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0521562287 - Middlemen of the Cameroons Rivers: The Duala and their Hinterland,
c. 1600-c. 1960

Ralph A. Austen and Jonathan Derrick

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Middlemen of the Cameroons Rivers

The Duala and their Hinterland, c. 1600–c. 1960

The Duala people entered the international scene as merchant-brokers for precolonial trade in ivory, slaves and palm products. Under colonial rule they used the advantages gained from earlier riverain trade to develop cocoa plantations and provide their children with exceptional levels of European education. At the same time they came into early conflict with both German and French regimes and played a leading – if ultimately unsuccessful – role in anti-colonial politics. In tracing these changing economic and political roles, this book also examines the growing consciousness of the Duala as an ethnic group and uses their history to shed new light on the history of “middleman” communities in surrounding regions of West and Central Africa. The authors draw upon a wide range of written and oral sources, including indigenous accounts of the past which conflict with their own findings but illuminate local conceptions of social hierarchy and their relationship to spiritual beliefs.

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Preface

The writing of this book has occupied well over twenty years, although both authors have simultaneously been involved in numerous other projects. The research and writing of chapters 2–4 is entirely the work of Ralph Austen. Chapters 5 and 6 are based on research and drafts by Jonathan Derrick, with additional research and the final writing undertaken by Ralph Austen.

In the course of our efforts we have both become heavily indebted to a great number of oral informants, research assistants and colleagues. Help on specific matters is acknowledged in our many footnotes but recognition beyond these formal courtesies must be extended to at least some institutions and individuals. These include the staffs of the many Cameroonian, British, Dutch, French, German and Swiss archives (governmental, missionary and private) in which we worked (the archives are specified in the bibliography).

In Cameroon we both benefited from the help of various members of the History and Geography Departments of the University of Yaoundé as well as the staffs of the American Cultural Center and the Goethe Institute. In Douala, we both owe special thanks to Father Eric de Rosny, SJ for personal support of various kinds and, in Ralph Austen's case, to the Collège Alfred Saker, the Procure Catholique, Louis Bissek and Martin Njeuma for lodging and other help. Jonathan Derrick is similarly obligated to Jean-Emile Mba and the late Achidi Ndifang in Douala and Dierk Lange in Paris and especially to Xavérie Kobla (now Mrs. Derrick). Although most of our interviews were carried out directly in English, French or German (a direct benefit of the Duala middleman past) Ralph Austen's work in the Littoral hinterland could not have been possible without the help of his assistant and interpreter, the late Moukouri Ndoumbe "Papa" Mbambe.

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Monga, David Richardson, Rosalinde Wilcox and Albert Wirz. Finally, financial support for travel to Africa and Europe came from the Ford Foundation, two Fulbright grants, the Social Sciences Research Council and the (United States) National Science Foundation. A critical period of writing by Ralph Austen also took place during a fellowship at the Harry Truman Institute of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

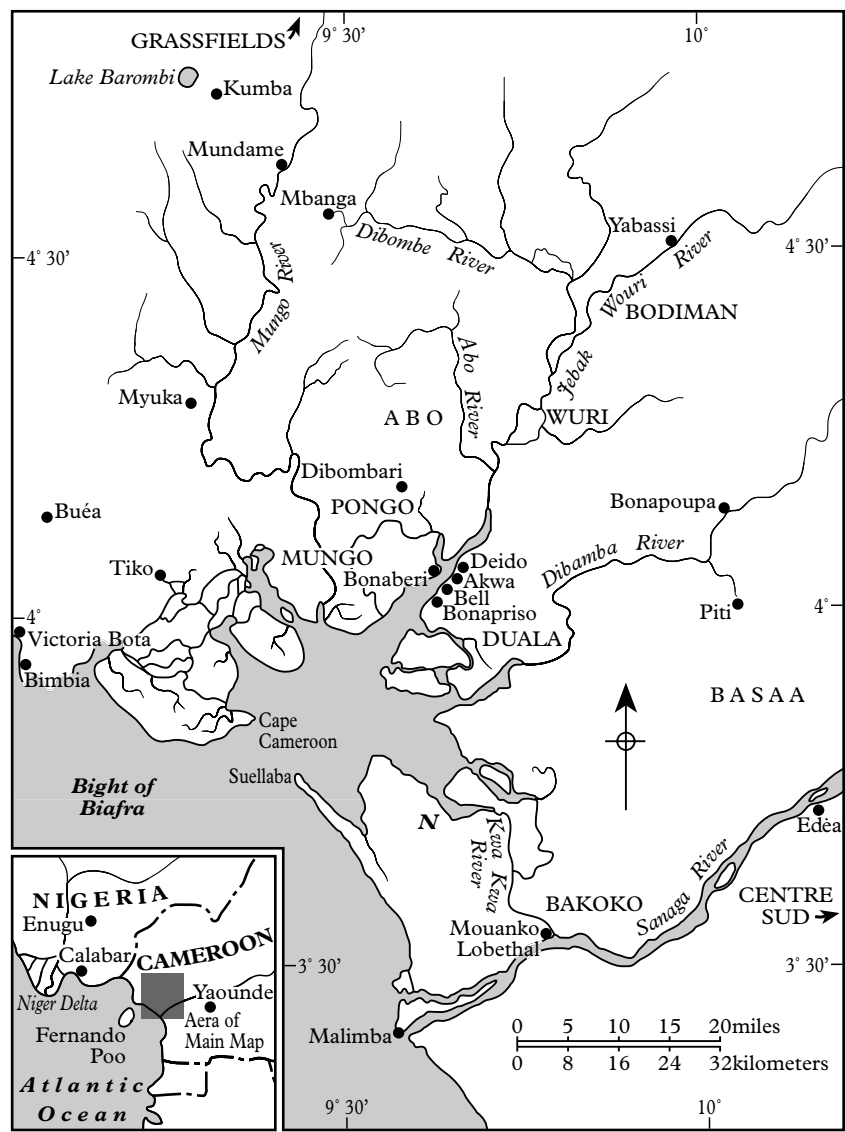
Portions of several chapters have been published previously in somewhat different form. Permission has graciously been granted by the following: Berghahn Books, Oxford for use in chapter 4 of Ralph A. Austen, “Mythic Transformation and Historical Continuity: The Duala of Cameroon and German Colonialism, 1884–1914,” in Ian Fowler and David Zeitlyn (eds.), *African Crossroads: Intersections between History and Anthropology in Cameroon* (1996); the editors of *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines* for use in chapter 6 of Ralph A. Austen, “Tradition, Invention and History: The Case of the Ngondo (Cameroon)” (32 [1992]: 285–309).

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Abbreviations

AA	Auswärtiges Amt [German Foreign Office]
ALME	Archive of Léopold Moumé Etia, Douala
ANC/FA	Archives Nationales du Cameroun, Fonds Allemands, Yaoundé
ANC/FF	Archives Nationales du Cameroun, Fonds Français, Yaoundé
ANSOM	Archives Nationales, Section d’Outre Mer, Aix-en-Provence, France
BFA	Bell Family Archives, Douala
BGF	Buea German Files, Cameroon National Archives, Buea
BMG	Basler Missionsgesellschaft archives, Basel, Switzerland
<i>BMH</i>	<i>Baptist Missionary Herald</i>
BMS	Baptist Missionary Society, London
Calprof	Calabar Provincial Files, Nigerian National Archives, Ibadan
<i>CEA</i>	<i>Cahiers d’Etudes Africaines</i>
CO	Colonial Office files, Public Records Office, Great Britain
CSO	Central Secretariat Office Files, Nigerian National Archives, Ibadan
FO	Foreign Office files, Public Records Office, Great Britain
ISH	Institut des Sciences Humaines, Yaoundé
<i>JAH</i>	<i>Journal of African History</i>
JME	Journal des Missions Evangéliques
<i>JOC</i>	<i>Journal Officiel du Cameroun</i>
NBC	Native Baptist Church
PMC	League of Nations, Permanent Mandates Commission
PP	Great Britain, Parliament, House of Commons, Sessional Papers
<i>RFHOM</i>	<i>Revue Française d’Histoire d’Outre Mer</i>
RKA	Reichskolonialamt files, Deutsches Bundesarchiv, Potsdam
RT	Germany, <i>Verhandlungen des Reichstags</i> [Reichstag debates and papers]
SMEP	Société des Missions Evangéliques de Paris
UPC	Union des Populations du Cameroun

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Map 1 The Cameroon Littoral, c. 1977. Reprinted by permission of the University of Wisconsin Press. Words in full capitals indicate ethnic groups.