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## ***Reges Gotorum defecerunt: The Visigoths in the Asturian Chronicles***

*Oto Mestek*<sup>1</sup>

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The Asturian chronicles were written at the turn of the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries. Although they are primarily concerned with contemporary history of their kingdom, they also mention older events related to the Visigothic kingdom. However, the information recorded here is questionable and unreliable. It can be considered even more tendentious contemporary creation than other Early Medieval texts. Thus, we can trace the Asturian discourse concerning Visigothic history from the contradictions between the various chronicles. The study focuses on how the Asturians worked with their Visigothic heritage and how the Visigoths themselves were perceived in the later chronicles. One of the emerging questions is whether Asturias was considered the Visigothic successor state or a completely new political entity.

[Hispania; Asturias; Visigoths; Alfonso III; Chronicles; Witiza; Roderic]

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### **Introduction**

In 711 the Arabs crossed Gibraltar and occupied all of Visigothic Hispania. Afterward, in the remote northern part of the peninsula, a new Christian kingdom was established, which we call the Kingdom of Asturias.<sup>2</sup> Local rulers created a new state and incorporated some of the Visigothic traditions into their political system. As time went on, their kingdom grew

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<sup>2</sup> The history of the Kingdom of Asturias in the early medieval period is discussed in A. BARBERO – M. VIGIL PASCUAL, *Sobre los orígenes sociales de la Reconquista*, Barcelona 1974; R. COLLINS, *The Arab Conquest of Spain: 710–797*, Oxford, Malden 1994; R. COLLINS, *Early Medieval Spain: Unity in Diversity, 400–1000*, London, Basingstoke 1995; A. COTERLO VALLEDOR, *Alfonso III el Magno: Último rey de Oviedo y primero de Galicia*, Madrid 1992; K. HEBERS, *Geschichte Spaniens im Mittelalter*, Stuttgart 2006; J. MONSALVO ANTÓN (ed.), *Historia de la España medieval*, Salamanca 2016; J. RODRÍGUEZ MUÑOZ (ed.), *Nuevas visiones del Reino de Asturias: Actas del congreso internacional*, Oviedo 2020, and L. VONES, *Geschichte der Iberischen Halbinsel im Mittelalter: 711–1480*, Sigmaringen 1993.

and the Asturian kings occupied more territory. The kingdom reached its peak during the reign of King Alfonso III (866–910). During his reign the Asturian chronicles were written.

The most comprehensive of these chronicles is called the Chronicle of Alfonso III, which has survived in two distinctly identifiable and different recensions, referred to as the *Rotensis* version and the version *ad Sebastianum*. The chronicle is quoted according to its versions, so we can count it as two separate works. The other two chronicles, the Chronicle of Albelda (*Albeldense*) and the Prophetic Chronicle (*Chronica prophetica*), are much shorter and more concise than the Chronicle of Alfonso III. Recent research on the Asturian texts, however, does not consider the Prophetic Chronicle as a separate literary work, but as a part of the *Albeldense*. The quoted edition containing all the Asturian chronicles was produced by Juan Gil Fernandez.<sup>3</sup>

Historians consider the Asturian chronicles to be extremely tendentious and unreliable, even by early medieval standards. The *Albeldense* was written in 881 and was subsequently expanded in 883. It is composed of several completely unrelated texts. The text of the *Chronica prophetica* is even shorter, containing a short text explaining the origins of the Arabs, a list of Arab governors and emirs, and a prophecy that Muslims will be expelled from the peninsula one day.<sup>4</sup> The Chronicle of Alfonso III covers the period between the accession of the Visigothic king Wamba to the death of Alfonso's father, King Ordoño I, or from 672 to 866. The *Rotensis* version is named after parchment manuscript from the 10<sup>th</sup> century, known as the Codex of Roda, in which it is preserved. The version *ad Sebastianum* is named for its introduction, which is addressed to a certain Sebastianus. According to older theories, the *Rotensis* represented the original version of the chronicle, with which King Alfonso III was not satisfied and therefore requested a redaction of the text, thus creating the *ad Sebastianum* version. Recent research, however, suggests that both versions are independent redactions of the original text.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> J. GIL FERNANDÉZ (ed.), *Cronicas asturianas*, Oviedo 1985. There is also a German edition J. PRELOG (ed.), *Die Chronik Alfons' III. Untersuchung und kritische Edition der vier Redaktionen*, Frankfurt am Main, Cirencester 1980 and the French edition Y. BONNAZ (ed.), *Chroniques asturiennes (Fin IX<sup>e</sup> siècle)*, Paris 1987.

<sup>4</sup> For analysis of this text see R. FURTADO, The *Chronica Prophetica* in MS. Madrid, RAH Aem. 78, L. CRISTANTE – V. VERONESI (eds.), *Forma di accesso al sapere in in età tardoantica e altomeidvale: raccolta delle relazioni discusse nell'incontro internazionale di Trieste*, Trieste 2016, pp. 75–100.

As can be understood from this brief introduction, the Asturian source material is chaotic and represents a conundrum for historians. It is not surprising, therefore, that the examination of these chronicles themselves represents a significant part of contemporary historiographical research on medieval Asturias. The legitimizing mechanism of the Asturian kings or how the Visigothic heritage was viewed in the new kingdom has often been examined in recent studies.<sup>6</sup>

The purpose of this paper is to look at how the Asturian authors worked with the Visigothic theme. In particular, the Chronicle of Alfonso III constructs a specific narrative, probably fictional, describing the sins of the family of King Witiza, the death of the “last” Visigothic king Roderic and the fall of his kingdom. A discursive analysis of the Asturian chronicles should be performed to describe these literary motives. We can also compare these chronicles with late Visigothic texts and the earlier Mozarabic Chronicle to see how the perception of the Visigothic kings changed in Hispanic society.<sup>7</sup> The information in the Asturian chronicles does not even have to be true, because it is meant to highlight a message to contemporary society and thus create “Asturian myths”. The method of discursive analysis is appropriate here because chroniclers’ moral judgments of monarchs are not objective historical statements, but rather expressions of contemporary discourse or personal opinion. In any case, we are looking for a specific later Asturian view of earlier events.

<sup>5</sup> R. COLLINS, *Caliphs and Kings: Spain, 796–1031*, Oxford, Malden 2012, pp. 55–58. The Asturian chronicles were recently discussed in A. ISLA FREZ, *La Crónica de Alfonso III y el reino astur*, Somonte, Centro 2019. For the different positions and theories about the origins of texts including stemmatology, see PRELOG, pp. III–CXC VII, and GIL FERNANDÉZ, pp. 11–105.

<sup>6</sup> These topics were discussed for example in A. ISLA FREZ, *Identidades y goticismo en época de Alfonso III: Las propuestas de la Albeldense*, in: *Territorio, Sociedad y Poder*, 6, 2011, pp. 11–21; J. ESCALONA MONGE, *Family Memories: Inventing Alfonso I of Asturias*, in: I. ALFONSO ANTÓN – I. KENNEDY – J. ESCALONA MONGE, *Building Legitimacy: Political Discourses and Forms of Legitimation in Medieval Societies*, Leiden, Boston 2004, pp. 223–262, or A. ORDÓÑEZ CUEVAS, *La legitimidad de los reyes asturianos en las crónicas de Alfonso III*, in: *Estudio Medievales Hispánicos*, 5, 2016, pp. 7–43.

<sup>7</sup> The Mozarabic Chronicle (*Continuatio Hispana* or *Chronica ad 754*) is a narrative source originating in 8<sup>th</sup>-century Hispania and, compared to the later Asturian and Arabic texts, is considered the most reliable source for late 7<sup>th</sup>- and early 8<sup>th</sup>-century Hispania. It is a Latin text written in the Muslim part of the peninsula. The edition used is *Addimenta IV. V. (Chronica minora (II))*, MGH, AA, XI, T. MOMMSEN (ed.), Berlin 1894. The most recent edition of the chronicle is J. LOPEZ PEREIRA (ed.), *Continuatio Isidoriana Hispana: Crónica mozárabe de 754 (Fuentes y Estudios de Historia Leonesa 127)*, León 2009.

## The Asturian Interpretation of Visigothic History

The entire history of the Goths from King Athanaric, who lived at the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, to King Roderic is described in the *Albeldense*. This text copied the older work of Bishop Isidore of Seville. His chronicle *Historia Gothorum* ended in the year 624/625, when King Swinthila conquered the last Byzantine outpost in Spain.<sup>8</sup> Isidore's other work, *Chronica maiora*, which is much briefer, ends its entries as early as 615.<sup>9</sup> The *Albeldense* also contains a list of Biblical forefathers and a list of Roman kings and emperors beginning with Romulus. These royal lists were borrowed by the author from Isidore's *Chronica maiora* and are part of the great family of early Latin chronicles, the eldest of them being Jerome's translation of Eusebius' Chronicle.

The *Albeldense* is thus logically our main source for the Asturian perception of Gothic history. In the account of the earliest Gothic kings, it only lists their military successes and occasionally mentions their religious achievements. An exception to this scheme occurs when the author mentions that King Euric (466–484) was the first to give laws to the Goths. However, this reference is also borrowed from Isidore.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, it is an interesting element of Gothic-Hispanic historiography. In the chronicles, the ruler needs to be part of the legislative process. The king as lawmaker is not a common theme in the Early Middle Ages. Gregory of Tours and the author of Fredegar's chronicle do not even mention the Frankish law code *Pactus legis Salicae* in their works. In contrast, this motive appears in the Asturian texts. In his *Historia*, Isidore wrote that King Leovigild (571–584) ordered the drafting of a new code of law called the *Codex Revisus*, which has not survived. The author of *Albeldense* decided to transcribe this information too.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> ISIDORUS HISPALENSIS, *Historia Gothorum* (*Chronica minora* (II), MGH, AA, XI), T. MOMMSEN (ed.), Berlin 1894.

<sup>9</sup> ISIDORUS HISPALENSIS, *Chronica maiora* (*Chronica minora* (II), MGH, AA, XI), T. MOMMSEN (ed.), Berlin 1894.

<sup>10</sup> *Albeldense*, XIV, *Item ordo gentis Gotorum*, 9.

"Iste [Euricus] primum Gotis leges dedit."

*Historia Gothorum*, 35.

"Sub hoc [Euricum] rege Gothi legum instituta scriptis habere coeperunt."

<sup>11</sup> *Historia Gothorum*, 51.

"In legibus quoque ea quae ab Eurico incondite constituta videbantur correxit, plurimas leges praetermissas adiciens, plerasque superfluas auferens."

*Albeldense*, XIV, *Item ordo gentis Gotorum*, 19.

"[Leuuigildus] Gotorum leges ante \*\*\* correxit."



In addition to military achievements, the *Albeldense* also records the manner of death of the Visigothic kings. The chronicler distinguished between natural/non-violent death (*vitam finibit/obiit/propria morte decessit*) and murder (*interfectus est*). Here, the *Albeldense* is also based on Isidore's *Historia Gothorum*. In the case of the kings Athaulf (411–415) and Sigeric (415), Isidore states that they were murdered by their own men (*a suis*),<sup>12</sup> and the kings Thorismund (451–453) and Theoderic II (453–466) were killed by their brothers, who subsequently took over the kingdom. In this case, the *Albeldense* is faithful to its source and mentions the fratricidal struggles of the mid- 5<sup>th</sup> century.

We can move on to the Gothic kings of the 6<sup>th</sup> century. When King Alaric II fell in the Battle of Vouillé in 507, he was succeeded by his illegitimate son Gesalic, but after a few years he was defeated, deposed, and killed. In Isidore's *Historia Gothorum*, Gesalic is probably the most criticized Gothic monarch.<sup>13</sup> The Bishop of Seville calls him cowardly, unsuccessful, and worthless. However, none of these criticisms are mentioned in the *Albeldense*, where we could find only the record of his defeat and death.<sup>14</sup> Subsequently, the *Albeldense* reduces Isidore's original text. For example, in the case of King Theudis (531–548), Isidore recorded his victory over the Franks in the Pyrenees and his defeat at the hands of the Byzantines at the African Ceuta. Theudis' defeat is omitted in the 9<sup>th</sup>-century chronicle.<sup>15</sup> The first half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century was a period of Visigothic political instability. Several kings were murdered. Among the Franks, there was even a bon mot that regicide was a disease of the Goths.<sup>16</sup> The

<sup>12</sup> *Historia Gothorum*, 19; 20; 30, and 33.

<sup>13</sup> For Isidore's criticism of King Gesalic see R. KASPERSKI, The Visigothic King Gesalic, Isidore's *Historia Gothorum* and the Goths' Wars against the Franks and the Burgundians in the Years 507–514, in: *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, CXXIV, 2017, pp. 7–37.

<sup>14</sup> *Albeldense*, XIV, *Item orgo gentis Gotorum*, 12.

<sup>15</sup> *Historia Gothorum*, 41–42 and *Albeldense*, XIV, *Item ordo gentis Gotorum*, 14.

<sup>16</sup> GREGORIUS TURONENSIS, *Libri historiarum X (Gregorii Turonensis Opera*, MGH, SS rer. Mer. I/1), B. KRUSCH (ed.), Hannover 1951, III, 30 and FREDEGARIUS SCHOLASTICUS, *Fredегarii Chronica* (MGH, SS rer. Mer. II), B. KRUSCH (ed.), Hannover 1888, IV, 82. For the Frankish perception of Gothic Hispania, see V. DRŠKA, Hispania Motives and their Function in the Chronicle of Gregory of Tours, in: *Littera Scripta*, 10/2, 2017, pp. 9–22; E. JAMES, Gregory of Tours, the Visigoths and Spain, in: S. BARTON – P. LINEHAN (eds.), *Cross, Crescent, and Conversion: Studies on Medieval Spain and Christendom in Memory of Richard Fletcher*, Leiden, 2008, pp. 43–64 and A. KEELY, Arians and Jews in the Histories of Gregory of Tours, in: *Journal of Medieval History*, 23/2, 1997, pp. 103–115.

author of the *Albeldense* only transcribed the reasons for royal assassinations, if they were justifiable based on the king committing sins. King Theudigisel (548–549) molested the wives of his noblemen, and King Agila (549–554) desecrated the tomb of St. Acisclus.<sup>17</sup> In the case of King Theudis, Isidore states that he deserved his death but does not explicate this idea, so it is omitted from the *Albeldense*.<sup>18</sup>

Similarly, the concept of *tyrannis* has changed. In Visigothic society, a *tyrannus* was considered to be a usurper, rebel, and enemy of the legitimate ruler, of whom he was the complete opposite.<sup>19</sup> In his writing, Isidore named the following as *tyranni*: King Athanagild (551–568), who defeated King Agila in civil war, Hermenegild, who in 579 unsuccessfully rebelled against his father King Leovigild (569–584); and King Witteric (602–610), who staged a coup against Leovigild's grandson Liuva II and had him murdered.<sup>20</sup> In the *Albeldense*, only Athanagild is marked as a tyrant, as the death of his predecessor in a civil war was a crucial moment in Visigothic history. Leovigild's son Hermenegild, who was even considered a martyr by Pope Gregory the Great,<sup>21</sup> was completely omitted by the author of the *Albeldense*, and Witteric is not described as a usurper/*tyrannus*, even though the Asturian author did acknowledge his role in the murder of King Liuva II.<sup>22</sup>

The passage dedicated to King Leovigild is the second longest in the *Albeldense*, surpassed only by the controversial text about King Witiza. Leovigild's person presented considerable problems for the Asturians. Probably the most important of the Visigothic kings was considered the saviour and restorer of the kingdom shortly after his death by his contemporary John of Biclaro.<sup>23</sup> A few years later, Isidore recognized the victories of this king, who regained control of the rebellious regions and conquered the kingdom of the Suebi, even praising him as a lawgiver and builder. The stain on the king's reputation, however, was his Arian

<sup>17</sup> *Historia Gothorum*, 44–45 and *Albeldense*, XIV, *Item ordo gentis Gotorum*, 15–16.

<sup>18</sup> *Historia Gothorum*, 43.

“Nec mora praevenit mors debita principem [Theudem].”

<sup>19</sup> For the Visigothic concept of *tyrannis*, see J. CASTILLO LOZANO, *Categorías de poder en el reino visigodo de Toledo: los tiranos en las obras de Juan de Biclaro, Isidoro de Sevilla y Julián de Toledo*, Murcia 2019.

<sup>20</sup> *Historia Gothorum*, 49–51 and *Albeldense*, XIV, *Item ordo gentis Gotorum*, 19.

<sup>21</sup> GREGORIUS MAGNUS, *Dialogi* (FSI 57), U. MORRICA (ed.), Roma 1924, III, 31.

<sup>22</sup> *Albeldense*, XIV, *Item ordo gentis Gotorum*, 16 and 21–22.

<sup>23</sup> IOANNES BICLARENSIS, *Chronica* (*Chronica minora* (II), MGH, AA, XI), T. MOMMSEN (ed.), Berlin 1894, s.a. 578, 4.

faith. He was the last heretical Visigothic king. This is how Leovigild was seen by both Isidore and the author of the *Albeldense*: as a powerful king, victor, and enemy of the Catholic Church.<sup>24</sup> The difference between the two texts is that in Isidore's story, the king's opponent and champion of the Catholics was his rebellious son Hermenegild. And in the *Albeldense* his role is replaced by the Gothic Catholic, Bishop Mazona of Mérida. He is absent from the *Historia Gothorum*, but this mention proves that the author of the *Albeldense* also drew on the hagiographical work *Vitas sanctorum patrum Emeretensium*.<sup>25</sup>

Another interesting part of the text concerns King Sisebut (612–621). The author of the *Albeldense* makes Isidore's description of the king's rule much shorter. It is mentioned that Sisebut brought many Jews to the Christian faith, but Isidore's criticism that these were forced conversions is missing. On the other hand, it is mentioned that King Sisebut commissioned the construction of the Basilica of St. Leocadia in Toledo. This text of the *Albeldense* borrowed from Isidore's second historical writing, *Chronica maiora*.<sup>26</sup> Isidore's vague assertion that Sisebut could have died of natural causes, overdosed on drugs, or been poisoned is copied by the author of the *Albeldense*. He added, however, that Mohammed was preaching at that time.<sup>27</sup> Although Muhammed's activity is erroneously dislocated to Africa, this mention shows that the Asturian scholars were able to seek parallels with Arab history and recognize them worthy of recording.

Probably the most curious error was made by the Asturian scribe in his description of the reign of King Swinthila (621–631). Isidore's *Historia Gothorum* ended in 624/625 and did not record the end of his reign.<sup>28</sup> Thus, the author of the *Albeldense* had to rely on other sources, unknown to us. In 631 Swinthila faced an insurrection in *Gallia Narbonensis*, which was supported by the Frankish king, Dagobert I. To avoid civil war, the Visigoths forced the king to abdicate, and Sisenand, the rebel leader,

<sup>24</sup> *Historia Gothorum*, 46.

<sup>25</sup> *Vitas sanctorum patrum Emeretensium* (CCSL 116), A. MAYA SÁNCHEZ (ed.), Turnhold 1992, V, 1–15. Discussed also in BONNAZ, pp. 74–75.

<sup>26</sup> *Chronica maiora*, 416.

<sup>27</sup> *Albeldense*, IXV, *Item ordo gentis Gotorum*, 24.

<sup>28</sup> For more about King Swinthila and his strange epithet *pater pauperum*, which was also copied into the *Chronica Albeldense*, see L. GARCÍA MORENO, La oposición a Suintila: Iglesia, Monarquía y Nobleza en el Reino Visigodo, in: *Polis, Revista de ideas y forma políticas de la Antigüedad Clásica*, 3, 1991, pp. 13–24.

became their new ruler.<sup>29</sup> However, we read nothing about these events in the *Albeldense*. The chronicle merely states that King Swinthila reigned for 10 years and died peacefully in Toledo.<sup>30</sup> From the text, we get the impression that Swinthila was not deposed in the rebellion at all, and his rule ended with his own natural death. However, the older text of the Mozarabic Chronicle explicitly mentions that Sisenand seized power by rebelling against his predecessor, although it does not specify the fate of the later one.<sup>31</sup>

For the subsequent kings, Sisenand and Chintila, we do not know the source material for the *Albeldense*. Isidore did not continue in his writings and died in 636. The Asturian chronicle is considerably more concise than the older text of Mozarabic Chronicle. Interestingly, the *Albeldense* prefers the term “*synoda episcoporum*” for the description of church councils against the word “*concilium*” used in the Mozarabic Chronicle.<sup>32</sup>

The Asturian interpretation of the role of King Chindaswinth is probably the most interesting. This monarch imposed a draconian rule to stabilize the disordered Visigothic society. His contemporaries started to criticize him shortly after his death. At first, Bishop Fructuosus very carefully critiqued his rule, when he wrote a letter to his son King Recceswinth.<sup>33</sup> In contrast, Bishop Eugenius of Toledo ventured much further and created a harsh epitaph depicting the late king as a heinous tyrant.<sup>34</sup> Chindaswinth’s tarnished reputation entered even into the later,

<sup>29</sup> *Fredegarii Chronica*, IV, 73, and *Concilium Toletanum IV*, (all Visigothic Church councils are quoted according to the *Concilios visigóticos e hispano-romanos*, J. VIVES GATELL (ed.) Barcelona, Madrid 1963), Canon 75.

<sup>30</sup> *Albeldense*, XIV, *Item ordo gentis Gotorum*, 25.

“Suintila rg. an. X. Uictoria et consilio magnus fuit. ... Omnem Spaniam et Galliam strenue rexit, et ob meritum pater pauperum uocari est dignus. Fine proprio Toletu decessit sub imperatore Eraclio.”

<sup>31</sup> *Continuatio Hispana*, 19.

“Huius Eraclii temporibus Sisenandus in era DCLXVIII, ..., per tyrannidem regno Gothorum inuaso, quinquennio regali locatus est solio.”

<sup>32</sup> *Continuatio Hispana*, 20 and 22, and *Albeldense*, XIV, *Item ordo gentis Gotorum*, 26–27.

<sup>33</sup> *Epistolae Wisigothicae (Epistolae Merowingici et Karolini aevi*, MGH, *Epistolae III*), W. GUNDLACH (ed.) Berlin 1892, 20.

<sup>34</sup> EUGENIUS TOLETENSIS, *Carmina, Epitaphion Chindasvintho regi conscriptum (Fl. Merobaudis reliquiae. Blossii Aemilii Dracontii Carmina. Eugenii Toletani episcopi Carmina et epistulae*, MGH, AA XIV), F. VOLLMER (ed.), Berlin 1905. The criticism of the king could be most clearly seen in verses 9–11: “Chindasuinthus ego noxarum semper amicus, patrator scelerum Chindasuinthus ego. Inpius obscaenus, probrosus turpis iniquus.” For more about Eugenius’ epitaph, see E. THOMPSON, *The Goths in Spain*, Oxford 1969, p. 199;

or foreign texts. For the author of the Mozarabic Chronicle, the king was a tyrant destroying the Gothic people, and the Chronicle of Fredegar mentions the executions of Gothic noblemen carried out by the king.<sup>35</sup> However, in the *Albeldense*, Chindaswinth is depicted as the king who pacified the situation on the peninsula.<sup>36</sup> The text dedicated to him is rather short, but at the same, it gives a strong impression, and it is radically different from other sources, in which King Chindaswinth is mentioned.

### Kings Wamba, Erwig, and Egica

The *Albeldense* is brief in telling the story of Chindaswinth's son Recceswinth. It mentions three Church councils and the king's general popularity. The entry ends with Recceswinth's death at his villa in Gerticos. This reference is copied from *Historia Wambae regis*, written by Bishop Julian of Toledo in the 680s.<sup>37</sup> The other Asturian textual source, the Chronicle of King Alfonso III, began with Recceswinth's death in Gerticos.<sup>38</sup> The Asturian monks obviously owned most of the Visigothic scriptures.

The authors of the chronicles shortened the whole *Historia Wambae* into one (*Albeldense*) or two (Chronicle of Alfonso III) paragraphs. They

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G. KAMPERS, *Geschichte der Westgoten*, Paderborn 2008, pp. 198–199 and A. BARBERO – I. LORING, The Catholic Visigothic Kingdom, in: P. FOURACRE (ed.), *The New Cambridge Medieval History I*, Cambridge 2005, p. 359. A new and interesting interpretation of the bishop's poem can be found in D. UNGVARY, The Voice of the Dead King Chindasuinth: Poetry, Politics, and the Discourse of Penance in Visigothic Spain, in: *Early Medieval Europe*, 26, 2018, pp. 327–354.

<sup>35</sup> *Continuatio Hispana*, 26 and *Fredegarii Chronica*, IV, IV, 82.

<sup>36</sup> *Albeldense*, XIV, *Item ordo gentis Gotorum*, 29.

"Cindasuintus rg. solus an. VI et cum filio suo Recesuinto an. IIII. Huius tempore quieuit Spania et per sinoda erudiuit eclesia."

<sup>37</sup> IULIANUS TOLETENSIS, *Historia Wambae regis* (CCSL 115), J. HILLGARTH (ed.), Turnhout 1976. This text, which is on the borderline between history and hagiography, is discussed in W. DREWS, The Image of the Christian Ruler in the Catholic Monarchy of Visigothic Spain: Julian Toledo's *Historia Wambae*, P. FORNESS – A. HASSE-UNGEHEUER – H. LEPPIN (eds.), *The Good Christian Ruler in the First Millenium*, Berlin, Boston 2021, pp. 311–325; J. MARTÍNEZ PIZZARO, *The Story of Wamba: Julian of Toledo's Historia Wambae regis*, Washington D. C. 2005; R. FRIGHETTO, Memória, historia e identidades: Considerações a partir da história Wambae de Juliano de Toledo (século VII), in: *Revista de História Comparada*, 5, 2011, pp. 50–73; R. FRIGHETTO, Legitimidade e poder da realeza hispano-visigoda, segundo a História Wambae de Juliano de Toledo (segundo metade do século VII), in: *Espaço Plural*, 15, 2014, pp. 89–116 and F. SALVADOR VENTURA, La *Historia Wambae* de Julián de Toledo y sus caracteres de historiografía clásica, in: *Habis*, 50, 2019, pp. 391–407.

<sup>38</sup> *Rotensis*, 1 and *ad Sebastianum*, 1.

started with the election of the new king in Gerticos and his anointing in Toledo. Wamba subsequently marched against the rebellious Basques. The Chronicle of Alfonso III smuggled in an ahistorical mention that the Asturians were among the rebels, though Julian of Toledo does not mention them at all.<sup>39</sup> Wamba also celebrated victory over his governor of *Gallia Narbonensis*, *dux* Paulus, who revolted in 672. The Chronicle also states that among the king's enemies were the Franks, who are omitted from the *Albeldense*. The victory over a foreign enemy gives Wamba another aspect. Since the last known conflict with the Franks occurred in 631 during the rebellion of Sisenand, Wamba is the only king who overwhelmed foreign *gentes* and also suppressed the rebellion inside the kingdom. This dimension of Wamba's reign as protector of Spain is further developed in the next paragraph of the Chronicle of Alfonso III, which claimed that he repelled the first attack of Arab ships on the peninsula.<sup>40</sup> While the historicity of this passage has been questioned, its message and purpose is clear. Wamba succeeded where his successors will one day fail: protecting the kingdom from the Saracens.

This is followed by a story of the deposition of Wamba, which was carried out in October 680. The coup was briefly mentioned in the *Albeldense* and described in more detail in the Chronicle of Alfonso III.<sup>41</sup> Here, it is necessary to first explain the Asturian view on the last phase of the Visigothic history. The passages of the Chronicle of Alfonso III are devoted to criticism of the lineage of the penultimate Visigothic king, Witiza (694/702–710), to the extent that they can be described as “antiwitizanism”.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Ibidem. See also BONNAZ, pp. 77–78; Wamba was fighting against the stereotypical enemies of the Goths.

<sup>40</sup> *Rotensis*, 2 and *ad Sebastianum*, 2.

“*Illius quoque tempore CCLXX nabes Sarracenorum Spanie litus sunt adgresse, ibique omnes pariter sunt delete et ignibus concremate.*” (According to the *Rotensis*).

<sup>41</sup> *Albeldense*, XIV, *Item ordo gentis Gotorum*, 30.

“*Postea ab Eruigio regno priuatur [Wamba] sub imperatore Constantino Nobo era.*” *Rotensis*, 2.

“*Quumque prefatus Eruigius palatio esset nutritus et honore comitis sublimatus, superuia elatus callide aduersus regem est excogitatus. Erbam cui nomen spartus illi dedit potandam; statimque ei memoriae st ablata. Quumque episcopus ciuitatis seu et obtimates palatii qui regis fideles erant, cui penitus causa potionis lateuat, uidissent regem iacentem et memoriam nullam abentem, causa pietatis comoti, ne rex sine ordine migraret, statimque eui confessionis ordinem seu et penitentie dederunt. Quumque rex a potione surrexit et factum persensit,...*”

<sup>42</sup> GIL FERNÁNDEZ, p. 65; ORDÓÑEZ CUEVAS, pp. 16–19 and A. BRONISCH, Precisiones sobre algunas informaciones históricas en la „Crónica de Alfonso III“, in: *Edad Media: revista de historia*, 12, 2011, pp. 35–66 (37).



This conception of Visigothic history works with the narrative that Witiza's grandfather, King Erwig (680–687), drugged his predecessor Wamba with the poisonous plant *spartus*,<sup>43</sup> thus achieving his deposition by presenting the king's poisoning as insanity. Subsequently, Witiza's father, King Egica (687–702), had his wife Cixilo repudiated, which A. Bronisch also adds to the immoral acts of Witiza's family.<sup>44</sup>

Historians successfully refuted, or at least in some way contradicted, all the claims that the Chronicle of Alfonso III makes about Witiza's bloodline. According to more reliable sources, King Wamba fell unconscious and was granted the sacrament of penance, but when the king recovered from his illness, the court opposition took advantage of the situation to depose the king, arguing that after acquiring the penance, Wamba was ecclesiastically considered dead or unfit for secular life. The king was thus deprived of his rule and forced to sign a letter of abdication.<sup>45</sup> If the king had been drugged and mentally unfit to rule, no doubt the bishops and palace officials would not have accepted the document signed by him, which would have been invalid.

The text of all three Asturian chronicles does not differ that much when describing Wamba's successor, King Erwig.<sup>46</sup> He supposedly seized power in a coup against Wamba, held several Church councils (three to be exact), wed his daughter Cixilo to his successor Egica, and died peacefully in Toledo. The Chronicle of Alfonso III, in the previous chapter, additionally states that King Erwig was the grandson of King Chindaswinth. Chindaswinth's daughter was said to have married Byzantine nobleman Ardubast, who fled from the East to Hispania, and they had a son named

<sup>43</sup> According to Bronisch, it was probably a poisonous shrub (*Spartium junceum*), related to the well-known golden chain (*Laburnum sp.*). Bronisch points out that this plant is characterized by a strong bitter taste and that poisoning is accompanied by vomiting and a severe headache, not the unconsciousness mentioned in the Visigothic texts (BRONISCH, pp. 39–40).

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., pp. 46–62.

<sup>45</sup> *Concilium Toletanum XII, Canon 1, and Laterculus regum Visigothorum (Chronica minora (III))*, MGH, AA, XIII), T. MOMMSEN (ed.), Berlin 1898, 47. An interpretation of the course of events of Wamba's deposition and the installation of Erwig as king is available in: KAMPERS, pp. 216–217; I. LORING – D. PÉREZ – P. FUENTES, *La Hispania tardorromana y visigoda: Siglos V–VIII*, Madrid 2007, p. 196 and J. SAYAS ABENGOCHEA – M. ABAD VARELA, *Historia Antiqua de la Península Ibérica II: Época tardoimperial y visigoda*, Madrid 2013, p. 396.

<sup>46</sup> *Albeldense*, XIV, *Item ordo gentis Gotorum*, 32; *Rotensis*, 3, and *ad Sebastianum*, 3.

Erwig.<sup>47</sup> This claim is difficult to prove and some historians have found it fictitious.<sup>48</sup> Determining the role of Ardubast in the text is also complicated, but it shows that kinship played a greater role for the authors of the Asturian texts than for the Visigothic chronicles.

According to *Laterculus regum Visigothorum*, shortly before his death Erwig abdicated, received penance, and recommended his son-in-law Egica as his successor.<sup>49</sup> Egica's royal accession is not commented on in the Asturian texts. However, the Chronicle of Alfonso III states that Egica was a nephew (*consuabinus*) of King Wamba.<sup>50</sup> This claim cannot be corroborated in any other source. However, it confirms that the author of the Chronicle of Alfonso III was very concerned with defining the family ties between the Visigothic kings. According to the *Rotensis*, Wamba even advised his nephew to repudiate his wife Cixilo. Although there are indications that the relationship between Egica and Cixilo was dynamic, we have no proof of the queen's repudiation.<sup>51</sup> Moreover, the Asturian text claims that Wamba was alive in some monastery for the whole seven

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 2 (both versions).

<sup>48</sup> COLLINS, *Visigothic Spain*, p. 102; GIL FERNÁNDEZ, p. 66 and BONNAZ, p. 116. According to some scholars, Ardubast's role as the ancestor of Erwig and Witiza undermined their antagonistic roles in the kingdom, as their Byzantine roots made them foreigners, see BONNAZ, p. 120 and Á. SOLANO FERNÁNDEZ-SORDO, La ideología del reino de Asturias a través de sus crónicas, in: *Boletín de letras del real instituto de estudios Asturiano*, 63, 2009, pp. 109–158 (120).

<sup>49</sup> *Laterculus regum Visigothorum*, 49.

"In quo die in ultima aegritudine positus elegit sui successorem in regno gloriosum nostrum domnum Egicanem et altera die, quod fuit XVII. k. Sept., die sexta feria, sic idem domnus Ervigius accepit paenitentiam et cunctos seniores absolvit, qualiter cum iam dicto principe glorioso domno Egicane ad sedem regni in Toletum accederent." The entry concerning Erwig's abdication and penance was recorded in the version of the *Laterculus* from the year 700 in the *Codex Soriensis*. However, it was lost in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The *Laterculus* was copied here along with various Visigothic and Asturian texts, as well as the Mozarabic *Chronica Byzantia-Arabica*, so it is possible that it may have been used as one of the sources for the creation of the Asturian chronicles (R. FURTADO, Reassessing Spanish Chronicle Writing before 900, in: *The Medieval Chronicle*, 11, 2018, pp. 171–194).

<sup>50</sup> *Rotensis*, 3 and *ad Sebastianum*, 3.

<sup>51</sup> The status of the queen is partially reflected in the acts of Church councils. In 691 the Third Council of Zaragoza stated that widowed queens must spend the rest of their lives in a convent (*Synodus Caesaraugustana III, Canon 5*). Subsequently, the 16<sup>th</sup> Council of Toledo did not mention the queen at all. However, in 694 the 17<sup>th</sup> Council of Toledo granted the queen and her children ecclesiastical protection (*Concilium Toletanum XVII, Canon 7*). This means that if there were any differences between the royal couple before, they disappeared with time.



years and survived his successor Erwig. However, this is rejected by some historians.<sup>52</sup>

Egica appointed as co-ruler his son Witiza, whose mother, according to the *Rotensis*, was to be Cixilo.<sup>53</sup> Egica's and Witiza's joint rulership is evidenced not only by older written sources but also by charters, inscriptions, and coinage.<sup>54</sup> The Asturian chronicles, however, claim that Witiza became the administrator of the province of *Gallaecia*. Both versions of the Chronicle of Alfonso III even claimed that the kingdom was divided. Egica ruled the Goths and Witiza ruled over the Suebi (the tribe who controlled *Gallaecia* before 585).<sup>55</sup> That concept of government is unlikely because Visigothic texts no longer recognize the Suebi after their conquest by King Leovigild.<sup>56</sup> The *Albeldense* speaks only of the province of *Gallaecia*, not the Suebi, and tells us an episodic story, that Witiza settled in the town of Tuy and in some dispute over a woman he killed *dux* Fafila, the father of the first Asturian king, Pelagius.<sup>57</sup> This tale seems strange, if only because a few lines below it says that Pelagius' father was named Veremundus.<sup>58</sup> The story of the origin of the Asturian monarchs is not consistent in these chronicles.

Except for the murder of Fafila, the *Albeldense* does not say much about Witiza; it only states that the king died a few years later in Toledo.

<sup>52</sup> PRELOG, pp. CXLIII–CXLV.

<sup>53</sup> *Rotensis*, 4. According to Bronisch, Cixilo was not the mother of Witiza. He could have been the son of an unknown first wife of Egica. For this, see BRONISCH, pp. 47–62.

<sup>54</sup> *Continuatio Hispana*, 58; *Laterculus regum Visigothorum*, 51; A. CANELLAS LÓPEZ (ed.), *Diplomática Hispano-Visigoda*, Zaragoza 1979, núm. 192 *Preceptum Medemae*, and núm. 226 *Monumentum aedificationis*, and A. KURT, *Minting, State, and Economy in the Visigothic Kingdom: From Settlement in Aquitaine through the First Decade of the Muslim Conquest of Spain*, Amsterdam 2020, p. 303.

<sup>55</sup> *Rotensis*, 4 and *ad Sebastianum*, 4.

“... filium adulescentem nomine Uitizanem, quem rex in uita sua in regno participem fecit et eum in Tudensem ciuitatem auitare precepit, ut pater teneret regnum Gotorum et filius Sueorum.” (According to the *Rotensis*).

<sup>56</sup> The last mention of the Suebi is in Isidore's texts (*Historia Gotorum*, 49 and *Historia Sueborum*, 92), written in 624/625. These texts did not mention any Suebic activity after 585.

<sup>57</sup> *Albeldense*, XIV, *Item ordo gentis Gotorum*, 33. For the commentary of this mention, see BONNAZ, p. 79.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibidem*, XVa, *Item nomina regum catolicorum Legionensium*, 1. The *Rotensis* did not mention the name of Pelagius' father and the *ad Sebastianum* calls him *dux* Fafila (*ad Sebastianum*, 8). For the family tree of Pelagius see GIL FERNÁNDEZ, pp. 65–67, or BONNAZ, p. 115.

However, Witiza is depicted as a cruel and depraved ruler in both versions of the Chronicle of Alfonso III. Supposedly, he had several wives, forbade the holding of Church councils, and even forced bishops, priests, and deacons to have wives as well.<sup>59</sup> The older Mozarabic Chronicle presents a different picture. In al-Andalus, Witiza was regarded as a mild and just ruler, restoring property and rights to those persecuted by his father.<sup>60</sup> The report in the Chronicle of Alfonso III that Witiza did not hold a Church council turns out to be false, for during his reign, probably in 703, the 18<sup>th</sup> Council of Toledo was held.<sup>61</sup>

Roger Collins has an interesting explanation for the Asturian claim that King Witiza forced clerics to marry. He states that this may not have been a kind of perversion of Witiza, as described in later sources, but rather an effort to enforce the ecclesiastical regulations defined by the Quinisext Council in Hispania.<sup>62</sup> This council established strict celibacy for bishops but allowed priests and deacons to live with their wives, whom they married before ordination. This, however, was contrary to the Hispanic Church tradition, which, as early as 306, had mandated strict celibacy

<sup>59</sup> *Ad Sebastianum*, 5.

*“Era DCCXXXVIII post Egicani discessum Uuitiza ad solium patris reuertitur Toletu. Iste quidem probrosus et moribus flagitiosus fuit, et sicut equus et mulus, in quibus non est intellectus, cum uxoribus et concubinis plurimis se coinquinavit. Et ne aduersus eum censura ecclesiastica consurgeret, concilia dissoluit, canones obserauit omnemque religionis ordinem deprauabit. Episcopis, presbiteris et diaconibus uxores habere precepit.”*

<sup>60</sup> *Continuatio Hispana*, 59.

*“Hic patris succedens in solio, quamquam petulanter, clementissimus tamen, quindecim per annos extat in regno. Qui non solum eos, quos pater damnaverat, ad gratiam recipit temtos exilio, verum etiam clientulus manet in restaurando. Nam quos ille gravi oppresserat iugo, pristino iste reducebat in gaudio et quos ille a proprio abdicaberat solo, iste pio reformans reparabat ex dono. Sicque convocatis cunctis postremo cautiones, quas parens more subtraxerat subdolo, iste in conspectu omnium digne cremat incendio et non solum quia innoxios reddet, si uellet, ab insolubili vinculo, verum etiam rebus propriis redditus et olim iam fisco mancipatis palatino restaurat officio.”*

<sup>61</sup> R. COLLINS, *Visigothic Spain: 409–711*, Malden 2004, p. 110 and LORING – PÉREZ – FUENTES, p. 204. The acts of this council did not survive to the present day.

<sup>62</sup> COLLINS, *The Arab Conquest*, pp. 17–19. The Quinisext Council or the Council in Trullo was held in 692 at Constantinople under Emperor Justinian II. However, the disciplinary canons made here were not accepted by the Church in Western Europe, and the Latin Church does not consider the Council to be ecumenical (D. SUCHÁNEK – V. DRŠKA, *Církevní dějiny: Antika a středověk*, Praha 2013, p. 109). The canons on the celibacy of bishops and marriage of priests and deacons are *Concilium Quinisextum* (*Concilium Constantinopolitanum a. 691/2 in Trullo habitum*) (*Concilium Quinisextum*, ACO II, Pars 4), H. OHME (ed.), Berlin, Boston 2013, Canon 3–6.

for all clerics.<sup>63</sup> Such a royal decision undoubtedly caused indignation in the Church. That Witiza's statutes regarding the marriage of clerics were not merely a literary polemic against the king is evidenced by the Chronicle of Alfonso III itself, which mentions the statutes once more, when they were repealed in the mid-8<sup>th</sup> century by King Fruela I.<sup>64</sup>

### The Last King of the Goths, Roderic

The stories surrounding King Roderic are inevitably linked to his defeat by the Arabs at Guadalete. According to contemporary conventions for constructing a historical narrative, the destruction of the Visigothic kingdom is explained in the sources as God's punishment for sins, as well as for the decline in morals and manners, accompanied by internal disunity on the part of the Visigoths. No text describes the course of the actual battle of Guadalete, where in 711 Tāriq ibn Ziyād defeated the Visigothic king, Roderic. Thus, we cannot convincingly and rationally explain the Arab victory over the Visigoths in terms of military tactics, organisations, and command in battle. We can, however, juxtapose different narrative strategies for explaining the Muslim victory. The Chronicle of Alfonso III points the finger at King Witiza and his sons. The kingdom was burdened by the sins of the previous monarch, and his sons supposedly betrayed Roderic in battle, although the chronicles do not discuss exactly how their betrayal happened.<sup>65</sup> Oddly enough, the *Albeldense* and *Chronica prophetica* do not mention this betrayal at all and only speak about the battle between Roderic and Tāriq.

The Arab chroniclers, however, shifted the blame for the sins of the monarch from the person of King Witiza to his successor, Roderic. The oldest of these chroniclers is Ibn 'Abd al-Hakam from 9<sup>th</sup> century Egypt. The story then appears in much later texts by Ibn 'Idārī, Ibn al-Athīr and Ahmad al-Makkārī. According to the narrative of their texts, Ilyan, the ruler of North African Ceuta (whom later Christian texts identify as

<sup>63</sup> *Concilium Eliberritanum*, Canon 33; *Concilium Agathanse*, Canon 39; *Synodus Bracarenensis I*, Canon 15 and *Concilium Toletanum III*, Canon 5.

<sup>64</sup> *Rotensis*, 16.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

"Anno regni illius tertio ob causam fraudis filiorum Uitizani Sarrazeni ingressi sunt Spaniam. Quumque rex ingressum eorum cognouisset, statim cum exercitu egressus est eis ad uellum. Sed suorum peccatorum classe oppressi et filiorum Uitizani fraude detecti in fuga sunt uersi. Quo exercitus fugatus usque ad internicionem +eo+ pene est deletus. Et quia dereliquerunt Dominum ne seruarent ei in iustitia et ueritatem, derelicti sunt a Domino ne auitarent terram desiderauilem."

Count Julian),<sup>66</sup> sent his daughter to Toledo for education, but there she was raped by Roderic. In doing so, he committed both a sin against God and a crime against Īlyan, who, in pursuit of justice, allied himself with the Arabs, transported them in his ships to Spain, and assisted Tāriq ibn Ziyād in winning the battle against Roderic.<sup>67</sup> The Arab and Asturian narratives are constructed similarly. The Arab invasion was preceded by the sin of fornication on the part of the Gothic kings (Witiza's concubines/Roderic's rape of Īlyan's daughter), which led to divine punishment. This took the form of the betrayal of part of the Gothic army, resulting in the victory of the Arabs and the conquest of the Visigothic kingdom.

The only reliable source recording the conquest of Hispania, the Mozarabic Chronicle, makes no mention of *comes* Julian, the sons of Witiza, or treachery inside the Gothic army. The Chronicle, written 40 years after the Battle of Guadalete, suggests that the disunity and rivalry among the commanders of Gothic army and the low authority of King Roderic were the reason for the defeat in battle.<sup>68</sup>

Witiza's sons are an elemental part of the Asturian narrative,<sup>69</sup> so our attention must be focused on them. Neither version of the Chronicle of Alfonso III mentions their names when recounting Roderic's defeat at Guadalete. The nature of their treachery is not entirely obvious either.

<sup>66</sup> Some theories have emerged among historians as to who Īlyan/Julian may have been. In his case, the scale of possibilities extends from the option that he may have been the last Byzantine *exarch* in Africa, or the Christian Berber ruler of Ceuta, to the possibility that he was a Visigothic nobleman controlling the Straits of Gibraltar (J. O'CALLAGHAN, *A History of Medieval Spain*, Ithaca 1975, p. 52).

<sup>67</sup> This story is first found in the text of Ibn Abd al-Hakam, an Arab historian writing in Egypt at the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> century and then appears almost unchanged in the works of other Arab chroniclers and authors (J. HARRIS JONES (ed.), *Ibn Abd-El-Hakem's History of the Conquest of Spain*, Goettingen, London 1858, pp. 18–20). The character of Governor Īlyan/count Julian is considered to be rather mythical and unhistorical, and the whole story is just a legend explaining the Arab victory over the Visigoths.

<sup>68</sup> *Continuatio Hispana*, 68.

*"anno imperii Iustiniani quinto, Arabum nonagesimo tertio, Ulit sexto, in era DCCL Transductos promonturiis sese cum eis confligendo recepit eoque prelio fugatum omnem Gothorum exercitum, qui cum eo emulante fraudulenterque ob ambitionem regni advenerant, cecidit. Sicque regnum simulque cum patriam male cum emulorum internicione amisit, peragente Ulit anno sexto."* For more about the Arab conquest of the Visigothic kingdom, see COLLINS, *The Arab Conquest*, pp. 23–51 and L. GARCÍA MORENO, *El fin del reino godo y la invasión árabe desde las Asturias*, in: J. RODRÍGUEZ MUÑOZ (ed.), *Nuevas visiones del Reino de Asturias*, Oviedo 2020, pp. 27–50.

<sup>69</sup> For the discussion see BONNAZ, pp. 132–134.

The *Rotensis* states only that the Arabs came to Hispania at the instigation or for the benefit (*ob causam*) of the sons of Witiza, and that their treachery was the decisive factor in the flight of the Gothic army.<sup>70</sup> This suggests a previous agreement between the family of Witiza and the Arabs, and also that at the beginning of the battle, the warriors of Witiza's sons were present on the Gothic side and the betrayal occurred during the battle.

In the version *ad Sebastianum*, there is a slightly more specific portrayal of their betrayal. According to this version, the sons of Witiza were to send messengers to the Arabs in Africa to ask for their support in their own fight against Roderic, but they perished in the battle, fighting alongside the Arabs.<sup>71</sup> Here, they fill the role that Julian played in the Arab texts but, unlike Julian, they are driven by their ambitions and not by the pursuit of justice.

It is only in one of the subsequent chapters that the chronicle gives us the name of one of Witiza's sons. Later, in 718, one of the supporters of the Arab conquerors, Bishop Oppa, was identified by the chronicle as the son of the later king. Even in this case, the chronicle is not very consistent.<sup>72</sup> Fortunately for us, Oppa is also mentioned in the Mozarabic Chronicle, but according to it, he was not Witiza's son but his brother. His episcopal see is not mentioned. The chronicle states that he played some role when Mūsā ibn Nusayr seized Toledo, but it is not clear from the text what Oppa did there.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>70</sup> *Rotensis*, 7.

"Anno regni illius tertio ob causam fraudis filiorum Uitizani Sarrazeni ingressi sunt Spaniam. (...) Sed suorum peccatorum classe oppressi et filiorum Uitizani fraude detecti in fuga sunt versi."

<sup>71</sup> *Ad Sebastianum*, 6.

"Filii uero Uuittizani inuidia ducti eo quod Rudericus regnum patris eorum acceperat, callide cogitantes missos ad Africam mittunt, Sarrazenos in auxilium petunt eosque nauibus aduectos Yspaniam intromittunt. Sed ipsi, qui patrie excidium intulerunt, simul cum gente Sarrazenorum gladio perierunt."

<sup>72</sup> According to the *Rotensis*, 8, Oppa was the bishop of Toledo, while in *ad Sebastianum*, 8, it is stated that he was the bishop of Seville. From other sources, we know that the bishop of Toledo at that time was Sindere who fled to Italy (*Concilium Romanum I (Sacrorum Conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio, Tomus XII)*, G. MANSI (ed.), Firenze 1766, *Subscriptiones and Continuatio Hispana*, 69).

<sup>73</sup> *Continuatio Hispana*, 70.

"... penetrat atque Toletum urbem regiam usque inrumpendo, adiacentes regiones pace fraudifica male diuerberans nonnullos seniores nobiles viros, qui utquique remanserant, per Oppam filium Egiche regis a Toletum fugam arripientem gladio patibuli iugulat et per eius occasionem cunctos ense detruncat." This passage is very obscure (the text does not show whether Oppa himself was fleeing Toledo or whether he was catching the Gothic noblemen fleeing

A unique source dealing with the story of Witiza's sons is the Muslim chronicle of Ibn al-Qūtiyya, who lived in Seville in the 10<sup>th</sup> century. He not only described himself a Muslim Visigoth but even claimed to be a descendant of King Witiza through his granddaughter Sārā al-Qūtiyya. Thus, in his work, *Ta'rikh ifitāh al-Andalus* (History of the Conquest of al-Andalus), he provides a valuable perspective on the role of Witiza's sons in the events of 711.<sup>74</sup> According to his family narrative, which cannot be confirmed from other sources, King Witiza had three sons named Almund, Rumulus, and Artabas. He states that at the time of the death of their father, they were still children being raised by their mother in Toledo. Roderic, one of Witiza's commanders, seized power in the kingdom. In Ibn al-Qūtiyya's story, İlyan/Julian has a slightly a different role than in other Arab texts. He was a wealthy merchant providing a connection between Hispania and Africa. It was he who, after Roderic had disgraced his daughter, brought to Tāriq ibn Ziyād the idea of invading Hispania and gave him his ships. Witiza's sons thus played no part in the invasion of the Arabs, but after learning of their landing, instead of joining Roderic's army, they went to the Muslim camp to meet Tāriq, where they tried to negotiate a treaty with the Muslim commander, claiming that Roderic was merely a rebellious client of their father. Ibn al-Qūtiyya makes no mention of the betrayal of his ancestors in the Battle of Guadalete; in fact, his chronicle tells us that at the time when Roderic was fighting at Guadalete, three brothers were in Africa negotiating with Tāriq's commander Mūsā ibn Nusayr. They were most likely trying to reclaim their family land, which had been seized by Roderic. Ibn al-Qūtiyya thus created a narrative to defend and justify the actions of the sons of Witiza.

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the city) and thus various interpretations have been created. According to Collins, in 711, Oppa was the ruler of Toledo in opposition to Roderic and Agila II (COLLINS, *Visigothic Spain*, p. 134 and COLLINS, *The Arab Conquest*, pp. 29–33). According to some historians, Oppa supported the Arab invasion and could have opened the gates of Toledo to the Muslim army (LORING – PÉREZ – FUENTES, p. 206) or gone along with the Arab army and tried to turn Mūsā ibn Nusayr against his political rivals from the Visigothic aristocracy that supported King Roderic (L. GARCÍA MORENO, *Historia de España Visigodos*, Madrid 1989, p. 190). Gerd Kampers interprets the text to mean that Oppa first surrendered the city of Seville to the Arabs and subsequently accompanied Mūsā on his campaign and assisted him in the siege of Toledo, which was defended by the remaining members of Roderic's court (KAMPERS, pp. 231–232).

<sup>74</sup> IBN al-QŪTIYYA, *Ta'rikh ifitāh al-Andalus* (*Early Islamic Spain: The History of Ibn al-Qūtiyya*), D. JAMES (ed.), Oxon 2009, I, 2–6 (pp. 49–52).

## The Asturian Perception of the Past

This article deals with the perception of the Visigoths in Asturian society at the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> century. Unfortunately, it is not entirely possible to reconstruct the development of the Asturian discourse. All the surviving texts date to the turn of the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries when King Alfonso III ruled. The *Chronica prophetica* is not concerned with the Visigothic past and the Asturian charters did not address the issues that are relevant for this research.

It is assumed that the first Asturian chronicle was written at the beginning of the 9<sup>th</sup> century during the reign of Alfonso II. However, it has not survived, and we can only speculate how it was written based on the later texts.<sup>75</sup> From what we know, the Asturian perception of their kingdom and their past has varied over the centuries. From the time of Alfonso III, the chronicles present the idea that his kingdom was the successor state of the Visigothic realm.<sup>76</sup> The chapter in the *Albeldense* dealing with the Asturian monarchs is named *Item ordo Gotorum Obetensium regum* (Order of the Gothic kings of Oviedo). Only a later chronicle from the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the *Historia Silense*, directly identifies the state of Alfonso III as the kingdom of the Goths (*regnum Gothorum*).<sup>77</sup> In earlier times, however, the concept of the Asturian state was different. One of the charters of King Alfonso II states that the kingdom was constituted of *gens christianorum asturumque*.<sup>78</sup> The perception of the Gothic past in the surviving Asturian chronicles is thus more of a product of their time than a consistent reflection of Gothic history.

<sup>75</sup> For the hypothetical Chronicle of Alfonso II, see C. SÁNCHEZ ALBORNOZ, ¿Una crónica asturiana perdida?, in: *Revista de Filología Hispánica*, 7, 1945, pp. 105–146; GIL FERNÁNDEZ, p. 76; M. HUETE FUDIO, Fuentes menores para el estudio de la historiografía latina de la Alta Edad Media hispánica (siglos VII–X), *Medievalismo*, 4, 1994, pp. 5–26 (12–18) and SOLANO FERNÁNDEZ-SORDO, p. 116. This lost text may have been used as source material for the *Annales Portugalenses veteres* and the *Chronicon Compostellanum*.

<sup>76</sup> ORDÓÑEZ CUEVAS, p. 34. It is worth mentioning, that the *Chronica prophetica* predicts that King Alfonso III will restore the Visigothic kingdom. *Albeldense*, XIX (*Chronica prophetica*), *Dicta Ezeielis profete*, 3.

“Quod etiam ipsi Sarrazeni quosdam prodigiis uel a[u]strorum signis interitum suum adpropinquare predicunt et Gotorum regnum restaurari per hunc nostrum principem dicunt; ...”

<sup>77</sup> F. SANTOS COCO (ed.), *Historia Silense* (*Textos latinos de la edad media Española*), Madrid 1921, 39.

<sup>78</sup> A. FLORIANO CUMBREÑO, *Diplomática española del periodo asturs: Estudio de fuentes documentales del reino Asturias (718–910)*, Oviedo 1949, doc. 24.



What, however, is the conception of the Asturian chronicles? According to an analysis made by Álvaro Solano, the most frequent words in the chronicles are *rex* and *regnum*. The chronicles are an expression of the kingdom itself, and the king is the symbol of the state.<sup>79</sup> The next step, then, is to understand how the Asturian texts describe the Visigothic kings. Superlatives are rarely used in the chronicles. On one occasion, Reccared is called the most religious king thanks to his conversion to Catholicism.<sup>80</sup> Similarly, in the *ad Sebastianum*, Wamba's victories over the rebels and Franks are considered to be the most famous ones.<sup>81</sup> Thus we can observe the overall Asturian opinion of the Visigothic kings.

King Reccared was considered by Asturian chroniclers to be the greatest monarch, due to his conversion and Catholicization of the Goths at the 3rd council of Toledo. The second positively perceived Gothic king was Wamba. His later legacy was established by his military achievements, his effort to centralize the state through fighting against the insurgents, and his role as the victim of the ancestors of the despised King Witiza. Compared to them, Witiza is the most criticized king. The *Albeldense* does not judge him directly, but it tries to portray king's personality by describing the murder of Fafila and the banishment of his son Pelagius.<sup>82</sup> The Chronicle of Alfonso III is more direct and considers Witiza to be disgraceful and to have shameful habits (*probrosus et more flagitiosus*).<sup>83</sup> King Leovigild remained a somewhat controversial king for the Asturians. His successes in stabilizing and expanding the Visigothic kingdom clashed with his Arian beliefs. The controversy surrounding Leovigild can be seen when the *ad Sebastianum* considers Leovigild and his son Reccared to be the ancestors of the third Asturian King Alfonso I, while the *Rotensis* only states that Alfonso I had some royal blood in him.<sup>84</sup>

<sup>79</sup> SOLANO FERNÁNDEZ-SORDO, pp. 119–125.

<sup>80</sup> *Albeldense*, XIII, *Incipit ordo Romanorum regum*, 62.

*"Idem quoque Goti per Recaredum regem religiosissimum ad catholicam fidem conuertuntur."*  
This commendable label is taken from Isidore (*Historia Gothorum*, 53).

<sup>81</sup> *Ad Sebastianum*, 1.

*"... quanta agmina Francorum uel Gallorum Uuambane sint interempta quantasque famosissimas uictorias idem exercuerit, que de Pauli tyrannide excidia euenerint, ..."*

<sup>82</sup> *Albeldense*, XIV, *Item ordo gentis Gotorum*, 33.

<sup>83</sup> *Rotensis*, 5 and *ad Sebastianum*, 5.

<sup>84</sup> *Ad Sebastianum*, 13.

*"... Adefonsus successit in regnum, uir magne uirtutis filius Petri ducis, ex semine Leuuegildi et Reccaredi regum progenitus."*

*Rotensis*, 11. *"... Adefonsus filius Petri Cantabrorum ducis ex regni prosapiem..."*



The Asturians knew the Visigothic concept of *tyrannis*.<sup>85</sup> The tyrants were usurpers who impiously rebelled against the legitimate kings. In the Asturian kingdom, legitimacy was determined not only by the election/recognition of the Asturian elites in the palace in Cangas or Oviedo, but also by legitimate direct lineage from the kings Pelagius and Alfonso I. The unsuccessful rebels Nepotianus, Aldroitus, Piniolus and Fruela were thus labelled as *tyranni*.<sup>86</sup> In the *Rotensis*, the reign of King Mauregatus (reigned 783–788), who usurped power in place of his nephew Alfonso II, is even described as *tyrannis*. Mauregatus was the son of King Alfonso I and an unnamed slave, so he may not have been seen as a legitimate member of the royal house.<sup>87</sup>

The Asturian sources use the word “*tyrannus*” for the *dux* Paulus, who rebelled against King Wamba.<sup>88</sup> In the *Albeldense* only King Athanagild is called *tyrannus*.<sup>89</sup> Similarly, in the *Rotensis* only King Erwig is classified as a *tyrannus* for his part in deposing his predecessor, Wamba.<sup>90</sup> No Gothic king is labelled as a tyrant in the *ad Sebastianum*. Moreover, this version of the chronicle rarely uses the concept of *tyrannis*. King Witiza’s legitimacy is not challenged in any way, although there were objections about him in Mozarabic society.<sup>91</sup>

There was no or little effort to delegitimize the Visigothic monarchs in the texts. The authors of the Asturian chronicles probably based their concept of a king and royal legitimacy on Isidore’s Etymologies. According to the bishop of Seville, the word “*rex*” is derived from the word “*recte*”.<sup>92</sup> The king is legitimate if he acts rightly, and his authority and power diminish

<sup>85</sup> This concept is discussed in the already mentioned CASTILLO LOZANO, *Categorías de poder*.

<sup>86</sup> Comes Nepotianus and the noblemen Piniolus and Androitus rebelled against King Ramiro I (reigned 842–850), see *Rotensis*, 23 and 24; *ad Sebastianum* 23, and *Albeldense*, XV, *Item ordo Gotorum Obetensium regum*, 10. In the first years of his reign (after 866) Alfonso III faced the rebellion of *comes* Fruela. For this rebellion see *Albeldense*, XV, *Item ordo Gotorum Obetensium regum*, 12, and *Historia Silense (Ex Sampiro)*, 49.

<sup>87</sup> *Rotensis*, 19 and *Albeldense*, XV, *Item ordo Gotorum Obetensium regum*, 7.

<sup>88</sup> *Ad Sebastianum*, 1.

<sup>89</sup> *Albeldense*, XIV, *Item ordo gentis Gotorum*, 116.

<sup>90</sup> *Rotensis*, 3.

<sup>91</sup> *Continuatio Hispana*, 58.

“[Wittiza] hic patris succedens in solio, quamquam petulanter, clementissimus tamen, quindecim per annos extat in regno.”

<sup>92</sup> ISIDORUS HISPALENSIS, *Etymologiae* (Oxford Classical Texts: Isidori Hispalensis Episcopi: *Etymologiarum Sive Originum*, Vol. 1: *Libros I–IX*), W. LINDSAY (ed.), Oxford 1911, IX, 3, 4.

when he acts wrongly. Only Athanagild's legitimacy was questioned when the Byzantines were drawn into the civil war between him and Agila, causing the kingdom to lose its southern territory for 75 years. Because the authors of the chronicles were aware that the succession of Visigothic kings was not according to hereditary principles, thus they had limited means of criticizing it. In the *Albeldense*, usurpers and regicides like Theudis, Theudigisel, Witteric, Sisenand, and Chindaswinth were considered to be legitimate rulers, and some of them were even praised by the author of the chronicle.

### Conclusion

The Asturian chroniclers respected the status quo of the kingdom of Toledo and did not challenge the legitimacy of the old Gothic kings, even though they could. The legend of the betrayal of the sons of Witiza was essential for explaining the victory of the Arabs in 711, but otherwise the Gothic kings were criticized only minimally, and except for Athanagild, their legitimacy has not been questioned at all. Shortly before the chronicles were written, the reign of Alfonso III was threatened by the rebellion of *comes* Froyla. This may have been a key moment for Alfonso III in his conception of kingship.<sup>93</sup> Since he knew that the support of the Asturian elites would not be permanent, his legitimacy as king could only be guaranteed by his family line and his holding of the royal title after the death of his father Ordoño II. According to Alfonso III and his chroniclers, the king's position was virtually unquestionable. To preserve the legitimacy of Alfonso III and his family, the rule of their Visigothic predecessors was universally recognized. It is worth recalling that the *Albeldense* does not mention the forced abdication of King Swinthila in 631, which the author must have learned about from the acts of the Councils of Toledo.<sup>94</sup> According to the chroniclers, it was not possible to rule illegitimately or to lose a royal title.

The *Albeldense* brings a different approach to evaluate the Gothic kings. Their level of assertiveness and approach to government is reflected in a few cases. We can thus distinguish kings who were characterized as *strenuus*

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*"Reges a regendo vocati. ... Non autem regit, qui non corrigit. Recte igitur faciendo regis nomen tenetur, peccando amittitur. Unde at apud veteres tale erat proverbium: Rex eris, si recte facias: si non facias, non eris."*

<sup>93</sup> ISLA FREZ, *Identidades y goticismo*, pp. 19–20.

<sup>94</sup> *Concilium Toletanum IV, Canon 75.*

(brisk)<sup>95</sup> or as *blandus* (suave).<sup>96</sup> The word *blandus* itself has no negative connotations, but compared to *strenuus*, it may have been an antonym in the Asturian context. These adjectives are not present in Isidore's *Historia Gothorum*, and in the Chronicle of Alfonso III only one word with the same root can be found.<sup>97</sup> This concept is original to the *Albeldense* and not present in other Asturian texts. The features implied by the words *strenuus* and *blandus* do not undermine the legitimacy of the described kings in any way. These words reflect the Isidorian concept of a king who is acting *recte*, and they describe the manner and method of the king's actions. The *reges strenui*, such as Witteric, Swinthila and later Chindaswinth, who waged war against the kingdom's enemies and suppressed domestic opposition, were regarded favourably in Asturian texts. The king should be a warrior, victor, protector of the state, and guardian of the Church. Thus, these qualities were appreciated among the Visigothic monarchs.

In the Asturian kingdom of the age of Alfonso III, there seems to be no break in continuity with the Visigothic kingdom. Alfonso III considered himself to be the direct successor of Reccared, Chindaswinth, and Wamba and the chroniclers saw no break between the two states. This is a distinctive difference from Frankish society. Frankish scholar Einhard denounced the previous Merovingian dynasty as mere nominal rulers.<sup>98</sup> This was a conscious break between the Carolingian and Merovingian periods and a general rejection of the previous epoch. It must be admitted that the Carolingian *mayordomi* coexisted with the Merovingian kings for a certain period of time, so the distinction was determined by historical circumstances. However, the Carolingian authors could have chosen other narrative strategies, and they choose rejection of previous dynasty. This concept is not found in the Asturian texts. The invasion of the Arabs is considered to be the turning point in the history of the peninsula, but the kingdom of Asturias was, in the eyes of the writers of Alfonso III's time, the cultural and political continuation of the Visigothic state.

<sup>95</sup> The kings Witteric and Swinthila were characterized as *strenui*. Mentioned in *Albeldense*, XIV, *Item ordo gentis Gotorum*, 22 and 25.

<sup>96</sup> This word is used to describe King Tulga, who was overthrown by Chindaswinth in 642. See *Albeldense*, XIV, *Item ordo gentis Gotorum*, 28.  
"Tulga rg. an. III. Blandus in omnia fuit."

<sup>97</sup> The non-violent Arab occupation of some Hispanic regions is described by the adverb *blandiendo* (*Rotensis*, 8).

<sup>98</sup> EINHARD, *Vita Karoli Magni* (*Einhardi Vita Karoli Magni*, MGH, SS rer. Germ. 25), C. HOLDER-EGGER (ed.), Hannover 1911, 1.

This is attested in the records of the Chronicle of Alfonso III, which claim that King Alfonso I was a descendant of the unnamed Visigothic kings.<sup>99</sup> The *ad Sebastianum* even found for him Visigothic royal ancestry claiming that he was a descendent of Leovigild and Reccared. In this regard, it is peculiar that the Asturian chronicles did not attempt to find, or rather fabricate, a kinship between Leovigild, Chindaswinth and Roderic.

It must be acknowledged that the Asturian authors had a solid understanding of Visigothic sources. The only discrepancy arises in the description of the deposition of King Swinthila in 631. The author of the *Albeldense* either misunderstood the events or deliberately distorted them so the fact that the king could be deposed would be forgotten. This follows the narrative pattern of the Asturian chronicles. These chronicles also highlight the role of some kings as lawgivers. This distinguishes them from Frankish texts. It is not entirely obvious, whether this was merely a case of adopting and copying source motives or an attempt to emphasize the continuity of Visigothic legislation, which was still valid in Asturias, and thus maintain a connection with the old kingdom.

The number of *tyranni* in the texts was also reduced – among the Gothic kings, the Asturians considered only King Athanagild to be a *tyrannus*. Criticism of the Toledan Kings also decreased, though it did not disappear entirely. Both the *Albeldense* and the Chronicle of Alfonso III regarded some kings as sinners, but they did not evaluate their actions as wrong or incorrect. This seems to follow the ideas of Isidore of Seville. The kings were already recognized as rightful and legitimate rulers and they were right (*recte*). Monarchs could act sinfully, but not erroneously, and for this reason the weak and deposed King Tulga was described by the author of the *Albeldense* as *blandus*, so as his reign would not be questioned.

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<sup>99</sup> *Rotensis*, 11 and *ad Sebastianum*, 13.

# Cultural Heritage and Change in Yorubaland, Southwestern Nigeria

*Ayowole S. Elugbaju*<sup>1</sup>

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As the centrum of numerous gods in the Yoruba pantheon and, consequently, the epicentre of Yoruba Traditional Religion, religio-cultural practices such as rituals, festivals, and processions are regarded as components of sociocultural practices prevalent in Ile-Ife. These native practices serve as agencies through which humans articulate interactions with and elicit the participation of the otherworldly in earthly affairs. Nonetheless, the interaction between the physical and ethereal in the Ife native practices are intersected by components of cultural heritage such as groves, shrines, holy waterbodies, effigies, and processional routes which, for the religious and historical purposes they serve, are sacred. In the past, human activities and encounters with these cultural heritage components were regulated by the sacerdotal nature ascribed to them. However, in recent decades, modernisation, population growth, religious change, and urbanisation, among others, have spurred environmental changes that have had enduring consequences, some of which have permanently altered the existence of these elements of cultural heritage. Exploring primary and secondary sources, especially orality, archival sources, and literature, this study examined the impacts of environmental changes on the cultural heritage of Ile-Ife. This study established, *inter alia*, that modernisation impacted the landscape of Ile-Ife in such a way that cultural heritage sites have been eroded due to natural resource exploitation and the appropriation for the construction of modern buildings. This paper concludes that despite the far-reaching impacts of environmental changes, there are ongoing attempts to preserve the cultural heritage sites in Ile-Ife.

[Environmental Change; Cultural Heritage; Religious Change; Ile-Ife; Sacred Sites]

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## Introduction

Cultural heritage reflects human history, civilisation, and the coexistence of multiple peoples and their ways of life. Its protection is a shared

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responsibility of the international community in the interest of future generations.<sup>2</sup>

When approached at face value, cultural heritage connotes the heirlooms passed on across generations. Meanwhile, because of several attempts by scholars to conceptualise the term within different fields of study and organisations, the understanding of cultural heritage has expanded, and there is a lack of a generally acceptable definition.<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, as a phenomenon that has permeated human consciousness in the last century, its conceptualisation has evolved through several perceptions. Mounir Bouchenaki, in a keynote address delivered at the 14<sup>th</sup> general assembly of the International Council for Monuments and Sites (ICMS), identified the process of this evolution.<sup>4</sup> The definitions specified in the keynote address include the description of cultural heritage as monuments and sites limited to architectural heritage.<sup>5</sup> However, over time, the definition has incorporated different architectural structures such as the industrial, vernacular, built heritage of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and historic gardens, highlighted as the “concept of cultural landscape”.<sup>6</sup> According to UNESCO, cultural heritage is an entire corpus of material signs, consisting of the artistic and symbolic bequeathed across generations within a culture “and, therefore, to the whole of humankind”.<sup>7</sup> When aggregated, the definitions examined thus far show that cultural heritage can be described as a social ensemble of many complex and interdependent manifestations. These consist of living expressions or traditions inherited and passed across generations, such as performing arts, oral traditions, rites, festivals, rituals, knowledge corpus and prac-

<sup>2</sup> World Affairs Council of Philadelphia, *Protecting and Preserving Cultural Heritage: Topic Background for the Committee on Protecting and Preserving Cultural Heritage*, <https://wacphila.org/uploads/attachments/ckdervf210pgse4qugpre13g7-protecting-and-preserving-cultural-heritage-briefing-paper-2017-final.pdf> [2023-09-05].

<sup>3</sup> G. SONKOLY – T. VAHTIKARI, *Innovation in Cultural Heritage Research – For an integrated European Research Policy*, Luxembourg 2018.

<sup>4</sup> M. BOUCHENAKI, *The Interdependency of the Tangible and Intangible Cultural Heritage*, <http://openarchive.icomos.org/468/> [2023-09-05].

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> J. JOKILEHTO, *Definition of Cultural Heritage References to Documents in History: References to Documents in History*, International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) Working Group Heritage and Society. [http://www.ycarhe.eu/uploads/media/rural-heritage/Cultural-Heritage-definitions\\_ICOMOS2005.pdf](http://www.ycarhe.eu/uploads/media/rural-heritage/Cultural-Heritage-definitions_ICOMOS2005.pdf) [2023-09-05].

tices that concern nature and the universe or the knowledge and skills to produce traditional crafts.<sup>8</sup> Simply put, cultural heritage includes all the elements employed by a people or society to structure an identity and its sense of its history, present and future.<sup>9</sup> In addition, studies have extended the understanding of cultural heritage by compartmentalising it into the intangible and the tangible.<sup>10</sup> Perhaps this serves as an indicator of the progress made in unpacking the concept of cultural property.

The intangible consists of non-material practices that have been transmitted across generations.<sup>11</sup> The instances of this include orality, skill of crafts, performing arts and knowledge of rituals,<sup>12</sup> to mention a few. The tangible cultural heritage includes material relics from the past.<sup>13</sup> The qualities of this class of cultural heritage are that they can be touched, are movable or immovable,<sup>14</sup> and incorporate aspects of material culture associated with water bodies.<sup>15</sup> When the analysis attempted so far to unpack cultural heritage is considered in the context of the Yoruba, it will, perhaps, be safe to indicate that Ile-Ife is a hub within which numerous vestiges of the Yoruba cultural heritage are pervasive.<sup>16</sup> Ile-Ife is regarded as an ancient city, and through the radiocarbon dating of excavated materials,<sup>17</sup> the antiquity of the town has been confirmed in addition to

<sup>8</sup> United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), *What is Intangible Cultural Heritage*, <https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/01851-EN.pdf> [2023-09-05]; BOUCHENAKI, *The Interdependency of the Tangible and Intangible Cultural Heritage*, <http://openarchive.icomos.org/468/> [2023-09-05].

<sup>9</sup> BOUCHENAKI, *The Interdependency of the Tangible and Intangible Cultural Heritage*, <http://openarchive.icomos.org/468/> [2023-09-05].

<sup>10</sup> F. HAMILTON, *Tangible and Intangible Cultural Heritage*, <http://www.utsdesignindex.com/researchmethod/tangible-intangible-heritage/> [2023-09-05].

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), *What is Intangible Cultural Heritage*, <https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/01851-EN.pdf> [2023-09-05].

<sup>13</sup> HAMILTON, *Tangible and Intangible Cultural Heritage*, <http://www.utsdesignindex.com/researchmethod/tangible-intangible-heritage/> [2023-09-05].

<sup>14</sup> T. G. WEISS – N. CONNELLY, Protecting Cultural Heritage in War Zones, in: *Third World Quarterly*, 40, 1, 2019, pp. 1–17.

<sup>15</sup> United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), *What is Intangible Cultural Heritage*, <https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/01851-EN.pdf> [2023-09-05].

<sup>16</sup> L. FROBENIUS, *The Voice of Africa: Being an Account of the Travels of the German Inner African Exploration Expedition in the years 1910–1912*, London, 1913, pp. 293–294.

<sup>17</sup> F. WILLETT, Archaeology, in: S. O. BIOBAKU (ed.), *Sources of Yoruba History*, Oxford, 1973, pp. 111–139; P. OZANNE, A New Archaeological Survey of Ife, in: *Odu: A Journal*



the vestiges of the past mostly associated with the deified Yoruba culture heroes in the Yoruba Traditional Religion.<sup>18</sup> Consequently, several studies have examined the traditions of origins of Ile-Ife,<sup>19</sup> sociocultural practices,<sup>20</sup> material culture,<sup>21</sup> and the emergence of the 20<sup>th</sup> century agencies of change in the town, such as Christianity,<sup>22</sup> Islam,<sup>23</sup> and colonialism.<sup>24</sup> The former group of literature largely show the extent of the vestiges of the cultural heritage in Ile-Ife; the latter group of studies have not only generally highlighted the disruptive phenomena of the 21<sup>st</sup> century but also indicated some of the changes they have introduced, such as

of *West African Studies* 1, 1969, pp. 28–45; E. EYO, *Recent Excavation at Ife and Owo and their Implication for Ife, Owo and Benin Studies*, University of Ibadan, PhD Thesis, 1974.

<sup>18</sup> B. IDOWU, *Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief*, Ibadan 1982.

<sup>19</sup> I. OLOMOLA, Ife Before Oduduwa, in: I. AKINJOGBIN (ed.), *The Cradle of a Race: Ife from the Beginning to 1980*, Port Harcourt 1992, pp. 51–61; B. ADEDIRAN, The Early Beginnings of Ife State, in: I. AKINJOGBIN (ed.), *The Cradle of a Race: Ife from the Beginning to 1980*, Port Harcourt 1992, pp. 77–93; S. AKINTOYE, *A History of the Yoruba people*, Dakar 2014; M. FABUNMI, *An Anthology of Historical Notes on Ife City*, Ikeja 1985.

<sup>20</sup> M. OMIGBULE, *Rituals of Ilé-Ife, Nigeria: Narratives and Performances of Archetypes*, Newcastle upon Tyne 2021, pp. 1–38; N. FADIPE, *The Sociology of the Yoruba*, Ibadan 1970; M. FASOGBON, *The Ancient Constitutional History of Ile Ife Ooyelagbo*, Lagos 1985; M. FABUNMI, *Ife Shrines*, Ife 1969; P. STEVENS, Orisha-Nla Festival, in: *Nigeria Magazine*, 90, 1966, pp. 184–199; M. J. WALSH, The Èdi Festival at Ile Ife, in: *African Affairs*, 47, 189, 1948, pp. 231–238.

<sup>21</sup> F. WILLETT, Ancient Ife: An Ethnographic Survey, in: *Odu: Journal of Yoruba and Related Studies* 8, 1960, pp. 21–35; O. ELUYEMI, Excavations at Isoya near Ile-Ife (Nigeria), in: *West African Journal of Archaeology* 7, 1971, pp. 97–115; E. EYO, Odo Ogbe Street and Lafogido: Contrasting Archaeological Sites in Ile Ife, Western Nigeria, in: *West African Journal of Archaeology* 4, 1974, pp. 99–109; B. FAGG – W. FAGG, The Ritual Stools of Ancient Ife, in: *Man*, 60, 1960, pp. 113–115; O. RAHEEM – A. S. ELUGBAJU, Moremi in the Ritual Drama of Ilé-Ife: A Light into the Edi Festival, in: *Journal of Black Culture and International Understanding (JBCIU)*, 3, 1 & 2, 2017, pp. 62–89.

<sup>22</sup> M. FABUNMI, *Itan Ibere Esin Kristi Ni Ile-Ife Ati Agbegbe: The Story of the Beginnings of the Christian Faith in Ile-Ife and Surroundings*, Ibadan 1970; D. ADELOWO, Islam and Christianity in Ilé-Ife, in: I. AKINJOGBIN (ed.), *The Cradle of a Race: Ife from the Beginning to 1980*, Port Harcourt 1992, pp. 333–349; A. ADEYOMBO, *From Parish to Cathedral: St. Phillips Anglican Church, Ife* 2010; M. ADETUNMBI, *Growth and Expansion of Christian Missions in Ifeland 1899–2009*, Akure 2012.

<sup>23</sup> A. S. ELUGBAJU – S. O. AGHALINO, Islam and Religious Change in Ilé-Ife, South-western Nigeria, in: *Journal of Historical Society of Nigeria*, 30, 2021, pp. 49–71; S. O. AGHALINO – A. S. ELUGBAJU, Issues and Contentions in the Incursion of Islam and Christianity into Ilé-Ife, Southwestern Nigeria, in: *International Area Studies Review*, 25, 1, 2021, pp. 21–35.

<sup>24</sup> C. O. OSASONA, Colonial Architecture in Ile-Ife, in: *Bahaus Imaginista*, 3, 2018, pp. 1–15.



religio-cultural change<sup>25</sup> for Christianity and Islam and the introduction of Western education<sup>26</sup> and modern infrastructure by colonialism.<sup>27</sup> Additionally, while these studies have, to an extent, shown that human activities and encounters with the components of cultural heritage in Ile-Ife were regulated by their sacerdotal nature and importance ascribed to them,<sup>28</sup> there appears to be a paucity of literature examining the decline in the value<sup>29</sup> ascribed to cultural heritage and the role of this in shaping human activities leading to environmental changes within Ile-Ife, a space dominated by vestiges of cultural heritage. Therefore, the aim of this study is to interrogate the roles of modernisation, population growth, religious change, and urbanisation, in addition to insecurity and warfare,<sup>30</sup> among others, in spurring environmental changes that have had enduring consequences, some of which have permanently altered the existence of certain elements of the cultural heritage in Ile-Ife.

### **Ile-Ife: The City of the Relics of the Gods**

Sociocultural practices are the unique physical, intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and material characteristics that define a society or a social group.<sup>31</sup> A complex set of sociocultural traditions unique to the Yorùbá people is thought to have roots in Ile-Ife.<sup>32</sup> The town occupies this significant position since it is the centre of the Yorùbá Traditional Religion. This most likely influenced the view of Basorun Ogunmola during the Yoruba internecine wars of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>33</sup> The Ife maxims emphasising the significance of sacrifices and ritual killings probably reflect this ongoing practice of venerating ancestors.<sup>34</sup> The foundation of the family compound structure within the town appears to have contributed to the continuity of sociocultural practices founded in ancestor worship

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<sup>25</sup> ELUGBAJU – AGHALINO, pp. 21–35.

<sup>26</sup> AGHALINO – ELUGBAJU, pp. 49–71.

<sup>27</sup> OSASONA, pp. 1–15.

<sup>28</sup> D. LANGE, *Ancient Kingdoms of West Africa*, Dettelbach 2004.

<sup>29</sup> SONKOLY – VAHTIKARI, pp. 15–17.

<sup>30</sup> WEISS – CONNELLY, pp. 1–17.

<sup>31</sup> K. AKUOKO, Traditional Values, Socio-Cultural Factors and Human Resource Management Practices in Public Sector Organisations in Ghana, in: *Journal of Science and Technology*, 28, 3, 2008, pp. 58–69.

<sup>32</sup> J. ADEMAKINWA, *Ifè Cradle of the Yoruba*, Lagos 1985.

<sup>33</sup> S. JOHNSON, *The History of the Yorubas from the Earliest Times to the Beginning of the British Protectorate*, Lagos 1921, p. xi.

<sup>34</sup> O. OGUNREMI, *Oriki Agboole Ile-Ife*, Ile-Ife 2012, p. 3.

in Ilé-Ife in the past. Currently, there are three major classes of natives living in Ilé-Ife.<sup>35</sup> The sociocultural customs indigenous to these classes of Ife originated in the ancient ancestral rituals carried out throughout the various stages of life and death for the first two groups.<sup>36</sup> More specifically, this involves ritualising and spiritualising the events of marriage, childbirth, investiture, and burial. As a result, the wider system of Yorùbá Traditional Religion is entrenched across the social strata in Ilé-Ife. This perhaps underpins the commonly recounted dictum that festivals and rituals are conducted daily in Ilé-Ife, except for one day.<sup>37</sup> Thus, the centrality of Yoruba Traditional Religion to Ile-Ife indicates it is a sacred city. As argued by Zwi Werblowsky, a place may be considered sacred because they “*acquired their holiness as a result of historical circumstances or events, or because either in theory or in actual fact they were constructed so as to reflect cosmic reality – a kind of microcosmic spatial reflection of the macrocosm and its divine ground. Other cities are holy because they harbour or possess a holy object, a shrine or a tomb. Others again exhibit all these qualities in various combinations*”.<sup>38</sup>

According to the Yoruba, Ile-Ife is sacred for these three reasons. Apart from the festivals, rituals and rites, it is further expressed in the prevalence of sacred sites and objects such as groves, holy wells, votives, effigies, tombs, waterbodies and several natural objects associated with a plethora of deified historical figures incorporated into the Yoruba pantheon – most of which received attention in the 20<sup>th</sup> century through search and rescue, accidental discovery and deliberate archaeological investigations.

Extending across two Local Government Areas<sup>39</sup> in the present-day Osun State, the city of Ile-Ife has continued to linger in the imagination of writers for more than a century.<sup>40</sup> Despite its seeming popularity, especially within certain fields of study<sup>41</sup> in recent decades, it would appear

<sup>35</sup> A. S. ELUGBAJU, A King or A Priest in the City of 201 Gods: Interrogating the Place of the Oòni in the Religious system of Ilé-Ife in Southwest Nigeria, in: *Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies*, 43, 1, 2022, pp. 87–105.

<sup>36</sup> ELUGBAJU, pp. 87–105.

<sup>37</sup> OGUNREMI, p. 3.

<sup>38</sup> R. WERBLOWSKY, Introduction: Mindscape and Landscape, in: B. Z. KEDAR – R. J. Z. WEBLOWSKY (eds.), *Sacred Space: Shrine, City, Land*, New York 1998, p. 11.

<sup>39</sup> Centre for Democracy and Development, *Osun State 2018 Governorship Election: Things to Know*, <https://www.africaportal.org/documents/18622/2018-Osun-State-Governorship-Election.pdf> [2019–06–10].

<sup>40</sup> ELUGBAJU, pp. 87–105.

<sup>41</sup> F. WILLETT, Ife and Its Archaeology, in: *The Journal of African History*, 1, 2, 1960, pp. 231–248.

that only a little was known about the city except for the religio-mythical description in the Yoruba cosmogony and religion. The earliest documentation referring to Ile-Ife described the encounter that the Lander brothers had with an artefact which reportedly originated from Ile-Ife. They described the relic as a curious “*and singular kind of stone in the market. The natives informed us that it was dug from the earth, in a country called Iffie, which is stated to be ‘four moons’ journey from Katunga, where, according to their tradition, their first parents were created, and from whence all Africa has been peopled. Ignorant of mineralogy, as I am [...] I am unacquainted with the nature and properties of the stone alluded to, and therefore I grieve to say I am incapable of giving a scientific description of it. It consists of a variety of little transparent stones, white, green, and every shade of blue, all embedded in a species of clayey earth, resembling rough mosaic work*”.<sup>42</sup>

The description of the material as described by the Landers may elicit a guess that they probably encountered Ife beads. At any rate, while the material may never be unravelled, the finding and its documentation probably contributed to the exposure of the African city to discourses in Europe.<sup>43</sup> It is perhaps part of the reason Daniel May retorted in his journal that he “*accomplished one desideratum of my journey by arriving at the much talked of town of Ife*”.<sup>44</sup> Indeed, Daniel May was the first European to visit Ile-Ife. He did not, however, report any remarkable findings.<sup>45</sup>

This changed in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century when, in 1910, Richard Dennet, another European interested in the political system and, most especially, the religion of the Yoruba, visited Ile-Ife. Indeed, his visit was equally short.<sup>46</sup> However, it appears Dennet appreciated the religious significance of Ile-Ife, especially in the context of the nature of gods in Ile-Ife regarding figures such as Ore, Ogun, Oluorogbo and Oranmiyan.<sup>47</sup> Similarly, he encountered the sacred sites of these figures,

<sup>42</sup> J. LANDER – R. LANDER, *Journal of an Explore the Course and Termination of the Niger: With a Narrative of a Voyage Down the River to its Termination*, New York 1843, p. 171.

<sup>43</sup> Some European writers made references to the ongoing debate concerning the wealth and advancements in sub-Saharan Africa. For further readings, see FROBENIUS, *The Voice of Africa*, pp. 1–29.

<sup>44</sup> D. J. MAY, Journey in the Yoruba and Nupe countries in 1858, in: *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London*, 40, 1860, pp. 212–233.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> R. E. DENNETT, *Nigerian studies or The Religious and Political System of the Yoruba*, London, 1910.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

which included the groves, obelisks, stones and temples.<sup>48</sup> Similarly, Leo Frobenius, a German Ethnologist, encountered accounts describing Ile-Ife as one of the sites of some of the wonders of the world during his explorations in Timbuktu.<sup>49</sup> This, among several factors he mentioned in his book, spurred his sojourn in Yorubaland, where, while in several cities, he continued to encounter different accounts describing Ile-Ife.<sup>50</sup> Eventually, the ethnologist made his way to Ile-Ife and his findings while in the city would go on to challenge the existing perception about the civilisations in sub-Saharan Africa and, concurrently, propel the city into the limelight.<sup>51</sup> The discoveries encountered by Frobenius appear to be numerous, particularly in the form of the moveable and the immoveable elements. Yet, while he interprets the elements of his findings as artefacts, the locals, through whom he acquired access to the materials, understood them as relics of ancestors with religio-cultural underpinning.<sup>52</sup> Thus, the artefacts uncovered by Frobenius served religious purposes considered important to the continuous existence of Ile-Ife and the Yoruba world. At any rate, the findings made by Frobenius spurred the influx of explorers and scholars into Ile-Ife. This would reveal an extensive cultural heritage element domiciled in Ile-Ife and, eventually, the emergence of certain fields of study within Nigeria.<sup>53</sup>

In addition to Frobenius and Dennet, several other Europeans engaged in expeditions to present-day Nigeria and West Africa. Eventually, a type of search and rescue operation which, to a certain degree, crystallised into the origins of archaeology and, most importantly, the ascription of material value and the preservation of these artefacts.<sup>54</sup> In 1938, during an extensive digging conducted to prepare the foundation of a house in the Wunmonije compound, eighteen extraordinary bronzes were unearthed.<sup>55</sup> Meanwhile, not only did Ile-Ife appear more frequently in literature, but further findings, sometimes accidental, occurred, leading

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> FROBENIUS, *The Voice of Africa*, pp. 85–86.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> T. SHAW, Archaeology in Nigeria, in: *Antiquity*, 43, 171, 1969, pp. 187–199.

<sup>54</sup> C. A. FOLORUNSO, The Practice of Archaeology in Nigeria, in: L. R. LOZNY (ed.), *Comparative Archaeologies: A Sociological View of the Science of the Past*, New York 2011, pp. 807–826.

<sup>55</sup> W. R. BASCOM, Brass Portrait Heads from Ile-Ife, Nigeria, in: *Man*, 38, 1938, p. 176.

to the discovery of more relics of the material past of the city.<sup>56</sup> The increase in the uncovering of the unearthed materials in a city where gods sunk into the earth spurred the interest in preserving what was construed as a cultural heritage of the town in a museum.<sup>57</sup> Between 1949 and 1953, archaeologists of European origin journeyed to Ile-Ife to conduct excavations.<sup>58</sup> In addition to the site in Abiri,<sup>59</sup> more groves were subjected to scientific excavations, such as the Olokun Walode, Osangan-gan Obamakin and Olokun groves,<sup>60</sup> which yielded valuable materials for further studies and preservation, such as “*a sculpture in granite of a calabash or pot with a sash round its neck, the terracotta head said to be of Osangan-gan Obamakin, which was supposed never to see the light of day, and the incomplete representation in terracotta of a fettered man suffering from elephantiasis scroti ... A fine head was found buried on its side next to a food bowl which appeared to be recent. All the fragments were within eighteen inches of the ground surface; the lowest level was a hard gritty layer pierced by a shaft almost fourteen feet deep, containing pottery and charcoal. At the bottom the shaft was three feet three inches in diameter though it was narrower at the top. It seemed possible that this was a burial pit from which the bones had completely decayed*”.<sup>61</sup>

Similarly, in 1957, an investigation at a sacred site known as Ita Yeemo was spurred by an accidental encounter with an artefact during a dig for construction.<sup>62</sup> The exploration of the site revealed bronzes, terracotta figures and a shrine. What seems to be a major finding would not occur at this site until 1962 when another investigation was conducted, and not only was another shrine uncovered, but an extensive network of potsherd pavement was unearthed.<sup>63</sup> At any rate, between 1957 and 1962, the findings uncovered at this site include a figure of an Ooni, a royal pair of Obatala and Yeemo with arms and legs interlocked, an elaborate pot situated on a round stool with a loop of which is supported

<sup>56</sup> Instances of such accidental findings have been reported. For instance, see *ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> WILLETT, pp. 231–248.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> B. E. B. FAGG, New discoveries from Ife on exhibition at the Royal Anthropological Institute, in: *Man*, 49, 79, 1949, pp. 60–61.

<sup>60</sup> WILLETT, pp. 231–248.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> F. WILLETT, Bronze and Terra-Cotta Sculptures from Ita Yemoo, Ife, in: *The South African Archaeological Bulletin*, 14, 56, 1959, pp. 135–137.

<sup>63</sup> L. ROTH – G. CHOUIN – A. OGUNFOLAKAN, Lost in Space? Reconstructing Frank Willett’s Excavations at Ita Yemoo, Ile-Ife, Nigeria: Rescue Excavations (1957–1958) and Trench XIV (1962–1963), in: *Afrique: Archéologie & Arts*, 17, 2021, pp. 77–114.

on a rectangular stool, a royal figure holding a staff topped with human heads curled round a pot, and two mace-heads each bearing two gagged heads.<sup>64</sup> Shortly after the excavations at Ita Yeemo, Oliver Myers investigated two separate sites, including the Igbo Obameri and a site within the present-day Oduduwa College.<sup>65</sup> These two excavations led to the discovery of a mask head and several terracotta heads.<sup>66</sup>

Ekpo Eyo contributed to the discovery of more ancient relics in Ile-Ife when he excavated a site in the Odo Ogbe area, where a large market has since been established.<sup>67</sup> As with several other investigations in Ile-Ife, this was similarly spurred by an accidental discovery of a terracotta head which the torrents of the rain had exposed.<sup>68</sup> Nonetheless, the excavation led to the discovery of extensive deposits, a series of pits with pots situated within them and a burial chamber with the remains of a human skeleton.<sup>69</sup> In describing the complex nature of the discovery, Ekpo Eyo revealed that the burial chamber had a tunnel connecting it to another pit where several pots and pebbles were found, prompting him to suggest that it must have been linked to Osun.<sup>70</sup> Ekpo Eyo uncovered more cultural properties in 1969. Following the Odo Ogbe excavations, he dedicated an investigation to what he called the Lafogido site.<sup>71</sup> It seemed the earlier rescue and salvage operation conducted on this site in 1963 prompted his interest in conducting a further investigation there. During the excavation on this site, Ekpo Eyo discovered the effigy of an animal, which he regarded as mythical probably because of the royal emblem he said he found on it.<sup>72</sup> In addition, it was reported that the mythical animal was situated on a pot affixed to the edges of a rectangular pottery pavement, which he concluded could be a burial site.<sup>73</sup> While this

<sup>64</sup> WILLETT, *Bronze and Terra-Cotta*, pp. 135–37; and ROTH – CHOUIN – OGUNFOLAKAN, pp. 77–114.

<sup>65</sup> T. SHAW, Ife and Raymond Mauny, in: *2000 Years of African history: The Ground, Speech and Writing. Mixtures in Homage to Raymond Mauny, Volume I*, Paris 1981, pp. 109–135.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> R. MILLS-TETTEY – O. FADARE, Socio-Economic and Investment Characteristics of a Traditional Yoruba Market: The Case of Odo–Ogbe, Ile-Ife, Nigeria, in: *Third World Planning Review*, 13, 2, 1991, pp. 191–206.

<sup>68</sup> E. EYO, 1969 Excavations at Ile-Ife, in: *African Arts*, 3, 2, 1970, pp. 45–87.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> SHAW, pp. 109–135.

<sup>71</sup> EYO, Excavations, pp. 45–87.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

burial site forms a cultural heritage, it could have yielded more, except that the investigation was truncated.<sup>74</sup> Still, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Peter Galarke contributed to the growing list of cultural heritage artefacts through his archaeological investigations conducted at Obalara<sup>75</sup> and Woye Asiri<sup>76</sup> lands along the present-day Ibadan Road in Ile-Ife which turned up remarkable findings and furthered the possibility of dating different periods of Ife history.<sup>77</sup>

As a city where deified ancestors are memorialised in the form of burial sites and, in most cases, effigies buried in certain marked places only to be unearthed at certain periods annually.<sup>78</sup> These practices are embedded in the daily activities of the descendants of every ancestor at every family compound level across every lineage such that the deified culture heroes are propitiated weekly on specified sacred days regarded as *ojo ose*.<sup>79</sup> Similarly, as stated earlier, the sociocultural and religio-cultural activities cutting across marriage, childbirth, death and internment are deeply ensconced and interlinked with the deified ancestors of Ile-Ife, and there is a high probability that this complex system of ancestor worship has been operated among the natives of the town for centuries. Thus, if the depth of ancestor worship within lineages in Ile-Ife is considered, then it becomes curious the problem of discontinuities reported by Frobenius when he stated that: *"Many of the others make mutual accusations of having stolen their Orishas and are, therefore, not descendants of the Gods upon whom they allege dependence. He also said: Many were not entitled in any way to make a claim to such descent, for in the earlier war like times, everything got mixed. Both the clans of the Orishas Olokun and Odudua scarcely existed any longer. And they lied who called themselves after these Gods today."*<sup>80</sup>

This was further accentuated by Willet when using the case of the evacuation of Ife as a result of the war with Modakeke, he argued that: *"The present-day people of Ife, even the priests, know very little about the figures and*

<sup>74</sup> SHAW, pp. 109–135.

<sup>75</sup> P. S. GARLAKE, Excavations at Obalara's Land Ife: An Interim Report, in: *West African Journal of Archaeology*, 4, 1974, pp. 111–148.

<sup>76</sup> P. S. GARLAKE, Excavations on the Woye Asiri Family Land in Ife, Western Nigeria, in: *West African Journal of Archaeology*, 7, 1977, pp. 57–95.

<sup>77</sup> WILLETT, Ife and Its Archaeology, pp. 231–248.

<sup>78</sup> FROBENIUS, pp. 89–90.

<sup>79</sup> Personal observation by the researcher from direct participation in the weekly veneration of Orisa for more than a decade.

<sup>80</sup> FROBENIUS, p. 285.



*other objects of worship in the shrines and groves. Different priests of the same cult will give different identifications of the individuals represented, and even the same priest will give different accounts on different occasions. This does not appear to be due to a simple desire to mislead, but to a real confusion in the tradition.*"<sup>81</sup>

Both excerpts highlighted the consequence of the war with Modakeke during the Yoruba internecine wars cited. Indeed, the evacuation of Ife did occur, and certain lineages may have gradually lost knowledge of their tangible and intangible cultural heritage. However, both writers appear to have been oblivious to the stringent measures observed among the Ife to safeguard against the possibility of encroachment by individuals or groups who are not members of a lineage and non-Ife settlers.<sup>82</sup> These measures include differentiation in panegyric,<sup>83</sup> childbirth rites, access to collective lineage properties and inclusion in ancestral cults.<sup>84</sup> These measures were applied so that settlers within a lineage compound, Ife and non-Ife, within a lineage settlement are encouraged to retain the practices of the lineage or town they originated from.<sup>85</sup> The application of these measures guards against the usurpation of the cults and the components of ancestor veneration, as indicated by Frobenius as a factor responsible for the mix-up in traditions. Other possible factors are accountable for the problems associated with the preservation of cultural heritage materials, including religion and the modernisation of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. While war, religious change, colonialism and modernisation may have

<sup>81</sup> WILLETT, *Ife and Its Archaeology*, pp. 231–248.

<sup>82</sup> An interesting explanation of the concept of family and non-family is provided in A. AKINSOLA, *Ajobi and Ajagbe: Variations on the Theme of Sociation*, Ife 1983.

<sup>83</sup> An instance of co-habitation marked with differences in panegyric abound in several studies examining the panegyrics of compounds across Ile-Ife. For further reading, see OGUNREMI, *Oriki Agboole Ile-Ife*, pp. 1–98.

<sup>84</sup> Oral interview held with Babatunde Omidirepo, 55 years, the Chief Obaluru of Iranje-Idita, a diviner and a farmer, Igbo Itapa Street, Ile-Ife, February 2016 revealed that Ile Balea which is a section of Iranje-Ideta house cohabit with a lineage known as Ile Moleyo. And while both cohabit, neither can benefit from the ancestral inheritances, indigenous and public offices among others. Oral interview held with Very Reverend Adeboye Awoyode, 60+ years, Anglican Church Clergy, Mission House, Anglican Church Ayetoro, Ile-Ife, October 2019 equally revealed that while his lineage house was situated within a section of Iranje-Ideta that they were not descendants of Obatala but rather that of Owa Aponlese of Ilesa. And that his family and 16 others scattered across Ile-Ife migrated to Ife when they could not secure the right to the throne of Ilesa. And that while his lineage co-habit with members of Iranje-Ideta, they had limited access to certain benefits and rights within the group they co-habit with.

<sup>85</sup> Oral interview held with Very Reverend Adeboye Awoyode.



impacted the cultural heritage of Ife, attempts have been made to rescue moveable artefacts through the efforts of Ooni Aderemi and the Nigerian Government, which led to the establishment of a Museum in Ife to preserve and conserve these items and in some cases certain sites.<sup>86</sup> However, immovable cultural properties have not fared well under the pressure of environmental changes, which have continued to peak in Ile-Ife.

### Cultural Heritage, Environmental and Religious Change

The definition or conceptualisation of environmental change continues to evolve – as is the case with every phenomenon subjected to the reflections of scholars. D. L. Johnson et al. defined environmental change as a change or disturbance of the environment through natural ecological processes.<sup>87</sup> This definition limits environmental change to natural phenomena or disasters in the form of meteorite impacts, tectonic shifts and volcanic eruptions. However, they seem to recognise the place of human activities intensified by technological advancement in environmental change, which they classified as non-natural.<sup>88</sup> The natural and the non-natural processes in environmental change were captured in a definition which states that environmental change “occurs as a result of both natural and human processes. Environmental systems and human activities contribute to environmental changes through the transformation and transportation of large quantities of energy and materials”.<sup>89</sup> In addition, another definition has extended the concept to include environmental changes that are either naturally occurring or influenced by human activities, such as burning fossil fuels, land reclamation, intensifying agriculture, urbanisation, deforestation, waste generation, overfishing and obtaining fresh water.<sup>90</sup> In the past, it would appear that the impact of human activities on the environment was relatively low. However, in recent times, the changes caused by human activities have been at a remarkable scale, such that it

<sup>86</sup> WILLETT, *Ife and Its Archaeology*, pp. 231–248.

<sup>87</sup> D. L. JOHNSON – S. H. AMBROSE – T. J. BASSETT et al., Meanings of Environmental Terms, in: *Journal of Environment Quality*, 26, 3, 1997, pp. 581–589.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> European Environmental Agency, Environmental changes and human development, in: *Europe's Environment – The Dobris Assessment*, <https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/92-826-54095/page002new.html#:~:text=Environmental%20change%20occurs%20as%20a,quantities%20of%20energy%20and%20materials> [2023–09–05].

<sup>90</sup> S. DRIMIE et al., Global environmental change and food systems in Southern Africa: The Dynamic Challenges Facing Regional Policy, in: *Journal of Geography and Regional Planning*, 4, 4, 2011, pp. 169–182.

*“is also evident in the modification of the physical landscape. Since the eighteenth century, the planet has lost 6 million km<sup>2</sup> of forests – an area larger than Europe. In addition, the degradation of land to the point that its biotic function is damaged has increased. According to a recent study from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) the extent of vegetated soil degradation has reached 1964.4 million hectares (17 per cent of the Earth’s land area) in the last 45 years, due to overgrazing, deforestation, overexploitation, and improper agricultural and industrial practices. In Europe, the portion of degraded vegetated land reached about 23 per cent of the total over the same period”<sup>91</sup>*

These conceptualisations of environmental change and its consequences were reflected upon without consideration for Ife-Ife. However, the definition propounded by D. L. Johnson et al., which reported that environmental change found unnatural causes in human activities through the development of technology, even if crude, reflected the trajectory of environmental change in Ife-Ife<sup>92</sup> caused by the introduction of a certain degree of technology reflected by several artefacts such as the bead making industry in Odi Olokun<sup>93</sup> and paved pathways linking different streets of the city.<sup>94</sup>

The absence of documentation limits the extent to which the human activities of several centuries ago initiated environmental change in Ife-Ife. Therefore, attention will be limited to recent centuries, particularly the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The most remarkable event in this century, regarded as Ife’s sad century, was perhaps the Ife-Modakeke civil wars of 1849 and 1882, but with the latter situated within the broader Yoruba internecine wars of 1877–1893.<sup>95</sup> The complexities of these wars have been examined in several studies. Hence, the details surrounding the war, including the involvement of Ife, will not form an aspect of reflection in

<sup>91</sup> European Environmental Agency, Environmental changes and human development, in: *Europe’s Environment – The Dobris Assessment*, [https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/92-826-54095/page002new.html#:~:text=Environmental%20change%20occurs%20as%20a,quantities%20of%20energy%20and%20materials%20\[2023-09-05\]](https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/92-826-54095/page002new.html#:~:text=Environmental%20change%20occurs%20as%20a,quantities%20of%20energy%20and%20materials%20[2023-09-05]).

<sup>92</sup> JOHNSON – AMBROSE – BASSETT et al., pp. 581–589.

<sup>93</sup> O. ELUYEMI, The Technology of Ife Glass Beads: Evidence from Igbo Olokun, in: *Odu New Series*, 32, 1987, pp. 197–220; A. B. BABALOLA, *Archaeological Investigations of Early Glass Production at Igbo-Olokun, Ile-Ife (Nigeria)*, Rice University, PhD Thesis, 2015, pp. 61–64.

<sup>94</sup> WILLET, Ife and Its Archaeology, pp. 231–248; S. P. BLIER, *Art and Risk in Ancient Yoruba: Ife History, Power and Identity, c. 1300*, New York 2015, p. 43.

<sup>95</sup> A. USMAN – T. FALOLA, *The Yoruba from Prehistory to the Present*, Cambridge 2019, pp. 177–201.

this study. Nonetheless, it is important to point out that Ile-Ife was one of the theatres of the war, which saw the participation of external on both sides of the Ife and Modakeke, respectively.<sup>96</sup> The magnitude of the battles seemed to have been remarkable, so much so that not only did it lead to the evacuation of the Ife exiled in several places such as Oke-Igbo and Isoya, but the wars seemed to have been particularly devastating that it led to the destruction of Ife with that of 1882 being extensive.<sup>97</sup> In a report of his eyewitness account during his tour of certain parts of Yorubaland, including Ile-Ife, following the war of 1849, David Hinderer indicated that he saw *"nothing but ruins, broken mud walls, and old pots"*.<sup>98</sup> Similarly, in 1886, Higgins, who led a peace committee instituted by the Lagos government, described the effect of the destruction of 1882 when he commented that: *"On our north was the site of Ile-Ife, the lines of the demolished walls which had once extended from Modakake to where Arimoro had made his camp being still traceable, although so completely had the town been razed to the ground that it was scarcely possible to discover the traces of a single house in the bush and grass which has over grown the place."*<sup>99</sup>

The desertion of Ile-Ife lingered until 1894.<sup>100</sup> However, the extent of the destruction of the city was probably far-reaching that in 1858, David Hinderer, during a visit to the Ooni, reported the sight of the palace: *"I met him in a very humble abode close by the ruins of the place, a shed about 20 feet long by 8 feet wide. He is a middle-aged short and stout man. His conversation was very brief, perhaps more affected than real on account of the misfortunes under which he came to his honour as king of Ife."*<sup>101</sup>

To the Ife, the palace is one of the most important sacred sites in the city, within which several sacred religio-cultural heritage components are held. Noting the extent of the destruction of the palace, it can be suggested here that the city must have been completely ravaged such that most of the sacred sites and components must have been subjected to wreckage. This is reflected in the accounts of the visit of Leo Frobenius in 1910, whose visit was about 16 years after Ife had been resettled.<sup>102</sup>

<sup>96</sup> JOHNSON, pp. 420–507.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> O. OMOSINI, Ife: The Years of Recovery, 1893–1930, in: I. AKINJOGBIN (ed.), *The Cradle of a Race: Ife from the Beginning to 1980*, Port Harcourt 1992, pp. 171–191.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> FROBENIUS, pp. 287–291.

Interestingly, compared to some of the reports highlighting the effects of the wars on Ile-Ife, that of Frobenius seemed more graphic. In his account, not only did Frobenius identify sacred items and sites, but he also provided descriptive analyses of the impact of the destruction of the war on them.<sup>103</sup> In one of the accounts he documented while in Ife, Frobenius recorded that the marauding Modakeke elements overran and exploited the wealth of the city when it was sacked. *“Although those telling the story naturally smoothed this over, Ife had been obviously weakened by the Modekan blood-suckers. But now the Modekans cast an eye at the source of Ife’s wealth, Ebolokun, which is to the North-east of the city... However, this may be, whatever the length of the contest, the good Ilifians were eventually beaten and the Modekans seized Ebolokun. It is they who are said to have driven most of the pits which have torn up its soil. The Ilifians never again dug there after that [...].”*<sup>104</sup>

The century, particularly the 20<sup>th</sup> century when Frobenius visited, did not only feature the re-occupation, restoration and recovery of Ile-Ife. The period recorded the institution of colonialism<sup>105</sup> and the advent of Christianity and Islam.<sup>106</sup> These phenomena introduced modernisation and religious change, both constituting a form of disruption that has left a lasting impact on the continued existence of cultural heritage in Ile-Ife. The complexities associated with the advent of Christianity and Islam have been discussed extensively elsewhere.<sup>107</sup> However, it is vital to indicate that both religions were introduced by natives who had been exposed to them during exile or sojourn.<sup>108</sup> In addition, the years of these two religions overlap so that in 1899, when Christianity was established through the agents of the Anglican church, Islam began to make inroads into Ile-Ife. In 1903, the first mosque was constructed and commissioned for use.<sup>109</sup> The response of the Ife to the introduction of an alien religion can be regarded as mixed. At any rate, the proponents of Christianity and Islam operated a policy that seemed to target material aspects of

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> O. OYEDIRAN, The Position of the Ooni in the Changing Political System of Ilé-Ife, in: *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, 6, 4, 1973, pp. 21–34.

<sup>106</sup> D. ADELOWO, Islam and Christianity in Ilé-Ife, in: I. AKINJOGBIN (ed.), *The Cradle of a Race: Ife from the Beginning to 1980*, Port Harcourt 1992, pp. 333–349.

<sup>107</sup> S. O. AGHALINO – A. S. ELUGBAJU, Issues and contentions in the incursion of Islam and Christianity into Ilé-Ife, southwestern Nigeria, in: *International Area Studies Review*, 25, 1, 2022, pp. 21–35.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> ADELOWO, pp. 333–349.

Yoruba Traditional Religion, particularly effigies, costumes and sacred sites, which are components of cultural heritage.<sup>110</sup> The agencies of proselytisation were largely peaceful – this consisted of using modern health care methods, Western and Arabic literacy, modern farming methods and other diplomatic means. However, the position of both religions consisted of eliminating Yoruba Traditional Religion and its components.<sup>111</sup> For instance, in an interview with Princess Funmilayo Elugbaju revealed that during a sermon led by Pastor Adejumo, her paternal grandfather dumped votary items of an *Òrìṣà* which were inherited heirlooms into a pit, marking his exit from Yoruba Traditional Religion for membership in the Christian community.<sup>112</sup>

While the case in point may not derive from environmental change, it nonetheless registers the situation of cultural heritage in the history of religious change in Ile-Ife. This policy entails the construction of church buildings and mosques upon lands or within groves that are considered sacred to Yoruba Traditional Religion.<sup>113</sup> An account relates that the Christians and Muslims specifically targeted these spaces in their requests for land so that its successful occupation, which has been regarded as a miracle, can serve as an indicator of the power of their God.<sup>114</sup> And ultimately, make Christianity and Islam more appealing. Another account reported that the lands offered to the Christians and Muslims to construct worship centres were considered sacred sites within which certain otherworldly agents with the capacity to exterminate trespassers, in this case, the Christians and the Muslims, occupied.<sup>115</sup> Ultimately, the intent was that the otherworldly agents domiciled within these sites would exterminate Christians and Muslims. Hence, the disruptive religions would be ended.<sup>116</sup> Efforts will not be expended here to examine the originator of the policy. At any rate, Christians and Muslims appeared to have directed the efforts to establish worship centres towards sacred sites. For instance,

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<sup>110</sup> AGHALINO – ELUGBAJU, *Issues and contentions*, pp. 21–35.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>112</sup> Oral interview held with Princess Funmilayo Elugbaju, 60+ years, Retiree, Olojo Yannigan Compound, Igbodo, Ile-Ife, May 2019.

<sup>113</sup> Oral interview held with Pa I. A. Otete, 90+ years, Retiree, Christ Apostolic Church, More, Ile-Ife, May 2019.

<sup>114</sup> Oral interview held with Pa I. A. Otete.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>116</sup> Oral interview held with Madam Ajoke Elufisayo, 75+ years, Retiree, Ilode Road, Ile-Ife, July 2019.

the Anglican church building sited at Ayegbaju was a sacred forest known as *Igbó Iso* (forest of the hanged), and it was associated with one of the important Yoruba deified culture heroes, perhaps, Obameri the god of suicidal deaths from hanging.<sup>117</sup> Igbo Iso served as the sacred internment space for those who died from certain diseases and those who committed suicide, especially by hanging.<sup>118</sup> As a result, the forest was avoided due to the belief that visitors would suffer a similar fate of suicide identical to the corpses deposited there.<sup>119</sup>

Another case in point would be the Christ Apostolic Church at Mòòrè quarter. The land which the church now occupies was known as *Igbo Olose* (Forest of Olose).<sup>120</sup> This forest was particularly feared such that as recent as the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the path along the forest was barely used.<sup>121</sup> It was a widespread belief in the past that anyone who went into this forest would suffer several consequences, particularly death.<sup>122</sup> Despite the risk, specific individuals partook in the penetration and preparation of these sacred forests to construct church structures.<sup>123</sup> It was reported that at the time the grove was penetrated, several ancient materials were encountered but equally destroyed by the Christians, who concluded that they represented evil.<sup>124</sup> In addition, the Muslims towed a similar path. An example is the attempt made by the Muslim community to establish a mosque on a section of the land regarded as a part of the Idio grove of Oduduwa, a deity considered essential in the Ife indigenous political structure.<sup>125</sup> Although this culminated in a violent conflict between the Muslims and the adherents of the Yoruba Traditional Religion, the

<sup>117</sup> Oral interview held with Oluwo Fatade Owoyomi, 70+ years, the Chief Awise Awo Ilode, Chief Oluwo Lokore and Diviner, Oke Atan Road, Ilode, Ile-Ife, September 2019.

<sup>118</sup> Oral interview held with Madam Ajoke Elufisayo.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Oral interview held with Pastor Femi Olayinka, 55+ years, Pastor, Christ Apostolic Church, More, Ile-Ife, September 2019.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> PASTOR S. AFOLABI, *Itan Ibere ati Idagbasoke Ijo Aposteli Ti Kristi Ni Ife, 1926–1997*, Ile-Ife, 2018 indicated the group of early members of the Christ Apostolic Church who went into the sacred Igbo Olose with cutlass to clear the grounds and they were led by Pastor E. T. Latunde.

<sup>124</sup> Oral interview held with Pa I. A. Otete; PASTOR S. AFOLABI, *Itan Ibere ati Idagbasoke Ijo Aposteli Ti Kristi Ni Ife*.

<sup>125</sup> M. FASOGBON, *The Ancient Constitutional History of Ile Ife Ooyelagbo*, Lagos 1985.

eventual establishment of the mosque has impacted the extent of the sacred grove of Oduduwa in such a way that the extent of the land has been encroached on and reduced in size.<sup>126</sup> Similarly, in the present-day Igbo Itapa area where the sacred sites associated with Obatala are situated, the Muslims reportedly erected a mosque on a site dedicated to the veneration of Kori Koto, a deified figure associated with the well-being of children.<sup>127</sup> In addition to constructing mosques on sacred grounds, the Muslims also operated a policy of occupying sections of lands reportedly associated with culture heroes inherited across generations, thereby reducing the extent of these ancestral spaces considered sacred.<sup>128</sup>

The advent of Christianity and Islam in Ile-Ife appears to have accelerated the obliteration of several cultural heritage sites and elements through expansionism conducted by the establishment of praying centres. In addition, the adoption of these religions by the Ife seemed to have introduced a new way of thinking, which shifted the understanding of cultural heritage elements as sacred to the view that they were man-made. As such, the values attached to these items were eroded and exposed to a high theft rate.<sup>129</sup> In the desperate search for these sacred components, certain natives of Ife engaged in activities that elicited environmental change, such as digging pits within sacred sites and other perceived locations of these objects to exhume them from the earth.<sup>130</sup> This was particularly pronounced during the reign of Ooni Adesoji Aderemi between 1930 and 1950 when the artefacts of Ile-Ife received global attention and, thus, became commercialised by the Ife, who desperately exchanged these artefacts for monetary gains.<sup>131</sup> Some of the stolen dug-out artefacts orchestrated the disappearance of several components of cultural heritage and obliteration of the sites in which they were situated, which had become subject to human occupation and the construction of other edifices.<sup>132</sup> This has also led to the decline of the cults of specific deities

<sup>126</sup> Oral interview held with Sodiq Oramuyiwa, 60 years, Trader and Cleric, Enuwa Central Mosque, Ile-Ife, April 2020.

<sup>127</sup> Oral interview held with Babatunde Omidirepo.

<sup>128</sup> Oral interview held with Mutui Adeosun, 55+ years, the Imam of the Ita Akogun Mosque, Oja Ita Akogun, Okerewe, Ile-Ife, March 2020.

<sup>129</sup> Oral interview held with Babatunde Omidirepo.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> EYO, Excavations, pp. 45–87; F. WILLETT, Restitution or Re-Circulation: Benin, Ife and Nok, in: *Journal of Museum Ethnography*, 12, 2000, pp. 125–131.

<sup>132</sup> Oral interview held with Babatunde Omidirepo cited an instance of sacred sites in Iranje-Ideta which have now been encroached upon with residential buildings.



and, in some cases, the obliteration of the festival of particular gods, such as Osupa Ijio, to mention a few.<sup>133</sup> The high demand for the votives of Yoruba Traditional Religion led to a spike in the theft of religio-cultural items that formed the theme of the UCLA James S. Coleman African Studies Centre publication in 1994.<sup>134</sup>

Modernisation is another notable factor that has engendered environmental change that has impacted the cultural heritage of Ile-Ife. The British intervention in the Yoruba internecine wars laid the groundwork for colonialism in Yorubaland<sup>135</sup> and, consequently, modernisation. Certain studies have examined the place of the colonialists in the introduction of modern infrastructure and architecture in Ile-Ife.<sup>136</sup> The effect of this phenomenon of architectural change can be argued to have prompted a change in the architectural and infrastructural pattern common among the Ife to the modern types.<sup>137</sup> A remarkable instance of modernisation in Ile-Ife was the naming of the road paths, which were subjected to upgrades in the form of expansion and tarring after the considerations accorded to it by the colonial Native Authority.<sup>138</sup> Indeed, the introduction of modern architecture and road network construction across Ile-Ife impacted cultural heritage, particularly the sacred edifices and groves. This was in such a way that the new architecture initiated a migration of the population of Ile-Ife from the ancient spaces to newly planned or laid out sites for modern buildings.<sup>139</sup> Thus leading to the abandonment of the areas regarded as old, sacred and ancestral. This resulted in the dilapidation and, in some cases, total collapse of sacred buildings. In some

<sup>133</sup> DENNETT, p. 26

<sup>134</sup> F. WILLET, *Restitution*, pp. 125–131; Anonymous, *Stolen Ife Terracotta and Bronze Heads*, in: *African Arts* 27, 1, 1994. pp. 93–93.

<sup>135</sup> JOHNSON, pp. 651–688.

<sup>136</sup> OSASONA, pp. 1–15.

<sup>137</sup> For instance, in 1935, the road linking the Ifè township to Mòkúró was constructed, among others. In addition, Ile Olayinka (Olayinka House), Ile Alubarika (House of Blessing), and Ile Oyinbo Moore (Ologbenla House), to mention a few, are indicative of the interest taken by the indigenous Ifè in modernization, for further reading, see OSASONA, pp. 1–15.

<sup>138</sup> National Archive Ibadan, Ifè Div 1/1, File 426, Ife Town Roads.

<sup>139</sup> Prince Adetoyese Adeniji in discussion with the author, August 2019 revealed that Akarabata lines 1, 2, and 3 were laid out by Ooni Aderemi and equally, apportioned to individuals with the capacity to facilitate the construction of modern residential buildings. With the saturation of Akarabata, Igboya, Eleyele, and Fajuyi were marked out for the same purpose.

cases, spaces dedicated to deified culture heroes became overgrown and reduced to sites for tree felling, farming and human exploitation.<sup>140</sup> Furthermore, the shift in the residential domain created a surge in demand for land, which prompted the Ife to look elsewhere for space.

The increased demand for new spaces for the construction of modern buildings compelled members of certain lineages to sell parts, or in some cases, all of the sacred lands hosting components of cultural heritage and regarded as a cultural heritage in itself.<sup>141</sup> The economic benefits, especially in the financial form, tied to the demand for land, facilitated a wide-scale participation in the sale of sacred lands.<sup>142</sup> While the sale of lands may have facilitated upward economic mobility, the extensive nature of the sale appears to have been indiscriminate and unregulated that many of the cultural heritage elements in the form of natural objects, considered historical and sacred, were destroyed and sold and in some cases, converted to private use.<sup>143</sup> Sacred paths employed in processions of rituals and festivals connecting important ritual sites appear to have been obscured due to modernisation through the construction of buildings and roads, which have obliterated ancient routes.<sup>144</sup> In addition, urbanisation and the proliferation of residential buildings have led to encroachment into some pieces of land retained for their ritual importance.

## Conclusion

In addition to other factors, Ile-Ife recorded an extensive effect of environmental change on cultural heritage between the closing part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As shown in the study, the environmental changes were engendered by war, religious change, colonisation and modernisation. However, despite the palpable nature of the effects of environmental change, the Ife appears to have shown

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<sup>140</sup> Several sacred groves and spaces suffering from this fate are scattered across Ile-Ife.

<sup>141</sup> Oral interview held with Babatunde Omidirepo.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> For instance, the route leading to the sacred grove of Owa Ilare has become highly populated with modern buildings such that during processions, the ritual activities conducted along the path were usually exposed to the gaze of residents and pedestrians within the area. The encroachment on sacred paths have led to violent encounters as in the recent case. For further reading, see B. BAMIGBOLA, *Osun Muslims-Traditionalists' Endless Rifts Unsettle Community*, in: PunchNG. <https://punchng.com/osun-muslims-traditionalists-endless-rifts-unsettle-community/> [2023-09-05].

a degree of resilience in preserving what is left of the cultural heritage handed down across generations. While many sacred lands containing relics have been encroached upon, there exists a certain portion of these lands, usually minuscule, upon which attempts are made to sustain the historical origins and religio-cultural importance of the geographical space. Similarly, while many moveable objects appear to have been untraceably lost or, in some cases, relocated to other places, attempts have been made to reclaim many of these relics for the purpose of returning them to the sacred locations they belonged to in Ile-Ife and also, for the revival of the religio-cultural roles or cults associated with them. At any rate, environmental change, which continues to evolve through new human endeavours and inventions, threatens the continued existence and the future of cultural heritage in Ile-Ife.

## The Adriatic Question: Case Albania

*Armend Mehmeti*<sup>1</sup>

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The Adriatic Question was an issue discussed at Paris Peace Conference (1919) and embraces the disputes over the territories along the north-eastern coast of Adriatic Sea that formerly belonged to Austria-Hungary. The roots of this problem laid in the Treaty of London (1915), when the Entente promised territorial concessions to Italy in Balkans. The paper elaborates on the circumstances that led to Albania's involvement in this issue, the efforts of Albanians to preserve their independence and territorial integrity, the policy of the Entente and its allies towards Albania, and the epilogue this issue had for Albania. A comparative and chronological approach was used to draft this article. The arguments stemming from this paper prove that European powers tried to sacrifice Albania for their political goals, but such an attempt was thwarted by President Wilson's determination to put into practice his principles of new world order.

[Albania; Entente; Italy; Shkodra; Wilson]

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### Introduction

When World War I started, the Entente and the Central Powers attempted to form an alliance with the neutral governments. Italy was the focus of the warring bloc's attention because of its strategic location and potent armed forces. By promising Italy territorial concessions, the Entente managed to win her support in the war against Central Powers. Italy and the members of the Entente Powers as a result concluded a treaty in London in April 1915.<sup>2</sup>

The Treaty of London promised Italy territories in the north-eastern Adriatic: Trentino, South Tyrol, Trieste, the surroundings of Gorica and Gradishka, all Istria up to Quarnero, islands of Istra, Cherso and Lussin,

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<sup>2</sup> On a more analyses about the alliances during the World War I see: H. W. Y. TEMPERLAY, *A History of the Peace Conference of Paris, Vol. V. Economic reconstruction and protection of minorities*, London 1921, p. 392; L. S. STAVRIANOS, *The Balkans since 1453*, London 2000, p. 710.

as well as several small islands around. Italy was also promised the province of Dalmatia with its administrative borders.<sup>3</sup> But, these were not the only commitments that the Entente Allies promised to Italy. To balance the possessions promised to Italy in the north-eastern Adriatic, the Entente had pledged to cede a part of the Adriatic to Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro. This section began at the Istrian border and extended south down the Dalmatian coast, including the port of Fiume and a number of other islands.<sup>4</sup> The Treaty of London (1915) also affected Albania. Based on Articles 5, 6 and 7 of the Treaty, the Albania recognized in 1913 would be divided in this way: Valona and its surroundings would fall under the full sovereignty of Italy; an autonomous Muslim Albanian state will be formed in Central Albania under the Italian protectorate; Northern Albania is given to Serbia and Montenegro, and southern Albania to Greece. Serbia and Montenegro provided access to the Albanian Adriatic.<sup>5</sup>

Along with the aforementioned clauses, the Treaty of London also included general provisions regarding the distribution of territories or interests of Allies in Asia Minor, the Middle East, and Africa.<sup>6</sup>

### The Situation in Balkans at the End of World War I

In addition to great losses and material destruction, the World War I marked drastic changes in the political, cultural and social areas in Europe, Asia, Africa, and in all other regions that were directly involved in this war. Old empires were destroyed, and in their lands new states emerged. The fall of Austro-Hungary marked an important point in Balkans history. This major event resulted in the liberation of many territories north of the Danube River, in Dalmatia and the north-eastern shores of the Adriatic, mainly inhabited by Slavic populations: Slovenes, Croats and Serbs.<sup>7</sup> The representatives of these people formed in August 1918 the Yugoslav National Council. A month later, Ante Trumbic (Trumbić)

<sup>3</sup> *Agreement between France, Russia, Great Britain and Italy, signed at London, April 26, 1915*, London 1920, pp. 3–5, <https://archive.org/details/agreementbetween00franrich/page/n3/mode/2up> [visited 2023–11–10].

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> W. BLAND, I. PIERCE, *A Tangled Web: A History of Anglo-American Relations with Albania (1912–1955)*, London 1986, p. 6; P. TELI, *Shqipëria dhe diplomacia angleze 1919–1927*, Tiranë 2005, pp. 29–30.

<sup>6</sup> *Agreement between France, Russia, Great Britain and Italy, signed at London, April 26, 1915*, London 1920, pp. 5–7, <https://archive.org/details/agreementbetween00franrich/page/n3/mode/2up> [visited 2023–11–10].

<sup>7</sup> B. ЋОРОВИЋ, *Историја Југославије*, Београд 1933, p. 675.

on behalf of the Yugoslav Council and Nikola Pasic (Pašić), on behalf of the Serbian government, signed the declaration calling for the formation of a common state between Serbia and the Serbs-Croats-Slovenes of the former Austria-Hungary.<sup>8</sup> This call was realized on December 1, 1918 when Prince Alexander of Serbia proclaimed the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes<sup>9</sup> (hereinafter: Kingdom SCS). The creation of a state of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes somehow fulfilled the claims of the Serbian government, which during the World War I was committed to two solutions: (1) the great option: Serbia includes in its possession following regions: Bosnia and Herzegovina and all areas inhabited by Slavic population (Slavic ethnic areas) under Austro-Hungarian rule, and (2) the minor option: an expanded Serbia, up to the borders with Slavic population under Austria-Hungary.<sup>10</sup>

The new state was run by Serbs, despite the fact that they made up about half of the population.<sup>11</sup> The Serbian army became the army of Kingdom SCS; Croatian units of the old Austro-Hungarian army were dissolved. Serbs held all important positions in government and state administration. Belgrade remained the capital and the king of Serbia became king of the new state.<sup>12</sup> The trend of political dominance produced the confrontation between the concept of a unitary state represented by the Serbs and the federal one by the Croats and Slovenes.<sup>13</sup> In contrast to the centralization promoted by the Serbs, the Croats and Slovenes sought a federal political structure in which each group would be able to maintain its own political, cultural and religious features.<sup>14</sup> These divergences will become more pronounced among the members of the delegation of the SCS Kingdom during the Peace Conference works, especially in the resolution of border disputes between with Italy.

<sup>8</sup> STAVRIANOS, pp. 616–619.

<sup>9</sup> G. CASTELLAN, *Histori e Ballkanit*, Tiranë 1997, p. 422.

<sup>10</sup> B. KRIZMAN et.al., *Iz istorije Jugoslavije 1918–1945*, Beograd 1958, pp. 148–149.

<sup>11</sup> The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes had a population of about 12 million inhabitants, on a surface of 248,250 km<sup>2</sup>. The census was done on a religious, not a national basis. According to this classification, Orthodox Slavs were called Serbs, Catholics were called Croats. According to the census there were about 5.4 million Serbs, 3.7 million Croats and 1.3 million Muslims, and a number of minorities such as Germans, Hungarians, Albanians, etc.... For more see CASTELLAN, p. 431.

<sup>12</sup> M. MAKMILLAN, *Paris 1919 – Gjashtë muaj që ndryshuan botën*, Tiranë 2006, p. 149.

<sup>13</sup> CASTELLAN, p. 431.

<sup>14</sup> STAVRIANOS, p. 616.

## Albania on the Eve of the Peace Conference

Until the eve of the Balkan Wars, the territories inhabited by Albanians were under the rule of the Ottoman Empire and divided into several administrative provinces. With the outbreak of the Balkan Wars, Albania declared its independence from the Ottoman Empire on November 28, 1912, but it was not recognized by the Great Powers.<sup>15</sup> Conference of Ambassadors in London was gathered to decide about the political future of Balkan territories of the Ottoman Empire. It was held (December 1912 – August 1913) under the chairmanship of British Foreign Minister Edward Grey.<sup>16</sup> In March 1913 the Conference of Ambassadors arbitrarily defined the borders of Albania,<sup>17</sup> not being based on ethnic principles and leaving more than half of the Albanians outside the new Albanian state. In particular, the rich region of Kosovo in the north and the province of Chameria in the south were ceded to Serbia, respectively to Greece. Finally, on July 19, 1913, the Conference of Ambassadors recognized Albania, not as an independent state, but as an “*autonomous, sovereign and hereditary principality*”.<sup>18</sup> The Great Powers appointed Wilhelm Wied, a 35-year-old German army captain, as the head of Albania. On March 7, 1914, he landed in Durres where he was welcomed with enthusiasm.<sup>19</sup>

During the World War I Albania was plunged into a total anarchy; Wied had left and Albania was occupied by Italian, Austrian, French, Greek, Serbian, Montenegrin and Bulgarian armies.<sup>20</sup>

The end of the war found Albania not only divided into four separate zones of occupation,<sup>21</sup> but also severely destroyed. The military actions,

<sup>15</sup> A. PUTO, *Pavarësia e Shqipërisë dhe diplomacia e Fuqive të Mëdha 1912–1914*, Tiranë 2012, p. 133.

<sup>16</sup> XH. SHUKA, “Italian Attitude towards the Albanian Issue: Albania’s Southern Border at the Conference of Ambassadors in London 1912–1913”, in: *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* 6, 3, 2015, p. 326.

<sup>17</sup> P. MILO, *Shqipëria dhe Jugosllavia 1918–1927*, Tiranë 1992, p. 23.

<sup>18</sup> K. KRISAFI, “The International Legal Status of Albania from the end of the London Conference of Ambassadors to the end of the First World War”, in: *SEEU Review*, Special edition 10, 1, 2014, p. 71.

<sup>19</sup> K. PRIFTI et. al., *Historia e Popullit Shqiptar*, Vëllimi III, Tiranë 2002, p. 58.

<sup>20</sup> STAVRIANOS, p. 616.

<sup>21</sup> At the end of the war and after the armistice was reached the Supreme Council of the Allies decided that the Allied troops (British, French, Italian and Serbian) should remain in Albania. Albanian’s case was to be decided by the Peace Conference. See more: R. GURAKUQI, *Shqipëria dhe çështja shqiptare pas Luftës së Parë Botërore*, Tiranë 2011, p. 16.



which took place on the Albanian territory during the years brought great destruction to the country. Many villages were burned and destroyed, including loses in agriculture and livestock. Almost 70 thousand people died due to war actions, hunger, diseases, and particularly the Spanish flu.<sup>22</sup>

By the end of the war, the Albanians began to organize themselves to protect their national interests. On December 25, 1918, 48 delegates from all parts of Albania gathered in Durres and formed a provisional government. A delegation was chosen by the government to represent Albania's interests at the Peace Conference.<sup>23</sup>

### **The Stances of Powers**

The Allied Powers called the Conference (January 1919) with the aim to set the peace conditions and to share the spheres of influence. All countries, in particular small ones hoped for a right solution of their national question based on Wilson's principles. Regardless the Entente statement for "justice, liberty and people's right for self-determination", the developments proved that the Allies continued to rely on old diplomacy, causing other problems in post war order.<sup>24</sup>

As it happened in the past the primary goal of Great Powers was protecting of their interests. At the meeting of Trianon, between the Entente allied states, which was held in October 1918, two facts of great importance emerged: the Great Powers had the exclusive right to form an international system and peace solutions should include the necessity to adapt the 14 points of the American president Wilson, who had firmly rejected the secret agreements made during the war. How much the Great Powers were interested in formation of a new world order was also evidenced by the organizational structure of the Conference. The main decision-making body, the Council of Four, consisted of Woodrow Wilson – the President of the US, David Lloyd George – the Prime Minister of the Great Britain, George Clemenceau – the French Prime Minister, and Vittorio Orlando – the Italian Prime Minister. The Council of Four was the central governing body of the conference, a body where the most important decisions were made.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> PRIFTI et. al., p. 98.

<sup>23</sup> GURAKUQI, p. 22.

<sup>24</sup> E. LUKU, The Diplomacy of the Great Powers towards Albania in the Context of the "Adriatic Question", in: *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 3 (1), 2012, p. 289.

<sup>25</sup> R. ALBRECHT-CARRIE, *Contemporary Europe: A Study of National, International, Economic, and Cultural Trends*, New York 1941, p. 363.

The British Prime Minister David Lloyd George, in his peace program announced on 5 January 1918, before representatives of British trade unions, spoke generally for a territorial solution based on the right of self-determination, or the consent of the governed. He emphasized that Britain prioritized the restoration of the political, territorial and economic independence of Belgium, and then the restoration of Serbia, Montenegro, Romania, France, the unification of the Italian people, the independence of Poland, etc. He affirmed that the struggle and suffering of the sailors and soldiers who fought for the cause of freedom should not be forgotten at the Conference.<sup>26</sup> British Prime Minister David Lloyd George did not touch the Albanian issue at all. He spoke generally of a *“territorial solution based on the right of self-determination, or the consent of the governed”*. This statement of January 1918 was in consent with the position consistently maintained by the British government, which stemmed from the primary role it had recognized for Italy on April 26, 1915. But what the British Prime Minister did not say on January 5, was completed later by his Secretary for Foreign Affairs, A. Balfour. Responding to a deputy who had asked about the future of Albania, Balfour affirmed in the Chamber of Deputies, on February 18, that: *“...the agreements concluded in 1913, in which Albania was not a party, have ceased to be in force ... since all the signatory powers are now at war.”* By this statement, it was understood that the international acts related to Albania had to be made from scratch, that the Albanian people, just as they were not asked about their fate in 1913, would not be asked at the end of the war, and that the Great Powers will decide about Albania.<sup>27</sup>

The US goals at the Peace Conference were expressed through a speech that President Wilson addressed to Congress on January 8, 1918. He asserted that the US had entered the war to secure peace, justice and self-determination for all the people of the world. Such a program was elaborated in 14 points, which became known as “President Wilson’s 14 points”, which in a general framework included: open international agreements, freedom of navigation outside territorial waters, the removal of economic barriers, the establishment of equal commercial conditions among nations, preservation of independence and territorial integrity

<sup>26</sup> *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States*, vol. I-1918, Supplement 1, The World War, Washington 1933, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1918Supp01v01/d4> [visited 2023-12-10].

<sup>27</sup> M. ÇAMI, M. VERLI, *Shqipëria në Konferencën e Paqes (1919-1920)*, Tiranë 2015, p. 28.

for all states, etc.<sup>28</sup> In this program, the points 9 (Re-adjustment of the borders of Italy clearly recognizing the borders of nationality), 10 (Limited self-government for the peoples of Austria-Hungary) and 11 (Evacuation of German troops from Romania, Serbia and Montenegro and to guarantee the independence for Balkan countries)<sup>29</sup> – had to do with Albania and the northern Adriatic. But was Albania included as an independent state in the Balkans, which would have the right to borders according to the principle of nationality? In a report by American experts on December 22, 1917, on the basis of which President Wilson's 14 points were formed, it was said: "... *an independent Albania constitutes, almost certainly, an undesirable political being.*"<sup>30</sup>

The intentions of France were revealed by the speech that its Foreign Minister delivered in the parliament. "*We fight for a lasting peace for which three conditions must be met: the respect of agreements, the regulation of territories based on the right of peoples and the limitation of armaments.*" Our goals, Pichon emphasized, are in line with those of the British and Americans: the removal of economic barriers, the restoration of Belgium, Serbia, Romania and the correction of territorial injustices done to France in 1871.<sup>31</sup> The France government was in same lines with British government. Demanding to restore the rights of Serbia, Greece and Romania, the French government did not mention Albania.<sup>32</sup>

Unlike France, Great Britain and the US, Italy was directly bound by the Treaty of London of 1915, through which it aimed to realize its claims in the entire Adriatic area. Although the Italians were conditioned and sometimes absorbed by the pursuit of their aspirations on the eastern shores of the Adriatic, anyway they attempted to form an autonomous position regarding the question of the "new Europe". The main challenge lay in the fact that their interests were not aligned with the interests of other powers. Factors such as the proximity to the Danube region and the Balkan peninsula, the destruction of the traditional rival Austria-Hungary, and the appearance of the SCS state that claimed most of the eastern Adriatic and was allied to France, caused the Italians to consider with

<sup>28</sup> ALBRECHT-CARRIE, pp. 14–15.

<sup>29</sup> MAKMILLAN, pp. 555–556.

<sup>30</sup> *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States*, The Paris Peace Conference, 1919, Vol. I, The Inquiry Memorandum submitted December 22, 1917, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1919Parisv01/d35>, [visited 2025–4–15].

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> ÇAMI, VERLI, pp. 28–29.

reservations the creation of a new order, based not only on the principle of nationality, but rather on the predominance of small and medium-sized states that identified with the cause of the victors of the war. Unlike the Americans, the British and the French, the Italians were committed to creating a balance between the states in the region, from both sides: the winners and the defeated.<sup>33</sup> Italy saw the conference as an opportunity to realize its goals in acquiring the Italian-speaking provinces of the former Austro-Hungarian monarchy and in strengthening its predominance in the Adriatic Sea, respectively to gain a *mare clausum*.<sup>34</sup> In the case of Albania, it sought possession of Valona, as an important geostrategic point in the Southern Adriatic and to come over the Italian protectorate of the “Albanian autonomous state.”<sup>35</sup>

### The Beginning of the Conference Works

The Paris Conference marks one of the most delicate moments in human history. It was a time when the future of humanity was in question. There were only two alternatives: reconciliation and the possibility of general cooperation in a spirit of good will to renew the ravages which the war had brought and make war impossible, or a blind, selfish battle, general bankruptcy and clash of civilization.<sup>36</sup> The third alternative seemed impossible. The task of restoring peace in 1918 was comparable in importance to the congress that had been held in Vienna about a hundred years earlier. However, the situation was now more complicated since Europe had developed during these hundred years, especially in terms of the development of economic relations between the warring parties. The circumstances of the war, the decisive importance of the western front, the French role, the convenient location and the available infrastructure, made Paris the place where the Conference would hold its work.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>33</sup> F. CACCAMO, Italy, the Paris Peace Conference and the Shaping of Czechoslovakia, in: *Forum Historiae*, 15, 1, 2021, pp. 7–8.

<sup>34</sup> A. BECHERELLI, Yugoslav-Italian Relations and the Adriatic Issue in late 1918 and early 1919, in: A. BIAGINI, G. MOTTA (eds.), *Empires and Nations from XVIII to XX Century, Vol. II*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing 2014, pp. 384–392.

<sup>35</sup> E. DERVISHI, The Albanian Question at the Peace Conference during 1919–1920, in: *Journal of Liberty and International Affairs*, 6, 2, 2020, pp. 123–134.

<sup>36</sup> S. HUDDLESTON, *Peace-Making at Paris*, London 1924, pp. 9–10.

<sup>37</sup> R. ALBRECHT-CARRIE, *Diplomatic History of Europe since the Congress of Vienna*, New York 1958, p. 360.

The international circumstances on the eve of the Conference were adverse for Albania. In the British and French schemes for post-war Europe, Albania did not appear at all. Albania was neither among the winning powers nor among the defeated. Albania did not participate in any of the warring blocs because from the beginning to the end of the World War I it was not administered by sovereign bodies that had the right to declare war, while its territory became the arena of fighting between the blocs.<sup>38</sup>

The Albanian delegation was classified in the fourth category of the Conference, which meant that it could communicate with the Conference only through the exchange of letters or upon invitation. As a result, the Albanian delegation managed to communicate with the Conference only through the mediation of Italy, which was influenced by the interests to achieve its claims in the Adriatic, and thus Italy approached to the Albanian government headed by Turhan Pasha.<sup>39</sup>

In this way, through a memorandum dated February 12, 1919, the Albanian delegation addressed the Peace Conference. The Memorandum opposed the London Treaty of 1915 and presented the following claims: the independence of Albania should not be discussed because this issue was closed by the London Conference of 1913; secondly, the territorial integrity of Albania guaranteed in 1913 should not be affected, and thirdly, to discuss the expansion of Albania's borders with territories inhabited by Albanians that were given to Serbia, Greece and Montenegro in 1913.<sup>40</sup>

Greece, the Kingdom of SCS and Italy also presented their claims at the Conference. Greek territorial claims found full support from Great Britain and France, as well as enjoying the partial support of the United States. British diplomats urged the French also to change the political boundaries of south Albania by favouring Greece.<sup>41</sup> The Greek Prime Minister demanded that two southern Albanian cities: Gjirokastra and Korcha enter the Greek state.<sup>42</sup> To justify the annexation, the Greek Prime Minister did not oppose the Treaty of 1915, while as an additional argument he presented before the Conference the old-fashioned thesis, according to which the Christian (Orthodox) Albanians who made up

<sup>38</sup> M. ÇAMI, *Shqipëria në rrjedhat e historisë 1912–1924*, Tiranë 2007, p. 90.

<sup>39</sup> A. MEHMETI, *Diplomacia e Britanisë së Madhe dhe marrëdhëniet shqiptaro-jugosllave 1919–1939*, Tiranë 2020, p. 73.

<sup>40</sup> T. P. PERMETI, *Shqipëria përballë Konferencës së Paqes Paris 1919*, Romë 1919, p. 27.

<sup>41</sup> L. AHMETAJ, A. SINANI, Wilson and European Policy in Albania (1918–1920), in: *SEEU Review*, Special Edition 10, 1, 2014, pp. 119–120.

<sup>42</sup> ÇAMI, VERLI, p. 102.

half of the inhabitants of these provinces felt themselves as Greeks.<sup>43</sup> This thesis was rejected by De Martino, Italy's representative who was considered highly knowledgeable about the issue, putting forth a series of arguments that challenged the Greek position. He stated the Albanian nationality cannot be determined easily, and religion in Albania was not a determinant element: *"In the north there are Catholics who are Albanian, and Albanians of the Orthodox religion in the south."*<sup>44</sup>

On the other hand, the SCS Kingdom, based on the border problem with Italy and the heterogeneous composition of its delegation, did not express direct claims against Albania. In a memorandum dated February 18, 1919, the SCS delegation presented two positions: (1) the recognition of Albania in 1913, the non-recognition of the Treaty of London and the departure of Italy from the Balkans; and (2) if Italy was given Valona, then the SCS Kingdom pretends the northern Albanian lands up to the Drin River, reasoning to secure its southern borders.<sup>45</sup>

The stance of SCS Kingdom was based on its objectives in foreign policy and in the internal political constellation. The priorities of the foreign policy of the SCS Kingdom were to ensure the borders and territorial integrity of the state, while in the long term, through its geostrategic position, and with access to three seas: the Adriatic, the Aegean and the Black Sea, to impose itself as a regional power and ensure its influence in the Balkans and Central Europe.<sup>46</sup>

At the time when the delegations of Albania, Greece and the SCS Kingdom had submitted their demands to the Conference, the latter had not yet begun to examine the Peace Treaty with Austria and Hungary. This meant that Italy did not rush to present its demands while waiting for what was being decided regarding the former Austro-Hungarian possessions, always in the sense of the Adriatic. Based on the work at the Conference, Italian diplomacy began to draft a memorandum which included claims for the new Italian-Austrian border, the Italian-SCS Kingdom border, as well as for its claims in Albania, namely the placement of

<sup>43</sup> DERVISHI, p. 124.

<sup>44</sup> AHMETAJ, SINANI, p. 121.

<sup>45</sup> B. KRIZMAN, B. HRABAK, *Zapisnici sa sednica delegacije kraljevine SHS na mirovnoj konferenciji u Parizu 1919–1920*, Beograd 1960, pp. 365–366; D. TODORVIĆ, *Jugoslavija i balkanske države 1918–1923*, Beograd 1979, p. 50.

<sup>46</sup> Б. ГЛИГОРИЈЕВИЋ, Интереси великих сила у Албанији и угрожавање безбедности Југославије 1919–1939, in: *Југословенски Историјски Часопис*, 1–2, 2000, p. 9.

the Albanian state under the Italian protectorate and sovereignty of Italy over Valona and its hinterland. The said memorandum was submitted to the Conference on March 12, 1919.<sup>47</sup>

### The Emergence of Adriatic Question

The examination of various issues was followed by contradictions between the powers at the Peace Conference. A special case presented the Austria-Hungarian possessions in the eastern Adriatic, especially Fiume and Dalmatia, which were claimed by both Italy and the SCS Kingdom. The essence of the rivalry for Fiume lay also on its bay, a strategic location and rich deposits of raw materials (crude oil and natural gas), which presented a potential factor for economic growth.<sup>48</sup>

The territorial conflict between Italy and Kingdom of SCS over the territories of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire on the eastern coast of the Adriatic has gone down in history under the name “Adriatic Question”. In this matter, although the Entente Allies had promoted the right of self-determination, they again consolidated alliances with the old diplomacy, which accepted the right of annexation, and therefore almost insurmountable difficulties arose. It is well known that of all the problems that the Peace Conference faced, none was more complicated or more difficult to solve than that of the Adriatic. Territorial disputes or border problems between Italy and the SCS Kingdom, which arose as a result of the Treaty of London in 1915, inevitably involved Albania in this problem.<sup>49</sup>

The “Adriatic Question” emerged in April 1919 when the Italian delegation repeated the request for the annexation of Fiume, which according to the Treaty of 1915 had to remain in Croatia. The Powers, especially the US, rejected Italian claims.<sup>50</sup> The head of the American delegation presented a written answer to the Italian delegation on April 14, 1919, where, among other things, he considered Valona as an important strategic position for the “security” of Italy in the southern Adriatic. As for the territories in the northeast of the Adriatic, the US agreed that the ports of Trieste and Pola should be given to Italy, but not all of Istria. The

<sup>47</sup> ÇAMI, VERLI, p. 134.

<sup>48</sup> K. S. MORAWSKI, Gabriele D’Annunzio’s coup in Rijeka (1919–1920) in the context of Italian-Yugoslavian relations, in: *Sudija z Dziejow Rosji i Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej*, LII–SI (2), p. 26.

<sup>49</sup> J. SWIRE, *Shqipëria ngritja e një mbretërie*, Tiranë 2005, p. 231.

<sup>50</sup> BECHERELLI, pp. 384–392.



US was against Italy's annexation of Fiume and the Dalmatian coast. In the memorandum, Fiume was considered as an international port, for the use of which the surrounding countries needed.<sup>51</sup>

So, as it might be seen, Albania's first connection with the "Adriatic Question" was expressed by President Wilson's memorandum of April 14, 1919, when he recognized Valona to Italy in exchange for an eventual concession around the Italian-SCS border,<sup>52</sup> transforming thus Albania into an exchange currency for negotiations. Unlike the US, Britain and France did not oppose openly to Italian demands. However, these two states, in order to attack Italy's claims, expressed themselves as bound by the "Treaty of London" and that according to this treaty, Fiume belonged to Croatia and that the entire treaty had to be respected and not only what Italy wants, otherwise the In such a case, the Treaty would not apply.<sup>53</sup>

In the course of discussions on 7 May 1919, the US delegation presented a new scheme for solving the problem. American experts supported the SCS proposal of April 14, to hold a plebiscite as the best way to resolve the territorial issues between these two countries regarding Istria, Dalmatia and Fiume. If the population of Fiume decided to join Italy, then Italy had to build a new port in the vicinity of Fiume within six months, because the old port had to serve to SCS and other countries. In the case of Albania, Italy was given Valona with its hinterland and the mandate over the Albanian state.<sup>54</sup>

But, the US scheme was not supported by Clemenceau and Lloyd George. In response, these two presented their options. In his project, the French delegate Tardieu saw Fiume as a free city, Dalmatia was given to Croatia with the exception of Zadar and Sibenik, while the islands were given to Italy. In the case of Albania, Tardieu recognized Italy's mandate over Albania, the southern borders of Albania were to be decided by the Conference, while the northern borders were to remain those of 1913, but with a condition that the Kingdom of SCS had to obtain an access to the Adriatic through a railway that would pass through the northern Albania.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>51</sup> ÇAMI, VERLI, pp. 186–187.

<sup>52</sup> S. DRAŠKIĆ, Albansko pitanje na konferenciji mira u Parizu 1919.godine, in: *Ideje – Časopis za teoriku savremenog društva*, 5–6, 1987, p. 25.

<sup>53</sup> ÇAMI, VERLI, p. 190.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 217.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 219.

The discussions of the “Adriatic Question” during April and May had shown to Albanian delegation in Paris that they would not find support to oppose to claims presented by Albania’s neighbours, but moreover, they will also lack any understanding on preserving the political independence and territorial integrity of Albania. However, the Albanian delegation continued its diplomatic efforts. On May 8, the delegation sent a note to Wilson expressing their opposition for Valona being given to Italy, and also openly opposed the Italian mandate over Albania.<sup>56</sup>

Then projects submitted by Allies influenced the activation of the second point of the SCS attitude towards Albania, i.e. the right of territorial compensation if Italy takes any part of the Albanian territory. Such a claim was expressed through a note that the SCS delegation sent to the Conference by the end of May 1919, claiming Northern Albania up to the Drin River together with Shkodra.<sup>57</sup>

### The intense Italian Course

The examination of the “Adriatic Question” continued in the second part of 1919, while the states involved did not move from their stances. By the end of June 1919, changes in Italian government reflected in Italian foreign policy. While the former Italian Foreign Minister Sonino had followed a policy aimed at excluding the Balkan monarchies from the partition of Albania, the new minister Tomaso Titoni showed himself ready to divide Albania with its Balkan neighbours, in particular with Greece.<sup>58</sup> In this way, on July 29, 1919, the agreement between Italy and Greece, known as the Titoni-Venizellos Agreement, was reached.<sup>59</sup> The agreement included the division of territories in Asia Minor, but two articles dealt with Albania: (1) Italy undertook to support the Greek claims for the annexation of Southern Albania, retaining, however, for fifty years a share in the port of Saranda and the right to build a railway thence into the interior if the Greek Government does not do so; (2) Greece undertook to support Italian claims before the Conference for a mandate over the remaining portion of Albania, sovereignty over Valona with its strategic hinterland.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>56</sup> M. ÇAMI et al., *Lufta e popullit shqiptar për çlirimin kombëtar 1918–1920. Përmbledhje dokumentesh*, Tiranë 1975, p. 204; PERMETI, pp. 111–114.

<sup>57</sup> KRIZMAN, HRABAK, pp. 131–133; DRAŠKIC, p. 26.

<sup>58</sup> ÇAMI, VERLI, pp. 233–234.

<sup>59</sup> SWIRE, p. 246.

<sup>60</sup> AHMETAJ, SINANI, p. 126.

The reactions of the Albanian delegation against the Titoni-Venizellos agreement were in vain, because in principle the Titoni-Venizellos agreement had the support of Britain and France. When Titoni presented the project for the “Adriatic Question”, at the early August, which was approved by Clemenceau and Lloyd George, the Albanian issue was dealt with according to the secret Italian-Greek agreement. The SCS delegation countered and requested the assistance of the American delegation. In mid-August, Trumbic met with Polk, who at that time headed the American delegation, and expressed his concern about Italian efforts to place Albania under their mandate. Polk confirmed the stance of the Entente Powers on the pretext that the Albanians were unprepared and incapable for self-government.<sup>61</sup> But, the American President thought differently. Regarding the Italian claims, Wilson had stated that the Italian mandate over Albania “*was very dangerous for peace and for Balkans, therefore it should not be accepted*”. But he accepted the Italian sovereignty over Valona and its hinterland, but only on the condition that: “*if the Serbs-Croats-Slovenes did not oppose it.*”<sup>62</sup>

In addition to diplomatic actions, Belgrade also used the military apparatus. At the end of September and beginning of October, the SCS army invaded some territories on the Northern Albania.<sup>63</sup> This act incited the uprising of Albanian residents in these areas; as a result, the SCS forces withdrew.<sup>64</sup> The military actions of the SCS Kingdom in Albania were aimed at strengthening its diplomatic position at the Conference, but also at preparing the ground for a practical annexation of the northern Albanian provinces.

Due to the impossibility to reach any compromise the discussions about the “Adriatic Question” continued throughout the rest of the year. Great Britain and France continued to support Italian claims but partly aiming to offer concessions to the Kingdom of SCS in Albania. Thus, through a joint note dated September 15, 1919, the Conference sent to President Wilson a draft of the Italian claims which, among other things, contained the following proposals: the city of Fiume should be given to Italy, with condition that SCS Kingdom takes the rest of the hinterland;

<sup>61</sup> P. MILO, *Shqipëria dhe Jugosllavia 1918–1927*, Tiranë 1992, p. 78.

<sup>62</sup> ÇAMI, VERLI, p. 266.

<sup>63</sup> LUKU, p. 291.

<sup>64</sup> P. MILO, Dështimi i përpjekjeve për pushtimin e viseve verilindore të shqipërisë nga forcat jugosllave (1918–1921), in: *Studime Historike*, 2, 1988, p. 105.

all of Dalmatia is given to the SCS except the city of Zadar, which will remain a free city under the mandate of the League of Nations; Albania was re-recognized as independent, but under the Italian mandate, while Valona passed under Italian sovereignty; the SCS claims for a territorial concession in the Drin valley were denied, but it was accepted that SCS may use the railway which had to be built through guarantees similar to those given to Italy in Assling.<sup>65</sup>

The note addressed to Wilson was a result of understanding that Titoni had reached with Loyd George and Clemenceau, while the American representative had also worked for such a solution. The proposals stemming from this note were accepted in principle by US President Wilson. Wilson accepted the Italian mandate over Albania on the condition of a strong control over its exercise, and on the condition that Italy accepted the plan for solving the “Adriatic Question” in general.<sup>66</sup>

However, the “Adriatic Question” remained open because the action of the nationalist poet Gabriele D’Annuncio, who together with his legionnaires entered and took control over the city of Fiume.<sup>67</sup> Titoni who had agreed to the free city of Fiume now changed his mind and was inclined to annex it.<sup>68</sup> In new circumstances, Belgrade claimed the annexation of Northern Albania. Belgrade also came up with the other option for Mirdita (province in Northern Albania) and Northern Albania to create a buffer state or to hold a plebiscite for their union with the SCS state.<sup>69</sup>

The persistence of SCS did not remain without influence on the Great Powers. Of course, they did not support Belgrade’s maximum claims, but they gave it a ground to claim more in the future. Specifically, the Americans, for the first time in September, requested that SCS be given the right to build a railway in Northern Albania. Officially, the new American position was made known in the memorandum that US Secretary of State Lansing addressed on October 27, to the Italian Foreign Minister, Titoni. The SCS, it said, will have the right to build the railway in Northern Albania, north of the 41–15<sup>th</sup> parallel, as well as all the privileges of international transport through Northern Albania. Also, after Montenegro

<sup>65</sup> E. L. WOODWARD, R. BUTLER, *Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919–1939, First Series*, Vol. I, London 1947, p. 710.

<sup>66</sup> MAKMILLAN, pp. 361–362.

<sup>67</sup> MORAWSKI, p. 23.

<sup>68</sup> ÇAMI, VERLI, p. 268.

<sup>69</sup> MILO, *Shqipëria dhe Jugosllavia 1918–1927*, pp. 78–79.

became part of the SCS state, the latter would have the right to develop and improve navigation on the Buna River. Even the British supported the American line on SCS claims over Northern Albania.<sup>70</sup>

### The Memorandum of December 1919

During the period August – November 1919 the representatives of the four powers agreed on the Italian claims over Albania. Anyway, all Powers did not have similar approach to Italian claims and Italy used these divergences to confuse them, talking differently with each of them. Upon perception of Italian behaviours the US presented the idea of coordinated actions. This idea was supported by Lloyd George and Clemenceau. Under these conditions, the joint Memorandum of December 9, 1919 of the representatives of Britain, France and the USA was drawn up, on the “Adriatic Question”, part of which was the Albanian issue.<sup>71</sup>

The memorandum proposed an *impasse* solution on the “Adriatic Question”: Zadar to choose for herself which country would represent her diplomatically, Italy to take Palagosa, Lisa and Lusina. In turn Italy had to give up its claims to the island of Lagos and the eastern part of Istria, while Fiume would be autonomous within a free buffer state.<sup>72</sup>

According to this memorandum, Albania was recognized as an independent state, but Italy would have the mandate for its administration under the umbrella of the League of Nations.<sup>73</sup> Attached to this memorandum was a framework, which, according to the opinion of the three representatives, shows the form that this mandate should take. Albania’s borders in the north and east will currently be those determined by the London Conference of 1913; the southern border is a matter to be negotiated. The city of Valona, together with a neighbourhood will be given to Italy under full sovereignty.<sup>74</sup> Among others, the memorandum provided that the SCS government was given the right to build the railway line in Northern Albania and contribute to the development of navigation on the Buna River, according to the criteria defined in the Lansing memorandum. With an elastic diplomatic form, the memorandum underlined a new element: the “right” of the Albanian state “*to hold talks with the*

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., pp. 79–80.

<sup>71</sup> ÇAMI, VERLI, pp. 284–285.

<sup>72</sup> SWIRE, pp. 247–248.

<sup>73</sup> A. HADRI, *Presidenti Vilson dhe çështja shqiptare (Politika e SHBA në Konferencën e Paqes në Paris 1919–1920)*, Prishtinë 2012, p. 153.

<sup>74</sup> “The Adriatic Question”, Senate Documents, Washington 1920, pp. 5–6; LUKU p. 292.

*Serbo-Croatian-Slovenian Kingdom to change the line of the common border in any province in consent to local ethnographic and economic needs*".<sup>75</sup>

The content of the December 9 Memorandum disappointed Albanians. The Albanian delegation perceived Albania's weakness in front of Powers, so it was a need to change the stance. Unlike other times, when protesting against territorial claims of neighbours and concessions at the expense of Albania, the note that the Albanian delegation addressed to Clemenceau on December 26, 1919, expressed the willingness of the Albanian delegation to accept only those concessions that were compatible with *"territorial unity, independence and sovereignty of Albania"*.<sup>76</sup> These concessions were intended to remove the great danger, that of the extinction of the Albanian state. In relation to the Kingdom of SCS, the delegation accepted its commercial access to the Adriatic, with the condition of international control of the railway and the port of San Giovanni de Medua. Regarding Greece and Italy, the Albanian delegation did not agree to make territorial concessions (give Gjirokaster to Greece and Valona to Italy). The delegation agreed to recognize a "municipal autonomy" for the Orthodox community in South Albania since the Greek claims were based on religion.<sup>77</sup>

The SCS delegation at the Conference also reacted to the memorandum. This delegation addressed a letter to its government in Belgrade expressing the clear opinion that the protection of Albania's independence also means the protection of the SCS Kingdom from Italian hegemony. The head of the SCS delegation, Nikola Pasic, said: *"We will defend the independence of Albania ... we will assert that it would be a mistake to give Italy the mandate of the protectorate, because such a solution would result in war in the Balkans ... If Italy gains space in the Balkans, it will occupy us. She will start the agitation against us among the Albanians who live in our country, then she will establish close contacts with Bulgaria ... and she will support all minorities regardless of ethnicity."*<sup>78</sup> Furthermore, Pasic used the slogan *"the Balkans belongs to the people of Balkans"*, as a mean against the Italian intervention in the Peninsula and apparently hid his hegemonic intentions.<sup>79</sup>

The SCS government was aware that the memorandum fulfilled Italy's goals in Albania, so it concentrated its forces on finding solutions that

<sup>75</sup> MILO, *Shqipëria dhe Jugosllavia 1918–1927*, pp. 80–81.

<sup>76</sup> ÇAMI, et al., *Lufta e popullit shqiptar*, pp. 508–509.

<sup>77</sup> ÇAMI, VERLI, p. 340.

<sup>78</sup> TODOROVIĆ, p. 61.

<sup>79</sup> LUKU, p. 290.

would undermine the positions of its rival. The SCS delegation in Paris discussed at length on December 17 the ways and means of dealing with this problem. First, Pasic asked to use the strong anti-Italian movement that had erupted in Albania and to encourage it even more. Secondly, in the diplomatic field, to continue asking the Great Powers that in the event that Italy was guaranteed the mandate over Central Albania and the annexation of Valona, the SCS state would be provided with the mandate over Northern Albania and a strategic border covering the line: river Drin and the Lake of Ohrid up to its spillway. Thirdly, to fund those members of the Albanian delegation in Paris who were oriented against Italy and who, under the circumstances, wanted to get closer to Belgrade. Our political interests, Pasic said, require us to spare no expense in order to win not only their sympathy and friendship, but to connect them with Serbia for all time with the aim of them entering the economic-customs union with us, if not more. For this purpose, Pasic requested 2–3 million francs. Belgrade initially set an amount of 500 thousand francs.<sup>80</sup>

In the debates within the SCS delegation to determine the position to be taken on the Memorandum of December 9, two tendencies were distinguished: (1) Pasic's tendency related to Serbian unitarism, and (2) Trumbic's tendency related to Croatian-Slovenian federalism. Pasic and most of the delegation were for a general compromise on the "Adriatic Question". They were willing to make concessions in Dalmatia and Fiume in favour of territorial claims in Northern Albania. Pasic insisted on the strategic border and the mandate in Northern Albania, in case the Peace Conference did not affirm Albania's independence on the borders of 1913. Trumbic, as a representative of Croatian interests, was very sensitive to the fate of Fiume. He was against any kind of compromise so that territorial concessions in the north-eastern Adriatic would be compensated with territories in other countries, including Albania. He did his best to fill the minds of the other members of the delegation that the Great Powers would never give the Northern Albania to SCS, nor the mandate over it, nor strategic borders. The subtext of Trumbic's insistence was more understandable: to put aside claims for Northern Albania and to fight persistently to protect SCS interests in Fiume and Dalmatia.<sup>81</sup>

While the debates between the members of the SCS delegation continued, the SCS government, to strengthen its positions at the Conference,

<sup>80</sup> MILO, *Shqipëria dhe Jugosllavia 1918–1927*, pp. 81–82.

<sup>81</sup> KRIZMAN, HRABAK, pp. 208–209.



at the time when the territorial concessions were being finalized, ordered its army to prepare the project for the occupation of Mount Tarabosh and part of the lands on the right side of Buna River in Northern Albania.<sup>82</sup>

### **The compromise of January 1920**

At the beginning of 1920, a new phase on the “Adriatic Question” was opened. The internal political circumstances in the US, which were accompanied by the ill health of President Wilson and the Senate’s failure to approve the Versailles agreement, paved the way for calculations of international policy changes by European powers. France, Great Britain and Italy perceived these circumstances as an opportunity to re-configure their interests regarding the “Adriatic Question”, with the aim of territorial division of Albania, as well as about open issues in Asia Minor.<sup>83</sup>

The first diplomatic activity for the year 1920 in terms of the “Adriatic Question” was initiated by Italy, by addressing a note to British Prime Minister Lloyd George, dated January 6, 1920. In this note, Italy requested the implementation of the Treaty of London of 1915, for Fiume to remain a free city, Zadar to be a free city with the right to choose its own diplomatic representation, as well as with some claims for the islands and the rights for the Italian population.<sup>84</sup>

In response to the Italian note, the British Prime Minister Lloyd George confirmed his willingness to respect the Treaty of London, but according to him the Treaty of London was not entirely suitable for the existing conditions which were completely different from those of 1915. Clemansoe maintained the same attitude. Taking a step back in the current course of events, Lloyd George presented his proposals to Nitti on January 9, 1920. In these proposals, the free state of Fiume was foreseen with some territorial changes, under the League of Nations; some islands were given to Italy, Zadar would be a free city, and some citizenship issues were resolved for the Italian residents of Dalmatia, etc., while regarding Albania, the proposal emphasized that Albania’s borders were the subject of discussion, considering them as part of inseparable from the Adriatic issue.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> MILO, Dështimi i përpjekjeve, pp. 105–106.

<sup>83</sup> HADRI, p. 159.

<sup>84</sup> F. ŠIŠIĆ, *Jadransko pitanje na konferenciji mira u Parizu, Zbirka akata i dokumenata*, Zagreb 1920, pp. 51–52.

<sup>85</sup> TELI, p. 75.

In line to the implementation of these proposals, on January 10, 1920, the SCS delegation was suddenly invited to a meeting that was held the same day in the office of the French minister Pichon, where Clemenceau, Lloyd George and Nitti were also present. Clemenceau asked Trumbic to reveal the position of the SCS regarding the issue of the Adriatic and Albania. After the exposition related to Dalmatia, Trumbic stopped at Albania, asserting that the SCS is committed to an independent Albania with the borders of 1913 and without the mandate of any foreign power. If the mandate was given to Italy, then not only the Skopje-Thessalonica railway, which was the only trade artery for Serbia, but also the border towns such as Dibra, Struga, Manastir, Prizren, etc., could be endangered through the north-eastern Albanian border, Trumbic asserted.<sup>86</sup>

Trumbic continued the rhetoric regarding Albania, asserting that if the concept of Albania as an independent state is abandoned, and if Valona and Southern Albania were given to other states, then Northern Albania should be given to the Kingdom of SCS. The claims of SCS for Northern Albania were argued by Trumbic in the conclusions of London of 1913, with which Serbia was recognized as having access to the sea. The Danube-Adriatic railway would pass through these corridors, through central Serbia, following the Drini and passing Shkodra to the sea.<sup>87</sup>

Due to the Italian pressure and dissatisfaction of SCS government and driven by the Treaty of London 1915 France and Great Britain took the initiative to solve the “Adriatic Question” through the partition of Albania. In this way, France and Great Britain presented on January 13, 1920, the Memorandum for the settlement of the “Adriatic Question”.<sup>88</sup> According to this Memorandum, Fiume passed under the possession of Italy; the city of Zadar would be established as an independent state under the guarantee of the League of Nations; three islands in Adriatic passed into the possession of the Italian state, while the others were demilitarized. The France-British-Italian compromise provided for the division of Albania between three neighbouring states. Italy would take Valona and the mandate over Albania, the Kingdom of SCS would take Northern Albania, including Shkodra (which would enjoy autonomy like that of the Rutene province in Czechoslovakia) and Greece the provinces

<sup>86</sup> ŠIŠIĆ, pp. 72–80.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., pp. 80–81.

<sup>88</sup> A. MEHMETI, The Admission of Albania to the League of Nations, in: *Anglisticum Journal (IJLLIS)*, 12, 12, 2023, p. 42.

of Korcha and Gjirokaster. On January 13, 1920 Clemenceau made these proposals known to Pasic and Trumbic.<sup>89</sup>

A day later the SCS delegation returned the response to the memorandum of the Great Powers. Belgrade did not accept that Fiume would pass under Italian possession, that the Italian border in Istria would be connected to Fiume through a corridor. In the event that Albania would be deprived of its independence and would not have an autonomous government, the SCS delegation demanded that the Serb, Croatian, and Slovenian state be given Northern Albania and that the Serbian-Albanian border be repaired in the eastern part of this border. The Belgrade delegation also requested that the neutrality and demilitarization of Albania be fixed if the mandate that would be granted to Italy.<sup>90</sup>

Even in this case, divergences appeared between Serbian interests on the one hand and Slovenian and Croatian interests on the other. Croats and Slovenians did not want Fiume to be sacrificed for Shkodra, while Serbs and Montenegrins did not want Shkodra to be given up for the sake of Fiume. So SCS loved both. But both could not. This was the reason that forced the SCS delegation to lean toward the rejection of the compromise. "Finally, this project must be rejected for a political reason. In our people, the idea of compensation would have a very bad echo, that for Shkodra and the wild Albanian ridges we gave Fiume." This is what the member of the SCS delegation, O. Ribarzh, stated in the meeting of the delegation on the afternoon of January 13, when the answer to be given to the Supreme Council for the compromise was being discussed.<sup>91</sup>

The new compromise between Great Powers was unacceptable for the Albanian delegation. A letter of protest was addressed to the Head of the Peace Conference of January 15, 1920, emphasizing that "... *Albania cannot accept the loss of her independence and integrity. Italy has no legal rights on Valona and its hinterland. Greece and Kingdom of SCS have no rights on other Albanian territories. Giving Italy or any other power the mandate for Albania is in contradiction with Article 22 of the Treaty of Versailles*".<sup>92</sup> A similar letter was addressed even to President Wilson, asking him to intervene against the partition of Albania.<sup>93</sup>

<sup>89</sup> MILO, *Shqipëria dhe Jugosllavia 1918–1927*, pp. 86–87.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., p. 87.

<sup>91</sup> KRIZMAN, HRABAK, p. 237.

<sup>92</sup> LUKU, p. 293.

<sup>93</sup> P. MILO, *Politika e jashtme e Shqipërisë*, Tiranë 2013, p. 451.

### The Exclusion of Albania from the Adriatic Question

The rejection of the proposal by the SCS delegation had angered Clemenceau and Lloyd George. These two, on January 15, 1920, offered the SCS delegation the last version of the proposal with which Italy had also agreed. Fiume would become independent under the League of Nations, while the city of Susak would pass to the SCS. Zadar remained a free city, while Valona would be given to Italy. Italy would secure the mandate over Albania. The border between SCS and Albania would be corrected in favour of SCS, while Korcha and Gjirokaster would pass to Greece.<sup>94</sup>

France and Great Britain were determined to close the “Adriatic Question” based on the framework of the Treaty of London. Thus, on January 20, the Supreme Council presented the SCS delegation with the opportunity to choose one of the following two alternatives: (1) acceptance of the compromise of January 14; or (2) implementation of the Treaty of London.<sup>95</sup>

The request addressed to the SCS delegation was in the form of an ultimatum, while the answer had to be given within four days with “yes” or “no”. The SCS delegation had asked the French Prime Minister to extend the deadline. The US was also involved in this matter, asking London and Paris if their goal was to resolve the issues without the participation of the US, and then to proclaim results achieved. The Franco-British proposals had been drawn up without the participation of the American delegate, so the US Secretary sent a clear message that certain aspects of the Fiume issue, which would be resolved by Clemenceau and Lloyd George alone, would be unacceptable to President Wilson.<sup>96</sup> In these circumstances, when the American position was made known, the SCS delegation responded to the ultimatum on January 27, 1920 through an ambiguous answer in terms of accepting or rejecting the allies’ proposals of January 14.<sup>97</sup> The SCS delegation reasoned that they were ready for concessions but could not exceed the authorizations they had from their government, asking for time to return to Belgrade for further consultations.<sup>98</sup>

<sup>94</sup> ŠIŠIĆ, pp. 97–98; KRIZMAN, HRABAK, p. 240.

<sup>95</sup> R. BUTLER, J. P. T. BURY, *Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919–1939, First Series*, Vol. XII, London 1962, p. 132.

<sup>96</sup> MILO, *Politika e jashtme e Shqipërisë*, p. 453.

<sup>97</sup> B. KRIZMAN, *Vanjska politika jugoslovenske države 1918–1941: diplomatsko-istorijski pogled*, Zagreb 1975, pp. 26–27.

<sup>98</sup> BUTLER, BURY, *Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919–1939*, Vol. XII, p. 102.

The French-British response to the US accusations was more of an exculpatory document. Both European leaders wrote that it was not the intention of the French, British and Italian governments to make a final settlement of the “Adriatic Question” without taking into account the US position. They assured Wilson that the negotiations had been in the spirit of the December 9 memorandum to find a solution that reconciled Italian-SCS views. They declared to Wilson that the settlement they had offered for Fiume was in favour of SCS Kingdom because from a free state it now became independent under the guarantee of the League of Nations. Regarding Albania, the French-British response stated that “an effort was made to satisfy the main needs of all interested parties. The details of the administration of this country by SCS, Italy and Greece have not been worked out yet, but while working on them, the feelings and interests of the Albanian people will also be taken into account”.<sup>99</sup>

The Washington did not agree with the answer received. The USA announced on January 27, 1920 that there would be no changes regarding the “Adriatic Question”. The Kingdom SCS was advised not to make compromises with the British and French. This encouraged the SCS delegation to reject the French-British ultimatums through a cautious response. To buy time, the SCS government resigned.<sup>100</sup>

The US intervention had the effect of further complicating the issue. Under these circumstances, President Wilson proposed direct talks between Italy and the SCS, as the only way to end the conflict between these two countries.<sup>101</sup>

This separation of the Albanian issue from the entirety of the “Adriatic Question” upset the French and British government, since they could not come up with schemes for the solution of the “Adriatic Question”, because Shkodra and Albania could no longer be used as a medium of exchange.<sup>102</sup> In the new circumstances the prime ministers of France and Great Britain were forced to respect Wilson’s position. As a result, they officially withdrew their memorandums of December 9, 1919 and January 14, 1920.<sup>103</sup>

<sup>99</sup> MILO, *Politika e jashtme e Shqipërisë*, pp. 453–454.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., p. 454.

<sup>101</sup> H. SILAJXHIC, *Shqipëria dhe SHBA në arkivat e Washingtonit*, Tiranë 1991, pp. 116–117; A. MOUSSET, *Shqipëria përballë Evropës (1919–1929)*, Tiranë 2004, p. 26.

<sup>102</sup> TELI, p. 91.

<sup>103</sup> BLAND, PIERCE, p. 11; MEHMETI, *The Admission of Albania to the League of Nations*, p. 43.

The aforementioned acts meant the final separation of Albania from the “Adriatic Question”.<sup>104</sup> President Wilson exerted a powerful influence on the exclusion of Albania from this issue, maintaining a steadfast stance against the dismemberment of Albania. On March 6, 1920, he categorically opposed the granting of Albanian lands to the SCS as compensation for Fiume and other territories in the Adriatic that it (SCS) had to cede to Italy. He maintained that Albanian lands should not be included in the proposed joint discussion of Italy, and that he would not accept that territories of the northern Albanian regions be given to the SCS as compensation for what was deprived of it in other countries.<sup>105</sup> Wilson’s position was clearly reflected in the British newspapers: “He accepts the first two points in the proposed procedure, and demonstrates that he is ready to support an agreement between the two parties that is closely based on the basic principles of the agreement of December 9 and that this agreement remains the last basis on which the parties can apply it. Mr. Wilson takes an opposing position to any eventual application of the Treaty of 1915 in relation to the Albanian question, desiring, as he points out, the preservation of the rights of the Albanians who have been sacrificed so much by the Yugoslavs in the two agreements that were submitted to him.”<sup>106</sup>

Wilson’s position brought down the French-British-Italian project for the partition of Albania. In this way, Albania was saved, while efforts to resolve the “Adriatic Question” continued through direct talks between Italy and Kingdom of SCS. Talks between these two countries began in March 1920, while in November of this year an agreement was reached, which was called the “Agreement of Rapallo”.<sup>107</sup>

In Albania, in the meantime, they were aware of the disastrous decisions of the Conference and the prevailing view was that the positions against the further fragmentation of Albania in 1913 should be radicalized. On January 21, 1920, the Congress of Lushnja had begun its work, which in the conditions where the diplomatic efforts for the reaffirmation of the independence and territorial integrity of the Albanian state did not yield results, he undertook the organization of the internal popular resistance. The Congress decided to establish a Supreme Council of four people in

<sup>104</sup> DRAŠKIĆ, p. 25.

<sup>105</sup> STAVRIANOS, pp. 712–713.

<sup>106</sup> *The Courier*, March 8, 1920; *The Western Times*, March 9, 1920.

<sup>107</sup> MOUSSET, pp. 116–117; SILAJXHIC, pp. 116–117.

the capacity of the head of state, the establishment of a national parliament or assembly, and a new government. The new Albanian government sent a note of protest to the Peace Conference against the proposals of the great powers and moved the capital from Durres to Tirana.<sup>108</sup>

### Conclusion

One of the main problems that the Peace Conference in Paris had to solve was that of the border between Italy and the Serbian-Croatian-Slovenian Kingdom, known as the “Adriatic Question”. The source of this problem laid in the territorial concessions on the north-eastern shores of the Adriatic that the Entente Allies had offered to Italy in the Treaty of London of 1915 in order to bring Italy to its side. To balance its Balkan allies, the Entente had thought of territorial compensations for Serbia, Montenegro and Greece, at the expense of Albanian lands. In this way, the Treaty of London became the main cause of disputes for the settlement of border disputes between Italy and the SCS Kingdom, which inevitably included Albania as well. Albania had not participated in the war, its territory had been trampled and destroyed by the armies of the two blocs, while at the end of the war it remained occupied by the Allied forces. The Allies did not recognize the independence of Albania that they had confirmed in 1913, while the reason for the non-recognition lay in the fact that Albania would be used for compromises between the Great Powers themselves. This fact was proven by the argument that the Albanian delegation could contact the Conference only through an invitation from the winning Powers, while the developments proved that the complaints, protests, suggestions and demands of the Albanian delegation were not even considered seriously. Starting from March 1919, all developments related to the “Adriatic Question” were directly or indirectly related to Albania. Its territories are used as barter between Italy, SCS, Greece, and Great Powers. The most critical situation for the Albanian state was when France and Great Britain projected the partition of Albania in January 1920. Such a project was avoided thanks to the interweaving of a series of factors that included President Wilson’s stance against secret agreements and in favour of self-determination of peoples, but also of the internal circumstances in SCS that were afraid of a powerful state like Italy on its borders. In other words, the arguments emanating from this paper prove

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<sup>108</sup> B. META, “Kongresi kombëtar i Lushnjës”, in: *Historia e shqiptarëve gjatë shekullit XX*, Vëllimi II, Tiranë 2019, p. 33.



that the European powers tried to sacrifice Albania in order to accomplish their political and economic goals, but such an attempt was thwarted by President Wilson's determination to put his principles into practice on the new world order.

## **A Town once blessed with Two ‘Witches’: A Study of Lady Jane McCotter and Gertrud Biersack in the Health Services if Abeokuta, 1928–2014**

*Olasupo Thompson*<sup>1</sup>

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Women play germane roles in societal development. Though there is a growing scholarship in this regard, much is yet to be done. This article examines the role played by two foreign prominent women – Lady Jane McCotter and Dr Gertrud Biersack during the British colonial and post-colonial eras in Abeokuta respectively. The article relies on primary and secondary sources including video documentary, oral interviews, biography, public commentaries, newspapers, journals and books. The article argues that while these women were tagged as ‘witches’ during their various sojourns in Abeokuta; the town was blessed to have such ‘witches’. This was because these women did not only sacrifice most of their youthful days for the social development of the town particularly in the area of health and medicine, but they also deployed their personal resources including their wealth of experiences, finances and knowledge to improve the lives and wellbeing of the vulnerable groups including lepers, pregnant women, nursing mothers, the sick, babies and elderly people in Africa at large and Abeokuta in particular.

[Nursing; Colonial Medicine; Infant/Maternity Mortality; Sacred Heart Hospital]

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### **Introduction**

The advancement of any society depends on the overall contribution of its entire population. In spite of the roles of women in societal development, their roles and contributions tend to be suppressed by the roles of their male counterparts. In the opinion of Fausta Deshormes, *“the histories by men often hide women in dark folds, erase them, or are unaware of their*

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*presence*".<sup>2</sup> Women have been described in various ways as a result of the roles they perform in the development of the society from pre-colonial era. This includes custodians of fire, water and earth,<sup>3</sup> and even saviours of their societies.<sup>4</sup> The position of saving their societies emanates from holding different positions such as being mothers, warriors, self-sacrifice, birth attendants and healthcare givers.<sup>5</sup>

Situated in the larger context of health, feminism, gender and witchcraft, biography studies tend to ignite and unearth underlying hidden historiographies. In other words, biographies help to shape opinions. As widely held, biography as a genre, though immensely popular in the public arena, finds little favour in the academy<sup>6</sup> and most historians often see biography as a lesser form of history or the profession's unloved step-child.<sup>7</sup> While a lot of researches have been embarked upon to document the roles of women in the society, there are however inadequate studies on the biographies of some foreign prominent women and particularly, public perception of the indigenous population about the life and times of these foreign prominent women in Africa in spite of their salient contributions. For example, The Church Work Magazine of 1868 detailed that by the time traders and the missionaries began to enter the continent with their messages, women were directly involved in numerous ways including as missionaries or missionaries' wives.<sup>8</sup> The earliest volunteers of the *Kiosk*, a group saddled with production and distribution of Christian tracts for evangelism consisted of six Christian men and six ladies of various nations, one Arab, two Swiss, four English and five French.<sup>9</sup> During their

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Y. BESSIERES, P. NIEDZWIECKI, Women in the French Revolution (1789). Bibliography, in: *Women in Europe Supplement*, 33, 1991, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> A. A. MAZRUI, *The African renaissance: A Triple Legacy of Skills, Values, and gender*, Lagos 2000, p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> B. AWE, Saviours of their Societies, in: B. AWE (ed.), *Nigerian Women in A Historical Perspective*, Ibadan 1992, pp. 3–11.

<sup>5</sup> MAZRUI, pp. 3–8; N. MBA, *Women in Southern Nigerian Political History 1900–1965*, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, 1978, pp. 1–67.

<sup>6</sup> R. J. RICHARDS, The Role of Biography in Intellectual History, in: *KNOW*, 1, 2 2017, pp. 1–25. At <http://home.uchicago.edu/~rjr6/articles/KNOW--role%20of%20biography.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> D. R. MEISTER, The biographical turn and the case for historical biography, in: *History Compass*, 2017, pp. 1–10. At [https://www.rug.nl/research/biografie-instituut/meister\\_the\\_biographical\\_turn.pdf](https://www.rug.nl/research/biografie-instituut/meister_the_biographical_turn.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> *Church Work or the news of the Christian Churches*. A Magazine of Religious and Missionary Information, in: *The Kiosk*, 1 February, 1868, p. 49.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

colonial “adventures” in Africa, both males and females played several roles. These roles, whether in administration, domestic affairs, military, medicine, trade or even social services were impactful in their respective colonies. For example, some European women came as teachers, girls’ instructors, and fought for women’s rights, girls’ education, among other roles, which were exemplifying.<sup>10</sup> Yet, scholars in social history and even feminists studies have not done much in establishing the roles of prominent foreign women in spite of their sacrifices and contributions to Africa.

This article examines the contributions of two women, Lady Jane McCotter and Dr Gertrud Biersack and indigenous perception towards them during their sojourn, though at varying times (colonial and post-colonial times respectively) in Abeokuta – a town established between 1929 and 1930.<sup>11</sup> As such the research questions are: What was the state of healthcare before the coming of these women healthcare practitioners? Who were Lady Jane McCotter and Dr Gertrude Biersack? What were the contributions both women, Lady Jane McCotter and Dr Gertrud to the healthcare practices of Abeokuta in their eras? How did the indigenous people perceive the two healthcare providers? The study is significant because it bridges the knowledge gap on biographical studies as well as women and feminists’ studies. Overall, it is intersection of social history of health and women history. The paper is structured into the introduction; literature review; health services in Abeokuta before the arrival of these prominent women; the biographies of these women and finally the conclusion.

### **Traditional, Colonial Medicine and Women in Medicine**

Pre-scientific and pre-colonial societies developed various ways of healing and treating themselves as well as preventing diseases. Whether it is Africa or Asia or Americas, these societies and people had well developed system of medicine and healthcare delivery. Harold Balme wrote extensively on the Chinese medicine before the advent of western medicine in China.<sup>12</sup> The arrival of what is now known as modern medicine may have changed

<sup>10</sup> A. M. TRIPP, A New Look at Colonial Women: British Teachers and Activists in Uganda, 1898–1962, in: *Canadian Journal of African Studies / Revue Canadienne des Études Africaines*, 38, 1, 2004, pp. 123–156.

<sup>11</sup> S. TUKER, *Abbeokuta; or Sunrise within the Tropics: An outline of the origin and progress of the Yoruba Mission*, New York 1855, p. 41.

<sup>12</sup> H. BALME, *China and Modern Medicine: A Study in Medical Missionary Development*, London 1921, pp. 11–15.

the nomenclature and processes of how these services are delivered, the rationale remained the same – preventing diseases and healing the sick. Pre-colonial societies in Nigeria are not left out in these art and services of healing and treating diseases. Traditional medicine is the sum total of knowledge, skills, and practices based on the theories, beliefs, and experiences indigenous to different cultures that are used to maintain health, as well as to prevent, diagnose, improve, or treat physical and mental illnesses.<sup>13</sup> Simpson was clear on the huge roles played by the traditional healers.<sup>14</sup> Olasupo Thompson in his thesis examined a history of maternal healthcare services in Abeokuta, 1895–1987. He found out that some women offered both home and professional healthcare services to women who were seeking to get pregnant, who were pregnant and after delivery.<sup>15</sup> Thus it is a truism that traditional medicine is an ancient medical practice that existed in human societies before the application of modern science to health.<sup>16</sup>

The emergence of the explorers, the missionaries and later traders who in turn metamorphosed into colonial conquest was a game-changer in Africa's historical epoch. At first, the missionaries that reluctantly provided healthcare services, but reports of the conditions of the disease burden of Africa changed their orientations.<sup>17</sup> The advent of colonialism was indeed the major game-changer in the practice and theory of traditional medicine. There were times when the medical missions and the colonial administrations had conflicts though, they cooperated in certain areas and certain period particularly in the inter-war era and in the treatment of epidemics and pandemics.<sup>18</sup> Though colonial medicine

<sup>13</sup> WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION, *Traditional, Complementary and Integrative Medicine*, [https://www.who.int/health-topics/traditional-complementary-and-integrative-medicine#tab=tab\\_1](https://www.who.int/health-topics/traditional-complementary-and-integrative-medicine#tab=tab_1).

<sup>14</sup> G. E. SIMPSON, *Yoruba religion & medicine in Ibadan*, Ibadan 1980, p. 93.

<sup>15</sup> O. THOMPSON, *A History of Maternal Healthcare services in Abeokuta*, unpublished PhD thesis, Department of History and International Studies, University of Ilorin, 2021, pp. 280–312.

<sup>16</sup> J. O. EZEKWESILI-OFILI, A. N. Ch. OKAKA. Herbal Medicines in African Traditional Medicine, in: P. BUILDERS (ed.), *Herbal Medicine*, IntechOpen 2019, pp. 191–214.

<sup>17</sup> C. M. GOOD. Pioneer Medical Missions in Colonial Africa, in: *Soc. Sci. Med.*, 32, I, 1991, pp. 1–10.

<sup>18</sup> M. HOKKANEN, The government medical service and British missions in colonial Malawi, c. 1891–1940: crucial collaboration, hidden conflicts, in: A. GREENWOOD (ed.), *Beyond the State. The Colonial Medical Service in British Africa*, Manchester 2015, pp. 39–63.

played significant roles in shaping the healthcare system of the continent by introducing new medical practices, technologies, and drugs while also establishing medical institutions and training programs, no doubt that it altered some pre-existing traditional society world order. This was because the provision of medical care was influenced by political, economic, and social factors, which affected access and quality of care. It is on this basis that some scholars saw the trajectory as a mixture of agony and fortune.<sup>19</sup> In South Africa, colonialism pitted the white race against the whites and this marked a remarkable but negative colorations in the access, situation and utilization of quality healthcare.<sup>20</sup> Shane Doyle described the situation thus: *"Early colonial medicine focused intently on the consolidation of white power, with outbreaks of plague legitimizing the racial segregation of urban space, and the devastating epidemics of sleeping sickness which accompanied the disruptive nature of conquest provoking a remodelling of rural societies."*<sup>21</sup>

Brandon Stilson posits that the failure of the European colonialists to avail and provide adequate and quality healthcare for Africans was as a result of the scarce resources and that the few available ones were often only deployed to meet the needs of Europeans.<sup>22</sup> While the histories of the past usually dotted with the role of men and reduced the role of women to the background, evidences have shown that women played significant roles in every facet of the society from economy, political to social. Some scholars explored the role of African women in the pre-colonial and colonial economy, particularly in the rural and urban areas. They found that women's labour contributed to the growth of the pre-colonial and colonial economy as well as the challenges that they faced in accessing

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<sup>19</sup> A. A. ABDULLAHI, Trends and Challenges of Traditional Medicine in Africa, in: *Afr J Tradit Complement Altern Med.*, 8, 2011, pp. 115–123; W. RODNEY, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, London 1972, pp. 206–209; D. A. OFFIONG, *Imperialism and Dependency: Obstacles to African Development*, Enugu 1980, p. 17.

<sup>20</sup> N. V. PEMUNTA, T. Ch.-J. TABENYANG, Traditional Medicine, Colonialism and Apartheid in South Africa, in: N. V. PEMUNTA, T. C TABENYANG (eds.), *Biomedical Hegemony and Democracy in South Africa*, Boston 2021, pp. 47–76.

<sup>21</sup> S. DOYLE, Health in African History, in: E. FRANKEMA, E. HILLBOM, U. KUFAKURI-NANI et al. (eds.), *The History of African Development: An Online Textbook for a New Generation of African Students and Teachers*, African Economic History Network E-book 2023, pp. 96–116.

<sup>22</sup> B. STILSON, A Failure to Care: Colonial Power and Healthcare in Africa, 1850–1939, in: *The Undergraduate Historical Journal at UC Merced*, 6, 1, 2019, pp. 24–36.

the opportunities and resources that these eras provided.<sup>23</sup> Women were not also left out in nationalist struggle in Africa and eventual elimination of colonialism on the continent. Marie Grace Brown's explored the intersection between fashion, colonialism, and gender in Sudan during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Brown established how fashion was used as a tool of colonial control, as European dress was imposed on Sudanese women in an attempt to "civilize" and modernize them. At the same time, Brown shows how Sudanese women used fashion to resist colonialism and assert their own identities, adapting European styles to their own cultural context and challenging the dominant discourse around gender and beauty. Drawing on a wide range of sources, including photographs, newspapers, and personal accounts, Brown offers a nuanced and compelling account of the complex dynamics of colonialism and gender in Sudan.<sup>24</sup> One area where again women did magnificently well was in the area of medicine and health. In traditional African societies, women played important roles in healthcare, particularly in reproductive health.<sup>25</sup> However, the introduction of modern medicine during the colonial era saw a shift in the gender roles in healthcare. Women's access to medical education and training was limited, and they were excluded from leadership positions in the medical profession. Monica Green argued that women's exclusive role in gynaecology in pre-colonial era was gradually eroded as men slowly crept in into this aspect of medicine. She furthered that men slowly established more and more authority in diagnosing and prescribing treatments for women's gynaecological conditions (especially infertility) and even certain obstetrical conditions and that even if their "hands-on" knowledge of women's bodies was limited by contemporary mores, men were able to establish their increasing authority in this and all branches of medicine due to their greater access to literacy and the

<sup>23</sup> E. AKYEAMPONG, H. FOFACK, The Contribution of African Women to Economic Growth and Development: Historical Perspectives and Policy Implications Part I: The Pre-Colonial and Colonial Periods, in: *Policy Research Working Papers*, April 2012, pp. 1–40. <https://dash.harvard.edu/bitstream/handle/1/23955422/24933671.pdf?jsessionid=A4A0A3498601CODEEA905856AAC54A59?sequence=1>; J. A. BYFIELD. African Women in Colonial Economies, in: M. SHANGUHYIA, T. FALOLA, (eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of African Colonial and Postcolonial History*, New York 2018, [https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-59426-6\\_6](https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-59426-6_6); J. ALLMAN, S GEIGER, N. MUSISI, *Women in African Colonial Histories*, Bloomington, Indianapolis 2002, pp. 1–18.

<sup>24</sup> M. G. BROWNS, *Khartoum at Night: Fashion and Body Politics in Imperial Sudan*, California 2017.

<sup>25</sup> THOMPSON, p. 46.



knowledge contained in books, whether in Latin or the vernacular.<sup>26</sup> The World Health Organisation explores the role of women in healthcare in Africa, particularly in the context of reproductive health. It highlights the challenges that women face in accessing healthcare and the efforts to promote women's health in Africa.<sup>27</sup> Stephanie Newell and Africa Research Group provides a collection of essays that examine the history and practices of traditional African medicine, with a focus on women's roles.<sup>28</sup> It highlights how women's knowledge and practices have been marginalized in modern healthcare systems. Adeola Adeloye while giving some of the pioneers of modern medicine in Nigeria also did little on pioneer nurse or those in the private or missionary pay.<sup>29</sup> This lacuna of the roles of some women in the general healthcare of Abeokuta is what this article intends to fill. Two women stood out, Lady Jane McCotter and Dr Gertrud Biersack.

### Healthcare Services in Abeokuta before the Arrival of the "Witches"

Health is the state of physical, mental and social well-being but not just the absence of diseases and infirmity. In tackling diseases and infirmities, professionals were established along these lines. Some societies were even famous for healthcare among the Yoruba people during pre-colonial era. These professionals range from *teguntegun* (bone setters), *eleweomo* (indigenous paediatricians), *leku-leja* (indigenous pharmacists), *babalawo* (Herbalists), *Onisekun* (native doctors), *iyaagbebi/agbomola* (Midwives), *olola* (circumcisionists), *alasotele* (soothsayers), to even *oso* (Wizards) and *aje* (Witches).<sup>30</sup> These were social groups drawn from every part of the society including men, women, children and even the elderly. Although the most feared or negatively viewed were the Wizards (*Oso*) and Witches (*Aje*). Meanwhile, a few healthcare professionals were either members of the group or collaborated with them in order to treat very complex

<sup>26</sup> M. H. GREEN, *Making Women's Medicine Masculine the Rise of Male Authority in Pre-Modern Gynaecology*, New York 2008, pp. 163–164.

<sup>27</sup> World Health Organisation (WHO), *Addressing the Challenge of Women's Health in Africa Report of the Commission on Women's Health in the African Region*, New York 2012, pp. 30–56.

<sup>28</sup> M. OSEI, *Women and Medicine on the Gold Coast, 1880–1945*, unpublished Masters thesis, Western University 2023, pp. 74–83.

<sup>29</sup> A. ADELOYE, *Nigerian Pioneers of Modern Medicine*, Ibadan 1977, pp. 14–16.

<sup>30</sup> D. D. O. OYEBOLA, *Hospitals or Healers?: The Dilemma of Nigerian Patients*. Inaugural Lecture, University of Ibadan, 8 January 1987, p. 9.

ailments pronounced to be mystical (*to niowoaiyeninu*). They were also feared because of the belief that they usually do bad things.

Baba Ifagbemi puts it thus: “*Ki Oyinbo to de, ni a tini bi ase n se imototoaraa-tiayika. Be sini, itojuaralatidojukoaisan, aileraatiarun. Ni aiyeighbana, inuigbe la n yaigbesi, ibe la tun da ilesi. Ojumokanko le de kiamagbaayikatabiinule. Ni gbatioyinbo de ni a waniawonkogbekogbe, adalenu, atibebelo. Eni tikoba se eleyi, yioteileikase*” (Before the Whites came, we had our way of taking care of ourselves and environment. More so, we observed personal hygiene to fight against sickness, illness and diseases. Those days, we defecated in the bushes; we also throw our dirt there. There is no household that would not sweep the rooms or environment on daily basis. Failure to do this was regarded as stepping on *ikase* [dirt]).<sup>31</sup>

During this era, superstitions and taboos worked against any person who did not take care of their surroundings or personal hygiene. During this period, the people were threatened by various diseases, health and sanitary challenges. However, these challenges were always being attributed to metaphysical or spiritual especially, when it could not be treated by the native Medicine man or the healers.<sup>32</sup> R. T. Akinyele in his submission, “Health and Sanitation in Colonial Abeokuta,” argued that, indigenous people of Abeokuta suffered from malaria, hookworm, Guinea worm, intestinal disease, yaws, venereal diseases, and several other parasitical infections, but that, malaria was the commonest. He did not mince words that culture and tradition affected the patronage of modern health practitioners in colonial Abeokuta.<sup>33</sup>

The Egba people of Abeokuta had developed a confederal system of government through the structure of the popular Egba United Government (EUG). The EUG also established a hospital in 1908 but the structure and services provided were liken to that of a small dispensary.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>31</sup> A. OYEGUNLE (AKA Baba Ifagbemi) c. 95years. (Araba gbogboAgege, Anopeloku of Iporo, Araba Kola, Sango) [Though Baba claimed he was more than 100years but a perusal about if he was born during the *Adubi* crisis of 1918 revealed otherwise]. Oral Interview held at residence, 29 October, 2016.

<sup>32</sup> M. AKIODE, Age c.50years. Oral Interview, Auditor, Traditional Birth Attendants of Abeokuta South Local Government. Oral Interview at his residence at OkeAro near Olumo rock on 22 June, 2016; interview at his residence 29 October, 2016.

<sup>33</sup> R.T. AKINYELE, “Health and Sanitation in Colonial Abeokuta”. In Toyin Falola & J. Salm, eds. *Nigerian Cities* (Trenton, USA: Africa Word Press, 2003), pp. 293-313.

<sup>34</sup> E. M HOGAN, *Cross and Scalpel: Jean-Marie Coquard among the Egba of Yorubaland*, Ibadan 2012, p. 173.

Thus, one could say that only the Sacred Heart Hospital under Father Jean-Marie Coquard provided healthcare services for the 300,000 population. But the colonization of the town following the Ijemo massacre in 1914 marked the end of an era.<sup>35</sup>

The health condition of the town, like the entire pre-colonial Africa state was not developed. Diseases and epidemic like small pox, malaria, and yaw were rampant in the town leading to high rate of maternal, infant and general mortalities and morbidities. For instance, it was reported that the conditions under which majority of the population especially women lived bred and trained up children increased the death-toll and retarded progress. Responding to this health and medical predicaments were further hindered by financial incapability.<sup>36</sup> By 1928, there were questions about the financial status of Egba Native Administration, especially, with the emerging world economic depression. At that time, the severity of the strain was particularly intense in Nigeria where the newly established administration was still struggling to find its bearing.<sup>37</sup> This was also manifested in the healthcare conditions of the people. To be sure, a report affirmed the state of the deplorable state of medical and health works, thus: *"With the cry for medical assistance all over the country, it is clearly unreasonable for two Lady Doctors and two qualified nurses to be engaged in this one small institution. The position is undoubtedly difficult and uncertain, also pathetic and ridiculous at times as anyone acquainted with all the individuals concerned would soon recognise."*<sup>38</sup>

The above shows that only two female doctors were available to cater for the healthcare of many women in the town. The need for female doctors and nurses or midwives were imperative owing to the fact that many indigenous women were not free around the male healthcare practitioners.<sup>39</sup> The available European Staff, consisted of one Medical Officer, One Senior Sanitary officer, One Lady Medical Officer, One ensuring sister, one sanitary inspector and a Rodent Inspectors engaged in de-ratting

<sup>35</sup> A. PALLINDER-LAW, Aborted Modernization in West Africa? The Case of Abeokuta, in: *The Journal of African History*, 15, 1, 1974, pp. 65–82.

<sup>36</sup> National Archives Ibadan (hereinafter NAI), COMCOL 1, 498. Resident, Lagos to Sir Hugh Clifford, 16 October 1923, par 2.

<sup>37</sup> J. OSUNTOKUN, *Nigeria in the First World War*, Longman 1979, p. 1.

<sup>38</sup> NAI, File 11875 /Vol. vi. Annual Report, Abeokuta Province, 1928, par 52.

<sup>39</sup> Interview, Mrs Kolawole, 65years, Alagbon-Meta, Somorin, Obantoko, 12 December 2017.

Abeokuta Town.<sup>40</sup> Though the Colonial Government also provided staff for the women's side of the Catholic Hospital, which was under Father Coquard. They were grossly inadequate. For example, only two female medical staff were employed for the only surviving hospital in the town. These two females were a Lady Medical Officer, Dr Gallagher and a highly qualified sister, Miss McCotter.<sup>41</sup> The report stated the deploring state of medical and health works as: *"With the cry for medical assistance all over the country, is clearly unreasonable for two Lady Doctors and two qualified nurses to be engaged in this one small institution. The position is undoubtedly difficult and uncertain, also pathetic and ridiculous at times as anyone acquainted with all the individuals concerned would soon recognise."*<sup>42</sup>

This shows that while health and sanitation was a universal and fundamental need, government could not provide adequate number to cater for the thousands of population in Abeokuta.

### **The Witches Who Saved Lives: Lady Jane McCotter and Dr Gertrud Biersack**

This part shall discuss the biography that is life and times of both Lady Jane McCotter and Dr Gertrud Biersack. These are women who represent two different epochs in the history of Nigeria and Abeokuta in particular. That is, while the former worked in the land during colonial era, the latter worked in the post-colonial era.

#### *Lady Jane McCotter*

The birth of Lady Jane McCotter remains invisible in many literatures because of the little literature on this enigma. Available records suggest she was born in 1870 in Ireland but moved to England as one of the early nursing students who were later sent to Africa by the British Colonial Government. She was initially sent to South Africa during the Boer War, where she worked as an Army Nursing Sister from 1901–1905. She then joined the West African Nursing Service in Southern Nigeria in 1909 and variously stationed at Old Calabar, Warri during the Yellow Fever Outbreak in 1911 and later Lagos.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>40</sup> F. B. ADAMS, Annual report, Abeokuta, 1928, par 3; see also, Sec Southern provinces Enugu to the Hon, the chief secretary to the Government, Lagos. 2 April, 1929 Southern Province. NAI, File 11875 Vol vi., par 48.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., par 52.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> N. ADEOLA, *Abeokuta: Some Historical Reflections*, Abeokuta 1980, p. 14

In 1926, she was honoured with the insignia of the Member of the British Empire (MBE). In 1927 she retired from Government service and returned to England but because she wanted to continue to render her services to African and its people, she returned to Nigeria. But this time, at the Sacred Heart Hospital, where her name was corruptly called Makota. She worked there for about a year until the Egba Maternity and Child Welfare Centre (EMCWC) was opened at Ijemo where the Native Administration needed someone who could manage the centre and attend to pregnant women, nursing mothers and their infants. With the vacancy, she applied and she was successfully selected for the job in 1929. The centre was established to provide for women, who desired to benefit from it, a service of ante-natal and post-natal care at affordable costs within the reach of all. It was reported that Makota would arrive at the clinic as early as 4.00am but later due to her failing health 7.00am as reflected from the attendances between April 9, 1929, and January 9, 1930 which was around 27,621.<sup>44</sup> Special attentions were given to regular checkup cases and of domiciliary mid-wifery visits.

As the head of the new Egba Infant and Welfare Centre, she saved the lives of hundreds of women who would have died from preventable diseases, superstitions, maltreatment and poor medical attention especially in cases of difficult or abnormal births. She also encouraged her girls to go to the homes of both poor and wealth indigenes who needed their services and who could not get access to the centre as a result of distance, poor access road and other challenges.<sup>45</sup>

One area where her work was also impactful though silent was in menstrual hygiene. It must be noted that before colonial era, girls of puberty usually used waste pieces of clothes as menstrual pads. They also used cotton wools which were either disposed or washed to be used again.<sup>46</sup> The effect of this unhygienic act led to several cases of infectious and venereal diseases including sexually transmitted ones such as gonorrhoea and syphilis. Although there were no records available, there seems to be a general consensus among medical practitioners that there were widespread. As a colonial report states: *"The most important single diseases*

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<sup>44</sup> National Archives Abeokuta, Annual Report, Abeokuta Province, 1929, par 20–26.

<sup>45</sup> F. ONIFADE, a former student of Lady McCotter, now the mother-in-law to Professor Comfort Onifade, former HoD, Oral interview, CGNS, FUNAAB, 5 September 2019.

<sup>46</sup> Iya Dudu, Elewe Omo (Native Herb seller), Oral interview with at her stall at Itoku Market, 19, April 2022.



Figure 1. Lady Jane, Father Mariere Coquard in the Midst of Egba Nursing Mothers, c. 1929.

*is gonorrhea, with its manifold sequels and its important bearing on the fertility of the race. Some years ago a medical practitioner in close touch with conditions in Lagos stated that before many generations had passed, the Yoruba native population would markedly diminish. ... The more rapid spread in recent years may be due to the more lax condition of the people in the transition state of civilization. The information concerning syphilis is even vague than that of concerning gonorrhea, as the only reliable test is also positive for Yaws, which is endemic over greater part of southern Nigeria.*<sup>47</sup>

The conclusion of the committee on the causes of maternal and infantile mortality in Lagos colony and the entire country were among other things unsanitary conditions, superstitions and a general unhealthiness which prevails in the town and country.<sup>48</sup>

This unhygienic practice was one of the areas where Lady McCotter addressed through sensitization programmes and harmonization in the nursing curriculum.<sup>49</sup> Thus, she also inspired many young girls as at that period including her chief midwife, Mrs Josephine Durojaiye of Itesi, Abeokuta.

<sup>47</sup> R. R. KUCZYNSKY, *Demographic Survey of the British Colonial Empire. Vol 1, West Africa*, London 1948, p. 663.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 670.

<sup>49</sup> F. Onifade. Oral interview,



She also tried to advise most of the market women to leave their infants with her at the maternity and infant centre before going to the market to trade in order not to expose them to the hustles and harsh weather conditions. She often times gave older children meals and also fed nursing mothers whom she felt were deprived of nourishment at home. It was also reported that she was so generous that no one could ever account for her private investment and resources she lavished on the welfare of women and children under her care.<sup>50</sup> The Balogun of the Egba, Idowu Soyoye, described the work of the Infant Welfare Centre Ijemo headed by the enigmatic Lady Jane McCotter as follows: *"I have taken several women to the centre since its inauguration. I have personally suffered loss of many children for the past 8 years, but since I have been sending my wives and children to the place after all native medicines have failed, I am today having strong and healthy children alive."*<sup>51</sup>

It was also reported that about, 111 mothers were delivered of their babies through home delivery by the Centre's midwives. In fact, the greatest achievement of Lady McCotter and her team was the revelation concerning an obnoxious native drug, *agbo*, which to the Yoruba mothers was regarded as the needed magical drug for the treatment of ailing infants.<sup>52</sup> Unfortunately, the *agbo* was hugely abused by many people and such abuse usually led to complications for mother, their unborn babies and their infants.<sup>53</sup>

The EMCWC, thrived even at the end of the Second World War in 1945, when the daily average attendances were over 1,000 at Ijemo and Idi- Aba as compared to 993 in the previous year. New Centres were also opened at Otta in the Egba Division and at Ado and Aiyetoro in the Ilaro Division.<sup>54</sup> It must be noted that these centres were opened at the behest and supervisory surveillance of Lady McCotter. In fact, she worked not just as a nurse, midwife, administrator but also engineer and special adviser.

Due to the shortage of nursing and midwives, she established a school of midwifery<sup>55</sup> to complement that established by the Sacred Heart

<sup>50</sup> ADEOLA, p. 17.

<sup>51</sup> National Archives Abeokuta, Egba Council Records, 1/1/54 vol 3 nos. 269–410, Minutes of 31 December 1931, p. 5.

<sup>52</sup> NAI, CSO/2 or file 11875/x. Annual Report: Abeokuta Province, 1933, par 21.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Annual Report, 1945, par 41. The report labelled her regime autocratic. This may have been because of her strict adherence to protocol.

<sup>55</sup> NAI, ABP 247, Vol II, Sgd M.P Steele, Regional Matron, 192; O. O. THOMPSON – A. S. AFOLABI – O. G. F. NWAORGU, p. 342.



Hospital. The girls who attended the school came from over the country and were mandated to pass the government board exams which was held twice a year.<sup>56</sup> The students produced from the midwifery school were also in high demand across the country. Hence, it was reported that generations of Egbas and Egbados owe her a debt of incalculable gratitude as a result of her contribution to the increase in ante-natal attendances to over 1 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>3</sub> million cases and consequently, safer delivery.<sup>57</sup> But in spite of her failing health, she continued to support the government in the provision of welfare for women, babies and nursing mothers. Moreover, she queried the government and even stakeholders such as Funmilayo Ransome Kuti where they erred or went contrary to her professional advice. For instance, she was in 1951 instrumental to the provision of two newly built clinics at Owode and Imala, with the hope of many more across the province. Considering the enormity of the services that she helped to provide, the Egba Native Authority had no choice than to notify the Chief Commissioner to raise her salary.<sup>58</sup> She obtained many contributions to augment the official funds available especially through the United Africa Company (UAC) Ltd., which, for many years continued to give annual subscription in support of feeding orphans and other (infants), that by 1952, 35,198 meals were already provided.<sup>59</sup>

Some women around the Ijemo area regarded her as “*ajeolomopupo*” – the witch with many children. This was because of her motive to not just cater for the pregnancies but also see to the growth and development of the babies.<sup>60</sup> As a sign of her contribution to Egba, Africa and the British Empire as a whole, the Countess Mount Batten of Burina visited the centre in February 1951, the same year she received the Order of the St John of Jerusalem. Above all, she was honoured with the Commander of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in 1955, shortly before her death on 22<sup>nd</sup> November at Ibadan.

Following her demise, the golden days of the Infant Centre began to diminish. This was because apart from the shortage of qualified staff and quality leadership that McCotter offered, the centre had to rely on borrowing qualified midwife from the Sacred Heart Hospital during the period and such gesture took its toll on the services rendered by the

<sup>56</sup> ADEOLA, p. 15.

<sup>57</sup> Annual Report, Abeokuta Province, 1948, 19, par 50.

<sup>58</sup> Annual Report Abeokuta Province, 1951, 23, par 46.

<sup>59</sup> Annual Report, Abeokuta Province, 1952, 18, par 45.

<sup>60</sup> F. Onifade. Oral Interview.

Sacred Heart Hospital as well, that the SHH requested that it was no longer feasible to support the Ijemo centre with its staff. To be sure, The Local Government Inspector succinctly put the nature of the challenge in the following words, *"I am now informed that the Catholic Mission cannot continue to supply a Sister to supervise the Infant Welfare Service in Egba Division, as all its Sisters are required for its own work"*.<sup>61</sup>

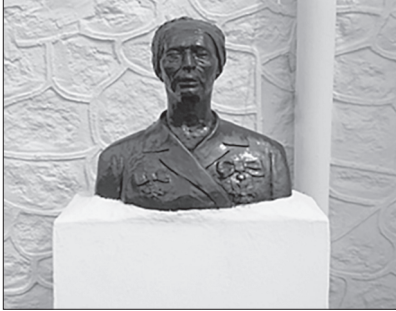


Figure 2. Bust of Lady Jane McCotter at the front of Oba Ademola II Hospital, Ijemo, Abeokuta.<sup>62</sup>

### *Dr Gertrud Biersack*

Gertrud was born in Germany on January 27, 1934 to an Austrian mother, Serotine Biersack (nee Lutter) and a German father, Johann Ferdinand Biersack. Gertrud had two other siblings, Brigitte and Margaret.<sup>63</sup> The eldest, Brigitte studies Arts and practiced Fine Arts, while the youngest, Margaret studied nursing and midwifery. Tragedy struck when their fathers died in 1937 when Gertrud was three years old.<sup>64</sup> The outbreak of the World War II (1939–1945) affected her education, just like it affected the global community.<sup>65</sup> By the time the World War II ended in 1945, Gertrud was only 11 years and was fortunate like her family to escape the war unscathed. After the war, Gertrud stayed at home until October before she could be placed at Muenchen Nymphenburg for her secondary school education until she graduated in 1952.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>61</sup> NAI, ABP 1647. Local Government Inspector, Abeokuta Province to all sec of District Councils, 18 February 1956, par 1.

<sup>62</sup> THOMPSON, p. 194.

<sup>63</sup> O. YEMITAN, *Dr Gertrud Biersack: benevolent Witch of Lantoro: A biography*, Lagos 2016, p. 43.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>65</sup> WHO, *Effects of Nuclear War on Health and Health Services*, Geneva 1987, pp. 1–60.

<sup>66</sup> YEMITAN, p. 45.

Two factors shaped the paths at which Gertrud took. First, she had read about the Medical Mission Institute located in Wurzburg. Second, newspaper reports about German doctors traveling for missionary work outside Europe. Hence, after her secondary education, she applied to the Wurzburg Medical institute. Though one of the criteria of the institute was for candidates to undertake and be knowledgeable in religious studies, Gertrud took the risks and passed. After passing the courses which built her spiritually and emotionally, she enrolled for the medical programme in 1953 and she was awarded Doctor of Medicine (medical states examination), University of Munich in 1959. She worked as a medical officer in Germany between 1961 and 1962, mission physician Catholic Mission, Ghana between 1962 and 1966;<sup>67</sup> senior medical officer, Mission Medical Clinic, Wurzburg, Germany between 1968 and 1970 where she also pursued a programme in Obstetrics and Gynaecology in May 1970.<sup>68</sup>

When Dr Oswald Madecki who was the head of the Lantoro hospital in Abeokuta at that time visited the Wurzburg Institute in the late 1960s, he convinced Dr Biersack to come to the Catholic Hospital, Lantoro where the services of a gynaecologist and obstetrician was seriously needed. This coincided with when some new buildings were commissioned at the Sacred Heart Hospital, Lantoro. Following her arrival in Abeokuta, she was allocated a quarters within the hospital. This made her closer to the patients. Through her efforts, General Obasanjo and Dr Madecki in 1981, they commenced the building of the Chest Diseases specialist. Unfortunately, Dr Madecki fell ill and died in 1985,<sup>69</sup> thereby paving way for the most senior medical personnel, Dr Biersack to take over the administration of the hospital in 1985. The hospital was approved in 1985 to run the general medical practice programme for doctors and has since then been assisting in the training of General Medical Practitioners in Nigeria.<sup>70</sup> However, the chest disease hospital was launched on February 28<sup>th</sup> 1986.<sup>71</sup> As an administrator, she focused on raising funds to support

<sup>67</sup> *Prabook*, "Gertrud Maria Biersack" 2020, [www.prabook.com/web/mobile/#!/profile/472710](http://www.prabook.com/web/mobile/#!/profile/472710).

<sup>68</sup> YEMITAN, pp. 49–50.

<sup>69</sup> He was Honoured with the chieftaincy title of Agbeji of Egbandal (Healer of Egbandal) by Oba Lipede.

<sup>70</sup> Some of the finest medical doctors in Abeokuta such as Dr K. AMUANGI has benefited from the tutelage he got under Dr Biersack.

<sup>71</sup> Sacred Heart Hospital, A Short history. This was a five-page paper handed down by the secretary of the Hospital.

the hospital, compassion to help the needy and consummate desire to care for the sick including women and children.<sup>72</sup> In order to raise funds, she would send more than 500 cards abroad annually to friends of the Sacred Heart Hospital in order to thank them and also remind them of the need to assist the hospital. Through her foresight and that of Chief Olusegun Obansanjo.



Figure 3. Dr Gertrud Biersack at the Lunching of a Water Project in Abeokuta.

Source: DAHW Archive. <https://www.dahw.de/unsere-arbeit/presseportal/pressemeldungen/meldung/nachruf-dr-gertrud-biersack-otun-iyabiye-of-egbaland-5166.html>.

On taking care of the health of the needy, she instructed all members of the hospital never to deny the poor and sick patients access to affordable and quality healthcare. This was in conformity with her resolve to save lives. Hence it was not a surprise to see patients demand for her to attend to them instead of other medical doctors particularly Nigerians. The reasons for this was not farfetched. She usually treated poor and sick patients free and her reputations preceded her. Local historian, Chief Yemitan's account of her is worth quoting here: *"Patients were amazed by her ability to know what their problem really was even when they believed that something else was their health problem; and Dr Biersack would correct their wrong beliefs and go straight to deal with the actual problem. This was what led her patients to conclude that she was a 'witch'."*<sup>73</sup>

Biersack herself refuted such claim, *"But I can myself see what is wrong with patient after examining her. Gynaecology is like that: you can see for yourself and*

<sup>72</sup> YEMITAN, p. 57. Though this was also in line with the Catholic Church policy, she followed it to the latter.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

*know what the problem is, even when the patient says something different.”* Some patients who have had contact with her still hold the belief that she was indeed a witch because of the way she would predict the period when they would either get pregnant, deliver or be healed. As one woman puts it: *Ni gbatimoloyun. Mo lo si Sakiredihaati. Mo padeoyinbo. O se ayewo fun mi. O de so fun mi peosubayiini ma bimo. Sugbon mi ko Gbagbo afigbati o di asikona. Geleniasikoti o so nimo bi omonaa.* (When I was pregnant, I visited the Sacred Heart Hospital where I met with the white woman. She diagnosed me and informed me that I would put to bed at a particular month, but I doubted her until the exact month she told me came to fruition.)<sup>74</sup>

One of the things that must have caused the situation above must have been the use of the sonographic scan which was not common as it is today. Such accurate predictions of due dates may have informed the woman to tag Dr Biersack a witch. Another woman narrated that when her daughter wanted to give birth at the Lantoro Hospital more than a decade ago, a doctor had told her that she would undergo caesarian section (CS) in order to put to bed safely but upon the intervention of Mama Biersack, who insisted that there was no need for the young lady to go through CS. And after her intervention, it was while they were discussing that the young lady put to bed. She stated that she really heard a lot about the hospital at that time and how Biersack would always leave her comfort zone or whatever work she was doing to attend to patients who ordinarily were supposed to be under the supervision of other medical doctors.<sup>75</sup> She further narrated how she was informed of a particular woman who was taken to the Sacred Heart Hospital by her mother-in-law but was having difficulty in delivering. She further held that when Biersack noticed that the woman was making some gesticulations with her toes crossed, she drove out the woman from the premises of the labour ward and the daughter in law delivered safely. She further stated that Biersack diplomatically informed the new mother to be careful of those she thought were her friends or families.<sup>76</sup>

The Human Resource personnel of the hospital debunked any claim or beliefs that Dr Biersack was witch. As he claimed, *“She is not a witch as most people proclaim, but she has a natural power to detect women’s problems based on*

<sup>74</sup> F. OLOKODE Funmi, 73 years, Trader at Abiola Way, Oral interview, Lantoro Junction, 12 April 2017.

<sup>75</sup> F. UKOH (AKA Iya Sam) trader at Somorin Road, oral interview, Somorin, Obantoko, 29 March 2021.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

*her long years of experience.*"<sup>77</sup> However, a philosopher of science scholar warned that the designation of the good doctor as a witch may not be misplaced, as such social beliefs are also popular among European, only that they usually use it for humankind.<sup>78</sup>

Be that as it may, an international non-governmental organisation known as The Future for Children noted in its statement of purpose stated that while hospitals in the developing countries not only have the task of healing and fighting disease, they also offer the poor population a place of security and hope against the ever increasing violence and poverty and Dr Gertrud Biersack who has been Chief Supervisor of the Sacred Heart Hospital for many years has also picked up such interests in helping the vulnerable including the sick, poor and the downtrodden.<sup>79</sup> Referring to the role of the Sacred Heart Hospital under Dr Biersack, it held: *"Today, it includes the most important departments and looks after more than 400 inpatient beds. Each ward handles countless outpatient cases, affecting almost 11,000 children, and at the end of a year looks at around 45,000 cases. The number of pregnancy check-ups and births also show a proud number, which are carried out by a surprising few general practitioners and specialists. The hospital is well positioned with wards for internal medicine, surgery, pediatrics and neonatology. X-ray machines, a blood bank and a laboratory accompany the tests [...] The children have no chance and no possibility to free themselves from it. And this is where we come in: under the watchful care of Dr Biersack we support these families who are no longer able to finance their children's schooling. Specifically, its about school fees, clothing, materials and everything you need to get basic education."*<sup>80</sup>

The above shows that Dr Biersack was not just a medical expert but also a dependable partner in social welfare provider and an international philanthropist. It was as a result of these enormous contributions to the development of Egba and Egba Health history that the then Alake of Egba land, Oba Lipede honoured her with the *Otun Iya Abiye* of Egbaland – Chief Matron of Egba land. After she started developing eye problems and decided to retire voluntarily from the Sacred Heart Hospital Lantoro, some prominent Egba sons and daughters decided to honour her and do a biography of her. At the launching of the book in June 2017, the former first lady of the state Chief Mrs Foluso Amosun described Dr Biersack

<sup>77</sup> Personal discussion with him at SHH, Lantoro, 2 April 2019.

<sup>78</sup> O. G. F NWAORGU, Professor, Philosophy of Science and Critical Thinking, oral interview FUNAAB. 12 March 2021.

<sup>79</sup> Future for Children, "Africa-Nigeria, Abeokuta".

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

as a valuable asset to medical profession and people of the State. In her opinion: *"She has contributed immensely to the development of Egbaland through her selfless service in the health sector; it is worthy of praise and it will linger in the heart of the people for a long time."*<sup>81</sup> She voluntarily retired from the services of the SHH, Lantoro after clocking 80 years and when her eyes were failing her during surgeries.

After she returned to Germany, her heart was still in Africa and the Sacred Heart Hospital Lantoro. As she puts it during her remarks at the send-off party in her honour: *"I will miss all of you very much. I am only at home when I am here [...] I shall continue to remember the Sacred Heart Hospital and to support it in my prayers."*<sup>82</sup> Also, Dr Biersack never got married or had children of her own, but it was believed that she was a witch that saved many lives and helped to deliver thousands of babies in Abeokuta and beyond.<sup>83</sup> As a retiree from the hospital stated: *"She helped women who came from Lagos and other places seeking to become pregnant. Dr Biersack was the best in gynaecology. She was a blessing to the Egba."*<sup>84</sup> She used to send greeting cards and also help generate some funds from abroad into the place she lived her life. She spent the last part of her life at the St. Thekla Senior Center in Würzburg, where she died on February 14, 2022.<sup>85</sup> She chose the saying for her death picture herself: *"I wanted to be at home and be without the consolation of all worlds, I mean at home in heaven, where I can see God forever."*<sup>86</sup>

## Conclusion

The article is a biographical studies set out to detail the life and times of two great personalities, Lady Jane McCotter and Dr Gertrud Biersack and their contributions to Egba land, Abeokuta. The article revealed that though there was a level of healthcare provided by the indigenous practi-

<sup>81</sup> O. TORIOLA, Amosun's Wife Extols Virtues of Former MD Sacred Heart Hospital, in: *Western Post*, 18 June 2017. At <https://westernpostnigeria.com/amosuns-wife-extols-virtues-of-former-md-sacred-heart-hospital/>.

<sup>82</sup> YEMITAN, pp. 90–91.

<sup>83</sup> O. LAWAL, Nurse with FMC, who worked at the SHH, oral interview Lantoro under Dr Biersack.

<sup>84</sup> E. OLOYEDE but culled from the Documentary on Dr Biersack, by Sina ANIDUGBE 2014; YEMITAN, p. 76.

<sup>85</sup> DAHW, Obituary Dr Gertrud Biersack – Otun Iya Abiye of Egbaland. March 04, 2022. <https://www.dahw.de/unser-arbeit/presseportal/presse-meldungen/meldung/nachruf-dr-gertrud-biersack-otun-ya-abiye-of-egbaland-5166.html>.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.



tioners and later the missionaries and colonial government; they were inadequate, unequally distributed and of low quality. These encounter with these two foreign personalities who developed an undying love for Africa and the people of Egba in particular helped in no small means to improve what was already on ground. While Lady Jane McCotter arrived during colonial period; Dr Gertrude Biersack arrived in the post-colonial era. The arrival of these two foreign women contributed to the development of the health services of Egba in their various times. These contributions were so glaring that many women and people tagged them as 'witches.' Witches as it is commonly known world-wide are associated with evil deeds such as cause of death, diseases and ailments that are not treatable. But on the contrary, Lady McCotter and Dr Biersack were complete opposite as they helped to bring many children into the world, and they also laboured to not only see them live healthily but also their overall development. In fact, in some instances, they also helped in the social advancement of the citizenry. There is no doubt that while there is a general belief system about witches and witchcraft to be malevolent across the globe and in Africa, the case of Egba, Abeokuta was uncommon. Hence, it could be emphatically held that indeed Egba, Abeokuta was once blessed with this kind of 'witches.'

The article makes case for more studies on biographical studies and history from the margins especially groups that have not been given adequate attention. These women fall into this category.



# The Divorce of Two Islands, the End of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, and the Interpretation of Post-WWI International Policy

*Miguel Leite Ferrari*<sup>1</sup>

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The study aims to analyse the relations between Japan and Great Britain through the Anglo-Japanese alliance, an alliance between two island empires from different parts of the world that, due to the geopolitical scenario and the issues they faced at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, such as the threat of the Russian Empire, they decided to join forces in a treaty that assured their positions in the Far East. As the years passed, they decided to renew the alliance twice, becoming essential politically, economically, and militarily for both of them, especially in the 1910s. Despite this close link, the alliance wasn't extremely popular for various reasons, whether within the empires or abroad. As the First World War ended, the new world that emerged saw the alliance and the style of diplomacy it was made by as antiquated. The situation eventually evolved into the abrogation of the alliance at the Washington Conference. However, the memory of the alliance would be transformed by those who were against internationalism and the characteristics of the new style of diplomacy, seeing the alliance as an example of the reliability of the old style, thereby creating a myth that considers its abrogation to have been a massive blunder that eventually led to the Pacific War, that permeates to this day, the "ghost" of the Anglo-Japanese alliance. Therefore, this study aims to explain what the alliance was and its circumstances, from the beginning till its end, and how it affected the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

[Security Concerns; Strategic Concerns; Myth; New Diplomacy; Abrogation; Open Door, Washington Naval Conference]

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## Introduction

In the pages of history, alliances are formed and dissolved, leaving an indelible mark on the geopolitical landscape. These pacts that are created for the mutual benefit of all participants are crucial to under-

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standing the complexities of the relations between nations, how they act with each other and with the rest of the world, their reasonings, their motives, how the world itself forces it to change and adapt, and lastly, how both sides decide that it is better for such a construct between them be dissolved. Such was the case of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, an unprecedented partnership between a European and an Asian nation that emerged at the turn of the twentieth century. Both sides faced difficult circumstances, with the British having to deal with challenges like maintaining its vast colonial holdings and managing the balance of power in Europe while facing severe spending constraints.<sup>2</sup> In contrast, Japan had to find a way to circumnavigate the European nations after suffering a terrible humiliation by the Triple Intervention and discover a country to aid its economic development. After a long period of negotiations, both nations signed a bilateral treaty that addressed several shared objectives, like mutual defence, naval cooperation, territorial integrity, and more, making it so that as time went on, both nations began to depend on the alliance, initially between a more robust and a weaker member. Still, as time passed, their relationship slowly became one of equality, causing friction between them. Despite all challenges and opposition, it stood for two decades as a symbol of cooperation and mutual benefit between its members. For Britain and Japan, it stood as their foundation in the foreign affairs of the Far East.

Its abrogation was a lengthy process that ended with the Washington Conference of 1922, replaced by the much broader Four-Power Treaty, encompassing the United Kingdom, Japan, the United States, and France. It was considered by everyone involved, especially the governments of Great Britain and Japan, to be a suitable replacement and finale of the alliance, encapsulating the status quo and projecting peace and stability over the regions, following the tenets of the new style of diplomacy that the League of Nations was espousing. However, many were aghast that such an agreement was rescinded and, in the years to come, would create a myth utilizing the events that followed, such as the rise of Japanese expansionism, to justify their points of view, seeing the alliance as an example of the so-called “Old Diplomacy,”<sup>3</sup> the one before the new one

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<sup>2</sup> C. L. DAVIS, Linkage Diplomacy: Economic and Security Bargaining in the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 1902–23, in: *International Security*, 33, 2008, 3, p. 154.

<sup>3</sup> A. BEST, The ‘Ghost’ of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance: An Examination into Historical Myth-Making, in: *The Historical Journal*, 49, 2006, 3, p. 831.

championed by President Woodrow Wilson after the Great War, and that if it had been maintained, British would have had a faithful ally in the Far East.

This misconception would spread to the point where, in several British survey studies, the alliance's abrogation was considered a significant blunder that would clear the way for the Pacific War.<sup>4</sup> As such, this text will therefore do its best to elucidate what the Anglo-Japanese alliance, from its beginning till its decline and abrogation, and how its memory was transformed into a myth that completely altered the truth of what it indeed was.

### The Island Empires before the Alliance

The Empire of Japan was a nation that, less than a century earlier, stood as a feudal and agrarian-based land isolated from the rest of the world, with the Tokugawa shogunate, the regime that governed the island, upholding their isolationist policy *Sakoku* (鎖国, "locked country"). Following her forced opening by the "Black Ships" of the United States, Japan would have a profound and transformative metamorphosis following the Meiji Restoration, with the new government incorporating several aspects of Western civilization while maintaining the main traditions and principles of the Land of the Rising Sun. During this period, she called upon the European empires to aid in their military and technological development; such was the case of the British Empire, which sent naval officers to lecture in Japan's naval academies and built several warships for the Japanese Imperial Navy.<sup>5</sup>

As such, by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it asserted itself as a mighty regional power in the geopolitics of the Far East, having three main objectives: the assertion of its position and influence in regions it considers of interest like China, Korea, and Manchuria, the acquisition of raw materials to continue the expansion of their industry and military, and lastly and most important, the basis of their political thinking, the protection of the Home Islands against any possible foreign incursion, preventing the possibility of suffering the fate of China at the hands of the European Great Powers. These three objectives are all interconnected, with the Japanese leadership believing that to prevent any enemy from

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., pp. 812–813.

<sup>5</sup> J. C. PERRY, Great Britain and the Emergence of Japan as a Naval Power, in: *Monumenta Nipponica*, 21, 1966, 3/4, pp. 311–312.

attacking their home, they should never allow their foe to be close enough to it, with Korea's position, in particular, being their primary concern.

Initially, Japan believed that it would be able to achieve its objectives alone; however, after decisively defeating The Qing Dynasty in the First Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895) and forcing their defeating enemy into accepting the Treaty of Shimonoseki, they suffered the united intervention of The German Empire, The Russian Empire, and The Third French Republic, who together forced Japan to back down and give back certain conquests it acquired with the treaty previously mentioned, stating that the cession of Liaotung under Japanese control would be a constant threat to the peace in the region.<sup>6</sup>

This “friendly advice” was received as an extremely unpleasant surprise by the Japanese Foreign Office, who attempted to gain the support of nations like Great Britain, the United States, and Italy, none of which were willing to support Japan against the troika of powers, forcing the Japanese government to comply with the demands.<sup>7</sup>

The humiliation of being forced to cede most of their war gains dealt a heavy blow to the entire nation, from top to bottom; the entire population united in their outrage, making them give more importance to the view that the only way for them to feel safe and no longer suffer at the mercy of the Great Powers, was to achieve complete superiority over them in regards to military capabilities, making the people give more importance and prestige to the Armed Forces, which they, be it as a united Army-Navy movement or not, utilized to be significant players in the decision-making of Japanese politics and geopolitics.<sup>8</sup>

This event would force the Japanese government to search for a solution that would ensure such a travesty would never occur again, something they quickly needed as Russia had, as previously mentioned, taken over Port Arthur; it was developing its infrastructure through the Trans-Siberian Railway and was making incursions towards Manchuria and Korea, all moves that created animosity and showcased Russian interest in what they considered as in their sphere of influence. There were only two options for them: either reach an agreement with Russia where they settled their spheres of control in the Far East, an extremely unpopular option

<sup>6</sup> I. NISH, *Japanese Foreign Policy 1869–1942: Kasumigeki to Miyakezaka*, London 2010, p. 39.

<sup>7</sup> F. W. IKLÉ, The Triple Intervention. Japan's Lesson in Diplomacy of Imperialism, in: *Monumenta Nipponica*, 22, 1967, 1/2, p. 128.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 129–130.

that some far-sighted politicians like Itō Hirobumi supported or find an ally that could aid them in stopping Russian advance, which in this case could only be the British Empire.

Despite some ill feelings within the Japanese leadership towards the British, who did nothing to aid them during the Triple Intervention and even advised them to stand down, many found this choice attractive as they knew that only the British could benefit them politically and economically regarding loans to develop their industry and military capabilities. They then decided to try both of them, emphasizing the British, but if they didn't respond, the Russian agreement would be the only solution.

To understand the mentality of the Japanese about their actions in world politics of this period, it is necessary to explain the two different positions it adopted with the West and its Asian neighbours: with the former, she was meek and conciliatory, doing its best to avoid any confrontation that could threaten her position and security till she achieved parity with them, especially after the Triple Intervention, while in Asia, in this case China and Korea, she was forceful and harsh, acting in an imperialistic manner similar to the empires of Europe. They believed themselves superior to the Europeans and other Asians, that they possessed *yamato damasbii*, a spirit unique to the Japanese people, and that their innate superiority would soon be apparent.<sup>9</sup> Not only that, Japan's victory over China in 1895 and its demanding attitude towards their foe would bring to life numerous groups with interest in expanding their nation's influence and control over the Middle Kingdom, such as the *Kokuryukai*, who were influential in Japanese society in moulding it towards supporting an expansionist agenda, and the need for a strong military. This, along with the perception that White powers surrounded them, would make the people turn to the military. This institution had immense control over the civilian government, with the army and navy becoming essential players in Japan's decision-making, weakening the civilian government's hold.

The British Empire was considered the preeminent global power in the world, with more than 400 million people living within its aegis and having the largest navy to protect it and its interests. For most of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it stood alone on the geopolitics of the world, supporting the diplomatic practice of "Splendid Isolation," where they avoided

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<sup>9</sup> PERRY, p. 317.



permanent alliances while also minimizing their involvement in European affairs, focusing more on trade, colonies, and respecting the balance of power. However, by the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the situation forced them to realize that they couldn't remain as they were and that they would need to change to protect their interests: the expense to properly build up its navy to defend its empire and interests all over the world was too much to bear for the realm, the Second Boer War showcased that their army was unprepared for war, Russia was advancing its interests in China and Manchuria, effectively controlling sectors of the latter like its finances and railway system,<sup>10</sup> while at the same time threatening the Jewel of the British Empire, the Raj. Due to these reasons, the government of the conservative (Tory) Marquis of Salisbury looked for a solution to lessen the costs in the name of security and ensure the safety of their territories in the Pacific. The solution they found was an alliance with Japan, a nation that a few years prior they were opposed due to its aggression against China and the fact that its economic and political interests in the Far East required peace and the preservation of the *status quo*.<sup>11</sup> However, when rumours emerged that Japan was possibly seeking an agreement with Russia that divided Manchuria and Korea between them,<sup>12</sup> the British government quickly sent feelers to the Japanese, who were also amenable to a possible alliance where its only focus would be the Far East.<sup>13</sup>

### **The Alliance and its Effects till the Great War**

After a lengthy period of negotiations, both Japan and Great Britain decided to sign the treaty of the Anglo-Japanese alliance. Regarding the geopolitical scenario of the Far East, they settled on the mutual defence of one another in case of an attack by two or more Great Powers, freeing Japan of their constant fear of a second Triple Intervention. In Great Britain's case, it would not need to spend its limited resources on countering Russia while also not having to enter in a way if Japan fought only Russia. As for economic reasons, the British were able to send their warships to other areas of the globe, reducing military spending to the point where,

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<sup>10</sup> J. P. DOLLIVER, Significance of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, in: *The North American Review*, 174, 1902, 546, pp. 601–602.

<sup>11</sup> C. N. SPINKS, The Background of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, in: *Pacific Historical Review*, 8, 1939, 3, pp. 319–320.

<sup>12</sup> Z. S. STEINER, Great Britain and the Creation of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, in: *The Journal of Modern History*, 31, 1959, 1, pp. 27–28.

<sup>13</sup> NISH, p. 68.

in later years, Japan would be essential to protect their holdings in the Pacific. For Japan, meanwhile, she was able to gain loans from British banks to finance its industrial and military development and gained recognition of their “special rights” in China and Korea; essentially, it was a euphemism for intervention in these countries’ political affairs to achieve dominance and preferential access to trade and investment, which in time would evolve to complete control.<sup>14</sup> Not only that but to keep their relations’ amicable, they decided they wouldn’t interfere in each other’s spheres of influence, such was the case of Korea and later on Manchuria for Great Britain and the Yangtze River Basin for Japan.

The Russo-Japanese War was the main event to occur during the “first alliance” (1902–1904), as Japan declared war on the Russian Empire and, after decisively winning battles like Port Arthur and Tsushima, it emerged victorious, pushing their foe away from Korea and southern Manchuria. Their victory was unprecedented, as an Asian nation won a war against one of the European Great Powers, which solidified the Japanese position in the region. In turn, Russia would adopt a more conciliatory role in the Far East, one where its coexistence with Japan would slowly increase its ties to the point where, during the First World War, the short-lived Russo-Japanese Alliance was established, between Japan and tsarist Russia.<sup>15</sup>

In this situation, Great Britain was delighted that her rival was defeated, coinciding with the objective of the first alliance, which was to counter Russia. However, she would not have time to rest, as a new and more dangerous contender emerged in the affairs of the Far East, whose expansionist policies, along with their ever-increasing navy, caused concern in Whitehall: the German Empire of Kaiser Wilhelm II. With such a rival to British interests that threatened the Home Islands, they needed the alliance more than ever, as they had to keep their numerical superiority over the German High Seas Fleet while also needing to defend their possessions all over the globe, differently from Germany, which caused Great Britain to become more dependent on the alliance and Japanese assistance, making them desperate for its renewal. In Japan’s case, while not as threatened by Germany, she saw its link with Britain as its cornerstone in foreign policy, gaining prestige, respect, and recognition in a world dominated by imperialist European powers, so they were also glad to renew their commitment. As such, both sides decided to remain

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<sup>14</sup> DAVIS, pp. 154–160.

<sup>15</sup> NISH, p. 109.

allies, this time with the inclusion of India in the area for Japan to defend, while also excluding the United States as a potential target to the alliance, as she became, after Russia, Japan's rival.

In the years that followed till the First World War, both sides decided to renew a third time in 1911, as tensions in Europe were escalating rapidly, which would culminate three years later. However, before explaining the topic of the partnership in the Great War, the opposition to the alliance must be analysed.

### **The Opposition to the Anglo-Japanese Alliance**

Before explaining how the alliance influenced the affairs of the First World War, it is necessary to elucidate the existing opposition to it, those who were against its creation, and its continuation from both empires. The side whose detractors were the smallest in number was the Japanese since they benefited greatly from the support of the British to develop their nation, gain recognition, and achieve their political and economic goals in the Far East; however, there were still some who disliked the fact that their government was associated with them, especially those whose agenda was against European imperialism in Asia.

As the years passed, Japan grew ever closer to reach parity with their ally and leave their initial position of junior partner, and many within the Japanese government and military began to feel that they did not need the alliance anymore and could chart their path free from any obligations towards their ally. Lastly, to discern the opinions of the Japanese population during this period, it is essential to note that the government kept them out of the loops of any negotiations or detailed circumstances of events, be it at peace or war, giving them only a barebones version emphasizing their victories or strength, leaving them unprepared and astonished when they only receive mild results instead of the expected triumphs, causing revolt and making them more susceptible to anti-western movements. Such a case occurred at the end of the Russo-Japanese War when many people rioted. They were not expecting the mild results their government accepted in the negotiations, having received only news of the triumphs of the Japanese army and not its delicate position in Manchuria.<sup>16</sup>

While the opposition was not widespread in Japan and did not interfere heavily with its apparatus, the same cannot be said for the British Empire, where many in the Home Islands, the Dominions, and the Raj opposed

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 76.

such an entente with the Japanese. In Great Britain, some did not want to depend on their ally for their colonies' security, a view shared with Australia. Others were against such a pact with an Asian nation due to the racist fear of the "Yellow Peril," something Whitehall had to make immense efforts in propaganda to keep the alliance popular enough in the population,<sup>17</sup> differently from Japan, where only the richest participated and elected the government, the voting franchise in Britain was more open, making the people's opinions more relevant. The primary opponents in the Home Islands were the merchants, who were extremely unhappy with the way their government was giving benefits to Japan over their interests, such as closing to them huge potential markets like Korea and then Manchuria, not establishing protectionist taxes on Japanese goods, all in the name of national security. This merchant opposition had their chance to alter things in their favour during the ministry of the Liberal Party, which, in comparison to the Conservatives, was more interested in satisfying their voters than national security, as Whitehall forced some changes in the alliance that Japan was forced to accept to keep it stable.<sup>18</sup> Lastly, many were discomforted with the sense of anti-British bias in Japanese newspapers and public opinion and irritated that many Asian leaders who fought against European imperialism took residence in Japan, such as the well-known Sun Yat-Sen.

As for Dominions, but especially Canada and Australia, their main issue with the alliance was about immigration,<sup>19</sup> as both states practiced a policy of restricting Asian immigrants, with the Japanese soon becoming one of the many peoples who were barred from settling, like the Hindus and the Chinese. At the time, Canada practiced a rigid quota system for Japanese immigrants, while Australia, which at the time supported the "White Australia" policy, used a dictation test where only certain professions were accepted, which the Japanese government, for the most part, endured as a sort of "Gentlemen's Agreement," where they didn't interfere in the internal politics of Australia, who also didn't follow the commercial agreements of Britain and Japan, however, as the years passed, they asserted their power in the Far East, and the Japanese government and its people were becoming less willing to accept such a discriminatory

<sup>17</sup> A. BEST, Race, Monarchy, and the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 1902–1922, in: *Social Science Japan Journal*, 9, 2006, 2, pp. 171–186.

<sup>18</sup> DAVIS, pp. 166–167.

<sup>19</sup> P. LOWE, The British Empire and the Anglo-Japanese Alliance 1911–191, in: *History*, 54, 1969, 181, p. 213.

attitude of their allies, creating more fears and hostility in the Pacific Dominions who feared that Japan would encroach on their nations.<sup>20</sup>

### **The Great War and the Treaty of Versailles**

The First World War was a significant event regarding the condition of the Anglo-Japanese alliance and its way toward abrogation. Initially, there was a view among some politicians at Whitehall, spearheaded by the foreign secretary Sir Edward Grey, to oppose Japanese participation in the war, with Grey's justification being that he feared that Japan would use this opportunity to expand beyond what they deemed reasonable.<sup>21</sup> He also stressed that Britain's relations with the Dominions of Australia, New Zealand, and the United States would be damaged and that they would oppose a Japan that seemed to have Britain's support when instead they should focus on Germany.

However, when Germany began to mobilize its forces in the Pacific, he bowed to the inevitable, as Britain soon after sent messages to call its ally to the war. An important figure who was reticent on Japanese participation and was one of the responsible for British dependence in the Far East was Winston Churchill, at the time First Lord of the Admiralty, as he had sent most of the ships of the Pacific to shore up their position in Europe, and he would be critical in the years that followed, especially regarding the memory of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance after its dissolution.<sup>22</sup>

As for Japan, the government discussed several times if they should aid their ally, as the alliance did not obligate them to enter a war started in Europe. Despite this, they signalled the British government that they were prepared to come to their ally's aid in the coming war if called upon, something that, according to Ambassador of the United States when reporting to the American Secretary of State, meant that Japan was still not satisfied with its gains following the Russo-Japanese War, and that, in the coming war, it wanted to strengthen itself even more by acquiring territories and gaining influence at China's expense.<sup>23</sup>

As such, when the Japanese government received the messages of the British to enter the conflict, they did so quickly and decisively, delivering

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<sup>20</sup> E. L. PIESSE, Japan and Australia, in: *Foreign Affairs*, 4, 1926, 3, pp. 485–486.

<sup>21</sup> T. D. SAXON, Anglo-Japanese Naval Cooperation 1914–1918, in: *Naval War College Review*, 53, 2000, 1, pp. 65–66.

<sup>22</sup> BEST, p. 829.

<sup>23</sup> R. P. DUA, How far the Anglo-Japanese Treaty of Alliance (1911) was relevant to Japan's entry in the war in 1917, in: *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 32, 1970, p. 295.

an ultimatum to Germany demanding that it should give all its Pacific possessions to Japan, such as the Kiaochow and its Pacific Islands, and that its naval vessels leave the region or surrender to Japan. After no response from Germany, Japan officially declared war on the Central Powers, entering the Great War on the side of the Entente.<sup>24</sup>

The Japanese participation in the Great War completely differed from what most studies from the West describe as lacklustre and limited. In reality, Japan stretched itself thin to aid its allies in several areas of the globe, doing things like capturing German possessions in the Pacific, like the naval base of Tsingtao, protecting the trade lines and the convoys of troops from Australia and New Zealand from German raiders, and providing task forces to the Mediterranean where the Allies were under heavy straits. Their efforts were praised by many, who didn't expect much from the Japanese except to seek their gains, heedless of its commitments with the Allies.<sup>25</sup> Lastly, it also participated in the Allied intervention in Siberia during the Russian Civil War, a move that earned suspicion from the United States, who believed they sent a contingent of troops larger than any other nation to further their regional goals.

However, it is essential to note that while Japan sought to aid its ally Britain in removing the Germans from the Pacific, it also saw the war as an opportunity to not only expand but to also increase their influence over China, sending to Chinese President Yuan Shikai "16 demands and 5 'desires'"<sup>26</sup> as a settlement of problems in exchange for Japan's promise to return Shantung, a region captured by Japanese forces. Known throughout the world as the "Twenty-One Demands", they consisted of arrangements that, if they were accepted, would massively increase Japan's sway over vital sectors within China. Among the points in the document were the extension Japan's leases in Manchuria to ninety-nine years, as well as the "desire" of Japan for China to employ Japanese advisors in the political, financial, and military sectors.<sup>27</sup>

Despite efforts from Yuan Shikai to enlist support from foreign powers in order to withstand the Japanese, the Great War meant that none were available, making it so that he was forced to sign the treaty. This move by Japan would hurt her reputation immensely, where before she was seen

<sup>24</sup> SAXON, pp. 66–67.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., pp. 82–83.

<sup>26</sup> NISH, p. 128.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 129.

as a “safeguard against imperialist intrusion”,<sup>28</sup> she was then seen as an imperialist nation. It would also increase the antagonism of the United States and Australia, with the first being furious that Japan was going against their prized Open Door policy, while the latter grew ever more suspicious of Japan, especially when it continued to occupy throughout the war many of the German Pacific Islands, to the point where it would be its fiercest opponent in the Peace Conference of Versailles.

As for Britain, while it warned Japan that it had gone too far in certain points such as with the advisors, it also urged China to accept certain demands such as the opening of more ports to Japanese trade,<sup>29</sup> intent on keeping the alliance strong and showing its importance not only in the context of the Great War but also in the overall imperial security.

In the end, the United States and Japan decided on the Lansing-Ishii Agreement, where both sides agreed to respect the independence and territorial integrity of China while also acknowledging the special interests of Japan, which the Japanese touted as American acceptance, with the former believing that they would continue to exist, with or without diplomatic recognition, however, as it wasn't signed, the United States discarded it as unofficial, showcasing a difference of diplomacy between both states that would be expanded upon during the Washington Conference.

The Allies won against the Central Powers and soon came the time to decide the Post-War world via the negotiations in Versailles. Among the areas to be distributed among the victors of the Great War, the former colonies of The German Empire were of special interest for both members of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, as well as the Dominions. For Australia, the acquisition of the German Pacific Islands was the main goal, as by annexing the islands, they believed that they would be able to forestall Japanese influence in the area, which they believed to be a possible threat not only in geopolitics but also domestically, especially due to immigration and racial issues.<sup>30</sup> Both of these points combine in the “White Australia” policy, which was a set of racial policies with the objective of forbidding people of non-European ethnic origins from immigrating to Australia.

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 133.

<sup>29</sup> DAVIS, p. 174.

<sup>30</sup> J. VALKOUN, *Great Britain, the Dominions and the Transformation of the British Empire, 1907–1931: The Road to the Statute of Westminster*, New York, London 2021, p. 100.



Another important member of the British Empire that was of extreme importance to the fact of the post-war Pacific was New Zealand, which saw the importance of warning that the acquiescence of too many of Japanese demands could create a future danger, utilizing the example of Samoa, which was granted to Germany in 1899 and later became a German naval base.<sup>31</sup>

As for Japan, while they desired to expand their empire, they also had wanted to achieve racial equality with the white man since the beginning of its modernization process, with the Japanese government devoting itself to internal reforms and strengthening of national power<sup>32</sup> to answer to the unequal treatment they suffered from nations like the United States, Canada, and Australia.

With its people feeling a deep wound that they were still considered inferior, despite great efforts to aid in the Great War, the Japanese representatives proposed, in the negotiations that would eventually lead to the founding of the League of Nations, the adoption of a declaration of racial equality within the Covenant of the League, arguing that just as the equality of nations was essential in which the League of Nations was founded, the equality of races and nationalities needed to be as well.<sup>33</sup>

While some nations were supportive of the initiative, and others were ambivalent, the representatives of Canada, New Zealand, and Australia were completely opposed, seeing it as a threat by Japan to their sovereignty, with Australia in particular, under the leadership of the bombastic Billy Hughes, seeing the proposal as a threat to the “White Australia” policy, and despite assurances from Japan that it wouldn’t be the case, and that immigration was a matter for domestic legislation outside the League of Nations,<sup>34</sup> Hughes wouldn’t accept it, intent on fighting vigorously to prevent it.<sup>35</sup>

The combined move of the Dominions would force Britain to abstain from the vote, and even though the proposal received the majority vote on the day, President Woodrow Wilson of the United States would overturn it by stating that, to pass such a proposal, it needed to be unanimous.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> PIESSE, pp. 483–484.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 483.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 484.

<sup>35</sup> C. H. GRATTAN, The Historical Context of Australian-Japanese Relations, in: *Current History*, 62, 1972, 367, p. 167–168.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 168.

This opposition from its allies in the Great War would make many in Japan furious at this betrayal, spreading anti-western sentiment in the Home Islands, with some Japanese military officers believing that the reason why Japan was seen with hostility by the Americans and their “allies”, despite the service it provided during the Great War, was because of a British and American conspiracy against Japan based on racial animosity.<sup>37</sup>

While this event was shocking for Japan, it is correct to say that they earned much territorially from the Treaty of Versailles, with Woodrow Wilson seeking to placate Japan by ensuring that its demands were met, such as the transfer of Germany’s rights in Shandong to Japan, and control of the German islands of the Pacific north of the Equator through a League of Nations mandate, and with the fall of the Russian and German Empires, this effectively made Japan the strongest nation in the Far East.

### **The Imperial Conference of 1921**

During the period between the end of the Great War in 1918 to 1921, the relationship between Japan and Britain continued to degrade, as the fulfilment of the alliance’s primary goal of protecting their interests from Germany and Russia, the decrease of economic ties between the two, and the increasing strength of the opposition, showcased to many that the alliance was obsolete, that it should be repealed. Despite this, both countries were content with a renewal in a way that went in harmony with the Covenant of the League of Nations. However, the circumstances of the Post-War war would prevent such a thing, with this theme being heavily debated in the Imperial Conference of 1921.

It cannot be said enough that the Imperial Conference of 1921 was of enormous import to how the alliance was abolished, as during this meeting, which was a recurring reunion between the United Kingdom, its Dominions, and the British Raj, the question of renewing or abrogating the alliance with the Japanese was discussed, with two sides being created on the matter: those who supported the abrogation of the treaty composed by Canada, South Africa, and India, and those who desired a renewal, being Australia and New Zealand. As this matter was discussed within the empire and abroad, especially by those whose interests favoured the end of the agreement, like the United States and China, Britain would have to face a minefield to achieve its objectives without creating hatred on

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<sup>37</sup> SAXON, p. 83.

one side or the other, creating a situation where their Asian possessions might become the spoils of a future war in the region.<sup>38</sup>

Among the opposition, its most prominent voice was Prime Minister Arthur Meighen of Canada, whose main arguments were the effects on Anglo-American relations, with the alliance creating barriers and distrust with The United States, their neighbor and close partner, whom Meighen wanted to keep as friendly as possible. For him, their connection with Japan was no longer necessary, and Canada could not support a proposal that would make the Americans adopt a more aggressive position against them.<sup>39</sup> Another important reason was due to Canada's unwillingness to accept Japanese immigrants,<sup>40</sup> demonstrating the importance of the topic not only domestically but also internationally. As such, regarding the renewal of the alliance with Japan, Canada said Nay in the name of national security, even threatening a possible rupture with the rest of the British Empire.

Alongside Canada in opposition to a renewal of the alliance with Japan stood South Africa, a country that was uninterested in the alliance since its foundation, seeing it something it had to endure to be a part of the British Empire, however, by 1921 they were not enthusiasts on the idea of extending the alliance, due to their interest in the League of Nations and in befriending the United States.<sup>41</sup> Not only that, but Prime Minister Jan Smuts also argued that while the alliance shouldn't continue, they must not alienate Japan, believing the country to be a threat to the peace established after the Great War.<sup>42</sup>

Lastly, India, which wasn't a Dominion but was present in the Imperial Conference, was also opposed, as they felt that Japan was beginning to be a threat to the stability of the British Raj, due to several factors: commercial rivalry, with the Japanese shipping lane *Nippon Yusen Kaisha* in particular expanding massively to the point of damaging the interest of British companies, their seeming support in Pan-Asiatic propaganda against British rule, with the suspicion that the Japanese government was encouraging or permitting the dissemination of propaganda against

<sup>38</sup> I. KLEIN, Whitehall, Washington, and the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 1919–1921, in: *Pacific Historical Review*, 41, 1972, 4, pp. 470–471.

<sup>39</sup> J. B. BREBNER, Canada, The Anglo-Japanese Alliance, and the Washington Conference, in: *Political Science Quarterly*, 50, 1935, 1, p. 48.

<sup>40</sup> VALKOUN, p. 122.

<sup>41</sup> LOWE, p. 221.

<sup>42</sup> VALKOUN, p. 125.

Britain in India, the presence of Japanese officials in Tibet, a region of high importance to the Raj's government, and Japan's expansionistic behaviour at the time.<sup>43</sup>

While each member of the British Empire stated above had their own reasons, they all believed that the alliance with the Japanese was a thing of the past, in what would later be considered to be an example of the "Old Diplomacy" that sparked the Great War, placing their hopes instead on the "New Diplomacy" championed by President Woodrow Wilson of the United States.

Compared to the opposition, whose members had distinct reasons but were united on the same objective, the members supporting the renewal were wholly connected, with Australia and New Zealand having the same goals and problems with the possibility of an end to their treaty with the Japanese. Both of them, despite being known opponents to the alliance throughout its existence and its effects on them domestically, such as the case of Australia not adhering with commercial treaties signed between Britain and Japan,<sup>44</sup> realized that at the time, due to the geopolitical situation in the Pacific, the alliance was necessary to ensure stability in the region.

The leader of the supporters of renewal was Prime Minister William Hughes of Australia, who argued that it was indispensable for Australia's security that the alliance with Japan be maintained, as there wasn't a naval base in Singapore to protect them, along with the fact that they were suffering post-war economic woes, with no help from Britain in sight, which made them believe that they couldn't count on Great Britain to win a naval race against Japan, who would surely be offended with them breaking the alliance and become a future enemy. As such, he believed that by being Japan's ally, the British Empire would be able to control or at least direct Japanese policies in the region,<sup>45</sup> ensuring peace in the Pacific.

When the topic of American opinion arrived, Hughes responded by saying that while he would be happy to have a resolution that pleased the United States, whose friendship he prized dearly, he chose to stand with the alliance with the Japanese due to them being aware of the withdrawal

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., pp. 222–224.

<sup>44</sup> PIESSE, pp. 480–481.

<sup>45</sup> VALKOUN, p. 124.

of the Americans from participation in plans for world security,<sup>46</sup> wanting instead to return to Isolationism, and that they needed something concrete to ensure their protection. In the words of Hughes himself: *"If Australia was asked whether she would prefer America or Japan as an Ally, her choice would be America. But that choice is not offered her [...] Our Young democracy in its remote isolation, there is no answer."*<sup>47</sup>

Even though, throughout the years, Australia was the most virulent opposition to the alliance with Japan, with Hughes himself being extremely vocal against the Racial Equality Proposal in the Paris Peace Conference,<sup>48</sup> it chose during the Imperial Conference of 1921 to vote in favour of the renewal of the Anglo-Japanese alliance.

Before illustrating the view of the British, it is fundamental to elucidate the perspectives of essential nations that were highly invested in achieving the abrogation of the Anglo-Japanese alliance and whose opinions Britain had to keep a close eye on: China and the United States. For the former, she considered it a warlike measure between Britain and Japan to protect their interests in the Far East, with herself in particular not being consulted or reassured by it.<sup>49</sup> She was afflicted as she was currently in a dispute with Japan over the Shandong Question, where Japan, since the end of the Great War, was occupying illegally the German concession of the Shandong Peninsula, along with the fact that she denounced her forced agreement of the Twenty-One Demands and, in the Washington Conference, she hoped that the international community would rectify it. The sentiment against the renewal was growing intensely in the population of China, and as Britain prized its relations with China, it needed to find a way to keep her happy.

For the latter, the United States was extremely concerned with the possibility of a renewal in what they believed to be a significant threat to America in the Far East, an area they had an extreme interest in maintaining the Open Door policy in China. The expansionist course of Japan during and after the Great War, such as the case of Shandong peninsula, where Japan continued to occupy despite agreements to deliver the region

<sup>46</sup> M. TATE – F. FOY, More Light on the Abrogation of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, in: *Political Science Quarterly*, 74, 1959, 4, pp. 536–537.

<sup>47</sup> VALKOUN, p. 125

<sup>48</sup> GRATTAN, p. 142.

<sup>49</sup> S.-K. A. SZE, China and the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, in: *Current History*, 14, 1921, 5, pp. 747–748.

to China, made it so that the Americans viewed a possible renewal of the alliance between Japan and Britain as a way of London acknowledging the so-called “special interests” of Japan in the Far East, which the public saw it as a “treachery of modern civilized ideals.”<sup>50</sup>

Despite the fact that neither Britain nor Japan saw the United States as a possible enemy of the alliance, having even stated so during the third renewal in 1911, the Americans were unconvinced, it became a priority for the American government to do its best to convince the British to repeal the threat with their main rival, while at the same time ordering the build-up of a massive naval expansion, to create a balanced fleet equal in size to the combined fleets of Britain and Japan, generating fear throughout the world of the possibility of a new arms race in the Pacific.

As for the British, they stood in an increasingly tricky situation since the option to renew the alliance in its entirety was considered by many to be infeasible: With the threats of Germany and Russia gone for the time being, Britain no longer needed the aid of the Japanese to ensure the protection of their empire, as it was before and during the Great War. This in turn would also make the opposition to the alliance more influential in the direction of the British government, especially the merchants whose interests were sacrificed for the sake of national security in regions like Korea and Manchuria.<sup>51</sup>

Not only that, but Japan had also assumed the position of its main rival economically and militarily in the Far East, having completely opposite objectives in the region in comparison to Britain, with the intent of becoming the hegemon. As such, among the main goals of Japan were that China would be extremely weak, compliant to their interests, and that it would be closed off to anyone except them,<sup>52</sup> which went against the objectives of Britain as well as the United States, both of whom desired a strong China and equal trading opportunities.

However, the post-war situation was one where Britain was not only exhausted but also weakened militarily, to the point where it led to a reassessment of the situation in the Far East, with the main objective being to increase cooperation with the United States.<sup>53</sup> With all of these

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<sup>50</sup> VALKOUN, pp. 123–124.

<sup>51</sup> DAVIS, pp. 168–169.

<sup>52</sup> VALKOUN, p. 123.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

factors, the British government also needed to find a way to ensure the protection of their possessions in Asia, prevent an arms race in the Pacific that would erode British naval dominance, prevent Japan from taking offense and genuinely becoming a future enemy, and, most importantly, keep their relationship with the United States as friendly as possible, as the question of the enormous war debts they accrued during the war made it so that to oppose the Americans was impossible and, in the minds of many politicians, if they proved helpful to the United States, wouldn't it be reasonable to expect that the Americans would adopt a new policy towards the debts?<sup>54</sup>

The solution that was soon found was to seek out the possibility of a tripartite treaty between the United States, Britain, and Japan, as well as a naval treaty aimed to prevent a naval arms race,<sup>55</sup> which, in their minds, would be sufficient for establishing peace in the Pacific. However, the Americans, who at the time were going to host a conference about disarmament in Washington, were completely against such a treaty, with Secretary of State Charles Evan Hughes stating that an alliance with Japan was a serious hurdle to Anglo-American friendship,<sup>56</sup> and that any formal treaty that made them obligated to enter a war not of their choosing would not be accepted.

As such, Britain instead replied that it was better to prefer an "agreement" similar to the Root-Takahira Agreement of 1908,<sup>57</sup> including France, to involve all nations with possessions and interests in the Far East, which the British liked the suggestion. Hence, Britain's prime minister informed the Dominions that the question of the Anglo-Japanese alliance would be resolved in the Washington Naval Conference.

The Imperial Conference of 1921 is one of the events that received significant attention from historians over the years, each supporting different views of how the events occurred, each in opposition to the other. In the opinion of J. Bartlett Brebner, it was the eloquence of Canadian Prime Minister Arthur Meighen that changed the minds of the British leaders, influencing them to abandon the alliance and showcasing for the

<sup>54</sup> R. A. DAYER, *The British War Debts to the United States and the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 1920–1923*, in: *Pacific Historical Review*, 45, 1976, 4, p. 577–578.

<sup>55</sup> VALKOUN, p. 128.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.* p. 126.

<sup>57</sup> J. C. VINSON, *The Drafting of the Four-Power Treaty of the Washington Conference*, in: *The Journal of Modern History*, 25, 1953, 1, p. 43.



first time how the Dominion of Canada affected the empire's foreign policy and evolved as a nation.<sup>58</sup> For J. Chal Vinson, the Dominions came to the meeting prepared to drop the alliance to improve their relations with the United States, demonstrating how the Dominions affected the course of the British Empire.<sup>59</sup> Another historian named M. G. Fry supported the theory that due to the division of opinion regarding the alliance between Whitehall and the Dominions, a compromise solution could be affirmed at the Conference to renew the bond with Japan temporarily.<sup>60</sup>

At the same time, they sought better terms with Washington. Each of these perspectives believes that the Dominions, be it one in particular or combined, were instrumental to finding a solution; however, a better theory that aligns with the question of the war debts was the study of Ira Klein, as she defends that instead of the Dominions leading the charge, it was instead Whitehall and Washington who were fundamental, with the members of the cabinet of the former being conscious of the problems they were facing and the dangers of emphasizing either the United States or Japan solely.<sup>61</sup> While pressure from the Dominions was an essential factor in the decisions that followed, they were not the ones who fundamentally led to the Washington Naval Conference.

### **The Washington Naval Conference and the Alliance's End**

The Anglo-Japanese alliance, a mutual defence agreement that was in effect since 1902, would have its abrogation announced at the end of the Washington Naval Conference, a meeting held in the capital of the United States where nine countries, outside the auspices of the League of Nations, would discuss over disarmament, a topic the world's public opinion was in favour after witnessing the carnage of the Great War, and the search for an arrangement that would ensure peace and the mutual protection of the holdings and interests of the members in the Pacific Ocean and the Far East. The United States and China's primary objectives were the end of the treaty between Japan and Britain, with the former wanting to be free of any formal alliance and return to Isolationism. In contrast, the latter wanted the return of the concession in the Shandong peninsula occupied

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<sup>58</sup> BREBNER, pp. 56–58.

<sup>59</sup> VINSON, pp. 264–266.

<sup>60</sup> M. G. FRY, The North Atlantic Triangle and the Abrogation of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, in: *The Journal of Modern History*, 39, 1967, 1, pp. 62–64.

<sup>61</sup> KLEIN, pp. 461–462.

by the Japanese, the public assurance that they would not be exploited, and the end of the alliance between Japan and Britain, which was resolved around their interests in China, but it was not involved.<sup>62</sup> Britain's main goals were to maintain its dominance of the seas to protect its colonies and Dominions in the Far East without sending a large fleet, which would cause economic issues and prevent Japan from becoming a rival.

As for Japan, her situation was complex, as she was also not content with the alliance, even though they were willing to renew it since many believed it to be no longer necessary to ensure their protection, as they were one of the strongest nations in the world and possessed a powerful and efficient military and economy. Also, they were not happy that by the accords of the alliance, if they went to war with the United States, which Japan considered its main rival, Britain wasn't obligated to join him, ultimately negating the alliance's objective in their view.<sup>63</sup> Despite these factors, the Japanese establishment for the most part was content with the alliance, in fact, it was considered to be the cornerstone of its foreign policy,<sup>64</sup> as well as the way to maintain the Far East stable and orderly.<sup>65</sup>

However, at the same time, due to American pressure regarding her expansionist actions since the end of the Great War, with President Woodrow Wilson leading the charge with his "New Diplomacy", as he moved to counter Japanese interests in areas like Japan's China policy and Shandong,<sup>66</sup> Japan felt increasingly isolated internationally, and when she received an invitation to the conference, a sense of fear and mistrust spread through Japan, as many believed that the United States and Britain were plotting against Japan in order to roll back all of its gains in Manchuria and China.<sup>67</sup> Another worry was that they would build naval bases in the Philippines, Guam, and Hong Kong, making their warships within striking distance of the Japanese Home Islands. Lastly, due to the postwar economic slump they were suffering, there was a conviction within its political apparatus that to assure the survival of the Japanese

<sup>62</sup> SZE, pp. 747–748.

<sup>63</sup> C. N. SPINKS, The Termination of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, in: *Pacific Historical Review*, 6, 1937, 4 p. 318.

<sup>64</sup> DAVIS, p. 174.

<sup>65</sup> VALKOUN, p. 127.

<sup>66</sup> S. ASADA, Between the Old Diplomacy and the New, 1918–1922: The Washington System and the Origins of Japanese-American Rapprochement, in: *Diplomatic History*, 30, 2006, 2, pp. 213–214.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 213–215.

Empire, their “special interests” in the mainland needed to be guaranteed at all costs.<sup>68</sup>

At the beginning of the Conference, Secretary of State Charles Evan Hughes announced that the United States was ready to destroy thirty capital ships in existence or construction and suggested that Britain should scuttle thirty-six of its battleships, establishing a 5:5:3 ratio of capital ships tonnage. Such a thing was acceptable to the British, who were happy with the fact that they would keep their advantage, while the Japanese had their reservations, with many desiring instead of the sixty-percent ratio that the agreement stipulated for the Japanese navy to seventy percent; however, the leader of the delegation, Katō Tomosaburō, decided that it was good enough for the security issues of Japan, along with the fact that by agreeing, they would be able to establish warmer relations with the United States, an important commercial partner that Japan heavily relied on exports, prevent an arms race that their nation couldn’t sustain,<sup>69</sup> while at the same time utilize the resources that were to be used on building ships to work on the economy.

As for establishing peace in the Pacific, the main treaties signed were the Five-Power Naval Treaty, the Four-Power Treaty, and the Nine-Power Treaty. The first accord stipulated a maximum capital-ship tonnage between the Great Powers to prevent a naval arms race; the second was between the major nations that had possessions in the Far East, who by signing, agreed to respect the rights each other had to their territories in the Pacific Ocean, that in the case of any situation between them, there would be a joint conference where they would settle the dispute through diplomacy (articles I and II), the reiteration of the Open Door policy and the formal renunciation of the four from seeking a sphere of influence in China (articles III and IV), in brief, the respect of China’s neutrality. The third was between more nations to reaffirm that China’s sovereignty would be respected, to provide it an opportunity to develop itself as a stable government, to establish equal opportunity for trade and industry inside it, and to forswear from taking advantage of its unstable situation to get special privileges.

Another aspect of the pact was that Britain, and the United States wouldn’t build any fortifications in Hong Kong for the former and in

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<sup>68</sup> S. ASADA, Japan’s “Special Interests” and the Washington Conference, in: *The American Historical Review*, 67, 1961, 1, pp. 64–65.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83–87.

Guam and the Philippines for the latter, greatly enhancing the security of Japan and assuring the civilian cabinet in Tokyo. Lastly, Japanese forces would withdraw from Siberia and Shantung, with her commercial interests in the Chinese region remaining under her control, while at the same time removing some of the most opposed sections of the Twenty-One Demands by China.<sup>70</sup>

### **The Consequences of the Washington Conference and the “Ghost” of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance**

With the end of the conference, the Anglo-Japanese alliance was no more. The agreements signed at Washington would, until 1934, constitute an attempt to stabilize the balance of power in the Far East, benefiting all nations involved, like the United States, Britain, Japan, and China. At the time, all signing countries considered the situation to be resolved, with the threat of a naval arms race dissipating in favour of peace that, alongside the establishment of the League of Nations, seemed to bring forth an era of peace between the Great Powers in the Far East under Woodrow Wilson’s New Diplomacy. By signing the treaty, the United States emerged triumphant, with Washington pleased that they managed to push the “American view” in the Pacific,<sup>71</sup> as the alliance that they detested so much was terminated at the cost of a simple accord that called for nothing more than a consultation in the event of any future problem in the Pacific, which pleased the American public, who was at ease that there wouldn’t be a solid Anglo-Japanese entente against them and that they could return with no worries to their post-war economic prosperity in the Roaring Twenties.

For Japan, or in this case, the civilian government of the time, the treaty signed at Washington was a suitable replacement for the alliance; there were many benefits: they were no longer required to ensure the protection of British interests, there would be no fortifications built near the Home Islands, their dearly prized “special interests” in China and Manchuria were recognized, the naval race that seemed to be developing with the United States that was causing immense problems to the economy dissipated, and the naval agreement ensured that while there would be a limit in capital ships, there were none in other classes like submarines,

<sup>70</sup> W. B. THORSON, Pacific Northwest Opinion on the Washington Conference of 1921–1922, in: *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, 37, 1946, 2, p. 110.

<sup>71</sup> VALKOUN, p. 130.

destroyers, and cruisers, types of vessels that they would develop over the years and by doing so maintain their naval supremacy in the Far East while having only to face parts of the British and American fleets, who had other areas to pay attention to. This also meant that maritime race between Japan and the United States effectively continued in the last years of the 20s and into the 30s, with the future naval conferences being unable to rectify this partial measure.<sup>72</sup>

Despite these advantages of ending the alliance with the British, some felt betrayed that Britain broke their twenty-year-long partnership with them in what seemed to be the drop of the hat, such as General Itami, who remarked that the British would lose for more than gain by giving up Japan to win the favour of the United States and that the Americans wouldn't cancel the war debts.<sup>73</sup>

Of the three nations, the one who didn't gain as much was Britain, who managed to fulfil most of her objectives; she gained security for her interests in India and the Far East, maintained her good relations with the United States, prevented a situation that would make Japan snubbed, and pleased her constituent Dominions, who were all content with the Four-Power Treaty. However, there were several downsides, such as the fact that she sacrificed her ability to intervene militarily in the region, having to instead rely on Japan's good faith in carrying out the treaties, and most importantly, they were unable to convince the American government to void the war debts, as the Congress, determined to assert its authority over the executive branch, immediately passed the Debt Funding bill, creating the World War Debt Commission, to ascertain that the war debts would be paid. Despite initial resistance, the British eventually caved into the commission regarding the debts, which, with accrued interests increasing massively, proved to be an extremely troublesome thorn in Britain in the following years.<sup>74</sup>

In comparison to the Home Islands, whose opinion regarding the end of the alliance was stated above, those of the Dominions are more divided: while some such as Canada and South Africa were glad that they managed to find a treaty that would, in their minds, ensure the stability in the Far East and free them from their links to Japan, Australia and New Zealand

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<sup>72</sup> W. S. JOHNSON, *Naval Diplomacy and the Failure of Balanced Security in the Far East 1921–1935*, in: *Naval War College Review*, 24, 1972, 6, p. 84.

<sup>73</sup> DAYER, p. 585.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 583.

would see the Four-Power Treaty as a temporary settlement that would ensure only temporary security,<sup>75</sup> preferring a more formal connection with the powerful Asian nation to prevent a confrontation.

While the three nations of Britain, the United States, and Japan were, for the most part, content with the status quo, with Japan, during the 20s under the “Shidehara diplomacy,” being extremely faithful to the accords they signed, with Foreign Minister Shidehara Kijūrō at the helm, a proponent of the New Diplomacy and peaceful relations with the United States, as well as a supporter of friendlier ties with China. In the mind of Shidehara, the only course for Japan to take was through peaceful economic development that would ensure the stabilization of the Far East, while at the same time asserting Japan’s position in the post-war world.<sup>76</sup>

However, many within the Japanese government and military were dismayed by the decision to accept the sixty-percent ratio, seeing the idea of seventy percent as Japan’s minimum defence requirement to have any chance of facing the United States, as they believed in a quick war to prevent a battle of attrition that Japan would inevitably lose against the American behemoth.<sup>77</sup> The main follower of this vision was Kato Kanji, an influential member of the Imperial Japanese Navy and a dogged opponent of Katō Tomosaburō, who since the Washington Naval Conference tried to counteract the actions of his rival by proposing that the ratio of Japan’s navy with those of the other nations should be 7 to 10,<sup>78</sup> seeing the ratio proposed by the Americans at the treaty as a way to “*deprive the Imperial Navy of its supremacy in the Far East*.”<sup>79</sup>

While Admiral Katō Tomosaburō would be effective in keeping overall control over the Navy during his time in office, after his untimely death in 1923, Admiral Kato Kanji, would reverse the policies of his rival, being much more ethnocentric and having the belief of the inevitability of a war with the Americans. After he and his faction gained dominance in the halls of the Imperial Japanese Navy, Kato Kanji would seek to ensure the security of Japan from “Anglo-American oppression” as he called it, causing a crack in the Washington Treaty system by being completely

<sup>75</sup> VALKOUN, p. 131.

<sup>76</sup> ASADA, *Between the Old Diplomacy and the New*, p. 216.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 85–86.

<sup>78</sup> I. NISHI, *Japanese Foreign Policy in the Interwar Period*, Westport, London 2002, p. 37.

<sup>79</sup> S. ASADA, *The Revolt against the Washington Treaty: The Imperial Japanese Navy and Naval Limitation, 1921–1927*, in: *Naval War College Review*, 46, 1993, 3, p. 87.

opposed to any extension of the Washington ratios of 10:10:6 to other types of ships, demanding a seventy-percent ratio between the Japanese and the American and British navies,<sup>80</sup> and a continued expansion of the navy.

While it is correct to say that Japan had an important role in the fall of the “new order” established in the Washington Naval Conference, there were other reasons why it failed to establish peace in the Far East: Although the nations agreed on the principles of respecting China’s integrity and cooperate in its struggle to achieve unity and modernize, it didn’t include the Soviet Union, who were eager to spread its influence in Asia, and who were not obligated to fulfil the agreements signed at the Washington Naval Conference.<sup>81</sup> This in turn influenced the civil war that was occurring in China, who was unable to contain the chaos and establish a strong government,<sup>82</sup> creating a situation that made it left it impossible for the signing nations of the Nine-Power Treaty to cooperate, as they couldn’t count on the authority Beiyang Government (1912–1928) to help its development and protect their interests in the country, making it so that it was more viable for Japan and Britain to deal locally rather than the central government.

Lastly, another main reason it all fell was the maintenance of the status quo in the Far East, with the nations, rather than abolishing their privileges within Chinese territory, decided to maintain it,<sup>83</sup> as a weak Chinese government was easy prey for Japanese expansionist factions.

Before finishing this article about the history of the Anglo-Japanese alliance, it is necessary to expound on its memory, on how it is seen till the modern day, and, most importantly, on the myth that emerged in the years following the abrogation, the “ghost” of the alliance. In British society, especially on the Right, there were many who, following the events of the Washington Conference and seeing the slow increase of tensions in the Far East, were unhappy with the fact that they broke their treaty with Japan, and their reasons were many: they believed that they weren’t rewarded enough for their sacrifice by the United States,<sup>84</sup> that they had compromised the defence of the empire through the inter-war

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., pp. 91–92.

<sup>81</sup> JOHNSON, p. 85.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., p. 86.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., p. 86.

<sup>84</sup> BEST, p. 813.



period by nullifying the only way of controlling Japan, their supremacy on the seas, that they didn't receive the voiding of the debts that they so desired, that they broke a "concrete alliance" with the Japanese for a "simple agreement", that if they kept their alliance with Japan, they would've been able to restrain their ally's actions,<sup>85</sup> and lastly, they were dissatisfied with the new style of diplomacy championed by Woodrow Wilson and the League of Nations, with its internationalism, desiring instead a return the old kind of diplomacy, of secret negotiations, of bilateral diplomacy instead of the public diplomacy, viewing in the Anglo-Japanese alliance as a perfect example of the reliability and the effectiveness of the old style of diplomacy.<sup>86</sup> In short, they believed the abrogation of their partnership with Japan to have been a short-sighted mistake that would lead to the Second World War and indirectly the disintegration of the empire.<sup>87</sup>

In the years that followed, they would effectively create the 'ghost,' a myth that claimed the alliance was a close-knit partnership between Japan and Britain, one that could have prevented the horrors of the Pacific War, creating a beautified vision of the treaty that, in the years following the Second World War, would gain immense recognition, even becoming a sort of truism, despite many more opposing such a view and putting it in writing, such as the renowned Ian Nish, who wrote that the decision to rescind the alliance was a formal burial of a relationship that had already died and that Britain was fully conscious of the fact that the benefits of maintaining the treaty with Japan weren't comparable to if they decided to end it. It was paramount that their relations with the Americans remained friendly, prevent damage to the empire's unity and an arms race, and keep their commitment to the Covenant of the League of Nations.

As such, despite this myth surviving to this day, it is possible to navigate through its assumptions and see what it indeed was: an example of international policy between two empires who, due to their different circumstances and shared interests, decided to join forces in a treaty that ensured their strategic and economic objectives,<sup>88</sup> and through the years, it would be renewed twice, becoming a central point of their foreign policy in the Far East. However, it would soon begin its decline, as the opposition to it

<sup>85</sup> SPINKS, p. 321.

<sup>86</sup> BEST, pp. 829–831.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 812.

<sup>88</sup> DAVIS, pp. 154–155.

grew increasingly and the reasons for its existence disappeared, making it so that it was only a matter of time till its abrogation, which happened in the Washington Naval Conference, ending a chapter in Anglo-Japanese relations and bringing forth a new one.

## Der Erste Weltkrieg und das 20. Jahrhundert

*Csilla Dömök*<sup>1</sup>

Der Erste Weltkrieg wird schon seit Langem in der Geschichtswissenschaft als die „Urkatastrophe“ des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts angesehen, die den Verlauf der Jahrzehnte nach 1918 bis zum Zusammenbruch des Ostblocks 1989/90 und darüber hinaus bis in unsere Tage fundamental beeinflusst hat.<sup>2</sup> Schon das an sich unhistorische Gedankenspiel mit der Frage macht dies deutlich: Wie hätte sich die neueste Zeit entfaltet, wenn die Großmächte im August 1914 nicht in den Abgrund eines totalen Krieges gestürzt wären, an dessen Ende mindestens zwanzig Millionen Tote zu beklagen waren? Keine Doppelrevolution in Russland 1917? Kein Zusammenbruch von drei Monarchien in Zentral- und Osteuropa sowie das Osmanischen Reiches? Kein Faschismus? Kein Stalinismus? Kein Zweiter Weltkrieg? Kein Holocaust? Kein Kalter Krieg? Kein Ende des Kolonialismus mit seinen menschenverschlingenden Befreiungskriegen? Die Kette der nach 1918 entstandenen Probleme ließe sich fortsetzen.

### Der Erste Weltkrieg und seine Folgen

Wer den Ausdruck, den Verlauf und das Ende des Ersten Weltkrieges rückschauend aus der Perspektive des beginnenden 21. Jahrhunderts betrachtet, mag angesichts der Welt, in der wir heute leben, die Ereignisse der Jahre 1914–1918 nicht mehr ganz so unbegreiflich finden, wie sie zuerst den Zeitgenossen in den zwanziger Jahren erschienen.<sup>3</sup> Damals war in vielen Kreisen die Ansicht verbreitet, dass Europa von einer Naturkatastrophe heimgesucht worden sei.

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<sup>2</sup> W. J. MOMMSEN, *Die Urkatastrophe Deutschlands. Der Erste Weltkrieg, 1914–1918*, Stuttgart 2002, S. 56–88.

<sup>3</sup> V. BERGHAHN, *Der Erste Weltkrieg*, München 2003, S. 1–23.

Man glaubte, ein Orkan sei über die Menschen hinweggefegt, der Teile Europas in eine öde Mondlandschaft verwandelt hatte. Und nachdem die Waffen dann endlich schwiegen – so hieß es damals weiter – kam erneut die Natur daher und überdeckte die Felder des millionenfachen Todes mit einem sanften hügeligen Grasteppich oder mit Getreidefeldern, in denen die für Nordfrankreich und Flandern so typischen roten Mohnblumen im Winde mit den Ähren schwankten.<sup>4</sup> Das waren die Blumen, die in Großbritannien bis heute am Totensonntag im Knopfloch zur Erinnerung an den „Great War“ getragen werden, als der der Weltkrieg den Engländern immer noch erscheint. An dieser Interpretation des Krieges haben viele Schriftsteller mitgewirkt, die den Krieg nach 1918 in ihren Romanen und Memoiren romantisieren. Aber auch in den Bevölkerungen Europas und unter den Hinterbliebenen kam das Bild einer Naturkatastrophe einem verständlichen Bedürfnis entgegen, diese Jahre zu bewältigen. Und schließlich dürfen wir nicht vergessen, dass viele Menschen, die damals politisch links standen, die Heroisierungen des Konflikts nie akzeptiert haben.<sup>5</sup>

Doch selbst wenn wir die Erklärung des Ersten Weltkrieges als Naturkatastrophe heute zurückweisen und ihn als ein Ereignis sehen, das von Menschen ausgelöst, vorangetrieben und schließlich erschöpft beendet wurde, der Eindruck des Apokalyptischen bleibt, je mehr wir uns in die Ursachen und den Verlauf des Konflikts vertiefen.<sup>6</sup> Dies gilt umso mehr, weil wir auch wissen, dass „1914–1918“ nur der Beginn einer viel längeren Epoche war, die Europa und die ganze Welt schließlich mit einer weiteren Orgie der Gewalt überzog.<sup>7</sup> Gibt es doch viele gute Argumente dafür, dass der Zweite Weltkrieg, der noch höhere Totenziffern produzierte und schließlich im Holocaust kulminierte, eine Fortsetzung des Ersten war. Zwischen diesen beiden Konflikten lagen Jahre des fortgesetzten Bürgerkriegs, des gegenseitigen Mordens unter innenpolitischen Gegnern mit kaum gezählten und zählbaren Opfern.<sup>8</sup>

Auch nach 1945, als der Zweite Weltkrieg endlich vorüber war, ging das Töten weiter, diesmal allerdings verlagert auf Regionen außerhalb

<sup>4</sup> M. HASTINGS, *Catastrophe 1914: Europe Goes to War*, New York 2013, S. 366–388.

<sup>5</sup> H. MÜNKLER, *Der Große Krieg. Die Welt 1914 1918*, Berlin 2013, S. 320–377.

<sup>6</sup> G. KRUMEICH, *Juli 1914, Eine Bilanz*, Paderborn 2013, S. 225–255.

<sup>7</sup> G. KNOPP, *Der Erste Weltkrieg, Bilanz in Bildern*, Berlin 2013, S. 209–310.

<sup>8</sup> M. S. NEIBERG, *Dance of the Furies. Europe and the Outbreak of World War I*, Cambridge 2011, S. 122–155; M. MACMILLAN, *The War That Ended Peace*, New York 2012, S. 655–690.

Europas in der so genannten „Dritten Welt“, ganz zu schweigen von den Opfern, die die Errichtung stalinistischer Diktaturen in der „Zweiten Welt“ nach 1945 forderte.<sup>9</sup> Insgesamt starben in der zweiten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts sogar mehr Menschen einen gewaltsamen Tod als in der ersten. Heute liegen die Schätzungen für das gesamte Jahrhundert bei 187 Millionen Toten, davon ca. 60 Millionen für den Zweiten Weltkrieg und 20 Millionen für den Ersten. Wer die Soldatenfriedhöfe des Ersten Weltkriegs in Nordfrankreich gesehen hat, ist von dem Meer von Grabkreuzen und – steinen überwältigt.

### Die Verluste

Bei Beginn des Ersten Weltkriegs standen in den beiden zentraleuropäischen Monarchien, Deutschland und Österreich-Ungarn, 2,2 Millionen bzw. 810000 ausgebildete Männer, die für einen großen Konflikt mobilisiert werden konnten.<sup>10</sup> Das mit Frankreich verbündete Russland verfügte über 1,2 Millionen, die Franzosen über 1,25 Millionen. In England, das keine Wehrpflicht besaß, waren es 711000. Italien, das ursprünglich mit Deutschland und Österreich-Ungarn verbündet war, aber bei Kriegsbeginn neutral blieb, ehe es 1915 gegen den zentraleuropäischen Zweibund antrat, brachte es auf 750000 Mann.

Das waren sicherlich beachtliche Zahlen. Wie weit die Totalisierung des Krieges dann bis 1918 voranschritt, zeigt sich an der Zahl der bis dahin insgesamt Eingezogenen: Deutschland: 11,0 Millionen, Österreich-Ungarn: 6,5 Millionen, Osmanisches Reich: 1,6 Millionen, Großbritannien (mit Empire): 7,4 Millionen, Frankreich (mit Empire): 7,5 Millionen, Russland: 12,0 Millionen, Italien: 5,5 Millionen, Vereinigte Staaten von Amerika: 4,2 Millionen.<sup>11</sup>

Für die insgesamt 9,14 Millionen, die unmittelbar in Kampfhandlungen umkamen, besitzen wir für England, Frankreich und Deutschland einigermaßen verlässliche Ziffern: 723000 bzw. 1,32 Millionen bzw. 2,03 Millionen. Für Russland und Österreich-Ungarn ist die Zahl mit 2 Millionen bzw. 1,4 Millionen wahrscheinlich zu niedrig angesetzt,

<sup>9</sup> S. NEITZEL, *Kriegsausbruch. Deutschlands Weg in die Katastrophe, 1900–1914*, München 2002, S. 130–166.

<sup>10</sup> A. TÓTH – L. NOVOTNY – M. STEHLIK, *Nemzeti kisebbségek Csehszlovákiában 1918–1938*, Prága 2018, S. 9–15.

<sup>11</sup> G. HIRSCHFELD, (Hg.), *Enzyklopedie Erster Weltkrieg*, Paderborn 2003, S. 848–855; K. BENE, A francia hadsereg baranyai katonái az első világháborúban, in: A. BÖSZ (ed.), *A Nagy Háború emlékezete. A Dél-Dunántúl és az első világháború*, Pécs 2017, S. 42–44.

forderte doch der russische Bürgerkrieg, der der Revolution von 1917 folgte und bis 1921/22 tobte, über 900000 Tote, während 6,9 Millionen verletzt oder krank wurden. Außerhalb Europas kamen allein in Indien durch die 1918 ausbrechende Grippe-Epidemie 6 Millionen Menschen ums Leben; in Afrika belief sich die Zahl einschließlich anderer Krankheiten auf über 1 Million.

Zu den Weltkriegstoten müssen auch die vielen Vermissten gezählt werden, die oft in Kriegsgefangenschaft geraten waren, aber nicht zurückkehrten.<sup>12</sup> An der Ostfront waren infolge des dortigen Bewegungskrieges die Kriegsgefangenenzahlen besonders hoch: 2,2 Millionen unter den Russen. Zwar bemühte sich die Zarenarmee anfangs noch um eine humane Behandlung der österreichisch-ungarischen Soldaten, die in ihre Hände fielen und z. T. in sibirische Lager transportiert wurden. Aber sowohl das dortige Klima als auch der bald das ganze Land betreffende Zusammenbruch der Lebensmittelversorgung trieben die Zahl der in den Lagern Verstorbenen in die Höhe, bis 1917 mit der Revolution schließlich das völlige Chaos ausbrach.<sup>13</sup>

Infolge eines Rekrutierungssystems, das erst später abgeändert wurde, wurden in Großbritannien zu Beginn des Konflikts manche Regionen und Städte besonders schwer getroffen.<sup>14</sup> Dort geschah es bei dem Aufruf, sich freiwillig zu melden, dass ganze Dörfer oder Straßenzüge, in den Arbeitervierteln der nördlichen Industriestädte frohgemut nach Belgien oder Nordfrankreich zogen, um dann in einer der Höllenschlachten bei Ypern oder an der Somme gemeinsam den Tod zu finden. Besonders tief war auch die Trauer in den Oberschichten. Deren an den Eliteuniversitäten studierende Söhne hatten sich in großer Zahl als Freiwillige gemeldet und – anders als die oft unterernährten und kränklichen Freiwilligen aus den Slums der Industriegebiete – die Musterung ohne weiteres bestanden. So starben von den Unterzwanzigjährigen an den Universitäten von Oxford und Cambridge 23,7 bzw. 26,7% im Vergleich zum Armeedurchschnitt von 16,2%. Hier wirkte sich also ein Klassenunterschied anders aus, als auf den ersten Blick vielleicht zu erwarten. Diese Studenten waren die „Lost Generation“, deren Ausfallen infolge des Ersten Weltkrieges

<sup>12</sup> V. BERGHAHN, Wettrüstungen und Kriegsgefahr vor 1914, in: H. BÖHME – F. KALLLENBERG (Hg.), *Deutschland und der Erste Weltkrieg*, Darmstadt 1987, S. 79.

<sup>13</sup> K.-D. ERDMANN (Hg.), *Kurt Riezler: Tagebücher, Aufsätze, Dokumente*, Göttingen 1972, S. 404–455.

<sup>14</sup> K. WILSON, (Hg.), *Decisions for War, 1914*, London 1995, S. 199–223.

manche für die späteren Führungsschwächen Englands verantwortlich machten, nicht zuletzt auch im Hinblick auf die Fähigkeit des Landes, in der dreißiger Jahren auf die Bedrohung durch den Nationalsozialismus eine adäquate Antwort zu finden.<sup>15</sup>

Die detaillierte Beschreibung der menschlichen Kosten des großen Sterbens an den Fronten, wie sie durch die internationale Forschung inzwischen erfolgt ist, ist auch deshalb bedeutsam, weil neben die individuelle Trauer, die für Millionen von Europäern im Kriege und oft schon im Herbst 1914 begann, die spätere kollektive Verarbeitung des Massensterbens trat. Obwohl wir es hier mit einem Phänomen der Nachkriegszeit zu tun haben, muss es wenigstens kurz erwähnt werden. Denn in dem Bedürfnis nach einer gemeinsamen Erinnerung an die Toten an den jährlichen nationalen Trauertagen und in den Andachten vor den Kriegerdenkmälern, die bald selbst in den kleinsten Gemeinden errichtet wurden, spiegelt sich auch das große Elend, das der Weltkrieg verursacht hatte. Zu den menschlichen Kosten des Weltkrieges gehören schließlich die Verwundeten und oft bis zur Unkenntlichkeit Verstümmelten, die nach Hause kamen. Manchen der Kriegsversehrten gelang es, eine Arbeit zu finden, die oft aber wenig befriedigend war. Schließlich gab es noch Hundertausende, die bei physischer Gesundheit seelischen Schaden davongetragen hatten. Im Prinzip galt dies wohl für jeden, der die noch zu schildernden Materialschlachten im Westen in den Schützengräben miterlebt hatte. In einer Zeit unterentwickelter psychiatrischer Betreuung versuchten freilich die meisten, mit ihren seelischen Nöten allein oder im Kreise der Familie fertig zu werden. Für die, denen dies nicht aus eigenen Kräften einigermaßen gelang, standen Spezialkliniken zur Verfügung. Dort wurden während des Krieges und danach Tausende von Soldaten und Offizieren behandelt, die einen „Shell Shock“, eine Kriegsneurose, erlitten hatten. Die bisherige Schilderung der menschlichen Verluste des Weltkrieges versuchte einen Begriff davon zu vermitteln, welche menschlichen Kosten und Belastungen das Geschehen an den Fronten für die Soldaten selbst, ihre Familien und die Gesellschaften der beteiligten Nationen mit sich brachte. Wenden wir uns den materiellen Verlusten zu, glichen Teile Nordfrankreichs und Flanderns 1918 einer leblosen Schlammwüste mit riesigen Trichtern und Baumstümpfen. An die 25000 Quadratkilometer an landwirtschaftlichen Boden und Forsten waren

<sup>15</sup> E. PIPER, *Nacht über Europa. Kulturgeschichte des Ersten Weltkrieges*, Berlin 2013, S. 445–477.



zerstört; 1,3 Millionen Kopf Vieh gingen verloren, und 250000 Quadrat-kilometer an landwirtschaftlichem Boden und Forsten waren zerstört; 1,3 Millionen Kopf Vieh gingen verloren, und 250000 Gebäude lagen in Trümmern. Im Osten waren die physischen Zerstörungen ebenfalls groß und großflächiger, da manche Regionen mehrmals von der einen Seite erobert und dann von der anderen zurückerobert worden waren.<sup>16</sup> Soweit bekannt, ist es nie möglich gewesen, für den Osten eine Gesamtverlust-rechnung aufzustellen.

Diese Zerstörungen waren vor allem von Waffen verursacht, die vor 1914 produziert und aus den Staatshaushalten teuer bezahlt worden waren. So gab die Triple Entente (England, Russland, Frankreich) 1913 zusammengekommen 246,2 Millionen Pfund Sterling, Deutschland und Österreich-Ungarn 118,4 Millionen Pfund Sterling aus. Zwischen 1890 und 1913 wuchsen die Verteidigungshaushalte für die Triple Entente um 164,2 %, für den Zweibund um 158,5 %. Die Staatsverschuldung erhöhte sich 1913 im Vergleich zu 1887 in Frankreich um 39 %, in Deutschland um 153 % und im Zarenreich um 137 %. nur England verzeichnete einen Rückgang um 5 %.<sup>17</sup>

Allerdings verblassten die Rüstungsausgaben aus der Vorkriegszeit im Vergleich zu den Kosten der Kriegführung nach 1914. Dabei ist zu betonen, dass es sich bei den folgenden Statistiken um grobe Schätzungen handelt. Was diese Schätzungen so schwierig machte, war einerseits, dass die Geldentwertung die Staatsschulden z. T. dramatisch verringerte. Zum anderen führte die fortschreitende Totalisierung des Krieges zu erhöhten Investitionen und zu einer Modernisierung der Produktionsapparate, nicht zuletzt auch weil die Maschinen bei ihrem Dauereinsatz schneller verschlissen wurden.

Stellt man diese und andere Faktoren in Rechnung, kostete der Weltkrieg die Großmächte auf beiden Seiten über 175 Milliarden \$. Davon trugen Deutschland und Großbritannien mit 37,8 bzw. 35,3 Milliarden den höchsten Anteil, gefolgt von Frankreich mit 24,3 Milliarden, Amerika mit 22,6 Milliarden, Russland mit 22,3 Milliarden, Österreich-Ungarn mit 20,6 Milliarden und Italien mit 12,4 Milliarden. Am höchsten waren dabei die Materialverluste im Landkrieg. Allein bei der Vorbereitung des britischen Angriffs auf die deutschen Stellungen an der Somme Ende Juni

<sup>16</sup> F. FISCHER, *Krieg der Illusionen*, Düsseldorf 1969, S. 688–695.

<sup>17</sup> S. R. WILLIAMSON, *Austria-Hungary and the Origins of the First World War*, New York 1991, S. 225–298.

1916 hagelten auf einem 20 Kilometer langen Abschnitt drei Millionen Granaten nieder.<sup>18</sup>

Weniger kostspielig war der Seekrieg. Denn die teuren Schlachtschiffe, die sich der Zweibund seit der Jahrhundertwende zugelegt hatte, blieben, von einzelnen Gefechten und dem Kreuzkrieg in Übersee abgesehen, weitgehend unversehrt im Hafen liegen. Sie waren zu schwach, um der Royal Navy die Stirn bieten zu können. Der Seekrieg verlegte sich auf Torpedierungen alliierter Handelsschiffe durch die Deutschen, die vor allem die Engländer erheblich schädigten.<sup>19</sup> Sie verloren über neun Millionen Bruttoregistertonnen, gefolgt von den Norwegern mit 1,2 Millionen.

Zudem brach der internationale Warenaustausch zusammen, der vor 1914 dazu beigetragen hatte, den Wohlstand aller europäischen Staaten so eindrucksvoll zu vermehren. Hier gehörte die Handelsnation Deutschland, deren Zugang zum Weltmarkt die Royal Navy bei Kriegsausbruch sofort blockierte, zu den Hauptleidtragenden. Noch 1913 hatte das Deutsche Reich Güter im Wert von 10750 Mill. Mark exportiert. Der Importwert lag mit 10750 Mill. sogar noch etwas höher. Im Kriege sanken diese Ziffern auf einen Bruchteil, da der Handel selbst durch das neutrale Holland durch die alliierte Blockade weitgehend eingeschränkt wurde und allenfalls der Weg nach Schweden mit seinen Erzvorkommen offenblieb. Erst im Jahre 1925 überschritten die deutschen Importwerte die von 1913 um 2400 Mill. Mark, während die Exporte mit 9284 Mill. Mark bezeichnenderweise unter dem Vorkriegsstand blieben.

Diese Diskrepanz spiegelte sich auch in der deutschen Industrieproduktion, die bei den Investitionsgütern 1922 bei 70% des Vorkriegswertes lag und infolge der Besetzung des Ruhrgebiets, des schwerindustriellen Herzens des Reiches, durch die Franzosen und Belgier im Jahre 1923 gar auf 43% absank. Auch in Westeuropa, wo man vor 1914 ebenfalls vom internationalen Warenaustausch enorm profitiert hatte, kamen Handel und Gewerbe nach 1918 nur langsam wieder in Gang. Die Folge waren Arbeitslosigkeit und materielle Not, vor allem in den Unterschichten, die z. B. in England zu Proteststreiks und Hungermärschen führten.<sup>20</sup>

Die Kosten des Weltkrieges wären indessen nicht vollständig aufgeführt, wenn man nicht auch die Verluste des Finanzsystems betrachtete.

<sup>18</sup> S. McMEEKIN, *Countdown in den Krieg*, Wien 2014, S. 433–477.

<sup>19</sup> J. C. G. RÖHL, Admiral von Müller and the Approach of War, 1911–1914, in: *Historical Journal*, XII, 4, 1969, S. 670.

<sup>20</sup> N. ANGELL, *The Great Illusion. A Study of the Relation of Millitary Power in Nations to Their Economic and Social Advantage*, North Stratford 2000, S. 122–145.

Hier genügt daher der Hinweis, dass der Konflikt überall zu einer Verarmung der Volkswirtschaften führte. Die Hoffnung war, dass der Sieg es möglich machen würde, die eigenen Kosten durch Reparationszahlungen des Verlierers auszugleichen. In diesem Glauben finanzierten alle Nationen, voran das Deutsche Reich, ihren Krieg über Anleihen, d.h. den Aufruf an die besitzenden, ihre Ersparnisse gegen Anleihezertifikate dem Staat zur Verfügung zu stellen. Dieser versprach mit dem Zertifikat, die Summe bei einem siegreichen Ausgang zusammen mit Zinsen zurückzuzahlen.<sup>21</sup>

Indessen brachte schon die durch den Krieg beschleunigte Inflation eine Entwertung dieses patriotischen Opfers mit sich. Als zu dieser Entwertung auf Seiten der Mittelmächte noch die Niederlage kam, sank der Wert der Zertifikate unvermeidlich auf den Nullpunkt. Mit anderen Worten, die Dezimierung mittelständischer Sparkonten durch die im Kriege begonnene Teuerung steigerte sich hernach dadurch, dass der Staat sein Versprechen, die Anleihen plus Zinsen zurückzuzahlen, infolge des Kriegsausgangs annullieren musste. Wer einst ein schönes Sparguthaben besessen hatte, wurde auf diese Weise nach 1918 praktisch enteignet, mit politischen Folgen, die schließlich einen nicht unerheblichen Beitrag zum Zusammenbruch der Weimarer Republik und dem Aufstieg Hitlers leisteten.

Angesichts der hier präsentierten Zahlen über die menschlichen und materiellen Verluste ist es nicht verwunderlich, dass die Europäer die Nachkriegsprobleme, die mit diesem Aderlass entstanden waren, bis 1939 nicht meisterten. Danach zettelte das nationalsozialistische Deutschland einen weiteren Weltkrieg an, der u.a. die territorialen Ergebnisse des Ersten annullieren und den nicht errungenen Sieg von 1914 „nachholen“ sollte. Ebenso ist verständlich, warum die Historiker bis heute so gut wie einhellig den Ersten Weltkrieg als die „Urkatastrophe“ des gewaltsamen 20. Jahrhunderts ansehen.

### **Die tieferen Ursachen – Ausbruch des Ersten Weltkrieges**

Wie alle großen historischen Ereignisse ist der Erste Weltkrieg nicht auf eine Ursache zurückzuführen, und die Wissenschaft ist sich bis heute nicht einig, welche von diesen dabei das relativ größere Gewicht gegeben werden sollte. Sicherlich wird man diversen externen Faktoren einen hohen Stellenwert einräumen müssen. Darunter stellt sich wiederum das Bündnissystem der europäischen Großmächte und seine langsame

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<sup>21</sup> V. ULLRICH, *Kriegsalltag. Hamburg im Ersten Weltkrieg*, Köln 1982, S. 111–134.

Verfestigung in zwei feindliche Blöcke – den Dreibund (Deutschland, Österreich-Ungarn, Italien) – und die Triple Entente (Russland, Frankreich, England) als besonders fatal dar.<sup>22</sup>

Dieses Bündnissystem war Anfang der neunziger Jahre auf den Ruinen der Konzeption von Reichskanzler Otto von Bismarck entstanden, die nicht zuletzt darin bestanden hatte, Russland und Frankreich voneinander fernzuhalten und auf diese Weise zu verhindern, dass das Deutsche Reich bei einem Konflikt mit einer der zwei Mächte in einen Zweifrontenkrieg gegen beide zusammengeriet. Indessen hatte sich diese Strategie schon Ende der achtziger Jahre nicht mehr aufrechterhalten lassen, ehe 1890 dann der junge Kaiser Wilhelm II. dem Reichskanzler den Laufpass gab. Hiernach verschlechterten sich die Beziehungen zu Frankreich und Russland weiter. Im August 1892 unterzeichneten Paris und St. Petersburg eine Militärkonvention, der im Januar 1893 ein offizieller Allianzvertrag folgte.

Um die Jahrhundertwende war es dann England, das durch die „Weltpolitik“ Wilhelms II. zunehmend beunruhigt wurde und langsam seine bis dahin gepflegte „Splendid Isolation“ aufgab. Diese Umorientierung der britischen Außenpolitik brachte eine Annäherung an Frankreich mit sich, die im April 1904 schließlich mit dem Abschluss der Entente Cordiale besiegelt wurde. Drei Jahre später, im August 1907, kam es zwischen St. Petersburg und London zu einer Einigung über ihre seit langem vor allem in Südasien schwelenden Konflikte. Mit der Entstehung der Dreierentente war die Aufteilung Europas in zwei große Bündnisblöcke komplett, die sich dann 1914 im Weltkrieg gegenüberstanden.<sup>23</sup>

Diese Verfestigung wurde begleitet und z. T. vorangetrieben durch ein Wettrüsten, das um die Jahrhundertwende zuerst als ein Seewettrüsten zwischen Deutschland und England begann, ehe es sich ab 1911/12 auf die Vorbereitung der beiden Blöcke auf einen Landkrieg verlagerte.

Das Seewettrüsten war auf eine Entscheidung Wilhelms II. und seines Marinestaatssekretärs Alfred von Tirpitz zurückzuführen, die deutsche „Weltpolitik“ durch den Bau einer Schlachtflotte abzustützen. Diese Schlachtflotte sollte – wie wir heute wissen – groß genug sein, um den Engländern nicht nur am Verhandlungstisch koloniale Konzessionen abzutrotzen, sondern auch um im Extremfall der Royal Navy in einer

<sup>22</sup> D. GEYER, *Der russische Imperialismus*, Göttingen 1977, S. 456–499.

<sup>23</sup> J. LEONHARD, *Die Büchse der Pandora. Geschichte des Ersten Weltkrieges*, München 2014, S. 445–554.

großen Schlacht in der Nordsee militärisch Paroli bieten zu können.<sup>24</sup>

Die zu Recht misstrauischen Briten verwickelten Tirpitz nach der Jahrhundertwende daraufhin in ein Wettüben, das der Marienstaatssekretär um 1910/11 verlor. Es fehlte dem Kaiserreich an der finanziellen Kraft, die Royal Navy sowohl in der Zahl als auch in der Größe seiner Schlachtschiffe „überbauen“ zu können. Der Fehlschlag der Kaiserlichen Marine brachte die preußisch-deutschen Generäle auf den Plan, die jetzt darauf drängten, dass Deutschland – wenn seine Flotte schon zu schwach war – wenigstens zu Lande auf einen Konflikt mit der Triple Entente vorbereitet sein müsse.<sup>25</sup>

Schließlich ist der Kriegausbruch 1914 auch mit der imperialistischen Expansion der Europäer nach Asien, Afrika und Lateinamerika in Zusammenhang zu bringen. In den siebziger und achtziger Jahren des 19. Jahrhunderts begannen die Europäer jenen berühmt-berüchtigten „Scramble of Colonies“, in dessen Verlauf so gut wie alle von ihnen noch nicht besetzten Teile der Erde unter ihnen aufgeteilt und förmlich in die schon bestehenden überseeischen Besitzungen einverleibt wurden. Die kolonialen Rivalitäten, die zwischen ihnen in Übersee entstanden, wurden schließlich so stark, dass sie auf Europa zurückschlugen und die dort schon schwelenden Konflikte weiter verschärften.

Doch so stark diese Faktoren in einem internationalen System, das nach dem Prinzip eines sozialdarwinistischen Überlebenskampfes organisiert war und dem eine zentrale, den Frieden sichernde Autorität fehlte, auch auf die jeweilige Entwicklung der Großmächte einwirkten, Europas innenpolitische Kräfte und Konflikte sind ebenfalls in Rechnung zu stellen. In dem multinationalen Osmanischen und Habsburger Reich stand die Regierung einerseits unter dem Druck sich zunehmend sammelnder nationaler Minderheiten, die eine größere Autonomie, wenn nicht gar die Unabhängigkeit anstrebten. Gegen sie machten diejenigen Bewegungen mobil, die den Status quo auf jeden Fall erhalten wollten und dabei auf die Vorherrschaft einer ethnischen Gruppe drängten.

In der Sorge um die Erhaltung des Bestehenden griffen vor allem die zentraleuropäischen Monarchien und das Zarenreich immer wieder zu Polizei und Armee und zu Propagandafeldzügen, um die zentrifugalen

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<sup>24</sup> A. OFFNER, Going to War in 1914: A Matter of Honor?, in: *Politics & Society*, 23, 2, 1995, S. 213–241.

<sup>25</sup> S. FÖRSTER, Der deutsche Generalstab und die Illusion des kurzen Krieges, 1871–1914. Metakritik eines Mythos, in: *Militär-geschichtliche Mitteilungen*, 54, 1, 1995, S. 61–95.

Tendenzen der ethnischen Minderheiten zu unterdrücken. Außer der Sorge vor einem Zerfall dieser Reiche bestand eine innenpolitische Furcht vor der wachsenden Zahl von Fabrikarbeitern, die im Zuge der Industrialisierung aus der Landwirtschaft in die Städte gewandert waren. Dort bildeten sie ein Proletariat, das ein besseres Leben und eine Teilhabe an der politischen und wirtschaftlichen Macht anstrebte und seine Erwartungen über z. T. große Gewerkschaften und politische Parteien artikulierte. Wo diese Bewegungen nicht durch Konzessionen beschwichtigt und in das bestehende System integriert werden konnten, leisteten sie leicht einer Polarisierung der politischen Konflikte Vorschub. Diese Polarisierung, die sich gerade auch an der Frage der Steuerlastenverteilung und der jeweiligen Nutznießer der in die Gesellschaft rückverteilten Staatseinnahmen manifestierte, verstärkte die Neigung der Regierenden, Innen- und Außenpolitik zu verknüpfen und je nach Interessenlage die eine als Schwungrad der anderen zur Stabilisierung des bestehenden Systems einzusetzen.<sup>26</sup>

Doch wie immer man die tieferen innen- und außenpolitischen Ursachen des Ersten Weltkrieges auch gewichten mag, die Mobilmachung von Millionen von Soldaten, die auf den Schlachtfeldern kämpften und starben, erfolgte aufgrund von Entscheidungen und Befehlen, die nicht von anonymen Kräften, wenig handelte es sich dabei um Entscheidungen, die von den Bevölkerungsmassen in den verschiedenen europäischen Nationalstaaten oder von größeren, klar identifizierbaren Elitegruppen, wie etwa den Industriellen oder den Bankiers, gewollt und gefällt wurden. Parlamentarier oder Journalisten hatten auch keinen direkten Anteil an den Entscheidungen, die im Ausbruch des Weltkrieges endeten.

Vielmehr fielen die Würfel in einem kleinen Kreis um die beiden gekrönten Häupter der zentraleuropäischen Monarchien in Wien und Berlin. Auch in Russland, Großbritannien und Frankreich war nur eine kleine Gruppe von Verantwortlichen involviert.<sup>27</sup> Indessen regierten sie in erster Linie auf die Schachzüge, die von Franz Joseph I. und Wilhelm II. mit ihren engsten Beratern entwickelt worden waren. Diese beiden Monarchen hatten nach der Verfassung der beiden Staaten das exklusive Recht, über Krieg und Frieden zu entscheiden, und insofern lag in ihren

<sup>26</sup> S. R. WILLIAMSON, *Austria-Hungary and the Origins of the First World War*, New York 1991, S. 122–144.

<sup>27</sup> R. A. MARK, *Im Schatten des „Great Game“. Deutsche Weltpolitik und russischer Imperialismus in Zentralasien, 1871–1914*, Paderborn 2012, S. 305–370.

Alleingängen nichts Illegitimes. Doch in ihren Konsequenzen waren sie welterschütternd. Kurzum, die unmittelbaren Ursachen des Ersten Weltkrieges sind vor allem in Berlin und Wien und weitaus weniger in London, Paris oder St. Petersburg zu suchen.

### **Die Verantwortung der Entscheidungsträger**

Angesichts dieser Macht- und Entscheidungskonstellation erhebt sich als Erstes die Frage, wie die beiden Monarchen und ihre Berater in Wien und Berlin die Welt von 1914 sahen und die Zukunft einschätzten.

Betrachtet man verschiedene private Äußerungen und öffentliche Stellungnahmen von Franz Joseph I. und Wilhelm II., so mag es erscheinen, als seien sie besonders aggressiv und auf territoriale Eroberungen erpicht gewesen. Doch hinter dem Säbelrasseln verbargen sich bei beiden eine große Unsicherheit und ein wachsender Pessimismus. Das Habsburger Reich schien angesichts der starken Unabhängigkeitsbestrebungen der Slawen, ob im nördlichen Böhmen und Mähren oder auf dem südöstlichen Balkan, auseinander zu fallen. Seit der Annexion Bosniens im Jahre 1908 hatte sich das Verhältnis Wiens zu Russland das mehr und mehr die Rolle eines Protektors aller Slawen übernahm, verschlechtert.<sup>28</sup>

Auch für das Deutsche Reich sah es 1914 nicht gut aus. Infolge seiner antibritischen und antifranzösischen Welt- und Rüstungspolitik war Wilhelm II. seit der Jahrhundertwende zunehmend in die Isolierung geraten. Statt sich selbst für diese Lage verantwortlich zu machen, wurde diese Isolierung in Berlin als lebensbedrohende „Einkreisung“ seitens der Triple Entente verstanden, nachdem sich der Ring um die Zentralmächte 1907 mit der englisch-russischen Verständigung geschlossen hatte. Im Innern hatte der deutsche Kaiser wie der Habsburger zwar auch mit unruhigen Minderheiten zu kämpfen; doch diese Konflikte verblassten gegenüber der wachsenden sozialdemokratischen Arbeiterbewegung, die als fundamentale innenpolitische Bedrohung empfunden wurde.<sup>29</sup>

Wir wissen heute, dass die deutschen Gewerkschaften und die Sozialdemokratische Partei (SPD) eher reformistisch denn revolutionär waren. Doch änderte dies nichts an der subjektiven Furcht der Regierenden vor ihrem Potenzial an der Wahlurne. Immerhin war die SPD bei den Wahlen von 1912 zur stärksten Partei im Reichstag aufgestiegen und verlangte zumindest eine Parametrisierung, auf ihrem linken Flügel gar eine noch

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<sup>28</sup> K. H. JARAUSCH, *The Enigmatic Chancellor*, Princeton 1972, S. 148 ff.

<sup>29</sup> J. JOLL, *Die Ursprünge des Ersten Weltkrieg*, München 1988, S. 222–265.



radikalere Reformierung des politischen Systems. Das aber erforderte einen Verfassungswandel und einen Machtverlust des autokratischen Monarchen, den er und seine erkonservativen Berater in Friedenszeiten niemals zugestehen würden.

Sechs Wochen später wurden der österreich-ungarische Thronfolger und seine Frau im bosnischen Sarajewo von serbischen Nationalisten ermordet; weitere vier Wochen später zogen Millionen von jungen Männern in den Ersten Weltkrieg, der für viele von ihnen einen oft grauenvollen „Heldentod“ brachte. Um den Ablauf jener dramatischen Wochen zwischen dem Attentat in Bosnien und dem Kriegsausbruch voll zu begreifen, müssen vorweg einige grundlegende Faktoren erwähnt werden.

1. Wie in allen schweren Krisen gab es unter den Verantwortlichen auch im Juli 1914 erhebliche Meinungsverschiedenheiten in Fragen der politischen Strategie und Taktik. Selbst wenn es sich damals nur um einen kleinen Kreis von Entscheidungsträgern handelte und der Durchschnittsbürger ebenso wie bestimmte Elitegruppen bei dem Entschluss zum Kampf nicht gefragt oder gar eingeweiht wurden, Einstimmigkeit bestand überall allenfalls, als der Mobilmachungsbefehl unterzeichnet wurde.<sup>30</sup> Die Entscheidungsträger kannten die Zukunft nicht und konnten daher die Folgen ihrer Entschlüsse nicht voll erkennen. Das förderte eine Neigung, Risiken einzugehen, die sich hernach als viel zu hoch und schließlich gar als Illusionen erwiesen.

2. Die Jahre vor 1914 waren noch nicht die Zeit, in der man wie am Schachbrett verschiedene Optionen als Szenarien vorweg systematisch durchspielte, um mögliche Reaktionen des Gegners auf die eigene Strategie zu prüfen und diese dann entsprechend zu modifizieren. Welche Kalkulationen im Juli 1914 auch immer angestellt wurden, sie waren mehr Spekulationen, die die Möglichkeiten der reagierenden Großmächte durchweg grob unterschätzten.<sup>31</sup>

Vor diesem Hintergrund sind als Erstes die Entscheidungen in Wien zu sehen, wo der durch das Attentat von Sarajewo sehr direkt betroffene Franz Joseph I. saß und von woher die erste Antwort auf die Ereignisse vom 28. Juni zu erwarten war. Denn niemand in Europa erwartete, dass der Kaiser die Ermordung des österreichisch-ungarischen Thronfolgers und seiner Frau durch serbische Nationalisten in der bosnischen Haupt-

<sup>30</sup> K. HILDEBRAND, *Das vergangene Reich*, Stuttgart 1995, S. 877–922.

<sup>31</sup> J. BURKHARDT (Hg.), *Der lange und der kurze Weg in den ersten Weltkrieg*, München 1996, S. 143ff.



stadt Sarajewo einfach hinnehmen würde. Tatsächlich meldete sich Generalstabschef Conrad, der seit längerem auf eine solche Gelegenheit wartete, sofort zu Wort. Er sprach sich für einen harten Kurs gegenüber Serbien aus, dass man sofort als den angeblichen Drahtzieher hinter der Verschwörung von Sarajewo ausgemacht hatte. Ihm sekundierte Alexander Krobatin, der Kriegsminister. Hingegen riet der ungarische Ministerpräsident Stefan Graf von Tisza, unterstützt von seinem österreichischen Kollegen Karl Graf Stürgkh, einen kühlen Kopf zu bewahren.

Um sich möglichst fest der deutschen Unterstützung zu versichern, entsandte Franz Joseph I. Alexander Graf von Hoyos mit einem persönlichen Schreiben für Wilhelm II. nach Berlin.<sup>32</sup>

Dort waren die Entscheidungsträger nach dem 28. Juni ebenfalls in zwei Lager zerfallen. Auf der einen Seite standen Moltke und die Generäle, die mit Hilfe einer österreichisch-ungarischen Strafexpedition gegen Serbien einen großen Konflikt auslösen wollten. Auch der deutsche Kaiser hatte auf das Attentat von Sarajewo zuerst mit einem „Jetzt oder Nie“ reagiert.

Der Reichskanzler Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg habe in den Tagen Anfang Juli eine andere Strategie vertreten. Bethmann vertrat im Gegensatz zu Moltke eine gemäßigtere Linie, und weil Franz Joseph I. und Berchtold nicht mehr als eine Strafexpedition gegen Serbien anzuvisieren schienen, überredete er Wilhelm II., Wien seinen „Blankoscheck“ nur für eine begrenzte Aktion auf dem Balkan auszustellen.<sup>33</sup>

Zwar besitzen wir keine direkte Stellungnahme des deutschen Kaisers oder ein Protokoll seiner Unterredung mit Hoyos; doch gibt es eine Reihe von Berichten von militärischen Beratern, die den Monarchen kurz nach der Hoyos-Mission sprachen. Ihnen zufolge äußerte Wilhelm II. die Ansicht, dass Österreich-Ungarn zwar nach einem Ultimatum an Belgrad bei dessen Nichterfüllung in Serbien einmarschieren werde; allerdings hielt er ein Eingreifen Russlands zur Deckung von Serbien nicht für wahrscheinlich, weil der Zar die Königsmörder nicht unterstützen werde und weil Russland zurzeit militärisch und finanziell völlig kriegsunfertig sei. Gleiches gelte, besonders in finanzieller Beziehung, für Frankreich. Von England wurde nicht gesprochen. Er habe daher dem Kaiser Franz Joseph sagen lassen, dass er sich auf ihn verlassen könne. Insgesamt glaubte Wilhelm II., dass sich die Situation in 8 Tagen durch Nachgeben

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<sup>32</sup> M. FERRO, *Der große Krieg*, Frankfurt 1988, S. 125–155.

<sup>33</sup> A. HILLGRUBER, *Deutschlands Rolle bei der Vorgeschichte der beiden Weltkriege*, Göttingen 1979, S. 34–44.

Serbiens klären würde. Seine weitere Bemerkung, dass man auch für einen anderen Ausgang gerüstet sein müsse, deutet darauf hin, dass man sich eines Risikos hinsichtlich der Reaktion der anderen Großmächte, voran des Zarenreichs, durchaus bewusst war.<sup>34</sup>

Es sieht also so aus, als habe Bethmann den Kaiser am 5. Juli gegen Moltke auf einen begrenzten Konflikt festgelegt. Moltke blieb nur die Wahl, zuzustimmen und abzuwarten, ob diese Strategie Erfolg haben würde. Dementsprechend ging in Berlin die gesamte erste militärische Garnitur in den Sommerurlaub. Auch der Kaiser trat seine Kreuzfahrt nach Norwegen an, während Bethmann und Jagow von Berlin aus die Entwicklungen in Wien scharf beobachteten.

### Fehlkalkulationen im Juli 1914

Indessen zeigte der Hinweis des Kaisers, die Lage auf dem Balkan werde sich innerhalb einer Woche klären, auch, dass der deutsche „Blankoscheck“ auf zwei weiteren Kalkulationen beruhte, nämlich, dass sich die Wiener schnell auf den Text ihres Ultimatums einigen würden und bei einer Weigerung Serbiens, die österreichisch-ungarischen Forderungen zu akzeptieren, sofort kriegsbereit wären. Beide Annahmen stellten sich als falsch heraus.<sup>35</sup>

Aus Gründen, die nicht zuletzt auch mit nie gelösten Spannungen zwischen Ungarn und Österreich innerhalb der Doppelmonarchie zusammenhingen, war die Habsburger Armee nicht nur schlecht ausgerüstet, sondern hatte auch nie mehr als 29 % der zur Verfügung stehenden Rekrutenbevölkerung ausgebildet. Und von denen, die 1914 gerade dienten, waren wichtige Einheiten für den Sommer auf Urlaub geschickt worden, um in ihren Heimatregionen bei der Einbringung der Ernte mitzuhelfen. Sie vorzeitig zurückzurufen, hätte die Russen und Franzosen misstrauisch gemacht und die Lokalisierungsstrategie unterminiert, auf die man sich mit Berlin geeinigt hatte.

Die zweite Fehlrechnung, die eine schnelle Aktion gegen Belgrad verhinderte, hing mit der Opposition Tiszas gegen ein unannehmbar hartes Ultimatum zusammen. Seiner Meinung nach sollte Wien den Serben erst eine Liste von Forderungen präsentieren und nur ein Ultimatum stellen, wenn Belgrad eine Erfüllung verweigerte. Er warnte auch vor einer völligen Auflösung Serbiens.

<sup>34</sup> L. L. FARRAR, *The Short-War Illusion*, Santa Barbara 1973, S. 177–198.

<sup>35</sup> I. GEISS (Hg.), *Julikrise und Kriegsausbruch*, 2 Bde., Hannover 1963, S. 355–389.

Einer Annexion des Landes könne er nie zustimmen, und auch Russland werde eine solche nicht tolerieren.<sup>36</sup> Obwohl seine Kollegen mit diesen Vorschlägen überhaupt nicht übereinstimmten, gingen die Verhandlungen mit Tisza, wie Bethmann ziemlich alarmiert am 17. Juli aus Wien erfuhr, weiter. Erst zwei Tage später verabschiedete der Ministerrat den Entwurf des Ultimatums. Zugleich einigte man sich darauf, es am 23. Juli in Belgrad zu überreichen. Diese erneute Verzögerung war ein weiterer Beweis dafür, wie unsystematisch man Anfang Juli vorgegangen war.

Nach der Überraschung mit dem Ernteurlaub und den Schwierigkeiten mit Tisza gab es noch eine weitere Entdeckung, die bei sorgfältigerer Planung ebenfalls hätte einkalkuliert werden können: Man hatte nicht bedacht, dass der französische Präsident Raymond Poincaré vom 20.–22. Juli zu einem langen angekündigten Staatsbesuch in St. Petersburg sein würde. Wurde das Ultimatum vor seiner Rückkehr publik, war damit zu rechnen, dass die beiden Bündnispartner ihre Reaktion auf höchster Ebene gleich persönlich würden absprechen können. Hätte man das russisch-französische Treffen rechtzeitig in das Kalkül einbezogen, wäre noch ein weiteres Problem sofort deutlich geworden: Wien und Berlin waren so auf St. Petersburg als den Protektor der Serben fixiert, dass man die französische Reaktion auf ein Eingreifen Russlands noch weniger durchdachte.<sup>37</sup> Man nahm nur an, dass Paris ebenfalls nicht kriegsbereit sei und auf eine Begrenzung der Krise auf dem Balkan hinarbeiten würde. Mochte man das Risiko eines russischen Eingreifens auch erkennen, in Berlin übersah man, dass Russland und Frankreich als Bündnispartner auch durch die moltkeschen Operationspläne untrennbar miteinander verbunden worden waren: Schon Jahre zuvor hatte der Generalstabschef einen bis dahin bestehenden deutschen Aufmarschplan gegen Russland allein zu den Akten gelegt.

Stattdessen hatte er eine von seinem Vorgänger, Alfred Graf von Schlieffen, entworfenen Plan weiterentwickelt, der selbst bei einer Kriegsgefahr im Osten den Angriff auf Frankreich vorsah. Mit anderen Worten, im Falle eines Konflikts mit dem Zarenreich sollte als Erstes dessen Bündnispartner angegriffen werden. Nach einem erwarteten

<sup>36</sup> S. FÖRSTER, *Der doppelte Militarismus*, Stuttgart 1985, S. 123–166.

<sup>37</sup> F. FISCHER, *Griff nach der Weltmacht*, Düsseldorf 1961, S. 422–467; K. BENE, Francia–magyar katonai kapcsolatok Szarajevótól Trianonig, in: B. RESS – J. BALI – L. KULCSÁR et al. (Hg.), *Ibolyától krizantémig 1867–1920*, Budapest 2021, S. 224–225.

schnellen Sieg im Westen sollten die deutschen Truppen dann nach Osten geworfen werden, um dort in einer zweiten Riesenoperation die Russen zu besiegen. Das Kalkül dabei war, dass die langsame Mobilisierung der russischen „Dampfwalze“ im Osten den Deutschen eine derartige Zwei-Phasen-Operation ermöglichen würde.<sup>38</sup>

Dem Generalstab war nicht verborgen geblieben, dass eine solche Zwei-Phasen-Operation große Risiken in sich barg. Was würde geschehen, wenn dem Angriff auf Frankreich der schnelle Erfolg versagt bliebe? Um diesen abzusichern, hatte schon Schlieffen eine große Umfassungsoperation durch Belgien vorgesehen. Der Angriff auf Frankreich sollte über Belgien vorgetragen werden. Nach der kurzfristigen Besiegung des kleinen Landes sollten dann die deutschen Armeen von Norden her bei relativ flachem und im Gegensatz zu Französisch-Lothringen im Osten unbefestigtem Terrain direkt auf Paris vorstoßen.

Diese Strategie musste aber die Briten auf den Plan rufen, die 1832 den Fortbestand eines neutralen Belgiens garantiert hatten. Auch die Möglichkeit dieser durch den Schlieffen-Plan ausgelösten Kettenreaktion hatte man Anfang Juli in Berlin nicht richtig bedacht. Wie einer der militärischen Berater des Kaisers am 6. Juli, dem Tage nach der Hoyos-Mission, berichtete, hatte der Monarch von England überhaupt nicht gesprochen. Auch Moltke scheint eine mögliche Intervention Großbritanniens bei den diversen Verfeinerungen seines Westaufmarschplans nicht ernst genommen zu haben. Die Kaiserliche Marine, die sich bei einem Weltkrieg um die Stärke der Royal Navy Sorgen machen musste, war nicht so unbekümmert. Ihre Sorgen erhöhten sich, als England Mitte Juli in den Gewässern um die britischen Inseln eine Probemobilmachungsübung durchführte, die mit einer Flottenparade vor Spithead endete.<sup>39</sup>

Diese unterschiedlichen Einschätzungen des möglichen Verhaltens der Engländer traten noch am 20. Juli in einem Gespräch des Konteradmirals Paul Behncke mit Jagow hervor. Ersterer meinte bei dieser Gelegenheit, England würde mit den andern gegen uns losschlagen. das sei auch vom rein militärischen Standpunkt die an sich richtige Handlungsweise. Ohne die belgische Frage zu erwähnen, äußerte Jagow die Ansicht, dass England zunächst abwarten und sein Verhalten vom Gang der Dinge

<sup>38</sup> D. STEVENSON, *The First World War and International Politics*, New York 1988, S. 566–592.  
E. DOMONKOS – A. SCHLETT, Financial Recontstruktion in Central and Eastern Europe after World War I: The Case of Hungary, in: *West Bohemian Historical Review*, XI, 2021, 2, S. 209–235.

<sup>39</sup> E. MATTHIAS, *Zwischen Räten und Geheimräten*, Düsseldorf 1969, S. 56–78.

abhängig machen würde. Das zeigte sich in aller Deutlichkeit spätestens bald nach der Übergabe des Wiener Ultimatums in Belgrad. Schon am 25. Juli wurde klar, dass Russland eine Zerstörung Serbiens nicht zulassen würde. Besonders Außenminister Sergei Sazonow drängte auf eine klare Antwort, während der Zar die Versicherung seiner Generäle, die Armee sei kriegsbereit, bis auf weiteres mit der Hoffnung verband, dass sich eine friedliche Lösung der Krise finden werde.<sup>40</sup> Deren Ausweitung auf die Großmächte wurde indessen zur Gewissheit, als Österreich-Ungarn am 28. Juli den Angriff auf Serbien unter dem Vorwand einleitete, dass Belgrad das Ultimatum nicht erfüllt habe. Inzwischen waren zusammen mit Wilhelm II. auch Moltke und die anderen militärischen Berater aus dem Urlaub zurückgekehrt. Sie stellten sofort fest, dass Bethmanns Plan vom 5. Juli fehlgeschlagen war. Seither drängten sie auf jene „große“ Lösung des Konflikts – die Abrechnung mit Russland und Frankreich –, die sie schon vor dem Attentat für unvermeidlich erachtet und am 5. Juli nur zögerlich auf Eis gelegt hatten.

Zwar bemühte sich Bethmann noch verzweifelt, einen Weltkrieg, der jetzt bevorstand, durch diplomatische Manöver zu verhindern. Aber selbst, wenn seine diesbezüglichen Initiativen wirklich ernst gemeint waren, er war infolge des Versagens seines eigenen Rezepts im Kreise der Entscheidungsträger um Wilhelm II. zu geschwächt, um mit seiner Stimme noch viel Gewicht zu haben. Stattdessen sah er es jetzt als seine Aufgabe an, wenigstens dafür zu sorgen, dass die deutsche Bevölkerung hinter den Entscheidungen des Monarchen stand. Das war deshalb nicht sicher, weil nach der Übergabe des Ultimatums nicht nur im Westen, sondern auch in Deutschland der Eindruck entstanden war, als säßen die eigentlichen Kriegstreiber in Wien. Folglich kam es in diversen deutschen Städten zu Friedensdemonstrationen gegen die Habsburger, an denen sich die örtlichen Arbeiterbewegungen beteiligten.

Über diese Proteste mit Recht besorgt, begann die Reichsleitung unter Bethmann und dem Staatssekretär des Innern Clemens von Delbrück Gespräche mit den Führern des rechten Flügels der SPD, denen sie unter Verschleierung der tatsächlichen Entwicklungen ein düsteres Bild von einem bevorstehenden Angriff Russlands auf das unschuldige Deutschland malten. Delbrück wusste, dass die deutsche Arbeiterschaft nicht für einen deutschen Aggressionskrieg, wohl aber für einen patriotischen Verteidigungskampf gegen die zaristische Autokratie mobilisiert werden

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<sup>40</sup> V. BERGHAHN, *Der Erste Weltkrieg*, München 2003, S. 18–31.

konnte. Dementsprechend wurde in den letzten Julitagen in Berlin nichts wichtiger, als den Russen bei der Veröffentlichung der Mobilmachungsorder den Vortritt zu lassen. Als diese Order schließlich kam und der Zar ein deutsches Ultimatum vom 31. Juli, sein Befehl binnen 24 Stunden zurückzunehmen, nicht beantwortete, unterzeichnete Wilhelm II. am Nachmittag des 1. August die deutsche Mobilmachung. Infolge dieser Sequenz erschien es dem deutschen Durchschnittsbürger, als seien die Russen die Angreifer. Moltkes Armeen setzten sich zum Angriff auf Frankreich und Belgien in Bewegung. Am 4. August trat England in den Krieg ein. Der Weltkrieg und das große Sterben hatten begonnen.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> V. BERGHAHN, *Der Untergang des alten Europas*, München 1997, S. 188–198.



## Passport Affaire of the Crown Prince of Habsburg during World War II

Gergely Fejérdy<sup>1</sup>

*The Czechoslovak Legation in Ottawa has sent me the enclosed document reproducing a philippic by a member of the American Congress against Archduke Otto. I do not know whether my colleague from Czechoslovakia has sought information on a point of fact which involves your Department. It does not appear that the Czechoslovak Legation sent – despite the compliments.*

These few lines can be read in a telegram from the Belgian Ambassador in Ottawa to London, sent on 12 February 1943 to Paul-Henri Spaak, Foreign Minister of the Belgian government in exile. Attached to the message is a page from the minutes of the US Congress of 7 December 1942. The diplomat has highlighted these lines in red:

*Some state that Otto [Habsburg] has a Belgian diplomatic passport. I am checking on this. How in thunder he can represent Belgian interests is beyond me. Of course, as an immigrant alien, here on a temporary permit or as a diplomatic agent, he cannot be drafted. Thus, Otto operates at a safe distance. If he is anxious to serve the Allied cause, let him enlist in the United States Army and serve without fanfare or trumpets. I denounce the political manoeuvres and machinations of this refugee archduke, pretender to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and his distortion of whatever laudable purposes may be involved in a „Free Austrian Legion”.<sup>2</sup>*

The question arises, how did Otto von Habsburg have a Belgian diplomatic passport and why did this disturb the ambassador of Czechoslovakia to Canada in 1943? In the following, we will try to find an answer to this story, but also to point out, through this example, how significant

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<sup>2</sup> Archives diplomatiques du Royaume de Belgique, Service public fédéral, Affaires étrangères, Commerce extérieur et Coopération au Développement, Dossier, 11908, Habsbourg en Autriche, Archiduc Otto de Habsbourg, passeport diplomatique belge, Legation de Belgique à Ottawa, 835/129, Ottawa, 12<sup>th</sup> February 1943.



propaganda was carried out by the leaders of certain states to ensure that the status quo after the First World War was not inadvertently changed.

### **The Habsburg Royal Family in Exile**

It is well known that the last monarch of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy withdrew from the exercise of his royal and imperial prerogatives in November 1918. In the increasingly turbulent political situation in Central Europe after the First World War, Charles of Habsburg-Lorraine was forced into exile with his family, including his eldest son Otto, then heir to the throne, aged six. On 24 March 1919, with British assistance, they fled Austria for Switzerland.<sup>3</sup> The Helvetic Confederation granted the family temporary residency. Following the departure of the former monarch, the Viennese parliament passed the Habsburg Law (*Habsburger-Gesetz*) on 3 April 1919, which regulated the legal status of the members and property of the Habsburg-Lorraine family in the first Austrian Republic after the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. Among other things, this legislation deprived members of the House of their titles and rights as monarchs and banned them from the territory of the Republic. Any return was made conditional on a declaration of renunciation of their imperial rights. With this act, the family members also lost their Austrian citizenship. From April 1919, they were effectively stateless.

Otto von Habsburg, born on 20 November 1912 in Wartholz Castle in Reichenau an der Rax, in Lower Austria, would have been entitled to Austrian citizenship after the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, but as heir to the throne he could only have obtained it if his parents had renounced their claim to the throne. However, this was out of the question until 31 May 1961.<sup>4</sup> The heir to the throne was also not granted citizenship by the other successor states of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. As is known, Czechoslovakia, established in 1918, became a republic. Prague's influential foreign minister at the time, Edvard Beneš, was a vocal opponent of the restoration of the former empire, especially the Habsburg family. The existence of this new European state was closely linked to the status of the former ruling family. In Prague, it was feared that the Habsburgs would threaten the country's independence, because

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<sup>3</sup> G. BROOK-SEPPERD, *Habsburg Ottó életrajz*, Miskolc 2003, pp. 91–92. The event is also reported in detail: D. TRITON, *Colonel Strutt's Dairing, Royal mission. The Secret British Rescue of the Habsburg family 1919*, Barnsley 2023, pp. 64–140.

<sup>4</sup> On this day Otto von Habsburg officially renounced his claim to the Austrian throne.

their possible return to Vienna or Budapest would mean the partial or total restoration of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, in other words, the dissolution of Czechoslovakia. Similar views were held in the Serbo-Croatian and Slovenian Kingdom (future Yugoslavia) and in Romania. For Otto von Habsburg, Hungarian citizenship was therefore the only option, where, after a brief intermezzo, the return of the royal family did not seem entirely unrealistic.

In Hungary, after the short-lived republican period and then the communist takeover in 1920, it was clearly confirmed that Hungarian politics was in favour of maintaining the kingdom. In their resolution of 2 February 1920, the Entente Powers essentially prohibited only the Habsburg Restoration – but considered the decision on the form of government to be an internal matter for Hungary. In February, it was still clear that Hungary would remain a kingdom, but the question of who should rule divided Hungarian public life. Two camps emerged, the legitimists, who considered the so-called Eckartsau Declaration of 13 November 1918 not to be an official document, or at least not a document that would have terminated the right of Charles Habsburg, who had been crowned on 30 December 1916, to rule. There was, therefore, a significant group of people who would have supported the return to the throne of the family then living in exile in Switzerland. In Hungary, however, there was, as in previous centuries, a group of so-called “free king electors”. Here, two major groups were in conflict: one wanted to choose a suitable person from another European ruling house or from another branch of the Habsburg family, and the other wanted a king of specifically Hungarian origin. In the end, a compromise was reached, and Miklós Horthy was elected governor in 1920, initially on a temporary basis so that the question of the throne could be settled later.

It should be noted that members of the Habsburg family confirmed Charles’ rights and claims at a family meeting in Olten, Switzerland, on 27<sup>th</sup> of October 1919, and were waiting for the opportunity to assert them.<sup>5</sup> It was for this reason that Charles Habsburg, hoping for international support, decided to try to regain the Hungarian throne in 1921. He attempted to return to Hungary twice, but both attempts failed. The consequence of his attempts, however, was that the Council of Ambassadors that replaced the Peace Conference of 1919 banished the monarch, and send him and de facto his family also, to the island

<sup>5</sup> R. FIZIKER, *Habsburg kontra Hitler – Legitimisták az Anschluss ellen, az önálló Ausztriáért*, Budapest 2010, p. 23.

of Madeira. In Hungary, on 6 November 1921, Law No. 1921/XLVII was passed, officially ending the reign of Charles Habsburg, but not ruling out the possibility of Otto Habsburg's accession to the throne at a later date. However, the international and Hungarian domestic political situation between the two wars did not allow this.

Otto von Habsburg and his family were taken from the island of Madeira to Spain, where they were welcomed by his kinsman King Alfonso XIII. The citizenship issue was not settled at this time either. The family very rarely travelled abroad during these years, but when they did, they did so with diplomatic passports from the Kingdom of Spain. In the 1920s, they visited France several times. Among other places, they made a pilgrimage to Lourdes.<sup>6</sup> They also went to nearby Bayonne to watch the Tour de France cycling race, which was of particular interest to the Crown Prince.<sup>7</sup> Although the King of Spain offered the family the possibility of a longer-term residence, Queen Zita did not want this, and therefore did not want Otto to take up citizenship of the country, fearing that it would prevent his eventual return to Austria or Hungary. The widow of the last Habsburg monarch preferred to move to a French-speaking country. So, she opted for Belgium. Queen Zita insisted that Otto von Habsburg and his brothers should attend a prestigious European university where French was the language of instruction. To make the necessary preparations, in 1927, the Crown Prince travelled to Luxembourg, where his uncle, Prince Felix of Bourbon-Parma, was the ruler. Otto von Habsburg used a Spanish passport for this travel. In Luxembourg he studied at the Benedictine boarding school within the walls of the Abbey of Clervaux and perfected his French. In the Luxembourg period, as before, it was suggested, mainly in Austrian newspapers, that Otto von Habsburg was in this small European country only because he wanted to come to Hungary with a false passport and take power.<sup>8</sup> Of course, such and similar fake news was constantly circulating about him, especially as his 18th birthday approached.

### From Belgium to the United States of America

The family left definitely Spain in 1929 and moved to Belgium. Otto von Habsburg arrived in Brussels on 19 October 1929. According to the

<sup>6</sup> E. CSONKA, *Habsburg Ottó. Egy különös sors története*, München 1972. p. 53.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54.

<sup>8</sup> "A bécsi Arbaiter Zeitung fantasztikus híradása Habsburg Ottóról", in: *Temesvári Hírlap*, Mai 13, 1927, p. 3.

archives, he travelled on a Spanish diplomatic passport issued in San Sebastian on 31 August 1927.<sup>9</sup> In November he also had a permanent residence permit. The former heir to the throne studied at the Catholic University of Leuven from 1929 to 1935. They first lived in the Brussels house of Count Hippolyte d'Ursel, a former Belgian senator, until January 1930, when they rented the 16<sup>th</sup> century chateau of Marquis Jean de Croix, so called "Schloss Ham", until 10 May 1940.

Otto von Habsburg defended his doctoral thesis in 1935. In addition to his university studies, the royal prince became increasingly active in European politics, above all in the fight to preserve Austria's independence.<sup>10</sup> After the Anschluss, Otto von Habsburg sought to represent the interests of the former peoples of the Monarchy in Belgium, France and the United States. In Paris in the 1930s, he built up excellent relations with, among others, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's ambassador to France, William Christian Bullitt Jr. He also maintained close friendships with the American Ambassador in Brussels, Hugh S. Gibson. Yet it was not Otto Habsburg but his second brother, Archduke Felix, who was the first to travel to the other side of the Atlantic, at the invitation of their uncle, the Grand Duke of Luxembourg. The destination was Canada, but this visit played an important role in preparing the former heir to the throne for his trip to the United States. The two brothers exchanged frequent letters during this period.<sup>11</sup> Otto von Habsburg finally left for the United States on 3 March 1940 at the invitation of President Roosevelt. In Washington, he met not only the President but also several influential politicians, including Secretary of State Cordell Hull, who hosted him at a special dinner.<sup>12</sup> The US President had heard a great deal about Otto von Habsburg before his arrival, as Ambassador Bullitt in Paris regularly sent information about him. The former heir to the throne had won Roosevelt's approval by delivering a secretly obtained document on Hitler's plans to the US embassy in France as early as the autumn of 1938. The document detailed the German plan to invade Poland. Otto von Habsburg, incidentally, had obtained this document, which contained important information, through Rudolf Graber, a German priest who later became Bishop of Regensburg. Bullitt forwarded this important document to Washington,

<sup>9</sup> Archives de l'État en Belgique, (AÉB), Ministère de la Justice, 3<sup>ème</sup> Direction Générale, (Police des Étrangers), Dossier Nr. 1.596.913, f. 9–11.

<sup>10</sup> FIZIKER, pp. 149–153.

<sup>11</sup> S. BAIER – E. DEMMERLE, *Habsburg Ottó élete*, Budapest 2003, pp. 128–130.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., pp. 133–134.

which led to the idea of inviting him to the United States.<sup>13</sup> This visit finally took place in the spring of 1940 and proved to be particularly successful. A few months later, Otto von Habsburg was forced to return to the United States as a refugee. His first visit in the spring of 1940 was a major factor in his welcome overseas.

On May 10, 1940, barely after returning from the United States, he was forced to flee Belgium because of the German attack. On June 3, 1940, before the German occupation of the city, he had dinner in Paris with Hugh S. Gibson, the former United States Ambassador in Brussels, then Director-General of the Polish Aid Committee and the European Director-General of the Aid Committee in Belgium. Otto von Habsburg was therefore in close contact with American diplomats even during the fighting. On 19 June 1940, with the help of Spanish and Portuguese consuls, he crossed into Spain and from there into Portugal. During the escape, he also rescued others in difficulties. He tried in particular to get Austrian and Central European citizens who had been forced to flee Hitler to France into Spain. He helped many, including many of Jewish origin. Otto von Habsburg's life was in constant danger because Hitler had put a price on his head. He was not safe in Portugal either, and left Lisbon for the United States on 11 July 1940.<sup>14</sup> Here he settled first in New York and later, on president Roosevelt's advice, in Washington.<sup>15</sup> Already in the autumn of 1940, he made a lecture tour of the United States, which partly enhanced his reputation and partly led to the establishment of a considerable network of contacts.

Otto von Habsburg's main task was to prepare the post-war settlement of Central Europe. He was aware that the United States was and would remain an inescapable player in world politics. At that time, Otto von Habsburg had already raised the question of a confederation of the Danube Basin states in his negotiations with Roosevelt. However, Austria was the main focus of the lobby. He tried his utmost to get Washington to recognise the independence in principle of the country annexed by Hitler in 1938. With this in mind, he also attempted to unite the Austrian emigration. Otto von Habsburg saw the importance of united action if

<sup>13</sup> Magyar Mozgókép Megismertetéséért Alapítványtól (MMA), 0451\_28\_HO\_980621, interview in Pöcking, June 21, 1998. On the record find here: 00:55:23. The same think written by R. PEREZ-MAURA, *Del Imperio a la Unión Europea, la huella de Otto de Habsburgo en el siglo XX*, Madrid 1997, pp. 212–213.

<sup>14</sup> BEIER – DEMMERLE, pp. 136–144.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 146.

Austria was to attract the attention of American politicians. He could count it a success that President Roosevelt, in a public speech on 27 May 1941 and 9 of December mentioned Austria in his speech, among the countries that needed to be liberated, and their statehood restored. Also under Otto's influence, Secretary of State Cordell Hull said that Washington would never accept the "kidnapping" of Austria.<sup>16</sup>

A few months later, on March 9, 1942, the former Crown Prince's friend James A. Shanley, a Connecticut congressman, introduced a resolution in Congress that the United States would never recognize the annexation of Austria to the Germany.<sup>17</sup> At the end of August 1942, President Roosevelt, in a meeting with Otto Habsburg and his brother, expressed his wish to have an Austrian battalion in the American forces.<sup>18</sup> However, the idea ran into serious difficulties. Circles linked to the Czechoslovak politician Edvard Beneš, based at Rockefeller Centre in New York, did everything in their power to prevent the battalion from being raised and to discredit Otto Habsburg and his brothers. Agents were paid to discourage those who were willing to serve in the army. The operation, coupled with a discrediting press campaign, was crowned with success. On April 17, 1943, Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson reported to the President that the initiative could not be carried out because there were not enough applicants for the Austrian contingent.<sup>19</sup> Although Otto Habsburg had opposed the creation of this battalion in the form envisaged by Roosevelt from the outset, the military formation was the focus of attacks.

Groups linked to Edward Beneš were the most active in attacking the Archduke. After the Munich Conference in October 1938, the Czech president went to Paris and then to London with secret Soviet help. He later lived in Chicago between February and July 1939. There he taught at the university. He visited the United States almost every year during the war. He was in Washington in 1942 and again in May 1943. It was on the latter visit that he first met President Roosevelt.<sup>20</sup> Beneš tried to negotiate primarily about the future of Czechoslovakia and, as far as possible, tried to block any movement or lobby he considered hostile. In addition to his own national considerations, he also acted with the Soviet Union's

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 153.

<sup>17</sup> Congressional Record: Proceedings and Debates of the 77<sup>th</sup> Congress, Second Session. Appendix vol. 88 – part 8. Washington, Appendix to the Congressional Record A1093.

<sup>18</sup> BEIER – DEMMERLE, p.162.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p.164.

<sup>20</sup> CSONKA, p. 331.

interests in mind, not primarily out of conviction but out of profit. After all, Beneš had already been in contact with the Stalinist empire after 1933,<sup>21</sup> and later, according to some sources, he also worked as a Soviet agent.<sup>22</sup> One thing is certain, the Czech President spent untold sums of money from 1940 onwards to prevent the American public from sympathising with Otto von Habsburg. Beneš received financial support partly from the Soviets and partly from the President of the Czech-Moravian Protectorate, Emil Hácha, a collaborator with Hitler's regime.<sup>23</sup> He made constant attacks on Otto von Habsburg not only through the Austrian associations he set up but also through the press. Well-connected and with the help of considerable funds, Beneš's circle was able to influence most of the American newspapers of the time.<sup>24</sup> In later interviews, Otto von Habsburg underlined that the former Czechoslovak president also had good relations with the inescapable figure in the State Department in Washington, Alger Hiss, whom he already considered a Soviet agent. As is known, he was later charged with this, and his case remains unclear.<sup>25</sup>

### The Belgian Diplomatic Passport of Otto von Habsburg

It is in this complex context that the dossier on the diplomatic passport of Otto von Habsburg in the archives of the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs can be understood.

The issue started by a telegram sent by Belgium's ambassador to Ottawa, Baron Robert Silvercuys, to London on 12<sup>th</sup> February 1943. The diplomat sent a few lines to Foreign Minister Paul-Henri Spaak and the Belgian ambassador to the Czechoslovak government in exile, Marcel Henri Jaspas, pointing out that on 7<sup>th</sup> December 1942, in the US Congress, a Congressman named Emanuel Celler had sharply attacked Belgium for granting a diplomatic passport to Otto von Habsburg. Silvercuys indicated in his telegram that he had learned of this from his Czech diplomatic

<sup>21</sup> I. LUKES, *Czechoslovakia between Stalin and Hitler: The Diplomacy of Edvard Beneš in the 1930s*, Oxford 1996.

<sup>22</sup> P. SUDOPLOTOV et al., *Special Task: The Memoirs of Unwanted Witness – A Soviet Spymaster*, Boston 1994, pp. 62–63.

<sup>23</sup> E. FEIGL, *Otto von Habsburg. Profil eines Lebens*, Wien 1992, p. 129. In a later interview, Otto Habsburg says that Hácha sent a large part of the Czech National Bank's reserves to London, under the control of Edvard Beneš. MMMA, 0451\_28\_HO\_980621\_Pöcking, June 21, 1998: 00:39:41.

<sup>24</sup> MMMA, 0451\_47\_HO\_981203, Pöcking, December 3, 1998: 01:35:43.

<sup>25</sup> MMMA, 0451\_33\_02\_HO\_980718, Pöcking, July 18, 1998: 01:15:15.



colleague.<sup>26</sup> In connection with the this issue, on 26<sup>th</sup> February 1943, Ambassador Jaspar drew the attention of Charles de Romrée de Vincenet, Political Director of the Belgian Foreign Ministry in exile in London, to the fact that he had been approached on this affair by the Czechoslovak diplomatic chief, Jan Masaryk, as early as January 1941. At that time, the politician also asked for an explanation of the Habsburg family's Belgian diplomatic passport. Jaspar indicated to the political director that he had told him at the time – the son of President Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, who played a key role in the founding of Czechoslovakia – that the reason for issuing the document was that Hitler was a common enemy of Brussels, just as much as the Habsburgs. According to the Belgian diplomat, Jan Masaryk understood this perfectly well and the question was not returned to later. However, in Jaspar's view, it is indeed worth considering the possibility of a person who pursues a hostile policy towards a state that has friendly relations with Belgium being granted a Belgian diplomatic passport.<sup>27</sup>

This issue was clarified by the Minister of Foreign Affairs on behalf of Paul-Henri Spaak, Charles de Romrée de Vincenet, in a telegram to Ambassador Jaspar dated 9<sup>th</sup> March 1943. The political director underlined that he had recently met Jan Masaryk and that the conversation between them confirmed that the Habsburg family could safely use a Belgian diplomatic passport. At the end of the telegram, the diplomat underlined that if he received any further enquiries on this subject from Masaryk or Beneš, he would feel free to reply that *"the Habsburgs are not Czechoslovak citizens"*.<sup>28</sup>

A few days later, Belgium's Ambassador in Washington, Count Robert van der Straten-Ponthoz, reported in a short telegram on the speech made by Congressman Celler in New York in December 1942. The American Democrat, who had been an uninterrupted member of Congress since 1923 and who had been one of the opponents of the Immigration Act of 1924, attacked Otto von Habsburg's activities in connection with the establishment of the Austrian battalion. He stated, among other things, that *"he came to this country seeking asylum after being expelled from Austria by*

<sup>26</sup> Archives diplomatiques du Royaume de Belgique, Service public fédéral, Affaires étrangères, Commerce extérieur et Coopération au Développement, Dossier 11908, Habsbourg en Autriche, Archiduc Otto de Habsbourg, passeport diplomatique belge, Legation de Belgique à Ottawa, 835/129, 12<sup>th</sup> February 1943.

<sup>27</sup> ADRB, idem, 27/2/9, London, 26<sup>th</sup> February 1943.

<sup>28</sup> Idem, 27/3. London, 9<sup>th</sup> March 1943.



*decrees of the Austrian Republic which have never been repealed. He arrived here through the back door with a passport issued by the Belgian Embassy. How this dummy can be a representative of Belgian interests is beyond me. This passport should be respectfully recalled by the Belgian Embassy".*<sup>29</sup> In his report, Count Robert van der Straten-Ponthoz underlines that Celler is far wrong, since the decisive factor in granting Otto von Habsburg a residence permit to the United States was not the Belgian diplomatic passport, but the fact that the investigations carried out by the American authorities approved his application. The diplomat indicated that, on behalf of the representative, he had asked the Washington government whether they would request that the Archduke's diplomatic passport be revoked by Belgium. The reply was that there was no reason to ask for this. In his report, Count van der Straten-Ponthoz added that he considered it important that Belgium should take a united stand on the matter, because it was almost certain that the Czechoslovak Ambassador in Washington, Captain Vladimir Hurban, would inform London of this issue.<sup>30</sup> In any case, Democratic MEP, Celler has also written to the Belgian Embassy asking it to revoke Otto von Habsburg's passport.

Spaak also received another note from the United States, namely the Belgian ambassador and former prime minister, Georges Emile Léonard Theunis, who was in New York on a special assignment, also wrote about this matter. In his memo dated March 15, 1943, he indicated that at the event organized on the occasion of the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Anschluss, the Habsburgs were sharply attacked for setting up the Austrian battalion. According to Theunis, there is no need to take the case seriously, because this wave of outrage will soon subside. On the same day as the report dated in New York, Count Van der Straten-Pont from Washington sent a detailed report to London. In it, among other things, he drew attention to the fact that there is a press campaign against Otto von Habsburg and that his case is causing heated debates. Among other things, President Roosevelt had to make a personal statement to refute the rumours about the Austrian battalion. Van der Straten-Ponthoz also attached to his report the letters and press reports that he received on the matter, among others, from representative Celler himself. In his report, the Belgian

<sup>29</sup> Congressional Record, no. 37, 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1943, p. 1560.

<sup>30</sup> ADRB, Dossier 11908, Habsbourg en Autriche, Archiduc Otto de Habsbourg, passeport diplomatique belge, Washington, 8177/ 1321–215, Washington, 13<sup>th</sup> March 1943.

ambassador underlined that the American politician is not aware that a diplomatic passport issued by Belgium does not mean that someone has diplomatic status, and even if this document were to be revoked, Otto von Habsburg's stay in the United States depends on Washington and not on London Belgian provisional government. Van der Straten-Ponthoz also indicated that the accusers were clearly linked to the "Little Entente". He also drew attention to the fact that Otto von Habsburg is strongly anti-Soviet, which is also blamed on him, and several newspapers "even makes him a fascist". On March 17, the Belgian ambassador turned to American Foreign Minister Cordell Hull in connection with this issue and asked him for information regarding the position of the Washington government regarding Otto von Habsburg's passport.<sup>31</sup>

Within ten days, on March 27, the answer was received. Among other things, the American diplomatic chief wrote the following: *"It was noted that Archduke Otto received a Belgian diplomatic passport as a political refugee residing in Belgium and that he was never entrusted with any diplomatic or official mission. The State Department in Washington fully understands that the fact that Archduke Otto was granted asylum in Belgium and received a diplomatic passport to flee to the United States, among other things, does not mean that the Belgian government accepts responsibility for his political activities."*<sup>32</sup>

In his report to Van der Straten-Pont when the letter was submitted, he underlined that the Washington State Department indicated that it saw no reason to revoke Otto von Habsburg's Belgian passport. The Belgian ambassador also discussed the matter with the Assistant of Secretary of State for Latin America, Adolf August Berle, who was also responsible for the intelligence activities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in cooperation with the FBI in Latin America and the OSS in Europe. The former university professor, who was particularly close to President Roosevelt, informed Van der Straten-Ponth that he called Representative Celler into the ministry and explained to him that Belgium had nothing to do with Otto von Habsburg's residence permit in the United States. The Belgian diplomat also pointed out to Spaak that Celler does not have a good reputation. In a confidential report, he described that in general, even his Democratic colleagues in the US Congress have a bad opinion of him. Van der Straten-Ponthoz also discussed the matter personally with Sol Bloom, a Democrat representative of Polish Jewish origin and head of

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., Washington, 8177/1366–226, Washington, 15<sup>th</sup> March 1943.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., Washington, 8177/1649–278, Washington, 31<sup>st</sup> March 1943.

the Foreign Affairs Committee. According to the diplomat, the politician sharply criticized Celler.<sup>33</sup>

Despite reassurance from US personalities, the protests continued. For example, from Chicago, the President of the Czechoslovak National Council of America, Jaroslav Josef Zmrhal, and Secretary Joseph Martinek sent a letter of protest to the Belgian Embassy in Washington. The Belgian ambassador politely replied. In his report on the letter to London, he stressed that his Czechoslovak colleague did not support Zmrhal's initiative. This showed that there was not complete harmony within the Czechoslovak emigration either. While Beneš's circle in London tried to keep the critical atmosphere towards Otto von Habsburg alive, Hurban saw fit to consider the matter closed, because Celler's person and his lack of preparation on the subject would not have helped but rather hindered the Czechoslovak cause.

In April 1943, no sooner had the controversy over the Belgian passport settled in the United States than it was back on the agenda in Europe. The press reports discrediting Otto von Habsburg and demanding the revocation of his Belgian passport were already being read in the Old Continent via news agencies in March, but it was not until May that they really began to attract attention. For example, the Belgian embassy in Lisbon reported Portuguese news on the subject to the refugee government in London in 1943.<sup>34</sup>

A few months later, Camille Huysmans, a former Belgian minister and socialist MP who had presided over the Brussels government during the war (without British recognition), turned to Spaak about Otto von Habsburg's passport case. Indeed, in May 1943, the Austrian Socialist Information newspaper in London printed Celler's speech to Congress six months earlier, which caused consternation in certain Belgian Socialist circles. Among others, Belgian Senator Henri Rolin, who had been Secretary of State for National Defence in the government-in-exile from 1941, asked Huysmans to help him to see the issue of Otto von Habsburg's passport clearly. Charles de Romrée de Vincenet, Political Director at the Foreign Ministry, answered the question. In his letter he wrote that Otto von Habsburg and his family had been granted passports by Belgium as refugees under usual international law. He explained that Brussels traditionally grants diplomatic passports to certain foreign personalities

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., Lisbon, 2824/498, 194, Lisbon, 24<sup>th</sup> March 1943.

deserving special consideration, and members of the former ruling family fall into this category. It should be noted that the reigning King Albert II himself and, from 1934, King Leopold III, also supported the Habsburg family, to whom they were related. De Romrée de Vincenet also pointed out in his reply to Huysmans that the passport issue was in fact an attack on President Roosevelt's policies.<sup>35</sup> The Belgian socialist politician, who had good relations with Beneš's circles and sympathised with the Soviet Union and was previously known as a friend of Lenin and Trotsky, found the explanation unacceptable. In Huysmans' view, Otto von Habsburg had asked to be admitted to Belgium before Hitler came to power, so he could not be considered a refugee in this form. The Belgian politician also stated in his letter that the Archduke had constantly worked against the overthrow of the independence of democratic states such as Czechoslovakia. According to Huysmans, it was therefore a huge mistake to issue this passport in such circumstances, which "compromises Belgium".

The letter of the socialist Belgian politician shows the extent to which the information was distorted, since Otto von Habsburg did indeed receive a Belgian residence permit in 1929, not 1930, but basically, since he could not return to Austria, he had to be considered a refugee already then. In his struggle for Austria in the 1930s, he did not support the abolition of Czechoslovakia's independence, even though he criticised the post-First World War settlement in Central Europe and Prague's policy towards the nationalities living in the area.

There is no written record in the files of the Belgian Foreign Ministry of any further consideration of the matter or of any further response to Huysmans' letter of displeasure. It is highly likely that verbal discussions took place on this issue and, as neither the United States nor the Czechoslovak government in exile pressed the question further, the Belgian ambassador in New York was eventually vindicated and the matter closed on its own. Nevertheless, the issue of the passports of Otto von Habsburg and his family was still a matter of concern to the Belgian government. In 1944, the Archduke and his brothers and sisters returned to Europe.

### **Otto Habsburg's Statelessness and Passport Problems after the War**

Crossing the ocean was not easy, however, because even in the autumn of 1944, German cruisers had more than once successfully stopped ships bound for Europe and arrested those who were under arrest warrants.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., London, 27/3, London, 17<sup>th</sup> March 1943.

Otto von Habsburg therefore tried to keep his plans secret. He first wanted to sail for Lisbon on 21 October 1944. The Belgian ambassador, among others, intervened to get him on board.<sup>36</sup> At the same time, however, Count Henrich von Deggenfeld, Otto Habsburg's secretary, applied to President Roosevelt's secretary for permission to travel by plane. This permission was granted. On 31 October he was allowed to fly to Europe, arriving in Lisbon on 2 November 1944.<sup>37</sup> There he and his brothers did much to prevent Austria from being completely ceded by the United States to the Soviet Union. In this struggle, they again found themselves confronted by Beneš's circle and the Director of the Office of Special Political Affairs of the American States Department, Alger Hiss in Washington.<sup>38</sup> After only a few weeks in Lisbon, Otto von Habsburg went to Paris in early 1945, where he had the support of Charles de Gaulle and could rely on the friendly relations he had built up between the two wars in his struggle for Austria and the independence of Central Europe.

He had already expressed his intention to visit Belgium. Ambassador Jules Guillaume, who, despite his Romanian origins, was not hostile to the Archduke, asked Brussels for approval to issue the visa. However, in a telegram dated 17<sup>th</sup> of February 1945, Spaak emphatically refused.<sup>39</sup> In April 1945, however, he was granted permission to enter the country, but only for five days and with the strict stipulation that he could not engage in political activities.

This allowed a short visit to Belgium and Luxembourg in April 1945. In connection with Otto von Habsburg's stay in Brussels, the political director of the Belgian Foreign Ministry, de Romrée de Vincenet, also received contemporary intelligence material on the Archduke. The secret document revealed that Otto von Habsburg was received by Baron Evence Arnold Coppée, who died shortly after the Archduke's arrival on 16 April 1945. Otto von Habsburg was also a guest of Count Harold de Hemptinne

<sup>36</sup> FEIGL, pp. 159–160.

<sup>37</sup> The Swiss *Journal de Genève*, citing the Reuters news agency, reports on this date. *Journal de Genève*, 4–5 November 1944, p. 2. Feigl writes in his book about 26 October. FEIGL, p. 196. This date is by no means good, because BAIER – DEMMERLE book refers to October 31<sup>st</sup> as the date of departure from the United States, citing the diary of Otto Habsburg. Cf. BAIER – DEMMERLE, p. 185. In this book, however, the claim that the Archduke arrived in Portugal on 8 November 1944 is incorrect. At that time, Otto Habsburg had already been in Lisbon for six days.

<sup>38</sup> BAIER – DEMMERLE, pp. 177–180.

<sup>39</sup> ADRB, Dossier 12.668, Brussels, 7<sup>th</sup> February 1945.

in Brussels for several days. This aristocrat was known for having sheltered the Belgian king's brother, Archduke Charles, during the Second World War. According to the intelligence report, the archduke also met during his stay in Belgium with Marquis Charles Terlinden, a famous Belgian historian of the period, and Baron Pierre Nothomb, a Catholic Party senator. The document also reveals that Otto von Habsburg was in regular contact with a German-born Capuchin priest who was also his confessor, Father Arnulf Schweitzer, alias Father Canisius, who lived in the Capuchin monastery in Brussels. The intelligence report notes that the Archduke is primarily supported by the US in Central European affairs and that the Hungarians who support him not so much pro-Habsburg as strongly anti-Soviet and anti-Beneš, hence their support for the former heir to the throne.<sup>40</sup> Taking these into account, and fearing that the Archduke's presence would strain Soviet-Belgian relations, the Belgian government did not want him to stay in Belgium for any length of time. However, Otto von Habsburg left for France briefly after his travel permit expired and returned to the country illegally. This was revealed in the press. Brussels was forced to ask Otto von Habsburg to leave Belgium. In a secret Belgian diplomatic telegram sent to Moscow on 24 April 1945 in connection with this incident, the Belgian embassy was instructed that if for any reason the matter was raised with the Soviet authorities, the Belgian representative should answer the question in accordance with Britain.<sup>41</sup>

Otto von Habsburg returned to Paris after his visits to Belgium. From there he tried to do everything he could to travel to the French zone of occupation of Austria. This was not permitted for many weeks by the French authorities. The French Foreign Minister Georges Bidault was the main opponent of the Archduke's plan, not only because he was not sympathetic to it, but also because he feared the growing pressure of the Soviet Union on France. Finally, in June 1945, Otto von Habsburg was able to obtain documents that would allow him to travel to Austria. Here he plunged into the political struggles of a country divided into four occupation zones. The Archduke was also protected here by his Belgian diplomatic passport and by the precautions taken by General Antoine Béthouart in the French zone of occupation.<sup>42</sup> The French military leader,

<sup>40</sup> ADRB, Dossier 12.668, Belgium State Security report, Brussels, 20<sup>th</sup> April 1945.

<sup>41</sup> ADRB, Dossier 12.668, Brussels, Nr. 57, encrypted telegram, Brussels, 24<sup>th</sup> April 1945.

<sup>42</sup> Who, incidentally, was only officially informed of Otto's presence in Tyrol in August 1945. M. E. BÉTHOUART, *La bataille pour l'Autriche*, Paris 1966, pp. 66–67.

who met Otto's brother, asked that the former heir to the throne's residence in Austria not be revealed to him, so that he would not be deported.<sup>43</sup> Moscow, however, did not tolerate Otto von Habsburg's presence in Austria and, with the active involvement of the socialist politician Karl Renner, sought to have him removed from the country. The easiest way to do this was to reactivate the Habsburg Laws. However, Otto von Habsburg remained illegally in Austria. He was finally expelled from Austria on 18 November 1945. According to press reports, the Archduke and his two brothers returned to Innsbruck from Liechtenstein on 15 January 1946 in the hope of changing the country's internal political situation. However, in Austria, which was partly occupied by the Soviet Union, this was completely unrealistic. The Viennese authorities launched a manhunt against them. On 18<sup>th</sup> January 1946, news was already circulating that the three Habsburgs had been captured in the Tyrol.<sup>44</sup> Two days later there were reports of the capture of Archduke Louis Charles.<sup>45</sup> According to Belgium's envoy in Paris, the former heir to the throne and his brothers were on their way to Vienna on 18<sup>th</sup> January 1946, but were forced to stop and delay their journey for a day because of the icy road. This is how they learned that the press had already reported the news of their arrest in Vienna, even though they were completely free in Innsbruck.<sup>46</sup> This information, and the fact that several legitimists had been arrested, prevented Otto von Habsburg and his brothers from staying any longer. Nor were the French military authorities able to interfere in Austrian domestic affairs, and American pressure was being brought to bear on General Antoine Béthouart to stop covering up for members of the former royal family who were illegally in Austria. Under these circumstances, Otto von Habsburg was forced to leave Austria on 21 January 1946.<sup>47</sup>

At the end of January 1946, he went first to Belgium, and from there to Paris. It was when he arrived in the French capital that he felt truly stateless.<sup>48</sup> He still had a valid Belgian diplomatic passport, which was extended for two years on 16 January 1945 at the Belgian Embassy in Lisbon.<sup>49</sup> In Brussels, however, the attitude towards Otto von Habsburg

<sup>43</sup> PERREZ-MAURA, p. 254.

<sup>44</sup> "Les Habsburg en Autriche", in: *Le Jura*, vol. 96, 8, 18<sup>th</sup> January 1946.

<sup>45</sup> "La Monarchie en Autriche?", in: *Le Nouvelliste Valaisan*, 20<sup>th</sup> January 1946.

<sup>46</sup> ADRB, 11908, 4311/1201/P.9. Paris, 14<sup>th</sup> February 1946.

<sup>47</sup> BAIER – DEMMERLE, p. 402.

<sup>48</sup> CSONKA, p. 399.

<sup>49</sup> ADRB, 11908, telegram num. 39., Lisbon, 22<sup>nd</sup> February 1946.



was increasingly hostile. Prince Regent Charles showed no sympathy for the Archduke, who had been expelled from Austria for having been on good terms with his brother, King Leopold III, and for having supported the accession of Prince Baudouin. In addition, the Cold War conditions after the Second World War made it dangerous for Belgium to support, even as a refugee, the heir to the throne of the family that had ruled the Central European region under the influence of the Soviet Union barely forty years earlier. Otto von Habsburg later recalls that his diplomatic passport was revoked.<sup>50</sup> In several interviews, he mentions that Tibor Bartheldy, a diplomat in charge of the presidential department of the Hungarian Foreign Ministry who had fled to Portugal at the end of World War II, told him not to worry about the passport, “*as long as we have a typewriter, we have a travel document*”.<sup>51</sup> This offered a possible solution for Otto von Habsburg in the confusion of the end of the war. So, for a short time he used a self-issued document for his travels, marked “*Civilian representative of the occupying army of the Duchy of Monaco in Germany*”.<sup>52</sup> From 1945 onwards, however, Otto von Habsburg was looking for a way to obtain official travel documents so that he could move freely in Europe and around the world. Indirectly, the idea of Hungary issuing a passport to the Habsburg family was mooted, but Prime Minister Ferenc Nagy did not consider it desirable.<sup>53</sup> He also tried to get a passport in France. Although General Charles de Gaulle retired from politics on 26 January 1946, he tried to get the Duchy of Monaco and the Order of Malta to issue him a passport. Eventually, François de la Noë, Count of Normandy, who had worked for the secret services during the war,<sup>54</sup> and Pierre Charles

<sup>50</sup> MMMA, 0431\_HO\_970327, Bokor-Hanák interview, Budapest – OSZK, March 27, 1997: 00:29:25.

<sup>51</sup> MMMA, 0451\_51\_HO\_991027, Bokor-Hanák interview, Pöcking, October 27, 1999: 01:12:40. See also: PERREZ-MAURA, p. 262. It mentions an ambassador, László Bartók, instead of Barthely, but this personality took up his post in Vienna in May 1946 and wasn't in contact with the Habsburg family.

<sup>52</sup> PERREZ-MAURA, p. 262.

<sup>53</sup> P. KOCSIS – Z. ÓLMOSI, *Habsburg Ottó és az államhatalom. Levéltári források az utolsó magyar trónörökösről*, Budapest 2020, p. 11.

<sup>54</sup> The BAIER – DEMMERLE book mistakenly attributes it to Lannot. This has been adopted by all biographers. But this name is only a nickname. Otto von Habsburg enlisted the help of François de La Noë. This Count of Normandy, a former writer and journalist, was a man who worked for the Vichy government after 1940, then became a confidant of Charles de Gaulle, and was several secret intermediaries who also played a major role in obtaining the Maltese and Monaco passports. See: J. GROSSMANN,



de Witasse, a former French diplomat and Prime Minister of Monaco from 1944, arranged for Otto von Habsburg to obtain a travel document.<sup>55</sup> In August 1946 he was able to travel to North Africa with this passport, then to Canada in November and to the United States in 1947.<sup>56</sup> His Belgian document expired in January 1947 anyway. Spain later granted him a diplomatic passport again, but this was in 1948. This was arranged for him by the head of the Foreign Ministry in Madrid, Martin Artajo, with whom he had a particularly good relationship. On 1 June 1966, the first son of the last monarch of the Austro-Hungarian Empire was finally issued with an Austrian passport<sup>57</sup> and later received a German passport, followed by Hungarian and Croatian travel documents in the 1990s. From the summer of 1951, when Baudouin became King of Belgium as the son of Leopold III, he once again enjoyed the sympathy of Belgian officials and was able to travel to the country with ease, but no new passports were issued.

## Conclusion

Nearly half of the former heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne's life was spent in exile, without recognition of his birthright citizenship. Otto von Habsburg always obtained a passport, either through the good offices of the states that hosted his family or through the intercession of friends. During the Second World War, he owed his life to his Belgian diplomatic passport, which enabled him to flee to the United States to escape the German offensive in the West and Gestapo agents in May 1940. However, this document surprisingly fell into the crosshairs of the anti-Habsburg Czech politician Edvard Beneš, who was adamantly opposed to any change in the status quo after the First World War, and through him, Moscow. Despite the heavy attacks, Otto von Habsburg's prestige and the trust placed in him were not undermined by President Roosevelt or the Belgian refugee government, but he did succeed in stirring up resentment against him in certain public circles. At the end of the Second World War, in 1944, the former heir to the throne who had returned to Europe was able to extend his Belgian diplomatic passport for two years, but he was less and less able to use it in practice, as he was not granted support for

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*Die Internationale der Konservativen. Transnationale Elitenzirkel und private Aussenpolitik in Westeuropa seit 1945*, Oldenburg 2014, pp. 188–190.

<sup>55</sup> F. BOULET, *Otto de Habsbourg. 1912–2011*, Haroué 2017, p. 122.

<sup>56</sup> BAIER – DEMMERLE, pp. 204–205.

<sup>57</sup> CSONKA, p. 482.

his travels from Brussels and was only allowed to visit Belgium briefly. Otto von Habsburg was forced to obtain a new travel document after he was forced to leave his native country after short stays in Austria. From 1947, he thus held a passport issued by the Order of the Kings of Malta, later a Spanish diplomatic passport, and decades later Austrian, German, Hungarian and Croatian passports, underlining his family's European ties in the literal sense of the word.



## Deaths of Border Guard Members on the Czech-Bavarian Border<sup>1</sup>

*Kateřina Komorousová<sup>2</sup>*

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The Border Guard was an elite component of the Czechoslovak Army. Only selected individuals with suitable qualifications and class background could become members. The Border Guards, whose main task was to guard the state border, were subject to high demands, both physically and mentally. The Communist regime presented service in the Border Guard as very dangerous. Claims of hundreds of border guards murdered by Western intelligence agents or other armed intruders were a myth presented by the propaganda of the time. In fact, most of the border guards died as a result of traffic accidents, suicides and severe injuries. Suicide was the second most common cause of death for Border Guards. The most common reasons were health problems (physical and mental), problems in personal relationships, financial problems or career difficulties.

[Border Guard; Iron Curtain; Czechoslovakia; Causes of Death; Suicides]

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### Introduction

The Czechoslovak Border Guard (Pohraniční stráž – PS) was formed in 1951 to protect the Czechoslovak state border. The structure and functioning of this new armed force was based on the Soviet model. Border guards had the powers of both the military and the security authorities, and were also authorised to use weapons in the course of their duties. The previous method of border protection by means of patrols was replaced by the so-called military method of guarding the border. A military security engineering system of protection was progressively constructed along the border with West Germany and Austria, representing a physical form of the Iron Curtain. This primarily consisted of multiple lines of barbed

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<sup>1</sup> The study was created within the SGS–2023–026 project, *Selected Problems from Modern History III*, undertaken at the Department of Historical Sciences of the University of West Bohemia in Pilsen.

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wire fences (connected to a high-voltage electrical source until 1965). This wire barrier was further supplemented by minefields (only used in the 1950s), a control belt where any intruders would leave behind tracks, booby traps and, of course, observation posts from which border guards monitored their section.

PS headquarters was located in Prague. The border brigades, which commanded individual border companies, fell under its command. The companies formed the basic unit of the entire organisational structure of the PS, as they were the ones who carried out the actual border guard duty. After the new structure was established in 1951 (the transition to the military method of guarding the border), the number of border companies averaged between 35–40 men, with each company guarding a 3–4 km long section of the state border. The number of border guards was gradually increased through regular conscription, and in the 1960s up to 98 men served on the most exposed sections.<sup>3</sup>

The daily routine of the company was based on the daily schedule, work plan and border protection plan. The daily schedule determined the exact time of wake-up, physical warm-up, morning hygiene, cleaning, breakfast, lunch, dinner, evening drill, personal rest and bedtime. In addition, it defined the time allotted for employment, training, political instruction, cultural and educational work of the combat division, and daily orders.<sup>4</sup> Duty length was usually set at 8 hours. However, this could be extended to 9–12 hours in the event of increased border protection, with larger numbers of patrols being deployed in the field. Border patrols usually consisted of two men, as there was a danger of a border guard defecting if a one-man patrol was used. For each patrol, a (senior) patrol leader was appointed, usually a second-year soldier. The combat task and the associated arms and equipment of the patrol were determined by the company commander during the division of combat. In the 1950s, the most commonly used PS weapons were the Model 24/26 submachine gun and the Model 52 rifle. At the turn of the 1950s and 1960s, rearmament took place. The rifles were discontinued and the submachine guns were replaced by the more modern Model 58 and Model 61 guns.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> T. JÍLEK – A. JÍLKOVÁ, *Železná opona: československá státní hranice od Jáchymova po Bratislavu 1948–1989*, Praha 2006, p. 48.

<sup>4</sup> Archiv bezpečnostních složek (eBadatelna), f. A 6/5 i. j. 544, Nařízení MV č. 56/1962, Služební předpis PS-I-1 Pohraniční služba (pohraniční hlídka, pohraniční rota), p. 145.

<sup>5</sup> Z. ŠMÍDA, *Z historie 10. brigády Pohraniční stráže Volary*, Praha 2017, p. 36.

The Border Guard was a prestigious unit within the Czechoslovak army, whose members were held to high standards and were expected to be completely loyal to the regime. Hence, not everyone could become a member of the PS. Recruits were selected very carefully and all had to undergo a vetting process. As a rule, they were members of communist families, union functionaries or direct members of the Communist Party.<sup>6</sup> The actual service on the state border required both physical and mental endurance. Border companies were usually located in mountainous terrain, several kilometres away from the nearest settlements. Furthermore, in winter, snow and frost complicated all the activities of the border guards. They spent long hours on patrol, where they had to be constantly on the alert. Regular political instruction and ubiquitous propaganda made the young soldiers feel that every breach of the state border was the work of an armed enemy agent.

The communist regime portrayed serving at the state border as very dangerous. It pointed to hundreds of detained intruders and dozens of border guards who died in shootouts with them. The reality, however, was that only a small number of PS officers had died in clashes with people attempting to cross the state border illegally. The others had died in traffic accidents, as a result of severe injuries or after being hit by accidental gunfire. However, many border guards could not bear the demands of border duty and the long separation from the civilization around them and decided to end their lives voluntarily. This study focuses on cases of deaths of PS members serving in units stationed on the Czech-Bavarian border. After analysing the causes and frequency of deaths in individual brigades, it focuses on the issue of suicide, which, together with traffic accidents, was one of the most frequent causes of death among border guards. For the purpose of the text, five specific cases have been selected. Their descriptions, conveyed through investigative reports, provide a snapshot of the circumstances and causes of the act itself, as well as a certain picture of the functioning of the border company, relations between the soldiers, the course of border duty, etc. Cases were selected to illustrate the most common motives for suicide, which included problems in personal relationships, health and psychological difficulties,

<sup>6</sup> Tajný rozkaz ministra národní bezpečnosti č. 9 ze dne 25. ledna 1952 „Odvozy branců v březnu 1952, výběr pro službu v PS“, in: [ibadatelna.cz](https://www.ibadatelna.cz) [online], [2024-04-25], [https://www.ibadatelna.cz/data/pdf/badatelna/1952/TRMNB\\_1952\\_9.pdf](https://www.ibadatelna.cz/data/pdf/badatelna/1952/TRMNB_1952_9.pdf).

and financial problems. Both regular soldiers, who logically dominate the overall number of suicides, and officers, whose motives were usually.

### **Causes of Death**

Cases of deaths of members of the PS were examined by Martin Pulec in his work, *Death in Border Uniform. Myths and Reality*, in which he managed to collect the records of a total of 952 soldiers who died during their assignment in the border armed forces between 1945 and 1991. However, far from all of them died in connection with their service. Pulec's extensive study primarily aimed to dispel the myth put forward by the communist regime about hundreds of dead border guards murdered by Western intelligence agents and other armed intruders. There were indeed shootings on the border, but only to a greater extent in the period 1945–1951, i.e. until the construction of the Iron Curtain and the transition to military border protection. Between 1951 and 1991, only four border guards died in armed clashes with intruders. The remaining deaths occurred, for example, as a result of committing suicide, serious injuries, traffic accidents, accidental shootings or by misadventure.<sup>7</sup>

A total of 211 border guards died in the area investigated on the Czech-Bavarian border in connection with their service between 1951 and 1991. This number does not include cases that occurred during leave and outings (e.g. accidents involving private vehicles, drunken brawls, etc.) and natural deaths. Suicide was by far the largest cause of death. Of the 211 cases, one in three was suicide (70 in total). Traffic accidents were the second most common cause of death, killing 42 soldiers. A relatively high number (24) of border guards were killed by a shot from the weapon of another border guard caused by accident, careless or unskilled handling. A total of 20 members of the PS were killed by the engineering and technical security devices intended against intruders. These cases date mainly from the 1950s, when the wire barricade was reinforced by mines, and the middle section of the barricade was charged with high voltage. Mine explosions killed 8 border guards and electrocution, which unlike mines continued to be used in the protected border area until 1965, resulted in 12 casualties. The number of 6 PS members drowned is perhaps somewhat surprising. Again, however, these are only service-related cases; the total number of drownings in the PS was much higher. Most of the cases, however, occurred while swimming, e.g. in a pond or a river,

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<sup>7</sup> M. PULEC, *Smrt v pohraniční uniformě. Mýty a skutečnost*, Praha 2021, pp. 27–28.

during personal leisure and outings. It is also worth mentioning 5 deaths caused by mistaken armed encounters between border patrols, which occurred exclusively during night hours, i.e. in poor visibility, and 5 cases of murder by a fellow border guard. The murders occurred in two cases as a result of the aggressor's drunkenness, twice in mutual confrontation between members of the patrol when one of them tried to desert, and one soldier was killed in a fight at the company building. Other causes of death included injuries during construction work (5), discharge of own weapon caused by accident, careless or unskilled handling – not proven to be suicide (4), railway accidents (3), gunshot wounds (3), grenade or explosive blast (5) and falling from the observation post (2). Rather curious cases include two lightning strikes, frostbite, injuries while playing football<sup>8</sup> and being kicked by a horse.<sup>9</sup> All the deaths are listed in the table (see Appendix 1), which lists both the causes and the respective numbers of cases.

### Suicide

As previously mentioned, suicide was the most frequent cause of death of PS members. A total of 70 border guards committed suicide within the Czech-Bavarian border area in the studied period of 1951–1991. Possible suicide was speculated in another five cases. The most frequent (57) cases were suicides by shooting or hanging (nine). Two soldiers decided to end their lives by ingesting poison, one jumped out of a window and one jumped from a moving train. The majority of the cases (56) were ordinary soldiers aged 19–24, on compulsory military service. The remaining 14 deceased were professional soldiers. The motive for the act could only be clarified if the person concerned had indicated one in his suicide note. Otherwise, during the investigation, the long-term psychological state of the deceased, his personal relationships (both in the army and in private life), family situation, disciplinary sanctions, financial problems, etc. were examined. It was problems in personal relationships that predominated among soldiers of basic service. For 10 of them the suicide could be linked to problems in their relationship to their partner, most frequently as a direct result of breaking up with their girlfriend. Other motives for suicides

<sup>8</sup> Injuries sustained during football are included among the cases related to the performance of service due to the mandatory participation of soldiers in regular physical training.

<sup>9</sup> Archiv bezpečnostních složek (hereinafter ABS), f. 2342, k. 146, č. j. PS-0412/01-1964, Vyšetřující zpráva o usmrcení vojína Sádeckého Miloše.



of regular soldiers included family problems, disciplinary sanctions, financial debts, as well as dissatisfaction with military service, bullying, and psychological and health problems. For professional soldiers, in addition to personal and relational problems, motives stemming from career sanctions<sup>10</sup> and investigations<sup>11</sup> were common. They usually ended their lives using a service pistol, either at their residence or outside their unit. In contrast, in most cases (29), soldiers on basic duty shot themselves in the company building, specifically in the drying room, ammunition store or weapons cleaning room. This fact is somewhat curious, given that soldiers were not allowed access to ammunition while off duty and, since about the 1960s, not even to weapons kept in a locked munitions store.<sup>12</sup> Some of them thus gained access to the weapons room, for example, by distracting the company supervisor or by taking advantage of the unlocking of the room at a time when the soldiers were about to go on duty.<sup>13</sup> Other options included stealing a submachine gun (or other weapon) and bullets at an unguarded moment,<sup>14</sup> or storing bullets, e.g. from a practice shoot, and using them before handing in the submachine gun after the patrol, while cleaning it, or stealing it.<sup>15</sup> Ten soldiers shot themselves during a patrol, i.e. at a time when the border guards had weapons loaded with live ammunition. Suicides by hanging most often took place outside the company area, usually in the woods.

In terms of any link between the suicide and the performance of compulsory military service, such a link could only be proven in eight cases. In four cases it was a reaction to a disciplinary sanction (imprisonment). The reasons for the sanctions were drunkenness, illegal possession of submachine gun bullets, late return from leave and the unintentional killing of another border guard. Two suicides were related to disagreements with other border guards and bullying. One soldier shot himself after he caused a crash of a service vehicle he was driving without a license, in which another border guard was slightly injured. In the last case on this

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., f. 2344, k. 10, č. j. PS-0470/1970, Hlášení o sebevraždě majora Lukáše Miroslava.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., f. 2347, k. 10, č. j. 1065/71, Dokumentace v případě sebevraždy Václava Kačerovského – závěrečná zpráva.

<sup>12</sup> JÍLEK – JÍLKOVÁ, p. 46.

<sup>13</sup> ABS, f. 2347, k. 8, č. j. PS-0855/69, Vyšetření případu mimořádné události pokusu o sebevraždu zastřelením vojína Petra Albrichtera.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., f. 2345, k. 28, č. j. PS-0309/01-62, Vyšetřující zpráva o sebevraždě vojína Kubiše Emila.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., f. 2344, k. 8, č. j. PS-3550/1969, Bárta Jan, svobodník – sebevražda.

list, the PS member killed himself because he did not want to serve in a first-line unit.<sup>16</sup>

In analysing the frequency of suicides in individual border brigades on the Czech-Bavarian border (see Annex 1), only the Volary 10<sup>th</sup> Border Brigade stands out, which, unlike the others, was operational only until 1962. Of the six recorded cases, four took place in the 1950s and two in the 1960s. Numbers are similar for the other border brigades (see Annex 2). The highest number of suicides (19) occurred in the Sušice 7<sup>th</sup> Border Brigade and the lowest number (13) in the Cheb 5<sup>th</sup> Border Brigade. It is also worth noting that the highest number of suicides (eight) were committed in the 1950s in the Sušice Brigade, whereas the highest number of suicides in the Plana and Domažlice Brigades were committed in the 1970s (seven in both brigades). When examining the individual decades, the numbers for the 1950s and 1960s are identical (23). In the 1970s there was a slight decrease (19) and in the 1980s there are only four recorded cases. The last suicide in the PS occurred in August 1990.

### *Private Ján Farkaš*

On 18 December 1958, at 6.45 pm, Private Ján Farkaš, born on 28 August 1939, of Hungarian ethnicity, assigned to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Company of the Biřkov Training Centre of the Domažlice 9<sup>th</sup> Border Brigade, committed suicide by gunshot.<sup>17</sup>

Private Farkaš joined the guard shift on 18 December 1958 at 4 pm in order to guard the Biřkov training centre. During the period of preparation for guard duty, the private did not exhibit any agitation which might have aroused suspicion. Between 4.00 pm and 6.00 pm, when the appointee was off duty, he wrote a letter to his girlfriend with the approval of the Chief of Guards. At 5.50 pm, by order of the Chief of Guards, he prepared to assume duty. He took up his post in good order at 6.00 pm. At about 6.45 pm, several officers heard 2 muffled shots and accordingly alerted the unit supervisor, Sergeant Kováč, who immediately went to investigate the cause of the shooting. Sgt. Kováč then attempted to call the guard in the area from several locations, but there was no response. He therefore decided to search the pistol range and the edges of the barracks where the guard was supposed to be. After searching the pistol range, he climbed the embankment of the range where by the light of his torch he

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., f. 2343, k. 86, č. j. PS-050-1/72, Záznam o mimořádné události.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., f. 2344, k. 8, č. j. PS-0847/58, Hlášení o sebevraždě vojína Farkaše Jána.

saw the guard lying on the ground. Near him lay the butt of a rifle with the buttstock over it, and the barrel of the rifle was tucked under his coat. Two NCOs on basic service subsequently rushed to the scene. Since the unit supervisor did not see any signs of life on the deceased, he ordered the NCOs to guard the said area, not to allow any movements and also not to allow access to other officers. He himself then ran to inform the centre officials. The soldier responsible for tending the wounded, Private Bina, conducted an examination of the wounded Private Farkaš, testing his pulse and the reaction of his pupils to the light but with negative results. He therefore concluded that Private Farkaš was already dead. Nevertheless, he decided to transport Private Farkaš by ambulance to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Military District Hospital in Plzeň in order to carry out a possible medical procedure or to make a medical declaration of death. Upon the immediate transfer of the named person to the said hospital, the doctor on duty there pronounced him dead and had the body of Private Farkaš placed in the hospital morgue.<sup>18</sup>

Investigations into the activities and behaviour of Private Farkaš revealed that he had had a very difficult time adjusting to the transition from civilian to military life. In his dealings with his superiors, he behaved almost rudely, was reclusive but at the same time hard-tempered, unforgiving and disrespectful of authority. He was given a two-day punishment of working out of turn on 19 November 1958 for failure to obey orders.<sup>19</sup> He achieved poor results in theory, whereas he performed well when practicing on equipment in which he showed interest. It was also known that he had a close personal relationship with Alžbětová Kollerová, with whom he had had daily contact before joining the army. At the beginning of his military service in particular, especially in November, they corresponded almost daily, as Private Farkaš sometimes received two letters at the same time. However, as time went on, he did not receive letters so often, which he took quite badly. He was very jealous of his girlfriend, which got to the point where he asked his friend to look after the girl for him. Private Farkaš was too preoccupied with his personal affairs, which resulted in his inattentiveness, especially during exercise. On 16 November 1958, he did not pay attention during a political lecture and instead wrote a letter to his girlfriend, for which the platoon commander reprimanded him.

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> This was a punishment in which the person concerned performed the designated work during his personal leave.

On 17 December 1958 Private Farkaš received a total of 3 letters and 1 postcard. One of these letters had been sent to him by his girlfriend. Private Farkaš sat in thought after reading this letter. Within a short time, particularly after opening the other letters, the other border guards did not observe any further agitation on his part.

Nothing suspicious was observed in his behaviour during the day of 18 December 1958. He behaved in the same way as at any other time and during the day he again wrote a letter to his girlfriend. In this letter he made no mention that he might be saying goodbye or anything of the sort. Nor were there any irregularities in the other letters which might have upset Private Farkaš.

Private Farkaš's jealousy was apparently prompted by a reduction in the sending of letters from his girlfriend, which had recently occurred for unknown reasons, and which he discussed and drew various conclusions. This probably also occurred while he was on duty as a guard, where he probably brooded undisturbed over his troubles and, under some disturbance of mind, decided to commit suicide. He had prepared himself for this act, as evidenced by the disassembly of the rifle by separating the barrel from the stock, reinserting the magazine into the barrel and putting the muzzle of the rifle to his heart and then firing two bullets to kill himself.

Following an investigation into the whole case, the Brigade Commander ordered a debriefing of the whole case with all officers and leaders of the training centre units. The objective was to increase vigilance and attend to those officers who were found to be in a disturbed state of mind on the basis of reports from home or from the transition from civilian to military life. The case was brought to the attention of the lower military prosecutor in Plzeň. According to his instructions, Private Farkaš was transported and buried at his home.<sup>20</sup>

### *Sergeant Jiří Vinický*

On 22 September 1960, at 10.55 pm, a sergeant by profession, Jiří Vinický, born on 21 March 1939, of Czech ethnicity, a senior member of the 20<sup>th</sup> border company of the Sušice 7<sup>th</sup> border brigade, committed suicide by shooting himself with a service pistol in a Finnish lodge.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> ABS, f. 2344, k. 8, č. j. PS-0847/58, Hlášení o sebevraždě vojína Farkaše Jána.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., f. 2343, k. 86, Zpráva o spáchání sebevraždy četařem z povolání Vinickým.

After joining the army, Jiří Vinický proved to be an average member of the training centre. He had a weaker rating in physical training. Otherwise, in other subjects he was rated well. He showed the same results at the 18<sup>th</sup> Border Company, where he was assigned after completing his training. On 1 November 1959, he was transferred to the 20<sup>th</sup> Border Company and organizationally assigned as an armour officer of the 1st Rifle Squad. He was rated very well in both combat and political training. Prior to being commissioned as a non-commissioned officer, he was rated as outstanding and was one of the best officers in the 20<sup>th</sup> Border Company. He was rewarded for his good performance and achievement in combat and political training on ten occasions, was promoted to the rank of Lance Corporal, and was awarded the Exemplary Border Guard Badge as of 9 May 1960. He was not punished throughout his military basic service. He was of a mild, cheerful disposition, displayed a certain moodiness and often changed his opinions. The officers liked him for his directness and his friendly attitude towards others. He was happy to provide assistance to other officers when they approached him.

In civilian life, his conduct sometimes displayed volatility, especially at parties when he consumed alcohol, when his temper was explosive. Before entering military service, he had had an acquaintance with Marie Chotová. After a short time, a civilian friend informed him that the girl had cheated on him. At his request, he was given leave to settle the matter. After discovering the facts, he broke up with the girl. However, he found the break-up difficult to accept and doubted whether his actions were right. While he was still in the 18<sup>th</sup> Border Company, he contemplated whether he should shoot himself because of the girl. According to the testimony of Private Varyš, a member of the same company and also Vinický's best friend, Vinický had said that he would stay in the army for her sake, and partly because he would otherwise have to seek civilian employment. He later had a relationship with a girl, Jana Kneisová, who was studying medicine. According to his account, Private Varyš concluded that he was in a serious relationship with this girl.

In view of vacancies for non-commissioned officers in the 20<sup>th</sup> Border Company, the company's recruiting officers considered accepting the then still lance-corporal Vinický as a non-commissioned officer on the grounds that he had shown himself to be the best member of the unit. Lance Corporal Vinický himself stated that he had no place in civilian life and that he was thinking of staying with the PS as a non-commissioned officer. To this end, the commander granted him a leave of absence to

confer with his parents at home. On his return from home, he informed the Assistant Commander for Political Affairs (ZVP) that his parents had agreed to his taking the post. In the month of June 1960, the Company Commander granted him a regular leave of absence and on his return from leave, he informed the ZVP that he was no longer interested in becoming a career NCO. No further comment was made by the appointee on his refusal to accept the appointment until the time he was to be sent for medical examination at the military hospital, in the month of August 1960. He stated that he had no intention of leaving, and that he no longer wanted to become a non-commissioned officer by profession. He justified this on the grounds that his whole recruitment process was lengthy and that he was probably not interested. His negative attitude was again manifested when he was due to leave for his acceptance interview at the brigade headquarters. In front of Sergeant Šerfl, he said that he would not stay, that he would rather shoot himself. Later he changed his mind again, saying that he would stay there for two years or that he would ask to be transferred to another brigade. He went for an interview at the brigade headquarters and there declared that he wanted to be accepted as a non-commissioned officer by profession. Since he had hitherto held a negative position, the company officials and other members were surprised by his decision.

He was admitted as a non-commissioned officer on 1 September 1960, when he also took up the post of senior officer of the 20<sup>th</sup> Border Company. On 10 September 1960, he went to his parents' home for a leave of absence, which he had previously urgently requested. Upon completion of his leave, he reported for duty on 21 September 1960. When asked by the company ZVP how he had got on during his leave, he replied that he had done well. The company officials, and the officers themselves, observed no apparent change in his behaviour, conduct or mood.

On 22 September 1960, he reviewed the company's senior officer's documentation. He then talked to the cooks about their work and assured them that if they had any problems, he would resolve them with them. Later in the day he made several statements that he was sorry he had remained a non-commissioned officer, and that he would have had a better life as a civilian. In the evening, Jiří Vinický, together with other members of the military, attended a screening of the film "The Undeclared". After the film, he went to the company office where he informed the ZVP of when he was on duty. He then went to the guardhouse where he talked with the company members. No one observed that there was any change

in Vinický's mental state on these occasions either. He said he was going to go to sleep and at 10.00 pm he went to his apartment in the attic room of the Finnish house. This room was shared with a second lieutenant on basic duty, Josef Pohořalý, who was not present in the bedroom when Vinický arrived. Lieutenant Vrabec, who was off duty, slept on the ground floor of the Finnish house.<sup>22</sup>

At about 10.50–10.55 pm Private Kostelec, on company guard duty, heard a hollow bang in the direction of the Finnish house. He reported the fact to the company supervisor, who brought a searchlight to verify the observation. However, they only searched the outside area where they found nothing suspicious. Sergeant Vinický's body was found only by Second Lieutenant Pohořalý after his return from duty at 00.45 am on 23 September 1960. He immediately reported the case to Lieutenant Vrabec. A search of the scene revealed that there was an unfinished half-litre bottle of plum brandy on a chair by the stove. Sergeant Vinický had apparently consumed a large quantity of alcohol before his act. Also on the chair was a photograph of Marie Chotová, the girl he had broken up with after entering military service. On the unmade bed there were letter papers with a written letter and a piece of paper on which he had said goodbye to his parents. None of the officials were able to determine at what point Sergeant Vinický had removed his service pistol from its holster, which hung with his belt in the company office. Nor did Lieutenant Sparrow, who was sleeping on the ground floor of the Finnish house, hear any shot. No correspondence was found on the named man.<sup>23</sup>

The following probable motives for the suicide emerged from the investigation of the whole case: the most likely determining motive was the separation from his girlfriend Marie Chotová. Jiří Vinický had been unable to come to terms with this break-up, as evidenced by the remarks he had made in his notebook, in which he blamed himself for having probably drawn the wrong conclusion. After the act had been committed, a photograph of the girl was found at the scene, placed next to a bottle of alcohol. The matter of his recruitment as a non-commissioned officer had also had an immediate impact on his decision. He had changed his mind several times about serving in the PS. When there was interest in him and no pressure was exerted on him, he declared before the brigade committee his firm decision to remain a non-commissioned officer. He

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.



regretted his decision upon his arrival at the unit, as stated in his farewell message to his parents. His decision to commit suicide was to some extent influenced by watching the film “The Undefeated”, which depicts the withdrawal of the army units from the borders of the pre-Munich republic in 1938. In the last part of this film, there are scenes showing a drunken lieutenant who surrenders to the fascists and is shot, the helplessness of the staff captain who seeks a way out in suicide, and the violent parting of lovers where the girl is shot by the fascists and the young man hurls himself suicidally into enemy fire. These moments and the misunderstanding of the situation may have influenced Sergeant Vinický’s feelings to some extent and probably brought about an even greater unsettlement in his character at this point. Last but not least, just before committing suicide he had consumed alcohol, which had most certainly influenced his actions.

#### *Private Ladislav Kruml*

On 16 April 1963, the suicide of Private Kruml Ladislav, born on 22 March 1942, of Czech ethnicity, a member of the 2<sup>nd</sup> year, and the attempted murder of Private Oravec, born on 30 August 1943, a member of the 1<sup>st</sup> year of the members the Cheb 5<sup>th</sup> Border Brigade both took place.<sup>24</sup>

On 16 April 1963, at 4.00 pm, a two-man patrol consisting of the patrol commander, Private Kruml, and the dog handler, Private Oravec, with his service dog, went on duty. While moving the service vehicle to the post, Private Kruml handled a machine gun in an unauthorised manner. The other border guards intervened to prevent him from acting in this fashion, and it is likely that the submachine gun was switched between Private Oravec and Private Kruml. On arrival at the scene, the patrol took up a position at the observation post and carried out their task.

Private Kruml, in a casual conversation with Private Oravec, had stated that he would never see civilian life anyway, something Private Oravec did not understand. After a while, he told Private Oravec that he was going to go and perform a personal errand. When he left, he took his submachine gun with him. When he returned, he fired two shots from the observation post into the checkpoint strip. Private Oravec responded by saying: “*What are you doing? Give me the radio link, this must be reported to the company.*” However, Private Kruml refused to hand over the link. After

<sup>24</sup> ABS, f. 2342, k. 146, č. j. PS-O 380/11-1963, Hlášení o sebevraždě vojína Krumla Ladislava a pokus vraždy.



the discussion, service was calm again. Kruml lit a cigarette and offered it to Oravec, who refused, saying that he was a non-smoker. About three minutes later, Kruml lit another cigarette and offered it again to Private Oravec, who again declined. At this time Private Oravec noticed that Kruml's face was turning red and pale at times. After smoking the second cigarette, Kruml took a moment to reach into his pocket again. Private Oravec believed that he was again reaching for a cigarette. At the same time, Oravec noticed that the service dog was sniffing something, so he turned in the direction of the state border. As soon as Oravec turned around, Kruml punched him in the nape of the neck. When Oravec turned around, Kruml attacked him again, this time with a pocket knife, which he used to stab Oravec in the nape of the neck. Private Oravec fell from his seat (from a height of about 1.5 m) and, without his weapon, which had remained on the seat, began to flee in the direction of the company post. About 10 metres from the observation post, Private Kruml fired a short burst from his submachine gun at Private Oravec. Oravec fell to the ground as he fired in self-defence. He then started to run again along the edge of the forest and Private Kruml fired another burst from his submachine gun at him. Oravec fell again, and when the shooting stopped, he got up again and fled. After a short time, Private Oravec heard 2–3 more shots, as confirmed by the neighbouring patrols. Private Kruml presumably left his seat, took both submachine guns with him and advanced in the direction where Private Oravec had fled. He appears to have killed himself with the last shots. Private Oravec ran to the post of a neighbouring patrol, which reported the incident to the company. The company officer in charge arrived at the scene and first ascertained from Private Oravec what had happened and then went to the scene with other border guards. They found Private Kruml lying on the forest path at a distance of about 70 m, towards the state border. They found that he had been shot in the head and, after checking his pulse, that he was dead. The officer in charge arranged for the area of the crime scene to be guarded and the wounded Private Oravec was taken to the hospital in Aš.<sup>25</sup>

The investigation into the case found that the following circumstances had influenced Private Kruml's actions: there was insufficient organisation of the life and activities of the company on 16 April 1963. The company commander was on leave at the time and the second-in-command had left the company on a private trip without authorisation. The ZVP was

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

attending training at the brigade headquarters and of the officials in the company, only the company elder, Staff Sergeant Banko, remained, who was also on duty as the company's supervisory officer. Although political training of the men was held from 2.00 pm, many of the border guards did not attend and performed agricultural work in the company area. Privates Kruml, Votýpka and Kozlík took advantage of this work to leave the company premises and visit the local Jednota shop in order to consume beer. When their absence from the company was discovered, insufficient measures were taken to locate them.

Border guards Kruml, Votýpka and Kozlík drank a considerable amount of alcohol, and Private Kruml also purchased a quarter-litre bottle of vodka, which, judging by the bottle found near the seat, he had drunk while on duty before attacking Private Oravec. In the afternoon, other border guards confessed that they had also visited the Jednota to drink beer. Actual attendance at the men's political training and farm work was not recorded.

Although the job of company supervisor was performed by Staff Sergeant Banko, at that time the only professional soldier in the company, the posting of patrols for state border duty was carried out by the graduate Sergeant Reitmayer. He did not carry out the posting of the patrol according to regulations since the appointed officer had overlooked Private Kruml's drunkenness and had not checked the readiness of the patrol.

Even though the company supervisor, Corporal Drahorád, knew about the drunkenness of some of the border guards, in particular Kozlík and Kruml, he did not report this fact even when he presented them for the issue of a combat order. Some other border guards who knew about the drunkenness did not report anything either. Only in the case of Private Kozlík did the patrol commander report from the field that the appointee was in a drunken state. Staff Sergeant Banko sent Staff Sergeant Durny to investigate the situation, and he reported that everything was fine.

One of the most significant problems at the 24<sup>th</sup> Border Company in the previous year had been the drunkenness of the border guards. The company commander, Captain Tichý, and his deputy, Lieutenant Commander Veselý, had had a crucial influence in this respect, as they themselves had got drunk in several cases, in the presence of both border guards and civilians. This behaviour was repeated on 15 February 1963 at the pub in Doubrava. The conduct of the commander and his deputy aroused public indignation, and the case was therefore dealt with by

military command and the Communist Party. Captain Tichý was relieved of his post as company commander and his deputy, Lieutenant Veselý, was given a warning for irresponsible performance of his duties.

There were several repeat offenders in the company, and among them were privates Kruml, Votýpka, Kozlík and Adamec, who were disciplined several times, mainly for drunkenness. They were constantly being dealt with and the situation had improved somewhat, although no major improvement had been achieved. The case may also have been influenced by the fact that Private Kruml had been hit several times on the head with a pistol by a member of the National Security Corps (SNB) during a walk in Aš on 24 March 1963, which had given him concussion. He received treatment for about 14 days at the state hospital in Aš. An investigation into the case found that Private Kruml was not guilty.

Private Kruml came from a working-class family. His parents had not lived in the same household for the last 8 years. His mother had been sentenced in court several times, mainly for prostitution. Kruml had grown up in poor conditions and was mainly raised by his grandmother. He joined the 24<sup>th</sup> Border Company in 1961. He was disciplined four times for shortcomings in the performance of his duties, with an unconditional imprisonment of 35 days. Of these, he was punished twice for drunkenness, once for returning late from an outing and once for falling asleep on duty. He was not punished for the case of a clash with a policeman in Aš. On the basis of consistently conducted interviews and individual work with him, he had shown effort and had recently improved, as confirmed by officials and border guards.

Private Emil Oravec came from a working-class family and joined the unit in 1962. He performed his tasks very well, he had not been disciplined and, conversely, he had been rewarded twice for his initiative and activity. He had a very responsible approach to fulfilling his military duties and was rated by his superiors as one of the best border guards of the company.

The investigation did not show that there had been any disagreements between Private Kruml and Oravec earlier or just before he left the service. Nor did the contents of Private Kruml's correspondence or the inquiry among the border guards clarify any motive for his actions. Private Kruml was of a more private nature, and this was reflected in the fact that he was not close friends with anyone in the company and that he was very reluctant to confide his problems, especially family problems, and only rarely did so.

The investigation further revealed that the main cause of the suicide of Private Kruml and the attempted murder of Private Oravec was drunkenness. Private Kruml had a considerable propensity for this. The fundamental weakness which prevented a more effective solution of the problems of morale and military discipline was considered to be a false comradeship which, in the case in question, was most markedly manifested in the conduct of a number of border guards and of the officials themselves.

Another cause was the poor organization of the unit's life and activities on that particular operational day. The life and activity of the company did not correspond to the regulations and the functionaries did not fulfil their basic duties. The battalion functionaries did not know the actual situation in the company well. A long-term review conducted by the Chief of Staff, Major Vrba, did not address these problems. The battalion had not consistently addressed morale and military discipline issues over the previous year.

Although the brigade headquarters and the political department had dealt with the situation in the company in connection with the former commander, Captain Tichý, they did not continue to follow the development and the situation in the company. Neither the battalion nor the brigade provided the new company commander with the necessary and consistent assistance. Consequently, the brigade chief of staff proposed a comprehensive solution to the problem of drunkenness through a series of training sessions, focusing on party-political work. He also established a procedure for dealing with individual cases of drunkenness and imposed disciplinary penalties, both on specific regular border guards and on their superior officers.

#### *Lieutenant Václav Kačerovský*

On 20 October 1971, Lieutenant Václav Kačerovský, born on 2 May 1942, of Czech ethnicity, assigned to the 12<sup>th</sup> Border Brigade in Planá u Mariánských Lázní, committed suicide by hanging himself in his apartment.<sup>26</sup>

At 6.45 am on 20 October 1971, Lieutenant Kačerovský arrived in front of the unit's shoeshop, where he asked civilian employee Píkl to hand over two envelopes to Major Šiling. Píkl shortly thereafter handed said envelopes to Ensign Toman, who noticed that one envelope was open

<sup>26</sup> ABS, f. 2347, k. 10, č. j. 1065/71, Dokumentace v případě sebevraždy Václava Kačerovského – závěrečná zpráva.

on the side and that it contained two other letters. One was addressed to Lieutenant Kačerovský's wife and the other to the President of the Senate, Maria Lukešová, who had judged Kačerovský the previous day. He therefore immediately opened the letter addressed to Major Šiling and from its contents he discovered Lieutenant Kačerovský's intention to end his life by hanging himself in the attic of his flat. He immediately dispatched the officials present to the spot, with the intention of stopping him. At the same time he called the department doctor to render first aid if necessary. In spite of all these precautions, at about 7.10 am Lieutenant Kačerovský was found hanging from a beam in the attic of his house. He was immediately cut down, brought down from the attic and the doctor called in started resuscitation attempts, which succeeded in restoring cardiac activity and breathing. Kačerovský was subsequently taken to the hospital in Plana near Mariánské Lázně, where he died the following morning despite all medical care. The body of the deceased was then taken to the Central Military Hospital for a forensic autopsy.<sup>27</sup>

An examination and investigation of the circumstances of the suicide revealed that on 19 October 1971, the District Court in Tachov, headed by the presiding judge, Maria Lukešová, had sentenced Václav Kačerovský to three years' imprisonment without parole for his involvement in poaching. A year earlier, on 15 June 1970, Kačerovský had applied for admission to the service of the Czechoslovak People's Army and for assignment as a political worker. From all the assessments and checks carried out on the named person and from other characteristics, it was clear that he was a non-adversarial person. Accordingly, he was recruited, promoted to the rank of lieutenant and given the post of ZVP, which he held from 30 June 1971. In connection with the above-mentioned criminal activities, he was removed from his post on 1 July 1971 and subsequently transferred to the accommodation department of the Border Brigade.<sup>28</sup>

Václav Kačerovský was evaluated as a politically mature officer with a good overview of the international and domestic political situation by the military. He was active in the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. He led an orderly family life. He fulfilled his duties conscientiously, honestly and independently. Overall, the evaluation shows that he was a promising officer. The reputation report showed that Kačerovský's attitude towards the socialist establishment was good, and he behaved as a good party

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

member and citizen of the republic during the events of August 1968. Even in the civilian community he showed himself to be a sincere and friendly person towards others.

Kačerovský was accepted for service in the Czechoslovak People's Army (CSLA) on the basis of good judgment and characteristics. The first defective findings were discovered by the authorities of the District Department of the Tachov police force only after Kačerovský had entered the service of the CSLA. On the basis of the contradictions that came to light in connection with his additional vetting, the military authorities had to re-verify Kačerovský's origins and relationship to the socialist establishment. The assessments up to that time had shown that Kačerovský was of working-class origin with a positive attitude towards the Communist Party. However, it was now established that Kačerovský's father had taken ownership of a farm of about 7 ha in the village of Vseruby in 1945, although he was more involved in the cattle trade. In 1950, during the political evaluation of the inhabitants of the border villages, the Kačerovský family had had to leave the border villages back to Kdyně. From that time on, Kačerovský's father worked in that place until his retirement as an auxiliary worker at the Kdyně Machine Works. Especially when drunk, he showed a certain aversion to the state and political establishment. It was further established that at the time of Kačerovský's recruitment for service in the CSLA, the Kdyně police authority (at the place of residence of his parents) were not asked to carry out a background check and report on his parents.

The investigation concluded that the immediate motive for the suicide of Lieutenant Kačerovský could be considered to be a severe depressive state resulting from a combination of personal problems resulting in the imposition of an unconditional prison sentence. The military staff bears no blame for the death of Václav Kačerovský. Certain misconduct must be noted which occurred in connection with the investigation of the individual named at the time of his recruitment to the CSLA. The military authorities were alerted to this fact and drew the appropriate conclusions from it.

#### *Private Dušan Berko*

On 26 February 1973, at around 12.15 am, Private Dušan Berko, born on 20 June 1953, of Slovak ethnicity, assigned to Sušice 7<sup>th</sup> Border Brigade, committed suicide with a submachine gun near the Javoří Pila border company.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>29</sup> ABS, f. 2343, k. 86, č. j. PS-0277/1973, Vyšetřující zpráva – Berko Dušan.

Private Berko had been granted border leave on 25 February 1973. In the afternoon he took part with other border guards in a trip to Sušice, where he visited a cinema. Afterwards they returned to their unit at 9.00 pm. During this time, none of the border guards observed Private Berko showing any changes in his behaviour. On arrival at his unit, he was reported for duty, namely company guard from midnight until 1.00 am, and then from 2.00 am to 3.00 am, with further duty starting in the morning to guard the national border. He stayed in the washroom until the first duty started, where he complained to Private Mlynářčík that he was again on night duty. In all probability, he also wrote a farewell letter in his pocket calendar. At midnight he then took up his company guard duty, to which he was introduced by the company supervisor, Corporal Kerekeš. Under his command, Private Berko carried out the loading of his submachine gun and relieved the old guard, Private Srna. During this activity, according to the testimony of Corporal Kereš and Private Srna, Berko behaved quite normally. After about 10–15 minutes, the company supervisor heard a machine gun shot near the company. He immediately ran with Private Srna to the front of the unit to check on the situation. In the process, they both called for the guard, but he did not answer. Following fresh footprints in the snow, they began to look for him, proceeded along the road towards the state border and found him at a distance of 100 metres from the area of the sentry, lying on the road on his back in a prone position, with the submachine gun lying about 2 steps beside him. On first examination they found that Private Berko had been shot in the head and was showing no signs of life. They reported the case to the company officer in charge, who immediately summoned medical assistance and informed the company commander. As it was snowing heavily, he had Private Berko transferred to the unit so that he could be given first aid and the suicide scene secured. The doctor who was summoned stated that death by gunshot had occurred immediately.<sup>30</sup>

Private Berko had joined the Javoří Pila border company on 15 May 1972. He performed his tasks in the state border guard well, was conscientious in his service and was awarded the title of border patrol commander. He was rated good to outstanding in combat and political training and was awarded the title of Exemplary Border Guard on 22 February 1973. He did not integrate into the wider team and was friends with only a few border guards of Slovak ethnicity in the company. He was known to get

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.



very angry over small things and to have violent outbursts of anger. He did not consume alcoholic beverages during his military service. In civilian life, according to the reports, he was positively evaluated.

An investigation conducted by a designated committee at the scene found that Private Berko had written a suicide note in his personal calendar before committing suicide, which was the main evidence that he had committed suicide. The act could not have been committed by another person, not least because there were no other traces in the freshly fallen snow. In his farewell letter, Private Berko mentioned that the company was in disarray and that he had to commit suicide in order to resolve the ethnic question in the company. The Commission had to investigate these serious reasons thoroughly.

The investigation found that border guards were taking disproportionately long shifts in the current winter conditions. This was apparent when manning posts on the signal wall, where patrols were ordered for periods of up to 8 hours continuously. This duty also extended into the night time, and checks had to be made on the wall, which greatly exhausted the border guards. In many cases this was not followed by rest to rebuild strength, but by additional duty of 1–3 hours on guard duty at the company. Moreover, the period between each duty during the operational day did not ensure that equipment could be dried for further service, and so it was common for border guards to leave for duty with their equipment soaking wet. In addition, there was no regular rotation of night and day duty. A heavy workload was recorded in the month of February, when a large snow cover was building up and the company commander, in an attempt to keep the signal wall in working order, organised its clearance at the expense of the border guards' personal leave. In this situation, the company also fulfilled the set programme of combat and political training. Partial tasks in this direction were also performed in the personal time of the border guards. The company commander left one-third of the plan for guarding the state border to subordinate officers. Therefore, the plan was not thoroughly thought through, which resulted in a disproportionate burden on some border guards. This burden had an adverse effect on the morale of the border guards, especially since they learned from border guards of a neighbouring unit that there was no training, no repair of the signal wall, no work being done in their company and, therefore, that their life was considerably easier.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.



Although the company commander regularly granted border guards border leave within the limits of the company's capabilities, its use was influenced by other regulations. During border leave, a border guard was required to attend roll call for breakfast, lunch, dinner, combat differentials, specified drills, and last but not least, all topics in political training. When granted an excursion to the settlement of Srní, about 10 km away, border guards had to walk in most cases, which in difficult snow conditions meant a 3-hour journey there and back. On their return, they were usually expected to be on night duty, so they preferred not to go on the walk for fear of falling asleep on night duty. It also reflected negatively on the collective of the unit's border guards that the company commander in some cases, in connection with the high workload, treated the border guards inappropriately or even arrogantly. He had little response to their comments and requests, which were not handled flexibly because there was no mutual and sincere contact between the commander and the border guards. This led to various discussions amongst the officers and there were opinions to the effect that some border guards were more or less burdened by both duty and various jobs at the company compared to others. In particular, it was said that the members in question were of Slovak and Hungarian nationality. On careful examination, no differences between Czechs and Slovaks, differences between the collectives or various forms of bullying were confirmed, as most of the border guards testified. Such a view came from the fact that the specialist positions in the company (sleepers, engineers, cooks, drivers, etc.) were mostly held by members of Czech nationality and were therefore not encumbered by border service on such a large scale.<sup>32</sup>

Both the problems of duty and of mutual relations were often discussed by border guards in smaller and larger groups. About 15 days before the suicide, a group of 15 border guards, of varying makeup, met in the company washroom to discuss the ongoing strain on the physical and mental state of the border guards. Among them was Private Berko. Most of the border guards agreed that something had to happen at the company, that someone would either have to shoot themselves or run away in order for their problems to begin to be addressed. Private Berko did not comment on this.

Such facts had some influence on the conduct of Berko, who was known to be of a violent temper and got annoyed even when he was given

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

the night shift. Examination of Private Berko's workload showed that he was not overworked in terms of duty. His average daily duty time was 7.15 hours and of this 44% was night duty. On some days he had more hours of service, but this evened out on other days. His higher workload was confirmed in other tasks, especially manual work, just in the winter period.

The investigation also found significant findings at Private Berko's place of residence. His father reported that they had expected such a thing from their son. The parents also stated that Private Berko had twice attempted suicide at home. The first time had been by crashing his motorcycle, and the second time had been before entering military basic service, when he had tried to cut the veins in his arm. In his civilian life, he often consumed alcoholic drinks, for which he had been treated in an alcohol treatment centre. He was also highly religious. These facts, however, were not known prior to his entry into military basic service, as they were not registered in the slightest in the enlistment documents. This had to be regarded as a serious deficiency, since such a soldier could not perform tasks on the state border.

The investigation into the whole case led the commission to conclude that he was a psychopath, a fact that was established at his place of birth and verified by the unit. He appeared to be a nervous, short-tempered border guard and had frequent outbursts of anger. He had only a few friends in the unit, with whom he did not confide his problems. He also limited written contact with his parents, and at the critical time, when he returned from a walk and discovered that he was on night duty, he became agitated and could find no other solution and committed suicide. The identified deficiencies in the unit's organization and educational work cannot be regarded as a major cause, and cannot have had an impact on the perpetration of the act. Although they caused dissatisfaction among the border guards, they were not such a burden as to exceed the limits of bearability. Other border guards in the company performed similar tasks. The investigation did not confirm any cases of harassment and ethnic differences were entirely ruled out.

The case was discussed at a meeting with all the commanders of the border and security units on 27 February 1973, highlighting the deficiencies found in the unit during the investigation. The brigade commander punished the commander of the Javoří Pila Company with a severe reprimand for poor implementation of individual educational work, for improper handling of border guards and for weak influence on

organizational and management work in the application and processing of the state border protection plan.

## **Conclusion**

The communist regime tried to present the deceased Border Guards as victims of constant skirmishes with Western intelligence agents and other armed intruders. Armed clashes did indeed take place at the state border, but mainly in the period from 1945 to 1951, when the state border was still relatively easy to penetrate and its protection was carried out only by means of patrols. After 1951 and the switch to military methods of border protection, only four border guards died in clashes with intruders. The other deaths were mostly due to traffic accidents, suicides, accidents, accidental gunshots, etc. However, a large part of the cases were not related to the performance of border guard duty, as they occurred during outings and on periods of leave. In the five border brigades stationed on the Czech-Bavarian border, a total of 211 border guards died in connection with their duties between 1951 and 1991. Suicide was the most frequent cause of death, with 70 soldiers opting for it. Traffic accidents claimed 42 victims. The accidental discharge of a second border guard's weapon killed 24 men, and 20 others were killed by the means of technical engineering, specifically a mine explosion or electrocution. Of the 211 cases in total, one in three was a suicide. The majority of these were soldiers on basic duty who decided to end their lives by shooting themselves. The most common motives for the act were difficulties in relationships with partners, financial debts, conflicts with other border guards, dissatisfaction with military service and mental and health problems. An analysis of suicide rates by decade found that the number of cases in the 1950s and 1960s was identical. In both these decades, 23 soldiers committed suicide. In the 1970s, there was only a slight decrease to a total of 19 cases. The only exception was the 1980s, when only four border guards decided to end their lives. We can therefore say that suicides occurred at the same rate in different time periods, except in the 1980s, when the number of cases dropped significantly. Detailed descriptions of individual cases, among other things, give a closer view of the actual situation and environment at the border company and thus provide a picture of the actual functioning of the Border Guard units, which did not always coincide with what was presented by official sources.

### Annex 1: Causes of death

CAUSE OF DEATH	NUMBER OF DEATHS
suicide	70
traffic accident	42
accidental discharge of another border guard's weapon	24
electrocution	12
mine explosion	8
drowning	6
murdered by another boarder guard	5
accident during construction work	5
mistaken armed encounter between border patrols	5
accidental discharge of own weapon	4
railway accident	3
gunshot wounds	3
grenade explosion	3
explosives blast	2
air accident	2
poisonous gases	2
lightning strike	2
fall from an observation tower	2
shot in an armed encounter with a military defector	2
shot by a deserting border guard	2
shot by a border patrol in an unsuccessful attempt to defect to Bavaria	1
freezing to death	1
injury in a football game	1
kicked by a horse	1
as a result of burns	1
consequences of an inept prank	1
injuries during engineering blasting work	1
<b>TOTAL NUMBER OF DEATHS</b>	<b>211</b>

**Annex 2: Suicide numbers**

	CHEB	PLANÁ	DOMAŽLICE	SUŠICE	VOLARY	TOTAL
1950s	4	5	3	8	4	23
1960s	6	5	5	4	2	23
1970s	1	7	7	4	0	19
1980s	1	0	0	3	0	4
1990s	1	0	0	0	0	1
TOTAL	13	17	15	19	6	70

## From the post-Cold War toward a Renewed Cold War? The Multifacetedness of the Cold War Concept

*Barnabás Vajda*<sup>1</sup>

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Currently we are witnessing new situations in international relations. The international political climate has cooled down once again, and a “New Cold War” is often mentioned nowadays. Despite our rich and multi-layered knowledge of the Cold War, there are firm signs that our thinking about its conceptual nature has been influenced retrospectively by the most recent international affairs in general and by the Russo-Ukrainian war in particular. The author of this study argues that it is worth considering a possibility of a “new” or “re-started” or “renewed” or “re-launched” Cold War. In the author’s understanding, since 1991 the meaning of the term Cold War has expanded. On the one hand, Cold War is far more than a historical era; on the other hand, the public opinion considers it, in its renewed form, a phenomenon that means and refers to any kind of disorderly and destabilized international relations. Consequently, a new periodization for the most recent history can be proposed such as the old Cold War; the post-Bipolar era; and the renewed Cold War (from 2007/2014/2022 onward). The author’s main argument says that the scale of the renewed Cold War is smaller than the scope and the scale that the old Cold War used to have, nevertheless, its significance regarding the world order is not smaller: Is it a start of a new world order based exclusively or dominantly on sheer force?

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### The Cold War is over...

The overwhelming majority of Cold War historians are of the opinion that the Cold War as a historical era ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union in the years 1989–1991.<sup>2</sup> A good number of primary sources of

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<sup>2</sup> E.g. Cs. BÉKÉŠ, *Hungary’s Cold War. International Relations from the End of World War II to the Fall of the Soviet Union*, Chapell Hill 2022; Z. BRZEZINSKI, The consequences of the end of the cold war for international security, in: *The Adelphi Papers*, 32 (1991); Ch. HARTMAN–P. VILLANOVA (eds.), *Paradigm lost. The Post Cold War Era*, London & Concord, Massachsettes 1992.

historical importance can be cited as arguments for the end of this era. Just to name a few, the fifteen-page political statement titled the Charter of Paris for a New Europe issued at the European Security and Cooperation Conference that ended on November 21, 1990, literally began with the statement: *“The age of division and tension in Europe is over. [...] Europe has freed itself from the legacy of the past.”* We can also mention the joint statement by Boris Yeltsin and G. H. W. Bush at Camp David in which the second point of the document stated that the two superpowers *“will seek to remove all vestiges of Cold War hostility”* and that *“the United States and Russia are now ushering in a New Era regarding their relationship”* (February 1, 1992).

There are clearly strong arguments against a continuing Cold War. In historical hindsight it is very important that the contemporary protagonists regarded the Cold War as being over already in the times when it was only halfway through. For example, diplomatic insiders of the 1960s and 1970s, such as USA Ambassador to Moscow Charles E. Bohlen or Soviet Ambassador to Washington, D. C. Anatoly Dobrynin, at numerous points during their remarkably rich diplomatic careers considered “the Cold War over” or sometimes they felt that “it had returned”.<sup>3</sup> Historian John Lukacs wrote a monograph on “a” history of the Cold War already in 1962.<sup>4</sup> We can also cite from the American and European press from the 1980s which frequently referred to Ronald Reagan’s “new Cold War” and so forth.<sup>5</sup>

There is no doubt that there was once the old Cold War which began in 1945 (the earliest) or in 1947 (more likely), and ended sometimes between 1988 and 1991, depending on what event or process one considers to be the most relevant factor of this historical turn. Nevertheless, it is not easy to answer the basic question that what were the characteristic

<sup>3</sup> Ch. E. BOHLEN, *Witness to History 1929–1969*, New York 1973, pp. 286, 287, 493; A. DOBRYNIN, *In confidence*, New York 1995, pp. 411, 444, 478.

<sup>4</sup> J. LUKACS, *A history of the Cold War*, New York 1962.

<sup>5</sup> Related to this is the fact that the concept of “the second Cold War” has already been used in the Hungarian scholarly literature. In 2000, Csaba Békés, the leading scholar of the Hungarian Cold War research introduced a novel Cold War chronology, in which the total time period between 1945 and 1991 consists of a first half of the period, *“the first Cold War, the irrational phase [...] the worst phase of it up until 1953”*, which was followed by *“a second Cold War from 1953 to 1991”*. See Cs. BÉKÉS, *Enyhülés és emancipáció. Magyarország, a szovjet blokk és a nemzetközi politika, 1944–1991*, Budapest 2019, p. 15. Yet, prof. Békés slightly changed his position on the term “second Cold War” in one of his later works, calling the period between 1979 to 1985 a “period of standby détente”. See Cs. BÉKÉS, *Hungary’s Cold War. International Relations from the End of World War II to the Fall of the Soviet Union*, Chapell Hill 2022, p. 13.

features of the Cold War which had already ended, since there is no comprehensive (concise, coherent) definition of the Cold War.

In general terms, the Cold War used to mean a bipolar world order which was dominated by the USA and the Soviet Union. It was a flow of international relations, a process that took place in an overall atmosphere of mistrust and animosity between two political and military hegemony and their respective block members. Reviewing the extremely abundant international historiography of the Cold War, it is not easy to single out a definition as the most typical one. Being aware of the simplification, I focus here on two definitions from the scholarly literature. Firstly, Odd Arne Westad's recent definition states that "*the Cold War was born as an ideological contest in Europe and the European offshoots, Russia and the United States*".<sup>6</sup> Secondly, I draw attention to Mark Kramer's slightly earlier summary: "*Two features of the Cold War distinguish it from other periods in modern history. First, it stemmed from a fundamental clash of political ideologies (Marxism-Leninism versus liberal democracy). Second, it entailed a highly stratified global power structure [...] Both of these features were prerequisites for the Cold War.*"<sup>7</sup>

By analysing and condensing several interpretations of the Cold War into a formal definition, we can establish the following: By the Cold War we mean an international phenomenon in which there is a clear conflict of interest between two major power actors who are imbued with ideology; during this conflict the nuclear option is an important factor and their conflicts extend not only onto the direct participants but they have a global impact.<sup>8</sup>

### If the Cold War is over, why are we talking about it?

The confidence of the scientific discourse over the essence and the time span of the Cold War has been shaken recently. Even the most renowned

<sup>6</sup> O.A. WESTAD, *The Cold War. A world history*, London 2018, p. 261.

<sup>7</sup> M. KRAMER, Power, politics, and the long duration of the Cold War, in: S. PONS, F. ROMERO (eds.), *Reinterpreting the End of the Cold War. Issues, interpretations, periodizations*, London, New York 2005, p. 21.

<sup>8</sup> Of course, when applying the above definition, selection and careful weighting should be done between related phenomena. For example, during the analysis of events, truly determining (relevant) factors should be separated from less determining, or downright irrelevant, factors. Does the number of participants in the Cold War matter, i.e. should we stick to two superpower participants or perhaps a limited number of actors? If there is a conflict of interest among the Cold War participants, exactly what type of interest conflicts are we witnessing today: is it a political, military, economic, or ideological tension, or a combination of them? and so forth.



scientific authorities of the Cold War started to ask, among other questions, what came about when the Cold War was over? For example, O. A. Westad in one of his basic Cold War books (dated 2018) denies in the one hand that recent US foreign policy towards Russia or China “*would lead to a new Cold War*”;<sup>9</sup> yet, on the other hand he makes us aware that during the early 21<sup>st</sup> century “*new forms of global interaction had taken place in the world*”.<sup>10</sup>

The language of the news on recent international affairs has also contributed to the terminological uncertainty over the Cold War. For if that era is definitely over, then why do the public political discourse as well as analytical media of our time often refer to “Cold War conflicts”, “a return of a new Cold War”, “Cold War mentality”, or “continuing Cold War attitude”, or “Cold War-type international tensions of our times”, etc.?<sup>11</sup> Why is the concept of the Cold War being mentioned so regularly and in so many different aspects, and why do observers and commentators interpret it as something still ongoing and effective? Why is the “Cold War” mentioned every now, if and when the Cold War ended in 1991 and we have been living in a post-Cold War era for three decades now?<sup>12</sup> Of course, one has to acknowledge that public speakers when referring to the Cold War as an expressive *metaphor* do not necessarily consider the historical relevance of the term they use. After all, many of the phenomena

<sup>9</sup> WESTAD, p. 625.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 616.

<sup>11</sup> My press examples come mostly from the Hungarian press. Term “post bipolar age” is mentioned by Viktor MARSÁI in *Válasz online*; visited [2022–07–14]. Term “a newer Cold War” appears at Péter STEPPER in *Magyar Nemzet online*; visited [2022–07–14]. Term “new cold war” was used by Viktor MARSÁI in *Válasz online*; visited [2022–09–14]. Term “modified Cold War” was used by strategic expert Réka SZEMERKÉNYI; according to her, it is justified to speak about a “new chronology of the Cold War”, see R. SZEMERKÉNYI in *Mandiner online*; visited [2022–04–11]. It has to be noted however, that many identical or very similar phrases appear in the press from the USA through European papers up to the Chinese press in English.

<sup>12</sup> Verbal references on the Cold War appearing in international political press after 2022 are so numerous that there is no need to prove their existence, here I indicate a few examples for the sake of illustration only. US President Joe Biden felt it necessary to state in Bali that “the US does not seek a New Cold War”. (US President Joe Biden on 14. November 2022 in Bali, Indonesia; cited in *China Daily*, November 18–24, 2022.) North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in October 2023, referring to his cooperation with Russia, “*urged North Korea to play a more significant role within the coalition of countries opposing the US [...] in the new Cold War*”, in *Mandiner online*; visited [2023–10–13].

that used to characterize the Cold War (an era very, very close in time for many of us) have been living with us.

The more research is being done on the Cold War, the more questions are raised about its particularities. For instance, when did the Cold War end? Honestly, picking its end is quite optional. For many, and not only for Germans, but the Cold War also started to end symbolically in November of 1989 when the Berlin Wall came down and ended by the re-unification of Germany in October 1990. From the perspective of the re-united Western and East Central Europe, the Cold War ended with the “Charter of Paris for a New Europe”, a solemn political declaration at the Paris Conference of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in November 1990. For those East Central European citizens who care remembering historical turning points, especially the ones that were turning points of their lifetime, the Cold War started to end now when they got sense of their re-gained national independence in the years of 1988 and 1989. The official break-up or dissolution of the Soviet Union in December 1991 can be described not simply as a reassuring end of a historical process but rather as a big and deep sigh from the chest of millions of East Central European people: Free, at last free without Russians!

But when did the Cold War end for the countries of Asia and the Global South? Even if there is no definite answer, we know it with high probability that for most of the Globe the historical period that we call Cold War means quite a different era than for most Europeans.<sup>13</sup> And finally, when did the Cold War end for Russia? Without too much ado and detail, if one considers the presence of the Russian army in Moldova/Transnistria since 1992; or one looks at Russia’s war in Georgia/South Ossetia/Abkhazia in August 2008; or one studies Russian occupation of the Crimea in 2014;<sup>14</sup> or one looks at the all-out attack of Russia on Ukraine in February 2022 – so, judging from these events, it is rather obvious that the Cold War

<sup>13</sup> E.g. P. M. McGARR, *The Cold War in South Asia*, Cambridge 2015.

<sup>14</sup> A. CUPPULERI, Russia and Frozen Conflicts in the Post-Soviet Space, in: O. RICHMOND, G. VISOKA (eds.), *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Peace and Conflict Studies*, London 2020, pp. 1–9; G. HALL, The Russian annexation of Crimea: regional and global ramifications, in: *European Politics and Society*, 17, 2016, pp. 490–505; T. D. GRANT, Frozen Conflicts and International Law, in: *Cornell International Law Journal*, 50, 2017, 3; J. VIDMAR, The Annexation of Crimea and the Boundaries of the Will of the People, in: *German Law Journal*, 16, 2015, 3, pp. 365–383.

never ended for Russia. Some would even add that the Cold War did not end for *imperial* Russia.<sup>15</sup>

### From the post-Cold War Era toward a Renewed Cold War

The end of the Cold War began in the late 1980s, and the period after that has been called since then either commonly as “the era after the Cold War” or more professionally as “post-Cold War era”.<sup>16</sup> In the three decades from 1991 to 2024, the majority of historians has been calling this period as the “post-Cold War”, expressing that this era ended once and for all. Since the general European public after 1991 also assumed that some new era would come (and this perception was strengthened especially as the 21<sup>st</sup> century set in), both designations (“after, post”) were very convenient to use. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, it was generally believed by many scholars as well as politicians that the Cold War was over. Twenty or thirty years ago there were not many scholars who thought that the post-Cold War period, a prosperous time of two generations without major wars in Europe, was supposed to be provisional or interim; and this feeling further strengthened a routinely usage of the “post-Cold War” designation in the last decades.<sup>17</sup> Yet, the question what proceeded after the Cold War, has been a subject of debate since 1991. In the last 20 to 30 years, scientific voices pointing to the continuation of the Cold War, or raising the possibility of its return, were not typical but they did exist. In fact, the scholarly literature wrote about the possibility of a “*return to the Cold War*” right after 1991,

<sup>15</sup> A. GRAZIOSI, The Weight of the Soviet Past in Post-1991 Russia, in: *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 23, 2021, 1, pp. 89–125; C. S. MAIER, The Cold War as an era of imperial rivalry, in: S. PONS, F. ROMERO (eds.), *Reinterpreting the End of the Cold War. Issues, interpretations, periodizations*, New York 2005, pp. 13–20.

<sup>16</sup> Alternatively, some contemporary historians mark the period after 1989–1991 as an “ex-Soviet”, or “post-Soviet era”; see e.g. GRAZIOSI, pp. 89–125.

<sup>17</sup> The concept of post-Cold War era has been used in numerous scientific works, such as: F. FISCHER, *A kétpólusú világ 1945–1989*, Budapest, Pécs 2005; M. FURRER, P. GAUTSCHI (eds.), *Remembering and recounting the Cold War. Commonly Shared History?*, Schwalbach 2017; J. L. GADDIS, *Studená vojna*, Bratislava 2006; S. MICHÁLEK, M. ŠTEFANSKÝ, *Age of Fear. The Cold War and Its Influence on Czechoslovakia 1945–1968*, Stuttgart Verlag 2019; S. PONS, F. ROMERO (eds.), *Reinterpreting the End of the Cold War. Issues, interpretations, periodizations*, New York 2005; S. SAVRANSKAYA, Th. BLANTON, V. ZUBOK (eds.), *Masterpieces of History. The Peaceful End of the Cold War in Europe 1989*, Budapest, New York 2010; W. McWILLIAMS, H. PIOTROWSKI, *The world since 1945. A history of international relations*, Boulder 2014, and by many others.

specifically in connection with Russia's humiliated international position after 1991, and especially if "*some changes in Russia turn bad*". Co-authors Hartman and Villanova asked the question as early as 1992: "*Is it realistic to think of a new 'freeze' in the USSR, and to consider the reaction of Europe and the USA?*"<sup>18</sup>

The "post-Cold War" denomination had its challengers already in the 2000s. Some experts have already been sensing some kind of back-shift in times, such as Martin McCauley whose book-title suggested almost a decade ago that year 1991 might not be necessarily the end of the Cold War.<sup>19</sup> Commencing from the early 2000s, and especially following the Russo-Ukrainian war, scientific doubts about the closure of the Cold War period have become more frequent when the political and media discourse analysing the Russo-Ukrainian war has so often referred to this war as a "Cold War conflict". At the same time, term "Cold War" became a hot word in the press once again. So much so that recent historical events suggest that we have been living in an interim age which can be described as a "renewed Cold War".

### A Renewed (Revived) Cold War

The impact of the most recent international relations has revealed the vulnerability of the term "post-Cold War". Its implicit meaning, suggesting that "we have long been over it", contradicts to our recent experiences about the turbulent world politics in general, and some "cold-warlike conflicts" in particular, where superpower conflicts are casual. As a consequence, we have been witnessing new interpretations of the Cold War concept under this influence. A circle of scientists, including John Mearshimer, Niall Ferguson,<sup>20</sup> Hal Brands, J. L. Gaddis, Simon Dalby among others, can be named nowadays who say that a "New Cold War" or "Cold War II" is already underway.<sup>21</sup> One of the conclusions that can be drawn from them is that the era what ended in 1991 was the Old Cold War; that indeed ended between 1988 and 1991 gradually. And if we live

<sup>18</sup> HARTMAN, VILLANOVA, p. 7.

<sup>19</sup> See e. g. M. McCAULEY, *The Cold War 1949–2016*, London, New York 2017.

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.hoover.org/research/cold-war-ii-niall-ferguson-emerging-conflict-china> [visited 2024–01–14].

<sup>21</sup> See e. g. J. J. MEARSHEIMER, *The Inevitable Rivalry. America, China, and the Tragedy of Great-Power Politics*, in: *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2021; S. DALBY, *Creating the Second Cold War. The Discourse of Politics*, Bloomsbury 2016; H. BRANDS, *War in Ukraine: Conflict, Strategy, and the Return of a Fractured World*, Baltimore 2024.

in a new era than retrospectively it is necessary to rephrase our knowledge on the historical period, we have been living in.

If we suppose that we are living in a renewed Cold War than in what way is it different from the earlier one? Did we return to the past, meaning that we are witnessing the same typical features of the Old Cold War perhaps in new situations? Is it the same Old Cold War times, perhaps its slightly renewed/alterd version, or do we experience something new? And if we live in a new era, in an era of a renewed or revived Cold War, when and how did it start? Currently we might not be in a position to make final judgements; nevertheless, the occupation of the Crimean Peninsula by Russia in 2014, and its full-scale military attack on Ukraine in February 2022 may be regarded as a start of a new historical era.

The notion of a new era is not new neither among Cold War historians<sup>22</sup> nor among politicians and journalists. One might ask where is the proof that there is a new era regarding international relations? Of course, a substantial amount of cautiousness is needed here. Yet, politicians of the highest rank make attempts to find answers to the most burning international questions. For instance, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz wrote about a “*new global dichotomy*” and a huge cataclysm of our times when he declared that “*the world is facing a Zeitenwende: an epochal tectonic shift*”.<sup>23</sup>

The era of the renewed Cold War is being marked with appearance of new challengers on the international horizon who have stepped up on the world stage to openly challenge the current international system and order. And it is not only the overall concept of the Cold War but the presence of its components in the public discourse that may resemble an earlier historical epoch. Some issues of the international political discourse recall affairs that were typical for earlier times. Nowadays we can read about “deterrence”, even “nuclear deterrence”, and we can read about “the [*Nato*] Alliance [*that*] must credibly deter further Russian aggression”, etc.<sup>24</sup>

Another example is the return of the “containment policy” to the European international public discourse under the influence of the

<sup>22</sup> See for instance a forum of expert at P. ZELIKOW – C. RICE – K. SPOHR et al., Ending the Cold War and Entering a New Era: Perspectives on To Build a Better World, in: *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 23, 4, 2021, pp. 181–210.

<sup>23</sup> O. SCHOLZ, The Gobar Zeitenwende. How to avoid a New Cold War in a multipolar Era, in: *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2023, [<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/germany/olaf-scholz-global-zeitenwende-how-avoid-new-cold-war>].

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

Russo-Ukrainian war. It is manifested, for instance, in an article published in the *Foreign Affairs* journal, which was written by three Central and East European prime ministers at the end of April 2023. The article, written by Prime Ministers Petr Fiala (Czechia), Eduard Heger (Slovakia) and Mateusz Morawiecki (Poland) firmly stands out in favour of Ukraine and the continuation of the war. The prime ministers not only literally refer to George F. Kennan (who also published his famous strategy in the *Foreign Affairs* back in 1947 which became the principal basis for President Truman's containment) but they explicitly advocate a kind of "dual track" on the NATO's side. Quite remarkably, the prime ministers wrote about the same duality of "deterrence and dialogue", i.e. a dual strategy towards Russia, which used to be the very context of Kennan's historical article.<sup>25</sup>

### The Multifacetedness of the Cold War Concept

It is obligatory to look at the renewed Cold War that commenced recently in a new international environment (which is quite different from the times of the late 1940s, or 1970s, or 1980s) both with curiosity and a substantial amount of cautiousness. What are the characteristics of our changing times? What are the features of a re-branded Cold War which distinguishes it from the old one? What has been taken over from the old Cold War to the renewed one? Which are its historical features that had never existed before? There is a real notion that the Russo-Ukrainian war created a completely new situation not only in geopolitics but also in terms of linguistic concepts referring to our own era. Quite naturally, we incline to re-use, re-cycle the conceptual apparatus of an earlier era, at least some parts of it, for newer international situations.<sup>26</sup>

As a general rule, it is worth looking at the renewed Cold War not as a period but rather as a *concept*. It seems that the meaning of the Cold War has changed, and we should pay particular attention to the assumption

<sup>25</sup> P. FIALA – E. HEGER – M. MORAWIECKI, The free world must stay the course on Ukraine. A frozen conflict or partial victory will solve nothing, in: *Foreign Affairs*, April 2023, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/ukraine/free-world-must-stay-course-ukraine>.

<sup>26</sup> Those who had lived through it and had experienced it, at minimum from political news, what old Cold War international relations were like, can agree that many familiar elements can be discovered in today's Russo-American relations, as well as in a wider spectrum of international affairs. For instance, the nuclear threat has haunted us since the early days of the Cold War; sharp opposition between the superpowers can resemble the 1960s; the usage of the "oil weapon" is well known from the 1970s, and so forth. It does not need much effort to realize that the *deja vu* is completely natural.

that the concept of the Cold War has been continuously changing ever since 1991. It is happening because the international environment and the nature of the international relations have all been changing significantly.

As a historical period, Cold War is equal to four decades of tension and confrontation. The same term in its most everyday meaning today is understood as a steadfast confrontation between major countries.<sup>27</sup> And what makes it even more complex is that, under the impact of the Russo-Ukrainian war as well as several other tense international affairs, certain nuances of the Cold War as a concept became visible. We should be careful, however, because some features are identical with the old Cold War features; some only resemble former phenomena; and some might be completely new. It seems that the old Cold War had had some well known features that did not cease with the end of that era; on the contrary, they have been with us practically ever since 1945.

Considering the main directions of change in the meaning of the Cold War since 1991 (so that it is no longer just an era and not just a tense relationship between two actors), we can identify the concept of the Cold War as a world order or an overall international system as the most decisive concept that has been dominating the scholarly discourse. In this sense, *“the Cold War was an international system, in fact, the last great international system [...] and an organizing element in the world”*.<sup>28</sup>

Others may mean different concepts when referring to “Cold War”, such as: Cold War as a “global war project”; the Cold War as a “peace project”; the Cold War as “the USA’s European project”; and others. For instance, behind the Cold War as a global war project there is the idea that *“the Cold War was the global militarization of the world [...] the faith in purely military solutions”*.<sup>29</sup> It is closely related to the use of military power and brute force in international affairs which Odd Arne Westad have put succinctly as follows: *“The [CW] confrontation helped cement a world dominated by superpowers, world in which might and violence, or the threat of violence, were the yardsticks of international relations.”*<sup>30</sup> We might also mention the Cold War as an “imperialist” project from the point of view of the Global

<sup>27</sup> Further details on the military confrontation see at M. BÍLÝ, *Varšavská smlouva 1985–1991. Dezintegrace a rozpad*, Praha 2021; G. KECSKÉS, *A view from Brussels. Secret NATO reports about the Eastern European Transition, 1988–1991*, Budapest 2019.

<sup>28</sup> WESTAD, pp. 1–3, 170.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., pp. 2, 103.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 2.



South (earlier the Third World) in relation with both superpowers. In the context of this concept, decolonized countries had to solve a double task: on the one hand, they had to overcome their own internal backwardness, on the other hand they had to face international challenges of the Cold War. Finally, a very interesting way of understanding the Cold War is the Cold War as a method, i.e. a method of managing international relations. We can recognize the idea in the NSC-68, an early American national security plan that was drawn up in 1949–1950: “[...] *the Kremlin seeks to bring the free world under its dominion by the methods of the cold war* [...].”<sup>31</sup> Here the emphasis is on the idea that the Cold War is neither an historical era nor a world system dominated by two powerful actors but it is a kind of *method of managing international relations* (peculiarly, attributed to the Russians in the source above).

### Summary

The possibility that we are living today in a renewed Cold War era does not change the fact that the old Cold War ended in 1991. The term Cold War, however, has been continuously changing ever since. Major international affairs, and especially a “hot” war (that has not been seen by two generations of Europeans) might help us retrospectively understand a historical process that is unfolding right before our eyes. Investigations into conceptual changes over recent international affairs do not merely offer new interpretative contexts for the up-to-date meanings of the Cold War. It can also contribute to resolving a general uncertainty about the question: Which Cold War are we thinking of, or which one do we want to talk about? Examining the concept of the Cold War, old or renewed, is not an activity for its own sake. The application of historical concepts is closely related to the understanding of the investigated phenomena, in this case the nature of current international relations that have cooled down once again. We cannot begin the interpretation of new events of historical significance with confuse concepts. If we pay attention to the old and new nuances of the Cold War as a concept, we can arrive at multi-layered interpretations. That is, in the long run we can achieve a more qualitative dialogue about a historical problem that is very relevant to our time.

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 105.





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***The Oxford Handbook of Commodity History***

Oxford, New York, Oxford University Press 2024. LCCN 2023017665 (print), LCCN 2023017666 (ebook), ISBN 9780197502679 (hardback), ISBN 9780197502693 (epub), ISBN 9780197502686, 734 pp, index.

In recent decades, the number of historical, sociological, geographical and anthropological studies dedicated to the research of commodities and their role in historical processes has been growing. These studies underline the importance of cultivation, extraction and production in the forming of the modern world, emphasizing the understanding of the influence of commodities and commodity chains on local, regional and global development. Studies in the history of commodities make it possible to trace the connections and social and economic relations connecting agriculture with consumption through production and trade. The monumental collection, which is the subject of this review, is undoubtedly one of the essential milestones on the path of this knowledge. It is a work in which 47 authors participated, mainly from Europe, North and South America.

The introduction summarizing the development of the history of commodities and leading studies in the given area deserves attention. In it, the creators of the anthology profess

to trends that have gradually shaped contemporary approaches. It is a broad spectrum ranging from the Annales school, through the works of the American sociologist Terence Hopkins and the historian Immanuel Wallerstein, the key works of the 1990s sociologists Gary Gereffi and Miguel Korzeniewicz on commodity chains and the development of global capitalism, the “approaches filières” of franco-phone historians to a series of large-scale international projects focused on commodities, such as the “Commodities of Empire (CoE)” project or the “anti-commodity” research program exploring domestic production as a sustainable practice to the trend concentrated on the “commodity frontier” focusing on the availability of resources and their depletion. A series of interdisciplinary projects focused on the exploitation of “big data” in the given area is also not neglected. All these movements are represented in the reviewed handbook. The aim of the anthology is thus to present a wide spectrum of current research in the history of commodities

from all over the world, from different points of view.

The structure of the collection is not organized around specific commodities, an approach focused on the most important topics and tendencies characterizing the history of commodities as a field of study was chosen – from cultivation, extraction and processing through trade to consumption, social, cultural and ecological impacts. At the same time, the selection of topics was not only aimed at the usual priorities in the field such as spices, tea, sugar, coffee or cocoa, the authors of the concept tried to capture the widest possible range of commodities and researched regions. It must be said that a large number of areas are completely missing. From the point of view of time limitation, the anthology ranges from the early modern period to the present day. No chapter focuses exclusively on the rise of global capitalism, yet this theme is implicit in a number of studies. The same applies to specific processes of decolonization and neocolonialism.

The volume was organized into seven parts.

The first part focuses on key methodological approaches to commodity history – research on commodity chains, approaches *filières*, anti-commodities and commodity borders. The second part concentrates on the history that arose from commodities, from early modern trade routes and ports, through the development of cities, the creation of empires, and the development of new economic powers. The third part focuses on mining, plan-

tations and crops, the technological history of commodities and the use of primary agricultural products in the development of modern industry, the importance of commodities and their boundaries for the emergence of modern capitalism and its socialist alternative in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The fourth part puts people and land in the spotlight. It includes migration and slavery, labor and land rights. The fifth section examines the impact of commodity history on the environment, surveying, the processes that opened up regions to economic exploitation, different land uses, ecological transformations and their consequences. Part six examines specific aspects of commodities and consumption – the use of animals as commodities, the history of drugs, culinary commodities, and our social and cultural relationship to these goods. The seventh part presents some of the new methodologies that are used in the mining of “big data” using computing technology, the use of historical geodata and other interdisciplinary approaches.

Despite a number of specifics, all chapters follow a common pattern. Each of them is roughly equally divided into three parts. It begins with an overview of contemporary historiography relevant to the topic under investigation and its place in the history of commodities. This is followed by a specific case study drawing on the expertise of each contributor, and finally an assessment of what the case contributes to a broader historical and historiographical understanding. In some chapters the case study focused

on a single commodity, in others several commodities are examined at once.

The volume ends with a conclusion in which co-editors Clarence-Smith and Vos discuss the white spaces and perspectives for future commodity research and highlight the need for specific research.

The goal of the handbook is to provide the reader with an insight into the broad state of knowledge in individual research areas and to support future studies by presenting individual

methods and approaches by which the historical study of commodities can shape a better understanding of the world. Undoubtedly, the collection does not cover everything, but without a doubt it provides a comprehensive overview of the current state of the field of commodity history and therefore deserves the attention of historians of various orientations.

*Michal Wanner*

