

# **When the White Man Goes Away ..., the 1916 Bongo Riot and the Chiefs; African Response to Colonial Administration in Eastern Upper Gold Coast**

by

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‘When the white man goes away, we will teach the chiefs some sense’.

## **Abstract**

This paper appraises the extent to which African people responded to colonial rule, especially in Eastern Upper Gold Coast. Hence, the nature and extent of destruction that emerged as a result of the constant manipulation of the colonial administration, and the consequent response by the people to reclaim their land and tradition is discussed considering that consistent opposition to colonial rule has taken many forms in Africa, and although they did not ensure the eradication of colonial rule and administration, they served as grounds for the people to express their displeasure towards the rate of destruction plunging the face of the continent.

## **Introduction**

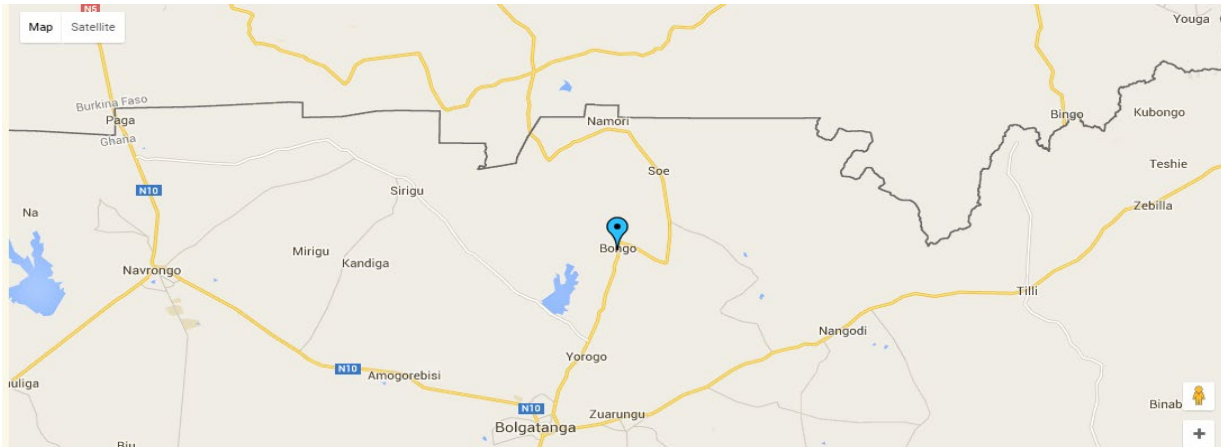
Colonialism, as described generally, is a form of domination accompanied by the control of individuals or groups over a territory, or the control of the behavior of individuals or groups.<sup>1</sup> Many interchange colonialism and imperialism as being the same or similar, but the important difference between colonialism and imperialism appears to be the presence or absence of significant numbers of permanent settlers in the colony for the colonizing power.<sup>2</sup> It is very important to understand these definitions and differences as it throws more light on the various modes undertaken by colonialists in the administration of a colony. Colonialism in Africa has taken various different forms due to the numerous European colonialists that plunged the face of the continent. These include; the British, the French, the Portuguese, the Germans, among others.<sup>3</sup>

The partitioning of Africa marked the official occupation and colonization of Africa.<sup>4</sup> The British and the French won more colonies due to the numerous treaties they held indicating sphere of influence.<sup>5</sup> The Gold Coast effectively came under the authority of the British with the British administering the colony by the use of indirect rule. Indirect rule or indirect administration is designed to adapt for the purposes of local government, hence, the institutions which the native peoples of Africa evolved for themselves.<sup>6</sup>

As such, indirect rule simply is a policy of ruling African communities through their own chiefs.<sup>7</sup> This system of indirect rule was practiced in most British colonies especially in areas where traditional political organization was present.<sup>8</sup> In instances where there was no centralized traditional authority, the British authority created a centralized traditional authority in order to effectively administer the colony.<sup>9</sup> In the Gold Coast, British colonialists' occupation was in phases. The first point of contact was the coastal areas, then it gradually moved into the interior. The acquisition of the Northern territories started in 1902 when the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast were constituted by an Order in council and through treaties signed with some chiefs through to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Northcott who was appointed commissioner and commandant of the protectorate over Northern Ghana indicated that given the conditions of the protectorate, applying a rigid and minute system of administration is impolitic.<sup>10</sup> Supported by Joseph Chamberlain, who was the secretary of state for the colonies also indicated that the agency of the chiefs should be employed to a greater extent.<sup>11</sup>

Hence, Northcott devised a scheme of government of the simplest and most economic form which was adequately elastic to the developments that may emerge in these areas.<sup>12</sup> Thus, chiefs and their authority were supported if they showed good behavior; and in 1902, chiefs were empowered leading to a restructuring of the power relations between chiefs and their people in favor of the colonialists.<sup>13</sup> However, the use of the indirect rule system led to the emergence of certain consequences like the development of vertical relations, and emerging horizontal divides, which came to rest on the reproduction of chiefly authority over commoners.<sup>14</sup> This invariably means that conflict arose between colonial backed chiefs and subordinated communities. This study examines a significant riot which occurred in the Eastern Upper Gold Coast in 1916, popularly referred to as the Bongo Riot and its implication on the colonial administration, and the traditional political institutions in the Eastern Upper Gold Coast. Thus, the presentation will signify the devastating nature of the indirect system in the Eastern Upper Gold Coast; indicating the two fold response to this colonial administration.

## Bongo



Map of Bongo District (Google Maps)

Bongo is found in the Upper East region of Ghana and shares the following boundaries; Burkina Faso in the North, Togo in the East, in the West by Sissala and Mamprusi.<sup>15</sup> The Bongo district is predominantly rural and is characterized by large household size, high population density and high fertility rate, as found in other parts of the region.<sup>16</sup> During British acquisition of the Northern Territories, communities surrounding Bongo together with Bongo came to be under British protection and rule. These communities include; Zouaragu, Bongo, Namorgu, Zoko, Gogi, Navarro, among others. Hence, the people of the Eastern Upper Gold Coast were an acephalous group or state; they had no centralized form of political authority and Administrative machinery.<sup>17</sup> The lineage took the place of political allegiance and clusters of lineages formed a clan, and major decisions were taken by the heads of the clans and conflicts between people from different clans were solved by them. Political power was entrusted in the heads of the totemic clans called Tigatu (Kasem) or Tendana (Nankani).<sup>18</sup> These were the landowners of the various clans of the Eastern Upper Gold Coast territory. The duties of these clan heads were primarily religious however; it was difficult to perform strictly religious roles because they were clan heads as well. Hence, they performed some form of political function within the community.<sup>19</sup> And conversantly, the authority of the Tigatu/Tendana lay in his control of the supernatural, as they were believed to wield considerable spiritual powers with which he could invoke to punish wrongdoers. The Tigatu/Tendana was the main intermediary; he stood between God, or divinity and man. He was the religious symbol of God among his people. He was the owner of the Tangwana (Kasem)/Tengana (Nankani).<sup>20</sup>

## Political Mishaps – Towards the Making of Chiefs

The Eastern Upper Gold Coast territory was predominantly a community which posed a great challenge to the implementation of indirect rule.<sup>21</sup> However, the unavailability of a centralized political authority did not prevent the colonial authorities from implementing the policy of indirect rule. The implementation of the policy in the Zuarungu or Frafra district led to the discovery that there were no chiefs at all in most parts of the land; the immediate reliance on the clan heads was inevitable. However, the colonial administrators, for some obvious reasons, found the clan heads unsuitable. As a result, new leaders were created or appointed and as Iliasu (1975) indicated 'these created Chiefs were militarily titled 'government chiefs' and was perhaps the most appropriate name for these parvenu chiefs for they were, to borrow A. W. Cardinall's phrase, 'mere sergeant-majors through whom the administration addressed the rank and file'.<sup>22</sup> The people or subjects under these 'inventions' were in no position to object, and if they should show any sign of averseness, they were either arrested, imprisoned or murdered. Thus, the authority of these chiefs relied solely on threats of retaliation by the colonial administration.<sup>23</sup>

Iliasu (1975) advances an argument which questions the entire system of indirect rule. He contends that if the administration had been concerned with legitimacy, it would probably have appointed the Tendanas as chiefs, because they alone exercised administrative, executive and religious powers within their clans. Nonetheless, legitimacy was not the administration's main concern in resolving the political complexities in the Eastern Upper Gold Coast territory. The interest of the administration had to be upheld, and this interest had to be entrusted to those 'chiefs' who would willingly protect it. According to Iliasu, 'the administration wanted 'sergeant-majors' and it believed that the Tendanas, whom Nash often described as 'blind, naked and decrepit', were unfit for appointment to that rank.<sup>24</sup> Iliasu's concerns about the colonial administration, examined critically, seem to promote the understanding that the creation and appointment of individuals as chiefs was a move for the colonial administration to protect their sole purpose for implementing their administrative policy.

The creation and appointment of 'chiefs' in especially these communities led to discontinuities within the socio-political system of the communities of the Eastern Upper Gold Coast. In communities such as Bongo, Nangodi, Sekoti, Tongo, Zouaragu, Namorgu, Zoko, Gogi, Navarro, among others, chiefs were selected and even paramountcy created. The people within these communities did not pledge their support to some of the chiefs that were appointed and therefore, they were bent on deposing these chiefs when the white man goes away.<sup>25</sup> After creating these individuals to be chiefs, it became necessary to appoint head chief.<sup>26</sup> As the other chiefs were of equal ranks it became very difficult for the colonial administration to select the head chief.

However, to aid in the selection of the head chief, the colonial administration was warned not to select a Frafra. All the same, the colonial administration went ahead to make an autonomous decision and appointed the chief of Bongo as head chief for the Zouaragu district.<sup>27</sup> This action brought on enmity between the subjects and the rulers. The sub-chiefs, however, did not have much of an option for opposition; they were either de-stooled or exiled.<sup>28</sup>

There is however a contention with the composite constituents of the Frafra people. The Frafra live predominantly in the north-eastern part of the Upper East Region of Ghana, and called themselves in the Gurune language "Gorse," whilst some historians refer to them as 'Gurune'.<sup>29</sup> Their popular name Frafra is a colonialist term given to them by the Christian missionaries, who when they first encountered Frafra farmers, they were greeted with the common greeting to people working "Ya Fare fare?", which means "How is your suffering (work)?" The missionaries began referring to the Gurune as Frafra, a derivation of the greeting, which eventually was adopted by the people themselves. Bolgatanga is the commercial center of the Frafra people, and the other important villages and towns include Bongo, Tongo, Zuarungu, Zoko, Zuarengu, Somburungu, and Pwalugu. It must be noted however that Tongo is the principal town of the Talensi people who are ethnically different from the Frafra.<sup>30</sup>

Another school of thought is that the early missionaries who penetrated the Eastern Upper Gold Coast first met some farmers working at Bolga, who exchanged their common greetings "Ya Fare fare?" – which means "How is your suffering (work)?" The missionaries began referring to these people at Bolga as Frafra, a derivation of the greeting, which eventually was adopted by the people themselves. Tongo, however was no exception.<sup>31</sup> It was part of the Frafra people. The problem here lie with the fact that the term was limited to the Bolga people, and as such, it gave precedence to the other communities, to see themselves different from the Bolga people.<sup>32</sup> Thus when the colonial administration was warned not to select a Frafra as head chief, they meant, they needed nobody from Frafra to lord over them. Then again, it should be considered that the entire Eastern Upper Gold Coast was Frafra zone, and although the colonial administration never heeded to the warning, the appointment of a Frafra was inevitable, because whoever the colonial administration would have appointed, was definitely going to be a Frafra person, and also in this configuration, Bongo was apparently a vast land with a considerable number of population and as well having the protection of the Dagombas. The other communities such as Tongo had been constantly distracted, over the years by the activities of Samoure Toure, the slave raider, causing a decrease in human resource and physical resource. Bongo's geographical position together with their vast lands and population led the colonial administration to appoint the Bongo chief as the head chief. More so, the chief of Bongo was loyal and suitable to the colonial administration.

## The Bongo Riot

In 1915, relations between the administration and the chiefs and people continue to improve and may now be described as cordial.<sup>33</sup> This is not to suggest there was no form of discontent within the area. Many scholars suggest that the uprising or the emergence of the riot to the First World War which started in 1914 through to 1918 and was due to the withdrawals of administrative officers in the protectorate.<sup>34</sup>

Nevertheless, the Bongo riot began as a family dispute about the ownership of farmland living at Bongo and Lungu villages situated north of Zouaragu.<sup>35</sup> The dispute commenced with mutual abuse and stone throwing. In the course of the dispute, the contestants had recourse to bows and arrows and, with increasing numbers of young men from each faction, insurgency became inevitable.<sup>36</sup> The chief of Bongo journeyed on horseback to the scene of the disturbance and with extreme valor and great gallantry attempted to stop the fighting, but due to the dispositions and temperaments of the young men, it was impossible to resolve the dispute. The chief of Bongo then rode into Zouaragu for assistance. He returned to the scene with two Constables to aid him restore order. In his struggle to achieve his aim, he received an arrow in his heel. He immediately dispatched messengers to the District Commissioner at Navarro and insufficiently dispatched a reliable Corporal and two Constables.<sup>37</sup> The Lungu faction raised the war cry which signaled all other young men of the surrounding villages who were already 'spoiling' for a fight to join them. These included; 'Namogu' (Namogo), 'Sambologu' (Sambolugu) and 'Sawgni' who were nemesis' of the Bongo paramountcy.<sup>38</sup> The dispatch from the District Commissioner, fortunately arrived at the moment when the combined forces were about to attack Bongo. The Corporal, Timbela Kanjarga, who is very well known to the people, and his bid to exhibit fearlessness and lionheartedness, rode among the rioters to restore order. Unfortunately, he was hit by a poisoned arrow. The constables who were with him were equally wounded. Bongo was then attacked and burnt and its inhabitants were driven into the neighboring hills.<sup>39</sup>

Investigations commenced under the auspices of the District Commissioner, Castellain. In the course of the investigation, Castellain got to know that the Lungu people were responsible for the commencement of the riot so he burnt Luenaba's compound in Lungu. Castellain sympathized with the chief of Bongo and with the assistance of some Bongo people, and seized items such as corn from the Lungu compounds to compensate for the loss in Bongo.

Castellain had peace talks with all the groups that joined the Lungu in the riot in order to allay their fears. Castellain, by the end of April, came to a conclusion that the disturbance were over indicating that all that remained were to arrest the ring leaders who were at the forefront of the riot. He garnered the support of the Chief of Bongo and the sub-chiefs. Chiefs who had harbored some rioters were arrested, however, rebellious activities increased. The Chief of Nangodi complained that his messengers had been beaten when they went out to collect carriers. Their assailants told them that 'they would not carry loads for the White man.'<sup>40</sup>

With all these developments of in-fighting, on the arrival of the Commissioner at Bongo, the ringleaders fled to French Territory and fighting ceased for the time, however hostility was probably intensified because the French had recently shot a large number of people. At the end of May Castellain went to Namogo to arrest one of the 'ringleaders' of the riots, Ajigindi, who, Castellain claimed had been for years 'the instigator of riots in Namogu marketplace'. The new Chief of Namogo was clearly no more capable of meeting British expectations than his recently deposed predecessor. He was fined and sent to Gambaga for six months for failing to report Ajigindi's return. In June, the action of a Sergeant, who met his death in an endeavor to arrest one of the ring leaders who had returned to his village, revived the unrest which threatened to spread to the Bawku District. Perpetrators were brought to justice as some were sentenced to die by hanging. Interestingly, on the 9<sup>th</sup> of August, another fight occurred between the Bongo and Lungu, this time, some people of the Bongo went to Lungu at dawn for the purpose of catching recruits, and the District Commissioner at the time, set out to inquire, and he indicated that;

‘He feared it might be a recrudescence of the old trouble. I have now however come to the conclusion that the riot was altogether due to the chief of Bongo’s loyal efforts to catch Lungu boys at dawn as recruits. The latter naturally resented this and a fight occurred’.<sup>41</sup>

### **Notes from the Inquiry Concerning the Riot**

Turning to the notes of the inquiry into the unrest in Zouaragu District will perhaps provide a deeper understanding of the riot, and a better appreciation of the aftermath of the riot. Hence, some respondents at the inquiry were of the view that the problem was started by the chief of Bongo as he had given a particular land to two parties from different communities. Plus, the paramountcy was at Bongo, the chief was misusing, and he was manhandling the properties of the community. Azure, chief of Nangodi was of the view that:

‘The people who have been brought forward as perpetrators are not those who caused the trouble. He indicated that ‘the man from the Belungu named Paliam is the actual owner of the farm over which the trouble commenced. His forefathers owned it in times past. A Bongo man, Akamboma, went to make a farm on his old farm land and he carried with him a bow and arrow. When Paliam saw Akamboma, he warned him off the farm and later started to shout. Paliam and his people, had I understand, paid something to the chief of Bongo. The chief of Bongo seems to have accepted presents from both parties and told each party he could farm the same land, and the result was the fight’.<sup>42</sup>

Notes from the inquiry indicated that the people were unhappy about the presence of the Whiteman and his administration. This was expressed in the popular saying of the people in the words 'now the white man has gone'. The expression was primarily used concerning the chiefs, and especially for the chief of Bongo. This saying evolved immediately 'the company was withdrawn from Zouaragu and the commissioner sent to Navarro', and the people, due to the absence of a permanent commissioner in the district 'used to say that the commissioner was only a trader walking about the country'.<sup>43</sup> Some people were concerned about their safety in the territory especially when the company was removed. 'The common talk or saying among the Fra Fra was that the White man has left us again, and there are only a few constables at Zouaragu, and so they could please themselves in their actions'. In the north eastern province, there was considerable increase in crime, wholly due to unrest in the Zouaragu and Bawku districts as ten cases of murder were reported, eight in connection with the Bongo riot.<sup>44</sup>

During the course of the enquiry, it was proved that the old men in the villages were responsible for the trouble, for they had played upon the feelings of the young men by their constant jeers at what they were pleased to term their effeminacy in submitting to their chiefs' authority, that the latter were only awaiting the first opportunity that offered itself to show their 'manhood' by fighting and had secretly prepared large stores of poisoned arrows, far in excess of their normal requirements as hunters, for that purpose. This is exemplified in the statement given by the chief of Zouaragu as he indicates that:

'All I can say is that while we had a Commissioner at Zouaragu, nothing of this sort of thing that recently happened was heard of. Before I was made chief, the people around here used to say- "when the White Man goes away, we will teach the Chiefs some sense". When the District Commissioner was removed from Zouaragu, the Bongo people started shouting. Recently, I got word from the chief of Bongo that his people were starting to fight. My opinion is that it is only because there has been no Whiteman stationed at Zouaragu that the people started to go against their chiefs. The people would not look to the White Man who only travelled from another district. They said it was like a trader coming and going and no one would take notice of travelling strangers. I am sure that the people were not against the White Man. It was only that one was not resident at Zouaragu and they thought they could not be punished if they did wrong. They disobeyed Chiefs when the latter had not the direct support of a Commissioner. What the Chief Commissioner said was true. The old men have misled the young men recently. The old men don't care'.



## **Reports from District Commissioner to Governor**

The Governor was very much alarmed at the height and rate of killings during the riot, and it was necessary that the District Commissioner, Castellain, was to furnish full details and not partial truths. Certain inconsistencies evolved in the report sent by Castellain. For this reason, the Governor did not 'regard the information contained in the letter...in that of Mr. Castellain, as affording to him all the information that is desirable or that should as a matter of course have been furnished'.<sup>45</sup> The Governor was not sure about the conclusions of the District Commissioner on the subject matter, thus:

'The governor sought in vain through certain documents furnished him for any indication of the grounds upon which you have arrived at the conclusion that the chief of Namogu has been guilty of conduct that justifies his destoolment. Similarly, Castellain, who is also silent upon the subject of the chief of Namogu's alleged misconduct, makes no mention of the attempt to burn down the chief of Bongo's compound. Moreover, though he mentions that the corporal was sent to the scene of disturbance "expanded what ammunition he had taken with him" and later quotes the chief of Bongo's statement that "36 of his people have been killed" he says nothing as to what deaths, if any, were caused by the rioters' bows and arrows, or how many by the rifles of the constabulary'.<sup>46</sup>

The Governor again doubted the efficiency of Castellain's conduct during the riot. Castellain's inability to respond adequately to the riot was his first foundation in doubting the authenticity of the report. And in the words of the Governor, 'Castellain appears to have acted leisurely, if not over-cautious manner because he did not leave Navarro till some 11 hours after the news of the outbreak had reached him'.<sup>47</sup>

## **The Bongo Riot and the Chiefs**

The Bongo riot of 1916 significantly had adverse effects on the authority of the chiefs in the area. From the narrative of the riot, it appears that to fully administer the indirect rule administrative machinery, there was the need for a situation that would be of greater importance than anything else, hence, a paramountcy. The British due to their lack of resources and not willing to spend so much had to create a form of bureaucracy where all the chiefs within a said area came under one umbrella.<sup>48</sup> Thus, the creation of paramountcies is where the British would have the opportunity to deal with one person who will be in charge than to a host of people to negotiate and deal with the chiefs in the various communities.<sup>49</sup>

For this reason in the Zouaragu district which comprised of the Boko, Fiagu, Ashebre, Namogu, Kadare, Balungo, Sambolugu, Sore, Bongo, Dua, Yarogo, Nangodi, and the Sekoti, Zuarungu, among others, all the chiefs had to come under the paramount chief where the paramountcy was located, i.e. Bongo. Reasons why Bongo was more favorable to the British is not known, but many of the people in the other communities disliked the idea of the paramountcy being located at Bongo. And since the chiefs had no option than to consent or risk being destooled, the people took matters into their own hands and planned their insurrection immediately so that the White man would go away, hence the popular saying amongst the people, ‘when the White Man goes away, we will teach the chiefs some sense’. This led to the loss of traditional authority of the chiefs.

The Chief in the Northern territories had been a priest, revered as the lineal successor of the founder of the state, and its subdivisions, the division and the village. His subjects felt beholden to him for their well-being. He was the custodian of the lands of the political community of which he was the head. He exercised judicial functions in relation to offences classified as hateful to the ancestral spirits and other spiritual beings, to which he offered prayers for the prosperity of the community. The chief succeeded to office by virtue of his lineal descent from the ancestral founders of the political community; and what amounted to election by the representatives of the subunits of that community.<sup>50</sup> The sacredness of chiefs was derived from both the general sacred conception of the ancestors and the mystical relationship existing between traditional rulers and their ancestors. In addition, the customary rites, rituals and practices performed by traditional rulers all appeared to have religious undertones that make the institution sacred. Parrinder summarizes it as, “The Kings now often called “chief” or “paramount chiefs” ... were sovereign rulers, divine kings, both traditional and charismatic ...”<sup>51</sup>

Having understood the traditional role of the chiefs, it becomes quite clear the level of destruction or manipulation of the chieftaincy system by the indirect rule administrative machinery. This machinery altered the traditional power and responsibilities of the chiefs immensely, as the agency to be employed was that the local chiefs and the power or authority supported during good behavior, except in matters of their relationships with their neighbouring chiefs, and offences of a capital nature.<sup>52</sup> This was the background to the Administrative Ordinance of 1902. The powers of chiefs thus depended on the backing of the District Commissioners because there was no formal framework for them to exercise authority. This implies that the chiefs were not independent of themselves. Traditional authority, therefore, only became useful as long as it helped in the achievement of colonial objectives, but those exercising it were not seen as having intrinsic or inalienable rights or as entitled to assert interests of an independent kind. Cardinall, thus, notes that, “...the chiefs were practically powerless: they have neither revenue nor authority. They have tended to become mere sergeant–majors through whom the Administration can address the rank and file”.<sup>53</sup>

The only way for the people to express their discontent was only through outright disrespect of the traditional authority, and the commencement of disputes only when the White man was away, and in that way, they would not have to answer to anyone. This is because the chiefs, especially the chief of Bongo, were growing insolent and working not in favor of the people as lands were seized, sold to multiple people, along with seized cattle and property.

## **Implications of the Bongo Riot on the Colonial Administration**

The Bongo riot served as a sequel to the absence of British officials in the territory. During the enquiry, emphasis was placed on the effects of British withdrawal; for example, the Chief of Bongo had told Sergeant-Major Egala Grunshi that the people were restless because they believed 'all the English had left the country and the Commissioner at Navarro could not be English on this account, but they thought he must be a white Hausa-man.<sup>54</sup> The correspondence from the District Commissioner to the Governor did not indicate any form of reproach on the modus operandi of the colonial administration as the primary cause of the problem or as that which needs modification. However, in understanding the reports from the people during the inquiry, it became clear that there was the need to position permanently British officials to administer the territory. This invariably means that the British Government would have to commit economically to protect their interest in the territory. That notwithstanding, the methods employed by the District Commissioner during the disturbance was not recommended by the Governor and thus, sent a bad signal to the British Governor with respect to the personnel employed to undertake certain tasks in the territory. In effect, one could say that the riot did not primarily have any direct bearing on the colonialist and their administration, because their method was indirect, and so were the effects of the riot, and thus, the chiefs whom the colonialists were supporting were the ones taking the heat from the people.

## **Effects of the Bongo Riot**

Like many other areas in Ghana where there was the refusal of certain communities to come under or come together to form a paramountcy, the Zouaragu district was one prominent example. From the narrative, it seems that there were no clear cut reasons why Bongo was chosen as the Paramountcy. This led to the people of Bongo feeling superior over other communities in the paramountcy to the extent that it was the people of Bongo together with their chiefs that were catching people for recruitment on behalf of the District Commissioner. This brought about tensions and hatred, especially for the Bongo people and the Bongo chief. Hence, the reason why the war cry was raised as other communities came in to join the Lungo people to fight the Bongo person, which leads to the grievance model of ethnic conflict where the rest of the community apart from Bongo held beef.<sup>55</sup>

The Bongo riot also leads us to the internal considerations for state actors and their role in the development or liberty of the people. As Bonnie Campell indicated, it is important to consider the internal wrangling of state actors who claim to be acting on behalf of the state, but not in the interest of the state.<sup>56</sup> In the case of the Bongo riot, the chiefs, in the eyes of the people, had become like the White man. The chiefs had taken advantage of their position, and because they were being backed by the White man, they felt very secure, and did their best to serve the interest of the British colonialists. This riot was one way the people responded to the inventions of chieftaincy positions or institutions. From the viewpoint of the chiefs, it was highly pleasant and moreover, those who resisted were either destooled or arrested.<sup>57</sup> Thus in response to Peter Geschiere's question whether chiefs are an alternative source of power, the Bongo people think otherwise. The extent to which the chiefs have been corrupted by the sense of power and the exercise of power which are in themselves not traditional, it would be difficult, in the eyes of the Bongo people to consider the chiefs as an alternative source of power.<sup>58</sup>

## Conclusion

The 1916 Bongo riot as its popularly known was primarily fought on ethnic grounds, with the aim to conquer the administrative machinery of the colonial masters. This was fought indirectly; like the colonial administration was indirect, so was the riot. Chiefs were rebelled against in the event to send a message of disapproval to the mechanisms adopted by the White man in the political administration of the territory. Irrespective of the fact that the riot was not only staged in Bongo, it received the title 'Bongo riot' because the attack was on the head chief who was at Bongo. The people opposed the colonial administration on two fronts, first, because of the invention of tradition i.e. the changing of the entire traditional system of the people and second, because ethnicity was the grounds on which some community members tried to rebel.

The invention of tradition which has come to stay within the socio-politico-economic system of the entire country has been a problem, as well as a strong legacy of the colonial administration. Many traditional authorities now rely solely on the events and happenings during the colonial administration to make a claim. However, crooked the methods of the colonial administration were, it does not matter, because it serves the interest of someone making a claim. The situations of the chiefs in the northern territories were no different from those across the African continent. Their situation still becomes very relevant in contemporary times; and the issues of legitimacy and ethnicity still poses threats not just to the traditional politics, but to modern Western democratic politics. The consistent opposition to colonial rule has taken many forms such as the Aba Riots, the Maji Maji revolts, among others. Although they did not ensure the eradication of colonial rule and administration, they served as grounds for the people to express their displeasure towards the rate of destruction plunging the face of Africa. Also, in the face of all these oppositions to colonial rule, there were some individuals who were in full support of the colonial administration, thwarting the efforts of those who fought earnestly against this rule. And indeed, colonial opposition would have been more effective if and only if there was a united front to the struggle.

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<sup>12</sup> AA Iliasu, "The Establishment of British Administration in Mamprugu, 1898-1937," *ibid.* 16, no. 1 (1975).

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<sup>16</sup> "Working Paper: Background Conditions in Upper East Region, Northern Ghana, 2005," *LACOSREP II/IFAD* (2006). The Bongo district is a post-colonial creation. It was not a district during the colonial period. It was under the Zouaragu district.

<sup>17</sup> AK Awedoba, "The Peoples of Northern Ghana," *Accra, Ghana: National Commission on Culture* (2006).

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<sup>22</sup> Iliasu, "The Establishment of British Administration in Mamprugu, 1898-1937."

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> PRAAD/ADM.5/1/15, "Annual Colonial Reports No. 917: Northern Territories of the Gold Coast Report for 1915," (1915).

<sup>26</sup> PRAAD/ADM.5/1/65, "Notes of Enquiry into the Unrest in Zouaragu District."

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<sup>31</sup> Discussion with some selected Mphil and PhD students who are from the place and have considerable knowledge of the area of study. Although information gathered was inconclusive, there was a clearer understanding of the complexities with the subject matter 'the Frafra' people. Who they really are has to be thoroughly interrogated in order to truly understand historical undertakings in the Eastern Upper Gold Coast.

<sup>32</sup> Information gathered from the small discussion with the Mphil and PhD students indicate some form of ethnic tensions amongst the people of the Eastern Upper Gold Coast which also need to be interrogated thoroughly.

<sup>33</sup> PRAAD/ADM.5/1/15, "Annual Colonial Reports No. 917: Northern Territories of the Gold Coast Report for 1915."

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid; Thomas, "The 1916 Bongo 'Riots' and Their Background: Aspects of Colonial Administration and African Response in Eastern Upper Ghana."

<sup>36</sup> PRAAD/ADM.5/1/15, "Annual Colonial Reports No. 917: Northern Territories of the Gold Coast Report for 1915."; PRAA/ADM.11/1/615 (S.N.A. 628), "Case No. 24/1916," (1916); PRAAD/ADM.5/1/16, (1900-1928).

<sup>37</sup> 628), "Case No. 24/1916."

<sup>38</sup> Thomas, "The 1916 Bongo 'Riots' and Their Background: Aspects of Colonial Administration and African Response in Eastern Upper Ghana."

<sup>39</sup> PRAAD/ADM.5/1/15, "Annual Colonial Reports No. 917: Northern Territories of the Gold Coast Report for 1915."

<sup>40</sup> PRAAD/ADM.11/1/628.

<sup>41</sup> PRAAD/ADM.5/1/165.

<sup>42</sup> PRAAD/ADM.5/1/65, "Notes of Enquiry into the Unrest in Zouaragu District."; PRAAD/ADM.5/1/165.

<sup>43</sup> PRAAD/ADM.5/1/65, "Notes of Enquiry into the Unrest in Zouaragu District."

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<sup>48</sup> Iliasu, "The Establishment of British Administration in Mamprugu, 1898-1937."

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<sup>54</sup> Thomas, "The 1916 Bongo 'Riots' and Their Background: Aspects of Colonial Administration and African Response in Eastern Upper Ghana."

<sup>55</sup> Robert Blanton, T David Mason, and Brian Athow, "Colonial Style and Post-Colonial Ethnic Conflict in Africa," *Journal of Peace Research* 38, no. 4 (2001).

<sup>56</sup> Bonnie Campbell, "Neocolonialism, Economic Dependence and Political Change: A Case Study of Cotton and Textile Production in the Ivory Coast 1960 to 1970," *Review of African Political Economy* 2, no. 2 (1975).

<sup>57</sup> Li Anshan, "Asafo and Destoolment in Colonial Southern Ghana, 1900-1953," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 28, no. 2 (1995).

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