

# ABIBISEM

JOURNAL OF AFRICAN CULTURE AND CIVILIZATION



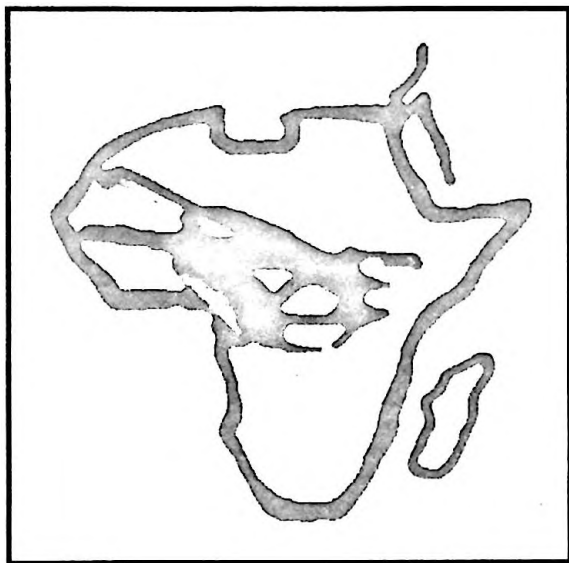
A Publication of the Department of History  
University of Cape Coast, Ghana

VOLUME 8, 2019

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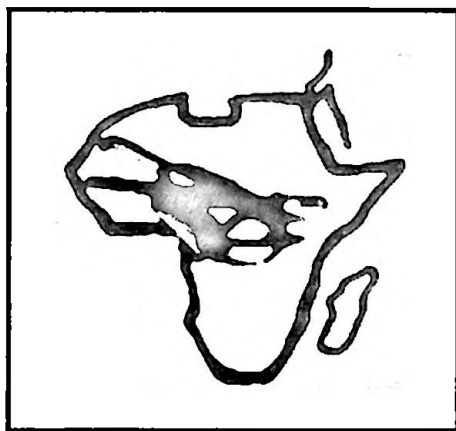


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## **EDITOR'S NOTE TO CONTRIBUTORS AND READERS**

*ABIBISEM: Journal of African Culture and Civilization* continues its goal of trying to publish quality articles submitted for consideration. We continue to underscore our commitment to intellectual engagement and academic discourse and intend to ensure and maintain continuity in our interrogation of issues relating to African Culture and Civilization.

We are excited by the challenge of serving you and are gratified by the increasing level of interest in the journal. We feel it is critical that the journal continues to remain truly interdisciplinary, though not every article submitted need to be interdisciplinary in orientation. We are mindful though that most of our volumes may be dominated by papers from historians. We are interested in papers by junior scholars, senior scholars and graduate students as well. In short, we are looking for polished and "uncut diamonds" because we want to provide a platform for people to disseminate the results of their research.

The present volume of *Abibisem*, like the previous one, covers a very broad range of topics. Given the politics of the academy, we have taken the extraordinary step of publishing this volume, at considerable expense to the journal and the people who work on it, with an academic printing press in the glorious capital of Ghana.

We wish to thank the members of the Editorial Board and the Editorial Advisory and Review Board for working assiduously on this volume. It is, indeed, a labour of love. Above all, we thank all the contributors to this volume, those who have contributed to the next volume (a remarkable effort indeed) and those who are looking forward to making contributions in the future.

Abrazos.

**Edmund Abaka, Ph.D.**

*Associate Professor of History & International Studies  
(University of Miami, Florida)*

*Editor*

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# Facilitating Colonial Exploitation of Resources of the Gold Coast: The Role of the Police Force, 1894 – 1914

Emmanuel ANKOMAHENE and Kassim ASIMAH

## *Abstract*

*Euro-African interactions between the 15th and 20th centuries were mainly motivated by the desire to exploit the economic resources of Africa. To ensure a peaceful exploitation of resources in the Gold Coast, the British policed their forts and castles for the peaceful conduct of trade. Even though policing in the Gold Coast was not a structured institution before its official establishment in 1894 by the British, it was an important institution in the administration of the colony. After the enactment of the 1894 ordinance, the Gold Coast Constabulary was renamed the Gold Coast Police Force. The police institution from this period operated under a standardized structure in the British-controlled areas of the Gold Coast. Using information from archival and secondary sources, this paper explores within a historical context, the extent to which the colonial Police Force facilitated the exploitation of the resources of the Gold Coast between 1894 and 1914. To achieve this, the study looks at the changing structure and functions of the Gold Coast Police Force from 1894 to 1914. One key argument of this paper is that to ensure a peaceful exploitation of colonial resources, the colonial government upon investing heavily in infrastructure (roads, railways, and communication), set up the Police Force to protect these investments. Moreover, the British economic interest and policy outcomes (acquisition of resources of the Gold Coast) between 1894 and 1914 dictated the structure and functions of the Police Force for the peaceful conduct of trade. The paper finally demonstrates that through the performance of the Gold Coast Police Force, the British by the end of 1914 had vastly exploited the resources of the Gold Coast to their advantage.*

**Keywords:** Policing, Exploitation, Protectorate, Brutality, Constable

## Introduction

There is a paucity of literature on the Gold Coast Police Force (formerly known as the Gold Coast Armed Police or Constabulary). The role of the colonial police in the British exploitation of resources of the Gold Coast has not been subjected to detailed scholarly attention even though there are lots of scholarly works on the police force. Significant evidence indicates that the police force was instrumental in the colonial exploitation of the resources of the Gold Coast. The British, being aware of the need for protection of the capitalist economy of the Gold Coast, passed an Ordinance in 1894 to define the structure and functions of the colonial Police Force. Thus, the official operation of the Gold Coast Police Force began in 1894. The force then became the Civil Police of the Gold Coast Colony under the Governorship of William Brandforth Griffith.<sup>1</sup>

Scholars who have exhibited scholarly interest in policing in the Gold Coast have mostly treated it as part of the general history of Ghana. Policing, in the history of Ghana, is only mentioned in passing.<sup>2</sup> For example, David Kimble and John Kofi Fynn provide significant pointers to the set up and functions of the *Asafo* Group as a law enforcement group. This group was set up by the people of the Gold Coast and Asante. They maintain that in pre-colonial Ghana, there was both a traditional system of policing in the form of *Asafo* groups known as the *Ahenkva* and *Akwansrafo* (basically found in Asante). The Fante also had the *Asafo* Group. The *Asafo* of Fante origin in the pre-colonial and colonial periods was seen as a social group comprising the 'young men' of the various indigenous states who, in war-time,

<sup>1</sup> PRAAD-Accra, RG. 4/1/18. Ordinance of the Civil Police of the Gold Coast Colony. 30, June, 1894, 1.

<sup>2</sup> See for example, W. B. F. Ward, *A History of Ghana* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1948); R. Gocking, *The History of Ghana* (London: Greenwood Press, 2005), 37–48; D. Kimble, *A Political History of Ghana, 1850–1928* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 142 & 143; J. K. Fynn, *Asante and Its Neighbours* (London: Northwestern University Press, 1971), 120. These works discuss a small aspect of the activities of the *Asafo* Group and the colonial Police Force of the Gold Coast as part of the general history of Ghana.

constituted the bulk of the fighting men. In peacetime, they were seen as independent rival groups in the towns in variously specified relations to the chief.<sup>3</sup> These scholars focus on the pre-colonial period and do not look at the dynamics of the structure and functions of the colonial police force. Ward briefly provides very essential information on the functions of the colonial Police Force set up by the British in the colonial period. He records that policing in the British colony was essentially aimed at achieving three goals: first, the enforcement and maintenance of security for trade in European goods; second, to serve as a vanguard for colonial expansion into the hinterland for increased exploitation of agricultural and mineral resources; and, third, to protect the ruling and propertied classes.<sup>4</sup>

Major works by Kumi Ansah-Koi, Francis D. Boateng, and Isaac N. Darko provide understanding on policing in the Gold Coast. Ansah-Koi examines the police administration in Ghana and also shows the differences between the traditional system of policing and the colonial system of policing.<sup>5</sup> Boateng and Darko in an article titled “Our Past: The Effect of Colonialism on Policing in Ghana” examine the effects of colonialism on policing in Ghana, and recommend ways of improving police legitimacy.

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<sup>3</sup> Kimble. *A Political History*, 142; Fynn, *Asante and Its Neighbours*, 120. Asafo literally means a para-military organization of a town's youth. Asafo is derived from the Akan words 'sa' (war), and 'fo' (people). The Asafo during a peacetime social event in the Gold Coast and Asante also engaged in drumming, singing and dancing. Ahenkwa which is also known as Ahenenkoa means king's servants and Akwansrafo literally means road wardens.

<sup>4</sup> Ward, *A History*, 45. The functions of the police explain why Governor George MacLean, who is credited with the establishment of the Gold Coast police, warned that: "...to interfere with travelers and with trade — in the local phraseology, to 'close the paths' — was a serious offence." Moreover, in 1896, the Governor of the Gold Coast ordered that "no police should be stationed where there were no Europeans." See also F. D. Boateng, and I. N. Darko, "Our Past: The Effect of Colonialism on Policing in Ghana," *International Journal of Public Science & Management* 18, 1 (2015), 15.

<sup>5</sup> K. Ansah-Koi, "Police Administration in Ghana," *Universitas, an Inter-Faculty Journal* 9 (Nov., 1989), 23; Boateng, and Darko, "Our Past: The Effect of Colonialism on Policing in Ghana." 15.

They argue that the legitimacy problems facing the police today were due to the imperialist rule by the British, and that the best way to address these problems is for the police to untie itself from the past. While these works contain much information on policing in the Gold Coast, their scope and relevance for our present purpose are limited by the fact that they do not provide enough insight into the dynamics of the structure and functions of the colonial police force and the extent to which it facilitated colonial exploitation of the resources of the Gold Coast by the British authorities. The focus of this paper is not only the structure and functions of the police, but also the extent to which in the discharge of their duties, the police facilitated the British colonial exploitation of the resources of the Gold Coast. It is our contention that examining the structure and functions of the police force and placing it in the context of colonial rule, would provide significant insight into their unique set up and their role in the colonial exploitation of the resources of the Gold Coast. This would go a long way to highlight the differences between the structure and functions of the Police Force in colonial and post-colonial Ghana. The analyses, evaluation and interpretation of this paper are based on both primary and secondary sources. The primary information was obtained from the Ghana Public Records and Archives Administration Department (PRAAD) in Accra and Cape Coast. They were retrieved from the Annual Departmental Reports and files from the Colonial Secretary's Office. Secondary information was obtained from the Sam Jonah Library of the University of Cape Coast and the Osagyefo Library of the University of Education, Winneba. Relevant articles were also accessed from online journals.

The paper argues that for the British authorities to ensure a peaceful exploitation of colonial resources, there was the need to set up the Police Force to protect the investments they had made in the colony. It also maintains that the economic interest and policy outcomes of the British between 1894 and 1914 dictated the structure and functions of the Police Force concerning peaceful conduct of trade. Finally, it asserts that through the

performance of the Gold Coast Police Force, the British, by the end of 1914, had vastly exploited the resources of the Gold Coast.

### **Policing in Pre-Colonial Gold Coast**

The intention of every state is to operate in a manner that ensures development. One of the institutions that executes the state's intent through the preservation of social order is the police. The police force is a legitimate institution that ensures a peaceful environment for the government to roll out its policies. In the life of the state, the police are one of the basic links between the state and society that assist a state in its maintenance of power and authority. The police ensure that the law has substance, that is, the fundamental rights like protection of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness do not only exist on paper but the police makes them real.<sup>6</sup> The police practically protects the lives of the citizens of a country. Kumi Ansah-Koi examines the social function of the police. He asserts that the police enforce law and order and that their set-up is delicately interwoven within an influential socio-cultural matrix. That is, their social function is basically the enforcement of laws and maintenance of order.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> For more information on the analysis of the roles and functions of policing in Africa, see O. Marenin, "Policing African States: Toward a Critique," *Comparative Politics* 14, No. 4 (Jul., 1982), 379. The description of the Police has been made clear by Marenin "A policeman is the flesh and blood of the law. Without him the law would have form but no substance. The cold point of the Constitution and the Statutes trace the outline of protection for life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. These fundamental rights are dry and lifeless so long as they exist on paper only. Our rights and our liberties are made real by the flesh and blood of the policeman on the beat."

<sup>7</sup> Ansah-Koi, *Police Administration*, 23. The police ultimately through the enforcement of law and maintenance of order functions as a link between state intent and the peace of the society. See also S. Andrevski, *The African Predicament* (New York: Atherton Press, 1968), 93, 98 & 99; H. Bretton, *Power and Politics in Africa* (Chicago: Aldine, 1973), 178; R. Sklar, *Nigerian Political Parties* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), 355-65; A. Zolberg, *Creating Political Order* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1966), 77-92; D. H. Bayley, *The Police and Political Development in India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 11; M. B. Clinard and D. J. Abbott, *Crime Developing Countries* (New York: John

Prior to the eventual annexation and colonization of the Gold Coast by the British in 1874, policing in the Gold Coast was entirely in the hands of the traditional authorities. Chiefs authorized and provided security and protection within their jurisdictions.<sup>8</sup> This was because the Gold Coast before 1874 had not been officially colonized by the British and, as a result, its affairs were in the hands of the local authorities including those in the coastal states. Ansah-Koi argues that the police in the traditional set up did not have any definite institution that was exclusively devoted to their performance but their functions were carried out within the various traditional pre-colonial polities.<sup>9</sup>

The local chiefs or kings had the mandate to organize young and able men into small groups or units with the authority to patrol and enforce the by-laws of the community. Among such groups or units were the *Akwansrafo*, formed by the Asante Empire. The *Akwansrafo* were road wardens who patrolled trade routes and collected taxes for the state.<sup>10</sup> Also, one of the groups that carried out functions of law enforcement and other services associated with the police in modern times was the special officials known in the Akan language as *Ahenkva*. The *Ahenkva* were king's servants who also served members of the king's family. Another important form of the traditional system of policing was the *Asafo* Company. They averted aggression,

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Wiley, 1973), 215-230.

<sup>8</sup> Ansah-Koi, *Police Administration*, 23.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Three unique features characterized the organization of policing in pre-colonial Gold Coast. These characteristics largely defined pre-colonial policing as unprofessional. The first was that the men who were tasked to provide security in the community by patrolling and performing other policing duties did not receive salaries for their hard work. They performed police duties on a voluntary basis. Related to this was the fact that the men were only paid commissions from the taxes they collected. Third, the men were not properly organized and trained. Recruitment into the units did not follow any professional standards, as men were mostly forced or conscripted into these organisations. See Boateng, et al., *Our Past*, 14; See also Ansah-Koi, *Police Administration*, 23.



searched for lost community members and also cleaned streams and other public places.<sup>11</sup>

The British in the pre-colonial period policed their forts to ensure efficient trading activities. Ansah-Koi states that British merchants in the Gold Coast around the 1820s were private individuals and, as such, organized private police institutions to protect their activities.<sup>12</sup> The British police at the time was confined to the forts only and their operations did not extend to people outside those settlements.<sup>13</sup> This was because British jurisdiction was basically confined to the forts. The British also established a police force in the Gold Coast in 1831 to protect their forts, and castles and merchants who plied along the coast. Francis Boateng and Isaac Darko argue that policing in the Gold Coast originally started when the President of the Council of Merchants in the Gold Coast, Captain George MacLean, formed a body of 129 men to maintain and enforce the provisions of the Treaty of Peace signed with the Fante chiefs and the king of Asante in 1831.<sup>14</sup> Interestingly, for the British to meet the ends of the developing colonial government in the 1840s, there was the need to organize a new form Police Force. With its headquarters in Cape Coast, the force carried out garrison duties at all the coastal forts. The police enforced the Bond of 1844. The bond was meant to legalize the jurisdiction that had grown up in the “Protectorate under Maclean’s influence”.<sup>15</sup> Thus, policing by the British in the pre-colonial period began in Cape Coast.

### **The Police and Colonialism, 1894 – 1914**

The monopolistic power enjoyed by the Gold Coast chiefs and kings came under a serious challenge when Asante finally fell into the hands of the British imperial expedition in 1874.

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<sup>11</sup> Ansah-Koi, *Police Administration*, 23.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Boateng, and Darko, *Our Past*, 15

<sup>15</sup> Ansah-Koi, *Police Administration*, 24.

From this period, Cape Coast was the capital of the Gold Coast and it remained so until 1877 when the capital was moved to Accra. But before 1874, an ordinance was enacted in 1873 to formalize the Gold Coast Police. This step was necessary for the British because they needed a strong police to suppress any insurrections from the people of the Gold Coast and Asante. The Gold Coast police then became 'The Gold Coast Armed Police or the Hausa Constabulary'. Quantson notes that 700 Hausa men were brought in from Northern Nigeria to assist with controlling insurgencies. The men, who stayed after the conflict ended, were given civilian policing duties to perform.<sup>16</sup> Manu Herbstein also shows evidence of the presence of Hausa men who formed part of the Gold Coast police. He posits that when Major-General Sir Garnet Wolseley arrived in the country in October, 1873, he had officers who were whites, West Indian and Hausa troops to support him.<sup>17</sup> Major-General Sir Garnet Wolseley was the Commander of the British expedition which set fire to Kumasi in 1874. The West Indian and Hausa troops were considered to be strong. According to Appiagyei-Atua, the Hausa paramilitary-style behaviour of discharging duties earned them the nickname buga-buga, which literally means 'beat-beat' in Hausa.<sup>18</sup> The British government from 1874 began to entrench colonial rule by creating territorial boundaries under the watch of military troops.<sup>19</sup> The Gold Coast Armed Police

<sup>16</sup> K. B. Quantson, *Reform of the Ghana Police Service* (Accra: Ghana Publishing Corporation, 2006), 6.

<sup>17</sup> M. Herbstein, *The Boy Who Spat in Sargenti's Eye* (Accra: Techmate Publishers Ltd, 2013), 63. Even before 1873, there were officers who had protected the forts, castles and trade routes in the Gold Coast. The West Indians were just like Africans in appearance because they are the descendants of the Africans whom the British bought and sent to the West Indies-Barbados, Jamaica and Trinidad.

<sup>18</sup> K. Appiagyei-Atua, "Bumps on the Road: A Critique of How Africa Got to NEPAD," *African Human Rights Law Journal* 6, 2 (2006), 524-548. See also, M. Deflem, "Law Enforcement in British Colonial Africa: A Comparative Analysis of Imperial Policing in Nyasaland, the Gold Coast, and Kenya," *Police Studies* 17, 1 (1994), 48.

<sup>19</sup> The Gold Coast at the time had three provinces under the control of the British; Central, Eastern and Western Provinces. Cape Coast was in the Central Province.

was renamed the Gold Coast Constabulary in 1876, with the creation of several important units such as the Railways and Mines Detachments, Escort Police, Marine Police, and Criminal Investigations Department.<sup>20</sup>

The British were motivated to settle in the Gold Coast because of its resource endowments. Remarkably, after the country had been colonized by the British, they unceasingly rolled out policies that sought to exploit the resources of the Gold Coast. As stated by Frimpong-Ansah, the colonial government of the Gold Coast sought to exploit primary and mineral resources for export, especially, the period from the turn of the 1900s to about 1928.<sup>21</sup> It should be noted that the British occupation of the Gold Coast was inspired by the desire to acquire colonial resources. As a result, it was needful to apply efficiently, the factors of production to effectively exploit colonial resources.

The British occupation was influenced by three neo-classical assumptions which emphasized on the use of land, labour and capital. Here, Frimpong-Ansah mentions that the British government believed that land, though fixed, was not a constraint to development; that labour was abundant and also not a constraint to development. However, the shortage of capital was a constraint, particularly, on the development of communications which he regarded as the bottleneck to development.<sup>22</sup> The British then invested heavily in infrastructure: railways, motor roads, and a harbour at Takoradi, among others, to facilitate easy transportation of resources within the country to ease export.

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<sup>20</sup> Quantson, *Reform of the Ghana Police Service*, 6

<sup>21</sup> J. H. Frimpong-Ansah, *The Vampire State in Africa: The Political Economy of Decline in Ghana* (New Jersey: Africa World Press, Inc., 1992), 58 shows the economic policies of Guggisberg's administration. It emphasizes how economic policies informed Guggisberg's programmes. This made him to command the economy to the benefit of British exploitation of colonial resources more especially in the 1920s.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 20

The economic policy outcomes of the British altered the structure of the Police Force. To protect these investments, the British government needed the police as a structured institution to ensure peace and order in the Gold Coast for exploitation of resources. In fact, the performance of the police actually made it possible for the British to successfully exploit colonial resources, particularly, at the beginning of the twentieth century. In 1894, the British government established the Police Force Ordinance which officially set up the Gold Coast Police Force. The ordinance defined the structure and functions of the police and was geared towards enhancing colonial exploitation of resources. The Police Ordinance of 1894 affirmed the appointment of Commissioners of Police and other officers by the Governor. It stated that:

It shall be lawful for the Governor to appoint a Commissioner of Police and a sufficient number of Assistant Commissioners, Sub-Assistant Commissioners and Superintendents, First and Second Class Sergeants and First, Second and Third Class Constables.<sup>23</sup>

The colonial police in the Gold Coast was tasked to ensure the enforcement and maintenance of security to facilitate peaceful trade in European goods; to serve as a vanguard for colonial expansion into the hinterland for increased exploitation of agricultural and mineral resources; and, finally, to protect the ruling and propertied class.<sup>24</sup> The police was deployed to the three provinces of the Gold Coast colony: Central, Western and Eastern Provinces. Since one of the motives behind the British annexation of the Gold Coast was to create space for effectual exploitation of resources of the colony, the Police Force in the Gold Coast was set up to protect the space and assets of the British. The Police did not take into consideration the comfort and the peace of the people of the Gold Coast. In other words,

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<sup>23</sup> PRAAD, Accra, R. G. 4/1/8, The Police Ordinance, 1.

<sup>24</sup> Ward, *A History*, 46.

the interest of the colonial police, as established by the British, was rather to augment the British colonial exploitation of the resources of the Gold Coast more than to protect the people of the Gold Coast.

### **The Administration and Structure of the Gold Coast Police**

The administration, structure and functions of the police force underwent some changes as well as continuity from 1894. These were tailored along the economic motive of the British government. The 1894 police ordinance officially set up the Gold Coast Police Force. It comprised one Commissioner, four Assistant Commissioners, four Sub-Assistant Commissioners, six Superintendents, ten First Class Sergeants, twenty Second Class Sergeants, thirty First Class Constables, one hundred Second Class Constables and two hundred and twenty-five Third Class Constables.<sup>25</sup> In all, the strength of the Civil Police at the time stood at three hundred and seventy-five. The Governor had the power to either increase or reduce the number of the police at any time as it would seem necessary.

The police force as a body of disciplined and reliable men subdued riots and insurrections disruptive to the colonial state.<sup>26</sup> That the police force in the Gold Coast was established to protect the colonial interest of resource exploitation rather than to protect the lives and property is evident in the declaration of the police constable upon enlistment of true allegiance to His Majesty, King George VI, his Heirs and Successors. From the time of the formation of the Police Force in 1894 until 1902, the outstanding duties of the force included arresting criminals, prosecution of offenders, crime detection and prevention, guarding of European residential quarters, office blocks, and colonial officials.<sup>27</sup>

From the 1900s, some changes were made in the administration, structure and functions of the police. From

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 2

<sup>26</sup> See Kumi Ansah-Koi. 24 & 25

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

1901, the police force in the Gold Coast had five departments. These included the General Police, Escort Police, Mines Police, Railway Police, and Marine Police.<sup>28</sup> The General Police examined motor-vehicles to verify their road-readiness, vehicle licensing, and to direct motor-vehicles. The Escort Police was to ensure the safety of British merchants in the Gold Coast. The Mines Police ensured a peaceful atmosphere in all mining areas and also prevented gold theft in these areas. The Railway and Marine Police maintained law and order in their respective stations.<sup>29</sup> Although their functions differed from one department to the other, the outstanding duties they performed were arresting criminals, crime detection and prevention. The British increased police presence in the colony and, by 1916, the General Police in the Gold Coast numbered 459, the Escort Police were 506, the Mines Police 39, the Railway Police had 91 men and the Marine Police 9. On the whole, the Police Force was made up of 1,104 personnel as of 1916.<sup>30</sup> It is clear that the number of policemen in the General and Escort Departments were more than the other departments. This suggests that there was a concern about crimes in the areas under these departments.

### **The Role of the Police Force in the Colonial Exploitation of Resources of the Gold Coast**

The Gold Coast Police Force facilitated the British exploitation of the resources of the Gold Coast. As a step towards the exploitation of the resources of the Gold Coast, the British colonial government came out with regulations to deal with crime on the one hand and regulate closely exploitation of resources like minerals. In the mining sector, for example, three regulations were made. First, the frequency of inspections by the mines department was to be increased, that is, regular inspections were to be done. Second, minor infringements

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<sup>28</sup> PRAAD, Accra, R. G. 5/1/12, Annual Departmental Report, 1901, 6-8.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> PRAAD, Accra, R. G. 5/1/12, Annual Departmental Report, 1901, 1903, 1906, and

should be more severely dealt with by the Chief Inspector of Police. Third, imprisonment shall be the only punishment for offences. These regulations were to be enforced by the Mines Police under the supervision of the District Commissioner of Police.<sup>31</sup> The effect of the regulations was an annual increase in numbers of the General Police, the Escort Police, the Railway Police and the Marine Police.<sup>32</sup>

The main function of the Gold Coast Police Force was to ensure a peaceful environment for the colonial government to do its business. In view of this, the force was used to subdue riots and insurgencies considered disruptive to the colonial state.<sup>33</sup> The work of the police in this regard, culminated in the arrest of criminals who were mostly sent to prison. It is worthy nothing that most of the policemen, who were largely indigenes of the Gold Coast, were illiterate and lacked training in police work. Most of them committed wrongful arrests, unlawful detentions and assaults, to mention a few. According to Boateng, the police were ineffective, especially, in protecting the local people of the Gold Coast. Ineffectiveness was not the only issue facing the police. Equally important was the extreme public distrust of the police as a result of excessive police brutality.<sup>34</sup>

The brutal nature of the Police in Gold Coast was the result of the belief of the British colonial authorities that only in a very conducive and peaceful atmosphere could successful trade take place. The consequence of the brutalities and arrests in the Gold Coast was that by the end of 1901, an estimated 3,171 people composed of 2,997 men, 142 women and 32 juvenile offenders from the mining towns were imprisoned. An estimated gross value of prison labour by the close of 1901 was £7, 819 5s. 7d., and the amount realized from the sale of work executed by the

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<sup>31</sup> PRAAD, Accra, R. G. 5/1/12, Annual Departmental Report, 1901, 7

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Kumi Ansah-Koi, *Police Administration*, 24 & 25

<sup>34</sup> F. D. Boateng, "Students and the Police in Ghana: Mixed feelings. Police Practice and Research," *An International Journal* 18, (1) 2015.

prison industry was £267 14s. 7d. The total revenue generated from the mining sector amounted to £18, 658 11s. 5d.<sup>35</sup>

Determined to reap super profits, successive colonial governments continued to increase the number of policemen. By 1914, the number of policemen in the mines department had increased from 50 in 1913 to 77. The value of gold produced in 1914 amounted to £1, 744, 498, being an increase of £95,729.<sup>36</sup> Out of the total amount of gold, 402,231 ounces was obtained by mining and 8,423 ounces through police operations. The prisoners in 1914 numbered 5, 697, compared to 5,358 in 1913. The total earning in respect of prison industry labour in 1914 amounted to £4,639, as compared to £2,345 in 1913, an increase of £1,294, which was due to the increase in the number of the prisoners.<sup>37</sup> It can therefore be concluded that, the unlawful arrests and imprisonments by the mines police were calculated attempts to ensure a peaceful atmosphere for the exploitation of the resources of the colony.

By the end of 1914, the police were in total control of all motor licensing, registration of domestic servants and duties in connection with immigration and the registration of foreigners. Auctioneers' and goldsmiths' licenses were also controlled by the police.<sup>38</sup> Indeed, the rapid progress made by the colonial government in terms of revenue mobilization in the various departments in the economy between 1894 -1914 clearly demonstrates the instrumental role played by the police in the economic exploitation of the Gold Coast. The table below shows the total revenue generated from 1901 to 1914.

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<sup>35</sup> PRAAD-Accra, R. G. 5/1/9, Annual Departmental Report, 1902, 6.

<sup>36</sup> PRAAD-Accra, R. G. 5/1/14, Annual Departmental Report, 1914, 19

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 20

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*



Year	Revenue (£)
1901	471,193
1903	554,552
1905	586,221
1906	683,101
1912	1,230,850
1913	1,301,566
1914	1,331,713

Source: PRAAD – Accra, RG/5/1/14, *Annual Departmental Report, 1914*.

### Conclusion

The British colonization of the Gold Coast has had enormous impact on the history of the Gold Coast. The establishment of the Police Force to facilitate the British occupation in the Gold Coast needs to be given the necessary scholarly attention. The study, therefore, sought to examine the extent to which the Gold Coast Police Force facilitated British exploitation of the resources of the Gold Coast from 1894 to 1914. The study demonstrates that the colonial government routinely relied upon the police to achieve its economic objectives. The police throughout the period under consideration performed functions like crime prevention, crime investigation, the prosecution of criminals, as well as general deterrence and prevention of criminal acts. The study also maintains that the police regularly enforced precautionary measures to safeguard the lives and property of the British colonial authorities and to maintain peace to enable them effectively do their business. The colonial government used the police in its attempts to enforce legal statutes, suppressing smuggling, profiteering, and hoarding of essential consumer items by retail traders.

More importantly, the Gold Coast Police Force as part of their functions, examined motor-vehicles to verify their

road-readiness, vehicle licensing, and also direct motor-vehicles on the roads. The police furthermore, functioned to maintain the colonial integrity of the state through the seizure of arms and ammunition, regular patrols and searches, arrest of insurrection leaders, gathering and transmission of intelligence information and the actual quelling of irredentist moves. In fact, the performance of the Gold Coast Police Force during colonialism indicates that it was one of the major arms of the colonial government that maintained law and order to facilitate exploitation of the resources of the Gold Coast. Through the performance of the Gold Coast Police Force, the British, by the end of 1914, had vastly exploited the resources of the Gold Coast to their advantage.

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# **“Before Allah Created Human Beings, There Was A Marijuana Tree”: Marijuana Myths and Culture in the “Ghettoes” of Maamobi Zongo Community, Accra**

**Charles PREMPEH**

## ***Abstract***

*The objective of my paper is to deploy marijuana etiological myths in the “ghettoes” of Maamobi, Accra, to explain the persistence of the marijuana culture in Ghana. The fact that marijuana is a criminalized herb and yet remains a widely consumed herb by some of the youth leads to what I refer to as the ‘marijuana paradox’. Consequently, rather than constructing myths as irrational, self-indulgent and relics of a pre-scientific past or antiquated, concocted fairytales, I use marijuana myths to explain how it informs the marijuana culture in Maamobi and also betrays the construction of the marijuana culture as a fad and a craze that could be controlled with laws. Using ethnographic research techniques such as in-depth interviews, focus group discussion, informal conversation, and participant observation, I argue that the over-reliance on external reasons, without digging into how marijuana myths inform the cultogenic and sociogenic of marijuana culture in the “ghettoes” of Maamobi, will continue to frustrate the efforts of stakeholders to stem the tide against the consumption of the herb in Ghana.*

**Keywords:** Marijuana, Myth, Ghetto, Islam

## Introduction

My paper analyzes the extent to which myths about marijuana inform marijuana culture in two of the oldest “ghettos” – Barracks and Four Junction – in Maamobi Zongo community. Marijuana remains a highly contentious herb in Ghana and most parts of the world. Conversations about the herb have divided Ghanaians who think differently about it. Currently, Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) Law 236 criminalizes the cultivation, consumption or trade in it. But the criminalization of the herb notwithstanding, the Ghanaian public is often fed with news about marijuana cultivation, consumption, and export by some Ghanaians.<sup>1</sup> This contradiction in the legal status of the herb and its widespread consumption by some Ghanaians has polarized the front of Ghanaians over what should be done with the herb. While some prominent Ghanaians, including the late Kofi Annan, former General Secretary of the United Nations, have called for the herb to be legalized,<sup>2</sup> others like Dr. Akwasi Osei, the National Chief Psychiatrist of Ghana, has called on Ghana to keep the status of marijuana as a criminalized herb.

The debates over marijuana in Ghana have been framed around its abuse. Those in support of decriminalization have argued that the liberalization of Ghana’s laws on marijuana would help the nation to curtail the abuses of the herb. This argument is informed by the assumption that while marijuana remains a criminalized herb, it is widely consumed by many people in the country. The consumption of marijuana is a transnational social phenomenon that transcends social barriers. This implies that it is one herb that is consumed by the young and old, rich and poor,

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<sup>1</sup> On Thursday March 14, 2019, the National Narcotic Control Board (NACOB) made what it says to be the biggest narcotic bust in the country’s history with the interception of 5,851 compressed slabs of what is suspected to be cannabis at the Tema Harbour “Tema Port NACOB busts £29.2m UK-bound cannabis” (March 14, 2019) <https://www.classfonline.com/1.12268668>, Date accessed: March 16, 2019.

<sup>2</sup> Richmond Neequaye, “Ex-UN Chief Kofi Annan Calls for Cannabis Legalization” (October 3, 2017) <https://denzonline.com/ex-un-chief-kofi-annan-calls-for-cannabis-legalization/>, Date accessed: March 16, 2019.

religious and irreligious. But because the consumption of the herb is done in the 'dark', it is difficult for the state to regulate it. This argument is predicated on the fact that since marijuana consumption remains a sub-culture in Ghana, the perception of the culture as a fad and a craze that could be controlled through criminalization has rather pushed the herb undercover. This development has frustrated every effort by the law enforcement agents to deal with it. Consequently, the argument for legalizing the herb has been advanced on the basis that it will help the nation to deal with the abuse. It will also make it easy for the state to regulate its production, consumption, and export. In support of this argument is the assertion that decriminalizing the herb will help the nation to benefit from other uses to which the herb could be put such as the production of hair cream.

On the other hand, those who argue for the continued criminalization of marijuana argue that decriminalizing the herb will frustrate the effort of the government to regulate the control of the herb. Others have also invoked the perceived health challenges associated with the herb as an argument for decriminalization.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, while scholars are divided over the perceived health risks associated with marijuana, the argument has been hyped that marijuana predisposes consumers to cancer and other forms of chronic bronchitis.<sup>4</sup> It is also assumed that there is a direct nexus between marijuana consumption and crime.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Fred Leavitt, *Drugs & Behavior* (Third Edition) (California: Sage Publications, Inc., 1995), 143.

<sup>4</sup> Nancy J. Cobb, *Adolescence: Continuity, Change, and Diversity* (Second Edition) (California: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1995), 565.

<sup>5</sup> Klaus A. Miczek, Joseph F. DeBold, Margaret Haney, Jennifer Tidey, Jeffrey Vivan, and Elise M. Weerts, "Alcohol, Drugs of Abuse, Aggression, and Violence. Understanding and Preventing Violence," in *Understanding and Preventing Violence* Vol. 3, eds. Albert J. Reiss, Jr., & Jeffrey A. Roth (Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 1994), 377-570; Helen R. White, and Gorman, D.M. *Dynamics of the Drug-Crime Relationship in The Nature of Crime: Continuity and Change*, ed. Gary LaFree (Washington, DC: US Department of Justice, 2000), 151-218.



While the debate over marijuana continues to be problematic, many reasons have been adduced to explain why people consume marijuana and other illicit drugs. Historically, it is argued that human beings have always had the inclination to search for and use substances that would sustain and protect them and also act on their nervous system to produce pleasurable sensations.<sup>6</sup> Aside from marijuana, kola, maté, khat or kat, etc., have all been used for this purpose. Others have also maintained that some people consume marijuana and other 'illicit' drugs because it is available, due to peer pressure, as a way of rebelling against parents, escaping from the realities of life, and dealing with emotional disturbances and social alienation or societal rejection.<sup>7</sup> Others also use drugs to partly prove their boldness and sense of adventure and partly because they do not really believe, at least initially, that anything disastrous can really happen to them. Some youth also use drugs due to peer pressure, and as a way of rebelling against parents, escaping from the realities of life, from emotional disturbances and social alienation or societal rejection.<sup>8</sup> This factor implies that it is possible that many marijuana users take the herb to escape some unfavorable or unpleasant circumstances.<sup>9</sup> In sum, many researchers have suggested that marijuana consumption occurs, at least in part, as a result of the influence of peers, whether in the guise of conformity to peer pressure or not, learning to smoke properly, perceiving the effects and defining them as pleasurable, or simply due to social modeling and imitation.

Lack of commitment to major societal values and institutions has also been identified as one of the factors that

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<sup>6</sup> John W. Santrock, *Adolescent* (10th Ed) (New York: McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., 2005), 509.

<sup>7</sup> Paul H. Mussen, John J. Conger, Jerome Kagan, & Huston, C. A. *Child Development and Personality* (Sixth Edition) (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1984), 538-539.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, p. 538-539.

<sup>9</sup> Gary J. Miller, *Drugs and the Law: Detection, Recognition & Investigation* (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition). (Florida: Gould Publications, Inc., 1997), 426.

could predispose one to associate with peer groups likely to be using drugs.<sup>1</sup> There is yet another group of people who abuse drugs because they think drugs will help them learn well. This is usually associated with students who consume marijuana and other drugs to enhance learning. There are also those who use drugs because they think they will get the needed energy they require to work. For instance, there are some farmers, fishermen, musicians and artists who use marijuana and other drugs to help them to be more energetic and improve their performance. Some long-distance drivers who drive through the night also use marijuana, on the assumption that it will keep them high and, thus, free from sleeping on the job.<sup>2</sup>

These reasons for smoking marijuana espoused above are context-based since what takes place in a community or on a school campus may not necessarily be the same as what happens in the "ghettoes." Again, these reasons, at best, explain why and how the youth may be initiated into the smoking of marijuana, but they do not provide us with the reasons why most of these youth continue to use drugs after their initial introduction to the drug culture. What we need to find out is why people continue to smoke marijuana after their initial introduction, since the herb is said to be less addictive.<sup>3</sup>

It must also be mentioned that the over-dependence on extrinsic factors to account for why some people use drugs has been criticized by Goode as a fundamental error that blurs society's appreciation of the complexity of the drug culture.<sup>4</sup> It has been argued that by concentrating on externalities to explain the rapidity in drug use, society mistakenly assumes that

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<sup>1</sup> See, Bruce D. Johnson, *Marijuana Users and Drug Subcultures* (New York: Wiley, 1973).

<sup>2</sup> Joseph B. Asare, *The Problems of Drug Abuse in Ghana* (Accra: Sedco Publishing Ltd., 2008), 23.

<sup>3</sup> Fred Leavitt, *Drugs & Behavior* (Third Edition). (California: Sage Publications, Inc, 1995), 137.

<sup>4</sup> See, Erich Goode, *The Marijuana Smokers* (New York: Basic Books, 1970).

the culture of smoking marijuana is a fad and a craze; and that marijuana smokers are irrational human beings who have been entrapped in smoking by some wise tricksters who want to dupe them.<sup>1</sup> In effect, the consumption of marijuana should be treated as a sub-culture that would require systematic objective study to understand.

Consequently, my paper maintains that marijuana myths provide a rationalization for what I term as the ‘marijuana paradox’ – marijuana is the criminalized and, yet, most consumed herb in Ghana. I argue that it is the myths about marijuana that have routinized the marijuana culture in the “ghettoes” of Maamobi. Moving away from the popular assumption that myths are a relic of a pre-scientific and pre-logical society that needs to be confined to the backwaters of history, they help us to appreciate the complexities and persistence of the marijuana culture in Maamobi. I engage the persistence of marijuana consumption from the point of view of myth because human beings who are meaning-seeking creatures invent myths to explain what is ordinarily explicable.<sup>2</sup> In sum, there is no natural phenomenon and no phenomenon in human life that is not capable of mythical interpretation and which does not call for such an interpretation.<sup>3</sup> As I argue in the paper, it is the marijuana myth that has ensured the tenacity of the consumption of the herb, expressed in the social structuring of “ghettoes” in Maamobi, Accra. The remaining segment of my paper is divided into five sections: methodology, a brief background of the “ghettoes” in Maamobi, marijuana myths, marijuana culture and conclusion.

## Methodology

The data for the paper was collected between 2009–2011 when I conducted fieldwork for my Master of Philosophy dissertation,

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Karen Armstrong, *A Short History of Myth* (Edinburgh: Canongate Books Ltd, 2008), 1.

<sup>3</sup> Ernst Cassirer, *An Essay on Man: An Introduction to a Philosophy of Human Culture* (Yale: Yale University Press, 1944), 98.

which was about the consumption of marijuana among Muslim youth in the Maamobi community. It was an ethnographic study that utilized techniques like in-depth interviews, informal conversations and focus group discussion to engage marijuana consumption in a conversation about the marijuana culture. The informal conversation involved the researcher visiting the “ghettoes” continually for about a year to engage in casual conversation about marijuana consumption. On such visits, I did not carry any recording device or field-note to record any of the conversations. But much information was elicited in those informal conversations. This was primarily because marijuana consumers felt at ease discussing a wide range of issues that I carefully directed, finally, towards marijuana consumption. Such conversations also helped me to understand the complex web embedded in the marijuana culture. Immediately, I left the “ghettoes,” I wrote down as much of the information as I could remember. But before I used any of those informal conversations, I ‘anonymized’ the respondents. And since the research was highly sensitive as any lack of due diligence on my part could land any of my respondents in trouble with the law, I did not use any information that could even remotely be leveraged by the police or any of the security agencies to indict any of my respondents. In the case of formal interviews, I carefully wrote down the responses of marijuana consumers. While they objected to the recording of their voices for security reasons, they were patient enough for me to painstakingly write down their words verbatim. But whether in formal or informal conversations, marijuana consumers were informed about the intent of my research.

Two main factors facilitated the rapport I established with them. The first was the fact that most of the consumers were my childhood friends. Having lived in Maamobi since 1984, many of the youth who consume marijuana were persons I knew from childhood. The second was that, while I did not conceal my religious identity as a non-Muslim, my fluency in Hausa – the lingua franca of the community – (also used by most of the

marijuana consumers) consolidated my linguistic affinity with them. In the same vein, I swore on the English version of the Qur'an to assure them of confidentiality. In the end, the fears and suspicions of marijuana consumers were significantly allayed.

As part of my use of the ethnographic technique, I participated in social events of marijuana smokers in the community. I played soccer with them, participated in the naming ceremonies of some of their relatives, and also joined in their occasional social gatherings. There were times I attended open-air preaching (*waazi*) and Friday *Jama'h* sermon (*utuba*) with some of them. In all of these, I observed how the marijuana culture shapes the behaviors of marijuana consumption.

Though the Hausa language is commonly spoken in the community, questionnaires were written in English and translated into Hausa during the interviews with respondents. In a few cases, Pidgin English and the Twi language were also used. Also, since language is the vehicle through which culture – ideology and philosophy – travels, and for that matter necessary for ethnographic study, the researcher familiarized himself with common jargons used by marijuana smokers. This helped the researcher to have unimpeded conversation with marijuana smokers. The researcher's long period of residence in the community also enabled him to establish a cordial relationship with marijuana smokers and facilitated easy entrance to the "ghettoes." Data was properly processed for easy analysis. The processed data was interpreted descriptively in order to see how they fulfill the objectives of the study. The data collected was grouped thematically to reflect the objectives of the study.

### **The Background of the Consumption of Marijuana in Maamobi Community**

In Ghana, apart from the name ganja, marijuana has lots of names. Some of these names include "tampe," "sundu," "obonsam tawa," "apopo," "taba," and "wee" and "wee bitters". While there is obscurity about the history of marijuana in Ghana, the consumption of the herb has been an established

culture in Maamobi community since the 1950s. During this period, *America House*, a constituency in the community, gained popularity as a vibrant “ghetto” for the sale and consumption of marijuana to the extent that apart from *America House*, it was only in Avenor that one could get marijuana to buy in Maamobi, Nima, Pig Farm and Accra New Town (formerly Lagos Town). The early pushers then included Mahama Issaka, Awolah, Medicine, and Mamare. These people traveled within and outside Ghana to purchase marijuana.<sup>4</sup>

Some residents in the community link the introduction of the smoking of marijuana in the community to ex-servicemen who were, incidentally, part of the earliest settlers of the community, shortly after World War II.<sup>5</sup> But this connection is refuted by the Chief Imam of the Maamobi Islamic community, Yussif Iddris Konate, who claims that it was rather the stevedores from the Congo whose dealings with some of the youth in Maamobi community and who worked as laborers at the Light House Port resulted in the introduction of marijuana into the community. He said that because the source of marijuana, as known to the people was from Congo, they called it “Congo tobacco.” In the case of the ex-servicemen, he contends that instead of marijuana, they were rather well known for smoking tobacco, which was regularly supplied to them on a monthly basis in large quantities by the colonial government.<sup>6</sup>

The controversy over the source of the introduction of the smoking of marijuana into Maamobi community notwithstanding, some residents, rightly or wrongly, linked the smoking of marijuana by some youth to armed robbery, criminal

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<sup>4</sup> Yusuf Iddris Konate, the second Chief Imam of Maamobi who has served for five decades. Personal communication, July 6, 2010.

<sup>5</sup> Emmanuel Akyeampong, “Diaspora and Drug Trafficking in West Africa: A Case Study of Ghana,” *African Affairs* 104/416 (2005), 429–447.

<sup>6</sup> The position of the Chief Imam is supported by other elders of the community, including Baba Moro Issa, Chief of the Wangara Community, and Alhaji Haruna Bukari Dabre, Assemblyman for Maamobi East Electoral Area.

activities and other social vices that were ripe in the community. The situation was so serious, they argue, that it was not possible for residents to stay outside deep into the night without risking being robbed or harmed in the 1950s.<sup>7</sup> It was a common practice at the end of the month, they claim, for armed robbers and some disgruntled ex-servicemen in the community to waylay and steal from workers of the Survey Department who were residents of the community. They did so with guns and knives and other deadly weapons, accompanied by the expression, “Kawokudi”, (a Hausa expression which means, “Bring money”) if one wanted to escape from being harmed. It was this scenario that gave a suburb of the community the name “Kawokudi”. It is alleged that the robbers were also responsible for popularizing the consumption and sale of marijuana among the youth in the community. With this backdrop, the community became a major target for ridding off criminal activities in the country during the 1979 political uprising.

Indisputably, 1979 was a major event that contributed to the collapse of *America House*. But around that same time or even earlier, while *America House* lost its popularity, *Barracks* and, later, *Four Junction* emerged as major alternative “ghettoes” for the marijuana business. These two “ghettoes” to date remain important centers for the sale and consumption of marijuana. They are politically and socially well-structured in terms of the hierarchy of leadership and laid down rules that they play a major role in the politics of the community.

### **Marijuana “Ghettoes” in Maamobi**

Maamobi<sup>8</sup> – East and West – is a suburb within the Ayawaso sub-

<sup>7</sup> Personal communication with late Mr. Anthony Prempeh on 12/08/08.

<sup>8</sup> Maamobi, named after one of the early ex-settlers of the community, Modibbo Alhamdu, originally known as Alhamdu, is a migrant community that grew out of the early settlement of Fulani and Hausa traders who were the first settlers there in the 1940s. Later after World War II, the community was opened to ex-servicemen from British West Africa, who were largely from either Northern Ghana or Hausa Soldiers from Northern Nigeria. It was, however, after the mid-960s that the community became fully established. As a migrant community, therefore,

metro of the Accra Metropolitan Assembly. It covers an area that lies south-east of the Odaw water body, which separates Avenor – South-West and North-West Industrial Areas from Tesano Police Depot and Achimota on the West. Maamobi also shares boundaries with Accra New Town, formerly called Lagos Town, Kpehe, Alajo, Kokomlemle, Flagstaff House, Broadcasting House, Kanda-Ruga and 37 Military Hospital in the East. The community further shares boundaries with Roman Ridge in the North and with Kotobabi in the South-West of La.

Maamobi reflects much of Hausa and Islamic cultural influences. Even so, when the community became established, the Ga people of Osu-Asante descent, the traditional custodians of the land, contested the land being named after an 'alien' Muslim. Following this protest, a delegation was sent by Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, then in charge of Government Business, in 1954, to mediate the issue. In the course of dealing with the issue, a Muslim man, who could not speak Ga fluently, wanted to explain to the Ga people that the name 'Alhamdu' was not in actual fact the name of a person, but a contraction of an Arabic expression, Alhamdu lil-laahi (lit. All praises to Allah Ref. Qur'an 1:2). Thus, in attempting to give a Ga rendition of this expression, he inaccurately said: "The name 'Alhmadu' which is a contraction of Alhmadu lil – laahi, means, "Mmo Nyomo". As the Ga people realised that the name was theophoric, they became convinced about the explanation, and decided to call the community "Ma mmo Nyomo bii," to wit, Town of people of thankfulness. Over time, the expression Ma mmo Nyomo bii was contracted to Maamobi. It must, however, be stated that this change of name notwithstanding, official documents still refer to the community as Alhamdu. Another version of the origin of the name Maamobi is that the name is a contraction of the Ga expression "Ma momo mli bii," to wit, Town of Old People. This version conveys the impression that after the Muslim settlers in Ruga moved, they first settled in Maamobi before they moved to Nima. Thus, historically, Maamobi is older than Nima. The popularity of Nima today over Maamobi is, thus, explained by the fact that in the 1960s, Maamobi, especially, from Kawokudi to the eastern side of where present day Accra Girls' Senior High School is located, was reserved as a cemetery, and so, most of the early settlers, upon realising that the community was too close to the cemetery moved to Nima. Only a few people remained in the community. Following this development, Nima grew and developed faster than Maamobi. Be as it may, when the community became established, Nii Saka Adokwei was appointed as the first Ga Chief in the community, who represented the interest of the custodians of the land, Osu Asante Ga people. Apart from this historical background, the transfer of the Survey Department, following the transfer of the Capital of the Gold Coast from Cape Coast to Accra in 1877, as well as the resettlement of the ex-service men, greatly contributed in the growth and development of the community. This is because the community was used as a residential area to accommodate labourers of the Survey Department.



The term “ghetto” is used by American writers to refer to a section of a large city that is a rundown, dilapidated, rat-infested slum inhabited by a minority group that has been compelled to live there because of discrimination or institutional racism.<sup>9</sup> In European history, however, the term is used to refer to a walled city where Jews in the Diaspora were forced, according to the laws of the city, to live separately from the mainstream community.<sup>10</sup> “Ghettos” were over-crowded, isolated that eventually turned into slums. Thus, from the point of view of the geographical description of “ghettos” in American literature, the whole of the Maamobi community, apart from the issue of racism, could be likened to a “ghetto.” This is because the Maamobi community shares some of the social description with American “ghettos,” such as poor sanitation, squalid living conditions, and erratic supply of piped water. The community also continues to experience rapid population growth that exacerbate the congestion and pressure on its limited infrastructure and services.

For the purposes of this study, the term “ghetto” is used contextually to refer to constituencies in the Maamobi community where marijuana is sold and consumed. This is because the term is consistent with the fact that both residents and marijuana consumers refer to the places for the sale and consumption of marijuana as “ghettos.” It must, however, be noted that from the perspective of history, the term “ghetto” cannot be directly used to designate “ghettos” in Maamobi community without some difficulties. This is because “ghettos” in Maamobi community simply refer to places where marijuana is sold and consumed. Also, even though “ghettos” in the community constitute a subculture, they are not settlements, as it was historically known of “ghettos.” Thus, marijuana consumers do not sleep,

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<sup>9</sup> Peter Marcuse, ‘Enclaves Yes, Ghettos No: Segregation and the State,’ in David P. Varady (ed.) *Desegregating the City: Ghettos, Enclaves, and Inequality* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 15–30.

<sup>10</sup> Dan Michman and Lenn J. Schramm, *The Emergence of the Jewish Ghettos During the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

cook, and/or do other domestic activities that take place in a mainstream settlement in the “ghettoes.” Finally, “ghettoes” in the community do not have any national socio-economic and political identity.

All the same, there are some geographical features of historical “ghettoes” that reflect in the “ghettoes” in Maamobi community. First, the “ghettoes” in Maamobi are isolated from the mainstream community. Apart from *Barracks* that shares a boundary with a public toilet popularly called NDC Toilet, which is located in the community, Four Junction and all the other “ghettoes” are far removed from the community. Four Junction, for example, is located at a point that forms four-joined alleys of four compound houses, thus, making entrance completely inaccessible to non-smokers. The location of Four Junction is such that until one enters the place, one can hardly see marijuana smokers. Policemen who occasionally organize swoops get lost in the attempt to locate the place. The “ghettoes” are also isolated in the sense that membership is limited to marijuana smokers and pushers.

### **The Background of *Barracks***

The background of *Barracks* is closely linked to the social development of the Maamobi community in the early 1980s. The “ghetto” started as an informal “base” (a term for designated places where young men sit to while away time) in the early part of the 1970s but became very established shortly after the 1979 military uprising. The place began as a rubbish dump and, until the construction of Maamobi road by Kasadjan Construction Company in 1987, some of the male youth of the community visited the place only to smoke, but not to chat and live an organized life. But after the construction of the road, the early founders of the “ghetto,” Alhassan, Yussif, Tanko, Zakari, and Lari, who were also leading pushers of marijuana at the time, asked for a public toilet to be built to replace the rubbish dump. Their request was granted and in the early part of the 1980s, a five-hole public toilet was built for them.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Personal communication with Seidu (name anonymised as requested by

The management of the public toilet was initially under the control of the Maamobi Town Council. But since the smokers were not only the initiators of the idea of building a public toilet for the community but had also contributed immensely to its construction through the provision of labor, the leadership of the “ghetto” wrote a letter to Baba Moro Isa and Mr. Ayabeng, then leaders of Maamobi Town Council, to be given a percentage of the money accrued from the running of the public toilet. Fortunately, their request was granted, and they co-ran the toilet, through the shift system, with Accra City Council until sometime in 1986.<sup>12</sup> The founders of Barracks operate the toilet and rendered monthly accounts to the Maamobi Town Council and were given a monthly salary of Six (6) Cedis each.<sup>13</sup> They did this until 1989 when Baba Ali, noted for bringing in ‘white people’ to organize adult literacy for residents in the community, had his candidature supported by the marijuana smokers to become the first Assemblyman for Maamobi community. From that time, the smokers re-organized themselves well to contribute to the politics of the community. Membership of the “ghetto” was open to all males, both residents and non-residents from all walks of life who smoked marijuana, thus giving the “ghetto” the name “Barracks.”

Though the “ghetto” is strictly opened to only males, members could go there with their conjugal girlfriends or wives to consume the herb together, and females are allowed short visits to buy marijuana sticks and seeds for medicine and use in hair cream. Not allowing females into the “ghetto” was inspired by socio-religious factors and the supposed weakness of females to keep a secret, which is needed for the marijuana culture. Socio-religiously, Islam does not encourage the free mingling of females and males and, as the early founders of the “ghetto” were

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interviewee), a senior member of the “ghetto” on October 10, 2010.

<sup>12</sup> Personal communication with Alhaji Haruna Bukari Dabre, the second person to be elected as Assemblyman for Maamobi community, on October 10, 2010.

<sup>13</sup> Personal interview with Yahya (name anonymised as requested by interviewee), a senior member of Barracks on October 10, 2010.

largely Muslims, they decided to apply this Islamic injunction to the “ghetto.”

It is also believed that since the sale and smoking of marijuana is illegal, according to the constitution of Ghana, much of the activities of the “ghetto,” especially, in relation to the sale and smoking of marijuana, are by rule supposed to be kept secret – a rule females are perceived not to be capable of observing because they are considered to be “talkatives.” The consumption of marijuana is also believed to be a male activity and is considered unacceptable for females to engage in such activity. It is said to be an action-oriented behavior – working hard, escaping undue arrest, surviving the agony of prison experience and standing the stigma of the community. Females are said to lack these attributes. Leadership in the “ghetto” is gerontocratic and members are not allowed to sell any substance other than marijuana.

### **The Background of *Four Junction***

*Four Junction*<sup>14</sup> also known as the University of Four Junction, emerged as an extension of Hangingderg.<sup>15</sup> It was started by Lover in the early part of the 1980s. Lover discovered the place as an alternative to Hangingderg, a disorganized base for the smoking of marijuana. He was later joined by some male residents of the community, including Fighter, Santo, Zion, and Babylon to properly organize the place for the sale and smoking of marijuana.<sup>16</sup> Like Barracks, the place later became well organized with a well-structured political leadership and

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<sup>14</sup> The name “Four Junction” is a reflection of the location of the “ghetto,” located in the alleys of four compound houses; also, there are four ways of escape when there is a ‘scatter’ (or police raid).

<sup>15</sup> The ‘Hangingderg’ is a corruption of ‘Hanging there’, a name that was given by an African-American friend of Lover who patronized life in the Four Junction. The name depicted the nature of the “ghetto,” as members did not have any bench, and so only stood to smoke and left the community afterwards.

<sup>16</sup> Personal communication with Saani (anonymised name as requested by the interviewee), an elder of Barracks on November 9, 2010.

a well-defined “ghetto” membership. *Four Junction* shares the same socio-political structure with Barracks, except that while membership in Barracks was partially restricted to adults, membership in Four Junction is made up of old and young people alike.

### **The Myths About the Origin and Prohibition of Marijuana: The Basis of the Sociogenic Structure of the “Ghettos” of Maamobi**

The criminalization of marijuana stems from socio-economic, medicinal, religious and political reasons. However, marijuana smokers have myths that seek to give yet other reasons for the prohibition of marijuana in the world. But more importantly, they explain why one will put one’s freedom at risk to consume the herb. It is asserted that “the word myth, in popular usage, refers to something that is widely believed to be true, but probably is not.”<sup>17</sup> Thus, myth, in actual fact, may not pass the test of historical scrutiny but its functional role of informing peoples’ ideas, beliefs, and actions cannot be overemphasized. This is precisely because it has been argued that myths provide the charter for how and what people should believe, act, and feel.<sup>18</sup> Thus, mythology appears to some people not only as outdated but also as an antiquarian pastime when it is approached as a field of study.<sup>19</sup> Even so, myth does not lend itself to any universally accepted definition. But for the purposes of my paper, I adopt the definition of myths as simply stories about something significant.<sup>20</sup> More broadly, I conceptualize myth as stories of unknown origin that are told to rationalize a belief

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<sup>17</sup> William A. Haviland, *Anthropology* (Tenth Edition) (California: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2003), 688.

<sup>18</sup> See, Bronislaw Malinowski, *Myth in Primitive Psychology* (New York: Norton, 1926).

<sup>19</sup> Joseph H. Kwabena Nketia, “Mythology in the World Today,” in *Perspectives on Mythology*, ed. Esi Sutherland-Addy, (Accra: Goethe-Institut, 1999), 7.

<sup>20</sup> Robert A. Segal, *Myth: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 5.

system, shape behaviors, and underscore the importance of an institution in society.

From the above, we may conceptualize myth in relation to its function as sacred stories of unknown origin that are told to justify religious beliefs, practices, and institutions. While we appreciate the above function of myths, the aspect of it that is apt for my paper is the idea that a myth provides the impetus for society to harmonize contradictory behaviors that are present in a culture.<sup>21</sup> This functionality of myth is appropriate for my paper because it explains how Muslim youth utilize myth to justify and rationalize the consumption of marijuana, a behavior that is perceived by the larger Maamobi community to be anathema to Islam and Christianity.

In the "ghettoes," marijuana consumers have myths that explain the origin of marijuana and explain why despite some beneficial values of the herb, it is almost prohibited universally. Consumers cannot actually tell the origin of these myths, except to say that "I was told by so and so." But the myths are treated as sacred and they constitute the category of make-believe stories in the lore of marijuana culture. These myths predate the origin of human beings, as they date back to the origin of creation to reflect the antiquity of marijuana. They are held to be true in both *Barracks* and *Four Junction*. Consumers felt a sense of awe and enthusiasm and listened attentively, as the leaders of the "ghettoes" narrated the following myths:

Once upon a time, before Allah created human beings and put them in a beautiful garden, He planted a ganja tree that man was asked to use to cure his diseases and to aid in His communion with him. All the Prophets benefited from the plant until the time of Prophet Mohammed. During the

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<sup>21</sup> See, Abraham Rosman & Paula G. Rubel, *The Tapestry of Culture: An Introduction to Cultural Anthropology* (Third Edition) (New York: NewberryAward Records, Inc., 1989).

time of the Prophet, he expressed interest in using ganja, but *Sheitani* (Satan) got wind of it, and quickly went and urinated on it. The urine of *Sheitani* completely changed the flagrant smell of marijuana from pleasant to an abominable scent. Since then Allah ordered all human beings not to use ganja. For a very long time, no one used the ganja tree, until one man used it. When he used it, he immediately got intoxicated and slept for the rest of the day. When he regained consciousness, his friends asked him of the reason for his intoxication the previous day. He refused to tell them. This was because he was not prepared to share the benefits of the tree with his friends since he knew they would hate him and ignore his company. But he could not hide this for long. His friends prevailed over him and, eventually, he told them about the ganja tree. As his friends got to know about his story, some criticized him for breaking Allah's law to take what is prohibited. They disassociated themselves from him. Others also felt they could try it. They went ahead and used it, and had a similar experience as their friend. The common experience knitted them together and strengthened the intimate relationship between them. They were happy but did not know how Allah was going to react. But after waiting for years, as they continued to take it without Allah punishing them or suffering from any misfortune from smoking, they went ahead and spread the good news about ganja. They revived its medicinal and recreational use and passed on the knowledge to their children, who also

passed the knowledge on. Those who refused to take the ganja criticized those who used it and spread falsehood about it. When they realized that Allah had not punished those who used it, and instead they were growing healthy, they instigated hatred against those who smoke, by winning the support of the political and some religious leaders to their side. But the more they suppressed the truth about ganja, the more the tree gained its popularity. However, because of deviance, which resulted in the abuse of ganja, Allah intervened, and allowed two groups of smokers to exist side by side: those who rationally used it and benefited from it, as it assisted them to meditate and think deeply about Allah, in order to avoid sin, and those whose abuse of the tree were led by it to commit crimes and also developed mental problems. The abusers were responsible for giving ganja a very bad name. Later, Allah allowed the existence of some people too, who by the nature of their creation cannot use ganja at all.<sup>22</sup>

Another myth also has it that:

Once upon a time, before the creation of man, God created the ganja tree that was meant for man to use for medicinal and recreational purposes. But man never had knowledge about it until one man, who lived with his two sons, had to find a cure for one of his sons who fell terribly ill. The man went on a search of the herb to cure his son. It was through this search that the man came into contact with the ganja tree. He plucked

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discussion at Barracks on 9/10/10.



it and sent it home. When he administered it to his son, his son got well. He told his neighbors about the plant and, with time, ganja became a universal plant, used to cure all manner of diseases. This continued until one day, *Sheitani*, the archenemy of man, out of envy and jealousy, went and urinated on the ganja tree. By this act, *Sheitani* polluted the potency of ganja. Since then, God asked that no one should use the ganja leaves. But some people did not listen to God's command. They went ahead and used it. Among those who used it, some were not lucky; they lost the protection of God and eventually got entrapped by *Sheitani*. *Sheitani* made some of them mad, criminals and miserable. Others too were fortunate. God had mercy on them, gave them a long time, and blessed them with good health. But since God had cursed the use of it, all the Prophets condemned it, and from that time, ganja has always been a bad herb in the eyes of the world.<sup>23</sup>

“Once upon a time ...” inaugurates a suspension of time, a break with space and a non-participation in the present. This is an incantory verbal formula that includes a dramatic, rapid regression into the dim past for the actualization of archetypical realities, the here and now having been assimilated into that “once upon a time” that transcends factors of human reckoning.<sup>24</sup> Also, the invocation of the incantory formula is meant to legitimize the validity and absolutism of the truth claims embedded in the myth, particularly, its invocation to support the social structure

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Noah A. Imeyen, “The Mythological Tree: A History of Myths, Legends and Folktales,” In *Perspectives on Mythology*, ed. Esi Sutherland-Addy (Accra: Goethe-Institut, 1999), 12.

of the “ghettoes.” Myths are, therefore, not to be contested or subject to any kind of ‘logical’ truth test: they are make-believe.<sup>25</sup> The orality of marijuana culture in the “ghettoes” also implies that these myths have not remained the same ever since their narration began. Any attempt to assume that these myths have remained frozen in time is to deny marijuana consumers the intellectual creativity to embellish or reconstruct aspects of these myths to reflect the changing patterns of marijuana culture. This also helps to distill normative practices constructed out of the myths to shape behaviors in the “ghettoes.” It also helps us to see the similarity in the two marijuana myths I collected. The two myths constitute part of the imaginative creativity of marijuana consumers to make sense of the tensions that have shaped discourses on marijuana. By assigning the origin of marijuana as part of God’s creation, marijuana consumers dislocate the herb from the innate evil that some residents of the community associate with it. Thus, the invocation of God as the creator of marijuana gives the herb a legitimacy to be used by human beings.

Consequently, taking a cue from Malinowski’s work on the functionality of myth, I argue that marijuana myth informs normative behavior practices in the “ghettoes” of Maamobi. Malinowski asserted that:

Myth fulfills in [primitive] culture an indispensable function; it expresses, enhances, and codifies belief; it safeguards and enforces morality; it vouches for the guidance of man. Myth is thus a vital ingredient of human civilization; it is not an idle tale, but a hard-worked active force; it is not an intellectual explanation or an artistic imaginary, but a pragmatic charter of [primitive] faith and moral wisdom.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Karen Armstrong *A Short History of Myth* (Edinburgh: Canongate Books Ltd, 2008), 7.

<sup>26</sup> Bronislaw Malinowski *Magie, Science and Religion and Other Essays* (Garden

In the “ghettoes,” the myth of marijuana informs the sociogenic and cultogenic-bent of the consumption of the herb. Since the myths ascribe divine origin/creativity to marijuana, it enjoins a sense of we-feeling among consumers. The sense of solidarity is invoked in the sharing of ‘joints.’ The slang for marijuana, ‘wee’, is reconstructed among marijuana consumers as ‘we’, which implies ‘all of us’. The solidarity in the “ghettoes” is embodied in the persona in the myths sharing knowledge about the use of the herb with his neighbor.

Marijuana consumers hardly admit non-participants of “ghetto” life, including those who trade in other narcotic drugs such as cocaine and heroin, as friends. This has created a form of fictive family in the “ghetto” where members are provided with social networks and support. There is, therefore, a strong sense of solidarity among members. Yet another avenue that binds “ghetto” members together is the criminal nature of consuming marijuana. Since one stands the risk of incarceration, “ghetto” members consume the herb with intimates or intimates of intimates. They avoid consuming it with non-intimates. Thus, for them, “it is better to smoke with intimates in chains than strangers in paradise.”

The sociogenic nature of consuming marijuana is also a latent way of “training” a neophyte in the dynamics of consuming marijuana, including the neophyte learning the expected behavior in the “ghetto” when the neophyte is ‘on high’. The neophyte marijuana consumer, at first exposure to the drug, is subject to group definitions of the desirability of the experience as well as the nature of its reality. After a neophyte has learned the dynamics in consuming the herb, he joins the fraternity as a full member. “Ghetto” members see each other as brothers, and it is the duty of skilled members to pass on any known skills to other members. In view of this, the “ghetto” has people who have learned how to mold blocks, work in parks and gardens; others possess hunting skills as a result of taking part in

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City: NY: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1954), 101.

“ghetto” life. An attack on a “ghetto” member by a non-member is defined as an attack on all “ghetto” members. This sometimes leads to open confrontation in the community. This sense of solidarity in the “ghettoes” is important in providing members with job information or finding jobs and accommodation, as well as visiting members in prison. This social network and support help “ghetto” members to find an emotional adjustment to the challenges of life. This also entices other youth to join “ghetto” life in the community.

In a gender sense, the “ghetto” is a man’s world and so membership is limited to only males. Females are not allowed in the “ghetto.” They can only go there in the company of their conjugal boyfriends or husbands. A few of them also go there to buy marijuana sticks and seeds that they use for medication and in hair cream. It is a taboo for a female to go to the “ghetto” alone to buy marijuana and consume it there. Apart from females, “ghetto” life is opened to all categories of people. There is no professional, religious, ethnic, or political segregation in the “ghetto.”

The “ghetto” has unwritten rules and regulations to govern the conduct of members. As part of the code of conduct in the “ghetto,” members are not allowed to use any hard drugs in the “ghetto;” members are not allowed to make unnecessary noise or fight in the “ghetto;” members are forbidden to steal in and outside the “ghetto” or admit criminals or thieves into “ghetto” life. Though most “ghetto” members smoke cigarette, in addition to marijuana in the “ghetto,” the sale of cigarette is not allowed in the “ghetto;” members are not proscribed from drinking alcohol, but members cannot live in the “ghetto” under the influence of alcohol. No marital unfaithfulness is permissible, and finally “elders” are not supposed to be disrespected.

There are also punitive measures to ‘discipline’ members who fall short of “ghetto” rules. The administration of punishment depends on the degree of the offense. The highest

form of punishment known as "Hukumchi"<sup>27</sup> is administered to members who are reported and confirmed to have stolen or committed a crime.

"Hukumchi" requires the guilty person to be tied to the ground and given an undetermined number of lashes by any member of the "ghetto" from which the offending member hails. If a person is caught at night, punishment is deferred until the following day, and the offending party is kept in the room of an elder. The climax of "Hukumchi" is excommunication. The guilty person is "dismembered" from "ghetto" life. During the fieldwork, the researcher discovered that excommunication is highly dreaded by members. A council of elders enforces the laws and regulations as well as dispenses punishment in the "ghettoes."

Since leadership is necessary for the sustenance of "ghetto" life, there is a form of gerontocratic leadership in the "ghettoes." Leadership is reposed in older members of the "ghetto." They are expected to live an exemplary life and promote group solidarity among members. It is also their duty to initiate and organize social activities such as football matches and cleanup exercises. They also assist members in the organization of marriage, funerals, and naming ceremonies.

Though these two marijuana myths which have been discussed have no basis in Islam, they are held to be true, and they help "ghetto" members to rationalize the consumption of marijuana. The myths also give them some eschatological hope that someday Ghana will decriminalize the consumption of marijuana in the country. This hope enjoins older members to pass the myths on to new members as part of the new members' initiation into "ghetto" life.

## **Conclusion**

The fact that the consumption of marijuana among some of the youth in Maamobi in particular and Ghana in general continues

<sup>27</sup> Hukumchi is a Hausa term for punishment.

to escalate, in spite of the criminalization of the herb, makes it necessary for one to find out the reasons that continue to sustain the consumption of the herb. I have argued that marijuana myths in the “ghettoes” of Maamobi provide enough reason for marijuana consumers to defy the threat of imprisonment to consume the herb. The appropriation of marijuana myths to form a fictive family in the “ghettoes” becomes a vector for marijuana consumers to cope with the problematic predicaments associated with marijuana culture: arrest, prosecution, imprisonment, stigmatization, and reprisals from the community. In sum, while we may logically and historically discount the factual information that the myths postulate, we must appreciate how the effectiveness of these myths helps in keeping one in the practice of consumption of marijuana once one gets introduced to the herb.

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## Journal Article

Akyeampong, Emmanuel. "Diaspora and Drug Trafficking in West Africa: A Case Study of Ghana," *African Affairs* 104/416 (2005): 429–447.

# **Health Care and Population Growth in Ghana: A Catalyst for Development in New Dwaben**

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## ***Abstract***

*Health care is one of the important elements in the development of every nation. In view of that every government makes it a priority to provide efficient health care to its people through the establishment of facilities, providing medication and also training health workers. The construction of modern health care facilities by the colonial government in New Dwaben, Koforidua, in 1926, represents a serious attempt to provide for the health needs of the people of the Gold Coast. The advent of the hospital helped to improve the health of the people of the community and, to a large extent, contributed to the development of social and economic activities in New Dwaben. This article examines the factors that led to the establishment of the hospital and how it contributed to growth of social and economic activities in New Dwaben, Koforidua. There was growth in social and economic activities including employment, agriculture, transportation, population, entertainment, trade, sanitation, jobs partly due to the advent of the Koforidua Government Hospital in New Dwaben.*

**Keywords:** New Dwaben, Government Hospital, Colonial Medical Policies, Ghana Health Service

## Introduction

The lack of modern methods of health care delivery was one of the problems that confronted the settlers of New Dwaben in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Without hospitals, clinics, trained medical doctors, nurses and other health workers in the early stages of settlement the only available method of health care at the time was the traditional medical system which was administered by traditional healers, usually referred to as herbalists. Many health professionals refused posting to the area because they could not educate their children in any school in New Dwaben. The major sources of medication for ailments were leaves, roots and the skin of plants. Diseases, perceived to have been caused by the gods, were treated by the traditional priests after pacifying the gods. But these methods of cure became ineffective over the years as new and complicated diseases emerged which called for a more efficient approach to health care. Nevertheless, prior to the establishment of modern methods of health care, the traditional system was the only acceptable form of treatment because the people of New Dwaben were in a society that was still going through transition and transformation.<sup>1</sup>

It is said that a healthy mind always operates better in a healthy body, and to keep a healthy body required good medical services. Thus, anticipating a possible outbreak of diseases due to the interaction of people from different backgrounds moving into New Dwaben to live and work there, the colonial government made it a priority to provide health care services. First of all, the colonial government was very much concerned about the health needs of the European merchants and their families who traded in raw materials such as cocoa, oil palm, timber and other finished goods. The colonial government's commitment to the provision of good health care for the Europeans and the local people of New Dwaben, Koforidua, was evidenced by the construction of the Koforidua Government Hospital in 1926<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with Nana Oko Yaw, Dwumakwachene of New Dwaben, on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2008.

<sup>2</sup> PRAAD (New Dwaben) ERG 101 Extension of Koforidua Central Hospital, 1.

However, the history of modern health care in New Dwaben dates back to an earlier period before 1926. With the assistance of the Christian Missionaries, New Dwaben chiefs established a mini health post in Koforidua in 1921.<sup>3</sup> The health post was then known as Koforidua Native Hospital. It was managed by the European Christian Missionaries who had acquired some knowledge of clinical health care from health training centres in Europe. The establishment of the health post complemented the efforts by traditional healers to provide health care to the people of New Dwaben and the neighbouring towns and villages.<sup>4</sup>

However, the growth in population with the influx of migrants rendered the health post inadequate for health care delivery. The population growth and the rate at which people threw rubbish indiscriminately in the Koforidua Town alarmed the government as well as the chiefs and there was anticipation that there could be an outbreak of unfamiliar diseases<sup>5</sup>. This situation created panic among the people when they began to experience the outbreak of strange diseases like river blindness, typhoid, yellow fever, influenza and bilharzia in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>6</sup>

### **Improvement of Health Care Facilities**

The alarming situation as a result of the outbreak of diseases called for immediate action to bring the deteriorating situation under control. The new types of diseases required a new method of health care different from the old method of traditional health administration. The new change in health administration was to speed up the health care delivery to meet the needs of both the people of New Dwaben and its environs. To expedite action on this situation, the colonial government quickly came to the aid of the chiefs and the missionaries by constructing the Koforidua

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>5</sup> David K Patterson, "Influenza Epidemic of 1918-1919 in the Gold Coast," *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana*, New Series, 1 (1995), 206-208.

<sup>6</sup> PRAAD (New Dwaben) ADM 4692/1657/24 Report by the Ministry of Health, 5.

Government Hospital in 1926. The hospital had a number of clinical departments which were managed by qualified medical doctors, nurses and paramedical personnel. One of the new additions incorporated into the hospital structure was the child welfare unit.<sup>7</sup> Children were the major victims of the outbreak of the new diseases. The clinic provided important medical services to the children in New Dwaben and the neighbouring towns and villages. As had been anticipated by the colonial government and the chiefs in 1927, barely a year after establishment of the hospital, New Dwaben began to experience a persistent outbreak of malaria and yellow fever.<sup>8</sup>

In 1929, a report from the Ministry of Health to the Acting Commissioner of the Eastern Province indicated that the medical doctor in charge of the children's ward worked assiduously from 8 a.m. till 6 p.m. six days every week, particularly to see to emergency cases concerning children.<sup>9</sup> Although he had little equipment to work with, he never relented in his efforts to counsel pregnant women and nursing mothers on the proper method of handling pregnancy and the care for infants and children. He administered the required medication to all patients.<sup>10</sup>

The modern methods of health administration worked hand-in-hand with traditional methods of health care which used herbs, tree barks and roots.<sup>11</sup> These forms of medicine have existed alongside each other for quite a while. However, modern scientific medicine has, indeed, been beneficial to the people of New Dwaben in the areas of increasing life expectancy and

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> PRAAD (New Dwaben) ADM 60/2/29 Report by the Ministry of Health to the Acting Commissioner Eastern Province, 3.

<sup>11</sup> Emmanuel Asante and R. Avomyo, "Enhancing Healthcare System in Ghana through Integration of Traditional Medicine," *Journal of Sociological Research* Vol. 4, 2 (2013): 256-257.

lowering death rates.<sup>12</sup> With the professionally trained medical doctors and nurses and the scientific methods of health diagnoses, the rate of mortality related to malaria, yellow fever and water-borne diseases were reduced, if not totally eliminated.<sup>13</sup>

There was also an improvement in anti-natal health care in New Dwaben and this reduced the death rate of pregnant women and unborn babies. New born babies were also taken good care of and that also reduced child mortality rate.<sup>14</sup> The joy of some of the local people was due to the move away from the idea of superstition which had shrouded the outbreak of diseases. To them, the modern form of diagnoses and cure enlightened them on preventable diseases.<sup>15</sup> The Koforidua Government Hospital was later upgraded to a regional hospital in 1953 by the Government of Ghana with an improvement in its infrastructural facilities to provide quality health care. For example, the anti-natal ward, child care unit, out-patient department, accident and emergency wards were all expanded.<sup>16</sup>

The expansion of medical services called for the construction of clinics and health care centers in other communities in New Dwaben besides Koforidua. Thus, the increase in the number of hospital patrons compelled the New Dwaben Urban Council, in collaboration with the government, to purchase a plot of land from Mr. D. K. Ankrah an estate agent, for the construction of a second hospital.<sup>17</sup> The congestion at the Koforidua Government Hospital informed that decision by the Government and the Urban Council. For example, in the old hospital both the child welfare and the maternity clinics operated in the offices of the

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Patrick A. Twumasi, *Medical Systems in Ghana: A Study in Medical Sociology* (Tema: Ghana Publishing Corporation, 1975): 256.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 257.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> PRAAD (New Dwaben) File CSO 1367/4451 Ministry of Lands Report 1930, 1.

medical officer in charge of the health services.<sup>18</sup> The situation caused much nuisance and inconvenience to the medical officer in charge of health services, the doctors on duty and the patients as well.<sup>19</sup>

From February 1929 to October 1930, the daily average child attendant at the clinic was one hundred. Dealing with these cases all involving daily consultation, injection, dispensing of drugs, created congestion and embarrassing situations for the management of the hospital.<sup>20</sup> What worsened the situation was that the only two people who assisted the doctor were not professionally trained nurses and, thus, most of the duties were undertaken by the medical doctor himself.<sup>21</sup> However, in spite of all the difficulties no death was recorded for a period of nine months. What a joy it was for the medical officer, the staff as well as the entire community of New Dwaben when on April 23, 1930, a new clinic was commissioned by the then Honorable Commissioner of the Eastern Province, Mr. F. W. Applegate, who was accompanied by D. H. O'Hara, the Deputy Director of Health Services and Mrs. W. J. D. Innees, the wife of the Director of Medical and Health Services.<sup>22</sup>

To ease the pressure on the hospital, two new clinics were constructed in the early 1930s at a new site to accommodate the child welfare and the maternity clinics.<sup>23</sup> In the new clinics, the number of patients attended the hospital went beyond an average of 185 a day during the months of August, September and October.<sup>24</sup> This was due to the fact that many people who traveled to New Dwaben to trade in cocoa and other agricultural

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>20</sup> PRAAD (New Dwaben) CDV/JSEAT Child Welfare Clinic, 4.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>23</sup> PRAAD (New Dwaben) ERGKC12/86 Koforidua Hospital, 7.

<sup>24</sup> *bid.*



produce such as oil palm, coconut, maize, plantain, cassava, yam and other food items found it opportune to seek medical care for their children and spouses.<sup>25</sup> A fee of one shilling was charged for the prescription of medicine. However, daily consultation with the Doctors was free. But in the case of yaws patients, two shillings was charged for the first injection given and one shilling for every subsequent injection<sup>26</sup>.

Besides the charges for health care delivery, fines were levied for other related services and on people who were found guilty of various offences. For example, a patient was made to pay one shilling for the loss of a hospital identity card, six pence for defacing the card, one shilling for unnecessary talking and disturbances in the consulting room and one shilling for spitting in the room.<sup>27</sup> For a period of six months, from April to September 1930, the total fees collected into the treasury amounted to £625.<sup>28</sup>

Wives and children of government workers attended the health care centers free of charge. School children who brought official sick permits from their respective head-teachers were also catered for free of charge. Arrangements were also made to offer treatment to patients in their homes at a special fee.<sup>29</sup> These arrangements were specifically for those who could not visit the clinics or the hospital due to the severity of their ailments. Such fees were also paid into the central treasury.<sup>30</sup> But this opportunity was abused as it became difficult to sometimes collect money from patients who were treated privately in their homes.<sup>31</sup> As a result of this, the medical officer gave instructions to cut off all

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>27</sup> PRAAD (New Dwaben) File ERGN7/Vol. II Koforidua Hospital Improvement, 2.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 3

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

those private services and all patients were then directed to go to the hospital for treatment in spite of their condition.<sup>1</sup> That decisions by the medical officer enabled the clinics to collect monies from patients who were given treatment. Those with financial difficulties consulted the senior medical officer for consideration and special arrangement.<sup>2</sup>

### **Increase in Hospital Attendance**

To ensure effective and efficient health care delivery, additional qualified medical personnel were employed by the government to support the medical personnel who worked at the Koforidua Government Hospital. For instance, on days when the number of patients was very huge at the out-patient department and the children's unit when it seemed too difficult for one person to dispense drugs, extra qualified dispensers were employed temporarily to assist the permanent staff on duty. On August 1, 1930, for example four people were employed to support the staff strength at the central hospital.<sup>3</sup> The first to be employed was Mrs. Williams, a professional midwife at the anti-natal clinic. The others were Marrian Bordoh, a clerk responsible for hospital correspondence including the patient identification cards, and Rose Peters an interpreter and a cleaner.<sup>4</sup>

Occasionally, some of the European women residing in Koforidua offered voluntary assistance to the cleaners and other Para-medical staff at the Koforidua Government Hospital. The hospital authorities expressed their profound gratitude to the volunteers, especially, Mrs. W. W. Greer and Mrs. G. C. Cuthbert, for their invaluable contribution to the upkeep of the hospital.<sup>5</sup> In the 1930s the majority of the cases reported at the hospital were malaria in children under two years of age. The danger that

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

loomed was that anti-malaria drugs were in short supply and the lives of the affected children were in danger. However, during that same period, there was a drastic reduction in the spread of yaws.<sup>6</sup> But there was also a report of other strange diseases that threatened the life of the people of New Dwaben at the time. On a daily average, four cases of typhoid were reported, eight cases of pneumonia, four leprosy cases, two of scurvy, two of leukemia and two of dysentery. Most of the serious cases were referred to the Gold Coast Government Hospital in Accra for emergency treatment.<sup>7</sup> In spite of this menace the services rendered at the anti-natal clinic improved steadily and many pregnant women traveled from distant villages from Krobo, Akuapem and Akyem Abuakwa to seek medical care in New Dwaben.<sup>8</sup>

The smooth journey to and from New Dwaben was made possible due to the availability of modern means of transportation, especially, railways which was the cheapest means of transport at the time.<sup>9</sup> Some of the pregnant women found it convenient to travel by rail transport than road transport. Those who could not get medical attention the same day preferred to live in New Dwaben for a number of days or months to receive medical treatment from their doctors.<sup>10</sup> Although they initially found it strange to live in a new town they quickly adjusted to the new situation as the days went by. The influx of people to New Dwaben for health care delivery partly contributed to the creation and expansion of some satellite communities like Asokore Kuma, Akwadum, Jumapo, Aboabo, Ada, Nsukwao, Sorodae and Zongo communities.<sup>11</sup> This fostered the development of New Dwaben into an urban area.

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> PRAAD (New Dwaben) ERGGQ2/18/SF/38 Extension to Koforidua Hospital.

<sup>8</sup> Interview with John Kobina Nunu, Retired Traffic Officer, Ghana Railway Corporation, Koforidua, on 15<sup>th</sup> February, 2009.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

The table below shows the level of increase in utilization of child welfare, school children and anti-natal clinics at the Koforidua Government Hospital between the years of 1929 and 1930.<sup>12</sup>

ATTENDANCE	1929	1930
Child Welfare Clinic	5,222	13,508
Anti Natal Care	224	1,068
School Children	267	746

As shown in the table, in 1929, the child welfare clinic cared for five thousand, two hundred and twenty-two patients. The patient number increased to thirteen thousand, five hundred and eight in 1930. The anti-natal clinic in 1929 cared for two hundred and twenty-four patients. But the patient number shot up to one thousand and sixty-eight in 1930. A similar situation occurred in school children's utilization of the hospital. The number of school children cared for at the hospital in 1929 was two hundred and sixty-seven. This number increased to seven hundred and forty-six in 1930.<sup>13</sup>

The Koforidua Government Hospital prides itself on efficient and effective health care delivery. To the medical staff of the hospital a satisfied customer was their best form of advertisement to the general public. To monitor the progress of their work and services to the public, an arrangement was made for some health officers to visit the homes of patients who had been treated by the hospital and discharged. The purpose of the visit was to assess the rate at which the discharged patients were recovering from their ailments.<sup>14</sup> Even the mortal remains of a few dead people were monitored as to how they were buried. This was because some of the diseases that killed the patients

<sup>12</sup> PRAAD, New Dwaben ADM 40/635/12 Ministry of Health Report, 1930, 7.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

were contagious and thus the bodies were to be buried properly to avoid the spread of such diseases.<sup>15</sup>

### **Contributions by the British Red Cross Society**

In 1931 an extension of the maternity ward was constructed to cater for child delivery and related maternity cases whilst the main ward concentrated on pregnant women.<sup>16</sup> To increase the staff at the new maternity ward, traditional birth attendants were recruited and offered professional nursing and midwifery training to complement the work of the nursing staff. After the training they were employed as nurses and midwives in the maternity department.<sup>17</sup> To support the female and children wards with advanced medical treatment that prevailed in Europe at the time, the colonial government created a branch of the British Red Cross Society in New Dwaben in 1935.<sup>18</sup> After the branch was firmly established in New Dwaben, the infant welfare clinic was handed over by the colonial government to the management of the British Red Cross Society. However, the government exercised general control over the clinic to ensure effective health care delivery. The Ministry of Health also collaborated effectively with the society to achieve its intended purposes.<sup>19</sup>

The financial resources and administration of the British Red Cross Society were taken over by the government so that it could judiciously use the funds generated internally for its operations.<sup>20</sup> However, during difficult financial times the government subsidized the society's activities.<sup>21</sup> The salaries and pension gratuity of the medical doctors and all the health

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<sup>15</sup> PRAAD, New Dwaben ADM 41/271/13 New Dwaben Government Hospital, 10.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> PRAAD (New Dwaben) ADM 355/1983/29 Midwifery and Nursing Training offered the Traditional Birth Attendants.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> PRAAD (New Dwaben) ADM 296/2/1935 The Child Welfare Clinic Handed Over to the British Red Cross Society, 10.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 12.

workers of the Koforidua Government Hospital were paid by the government.<sup>22</sup> To mobilize enough funds for the upkeep of the health sector, individuals and private companies contributed generously to support the colonial government's expenditure.<sup>23</sup> Others too offered manpower support to the health sector. The United African Company (UAC), for example, in 1936, contributed to the rehabilitation of the Koforidua Government Hospital.<sup>24</sup> One of the health personnel of the Company, Mr. E. A. Kwapong, was asked by the company to offer assistance to the British Red Cross Society in the organization and delivery of health care education for the people of New Dwaben and the whole of the Eastern region.<sup>25</sup> Among the towns outside New Dwaben where health care education was delivered was Anyinam in the Akyem District.<sup>26</sup>

In 1939 the British Red Cross Society expanded its operations when the colonial government constructed a new medical block for the society in Koforidua.<sup>27</sup> The request for a new medical block was made to the colonial government by the executive committee of the society. After the colonial government approved the request, authorization was given to the Commissioner of the Eastern Province, Mr. Eugene Smith, to cut the sod for the commencement of the project.<sup>28</sup> For administrative purposes, a board of directors made up of the District Commissioner as chairman, the medical doctor in charge of the British Red Cross Society and the resident engineer as members, were appointed on behalf of the government to

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 13

<sup>24</sup> Interview with Mr. Jonathan Aboagye, Public Relations Officer, Ministry of Local Government, Accra, on 4<sup>th</sup> April, 2008.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> PRAAD (New Dwaben) ADM 296/2/1935 Construction New Medical Block for British Red Cross Society, I.

manage the affairs of the society.<sup>29</sup> Report on the operations of the society was submitted to the Governor annually.

The increase in population due to urbanisation invariably increased the number in hospital attendance during the middle part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Besides those who were residing in New Dwaben, others traveled daily by rail from the neighbouring towns to seek medical care in New Dwaben.<sup>30</sup> The increase in hospital attendance created congestion again in the main hospital and the affiliate clinics.<sup>31</sup> The patients outnumbered the health workers both in the hospital and in the associated clinics. In some instances, patients had to sleep on the bare floor to receive medical treatment due to lack of beds.<sup>32</sup> The situation worsened the conditions of some of the patients even to the point of death. In October 1954, the people of New Dwaben as well as the chiefs raised serious concerns about the congestion at the Koforidua Government Hospital and its effects on the health of the people. The matter was subsequently reported to the Government by the management of the hospital.<sup>33</sup>

The poor hospital conditions created tension between the people and the Ministry of Health. To reduce this the Government carried out major renovation and expansion work at the Koforidua Government Hospital. The first phase of the project was started in October 1954. New departments were constructed in addition to the existing ones. The new departments, including X-Ray, Surgical, Out Patient, Laundry, Consulting Rooms, Recovery Wards and a Photographic Unit were constructed at the new site. The existing kitchen was expanded to accommodate food prepared for the patients. New diagnosing equipment was also purchased. The government solely financed the project and

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Interview with Mr. Abeka Amoah, Public Relations Office, Ministry of Health, Takoradi, on 28<sup>th</sup> December, 2007.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

construction was undertaken by the public works department at the cost of £16,000.<sup>34</sup> A second phase of the renovation and expansion works were carried out in November of the same year at a cost of £18,160. Additional bungalows were built for doctors and nurses to ease the burden of accommodation and also to boost the interest of the new ones posted to the hospital.<sup>35</sup> The foot paths leading to the hospital were cleared and widened whilst the tarred roads in bad conditions were reconstructed. The drainage systems were improved to enable free flow of waste water from the hospital and a demolition exercise was carried out to get rid of encroachers on the hospital land.<sup>36</sup> The regional minister financed the construction of a reservoir to serve the hospital.<sup>37</sup> Water was pumped from the Densu River to supply the hospital and the residences of the staff. The regional minister subsequently furnished the new maternity ward with beds and sterilizers.<sup>38</sup>

In 1955, a fully furnished kitchen was provided by the Ministry of Health for the patients at the Koforidua Government Hospital.<sup>39</sup> The purpose of the kitchen was to relieve the relatives of the patients of the burden of providing food and also to ensure that patients were given nutritious food from the hospital. In a report to the regional minister the hospital management indicated that patients had better treatment at the New Dwaben hospital. All patients were properly diagnosed before treatment and adding to the improvement in the hospital health care delivery was the provision of sheds and adequate seats for visitors.<sup>40</sup> For security purposes, security staff were stationed at the main entrance in each of the wards to prevent intruders and protect both patients

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<sup>34</sup> PRAAD (New Dwaben) ERG KC 12/15 Congestion in Koforidua Hospital, 14.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> PRAAD (New Dwaben) ERG 170/vol2/3472 Extension to Koforidua Hospital, 9.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> PRAAD (New Dwaben) ERG KC12/30 Office of the Regional Minister, 13.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.



and staff.<sup>41</sup> The management of the hospital ensured that besides the monthly salaries and allowances given to the staff, they would also have a better working environment to motivate them to give off their best to the service.<sup>42</sup>

As the population of New Dwaben continued to increase, companies including United African Company and G. B. Olivant volunteered to support the Ghana Government in health care delivery.<sup>43</sup> This was due to the fact that the government hospital and clinics alone could not cater for the health needs of the people. Churches, especially, the Roman Catholic Church, supported the government in this sector. The R. C. Church established the St. Joseph's Hospital in 1959. The hospital was noted for its specialty in orthopedic treatment and other diseases.<sup>44</sup> There was speedy delivery of health services and patients were even transferred from other hospitals, particularly, in other parts of the Eastern region to Koforidua. Some of the patients after recovery found themselves in permanent residence in New Dwaben due to the efficiency and professionalism from the medical staff.<sup>45</sup>

### **Challenges in Health Care Delivery**

Due to the rapid growth in social and economic activities such as trade, agriculture, transportation and entertainment the Government of Ghana established a branch of the Department of the Town and Country Planning in Koforidua in 1959. The responsibility of the Department was to restructure the demarcation of residential areas to control the haphazard manner of putting up buildings, disposing waste, constructing sewerage systems, siting of lorry parks, markets, schools and recreational centers, to ensure both the beautification and a

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>42</sup> PRAAD (New Dwaben) ERG GQ2-18/SF38 Extension to Koforidua Hospital, 8.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> PRAAD (New Dwaben) 2003 Annual Report: A Brief Development History of New Dwaben, 21.

healthy environment in New Dwaben. One of the measures adopted by the department to achieve its objectives was to prevent the people of New Dwaben from either building or farming without permits.<sup>46</sup> Anyone who required land for any project had to go for a permit prior to the commencement of the project. A permit was issued on payment of twenty-four shillings (24s).<sup>47</sup> The tenancy agreement further stated that every land, farm or house owner had to make a payment of an annual rent of twelve-shillings (12s) to the Town and Country Planning Office. Foreigners who had already utilized land were made to pay a penalty of forty-shillings (40s) per person for violating the law.<sup>48</sup>

The effort of the Town and Country Planning Department yielded positive results such that by the end of 1959, New Dwaben had started enjoying treated and purified water drawn from the Suhyien and Okume Rivers.<sup>49</sup> There was improvement in drinking water from wells and streams which were major vehicles for the outbreak of waterborne diseases like bilharzia and river blindness.<sup>50</sup> The tremendous efforts displayed by the Government of Ghana, the chiefs and the health workers of New Dwaben to bring the situation under control were commendable. They complemented the efforts by the hospital to reduce and control diseases like malaria, yellow fever and water born infections.<sup>51</sup>

From 1967 the hospital faced another round of problems. The first was financial difficulties that affected its operations. It retarded the rate at which progress was being made in health care delivery in New Dwaben and its environs. The financial problem was due to the fact that funds were not been released regularly and sufficiently by the Ministry of Finance to cater

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

for expenses incurred by the Koforidua Government Hospital.<sup>52</sup> The internally generated funds from the hospital were also not enough to meet the challenging needs at the time. This situation presented difficulties for the Ministry of Health which was the statutory body that supervised the operations of all government hospitals and clinics in the country at the time. This financial difficulty affected the provision of Hospital beds and night wear for patients, let alone carry out major renovations and extensions.<sup>53</sup> This problem was not common to most government hospitals in the country in 1967. The situation hampered the development plan by the Government of Ghana to construct another hospital with modern facilities in the Eastern Region.<sup>54</sup>

By 1968 the number of people attending the Koforidua Government Hospital in New Dwaben was over sixty-one thousand. The patrons were people from Akuapem, Krobo and Akyem towns and villages. At the time, the hospital had only one hundred and seven beds distributed to the various wards. The female ward had 18 beds, the male ward 20, the maternity ward 42, anti-natal ward had 6 and children's ward, 21. Due to lack of rooms, temporal structures were used for dispensary, consulting room, registration office, laboratory, administration, X-ray section and a tuberculosis unit.<sup>55</sup> The hospital at the time had only one dental clinic. The surgical theater was still under construction and the small building used as a mortuary was outmoded with malfunctioning refrigerators. Dead bodies sometimes decomposed in the refrigerators. As well, frequent power cuts also affected the functioning of the mortuary.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> PRAAD (New Dwaben) ERG ER/DS/D-31 Press Criticism on Koforidua Hospital, 7.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> PRAAD (New Dwaben) ERGKC12/TJ Koforidua Hospital Needs Supervision. p. 6.

Another problem was lack of sufficient staff at the Koforidua Government Hospital. For the over sixty-one thousand people across the length and breadth of New Dwaben, there were only four doctors, one dental surgeon, three pharmacists, five dispensary assistants, one secretary, one assistant catering officer, two X-ray technicians, one store keeper, one dental assistant, one medical assistant, one record keeper, thirteen orderlies, two labourers for general duties and one telephone operator.<sup>57</sup> A little encouraging was the one hundred and sixty-nine nurses including those in the University of Ghana Nursing Training School. These were the devoted staff at the hospital in the late 1960s. On average, one doctor was caring for over fifteen thousand patients. There was also only one surgeon at post was for the entire Koforidua Government Hospital. On average, one bed was serving seven hundred and thirty-six patients and one maternity bed was for one hundred and twenty pregnant women.<sup>58</sup>

There was also the problem of noise-making from nearby communities and activities such as excessive noise from passing trains, noise from the electricity corporation generating plants and from primary and middle schools around the hospital. These disturbances compelled the Government of Ghana to consider the construction of another hospital far from the city center in 1971.<sup>59</sup> Another problem was the attitude of some of the staff at the hospital, particularly, the nurses. In 1969, a report to the Progress Party Government indicated that some of the nurses were not polite and, thus, had neglected patients in the course of their duty. The lack of supervision by the senior nursing sisters created a situation in which the junior ones acted in their own interest and ignore the rules and regulations governing the medical profession.<sup>60</sup> The report further indicated that

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> PRAAD (New Dwaben) File ERG F16/27 Petition from Regional Hospital Koforidua, 5.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

the services at the hospital were not up to standard. Patients complained about noise made by the staff to their discomfort. To find lasting solutions to these problems, the government issued an order to the staff to desist from aggravating patients' woes and reminded them of the duties and responsibilities of medical professionals, especially on the cardinal point of how to treat patients with care. The health workers were asked to emulate the example of Lady Nightingale who introduced nursing the service during the Crimean war and how she exhibited humility and modesty by showing courtesy to people. This improved the situation at the Koforidua Government Hospital<sup>61</sup>.

The Koforidua Government Hospital continued to have problems after 1969. In 1970, for example, a visit to the hospital by a Committee of the New Dwaben Traditional Council, led by the Nifahene Nana Frimpong Mposo II, revealed that the hospital was in dire need of doctors.<sup>62</sup> This was because many doctors refused posting to Koforidua due to the conditions in the hospital. For this reason, doctors had to be persuaded to accept the government request.<sup>63</sup> Among the conditions that convinced doctors to accept posting to New Dwaben Hospital was the fact that the government promised to build a new hospital with modern equipment and facilities in 1971. This promise by the government and an improvement in the service conditions of doctors by increasing their salaries and allowances and also providing equipment for work motivated medical staff to go to New Dwaben.<sup>64</sup>

Living up to its promise, the Progress Party Government authorized the Ministry of Health to acquire a two-hundred-acre land for the construction of a new hospital in 1971. But while waiting for the construction of the new hospital, problems in the

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<sup>61</sup> PRAAD (New Dwaben) ERG Vol. 1/No 51 Koforidua Hospital Needs Supervision, 2-3.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> PRAAD (New Dwaben) ERG 13/472/70 New Hospital for Koforidua, 3.

old one kept on increasing. In 1972, the surgical and maternity wards were closed down due to persistent outbreak of contagious/infectious diseases.<sup>65</sup> The outbreak was partly blamed on the lack of space in the old hospital to accommodate patients. As well, most of the equipment in the wards were not in good condition. The ambulances and mobile vans that transported patients from Koforidua to other Regional Hospitals had also broken down. Subsequently the Epidemiology Division of the hospital recommended the closure of specific wards.<sup>66</sup> Investigations conducted by the Deputy Director of Medical Services revealed that the situation was so bad that he approved the request. As a result, the government did not relent in its efforts to avert the looming danger that posed a threat to human life. It sped up the construction of additional wards, but the immediate action taken by the government was to furnish the old hospital with new equipment. The new equipment bought was worth N¢ 4,268,000.<sup>67</sup>

### **Efforts by Government to Resolve Problems at the Hospital**

For the hospital authorities, the most important step to prevent the repetition of the problems in future was the quick completion of additional new wards at the new site. To see to the progress of the work the Senior Medical Officer, Dr. Hammond Grant, paid a working visit to the site in April 1972. He reported that the work on the new ward was progressing steadily.<sup>68</sup> To ensure the safety and protection of the children, the child welfare clinics which operated in distinct locations were taken over by the Public Health Division of the Koforidua Government Hospital.<sup>69</sup> The hospital management took the decision in the wake of an outbreak of infectious diseases including bilharzia, yellow,

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>67</sup> PRAAD (New Dwaben) File ERG N7/Vol. 11 Improvement on Koforidua Hospital, 1.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 2.

malaria and river blindness in Koforidua in the early 1970s. The diseases were fast spreading among children in New Dwaben and the nearby villages and, therefore, quarantine was enforced.<sup>70</sup> The hospital management introduced a pilot project called the "under five health care programme" to control the spread of the diseases. The intensive health care unit also supported the public health care division in the fight to cure the affected children.<sup>71</sup>

The Regional Medical Director, in a report to the government in 1972, stressed the importance of constructing a regional medical store in Koforidua, to facilitate quick access to medication in case of emergencies. This was because the delay in transporting medication from Accra to New Dwaben caused serious problems. In some instances, patients died as a result of the delay.<sup>72</sup> Heeding to the request by the medical officer, an additional hundred-acre land was acquired by the government for constructing a regional store. Another fifty acres was acquired for the expansion of the midwifery training school to train professional midwives to handle all maternity cases.<sup>73</sup> As well additional wards were constructed and the out-patient department was also rehabilitated to accommodate more patients.<sup>74</sup>

Major renovation and expansions works were undertaken at the New Dwaben hospital in 1972. A number of new blocks, a new maternity block with an operating theatre, anti and post-natal units and an obstetric consulting room were constructed by the Government of Ghana.<sup>75</sup> Expansion works continued with the construction of surgical block, a bigger mortuary, paediatric ward, a new administration block, a sewing room, a physiotherapy department, a staff canteen, a library, a conference room, a staff

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> PRAAD (New Dwaben) ERG 127/5/ 12 Koforidua Hospital Improvement, 16.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

common room, a regional laboratory and new medical wards.<sup>76</sup> After the completion of the new departments a section of the staff in the old blocks were assigned to these new units.<sup>77</sup> The child welfare division, by 1975, had outlived its usefulness. The increase in child patient attendance had rendered the size of the ward inadequate. The numbers were far greater than the division could admit.<sup>78</sup> To improve service delivery, a new block was constructed by the government with new facilities. Suitable beds and other equipment were also provided for the children. By the end of 1975 the daily child attendance at the hospital was three hundred.<sup>79</sup>

Medical equipment purchased by the government was screened by the University of Ghana Medical School prior to delivery.<sup>80</sup> For instance, a number of hospital equipment suppliers applied to furnish the surgical theatre, the orthopaedic theatre and the recovery ward of the Koforidua Government Hospital but only one of them, Hospital Services Ghana Limited, won the approval of the Medical School.<sup>81</sup> The company was tasked with the responsibility of supplying anesthetic equipment, surgical instrument, neurosurgical equipment and thoracic equipment to replace the obsolete ones.<sup>82</sup> Since 1975, the University of Ghana Medical School has continued to offer valuable assistance to the Koforidua Government Hospital by posting trained doctors, nurses and other health professionals to the Regional Hospital.<sup>83</sup> This invaluable assistance from the University of Ghana Medical

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> PRAAD (New Dwaben) ERG KC 12 Improvement Maternal and Child Health Care Division - Koforidua Hospital, 14.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> PRAAD (New Dwaben) MS/DA-71A University of Ghana Medical School Assistance to Koforidua Hospital, 8.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.



School contributed greatly to the maintenance of quality health care delivery in New Dwaben. This in the long term had positive effects on the health status of the people by contributing a low mortality rate.<sup>84</sup>

To improve the efficiency of health care delivery, the University of Ghana Medical School continued to offer assistance to the hospital. The University of Ghana Medical School recommended the appointment of qualified medical staff to work at the Koforidua Government Hospital.<sup>85</sup> The hospital accepted the recommendation and, in October 1975, some medical professionals were assigned to the hospital wards. One senior nurse, four ward attendants with training in theatre work, twelve staff nurses, four instrument boys, three orderlies and nine porters were assigned to the Koforidua Government Hospital.<sup>86</sup>

The orthopaedic theatre was also allowed three ward assistants, six staff nurses, two instrument boys, two wardens, four porters and one messenger. To the recovery ward, two ward assistants, one nurse and five ward orderlies were assigned.<sup>87</sup> Periodically, these categories of professionals were given professional workshops at the Korle-Bu Teaching Hospital to enhance their efficiency.<sup>88</sup> Furthermore, regular outreach programmes were also organized so that doctors in Accra could work with the junior doctors at the Koforidua Government Hospital.<sup>89</sup> This was an opportunity for the junior doctors to learn more from their senior colleagues and to acquire

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 11.

experience, especially, in the surgical field.<sup>90</sup> The expansion of the Koforidua Government Hospital created jobs not only for the health professionals but also unskilled labour like cleaners, watchmen, gardeners, washers, messengers.<sup>91</sup>

### **Conclusion**

It is a fact that New Dwaben is one of the urban communities in Ghana today. There were several factors that contributed to the urbanisation of New Dwaben including health care provision. Prior to the establishment of modern health care in Koforidua in 1926, the people of New Dwaben relied on traditional medicine in which healers used leaves and spiritual means to cure sick people. However, the use of traditional medicine became inadequate because the healers could not cure an outbreak of strange diseases including river blindness, bilharzia and yellow fever which attacked many people, including European Missionaries, who came to New Dwaben to spread the Christian gospel in the later part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As a result of the strange diseases some lives were lost. The alarming situation called for a more efficient method for curing ailments in New Dwaben. Thus, the colonial government was compelled to establish a hospital at Koforidua in 1926. The advent of the Koforidua Government Hospital helped to bring under control the upsurge of diseases including river blindness, bilharzia and yellow fever. Professional doctors and other health workers also helped to cure patients and, as a result, many lives were saved. The emergence of the hospital helped to improve the lives of the people in New Dwaben and neighbouring towns and villages. The improvement of lives contributed to increase in social and economic activities including trade, agriculture, transportation, entertainment and sanitation. These and other factors helped New Dwaben to become urbanised by the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

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<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

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# **The Contribution of Muslim Women's Associations to the Development of Kumasi, 1970–2019**

**Victoria Agyare APPIAH and Edmund ABAKA**

## ***Abstract***

*This paper investigates the contribution of Muslim Women's Associations towards the development of Kumasi. It argues that the urbanization of the Kumasi increased the number of women in Kumasi as in other cities and, eventually, resulted in the emergence of Women's Organizations that, from the mid twentieth century, became advocates for women and women's issues and rights. In the process, they negotiated a space for self-expression as Muslim women. In this case, the Muslim Women's groups advocated for Muslim Women and played important roles in the development of Kumasi. They empowered women, offered seminars and skills-training programmes and provided opportunities for personal growth, religious and self-identity and self-fulfillment through a deeper study of the Qur'an. They assisted with education for the young and sponsored people to study locally and in Saudi Arabia. The paper groups the women's association into five and highlights their contribution to the development of Kumasi.*

**Keywords:** FOMWAG, Muslim Women, Asante, Hausa, Islam

## Introduction

Until recently, ethnic associations and gender-specific associations were limited largely to urban areas of the Gold Coast, later, Ghana. In the post-independence period and, specifically, since the 1970s, the rate of rural-urban migration has increased tremendously, especially, to the major towns of Southern Ghana and thus to Accra, Kumasi, Sekondi-Takoradi among others. This increase in urban population resulted in an increase of the number of women and women's groups in the urban centers.

Roberta Ann Dunbar notes that women, as members of society, "reside in social and political contexts that propose images and expected roles often prescribed by patriarchal hegemony."<sup>1</sup> However, women have, and especially in the twentieth century, interpreted, mediated and acted in ways that have given self-expression and identities and Muslim women have done just that.<sup>2</sup> She further asserts that:

Muslim women in the late twentieth century resided in an era of great promise and great danger: great danger in that authoritarianism, in the hands of agents of military or social class, but justified in the name of religion, will impose greater physical, material and psychological hardships on women than on men; great promise in that through political groups, ceremonial organizations, and education campaigns, women are finding new, essentially democratic arenas for public engagement and influence in the broader society.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Roberta Ann Dunbar, "Muslim Women in African History," in *The History of Islam in Africa*, eds. Nehemiah Levtzion & Randall L. Pouwels (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000), 397.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 412.



That is the context in which this analysis of the role and contribution of Muslim Women's Association in Kumasi is undertaken to examine organizing and political activism that these women engaged in with a view to carving out political, economic and educational spaces in which they could negotiate spaces for self-expression, empowerment and social activism. This paper focuses on the emergence of Muslim gender-specific associations, especially, Women's groups in Kumasi and the advocacy of these groups around issues that are of importance to them as Muslims and to disabuse the general notion that the woman's place, and the Muslim woman at that, was only in the home. To get at this, the paper discusses the arrival of Islam in the Volta Basin, the Gold Coast in general and Asante in particular, the emergence of Muslim Women's voluntary associations and their contribution to the development of Kumasi and Ghana between 1970 and 2019.

### **Introduction of Islam into the Gold Coast/Ghana**

Islam's introduction into modern day Ghana, according to many scholars, date from the middle of the sixteenth century when it was introduced into Gonjaland. By the seventeenth century Islam had made adherents among the Dagomba and the Waala people and its reach into the heartland of Asante Kingdom would follow later in the eighteenth century.<sup>4</sup> Mervin Hiskett argues that Islam was introduced into the Volta Basin, specifically, in the Gonja area, before the end of the sixteenth century. The Gonja Kingdom is believed to have been established by Mande speakers who used superior military organization, largely the use of cavalry, to overwhelm the Dagbon.<sup>5</sup> Ivor Wilks, on the other hand, attributes the founding of Gonja to Mande-Dyula Muslims and to one Nabanga, who was in the company

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<sup>4</sup> Nathan Samwini, "The Muslim Resurgence in Ghana Since the 1950s. Its Effects Upon Muslims and Muslim-Christian Relations," PhD Thesis, University of Birmingham, 2003, 22.

<sup>5</sup> See Mervin Hiskett, *The Development of Islam in West Africa* (London: Longman, 1984), 120.

of Muslim Clerics.<sup>6</sup> In this case, Islam was introduced at the moment Gonja was founded. Nehemia Levtzion also suggests a Mande-Dyula connection to the founding of the Gonja Kingdom through Ndewura Jakpa and Fati-Morukpe. But Levtzion also avers that early Muslims from Hausaland and Bornu possibly settled in the area before the Mande conquest and founding of Gonja.<sup>7</sup>

The introduction of Islam into Asante in the eighteenth century is connected with the arrival of Hausa Muslim traders in Gonja to trade in kola and, later on, to Kumasi, the heartland of the “Kola Kingdom.” As the midway point between Hausaland and Asante, Salaga became an important center for the Hausa kola trade between Northern Nigeria and the Volta Basin. Apart from kola, the Hausa merchants traded in salt, spices, and enslaved persons.<sup>8</sup>

Hiskett notes that:

The Hausa occupation of Salaga had important consequences for the spread of Islam [in Ghana]. It meant that an important center of Hausa, and to some extent also Bornu Islam, was established in the midst of an area that had previously been dominated by Dyula Islam.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> See Ivor Wilks, “The Juula and the Expansion into the Forest,” In *Islam in Tropical Africa*, (ed.) I. M. Lewis, Oxford: International African Institute, 1966, 127–143.

<sup>7</sup> Nehemia Levtzion, *Muslims and Chiefs in West Africa, A Study of Islam in the Middle Volta Basin in the Pre-Colonial Period* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968).

<sup>8</sup> Edmund Abaka, *Kola is God's Gift. Agricultural Production, Export Initiatives & the Kola Industry of Asante & the Gold Coast c. 1820–1950* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2005), 84–86; Paul E. Lovejoy, *Caravans of Kola. The Hausa Kola Trade 1700–1900* (London & Zaria: Oxford University Press, 1980). See also Lovejoy, “Long-distance Trade and Islam: The Case of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century Hausa Trade,” *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, V. 4 (1971): 537–547.

<sup>9</sup> Hiskett, *Development of Islam*, 131.

The position of Salaga as a mid-way town between Hausaland and Northern Nigeria and Kumasi in the forest belt of Ghana opened the way for Hausa penetration not only into Asante, but also to the southernmost parts of the country.<sup>10</sup>

The Asante kept the Hausa kola traders at Salaga on the northern fringes of the kingdom in order to control access to the source of kola nuts and, thus, regulate the price of the product. This continued until the British defeat of Asante in 1874 led to the decline of Salaga and the commencement of a southward orientation of the kola trade through Salaga and down through Kumasi to the coast by sea to Lagos.<sup>11</sup> In the post-1874 period, Hausa-Muslim traders entered Asante in large numbers trading in kola nuts and other forest products.<sup>12</sup>

The Asantehenes of the early nineteenth century believed in the efficacy of Muslim prayers and amulets as important vehicles for protection and, throughout the century, invited Muslims from the Central Sudan to their court.<sup>13</sup> The significance of the Muslim presence in Asante is borne out by the use of Muslims in the Asante army and, more important, by the Asantehene's *batakarikese* ( a fugu or smock embossed with leather pouches containing Qur'anic writings and supposed to protect the user from bullets in battle) and antedating the British defeat of Asante in 1874.<sup>14</sup> The Muslims were also to pray for Asante victory in war or help them snatch victory from the jaws of defeat. Furthermore, literate Muslims were also utilized by the Asantehene as civil servants and Osei Kwame,

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Samwini, "Muslim Resurgence in Ghana," 31; Abaka, *Kola is God's Gift*, 84-86; Lovejoy, *Caravans of Kola*.

<sup>12</sup> Abaka, *Kola is God's Gift*, 68-69; Lovejoy, *Caravans of Kola*; Wilks, "The Position of Muslims," 332.

<sup>13</sup> David Owusu-Ansah, "Prayer, Amulets and Healing," in Nehemia Levtzion and R.L. Pouwels (eds.), *The History of Islam in Africa*, 479.

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, Ivor Wilks, *Asante in the Nineteenth Century*, 618; Hiskett, *Development of Islam*, 131.

in particular, between 1777 and 1798, increasingly relied on Muslim advisors.<sup>15</sup>

Between 1764 and 1776, and even before, the Asante recruited literate Muslims for utilization in official correspondence. Hiskett avers that one Muslim, 'alim Abū Bakr Kyeame and his son, Imam Sa'aid Bamba, all served in this capacity between 1777 and 1798.<sup>16</sup> It was these people who "compiled the records in Arabic about the history and administration of the Asante Kingdom and they did for Gonja in the north of Ghana."<sup>17</sup> Other Muslims served the Asantehenes as secretaries and accountants.<sup>18</sup> Not surprisingly, an eighteenth century madrasa at Buna, west of the Black Volta and headed by 'Abd Allah b. al-Hajj Muhammed al-Wattari, trained Asante civil servants.<sup>19</sup> Osei Bonsu, in particular, had Muslim advisors and an office of government records staffed by men who had trained at the Buna madrasa.<sup>20</sup>

Above all, Muslims were Hausa trade representatives or agents who were to look after the interests of the northern kola traders and also doubled up as political representatives of the northern kingdoms from which the traders came to Asante.<sup>21</sup>

As well, Muslims in Kumasi were the driving force behind the Kumasi Cattle Trade. They brought cattle and incense from the northern towns for sale in Asante and, in return, they purchased kola nuts from the forest region to transport to Hausaland using the caravan routes via Jenne, Timbuktu to Hausaland.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Hiskett, *Development of Islam*, 133.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Samwini, "The Muslim Resurgence in Ghana," 34; Wilks, *Asante in the Nineteenth Century*, 278; Hiskett, *Development of Islam*, 134.

<sup>18</sup> Samwini, "The Muslim Resurgence in Ghana," 34.

<sup>19</sup> Hiskett, *Development of Islam*, 133.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 134.

<sup>21</sup> Hiskett, *Development of Islam*, 134.

<sup>22</sup> Lovejoy, *Caravans of Kola*; Abaka, *Kola is God's Gift*, 80-81; Samwini, "The

## Muslim Women's Associations

In the post-independence period, specifically in the 1960s, Muslim Women began to organize into groups and publicly engage in advocacy to improve their condition and standing as Muslims and to come out from their confinement to debunk the perception held by many people that the Muslim woman's place and role in society was confined to the home. According to Iqbal, "the very mention of Muslim women brings to the minds of many a vision of veiled maids in a dark room."<sup>23</sup> But as Abdur-Razak has noted, this is a very warped perception about Muslim women.<sup>24</sup> Muslim women formed various associations with the aim of projecting Islam and contributing to the development of the societies where they lived. These Muslim women who formed the Muslim Women's Associations in Asante lived in different communities in Kumasi, but majority of them were domiciled in West Tafo, Asawase, and Suame, the predominant Muslim areas in the Kumasi metropolis. Apart from these Muslim-dominated areas, the Muslim Women's Associations could also be found in other areas which were not considered predominantly Muslim areas. These included Oforikrom, Atonsu and Ayigya.

The paper is focused on the activities of five selected Muslim Women's Associations in Kumasi, some of whose members were interviewed about the activities of the associations and their contribution to the development of Kumasi. As previously indicated, Muslim women in Ghana, particularly, Kumasi, deemed it necessary to form strong groups to project Islam, raise the standard of living of the Muslim women through learning trades like hair-dressing, dress-making, soap-making and batik making and thus contribute to the development of their communities. Prominent among these Muslim Women's Associations in the Kumasi Metropolis are *Lajna Immaila* (literally maidservant of Allah), the *Al-Ansariya* Islamic Society

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Muslim Resurgence," 340.

<sup>23</sup> S. Iqbal, *Women and Islamic Law* (India: Adam Publishers, 2004), 2.

<sup>24</sup> H. Abdur-Razak, *Islamic Awareness in Women* (Nigeria: Center for Islamic Education and Propagation, 1995), 49.

(*Al-Ansariya* – literally fighting for the will of Allah), the Federation of Muslim Women's Association (FOMWAG) and the Tijanniya Muslim Women's Association.

### **The *Lajna Immaila***

According to Hajia Hajara Is-hag Nuhu, the Ashanti Regional President of *Lajna Immaila*, the name of the organization literally means maid-servant of Allah and it is an Ahmadiyya Muslim Women's Association which was established by Hadrat Khalifah Maimud Ahmad in 1921, in Pakistan.<sup>25</sup> Hajia Nuhu notes that Hadrat Maimud Ahmad saw the need to mobilize Ahmadiyyah Muslim women to study the Qur'an in order to be very well versed in its teachings. The association is a non-governmental organization headquartered in Pakistan and with about one hundred branches worldwide. In Ghana, the association's national headquarters is in Accra with regional branches in ten regional capitals and local branches in over one hundred and sixty metropolitan, municipal and district centers.<sup>26</sup> The association has a youth wing and an adult wing all of which operate under one umbrella. The national executive is made up of twenty-five members including the President, two Vice-Presidents, a Secretary, an Organizer, a Welfare Secretary as well as officers in charge of education, health, sports, handicrafts and preaching the word of Allah.<sup>27</sup>

As far as membership of *Lajna Immaila* is concerned, Kumasi has been zoned into three local branches: the Asafo Central mosque, Oforikrom and Atonsu. Members pay ten Ghana cedis as dues every month. After collection, the money is deposited into the accounts of the national secretariat in Accra.<sup>28</sup> Any time the executives need money for any business related to the running of the association, they use this money for that

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<sup>25</sup> Hajia Hajara Is-hag Nuhu, Ashanti Regional President of *Lajna Immaila*, interviewed in Kumasi by Victoria Agyare Appiah on December 4, 2013.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

purpose. Apart from the monthly dues, members of *Lajna Immaila* make special contributions toward funding its programmes. No set amount is levied for this special contribution. Members make such contributions based on their ability to pay.

*Lajna Immaila* has achieved a number of successes and has made important contributions to the lives of its members in particular and to Kumasi and the Ashanti region in general. First, through sponsorship, many of the members have attained higher levels of education. Majority of the beneficiaries have studied in a Saudi Arabia University and at the Islamic University of Ghana. Many of these people are now professionals – medical doctors, teachers and lawyers and are making important contributions to the political economy of Asante and Ghana as a whole.<sup>29</sup> Attempts to find out the percentage of the beneficiaries via a vis the size of the membership, however, proved futile. In spite of these achievements, the association is not resting on its oars but making provisions to sponsor more females abroad for studies and to establish a vocational institute to train more females in employable skills.

Secondly, *Lajna Immaila* assists the needy in the society, especially, orphans and elderly people who find it difficult to make ends meet.<sup>30</sup> Third, it donates regularly to institutions such as hospitals, orphanages and prisons and undertakes clean-up exercises in these institutions as well. The members of the association also settle the bills of discharged members who have been detained at the hospital for their inability to settle their bills.<sup>31</sup> Finally, through member contributions, the association has been able to purchase a motor vehicle which is used to carry out outreach programmes such as preaching or Islamic evangelization<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

On her part, Halimah Pokuah of *Lajna Immaila* noted that the organization has assisted many females to learn trades such as hair-dressing, soap making, bead making, batik and dress making. Through this training, many of the women have established their own businesses and are no more at the mercy of their husbands.<sup>1</sup> Thus, Halimah Pokuah noted that the learning of trades has reduced the number of jobless women in Asante and many are now contributing to the growth of Asante.<sup>2</sup>

Fatimah Issaka, on her part averred that members of *Lajna Immaila* have also set aside a day for embarking on clean-up exercises in institutions such as hospitals, prisons as well as in the Islamic communities and their environs. As part of the clean-up exercises, the women weed, collect rubbish and distil choked gutters in the metropolis in order to reduce the volume of rubbish or garbage all of which contribute to ailments such as malaria and cholera.<sup>3</sup> These clean-up exercises contribute to cleaner environments and overall reduction of sicknesses in Kumasi and Asante in general.

### ***Al-Ansariya* Islamic Society**

As noted by Hajia Sakinah J'afar, a founding member of the Al-Ansariya society, *Al-Ansariya* means "fighting for the will of Allah." It is the women's wing of *Ahlus-Sunna wal Jama'a*. The *Al-Ansariya* association was formed on February 23, 2004, by Hajia Hajara Siddik and Hajia Sakina Ja'far who saw the need to form an association to uplift the image of Islam in the Sofo Line area and its environs in Kumasi. The association was formed in the Sofo Line area of Kumasi because Islam was not practiced according to the mode and exemplary life (Sunna) lived by the prophet Muhammad, the founder of the

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<sup>1</sup> Halimah Pokuah, interviewed by Victoria Agyare Appiah in Kumasi on January 10, 2019.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Fatimah Issaka, interviewed by Victoria Agyare Appiah in Kumasi, on January 11, 2019.



Islamic religion.<sup>4</sup> The founding members of *Al Ansariya* Islamic society were ten in number, but all efforts to get the names of these founding members proved futile. Informants could not provide the names of the founding members due to old age or lack of record keeping by the Association. Some of the people who served as executive members of the association included Abubakar Shamsudin as Chairman, Hajia Hajara Siddik as Vice Chairman, and Muhammed Kassim as Secretary. Abdul Rafiq was the Treasurer for the organization. Usman Is-hak and Amina Seidu, who were also prominent members of this early group, did not hold any executive position but they played active roles in the society.<sup>5</sup>

Although the *Al-Ansariya* Islamic Society is a women's association, men were initially given key positions to ensure that the association's foundation was firmly rooted before handing over the association's administration to women. The main objectives this Islamic Society included, among others, uplifting the image of Islam in Kumasi and its environs (because the practitioners of Islam in Kumasi at the time did not hold the religion in high esteem), educating children in line with Islamic principles and improving the social standing of Muslim women through learning trades such as soap-making, dress making, hair dressing and batik making, promoting interest in the pure form of Islamic practice and fostering good relationships among members. As well, the Society aimed to teach members how to recite and read the Qur'an in its original Arabic text and to become very knowledgeable in its interpretation.<sup>6</sup>

The main source of finance for the society is the weekly contribution of thirty pesewas by members as at the time of collecting data for this project between 2009 and 2010. However, members make special contributions towards the execution of

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<sup>4</sup> Hajia Sakina J'afar, interviewed by Victoria Agyare Appiah in Kumasi on 20-12-2013.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

specific programmes such as donations to hospitals, orphanages and prisons.<sup>7</sup> The society, which started from a humble beginning in 2004, now has about 250 active members.

The *Al-Ansariya* Association has made important contributions to the lives of its members, to the Sofo Line community and Kumasi in general and even the country as a whole. The society has established an Arabic school at Sofo Line with an average enrolment of about 200 pupils.<sup>8</sup> In this way, the organization is contributing to the provision of education in the country. The teachers of the school are paid monthly from the coffers of the society and women are taught how to read and memorize the Qur'an in Arabic.

In addition to the above, the society had already established an adult night school (*Makaranta*) purposely for the *Ummi* (unlettered) in order to help them read and interpret the Qur'an.<sup>9</sup> Finally, the association assists members with donations in cash and in kind during child naming ceremonies, weddings, funerals and other programmes that usually attract high costs.<sup>10</sup> In this way, the association is able to alleviate some of the financial challenges faced by its members.

### **Federation of Muslim Women's Association of Ghana (FOMWAG)**

The third important Muslim women's association in Kumasi is the Federation of Muslim Women's Association of Ghana (FOMWAG). As already stated, some Muslim women in the Kumasi Metropolis saw the need to form a women's association for the development of their community in the post-independence period. In 1992, a nationwide Muslim Women's Association known as (FOMWAG) was started in Accra. In that year five well-educated Muslim women including Aisha Lamin Futa,

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

Hajia Katumi Mahama, Zalia Ali, Rukaya Ahmad and Zainab Yakubu saw the need to mobilise their fellow Ghanaian Muslim women under one body.<sup>11</sup>

What was uppermost in the minds of these women in question was the need to give Muslim women a voice and recognition in society. As underlined in the central argument of the paper, these women were interested in the welfare of Muslim women and community development and pushed for a prominent role for women in the society beyond the stereotypical, Victorian-era, idea of a woman's place in the home.

FOMWAG received external assistance from Nigeria at its formation. On May 2, 1993, the five women mentioned above were invited to meet the Director of the Centre for the Distribution of Islamic Books in Nigeria. Rufai Muhyedeen informed them that the Federation of Muslim Women's Association of Nigerian (FOMWAN) was concerned about the lack of representation of Ghanaian women at Muslim women's conferences and, therefore, the Federation would help a sister organization in Ghana stand on its feet and become active and engaging in Islamic circles.<sup>12</sup> FOMWAN had been formed in Nigeria in 1985 to "promote Islam and interpretations of it designed to improve women's status" and it took the lead in "both politicizing Muslim women and at the same time fashioning an agenda acceptable to those who wished to speak out as Muslim women on national issues."<sup>13</sup> It also spoke out strongly in favour of women's rights in the workplace and argued for "the need for more women scholars to be involved in the interpretation of the law and the hadith."<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Samwini, "The Muslim Resurgence," 137-138

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 137.

<sup>13</sup> Dunbar, "Muslim Women in African History," 407.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 407-408. For analyses of Muslim Women's Organizations in Nigeria see, for example, Bilkisu Yusuf, "Hausa-Fulani Women: The State of the Struggle," in Catherine Coles and Beverly Mack, *Hausa Women in the Twentieth Century* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991).

FOMWAN's hand of friendship and support to what became its fledgling counterpart in Ghana was great news for the five highly educated Muslim women who saw the need to form the nucleus of an association that would represent Muslim women's interest in Ghana. Samwini asserts that the aims of FOMWAG, as per its constitution, included, the propagation of Islam, raising awareness about the need for education among Muslims, promoting unity among Muslim women in Ghana and raising the social status of the Muslim community in Ghana.<sup>15</sup>

FOMWAG branches were opened in Kumasi and other regional capitals of Ghana by the founders. Hajia Yasmine Appeadu, the current President of FOMWAG in Kumasi, notes that the Ashanti Regional Branch of FOMWAG was formed in September 1994. She added that it was started by the following pioneer members: Muhammad Adako, Sheik Nazir, Mallam Seidu, Abua Mallama as President, Hajia Halimah Mamprusi as Vice-President, Hajia Neene, Hajia Ramat Sunni, Hajia Adi Sa Bomba, and Hajia Suwabah.<sup>16</sup> The founders of FOMWAG in Kumasi, unlike their counterparts at the national level in Accra, did not focus their attention largely on literate and highly educated Muslim women but welcomed both literate and illiterate women. And although it was a women's association, another distinction is that males were allowed to stand for executive positions in the organization from the onset in order to give it a solid foundation before it was finally handed over to the women.<sup>17</sup>

The Kumasi FOMWAG shares the same aims with the other regional branches in Ghana. Appeadu stressed that other Muslim associations in Kumasi are active members of FOMWAG-Kumasi: These included the Jihad Central Mosque Women's Association of Tijanniyas, the Islamic Mission Secretariat

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<sup>15</sup> Samwini, "The Muslim Resurgence in Ghana."

<sup>16</sup> Hajia Yasmine Appeadu, interviewed by Victoria Agyare Appiah in Kumasi on November 22, 2013.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

Women's Association of Ghana, the Ghana Muslim Mission, the *Ayigya Ahlus Sunna* Women Association, the *Saamadaniyya* Muslim Women's Association, the *Nisai Muminat* Women's Association, the Oforikrom *Watannia* Women's Association, the Aboabo *Wattania* Women's Association, the Yussifiyya Muslim Women's Association, *Sakafyya* Muslim Women's Association, the *Faliniyya* Muslim Women's Association, the Kwadaso *Shabab Nasur* Women's Association, the Suame Islamic League Women's Association and the Husseiniyya Women's Association.<sup>18</sup> The Kumasi branch of FOMWAG generated its funding from international organisations, local well-to-do Muslims in Kumasi as well as monthly membership dues of thirty pesewas (Gh 0. 30) per member.

### **Tijaniyya Muslim Women's Association**

According to Seidu Ustaz Ahmed, the executive secretary to the Council of Ulema and the office of the regional Chief Imam, Kumasi, the main body of the Tijaniyya Muslim Association was set up in 1952.<sup>19</sup> The leader was Baba Makaranta (our informant could not provide his actual name but remembered the popular name by which he was known) who was then residing in Kumasi. The Kumasi branch was established in 1975 and it was headed by the following five eminent clerics: Sheikh Baba Al Waiz, Imam Muhammad, Baba Chiroma, Alhaji Haruna Muhammad, Alhassan Nasurudin and Imam Gariba Abubakar.<sup>20</sup>

Ustaz Ahmed further notes that in the initial stages the association was not very active because many Muslims did not deem it necessary to join any such associations but this gradually changed over time as people began to see what the Association was doing in the lives of members and in the communities where it worked.<sup>21</sup> The leaders finally spelled out the aims of

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Seidu Ustaz Ahmed, interviewed by Victoria Agyare Appiah in Kumasi on November 11, 2013 and on January 7, 2019.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

the Association in 1987, as among others, to foster brotherhood/sisterhood, inculcate the virtues of Islam as well as the *tariqa* (path) into Muslim women and sending the message of the *tariqa* through preaching, seminars and helping the needy. Finally, it aimed to assist women to be conscious of the religion. After spelling out clearly the aims of the association, many women, both young and old, were brought on board.<sup>22</sup>

Jaharatu Mumuni, a member of the Tijaniyya Women's Association, known also as Jihad Central Mosque Women's Association of the Tijaniyyas, maintains that the Association established an Islamic Senior High School at Effiduase Asokore in the Asante region in 2010. The establishment of the school has made the people in the community aware of the importance of Women's education.<sup>23</sup> As a result, majority of the Muslim females who were at home have been enrolled in school. Mumuni further states that the education of women has resulted in the production of female elites in their communities, especially, Aboabo and Asawase, who are now serving as role models in the Islamic community.<sup>24</sup> Due to the establishment of the Islamic Senior High School, many Muslim women have pared down their extravagant life styles and are spending money on the education of their children, particularly, girls.<sup>25</sup>

The late Sandaliya Dadalwaiz, a former Vice-President of the Association at the time the researcher was gathering data, also pointed out that the Association has brought women together as one people who have a common cause to champion. The women meet to study the Qur'an, preach at naming ceremonies, and organize seminars for women at the mosque or at the community center. The organization of the seminars has

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Jaharatu Mumuni, interviewed by Victoria Agyare Appiah in Kumasi on January 8, 2019.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Jaharatu Mumuni, interviewed by Victoria Agyare Appiah in Kumasi, January 8, 2019.

helped the women to gain more insight into the Quran as well as gaining recognition from their male counterparts. This has contributed to increasing the women's self-confidence as well as conscientizing them about their religion and finding solutions to social issues and problems they face in society. It has also helped to reduce social tensions due to "streetism."<sup>26</sup>

The Tijaniyya Women's Association also provides support to the poor and needy in Kumasi. The members pay the hospital bills of the sick who cannot pay their bills, enroll brilliant but needy pupils in their school as well as in other Islamic schools in Kumasi and also assist orphans in their communities in Asokore and Aboabo. This has drastically reduced the number of needy and poor children in their communities and, by extension, the whole of Kumasi, who would have gone wayward.<sup>27</sup>

#### ***Ahlus Sunna-Waal Jamaa'l* Women's Association**

According to Aisha Futa, a member of the *Ahlus Sunna-Waal Jamaa'l* Women's Association, the Association acquired a big plot of land at Borban, a suburb of Kumasi near Asokore Mampong, in 2009 and established an English and Arabic basic school.<sup>28</sup> The children in the area attend the school for the study of English as well as Arabic. This has helped to increase the literacy rate in English in Asante. While the Ghana Education Service stipulates that children in primary one to primary four should be taught in the local language, this school rather uses English and Arabic as the medium of instruction and it is this that has accounted for the high literacy in English.<sup>29</sup> The school has trained many people who have contributed immensely towards the development of Kumasi. The acquisition of the Arabic language has increased and improved the religious knowledge

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<sup>26</sup> Sandaliya Dadalwaiz, interviewed by Victoria Agyare Appiah in Kumasi, January 8, 2019.

<sup>27</sup> Bilqees Yakubu, interviewed by Victoria Agyare Appiah in Kumasi, January 8, 2019.

<sup>28</sup> Aisha Futa, interviewed by Victoria Agyare Appiah in Kumasi on January 4, 2019.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

of those who had access to instruction in Arabic in the sense that the Arabic language is foundational to the Islamic religion and, as a result, they have a better understanding of the Qur'an. This has helped them to gain greater insight into the religion.<sup>30</sup>

Safia Tanko, a member of the *Sunna-Waal Jamaa'l* Women's Association noted that the Muslim women also built a Mosque in 2009 to serve as a place of worship as well as a place of dissemination of information for the Muslim community. The building of this mosque has contributed immensely to the lives of Muslims in the area generally and to the development of Kumasi in the sense that the preaching and religious activities have had a great impact on the lives of Muslims in Kumasi. A better understanding of the Qur'an and the tenets of Islam have improved the religious lives of Muslims.<sup>31</sup> As well, due to education, many of these Muslims now have good jobs and, as a result, can take care of their families and engage in community development activities such as communal labour and payment of taxes.<sup>32</sup>

Furthermore, Tanko stated that the community members used to engage in conflicts as well as violent practices before the construction of the mosque in 2009. However, due to the construction of the mosque and the programmes carried out by the Association, such as its preaching activities, some aspects of the chaotic lives of the members have been curbed or modified. This has helped members in Kumasi to live together in peaceful co-existence as well as making an impact on the spiritual lives of members, their families and friends.<sup>33</sup>

In 2004, the association built a clinic on the land which was acquired at Borban. Although this clinic is very small, it provides the services of a chip compound and medical services

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Safia Tanko, interviewed by Victoria Agyare Appiah in Kumasi, January 4, 2019.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.



to members in the community who do not have access to a hospital.<sup>34</sup> Recently, the clinic has started providing anti-natal and child care services to the indigenes. This clinic is making a major contribution to the health life of the people of Kumasi such as safe delivery and the provision of maternal care to women in Asante.<sup>35</sup>

## Conclusion

From the mid-twentieth century onwards, Muslim women found ways to engage in democratic arenas of public engagement through various organizations that became vehicles for negotiated space in society. Kumasi Muslim women came out of their confinement to organize through various associations such as the *Lajna Immaila*, the *Al Ansariya* Islamic Society, the Federation of Muslim Women's Association (Kumasi Branch), the Tijaniyya Women's Association and the *Ahlus Sunna-Waal Jamaa'l* Women's Association. These Muslim women's groups pushed for the empowerment of women through the study of the Quran as well as through other literacy programs and skills training so that women could establish businesses like batik making, soap making, dress making and hair-dressing, among others. Some of these Muslim Women's groups have built schools and clinics to assist with the education of the young ones and the health needs of the members of their communities. They have sponsored people to study at the university level both locally as well as in places like Saudi Arabia and some of the graduates are back in the community playing meaningful roles. Finally, in hands-on activities like communal work the women are making a visible show of practical contributions to their communities in the Kumasi metropolis.

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<sup>34</sup> Memuna Yusuf, interviewed by Victoria Agyare Appiah in Kumasi in January 7, 2019

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

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# The Ghana Commercial Bank and Agriculture Financing in Ghana, 1960s – 1980s

Isaac KYERE

## *Abstract*

*The British Bank of West Africa (BBWA) now renamed Standard Chartered Bank Limited and Barclays Bank Ghana Limited were the two prominent foreign Commercial Banks first established in the Gold Coast in 1897 and 1917 respectively. In the colonial era, these British banks only dealt with large businesses and did not extend credit to individual Gold Coast farmers because they were tagged as not credit-worthy or could not arrange suitable collateral for loans. Essentially, lack of access to credit continues to be a key factor contributing to the poor performance of the agriculture sector in general.<sup>1</sup> In 1953, the Ghana Commercial Bank (GCB) was established as the first indigenous commercial bank to serve the people of the nation.<sup>2</sup> Since 1953, the Ghana Commercial Bank has made agriculture financing its priority and has extended loans to its agricultural customers. This paper, which is multi-sourced, uses archival documents, Government Records, Annual Reports and scholarly secondary works, to examine the approaches and strategies used by GCB to support agriculture in Ghana from the late 1960s to 1980s. The paper specifically sheds light on the measures adopted by the bank to transform agriculture in the country.*

**Keywords:** Ghana Commercial Bank, Agriculture Financing, Colonial Banking, Agricultural Programme

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<sup>1</sup> Ghana Commercial Bank Quarterly Economic Review, July to September, Vol. 27 No. 3, (Accra: Skyco Press Limited, 2007), 12.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

## **Introduction**

It is commonly believed that lack of access to government-subsidized or formal credit to the agricultural sector could partly explain the low agricultural productivity in the country. Access to sufficient credit was a serious problem even for early American farmers. Credit plays a dominant role in agriculture finance and the amount of credit extended and terms and conditions have influenced farmers and their activities. Many also hold the view that the banking sector, in totality, has not helped the agricultural sector in terms of credit facilities as compared to the manufacturing and the retail sectors. Lack of access to credit continues to be a key factor contributing to the poor performance of the agricultural sector in Africa in general. This paper examines the programmes which were put in place by the Ghana Commercial Bank to finance agriculture in Ghana. Before 1966, though the bank was charged to help the agriculture sector, it was in its infant stage and lacked the capacity and logistics to do so on a large scale. The bank largely began instituting sound agricultural policies from the late 1960s when it realized that it had the capacity to extend loans to a large number of farmers.

The analyses and interpretation of the data for this paper are based on materials from primary and secondary sources. The primary data is derived from archival records obtained from the Public Records and Archives Administration Department (PRAAD) in Accra and Sunyani and other Government Records such as the *Ghana Official Handbook* and the *Ghana Trade Journal*. The secondary data comprise history books and journal articles dealing with agricultural financing in Ghana.

### **The Role of the Ghana Commercial Bank in Agricultural Financing from the 1960s to the 1980s.**

The Ghana Commercial Bank's (GCB) first programme was in 1966 and it was the creation of a Development Financing Unit. The Government of the National Liberation Council, in 1966, was engaged in the task of laying down the basics for growth

in all sectors of the economy. The Government pursued plans for accelerated economic development in Ghana. As a result, the Bank of Ghana relaxed the restrictions imposed on lending on all Commercial Banks in Ghana at the time. On the level of credit available to the productive sector, including agriculture as at the end of 1968, the GCB increased its lending by over 15 per cent and was thus in a better position to finance agriculture.<sup>3</sup> Significantly, the Central Bank also revised the GCB's cash and liquidity reserves requirement. This meant that the GCB's cash ratio, which comprised of items like the bank's cash in till, net balances with other commercial banks in Ghana and its current account deposit with the Bank of Ghana was kept at 15 per cent instead of the old rate of 8 per cent.<sup>4</sup> Ghana Government Stocks and Treasury Bills were also raised from 18 to 20 per cent of customers' deposit liabilities.<sup>5</sup> These arrangements made it quite difficult for the GCB to meet the conditions so the bank carried out certain redistributions after it critically re-examined its loan package for its customers.

In 1968 the GCB proposed setting up a Development Financing Unit and a major component of the loans to be disbursed by the unit was agricultural loans. This Unit was supposed to create room for more advances to the agriculture sector, meet the existing difficulties of the 1970s and also help with the Government's economic plan as far as agriculture was concerned. This Unit was supposed to cater for the medium-term needs of the bank's agricultural customers and farmers and also relieve the pressure on the bank's normal commercial banking activities. In August 1969, the bank created the Development Finance Unit (DFU) which made recommendations on the viability of projects proposed by customers and provided specialist advice to these customers, mostly on agricultural

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<sup>3</sup> PRAAD, Accra, RG 6/5/4 The Ghana Commercial Bank's Progress Report.

<sup>4</sup> The Bank of Ghana Annual Report, Information, Documentation and Publishing Services, 1969, 4.

<sup>5</sup> PRAAD, Accra, ADM 7/9/3, Economic Statistics and Bulletin.



schemes.<sup>6</sup> This was a policy the bank embarked upon as an alternative to the traditional short-term lending system to promote agriculture on a medium-term basis. By April 1970, the Unit had granted medium-term loans to the tune of N¢0.5 million for the development of Agriculture and Industry.<sup>7</sup> The bank again increased its support for the agriculture sector and, by August 1970, the Unit had granted N¢4.5 million to eleven Ghanaian agricultural firms.<sup>8</sup>

The second important programme the GCB rolled out was in 1972 which was the establishment of the Rural Development Unit. The bank's attention was drawn by the public to the necessity of reviewing its credit policy to meet the needs of the agricultural sector so in 1972 the bank established a Rural Development Unit within the Development Finance Unit to coordinate and give direction to the bank's rural development programme. It was to advise potential and prospective farmers on how best to store, package and market their produce. In late 1959, the bank's investment portfolio remained rather stable and this meant that the bank tended to hold increases in deposits in the form of balances with the Bank of Ghana. In this period, more worthwhile low risk demand for loans increased and the bank expanded its lending activities. During the third quarter of 1959, when the Cocoa Marketing Board relied more on bank accommodation to finance the season's cocoa purchase, the GCB had the opportunity to expand its loans from £G1.4 million at the end of the second sector to £G3.1 million at the end of the third.<sup>9</sup>

In a bid to support the cocoa industry, the Ghana Government established a Cocoa Rehabilitation Project in the 1970s as a means to boosting cocoa production. This project was

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<sup>6</sup> *Ghana Official Hand Book*, Accra: Public Relations Department, 1972, 6.

<sup>7</sup> *Ghana Commercial Bank News*, vol. 2 No. 1, (Accra: Ghana Publishing Corporation) March 1970, 5.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ghana Commercial Bank Annual Report*, (Accra: Ghana Publishing Corporation, 1960), 6.

undertaken to help farmers in the country get access to loans, especially, for cocoa production since cocoa was the country's largest foreign exchange earner. In this regard the GCB stepped up its financial support for the development of the agricultural sector and, as a policy and a priority, contributed N¢1.5 million towards the Government's N¢15.5 million initiative for the project.<sup>10</sup> Again, as part of the Bank's lending business and in the Bank's bid to help increase the country's cocoa production, its participation in the financing of cocoa business during 1971 and part of 1972 surpassed all the previous records with an average weekly credit level of over ¢19 million and the season's peak level of over ¢60 million.<sup>11</sup>

With the introduction of the Akafo Cheque Scheme in Ghana in the 1982/83 main crop season, the Cocoa Marketing Board (CMB) drew bills which were payable to the drawers' order and endorsed to the order of GCB. After acceptance by the drawer, the GCB then discounted the bills which were also rediscounted at the Bank of Ghana.<sup>12</sup> In other words, the Ghana Commercial Bank purchased the cocoa crop by financing it with internal bills whilst the Bank of Ghana provided rediscounting facilities. Seed funds were lodged with the GCB and other banks for purchasing the cheques. Also, the level of credit advanced by the Bank for the financing of food production was raised to a much higher level during the 1970/71 financial year.<sup>13</sup>

Another significant programme instituted by the GCB was the setting up of a Development Leasing Company.<sup>14</sup> In 1971, the

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<sup>10</sup> Ghana Commercial Bank Annual Report, (Accra: New Times Corporation, 1971), 5.

<sup>11</sup> Ghana Commercial Bank Annual Report, (Accra: New Times Corporation, 1973), 9.

<sup>12</sup> S. M. A. Adjetej, Bank of Ghana-Notable Historical Events and Developments, Accra, 2000, 23.

<sup>13</sup> S. M. A. Adjetej Bank of Ghana-Notable Historical Events and Developments, (Accra, 2000), 34.

<sup>14</sup> Commerbank News, Vol. 2 No. 2 (Accra: New Times Corporation, 1971), 12.

Bank of Ghana, as part of its policy to control and supervise the banking activities of the Commercial Banks in Ghana, introduced a monetary control measure to check the banking activities of the GCB. This new monetary policy changed the bank rate and revised the minimum interest rate on savings deposits as well as the imposed mandatory interest on demand deposits. This meant that the GCB's time deposits and lending rates were to be also reviewed in the same way. Along with these changes, and in keeping with the GCB's policy of favouring the development of the priority sectors of the Ghanaian economy, it approved a form of interest rates differential which related to the type and purpose of the loan and the security provided.<sup>15</sup> Subsequently, credit extended to the agriculture sector generally carried relatively lower interest rates than credit to the manufacturing and the industrial sectors. Not surprisingly, a lot of the bank's credit was granted to the agricultural sector as one of its priority sectors. The bank's credit expansion picked up in 1971 and a substantial increase in credit was registered as a whole. A large chunk of the increase was channelled in favour of the priority sector and, especially, into agriculture.

In 1972, it became very urgent for the GCB to step up agricultural financing activities following the launching of 'Operation Feed Yourself' (OFY), the NRC Government's Agricultural Programme which aimed primarily to increase production and marketing of food in Ghana.<sup>16</sup> This emphasis upon agriculture was by no means unique to the Acheampong regime. The National Redemption Council abandoned Kwame Nkrumah's food farm settlements and plantations at the various state farms, emphasizing instead a more traditional, labor-intensive approach to agriculture.<sup>17</sup> The Acheampong government's predecessors had failed to make very substantial inroads in the basic structural problems of the country. Just prior

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<sup>15</sup> *Commerbank News*, Vol.2, No. 2 (Accra: New Times Corporation, 1971), 12.

<sup>16</sup> PRAAD, Sunyani, BRG 1/1/51, Vol. 2. Operation Feed Yourself Campaign.

<sup>17</sup> Donald Rothschild, "Military Regime Performance: An Appraisal of the Ghana Experience, 1972-78," *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 12, No. 4 (Jul., 1980), 467-478.

to the change in administration, a major crisis in the balance of payments dominated the economy. Cocoa prices declined by approximately 25 percent in 1971 reducing export earnings by about 90 million dollars below the 1970 level.<sup>18</sup> In what was described as “a complete reordering of priorities,” the National Liberation Council government gave precedence to the agricultural sector over all others.<sup>19</sup>

Subsequently, in 1975, the OFY programme developed the cultivation of cereals and Operation Feed Yourself Industries, agro-based industries which processed locally harvested crops.<sup>20</sup> In a speech delivered by Col. Acheampong in 1976, he confirmed, affirmed and defended the formulation of the OFY as a policy of self-reliance in agriculture in Ghana as a means to deal with Ghana's foreign debt.<sup>21</sup> The GCB, on its part, accepted the challenge and increased its financial support for the production of local foods like rice, maize, cassava, maize and other staples which had been earmarked by the government for increased production.<sup>22</sup> As a result, the Bank reviewed its policy which concentrated and coordinated efforts in areas with significant agricultural potential. The bank focused on viable projects in partnership with the Agricultural Development Bank, the National Investment Bank and other interested investors to finance co-operative farmers and other organised groups of farmers in the areas of food production, storage, marketing and processing of

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<sup>18</sup> A Document of International Development and Recommendation of the President to the Executive Directors on a Proposed Credit to Ghana for a Sugar Rehabilitation Project, (Accra: Bank Group, 1972), 2.

<sup>19</sup> Rothschild, *Military Regime Performance*, 467.

<sup>20</sup> A Speech Delivered in the Fourth Year in Office of Colonel Ignatius Kutu Acheampong, 13<sup>th</sup> January 1975 – 12 January 1976, (Accra: The Office of the Press Secretary to the Military Council, 1976), ix.

<sup>21</sup> A Speech Delivered by General Kutu Acheampong as his fifth Milestone, 13<sup>th</sup> January 1976 – 12<sup>th</sup> January 1977, (Accra: The Office of the Press Secretary to the Supreme Military Council, 1978), 2.

<sup>22</sup> PRAAD, Sunyani, BRG 1/1/51, Operation Feed Yourself Campaign.

agricultural produce.<sup>23</sup> The bank also engaged itself directly in the financing and management of demonstration farms focusing on livestock and its related processing facilities.<sup>24</sup> In addition, the bank gave financial assistance to pay for seeds, fertilizers, weeding, transportation and other expenses of farmers. In the Northern Region of Ghana, the bank ploughed and harrowed acres of land, and alongside these efforts, any branch of the bank in the Northern Region of Ghana availed customers of overdraft facilities without security.<sup>25</sup> With the pilot project in the Northern Region, a sector believed to be the nation's granary, thousands of acres were ploughed and harrowed while more machinery in the form of crawlers, tractors and combine harvesters were acquired to meet the growing demand for agricultural input. To make the provision of equipment more meaningful, fully equipped servicing workshops were built in Tamale, Bolgatanga, Bawku and Wa to provide storage and repair facilities for the machines.

In 1972 the GCB also established the Development Leasing Company, which later became a subsidiary of the bank. The establishment of the Development Leasing Company was a result of the amendment of the Bank's 1952 Ordinance which called for more emphasis to be placed on development lending. This led to the creation of wealth which, in turn, generated more employment opportunities for the growing population of Ghana. The bank also reviewed its policy on lending that resulted in the birth of its subsidiary company, the Development Leasing Company Ltd. This subsidiary leased agricultural equipment to farmers generally. The Unit made recommendations on the viability of projects proposed by customers and provided specialist advice to them, mostly on agricultural schemes.<sup>26</sup> This Development Leasing Company as its specialty, leased bulldozers, cultivators, harvesters, tractors, ploughs and other modern and sophisticated agricultural machinery to its farming

<sup>23</sup> PRAAD, Accra, RG 6/5/6 The Ghana Commercial Bank's Progress Report.

<sup>24</sup> PRAAD, Sunyani, BRG 1/1/51, vol. 3 Operation Feed Yourself Campaign.

<sup>25</sup> Ghana Official Handbook (Accra: Public Relations Department 1972), 7.

<sup>26</sup> Ghana Official Handbook, (Accra: Public Relations Department, 1974), 17.

customers in the then Northern Region of Ghana. The Northern Region was chosen for special consideration due to the fact that it was an area where rice cultivation was prevalent. Later the company also extended its operations to the other regions of Ghana. The operations of this leasing company was professional in character and was meant to supplement the lending activities of the Bank's Development Finance Unit which, by the time, was serving as a channel through which loan funds were invested into agriculture and other business enterprises requiring medium-term financial assistance.<sup>27</sup> During the 1975/76 financial year, the Development Leasing Company of the GCB rendered useful services to customers in the Northern Region of Ghana. For that financial year, the company extended loans of more than ₵1.0 million for the cultivation of several acres of farmland.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, the company increased its crop loans substantially during the 1976/77 financial year and channeled loans specifically into the production of rice, maize, groundnuts and vegetables. The crop loan facility benefited more farmers because the company had an adequate supply of machinery and spare parts during that financial year. The Company did not only lease agricultural equipment to farmers but some agricultural machinery was also sold outright to farmers at subsidized rates. The bank also provided servicing facilities for all equipment sold or leased to farmers at reasonably subsidized rates.

Apart from supporting Kutu Acheampong's Operation Feed Yourself Programme, the bank devised a scheme to stimulate agricultural development in Ghana, especially, in the 1970s when the country was in an economic crisis. For example, from January 1973 to December 1973, Ghana spent US\$53 million on oil imports, while for the first seven months of 1974, she paid US\$700 million for oil imports.<sup>29</sup> The level of development was drastically affected by the energy crisis and, most importantly, the price of gold which reached an all-time high \$175 an ounce

<sup>27</sup> Ghana Official Handbook, (Accra: Public Relations Department, 1974), 17

<sup>28</sup> Ghana Commercial Bank Annual Report (Accra: GCB Press, 1977), 3-4.

<sup>29</sup> Commerbank News, Vol. 3 No. 1 (Accra: New Times Corporation, 1974), 8.

in early 1973, dropped to about \$150 per ounce in mid-June, 1973.<sup>30</sup> All these factors had a negative effect on the nation's economy and the situation got worse when cocoa, the country's largest crop foreign earner, suffered a downward price trend.

The worst of these cases was that Ghana's share of the World production of cocoa, which rose from 29 per cent in the 1950s to 37 per cent in 1960/64, declined again to 20 per cent in 1972.<sup>31</sup> The United Kingdom, which was Ghana's largest trading partner, experienced an inflation rate of about 25% per annum in 1974 and it was estimated that Ghana imported inflation from that country at a rate of not less than 15%.<sup>32</sup> This distressing phenomenon, coupled with the drop in Ghana's export prices, undermined the country's foreign exchange base and created balance of payment problems for the Ghanaian economy. Ghana's import and export trade was in dire straits and GCB as a national bank and a supporter of the Government's agricultural policies took the necessary measures to stimulate agricultural development to help mitigate the adverse balance of payments situation of the country. Thus, in 1974, as part of GCB's policy to support agriculture in Ghana, the bank re-oriented its policy towards giving additional attention to government efforts towards self-sufficiency in food and raw materials production.<sup>33</sup> The government took the initiative in increasing the level of paddy rice production which virtually made Ghana self-reliant.

GCB contributed substantially to this achievement and financed rice farmers through its branches in the Northern and Upper regions of Ghana. Moreover, provision of assistance in these areas took the form of granting short term overdraft facilities, and lending farm equipment and implements to

<sup>30</sup> *Commerbank News*, Vol. 3 No. 1 (Accra: New Times Corporation, 1974), 8.

<sup>31</sup> *The Ghana Commercial Bank Annual Report*, (Accra: New Times Corporation, 1974), 7.

<sup>32</sup> *Ghana Commercial Bank Annual Report*, (Accra: GCB Press, 1976), 7.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

farmers through the bank's wholly-owned lending subsidiary company, and finally, by discounting price bills. For instance during the 1974/75 financial year, the bank discounted ₵130 million worth of bills in respect of cocoa, rice and maize.<sup>34</sup> In the same financial year, the GCB promoted the establishment and financing of a shallot marketing company which was based at Anloga.<sup>35</sup> In 1971, a cooperative in Anloga, known as the Dzita-Anyamui Shallot farmers and Marketing Co-operative Society Limited, was formed and the GCB extended credit to the society.<sup>36</sup> Part of the loan was used to purchase two trucks for haulage and the rest dispensed to members at 6 per cent interest.<sup>37</sup> In 1979, GCB issued new loans to any individual who belonged to the cooperative and had a satisfactory repayment record for previous loans. The total sum any individual borrowed was tied to the number of farm lands he or she inherited or owned. At the same time the rate of interest increased from 10 to 13 per cent.<sup>38</sup> The Dzita-Anyamui Shallot Farmers and Marketing Co-operative Society Limited purchased shallots from local growers in the Keta – Anloga area and organized the transportation and sale of the crop.<sup>39</sup> Additionally, the company had its own transport and was expected to make a positive contribution to the economic development of the Keta – Anloga district.

Another programme of the bank was its Special Scheme to aid small scale farmers. In a continued aggressive bid to finance agriculture and increase the production of food in Ghana, the GCB in February 1976 launched its special financing scheme for small scale farmers.<sup>40</sup> The GCB Board approved this scheme

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<sup>34</sup> Ghana Commercial Bank Annual Report, (Accra: GCB Press, 1974/75), 7.

<sup>35</sup> PRAAD, Accra RG 6/5/6. The Ghana Commercial Bank's Progress Report.

<sup>36</sup> Sonia E. Patten and Godwin K. Nukunya, "Organisational Responses to Agricultural Intensification in Anloga," *African Studies Review*, (1982): 75–76.

<sup>37</sup> Patten and Nukunya, Agricultural Intensification in Anloga, 77.

<sup>38</sup> Patten and Nukunya, Agricultural Intensification in Anloga, 78.

<sup>39</sup> Patten and Nukunya, Agricultural Intensification in Anloga, 79.

<sup>40</sup> Ghana Commercial Bank Annual Report (Accra: GCB Press, 1977), 8.



because it realized that about 90 per cent of the total agriculture production in Ghana in the 1970s was still in the hands of indigenous small-scale farmers and the bank was convinced that Ghana's agricultural output could be raised if technical and financial assistance were given to these small scale farmers in the rural areas.<sup>1</sup> The scheme was put together with the active co-operation and support of the Ministry of Agriculture, the Cotton Development Board, the Vegetable Oil Mills Limited and Regional Organisations.<sup>2</sup> The implementation of the scheme was entrusted to Mr. Kofi Agyeman, a Chief Manager at the GCB head office.<sup>3</sup> A new division, known as the Agricultural Finance Department, was established at the Head Office and new loan forms together with loan passbooks specially meant for farmers were printed and distributed through the bank's branch network. One striking aspect of the scheme was that all loan requests were dealt with at the branch level by the bank's Area Managers and not a single loan facility was considered at the head office in Accra. Another interesting aspect of the programme was that all recipients of the loan were encouraged to join the bank-sponsored Farmers' Association known as Commerbank Farmers' Association.

Significantly, during the latter half of 1978, the bank provided farmers with adequate storage and other marketing facilities in some selected towns in the Ashanti, Central and Brong-Ahafo regions notably, Nsuta, Winneba and Atebubu respectively. The Commerbank Farmers' Association was established by the bank for easy identification of farmers and to make provision of finance and repayment of the loans easy for both the bank and the farmers.<sup>4</sup> The bank widened the scope of its agricultural financing during the 1976/77 financial year. It was able to extend credit facilities to small rural farmers which were

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<sup>1</sup> The Ghana Trade Journal (Accra: Business Publications, 1976), 6.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Ghana Commercial Bank Annual Report (Accra: GCB Press, 1977), 9.

<sup>4</sup> Ghana Commercial Bank Annual Report (Accra: GCB Press, 1978), 9.

channeled through the Commerbank Farmers' Associations. The GCB's support in the form of provision of credit was evenly spread across all regions. The Commerbank Farmers' Association which started operating in March, 1977, helped peasant farmers to respond positively towards the production of food to feed the nation and thus the incomes and standard of living of the farmers were raised in the process.<sup>5</sup>

A number of GCB branches in the Ashanti and Brong Ahafo areas witnessed full payment of loans granted to farmers by early 1978 and in other branches in the Central and Western Regions, the rate of repayment was well over 90% though all loans granted were unsecured.<sup>6</sup> The GCB continued to extend short term unsecured credit facilities ranging from ₵200 to ₵1,000 to these farmers to increase the cultivation of rice, maize and potatoes in a bid to increase and sustain production of the crops to meet domestic demand.<sup>7</sup> By 1979, the association had provided finance to no less than 50,000 small farmers in Ghana.

One interesting feature of the programme involving the Commerbank Farmers' Association was that GCB provided short term facilities to farmers to cater for the overdraft which was supposed to pay for their children's school fees, to keep them financially solvent during the off-crop season.<sup>8</sup> It was also supposed to enable farmers to repay their debts and to take back their farms. This was a big problem as it led to loss of farms and decrease in farm production in Ghana. Also, during the first phase of this important scheme, the GCB provided not only loans to the farmers, but it also ensured that adequate supplies of other imports such as seedlings, fertilizers and other farm equipment, short term overdrafts and loans got to the doorstep of farmers. This action became very necessary because the Bank realized that for this programme to be extremely succesful it

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ghana Commercial Bank Annual Report, (Accra: GCB Press, 1979), 1-2.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ghana Commercial Bank Annual Report (Accra: GCB Press, 1979), 10.

was necessary to ensure that both bank credit and also vital farm imports were available to farmers. Furthermore, as part of the scheme, the bank completed plans to provide marketing services including the provision of transport and storage facilities for the small-scale farmers in Ghana.<sup>9</sup> For example, the bank improved and promoted prompt services to farmers and also constructed and opened farm centres in remote farming areas. The creation of these farm centres facilitated the bank's provision of facilities such as storage, processing and transport for small-scale farmers. A number of communities which were chosen as farm centres were identified mainly in areas where the bank's Commerbank Farmers' Associations were established and, as such, communities like Atebubu and Juaso were identified and chosen in the Brong Ahafo and Ashanti regions respectively. One major aspect of this programme was that lending for storage facilities recorded an appreciable increase of 5 per cent despite the slackening of economic activities in Ghana in 1976.

In the same year, 1976, groundnut production was selected and developed on a country-wide basis and the bank ensured that financial assistance was given to the farmers for land preparation, seeds and fertilizers. Similarly, palm oil production, which had been a viable venture, was selected for substantial support. In colonial period, increasing quantities of palm oil exported from West Africa to United Kingdom in the nineteenth century seem impressive: they leaped from an average of 2,749 cwt. in the 1790s to 577,523 cwt. in the 1850s, and then again to an average of 804,393 cwt. in the 1890s, with a peak year of 1,058,989 cwt. in 1895.<sup>10</sup> Palm oil had been a prominent export commodity in the Gold Coast until the late nineteenth century when cocoa replaced oil palm as the dominant export crop in the Gold Coast.<sup>11</sup> The consumption of palm oil is particularly

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<sup>9</sup> Ghana Commercial Bank Annual Report (Accra: GCB Press, 1979), 11.

<sup>10</sup> Donna J. E. Maier, "Pre-Colonial Palm Oil Production and Gender Division of Labour in Nineteenth-Century Gold Coast and Togoland," *African Economic History*, Vol. 37 (2009), 3.

<sup>11</sup> Kojo Sebastian Amanor, "Family Values, Land Sales and Agricultural

important in diets that lack vitamin A, especially, in the tsetse fly belt, where animal husbandry is limited.<sup>12</sup> Palm oil makes an excellent addition to a carbohydrate-rich diet based on root crops such as yams.

In the aftermath of the slave trade, palm oil formed an important part of local and regional economies in West Africa in general but its production was hampered, to a some extent, by depressed prices in the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>13</sup> Notwithstanding its importance to society, Ghana was spending about ₵15 million per annum on imports of palm oil during the 1970s.<sup>14</sup> In order to cut down imports and make Ghana self-sufficient in oil palm production, the GCB extended loans to farmers engaged in the production of oil palm. The bank's Agricultural Finance Department in 1977 imported 240,000 oil palm seedlings for distribution to small-scale farmers in the Western and Central Regions of Ghana.<sup>15</sup> Another consignment of one million oil palm seedlings was imported on behalf of three major customers of the bank.<sup>16</sup> In a bid to increase oil palm production in Ghana, GCB imported an average of 1.5 million seedlings yearly from 1977 and made Ghana self-sufficient in oil palm production by 1985.<sup>17</sup>

The potato growing industry flourished in Ghana between 1939 and 1945, but had virtually collapsed in the 1970s. In order

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Commodification in South-Eastern Ghana," *Journal of the International African Institute*, Vol. 80, No. 1, (2010), 110.

<sup>12</sup> Catherine D'Andrea, Amanda L. Logan and Derek J. Watson, "Oil Palm and Prehistoric Subsistence in Tropical West Africa," *Journal of African Archaeology*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (2006), 200.

<sup>13</sup> Paul Huddleston and Matthew Tonts, "Agricultural Development, Contract Farming and Ghana's Oil Palm Industry," *Geography*, Vol. 92, No. 3 (Autumn 2007), 268.

<sup>14</sup> PRAAD, Accra, RG 6/5/4 Progress Report of the Ghana Commercial Bank.

<sup>15</sup> Ghana Commercial Bank Annual Report (Accra: GCB Press, 1978), 2.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>17</sup> Ghana Commercial Bank Annual Report (Accra: GCB Press, 1986), 3-4.

to revive this industry, the Agricultural Finance Department of the GCB imported a large consignment of potato seeds to be distributed to small farmers in the Mampong – Nsuta area, the Pepease area of Kwahu and the Amedzofe area in the Volta Region. These areas were chosen because they were the prominent potato-growing areas at the time. The first harvest was registered in mid-1977 and the GCB, by providing seeds, fertilizer, and finance, was able to revive the industry.

The GCB, with the active support and encouragement of Nestles (Ghana) Ltd., embarked on the establishment of a coffee nursery, offering free technical advice on coffee growing and the selection of seeds, in order to promote coffee cultivation in Ghana. Farmers in the Ashanti Region of Ghana benefited greatly from this programme and they were provided with coffee seedlings for the 1978 planting season. The Bank also promoted rice production. As a way of encouraging rice production, the GCB's Agriculture Finance Department imported one hundred small scale threshers and rice mills for use in rural areas of Ghana.<sup>18</sup> Another feature of the Scheme meant for small-scale farmers was the granting of banking and lending facilities to hundreds of rice farmers in the Dunkwa-On-Offin, Tarkwa and Breman-Asikuma Districts to increase the production of paddy rice in Ghana.<sup>19</sup>

As part of the GCB's aid and, in order to provide farmers with a marketing outlet for their food crops, the bank embarked upon the construction of food depots at Winneba and Breman-Asikuma in the Central Region, Kwamikrom in the Volta Region, Wenchi, Ejura, Atebubu and Techiman in the Brong Ahafo Region, Nusta, Akumadan, Juaso and Bekwai in the Ashanti Region and Dunkwa in the Central Region. Construction work on the food depots began in 1977 which provided easy access from the above-mentioned towns to the surrounding

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<sup>18</sup> The Ghana Commercial Bank Annual Report (Accra: GCB Press, 1977), 1-2.

<sup>19</sup> The Ghana Commercial Bank Annual Report (Accra: GCB Press, 1978), 1-4.

marketing centres or villages and towns.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, in 1978, the GCB assisted small farmers by completing the construction of marketing depots at Akumadan and Goaso. Members of the Commerbank Farmers' Association (CFA) in these towns sold their produce at these new depots. In this same year, plans were made to transport farmers' farm produce from these depots to the urban centres for sale while a lot more depots were built in Ejura and Tarkwa after 1978.<sup>21</sup>

Under the second phase of the Bank's Agricultural Finance Scheme, arrangements were made and loans were granted to small farmers for the rehabilitation and expansion of tree farms. The second phase of loan granting was designed to facilitate increase in the production of cocoa and other tree crops such as citrus, coconut, and coffee for export.<sup>22</sup> The GCB established nurseries for farmers in order to make oil palm, coffee and cocoa seedlings available to them. Measures were taken by the bank to see to it that loans provided were utilised for the intended purposes. Most importantly, during the years of economic recovery in Ghana, the GCB assisted the Commerbank Farmers' Association in every way to make farmers successful. In 1986, as a means to boost economic activities and increase food production in Ghana, the GCB intensified its activities and granted loans to a number of farmers nationwide. By the end of the financial year in 1986, a total sum of  $\text{¢}500$  million had been disbursed as against  $\text{¢}233$  million in 1985 to the members of the Association.<sup>23</sup>

Though demand for loans granted to rural farmers through the Farmers' Associations was very strong and enjoyed tremendous patronage, the GCB decided to re-organise the Farmers' Associations with effect from January 1987. In this regard, members of the former CFA were re-registered during

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<sup>20</sup> Ghana Commercial Bank Annual Report (Accra: GCB Press, 1978), 1-2.

<sup>21</sup> Ghana Commercial Bank Annual Report (Accra: GCB Press, 1979), 3.

<sup>22</sup> PRAAD, Accra, RG 6/5/6, Progress Report of the Ghana Commercial Bank.

<sup>23</sup> Ghana Commercial Bank Annual Report (Accra: GCB Press, 1987), 4.

the 1987 financial year.<sup>24</sup> The bank continued to focus on the CFA in 1990 and lent to small-scale peasant farmers as a priority endeavor. GCB also intensified the recovery of outstanding CFA loans to enable it provide more funds to other farmers. Another arrangement was started under the CFA to finance the development of the Anloga Shallot Industry and the Afife Irrigation Projects which were granted ₵12 million and ₵60 million as loans respectively.

During the 1978/79 financial year, the GCB's net profit before taxation amounted to ₵15,127,833 as against a profit of ₵12,126,125 in 1977/78. As a result the GCB's Management Board approved a transfer of ₵5,200,000 to its reserves, thus bringing the Bank's total capital funds to ₵47,679,948.<sup>25</sup> In addition to the above, the GCB realigned its cash reserve even with the increase in the mandatory minimum cash ratio to 45 per cent during the fiscal year by the Bank of Ghana. The implication was that there was a marked reflection of the bank's efforts to conduct business in line with the Central Bank's regulations concerning liquidity and credit restraints to the extent that the asset side of the balance sheet of the bank during this financial year witnessed a rise in the level of liquid resources as compared to the 1977/78 financial year and this was possible because of the steep rise in demand for savings and time deposits during the 1978/79 financial year.<sup>26</sup> With the continued growth of the bank's deposits, the government put intense pressure on the bank's management to improve its investment in, and support for, national policy priorities and credit control measures of the Central Bank. In this light, the GCB's credit policy during the 1978/79 financial year continued to be focused on investment in agricultural production to support the Government's policies. The GCB devised a new approach to farm financing under which efforts were made to reach all economically viable farmers,

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<sup>24</sup> Ghana Commercial Bank Annual Report (Accra: GCB Press, 1988), 9.

<sup>25</sup> Ghana Commercial Bank Annual Report (Accra: GCB Press, 1980), 1-2.

<sup>26</sup> Ghana Commercial Bank Annual Report (Accra: GCB Press, 1980), 1-2.

especially, the small farmers who attracted the least support in the rural areas.<sup>27</sup> The bank supplied seeds to farmers while lending for groundnut production which had been taken up more seriously by farmers in areas identified as suitable for growing groundnuts. Farmers in the Atebubu area took up groundnut farming far more seriously than they had done in the past with the result that the vegetable oil mills in Atebubu for the first time bought large quantities of groundnuts from local sources.

The Special Scheme instituted by the bank to finance cocoa purchasing was yet another programme of the 1980s. In the early 1980s, notably, 1982 and 1983, the government of Ghana commenced a new programme to eliminate the numerous bottlenecks in the internal cocoa trade by ensuring that cocoa farmers received ready cash for the sale of their produce.<sup>28</sup> During the 1982/83 cocoa season, cocoa farmers were paid by special farmers' cheques known as the Akoafo Cheque through the banking system. The operation of the Akoafo Cheque System (ACS) was quite simple. The Cocobod, in collaboration with the Bank of Ghana (BOG), Ghana Commercial Bank (GCB) and Agricultural Development Bank (ADB), printed special cheques which were code-named "Akoafo Cheque".<sup>29</sup> At the commencement of each cocoa season, the board would supply a number of cheque books to the cocoa buying agents to be used for payment to cocoa farmers at the purchasing centres. Seed funds were also lodged with the banks for purchasing the cheques. On receipt of the cheque as payment, farmers were directed to nearby bank branches or rural banks to cash them. At the banks, the farmers were compelled first to open accounts into which the face values of the cheques were deposited.<sup>30</sup> Then the farmers were asked to indicate the amount of cash they would wish to withdraw for the time being and come back later for

<sup>27</sup> Ghana Commercial Bank Annual Report (Accra: GCB Press, 1980), 3.

<sup>28</sup> Ghana Commercial Bank Annual Report (Accra: GCB Press, 1982/83), 3.

<sup>29</sup> S. M. A. Adjetej, *Bank of Ghana-Notable Historical Events and Developments*, Accra, 2000, 45.

<sup>30</sup> Adjetej, *Bank of Ghana*, 46.



further withdrawals as and when necessary but, preferably, not within two weeks. Most of the small farmers initially withdrew everything and started saving from subsequent proceeds. At the end of every week, the banks declared their total purchases of cheques to the Cocobod for which each bank earned a commission of 1 per cent.<sup>31</sup> Considering the huge amounts involved in cocoa financing at the primary level, the 1 per cent commission constituted an important source of revenue as well as savings mobilisation for most of the banks that operated in the cocoa growing areas.

The introduction of the Akafo Cheque System in October 1982 was an attempt to curtail the injection of large amounts of cash into the economy during the cocoa season, which was thought to be not only expansionary but also inflationary financing.<sup>32</sup> As well, it was meant to minimise and, possibly, curtail the cheating of farmers by purchasing clerks. Also it was to reduce the incidence of malpractices, embezzlement and other criminal tendencies associated with the direct cash payment to farmers, and introduce the farmers to the banking system, and thus gradually inculcate the banking culture into the cocoa growing communities.<sup>33</sup> In that regard, the Akafo cheques were honoured only after the farmers had opened accounts with the banks. Finally, the ACS was meant to encourage and sustain the banks operating in the cocoa growing areas and buying centres in their banking operations.

The world economic outlook in 1982 posed serious challenges to the banking business in the world and in Ghana in particular. The dominant feature of the world economy in 1982 continued to be a global recession. Economic activity remained stagnant even in the major industrialised countries and developing countries like Ghana experienced severe economic hardships. The volume of world trade was reported to have

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<sup>31</sup> Adjetei, Bank of Ghana, 48.

<sup>32</sup> Adjetei, Bank of Ghana, 55.

<sup>33</sup> Adjetei, Bank of Ghana, 56.

decreased by 2 per cent, creating intense economic hardships to most developing countries, including Ghana.<sup>34</sup> Oil-importing countries were the hardest hit. For instance in Ghana, the high price of crude oil inflated the nation's imports and in 1981 a total amount of ₵983 million was spent on oil imports.<sup>35</sup> For the first time, cocoa farmers were paid with cheques through the banking system and the use of cheques and bank overdrafts were encouraged by banks which transformed the cash-based monetary system into a cheque system for the payment of cocoa proceeds to Ghanaian cocoa farmers. The GCB decided to participate in this new arrangement which entailed moving more resources to finance cocoa purchases.

As a result, the GCB in the 1982/83 financial year allocated nearly 18 per cent of the bank's loan portfolio to support related agricultural activities, due to increase in banking facilities in the cocoa-growing areas. In the 1984 financial year, GCB intensified its purchasing of cocoa cheques to ensure the success of the new cocoa buying system. In order to reach a large number of cocoa farmers, eleven new branch offices were opened near farming areas.<sup>36</sup> As well, in buying centres where the bank had no branch offices, the bank ran mobile bank services to facilitate the purchase of cocoa. For instance, in 1985, the GCB acquired a number of vehicles for bank workers to travel round the buying centres where the bank had no branches.<sup>37</sup> Consequently, the bank was able to reach a lot of farmers and the bank's business also expanded considerably during the year. Thus, the GCB intensified its participation in the Akafo Cheque System under which cocoa, coffee and shea nut farmers were paid with cheques for the purchase of their produce.

By 1986, the government of Ghana was still struggling with the restructuring of programmes which were designed to

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<sup>34</sup> Ghana Commercial Bank Annual Report (Accra: GCB Press, 1982/83), 1.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 2

<sup>36</sup> Ghana Commercial Bank Annual Report (Accra: GCB Press, 1984), 3-4.

<sup>37</sup> Ghana Commercial Bank Annual Report (Accra: GCB Press, 1985), 4.

put the Ghanaian economy on a steady path of growth. The GCB, which had given support to government policies, had increased its share of credit in general to the productive sectors from 56.4 per cent in 1985 to 61.2 per cent in 1986.<sup>38</sup> The agricultural sector amounted to ₵84.9 million in 1986, though the sector's share of total credit dropped from 31.8 per cent in June 1985 to 22.8 per cent in June 1986 due to the slow rate of credit recovery and reduction of funds available for loans.<sup>39</sup>

The Input Supply Scheme (ISS) was yet another programme of the bank to promote agricultural production. This scheme distributed basic farm inputs and machines to farmers. It was executed through the bank's Development Leasing Company Ltd., which was a GCB subsidiary. The ISS, which was introduced in the 1970s, did not feature prominently in the bank's programme due to the numerous economic problems and foreign exchange constraints which Ghana witnessed in the early 1980s.<sup>40</sup> In the 1985 financial year, the ISS was revived. Under an agreement signed between the Ghana Government and the European Economic Community (EEC) in September 1984, the Ghana Commercial Bank benefitted from an EEC grant to import agricultural machinery and equipment like tractors, rice millers and ploughs for the development of rice cultivation in Dunkwa-on-Offin, Tepa, Effiduase and Konongo areas. The programme benefitted some 100 rice farmers' associations and about 10,000 farmers in the project areas.<sup>41</sup> During this same year, the ISS distributed and sold agro chemicals, cutlasses and spraying machines through the bank's subsidiary and branch offices to small-scale farmers throughout the country.

Ghana's economy was plagued by an acute shortage of foreign exchange, scarcity of industrial raw materials, and basic consumer items and hyper-inflationary pressures in the late 1970s

<sup>38</sup> PRAAD, Accra, RG 6/5/4 The Ghana Commercial Bank's Progress Report.

<sup>39</sup> The Ghana Commercial Bank Annual Report (Accra: GCB Press, 1987), 5.

<sup>40</sup> Ghana Commercial Bank Annual Report (Accra: GCB Press, 1986), 4.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

and early 1980s. The government of the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC), decided to introduce its economic programme for the reconstruction and development of Ghana. As part of the reconstruction, a Recovery Programme was instituted in April 1983. The programme was launched under the guidance of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, among others, with the aim to restructure Ghana's financial system including help potentially viable banks in Ghana. Agriculture was given a prominent position in the Government's Recovery Programme. Subsequently, during the 1984 financial year, the GCB, as a National Bank, gave priority to agriculture financing although the bank was very selective in granting new credits due to the prevailing economic conditions in Ghana. 42 per cent of the bank's loans and advances went to agricultural financing meant to mitigate the food crisis in Ghana in 1983.<sup>42</sup> It was reported that 90 per cent of the loans to the agricultural sector went to customers engaged in the production of food crops, vegetables, fishing, livestock breeding and poultry farming. The GCB again provided a total amount of 2.4 billion cedis in June 1986 to this sector and over 95 per cent of this amount went to finance the production of livestock, crops, poultry and fishing.<sup>43</sup> Still, the target customers were small-scale peasant farmers because they produced the bulk of Ghana's food output. Approximately One billion cedis was channeled to 250,000 of these farmers through the bank's Commerbank Farmers' Association which had been established in 1977.<sup>44</sup>

In addition to short term credit facilities, farm inputs such as spraying machines, and chemicals and machetes were also made available to most of the farmers across the country. The GCB was granted an EEC. loan from the European Community for the importation of tractors, spare parts, rice millers, trailers and ploughs which were also made available to the farmers during the 1984/85 farming season. During this same farming

<sup>42</sup> Ghana Commercial Bank Annual Report (Accra: GCB Press, 1984), 1-2.

<sup>43</sup> Ghana Commercial Bank Annual Report (Accra: GCB Press, 1987), 3.

<sup>44</sup> Commerbank News, Vol. 2 No. 1 (Accra: GCB Press, 1986), 11.

season, the bank stepped up its operations, and was able to reach a large number of small-scale peasant farmers. During the 1987 financial year, the GCB again procured some agricultural implements with the assistance of the EEC for rice cultivation but the scheme encountered some difficulties with the sale of some of the machines.

The GCB in its commitment to the success of the ongoing economic recovery process gave credit facilities to the priority sectors of the economy, including agriculture, in 1985. On the whole, credit issued to those priority sector borrowers increased by 38.8 per cent. Specifically, at the end of the 1985 financial year, credit to finance agriculture was  $\text{¢}1,556.4$  million representing 32.3 per cent of the loan packages of the bank.<sup>45</sup> Of this amount nearly  $\text{¢}1,525.1$  million or 97.9 per cent went to finance food production in order to curb the increases in the prices of food crops.<sup>46</sup>

The bank's next agricultural programme was its involvement in the activities of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). During the mid-1980s, a significant food project was established in Ghana by the government with the aim of helping the poorest farmers nationwide with loans and other inputs to raise their income levels and food production in the country. The GCB, which had since supported Government Agricultural Policies, financed this project called the Food and Agriculture Organization People's Participation Projects (FAO/PPP) with  $\text{¢}3$  million with the Begoro and Wenchi areas showing great commitment to the project by 1985.<sup>47</sup> In 1986, the GCB continued to participate in the FAO/PPP project in Wenchi and Begoro. That year, a sum of approximately  $\text{¢}8$  million, representing an increase of 166 per cent over the 1985 amount, was made available to beneficiaries of the projects.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Ghana Commercial Bank Annual Report (Accra: GCB Press, 1987), 3.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ghana Commercial Bank Annual Report (Accra: GCB Press, 1986), 3. Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

In the bank's continued commitment, an amount of ₵15million was allocated for disbursement to beneficiaries of the project in 1987.<sup>49</sup> Wenchi was given ₵9.7million and Begoro ₵5.3 million.<sup>50</sup>

Finally, the GCB established another scheme to finance agriculture in Ghana in the 1980s. The bank encouraged farmers and other agricultural customers to deposit sums of money with the bank and, periodically, those same depositors took loans from their savings. This Scheme became known as the Special Farmers' Deposits which later became residual payments made to cash crop farmers. This programme survived until the end of the 1987 financial year. By that year, it reflected a balance of ₵164.2 million which was an increase of 53.6 per cent over the 1980 figure of ₵106.9 million and also represented 2 per cent of total savings deposits made by cash crop farmers.<sup>51</sup>

## Conclusion

The Ghana Commercial Bank's attempt to support and finance agriculture was part of its mandate as a domestic bank. The bank's initiative in leasing out agricultural machines to farmers, instituting schemes to finance agriculture in Ghana and its involvement in the agricultural programmes set up by various Governments, especially in the 1970s, and its involvement in the activities of the FAO were all remarkable.

An increase in domestic business was partly a result of the loans granted to the agriculture sector. In fact, the marked increase in credit expansion in GCB's domestic operations was not necessarily confined to the mobilization of deposits alone. Also more important was its operations which ensured that the deposits were channeled to the productive sectors of the economy, especially, the agriculture sector.

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<sup>49</sup> Ghana Commercial Bank Annual Report (Accra: GCB Press, 1988), 3. Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ghana Commercial Bank Annual Report (Accra: GCB Press, 1987), 3.

<sup>51</sup> Ghana Commercial Bank Annual Report (Accra: GCB Press, 1987), 3

The Ghana Commercial Bank actually did much to support agriculture in Ghana. Though in 1967 the bank generally decreased its loans and overdrafts facilities by 9 percent, it however, substantially increased loans to the agricultural sector as a result of the devaluation of the new cedi. Again, by the end of 1968, the Ghana Commercial Bank had increased its lending to the agricultural sector by 15 percent. The bank also set up its Development Financing Unit in 1969 which took over loans (especially agricultural loans) which, by nature and background, needed to be reinvested over a longer period than was permitted by normal requirements. In 1970, the bank again stepped up its financial support for the development of the agricultural sector in Ghana. Specifically, it contributed N¢1.5million toward the government's N¢15.5m Cocoa Rehabilitation Project

During the third quarter of 1959, when the Cocoa Marketing Board relied more on bank accommodation to finance the season's cocoa purchase, the GCB. had the opportunity to expand its loans from £G1.4 million at the end of the second sector to £G3.1million at the end of the third.<sup>52</sup>

By April 1970, the GCB had granted medium-term loans to the tune of N¢0.5 million for the development of Agriculture and Industry.<sup>53</sup> The bank again increased its support for the agricultural sector and, by August 1970, the Unit had granted N¢4.5 million to eleven Ghanaian agricultural firms.<sup>54</sup>

Again as part of the Bank's lending business and in the Bank's bid to help increase the country's cocoa production, the Bank's participation in the financing of the cocoa business during 1971 and part of 1972 surpassed all the previous records with an average weekly credit level of over ¢19 million and the season's peak level of over ¢60 million.<sup>55</sup> The bank's credit

<sup>52</sup> Ghana Commercial Bank Annual Report, (Accra: Ghana Publishing Corporation, 1960), 6.

<sup>53</sup> Ghana Commercial Bank News, Vol. 2 No. 1, March 1970, 5.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ghana Commercial Bank Annual Report, (Accra: New Times Corp., 1973), 9.

expansion picked up in 1971 and a substantial increase in credit was registered as a whole. A large chunk of the increase was channelled in favour of the priority sector and, especially, into agriculture.

However, the bank gave loans to its customers but failed to acknowledge the problems of land tenure, which made it impossible for some farmers to cultivate lands for which they had gone to collect loans. Despite the fact that agriculture contributed 42 percent of Ghana's GDP and employed 60 percent of its work force, the country still imported over 190 million cedis of food and agricultural raw materials in the year of the Acheampong coup in 1972. Agriculture also offered unequalled developmental opportunities, over the short term at least. Not only were substantial lands still to be utilized, but the cost of agricultural improvement was significantly lower than that for other economic activities.

The GCB's agricultural finance programmes also did not take into consideration gender disparities in agriculture which was pervasive. Women were typically confined to food production while men dominated cash crop production. Thus, the GCB extended more loans to men than women. The Bank's access to inputs, to credit and to land tended to be biased in favor of men. In effect, since the bank's loans went mostly to men, women were neglected. Extension of credit mostly to men discouraged women who did not take active part in farming, especially the production of commercial crops.



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

Joseph Udimal KACHIM

## *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.<sup>1</sup> More precisely, they occupied the Middle Volta basin in the area between the Dakar and the Oti Rivers as far back as legends relate.<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup> 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

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> 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.

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

<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup> 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.<sup>6</sup>

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.<sup>7</sup> 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".<sup>8</sup> 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

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

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 205.

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

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.



areas.”<sup>9</sup> 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.<sup>10</sup> In short, Maasole’s assertion merely confirms the views that the Konkomba had no history beyond their encounter with the Dagomba.<sup>11</sup>

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,<sup>12</sup> 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.<sup>13</sup> Others, which I believe, present a more convincing and plausible narrative,

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<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, 29.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*, 26.

<sup>11</sup> Tait, *The Konkomba of Northern Ghana*, 226.

<sup>12</sup> Interview with Gabriel Lasim, Retired Teacher, Saboba, 7 July, 2009.

<sup>13</sup> 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.<sup>14</sup>

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.<sup>15</sup> 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.<sup>16</sup> 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.<sup>17</sup>

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

<sup>14</sup> 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.

<sup>15</sup> 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).

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

<sup>17</sup> Mahama, *Ethnic Conflicts in Northern Ghana*, 203–205.

language meant "poaching site."<sup>18</sup> 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.<sup>19</sup> 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.<sup>20</sup> 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.<sup>21</sup> Gonja oral tradition also asserts that they encountered the Konkomba in Alfai in the second half of the seventeenth century and whom they conquered.<sup>22</sup> 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.<sup>23</sup> 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

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<sup>18</sup> Interview with Yaja Bitabi, Kpassa, 26 June, 2009.

<sup>19</sup> Interview with Kichakpojok Tawan, Elder of Nankpatiib, Kpassa, 27 June, 2009.

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

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

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

<sup>23</sup> Kumah, "Nawuri and Kpandai Traditions", 4.

Nawuri.<sup>24</sup>

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.<sup>25</sup> 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.<sup>26</sup> 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.<sup>27</sup>

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.”<sup>28</sup> It is not clear which Dagomba invasion is being referred to here but this is most likely the *Dagban Sabla* or the Black Dagomba

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<sup>24</sup> 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.

<sup>25</sup> 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.

<sup>26</sup> Interview with Gabriel Mabe, Retired Educationist, Saboba, 7 July, 2009.

<sup>27</sup> See E. F. Tamakloe, *A Brief History of the Dagbamba People* (Accra: Government Printing Office, 1931),

<sup>28</sup> 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.<sup>29</sup>

According to a dominant Mossi tradition, the first sovereign of Nungu, Jaba Lompo, was a son of Naaba Wedraogo.<sup>30</sup> But this version appears to be totally unknown to the Gurma and appears to stem from Mossi ideological imperialism.<sup>31</sup> 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.<sup>32</sup> 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.<sup>33</sup> 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.<sup>34</sup> Froelich seems to have taken the same line of argument when he concludes that:

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

<sup>30</sup> 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.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> Mahama, "Bimoba-Komba Relations", 3.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> 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.<sup>35</sup>

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.<sup>36</sup> 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

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<sup>35</sup> Froelich, *La Tribu Konkomba Du Nord Togo*, 225.

<sup>36</sup> Kumah, "Nawuri and Kpandai Traditions," 40.

descendants of this man (*Bigrumaab*).<sup>37</sup> 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.<sup>38</sup> 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.<sup>39</sup> 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.<sup>40</sup> 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.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Interview with Mawung Bayul, Chamba, 27 June, 2009.

<sup>40</sup> See the Bimoba account in Mahama, "Bimoba-Komba Relations," 7-8.

<sup>41</sup> 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.<sup>42</sup> 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.<sup>43</sup> 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.<sup>44</sup> 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

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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.

<sup>42</sup> Withers-Gill, *A Short History of the Dagomba Tribe*, 1.

<sup>43</sup> 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.

<sup>44</sup> 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.<sup>45</sup> 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.<sup>46</sup> 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.<sup>47</sup> 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.<sup>48</sup> 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.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>45</sup> 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.

<sup>46</sup> 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.

<sup>47</sup> 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.

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

<sup>49</sup> 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.<sup>1</sup> 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".<sup>2</sup> 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...<sup>3</sup>

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.<sup>4</sup> 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"<sup>5</sup> cannot be

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 87.

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

<sup>4</sup> Mahama, *Ethnic Conflicts in Northern Ghana*, 165.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

true. The Nagbiba themselves claim that they are Konkomba.<sup>6</sup>

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.<sup>7</sup> 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.<sup>8</sup> 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.<sup>9</sup> Jack Goody also suggests that there were Konkomba speakers in eastern Gonja before the arrival of the Ngbanya.<sup>10</sup> 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.<sup>11</sup>

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

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

<sup>7</sup> 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.

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

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

<sup>10</sup> 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.

<sup>11</sup> 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'.<sup>12</sup> 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."<sup>13</sup> 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.<sup>14</sup> 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

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

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

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*

Akunonyi the Ghana-Togo border serves as the boundary towards the south.<sup>15</sup>

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.<sup>16</sup> 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.<sup>17</sup> However, according to H. A. Blair, the Bichabob were not aboriginals but invaders who pushed out an earlier group.<sup>18</sup> 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.<sup>19</sup> 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.<sup>20</sup> Since the Buakutiib did not encounter the Anufo in the Sansanne Mango area, it can be deduced that their migration south into

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<sup>15</sup> KOYA, "Supplementary Paper on the Konkomba Position," n.d., 6.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Interview with Tigur Bombo, Nalogni, Saboba, 7 January, 2012.

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

<sup>19</sup> Interview with Uninkpel Bingrini, Buakuln, Saboba, 12 July, 2009.

<sup>20</sup> 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.<sup>21</sup> 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.<sup>22</sup> 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.<sup>23</sup> 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.”<sup>24</sup>

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

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

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

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

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

years in their present location at Nalogni, Ipiin was joined by his brother whom he directed to settle at present-day N-nalog.<sup>25</sup> 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.<sup>26</sup> 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.<sup>27</sup> 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.<sup>28</sup> 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).<sup>29</sup>

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.<sup>30</sup> 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

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

<sup>26</sup> 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.

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

<sup>28</sup> Interview with Tigur Bombo, Nalogni, Saboba, 7 January, 2012.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> 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*.<sup>31</sup> 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*.<sup>32</sup> Their ancestral shrine, *Tapek*, is a stone on the *Oti River* bank.<sup>33</sup> 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.<sup>34</sup> From there, they moved into the triangle between *Saboba*, *Wapuli* and *Sanguli*. Their presence in *Kinafek* brought about the *Jagbel* rebellion of 1940.<sup>35</sup>

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."<sup>36</sup> 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*,

<sup>31</sup> Interview with *Tigur Bombo*, *Nalogni*, *Saboba*, 7 June, 2002.

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

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> *Froelich*, *La Tribu Konkomba Du Nord Togo*, 214.

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

<sup>36</sup> *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.”<sup>37</sup> 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.”<sup>38</sup> 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.<sup>39</sup> 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*.<sup>40</sup>

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.<sup>41</sup> 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.<sup>42</sup> According to Tamakloe,

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<sup>37</sup> Froelich, *La Tribu Konkomba Du Nord Togo*, 211.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> Interview with Aleji Kagon, Chief of Kpalb, Kpalba, 24 April, 2017.

<sup>40</sup> Interview with Ali Moro Ayana, Son of Ali Kamashiegu, Saboba, 17 April, 2017.

<sup>41</sup> Interview with the Chiefs and Elders of Sambol, Samboli, 6 January, 2012.

<sup>42</sup> 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.<sup>43</sup> 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'.<sup>44</sup> 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.<sup>45</sup>

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.<sup>46</sup> 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

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Interview with Nasangma Kufegma, Samboli, 12 April, 2014.

<sup>46</sup> 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.<sup>47</sup> 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.<sup>48</sup> 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.<sup>49</sup>

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.<sup>50</sup> According to Froelich, their territory was continuously raided by the Anufo from Sansanne Mango.<sup>51</sup> 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

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<sup>47</sup> 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.

<sup>48</sup> Interview with Kanambe Dalafu, Sanguli, 13 July, 2009.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> Interview with Ponpir Mpuan, Utindaan of Kutul, Kutuli, 12 January, 2014.

<sup>51</sup> 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.<sup>52</sup> 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.”<sup>53</sup> This claim is corroborated by Chagbaan traditions that they came to their present home with the Kutultiib who were their kinsmen.<sup>54</sup>

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”.<sup>55</sup> 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

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<sup>52</sup> Interview with Ponpir Mpuan, Utindaan of Kutul, Kutuli, 12 January, 2014.

<sup>53</sup> Froelich, *La Tribu Konkomba Du Nord Togo*, 210.

<sup>54</sup> 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.

<sup>55</sup> Interview with Nborkan Timunyun, Kukunzoli, 11 January, 2014.

ancestral shrine called *Liwal Puboa*.<sup>56</sup> 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.<sup>57</sup> 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.<sup>58</sup>

The Chatiib were forced to move east to establish another Chaar east of the Oti near Kanjock.<sup>59</sup> 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.<sup>60</sup> 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

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<sup>56</sup> Interview with Ubor Yamba, N-nalog, 11 January, 2014.

<sup>57</sup> Interview with Mahama Takai, Chief of Kulkpene, Kulkpene, 17 July, 2009.

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

<sup>59</sup> Froelich, *La Tribu Konkomba Du Nord Togo*, 211.

<sup>60</sup> 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.<sup>61</sup>

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.<sup>62</sup> The lineage of Tapotiib was the “owner of the shrine lineage”, and perhaps was the owners of the land (*Bitindam*).<sup>63</sup> 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.<sup>64</sup> 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

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<sup>61</sup> Froelich, *La Tribu Konkomba Du Nord Togo*, 211–2.

<sup>62</sup> Interview with Gnansiin Biye, Uninkpel, Chindere, 31 December, 2012.

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

<sup>64</sup> Interview with Gnansiin Biye, Chinderi, 31 December, 2012.

the British territory by Kpadin.<sup>65</sup>

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.<sup>66</sup> 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.<sup>67</sup> 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.<sup>68</sup> The Kooon people claim that they were all the children of one Kunteen, who brought them to Kujoon after it was founded by Ugoln.<sup>69</sup> 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.<sup>70</sup> 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.<sup>71</sup>

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

<sup>65</sup> Interview with Unanjin Kpadin, An Elder of Sagmanti, Chamba, 29 January, 2014.

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

<sup>67</sup> Froerlch, *La Tribu Konkomba, Du Nord Togo*, 214.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> Interview with Wajom Gmagri, Kujoon, 19 January, 2014.

<sup>70</sup> Froerlch, *La Tribu Konkomba, Du Nord Togo*, 214.

<sup>71</sup> 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.<sup>72</sup> 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.<sup>73</sup> The Jagbetiib who controlled the Jagbel lands also came from Kunandu near Saboba and settled at Jagbel when it was uninhabited.<sup>74</sup> They have their shrine at Nanga, where there are the legendary ruins of the Kondodenas.<sup>75</sup> The Kacheentib are also said to have migrated from Kacheen around Saboba in the Nankpatiib territory.<sup>76</sup> Some elders of the Binafeeb however claim that they had been settled in their present home since the thirteenth century.<sup>77</sup> 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.”<sup>78</sup> 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.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Froelich, *La Tribu Konkomba Du Nord Togo*, 221.

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

<sup>75</sup> Froelich, *La Tribu Konkomba Du Nord Togo*, 220.

<sup>76</sup> 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.

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

<sup>78</sup> 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.<sup>79</sup> 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.<sup>80</sup> 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

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<sup>79</sup> Interview with Ibrahim Nigbun, Nambiri, 12 December, 2014.

<sup>80</sup> 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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