

# Konstanze N'Guessan and Mareike Späth

**In the crossfire of commemoration**  
Entangled histories of the *tirailleurs  
africains* as heroes in national-day  
parades in Francophone Africa and  
France

ARBEITSPAPIERE DES  
INSTITUTS FÜR  
ETHNOLOGIE  
UND AFRIKASTUDIEN

WORKING PAPERS OF  
THE DEPARTMENT OF  
ANTHROPOLOGY AND  
AFRICAN STUDIES



Herausgegeben von / The Working Papers are edited by:

Institut für Ethnologie und Afrikastudien, Johannes Gutenberg-Universität,

Forum 6, D-55099 Mainz, Germany.

Tel. +49-6131-3923720; Email: ifeas@uni-mainz.de; <http://www.ifeas.uni-mainz.de>

<http://www.ifeas.uni-mainz.de/92.php>

Geschäftsführende Herausgeberin / Managing Editor: Konstanze N'Guessan ([nguessan@uni-mainz.de](mailto:nguessan@uni-mainz.de))

Copyright remains with the author.

Zitierhinweis / Please cite as:

N'Guessan, Konstanze and Mareike Späth (2016): In the crossfire of commemoration. Entangled histories of the *tirailleurs africains* as heroes in national-day parades in Francophone Africa and France. Arbeitspapiere des Instituts für Ethnologie und Afrikastudien der Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz (Working Papers of the Department of Anthropology and African Studies of the Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz) 169.

---

**Konstanze N'Guessan and Mareike Späth: In the crossfire of commemoration.** Entangled histories of the *tirailleurs africains* as heroes in national-day parades in Francophone Africa and France.

### Abstract

Ever since their creation, the *tirailleurs africains* participated in the military parades of 14 July in France, in the French colonies and later in the independent nation-states of Francophone Africa. The *tirailleurs* paraded as colorful element in the 14 July parades in order to satisfy the audiences hunger for exoticism. They paraded as French war heroes who had helped chase the Nazis and Vichy. They paraded as vanguards for African independences and 'national heroes' of colonial sacrifice. A century later, their representatives paraded as reminders of either continuous Franco-African friendship or ongoing neo-colonial attitude. Apparently, heroes and practices of hero-worship are at once prone to cross-cultural borrowings, robust to change and still surprisingly flexible and open to adoption. In order to understand this mnemonic condensation of parading *tirailleurs* (or representatives of them) as heroes of entangled Franco-African histories, we analyse heroism as a social phenomenon involving actors with varying reputational projects using a variety of media in the making and unmaking of the heroic tale. In this paper we follow the parading *tirailleurs* through times (from the First World War to the present) and spaces (in France and Francophone Africa). On this basis we ask comparative questions about the changes in the heroic narrative, about the role of living or enacting representatives of the heroes, about the reputational entrepreneurs and the audience as important actors in the hero-making process and about the media that are used to disseminate the heroic tale. Our praxeological perspective on both chronologically and geographically entangled histories presents an innovative view of heroism and hero-making that could be of use in the context of a more general theory of heroes.

### Zusammenfassung

Seit der Gründung afrikanischer Regimenter in der französischen Armee nehmen die afrikanischen Soldaten an den Militärparaden zur Feier des 14. Juli in Frankreich, in den Kolonien und nach der Unabhängigkeit auch in den Paraden der jeweiligen Nationalfeiertage im frankophonen Afrika teil. Sie paradierten als Farbtupfer zur Befriedigung exotischer Seherwartungen der Zuschauer, als Kriegshelden, die de Gaulle halfen die Nazis und das Vichy-Regime zu vertreiben. Sie paradierten aber auch als Vorreiter der Unabhängigkeit und als Erinnerung an das Unrecht und die Opfer des Kolonialismus. Anfang des 21. Jahrhunderts paradierten ihre Repräsentanten als Symbol der andauernden frankoafrikanischen Verbundenheit oder des neokolonialen Erbes. Offenbar sind Helden und Praktiken des Heldengedenkens anfällig für kulturübergreifende Anleihen und flexibel aber gleichzeitig stabil und widerstandsfähig. In diesem Artikel widmen wir uns der Entwerrung der mnemotischen Kondensierung der *tirailleurs* als Helden einer transkulturellen Beziehungsgeschichte (*entangled history*). Wir untersuchen Heldentum als soziales Phänomen und aus einem praxeologischen Blickwinkel.

Dabei folgen wir den *tirailleurs* sowohl durch Zeit (vom ersten Weltkrieg bis zur Gegenwart) wie auch durch Raum (Frankreich, Frankophones Afrika) und fragen nach den Veränderungen des Heldennarrativs, nach den Akteuren und Medien des Heldenmachens. Diese Perspektive auf sowohl chronologisch wie geographisch verflochtene Geschichte begründet einen innovativen Ansatz zu Heldentum und Praktiken des Heldenmachens.

### **The authors**

Konstanze N'Guessan is lecturer at the Department of Social Anthropology and African Studies at Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz and research fellow in the research unit "Un/doing Differences. Practices in Human Differentiation" funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, FOR 1939).

Mareike Späth is lecturer and post-doctoral researcher at the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology at Johann Wolfgang Goethe-University Frankfurt.

**E-Mail:** [nguessan@uni-mainz.de](mailto:nguessan@uni-mainz.de); [spaeth@em.uni-frankfurt.de](mailto:spaeth@em.uni-frankfurt.de)



Introduction .....	2
From savages to soldiers: the <i>tirailleurs</i> before and during World War I .....	4
Fighting for emancipation: African soldiers at the end of World War II.....	12
The <i>tirailleurs</i> in the period of decolonisation: heroes, victims or perpetrators? .....	15
Nationalising the <i>tirailleurs</i> ? Postcolonial Francophone Africa and France .....	20
The ‘children’ of the <i>tirailleurs</i> : convergence, continuities and changes .....	24
The making and unmaking of heroes .....	28
References .....	32

## INTRODUCTION

On the occasion of the centennial of the Great War in 2014, France invited representatives of 80 countries to participate in the famous military parade on the Champs-Élysées, which is part of the festivities marking Bastille Day.<sup>1</sup> As François Hollande explained in a press release, this gesture was intended as sign of peace and recovered proximity, and as homage to all those who fought and died in the battlefields of World War I (WWI).<sup>2</sup> Among the 200 foreign soldiers marching alongside the French army were representatives of several African countries. The latter paraded as descendants of the men who had been recruited in the French colonies to fight for the empire in global conflicts.<sup>3</sup>

The participation of African soldiers in the 14 July parades is nothing new and dates back to the late nineteenth century (Vogel 1997: 113-4). Not even their commemorative exploitation in the name of an entangled Franco-African history is new. From the outset the parading African soldiers served various actors in the narration of heroic tales as part of their different mnemonic projects. It is remarkable to note that many books and papers about the *tirailleurs africains* open with vignettes or anecdotes about the African soldiers as participants in the military reviews on the occasion of 14 July but none of them deal explicitly with parades.<sup>4</sup> In this paper we take our curiosity about the parading of African soldiers on the French national day in 2014 as a starting point to examine parading and other performative and participatory practices of remembering as central sites for the production of heroic reputation and entangled history-telling.

Between 1857 and 1964 African recruits served in special units of the French army on various sites within the French colonial empire. These units were named after the origins of the first recruits: for example *tirailleurs algériens*, *tirailleurs marocains* or *tirailleurs tunisiens* from North Africa, *tirailleurs sénégalais* designating soldiers from French West Africa, *tirailleurs somalis* mainly from French Somaliland and the *tirailleurs malgaches* from Madagascar.<sup>5</sup> Internally the African recruits were differentiated by their French superiors according to their military

---

<sup>1</sup> This paper is based on fieldwork on national day festivities and commemorative practices in Côte d'Ivoire, Madagascar and France carried out between 2010 and 2015. Our research was funded by the University of Mainz through the programme 'PRO Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaften 2015', the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the German National Academic Foundation and the research group 'Un/doing Differences. Practices in Human Differentiation' at Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz (DFG, FOR 1939) funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft. We would like to thank our colleagues at the Department of Social Anthropology and African Studies, the organisers and participants of the NISE conference "Heroes & protagonists: creating and interpreting heroes and heroism in a national context" in Vilnius (2014), and our collaborators and informants in Côte d'Ivoire and Madagascar who assisted us in many ways during research, suggested some of the ideas developed in this paper or commented in one way or another on different versions of this paper.

<sup>2</sup> Presidency of the French Republic, Press Release '14 Juillet 2014', [www.elysee.fr/assets/Uploads/DOSSIER-DE-PRESSE-14juillet.pdf](http://www.elysee.fr/assets/Uploads/DOSSIER-DE-PRESSE-14juillet.pdf) (last access: 14.12.2015).

<sup>3</sup> The centenary of WWI is subject of a large research project at the Université Paris 1 (Panthéon-Sorbonne). See [www.univ-paris1.fr/autres-structures-de-recherche/observatoire-du-centenaire/](http://www.univ-paris1.fr/autres-structures-de-recherche/observatoire-du-centenaire/). A number of contributions to this project dealt with ceremonies and rituals, among them the military parade of 14 July 2014 in Paris and several commemorative activities in Madagascar (Léonard 2015).

<sup>4</sup> See for example Deroo 2013; Haberbusch 2014; Van Galen Last 2015.

<sup>5</sup> On the history of the *tirailleurs* see Echenberg 1991; Lawler 1996; Valensky 1997 and Zimmermann 2011.

value and their suitability for military heroism. The Senegalese Bambara, for example, were imagined as brave by nature due to their inability to reflect and assess risks. In accordance with these ascribed virtues they were predestined to become protagonists in a war heroes' tale. Others like the Hova and Betsileo from Madagascar were regarded as intelligent but weak and said to know 'neither heroism, nor loyalism, nor patriotism, nor military honours' (Schindler-Bondinguel 2009: 66); a judgement that rendered them inept for military heroism. They were, therefore, only admitted to the army in small numbers for non-combat tasks. Other Malagasy like the Makoa and Sakalava were identified as "blacker" on the basis of their phenotype and thus considered as bellicose, but difficult to control. The tasks assigned to these units were as heterogeneous as their composition.<sup>6</sup> While the colonisation project had used local recruits to man the police forces in the colonies from the outset<sup>7</sup>, African recruits became increasingly important for the French army from the early twentieth century. Since military honours are awarded for outstanding bravery in the battlefields, the frequent use of the *tirailleurs* as front-line soldiers was a prerequisite for their heroic career in the French Army.

Despite the fact that many of them were recruited by force or as mercenaries, the *tirailleurs* were depicted as young men who loyally served Greater France as true sons.<sup>8</sup> In France, the *tirailleurs* were presented as symbols of the imperial project. Based on this apparently successful integration of people formerly considered as savages into the military, the *tirailleurs* served to legitimise the colonisation project as a civilising mission. Furthermore, they were heroised for their unquestionable contribution to French war victories: they were martyrs or – if they survived – heroes who defended the idea and the borders of Greater France against resistance and riots in the colonies, against the Germans, the English and other colonial powers, and against independence or secessionist movements.<sup>9</sup> In the colonies, the *tirailleurs* appeared as heroic role models, but also as victims or perpetrators and as unruly threat to colonialism. After independence, they served as icons of continuing Franco-African friendship or as torchbearers of anticolonialism, and reminders of colonial exploitation in the new independent nations. These different imaginaries surrounding the *tirailleurs* make commemorating them a difficult and ambiguous enterprise.

In order to understand the mnemonic condensation of the parading *tirailleurs* and their representatives as the heroes of entangled Franco-African histories, we analyse heroism as a

---

<sup>6</sup> On the tasks see Cockburn 2005: 276, Koller 2001: 90-2, Lunn 1999, Schindler-Bondiguel 2009: 65-8 and Valensky 1995: 276.

<sup>7</sup> See Göpfert 2014: 29-36 on the origins, composition and tasks of the *tirailleurs* as local policing forces.

<sup>8</sup> Initially, the *tirailleurs* were to a large extent recruited as prisoners-of-war during the conquest of the colonial territories. Many of the recruits came from the lower social classes or slave families. Voluntary signing-up was unattractive to many Africans, so the colonial administration enacted a law calling first for partial and later universal conscription. Many young men tried to resist conscription through migration. On the eastern border of the Côte d'Ivoire colony among the Agni, entire villages crossed the border into British Gold Coast in order to avoid recruitment and forced labour (Echenberg 1991: 70ff).

<sup>9</sup> A number of studies have dealt with colonial images of the *tirailleurs* in popular media, postcards, books, theatre and commodity culture; see, for example, the contributions to Blanchard et al 2013; Fogarty 2010; Riesz 1990; Bloom 2008; Hinrichsen 2012.

social phenomenon involving actors with varying reputational projects who use a variety of media in the making and unmaking of the heroic tale. Building on and contributing to constructivist and praxeological theories of history, we look at practices that invent, affirm or topple a hero through performative or participatory forms of remembering. The crossfire metaphor used in the title of the paper is not meant to imply that the *tirailleurs* were the victims or objects of commemorative exploitation. Rather, we will show that they should be regarded as hero-makers or 'reputational entrepreneurs' (see Fine 1996, 2001; Schwartz 2000: 20; DeSoucey 2008) themselves. Disentangling the condensation of meanings will help to understand how and why the *tirailleurs* were transformed from press-ganged cannon fodder in the battlefields of French wars to war heroes on the Champs-Élysées in the early twentieth century, to vanguards of African independence and national heroes of colonial sacrifice in their motherlands in the 1950s, and, finally, to reminders of either enduring Franco-African friendship or ongoing neo-colonial attitudes in the 2000s and 2010s.

The intention of this paper is to describe and compare the parading *tirailleurs* as heroes of entangled Franco-African history through changes in time and sphere of reference. In other words, we follow the parading *tirailleurs* on two levels: first, on a timeline that begins with WWI, then considers WWII and the beginning of decolonisation, and culminates with the postcolonial and contemporary period. This provides the basic structure of the paper. Second, we follow the parading *tirailleurs* as they appeared in public in France, and in francophone Africa and ask comparative questions about the changes in the heroic narrative of the *tirailleurs* as a transnational phenomenon, about the role of living or enacting representatives of the heroes, about the reputational entrepreneurs and the audience as important actors in the hero-making process, and about the media used to disseminate the heroic narrative. Our praxeological perspective on both chronologically and geographically entangled histories presents an innovative view of heroism and hero-making that could be of use in the context of a more general theory of heroes.

#### **FROM SAVAGES TO SOLDIERS: THE *TIRAILLEURS* BEFORE AND DURING WORLD WAR I**

From 1881 onwards the French celebrated their national day with military parades in all garrisons throughout the country (Vogel 1995: 202). There was always a special unit or element in the parade in Paris that was staged as the highlight of the military review. In 1886, for example, a group of soldiers fresh from the so-called pacification of Tonkin (Vietnam) participated in the parade and was feted as heroes of imperial France. Such a tribute was also paid to the appearance of non-French soldiers who had helped to establish French protectorates in the overseas territories. For example, when a unit of *tirailleurs sénégalais* under the command of General Marchand participated in the parade of 1899 (Vogel 1997: 113-4), the French newspaper *Le Figaro* established a close link between the presence of these African soldiers in Paris and the French nation's military grandeur past and present:

Les Sénégalais, les vrais héros de la journée, le clou de la revue,... sont à Paris. Et ils y sont au milieu de l'armée de France, dans un champ où sont le passé et le présent et

l'avenir de la patrie: officiers ayant gagné leurs galons en 1870 ou dans nos colonies, soldats qui assuraient hier Madagascar, et élèves de nos Ecoles militaires à qui nous devons la gloire de demain (cited in Vogel 1997: 189).

The African participants in the parade legitimated the imperial project of Greater France and supported the idea of the colonies as sources of future grandeur both symbolically and performatively. In 1910, French President Fallières even decorated two of the participating regiments of colonial troops with the National Order of the Legion of Honour lauding their heroic contribution to what he called France's glorious military history (Vogel 1997: 190). When in 1913, North and West African soldiers participated in the military parade for the French national-day celebrations in Paris, the public enthusiasm at their participation prompted the organisers to organise two more parades in the days that followed (Koller 2001: 72). The popularity of the African and other foreign troops in the military parade can partly be explained by their exotic costumes. Their colourful uniforms stood out from the samey blue and red uniforms of the various French battalions (Vogel 1997: 114). However, as demonstrated by the above-cited article from *Le Figaro*, the *tirailleurs* were adopted as French heroes from the outset.

Popular myths about the *tirailleurs sénégalais* as both naïve and coarse served the purposes of French war propaganda (see Riesz 1990: 444 ff.). Their heroism was linked to their assumed childish loyalty to their French superiors. They were considered as being suitable soldiers due to their supposed natural desire to be guided by a leader. This was also expressed in a number of marching songs. In the chorus of the *Tirailleurs' March*, they are characterised as good children'.<sup>10</sup> In the song *The Review*, the *tirailleurs* are described as having 'an atavistic passion for the games of war' and as being 'big children' and heroes at the same time.<sup>11</sup> Apart from being associated with ethnic stereotypes the childish heroism of the *tirailleurs* was also explained by the evolutionist idea of Africans as representing an early stage of civilisation.

The importance of African soldiers in the French army and hence in the military parades in France was reinforced during WWI. In 1914, the *tirailleurs sénégalais* represented a key attraction during the parades on French national day. The first lines of a popular song entitled *Bou Dou Ba Da Bouh*, which was composed by Félix Mayol in 1913, convey the curiosity with which French citizens came to view the colonial troops:

Parmi les Sénégalais  
Qu'on fit venir pour la revue  
L'jour du Quatorze Juillet  
Se trouvait la chose est connue  
Un grand gaillard à la peau noire  
Aux dents comme l'ivoire  
[...]

<sup>10</sup> <http://musique-militaire.fr/armee-dafrique/marche-des-tirailleurs>, last accessed on 11.11.2015

<sup>11</sup> <http://musique-militaire.fr/armee-dafrique/la-revue>, last accessed on 11.11.2015



Quand son régiment défilait  
 Au son joyeux flageolets  
 Le Tout-Tombouctou  
 Admirait surtout  
 Celui d'Bou-dou-ba-da-bouh

The song goes on to relate the love story between Bou-dou-ba-da-bouh and a mademoiselle who could not resist the lures of the exotic, handsome and brave *tirailleur*. The story does not end well for the mademoiselle, however. In keeping with the image of the assiduous soldier, Bou-dou-ba-da-bouh is sent away to some battlefield in Africa where he gives his life for the French empire. The song emphasises another dominant trope of the *tirailleurs*' image in Europe at that time: they were appreciated as fierce warriors and had a reputation for seducing women, which earned them the envy and disdain of European and African men alike. The exoticness and ambivalence projected onto the *force noire* together with the hopes pinned on them qualified them as protagonists in a heroic narrative.

Other stories, songs, plays, postcards and pictures of and about the *tirailleurs* fed popular exotic stereotypes of decapitating barbarians who took no prisoners (Echenberg 1991: 32ff.). The *tirailleurs sénégalais* and other colonial troops were proudly cherished by the French army – particularly as both the German enemy and the British allies were more than sceptical about the French *force noire* (see Echenberg 1991: 32-8). At the same time, the accounts of brave and determined African soldiers who 'scare[d] *les boches* all the way back to Berlin' somehow contradicted the stereotypes of African savagery (Echenberg 1991: 33) since indeed, it was the Germans who were portrayed as the real savages being 'even more barbarous [...] than the natives' (Deroo 2013: 137). These myths and images were mainly addressed to a European audience with the aim of encouraging the French and scaring and humiliating the Germans. Hence, myths that countered the imagery of African praetorians defending France were spread by French critics of the *force noire* and the British allies and German war propaganda in particular. The German press campaign against the *Schwarze Schande* or *Schwarze Schmach* (the black shame or black humiliation) of the French occupation of the Rhineland after the armistice in 1918 claimed that France had deliberately selected colonial troops for the occupation to humiliate the Germans (Echenberg 1991: 35).<sup>12</sup>

Even within France, the public appearance of African soldiers in the military parades of 14 July was met with disapproval both on the part of people who found Africans unworthy to represent France and critics of the use of African conscripts as a form of forced labour or slavery that should be abolished. Apart from that, many French too, were impressed by the narrative of the barbarian *tirailleurs* addressed to the Germans and feared the so-called uncivilised Africans who were brought to Europe and armed; potentially threatening the civilian population. To counter these concerns the French army distributed propaganda

---

<sup>12</sup> Two insightful historical studies have recently analysed the German press campaign against the *Schwarze Schmach* and the Rhineland occupation: Collar 2013 and Wigger 2007.

material featuring images of everyday scenes of army camp life, wounded *tirailleurs* and soldiers at recreation. One of these videos also shows the 4<sup>th</sup> regiment of *tirailleurs algériens* parading through a village in France in 1915 (Herren-Oesch 2014).<sup>13</sup> In this case, the circulation of images of parading *tirailleurs* can be seen as a way of humanizing the African soldiers and highlighting their discipline in the perception of the French population. Thus while the parades usually contributed to the glorification and idolisation of soldiers, the propaganda material also shows how the passing of the soldiers in close proximity to civil society and on the streets, which usually belonged to the realm of everyday life, contributed to diminishing the distance between the foreign *tirailleurs* and civilian onlookers.<sup>14</sup>

In the post-war years the colonial forces' contribution to France's victory became visible in the mnemonic landscape. Nevertheless, as Joe Lunn points out, the post-war heroic iconography used in monuments usually glorified the French military commanders while the soldiers themselves remained an 'impersonal abstraction' (Lunn 2009: 129). In this respect the parades played a crucial role. Although the soldiers paraded as a group, in which the individual remained anonymous, the *tirailleur* and the individual soldier were at least visible through their appearance on the streets of France, and their parading did not generally differ from that of the French.

The *tirailleurs* paraded not only in France but also in the overseas territories. The heroic myths created around the *tirailleurs* there differed in some aspects from the ones narrated in France. In the French colonies the celebration of 14 July was subject to a law passed on 6 July 1880 that had established the French national holiday as a holiday in the colonies.<sup>15</sup> The first such celebration is reported as having taken place in 1881 in Senegal (Michel 1990: 145). Many of the characteristic elements of the French national holiday in the metropole (such as the torchlight procession, the military review, veneration at the war memorials, public speeches, sport competitions, fireworks, public dances) were also part and parcel of the celebrations in the colonies (Tirefort 1999: 172). The military review in the colonies consisted of the security forces of the colonial administration (the so-called *gardes de cercle*) which were mostly made up of Africans from other colonies (Göpfert 2014: 34). Michel describes the celebration of 14 July in Senegal as follows:

Les jours précédant la fête, on a préparé les illuminations des bâtiments publics, ainsi que les installations pour le défilé et les réjouissances. La veille, le 13, a été consacrée aux distributions de secours et aux premières réjouissances suivies de la rituelle retraite aux flambeaux pour annoncer la 'belle' journée du lendemain. Celle-ci est saluée au lever du soleil par une salve de coups de canon. Très tôt, les 'autorités', le

<sup>13</sup> The video can be accessed on the website of the European Film Gateway 1914 at [www.cnc-aff.fr/internet\\_cnc/Internet/ARemplir/parcours/EFG1914/pages\\_FR/B\\_305.html?bt=europeanaapi](http://www.cnc-aff.fr/internet_cnc/Internet/ARemplir/parcours/EFG1914/pages_FR/B_305.html?bt=europeanaapi) (8.1.2016).

<sup>14</sup> See also Jobs 2012: 51ff, who makes a similar point in his historical analysis of the Harlem Hellfighters in the New York City military parades.

<sup>15</sup> The national-day celebrations were organised under the auspices of the Ministry of the Interior and its decentralised institutions. In the colonies, responsibility for the celebrations lay with the *governor* or *commandeur de cercle*. After independence responsibility was transferred to the president at national level and the prefects at local level.

gouverneur général, les gouverneurs du Sénégal et de Dakar, le commandant supérieur en A.O.F. passent les troupes en revue du haut des tribunes d'honneur installées sur le boulevard National, aux environs de la place Protêt. Toutes les forces militaires stationnées à Dakar et dans les environs, troupes blanches et tirailleurs, sont représentées dans le défilé: le 7e R.T.S., le 6e R.A.C., le génie, les marins, les gendarmes auxiliaires ... Puis, le gouverneur général reçoit les chefs indigènes au Palais et offre le traditionnel déjeuner aux personnalités. Dans l'après-midi et la soirée se déroulent les jeux, les joutes, les régates de pirogues et, pour finir, les danses au tam-tam (Michel 1990: 146).

Similar to their presence in the metropolitan parades, the participation of African soldiers in the parades in the colonies was intended as a powerful symbol of imperial France. In fact, the decision to open the 14 July celebrations in the colonies to the general public was taken because it was not sufficient to only demonstrate French grandeur to the French. Particularly in the face of resistance to colonialism, the colonial subjects had to be made aware of the benefits of belonging to 'Greater France' as well.

This applies especially to those colonies where *tirailleurs* were deployed in the pacification and conquest of the territory, as for example in Madagascar (Ba 2012: 93; 97). When the French national day was celebrated for the first time in Antananarivo on 14 July 1897, these *tirailleurs* featured in the parade and their public appearance was a visible sign of imperial France that had recently been established with the help of these African-soldiers-turned-French-heroes. However, their appearance might have aroused disdain rather than adoration to those Malagasy onlookers who had tried to resist – heroically in their own eyes – the colonial occupation. For them the parading *tirailleurs sénégalais* were probably the personification of their defeat.

While in the face of their European and African enemies the *tirailleurs* represented and were used to represent the fearless, savage and invincible soldier, their role acquired through the status as soldiers signalled something different to their fellow Africans. In the colonies, the French also deployed the *tirailleurs* in the colonial assimilation project to communicate and disseminate French values and morals to the colonial subjects.<sup>16</sup> One aspect of the heroic narrative spun around the *tirailleurs* was the idea that serving in the French army was a pathway to upward social mobility. Within the colonial policy of assimilation the *tirailleurs* became part of a logic of distinction from their fellows who were categorised as 'simple natives' (Valensky 1997: 69; see also Riesz 1990: 441-4). Multiple decorations for their service in the armed forces, which were usually presented during public commemorative events, facilitated their heroising (Valensky 1997: 69). The publication of their names in magazines like the *Journal officiel de Madagascar et Dépendances* reinforced the *tirailleurs'* position and self-perception as superior. The fame was enjoyed not only by the soldiers themselves but was also reflected on their proud families who gained prestige from the fact that they had sent

<sup>16</sup> Not all *tirailleurs* returned to their countries of origin after the war. Those who had survived the atrocities of war were often denied leave to return home. Instead they were kept in France and forced to help to rebuild the country (Sharp 2003: 81).

their sons abroad (for Madagascar see Esoavelomandroso 1986: 136). Gontard retells a story about the mother and a wife of a *tirailleur* that clearly illustrates the sense of pride in the soldiers which prevailed at that time. On learning of her husband's death in Europe, the young wife-turned-widow started to cry, but she was interrupted by her mother-in-law who is reported to have said: 'You should not bewail your husband, he died gloriously'. The story then goes that she turned to the colonial administrator and offered her second son to be sent to France to replace the deceased one (cited in Gontard 1966: 12). Thus the heroisation of the *tirailleurs* in the colonies served first and foremost the need to ensure the constant flow of new recruits to replace the *tirailleurs* who died on the European battlefields. The target audience of this heroic tale was, therefore, the young African men whom the authorities wanted to lure into voluntary enrolment.

Heroes are usually role models in the sense that they condense something that is considered desirable. The aspect of upward mobility became a resource in the hands of the French administration as well as the returning soldiers, who used their role in turn as a resource in the game of power and prestige in the local societies, as Valensky describes for Madagascar:

Les mises en scène militaires (redditions de rebelles, remises de décorations), les rituels de la garnison, les cérémonies du 14 juillet sont des moments privilégiés où s'opère ce transfert culturel. Les airs martiaux joués par les fanfares militaires comme la tenue de parade des soldats, la position occupée dans le cortège, avec ou sans armes ou outils, le rôle du porte-drapeau, l'agencement de l'estrade officielle incrustent l'imaginaire de la population d'autant de lectures, d'images et d'interprétations édifiantes. Rendues visibles – et sous leur meilleur jour –, ces données finissent par paraître accessibles, voire familières pour les plus assidus, constituant un fonds commun de références nouvelles (Valensky 1997: 72).

Having served in the French army long enough to earn the right to receive a pension, many *tirailleurs* enjoyed a degree of authority and prosperity. Some of the soldiers who had served for more than ten years took administrative positions in their villages and were permitted to levy taxes (Valensky 1997: 62). Similarly, the returning *tirailleurs* in West Africa were considered as representing good role models, and it was common practice to replace ineffective or uncooperative chiefs with returning veterans.<sup>17</sup> In addition the *anciens combattants* had preferential access to jobs in both the private and public sector – particularly if they had acquired specialised skills during their military service (Echenberg 1991: 133-4). Furthermore, military-style schools for the sons of returning soldiers were established in Saint Louis (Senegal), Bingerville (Côte d'Ivoire) and Kati (French Sudan) with the idea of both rewarding the returning soldiers and ensuring a steady supply of recruits in the generations to come (Echenberg 1991: 66; 139-40). All of this can be seen not only as a form of compensation but as part of French colonialism's traditional assimilation policy. By virtue of having served in the French army the former soldiers had risen on the ladder of civilisation –

<sup>17</sup> This practice was later revisited (coinciding, in part at least, with the reduction of the chief's powers, a measure that made the post less attractive). However, even after 1945 returning veterans continued to petition the administration for posts as chief.

in the context of the colonial philosophy of *indigènes* versus *évolués* – and could, therefore, be of service not only to the colonial administration, but also as role models for their compatriots.<sup>18</sup> It was for the purpose of displaying this transformation from savages into respectable soldiers that the French authorities included *tirailleurs* in the military parades of the 14 July celebrations in the colonies.

The transfer of the *tirailleurs*' heroic narrative from France to the colonial territories entailed some major changes in the way these soldiers were looked at by their audience. While in France their image oscillated between that of the naïve child, the exotic seducer and the barbaric warrior, the African audience celebrated the (returning) *tirailleurs* as war heroes and role models. But in the colonies too, the *tirailleurs* were received with much ambivalence. Despite numerous attempts to promote a career in the French army as a possible route to social advancement, many Africans treated those who enrolled with suspicion and would not simply forget their low social status when they returned.<sup>19</sup> Thus, the French project involving the use of the *tirailleurs* as role models was undermined by the poor standing of many returnees in their communities of origin. Back in their villages, the returnees were still regarded as the slaves, mercenaries, or collaborators they had been on their departure and discovered that they would not be able to draw on their heroic reputation and exploit their supposedly improved social status outside the realm of French influence. Those who managed to gain a reputation back home often already enjoyed a certain status as the sons of influential families prior to their enrolment. One such example is Major Abdel-Kader Mademba from Saint-Louis, the only African to reach the rank of a major before WWII (on Major Abdel-Kader Mademba, see Echenberg 1991: 38-42). Reinwald describes cases where veterans tried to translate their new social status into well-known patterns by marrying several wives – something that used to be reserved for noble families (2005: 259-63), and that did not at all match with “French” ideas about good role models. A large number of the *tirailleurs* did not return to their villages of origin but settled in provincial towns and larger urban centres, where they could draw on their reputation as war veterans vis-à-vis both the French authorities and the local population (Echenberg 1991: 82-3; Lawler 1996: 246).

<sup>18</sup> In Senegal for example some African activists saw in the French declaration of war first and foremost an opportunity to secure the rights of the *originaires* (Senegalese from the four communes who had a special status among the colonised subjects) to French citizenship. The *évolués* saw conscription as a powerful instrument to claim not only equal duties but also equal rights. They thus demanded to serve as French citizens in the regular French army (Echenberg 1991: 44-5).

<sup>19</sup> A career as *tirailleur* for a long time remained attractive only for young men from remote areas and low social classes, who were limited professionally (Echenberg 1991: 67). According to Echenberg's estimates, as late as 1918, 75 percent of the African recruits were still of slave origin, however the post-war mobilisation campaigns in the African urban centres and the new conscription law of 1919 had important consequences. The vast majority of conscripts still originated from the lowest rung of society. Echenberg describes them as ‘physically fit peasant youth of low status and without traditional skills’ (1991: 62). A minority was drawn from the top echelons of society and included the sons of noble families who estimated that they could use the reputation gained in the army to trump their brothers or cousins in the quest for political power, for example for the position of chief (Echenberg 1991: 62-3). Young men from the new middle classes, who had been educated in French schools and were known as *évolués*, were underrepresented. On the one hand the army did not appear to offer them any advantages in terms of upward mobility and, on the other, the French were hesitant to recruit them because they feared they might be ‘tainted by nationalist ideology and thus had a bad influence on the rest of the troops’ (Echenberg 1991: 63).

With the introduction of Armistice Day as a public holiday in 1922, the heroic tale of the defence of civilisation by the *tirailleurs* became a commemorative event centred on the *tirailleurs*–turned-*ancien combattants*. The *ancien combattants* were invited to a banquet by the local authorities on the day – more or less the only commemorative ritual which expressed the government's gratitude for the sacrifice they had made for the empire. In the years that followed, commemorative monuments were inaugurated in the presence of representatives of the *ancien combattants* and henceforth became focal points in the commemoration of the war.<sup>20</sup>

However, many of those who returned home did not come as heroes, but survivors. With the returning *tirailleurs* and, even more with those who did not return, the heroic tale of was transformed into a narrative of death, loss, mutilation, sorrow and martyrdom. The commemorative performances by the *ancien combattants* themselves were dissociated from the glorious formats of the national days. In the post-WWI years, comrades gathered at the sites designated for the commemoration of the soldiers *morts pour la France* on the days of prominent battles and losses and, of course, on Armistice Day. Rather than performing military grandeur, these gatherings were very solemn and involved a wreath-laying ceremony and a minute's silence. On the rare occasions that parading formed part of these commemorative activities, it was performed as an act of veneration of the dead. For example, on 11 October 1923 a monument to the dead Betsileo was inaugurated in Fianarantsoa, Madagascar. During this ceremony, the president of the *anciens combattants* called out the names of the fallen combatants. At the end of this process, the *anciens combattants* and over 1500 schoolchildren marched past the new monument saluting it.<sup>21</sup> Their parading was neither a performance of power nor military grandeur but a tribute to those who had marched in previous parades before they lost their lives in the war.

In the eyes of the local elite, the heroic soldiers of WWI were transformed into witnesses of the Malagasy sacrifice for a French war without even receiving a proper reward in the form of the compensation or the naturalisation that many hoped for. The label *anciens combattants*, accompanied by a number of privileges, such as the right to a small pension, was reserved for war veterans who had spent at least 90 consecutive days on the front.<sup>22</sup> Based on press articles from the last month of 1919, Arnaud Léonard recounts that the returning *tirailleurs malgaches* tried to get back at the recruiters in Madagascar for having enticed them to enrol in the French army with false promises; their actions culminated in a level of extreme violence, during which some 30 *tirailleurs* killed a policeman. The French reacted by offering them compensation in form of land. The insurgents quickly accepted this offer as it was clear to

<sup>20</sup> For Madagascar see Jennings (2004).

<sup>21</sup> See the results of a research project conducted by Malagasy students as a commemorative project on the occasion of the centenary of the outbreak of WWI published on [http://tiraera.histegeo.org/monument\\_morts\\_MADAGASCAR.pdf](http://tiraera.histegeo.org/monument_morts_MADAGASCAR.pdf) (16.8.2014).

<sup>22</sup> Other titles that could be transformed into reputational as well as economic and social capital were 'prisoner of war' (soldiers who had been taken prisoner by the enemy and incarcerated for at least 6 months) and 'war invalid' (soldiers who had been severely disabled while in uniform) (Echenberg 1991: 128).

them that it was the best they could hope for.<sup>23</sup> The unfulfilled promises and thirst for vengeance soon manifested in the flare-up of anticolonial movements. Other returnees, like Jean Ralaimongo from Madagascar, advocated a new relationship between France and its colonial subjects by consistently demanding naturalisation without asking France to make amends for their services (Domenichini 1969: 245; see also Randrianja 2001: 166ff). These examples show that the veterans must be regarded as reputational entrepreneurs who followed their own agenda and participated in the hero-making process. WWII, then, represented an important milestone and turning point regarding the role of veterans and returning soldiers as agents of societal change and actors involved in the making of the heroic narrative.

### FIGHTING FOR EMANCIPATION: AFRICAN SOLDIERS AT THE END OF WORLD WAR II

While Africans constituted approximately three percent of the soldiers in the French army during WWI, they were involved in greater numbers in WWII. At the time of the armistice in 1940, Africans accounted for almost nine percent in the regular French forces, the Free French forces (1940-44) were even essentially composed of African soldiers (Echenberg 1991: 88). Unsurprisingly, this development was accompanied by changing discourses and ideologies regarding the role and significance of the *tirailleurs*. Since the colonial government of French West Africa had sided with Vichy, the government of southern France that allied with Nazi Germany, this meant the unravelling of many previous achievements in the struggle for equality. For many colonial subjects the living conditions in the colonies deteriorated in the context of Vichy racial politics (see Ginio 2006a).<sup>24</sup>

The representatives and spokesmen of Allied-oriented Free France led by de Gaulle had chosen French Central Africa and Brazzaville as the starting points for their resistance movements and attempts to liberate France from the Nazis and their French Vichy collaborators. In this context, the massive recruitment campaigns for African soldiers were marked by a discourse of shared heroism, in which French and African soldiers were seen as fighting together in equality and fraternity for the freedom of France and beyond.

In some respects, the heroic tale of the *tirailleurs* in WWII revived their image as being particularly brave. According to popular myths, Africans fought tenaciously before retreating in orderly fashion in the face of the overwhelming superiority of the German troops, and outperformed their French comrades and superiors in many respects (see Echenberg 1991: 89-96). Other aspects of the heroic tale of the *tirailleurs* also emphasised their discipline and courage and linked these to their acceptance as equals by the French in the mixed units of the Régiments d'Infanterie Coloniale Mixtes Sénégalais. In contrast to the

<sup>23</sup> Interview with Arnaud Léonard, 'L'image du tirailleur malgache de la Grande Guerre est brouillée', *Le Monde*, 20.5.2014.

<sup>24</sup> Some authors have argued that the first anticolonial movements and sentiments emerged in this difficult context. For a perspective on the anticolonial movements in Algeria and Madagascar, see Jennings 2004: 73ff; for a perspective on decolonisation as transition in French West Africa, see Ginio 2006a: 173-82.

tales of head-cutting barbarians, the new narrative actively sought to downplay the exotic characteristics of the *tirailleurs* and was emblematically condensed in the comic strips of *Mamadou s'en va-t-en guerre* (1939). Published in the fortnightly publication *La Gazette du Tirailleur*, it narrated the story of Mamadou and Ibrahima who voluntarily signed up when the motherland appealed for help (see Echenberg 1991: 90-1). They were dispatched from Dakar as heroes by the African public, warmly received by a grateful French population who showered them 'with gifts of cigarettes and flowers' (Echenberg 1991: 90), and experienced the French as equals and no longer their superiors. According to Echenberg, this reflected changes in the ideology of colonial contributions to the military as such (1991: 88-91). These myths notwithstanding, the experiences of African soldiers who fought under the French flag were ambivalent and contradictory,<sup>25</sup> as was the official memory of them. A French marching song that was very popular among *tirailleurs* units captured this ambiguity in the complaint about 'our mother France' who fed her children nothing but potatoes and rotten beans (cited after Echenberg 2009: 291).<sup>26</sup>

In anticipation of the victory of the Free French forces, de Gaulle gave orders to whiten the French Army in autumn 1944 and to send back African soldiers to their countries of origin (Echenberg 1991: 98-9). Hundreds of thousands of African soldiers were told that their services were no longer needed. They were literally relieved of their frontline positions, arms and uniforms without warning and sent to camps in the south of France to await ships to take them back to Africa. African soldiers were gradually replaced by French interior forces, young Frenchmen and partisan groups so that they could have a share in the Allied success of liberating France (Chafer 2002: 46). Paris was liberated in August 1944. The 14 July parade of 1945 still featured a regiment of African hunters, and Algerian soldiers were awarded decorations. But by 1946, the *tirailleurs* in the parade had been replaced by young civilian Frenchmen, supposedly partisans, and thus deprived of their tribute.<sup>27</sup>

Another reason for demobilising and sending back African soldiers towards the end of the war, was the French government's fear of the destructive potential of a large group of soldiers, who had seen France suffer a humiliating defeat, and being dependent on African help (Ginio 2006a: 125f). Apart from the frustrating denial of the credit for bringing liberation to the French, African soldiers suffered shortages of food, clothing and shelter in the transition camps. The discriminatory treatment belied the earlier discourse of brothers-in-arms (Echenberg 1991: 96ff.). This led to a number of incidents, in which frustrated soldiers protested against their living conditions and the failure of the French authorities to provide them with back pay and demobilisation premiums. The experiences of shared suffering in

<sup>25</sup> See, for example, Schindler-Bondiguel who discusses the representation of Malagasy soldiers in the French colonial forces as located between indigenous auxiliary and French soldiers.

<sup>26</sup> The song also prominently features in the 2006 film *Indigènes*, but it is not specifically a *tirailleurs*' song. Instead it is the eighth verse of the military marching song *Les Officiers* of the École spéciale militaire de Saint-Cyr in Coëtquidan (see <http://musique-militaire.fr/ecoles/saint-cyr/les-officiers>).

<sup>27</sup> See [www.ina.fr/video/AFE85001581/revue-militaire-et-defile-populaire-du-14-juillet-video.html](http://www.ina.fr/video/AFE85001581/revue-militaire-et-defile-populaire-du-14-juillet-video.html), last accessed on 20.11.2015



trench warfare and shabby treatment after demobilisation triggered a heightened consciousness among the *tirailleurs* as Africans and, moreover, as 'better defenders of France's sovereignty during the debacle of 1940 than [...] metropolitan Frenchmen' (Echenberg 1991: 103). Even after the former soldiers had been discharged and returned to their villages, many of them threatened the colonial order by behaving aggressively towards the chiefs and the colonial administration, refusing to pay taxes and, more generally, failing to pay respect to the French, whom they described as cowards who had fled the battlefield and abandoned the African soldiers to German cruelty (Ginio 2006a: 128ff.).

The returning soldiers not only publicly shattered the image of colonialism as a civilizing project through their acts of disobedience. They also initiated the protest against unequal treatment in a more institutionalised form. A number of veterans associations assumed the task of catering for the interests of *anciens combattants*, economically, politically and in terms of reputation.<sup>28</sup> The veteran's slogan 'equal sacrifices = equal rights' primarily referred to pensions and benefits (Echenberg 1991: 104), but also referenced the African soldiers' reputation as war heroes and the question as to how the experience of war and the shared victory over Nazi Germany should be reconciled with the reality of colonialism. The crucial question was which contributions to the war and whose contributions qualified as heroic deeds? For example of the *tirailleurs malgaches* who had not been recruited for the fighting forces for reasons of racial stereotypes, only one regiment of was ever decorated with military honours. All other Malagasy soldiers who never served on the front line but in logistic and strategic positions were omitted from the bestowal of military honour. Echenberg reports on a number of incidents in which African veterans were refused access to commemorative ceremonies and, particularly, the receptions organised by the local Commandant de Cercle. In response, the Dahomean branch of the Association des Anciens Combattants et Victimes de Guerre de l'Afrique Occidentale Française (AACVGAUF) decided to boycott the 14 July festivities in 1948. Being no longer either slaves or soldiers the parading *tirailleurs* allowed to question the supposedly natural and God-given dominion of Europeans over Africa. Protesting against the withheld invitation to the reception, the veterans denied the parade's organizers (and, symbolically, France) the public demonstration of recognition in the parade. The conflict generated a lot of public clamour throughout French West Africa (Echenberg 1991: 143-4).

In short, after the second World War, veterans associations became active stakeholders in commemorative rituals and discovered that by participating (or not participating) in the national-day festivities they could make powerful claims to what was legitimately theirs in economic and reputational terms. Furthermore, they instrumentalised this position to oppose France's ambition to build a good reputation via the public demonstration of fraternity while neglecting their duty towards the veterans in other domains. More generally speaking, national-day parades as public rituals of commemoration introduced the veterans as

---

<sup>28</sup> Many veterans' associations had their origin in France. They differed in size, impact and functions, and in their relationship to the colonial administration and politics (Echenberg 1991: 127-63).

stakeholders in the hero-making process, and many were soon to instrumentalise their moral capital and revolt against the colonial inequalities more generally.

### THE *TIRAILLEURS* IN THE PERIOD OF DECOLONISATION: HEROES, VICTIMS OR PERPETRATORS?

In *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), Frantz Fanon's work on the psychology of the racism and dehumanisation inherent in the colonial situation, the author deconstructed the French image of the *tirailleur* as 'the-good-soldier-under-command, the brave fellow-who-only-knows-how-to-obey' (Fanon 2008 [1952]: 77). Fanon's perspective was undoubtedly influenced by his experience of the Algerian liberation war. However, other African intellectuals, such as Aimé Césaire and Léopold Senghor, also denounced not only the use of African recruits as 'the empire's black mastiffs'<sup>29</sup> (Senghor 1948: 84), but also the way in which they were publicly deployed as symbols of a supposedly mutually beneficiary project of colonisation as civilisation.<sup>30</sup> Despite these critical voices from intellectual African circles and notwithstanding the increasingly ambiguous role which the *tirailleurs* or veterans took up in the negotiation about the (de)heroising process of their status, somewhat surprisingly the *tirailleurs* survived independence. They did so not as special units within the French army, as these were dissolved gradually up to 1964, but in the popular imaginary as heroes and symbols of a special Franco-African relatedness or even consanguinity and, not least, as a standard feature of the national-day parades in both France and the colonies.

In Côte d'Ivoire, many elderly people recall the 14 July celebrations in the late 1950s as important events in the calendar, particularly for the children. They not only participated in the lantern parade on the eve of the holiday, but also competed in the numerous races and amusements on the day itself for prizes such as bottles of lemonade, tins of sardines, bars of soap, etc.<sup>31</sup> During the conversations Konstanze had with Pépé Kinimo Kacou in Côte d'Ivoire about his memory of the *tirailleurs*, he recalled the festivities of 14 July that opened with the *salut aux couleurs*, the singing of the Marseillaise and a parade that consisted of the colonial police and the *anciens combattants*. For Pépé Kinimo Kacou, the former *tirailleurs*, now referred to as *anciens combattants*, in their 'beautiful uniforms', were an important feature of the festivities and regarded a pre-independence African heroes and torchbearers of African bravery and valour. The then young boys and girls admired them as 'our parents who fought for France' (Bongouanou 4 September 2013). As Pépé further recalled, in the eyes of the African onlookers the parading *anciens combattants* were retransformed from French heroes into 'our boys' (Interview Pépé Kinimo Kacou, Bongouanou, 4 September 2013).

<sup>29</sup> Also translated as 'the empire's black watchdogs' (Parent 210: 238).

<sup>30</sup> With *Hosties Noirs* (1948) Senghor published a whole anthology of poetry imagining the *tirailleurs* as heroes of the French liberation movement (Michel 2002: 110).

<sup>31</sup> Interviews with Pépé Kambou, 15 January 2010, Abidjan; Barthélémy Kotchy, 18 March 2010, Abidjan; Christophe Wondji, 1 September 2010, Abidjan; Gabriel Akpagny, 3 August 2013, Bongouanou; Nanan Louis Serges Kanga Eba, 28 August 2013, Abongoua; Nanan Kouamé II Etienne Kandio, 30 August 2013, Tanoso; Kinimo Kacou, 4 September 2013, Bongouanou.

The heroic tale of the brave *tirailleurs* mediated to the audience during the parade was well received by the public. They readily adopted the encoded narrative about the heroic contribution of 'their boys' to world history. For some, the *anciens combattants* were reminders of the victory of Greater France; for others who were also attentive to the narrative disseminated by the veterans about the unjust treatment by the French, they were instead reminders of the ongoing colonial exploitation of Africans by Europe. The fact that the heroic narrative was no longer undisputed points to the important role of the audience as actor in the hero-making process. What certain members of the audience saw in the parading *tirailleurs* may not have been what the parade organisers intended them to see. As performances, parades create meaning in the shared co-presence of actors and spectators. They are forms of mutual meaning-making on the part of the organisers, parading *tirailleurs* (or their representatives) and the audience. Once we 'explore the creation of meaning as an act of collaboration among those who planned the parades and the soldiers and spectators who participated in them' (Jobs 2012: 10) we can access the multiple contents a heroic narrative, disseminated through parading soldiers, may contain. It is within this 'complex web of actors', Jobs concludes that 'room for diverging interpretations and agency' emerges (2012: 10). When talking to parades' spectators in Madagascar, for example, one spectator recalls the parade of the *ancien combattants* as the most enthralling part about the yearly parade on Independence Day at the time of his growing up in northern Madagascar: however, he admits that the curiosity about the former soldiers was not exclusively based on the glorification of their military heroism: 'We kids were just excited to see how many of them were still alive'. Each year their number decreased and the boys placed bets on how many there would be in the parade; a childish behaviour indicative of curiosity rather than respect and heroisation.

From the perspective of France, the *tirailleurs* were indeed heroes because they had helped to defeat the Nazis (and the Vichy government) and contributed to the establishment of the Fourth Republic. As the liberation of France progressed, however, the heroism of the *tirailleurs* was quickly forgotten, particularly once they returned to Africa, and the liberation was presented as a story of French heroism only. This process may have culminated in the shootings in Thiaroye on the outskirts of Dakar on 30 November 1944 when a significant number of *tirailleurs sénégalais* were killed after having staged a mutiny against the discriminatory treatment by French superiors in the camps. The African comrades-in-arms who demanded to be treated as the French soldiers had ended up where they had been before the war: colonial subjects.<sup>32</sup> Thiaroye symbolised the ingratitude of the French and it was quickly integrated into a discourse that dreamed of a different postcolonial world order. In his poem *Tyaroye* written shortly after the massacre in 1944, Léopold Sédar Senghor celebrated the heroism of the victims:

No, you have not died in vain.

---

<sup>32</sup> On the incidents at the transition camp in Thiaroye see Echenberg 1991: 100ff.

You are the witnesses of immortal Africa  
 You are the witnesses of the new world to come.<sup>33</sup>

The poet Senghor took up the heroic narrative of the *tirailleurs* and – in the light of their new suffering and victimhood – turned their reputation into a martyrs' version of the same narrative, now directed as reproach towards the French and as appeal for revenge towards the African audience. In French West Africa Thiaroye became an important symbol of the continuing colonial oppression of the late 1940s and 1950s. A dominant narrative was that of the brave Africans who had fought and died for the freedom of French and Africans alike, only to be denied their reward by French conservatives and colonial die-hards:

La France a été occupée par l'Allemagne. Pour sa délivrance, elle a lancé un appel aux Africains qui ont libérée la France. Le RDA [Rassemblement Démocratique Africain] a demandé que les anciens combattants, les mutilés, reçoivent la même pension que les mutilés de guerre de la métropole. Le gouvernement pourri a jusqu'à ce jour refusé de nous donner cette égalité, pourtant un Africain meurt comme un blanc (Victor Biaka Boda, cited in Lawler 1996: 223).

Encouraged by the tale of brothers-in-arms who had helped defend and reconquer the motherland, and by de Gaulle's speeches and promises at the Brazzaville conference in 1944, Africans made use of the heroic image generated in the war propaganda for the benefit of the colonised people. 'He used to say "we fought in fraternity and equality for liberty" but it needed another battle to get what we were promised' exclaimed Juliette Brou in a conversation we had about her late father who had served in the French army in WWII (Abidjan, January 2010). Similar statements can be found in the stories collected by Nancy Lawler from returning WWII veterans. She tells the story of Namongo Ouattara, who after his demobilisation in 1947 returned to his hometown Korhogo in Côte d'Ivoire. Disappointed of being treated as a second-class-soldier despite de Gaulle's promises to the *tirailleurs* that they would be rewarded for their share in the victory of Free France, Ouattara joined the local section of the PDCI-RDA, the Ivorian section of the Rassemblement Démocratique Africain. He campaigned extensively among his former comrades for Houphouët-Boigny's movement, which – in his opinion – was fighting the same battle as the one they had started for the liberation of France now for the liberation of Côte d'Ivoire (Lawler 1996: 207-16):

Il y avait un grand changement chez nous. Ceux qui étaient nés à Korhogo ne connaissaient que les choses de Korhogo, mais ceux qui avaient voyagé partout n'avaient pas la même mentalité. Ils avaient vu beaucoup de choses. Ils étaient plus intelligents que ceux qui étaient restés. [...] Nous les anciens combattants, on a été très forts pour expliquer les choses à la population. Le système du travail forcé est tombé (Namongo Ouattara, cited in Lawler 1996: 214).

In contrast to the previous generations, the *tirailleurs* who returned from WWII enjoyed a lot of respect in their villages of origin irrespective of their social position on joining the army.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Senghor 1991: 68. For a comprehensive study of Senghor's poem and further cultural representations of the massacre see Parent 2010: 233-5; Parent 2014.

Ordinary villagers admired them for their knowledge about everything that was French and modern and for their intrepidity vis-à-vis French rule and authority – whether in form of the police or the chefs de cantons. In their efforts to relate the colonial war propaganda used in their recruitment, their experiences on the battlefields in Europe, and what they saw and heard on returning home, the former *tirailleurs* actively forged a narrative of courage and fearlessness that was easily adapted to the new political struggles ahead.

Some African veterans could turn the reputation they gained in the French trenches into social and political capital back home and many *anciens combattants* became important actors in the decolonisation process. In Côte d'Ivoire, an important actor in the re-reading of the *anciens combattants'* contribution to the war in terms of the nationalist struggle was Philippe Yacé, a trained teacher who had returned from the war decorated with several military awards and had obtained French citizenship as a reward for his services to the military.<sup>35</sup> In numerous public speeches he linked the fate and history of the *tirailleurs* to that of Ivorian independence by asking: 'We have liberated France, why aren't we free?' (Yacé cited in Lawler 1996: 223). Two ways of decolonisation were imagined: independence as an abrupt and violent breaking of ties, or independence as a slow emancipation process aimed at maintaining a close relationship between the colonies and the metropole. The returning *tirailleurs* became leading figures for both of these movements. Why was this the case?

Indeed, in the early post-war period many of the soldiers enrolled for positions within the colonial administration (i.e. in the colonial police forces, as clerks, mechanics, or male nurses; see Echenberg 1991: 105ff; Ba 2012: 226-8). Thus, initially at least, many *anciens combattants* supported the continuity of French presence in Africa (see Chafer 2002: 45-50). In the context of crafting a new post-war colonial project, Thiaroye became embarrassing not only to the French but also to the African advocates of the *communauté française* who campaigned for integrating France and its colonial territories in a federation of states. Remembering the *tirailleurs* as victims of colonialism would not have suited the interests of the political elite of the time, thus the narrative of the *tirailleurs* as heroes and martyrs for French liberty was not systematically exploited by the nationalist movements of French West Africa.

In other circles, WWII and especially the massacre in Thiaroye fuelled a violent anticolonial martyr narrative, and the veterans returning from WWII adopted a more violent approach to nationalism. The war had exposed the fragility of French power (Chafer 2002: 48) and equipped the soldiers with military knowledge, and this was used as a resource. Hence the veterans were influential in spreading the anticolonial message (Lawler 1996: 213-4) and many of them supported the emerging nationalist movements that advocated for a violent

---

<sup>34</sup> Hanke 2004 discusses this at length for the case of *tirailleurs sénégalais* in Burkina Faso.

<sup>35</sup> On his return he founded a teachers union and became one of the leading figures of the PDCI-RDA. In 1959 he was elected president of the Assemblée Législative, which prepared the gradual independence to follow a year later. After independence he held several leading positions in the independent Republic of Côte d'Ivoire and within the single party PDCI, and was even viewed as possible successor to President Houphouët-Boigny.

‘taking’ of independence through military actions notably in Madagascar and Algeria, and many demobilised soldiers became actors and heroes of the independence wars.

Those *tirailleurs* who continued to serve as part of the French defence forces after the war were deployed, in particular, in the quelling of these anticolonial riots and uprisings. As part of the French army they contributed significantly to the maintenance of the colonial project. They were both colonisers and colonised and thus often perceived as agents of colonialism in the respective countries.<sup>36</sup> While the *tirailleurs malgaches* were sent to Algeria and Indochina to fight against independence movements, some 18,000 *tirailleurs sénégalais* participated in the repression of the anticolonial uprising in Madagascar in 1947.

These missions again diversified the *tirailleurs’* reputation. Far from being idolised as heroes in Madagascar, the West-African *tirailleurs* had a reputation as being particularly merciless in their treatment of the Malagasy rebels.<sup>37</sup> In a rather similar way to the ambiguous reputation of the *tirailleurs* as *Schwarze Schmach* during the French occupation of the Rhineland, the deployment of the West-African *tirailleurs* in Madagascar was perceived as both a threat and humiliation. Thus while the *tirailleurs sénégalais* paraded as heroes of the French colonial project in France and Madagascar alike, they had a particularly negative image among the Malagasy nationalists who despised them as assimilated puppets of the colonial forces. Many African intellectuals discredited the *tirailleurs* as agents of French coercion, at best, and as barbaric mercenaries, at worst (most prominently perhaps Ly 1957; see also Echenberg 1991: 164ff.). Amadou Bâ (2012) retraces the lives of *tirailleurs sénégalais* and their descendants in Madagascar and describes their problematic integration into today’s society. They are stigmatised through the use of derogatory designations, and their particularly negative image is perpetuated in popular literature and songs, expressions and sayings, and other media of collective memory.

In this section we have retraced the many ways in which the heroic narrative of the African *tirailleurs* was continued, twisted and developed after WWII. It was already fragmented when not all soldiers who had gone to war in Europe returned unharmed. It was yet further fragmented when they used their reputation for having travelled to Europe and having fought side by side with the French as brothers for their own ends. Indeed, the *tirailleurs* came to symbolise not only heroes of Franco-Africa but also collaborators or victims of colonisation and even torchbearers of anticolonialism. Thus in 1960 when many African colonies became independent, the parading veterans of the two world wars served as reminders of the cruelty and injustice of colonialism that had finally come to an end, on the one hand, and as reminders that the colonisers and the colonised were linked by a common history that would outlive decolonisation, on the other. The (former) *tirailleurs* could be all

<sup>36</sup> For a detailed description of the role played by the *tirailleurs sénégalais* in colonial conflicts, see Zimmerman 2011.

<sup>37</sup> For a comprehensive study of the role of the West African *tirailleurs* in conquest, pacification and repression in Madagascar between 1895 and 1960, see Ba 2012.

these heroes at once. This ambiguous position made them particularly robust icons and guaranteed them a stable place in future memory projects.

### NATIONALISING THE *TIRAILLEURS*? POSTCOLONIAL FRANCOPHONE AFRICA AND FRANCE

After independence the African *tirailleurs* fell victim to oblivion both in France and in the colonies. Sakho (2014: 129) states that even the few monuments commemorating the *tirailleurs* were taken down in the attempt to clean the mnemonic landscape off reminders of colonialism. Having served France loyally in the world wars and in putting down anticolonial struggles and having fought for independence in the colonies, they did not fit into the official postcolonial narratives, neither of the newly independent countries nor of the metropole (see also Chafer 2008: 36). The immediate post-independence years were characterized by efforts to commemorate a shared Franco-African history as a community of fate. Almost all African countries had not broken completely with their former coloniser after the transition of power to the new governments, and this provided space for the mutual recognition of Franco-African partnership. This was reflected in several commemorative practices. On the occasion of the national-day festivities in the newly independent countries, high-ranking French authorities were invited as special guests, and the official programme of the celebrations often included a wreath-laying ceremony at the monuments commemorating all the fallen soldiers of the two world wars regardless of their country of origin. In addition, new monuments were erected, such as the Mémorial de l'armée noire in Fréjus (France), which was built in 1994. Although being one of the few monuments deliberately pointing to the existence of African *tirailleurs* in the French Army, the arrangement and design of the soldiers in this monument repeats many of the paternalistic stereotypes. The French soldier in the arrangement stands apart as the only one still upright and unaffected by the horrors of war. The four African soldiers by contrast appear to be desperate, broken and looking for guidance.<sup>38</sup> The monument does not recognise the *tirailleurs* as equal heroes of the world wars. In commemorative rituals organised by France this is to some extent repeated performatively: the African representatives are usually supernumeraries or, at best, invited guest. They partake through 'physical participation' (Reinwald 2005: 132) but never have any role in the active shaping of the commemorations.

In some respects the heroes' narrative became a story of victimhood, which remembered different things and availed itself of media other than the military parades (even though incorporating war invalids into the parades as reminders of the cruelty of war had been a feature of military parades in France). The Thiaroye uprising and its bloody aftermath is perhaps the most prominent example of this change in the heroic tale in French West Africa. Although the *ancien combattant* and anticolonialist Senghor described the *tirailleurs* as 'witnesses of the new world to come' in his poem about Thiaroye, Senghor the Senegalese president did little to commemorate the event so as not to damage the good relations with

<sup>38</sup> For a detailed description and analysis including images refer to Reinwald (2005: 128-32). For a comprehensive study of French monuments to the *tirailleurs sénégalais* see also Barcellini 1997.

France. Instead it was the opposition that organised pilgrimages to Thiaroye to commemorate the victims. It was not until the 1980s that Thiaroye was remembered more openly, particularly in the realm of popular culture. In a way, a play and a number of songs written at the time and Ousmane Sembène's 1988 movie *Camp de Thiaroye* anticipated the official Senegalese memory offensive in the 2000s (Ginio 2006b, see also Parent 2010 on the (re)writing of Thiaroye). The first monument commemorating Thiaroye on the African continent was inaugurated in Bamako in 2002 and is dedicated to 'the martyrs of Thiaroye', as the inscription reads, taking up the narrative of suffering and death.

Apart from these attempts to recast the heroic narrative of the *tirailleurs* as part of the memory of colonial exploitation and victimhood, the *anciens combattants* were to some extent subsumed under the forces that had contributed to the attainment of independence in one way or another. This is particularly true of their inclusion in the national-day parades of the newly independent governments. In fact, many elements of the celebration remained basically the same after independence, particularly in rural areas (Coquery-Vidrovitch 1999: 208-9; D'Almeida-Topor 1999: 255-62). While the military review of national-day celebrations no longer featured the colonial police forces but the first recruits in the national armies, the *anciens combattants* continued to participate in the parade as an important and much-feted group. An official press photograph taken on 26 June 1960, when the newly founded Malagasy army paraded for the first time on Madagascar's Independence Day, shows former *tirailleurs malgaches* participating as *ancien combattants* in the parade. They displayed the decorations they had gained as soldiers in the French colonial forces and waved both French and Malagasy flags, a visible indication of their ambiguous attachment to France and Madagascar.<sup>39</sup> In Côte d'Ivoire, they were positioned as link between the military section of the parade and the civil parade. In 1964, for example, a huge parade was held in Bouaké, in which three battalions of the national army, the presidential guard, troops of the gendarmerie of Abidjan and Bouaké, *anciens combattants* of the sub-prefectures of the department, 330 young girls from the civil servants' school, students of the National School of Administration, and members of local political committees and associations paraded as the nation's living forces (*Fraternité Hebdo*, 7 August 1964). The term 'living forces' has since become a received concept used to refer to participants in the parade. They are regarded as the driving force of the nation and the basic pillar of its success. Thus, at this stage, the former French war heroes had become veritable national heroes.

How can this extraordinary transformation be explained? During the French military parades in France the *tirailleurs* exemplified the success of the imperial project while simultaneously satisfying the audiences' desire for exoticism. In the colonies the *tirailleurs* and *anciens combattants* already represented rather different virtues or their participation in the parades could be interpreted differently. As in the memories of Pépé Kinimou, discussed above, they came to represent a vanguard force of African grandeur that questioned the

---

<sup>39</sup> Agence Nationale Taratra (ANTA), photographs CO3 No 1430 and 1429.



entire idea of white supremacy, and thus deprived the colonisation project of its initial legitimisation. The changes in the narrative of the heroic *tirailleurs* from exotic and naïve loyal servants of the French empire to proto-nationalists struggling for the liberation from France seems to be connected to the travelling of the heroes and the heroic tale from the sphere of influence of France to the *tirailleurs* themselves on their return to Africa. However, independence itself constituted a major turning point within the countries. Even if the *anciens combattants* still paraded on the occasion of national-day festivities of the now independent countries, the issue of pensions and how much pressure the independent governments would put on the French to achieve some form of compensation depended a lot on the relationship between the former coloniser and the colonised.

Apart from notable exceptions like Philippe Yacé, who established a significant political career after independence (but no longer publicly referred to being an *ancien combattant*), the vast majority of former soldiers were forced to discover that their suffering, knowledge of French, ‘overseas experience’ and even military reputation counted for less and less the more Ivorians entered the modern new world as an independent country. Even worse, there was now a national army, whose soldiers were not much interested in the ‘old stories’ of a long-ended war. *Ancient combattant* Yeo Kouhoua had served for three years in the French Army before he returned to Blagbokaha in 1947. When discussing his experience with Nancy Lawler, he complains: ‘When we returned to our villages, *they* admired *us*. That was at the time. Now, *they* have an African Army, and *they* no longer respect *us* at all’ (cited in Lawler 1996: 238, italics by the authors). This reflected the dominant nationalist project of the independent Republic of Côte d’Ivoire which was not interested in bemoaning the past and attempted instead to hold the nation together in a firm commitment to future progress (see N’Guessan 2014: 34-65). In Yeo Kouhoua’s statement two communities of belonging are presented as antagonists: ‘*they* have an African Army’ and ‘*they* no longer respect’ refers to the postcolonial nation-state of Côte d’Ivoire and the Ivorians to which Yeo Kouhoua apparently does not feel he belongs to. ‘Us’ by contrast is the group of the *tirailleurs*, a transnational community of fate bound together by the experiences of the war. ‘They’ who didn’t respect the *tirailleurs* were even blamed with what should have been in the responsibility of France. Former *tirailleur* Ditiembe Silué, also an interlocutor of Nancy Lawler, for example commented: ‘They don’t give a damn about us. They are only interested in the *anciens combattants* of the Ivorian army now. We have fought for France and we don’t have anything. They don’t give us anything’ (cited in Lawler 1996: 239). In this case, ‘they’ is the Ivorian state, who is blamed of not caring and catering for those having served in the army of a now no-longer existing colonial empire. For the *tirailleurs* who imagined their combat as having contributed not only to the victory of France, but also to the emancipation of Africans, the independent African states logically were responsible for their well-being. These expectations were not met by the postcolonial governments. The words of these *tirailleurs* left behind by the changes of postcolonial Africa reveal a major shift after independence, when suddenly the hitherto relevant community of reference provided by the

colonial administration was no longer politically and socially relevant. This affected the *tirailleurs* role and self-imagining, and it influenced the way how the *tirailleurs* were integrated into the new national memory cultures. Until 1960 the *tirailleurs* constituted an important icon of French-African memory culture. Whereas this imaginary was carried on in France, it became obsolete in the newly independent African nation-states, once the French African colonial empire collapsed.

The new official image of the *tirailleurs* in the context of the postcolonial state was mirrored in the appearance of the *anciens combattants* in public during the national-day parades. In 1961, the parade was choreographed to reflect the celebration of farmers as the nation's vanguard force in the struggle for development and modernisation as promoted by Houphouët's nation-building project. The military parade, comprised of several pedestal and motorized units, was closed by the so-called rural youth on their tractors and modern agricultural machines which were no less impressive to most onlookers than the preceding military vehicles. They were followed by the *anciens combattants* (*Abidjan Matin*, 8 August 1961). The choreography of the parade positioned them as civilians, whereas the young farmers took up the role of national models. The parade transformed the *anciens combattants* into 'old heroes' to be replaced by future heroes.

Due to the ambiguous relation between France and the newly independent states remembering the *tirailleurs* was a rather complex and complicated process. Ruth Ginio argues that it was 'precisely the commemoration of one of the symbols of these ostensibly peaceful colonial relations - the African colonial soldiers - that threatened to endanger this image [of French colonialism in West-Africa]' (2006b: 142).<sup>40</sup> In Côte d'Ivoire and other countries of French West Africa the memory of colonialism and everything associated with it was very much dwarfed by a nationalism that conjured up a bright future rather than deploring the suffering of the past. The *anciens combattants* who paraded on the occasion of Independence Day thus embodied both the re-imagination of the *tirailleurs* as independence fighters *avant la lettre*, as promoted by nationalists in the 1940s, and a symbol of the 'consanguinity' between the former colonies and the metropole. As was the case with the different interpretations of the parading *tirailleurs* in the 14 July festivities in the aftermath of WWII and in the light of anticolonial struggles, the *anciens combattants* meant different things to different people in the context of the national-day festivities of the now independent states.<sup>41</sup> In the last section, we look at these future heroes, the children of the *tirailleurs* and the question to what happens to the narrative when it becomes transgenerational.

---

<sup>40</sup> In her analysis of the military museum in Dakar as a site of memory, she states that all aspects that could challenge the narrative of the *tirailleurs* as heroes were ignored. The *tirailleurs* were neither presented as victims nor collaborators of colonialism, they simply served as link between Senegal and France, as 'symbols of friendship and cooperation for African's benefit' (Ginio 2006b: 150). However, one should consider that Ginio's monuments and museums are a medium of commemorative practice that is different from parades.

<sup>41</sup> Sebastian Jobs (2012) made similar observations in his analysis of the victory parades of the so-called Harlem Hellfighters returning from WWI. Whereas for some spectators the parading Afro-American soldiers were proof to the civilizing power of the military, that 'had turned African American (male) bodies into well-disciplined and

## THE 'CHILDREN' OF THE *TIRAILLEURS*: CONVERGENCE, CONTINUITIES AND CHANGES

The narrative of the *tirailleurs* does not necessarily end with the death of the last hero.<sup>42</sup> Different reputational entrepreneurs use the heroic narrative of the *tirailleurs* in conjunction with contemporary concerns. The idea of a succeeding generation continuing the combat or maintaining the hero's heritage is a common pattern that keeps the heroic tale alive and continuously adapts it to changing contemporary needs. In the case of the *tirailleurs*, their official memory appears to have increased rather than decreased over the past decade. The fact that most *tirailleurs* have passed away by now has not been an obstacle to this and has instead facilitated their commemoration both in France and the former colonies (see Ginio 2006b: 141-2). As Carola Lentz has stated in the case of independence jubilees in Africa: 'memory is always constructed and socially mediated, but the selectivity of memory [...] increases the more distant the lived experience becomes' (2013b: 221). As we will discuss in this section, this is often accompanied by complex processes of convergence (Rigney 2005: 18f.).

In Madagascar, where an anticolonial war had been fought, the veterans of the two world wars and the veterans of the anticolonial uprising were merged in the category of *ancient combatants* and are remembered as *tiraera*. This convergence is mirrored in the commemorative practices organised with or for them. In 1966 the Malagasy government introduced a commemorative day in honour of those who fought for independence in 1947 and in 1975 the Direction des Ancien Combattants de la Révolution was founded as part of the Ministry of Defence. The main objective of the commemorative practices of both the surviving *ancient combatants* themselves and the Department was the attainment of recognition of the *ancient combatants'* contribution in form of a veteran's pension. This demand was directed at both the Malagasy and French governments. Similarly, the memory work undertaken in the context of various commemorative ceremonies, exhibitions, speeches and comments held and made during the centenary of the Great War in Madagascar reveals how reputational entrepreneurs in the person of curators, politicians, and onlookers merge the concerns, reputation and effect of *tirailleurs malgaches* during and after the two world wars. All *tiraera* who were involved in military action at some point of Malagasy history are collectively heroised as war heroes, heroes of liberation and independence fighters – eliding any kind of differentiation in the face of historical evidence.<sup>43</sup>

---

regulated fighters capable of containing their wildness and using their power for a meaningful cause' (2012: 51), interaction between soldiers and black spectators created new forms of black community and consciousness, that certainly had not been intended by the organisers of the parade (Jobs 2012: 65-66).

<sup>42</sup> See Mourre (2014) for a discussion of the death of the supposedly last WWI *tirailleurs* Abdoulaye N'Diaye in 1998. Ironically, he died one day prior to the planned decoration with National Order of the Legion of Honour in the name of Jacques Chirac as if he wanted to deny the French President the honour of decorating himself with the reputation of finally having recognized the *tirailleurs'* place in French history.

<sup>43</sup> See the collection of media coverage by Arnaud Leonard accessible at [www.univ-paris1.fr/fileadmin/IGPS/Leonard\\_-\\_Madagascar.pdf](http://www.univ-paris1.fr/fileadmin/IGPS/Leonard_-_Madagascar.pdf) (8.1.2016). The *tirailleurs sénégalais* who are remembered for their actions at the side of the French against the resisting Malagasy nationalists are of course not subsumed under the term *tiraera*. For them, the Malagasy use the pejorative term *Senegaly*.

As a transgenerational and multilocal narrative, the heroism of the *tirailleurs* has condensed many different and partly conflicting aspects of history. This is best exemplified by the most recent commemorative entanglements of parading African soldiers in France. On 14 July 2010, fifty years after the so-called African year of independence, France invited the armies of its former colonies to parade on the Champs-Élysées. The invitation was explicitly intended as a reference to the participation of the *tirailleurs* and other African troops in the military parades on French national holiday during colonisation. It was meant as a reminder of the 'consanguinity' between France and its former colonies, which was established through the heroic deeds of French and African soldiers in the liberation of France from Nazi Germany (Nicolas Sarkozy, cited in *L'Express*, 13 July 2010).<sup>44</sup> Those who did parade on the Champs-Élysée in 2010 were neither *tirailleurs* nor *anciens combattants*, but young men and active soldiers. They served as representatives of the *tirailleurs* but they also represented the sovereign post-colonial nation-states. By linking the active armies of these nation-states to the memory of the *tirailleurs* the initiative triggered the allegation of neo-colonialism. It thus comes not as a surprise, that the 2010 initiative was eyed suspiciously by many intellectuals in both Francophone Africa and France (see, for example, Mbembe 2010). In Côte d'Ivoire, where a recent civil war had led to the renewal of French military presence on Ivorian territory, the French initiative was largely dismissed in the public discourse as a typical expression of the French neo-colonial attitude. Indeed, Ivorian president Laurent Gbagbo refuted the invitation and did not send Ivorian soldiers to parade on the Champs-Élysées. Pierre Kipré, who was Ivorian ambassador in France and president of the national organizing committee of the independence jubilee in Côte d'Ivoire by that time, explained:

C'est notre anniversaire, nous le fêtons à la maison chez nous. Nous ne voyons pas bien les raisons profondes de cette volonté de fêter le cinquantenaire d'États indépendants en France. [...] C'est une initiative très ambiguë. [...] Si c'est la francophonie qu'on fête, qu'on nous le dise. Mais la francophonie n'a pas 50 ans (*Notre Voie*, 14 July 2010).

Kipré's criticism was thus addressed at the mnemonic convergence the initiative had generated by making African armies parade on the French national day as representatives of the *tirailleurs* on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of African independence. In this case the condensation of the heroic narrative to host a multitude of histories did not lead to greater cohesion but fragmented the narrative. For many Ivorians, the *tirailleurs* were not icons of a shared Franco-African history. Instead, they were used to construct a genealogy of resistance to foreign domination from slavery to neo-colonialism, culminating in the 2002-

---

<sup>44</sup> The commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of independence in Africa and France has been analysed in a number of studies. See, for example, Chafer and Keese 2014; Förster 2012; Fricke 2013; Goerg 2013; Heitz 2013, 2014, Lentz 2011, 2013a, 2013b; N'Guessan 2013, 2014, 2015; Pype 2013; Späth 2013, 2015; Späth and Rajaonarison 2013 and Tiewa 2013.

2011 civil war.<sup>45</sup> In the Ivorian mnemonic twist, the *tirailleurs* became reminders of the ongoing (neo)-colonial exploitation.<sup>46</sup>

One of the African states that accepted the French invitation to parade on the Champs-Élysées was Madagascar. One year prior to the independence jubilee, the young mayor of the capital Andry Rajoelina, had overthrown the acting president and established a transitional government which he presided, albeit without a democratic mandate. Thus Madagascar faced the challenge of celebrating the anniversary under a government that was highly controversial and lacked international recognition. The supporters of the transitional government hoped that the invitation to Paris would signal acceptance of the change of government by France. Critical voices opposed participation for the same reason.<sup>47</sup> The majority of the Malagasy population, however, considered the invitation as an honour or a self-evident feature of global politics. The question as to whether the French gesture of celebrating this anniversary as its own should not be ignored as neo-colonial arrogance was drowned by the bigger questions concerning internal Malagasy politics.<sup>48</sup>

As the 2010 parade shows, the turn of the century marked a change in French policy regarding the memory of the French colonial troops and the responsibility of the French forces for events in the former colonial territories. In 2004, a sum of EUR 120 million was budgeted by the French government to supplement the pensions of *anciens combattants* in the former colonies and President Jacques Chirac decorated some twenty African WWII veterans as Chevaliers de la Légion on the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of the allied landing in Provence (Chafer 2008: 35).<sup>49</sup> Four years later the centenary of WWI again raised the question as to how the colonial soldiers' share in the victories and losses of the war should be commemorated. Historians, media and government commissions in charge of organizing the different activities of the commemorative year debated the question as to how to represent the international and multifaceted character of the war (Cossart and Hainagiu 2014: 9). However, it was the question as to how to remember the *tirailleurs* that triggered the most controversial debates. In France, the Front National and the ultra-nationalist press led a polemical debate about the participation of Algeria in the 14 July parade. For them, the Algerian soldiers represented, first and foremost, the heirs of the Algerian liberation movement FLN, a 'terrorist organisation' that had been responsible for the deaths of

---

<sup>45</sup> In 2002 a partly successful coup d'état turned into a rebellion and split the country in two with a rebel-held North and a government-controlled South. The Gbagbo government accused the rebels of being puppets defending the interests of France. The rebellion served the Gbagbo camp as proof that patriotic resistance had to be organised in order to defend the newly-initiated programme of *refondation*. On the imagination of the Ivorian civil war as a war of second independence, see N'Guessan 2013; 2015.

<sup>46</sup> Not surprisingly this reinterpretation of the *tirailleurs*' symbolic reputation was not produced in state-organized parades, but rather in individualistic and fugacious formats of popular culture, particularly music such as Reggae and Zouglou. See for example Alpha Blondy's *Armée Française* (1998) and Collectif Zouglou *David contre Goliath* (2004).

<sup>47</sup> The French government solved this dilemma by inviting a unit of marching soldiers as representatives of the Malagasy people to the parade, but denying Rajoelina the invitation as head of state on the VIP grandstand.

<sup>48</sup> For a detailed analysis of the Malagasy jubilee in the context of political crisis, see Späth 2015.

<sup>49</sup> 'Tirailleurs sénégalais. Histoire des tirailleurs: chronologie', *Radio France International*, 28 May 2014.

numerous Algerians and Frenchmen during the Franco-Algerian war.<sup>50</sup> In Algeria, by contrast, the Organisation Nationale des Moudjahidines (*anciens combattants algériens*) protested against the initiative and demanded that France ‘offer their apologies for the crimes committed in Algeria’ before any possible participation in the parades could be discussed (see Cossart and Hainagiu 2014: 10-1).<sup>51</sup>

Indeed, the appropriation of commemorative events and the legacy of the former *tirailleurs* in the name of continuing Franco-African friendship was not only met with mutual assurances of the ‘consanguinity’ between former coloniser and colonised. On many occasions, France’s invitation to integrate the African heroes of their colonial army into commemorative rituals as homage to their contribution to French grandeur was denounced as mere lip service as the question of equal pensions let alone reparation remains unresolved.<sup>52</sup>

Some of the former colonies also rediscovered the *tirailleurs* as heroes. It was upon the initiative of Jacques Chirac that Senegal’s President Abdoulaye Wade introduced Thiaroye to Senegal’s commemorative calendar in 2004 and installed the *tirailleurs sénégalais* as emblems of the shared history between Senegal and France (see Ginio 2006b). He declared 23 August, the day when *tirailleurs* liberated Toulon in 1944, a commemoration day for the *tirailleurs* in Senegal. In line with the French reading of the narrative, the date as well as the rhetoric of the commemorative event in Senegal returned to the heroic narrative of the brave *tirailleurs* who defended and liberated France, only combined with a subtle criticism of France’s ingratitude (Thioub 2014: 141). Of course in order not to taint the heroic image of the *tirailleurs*, the official commemoration also refrained from naming the less glorious aspects of the *tirailleurs’* missions, namely their contribution to colonial conquests, the suppression of the uprising in Madagascar, and the anticolonial wars in Indochina, Cameroon, and Algeria (ibid.). Since then, the appearance of France’s Senegalese veterans in commemorative rituals, which had been previously limited to Veterans’ Day, increased to three to four parades per year (Zimmermann 2011: 144). This mnemonic rediscovery of the *tirailleurs* comes along with a more general reassessment of Franco-African history and its legacy (see Chafer 2008: 36-7). The *tirailleurs* as icons of Franco-African history embody highly ambiguous and even paradoxical meanings in this changing context: they are both heroes and martyrs in the struggle for freedom and victims of French colonialism still being treated shabbily by France at present (Chafer 2008: 37). This reveals that the *tirailleurs* have become a particularly robust icon that encompasses the ambiguous shades of the historical *tirailleurs*.

<sup>50</sup> See the initiative ‘Non au défilé des troupes algériennes le 14 juillet 2014’; [www.frontnational.com/2014/06/non-au-defile-des-troupes-algeriennes-a-paris-le-14-juillet-2014/](http://www.frontnational.com/2014/06/non-au-defile-des-troupes-algeriennes-a-paris-le-14-juillet-2014/)

<sup>51</sup> Interestingly it is on the occasion of commemorative events, such as the fiftieth anniversary of African independences in 2010 and the 2014 commemoration of the beginning of WWI and the public attention triggered by other commemorative media, such as the film *Days of Glory* (2006), that the question of pensions re-emerged in the public discourse and, in turn, triggered activism.

<sup>52</sup> ‘Even the small steps taken to remember the role of former colonies, like the invitation to African troops to take part in the Bastille Day celebrations in 2014, amount to mere pats on the back for spilling their blood obediently’, complain Jacques Enaudeau and Kathleen Bomani in their blog World War I in Africa, in which they set out to create a platform for the commemoration of WWI on African soil and investigate its heritage in the present; <http://wwiafrica.ghost.io/about/> (19.8.2014).

## THE MAKING AND UNMAKING OF HEROES

In this paper we have analysed the mnemonic condensation of the parading *tirailleurs* (or representatives of them) as heroes of entangled Franco-African histories. The fact that the heroic tale of the parading *tirailleurs* survived two world wars and historic watersheds in the postcolonial world points to the sturdiness of heroes and practices of hero-worship in their capacity to capture ‘a maximum of meaning in the fewest of signs’ (Nora 1989: 19). In the remainder of this paper we want to extract some more general ideas about this process of the making and un-making of heroes in order to explain the sturdiness of the heroic tale and the performative power of parades.

Looking at the making and unmaking of heroes, we have focussed on three aspects: first, the heroes themselves, who are the protagonist of the tale to be told; second, those who tell and listen to the tale; and third the media chosen to tell the tale. The relationship between these three factors – the heroic tale, the actors and the media – is constitutive of the heroic narrative as practised and performed through various types of socially embedded activities. However, this approach slides all too readily into a purely functionalist understanding of heroes without really explaining how and why these global flows and connections are established, how they are influenced and shaped by those who employ them, how the latter employ them, and the way in which these changes feed back into the ‘original’ heroic tale. Instead of simply stating that heroes may serve different past and contemporary mnemonic projects, we argue that it is useful to look at the complex history(ies) of the *tirailleurs* as one narrative and explore and compare the processes of the making and unmaking of specific sub-narrations. Based on the understanding of heroism as a global phenomenon, we assume that this approach is also suited to the exploration of comparative questions. A heroic narrative might be known in different places – sometimes retold in similar terms and sometimes with a quite local flavour. By looking at heroism as it is practised we not only integrate actors and contextual circumstances into our observations, but also compare nuances of a heroic narrative with its own past and ask about the circumstances in which it changes or remains the same.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, by looking at heroism as a performance, we can address the question of how ‘meaning is created in the very moment of the per-form-ance; i.e., [by gaining] a palpable form’ (Jobs 2012: 27). As Jobs points out, ‘the methodological potential of performance as a theoretical concept lies in its ability to grasp changes and instabilities as well as to elucidate how certain views and ideologies become stable’. Heroism as performance in this sense is ‘more about becoming rather than being’ (2012: 27).

Let us take a closer look at the central factors involved in the process of hero-making: the heroic tale, the actors and the media. While many heroic tales are constructed around an individual heroic figure, the *tirailleurs*’ narrative builds on a collective. This might have facilitated the transnational spread of their narrative and connects their story to so many

---

<sup>53</sup> The question of variations in narrative patterns in different contexts has been raised and researched by oral historians under the heading of *Wandersagen* (migratory legends) or stock narratives (see, for example Vansina 1981 and Baumann 1936).

localities and so many peoples' lives. Heroes are tangible resources drawn on in response to the need for a symbolic object to define or explain a course of action or to promote moral and ethical values. Marie-Aude Fouéré considers them a 'moral matrix, from which individual and collective actors can draw for their particular agendas' (2014: 6).<sup>54</sup> Thus the hero's deed symbolises the moral values and virtues of the mnemonic community for which he is a hero. The *tirailleurs* as soldiers symbolised bravery, fearlessness, and brutality where needed, as African soldiers in France they embodied exoticness and as French soldiers in Africa they represented discipline, evolution and upward mobility. In later years, they stood for political diplomacy or resistance and military knowledge, depending on which side they took, and finally for Franco-African fraternity. While many heroic deeds imply a certain degree of predestination, the *tirailleurs* became so by force, from necessity or accidentally, and often initially against their will. This of course challenges the heroic tale, which therefore prefers to emphasise narratives of voluntary conscription. Heroic deeds often represent a disruption to the status quo, for example protest, resistance (to a threat, to ignorance) or defence (of virtues, of the weak) rooted in a moral obligation. In fact, the heroic deeds portrayed in the *tirailleurs'* narrative show their courage in the face of danger to promote the greater good: liberation. To turn this disruption into a triumphalist narrative and make liberation and equality the norm, their example was and is still referred to in the telling of the story of colonial injustice.

A basic characteristic of the heroic tale about the hero and his deed(s) is its simple and undisputed nature, which usually does not allow for complex or ambiguous aspects or nuances. But once we compare several local versions of the *tirailleurs'* narrative that work in different social contexts and for different audiences, we build a complex web of different meanings and perspectives that the plurivalent symbol of the *tirailleurs* manages to incorporate.

This is where further factors involving the making and unmaking of heroes come into play: the addressee, the actors, and the media of dissemination and conservation. A heroic tale depends on narrators and witnesses. Whether the heroic tale is 'historically correct' or not is of minor importance. But the spreading of the word is central to the narrative. Indeed, the case of the *tirailleurs* proves that their carefully choreographed appearance in public was far more important than the sacrifices and suffering they actually endured during the conquests and trench warfare of the world wars. The heroic tale of the *tirailleurs* was told by the French governments to their citizens in France and in the colonies, to future recruits and remaining families, it was also told to the independence governments of the new states and to their populations. In a different way it was also told by the *tirailleurs* themselves to the French governments, to their own governments, to their fellow citizens and to their heirs. In many cases the addressees not only consume the heroic tale but also participate in the making or

---

<sup>54</sup> She borrows the term 'moral matrix' from Schatzberg (2001) who introduces the concept to designate a set of metaphors which actors use to think and speak about power.



unmaking of heroes through their consumption. The erection of a monument only creates a heroic narrative if it is visited by people to honour or commemorate the deeds of its subject. Gary Fine's term 'reputational entrepreneur' (1996) pays credit to this ambiguity of actor roles as it is not necessarily the inventor of a heroic tale who serves as reputational entrepreneur, the hero himself may even participate in this undertaking. Reputational entrepreneurs identify a hero and respective heroic deed as a figurehead of their movement so as to support the moral project. Very often they are members of the elite or the leaders of a specific movement. In some cases they are family members or political associates of the hero. When making heroes, reputational entrepreneurs often are guided by their personal self-interest. They promote heroes to introduce claims about the social or political world and promote the heroic tale as a source of their legitimacy. The reputational entrepreneurs' access to sufficient resources for mobilizing others is central to the level of success achieved by the heroic narrative.

When circumstances change, societal parameters for measuring the value of a heroic deed within a narrative may alter and result in the inversion of the narrative. This can also be a parallel process carried out by a second group of entrepreneurs who promote different values. In other words: a hero is never established for once and for all, but is socially embedded and produced and subject to change over time. These processes can best be studied using historical figures whose reputation is difficult (Fine 2001: 9-11) or who embody many different and competing stories narrated by many different actors in different places – as is the case with the *tirailleurs*. In any case, in order to agree on the value of the hero's deed, the actors involved in the hero-making process are always linked to each other through a shared moral context. The content of the heroic tale usually changes when retold by someone else to another audience in another place. We observed a certain tendency of the narrative to be rather concrete and complex when situated in a rather narrow sphere of reference and to become more abstract and simplified as the scene in which it is effective widens. This does not reduce heroes to models *of* and *for* behaviour in a given society (see Geertz 1973: 93-4), but highlights instead the interactional or praxeological dimension of the hero-making. Reputations are 'collective representations enacted in social relationships' (Fine 2001: 3) and they are always a matter of contention. In this sense collective memory – and hero-worship as a particular form of it – should thus best be studied as a performance, in which actors and spectators give birth to a hero through their physical co-presence; as is the case in the military parades we have placed in the centre of our analysis.

The media suited to conveying a heroic narrative are manifold and similar to the media of historiography in general. In this paper we have looked at the use of monuments, songs and literature, and commemorative rituals, especially parades. Performative and participatory formats, such as parades, are particularly suited to such a perspective on hero-making because the interaction between the different actors involved in the process here is rather direct and not mediated. In the case of the *tirailleurs* it is evident that the context in which they appeared in public is important. The military parades on 14 July, both in France and in

the colonies, were among the most celebrated appearances of the *tirailleurs* and, later on, the veterans. In this context the organisers of these events and the veterans themselves became important reputational entrepreneurs. Veterans associations not only pushed for equal treatment and the same pensions as their French comrades, but also participated in the making and maintenance of an imaginary as heroes, which could be exploited for the concrete political, economic or social well-being of the former soldiers.

Given this dependence on so many parameters, one might assume that a hero is in a very vulnerable position and can easily be overthrown. On the contrary, however, we observed that, once established, a heroic narrative is quite robust. In fact, the case of the *tirailleurs* demonstrates that heroes are never completely forgotten. Instead, they are delegated to the archive of social remembrance (Assmann 2010: 97-107), kept active in different mnemonic practices or formats or embraced by other narratives. As we have seen, it was not all that obvious that the *tirailleurs* should parade as heroes. In fact, the high loss of life among them and the forced conscription would have and to some extent did favour a narrative of victimhood instead. At the same time, however, the hero version was kept alive by processes of convergence allowing for example to grasp the *tirailleurs* as torchbearers of independence.

The heroic narrative of the *tirailleurs africains* was repeatedly contested. But being contested does not necessarily mean that a hero does not work. The fact that we cannot tell whether those watching the parading *tirailleurs* really 'saw' them as heroes does not necessarily mean that the commemorative practices had no effect. Indeed, the strength of performative formats of hero-worship like parades lies in the physical co-presence of the actors and audience during the performance. In other words: the three basic pillars we identified as constitutive in the making of heroes – i.e. the heroic tale, the actors and the media – interact in the performance of the parading *tirailleurs*. Heroes and hero-worship practices are prone to cross-cultural borrowings and resilient to change, but nonetheless surprisingly flexible and open to adoption. It is precisely this contestedness and condensation of meanings in a single (or collective as in our case) icon that makes the case of the *tirailleurs* as heroes of entangled Franco-African histories who transcend national boundaries and extended periods of time simultaneously particular and exemplary of processes of hero-making in general.

## REFERENCES

- Assmann, Aleida 2010. 'Canon and archive', in Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (eds): *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 97–107.
- Ba, Amadou 2012. *Les Sénégalaises à Madagascar. Militaires ouest-africains dans la conquête et la colonisation de la grande île (1895-1960)*. Paris: L'Harmattan.
- Barcellini, Serge 1997. 'Les monuments en hommage aux combattants de la 'Grande France' (Armée d'Afrique et Armée coloniale)', in Claude Carlier and Guy Pedroncini (eds): *Les troupes coloniales dans la Grande Guerre*. Paris: Institut d'Histoire des Conflits Contemporains, 113–53.
- Baumann, Herrmann 1936. *Schöpfung und Urzeit des Menschen im Mythus der afrikanischen Völker*. Berlin: Reimer.
- Blanchard, Pascal et al (eds) 2013. *Colonial Culture in France since the Revolution*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Bloom, Peter 2008. *French Colonial Documentary: mythologies of humanitarianism*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Chafer, Tony 2002. *The End of Empire in French West Africa: France's successful decolonization?* Oxford: Berg.
- Chafer, Tony 2008. 'Forgotten soldiers', *History Today* 58 (11): 35–7.
- Chafer, Tony and Alexander Keese (eds) 2014. *Francophone Africa at Fifty*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Cockburn, Joshua 2005. *Attitudes to Gender and Race in France during World War One*. PhD thesis, Cardiff University.
- Collar, Peter 2013. *The Propaganda War in the Rhineland: Weimar Germany, race and occupation after World War I*. London: Tauris.
- Coquery-Vidrovitch, Cathérine 1999. 'Fêtes et commémorations en Afrique occidentale au XX<sup>e</sup> siècle', in Odile Goerg (ed): *Fêtes urbaines en Afrique. Espaces, identités et pouvoirs*. Paris: Karthala, 201–10.
- Cossart, Paula and Mihaila Hainagiu 2014. '14 juillet 2014, une commémoration paradoxale de la Grande Guerre', URL: [https://www.univ-paris1.fr/fileadmin/IGPS/Cossart-Hainagiu\\_paradoxe\\_def.pdf](https://www.univ-paris1.fr/fileadmin/IGPS/Cossart-Hainagiu_paradoxe_def.pdf) (7.10.2016).
- D'Almeida-Topor, Hélène 1999. 'La ville magnifiée. Les fêtes de l'indépendance dans les capitales ouest-africaines francophones', in Odile Goerg (ed): *Fêtes urbaines en Afrique. Espaces, identités et pouvoirs*. Paris: Karthala, 255–62.
- Deroo, Éric 2013. 'Dying: the call of the empire (1913-1918)', in Pascal Blanchard et al (eds): *Colonial Culture in France since the Revolution*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 132–42.

- DeSoucey, Michaela 2008. 'Memory and sacrifice: an embodied theory of martyrdom', *Cultural Sociology* 2 (1): 99–121.
- Domenichini, Jean-Pierre 1969. 'Jean Ralaimongo (1884-1943) ou Madagascar au seuil du nationalisme', *Revue Française d'Histoire d'Outre-Mer* 61 (204): 236–87.
- Echenberg, Myron 1991. *Colonial Conscripts: the tirailleurs sénégalais in French West Africa 1857-1960*. London: James Currey.
- Echenberg, Myron 2009. *Les tirailleurs sénégalais en Afrique Occidentale Française (1857 - 1960)*. Paris: Karthala.
- Esoavelomandroso, Faranirina 1986. 'La grande guerre vue d'outre-mer. Patriotisme français et patriotisme malgache', *Revue Française d'Histoire d'Outre-Mer* 73 (271): 129–41.
- Fanon, Frantz 2008 [1952]. *Black Skin, White Masks*. London: Pluto.
- Fine, Gary Allan 1996. 'Reputational entrepreneurs and the memory of incompetence: melting supporters, partisan, warriors, and images of President Harding', *American Journal of Sociology* 101 (5): 1159–93.
- Fine, Gary Allan 2001. *Difficult Reputations: collective memories of the evil, inept, and controversial*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Förster, Till 2012. 'Imagining the nation: independence ceremonies under rebel domination in Northern Côte d'Ivoire', *African Arts* 45 (3): 42–55.
- Fogarty, Richard 2010. 'Race and empire in French posters of the great war', in Pearl James (ed): *Picture This: World War I posters and visual culture*, Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 172–206.
- Fouéré, Marie-Aude 2014. 'Julius Nyerere, ujamaa, and political morality in contemporary Tanzania', *African Studies Review* 57 (1): 1–24.
- Fricke, Christine 2013. 'Protocol, politics and popular culture: the independence jubilee in Gabon', *Nations and Nationalism* 19 (2): 238–56.
- Geertz, Clifford 1973. *The Interpretation of Cultures: selected essays by Clifford Geertz*. New York, NY: Basic Books, Inc.
- Ginio, Ruth 2006a. *French Colonialism Unmasked: the Vichy years in French West Africa*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.
- Ginio, Ruth 2006b. 'African colonial soldiers between memory and forgetfulness: the case of post-colonial Senegal', *Outre-Mers, Revue d'Histoire* 93 (350): 141–55.
- Göpfert, Mirco 2014. *Enforcing the Law, Restoring Peace: an ethnography of the Nigerien gendarmerie*, PhD thesis, Department of Social Anthropology and African Studies, Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz.
- Goerg, Odile et al (eds) 2013. *Les indépendances en Afrique. L'événement et ses mémoires, 1957/1960-2010*. Rennes: Presse Universitaire Rennes.

Gontard, Maurice 1966. 'La contribution de Madagascar à l'effort de guerre français: le recrutement des volontaires malgaches pendant la guerre de 1914-1918', *Annales de l'Université de Madagascar* 5: 7–25.

Haberbusch, Benoît 2014. 'Un espace stratégique ? L'empire colonial français à la veille de la Première Guerre mondiale', *Revue Historique des Armées* 274 (1): 38–48.

Hanke, Marc 2004. 'Anciens Combattants. Die Kriegsveteranen der französischen Armee in Diébougou/Burkina Faso. Eine lokale Elite?', *Working Papers of the Department of Anthropology and African Studies, Johannes Gutenberg-University Mainz* 41.

Heitz, Kathrin 2013. 'Recollections from the times of independence: talks with elderly people in western Ivory Coast', in Odile Goerg, Jean-Luc Martineau and Didier Nativel (eds): *Les indépendances en Afrique. L'événement et ses mémoires, 1957/1960-2010*. Rennes: Presses Universitaires Rennes, 421–36.

Heitz, Kathrin 2014. 'Through the prism of the cinquantenaire: Côte d'Ivoire between réfondation and Houphouët's legacy', in Tony Chafer and Alexander Keese (eds): *Francophone Africa at Fifty*. Manchester: Manchester University Press: 219–32.

Herren-Oesch, Madelein 2014. 'Kolonialtruppen im Ersten Weltkrieg', URL: <https://europa.unibas.ch/aktuelles/nachrichtendetails/article/kolonialtruppen-im-ersten-weltkrieg/> (8.1.2016).

Hinrichsen, Malte 2012. *Racist Trademarks: slavery, orient, colonialism and commodity culture*. Münster: Lit.

Jennings, Eric T. 2004. *Vichy in the Tropics: Petain's national revolution in Madagascar, Guadeloupe, and Indochina, 1940-44*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Jobs, Sebastian 2012. *Welcome home, boys! Military victory parades in New York City; 1899-1946*. Frankfurt: Campus.

Koller, Christian 2001. 'Von Wilden aller Rassen niedergemetzelt'. *Die Diskussion um die Verwendung von Kolonialtruppen in Europa zwischen Rassismus, Kolonial- und Militärpolitik (1914-1930)*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner.

Lawler, Nancy 1996. *Soldats d'infortune. Les tirailleurs Ivoiriens de la IIe guerre mondiale*. Paris: L'Harmattan.

Lentz, Carola 2011. 'The African independence jubilees: introduction', in Carola Lentz (ed): *Celebrating Africa@50: the independence jubilees in Madagascar, the DR Congo, Benin, Mali and Nigeria*. *Working Papers of the Department of Anthropology and African Studies* 130.

Lentz, Carola 2013a. 'Celebrating independence jubilees and the millennium: national days in Africa', *Nations and Nationalism* 19 (2): 208–16.

Lentz, Carola 2013b. 'The 2010 independence jubilees: the politics and aesthetics of national commemoration in Africa', *Nations and Nationalism* 19 (2): 217–37.

- Léonard, Arnaud 2015. 'Commémorer la participation des Malgaches à la Grande Guerre en 2014', URL: [https://www.univ-paris1.fr/fileadmin/IGPS/Leonard - Malgaches.pdf](https://www.univ-paris1.fr/fileadmin/IGPS/Leonard_-_Malgaches.pdf) (7.10.2016).
- Lunn, Joe 1999. 'Les races guerrières: racial preconceptions in the French military about West African soldiers during the First World War', *Journal of Contemporary History* 34 (4): 517–36.
- Lunn, Joe 2009. 'Remembering the tirailleurs sénégalais and the great war: oral history as a methodology of inclusion in French colonial studies', *French Colonial History* 10: 125–49.
- Ly, Abdoulaye 1957. *Mercenaires noirs. Notes sur une forme de l'exploitation des Africains*. Paris: Présence africaine.
- Mbembe, Achille 2010. 'Cinquante ans après la décolonisation. Aux Africains de se battre', *Le Messenger*, 1 Avril 2010.
- Michel, Marc 2002. 'Hosties noires entre mémoire et reconnaissance', in Jacques Girault and Bernard Lecherbonnier (eds): *Léopold Sédar Senghor. Africanité-universalité*. Paris: L'Harmattan: 101–10.
- Michel, Marc 1990. 'Mémoire officielle, discours et pratique coloniale. Le 14 juillet et le 11 novembre au Sénégal entre les deux guerres', *Revue Française d'Histoire d'Outre-Mer* 77 (287): 145–58.
- Mourre, Martin 2014. 'Der letzte Tirailleur, das Dorf und die Medaille (1914-1918)', in Benedikt Burkard (ed): *Gefangene Bilder. Wissenschaft und Propaganda im Ersten Weltkrieg*. Petersberg: Imhof: 143–145.
- N'Guessan, Konstanze 2013. "Independence is not given, it is taken": the Ivorian cinquantenaire and competing history/ies of independence', *Nations and Nationalism* 19 (2): 276–95.
- N'Guessan, Konstanze 2014. *Histories of Independence: an ethnography of the past in the present in Côte d'Ivoire*, PhD thesis, Department of Social Anthropology and African Studies, Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz.
- N'Guessan, Konstanze 2015. 'Fathers and children of Ivorian independence: metaphors of kinship and generation in the making of a national time', *Africa* 85 (2): 289–311.
- Nora, Pierre 1989. 'Between memory and history: les lieux de mémoire', *Representations* 26: 7–24.
- Parent, Sabrina 2010. '(Re)writing the massacre of Thiaroye', in Hetty ter Haar (ed): *Narrating War and Peace in Africa*. Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press: 231–40.
- Parent, Sabrina, 2014: *Cultural Representations of Massacre: Reinterpretations of the Mutiny of Senegal*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Pyper, Kathrin 2013. 'The drama(s) of Independence Day. Reflections on political affects and aesthetics in Kinshasa (2010)', *Anthropology Southern Africa* 36 (1-2): 58–67.

- Randrianja, Solofo 2001. *Société et luttes anticoloniales à Madagascar de 1896 à 1946*. Paris: Karthala.
- Reinwald, Brigitte 2005. *Reisen durch den Krieg. Lebensstrategien westafrikanischer Weltkriegsveteranen der französischen Kolonialarmee*. Berlin: Klaus-Schwarz-Verlag.
- Riesz, János 1990. 'Die Heimkehr des Helden. Zur Gestalt des "Tirailleur Sénégalais" in der französischen Kriegs- und Kolonialliteratur nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg (1919-1929)', in Karl-Heinz Kohl et al (eds): *Die Vielfalt der Kultur. Ethnologische Aspekte von Verwandtschaft, Kunst und Weltauffassung. Ernst Wilhelm Müller zum 65. Geburtstag*. Berlin: Reimer: 441–52.
- Rigney, Ann 2005. 'Plenitude, scarcity and the circulation of cultural memory', *Journal of European Studies* 35 (1): 209–26.
- Sakho, Cheikh 2014. 'Das "Denkmal für die Helden der Schwarzen Armee" in Reims', in Benedikt Burkard (ed): *Gefangene Bilder. Wissenschaft und Propaganda im Ersten Weltkrieg*. Petersberg: Imhof: 128–131.
- Schatzberg, Michael 2001. *Political Legitimacy in Middle Africa: father, family, food*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Schindler-Bondiguel Marc 2009. 'Auxiliaires indigènes ou soldats français? Race, civilisation et genre dans la construction d'une catégorie impériale: le soldat indigène. L'exemple des soldats malgaches (1889-1939)', in Carole Reynaud Paligot (ed): *Tous les hommes sont-ils égaux? Histoire comparée des pensées raciales 1860 – 1930*. München: Oldenbourg: 59–80.
- Schwartz, Barry 2000. *Abraham Lincoln and the Forge of National Memory*. Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press.
- Senghor, Léopold 1948. *Hosties noires*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil.
- Senghor, Léopold 1991. *The Collected Poetry. Translated and with an introduction by Melvin Dixon*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia.
- Späth, Mareike 2013. 'Madagascar's independence jubilee: a nation's holiday in times of crisis', *Nations and Nationalism* 19 (2): 257–275.
- Späth, Mareike 2015. *Ein günstiger Augenblick. Das Jubiläum der Unabhängigkeit in Madagaskar*, PhD thesis, Department of Social Anthropology and African Studies, Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz.
- Späth, Mareike and Helihanta Rajaonarison 2013. 'National days between commemoration and celebration: remembering 1947 and 1960 in Madagascar', *Anthropology Southern Africa* 36 (1-2): 47–57.
- Thiouh, Ibrahim 2014. 'Die staatliche Erinnerung im Senegal', in Benedikt Burkard (ed): *Gefangene Bilder. Wissenschaft und Propaganda im Ersten Weltkrieg*. Petersberg: Imhof: 139–141.
- Tiewa, Kathrin 2013. *The Lion and his Pride. The Politics of Commemoration in Cameroon*, PhD thesis, Department of Social Anthropology and African Studies, Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz.

- Tirefort, Alain 1999. 'Aux antipodes du tam-tam, la fête coloniale en Côte d'Ivoire pendant l'entre-deux guerres', in Odile Goerg (ed): *Fêtes urbaines en Afrique: espaces, identités et pouvoirs*. Paris: Karthala: 167–80.
- Valensky, Chantal 1995. *Le soldat occulté. Les Malgaches de l'Armée Française 1884-1920*. Paris: l'Harmattan.
- Valensky, Chantal 1997. 'Soldats malgaches et culture française (fin du XIXe-première moitié du XXe siècle)', *Revue Française d'Histoire d'Outre-Mer* 84 (315): 63–84.
- Van Galen Last, Dick 2015. *Black Shame: African soldiers in Europe, 1914-1922*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Vansina, Jan 1981. 'Oral tradition and its methodology', in Joseph Ki-Zerbo (ed): *UNESCO General History of Africa*, Vol. 1 London: Heinemann Publishers: 142–165.
- Vogel, Jakob 1995. 'Militärfeiern in Deutschland und Frankreich als Rituale der Nation (1871-1914)', in Etienne François, Hannes Siegrist, Jakob Vogel (eds): *Nation und Emotion. Deutschland und Frankreich im Vergleich 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Rupprecht: 199–214.
- Vogel, Jakob 1997. *Nationen im Gleichschritt. Der Kult der 'Nation in Waffen' in Deutschland und Frankreich, 1871-1914*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Rupprecht.
- Wigger, Iris 2007. *Die 'Schwarze Schmach am Rhein'. Rassistische Diskriminierung zwischen Geschlecht, Klasse, Nation und Rasse*. Münster: Westfäl. Dampfboot.
- Zimmermann, Sarah Jean 2011. *Living Beyond Boundaries. West African servicemen in French colonial conflicts, 1908-1962*, PhD thesis, University of California, Berkeley.