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African Journal of History and Culture

July-December 2023
ISSN: 2141-6672
DOI: 10.5897/AJHC
www.academicjournals.org



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Review

Investigating the origin, elements and motivations of the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon

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Received 5 March, 2023; Accepted 17 July, 2023

Over the last five decades, the status of Anglophones in Cameroon as marginalized has surfaced in political and religious spaces, illustrating the politics of oppression that has persisted since the amalgamation of East and West Cameroon into the United Republic of Cameroon on May 20, 1972. Anglophone marginalization operates at various levels in the unitary state, with varying impacts. The purpose of this study is to depict how decades of marginalization have eventually resulted in incessant civilian unrest in a country that was once deemed "peaceful." This study adopts the narrative model and maintains that the effective method of sustaining the status quo has been to control the conduct of Anglophone Cameroonians by suppressing Anglophone identity in a way that ensures the survival of the politics of oppression existing within the unitary state.

Key words: Democratization, cultural and linguistic identity, self-determination, regional conflict, decentralization.

INTRODUCTION

The year 1972 marked a pivotal moment in the democratic governance and political advancement of Cameroon, signifying a period of constitutional, legislative, political, and institutional change. It was the year Cameroon transitioned from a federal system of government to a unitary state (Stark, 1976). The unitary state merged East and West Cameroon under one centralized government, with Yaoundé as the nation's capital. These developments were purportedly intended, among other things, to introduce a paradigm shift from a colonial heritage of autocracy to a contextualized, progressive system of democratic governance (Konings and Nyamnjoh, 1997). The creation of the unitary system of government was projected by President Ahidjo as the ultimate solution to foster socio-economic growth and

prevent administrative disarray. However, reunification led to an extreme centralization of political power in East Cameroon and subsequent authoritarianism, at the expense of liberal democracy. First, it endorsed the design of an authoritarian social contract in which the head of state extended welfare and bribes, and in exchange, the denizens settled for a reduced role in politics. Second, the unitary state evaded the necessity to build administrative capacity because of the absence of accountability, financial transparency and legal limits on state officials. Besides the adoption of multiparty politics in 1990, the unitary state rendered little overall growth for the former British territory of Cameroon (Konings and Nyamnjoh, 2003).

Why then has the state not returned to the federal

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system of government seeing as the unitary state has failed to live up to its promises of greatness through unity? This study argues that the effective method of enabling the prevailing order has been to control the conduct of West Cameroon by suppressing Anglophone identity in a way that sustains the status quo; hence, the survival of the politics of oppression. Having been faced with endless roadblocks in the quest for federalism, the Anglophone community appears to be adopting a more radical stance and pushing for complete secession/independence from East Cameroon.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Throughout the years, scholars of African politics and history have advanced theories that define nation states. However, such theories have only multiplied for countries that have undergone civil wars like Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone and Sudan. According to Collier (2000) conflicts are more likely to be perpetuated because of the lack of suitable economic opportunities¹. Then, there are other scholars who argue that post-independent governments under African rulers were inherited from the colonial masters. This argument suggests that the colonial legacy that was passed down to the African elites was porous and incomplete (Rodney, 1972). For instance, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) until 1907 was governed as King Leopold's personal property (Meredith, 2005; Shillington, 1989). As the argument goes, after the DRC gained independence, President Mobutu Sese Seko continued to rule the state just like his Belgian predecessor (Young, 1986).

There are hardly any works of such eminent scholars which discuss the question of the "peaceful" states in Africa unless we take claims by Huntington (1991) about democratization into account. Huntington (1991) uses GNP statistics and the correlation between economy and democracy to define transitioning states. However, even Huntington's analyses are not relevant to Cameroon because the GNP has either declined or remained unchanged for decades. Changes in the economy of the transitioning nation are important for the democratization process because economic development (among other variables) brings about and sustains democracy. In this light, Przeworki et al. (2000) argues that the probabilities of transitions change depending on developmental levels. Therefore, liberalist (multi-partism and free press) only marked the first stage of the democratic transition for Cameroon.

Also, there is Johan Galtung's neo-Marxist concept of dependence or structural theory of imperialism. For Galtung (1972), the international system consists of center nations (industrial West) and periphery nations.

Per this model, the periphery nations supply "value" to the center nations. This dominance/dependence relationship fosters repression and disharmony of interest in periphery states.

Furthermore, neo-Marxist concepts maintain that the source of economic stagnation and repression in the "third" world is in exogenous factors, the product of capitalism. In recent years, exogenous accounts for underdevelopment and marginalization, like Rodney's (1972) *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, have lost much of their attraction because several former Asian colonies have demonstrated that identity formation/preservation coupled with a vibrant market economy support democratic institutions. Thus, exogenous accounts for slow growth and marginalization are no longer popular.

Other authors have looked for answers pertaining to the failure of post-colonial states in the extraction and distribution of raw material. According to Vandewalle (1998) distributive states are prone to economic collapse.² Also, Holm and Sorensen (1995) maintain that there are core and periphery states. But unlike Galtung (1972), do not blame exogenous factors for the status of the marginalized and failing states. However, per Holm and Sorensen (1995), periphery states are that way due to pre-modern political systems. Holm and Sorensen (1995) concept only account for less than half of the problem in Cameroon. These scholars do not analyze the role of identity (or lack thereof) as an endogenous factor in the underdevelopment of the "third" world. In its holistic form, the literature on "third" state politics does not address the idea that identity conditions the survival of the status quo in post independent states. Opposed to interacting with values like premodernity, performance dilemma/corruption, neocolonialism and poverty, this study aims to fill the literary gap.

Scholars of Cameroon's History and politics like Eyoh (1998); Konings and Nyamnjoh (1997, 2003); Achankeng (2015); Ngoh (1979); Takougang (1998); Krieger (2008) etc., have all covered the Anglophone problem extensively. Some of these scholars like Ngoh (1979) discussed the History of Cameroon, from before the German colonial era until independence. While others like Achankeng (2015) investigate the "false negotiations" at the Fouban constitutional conference of 1961 that set in motion the path for future Anglophone manipulation by the Francophone-led government. He also argues that the current nationalist conflict in British Southern Cameroons is a direct result of the political developments following the Fouban Conference. Meanwhile, Le Vine (1964) and Benjamin (1972) hold that the Anglophone problem is a direct result of the partition of German Kamerun between the British and the French.

Konings and Nyamnjoh (1997) do a deep dive into the

¹ Collier and Hoeffler (2004) argue in a later study that the risk of civil war outbreak is most likely when the following conditions are present: low GDP per capita, large diaspora, low growth rate and a rising population.

² Distributive states are "states that do not rely on local extraction of revenue and that spend inflows of capital generated by commodity sales as their primary economic activity" (Vandewalle 1998, p. 7).

intricacies of the Anglophone problem. In so doing, they examine the socio-economic and political factors and implications of the crisis. Furthermore, Konings and Nyamnjoh (2003) examine the deconstruction of Anglophone identity by the Biya government by means of adopted colonial policy such as divide and rule tactics.

Similarly, Eyoh (1998) discusses the effect of ethnonationalism in sustaining the Anglophone crisis. Ethnonational identities play a fundamental role in influencing the 'us versus them' dichotomy that has now sustained the political struggles. In his analysis of the Anglophone minority in Quebec, Stevenson (1999) also draws attention to the role of ethnonationalism and argues that a new sense of Anglophone identity was born out of conflicts with the Francophones. Despite this rich and seemingly well-rounded research, none of these scholars discuss why and how Anglophone identity is a threat to the Francophone-led government and why the latter seeks to suppress it.

Since the 2016 uprisings, Cameroon has witnessed a profound transformation of its socio-political structure, with substantial economic changes on society. As the current state of events remains fluid, comprehending the new Cameroonian reality and political economy is burdened with hurdles and uncertainty. In its current state, Cameroon is unstable and divisive: political fragmentation seems to be the dominant dynamic based on differences of opinion, loyalties, interests and identities. The coercive power and manipulation of the state can suffice for socio-political marginalization of an entire group within a nation-state. The Anglophone society has come to see itself within the governing structure as inferior and powerless, hence not deserving of increased political participation and developmental resources. In addition, the unitary state continually exploits West Cameroon and pits the elites of the southwestern region against their northwestern counterparts to further demolish a unified Anglophone identity.

IDENTIFYING THE DRIVING FACTORS OF THE ANGLOPHONE CRISIS

To what extent has the Biya administration contributed to the perpetuation of Anglophone marginalization and the subsequent Anglophone crisis? Following the dissolution of the federal system, the unitary state began to utilize repressive politics as a tool to marginalize the Anglophone minority. Marginalization encompasses social inequality, the core of the Anglophone problem. Unlike the Marxian concept which focuses on the ruling class and subjects, marginalization in Cameroon is politically stratified.

Political power stems from the state in a top-down fashion and is dominated by the president, who in turn governs along patrimonial/patron-client lines (Gabriel, 1999). In Cameroon, diversity between ethnic groups has been evident since the German exit. Both Ahmadou

Ahidjo (1960-82) and Paul Biya (1982-present), have been skillful at exploiting ethnic diversity for their political gain (this system leaves ethnic groups fighting each other for political favor, opposed to banding together against the broken system).³ Upon independence, the government was formed on a multi-ethnic ruling class, which has prevented the rise to power by any one ethnic group over the other. Although Ahidjo was Fulbe, and Biya is Catholic of the Beti ethnic group, they both established a diverse ruling class along neo-patrimonial/patron-client lines that rendered monopolization by one ethnic group practically impossible. Power is decentralized such that a false sense of peace can be maintained and all regions appear to enjoy the same amount of resources.⁴

According to Konings and Nyamnjoh (2003), Ahidjo emphasized the need for "ethnic balance and national unity" (p. 6), however, both authors agree that there is sufficient evidence to suggest that three elite ethnic groups enjoyed positions of privilege during Ahidjo's administration. "There were, first of all, the Muslim Fulbe elite, especially those who originated from Garoua, Ahidjo's hometown, the so-called 'Garoua barons'. Second, there were the members of the Christian Beti elite from the southern part of Francophone Cameroon who formed the core of the bureaucratic-administrative faction of the hegemonic alliance on the basis of their high educational qualifications. The Fulbe-Beti axis constituted the regime's major ethnic underpinning. And thirdly, there were the members of the Bamileke elite from the Francophone part of the Grassfields, the present-day West Province" Konings and Nyamnjoh (2003, p. 6). Favoritism towards certain groups (mostly in Francophone Cameroon regions) over others was not at all subtle and has persisted into Paul Biya's regime. These ethnic partialities have gone a long way in solidifying proof of blatant Anglophone marginalization. To the average Cameroonian, Anglophone marginalization is visible in all domains of life. In the political sphere, members of Anglophone political parties such as the Social Democratic Front (SDF) and the Alliance of Progressive Forces (APF) are treated by the government as political dissidents.⁵ Francophones occupy almost all key positions in government, while

³ Gabriel (1999, p. 3) maintains that these presidents have been able to prevent the ethnically diverse country "from joining the ranks of failing states" and preventing the rise to power by a single ethnic or regional group.

⁴ From the vantage point of many critics, the problem in Cameroon is not that one group "has its hand in the public till" - but rather that all of them do!" (Gabriel 1999, p.7).

⁵ "Cameroonian security forces have repeatedly used violence, arbitrary arrests and unlawful detentions to prevent political activists who belong to opposition political parties from holding public or private meetings. Those targeted include members of the Front des forces alternatives (FFA, Alternative Forces Front), some of whose leaders were briefly detained in October 2003 and in January 2004, including its president, Jean-Jacques Ekindi; members of the Alliance of Progressive Forces; members of the Social Democratic Front (SDF); and members of the SCNC." "Cameroon: Impunity underpins persistent

qualified Anglophone candidates are excluded from holding top political senatorial and ministerial positions even in their regions (the Northwest and Southwest regions).

Economically, Anglophone marginalization “has taken the form of discrimination against Anglophones in employment within the state and parastatal sectors and the private corporate sector, which is predominantly French or located in French-speaking areas, and discrimination in the allocation of public investment” Eyoh (1998, 351). In the social domain, marginalization is marked by the daily treatment of Anglophone denizens as unequal partners of the unitary state. The poor treatment of Anglophones by their Francophone counterparts resulted in John Ngu Foncha’s resignation from his post as VP of the CPDM. In his resignation letter, Foncha wrote: “The Anglophone Cameroonians whom I brought into the union have been ridiculed and referred to as ‘les Biafraïses’, ‘les ennemies dans la maison’, ‘les traîtres’ etc., and the constitutional provisions which protected this Anglophone minority have been suppressed, their voice drowned while the rule of the gun replaced the dialogue which the Anglophones cherish very much.”⁶

The 1991 Tripartite conference, that called together government representatives, members of political parties and civil society, was the first attempt by the Francophone-led government to resolve the Anglophone problem. Francophone representatives proposed decentralization, while their Anglophone counterparts sought complete dismantlement of the unitary state and a return to the federal system of government (Takougang and Krieger, 1998). Although the Anglophone delegation’s request for a return to the federal state was not granted, President Paul Biya expressed his desire for constitutional reform. As a result, a constitutional committee was formed – the Technical Committee on Constitutional Matters (TCCM). According to Konings and Nyamnjoh (2003), the TCCM comprised of seven Francophones and four Anglophones, chaired by then Secretary General, Joseph Owona. Efforts at federalism were still the objective of the Anglophones as the four Anglophone representatives (Benjamin Itoe, Simon Munzu, Sam Ekontang Elad and Carlson Anyangwe) presented a draft proposal for a new federal structure. This proposal, code named EMIA, was rejected by Biya and soon after the committee was suspended, and Benjamin Itoe was discharged from his ministerial position. Two weeks prior to the October 1992 presidential elections, the chairman of the TCCM, Joseph Owona, “presented a draft constitution to the Anglophone Prime Minister Simon Achidi Achu, which preserved the essential features of the unitary state, making no

concession to the Anglophone members’ federalist demands” (Konings and Nyamnjoh, 2003, p.83). The 1991 Tripartite conference was the first and last attempt, of its kind, to resolve the Anglophone crisis. The Biya government has been persistent with trivializing the Anglophone problem by maintaining the need to unify the country as it was during German colonial rule. During his 1991 visit to Bamenda, Biya had this to say with regards to the Anglophone problem

*Let us not oppose Anglophones and Francophones... The language barrier is not and should not be a political problem in our country. Mind you, at the start of this century Cameroonians were neither Anglophones nor Francophones. Why should the wars of others and the culture of others divide Cameroonians at the dawn of the third millennium?*⁷

The Biya administration has since asserted that the regionalized construct of the country that was instituted with the constitution that was drawn up in 1996, encompasses the only satisfactory tactic which underlines the state’s strategy with respect to a unified identity for all Cameroonians and to assure regard for divergence diversity through limited regional sovereignty (Enonchong, 2021). This strategy has been fundamentally ineffective as was witnessed in 2016 when peaceful protests by Anglophone teachers and lawyers against oppressive institutions deteriorated into ongoing armed conflicts between military forces, civilians and extremist groups.

FUNDAMENTAL ELEMENTS OF ANGLOPHONE IDENTITY

What is Anglophone identity? How does Anglophone identity threaten the Francophone-led government and why does the latter seek to suppress it? Anglophone identity is evidenced by the formation of historical ties and ethno-regional cultures of the Northwest and Southwest regions. The present sense of Anglophone identity has evolved in the last sixty years, having been influenced by a variety of endogenous and exogenous factors. The basis of Anglophone identity “is the conception of former West Cameroon as a distinct community defined by differences in official language and inherited colonial traditions of politics, law, education and public administration” (Eyoh, 1998a, p. 351). Maintaining that identity as a concept is subject to interpretation depending on specific linkages, one could argue that Anglophone identity changed fundamentally after West and East Cameroon merged under the unitary state. The reproduction of Anglophone identity after 1972 has been facilitated by attempts of the Francophone élites to

abuse.” *Amnesty International*

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr17/001/2009/en/>

⁶ John Ngu Foncha’s letter of resignation as national VP of the CPDM, cited by Piet Konings and Francis. B Nyamnjoh in *Negotiating An Anglophone Identity*. Afrika-Studiecentrum Series, vol. 1. London: Brill, 2003.

⁷ Speech by President Biya in Bamenda on 13 September 1991, in *Playdoyer pour une Vraie Démocratie*. Yaoundé: Imprimerie Saint Paul, 1991, 68.

extend French administrative systems to Anglophone communities in the postcolonial era. This extension would mean a complete annihilation of Anglophone legal, linguistic, institutional and cultural distinctiveness.

In a draft essay, Fearon (1999, p. 10) holds that "Identity is a new concept and not something that people have eternally needed or sought as such." However, an argument can be made that identity was recently contextualized, not that the term itself is a new concept. People have had identities for as long as history can remember; these identities helped communities form and defined the differences between people. Several factors, like culture, interests, geographic location etc., have over time contributed to identity formation. Maintaining that identity is "people's concepts of who they are, of what sort of people they are, and how they relate to others" Hogg and Abrams (1988, p. 2), one can see how identity is not simply a result of people sharing similar norms when it is in their best interest but also when those norms are internalized in their identities. This would explain the desire by Anglophone Cameroon to maintain its identity, free of Francophone influence.

It stands to reason that Anglophone identity in its broadest sense is a linguistic and cultural identity of English-speaking Cameroonians, who consist of roughly 20% of the country's population; an identity that was formed as a result of a shared culture, tradition and language. The question of Anglophone identity pivots on the subject of how the English-speaking Cameroonians have upheld decades of tradition and culture. Anglophone cultural norms are perceived as rich, steeped in tradition, and authentic; hence their shared responsibility to preserve their cultural heritage irrespective of the odds, the odds being the birth of a 'new' identity that was cultivated following the institutionalization of the unitary state. The 'new' identity has redefined the interests of the Anglophones; Anglophone identity is now defined by communal marginalization and political oppression. The recreation of Anglophone identity by the Francophone-led government has over the years modified the individual interests of Anglophones and heightened the desire for some to push for the creation of a loose federation while others demand secession from Francophone Cameroon. The impacts of marginalization on the Anglophone community are far-reaching and encompassing of hundreds of thousands (if not millions) of Anglophones in the Northwest and Southwest regions. As French Cameroon enjoyed cultural, economic and political growth, the Anglophone regions have deteriorated under oppressive policies. Ahidjo, and subsequently Biya, utilized hegemonic control to manage ethnic diversity by centralizing political and economic power in the presidential office. This strategy was effortlessly enforced by the creation of the unitary state in 1972. The institution of the unitary state meant that executive policymaking was centered in the capital city and the constitution served as a tool to focus authority on the office of the president (Konings and Nyamnjoh, 2003). As a result,

socio-economic and political decisions were strategically designed to favor the Francophone regions.

Historically, Anglophone identity has been perceived as a threat to Francophone Cameroon for several reasons. Firstly, a unified Anglophone Cameroon is viewed as a symbol of resistance against the Francophone-dominated government. Anglophones have arguably been more politically forthright and passionate in their demands for socio-political growth. This sort of vocal approach by Anglophones has often resulted in armed confrontations with military forces.⁸ The government has come to interpret these political efforts by Anglophones as a threat to its power and centralized authority, thus fears that Anglophone identity could potentially result in complete secession which would destabilize the country. As a result, has sought to subdue any form of political dissent.

Over the years, economic discrimination has resulted in a sense of disenfranchisement among Anglophones, which has fueled calls for increased autonomy. Anglophone autonomy has been perceived as a threat to the government's centralized power and unopposed control. According to Konings and Nyamnjoh (1997), Ahidjo's justification for the 'glorious revolution of 20 May 1972' was that federalism fostered regionalism and impeded economic Development (p. 210). However, Anglophones maintained that Ahidjo's justification was false, and attributed the emergence of regionalism and slow economic growth to the state's hegemonic policies (Konings and Nyamnjoh, 1997). The Anglophone regions are rich in natural resources like rubber, timber, cocoa, coffee, gas and oil and its mountainous regions are home to strategic economic sectors comprising forestry, fishing and agriculture. One would argue that an autonomous British Southern Cameroons would mean a loss of control over these natural resources and subsequent loss of revenue for the government.

Finally, Anglophone identity is viewed as a threat to the linguistic, educational and cultural hegemony of the government and national unity. Since independence, the government has upheld Francophone culture, language, legal and educational systems over Anglo-Saxon educational and legal structures. Upon reunification, under the guise of synchronizing the educational systems, the government rather took measures to suppress Anglophone educational autonomy. Anglophones "became increasingly worried when harmonisation turned out to be an ill-concealed Francophone attempt at assimilation and even dismantlement of their educational system" (Konings and Nyamnjoh, 2003, p. 163). It is important to stress that there are considerable cultural differences between Anglophones and Francophones due to their different colonial legacies, strengthening the argument that federalism is the best political system for

⁸ "Cameroon: New Attacks on Civilians By Troops, Separatists: At Least 170 Killed; Hundreds of Homes Burned," Human Rights Watch, accessed May 5, 2023, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/03/28/cameroon-new-attacks-civilians-troops-separatists>

the two very different linguistic groups. To the Francophone government, Anglophone identity is perceived as a threat to the status quo. The Francophone-led government has sought to suppress Anglophone identity because of the threat it poses to the centralized power of the state. The government perceives Anglophone identity as an indication of defiance, a threat to its singular authority and a challenge to the linguistic, educational and cultural supremacy of the Francophone majority. The government has used strategies such as censoring free speech, repressive policies and intimidation to asphyxiate any appearance of opposition or calls for greater autonomy. A repeated effort by the government to suppress Anglophone identity has further exacerbated tensions between both linguistic entities.

In studying the Anglophone cultural construct, one will easily notice a divergence between Anglophones in favor of complete autonomy and those in favor of a return to federalism. At the core of this divergence is the dire need for the preservation of a sense of Anglophone culture and individuality; Anglophones want territorial/economic and linguistic autonomy. The divergence became apparent with the creation of political parties like the Social Democratic Front (SDF) that has since its formation in 1991, sought decentralization within the unitary state. The birth of the SDF in 1991 and multiple Anglophone political parties thereafter increased Anglophone consciousness. Meanwhile, political parties like the Free West Cameroon Movement and Ambazonian Movement of Fon Gorji Dinka pushed for the creation of an Ambazonian State or West Cameroon state (Konings and Nyamnjoh, 2019). The creation of the Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC) in 1994, sought “to restore, within a newly restructured Federal Republic of Cameroon, the autonomy of a territory – Southern Cameroons – and of a people – Southern Cameroonians – and to put an end to their annexation by La République du Cameroun” (Konings and Nyamnjoh, 2003, p. 91).

The ongoing unrest in the Anglophone regions is a result of economic and political discrimination against the Anglophones that has culminated in ethnic and cultural tensions between the government and the Anglophone minority. Begging the question, what sort of federalism is Anglophone Cameroon agitating for and how does this conflict with the unitary system? Federalism for a vast number of Anglophones was the ideal form of government. Due to the shared feeling of communal disadvantage among Anglophones, the Anglophone élites sought a loose federalism, one with less centralized executive powers. Like Foncha argued, a loose federation would protect the minority status of the Anglophones and guarantee the protection of their unique identity, explicitly in the linguistic, cultural, educational and judicial spheres.

Even now, it is unclear what percentage of the electorate is either in favor of creating a loose federation or self-determination/complete secession. A referendum

has yet to be organized to help determine an answer to this question; in the meantime, Anglophone Cameroon remains split. While a voluntary referendum is not the deciding factor of either federalism or secession, it will determine if the Anglophone movement has the support it requires to make either federalist or separatist demands to the government. Despite the divergence in political preference, majority of the English-speaking faction seek the conservation of Anglophone culture and identity.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

It is useless to spend any more time identifying the democratic shortfalls that have contributed to the Anglophone crisis; however, it is worth noting that the fundamental dispute between the government and the separatists is the question of self-determination for the Anglophone regions. Stabilizing Southern Cameroon will require an intentional solution for sustaining democracy, human rights and transparent government. These recommendations speak to the Biya administration, civil society organizations (CSOs) and the international community. If all these groups plus stakeholders’ work as a cohesive unit to level set and problem solve, the Anglophone crisis will be resolved quickly.

Form a united front

All Anglophone political factions (either in favor of separatism, federalism or maintaining the unitary state as is) should compromise on a single coherent and unanimous stance to address the political economy of marginalization, hence begin efforts towards restoring peace. There is no room for divisiveness on such crucial matters to determine the future of all Anglophones in Cameroon or abroad. It will be important to consider how policies and agendas directly influence institutionalization and social cohesion. This recommendation will be successful through inclusive participation of all Anglophone political groups in objective and transparent discussions to determine the path to peace.

National dialogue/peace negotiations

A second national dialogue that includes key government officials, civil society actors, separatist factions and the public to discuss a path forward for stabilizing conflict-affected regions would be a useful first step towards meaningful participation of stakeholders. The September 30 to October 4, 2019, national dialogue between Anglophone and Francophone representatives that was held in Yaoundé did not result in an end to the Anglophone crisis, as was anticipated. The 2019 national dialogue failed because the Biya administration

attempted to resolve the grievances of the Anglophones without engaging in negotiations with civil society leaders and separatist leaders. The government did not make any efforts at compromising on the release of Anglophone separatist leaders.⁹ A follow-up to the 2019 national dialogue should be organized, only this time, the national priority should be social cohesion, given that premature desertion of peacebuilding activities would destabilize an exit from instability. Efforts towards conflict mitigation should be discussed and enforced with special consideration to historic fault lines and to dimensions of peace processes that were previously overlooked, such as disarmament, and truth and reconciliation processes. If successful, the crisis would be quelled and efforts to disarm rebel groups and reincorporate them into society will begin. Historically, such channels for dialogue have been successful at bringing about peace and laying the path for democratic transitions (in other war-torn countries).

Constitutional and institutional reform

The government on September 7, 2020 authorized the country's first regional council elections. Arguably, this decentralization attempt by President Biya was a way to save face in the midst of an already four-yearlong crisis with no end in sight. In addition to decentralization efforts, the constitution should be amended to clearly articulate the demands of the Anglophones to help towards securing long-term peace. If Anglophones were to be guaranteed some amount of autonomy over their legal and educational systems, then demands for secession will certainly recede. The central focus should be on democracy and good governance as the democratic deficit is the underlying cause of the broader crisis. Any policy to stabilize Cameroon must account for the democratic shortfalls and employ strategies to directly resolve them. In this light, the Biya regime should clearly elucidate how it proposes to peacefully transfer executive power and how government officials and party affiliated politicians should be held accountable for enabling patron/client politics. One of the arguments for the underdevelopment of the African continent is the prevalent patron/client system that in itself is antidemocratic and corrupt. The absence of checks and balances in patron-client systems results in gross mismanagement of foreign aid/loans. The Biya administration has in recent years detained several ministers for such alleged financial mismanagements of public funds.¹⁰ However, the problem has persisted,

mostly due to the absence of financial transparency; while this policy may appear risky to the government whose highest priority is maintaining the territorial integrity of Cameroon opposed to implementing democratic measures. It is worth noting some considerations to counter any reservations. Firstly, amending the constitution to allow Anglophones certain privileges will result in an end to the crisis, as warring factions will no longer have grounds for disgruntlement. Secondly, instituting democratic practices to curb patron/client politics will mean equal growth opportunities for all people, hence improved economic conditions. Finally, ensuring the peaceful transfer of executive power by means of free and fair elections will show the international community that Cameroon is finally turning away from autocracy and embracing modern forms of government. Cameroon has undergone several constitutional amendments since 1972 none of which have materialized in the democratic transition of executive power. Instead, the country wallows in sustained poverty, absence of basic human rights and overall institutional weakness. One of the effective ways to resolve the question of secession will be via constitutional amendments that directly result in the democratic transfer of power and subsequent institutional reform to help rebuild the private sector and overall economy.

Prioritize regional growth

Some of the systemic and institutional problems in Cameroon can be resolved by CSOs and development actors. Civil society actors should develop regional networks to participate in advocacy, information/knowledge exchange, monitor local governmental policies and strategy advancement including collaboration between CSOs and locally elected officials. They should engage in efforts to address instability in warring regions and take into account regional resources in their policy development and design. Borrowing democratic tenets from other African countries like Kenya can help CSOs problem-solve bureaucratic obstructions and proactively ensure a consistent path towards regional growth. The success of this policy recommendation lies in cultivating efforts for CSOs to be nonpartisan and to be granted immunity from suffering unjust punishments for holding elected officials accountable. As earlier mentioned, Cameroon has a history of persecuting right-based civic groups and individuals who challenge the abuse of power by the government and government officials. This is a human rights violation and democratic deficit that can be curbed if the Biya administration institutionalizes free speech and political protection for right-based groups.

⁹ Separatist leaders like Sisiku Ayuk Tabe, self-proclaimed president of Ambazonia was arrested in Abuja, Nigeria for "engaging in a clandestine meeting against Cameroonian authorities" and was handed a life sentence, shortly after. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-42603610>

¹⁰ See "Cameroon Investigates Missing \$335 Million in COVID Funds" by Moki Edwin Kindzeka, May 31,

2021. https://www.voanews.com/a/africa_cameroon-investigates-missing-335-million-covid-funds/6206445.html

Support from the international community

The French and British governments should make deliberate short-term ventures to expand citizen involvement in local governance especially in conflict-affected regions, while encouraging long-lasting stabilization and recompense of political, economic and security injustices. In addition, it will help for international organizations like the United Nations to continue voicing support for CSOs and providing financial assistance to apolitical welfare groups that provide aid to internally displaced persons. In the event that peace is restored, these social welfare groups will be the frontrunners for resettling displaced communities and restoring a sense of normalcy in the interior/villages. Organizations like the African Union should publicly condemn the abuse of political power in Cameroon, and take steps to encourage the institutionalization of due democratic process such as a limitation on the presidential term/power and fair elections etc. Finally, organizations like the World Bank and international NGOs should withdraw financial aid/loans and foreign investments to the Biya government until the Anglophone problem is peacefully resolved. Stopping these foreign monies from flowing into the country until democratic tenets are employed would force government officials to look into resolving the Anglophone problem and finally take steps to incorporate democratic tools in administering the state.

To increase the likelihood of success, these recommendations must be driven by a policy for stabilization. A negotiated resolution between armed militia and the government is the only clear path to sustainable peace, however, immediate financial and technical support to build regional governance infrastructure will enable municipal councils to carry on with day-to-day functions of serving their regional communities. Anglophone pressure groups like the Southern Cameroons Restoration Movement (SCARM) have maintained that children and youths constitute at least two-thirds of the population of Anglophone Cameroon. For an area that produces critical sources of regional wealth, the rate of unemployment, illiteracy and underemployment among this group is staggering. The state has failed for several years to provide basic services, and the repressive nature of the state has rendered formal complaints impossible, if not suicidal. If we are to accept that societies comprised of human beings are in a state of steady growth and social change, then we are also to accept that the civilian uprisings indicate that the status quo is unsustainable.

CONCLUSION

Present-day Cameroon is arguably plagued by its checkered past. A valuable discussion to analyze the factors that account for the many political and civil issues befuddling the country's overall development remains to

be had between government officials, opposition party representatives, civil society and sectarian groups. As aforementioned, the efforts of the colonial administrations to prepare the territories for self-determination lacked genuine effort as was reflected by the problems that plagued the country shortly after. While British rationale for appending Southern Cameroons to Nigeria was not completely irrational, it unavoidably meant that its socio-political and economic growth was forfeited for administrative convenience. Nevertheless, one could argue that a considerable focus on developing the region would have potentially placed it in an irrepressible position; better prepared to confront the challenges of building a modern state. The myriad of governance issues and absence of steady economic and political advancement of Cameroon can be credited to the country's colonial past. Be that as it may, federalism (even though highly centralized) was a significant cusp for the decentralization of Cameroon, seeing as it established fundamental components for representative democracy. Nevertheless, the imposition of the unitary state hampered constitutional and democratic advancement, leaving the Anglophone minority to suffer oppressive government policies and economic challenges.

To unsuspecting visitors, Cameroon was once perceived as a "peaceful" country; diverse but inclusive.¹¹ The official discourse made use of all necessary means to maintain the fiction of a society devoid of conflict (Mbembe, 1992, 5). To a developing country like Cameroon, identifying as a peaceful nation is imperative because it allows accessibility to monetary, medical, and military support from the international community. While Cameroon's foreign policy has been geared towards portraying a peaceful façade within Africa and the international community, it has however, failed to retain stable political institutions and socio-economic structures. Contrary to popular belief, and by all standards and definitions, this study argues that Cameroon is a fragmented, divisive, politically stunted, and repressive.

Even though it is difficult to predict the future of Cameroon's democracy or the outcome of the ongoing civilian unrests (seeing as Cameroon has yet to readopt federal status, and President Paul Biya won the 2018 elections with 2022 marking his fortieth anniversary as president), this study is relevant to 21st century scholarship for two reasons. First, it makes a methodological contribution to the discussion of "peaceful" state governmentality. Second, it serves as a framework for analyzing the legality of the unitary state versus the implementation of a loose federation. Several Anglophone political parties and civil society groups are increasingly referring to the Anglophone region as Southern Cameroons or Ambazonia, their way of challenging the unitary government and pushing for

¹¹ Scholars like Jurg Martin Gabriel maintain that Cameroon's "main achievement is that the peace has been kept" (Gabriel 1999, p. 9).

secession. Despite its violent resurgence, the creation of statehood for the Anglophone minority will in reality prove to be extremely costly with an uncertain future and possibly low success rate.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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Review

The copper mine at Hofret en Nahas, Sudan

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Received 2 June, 2023; Accepted 28 August, 2023

Copper is the world's third most important metal after iron and aluminium. It has been used for thousands of years and continues to be an important item in manufacturing, medicine, construction and the electrical industries. The world has enormous reserves of copper ore: It is found in many African countries. Sudan has considerable resources in the Red Sea area and in the southwest of the country but almost none of these has been used to extract copper metal. The Hofret en Nahas mine in southwest Sudan or northwest South Sudan, depending on how local geography is interpreted, has been exploited by artisanal methods for hundreds of years and is important in local culture and to a lesser extent in current times in the local economy. The mine was visited by European explorers from the mid nineteenth century and through to the mid twentieth century by potential entrepreneurs with a view to exploit the mineral. Various analyses have shown that the ore can produce high quality pure metal. Among the many reasons for the mine not being developed are the remoteness of the location, poor and only seasonal access by road, a distance to the railway of more than 200 miles (320 km), lack of a local labour force and difficulties about feeding such a force. In recent years (since 2011) the failure to secure an agreement on the international boundary between the Republic of Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan inhibits any progress towards development of the mine. This diachronic study of more than 170 years of events and activities at Hofret en Nahas covering actual artisanal copper extraction, geographical and geophysical exploration, the cultural setting and the causes of and problems with civil war in the area. As far as can be ascertained the paper is the only synthetic review of these subjects and could form the basis of future studies.

Key words: Darfur, Bahr el Ghazal, chalcopryite, artisanal exploitation, geographic exploration, geological exploration, cultural value, slavery.

INTRODUCTION

Copper has been used in coins and ornaments since 10,000 BP, making it one of the first metals to be used by humans (Doebrich and Masonic, 2009). Copper is malleable and ductile, resists corrosion and conducts

heat and electricity efficiently. It was very important to early humans and continues as a preferred element for many domestic, industrial and high-technology applications (Flanagan, 2020).

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A great leap forward in human society was made about 5000 BP when it was found that copper could alloy with tin to result in bronze. This moved advanced man from the primitive tools of the Stone Age to the more technologically advanced Bronze Age. Another major and important alloy of copper is its connection with zinc which results in brass. Both these alloys extended the use of copper to additional functions in somewhat different roles as bronze is harder than brass.

Recent uses of copper have been in medicine although some medical properties were already recognized in ancient times (Morrison, 2020). Copper has antimicrobial properties effective against a wide range of pathogens. One example is that of the novel covid-19 virus which can survive for long periods on glass, plastic and stainless steel surfaces, but dies within hours on a copper surface (van Doremalen et al., 2020). Another is the death within minutes of some microorganisms when exposed to a dry copper surface.

Copper is used in the construction industry, in the generation of power, the manufacture of industrial machinery and especially modern vehicles. The metal is an essential component in the engines, wiring, radiators, connectors, brakes and bearings used in motor vehicles. A small car contains 1.5 km (0.9 mile) of copper wire whereas the total amount of copper ranges from 20 kg (44 pounds) in small cars to 45 kg (99 pounds) in luxury and hybrid vehicles (Copper Facts, 2023).

At least 160 copper-bearing minerals are known, many being important as jewelry. Among the most familiar are chalcopyrite, malachite, azurite and turquoise. Chalcopyrite is the most abundant and economically significant of these minerals. Porphyry, the most important type of deposit, is associated with igneous intrusions and yields about two-thirds of the world's copper. Deposits in sedimentary rocks, such as those in the Copper Belt of Central Africa, account for about one quarter of the world's identified copper resources. Individual deposits may contain hundreds of millions of tons of copper-bearing rock that is often recovered by open-cast techniques.

Copper is the world's third most industrial metal after iron and aluminium. World production (supply) and consumption (demand) increased dramatically in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. As large developing countries have entered the global market demand for mineral commodities, including copper, has increased. In the past 20 years, the Andean region of South America with Chile well to the forefront has emerged as the world's most productive copper region. In 2007 about 45 per cent of the world's copper was produced from the Andes Mountains. Secondary production – “recycling” – contributes about two-thirds of total copper production. Copper and its alloys can be recycled many times without loss of their properties at a cost of about one-sixth of production from ore (BGS,

2007).

The world's identified copper resources are estimated at 1.6 billion tonnes not including 0.9 billion tonnes in deep sea nodules¹. About 30% of resources are in Chile with much lesser amounts in the USA and Indonesia (7.5% each) and less than 6% in several other countries. Reserves in Zambia, at 19 000 tonnes, are 4.1 per cent of total reserves.

Copper is produced in about fifty countries, of which six produce more than 500 000 tonnes each year and together account for more than 80% of total output. Africa produces less than 3% each of smelter copper and refined copper.

Sudan has huge reserves of copper ore, mainly in the Red Sea Hills area in the northeast of the country. Other deposits occur in the Nuba Mountains in the south of the country bordering Republic of South Sudan). Further exploration is under way in these areas. There are large reserves around the “Copper Pit” in the southwest of the country which also contain gold and uranium (Sudan Government, n.d.).

The Copper Pit (generally known as Hofret en Nahas (usually translated as the Copper Hole) is located at 9° 37' N; 24° 05' E (Figure 1) and is one of the remotest places in Africa². As far as is known this is the only national resource from which copper has been extracted. This paper reviews the literature of the mine and its surrounds from a wide range of sources with regard to their history, exploration, exploitation, culture and geological context. It is, as far as the author has been able to discover, the first synthesis of this nature and is a contribution to the body of knowledge of a remote part of the African continent³.

This diachronic study of more than 170 years of events and activities at Hofret en Nahas covering actual artisanal copper extraction, geographical and geophysical exploration, the cultural setting and the causes of and problems with civil war in the area. As far as can be ascertained this paper is the only synthetic review of these subjects and could form the basis of future studies.

EARLY HISTORY AND NINETEENTH CENTURY

The earliest reference to exploitation of the Hofret copper deposits dates from the middle of the fifteenth century when the Genoese trader Antonio Malfant referred to copper from that area being traded across much of central Africa (Thomas, 1997). It can reasonably be assumed, however, that exploitation of the deposits pre-

¹billion is 10 to the power of nine (10⁹; 1,000,000,000).

² Transliteration to English of Arabic orthography for the area is not standard and is rendered in various forms. Hofret en Nahas (sometimes truncated to Hofret) is employed in this paper as it is the most common usage.

³ This paper was inspired by the Author's “tourist” visit to Hofret en Nahas: writing was started on 10 April 2023, the fiftieth anniversary of that visit.



Figure 1. Old workings at Hofret en Nahas being studied by the Author's wife Mary, colleague Stan E Clarke and a Sudanese colleague.
Source: Photo by the Author taken on 10 April (1973).

dated that account, but the origin of mining and copper production in the region is unrecorded. The cultural and economic importance of copper is, however, indisputable. One symbol of this is the possession of a drum of copper with a leather skin as its head (Figure 2). Ownership of such an artefact bestowed great prestige on the possessor and was usually limited to the Sultan of Darfur and a small coterie of notables (Arkell, 1966; O'Fahey and Spaulding, 1974; O'Fahey, 1980).

Smelted copper made into rings weighing 10 to 12 lbs (pounds avoirdupois; 4.5 -5.4 kg) was traded from the mines to Kordofan whence it was presumably traded farther afield (Afia and Widatalla, 1961).

In the first quarter of the nineteenth century Hofret's fame was a main reason for the annexation of Darfur by Mohammed Ali Pasha, Khedive of Egypt. In 1838 Mohammed commissioned the Austrian geologist Burgrath Russegger to conduct a feasibility study of Hofret. It is unlikely that Russegger ever reached the mines – Darfur had not been annexed to the Sudan at the time – but based his reports on information and samples (in the form of small pellets) that he obtained in Kordofan

(Herbert, 1984:161). Russegger (as cited in Afia and Widatalla, 1961) described the copper as of a light yellowish colour, extremely fine and pliable and so pure that he was unable to detect traces of any other metal with any type of reagent.

In the 1850s the Arab slave and ivory trader, al-Zubayr Rahma Mansur, settled in the Bahr el Ghazal area and gradually built up a trading empire (Figure 3). He was largely left alone by the local Zande chiefs and the Government in return for respecting administrative authority (Jackson, 1913; Afia and Widatalla, 1961). In 1869 an adventurer named El Haj Mohammed en Billali, returning from the pilgrimage to Mecca and, backed by the Sudanese authorities, arrived in the area with a considerable force intending to occupy Bahr el Ghazal. Billali had been to Cairo and told the Khedive that he had conquered Darfur and wished to resume possession of the mines at Hofret en Nahas, then considered to be in Darfur. Over the next year Zubayr and Billali fought several battles, the one being successful at some time and the other at another. On one occasion (and for unknown reasons) Zubayr allotted Billali and his



Figure 2. Beaten copper and leather drum, the ownership of which was a mark of authority and social standing in Darfur (Source: National Army Museum Study Collection Accession Number NAM 1963-05-13-1 (<https://collection.nam.ac.uk/detail.php?acc=1963-05-13-1>); The illustrated drum is reputed to have been taken as a trophy after the defeat of the Dervish forces at the Battle of Omdurman in 1898).

followers 1500 purses of gold together with some clothes and copper from Hofret. It was claimed that the copper was worth Egyptian Pounds 15 per kantar, was of extraordinary purity far exceeding that of European copper and from which ninety nine kantars of pure copper and one kantar of gold could be extracted from one hundred kantars of raw copper. The extraction was an “easy task” as it was accomplished by the many slaves owned by Zubayr⁴. Billali was eventually killed, Zubayr conquered the whole of Darfur and later became Governor of Bahr el Ghazal where he remained from 1873 to 1877 (Jackson, 1913:32-44).

Copper from Hofret was exported to Kano (now in northern Nigeria) as early as the 1850s where the “useful and handsome metal is also imported every year by the Jellaba of Nimro in Waddy, who bring it from the celebrated copper-mine, “el hofra,” situate to the south of Dar-Fur” and rendered a profit of more than 100%. Purchase of a young slave cost one kantar of copper, equivalent to the cost of 100 kg of ivory which was then

sold for two kantars in Kukawa (Barth, 1857). Copper rings and wire were also exported to many destinations (Walz, 1978). It was not only copper; however, that was the wealth of the Hofret region. According to Romulu Gessi, who was General Gordon’s attack dog and hounded Zubayr across the Bahr el Ghazal and Hofret en Nahas region, the area furnished at least 80 000 slaves a year and more than 20 000 Arabs were engaged in the trade. In Deim Suleiman (formerly Deim Zubayr and the capital of Western Bahr el Ghazal) (Figure 4), Gessi found bills for 90 000 thalers payable to different merchants, Government Officials and traders for the slaves they had supplied (Jackson, 1913; Thomas, 2009)⁵.

During the late 1860s the area was traversed by the Latvian botanist and ethnographer Georg August Schweinfurth. He described the artisanal method of smelting and noted that it took place only after the crops had been harvested and the rains had receded. The smelter was made of clay, about five feet (1.5 m) in height, with three distinct compartments of the same size

⁴ 1 kantar = 44 okes = 123.2 pounds avoirdupois (55.88 kilogram): the oka, okka or oke (Ottoman Turkish *هقولا*) was an Ottoman measure of mass equal to 400 dirhems (Ottoman drams): its value initially varied but it was standardized in the late empire as 1.2829 kilograms.

⁵ A thaler was a large silver coin about 40 mm in diameter and weighing 25 - 30 grams minted in the territories of the Holy Roman Empire: the word “dollar” is derived from this term.



Figure 3. Portrait of al-Zubayr when Governor of Bahr el Ghazal.

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A-Zubayr_Rahma_Mansur#/media/File:Al-Zubayr_Rahma_Mansur.jpg.

(Figure 5). The middle compartment was separated from the lower one by a kind of frame resting on a circular projection and was filled with alternate layers of fuel and

ore. This middle chamber was divided from the one above by a narrow neck. The upper and lower chambers were for fuel only. The base of the lower chamber was

pierced by four holes into which “tewels” or pokers were inserted and attached to bellows, used to increase the intensity of the combustion. A fifth hole was stopped with clay and opened periodically to allow the metal to be raked out after it had trickled down into the cavity below the frame (Schweinfurth, 1874, vol. 1, 274).

During the early 1870s a decommissioned ex-Civil War officer of the United States Union (Northern states) Army was recruited along with other Americans by the Egyptian Khedive to bolster his staff. Together with two other American officers and nine Egyptian officers Erasmus Sparrow Purdy set off in 1874 towards Dongola and the capital of Darfur province. One of Purdy's discoveries on that trip was Dar Fertit. The expedition explored the iron mines of Kordofan and completed a minute reconnaissance as far as the Shakka district and Hofret en Nahas (Rafaat, 1997).

Unfortunately for posterity Purdy's report of the southern Darfur part of his journey has been lost so nothing is known of his findings (Douin, 1942).

During a period of fighting in Darfur in the later 1870s, Governor Rudolf von Slatin (Figure 6) and his forces were besieged by the Mahdist army. The situation of the Government troops was perilous:

My ammunition was becoming critically low, and I found myself in a quandary regarding how to replenish my depleting stock. While I had an ample supply of powder and shells, my primary challenge was acquiring lead. Despite this, I managed to refill the empty Remington cases by melting down bullets from percussion guns and muskets. A small quantity of these bullets remained available. Additionally, I created copper bullets using the supply of copper obtained from the mines of Hofret en Nahas. To bolster this supply, I purchased copper bracelets and anklets from Black women who were fond of such copper ornaments (von Slatin, 1896:249)⁶

At the very end of the Nineteenth Century it was remarked that:

⁶ This is a translation of the original German version – Rudolph Carl Slatin (1896) *Feuer und Schwert im Sudan, Meine Kämpfe mit den Derwischen, meine Gefangenschaft und Flucht. 1879 -1895* published in Berlin by Verlag der Pioniere. The original full English translation is https://access.bl.uk/item/viewer/ark:/81055/vdc_0000001CEA8#?c=0&m=0&s=0&cv=77&xywh=139%2C1194%2C2586%2C12801896. Rudolf Karl, Baron von Slatin, also called Slatin Pasha (7 June 1857-4 October 1932) was an Austrian who served in the Egyptian army in Sudan. Slatin first arrived in Sudan in 1874 and became Governor of Darfur province in 1881 a year before the Mahdist revolution began. Slatin fought with determination against the Mahdist forces (even converting to Islam to improve the morale of his Sudanese troops) but was forced to surrender at the end of 1883. He was a prisoner during the period the Mahdists controlled the country. He escaped in 1895 and made a perilous 3-week journey across the desert to Khartoum. Created Pasha by the Khedive of Egypt his book was instrumental in enlisting support against the Mahdists. Following service with Lord Kitchener (1897-1898) in the reconquest of Sudan he was made the country's Inspector General in 1900 and served in that capacity until 1914. His 40 years in the country indelibly influenced its development.

Incredible as it may seem to those who do not know the history of Bahr-el-Ghazal, the veins of copper of Hofret en Nahas, which are celebrated throughout the Sudan, have never been the object of serious enterprise, although in Europe attention was drawn to them over fifty years ago (Gleichen, 1898, 1899).

TWENTIETH CENTURY

The untamed and disorderly character of the region encompassing western Bahr el Ghazal, southwestern Kordofan, and southern South Darfur during the early twentieth century was emphasized during an administrative patrol led by Governor Sparkes Pasha of the Bahr el Ghazal Province⁷. He met two Arab traders between Wau and Hofret en Nahas who alleged they had been robbed by a band of locals (Sparkes, 1903). Sparkes was the first European to visit Hofret in almost thirty years.

Natives of the area stated that no one from the Congo Free State had been at Hofret in 1894 as had been claimed (Gleichen, 1905:156 footnote). King Leopold II of the Belgians and “owner” of the Congo Free State did, however, have designs on parts of Bahr el Ghazal and southern Darfur and wanted possession of the Hofret mine. A mission of 400 soldiers was mounted, commanded by a Commandant Royaux but it did not reach the mine and returned to the Congo (Heyse, 1953).

The presence and activities of Hofret en Nahas were well known in 1903. It was said to be the only copper-producing mine in the Sudan and also to be in southwest Kordofan. At that time Darfur was an independent sultanate and not part of Sudan to which it was incorporated in 1916 after the sultan was killed in battle (Theobald, 1965).

Remoteness and lack of transport were reasons for the

⁷ William Spottiswode Sparkes (1862-1906) was born on 4 July 1862. He joined the Welsh Regiment of the British Army on 22 October 1881. Promoted to Captain in 1888 he was seconded to the Egyptian Army in 1894 and posted to Sudan where he fought in several battles in the Second Sudan War of 1896 -1899. He was Mentioned in Despatches by Kitchener for his action in the Battle of Omdurman in 1898 (having previously been Mentioned in Despatches for the action at Dongola) and awarded the Turkish Order of Osmanieh, 4th Class. By the Egyptian Khedive. As Governor of Fashoda in 1899 he was involved in the Fashoda Incident and confronted the French under the command of Captain Jean Marchand. In 1901 Sparkes led a patrol among the NiamNiam in southern Bahrel Ghazal and acted as an intermediary to get one of their leaders to Khartoum with the objective of gaining cooperation from the local people for the Anglo-Egyptian Government and in return he received a present of 80 elephant tusks which were transported by 100 bearers (Sparkes 1901; Tuttle 2019). He commanded a detachment of the Egyptian Army in 1901 -1903 which occupied Bahrel Ghazal during which he raised the British and Egyptian flags at Wau. In April 1902 Major and Brevet Lieut -Colonel Sparkes was promoted to Colonel in recognition of his services during an Expedition in the Bahrel Ghazal Province (RUSI 1902). In 1906 Colonel WS Sparkes was appointed a Companion of the Most Distinguished Order of St Michael and St George and died shortly afterwards of ill health on 4 July 1906.



Gessi Pasha's Troops advancing to the attack on "Dem Suleiman."

Figure 4. Troops of Romulu Gessi attacking Deim Suleiman. Painting by R Talbot Kelly. Source: von Slatin, "Fire and Sword ..." [18, Guggenheim Edition].

mine being worked solely for local use with mining and smelting being on a primitive scale. Other reasons probably included disruption of trade by the Mahadiya and severe drought and serious famine in the 1910s. Prospecting had begun elsewhere in the country but, although copper had yet to be found, it was thought to be present in Suakin District (Stevens, 1903a:148; 1903b:334). Analysis of an ore sample at this time showed it to be of silicate and carbonate and not a sulphate of copper and contained 14 per cent of pure metal (Gleichen, 1905:156).

On reaching the mines Comyn was not much impressed. He described the area as containing a lot of shallow pits about thirty yards (27.4 m) across and ten to twenty feet (3.0-6.0 m) deep on an area of about half a mile square (0.8 x 0.8 km). He bemoaned his lack of geological knowledge but he bought a huge ingot of horseshoe shape, seven inches (17.8 cm) across by two inches (5.1 cm) thick which was later mislaid (Comyn, 1911:170).

To ensure that his visit would not go unnoticed he annotated a map of the country with traces of all the journeys he made during his 4 -year service in the country (Figure 7).

The mines were visited by a Burgess-Watson in 1918 who at the time was the Inspector based in Raga District

and who took rock samples with the long term objective of opening up the deposits at a future date. Between 1918 and 1922 the Nile-Congo Divide Syndicate was granted a concession and explored the Hofret en Nahas mine. The company sunk shafts and boreholes and dug trenches. No exploitation of copper took place largely because of the remoteness of the mine and the associated problems of transport but an estimate of 400 million tonnes of copper ore was made (Afia and Widatalla, 1961:5). There was further interest in the mine in 1948 and in the early 1950s (Guernsey 1948), both initiatives coming to nought (Afia and Widatalla, 1961:6). In 1961 the African Mining Corporation took a lease on the mine from which the Director of the Geological Survey Department "anticipated that some practical steps would [...] be taken to initiate the exploitation of Hofret" and that "opening of the Hofret mine would be the beginning of a sustained development in the mining industry". The Director's hopes were – regrettably – unfulfilled.

Further visits, reconnaissance trips and minor expeditions were made by various enterprises including one in 1945 by geologists of the Anglo-American Corporation of South Africa (Afia and Widatalla, 1961). The Messina (Transvaal) Development Company Ltd visited Hofret in 1952 and demonstrated that a

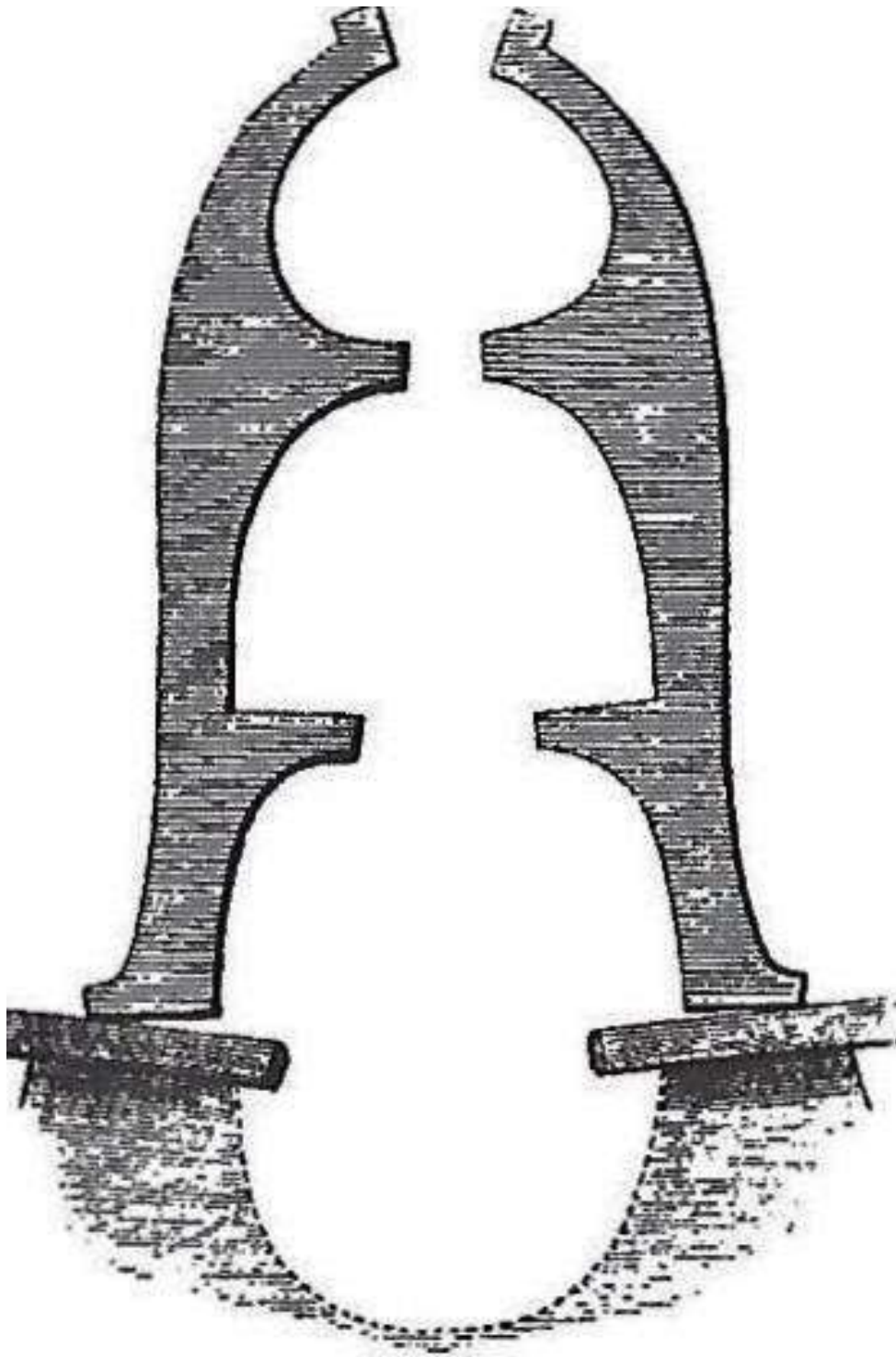


Figure 5. Sketch of a traditional smelting kiln as used at Hofret en Nahas.
Source: Schweinfurth (1874).

magnetometric survey was an inappropriate tool to establish the presence of copper ore (Afia and Widatalla, 1961;20). In 1954 a person named Maxwell McGuiness

applied for a licence to explore the mine but this was refused and in 1956 a Geological Commission from the German Democratic Republic made some observations



Figure 6. Life-size, head and shoulders of von Slatin in his Dervish dress commissioned by Queen Victoria. Portrait by Heinrich von Angeli (1840-1925) who was paid £263 5s for the portrait on 4 December 1895. Signed and dated 1895. Source: Royal Collection Trust <https://www.rct.uk/collection/405919/rudolf-von-slatin-pacha-1857-1932>.

on the Hofret deposit using a Geiger counter which indicated a high level of radio activity but made no

estimate of either radioactive material or of copper reserves (Afia and Widatalla, 1961:3,20).

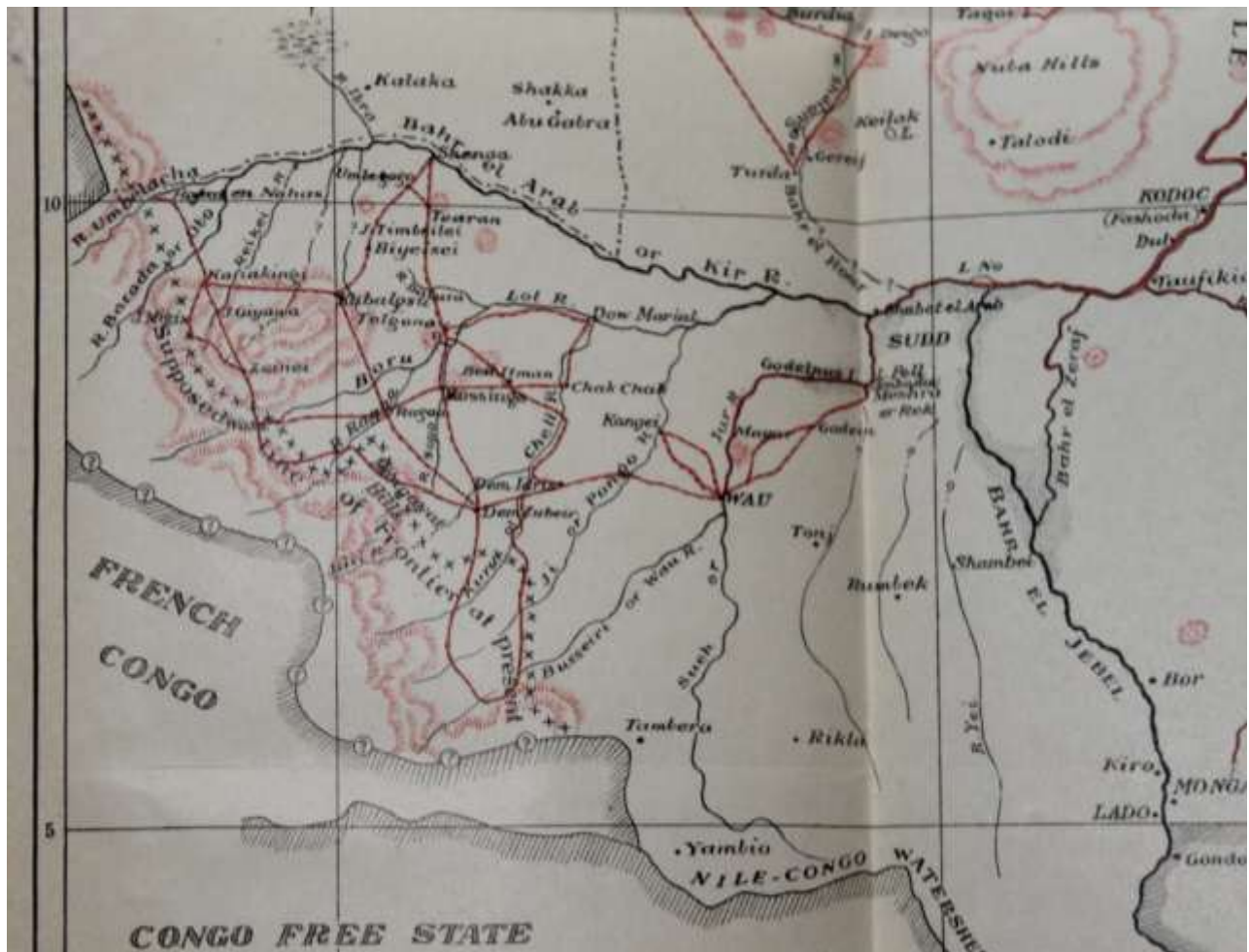


Figure 7. Map of Sudan circa 1905 showing journeys undertaken by Lieutenant French-Comyn.
Source: loose insert in Comyn's book "Service and Sport ..." [First Edition in author's collection].

A detailed survey of the copper deposits at Hofret was carried out by the Geological Survey Department of the Sudanese Ministry of Mineral Resources starting in 1957 (Afia and Widatalla, 1961). None of the local population had any memory of the mine being worked but many slag heaps confirmed the earlier workings. The survey proved the existence of over ten million tonnes of ore down to 500 feet containing an average of 2.78 per cent copper. It was estimated that 16 groups of former workings at the mine contained 185 377 tonnes of dumped material from earlier diggings with an average copper content of 1.53% (0.47 to 3.2% depending on the group) equivalent to 2843.68 tonnes of copper (Afia and Widatalla, 1961:114). Based on the results of 15 boreholes drilled to a depth of between 60 and 160 m by the survey the area contained 10.182 million tonnes of ore at an average copper content of 7.36% (1.318 to 8.400% in individual bores) for a total copper yield of 283 420 tonnes (Afia and Widatalla, 1961:120). Copper ores were also located over

a distance of 18 miles (29 km) in a strike running northeast to southwest.

Hofret en Nahas continued to receive mentions throughout the second half twentieth century but this was often in a political rather than a mineral production context. The authoritative USGS publication *Minerals Yearbook for 1997* (as cited in Mobbs (1997)) has only a very small section on Sudanese minerals with no mention of copper. There was slightly more information for 1999 where it is stated that a British company was exploring for copper in the Hofret en Nahas area (Mobbs, 1999).

TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

In the middle of the second decade of the twenty-first century attempts were made to characterize and process the copper sulphide ore of Hofret en Nahas. Mineralogical examinations indicated that chalcopyrite

was the main valuable copper mineral present with associated worthless minerals including pyrite, feldspar, quartz and calcite. A flotation feed that assayed 2.7% copper produced a concentrate that assayed about 23.5% copper at a recovery of 91.5% was obtained after only one roughing and one cleaning stage (Seifelnasr et al., 2017).

A statement in the 2018 report by the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of South Sudan, that copper is being exploited at Hofret en Nahas (UNEP, 2018:252) is probably wishful thinking. The same document indicates that copper-gold ore at Hofret en Nahas, as prospected by several companies, indicates reserves in the region of 40-60 million tonnes with an indicated chemical analysis of 1-5% of copper and up to 3 g of gold per tonne and that these ores are sometimes associated with radioactive minerals (UNEP, 201:253).

The annual reports in Minerals Yearbook of the USGS fluctuate to a considerable extent in their treatment of copper resources. Thus in some years copper is mentioned whereas in others it is not. With two exceptions (Yager, 2004; Taib, 2019) in the series from 1997 to 2019 Hofret en Nah as receives no recognition with most attention being given to the copper deposits in Red Sea Province.

A recent conference presentation which describes a newly discovered geological feature puts Hofret en Nahas firmly in South Sudan (Master et al., 2016). This geographical reference underlines the main problem of the twenty-first century and the major reason that Hofret en Nahas is often in the news. The so-called Kafia Kingi Enclave was part of Bahr el Ghazal province when then Anglo -Egyptian Sudan gained its independence as the Republic of Sudan on 1 January 1956.

In 1960, however, the area was transferred to Darfur province, Under the terms of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) the border between north (Republic of Sudan) and south (Republic of South Sudan) Sudan is defined as the boundary line at independence (Lavergne, 2012; Thomas, 2013). Thus, as clearly provided for by writ of the CPA the Kafia Kingi Enclave, including Hofret en Nahas, should be returned to the civilian administration of Western Bahr el Ghazal state in South Sudan. In addition, the 1972 Addis Agreement defined the "Southern Provinces of Sudan" as they were at independence and thus mandated a return to the South. The size of the Enclave with its (potential) rich mineral wealth will almost certainly ensure its continued occupation by the northern Republic of Sudan. Khartoum continues to grant concessions for exploration and development of Hofret's mineral resources that are taken up by major international mining companies including the Canadian giant Billiton and companies from Qatar that have established enterprises registered in northern Sudan to ensure administrative support (Saudi Gazette, 2013).

DISCUSSION

The mine at Hofret en Nahas has been known as a source of copper ore for several centuries. Its copper was greatly valued as a cultural and economic item in western Sudan and farther afield. It was used as an object of trade as early as the sixteenth century and Hofret copper was to be found far to the west. In spite of its multiple values it has never been exploited systematically and has been subject to extraction only spasmodically by traditional and primitive techniques. There appears to have been no exploitation at all since the very beginning of the twentieth century. The mine is regularly in part involved in (and partly the cause of) local conflicts by various factions inhabiting the surrounding areas (Giraffe Conservation Foundation, 2020).

Hofret en Nahas aroused interest as a curiosity in some early European explorers from the middle to the end of the nineteenth century and was visited and inspected by officials of the Sudanese government in the first decade of the twentieth century. Serious consideration of the possibility of commercial exploitation was pursued in the 1920s but constraints to its economic development – the nearest railhead at El Obeid 200 miles (320 km) away, extremely poor access by primitive tracks for only a few months of the year, the lack of a local labour force and the feeding of any such force – were paramount and assumed primacy over any nebulous economic benefit.

In recent years political conflict and the question of "ownership" of the geographical area and thus of the copper resource itself between the (northern) Republic of Sudan and the (southern) Republic of South Sudan have prevented any possibility of rational exploitation. The northern government is keen to increase the contribution of the mining sector to the national economy to which end it has granted concessions to national and international companies and conglomerates but these have preferred to put their expertise and their money in more accessible areas and away from potential international conflict. It is unlikely that the undoubtedly valuable resource that is the ore at and around Hofret en Nahas will be exploited in the foreseeable future.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author is grateful to Jon Hales for his invaluable assistance in identifying information sources and for conducting a thorough review of the manuscript. He also appreciates the contributions of two anonymous referees whose recommendations resulted in noteworthy

enhancements to the manuscript.

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Full Length Research Paper

Changes in the customary marriage traditions and their implication for the girl child: A gender perspective

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Received 31 July, 2023; Accepted 21 September, 2023

In Ghana, customary marriage traditions have witnessed some level of changes. This study examined these changes and their implications for the girl child development, using the Gurishies of Bongo in the Upper East Region as a case. Purposive and quota sampling techniques were employed to select 41 participants in a case study design. Face to face interview was employed in gathering primary data and were analysed thematically. The study found that the traditional processes of courtship is currently not strictly adhered to, elders and parents have less influence on the choice of partners, marriage by elopement has been reduced to unnoticeable level, and monetization of bride wealth payment in some instances. These changes have weakened the stability of marriages and increased in cases of teenage pregnancies. The changes equally, have liberated the girl child from the inadvertent abuse of forced marriage through elopement, circumcision, and denial of formal education. The study recommends the formation of all-inclusive advocacy groups including traditional authorities, women and men associations, to spearhead the protection and promotion of the rights of the girl child and women in consistent with the current realities without necessarily undermining the traditional heritage of the people.

Key words: Tradition, customary marriage, change, girl child, women.

INTRODUCTION

Customary marriage, the contraction of marriage traditionally by way of the payment of bride wealth is a practice prevalent in the world over, most especially, in Africa (Murdock, 1967). Nukunya (2003) wrote that, traditionally, customary marriage in Ghana is construed as a union between a man and a woman who have gone

through all the acceptable customary practices. These legitimate practices included the payment of bride wealth (Renya, 1984), family gatherings (Ozoemena, 2015), and libation prayers, exchange of gifts and captivating cultural performances (Lodonu et al., 2015). The marriage institution is thus a revered one with rules governing its

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practices (Murdock, 1967). According to Conteh (2016), bride wealth practices have been prevalent for millennia as a way for people to fulfill the conditions of marriage. Conteh (2016), claims that the transfer or exchange of commodities and services signifies a particular kind of contract between and among groups of people who share a common interest. Anthropological studies by Murdock (1967) and Renya (1984) have found that bride wealth is traded in Ghana as in a number of African marriages. They observed that this practice authenticates the marriage. In Ghana, the sanctity of customary marriage is guaranteed by the 1992 Constitution. Section 39(2) of the Republican Constitution of Ghana (1992) unequivocally indicated, 'The State shall ensure that appropriate customary and cultural values are adapted and developed as an integral part of the growing needs of the society as a whole; and in particular that traditional practices which are injurious to the health and wellbeing of the person are abolished'.

According to Akoto (2014), Africa traditions are a part of generational living experiences that meaningfully depict the present-day historical events. He maintains that in Africa, customs are the means by which the current historical events find meaningful expression. Consequently, Graburn (2001) indicated that traditions are continually being created, not in some past time immemorial, but during 'modernity'. He cited that after the agricultural and industrial revolutions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, rural traditions became the source of inspiration and identity in many European countries, particularly those like Finland, Ireland, Hungary, and the German principalities that had no prior independent statehood. Thus, tradition as a reservoir is the strength to draw upon, a source of historically defined identity, and a source of a sense of safety, specialness, or difference. It is in this realm that Gyekye (1997) conceived traditions as practices that are passed down and persist over at least three generations within an ethnic tribe. He compared tradition to cultural practice, pointing out that the two are not interchangeable. A cultural practice is not yet a tradition without the specified time and persistence elements. A cultural practice may arise and die within a generation or be passed down between generations. If it endures over three or more generations, it can then be called a tradition (Gyekye, 1997).

Abimbola (2015) noted that the major types of marriages that existed in the pre-colonial era as in Ghana were the cultural/traditional marriage. This type of marriage practice was determined by the prevalent traditions or religions which governed the society where the parties live in or where they originated from. It was and still revered as sacred and thus heavily guarded by various religions, traditions, social norms and laws (Renya, 1984). Ozoemena (2015) emphasized that customary marriages are not entered into secretly but are usually organised and planned with a lot of family gatherings orchestrated to such an extent that the

community must know that a man is now connected to the woman's family by marriage. It is considered as a means of bringing families and even communities together in many African traditions (Owurasah, 2015). Traditional marriage as among the Akan culture of Ghana entails the establishment of a stable relationship between individuals' families (Agyekum, 2012). This indicates that although marriage as an institution occurs between a man and a woman, families and the larger community have a significant impact on how marriage is established and maintained. Toth and Kemmelmeier (2009) studied on divorce phenomenon through a cultural lens, and found higher divorce rate in individualistic cultural societies as compared to socialist cultures. This accentuates the importance of communities in engendering marriage stability. Highlighting the value of marriage and its processes, Gesinde (2010) and Boomie (2010) observe that among the Yorubas of Nigeria, the customary marriage, also known as an engagement or traditional wedding, continues to be a significant part of the wedding ritual. In a similar view, Omobola (2013), claims that because marriage involves the union of two or more families, it is the obligation of the communities, not just the couple, in Yoruba culture. This is true because, historically, that is what society has defined as a man and a woman becoming married. This serves as more evidence that customary marriage is still seen as a significant rite in the majority of nations, even in modern times when most customary traditions have been rendered obsolete by civilization, education, religion, and modernism (Omobola, 2013).

The value of customary marriage is enhanced by the kind of rites that are associated with it. Normally visible with marriages are libation prayers, exchange of gifts and captivating cultural performances (Lodonu et al., 2015). Dowries and bride wealth play instrumental role in customary marriage. These are the well-known forms of traditional wedding gifts. A bride wealth payment is a financial or in-kind transfer made by or on behalf of the groom to the family of the bride upon the marriage. Contrarily, dowry payments entail a transfer from the bride's family to the groom's family following the marriage (Conteh, 2016). He noted that depending on the economic status of the groom, payment is typically done by the groom. However, family members of the groom can sometimes be collectively accommodating in helping the groom meet the cost of payment. The author also noted that there are cases when both the bride and groom families offer such as land and other valuables to the bride and groom to establish their new family. This, however, depends on the wealth status of both families. According to Anderson (2007), sub-Saharan Africa and several regions of Asia are both home to the practice of paying a bride wealth at the time of marriage. The Ancient Egyptians, Mesopotamians, Hebrews, Aztecs, and Incas all practiced this method. It has a lengthy history, going back at least to 3000 BCE. The author emphasized that historically and currently, the bride

wealth is frequently substantial; bridal wealth transfers are frequently greater than a year's worth of income and occasionally even seven or eight times as large.

Africa, as in Ghana, however has been mostly affected as a result of some vulnerability in the African cultural environment. As earlier hinted by Moore (1963), institutions have always been changing their forms and functions.

Grosz-Ngaté et al. (2014) however maintain that these changes have affected Africa more than many other places on earth. Notable among these forces of social change include internal realignment of political forces, others in the wake of civil wars, famine, floods and other natural disasters, western education, colonialism, the media, and the advent of missionary activities. These changes have all led people to reevaluate their lives, values, and ideals (Nukunya, 2003; Ushe, 2015). Consequently, the social norms and practices surrounding marriage have undergone both change and continuity with their implication for the development of the girl-child, especially in Ghana. This is in consonance with the social change theory which anchored the study.

Solaja (2020) construes social change as any significant alteration over time in behavior patterns and cultural values and norms. It may be driven by cultural, religious, economic, scientific or technological forces. It is premised that the changes that have taken place in the institution of the customary marriage in the Bongo Traditional area, the study locality are as a result of some of these forces. Apparently, their implications for the girl child development are less researched. While other researchers are more interested of the sacrosanct of the traditional heritage of the people (Akoto, 2014; Gyekye, 1997), others have looked at the dynamic nature of traditions (Nukunya, 2003). Yet, others simply look at how harmful traditional practices have been without necessarily examining their overall effects. This is the niche of the current study. The study has two main objectives. It sought to (1) interrogate the various changes that have taken place in the customary marriage from the past six decades, and (2) analyse the ramifications of these changes on the girl child development.

METHODOLOGY

This article employed the case study design grounded in the phenomenology tradition which holds that any attempt to understand social reality has to be couched in people's experiences. Custom and practices are grounded in people's belief systems and could properly be understood from the perspective of the people themselves. Given the philosophical underpinning and objectives of the study, qualitative case study design was considered as appropriate as it stimulated close interaction between the researchers and the research participants. This also helped the researchers to learn in detail, firsthand information as much as possible from the participants own viewpoints on the customary marriage practices, their dynamics and ramifications on the girl child development in the Bongo community. As argued by Leedy and Ormrod (2010), a case study design is useful for learning more

about a little known or poorly understood situation.

This explains why Robson (2002) espouses that a case study involves a firsthand study of a particular present phenomenon within its real-life context using multiple sources of evidence. This underscores the justification for the choice of the case study design in this current study.

As noted by Vinay (2017), non-probability research methods are best employed in phenomenological study and typically involve conducting interviews (Giorgi, 2009). The researchers thus used purposive and quota sampling methods in selecting the required participants of 41. The youngest was 43 years with the oldest been 88 years. For the purposes of anonymity, pseudonyms were used in the discussions. The experiences of the selected participants were tapped to provide answers to the research questions. The subjects whose experiences were targeted were married women and men (10 each), chiefs and elders (6), one queen mother, a land Priest, three institutions working on girl child development and gender parity in the study district, the older generations of sixty plus years (10). The sample size of the study was determined by the method of saturation which is employed in qualitative data collection. The commonly proposed criterion for determining when sufficient sample size has been reached in qualitative research is saturation (Charmaz, 2003; Merriam, 2009) usually construed as reaching a point of informational redundancy where additional data collection contributes little or nothing new to the study. For the purpose of data collection, face to face interview with the aid of interview guide was utilized to gather the relevant information. Data generated were verified through a follow up interviews and thereby analysed thematically. The recorded information was first transcribed and categorized. Quotes were used in presenting the information.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Changes in the traditional customary practices and their implications

The study first sought to establish the nature of changes in the traditional customary practices of the people of Bongo. As argued by Grosz-Ngaté et al. (2014), time will never remain the same and that the world is changing with our values. In response to the question, all the forty-one (41) respondents admitted that there have been changes in the practice of customary marriage even though a few of the marriages have tried following the strict traditional procedure as existed in the past.

Shifts in courtship and circumcision practices

According to Adamu (pseudonym) the 88 year-old man who has lived his entire life in the traditional area, one of the numerous changes is the ambiguous procedure in contracting marriages as it is hardly to observe the traditional marriage arrangements in Bongo. He indicated that the traditional processes of courtship are less adhered to by most of the people, especially the educated ones. This is because the present generation think that traditions are out-dated and not worthy of keeping and practicing. In his frustration he lamented thus:

"The youth think that what we have inherited from our ancestors are outmoded and do not make sense. They have been brainwashed by what they see today in the television and think that we are 'kolo,' that is out of fashion. My son you can see that they are divorcing their wives far more than we did".

The information indicated that the process of contracting marriage has hugely altered. It also suggests that the stability of marriage has been eroded given rise to perceived frequent divorce. This current study supports Toth and Kemmelmeier (2009) findings which revealed higher divorce rate is common among individualistic cultural societies as compared to that socialist culture. This accentuates the importance of communities in engendering marriage stability. This finding confirms what Grosz-Ngate et al. (2014) have indicated. They reiterated that changes of cultural practices and values cut across all nations in the World. They were however quick to add that, these changes have affected Africa the most. This could suggest that acculturation has been strong among African countries but not Ghana lone.

Mr Courage, a 75-year-old man emotionally explains that, nowadays a man and woman meet outside for instance in a market centre and courtship begins and after that marriage can immediately take place without the family involvement. He further expressed that in present times, parents hardly know the boyfriends or suitors of their daughters. They pick their boyfriends and marry them without the prior knowledge of the parents. The girl packs her belongings and joins the man in his house. Sometimes the man does not know the house or parents of the girl and would have to make enquiries either from the girl or from the community, before visiting the parents of the girl, to inform them of their marriage. While laughing he indicated:

"Parents are only informed after the children have taken a decision that they are married and there is nothing you can do because they are uncontrollable. Your daughter can leave your house and stay with a man for months. It is when their actions lead to pregnancy that they may begin to consider marriage in the traditional form."

Mr. Courage blamed this misbehaviour to the fact that girls are no longer circumcised, so because of that they are lustful and therefore find it difficult to control themselves. This endorses the reason why there was so much resistance against the campaign to stop female genital mutilation, which was so rampant in the District. The study found that one other change that used to be a condition before marriage was women circumcision. As revealed in the study, it was perceived that no woman could have a happy marriage without going through the circumcision. The supposition was that if any woman bore children without having to go through this, the children were being disrespected, insulted and looked

down upon. These children were being referred to as 'Clitoris children.' They were considered as stubborn because their mother gave birth to them without going through the rite of circumcision. These derogatory remarks and insults were also affecting their mothers. So no woman wanted to go through such an experience, despite the pains and difficulties they experience after. All the participants informed the researchers that such practice does no longer exist in the communities. An elderly woman (73 years) expressed:

'I have not seen or heard of this done anywhere in the traditional area for a long time now. The Police and Social welfare people will arrest any person who does that. Even the chiefs now do not support it. If it is practiced at all, it may be possible with the communities outside our jurisdiction that is those across the borders of Ghana'.

The key informants and 23 others however, had a contrary view, indicating that in as much as the traditional practice of circumcision sought to reduce the sexual drive of the girl- child, such practice actually was dehumanised as it came with a lot of complication and bemoaned the practice in the past. To them government policy targeting female circumcision has been a laudable one. One of them indicated:

'Notwithstanding the wisdom behind this practice, it negatively undermines the sacrosanct of the girl child. Traditional authorities could find other better alternatives to deal with sexual drive of young girls rather than subjecting them to circumcision which has dangerous consequences on their health, emotional and physical development'.

The emerging theme is that all the participants have identified the dangers of early sex among the girl child. The picture is that the approach to early sexual life among girls however, was detrimental to the development of the girl child. This also means that the change in such a practice has protected the girl child from injurious but unintended practice of abuse. The assertion that parents are less involved in contraction of marriage signalled that the traditional concept of marriage which is not just a union between a man and a woman but families, is defeated and could explain why marriage is perceived as unstable compared to the past. As argued by Omobola (2013), marriage involves the union of two or more families, and it is the communal responsibility of the people to ensure that it succeeds. This assertion was validated by Madam Patience (59 years). She explained:

'The effects of the non-adherence to the customary marriage procedure means that the interactions that use to take place between families before marriage as agreed upon are virtually absent. There is no extensive background investigation of the partners.'

For this reason, traditional marriage is no longer forging any strong relationship between families, clans and communities. It is now a relationship that is limited to two or few individuals. The entire extended family is no longer involved in most instances. This, therefore, does not lead to a united extended family, that has love among its members and cares for the welfare of all members’.

In corroboration Madam Bawa (45 years) pointed out that:

‘There is lack of parental control and respect. The children no longer get closer to their parents and elders for advice. Now it is very difficult to monitor the children’s movement, especially the girls. So because of this, they engage in relationships with the opposite sex without the knowledge of the parents. Sometimes these relationships result into unwanted pregnancies and marriages without the consent of the parents. In the olden days both the father and mother had roles they played in providing education about life in general and in the area of gender roles and family issues. Now it is very difficult to carry out these parental responsibilities’.

The emerging idea is that the social change as experienced is affecting society in general creating a system of instability and insecurity in marriage and social life. As the social change theory espoused, society is likened to a living organism which has interdependent parts. This means that a malfunctioning with one organ (institution/instability of marriage) is likely to affect the whole fabric of society. This calls for a reconsideration of contemporary marriage arrangement which is said to be virtually devoid of family (parents) contribution as identified in the study.

Monetization of bride wealth

One other change, as identified in the study in contemporary time is monetization of bride wealth with its ramification on marriage security of women as pointed out by 18 participants. Madam Abiba (38 years) explained as follows:

‘Monetization of bride wealth - the payment of the bride wealth in cash, is not dignified. What happens here is that the suitor and the in-laws make a market survey of prizes of cows that are suitable for the traditional bride wealth payment and then the animals are converted into cash as payment for the bride wealth instead of the traditional use of hoes, axes and cattle. Payments of bride wealth with cash principally have been conducted by people who have migrated outside the community, especially to the southern sector of the country. Women are now

bought like slave with cash. This affects their reputation and that of the community they come from’.

In support of the assertion, Madam Agrawe (87 years) recounted,

‘The problem with this payment is that, there is usually no witness involved in this deal, as a result, this can generate into a problem in the future because there are no records kept in this transaction. Regarding the bride wealth payment using animals, what happens is that the cows usually would be driven out from the man’s house to the full glare of the community and taken to the in-laws by a witness who is known as the pogkigra. The larger community members indirectly witness the unification between the married couples and the entire families.

A participant, a teacher (49 years old) was of the view that giving out a daughter for money is like she is being sold out. He remarked:

‘Now people even bargain with their in-laws as if they are selling a commodity. In one marriage that I witnessed, they had to bargain for long before they finally settled on an amount. The family of the lady wanted them to pay GHS1, 600.00 (about 160 US dollars) per cow and that they needed two cows and they too felt that it was too much and offered to pay GHS 1,400.00 per cow (about 140 US dollars). Their reason for demanding a reduction was that, the man was in school and also needed money to pay his school fees. This went to and fro until they settled at GHS1, 500.00 per cow (about 150 US dollars). So instead of cows they paid GHS 3,000. 00 (about 300 US dollars) to represent two cows. To me this monetization of bride wealth is “like selling the woman’.

A section of the participants (24) however were of the view that the change of bride wealth to cash is necessitated by a factor of convenience and see nothing wrong with it. They expressed that as a result of the difficulty of shepherding the cattle, due to limited grazing land and labour scarcity as the children now have to go to school, the payment of the bride wealth in cash could be acceptable. This revelation suggests that due to the changing social and economic conditions of society, it is increasingly becoming not feasible to pay cow or other materials either than the payment of cash in this cash economy. The study also suggests that the traditional bride wealth payment in the form of cattle denied children, both boys and girls from attending school as they have to take care of those cattle involved. Chiweshe (2016) in his study found that many individuals did not see the monetization of bride wealth to be a concern

because bridal money is viewed as a significant component of African cultural identity, so women as well as men defend the practice. Also, Chabata (2012) in his studies found that, married women claimed the bride wealth confers status on them, because the payment of a sizable sum of money as bride wealth conveys the value of the recipient.

Abandonment of elopement

A noticeable change as in traditional marriage system which has a major implication for the girl child as gathered from 36 participants was marriage by elopement, a situation where girls are captured and taken as wives virtually without their knowledge or consent. This practice was however, an acceptable traditional marriage arrangement. While few participants (8) were of the view that this practice guaranteed the safety of the girl child's marriage (future), overwhelming majority (29) expressed that it was not dignified and undermined the right of choice of the girl. The participants indicated that marriage is a lifelong union and people should be given the opportunity to decide whom they want to marry. Some participants expressed as follows:

'This forced marriage was only limited to the girl child. The boy-child was allowed to grow and make his choice of the lady he desires to marry. Sometimes the family identifies a girl they think is suitable for him to marry and he has the right to decline or accept. "ba ka perigre budibla ti a zona tampugre," (you do not force a man against his will to marry)'

'Marriage by elopement is hardly practiced again in our communities which is very good. This way of marriage was less dignifying and disrespectful to womanhood. A girl is forcefully given to marriage to a man by her parents. They did not even consider the maturity of the girl. They only used physical appearance as a benchmark as a sign of maturity to force the girl into marriage'

"This practice was forced to stop because of enforcement of laws by the state agencies especially the police. Elopement is now considered as an act of kidnapping and anyone found doing that is considered a criminal, and for that matter, can be punished by the law. What happens now is that lovers who want to enter into marriage relationship reach a mutual consensus to marry."

The emerging theme was that the practice of elopement was discriminatory against the girl child and denied her opportunity to access education. It also implies that the advent of civil law and other forms of activism have contributed to the change in traditional marriage arrangements. This way of marriage as the study found

was abusive and undermined the rights of women, for that matter the girl child. The girl had no right to make choices as to whom they should marry. The system also promotes early marriage regardless as to its social, economic and psychological consequences on the girl's development. This could explain why the Ghana's Children's Act (1998) (Act 560) prohibits the idea of forced marriage. It also defines a child as any person below the age of 18, and as such, should be given the needed care and protection. Section 14 of the Act clearly indicates that 'No person shall force a child to be married, to be betrothed and to be subjected to a dowry transaction'. It also indicated that the minimum age of marriage of whatever kind shall be eighteen years. This means that the changes that have taken place in terms of elopement have positively improved the quality of the girl child. This finding supports Ushe's (2015) claim that, some changes in traditional practices improve the quality of life while others create conflict and stress.

Summary

From the foregoing findings and discussions, the general picture is that the changes in customary marriage practices as in the Bongo community have both positive and negative consequences on the development of the girl child. As rightly argued by Akurugu et al. (2021), Horne et al. (2013) and Posel and Rudwick (2013), bride wealth performs important and conflicting roles in securing yet confounding various kinds of rights and entitlements such as dignity, recognition and respect for the conjugal couples in most (patrilineal) societies. Nonetheless, the practice equally tends to deepen existing gender disparities between men and women (Akurugu et al., 2021). While there is the need to strengthen the best customary marriage practices, those found to be inimical to the growth and development of the girl child and women in general, have to be abandoned and reinforced by law.

Conclusion

The study interrogated the changes in the customary marriage of Bongo Traditional Area over the past 60 years. The study found that the advent of formal education, civil laws and human rights and gender activism, have resulted in the changes in traditional marriage arrangements of courtship and circumcision, monetization of bride wealth and elopement. From gender perspective, the various changes have both positive and negative implications. Instability of marriage due to less parental involvement in marriage arrangement, and perceived frequency of unwanted and teenage pregnancy are blamed on disregard to some traditional marriage processes which hitherto guaranteed

marriage stability and family life. The study also found that due to certain changes, girls are now free to access education, determine as and when they want to marry and the person they prefer to be the life partner. The changes have also liberated the girl child from early marriage and circumcision who hitherto affected the physical, emotional and psychological development of the girl due to pain and stress. These changes are in consonance with the change theory which anchored the study.

The study concluded that cultural traditions are dynamic and changes are bound to take place. Society therefore needs to uphold the good practices and at the same time, abandon those that are injurious to the development of the girl in particular.

Recommendations

On the basis of the study findings, it is recommended that advocacy groups should be formed at the local levels, consisting of women and men associations in conjunction with traditional authorities, opinion leaders and civil society organizations (CSOs) who actually understand the plight of the girl child and women and would want to protect and promote their rights without necessarily undermining the cultural heritage of the people. As espoused by the 1992 Constitution of Ghana, appropriate customary and cultural values are required to meet the needs of the people, however, those found to be detrimental to the health and safety of the people should be eradicated.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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Full Length Research Paper

Equines on the Islands of Malta from the tenth to the twenty-first centuries AD

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Received 21 October, 2023; Accepted 4 December, 2023

Donkeys probably first arrived on Malta 3000 years ago. The first written record appears in the late tenth century when wild donkeys were present on an unoccupied Malta and were captured by itinerant traders for export, mainly to Sicily. In 1091 Sicily invaded Malta and confiscated all the inhabitants' horses and mules. Horse numbers declined from 600 animals in 1565 to 130 by 1638. Donkeys were always most numerous: 732 were exported between 1589 and 1611 along with 199 mules and 6 horses. Equines were pack and riding animals and worked in agriculture until horse-drawn carriages were introduced in the late eighteenth century: horse-drawn omnibuses arrived in the 1850s. Equines were phased out from traditional activities with the introduction of the internal combustion engine but donkeys had a continued urban presence until the mid-twentieth century working for peripatetic traders. Horse transport resurged briefly during World War II when vehicle fuel was scarce. Between 1961 and 1984 donkey numbers declined from 2383 animals to 500, mules regressed from 1599 to 300 and horse numbers fell from 1906 to 890. No reliable population data are available since the mid-1980s. In the 2020s horse numbers have built up for sport (dressage, show jumping, racing and polo), leisure and tourism but donkeys and mules are no longer important.

Key words: Foreign invasions, beasts of burden, agricultural operations, horse-drawn vehicles, trade, equine sports.

INTRODUCTION

The Republic of Malta is an archipelago in the Eastern Basin of the Mediterranean Sea, lying 50 miles (80 km) south of Sicily (Italy), 176 miles (284 km) east of Tunisia and 207 miles (333 km) north of Libya. The archipelago comprises three inhabited islands (Malta, Gozo and Comino) and 18 uninhabited islets (CIA, 2023). Malta, with limited exceptions, has been inhabited for about 7000 years. Due to its strategic location in the Mediterranean it has been subject to several invasions and occupations by various cultures. The Phoenicians colonised the islands almost three thousand years ago

(800-700 BC) and used them to extend their trading activities throughout the Mediterranean area, North Africa and southwestern Europe. The Carthaginians from their base in Tunisia then occupied Malta for some time until they were ousted in 218 BC by the Roman Republic (History Extra, 2023).

The Romans in turn were expelled by the Byzantine Empire in the fourth century AD which retained possession of the archipelago until the ninth century. An invasion by Arabs who introduced Islam took place in 870 AD. Muslim rule came to an end when the Normans

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conquered the island in 1091 and the islands were completely re-Christianised by 1249.

The islands were part of the Kingdom of Sicily until 1530 when Charles V of Spain gave them in perpetual lease to the Order of Knights of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem (Luttrell, 1975). Napoleon invaded the islands in 1798 but his hegemony was very brief. In 1800 the Maltese recovered the islands with the aid of the British (History Extra, 2023). In what was a most extraordinary event in the history of the British Empire, which was largely expanded through conquest, in 1802 the Maltese requested Britain to assume sovereignty over the islands which declared it a British Colony in 1814. A proposal in 1956 to integrate Malta into the United Kingdom did not come to pass as the British people were reluctant for this to happen. Malta became an independent country in 1964 but retained the British Sovereign as its Head of State until 1974 when it became a Republic. The Republic joined the European Union in 2004 (Rudolf and Berg, 2010). This paper reviews the history of equines on the archipelago over a period of more than one thousand years from the tenth to the twenty-first centuries. As far as can be ascertained it is the first synthesis of the presence and activities of donkeys, mules and horses on the islands of Malta to be published in both the national and international scientific literature. It thus broadens and provides a more comprehensive view of the activities of equines over a long period and how external factors have influenced the social and economic roles of this group of domestic animals.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This paper is based in part on a visit to Malta in April and May 2023. During this period, informal and unstructured verbal discussions were undertaken with various interested parties, including administrators and officials of the various equine sports associations, the owners and operators of the tourist carriages known as *karozzin* and the Agriculture Centre and Innovation Hub of the Maltese government were made.

The main sources of information, however, were from a thorough internet search and literature review relating to equines in the archipelago. Terms included in the search (no restrictions or limits) the internet search, all preceded by Malta or Maltese were: Geography, history, equines, horses, mules, donkeys, asses and equine sports. No recent international sources or publications on Maltese equines were found during the internet search.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Do not call your brother an ass, for you are his next of kin (Maltese proverb)

Tenth to fifteenth centuries

The date on which equines first arrived in Malta is not known with any certainty. One authority believes,

however, that it was at the time of the Phoenicians some 3000 years ago as they expanded and consolidated their empire (Dent, 1972:152-153). It was nonetheless sure to have been a considerable time before the end of the first millennium AD. Testament to this is by Ibn Hauqa, the Arab Muslim writer, geographer and chronicler. He travelled around the Mediterranean towards the end of the tenth century and records that Malta was uninhabited at the time but was occasionally visited by people who rounded up wild donkeys there. These were then shipped to mainland Europe, mainly Sicily where they were sold and put to work on a variety of tasks (Gabrieli, 1961).¹

The islands were gradually repopulated from Sicily during the eleventh century. In 1091 the Norman Count Roger of Sicily invaded and conquered the islands. In one battle, the Count with as few as thirteen knights on horseback massacred many of the resident population, the remainder being forced to surrender all their horses and mules to him together with all their weapons (Luttrell, 1975).

In the fourteenth century, blocks of land known as fiefs were granted to individuals on condition of military service by one or more armed men on horseback in the king's military forces (Wettinger, 1982). At the beginning of the fifteenth century, horses were relatively scarce in agriculture as oxen were preferred

Sixteenth to eighteenth centuries

The Maltese islands have for long been dependent on imports of food from abroad which necessarily arrived by sea. Travel to gain access to and supply the interior, other than by foot, was by mule or donkey. As a result, a trade centred on buying and selling these kinds of stock developed, not only for internal trade for use in Malta but also for export to Sicily and elsewhere overseas (Cassar, 1996).

In the late fifteenth century, persons arriving at Malta by sea were able to hire donkeys for the journey from the coast to the then capital of Mdina, some eight miles (12.9 km) inland (Cassar, 1996).² Even so travel was very difficult in winter: in 1575, for example, the parish priest of Rabat was unable to travel to outlying villages at times in order to administer extreme unction to his parishioners. A small force of horse cavalry was maintained in Malta but other than that horses were very scarce in the country. So rare, in fact that the Grand Master of the Knights ordered his representative in Palermo to obtain stallions

¹ In the Maltese language, which is largely derived from the western Arabic spoken in Sicily and Spain in the Middle Ages, donkey is *hmar*, mule is *baghal* and horse is *ziemel*. *Humr* (حمار) is the modern Arabic word for donkey and an Arabic base can be recognized in many Maltese words in agricultural terms and in many other areas when travelling around the island.

² Much of the immediately following text is based on Cassar as much of his text is derived from obscure manuscript and archival sources which were not available to the Author of this paper.

Table 1. Equine exports from Malta at the end of the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth centuries.

Period	Species				Total
	Donkey	Mule	Horse	Unspecified	
1589-1595	28	18	0	0	46
1596-1600	302	772	3	0	382
1601-1605	121	35	1	0	157
1605-1611	281	69	2	20	372
Total	732	199	6	20	957
Percentage/a	76.5	20.8	0.6	2.1	100

A - Percentage of species of total exports.

Source: Cassar, 1996 (from his source: MCC Reg. Patentarum II-IV: 1581-1611).

in Sicily and ship them to Malta.

The horse shortage persisted for a considerable time with the complement of 600 horses in the country in 1565 being reduced to 130 by 1638, compelling the Grand Master issuing an Edict forbidding the export of horses without a licence. During this period, mules continued to be in considerable demand due to their load carrying capacity and sturdy nature and they were used to transport artillery by the Ottoman army in its attempt to conquer Malta during the great siege of 1565 (Cassola, 1999).

Exports of equines, particularly donkeys, were clearly a profitable business. Between 1589 and 1611, a total of 957 beasts of burden were exported on 146 voyages by vessels which departed from Malta (Table 1) with variations in numbers in individual years. The destination of most of these animals was usually Sicily or other Italian ports although at least one animal went to Marseilles. Donkeys were in great demand in Sicily where they were very cheap to buy and very cheap to keep: in 1565, for example, a donkey was valued at 15 scudi whereas a pregnant (horse) mare was worth 50 scudi.

As early as the seventeenth century (but possibly as early as the fourteenth century) bareback horse and donkey races were held at a major festival known as "mnarja" near Mdina to celebrate the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul (Pullicino, 1949). The prizes for the winners of these races are "palji" (special brocaded banners) which the winners traditionally donate to their village church to be used as an altar cloth. The festival continues to the present and the feast day of 29 June is a public holiday in Malta.

The Maltese donkey is not recorded as a breed in the authoritative dictionary of Mason (1996). The same source, however, somewhat strangely in view of its absence from the main listing, notes it as a contributor to the gene pool of the American Mammoth Jackstock. This well-known and magnificent breed has its origins in two jack (male) donkeys imported from Europe. In 1785, George Washington, first President of the United States

of America, decided his country needed better mules (Howard, 2016). He petitioned King Charles IV of Spain for some of his large Spanish donkeys. The outcome was the arrival of a jack known as Royal Gift that stood 16 hands (162 cm) at the withers. In 1786, the Marquis de Lafayette, a French aristocrat who had fought with Washington in the American War of Independence sent him a Maltese Jack standing at 14 hands (142 cm) known as the Knight of Malta.

From these two imports, both of which Washington hired out at stud (Figure 1), he bred a strain of donkeys that became the "Compound" whose mules were stronger, hardier and cost three times as much as a working horse (Howard, 2016). Further jacks were imported from Malta over the years and were used to breed riding and carriage mules whereas Spanish jacks were used to get heavy draught mules (Dent, 1972:108). GWP Custis, the great-step-grandson of Washington and a plantation owner in the state of Virginia, wrote:

The Knight was of mediocre size, clean limbed, great activity, the fire and ferocity of a tiger, a dark brown, nearly a black colour, white belly and muzzle, could be managed only by one groom and that always at considerable risk. His mules were all active, spirited and serviceable, and from stout mares attained considerable size (Dent, 1972: 108).

Nineteenth century

Ridden mules, donkeys, and to a lesser extent, horses were the main means of transport until the end of the eighteenth century. As that period ended, when the Knights of St John controlled the islands, a few wheeled vehicles, mainly farm carts (Maltese = il-karettun), were used as people transport, but the caleche (Maltese = il-kaless) had appeared by the middle of the eighteenth century (Chetcuti, 2018)³. Some 1200 carts and 900 caleches were registered by 1830 (Miège, 1841). The caleche became popular in Valletta and the urban areas

ROYAL GIFT, AND THE KNIGHT OF MALTA, two valuable JACK ASSES,

WILL cover Mares and Jennies at MOUNT-VERNON, this Spring, for Five Guineas the Season.

The first, is of the most valuable Race in the Kingdom of Spain.—The other, lately imported from Malta, by the Way of Paris, is not inferior.—ROYAL GIFT, (now 5 Years old) has increased remarkably in Size since he covered last Year—and not a Jenney, and scarcely a Mare to which he went, miss'd.—THE KNIGHT OF MALTA will be 3 Years old this Spring—is near 14 Hands high—most beautifully formed for an Ass—and extremely light, active and sprightly.—Comparatively speaking, he resembles a fine Courser.

These two JACKS seem as if designed for different Purposes equally valuable.—The first, by his Weight and great Strength, to get Mules for the slow and heavy Draught.—The other, by his Activity and Sprightliness, for quicker Movements on the Road.—The Value of Mules, on account of their Longevity, Strength, Hardiness and cheap keeping, is too well known to need Description.

M A G N O L I O

Stands at the same Place, for FOUR POUNDS the Season.—The Money, in every Case, is to be paid at the Stable, before the Mares or Jennies are taken away.—No Accounts will be kept.—Good Pasture, well enclosed, will be provided, at Half a Dollar per Week, for the Convenience of those who incline to leave their Mares, and every reasonable Care will be taken of them; but they will not be insured against Theft or Accidents.

JOHN FAIRFAX, OVERSEER.

Mount-Vernon, March 12, 1787.

Figure 1. Notice for the services of George Washington's donkey jack.
Source: <https://americanmuleassociation.org/say-anything/the-royal-jack-and->

around the Grand Harbour. It comprised a rough cabin slung between a pair of shafts on leather straps. Unlike most 2-wheeled vehicles in which the passenger compartment sits over the axle, in the caleche, it was located before the axle. All the weight of the contraption and its passenger(s) was thus borne by the horse or mule. The large-diameter wheels were of hard wooden spokes covered by a thick iron tire. Drawn by a single animal, the caleche was directed by a man walking at the side of the vehicle (Figure 2a). Some vehicles carried lamps, which allowed their use at night. The cabin was usually painted black or dark green and was sometimes adorned with the coat of arms of the owner. The interior might be upholstered with very fine fabric or damask, and curtains offered not only privacy but also protection from the elements⁴.

As there was little or no suspension, a caleche ride was very rough. Seasoned military campaigners also found it so, as epitomized by a veteran of the Napoleonic wars in Egypt: Caleches were "very clumsy awkward carriages... which shake the unfortunate passengers to pieces" (Walsh, 1803). Even the caleche, however, was unable to travel to some places over the very bad tracks (Swan, 1826:86). As early as 1820, a British writer wrote travellers' guides: The ninth edition of her guide provided

information on Maltese transport. She stated 2-wheel carriages in general use, drawn by one horse, could be hired by the day at 3 shillings 6 pence or by the half-day at 2 shillings; the few 4-wheeled carriages with two horses cost 7 shillings for the day or 4 shillings 2 pence for the half-day, and horses could be hired for 3 shillings and 2 shillings for the day and half-day (Starke, 1836:469). In late 1836, a gentleman meandering around the Mediterranean and southeastern Europe traveled by caleche in Malta, describing it as "a covered vehicle drawn by one horse or mule with a very high straddle, the driver walks by the side or occasionally sits on the shaft" (Burton, 1838:15).

If the caleche was uncomfortable, better was to come. The 4-wheel enclosed carriage known as a karozzin (Maltese = karozzin) was introduced to Malta in 1856. A comfortable ride for four passengers; it was also better for the driver who oversaw the one or two horses, sitting on a bench at the front of the passenger compartment. The karozzin quickly became a popular means of transport both for intraurban and longer journeys to the outlying villages. It was a particularly sought-after vehicle for family outings and for church trips on Sunday. The karozzin gradually lost its importance, perhaps in part with the advent of horse-drawn omnibuses. In the 2020s,

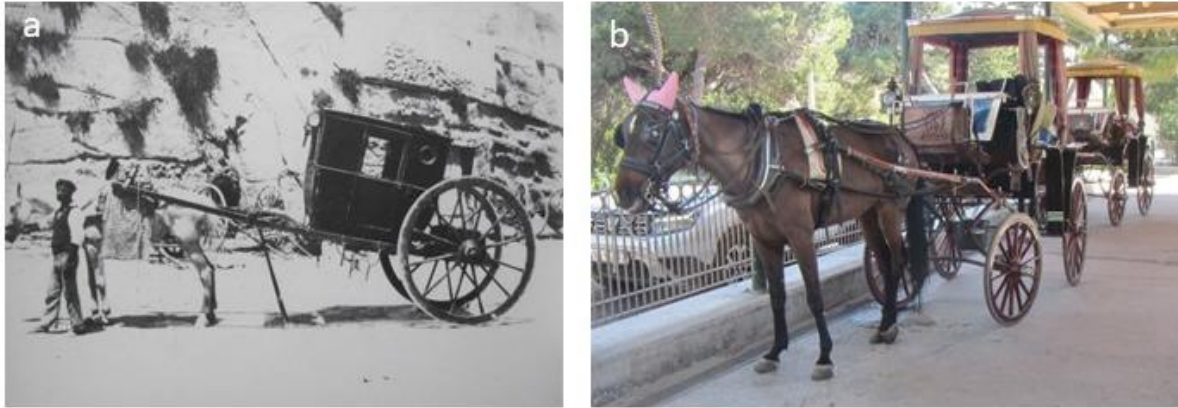


Figure 2a. - a Caleche (kaless) in Malta 1856. b - a Karozzin awaiting custom at Mdina in April 2023.
Source: Photo by Lea Francis Ellis on flickr <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/784118985135339389/>; Photo by the Author, 28 April 2023).

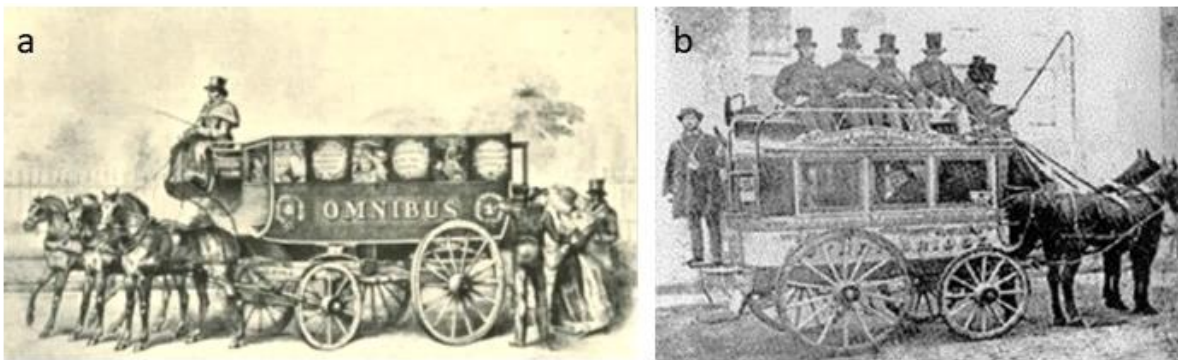


Figure 3a. - a 16-seat omnibus of the first batch to arrive in 1856 (note 3-horse harnessing); b - a 27-seater of the second batch.

Source: <https://ohmyalta.com.mt/2020/06/26/the-evolution-of-transport-in-malta/>;
<https://vassallohistory.wordpress.com/maltese-public-transport-since-1856-a-brief-history-of-the-public-transport-in-malta-the-omnibus-up-to-the-mid-1800s-the-only-means-of-human-transport-w/>.

the carriage is seen in Valletta and Mdina where it serves the tourist industry with short (and expensive!) turns around the popular sites (Figure 2b). Other types of horse-drawn vehicles were also used in small numbers. The landau was more elongated than the normal carriage and had closed doors and windows: This vehicle was used by the island's bishop and by His Royal Highness the Duke of York (later King George V of Great Britain and incidentally the King of the Crown Colony of Malta) in 1901 (Duncan, 2019). Two other types of carriage were the wagonette said to be a roofless carriage and the 4-wheel phaeton with open seating on a long bench (Duncan, 2019).

People transport became easier in 1856 with the introduction of horse-drawn omnibuses. In October, the first 16-seater bus (Figure 3a) arrived in Malta from England. About the same time, six buses were bought, each with a capacity of 27 persons (Figure 3b), along

with horses to draw these. On 2 November, ten horses arrived by ship. The first two buses arrived on 4 January 1857, followed by two more on 11 January when operations were started on a route from Valletta to Lija, followed by the route Valletta to Saint Julian on 19 January. The horse buses operated successfully for several years but became the subject of competition when the railway from Valletta to Mdina started operations in 1883.

More competition arrived in 1905 with the advent of an electric tram service. Shortly afterwards, all these modes of transport were ousted by the introduction of buses operating with internal combustion engines. Throughout the nineteenth century (and into the early twentieth), the less noble equines that were the mule and the ass gave sterling service to agriculture in ploughing the arable lands (Figure 4a), in lifting water from underground sources to the surface to be used in irrigation (Figure 4b),

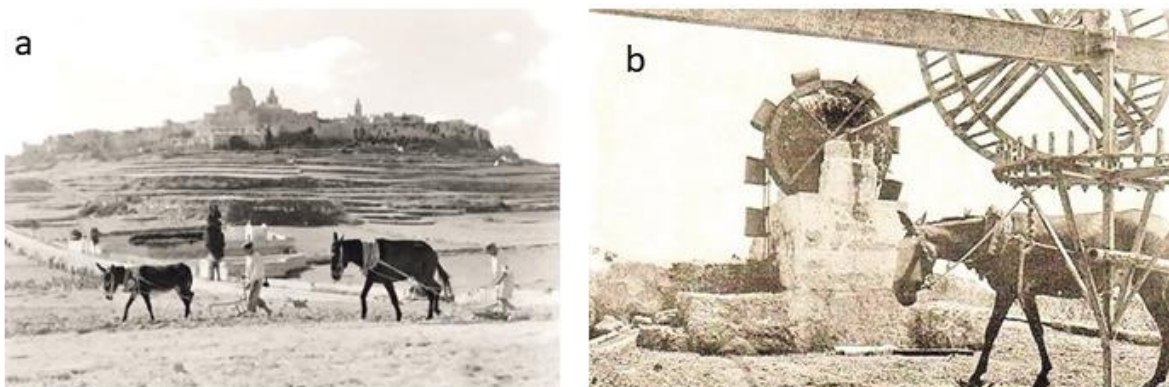


Figure 4. Equines in the service of man in the mid nineteenth century: a - donkey and mule with wooden ploughs below the city of Mdina; b - mule operating a mill (“sienja”) to lift groundwater for surface irrigation.
Source: <https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/an-1841-account-of-agricultural-activity-in-malta-by-dominique-miege>.

and in many other ways on the land and in drawing carts laden with the fruits of that land. A “Cavalry Section” was formed in the Malta police force in 1860 (Vassallo, 2018). It was, however, the presence of the British Army and the Royal Navy in the United Kingdom’s colony of Malta that was a boon for horses. Many officers of these armed forces were of the higher echelons of society, and they brought higher-class horses as individuals for their leisure and pleasure times.

Officers of the Armed Forces were often competitive, and soon their minds and deeds turned to competitive sport. In 1868, a few keen enthusiasts, including not only Army and Navy officers but also some local sportsmen, decided to found a racing association. A Malta Race Committee was founded, and the Marsa area was selected as the site for the racetrack, which quickly became, at one and three-quarter miles (2800 m), the longest in Europe. Funds were initially difficult, and members had to rely mainly on their personal assets. The first meeting of seven events, including the “Malta Grand National Steeplechase” of two miles (3200 m), was open to English, Arab, Barb, and Spanish horses and took place on 12 to 13 April, 1869. Whereas one of the first races was a steeplechase (that is, a track with fences and other obstacles that have to be jumped over), most races were flat races (no obstacles) in which, until at least the outbreak of World War One, the jockeys were also the owners of the horses (Vassallo History, 2023). Claimed to be the second oldest club in the world behind the Calcutta Polo Club of India and the oldest in Europe, the Malta Polo Club was founded in 1868 by British Army and Royal Navy officers stationed on the island and by others who were either on their way to or returning home from India. The Cavalry regiments and the Royal Navy’s Mediterranean fleet were the first teams to play on the island. The Earl Mountbatten of Burma, a former president of the Club, introduced Maltese players to the game and personally taught many who were interested in this novel sport (Anon, 2023).

Twentieth century

The Royal Navy Polo Association (RNPA) was founded in Malta in 1929 by Admiral of the Fleet Lord Keyes, commanding the Royal Navy Mediterranean Fleet. Before then, however, the Cawnpore Cup was initiated in India in 1901 and transferred to Malta in 1947 when India became independent. When the Royal Navy withdrew from Malta in the 1960s, the RNPA and its ponies returned to the UK but the Cawnpore Cup is still contested at the Malta Polo Club (Anon, 2017). The Rundle Cup, named after the Colonial Governor of the time, was first competed for in 1915 when it was won by the Royal Navy team and last contested in Malta in 1966 when it was won by the Army: It is still contested in England on an annual basis.³

In the 1930s (and probably before), the Royal Navy put out contracts for transporting supplies and material among RN establishments on Malta, mostly from the Dockyard to other locations (Anon, 2011). A contractor was to supply horses or mules (note no donkeys), harness, carts, drivers and laborers as demanded by the superintending officer. Animals were to be strong, full-sized, well-made, not old or battered, sound, well-fleshed, in good condition, free from sores, and in all respects fit for the services to be supplied. The contractor had to provide and keep repaired all harnesses, collars, and cart saddles. Horses or mules were to work singly or in teams of up to four. Horses were to be properly shod, fed and watered regularly at the contractor’s expense. Time was not to be spent in shoeing, feeding, cleaning, harnessing or watering the horses or mules during working hours other than in case of unavoidable accident or necessity, but the Admiralty would not, in any case, be responsible for accidents. The animals’ feet were to be examined,

³General Sir Henry Macleod Leslie Rundle, GCB, GCMG, GCVO, DSO (6 January 1856-19 November 1934) was Governor and Commander-in-Chief of Malta from 1909 to 1915

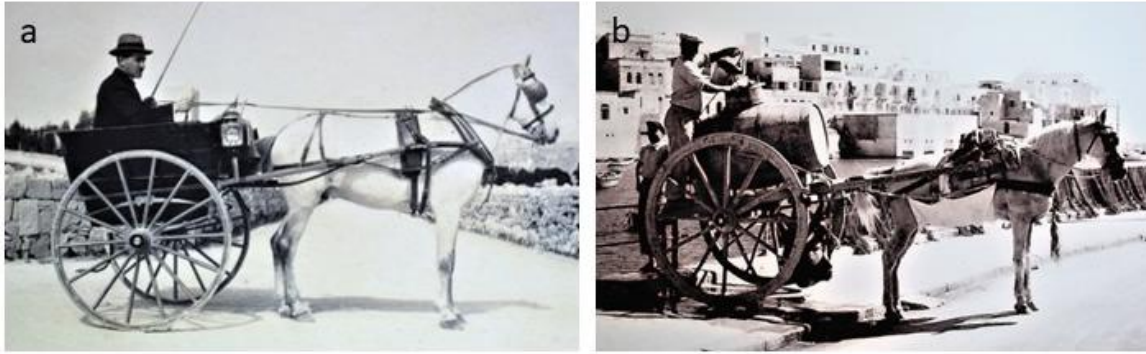


Figure 5. Equine roles in the 1930s: a - a “pleasure cart” [the vehicle is closer to a phaeton than the one described earlier and note also the quality of the horse] than the one described; b - Water being loaded on to a cart to slake dust on unpaved roads prior to World War Two. Source: https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-d&q=horse+drawn+leisure+cart+in+malta+in+1930s#imgrc=Wu_rq93vbK1BCM,https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/chairs-carts-non-mechanised-transport-old-malta.

and their shoes repaired at the expense of the contractor during the workmen’s meal break and at the end of the working day. Carts were to be 2-wheeled, strong and well-made and fitted with strong boxes with distinctive markings to the satisfaction of the superintending officer. The standard load was 20 cubic feet (0.57 cubic meters), equal to a weight of between 12 and 15 cwt (609 to 762 kg), with the latter weight being the maximum load for a single horse or mule. Although there was plenty of work during peacetime, equine transport came into its own during the 1437 enemy air raids that blitzed Malta between June 1940 and November 1942 when petrol and spare parts for lorries were in short supply. During air raids, all horses and mules were unharnessed and tethered, but still, many animals were killed (Anon, 2011).

During the first half of the twentieth century the motor bus took over the role of public transport as it displaced the horse. A few horses were still used by some Maltese with adequate disposable income to provide leisure activities (Figure 5a), and horsepower was again used during World War Two when petrol, even for the armed forces, was restricted by enemy action. Throughout this early period, mules and donkeys continued to provide much of the energy for the agricultural sector and were employed in a range of roles in other sectors, being used extensively, for example, in carts that spread water on still unpaved roads to slake the dust (Figure 5b) (Bonelli, 2022). A feature particularly in urban areas well into the 1940s was the use by entrepreneurs or small businesses of donkeys, mules, and horses in carts or as pack animals to provide a wide range of goods and services to the local people (Figure 6). Good quality horses were imported from North Africa, and trotting horses were introduced in the late 1920s. A challenge cup, the “It-Tazza l-Kbira” (The Big Cup) was established by the Malta Racing Club in 1934. The increase in the British military during the 1930s led to increased use of horses for leisure and sport, but this came to an end during the

Second World War. Sporting activities resumed in 1945 with the availability of Trotters and new inflows of European (mainly British) Thoroughbreds enabled flat racing to restart. Photo-finishing equipment was installed at Marsa race course in 1983, and starting gates appeared in 1985. There was a steady decline in the numbers of all three types of equines between 1961 and the mid-1980s (FAOStat, 2023). The number of donkeys fell from 2383 in the former year to 500 in the latter period. Mules lost 1300 head from 1599 animals in 1961 to 300 in 1984. Horse numbers were reduced from 1906 to 890 in the same period (Figure 7).⁴ Concomitant to the decline in numbers coupled with more intensive use of arable land was a decline in the quality of native Maltese animals. By the 1970s, donkey breeding was reduced to a minor activity and animals were imported mainly from North Africa (Dent, 1972:153).

Twenty-first century

By the beginning of the twenty-first century, the traditional roles of equines as working animals in the fields to provide energy and on the roads as a transport animal for people and goods had been superseded by the internal combustion engine. The only “work” animal in 2023 appears to be the one used in the karozzin trade. Licences are needed for horses and operators as well as the vehicle and are limited to 111 vehicles at any one time. Donkey and mule numbers were at a historical low, and these two classes of stock had virtually disappeared from the islands.

Not so for horses, however, which had become very popular in sport and other leisure pursuits. Equestrian

⁴These numbers are from FAO who credit, in various years, any of official data, estimates and imputed numbers: data from the mid 1980s to 2017 on the FAO data base remain static (claimed as estimates).

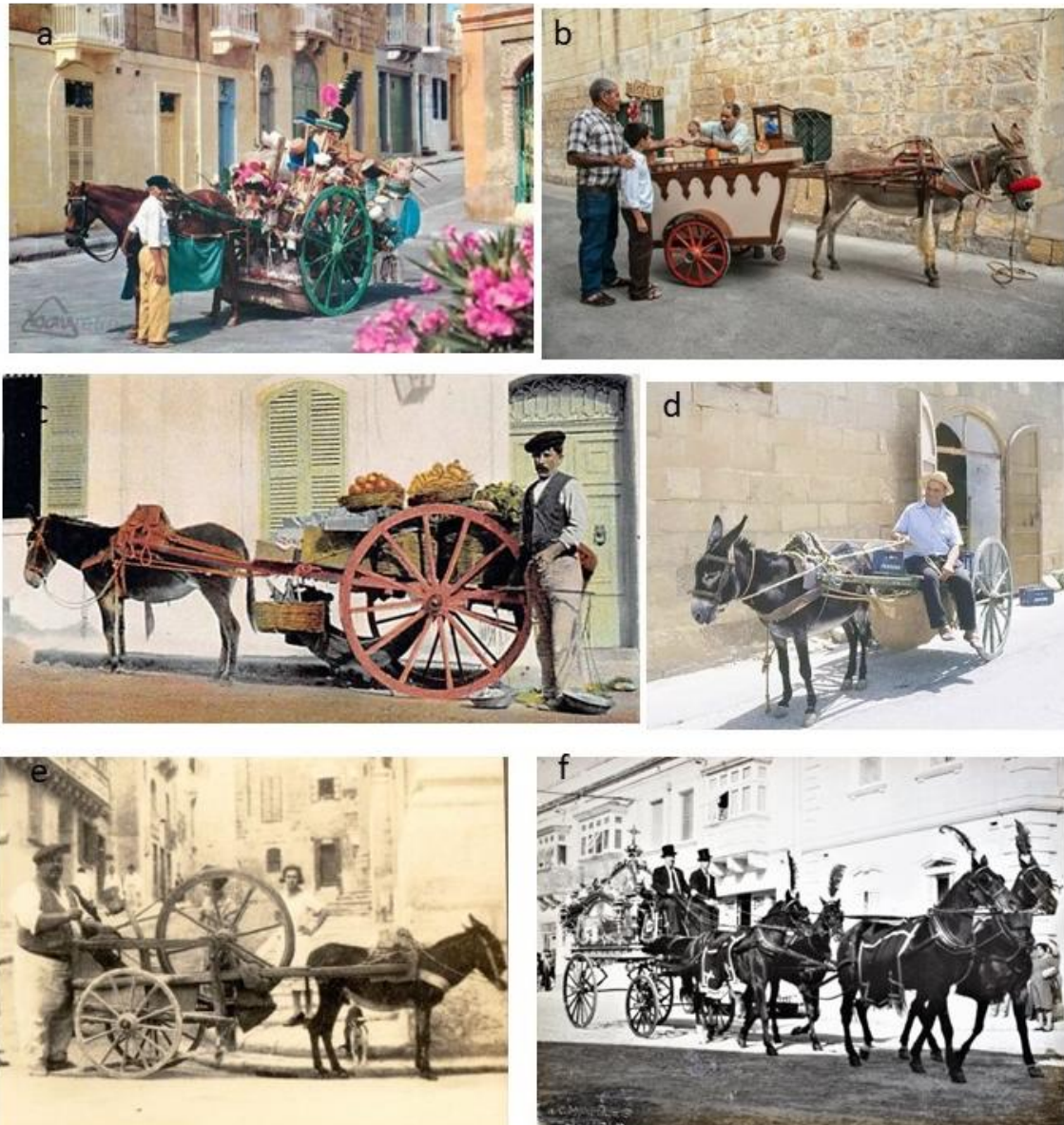


Figure 6. Equines providing the urban areas with goods and services: a - horse cart with household essentials; b - donkey cart dispensing ice cream; c - donkey cart with mixed vegetables; d - donkey cart with mixed goods on the island of Gozo; e - a peripatetic knife sharpener in the streets of Valletta; f - memento mori = the final journey.

Source: <https://www.mediastorehouse.com/eyeubiquitous/transport/20033293-20105689.html>;
<https://vassallohistory.wordpress.com/street-vendors/>;
<https://i.pinimg.com/originals/26/b8/70/26b8701897a48031fff994c2af2e17e8.jpg>;
<https://www.mediastorehouse.com/eyeubiquitous/transport/20033293-20105689.htm>;
<https://www.pinterest.ca/pin/390476230193363873/>;

events were introduced in the 1970s under the auspices of La Valette Riding Club, which was affiliated with the British Horse Society (BHS). Olympic sports, including dressage (Figure 8a), show jumping (Figure 8b), and cross-country competitions, were held regularly, in addition to fun events such as gymkhana games, fancy dress rides, handy hunters, and the like. The club had a

riding membership of over one hundred, with most events centered on the facilities in Marsa (Pisani, 2006).

The Malta Equestrian Federation (MEF) (Figure 8c) was established in 1999 to govern the growing sport and became affiliated with the international governing body, the Fédération Équestre Internationale (FEI). A new equestrian center was opened in 2012, the larger

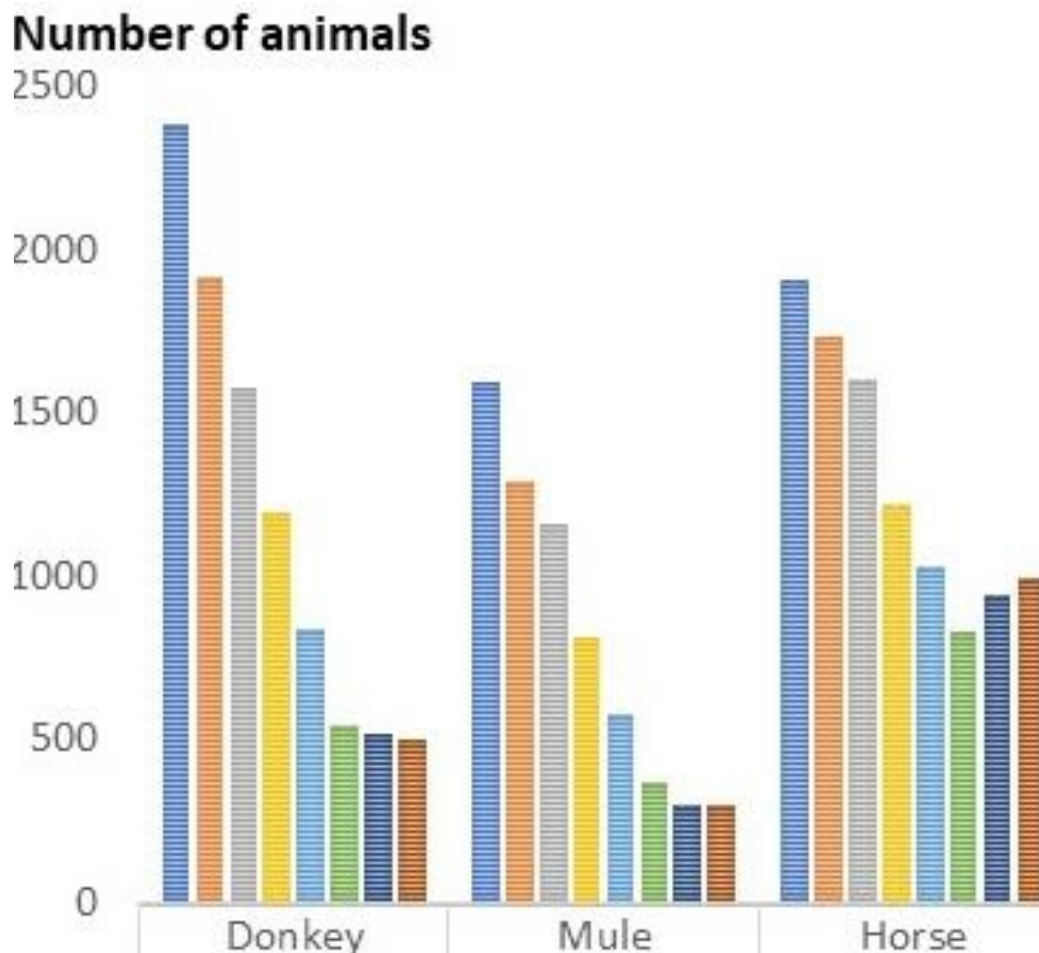


Figure 7. Changes in numbers of equines by 4-year periods, 1961-1993.
Source: Adapted from FAOStat (2023).

facilities allowing the sport to grow between 2013 and 2016, with monthly shows attracting more than 100 entries. The MEF joined the international leagues in the World Dressage Championships in 2010, a competition organized by the FEI for federations in small countries in which judges traveled to the riders as opposed to the usual format where riders had to travel to a competition. Malta was placed in Zone 4 composed of Greece, Cyprus, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, and Israel. Local riders enjoyed some success and were placed second in the team competition in 2010 and 2015 (Pisani, 2006). The MEF hosts competitions, adhering to the FEI codes of conduct with regard to horse welfare, the environment, and fair play throughout the year with the season culminating in the Championship Cup at the end of May or early June.

Horse racing is still important to Maltese culture, with up to 40 meetings per year between January and July on the main island under the auspices of the Malta Racing Club (Figure 8d) at its Marsa racetrack (now rebranded the Malta Equidrome). The major draw is still trotting

(Figure 8e), usually over 2640 m (1.64 miles or about 1 mile 5 furlongs in English racing terms). Every year the “It-Tazza l-Kbira” attracts international competitors. In 2014, for example, on the 80th anniversary of its establishment, there were entrants from Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden and the USA in addition to those from Malta.

Flat races, in which a jockey rides on a saddle on the horse’s back, are less popular than harness racing and are run over a maximum distance of 2250 m (1.40 miles, 1 mile 3 furlongs 40 yards). Racing is not confined however to the main island. The Gozo Horse Racing Association has its headquarters at the Xhajma Racetrack where there are meetings every two weeks from October to May and occasionally at other times of the year. There are also traditional racing events on Gozo, such as on the 15th of August on the feast of Santa Matija along the streets of the city of Victoria, the largest town on Gozo (Anon, 2022).

The Malta Polo Club shares grounds and facilities at Marsa with the Malta Race Club (Figure 8g). The Polo



Figure 8. Activities with horses in the twenty-first century: a - dressage under FEI rules; b - show jumping under FEI rules c - logo of the Malta Equestrian Federation; d - logo of the Malta Racing Club; e - trotting races are held regularly at the Malta Racing Club's Marsa race track; f - street racing at the Feast of Santa Marija in Victoria, Gozo; g - polo is a popular sport for both men and women; h - polo in the heat of the action.

Source: <https://www.maltaequestrianfederation.org/>; <https://www.maltaequestrianfederation.org/news-1/>; [https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-e-d&q=malta+racing+club+logo#vhid=sbxSsP4bo7i_rM&vssid=l](https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-e-d&q=malta+racing+club+logo#vhid=sbxSsP4bo7i_rM&vssid=l;); <https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/wins-cupidon-du-corbon-surf-n-turf.1011849/>; <https://gozo.news/98857/santa-marija-feast-celebrations-in-victoria-this-weekend/>; <https://maltapoloclub.com/the-equestrialmalta-cawnpore-cup/>; <https://maltapoloclub.com/history/>.

Club provides entertainment for competitors and spectators alike at its regular meetings (Figure 8h). It has stabling for 60 ponies and rents out ponies for beginners and adepts, whatever their level of competence. A professionally staffed academy helps newcomers to the sport improve their skills. The Club is a Corresponding

Member of the Federation of International Polo (FIP) and is placed in Zone C (Europe): Corresponding Members of the FIP provide membership information but do not pay the full membership fee and do not participate in or benefit from any FIP programs or events.

Testament to the continued and increasing popularity of



Figure 9. The Malta Police Mounted Section: a - stables at Marsa (Source: <https://tvmnews.mt/en/news/new-horses-for-police-forces-cavalry-division/>); guardians of the peace. Source: <http://merlinandrebecca.blogspot.com/2012/03/maltese-horses.html>.

the sport is the Island Polo Club, which was established in January 2015 and is based at the MonteKristro Estate in the south of the main island. The club has chukkas four times a week between the beginning of October and the end of June. It provides instruction and other activities for new entrants to the sport. It has both male and female players. Livery services are provided for those with their own ponies, and the Club also has ponies for hire.

The “Cavalry Section” of the Police Force referred to earlier is officially known as the Mounted Section of the Traffic Branch and has stables at Marsa (Figure 9a). The Section comprises 21 horses and 15 officers. Fifteen new horses were purchased in 1918 to improve the quality of horseflesh (Vassallo, 2018). Half- or three-quarter bred animals are preferred by the police force as they combine the spirit of a thoroughbred with the strength and stability of a draught horse. Training in police work is tailored to each horse and usually lasts six months, preferably carried out with the officer who “owns” the horse. On completion of its training, horses are given the rank of Inspector (trained dogs are only Sergeants!). A normal shift for man and beast lasts eight hours, beginning with the care of tack and the horse. Patrols are designed to deter criminals and reassure the public of police presence, aided by the high visibility of the horse and rider (Figure 9b). Crowd control and escort duties for foreign diplomats and displays, especially during the annual celebrations of the Police Anniversary in July, are also among the functions of the Mounted Section (Anon, 2010).

Horse-drawn hearses were reintroduced to the Maltese streets in 2009. They had not been seen since 1970 but a local undertaker has repaired and revived five 120-year-old vehicles: The Priests carriage, first-class carriage (talkewba) originally used by “rich Sliema residents”; prima and sekonda carriages used by lower levels of society but equally elaborate; and a white hearse for babies and

single women (Debono, 2009). A rapidly expanding subsector of the horse scene is the proliferation of riding schools, one of which also has a donkey and the beginning at some of these schools of hippotherapy.⁵

In many countries that practice equine sports, there is a welfare lobby that accuses the industry of not caring for the welfare of its horses and even accuses them of cruelty. Malta is no exception to this generalization. Recently, the country’s Animal Welfare Commissioner reminded owners that a horse was for life and not just for a short period of racing before being “dumped” (Calleja, 2019). The single very active horse welfare non-governmental organization (NGO) in Malta, founded in 2016, indicates that up to 300 horses per year are imported into the country and that most of these are sport horses (RMJ, 2023). It contends that the majority of these do not race or play a game for a whole season, that some do not race or play even once, and that in any case, they are neglected at the end of their careers or sent for slaughter. The owners of course deny this and say they continue to look after their charges.⁶ The NGO is a totally voluntary organization, receives no funding from any official source and relies entirely on donations from the private sector to house and feed the up to 80 horses in its care and to attempt to find new homes for the abandoned animals.

Horse numbers have increased during the twenty-first century. Reliable information on numbers is not readily accessible, and that which is available is often

⁵Access through Google.

⁶On the day this section was written a regional newspaper in the west of England reported that British Racing’s Horse Welfare Board was launching a census of the fate of thoroughbred horses at the end of their racing careers and would enable the board to “improve the traceability of thoroughbreds after they retire from racing [...] help to talk about responsible ownership and the critical part every thoroughbred owner plays in the post career of retired horses!” (Western Morning News 12 July 2023, pp. 16-17).

contradictory and contestable. The 300 head of imports noted in the preceding paragraph gives no indication of the purpose, whether they are temporary entrants for sports events or permanent imports for leisure. Information on exports is unreliable and probably inaccurate. FAO data for 1961-2023 are a case in point and again cite a variety of sources for numbers. In the period 1965 to 2008, annual imports according to FAO but based on official data varied from 80 to 812 horses per year, with most years in the range of 300-500 (FAO, 2003). From 2009 to 2019, the number of imports varied from 0 to 3, with outliers of 7 (2011), 18 (2012), and 19 (2009).

Over the same time frame of 1961 to 2023, exports of horses varied in the range of 0 to 8, with outliers of 62 (2013), 39 (2003), 18 (2002), 17 (1972) and 107 (1966 - note this is the year the British military left Malta). In the official Census of Agriculture 2020, Question E9 in the Livestock Section asks, "How many Equidae were being reared for consumption or as a means of production in agriculture (exclude racing and riding horses) on 30-09-2020?" but the summary of livestock numbers by species has no listing for Equidae (NSO, 2022). As a Member State of the European Union, all domestic animals in Malta must be registered and capable of being individually identified. On the premise that Malta adheres to these regulations, the most recent and almost certainly the most accurate information concerning horse numbers in Malta is that provided from the National Livestock Database by the Directorate for Veterinary Regulation: In August 2021 there were 5506 horses in the Republic (Micallaf, 2021).

Horses slaughtered legally in abattoirs are in the region of 12 per year but horse meat on the market is in excess of which would be available from local slaughter (Martin, 2019). Horse meat is, however, legally imported into Malta: In 2021 the value of such imports was 192 thousand US Dollars coming mainly from Belgium (127 thousand dollars), Brazil (107 thousand dollars), Italy (56.8 thousand dollars) and the Netherlands (7.84 thousand dollars) (OEC, 2023). Other sources believe that illegal horse meat is also bought by keepers of private zoos and the illegal killing of horses, but also because it is a stark reminder that, in this tiny island, there are tigers, jaguars, lions and other non-native (man-eating) animals roaming fairly freely in our midst" (Anon, 2019).

Conclusion

Equines have been integral to life on the Maltese archipelago for at least one thousand years. At the beginning of the period under review, feral donkeys were a source of income for hunter-gatherers, mainly from Sicily. At the end of the eleventh century, Count Roger of Sicily conquered the islands, a feat he might not have achieved without his horse cavalry. In the fourteenth

century, wealthier individuals could obtain land blocks using horses as collateral, with mounted men pledged to fight for the Knights of St John if needed. Throughout the period until the early eighteenth century, ridden donkeys and mules, and to a lesser extent horses, were the primary means of travel across the islands. In the mid-nineteenth century, wheeled vehicles drawn by horses and mules replaced donkeys as the main mode of transport for people. Although little acknowledged, equines historically provided energy for agriculture, contributing to the islands' food security and overall human welfare. This role gradually diminished during the twentieth century with the replacement of "horsepower" by the internal combustion engine. By the beginning of the twenty-first century, donkeys and mules had almost disappeared from the islands. In this period, horses provided entertainment in sports such as racing and polo, as well as for leisure activities and the emergence of hippotherapy. Horse numbers in the third decade of the third millennium are probably higher than ever on the islands, and it can be expected that this increased number will persist as sport and leisure activities assume greater importance in the human scale of value.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank Maria Hitchings, for persuading him to visit the Republic of Malta.

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