

The search for collaborative partners to document and promote German-Cameroon heritage by the “German Monuments and African Cultures Association” (GEMAC Ass.)

Christopher N. Galega



Fig. 1 Left: Gravestone of Friedrich August Franz Hartwig, born in Oldenburg on November 28th, 1881, and died on January 4th, 1912 in Cameroon. Right: Gravestone of Bertha Bieudorra, died on May 14th, 1896. Both gravestones were saved by Christopher N. Galega to be re-erected at a protected place. Photo: Chr. N. Galega.

The “German Monument and African Cultures Association” (GEMAC Ass.) was founded on 4 April 2007 and has its headquarters in Douala, a port and Cameroon’s largest city.* It has 15 members. Its objective is to protect and preserve the cultural heritage of Germans and Germany from the colonial era in Cameroon (1868/84-1919): to collect archive material such as historical photos, for example, to make buildings habitable again, to restore and preserve gravestones and grave monuments. Many sites of German-Cameroon heritage are located in parts of Cameroon where there is a lot of mineral mining and forestry activity. The GEMAC Ass. wants to recover these sites, compile reports and raise awareness about their protection.

It also wants to re-establish the development of the plantations in the former German Cameroon (*Kamerun* in German) and the contribution of King Galega I (1857-1901) to these important activities. This cultural heritage will be traced, retrieved and restored by experts. Cameroon, Germany, and the world as a whole will benefit from this, given the agricultural fertility of Cameroon, which occupies one of the most productive areas in the world with a high potential for agricultural development – one of the reasons that the British Empire and France wanted to conquer Cameroon during the First World War.

To this end, the association undertakes research, collects appropriate records, documents and pho-

tographs monuments and reports on them. Its main concern is to preserve the knowledge and the findings gained on the German cultural heritage in the country and disseminate it further as a contribution to the knowledge on the diversity of the cultures in Africa. The GEMAC Ass. thus wants to bolster tourism as well, increase the quality of life of the local communities, and promote the cultural development of humanity overall.

Ongoing projects

The GEMAC Ass. has identified almost 30 grave sites, usually gravestones, of Germans in all ten regions of Cameroon, and many other monuments, such as residential buildings. There are two German grave sites in Douala, for example. One of them (“Bonaku” at Bonabele) has already been destroyed; the other, which still has more than two hundred gravestones, is in danger of being destroyed, too.



Fig. 2 Gravestone of Leopold Heider, born in Munich on May 28th, 1867, and died on October 8th, 1889. Stone saved by Christopher N. Galega to be re-erected at a protected place. Photo: Chr. N. Galega.

The GEMAC Ass. is currently working on preventing the further destruction of these gravestones and the vandalism occurring. It is attempting to gather the endangered gravestones together and move them to a better protected location (Fig. 1-2). Hence, more than two hundred gravestones need to be rehabilitated (VITT, 1970; ANON, 2012). Additionally, the GEMAC Ass. wants to take care of cenotaphs and other engraved monuments erected in memory of Germans during the colonial wars and the exploration of Cameroon. Among the gravestones already known are those of important German public figures such as Alexander Graf von Monts (the Younger, died 1893), German naval officer and head of the admiralty, appointed by Kaiser Wilhelm II in 1888, or the gravestone of Hermann Ludwig Randaad (born on January 19th, 1860, died on April 13th, 1890), German consul in Togo. The GEMAC Ass. has found the gravestone of Theodor Christaller, the first teacher of a German state school (*Reichsschullehrer*) in Cameroon and founder of the Cameroon state school system (CHRISTALLER, 1895/1897); the GEMAC Ass. wishes to foster the research and knowledge about the German-Cameroon education system he introduced through documentation, conferences, etc., in recognition of its modern approach and exemplary nature.

Currently, the Douala Cemetery is serving the GEMAC Ass. as an improvised temporary store for salvaged gravestones. The GEMAC Ass. has already reached a formal agreement with the authority of the Limbe Botanic Garden and the state



Fig. 3 Photo of a piece of land (about 100 m²) given by Limbe Botanical Garden to the GEMAC Ass. for collecting, re-erecting and displaying German gravestones. Photo: Chr. N. Galega.

of Cameroon to use Limbe Botanic Garden as a permanent site to re-erect and display these gravestones (fig. 3). Limbe is a city formerly known as "Victoria" on Cameroon's coast, 60 km west of the city centre of Douala. Its famous botanical garden was founded by Germans in 1892 to study and experiment with tropical crops (ANON, 1994). A valuable starting point for the further research into German cemeteries and gravestones in Cameroon is being provided by the publication by Horst Vitt (1970), which the German ambassador in Cameroon made available to the GEMAC Ass. (fig. 4).

Future projects

The aim is a comprehensive recording and documentation of German cultural goods in Cameroon such as gravestones and buildings, and other cultural resources as well. This documentation is intended to form the basis for a national campaign in Cameroon which recalls Germany's cultural heritage in Cameroon and raises awareness of it. The campaign is to be based on finds, documents and archive material and will use modern, fast publication options, and also aims to hold exhibitions in museums.

In Germany, the *"Traditionsverband ehemaliger Schutz- und Überseetruppen. Freunde der früheren deutschen Schutzgebiete e. V."* has promised its support. The GEMAC Ass. requires further partners to realise its project. It calls on all experts with expertise in such projects to support it, e. g. archaeologists, historians, journalists, publishers of journals and documentary film makers. The GEMAC Ass. is asking for research and help to retrieve and collect information about relevant monuments and sites. The GEMAC Ass. also needs financial assistance to improve its mobility, to create local partnerships and activities, and to communicate with chiefs and communities. Also, financial assistance is needed for material such as computers, photocopiers, desktop publishing equipment; photographic cameras and video cameras are also needed, as is restoration equipment. The GEMAC Ass. seeks to form binding, serious partnerships which are based on a *"memorandum of understanding"*. It hopes that German families whose ancestors are buried in Cameroon will also support the project.

* This article was written with substantial support from the *"DGUF AK Kulturgutschutz"* (namely Frank Siegmund and Diane Scherzler) and from Valerie Scholes and Ulrich Greb (TechniText Translations).

References

Anon (1994). Limbe Botanic Garden, Cameroon. *Botanic Gardens Conservation International* 2(3). <https://www.bgci.org/resources/article/0127/> [28 August 2018].

Anon (2012). Douala, Region Littoral, Republik Kamerun (ehem. deutsche Kolonie Kamerun). In Th. C. Aghte (red.), *Website Gefallenendenkmäler von Ahnenforschern für Ahnenforscher*. http://www.denkmalprojekt.org/2012/douala_region-littoral_republik_kamerun.html [18.9.2018].

Christaller, B. Th. (1895/1897). Photo "Christaller, Head of the Government School, with his wife and child, houseboys, and a subordinate teacher." *BM Archives (Basel Mission / Mission 21) no. E-30.39.051*: <http://www.bmarchives.org/items/show/60205> [10.9.2018].

Vitt, H. (1970). *Deutsche Grabinschriften in Kamerun. Epitaphes en langue allemande en République Fédérale du Cameroun*. Collected and published by Horst Vitt. Bingen am Rhein: Rhein-Nahe-Verlag.

About the author

Prince Galega Christopher Njinuwe Tuttcy, Founding President of the GEMAC Ass., is a philanthropist and researcher. The well-known King Galega I (1857-1901), Fon (i. e. king or chief) of Bali-Nyonga, is his great-great-grandfather. Christopher Galega's commitment is driven by his deep interest in Germany's impact on the history, culture and further development of Cameroon and the important role of his forefather Galega I during Cameroon's German era. The author's preferred language of communication is English; he can be contacted via email or his Facebook account. A website for the GEMAC Ass. is still under construction.

Prince Galega Christopher Njinuwe Tuttcy
P.O. Box 3540
Akwa Douala
Cameroon
galegaChristopher@yahoo.com
<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100009595550513>



Fig. 4 The German ambassador in Cameroon, His Excellency Holger Mahnicke (mid), and his Cultural Attaché (left) shaking hands with Christopher N. Galega (right) (October 2016). Photo: Tinapia Photo, Cameroon.