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Chapter Author(s): Robbie Aitken

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EDUCATION AND MIGRATION

Cameroonian Schoolchildren and Apprentices in Germany,
1884–1914

Robbie Aitken



In the Holthausen cemetery in Mülheim on the Ruhr in northern Westphalia, one particular gravestone attracts attention for being somewhat unusual (see figure 11.1). The words on the headstone read: “Rest in peace. Here lies Prince Equalla Deido, born 27 April 1876 in Douala, Cameroon, died 1 May 1891 in Holthausen.”¹ This grave, one of the few visible reminders of Germany’s colonial past, is testimony to an increasing presence of African colonial subjects in Germany at the turn of the twentieth century.

Equalla Deido was one of several thousand men and women of African descent from various regions of sub-Saharan Africa and from farther afield such as Haiti and the United States who were present in Germany in the period between high colonialism and the outbreak of World War I. Indeed, the development of a permanent, small, but visible black population in



Figure 11.1. Grave of Prince Equalla Deido in Mülheim, Germany (Source: Robbie Aitken).

Notes from this chapter begin on page 227.

Germany was primarily an unforeseen consequence of German colonialism and Germany's emergence as a maritime power. In particular, there was an almost constant migration of colonial subjects from Germany's newly acquired African protectorates, Togo, German East Africa, and, to a lesser extent, Namibia. Numerically dominating this African colonial population, however, were young men from Germany's protectorate of Cameroon, principally from the influential coastal town of Douala.

Cameroonian migrants reached Germany by various means. Personal servants accompanied colonial officials, missionaries, or private individuals on home leave, while others participated in ethnological exhibitions. A handful of Cameroonians taught as language instructors at the Hamburg Colonial Institute or at the Berlin Seminar for Oriental Languages. An uncertain number of others arrived at German ports, often as members of the increasingly international workforce in the German merchant fleet or as stowaways or adventurers. In general, however, the initial impetus for travel came from the requests of elite families in Cameroon, especially the Duala, that their children be schooled or trained in Europe. Between 1885 and 1914, over sixty youngsters, including Equalla Deido, are known to have left the German protectorate for Germany with this purpose in mind, and it is this group of educational migrants that forms the focal point of this chapter.² Although there is a growing literature on the African presence in Germany, it tends to focus either on individual biographies or on the Weimar and National Socialist periods.³ In comparison, far less research has been devoted to the imperial period, the formative period in the creation of a permanent African community in Germany, during which educational migrants were among the first colonial subjects to arrive in Germany; they formed one of the most prominent and visible African groups. Their presence was commented upon in colonial newspapers and their experiences were frequently covered by the local press in the towns in which they lived. At the same time, the European missions, colonial authorities, and the German Foreign Office debated the advantages of training Africans in Germany. This chapter concentrates on the type of schooling and/or apprenticeships the migrants undertook, the role of the colonial authorities in organizing and controlling educational visits, and the problems of reacculturation returning migrants faced. In doing so, it grants us insight into migrants' variable experiences as well as their reception in Germany. Furthermore, it demonstrates the influence that the presence of these migrants had upon future German policy regarding migration from the protectorates.

Equalla Deido, or Songue Epee Ekwalla Eyoum Ebelle, to give him his full Duala name, was the eldest son of Epee Ekwalla Deido (also known as Jim Ekwalla or King Deido), the traditional leader of the Deido quarter of Douala, and Njowe Kwane, one of his seven wives. By the onset of German colonial rule over Cameroon, the Duala were socially and politically organized into several key groupings, the two foremost being the Bell and Akwa lineages. The Deido group

was originally a faction of the Akwa lineage. As their leader, Epee Ekwalla Deido was an influential figure and one of the signatories of the 1884 Treaty of Protection, which helped establish German control over Cameroon. Like a number of Duala notables, he played an important role in sponsoring local education by making land available to the German administration or the European missions in order for schools to be set up. Thus, in 1889 he granted the administration land in Deido on the condition that it construct its second school there and that it provide a European teacher.⁴ At the beginning of 1890, twenty-five selected local youngsters, including Equalla, received four hours of daily instruction from the German teacher, Friedrich Flad, in basic reading, writing, and arithmetic skills, as well as singing.⁵ Like Equalla, the majority of youngsters who were to leave for Germany had already attended either mission or government schools, and many had already been confronted with at least some basic German.

In addition, the Duala in their role as coastal middlemen had been quick to seize upon the opportunities opened up by the access to education that they hoped would benefit them in their relations with European traders and European governments.⁶ Due to the efforts of the British Baptist Missionary Society, which had entered Cameroon around the middle of the nineteenth century, many Duala were literate long before the Germans arrived.⁷ Furthermore, there was a tradition among some elite Duala families of sending their sons to Europe to be educated as a means of heightening their own prestige and increasing their political influence.⁸ This was part of a larger nineteenth-century tradition of elite families along the west African coast that their sons be trained in Europe and in particular in Britain.⁹ In Cameroon, this practice became increasingly common under German colonial rule. Elite Duala families themselves took the initiative in sending their children to Germany. As early as 1885, two influential figures within Duala society, the Bell paramount Ndumbe Lobe Bell and the Akwa government translator David Meetom (Mwange Ngondo), had first approached the governor of Cameroon, Freiherr Julius von Soden, to request that their sons be educated in Germany.¹⁰ Epee Ekwalla Deido similarly believed in the benefits of a European experience for his children. In the spring of 1885, a younger son, Ebobse, was one of the first Duala to arrive in Germany, where he spent several weeks in Berlin under the care of German consul Eduard Schmidt.¹¹

Schoolchildren

The initial response from both the colonial authorities in Berlin and the colonial administration in Douala to the idea of selected Cameroonian youngsters undertaking schooling or an apprenticeship in Germany was positive.¹² Governor Soden declared himself willing to support limited migration for educational purposes in the hope of binding prominent families to the colonial system, as

well as out of a desire to create a skilled indigenous labor force that could be integrated into the colonial economy and the lower levels of the administration.¹³ The administration thus acted as a mediator between the elite families and the educational institutions or German firms in Germany. Importantly, this involved little or no expense on its part. Instead, it was the parents of migrants who financed their children's education. In 1885, the administration estimated that this would cost parents around 2,000 marks a year. In reality, during the first decade of Cameroonian migration the actual sum was closer to 1,000 marks.¹⁴ Included in this amount were the costs of schooling, clothing, food, and accommodation. This was a huge sum given that in 1885 the average German worker earned a yearly wage of just over 580 marks.¹⁵ In view of the high costs, it is not surprising that it was almost exclusively children of Duala leaders, notables, or wealthy traders who were educated in Germany. Alongside Equalla, this group included Ludwig Mpundu Akwa, the future anticolonial activist and son of Akwa paramount Dika Akwa, and the future Bell paramount and anticolonial martyr Rudolf Duala Manga Bell, as well as three of his brothers and, later, his first son. Occasionally, domestic servants from lesser circumstances who accompanied

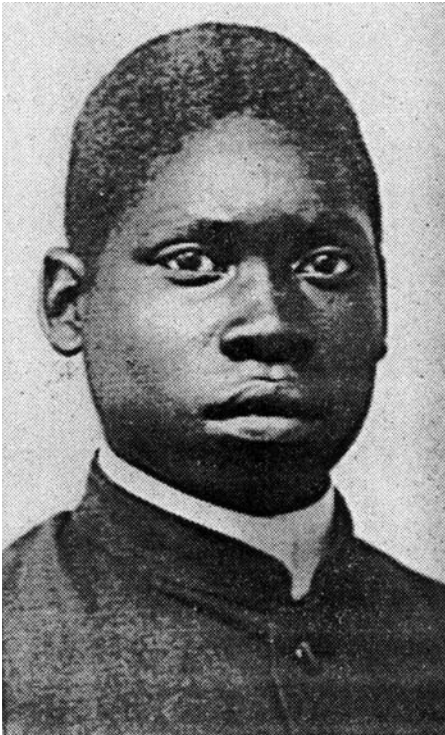


Figure 11.2. Portrait of Prince Equalla Deido (Source: Unknown).

returning members of the colonial administration or private individuals to Germany were also educated or trained at their master's expense.

The schooling that Cameroonian youngsters received was to some extent dependent upon their age on arrival in Germany, the institution that they attended, and the denominational background of the school. In Mülheim, for example, Equalla likely attended the local Victoria School, an evangelical elementary school (see figure 11.2 of Equalla in his uniform). The Cameroonian pupils received the same instruction as their German counterparts, typically covering a wide range of subjects, including German language skills, math, and a foreign language. In addition, some also received private tutoring at home. In general, throughout the entire colonial period these educational migrants received positive school reports in Germany,

which frequently praised their ability, diligence, and behavior during lessons.¹⁶ Yet, in spite of the progress they made they had little or no access to higher education and were sent back to Cameroon once their secondary education was complete.

Apprentices

A further two dozen or more Cameroonian youngsters left Cameroon to be trained as apprentices in Germany. Alongside the practical skills they were taught, they also received a basic education and were provided with private tutoring in the German language. Typically, apprentices were trained in trades geared toward their future participation in the development of the protectorate. These included construction skills such as carpentry, joinery, masonry, and metalworking, as well as crafts like tailoring, cooking, and shoemaking. A contract drafted between the colonial administration and the Corporation for Reinforced Concrete in Berlin gives an insight into the contractual obligations placed upon firms training Africans.¹⁷ The company, which pioneered the use of new building techniques in Germany, had been responsible for work on several administration buildings in Douala, including the hospital. Their representative in Cameroon selected the young Duala M'bende Epo to undertake a three-year apprenticeship in Berlin. According to the contract of June 1892, the company was to meet all costs of his training, including accommodation and clothing. Furthermore, it was to finance elementary education in reading, writing, and math for Epo, who had already been receiving such lessons in Douala. For its part, the administration committed to paying for the travel costs to and from Germany, while then Governor Zimmerer agreed to pay for two suits and other clothes for Epo's outward journey out of private funds. Finally, the contract stipulated that Epo had to follow his teacher's orders and that, should he show signs of "immoral behavior" such as laziness or recalcitrance, the company would be entitled to send him back to Cameroon.

The Corporation for Reinforced Concrete was not the only German firm present in the protectorate to actively look to recruit indigenous apprentices to instruct in Germany. The construction and architectural company F. H. Schmidt funded the training of eight African youngsters at its Altona branch between 1887 and 1895. There were two underlying reasons these firms were prepared to make this investment. First, in contrast to German Southwest Africa, there was never any question of Cameroon becoming a settler colony for European migrants, primarily because of its tropical climate. As a consequence, few skilled European craftsmen migrated to the protectorate. A decade after the onset of German colonial rule, the *Deutsches Kolonialblatt*, the official mouthpiece of the colonial authorities, put the entire European population of Cameroon at 215 in

its report for the period from August 1892 to July 1893.¹⁸ Out of this number, there were only four carpenters, three machinists, and one metalworker. In light of debates over the ability of Europeans to acclimatize and work in tropical regions, European firms sought to develop a skilled indigenous workforce, which, crucially, could also be paid far lower wages. Secondly, until firms set up their own workshops in the protectorate, local youngsters would have to be trained outside of Cameroon.

Life in Germany

African colonial migrants, both schoolchildren and apprentices, were not granted German citizenship. Instead, they occupied an inferior, ill-defined legal position as subjects of a German protectorate (*Schutzgebietsangehöriger*). At times this was variously described by additional terms such as “person under German protection” (*Deutscher Schutzgenosse*) or simply as “native” (*Eingeborener*). Their presence in Germany was deemed desirable only as long as it suited the purposes of the colonial project. Even before they left for Europe, limits were imposed upon their period of stay, and the colonial authorities sought to regulate their freedom of movement and exposure to German society. This determined that, in general, educational migrants lived sheltered lives in Germany. The Cameroonian administration, in particular, stressed the need for strict supervision to be exercised during migrants’ stays. This was deemed increasingly necessary after the Duala apprentice Alfred Bell (Belle Ndumbe), nephew of Ndumbe Lobe Bell, and one of the first Cameroonians to arrive in Germany in 1887, had expressed apparent sympathy for the social democratic workers’ movement.¹⁹ The colonial authorities, both in Germany and in the overseas territories, feared that socialism might gain a foothold in the colonies among the indigenous populations. They believed that the spread of concepts such as freedom, equality, and civil rights would undermine the rigid social and political structure of the colonies, which was based upon a principle of inequality and biased in favor of the colonizers.

Alfred had been involved in passing on letters of protest in which the brutality and unfairness of German rule was condemned from his family in Douala to leading government figures.²⁰ He himself questioned Germany’s right to exercise authority over Cameroon in an interview with the London newspaper *The Pall Mall Gazette*. A copy of a later reproduction of the letter in a South Africa-based, English-language newspaper²¹ was brought to the attention of the German authorities. As a consequence, he was eventually sent home before completing his apprenticeship. On account of the difficulties encountered with Alfred, plans to send gifted students at the administration’s schools in Douala to Germany for a further year of training as teachers, clerks, or translators were dropped.²² Nonetheless, the Cameroonian administration did not abandon its involvement

in educating Africans in the metropole, but instead resolved to exercise even more control over migrants' visits. This demonstrated the continued importance it placed on the venture, while at the same time signaling the start of a growing concern as to the longer-term benefits and prospects of educating Africans in Germany.

On their nineteen-day voyage to Germany, young Duala migrants were usually in the care of a supervising European, a returning civil servant, colonial businessman, or missionary. Although it was not unknown for youngsters to be sent to Germany in pairs, young Cameroonians tended to live in relative isolation from other Africans in Germany. The youngsters, primarily members of Cameroon's social and political elite, frequently lived in distinctly middle-class or lower-middle-class environments. As the Cameroon administration requested, they were placed under the care of a watchful host family or institution, often in smaller German towns, where it was believed greater control could be exercised over their movements and experiences. Often, schoolteachers or similar authority figures acted as hosts, keeping the colonial authorities updated on the behavior and progress of their charges. Thus, in Mülheim Equalla stayed with the headmaster of the school he attended, Heinrich de Jong, and his wife Anna.

The available documents unfortunately allow only a fleeting insight into migrants' experiences and their reception in Germany. Local newspapers frequently ran stories about their stay, covering events such as their arrival, baptism, or departure. Such coverage reflected genuine local interest in the lives of migrants, whose very presence provided a visible link to the overseas empire for small communities otherwise largely untouched by the German colonial project. Many of them had likely never encountered men and women of African heritage before. Equally, this coverage suggests an underlying patronizing fascination with young Africans' ability to adapt to their new environment, as well as with their supposed "otherness." The public scrutiny youngsters faced could be unsettling. For example, local papers in Aalen even printed summaries of Duala Manga's and Tube Meetom's school reports.²³ This greatly upset Duala Manga, whose results were less favorable than Tube Meetom's.

Overall, migrants' experiences of Germany were highly variable and were greatly dependent on their situational context. In Aalen, efforts were made to make Duala Manga and Tube Meetom feel welcome; they were greeted by the town's brass band upon arrival. According to a former schoolmate, the two were popular among their fellow pupils: "Their friendship was greatly sought after, because both were physically very agile, good runners and swimmers. Rudolf [Duala Manga] possessed immense physical strength; nothing could easily happen to anyone who was his friend."²⁴ In contrast, Alfons Demba and Richard Lukenje were subjected to verbal abuse from local schoolchildren in Görlitz; their ability to resist this provocation was praised in a school report.²⁵ Alfred Bell was likewise aware of and upset by comments his presence attracted on the streets of

Berlin and remarked that it was “coarse and unmanly to laugh at a person or to insult him because his skin happens to be dark.”²⁶ Undoubtedly, this exposure to discrimination and prejudice was something all Cameroonian migrants faced.

While Alfons Demba and Richard Lukenje developed a strong relationship with their host mother, who financed their education and helped to find the pair an apprenticeship, others, like Mpundu Akwa, experienced difficulties with their hosts’ heavy-handed control and eventually changed families.²⁷ In at least one case, the Cameroonian administration struggled to find a host for African youngsters, demonstrating that not all communities were open to the prospect of providing a new home for colonial migrants. In 1888, it was unable to find a master in Paderborn willing to take on Josef Timba and Mbanga Akwa, who had traveled to Germany with Mpundu Akwa.²⁸ Instead, the youngsters were sent to be trained at the Catholic Arch Abbey St. Otilien in Türkenfeld, near Munich.²⁹

Throughout the entire colonial period, emphasis was often placed on the provision of moral and religious guidance for educational migrants. Within colonial discourse, the perceived moral and cultural inferiority of the colonized Africans was a prominent theme. This fed into notions of the civilizing nature of colonialism and a belief in the need to morally “raise” the indigenous populations to the level of the European. It also served to justify colonial brutality. In Germany, a large number of African migrants received confirmation or were baptized, often apparently at the request of the youngsters themselves. Such ceremonies were popular events. The congregation attending the baptismal ceremony for Mbanga Akwa at St. Otilien in 1889 was so large that it had to be moved from the institution’s own chapel to the larger, nearby church.³⁰ Among those in attendance was Ludwig Windthorst, head of the Catholic German Center Party, who had become Mbanga Akwa’s godfather and after whom he was now to be named.³¹ A report of the event was even sent to Pope Leo XIII in Rome, and Mbanga Akwa also received a letter of congratulations from his cousin Mpundu Akwa, who was later baptized. This illustrates the interest Germany’s Catholic elite showed in the welfare and religious upbringing of African youngsters, both in Germany and in the protectorates.³² It must also be seen in the context of Catholic and Center Party efforts to gain government permission to establish Catholic missions in the overseas territories.

Adapting to the climate in Germany and frequent, related bouts of ill health were also typically part of migrants’ experience. Progress reports sent to the colonial authorities usually made reference to their health. Migrants were particularly susceptible to respiratory diseases like tuberculosis and pneumonia, which continued to affect the German public at large in spite of improvements in public health. Out of four Duala youngsters who had arrived to train with F. H. Schmidt in Altona in 1892, one died of pneumonia within a year, and two others returned home early at their own request following prolonged bouts of ill health.³³ At least

half a dozen Cameroonians are known to have died from respiratory diseases in imperial Germany, with a further three dying of unknown causes. Among this number is Equalla, who died within six months of having arrived in Mülheim. While in Mülheim it has been suggested that he died of pneumonia, oral history in Deido tells the story of him dying in a duel defending his honor, after having been subjected to discriminatory remarks.³⁴ For Cameroonian parents, who entrusted their children to the care of the colonial administration or European firms, the news of a child's death in far-off Germany was devastating. Equalla's grief-stricken father is said to have grown a beard as a sign of mourning after his son's death and to have later visited Equalla's grave in Mülheim.³⁵ A local newspaper report supports this, telling of a visit paid to the Holthausen cemetery by members of the 1902 Duala delegation to Germany, which traveled to Europe to protest against colonial abuses.³⁶

Returning Migrants and Travel Restrictions

Upon completing their education or training, African migrants were expected to return to Cameroon and put their skills to work. The German colonial administration in Cameroon often arranged employment opportunities for them. Josef Timba, who had trained as a shoe maker, was provided with materials and equipment on credit in order to construct a shoe making workshop. To help him meet his payments, a position as a clerk was also arranged for him.³⁷ African clerks with German language and translating skills were constantly sought after, and several returning migrants took positions either working at lower levels within the administration or at European firms. This also enabled the administration to keep these returnees under observation. After their homecoming, migrants often faced reacculturation issues. The twelve-year-old Ndumbe Elokan is unlikely to have been the only Cameroonian to encounter communication problems. After three years in Wiesbaden, he arrived back in Douala no longer able to speak his native language.³⁸ Greater problems, however, resulted from difficulties in reintegrating into the rigid, hierarchical social structure of colonial society.

Young Cameroonians whose progress at school or in apprenticeships had been praised by teachers, masters, and host parents in Germany often found that the authorities and European employers in Cameroon dismissed their skills and experience. For example, an administrative report assessing Tube Meetom's skills after six years in Germany claimed that he had learned little more than the German language and that his cooking abilities were inferior to those of any unskilled Togolese youngster.³⁹ As a consequence, he was to be retrained as a clerk. Similarly, after an initial positive report on their progress, Governor Seitz wrote that Alfons Demba and Richard Lukenje were not as capable as Duala who had been trained in workshops in Cameroon and that they were falling into bad habits

such as laziness.⁴⁰ Seitz concluded that this illustrated how slight an impression a period of European education or training left on Africans. At the root of such comments was a change in the Cameroonian administration's attitude toward educational migration. As workshops for training young Africans were established in Cameroon, training them in Europe grew less necessary. This coincided with criticism of returning migrants' behavior and attitude from within the administration and sections of Cameroon's European population. Derogatory descriptors such as "trouser-wearing Negro" (*Hosen-Nigger*) emerged in colonial discourse to mock Africans who, in their (imperfect) mimicry of European manners and customs, were seen to be challenging notions of the essential difference between Europeans and non-Europeans that was so central to colonial rule.

For example, the *National Zeitung* reproduced the scathing comments from 1898 on returnees of Heinrich Vieter, an apostolic Prefect and member of the Catholic Pallottine mission to Cameroon:

Here in Cameroon one finds a large number of natives [*Neger*] who were in Germany for educational purposes. On the whole, one must say that this has brought no happiness to those educated, or better "spoiled," there. The results are largely discontent with their situation [and] demands that will not be satisfied. They were treated in Germany as something special, even as princes.⁴¹

The last remark likely refers to the audiences with members of Germany's royal families and ruling elite that a handful of Cameroonians, like Alfred Bell, were granted during the first years of migration.⁴² This was to the chagrin of the colonial administration, who believed that such visits instilled migrants with a false sense of importance.⁴³ Returning migrants were frequently considered to be "spoiled," "arrogant," or "lazy," and a disruptive influence upon fellow Africans. Thus, the Protestant Basel Mission student Dinne Dumbe, who had trained as a cook in Württemberg, was accused of causing unrest in the mission school in Douala. Disparaged as being "half Europeanized," he failed to come back for the new school year, much to the missionaries' relief.⁴⁴ Richard Lukenje was so unhappy in Cameroon that he asked to be allowed to return to Germany, which his former host mother in Görlitz fully supported. The Cameroonian governor, however, refused to grant him his wish. The authorities used such disappointment and discontent among returning migrants to justify action taken against them as well as to criticize African education in Germany. Yet, it merely masked problems that migrants must have experienced in once again being subjected to the strict racial hierarchy of the colonial arena, with frequent abuses of power by the colonizers and the constant humiliations this entailed.⁴⁵ In addition to being more aware of the exploitation that they were subjected to, they were likely also frustrated that their hopes of finding better employment as a result of their European education remained unrealized.

Increasingly, the benefits of African education in Europe were brought into question by the administration in Cameroon. This was part of a larger debate taking place in both Germany and the protectorates concerning the presence of African colonial subjects in Europe. The colonial authorities' educational policies were failing to produce the loyal, docile subjects that they had hoped for. Instead, migrants like Alfred Bell were even actively engaging with German anticolonialists. Additionally, several Cameroonians had run up considerable debts in Germany that the administration feared it would have to cover.⁴⁶ The administration was also considerably concerned about attempts by Reverend Hughes at the Colwyn Bay, African Training Institute in Wales to recruit Cameroonian youngsters to be trained for future British colonial projects.⁴⁷ The administration was disappointed with the results of its educational policy, but it was loath to allow a colonial rival to potentially benefit from training German colonial subjects.

In response, it restricted Cameroonians' ability to leave the territory,⁴⁸ issuing a first travel ban in December 1893, three months after the German governor of the Marshall Islands had introduced similar legislation in the South Seas protectorate.⁴⁹ Under the new legislation, Cameroonians who wanted to leave now required the governor's permission; they had to fill out an application form and pay a ten-mark fee, regardless of the outcome. Severe penalties awaited those breaking the new restrictions; the migrants themselves, members of their family, or persons who encouraged them to leave faced a potential thousand-mark fine or imprisonment. This legislation was part of a general withdrawal of administrative support for the migration of Cameroonians to Europe for educational purposes or otherwise. By 1900, several of Germany's other overseas protectorates had implemented similar travel restrictions, and the Colonial Department was routinely turning down requests from German firms to train Africans in Germany.⁵⁰

Mission-Sponsored Migration

From 1894 onward, the introduction of travel barriers resulted in steadily decreasing migration from the Cameroonian protectorate. Nonetheless, from the aftermath of the travel restrictions to the outbreak of World War I, elite Duala families and a handful of other prominent Cameroonian families remained insistent on sending their children to Europe. They now turned to the European missions to train or educate their children in Germany, or they sought to use their connections to European firms or individuals to help organize a stay abroad. The various missions were the driving force behind the development of an education system in Cameroon, which missionaries believed would improve their success in spreading their message and gaining converts.⁵¹ In addition, their success depended on positive relations with the local indigenous elite. It is therefore not surprising that

several wealthy and influential notables approached them about educating their children in Germany. The missions themselves, however, were divided over the issue of allowing Africans to travel to Europe.

As early as 1888, the largest European mission in Cameroon, the Protestant Basel Mission, warned its missionaries not to return to Europe with African youngsters and turned down several requests from Cameroonian notables keen on their children studying in Germany.⁵² In general, it shared the administration's discriminatory viewpoint that exposure to German society had a corruptive influence on Africans. An 1892 report on the training of African youngsters in Europe, produced by the Basel missionary Heinrich Bohner for the German administration in Cameroon, exemplified this.⁵³ With reference to F.H. Schmidt's recent recruitment of four apprentices to be sent to Altona, Bohner questioned the chances of this strategy being successful and instead described two equally disadvantageous outcomes. In the first scenario, the youngsters would be pampered and would return to Cameroon with unrealistic demands, leading to feelings of neglect and unhappiness. Alternatively, they would come into contact with the ideas of social democracy, which would render them entirely useless for the development of the protectorate. Bohner instead pointed to the Baslers' established practice of training Africans in Africa as a potential blueprint. The report met with the agreement of Governor Zimmerer, who expressed hope that Schmidt's apprentices would be the last to leave for Germany.⁵⁴

Nonetheless, in 1909 the Baslers agreed to make an exception in the case of Noah Sosiga, at the request of Sosiga's father Fon Nyonga II, arranging for him to be schooled in the small town of Spöck in southern Germany. The mission saw no alternative but to acquiesce because Sosiga's father was the traditional leader of Bali in the western grasslands of Cameroon and his support was deemed vital to the mission's success in the region.⁵⁵ While Sosiga's father hoped that his son would spend at least ten years in Germany, the youngster returned to Cameroon less than a year later, partly because the mission was unable to find a suitable family to take care of Sosiga.⁵⁶ This all too brief episode ended the Baslers' willingness to sponsor African education in Germany and was seen as confirmation of their belief that African migration to Europe was disadvantageous.

In contrast, after initial skepticism, Eduard Scheve, a central figure in establishing the German Baptist Mission in Cameroon, advocated the benefits of educating Africans in Europe. Between 1893 and 1909, at least eight Cameroonian youngsters from Douala and Victoria (now Limbé) were sent to live with Scheve and his family in the Moabit district of Berlin. There they were treated and brought up like Scheve's own children, with whom they shared a room.⁵⁷ The colonial authorities approved of this arrangement because they viewed Scheve as a trusted educator, capable of supervising the youngsters' stay. The Cameroonians under Scheve's care appear to have developed a strong relationship with him; one colleague spoke of the "veneration" they showed the pastor.⁵⁸ Among his charges

were the cousins Bertha Ebumbu Mbenge and Esther Sike Bilé, two of only a handful of Cameroonian women to spend a prolonged period in Germany. The youngsters were educated in local schools and were trained to later assist with teaching in the mission's schools in Cameroon.

The Catholic Pallottine Mission also sponsored the education and apprenticeships of around a dozen Cameroonians in the small town of Limburg an der Lahn in Hessen, where the mission was based. As yet, little more than the names of these individuals has been recovered from the paltry documentary evidence presently available. Here again, it was anticipated that the youngsters would work for the mission upon their return to Cameroon. While a number of Cameroonians who received a mission education in Germany did indeed dedicate their lives to the spread of Christianity in Cameroon, several others broke all ties with the missions once back in Africa.⁵⁹

In spite of the 1893 measures and the even harsher restrictions imposed in 1910, Cameroonians continued to successfully reach Germany, with or without official permission, and sometimes to be educated there, in part due to the help of the missions. As a result, around three dozen youngsters arrived in Germany for educational purposes after the imposition of the initial travel ban. This represented a relative decrease in numbers, but it is striking that several of these later migrants received administrative permission to leave the protectorate even though the colonial authorities had ended their support for the metropolitan education of Africans. Among this number was Otto Equalla, another of Equalla Deido's brothers, who accompanied his father as part of the Duala delegation of 1902 and was left in Scheve's care in Berlin when his father returned to Cameroon.⁶⁰ Unusually, the German authorities appear to have paid for Otto's education. From the scant sources available, it is unclear why this should have been the case. Indeed, there is far less available information in general about these later educational migrants. This is likely because the colonial authorities appear to have no longer played any role in facilitating their migration and, consequently, they no longer received regular updates about migrants' progress.

Conclusion

The onset of World War I, rather than travel restrictions imposed by the administration, brought an end to virtually all Cameroonian migration to Germany.⁶¹ Between 1884 and 1914, education had been a key factor in stimulating this migration, with Cameroonian, primarily Duala, elites actively initiating it. Educational migrants' experiences in Germany were largely shaped by their status as colonial subjects and by the policies of the Cameroonian administration, which sought to restrict and control their exposure to German society. Once it became apparent to the colonial authorities that they were unable to fully supervise and

control migrants' experiences, they came to view the presence of colonial subjects in Germany as counterproductive and withdrew their support. This meant that an ever-decreasing number of migrants left for Germany. The majority of educational migrants appear to have returned to Cameroon before the outbreak of war, where their reintegration into colonial society was often difficult. Hopes of taking up skilled positions within the colony economy often remained unfulfilled. Instead, returning migrants were frequently frustrated by the lack of opportunities available to them as well as by the discrimination they faced as a result of the strict racial segregation of colonial society. In turn, the authorities interpreted this as evidence of their arrogance or degeneration and used it as an argument for travel restrictions.

A small number of migrants, particularly those arriving in the immediate prewar period, remained in Germany on a longer-term basis either out of choice or necessity. They became part of an increasingly visible and networked African community. There they had to overcome numerous obstacles in order to carve out an existence for themselves, ranging from social isolation and discrimination to the question of their status in the postwar period. Others, like Equalla, died in Germany. It is unclear who paid for Equalla's gravestone, but his body was at first buried in a simple grave and reburied months later in a hereditary plot paid for by the de Jong family.⁶² It was not entirely unknown for local communities to erect memorials or hold services for young Africans who had died during their stay in Germany. Thus, an elaborate funeral attended by over four hundred people was held for the Togolese Eque Soloman James Garber in Berlin in 1892, while in 1903 German friends of the young Duala apprentice bookbinder Daniel Njo Disom, who died in Hersfeld, Hessen, arranged for a gravestone to commemorate his life.⁶³ While Disom's grave has long since disappeared, Equalla's provides an important reminder of the migration of Africans to Germany during the imperial period. His transnational story is remembered not only in the form of his grave in Mülheim, but also by a window in the church of Bonamadourou in Deido (see figure 11.3).



Figure 11.3. The window in the church at Bonamadourou that is said to depict Equalla and his sister (Source: Robbie Aitken).

The church, an extension of an earlier chapel, was officially opened by the Protestant Basel Mission in 1912 and the window, which depicts Jesus with two Cameroonian children, was donated with funds raised by Swiss children in September 1911. According to oral tradition in Deido, the children are said to represent Equalla and his younger sister Endale Epeye Ekwalla.⁶⁴

Notes

1. When the gravestone was restored in 1989, the date of death was incorrectly carved as being 1901; Equalla died in 1891. I am grateful to Ngando Mackay in Deido, Douala, for telling me the story of Equalla and allowing me access to his research. Pastor Sonnenberger in Holthausen also provided me with material. See Dietrich Sonnenberger, "Der Prinz von Holthausen hat wieder Familie—neue Erkenntnisse rund um ein 'rätselhaftes Grab,'" *Nachrichten der evangelischen Kirchengemeinde Holthausen*, April–May 2005, 10–11. See also Stefanie Michels, "Mülheim an der Ruhr: Der kleine schwarze Prinz. Das Grab von Moses Equalla Deido," in *Kolonialismus hierzulande: Eine Spurensuche in Deutschland*, ed. Ulrich van der Heyden and Joachim Zeller (Erfurt, Germany: Sutton Verlag, 2008), 417–21.
2. This chapter is based on a larger project on the lives of Cameroonian migrants and their children in Germany, 1884–1960, supported by a grant from the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council (grant number 112228). On the basis of this research, the names and biographical information of over seven hundred Africans have been recovered: over a third of these originally came from Cameroon.
3. See, in particular, Katharina Oguntoye, *Eine Afro-Deutsche Geschichte: Zur Lebenssituation von Afrikanern in Deutschland von 1884 bis 1950* (Berlin: Hoho Verlag, 1997); Peter Martin and Christine Alonzo, eds., *Zwischen Charleston und Stechschritt: Schwarze im Nationalsozialismus* (Hamburg, Germany: Bölling und Galitz Verlag, 2004); Tina Campt, *Other Germans: Black Germans and the Politics of Race, Gender and Memory in the Third Reich* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004); Tobias Nagl, *Die unheimliche Maschine: Rasse und Repräsentation im Weimarer Kino* (Munich: Text und Kritik, 2009); and Ulrich van der Heyden, ed., *Unbekannte Biographien* (Berlin: Kai Homilius, 2008).
4. Contract between the Governor and the Headman Epea Kwala [*sic*] from Bonebela, 29 September 1889, Bundesarchiv Berlin (hereafter BArch) R1001 4073, 95.
5. Report on the Condition of the School in Bonabela-Deido, 1 September 1890, BArch R1001 4073, 144–45.
6. Concerning the Duala as "middlemen," see Ralph Austen and Jonathan Derrick, *Middlemen of the Cameroon Rivers: The Duala and Their Hinterland, c. 1600–c. 1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 1–4.
7. Concerning the British Baptist Missionary Society in Cameroon, see Jean-Paul Messina and Jaap van Slageren, *Histoire du christianisme au Cameroun: Des origines à nos jours* (Paris: Éditions Karthala, 2005), 27–36; and Samuel Johnson, *Schwarze Missionare—Weiße Missionare! Beiträge westlicher Missionsgesellschaften und einheimischer Pioniere zur Entstehung der Baptistengemeinde in Kamerun (1841–1949)* (Kassel, Germany: Onken Verlag, 2004).
8. Jean-Pierre Félix Eyoum, Stefanie Michels, and Joachim Zeller, "Bonamanga: Eine Kosmopolitische Familiengeschichte," *Mont Cameroun*, no. 2 (2005): 14.
9. David Killingray, "Africans in the United Kingdom: An Introduction," in *Africans in Britain*, ed. David Killingray (Ilford, UK: Frank Cass, 1994), 7–9.

10. Governor Soden to Prince von Bismarck, 8 August 1885, BArch R1001 4297, 3–5.
11. See “Konsul Schmidt aus Kamerun,” *Teltower Kreisblatt*, 21 April 1885, 3, and in the section “Steglitz,” *Teltower Kreisblatt*, 4 July 1885, 4. Here Deido is falsely referred to as Bobb, son of King Dido.
12. Ministry of Intellectual, Educational and Medical Affairs to Bismarck, 3 October 1885, BArch R1001 4297, 8–10.
13. Soden to Bismarck, 8 August 1885, BArch R1001 4297, 3–5.
14. The parents of Mpundu Akwa and Tube Meetom paid 1,000 marks in 1889 and 1895, respectively. In Meetom’s case, the Foreign Office paid half the costs. It is unclear whether they took over all payments after Meetom’s father was executed as a rebel. Vandenesch, Government and School Advisor, to Royal Governmental President, Pilgrim, 8 August 1889, BArch R1001 5571, 27; and Dean Knapp to the Basel Mission, 23 January 1895, Mission 21 Basel (hereafter, Mission 21), Q-3-4, Mixed correspondence A-M, 1891–96.
15. Figure from Gerd Hohorst, Jürgen Kocka, and Gerd Ritter, *Sozialgeschichtliches Arbeitsbuch II* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1978), 107.
16. There are a number of examples in the files BArch R1001 5571–76.
17. Governor Zimmerer, Contract Concerning the Education of M’bende Epo from Akwadorf, 25 June 1892, BArch R1001 5571, 134–35.
18. “Report on the State and Development of the Protectorate of Cameroon, 1 August 1892 to 31 July 1893,” *Beilage zu Nr. 20 des “Deutschen Kolonialblattes”* (hereafter *DKB*) 4 (1893): 1.
19. On Bell, see Wolfgang Mehnert, “Schulpolitik im Dienste der Kolonialherrschaft des deutschen Imperialismus” (PhD diss., Karl Marx Universität, 1965), 125–34.
20. Alfred Bell to Joseph Bell, 31 October 1888, BArch R1001 4297, 88–89.
21. *The Pall Mall Gazette*, “An African Prince on German West Africa,” 16 April 1890, 1. Reprinted in *The African Times*, 1 May 1890, 68; in BArch R1001 5571, 70.
22. See von Soden to von Bismarck, 30 June 1888, BArch R1001 4071, 99–102; Foreign Minister von Bismarck to von Soden, 23 January 1889, BArch R1001 4072, 12–16; and Mehnert, “Schulpolitik,” 126.
23. Schoolteacher Oesterle to the Colonial Department of the Foreign Office (hereafter AAKA), 1 April 1894, BArch R1001 5572, 99–100.
24. All translations are my own unless otherwise stated. Hermann Stützel, quoted in Henning Petershagen, “Afro-Aristokrat in Aalen ausgebildet,” *Südwest Presse*, 31 May 1997, in Stadtarchiv Ulm. See also Eyoum, Michels, and Zeller, “Bonamanga,” 16.
25. Report, Realschule-Director Baron, 20 November 1893, BArch R1001 5572, 65–66.
26. *The Pall Mall Gazette*, “An African Prince on German West Africa.”
27. On Demba and Lukenje’s relationship to their host mother, see Elisa von Joeden-Forgey, “Nobody’s People: Colonial Subjects, Race Power, and the German State, 1884–1945,” (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2004), 352–69. On Mpundu, see Soden to Bismarck, 7 November 1889, BArch R1001 4298, 92.
28. Vandenesch to Pilgrim, 2 August 1889, BArch R1001 5571, 29–30.
29. “Die Taufe dreier Neger in St. Ottilien,” in *Missionsblätter St. Ottilien* 1 (1888–1889): 586–91. Two further African youngsters were at St. Ottilien, the Liberian Leo Dagwe and the Sudanese Hassi.
30. *Ibid.*, 590.
31. *Ibid.*
32. Windthorst was not the only influential Catholic to act as godfather to young African migrants. Karl Graf Drechsel zu Deuffstetten was the godfather of another child at St. Ottilien, the Sudanese Hassi, while Graf von Brühl was the godfather of the Duala Franz Peter Mundi ma Lobe. Notice, *Norddeutsche Zeitung*, 30 October 1890, BArch R1001 5571, 98; and Baptismal record, Mundi ma Lobe, Diözesanarchiv Limburg, Lim k 17, 1893, Nr. 131—Geburt.

33. F. H. Schmidt to AAKA, 8 April 1893, BArch R1001 5572, 26; F. H. Schmidt to AAKA, 10 February 1894, BArch R1001 5572, 79; and Joki Dikonge to Schmidt, 24 June 1894, BArch R1001 5572, 135.
34. Interview Ngando Mackay, Douala, March 2006; Sonnenberger, "Der Prinz von Holthausen hat wieder Familie."
35. Interview Mackay.
36. *Mülheimer Zeitung*, 12 September 1902. I am grateful to Peter Schick in Mülheim for sending me this information. See also Michels, "Mülheim an der Ruhr," 420.
37. "Ein eingeborener Neger als Kanzlist und Schuhmachermeister in Kamerun," *DKB* 3 (1892): 23.
38. Soden to Chancellor Caprivi, 9 July 1890, BArch R1001 4299, 8–9.
39. Puttkamer to AAKA, 24 December 1897, BArch R1001 5574, 147–48.
40. Seitz to Chancellor, Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst, 1 August 1896, BArch R1001 5573, 165.
41. *National Zeitung*, 25 August 1898, in BArch R1001 5575, 13.
42. Alfred Bell apparently met Bismarck. See *The Pall Mall Gazette*, "An African Prince on German West Africa." Samson Dido met Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm, later Friedrich III, while four Cameroonian sailors met Emperor Wilhelm I. Soden to Bismarck, 7 December 1886, BArch R1001 4297, 64–66.
43. *Ibid.* See also Report of the Teacher Christaller, included in Soden to Bismarck, 27 October 1888, BArch R1001 4297, 45–51.
44. Brother Mader, Yearly Report of the Middle School in Bethel 1892, 2 February 1893, Mission 21, E-2, 5 1892, Nr. 137.
45. See Joeden-Forgey, "Nobody's People," 338.
46. For examples, see Alfred Bell: Soden to Bismarck, 7 November 1889, BArch R1001 4297, 90–93; Rudolf Duala Manga Bell: Governor Puttkamer to Imperial Chancellor, Hohelohe-Schillingsfürst, 8 December 1896, BArch R1001 5574, 24.
47. See "Auswanderung Eingeborener aus Kamerun," *DKB* 5 (1894): 111–12. Two sons of the Baptist preacher Josua Dibundu were sent to be educated in Wales before the travel restrictions were put in place. The administration believed that ten more youngsters were preparing to leave for Wales and that Hughes was looking for fifty youngsters in all. For more on the Institute, see Ivor Wynne Jones, "Africans in Wales: The Story of the Congo Institute," in *A Tolerant Nation: Exploring Ethnic Diversity in Wales*, ed. Charlotte Williams, Neil Evans, and Paul O'Leary (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003), 77–92.
48. The travel restrictions were also introduced to prevent potential indigenous workers from leaving the colony. Adolf Rüger, "Die Entstehung und Lage der Arbeiterklasse unter dem deutschen Kolonialregime in Kamerun (1895–1905)," in *Kamerun unter deutscher Kolonialherrschaft*, vol. 1, ed. Helmuth Stoecker (Berlin: Rütten und Loening, 1960), 206.
49. Decree concerning the Emigration of Natives from the Imperial Protectorate, 11 December 1893, *DKB* 5 (1894): 105.
50. Travel restrictions were introduced in German East Africa in 1896, Togo in 1899, and, in 1899, the governor of German Southwest Africa argued that a previous law of 1891 could be used to prevent Africans from leaving the territory. Further legislation was introduced preventing colonial subjects from being brought to Germany for display purposes. The files BArch R1001 5575–77 contain several negative responses to requests for African apprentices or employees.
51. On mission education in Cameroon, see Kenneth Orosz, *Religious Conflict and the Evolution of Language Policy in German and French Cameroon, 1885–1939* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008).
52. Committee Protocol § 406, 8 April 1888, Mission 21. Also, Committee Protocol § 4, 3 January 1896, Mission 21.
53. Bohner to Zimmerer, May 1892 (exact date unknown), BArch R1001 5571, 141–48.

54. Zimmerer to Bohner, 18 May 1892, Mission 21, E-2, 5, 42.
55. Committee Protocol § 735, 5 July 1909, Mission 21.
56. Committee Protocol § 879, 1 September 1909, Mission 21.
57. Scheve names five Cameroonian children who, at various times, lived with him. Eduard Scheve, *Die Mission der deutschen Baptisten in Kamerun (West-Afrika) (von 1884 bis 1901)* (Cassel, Germany: Verlag der Missions-Gesellschaft der deutschen Baptisten, 1901). At least three others, Alexander Douala Manga Bell, Richard Manga Bell, and Otto Equalla, stayed with him later.
58. Jürgen Günther, "Mission im kolonialen Kontext. Beiträge zur Geschichte der Mission der deutschen Baptisten in Kamerun 1891 bis 1914" (unpublished master's thesis, University of Hamburg, 1985), 66.
59. Richard Edube Mbene served the Baptist mission until his death: Alfred Scheve, "Richard Edube Mbene," *Unsere Heidenmission* 1 (1907): 36–37; Joseph Ayisi, brought by the Pallottine Mission to Germany, played an important role in spreading Catholicism in Cameroon: Philippe Laburthe-Tolra, *Vers la Lumière? Ou le Désir d'Ariel. A propos des Beti du Cameroun Sociologie de la conversion* (Paris: Karthala, 1999), 251; Peter Munguli, trained by the Pallottine Mission in Limburg, left the religious life once back in Douala: Heinrich Vieter and Jean Criaud, *Les premiers pas de l'Eglise au Cameroun: Chronique de la mission catholique 1890–1912* (Yaoundé, Cameroon: Publications du Centenaire, 1989), 60.
60. Alfred Scheve, "Vier Generationen," *Unsere Heidenmission*, no. 2 (1902): 12–14; Notice, 23 July 1904, BArch R1001 5577, 35.
61. In the immediate postwar period, a handful of Cameroonians arrived in Germany, while several other youngsters left the newly French-controlled mandate territory of Cameroon to be educated in France.
62. Information from Peter Schick.
63. On Garber, "Where the Black Man is Brother," *New York Times*, 4 March 1892, 5. On Disom, *Fröhliche Weihnacht wünscht allen lieben deutschen Sonntagsschülern der Vorstand der Missionsgesellschaft der deutschen Baptisten Steglitz bei Berlin* (Cassel, 1908), in Onckenarchiv des Bundes Evang.-Freikirchlicher Gemeinden in Deutschland, Berlin.
64. Interview Mackay. My thanks to Ngando Mackay for showing me the church in Bonamadorou. It is unclear whether the two children depicted in the window were originally intended to represent Equalla and his sister. A report on the opening of the church mentions the window, but not any link to Equalla. S. Ebbing, "Kirchweih in Bonebela in Kamerun," *Evangelische Heidenbote*, no. 7 (1912): 52.