

Anglo-French Partition of Northern Togo and the Creation of Unequal Ethnic Power Relations, 1914 – 1932

Joseph Udimal Kachim*

Abstract

This article explores the Anglo-French partition of northern Togoland (former German Togo) after the First World War and its implication for ethnic power relations. Using mostly British archival records, the paper examines the manner in which the British acquired territories in northern Togoland during the Anglo-French partition and argues that the way the British executed the war in northern Togo left them in a disadvantaged position in territorial terms forcing them to ally themselves with the Dagomba to acquire territories. The British used oral narratives of the Dagomba chiefs of Demon, Sunson and Gushiegu to obtain Konkomba villages, which had come under the French by conquest. After acquiring these villages through Dagomba traditions, the British proceeded to re-engineer the entire political and territorial landscape of the area in order to put the Dagomba in a privileged position. This action by the British left the Konkomba landless and politically subordinated to Dagomba rule throughout the colonial and postcolonial period. In general, the article provides insights into how the convergence of European and local interests shaped not only colonial boundaries but also ethnic power relations in Africa.

* Joseph Udimal Kachim, Department of History of the University of Cape Coast, Ghana. Email: joseph.kachim@ucc.edu.gh

© 2023 The Author(s). This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited, a link to the license is provided, and it is indicated which changes were made.

Introduction

Although much has been written about the European partition of Africa, the question of African involvement in the process of African partition and its implications for ethnic relations has not received much attention. Earlier scholars on the partition of Africa were of the view that the boundaries were arbitrary imposed on unwilling Africans without regards to the African realities (Adu Boahen 1987). Touval (1966) however observes that since most of the colonial boundaries were constructed based on treaties made between European powers and African rulers regarding the fate of their territories, indigenous African political circumstance indirectly and sometimes directly influenced colonial boundaries. Similarly, Hargreaves (1985) argues that African rulers joined in to exploit the European competition for territories for their own short-term advantage. He shows for instance that the line along which Britain and France finally partitioned south-west Yorubaland in 1889 largely reflected the territorial and dynastic objectives of King Tofa (Hargreaves 1985: 20). In his study of the Buganda, Roberts (1962) examines how the Baganda found openings for the expansion of their own territory at the expense of their neighbours by supporting British colonial designs in the area.

In a more recent publication on Zimbabwe-Mozambican border, Mseba (2018) highlights how the late nineteenth century “dynastic Shona politics influenced the outcome of British and Portuguese attempts to carve out territories and exercise authority on the Zimbabwean plateau’s northeast” (Mseba 2018: 244). He argues that the process by which the BSAC and the Portuguese occupied and delineated the border between territories they claimed in Zimbabwe and Mozambique was influenced by local African politics. Although European powers fought to outmaneuver one another over the control of the region, the form that the boundary lines eventually took on the ground was decisively influenced by the actions of the local inhabitants of the region (Mseba 2018: 246). Similar interactions between the local people and European powers influenced and shaped the Anglo-French boundary line in northern Togo. This paper examines the strategy the British adopted to obtain territories during the Anglo-French partition to provide insights into how European powers employed local narratives to further their interest. It argues that beyond territorial acquisition, the strategy the British employed during the partition has had a lasting impact on ethnic power relations in the area. In general, the article contributes to scholarship on the partition of Africa and its implications for ethnic power relations.

Methods and Sources

This article is based largely on British colonial records obtained from the national archives of Ghana in Accra. These records include official letters, reports, memoranda and local oral testimonies recorded by colonial officials. Since the partition was intended to reflect the interest of the imperial powers, local voices were far less projected in these records. Even though local voices were largely excluded from the records, when they are “read against and across the grain”, some local voices could be recovered. The aim in this essay is not to celebrate local agency but to document the outcomes of an interactions among Africans and Europeans in which the interest of the Africans was ostensibly made important. Whilst the Northern Regional archives in Tamale contain substantial colonial records on the region, it is not very useful for the earlier colonial period, particularly before the 1930s. For records on the early colonial period in northern Ghana, one has to rely on the national archives in Accra. Oral interviews also proved to be very unhelpful since interviews tended to politicize narratives masking group interest and aspiration. For this reason, the article relied solely on written records produced during the period of the events they describe.

Background to the Anglo-French Partition

North Western Togoland was inhabited by many ethnic groups during the precolonial times. There were those that evolved centralized political systems before colonialism such as the Dagomba, Mamprusi, Nanumba and the Chakossi, and those that did not like the Konkomba, the Bassari, and the Bimoba. Colonial anthropologists have described these latter groups as ‘tribes without rulers’ (Middleton/ Tait 1958). During the colonial boundary making, the Europeans often signed treaties with the rulers of the centralized groups. More than any other group, the Dagomba came to play a prominent role in the European boundary making process. This involvement in the boundary negotiations, I argue, enhanced their position vis-à-vis their stateless neighbours. Arriving at Pusiga in modern day northern Ghana around the fourteenth century, the Dagomba established a vibrant centralized state with its capital at Yendi Dabari near Tamale (Iliasu 1970). Under pressure from the Gonja, another centralized state, they moved their capital eastward to the present town of Yendi which was originally inhabited by the Konkomba. The Konkomba, a historically non centralized group, are indigenous to the territory between the Oti and the Dakar Rivers (Maasole 2006). The movement of the Dagomba into Konkomba territory compelled the latter to move further east into the Oti River valley. Whereas the Dagomba insist that their movement into the Yendi area

amounted to conquest, the Konkomba claim to have withdrawn willingly (See Mahama 2003; Kachim 2018). The Konkomba position is supported by Cardinal (1918: 45) who observes that

“Originally, the whole of the Yendi District was Konkomba, but history relates that nine generations ago the Dagomba King, Na Luro, founded Yendi as his capital and the Konkomba withdrew eastward.”

During the European scramble for territories in the area in the closing decades of the nineteenth century, the Konkomba inhabited both banks of the Oti River (Tait 1961). Relations between the Konkomba and the Dagomba were on equal footing with the Dagomba raiding some scattered Konkomba hamlets for slaves (Staniland 1975).

This area inhabited by the Dagomba and Konkomba was subjected to two main European partitions. The first was the Anglo-German partition of the 1890s and the second was the Anglo-French partition after first world war. Following the establishment of their colony on the narrow strip of the coastline between French Dahomey and British Gold Coast, the Germans began to move inland, just as the British to the east were doing. In 1884 the two powers signed an agreement to recognize the triangle between Yendi, Salaga and Bimbilla as a neutral zone, to forestall the French encroachment in the area. This agreement was soon violated by the Germans who organized a military expedition into the zone in 1896 (Kachim 2013). The German expedition led to a treaty between Germany and Great Britain in 1899 leading to the partition of the neutral zone using the Dakar River as the Anglo-German boundary (Knoll 1978: 36; Staniland 1975: 10). By this demarcation, the Dagomba state was divided between the two powers with Yendi, the capital of the Dagomba, falling to the Germans whilst Western Dagomba came under Great Britain. By this partition also, all the Konkomba people came entirely under the Germans whose authority extended to Sansane-Mangu in the north. By the close of the 1890s, the German colony of Togo was well established, but this colonial establishment was short lived – lasting roughly fifteen years – from 1899 to 1914 (Amenumey 1969; Blackshire-Belay 1992; Laumann 2003).

Located between the British and the French colonies, German Togo became the first casualty of the global conflict that broke out in Europe in August 1914 (Moberly 1931: 31). With the defeat of the Germans in Togo, and the subsequent expulsion of Germany from Africa after the war, German Togo was subjected to

yet another partition – between the French and the British. This partition began during the war and by the close of the war in northern Togo, the temporary boundary lines had been drawn forcing the British to rely on local narratives to obtain more territories.

“Sitting down and hoisting flags”: Allies combat in northern Togo, August 1914

Following the outbreak of the First World War in Europe, the colonial authorities of the allied powers ignored the call for neutrality by von Doering, the acting Governor of German Togo, and invaded the colony on 6 August 1914 (Moberly 1931). When C. H. Armitage, the Chief Commissioner of the Northern Territories (CCNT) of the Gold Coast, received the telegraph message announcing the War, his immediate concern was how to safeguard the Empire’s possession in the Northern Territories (NT) from a possible German invasion from Yendi and Sansane-Mangu (ADM 11/1748: Reports on the Occupation of Yendi). Yendi was just ninety kilometers from Tamale, the headquarters of the British administration in the Northern Territories. Since 1907, there had been a Gold Coast defense scheme aimed at safeguarding Anglo-German frontier in an event of war with the Germans. Columns were to be formed at border towns like Gambaga, Jimle, Salaga and Krachi in the Northern Territories to resist a German advance from Sansane-Mangu and Yendi (ADM 12/5/120: Gold Coast Defense Scheme). When the war broke out, Armitage sent twenty men of the Northern Territories Constabulary under Lt. Kyngdon to Sang, a small village on the eastern border to the German station of Yendi to safeguard any German advance on Tamale. However, on 10 August, through a miscommunication, Lt. Kyngdon and his forces at Sang joined the officer commanding Jimle column, Captain Shaw, and proceeded to Krachi. Shaw’s departure to Krachi without capturing Yendi left the eastern frontiers of the British territory opened to a possible German attack from Yendi. Armitage later lamented that,

“Captain Shaw’s action in not occupying Yendi caused me the greatest anxiety, as I had learnt from native sources that the German Commissioner was still in residence at Yendi, but ready to leave the moment our troops crossed the frontier while the King of Yendi and his people were eagerly awaiting our arrival. This anxiety was increased by a report that five German officers and 250 men with three field guns had left Sansane-Mangu and were travelling south by an unknown route.” (ADM 11/1748: Report on the Occupation of Yendi).

Armitage reckoned that an attack on Tamale by the Germans at that period would have been very difficult to repel as the frontier and Tamale had been stripped of trained men. On August 12, Armitage, ordered Major J. Marlow to mobilize all available trained men to Sang, with instructions to proceed to Sambu and occupy Yendi if he received favourable information from local spies. Major Marlow with eight non-commissioned officers and men of the Northern Territories Constabulary, left Tamale on the afternoon of the same day. Hearing of the movement of British troops towards Yendi, the German commissioner evacuated the town allowing Marlow to occupy Yendi without any resistance (ADM 11/1748: *ibid*).

In the north of Yendi, Lieutenant C.C. Gratton-Bellew had the responsibility to mobilize the Reservists forces to protect the British frontiers at Gambaga and prevent any advance from Sansane Mangu. The mobilization was complete by August 6 and arrived at Gambaga the next day. From Gambaga, Gratton-Bellew was to defend the frontier and establish links and cooperate with the French forces marching southward from Upper Volta (Moberly 1931). In spite of the available intelligence about the weak position of the German forces at Mangu and the possible evacuation of the Germans on the British advance, Gratton-Bellew failed to proceed and occupy Mangu ahead of the French forces. On August 10, Gratton-Bellew attempted to march to Mangu but due to misinformation, the column returned to Gambaga the next day after making half the journey (ADM 56/1/187: Enclosure No. 1). After this failed attempt to reach Mangu, the Chief Commissioner instructed him to make every effort to occupy Mangu ahead of the French forces coming from Upper Volta. At this time, it was too late for Lieutenant Gratton-Bellew and his forces because a French contingent had already occupied Sansane-Mangu by August 16 (ADM 11/1748: Letter from Leut. Gratton-Bellew). The French contingent that occupied Mangu advanced from Fada Ngurma with forty police and about hundred irregulars. This force was headed by a civil officer and had no capacity for combat. Their instruction was to dash ahead of the main force and occupy evacuated German posts without risking any engagement (ADM 11/1748: *ibid*). This was with the knowledge that the territories occupied by any power during the war would be regarded as a conquered territory and come under the control of the occupying power (ADM 67/5/1: Information Book).

After several fruitless attempts at establishing communication with the French main force advancing from Upper Volta, Gratton-Bellew sent Lt. Matheson to proceed to Bassari. Gratton-Bellew later discovered that the French officers had no instructions to cooperate with the British in northern Togoland (ADM 56/1/187: Report on Military Operations). Meanwhile, after occupying Mangu

ahead of the British, the French party continued southward and occupied Bassari without any engagement. From there, they proceeded again to Sokode. Arriving at Bassari on August 22, Matheson found Bassari under the French flag. At this time, Matheson came under pressure from Armitage to occupy Bassari despite the French flag. Matheson however refused to accede to Armitage's request, insisting that he could not remove the French flag because the French had arrived there three days before him (ADM 56/1/187: Enclosure No. 1). When Armitage received information that the French had again occupied Sokode ahead of the British forces, he was angry and instructed Lt. Matheson to go to Sokode and "fly the British flag alongside (and not underneath) that of the French." He was also to proceed to Bismarksburg, occupy it and make a treaty with the local chiefs to place their lands under British protection (ADM 56/1/187: Report on Military Operations).

It was clear at point that, the competition between the French and the British over territories had become tensed. Armitage made several unsuccessful attempts to establish communications with the French officials at Mangu after which he took to the field himself. Arriving at Bassari on August 27, Armitage found that the French party occupying the town had "no sufficient men to take any offensive action." In his estimation, the orders of the French forces in northern Togoland were simply to acquire territory "by sitting down and hoisting flags" (ADM 56/1/187: Report on Military Operations). So far as fighting in northern Togoland was concerned, Armitage was right because the main French combat force of 130 rifles of Senegalese soldiers under Captain Bouchez from Ouagadougou did not arrive until August 26 by which time the war in German Togo was over (Moberly 1931: 32).

From the start of the war, the French objective was to occupy as much territories as possible. To achieve this objective, they sent a small force headed by civil officials to occupy evacuated German posts. The French force that occupied Mangu ahead of Lt. Gratton-Bellew for instance had no military capacity for combat. In the case of the British, Gratton-Bellew rejected the proposal to attach a political officer to the British military column (ADM 56/1/187: Letter from E. O. Rake). While there was unity of purpose between the French administrators and the military officers in their objective to occupy territories, there was intense friction and conflict between British officials, particularly between Mr. Wright (DC Gambaga) and Armitage (Chief Commissioner, NT) on the one hand and Gratton-Bellew, the military officer commanding the mobile column, on the other.

Armitage was of the view that the British military officers commanding the forces in northern Togo had disregarded his advice on how to prosecute the war. He insisted that if Gratton-Bellew had taken his advice, Mangu would have been occupied many days before the French, and he “would not now be placed in the humiliating position of following them about” (ADM 56/1/187: A Letter from the Chief Commissioner). Gratton-Bellew on the other hand complained that the Chief Commissioner and Mr. Wright:

“[...] seem to have adopted a policy of interference at a time when the military commander on the spot should have been particularly free from any interference and annoyance, and that these unfortunate incidences would never have occurred if the C.C.N.T. and the DC. Wright had but confined their activities to their own spheres instead of interfering with the military commander at the spot.” (ADM 56/1/187: Quoted in a Letter from the CC to the CS)

In defense of his failure to occupy Mangu, Gratton-Bellew argued that since he was at Gambaga to defend the frontiers, the operation would have gained nothing by his occupation of Mangu. In his estimation, proceeding to Mangu would have meant “putting myself out of touch with the O.C.F.F. by some 4 days” and the military cost of any delay entailed in responding promptly to commands from the O.C.F.F could have been disastrous for British operations in the War (ADM 11/1748: Enclosure No. 1).

In fact, while the British political officers regarded the operation of the Mobile Column under Gratton-Bellew in northern Togo as a complete failure, the military officers saw the campaign as a success. For instance, the officer commanding British forces in Togoland, F.C. Bryant, endorsed Bellew’s explanation of why he did not occupy Mangu as a sound and expedient military decision for the defense of British possessions. However sound Gratton-Bellew’s decision was from a military point of view, it was a political disaster. Armitage claimed that Gratton-Bellew’s decision not to occupy Mangu “hurt the feelings of the Mamprusi natives” because those territories would have come under them (ADM 11/1748: Letter from the Officer Commanding British Forces). But as far as Gratton-Bellew was concerned, acquisition of territories was not his concern. As he states, “the Na of Mamprusi would naturally have been pleased to have more territories of Togoland added to his country”, but “his personal desires were no affairs of mine” (ADM 11/1748: Enclosure No. 2). His focus, as he explained, was to execute the war in line with technical military tactics that would bring victory to the allied powers. The personal desires of the king of the

Mamprusi would have been those of Gratton-Bellew, if the British military and political class had worked together harmoniously. The governor observed that the political effect of the failure to occupy Mangu was not appreciated by Gratton-Bellew because of his inexperience (ADM 56/1/187: Letter from Colonial Secretary's Office). Whatever explanation was given, Gratton-Bellew attitude was a manifestation of the lack of corporation between British political and military officers in northern Togo.

Anglo-French Boundary Negotiations

By August 26, 1914 when the Germans surrendered to the Allied forces in German Togo, the French occupied most of the territories in northern Togo – three out of the four German administrative stations of Yendi, Mangu, Bassari and Sokode. In August, negotiations were already underway for the temporary partition of German Togo. It must be noted that it had already been agreed between the two powers that each power was to administer as conquered territory the areas occupied by their forces during the war. However, since only the German administrative stations were occupied by the powers, the numerous villages scattered around were “no man's land.” This opened the opportunity for the powers to continue to negotiate for territories. To allocate the villages to the various powers, it was agreed that all villages which paid taxes at Sansane-Mangu, Bassari and Sokode at the time of the invasion should come under the French authority, whilst all villages who paid taxes at Yendi should also be put under the English flag. The tax referred to was identified as *Goldshever* (ADM 67/5/1: Information book). German tax records became the basis on which such a determination was to be made. But it soon emerged from the records that the German tax system did not follow a neat pattern where villages paid tax at one particular station. The tax was found to have been collected from many villages including Jagbel, Nampoach, Pelal, Kunjoon, Buagbaln and others, all of which had come under the French (ADM 67/5/1: Information book). Once this method of sharing the territory was not satisfactory, the British had other ideas.

As early as August 12, 1914, the British had arranged to acquire the whole of the “Dagomba state” which pending further arrangements with the French Government should be put under British rule. Ten days later, they signed a treaty with the Ya Na (Dagomba paramount chief) at Yendi by which terms they acquired control over the whole of “Togoland Dagomba.” Even though the French officials were aware of this treaty and must have recognized it in principle, they were skeptical about its implementation because of lack of fixed boundaries (ADM 11/1748: Report on the Occupation of Yendi). On 31 August 1914, a provisional

agreement for the temporary boundary in the north was defined as to bring “the part of the Mangu-Yendi district forming part of the Dagomba country” within the British zone and the rest of the district and the entire Sekode-Bassari district would come under the French. By this agreement, more than two-thirds of the northern section of the former colony of Togo would have come under the French leaving the British a very small portion. With their treaty with the Dagomba at hand, the British hoped to obtain more territories which they claimed belonged to the Dagomba state.

However, as far as the French authorities were concerned, only “the part of the Mangu-Yendi district forming part of the Dagomba country” would come within the British zone (Benning 1983: 192). By the treaty, all territories situated within the Sokode-Bassari district irrespective of who inhabited them would come under the French. Misunderstanding soon emerged not only over the eastern limit of the Dagomba kingdom but also over the actual meaning of provision of the Anglo-French agreement of August 31. This misunderstanding soon led to serious dispute between the two powers over Sansugu [Zabzugu]. Zabzugu was a Dagomba village within the Sokode-Bassari district during the German period. In September 1914, the chief failed to comply to a requisition request by the French commandant at Bassari. As a signatory to the August 22nd treaty, the chief of Zabzugu had been under the false impression that he was under British authority. On September 30, French troops raided the village, arrested the chief and sent him to Bassari for failing to comply with their request. The troops threatened to destroy the village if the people did not supply 30 loads of guinea corn by the next month. The raid was reported to the British Commissioner at Yendi, G. W. F. Wright. Wright wrote to the Chief Commissioner insisting that since the Zabzugu people were Dagomba and once the chief was a signatory to the treaty between the Ya Na and the British, the French had no authority over the village (ADM 39/1/11: A Letter from G. W. F. Wright). C. H. Armitage, the CCNT then protested against the action of the French authorities demanding the immediate release of the chief and requested that the French should “abstain in future from sending [their] soldiers to Dagomba villages” (ADM 39/1/11: A Letter from Chief Commissioner). Whilst Zabzugu was a Dagomba village, it was within the Sokode-Bassari district which by the Provisional Agreement between Government of Gold Coast and Dahomey, was to be administered by the French. Having realized that the Agreement did not support their claim, the British attempted to negotiate with the French authorities to adjust the temporary boundary in a way that would include the whole of the Dagomba country in their sphere of influence. In November, Governor Clifford sent a telegram to the Lieutenant-Governor at Dahomey urging him to accept:

“as a temporary arrangement, the country inhabited by the Dagomba tribe should for the time being be administered by British officers, and with the object of arranging for this, a preliminary boundary, as a temporary measure, to be agreed upon by the British and French officers on the spot.”

His reason was that, if the Dagomba were again divided between the two provisional administrations, it could arouse great discontent and ill-feeling among them (ADM 39/1/11: A Telegram from Governor Accra). The British request seemed, on face value, innocuous and reasonable but its application could spill a can of worms. The question soon arose about the eastern boundary of the Dagomba state. As Tait (1961) and Staniland (1975) point out, the eastern frontier of Dagbon had no precise boundary except a number of military chiefdoms created as outposts against the Konkomba and Bassari. These outposts established by the Dagomba around the early 1800s must have allowed them to exercise some political influence in some Konkomba areas, but the vast majority of the Konkomba remained politically autonomous (Cardinall 1918). This vagueness in Dagomba territorial boundary allowed the British to make claims to more territories by simply attributing claims over Konkomba villages to Dagomba chiefs.

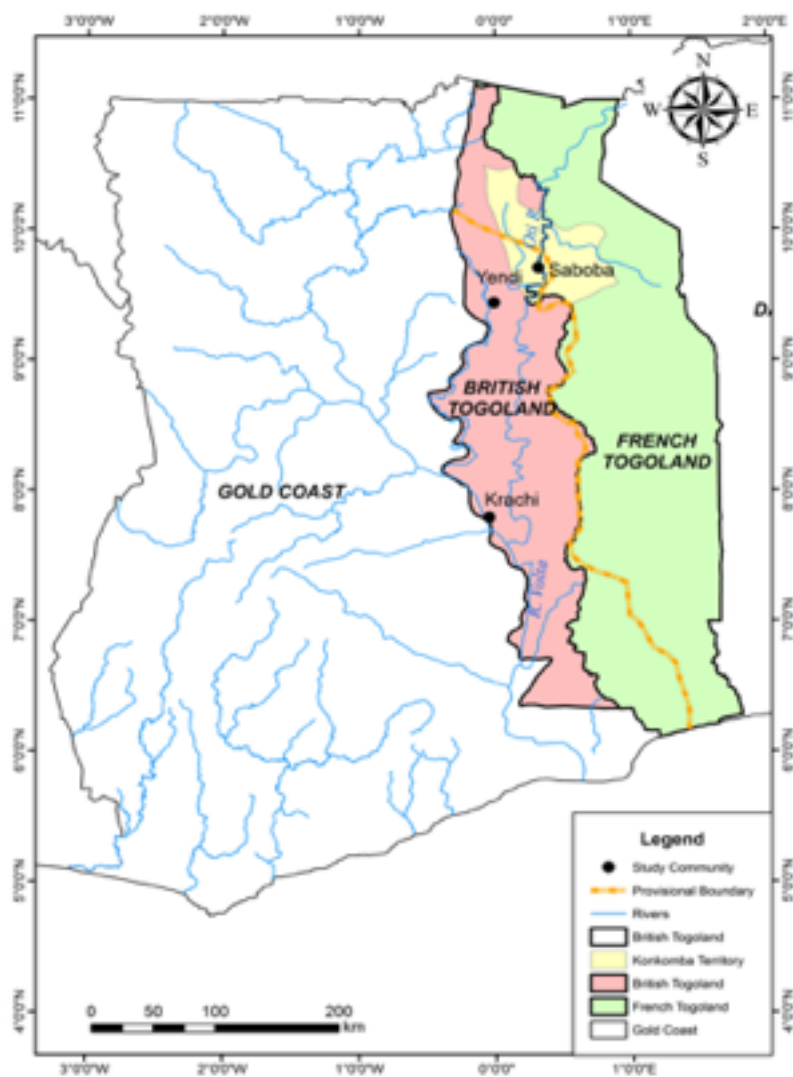
From September 1914, the British continued to shift the Dagomba boundary eastward to include a number of Konkomba villages that had come under the French control by conquest. They attributed the ownership of these villages to the Dagomba chiefs of Gushiegu, Sunson and Demon (ADM 67/5/1: Information book). Among these villages were Zabsugu, Nakpali, Wapuli, Jagbel, Saboba and Nambiri. The British admitted that Dagomba claims over these villages would be difficult to substantiate since in the exception of Zabzugu and Nakpali, which were inhabited by the Dagomba, all the other villages claimed were inhabited by the Konkomba. Regarding Zabsugu and Nakpali, the British found it easy to justify Dagomba claims because apart from the fact that these villages were inhabited by Dagomba speakers, Dagomba tradition shows that the two villages were of considerable importance in Dagomba political constitution. Zabzugu for instance enjoyed with Sunson the duties of burying the kings of Dagbon. Nakpali on the other hand, had also reached the level where it supplied chiefs to the three divisions of Karaga, Savelugu and Mion (today Sambu), from whom the Ya Na was selected (ADM 67/5/1: Information book).

With regards to the Konkomba villages, the British were prepared to employ Dagomba oral traditions. In 1915, even before the war ended, C. H. Armitage instructed A. W. Cardinall, the British Commissioner at Yendi, to conduct investigations into the ownership of the villages claimed by the Dagomba chiefs and make a case ready to be put forward at the end of the war “for the return of these territories and lands to their rightful owners” (Staniland 1975: 67). By 1916, the investigation was completed. During the enquiry into the claims, the Ya Na claimed that his ancestors had exercised control over all the villages claimed before the German colonization. Dagomba claims over Konkomba villages introduced the question of pre-colonial relationship between the Konkomba and the Dagomba. From the onset the British adopted the view that in the precolonial times the Dagomba conquered the Konkomba and established control over them until the Germans severed them from Dagomba rule for administrative convenience (ADM 67/5/1: Information book). Since it was in their interest to use the Dagomba argument to acquire territories in northern Togo, the British ignored the inconsistencies inherent in the Dagomba claims. Instead, they upheld the Dagomba argument that prior to the German occupation, the Konkomba had come under their rule but the Germans did not uphold their authority with the result that when the Anglo-French occupation took place, the Konkomba were openly hostile towards Dagomba chiefs (ADM 67/5/1: Information book). The French on their part refused to accept British and Dagomba narrative and provided details from the German *Karte von Togo (1907)* which showed a number of villages within the Yendi subdistrict as belonging to “the Konkomba tribe” (Nugent 2002: 2).

During the negotiation for permanent Anglo-French boundary, the British revisited the question of Konkomba areas. They continued to insist on obtaining the Konkomba villages that had come under French rule. They claimed that the chief of Sunson had held historical rights over the villages of Saboba, Nambiri and Chereponi from ancient times and therefore French claims over these villages deprived these chiefs of their subjects. One way by which European powers obtained territories in Africa was by upholding the territorial claims of groups whose territorial claims coincided with theirs (Hargreaves 1985). Evoking African historical claims to obtain territories in Africa was not new, but what was new in this case was the concessions the British were prepared to make to obtain the Konkomba villages for the Dagomba chiefs. During the negotiations for a permanent boundary line, the British made significant territorial concessions to the French in the south, including Lome in exchange for territories in the north (Nugent 2002). Consequently, the Milner-Simon Declaration of 10 July 1919 which agreed on the permanent boundary between the French and the

British handed over many Konkomba villages, which had come under the French by conquest, to the British. These villages included Saboba, Nambiri, Sambuli, Wapuli and other villages in the Zabzugu and Zagbeli divisions (ADM 39/1/1999: Togoland Partition).

Since the July 10 agreement allowed for modifications to be made during the actual delimitation on the ground, both powers continued to insist that the boundary be modified in their favour. In November 1920, the French Governor, Major A. Woelffel, argued that the French part of the Konkomba country that contained the most important road in the north had been given to the British. This road provided the French with direct communication from the south to Sansane-Mangu and linked Jugu to Nambiri through Chereponi. The French expressed worry that this all-important road might be neglected and allowed to fall into disuse by the British since it was not particularly important to them. They wanted all their Konkomba villages including Saboba, Nambiri and Wapuli to be handed back to them (ADM/39/1/199: Togoland Partition). The British refused to accede to the French request and continued to use Dagomba oral tradition to justify their claim to Konkomba villages. Although the British argument was stated in terms of the need to preserve traditional historical boundaries, a critical reading of the records reveals that the real reason for their claim over the Konkomba territory was based purely on economic considerations. According to the British, "the Konkomba people made the wealth of the district, they supply the real labour, paid or unpaid", which was of greater value than Dagomba labour and more importantly, "they own the cattle" (ADM 67/5/1: Information Book 1916). In a confidential report, H. C. Branch, the British Commissioner of the Northern Province, intimated that "Saboba, Nambiri and Chereponi country are our richest cattle lands and I need not point out how essential it is for us to retain this cattle country" (NRG 8/1/21: Confidential Report). The cattle in the Konkomba territory alone was estimated to be over 3,000. This was important because, in northern Togo, cattle trade constituted the most viable economic activity within the colonial economic arrangement. It was therefore imperative to keep this cattle area within the British territory. As Branch concluded, "ceding this part of the country" to the French would "take away the richest and most populous part of the district..." (NRG 8/1/21: Confidential Report).

Fig. 1. A Map of Togoland Showing the Partitions

Source: Adapted from Skinner (2007): 124

Although the British were delighted that the Dagomba and Mamprusi had been reunited under their rule, they wished to obtain a boundary line that would include all the Konkomba people in their sphere (Nugent 2002). The French, on the other hand, were anxious to secure the Konkomba territory for themselves. Both powers continued to demand that a definitive boundary settlement should adhere to ethnic boundaries as shown on the German map of 1907 (Bening 1983). During the actual demarcation of the boundary on the ground (1927-1929), it was discovered that the German map on which the July 10 agreement was based did not accurately represent the condition on the ground. Most of the villages located on the map were found to have ceased to exist because the people had migrated away or the village was never known. The Commissioners also found that whereas in some cases, certain points were known on rivers and paths, no ethnic boundary as a continuous line existed

(ADM 56/1/341: Anglo-French Boundary). Although the commissioners agreed that boundaries which coincided with ethnic boundaries were ideal, in the absence of such fixed ethnic boundaries, natural features, especially watershed and rivers were to be employed as far as possible. Consequently, the final boundary line between the British and the French spheres in the Konkomba area followed in most parts the course of the Oti River. A delimitation one might define as invented or imagined but it was surely not without the active participation of local agents.

Reconfiguration of Ethnic Power Relations in Northern Togoland

Although the demarcation of the Anglo-French boundary in northern Togoland followed in most parts the course of the Oti River, it was with the assistance of the Dagomba chiefs that such a boundary line was achieved. Once they acquired their territory in northern Togoland, the British began to create institutional forms that supported Dagomba power and dominance in the area. They systematically supported and increased the authority of the Dagomba to dominate the newly acquired territory. The British assumption was that the territory that came under their control, Western Togoland, was part of the Dagomba traditional state. Whilst in theory the newly acquired German colonies were to be administered under the Trusteeship of the League of Nation Mandate, this was of little effect. In their administration of what became known as Western Togoland, the British organized their territory into the 'Eastern Dagomba District.' An important aspect of this reorganization was how the Ya Na was made the center of the administration. As the name of the district suggests, the area became synonymous with the Dagomba state. The British assumed that all the land in the district belonged to the Ya Na and his heirs by right of conquest which took place in the sixteenth century. For the District Commissioner, the notion that the Ya Na owned all the lands of the district was recognized by all the people in the district (ADM 56 /1/513 Annual Report). According to the British, strangers who wished to settle on any part of the district was required to apply to the divisional chief who readily allocated them a place but the divisional chiefs did not own any rights on their own. They were merely representing the Ya Na who had allodial rights to land in the district (ADM 56 /1/513 Annual Report).

This idea that the Ya Na owned allodial title to land in Eastern Dagomba District was a complete perversion of the local customary law. In northern Ghana, unlike the south, land was owned by the Earth Priests, *Tindanas*, rather than the chiefs. The *Tindana*, literally meaning "landowner," was vested with ritual and allodial rights of land as the first-settler of area (Cardinall 1921; Manoukian 1951;

Kasanga/ Kotey 2001; Kunbuor 2002; Lund 2013). In Western Dagomba these rights of the first-settlers were transferred to the invading Dagomba with the former's extermination and complete assimilation. In Eastern Dogomba, the transfer of land rights from the indigenous groups to the invading Dagomba did not occur. As Duncan-Jonestone and Blair (1932: 10) observed, "in Eastern Dagomba, today, in contrast with the state of affairs in Western Dagomba, the Tingdanas belong to the subjects race of Konkomba, Chamba etc." In his investigation on the land tenure system in northern Ghana, Pogucki (1955) appears to have solely relied on Dagomba conquest narrative to deny the Konkomba allodial rights to land.

In order to bolster Dagomba claims to Konkomba lands which had been included in Western Togoland with Dagomba assistance, every effort was made to culturally and political re-engineer the connection between the Dagomba and the newly acquired territories. This was done through mapping processes where Konkomba village names were changed in British maps to reflect Dagomba autography. In most cases this was done by simply adding a 'vowel' to the last 'consonant' of the Konkomba name (Jobor 2014: Interview).

Table 1. Konkomba Village Names and their Dagomba Forms

Konkomba Name	Dagomba Form
Wapul	Wapuli
Chabob	Saboba
Nambir	Nambiri
Sambul	Sambuli
Kujoon	Kujoni
Kpalb	Kpalba
N-nalog	Nalogli
Kutul	Kuntuli
Chagbaan	Chagbani
Sobiib	Sobiba
Kokoln	Kokonzoli
Jagbel	Zagbeli

Source: Eastern Dagomba District Map

By the close of the colonial period therefore, everything from mountains, valleys and the entire land scape of the district with very few exceptions had become predominantly Dagomba in nomenclature. Literature has shown that renaming cities and landscapes through mapping has been one of the most effective ways of establishing contact with a place previously alien to a particular group. Far from revealing reality, maps produce reality (Leuenberger/ Schnell 2010). British colonial mapping processes served to obliterate Konkomba cultural imprint on their landscape and give legitimacy to Dagomba narrative of conquest and domination of the Konkomba in the precolonial times. It was the British administration in northern Togoland, which marked the beginning of the *Dagombaisation* of the Konkomba territory. However, although the British succeeded in changing the textual identities of the territory through *Dagombaised* names, they could not change the socio spatial organization of the Konkomba territory. Since Konkomba villages were uniquely clan based and named after the particular clan that inhabited them, it became impossible to completely obliterate Konkomba socio-cultural imprint on their territorial landscape.

Beyond changes in the nomenclature of the topography was the political subordination of the Konkomba under Dagomba chiefs. Although the British officials observed that the newly constituted district was inhabited by two principal ethnicities – the Dagomba and the Konkomba – they declared that the former were the ruling class and whilst the latter were a ‘subject race’ (ADM 56/1/491 Annual Report). As a subject group, the Konkomba were not allowed to have chiefs of their own. Konkomba villages were divided among Dagomba divisional chiefs of Demon, Gushiego and Sunson (ADM 11/1801: Konkomba Administration). To the colonial regime, the non-chiefly Konkomba were an unruly people who should be strictly controlled. As early as September 1914, the Colonial Secretary instructed the British official resident in Yendi to make the fullest use of the paramount chief of Dagomba and his subordinate chiefs (ADM 67/57/1: Information Book). Every encouragement was to be given to the Dagomba chiefs to exercise their authority, to hear and determine cases relating to native property, marriage and other civil actions and to uphold native laws and customs so long as they are not opposed to British ideas of justice (ADM 56/1/491 Annual Report). As rulers, the Dagomba obtain a high status in the district similar to the position of the Hausa of the middle belt of Nigeria where the British colonial practice reified and elevated them into a quasi-colonial community (Ochonu 2014).

However, not all British officials sanctioned this arrangement in which the Konkomba were brought under the Dagomba chiefs. As early as 1916, District Political Officer, A. G. Poole, wrote to the Chief Commissioner of the Northern Territories pointing out that the state of affair that pertained in the Konkomba areas whereby the Konkomba were put under Dagomba chiefs was not “in keeping with British policy.” He suggested that the Konkomba should be self-governed and proposed that a visit be made to the Konkomba country to arrange “an election of a paramount Chief and Sub Chiefs of villages in that sphere of Konkomba influence now under British Rule” (ADM 56 /1/211: Letter from the DPO). In 1917 Cardinall, proposed the establishment of an independent Konkomba council of elders to report directly to the District Commissioner of Yendi (ADM 56/1/211: A Letter from CCNT). Another official noted that even if the Konkomba had been under the Dagomba in the precolonial times, there was no doubt that prior to the German occupation they had been divorced from that rule. During the German period, tribute was “certainly not paid and the Konkomba keep very much to themselves, nor are they visited by their rulers” (ADM 67/5/1: Information book).

It soon became clear to the British colonial administration that no Konkomba subordination to Dagomba rule could be obtained “without compulsion” in view of the independent mindedness of the Konkomba. As would be expected, the Konkomba refused to obey Dagomba chiefs. Although the British bought into the Dagomba narrative of precolonial conquest, they soon realized that the Dagomba lacked real political authority over the Konkomba. Armitage and other officials were disappointed to learn that “most nas had never visited the areas of Kekpakpaam they claimed as part of their jurisdiction” (Talton 2010: 53). Dagomba chiefs feared the Konkomba poisoned arrows so much that they dared not visit Konkomba villages without British officials. In January 1916, Captain Short instructed the Sunson chiefs to investigate and help arrest some Konkomba people from Wapuli who had vandalized the telegraph wire. When the chief and the constable approached the village, they were shot at and the chief returned to Yendi to report to the District Commissioner (ADM 56/1/211: Letter from Captain Short). The culprits were only arrested after a reinforcement came from Yendi. Konkomba lack of respect for Dagomba authority irked colonial officials who continued to look for ways to force them into submission.

Several strategies were therefore employed by the British to bolster the Dagomba chiefs’ authority in the Konkomba areas. In the first place, the chiefs were required to accompany the district commissioners during their tours of inspection in Konkomba areas. They also had to accompany all punitive expeditions organized by the administration against their respective Konkomba areas. It was

hoped that as the Dagomba chiefs were always seen in the company of the colonial officials, their authority will be bolstered and with time the chiefs would be able to visit the Konkomba villages on their own. Another strategy adopted to increase Dagomba chiefs' authority over the Konkomba was to ensure that the Konkomba headmen received government directives through their Dagomba chiefs. Orders were passed to the Konkomba through Dagomba chiefs and hefty fines were imposed on the Konkomba headmen who disobeyed the orders of their Dagomba chiefs. In 1918, the headmen of both Wayul and Chakpeng were arrested for refusing to obey their chiefs (ADM 56/1/229, Yendi Official Diary). Furthermore, the chiefs were given authority to settle disputes among the Konkomba and were given power to summon them to their courts. Even so, the Konkomba continued to defy the chiefs' summons. In 1919 a British report admitted that,

“They [the Konkomba] retain a fanatical hatred for the chiefs, whose rapidly growing authority is repugnant to them, and do all in their power to undermine it and to prevent the youth of the country from getting into touch with civilization.” (ADM 56/1/491 Annual Report on the N.T, 1919)

Despite the Dagomba lack of authority over the Konkomba, the British officials insisted that there was “no Konkomba alternative to Dagomba authority” (Talton 2010: 53) and that serious efforts would have to be made to “teach the Konkomba for them to recognize and respect the nas' authority” (ADM 56/1/211 Letter from Chief Commissioner).

With the formal introduction of indirect rule in the 1930s, the British continued to implement policies that further cemented Dagomba authority over the Konkomba. By the Order of 1933, the East Dagomba division was constituted into a Native Authority and the Ya Na tribunal was established under the Native Tribunal Ordinance (ADM 67/5/1: Information Book). As the head of the Eastern Dagomba Native Authority, the Ya Na received enhanced powers and legitimacy to rule over his Konkomba subjects. Native Authority Ordinance empowered chiefs to issue rules on a wide range of matters including regulations on weapons, liquor, markets, sanitation and those of a general nature to ensure peace and order in the Native Authority area (ADM/11/1534: Report of Northern Territories). Under the Native Courts system, Dagomba chiefs gained jurisdiction over certain criminal and civil cases, including matrimonial and land cases. Backed by the Native Authority Police (NAP) referred to locally as “nana kana”, the Konkomba could no longer ignore the summons of Dagomba chiefs

(Kwarteng et al 2014: 160). Anyone who was sentenced to imprisonment by the Native Tribunal served the sentence in the Yendi prison controlled by the Ya Na. With the responsibility to collect taxes for the native treasuries — of which they retained a percentage — the British administration gave license to the Konkomba former slave raiders to formally extort them.

The actions of the British administration in northern Togoland elevated the Dagomba to the position of a ruling class and the Konkomba as subjects. This should not be surprising, as Mamdani (1996) points out, colonial rule in Africa was based on unequal power relations underpinned by racial hierarchies. Forms of exclusions were built around racially defined categories and where racial differences were absent, ethnicity became important bases of exclusion. Trusted and empowered to rule the whole district, Dagomba chiefs quickly found a niche in the colonial systems to exclude the Konkomba from any form of traditional authority. Throughout the colonial period, the Konkomba were positioned as second-class subjects without access to land and traditional authority. This exclusion continued into the postcolonial period. The alliance between the British and Dagomba during the Anglo-French partition of Togoland proved to be mutually beneficial. Whilst the British colonial administration used the Dagomba chiefs to obtain territory, the Dagomba exploited British support, to extend and bolster their authority over a large area occupied by the Konkomba. By signing away lands of their supposed subject groups, the Dagomba were rewarded with the legitimization of their nominal control. The changes in land tenure arrangements under colonial rule altered ethnic power relations and created new forms of power cleavages based on ethnicity (Newbury 1983).

Conclusion

During the colonial partition of Africa, some local groups obtained a privileged position vis-à-vis their neighbours by making a common cause with the colonialists. In the case of northern Togoland, the Dagomba came into alliance with the British to obtain Konkomba territories which subsequently fell under Dagomba chiefs. This article has argued that the way the British fought the first world war in northern Togoland forced them to make Dagomba oral tradition an important part of their strategy during the Anglo-French boundary negotiation. Although the Konkomba did not appear to have overtly resisted the British objectives, they were indifferent to British interest. The Dagomba on the other hand, became conscious of British ambition and succeeded in using the Konkomba as a pound in the colonial chest game of territorial acquisition. After acquiring the Konkomba areas with Dagomba oral traditions, the British proceeded to

establish a political administration in which the Dagomba ethnic group would dominate the area both politically and culturally. In order to establish cultural and social connections between the Dagomba and the newly acquired territory, the entire territory was reconstituted into “the Eastern Dagomba District”, a name which reflected Dagomba ownership of the territories. With the north-western Togoland coming under British rule, the Dagomba obtained improved political position and prestige at the expense of their stateless neighbours – the Konkomba. By the end of the colonial period, the Konkomba had been deprived of their land and political power and effectively subordinated under Dagomba authority. The Dagomba became the rulers and the Konkomba, the ruled. The unequal power relations that eventually emerged between the Konkomba and the Dagomba reflected how collaboration with European powers during the partition enhanced the authority of some groups over others.

Bibliography

- Amenumey, D. E. K. (1969): German Administration in Southern Togo. In: *The Journal of African History* 10, 4, 623-639.
- Bening, R. Bagulo (1983): The Ghana-Togo Boundary, 1914-1982. In: *Africa Spectrum* 18, 2, 191-209.
- Blackshire-Belay, Carol Aisha (1992): German Imperialism in Africa: The Distorted Images of Cameroon, Namibia, Tanzania, and Togo. In: *Journal of Black Studies* 23, 2, 235-246.
- Boahen, Adu (1987): *African Perspectives on European Colonialism*. New York: Diaspora Africa Press.
- Cardinall, A. W. (1918): Some Random Notes on the Customs of the Konkomba. In: *The Journal of the Royal African Society* 18, 69, 45-62.
- Cardinall, A. W. (1921): *Natives of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast*. London: Routledge & Sons.
- Hargreaves, J. D. (1985): The Making of the Boundaries: Focus on West Africa. In: Asiwaju A. I. (ed.): *Partitioned Africans: Ethnic Relations across Africa's International Boundaries, 1884-1984*. Lagos: University of Lagos Press. 19-27.
- Iliasu, Alhassan (1970): The Origins of the Mossi-Dagomba States. In: *Research Review* 7, 2, 95-113.
- Kachim, Joseph (2013): African Resistance to Colonial Conquest: The Case of Konkomba Resistance to German Occupation of Northern Togoland, 1896-1901. In: *Asian Journal of Humanities and Social Studies* 1, 3, 162-172.
- Kachim, Joseph (2018): *Staying on the Margins: Konkomba Mobility and Belonging in Northern Ghana, 1914-1996*. PhD Thesis, University of the Free State, South Africa.
- Kachim, Joseph (2022): The River Is Not to Be Crossed. Anglo-French Boundary and Konkomba Cross-Border Mobility on the Ghana-Togo Border, 1918–30s. In: *Journal of West African History* 8, 1, 143-165.

- Kasanga, K./ Kotey, N. A. (2001): *Land Management in Ghana: Building on Tradition and Modernity*. London: International Institute for Environment and Development.
- Knoll, Arthur (1978): *Togo under Imperial Germany, 1884-1914*. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press.
- Kunbuor, Benjamin (2002): Customary Law of the Dagara of Northern Ghana: Indigenous Rules or a Social Construction. In: *Journal of Dagaare Studies* 2, 1-21.
- Kwarteng, K./ Kachim, J./ Limpu, I. (2014): British Colonial Administrative Policy in the Gold Coast: Where the Ahafo and the Konkomba-Bassari Meet. In: *AKSU Journal of History & Global Studies* 1&2, 147-170.
- Laumann, Dennis (2003): A Historiography of German Togoland, or the Rise and Fall of Model Colony. In: *History in Africa* 30, 195-211.
- Leuenberger, Christine/ Schnell, Izhak (2010): The Politics of Maps: Constructing natural territories in Israel. In: *Social Studies of Sciences* 40, 6, 803-842.
- Lund Christian (2013): The Past and Space: On Arguments in African Land Control. In: *Africa* 83, 1, 14-35.
- Maasole, Cliff (2006): *The Konkomba and their Neighbours from the Pre-European Period to 1914*. Accra: Ghana Universities Press.
- Mahama, Ibrahim (2003): *Ethnic Conflicts in Northern Ghana*. Tamale: Cyber Systems.
- Mamdani, Mahmood (1996): *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Manoukian, Madeline (1951): *Tribes of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast*. London: International African Institute.
- Middleton, John/ Tait, David (eds., 1958): *Tribes without Rulers: Studies in African Segmentary Systems*. London: Routledge.
- Moberly, Frederick James (1931): *Military Operations in Togoland and the Cameroons 1914-1916*. London: The Battery Press.
- Mseba, Admire (2018): Late Precolonial Struggles, European Expansion, and the Making of Colonial Authority in Northeastern Zimbabwe, ca. 1840–1903. In: *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 51, 2, 243-262.
- Newbury, C. (1983): Colonialism, Ethnicity, Rural Political Protest: Rwanda and Zanzibar in Comparative Political Perspective. In: *Comparative Politics* 15, 3, 253-280.
- Nugent, Paul (2002): *Smugglers, Secessionists and Loyal Citizens on the Ghana-Togo Frontier*. Legon: Sub-Saharan Publishers.
- Ochonu, Moses (2014): *Colonialism by Proxy. Hausa Imperial Agents and Middle Belt Consciousness in Nigeria*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Pogucki, R. J. H. (1955): *Gold Coast Land Tenure. Vol. 1. A Survey of Land Tenure in Customary Law of the Protectorate of the Northern Territories*. Accra: Government Printer.
- Roberts, Andrew (1962): Baganda Sub-Imperialism of the Baganda. In: *Journal of African History* 3, 3, 435-450

- Skinner, Kate (2007): Reading, Writing and Rallies: The Politics of 'Freedom' in Southern British Togoland, 1953-1956. In: *Journal of African History* 48, 1, 123-147.
- Staniland, Martin (1975): *The Lions of Dagbon. Political Change in Northern Ghana*. London: Cambridge University Press.
- Tait, David (1961): *The Konkomba of Northern Ghana*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Talton, Benjamin (2010): *Politics of Social Change in Ghana. The Konkomba Struggle for Political Equality*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Touval, Saadia (1966): Treaties, Borders and the Partition. In: *The Journal of African History* 7, 2, 279-293.

Archives

- Public Records and Archives Administration Department, [hereafter PRAAD], Accra: ADM 11/1748: Military Operations in Togoland, 1914-1915.
- PRAAD, Accra ADM 12/5/120: Gold Coast Defense Scheme, 1907.
- PRAAD, Accra ADM 67/5/1: Information Book, 1916.
- PRAAD, Accra ADM 67/5/3: Village Record Book Vol. 2, 1919-1923.
- PRAAD, Accra ADM 56/1/187: Anglo-Franco German War, 1914 -1915.
- PRAAD, Accra ADM 39/1/11: War in Togoland, 1914.
- PRAAD, Accra ADM 11/1801: Konkomba Administration, 1940-1947.
- PRAAD, Accra ADM 56/1/204: Handing Over Report, Yendi Station, 1915-1921.
- PRAAD, Accra ADM 11/1/1534: Eastern Dagomba District Report, 1934-1936.
- PRAAD, Tamale NRG 8/1/21: Boundary Dispute Togoland, 1920.
- PRAAD, Accra ADM 56/1/491: Annual Report on NT for 1919.
- PRAAD, Accra ADM 56/1/341: Anglo-French Boundary Togoland, 1923-1931.
- PRAAD, Accra ADM 56/1/513: Annual Reports, Mandated Territory, 1919.
- PRAAD, Accra ADM 39/1/199: Togoland Partition between British and French, 1919-1946.
- PRAAD, Accra ADM 67/5/1: Information Book, 1919.
- PRAAD, Accra ADM 56/1/229: Yendi District Official Diary.
- PRAAD, Accra ADM 56/1/258: Occupation of Yendi, 1919-1928.
- PRAAD, Accra, ADM 56/1/ 211: A Letter from the D.P.O., Yendi to the CCN T, 11 June 1916.
- PRAAD, Accra ADM 56/1/1534: Dagomba District Report, 1934 -1936.
- Interview with Daniel Niena Jobor, Wapuli, January 2014.