PRESENTING WAR IN AFRICA ?

Belgian Military Campaigns in German Africa under the Camera Lens (1914-1918)[1]

- Anne Cornet -

In the Western imagination, the First World War I immediately conjures up images of the trenches of the European front. However, the African continent was also a battleground where German, French, British, Portuguese and Belgian troops clashed for four years. Every belligerent party enlisted tens, if not hundreds of thousands of African soldiers and carriers. Just as in Europe, some soldiers engaged in the practice of photography, accumulating pictures of men, weapons and landscapes. But their practice had the peculiarity of being a part of a colonial universe characterized by imperial domination, segregation and ranking of civilisations.

Do the profile of these photographer-soldiers and the study of their preferred subject enlighten the way in which the photographic practice in Africa combined codes of war with those of colonial culture ? Are we seeing the development of a new cultural approach to the war in Africa ? In an attempt to answer these questions, a collective portrait of the operators and the range of topics covered in East Africa between 1914 and 1918 are compared with the photographers on the Yser or the Somme fronts, as portrayed in their photograph albums.

Soldiers stuck in muddy trenches, severely injured faces, foggy no man's lands, cities in ruins...World War I generated thousands of photographs that left a deep imprint on our collective memory. While the conflict spread over several continents, no iconic image comes to the general public's mind when one raises the subject of the Great War in Africa. Were not there any photographer soldiers overseas? And if so, were their photographs *that* different from those of fighters in Marne or in Yser?

I. History, Africa, war and photography

For a very long time the photographic sources of the First World War - despite them being a considerable volume - have received little attention from war historians, authors merely taking some of them out of context to illustrate a few aspects of the conflict[2]. This confirms the tendancy long observed for the entire discipline of historical research towards photographic sources. There is no comprehensive study to speak of analyzing the WWI conflict through photography and the wartime amateur production that flourished on every front has been, for the most part, neglected. Nevertheless photography is gradually considered as an important memory source[3].

For some thirty years, many photo albums belonging to European soldiers in the trenches have reached museums and archive centres. Their recent accessibility offers real opportunities to bring a fresh perspective on the Great War's history. Innovative studies are starting to explore the intimate vision of these individuals about the conflict or the wartime *camaraderie*[4]. Methodological tools are being discussed[5]. Amateur photography now completes historians' corpora that were previously limited to propaganda images and war reportings. It is indeed considered as "more representative of behaviours and social values" than professional photography due to the unselfconscious nature of its construction of a subjective reality[6]. Soldiers' photo albums allow us to develop a new cultural and social approach of war. Since the 2000s, scientific production and mass-market publishing have shown an interest in them. The centenary of the First World War amplified this phenomenon, which is noticeable in most former belligerent countries. The French publishing world has seen a proliferation of illustrated books - often prefaced and commented upon by historians - focusing on one or other of these amateur photographers, not to mention the bringing together of new archives and the implementation

1. I warmly thank Dr. Kevin Dodd for proofreading the English version, and Mrs Anne Welschen, for guiding me through the maze of considerable museum photographic collections.

2. Ilsen About and Clément Chéroux, "L'histoire par la photographie", in *Etudes photographiques*, n°10, November 2001, p. 8-33.

3. Peter E. Palmquist (ed.), *Photographers: a Sourcebook for Historical Research*, Nevada City, 2000; Laurent Jalabert, "Les témoignages photographiques et les mémoires de la 'Grande Guerre'", in Laurent Jalabert et al. (eds), *La longue mémoire de la Grande Guerre: regards croisés franco-allemands de 1918 à nos jours*, Villeneuve-d'Ascq, 2017, p. 67-88; A. Kuhn and K.E. McAllister (eds), *Locating Memory: Photographic Act*, Oxford, 2006. About the Belgian general and colonial history: Veronique Meyfroot, *Fotografen en kolonisatie van Congo, 1885-1914*, Louvain, masterstudy, KULeuven, 1982; Sandrine Colard, *Photography in the Colonial Congo (1885-1960)*, Ph.D., Columbia University, 2016; Hendrik Ollivier, "Photos", in Patricia Van den Eeckhout and Guy Vanthemsche (eds), *Sources pour l'étude de la Belgique contemporaine, 19ᵉ-21ᵉ siècles*, Brussels, 2017, vol. II.

4. Laurent Gervereau (ed.), *Voir, ne pas voir la guerre. Histoire des représentations photographiques de la guerre*, Paris, 2001; Alexandre Lafon, "La photographie privée de combattants de la Grande Guerre. Perspectives de recherche autour de la *camaraderie*", in *Matériaux pour l'histoire*, 2008, p. 42-50; Anne Thomas (ed.), *The Great War. The Persuasive Power of Photography*, Ottawa, 2011.

5. Anne Roekens, "Que peuvent révéler les photographies de la Grande Guerre? Quelques réflexions à partir des albums de Jules Messiaen, photographe tournaisien", in Bénédicte Rochet and Axel Tixhon (eds), *La petite Belgique dans la Grande Guerre, une icône, des images*, Namur, 2012, p. 328-351.

6. Mélissa Vernier, "La photographie comme document historique: la représentation des femmes autochtones du diocèse anglican de Moosonee", in Micheline Tremblay and Sylvie Lafortune, *Actes de la 12ᵉ Journée Sciences et savoirs*, Sudbury, 2006, p. 39.

of the web platform 'Europeana Collections'[7]. The same goes for the English-speaking world even if publishers favour a combination of correspondences, diaries and pictures of some soldiers[8].

While the conflict had a global impact, these books only feature European fronts, with the exception of a few coffee table ones or popular booklets that merely include unreferenced pictures[9]. Scientific publications dedicated to the history of World War I in Africa largely neglect the photographic data[10]. Most pictures are barely referenced, if accompanied by any citation at all, which shows that they are not considered as sources but used

for illustration purposes only. As for the rare works addressing the practice of photography in marginal battlefields, none of them discusses the situation on the African continent[11]. To this day, neither World War I historians nor imperial history specialists seem to consider photography as a source for the study of the 1914-18 hostilities in Africa[12].

The photographic coverage of the Belgian military campaigns in Africa did not attract the attention of researchers or publishers either. However a few recent publications include some photographs[13]. Anyway, the disinterest about World War I in Africa is widespread, both amongst

7. Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, *Un regard sur la Grande Guerre. Photographies inédites du soldat Marcel Felser*, Paris, 2002 ; Thierry Ehret and Eric Mansuy, *Un artilleur en haute Alsace. Souvenirs photographiques de Pierre Jaminet, 1914-1916*, Altkirch, 2003 ; Frantz Adam, *Ce que j'ai vu de la Grande Guerre, photographies présentées par André Loetz*, Paris, 2013 ; *Images de l'arrière-front : Raoul Berthelé, lieutenant et photographe, 1914-1918*, Toulouse, 2008 ; Alexandre Lafon and Colon Miège, *Une guerre d'hommes et de machines. Désiré Sic, un photographe du génie, 1914-1918*, Toulouse, 2014 ; Rémy Cazals, *La Grande Guerre. Photographies du capitaine Hudelle,* Carcassonne, 2008 ; Nicolas Meaux and Marc Combier, *Regard de soldat : La Grande Guerre vue par l'artilleur Jean Combier*, Paris, 2005 ; Jean-Louis Roux and Yann Prouillet, *Un prêtre-brancardier dans le régiment des photographes. Carnet photographique de guerre de Loys Roux, 1914-1919*, Moyenmoutier, 2013. See the web platform http://www.europeana.eu/portal/en/collections/world-war-I.
8. Kira Charatan and Camilla Cecil, *Under Fire in the Dardanelles : The Great War Diaries and Photographs of Major Edward Cadogan*, Barnsley, 2005 ; Andrew Davidson, *A Doctor in the Great War : Unseen Photographs of Life in the Trenches,* New York, 2014 ; Karen Farrington, *Brothers in Arms : The Unique Collection of Letters and Photographs of Two Brothers from the Front Line During the First World War*, Haverton, 2015 ; Joyce Mollet, *With a Camera in My Pocket : The Life and Times of a First World War Nurse*, Baddeley, 2005 ; Edward E. O'Donnell, *Father Browne's First World War*, Dublin, 2014 ; Paul L. Rempe, *From German Cavalry Officer to Reconnaissance Pilot : The World War I History, Memories, and Photographs of Leonhard Rempe*, 1914-1921, El Dorado Hills, 2016 ; Mark Scott, *The Man Who Shot The Great War : The Remarkable Story of George Hackney, The Belfast Soldier Who Took His Camera to War*, Newtownadts, 2016 ; Richard Van Emden, *Last Man Standing : The Memoirs, Letters and Photographs of a Teenage Officer*, Barnsley, 2012 ; Von Hardesty, *Camera Aloft : Edward Steichen in the Great War,* Cambridge, 2015.
9. Chantal Antier-Renaud and Christian Le Corbe, *Les soldats des colonies dans la Première Guerre mondiale*, Rennes, 2014 ; Gordon Shepherd, *Conflict in the Colonies : East Africa and the First World War*, Catrine, 2014. The scholarly work of Robert Galic, *Les colonies et les coloniaux dans la Grande Guerre. L'Illustration ou l'Histoire en images*, Paris, 2013, pays more attention to the magazine articles than to the pictures themselves.
10. Ross Anderson, *The Forgotten Front. The East African Campaign, 1914-1918*, Spellmont, 2014 ; Byron Farwell, *The Great War in Africa (1914-1918)*, New York-London, 1986 ; Geoffrey Hodges, *Kariakor. The Carrier Corps. The Story of the Military Labour Forces in the Conquest of German East Africa, 1914 to 1918*, Nairobi, 1999 ; Marc Michel, *L'Afrique dans l'engrenage de la Grande Guerre (1914-1918),* Paris, 2013 ; Edward Paice, *Tip & Run. The untold tragedy of the Great War in Africa*, London, 2007.
11. For example Jane Carmichael, *First World War Photographers*, London-New York, 1989, writes about war photographers in Palestine, the Near East and the Dardanelles.
12. The workshops "Colonialism, War, & Photography" (King's College, London, 2015 ; Zentrum Moderner Orient, Berlin, 2016) organized by the *Cultural Exchange in the Time of Global Conflict* project constitute an exception. Three presentations dealt with the African continent : Daniel Steinbach, *Snaps from Africa : Amateur Photographs by British Soldiers During the First World War* ; Anne Samson, *The Wartime Experience of Two Official Photographers in East Africa, 1915-1917* ; Stefanie Michels, *Who is Shooting ? Photographs of German Colonial Soldiers Before and After 1918*.
13. Lucas Catherine, *Des tranchées en Afrique. La guerre oubliée des Congolais contre les Allemands en 1914-1918*, Brussels, 2014 ; *La guerre 14-18 en Afrique. Des mémoires repliées,* Brussels, 2016 ; Isidore Ndaywel and Pamphile Mabiala Mantuba-Ngoma (eds), *Le Congo belge dans la Première Guerre mondiale*, Paris, 2015.

researchers and authorities responsible for centenary commemorations[14].

Is this historiographical void caused by a lack of sources ? Did not the soldiers immortalise their war ? Was the practice of photography limited by the difficulties implied by a war of movement, the scarce connections with families in Europe, the harder supply of photographic roll film or the restricted number of men that could afford to own a camera ? All of these questions must be answered in the negative. Although there are undoubtedly fewer sources than for the European front, the works produced in Africa and kept in institutions of former belligerents, including Belgium, are in fact plentiful[15].

Corpus and issue

This paper is based on around fifty archival collections belonging to the historical photographic collections of the Royal Museum for Central Africa (RMCA), that include around 3,000 photographs and negatives produced during the 1914-18 Belgian military campaigns in Africa : Cameroon in 1914-1915, Northern Rhodesia in 1914-1915, and two military campaigns in German East Africa in 1916-1917, respectively called Tabora and Mahenge campaigns[16]. Most of the pictures come from amateurs, but collections also include propaganda photographs. Those were produced later, as the Belgian authorities - unlike the German, French and British armies – did not realize immediately the importance of documenting war by photography[17]. The photography department of the Belgian army was founded in 1916, but the coverage of the war in Africa was run by the *Service de Documentation et de Vulgarisation* created by the Colonial Office in October 1916. It is quite revealing that the first Belgian postcards showing the participation of the colonial forces in the conflict were in fact pictures taken by amateur photographers, as the troops were not accompanied by professionals[18]. The first official photographer, Ernest Gourdinne, was only sent to East Africa after the end of the hostilities[19]. In the early summer of 1918, he took some 755 photographs related to

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14. Laurence van Ypersele and Enika Ngongo, "Situating the Belgian Congo in the Great War Centenary", in Shanti Sumartojo and Ben Wellings (eds), *Commemorating Race and Empire in the First World War Centenary*, Liverpool-Marseille, 2018. The lack of in-depth studies is currently being fixed by Enika Ngongo's doctoral thesis, not yet complete, *L'administration coloniale belge et les populations congolaises dans la Première Guerre mondiale : entre adaptation et résistance (1914-1920),* working title, University Saint-Louis-Brussels.

15. Photographic collections on British campaigns in Africa are kept at the Imperial War Museum. In France collections are scattered across various institutions, including the *Médiathèque de l'architecture et du patrimoine du ministère de la Culture* or the *Etablissement de communication et de production audiovisuelle de la Défense at Ivry-sur-Seine.*

16. As the inventory is still ongoing, it is impossible at present to state the number of collections that include photographs of WWI and thus to determine precisely the number of these pictures. I have used all the spotted pictures to realize my analysis. Some albums are kept in other institutions : I found one of them at the *Musée Africain* of Namur (album Henri Mathieu), another at the *Archives et Musée de la littérature* (album Robert Vincent), some at the Royal Museum of the Armed Forces and Military History (Brussels), at the *Musée de la photographie de Charleroi* and at the Audio-visual Defence Archive (Peutie). I thank Enika Ngongo and François Poncelet for drawing my attention to some of them. About the photographic collections in general at the RMCA : Hein Van hee, "Niet-Europese collecties", in *Cahier-over collecties²*, Brussels, 2012, p. 142-149.

17. On British, French and German propaganda photography : Stephen D. Badsey, *British Official Photography in the First World War*, London, 1981 ; Thérèse Blondet-Bisch, "La pratique photographique en France pendant la Grande Guerre", in Jean-Louis Jadoulle et al. (eds), *L'histoire au prisme de l'image,* t.1, Louvain-la-Neuve, 2002, p. 167-178 ; Anton Holzer, *Die Andere Front. Fotografie und Propaganda im Ersten Weltkrieg*, Darmstadt, 2007.

18. The series "Est africain allemand. Occupation belge" started circulating in November 1917 (Roger Gallant, *Histoire du service postal au Congo belge, 1886-1960*, Kruishoutem, 2005, p. 331-344).

19. Ernest Gourdinne (1889-1932) was a photographer and a film-maker from Liège, committed in December 1917 by the Colonial Secretary to realize a cinematographic mission in the Belgian Congo, Ruanda and Urundi. He made about twenty short films and about 5,000 photographs between 1917 and August 1919 about the Belgian colony and the territories conquered in East Africa. On his mission in Africa : Anne Cornet, "Le soldat congolais dans la Grande Guerre. Un oublié de la propagande de guerre belge ?", in *Revue Française d'Histoire d'Outre-Mer*, CIV, n° 390-391 (*Les empires dans la Grande Guerre*), p. 211-233.

colonial troops occupying former German East Africa, in quarantine camps, on their way back, or on military exercices and official ceremonies[20]. In addition to amateur and propaganda pictures, RMCA collections include pictures taken by professional military photographers, among whom was Roger Castiau from the Tanganika squadron[21]. At the request of the ministry of Colonies, Castiau, a talented photographer, did not return with his comrades at the end of the summer of 1916 in order to take aerial pictures to illustrate propaganda brochures[22].

I made choices in the available archival collections, selecting the production made during the war and giving priority to the one produced by officers and non-commissioned officers (NCOs) involved in the fighting and to the military campaigns themselves. Thus I excluded the later commemorations and the economic war effort. Among the pictures taken by civilians, only those subsequently incorporated by photographer soldiers into their war albums, for example the troops entrance inside a conquered city, were taken into account. Finally, without excluding propaganda, I gave priority to amateur photographs due to their original point of view on the topics chosen and to their freedom of form, related to the restricted nature of their public. These pictures, which focused more on human relationships and camaraderie or on anecdotes, are also often less normalized than the official production.

I first attempted to reconstruct archival resources by operators. Indeed, in the past, historical photographs were not considered as archive sources but as simple illustrations. As a result, the pictures were grouped by subjects and glued on cards,

breaking up the initial archive. It is thus often difficult to reconstruct the original collection in its entirety[23]. The digitalizing process limited to the photographs glued on cards generated other obstacles, as only the descriptive information about the topics of the pictures were encoded, while photographers' names and dates of deposit were neglected. As to the photo albums, they had not been recorded systematically and in detail. Their catalogue description is limited to an often approximate chronological interval and to the donor's name[24].

Digitalized data bases, rich with tens of thousands of photographs but lacking thesauri, were surveyed using chosen keywords that correspond to the vocabulary used at the time, place names, individuals, weapons, etc. Each time that a picture was located, all the previous and following inventory numbers inside the same virtual archive were checked in an attempt to find the rest of the operator's photographs. In order to verify if each photographer's production had been entirely reconstructed, I then consulted the registers documenting the entries since they specify the number of items deposited by a donor at a given date. For several collections, some items are still missing. Then I systematically consulted the material collections (photo albums, isolated pictures, negative films).

Despite its richness, the corpus suffers from a series of limitations. First there is a lack of completeness since, as we just saw, the selection is incomplete due, on the one hand, to the difficulty in locating the items, and, on the other, to the museum collection which itself is random as it was built on individual donations. In addition there is the issue of heterogeneity, since the corpus includes

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20. Gourdinne to the Colonial Secretary, report on his work in German East Africa, Kigoma, 20 July 1918 (RMCA, fonds Gourdinne, non-inventoried).
21. Roger Castiau, a pre-war pilot, volunteered into the *Compagnie des Aviateurs* on August 1914. In 1916, he flew Short airplanes at the Tanganika Lake, and ended the war as a pilot with the 7th Squadron in Belgium.
22. *La guerre de 1914-1916. Campagnes belges au Cameroun et dans l'Est africain allemand,* Le Havre, [1916?].
23. A point of view shared by other researchers in photographic collections that were thematically reclassified (e.g. KARIN BECKER, "Das Bildarchiv und die Konstruktion von Kultur", in *Zeitschrift zur Volkskunde*, II, 1997, p. 235-253.
24. Half of the albums from the general historic photographic collection of the RMCA (close to 250 items) have been digitalized in 2017-2018.

pictures that meet various objectives (propaganda or personal use), come from different kinds of authors (soldiers or civilians), and deal with different war zones, periods and experiences[25]. Finally there is its partiality, as most of these photographs come from one camp, that of the Belgian colonial troops. Nevertheless, some collections include a few pictures taken from German prisoners or found in conquered sites. That is, they were taken only by Europeans, even though the overwhelming majority of mobilized soldiers were Africans. In conclusion, this corpus can only offer a partial and selective view of the war.

The photograph itself can be problematic because, among other things, of the difficulties linked to attribution, dating and use. Attributing photographs to a specific operator is complicated. Indeed pictures from private collections could have been bought, traded or taken by the album's author. Are we dealing with someone who acquired the picture or someone who made it? Who took the original? How did it end up in one collection or another? Is it a commercial photo integrated in a private album[26]? Who made the album? In addition the corpus does not always include photographic negatives, contact-printing, additional documentation, or even elementary biographical information about the operator. Albums and photographs can nevertheless provide clues about the authors, in particular because it is rare that an operator photographs men of another regiment or another company.

Dating is not easier since very few pictures are captioned in a precise manner and albums were rarely finished on the front. Many albums underwent successive arrangements, with cuttings, rejections or additions of pictures, and their captions were seldom completed. So it is hard to determine who captioned and arranged the albums.

It is also difficult to reconstruct their use. Indeed, the photographs of soldiers in World War I were not often circulated, or their circulation is poorly known. We generally do not know whether they served mainly for personal, intimate memories, or if they were shared with families. Overall, however, most of the soldiers' albums were intended for personal or family, not general, viewing[27]. Nevertheless albums do offer additional information sometimes. For example, careful penmanship, a special effort at layout and decoration can indicate an intention to show them widely. On the contrary, a rudimentary album is closer to a personal diary than to something planned for exhibition. This is also the case for photographs kept in simple envelopes or with glass plates never developed. Captions also give us some insight: the more they contain details, the more we can suppose personal use (the desire to remember the names of places, companions, etc.). Propaganda, on the other hand, aims at a more general audience and is incompatible with detailed references: only the names of big battles are mentioned. Finally, the contents of albums or pictures informs us about the intended viewers: if we see drinking bouts or naked women, we can expect that the authors of the album wanted to limit them for a (very) private context, sometimes only the photographer himself or his conrades-in-arms. Shots of good companionship, picturesque settings, housing, postings are more intended for family. The absence of personal pictures suggests the photographer intended them for wider, even official use. Among the collections of the RMCA, albums displaying both chronology and geogra-

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25. Laurent Véray, "Les albums photographiques des soldats de la Grande Guerre. Images de soi, images de l'histoire, histoire de soi", in Christian Delporte, Laurent Gervereau et Denis Maréchal (eds), *Quelle est la place des images en histoire ?*, Paris, 2008, p. 411.
26. I have found no trace of a commercialisation of amateur photographs taken during the military campaigns in Africa. The risk of facing commercially-published pictures bought by war veterans and integrated in their own personal archive is therefore close to zero, in contrast with collections on trench warfare in Europe, which can create confusion about their origin in the families (Anne Thomas (ed.), *The Great War…*, p. 57-59).
27. Laurent Véray, "Les albums photographiques des soldats…", p. 408-409; Annette Becker, *Voir la Grande Guerre. Un autre récit*, Paris, 2014, p. 19.

phy seem designed for sharing the war experience with only close relations.

Historical collections on the First World War kept in the RMCA are far too incomplete to comment on their use and circulation before their arrival at the museum. The purpose and dissemination of the pictures pertaining to Africa would therefore require additional analysis, which is beyond the parameters of this article.

Given the historiographical gap mentioned above as well as the complex use of archive collections, this article can thus only be an exploration, a prelude to a more systematic study. I chose to favour two perspectives, namely a collective profile of the photographers and a selection of their preferred topics. My approach, limited to a qualitative analysis, aims at including the photography in Africa in a dimension of global war through a comparative study of productions on European and African fronts[28].

I shall also attempt to make initial assumptions on the significance of the practice of war photography in a colonial space, by trying to assess the extent to which covered topics fall within a 'war culture' or a 'colonial culture', or even a culture that would be specific to the war in Africa[29]. Indeed, as Poivert emphasizes, "photography is first of all a history of ideas"[30]. It is thus not absurd to suppose that war photography in imperial spaces could reflect the colonial hierarchy, the aesthetics of its time and the 'war culture' at the same time. This pertains to topics chosen as well as for composition, framing, and poses. This article is therefore conceived as a contribution to the study of the dialectical relations between the concepts of 'war culture' and 'colonial culture' in an imperial space.

II. Photographing war in Africa : the operators

Too often researchers deal with photographic productions without giving any attention to their authors. Yet, by ignoring the photographer, one might not understand what he meant or wanted to achieve through his photographs. Indeed, especially in amateur practice, the operator is less an observer than an actor of the situations he captures on film. His identity models the way of photographing, the choice of topics and even the distribution of pictures.

To photograph is thus "essentially a personal matter"[31], the result of an individual eye influenced by various factors, such as familiarity with the practice of photography (those who already practised it in peacetime tended to photograph the war in all its details)[32], being of civilian or military status, a mobilized or a professional soldier, belonging to a specific military corps[33], training or professional activity in civilian life (doctors often adopted a

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28. I rely on the historiography devoted to the war in Western Europe in the eyes of soldier-photographers, mainly French, with some elements of Belgian ones (see above).

29. On this notion: Nicolas Offenstadt, Philippe Olivera, Emmanuelle Picard and Frédéric Rousseau, "À propos d'une notion récente : la « culture de guerre »", in Frédéric Rousseau (ed.), *Guerres, paix et sociétés, 1911-1946*, Neuilly, 2004, p. 667-674. Gervereau understands it "as all the modes of representation of the conflict among the contemporaries, which in its turn determines their behavior during the conflict" (Laurent Gervereau, *Montrer la guerre ? Information ou propagande*, Paris-Péronne, 2006, p. 139). Joëlle Beurier defines it as "a set of dominant representations [established by war] which echo in the speeches and practices of the French people behind the front" (Joëlle Beurier, *Images et violence, 1914-1918. Quand Le Miroir racontait la grande Guerre*, Rennes, 2007, p. 27).

30. Michel Poivert, "Temps et photographie : comment écrire l'histoire", in *Perspective, revue de l'INHA*, n°4, 2008, p. 772.

31. Anthony Petiteau, "Le spectacle de la guerre ? La Grande Guerre et la stéréoscopie en France", in Anne Thomas (ed.), *The Great War...*, p. 51.

32. *Photographies de Poilus. Soldats photographes au coeur de la Grande Guerre*, Paris, 2004, p. 18.

33. For example sedentary soldiers "insist particularly on what makes their everyday life. Their images are more intimate, more personal", than those of a scout or a doctor who moves frequently, making him "embrace war in a more global way, with a more hardened and more critical eye" (*Photographies de Poilus...*, p. 12).

greater emotional distance[34]), the rank in the hierarchy or even the type of relationship with the photographed person (is the operator a leader, a performer, a witness, an external observer, or even a victim?[35]). As for this corpus, it is necessary to add the impact of a possible prior knowledge of the African continent and colonial experience, or on the contrary of the discovery of an unknown, 'exotic' universe. Personal motivations complete the picture, like the desire to save bits of memories, to prove that one was on the front lines, to reassert that one is still alive, to document the war.

In Africa various types of operators photographed the Great War. There were amateurs and professionals employed by the colony, conscripted in Africa who already knew the region and the colonial mentality, and others having never set foot outside Europe, greenhorns and experienced people, general practitioners and technicians, etc. Often they combined several identities.[36]

European officers and non-commissioned officers

The consulted collections were exclusively produced by white men, among whom was a vast majority of officers or NCOs. I have not found any photographs taken by religious nurses integrated into field hospitals or by Congolese. The 'male, senior officer' profile corresponds to that of the European front where most of the pictures were taken by officers and city dwellers rather than by rural people[37]. Operators were men from middle or upper classes whose position of social and hierarchical superiority could generate 'conventional or condescending images'[38].

Why were the albums kept in European museums almost exclusively produced by officers or NCOs? Maybe because of "a bigger concern of culturally aware descendants who knew they were keeping this rich photographic heritage for the common good", or the fact that photography was not widely used yet[39]. The new devices, lighter and easier to use, did not require any scientific or technical knowledge but their possession remained mostly the privilege of the upper middle class – from which army executives were drawn – because it was an expensive practice[40]. In 1917, Kodak's Vest Pocket cost 55 francs, two weeks' pay for a Parisian worker, and a film roll cost a third of a worker's daily salary[41]. In a colonial context, an African soldier could not even dream to possess such a device and not all European actors were able to acquire it for financial or procurement reasons.

As officers, these photographers were generally "little inclined to propose a subversive vision for the troop morale or to reveal sensitive information on military sites and material"[42]. However, given the configuration of the war in Africa and the distance with censorship authorities[43], people seem to have been less cautious than in Europe's trenches[44].

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34. *Photographies de Poilus…*, p. 10.
35. According to the typology of Raoul Hilberg, *Exécuteurs, victimes, témoins. La catastrophe juive, 1933-1945,* Paris, 1994.
36. Lafon and Miège showed through Désiré Sic's trajectory how these multiple identities conjugate to form unique, very personal photographic views, even if they echo other photographic war productions (ALEXANDRE LAFON and COLON MIÈGE, *Une guerre d'hommes et de machines…*, p. 20-21).
37. *Photographies de Poilus…*, p. 9-10.
38. FRANTZ ADAM, *Ce que j'ai vu de la Grande Guerre…*, p. 21.
39. ALEXANDRE LAFON, "La photographie privée de combattants…", p. 47.
40. Even if enlisted soldiers gradually purchased a camera during the conflict in Europe.
41. ANNETTE BECKER, *Voir la Grande Guerre…*, p.21 ; THÉRÈSE BLONDET-BISCH, "La pratique photographique en France…", p. 172 ; JOËLLE BEURIER, *Images et violence…*, p. 22 ; FRANTZ ADAM, *Ce que j'ai vu de la Grande Guerre…*, p. 15.
42. ALEXANDRE LAFON et COLON MIÈGE, *Une guerre d'hommes et de machines…*, p. 18.
43. I did not find any evidence allowing to determine if prohibition of photography on the front, except for accredited photographers, applied in Africa as it did in Europe.
44. This lack of caution is to be seen amongst all belligerent parties. Pictures seized from German prisoners in regions of East Africa conquered by the Belgian troops show it.

The majority of the collections examined are the work of NCOs and contain the most unusual photographs[45]. Contributions from top army commanders, less frequent, usually consist of pictures collected among other operators to publish reports or to illustrate memories and are therefore more conventional[46]. Emmanuel Muller and Philippe Molitor's albums constitute an exception, as they adopted a peculiar perspective[47]. I also found unusual or quaint photographs in army medical officers' production during the military campaigns.

Is it, in the words of Lafon, "a categorized source" [48] ? The corpus is clearly racially and socially categorized. Europeans alone had the financial means to own a camera, so we only have the officers' perspective, and they were people of the bourgeoisie for the most part. This limitation is important, because it denies an access to common soldiers' perspective. The photographic source is missing the African vision of the war.

Greenhorns or soldiers accustomed to the African land

Some photographers were familiar with the Congo and its colonial environment, but misunderstood the 'war culture' that had quickly developed in the trenches. A significant number had indeed worked for the Congo Free State (CFS) or for the colony before the mobilization, mostly in the *Force Publique* or for cartographic missions. Some were present in Africa upon the outbreak of the conflict ; others who had returned to Europe after a colonial career were sent back from the Yser to Africa in 1915. Many were thus familiar with the African field. Furthermore, they had practised photography professionally or as a

hobby to share their tropical experience with their families in Europe. On the other hand, some of them did not have any previous colonial experience. Familiar with trench war and having been immersed in a 'war culture' in Europe, they were among the 150 officers and NCOs who, following the Colonial Secretary's call in June 1915, left for the African front to replace the Italians who had been recalled[49]. Half of the photographers I identified privately gathered their pictures together, a way of keeping their first impressions of the African continent and the colonial troops.

Why do we find such a proportion of active or retired colonials among these operators ? First of all, it was probably easier to mobilize men that were already on the spot. Then, former colonials, especially veterans of the CFS had a keener interest in defending the Congo than the Belgian population, and volunteered to fight in Africa. Their knowledge of the *Force Publique* and the Congolese soldiers, their experience of wars against Arab Swahili or their participation in police actions against rebellious populations brought significant advantages for an immediate military efficiency. Meanwhile, the practice of photography having spread very quickly in colonies, a number of colonial military officers already had the necessary equipment. It is thus not surprising that these men figure prominently in the corpus. But the profile of the institution managing the collections being studied is probably another explanation. People who formerly lived in Africa were more motivated to hand over their personal archives to the Belgian Congo museum than Yser's soldiers, who were less inclined to contribute to a colonial museum. Certain 'African' novices may have left their production to military institutions or to one or the other museum of photography.

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45. For example Saquet, Vandenheuvel, Vanden Hende, Van Petegem, Van Sinay, Verhaert.
46. Tombeur's war albums, for example, were offered to him and were composed of pictures taken by unidentified photographers.
47. Colonel Emmanuel Muller (1879-1956), a colonial officer, commanded a regiment of the South Brigade and took part at the Tabora campaign. Colonel Philippe Molitor (1869-1952), commanded the North Brigade during the East African Campaign in 1916. He took part in the Kato, Itaga and Tabora campaigns.
48. ALEXANDRE LAFON, "La photographie privée de combattants...", p. 50.
49. JACQUES VANDERLINDEN, *Pierre Ryckmans. Coloniser dans l'honneur*, Bruxelles, 1994, p. 49-50.

Official or individual, professional or amateur photographers

Professional or amateur status could influence the perspective on the war. Official photographers followed directives issued by civil and military authorities, and so their subject matter was imposed[50]. Their heavy and bulky equipment allowed them to get technically perfect photographs but prevented them from taking views on the front line. They concentrated on official events, exercises and life in rear bases. Their pictures were to send to the public a unique, formatted and controlled message, which eliminated individual perspectives. They are thus often flat and unoriginal. The official photographers' mission was to give an image as complete as possible of the war for immediate propaganda purposes and for future archiving. Amateurs on the contrary mostly wanted "to testify to their everyday life"[51]. Their photographs are often of a lower technical and compositional quality, but they show us real-life experience.

A large part of the corpus was produced by amateurs. Some collections come from civil photographers stationed far from the front, particularly in Elisabethville where they took pictures as the troops returned; another comes from a photographer sent by the propaganda service. The distinction between amateur and official operators is blatant in photographic archives on the First World War in Africa. It is however less obvious in the albums of high-ranking officers who collected a documentation to write their memoirs. They privileged photographs providing information on military events, infrastructural and transportation problems, troops, etc. over quaint pictures and photographs of *camaraderie*.

The corpus seems to indicate that the practice of photography particularly interested men who were already sensitive to scientific or technical issues, such as geometers, cartographers, telegraph operators, engineers, doctors, chemists, marksmen and aviators. Some military groups are overrepresented, in particular military engineering, while infantry plays a minor role. Lastly, it seems that this practice, quite recent outside professional photo studios, particularly appealed to the young and very young men.

Several officers and NCOs of the African front were engaged in photography before war, as a leisure activity or professionally (doctors, scientists, technicians). On the European front too, army doctors often practised photography, in particular to document the cases of veterans with severe facial injuries and to expose the physical damage caused by modern armaments[52]. In contrast, others discovered photography during the war, and their learning process is noticeable as their production progresses both on a technical and aesthetic point of view.

III. Photography on the African front line : a few recurring themes[53]

At that time war in Africa was still little known, overshadowed by European battlefields' countless victims. However, these rediscovered photographic archives reveal contemporaries' perception of extraordinary situations and new landscapes owing to their immersion in an overseas war. Like any souvenirs, photographic records include "silences, bias and choices"[54].

50. Laurent Gervereau, *Montrer la guerre..*, p. 139.

51. *Ibidem*.

52. See among others Joëlle Beurier, "Le 'photocombattant' ou la naissance d'un métier (1915-1918)", in Philippe Kaenel (ed.), *Les périodiques illustrés (1890-1940). Écrivains, artistes, photographes,* Lausanne, 2011, p. 207. See also Albert Le Play, presented as a "doctor experienced photographer (...) from the upper middle class and scientist by training" (*Photographies de Poilus...*, p. 10)

53. The illustrations in this article are accompanied with information about their origin and sometimes by the identification of characters or settings. Indeed « to read these images without transforming the sense, the spirit requires the transcription of the captions in their entirety » (Thérèse Blondet-Bisch, "La pratique photographique en France...", p. 176). The perspective of these photographs or sets of photographs will be found in the body of the article.

54. Frantz Adam, *Ce que j'ai vu de la Grande Guerre...*, p. 17.

This is especially true for battlefields where witnesses and actors were minimized or ignored. Photography is probably the only opportunity to remember the faces of hundreds of thousands of carriers and tens of thousands of African soldiers engaged in the war on the Belgian side.

Are there similarities or differences in the thematic choices made by operators in Africa compared to the ones in Belgian trenches ? Private archives show numerous snapshots of very diverse scenes in the war. Most amateur photographers try to answer the question 'what is the war ?' by focusing on the ordinary life of ordinary people on the front line. Pictures do not necessarily give us new factual information. Most of those kept in the RMCA are not unique in terms of form, aesthetics or contents. Topics are often recurrent from one archive to the other, from one operator to the other, and reveal nothing but the ordinary. By their triviality, their lack of technical or artistic quality, these pictures are similar to many other contemporaneous photographs on the same subjects. But the repetition of themes, the parallel that can be drawn with albums made on the European front, the similarity of viewpoints angles, etc., all this tells us a lot about the practice of photography in wartime, about what people want to capture, the images they want to keep, to comment on or to share with family and friends. Thus this practice goes far beyond the topics chosen by the photographers.

Numerous wartime themes are represented on pictures taken in Africa. Some, such as mobilization and overseas travel, or the meeting with unfamiliar populations and the experiencing of new landscapes, are specific to the photographic production of soldiers fighting in distant lands. Others mirror what can be found in French and British soldiers' albums from the European battlefields : the man in the war, the confrontation, the everyday and military life, the enemy, the *camaraderie*,

the suffering and death, etc. I have chosen some of them and tried to see if the way they are addressed by the photographers is different in a colonial context. In this way, I attempt to scrutinize the interaction between war and colonialism in the photographic construction of the Great War in Africa.

The soldier

Let us begin with the soldier. Although at the heart of the war, he seems 'faceless' in war photography[55]. Amateur operators rarely take common soldiers as central subjects of their production, unless they have a direct relationship with them because of a precise function[56]. They neglect to identify those whom they consider as part of an anonymous crowd of fighters. Usually the private soldier is photographed in a group within which his identity is diminished (Ill no. 1 and no. 7). Indeed the collective portrait conforms to codes. It is characterized by a standardized, orderly, hierarchical and impersonal representation. The mass of people, the perfect geometry, and the wearing of uniforms in the photography evoke "the interchangeability of the individuals in modern wars"[57]. Composition reflects the photographer's conception of the army and of the defense of the nation. Faces, and through them the men's uniqueness, are unnecessary in this demonstration. Thus an engineering officer will photograph a group of soldiers digging trenches to highlight the technical aspects of the war, whereas an officer will underscore the uniforms to emphasize the discipline and the power of the troops.

Photographs of military groups taken by amateurs in Africa do not differ from those taken in Europe. The fighters are assembled according to their rank, the hierarchical scheme overlapping the racial one. As in Belgium, operators rarely photograph soldiers as individuals. Only the officers' boys and

55. Michel Auvray, "Le soldat. Du combattant au technicien", in Laurent Gervereau (ed.), *Voir, ne pas voir la guerre…*, p. 175.
56. Alexandre Lafon, "La photographie privée de combattants…", p. 49 ; Alexandre Lafon and Colon Miège, *Une guerre d'hommes et de machines…*, p. 121
57. Laurent Gervereau, *Montrer la guerre…*, p. 24.

cooks are entitled to a certain visibility, probably because they are part of their superiors' daily life, a phenomenon also observed in Europe. Indeed, photographers indicate the Congolese soldiers' names only if they distinguished themselves in battle or because they were their servants (e.g. sergeant major Dimoget, ill no. 19). Captions insist moreover on the relation of 'proximity' by using the possessive ("my orderly", "my boy", "my cook") which refers to the fact that he is in a dominant position (ill no. 2). And, as in Europe, the lens often focuses on uniforms and not on faces.

Even more than amateurs, propaganda photographers construct through group portraits a conventional image of the soldier and a dramatization of the war. They say almost nothing about the men; they are depersonalized and blended in a nameless mass. The captions strengthen the soldiers' anonymity. At the same time they distinguish the senior officers, high commanders and heroes. The Gourdinne photographic production realized in Africa during the summer of 1918 reveals that, just like in Europe, the operator has only a working relationship with the photographed subjects. His soldiers' portraits aim to illustrate the superiority of the troops, their good behavior, strength and involvement in a common national fight alongside the *metropole*. Gourdinne then builds a "fragmented and oriented vision of the conflict" through his lens[58].

It is however interesting to notice that, beyond the men, Gourdinne photographs the fighters, whether Belgian or African. He favours a military vision to the ethnographical representation so prevalent in colonial photography (ill no. 3). The fact that the soldiers are black is for him incidental. His mission is to create the image of a Belgian colony serving the allied cause. This construction conveys the official message that Congolese are soldiers fighting for Belgium. It is in that capacity that they appear on pictures, not as colonized subjects. The Belgian Congo dedicates itself completely to serve the Allies, and the metropolitan State is then a full-fledged belligerent which will be important during the future post war talks. That is why Gourdinne highlights the army uniformity, its dress codes and its discipline without emphasising what would be specific to African troops (ill no. 4 and no. 16). He demonstrates the kinship between the Belgian and colonial troops, led by similar officers and according to a same military scheme. Is it because in warfare real otherness defines itself between fighters' blocks more than between races or social classes? The Other is the enemy, the barbarian, not the soldier belonging to a different culture than that of his officers. To define national values in a time of war necessitates the annihilation of the enemy's humanity. Yet the *Force Publique* soldiers precisely defend the national values in the eyes of Belgian officers and official operators. The ethnographic categories seem thus irrelevant in this context.

Whatever the colour of his skin or the battelfield, in Europe or in Africa, the private soldier seems generally only entitled to a generic, impersonal photographic coverage, without personal relationalship, without a real eye contact. For Miège and Lafon, it is the sign of "a division of labour, a social and almost ethnic division, which underlines the gap still existing between various categories of men"[59]. Would the photographic source question the existence of an intermixing of men in the war? Is war really more than a mere opportunity to bring men of diverse origins together? These questions, which were posed with regard to the European front, are much more critical when one examines a front which mobilizes colonial troops working under codes of a segregationist society. We will go deeper into this topic in the paragraph on camaraderie.

Individual portraits are another constant feature of soldiers' albums. It extends the practice of peacetime where the pose is favoured by the opera-

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58. Alexandre Lafon, "La photographie privée de combattants...", p. 43.
59. Alexandre Lafon and Colon Miège, *Une guerre d'hommes et de machines...*, p. 124.

Ill. 1 : « Kibati, October 1915. Captain Defoin (killed 15 days later) ». HP.1969.18.106, collection RMCA Tervuren, Dr Georges Mattlet archives. Captain Leon-Joseph Defoin (1883-1915) commanded the 3rd company of the 10th battalion of the Belgian colonial troops in Northern Kivu. He was in fact killed on 27 November 1915. The photographer, Dr Georges Mattlet (1890-), was a young doctor who began the war on the Yser and went to Africa in 1915, where he took part in several military campaigns (e.g. Ruakadigi and Tabora).

Ill. 2 : « My 'planton' Kumba, Bangala ». Photographer unknown. HP.1986.47.2-132, collection RMCA Tervuren, gift of the Royal Museum of the Armed Forces and Military History. The man has big ritual markings from the Bangala people of Equator.

Ill. 3 : *« A cyclist in Gottorp ». Photographer Ernest Gourdinne. HP.1966.1.488, collection RMCA Tervuren, Archive Office Colonial. This man represented a kind of modern warfare, with his bicycle, gun, uniform and bottle. The picture was taken in Gottorp, a place situated between Kigoma and Tabora, at the crossing between the railway and the Malagarassi river. The photographer, Ernest Gourdinne (d. 1932), was sent by the Belgian Colonial Office in East Africa at the end of 1917. He was not integrated in a unit, so he did not know the soldiers personally.*

Ill. 4 : *« The 8ᵗʰ batallion coming through Rutshugi ». Photographer Ernest Gourdinne. HP.1966.1.345, collection RMCA Tervuren, Archive Office Colonial. Rutshugi was not far from Gottorp.*

Ill. 5 : *Without a caption. HP.1953.23.7-10, collection RMCA Tervuren, Philippe Molitor archives. Philippe Molitor (1869-1952) commanded the Northern Brigade of the Belgian colonial troops during the Tabora campaign between April and September 1916.*

Ill. 6 : *« Battery of light artillery (70m/m) in the region of Kilossa. » Photographic Department of the Belgian Colonial Office, HP.1985.14.11, collection RMCA Tervuren, M. Cape archives. Kilossa was situated on the southeast of Dodoma, on the railway between Dodoma and Dar-Es-Salam. The British Colonial Army took Kilossa on August 1916.*

Ill. 7 : *« Commander Ermens (center of the picture) at Saisi in Sept. 1915. The 3/XII working in the trenches ». HP.1965.41.13, collection RMCA Tervuren, Robert Devillez archives. Captain Paul-Charles Ermens (1884-1957) commanded the 3rd battalion of the Belgian colonial troops. The picture was taken at the frontier between German East Africa and Northern Rhodesia, a frontier border protected by the Belgian colonial troops by request of the Rhodesian authorities. The Germans laid siege at Saisi twice, first in June 1915, then at the end of the summer of 1915. The photographer, Robert Devillez (1887-), was a cartographer of the topographic army service who took part in the Rhodesian and the Tabora campaigns.*

Ill. 8 : *« Military campaign in German East Africa ». Photographer Léopold Verhaert. HP.1966.1.552, collection RMCA Tervuren, Charles Tombeur archives. Leopold Verhaert (b. 1873) was secretary at the 3ʳᵈ batallion headquarters.*

Ill. 9 : *« Crossing of the Kagera river during the German East Africa campaign ». Photographer unknown. HP.1966.1.254, collection RMCA Tervuren, gift of the Belgian Colonial Office.*

Ill. 10: *Picture without a caption. Photographer Dr René Mouchet. HP.1969.40.2-14, collection RMCA Tervuren, René Mouchet archives. The photographer (1884-1967) was a colonial doctor. During the war, he led the 2ⁿᵈ batallion portable hospital.*

Ill. 11: *« Belgian colonial military campaign, 1914-17 ». HP.1966.1.359, collection RMCA Tervuren, Fernand Flamand archives. The photographer, Fernand Flamand (1882-1942), deputy of the territorial administrator of the Idjwi Island (Lake Kivu), was taken as a prisoner of war by the Germans on 24 September 1914, and freed by the Belgians at Tabora on 19 September 1916.*

Ill. 12: *« In front of an overturned water tank at Kilimatinda in 1916. Lieutenant R. Devillez, Second Lieutenant Seigne and Second Lieutenant Parent ». HP.1965.41.14, collection RMCA Tervuren, Robert Devillez archives. Kilimatinda was situated on the central railway between Dodoma and Tabora. On the cartographer Robert Devillez, see ill. 7. Henri Seigne was the chief of the snipers unit of the 2ⁿᵈ batallion. Henri Parent was a member of the 3rd bureau of the supreme headquarters commanded by General Tombeur.*

Ill. 13: *Picture without a caption. HP.1988.9.1-58, collection RMCA Tervuren, Greindl archives. The photographer Paul Greindl (1878-1951) was General Malfeyt's executive officer.*

Ill. 14 : *« Trenching ». Photographic Department of the Belgian Colonial Office. HP.1985.14.2, collection RMCA Tervuren, M. Cape archives.*

Ill. 15: *« Military encampment. German East Africa ». Photographer Léopold Verhaert. HP.1966.1.562, collection RMCA Tervuren, Charles Tombeur archives. On Verhaert, see ill. 8.*

Ill. 16 : *« 1918. Belgian colonial troops. Tabora Campaign. Hosting of the Belgian Governor-general at Kigoma. Parade of the troops involved in the campaign ». Photographer Ernest Gourdinne. HP.1961.74.841, collection RMCA Tervuren, archive René Jules Cornet. Governor-general of the Belgian Congo, Eugene Henry (1862-1930), was photographed at Kigoma (terminus of the central railway between lake Tanganika and Dar-Es-Salam), on 7 June 1918.*

Ill. 17 : *Picture without a caption. HP.1984.33.1-33, collection RMCA Tervuren, archive Rafaël Van Sinay. Rafaël Van Sinay (b. 1892) was second lieutenant of the 2nd cyclist company in the 2nd batallion of the Belgian colonial troops.*

Ill. 18: « Manoeuvre of a 105 artillery gun barrel of the SMS Königsberg mounted in the bow of the Götzen at Kigoma. Photo brought back by police captain Beaujot at Kigoma and transmitted to Second Lieutenant Verhaert. This picture was found buried at Kigoma. » HP.1958.40.3, collection RMCA Tervuren, Charles Tombeur archives. The cruiser SMS Königsberg was scuttled in 1915. The retrieved guns were mounted on the steamer Graf von Götzen. The picture was probably taken between mid-June and mid-August 1915. Captain Beaujot died in Kigoma on January 1919.

Ill. 19 : « The 'Allies'. Two black elite soldiers: the 1st sergeant of the Northern Rhodesian Police with Sergeant major Dimoget of the Belgian Congo FP, 3rd Batallion, Group I (right side of photo) at Saisi, Northern Rhodesia ». Photographer Léopold Verhaert. HP.1966.1.603, collection RMCA Tervuren, Charles Tombeur archives. On the siege of Saisi, see ill. 7. The picture may have been taken in June 1915.

Ill. 20 : *« Entry of the Belgian troops at Tabora, 19 September 1916. The mounted officer is the Commander Jacques ». Photographer Nicola Bergamasco. HP.1965.41.6, collection RMCA Tervuren, Robert Devillez archives (also in the Victor Vanden Hende collection). Captain Commander P. Jacques raised the Belgian flag at Tabora.*

Ill. 21 : *« The doctors, Kibati, January 1916. Dr S'Heeren, Dr Van Goidsenhoven, Dr Mottoule, Dr Mattlet. » HP.1969.18.86, collection RMCA Tervuren, Georges Mattlet archives. Louis S'Heeren (1880-1948) was the chief of the medical service of the 15th batallion. Paul Van Goidsenhoven was a medical inspector of the 15th batallion. Leopold Mottoulle was the surgeon of the 15th batallion. Georges Mattlet was the doctor of the 9th batallion.*

Ill. 22: *« Graves of the Belgians fallen in Kato on 3 July 1916. The monument». HP.1984.33.3-95, collection RMCA Tervuren, Rafaël Van Sinay archives. During the battle of Kato (southwest of Lake Victoria), the Belgian colonial troops suffered heavy losses: 33 Congolese soldiers and 4 Belgian officers (de Beughem, Domken, Dezitter and Bauwerlinck) were killed, 30 Congolese soldiers and 5 Europeans were wounded, and 5 African soldiers were reported missing. The individual graves were restricted for Europeans. The collective monument concerned the Africans.*

Ill. 23: *« Lt R. Devillez in front of the Bismarck monument in Dar-es-Salam, 1917 ». HP.1965.41.41, collection RMCA Tervuren, Robert Devillez archives. On Devillez, see ill. 7.*

Ill. 24 : Unattributed album. HP.1986.47.3, collection RMCA Tervuren, gift of the Royal Museum of the Armed Forces and Military History.

tors and their subjects. 'Stolen pictures', taken without the knowledge of the subjects or against their will are almost non-existent in the European trenches[60]. The corpus includes some examples of photographs of soldiers and African servants taken from life (e.g. ill no. 15). I did not find similar pictures of European subjects. Is it because operators knew the western participants better and involved them in their own representation[61]? Is it that African soldiers and carriers avoided the lenses and their superiors? An extended study of albums is needed to answer these questions.

Anyway, the portrait represents a significant moment in an individual's or a group's life; it is an important event, a way to appear "such as one sees oneself and such as one would want to be seen"[62]. Individual war portraits are often solemn, even austere (ill no. 2 and no. 17)). The photographic dignity characteristic of that period, with its facial expressions and postures, tells of the pride in belonging to the army, the bravery and the determination. Soldiers never portray themselves as victims, but as actors, fully aware of their parts in the war[63]. Stiffness of the posture and seriousness of the faces also reflect the exceptional nature of photography for soldiers from working-class communities. Indeed, in Europe, familiarity with photography varies according to social class and geographical origin. If it has become standard in towns, workers and farmers are less familiar with its practice. African soldiers and civilians are even less accustomed to the practice of photography and they do not share a close relationship with European operators in a context of segregation which is characterized by linguistic, cultural and historical obstacles. Thus their attitude in front of the lens is often embarrassed and formal. One can imagine that for many of them, far from being an exciting adventure, war means heartbreak due to the separation from the families.

Many of these portraits include some allusions to the war by the decor and the presence of weapons. These elements allow one to claim a sense of belonging. This fellowship can be in a combat force, and might be shown by focusing on a traditional emblem such as the infantry canes of officers. It can also be in a hierarchy (the horse being in Africa as in Europe the insignia of an officer's status), of a company or a regiment accompanied by the flag. In Africa the officers use these distinguishing marks for display. When it comes to Congolese soldiers, the lens lingers at insignia and military decorations (see e.g. ill no. 5). It is rare to see a single Congolese soldier posing near an artillery piece. The hierarchical relationship prevails over the representation of armament: an officer is at the controls, assisted by African servants (ill no. 6).

Front caramaderie, close camaraderie

In Great War popular imagery as well as in many scientific publications, the front appears as a place where solidarities between men of any origin arose due to proximity, common suffering and shared duty. However, if links are being created by the common experience of violence and danger, social relationships remain widely governed by the pre-war frames of reference, soldiers seeking out the company of men belonging to the same geographical or social origin. Thus the *camaraderie* at the front is relative and photography gives evidence of it. Far from crossing the barrier of social classes, it is rooted in very distinct homogeneous groups (common soldiers, NCOs, general staffs, high command). It is a compartmentalized world where " *'camaraderie'* arisen from the war has to be read as a *camaraderie* of ranks and functions rather than a generalized *camaraderie* between all the members of the fighting army "[64].

60. Alexandre Lafon, "La photographie privée de combattants...", p. 48.

61. Photographed people can be considered as "co-authors of the photographic picture, or at least, in Laura Mathys's terms, as 'participants in the photographing act" (Anne Roekens, "Que peuvent révéler les photographies de la Grande Guerre?...", p. 337).

62. Alexandre Lafon and Colon Miège, *Une guerre d'hommes et de machines...*, p. 106.

63. Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, *Un regard sur la Grande Guerre...*, p. 145.

64. Alexandre Lafon, "La photographie privée de combattants...", p. 48-49.

A clear distinction must be made between a front *camaraderie* and a close *camaraderie*, the first one neglecting social and regional barriers, the second basing itself on small groups sharing pre-war social and cultural references.

On the African front, photography gives evidence of a certain closeness between European officers and African subordinates in a context directly related to the fighting and military activities. Should we nevertheless call it *camaraderie* ? At least certain pictures depict a form of closer relations reflective of the intensity of the common warfare experience, such as the one with three crouching officers on the same row as soldiers sitting on the edge of a trench, instead of posing as a separate group (ill no. 7). Other pictures represent NCOs sitting in the bush with their reconnaissance patrol, without particular hierarchical or racial distinction (e.g. ill no. 8). Finally, the non-rigid attitude and the staring faces of some Congolese soldiers tend to indicate a private interaction with the European photographer.

Do we see the hierarchical and racial barriers breaking up ? Not really, because pictures revealing any kind of brotherhood are rare. The closeness typical of trenches does not exist in a war in motion where men spread along endless paths or in a military organization governed by a racial segregation which involves distinct camps and separate meals. Spatial separation does not allow any close relationships. Even if Europeans and Africans share hardships of war, albums do not contain any intimate photography similar to those of the western front, except naturally inside the circle of the European officers.

War comradship therefore has its limits. On the African front, inside the European microcosm, friendships could break down the usual barriers of social, intellectual, religious, political and regional divisions, and be easier to create between NCOs and high-ranking officers. But this was certainly not the case between Europeans and Africans, not even between the Congolese '*gradés*' and their direct superiors, the NCOs. Contrary to the pictures taken in the trenches of the Yser where a handful of Congolese soldiers could enjoy a moment of relaxation with their Belgian brothers-in-arms, no photo of the RMCA collections taken in Africa shows any close relationships between Europeans and Africans, except in purely military situations[65]. One does not find between Africans and Europeans any sign of the strong friendships observed in the trenches, no more than one can see any gesture or posture revealing ties of affection[66]. On the contrary, attitudes and looks proclaim an unbridgeable distance (ill no. 9). The visual exchanges between operators and soldiers of the European front contrast strongly with those caught by the lenses on the African one. Overseas, most of the time, there are only closed faces and suspicious eyes, echoes of the hierarchical distance and racial divide between officers and soldiers[67]. And when distance decreases, when faces light up and smiles dawn, it is in photographs taken by atypical operators walking in African soldiers' quarters, driven not by ethnological purposes, as it is not the picturesque or the cultural peculiarity which they are looking for, but the immortalization of everyday life on the front.

Some collections of the African campaigns reveal a real interest in Congolese soldiers as individuals[68]. There are beautiful portraits, some proclaiming an intense interaction between the photographer and his model. The captions cite the men's name, their village of origin and military function in the same way as European front albums ; they are a clear sign

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65. Some pictures of camaraderie between Congolese and Belgian soldiers on the Yser in Griet Brosens, *Du Congo à l'Yser. 32 soldats congolais dans l'armée belge durant la Première Guerre mondiale*, Waterloo, 2013, p. 140.
66. On the importance of body language as indication of sociability on the front, see Alexandre Lafon, "La photographie privée de combattants...", p. 49.
67. On the interaction or manipulation by the subjects photographed, see Alan Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs : Images as History*, Hill and Wang, 1989.
68. For example the pictures of Leopold Verhaert and Victor Vanden Hende.

- though tenuous - of a change in interracial relationships (see e.g. picture no. 2). They are not following the colonial albums'practice which rarely identify the Africans. It is however risky to consider that as an indication of a real closeness.

In Europe, alongside the solidarity of battle, closer ties are being forged between soldiers of the same origins. Comrades belong to the immediate company of the photographer and occupy a major place in his production. The reality shown in the African campaigns album is different. Logistics and crossing an untamed wilderness outweigh camaraderie. Any friendship between Europeans and Africans is unthinkable in a racially segregated context. Possibilities of real friendships between Europeans are limited by their low numbers and by the requirements of a war in constant flux requiring them to join various other units working towards a common goal. Thus the pictures dedicated to collective relaxation are rare and contrast with the European front albums which are full of companionship scenes, including pranksters and other card players.

The confrontation

Many pictures of the Great War represent only the periphery of the conflict, that is preparations for combat, time-outs of soldiers' lives and dealing with the consequences of war : the injured, the dead, the shell-shocked or the destruction. The absence of battles in the photographic albums is partly due to the fact that it is impossible to photograph attacks because it is too dangerous. There are also technical reasons such as visibility (lighting, depth of field)[69].

Photographers of World War I gradually imagine "a war framing"[70]. First of all, in Europe as in Africa, the only images of front-line combat shown by operators are pictures of explosions. Smoke evokes the fighting and panoramas taken from a distance give an indirect vision of the war (ill no. 10). Other methods complement these symbols. The assault can take the form of a race towards the enemy, a picture taken from the side, or one that captures the trench at a low angle, the photographer being undercover and photographing diagonally towards the sky (ill no. 11). Guerrilla warfare, frequent during the First War in Africa, is evoked by small details or by short stories, because in this type of fight "there is not necessarily a particular moment to capture"[71]. Albums of the Belgian campaigns in Africa have multiple pictures showing the deployment of troops in a hostile environment, the makeshift camps, eyes towards the horizon.

To show skirmishes is indeed impossible in one shot. The temptation therefore would be great to use simulations and reenactments. On the European front, falsifications, special effects and theatrics with models playing a role or combinations of photographic negatives are proven. The viewing angle reveals their artificiality. If the photographer captures the soldiers, while exposing himself to the enemy fire there is no doubt that it is a fiction. The corpus contains few theatrics and no special effects or juxtaposed pictures creating some fight scenes. This is likely because photographers in Africa had no opportunity to sell their pictures to the European illustrated press since they were thousands of kilometers away. Their only audience was themselves, their companions and their families. Operators tried to save mementos, not to convince newspaper editors with a dramatic picture. The more explicit setups in the corpus are photographs by Ernest Gourdinne. This operator sent by the Colonial Secretary films and photographs Congolese soldiers, but *a posteriori*, while the troops are already on the way back. He claimed that he never made use of reenactments, but according to Convents, archives give evidence that he made soldiers rehearse some fights and troop movements for

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69. André Gunthert, "La défaite de la photographie. L'image de guerre dans la presse illustrée allemande", in Laurent Gervereau (ed.), *Voir, ne pas voir la guerre...*, p. 111.

70. Laurent Gervereau, *Montrer la guerre...*, p. 60.

71. *Idem*, p.70.

the movie "Ruanda-Urundi"[72]. Furthermore, there are few amateur pictures seeming to be a kind of role-playing, due to the viewing angle. These photographs show some lookouts in trenches or shots toward the enemy.

A final way to suggest the confrontation is to photograph its devastating effects. In the European albums of trench warfare, pictures of destroyed fortifications, cities, bridges or ships are innumerable. In Africa, war is not marked by incessant bombings, forests cut by shrapnel, empty no man's land or razed cities. Photographers focus instead on the destruction (Malagarassi bridge, Kigoma harbour...), sunken ships, demolished trains, shot down planes, spilled water tanks in front of which the soldiers sometimes shoot photographs of their companions (ill no. 12).

Standby and movement

In Europe, trenches are the main subject of the albums. But the trench is also the obligatory entry point for soldiers arriving at the front line and those returning to the rear, as well as for supply. In Africa, photographs show that war is in essence movement, even though the troops know periods of barracks and quarantine. All men march, European as well as African, even if the photographers show the officers on horses during troop inspections, or being carried to keep their boots dry when crossing rivers. These pictures echo the high-ranking European officers transported in wheel seats pulled out and pushed by private soldiers to avoid the mud of trenches[73].

Operators suggest movement by pictures taken in diagonal, emphasizing helmets, weapons, back-

packs and not showing the faces of soldiers (ill no. 4). What matters is the effect of them moving towards a distant goal. But photographing movement in rough terrain is a technical challenge. How to show hundreds of men marching in dense vegetation which hides them from view or spread over kilometers ? Operators favour slowdowns such as river crossings and escarpments, or halts between two forced marches. To suggest the scale and the arduousness of the travels, they opt for wide panoramas within which long lines of carriers and soldiers weave (ill no. 13), and they insist on makeshift bridges built over rivers[74].

But if war in Africa is characterized by movement, propaganda reports parallel the trenches of Rhodesia and those of Europe (ill no. 14). By doing so, they do not create a reality, because these trenches did play an important role during one or the other episode, such as the 1915 siege of the Anglo-Belgian troops by the Germans in Saisi. Nevertheless, they produce a distorting effect by giving them a higher visibility than is warranted. Of course trenches are the symbol of the Great War, essential to any media communication. Besides propaganda photographs, the corpus also includes amateur pictures relating the construction of trenches by soldiers, the erection of walled defences, the figure of the spotter. But if in Europe the theme of the lookout often meant loneliness and anguish, in Africa it reflects above all boredom, probably because the photographs are taken during relative lulls in fighting. The hierarchical relationship between African lookouts and European operators is evident in the unsmiling faces and cool stares looking at the lens.

Trenches and rest stops are places of animation. Pictures of them vary greatly in Europe and in Africa.

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72. Gourdinne to the Colonial Secretary, Kigoma, 20 July 1918, Report on his work and stay in German East Africa (MRAC, fonds Gourdinne, un-inventorized) ; Guido Convents, *Images et paix. Les Rwandais et les Burundais face au cinéma et à l'audiovisuel. Une histoire politico-culturelle du Ruanda-Urundi allemand et belge, et des Républiques du Rwanda et du Burundi (1896-2008),* Leuven, 2008, p. 64.
73. Frantz Adam, *Ce que j'ai vu de la Grande Guerre…,* p. 124.
74. Decades earlier, photographers of the American Civil War used the same artifices in immortalizing marching troops, hastily constructed fortifications, temporary bridges, etc. (Joëlle Bollosch, *Photographies de guerre*, Paris, 2004, p. 14).

In the West, many amateurs try to share their everyday life by capturing everything in the fighter's life on the front line as well as in the rear areas of the fighting. One sees through their lenses soldiers eating, washing, playing soccer, relaxing, worshipping, fishing, hunting, mixing with women, etc. In Africa, daily activities take up little room in photographic albums. This can probably be explained by the division of labour and the separation of the barracks between European officers and African soldiers. The first ones have boys which take care of the daily tasks and live in separate quarters from the latter. The photographers thus pay little attention to the small activities of everyday life which are not their own. When they take pictures, they do it from a distance as in a news report (ill no. 15). The Congoleses'portraits are obviously taken against their will and do not lead to the amusing setups of the Yser fighters. And if the meal, whether simple 'cooking' or a festive gathering, constitutes a popular topic in European albums, if the funny arrangements are common, this is not the case in Africa. Perhaps it has something to do with the fact that officers face difficulties in supplying their troops, and that their own meals were not as pleasant as in Europe because they did not receive any parcel and have had little alcohol. Meals are thus a problem rather than a nice time one would take pleasure in immortalizing.

Relaxation, frequent in albums of French soldiers, is rare in those of Africa. Even activities such as hunting, or being playful in Europe, are rather duties to furnish missing supplies and to eradicate the menace of wild animals. This does not prevent Europeans from posing proudly next to their hunting trophies, rather like European trenches'soldiers displaying their collections of rats. It is difficult to distinguish the military officers' hunting scenes at war from those of the colonial great hunters on a safari. The influence of a colonial culture is here more explicit.

Leisure and sport practised behind the lines of the European front, encouraged by officers to main-

tain troop cohesion, are almost non-existent in the corpus, except for rare photographs where soldiers are occupied with African traditional games dug in the sand, or with music and dance. Of course the exhausting treks leave them little time for leisure activities and the rest periods take place in separate encampments for Africans and Europeans. When pictures deal with soldiers' and carriers'rest time, the operator deliberately leaves his own personal space to go to the African camp. In this case, the taking of the picture is rarely part of a shared experience between the photographer and his models, but has become a documentary report.

The viewer who would focus only on these 'African' photographic sources without inquiring on war in Europe would run the risk of believing that some elements are specific to this battlefield, while the range is actually very narrow. For example, the plank bridges made with flatboats, which could be considered as tinkering in distant lands, also appear in soldiers' albums of the Marne, for example. Scenes of collective baths are photographed as well on the European front as in Africa, and on both sides, men are naked. Pictures of naked African soldiers washing themselves are thus not a sign of a dismissive and disrespectful look of European operators on them, but the replication of a practice first adopted on battlefields in Europe. Back and forth between the European front photographic production and the one of the front overseas is thus essential to avoid misinterpretations and hasty generalizations.

Modernity and archaism

The Great War has been designated as the first conflict marked by modernity. Technique is fast-changing, but at the same time one reverts to old techniques or cobbles together solutions in a simpler manner. To use the expression of Audoin-Rouzeau, it a war of pack animals alongside a war of machines[75]. In Europe, beasts of burden

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75. Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, *Un regard sur la Grande Guerre...*, p. 109.

are horses and mules. Their suffering is photographed as a metaphor of the human suffering. In Africa, operators emphazise the fact that is people who play the role of workhorses. Indeed, if in Europe transport of ammunition to the artillery mobilizes men, animals and machines, in Africa they are militarized carriers assigned to the guns. Indeed, the mules, vulnerable to the tsetse fly, are restricted to the transport of heavy and bulky artillery pieces, while trains and motor vehicles are non-existent in the bush. The carrier is thus an essential actor of the African front, and photography emphasizes his importance. However it never immortalizes him in a individual way. The carrier is a generic, faceless entity without identity, always photographed within a group and often reduced to the size of an ant in a long shot (ill no. 13). He appears in pictures only to embody the arduousness and the complexity of the supply in a mobile warfare.

War photography also highlights, in Africa as in Europe, semi-chaotic conditions in supply, equipment, transport and accommodation. The photographers insist on the rudimentary and improvised nature of the camps (ill no. 15), the disordered assemblage of carriers, the crowded boats. They inadvertently shoot improvised uniforms, the lack of shoes and blankets, the presence of old people, children and women among the carriers. Operators on the European front line show a similar jumble of disparate clothing, and create the same impression of mismatched troops. In this field, amateur pictures of both fronts contrast with propaganda photographs which promote an ideal organization and a perfect order. Once more the 'culture of war' is predominant in the visual construction of the conflict and prevails over an exotic depiction derived from an imperial photographic tradition.

Machines and weapons have an important place in soldiers' albums on every front. Generally, photographs of armament are conventional in terms of framing and in the attitude of the servants looking at the camera. The latter seem aware that technological superiority is important to ensure the victory of their troops, that war is a serious matter, and that their own roles in war is very significant. So operators represent men proud of the technological advance of their camp and in close proximity to their weapons (e.g. ill no. 18), or to the airplanes. But if in Europe pictures insist on the power of weapons, photographers in Africa, at least in the Belgian camp, seem less fascinated by this[76]. Instead, they try to demonstrate that war is the same in Africa as in Europe, and that it is conducted in a manner as professional as in the trenches of France or Belgium. Thus operators insist on the perfect choreography of the men around an artillery gun, on the discipline and the knowledge of the weapons by the Congolese soldiers, in short their capacity to wage a modern war rather than on the guns by themselves (ill no. 6).

This different treatment is partly due to the fact that combat technology matters less in Africa than the speed of movement or the supply organization. Of course new weapons come to the African battlefields during the war, but the technical advances are focused first and foremost on siege warfare, and respond poorly to the requirements of a war of movement. In Africa, indeed, weapons must be light, easy to relocate, transportable by mule, since most regions have no railways. Consequently, if European photographers illustrate a technological war, in Africa they underline the very exhausting work of dismantlement. But the point is that in Africa as in Europe, photographers are interested by the men in war, whoever they are. Here the 'culture of war' still seems to dominate the photographic gaze.

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76. Among war trophies of the troops from the Belgian Congo there are German pictures found on prisoners or in conquered posts. These pictures insist much more on the power of weapons and artillery (ill no.18).

Army life

At the heart of army life, military manoeuvres and exercises crowd out any relaxation between the fights. In Africa, they take place in intervening time between two campaigns or in quarantine camps before repatriation to the colony. Because it is technically impossible to photograph the fights, this training offers an interesting alternative to the operators. The propaganda photographers gladly seek out this subject, as do amateur ones, because these exercices have the advantage of symboliz- ing the discipline, the strength and the cohesion of the troops. Photographing exercices also pro- duce a mass effect. There are a lot of pictures of this kind, especially in the Gourdinne collection. This official photographer sent to Africa after the end of the hostilities can in this way make up for his absence during the fighting by suggesting the effectiveness and the contribution of the Belgian troops to the Allied victory in Africa.

Other topics contribute to building a strong visual representation of the army. Throughout the war, military ceremonies punctuate the life of the fight- ers. Highly ritualised, they intend to maintain the *esprit de corps* and to keep the troops in a state of permanent mobilization. Photography contributes to assert the strength, the discipline and the organ- ization of the armies, and to emphazise the large number of troops (ill no. 16). The propaganda photographers focus particularly on ceremonies, taking a lot of pictures of parades, presentations of military decorations and official visits which give them the opportunity to produce a mass effect impossible to produce under normal circum- stances. Reviewing troops in particular allows one to photograph a whole regiment. The corpus is filled with pictures of this kind where inspections of troops alternate between parades and salutes to the Colours. It mirrors the production of the Army photographs in Europe on these subjects. The same visual construction of the war is adopted on both sides of the Mediterranean Sea.

Among these ceremonies, presentations of mil- itary decorations are particularly anticipated by the soldiers. As opportunities for the hierarchy to galvanize the troops, they combine solemn time and moments of shared *camaraderie*. This spe- cial photographic time, more formal than casual, holds a prominent place in all the soldiers' albums, as well in Europe as in Africa. But if in Europe the distinguished soldiers adopt a relaxed pose in front of the camera, in Africa the Congo- lese soldiers display a photographic dignity and show stiffness and solemnity (ill no. 17). This is due to the colonial framework of the war in Africa. Certainly, these soldiers are particularly serious because being photographed is a very special episode in their life. Still pictures are taken in a formal setting, by a commander and not by a peer. But racial segregation also plays a role, European and African sharing no common time of *camara- derie* after the official part. However the operators in Africa capture on film these moments in the same way as those of Europe. They adopt a visual code of the war rather than colonial references.

'The enemy' and the 'ally'

The photographic representation of the enemy is rather difficult. Most of the pictures suggest him rather than expose him explicitly. Fighters taken from the back watch in the direction of the fire or an explosion on the opposite side (ill no. 11). The topic of the invisible, off-camera enemy, is fre- quent in war photography. Indeed the enemy can only be shown when he is defeated, harmless, thus prisoners. In Europe as in Africa, most of soldiers' albums contain one or another picture of an enemy sometimes on public display. These are real pho- tographic 'war trophies'. Albums of Africa contain few pictures of prisoners, and in smaller groups than those of Europe. Operators mainly photograph western prisoners and almost never include Afri- cans and Europeans in a single picture. Is this focus due to a military hierarchical approach, the officers being interested only in their German peers? Still the Africans, who constituted the majority of the German prisoners, are generally absent, except when the photograph is about showing them at work. No picture shows white prisoners helping

with the chores. Would the Africans have been the only ones recruited to forced labour in a universe of racial segregation? Complaints against the Belgian authorities contradict this assumption[77]. Perhaps that might be seen as a will to hide compromising proofs of breaches of the law of war?

Authors of albums can also show the enemy by inserting pictures taken by the adversary himself (ill no. 18). The corpus includes glass plates hidden by the Germans before their defeat and discovered by the Belgian troops, or confiscated from prisoners[78]. They are generally pictures of high quality meeting the standards of propaganda. These photographs prove that the Germans had developed a photographic propaganda of war on all the battlefields. The integration of these pictures in albums of Belgian soldiers has an ambiguous effect because their character of trophy in no way decreases their propagandistic power because of their obvious technical and aesthetic superiority to the amateur pictures of Belgian albums.

The ally is another interesting figure, although generally barely present in war photography. His small insertion in soldiers' albums can doubtless be explained by people's desire to insist on their own exploits and sufferings. Besides, it is generally impossible to photograph the ally during the battles, because allied armies are never integrated, and each army has a specific zone to be defended or to conquer. The interallied collaboration can only be photographed at the time of a conference or of a victory celebration.

An exemplary picture of the ally shows a Congolese sergeant major of the Force Publique shaking hands with the 1st sergeant of a Northern Rhodesian Police at the Rhodesian border in 1915 during the Anglo-Belgian campaign in Rhodesia between September 1914 and January 1915 (ill no. 19). Thus the meeting of both armies is visually built around two African soldiers, not around their European superiors. The photographers of the African front adopt the same approach to the figure of the ally as those in Europe, but with further emphasis on the African character of the war territory. Besides, the troops of the Belgian Congo were exceptionally mixed with the British troops for securing the border between the Lake Tanganika and Saisi in 1915, as can be seen in some collective portraits mixing Belgian and British officers[79]

Imaging victory: triumphant entries, trophies and official ceremonies

No more than the enemy or the ally is victory easy to capture by photography. "There is a need for strong symbols, raised spontaneously or for the necessities of the set-up, so that the situation can be immediately interpreted"[80]. Entry rituals to conquered cities and victory processions giving rise to 'convenient images' are part of it[81]. However these images cannot be realized by the soldier-photographers because they belong to the marching troops. Thus the albums of Africa and Europe integrate pictures acquired or received from civil operators who were witnesses of these moments of glory (ill no.20). The theme of the hoisting of the Belgian flag on the mast in Tabora, the welcome of the Congolese troops by the local African authorities, the triumphant reception of the troops on returning to Elisabethville in 1917 are so many recurring pictures in the corpus. Their presence in albums gives evidence of the importance for Belgian officers to testify of their military success by this medium.

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77. Indeed, after the war, Germans denounced the fact that European prisoners had been humiliated in the presence of Africans (Reichskolonialamt, *Die kolonialdeutschen aus Deutsch-Ostafrika in belgischer Gefangenschaft*, Berlin, on 1918).
78. I found captions like "print drawn from a boche picture by Vanden Hende" (HP.1966.41.39, RMCA, Fonds Vanden Hende) or "these photographs were found hidden in the ground from Kigoma" (HP.1958.40.2,3, RMCA, collection Tombeur) (ill no. 18).
79. The British indeed required that troops were integrated, in spite of the Belgian request to keep them separate.
80. ROBERT FRANK, "Ennemi, allié, défaite et victoire. Poses et postures", in LAURENT GERVEREAU (ed.), *Voir, ne pas voir la guerre...*, p. 193.
81. Ibidem.

Booty is also a symbol of battles won. Flags are desired trophies, as are planes shot down, or seized boats and artillery pieces. As in Europe, operators in Africa immortalize officers and NCOs striking a proud pose near fortifications or artillery weapons taken to the enemy. There are no records of Congolese soldiers on these triumphant photographs. Operators reserve for them a different photographic treatment. They portray the dances of enjoyment and victory of the soldiers, the *gomas*, while shooting the scene from a distance. Moreover, photography has difficulties representing music and body dynamics of the troops or the happiness of ending a battle and the pride of victory.

Official ceremonies and festivities can act as trophies and are visible in the albums of every front. Yet the taking of pictures in Africa is connected with a culture and a war aesthetics, not with an imperial worldview.

Death and suffering

Deaths are almost absent in European war albums, a self-censorship due to modesty, the fear of voyeurism and the concern to protect one's relatives. The publications of that time and the collections preserved at the RMCA also do not contain pictures of corpses[82]. Nevertheless the human toll of war in Africa was very heavy. In the Belgian camp, about 30,000 African carriers, 1,895 Congolese soldiers and 145 officers were killed[83].

The wounded rarely appear in the corpus, nor in soldiers' albums of the European front, even those of the military medical officers[84]. Their representation is one of the most delicate questions of wartime. It is as difficult to omit them as to show them[85]. Photography never associates them with the fighting, but only with the results of the war, in particular in the case of war veterans with severe facial injuries, which will become a part of claims for war damages during peace negotiations. In Africa, the rare photographs related to these issues concentrate on staffs of ambulance drivers, male nurses and doctors or on hospital infrastructures (ill no. 21) ; they generally do not present either the medical practice itself or the wounded soldiers. Indeed the overseas war did not generate severely mutilated men.

Strangely the doctors in Africa seem to refrain from photographing the wounded soldiers, white or black, but they take pictures of Africans with spectacular pathologies among the populations encountered during the war (e.g. elephantiasis). Thus the cautious attitude adopted toward the fighters does not pertain to civilian populations. Doubtless these doctors can not resist their scientific reflexes to document exceptional cases for later scientific publications. The soldier on the other hand is not a 'native'. As a fighter, he is entitled to the same photographic respect as the soldiers of Europe or the European officers in Africa. Thus a demarcation takes place between a colonial iconography to which civilian populations belong, and a war iconography, which includes the soldiers regardless of their skin color.

If silence commonly reigns about the suffering generated by the war, what about burials, graves and cemeteries ? Omnipresent in European private collections, where pictures were taken for the photographer, his companions and grieving families, these topics are less frequent in the corpus. European photographers in Africa

82. With the exception of a picture of German soldiers in a book of the 1930s (Ministère de la défense nationale. Etat-major de l'armée. Section de l'historique, *Les campagnes coloniales belges. 1914-1918, t.2 : La campagne de Tabora (1916),* Brussels, 1927, p. 392).

83. Jan De Waele, "Voor Vorst en vaderland : zwarte soldaten en dragers tijdens de Eerste Wereldoorlog in Congo", in *Militaria Belgica,* 2007-2008, p. 128.

84. See in particular Frantz Adam, *Ce que j'ai vu de la Grande Guerre…*

85. Laurent Gervereau, *Montrer la guerre…*, p. 81.

limit themselves to taking pictures of the graves of their close friends, an act particularly important as their bodies will never be repatriated in military cemeteries or family vaults in Europe. The ultimate tribute lies in the picture taken by a companion. The visual codes are the same as those in Europe : emphasis is placed on the individualized, non-standardized character of graves, on the wooden crosses and the barriers which separate the sacred space from the profane. Photographs of the burial itself are rare.

On the other hand, the large number of anonymous carriers and dead soldiers does not get the attention of any European operator, partly because he does not know the Congolese families. They will never receive any photograph of graves. The individualization of graves and pictures is only for Europeans. African soldiers and carriers are buried in common graves which operators do not bother to photograph. Collective monuments are erected after the war ; they lead to photographs which distinguish them from those of Europe by their subject matter. Far from cemeteries mixing fighters of many ranks, origins and nationalities, those in Africa set the Europeans away from the Africans (ill no. 22). If the fight is common, death reinstates the racial barrier, on the ground as in the visual construction.

Moreover, the objective of pictures is different. Those that show Europeans' individual graves, whose names are carefully written on the back of the picture, suppose a link of *camaraderie* and have an intimate designation. They keep track of the missing person for families and display the sorrow and loss felt by the photographer and his addressees. The pictures of generic cemeteries and monuments are there to testify to the global violence of the war and the collective sacrifice for the Homeland. It is not a question of helping families with their mourning. Thus, the corpus reveals clearly a racial split when it is about death

and about tribute to the deceased. Colonial logic dominates here in the war culture the same as it developed on the European battlefields.

Tourism, monuments, exoticism and ethnography

On all fronts, one observes in soldiers' albums a fascination for the historic monuments and iconic buildings of the conquered localities, the symbols of the defeated enemy. Like their equivalents in front of the statue of *Kaiser Willem I* in defeated Germany, operators in Africa proudly posed in front of monuments dedicated to the heroes of German colonization Otto von Bismarck and Hermann von Wissmann, or before the palace of the governor of German East Africa (ill no. 23).

A war tourism, the precursor of that of the battlefields and cemeteries, appears very quickly in Europe, and is also visible in our corpus[86]. In Africa, pictures also show men posing on monuments or graves taken from the enemy. War memorials and allies'graves in the ex-colony of German East Africa quickly become subjects of British commercial postcards.

More than a collection of images of the defeated enemy, albums are a journey in a world war. As stressed by Annette Becker, the fighters discover "the 'natives', acting as ethnographers more than tourists" and "everywhere amateur photographers take advantage of their war travels to look, admire, judge, depreciate, in brief : testify"[87]. This exotic appeal can be found all over. The allied foreign troops are immortalized in the trenches of Europe. In Africa, photographers newly arrived are fascinated by the Indian soldiers and the local populations (ill no. 24). Tourism and ethnography become entangled. Various albums give the impression of depicting a safari or a hunting trip more than a war.

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86. As far as I know, the existence of a war tourism in Africa is not yet documented.
87. Annette Becker, *Voir la Grande Guerre...*, p. 32.

The question of exoticism and the ethnographical gaze is particularly complex in a war context. Gervereau considers that "war generally is an exotic phenomenon for the civilians, because it is about a world of exceptional rules"[88]. Some researchers, as Beurier, consider moreover that the photographic treatment of the French soldiers is influenced by colonial imaging. The war is evoked through men's daily activities which photography approaches ethnologically, by showing 'types' of soldiers, whereas texts present them as "a new civilization with its own culture", described with a vocabulary evoking tribes with unknown mores[89]. Lafon and Miège also interpret the sudden emergence of some vocabulary in the trenches as sign of "an acculturation in the universe of the colonial troops"[90].

A contrario, the photographers of the corpus do not generally take ethnographical shots of Congolese soldiers. They turn this ethnographical eye to the civilian populations. Admittedly, in colony, the soldier embodies modernity because he has been taken from his customary environment. Privates' photographs from the corpus could have been taken anywhere. It is not as 'exotic' individuals that these men are photographed, but as battle-hardened fighters and soldiers familiar with the use of their weapons. Thus the Belgian photographs of the war in Africa are hardly exotic in themselves. In that respect, conclusions of an analysis of the corpus are close to the observation of Puiseux for later battlefields: "The role of exoticism plays little in war photographs and images of combat engagement have a family resemblance"[91].

IV. Conclusion

The photographic repositories of the First World War kept in Tervuren allow us to understand the practice of photography at the front in a region considered as peripheral by the military authorities. A depiction of the operators, as well as a study of their favorite topics compared with those favored by the photographers of the European trenches in their albums bring out questions about the significance of a wartime practice of photography in imperial context.

The operators of Africa have a very close profile to that of the soldier photographers in Europe. Actually, both of them are mostly intermediate executives of the army. However the photographers of the corpus do not undergo interferences coming from commercial actors or propagandists sent to Africa after the hostilities. A significant part of them combines military and colonial experiences. Finally, while in Europe simple soldiers joined little by little the ranks of the operators and practiced, as their officers, an *'écriture de soi'* in images thanks to the acquisition of Vest Pockets, no African soldier, however, had access to this technology. The Congolese troops' war experience is only visible through the eye of European operators. Their intimate vision is condemned to remain a enigma, contrary to that of the soldiers of the Western front.

The topics covered by the photographers in Africa are multiple, but they show obvious similarity with those of their counterparts in Europe. The man in the war, the confrontation, the everyday life, the enemy, the death and the suffering, the *camaraderie* are omnipresent. The repetition of certain themes is doubtless representative of a local experience of war, but also of a more widely shared visual culture. If the identity of a photographer conditions what he wishes to capture on film, the society he lives in also plays a role in the development of his gaze and in the elaboration of his visual constructions.

88. Laurent Gervereau, *Montrer la guerre…*, p. 34.

89. Joëlle Beurier, "Voir ou ne pas voir la mort? Premières réflexions sur une approche de la mort dans la Grande Guerre", in Laurent Gervereau (ed.), *Voir, ne pas voir la guerre…*, p. 66.

90. See Alexandre Lafon and Colon Miège, *Une guerre d'hommes et de machines…*, p. 41, in particular about 'dugouts'.

91. Hélène Puiseux, "La bataille: mutations d'une figure. Du champ de bataille à l'individu combattant", in Laurent Gervereau (ed.), *Voir, ne pas voir la guerre…*, p. 211.

The photographic production of the First World War is thus inseparable from a whole context, that of the war and its political, military and technical contingencies, to which is added an imperial environment in Africa. One can wonder, then, whether the influence of a war culture was not accompanied - even darkened ? - by a previous colonial culture for the individual photographers in our corpus. Indeed, many of them were veterans or colonial officers shaped by a former imperial context and the propaganda of already some thirty years[92]. They were also familiar with the private and official practices of photography which had accompanied the setting up of a colonial administration, various expeditions and the development of missionary activities in Central Africa. Nevertheless, at this stage of the analysis, and in spite of the 'colonial' baggage of many operators, the codes of a war culture seem to be winning. The photographs from Africa are completing the picture already broadly sketched by the Great War in Europe. They offer an enlighting view on the war itself, the facts, places and people in a widely ignored geographical area (another continent, other people, other hierarchical relationships crossed by rank and the skin color). But above all, they provide information about how the war is looked at, the way it is lived, interpreted or memorialized individually and collectively.

Thus the study of the corpus is only a first step in questioning, through photography, the dialectic between war culture and colonial culture, colonial ethnography and that of the trenches, and on the new relationship emerging between officers and soldiers, which mix phenomena of race and social classes, national identity and the rejection of the enemy, adventure in unknown lands and the irreducible character of the war experience. In the end, should the practice of photography at war in Africa be read as the product of a general culture of war, an imperial culture or a culture of war specific to a colonial region ? By constructing an image of the fighters, are the operators adopting a fighters' point of view to other fighters or one of Europeans to Africans ? Is there finally a mutual influence of the photographic codes in war around the world ? Does a 'colonial' vision of the soldiers of the Western front, photographed as a new civilization with its own culture in an exotic and ethnographical dimension, face a 'warrior' vision of the colonial troops, photographed as soldiers and not as 'natives' ? These are some questions which the exploration of the photographic sources of the Great War opens in the field of the history of the war, imperial history and global history.

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92. Most of the Great War belligerents developped colonial propaganda long before war propaganda. Leopold II in particular established a successful propaganda organization to sell his Congo Free State (MATTHEW G. STANARD, *Selling the Congo. A History of European Pro-Empire Propaganda and the Making of Belgian Imperialism*, Lincoln-London, 2011).