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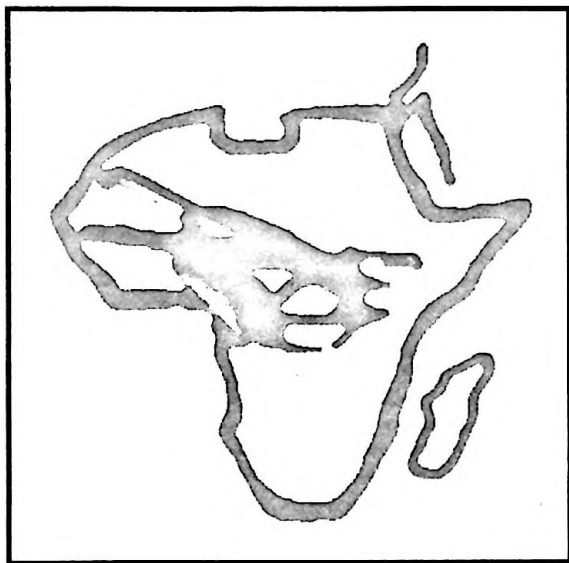
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Origin, Migration and Settlement History of the Konkomba of Northern Ghana, ca. 1400–1800

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Abstract

This article contributes to the depth of our historical knowledge about the origins and migrations of the Konkomba. Using Konkomba oral traditions collected by the author between 2009 and 2014, and supplemented with a range of other written sources, the article presents a detailed account of Konkomba origins and migration. It traces Konkomba origins to areas outside the boundaries of modern Ghana and examines clan settlement histories to throw light on how the Oti valley was populated by the Konkomba in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In doing so, the article interrogates the prevailing view that the Konkomba have no history beyond their encounter with the Dagomba in the Yendi area. At a general level, this article makes the case that it will be extremely beneficial for historians to revisit the oral traditions of hitherto neglected groups in Africa for the reconstruction of their histories.

Keywords: Origin, Migration, Oral Traditions, Konkomba, Northern Ghana.

Introduction

Historians have identified the Konkomba as one of the earliest inhabitants of most parts of present-day northern Ghana.¹ More precisely, they occupied the Middle Volta basin in the area between the Dakar and the Oti Rivers as far back as legends relate.² Today they are found in the Oti valley in the northern section of the Ghana-Togo border. Their homeland is located between latitude 9° 10' and 10° N. and longitude 0° and 1° E.³ This area is estimated to be about 50 kilometers wide from west to east and 175 kilometres long from north to south, an area of 5,750 square kilometres stretching from "near Nalerigu to Bimbilla", and covers Saboba, parts of Nalerigu, Gushiegu, Zabzugu and Tatale Districts.⁴ Their neighbours to the south are the Bassari, and to the north and the north-west are the Anufo and the Mamprusi respectively. They also share boundaries with the Kabre in the east and the Dagomba in the west.

Despite the existing widely acclaimed view that the Konkomba are one of the aboriginal groups of northern Ghana, their Ghanaian origin has been questioned in recent times. In his work, *Ethnic Conflicts in Northern Ghana*, Ibrahim Mahama contends that the Konkomba presence in Ghana dates back

¹ See J. D. Fage, 'Reflections on the Early History of the Mossi-Dagomba Group of States,' in J. Vansina, R. Mauny and L.V. Thomas (eds.), *The Historian in Tropical Africa* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), 177-81; D.H. Jones, 'Jakpa and the Foundation of Gonja,' *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana*, 6 (1992) 1-29; A. A. Iliasiu, 'The Origins of the Mossi-Dagomba States,' *Research Review*, 7, 2 (1970), 95-113; I. Wilks, 'The Mossi and the Akan States, 1400 to 1800,' in J. Ajayi and M. Crowder (eds.), *History of West Africa*, vol. 1. Third Edition, (New York: Longman, 1985), 465-502.

² Colonial Office, 'Report by Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the General Assembly of the United Nations on the Administration of Togoland under United Kingdom Trusteeship for the Year 1952,' (London, Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1953), 6.

³ D. Tait, *The Konkomba of Northern Ghana*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 1.

⁴ P. Barker, Peoples, Languages and Religion in Northern Ghana (Accra: Asempa Publishers, 1986), 170.

only to the colonial period. According to him, the pre-existing people in the Oti basin during the time of the Dagomba invasion in the fifteenth century were the 'Black Dagomba' and not the Konkomba.⁵ This pre-existing population, to him, were conquered by an invading group who became royals (*Nabihi*), and the conquered group became the commoners (*Tinbihi*). He attributes the growth of the Konkomba population in northern Ghana to massive migrations from Togo in the 1920s, thereby refuting the Konkomba claim of indigeneity in Ghana. In his view, all the Konkomba in Dagbon, Mamprusi, Gonja and Nanumba are immigrants.⁶

At present very little effort has been made by historians to trace the origins of the Konkomba. David Tait's *The Konkomba of Northern Ghana* remains the most authoritative work on the origins of the Konkomba. Yet, Tait's work offers no information on Konkomba origins beyond their thrust into the Oti River valley by the invading Dagomba in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Cliff Maasole has been the only historian who has attempted to trace the origins of the Konkomba.⁷ However, he has been unable to make any significant contribution to the subject because he dismisses Konkomba oral traditions as non-historical. On the authority of Tait, Maasole claims that the Konkomba had no migratory myths or traditions that could be used to trace their origin and migration. According to him, "what they [Konkomba] consider to be migration is their movement from Eastern Dagbon to their present homeland after their encounter with the Dagomba".⁸ This thinking led Maasole to the conclusion that "Konkomba origins do not depict very far off Sudanic links of either Western or Central Sudan, let alone beyond these

⁵ I. Mahama, *Ethnic Conflicts in Northern Ghana* (Tamale: Cyber Systems, 2003), 203 – 4.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 205.

⁷ C. Maasole, *The Konkomba and their Neighbours from the Pre-European Period to 1914* (Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 2006).

⁸ *Ibid.*, 23.

areas.”⁹ Having discounted the possibility of Konkomba origins outside the borders of northern Ghana, Maasole went ahead to suggest that the Konkomba were part of the “Paleolithic Man” who occupied modern Ghana before the Neolithic and Iron Age man made his appearance.¹⁰ In short, Maasole’s assertion merely confirms the views that the Konkomba had no history beyond their encounter with the Dagomba.¹¹

The aim of this article is to interrogate this view of the Konkomba as an ahistorical people by examining their origin and migrations. Using oral traditions of the various Konkomba clans, the article presents a detailed account of Konkomba origins, migrations and settlement histories. It analyses the various Konkomba traditions and traces their possible origins to areas outside the boundaries of modern Ghana and argues that Konkomba history transcends their encounter with the Dagomba. Finally, it sheds some light on how the Oti valley was peopled by Konkomba clans in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Origins of the Konkomba from 1400 to 1600

Oral tradition remains the most valuable and readily available source of reconstructing the histories of many African societies. However, there are several contradictions and disagreements among various traditions, and the Konkomba case is no exception. One version of Konkomba oral tradition claims that they emerged from a hole in the Oti River basin,¹² but others ascribe an outside origin to the Konkomba. Among those who assert an outside origin, some believe that the Konkomba were originally a Guan group that broke away from the Guan at Larteh and moved northward to their present location.¹³ Others, which I believe, present a more convincing and plausible narrative,

⁹ *ibid.*, 29.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, 26.

¹¹ Tait, *The Konkomba of Northern Ghana*, 226.

¹² Interview with Gabriel Lasim, Retired Teacher, Saboba, 7 July, 2009.

¹³ Interview with Kichakpojok Tawan, Kpassa, 26 June, 2009; Interview with Yaja Bitabi, Kpassa, 5 June, 2009.

hold that the Konkomba originated from the north-east beyond Ougaudougou into the Senegambia region.¹⁴

Had the Konkomba evolved in the Oti Basin, they would have moved many miles away from that point of origin after several centuries, considering their high mobility.¹⁵ Even if we were to accept Robert Comevin's assertion that the Konkomba did not embark on long migratory movements but only moved ten kilometres from one place to the other, after a period of five hundred years the Konkomba would have migrated thousands of miles away from the Yendi area.¹⁶ The assertion that the Konkomba originated from a hole in the Oti basin appears to be a recent invention, in view of their quest for a tribal history. This version confirms the general notion that the Konkomba were an autochthonous group in northern Ghana, and advance political claims to the area vis-à-vis their neighbours. This view, therefore, has political implications, making it hardly surprising that it is challenged by alternative accounts. For instance, Ibrahim Mahama, a Dagomba lawyer and author, claims that the original inhabitants of the Oti basin were not the Konkomba but the Black Dagomba.¹⁷

The version that claims that the Konkomba originated from Southern Ghana is also problematic. According to this account, the Konkomba were part of the Guan speaking group that inhabited southern Ghana before the arrival of the Akan in the forest area of Ghana. From southern Ghana, they migrated northward in search of farmlands. During their northward journey they settled for a brief period at Kpando in present-day Volta Region, which they called *n-kpando*, a term which in their

¹⁴ Interview with Gabriel Mabe, Retired Teacher, Saboba, 7 July, 2009. Ali Moro Ayana, Saboba, 5 July, 2009. Interview with Joshua Yakpir, Saboba, 8 January, 2014. Interview with Wajom Gmajir, Kujoon, 19 January, 2014.

¹⁵ See J. U. Kachim, "Staying on the Margins: Konkomba Mobility and Belonging in Northern Ghana, 1914–1996," (PhD Thesis, University of the Free State, Bloemfontein, 2018).

¹⁶ Robert Comevin, *Histoire du Togo* (Paris: Berger-Levrault, 1982), 31.

¹⁷ Mahama, *Ethnic Conflicts in Northern Ghana*, 203-205.

language meant "poaching site."¹⁸ From Kpando, the Konkomba made their way to Kete-Krachi where they settled for some time before moving to occupy the Kpandai area (Alfai). From Alfai, the Konkomba spread to occupy the triangle between Tamale, Yendi and Kpandai.¹⁹ It is not, however, clear when these migrations occurred. A document written by H. A. Blair suggests that the Nawuri were a mixture of Konkomba, Chumburu, and Asante.²⁰ This implies that the Konkomba arrived in the Alfai area before the Nawuri. The Nawuri traditions collected by J. E. K. Kumah also claim that the Nawuri met the Konkomba, who had scattered settlements all over Alfai, whom they fought and defeated. This defeat was said to have pushed the Konkomba northwards towards the Yendi and Saboba areas.²¹ Gonja oral tradition also asserts that they encountered the Konkomba in Alfai in the second half of the seventeenth century and whom they conquered.²² These traditions, when analysed together, reveal serious contradictions. If the Nawuri who claim to have preceded the Gonja had fought and sacked the Konkomba from Alfai, how did the Gonja come to meet them and also conquered them unless of course the two groups came together? But Nawuri traditions insist that the Nawuri came to their present home long before the Gonja.²³ It is very doubtful, to say the least, that the Nawuri met the Konkomba at Alfai. Had the Nawuri encountered the Konkomba in their present location, there would have been a significant impact of the Konkomba language and culture on the incoming Nawuri. But this is completely absent. Moreover, J. Dixon has shown that there was no archaeological evidence of any habitation of the Alfai area prior to the arrival of the

¹⁸ Interview with Yaja Bitabi, Kpassa, 26 June, 2009.

¹⁹ Interview with Kichakpojok Tawan, Elder of Nankpatiib, Kpassa, 27 June, 2009.

²⁰ PRAAD, Tamale, NRG/1/2, Boundary Disputes in Togoland, 1921, 4.

²¹ J. E. K. Kumah, "Nawuri and Kpandai Traditions," in *Ketekrachi Traditions*, Number 18, Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, Legon, 1966, 3.

²² UNESCO, "UNESCO Research into Oral Traditions, Oral Traditions of the Gonjas," Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, Legon, Nov. 1969.

²³ Kumah, "Nawuri and Kpandai Traditions", 4.

Nawuri.²⁴

The third tradition points to a place north-east of present-day Burkina Faso as the place of Konkomba origin. Most of the Konkomba clans claim to have migrated into modern Ghana from a place beyond Burkina Faso. Although the specific name of this place is not remembered, it is generally referred to as the Gurma country.²⁵ Whereas the routes of migration is not remembered in any detail, some suggest that on their way south from the Gurma country, they settled around *Mali* for some time before arriving in modern Ghana.²⁶ It is not possible to determine the veracity of this tradition, but it appears to have been influenced by the migration story of the Dagomba who claim that their ancestors assisted the king of *Mali* in his wars of conquests on their way south.²⁷

A more plausible version of the north-eastern origin account of the Konkomba origin is the one that associates the Konkomba with the Gurma migratory story. This tradition asserts that the Konkomba migrated from the Gurma country together with the Bimoba. A Gurma informant told J. C. Froelich, a French colonial official and anthropologist in the 1940s, that “we know that the Konkomba have come a long time ago from our country, they came here at the time of the Dagomba invasion.”²⁸ It is not clear which Dagomba invasion is being referred to here but this is most likely the *Dagban Sabla* or the Black Dagomba

²⁴ Report by Mr. J. Dixon on Representations Made to the Trusteeship Council of the United Nations Organization, Concerning the Status of the Nawuris and Nanjuros within the Togoland Area of the Gonja District, 4.

²⁵ Interview with Wajom Gmajrime, Elder of Kujoon, 17 January, 2014. The place described as beyond Burkina Faso could possibly be Withers-Gill’s ‘Western Sudan.’ See J. Withers-Gill, *A Short History of the Dagomba Tribe*, Translated from a Hausa Manuscript in the Library of the School of Oriental and African Studies, London, n. d., 1.

²⁶ Interview with Gabriel Mabe, Retired Educationist, Saboba, 7 July, 2009.

²⁷ See E. F. Tamakloc, *A Brief History of the Dagbamba People* (Accra: Government Printing Office, 1931),

²⁸ J. C. Froelich, *La Tribu Konkomba Du Nord Togo* (Dakar: IFAN, 1954), 224.

invasion, which occurred before the arrival of Na Gbewa. The implication of this assertion is that the Konkomba origin story must be viewed from the perspective of the larger Gurma group. The traditions of the Gurma relate that they came from far away Bornu in present-day north-east Niger. From Bornu, they migrated to present-day Burkina Faso where they founded Nungu, the capital of the Gurma kingdom.²⁹

According to a dominant Mossi tradition, the first sovereign of Nungu, Jaba Lompo, was a son of Naaba Wedraogo.³⁰ But this version appears to be totally unknown to the Gurma and appears to stem from Mossi ideological imperialism.³¹ The Gurma themselves assert that the first king of Nungu, Jabo Lompo, descended from heaven riding on a white horse accompanied by his wife, at a place called Kudjoa Boangu.³² Due to the complexity of Gurma history, it is difficult to obtain an exact chronology of the movement of the Gurma group which became Konkomba. What seems, however, certain is that it was at Nungu that a group broke off from the main Gurma stock and moved south probably in the eleventh century. This southward group split into Bimoba and Konkomba. The Bimoba believe that they came into their present home from Fada N'Gurma together with the Konkomba before the Dagomba arrived.³³ Robert Comevin corroborates this account when he asserts that a group of people were expelled from Borgu (Nungu) by the Gurma from Fada N'Gurma and that it is from this Gurma group that the Konkomba of northern Ghana ought to seek their origins.³⁴ Froelich seems to have taken the same line of argument when he concludes that:

²⁹ R. B. Mahama, "Bimoba-Komba Relations," B. A. Long Essay, Legon, May 2001, 3.

³⁰ M. Izard, "The Peoples and Kingdoms of the Niger Bend and Volta Basin," in D.T. Niane (ed.), *General History of Africa* Vol. IV. Africa from the Twelfth to the Sixteenth Century (Heinemann: UNESCO, 1984), 225.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Mahama, "Bimoba-Komba Relations", 3.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Comevin, *Histoire du Togo*, 26.

... the first movement of population which one knows of is a vast migration towards the south, of people coming from a country which today is the Gurma country. The emigrants were at least of two kinds: Dagomba and Gurma, speaking two languages of the same family. The former settled in the west, the latter in the east.³⁵

These earlier Dagomba immigrants who came with the Konkomba were the Black Dagomba and not the Gbewa group. In this case, according to Froelich, they were neighbours of the Konkomba to the west. It is rather doubtful if the two groups migrated from the same place because they spoke different languages. Whilst the Konkomba spoke a Gurma language, the Black Dagomba spoke the Mole-language.

If we accept the view that the Konkomba descended from the Gurma, which appears to be more convincing, then Bornu should be looked upon as the original home of the Konkomba. According to the Bassari tradition collected by J. K. Kumah, the Bassari were also part of the Bimoba-Konkomba migration wave. The split between these three, according to the Bassari tradition, occurred in the Gurma country. The story is that the progenitors of Bassari, Bimoba, Konkomba were brothers who quarreled over a cow tail leading to their separation and their various places of settlement.³⁶ According to this tradition, in the course of their stay in the Gurma country, a feast of appeasement was celebrated and a cow was killed for that purpose. During this celebration, a dispute arose among the brothers over a cow tail and degenerated into a serious conflict. During the conflict, the oldest among the three brothers suffered a humiliating defeat and was banished from the family. While fleeing, the banished brother left behind a *Talisman* which the Konkomba call *Gulma* and, therefore, Gurma became the tribal name for the

³⁵ Froelich, *La Tribu Konkomba Du Nord Togo*, 225.

³⁶ Kumah, "Nawuri and Kpandai Traditions," 40.

descendants of this man (*Bigrumaab*).³⁷ Shortly after this incident the Konkomba, together with the Bassari, moved south and the latter, under their leader, Basante, settled under a mountain in present day northern Togo which they called Bassar.³⁸ This tradition complicates the issue rather than clarifies it. It implies that the name "Gurma" emerged from the split rather than giving rise to it. The Gurma are known to be the parent stock of all the Gur speakers of the Volta basin and, therefore, could not have emerged out of the this split which is the source of the divisions between the Gur- speakers.

The Konkomba version of the tradition throws considerable light on the Bassari tradition. It suggests that the split occurred after a section of the Gurma had moved south into present day northern Ghana. The account asserts that the Bimoba and the Konkomba were brothers with the same father. The man could not find wives for his two sons and called for a wrestling contest to determine who would be given the only wife he found. The victor was said to have obtained the woman and the vanquished was compensated with a cow tail.³⁹ The Konkomba claim that they descended from the victor whilst the Bimoba descended from the vanquished. But the Bimoba tradition asserts that the Konkomba ancestor actually chose a cow tail over the woman.⁴⁰ This has been the basis of a joking relationship between the Konkomba and the Bimoba to this day. A wrestling contest was not an unlikely method of choosing a suitor for a girl within the social context of the time. However, although the Konkomba and the Bimoba traditions are silent on the main cause of the separation, the Bassari version of a conflict over a cow tail appears a more plausible cause of the separation than a wrestling contest. It must have been a violent patricidal struggle that brought about the split.⁴¹

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Interview with Mawung Bayul, Chamba, 27 June, 2009.

⁴⁰ See the Bimoba account in Mahama, "Bimoba-Komba Relations," 7-8.

⁴¹ Traditions of quarrels splitting brothers and followers into two distinct groups are

Whatever might have caused the split, it is reassuring that both the Konkomba and the Bassari traditions agree on the common ancestry with the Bimoba. These traditions are further buttressed on all the essential points by the available documentary sources. A Hausa manuscript translated by Withers Gill asserts that both the Konkomba and the Bimoba are of Zamfara origin, but the Konkomba settled in their present home before the latter.⁴² E. F. Tamakloe presents another tradition which suggests that both the ancestors of the Konkomba and the Dagomba arrived in modern Ghana from the same direction. He notes that the ancestors of the Dagomba were a people of a gigantic stature called Kondor or Tiawomya.⁴³ They were believed to have inhabited the Dagomba country before the arrival of the Gbewa group. This is confirmed by A.W. Cardinall who argues that these earlier settlers were workers of iron and moved from one ore-supply to the other.⁴⁴ This tradition of giants links the Dagomba and the Konkomba to the biblical Noah. It states that the descendants of *Ad* settled in the province of Hadramaut where they multiplied and continued to worship God but after some time, they fell out with the true worship of God. For this reason, God sent Heber to preach to them to change their bad ways. Those who listened to Heber were saved but those who refused were destroyed by God. The survivors wandered around uninhabited countries till they arrived in the territory of present Dagbon. Their descendants were the Dagbamba and those who settled beyond the Oti River were the progenitors of

common in African history. See for example B. A. Ogot, "Kinship and Statelessness Among the Nilotes," J. Vansina, R. Mauny and L.V. Thomas (ed.), *The Historian in Tropical Africa* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 90.

⁴² Withers-Gill, *A Short History of the Dagomba Tribe*, 1.

⁴³ Tamakloe, *A Brief History of the Dagbamba*, 1. There is a similar tradition of a race of 'giants' who preceded the Kanuri inhabitants, south of Lake Chad. See T. Shaw, "The Approach through Archaeology to Early West African History," in J. F. Ade Ajayi and Ian Espie (ed.), *A Thousand Years of West African History* (Ibadan: University of Ibadan Press, 1981), 36.

⁴⁴ A. W. Cardinall, "Some Random Notes on the Customs of the Konkomba," *Journal of the Royal African Society*, 18, 69 (1918), 58.

the Konkomba races.⁴⁵ This “biblical origin hypothesis” may not be entirely tenable but suggests a relationship between the Konkomba and the Black Dagomba.

It is difficult to determine exactly when the migrations involving the Konkomba group occurred and when they entered modern Ghana. The only certainty is that the ancestors of the Konkomba broke away from the main Gurma group and moved into modern Ghana centuries before the arrival of Na Gbewa and his followers at Pusiga in the fifteenth century.⁴⁶ De Baros asserts that archaeological evidence suggests that some Bassari clans, which were possibly of Konkomba origin, were already settled in their present location and engaged in iron industry by 1300.⁴⁷ It appears that by the thirteenth century, the Konkomba were already settled in and around Yendi. Yendi (Tchare) has been identified as one of the oldest settlements in Ghana and its indigenous inhabitants were the Konkomba.⁴⁸ The existence of Konkomba settlements in and around Yendi was reported by Muslim traders who passed through the town before the eastward migration of the Dagomba into the area in the eighteenth century. Before the eastward thrust of the Dagomba into eastern Dagbon, Yendi was already an important town on the trade route to Hausaland and had attracted Muslim traders and clerics.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Tamakloe, *A Brief History of the Dagbamba*, 1–2. The term “Dagbamba” used by Tamakloe refers to the “Black Dagomba” or “Dagban Sabla” but not the Gbewa group. The Black Dagomba are the earlier Mole speaking group that was conquered by the Gbewa group in the fifteenth century and established the Dagomba state.

⁴⁶ J. D. Fage contend that the ancestors of the Dagomba were pushed south by Songhai Kings Sonni Ali and Askia Mohammed. See J. D. Fage, “Reflections on the Early History of The Mossi-Dagomba”, 178–9.

⁴⁷ De Barros, “How Far Inland Did the Arm of Slave Trade Reach?: An Overview of Slave Trade in Togo,” Conference in Honor of UCLA Emeritus Professor Merrick Posnansky, William A. Clark Memorial Library (2009), 6.

⁴⁸ Z. A. Mahama, “Traditional Political-Economy of Yendi,” B. A. Long Essay, Legon, 1986, 4.

⁴⁹ N. Levtzion, *Muslims and Chiefs in West Africa: A Study of Islam in the Middle Volta Basin in the Pre-colonial Period* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 87.

Nehemiah Levtzion points out that the first Muslim in Yendi was Umar Jabaghte, from Saryartenga, who settled among the Konkomba at Kuga about one kilometer east of Yendi, then known as Kyeli.¹ Later when the Dagomba arrived from Toma, he stayed among the Dagomba at Kuga. Due to this contact with the Konkomba, Jabaghte's descendants performed the ceremonial sacrifice at the Konkomba shrine called "Pabo".² But Yendi did not only attract traders; it also attracted military raids from Gurma chiefs. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Tchare was the target of Gurma invaders. A. H. Blair reports that:

A certain small tribe [ethnic group], known as ... 'Tawaliba' state definitely that, they are Gurmah; that many years ago, before the Dagomba came, a king of Grumah came down and invaded the Konkomba about Yendi, then called 'Kyali'...that when the (chief) of Gurmah returned, they remained behind and later moved to 'Djankali,' and thence to Pawaliba...³

The remnant of this group is very difficult to identify, but Ibrahim Mahama has suggested that they are now the Nagbiba at Wanbong. Confusing Tawaliba with Binagbiib, who are a lineage of Bigbem, is an error because the Bigbem do not regard the former as their kinsmen.⁴ Mahama's claim that "the Nagbiba are not Konkomba' and have no affinity of any kind either in language, culture or history with the Konkomba"⁵ cannot be

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid., 87.

³ H. A. Blair, cited in H. B. Martinson, *The Hidden History of Konkomba Wars* (Tamale: Masta Press, 1995), 51.

⁴ Mahama, *Ethnic Conflicts in Northern Ghana*, 165.

⁵ Ibid.

true. The Nagbiba themselves claim that they are Konkomba.⁶

The question of how far west and south of Yendi the Konkomba occupation extended before the emergence of the centralized kingdoms of Dagomba and Mamprusi is still a contested issue. Some scholars have claimed that there is evidence to suggest that at one time the Konkomba were resident as far west as Tamale.⁷ There was also a tacit admission to this view by a Dagomba elder who told M. D. Iddi that the Dagomba met both the 'Dagban Sabla' and the Konkomba in the Tamale region whom they subdued.⁸ In Gonja oral tradition, Ndewura Jakpa was also said to have encountered both the Konkomba and Nanumba in Salaga and the Alfai whom he conquered.⁹ Jack Goody also suggests that there were Konkomba speakers in eastern Gonja before the arrival of the Ngbanya.¹⁰ In the north, the Konkomba were believed to have been driven out of Nalerigu by Na Atabia who moved his capital to the place. There has also been a view that the Konkomba had spread as far south as Bimbilla before the invasion of Mantambo.¹¹

The tradition of a section of the Dagara, the Guombo,

⁶ Personal conversation with Bageri Thomas, a Nagbiba, Tamale, January 2017. Interview with Ubor Yamba, N-nalog, 11 January, 2014.

⁷ See D. Tait, "History and Social Organization," *Transactions of the Gold Coast and Togoland Historical Society*, 1, 5 (1955), 185-215. P. Streven, "Konkomba or Dagomba?" (A Linguistic Corollary to History and Social Organization), *Transactions of the Gold Coast and Togoland Historical Society*, 1, 5 (1955), 186-215. Labelle Prussim, *Architecture in Northern Ghana: A Study of Forms and Functions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 24.

⁸ See M. D. Iddi, Field Notes, Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, Legon, 1973-74.

⁹ UNESCO, "UNESCO Research into Oral Traditions: Oral Traditions of the Gonjas," Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, Legon, Nov. 1969.

¹⁰ J. Goody, "The Mandé and the Akan Hinterland," J. Vansina, R. Mauny and L. V. Thomas (ed.), *The Historian in Tropical Africa* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 202.

¹¹ See A. A. Illiasu, "Northern History Scheme: Manprugu, the Oral Traditions of its People", Vol. 1, Department of History, Legon, Ghana, n. d. 36

states that they originated from Konkomba territory. A version of the tradition of the Owlo of the Upper West claims that their ancestors were ejected from the Konkomba land because they indulged in 'Gbang'.¹² Tuurey expressed doubt about the link between these Dagara people and the Konkomba but conceded that "since the Guombo insist and state definitively that their forebears came from Konkomba country, this must be explained rationally in one or two ways."¹³ The first explanation he offers is that some Konkomba elements could have been displaced by the Mantambo invasion of the area forcing them to migrate to the north-west of present-day Ghana. Secondly, there could have been some Konkomba elements among the Mole-speakers who emigrated westward with the Dagara as a result of the Nyagse invasion of Western Dagbon in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. According to Tuurey, a section of Konkomba elements might have moved north-wards to the Lambussie area where they ultimately became absorbed and assimilated by the Isala.¹⁴ If this is true, then it suggests that Konkomba elements were widely spread within the Volta basin before the area was invaded by the state-making groups. The Konkomba Youth Association (KOYA) has buttressed this view by asserting that the Konkomba had occupied a large area in the Northern Region including the whole of Eastern Dagbon before the Dagomba arrived in the fifteenth century. According to them, in the past, the boundaries of their territory:

stretches from Yapla, south-east of Tamale moving northwards through Kpilgini, Karaga and thence to Sakulo. From Sakulo it moves in an easterly direction through Nakurugu, Nyambande to Akunonyi to the Ghana-Togo border in the north. From

¹² S. T. Terry, "A History of Owlo/Uollo," (B.A. Long Essay, University of Cape Coast, 1999), 6-7.

¹³ G. Tuurey, *An Introduction to the Mole-Speaking Community* (Wa: Catholic Press, 1982), 32.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Akunonyi the Ghana-Togo border serves as the boundary towards the south.¹⁵

KOYA, however, admits that in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Konkomba were displaced from their original home by the Dagomba and the Anufo to the east and the south respectively.¹⁶ This displacement pushed the Konkomba to their present homeland in the Oti plain. The migration of the Konkomba southward and eastward occurred in family groups. Whenever a family left one location, they were later followed by their kinsmen and, with time, these family groups came together to form clans and sub-clans.

The Settlements of Konkomba Clans in the Oti Plains

The Konkomba are divided into many clans. These clans arrived in the Oti plains at different times. One of the first groups to arrive were the Bichabob clan.¹⁷ However, according to H. A. Blair, the Bichabob were not aboriginals but invaders who pushed out an earlier group.¹⁸ Their tradition suggests that they came from the north of Yendi to inhabit the western banks of the Oti River. But not all the Bichabob clan came from the north east of their present settlement. Different sub-groups came from different directions. The Buakutiib, for instance, claim that their ancestors came from *Nkoon*, possibly the Sansanne Mango area. They came by River Oti in a canoe to their present location.¹⁹ The exact route of migration is not given but it is clear that they passed through the area now inhabited by the Anufo. They claim that in the course of their journey a crocodile helped them, and for this reason, the crocodile is the totem by the Buakutiib clan.²⁰ Since the Buakutiib did not encounter the Anufo in the Sansanne Mango area, it can be deduced that their migration south into

¹⁵ KOYA, "Supplementary Paper on the Konkomba Position," n.d., 6.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Interview with Tigur Bombo, Nalogni, Saboba, 7 January, 2012.

¹⁸ H. A. Blair cited in Martinson *The Hidden History of Konkomba Wars*, 41.

¹⁹ Interview with Uninkpel Bingrini, Buakuln, Saboba, 12 July, 2009.

²⁰ Ibid.

their present location occurred before the Anufo established Sansanne-Mango in the second half of the eighteenth century.

Among the Bichabob, however, the Buagbatib clan was the first to arrive in the Saboba area and are regarded as *Bitindam* (Land owners) of Saboba and their ancestral shrine, *Kuboan*, is the land shrine of Saboba.²¹ The Bikumbom claim that they came from the east, from a place called Lijoltaab, now in Togo, under their leader Guu. They admit that upon their arrival they met the village of Buagbaln at its present location. Their ancestor, Guu, crossed the Oti River on a hunting expedition and found plenty of game and fish at Buagbaln. He brought his family to settle at a place close to Buagbaln called Likumbonampal before moving west to the present location at Kpatapaab.²² David Tait describes the Buagbatib and Bikumbom as occupying the same district and believes that it is to their district that the term Saboba is applied by the Dagomba and cartographers.²³ Though not related by blood, the two clans had evolved into a single administrative unit. Whereas Buagbatib became *Bitindaam* or “landowner’s people,” the Bikumbom were *Uninkpelanib* or “the Elders people.”²⁴

The Nalatiib clan is one of the subgroups of the Bichabob group whose traditions of origin are well preserved. According to their tradition the Nalatiib clan was founded by a certain Ipiin. Ipiin was a hunter who embarked on a hunting expedition from their original home in Gushiegu. He first settled at Chanchan (Sunson) and hunted around their present location, Nalogni. Ipiin came to settle there because of the abundance of game at the place and the depletion of game at Chanchan. Binalob and Nankpatiib were also originally part of Nalatiib before breaking away to establish their own clans. After a considerable number of

²¹ Interview with Elders of Bekumbom, Ujabiligban Tigen and Tamanja Koyadin, Chief’s Palace, Saboba, 9 January, 2014.

²² Ibid.

²³ D. Tait, “The Political System of the Konkomba,” (PhD Thesis, University of London, 1952), 59.

²⁴ Ibid.

years in their present location at Nalogni, Ipiin was joined by his brother whom he directed to settle at present-day N-nalog.²⁵ His brother's descendants became the Binalob. The Binalob spoke a different dialect from that of the Nalatiib but there continued to be ritual relations between the two clans.²⁶ After some time in their present location at Nalogni, Ipiin and his people were faced with a serious danger and after ordering his children to escape, Ipiin entered the ground.²⁷ This occurred at the place where their ancestral shrine (Kunang) is now located. This danger is sometimes identified as a war with the Bisabaalb during which the Nalatiib were defeated and killed to near extinction.²⁸ Those who survived the carnage sought refuge in distant lands and returned later to begin the Nalatiib clan. Those who returned were the three sons of Ipiin – Bola, Kotien and Makpadaan. These three sons came to represent the three lineages of the Nalatiib – Bolado, Kotiengo and Wajado (Makpadaan).²⁹

David Tait believes that the Nankpatiib clan was also originally part of the Nalatiib and only broke off at their present location at Nalogni and, in his estimation, they must have been one of the last clans to come into being.³⁰ The apical ancestor of the Nankpatiib was, probably, the last person to join Ipiin from Gushiegu. Nalatiib tradition states that a man came from *Nkoon* (Komba territory) and requested for land on which to settle. This man was given a place near a very big stone on which a buffalo had been killed. This stone was smeared with the fat of the buffalo, hence when the man settled near the stone, his house

²⁵ Interview with Kayil Mado, conducted by Barnabas Kayil, Saboba, 2008 and transcribed by the author.

²⁶ D. Tait, "The Territorial Pattern and Lineage System of the Konkomba," J. Middleton and D. Tait (ed.), *Tribes Without Rulers* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1958), 172.

²⁷ H. Zimon, "Guinea Corn Harvest Rituals among the Konkomba of Northern Ghana," *Studia Ethnologica*, 2, Str. 207–217, (1990), 212–3.

²⁸ Interview with Tigur Bombo, Nalogni, Saboba, 7 January, 2012.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Tait, *The Konkomba of Northern Ghana*, 154.

became known as '*n-nakpendo*', meaning 'cow fat's house'. The descendants of the man became known as *Nnakpentiib* which later transformed into *Nankpatiib*.³¹ This narrative is, however, not supported by the traditions of the *Nankpatiib* themselves. The *Nankpatiib* traditions claim that God created their ancestor *Nankpan* and his wife, *Janku*, at their present location on the bank of the *Oti River*. The name *Nankpatiib*, they assert, originated from their apical ancestor, *Nankpan*.³² Their ancestral shrine, *Tapek*, is a stone on the *Oti River* bank.³³ The absence of traditions of origin outside the *Oti river* banks seems to confirm the view that they were originally part of the *Nalatiib* group. In the 1900s, they migrated into the *Bigbem* and *Binafeb* territories where they sacked the *Bigbem* from *Bouragbam* and occupied it.³⁴ From there, they moved into the triangle between *Saboba*, *Wapuli* and *Sanguli*. Their presence in *Kinafek* brought about the *Jagbel* rebellion of 1940.³⁵

Another *Konkomba* group was the *Bimonkpem* known to the *Dagomba* as *Monkpimba*. The clans subsumed under this name were very diversified and disunited. As Blair states "... the *Monkpenba* [tribe] as a whole is disunited; the clans are intermittently hostile and there seemed no chance of unification until the colonial administration brought them under the *Dagomba* administration."³⁶ The *Bimonkpem* clans are found in the territories between *Demon* and *Samboli* which includes *Kucha* and *Kugnani*. They are also found north of *Saboba* where the populations of *Gbangbapeng*, *Nambiri* and *Sanguli* are almost entirely *Bimonkpem*. But the most important ones include, *Samboltiib*, *Bignaanliib*, *Kutchatib*, *Bututib*, *Kanjotib*,

³¹ Interview with *Tigur Bombo*, *Nalogni*, *Saboba*, 7 June, 2002.

³² Interview with *Moakpanja Gmajir*, the chief of *Naakpando*, *Nankapdo*, 8 January, 2014.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Froelich*, *La Tribu Konkomba Du Nord Togo*, 214.

³⁵ See *B. Talton*, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana: The Konkomba Struggle for Political Equality* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 91.

³⁶ *H. A. Blair* cited in *Martinson*, *The Hidden History of the Konkomba Wars*, 41.

Kpaltiib, Chatiib, Koukoutiib, Sangutiib, Binandim, Chagbantib, Sangmantiib, Monkpetiib and Kutultiib, etc.

The Dagomba regard the Kpaltiib clan as one of the oldest and the source of all Bimonkpem “tribe.”³⁷ J.C. Froerich claims that the Kpaltiib settled at Kpalba a long time ago and were autochthones since they say that “God created our ancestors here, but we do not know where exactly.”³⁸ In my interviews, however, Kpaltiib traditions reveal that the group is made of different people coming into the Oti valley from various directions. The *Kasiintiib* (middle People) were the first people to arrive in Kpalb. The second group, the *Taatiib*, were a combination of Gonja fishermen and Konkomba trappers.³⁹ These earlier groups were followed by the *Paabyaab* (Upper people) who settled near the forest because they were originally hunters but were later joined by salt traders of Hausa origin whom they called *Yakitiib*.⁴⁰

The Samboltiib traditions recount their encounter with the Dagomba in the Yendi area. Their traditions assert that their ancestors migrated from the Gushiegu area to Sambu, a village near Mion, on the Yendi-Tamale road, under their elder, Saam.⁴¹ It is not known exactly when this migration occurred but traditions claim that the Samboltiib lived at Sambu for more than a hundred years before the Dagomba arrived. It appears that at Sambu the Samboltiib interacted with the Gurma because Saam was said to have married a Gurma woman. The Samboltiib’s eastward migration was occasioned by Dagomba pressure. From western Dagomba in the Tamale area, the Dagomba began to move towards Sambu and first settled at Tamalgo, a village near Kpabia, before arriving at Sambu.⁴² According to Tamakloe,

³⁷ Froelich, *La Tribu Konkomba Du Nord Togo*, 211.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Interview with Aleji Kagon, Chief of Kpalb, Kpalba, 24 April, 2017.

⁴⁰ Interview with Ali Moro Ayana, Son of Ali Kamashiegu, Saboba, 17 April, 2017.

⁴¹ Interview with the Chiefs and Elders of Sambol, Samboli, 6 January, 2012.

⁴² Tamakloe, *A Brief History of the Dagbamba*, 59.

the movement of the Dagomba to Sambu was occasioned by a misfortune to a Dagomba prince. At Kpabia, a Dagomba prince died suddenly after he had been appointed the first *Mion-Lana*. His successor, in an attempt to avoid a similar fate, moved his headquarters to Sambu, which was then inhabited by Samboltib. The Samboltib left behind their fetish which was then a young baobab tree, and moved across the Oti.⁴³ They stayed there for a long period of time and, "...owing to the fruitlessness of the place, they were compelled by a continuous famine to quit that place for their present location at the west bank of the Oti" which they called 'Sambul'.⁴⁴ The migration of Samboltiib from Sambu towards the east was not a conquest of the Samboltib clan by the Dagomba. They might have felt threatened by the Dagomba presence and moved east to avoid any interference in their affairs. According to their traditions, Saam and his people brought their ancestral shrine from Sambu, which passed into a tree on the east side of the Oti River before they moved across to their present home in Sambul. However, the Kanjotiib, who came from the north, probably the Gushiegu area, to settle at that location, sought to prevent them from having access to their shrine, which brought about wars between the two groups.⁴⁵

Neither Samboltiib traditions nor Tamakloe give any indication of when this migration occurred but it appears that it occurred before the Dagomba were finally pushed east by the Gonja. By this reckoning, the eastward migration of the Samboltiib clan cannot be placed later than the eighteenth century when the Dagomba capital was moved to Yendi. It is believed that Saam, the founding ancestor of the clan, did not die but sunk into the ground at their present location.⁴⁶ This incident gave the place its name "*Saam bil*" which means "Saam planted." This suggests that the migration southwards from Gushiegu and the eastward migration across the Oti and back to the west bank

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Interview with Nasangma Kufegma, Samboli, 12 April, 2014.

⁴⁶ Interview with the Chief and Elders of Sambol, Samboli, 6 January, 2012.

of Oti all occurred within one generation, but this movement is not likely to have occurred in a generation. Like the case of the Gonja Jakpa, Saam must have been used to represent a number of Samboltiib elders who led the clan to their present location. From Sambol, a group of Samboltiib migrated northward to settle at Sanguli, north of Saboba. It was population pressure and food scarcity that forced them to migrate.⁴⁷ This kind of emigration was common among the Konkomba and it was a safety valve both against over population and internal wars. According to the oral accounts of the Sangutiib, Nimpah, on account of his hunting expeditions founded Sanguli. As a result of the abundance of game and fertile lands in Sanguli Nimpah broke away from the main Sambol group and settled at Sanguli. Later, more people joined him there.⁴⁸ This migration must have occurred in the early nineteenth century, since Labarl, the elder whom the Germans met in 1897, was the son of Nimpah.⁴⁹

The Kutultiib migrated from Tchang-wi near Mango to settle at Nambiri where they met the Komba whom they fought and drove across the river and intermarried with those who were left behind.⁵⁰ According to Froelich, their territory was continuously raided by the Anufo from Sansanne Mango.⁵¹ Even though Kutul traditions do not mention Anufo raids as a factor in their migration, it is clear that these raids might have forced them to move south to their present location at Kuntuli. Their present home of Kutuli was founded by Nadeen, who was a hunter from

⁴⁷ Froelich, *La Tribu Konkomba Du Nord Togo*, 212, The group that broke away from Sambol and moved to Sanguli were of the Nankpatiib clan. It is said that a Samboli woman married a Nankpatiib man and after giving birth she left her husband's place with her son to her father's place. This child grew up in Sambol speaking the Sambol dialect but was fully aware of his Nankpando descent. Today the people of Sanguli sacrifice to both the ancestral shrine of Nakpatiib and Samboltiib. This information was obtained in an interview with Nakoja Daniel, a candidate for Sanguli Chiefship, Chamba, 4 January, 2014.

⁴⁸ Interview with Kanambe Dalafu, Sanguli, 13 July, 2009.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Interview with Ponpir Mpuan, Utindaan of Kutul, Kutuli, 12 January, 2014.

⁵¹ Froelich, *La Tribu Konkomba Du Nord Togo*, 210.

Nambiri. His descendants (Benadeem) became the owners of the land (Bitindam) and it is believed that the Benadeem were followed by Jatiib, who became *Betidamkpaab*. The last group to arrive from Nambiri was the Moayutiib, who were fishermen. They arrived in canoes with the Chagbaantiib.⁵² Even though the Chagbaantiib are now regarded as a distinct clan, they had lived at the Nambiri area with the Kutultiib as the “same clan under two different names.”⁵³ This claim is corroborated by Chagbaan traditions that they came to their present home with the Kutultiib who were their kinsmen.⁵⁴

The Koukoutiib claim to have descended from a hunter from a distant land. This man is believed to come from a people, the Konkomba called the *Bisabab*. This Usabakja arrived via the River Oti and settled at the riverbank and instead of being a fisherman, the man was a hunter. Once he settled, he hunted in the immediate surroundings. On one of his hunting expeditions, he killed an elephant close to a hill. This made the people to call him “Uku kuln ja” meaning “he killed an elephant”.⁵⁵ The place where he killed the elephant became known as Kukuln and he moved from the riverbank to settle there. His descendants became the Koukoutiib. They met an earlier group of Binalob from N-nalog but it is not clear how they called their settlement before the stranger group arrived. These groups integrated and became one clan, but the earlier group formed the lineage of *Bitindam* of Kukuln. Kukuln together with Chakpeng, Wayul and N-nalog had developed a kinship relationship with a common

⁵² Interview with Ponpir Mpuan, Utindaan of Kutul, Kutuli, 12 January, 2014.

⁵³ Froelich, *La Tribu Konkomba Du Nord Togo*, 210.

⁵⁴ Interview with Juliib Buayi, Chagbaan, 11 January, 2014. The traditions related by Juliib states that their ancestor, Gbaja, gave birth to Nachiin who is remembered as the father of Chagbaantiib. Their ancestral god Nampatul is a baobab tree. But there is another tradition from the Kpalba perspective that Chagbaan is inhabited by a fugitive from Kpalb.

⁵⁵ Interview with Nborkan Timunyun, Kukunzoli, 11 January, 2014.

ancestral shrine called *Liwal Puboa*.⁵⁶ It is clear from the history of these groups that they all came from different directions and grew into a single entity as a result of the proximity of their settlements at their present location.

The Chatiib were also one of the first Konkomba groups to have migrated south from the Gushiegu area. It was this clan that established Chaar or Kyali in the vicinity of present day Yendi before the Dgaomba arrived there. The Benajub and the Kpanjabtiib are both sub-clans of the Chatiib with the same ancestor.⁵⁷ In the seventeenth century, as a result of Gonja pressure, the Dagomba moved east into the Chatiib area. As A.W. Cardinall put it:

To avoid this incessant fighting Na Luro, who had succeeded Dariziogo, deemed it expedient to abandon the capital and to build a new one in Kpamkpamba country. Na Luro occupied the Kpamkpamba town Chare, drove the people away to Wangbun on the Demon road and Chare became Yendi from that time.⁵⁸

The Chatiib were forced to move east to establish another Chaar east of the Oti near Kanjock.⁵⁹ Chatib oral narratives claim that no war was fought between the Chatiib and the Dagomba but that their movement out of Yendi was voluntary and gradual.⁶⁰ From Chaar in present Togo, the clan spread to other areas like Naware, Kamboul, Bompal, Djepil, Nakpateo and Bapoure all in present day Togo. An informant explained to Froelich how they left Chaar:

Our ancestors lived first at Chaar near

⁵⁶ Interview with Ubor Yamba, N-nalog, 11 January, 2014.

⁵⁷ Interview with Mahama Takai, Chief of Kulkpene, Kulkpene, 17 July, 2009.

⁵⁸ A.W. Cardinall, *Tales Told in Togoland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 262.

⁵⁹ Froelich, *La Tribu Konkomba Du Nord Togo*, 211.

⁶⁰ Interview with Mahama Takai, Chief of Kulkpene, Kulkpene, 17 July, 2009.

Kandjok; one day my mother died, the death of my mother was not natural, a sorcerer had eaten her life (*oussouon*); this sorcerer lived with us, but our father did not want to kill him, and we left the place with all our relatives. So we came to live at Djepil, I was still a child, this was about seventy years ago, then a few years later we came here to Naware and here I married.⁶¹

This suggests that one of the main causes of the migration for the Konkomba was witchcraft and unexplained deaths.

The Sagmantiib have no knowledge of their home outside the Oti valley. They point to Butun as their ancestral home and claim to have settled there before the Bichabob arrived. Their ancestral shrine, *Lival Piibon*, found near Butun, was found in the Oti River during a fishing expedition by a slave. This god has remained on a small hill close to the Oti River where it was found.⁶² The lineage of Tapotiib was the “owner of the shrine lineage”, and perhaps was the owners of the land (*Bitindam*).⁶³ In the early nineteenth century, they moved out of Butun to settle at Kasseman, Tapong, Ouabouniane, Tonin and Bombal in modern Togo. The Sagmantib are composed of three major lineages, Tapotiib, Tonintib and Bombatib and the fourth, Sandatiib, had been formed by the 1890s.⁶⁴ The names of the lineages suggest that these lineages developed not in their homeland at Butun but in their new territories in present day Togo. Since their rebellion against the French colonial administration at Ouabounmane in 1943, Sagmantiib almost entirely abandoned the region of Kasseman and Tapon and moved into the British territory and further south to the Krachi areas. A section of them were led into

⁶¹ Froelich, *La Tribu Konkomba Du Nord Togo*, 211–2.

⁶² Interview with Gnansiin Biye, Uninkpel, Chindere, 31 December, 2012.

⁶³ *Ibid.* In this district the ancestral shrine doubles as the land shrine which is a common phenomenon among the Konkomba.

⁶⁴ Interview with Gnansiin Biye, Chinderi, 31 December, 2012.

the British territory by Kpadin.⁶⁵

The Bigbem seems to be made up of people of different origin. The *Ugbimbordoyaab* claim that they migrated from Karaga after a big war with some people fighting on horseback.⁶⁶ According to their tradition told to Blair which Froelich refers to in his work, the Bigbem originally came from Mango as a result of Anufo pressure. After moving south, they came into contact with the Bichabob before moving north to the Bouragbam area.⁶⁷ The people of Nayel claim to be the purest race of the Bigbem clan. The ancestors of the Nayel people settled at Bouragbam near Tchangpon, from where they were sacked by the Nakpantiib.⁶⁸ The Kooon people claim that they were all the children of one Kunteen, who brought them to Kujoon after it was founded by Ugoln.⁶⁹ Another section of the Bigbem clan believes that they came from the Gurma country and Blair identified yet another group called Gbin-Dagomba who believed they were related to the Dagomba and came with them to their present location.⁷⁰ The present researcher could not confirm this assertion except that he found that one lineage (*Bikpamyaab*) has been completely assimilated by the Dagomba and, till today, regard themselves as Dagomba.⁷¹

The Binafeeb originally migrated from the north, possibly, the Gurma territory either after the Komba or with them to settle near Gushiegu. In the face of raids from the Anufo, they organized themselves under their elders to resist these raids. Under Bugutandi and Kugbong, the Nafeba fought the Anufo but

⁶⁵ Interview with Unanjin Kpadin, An Elder of Sagmanti, Chamba, 29 January, 2014.

⁶⁶ Interview information recounted to the researcher by Labri Indico, a history student at the University of Education, Winneba, 15 February, 2014.

⁶⁷ Froerlch, *La Tribu Konkomba, Du Nord Togo*, 214.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Interview with Wajom Gmagri, Kujoon, 19 January, 2014.

⁷⁰ Froerlch, *La Tribu Konkomba, Du Nord Togo*, 214.

⁷¹ Interview with Wajom Gmagri, Kujoni, 12 January, 2014.

failed to ward them off. To avoid the Anufo raids the Binafeeb migrated south first to Nashego and, again, to Nafecher where their ancestral shrine is now sited.⁷² The main group who migrated from Gushiegu appears to be the Bordotiib who are the “landowner’s” (*Bitindam*) of Wapuli. However, most of the Nafeba clans were formed in their present location. For instance, the Kpietiib group, whose totem is a python, is a hunting clan from the Bechabob clan of Kpiek near Saboba.⁷³ The Jagbetiib who controlled the Jagbel lands also came from Kunandu near Saboba and settled at Jagbel when it was uninhabited.⁷⁴ They have their shrine at Nanga, where there are the legendary ruins of the Kondodenas.⁷⁵ The Kacheentib are also said to have migrated from Kacheen around Saboba in the Nankpatiib territory.⁷⁶ Some elders of the Binafeeb however claim that they had been settled in their present home since the thirteenth century.⁷⁷ From the account given by H. A. Blair, it appears that at Nafecher, the Nafeba recognized the authority of the Gushie-Na. He notes that “until some forty years ago when the village of the chief Elder of Nafeba (Nafekali) was destroyed by the Gbimba, the Nafeba were still under Gushiegu.”⁷⁸ This claim is very tenuous if not completely bogus. It would have been very much unreasonable for the Nafeba to continue to pay allegiance to an overlord who was unable to protect them against outside raids. The nature of the relationship between the Gushie-Na and the Nafeba was, most probably, one of friendship.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Froelich, *La Tribu Konkomba Du Nord Togo*, 221.

⁷⁴ ADM. 67/5/2, Village Record Book, Vol. 2, 9 Sep. 1919–31 Dec. 1923.

⁷⁵ Froelich, *La Tribu Konkomba Du Nord Togo*, 220.

⁷⁶ It is said that a Nafeba woman married a Nakpatiib man and when the man died the widow returned to Kinafeek with a son who grew up to speak Linafel but still regards his father’s people as his people. This information was acquired from Daniel Nicna Jorbor who is himself Ukacheenja.

⁷⁷ Interview with Mr. Joshua Yagbir, an Elder of Jabel clan of Binafeeb, Saboba, 14 January, 2014.

⁷⁸ PRAAD, Tamale, NRG/2/33, Konkomba Language, Customs and Constitution Enquiry, 1931.

The people of Nambiri say their ancestor, Tandaal, was a hunter from the Binagbiib clan of Wanbong. He settled at old Nambiri near River Oti, called Tandaaldo, and interacted with the Anufo. He married an Anufo woman from Achuma. His children grew up speaking Chakossi, the Anufo language. At Tadaaldo, another group of people from the Bichabob clan of Liwalpu came and joined them. After some time, the Nambiri people moved to their present location because crocodiles were destroying their animals. They met a Kabre man called Bamja at the present site of Nambiri who refused to show them the gods of the land.⁷⁹ For this reason, all sacrifices were made on a grave which became a fetish of Nambiri called Bamja. Up to date the Anufo continue to call Nambiri by the name Namba after the Kabre man. In the 1890s, Jagri, whom the Germans made the chief of Nambiri was three generations removed from Tandaal who founded the settlement of old Nambiri.⁸⁰ It can be deduced that Tandaal migrated from Wambong to Nambiri in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth centuries.

Conclusion

From the above discussion, it can be concluded that by the beginning of the nineteenth century, almost every Konkomba clan in the vicinity of Saboba was settled. A number of significant facts have however emerged from this article. The first is that, the origin of the Konkomba could be traced to areas outside the borders of modern Ghana. It has been demonstrated that although the Konkomba are regarded as one of the indigenous groups of northern Ghana, they migrated into the country from the north-east, possibly, the Western Sudan. They arrived in the territories of modern Burkina Faso as a Gurma group for which reason Borgu in present day Niger can be put forward as the original home of the Konkomba. This means that Konkomba history goes beyond the Volta basin in modern northern Ghana. Concerning the dates of the movements of the Konkomba, nothing more

⁷⁹ Interview with Ibrahim Nigbun, Nambiri, 12 December, 2014.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

than possibilities can, at the moment, be established. The only certainty is that the Konkomba arrived in the middle Volta basin before the state building groups entered northern Ghana in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The article has shown that on arrival, the Konkomba occupied a wide area stretching from Bimbilla in the south to Nalerigu in the north and as far west as Tamale before being pushed into the Oti plains by their more centralised neighbours. It has also been shown that they arrived on the Oti banks of their present home in family groups. From the traditions of the various Konkomba clans, it is clear that these groups arrived at different times. Some clans, precisely the Bichabob, were among the first groups to arrive in the Saboba area. Although there might have been an earlier group that inhabited the Oti plains before Konkomba arrival, virtually nothing is known about these earlier inhabitants from the Konkomba traditions.

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