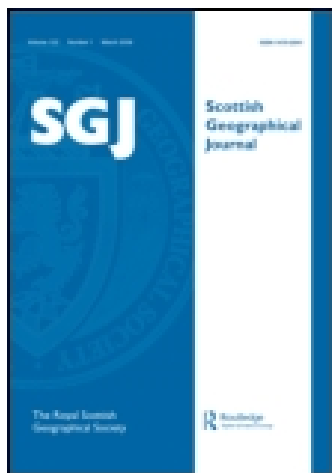


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### The backbone of Africa

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Powers. It follows, therefore, that on the strategic map the Empire stands astride the Indian and Atlantic Oceans, reaching not all round the world but only half-way round. None of the great foreign Powers has home ports on the Indian Ocean, all but Japan have their chief harbours within the Atlantic Basin. The chief front of the British Empire lies, therefore, on one or other side of the Atlantic, that is to say, either in Canada or the British Isles. The latter have a population six times as great as the former, and face across the Channel and North Sea four great Powers with a population more than twice as great as that of the United States. Moreover, the Old World being twice as large as the New will probably always be the more populous. Consequently the British Isles connect our oceanic Empire with its principal neighbour. They are also more central than Canada for inter-imperial communication. Consequently, both by resources and position the British Isles are typically conditioned for the site of the imperial capital. The home of three-quarters of the white population is politically the most important part of the Empire. Being close to the principal group of great Powers it is a suitable forward position for military headquarters. The home waters are not only the greatest focus of maritime routes but stand close to the radiant of the world's greatest railway system, and are, therefore, suited for the commercial headquarters of an oceanic empire. Finally, since the harbours of Great Britain are at the main approach to the communications of the Empire and those of Ireland at their main junction, the British Isles are the proper headquarters of the navy.

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### THE BACKBONE OF AFRICA.<sup>1</sup>

SIR ALFRED SHARPE has set forth the itineraries of his three journeys in Central Africa made during the years 1912-17. To these he has added certain reflections and a dissertation on the Tsetse Fly in its relation to big game. There is also a chapter on elephant-hunting, and one containing suggestions for reconstruction in Eastern Africa. The geographical interest centres in the trip up the Rusisi Valley and the volcanic area between Lakes Kivu and Edward, otherwise the routes followed are mainly well-known tracks, with digressions in search of elephants from time to time.

In the chapter on "Reconstruction in Eastern Africa" a sweeping proposal for administrative reform is put forward for consideration, viz. the amalgamation of Uganda, Kenya Colony, Tanganyika Territory, Nyasaland, Northern Rhodesia, and Zanzibar with Pemba and Mafia under a Governor-General, with headquarters at Zanzibar; the whole to be subdivided into three local administrations with Governors in charge

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<sup>1</sup> *The Backbone of Africa*. By Sir Alfred Sharpe, K.C.M.G., C.B., formerly Governor of Nyasaland. Pp. 232. Illustrations and maps. London: H. F. and G. Wetherby, 1921. Price 16s.

—(1) Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia, headquarters Zomba; (2) Uganda and Kenya Colony, headquarters Nairobi; and (3) Tanganyika Territory and Zanzibar and islands, headquarters Zanzibar; the united territory to be styled the "Colony of British East Africa." Given adequate inter-territorial communications, and the subsequent inclusion of Portuguese East Africa north of the Zambezi to make one homogeneous whole, there might be something to be said for the proposal. But communications are not adequate, nor are they likely to be for many years to come, and the delays which would inevitably follow when important matters had to be referred from the local Governments to the Governor-General would not make for good administration. Also Portugal is unlikely to part with its territories north of the Zambezi, for the present at any rate. The proposal is not original, but is adapted from the system of centralised government in force for many years in Portuguese East Africa, and all who have seen it in operation there know that it is a dismal failure. To apply this obsolete system of government to British territories in East Africa, at the best less than half developed, and with inadequate inter-territorial communications, would be fatal.

The further proposal for the re-grouping of British possessions north of the Zambezi and south of the Sudan into three sections also requires consideration:

*Group 1.* Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia, with headquarters at Zomba. There is much to be said in favour of this, for the two territories are closely allied, both ethnically and geographically. The difficulty lies in the fact that the Chartered Company have expended considerable sums in the administration of Northern Rhodesia from the date of its inception, and would naturally expect to be compensated for their outlay. In view, however, of the fact that the revenue seldom meets the expenditure, it is probable the Chartered Company would be content to waive the question of refund, and to hand over the administration to the British Government as a going concern, subject to the retention by the Company of all lands other than native reserves and mineral rights therein, and compensation for buildings and public works. Whether the British Government would care to take over Northern Rhodesia on these terms is another matter, as considerable subsidies would be required for a number of years if adequate development is to be proceeded with.

*Group 2.* Uganda and Kenya Colony, with headquarters at Nairobi. Sir Alfred Sharpe urges that this amalgamation should take place without delay, but it is doubtful whether he has studied the matter. This is not a new proposal, but one which has received consideration many times during the past fifteen years. Kenya Colony is suitable for European settlement, and can carry a large white population; Uganda is not. Kenya Colony has scattered native communities whose tribal systems have been destroyed by the medal-hunting expeditions which marked its early adminis-

tration; Uganda has no less than four important native kingdoms, each with its representative legislature and judiciary. In Kenya agriculture is developed by the European; in Uganda by the native. Kenya is a white man's country; Uganda is essentially a black man's country, and native policy which would be equitable to the former would be quite unsuitable to the latter. These are but a few of the reasons which could be adduced in support of the existing system, which, as before stated, has been fully considered, and is the only one possible if justice is to be done to the subject races. All that was required was the unification of the customs systems to allow of inter-colonial and protectorate freedom of trade, and this has now been secured by the amalgamation of the Kenya and Uganda Customs Departments, of which Sir Alfred Sharpe does not appear aware. The Kenya and Uganda Railway administrations are being similarly unified.

*Group 3.* Tanganyika Territory and Zanzibar and islands, with headquarters at Zanzibar. As Tanganyika is a "mandate" territory, and not a British possession, discussion would appear premature. But it should be taken into consideration that, when the British East Africa Protectorate and Zanzibar were originally under an administration similar to that proposed, it was found to be unworkable; hence it is unlikely to prove a success if applied to Tanganyika Territory and Zanzibar.

Regarding Sir Alfred Sharpe's proposals for the rectification of the various boundaries there is much to be said in favour, but here again these are dependent on the ultimate fate of Tanganyika Territory, viz. whether it is to remain indefinitely a "mandate" territory or become a permanent British possession. An expert commission, consisting of qualified representatives from each of the colonies or protectorates affected, could however easily settle this.

Perhaps the most valuable suggestions in the book are those dealing with the Central Africa Railway policy of the future. The extension of the Uganda Railway to Uganda Proper is the first essential, and should be taken in hand without delay. The section from Kampala to Tonia, at the south end of Lake Albert, has already been surveyed, and, but for the War, would have been well on to completion, as funds for the purpose were provided under the Uganda Loans Ordinance, 1915. In so far as Kenya Colony and Uganda are concerned the mistake in policy which has been made in the past has been to allow the requirements for branch feeder lines in both territories to take precedence to the completion of the through line to Lake Albert *via* Kampala. This should be the main objective, and all further proposals for branch feeder lines to favoured districts should be held over until the parent line is built. Incidentally, it is of interest to note that the Uganda Railway is one of the few African railways which, from completion, had a greater down than up traffic, due to the enormous export of produce from the countries adjacent to Lake Victoria. The extension of the trunk line to Lake Albert has likewise enormous potentialities, as it will not only

open up the fertile plains of Western Uganda but will tap the Eastern Congo. This construction should be the first objective. The second should be the tapping of the Lake Kivu and Lake Edward areas, either as suggested by Sir Alfred Sharpe, or by the construction of a branch line of the Uganda Railway extension south-west from Kampala. In considering the alternative routes proposed it should be taken into account that Kenya Colony and Uganda are British possessions, and, as such, should have a prior claim to British capital; for so long as Tanganyika remains a "mandate" territory it would be folly to sink money in the development of a country which in the course of a few years may revert to Germany. What is not properly realised is that development in Tropical Africa involves capital expenditure by the Home Government, and will for many years to come, either in the form of grants-in-aid, subsidies, or loans; and the larger our African dependencies become the more our financial obligations increase. At present these obligations appear to be considered lightly, and with little thought to the future, but some day soon the British Government will have to consider seriously whether it would not be better to administer and develop properly the large African areas it already controls, rather than to continue indefinitely increasing its spheres of influence, and incidentally its financial obligations, by the assumption of responsibility for "mandate" territories which it cannot afford. At the present it is a case of pride *versus* common sense, and, so far, pride has prevailed, but whether it will indefinitely remain to be seen. Anyhow it is a poor look-out for the "mandate" territory concerned when it will have to be run by a foster parent country which cannot afford it.

In addition to the one supreme control referred to, one customs tariff, one land policy, and one native policy are advocated. Kenya and Uganda already have a common customs policy which provides for freedom of trade between the two countries. Tanganyika Territory might advantageously be included in this union, also Nyasaland. Financially there would be little change, as all four are exporters of raw produce, and have no manufactures to protect, but, as complete inter-territorial freedom of trade would remove a number of petty and annoying restrictions which at present exist, there is much to be said in its favour, and a general application could be easily made under the existing systems of administration.

A common land policy for all Central African territories was evolved and applied by the Colonial Office during the War. Unfortunately this was conceived on narrow lines, as it abolishes all further grants of freehold Crown Lands, and insists on leasehold only. The objections to this are fully set forth by Sir Alfred Sharpe. Under the scheme the only classes that have benefited have been the companies which secured the reversion of vast areas in Kenya and Nyasaland granted during the early days of occupation. These have found the value of their holdings more than trebled, as the settler in search of freehold must perforce buy from them. It is an iniquitous system, and should be dropped without delay. In any case, a common policy in such vast areas, with differing economic conditions, is not only doubtful

but dangerous to development, and it would be better to let each territory work out its own salvation without Colonial Office interference, subject to native rights being adequately safeguarded.

One native policy for all these areas is also doubtful. Native conditions in Kenya, Tanganyika, and Nyasaland are much the same; viz. there are few, if any, centralised native governments in these territories responsible for law and order, and the native headmen of the villages have but little authority over their people. In Uganda there are strong native governments, which rightly would resent interference. In any case it would be difficult, if not impossible, to evolve a common policy equitable to all the territories concerned, and here again it would be better to let each colony or protectorate work out its own salvation, as will be understood when it is taken into consideration that the destinies of some ten millions of natives of many and varying races, living under widely separated conditions, are involved.

From time to time reference is made by the author to the superiority of British to German administration of native races in Tropical Africa. But what are the facts? The beginnings of British administration in Nyasaland and Kenya centre about 1892, in Uganda 1895. German administration did not commence in East Africa until about 1895, by which time conditions in Nyasaland and Kenya were well advanced; both countries at the time being fortunate in having no critical neighbours in their adjoining territories to discuss the methods by which this state of affairs had been arrived at, as Portugal then confined her activities to the coast and the Zambezi valley. In Uganda, which also started about 1895, the establishment of settled government was comparatively easy owing to the local authorities having the good sense to utilise the centralised native governments which existed prior to British occupation. British law soon began to run both in Nyasaland and Kenya, but before it did run properly things were, to say the least, sometimes unpleasant. Conditions in German East Africa in the beginning were much the same as in Nyasaland and Kenya. The Germans, however, had the misfortune to have critical neighbours, already established, forgetful or unmindful of what had happened on much the same scale in their own territories; and the tales lost none in the telling, hence the tradition, carefully bolstered up by interested parties, that, as Germany's ways were not British ways, she could not administer native races. As a matter of fact, however, Germany did follow British methods, for she did what was done in both Nyasaland and Kenya, viz. break up the existing systems of tribal rule in the areas of least resistance and leave severely alone areas where organised opposition was likely to be encountered until such time as a favourable opportunity should arise for them to be adequately dealt with. Then, like Nyasaland and Kenya, she established administrative centres in the conquered areas, and set to work to build up settled native communities under district discipline. Except that, in the beginning, German District Officers were more often recruited from the military grade than the British, and that district discipline was more strictly enforced in consequence, the systems were practically identical. Later, the British

system of building up a colonial civil service recruited from civilian candidates was followed. On the outbreak of war German East Africa colonial administration differed very little from our own. In some points it was a little in advance, in others a little behind. It was mainly a question of policy, and each had something to learn from the other. Even during the strict military district rule of the earlier days there was no migration of any importance on the part of the natives affected to British territory, north or south, where it would have been an easy matter to cross the border, and this in itself is significant. From the first the natives in German East Africa recognised and respected their rulers as a whole, and, in their own way, were as loyal to them as British natives were to theirs. Had that not been so the German Colonial Forces could never have held out, as they did, for the duration of the War, against overwhelming odds. When peace was declared there was no jubilation on the part of the German native at coming under British rule—rather the reverse, in fact. German Central African Administration had much to be proud of and something to forget: British Central African Administration likewise has much to be proud of, also something to forget. The essentials of both were the same, and the assumption that British methods of dealing with native races in Tropical Africa were superior to those employed by the Germans will not bear examination.

The Mohammedan peril, so-called, has long been a fruitful theme for the returned missionary desirous of producing thrills, but it is somewhat startling to find an ex-African administrator supporting the theory that Islam is rapidly becoming dominant in Central Africa. The Arab, always Mohammedan, has traded on the East African littoral for hundreds of years, and has from the first carried his religion with him. Later he, with the Indian trader, also mainly Mohammedan, opened up pioneer establishments in the interior, and hence, from a religious point of view, had a long start of the Christian missionary; for the followers of Mohammed always proselytise wherever they go. But the bulk of the population is not Mohammedan; it is still pagan, and, of the remainder, apart from the coast areas, Christian adherents outnumber the Mohammedans everywhere. The fact is that Islam, as taught in Central Africa, is not fanatical, nor does it attempt propaganda on any scale comparable with Christian missions. Its teaching is a simple, healthy creed, inculcating abstinence and cleanliness, and is essentially law-abiding. It admits of polygamy, but lays down a moral code repugnant to racial suicide. It tolerates other religions, but leaves them severely alone. It is, on the whole, a mildly elevating moral force, which, reasonably and judiciously handled, is a power for good. During all the past years there has been no attempt at combination on the part of its scattered adherents in Central Africa, nor is there likely to be any so long as religious toleration exists in the territories affected. The main attractions to the native are its simplicity and the admission of polygamy, as the latter safeguards the welfare of the household during the husband's long absences; for, during pregnancy, it provides for rest to the mother, whose share of work in the gardens that supply the

food on which the household depends is then done by the other wives. Its chief disadvantage is the enforcement of circumcision, which is repugnant to the Bantu. Moreover, Mohammedanism is the creed of the yellow race, as compared with Christianity, the religion of the white, and, as to the native mind there is a big gulf between the two, it loses prestige accordingly. Throughout Central Africa the pagan's reasons for the adoption of Christianity or Mohammedanism are the same, viz. the desire for a higher life and, incidentally, the betterment of his social status, by becoming a member of a recognised creed. He does not desire to investigate theology, but to be given a few definite principles to abide by on which he can work. Each religion attracts its adherents, and each finds favour according to the local influences at work, the balance in the aggregate being in favour of Christianity. As a matter of fact, in so far as Central Africa is concerned, there is no Mohammedan peril, nor is there ever likely to be one so long as religious toleration is observed by the Governments concerned.

Sir Alfred Sharpe's pronouncement that there is little or no connection between the incidence of tsetse and big game in association, and that the extermination of big game would have no more effect on the existence of tsetse than the slaughter of domestic cattle would have on the extermination of common flies, may be comforting to the big game-hunter, but is open to question. As a matter of fact, every African administrator knows that big game protection and agricultural development are incompatible, though he may not admit it for personal reasons. The antelope, as an infection carrier, is negligible, for without exception he is a timid beast, and seeks sanctuary far afield as a country opens up. The buffalo, however, is another matter, for wherever he roams *nagana* follows; wherever he has been exterminated or permanently driven off, *nagana*, with its attendant carrier, *G. Morsitans*, invariably disappears. Southern Rhodesia and Portuguese East Africa south of the Zambezi have fully proved this, for large areas there, once pest-ridden and the haunt of buffalo, are now free from both fly and *nagana* where game has disappeared. Sir Alfred Sharpe is careful to refer to the country north of the Zambezi only, but all who have had administrative experience there know that the same applies, and that development and big game protection cannot march together; for not only is there always danger of *nagana*, but rinderpest follows in its train. In this connection the chief veterinary officer of Uganda, in his report on the recent epidemic of rinderpest there, which accounted for over 100,000 head of cattle in a few months, speaks in no uncertain manner (1920). Whilst on the subject of big game it is enlightening to turn to the chapter on "Elephant Hunting," which records Sir Alfred Sharpe's experiences during some two months spent in the Eastern Congo on his second trip. There is little interest in big game protection recorded there, for the narrative reeks of elephant slaughter, not in the interests of science, or for the protection of native crops, but for pure lust of ivory, the complacent recital of which, from any point of view except that of an ivory trader, is unpleasant reading.

H. R. WALLIS.