

## PART II

### THE MAKING OF THE 'MUSLIM SPHERE' DURING THE COLONIAL PERIOD





## **CHAPTER THREE: EARLY IMAGES OF ISLAM IN DAGBON**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The representation of African societies in European literature is, in many ways, an outcome of the gradual encounter with 'the other'. The first part of this chapter deals with one of the many stories of changing European representations and images of an African entity, namely a region which was called the hinterland of the Gold Coast and Asante during the nineteenth century. The main focus will be on Dagbon. The description of the area as the 'hinterland' already reveals a European bias: seen from the perspective of Western travellers and residents in the coastal factories and trading posts, this region was somewhere inland, perhaps behind a vast desert, perhaps between the coastal region and the mysterious city of Timbuktu. However, for its inhabitants, the region was certainly not a 'hinterland', and neither was it so for African traders and travellers who crossed the 'hinterland' on their way from the north to the south or the east to the west.

The second part of the chapter is a reflection on the relationship between Christian missionaries and the colonial government in Dagbon at the beginning of the twentieth century. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Protestant and Catholic missionary societies wanted to establish themselves in the hinterland of Togo (as well as the Gold Coast/Ghana) as part of their ambition to spread the word of the Gospel and, in case of the hinterland of Togo, to roll back the steady progress of Islam in Africa. From the missionary societies point of view, Islam was advancing and only the expansion of Christian missionary activities would be able to halt the spread of the message of the 'false prophet'. Nevertheless, the bottom line was that: the Christian missionary societies needed the permission of the colonial governments to commence missionary work. For the colonial government, on the other hand, the aim of their policy was not to save souls and to roll back Islam but, first of all, to establish 'peace and order'. Any activities, whether by Christian missionaries or Mahdist preachers, were regarded potentially troublesome, if not causes for insecurity and upheaval among the local population. Furthermore, colonial officials were usually indifferent towards Christianity, although they might in the end tend to 'understand' the arguments of the Christian missionaries since both the Germans and the British argued that Christianity was part of Western civilization and might eventually be a gateway towards a civilized way of life and the benefits of (Western) civilization. However, some colonial officials believed that Christian

theology and morals were too complex and abstract for the African ‘soul’ to grasp, whereas Islam was identified as being more suitable for Africans.<sup>1</sup>

The European encounter with Muslim societies in Africa represents, in many ways, a crossroads. First, one is dealing with the already mentioned image of ‘us and them’: the civilized Western spectator and the barbarian or juvenile ‘other’ – in this case the kingdoms in the Voltaic Basin, their rulers and inhabitants. Second, one is dealing with the creation of an image that has to take into account both Western preconceptions about Islam and at the same time to come to terms with its non-Arabic nature in Africa. Thus, it is striking that, when one deals with the images and representation of Islam and Muslims in Dagbon and elsewhere in Sudanic Africa, the erstwhile negative image of Islam had changed into a rather neutral or even positive one. Many early colonial Western scholars, such as Carl Heinrich Becker, regarded Islam as a more suitable civilizing force than Christianity.<sup>2</sup> Not surprisingly, one is still dealing with a hidden racist agenda: the Africans were too childish or too barbaric to understand the theoretical Christian dogma, whereas Islam was simplistic enough – if not, in a sense, primitive – for the Africans to understand. There was, on the other hand, an equally vociferous lobby of missionary societies and their backers, who argued that the Africans should be saved from the barbaric message of Islam and wanted to halt the ‘encroachment of Islam’ in Africa. For many of them, Islam was the worst kind of heresy: the ‘false prophet’ and his message. Even worse for the missionaries, at the beginning of the twentieth century, it seemed as if all of the main colonial powers in West Africa – Britain, France and Germany – had a very pro-Islamic policy.

The oscillation in Western thought between Islam as a positive and negative force becomes evident when one is studying the change in representation of Islam and Muslims in Dagbon. As will be shown in this chapter, the different images of Islam in Dagbon varied with the sometimes hidden, sometimes open agendas of the spectators. Sometimes it was felt that a Muslim ruler would behave in a certain way and be a suitable ally for the Europeans, while at other times, the European spectators were filled with relief when they found out that the ruler of Dagbon was not a Muslim and would thus back European (missionary) enterprises.

## 2. RUMOURS ABOUT A MUSLIM KINGDOM IN THE HINTERLAND

European contacts with the people and countries on the Gold Coast were at first limited to the immediate vicinity of the coast. Portuguese and later Dutch, British and Danish accounts mainly dealt with those entities or ‘kingdoms’ with which the European traders and post had direct contact. Thus, Thornton in his analysis of some seventeenth-century maps and accounts of West Africa concludes that

<sup>1</sup> See further Barnes 1995 and Walls 1999.

<sup>2</sup> Weiss 2000b; Loimeier 2001, 68–71.

the region north of the Akan states was more or less *terra incognita* and notes in his descriptions that there is “insufficient information.”<sup>3</sup> Only with the rise of Asante during the eighteenth century did European interest in the hinterland start to develop. Asante was to be known as the regional ‘super-power’, being engaged in long periods of warfare and expansion to the south but also to the north. European trading companies and representatives had to accommodate themselves and their trading relationship with the new political factor that was increasingly putting the existing political and commercial structures under pressure. As an attempt to get more information about Asante policy and to establish commercial relationships, emissaries and embassies were sent to Kumasi, the capital of Asante. However, with the increasing engagement with Asante, information about even more remote, interior regions reached the coast.<sup>4</sup>

One of the earliest accounts on the regions north of Asante was presented by Ludewig Ferdinand Rømer.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, Rømer himself had not been to Asante or further north, but had received his information via some (Ga) people from Accra who had been sent to Kumasi as Danish emissaries. Rømer was told that there existed to the northeast of Asante a densely populated country that was ruled by a woman. Unfortunately, Rømer could not remember the name of this ‘kingdom’, but there is no doubt that he was referring to Dagbon. Rømer’s account deals mainly with the attack on Dagbon by the Asante in 1744, which is usually taken to mark the beginning of Asante hegemony over Gonja and Dagbon,<sup>6</sup> but Rømer’s description of the attack and retreat of the Asante army also allows the possibility of other interpretations.<sup>7</sup> However, when pondering about the state of affairs in Dagbon, Rømer makes a remark that perhaps influenced later travellers to Asante:

He [Asantehene Opoku Ware, ca. 1720–1750] sent out these riders to collect information about the enemy but saw nothing more of them. Several prisoners taken from that people said all of the riders had been beaten to death, and that many hundreds of thousands of horse-riders had attacked the Assiantes in order to kill them. **These people were of the Turkish religion** [emphasis mine], and at Accra we have seen many Arabian books found by the Assiantes when plundering the city mentioned above. They also took as prisoners several Moors who had undoubtedly come from Barbary to that country to trade. Two of these Moors still live in Assiante.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Thornton 1998, X.

<sup>4</sup> On the rise of Asante, see further Fynn 1971.

<sup>5</sup> According to Goody (1966b, 19), one of the earliest European references to Gonja and the Gold Coast hinterland is found in a Dutch map of the northern Akan area. On this map, reference is made to several ‘states’ as lying north of Acany, namely Qanqui (Wenchi), Incassa, Bonno (Buna), Inta (probably Western Gonja). Another early reference to the northern hinterland is found in de l’Isle’s Atlas (1700–46), see further Goody 1964, 203 fn 24.

<sup>6</sup> PRAAD NRG 8/2/1, The History and Organization of the ‘Kambonse’ in Dagomba, 7; Bowdich 1819; 235; Reindorf [1898] 1966, 84; Tamakloe 1931a, 31; Arhin 1979, 23.

<sup>7</sup> Fynn 1971, 115; Staniland 1975, 6–7; Wilks 1975, 21–22.

<sup>8</sup> Rømer 2000, 171.

Did Rømer – or his informants who had accompanied the Asante army to Yendi, the capital of Dagbon – claim that “these people” were Muslims? Rømer clearly differentiated between the ‘horse riders’, i.e., the Dagbamba army, and Moors. There exists no information about a ‘Turkish’ influence in Dagbon at that or any other time; the reference is clearly to the general European notion of that time that the ‘Turks’ or the Ottoman Empire was a Muslim empire and thus ‘Turkish’ would refer to Muslim or Islam. The term Moors, on the other hand, was used to describe Muslim traders in general. Thus, one possible reading of Rømer’s text is that Dagbon was a ‘Muslim kingdom’ northeast of Asante, powerful enough to give the Asante army a good fight, and commercially interesting as it was visited by Muslim traders.

A second account on the state of affairs in Dagbon was given by one Fezzani Sharīf Imhammad [Muhammad], whose account was published in 1791 by Simon Lucas. Sharīf Imhammad referred to “the Mahometan Kingdom of Degombah,” and this notion was to hold for the next century.<sup>9</sup> The rumours about a relatively powerful Muslim kingdom north of Asante were strengthened by two British accounts from the early nineteenth century. In 1816, Thomas Edward Bowdich headed a British mission to Kumasi. Here he received additional information about Dagbon, which he – referring to the information published by Lucas – defines as a Muslim kingdom:

The King, Inana Tanquaree, has been converted by the Moors, who also have settled there in great numbers. Mr. Lucas called it the Mahomedan kingdom of Degomba, and it was represented to him as peculiarly wealthy and civilized.<sup>10</sup>

Bowdich received his information on Dagbon from Muslims resident in Kumasi, including “the Bashar” or Muhammad al-Ghamba, called Baba, who served as the head and imam of the Muslim community in Kumasi. Muhammad al-Ghamba had come to Kumasi about 1807 [Owusu-Ansah: 1804] from the Mampurugu town of Gambaga and seemed to have been entitled to serve not only local Muslim interests in Kumasi but also was in charge of Northern affairs at the council in Kumasi.<sup>11</sup> Bowdich’s chief informant, therefore, might have given a rather Muslim interpretation of the state of affairs in Dagbon, although the actual labelling of Dagbon as a ‘Muslim kingdom’ was done by Lucas.

However, it is in the published excerpts of the diaries of Mr. Hutchinson, the British Resident at that time in Kumasi, that one finds an answer to the motives for the British interest in Dagbon. Both Bowdich and Hutchinson criticized the inhumane state of affairs in Asante, especially the existence of human sacrifice and the despotic manners of the Asantehene. However, as long as Asante was the

<sup>9</sup> Published in the *Proceedings of the Association for Promoting the Discovery of the Interior Parts of Africa* (1791), quoted in Ferguson 1972, 191.

<sup>10</sup> Bowdich 1819, 178.

<sup>11</sup> Wilks 1975, 260; Owusu-Ansah 1991, 6; Maier 1996, 330. See also Chapter II.3.1.



major political and commercial power in the region, there was little one could do to counteract Asante hegemony. Therefore, the existence of a powerful, Muslim kingdom in the savannah would make a much needed political ally and an even more important commercial market as one would get direct access to ‘legitimate’ trade goods. Even more important, all Muslim informants had praised the largess of trade, markets and the availability of goods in Yendi.<sup>12</sup> Not surprisingly, therefore, Hutchinson – who had not been in Dagbon either but received his information about the kingdom from the same sources as Bowdich – declared that:

A mission to Dagwumba [Dagbon, HW] is of the first importance. The commercial genius and opulence of its people, their disinclination and inaptitude to war, their superior civilization, and the numerous caravans which frequent this emporium, from the most remote parts of the interior, make a treaty of intercourse most desirable, both for commerce and science. But it is more imperiously desirable, or rather this enterprise becomes a duty, from the recollection, that, from the [Dagomba] King’s proverbial repute for sanctity, if he were persuaded by the deliberate remonstrance of a British Resident, at least to mitigate, if not ultimately to abolish human sacrifices, his example would naturally be followed by the several neighbouring monarchs who make him their oracle.<sup>13</sup>

The other early nineteenth-century British account of Dagbon is to be found in Joseph Dupuis’ journal on his time as a Resident in Kumasi some years after Bowdich’s mission.<sup>14</sup> In comparison to Bowdich, Dupuis describes several regions north of Asante as being governed by Muslim Law and refers to the ruler of Dagbon as the ‘Sultan of Yandy’.<sup>15</sup> However, Dupuis made an important clarification in his generalization about the state of affairs in the northern hinterland. Having first emphasized that Muslim law prevails in both Dagbon (‘Tonouma’, ‘Simmer’) and Gonja (‘Ghofan’, ‘Entaa’), he moderates his account by noting that:

[I]n most of these places the heathens are, notwithstanding their numerical superiority, either subservient to it [Muslim law, HW], or they cheerfully comply with a judicial doctrine whose ministers they are from childhood taught to respect as apostles of the great God, and whose fetische is thought to be of greater power and efficacy than any ritual or magical incantation known among themselves.<sup>16</sup>

As with the earlier descriptions, Dupuis himself had never been to Dagbon and his chief informants in Kumasi were the same as for Bowdich and Hutchinson, namely

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<sup>12</sup> Thus, Bowdich declared that “the markets of Yahndi [Yendi] are described as animated scenes of commerce, constantly crowded with merchants from almost all the countries of the interior. Horses and cattle abound, and immense flocks are possessed even by the poorer classes (Bowdich 1819, 178).”

<sup>13</sup> Hutchinson’s diary in Bowdich 1819, 453.

<sup>14</sup> See further Wilks 1995.

<sup>15</sup> Dupuis 1824, xxxix. The referring of the ruler of Dagbon as ‘sultan’, i.e., as a Muslim [?] ruler, was to stick for decades. It was still used by German writers, such as von François (1888, 87–88), Gruner (1997, *passim*) and Trierenberg (1914, 113), when referring to the ruler.

<sup>16</sup> Dupuis 1824, xl.

Muslim traders and scholars resident in Kumasi. However, between the lines, the picture of a ‘Muslim kingdom’ in the north starts to vanish – although this might not have been apparent even to Dupuis himself. Having on the one hand stated that Muslim law was in force in Dagbon, it seems that only a minority of the population was in fact affected by it. Yet, so far one gets the impression that Dagbon is at least ruled by a Muslim dynasty and that at least some of the ruling and trading class would be Muslim.

Bowdich’s and Dupuis’ accounts seemed, for the next decades, to have established a line of outline: Dagbon was a Muslim kingdom, civilized as well as politically and commercially of importance for the British. The idea of the existence of a ‘Muslim kingdom’ in the hinterland of Asante became even more important with the rising tide of social Darwinism and racial prejudices during the nineteenth century. Whereas Africans were depicted as savages and incapable of establishing any political institutions, Islam and ‘Muslim kingdoms’ were labelled as ‘feudal’, halfway between savage and civilized (i.e., Western). While one could look in vain for ‘useful’ political structures among the savages, Muslim ‘feudal’ structures would, for the time being, make a good substitute for direct Western involvement.<sup>17</sup>

Apart from Bowdich’s and Dupuis’ notes on the Asante hinterland, not much was known in Europe about the region before the end of the nineteenth century. Heinrich Barth, on his travels in the Sudan savannah during the mid-nineteenth century, seemed to have put in question the claim about a ‘Muslim’ kingdom of Dagbon as he was informed that the people of Yendi were unbelievers (“idolaters”). However, the first European visitor to Dagbon, V. Skipton Gouldsbury, who visited Yendi in 1876, again reconfirmed earlier claims: “The greater portion of the population are followers of Mohammed.”<sup>18</sup>

## 2.1. Not a Muslim Kingdom

The representation of Dagbon as a Muslim kingdom was finally to change only at the end of the nineteenth century. Due to the travel accounts of George Ekem Ferguson, a Fanti Official of the Gold Coast, who travelled extensively in the northern hinterland of the Gold Coast during the 1890s,<sup>19</sup> the earlier picture of a ‘Muslim kingdom’ vanished. Ekem Ferguson visited Dagbon on several occasions and met both Muslim as well as non-Muslim dignitaries and also negotiated with the ruler himself. Thus, Dagbon together with Gonja and Mampurugu are referred to by Ekem Ferguson as being ‘countries with organized government’, namely

<sup>17</sup> See further Masonen 2000, especially page 393–394.

<sup>18</sup> Quotation from Barth in Ferguson 1972, 315; Dr. Gouldsbury’s Report of His Journey into the Interior of the Gold Coast, May 1876, 5, in: TNA CO 879/9 African. No. 95.

<sup>19</sup> George Ekem Ferguson travelled through Dagbon in 1892 and 1895.



having a ‘despotic monarchical government’, but with an influential ‘Council of Eunuchs’ (in Dagbon) counterbalancing the position of ruler.<sup>20</sup> Compared to Gonja and Mampurugu, Dagbon was still regarded as the most influential ‘potentate’ of the hinterland,<sup>21</sup> but none of the rulers can be said to have been a Muslim and Muslim Law did not prevail. Although Ekem Ferguson has an obscure reference to “Mohammedan-professing tribes,”<sup>22</sup> this seems to refer to their being “dressed in a Mohammedan style,”<sup>23</sup> i.e., wearing clothes of a style produced, e.g., by Hausas (who were known to be Muslims). Thus, what Ekem Ferguson noted was a kind of cultural influence of Islam.

Nevertheless, with respect to a political or juridical impact of Islam or the existence of ‘Muslim kingdoms’, Ekem Ferguson gave a negative report: “With the exception of Kong there are no states governed entirely by the Codes of Islamism,”<sup>24</sup> while there were no traces of such Codes of Islamism in Dagbon, Gonja or Mampurugu:

Islamism has not overthrown the authority of aboriginal tribes, and the government is still in the hands of Fetish Worshipers, the Kings and Chiefs of which do not understand Arabic language, nor do they know how to read or write Arabic.<sup>25</sup>

Instead, Ekem Ferguson noted the existence of a rather influential Muslim trading community: “The trading community is composed chiefly of persons professing the Mahomedan creed.”<sup>26</sup> Although the existence of Muslim trading communities in the hinterland was already well known in Ekem Ferguson’s day, their political and cultural influence was not and, although Ekem Ferguson discussed their influence, the question concerning this influence was a matter for debate and inquiries during the early colonial period. Ekem Ferguson himself made it clear that the majority of those who “adopt the Hausa and Mahomedan garbs,” i.e., pointing to the cultural influence of Hausa fashion – what could be described as ‘Hausanization’ – could neither read nor write their names. However, those Muslims – Ekem Ferguson made it quite clear that he referred only to Muslims, especially to the imam – who could read and write had “a certain amount of influence over their converts as well as in the Native Courts.”<sup>27</sup> Thus, according to Ekem Ferguson, the Muslims had a rather limited political influence at the courts, mainly due to the fact that they comprised

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<sup>20</sup> Arhin 1974a, 75, 99.

<sup>21</sup> Arhin 1974a, 74.

<sup>22</sup> Arhin 1974a, 68.

<sup>23</sup> Arhin 1974a, 83, 86, 128.

<sup>24</sup> Arhin 1974a, 127.

<sup>25</sup> Arhin 1974a, 109. Ekem Ferguson especially referred to the case of Mampurugu, but one can argue from the composition of his text that one can also stretch his argument to include Dagbon and Gonja as well. For Gonja, he claimed that the original Wangara who founded the state were Muslims but subsequent rulers abandoned Islam (Arhin 1974a, 116).

<sup>26</sup> Arhin 1974a, 99–100.

<sup>27</sup> Arhin 1974a, 109–110.

only a small minority within the states and that none of the constitutions allowed Muslims any powerful positions.<sup>28</sup> On the other hand, Ekem Ferguson's description of the state of affairs in the hinterland comes close to later representations, namely that of Muslims, and especially the imams, serving as intermediaries between rulers and (visiting) strangers.

## 2.2. Muslim or Not?

Alongside the British expeditions to the Asante hinterland, the French and Germans also started to focus their interest and aspirations on the region at the end of the nineteenth century. A French expedition led by Captain L. G. Binger arrived in Dagbon in 1888, and Binger would still insist that, at least in Karaga, one of the senior towns of Dagbon, the major part of the population were Muslims,<sup>29</sup> and ten years later the British military commander Captain Mackworth claimed that "all the big chiefs [in Dagbon] are Mahomedan men, and have Arabic clerks and priests."<sup>30</sup>

By 1892, an Anglo-German agreement had placed most of Dagbon in what was known as the Neutral Zone.<sup>31</sup> However, both parties tried to gain influence in the region. Due to the mistrust of the Dagbon ruler – especially towards the German intentions – trade routes through Dagbon were cut about 1896 and when the Germans learned about French attempts to establish themselves in the Togo hinterland, a German military force was employed to secure German interests in the region. German forces twice attacked Dagbon (in 1896 and in 1900) and on the 10<sup>th</sup> of May 1900, the German flag was raised in Yendi.<sup>32</sup>

Dagbon was, for the Germans, very much *terra incognita*.<sup>33</sup> Although two expeditions had travelled through Dagbon during the 1880s, one led by Gottlob Adolf Krause in 1886–1887<sup>34</sup> and the following by Captain Curt von François in 1888, not much was known about the region. In a letter dated on the 5<sup>th</sup> of April 1888, von François wrote that the region north of Salaga was predominantly inhabited

<sup>28</sup> Arhin 1974a, 110, 112.

<sup>29</sup> Binger 1892, 65.

<sup>30</sup> Quoted in Ferguson 1972, 316.

<sup>31</sup> The Neutral Zone had been established by the British and Germans in 1888. On the evolution of the Neutral Zone, see Bening 1973.

<sup>32</sup> Trierenberg 1914; Ferguson 1972, 44–46. The Neutral Zone had officially been abolished and divided by Britain and Germany in 1899 by an Anglo-German agreement. As a result, Mampurugu and the western part of Dagbon were declared a British protectorate whereas Yendi and eastern Dagbon were put under German control. In 1901, Eastern Dagbon was incorporated into the Sansanne-Mango administrative division of German Togo while western Dagbon was included by the British as the Dagomba or Tamale District into the Southern Province of the Protectorate of the Northern Territories established in 1901 (Staniland 1975, 10–11).

<sup>33</sup> Thus claimed by G.A. Krause in his letter to the German Foreign Office (*Auswärtiges Amt*), dated 15.2.1886, quoted in Sebald 1972, 75.

<sup>34</sup> On Krause's expedition towards the Niger Bend, see further Sebald 1972, 78–81.



**Plate 9.** Binger's visit to the court of the KaragaNa, illustration from Binger 1892, 66/67. Intentionally or not, Binger's sketch portrayed the event as one which was dominated by Muslim elders – most, if not all (including the Karaga-Na) were wearing 'Muslim clothes' and wore turbans.

by Muslims,<sup>35</sup> but in his subsequently published travel report, he seemed to have modified his earlier account on Islam and the influence of Muslims in Dagbon and Salaga. Although he still argued that almost all of the 'sultans, chiefs and dignified persons' were Muslims, Islam did not seem to have been the religion of the majority of the inhabitants as he found only a few Muslims in every village.<sup>36</sup> This did not make a major difference to von François as his main interest was to call attention to the existence of at least some – influential – Muslims, who might become possible partners and allies of the Germans. Thus, some years later, the German pro-Muslim policy in the hinterland of Togo became evident when the Germans backed the Muslim faction in the Salaga Civil War.<sup>37</sup> Last, but not least, similar to other contemporary eyewitness accounts, von François noted the 'cultural influence' of Islam in Dagbon and Salaga, which was mostly manifested in the use of Hausa gowns and amulets produced by Muslim scholars.<sup>38</sup>

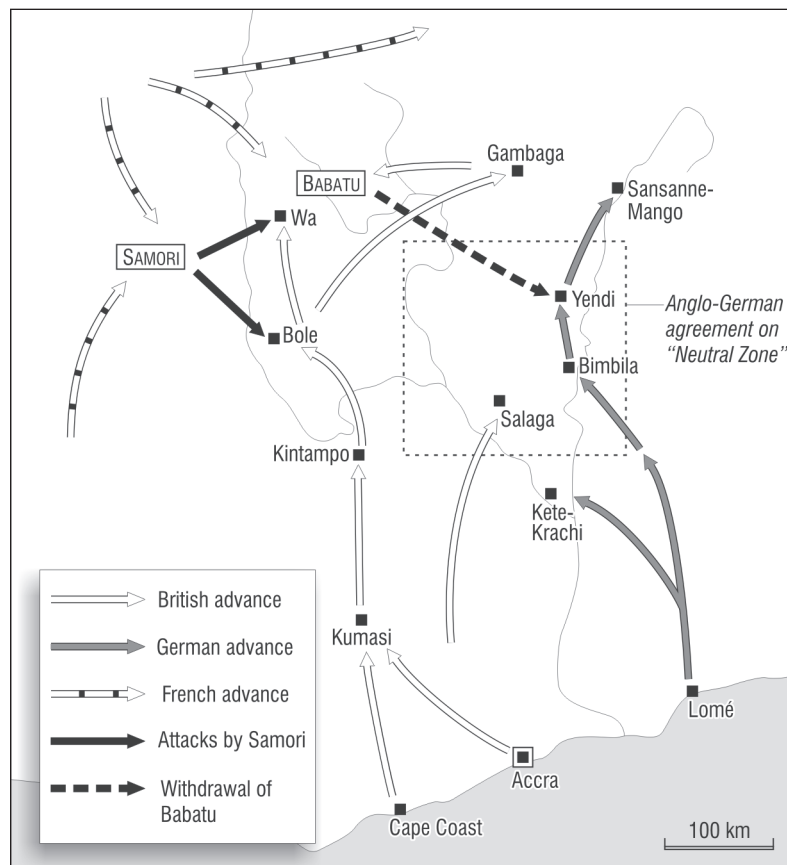
Krause was rather an oddball among the nineteenth-century German travellers. After his 1886–1887 expedition, he returned to West Africa and settled in Salaga due to the animosity of the German authorities in Togo who prohibited him from settling in Togo. In Salaga, he established a trading and scientific station and lived

<sup>35</sup> Von François 1888, 88.

<sup>36</sup> Von François 1888, 165.

<sup>37</sup> On the Salaga Civil War, see further Braimah and Goody 1967.

<sup>38</sup> Von François 1888, 164.



**Map 11.** The colonial factor in the Voltaic Basin.

there from 1889 to 1894. He witnessed, among other things, the civil war in Salaga and the subsequent attack of the Dagbon army on Salaga in 1892. During his stay in Salaga, he also started his attack on the hidden slave trade from Salaga to Togo where, Krause claimed – and demonstrated – that the German authorities not only closed their eyes towards this trade but actually encouraged it. Krause’s letters of accusation in German newspapers led to a fierce debate between him and the colonial authorities in Togo and the colonial lobby in Germany and eventually provoked Krause to send a petition for an investigation to the German parliament.<sup>39</sup>

A third German (military) expedition headed by Dr. Hans Gruner traversed through Dagbon in 1894. In his account, Gruner would still claim that the Dagbamba were strict Muslims as they – officially, at least – refused to drink alcohol.<sup>40</sup> As Ferguson had, Gruner also noted the habit of wearing ‘Hausa’ clothes. However, in contrast to Ferguson, Gruner gave a clear impression that he was dealing with a Muslim ruler – he met the ‘Sultan’ Mohammed Adani [Ya Na Andani II (ruled 1876–1899)] in Yendi and there was small mosque inside the palace compound

<sup>39</sup> On Krause and his attack on the colonial authorities, see further Sebald 1972.

<sup>40</sup> Gruner 1997, 79. Gruner also mentions the reputation of the people in Yendi as being ‘fanatics’ (der bekannte Fanatismus der Jendileute, page 80). However, as Gruner sarcastically remarked: “nowhere else was I served that much Schnaps as in the strict Muslim counties of Dagbon and Gwando.”



– indicating that the presence of Islam must have been felt at the royal court. He also met the ‘Galadima’ Osumanu who was a eunuch, i.e., Gruner was probably referring to the Zohe-Na,<sup>41</sup> but perhaps due to the information given by Gruner’s Hausa Muslim interpreter, he was referred to as the *galadima*, a title used in the Muslim emirates in the Sokoto Caliphate. Another dignitary who Gruner met was Limam Muhamma (Imam Muhammad), perhaps to be identified as the Ya Na’s Imam, to whom he gave a deluxe edition of the Quran as a present.<sup>42</sup>

Subsequent German observers became more sceptical about Dagbon being a ‘Muslim’ kingdom. The German commander in the north, Graf von Zech, was not impressed: “The kind of Islam which is found in Dagbon at present is shot through and through with pagan practices.”<sup>43</sup> According to Phyllis Ferguson, von Zech’s (as well as the other German accounts) were rather superficial and at best only partly reflected the true state of affairs in Dagbon. However, one has to take a closer look at von Zech’s account which, although published in 1904, was his account of a journey in the hinterland of Togo and the Gold Coast during 1901/02. Von Zech’s main interest was in consolidating German rule in the hinterland and German *Realpolitik* at the beginning of the twentieth century firmly rested on the concept of a German-Muslim sovereignty. According to German official logic – which in the end did not differ at all from British or French – ‘Islam’ with its landmarks of the caliphates of Damascus and Baghdad, brought enlightenment to people in the form of a ‘feudal’ system of administration, a written language, a written law and a profound – although somewhat archaic – code of morals and ethics. The non-Muslim African people were lacking all of these. Thus the Muslims were thought of being the intermediaries between the civilized Europeans (i.e., the Germans) and the uncivilized pagans (i.e., the non-Muslim Africans). Therefore, whatever Islamic or Muslim traces which could be identified in the hinterland of Togo would be regarded as being a possible foundation for the planned German-Muslim alliance.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>41</sup> According to Phyllis Ferguson (1972, 280), the Zohe Na might have acquired the title Galadima in the early nineteenth century “as part of a deliberate attempt to assimilate the structure of the Dagbon Court more closely to the model of that of the newly reconstituted amirates of Hausaland under the Sokoto khalifs.” Ferguson’s note is interesting as it might explain why the Muslims in Kumasi would stress to the British that one was dealing with a ‘Muslim’ kingdom in Dagbon.

<sup>42</sup> Gruner 1997, 81–98. According to Gruner, the position of the imam (*limam*) was always given to a brother of the ‘sultan’ who had received training as a Muslim scholar, although Phyllis Ferguson’s research (1972) would refute such a claim. Interestingly enough, Gruner also referred to the promotional pattern of the succession system in Dagbon and noted that the governor (*Statthalter*) of Karaga (i.e., the Karaga-Na, one of the gate-skins) was always the heir (Gruner: Yerima, i.e., Yeri-Na) to the throne. In 1900, the Germans called upon KaragaNa Alhassan (Alasani) to take the Na-ship. See also Ferguson and Wilks 1970, 341, 345.

<sup>43</sup> Von Zech 1904, 122 (English translation in Ferguson 1972, 316).

<sup>44</sup> Hiskett 1984, 279–280. It has to be remembered that the viewpoint of the British in the hinterland of the Gold Coast and Asante did not differ at all from the German position. See further Chapter IV.

A close reading of von Zech's account confirmed for me much of what was believed to be the state of religion in the hinterland of Togo at the turn of the century. Although none of the political realms were any longer painted as being genuinely Muslim kingdoms and entities, in some of them, namely Nanun, Dagbon and the Chokossi, the position of Islam and the Muslims was thought of as being rather influential. Islam, claimed von Zech, was spreading both among the ruling estate as well as among the commoners in Nanun.<sup>45</sup> A similar situation seemed to have prevailed in Dagbon where von Zech noted the same ambiguity as in Nanun: the very strong position of the pre-Islamic cults and traditions side-by-side with Muslim practices. Although von Zech refers to a 'degenerated' form of Islam – which subsequent researchers would perhaps label as syncretism and Muslim reformers condemn as 'mixing practices' – he does claim that the centuries old process of Islamization in Dagbon had had the effect of strengthening the position of the chiefs and the ruling estate.<sup>46</sup> In addition, he noted the use of Muslim amulets in Dagbon – most notably those in use by the cavalry troops of the ruler: their gowns were covered by small pockets and containers containing a piece of paper with a line from the Quran. For von Zech, this was a clear indication of the influence of Islam.<sup>47</sup>

However, the most division was that between kingdoms and stateless people. This division was already noted by Ekem Ferguson in his account of the Asante hinterland and was, in a sense, confirmed by von Zech's account. Although none of the identified 'kingdoms' or 'states' were 'genuine' Muslim ones, the Muslim factor was identified by both the British and the Germans as being the most important one for their planned rule. Not surprisingly, both British and German colonial doctrines put forward the kind of rule through (or with) the local rulers, who in turn would rule both their commoners as well as those 'stateless' people they claimed to dominate. Therefore, for both British and German colonial authorities, the Muslim factor was either to be strengthened – or at least not to be challenged – as it was thought that the Muslims would become their most important allies, as indeed they did. As a consequence, therefore, the hinterlands of Togo as well as those of the Gold Coast were closed to Christian missionary activities at the beginning of the colonial period.

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<sup>45</sup> Von Zech 1904, 119.

<sup>46</sup> Von Zech 1904, 122–123.

<sup>47</sup> Von Zech 1920/1996, 281. Today, one would see this habit as an influence of 'Muslim' culture, not Islam per se.



### 3. MUSLIM REACTIONS TO EUROPEAN PENETRATION: THE CASE OF DAGBON

As note above, an Anglo-German agreement had divided Dagbon in 1899 and the eastern part of it together with its capital Yendi fell under German rule.<sup>48</sup> Two military expeditions, one in 1898 and another in 1900, crushed the Dagbamba resistance and the area became part of the Mangu-Jendi *Bezirk* (district). Especially the violence that occurred during the first German advance left the local population in both Nanun and Dagbon in fear. From a German point of view, their advance in 1898 was a counter-reaction to French and British activities in the hinterland. From a Dagbamba perspective, the ventures by the various imperial powers were at first a distant power-play, where different colonial actors tried to persuade Ya Na Andani II (1876–1899) to ally himself with one of them. Before 1898, the sympathies of the court in Yendi were clearly with the British and if he had to choose, the Ya Na openly declared to the German representatives, that he would rather side with the British than the Germans.<sup>49</sup> At that point, however, the future of the Neutral Zone was at stake and therefore the Ya Na's declaration ran counter to German interests in the north. The German position in neighbouring Sansanne-Mangu was also rather insecure, and when news reached the German headquarters in southern Togo about increased French activities in the north, it was decided to send an expeditionary force to the north to wave the German flag and to tie the north to the rest of their colony. The German expedition intended for Sansanne-Mangu was organized by Baron von Massow, Graf Zech and Dr. Gruner. En route, it was to pass through Bimbila and Yendi.<sup>50</sup>

German hopes to be granted free conduct through Nanun and Dagbon proved unrealistic. None of the kingdoms granted permission; instead, both rulers summoned their soldiers to stop the German intrusion. Not surprisingly, the Germans decided to subdue any resistance on their way to the north. The Nanumba collected large forces in both Wulensi and Bimbila to impede the advance of the expedition. The two forces fought their first battle near Wulensi, but the Nanumba forces were driven to Bimbila. A new battle commenced at Bimbila. The Nanumba were mown down with heavy loss of life, and the rest fled with their blind king to Chamba. Bimbila was set on fire by the Germans before they continued their advance to the north. The Dagbamba, too, tried to stop the advance of the German expeditionary force on its march against Dagbon. As in Nanun, the outcome was a bloody battle. At Adibo the Dagbamba were killed in great numbers; heaps of dead bodies were to be found in all directions. The War-Chief with all his captains died on the battlefield.

<sup>48</sup> Von Zech 1920/1996, 280.

<sup>49</sup> Wilks 1975, 307, quoting a letter sent by Ya Na Andani to the British: "The Germans write twice from Kraki. I refuse their letters. They say you refuse letters, so we come and fight. I want to be English, not German. I belonged to Ashanti. English conquer Ashanti, I now belong to the English..."

<sup>50</sup> Trierenberg 1914.

Ya Na Andani fled from Yendi, the Germans entered Yendi, set fire to the town and departed for Sansanne-Mangu.<sup>51</sup>

Local traditions collected in Yendi stressed the horror felt by the local population during the German advance. “Upon their arrival everybody ran into the bush,” Lubeck was told by his informants.<sup>52</sup> In his poem *Labarin Nasaru*, ‘The arrival of the Christians’, Imam ‘Umar<sup>53</sup> was horrified by the ruthless behaviour of the German troops towards the local population in Dagbon in 1896: without any obvious reason, they killed the *yerima* [Yeri-Na], who was a blind man.<sup>54</sup> The destruction caused by the Germans in Yendi was also highly criticized. When the Germans set fire to the houses in Yendi, several leading Muslim families lost all their books and documents. This happened, e.g., to the family of al-Hājj Abū Bong b. Muhammad b. Ibrāhīm b. al-Hājj Muhammad.<sup>55</sup> From a historical perspective, this action was the most barbaric one and was to cause an immense loss for future historians as no historical or other records survived.

From a local perspective, the arrival of the German force was at first misunderstood. Tamakloe was told by his informants that the Germans were not believed to be staying for a long time. “[The] white man’s gun has no flint stone,” it was said – indicating the superior firepower of modern European weapons of which then nobody actually had had any experience. “The white man is come from the water, he is a fish,” was another expression, indicating that the white man would not stay for long (since a fish could not survive on land).<sup>56</sup>

However, although the Germans had left Yendi in 1898, they soon returned. While their intention in 1898 had not been to conquer Nanun or Dagbon, two years later the international situation had changed. The existence of a Neutral Zone was perceived by both Germans and British not to be a good solution and, therefore, it was to be abolished. At the same time, Ya Na Andani died and Dagbon experienced the typical situation of political and military turmoil when different potential rulers-to-be tried to get enskinned. One of the contestants, the ruler of Karaga, Karaga Na Alhassan, applied to the German Resident (*Bezirksleiter*) at Sansanne-Mangu, Dr. Rigler, to intervene and to back his cause. Although the Dagbamba country was still a neutral zone at that time, Dr. Rigler came down with his cavalry and foot soldiers, and fell upon the the people of Savelugu in Sang, and Idi, the eldest son of Ya Na Andani, who was the former Tugu Na and had aspired to become Savelugu Na, was killed.<sup>57</sup> However, other accounts connect the German intervention

<sup>51</sup> Trierenberg 1914; Tamakloe 1931a/1931b.

<sup>52</sup> Lubeck 1968, 16.

<sup>53</sup> Imam ‘Umar (Alhaji ‘Umar, 1858–1934) was at this time imam in Kete-Krachi.

<sup>54</sup> Pilaszewicz 1975, 75.

<sup>55</sup> Stevens 1968, Interview conducted 4.8.1968. Yendi is estimated to had some 6,000 inhabitants before the German destruction (Wilks 1975, 244), while the population dropped to about 3,000 during German rule.

<sup>56</sup> Tamakloe 1931a, 39; Tamakloe 1931b, 256.

<sup>57</sup> Tamakloe 1931a, 39–40; Tamakloe 1931b, 278.

with the unsettled state in Dagbon and Mampurugu, especially with the British attempt to solve their problems with Babatu. Babatu and his Zabarima had allied themselves with Bukari, a son of Ya Na Andani who had first been the Pigu Na and thereafter the Tugu Na – probably the same person as Tamakloe’s Tugu Na. Babatu and Bukari had made an effort to dislodge the British from Gambaga on several occasions, but failed and had to flee when a British force was sent against them.<sup>58</sup> What happened thereafter is somewhat unclear. According to Tamakloe, the allied Zabarima-Dagbamba forces were routed by a joint British-Mossi force at Karaga, whereupon Babatu and the remainder of his forces fled to Yendi where they settled.<sup>59</sup> However, according to Holden, the final blow to Babatu and the combined forces of the Pigu Na and the Tugu Na was the German attack on Sang: the Pigu Na fled to Pigu whereas Babatu came to Yendi and surrendered to the Germans. At first, he was not allowed to settle in Yendi but at Wapuli, “as he was a bad man”, Holden was told. Soon, however, Babatu started slave raiding again and the Konkombas reported him to the Germans. The Germans sent for him and he was placed under house arrest in Yendi, where he died in 1901.<sup>60</sup>

On his return from Sang, Dr. Rigler interviewed the elders (i.e, the kingmakers) in Yendi on the question of electing a king. They all unanimously told him that Alhassan of Karaga was the rightful heir. Alhassan, therefore, was sent for to be king and was enskinned. Local tradition has been highly critical about Alhassan’s relationship with the Germans. Tamakloe was told that though the Germans were his benefactors, their settlement in Yendi did him no good as he was deprived of all his authority as a king. Consequently, Alhassan was utterly rejected and despised by his own people, and the country was, after its partition by the Anglo-German Boundary Commission in 1900–1901, ruled directly by the Germans, and sometimes through the agency of the king’s own ministers to whom only the Germans talked.<sup>61</sup>

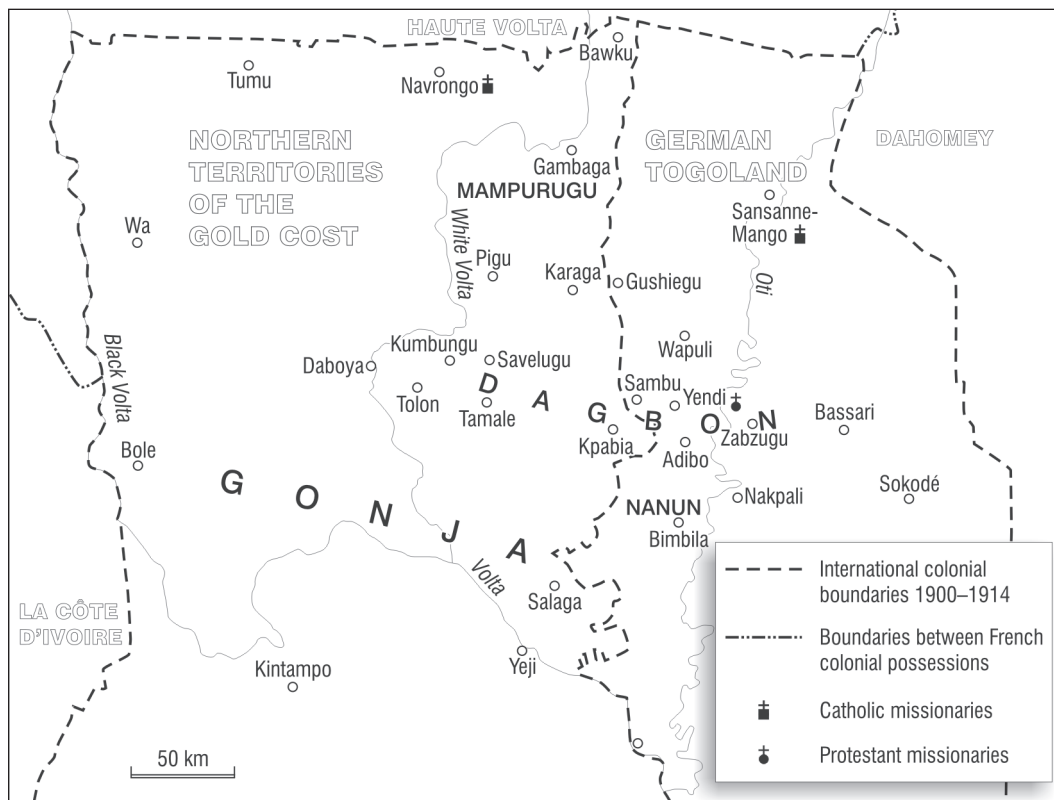
The position of the Muslim communities during the late nineteenth century in the Voltaic Basin, especially after the civil war in Salaga and the frequent incursions by external forces – African ones such as those of Samori and Babatu as well as European, such as the British and the Germans, was a highly problematic one. On the one hand, they too were strangers and outsiders. With whom should they side? The local rulers in their attempt to defend their sovereignty or the intruders, either those who said they fought for a just cause – both Samori and Babatu tried to define their military expeditions as a *jihad* against infidels and those who sided with them

<sup>58</sup> Tamakloe 1931a, 53; Tamakloe 1931b, 278; Holden 1968, interview with al-Hājj Sa’īd Babatu, page o. The British had occupied Gambaga in 1898. According to British accounts, the Nayiri moved away from the town and settled in Nalerigu, and the imam of Gambaga became the most important ally of the British. (PRAAD/A ADM 56/1/124, Tour of Inspection by CCNT C.H. Armitage, July 1911, para 7.) However, according to local sources, the Nayiri’s move out of Gambaga had already occurred before the British occupation.

<sup>59</sup> Tamakloe 1931a, 53; Tamakloe 1931b, 278.

<sup>60</sup> Holden 1968, interview with al-Hājj Sa’īd Babatu, page p; Lance 1995, 76.

<sup>61</sup> Tamakloe 1931a, 40–42. This information is omitted in Tamakloe 1931b.



**Map 12.** Dagbon divided, 1900–1914.

– or the colonial powers who promised to bring peace and stability? In 1898, the German expeditionary force made use of the help of a Muslim from Salaga, Yusuf [Yūsuf] Bamba. He was sent by the Germans to explain to Ya Na Andani that it was futile to resist German penetration. According to Lubeck’s informants, Yūsuf did this because he knew the Germans could not be stopped and he did not want to see a useless war. However, Andani refused to take Yusuf’s advice.<sup>62</sup> After their second arrival in Yendi in 1900, the Germans wanted Yusuf Bamba to again serve as their intermediary (he was even suggested for the post of *sarkin zongo* at Yendi), but this time Yusuf declined the invitation. However, despite Yusuf’s attempt to distance himself from the Germans, he and his family was accused of being pro-German. In fact, Yusuf was not the only (foreign) Muslim scholar who at least officially worked with the German colonial authorities: during German rule, several influential Hausa malams also worked with the Germans.<sup>63</sup>

The Muslim community in Yendi, on the other hand, seemed to have sided with Ya Na Andani. Their decision was a logical one: had they not been tied to the ruling elite over the last centuries and were they not (to some extent) part of the local political system? This was certainly the case for the Mande Muslim community in Dagbon, i.e., the ‘old’ community – at least if one follows Phyllis Ferguson’s (1972)

<sup>62</sup> Lubeck 1968, 35.

<sup>63</sup> Lubeck 1968, 35–36. On the *zongo* in Yendi, see further Chapter V.1.

account of the development of the ‘Muslim sphere’ in Yendi. However, one could also argue that there was a visible rift within the Muslim community in Yendi at that time already, namely that between the ‘older’ and the ‘newcomers’, i.e., the Hausa Muslim community that emerged during the nineteenth century in comparison to the older Hausa communities that already existed during the eighteenth century.<sup>64</sup> The latter community does not seem to have been very integrated into the local political system, but rather existed as a stranger community on the fringes of the local society.<sup>65</sup> It was perhaps the cosmic and moral interpretation of the ‘newcomer’ community that is reflected in the information of one of Lubeck’s informants, who stated:

Just before the Germans came to Yendi a star came by in the sky, it was in the year 1295 [AH?]<sup>66</sup>. Many Mallams said that this was a warning that the Germans were coming. And later they said that the German conquest was divine retribution for the sins of the Dagomba.<sup>67</sup>

Such an interpretation is an interesting one as it reflects a very common Muslim interpretation of (worldly) catastrophes: someone – in this case the Dagbamba – had challenged, if not broken, the divine relationship between God and humanity, and the advent of the Germans was therefore to be seen as divine punishment. In fact, during the reign of Ya Na Andani, tension between some Muslim scholars and the ruler increased and, from a Muslim perspective, the former, rather cordial relationship between the ruler and the Muslim scholars was strained. According to Tamakloe’s informants, the decline of the population of Dagbon had already started during the reign of Ya Na Andani as a consequence of his arbitrary, somewhat brutal, behaviour towards the Muslims. For example, he was accused to have executed an innocent Muslim scholar.<sup>68</sup>

However, it seems as if other Muslims in Yendi did not, at least at first, apply a moral and cosmic interpretation to the German conquest. When Ya Na Andani returned to his sacked town, he immediately engaged the Muslim community (or at least those loyal to him). He gave cattle and plenty of cowries to the Muslim community in all parts of his kingdom to make charms to prevent the white man from coming any more into his country. These charms were hung on the branches of the kapok and the baobab trees in Yendi, and some were buried on the Yendi-Bassari road, the Yendi-Demon road, the Yendi-Sansanne-Mango road, the Yendi-Salaga

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<sup>64</sup> See further Chapter II.3.

<sup>65</sup> Ferguson 1972, 242–243, 320–322.

<sup>66</sup> This is the date given in Lubeck’s text. However, if the date is given in the Muslim calendar, it corresponds with the year 1878 AD, a date too early to refer to the approach of the Germans. It could be that the date is a misspelling, perhaps it should read 1895?

<sup>67</sup> Lubeck 1968, 30.

<sup>68</sup> Tamakloe 1931a, 38–39; Tamakloe 1931b, 272–276. In fact, Tamakloe’s informants portrayed Ya Na Andani as being “the most tyrannical of all the kings of Dagbon” (Tamakloe 1931b, 272).

road, the Karaga-Gambaga road, the Savelugu-Diari road, the Tamale-Daboya road, and the Kumbungu-Yagaba road.<sup>69</sup>

Despite the charms of the Muslims and other preventive measures, Dagbon was sliced up between the imperial powers. In Yendi, where the Germans established a military base,<sup>70</sup> as well as throughout the German-controlled territory (see Map 12), German rule was remembered as strict and harsh. Like the British, the Germans made slave raids illegal, prohibited the trade in slaves and closed all slave markets.<sup>71</sup> This was a severe blow for some Muslim merchants as the slave trade had been greatly under their control. Even worse, many slaves were said to have run away from their masters.<sup>72</sup> Furthermore, German trade policies, including the introduction of caravan taxes, led to the emigration and resettlement of many Muslim traders from German-controlled to British-controlled territory<sup>73</sup>. Breach of rules and regulations were punished severely, much to the dislike of the local population, who declared that seven months in an English jail was better than seven days in a German jail;<sup>74</sup> “the English never beat people, they demanded fines or put people in prison.”<sup>75</sup>

From a Muslim perspective, German rule was ambiguous, being perceived as harsh on the one hand, but just on the other. A positive aspect of German rule was the promotion of Hausa to being the official *lingua franca* in the north. Such a policy strengthened the position of the Hausa malams.<sup>76</sup> *Bezirksleiter* Mellin (died 1910) decided to implement a rather pro-Muslim policy, which tried to establish a good relationship with local Muslims in Dagbon. He attempted to tie influential Muslims to the German administration and make them part of the administrative set-up in his district. Alas, the policy he was to pursue was similar to that of the British: a positive attitude towards “our” Muslims, but a critical, if not negative, attitude towards “alien” ones who were regarded as potential trouble-makers.<sup>77</sup> Despite the cordial relationship on the local level, Muslims were not given any special status under German rule in Togo nor was Muslim Law given official recognition.<sup>78</sup> Ferguson’s claim that, under the German colonial administration, the use of *shari’a* was not only permitted but encouraged, must therefore be regarded as an overstatement.<sup>79</sup> However, at least on the local level and in the daily administration, German officials

<sup>69</sup> Tamakloe 1931b, 278.

<sup>70</sup> The German military base was manned by a Resident (*Bezirksleiter*) and an attachment of African soldiers. In 1913, for example, the station contained *Bezirksleiter* Oberleutnant Stockhausen, *Bezirksassistent* Sonntag (who had been *Stationsleiter* in Yendi since 1910), and twelve African soldiers.

<sup>71</sup> Von Zech 1912, 133.

<sup>72</sup> Lubeck 1968, 31.

<sup>73</sup> Sebald 1988, 467.

<sup>74</sup> Lubeck 1968, 30.

<sup>75</sup> Lubeck 1968, 28.

<sup>76</sup> BMA D-1,85 file 74, Report on the conditions in northern Togo by Mohr (1906), page 3.

<sup>77</sup> BMA D-1,85 file 68, Letter from *Bezirksleiter* Mellin to Martin, Yendi 22.5.1906.

<sup>78</sup> Westermann 1914, 203; Sebald 1988, 463–464.

<sup>79</sup> Ferguson 1972, 203.



were very eager to promote the position of Muslims. For example, the second Friday Mosque in Yendi was said to have been founded at the beginning of the twentieth century on the instructions of the German resident since the first Friday Mosque had become too small for the Muslim community. Local informants say that the Germans ordered Yusuf Bamba to build the mosque.<sup>80</sup> Others claim that the Friday Mosque in Yendi was built by Alhaji Qadir [Qādir], who had succeeded Malam Yusuf as *sarkin zongo*. Moro's informants assert that he and the Germans insisted on putting up a Friday Mosque for Yendi because, until then, there was no Friday Mosque in the town.<sup>81</sup> Moreover, according to local informants in Yendi, at the time of the arrival of the Germans, the imamate of the Friday Imam was established and Malam Yaqub [Ya'qūb], at that time the most influential Hausa Muslim scholar, was elected as the first Friday Imam of Yendi.<sup>82</sup> Some years later, Yaqub was made Zohe Imam,<sup>83</sup> and had he not died in 1905 (around the age of 65), local informants claim that he would have been selected as the Ya Na's Imam.<sup>84</sup> Some of the Muslim scholars, such as Malam Yaqub's son Malam Halidu [Khālid], who worked for the Germans for three years, were engaged by the German authorities. At that time, every farmer had to farm for the Germans for twelve days each year and Halidu was said to have done so three times.<sup>85</sup>

One of the few available local written texts about the advent and establishment of European rule in the Asante hinterland is Imam 'Umar's (Alhaji 'Umar of Kete-Krachi) *Labarin Nasaru (Zuwan Nasara)*. The text itself is mainly a lamentation about the divisions among the local rulers and their inability to establish a unified front against the Europeans. The text seems to have been written about 1906,<sup>86</sup>

<sup>80</sup> Stevens 1968, interview conducted 14.8.1968; Ferguson 1972, 303. According to Stevens'/Ferguson's informants, the second Friday mosque was built in the same style as the first one, the so-called Larabanga Mosque.

<sup>81</sup> Moro 1968, M25. In other places, too, Friday Mosques were built, such as in Zabzugu where Imam Idrīs erected the first Friday Mosque (Stevens 1968, supplementary notes added to interview conducted 4.8.1968).

<sup>82</sup> According to Lubeck's informants, Malam Abdallah, who was both the Ya Na's Imam and the Friday Imam, divided his office during the reign of Ya Na Alhassan, and allotted the position of Friday Imam to Yaqub, because of his great knowledge (Lubeck 1968, 10). However, Moro's informants claim that the Germans and Na of Yendi built a mosque for the Friday prayers and when the imam of the mosque died, Yaqub was brought over from Kobyā to succeed the late imam (Moro 1968, interview 3).

<sup>83</sup> According to Lubeck's informants, the German authorities interfered in local affairs when they suggested that the blind Zohe Imam should be replaced. The '*ulama*' of Yendi, however, agreed to this and chose Yaqub as their candidate (Lubeck 1968, 44).

<sup>84</sup> Lubeck 1968, 39. According to Moro's informant, Yaqub died 12<sup>th</sup> of Rajab 1333 AH, i.e., one year after the British had ejected the Germans.

<sup>85</sup> Stevens 1968, interview conducted 16.8.1968.

<sup>86</sup> According to Goody (1968, 251) and Pilaszewicz (1975, 56), the text was written in 1903. On other, earlier poems on the same subject by Imam 'Umar, see Hodgkin's 1966, 455. A critical analysis of the text also makes Goody's and Pilaszewicz's dating problematic as Imam 'Umar also mentions the rebellion and clashes in Hadejia, which occurred in 1906. It is possible, however, that Imam 'Umar composed different versions of his text and added the information on Hadejia in a later

perhaps based on an earlier, similar prose text, *Nazm al-la'ālī' bi akhbār wa tanbīh al-kirām*, which he wrote ca. 1899/1900.<sup>87</sup> *Labarin Nasaru* seemed to have reached a fairly large audience and copies of the poem were spread at least among the Hausa Muslim community in the region.<sup>88</sup>

*Labarin Nasaru* can be divided into two parts. In the first part, Imam 'Umar describes the aggressive policy of the Europeans and the inability of local rulers to come to terms with the changing political and economic situation, especially the break down of Asante control of the political and economic structures in the savannah after the sack of Kumasi in 1874. The main section in this part deplored the fate of the Muslim rulers in the savannah, who one after the other had to flee: Seku Ahmadu from Masina, *sarkin muslimin* Attahiru from Sokoto. In the poem he mentioned 35 skirmishes between the Europeans and the peoples of West Africa and pointed out the threat from colonial occupation not only to political independence but also to the traditional way of life and the Muslim religion. He asks his listeners what evil these rulers had done, but finds no answer to the question – apart from the treacherous acts and brutality of the Europeans. Whatever the Muslim rulers tried to do, their actions were wrong in the eyes of the Europeans. All in all, Imam 'Umar's conclusion was that the Europeans seemed to act at that time as if everything was forbidden. Resistance proved disastrous, and Imam 'Umar pointed to the effectiveness and firepower of European (modern) weapons: whenever they were engaged in battles, despite their inferior numbers of soldiers, their weapons proved invincible. Imam Umar's conclusion was that open rebellion was fruitless and doomed to fail and only destruction and suffering would follow – as the Asante rebellion of 1900 had shown him.

However, apart from being a lamentation, Imam 'Umar's work is also highly critical about the actions of the local rulers and the late precolonial conditions in the region. In his view, Samori's and others' activities in terms of warfare and slave raiding, too, had only brought destruction and fear. The ruler of Zinder (present-day Niger) had behaved like a madman when he killed a Frenchman in 1898, like the *magajin* of Keffi, who boasted of having killed an Englishman. On the other hand, Imam 'Umar regarded the ruler of Kebbi as a wise man when he decided to act "like a gentleman" towards the Europeans. Yet, despite his critics, he was aware of the fact that the European conquest at first brought little comfort for the downtrodden: the destruction caused by local armies was only replaced by that of the colonial ones.

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version of the song, or that the person who copied the text (and mentioned the date when he had done so, i.e., in 1903) made a mistake. According to Pilaszewicz, who compared four versions of the text, the rebellion in Hadejia is mentioned in all of them, which strengthens my argument that Imam 'Umar wrote *Labarin Nasaru* as late as 1906/07.

<sup>87</sup> Goody 1968, 251.

<sup>88</sup> Moro 1968, M52. Moro found one copy of the text (*Nasamu da Ali*, "The Coming and Spread of Europeans in Africa," written AH 1318) in Yaqub's library in Yendi.

At first, European rule was a double-edged sword: for some, the European expansion was a threat, for others, it provided unforeseen possibilities. The abolition of the slave trade and closure of slave markets, sometimes even the emancipation of slaves, was the most obvious case. According to Imam ‘Umar, on their liberation, the slaves in Asante rejoiced, saying “we shall not be slaves under the Christians.” Imam ‘Umar did not further dwell upon this subject in his poem, apart from saying that the former slaves now became their own masters and regained their former dignity. However, this social transformation – if not structural change – was in full pace when Imam ‘Umar wrote his poem. In another text on the social and economic structures of Hausaland, which he wrote for Adam Mischlich, Imam ‘Umar’s position towards slavery is clearly outlined.<sup>89</sup> Slavery was not regarded as a problem or even immoral from the perspective of a Muslim scholar. On the contrary, for him slavery was more or less a ‘natural’ part of the social order and he had little understanding of the moral arguments of the Europeans about abolition and emancipation. Other Muslim scholars, such as Shehu Na Salga in Hausaland, were even openly critical about the actions of the Europeans in this regard. In his poem *Bakandamiya*, ‘Hippopotamus-hide whip’, Shehu Na Salga complained that the liberation of slaves had led to the worsening of his living conditions. For example, because of the lack of female slaves, he had had to abandon the religious obligation of keeping his wives in seclusion (*pardah*) – instead, they had to work in the fields.<sup>90</sup>

Whereas the first part of *Labarin Nasaru* is a lamentation, the tone in the second part of the poem changes towards a critical, sometimes sarcastic, hymn to European rule. Some of the changes which had been introduced through colonial rule were even hailed by him:

The grass has been weeded and swept in the town:  
And that is a good deed of the Christians.  
The roads have been improved, they go on endlessly:  
Even the bridges have been built thanks to the Christians.  
They have repaired all the markets making them clean  
And changed market stalls – it is the Christians deed.  
The peace reigns here, there is no plundering  
And there is no swindle in the Christians’ doings.<sup>91</sup>

Imam ‘Umar’s assessment comes as no surprise, considering he himself was a member of the Muslim literati and came from a merchant family: one could deplore the fate of the Muslim rulers, but in the end it did not matter much as long as the new rulers promised to guarantee political peace and stability and the freedom of religion. Imam ‘Umar’s decision to reach an accommodation with the new rulers was not unique. On the contrary, all Muslim scholars faced the same dilemma

<sup>89</sup> Mischlich 1909, 45, 258–261; Ferguson 1973, 223–233.

<sup>90</sup> Pilaszewicz 1985, 207.

<sup>91</sup> Pilaszewicz 1975, 101.

after the colonial conquest: should one capitulate to the ‘infidels’ or should one emigrate as prescribed in the *shari‘a*? For Imam ‘Umar and other Muslim literati who already in the precolonial period had subjected themselves to non-Muslim rulers, the question was not problematic.

However, despite Imam ‘Umar’s generally positive perception of colonial rule, he regarded the colonial order to be a totally novel and sometimes frightening one. His world was turned upside down; the old order was being eroded:

The dog has eaten the hyena thanks to the Christians.  
The she-cat feels safe on the wild cat road:  
She abuses him thanks to the Christians’ power.  
The hare also has come to boast (in front) of the lion  
[...]

The mice have gathered and celebrate  
Their marriage in the Christians’ days.  
The cat is their bride-washer – imagine it!<sup>92</sup>

Much worse, the Muslim judges were corrupt, so it was better for a Muslim to go to a Christian judge. On the other hand, the behaviour of the Europeans was presumptuous and local people were discontented. He was especially critical of those who tried to please the new rulers:

Everyone dances for himself in front of the Christians.  
They neither fear, not feel ashamed:  
[...]  
Stop being proud – they know you, ye fool.<sup>93</sup>

At the end of his poem, Imam ‘Umar gives an account of his own relationship with the Europeans, namely the Germans in Togo. Rather surprisingly for his listeners, Imam ‘Umar declared that he himself had nothing against the new rulers. Instead, in his view, the rule of the Christians could be forever:

As for me, I thank God for their times because  
They have treated me kindly, the Christians.  
For me their rule may last for ever  
Because I feel enjoyment under the rule of the Christians.<sup>94</sup>

However, such a positive perception should not fool the listener. In the next line of the poem, Imam ‘Umar declares: “save us from the tyranny of the Christians!” Thus, whereas his personal situation had improved during German rule and without any doubt he had individually benefited from his contacts with the Europeans, especially the local Resident (*Bezirksleiter*) in Kete-Krachi, Adam Mischlich, he was fully aware that his personal situation did not reflect the general state of affairs where colonial rule was perceived with mixed, if not negative, feelings.

<sup>92</sup> Pilaszewicz 1975, 103–104.

<sup>93</sup> Pilaszewicz 1975, 107–109.

<sup>94</sup> Pilaszewicz 1975, 109.

Imam Umar's decision and position was not unique. In fact, one could argue that his case exemplifies that of many Muslim literati in the Voltaic Basin: on a personal level, one would accept the new rulers and would serve as intermediaries. As stated earlier, the relationship between the German colonial authorities and the local Muslim community in Yendi was at times a positive one. Two influential Hausa Muslim scholars, Malam Yaqub and his son Halidu worked for and with the colonial authorities. Both were said to have stated that life improved under European administration and that there was justice and material improvement.<sup>95</sup>

### 3.1. Muslims in German Togoland

German Togo was not a Muslim country. According to official estimates, there were some 14,000–16,000 Muslims living in Togo in addition to an unspecified number of Muslim traders, who were defined as non-residents by the German government.<sup>96</sup> However, Muslims were found all over the country and especially in the northern parts – Dagbon and the Mangu [Sansanne-Mangu] *Bezirk* (district) – Muslim influence was claimed to be very noticeable.<sup>97</sup> The “Muslim-ness” of the North was clearly reflected in the number of resident imams and malams (at least from a German point of view). There were at least eleven imams in Togo: seven in the Mangu district,<sup>98</sup> one in Kete,<sup>99</sup> one in Palime, one in Atakpame<sup>100</sup> and one in the Hausa *zongo*<sup>101</sup> of Lomé. About 55 malams or more were believed to live in the Mangu district (of whom 10 lived in Sansanne-Mangu and 15 in Yendi), 17 in the Kete-Kratschi [Kete-Krachi] district (of whom 16 lived in Kete), 5 in Lome [Lomé] town and at least 5 in Misahöhe district. (Data from Sokode [Sokodé] district is missing.) The leading spiritual authority of the Muslims in Togo was said to be Imam ‘Umar of Kete.<sup>102</sup>

As in the neighbouring British territories, the Gold Coast Colony, Ashanti and the Northern Territories, the Germans soon realized that they were dealing with two different Muslim groups: immigrant Muslim traders from adjacent regions and indigenous Muslims. However, the situation in Togo was more complex than this (as it was also in the British territory, see further Chapter IV). The main immigrant group consisted of Hausa traders, who had arrived at the coast at the end of the

<sup>95</sup> Lubeck 1968, 51.

<sup>96</sup> Weiss 2000b, 77. A local account on Muslims in Togo during the German period is presented by Foli 1939.

<sup>97</sup> Westermann 1913, 89.

<sup>98</sup> Unfortunately, Westermann listed only one imam in Mangu, namely Imam Hamadu who was of Juula/Wangara descent, and two in Yendi, namely Imam Yaqub [Ya‘qūb, Yakobu], who was from Katsina, and Imam Abudulai (Westermann 1914, 212).

<sup>99</sup> Imam Umoru [‘Umar] (Westermann 1914, 203).

<sup>100</sup> Imam Boali (Bukhari), who was an Anago or a Yoruba (Westermann 1914, 200).

<sup>101</sup> Imam Ibrahim, who was from Sokoto (Westermann 1914, 194).

<sup>102</sup> Westermann 1914, 190–217; Sebald 1988, 466–467.

nineteenth century.<sup>103</sup> On the coast, the colonial officials (German as well as British) also counted a few local converts as well as an increasing number of Yoruba traders (who seemed at that time to have been mainly Muslims, too). For example, the cosmopolitan setup of the Lomé *zongo* was reflected in the five malams resident there: Malam Isa was born in Lagos, his father was a Fulbe and his mother an Anecho, Malam Abu Bakar came from Borno, Malam Mohama (Muhammad) from the Sokoto region, Malam Isa from Bimbila in northern Togoland, and Malam Abu Bakar from Ilorin. Interestingly, most of the Muslims in the *zongo* were said to be members of the Tijaniyya.<sup>104</sup>

Both German and British officials regarded the spread of Islam in their colonies to be part and parcel of the peaceful, southern expansion of Muslim traders. The situation in the Lomé *zongo* underlined this development. There the bulk of the inhabitants were engaged in trade, apart from a smaller group who were engaged in various handicrafts. Some of the inhabitants in the *zongo* were rather ‘secularized’ from a European perspective: the *sarkin zongo* was known to be a heavy drinker and smoking cigarettes was a common habit among the younger generation. Not surprisingly, some Muslims condemned such practices as being un-Islamic. Such a strict position was not uncommon among the Muslims: in Atakpame, for example, the Hausa strictly refrained from smoking. Whether or not this was a common position among the Hausa is questionable as smoking was said to be common among the Hausa in Misahöhe.<sup>105</sup> According to the Basel Missionary Gottfried Martin, who travelled through northern Togo in 1906, Muslim communities were to be found in every larger village and in the towns, such as Tschomba, Kjikiri, and Sokodi [Sokodé]. Many of the Muslim literati he met had been to Mecca. In Martin’s mind, the local scene reminded him of the orient: each day before sunrise and at sunset, the believers were called to prayers and the local Muslims either went to the mosque, to the praying grounds in their quarters of residence or performed their prayers in their compounds. Thus, for Martin the Muslim scene was very active and according to him, the Muslim leaders had a large following.<sup>106</sup>

Apart from Lomé, *zongos* also existed in Atakpame (some 40–50 resident inhabitants), Kete (ca. 200 inhabitants) and Bimbila (ca. 100 inhabitants).<sup>107</sup> In general, the *zongo* communities were first and foremost merchant communities where a capitalistic, if not bourgeois, spirit was overwhelming.<sup>108</sup> Success in trade and

<sup>103</sup> Sölken 1939, 67–68. See further Adamu 1978.

<sup>104</sup> Westermann 1914, 194–195. The spread of the Tijaniyya in Togo has not been studied. In Ghana the large-scale spread of the Tijaniyya commenced during the twentieth century (Stewart 1965), although some Muslim scholars were already affiliated with the order during the late nineteenth century.

<sup>105</sup> Westermann 1914, 191–192, 198, 200.

<sup>106</sup> BMA D-1,85, file 72, Letter from Gottlob Martin to his brother Reverend (Pastor) Paul Martin, spring 1906.

<sup>107</sup> Westermann 1914, 200, 202.

<sup>108</sup> According to Foli, all *zongos* were established as separate ‘Muslim quarters’. The inhabitants of



economic transactions were the leitmotiv of the inhabitants rather than the conversion of ‘pagans’ and ‘infidels’. Such conditions were rather typical of settlements of Muslim traders throughout the Sudan savannah or, as one could also claim, for Muslim traders throughout the Islamic *oecumene*. In the Lomé *zongo*, for example, prayers of supplication for the success of trade ventures were not uncommon:

Allah, give us health!  
Allah, give us a long life!  
May Allah give us food and drink  
And money and wives and children!<sup>109</sup>

Although most of the Muslims in Togo were found in the northern part of the colony, the North itself was not a Muslim region. In Dagbon (Mangu-Jendi District), the Muslims were but a tiny minority, 6,000 out of 225,000 inhabitants, according to Adam Mischlich.<sup>110</sup> However, the figures for Dagbon are most confusing. Yendi town was said to be more or less ‘Muslim’, but neither the local inhabitants nor the king participated in the daily and weekly prayers although the king as well as all the other important persons were said to be Muslims.<sup>111</sup> The Germans noted a large presence of Muslim institutions in Dagbon: Yendi itself had three big mud mosques, fifteen smaller mosques and six Quran schools and there were 56 malams and seven imams.<sup>112</sup> According to Westermann – and in contrast to Mischlich – there were some 20,000 Muslims living in the District alone and about ten percent of the 4,000 inhabitants of Yendi were said to be Muslims,<sup>113</sup> but according to an undated report of an unknown author, the number of Muslims in the District was at most 2,000.<sup>114</sup> References in official publications, such as the *Deutsches Kolonial-Lexikon*, further added to the prevailing confusion: von Zech – who wrote the entry on Dagbon – stated that the Muslims were a minority in Dagbon, but that there were many Muslims living in Dagbon and, especially among the ruling elite, there were many adherents of Islam.<sup>115</sup>

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a *zongo* would choose among them an imam, a *galadima* (i.e., an administrative head also known as the *sarkin zongo*), a *sarkin pawa* (Chief Butcher) and a *sarkin samari* (Chief of the Youth), whereas the women would choose a *mangajia*. See further Foli 1939, 68–69.

<sup>109</sup> Westermann 1914, 193.

<sup>110</sup> BArchB R 150 F FA 1/22, page 104–108. See also Weiss 2000b, 77.

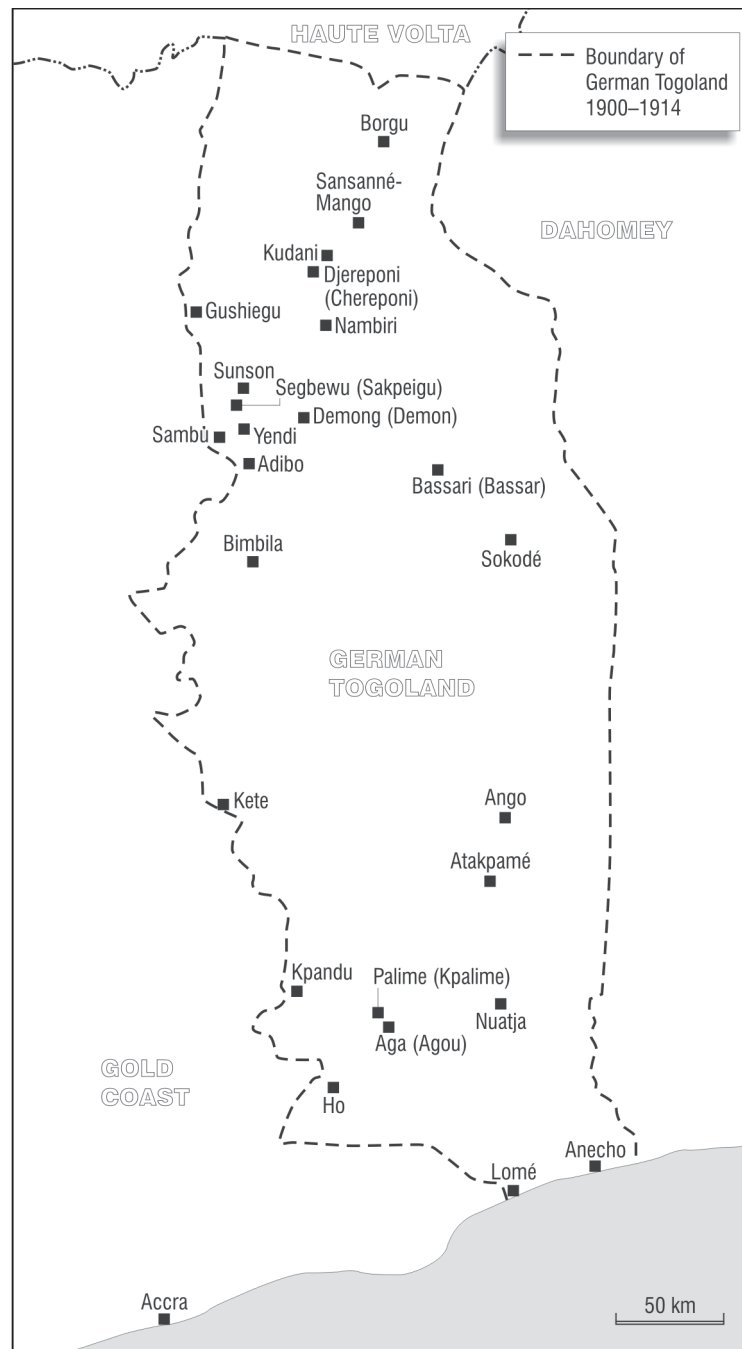
<sup>111</sup> According to another account, both the Muslim and the non-Muslim population participated in the official prayers (i.e., the ‘state’ festivals), which were held four times a year (BArchB R 150 F FA 1/210). See also Weiss 2000b, 82.

<sup>112</sup> Westermann 1914, 209–212.

<sup>113</sup> Westermann 1914, 208.

<sup>114</sup> BArchB R 150 F FA 3/4072. See Weiss 2000b, 81.

<sup>115</sup> Von Zech 1920/1996, 281.



**Map 13.** Muslim settlements in German Togoland.

#### 4. SAVING SOULS AND REJECTING THE FALSE PROPHET

Dagbon was very much *terra incognita* for the German's at the beginning of the twentieth century notwithstanding the fact that several German expeditions had travelled through the region during the 1880s and 1890s. The official line was that Muslim influence was very strong at the court of Dagbon. Islam was perceived as being

strong in the kingdoms. Of foremost importance was the idea of using Muslims as intermediaries in the colonial administration. According to German official logic – which did not differ at all from British or French – Islam was believed to have brought enlightenment to the people in the form of a ‘feudal’ system of administration, a written language, a written law and a profound – although somewhat archaic – code of morals and ethics. According to the military commander in Northern Togo, Count von Zech, Islam was spreading among the ruling elite in Nanun and Dagbon. In his view, the centuries-old process of Islamization in Dagbon had had the effect of strengthening the position of the chiefs and the ruling class. Therefore, the German colonial authorities felt that the Muslim factor in the North was either to be strengthened – or at least not challenged – as it was thought that the Muslims would become their most important allies. As a consequence, the hinterlands of Togo were closed to Christian missionary activities at the beginning of the colonial period.<sup>116</sup>

Governor Jesco von Puttkamer’s decision to ban Christian missionaries as well as European traders from establishing themselves in northern Togo, the so-called *Hinterlandssperre*, was a big blow to the Christian missionary societies, which had been present for several decades along the coast and had hoped to gain access to the hinterland. In Togo, it was initially the *Norddeutsche Mission* or the Bremen Missionary Society, which had hoped to send German protestant missionaries to the north. Due to the lack of personnel and the decision to strengthen their work among the Ewe, the *Norddeutsche Mission* decided in 1902 to invite the Basel Missionary Society (BMS) to take over the missionary work in Northern Togo. The Basel Missionary Society had been working on the Gold Coast since the mid-1800s. In fact, the northern regions were not unknown to the Basel missionaries. Several of their missionaries had visited places including Salaga during the 1870s and especially during the 1880s, and had brought with them news about a vast, untouched mission field to the east and northeast of Volta River, i.e., Dagbon. In the south, several missionaries, among others Gottfried Martin in Kyebi and G. Josenhans in Odumase, had made contact with people coming from the North which further increased the impetus among the local missionaries to go to the North. Their main assertion was that, despite previous rumours about Dagbon and the North being a Muslim area, it was not and that if one could go there, souls could be saved and the ‘false prophet’ be rejected. In 1905, the *Generalkonferenz* (General conference) of the BMS on the Gold Coast therefore decided that it would be the aim of the society to establish a mission in the north, preferably in German Togo in Yendi rather than in the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast. Surprisingly, the society got permission from Governor von Zech to send a fact-finding mission to the North, and in 1906 missionaries Mohr and Martin left for the North.<sup>117</sup>

<sup>116</sup> Norris 1984, 168; Weiss 2001, 100–103.

<sup>117</sup> Huppenbauer 2002, 31–32.

The debate about Islam and Christianity in Africa was at its height in Germany during the first decade of the twentieth century. According to the missionary lobby, Islam was a threat to both Christian missionaries and to the colonial state. Islam was identified as a negative factor, having a warlike spirit that forced itself on innocent 'pagans'. It was argued that Islam was incapable of achieving any higher standards of civilization. However, the problem was that neither the Christian missions nor the colonial state seemed to be able to check its spread. Furthermore, Islam was thought of leading to the break-up of states and societies whereas Christianity was said to serve as an integrating factor. Even worse, Islam was accused of being an obstacle for the economic and social development of the colonial state because it had no interest in the political, social and moral education of the Africans.<sup>118</sup>

Similar fears of Islam were articulated the members of the Basel Missionary Society (BMS). In 1907, when the BMS was discussing the need to establish a mission in Northern Togo, three reasons were put forward by the Missionary Inspector why the BMS should operate in northern Togo: the needs of the pagan population, the need to stop the advance of Islam, and the need to stop the advance of the Roman (Catholic) missionaries.<sup>119</sup> In the request of the BMS to the *Kolonialamt* (German Colonial Office) in Berlin, stopping the spread of Islam was presented as the main argument for the start of missionary work in Northern Togo. The argument of the BMS was that the present colonial policy in Northern Togo should not try to integrate Islam within the colonial framework as it could develop into a problematic element in future<sup>120</sup>

However, the religious state of affairs in Northern Togo was still very unclear during the first decade of the twentieth century. Those Basel missionaries, who had been able to travel to Northern Togo and investigate the religious state of affairs, such as Josenhans and Fisch in 1910, claimed that Islam was making a steady progress in the region. In their internal reporting, the missionaries were painting a picture of an inevitably advancing Islam and that Islam had already a tremendous influence in at least Nanun (Bimbila) and Dagbon (Yendi).<sup>121</sup> In their public writing, however, the description by Fisch, at least, was a rather different one, noting that Islam had not gained much influence in Dagbon and that the majority of the population was still non-Muslim,<sup>122</sup> although the Muslim presence was much felt in the towns.<sup>123</sup> Consequently, the mission committee in Basel took a similar stance: 'fetishism' was (still) the religion of the majority of the people in Nanun though Islam was

<sup>118</sup> See further Weiss 2005b.

<sup>119</sup> BMA D-1,85 file 77, Report by the Missionary Inspector concerning the prospects of establishing a mission station in Togo (Basel, 19.1.1907).

<sup>120</sup> BMA D-1,85, file 79, Official Request Sent to the *Kolonialabteilung*, Basel 4.3.1907.

<sup>121</sup> BMA D-1,94, file 92, Report by Missionary Josenhans of His Travel to the Northern Territories and Northern Togo, Odumase 27.5.1910.

<sup>122</sup> Fisch 1913, 133.

<sup>123</sup> Fisch 1911, 57–58 (Yendi), 75 (Tamale), 81 (Tolon), 87 (Kumbungu), 89 (Savelugu).

making steady progress in the region.<sup>124</sup> The situation in Dagbon was identified as critical: Muslim preachers had been active and ‘Islamic propaganda’ was making progress among the local population.<sup>125</sup> However, there was still the possibility for counteracting the spread of Islam in Northern Togo, assumed Josenhans.<sup>126</sup> Thus, if the protestant missions wanted to fulfil their civilizing mission by fighting back the negative influence of Islam, they had to start work in Northern Togo, otherwise Dagbon and other areas would be lost – either to the Muslim or to the Catholics.<sup>127</sup>

#### 4.1. The German Colonial Government and the Ghost of Mahdism

The official German decision to ban missionary activities in Northern Togo was highly criticized by missionary societies, especially the Basel Missionary Society.<sup>128</sup> However, despite the disapproval of the missionary societies, the German authorities kept on saying that the political situation in the northern hinterland was too unstable and that the missionaries would shatter the Muslim-German alliance. Count von Zech, who was the governor of Togo during the first decade of the twentieth century, explained in a letter to Missionary Martin about the cautious German *Realpolitik* in the North. According von Zech, it was especially the recent outbursts of Muslim ‘fanaticism’ throughout West Africa that caused the German ban on opening the northern hinterland to missionary activities.<sup>129</sup>

Governor von Zech’s worries about Muslim ‘fanatics’ had not been without foundation. Colonial pro-Muslim policy was seriously challenged when Mahdist movements were reported throughout British, French and German West Africa at the beginning of the twentieth century. Mahdist or ‘radical’ Muslim preachers were closely watched by colonial officials after the Mahdist uprisings in Northern Nigeria and adjacent regions (French Niger, German Adamawa) between 1905 and 1907.<sup>130</sup> In Northern Togo as well as in the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast Muslim itinerant preachers began to be viewed with suspicion by the colonial officials.<sup>131</sup> Subsequent accounts by Missionaries Martin and Mohr, who had visited the northern hinterland in 1906, reported on the activities of the Muslim itinerant

<sup>124</sup> BMA D-1,94, file 99, Minutes of a meeting concerning the situation in Dagbon, 30.11.1910, page 1–2.

<sup>125</sup> BMA D-1,103, No.100. *Denkschrift über eine neue Missions-Unterhandlung im Hinterland von Togo* (April 1911).

<sup>126</sup> BMA D-1,103, No.3., Letter from G. Josenhans to the BMS headquarters, dated 24.1.1911.

<sup>127</sup> BMA D-1,103, No.9., Letter from *Missions-Direktor* A.W. Schreiber (*Norddeutsche Missions-gesellschaft*) to the BMS, dated 20.3.1911.

<sup>128</sup> BMA D-1,85, file 75, Report by Missionary Mohr about northern Togo (1906), page 6.

<sup>129</sup> BMA D-1,85, file 53, Letter from Governor von Zech to Missionary Gottfried Martin, Lome 16.1.1906.

<sup>130</sup> See further Lovejoy and Hogendorn 1990, and Büttner 1995.

<sup>131</sup> Westermann 1914; Sebald 1988, 468. Mahdist movements and their impact in the Northern Territories, see further Goody 1970, Wilks 1989, 152–157, and Goody 1998. See further Chapter IV.2.3.

preachers in Dagbon and Nanun one year earlier. Both Mohr and Martin noted the tremendous impact these preachers had had in the region, new praying grounds had been laid out in every village they had visited.<sup>132</sup> However, when the Muslim preachers started to agitate against the German authorities, they were quickly jailed and “unschädlich gemacht”.<sup>133</sup>

It seems as if the activities of the itinerant preachers in Northern Togo during 1905 and 1906 at first did not cause much concern. Governor von Zech even summoned the representatives of the Protestant and Catholic missionary organizations at the end of January 1906 to discuss the future policy for missionary work in the northern hinterland. Governor von Zech presented to the missionary societies his plan to divide the hinterland into a Protestant (Mangu-Jendi District) and a Catholic (Sokode-Basari District) missionary area. He further raised some doubts about the impact of Islam in the North since, according to him, the ruling class among the Chokosi, Dagbamba and Tchaoudjo were “islamisch angehaucht”, yet one could not observe a thorough Islamization of these societies. Referring to the impact of itinerant preachers, von Zech claimed that the Muslim population in the North was not ‘fanatic’ and therefore the message of the itinerant preachers would not cause much political turbulence.<sup>134</sup> The BMS representatives were delighted by von Zech’s change in policy.<sup>135</sup> For a moment it looked as if the BMS would soon be able to establish itself in Dagbon, and missionaries Mohr and Martin received permission to travel to Dagbon.<sup>136</sup>

However, there were serious reservations about the aims of the governor: why was there a change of policy? The missionaries were also critical about von Zech’s proposal to divide the hinterland between the Catholic and Protestant missionary societies. Eventually, the Basel missionaries decided to turn down the governor’s proposal. The missionaries claimed that von Zech’s plan was against the intentions of the German Colonial Office. They argued that as the German Colonial Office had given the Basel Missionary Society free room to establish themselves in Kamerun [Cameroun] in 1886, a similar situation should also prevail in Togo.<sup>137</sup>

Despite the critics in the BMS concerning Governor von Zech’s plans, the BMS decided to hand in an application to do missionary work in Dagbon to the *Kolonialabteilung* in the autumn of 1906. To the astonishment of the BMS, the

<sup>132</sup> BMA D-1,85, file 71, Report by Missionary Gottfried Martin about his travel in the hinterland of Togo (4.7.1906); BMA D-1,85 file 74, Report of Missionary Mohr (1906).

<sup>133</sup> BMA D-1,85, file 54, Minutes of meeting concerning plans to establish missionary stations in Northern Togo, Lome 31.1.1906; Westermann 1914, 202–208.

<sup>134</sup> BMA D-1,85, file 54, Minutes of meeting concerning plans to establish missionary stations in Northern Togo, Lome 31.1.1906.

<sup>135</sup> BMA D-1,85, file 58, Comments to Missionary Martin’s report, dated Anum 8.2.1906/10.3.1906.

<sup>136</sup> BMA D-1,85, file 55, Letter from Governor von Zech to Missionary Martin, 3.3.1906.

<sup>137</sup> BMA D-1,85, file 58, Comments to Missionary Martin’s report, dated Anum 8.2.1906/10.3.1906.



news from Berlin was rather negative. The BMS Missionary Inspector Oettli was informed that Governor von Zech had given a very vague description to the German Colonial Office about the political and religious situation in the hinterland of Togo. The German Colonial Office had received at the same time news about the Mahdist uprisings in Northern Nigeria, which strengthened the negative attitude of the German colonial administration towards missionary activities in the hinterland of Togo. According to *Oberverwaltungsgerichtsrat* Brunow, who acted as a link between Basel and the German Colonial Office in Berlin, Governor von Zech did not want to be caught in a situation where a missionary station could be put in danger due to an uprising and where the colonial army would not be able to come quickly. More specifically – von Zech was not sure about the influence of Islam in the North and seemed to have become alarmed about the impact of Muslim itinerant preachers.<sup>138</sup>

Thus, those Basel missionaries who still wanted to open up the hinterland of Togo had to prove that Islam was not a major factor among the population and that its influence had been overestimated. In fact, Mohr and Martin's mission in 1906 did put forward such a claim. According to Mohr, the whole of the hinterland was non-Muslim and even the chiefs and village elders, who were said to be Muslims, were not.<sup>139</sup> Missionary Martin even refuted the official idea of the unstable conditions in the hinterland,<sup>140</sup> and told the Missionary Inspector that the ruler of Nanun had welcomed the missionaries to establish a station in Bimbila.<sup>141</sup> More important, however, was the message of *Bezirksleiter* Mellin to Missionary Martin. Mellin, who was in charge of the government station in Yendi, seems to have changed his opinion about the German-Muslim alliance and, after the Muslim insurrections in Dagbon, had become suspicious about Muslim influence in the region.<sup>142</sup>

Encouraged by the reports of Martin and Mohr, Missionary Inspector Oehler decided to hand in an official application and inquiry for establishing a mission station in Dagbon to the *Kolonialabteilung* in March 1907. Oehler underlined in his application that the proposed mission station would not be part of the Gold Coast mission but would be independent from the latter.<sup>143</sup> However, despite Oehler's urging, the attempt failed at this point. Brunow informed Oehler in a letter, dated on the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 1907, about the negative opinion of the new director of the Colonial Office, Bernhard Dernburg. Dernburg was said to agree with von Zech that the start of Protestant and Catholic missionary activity in the hinterland of Togo would cause

<sup>138</sup> BMA D-1,85, file 73, Letter from *Oberverwaltungsgerichtsrat* Brunow to *Missionsinspektor* Oettli, Berlin 11.10.1906.

<sup>139</sup> BMA D-1,85, file 74, Report on the conditions in northern Togo by Mohr (1906).

<sup>140</sup> BMA D-1,85, file 56, Letter from Missionary Gottfried Martin to the BMS headquarters, 17.5.1906.

<sup>141</sup> BMA D-1,85, file 71, Missionary Gottfried Martin's report about his travel in the hinterland of Togo (4.7.1906).

<sup>142</sup> BMA D-1,85, file 68, Letter from *Bezirksleiter* Mellin to Missionary Martin, Yendi, 22.5.1906.

<sup>143</sup> BMA D-1,85, file 79, Official Request Sent to the *Kolonialabteilung*, Basel 4.3.1907.

much turmoil and even endanger the German position in the North. The German negative position towards Christian activities in Muslim areas seems to have been a direct reflection of the situation in German Northern Kamerun where two Muslim (Mahdist) uprisings had proved to the colonial officials that Islam could emerge as an anti-colonial unifying force if not checked. Christian activities were therefore to be restricted and Brunow regarded any change in policy as “aussichtslos” (hopeless) for the time being.<sup>144</sup> As a consequence of the negative news from Berlin, Oehler informed the missionaries on the Gold Coast that all attempts to start missionary work in the Togo hinterland had been postponed.

#### 4.2. Northern Togo or the Northern Territories?

New prospects for missionary work in Dagbon turned up in 1909. This time the Basel Missionary Society received a letter from Chief Commissioner Watherston, asking the BMS about their plans for establishing a trading station in Tamale. Watherston, who for years had blocked Christian missionary activities in the Northern Territories, even invited the missionaries to operate in Tamale because “there is a desire on part of the coast Natives [here] to have a proper church of some sort here, and I hope you will give the matter careful consideration.”<sup>145</sup> However, all the BMS trade stations on the Gold Coast rejected the offer, claiming that the prospects for trade were small or limited in the north.<sup>146</sup> Eventually, the General Agent of the BMS turned down Watherston’s invitation.<sup>147</sup>

The British invitation resulted in a lengthy discussion within the Basel Missionary Society. Although the previous plans for missionary work in German Northern Togo had for the time been buried, the representatives of the BMS were still discussing with the German authorities about future possibilities. However, the German Colonial Office had already in 1906 made it clear that any activities of the BMS in Togo had to be independent of the activities in the Gold Coast.<sup>148</sup> It would therefore be impossible to extend missionary work from British Dagbon (Tamale) to German Dagbon (Yendi). On the other hand, the British invitation was the opportunity for the BMS to establish a mission station in the North. The result was a fierce discussion at the missionary conference in October 1909. Eventually, the conference decided to send an expedition to both British and German territories.<sup>149</sup> The expedition was led by Dr. Rudolf Fisch, one of the BMS missionaries on the Gold Coast, who had started to take lessons in Dagbanli in the summer of 1909. Together

<sup>144</sup> BMA D-1,85, file 80, Letter from Brunow to Oehler, Sassnitz 31.3.1907.

<sup>145</sup> BMA D-1,91, file 91, Letter from Chief Commissioner Watherston, Tamale 29.4.1909.

<sup>146</sup> BMA D-1,91, file 92, Evaluation of economic prospects of the Northern Territories.

<sup>147</sup> BMA D-1,91, file 100, Letter from *Generalagent* A. Opferkuch (extracts), Accra 19.7.1909.

<sup>148</sup> BMA D-1,85, file 73, Letter from Brunow to Oettli, Berlin 11.10.1906.

<sup>149</sup> BMA D-10,24, Dr. Rudolf Fisch’ Diary (1908–13.11.1911), entries for 27.8.1909, 11.10.1909 and 12.10.1909.

with two other missionaries, Josenhans and Groh, the BMS expedition traversed the Northern Territories and Northern Togo during the early months of 1910.

Whatever Dagbon and the religion of its inhabitants had been, at the time of Fisch's expedition it was certainly not Muslim. Fisch declared that the religion of the Dagbamba is animism, but stated in the following paragraph that Islam has gained much ground among the Dagbamba in recent times. The chiefs themselves remained 'pagans', but, as Fisch noted, they had to take into account the 'political influence of Islam', and 'paganism' had been pushed back to the remote villages and nobody dared openly to worship the traditional spirits and gods.<sup>150</sup>

Partly as a result of Dr. Fisch's mission, partly bowing to pressure at home from the pro-missionary lobby in Germany, the hinterland of Togo was opened for both Protestant and Catholic missionaries. On the 13<sup>th</sup> of January 1913, three Basel missionaries, Otto Schimming, Hans Huppenbauer and Immanuel Kies together with Schimming's wife, Julia Schimming, arrived in Yendi.<sup>151</sup> The rather sudden change in policy by the colonial authorities in Togo in 1911 had enabled the BMS to start to plan for an expansion into the north. In 1912, the plans to establish a mission in Dagbon were made public to the members of the society.<sup>152</sup> Schimming and his wife had been in the Gold Coast for some years, and also visited the mission field in Kamerun (Cameroun) whereas Huppenbauer and Kies were studying African languages, including Hausa, in Germany.<sup>153</sup> In the autumn of 1912 the group was ready for departure and arrived on the African coast in December 1912.<sup>154</sup> In fact, Huppenbauer made his first practical studies of Hausa and Dagbanli in Lomé, where he visited the Hausa *zongo* and had discussions with the imam.<sup>155</sup>

#### 4.3. 'True' and 'Superficial' Muslims

Various BMS expeditions to Northern Togo had tried to investigate the state of Islam and the position of Muslims in the region. According to Fisch's assumptions, the majority of the inhabitants in northern Togo were neither Muslim nor did the

<sup>150</sup> Fisch 1913, 132–133.

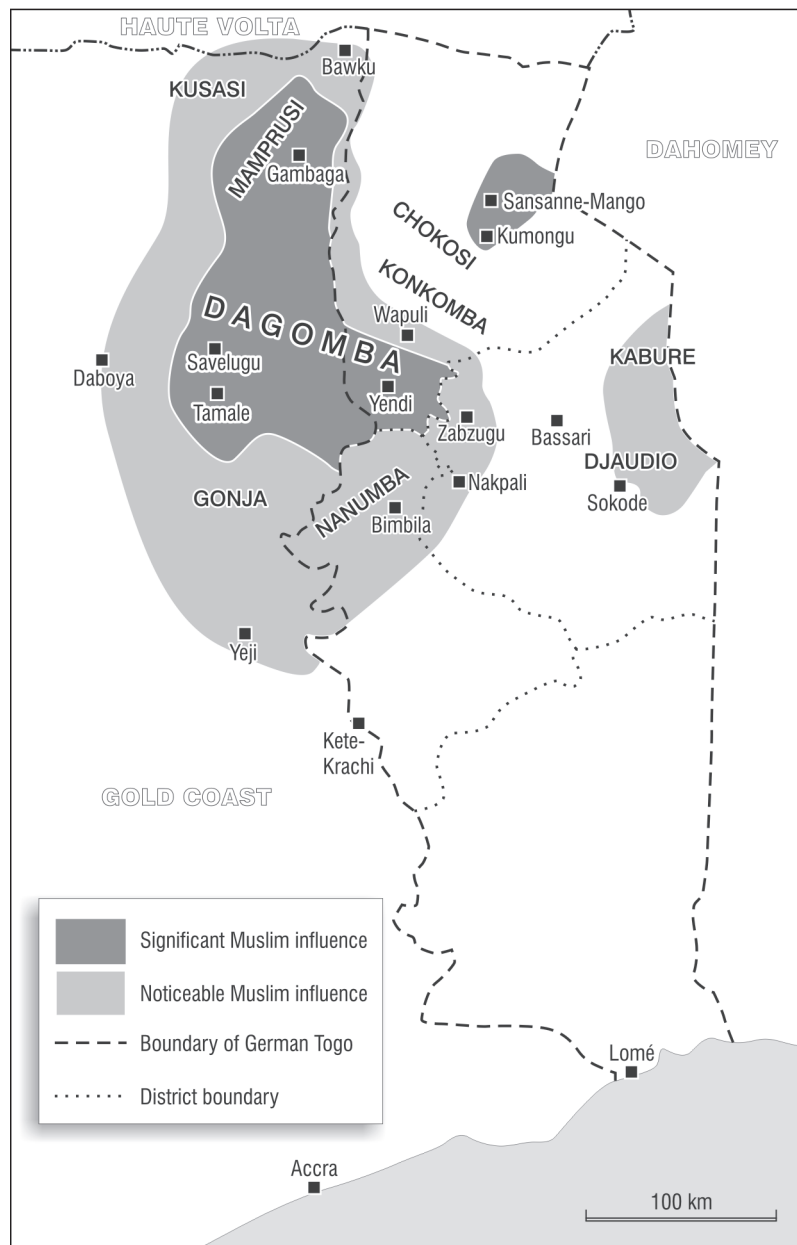
<sup>151</sup> Phyllis Ferguson (1972, 319) is therefore incorrect in claiming that Fisch was part of the group in Yendi.

<sup>152</sup> BMA D-1,104, V. Zirkulare und Drucksachen 1911–1914, *Basler Mission Kollekteblatt* Nr. 305, Juli 1912.

<sup>153</sup> Huppenbauer had studied at the missionary school at Bethel (1906–7) and the seminary at Basel (1907–10) before participating in Professor Westermann's Arabic, Hausa and Dagomba classes (Huppenbauer 2001a, Preface). In addition to the missionaries, the group included seven Africans, among others Dr. Fisch's former assistant Musa who was fluent in Dagbanli, Hausa and Twi (Huppenbauer 2001b, 27). Fisch had hired Musa while he was in Savelugu in 1910 (Fisch 1911, 90).

<sup>154</sup> BMA D-1,104, V. Zirkulare und Drucksachen 1911–1914, *Basler Mission Kollekteblatt* Nr. 315, März 1914.

<sup>155</sup> Huppenbauer, *Tagebücher* 2001, 12. On the change in German colonial policy in Togo and the attempts by the Basel Missionary Society to establish a missionary station in Yendi, see Weiss 2005b.



**Map 14.** Muslim and non-Muslim areas according to investigations by the Basel Missionary Society (1911).

Dagbamba constitute the largest ethnic group. German-controlled Dagbon was said to be inhabited by some 24,000 Dagbamba and almost 50,000 Konkomba. The most populous ethnic groups were the Bimoba in the extreme north.<sup>156</sup> However, as Fisch believed that some 60,000 Dagbamba lived in British-controlled Dagbon, the selection of Yendi as the headquarters for a missionary station, which needed to cover the whole of Dagbon, was almost as good as Tamale. Although imperial and colonial politics changed the plan, Christian missionary activities were to be

<sup>156</sup> BMA D-1,103, file 100, *Denkschrift über eine neue Missions-Unternehmung im Hinterland von Togo* (Basel 1911).

concentrated in Yendi – despite the general argument that Islam was making good progress in Dagbon and Nanun. Instead, time after time, the missionaries underlined the need to shift their focus from Dagbon to the ‘pagan’ areas.

The 1910 BMS expedition was above all a fact-finding mission. According to Fisch’s report, both Dagbon and Nanun were “organized kingdoms” where one could identify a political hierarchy and a ruling class. The group met village and paramount chiefs, imams and other political and religious leaders. Other ethnic groups, such as the Konkomba or Bimoba, lacked a clear-cut political stratification or political institutions. Furthermore, the Dagbamba as well as the Nanumba and the Mamprusi lived in large villages and towns, whereas other groups did not.<sup>157</sup> In terms of the state of religion in the North, the expedition noted that Islam was making steady progress in Nanun and Dagbon. Separate Muslim quarters existed in both Bimbila and in Yendi; the latter was believed to contain some 1,000 inhabitants (i.e., about half of the population of Yendi). Above all, the majority of the Dagbamba in both British- and German-controlled territory were said to have converted to Islam.<sup>158</sup> In fact, Fisch more or less openly presented Islam in Dagbon as an urban phenomenon. Every Dagomba town that was visited by the expedition (Yendi, Kpabia,<sup>159</sup> Tamale, Tolon, Kumbungu and Savelugu) had a fairly large Muslim community and a mosque, and in Tolon and Savelugu the party also visited the Quran schools. In Nanun, too, the presence of Muslims was noted,<sup>160</sup> although they seemed to have confined themselves to Bimbila and Wulensi.<sup>161</sup>

Thus, when the outlines of missionary work in Northern Togo were discussed in 1911, the region was divided into two parts reflecting the religious conditions of the population. Based on the 1910 reports of Fisch and Josenhans, Dagbon, Nanun and Chokosi were defined as Muslim areas where Islam was making steady progress, while the Bimoba and Gurma regions were labelled as non-Muslim areas.<sup>162</sup> All in all, the North and especially Dagbon seemed to be on the brink of being “taken over” by Islam:

<sup>157</sup> According to the 1911 BMS Denkschrift, Bimbila had some 3,000 inhabitants and Yendi 2,500. On the other hand, the Dagbamba towns in British-controlled territory were said to have about 33,000 inhabitants in total and Gamgaba ca. 8,000 (BMA D-1,103, file 100, *Denkschrift über eine neue Missions-Unternehmung im Hinterland von Togo* [Basel 1911], 13).

<sup>158</sup> BMA D-1,103, file 100, *Denkschrift über eine neue Missions-Unternehmung im Hinterland von Togo* (Basel 1911), 14–15; Fisch 1911, 58. Josenhans, however, was not sure about the dominance of Islam in Dagbon, but agreed that Islam was spreading in the area (BMA D-1,94, file 92, Report by Josenhans, 27.5.1910, page 9).

<sup>159</sup> According to the entry in Fisch’s diary, Kpabia had two mosques (BMA D-10,24, Tagebuch Fisch, entry for 16.2.1910).

<sup>160</sup> According to Josenhans, the majority of the Nanumba were non-Muslims (BMA D-1,94, file 92, Report by Josenhans, 27.5.1910, page 5).

<sup>161</sup> Fisch 1911, 46, 48–49, 57, 63, 70, 75, 81, 87, 89–90.

<sup>162</sup> BMA D-1,103, file 100, *Denkschrift über eine neue Missions-Unternehmung im Hinterland von Togo* (Basel, April 1911), s.14–15; BMA D-1,104, V. Zirkulare und Drucksachen 1911–1914, *Basler Mission Kollektblatt* Nr. 305, Juli 1912: “Unser neues Missionsfeld in Nord-Togo.”



Das Volk ist in Gefahr, eine Beute des Islam zu werden. In jeder grösseren Stadt befindet sich ein starkes Mohammedanerviertel mit Moschee und Koranschule. Die Männer tragen das weite, wallende Gewand der mohammedanischen Hausa, die vom Sudan aus als Händler das ganze nordwestliche Viertel Afrikas durchziehen. Eine eigentümliche Einrichtung ist der Unterricht der Jünglinge durch die Aeltesten, der in der Einprägung des Gehorsams gegen die Eltern, der Gastfreundschaft und einer gewissen Nächstenliebe bestehen soll.<sup>163</sup>

However, when the Schimmings, Huppenbauer and Kies arrived in Yendi, they did not regard Islam as making any decisive progress in Nanun or Dagbon. Instead, Huppenbauer noted that, although there seemed to be many Muslims in Nanun, the form of Islam observed among the local population was of a rather debased type and in spite of Fisch's claim, no mosques had been built in Bimbila.<sup>164</sup> In his diary, Huppenbauer further noted that there existed two kinds of Muslims in Bimbila: those who superficially followed Islam and 'real' Muslims. The 'real' Muslims were living in a separate quarter and had two prayer-grounds. On their way to Bimbila, the missionaries also visited the Wulensi. According to Huppenbauer, it was a fairly large settlement with a considerable number of Muslims resident there. When arriving in Dagbon Huppenbauer had a discussion with someone in Adibo. This man told him that the Muslim prayer-ground of the town – which had been laid out by the father of the present local chief – was only used by the chief himself. All other Muslims of the town, Huppenbauer was told, had gone to Yendi. However, Huppenbauer was not told the reason for the move – had it been a temporarily one or a permanent one, perhaps caused by the German conquest?<sup>165</sup> Schimming's description of the situation in Bimbila was similar to Huppenbauer's. According to Schimming, the majority of the 'true' Muslims were foreigners, most of them Hausa, and they lived in a separate quarter in Bimbila.<sup>166</sup> Similar conditions also prevailed in Yendi, according to Schimming, although here the Muslim element was much more dominant.<sup>167</sup>

Both Huppenbauer and Schimming made a separation between 'true' and 'superficial' Muslims. In fact, such a division was rather common one during the early twentieth century and reflected the European concepts of Orientalism. 'True'

<sup>163</sup> BMA D-1,103, file 102, *Togo-Flugblatt* Nr 1 (Basel 1911): "Ein neues Arbeitsfeld der Basler Mission." Translation: "The people are in danger of becoming the prey of Islam. There is a strong Muslim quarter in every larger town, including a mosque and a Quran school. The men wear the white, large gowns of the Muslim Hausa, who come as traders from the Sudan to the Northwestern [sic] part of Africa. A strange habit [among the local population, HW] is the teaching of the youth by the elders, which seems to amount to having the obedience towards one's parents drummed into one as well as hospitality and a certain sense of love of one's neighbour."

<sup>164</sup> BMA D-1,104, file 2, Huppenbauer's Diary (December 1912–January 1913).

<sup>165</sup> Huppenbauer 2001b, 33–34.

<sup>166</sup> BMA D-1,104, file 3, Letter from Missionary Huppenbauer to the BMS headquarters, Jendi 18.1.1913.

<sup>167</sup> BMA D-1,104, file 4, Letter from Missionary Schimming to the BMS headquarters, Jendi 20.1.1913.

Muslims were said to strictly follow the rules and regulations of what was defined as ‘Islam’ by European scholars while ‘superficial’ Muslims were those who mixed Muslim and local traditions. Huppenbauer and Schimming’s differentiation of the Muslims resembled that of later British colonial officials who also made (or tried to establish) a clear-cut distinction between ‘pseudo’ and ‘true’ Muslims (see further Chapter IV). However, Huppenbauer’s description of Bimbila and its separate Muslim quarter also comes close to the very common sight of the urban spaces in the Sudan savannah, namely the existence of *zongos* or strangers’ settlements. In the case of Bimbila, the *zongo* was mainly inhabited by Hausa – or at least individuals who used Hausa as their main lingua franca.

Otto Schimming discussed the state of Islam in Dagbon in an extensive report to the missionary headquarters in Basel in September 1913.<sup>168</sup> He declared that although the greater part of the Muslim population in Dagbon would still drink beer (which, according to Schimming, led to some rifts between the Hausa and the Dagomba Muslim communities), the Muslim community seemed to have a substantial political influence as “the Chief cannot take decisions without other Muhammedans unless, as I saw several times, the Imam so wills it.” Phyllis Ferguson claims that Schimming wrote this in his letter.<sup>169</sup> Although I have not been able to locate this exact reference in the German letter, his letter reveals some other interesting facets. Schimming definitively refutes earlier claims that the Ya Na or anyone else among the ruling elite in Yendi were Muslims – although Phyllis Ferguson’s translation of the sentence would imply that the ‘Chief’ (the Ya Na) in fact was a Muslim himself as the emphasis of the sentence is on the word ‘without *other* Muhammedans’.<sup>170</sup> Many youngsters attend classes in one of the six Quran schools in town, but those who do so were either children of Muslims or of non-Muslim commoners, “no

<sup>168</sup> See also Weiss 2001, 105–107.

<sup>169</sup> BMA, D-1,104, file 16, Letter from Missionary Schimming to the BMS headquarters, 11.9.1913, quoted in Ferguson 1972, 317. Phyllis Ferguson’s translation: “One dare not underestimate the influence of Islam here in Yendi. Although by far the greater part of the Muhammedan Dagomba still drink beer, and are therefore not totally acceptable to the Hausa, *yet the Chief cannot take decisions without other Muhammedans unless, as I saw several times, the Imam so wills it*[this part of the English translation is not identical with German original text, HW]. If the situation was otherwise, then the Chief would certainly be politically superior to, instead of deeply under, the malams and Imam. But that would not be approved, especially with West African Muslims for whom politics and religion go completely hand in hand. That is sufficient indication that the slow but sure advance of Islam, we say once more, is proclaimed in Yendi.” Compare with Schimming’s German text: “Trotzdem darf man den Einfluss des Islam hier in Jendi nicht unterschätzen. Wenn auch der weitaus grösste Teil der Muhammedanischen Dagomba noch Bier trinkt & daher bei den Haussa nicht für voll genommen wird. Der Häuptling kann nicht ohne weiteres Muhammedaner werden es sei denn dass er, so sehe ich es wenigstens, die Sache an gleichzeitig auch Imam zu werden imstande wäre. [My reading of the text would imply that the Chief cannot become a Muslim if he would not at the same time become an imam.] Andernfalls wäre er zwar politisch der Höchste aber sonst doch tief unter Malam & Imam. Das geht nicht, besonders auch nicht bei den westafrikanischen Muhammedanern, wo doch Politik & Religion ganz Hand in Hand geht. Aber sonst gibt es Anzeichen genug, die die langsame aber sichere Islamisierung sagen wir einmal von Jendi, verkünden.”

<sup>170</sup> I am grateful to Margot Stout Whiting for drawing attention to this matter.

child, be it a boy or a girl of the ruler or any other influential men attend a Quran school, as one *malam* told me,” wrote Schimming. He further stated that Frisch’s figure of some 1,000 Muslim inhabitants in Yendi<sup>171</sup> (of about 2,500 inhabitants – a figure presented by Schimming in another letter<sup>172</sup>) was an overestimation.<sup>173</sup>

Islam – or at least ‘Islamic culture’ – was, on the other hand, making steady progress among the Dagbamba in Yendi. Many Dagbamba were giving ‘Muslim’ names to their children, although they themselves were not Muslims. They invited *malams* to perform the naming ceremonies and to circumcise their boys. Malams were also invited to funerals. Schimming also noted that the *‘id al-fitr* and the local traditional New Year’s (*bugum*) festival occurred on the same day and seemed to have been celebrated as ‘Muslim’ festivals by most of the population.<sup>174</sup> However, in spite of the fact that Schimming and the other missionaries felt that Dagbon was already more or less lost to the ‘encroachment of Islam’, they underlined that their relationship with the *malams* was one of mutual respect, if not better.<sup>175</sup> In fact, when the missionaries started to build their mission station outside Yendi on the road to Kuge, Malam Halidu sent them twenty workers to help them in the construction of the buildings. Malam Halidu was to become one of the key persons for the missionaries – at least at the beginning of their stay in Yendi. Discussions with him as well as with Imam Hamada and Malam Jaijoba were held in Hausa, and also in Arabic with Malam Halidu.<sup>176</sup>

#### 4.4. Missionaries and Government Officials

Although the Basel missionaries had received a warm welcome from the local German officials and the Governor Duke Adolf Friedrich von Mecklenburg, who toured Northern Togo in early 1913, the relationship between the German colonial authorities and the missionaries did not go beyond cordial. The two European communities represented two totally divergent positions. The colonial one was openly militant and based its position on political and military superiority. Its most

<sup>171</sup> BMA D-1,103, Denkschrift *über eine neue Missions-Unternehmung im Hinterland von Togo* (April 1911), page 15.

<sup>172</sup> BMA D-1,104, file 19, Letter from Missionary Schimming to the BMS headquarters, 22.9.1913.

<sup>173</sup> BMA D-1,104, file 16, Letter from Missionary Schimming to the BMS headquarters, 11.9.1913, page 2.

<sup>174</sup> Several decades later, British officials would note that almost all of the Dagbamba ‘state’ festivals were in fact ‘Muslim’ festivals (PRAAD ADM 11/1/824, H.A. Blair, *An essay upon the Dago-amba People*, 1931, page 78–83).

<sup>175</sup> BMA D-1,104, file 16, Letter from Missionary Schimming to the BMS headquarters, 11.9.1913, page 3 + 5; BMA D-1,104, V. Zirkulare und Drucksachen 1911–1914, *Basler Mission Kollekteblatt*, Nr. 315, März 1914: “Auf Vorposten in Nord-Togo,” page 7 (“... und schliesslich kommen sie auch mit den Mohammedanern zusammen, mit denen sie bisher ein freundschaftliches Verhältnis gepflegt haben.”)

<sup>176</sup> Huppenbauer 2001b, 38–39.

visual symbol of power was the military station in Yendi, build as an inaccessible fortress outside Yendi town. The missionaries, on the other hand, wanted to bridge the gap between themselves and the local community although the missionaries also recognized themselves as being part of a superior spiritual world. In visual symbolic terms, however, the missionaries signalled a totally different concept of marking their presence: the mission station resembled a mixture of a local compound and a European-style barracks. Compared to the military station, the mission station was an open space, accessible to the local population.

The main divergence between the missionaries and the German colonial officials was their different understanding of the influence and impact of Islam in the region. The missionaries had little understanding of some of the German officials, who tried to 'go native', such as Hauptmann von Thierry, who had been stationed at Sansanne-Mangu at the beginning of the twentieth century. Thierry's adoption of 'Muslim' clothing was understood by the local population as a clear sign that the colonial government backed and preferred Islam and Muslims.<sup>177</sup>

The colonial officials, in their turn, regarded the advent of the missionaries in Yendi with mixed feelings. When Schimming once had a discussion with District Commissioner (*Bezirksleiter*) Hauptmann von Hirschfeld in Sansanne-Mangu, the latter declared that Christian missionary activities should be limited to the totally non-Muslim areas, such as Bimoba and Konkomba. When Schimming challenged von Hirschfeld's position, the *Bezirksleiter* declared that he was afraid that the activities of the missionaries would cause problems in the 'Muslim' regions, i.e., Yendi and Sansanne-Mangu, and therefore their activities were not wanted in those areas.<sup>178</sup>

The language question caused further divergent opinions between the missionaries and the German officials. From the very first, the German officials in Yendi and Sansanne-Mangu claimed that Hausa should be the language taught and learned in both government and mission schools. Hauptmann von Seefeld referred to the argument of Count von Mecklenburg,<sup>179</sup> who stated that Hausa would be the language of the future for West Africa whereas Schimming, in an early dispatch, underlined the need to use Dagbanli as the school language.<sup>180</sup> In 1914, the language question was again put on the table by the missionaries. Huppenbauer concluded in his investigation on the spread and use of Hausa in northern Togo that it was a 'vulgar' form of the Hausa spoken in Hausaland and thus was not suitable to be used in classes.<sup>181</sup> Therefore, Schimming requested in a letter to the German officials

<sup>177</sup> BMA D-1,85, file 74, Report on the conditions in northern Togo by Mohr (1906), page 8.

<sup>178</sup> BMA D-1,1,104, file 19, Schimming's letter to the Basel headquarters, Report on his trip to the Bimoba country, Yendi 22.9.1913; Huppenbauer 2002, 34.

<sup>179</sup> The governor paid a visit to the missionaries while he was visiting Yendi in January 1913. During their meeting, the governor had strongly advocated the introduction of Hausa as the language of instruction in the schools (Huppenbauer, 2001b, 37).

<sup>180</sup> BMA D-1,104, file 4, Letter from Missionary Schimming to the BMS headquarters, Jendi 20.1.1913, page 7.

<sup>181</sup> BMA D-1,104, file 41, Statement by Missionary Huppenbauer concerning Hausa as language

in Sansanne-Mangu that Dagbanli, not Hausa, should be the school language.<sup>182</sup> In fact, the missionaries had turned to one of the leading German experts in African languages, Professor Diedrich Westermann, and asked for his opinion. In a letter dated on the 21<sup>st</sup> of July 1914, Westermann replied that it might be possible to introduce Dagbanli as the regional school and church language in northern Togo, however, he underlined that Hausa, as the lingua franca of West Africa, was too important to be neglected by the missionaries.<sup>183</sup> In fact, the idea that Hausa was of the utmost importance for the spread of the Gospel was not unfamiliar to the Basel missionaries. Schimming had already in one of his 1913 reports to Basel urged that all of the missionaries learn Hausa, and even asked the Headquarters to send someone fluent in Arabic.<sup>184</sup>

Interestingly, the reply of the district officer in Sansanne-Mangu was a positive one. The officer supported the argument that Hausa should not be used as a language of instruction in the missionary school. Instead, Dagbanli and German were preferred.<sup>185</sup>

The language question was one of paramount importance for the missionaries. The key objective was which of the several local languages would be developed into a written language. The missionaries were well aware of the link between language and ethnicity – whatever one of the local languages would be chosen, then this might give benefits to the group using it as its native language. Should it be Dagbanli since the missionaries had made Dagbon the centre of their activity or another language? According to the missionaries, one negative aspect of Dagbanli was that it could be tied to Islam as most of the Dagbamba were perceived by their neighbours as being Islamized. Or should it be one of the languages of the so-called pagan tribes? According to Schimming, five languages were of key interest: the languages of the Dagbamba, the Konkomba, the Moaba, the Gurma and the Tjokossi (Chakosi).<sup>186</sup>

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of instruction in schools, 22.5.1914. Later studies by German linguists also noted the ‘provincial’ nature of Hausa in the region but were still positive about the use of Hausa as a lingua franca. See further Sölken 1939, 21.

<sup>182</sup> BMA D-1,104, file 42, Letter from Schimming to the German Resident in Sansanne Mangu, 22.5.1914.

<sup>183</sup> BMA D-1,104, III, Briefe von Diversen, letter from Professor Diedrich Westermann to *Missionsinspektor* Oettli, 21.7.1914.

<sup>184</sup> BMA D-1,104, file 16, Letter from Missionary Schimming to the BMS headquarters, 11.9.1913, page 5.

<sup>185</sup> BMA D-1,104, file 45, Letter by the German Resident in Sansanne Mangu to Missionary Schimming, 30.5.1914.

<sup>186</sup> BMA D-1,104, file 16, Letter from Missionary Schimming to the BMS headquarters, 13.9.1913, page 6. All of the missionaries therefore learnt Dagbanli. In addition, Schimming was fluent in Twi whereas Huppenbauer spoke Hausa and could read Arabic. The study of language became Huppenbauer and Schimming’s main task: Huppenbauer concentrated on Dagbanli, Konkomba, Moaba and Gurma whereas Schimming started to study Anufo.



Despite the somewhat problematic situation in Dagbon, the Basel missionaries were confident about future prospects after their first year in Yendi. Schimming and Huppenbauer had made two expeditions outside Dagbon, one to the Konkomba area to the west of Yendi, another to the Bimoba country in the extreme north. Both areas were identified by the missionaries as future fields for missionary work.<sup>187</sup> Most importantly – the influence of Islam was nil in both areas and the local population was said to be willing to receive the Gospel. However, in 1914 the situation changed drastically in northern Togo due to the outbreak of war. On the 12<sup>th</sup> of August 1914, the German officials withdraw from Yendi. The missionaries, however, decided to remain in Yendi and to surrender to the British. Two days later, a British officer together with eight soldiers entered Yendi and took command.<sup>188</sup> Although the BMS was a Swiss organization, the missionaries were viewed with suspicion by the British. Consequently, the missionaries were prohibited from leaving Yendi and missionary work among the Muslim population as well as preaching were not allowed. Thus, Schimming and Huppenbauer could only study languages, while Kies provided medical services in Yendi and occasionally in the surrounding villages.<sup>189</sup>

Due to the restrictions on movement and preaching activities which the British imposed on the missionaries during the war, the study of languages and medical treatment remained the only opportunities for the missionaries for two years.<sup>190</sup> On the 9<sup>th</sup> of March 1916, about half of the missionary station was destroyed by fire. Only two days after the Schimmings had moved into their new hut, the missionaries received orders from the British Commissioner to start preparations for leaving Yendi. A similar decision had also been taken in Basel as it was felt that missionary work in Northern Togo had become impossible.<sup>191</sup> A military escort took Schimming,

<sup>187</sup> Huppenbauer 2002, 41–51.

<sup>188</sup> BMA D-1,104, file 48, Letter from Schimming to Oettli, Yendi 2.9.1914.

<sup>189</sup> BMA D-3,12, Final report by Missionary Huppenbauer concerning missionary work in Northern Togo (June 1918); Huppenbauer 2002, 94–95.

<sup>190</sup> Huppenbauer 2002, 26–29; Weiss 2005c. However, despite the restrictions, Huppenbauer at least was able to collect an enormous amount of data on Dagbanli and other languages: they included a card index (Zettellexikon) of 3,000 Dagbanli words, one collection of some 110 Dagbamba stories, one collection of Dagbamba proverbs as well as an outline of a Dagbanli grammar, as well as a card index (Zettellexikon) of some 1,800 Bassari, some 1,200 Konkomba and some 1,200 Bimoba words in addition to outlines of Bassari, Konkomba and Bimoba grammars (BMA D-3,12, Final report by Missionary Huppenbauer concerning missionary work in Northern Togo [June 1918]). Huppenbauer's collections have recently been edited and published by his son, Hanns Werner Huppenbauer, and contain the following items: *Sprichwörter der Dagomba gesammelt 1912–16 in Yendi (damals Nordtogo, heute Ghana)* and *Woher das Chamäleon seinen krummen Rücken hat. Dagomba-Märchen gesammelt von Hans Huppenbauer in Yendi 1912–16*. The original versions are located in the mission archives, BMA D-10.82,12 (Huppenbauer: Sprichwörter), BMA D-10.82,13 (Huppenbauer: Woher das Chamäleon...), and BMA 10, 43 (Huppenbauer: Dagomba-Märchen).

<sup>191</sup> BMA D-3,12, Final report by Missionary Huppenbauer concerning missionary work in Northern Togo (June 1918).

his wife, Huppenbauer and Kies to the coast. The mission station was left empty and was never reoccupied.<sup>192</sup>

Several decades later, Hans Huppenbauer made an evaluation of the impact and position of the missionaries in Yendi. In his critical self-reflection, he highlighted the differences between 'real' Europeans and the missionaries. According to him, there was an initial confusion among the Dagbamba about the position of the missionaries. The missionaries were not colonial officials who carried weapons nor were they 'people with the purse', i.e., merchants. Thus, the Dagbamba regarded the missionaries as not being 'real' Europeans since they had no political or military power. Even worse, when the *Bezirksleiter* of Sansanne-Mangu tried to explain to the people in Yendi the difference between the colonial authorities and the missionaries, his speech was mistakenly translated into meaning that the missionaries had been slaves in Europe. Therefore, Huppenbauer declared, the Dagbamba must have felt that the missionaries were people with no power and no right to command other people. Furthermore, the actions and activities of the missionaries demonstrated to the local population that they were not 'real' Europeans as they did things which 'real' Europeans and people with power never did: they helped in building their houses and got dirty, they offered medical service and they learned the local languages. 'Real' Europeans, noted Huppenbauer, never interacted with the local population, they always kept a distance and used interpreters for communication.<sup>193</sup>

In the end, however, the short stay of the missionaries in Yendi had a positive impact on the local level. The missionaries were able to establish contact with the local population, even with some local Muslim scholars, and earn their respect and even confidence. The German authorities never succeeded or even wanted to achieve an interaction with the local population.

## 5. CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

European images of Islam in the Northern hinterlands of the Gold Coast were at first based on the belief in a powerful Muslim kingdom north of Asante, namely Dagbon. At the peak of Asante power, this kingdom was thought of being a possible ally for the Europeans in their attempt to counteract the rising influence of Asante. During the era of 'legitimate trade' and especially when the British attempted to ban the trade in slaves, this imagined Muslim kingdom was presented as both an important centre of trade as well as perhaps the only military force that could match the military power of Asante. Most important, however, was the idea that this Muslim kingdom would be on a higher moral plane than Asante: no Muslim king would allow human sacrifices which were said to be common in Asante.

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<sup>192</sup> Weiss 2005b.

<sup>193</sup> Huppenbauer 2002, 78–80.

The positive image of Dagbon as a Muslim kingdom was to change at the end of the nineteenth century. This change was due to two factors. First, the imperialistic mode had little in common with the early nineteenth-century discussions about a Western-Muslim relationship such as the one proposed by Bowdich, Hutchinson and Dupuis. French encounters with Muslim powers and rulers such al-Hājj ‘Umar Tall and Samori Turay or British with the Sokoto Caliphate and the Sudanese Mahdi resulted in a critical, if not negative attitude, towards Islam – it became a threat. However, on the other hand, British and German imperialistic missions in the North sought to engage in trade and political relationships with ‘states’ and rulers and therefore set out to search for the Muslim kingdoms to establish imperial relations with them. According to Western political logic, political and trade relationships could be established between states. However, as it turned out that none of the kingdoms in the North – Gonja, Dagbon, Nanun or Mampurugu – could be labelled Muslim ones, the imperialistic thrust and later colonial rule faced a problem: with whom to sign treaties, with whom to rule?

The second factor in the changing Western-Muslim relationship in West Africa was due to increased Christian missionary activity in Africa. According to Christian logic, Africa would soon be lost to Islam. In Christian perceptions, Islam was painted as a dark force, lacking morals and ethics, e.g., by allowing polygamy and other ‘heathen’ practices. However, Christian images of Islam – as well as those of many Western scholars – were based on theological research on ‘classical Islam’: the Quran as well as the early period of Islam. Islam was perceived as a static religion, unable to change or adjust in time and space. Thus, when Western people with such a background reached the Asante hinterland – such as the Basel missionaries during the 1910s – the state of Islam they found did not at all resemble the one in the European scholarly treatises. Instead, Islam was found to be of a ‘debased’ form, shot through and through with ‘pagan’ practices. However, a positive factor was that none of the kingdoms were ruled by Muslims. The result was that the northern hinterland of the Gold Coast was no longer perceived as a Muslim region, an image that was to last for the next fifty years.

