



ABSTRACT BOOK

Bayreuth, 11.-14. April 2023

International Conference:
MULTIDISCIPLINARY
PERSPECTIVES ON
COLONIAL
CORRESPONDENCES

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Welcome to the Conference!

The conference team, the project team as well as the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence are happy to welcome you all to Bayreuth for this international conference “Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Colonial Correspondences”. This conference is organised by the Research Project “Colonial Letters and the Contact of Knowledges” and funded by the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence here at the University of Bayreuth, Germany.

It is amazing and encouraging that the topic of colonial correspondences, which we thought was such a niche, has attracted over 36 active participants from all over the world to discuss colonial epistolary correspondences written in ten colonies. We are happy to welcome participants from Algeria, Botswana, Cameroon, Ghana, Israel, Kenya, Mauritania, The Netherlands, Nigeria, Singapore, Switzerland, USA, Zimbabwe and of course Germany.

The trajectories of colonial correspondences traced in the presentations at this conference are principally of the British Empire but with undertones of other colonisations, for instance, the French. The broad spectrum of colonial experiences covered here includes Algeria, British Colony of Aden, British Southern Cameroons, Indonesia, Kenya, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Southern Rhodesia and Togo. These offer solid in-depth glimpses into the discursive construction of colonial agendas, the enactment of power, the restructuring of identities and above all the state of mind of the actors involved in the entire colonial enterprise.

We thank you all for sharing your enormously empirical research with us.

Welcome!

Conference Organisation

Eric A. Anchimbe & Glory Essien Otung

The Project


“Colonial Letters and the Contact of Knowledges”

Letters were one of the major means of communication during the 19th-20th Century British colonialism of Africa. Through them, the instructions, intensions, decisions, complaints, justifications and agenda of resident British colonial officers, local colonial administrators and collaborators, colonial officials in Britain and colonised subjects (individuals, villages) were transmitted across time and space. These letters offer extraordinary access to the mindset and overall agenda of the entities producing them. The ways of life of these entities, their patterns of social order, repertoires and constellations of knowledges, linguistic voices, world views and cosmologies are projected, both directly and indirectly, in these letters. In themselves, these letters embody the contact zone of colonial-precolonial structures, coloniser-colonised entities, indigenous-foreign knowledges, cultural and linguistic practices, etc.


This research project studies, from a predominantly linguistic perspective, the instantiations of colonial contact and postcolonial heritages that are embodied in, and transmitted through, letters written during British colonisation of Southern Cameroons (1916-1961). Markers of the construction of multiple identities, the discursive enactment of (social, political, hereditary) power and the coalescence of colonial and precolonial social norms of interaction (hierarchy, respect forms, kinship affiliation) found in these correspondences are studied from interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary perspectives that include linguistics, history, literature, sociology, anthropology, communication studies and (post)colonial studies.

The project funding, provided by the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence at the University of Bayreuth, started in 2019 and will end in 2023. However, research on the huge corpus of colonial correspondences put together by the project team will certainly continue. This corpus is referred to as the “Corpus of Colonial Epistolary Correspondences” contains over 5.000 documents of about five million words. It will be launched during the conference. Access will thereafter be made possible to researchers who are interested in colonial correspondences.


Project Team

 Emmanuel E. Kengo

 Eric A. Anchimbe


 Glory Essien Otung


 Gratien G. Atindogbe


 Julius A. Eyoh

 Pepetual Mforbe Chiangong

 Sarah Marjie

 Stephen A. Mforteh

 Uchenna Oyali

 Valentine N. Ubanako

The Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence

The Africa Multiple Cluster is funded by the Excellence Initiative of the States and Federal Governments of Germany. This funding is for seven years (2019-2025).

The overarching aim of the “Africa Multiple” Cluster is to reconfigure African studies, on both the conceptual and the structural level. The cluster is conceived as a transformative space within which to systematically advance the study of Africa and its diasporas via the pursuit of transdisciplinary research, with a strong emphasis on critical area studies, in addition to the disciplines involved. Building on decades of internationally outstanding research in African studies at University of Bayreuth, the cluster will develop new approaches to the analysis of African and African diasporic lifeworlds through the lens of multiplicity.

The cluster’s research (infra-)structure is designed to overcome existing power imbalances in the production and transmission of knowledge in African studies, and thus to set unprecedented standards for collaborative research in this field. Together with our African colleagues, we establish four “African Cluster Centres” on the African continent, precisely at the University of Lagos, Nigeria, Moi University Eldoret, Kenya, Rhodes University Makhanda, South Africa and Université Ki-Zerbo Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. For more on the Cluster, visit its website at: www.africamultiple.uni-bayreuth.de

Conference Programme

Zoom: <https://uni->

bayreuth.zoom.us/j/67726519361?pwd=OEI3aHNESjAvLytFNkcweUQ4Z1VaQT09

Tuesday, 11 April 2023		
Time	Activity: Room S 58 (RW II)	Format
12:00-13:00	Registration	
13:00-13:30	Opening ceremony: Dean of Cluster, Vice Dean Research, Project Coordinator	
13:30-14:30	Plenary Hans-Georg Wolf Conceptualisations in colonial correspondences Chair: Eric A. Anchimbe	
14:30-15:00	Coffee break	
15:00-18:00	Theme 1: Contestation—Negotiation of Knowledges Chair: Eric A. Anchimbe	
15:00-15:30	Pepetual Mforbe Chiangong “Geographisation” of spaces, places and cultural knowledge: Travelling through sources of imperial knowledge	
15:30-16:00	Alabi Aliyu ‘What do they really want?’ Colonial savoir on Islamic education in Northern Nigeria	
16:00-16:30	Tolulope Esther Fadeyi Revisiting colonial correspondences on mission maternities and midwifery in Ibadan	
16:30-17:00	Tatenda Catherine Matirongo The coloniality of maternal health correspondences: Contestations over maternal epistemologies in Southern Rhodesia (1890-1979)	
17:00-17:30	Paul Abiero Opondo Colonial sources and the contestation of knowledge: The age of the written history of the Luo of Kenya	Online
17:30-18:00	Shalot Nyaradzo Nhete State led preventive healthcare in Southern Rhodesia: Voices from the archive	Online

Wednesday 12 April 2023		
Time	Activity: Room S 58 (RW II)	
09:30-12:30	Theme 2. Contestation—Negotiation of Power Chair: Sarah Marjie	
09:30-10:00	Sumo Tayo Aimé Raoul Trans-imperial colonial letters, French and British administrative authorities, and cross-border governance: A case study of the Banyo-Gashaga border	
10:00-10:30	Glory Essien Otung Deconstructing indirect rule: Linguistic strategies in the colonial discourses on the Mbembes' marriage customs	
10:30-11:00	Henry Kah Power and perception through letters in British Southern Cameroons	Online
11:00-11:30	Coffee break	
11:30-12:00	Usman Ahmad Mutual patronage in the correspondences between British colonial administrators and Northern Nigerian elites	
12:00-12:30	Valentine N. Ubanako and Emmanuel Tata Tangong Instantiations of power in selected colonial exchanges in British Southern Cameroons	Online
12:30-13:00	Isaac Junior Kwarteng Setting local politics on fire: Colonialism, tradition, and instability in Ghana (1900–1936)	Online
13:00-14:00	Lunch	
14:00-16:30	Theme 3. Resistance // Theme 7: Heritages & Commodifications Chair: Uche Oyali	
14:00-14:30	Akshatha Rangarajan Colonial letters: A discourse about art repatriation	
14:30-15:00	Sarah Marjie Insidious paternalism and the establishment of heritage: A contrapuntal analysis of colonial correspondences of the British Southern Cameroons	
15:00-15:30	Ilupeju Adepeju Colonial correspondence and the memory of resistance in Ijebu Igbo agitation for independence	Online
15:30-16:00	Julius A. Eyoh Quests for, and resistances to, change in colonial letters from British Southern Cameroons	Online
16:00	Launch of <i>Corpus of Colonial Epistolary Correspondences</i>	

Thursday 13 April 2023		
Time	Activity: Room S 58 (RW II)	
09:30-12:30	Theme 4: Contestation—Negotiation of Identity Chair: Gratien G. Atindogbe	
09:30-10:00	Emmanuel E. Kengo (Mis)-Representation of Southern Cameroonians in colonial communications, 1916 -1961	
10:00-10:30	Eric A. Anchimbe Discursive construction of identities and power in colonial letters	
10:30-11:00	Uchenna Oyali Identity change, conflict and identity negotiation in colonial Southern Cameroons: A study of the “Manga Williams’ Letters”	
11:00-11:30	Coffee break	
11:30-12:00	Stephen A. Mforteh Epistolary traces of the dissipation of indigenous identity of colonised people	
12:00-12:30	Takesure Taringana Colonial correspondence and the creation of a cheap labour economy in Southern Rhodesia: The taxable age debate, 1904-1911	Online
12:30-14:00	Lunch	
14:00-16:30	Themes 3/5: Gendered Representations //Resistance Chair: Glory Essien Otung	
14:00-14:30	Ori Schachmon Aden women writing: Personal letters from the Jewish community in the British Colony of Aden	
14:30-15:00	Dikko Muhammad Manifestations of resistance in the coloniser-colonised letter exchanges in Northern Nigeria: A study of Abubakar Imam Memoirs	Online
15:00-15:30	David Muthgegethi Beyond official archival narrative: Silence, omission and distortion of gendered experiences in colonial Kenya	Online
15:30-16:00	Walter Gam Nkwi Communication is power: Letters as a source of history in understanding women’s mobility in the Bamenda Division of British Southern Cameroon	Online
16:00-16:30	Taleb Bilal Eli Signs of spectacular resistance: Postal services and colonial letters in nineteenth century North Africa	Online

Friday 14 April 2023		
Time	Activity: Room S 58 (RW II)	
09:30-10:30	Keynote Mompoloki M. Bagwasi Power and struggle in letters written by British administrators and Batswana chiefs, 1885-1966 Chair: Pepetual M. Chiangong	
	Theme 6: Authorship Dynamics Chair: Emmanuel E. Kengo Room: S 58 (RW II)	
10:30-11:00	Mary Afolabi Knowledge and colonialism: The power of prefaces, letters and appendices in the journals of nineteenth century Niger Expeditions	
11:00-11:30	Gratien G. Atindogbe Linguistic politeness in selected colonial letters from British Southern Cameroons	
11:30-12:00	Ngozi Edeagu "Anxious to have friends": A case study of transnational letter writing among colonial Nigerian Children (1930s-1950s)	Online
12:00-12:30	Eyong-Tiku Eyong-Ewubhe Postcolonial Epistolary Conventions and Fragmentation: A Reading of Linus Asong's <i>The Crown of Thorns</i>	Online
12:30-13:00	Arogundade Nurudeen Olatoye Public Letter Writers (PLW) as an advocate and solicitor of the populaces: The Ife Native Courts experiences	Online
	Final discussion, publication and closing	
13:00-14:00	Lunch and end of conference	

Keynote Speaker

Mompoloki M. Bagwasi

University of Botswana

Mompoloki M. Bagwasi is Professor and Head of Department of English at the University of Botswana where she has been teaching for more than three decades. She obtained her PhD from Indiana University, USA, in 2002. Her dissertation, "A Historical Development of a Botswana Variety of English", is a sociolinguistic analysis of letters written by British administrators and Batswana chiefs between 1885 and 1966 when Bechuanaland (now Botswana) was a British protectorate. Most of her publications on Botswana English and critical discourse analysis are inspired by or based on data from the huge corpus of colonial correspondences she put together. Among her notable publications are "Education, multilingualism and bilingualism in Botswana" (*International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 267-268: 43-54 2021), "Englishising



African cultures: Revisiting acculturated forms of English in Botswana" (*Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 27 (2): 196-208, 2014), and "Pragmatics of letter writing in Setswana" (*Journal of Pragmatics* 40 (3): 525-536, 2008).

Power and struggle in letters written by British administrators and Batswana chiefs between 1885 and 1966

Mompoloki M. Bagwasi (University of Botswana)

A distinction is often made between a colony and a protectorate in the sense that a colony is said to be a territory of a colonial master who has full control over it while a protectorate retains its power and sovereignty when a more powerful state takes responsibility for its external relations and defence. Bechuanaland, now Botswana, is said to have been a protectorate rather than a colony of Britain from 1885 to 1966. However, this status of protectorate as opposed to colony is not supported by the tone in the letters exchanged between the British administrators and the leaders of Batswana ethnic groups (known as chiefs) during that period. Using a corpus of about 200 letters written during the protectorate era, by and to the British administrators on one hand, and letters written to and by Batswana chiefs on the other hand, this talk explores ways in which power was enacted between these two parties discursively. The enactment of power and the coalescence of British colonial norms and Setswana social norms are evident in the pragmatics of letter writing, politeness forms, and kinship terms that were used in the correspondences.

I use a sociolinguistic and critical discourse analysis approach to analyse the use of address terms such as “chief, friend, lion, your honour, and your obedient servant” by the two parties to signal their unequal power relations. The letters by the British administrators have shorter salutations and signatures and they tend to be more business-like, direct and authoritative whilst the letters by the chiefs have longer salutations and signatures and tend to be more conversational, informal and reconciliatory. Such formulaic salutations and signatures as “dear friend” or “your obedient servant” take a new and different meaning when the British administrators use them strategically to mask or assert their power and Batswana chiefs use them to bridge the power gap between them and the British masters. Besides the more evident power struggle in which the British administrators act on British authority and the chiefs act on the traditional authority vested upon them by their ethnic groups, the correspondences also exhibit linguistic and cultural differences that the two parties had to contend with. For example, the British administrators were criticized for misinterpreting and taking out of context some important Setswana proverbs as “lefoko la kgosi le agelwa mosaka” (i.e. ‘build a shelter around the chief’s word’) which is locally interpreted to mean honour the chief’s word. Some critics of British administrators argued that the British misinterpreted this proverb to mean “the chief’s word is law” and therefore Setswana chiefs have absolute power.

Plenary Speaker

Hans-Georg Wolf

University of Potsdam, Germany

Hans-Georg Wolf holds the chair of Development and Variation of the English Language at the University of Potsdam, Germany. His research interests include cognitive sociolinguistics, cultural linguistics, sociolinguistics, lexicography, and intercultural pragmatics. He has published a number of monographs and edited volumes – including *English in Cameroon* (2001) and *World Englishes: A Cognitive Sociolinguistic Approach* (with Frank Polzenhagen, 2009) – and some 60 journal articles and book chapters. He is co-editor of the Cognitive Linguistic Studies in



Cultural Contexts series, John Benjamins, and on the editorial board of such journals as *World Englishes* and the *International Journal of Language and Culture*.

Conceptualisations in colonial correspondences

Hans-Georg Wolf (University of Potsdam, Germany)

My talk will approach colonial correspondences from the angle of Cultural Linguistics, or, for that matter, Cognitive Contact Linguistics – two cognate fields. “Correspondences” is understood here in a wider sense to encompass different kinds of texts produced in the era and sphere of British colonialism within and with reference to the African context (e.g., letters written by missionaries, colonial subjects, colonial administrators; legal documents; minutes of League of Nations meetings). From these sources, one can extract a number of conceptualizations – or metaphorical constructions –, which are not always consistent but representative of the colonial mindset. These conceptualizations include, inter alia, an us versus them, an up down, and an ahead and behind schema, the event structure metaphor, metaphors of father, teacher, child, and pupil (Polzenhagen, Finzel, & Wolf 2021). However, the data shows that the colonized were not merely at the receiving end of imperial action, but that colonizer-colonized-interaction is more accurately described as mutually constitutive (cf. Brutt-Griffler 2002), as evidenced, for example, in the lexical appropriation of local cultural concepts by the British colonizers and in their legally acknowledging certain cultural practices.



Thematic Sessions

Theme 1: Contestation—Negotiation of Knowledges

“Geographisation” of spaces, places and cultural knowledge: Travelling through sources of imperial knowledge

Pepeetual Mforbe Chiangong (Humboldt University Berlin, Germany)

Members of ethnic groups located in the former British Southern Cameroons would probably identify their local communities discussed in the letters exchanged between British colonial authorities, traditional leaders and other local representatives. This paper examines how these letters enabled the reimagination and reconstruction of existing societies in ways that facilitated their administration and control based on colonial discourse and European standards. The paper further delves into the politics of how pre-colonised spaces were redrawn and presented in these communications, altering the dynamics of local governances. Therefore, a critical examination of the narrative techniques embedded in the letters are engaged to unravel how rewriting local spaces resulted in either the revision or erasure of existing cultural, social, and political knowledges. The intersection of local spaces and European imagination is studied with focus on how the narrative techniques, together with important tropes embedded in the letters resulted in a counter-discourse. Transformation is the overriding concept relevant to contest the mapping of spaces, borders and knowledges in select British colonial correspondences.

Colonial sources and the contestation of knowledge: The age of the written history of the Luo of Kenya

Paul Abiero Opondo (Moi University, Kenya)

African history is contested terrain, relying heavily on the sources used. Up to 1960s, the Eurocentric historians looked at African as having no history because s/he could presumably not read and write. Then came the era of oral tradition as history (Vansina 1961). B.A Ogot using oral history, was able to give the Luo their history (Ogot 1967). This history relied heavily on the memory of

the people. However, on the eve of decolonisation, archival sources infused fundamental changes. They provided readymade documents based on the provinces and the districts. The reports were germane in supporting the writing of Luo history. But they were colonial mouth pieces, reporting on the colonial state, hence the contestation of sources and history. The archival sources attempted to explore ways of fitting African historical past into western epistemologies. How was African history seen in European lenses and archives? Did the archival reports manifest the colonisation of the Luo national history, the rise of Luo national identity and cultural nationalism, marking a watershed on the rise of Luo knowledges through the written word? What are the merits and demerits of using new colonial documents and archival sources in the production of historical knowledge in Kenya?

Using African agency, this paper seeks to find out the types of knowledges the colonial letters and sources provided and interrogates how the adoption of written history contributed to the conservation of knowledge, how such knowledge was able to reach a wider Luo audience. The Luo, just like the Baganda, Kikuyu and the Yoruba, became bifurcated between being indigenous Africans and embracing European missionary education and sources. With new knowledges, based on the barrel of the pen, the Luo became economically conscious, pursuing modern agriculture and acting as indentured labour, moving as migrant labourers to major colonial settler farms in Central Kenya and the Rift-valley and settling as workers in the cities of Nairobi, Mombasa and Kampala. Going back to the 1890s, colonial letters explain the policies of the empire and the decolonisation process led by the new elites. The paper, therefore, discusses the place of the colonial written letters, archival sources and related documents, and assesses their impact on the modern writing of history, led by the missionaries and explorers, as well as colonial administrators who were the custodians of colonial knowledges.

‘What do they really want?’ Colonial savoir on Islamic education in Northern Nigeria

[Alabi Aliyu \(Bayero University Kano, Nigeria\)](#)

In Muslim societies of Northern Nigeria, one formidable field where resistance to the colonial enterprise continued throughout the colonial period and even beyond is in the field of education. Muslims have their Islamic education system,

which is coterminous with Islam. They were, therefore, hostile to the introduction of western education, which they considered a Judaeo-Christian agenda. Even though the colonial masters assured the Muslims that they would not interfere with their religion, Muslims were not convinced, given that the colonisers were Christians and Christian missionaries were the earlier purveyors of western education, especially as a proselytising tool. When secular western education was introduced in Muslim Northern Nigeria, the people were suspicious of the system and some chiefs even sent the children of their slaves as guinea pigs for the new education system. The British felt they were doing the Muslims some favour by not allowing missionaries to be in charge of education. As the schools were being run, they were thus puzzled by the apathy of the Muslims towards education despite the inclusion of some Islamic education in the curriculum. This much could be deduced from a number of official correspondences between British colonial education officers.

Following on Brenner's analysis of Foucault's levels of knowledge, this paper examines *Savoir* as a level of knowledge expressed by colonial bureaucrats writing about schooling and constituted through discursive exchanges, in this instance, between colonial bureaucrats on the problematic of administering western (and Islamic) education in northern Nigeria. By questioning Muslims' apathy to western education, this level of knowledge was produced by colonial bureaucrats in their attempts to understand, control and empower Muslim knowledge system, as an extension of the civilising mission of the colonial enterprise. In exasperation, one of them queried, 'what do they really want?' Through the knowledges produced in these exchanges, we can tease out the dilemma of colonial officers trying to educate Muslims in line with colonial policy on education for Muslims. How did the Europeans specify their notion of knowledge in the course of these exchanges? How was this knowledge applied in the administration of colonial education policy? How did the transfer of western knowledge to the Muslim milieu shape knowledge production in colonial and postcolonial contexts? This paper contends that these exchanges reveal the ambivalent and half-hearted nature of colonial policy on education for Muslims. This is not unconnected to the different *Weltanschauungs* of the producers of this level of knowledge and the subjects on whose behalf this knowledge was being produced.

Revisiting colonial correspondences on mission maternities and midwifery in Ibadan

Tolulope Esther Fadeyi (University of Basel, Switzerland)

A major feature of British colonialism during the 19th and 20th centuries was the ability of colonial officers to effectively communicate with their subjects on certain matters, decisions, resentments, and complaints. This generation of knowledge provides insights into the state of interaction between them as well as raises questions about the production of knowledge. Before the eventual colonial medicalisation of pregnancy and childbirth in Ibadan, the Church Missionary Society (CMS) provided maternal and infant health services to local women through education and proselytising to Christianity. They also challenged the socio-cultural practices of Iya-Abiye (Traditional Birth Attendants) which were 'perceived' as inimical to indigenous people, as a result of the increased maternal and infant mortality rates at the time. However, maternity care and midwifery practices in colonial Ibadan took a new shape following encounters with missionary medical administrators as a result of its dependency on African actors in the implementation of its decisions which were largely expressed through diverse correspondences.

This paper investigates the system of knowledge production adopted in missionary correspondences in colonial Ibadan, Southwest Nigeria. Existing research on colonial correspondences largely focuses on why the British documented the history of the people they governed for posterity, making such records available to new officers. Such studies have investigated how missionaries and colonial officials used education as a tool for Black liberation thereby painting stories of "primitive Africans" who had no documented history. By contrast, this paper argues that the opinion of local agencies was sidelined in the writing of their history. Colonial correspondence' appropriations of African agencies and the sense of being governed deserve to be seriously considered in the production of knowledge. It contextualises the validity of colonial correspondences in the reconstruction of motherhood in Ibadan within the 'political history from below,' a body of scholarship that has largely ignored the interests of colonised subjects. By highlighting the circumstances that repertoires of pieces of knowledge drive their production, and how stories of successful conversion dominated many reports, this paper re-evaluates the complexities surrounding the imperatives for western midwifery and mission maternities ideologies in Ibadan.

The coloniality of maternal health correspondences: Contestations over maternal epistemologies in Southern Rhodesia (1890-1979)

Tatenda Catherine Matirongo (University of Zimbabwe)

Letters were one of the communicative mediums during the British settler rule in Southern Rhodesia. Colonial correspondences tended to despise endogenous epistemologies by ingratiating their own knowledge with medical authenticity. This article analyses the stultification of indigenous maternal health in Southern Rhodesia by the British's imposition of biomedical systems as the sole scientific medical knowledge. It unfolds within the context of unmasking the intellectual mystification of maternal health by the biomedical hegemony and the necessity for medical decolonisation in Africa.

This article is alive to realisation that knowledge is geopolitical, thus, biomedical intellectual imperialism misinformed Africans into believing that the biomedical is superior to indigenous medical epistemologies. This colonial miseducation resulted in the intellectual mystification of maternity care by the British colonial rule as they imposed a medical culture that imposes biomedical maternity to discomfit classical maternal epistemologies that existed before the advent of British colonialism in 1890. While biomedical systems obliterated the colonised's ability to practice and develop their own indigenous maternal epistemologies with will, intent and interest, the biomedical perspectives had shaped the thought patterns of traditional birth attendants in assimilating the newly introduced maternal knowledge. Guided by medical decoloniality, the article explores epistemic politics operationalised by the global north to the global south in their pursuit of intellectual imperialism within the realm of maternity care. This article will rely on the National Archives of Zimbabwe to collect data on colonial maternal health correspondences in Southern Rhodesia from 1890-1979.

State led preventive healthcare in Southern Rhodesia: Voices from the archive

Shalot Nyaradzo Nhete (University of Zimbabwe)

This research focuses on the origins and development of preventive healthcare in Southern Rhodesia. It focuses on state-led preventive health programmes for Africans between 1923 and 1963. Acknowledging the existence of traditional African methods to prevent disease, this study departs from understanding the introduction of Western bio-medicine as a curative tool and focuses on Western medicine as an important method used to improve prevention of diseases in Africa through the established colonial systems. Prior to colonisation, Africans had their effective indigenous ways to prevent, control and cure common endemic diseases of their time. Attention is given to the agency of the state in providing health services in the colony with particular reference to how and why the state sought to prevent and control diseases in the colony. Despite the ability of the Africans to prevent and manage endemic diseases like malaria and tuberculosis, the British still perceived Africans as a people who needed external intervention in the form of Western biomedicine in order to conquer disease. Evidence from the letters, diaries and official reports of the British colonial officials who were involved in policy making shows that they had their social and economic mandates that later shaped the overall health policy of the colony. Preventive healthcare was mainly directed to those diseases that were infectious since disease is not racial but biological.

This study uses correspondences as a lens to understand the social, cultural, economic and political aspects that shaped the provision of health services in a colonial setting largely characterised by racism and profit-making motives. Using archival material and secondary sources it considers that they were used by the state to convey health policy to the citizens. The intention is to investigate and understand whether that Southern Rhodesia's preventive health care was influenced by the racially induced economic motives that shaped colonialism as a whole or not. To better understand this, the study focuses on the provision of preventive healthcare strategies for Africans who were only prioritised where the diseases threatened production in farms, mines and other production spaces. Health education, improved living conditions and vaccination campaigns are considered as other humanitarian efforts to improve African welfare. The correspondences are useful again in understanding if all the efforts were primarily intended to boost production and safeguard the settlers from the African scourge of disease or if the officials of the time had other motives.

Theme 2: Contestation—Negotiation of Power

Power and perception through letters in British Southern Cameroons

Henry Kah (University of Buea, Cameroon)

In this paper, we argue that colonial authority was perceived to be unavoidable by a category of indigenous Southern Cameroonians. Using a letter from a worker of the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC) of the Mabeta Camp in Victoria Division, this perception is analysed. He solicited government approval and assistance for a leprosy patient to leave Southern Cameroons for treatment in French Cameroon. The response of the District Officer for Victoria Division to his request was not given the attention that would have been expected since District Officer simply replied by asking the person concerned to make the arrangements himself. In spite of the thought that colonial authority was unavoidable in this case, there were many other people crossing the border from Southern Cameroons into French Cameroon illegally without approval of the colonial authorities. Words and phrases in the letter like “honour”, “under the government” and “put in the bank” depict the great respect this worker, like others, had for colonial authority as against those who went about their activities without government regulation. This paper examines the divergence in perception of government’s role in handling the day-to-day challenges of the population in Southern Cameroons using the letter of this plantation worker as case study.

Instantiations of power in selected colonial exchanges in British Southern Cameroons

Valentine N. Ubanako and Emmanuel Tata Tangong (University of Yaounde 1, Cameroon)

An examination of some epistolary exchanges between the colonial administration and the local chiefs and populations in former British Southern Cameroons indicates the extensive use of a peculiar language that we can conveniently call ‘the language of power’ by the colonial administration with the ultimate aim of maintaining order, collecting taxes, settling land disputes and implementing the colonial agenda en vogue at the time. From the exchanges,

it is clear that the instantiations of power were very rife and contributed in painting the brutal and gloomy atmosphere that characterized colonial rule. This paper explores instantiations of power in the colonial administration erected as a mode of governance in order to maintain control and a firm grip on the local population. It is based on Foucault's (1980) Theory of Power, which argues that power is immanent in all social relations and that all social relations are relations of power, whether in family or in hierarchies of government and social institutions. This paper will, on the one hand, identify, classify and analyse instantiations of power in the colonial context focusing on terms, words and expressions that embody power. The choice of power-embedded terms and expressions like "require you to report before me", "Failure to obey this summons...liable to persecution", "and on conviction a fine of", "he himself must be civilly or criminally liable", "any person who shall fail" "and should therefore be punished", etc. widen the gap between the colonised and the colonisers and portray domination and control of the former over the latter.

Trans-imperial colonial letters, French and British administrative authorities, and cross-border governance: A case study of the Banyo-Gashaga border

[Sumo Tayo Aimé Raoul \(University of Lausanne, Switzerland\)](#)

The classical classificatory approach to primary documents of African history distinguishes between internal and external sources. The former includes indigenous written documents, oral tradition, and archaeology. In contrast, the latter includes documents produced by non-African authors, including printed sources, cartographic documents, and archival sources (Gueye 1999). Colonial written correspondence belongs to the latter category and constitutes an essential source of African history. In some respects, it allows one to write the history "of Europe and Europeans in Africa" (Mbaye 2004). Colonial correspondence also allows access to the mindset and agenda of their authors, thus avoiding generalisations and common ideas on colonial practices.

This paper is based precisely on personal and official letters between the British colonial authorities of Gashaga (Nigeria) and Banyo (Cameroon) to describe the modalities of construction of a cross-border identity and colonial governmentality. The data for this paper were collected at the Banyo Divisional archives, one of the few to be systematically classified in the French-speaking part of Cameroon. Thanks to the French geographer Jean Hurault (1917-2005),

these archives dating from the German (1911-1916) and French (1916-1960) periods were restored and catalogued. It contains, among others, six boxes with correspondence from the French commander of the Banyo subdivision in Cameroon and the British District Officer of Gashaga in Nigeria. The boxes also contain letters from the local technical services of the two territories. A content meta-analysis of these letters shows that they were the main channel through which French and British colonial administrators exchanged experiences and learned from each other. It is also through written correspondences that they set up similar mechanisms for the “development” of their respective territories and the operationalisation of the government of local populations. Moreover, this dynamic has allowed a joined setting of imperial boundaries, the concerted management of border incidents and bilateral security cooperation.

Mutual patronage in the correspondences between British colonial administrators and Northern Nigerian elites

Usman Ahmad (University of Bayreuth, Germany)

This paper examines the relationship between British colonial administrators and Northern Nigerian elites as manifested through their correspondences. It analyses the pattern, forms and concepts Northern Nigerian elites and colonial administrators use in communicating with each other. The paper argues that there was mutual respect between colonial administrators and the elites in Northern Nigeria as can be seen in examples of how they addressed each other when they communicated. As the birthplace of British indirect rule, Northern Nigeria had a unique experience of colonialism which made Northern Nigerians more contented in the system than many other groups of people that had colonial experience. Consequently, the elites were so complaisant with the colonial administrators and the colonial administrators in turn appreciated the gesture by reciprocating the pleasant behaviour. The cordial relationship between British colonial administrators and the Northern Nigerian ruling class still plays a role in how Northern Nigerians reflect and evaluate colonialism's effect today.

Setting local politics on fire: Colonialism, tradition, and instability in Ghana (1900–1936)

Isaac Junior Kwarteng (Princeton University, USA)

From the late 15th century, European traders, including Portuguese, Danes, Dutch, and British established trading posts along the coast of the then Gold Coast, now Ghana, to engage in trading activities with the local people. By 1850, all these European traders had departed the Gold Coast, except the British, who had begun implementing measures that indicated their desire to bring the territory, particularly the southern states, including Denkyira, a West African polity that rose to economic and political prominence in the Pra-Offin basin of present-day Ghana between the 1660s and 1700s, under the British monarch's control. Consequently, by 1874, the British had successfully gained political control over the territories of the Gold Coast, except the middle and northern territories, which were under the powerful Asante Empire. In the process of colonisation, the colonial authorities co-opted local rulers into their administration and effectively stripped them of their legitimate authority to rule. That is, the processes of co-opting local rulers into the British administration had the effect of undermining the authority of local rulers by turning them into instruments of 'alien rule' in the eyes of their own people, whilst at the same time, giving them more power over their people than they had customarily exercised. This co-option again provided usurpers and other political upstarts the opportunities to test and challenge incumbent indigenous rulers. This created frequent instability in local politics in the colony. The result was political chaos that made it difficult for Africans to organise a centralised force to challenge British colonial rule.

By relying extensively on colonial letters and telegrams that were exchanged between local rulers and the British colonial officials in the Gold Coast as well as oral histories, this paper examines the complex contestation of political power, which was created by colonial policies in the early 20th century Gold Coast. It reveals how the imposition of British rule on Denkyira birthed personality clashes and the ultimate engineering of disruptive processes in the local politics of Denkyira between 1900 and 1936. It argues that the imposition of British rule on the state exacerbated the personality clashes between the Kings of Denkyira and their divisional chiefs, and laid the foundation for political instability, which often resulted in Denkyira kings abdicating from power, riots, civil war, and other forms of disturbances in the state.

Deconstructing indirect rule: Linguistic strategies in the colonial discourses on the Mbembes' marriage customs

Glory Essien Otung (University of Bayreuth, Germany)

Indirect rule incorporated traditional chiefs into the British colonial power structure. However, this incorporation rather reduced chiefs, the highest rank of authority in the traditional political formation, into the lowest level of authority in the colonial administrative hierarchy. Thus, the relationship between chiefs and British colonial administrators was highly asymmetric. This paper argues that indirect rule was rather a colonial strategy for effective subjugation of indigenous people. Drawing from the theory of the coloniality of power, the paper critiques the canonical definition of the concept of indirect rule as a colonial tool of inclusion. The data used includes archival materials like assessment records, handing-over notes by preceding divisional officers to their successors, and three letters written by the Divisional Officer of Bamenda to the chiefs and members of the Mbembe Native Court in 1948.

The linguistic analysis is centred on the strategic discursive enactment of colonial power by the divisional officers that were posted at different times to Bamenda. Discursive strategies like partisanship, blackmail, coercion, etc. were used by British divisional and district officers to put pressure on the colonised chiefs in order to win their support for changes in the indigenous social structures, particularly in the marriage rites in Mbembe, e.g., the imposition of the dowry system in which British pounds sterling substituted the Mbembe Bikom cloths and other gift items, etc. Findings reveal that the inclusion of indigenous chiefs in colonial administration fostered socio-political inequality, first between British colonialists and the chiefs and second, between the chiefs and the indigenous people. Therefore, indirect rule was rather an exploitative strategy. This paper also problematises the concept of inclusion and advocates a critical approach to the study of socio-political inclusion.

Theme 3: Contestation—Negotiation of Identity

(Mis)-Representation of Southern Cameroonians in colonial communications, 1916 -1961

Emmanuel E. Kengo (University of Buea, Cameroon)

Colonialism was about power and dominance. In order to have control and dominance over the colonised, a good knowledge of them was necessary. For them to understand the colonised, the British started their colonial administration of Southern Cameroons with studies that culminated in Intelligence and Assessment Reports on the various groups of people, correspondences on various subjects, etc. Taking a close examination of some of these colonial reports and the ensuing correspondences collected from the Cameroon National Archives in Buea, this paper examines the (mis)representation of the colonised in these communications and also looks at attempts by some of the colonised groups to contest misrepresentation. It intends to show how colonial representation or misrepresentation influenced identity construction and contestation in the colonial and postcolonial state. The paper argues that in spite of the numerous anthropological studies carried out (Assessment and Intelligence Reports), the coloniser did not quite understand the colonised which led to some errors of judgment. The paper is anchored on colonial discourse analysis and new historicism for analysis.

Discursive construction of identities and power in colonial letters

Eric A. Anchimbe (University of Bayreuth, Germany)

While much of the research on (post)colonial linguistics deals predominantly with discourses produced in post-independence times, a look at communication and discourses produced during colonialism yields enormous insights into how the current (im)balances of sociopolitical power, linguistic stratification, identity restructuring, and cultural hybridism started and were negotiated then. Using letters written during British colonisation of Southern Cameroons (1916-1961), I take a look at these issues at a time when colonialism was in active exercise. The aim is to establish the significant role played by power (colonial vs. tribal, appointed vs. hereditary) and identity (ruler vs. ruled, indigenous vs. foreign) in choices in communication, the type of discourses produced, and the discursive

strategies employed by each group. What constitutes power or identity for the colonial administration and the indigenous ethnic authority is different, and this difference, along with other cultural elements, must be factored into the reading of these letters for them to be understood properly. In this study, I try to do just that.

A historical narrative on colonial archival correspondence between Ewe (Togolese) migrants and the British colonial secretary in Lagos, Nigeria

Israel Abayomi Saibu and Felix Bayode Oke (Anchor University Lagos, Nigeria)

Colonial correspondences are a vital primary source of information on all aspects of the history of a colony. These correspondences from the Colonial Secretary to colonised subjects or from the colonised subjects to the Colonial Secretary in the colony, connected colonial authority and their subjects, families and friends, facilitated commerce and resolved legal disputes, turning all these into a cluster of political transformation and knowledge production. Through these correspondences, not only can we read history as part of daily life, but we can also see it expressed in language of considerable constellations of knowledge production revealing the mindset and agenda of the entities producing them. This paper examines the official correspondences between the Ewe-speaking migrants from Togo residing in Lagos during the British colonial rule in Nigeria. Precisely, it examines the official letter written by the Togo migrants in Lagos to the British Colonial Secretary in Lagos in respect of the demise of their leader and the appointment of a successor for recognition and as their new representative in the British colony of Lagos, Nigeria. The letter written to the Colonial Secretary in 1955 by the Togolese migrants' community is laden with a lot of revelation. Indeed, the archival material obtained from the National Archives Ibadan Nigeria, shows that by 1955, the Togolese community in Lagos was already well organised and recognised by the colonial government. In a letter to the Colonial Secretary dated 22nd February 1955, twenty-four (24) prominent 'Togo landers' wrote to inform the Colonial Secretary of their new choice of community leader in the person of Mr. Alexander Mensah Lawson. The information from the archival document revealed much more than the choice of the new leader, for it detailed a strong cohesive Togolese community in Lagos under a vibrant and generally acknowledged leadership.

This paper examines some critical facts imbedded in the letter relating to the presence of the Ewe migrant community in Lagos, Nigeria as early as the beginning of the 20th Century. The analysis reveals that the Ewe migrants had imbibed the art of official communication, communal coordination and organisation very early as the letter shows continuous, successive leadership succession of the community in Lagos. The Ewe community in Lagos had been recognised and accepted by both the colonial government and the traditional authority in Lagos. The letter was written for the information of the colonial Secretary and it detailed the efforts of the late Oba of Lagos-Oba Falolu to settle the leadership misunderstanding in the community. The paper concludes that colonial written correspondences are vital medium of communication that convey the agenda and aims of the entities writing them.

Identity change, conflict and identity negotiation in colonial Southern Cameroons: A study of the “Manga Williams’ Letters”

Uchenna Oyali (University of Abuja, Nigeria)

The arrival in 1858 of the Baptist Christian missionaries in Victoria District, Cameroon and the subsequent successive colonisation of the area by the German and, later, British colonial powers resulted in the unification of the several distinct villages under one administrative structure. Under this new structure, Manga Williams got appointed the Head of the Victoria District, President of the Victoria Federated Council and of the Native Court of Appeals. Subsequently, in a series of letters written during the period of British colonial rule in Southern Cameroons, some members of the district questioned the legitimacy of Manga Williams’ identity as traditional ruler, which elicited rejoinders from Manga Williams and his supporters justifying Williams’ position. Adopting the identity negotiation theory (Swann and Bosson 2008, Swann, Johnson and Bosson 2009), this study investigates the various processes of identity negotiation adopted by both parties in furthering their respective arguments. On the one hand, Williams’ accusers present identity-discrepant evaluations of Manga Williams, emphasising that his background and actions do not conform to expectations of his offices and thus necessitate that he be relieved of them. In response, Manga Williams’ adopts several intrapsychic mechanisms to justify his continued stay in office. In all, this study presents a fresh perspective on how colonial subjects used letters to question as well as legitimise the new identities occasioned by colonialism.

Epistolary traces of the dissipation of indigenous identity of colonised people

Stephen A. Mforteh (University of Yaounde I, Cameroon)

Letters written during British colonialism of Southern Cameroons (1900-1959) show that the colonised people had indigenous leadership models, religions, a judiciary system, etc. These elements reveal an identity that was ignored by the colonialists. Evidence gleaned from excerpts of these letters shows an acceleration in the loss of their indigenous identity. The dissipation began with the language of the coloniser being imposed; a renaming of the territories (Cameroon, Victoria), and a gradual eradication of new administrative zones and administrators (Resident, Attorney General) and cultural norms that stymied hitherto existing models. The theory of dissipation is adapted to show how identity markers were eroded by the coloniser and colonised. In addition, critical discourse analysis is used to show how the power tussle between the leaders, and the ethnic/regional groups, in their quest to align with the new ideologies of the coloniser, hastened the dissipation via blackmail, obsequiousness among others. Words used by both coloniser and colonised will be used to explore the strategies used by the coloniser to further dissipate rather than encourage the indigenous identity markers, and those that reveal the colonised people's yearning to discard rather than preserve their own identity.

Theme 4. Resistances

Manifestations of resistance in the coloniser-colonised letter exchanges in Northern Nigeria: A study of Abubakar Imam Memoirs

Dikko Muhammad (Umaru Musa Yar'adua University, Nigeria)

This paper explores the communications, in form of exchange of letters, between British colonial administrators and their Northern Nigerian subjects in the period between 1930s to the eve of Nigerian political independence. It presents a paradigm shift in the study of colonial engagements that took place in Northern Nigeria. Contrary to the popular discourse that the region accepted British colonisation and even sought for its extension in 1958, there were forms of intellectual resistance that existed but were subdued to foreground the mainstream discursive position that maintains the status quo of power negotiation between the British and the monarchs in the region. Using three different actors involved in these letters, this paper demonstrates how letter writing was utilised as an essential weapon of confronting British colonisation of the region, and the country, Nigeria, in general. These actors: the British colonial masters, their Northern Nigerian educated elite, and the teeming subjects all exert their power and contest for it in the economic, social, cultural, and political affairs of the region through letter exchanges.

The letters were intellectual spaces in which different people made claims to power and legitimacy and challenged the British from different enunciations. Some of these letters were published in the only Northern Nigerian newspaper of the time, *Gaskiya ta fi Kwabo* (The Truth is More Worthy than Money) which was created to contain ideologies that resisted colonisation. The letters embody postcolonial consciousness of questioning colonialism. The editor of the newspaper, Abubakar Imam, employed by the British, presided over these exchanges. He navigated through the storm, in multiple identities, both as a representative of his people and a staff of an organisation that was created to serve colonial purposes. The letters reveal that the newspaper did not succeed in dispelling nationalist quest for independence. It provided the grounds on which colonialism was fought and resisted from a conservative perspective. This paper argues that such a revisitation of colonial archives is necessary in order to discover the efforts made by nationalists from Northern Nigeria in resisting British colonialism in Nigeria.

Signs of spectacular resistance: Postal services and colonial letters in nineteenth century North Africa

Taleb Bilal Eli (University of Nouakchott, Mauritania)

The colonial period was marked by different forms of daily interactions and colonial communication practices. In North Africa, and more precisely in Mauritania and Algeria, for example, the traditional and old information channels and the indigenous peoples' ways of life "such as rumour, word of mouth, and the conveyance of letters and money by trusted intermediaries" have been very rigid and existed a long time before the advent of the colonisers and their new ways of correspondence such as the colonial postal service. More specifically, the postal service in colonial North Africa, in Mauritania and Algeria in particular, can be seen as an institution which has been structured in a very complex way as an attempt to establish control over the indigenous people and more importantly a strategy to stabilise European settlement.

Thus, written correspondences were seen as tools used to gain knowledge and as a means of controlling the indigenous people. However, the colonial communication tools were not welcome in most cases and had been rejected by the indigenous people claiming that they are the means by which rules and decisions of the colonisers were conveyed. Specifically, this paper studies the confrontation between the indigenous old correspondences tools such camel-based-services and the ones introduced by France in Mauritania and Algeria such as the postal services. Additionally, it tries to unravel the power relations between these correspondences and unveils the means of resistance used by the indigenous people to face off the colonial power and their new technologies of correspondences.

Colonial correspondence and the memory of resistance in Ijebu Igbo agitation for independence

Ilupeju Adepeju (University of Lagos, Nigeria)

Ijebu Igbo is a unit of Ijebuland that came under British control after Ijebu's defeat at Magbon in 1892. The defeat made the Awujale of Ijebu (King) come under the British protectorate. Ijebuland is a Yoruba unit in western Nigeria. The Ijebu Igbo's agitation for independence was a result of the British granting Ijebu-Remo independence from Ijebu Ode (the capital of the Awujale's rule) in 1938.

Shortly after, Ijebu Igbo elites wrote a series of letters to demand their own independence. The ruler at Ijebu-Ode had the support of the British as shown in a series of letters compiled in 1939 under the Ijebu province (Ije Prof 2 file no. C54 vol 1). The letters can be found at the National Archive in Ibadan, Nigeria. These letters will be analysed for their historical significance as an agency commemorating the political attitude of the Ijebu towards the colonial government. Literacy came to the Yoruba homeland through the return of the Sierra Leonean Yoruba, which began on a large scale around 1838. This process was supplemented in the 1840s by the activities of the Christian missions. The missions established elementary and secondary schools in the southern Yoruba towns, which began to teach the local populace.

The 1880s presented an indigenous movement of "cultural nationalism" among educated Yoruba. Educated Yoruba, primarily in reaction to the experience of increasing racial discrimination by Europeans in Yorubaland, gave up the attempt to become black Englishmen and sought instead to re-establish an identity with indigenous society. They became more involved in local politics thereby emerging as the intermediary between the people and the British government. A lot of literature has discussed the evolution of Yoruba historiography, especially history books produced during the colonial era. However, there are very few writings on the use of letters to describe the Yoruba response to British policies. The letters serve as an agency for remembering the colonial past. The context of the letters is a dialogue among the representatives of Ijebu Igbo, the Orimolusi of Ijebu Igbo and the British resident. It shows the agitations of the Ijebu Igbo people and the British punitive response to stop the secession. The letters are treated as primary sources. Other available pieces of evidence are used to corroborate and give a historical analysis of the 1939 events in Ijebuland. The letters also symbolise a soft power approach to anti-colonialism.

Quests for, and resistances to, change in colonial letters from British Southern Cameroons

Julius A. Eyoh (University of Yaounde I, Cameroon)

Upon conception, the very idea of colonialism was to be achieved through the initiation of change in various domains (such as cultural, socio-economic, political and administrative systems) in the lives of the colonised. Inasmuch as change is inevitable in the lives of individuals, communities, institutions and countries, it is sometimes not always easy to come by as it is mitigated by conflicting forces either struggling to effect it or resist it and maintain the status quo. It is in the light of the above that we chose to examine the concept of change based on data collected from colonial letters exchanged in the British Southern Cameroons (1916-1961), basically the Manga Williams Letters. This article identifies and analyses cases of quest for change or its resistance, attitude, implications, the language used, and the strategies put in place by the concerned to achieve their desires. It makes a retrospection of the struggles and challenges faced by the colonised and coloniser in either effecting or resisting change as evidenced in the colonial letters. In most of the situations, while the coloniser has put in place colonial structures (in different domains) to maintain the status quo, the colonised seek for change to better their own condition.

The language used to request for change can be polite at the start of the quest but begins to mount with tension when the change is not forth coming. The Critical Discourse Analysis Approach is used to analyse the data. The domains in which there was need for change were diverse, ranging from political, administrative, cultural, economic, infrastructural and institutional, among others. Although some points overlap, they are regrouped into three key areas within which the issue of change evolves: (i) Administrative or political system, (ii) Belief system or cultural practices and (iii) economic influence. From the data and analysis, it is evident that change lies primarily in the hands of those who hold power, and when power is wielded with a high degree of self-centeredness, resistance emerges and can lead to violence.

Theme 5. Gendered Representations

Aden women writing: Personal letters from the Jewish community in the British Colony of Aden

Ori Schachmon (Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel)

This paper studies a unique collection of personal letters, which were sent from and to the Jewish community in the British Colony of Aden, during the first half of the 20th century. These documents, preserved at the Aden Heritage Museum in Tel Aviv, are written in the Arabic dialect of Aden, in Hebrew script, and among them are dozens of pages written by women. The town of Aden in the south of the Arabian Peninsula was captured by Britain in 1839. It provided the British with control over the entrance to the Red Sea, and later served as a buffer against the Ottomans who occupied Yemen. The British intended to maintain a permanent garrison in Aden, but due to the escalation of conflicts with local nationalist groups, in 1967 they were forced to withdraw from the colony. Within this complex reality there was also a small Jewish community, whose character was largely shaped by the circumstances around it.

The British presence in Aden opened the city to international trade, and many members of the Jewish community became affluent merchants, who enjoyed a modern and comfortable life, wore European clothes, spent their free time at the beach, and frequently travelled abroad for business, leisure or convalescence. Thus, the collection contains letters from India, Africa, Egypt, and Western Europe, as well as postcards and photos from Tel Aviv in the 1930s and 1940s. Furthermore, as part of the progressive atmosphere in Aden, the Jewish girls were privileged to receive formal education, either in the local missions, or, starting in 1928, in a designated Jewish school under the guidance of Hebrew-speaking teachers from Mandatory Palestine. The case in question is therefore unusual in that Jewish girls and women in an Arab country mastered the art of writing, and also used it actively. The letters open a window into the reality of Jewish life under European rule, yet in the southernmost edge of the Arabian Peninsula. By virtue of being personal, the letters provide a rare glimpse into the intricacies of the home and family. The prominent place of women in the family, and their involvement in decision-making and financial management, become evident.

From a linguistic point of view, the letters provide us with a unique opportunity to study an Arabic dialect, which has been documented so far only very partially. The characteristics of the dialect, and of its Jewish variety in particular, are clearly visible in the written text. The letters constitute a unique source for the examination of women's writing, and through it — of feminine speech patterns. Notably, in the case at hand the "feminine" aspect comes into view not only in the topics addressed, but also in actual morphological features. For instance, the dialect idiosyncratically distinguishes between the masculine and feminine in the first person, a feature well reflected in the personal letters of women.

Beyond official archival narrative: Silence, omission and distortion of gendered experiences in colonial Kenya

David Muthegethi ([Kenyatta University Nairobi, Kenya](#))

British government officials attempted to keep records of the natives' lives in colonial Kenya. Nonetheless, these records were kept to guarantee the smooth running of the colony rather than for the welfare of the natives. Among the records are security reports, weather reports, agricultural activities, and infrastructure development. Also, official letters were used to give instructions and feedback to colonial administrators on the day-to-day running of the colonial state. These letters indicate colonial officials' perceptions and ideology concerning their subjects. So, they are informative concerning how colonial officials interacted with native communities. At present, some of the correspondence letters perceived as not harmful to the colonial government's reputation were inherited by post-independence Kenya and are currently kept in different archives around the country. Those documents perceived as dangerous to the British government were transferred to Britain, and some were destroyed through an operation code named "a thorough purge." Therefore, the current archives in Kenya are a version that is silent on some issues, distorted, and in some cases, deleted the history of the native communities.

This article aims to examine how through silence, distortion, and available voices of British official's correspondences, we can reconstruct gendered experiences in colonial Kenya. The data is analysed through the coloniality of power and critical discourse theories. Although this article will rely heavily on actual archives, attempts will be made to complement this data using imagined archives and secondary data from migrated archives. This approach is informed by the realisation that deliberate omissions, destruction, and migration of some

documents to Britain make the archives incomplete. As such, by combining archival data from different sources, including imagined archives, this article aims to reconstruct Kenyan's gendered experiences in the colonial period. Therefore, I anticipate that key findings will illustrate that documents of the colonial period reflect a patriarchal society where women's activities in public spaces were almost not expected. As such, the data will give insights into how colonial officials perceived women who actively participated in the liberation struggle. Such, the paper will strive to interrogate the language and tone used to describe men and women freedom fighters, gendered activities, and the overall perception of gender by colonial officials. Most importantly, the archives reflect how Britain tried to create its colonial legacy and memory for the world, especially on gendered issues. Therefore, I aim to make those inferences on archives' silence, distortion, and omission of gendered activities. This will include silent voices of British colonial rule resistance that were accidentally captured in the documents.

Communication is power: Letters as a source of history in understanding women's mobility in the Bamenda Division of British Southern Cameroon

Walter Gam Nkwi (University of Leiden, The Netherlands)

There is no doubt that historians have relied on a corpus of sources to document and write about Africa's encounter with the Western world especially Europe with particular focus on colonialism. Many scholars from the days of Kenneth Onwuka Dike have heavily relied on oral sources to compliment an indigenous prism to the history of colonialism in Africa. Within that repertoire, African historical narratives and discourses still suffer from certain flaws which include the exclusion of sources such as diaries, photographs, personal letters as well as life histories. Amongst all these dearth of ignored sources, this article attempts to penetrate the inner world of letters which behind it laid letter writers and examine them as a separate source of historical reconstruction in the Bamenda Division of British Southern Cameroon between 1940s and 1950s. It specifically, examines the letters and letter writers which carried themes which dealt with the geographical mobility of women in this part of the world. This was a period often known as the heydays of colonialism and radical social change in Africa. It is relevant to use the letters to decode aspects that will open a new caveat for the fuller understanding of this sub region. The letters were collected from the National Archives in Buea and interviews were conducted with some of the letter writers.

Theme 6. Authorship Dynamics

Public Letter Writers (PLW) as an advocate and solicitor of the populaces: The Ibe Native Courts experiences

Arogundade Nurudeen Olatoye (Osun State University, Nigeria)

Public Letter Writers (PLW) as a semi-legal profession remained one of the innovations of imperial rule in Nigeria. As rightly said, educated elite vision in colonial Nigeria was to be seen as a symbol of civilisation, modernisation, and a new form of socialisation that would promote western culture in all spheres, especially, law, education, etc. The central focus of this study is to examine the evolution of Public Letter Writers in Nigeria, their place in Nigerian society, their status in the judicial system, and their perceptions of the people in the profession. The study makes use of archival documents and published accounts to unravel the position of PLW in colonial Nigeria. The historical approach adopted in the analysis of violence/disturbance in the study area is to underscore its relevance in the everyday life of the people in the study area within the period of study.

Knowledge and colonialism: The power of prefaces, letters and appendices in the journals of nineteenth century Niger Expeditions

Mary Afolabi (University of Bonn, Germany)

Between 1799, when Mungo Park's account of his *Travels in the Interior of Africa* appeared proposing a theory that the Rivers Niger and Congo were the same, until 1859 when Samuel Crowther and John C. Taylor together wrote their accounts of *The Gospel on the Banks of the Niger* as a journal in the series of Niger expeditions, a lot had changed, from the actors involved, to justification for the missions. The River Niger, West Africa's main river and third longest river in Africa had for long been a source of curiosity for the Europeans, leading to a number of adventurous explorers risking their lives to find its source and termination which later led to the participation of Africans within the wider European colonial interest. As British Government commissioned schemes, documenting events and findings from the expeditions became a significant aspect of these exploits, for it was only through these narratives that we know

many things from the perspectives of the expeditioners; such as: the experiences of the explorers in Africa; descriptions of the peoples and cultures of Africa from European points of views; European travellers' and explorers' portrayal of Africa and Africans; their biases toward Africans; and the canonical knowledges they produced and disseminated about the region. On the whole, these texts present a contact zone of the colonial and the colonised; indigenous and foreign; and certainly, a clash of cultures. Although written correspondence in the form of letters, diaries and telegrams seem more prevalent in the colonial period, they were not the only form of communication. Messages also circulated in the form of narratives open to the public but targeted to specific audiences - in this case, Europe.

This paper aims at drawing attention to the overlooked body of the journals of nineteenth century Niger Expeditions for two reasons: firstly, although the series of Niger expeditions and the journals that resulted from them preceded colonial conquest, this corpus of writings can be aptly labelled as colonial writings given the necessity by the Europeans to generate knowledge about the West African region they would eventually subdue. Secondly, I intend to focus specifically on three overlooked elements in these journals, which include: prefaces, letters, and appendices. As opening or closing parts in published material, they are powerful sources of information which give insight into the justifications and overall agenda of British colonialism. These textual essentials also offer an opportunity to reflect on ways in which writers and authors control and exert authority in these elements. By examining the prefaces, letters and appendices in the journals of the nineteenth century Niger Expeditions, this paper intends to analyse how knowledge and power are closely linked and became necessary preconditions for colonial conquest in West Africa.

Postcolonial epistolary conventions and fragmentation: A reading of Linus Asong's *The Crown of Thorns*

Eyong-Tiku Eyong-Ewubhe (University of Maroua, Cameroon)

Postcolonial societies have in many ways become the base in which colonial correspondences could be looked at as a convention that equally helps to understand the unbalanced relationship of the colonial encounter, and the extent to which such epistolary correspondences strengthened imperial hegemony. Imperial hegemony and its grip over the colony have been to a

certain extent, influenced in the ways in which natives and colonial administrators established a proxy system of governance that enhanced parlous conditions within the native population occasioning its fragmentation. This paper illustrates the significance of letter writing in Linus Asong's *The Crown of Thorns* as a marker of how power dynamics and the policy of surveillance are established under a fictional British colonial set-up in Southern Cameroons. The paper chats with the ways in which such colonial correspondence could be looked at within a myriad of popular spin-offs that inform postcolonial scholarship and the extent to which it helps to ascertain the fact that, a historiographic understanding of Asong's *The Crown of Thorns* and the context in which its historicist setting is placed, are primordial for this study, within the regular cosmologies of postcolonial fiction. Postcolonial landscapes have in a continuum witnessed the colonial heritage as a very disruptive one. This is because colonial reports were fed by these letters that gave significant updates on how the sacred settings were managed by custodians of culture. The paper tries to answer the following questions: in what ways does the epistolary become a sub-genre in postcolonial studies? How does the Asong appropriate this letter as a communicative strategy of power dynamics? To what extent do such dynamics illustrate dominance and fragmentation? The paper relies on Postcolonial Theory and New Historicism as theoretical frameworks.

Linguistic politeness in selected colonial letters from British Southern Cameroons

Gratien G. Atindogbe (University of Buea, Cameroon)

The practice of indirect rule in Southern Cameroons compelled British colonial administrators to use epistolary communication with the local and traditional rulers to implement colonial policies. Some of the letters were requests, i.e., formal exchanges to demand favours from high officials or administrative personalities or responses to requests. This talk aims to examine linguistic politeness in those request letters to unveil the different standards of politeness employed in the correspondences, especially as the interaction was not oral, face-to-face and spontaneous, but instead written, "back-to-back", and planned. Face-to-face conversations are often considered more effective than written. Indeed, seeing or looking at the interlocutor during an interaction permits one to pick up on paralinguistic elements like nonverbal cues and body language, which contribute to better mutual understanding, thanks to a well-balanced dosage of face-threatening and saving acts. Linguistic politeness theory, which begins with Goffman's (1959) theory of "face", argues that conversation

interactants engage in face work to help maintain each other's identities. In the context of written exchanges, the measurement continuum is no face-to-face interaction with a commitment to protect each other's face, reputation or credibility. Consequently, studying politeness in those letters will help uncover the strategies used by the correspondents to avoid face-threatening acts, such as bullying, denigration, impositions and criticisms, and to indulge in face-saving acts.

“Anxious to have friends”: A case study of transnational letter writing among colonial Nigerian Children (1930s 50s)

[Ngozi Edeagu \(University of Bayreuth, Germany\)](#)

In 1900, letter writing in Southern Nigeria became an officially recognized trade, governed by the Illiterates' Protection Ordinance'. Utilising a pen or a typewriter, this new occupation of the colonial era produced professional letter writers who wrote business letters and those that “compel attention.” In addition, public letter writers, who also functioned as debt collectors, enabled the predominantly non-literate in English population to communicate their grievances in the form of petitions. However, letters held other uses besides venting which had become what Burns called “a national sport” in the colonial territory. Children, particularly in the colonial capital of Lagos, used letter writing to get in touch with others, create friendships and understand the world around them. Yet, the body of literature has not adequately addressed letter writing among children or outside the worn lens of petition writing. This paper aims to address this gap by examining letter writing among children in southern Nigeria. These children's letters were found mainly in the Chicago Defender newspaper, a widely circulating national African American publication in the United States. Through this case study, this paper expands the scope of the literature by incorporating alternative voices and diverse understandings of letter writing during the colonial period. These letters of various lengths demonstrate children's willingness to traverse space by reaching out to their brothers and sisters in the United States and affiliating with them through the instrument of the Bud Billiken children's club. Thus, this paper also aims to show how racial and social identities were built and sustained through letter writing.

Theme 7. Heritages & Commodifications

Insidious paternalism and the establishment of heritage: A contrapuntal analysis of colonial correspondences of the British Southern Cameroons

Sarah Marjie (University of Ghana)

Across different geographical spaces, colonial correspondences have often served as valuable data sources from which we may identify and evaluate social, cultural, perhaps, economic, and even political events of the past. These sources also allow us to reflect on what such events reveal about the past as well as what they may suggest about the present, from a postcolonial standpoint. Focusing on a selection of letters written during the British colonisation of the Southern Cameroons, this paper explores the incidence of an insidious form of paternalism revealed through discourses of contention present in the language of the letters. Through a contrapuntal analysis (allowing for the viability of varied cultural perspectives), this paper will try to show how the cited paternalistic attitudes unveil simmering tensions regarding the right to power (whether earned, deserved, assigned, inherited, or arrogated) and assertions to legitimacy, all determined primarily by an effort to establish true cultural heritage.

Colonial correspondence and the creation of a cheap labour economy in Southern Rhodesia: The taxable age debate, 1904-1911

Takesure Taringana (University of Zimbabwe)

Using letters and correspondences among the Resident Commissioner, the Chief Native Commissioner, Native Commissioners, the Chief Secretary and the Attorney General, this paper captures the factors and processes leading to the creation of a cheap labour economy. In 1904, the state and capital in Southern Rhodesia pushed for the reduction of the taxable age of African males from 21 to 14 years. The intention was to expand the taxable African male population in the colony. This was anomalous considering that taxability depended on adulthood, which according to the law in the Cape Colony, the Transvaal and the Common Law of England was pegged at 21 years. Why did

Southern Rhodesia choose to be that odd? The technicalities surrounding this proposed move provoked a debate on the subject pitting various interests at stake – economic, social and legal. The proposal to expand the pool of taxable male Africans in the colony happened at a time when, owing to efforts at reconfiguring the economy (the reconstruction of the mining industry and the reorganisation of the agricultural sector), the economy had an insatiable appetite for labour. The coincidence between the reconstruction efforts and the need to expand the taxable African male population is the central issue this paper explores. It sets a convenient context to analyse the reasons forwarded to support the proposal.

Through correspondences on the taxable age debate, this paper nuances dynamics in the creation of a cheap labour economy in Southern Rhodesia. It simmers together an assortment of considerations that fuelled the debate and how the perceptions were informed and shaped by the process of primitive capital accumulation. The debate offers rich clues and fresh evidence concerning the desperation of capital and the state to extract surplus from the indigenous production systems to the settler economy. I argue that the taxable age debate reveals capital's fortitude – through the creation of a cheap labour economy – to squeezing out and extracting the last vestiges of surplus value from the indigenous African production systems. This was rather a continuation of various forms of violence intended to dislodge the traditional economy and supplant it with the settler economy.

Colonial letters: A discourse about art repatriation

[Akshatha Rangarajan \(LASALLE College of the Arts, Singapore\)](#)

British colonialism and the effect of colonial power, which initiated the plunder of art and artefacts in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, in 1812, continues, even today, to manipulate the historical, social and cultural narrative of Britain and Indonesia. The provenance of an object, its biography and ownership history are significant because they determine a people's cultural identity. Art repatriation, steadily gaining relevance in the 21st century, connotes the return of pillaged art to the country of origin.

Letters from the British interim administration in Indonesia (1811-1816) indicate that the Lieutenant-Governor of the British East Indies, Sir Thomas Stamford

Raffles, authorised an invasion of the Yogyakarta Kraton (palace) on 20 June 1812. The army proceeded to raid the palace, and three officers interested in Javanese history and culture were responsible for seizing ancient manuscripts from the palace library. British written communication in the 19th century normalised the division of the spoils of war amongst soldiers by referring to it as the “prize” of the conquerors.

The questions that arise from this line of inquiry, using the Yogyakarta Kraton invasion as a case study, include—in what manner is the legacy of the British empire, as read in letters, characterised by power structures that justify the nature of its acquisition of cultural objects? What role does written correspondence play in producing knowledge about the value of a cultural property? How do colonial letters contend with the legitimacy of ownership of cultural treasures? Colonial letters whose knowledge lies within colonial reasoning become the source for the politics of claim and access—the foundation of hegemonic power. As an ideology, colonialism evolved through communication, dissemination and reinforcement through language. Benedict Anderson, a political historian, argues that both, deep-rooted ideologies and language, wield power. Moreover, colonial written correspondence imbues power through words indicating the superiority of the colonisers. The myriad complexities involved in resolving the procurement of artefacts during the colonial era make colonial written correspondences serve as a living archive, where memories connect with practices in the present.

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