

An Ethnologist on the Warpath: Leo Frobenius and the First World War

Richard Kuba

Frobenius Institute for Research in Cultural Anthropology, Frankfurt (Frobenius-Institut für Kulturanthropologische Forschung an der Goethe-Universität Frankfurt)

2020

POUR CITER CET ARTICLE

Kuba, Richard, 2020. "An Ethnologist on the Warpath: Leo Frobenius and the First World War", in *Bérose - Encyclopédie internationale des histoires de l'anthropologie*, Paris.

URL Bérose : article2053.html

BEROSE Publisher: ISSN 2648-2770

© UMR9022 Héritages (CY Cergy Paris Université, CNRS, Ministère de la culture)/DIRI, Direction générale des patrimoines et de l'architecture du Ministère de la culture. (All rights reserved).

Your use of this article indicates your acceptance of the Bérose site (www.berose.fr) terms and conditions of use, available [here](#).

Visited on 19 April 2024 at 01:25

Publié dans le cadre du thème de recherche « Histoire de l'anthropologie et des ethnologies allemandes et autrichiennes », dirigé par Laurent Dedryvère (EILA, Université de Paris, site Paris-Diderot), Jean-Louis Georget (Sorbonne Nouvelle, Paris), Hélène Ivanoff (Institut Frobenius, recherches en anthropologie culturelle, Francfort-sur-le-Main), Isabelle Kalinowski (CNRS, Laboratoire Pays germaniques UMR 8547, Ecole Normale Supérieure, Paris) Richard Kuba (Institut Frobenius, recherches en anthropologie culturelle, Francfort-sur-le-Main) et Céline Trautmann-Waller (Université Sorbonne nouvelle-Paris 3/IUF).

Dossier "Leo Frobenius" coordonné par Hélène Ivanoff et Richard Kuba

German-speaking anthropology was still in the process of establishing itself as an academic subject, field research among distant peoples was unusual, and long-distance travel was complicated and expensive when the First World War opened unsuspected research possibilities at home. In the first year of the war, numerous soldiers from the worldwide British and French colonial empires had already been captured by the Germans as prisoners of war on the European fronts and interned in specially established camps. In these camps, the renowned *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* exulted, there was "gathered together splendid material, which one has at hand without having to take bothersome and time-wasting trips to seek it out, and which one can question repeatedly at leisure without it making off". [1]

Probably in no other country participating in the world war were ethnologists as heavily involved in the war as in Imperial Germany and Austria-Hungary. [2] Their extensive research programmes included physical anthropological measurements of the prisoners of war, [3] but also visual documentation of them, audio recordings on wax cylinders, and ethnographic interviews. In addition, ethnologists were active on the propaganda front, in

the “culture war”, and in dangerous espionage and diversionary missions.

In the process, scholars tried to strike a balance between making use of the chances offered by the war situation to pursue their own research interests and applying their research in favour of the Central Powers’ war aims or presenting it as useful for those aims. The thesis that a German ethnology founded on liberal traditions was changed into an increasingly racist discipline by the experience of the First World War is one that can hardly be dismissed out of hand. [4]

The example of Leo Frobenius (1873–1938) offers the possibility of studying the ethnological discipline’s engagement in the war as if through a prism, since he spent the war years as the leader of a secret mission, as a researcher, propagandist, and director of a prisoner-of-war camp. At the same time, the multiplicity of his engagement is also unique and hardly representative of the ethnologists of his time. Behind this is the fact that while Frobenius was indeed one of the best known and, on account of his popular books, most read ethnologists of his time, he also was controversial and certainly not part of the academic mainstream. Leo Frobenius had just turned 24 when in 1897–98 he published his first scholarly masterpiece, an essay on the “West African Cultural Area” that was to become the manifesto of the influential ‘cultural area theory’ (*Kulturkreislehre*). In this small work, he opened up new paths for German anthropology, which were followed well into the 1960s. As an “entrepreneur-anthropologist” [5] he created the “Institute for Cultural Morphology”, which in spite of its highly devoted staff, was constantly on the brink of bankruptcy. An exceptionally gifted Public Relations talent, he had good connections to the highest social circles and even befriended the exiled German Kaiser. [6]



Fig. 1

Leo Frobenius’ portrait by his brother Hermann (Oil on canvass, 92x80 cm, 1924).

Frobenius Institute, EBA-Div N00045.

At the same time, Frobenius, who never gained a formal university degree, remained an outsider to the academic world and his colleagues were polarised in their appreciation of the man and his work. [7] (See Fig. 1) Unlike most of his colleagues, who were employed at

universities or anthropological museums, he did not have to rely on questioning his research subjects in prisoner-of-war camps, given that he had already made six extended African trips with his *Deutsche Inner-Afrika Forschungs-Expedition* (German Inner Africa Research Expedition) before the First World War broke out: to the Congo (1904–6), what is today Mali, Burkina Faso, and Togo (1907–9), the Maghreb (1910), Nigeria and Cameroon (1910–12), Sudan (1912), and Algeria and Tunisia (1913–14), documenting the history, culture, architecture and folklore of the areas visited each time. (See Fig. 2, 3, and 4.)



Fig. 2

Map of Leo Frobenius' Africa expeditions 1904-1935.



Fig. 3

Caravan of porters crossing the Oti in Togo, 1908.

Frobenius Institute, FBA FoA 02-3812.



Fig. 4

Expedition camp in Lokoja, Nigeria, 1911.
Frobenius Institute, FoA 04-5703.

In his accounts of his travels, the military vocabulary is striking: the expedition’s “main column” moves “in the direction of the primary thrust”, conducts “flanking manoeuvres”, and has “liaison officers” who report to the “base”. The ethnographic objects bartered for along the way are described as “war booty” and the favourite collectors’ items included bows and throwing knives, which he sold to museums or added to his private collection of bows (see Fig. 5).



Fig 5

One of the numerous sketches of bows and arrows in
Frobenius pictorial archive
Frobenius Institute, KBA 07691.

Frobenius’s closeness to the military world was probably also originally connected to the profession of his father, Lt. Col. Herman Theodor Frobenius (1841–1916), an engineer who specialized in building fortifications. The elder Frobenius, who after leaving active service was known, among other things, as an editor of military publications such as *Militär-Lexikon* (Military dictionary, 1901), and *Unsere Festungen* (Our fortifications, 1912), had a formative influence on his son, who in his later works “rigorously constructed a concept of culture based on the soldier’s self-understanding, governed by external direction and an ethic of

obedience”, in a way equalled by no one else. [8] Frobenius understood culture as a “fateful power” existing outside of human beings, and that seized them and caused them to act in accordance with its “service plan”. Such was the case, for example, in African sacred kingship, as Frobenius shared the views according to which the ruler, symbolizing the land’s fertility, carried out his ‘fateful service’ until his bodily strength waned and then he either had to commit suicide or was killed the local nobility.

Together with his father and a retired naval lieutenant commander, Frobenius had already published a voluminous *Weltgeschichte des Krieges* (World history of war) in 1903. The less expensive edition that came out the same year for a wider market had the alluring title *Menschenjagden und Zweikämpfe – Raubkriege, Kriege der Ackerbauern, Territorialkriege und Sklavenkriege: Kulturgeschichtliche Beiträge für Jung und Alt* (Manhunts and duels – Predatory wars, farmers’ wars, territorial wars, and slave wars: Essays in cultural history for young and old). (See Fig. 6) The prehistory of war was characterized as a “form of expression of humanity’s dawning consciousness”, and war as a “struggle for the existence of peoples”. As always in Frobenius’s writings, there was also a connection to contemporary Germany, of whose frenetic military build-up he approved, since “the stronger our military forces are, the more certain peace is”. [9]



Fig. 6

Frontcover of „Menschenjagden und Zweikämpfte“
(Man hunts and duels), 1903.

Prelude: Colonialism and the Image of Africa

On his early African expeditions, Frobenius was heavily armed, as was standard practice in the early colonial period. On his 1907-9 West African trip, he and his two European companions carried an automatic Luger pistol each, along with six rifles between 16 and 7.9 calibre. [10] That such firearms were not only for deterrence or for hunting is documented for his first expedition to the Congo (1904-6). There he practised those precautionary measures “that one must always implement when approaching a strange village in the African interior: I tested the lock of my carbine”. Shortly thereafter, precautions gave way to

the real thing, as the inhabitants of the village of Ekongo barred the ethnologist from entering their village with arrows and threatened to bypass his convoy in order to attack from behind. “So I rested the Görz rifle sight on my heavy case, and then the foremost of those youths, who wanted to get around us to Funda, took his leave of the world”. [11] The laconic tone of the published account gives no hint of how traumatizing this episode must have been in reality. Frobenius wrote years later in a letter to his wife Editha, “I blubbered all night like a quite small child; this blubbing was just like after the Ekongo fight in 1905”. [12] (See Fig. 7 and 8.)



Fig. 7

Tauwamba, the leader of the Ekongo-Badinga, who was captured as ringleader in the course of the bloody conflict with Frobenius in the Congo in 1905.

Frobenius Institute, FoA 01-2081.



Fig. 8

Station chief Mignon and Frobenius' painter Lemme in Mitshakila, DR Congo.

Frobenius Institute, FoA 01-2088.

These differing perspectives on the same episode are only one of many examples of

Frobenius's ambivalent attitude toward Africans. On one side is Frobenius the Enlightenment figure, who succeeded through his works in awakening enthusiasm for African cultures and cultural history in a broad public. His vision of an "authentic, ancient, warm-blooded culture" (Frobenius 1933: 15) in Africa was highly progressive at a time when noteworthy cultural achievements on the continent were at best ascribed to the civilizing influence of Islam. This explains why he was invoked by early advocates of black consciousness such as Léopold Sédar Senghor (1906–2001), the cofounder of the *négritude* movement and the first president of independent Senegal, and W. E. B. du Bois (1868–1963), the pioneer of the struggle for black civil rights in the United States. (See Fig. 9 and 10.)



Fig. 9

Leopold Sédar Senghor (1906–2001).
Public domain.



Fig. 10

W. E. B. Du Bois (1868–1963).
Public domain.

On the other side is Frobenius the child of his time, an authoritarian and conservative monarchist, who nonetheless simultaneously lamented the mixing and homogenizing

effects of colonialism:

Europe has no right to make these people out to be inferior, to be – always relative to their circumstances – less gifted. The people who had such gods were in their way more complete, more uniform, and in their uniformity more substantial types than those cultural mixed products into which we colonizers initially made them. [13]

Under the guise of paternalistic benevolence, Frobenius actually took exception whenever the alterity of Africans as distinguished from the 'white race' was called into question, whether through missionary work or via other influences. Africans who started to consider themselves as equals or act like Europeans were the targets of ambiguous reproaches:

[...] it is to be proven [...] that when the Negro is robbed of the sentiments of his original kind and thereby falls prey to the presumption of equality in the sense of cultural work, he greatly endangers not only the white race's cultural work but also himself. [...] For I really love these black children in their kind. [14]

Imperial concurrence

In his efforts to document African cultures before they collapsed under the onslaught of colonialism and the global market – what he called *Das sterbende Afrika* (the dying Africa), the title of a monograph published in 1923 (see Fig. 11) – Frobenius's concern was to fill gaps in knowledge, that is, to start by ethnologically researching those areas about which little was known in Germany up to that point.



Fig. 11.

Frontcover of „Das sterbende Afrika” (The dying Africa), 1923.

For this reason, he hardly visited the German colonies, merely spending half a year in Togo in 1909 and three months in Cameroon in late 1911. His research trips took him primarily to the Belgian, French, and British colonial areas. At the peak of the competition among the imperialist colonial powers, this was a practice mined with diplomatic dynamite for any

German researcher, and especially for a strong-willed and undiplomatic crank like Frobenius. While he got along well with the local colonial administrators in the back country, who were generally happy to see any European visitor in their isolated duty posts – Frobenius knew how to foster these contacts with a bottle of whiskey or absinthe he brought along and obtain ethnographic information in exchange – there were conflicts with the higher levels of administration. Trouble flared, for example, in Nigeria in 1910 in connection with illegally excavated art treasures, [15] (see Fig. 12) leading to fierce attacks on the German researcher by the *London Times*; in French West Africa in connection with unpaid bills; [16] and in Algeria in 1914 in connection with espionage accusations and alleged archaeological looting (see Fig. 13). Frobenius parried the attacks in his own way, seeing offence as the best defence. In 1913, he published an English translation of his account of his Nigeria expedition, in which he bitterly complained about what he saw as unjust treatment by one British colonial official, [17] and after his trip through French West Africa, he wrote an extremely critical “Denkschrift über kolonialpolitische Erfahrungen im französischen Sudan” (Memorandum on colonial political experiences in French Sudan) for the Imperial Colonial Office in Berlin in 1909. [18] That he additionally engaged in espionage activities during his travels can be conjectured but not conclusively proven on the basis of the available sources.



Fig. 12

Protagonists of the trial of Leo Frobenius in Ife, Nigeria, 1910 (Pencil drawing by Carl Arriens 18 x 12 cm).

Frobenius Institute, KBA 11907.



Fig. 13

Opening of a prehistoric burial mound in Moghrar region, Algeria, in 1914.

Frobenius Institute, FoA 06-7609.

After having devoted most of his time for ten years to expeditions on a continent that had not long before been divided up by Europe's competing imperialist powers in the "scramble for Africa" and where colonial rule was still in the process of consolidation, Frobenius returned to Germany in June 1914, in the "stifling international atmosphere" [19] a few weeks before the start of the war. A continuation of his scholarly expeditions in Africa was now out of the question, and so it was time to find new areas of activity.

A German Lawrence of Arabia? As a Secret Agent in the East

Frobenius, who always sought not only to make his specialized knowledge available for ethnological research, but also to apply it for his country's political and military benefit, offered his services to general headquarters shortly after the start of the war to instigate an uprising against the English colonial masters in Sudan. This plan fitted well into Imperial Germany's wider strategy to bring the Muslim world onto the side of the Central Powers and incite the Ottoman Empire to jihad against its enemies. [20] It was approved by the general staff without delay or long examination on 13 November 1914 and granted 60,000 gold marks in financial support. [21] Along with his recognized African expeditionary experience – among other things, Frobenius had already briefly visited Sudan two years earlier – it apparently helped that Frobenius was personally acquainted with Kaiser Wilhelm II. The two had met for the first time in late 1912 and found that they liked each other. [22] (See Fig. 14.)



Fig. 14

Leo Frobenius in conversation with the former emperor Wilhelm II in his exile in Doorn, Netherlands probably early 1930s.

Frobenius Institute, FoA oRN33.

For Frobenius, the mission was not least a welcome opportunity to indulge his taste for pompous titles. For the duration of the trip, he was granted the title of *Kaiserlicher Geheimer Regierungsrat* (imperial privy government councillor); subsequently and for the rest of his life he flaunted his consequent honorary title of *Geheimrat* (privy councillor). He also obtained the title of pasha from the Ottoman Sublime Porte in Constantinople, which he added to his Arabic alias Abdul Kerim, as well as the virtual title of “resident for Darfur”, and the German ambassador in Rome, former imperial chancellor Bernhard von Bülow (1849–1929) mockingly designated him “Frobenius Pasha Excellency”. [23] Frobenius set off at once for Constantinople, where the local correspondent for the *Kölnische Zeitung*, Harry Stuermer, remembered him unflatteringly as “the ethnographer and German agent [...] personally known to me from French West Africa for his taste for absinthe and Negro women and his authentically Teutonic harshness of tone in dealing with the pleasant and helpful French officials and merchants”. [24] He continued on from there to Damascus, then south with the Hejaz railway, and finally on board a small dhow to al-Qunfudhah on the eastern shore of the Red Sea. (See Fig. 15.)



Fig. 15

Frobenius disguised in Arab attire about to cross the Red Sea.

Frobenius Institute, FoA 07-8088.

After an adventurous Red Sea crossing, during which Frobenius and his German travelling companions were only able to escape discovery by the crew of the French warship *Desaix* by hiding in a small compartment under the deck – the British ambassador in Rome supposedly later sneered that it was the ship’s latrine [25] – the expedition reached Massawa, the Italian colony of Eritrea’s port, on 15 February 1915.

Frobenius’s primary mission consisted first of all in carrying diplomatic dispatches and instructions to the Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa, where the German envoy Wilhelm von Syburg (1854–1934) had been cut off from all communication with Berlin since the beginning of the war. Together with Syburg, Frobenius was then supposed to win the Ethiopian government’s support for German war aims. It was thought that the Ethiopians could send troops to support German General Lettow-Vorbeck (1870–1968) in East Africa, where he was holding on with his small colonial army against overwhelmingly superior British forces, or could support rebellions against the British colonial masters in Somalia or Sudan. The plan was for Frobenius then to travel on from Addis Ababa to British Sudan in order to instigate uprisings against the British by the followers of the Mahdi there. Finally, as many British troops as possible were to be tied down in Africa, and British Egypt was to be weakened to such an extent that a German-Turkish attack on the Suez Canal could have a prospect of success. In Berlin, control over the canal was considered a key to the war. [26] (See Fig. 16.)



Fig. 16

German propaganda poster in Arabic destined to instigate a Jihad against the English in the Near East. Frobenius Institute, LF652-2.

The Italians, who were still neutral – they would join the war on the side of the Entente only on 23 May 1915 – were at once suspicious of Frobenius and his travelling party, made up of five Germans and around a dozen Turks, Arabs, and Ethiopians. Even their presence on Eritrean soil compromised Italy’s fragile neutrality, and when Frobenius also began to flaunt military titles, [27] his supposedly purely diplomatic courier mission lost all credibility. Frobenius was barred from travelling on to Ethiopia, and so the ethnologist-cum-secret agent had little choice but to spend his five weeks in Eritrea doing the same thing he had done during his earlier African trips: documenting traditional architecture, material culture, and prehistoric rock art in drawings and photographs.

Five weeks was how long it took for the Italians to find a diplomatic solution that would offend neither Imperial Germany nor the Entente powers: provided with English and French passes, the Germans began their return voyage on board an Italian ship. The two powers’ issuance of the passes is to be understood as a gesture of thanks to the Italians, who had acted in the Entente’s interests by preventing the subversive German mission from travelling onward and now wished to be rid of it as quickly as possible.

There was in any case no more possibility of secrecy, since Italian newspapers had published extensive reports about the case and also publicized the true reasons for the expedition. [28] On 26 March, Frobenius and his German companions boarded an Italian mail boat in Massawa, headed for Naples. Frobenius still found time to start a public-relations offensive in Rome, with the aim of convincing the Italian press that his mission had no political or military goals and that he had therefore unjustly fallen victim to British intrigues. [29] The British secret service in fact seems to have been kept excellently informed by spies throughout the majority of the trip.

The enterprise left a bitter aftertaste in German diplomatic circles. The German ambassador in Constantinople, Hans von Wangenheim (1859–1915), was withering in his evaluation: “The

Turkish government has been made extremely sensitive by our various expeditions; Frobenius's especially aroused the greatest mistrust [...]". [30] In an earlier memorandum, he had already ascribed this to Frobenius's extrovert personality and remarked:

[...] I have met few people who have had the ability to give offense to Germans and natives to such an extraordinary degree as Frobenius. [...] he lacked all sense of tact, that he was in particular entirely deprived of the gift of understanding the Oriental spirit and handling Orientals the right way. [...] his manner borders on what is customarily called charlatanism. [31]

In fact, major disagreements had broken out between Frobenius and his Arab and Turkish travelling companions during the trip. The latter, he wrote in a report for the general staff, were "useless", "presumptuous and conceited" or "reluctant", [32] but his relationship with his German companions was also far from free of tension. In one memorandum, Frobenius attempted to excuse himself and justified his occasionally offensive demeanour on the grounds "that I myself am suffering from a torment of troubles that far exceeds all material thoughts and cares and that a fateful weight is pressing on me, one that has deeply embittered me precisely in the last three months and has made my life half a torment". [33]

The mission, as rash as it was naïve in its planning and dilettantish in its execution, [34] ultimately had no negative effects on its leader's subsequent career and perhaps contributed somewhat to the ethnologist's adventurous, daredevil aura. The brief account of his trip that he published in *Petermanns Mitteilungen* included only observations on Arabian cultural history and ethnography and spoke of "a comfortable study of the inhabitants of Italian Abyssinia". [35]

In an article titled "Sudan contra England" (Sudan against England) that appeared in the *Potsdamer Illustrierte Zeitung* in early 1916, Frobenius again expressed his hope that an alliance between the Senussi and the ruler of Darfur, Ali Dinar, could attack the British troops in Sudan. In fact it took an Anglo-Egyptian expeditionary force two thousand men strong to pacify Darfur and kill Ali Dinar in November 1916. [36]

On the Propaganda Front

Scholars and intellectuals on both sides of the front lines participated in the *guerre des plumes* as soon as the war broke out, and German-speaking ethnologists likewise worked to publish propaganda pamphlets, ventilate their opinions on the ethnic and racial composition of the enemy's troops in public lectures, or present them to a broad public in the form of photographic exhibitions or plaster casts of the heads of captured opponents. [37] They thereby reinforced the nationalist discourse of encirclement, according to which the Central Powers were surrounded by a world of enemies.

Frobenius used his position as a renowned ethnologist to condemn the colonial powers of France and especially England for using their colonized peoples to further their own war

aims, at the same time that he worked to protect the non-white colonial soldiers from increasing racist attacks in his own country. In his view, Germany, which he held to be the best colonizer in the world in any case, would never have allowed itself to put its colonized peoples on the front lines. (See Fig. 17.) Behind such a statement, however, there also stood the fear that the white colonizers could lose their halo of superiority. In one of the rather rare passages in which he drew openly on racist clichés, he wrote as far back as 1911:

[...] France wants to raise brothers for itself from these black people. It is a very bad, bad, oppressive thought that beautiful France, shining France, lovable France could under the influence of such an idea surrender its beautiful goddess's body to the black beasts of Africa – but it is so. [...] It is striving for racial equality and has its good reasons for doing so – but it is going down a dangerous path. It does not recognize the abyss that gapes wide. [...] Over there in Africa, all of us, all Europeans are one blood, one race; we have to be one will. We are taming this black beast, each of us the limb that fell to his lot in the distribution. [38]



Fig. 17

German colonial soldiers in Sansanne Mangu, Togo,
1909.

Frobenius Institute, FoA 02-3786.

This was also the thrust of the short book *Der Völkerzirkus unserer Feinde* (Our enemies' circus of peoples) that Frobenius published in 1916. As a member of the Federation of German Scholars and Artists (*Bund deutscher Gelehrter und Künstler*), an association active in cultural politics and one that played an especially prominent role on the battlefield of ideas, in 1916 Frobenius lent his support to the intensification of a propaganda that was meant to appear unofficial. [39] (See Fig. 18.) The work that was his contribution to this effort consisted largely of photographs from various, mostly unnamed sources that showed colonial soldiers of all colours, each with a brief caption. In the polemical and ironic introduction, primarily directed against England, the “tamer of peoples”, Frobenius set up an analogy to a circus performance, in which the beast tamer (England) trained the “wild beasts” (black Africans, Arabs, Algerians, etc.) with the help of “glowing iron, whips, stocks, and chunks of flesh”. The English had already dealt with the Indians the same way, according to Frobenius: “they are not ashamed to use the basest, most shameful means to plunder the unhappy inhabitants

and suck them dry”. [40] To hide their cruelty, he said, this was “constantly” accompanied by “a stinging cloud of incense from missionary activities, commandments of civilization, and Christian noble humanity in the ‘dressage area’”. [41]

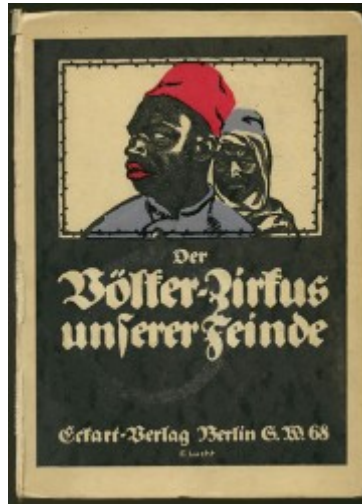


Fig. 18

Frontcover of “Völkerzirkus” 1916.

This “circus of peoples”, the publication of which was apparently promoted by military circles, nevertheless sparked criticism from the Foreign Office after it appeared. Letters of protest came in from North Africans and Asians who did not want to be lumped in with black Africans. [42] The writers also felt themselves discredited by being apostrophized as “lions, hyenas, bears, and panthers” led into the arena by the tamer. The goal of mobilizing the colonized peoples on the side of the Central Powers against their English and French colonial masters was certainly not served by this clumsy production, even if, in the context of a widespread animalization strategy with regard to the non-white colonial soldiers, it explicitly did not aim to present them as “animalized” human beings. Rather, the point was to criticize the British practice, characterized as cowardice by the Germans, of bringing in troops from all corners of the empire for war service in Europe. [43]

Frobenius also pursued a similar line of argument in a public magic lantern show on “Die farbigen Kriegsgefangenen in Deutschland und ihre Heimatländer” (The coloured prisoners of war in Germany and their homelands) that he presented in May 1917 on the occasion of the meeting of the Berliner Gesellschaft für Anthropologie, Ethnologie und Urgeschichte (Berlin Society for Anthropology, Ethnology, and Prehistory). In it he was protective of the African colonial soldiers, saying that “anger about the ‘black dogs’ is entirely unjustified” and in his view, indignation was to be directed rather against those who “only use the coloured population as cannon fodder”. [44]

“A German Professor Questions the Negros”

Frobenius first came into contact with colonial soldiers captured by the Germans as prisoners of war in summer 1916. He received from the Rudolf-Virchow-Stiftung (Rudolf

Virchow Foundation) a financial subsidy of 800 marks for ethnological studies in the *Mohammedanerlager* (Mohammedan camp) in Wünsdorf outside Berlin, [45] thereby becoming one of the first scholars allowed to conduct research on this “splendid material”, after multiple requests by scholars and artists to be permitted to visit the camp had been rejected. [46] Thirteen manuscript notebooks from his two months of research have been preserved among Frobenius’s papers. They primarily include stories and fairy tales from North Africa, the majority of which were included in the three-volume *Volksmärchen der Kabylen* (Folktales of the Kabyle), [47] published after the war, in which the editor did not reveal his source, which was right on his own doorstep in Mark Brandenburg.

Out of regard for Germany’s Ottoman ally, the captured Muslims who were interned in Wünsdorf starting in February 1915 were to be treated with special consideration. [48] For this reason, discussions began in early 1916 about reducing the camp’s high mortality rate of over 10 per cent per annum by transferring the Indians and Africans to a more agreeable climate. [49] After various alternatives had been rejected, Leo Frobenius was sent by the War Office in February 1917 to conduct “reconnaissance” in Romania, most of which had come under military occupation by the Central Powers not long before. Whether the ethnologist’s good contacts with the Wünsdorf camp commander played a role, or whether he was entrusted with this task on the basis of his familiarity with the prisoners’ places of origin, can no longer be reconstructed. In any event, Frobenius appeared to endorse the transfer, and in March 1917, an initial group of around two thousand Africans and Indians was evacuated from the central camp in Wünsdorf to Wallachia. The prisoners were divided by origin: the Indians went to Slobozia, and the Algerian Kabyle to neighbouring Morile Mărculesti, while the Africans were housed primarily on the Romanian king’s crown estate in Mănăstirea on the Arges and in Turnu-Măgurele on the Danube, near the Bulgarian border. [50] (See Fig. 19.)



Fig. 19

Prisoner of War camps for non-European soldiers in Romania, 1917.

As an “authorized agent of the Royal Prussian War Office”, [51] Frobenius was named director of the camps, which were subsequently officially known as *Deutsche Landbaukolonien farbiger Kriegsgefangener in Rumänien* (German agricultural colonies for coloured prisoners of War in Romania). The prisoners were to be employed, among other things, in producing food for famished Germany. In mid-June 1917 Frobenius was able to report success to his wife: he had, he wrote, “shipped many trainloads of grain to Germany”. [52]

Propagandistic influence on the prisoners was also in the War Ministry’s interest, now as

before, and Frobenius with his knowledge of Africa seemed the right man for this as well. At least this perspective was that transmitted by Gerhard Velburg, a German army reservist and military court clerk who passed through the area, in his memoirs published in 1930. Under the heading “A German Professor Questions the Negros”, he reported the following about the Romanian area of operations:

We were shown an old German gentleman in civilian clothes [Frobenius was forty-four at the time]. He returned to the estate early this morning from another prisoner-of-war camp where Negros are also found. He knows the Negro languages and has been charged by the German government with questioning the Negros we have captured. He is supposed to report what they think about Germany and France. [53]

Besides the records in the political archive of the Foreign Office in Berlin, Leo Frobenius’s papers include a series of informative private letters written during his Romanian episode to his wife Editha, who remained in Berlin. [54] The following depiction is substantially based on these letters.

At first, Frobenius had to struggle against the difficulties arising from an improvised evacuation, given that he and his prisoners arrived in spring 1917 amid piles of snow and mud – the Romanian winter showed itself to be anything but mild – and on top of that “the pumping station all at once breaks down. No water for a thousand men. In the morning, a captain (Popp) has a nervous breakdown on me; sanatorium; on the third day, a transport gets stuck; etc., etc. Then no food anywhere, no communications” (17 March 1917). (See Fig. 20.)



Fig. 20

A German military car stuck in the mud in Romania in early 1917.

Frobenius Institute, FoA 07-8548.

The theme of overwork continues to run through the later correspondence like a leitmotif: “My life becomes more desolate every day. I am trying to get out of the habit of sleeping” (24 March 1917). “Work from five in the morning until twelve at night [...] I’m exhausted [...] The work is growing into something monstrous here, and it’s not made easy for me” (2 April

1917). “Life is racing past me like a crazy dream [...] everything is really comfortless here” (20 May 1917). “I have dedicated myself here to a task that was originally as good as hopeless” (29 May 1917). “My nerves must start to behave” (18 June 1917).

And yet Frobenius was satisfied with what he achieved, when he considered the fruits of his efforts. This meant first of all the prisoners’ improved state of health, the most important motivation for the evacuation from Wünsdorf: “In Wünsdorf we had nine sick per day per thousand. Here we have only half a case of sickness per thousand per day. And that’s despite the terrible journeys and the rough conditions to which the people initially arrive” (24 March 1917). It is unfortunately impossible to verify these figures in external sources. Gerhard Velburg, who also visited the camp at Jegalia outside Marculesti in late May 1917, reported that the prisoners “had not gained much” with the transfer from Wünsdorf, “since as warm as it is in Romania in summer, it is just as cold in winter. The prisoners’ state of health is also supposed to be very poor for that reason, especially since they already brought many infectious diseases with them from home”. [55] Frobenius felt himself responsible not only for the prisoners’ bodily health, however, but for their spiritual health as well, and he emphasized how his work had a positive influence on their morale:

But the people are happy. The sun now! The work! The whole rigmarole that I put into the matter is for them directly like medicine or like recovery after a long illness. If I come into a camp, everything meets me beaming. That’s the most beautiful reward I could obtain – several thousand human beings are happy. That’s marvellous. (3 April 1917)

In his last letter from Romania, Frobenius drew an almost paradisiacal picture of a harmonious community he had created:

It’s too bad that you can’t see my agricultural colonies! How they would please you! Everything is built in the spirit of freedom, on the principle of making the greatest use of joyfully offered human powers. Someone who likes to work as a smith should work as a smith; the farmer should plough. Everything is in excellent internal harmony, and the people’s work productivity is quite extraordinary. We have brought over 23,000 *Morgen* [a land measure standardized in the late nineteenth century at 0.25 hectare] into cultivation and also tilled a great deal of land for vineyards. (18 June 1917)

Three weeks earlier, he had written about 31,500 *Morgen* of land that was tilled and in good shape, but exact figures probably played a subordinate role in the mind of this charismatic.

In the Frobenius Institute’s photographic archive, some 80 photographs from Romania can be ascribed with high probability to the institute’s founder who would have taken them during his stay in Romania in the first half of 1917. Frobenius was an excellent photographer and the captivating technical and formal quality of the pictures is almost reminiscent of the work carried out by a professional. [56] The photographs can be roughly divided into three categories: touristic photographs; [57] ethnographic/archaeological documentation; [58] and camp pictures. This last category with some 42 pictures shows the camp infrastructure

including the canteen and latrines (19 pictures) as well as 23 pictures of the camp's inmates. In the scope of this article we might have a closer look at them.

The majority shows the daily work done by the African POWs as they are engaged in activities such as garden work, basket-weaving, house construction and harvesting. They seem to serve as evidence that the camp inmates are engaged in useful work and that everything is well organized. These pictures are the kind of documentation one might expect from the head of such a camp. However there are also four photographs which seem to be much more unusual considering the context. They display prisoners in their free time, eating, cooking or just relaxing. Comparing these pictures with Frobenius's ethnographic photography and his emphasize on documenting Africans in their everyday life one cannot but see a similar approach. (See Fig. 21.)



Fig. 21

Scene with North African PoWs in Romania.

Frobenius Institut, FoA 07-8615.



Fig. 22

Scene with West African PoWs in Romania.

Frobenius Institut, FoA 07-8614.

These pictures seem not to be staged but they rather attempt to catch some “natural” behaviour, uninfluenced by categories of order and obedience, which usually would hold sway in such a camp. As it was during his ill-fated secret mission in Eritrea, Frobenius didn't

drop his ethnographic eye in Romania either, even in very different contexts. He rather continued a photographic tradition which could be identified in hundreds of photographs from in his first expedition to the Congo in 1904 onwards.

Nor did Frobenius drop his ethnological and prehistorical curiosity concerning Romania and despite his numerous other engagements as camp commander he found time to pursue some research. He undertook excavations at a Neolithic tumulus near what is today the village of Chiselet and at a second one probably near Cunești. For this purpose, as the surviving photographic documentation suggests, he apparently used camp inmates as dig workers. (See Fig. 23.) Information from Romanian sources indicates that the finds from these excavations, probably to be characterized as archaeological looting, were turned over to the Prehistorical Institute in Berlin. [59]



Fig. 23

Excavation of a prehistoric tumulus near Cunești, Romania, by prisoners of war.

Frobenius Institut, FoA 07-8605.

Ethnographic documentation of the Romanian population and its material culture was assigned by Frobenius to the German-Romanian painter Rudolf Schweitzer-Cumpăna (1886–1975), who initially received paints from the Red Sea expedition’s supplies “for the production of pictures for the large work desired by Lieutenant-General Friedrich on the life of the prisoners of war in Romania”, [60] a project that never came to fruition. Instead, the painter produced a total of forty-five watercolours with portraits of Romanians and depictions of their traditional architecture, found today in the Frobenius-Institute’s picture archive. Frobenius apparently also enabled the continuation of the linguistic studies in the Romanian camps that Heinrich Lüdders and Wilhelm Schulze had begun with Indian prisoners in Half Moon Camp in 1916. [61]

Nevertheless, Frobenius appears to have put a large part of his doubtless considerable energy into disputes with his superiors in the military bureaucracy. The ethnologist, who was at times just as high-handed as he was spontaneous and unconventional, had difficulty subordinating himself to a system based on hierarchies, obedience, and following proper channels:

Do you know what it means to be under government agencies like this and get twenty contradictory orders every day, make a show of complying with everything, and still go your own way? I now only dream about orders, ploughs, seed shipments, mills, Danube fishing, etc. *Summa summarum*, I am a machine, straight out of a book. (29 May 1917)

These disputes with the bureaucracy, which his correspondence does not describe in detail, apparently originated in Frobenius's efforts to make the camp not seem like a prison: "But there is precisely no more prison spirit, but rather a fresh impetus" (24 March 1917). This was due less to humane motives than to the fact that it made the inmates more susceptible to German propaganda and more productive sources of labour:

I am facing a difficult question: is it your duty to reach your Berlin goal or to follow the prescribed official channels? The Berlin goal is my task with the agricultural colonies, the utilization and propaganda of the colourful brigade. I can't see how this goal can be reached alongside simply idiotic instructions. (3 April 1917)

The conflict was apparently sparked by the camp's security installations. Frobenius wrote in triumph on 18 June 1917, "We are hardly prisoners of war anymore; we have fought against the barbed wire that was supposed to surround us". The fact that this met with resistance among some of his administrative superiors was in his view due to the vengeful emotions of military men:

You can imagine what kind of rage an approach like this aroused in the logistical bureaucracy. To be sure: we could not be reproached, but these black pigs should not enjoy the pleasure of achievement in freedom, they should feel that their lot is a hard one. Yes, yes, it's been a bitter struggle. (18 June 1917)

In fact, there were significant racist prejudices among the German troops. While Frobenius apparently had committed opponents as high as the general staff, the Prussian war minister held a protective hand over him: "At the decisive meeting, the minister praised me to my general staff opponent's face" (16 June 1917). Nevertheless, these struggles were so wearing that after a good four months in Wallachia, he asked the minister to be released. When his request was granted and he was to be replaced as camp commander by a certain Major von Moers, he greeted the news with the words "The time of my distress is over!" (16 June 1917).

Postlude

The details of Frobenius's activities after his return from Romania can only be deduced in outline from the available sources. He was probably not entrusted with any new responsibilities that were able to fully occupy him, given that he found enough time to engage in a curious dispute with his successor, Major von Moers. In two years of correspondence with the Prussian War Ministry, among others, the researcher complained that the Red Sea expedition's supplies stored in Romania, the flock of poultry he had established at his own expense (consisting of thirty-two chickens, thirty geese, thirteen

ducks, and a turkey), and the “two dearest little pigs Lieschen and Lottchen” had not been sent back to him after his return, as had been agreed – something probably not difficult to understand in view of the hungry winters of 1917 and 1918. The conflict reached such a pitch that Frobenius’s successor, whom he accused, challenged him to a duel (“with pistols”), but Frobenius managed to evade the challenge. The last document in the dispute is dated 2 January 1919 and states the conclusion of the Zentral-Rat des Kriegsministeriums (War Ministry Central Council) that the conflict was a private matter with which it did not wish to concern itself further. [62]

At the same time, the Africa expert hoped to be able to play a significant role in a much-expanded German colonial empire once the war was won, and he promoted his services to the Imperial Colonial Office with a variety of writings. His “Entwurf eines Organisationsprojektes zu Lösung des Eingeborenenproblems im Rahmen der deutschen Kolonialwirtschaft” (Draft of an organizational project for solving the native problem in the context of the German colonial economy), probably composed in late 1917, can be seen as a continuation of his work in the “agricultural colonies”. He urges immediate action in order that

systematically and energetically [...] these foreign-language-speaking natives [in the prisoner-of-war camps] be made acquainted with the trustworthiness, the depth of culture, the consciousness of their own aims, and the art of organization that characterize the German people even today, despite all the wars on their borders. By making these prisoners familiar with our unique characteristics [...] we obtain propaganda material in the other parts of the earth that costs us practically nothing and may be of the greatest possible significance when these people stream back to their homelands. [63]

The dream of a future great colonial empire in Africa had not yet vanished even in 1918. In preparation for the expected colossal administrative burden, Frobenius was charged by the state secretary of the Imperial Colonial Office with the task of evaluating “what expectations (can) be set for the participation of the West African population in the region’s economic development”. Frobenius submitted a seventy-eight-page report with numerous maps. [64] (See Fig. 24.)

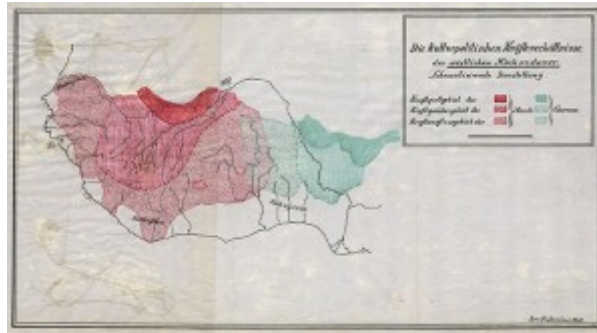


Fig. 24

Map of West African people from Frobenius's 1918 report to the Imperial Colonial Office.

Frobenius Institut, LF 1466.

Neither the polemical propaganda against the Entente nor the attempt to mobilize the colonized peoples against their colonial masters, at home or in the prisoner-of-war camps, was ultimately destined for success. Like many Germans, Frobenius experienced the armistice and the Treaty of Versailles as a national catastrophe.

As if to justify the painful defeat, the illustrated volume *Deutschlands Gegner im Weltkriege* (Germany's opponents in the world war) appeared years after the war's end. [65] Taking the form of a definitive presentation of all the peoples who had fought against Germany, this sumptuous, large-format work was a kind of handbook of portraits of Germany's opponents from around the world. The "cultural political introduction" was provided by Frobenius, as were fourteen out of a total of eighty one- to two-page descriptions of the opponents, each of which appeared opposite a full-page colour illustration. In each case, the texts were composed on the basis of the painted portraits and without further knowledge of the origin and milieu of the protagonists, who remained anonymous. (See Fig. 25.)



Fig. 25

Introduction of „Deutschlands Gegner im Weltkriege“.

In his introduction, Frobenius adopts the “stab-in-the-back” legend – “1,440 million against 158 million: in this unequal struggle, Germany's army was not conquered” – and he again makes use of a nationalistic and ethnically loaded revanchist discourse, [66] primarily directed against England and Russia. As chief enemies, these two countries stood “in the way

of Germany’s cultural primacy” and in the process mobilized all the peoples “who – whether as burdened weaklings or as barbarian cultural novices – had come into the service of higher humanity” and who then encircled German power with the swirling vortex of a “cultural witches’ sabbath”. [67] Russia in the east, which fell “upon Germany ravaging and destroying” with the “mass of its enslaved peoples and with tyrannical firmness of will”, was characterized on the basis of ethnic stereotypes just as much as England, which had indeed originated in the “Germanic block of peoples”, but whose materialism had become entirely alien to the “blazing idealism” of the “Germanic motherland”. During the war, England then brought in “[...] all the colourful mixtures of peoples from the Americas, Africa, Australia, Asia, and Europe, who from the African cannibals to the decadent Latins of Portugal had previously served only their economic greed for profit, but were now to give their heart’s blood”. [68]

Surprisingly, this style of polemical ethnic caricature is not continued in the main part of the work, which contains the descriptions of the individual peoples. To the contrary: the fourteen portraits composed by Frobenius, despite their paternalistic style, stand out gratifyingly from those of his fellow authors. [69] The reader learns something about history, forms of settlement, and the economic and social organization of each area of origin. Along the way, the ethnologist often shows much sympathy for the peoples he describes. The Kru stand out for their “visible pleasure in work” (51-52), the Mandara, from the area around Lake Chad, are “bearers of a deeply interior religiosity” (99-100), (see Fig. 26.) and the Bobo of Upper Volta (157-158) show themselves to be “as religious as they are industrious”. People of mixed Soninke heritage from Western Sudan (169-170) have wonderful poetry that contains “a nobility, a refinement of feeling, a fine discernment in all questions of tact”, and the Mossi from Upper Volta come from a “magnificent state” (189-190). The portraits by Frobenius’s fellow authors are quite different, like the one by Hermann Ratsch, for example, who characterizes the “Senegalese Negros” as “creatures who stand far below Europeans and closer to the animals on the ladder of life” (39-40). (See Fig. 27.)



Fig. 26

Mandara from the Lake Tchad area, Illustration in „Deutschlands Gegner im Weltkriege“, p. 101.



Fig. 27

„Stürmender Senegalneger“ (Raging Senegalese Negro), Illustration in „Deutschlands Gegner im Weltkriege“, p. 41.

In this work as in the various roles and activities that Frobenius took on during the war, the picture that emerges is one of a nationalistic scholar with ties to the military, apparently trapped in the widespread racist and colonial conceptual models of his time, but who was at the same time enough of a nonconformist to repeatedly break out of this tight corset and demonstrate new and unusual perspectives, as in his advocacy for a greater understanding of the non-white prisoners of war and their culture. He did not participate in physical anthropological research of the kind that other scholars undertook with the prisoners. Culture was the decisive factor in his eyes, not race – something that, granted, did not prevent him from repeatedly falling into racist formulations. He saw the captured African soldiers as instruments in the propaganda war aimed at undermining the colonial powers of the Entente. The idea that the colonized peoples in fact saw an honourable ally for their justified desire for self-determination in the foundering colonial power of Germany, of all countries, is supported by no evidence. In this area, as also in his Red Sea mission as a secret agent, Frobenius's story is one of failure, due not least to this famously undiplomatic ethnologist's excessively high opinion of himself and his egotistical craving for recognition.

In his scholarly activity he was equally interested throughout his life in basic research on the “dying” culture of Africa and in the applicability of his research. As an Africa expert, he felt himself called to draft plans for optimizing colonial administration, an area in which his hope of playing a significant role in a gigantically expanded German colonial empire merely added another dimension to his failure. He was probably more successful, after the war was lost, in his attempt to explain German culture through the African mirror, in a unique mixture of illumination and condemnation. This was the case, for example, in his *Vom Kulturreich des Festlandes* (On the cultural empire of the continent), published in 1923, which characterized the world war as a necessary evil in order to overcome a globalizing world (“world mechanism”) that exalted automatism over intuition and “organization over the organism”.

It was writings like these that convinced Frankfurt intellectuals and prominent citizens in 1925 to bring Frobenius and his Institute for Cultural Morphology to the banks of the Main.

But any portrait of Frobenius is incomplete – if not distorted – if his activities and writings as an ethnologist on the warpath are not taken into account. As dazzling and sometimes inconsistent they may seem, they nevertheless reveal a great deal about the basic orientations of this rather unusual founding father of early 20 century anthropology and of the embeddedness of the discipline in the greater political game.

Bibliography

Anonymous, Un agent provocateur en Afrique: Le docteur Leo Frobenius, *Bulletin du comité de l'Afrique française*, Avril 1915, pp. 100-104.

Anonymous, Stand der Rudolf-Virchow-Stiftung für das Jahr 1916, *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* 48/6, 1916, pp. 388-392.

Elazar Barkan, Post-Anti-Colonial Histories: Representing the Other in Imperial Britain, *The Journal of British Studies* 33/2, 1994, pp. 180-203.

Margit Berner, Die 'rassenkundlichen' Untersuchungen der Wiener Anthropologen in Kriegsgefangenenlagern 1915-1918, *Zeitgeschichte* 30, 2003, pp. 124-136.

Ulrich Braukämper, Im Spannungsfeld zwischen Wissenschaft und politischem Aktivismus: Leo Frobenius als Geheimagent in Nordost-Afrika, in: *Gestalter und Gestalten*, ed. Karl-Heinz Kohl and Editha Platte, Frankfurt a.M. 2006, pp. 167-186.

Rochio Da Riva, Lawrence of Arabia's Forerunner: The Bizarre Enterprise of Leo Frobenius, aka Abdul Kerim Pasha, in Arabia and Eritrea (1914-1915), *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 101, 2009, pp. 29-111.

Andrew D. Evans, *Anthropology at War: World War I and the Science of Race in Germany*, Chicago 2010.

Christoph Johannes Franzen, Karl-Heinz Kohl, and Marie-Luise Recker (eds.), *Der Kaiser und sein Forscher: Der Briefwechsel zwischen Wilhelm II. und Leo Frobenius*, Stuttgart 2012.

Leo Frobenius, H. Frobenius and E. Kohlhammer, *Weltgeschichte des Krieges*, Hannover 1903.

Leo Frobenius, H. Frobenius, and E. Kohlhammer, *Menschenjagden und Zweikämpfe—Raubkriege, Kriege der Ackerbauer, Territorialkriege und Sklavenkriege: Kulturgeschichtliche Beiträge für Jung und Alt*, Jena 1903.

Leo Frobenius, *Im Schatten des Kongostaates*, Berlin 1907.

Leo Frobenius, *Auf dem Wege nach Atlantis*, Berlin 1911.

- Leo Frobenius, *The Voice of Africa*, vol. 1, London 1913a.
- Leo Frobenius, *Die Möglichkeit einer Deutsch-Innerafrikanischen Luftflotten-Station*, Berlin 1913b.
- Leo Frobenius, Verlauf der vierten Reiseperiode der Deutschen Inner-Afrikanischen Forschungsexpedition, *Petermanns Mitteilungen* 62, 1916a, pp. 58-61.
- Leo Frobenius, *Der Völkerzirkus unserer Feinde*, Berlin 1916b.
- Leo Frobenius, *Volksmärchen der Kabylen* (Atlantis, vol. 1-3), Jena 1921-22.
- Leo Frobenius, *Vom Kulturreich des Festlandes*, Berlin 1923.
- Leo Frobenius, *Das sterbende Afrika*. München: O. C. Recht 1923
- Leo Frobenius, *Vom Schreibtisch zum Äquator: Planmässige Durchwanderung Afrikas* (Erlebte Erdteile, vol. 3), Frankfurt a.M. 1925.
- Leo Frobenius, *Kulturgeschichte Afrikas, Prolegomena zu einer historischen Gestaltlehre*, Zürich 1933.
- Leo Frobenius et al., *Deutschlands Gegner im Weltkriege*, Berlin n.d. [probably 1925].
- Katja Geisenhainer, Physische Anthropologie und Völkerkunde. Zwei ungleiche Schwestern, in: *Gefangene Bilder. Wissenschaft und Propaganda im Ersten Weltkrieg*, ed. Benedikt Burkard, Petersberg 2014, pp. 84-89.
- Andre Gingrich, After the Great War: National Reconfigurations of Anthropology in Late Colonial Times, in: *Doing Anthropology in Wartime and War Zones*, ed. Reinhard Johler, Christian Marchetti, and Monique Scheer, Bielefeld 2010, pp. 355-379.
- Peter Heine, Leo Frobenius as a Political Agent: A Contribution to His Biography, *Paideuma* 26, 1980, pp. 1-5.
- Hans-Jürgen Heinrichs, *Die fremde Welt, das bin ich. Leo Frobenius. Ethnologe, Forschungsreisender, Abenteurer*, Wuppertal 1998.
- Hans-Jürgen Heinrichs, *Leo Frobenius: Anthropologue, explorateur, aventurier*, Paris 1999.
- Gerhard Höpp, *Muslimen in der Mark: Als Kriegsgefangene und Internierte in Wünsdorf und Zossen 1914-1924*, Berlin 1997.
- Janheinz Jahn, *Leo Frobenius. The demonic child*, (African and Afro-American Studies and Research Center Occasional Publications 8), Austin 1974.
- Heather Jones, Colonial prisoners in Germany and the Ottoman empire, in: *Race, Empire and First World War Writing*, ed. Santanu Das, Cambridge 2011, pp. 175-193.
- Margot Kahleyss, *Muslimen in Brandenburg—Kriegsgefangene im 1. Weltkrieg*, Berlin 1998.

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

Britta Lange, *Wiener Forschungen an Kriegsgefangenen 1915-1918: Anthropologische und ethnographische Verfahren im Lager*, Vienna 2013.

Wilfried Loth and Marc Hanisch (eds.), *Erster Weltkrieg und Dschihad: Die Deutschen und die Revolutionierung des Orients*, München 2014.

Suzanne Marchand, Leo Frobenius and the Revolt against the West, *Journal of Contemporary History* 32/2, 1997, pp. 153-170.

Ted Norris, German Attempts to Incite Insurgency among the Muslims of the French and British Colonies during the First World War: The Case of the Campaign in West Africa, *Sozialanthropologische Arbeitspapiere* (Berlin) 32, 1990.

H. Glenn Penny, *Objects of Culture: Ethnology and Ethnographic Museums in Imperial Germany*, Chapel Hill 2002.

Editha Platte, Found and Lost in Ife: Leo Frobenius and the Olokun Bronze Head, in: *Nigeria 100 Years Ago—through the Eyes of Leo Frobenius and His Expedition Team*, ed. Richard Kuba and Musa Hambolu, Frankfurt a.M. 2010, pp. 73-80.

David H. Price, *Anthropological Intelligence: The Deployment and Neglect of American Anthropology in the Second World War*, Durham 2008.

János Riesz, Afrikanische Kriegsgefangene in deutschen Lagern während des Ersten Weltkriegs, in: *Deutsch afrikanische Diskurse in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. Michel Hofmann and Rita Morrien, Amsterdam/New York 2012, pp. 71-106.

Harry Stuermer, *Zwei Kriegsjahre in Konstantinopel: Skizzen deutsch-jungtürkischer Moral und Politik*, Lausanne 1917.

Monique Scheer, “Völkerschau” im Gefangenenlager: Anthropologische ‘Feind’-Bilder zwischen popularisierter Wissenschaft und Kriegspropaganda 1914-1918, in: *Zwischen Krieg und Frieden: Die Konstruktion des Feindes*, ed. Reinhard Johler et al., Tübingen 2009, pp. 67-109.

Monique Scheer, Christian Marchetti, and Reinhard Johler, “A Time Like No Other”: The Impact of the Great War on European Anthropology, in: *Doing Anthropology in Wartime and War Zones*, ed. Reinhard Johler, Christian Marchetti, and Monique Scheer, Bielefeld 2010, pp. 9-26.

Jay Spaulding, *An Islamic Alliance: Ali Dinar and the Sanusiyya, 1906-1916*, Evanston 1994.

Steigerwald, Peter, “Den Feind im Auge“ in: *Gefangene Bilder Wissenschaft und Propaganda im Ersten Weltkrieg*, ed. Benedikt Burkard, Petersberg 2014, pp. 52-57.

Bernhard Streck, *Ethnologen in den Kriegen des 20. Jahrhunderts*, in: *Krieg und Frieden: Ethnologische Perspektiven*, ed. Peter J. Bräunlein and Andrea Lauser, Bremen 1995, pp. 1-10.

Bernhard Streck, *Leo Frobenius—Afrikaforscher, Ethnologe, Abenteurer*, Frankfurt a.M. 2014.

Thomas Theye, *Der geraubte Schatten. Eine Weltreise im Spiegel der ethnographischen Fotografie*, München 1989.

Gerhard Velburg, *Rumänische Etappe: Der Weltkrieg wie ich ihn sah*, Minden/Berlin/Leipzig 1930.

[1] Anonymous 1916: 389.

[2] Gingrich 2010: 369. In the Second World War, on the other hand, ethnologists seem to have been more heavily engaged on the side of the Allies; see for example Streck 1996, Price 2008.

[3] Berner 2003, Evans 2010, Lange 2013

[4] Scheer, Marchetti, and Jöhler 2009, Evans 2010.

[5] Barkan 1994: 185

[6] Franzen, Kohl, and Recker 2012

[7] Only a few English texts have been published on Frobenius. Among the best are Jahn 1974 and Marchand 1997. The biography published by Hans-Jürgen Heinrichs in German (1998) has only been translated into French (Heinrichs 1999); the 2014 published biography by Bernhard Streck is in German as well.

[8] Streck 2014: 207.

[9] Frobenius 1903: vi.

[10] Taking weapons along on ethnographic expeditions to little-explored regions to ward off potential assaults as well as for hunting purposes was entirely usual as late as the 1950s.

[11] Frobenius 1907: 172f.

[12] Letter, 16 June 1917, Frobenius-Institut Archive, LF 1613.

[13] Frobenius 1925: 444

[14] Frobenius 1907: 233

[15] Penny 2002: 116-122, Platte 2010.

[16] Dubois 1911: 290.

[17] Frobenius 1913a: 105-126.

[18] Frobenius-Institut Archive, LF 1031. In his 1913 memorandum “Die Möglichkeit einer Deutsch-Innerafrikanischen Luftflotten-Station” (The possibility of a German air fleet station in the African interior), Frobenius advocated the establishment of an air fleet station in Northern Cameroon, not because it would be useful, but in accordance with a symbolic politics that was supposed to raise the “reputation” (Frobenius 1913b: 15) of the German colonizers in the eyes of the Africans, as well as of their French and English competitors.

[19] Frobenius 1916a: 61.

[20] Norris 1990, Loth/Hanisch 2014.

[21] Heine 1980: 2.

[22] The resulting relationship became closer after the war, when the Kaiser was living in exile in Holland, and is demonstrated by the published intensive correspondence between the two. See Franzen/Kohl/Recker 2012.

[23] Da Riva 2009: 48.

[24] Stuermer 1917: 118.

[25] Da Riva 2009: 70-71.

[26] Da Riva 2009: 43.

[27] Braukämper 2005: 557, Da Riva 2009: 77, Heine 1980: 3.

[28] Heine 1980: 3, Da Riva 2009: 77, 80.

[29] Heine 1980: 3, Da Riva 2009: 88.

[30] Report to the Foreign Office, 6 July 1915, as quoted in Da Riva 2009: 40.

[31] Letter to Imperial Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg, 2 May 1915, as quoted in Da Riva 2009: 40.

[32] Frobenius-Institut Archive, LF 265-28; see also Heine 1980: 4.

- [33] Letter to Robert Türstig, 15 March 1915, Frobenius-Institut Archive, LF 265-27.
- [34] Braukämper 2005: 173, Da Riva 2009: 97.
- [35] Frobenius 1916: 99.
- [36] Spaulding 1994.
- [37] Scheer/Marchetti/Joler 2010: 13.
- [38] Frobenius 1911: 175-6.
- [39] Koller 2001: 112.
- [40] Frobenius 1916: 8.
- [41] *Ibid.*: 12.
- [42] Kahleyss 1998: 33.
- [43] Koller 2001: 112.
- [44] Report in the *Vossische Zeitung*, Berlin, 2 May 1917.
- [45] *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, 48/6, 1916: 389.
- [46] Höpp 1997: 56.
- [47] Frobenius 1921-22.
- [48] Höpp 1997, Jones 2011.
- [49] This argument was, however, part of the propaganda war; the main purpose was to use POWs as farm labourers (Jones 2011: 177)
- [50] Höpp 1997: 51.
- [51] Letter to Editha Frobenius, 17 March 1917, Frobenius-Institut Archive, LF 1613.
- [52] Letter to Editha Frobenius, 18 June 1917, Frobenius-Institut Archive, LF 1613.
- [53] Velburg 1930: 129.
- [54] Frobenius-Institut Archive, LF 1613.

[55] Velburg 1930: 128.

[56] Steigerwald 2014: 57

[57] Town buildings: 5; a mud struck German car: 6.

[58] Traditional farmhouses: 13; a gipsy village: 7; a Persian wheel: 1; excavation of a prehistoric mound: 7.

[59] Personal communication from Mihai Dumitru (Bucharest), 25 April 2012.

[60] Frobenius-Institut Archive, LF 858.

[61] Höpp 1996: 57.

[62] Frobenius-Institut Archive, LF 858.

[63] Frobenius-Institut Archive, LF 1463.

[64] Frobenius-Institut Archive, LF 1466.

[65] Frobenius et al. n.d.

[66] Scheer 2009: 91.

[67] Frobenius et al. n.d.: II.

[68] Frobenius et al. n.d.: IV.

[69] Cf. Riesz 2012: 104f.