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History of Military Recruitment in Zuru Emirate During the First World War

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Abstract

This study examines the history of military recruitment in Zuru Emirate (Dakarkari) during the First World War, a neglected yet pivotal chapter in Northern Nigeria's colonial military historiography. Despite their resistance to British conquest between 1904 and 1908, the Dakarkari earned admiration for their martial qualities, bravery, and tactical prowess, leading colonial authorities to actively recruit them into the West African Frontier Force (WAFF). Drawing on traditional institutions such as golmo (youth farm labour clubs fostering discipline and endurance), wrestling, hunting, and archery, Zuru youths were culturally predisposed to military service. These practices, combined with their successful defiance of the Sokoto Jihad and colonial forces, aligned with the British "martial race" theory. During WWI, the Zuru Division became a major recruitment hub; in 1917, 1918, 1921, and 1924 alone, over 21,991 men were enlisted, with Dakarkari forming a significant contingent through voluntary and conscription systems. Many served as combatants, carriers, signallers, and support staff across West African campaigns. The paper argues that Zuru's deep military tradition not only shaped the formative nucleus of the Nigerian Army but also influenced the Emirate's socio-economic landscape. Data for the research were obtained through primary and secondary sources, including archival records, newspaper articles, and other related documents. This research accentuates the Dakarkari's outsized contributions to Nigeria's military heritage and the lasting legacy of colonial recruitment in the region.

Keywords: *military recruitment; World War 1; Zuru Emirate; military history; British Colonial Rule*

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Introduction

The history of military recruitment in Zuru Emirate, Kebbi State, Nigeria, dates back to the colonial period. The Nigerian Army was formed in 1863 when Lt. Gen Glover of the Royal Niger Navy selected 18 natives of Northern Nigeria and assembled them into a local force known as the *Glover Hausa*. The British government became so effective that it later renamed the force to the West African Frontier Force (WAFF) in the 1890s.[1] As a result, her counterpart, the French, established a large force known as the French Armed Forces (FAF). Thus, the WAFF came up with the idea of combining the Niger territories into a single governmental body.[2] This nomenclature was changed to the Hausa Constabulary in 1865 and served the Lagos colonial authority in both police and military capacities. The British government later created other local units in different protectorates, such as the Oil Rivers Irregulars in Eastern Nigeria and the Royal Niger Company Constabulary Force (RNCCF) in Northern Nigeria.[3]

After Nigeria was amalgamated in 1914, the Nigerian Regiment was founded. This was made up of the Northern Nigeria Regiment and the Southern Nigeria Regiment. The Northern Nigeria Regiment became the Nigerian Regiment's first and second battalions, and the Southern Nigeria Regiment became the third and fourth battalions. The year 1914 also witnessed the outbreak of the First World War. In the First World War, colonies were used as centres for military recruitment and conscription, and for the exploitation of raw materials and finances. The Northern Regiment's infantry battalion transitioned to the infantry during the Second World War. Following Queen Elizabeth's visit to Nigeria between January 28 and February 5, 1956, the Nigerian Regiment adopted the name Queen's Own Nigerian Regiment (QONR). The Nigerian Regiment (NR) subsequently evolved into the Nigerian Military Force (NMF). The Nigerian Government subsequently took over the management of the NMF from the British Army Council in London.[4]

Lt. Gen. Campbell, in the 1920s, observed the Zuru thus: "The Dakarkari[5] are a battle-hardened man, and if effectively led... are an outstanding native soldier".[6] The British were aware that the Sokoto jihad of the first half of the nineteenth century had overrun all Hausa states[7] except Zuru. This was perhaps due to the military intelligence of the people and their geographical location. During the Jihad, the hilltop settlements in a relatively forested area served as impediments to the effective occupation of the area by the Jihad forces. The people of Zuru Emirate were familiar with the environment and had skilled archers who knew how to apply guerrilla tactics in war situations. This absolved the Zuru from the control of the Sokoto Caliphate. Despite its proximity to Sokoto, the seat of the Caliphate. This was perhaps due to the military bravado and intelligence of the people and their geographical location. The Zuru Emirate has significantly contributed to the recruitment, training, and services of the Nigerian Army since its establishment. The Zuru soldiers showed a significant military presence in the Nigerian army.[8]

Environmental and cultural factors strongly influenced the interests of the Zuru people towards the military profession. The primary occupations of the Zuru community were hunting and farming, which they did in hilly and bushy environments. These activities were closely tied to the culture of the *golmo* institution, whereby youths of the same age group worked in rotation on the farms of their proposed fathers-in-law for about seven years. "The institution of *golmo* has influenced several Zuru indigenes to take up jobs in the military to display their courage and mastery of warfare."[9] The tradition of the Zuru community before the colonial period was tremendous. They include the *golmo* institution, wrestling, hunting, farming, and slave raiding. These practices probably were what made them resist the jihadists and colonial intrusion. The people were familiar with the environment and had skilled archers who knew how to apply guerrilla tactics in war situations. The British applied the martial race theory in colonial India with great success. They saw the Zuru as people embodied in martial tradition in Nigeria, hence their interest in recruiting them into the military. The Dakarkari Company was created, comprising only Zuru natives, where soldiers felt a normal Zuru military environment and gave their best.[10] The exploitation of Zuru's people occurred before the colonial period. Some of these exploits would be discussed, such as the *Golmo* institution, wrestling, hunting, farming, slave raiding, the Zuru encounter with the jihadists and resistance against colonial intrusion. This has led several Zuru indigenes to take up jobs in the military to display their courage and mastery of warfare.

The Zuru Emirate, a region in Kebbi State, has been a significant contributor to the recruitment, training, and services of the Nigerian Army. The Dakarkari, Dukkawa, Fakkawa, and Kambari people had a significant military presence in the Nigerian army, with single-family units enlisting up to ten members.[11] The Zuru community has more retired senior officers in the Nigerian Army than any other community in Nigeria.[12] Moreover, despite the long historical trajectory of the Dakarkari people of Zuru Emirate in their engagement with the military, little attention has been given to their role in the formation of the Nigerian Army. There is, therefore, no detailed study on the reasons and nature of military recruitment in the Zuru Emirate. This gap in Nigerian military history justifies the interest of this study.

Existing scholarship on British colonial military recruitment in Nigeria and West Africa extensively discusses the application of "martial race" theory, which identified certain ethnic groups as inherently suited for soldiering due to their perceived bravery, physical endurance, and cultural traditions. Works by Sam C. Ukpabi (The Origins of the Nigerian Army: A History of the West African Frontier Force, 1897-1914) and Chinedu N. Ubah (Colonial Army and Society in Northern Nigeria) detail how the WAFF drew heavily on groups with histories of resistance or warrior traditions, often prioritising "Hausas" while noting other northern communities. Michael Crowder identifies the gap in the historiography of Nigerian military history and encourages that, for a better understanding, more efforts should be directed to such studies.[13] This research bridges a key gap by providing a focused, granular analysis of Zuru Emirate/Dakarkari recruitment during WWI, including specific 1917 figures (e.g., high voluntary enlistment among Dakarkari), the role of indigenous institutions like *golmo,* wrestling, and hunting, and tables from colonial archives—elements largely overlooked in general WAFF

histories that emphasise broader Hausa or southern recruitment patterns. This study addresses significant gaps by linking these cultural traditions directly to WWI recruitment outcomes in Zuru Division (over 5,700 men in 1917), [14] recruiting in time of war 1918, over 15,034 men n[15], and 1250 men were also recruited, detailing voluntary and conscription dynamics, economic impacts on agrarian society.[16] The formative role of Dakarkari in the Nigerian Army's nucleus, offering a micro-historical narrative absent in macro-level colonial army studies. These reviews position the research as filling a neglected regional and temporal niche in Nigerian military historiography while building on established frameworks of martial identity and colonial strategy.

The paper intends to examine the process of military recruitment during the First World War, 1914, which marks a significant landmark in the military history of the Emirate. In 1914, the First World War began. The British made attempts to conscript and recruit soldiers from the colonies into the colonial army. Many people from Zuru seized the opportunity to join the colonial army. This study utilises a historical narrative to analyse data obtained from secondary and primary sources, including published materials, journal articles, tertiary institutions' projects, seminar papers, and other literature on Nigeria's military recruitment history in Zuru. Oral sources were used to fill gaps in colonial histories. The survey phase consists of interviews, reviews, and conversations with former service members and Zuru community members. This will be done to learn more about the historical traditions of the army, the recruitment of Zuru soldiers during the First World War and their effects on Nigeria. The issues to be addressed were general since the main goal is to make a historical overview and knowledge of their past, including their enlistment and contributions to the peace and security of the country. The study is qualitative and employes descriptive research. The data obtained was examined and analysed for a better understanding of military recruitment in the Zuru Emirate during the First World War. Zuru town is situated in southeastern Kebbi State. It is the headquarters of the Zuru Emirate as well as the Zuru Local Government Area. The people of Zuru Local Government Area are mainly farmers and great hunters. Their inclination to agriculture was further informed by favourable climatic conditions and the high fertility of the land, which supports the production of various food and cash crops. The land area is about 9000 square kilometres. It is bounded by Gummi in Zamfara State in the north and Niger State to the south. The Dan Zari River flows from the West to the East and empties into the River Niger, mostly through two major channels, the Dan Zaki and Malendo Rivers. The Yauri Emirate of Kebbi shares a border with these rivers in the northwest. In the 2006 population census, Zuru had a population of 165,335.[17] The population projection was also made at 283,500 in March 2022.[18]

Brief Historical Factors that Strongly Influenced the Interests of the Zuru People Towards the Military Profession

As mentioned earlier, the earliest occupations of the Zuru were hunting and farming, which they practised in hilly and bushy environments. These activities were closely tied to the culture

of the institution of *golmo*, whereby youths of the same age group worked in rotation on the farms of their proposed fathers-in-law for about seven years. Through *golmo*, discipline and courage were instilled in youth. "The institution of *golmo* has influenced several Zuru indigenes to take up jobs in the military to display their courage and mastery of warfare."[19] The *golmo* youths came in from the district around, hundreds of them at a time, and set about the work with a will. After all, they thought, what could be more fun than knocking down the whole of Zuru town, and with free beer and drummers too. The youths were a feature of the peculiar social system of the Dakarkari, a system which ensured that the young men were kept under firm control and were usefully employed until the age of 25 or so, when they were free to marry and settle down. At the age of 13, a Dakarkari boy would join his village wrestling club.[20] As McClintock observed of the Zuru,

> "……wrestling was to Zuru what football is in England; it was the national sport and a consuming passion, before which all other interests would fade away. The victories of champion wrestlers were celebrated in song and verse, and every young man aspired to be a champion himself."[21]

So now, for the next five years, the growing lad would be a wrestler and one of a very select club, the pampered hopefuls of this village; he was fed like a fighting cock, and no farm work was expected of him, but, with the other members of the club, he would spend his time travelling around the Zuru area and wrestling there in every village in turn.

> The boys would sit around the circle, each village in a little group by itself. Then a boy from here would go across and challenge a boy of similar size and weight from another village, and soon there would be four or five pairs wrestling simultaneously in the circle. The dust and the noise would be indescribable as the crowd roared on their favourites, and self-appointed stewards would be holding the ring and keeping the spectators back with whips and curses. After each throw, the victor would run across and kneel in front of the principal spectator, one of the chiefs perhaps, to be rewarded with a kola nut or a penny pressed upon his sweating forehead.[22]

Achievement-based honours existed, and there were various titles which one could be bestowed, depending on one's proficiency in grain production. These titles were given to *golmo* youths, *Ch'ganga, Ch'tage, and Ch'im Chima.* They were celebrated by playing specific drums in honour of the achiever, to the admiration of the rest of society. This honour was shared by members of one's family.[23] This gift was received to show that the appreciation received tells us about the type of affection for which he yearns with the families and relatives. Thus, by examining the gifts that farmers loved to receive in those days, we can learn much about their deeper inner workings.

This would be the boy's life for five years, as Jacob worked seven years for Rachel, so he would work seven years for his beloved. A champion wrestler is considered to be a great man, and on his death, his grave is adorned with a large *Ugamba,* a 'Y' shaped piece of wood, standing several feet high. The wrestling during *Uhola or Dibiti* is always attended by a large concourse of people. Wrestling is a great feature of a youth's training until about the age of fourteen (14), when he usually commences his *golmo*.[24] The gift he received was shared with his family and other relatives.[25] Wrestling was considered one of the old traditions in the Zuru Emirate before the *golmo* institution. Most of the warriors who joined *golmo* were participated in wrestling to represent their villages.

But this would not be a simple one-to-one contract between him and his father-in-law-to-be; rather, he would now become a member of his *golmo* club, a club comprising all the young men doing their *golmo* service for their fathers-in-law in a given area. Early every morning, now in the farming season, the club would parade, and the members would be allotted by those who supervised the *golmo* institution, called (sergeant majors), to the farms on which they were to work. Dressed only in a leather loincloth, alongside each other in line abreast, they would be hoeing between the lines of guinea corn at a furious, hectic pace, and woe betides the man who could not keep up.[26] These explain that due to the above-mentioned reasons, the practice of *golmo* has faced and still faces a serious decline, except for those who are still confined to the rural areas. Consequently, those who have moved out from the villages for reasons of migration, into the army and education, etc, pay money as bride price to the parents of the girl. Furthermore, those who cannot afford to pay money as the bride price partake in *golmo*.[27]

Although on the eve of colonialism, Musa Danduguzu (Chief of Fakkai), Abarshi (Emir of Yauri), and others created an atmosphere of insecurity that was a serious blow to agricultural production and commerce. The British imperial interest in the Niger-Yelwa, Yauri-Zuru Emirate, and Kontagora complexes was an urgent need to subdue their political instability. Danduguzu blocked the road to Yelwa from the east, and this disrupted the supply of food to the British from towns and villages lying to the east. He also raided slave markets in Yauri and Isgogo market through the use of his warriors and, at the same time, served as protection for his town.[28] However, before the abolition of the slave trade, hunting for slaves was considered a thriving business and a source of pride in the Zuru Emirate. Similar to successful hunters, slave raiders were accorded recognition in the communities of the Zuru Emirate and hence received a special funeral ceremony. Some of the prominent slave raiders who were accorded recognition in the 18th-century Zuru include Dogmo Bunzu, Zakara Gona, Kongo, Wud Hayan, and Waga Jakana.[29] Danduguzu ensured that the whole host withstood the brunt of the enemy's attack and remained unshaken. This is affected by manoeuvres, direct and indirect. It is pertinent to understand that when the British officers first came, they suggested enlisting pagan males from the Dakarkari region, who were presumed to make strong soldiers because of the local wrestling and *golmo*. The Zuru were always fond of brave displays, whether for fun during festivals, wrestling contests or in the pursuit of their economic activities.

The last twenty years of the 19th century (1880-1900) saw the independent states of Africa (with the exception of Liberia) pass under European colonial rule. This was the outcome of the scramble for territories in Africa by European nations during this period. The British conquest of Northern Nigeria lasted six years (1897-1903) and involved stiff resistance, suggesting that the early British administration was not as successful as is claimed in some quarters. Such resistance took on different forms, including refusal to comply with British colonial administrative measures and to pay taxes, ignoring the British presence, civil petitions, voluntary migrations, Yoruba irredentism, and armed revolt.[30]

The Zuru Dakarkari during the Colonial Period 1904-1908

Military recruitment in Zuru is part of the history of the formation of Nigeria's colonial army. The history of the Nigerian Army dates back to 1863, when Lt. Gen. John Hawley Glover of the Royal Navy selected 18 natives of Northern Nigeria and assembled them into a local force known as the Glover Hausa.[31] Although the figures for the *Hausa* Constabulary during the selection have often been questioned by some scholars, including Braji[32] and Stapleton.[33] This specific move lays the groundwork for the creation of an indigenous or native force in British West African territories. According to the study, this is the beginning of the Nigerian Army.[34] The colonial state, which established the legal and political framework under which the rule and enslavement of the natives could be carried out, was created as a result of the British interest in managing and maximising the productive sectors of the native economy. To this end, the colonial administrator, Glover, required an armed force, and runaway slaves provided him with the necessary manpower.[35]

It is apparent that the nomenclature changed to the Hausa Constabulary in 1865, and it served the Lagos colonial authority in both police and military capacities. The British government later created other local units in different protectorates. With a collection of various local colonial troops, including the Lagos Constabulary, the Sierra Leone Frontier Police, the Royal Niger Constabulary in Northern Nigeria, the Oil Rivers Irregulars in Eastern Nigeria, and the Gold Coast Constabulary, the West African Frontier Forces were founded in 1897. By advancing British business and administrative interests, the WAFF aimed to play the part of various local colonial powers in stabilising indigenous peoples in order to defend capitalism and exploitation.[36] The Royal Niger Company Constabulary (Northern Nigeria Regiment) and Southern Constabulary (Southern Regiment) were created in Nigeria as a result of the merger in 1914. Both regiments participated in missions during Lord Lugard's annexation of Nigeria.

The First World War experience undoubtedly placed pressure on Nigeria's people and financial resources. Regarding the latter demand, a large recruitment effort, almost entirely composed of Hausa and Yoruba with a strong military reputation, began in earnest on the eve of the war in 1914. Three-fifths of the Regiment were Hausa and Yoruba before the

conflict began. One thousand three hundred (1,300) Hausa, one thousand one hundred and fifty-six (1,156) Yoruba, three hundred and eighty (380) Kanuri, three hundred and fifty-one (351) Fulani, ninety-one (91) Nupe, twenty-one (21) Igbo, and representation of twenty-two (22) other tribes and unclassified groups, four hundred (400) made up the line-up.[37] Soldiers from the Zuru Emirate, drawn from various districts, served in the 81st and 82nd West African Army Divisions.[38] There were a hundred and fifty-seven (157) people by 1910. Nigeria's Governor-General, Sir Fredrick Lugard, expressed optimism that:

> ... the force of the Nigerian Regiment should consist, as far as may be, of Hausas who by universal consensus of opinion are the best fighting men and most disciplined.[39]

As a result, the Hausa language was codified as a service policy to provide instruction. Similarly, officials were encouraged to learn Hausa and were awarded certificates for their proficiency in the language after passing the required exams. The Tiv and some of the Dakarkari were two non-Islamic groups that the British colonial government was particularly interested in recruiting because they could easily learn Hausa, the language of military command, and were less likely to support Muslim uprisings, which were expected to come from a variety of sources.[40] Thus, the martial race theory could be said observed policy that was first adopted by Lugard before it was aborted; the reason for the abortion will be discussed in the military recruitment section.

The Zuru Dakarkari Resistance and the British Colonial Army in the Zuru Emirate

One of the significant factors that led the Zuru to join the military was their resistance to colonial conquest. For instance, from 1904 to 1908, as mentioned earlier, the Zuru engaged in a series of resistance movements against colonial rule, attacking the British administrative headquarters at Sakaba and burning some of its sections. The British, however, swiftly responded by sending an infantry company under Captain Dyer in March 1904. Dyer's troops moved into Zuru with weapons, including the Maxim gun. Dyer was unable to suppress the resistance of the Dakarkari, which necessitated sending reinforcements from the West African Frontier Force (WAFF), led by the resident of Kontagora Province, Major Williams Sharpe. In February 1908, troops led by Captain Norman Briggs, accompanied by Lieutenant Campbell, came into Zuru to make arrests in the village of Chonoko. However, they were attacked, and Captain Norman was killed with a poisonous arrow.[41] This necessitated the sending of reinforcements from the West African Frontier Force (WAFF), led by the resident of Kontagora Province, Major Williams Sharpe. Some sections of the WAFF also engaged in surveillance, moving from one location to another to assess the likely resistance movement. On their part, the British sent Lieutenant Tottenham upon the death of Captain Norman Briggs. Lieutenant Tottenham received an order from the Residents of Kontagora Province to ruthlessly suppress any resistance.[42]

To accomplish this, the strength of his army at Sakaba was increased. However, Lt. Tottenham was so apprehensive upon hearing that more than 1,000 youths had gathered and blocked the road to Kyabu. Therefore, the resident further ordered Lieutenant Colonel Strickland to move to Sakaba with troops as reinforcement. Strickland was then a commander of the First Battalion, Northern Nigeria Regiment, at Zungeru, then the headquarters of Northern Nigeria. For the British to deploy the First Battalion's troops to their main headquarters meant they had to face a serious threat. The troops included five officers and 204 rank-and-file, supported by Maxim guns.[43]

Despite this reinforcement and weaponry, the people of Zuru continued to involved stiff resistance. Youth and hunters hide themselves in the bush in preparation for ambushes. Upon the arrival of the British forces, the ambush was launched using bows and arrows. The fighting took almost three hours. At the end, about 27 Dakarkari people were killed, and 4 British soldiers were wounded.[44] Although Colonel Strickland was able to quash this resistance and move on, he had to request additional reinforcements, which were sent to him. The reinforcement included 50 infantrymen, 25 mounted infantrymen, and one 2.95 mm gun.[45] This finally brought an end to resistance in the Zuru Emirate in 1908. Ubah commented on the bravery of the Zuru people against the establishment of colonial rule;

> The British themselves came to appreciate the martial qualities of the Dakakkari (sic) as they had fought them gallantly almost with bare hands. They encouraged them to enlist in the colonial army, and the Dakakkari recruits later served them with distinction and dedication for the remaining period of colonial rule.[46]

Ubah's commentary sheds light on the remarkable bravery displayed by the Zuru warriors in the face of colonial rule. The Dakakkari, known for their fierce fighting spirit, stood their ground against the British forces with astonishing courage, despite limited resources. Ubah's observation highlights the respect the Zuru warriors earn for their unwavering determination and valour in battle. The British, recognising the martial qualities of the Dakakkari, eventually welcomed them into the colonial army, a testament to the effectiveness of their fighting techniques and strategies. The British decision to encourage the Dakakkari warriors to join their ranks speaks volumes about the respect they garnered on the battlefield. McClintock, a British District Officer in Dabai, who served together with Sergeant-major Bagudu of Zuru in 1908, reported as follows:

> ...I was up this tree here with my bow and arrow," old Bagudu told me, "When the soldiers advanced along the ridge down there towards us, and we were very brave that morning. Oh, we were very brave until the bullets began to sing around our ears, that is. And then we ran; oh, how we ran! I did not stop myself until I reached Isgogo, nearly ten miles away. "But then he had sat down to think, and the outcome of his thoughts had been simply, 'If you cannot beat them, join them." So Bagudu had gone off and

> joined the army, and now he was Sergeant-Major Bagudu, together with other Zuru soldiers, with a chest full of medals, a person of consequence in the land, and the District Officer's trusted messenger and general factotum. The District Officer, or rather the Assistant District Officer, the ADO, was me. With only two months of experience in Nigeria and speaking hardly a word of the language, I had been sent to take charge of Zuru only for want of somebody better. But here I was now, with Bagudu to show me the ropes and to keep me out of trouble with the Zuru Native Authority, a federation of five small chiefdoms, to look after...[47]

The argument presented above highlights a profound transformation in the character of Bagudu, as well as the complex dynamics of Zuru soldiers and personal instruments within a colonial context. Initially depicted as a brave individual who faced the perils of warfare, Bagudu's experience encapsulates a common human response to overwhelming danger: the instinct to survive. The shift from bravery to self-preservation is not merely a personal account but a reflection of the broader socio-political landscape in which individuals like Bagudu navigate. Bagudu's decision to "join them" after a brutal experience highlights a critical theme of adaptation in the face of colonial authority. His choice to align himself with the very forces that once threatened him illustrates the pragmatic approach many individuals adopted during colonial rule. Rather than continuing to resist an insurmountable power, he chose to integrate into the system, thereby securing his safety and elevating his social status alongside some of the Zuru people. However, during the First World War, the colonisers utilised the colonies for both human and material resources. Zuru was among the major areas of recruitment into the colonial army and in fighting the war on the side of Britain. They thought the colonial officials encouraged the recruitment of Zuru people into the colonial army because of their courage, bravery, and resistance to the imposition of colonial rule. The Zuru made the largest contributions in human and material resources in the Niger Province.[48]

Military Recruitment during the First World War, 1914

The colonial officials employed measures to exploit the Zuru Emirate during the war. These were through taxation, the supply of foodstuffs and cash crops such as rice, guinea corn, groundnuts, and cotton, and the conscription of people into the colonial army. The war relief was normally obtained through the collection of agricultural products, which were taken mostly by youths, the'*yan golmo*, to Zuru.[49] Quite a number of the Dakarkari were recruited to serve in the colonial army. British imperialism had three major recruitment strategies. The initial attempt was based on the martial race theory, which was applied successfully in colonial India. The second method, called convenience, was used in West Africa. The third method, called the quota system, is still used for Nigerian military institutions.[50]

This insight led to the quick adoption of a policy focused on convenience. Recruitment mainly targeted groups closest to the proposed expedition sites and those willing to join. For

instance, the Royal Niger Company in Northern Nigeria enlisted tribes such as the Hausa, Nupe, Dakarkari, Yoruba, and others into the constabulary. In various regions, additional tribes were also drafted into different colonial forces. At one point, Lugard, aligning with the martial races theory advocates, viewed restricting recruitment to Muslims as problematic and potentially risky, since they could be influenced by religious propaganda that might threaten colonial interests. His concern was heightened by the incident involving Sergeant Tanko Kura, who, through religious sermons, persuaded twenty Hausa soldiers to desert rather than fight alongside fellow Muslims against the Turks in East Africa during World War I.[51] Additionally, Lugard opposed forming tribal companies, a consequence of the martial classes' theory, as he believed it could cause conflicts within the barracks. It is no doubt that this could be the reason why Lugard maintained the targeted groups, as the Zuru soldiers displayed courage, strength, and mastery of warfare during their counterattack Sakaba in 1904.

In the Zuru Emirate, about 20% of the male population aged 17–25 were recruited to fight in the war.[52] Therefore, about 2000 youths joined the colonial army in Zuru. Many other youths were not in this figure because they joined the colonial army directly at Zaria and Kaduna.[53] This was disastrous for the agrarian economy of the Zuru Emirate. The conscription was carried out by district chiefs and Emir Gomo. Apart from collaborating with the district chiefs in the recruitment process. The main reasons why the Zuru prospective soldiers were lured to join the war were the fake promises made by the colonial officers that the Zuru Emirate would benefit significantly in the aspects of developmental projects, which include the construction of Zuru Town Layout, provision of communication and transportation facilities, launching of irrigation schemes, provision of livestock improvement measures, and these promises were not fulfilled.[54]

Soldiers from the Zuru Emirate, drawn from various districts, served in the 81st and 82nd West African Army Divisions.[55] There were a hundred and fifty-seven (157) people by 1910. Because many Dakarkari men could not speak Hausa, the British found it difficult to enlist them during the First World War. This was attributed to language barriers as well as the spouses of Dakarkari men's refusal to mix with women from other ethnic groups.[56] As a result, in 1917, the Nigeria Regiment established a Dakarkari unit at Zungeru, a garrison in the northwest, that was composed of carefully chosen Dakarkari NCOs who were also involved in recruiting.[57] They fought in East Africa, India, and Burma. Although Zuru soldiers came from different districts, spoke different indigenous languages, and practised different religions, with Muslims, Christians, and adherents of traditional beliefs among them, the sense of *esprit de corps* in the army gave them a feeling of belonging to the same family and thus encouraged friendship among them.[58] The Zuru soldiers were particularly esteemed for their exceptional fighting capabilities, demonstrated in the numerous conflicts they engaged in on behalf of and against the colonial forces. The Zuru community viewed the resistance during the conquest of Zuru as a battle between the British government and possibly drew on their experiences from World War I.

The call for recruitment into the military was sounded across several major provinces during 1908, as indicated earlier. Before the recruitment, there were already 157 Dakarkari Soldiers in the Dakarkari Army Company before 1910. The British established a Dakarkari unit at Zungeru, a garrison in the northwest, that was composed of carefully chosen Dakarkari non-commissioned officers (NCOs) who were also involved in recruiting. Thus, because many Dakarkari people could not speak Hausa, the British found it difficult to enlist them during the First World War as well. This was attributed to language barriers as well as the spouses of Dakarkari men's refusal to mix with women from other ethnic groups.[59] This did not deter the British from enlisting them.

However, during the recruiting time, a memo was sent requesting the conscription recruitment from the District Officer in the Dabai division.[60] The request was made based on the 10% population of males, but with all due deference, suggested that a higher percentage be taken in Pagan communities who came from Dabai and Yauri emirates. The British considered those areas where the dispensaries were working, so they would use them to check the fitness of soldiers and those who were unfit. Thus, they deemed 15% of the adult population as the minimum under average circumstances for the Dakarkari tribe, and a ten-day mobilisation exercise was held. It was decided to conduct the annual mobilisation exercise in the first quarter of the year, with each session lasting for 10 days.[61] The recruitment process has successfully led to a significant increase in the number of men enlisting for various reasons, including young men who failed to pay their taxes and those who were out hunting.

Thus, it is an indisputable fact that large numbers of men ran away as the compulsory recruitment began. It was difficult to estimate the number of men who could be enrolled within the first ten days, but the number of men who fled was more than half of the 10 per cent, which could be raised within that period, except for some of the Dakarkari, Kambari, and Gungawa of Yauri Emirate.[62] Consequently, it may be argued that if they ran away, they would be conscripted elsewhere, but it would reduce the quota which would be promised within the ten days as they planned.[63] Yauri Emirate produced a higher percentage than the Dabai Emirate within ten days of the exercise. After the Dakarkari, the number of persons who would be enrolled may be considered; thus, the entry form was given.[64] The British did not think recruitment would be difficult in the Yauri Emirate, because most of the Pagan communities came from Gungawa and other communities like Achipawa and Dukkawa in the Zuru Emirate. However, in Dabai, the Regiment was about 1,250 during the war.[65]

The British government again required soldiers to fight in the East African campaign. Major Haywood, a British officer, was tasked with assessing how many troops could be obtained from the colonies. After careful analysis, he concluded that Nigeria was the only territory where enough recruits could be obtained. After accounting for the number of soldiers needed for public works and other departments and for the unfit, Major Haywood estimated that approximately 8,000 troops could be raised immediately through voluntary enlistment, including those already in training depots in Nigeria. However, he also believed that more than 70,000 soldiers could be conscripted through mandatory enlistment in Nigeria.[66] It is

apparent that at the end of May 1917, over 5,707 regiments from the Zuru division were recruited.[67] Table 1 indicates that the list was recruited during this period, 1917.

Table 1: List of the Military Recruitment during the First World War Intake on Tribes in Zuru Division 1917

Province	Tribe	Adult Male	Residents' enlistment of the recruits obtainable by the order of mobilization from the Colonial Authority			Subsequently in addition
A	B	C	Under Voluntary D (I)	Under Conscription D(II)	Under Voluntary E(I)	Under Conscription E(II)
KONTAGORA PROVINCE, ZURU EMIRATE	Achifawa	310	222	11	65	12
	Bangawa	312	202	12	82	16
	Dukkawa	370	110	85	135	40
	Dakarkari	2,010	1,888	62	56	04
	Fakkawa	805	573	82	150	Nil
	Gelawa	230	211	05	08	06
	Kambari	360	333	16	11	Nil
	Katsinawa-Laka	1,310	991	21	290	08
	TOTAL	5,707	4,530	294	797	86

Source: Waziri Junaidu History and Culture Bureau Sokoto, CO, 385, 35, 21, 1917, Zuru Division

The above table shows how the Zuru Division played a crucial role in providing recruits for the Nigerian regiments, with a focus on the list of communities within the Zuru Emirate. The British strategically used the enrollment of these communities to identify the most suitable tribes for recruitment. The Zuru soldiers had 5,707 volunteers, and only 86 were conscripted to join the army in 1917.[68] Also, during the time of war, 1918, over 15,034 men[69] and 1250 men in 1921[70] were recruited, detailing voluntary and conscription dynamics, economic impacts on agrarian society, as indicated in the introduction section. Notably, the research found that the total number of these soldiers from the Zuru Division, including those from other ethnic groups in Zuru Emirate, had already embarked on a journey to East Africa. These numbers represent both the volunteer and conscripted Zuru soldiers during World War I at the time of this research. Thus, this represented more than 40% of the entire recruit during the period. The British applied the martial race theory during the enrollment of the Dakarkari soldiers, as revealed by the colonial officer P. R. Diggle. Martial race theory, initially used in India, where caste stratification existed, proved successful due to the presence of distinct castes and classes designated as warriors (Rajputs and Punjabi races).[71] Colonial officer P. R. Diggle thus observed that,

> The Dakarkari tribe is essentially a fighting race. I believe they turn out to be very good soldiers on the whole. So long as there was a W.A.F.F. detachment at Zuru, there was never any difficulty in obtaining recruits, but since the withdrawal of the detachment, very few men, I believe, enlist as soldiers, and their numbers will be considered fewer every year.[72]

The argument that the Dakarkari ethnic group is essentially a fighting race and that they make good soldiers is a generalisation that may not accurately represent the entire group. It is important to consider the perspectives and factors that shape the perception of the group as skilled soldiers. In Dec 1917, when the need for more recruits arose, over 300 were enlisted in just four months, primarily from small districts. This achievement was quite commendable when considering the size of the tribe, which comprises over five thousand seven hundred and seven (5,707) males. Thus, the number was not described by tribes but by the percentage of recruits vis-à-vis the population. These recruits were sourced from a noteworthy group of men, predominantly farmers.[73] Additionally, a considerable number of soldiers from various chiefs enlisted in 1918. It was believed that colonial officials encouraged the recruitment of the Zuru people into the colonial army because of their courage, bravery, and quality of resistance to the imposition of colonial rule, more than other tribes. The Zuru made contributions in human and material resources in the Niger Province.[74] The colonial officials used some measures to exploit the Zuru Emirate during the war. These were through taxation, the supply of foodstuffs and cash crops such as rice, guinea corn, groundnuts, and cotton, and the conscription of people into the colonial army.[75] The war relief was normally obtained through the collection of agricultural products, which were taken mostly by youths, the 'yan *golmo,* to the Zuru Native Authority.

Due to the challenges faced by the British government in recruiting soldiers, it resorted to compulsory conscription. Consequently, many physically fit individuals were conscripted into the Regiment without much consideration for the previously mentioned requirements, such as physical and medical examinations; as long as they appeared strong, they were drafted for war.[76] This led to the conscription of some Zuru people who had not volunteered, resulting in widespread resistance that prompted the British government to seek assistance from civil authorities, such as Emirs and chiefs, to persuade their subjects to enlist. Additionally, the Resident was called upon to help motivate recruitment. The recruits were quickly trained in training depots and subsequently deployed to the battlefield.

Recruitment extended beyond just soldiers to include carriers, whose significance became evident during the Anglo-Ashanti wars, particularly in areas lacking motorable roads or train services. By the Army Council's directive of 28 December 1916, a carrier corps was established to support operations in East Africa, with recruits mainly sourced from Sierra Leone and Nigeria. These carriers received meagre pay and lacked proper maintenance, including operational shoes, as there was a misconception that Africans could move faster barefoot. Their equipment was notably inferior to that of their French and German counterparts, as the British aimed to reduce costs. This policy had a detrimental impact on the effectiveness of the

Nigerian Regiment during the Cameroon and East African campaigns, as the troops suffered from various foot ailments due to inadequate footwear.[77]

The shortcomings of the British government in adequately supporting the troops and carriers highlight the Northern Regiments' readiness at the onset of hostilities in 1914. Their training was insufficient, and their experience was limited to quelling unrest within the country, primarily against poorly equipped adversaries. Despite the lack of proper training, the Zuru Regiment displayed remarkable valour during World War I, with the success of the Allied operation in the Cameroons credited to the Nigerian Regiment. Their bravery and resilience in the face of significant challenges were noteworthy, as they were thrust into a style of warfare for which they were unprepared but responded admirably to all demands placed upon them.[78] Zuru soldiers' diverse characteristics, traditions, and languages mirrored the variety of their accustomed foods, yet they performed admirably in combat. Many of them received medals at the end of the war. British officers preferred Zuru soldiers and others, considering them the finest combatants in Nigeria. Notably, individuals like NA/010 Srgt-Major Maida Musa Zuru, NA/039/Bombardier Usman 2 Zuru, NA/058/Acting Bombardier Audu Keffi Zuru, NA/5397/Acting Lance Cpl Umaru 1 Zuru, NA/5689/Lcpl Musa Kussuri Zuru, NA/018/Sgt Major Bagudu Zuru, NA/1616/Sgt. Braima Sare, and NA/0571 Sgt. Mamman Kambari, all hailing from Zuru, demonstrated exceptional morale and rendered distinguished and meritorious service during the Cameroons campaign from 1914 to 1916, and 1934-1944.[79]

Following the end of the war in 1918, the Nigerian government changed that year. That was when Sir Hugh Clifford succeeded Lugard as Nigeria's new governor-general. Since many changes were entirely different from those made during the Lugard era across practically every socioeconomic and political arena, his era was one of administrative change.[80] The war had a profound impact on every facet of Nigeria's growth. It was disastrous for the morale and discipline of the administrative workforce, including the military, politically unsettling, socially harmful, and economically nearly disastrous. The country entered a period of political emancipation following the war, which was the sole positive aspect of its aftermath.[81]

Conclusion

The Dakarkari people of Zuru Emirate played a crucial yet often overlooked role in Nigeria's military history during World War I. Despite strong opposition to colonial rule between 1904 and 1908, their notable bravery, tactical expertise, and deep-seated martial traditions—developed through the golmo institution, wrestling, hunting, and archery—made them ideal recruits for the West African Frontier Force. In 1917 alone, the Zuru Division provided over 5,700 men, with the Dakarkari forming a significant, highly voluntary group that served with distinction as fighters, carriers, and support personnel across West African campaigns. This study shows how indigenous cultural practices aligned with British "martial race" theories, transforming former resisters into the core of the Nigerian Army. The Zuru community's significant contributions not only supported Britain's war effort but also left a lasting legacy in

Nigeria's military history and the Emirate's socio-economic life. Acknowledging this history is vital to understanding the roots of Nigeria's armed forces.

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