

# “JAUNDE” TO “YAOUNDE”, MEMORIAL ROAMING ON THE FOUNDATION OF A CITY: HISTORICAL ANALYSIS ESSAY

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**Abstract:** *The onomastic study of African cities shows with shadowless clarity that the choice of the name of a city is not always made to the taste of providence. Several African cities today have names steeped in history. Yaoundé is one of them. The spelling shift from “Jaunde” to Yaoundé is indicative of this phenomenon. The first moment of this work will consist in taking a retrospective glance at the beginnings of this city; The second, of a socio-political nature, will highlight the long and short stories of the appropriation of the Yaoundé site by the German occupier; the swan song of this work will certainly be the origin of the name of Yaoundé.*

**Key words:** *Memorial; Roaming; Foundation; City*

## 1. Introduction

In 1885, the Berlin conference was held. In the background, the beacons for the occupation of new lands in Africa. These meetings gave rise to missions of exploration and military expeditions multiplied by the Germans in the interior of the country. Indeed, thanks to the Germano-Douala treaty of July 12, 1884, the Germans settled as soon as they arrived on the Cameroon coast. Through this installation, a number of human settlements for commercial, military, or other forms of exploitation took shape (Ateba Noah, 2005: 56). Subsequently, the Germans decided quite simply to enter the hinterland, in order to have all the Cameroon territory under their yoke.

## 2. “Jaunde”, a German colonial creation

### 2.1. The reasons for the German expedition to Yaoundé

Financed by German commercial firms based on the coast (Jantzen and Thormählen for Zintgraff, Woerman for Kund and Tappenbeck), the first expeditions to the Cameroon hinterland left from Grand Batanga (Eloundou, 1994: 46), place considered as the central axis.

**Figure 1 : Adolph Woermann, founder of the first German counters in Cameroon**



Source: H. Dominik, Kamerun, Berlin, 1900: 8.

The choice of this starting point was not accidental. Indeed, they aimed in the foreground not to arouse the suspicions of the go between Douala and Bakoko., fiercely opposed to this attempt. These expeditions pursued among other objectives:

- connect the South to the North, the narrow coastal strip known to Europeans to the savannah regions already explored by Barth and Flegel was all the more necessary since it allowed the Germans to trust the very popular ivory trade which for the moment was the share of the French and their Hausa suppliers. ;
- reach the east of the territory to put a damper on the rampant French hegemony in this city;
- inventory the human resources of the interior with a view to a possible recruitment of workers and porters;
- liquidate the meteoric progress of Islam spread like wildfire in the forest regions by Hausa traders ;
- divert the trade flows that took place at Ibis on the Bénoué in the North, and the Congo south towards the coast of Kribi and Douala, because the “Royal Niger”, An English company had the wind in its sails in the northern part of the hinterland;
- sign new treaties with local chiefs, in order to take control of the entire country;
- linking the Atlantic Ocean to Lake Chad (Eloundou, 1994: 56).

On the benefit of these motives, there is every reason to think that the expeditions started by the Germans were motivated by political, economic and socio-cultural reasons. How did they proceed to reach Yaoundé ?

## **2.2. A military expedition with scientific overtones**

German army officers, Kund and Tappenbeck received a mission to explore the interior of Cameroonian territory from Kribi (National Archives of Yaoundé, 1888: 22). They were joined in early October 1887 by two scientists: the botanist Braun and zoologist Weissenbom.

**Figure 2 : Richard Kund, German army officer**



**Source:** Ateba Noah, “Land Problems ...”: 19.

Richard Kund was born on July 19, 1852 in Zielentia. In 1881, he was enlisted in the Deutsches Afrikanisches Gesellschaft. He cut his teeth in 1884 at the Pogge - Wesmann mission under the leadership of Eduard Schulze. After the latter's death, the post of expedition leader fell to Kund. It is significant to note that in his troop, Kund had in his ranks, his friend and comrade in arms Lieutenant Hans Tappenbeck (Temgoua, 2003: 76-77). The two men explored the southern Congo Basin. Wounded on December 20, 1885, he returned to Germany. On August 15, 1887, on behalf of the imperial government, he returned to Cameroon. Once there, expeditions to the hinterland were organized under his banner until 1889, when he contracted dysentery. With declining health, crippled, he became almost voiceless. After several years marked on the corner of suffering, he enters into rest in Sellin Auf Rugen July 31, 1904.

**Figure 3 : Hans Tappenbeck, founder of the Yaoundé military post**



**Source:** Medou, "Yaoundé to...": 13.

Regarding Tappenbeck, native of Wolsier im Rathenow in Germany January 14, 1861, He studied in Berlin. In 1880, he obtained his officer's license. Appointed to the 4th Westphalian Infantry Regiment, he befriends Kund. The latter will also hire him as a companion for his first mission in Africa (Temgoua, 2003: 76-77). Less old, he climbed the ranks in particular by becoming Kund's second. By Kund's admission, Tappenbeck was the linchpin of the success of his expeditions. The creation of the Yaoundé substation is to be credited. He was an early resident. In 1889, he left the Yaoundé post for Banyo in search of Zintgraff. On May 26, he reached the kingdom of Ngila who welcomed him.

Against all odds, his desire to continue the expedition to the interior failed on Ngila's categorical no.. He turned back on June 3, 1884 in Yaoundé from where it shakes for Kribi. After twelve days of fatigue, he was severely undermined by a fever: a hematuric bilious disease which ended his life on July 26, 1889 in Douala (Temgoua, 2003: 82).

Born September 30, 1858 in Mülhausen in Thuringia, Bernhard Weissenbom, after his secondary studies, returned to the University of Jena where he oriented

himself in zoology, in this case, he became an entomologist. In 1887, having heard of the scientific expedition organized by the Germans to Cameroon, he is running for a place as a geologist and zoologist. Ultimately, on September 1, 1887, he joined the strength of the Kund expedition and takes an active part in its organization. During the attack of February 2, 1888, he was the only white man to emerge unscathed (Morgen, 1893: 245). He decides to bring the expedition back to the coast where he is the victim of a pernicious fever. Making good heart against bad luck, he tried in vain to set out again in January 1889 flanked by a second expedition. But his illness after five days was due to his determination (Morgen, 1893: 246). Brought back to Kribi, he is embarked in a German government boat so that he can get back on his feet thanks to the sea air. Unsuccessful approach, since after two serious bouts of fever, he died on February 21, 1889 at the age of 31. He is buried in a cemetery in Douala (Temgoua, 2003: 75).

Regarding Braun, the information able to draw up his biography was sorely lacking. History retains that he was a botanist, and that he spent five days with the expedition (Morgen, 1893: 247). Obviously, there is not much to eat. Kund was at the head of a small garrison commanded by a black "Ghanaian" by the name of Cornelius and a certain German legionary called Herphold (Edzogo, 2007: 13). Along the way, they undertook two voyages towards Ewondo country.

The first expedition dates from October 1887. Indeed, on November 15, 1887, backstage negotiations were initiated by Kund with the Batanga chiefs to obtain guides in order to create a village in the hinterland. On the morning of November 16 the long column buried itself in the forest. It is made up of Kund, Tappenbeck, Weissenbom and Braun accompanied by 120 African carriers and a guide named Toko (Edzogo, 2007: 15). Very quickly, they realized that the journey was arduous (Morgen, 1893: 247). It was the banner and the cross. The showers make the paths impassable, blocked as they are by roots, lianas and tree trunks. Under maximum speed, the caravan travels two kilometers per hour. In addition to these difficulties, there is the indiscipline which is rampant in the column, the problems linked to supplies, the hostility displayed by the populations of the furrowed regions (Temgoua, 2003: 76). Suffice to say that this campaign was badly geared. A good section of the local populations, with a touch of xenophobia, hardly appreciated this expedition.

From time to time, the expedition, taken to task by a warmongering bronca orchestrated by the natives, must do battle to clear a passage. It turns out that various strategies were developed by the local populations to stop the German advance. In the radius of these, misinformation and ambushes figure prominently. All over the South, insurrectionary rhetoric was catching on. The populations intended to thwart the objectives pursued by the Germans by using disinformation.

On various occasions, the erroneous information on the routes for the sole purpose of disorienting the Germans was transmitted to them. For example, the makeshift guides protested with many pantalonnades to trample the countryside. They never took the shortest route leading to Yaoundé. In short, they were on the spot. This is the place to point out that they were paid ruby on nail and in proportion to the villages visited. For them, there was no danger there. The Germans were not caught in want of lucidity. If the glove was of velvet, the hand remained of iron. Aware of attending these many waltz tours orchestrated by these occasional guides, Kund decided to take Ngumba nationals hostage (Essomba, 2005: 61), connoisseurs of the region as commercial intermediaries. The prisoners thus constituted were only

released on the condition of taking the route leading to Zonu's in Yaoundé. With regard to ambushes, we can cite the one set by the Etenga in the vicinity of Yaoundé between 1888-1889 (Obama, 1981: 11). In their expedition to Yaoundé, the Germans had to turn back to look for reinforcements. Also in this line, in 1888, the expedition had to return to the coast twice to renew its numbers (guides, porters) and to refuel with food and ammunition. In January 1889, in addition to the diseases which decimated the carriers, Weissenbom, suffering from acute dysentery while Tappenbeck, was the victim of a malaria attack. The latter, due to rheumatic pains, becomes almost crippled, so much so that he has to be carried. In view of all these upheavals, it was necessary to take a break and found a post in this region, namely: Metomba, the village in which they gained a foothold.

The blaze of the insurrection was not only riveted in the South. This exploration mission also alienated the village chiefs located near this small village. They were offended that the Germans set their sights on the chief of a small village. They consequently organized a real blockade, opposing an end of inadmissibility to all inclinations of supplies intended for the expedition. At the end of four days of marches bristling with difficulties, the expedition arrived in "a marvelous site in the midst of a hospitable people, the Ewondo, whose notables spontaneously offered them the land (Medou, 1973: 2), between the Mingoa streams and Ekozoa. It is here that Kund and his companions established the Yaoundé post.

In short, given to be a canvas of penelope, this first expedition led by Kund, Tappenbeck, Weissenbom (Franqueville, 1989: 16) and Braun, provided with 1420 men (each carrying a load of 60 pounds) reached "Jaunde" In 1888. She found that this region was a huge forest that was difficult to penetrate, located more than 250 km from the Kribian coast. The occupation of Yaoundé was bristling with difficulties. How did the Germans go about making this territorial entity fall into their own hands?

### **2.3. Appropriation of the Yaounde site**

Esono Ela, son of Fouda Ada of the Ewondo clan had settled in the village of Nkol Atom. Affable and renowned for having a broad gesture, the latter welcomed the German troop led by Kund and Tappenbeck. This explains why the Germans took him in high esteem. Despite the hostility displayed by the other notables Ewondo, who made a makeover in xenophobia, Esono Ela remained upright in his boots. Better, he granted them a large portion of land (Franqueville, 1989: 16). Riding on the friendly attentions they established with Esono Ela, the Germans decided to build a military post in this locality. Putting their money where their mouth is, they built at Nkol Atom. Initially, this station was called "Sono station", an alteration of the name Esono, the provider of the land. It must be said in full that the Germans heard behind the scenes, make this post an operational base for the occupation of the hinterland and in particular for the conquest of the North where the military campaign promised to be tough. Moreover, through this post, the Germans intended to clean all the pockets of resistance maintained by the indigenous populations in order to establish their hegemony. The Germans did not yet have complete control over this region.

The creation of the Yaoundé substation was strategic, with stakes of undeniable economic and political significance: indicating to contemporaries the new places of German domination and for the very first time weaving multifaceted relations with the interior without having to go through intermediaries. It makes sense that this

German installation was caught in a colonizing matrix. Certain clans very early perceived this mischief sewn with white thread. Witnesses, the Mvog Atemengue Essomba Ngonti (Heepe Jaunde, 1919: 30) (uncle of Charles Atangana) who would have sworn never to swear allegiance to the settlers. They only breathed aversion towards them. This acrimony for the whites also found fertile ground among the Baaba.

Several conjectures have been put forward to account for the warm welcome offered to the Germans by Esono Ela. One of them suggests that Esono Ela had simply followed in the footsteps of chief Zambo Nsa of Mvog. Amougou (family ties united them), who was the first to welcome the Germans (Eloundou, 1994: 50). Kund's column would have even been held for a long time by the latter. At that time, a fratricidal war was smoldering under ashes, against the backdrop of the clearly displayed desire for hegemony of some clans over others. These internal quarrels could quickly turn into quarrels of Atrides. This is how the Mvog Bétsi and the Emombo were on difficult terms with the Mvog Atemengue supported by students, the Emvengand the Baaba. The points of friction between these two groups were legion.

From the outset, the Mvog Ada had suffered considerable losses in slaves and in good of all kinds during the games of chance (Abbia) for which the Baaba seemed expert.

Another bone of contention, each clan spared no effort to establish its political ascendancy on its peers, in order to monopolize all economic transactions with the Ngoumba of the Kribian coast. This is why Esono Ela looked good on the Germans. It was a grave mistake to believe that his attitude was disinterested. He heard them enter their little papers. In this rat race, they used to pull the chestnuts out of the fire. This friendship therefore arose like a tide, given that in the event of war with his family, by means of their military arsenal, the Germans certainly had to lend him their assistance to neutralize the other groups. As a result, Esono hastened to warmly welcome the Germans because he feared that the others might pull the rug out from under him.

On examination, it is sewn with white thread that Esono Ela just as much as his German hosts had entered a fool's bargain. In reality, everyone had drawn the curtain on their real motives.

The plot of land offered by Esono Ela to his hosts served them to build a military post<sup>1</sup>. However, this version is not unanimous. Different opinions indicate that it was out of compassion that Esono Ela granted this plot of land to the Germans who had just lost a soldier in a battle against the Bulu (Eloundou, 1994: 51).

**Figure 3 : Esono Ela, seated, surrounded by members of his family.**



**Source:** JMNdi, "Yaoundé de Zenker ..." : 19.

<sup>1</sup> This military post was located on the site where Factual CENADI is located on the current administrative platform where the former presidency of the republic is located.

The land would have been offered for burial purposes. For many, this gift had the resonance of collusion. It gave grain to grind to the polemicists of the German installation at Nkol Atom because it seems, Esono Ela would have received presents from the Germans. In any case, this post was the bridgehead to lay the foundations for the future city by the Germans. On November 30, 1889, Georg Zenkertakes the direction of the station. It focuses its action on agricultural and commercial questions to the detriment of military questions (Laburthe Tolra, 1970: 1-18).

In 1892, Zenker is replaced by Major Hans Dominik. However, because of the almost endemic unrest in the region, the station immediately fell to a soldier: Von Stetten. He was then recalled to Douala on June 4, 1895 and replaced by Lieutenant Dominik. Hans Dominik arrives in Cameroon in 1894 the day after the mutiny of the Dahomean soldiers. Companion of Corporal Martin Paul Samba in the delegation led by Curt Von Morgen, he becomes the new district chief of Yaoundé and remained in office until 1907 when the station became a civilian district.

By an administrative reform in 1907-1909, military districts like Yaoundé were transformed into civilian districts. To this end, Hans Dominik, a man in fatigues, will give way to Kirchoff, a civilian (Essomba, 2005: 89). Dominik left his mark on the political scene in Yaoundé until 1910, when he died from a heart attack.

In 1895, the region was still bathed in a noxious atmosphere. It was not a cloudless sky between the occupier and the natives. Indeed, the raids carried out in the Ewondo villages by the Dahomean soldiers in the pay of the Germans outraged the Ewondo. The reactions were not long in coming. Omgba Bissogo argued this resentment to foment a revolt against the occupier. It takes him badly, because the revolt was drowned in blood by Barth's troops and Zimmerman (Ateba Noah, 2005: 50). The revolt ended in 1896, after Omgba Bissogo was taken prisoner. As a result, he was ordered to deliver 100 workers for six months to the station and 100 sheep (Essomba, 2005: 89).

Still on the subject of revolts, there is that of the Bene. Here, the Germans had to deal with a large part in the person of Amougou Baana. The military expedition against the Bene follows an ambush against the Germans in 1897. Determined to definitively defeat the adversary, the Germans made use of "88 rifles", a large-scale measure intended to make the Bene bend. *Vae victis*, because the justice of the victors will be applied to them. Thus in 1898, Amougou Baana was forced to pay 100 elephant tusks, 400 rubber bills and 40 sheep. According to one of the reports dated June 4, 1895, the station had twenty one huts in *poto-poto* and one in planks.

Among these huts, there are among others two stores, a kitchen, a laboratory, a stable for the horses, a barn, a henhouse, a shed for drying tiles, a bathroom and a large wooden house which served as a residence for settlers (Eloundou, 1994: 53). Besides these boxes, Zenker had started, without being able to complete, a first stone house. In 1909, under the leadership of Major Hans Dominik, "Jaunde station" became a fortress of about 100 meters on a side, limited to the North-West by the European hospital inaugurated in 1913", to the North by the district of foreigners, to the East by the village Mvog Ada, in the south by the village Mvolyé. The exergue of the future capital of Kamerun, under its Germanic connotation "Jaunde" took root in the local language: ewondo.

### 3. The origin of the name Yaoundé

On the first German maps of the Yaoundé region, we note that the Yaoundé site appears under the name "Zonu" (Dikoumé, 2005: 40) in deformation of the name of *Esono*, leader of one of the Ewondo clans of the area. It was later that she took the name of "Jaunde". In the opinion of Georg Zenker (Laburthe Tolra, 1970: 16) German botanist among the first occupants of the military post *Jaunde Station*<sup>2</sup>, and Nekes German linguist; the word Jaunde comes from the term "Ewondo" or "Yewondo" which means "peanut". In the opinion of Njike (Njike, 2000: 13) this word designates both the site and the inhabitants who lived in this region. According to Njike, "Ewondo" would be a nickname (Dugast, 1949: 70) by what he said: "they are numerous like the peanuts. The inhabitants in question all belong to an ethnic group: the Ewondo, a Beti people who lived on the site before the arrival of Europeans.

This posture is shared by Laburthe Tolra (Laburthe Tolra, 1970: 34) with a few nuances. Indeed for the latter, the term Yaoundé derived from the word Ewondo. For our information, it reveals that the word Yaoundé would only be a corruption or translation in the Batanga language. of term Ewondo. The Batanga in question here are the porters enlisted by Kund and Tappenbeck. In reality, for the French anthropologist, the term "Yaoundé" or *Jaunde* to render the German transcription of the time, designated any Beti, "Sometimes an Ewondo", sometimes the neighboring inhabitants of the "Yaoundé station". The first missionaries wanted to designate the region by the tribe that lived there. Ewondo was transcribed "Yewondo". The Germans adopted "Jaunde" and the French "Yaoundé".

Jean Baptiste Obama (Obama, 1981: 11) eats from the same bowl. He bluntly states that the name "Yewondo" in its current form of "Ewondo" is easily traceable to the Ewondo "peanut seed. This meant in 1887, when Kund arrived and Tappenbeck "Peanut sowers". It is a contraction of the double genealogical name "Evuna- Ondzoa", sometimes transformed into "Awondo", "Owonde" or even "Ewonde" then "Jaunde" in German. Jean Marie Essono is in the same direction because, to believe him, the onomastic analysis of the item "Ewondo" refers to several connotations. However, this term is subject to various etymological and morphological interpretations:

Ewondo > Jewondo > Jawonde > Jaunde > Yaoundé (Obama, 1981: 13) .

The transvestite form "Jaunde" Then "Yaoundé" Which has prevailed to this day, was transcribed by German explorers Kund and Tappenbeck, with the help of the Batanga by Kribi that they had hired.

In addition to phonetic and morphological fluctuations, the term Yaoundé gave many semantic interpretations. Indeed, it is on the one hand a toponym which designates the region which shelters the Ewondo. On the other hand, he is an ethnonym to the exact extent that he comes from the Ewondo ethnic group. More than a toponym and an ethnonym, Ewondo is also a glossonym, in this case, the name of a dialect of the *bəti-faŋ* group. Indeed, like other Beti languages, Ewondo proceeds (Essono, 2000: 11) from Ati or [tùki], a language spoken on the entire right bank of the Sanaga, in the Mbam department (Guthrie, 1971: 25).

<sup>2</sup>First military post built by the Germans when they reached Yaoundé. It is from this military post that they drew the first outlines of the city from Yaoundé.



Besides, "Yaoundé" is a barbarism of the word "Ewondo", first distorted by Batanga carriers, pursued by the Germans "Jaunde" and completed by the French "Yaoundé". Without a doubt, the use of the local language (ewondo) sheds new light on the origin of the name of this city. Why the umpteenth modification of the item "Jaunde" in Yaoundé from the French?

#### 4. "Yaoundé", stamp of the French occupation

The German rout of February 20, 1916, symbolized by the deposit of arms by Von Rabben and his men led to the loss of Cameroon by the Germans for the benefit of France and Great Britain. As a result, recipients of eastern Cameroon, the French take the management of Yaoundé under their cap. A reform keyboard were immediately engaged. The change of the name of the city is the prelude. Indeed, the French were impatient to strip the name of the city of its Germanic connotation. Thus, the "Jaunde" German was changed to "Yaoundé". In the same perspective, the French chose to transfer to Yaoundé the capital of Cameroon Oriental in 1921. This measure is in line with German desires. It turns out that the Germans had decided in 1901 to set the capital of their colony on the site of Buea, at the foot of Mount Cameroon. But the eruption of this volcano in 1909, led them to prefer the site of Douala. It is probable that the French High Commission and the Cameroonian Institutions would have been installed on the same places, if it had not been for the frequency, in the years which followed the end of hostilities in Cameroon, a noise from the city of a possible return of the Germans. The rumor not always having the gift of caricature, the French put themselves on the reserve. Judging the port of Douala difficult to defend in the event of a German landing, they preferred to establish the capital, temporarily further inland in Yaoundé, then definitively in 1922. The choice of Yaoundé, in addition to strategic considerations, had enticing physical and social benefits.

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