and Europeans in the *Schutztruppe* against civilians.¹² This is a vital aspect, since more contemporary accounts of the war, such as Ross Anderson's *The Forgotten Front* consciously focus solely on military operations. Nevertheless, Anderson's work provides

¹¹Charles Miller, *Battle for the Bundu: the First World War in East Africa*, (New York: Macmillan, 1974).

¹² *Ibid.*

a valuable contribution to the present project, since his study includes a brief comparison of the French, British, Belgian, Portuguese and German war efforts in Africa. In effect, the *Schutztruppe* and the *Tirailleurs sénégalais* compare favorably to their other European counterparts, in particular the Portuguese, which were often despised by the British as poorly trained and unreliable.¹³

In regards to German colonial history, the available historiography depicts the colonial period as one of secondary importance for Germany. The work of Woodruff D. Smith and William Otto Henderson focuses instead on how the colonial period impacted future German claims over its former colonies and far-right nationalism.¹⁴ For instance, German nationalists argued that the loyalty of the *askari* to their colonial officers was a sign of the success of the German colonial enterprise, and therefore an argument in favour of returning German colonies after the war. Many authors of general works on African history such as J.D. Fage and Adu Boahen agree in fact that German colonies were the most efficient and profitable ones among all European powers, and Togoland is often cited as one of the few self-sufficient European colonies¹⁵. On the other hand, German historian Winfried Speitkamp questions this assessment, and argues that most German colonies represented a net loss for the German Empire, and required huge investments that were unfeasible at the time. Only limited improvements both in the

¹³Ross Anderson, *The Forgotten War: the East African Campaign, 1914-1918*.(Stroud, Gloucestershire: Tempus, 2004).

¹⁴ Woodruff D. Smith and Otto Henderson, *the German Colonial Empire* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978).

¹⁵ Adu Boahen, Albert, *UNESCO General History of Africa, Vol. 7, Africa under colonial domination 1880-1935*, (London: University of California Press ; Unesco, 1990).

productive capacity and in the quality of life of the African population came only after 1910 and the war made it impossible to determine their effectiveness.¹⁶

Recently, the cultural aspect of the use of colonial troops during the war has become the subject of numerous studies in both Germany and France. The inauguration of the *Tansaniapark* monument in Hamburg as a tribute to the German colonial forces sparked a heated debate in the German media about the pertinence of such a monument. In effect, columnists decried the fact that the monument emphasized the subordinate nature of Africans, since the sculptures were placed in such a way that made white Germans more prominent.¹⁷ Similarly, recent scholarly works by Jorg Lehmann, Michael Pesek and Susann Lewerenz have shed new light upon the German colonial period.¹⁸ Pesek in particular is strongly critical of the “heroic” depiction of German colonial troops during the war, which only served to boost the morale of the German armed forces after the defeat, but ignored the atrocities committed by Germans in Africa, such as the Herero genocide and the brutal suppression of the Maji Maji revolt. Susann Lewerenz studies the fundamental contradiction at the heart of the “Black Shame” controversy. When French African troops were stationed to occupy the Rhineland after 1918, the German press reacted furiously at the alleged shame endured by the Germans by having “uncivilized” peoples on European soil. Lewerenz is quick to point out the fact that, on the one hand, the German press extolled the virtues of the black soldiers of the *Schutztruppe* as heroes, but on the other hand they had no compunction in depicting French *Tirailleurs* as savages.

¹⁶ Winfried Speitkamp *Deutsche Kolonialgeschichte*, (Stuttgart, Reclam Universal-Bibliothek, 2005).

¹⁷ Sigrid Meissner, “Warum brauchen wir dieses Denkmal?” In: *Hamburger Morgenpost*, 6. September 2003

¹⁸ Jürgen Zimmerer and Katy Heady (eds.) *German colonialism and national identity*, (New York; London: Routledge), 2011.

This unresolved contradiction had a major influence in the relationship between Germany and its black minority. The few Germans of African origin remained in an ambiguous position, since the German Republic considered black Germans not as citizens, but as something akin to colonial subjects in a country that no longer possessed any colonies.

Comparative studies of the war effort are relatively rare in the historiography of this subject. As mentioned before in the bibliographical section, comparisons between the war efforts in the colonies are limited in scope and do not constitute the central theme among the works consulted. For instance, Ross Anderson's extensive chronicle of the war in East Africa compares the war effort of some of the opposing forces, such as the Portuguese, Belgian and British forces, but the focus of the book is the East African theatre.¹⁹ In addition, there is a certain gap between traditional military accounts of the war and more contemporary works that seek to assess the impact of the colonial period, upon both colonizers and colonized peoples. The purpose and the intended contribution of the present work will be therefore to bridge that gap by incorporating recent analyses, some of them from the postcolonial school, to complement the military history approach. Furthermore, a broader comparison of the overall French and German colonial experience will be necessary to understand the context in which the recruitment of native troops took place. For instance, the Herero genocide in German Southwest Africa arguably changed German policy towards native peoples, relaxing the harsh restrictions imposed on African peoples in order to gain some measure of cooperation.²⁰ Events in metropolitan France

¹⁹ Anderson, *op. cit.*

²⁰ Speitkamp, Miller, *op. cit.*

also guided colonial policies, as the French defeat in the Franco-Prussian War in 1870 initiated a stronger push for native enlistment.²¹

Issues to be considered

The present thesis will analyze and compare the use of colonial troops by France and Germany during the First World War. More specifically, the focus will be on the reasons that led to the employment of Africans. Why during the heyday of scientific racism and colonialism did both French and German authorities resort to arming and recruiting native troops? How was this contradiction solved, if it ever was? Or did it manifest itself in particular forms of racism that never disappeared? Was this reflected in the tasks assigned to Africans during the war effort? In this sense, the present work will also consider the contemporary relevance of the subject in both German and French society, particularly given the high rates of immigration and the impact thereof. It is also interesting to ponder what kind of impact the use of African troops had on questions of identity and citizenship.²² The question of identity has been extensively studied on the French side in the seminal work of Marc Michel and more recently by Richard Fogarty, and on the German side by the collective work of Jürgen Zimmerer and Katy Heady, as well as numerous scholarly works from the postcolonial school of studies.

Another major aspect of the present work will deal with the differences and similarities between both countries in regards to the use of Africans in the war. If there were any differences or similarities, what caused them? And can it be argued that one was more successful regarding the military aspect than the other? Is there a standard that

²¹Charles Mangin, *La force noire*. (Paris : Hachette, 1910).

²²Tanja Bühner, *Die Kaiserliche Schutztruppe für Deutsch-Ostafrika. Koloniale Sicherheitspolitik und transkulturelle Kriegführung 1885 bis 1918* (München: Oldenbourg, 2011).

can be utilized to measure success? Furthermore, does the fact that Africans fought on European soil mean that the French were more tolerant about racial differences than the Germans? And therefore, how did the colonial experience shape the use of native troops? On the African side, the attention will be focused on the experiences of Africans and how the war affected their perception of Europeans, as well as what kind of attachment, if any, did Africans feel towards their respective colonial powers.

Hypotheses

So far it is possible to argue that racist attitudes permeated the war effort on both sides. Both the Germans and the French undertook extensive studies in the colonies concerning the physical and “mental” characteristics of their African subjects, in order to determine the “fittest” recruits. Peoples considered too “primitive” or unruly were excluded from the outset. The language and the purpose of these studies are remarkably similar in both cases. Moreover, in the case of France, some authors such as Balesi argue that Africans in the French army were used as “cannon fodder” by their own commanders. On the German side, there seems to be a consensus regarding the porters, which suffered heavy casualties and were treated with contempt by German commanders. In general, however, the *askari* appear to have been a professional mercenary force, highly trained and valued by their commanders and in turn fiercely devoted to them.

Concerning the comparison between both countries, at this stage it can be argued that one important difference stems from the very nature of German colonial rule, which confronted large-scale uprisings against the colonial order, such as the Maji Maji and Herero wars. As mentioned in the bibliographical analysis, the German colonial troops

had to adapt to new forms of warfare employed by Africans, such as guerrilla tactics, and, despite a brutal repression, many German officers were highly impressed by the effectiveness and flexibility of Africans.²³ This grudging admiration later became the inspiration for the strategies employed in World War I, which combined with conventional training in the use of modern firearms. Therefore, it is interesting to note that there was at least one characteristic of their colonial subjects that the Germans aspired to learn from. On the French side, at least on the military aspect, the French limited the training of their colonial troops to European-style warfare, even when they were destined for deployment on African soil.²⁴ However, an important similarity between both sides centers on the fact that the war increased awareness of the presence of Africans in Europe. In effect, for the first time French and German citizens became more conscious of the extent of their respective colonial empires and saw Africans in a context other than the “colonial exhibitions” that had been common until then. This impact cannot be dismissed, since it had considerable repercussions throughout the 1930’s in both France and Germany.

Finally, the present work will utilize the hypothesis that, despite the considerable war effort of Africans, their sacrifice went largely unrewarded, since racism continued to pervade French and German society to this day. It is true that there were some symbolical concessions. In France, the government recognized the wartime service of the *Tirailleurs*, but pensions were infrequently paid, and French citizenship was only given to very few

²³ Miller, op. cit.

²⁴ Myron J. Echenberg, *Colonial conscripts : the Tirailleurs Sénégalais in French West Africa, 1857-1960* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann; J. Currey, 1991).

Africans, despite the lobbying efforts of Blaise Diagne.²⁵ In Germany, back pay for the few surviving *askari* veterans was honored by the Bundestag only in 1964, while the *askari* that immigrated to Germany remained in an ambiguous legal status as “former colonial subjects,” less than full citizens. In this way, it is interesting to understand Africans’ attachment to the colonial power. In the case of France, it appears that at least in some cases there was a genuine belief in the defense of *la patrie*, despite the fact that most *Tirailleurs* were conscripts.²⁶ In the case of the German *askari*, however, the attachment of the latter seems to have been to their commander rather than to the Kaiser or to the German nation as a whole, although Charles Miller claims that by the end of the war, the *askari* came to define themselves as German soldiers first and foremost.²⁷ Later on, in both France and Germany, the war brought increased African migration to Europe, which triggered a whole new host of problems of integration and assimilation. In France, the role of Blaise Diagne was vital in pushing for equality, while in Germany, a number of associations pushed for equal rights during the Weimar Republic, and surviving *askari* even demanded recognition from the Third Reich.²⁸ The question of Africans on European soil was politically manipulated by both the French and the German governments in the decades following the First World War, since they both tried to prevent their minorities from making “radical” demands, while providing some concessions.

²⁵ Ibid, also see Amady Aly Dieng, *Blaise Diagne, député noir de l’Afrique* (Paris, Éditions Chaka, 1990).

²⁶ Michel, op cit.

²⁷ Miller, op cit.

²⁸ Lewerenz, op cit.

Methodology

The present work will focus mainly on the experiences of Africans, both from a military point of view as well as from the broader perspective of colonial relations. Therefore, when analyzing sources the focus has been particularly on those documents that inform on the relationship between Africans and Europeans, particularly comments from officers concerning the military conduct of Africans, as well as their daily interaction with African soldiers. Unfortunately, most of these sources, with some valuable exceptions, have been written by Europeans. Thus, whenever possible, these have been contrasted with oral sources that depict the African side of the war and African viewpoints of their offices. As with any other historical source, oral sources pose challenges of their own regarding the objectivity of the source material. Therefore, complementary sources, such as contemporary newspaper chronicles particularly from the British perspective, will be used to provide contrast with the German and French narratives.

Sources

First and foremost, archival sources will be essential to the present thesis, particularly the military archives of the Centre d'Histoire et d'études des troupes d'outre-mer in Fréjus, the Service historique de la Défense in Paris, as well as those found at the Bundesarchiv branch offices in Berlin and in Freiburg. Documents consulted consist mainly of field journals of the East African campaign and the role of Africans on the Western Front. Other documents include casualty and decorations lists and medical

studies of Africans. Finally, documents and papers by military commanders as well as newspaper chronicles and articles about the war will also be analyzed.

Other important primary sources will include autobiographies by the historical personalities who were decisive in shaping the history of native forces, such as Charles Mangin and Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck, as well as ordinary soldiers' accounts. The works of Bakary Kamian and Joe Lunn will be particularly useful, since they constitute some of the most important works of oral history about Africans in the First World War.

Concerning secondary sources, as has been mentioned before, there is an abundance of accounts of the war from both the French and the German points of view. Scholarly articles will be utilized as a more in-depth analysis on specific points, such as issues of identity and historical memory. In addition, an understanding of the historical context will be necessary to adequately frame these oral sources. Therefore, the historiography of the colonial period will provide this historical background. Further complementary sources will include paintings and depictions of Africans during the war produced during the war itself, as well as marching songs and military traditions that could provide additional insight into the lives of Africans and Europeans during the campaign.

At this stage it is possible to venture forth the working hypothesis that, despite the fact that the scope of the use of native troops by France and Germany was geographically different (since Germany did not intend to employ them on European soil), the consequences were similar. In effect, the use of native troops in World War I increased the visibility of African colonies. Postcards and accounts of Africans in European armies

were common during the war. Also, for the duration of the war, racial prejudices were put into question, since both the Germans and the French had to justify the arming of native Africans. This did not mean a long-term process towards assimilation or better integration, however, as improvements in the situation of Africans were minimal. Despite the fact that France remained a colonial power until the 1960's, the memory of the role of Africans played in World War I remains as obscure in France as in Germany.

Chapter 1

1.1 The colonial context

1.1.1 France: The aftermath of 1870

By the nineteenth century, France had already acquired and lost an extensive colonial empire in North America and India. After the Treaty of Paris on May 30th 1814, Great Britain agreed to restore the colonial possessions that France had held in 1792. These mainly comprised the Antilles as well as French Guiana, the island of Bourbon in the Indian Ocean as well as some trading posts in India and Senegal. These territories became the basis for France's second colonial empire. Among the factors that led France to seek to consolidate another colonial empire, national pride played a vital role. According to Denise Bouche, "[...] military glory was a positive value in post-Napoleonic France and the *Grande Nation* found compensation overseas for the annihilation of its continental ambitions after the disasters of 1814-1815 and 1870-1871."²⁹ In addition, French colonial policy was also guided by the *mission civilisatrice*, a profound belief that French rule could help "backward peoples" attain progress. Leroy-Beaulieu's *De la colonisation chez les peuples modernes* argued that colonization benefitted everyone, since it facilitated the circulation of goods, capital and people.³⁰ This in turn enabled France to get rid of its surplus population while at the same time bringing

²⁹Denise Bouche, *Histoire de la colonisation française*, 2 vols. (Mesnil-sur-l'Estrée : Éditions Fayard, 1991), 2 :7. "La gloire militaire était une valeur positive dans la France post-napoléonienne et la Grande Nation trouva outre-mer des compensations à l'anéantissement de ses ambitions continentales après les désastres de 1814-1815 et de 1870-1871. "

³⁰ Cited by Jean-Paul Gourevitch, *La France en Afrique : cinq siècles de présence ; vérités et mensonges* (Pré -aux-clerics, 2004), 140-141.

the gifts of science, reason and technology to backward peoples.³¹ More explicitly, Prime Minister Jules Ferry argued in 1885 before the Chamber of Deputies that “There is a duty for the superior races to civilize the inferior ones.”³² Moreover, an informal but highly influential “parti colonial” (colonial party) was strongly involved in pushing for colonization. It comprised three main organizations. The Comité de l’Afrique française, created in 1890, was a small organisation that brought together bankers, businessmen and intellectuals. It received financial support from the government and sponsored colonial expeditions. Its political counterpart was the colonial lobby in the Chamber of Deputies, which had a strong influence over the colonial ministry (ministère des Colonies). Finally, the Union Coloniale constituted the propaganda arm, with numerous publications under its control that extolled the virtues of French colonialism. This colonial party would have a close relationship with the most influential figures of French colonialism, such as Louis Faidherbe and more importantly for purposes of the present essay, Charles Mangin, the man behind the creation of the “Force Noire.”³³ Some socialists such as Jean Jaurès even admitted their powerlessness to put a stop to French colonial designs. However, support for colonialism was hardly unanimous in French society and politics. Radicals such as Georges Clemenceau and most socialists were consistently opposed to it.

From 1820 onwards, France tried to develop these existing colonies, but it also sought to extend its possessions whenever possible. By 1843, the French had also established fortified trading posts in Gabon and Côte d’Ivoire. In the case of Senegal, the

³¹ Ibid.

³² Jules Ferry, *Discours prononcé à la Chambre des députés : le 28 juillet 1885 « Les fondements de la politique coloniale »*, <http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/histoire/ferry1885.asp> “[...] il y a pour les races supérieures un droit, parce qu’il y a un devoir pour elles. Elles ont le devoir de civiliser les races inférieures...”

³³ Gourevitch, 145.

French initially tried to develop the trading posts of Saint Louis and Gorée, with little success. Under French governor Louis Faidherbe, French control expanded into the interior of Senegal between 1854 and 1865. In the Maghreb, French forces landed at Algiers in March 1830 on the pretext of an Algerian slight to the French consul and occupied the city soon after. The French gradually extended their control to the rest of Algeria, despite the fierce resistance of Abd el Kader and the region of Kabylie.

Once again, the theme of French pride was vital to the conquest of Algeria. According to Bouche, King Charles X wished to rally French public opinion behind him and deflect criticism of his domestic policies. Even though he was soon after deposed and replaced by Louis-Philippe, his successor was also reluctant to begin his rule by giving away the first French conquest since 1814 and Algeria remained under French control. By 1843, the French had also established fortified trading posts in Gabon, and control was extended to the region called Oubangui-Chari (contemporary Central African Republic), and Chad. In the Congo region not claimed by the Belgian king Leopold II, the explorer Pierre Savorgnan de Brazza signed a treaty with Makoko, ruler of the Batéké peoples, which established a protectorate over the area in 1880.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the government of the Third Republic decided to reorganize its colonial possessions in order to rationalize their administration. By 1904, the West African colonies were unified in the *Fédération de l'Afrique occidentale* (French West Africa). The governor general was the highest authority in the federation, followed by lieutenant-governors, who were in charge of territorial subdivisions (Upper Senegal-Niger, French Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, Dahomey, Mauritania, Niger and Upper Volta) and district commanders (*commandants de cercle*), in charge of

keeping a census of the colonial population as well as levying taxes. This elaborate hierarchy, however, could not function without the cooperation of local chiefs and also interpreters. As the next chapter will analyze, African authorities were vital to the creation and the recruitment of the Tirailleur battalions during the First World War. Indigenous authorities did see a substantial reduction in their powers after the last local uprisings were suppressed, and by the time of the outbreak of the Great War, the efforts to instruct French administrators in local languages had been haphazard.³⁴

The territories in Equatorial Africa were for their part unified in the *Fédération de l'Afrique équatoriale française* (French Equatorial Africa). They included as has been mentioned before the colonies established at Oubangui-Chari, Gabon, Chad and the French Congo. The capital was established at the city of Brazzaville on the shore of the Congo River. French Equatorial Africa was never economically important nor particularly prestigious as a destination for colonial authorities, and contributed less manpower to the French war effort during World War I than French West Africa. Bouche argues that “The country was very poor and sparsely populated [...] Under-populated and poorly administered, French Equatorial Africa was a land of scandals.”³⁵

1.1.2 Germany: a late place in the sun

Unlike other major colonial powers like Great Britain and France, Germany had entered the colonial race much later due to its own political developments. In effect, while some historians like Karlheinz Graudenz and Janos Riesz argue that earlier

³⁴ Bouche, 135.

³⁵ Ibid., 136-137. “Le pays était très pauvre et peu peuplé [...] Sous peuplée, sous administrée, l’Afrique équatoriale française fut une terre de scandales.”

Prussian efforts in the Americas constituted a precedent of German colonial experience,³⁶ these can hardly be compared to the vast colonial experience of France, which, as has already been mentioned, had possessed a vast colonial empire well before the Scramble for Africa. The fact remains that only after German unification in 1870 could colonization efforts begin in earnest. Even then, support for colonization was lukewarm at best. Chancellor Otto von Bismarck himself refused to support colonization efforts because he considered colonies to be both a risk in foreign relations and a financial gamble that he was unwilling to consider.³⁷ However, he later changed his mind slightly, but rather than the strong state presence in the French colonies, Bismarck favored a model closer to that employed by the British at the beginning of their presence in India, through private companies backed by the state but limited to trading and investment rather than settlement, as in the French colonies. However, this limited approach was compromised from the outset by overzealous explorers and lobbyists, who eventually had to be backed up by the German government. Thus, according to Sebastian Conrad, “at no point was there ever one uniform view within Germany of the country’s colonial policies.”³⁸ On the one hand, German political parties never seemed to agree on the guiding principles of German colonialism. On the other, a fervently nationalist colonial lobby, gathered in the German Colonial Society, pushed for a bold colonial policy that could provide an outlet for German emigrants, in order to maintain their ties to the Fatherland, unlike German emigrants throughout the 19th century in the Americas.

³⁶ Karlheinz Graudenz and Hanns-Michael Schindler, *Die deutschen Kolonien: 100 Jahre Geschichte in Wort, Bild und Karte*, (Augsburg, :Weltbild Verlag GmbH, 1988), Janos Riesz, “La Force Noire dans les colonies africaines allemandes » in *Forces Noires des puissances coloniales européennes*, ed. Antoine Champeaux, Éric Deroo and Janos Riesz (Fréjus : Lavauzelle, 2009).”

³⁷ Sebastian Conrad, *German Colonialism : a short history* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 21.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 30.

In 1884, a tobacco merchant named Adolf Lüderitz led the charge by establishing a trading company in southwest Africa (modern-day Namibia), but he soon ran into financial difficulties and was compelled to sell his assets to the German government, which promptly established the protectorate of German South-West Africa (Deutsch-Südwestafrika) in 1884, the first German colony in Africa. Contrary to Bismarck's designs, however, the German colonial governors sought to establish a settlement colony. Theodor Leutwein envisioned a grand scheme of German cattle ranchers and gradually adopted policies to displace native peoples. By the 1890's, 70% of the land was in the hands of German settlers. This provoked major uprisings by the Herero and Namaqua peoples, which were brutally put down by the German colonial government. In time, German South-West Africa proved to be the costliest colony to maintain.

Similarly, in Cameroon, another private agent paved the way for the establishment of a German colony, in this case the explorer Gustav Nachtigal. Sponsored by the Woermanns, a renowned trading family, Nachtigal signed a treaty with local chiefs in 1884 and established a trading post at Douala in the coast of present day Cameroon. Unlike South-West Africa, however, German control was limited to the coast and left a large amount of autonomy to local authorities in the interior. German settlement was limited by a lack of interest and the presence of endemic diseases like malaria. Nonetheless, Governor Jesco von Puttkammer wished to establish a plantation economy, and his harsh policies soon provoked a political scandal that cost him his career.

The protectorate of Togoland (Togo) was the rare exception that somewhat resembled Bismarck's cautious approach. Nachtigal once again succeeded in signing a treaty with local chieftain Mlapa III, and the colony's economy was mainly centered on

exports of palm oil and kernels. As in Cameroon, German control was concentrated on the coast, but Togo did not require major financial assistance for its upkeep.

Finally, Deutsch-Ostafrika (German East Africa) largely followed in the footsteps of the other German colonies. This time it was Doctor Carl Peters, another explorer who signed contracts with local chiefs off the coast of modern Tanzania, and attempted to run them through his own company, the German East Africa Society. Again, this was the model favored by Bismarck, but the German government had to once again intervene, this time due to the constant conflict with the local population. By the 1890's, the German authorities attempted to strengthen their control over the interior. Thus, Rwanda and Burundi were formally incorporated into German East Africa, but in reality, the rulers of both territories retained a large measure of autonomy. As in Southwest Africa, harsh exploitation policies sparked numerous colonial revolts. Already in 1888, Arab traders rebelled against the loss of their position as commercial intermediaries during the so-called Araberaufstand.³⁹ But the major revolt against German colonial power took place between 1905 and 1908, the Maji Maji War. Utilizing hit-and-run tactics, Africans were able to keep the German forces at bay.⁴⁰

³⁹ Riesz, 46.

⁴⁰ Miller, 12-23.

1.2 The creation of African units

1.2.1 France: the Tirailleurs Sénégalais

Traditionally, historians have attributed to Louis Faidherbe, governor of Senegal, the creation of the Tirailleurs Sénégalais,⁴¹ but according to Myron Echenberg, the antecedents of the Tirailleurs can be traced as far back as the seventeenth century.⁴² In effect, as has been mentioned in the previous section, at this time the French presence in Senegal was limited to small trading posts run by private companies. The French as well as the British began to employ local Africans as soldiers and sailors to augment European units and protect those trading enclaves. Recruitment during this period was limited to slaves. In 1819, the “rachat” system was introduced, which consisted of giving a premium to slave-owners who would in turn provide their slaves as manpower for a period of time between 12 and 14 years. In practice, it was essentially similar to the use of slaves and the “rachat” system clashed with the drive for abolitionism of the time. Thus, by 1848 and after the emancipation of slaves, the “rachat” was abolished and replaced with voluntary enlistment. However, few Africans were attracted to service in the military. According to Echenberg, the abusive recruitment policies of the past had caused Africans to see it as a degrading, as well as poorly remunerated, activity.⁴³ A recruitment crisis ensued and the “rachat” was reinstated in order to fill the ranks. When Faidherbe became governor of Senegal in 1854, he established the first battalions of the

⁴¹ Bouche, 49.

⁴² Echenberg, 7.

⁴³ Ibid., 9.

Tirailleurs Sénégalais in 1857, following a decree on the matter by the Emperor Napoleon III. While regulations and terms of service for Africans were the same as for Europeans, a crucial difference was that the wages of the former would be determined by the colonial authorities. Faidherbe also tried to establish new forms of recruitment that centered on attractive uniforms, limits on physical labor and enlistment bonuses. Even then, however, coercion was still the main source of manpower.

In 1910, Charles Emmanuel Mangin, a lieutenant colonel from Lorraine, published *La Force Noire*, where he warned against the demographic decline of France, particularly when compared to Germany. Analyzing the demographic trends during the course of the 19th century, Mangin argued that the French population was “[...] headed towards disappearance, and this decline, which has already begun, constitutes a real danger in the present state of matters in Europe.”⁴⁴ Therefore, Mangin continues, until this problem is addressed, France must take advantage of its colonial empire and massively enlist black Africans. He then proceeds to chronicle the role of black soldiers throughout history, and argues that blacks are naturally suited for war. In his own words “the black is born a soldier even more than a warrior, for his military instruction is easy and he has a feeling for discipline.”⁴⁵ Therefore, he pushed for the creation of a reserve force, initially 10,000 strong and recruited mainly from French West Africa. Military service, however, would not entail political rights. As has been mentioned before, Mangin had influences in the colonial party, and gradually his ideas began to convince

⁴⁴ Charles Mangin, *La Force Noire*, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k75022x/f10.image.r=tirailleur.langFR> “C’est donc bien vers la disparition que tend la population française, et la diminution, déjà commencée, constitue dans l’état actuel de l’Europe un véritable danger, ”8.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 236. “Le noir naît soldat plus encore que guerrier, car son instruction militaire est facile et il a le sentiment de la discipline. ”

metropolitan authorities. Together with a few like-minded colleagues, Mangin lead a mission to West Africa to study and identify the “races” that were most suitable for the “force noire” he envisioned. However, Mangin’s demands betrayed an “extraordinary ignorance” of local conditions.⁴⁶ Local authorities like William Merlaud-Ponty, governor of French West Africa at the time, warned of disastrous consequences for the colony’s population and economy. In any case, Mangin’s initiatives would not result in massive conscription until the beginning of World War I.

1.2.2 Germany: the Schutztruppe

Unlike France, there was no systematic attempt to massively enlist Africans in the service of Germany, or to deploy them in a Europe theatre. As Charles Mangin argued, Germany far outnumbered the French demographically, so that justification was absent. Furthermore, the colonial troops were often neglected when compared to the other branches of the German armed forces like the army and the navy. Tanja Bühner has defined it as the “forgotten third military formation of the German Empire,”⁴⁷ often incoherently regulated. As has been mentioned before, the initial colonial impulse in Germany came from private enterprises and businessmen. As was the case with the British and the French in the 17th century, the Germans also created private militias (Privaten Gewaltorganisationen) to protect their investments.

However, these private militias soon proved inadequate for the task of defending German colonial interests, particularly during the Araberaufstand. Therefore, the German

⁴⁶ Michel, 18.

⁴⁷ Bühner, 86.

imperial government decided to replace the private militias with the Kaiserliche Schutztruppe, which can be roughly translated as “imperial protection troops.” The law regulating the creation of such a force, the Schutztruppengesetz, was passed by the Reichstag in February 1891 and thereafter the Schutztruppe was to be under the command of the German Imperial Navy.⁴⁸ At this time, it was composed mainly of Muslim Sudanese soldiers recruited from neighboring British East Africa, hence the term “askari” (Arabic for “soldier”) utilized to designate black Africans under German command. However, as tensions with Great Britain increased, the Germans were forced to recruit the askari within their own colonies. As was the case with the French in the 19th century, the askari were essentially mercenaries, but, unlike French wages, those offered by Germany were considered attractive and the prospect of taking spoils from rival tribes as well as the prestige associated with the Schutztruppe provided far more incentives for Africans to enlist. Unlike Mangin’s appeals for a Force Noire, however, the askari remained a mercenary force.

As with the French, German colonial authorities also made detailed studies on the differences between races. However, unlike the French, these constituted private observations recorded by officers in their field journals or specialized work by ethnographers and scientists. Nonetheless, the intent is remarkably similar in both cases: provide a classification of the different races inhabiting the colonies and find those suitable for war. For instance, General Georg Maercker in *Unsere Schutztruppe in*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 87-88.

Ostafrika singled out the Swahili-speaking peoples of the coast as particularly brave and ferocious during the Araberaufstand.⁴⁹

The East African Schutztruppe provided the model for the rest of the German colonies, but troop composition varied widely depending on the region. For example, on the eve of World War I, the Schutztruppe in German South West Africa was composed exclusively of 1,870 European soldiers. Due to the scale of the Herero and Nama uprisings and the colony's segregated social order, Africans were considered particularly untrustworthy. This contrasts with Togoland, which, as has been mentioned before, was relatively peaceful and therefore the Schutztruppe comprised around 400 men, Africans and Europeans.⁵⁰ Cameroon on the other hand counted around 200 white officers and 1600 askari.⁵¹ As was the case with the Tirailleurs, the word askari became a generic term for all Black Africans under the German colours, regardless of their ethnic origin. This was probably not only out of tradition, but also probably to simplify designating them in field journals and other administrative tasks.

⁴⁹ Reisz, 53.

⁵⁰ Graudenz and Schindler, 207.

⁵¹ Reisz, 60.

Chapter 2

2.1 The setting: from Chemin des Dames to the Kilimanjaro

Recruitment progressed slowly in the years before the war. As explained in the brief historical survey of the Tirailleurs, there was often a lack of volunteers, so Governor Merlaud-Ponty was forced to resort to partial conscription in 1912.⁵² Furthermore, there was a need for adaptation to African customs when Tirailleur battalions were concentrated outside of their colonies of origin. In this way, while Mangin had envisioned a professional army in the image of French metropolitan units, colonial authorities had to allow the Tirailleurs to bring wives and families along.⁵³ This certainly clashed with the sense of uniformity that a modern army is supposed to establish, which provoked strong criticism from other sectors of the armed forces. Despite this, according to Michel, “[...] whatever the case, it is considered that this spared black soldiers from promiscuity and provided them with an almost village-like environment.”⁵⁴

The outbreak of World War I finally provided the supporters of the *Force Noire* with the chance to put their ideas into practice. However, in reality, West Africa was far from the reservoir that Mangin envisioned. At this time, the contingent of Africans consisted of approximately 30,000 men, half of which came from French West Africa and the other half unequally distributed between Equatorial Africa, Algeria, Morocco and Madagascar. In the words of Marc Michel, recruiting Africans to fight in a European war “[...] shows the profound ignorance of local realities on the part of those responsible at

⁵²Echenberg, 25.

⁵³Michel, 28.

⁵⁴Ibid. “Quoi qu’il en soit, estime-t-on, cela épargne aux soldats noirs la promiscuité et leur fournit un cadre de vie quasi-villageois.”

the time.”⁵⁵In effect, archival sources also confirm the ignorance of French authorities regarding the tensions in their colonies.⁵⁶ While recruitment continued throughout 1914, there were multiple instances of resistance and evasion. By September 1915, a full-scale mutiny broke out in French West Africa, which was only contained with great difficulty. Thereafter, recruitment efforts fell onto Blaise Diagne, who managed to increase recruitment in the last years of the war by promising equality of rights to volunteers. His efforts were by all accounts successful,⁵⁷and by the time of the armistice, the Tirailleurs Sénégalais numbered around 100,000 and were deployed along the German border. In Europe, the Tirailleurs were engulfed in the horrors of the Western Front, but were also deployed in the Dardanelles and in the Balkans.⁵⁸They served to reinforce numerous regular battalions and at times were merged into larger units when their losses were too high.

Meanwhile, in the German colonies, German colonial governors were well aware of the weak strategic position of their respective territories. In effect, many German colonial possessions in Africa were surrounded by the Entente powers, in particular Togo and Cameroon. Thus, German civil authorities tried to follow a neutral policy in the war. The governor of Togoland, Major von Doering, suggested to the British and the French that neutrality was mutually advantageous on the basis of the economic interdependence of Europeans in West Africa.⁵⁹ Similarly, in German East Africa, Governor Heinrich

⁵⁵ Michel, 29.

⁵⁶Composition des troupes coloniales à la mobilisation (Conclusions) 16 H 17 Musée des Troupes de Marine, Centre d’histoire et d’études sur les troupes d’outre-mer (CHETOM), Route de Bagnols en Forêt, B.P. 94-83608. “Le loyalisme de nos Colonies est caractérisé par une tranquillité presque absolue [...]”

⁵⁷ Michel, Joly, Echenberg and Balesi all coincide in the vital influence of Blaise Diagne in the recruitment of Tirailleurs in 1918.

⁵⁸ Éric Deroo and Antoine Champeaux, *La Force Noire* DVD, 2007.

⁵⁹Hew Strachan, *The First World War in Africa*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 14.

Schnee wished to avoid war, since the memory of the costly Maji Maji uprising was still fresh and he preferred to concentrate on the colony's economic development.⁶⁰ In addition, German settlers as well as missionaries also sided with the civil authorities, since they argued that war would disrupt their work in Africa. However, French and British troops rejected German requests for neutrality. Therefore, on August 5 1914, Togoland was attacked by Entente forces and the colony surrendered in only 20 days. The Entente's objective was the wireless station of Kamina, Germany's most important wireless station, which linked German colonies and trade. As has been mentioned before, owing to the pacified state of the colony, the Schutztruppe in Togoland was numerically small and posed no serious resistance. According to Strachan, Governor von Doering also intentionally conducted a half-hearted defence in accordance with his desire for neutrality.⁶¹

Cameroon was a rather different case. Unlike German East Africa, Governor Ebermaier's goal was to hold onto the colony as long as possible and protect Germany's presence there. To this end, Ebermaier was prepared to retreat into the interior, since, as has been mentioned before, only the coastal regions had been settled and explored. Consequently, knowledge of the terrain was crucial to the war effort. Unlike Togoland, however, the Entente offensive was spearheaded by the French. The British on their side concentrated on seizing the major ports and their first major offensive was repulsed with heavy casualties.⁶² Throughout 1915, however, British and French forces began to push inland utilizing the river network and finally Ebermaier retreated into the Spanish colony

⁶⁰ Michael Pesek, *Das Ende eines Kolonialreiches: Ostafrika im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag GmbH, 2010), 42.

⁶¹ Strachan, 18.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 35.

of Muni (modern-day Equatorial Guinea) and surrendered on February 18 1916. For its part, Southwest Africa was a rather secondary theater of the war. An arid landscape (unlike other German colonies) and clear lines of movement along the railroads made for very different conditions from those in Cameroon and Togoland. Strachan summarizes well the nature of warfare in this particular region: “the South-West African campaign was characterized by a maximum of movement and a minimum of casualties.”⁶³ Given its own unique history as the only German colony with a large settler population, the defense of the colony was almost entirely conducted by white German soldiers and settler commandos. In effect, archival sources make almost no mention of the role of natives during the war, except for the Colored (mixed-race), which were criticized for taking advantage of the war to settle scores with German settlers and murdering women and children.⁶⁴ In any event, German forces could only pose a token resistance to South African troops led by Jan Smuts, and surrendered in July 1915.

Finally, the war in German East Africa constitutes the main background for the present work. The colony saw the highest number of German askari take part in the First World War, alongside their white counterparts and officers. Their commander, Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck became a legend of German military genius, admired both by his men and his enemies. Unlike the Tirailleurs, this time Europeans had to adapt to African conditions. In effect, a war of movement like in South-West Africa was impossible, due to the densely forested landscape of East Africa. Furthermore, malaria was endemic to the area and was responsible for a large number of casualties.⁶⁵ However, as with the rest of

⁶³ Ibid., 91.

⁶⁴ Report on the South-West African campaign, R 1001 9564, Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfelde.

⁶⁵ Strachan, 124.

the German colonies, there was strong reluctance to enter the war among certain sections of the population. Von Lettow-Vorbeck himself acknowledged this in his memoirs:

Could we [...] prevent considerable numbers of the enemy from intervening in Europe? It is true however that I did not succeed in interesting all authorities in this idea [...] it must be admitted that in the case of a large number of Germans [in Dar-es-Salaam] (and even some of the local Government authorities) it actually did take some time before they were imbued with that warlike spirit without which the fulfillment of our task was simply impossible.⁶⁶

Encircled by the British Navy, Governor Schnee declared Dar-Es-Salaam an open city, while the Schutztruppe with Lettow-Vorbeck in command, retreated into the interior of the colony. At this time, the Schutztruppe numbered about 218 Europeans and 2542 askari, and, according to Strachan it was “[...] a professional military elite, proud of their vocation and often the sons of soldiers.”⁶⁷In November 1914, the British tried to land at Tanga, on the northern coast of the colony. Von Lettow-Vorbeck had anticipated the landing and prepared accordingly. On November 3rd the landing was repulsed by the Schutztruppe in the first major German victory in the war. A confident Lettow-Vorbeck decided therefore to attack Jassin, a British-occupied village in the border with British East Africa in January 1915. Although successful, the attack resulted in heavy casualties among German officers, which Lettow-Vorbeck could hardly afford. Furthermore, the general learned of the fall of German South-west Africa, which would enable South African forces to join the British. Thus, from the end of 1915 to 1918 the Germans were forced to resort to guerrilla warfare, attacking strategic enemy positions and establishing their headquarters in the areas where they could get supplies. When the Belgians entered the war from the west of the colony, the Schutztruppe was gradually forced to retreat

⁶⁶ Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck, *My Reminiscences of East Africa* (London: Hurst and Blackett,), 3-4, 20-21.

⁶⁷ Strachan, 103.

further south until, in 1917, they crossed the Rovuma River into Portuguese East Africa (Mozambique). Even then they fought on until they learned the news of the armistice from Europe.

2.2 The soldiers: conflict and accommodation

In general, it can safely be said that the Tirailleurs Sénégalais performed as well as their European counterparts. Most reports praise their extraordinary courage, particularly during specific engagements such as the defense of the Yser at the outbreak of the war, Chemin des Dames, the Nivelle offensive and the battle of Verdun. A decision by the government and signed by Georges Clemenceau in 1919 conferred the Croix de Guerre as well as the *fourragère* to the Tirailleur battalions in honour of the “particularly brilliant way” in which the Tirailleurs conducted themselves during the war.⁶⁸ Criticisms that the Tirailleurs were cowardly and ran away at the sight of gas attacks or charging German infantry come mostly from English commanders.⁶⁹ Insufficient preparation and poor leadership, particularly in the case of Chemin des Dames and the failed Nivelle offensive (which sparked a large-scale mutiny in 1917) seem to be the main causes for the poor results, which include not only the Tirailleurs but also the French army in general.

⁶⁸ “Décision du Ministère de la Guerre, April 23 1919,” 15 H 30, Musée des Troupes de Marine, Centre d’histoire et d’études sur les troupes d’outre-mer (CHETOM), Route de Bagnols en Forêt, B.P. 94-83608. “Les troupes sénégalaises ont participé d’une façon particulièrement brillante aux opérations de la grande guerre.”

⁶⁹ Michel, 58.

On the German side, there seems to be a consensus between primary sources and specialized works on the good performance of the askari and their overall loyalty. Thus, a report after the battle of Tanga simply attests that “the conduct of our troops, as well as the coloured ones,⁷⁰ was excellent.”⁷¹ Another report by Lieutenant Popper on the 8th of November added that “The conduct of the company askari, who today fought for the first time, was excellent, despite encountering numerically superior opponents.”⁷² For his part, Governor Schnee commented after the battle of Mahiwa “[...] this battle was, alongside Tanga, the greatest engagement in the whole war. During the battle, not only did the Germans display an outstanding valour, but also the askari fought equally brilliantly.”⁷³ Schnee also mentions that many askari had not fought against Europeans before, and therefore their performance was unexpectedly good.⁷⁴ Interestingly, as with the French with the Bambara, the Wanjwamwezi seem to have been the favored ethnicity by the Germans, since there are numerous specific references to them and their bravery.⁷⁵ Finally, Schnee also makes a rather interesting point about the pacification of East Africa, since he argues that no major uprising took place in the colony since 1905, where there were only 6000 Germans surrounded by 8 million Africans. According to Schnee,

⁷⁰In this case, the term “coloured” refers to the askari and not to mixed-race soldiers.

⁷¹ “Report on the Battle of Tanga,” November 5 1914, R 1001/9567, Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfelde. “Die Verhaltung unserer Truppe auch der Farbigen war ausgezeichnet.”

⁷² “Report on the Battle of Tanga by Lieutenant-Kompagnie Führer Popper” November 8 1914 R 1001/9567, Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfelde,. “Die Haltung der Askari der Kompagnie, die heute zum ersten Male im Gefecht waren, war trotz öfterer heftiger Zusammenstöße mit dem an Zahl weit überlegenen Gegner, ausgezeichnet.”

⁷³ “Vortrag vom Gouverneur Dr. Schnee, March 15, 1919. RW 51/9, Bundesarchiv Freiburg, Wiesentalstraße 1079115, Freiburg, 11. “Diese Schlacht war neben der Schlacht bei Tanga das größte Gefecht des ganzen Krieges. In ihr bewiesen nicht nur die Deutsche einen hervorragenden Heldenmut, sondern auch unsere Askaris schlugen sich ebenfalls glänzend.”

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Ibid., 19.

this proves the loyalty of both the askari and the African subjects.⁷⁶ However, given both the wide intertribal scope of the Maji Maji uprising, unheard of in German colonies at the time, and its violent suppression, it is unlikely that any other rebellion could have been as coordinated. Furthermore, Schnee's whole argument tries to make the case that German colonial policies were benign and that therefore Germany should not have lost its colonies. This was quite common at the time the document was written, since both the British and the French pushed for the creation of protectorates over the former German colonies due to the "ineptitude" of the Germans to properly develop them.

In an interview conducted years after the war, von Lettow-Vorbeck himself added that "[...] our men, even the black "askaris" [...] felt the simple duty to help the German Emperor and continued fighting therefore [...],"⁷⁷ despite acknowledging that some askari eventually deserted. In his memoirs, Lettow-Vorbeck also had great praise for the conduct of the askari. At Engito Mountain he commented: "although the enemy consisted of English and Boer farmers, who were therefore good horsemen and good shots, our Askari attacked them with the bayonet with such dash, that out of a strength of eighty Europeans some twenty dead were left behind."⁷⁸ Furthermore, he also emphasized the askari's chivalrous conducts vis-à-vis prisoners of war: "our Askari earned the respect of the enemy by their bravery in action and their humane conduct. On the 10th March the English lieutenant Barrett was severely wounded and fell into our hands [...] he was

⁷⁶Ibid., 17.

⁷⁷Duane Koenig, "A Note on World War I: General Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck in German East Africa." *Military Affairs*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (Feb., 1970), 14.

⁷⁸Lettow-Vorbeck, 33.

surprised when our Askari, who had no European with them, tied him up [...] and carried him to a doctor.”⁷⁹

The use of native troops by both France and Germany was marked from the outset by a tension between the rigid structure of European armed forces and the necessary adaptation to both African soldiers and, in the case of Germany, the African landscape itself. In the case of the Schutztruppe, officers had to adjust their recruitment tactics as well as their regimental regulations and their tactics to the particular conditions of East Africa and Cameroon.

On the French side, while Africans certainly had to adapt to European warfare on the Western Front, French commanders also had to be flexible enough to accommodate the Tirailleurs. First and foremost, African troops were unfamiliar with the climate of northern France and suffered terribly because of the cold and the inadequate trenches.⁸⁰ Therefore, during the harshest months of winter, they were taken to summer camps in the south of France, particularly in the region of Fréjus and Saint-Raphael. This appears to have been a fairly extended practice, as the journal of Corporal Marcel Cau attests. When commenting on his meeting with some Tirailleur companies, Cau mentioned that other French soldiers were used to seeing the Tirailleurs leave during the coldest months of the year.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Ibid., 107.

⁸⁰ Langlier Hamipré, “La bataille de Chemin des Dames”, August 20, 1914, 15 H 134. Musée des Troupes de Marine, Centre d’histoire et d’études sur les troupes d’outre-mer (CHETOM), Route de Bagnols en Forêt, B.P. 94-83608.

⁸¹ Marcel Cau “Extraits du journal du caporal Marcel Cau,” 1916-1918, 15 h 134, Musée des Troupes de Marine, Centre d’histoire et d’études sur les troupes d’outre-mer (CHETOM).

Archival sources also reveal a number of recommendations and special considerations that the French army had to take into account when employing African units. For example, a 1930 document by General Rueff listed many of the insights that the French military learned during World War I regarding their African soldiers. The document begins by asserting that “The Tirailleur is a “soldier” in the full sense of the word. Well employed he will perform as well as any other unit, even a European one, under any circumstance.”⁸² This reinforces the assertion that, in terms of military prowess, Senegalese troops generally performed well during World War I. Part II again noted the extreme sensitivity of Senegalese troops to the cold. Therefore, special precautions against respiratory illnesses had to be taken, including adequate clothing and discouraging certain conducts ascribed to the Senegalese, such as washing themselves with cold water.⁸³ Dietary considerations were also vital, since the French learned they had to adapt the rations to the Senegalese’s constitution. “The Senegalese, a big eater, loves to feel a full belly” Rueff continues, “[...] well prepared rice gives him a feeling of satisfaction that no other food can provide in equal measure.”⁸⁴ Furthermore, Rueff also noted the importance of having a proper supply of Kola nuts, a staple of West African peoples.⁸⁵ Even then, however, Rueff advised against maintaining the Senegalese custom

⁸² “Instruction sur l’emploi spécial des troupes sénégalaises” 4, 18 H 130. Musée des Troupes de Marine, Centre d’histoire et d’études sur les troupes d’outre-mer (CHETOM). “Le tirailleur Sénégalais est un ‘soldat’ dans toute l’acception du terme. Bien employé il donnera un rendement égal à celui de n’importe quelle autre troupe même européenne en toutes circonstances.”

⁸³ Ibid., 8-10

⁸⁴ Ibid., 12. “Le Sénégalais, gros mangeur, aime se sentir le ventre plein [...] du riz bien préparé lui procure un sentiment de satiété que ne lui donnera pas un autre aliment à poids égal.”

⁸⁵ Ibid., 13.

of eating a large meal once a day, and instead recommended that Senegalese soldiers be compelled to adapt to the customary three daily meals.⁸⁶

Adaptation to African soldiers and conditions was even more pronounced in the case of the Schutztruppe. In effect, the askari were not only allowed to bring their families along, but in the same way as European soldiers, they were permitted a number of personal servants called “boys.”⁸⁷ The number of porters allowed increased depending on the rank of the askari.⁸⁸ Moreover, German military regulations included provisions for religious holidays in the case of Muslim askari.⁸⁹ Military regulations encouraged gaining the confidence of elders or members of African elites enrolled in the Schutztruppe, since this was considered essential for maintaining discipline. Therefore, whites were encouraged to be patient with elders and not to insult or otherwise demean them, as well as to engage in occasional gestures of friendship.⁹⁰ In addition, German officers also tolerated practices that they personally disliked, such as taking clothes from the dead on the battlefield and pillaging. Upon seeing his askari take clothing from a dead Indian soldier, a German officer remarked “With our Blacks one had to even think and feel an African in this campaign.”⁹¹

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Alfred Dörffel, Oberapothekers Schutztruppe, report of the main pharmacist of the Schutztruppe. RW 51/ 6. Bundesarchiv Freiburg.

⁸⁸ Löhnungs- und Verpflegungsordnung für die farbige Soldaten der Schutztruppe und der Polizeitruppe des ostafrikanischen Schutzgebietes, 8 (1904), RW 1001 9587 Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfelde.

⁸⁹ Kommando-Befehl-Sammlung der Kaiserlichen Schutztruppe für Deutsch-Ostafrika (1910 Section VIII (6), 56, RW 5110, Bundesarchiv Freiburg,

⁹⁰ Ibid., article 6 and page 6.

⁹¹ Alfred Lorenz “Das Gefecht von Mahumbika,” N103/20, Bundesarchiv Freiburg, Wiesentalstraße 1079115, Freiburg. “Man mußte mit unserem Schwarzen eben afrikanisch denken und fühlen in diesem Feldzüge.”

Interspersed with these accommodations, however, other measures sought to regulate African life according to European standards. Section 2 b.2 of the same military regulations prohibited slavery among the askari and encouraged askari to have a “legal” wife (rechtmäßige Frau).⁹² Other regulations granted a bonus on the birthday of the Kaiser,⁹³ possibly another step to remind the askari of their belonging to the German Empire.

But the very structure of the Schutztruppe reflected African conditions. As explained in Chapter 1, German colonial troops encountered stiff resistance during the Maji Maji war. Slow-moving German divisions proved an easy target for the insurgents’ hit-and-run tactics. When the revolt was brutally crushed, German commanders modified the Schutztruppe’s tactics accordingly. Small and tactically autonomous companies became the norm, and this flexibility proved crucial in the dense jungles of East Africa, where complex tactical manoeuvres were largely ineffective.

However, despite these efforts at adapting European regulations, there was also a clear feeling of racial superiority towards Africans. For instance, in the case of France, from the sources analyzed, the Tirailleurs were not considered capable of taking the initiative during combat operations. They could perform well, but only as long as they were properly employed, which in practice meant that they had to be guided by European officers. Rueff adds that “[...] every elementary precaution that a White will instinctively take will require an order for a Black to do likewise.”⁹⁴ Echoing Rueff’s assertions is the

⁹² Ibid., 8-9.

⁹³ Löhnungs und... Article 20, p. 7.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 10. “Toutes les précautions élémentaires qu’un Blanc prendra instinctivement les cadres devront les commander aux Noirs.”

valuable testimony of Second Lieutenant Charles N'Tchoréré, one of the few Tirailleurs to attain officer rank. In his report on the conduct of the Tirailleurs, N'Tchoréré praised the valour of his fellow Africans, but emphasized that “The Tirailleur, as we have already said, is a big child, often an unconscious enemy of his most direct interests. His superior, as a father to a child, must illuminate, guide and even force him towards his interests, which almost always correspond to those of Military Duty!”⁹⁵ Another notice on the role of the Tirailleurs adds that “[...] in general, the Black is rough, credulous, proud, vain; he loves speeches and is easily influenced by good speakers, storytellers [...] he easily falls into a dumb stubbornness when he believes he is insulted or a victim of an injustice.”⁹⁶

Similarly, German officers considered black soldiers intellectually inferior to whites. A German officer, Moritz Freiherr von Lyncker wrote in his memoirs that “Naturally, the Black is never to be compared to a European.”⁹⁷ Another officer, Captain von Hammerstein, asked himself whether blacks were reliable, and answered “it cannot be said. How the black thinks has not been discovered. The black is very impulsive.”⁹⁸ Also, German military regulations assigned less food supplies to Africans, and of a lesser variety. Thus, besides meat and fish, Europeans were entitled to receive

⁹⁵ Charles N'Tchoréré, “Le tirailleur Sénégalais vu par un officier indigène” 15 H 30, Musée des Troupes de Marine, Centre d'histoire et d'études sur les troupes d'outre-mer (CHETOM). “Le Tirailleur, avons-nous dit, est un grand enfant, bien souvent ennemi inconscient de ses propres intérêts les plus directs. Son chef, tel un père pour son enfant, doit l'éclairer, le guider, voire le forcer vers ses intérêts, lesquels se confondent, d'ailleurs, presque toujours, avec ceux du Devoir Militaire!”

⁹⁶ “Notice sur les Sénégalais, leur emploi au combat, règles d'emploi des bataillons de Tirailleurs Sénégalais” 15 H 30, Musée des Troupes de Marine, Centre d'histoire et d'études sur les troupes d'outre-mer (CHETOM). “En général, le noir est fruste, crédule, orgueilleux, vantard; il aime les discours (le palabre), se laisse facilement influencer par les beaux parleurs, les conteurs [...] Il se bute facilement dans un entêtement stupide lorsqu'il se croit lésé, victime d'une injustice.”

⁹⁷ Moritz Freiherr Von Lyncker, “Die Schuztruppe für Deutsch Ost Afrika im Frieden und Kriege,“ “Selbstredend ist der Neger nie mit einem Europäer zu vergleichen,“ N103/99 (1), Bundesarchiv Freiburg.

⁹⁸ “Chronicle of Hauptmann Von Hammerstein and the battle of Tanga,“ N103/96, 2-3. Bundesarchiv Freiburg.

honey, jam, noodles and different kinds of liquor, while Africans were limited to “native” food, like cornmeal and other types of flour, as well as beans and meat.⁹⁹

In addition, the standard-issue field rifle for the askari was slow and outdated and produced a lot of smoke upon firing, due to the mistrust towards natives among German officers. There were also separate ranks for the askari, to ensure that they could not rise above a certain position within the Schutztruppe.

⁹⁹ Eiserner Bestand des Feldmagazins Muhesa, RW 1001 9569, Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfelde.

Chapter 3

3.1 Memory and the manipulation of the role of Africans after the war

After the war, both the French and the German authorities utilized the memory of African combatants to fulfill specific political goals, in particular the success of their respective colonial projects. In the case of France, this meant first of all demonstrating that the resources of the French empire were limitless and that France could successfully call upon its colonial troops in case of war. The war had effectively demonstrated that Africans could perform well in combat. But more importantly, after the end of World War I, French government officials promoted the view that the use of Africans proved France's commitment to the republican ideals of fraternity and equality.¹⁰⁰ In the postwar years, the French government celebrated this particular vision by erecting numerous memorials and monuments to the Tirailleurs.¹⁰¹ However, despite the promises made by Blaise Diagne during the war, there was little improvement in the conditions of Africans, both in the colonies and in metropolitan France. In 1920, Diagne, re-elected as deputy for Senegal, led a campaign to extend citizenship to African veterans, but was thwarted by more conservative officials, who feared unrest.¹⁰² Furthermore, very few Africans were promoted to the officer corps, since French officials did not want blacks leading whites. To this end, the French government created elite military schools such as the École

¹⁰⁰ Fogarty, 271.

¹⁰¹ Michel, 239.

¹⁰² Joe Lunn, *Memoirs of the Maelstrom: A Senegalese Oral History of the First World War*, (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1999), 199-202.

Spéciale des Sous-Officiers Indigènes at Fréjus. Only a select few, like Captain Charles N'Tchoréré managed to attain an officer's rank.¹⁰³ Finally, the 1919 Conscription Law formalized conscription in French West Africa, and established quotas for each administrative division. Males would be chosen through a lottery system. These lists however, were based on demographic surveys of dubious accuracy. According to Echenberg, the methods used were “slipshod” and “pseudoscientific”¹⁰⁴ and did not reflect the actual demographic capabilities of the colonies. Therefore, a large gap remained between the promises made before and during the war and the actual change in the colonial policies.

In the case of Germany, the historical narrative that developed after the war aimed to present the Germans as ideal colonizers. After the armistice, the East African Schutztruppe and von Lettow-Vorbeck were hailed as heroes, since they only surrendered after learning of the armistice. The Entente powers responded by deploring what they saw as the excesses of German colonialism. As part of the Treaty of Versailles, all of the German colonies passed on to the hands of other colonial powers, since the peacemakers at Versailles considered that German colonial rule had been a failure. For instance, the American expert on the subject at Versailles argued that “The native was almost universally looked upon as a means to an end [...] his welfare and that of the colony completely subordinated to the interests of the German on the spot and of Germany at a

¹⁰³ Echenberg, 64-69.

¹⁰⁴ Echenberg, 50.

distance.”¹⁰⁵ The British had already been criticizing German rule as a means of undermining the morale of natives. A propaganda message intended for the askari on January 1st 1918 accused the Germans of cowardice and of lying about payment for askari service. The message was also written in Swahili and offered the askari peace and a return to their homes in exchange for their desertion.¹⁰⁶ Moreover, in the British press, the September 22 1921 edition of the *Times Literary Supplement* “The East African Force” reported that many natives were discontented with German rule and joined the British army whenever possible.¹⁰⁷ The *Westminster Gazette* on the other hand had a headline that ran “German Brutality in East Africa” and directly accused the German army of starving and mistreating Africans.¹⁰⁸ Furthermore, the review “African World,” despite praising the military qualities of von Lettow-Vorbeck, criticized the lack of German “scruples” that led the latter to take supplies from the native. In what appears to be an affirmation of the higher moral nature of British colonial policies, the article emphasized that “the strict regulations which prohibited the commandeering of native supplies and insisted on exact payment for everything brought in made the task of the British even harder, for, of course, the Germans were hampered by no such scruples.”¹⁰⁹ Finally, General Jan Smuts, who had fought against von Lettow-Vorbeck, argued that only White

¹⁰⁵ H.W.V. Temperley, *A History of the Peace Conference of Paris*, vol. 3, 221. Cited by Margaret MacMillan, *Paris 1919, Six months that Changed the World*, (New York: Random House, 2003), 99.

¹⁰⁶ Note to the Askari, N103/20, Bundesarchiv Freiburg.

¹⁰⁷ “The East African Force” (*The Times Literary Supplement*, Thursday September 22, 1921), N103/20. Bundesarchiv Freiburg.

¹⁰⁸ “German Brutality in East Africa,” (*Westminster Gazette*, June 4 1919), N103/20. Bundesarchiv Freiburg.

¹⁰⁹ African World, March 2 1918, N103/20, Bundesarchiv Freiburg.

South Africans properly understood natives, and thus South Africa should administer German Southwest Africa.¹¹⁰

In response to these accusations, German historians and journalists of the time considered the backlash against German rule as a “Kolonialschuldlüge,” a “guilt lie” that unfairly placed the blame on Germany for violence against native Africans. The defenders of German colonial rule expressed the conservative values of the fallen imperial regime, particularly militarism and duty, in contrast to the emerging horrors of Communism and the uncertainties of democracy. In the German press, numerous articles hailed the role of the askari and their commander. For example, on March 31 1919, the *Herforder Zeitung* commented on the bravery of the Schutztruppe and the overall role of Germans in “liberating” native peoples.¹¹¹ Similarly, the *Chemnitzer Tageblatt*, in its edition of August 25 1921, praised the courage of von Lettow-Vorbeck and the askari and contrasted their valour to the sailors who took part in the Kiel mutiny: “at the time when the Kiel sailors mutinied cowardly and stabbed the Fatherland in the back, the black askari told their commander: ‘Sir, we remain at your side until we fall!’.”¹¹² Even contemporary authors such as J.D. Fage have depicted German colonialism as largely positive: “By 1914 it would not be unreasonable to say that German colonial administration was earning the respect and admiration, if not the love, of the African

¹¹⁰ MacMillan, 101.

¹¹¹ “Lettows Heldenlied,” *Herforder Zeitung*, 31 March 1919, N103/15 Bundesarchiv Freiburg.

¹¹² Extract from the *Chemnitzer Tageblatt*, number 234, August 25 1921, page 7, N103/20, Bundesarchiv Freiburg. “Noch in der Tagen als die Kieler Matrosen feige meuterten und dem Vaterlande den Dolch in den Rücken stießen, erklärten die schwarzen Askaris dem Führer: „Herr, wir bleiben bei dir, bis wir fallen!”

peoples subjected to it. But there was no time to see how the new German colonial policies might work out.”¹¹³

For his part, the deeply conservative von Lettow-Vorbeck was among the staunchest defenders of German colonial rule. In his campaign journal he accused the British of coveting German East Africa and emphasized the fact that, while the askari were certainly intelligent, they recognized their “backwardness” when compared to Europeans and acknowledged the progress made so far by the Germans in Africa.¹¹⁴ Furthermore, he yearned for a return to the traditional German values that seemed to have been lost in defeat. He concluded his memoirs on the East African campaign by arguing:

I believe that it the transparency of our aims, the love of our Fatherland and the strong sense of duty and the spirit of self-sacrifice which animated each of our Europeans and communicated themselves [...] to our brave black soldiers that gave our operations the impetus which they possessed to the end. If we East Africans received so kindly a reception in the homeland it was because everyone seemed to think that we had preserved some part of Germany’s soldierly traditions and that the Teutonic sense of loyalty peculiar to us Germans had kept its head high even under the conditions of war in the tropics.¹¹⁵

To this end, in 1928 he joined the Deutschenationale Volkspartei (German National Peoples’ Party) or DNVP. A deeply conservative and anti-Semitic party, the DNVP’s platform called for the return of the former German colonies, the restoration of the monarchy, the strengthening of the Reichswehr and the struggle against “the hegemony of Jewry” and this strongly resonated with von Lettow-Vorbeck.¹¹⁶ Thereafter, in numerous articles and public apparitions after the war, he continued to defend German colonialism and to attack the hypocrisy of the Entente powers. By the end of the 1920’s,

¹¹³J.D. Fageand William Tordoff, *A History of Africa*, (London: Routledge, 2002), 409-410.

¹¹⁴ Paul von Lettow Vorbeck, “Memories of a German Officer,” N 103/27, Bundesarchiv Freiburg, 111.

¹¹⁵ Von Lettow-Vorbeck, *My Reminiscences*, 326.

¹¹⁶ Uwe Schulte-Varendorff, *Kolonialheld für Kaiser und Führer* (Berlin: Christoph Links Verlag, 2006) , 95.

he had become convinced that Adolf Hitler's National Socialist Party was the only political force that "will not abandon Germany's rightful colonies."¹¹⁷ Consequently, as the Nazis gradually gained power, von Lettow-Vorbeck seized the occasion to put right what he saw as a critical issue in colonial matters: the backpay due to the askari after the war. As mentioned before, what set the askari apart from other Africans in the German colonies was the comparatively high wages that they earned and that, in time, transformed them into a pseudo native urban "elite." Therefore, the standing of the askari was highly dependent on their wealth, which is why, according to Uwe Schulte-Varendorff, the German government could ill afford to alienate their native allies and give credit to the "Kolonialschuldlüge." Thus, von Lettow-Vorbeck's efforts within the German government to settle the debt to the askari were vital, since "In the hopes of one day regaining its colonies, it was necessary to leave a positive image among Africans."¹¹⁸

3.2 The "Black Shame" controversy

Both the French and the German narratives on the ideal colonial project clashed during the episode called the "Black Shame." In 1917, near the end of the war, the German Colonial Office as well as the press began to criticize the French for the use of "savage" black troops on European soil.¹¹⁹ Africans were accused of beheading

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 99.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ Keith L. Nelson, "The "Black Horror on the Rhine": Race as a Factor in Post-World War I Diplomacy" *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 42, No. 4 (Dec., 1970), 606-627.

Published by:

surrendering German troops with their large combat knives, the “coupe-coupe.”¹²⁰ But these charges grew particularly virulent after the armistice and during the occupation of the Rhineland by French troops. Now, Africans were accused of raping German women and thus attempting to “contaminate” German blood. For its part, the German press accused the French government of attempting to humiliate the German people by occupying the Rhineland with black soldiers, previously no more than colonial subjects and subordinated to Europeans. In numerous German magazines and posters of the time, Africans were portrayed as monstrous, with ape-like features and sexually voracious. Coins were minted mocking the French motto “liberté, égalité, fraternité” with an image of a snarling black soldier. The French countered by accusing the Germans of racism and by extolling the loyalty of Africans towards France, the “bearer of civilization in Africa.”¹²¹ Furthermore, the French argued that Africans were considered “comrades in arms,” not wild beasts, and that the Germans were contradicting themselves by, on the one hand, praising the askari and, on the other, by their blatant racism against the Tirailleurs.¹²² How then did the Germans reconcile this apparent contradiction? According to Erich Duems, a writer in the *Deutsche Kolonialzeitung*, the purpose of the Schutztruppe was to protect German colonies, but never to be deployed in Europe. In addition, segregation of Africans was logical.

It is thus not for disdain for alien races, but on the contrary our high esteem for the principle of racial purity, that prompts us to ensure that the naturally given borders between races are not blurred; especially the native from the African colonies understands this, because he *despises* those whites who deny the prerogative of their

¹²⁰ Echenberg, 33.

¹²¹ Michel, 239.

¹²² Susann Lewerenz, ““Loyal Askari” and “Black Rapist” Two Images in the German Discourse on National Identity and their Impact on the Lives of Black People in Germany 1918-1945,” in *German Colonialism and National Identity*, ed. Michael Perraudin and Jürgen Zimmerer, (New York: Routledge, 2011), 173-183.

blood and color. The high esteem that the Germans have among the natives of our colonies and their inextinguishable *loyalty* to us is based not least on this racial consciousness, which preserves the distinctive ethnic character of both the colonizing nation *and* the natives.¹²³

Once again, this claim defends the German colonial project against the miscegenation resulting of French policies. In reality racism was a part of both societies, as well as limited integration. The next section will focus on the experience of colonial soldiers in their contacts with Europeans during and after the war. In the aftermath of the “Black Shame” controversy, the French withdrew most of their African troops from the areas under occupation, but the image of the African as a savage would prove enduring among the German right. Hitler would mention the Black Shame as an attempt of world Jewry to subjugate Germany, and Tirailleur prisoners of war during World War II would be harshly mistreated.

3.3 Soldiers’ memories and their impact on French and German society

However, despite the official narratives that each side tried to present, the reality of African soldiers in both countries was far more complex. For instance, the day-to-day lives of the Tirailleurs in the French army brought them into close contact with their fellow comrades in arms in what Deroo calls the “camaraderie des tranchées.”¹²⁴ Films of the time and field diaries portray the Tirailleurs intermingling with other French soldiers in football matches,¹²⁵ as well as engaging in bartering items such as pocket knives.¹²⁶

However, according to Joe Lunn, these contacts varied according to the knowledge of

¹²³ Erich Duems, “Rassenreinheit oder Rassenmischung? Frankreichs Kolonialarmee und unsere Schutztruppe” cited by Susann Lewerenz, 174.

¹²⁴ *La Force Noire* DVD, directed by Éric Deroo and Antoine Champeaux (Établissement de communication et de production audiovisuelle de la défense, 2007).

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ Marcel Cau, “Extraits d’un journal du caporal Marcel Cau,” *op. cit.*,

French on the Tirailleurs' side, and also "close attachments with Europeans in Senegalese units were the exception rather than the rule."¹²⁷

On the side of the French population, reactions were also varied. In general, according to Lunn, French citizens were grateful for the contribution of Africans to victory. News of French victories where the Tirailleurs had played a part spread among the population and Africans were greeted as heroes. Other Tirailleurs also came into contact with French women and some entered into romantic relationships with them. However, racism was quite common. Tirailleurs were also discriminated against in bars and pubs, as well as by their own officers, who still viewed them as colonial subjects. Furthermore, the image of the Tirailleurs was still largely paternalistic, as evidenced by the infamous "Banania" cereal. The product in question depicted a smiling Tirailleur advertising the cereal by saying "Y a bon Banania!" a common stereotype of the pidgin French spoken by the Tirailleurs.

The testimony of Lucie Cousturier, a French writer and painter in southern France, is also a valuable source for the daily life of the Tirailleurs among the French population. When the Tirailleurs were stationed in Fréjus for the winter of 1916, Cousturier's home was situated close to the winter camps. Initially, influenced by French colonial propaganda of the time, Cousturier expressed the fears of civilians, particularly women: "after the devastation of the forest, the drabness of their barracks [...] it was the drunkenness, the robbery, the rape and the epidemics that we blamed on them. The farmer girls wept- 'What will become of us [...] we will not be able to let our little girls walk on the trails, amidst these savages. We ourselves will not dare to go out alone, to

¹²⁷ Lunn, 165.

gather herbs or lumber. Think! If we were to be caught by these gorillas.”¹²⁸ However, she began to gradually interact with the Tirailleurs during their walks across the countryside. She also depicts the Tirailleurs as curious, when they stopped by her house to look at the rabbits she kept, and shy, but kind.¹²⁹ She was also saddened by the fact that the Tirailleurs were mocked by the French for their language skills. “[The French they teach us] is only for tirailleurs, they recognize sadly. Another one of my pupils, more spiteful, assured that ‘those are words found by the French to mock the Senegalese.’”¹³⁰ Thus, she decided to improve their French and even visited some of them later on in Senegal.

In the case of Germany, a similar analysis poses additional obstacles. Having lost its colonies in 1919, Germany’s links with its former colonies were far more tenuous than those of France or Great Britain, and, as mentioned above, interest in the colonies waned during and after World War II. Serious field studies, such as those conducted by Lunn or Deroux, are also infrequent and testimonies of surviving askari are scarce and incomplete. Nonetheless, archival sources do provide some interesting contrasts to the experience of the Tirailleurs. First of all, economic motivations were important for the askari. The wages in the Schutztruppe were higher than an African would normally receive, and

¹²⁸ Lucie Cousturier, *Des Inconnus chez moi*, (Paris : L’Harmattan, 2001), 8-9. “Après la dévastation de la forêt, la laideur des baraquements de leurs camps [...], ce furent l’ivrognerie, le vol, le viol, les épidémies qu’on leur prêta.

-Qu’allons-nous devenir? gémissaient les fermières [...] Nous ne pourrons plus laisser nos petites filles aller sur les chemins, parmi ces sauvages. Nous n’oserons plus sortir seules, nous-mêmes, pour faire de l’herbe ou du bois. Pensez! Si l’on était prises par ces gorilles.”

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 14 and 19.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 83-84.

Germans hoped to make a “native elite” out of the askari.¹³¹ Children of askari would also follow their fathers into the Schutztruppe, as will be explained later on.

Prestige was another reason connected to the latter. Von Lettow-Vorbeck mentioned that after the German victory at Tanga, the news spread “from tribe to tribe” and “all the best young men wanted to become Askari, and a belief in their troop’s strength and command awoke.”¹³²

On the one hand, some Schutztruppe members developed close relationships with their commanders. For example, Selemani Bin Ali, a porter in the service of a certain Oberleutnant Spalding served his commanding officer for four and half years. During that time he developed a close relationship with Spalding, whom he openly revered. According to Bin Ali, “My Lieutenant feared neither bullet nor enemy.¹³³” From the testimony, it is clear that Spalding and Bin Ali communicated in both Swahili and German. After the death of Spalding in battle, Bin Ali expressed sadness at the loss of his “master” and fulfilled his last wishes by sending a letter to the lieutenant’s family.¹³⁴ Since the testimony was found among field journals of the Schutztruppe, it is possible that it idealizes the loyalty of the porter to his officer, but it also indicates, among other testimonies, the importance of learning Swahili by German officers, another way in which the latter had to adapt to African conditions. Another testimony was collected by a German traveller named Hans Alexander Winkler, who allegedly met a

¹³¹Marianne Bechhaus-Gerst, *Treu bis in den Tod: Von Deutsch Ost-Afrika nach Sachsenhausen-Eine Lebensgeschichte*, (Berlin: Christoph-Links Verlag, 2007), 24-25.

¹³² Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck, Reports on the Battle of Tanga, N103/97 Bundesarchiv Freiburg. “Die besten jüngsten Männer wollten Askari werden, [...] und das Vertrauen zur eigenen Kraft und zur Führung wuchs ins Grenzenlose.“

¹³³Testimony of the porter Selemani Bin Ali, June 16 1915, N103 94 Bundesarchiv Freiburg, “Mein Oberleutnant fürchtete keine Kugel und keinen Feind.“

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

blind, unnamed askari veteran in Aswan, Egypt. The veteran showed Winkler his battle scars, recalled his former officers, particularly von Lettow-Vorbeck, and could still speak some German and remember marching orders, which he performed “with a glimmer in his face,”¹³⁵ according to Winkler.

Regarding the impact of Africans in Germany, racism and limited acceptance were both present in the case of the askari. The few that managed to travel to Germany joined a small minority of Afro-Germans. As in France, the image of Africans in Germany was characterized by racism. The famous “Völkerschau,” or “people shows” were essentially living exhibits of Africans in their “traditional” environment. As in France, advertisements depicted the askari as ignorant, particularly emphasizing the limited language knowledge of Africans. Like the example of Banania, the Fürstenberg beer company advertised its products showing a smiling askari accompanied by the words “he can only speak three words in German: Lettoff-Vorbeck, Volkswagen, Fürstenberg”¹³⁶(note the purposely misspelled name of Lettow-Vorbeck and the two other brands to emphasize the linguistic incompetence of Africans).

As with Lucie Cousturier, one of the most complete testimonies available for an askari veteran is that of Mahjub bin Adam Mohamed, also known as Bayume Mohamed.¹³⁷His father, Adam Mohamed, was part of the first generation of askari, and was already a veteran by 1914. Mahjub was allowed to attend government schools in East Africa and developed particularly good reading and writing skills in German. Upon the

¹³⁵ “Account by Hans Alexander Winkler, (*Ägyptischer Volkskunde*. Kohlhammer-Verlag, Stuttgart, 1936), N103/20, Bundesarchiv Freiburg, “Ein Schimmer lag auf seinem Gesicht.”

¹³⁶ Maß, 186.

¹³⁷ Notice on Bayume Mohamed Hussein, N103/16 001, Bundesarchiv Freiburg.

outbreak of the war, he enlisted in the Schutztruppe at age 10 and survived the East African campaign, although his father died during the final stage of the war. According to Marianne Bechhaus-Gerst, even at this young age, Mahjub had a strong desire to visit Germany. When talking to Lettow-Vorbeck, “he expressed his desire to travel to Uleija (Europe) and said: ‘Then the Kaiser will say to me ‘Good day, my son’ and will take me to the Empress, who will greet me ‘Good day, my child’ and give me cake [...]’”¹³⁸ Mahjub’s life after the war testifies to the harsh reality of askari veterans as well as Afro-Germans in Weimar Germany. In a similar way to the Tirailleurs, full German citizenship eluded most Afro-Germans, but, unlike France, Germany lost all of its colonies after 1919. Therefore, the majority of Afro-Germans remained in a legal limbo: no longer were they colonial subjects and neither did they receive citizenship. Rather, they were classified as “Unmittelbarer Reichsangehöriger” or “Deutscher Schutzbefehlener,” two ambiguous terms that can roughly be translated as “wards of the state.”

In effect, German authorities were reluctant to accept people who were once colonial subjects as equals.¹³⁹ Therefore, most jobs available to Africans in Germany were limited to menial tasks such as those of cooks and kitchen helpers.¹⁴⁰ Other possibilities included the “Völkerschau,” a spectacle designed to portray “authentic” Africans and their customs. Others, such as Mahjub, took part in numerous propaganda films of the era that glorified the Schutztruppe and the war in East Africa. They also faced the racism of the era, but in the case of Mahjub and other former askari, they struggled to reclaim their place as proud German soldiers. Eventually, Mahjub was able

¹³⁸Bechhaus-Gerst, 37-38.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 67.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibi.*, 58-59.

to find a teaching post as a Swahili language instructor at the Orientalisches Seminar in Berlin. The teaching of Swahili had in fact been an important part of German colonialism. As described above, some officers in the Schutztruppe spoke it fluently enough to communicate with their troops. But after the establishment of the National Socialist regime in 1933, Mahjub was fired from his position and he found less and less employment opportunities. Rather than submit to the racial ideology of the Third Reich, Mahjub fought for the recognition of his actions as an askari, but was unsuccessful. He eventually married a German woman, but was sentenced to a concentration camp at Sachsenhausen and died in 1945.

Once again, the testimony of the commanders is crucial. Karl Heidtmann, a Schutztruppe officer, described in great detail the daily interaction between the askari and the Germans. He made interesting observations on the eating habits of the askari of Wahehe ethnicity, remarking that “without bananas the Waheia (sic) cannot live at all.”¹⁴¹ He also described the burial customs of the askari, which included animistic elements. Furthermore, the latter did not hesitate to chastise Heidtmann after he “disturbed the dead” by taking two skeletons for study. When Heidtmann was attacked by a swarm of bees, the askari interpreted it as a sign of a devil they called “Scheidani,” angered by Heidtmann’s sacrilege and reprimanded him after mocking his ignorance.¹⁴² Finally, he scolded them in turn when the askari were roused in the middle of the night by a “huge shadow,” which turned out to be a large rock.¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ Karl Heidtmann, “Als Vorpost auf einen Insel In Viktoria-See” (1915), N103/96. “Ohne Bananen kann der Waheia überhaupt nicht leben,” 2.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 7-21.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 21.

3.4 Colonial troops in postwar France and Germany

The Tirailleurs Sénégalais continued to play a valuable role in the French armed forces until the beginning of decolonization in the 1960's. Having suffered terribly during the German offensive in 1940, African units rallied behind de Gaulle's Free French forces and contributed to the liberation of France. Thereafter they served to quell unrest in France's colonies, particularly in Algeria and French Indochina. Therefore, French propaganda, as expressed in memorials and monuments tended to emphasize the loyalty and devotion of Africans to France.¹⁴⁴ However, there were already signs of discontent with this official government stance. The massacre of mutinous Tirailleurs at Thiaroye in 1944 by French troops had already highlighted the blatant contradiction between rhetoric and reality, but the treatment of Tirailleur veterans also reminded them of their status as inferior troops. The issue of pensions was particularly controversial in the postwar era. Unlike their French comrades, African veterans saw their pensions "frozen" at the currency rate that existed at the time of African independence, regardless of inflation, which led to a substantial reduction of the latter's pensions. Only in 2002 did the French government include in its budget some "corrective measures" designed to adjust African veterans' pensions to better reflect the current economic situation of their country of residence.¹⁴⁵

In Germany, the narrative that emphasizes the positive aspects of German colonialism has been maintained in a number of different ways. Throughout the Cold War, German economic and technical aid to Africa was contingent on the political

¹⁴⁴ Echenberg, 165.

¹⁴⁵ Pierre Lang, "Le long chemin vers la dé cristallisation des pensions" in *Forces noires des puissances coloniales européennes*, ed. Antoine Champeaux, Éric Deroo and János Riesz (Fréjus : Lavauzelle, 2009).

alignment of the country in question. According to Sandra Maß, West Germans feared the image of communist-oriented Africans, which were supported by East Germany. Against this image of the communist African, the West German government promoted instead the image of the loyal askari who had fought a “chivalrous war” (ritterlichen Krieg) in East Africa, also in contrast to the horrors of the Second World War.¹⁴⁶ Consequently, West German aid was directed to countries not aligned with the Communist bloc. Hans Georg Steltzer, a former West German ambassador to Africa in the 1980’s, wrote in his memoirs that he wanted to understand German colonialism in its context and in an objective manner, and not just focus on the negative, as many postwar German historians had done.¹⁴⁷ Steltzer travelled through the former German colonies and delighted himself in finding traces of the German presence. In Togo, for instance, he found an old water pump that still worked. In Tanzania, Steltzer met former askari, who still spoke German and were “proud and self-confident,”¹⁴⁸ and in Cameroon he found that school textbooks praised German achievements.

In recent years, the legacy of the askari has surfaced once again in the construction of the unofficially-named *Tansaniapark* in Hamburg. Formerly a National Socialist monument to the role of the Schutztruppe, the monument depicted a column of askari led by a German officer, as well as a company of African porters led in turn by an askari. Statues of other representatives of German colonialism such as Lothar von Trotha, the German officer who brutally suppressed the Herero uprising, were also a part of the memorial. After the war, the memorial became part of an army barracks. In 2002, the

¹⁴⁶ Maß, 303.

¹⁴⁷ Hans Georg Steltzer, *Die Deutschen und ihr Kolonialreich*, (Frankfurt am Main, Societäts Verlag, 1984), N14/2, 8-9., Bundesarchiv Freiburg.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 7

Hamburg municipal government attempted to reopen the memorial in an attempt to emphasize cooperation between Germany and Tanzania. Tentatively named *Tansaniapark*, the reopening of the memorial stirred heavy controversy in the German press. The *Hamburger Morgenpost* accused the Hamburg authorities of attempting to whitewash the cruelties of German colonialism,¹⁴⁹ while activists demonstrated in front of the memorial and named it instead “Mohammed Hussein Bayume Park,” in honor of Mahjub and other victims of racism, colonialism and violence.¹⁵⁰ To this day, the park remains closed to visitors and there has been little promotion of the location as a tourist site.

Conclusion

Beyond the obvious geographical difference, the utilization of Africans by the French and the Germans presents some important differences, as well as some remarkable similarities. First and foremost, the scope of the use of the Tirailleurs Senegalais evolved from an experiment of limited numbers to the establishment of a force that was eventually deployed to quell colonial uprisings throughout the 20th century. The Tirailleurs fought in Algeria and in Indochina, and became an important part of the armed forces of the newly independent African countries. On the German side, the askari remained a mostly symbolical presence and played a marginal role in the politics of independent Africa. They were never viewed as a large-scale force, and the loss of

¹⁴⁹ Heiko Möhle, Der sogenannte Tansaniapark http://www.offene-kartierung.de/tpark/karten/tansania_park/. Last visited on 10-08-2013.

¹⁵⁰ Afrika-Hamburg Online project, <http://www.afrika-hamburg.de/projekt1.html>. Last visited on 10-08-2013.

Germany's colonies precluded any further development of the askari. Even so, it is possible to speculate, as Michael Pesek has done, that the askari were becoming an "African elite" due to their relatively high wages they enjoyed. In both cases, however, the Tirailleurs and the askari were feared among African civilians, since they were employed to suppress native uprisings.

Nonetheless, both Germany and France shared similar practices concerning recruitment. First of all, and consistent with racial theories of the time, the selection process was based on racial hierarchies, wherein some ethnic groups were favoured over others due to their "warlike" qualities. Second, despite the fact that the armed forces are supposed to be a homogenizing force in modern states, both German and French authorities had to make concessions and accommodations to ensure the adequate performance of their native troops. The French built mosques and winter camps for the Africans, while Germans allowed the Askari to keep their polygamous customs, provided religious holidays and respected tribal hierarchies.

There seems to be a consensus, on the other hand, on the combat prowess of Africans, despite accusations to the contrary during the war. Thus, despite centuries of racism, Africans were recognized for their value, at least in combat, and praised by their commanders and the press at home. However, it is also clear that in both cases the role of native troops proved devastating for African civilians. Government officials in the colonial capitals dictated their policies with little regard for Africans. In the case of the Tirailleurs, conscription ignored the realities of African demographics and even contradicted colonial authorities, who were anxious to avoid a war and to maintain the colonial economy running. In East Africa, pillage and devastation followed the

Schutztruppe, and the war worsened the precarious economic situation of the colony. In effect, military considerations took precedence over civilian ones. Both Mangin and von Lettow-Vorbeck managed to impose their will over their critics and to override their civilian counterparts. Mangin's *force noire* and von Lettow-Vorbeck's aggressive tactics eventually won the day.

Therefore, despite the accusations of “good” and “bad” forms of colonialism, it is interesting to note the similar policies adopted by both colonial regimes. In effect, German colonialism remains largely unmentioned in colonial histories. J.D. Fage mentions some of its positive developments, but, aside from German authors, studies of German colonialism focus mostly on the brutality of the Herero and Namaqua genocides or on the loss of colonies as a factor in German resentment after the war. But from the “scientific” approach to recruitment to the everyday racism prevalent in the colonial metropolis, the present study highlights significant similarities between two forms of colonialism that saw themselves as polar opposites and tried to discredit each other throughout their existence. It also evidences the strong influence of the colonial lobby and the military, which were both able to prevail over parliamentary opposition. This also reflects two societies still dominated by a strong central government prior to and during World War I, since in both cases the military was in effective control during the war. Also, the image of the African was one created and disseminated by Europeans, simplified and almost cartoonish at times. Thus, some common elements emerge: Africans were brave, instinctive and stubborn, good fighters but intellectually inferior.

Furthermore, the inclusion of primary sources on the African side enables a richer picture when compared to the traditional point of view that centers almost exclusively on

military tactics. The testimonies of the askari and the tirailleurs reveal complex motivations enlisting, as well as conflicting emotions regarding their officers. While the amount of sources on the German side are certainly scarce, the story of Mahjub and the experiences of Captain Charles N'Tchoréré provide valuable insight on the effects of colonial propaganda and assimilation. Both genuinely believed in the cause they fought for, and demanded to be treated according to their rank.

So what was the importance of the role of Africans in the First World War? For the first time, the war brought greater numbers of Africans into contact with European society. In the heat of battle, Europeans came to respect their African counterparts, at least as fellow soldiers. Von Lettow-Vorbeck spoke of “us Africans” in the concluding words to his memoirs and German journalists praised the askari in contrast to the “traitorous” Kiel sailors. In France, the memory of the Tirailleurs endures to this day. Furthermore, Africans also interacted with the population, despite both governments’ attempts to limit such contact, and, in some cases, they were able to overcome the racial prejudice of their time by integrating into European society. This thesis highlights how necessity led Europeans to enlist Africans in their armies, despite the colonial divide, and the outcome of such uncommon interaction.

Some possible pathways to further research could no doubt include other colonial powers such as Great Britain and Portugal. As mentioned before, some authors such as Ross Anderson, Eric Deroo and Michael Pesek have attempted comparative analyses of native troops, but only Pesek goes beyond the military aspects to analyze the recruitment practices of the British in East Africa. However, in the case of the British the analysis would also have to emphasize the use of the Indian army in Europe, which was limited.

The present study has also only briefly touched on the cultural impact of the Askari and the Tirailleurs in Europe. Numerous other works also analyze the influence of colonial policies in art and music. In the case of Germany, during the Weimar era, black Africans became an important subject for painters and musicians, and the Tirailleurs were important in the literary arts, such as the works of Léopold Sédar Senghor and Aimé Césaire. The situation of African immigrants in contemporary Europe could also shed light on the influence of colonialism.

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