

**LITERARY HISTORICITY: TEXTUALISING KAMERUN'S RESISTANCE TO
GERMAN COLONIALISM IN AZANWI NCHAMI'S *FOOT PRINTS OF DESTINY***

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Abstract

*This essay critically assesses the question of Kamerun's resistance to German colonial/imperial rule as creatively represented in Azanwi Nchami's historical novel *Foot Prints of Destiny*. Centring on the intersectionality between literature and history, literature as interpretation of history, memory and politics and the politics of memory the write-up situates Nchami's valorisation of two important historico-political figures in Kamerun, Rudolph Douala Manga Bell and Martin-Paul Samba. The paper argues fervently that these two nationalist heroes are pioneer fighters for the unyoking of Kamerun from the bondage of German colonialism and imperialism. To refer to Ernest Renan they are genuine heroes who form part of the socio-political capital of Cameroon's historical wealth. They are construed as indelible markers or foot prints Cameroon's destiny due to unconditional defiance, self-sacrifice and the spirit of synergy which placed their agency within the entire territorialisation of the nation. They are political martyrs and should therefore unquestionably form part of the collective memory of Cameroon which has failed to give them adequate national recognition. Azanwi Nchami's *Foot Prints of Destiny* is therefore a treatise which appeals to the Cameroonian state to include Rudolph Douala Manga Bell and Martin-Paul Samba in the nation's hall of fame.*

Key words: Literary Historicity, Resistance, Memory, Politics of Memory, Nationalism, Straddling Borders

Introduction

The centrality of this paper is the emergence of Kamerunian/Cameroonian anti-colonial nationalist spirit represented through the historico-creative lens of Azanwi Nchami.¹ Literature and historical memory intersect as Nchami indicts the nature of German colonial administration, particularly its repressive treatment of colonial objects based on Western

justifications for a civilising mission in the supposed dark and barbaric continent. A fundamental question to be examined also is whether Nchami's novel is more concerned with this resistance to German rule or she is, from an ideological perception, subtly or overtly contemptuous of the Cameroonian state's resistance to accept the true heroes of its early nationalist agency and inscribe them appropriately in national consciousness and hall of fame.

The borderline between history and literature is complex, Hayden White (1990), Munslow (1997), Montrose (2004), Ambanasom (2007), etc. A historical novel is far from being a mere corresponding or re-enactment of historical givens in the fabric of creative works. A new historicist perspective would argue that history influences literary productivity just as well as this productivity should have an impact on the reading audience. Literary creativity as interpretation of history involves a complex dialogic relation between the author and reader/critic. The supposed distinction between fiction and history becomes radically blurred. There are indeed numerous historical accounts which are mere fiction than creative texts which incorporate and interpret historical phenomena. The realities of the postmodernist turn have problematized the debate further, rendering the ambiguities of history common culture. However blurred the distinction between history and fiction or imaginative writing appears to be, history as an independent discipline still enjoys a certain undeniable authenticity. The life and death of the heroes in Nchami's novel are historical facts which diverse interpretations in the guise of historiography would not change.

The Cameroon literary scene as concerns historiography has variously textualised German presence, and colonial/imperial history as a whole. We have seminal Francophone writers such as Ferdinand Oyono, Eza Boto and Mongo Beti whose works, which narrate contemptuousness on colonial and imperial presence in Cameroon, centre mainly on French assimilationist colonialism. With specificity to German presence there is, for example, Paul Tchoukoté's *Samba* (1981).² With regard to Cameroon Anglophone literature, Bole Butake's and Gilbert Doho's *Zintgraff and the Battle of Mankon* (2002) represents the encounters of the German explorer Dr Eugen Zintgraff in the present North West Region of Cameroon, particularly the Bali fondom. In essence the play is about the alliance contracted between Fon Galega I and the German to subdue the Mankon and Bafut people under his supreme jurisdiction, the difficulty at achieving this ambition because of betrayal and stiff resistance, and the subsequent German colonialist control of the Grassfields with the help of Bali. Butake's *Family Saga* (2005) is an allegory which implores the mythic dimension to make reference to German incursion in Kamerun. He uses the metaphor of a masculine European Yaman (Germany) who is attracted to the exceptionally beautiful and sexualised African goddess Kamanda (Kamerun).³ Azanwi Nchami's text is exceptional in its focused intersection between literature and history specific to German occupation of Kamerun in a wide-ranging perspective.

Foot Prints of Destiny, a novel quite little known,⁴ is a distinctively enriching historical novel which explores aspects of German colonialism in Kamerun and the different strategies of resistance to this autocratic and hegemonic colonial rule. The story interweaves

international historical circumstances, particularly in European politics, which were to involve German colonies, especially Kamerun as primary territory with which the novel grapples. As indicated earlier, does Nchami take delight simply in fusing history in her creative fabric or there are deeper undercurrents and insights to this move.

Memory and Politics

Memory and politics are very complex terms in the social and political discrimination of politico-historical data. Nation is a landscape of memory and memory is the sum total of intrinsic and extrinsic cultural, social, economic and political mutations of nation. Nation is also a collectivity; a collectivity which bears markers of individual agency and distinction. A nation's heroes, past, present and future, are individuals who make the difference and therefore should be unquestionably inscribed in the annals of history. Why should events dating 1884 - 1914 be the substance of a creative text authored in 1985? Memory and politics are unavoidable terms of the answer to such an interrogation.

Paying homage to Rudolph Douala Manga Bell one of Cameroon's ace female journalists, Suzanne Kala-Lobe, has remarked that:

Sa vie est racontée dans de nombreux textes. Son exécution a fait l'objet de nombreuses représentations et son histoire doit être contée pour que l'on comprenne ce que l'Afrique a perdu du point de vue des arches qui doivent former sa mémoire. La vie et la mort de Rudolph Duala Manga Bell résument assez les forces de même qu'elles dévoilent les faiblesses quasi ontologiques du mouvement révolutionnaire en Afrique Centrale. Car le chemin de la lutte n'est jonché que de cadavres érigés en héros et martyrs, exécutés par pendaison, livrés, tués, décapités. Un siècle d'histoire héroïque, où la plupart des héros ne connurent que la mort. L'exécution. Avant de développer sur ce phénomène de l'histoire des luttes politiques et sociales au Cameroun, il faut revenir à Rudolph Duala Manga Bell.⁵

This is a very incisive appraisal of a man of unshaken principles whose life will rightfully be represented in different texts because of the place he is supposed to hold not only in Cameroon and Central Africa, but the entire memory of Africa. Kala-Lobe is right that one cannot talk about the history of Cameroon's fight for freedom and self-determination engendered in the selfless and heroic sacrifices of life without making reference to the likes of Manga Bell. The respectable statesman Nerus Namaso Mbile (2011) considers Rudolph Douala Manga as a national hero, asserting that the execution of both Ngosso Din and Manga Bell was one of the darkest acts of German 30 year colonial rule in Cameroon (238 - 242).⁶ It would appear today that these names are fractioned only in family and/or ethnic memory, not national memory.

8 August 2014 marks a century since two great historic Cameroonians heroes; Rudolph Duala Manga Bell and Martin-Paul Samba, represented in Nchami's novel, were executed by hanging and shooting respectively on charges of high treason, because they wanted to uphold the identity and dignity of Cameroon and of Africa by extension, because they stood against German imperialism for a just and legitimate cause common in human history. The state in

Cameroon usually suffers immensely from the burden of memory. In other words it is haunted by memory as it specialises in the defence mechanism of selective memory and perception. The very obvious, remembering, is construed today as very difficult, if not undesirable. Remembering certain issues, certain great personalities and not being silent is taboo. Not that the obvious may not be compellingly difficult and enigmatic. To articulate or voice out could be tantamount to political subversion and treason. This leaves one to doubt and interrogate what has gone wrong with what constitute an undeniable and uncontested part of a nation's memory. The politics of ignoring aspects of the past, of marginalising or eclipsing them, of skilfully truncating them for political purposes do not presuppose forgetting unless forgetting is used as a strategic measure of political correctness and control. The mutilation of history, of memory, of humanity itself - this is the new state order. As to whether the government of Cameroon has any near or future plans to honour the memory of these nationalists officially, remains speculative.

State history and state memory in Cameroon has not only distorted national consciousness, it has fragmented it, side-lining what does not suit its apparatuses of legitimation of power. The past should be invoked or revoked based on state controlled historical data. Even though it took the Cameroonian state seventy one years to declare Rudolph Douala Manga Bell a national hero by presidential decree in 1985, the state has not done much concretely to keep this name alive in national consciousness and the spiritual archive of the country. Perhaps another decree, a "texte d'application", is needed to materialise this martyrdom. State recognition of Martin-Paul Samba as emblem of liberation is certainly more than waiting for Godot, or perhaps "dans les tout prochains jours" (in the coming days) as characteristic of some of the unfulfilled promises that were made decades ago. If a careful and transparent opinion poll is conducted on these monumental figures it would be very likely that a huge majority of Cameroonians do not know exactly who these heroes were or what they represent to the country's national pride. This is not a presumptuous position. Nchami's reinsertion and rehabilitation of these heroes surpasses state engagement which dictates the degree of nationalist and patriotic spirit. Moreover, this rehabilitation points to the creative writer as impact factor of national consciousness and catalyst to collective memory.

National memory in my opinion was asphyxiated during the celebrations marking fifty years of independence in 2011. The president of the Republic as guarantor of the nation's independence was the focal point of state interest. This is a constitutional right though, but can one person incarnate the heroic past, present and future of a nation? Personality cult and presidentialisation of power hijacked the agency of the forefathers about whom we sing in the national anthem with much pride and emotions. Many historical figures including Rudolph Duala Manga Bell and Martin-Paul Samba, even the country's first head of state, were ignored or eclipsed as though they have ceased to form part of memory and the modern history of Cameroon. Why should a writer, an Anglophone female writer for that matter, use historical material and protagonists from the coastal and southern regions of Cameroon in a creative work within the tradition of Cameroon Anglophone writing? What has this text got to offer in understanding the deeper undercurrents of German imperialism, simple as it may

be? How does it represent Cameroonian heroes and martyrs? How relevant is it with regard to forgotten or suppressed traces of national memory? How can the novel be contextualised in the complexity of postcolonial interpretive paradigm?

The historian always talks about Cameroonian nationalism and agency against colonial and imperial rule just prior to independence. The implication is clear; nationalist sentiment is limited to the resistance to, and fight against French colonial rule and subsequently against the neo-colonialist regime of Ahmadou Ahidjo with national heroes and martyrs such as Rueben Um Nyobé, Félix-Roland Moumié, Tankeu Noé and Ernest Ouandié surfacing into the limelight. These great figures, most of whom were styled rebels and terrorists in state historical archives, extended the agency and nationalist mentality that had begun under the Germans. They followed, in metaphorical terms, the indelible foot prints of destiny which the likes of Bissogo, Manga Bell and Samba had left.

It could be plausible to say that Germany, as long as it was a colonial master, was to capitulate eventually to nationalist pressures of self-determination and self-rule from its colonies. Its fragility and defeat in World War I did not alter this historical fact in the fate of British and French imperialist dominance. Nchami's novel strives for national wholesomeness of the Cameroonian people irrespective of colonial epoch. The symbolic significance of the title conveys a move towards the synergy of national consciousness and memory. The novel is not only a display of history; it ignites and stirs layers of memory other than itself. The novel says what it does not say to refer to the French intellectual Pierre Macherey.⁷ As a text therefore, it veils multiple elliptical texts, depending on the spectrum of who thinks or visualises or textualises the missing gaps through varying interpretive paradigms.

History as Complex Memory

The legitimisation of the colonisation of Africa was made possible by the Berlin Conference of 1884 to 1885. Accounts of the coloniser and those of the colonised are always at disparity, conflicting and contestable. Not being an expert on German Colonial Studies, the intension of this section is to map a brief overview of German colonial rule in Cameroon, particularly concerning the fate of Manga Bell and Samba. German presence in Sub-Saharan Africa included Tanzania, Namibia, Togo, and Cameroon. Chancellor Otto von Bismarck championed Germany's participation in the "scramble for Africa". The history of German colonialism of Kamerun begins with Gustav Nachtigal's interaction with coastal area people and the famous signing of protectorate treaty on 12 July 1884. The Douala chiefs were led by Dicka Mpondo otherwise called King Akwa and King Bell. German representatives who acted as Nachtigal's facilitators were Johannes Voss of Jantzen Thornmählen firm and Edward Schmidt of Woermann firm. German expansionism was continued into the Southern parts by Captain Kund (1887) and Captain Morgen (1890). David Simo's innovative essay "Colonization and Modernization: The Legal Foundation of the Colonial Enterprise; A Case Study of German Colonization in Cameroon" (2005) sheds more light on the imposition of German judiciary system on indigenous peoples as ways of legitimizing its superiority over these people who were considered as having no sovereign powers to decide their wellbeing

(100 - 102). Simo also talks about the impunity and cruelty of German tradesmen, soldiers, and civil servants (101). Their excesses could not even be contained by Kaiser Wilhelm I. From 1884 - 1914 German control of Kamerun was characterised by different realities, depending on the specific location within this colonial space or site. The fierce and courageous Ewondo chief Omgba Bissogo (1855 - 1896) had fought against Germans in 1895 and defeated them, though later German reprisal led to the arrest and execution of the chief. The Bakweris under the leadership of their warrior Chief Kuva Likenye had staged stiff resistance against German expropriation of Bakweri land between 1891 and 1894.⁸ The Duala of the coastal region, major maritime gateway into Cameroon, now known as the Littoral could not stand the excesses of German violations of its terms of rule. German imperial administration under Governor Theodor Seitz defied the signed treaty of 1884 which guaranteed the people's attachment to their land and strategized to displace them to less favourable settler zones. This expropriation of land, based on a supremacist ideology on culture and race, was utterly unacceptable. The spatial apartness which the Germans created signalled visible signs of apartheid. Manga Bell mobilised forces to resist this gross abnegation of the 1884 treaty,⁹ requesting assistance from Martin-Paul Samba who was in collaboration with the French in the Congo and British in Nigeria to topple and overthrow Germany's international might. Their adamant sense of determination did not deter them from sacrificing their lives. All these coincidentally occurred at the advent of the WWI, leading the Germans to apprehend clear connivance between the heroes and its arch enemies Britain and France.

Rudolph Duala Manga Bell who served the colonial administration turned his back against it. He was relieved of his duties on 4th August 1913. This move did not deter his anti-colonial stance. He sent his assistant Adolf Ngosso Din to Germany to plead the case of the Douala people. Curiously, he was caught, tried and charged for treason, and dispatched to Cameroon for execution. Manga Bell looked for assistance across the country from other dignitaries and kingdoms outside Douala land. Examples include Charles Atangana of the Ewondos, Sultan Ibrahim Njoya of Bamum, Martin-Paul Samba of the Bulu, Bali, Dschang, Baham, Banyo, etc. (Ngoh 1996: 107). This was sign of his zeal for a national united front against Germans. Martin-Paul Samba, born around 1870 as Mebenga m'Ebono, had military training in Germany, returned to Cameroon and served the German imperial army in the hinterlands, fighting against and subduing all those who were opposed to German colonialism. His complacency with Germans was to be short-lived. He too was to fall out with the Germans, revolted by their brutality and gross abuse of indigenous peoples. He was resolved to take advantage of the war which France had waged against Germany to acquire arms and secretly train a resistance army. His strategy was to ally both with the French who occupied the Congo and the British who occupied Nigeria. One of his secret letters was intercepted and it became clear to the Germans that he was a traitor. On the same 7th August 1914 that Adolph Douala Manga Bell was tried in Douala, he was tried in Ebolowa and handed the same verdict of death sentence. Manga Bell was hanged and Samba shot on 8 August 1884.

Straddling Borders: The Historical Dimension in Literary Creativity

Foot Prints of Destiny is a complex blend of historical and aesthetic issues. The literary dimension of history is argued on the grounds of Nchami's fusion of historical facts into the fabric of her artistic display. Her commemoration of memory is unique in the sense that her novel showcases her erudition on historical archiving and reconstruction. It is a story of youthful enthusiasm and romance amid the different transformations the world was recording, particularly African which was subject to Western imperialism and capitalism. The narrative represents not only the official lives of Martin Paul Samba, Rudolph Douala Manga Bell and his cousin Felix Bele, it also touches fictionally on the simple human beings they were in the context of family and social life. It situates the trajectories of their lives and their common destiny in forming the foundations of a nation. Nchami narrates with great style how the various heroes spent childhood, adolescence and manhood. We are told with finesse their experiences of love, passion, adventure, parental hood, the conviviality of family and social cohesion. Whether historically appropriate or not the reconstruction of the details of the lives of Manga Bell and Samba are handled with such artistic richness that urges one to suspend any tint of disbelief. Nchami's use of dialogue, action, suspense, contrast, vivid description and other literary tropes like paradox, metaphor, symbol and hyperbole, enrich the artistic quality of the novel.

In the heart of it all, we see the reflective and strategist heroes, patriots and martyrs who carry the burden of freeing a nation from Western imperial tyranny represented by Germany. We see their determination to engaging an agency which goes beyond their territorial confines, strengthening the roots of a national synergy which product is today's Cameroon. We see the difficult task they are resolved to perform at all cost to dismantle the myth of white superiority and African inferiority. They have collaborated and worked with the colonial masters, no doubt, but they cannot bear any longer the servitude under which the hideous colonial machinery has plunged their people.

In the novel Martin-Paul Samba and Rudolph Douala Manga Bell meet for the first time as youngsters while studying in Germany. In the narrative it is the rich German business man Kurt von Morgen who, after the cruel murder of Samba's father, decides to persuade his mother to take Samba to Germany to bring him up. Here he gets acquainted to the von Morgen household, especially with Morgen's unique daughter Sonia with whom he passionately falls in love. He leaves Germany with the promise to marry her.

There is the exquisitely charming Amazon warrior Zara whose conquest and passionate story with the mighty Zulu chief Nguni gets into the entire fabric of the lives of Félix Bele and Paul-Martin Samba. She loses Nguni but is pregnant with Nguni's child, is captured and taken as a slave, rescued from a slave ship off the coast of Cameroon by a British anti-slavery patrol ship, taken care of by missionaries and eventually marries the frustrated Bele. Bele, infuriated and traumatised by German racist and discriminatory policies, travels to the United States of America, leaving behind Zara pregnant. She delivers Rudolph-Samba in the hands of Samba. Her eventual spell on Samba ushers yet another dimension of his emotional life amid his duty to rally support and end German dominance. The name of this child has great

symbolic significance. It is a symbol of their common goal and most especially a premonition of their impending fate in the hands of the Germans.

By the time Samba travels to Douala to seek Manga Bell's support against German tyranny they are already established friends. There are no historical accounts that the two ever met before the dire need of common action that brought them together. This is therefore Nchami's recreation. Both martyrs have different motives for their discontentment with Germans

Foot Prints of Destiny: Kamerun Agency and Strategizing in Rooted Nationalism

Most, if not all struggles for independence and self-governance in colonies, were triggered by resistance to the applicability of racial, cultural, anthropological, economic, political, social, philosophical and religious grand narratives of the West. These Western grand narratives or epistemologies in all their ramifications, which refused the colonised any specific space for its own authentic narratives, were ruptured and deconstructed. Manichean dichotomies of black/black, self/other, superior/inferior complex, centre/periphery, etc. are vividly showcased and then dismantled by Nchami. The true face of the colonialist is smeared with hypocrisy, sycophancy, cruelty, barbarity and darkness. In fact, the veritable heart of darkness is that of the colonial master who uses the defence mechanism of projection to locate these negative traits on the colonised.

Encounters involving the main protagonists Martin-Paul and Rudolph in view of building up rebellion against Germans are born of diverse motives but related to racial bias, high-handedness, misguided superiority, and highly orchestrated indifference. The political foot prints of these nationalist figures cannot be erased, they are indelible and Nchami represents these foot prints with depth.

Samba changes attitude towards Germans with the circumstances surrounding the death of von Morgen's daughter Sonia who he had planned to marry. Embittered and heartbroken, he goes to Germany to get first hand details about the death, murders von Morgen, comes back, and discusses racist issues with his mother in connection to von Morgen's heartless behaviour to both Samba and Sonia. It has taken him time to realise the cynical side of whites; he has been against his own people for the white man's sake, but he will change that orientation, swearing that he would no longer be the white man's tool. His resolution is unequivocal and captured thus: "I want the white man out of Kamerun. I want to wipe that smile of superiority from their hypocritical faces" (96). He must be a true Kamerunian in the eyes of his people and so works for ten years to rebuild and re-instate a positive and acceptable image among his people - he resigns from the German imperial army, becomes a chief (97- 98) and champions the course of Kamerun.

The policy of treating on a basis of one to one is what Samba advocates ardently. He contemplates that if all Kamerunian chiefs would reason on similar lines and speak with the same voice the chances of effective anti-German dominance and a restored order of self-rule would be possible (98). Samba's thought on the dire need for effective collaboration and synergy amongst Kamerunian chiefs showcases a unification spirit beyond Bulu land and Douala. The support and reinforcements (145) which Sultan Njoya sends to Martin-Paul Samba testify this collaborative nationalist spirit.

Samba starts amassing arms and drills young Cameroonians on the tactics of sophisticated warfare. He sets up a military camp at Biba, smuggles arms with the collaboration of the British, French and Belgians. He wants to exploit the tension born of arm race in Europe and the fact that Germany is trying to impose its superiority over Europe and the world. To help in fragilising Germany in its colonies would be part of defeating and evicting it from Kamerun (98).

In the meantime the problems in Douala are escalating with German imperial administration ready to violate previously signed treaties to assuage their power thirst. German decision to expropriate land signals a number of imperialist tendencies. The most important of which is a supremacist and high-handed approach to indigenous people, centring on power, race and culture. Expropriating the peoples' land is an overt move at denying them the essence of their lives; it is a measure of debasing their values. The consequent result is infuriation and radical unacceptance by the dispossessed people. Rudolph assumes the leading role in representing the Douala people and also in influencing other Kamerunian chiefs to his cause. Samba's embarking to, and arrival in Douala on Rudolph's invitation is very important with regard to German imperial excesses which has preoccupied him for so long.

The Samba - Bell encounters on discussions and strategy devising (112 - 114) throws light on nationalist spirit of the heroes. Pastor Lotin Same, who overtly supports the nationalists, is also present. They try to explore possibilities offered by international affairs which disfavour Germany but fit their designs. Samba's mastery of world affairs places their designs on an advantageous position. They ponder on how to make use of the *Entente Cordiale*...the Franco-British alliance...these all militate against Germany and therefore would offer a golden opportunity to attack and weaken German strength in its colonies.

Another important occasion which offers itself to further planning is the day of Ngondo at chief Akwa's palace during which the Douala council of chiefs meet amid celebrations to concert on matters that would eventually determine the destiny of Kamerun (117). Rudolph is unequivocal that depriving them of their land would render them lesser than captured slaves. He declares that the country is in peril and appeals that all differences and tensions be put aside for a united front to confront German racism and tyranny. Samba is referred to as the strategist in conceiving ways to be deployed to defeat Germany. Shadrack Ambanasom¹⁰ considers him the novel's hero even though he indicts Nchami for not exploring his character fully, particularly in terms of being vocal and charismatic. One would understand his military background to know that he is more concerned with tactics and practical warfare rather than make speeches. Nchami on the contrary leaves the reader with the apprehension of a great aura around Samba's military personality.

As mentioned already Samba is building a strong army in Biba with recruits from all over Cameroon while waiting for the right time to act (124 - 125). Some come from Mankon, Fouban and Garoua. It goes without doubt that this expanded territorial involvement engenders a strong nationalist spirit beyond the coastal and Southern regions of Cameroon. Samba had previously reflected that a general consensus with all Kamerunian chiefs would ensure effective ousting of Germans.

The visibility of the German side is inscribed in (Ndumbe) Manga Bell's confrontation with Governor Seitz. He has already sworn hell to the Germans on insinuations that they want to expropriate Douala land. It would be only "Over and my dead body", the chief ascertains (89). It would be worthwhile to cite the dialogue/confrontation when Seitz confirms that Germans are planning to expropriate land. It is no longer a matter of insinuation:

'I'm afraid the rumours you've heard are true, Your Highness.'

'But, Goddammit Seitz,' Rudolph's fist hit the table top loudly. 'The German Government cannot do this to us - not after all the concessions we've made to them. What? Expropriate our land? Dispossess us? You just hate our guts don't you? The Douala people have been the biggest torn in your white flesh ever since you annexed our country, haven't they? They are proud people. They are your commercial rivals. They refuse to pay your taxes. They have consistently refused to work in your plantation: they have refused to become your beasts of burden. In short, they refute your assumption of racial superiority over them. So now you want to teach them a lesson, put them in their place, is that it?

'You know I am strongly opposed to my government's expropriation policies, Your Highness.'

'You better be, Seitz, you just better be, because the Douala people are not going to stand for any of your high-handed German ways of operating. Not an inch of Douala shall be ceded to you excerpt on our terms and when we judge fit. We shall fight to the last man for our patrimony. You say you've been recalled to Germany. Well and good. Make it your business to feed some sense into the heads of your Kaiser and his Chancellor.' (89 - 90)

Rudolph's sardonic remarks are enough to signal danger on the part of the colonised. Collective resistance and resentment have been ingrained in the Douala people since the time of annexation. Disrespecting and disregarding the terms which had been signed is not a trifling matter for the colonised people, especially with regard to their ancestral lands. It is unbearable to allow this very fundamental component of their existence minimised or effaced by Germany. Before the year elapses the situation is deteriorating. Rudolph Douala Manga Bell is again in another confrontation with the new Governor Otto Gleim. The exchange with the Governor only frustrates and enrages Rudolph:

'The degree you're holding in your hand just arrived from Berlin.'

Rudolph held up the papers in question and read out loud, 'Decision to move Natives from Douala to a New Location separated from Europeans by one Kilometre. In order to prevent land speculation and also improve health conditions for Europeans, it has been decided...'...If leaving side by side with us natives is a health hazard for you,...Why do you want to put only one kilometre between yourselves and us? Put a million kilometres, in fact leave Kamerun. What could be safer for your health than that?' (101 - 102)

This is a bold and non-compromising challenge on a powerful high-handed colonial master, signalling a strong sense of patriotism to say the least. From this encounter it is certain that Gleim is not hypocritical. He is sympathetic but must rely on instructions from the hierarchy in Berlin and hopes that the situation does not escalate to a bloody conflict in which both sides would shed blood as Rudolph whole heartedly suggests. Rudolph demands that Kamerunians should be provided with guns to fight their cause. After this encounter Reverend Lotin consults with Manga Bell on what is to be done and they resolve to invite Samba for the Ngondo meeting.

German administration's premonition is not helping matters, especially as the legitimacy of the claims of the indigenous people is undoubtedly concrete. Governor Gleim genuinely sympathises with Kamerunians, is frank with home administration that there are strong risks of grave repercussions as regards its overzealous ambitions in Cameroon:

‘... this time (the Governor wrote), we may be going too far, I have a feeling this proud people are going to fight tooth and nail to keep their land. Indeed we cannot accuse them of insubordination as your majesty suggests. They have given us ample proof of their pliability in the past. We have ousted them from their monopoly of trade with the interior despite promises of non-interference on our part. For years now they have been paying the government taxes levied on them even though we know they are at bottom bitterly opposed to this imposition.

It is my biggest fear that the present protests may become violent. In their fight against this latest colonial ‘outrage,’ the Douala people have chosen a young firebrand, their paramount chief, Rudolph Douala Manga Bell to represent them. We have reason to suspect that he might be in contact with guerrilla elements...’ (123)

The Germans back home are certainly not unaware of impending trouble, especially as they are preoccupied with important continental issues. The brief description of Manga Bell leaves no doubt as to the determined spirit he has and the impact of his leadership among his people. Germany is so sure of its military superiority and so pays little attention to discontentment back at home. In fact, the Kaiser does not care about the Governor's honesty, and Gleim is even considered as taking sides with colonial subjects and recalled home after just one year of service.

It is in the wake of all these circumstances that Samba and Manga Bell discuss the various options in view of attacking Germans. Samba re-iterates his position and explains that they should exploit the confrontation which Germany has with other world powers and strike with the help of Belgians and British (124 - 125). After visiting Samba's military camp Manga Bell returns to Douala to continue outreach activities.

The leakage of Bernard Musi concerning German knowledge of Ndoumbe's conspiracy and their plans to investigate who he collaborates with in Kamerun before arrests (135 - 136) marks another turning point in the anti-German struggle. Musi's act is very significant because it images a form of intelligence dissemination in favour of Kamerun resistance.

Forewarning Rudolph means he should devise ways of outplaying the Germans. According to Musi's intelligence report, the Germans plan to use Ndoumbe to discourage any further opposition to their authority. Rudolph is even more bent on getting to the end even if it means self-sacrifice. In his reaction to deter any move at discovering those with him he is collaborating, he dispatches a letter to Samba to speed up action. The subsequent mishaps which lead to the arrest, trial and execution of both heroes go a long way to project them as unpassable in Kamerun's history.

Samba and Rudolph are primarily involved in a game of interest with Britain, France and Belgium; their strategy is to generate a situation where Kamerun would not rely on any of them as master, but equal partners. Their plan is not to succumb to new colonial rule but to gain independence born out of the impossibility of contenders to get hold over the country. By the time war is declared on Germany the British in Nigeria and Belgians in the Congo have been waiting for Samba's word of action so as to take revenge against Germany and rebuild new ties with Kamerun.

Rudolph is arrested in Douala, tortured and forced to acknowledge help from the Sultan in Fumbam. German troops are led by Captain von Hagen, Commandant of Ebolowa. Samba does not escape for very sound reasons. When Zara asks him to flee, he out rightly rejects such an option of cowardice and betrayal. He explains that his army trusts him so much that he cannot abandon it. Besides, he asserts, the repercussions of fleeing would be too disastrous for many innocent people who would pay the price for his disappearance with torture and death. Samba understands that there would be carnage perpetrated by Germans were he to escape. He would prefer to give himself up not as sign of vulnerability but as victory over his enemies (149 - 151). His dignity and courage, his loyalty to Kamerun must be high even in face of death. The heroes are killed but Germany loses World War I triggered by the assassination of the Austro-Hungarian Archduke in Sarajevo, Bosnia. Germany is branded as world enemy of Liberty and a united front is mounted against her. The allies win and Germany is deprived of Kamerun and its other colonies in Africa.

The foot prints of nationalism are visible with the agency of Manga Bell and Samba. The Cameroon they saw in the future, not the immediate one they were fighting for is a very important factor of their anti-colonial and nationalist spirit. They were not concerned only with the territorialisation of Douala and Bulu lands. Their networking globed the vast territory known today as Cameroon.

The Christian church and the question of resistance

In critiquing colonialism and imperialism, the Christian church has to an extent been construed as part of Western epistemology of dominance, particularly in its evangelism of psychological quiescence and subservience. Two incompatible accounts of Christianity gravitate in favour of African agency for nationalism in *Foot Prints of Destiny*.

Samba and his thoughtful sarcasm against the Catholic Church bring to mind the question of racial superiority in conjunction with Western religious superiority. The Sunday mass and its dramatic scenes recall to his mind the hypocrisy and cynicism even of the church:

Passing a Roman Catholic Church, Samba heard the '*O salutaris hostia*' of the beginning of Sunday benediction. Here too, was another esoteric world, perhaps the biggest of them all. The Africans, with their predilection for animism, took to the statues, the incense, the ringing bells and aspersing with enthusiasm...*Unit Trmoque Domino Sit sempiterna Gloria.*'

The Latin chant, by virtue of its incomprehensibility, held strong meaning for them. It was the abracadabra of the priest, magician and medium to this strange and fearful God who made the white man clever and the black man stupid. (105)

This is a statement or thought which is sharply against the entire epistemology of imperialism. The church, construed here as arcane or abstruse, is prototype of the Manicheanism of the imperial enterprise. In his reflection Samba is very convinced that there is a common denominator somewhere, somehow between Catholic worship and indigenous African iconolatriy (106). He is just entering Douala where he intends to discuss with Rudolph on the necessity to outwit German dominance in Kamerun. His thoughts are compatible with the centrality of his mission and fortify his unflinching anti-colonial stance.

Reverend Pastor Lotin Same's protestant education and theology deconstructs the myth of white spiritual superiority and Western theological mysteries because he intelligently appropriates the bible to the lives of Kamerunians under German bondage and evil. He had previously been unable to give help of dissuasion to Otto Gleim when Manga talked about war and bloodshed (102). His complacency with the Kamerunian cause is very evident. His 1913 Christmas sermon is evidence of positive use of biblical knowledge to instil agency among the disgruntled Douala people. The impassioned sermon comes in the wake of the massive displacement and relocation of the Douala people from their land and the resentment, anger and agitation born of this act:

'... Brothers and Sisters,' he reminded them. 'The Israelites in Egypt waited in patience for God's sign. And he did not fail them. God never fails those who wait for Him to show them the way. And I can promise you this: Yes God's time is almost at hand. A few more days, a few more months, what does it matter if in the end we overcome the Evil that has landed in our midst?'

'Our Moses is here. I have seen him with my own eyes. He has his rod ready in his hand. It won't be long before he waves it over that mighty sea to let us through and drown our enemies in this bloody tide.

Oh, what a bloody bath awaits them my countrymen! But beware of becoming impatient lest the Lord, in His holy anger, scatter us further afield like unplanted grain before the wind. Vengeance is mine saith the Lord. And to you, my people, I say, we shall be avenged, Amen.'

And the forest woods rocked and echoed as the congregation responded in one thunderous voice, 'AMEN'. (130)

This religious allocution and the unanimous reaction to it are rich in imagery. The Reverend's use of allusion, analogy, comparison, metaphor and emblem has totality of effect on his

apparently impatient audience. It makes for insightful analysis on a political platform. The sermon's content parallels the predicament of English puritans who in the sixteen and seventeenth centuries suffered religious persecution and had to leave for the Promised Land New England. The sermon, which militates for national re/construction, is not without antecedence. Reverend Lotin is aware of the plans of Bell and Samba to which he gives blessing as testified by the sermon. The degree of enthusiasm and optimism after the sermon is very high especially as there are rumours that Rudolph Douala Manga Bell (the obvious Kamerunian Moses) is conceiving strategies of pitting the French and British against Germans. Even if the church is not planted by German missionaries, the above church related issues act as catalyst for bitterness and rebellion to the established colonial order. This is indeed a true instance of sly mimicry in the sense that instead of the bible used as an instrument of subduing blacks, it is turned into a weapon to dismantle dominance and foster liberty and independence.

Conclusion

Though *Foot Prints of Destiny* is categorised as a work of fiction, Nchami's recreating and upholding of the image of its great historical heroes point to the very substance of nation as defined classically by Ernest Renan:

A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle. Two things, which in truth are but one, constitute this soul or spiritual principle. One lies in the past, one in the present. One is the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories; the other is present-day consent, the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage that one has received in an undivided form...The nation, like the individual, is the culmination of a long past of endeavours, sacrifice, and devotion. Of all cults, that of the ancestors is the most legitimate, for the ancestors have made us what we are. A heroic past, great men, glory (by which I understand genuine glory), this is the social capital upon which one bases a national idea. To have common glories in the past and to have a common will in the present; to have performed great deeds together, to wish to perform still more-these are the essential conditions for being a people. (41)

This excerpt is far from portraying the genuineness of nation and patriotism as unrealistic or romantic. Our heroes unquestionably militated devotedly to this notion of nation. And Nchami's art is a subtle re-inscription of these lives into the core memory of the Cameroonian nation.

The footprints of Cameroon's history, however eclipsed and ignored, can neither be erased nor effaced. Martin-Paul Samba and Manga Bell are uncontested signposts of national memory finely captured in Nchami's novel. They are the pioneer architects of the genuine unification of Cameroon. They form the part of the live spirit of the country's national anthem (most precisely the English version) which could be viewed from an intertextual perspective as a poetic rendition of Renan's prose, an anthem which is unfortunately fading into a lyric with little significance accorded its treasured contents.

Notes

1. Azanwi Nchami is a female Cameroon Anglophone writer who hails from the North West Region of Cameroon. *Foot Prints of Destiny* is the only literary work that she has authored and published. It was published in 1985 by Alfresco, London and republished by Langa RPCIG in 2009.
2. Paul Tchoukoté's *Samba* represents the heroic and nationalist life of Martin-Paul Samba. It is reviewed by Gilbert Doho in *Dictionnaire des oeuvres littéraires de langue française en Afrique au sud Sahara 1979 - 1989*. Ambroise Kom (Ed.) Paris: L'Harmattan, 2001. (502 - 503).
3. This image of a feminised and sexually appealing Cameroon also reverberates in *Footprints of Destiny* (97 - 98), igniting a degree of intertextual interpretive perspectives. Samba's thoughts border on how he can stir confusion among European powers in view of seeking eventual sovereignty for Cameroon. He refers to Cameroon as a female body that attracts and seduces conflicting imperial powers. Due to their inability to win over Cameroon she would simply demand the right to sovereignty.
4. This novel forms part of the corpus of Cameroon Anglophone writing. This is a literary tradition which is very rich but not yet appropriately explored. It has not enjoyed exposure and critical attention like other Anglophone literatures from Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, Zimbabwe and South Africa. This is because of its disadvantageous location in Cameroon which is widely considered a Sub-Saharan Francophone nation though bilingual (English and French) officially.
5. Kala-Lobe's remark is extracted from "il s'appelait...Rudolph Douala Manga Bell!" *La Nouvelle Expression*, 2011. In this write-up she is unequivocal about the memory of Manga Bell and other national martyrs in the reconstruction of Cameroon's historical archives.
6. Nerus Namaso Mbile's Chapter Seventeen of *Cameroon Political History: Memories of an Authentic Eye Witness* (2011), "Rudolf Douala Manga, a National Hero" (235 - 248), provides a portrait of Manga Bell whom he thinks should have a deserving place in Cameroon's hall of fame.
7. It is well established that a text is other than what it is in terms of eliciting multiple elliptical texts in different interpretive perspectives. In "The Text Says What it Does Not Say" (2004) Pierre Macherey emphasises the hermeneutic and extrinsic sources of a text's interpretation: "...although the critical discourse is not spoken by the book, it is in some way the property of the book, constantly alluded to, though never announced openly" (252). He goes further to stress that "in its every particle, the work manifests, uncovers, what it cannot say. This silence gives it life" (253). *Foot Prints of Destiny* attests to this critical conviction.
8. Dibussi Tande's treasured paper, "Bakweri Armed Resistance to German Colonialism, 1891 - 1894", showcases one of the unknown trajectories of Cameroon's

history under German colonial rule. The Bakweris were able to resist German incursions for three years until capitulation in 1894.

9. Land and native Agency has been well documented by Harry Rudin in *Germans in the Cameroons 1884 - 1914: A Case Study in Modern Imperialism*. 1938. (396 - 413) Rudin's Appendix I and II have the Germano-Kamerunian treaty texts (423 and 425). The 1884 Treaty features in Mbile's *Cameroon Political History: Memories of an Authentic Eye Witness*. (242 - 243). The treaty was written in English, Mbile claims.
10. Shadrack Ambansom is the only critic who has paid attention to this novel. In the *Cameroonian Novel of English Expression* (2009) he treats the novel (66 - 75) under the heading "Encounters with Europe", arguing that agency is born of the resentment and radical challenge of the Manichean structure with which Westerners operated in the colonies.

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