

Research Article

Cameroon and Germany: A Hundred Years of Breakdown and Continuity 1916-2016 “Kamerun Territoriality: Disruption or Breakdown and Continuity”

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Abstract

German Kamerun broke down and ceased to exist in 1916 after its new acquisitions were seized by the French and the initial territory partitioned into two new unique territories of British Cameroon and French Cameroun. The British soon decided to divide their small and narrow territory into separate administrative units of Southern Cameroons and Northern Cameroons. From 1916 to 1961, both the British and French territories separately bore in its territory a little semblance of Old Kamerun and in connection with Germany. In 1960, French Cameroun gained independence from France. But the British Southern Cameroons that also had a functional government was denied outright independence and compelled to unite with the other in 1961 in a clumsy effort to reunite former Kamerun. The British Northern Cameroons that did not have a single administration integrated permanently with Nigeria. The new united Cameroon Federation began to relate with Germany no longer as separate countries but as one country, although without those factors like language and culture that had brought the defunct Kamerun and Germany closer together. Yet the written name of the territories in different languages continued to sound the same. In addition, some vestiges of the old German past were still inheritances of modern Cameroon as well as some functional remnants of the Old Kamerun frontiers. Thus from 1916 to 2016 the separate territories and, later the united Cameroon continued to maintain a continual relationship with Germany and the Germans.

Keywords

Kamerun, Germany, Germans, Cameroon(s), Cameroun, Territoriality, Partition, Relationship, Independence, Reunification, Unification

1. Introduction

Kamerun, Cameroon and Cameroun are names of three colonial territories that existed independently of each other between 1884 and 1961, each with a territoriality, a recognised international status and a direct or indirect referent to Germany. What remains of the three today is modern Cameroon, a clumsy patchwork of the effort of nationalists and

international conspiracy (still protested about) that one of the territories must join a neighbouring country at independence. We use the term territoriality in relation to the expansion, delimitation and application of status of recognition to a territory. A disruption of that status would completely change it, while its breakdown would allow it to continue to exist in an

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unusual way in parts, under other names. Our focus is on Kamerun, the first of the three from which the other two emerged as separate entities.

Every country, past or present, had or has a name and territoriality on the surface of the earth. When such a country is mentioned by name, its territorial location comes to the mind of those who know it. That territoriality, then or in continuation would have a delimitation that indicates its extent, including the boundary of a single country or an island completely surrounded by water or sharing its boundary with contiguous countries. Some countries like Swaziland, Lesotho and The Gambia share their boundary with only one country all round or almost all round. Each boundary might be represented concretely on land and map by reference to the neighbours with whom the country shares it, to natural and/or artificial marks like coasts, hills, waterways and cairns, or even be expressed vaguely [1]. That country would have a time of origin, expansion and recognition and a time it ceased to exist, whether or not such times are known and remembered. That is the way we think of Kamerun in relation to Germany more than one hundred years after German colonisation ended abruptly.

2. The Scenario

What is known today as Cameroon (Cameroun, in French) is only a portion of the spoil of war in 1916 that resulted decades later, both from a failed attempt by nationalists to recreate Kamerun that was formed and lost in the Gulf of Guinea and from unprecedented international conspiracy that some parts of it must either unite or be part of a different contiguous country. The nationalists believed in the beginning that it was possible to re-establish Kamerun and pursued that belief vigorously, but it turned out to be an illusion because some limbs from the disruption of 1916 could never ever be recovered. As Edwin Ardener has pointed out, the unified Cameroon federal state that was established in 1961 did not have the boundaries that resembled a simple reconstruction of pre- or post-1911 German Kamerun, nor those defined by the mandates in 1922 [2].

Yet what was evidently a disruption turned out, in some ways, to be a break down in normality that might somehow be repaired. In this sense Kamerun though no longer existing, in a way, continued to exist somehow and to relate with Germany, a hundred years since German rule abruptly ended. This is surprising because, unlike the rule, the end of German authority was crowned with dismemberment of Kamerun and not with independence, as was the case later with other colonial territories. Interestingly, Germany still refers to modern Cameroon/Cameroun as Kamerun.

Independence would have resulted in a continuing active relationship in various domains between the Germans and Germany on the one hand and Kamerunians and Kamerun on the other; independence would have been the lamp of success that would continue to illuminate and foster relations

through maintaining and developing German values and civilisation (political institutions, economic and cultural connections) inherited from colonisation, particularly the language that would have been a major unifying factor, not English and French that have made unity and national integration a nightmare that no nationalist of the colonial and post-colonial periods could ever have imagined. Since independence was not the case, how then, we may ask, has modern Cameroon represented and maintained relationship (in place of Kamerun) with Germans and Germany since the disruption? To answer the question, we will begin from the beginning with the making of Kamerun and proceed from there.

3. The Making of Kamerun

There was no Kamerun before the Germans carved it out, even if the peoples who became Kamerunians had been occupying their lands for ages. The making of the German protectorate (during the scramble and partition of Africa) began with the signing of the first treaty of annexation by some chiefs and people of Duala ethnicity and German imperial officials in July 1884 in the 'country' that was already known to European slavers, abolitionists, traders, missionaries, naval and consular authorities of some powers, at the beginning of the 19th century, as Cameroons [3]. It was that treaty, recognised by rival powers that gave the Germans the right of possession of the new acquisition on the townships of the Wouri estuary (Rio dos Camerões, or river of prawns), to name it Kamerun and to begin to expand it in order to establish its territoriality. The making of the protectorate would proceed in two phases.

In 1885 and 1886 the Germans reached provisional agreements with their two main rivals in the scramble, the French and the British, to establish the limits of the Kamerun coast on the Campo River in the south and the Rio del Rey in the west. With the coastal base of 402 km fixed, the Germans began to extend their control inland and opened their first hinterland station at Kumba, and interior stations in Bali and Yaounde by 1888-89 [4, 15]. By March 1894 they had reached agreement with the French defining the eastern frontier all the way to Lake Chad. This was delimited by 1908 together with the river line they had extended along the Campo to 10^oE Longitude and on land to 15^oE Latitude where it linked with the Sangha-Ngoko confluence. The Rio del Rey line in the west had also, by 1893, been extended in three stages to Lake Chad: Rio del Rey-Rapids on the Cross River, Rapids-Benue River, and Benue River-Lake Chad. Expansion in the interior led the Germans to Foumban by 1902 and, in the same year, they opened the Bamenda station. In the north a short coastline frontier was established on the Lake Chad with Nigeria in the west and Chad in the east and the lake on top like a beret. By 1908 the delimitation had been completed and the territoriality of Kamerun was already on the maps. That ended the first stage of the making of Kamerun, Old Kamerun.

But the Germans during the 1880s and 1890s developed great anxiety to expand Kamerun beyond what they were getting and to begin to plan about setting up of a greater expansive empire in Central Africa. Such an empire might possibly come through absorbing both Belgian and French Congo as well as the Portuguese territories and linking Kamerun with German East Africa and German South West Africa. Although they were well aware of the fact that it was no longer possible in the mid-1890s to territorialise or to acquire more land and establish such “a large, undivided ... empire ... without provoking serious conflicts with other great powers” [5], they continued to hope and to look for opportunities to exploit to achieve it. An opportunity came somehow late, in the wake of the Panther incident at Agadir in Morocco, primarily staged to further German demands on the Congo.

The Franco-German convention of November 4, 1911 that had taken time to negotiate, allocated to Germany, in compensation for conceding her rights to an insignificant territory in Agadir and for accepting total freedom of French action over Morocco, the whole of the Rio Muni enclave, Gabon, the entire French Congo in the south and southeast and a part of Ubangi in Central Africa, all amounting to 295,000 sq. km. of territory, plus 12,000 sq. km of ‘Duck’s Bill territory’ at the north-eastern tip of Kamerun [6]. While still hoping for a possible seizure and sharing of the huge Belgian Congo with Britain that would link Kamerun and Tanganyika and the acquisition of the Portuguese territories of Angola and Mozambique through further negotiations to link with Angola, German monopoly capitalists rushed to exploit the beautiful harbours and the enormous natural resources (ivory and rubber especially) of New Kamerun as well as to plan further investments. That ended the second phase in the making of Kamerun, acquiring and adding New to Old territory. But the Germans had neither time to rejoice about the new acquisitions nor to plan further expansions - the third phase - when world war broke out and their designs on Kamerun and Central Africa ended abruptly.

4. The Disruption of Kamerun

Germany’s victory and France’s humiliation in the acquisition of an expansive Central African Empire was short-lived. The world war broke out in August 1914 and quickly spread to German Africa where their small force, “mercenary units set up ... for the purpose of holding down African population” plus police units [7] in Kamerun faced those of Allied powers - Britain, France and Belgium - based in neighbouring West, Central and Equatorial African colonies. By February 1916 the Kamerun war was over and the protectorate was torn into pieces in order to make it impossible for Germany to ever recover it. The disruption and dismantling of Kamerun, proceeded in three phases, in quick succession, within six years.

Phase one of the disruption of Kamerun was immediate. Following the commencement of the war and the breakdown

of German rule, France took the lead in the destruction of the protectorate. They quickly reached agreement with Britain to re-annex to their former colonies of Equatorial and Central Africa all the territories ceded to Germany three years earlier, even before the complete defeat of the Germans in the territory (or everywhere in the world) and holding of the peace conference where decisions would be made about what to do with enemy colonies. In so doing, France failed to relinquish the small part of duck bill they had gained when they ceded territory to Old Kamerun. Kamerun suffered the worst fate of all former territories in Africa because of the haste to disrupt it. It ceased to exist with the expulsion of the Germans. The possibility that it could be saved, with or without the return of the German administration, was destroyed first by the French action, second by the failure to set up a single Allied Expeditionary Force in the course of invasion, third by the British rejection of the idea of an Anglo-French condominium over the territory, and fourth by the setting up of separate administrations in areas captured by the forces of either power [8, 16].

Phase two of the destruction was negotiated from December 1914 until February 1916. During the negotiations about who would get what and how to put an end to Old Kamerun, the British advanced many ideas that were unattractive to the French. The most plausible that came closer to maintaining the protectorate intact was that, except for parts of the emirate of Yola and Bornu and the Cameroon Mountain region, all of Old Kamerun should go to France in return for what they would get elsewhere; alternatively it should be partitioned into two equal sections from the sea up along the Sanaga River. The French initially rejected the idea of partition until the end of the global war, ironically after they had regained territories they had ceded in 1911 and also began to station administrative personnel in areas captured by their own forces. Subsequently they yielded and suggested that Britain should incorporate only the Dikwa district close to Lake Chad into their Bornu district in Nigeria. The final agreement on 4 March 1916 that was put into effect two days later partitioned Old Kamerun, beginning at the coast on the Mungo River estuary and tracing the line of partition [9] from there to Lake Chad, on the basis of river courses, watersheds, hills, mountains and valleys, villages and ethnic groups.

The French received the bulk of the territory and the British only a fifth of Old Kamerun. Whatever either party got from the partition, the German protectorate was being disrupted and torn into pieces. New Kamerun had disappeared with its name into contiguous French territories and Old Kamerun partitioned and renamed. (That is how British Cameroon and French Cameroun came to be permanent new countries). In neither case was provision made in the Anglo-French agreements for the possibility of future reunification of Kamerun in whatever form. The peace conference also failed to provide such a possibility, although the idea of incorporating what they got into their adjacent colonies or turning them into outright colonies was put forth and rejected.

It was for this reason that British Cameroon and French Cameroun from 1922 officially became separate and autonomous new international territories.

The third and last phase of disruption occurred in British Cameroon. In spite of the insignificance of the territory they got, the British went ahead and divided it into Northern Cameroons and Southern Cameroons, (of the two, only Southern Cameroons remained a separate administrative unit as the Cameroons Province while Northern Cameroons was never ever administered as a unit until it ceased to exist in 1961), which they administered separately as integral parts of their Protectorate of Northern and Southern Nigeria. They rejected the idea of uniting and administering the League of Nations mandated territory together or providing opportunity for such a possibility in the future. Northern Cameroons was further bisected and merged with three different provinces of Northern Nigeria. When the nationalists in British Southern Cameroons and in French Cameroun began some decades later to discuss about “reunification of Kamerun” as it was in 1914 or the autonomy and independence of their respective territories before unification, the British led the international community at the United Nations to instead compel the inhabitants of Northern and Southern Cameroons to vote to join either of their two neighbouring countries, Nigeria or Cameroun. Their divided territory voted differently and the idea that Kamerun could ever be reconstructed ended in spite of the hope of nationalists.

5. Breakdown and Continuity

Evidence that nationalists in British Southern and Northern Cameroons were thinking of unification or reunification in terms of former Kamerun is in the way they named their political movements and parties using the German spelling. In order of their formation, the following movements and parties for reunification appeared in the Southern Cameroons: Kamerun United National Congress (KUNC) 1951; Kamerun National Congress (KNC) 1953; Kamerun Peoples Party (KPP) 1953; Kamerun National Democratic Party (KNDP) 1955; Kamerun United Commoners’ Party (KUCP) 1956; One Kamerun Party (OKP) 1957; and Kamerun United Party (KUP) 1960. In Northern Cameroons two parties with the same hope were formed, namely Northern Kamerun Democratic Party (NKDP) 1959 and Kamerun Freedom Party (KFP) 1960 (KFP) [10].

No political movement inside French Cameroun (possibly for fear of the French) adopted the German spelling of the country, including the most nationalist, UPC, that was active in both the French and British territories. When the UPC party was outlawed in both the French and British territories in 1955 and 1957 respectively and their leaders fled to Egypt, Ghana, and Guinea Conakry, their adherents indigenous to Southern Cameroons immediately formed the OKP. The exiled leaders out of reach of the French administration were now able to form a propaganda broadcasting service (La

Voix du Kamerun) and set up the National Army of Kamerun Liberation (NAKL), a ‘maquis’ (underground movement), which they controlled and funded from abroad [11].

When the Germans were forcefully removed from Kamerun and compelled to sign a peace agreement they had not negotiated surrendering their former colonies, it was believed that even their nationalists would never set foot there again. But when the British could not find non-German buyers for the bulk of plantations they had acquired as spoils of war, they sold almost all of them to their former owners who returned to put them in progressive production [12]. As a consequence, the number of German planters in the Southern Cameroons in the 1930s was between 200 and 250, which assured some continuity in spite of the end of Kamerun.

The dream and effort of nationalists to re-establish Kamerun were doomed from the very beginning by what had been done by the British and the French to that colonial state. The eventual decolonisation of parts of former Kamerun led to the independence of French Cameroun as a republic in 1960, the integration of British Northern Cameroons into Nigeria in 1961, and the unification of Southern Cameroons with the Republic of Cameroun in a new federation in 1961. In spite of these developments, important things remained to keep Kamerun in continuation, one hundred years since the disruption.

One very conspicuous heritage that has maintained the German past is the name Kamerun that continues to exist in the English and French versions of it. Until one sees them written, it is not possible to say which written version when one listens to the three names. There are equally functional remnants of the frontiers that belonged to Kamerun that are, in most places, exactly those of modern Cameroon. Except along the length where British Northern Cameroons integrated with Nigeria, modern Cameroon’s international boundaries are those of Old Kamerun with neighbouring countries. The coastal lines along the Atlantic and the Lake Chad are virtually the same, in spite of minor rectifications with Nigeria to solve conflicts [13]. The Anglo-French agreement that further tore apart Old Kamerun in 1916 disappeared in the south with unification in 1961.

Besides the name and territoriality of modern Cameroon that is inside the ruins of Old Kamerun, there are numerous vestiges of that past everywhere, many in continual functioning. These include among others, in different locations, the 72-room Schloss or Governor’s Lodge (now Presidency) in Buea built in 1901/02, the Senior District Officer’s Office in Limbe completed about 1890, the Tower of the Senior District Officer’s Office in Mamfe that came into operation in 1909, the Fort at Bamenda completed between 1909 and 1912 [14], House of Hans Dominik in Yaounde completed in 1912, the Fort Doumé towards Bertoua, the palace of King Bell in Douala built in 1905 and the plan of the city of Douala that began to be developed in 1896 and completed in 1906. There are German plantations, railway lines, roads and bridges here and there in continuous use in modern Cameroon.



Figure 1. Kamerun 1884-1911.



Figure 4. Southern Cameroons and Rep. of Cameroon 1960-1961.



Figure 2. Kamerun 4Nov. 1911-4Mar. 1916.



Figure 5. Federal Republic of Cameroon 1961-1972.

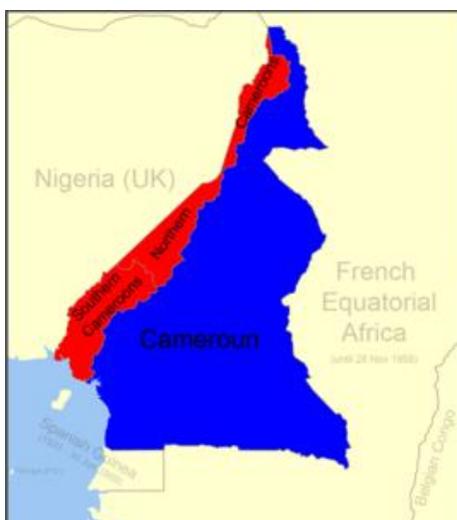


Figure 3. Br. Cameroon and Fr. Cameroun 1916-1960/61.



Figure 6. Republic of Cameroon (unitary state) 1984-2017.

It is true that Germany lost that vibrant and cordial relationship, which imperial powers that stayed established with their colonies after independence. We are talking about relationships that have been kept alive and that continue to promote the values of the imperial powers like the Commonwealth that groups Britain and former colonies as members, the Francophonie in which France and former colonies are members, and the association of Portuguese speaking countries in which Portugal and former colonies are members. Even countries that won independence after a long and bloody liberation movements like Algeria from France, Angola from Portugal, and Zimbabwe from Britain have continued to have special and active post-colonial relations with former imperial rulers. Germany could have established such a vibrant Germanic relationship at independence only if she had granted independence to Kamerun, not to modern Cameroon that was never her colonial territory. She thus lost the opportunity to set up a global institution that would promote German ways and other ties worldwide.

6. Conclusion

Modern Cameroon is made up of what could be described as the ashes of, but not the same thing as the Kamerun protectorate of 1884-1916. That protectorate expanded and contracted under different circumstances, particularly the Moroccan crisis of 1911 that led to the enormous expansion and World War 1 that caused the sudden contraction and end of Kamerun. But it was from the residue of Kamerun that two new colonial territories emerged and began the struggle for its reunification that would instead result in the unification of former British Southern Cameroons and French Cameroun. Even before unification, each part of the disrupted territory that adapted a new linguistic version of the old name continued directly or indirectly to maintain a continual relationship with Germany and the Germans.

Abbreviations

KFP	Kamerun Freedom Party
KNC	Kamerun National Congress
KNDP	Kamerun National Democratic Party
KPP	Kamerun People's Party
KUCP	Kamerun United Commoner's Party
KUNC	Kamerun United National Congress
KUP	Kamerun United Party
NAKL	National Army of Kamerun Liberation
NKDP	Northern Kamerun Democratic Party
OKP	One Kamerun Party
UPC	Union des Populations du Cameroun

Author Contributions

Verkijika Fanso is the sole author. The author read and approved the final manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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