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Between African planning and colonial intervention: the process of urbanization in Bolgatanga, Ghana (1896-1939)

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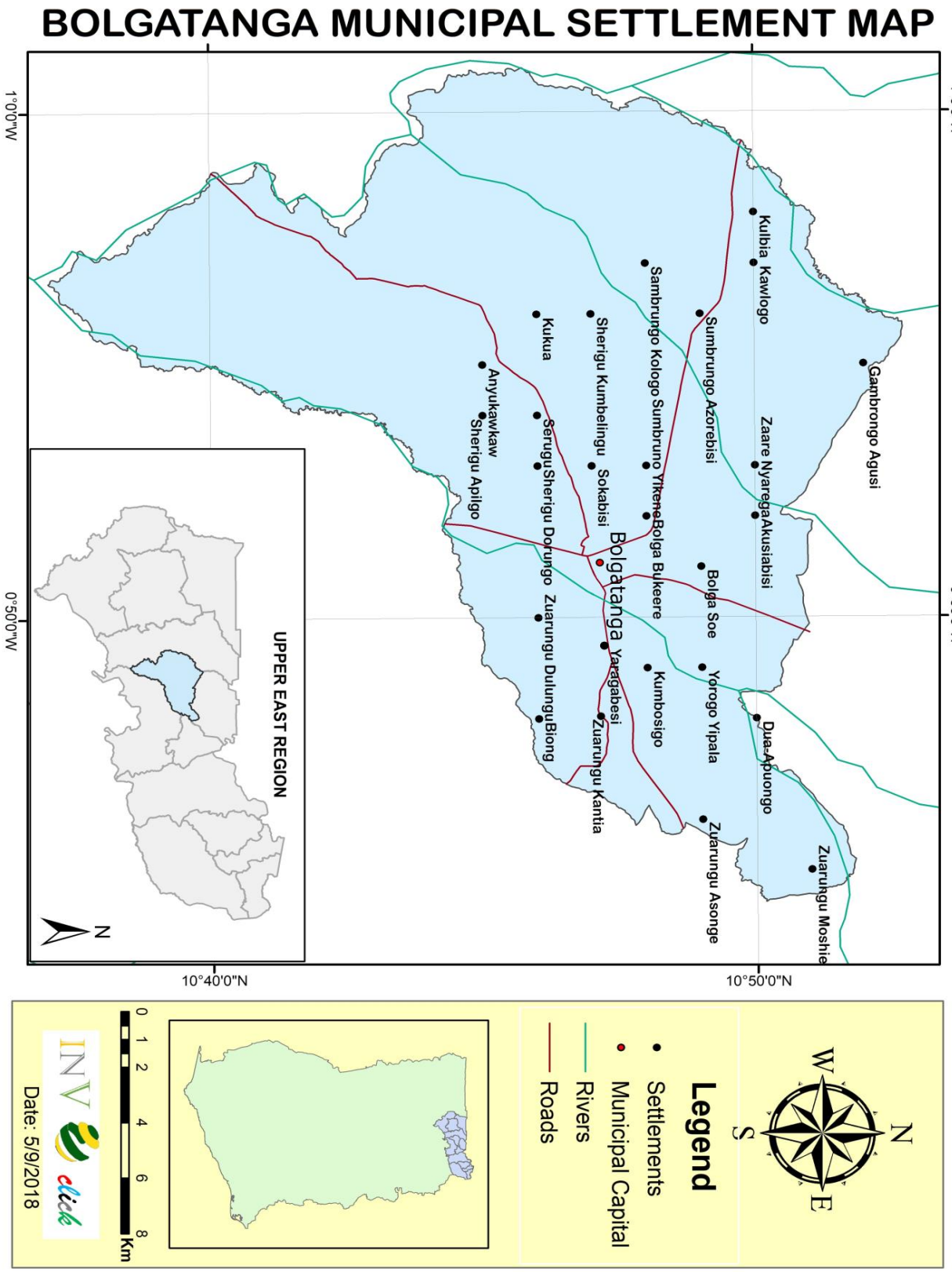
BOLGATANGA MUNICIPAL SETTLEMENT MAP
1°0'0"W
0°50'0"W
10°40'0"N
10°50'0"N
Kulbia
Kawlogo
Gambrongo Agusi
Sambrungo Kologo
Sumbrungo Azorebisi
Zaare Nyarega
Akusiabisi
Kukua
Sherigu Kumbelingu
Anyukawkaw
Sherigu Apilgo
Serugu
Sherigu Dorungo
Sokabisi
Bolga Bukeere
Bolgatanga
Bolga Soe
Zuarungu Dulungu
Biong
Zuarungu Kantia
Yaragabesi
Kumbosigo
Yorogo Yipala
Dua-Apuongo
Zuarungu Asonge
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UPPER EAST REGION
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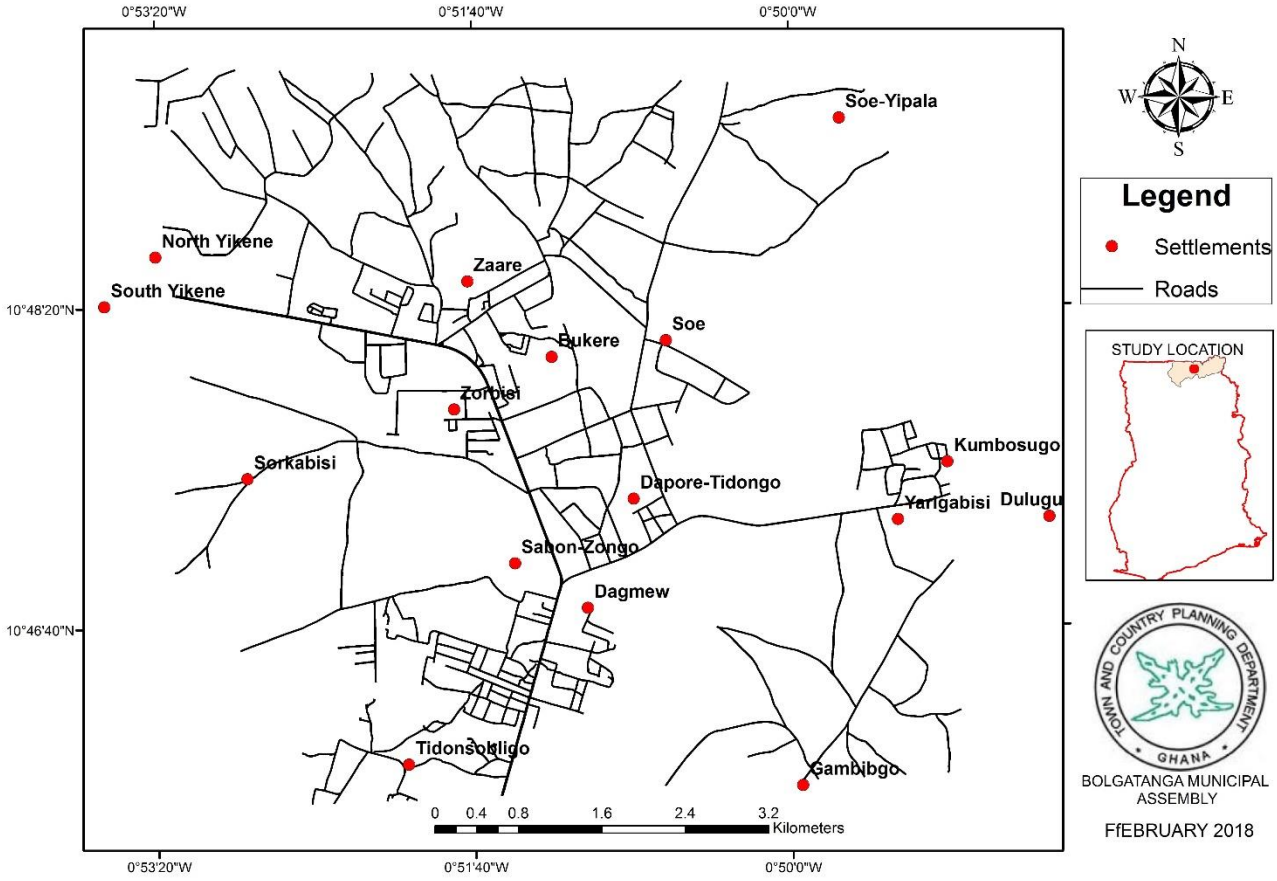

Figure 1. Bolgatanga settlements map

Source: Courtesy of Town and Country Planning Department Ghana

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Preliminary note on ethnonyms

Writing on the history of Bolgatanga is to write on the people who live and lived the town. Bolgatanga was and still is a melting pot of different communities, coming from different places with different social identities. For the sake of clarity and consistency I will use in the whole thesis just one ethnonym to indicate the main ethnic group that settled and is currently living in the area of Bolgatanga. In this section, I intend to provide an analysis of the etymological and philological debates behind the terms used in literature to indicate this community. I will consider the three main labels used in literature to address the people of the Bolgatanga and Bongo Districts, namely Frafra, Gurensi, Nankanni, and then conclude with the reasons behind my choice. This section intends to deal solely with ethnonyms. Their historical and social implications, such as colonial perceptions and policies, people internal divisions and migrations, and land ownership, will be tackled further in their historical dimension in the course of the thesis.

Ethnic labels are without doubts also products of history[1]. In the case of Bolgatanga, as well as in many other cases, this production was a shared effort between different social groups each one with its interests and purposes. As this section will show, the three main ethnonyms distil the social relationship between the groups that were living in the area, revealing in this way part of their past. British officers, indeed, came on stage after the creation of them and decided to opt for labels already in use in that context to name the population they were trying to subdue. However, colonialism did give an essential boost to the ethnicization and tribalization process. Over the years, officers struggled to create neat boundaries and categorize the social and linguistic groups encircled by them[2]. This created a severe predicament in that these societies did not have definite social and territorial boundaries as the Europeans expected them to have. Every colonial officer and ethnographer that studied the area immediately noticed the high cultural and linguistic affinity of the noncentralized societies of the Volta Basin[3]. As Goody asserted in 1957 for the LoDagaba, they «have no one

[1] I base my considerations on ethnicity in Northern Ghana on Carola Lentz, *Ethnicity and the Making of History in Northern Ghana* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006); Carola Lentz and Paul Nugent, *Ethnicity in Ghana: The Limits of Invention* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan, 2000).

[2] The process of boundaries delimitation will be analysed in the course of the thesis. On the colonial efforts to study and categorize the colonized see Sean Hawkins, *Writing and Colonialism in Northern Ghana.* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002); Carola Lentz, 'Colonial Ethnography and Political Reform: The Works of AC Duncan-Johnstone, RS Rattray, J. Eyre-Smith and J. Guiness on Northern Ghana', *Ghana Studies* 2 (1999): 119–169; Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge University Press, 2012).

[3] Henry P. Northcott, *Report on the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast* (London: Harrison and sons, 1899); Alan Wolsey Cardinall, *The Natives of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast. Their Customs, Religion and Folklore*

descriptive name which they regularly apply to themselves» and the «[n]ames resembling those usually called tribal are required only in specific contexts when the customary ways of acting of one group have to be distinguished from those of a neighbouring group»[4]. It was, in fact, a matter of distinction and denigration that gave birth to the ethnonyms Frafra, Gurensi and Nankanni.

The first use of the term Frafra in British colonial sources dates back to 1898 and reflects the bias attached to it by the *imam* of Gambaga, the principal British informer[5]. It was the expression of the prejudices attached to the noncentralized societies by their neighbours. Lt. Col. Henry P. Northcott, the first Commissioner and Commandant of the Northern Territories, expected therefore to find in the "Frafra" «a concentration of all evil characteristics» as was implied in the name, but he was struck to find none[6]. Even though the name derived from one of the greetings employed by the populations of the area, *fura fura*, it carried with it a sharp derogatory meaning, namely that of barbarity, savageness and brutality. In any case, this ethnonym was adopted by the British administration as an umbrella term to indicate the cluster of different social groups living in the former Zuarungu District (e.g. Boosi, Nabdam, Talensi, Gurensi). Keith Hart showed how this ethnonym was adopted and created a sense of ethnic unity especially among the migrants outside their homeland[7]. Over time, therefore, the term «has acquired a meaning which it historically lacked»[8].

Another umbrella term to indicate the groups of noncentralized societies that inhabited the Volta Basin is Gurensi or Gurunsi[9]. This term first appeared in European sources in Thomas E. Bowdich's *Mission from Cape Coast Castle to Achanti* in 1819[10], even though its origin predates it. As Gaetano Mangiameli showed, the ethnonym finds its source in the violent relationship among the noncentralized societies and their centralized and Muslim neighbours[11]. As I will point out in the first

(London: George Routledge and sons, 1920); Robert S. Rattray, *The Tribes of the Ashanti Hinterland*, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1932); Meyer Fortes, *The Dynamics of Clanship among the Tallensi: Being the First Part of an Analysis of the Social Structure of a Trans-Volta Tribe* (London: Oxford University Press, 1945); Madeline Manoukian, *Tribes of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast* (London: International African Institute, 1951).

[4] Jack Goody, 'Fields of Social Control Among the LoDagaba', *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 87, no. 1 (1957): 97.

[5] The National Archives, Kew [hereafter TNA] Colonial Office [hereafter CO] 879/52/2, Correspondence relating to the Northern Territories, Jan. to June 1898, Lt. Col. H.P. Northcott, "Report on a trip through the Frafra district of northern Mamprusi", Gambaga, 08.04.1898

[6] On this misinterpretation and the subsequent colonial adoption of the term see also Jean Marie Allman and John Parker, *Tongnaab: The History of a West African God* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 57.

[7] Keith Hart, 'Migration and Tribal Identity among the Frafras of Ghana', *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 6, no. 1 (1971): 21–36.

[8] Hart, 22.

[9] For a detailed account on this term see Anne-Marie Duperray, *Les Gourounsi de Haute-Volta: conquête et colonisation, 1896-1933* (Stuttgart: F. Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden, 1984), 17–24; Gaetano Mangiameli, 'L'invenzione precoloniale dei Gurunsi. Le razzie schiaviste e la genesi di un etnonimo in Africa occidentale', *L'Uomo Società Tradizione Sviluppo*, no. 1 (2016): 57–76.

[10] Thomas Edward Bowdich, *Mission from Cape Coast Castle to Ashantee: With a Statistical Account of That Kingdom, and Geographical Notices of Other Parts of the Interior of Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1891).

[11] Mangiameli, 'L'invenzione precoloniale dei Gurunsi. Le razzie schiaviste e la genesi di un etnonimo in Africa occidentale'.

chapter, especially in the 19th century, their relations were indeed profoundly affected by slavery and raiding activities. In this way, Gurensi came to be a synonym of uncivilized, non-believer, prey and started to be used to indicate the people that could be raided[12]. As for "Frafra" then, this term was imposed by others with a clear discriminatory meaning.

In the same way, the term Nankani or Nakaransi was an externally imposed label[13]. One of its first appearances is in Louis Binger's *Du Niger au Golfe de Guinée*[14], who, as Northcott did for "Frafra", probably acquired the term from the neighbours. As a matter of fact, the first colonial ethnographer that worked in the region, Robert S. Rattray, pointed out that this name was given by the neighbours Kasena to the so-called Frafra[15] once again with a pejorative meaning[16].

In conclusion, all three ethnonyms imply a degree of vilification. However, I opted for the term Gurensi for two reasons. The first one is that, at least since 1928, the year in which Rattray did his fieldwork, the people of the Bolgatanga and Bongo areas, if a label must be chosen, preferred to be called Gurensi rather than Frafra or Nankani[17]. This could create ambiguity and vagueness, considering that the term Gurunsi has been chosen by several scholars to indicate the whole of the noncentralized groups that inhabit the savannah belt between Ghana and Burkina Faso[18]. However, ambiguity and vagueness are in any case features of every ethnonym. A general and generic label intended to encompass and overcome social fragmentation will never find any accuracy in referral to the context. As every simplification, this conceptual operation levels and melts all the differences between different groups, adding confusion rather than clarity to a complex social milieu in itself. Apart from this last consideration, I am inclined to use the term Gurensi for another reason too. As Mangiameli puts it, the choice of Gurensi could be even read as a challenging act of historical

[12] Many slave raiders were indeed Muslims. The mark of paganism and barbarity was often imposed to justify the raiding and enslavement. See Natalie Swanepoel, 'Every Periphery Is Its Own Center: Sociopolitical and Economic Interactions in Nineteenth-Century Northwestern Ghana', *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 42, no. 3 (2009): 417; Robin Law, 'Ethnicity and the Slave Trade: "Lucumi" and "Nago" as Ethnonyms in West Africa', *History in Africa* 24 (1997): 205–19.

[13] This label is today used in Burkina Faso for those groups neighbouring to the North with Gurensi but divided by the border.

[14] Louis Gustave Binger, *Du Niger au Golfe de Guinée*, vol. 2 (Paris: Libr. Hachette, 1892), 36.

[15] Rattray, *The Tribes of the Ashanti Hinterland*, 232.

[16] François J. Nicolas, 'La Question de l'Ethnique "Gourounsi" En Haute-Volta (A.O.F.)', *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 22, no. 2 (1952): 171.

[17] «The members of this tribe do not, as a rule, call themselves by the name which we and others have bestowed upon them. They prefer to be known as Gurense (singular Gureŋa or Guriŋa) and their language Gureŋe.». Rattray, *The Tribes of the Ashanti Hinterland*, 232. This choice was confirmed later by Nicolas, 'La Question de l'Ethnique "Gourounsi" En Haute-Volta (A.O.F.)'; Anatoli Ignatov, 'The Skin and the Stool: Re-Crafting Histories of Belonging in Northern Ghana', in *Politics of African Anticolonial Archive*, ed. Shiera S. el-Malik and Isaac A. Kamola (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2017); Christopher Anabila Azaare, 'Recollections of Past Events of British Colonial Rule in Northern Ghana, 1900-1956', in *Politics of African Anticolonial Archive*, by Shiera S. el-Malik and Isaac A. Kamola (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2017); Christopher Anabila Azaare, 'Life in Bolga' (Unpublished manuscript); Jürgen Zwernemann, 'Shall We Use the Word "Gurunsi"?', *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 28, no. 2 (1958): 123–25. I found the people, especially the elder ones, more inclined to accept this ethnonym than the other ones.

[18] See for example Duperray, *Les Gourounsi de Haute-Volta*.

awareness, in that the term condenses and recollects the violent and dramatic background of the noncentralized societies of the Volta Basin[19].

[19] Mangiameli, 'L'invenzione precoloniale dei Gurunsi. Le razzie schiaviste e la genesi di un etnonimo in Africa occidentale'. For the historical background of the Volta Basin in the 19th century see chapter 1.

Introduction

Argument

Bolgatanga encircles the main crossroads of the Upper East Region, the one connecting up two other notable towns of upper Ghana, Navrongo and Bawku, and leading on to Burkina Faso, Togo and the northern countries of West Africa. The landscape at this crossroads could be aptly described as that of a thriving urban centre. Large Christian churches and mosques, a fading old market and a thriving new one, a stadium, and a regional hospital are just a few of the features making up the contemporary urban landscape of the city, the capital of one of Ghana's three northern regions. What is striking about the history of this centre is that its position of centrality is apparently very recent. In fact, it was only selected to be the administrative capital of the Upper Region in 1960, shortly after independence. From that date on the town experienced remarkable development and became ever more central. Before that date, it had no administrative functions and rarely appeared in the records as if it was of no importance or did not exist at all. Nonetheless, a town does not appear in a day. Bolgatanga, colloquially called Bolga, is no exception.

In 1910, during the first years of British occupation, Zuarungu, a Gurensi settlement just 5 kilometres from Bolgatanga, was chosen as the British administrative headquarter for the district. Contrary to the trend for other settlements in northern Ghana such as Tamale or Navrongo where the British decided to establish their headquarters, Zuarungu did not experience enduring growth. In the background, Bolgatanga acquired much more centrality. This thesis intends to study the appearance of this city in the records, and through this, its process of urbanization in the 20th century.

The research question at the core of the thesis deals with the process of urbanization the town underwent in the first half of the 20th century. What caused Bolgatanga to be subject to a steady process of urbanization in this period? Why did the town experience growing centrality in the region, whereas it did not even appear on colonial maps before the late 1930s? The thesis intends to explore the urbanization process by identifying the main forces that shaped it. The main argument is that the commercial and political prominence that the town acquired in the region at the beginning of and

throughout the 20th century, thanks to and despite of colonialism, created the conditions for its urbanization. The thesis, therefore, explores changes in settlement pattern, economic trends and political organization that affected the urban landscape of Bolgatanga in this period. In particular, the centrality acquired by the marketplace in the international trade flows and the political prominence of the chiefdom over neighbouring ones subsumed the urbanization of the settlement. These two processes were closely intertwined, and both caused the radical change in the town's settlement pattern.

The second subset of questions addressed by this thesis stems from an analysis of these changes and the social processes that set them in motion. Namely, who were the primary agents behind the spatial planning and transformation of the town? How did the inhabitants of Bolgatanga perceive urbanisation? Who directed the trade flows that crossed the region, and how so? How much did colonialism affect urbanization? In order to answer these questions, the thesis explores the multifaceted relationships between Africans and Europeans in Bolgatanga during the colonial period and how this relationship shaped the urbanization process. The town developed without any intentional British urban planning policy and outside of direct colonial control, but its dwellers did take advantage of the opportunities created by the colonial administration and acted to direct its growth.

The title of the thesis intends to portray this set of relationships, one in which African agency both reacts to and at the same time directs colonial intervention. The aim is to show that Africans guided the historical processes unfolding in Bolgatanga and leading to its urbanization, primarily in response to colonial intervention. Indeed, planning is defined as «the process of deciding how land in a particular area will be used and designing plans for it» when referring to an urban context[1]. This is the meaning that I seek to grant to the phrase "African planning" in the title, namely how and why Africans decided to shape the urban landscape of Bolgatanga in a certain way.

The thesis intends to present endogenous changes in the actual production and conceptualization of urbanity. I will thus focus on the processes that led to a radical change in the town's settlement pattern up to the moment in which people began to commodify their land and ceded their compound farms to new settlers. This moment represents a rupture with past land tenure practices and, at the same time, the start of a new way of conceptualizing and occupying space. The aim is to analyse both connections and disruptions in conceptualizing urbanity in light of the socio-economic changes that instilled them. The thesis aims to highlight the historical forces and agents that shaped the growth and establishment of this new urbanity and to examine how these processes

[1] https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/planning

were in part different from the other towns in the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast. The urbanization of Bolgatanga has been the result of complex dynamics in which colonial intervention and African agency converged to move each one towards the other. Indeed, the town was both a variable subject to exterior forces and an independent entity capable of acting as a transforming power, a multidimensional feature common to the urban phenomenon in Africa during European colonization[2].

This introduction is framed so as to present the theoretical and methodological choices underlying my research. I will begin by outlining some of the main trends that African urban historians have developed to tackle the study of urbanity before identifying the theoretical stances I adopted for my research. I will then present the methodologies and sources employed in the research on which this thesis is based. The introduction ends by describing the structure and focus of each chapter.

African urban history: the main trends and their relevance for this study

Urbanity has played a major role in humanity's past, and Africa is no exception. Although often linked with its ever- and over-expanding metropolises, this continent has a noteworthy urban history and historiography and this section intends to provide an outline of it. Thinking of African urbanity in terms of either megalopolis or villages is, of course, an oversimplification. In the middle stands a vast, kaleidoscopic range of urban entities which history and the social sciences are striving to define. In the following section, I present some of the main trends of African and Ghanaian urban history and conclude by explaining why I chose the theoretical stances underlying this thesis.

The first studies on urbanity in Africa were carried out by social scientists. As John D.Y. Peel illustrates in an influential review of the study of urbanization in West Africa[3], between the 1950s and 1960s urban anthropology began to focus on African towns. The tone was set mainly by the study of urban changes, and transitions and tribal identities became the unit of analysis. The leading institution was the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute in Northern Rhodesia under the direction of Max

[2] Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, *Histoire des villes d'Afrique noire: des origines à la colonisation* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1993), 17.
[3] John D.Y. Peel, 'Urbanization and Urban History in West Africa', *The Journal of African History* 21, no. 02 (1980): 269–277.

Gluckman[4]. In this wave of studies, examples of urbanity (closely linked to modernization) were used to debunk the concept of tribalism. In terms of theory, scholars shifted from studying the society as a whole, with its supposed tribal unity, to studying just one part of it. Academic research began to link African towns with heterogeneity, social dynamism, labour and migration flows. In West Africa, echoes of this approach can be found in Micheal Banton's work on Freetown[5]. During the last years of colonization in Ghana, two social surveys were published with a functionalist approach, one conducted by Kofi A. Busia on Sekondi-Takoradi[6] and the other by Ione Acquah on Accra[7]. One of the first historical accounts of urban formations in northern Ghana is Goody's and Braimah's *Salaga: the struggle for power*[8]. This book places the town in the history of Gonja in the late 19th century and presents its internal political division and conflicts in the dramatic moment of European colonization. It remains, however, more a political history than an urban one.

Scholars developed more nuanced approaches during the 1960s in which they incorporated continuity and change into their analyses and granted a more substantial role to Africans themselves. An example of this is Kenneth Little's research on West African associations and their role in shaping the social organization of the Africans who lived in towns[9]. By the end of the decade, the demographer John Caldwell[10] and geographer Akin L. Mabogunje[11] wrote two seminal studies on West African urban formations. The first one focused mainly on Ghana, giving an account of the connections between urbanity, rurality and migration. His work helped to debunk the urban/rural dichotomy and uproot views of the country's rural areas as completely isolated from its urban ones. Indeed, city culture affected migrants' imaginaries well before they decided to migrate. The work of Mabogunje on Nigeria has been considered one of the most convincingly theoretical models for understanding urbanization in West Africa[12]. In his conceptualization, towns are considered pivotal points in more extensive economic networks that help to generate economic growth. This is a point that will feature in this thesis, as Bolgatanga was and (still is) part of far-reaching socio-economic networks of West Africa that strongly influenced its growth and change.

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[4] Sally Falk Moore, *Anthropology and Africa: Changing Perspectives on a Changing Scene* (Charlottesville, Va.: Univ. Press of Virginia, 2010).
[5] Michael Banton, *West African City: A Study of Tribal Life in Freetown* (London: Published for the International African Institute by the Oxford University Press, 1957).
[6] Kofi Abrefa Busia, *Report on a Social Survey of Sekondi-Takoradi.* (London: Crown Agents for the Colonies on behalf of the Govt. of the Gold Coast, 1950).
[7] Ioné Acquah, *Accra Survey: A Social Survey of the Capital of Ghana, Formerly Called the Gold Coast: Undertaken for the West African Institute of Social and Economic Research, 1953-1956* (London: University of London Press, 1958).
[8] Joseph Adam Braimah and Jack Goody, *Salaga: The Struggle for Power* (London: Longmans, 1968).
[9] Kenneth Lindsay Little, 'The Role of Voluntary Associations in West African Urbanization', *American Anthropologist* 59 (1957): 579–96.
[10] John C. Caldwell, *African Rural-Urban Migration: The Movement to Ghana's Towns* (London: C. Hurst, 1969).
[11] Akin L. Mabogunje, *Urbanization in Nigeria* (New York: Africana Publ. Corp., 1968).
[12] Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, 'The Process of Urbanization in Africa (From the Origins to the Beginning of Independence)', *African Studies Review* 34, no. 1 (1991): 1.

One seminal work conducted in Ghana and based on network analysis and ethnicity is *People from the Zongo*[13]. In this book, Enid Schildkrout analyses the *zongo* neighbourhood of Kumasi and the processes of ethnicization that swept over it. Although not directly focused on urban formations, the book is nonetheless useful for urban studies in northern Ghana. It provides the tools for a better understanding of the connections and histories of *zongos*, the neighbourhoods composed of foreign settlers common in many Ghanaian towns. As will become apparent in the course of the thesis, this study provides fruitful insights into the relationship between urbanity and migrants in the upper part of Ghana, particularly in mapping migrants' and traders' networks.

The peculiarity of the urban phenomenon in Africa began to acquire more colours in its theoretical palette as scholars increasingly recognized that modernity and industrialization do not necessarily constitute the "essential" features of a town. At the beginning of the 1980s, Raymond Kea[14] depicted a landscape dotted with urban formations in the 17th-century Gold Coast, proving that urbanity is a dynamic and longstanding process in Ghana. Moreover, in that period, the work of Anthony D. King gave further impetus to the historical study of urban planning and architectural design[15]. Analysing the processes that led to a particular building form became a tool for exploring the social and political aims of the people who produced it. This is another point I incorporated into my research design. The analysis of the Gurensi compound and settlement pattern reveal a great deal about the social organization of its inhabitants. As I will clarify below, I thus analysed the changes that took place in the organization and planning of the settlement in order to grasp the socio-political configurations in Bolgatanga at the beginning of the 19th century and over the 20th century.

From the 1980s onwards, African urban history became a more well-defined field of study. The seminal works setting the standard for this line of inquiry were those collected in van Onselen's edited book on Witwatersrand and Cooper's edited collection *Struggle for the city*[16]. The first of these has been considered part of a «new generation in South African historiography» [17], while the second was equally influential. These books deal with the formation of the specifically urban social groups that composed and created various African towns. The main themes of this new social urban history, fed by Marxist debates focused on the "underclasses" or history "from below", and they considered

[13] Enid Schildkrout, *People of the Zongo: The Transformation of Ethnic Identities in Ghana* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978).
[14] Ray A. Kea, *Settlements, Trade, and Polities in the Seventeenth-Century Gold Coast* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982).
[15] Anthony D. King, 'The Social Production of Building Form: Theory and Research', *Environment and Planning. D. Society and Space; London* 2, no. 4 (1984).
[16] Charles van Onselen, *Studies in the Social and Economic History of the Witwatersrand, 1886-1914* (Harlow: Longman, 1982); Frederick Cooper, *Struggle for the City: Migrant Labor, Capital, and the State in Urban Africa* (Beverly Hills: SAGE, 1983).
[17] John Iliffe, 'A New Generation in South African Historiography', *The Journal of African History* 25, no. 1 (1984): 115–17.

both the linkage between labour and cities and the past of the working classes. Van Onselen's collection depicts how capitalist relations in some South African towns pave the way for the creation of urban niches populated by 'under classes' (such as cab drivers, prostitutes, and domestic servants) and their specific urban culture. In the same vein, Cooper's collection framed the «city as a locus of reproduction of the working-class rather than a locus of [capitalist] production»[18]. In this way, the town came to be considered one of the main melting pots in which social change takes place. Furthermore, scholars also recognized the city as the main stage of the struggles between the townspeople and the colonial state. Indeed, a crucial focus of this thesis is investigating the relationship that the inhabitants of Bolgatanga wove with colonialism and the political changes brought about by it.

By the end of the 1980s, Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch began to pursue a new, comparative and more comprehensive approach to African urban history[19]. Colonialism, modernization and industrialization were recognized as elements of the urban African equation but not necessarily regarded as the main variables. Africans have been townspeople just as have other people in the rest of the world, with their own history and their own dynamics. The late 1980s also gave rise to Ivor Wilks' *Wa and the Wala*[20], a book conversant with a corpus of colonial, oral and Arabic sources, that depicts the history of the Wala state and Wa, highlighting the complex cultural and religious processes that shaped the political landscape of the town and led to conflicts and communal violence. The book is a noteworthy component of the urban historiography of northern Ghana, and it provides for a crucial comparison with Bolgatanga through benchmarks, similarities and differences that will be highlighted in the course of the thesis.

In the last two decades, African urban history has flourished. One seminal edited collection is Anderson and Rathbone's *Africa's Urban Past*[21]. This volume offers a rich and chronologically wide-ranging compilation of urban studies on African towns. It also establishes a new starting point for urban history by clarifying what has been said and what else needs to be said. The editors view urbanisation as a historical force and call for their colleagues to address both the uniqueness and the comparable features of a particular urban experience[22]. This publication opened the way for many others to appear dealing with the social, political and economic aspects of African towns in a more

[18] Coquery-Vidrovitch, 'The Process of Urbanization in Africa (From the Origins to the Beginning of Independence)', 55.
[19] Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, *Processus d'urbanisation en Afrique* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1988); Coquery-Vidrovitch, *Histoire des villes d'Afrique noire*.
[20] Ivor Wilks, *Wa and the Wala: Islam and Polity in Northwestern Ghana* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).
[21] David Anderson and Richard J. A. R. Rathbone, *Africa's Urban Past* (Oxford: James Currey, 2000).
[22] Anderson and Rathbone, 9.

detailed and nuanced way[23]. Worthy of note is John Parker's account of Accra depicting how the town went through multiple transitions thanks to the endurance of the Ga society that made it[24].

More recently, Laurent Fourchard has stressed the need to recognize that African cities are characterised by global connections that debunk any supposed African peculiarity[25]. Relying on analytical categories such as colonial, Islamic or postcolonial cities could be misleading and represents more of an obstacle than an advantage[26]. Conversely, analysing towns' networks and the different roles cities performed in state formation are useful tools for shedding light on the urban past in many parts of the world. In particular, Fourchard identifies the weaknesses of the scholarship on both African and European urbanity as lying in

> a dearth of studies of small and medium size towns, which renders difficult a clear understanding of urban networks and their connections to the world economy; the decline of economic studies focusing especially on cities; and more generally, often absent connections between stories of individual cities and broader trends.[27]

This thesis intends to answer Fourchard's call to overcome these weaknesses in the sense that this study not only provides an analysis on the social changes that made urbanization possible in a small size town, but it also engages with the broader economic and social networks that participated in these changes.

As far as the literature on Bolgatanga is concerned, there are very few studies that deal solely with the town and its history. Apart from the corpus of unpublished material written by Christopher Anabila Azaare, a Gurensi historian whose profile will be presented below, there is the corpus of published articles and books by Christian Lund. In his seminal work, Lund discusses the evolution of land tenure in Bolgatanga and the Upper East Region more broadly from the late-colonial to the post-colonial period, analysing the different claims and conflicting micro-histories that still dot the region today[28]. In the same way, the volume edited by Albert K. Awedoba on northern Ghanaian conflicts provides a concise analysis of disputes between the traditional authorities of the town and their

[23] To cite just a few, sources include Steven J. Salm and Toyin Falola, *African Urban Spaces in Historical Perspective*, Rochester Studies in African History and the Diaspora (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2005); Bill Freund, *The African City: A History* (Cambridge [England]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Francesca Locatelli and Paul Nugent, *African Cities: Competing Claims on Urban Spaces*, African-Europe Group for Interdisciplinary Studies, v. 3 (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2009); Garth Andrew Myers, *African Cities: Alternative Visions of Urban Theory and Practice* (London; New York: Zed Books Ltd., 2011).

[24] John Parker, *Making the Town: Ga State and Society in Early Colonial Accra*, Social History of Africa (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2000).

[25] Laurent Fourchard, 'Between World History And State Formation: New Perspectives On Africa's Cities', *The Journal of African History* 52, no. 2 (2011): 223–48.

[26] The inefficacy of broad labels had been already pointed out by Coquery-Vidrovitch for the category of pre-colonial town. She argued that it is paradoxical to define a social process such as urbanization using a term that indicates a subsequent condition, such as colonization. Coquery-Vidrovitch, *Histoire des villes d'Afrique noire*, 9.

[27] Fourchard, 'Between World History And State Formation', 248.

[28] Christian Lund, *Local Politics and the Dynamics of Property in Africa.* (Leiden: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

historical background[29]. More broadly, Anatoli Ignatov provides an account of Gurensi rituality through an insightful comparison with the philosophy of Henry David Thoreau[30]. He also offers a clear example of how historical narratives can be produced and contested in the Gurensi area[31]. I will engage more thoroughly with these texts in the course of the thesis.

A more recent work based on comparing the contemporary peri-urban land use pattern of Bolgatanga and Takoradi was published in 2017[32]. The authors appropriately identify the settlement pattern as one of the main drivers behind the growth of the Gurensi town. This study lacks a historical background, however, in that it does not consider the changing features that affected the Gurensi settlement pattern in the 20th century and, at the same time, assumes that the main variable currently affecting land use planning is "cultural". This historiographical paucity led the authors to conclude that «local food crises» in the area are closely linked to a growing «urban sprawl»[33], a serious underestimation of the fact that, as many scholars have already pointed out, periodical food shortages are a longstanding feature of the area[34].

This thesis intends to fill a vacuum in this scholarly investigation into the urbanization process in Bolgatanga. There is no published research analysing the growth and the process of urbanization that affected the town from the outset of the 20th century. Many authors have assumed that this growth was the consequential result of just one or two well-known historical events touching the town, such as the growth of its marketplace or its postcolonial selection as a regional capital, thereby greatly simplifying its urbanization process[35]. However, this thesis proves that the settlement pattern has been undergoing continuous transformation at least since the beginning of the 20th century. I will show that the process of urbanization cannot be associated with just one or two main events that affected the town but lay outside its inhabitants' control; rather, the growth of the town and its changing urban landscape was deeply embedded in multifaceted socio-economic changes in which its dwellers played an active and primary role.

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[29] Albert K. Awedoba, *An Ethnographic Study of Northern Ghanaian Conflicts: Towards a Sustainable Peace. Key Aspects of Past, Present and Impending Conflicts in Northern Ghana and the Mechanisms for Their Address* (Accra: Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2009).

[30] Anatoli Ignatov, 'Thoreau Goes to Ghana: On the Wild and the Tingane', in *Common Goods: Economy, Ecology, and Political Theology*, by Melanie Johnson-DeBaufre (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015).

[31] Ignatov, 'The Skin and the Stool: Re-Crafting Histories of Belonging in Northern Ghana'.

[32] Janina Kleemann et al., 'Peri-Urban Land Use Pattern and Its Relation to Land Use Planning in Ghana, West Africa', *Landscape and Urban Planning* 165 (2017): 280–94.

[33] Kleemann et al., 287.

[34] Allman and Parker, *Tongnaab*, 184–85; John M. Hunter, 'Seasonal Hunger in a Part of the West African Savanna: A Survey of Bodyweights in Nangodi, North-East Ghana', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, no. 41 (1967): 167; Jérôme Destombes, 'From Long-Term Patterns of Seasonal Hunger to Changing Experiences of Everyday Poverty: Northeastern Ghana c. 1930–2000', *The Journal of African History* 47, no. 02 (2006): 181–205.

[35] Hart, 'Migration and Tribal Identity among the Frafras of Ghana', 23; Paul André Ladouceur, *Chiefs and Politicians: The Politics of Regionalism in Northern Ghana* (Longman, 1979), 205; Jerry S. Eades, *Strangers and Traders: Yoruba Migrants, Markets, and the State in Northern Ghana* (Trenton, N.J.: Africa World Press, 1994), 58.

Theoretical framework: defining what makes a town

One particular cogent issue in African urban studies is providing a univocal formulation of what constitutes the urban phenomenon. In perusing the abundance of published studies, one thing is clear: there is no single definition on which scholars agree[36]. Geographers offer a definition that is mainly informed by spatiality, keeping it somewhat elusive[37]. Anthropologists and sociologists characterise it as a process of cultural concentration and diffusion[38]. Political scientists have seen it as an articulation of power. John Peel, in his review of West African urban studies, argued that if there is to be «urban essentialism»[39], or a certain degree of unity among towns, it needs to be based on «their character as arenas of political conflict»[40]. While conflict is indeed an inextricable component of cities, it is not the only one, nor it is always their "essential" feature.

Beyond the definition itself, many scholars agreed that there is not even one single paradigm that can be adopted to illustrate the growth and decline of towns in Africa[41], not to mention the rest of the world[42]. The history of a town is thus an appropriate field for testing interdisciplinarity. Urban history can be considered the study of the various parts and processes that comprise a town. What makes a town a town must be defined dynamically in each case, freed from ready-made theoretical assumptions that might freeze it in time and transcend periodization. As suggested by Anderson and Rathbone following H.J. Dyos, urban history must be recognized as an organic field of study[43]. It has been at least forty years since scholars first put aside the quest for a unifying and universal theory that would define the urban phenomenon. Therefore, urban history should be the analysis of the ways in which different pieces of a town contribute to its totality.

Along these lines, Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch has departed in certain ways from Peel's position to suggest a more comprehensive definition with the scope to embrace many facets of the

[36] For some seminal and wide-ranging reviews on African urbanity see Coquery-Vidrovitch, 'The Process of Urbanization in Africa (From the Origins to the Beginning of Independence)'; Akin L. Mabogunje, 'Urban Planning and the Post-Colonial State in Africa: A Research Overview', *African Studies Review* 33, no. 2 (1990): 121–203; Peel, 'Urbanization and Urban History in West Africa'.
[37] See for example Mabogunje, *Urbanization in Nigeria*.
[38] Coquery-Vidrovitch, 'The Process of Urbanization in Africa (From the Origins to the Beginning of Independence)', 16.
[39] He defines it as «that doctrine […] that 'real' cities have a certain essential character which tends to energize the societies in which they fall». Peel, 'Urbanization and Urban History in West Africa', 271.
[40] Peel, 277.
[41] Anderson and Rathbone, *Africa's Urban Past*, 9; Mabogunje, 'Urban Planning and the Post-Colonial State in Africa: A Research Overview'.
[42] Brian Joe Lobley Berry, *The Human Consequences of Urbanisation*, The Making of the 20th Century (London: Macmillan, 1973); Tim Edensor and Mark Jayne, *Urban Theory Beyond the West: A World of Cities* (Routledge, 2012).
[43] Anderson and Rathbone, *Africa's Urban Past*, 9.

urban phenomenon[44]. According to Coquery-Vidrovitch, theoretical models of urbanity and the urban formation itself need to be defined dynamically based on the epoch, mode of production and exchange, power and ideology. In a later work, she also argued that towns are first of all spatial processes in which humans gather in a relatively confined and circumscribed place[45]. They need to be built and dwelt in. They are catalysts for convergent social forces that meet, clash, neutralize each other and mix among themselves. Towns should be the site of a social hierarchy, and most of all they should be centres of cultural diffusion. A number of scholars have further expanded on this consideration, theoretically approaching towns as nodal points in economic and social networks[46]. Therefore, rather than seeing the town as a unique and closed entity, I consider it as a totality composed of a multiplicity of social processes.

Beginning my research based on these considerations, I unpacked the object of study. I broke down the totality of the processes that shaped the urbanization process in Bolgatanga into three different parts while also analysing interrelations among them. The thesis thus follows three different layers of the town's growth: spatiality, power, and economy. The main objective is to analyse the history of the town through the interconnectedness of these layers. Indeed, each layer will add a piece to the comprehension of the research questions. The next sections introduce these themes and present their analytical relevance for the case study.

Conceptualizing space: Gurensi indigenous concepts of belonging

Over the years, one of the many differences between anglophone and francophone literature on African urban studies has been their different focus on inhabited space. While the former has emphasized social change and behaviour, the latter has been more attentive to urban planning and the built environment. I see no obstacle, however, in blending both lines of research in order «to grasp both the content and the container»[47]. King has already shown not only how the function of the built environment lies in preserving and reproducing the society that planned it, but also how it constitutes

[44] Coquery-Vidrovitch, 'The Process of Urbanization in Africa (From the Origins to the Beginning of Independence)'.
[45] Coquery-Vidrovitch, *Histoire des villes d'Afrique noire*, 25.
[46] See for example Mabogunje, *Urbanization in Nigeria*; Freund, *The African City*; Parker, *Making the Town*; Fourchard, 'Between World History And State Formation'.
[47] Coquery-Vidrovitch, 'The Process of Urbanization in Africa (From the Origins to the Beginning of Independence)', 19.

a powerful tool for political and social change[48]. There is indeed a «fascinating interrelationship […] between the built and the people: people build as they think, but they also think as they build»[49] and this is most revealing about urbanity and the analysis of this phenomenon. The way people build is revealing about the way they think from an anthropological point of view as well. Anthropologists have highlighted that the built environment is the material expression of social, cultural and political structures[50]. As pointed out by Meyer Fortes, this was precisely the case for the Talensi, living in the vicinity of Bolgatanga. He noted that «a Tale settlement is a miniature of the whole society and reveals all the basic principles of the social structure. No two settlements are identical in topography, shape, size, or social composition; but all have the same social form, based on the same principles»[51]. From a theoretical point of view, it is impossible to grant too little importance to the way in which people conceptualize and inhabit space. Very recent approaches to Ghanaian urban studies further confirm the importance of considering the construction and conceptualization of space in the analysis of urbanity and (colonial) urban space[52]. It therefore follows that scholars must refer to the indigenous theorization of what makes a settlement, or the urbanites' vision of what makes a town.

An analysis of Gurensi spatiality and its historical changes intends to answer the question as to how the inhabitants of Bolgatanga perceived urbanisation and how this vision shaped their idea of the world. Since sociality and spatiality are closely linked, the urban context provides an appropriate laboratory for studying this combination in its manifold peculiarities. In the Gurensi region as a whole, a specific, unique form of human settlement has emerged and developed over time. To analyse the urban phenomenon in the Gurensi region appropriately, therefore, I will rely on Gurensi definitions of town and settlement. In order to better understand the urban social processes that unfolded in Bolgatanga, it is necessary to explain how space was perceived and planned.

This approach represents a long-standing element of studies on the societies living in northern and upper Ghana. One of the first researchers to have based his studies on the settlement pattern was Robert Sutherland Rattray, the first colonial ethnographer who worked in the Northern Territories of

[48] King, 'The Social Production of Building Form'.
[49] Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, 'Introduction. African Urban Spaces. History and Culture', in *African Urban Spaces in Historical Perspective*, by Steven J. Salm and Toyin Falola (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2005), xxiv.
[50] Two examples from northern Ghana are Ann Cassiman, *Stirring Life: Women's Paths and Places among the Kasena of Northern Ghana* (Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 2006); Susan Drucker-Brown, 'House and Hierarchy: Politics and Domestic Space in Northern Ghana', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 7, no. 4 (2001): 669–685. More detailed references on building and indigenous architecture in upper Ghana are presented in the first chapter; for a general study of spatial organization and the built environment using an anthropological approach see Amos Rapoport, 'Spatial Organization and the Built Environment', in *Companion Encyclopedia of Anthropology*, by Tim Ingold (London: Taylor & Francis, 2002); Suzanne Preston Blier, *The Anatomy of Architecture: Ontology and Metaphor in Batammaliba Architectural Expression* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).
[51] Fortes, *The Dynamics of Clanship among the Tallensi*, 154.
[52] For a recent analysis regarding the role of music making as a means to appropriate colonial urban spaces in colonial Ghana see Nate Plageman, 'Recomposing the Colonial City', *Interventions*, 20 September 2019, 1–19.

the Gold Coast. In his book, he used a methodology that had been developed not directly by him, but rather by his indigenous collaborator, Victor Aboya[53]. Although the colonial ethnographer did not clearly state this fact, it can nonetheless be inferred from the history of Winkongo, a settlement not too far from Bolgatanga. This history adheres to Gurensi epistemology by posing questions such who was the ritual owner of the land, how many clans were in the settlement, who was its founding ancestor, which taboos were practiced in that locality and where did the founding ancestors migrated from.

Many social scientists who worked in the Ghanaian upper regions considered these concepts in articulating their analysis. To cite just one well-known example, Carola Lentz confirmed the validity of studying the pre-colonial political landscape through «the ideas of social order as articulated in the indigenous languages», and especially the «central notions of order», or what she termed the indigenous concepts of belonging[54]. These concepts not only synthesize the social, political and religious pillars of Gurensi society, they also provide a canvas with which it is possible to frame the planning of the settlements.

Two basic notions polarize the Gurensi spatial, political and social landscape. The first is *yiri*, the second *teŋa*[55]. Both refer at the same time to the spatial, political and social units and features that compose society. *Yiri* means the family compound as well as a smaller section of a patriclan, most frequently the people who inhabit the compound. In the same way, *teŋa* means not only the settlement in terms of its spatial features and human inhabitants but also the earth and the land in terms of their material and ritual aspects. Through these concepts, it is possible to consider many facets of Gurensi society, its urban dwelling and historical changes in it. Firstly, I outline the clear linkage between descent and land. This passage will help in comprehending the relationships between different settlements and the rules pertaining to land tenure. Secondly, changes in the customary land tenure explain why and how the landscape of the town physically changed over the years. Thirdly, the concepts of belonging will provide insight to better understand the spatial and social boundaries of the settlements and the historical development of the chiefdoms. As I develop the analysis, more and more issues can be seen to depend on these concepts, such as the articulation of power and also the recollection of the past. Taking this into account, an urban study of Bolgatanga cannot exclude the Gurensi concepts of belonging.

Urban planning and settlement patterns can reveal a great deal about the society that practices them, and above all, provide helpful insights for analysing the town as a place of articulation of

[53] Rattray, *The Tribes of the Ashanti Hinterland*, 232–36.
[54] Lentz, *Ethnicity and the Making of History in Northern Ghana*, 16–21.
[55] There is even a third one, not less important than the others, the *tingana.* This represents a ritual spatial unit, a place in which a particular deity is worshipped. All these issues will be explored in detail in chapter 1.

political conflict. As architecture and planning are the first steps of the analysis, they need to be integrated with a historical analysis of the political dynamism of the region that will make sense of the changes that took place in the conceptualization and enactment of power in Gurensi society over the 20th century.

The role of colonialism in shaping Bolgatanga

There is no doubt that colonialism affected many African cities in profound ways, and that these effects need to be studied. In many cases, British colonialism was the main force behind urban planning aimed at achieving a more effective system of hegemony, exploitation and segregation[56]. To cite a famous example in northern Ghana, the growth of Tamale was inextricably and directly linked with its status as the British colonial headquarters in the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast[57]. However, as stated by Paul Nugent and Francesca Locatelli, the way colonialism affected urban development varied greatly depending on the economic context of the colonies, the African political systems, the colonial intermediaries and the various African settlement patterns[58]. Many other towns in Africa did not become colonial towns and were not entirely subverted by colonialism, even though they were part of a colonial state[59].

In the case of Bolgatanga, colonialism played an important but secondary role in the historical development of the town, a role primarily moderated by Gurensi people. The popular recollection of the first encounter between the colonial officers and the Gurensi is particularly interesting and revealing concerning this point in that it subsumes the historical processes that led to the growth and development of Bolgatanga as a town and the role that colonialism played in this process. According to this popular historical account, the name Bolgatanga might have been the result of the encounter with the first "white men" to visit the region. Approaching some women in the old market in Dapore-Tindongo, a central area of the town, he asked for the name of the place. Since these women were

[56] Robert Keith Home, *Of Planting and Planning: The Making of British Colonial Cities* (London: Spon, 1997); Ambe J. Njoh, 'Urban Planning as a Tool of Power and Social Control in Colonial Africa', *Planning Perspectives* 24, no. 3 (2009): 301–17.
[57] Sebastian R. Soeters, 'Tamale 1907-1957: Between Colonial Trade and Colonial Chieftainship' (Leiden, Leiden University, 2012); Wyatt MacGaffey, 'A History of Tamale, 1907-1957 and Beyond', *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana*, New Series, no. 10 (2007): 109–24.
[58] Locatelli and Nugent, *African Cities*, 5.
[59] Freund, *The African City*, chap. 3.

standing on a rock (in Gurune *tanga*) near a place where it was possible to extract soft soil (*boleŋa*) for plastering the walls of the compounds, they answered *boleŋa-tanga*, later corrupted into Bolgatanga[60].

This account contains many of the elements that I will indicate in the thesis as fundamental to the process of urbanisation in Bolgatanga. First of all, the stage of the scene is the local marketplace, a crucial site for the development of the town, as in the 20th century it became a hub in international commercial networks[61]. Secondarily, I read a precise parallelism between the creation of the toponym and the overall process of urbanisation that affected Bolgatanga in the 20th century. Indeed, this account casts the toponym Bolgatanga as the result of interaction between the colonial officer and the Gurensi women. This encounter is highly symbolic in that it captures the respective roles of both characters. It is the curious questioning of the officer that created the conditions for the answer. In this way, colonialism, epitomized by the officer, acted as a catalyst that set in motion the creation of the toponymy[62]. However, the Gurensi locals formulated the name. These women, gathered in that specific place to collect building materials (a powerful metaphor for their creative role in the process of urbanisation[63]), answered "*boleŋa-tanga*", simultaneously creating the conditions for the existence of the town and sanctioning the birth of the toponym. In sum, if colonialism set in motion the historical processes that led to the urbanisation of Bolgatanga, it was the Gurensi who directed such processes. The popular historical account of the toponym thus serves to distil the history of Bolgatanga in the first four decades of the 20th century, a history in which a non-incisive colonial system encountered people determined to continue playing a central role in shaping their own lives.

Indeed, the thesis aims to show how colonialism affected the growth of the town only indirectly and how it was «accidental» in its consequences, as Jean Allman and John Parker have defined it[64]. The main feature of this accidentality is evident in the divergence between what colonial officers aimed at and what they achieved. Most of the time, as can be seen in fields such as political control, recruiting campaigns, infrastructure building, markets development and the introduction of currency, the effects of their actions were often unexpected and not what they had set out to obtain. The process of African mediation, even when not manifest in the records, was always in force. While colonialism introduced new ideas and practices, Africans creatively appropriated and spread them. Therefore, rather than being eminently European or African, the process of urbanization in

[60] This version of the myth is taken from Azaare, 'Life in Bolga'.
[61] Regarding this point, see chapters 3 and 5.
[62] Regarding the colonial need to apply names, see Hawkins, *Writing and Colonialism in Northern Ghana.*
[63] As I will point out in chapter 1, the process of plastering the walls of the houses and beating the floor, thereby making the compound fit for human habitation, was an operation carried out solely by the women. The role of the women could also be linked to the importance of the trade in shaping the town, as most of the traders in the market used to be women.
[64] Allman and Parker, *Tongnaab*, 91.

Bolgatanga was the result of the encounter between different ways of conceptualizing power and space, an encounter that was «quintessentially colonial»[65]. This thesis thus studies Gurensi political organization and the significant changes in this organization taking place during the first three decades of the 20th century. Although colonial policies will be considered, I will not focus solely on them; rather, I will show how they were pragmatically enacted and how Africans responded to them.

The historical development of an urban political landscape

The town is a privileged field of study to analyse the articulation of power and political conflict. As John Parker puts it, «if a city is a locus of exchange and transaction, then conflicts over who controls these exchanges and transactions – politics, in other words – further defines the nature of the urban»[66]. In my quest to define the urban phenomenon in Bolgatanga, a crucial task has been that of identifying the leading political figures operating in the area in the 20th century and how these actors affected the urban development of the town as well as the nature of their involvement with the British colonial administration. From a political point of view, the colonial project in this area was a «common enterprise of black and white actors», just as it was as in the rest of the continent[67]. The results of this enterprise came from the blending of colonial intentions and Africans interests. The literature on African collaboration and resistance to colonialism suggests that the most effective way of revealing the degree of control, manipulation, contestation and appropriation of power in the colonial period is to employ a nuanced approach that goes beyond simplifying dichotomies such as colonizer/colonized[68].

In line with such an approach, this thesis intends to demonstrate that colonial intervention was so pervasively mediated by Africans that it would be difficult to conclude that the officers' intentions were thoroughly enacted, making the planning and shaping of Bolgatanga a colonial outcome.

[65] Thomas Spear, 'Neo-Traditionalism and the Limits of Invention in British Colonial Africa', *The Journal of African History* 44, no. 01 (2003): 14.
[66] Parker, *Making the Town*, xxii.
[67] Jean Francois Bayart, 'Populist Political Action: Historical Understanding and Political Analysis in Africa', in *African Historiographies: What History for Which Africa?*, by Bogumil Jewsiewicki and David Newbury (Beverly Hills: SAGE, 1986).
[68] I am referring in particular to Frederick Cooper, 'Conflict and Connection: Rethinking Colonial African History', *The American Historical Review* 99, no. 5 (1994): 1516–45; Spear, 'Neo-Traditionalism and the Limits of Invention in British Colonial Africa'; Jon Abbink, Mirjam de Bruijn, and Klaas van Walraven, *Rethinking Resistance: Revolt and Violence in African History* (Boston, MA: Brill, 2003).

Colonial intervention was locally managed by the Africans themselves to achieve specific purposes. The intermediaries who filtered the enactment of the colonial project in the Gurensi region were mainly chiefs and employees such as clerks, soldiers, and interpreters. These figures often created their niches of power, taking advantage of the authority given to them by the colonial administration and exploiting the incomplete control the officers had over them. However, far from being widely accepted, their authority was often contested and challenged by Africans and colonial officers alike. A subtle equilibrium kept these figures in their positions, and most of the times this equilibrium depended on their political abilities. A study of the town thus comes to serve as a window onto the broader, complex dynamics of the people who inhabited not only this particular town but the region as a whole.

Chieftaincy did indeed play a crucial role in the urbanization and growth of the town. As a brand-new colonial introduction in the Bolgatanga area, it was promptly appropriated by those families who were able to do so, thereby breaking sharply with Gurensi political balances in the late 19th century. The ability to take advantage of the political turmoil of the beginning of the 20th century granted these families a privileged political position that, although highly contested, led to the elevation of the settlement on political and commercial levels. In Bolgatanga, the evolution of the chieftaincy institution over the years demonstrates that Africans did not plan only the spatial arrangement of the settlement. The creation, enhancement, negotiation and preservation of the politically privileged position of the chief likewise reveals subtle political planning.

The institution of chieftaincy changed gradually in keeping with colonial intents and purposes. From the beginning of the 20th century onward, this process served to strengthen the chiefs' political power by reinventing and adapting their functions and the geographical scope of their authority. Over time, the officers strived to create territorial boundaries, circumscribing the chiefdoms that had previously lacked this kind of demarcation. Lentz has described this process, further developed in the 1930s, making clear that

> the establishment of the boundaries of the native states and the choice of chiefs was a sort of process of trial and error in which existing local power structures on the one hand, and the British model of small territorial states with an inheritable kingdom on the other, were gradually made to correspond[69].

In reality, however, such a process characterized British-Gurensi political interactions well before the 1930s, as this thesis will show. The officers increasingly recognized the chiefdom of Bolgatanga as the political centre of the area and, as a consequence, it acquired political prominence over neighbouring settlements. In the long run, the chiefdom paramountcy helped grow and elevate the

[69] Lentz and Nugent, *Ethnicity in Ghana*, 146.

settlement, as the chief was able to promote the marketplace and assure it a favourable position in the colonial road network.

However, the economic prominence acquired by Bolgatanga was not only the result of the chiefs' political and commercial foresightedness. Many other people in Bolgatanga, such as traders and migrants, were also able to manage and take advantage of the opportunities created by colonialism, thereby allowing the settlement to rise to the status of pivotal market centre in the region and occupy a central position in more extensive networks of trade and mobility.

Markets, money and roads: the web of commerce among the Gurensi

This thesis intends to highlight Bolgatanga's connection to broader networks of mobility and commerce. Over the 20th century, the process of urbanization has evolved dynamically and has indeed responded to external stimuli that affected its development. Like many other towns in Africa, it became part of far-reaching economic networks that directly influenced its growth. This section will, therefore, outline the way I analysed the economic connections established during the 20th century and how they link to the town's spatial and political layers of growth. A critical driver of urbanization in Bolgatanga has been its marketplace and the market's changing position in West African commercial networks.

The study of these networks focuses primarily on the geography of the trade routes, infrastructural improvement, currency diffusion and migration patterns. I, therefore, analyse the degree of social creativity and interaction between the Gurensi and the traders passing through the town to determine how much these shaped its growth in terms of population increase and participation in trade channels. The noncentralized settlements distinctive of the Gurensi region were not isolated economically from the rest of West Africa in either the 19th or the 20th century. In this period, the trade routes in the region polarized in Bolgatanga and its market became a nodal point not only in a regional network of commerce but also in an international one.

The marketplace's growth depended on many variables, as it was closely linked to the presence of infrastructure, political stability, colonial intervention and traders' convenience. The phenomenon of market and commercial route development was, of course, thoroughly caught up with the colonial presence, but in a somewhat ambiguous way. As the case of Bolgatanga illustrates, many traders preferred to avoid the nearby colonial station. While Bolgatanga was close enough to the

colonial garrison in Zuarungu to guarantee it shared in the benefits of the improved colonial infrastructure such as motorable roads, it was also at the right distance away to avoid the colonial control over trade. In fact, most of the traders preferred to circumvent the centres where taxation was levied, and British currency imposed, opting to stop and settle in other centres where there was less control over trade. For this reason, over the years Bolgatanga became an advantageous point to both pass and stop in.

Considering this point, I have analysed the spread of colonial coinage and used this as a means of indicating the position of the Bolgatanga market in the geographies of trade and of assessing the degree of control colonialists exercised over it. In fact, British currency diffusion is a benchmark that helps us to understand the leverage colonial economic policies had on African trade[70]. As the failure of taxation policies and difficulties in effectively spreading the British sterling prove, Africans were able to manage colonial interference in matters of trade for their own purposes. At least for the first three decades of the 20th century, British officers were not able to impose their coins in a context in which the coexistence of multiple currencies was the norm[71]. What the sources suggest is that Africans were able to adapt to colonial coinage and insert it in their economic practices while the colonial administration was not able to impose its currency as the only one. The analysis of the spread of British currency in Bolgatanga and precisely the fact that colonial coins were smuggled, rejected or purchased at speculative prices by many traders reveals that this trade centre was outside of colonial control.

Furthermore, the study of currency diffusion is not only useful for proving how little control the officers had over the Gurensi markets; it also helps to determine the social and political divisions running through the town and, in broader terms, through the Gurensi society[72]. In fact, the way currencies were used provides a window onto relations between the autochthonous population and passing merchants. From slave trade to Gurensi banditry, from traders' scams to the exploitation of Gurensi's unfamiliarity with rates of currency exchange, the economic context of the region was indeed one of ambiguity and conflict.

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[70] Eric Helleiner, 'The Monetary Dimensions of Colonialism: Why Did Imperial Powers Create Currency Blocks?', *Geopolitics* 7, no. 1 (2002): 5–30; Mahir Şaul, 'Money in Colonial Transition: Cowries and Francs in West Africa', *American Anthropologist* 106, no. 1 (2004): 71–84; Walter I. Ofonagoro, 'From Traditional to British Currency in Southern Nigeria: Analysis of a Currency Revolution, 1880-1948', *The Journal of Economic History* 39, no. 3 (1979): 623–54; Jane I. Guyer and Karin Pallaver, 'Money and Currency in African History', in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History* (Oxford University Press, 2018).

[71] For an introduction to currency multiplicity in Africa see Guyer and Pallaver, 'Money and Currency in African History'.

[72] Natalie Swanepoel, 'Small Changes. Cowries, Coins and the Currency Transition in the Northern Territories of Colonial Ghana', in *Materializing Colonial Encounters*, by Francois Richard (New York, NY: Springer, 2015); Şaul, 'Money in Colonial Transition'.

Another crucial element that made Bolgatanga a pivotal commercial centre was the radical change in the region's transportation patterns. To understand how and why the economic networks that crossed the Gurensi area benefitted the town, I relied on an analysis of the grid of caravan routes and, subsequently, motorable roads that linked it to the rest of the world. In keeping with recent attempts in northern Ghanaian historiography to position the "Great North Road" – one of the main highways built in the colonial period – at the centre of the commercial development of the Northern Territories[73], I have analysed how caravan routes gave way to motorised roads. In this case as well, the planning and building of the colonial road network was a joint enterprise involving both Africans and Europeans. The decision to make Bolgatanga the central crossroads of the region was indeed made through mutual agreement between the officers and the chief in 1919, shortly before the construction of the "Great North Road" and the ensuing boom in motor transportation and trade.

Finally, Bolgatanga occupied a position as both pit-stop and starting point for the flows of people using these roads. The movement of migrants through the North-South routes is another phenomenon that reveals the kind of relationship that developed between the colonial administration and the societies inhabiting the Protectorate. Indeed, the migration patterns were entirely outside of colonial control. While in the first decades of the 20th century the British officers tried unsuccessfully to recruit and send labour to the South, «locally authored scripts of travel and migration were being written» autonomously by the northerners[74]. Migration was often cyclic and voluntary in nature. Every step the colonial administration took to recruit labour for the South ended in desertions and failures. On the other hand, Bolgatanga also developed as a centre detached from direct colonial intervention in terms of the mobility networks that developed alongside the commercial ones.

The theoretical framework of the thesis has been depicted as follows, with the study of urbanity framed through three broad and interrelated layers of growth. The first of these layers concerns spatiality and indigenous concepts of belonging. It is devoted to the study of historical changes in the settlement pattern of the Gurensi people who lived in Bolgatanga. The second layer takes into consideration the dynamism of the town's political landscape, analysing how the local figures of power interacted with colonialism. The study of the economic networks that connected

[73] Soeters, 'Tamale 1907-1957: Between Colonial Trade and Colonial Chieftainship'; Samuel Aniegye Ntewusu, 'The Road to Development: The Construction and Use of "the Great North Road" in Gold Coast Ghana', Working Paper 114 (Leiden: African Studies Center, 2014). More generally on transportation in Gold Coast see Simon Heap, 'The Development of Motor Transport in the Gold Coast, 1900-39', *Journal of Transport History* 11 (1990): 19–37; Elizabeth Wrangham, 'An African Road Revolution: The Gold Coast in the Period of the Great War', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 32, no. 1 (2004): 1–18; Jennifer Hart, *Ghana on the Go: African Mobility in the Age of Motor Transportation* (Indiana University Press, 2016); Komla Tsey, *From Head-Loading to the Iron Horse: Railway Building in Colonial Ghana and the Origins of Tropical Development* (Cameroon: Langaa Research and Publishing Common Initiative Group, 2013); Kurt Beck, Gabriel Klaeger, and Michael Stasik, *The Making of the African Road*, 2017.
[74] Allman and Parker, *Tongnaab*, 91.

Bolgatanga with the rest of West Africa thus represents the third layer of town growth. Having thereby assessed the themes and fields of enquiry that I deployed in studying Bolgatanga as a town, in the next section I will present the thesis research methods and sources.

Research methods and sources

Gareseko nde bogro.

Detailed enquiries are soothsaying.

Gurensi proverb

Urban history cannot be considered a «contained subdiscipline», otherwise its range and scope would be self-defeating, as suggested by John Peel[75]. To explain and analyse the process of urbanization in Bolgatanga, the thesis employs an interdisciplinary approach relying mainly on history and anthropology. Nonetheless, other disciplines such as architecture and geography inspired me and led me to modify in part my approach, as explained in the above discussion on the theoretical framework. I have also drawn on the wide variety of sources that mirrors this theoretical multiplicity and represents a constant in the methodology usually deployed for studying African history. As stressed by Carola Lentz, there is indeed a wide-ranging consensus on the fact that «African history can only be researched through a critical use of sources, a multi-perspectival approach, and reflecting on the interests and historical consciousness of the different actors and interpreters»[76]. This section intends to outline the sources used in this research and how they were read and interpreted. The main corpus of these sources comes from the archival records and ethnographic data I collected during research trips carried out between 2015 and 2019. I will proceed by first discussing the archival sources and then the ethnographic ones.

[75] Peel, 'Urbanization and Urban History in West Africa', 277.
[76] Carola Lentz, 'Of Hunters, Goats and Earth-Shrines: Settlement Histories and the Politics of Oral Tradition in Northern Ghana', *History in Africa* 27 (2000): 196.

Archival sources

I used two types of archival sources in this research, British colonial records and catholic missionaries' diaries and reports. The first set of documents was authored by the colonial staff who worked in the Northern Territories, and I consulted some of these records which are currently held at the National Archives in London, in the Bodleian Library in Oxford, and in the Public Records and Archives Administration Department in Ghana[77]. In reading and analysing these documents, what is most immediately striking is the degree of mutual diffidence between the Gurensi population and the colonial officers[78]. Ironically, the level of optimism that the officers expressed in many of their reports could be considered a marker of this diffidence and their distance from the African population. As Henrika Kucklick pointed out in her work on the British colonial administration, optimism in Gold Coast colonial reports (just like dissimulation in Nigeria) was strategically useful for concealing setbacks in the officers' work, such as the failure to implement orders or the unintended effects of colonial rule[79]. On the other side, the Gurensi people mistrusted colonial officers in the first decades of colonization even though in some instances this suspicion was not directly manifested[80]. Still today the people of the Upper East Region continue to contest the colonial past through narratives and recollections «pervaded by profound anticolonial sensibilities»[81].

However, familiarity between the British officers and the Gurensi locals increased as the years passed. The mutual curtain of diffidence did not disappear altogether, but it did fade slightly as the aims of the actors on each side became more evident to each other. This process went hand in hand with the establishment of so-called traditional authority and the preparation of the indirect rule[82]. As noted above, compromises were a constant feature in the enactment of the orders in Bolgatanga just as in the rest of the British colonies[83]. Over the years, people came to better understand the officers' minds and they made compromises to accommodate many of their requests; *vice versa*, each of the officers developed his personal way of interacting with locals and trying to achieve his objectives

[77] I consulted the documents preserved in Accra and Tamale. In the latter case most of the records have been digitized and are available online at https://eap.bl.uk/collection/EAP541-1. In the thesis, I indicated the link to the digitized document for easier consultation.
[78] The prejudices on the barbarity of the Gurensi and the source of these will be appropriately considered in the first chapters of the thesis, as I will point to the ways in which they biased many of the reports on the area.
[79] Henrika Kuklick, *The Imperial Bureaucrat: The Colonial Administrative Service in the Gold Coast, 1920-1939* (Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institution Press, 1979), 160.
[80] Examples are plentiful. In one of the first colonial reports on the area, Henry P. Northcott denounces reticence on the native part, Northcott, *Report on the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast*, 22. In the census of 1911 just one third of the population was counted, even if this was not made evident. Many statistics on the amount of trade were heavily approximated due to the trader avoidance of colonial posts.
[81] Ignatov, 'The Skin and the Stool: Re-Crafting Histories of Belonging in Northern Ghana', 155.
[82] On this see for example Lentz, 'Colonial Ethnography and Political Reform'; Martin Staniland, *The Lions of Dagbon: Political Change in Northern Ghana*, African Studies Series 16 (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 78.
[83] Kuklick, *The Imperial Bureaucrat*, 3.

while also learning some of their ways of life. In the middle, greasing the wheels of this process, stood the interpreters, constabulary and chiefs[84]. In the course of presenting this research, I will address how and when expressions of confidence, diffidence, prejudice and negotiations appeared in the colonial records.

The second group of sources that I used are the diaries and reports compiled by the White Fathers missionaries and collected in their Casa Generalizia in Rome. The Society of the Missionaries of Our Lady of Africa, also known as the White Fathers, was founded in 1868 by Cardinal Charles Lavigerie in North Africa[85] and they established their first mission in the Northern Territories in 1906. By 1905, following a series of anticlerical laws promulgated by the French government in response to the Dreyfus affair, the White Fathers decided to move from the Mossi region to the British territories and settle in Navrongo. In 1925 they opened a new station precisely in Bolgatanga, in a central part of the town not too far from where the Catholic cathedral stands today. In their efforts to convert locals, missionaries were driven to learn their culture, languages and practices. In the few first months after arriving, in fact, the White Fathers were required by their superiors to learn the language of the people they were trying to convert. Consequently, many of these reports are very rich in the kind of details that are missing from the main, colonial corpus of sources[86].

A certain degree of friction characterized the relations between the missionaries and the colonial officers from the moment they arrived[87]. The existence of the White Fathers' Catholic mission in the British territories was indeed directly related to the educational success of it. In the first decades of the 20th century, the British administration did not support the establishment of these stations. Instead, the officers put the missionaries and especially their schools to the test. Therefore, the successes and failures of their educational endeavour were crucial to their continued presence, a fact which explains the markedly over-celebratory tone of some parts of the missionaries' diaries. On the other side, this detachment with the colonial project is one of the strengths of this source, in that it provides a point of view which is disconnected from the colonial one. Clear examples of this divergent viewpoint can be seen in missionary reports denouncing the chief's abuse of some of the

[84] On the process of customary law production see Spear, 'Neo-Traditionalism and the Limits of Invention in British Colonial Africa'. For the role of the colonial employees see as key local figures of power see Emily Lynn Osborn, '"Circle of Iron": African Colonial Employees and the Interpretation of Colonial Rule in French West Africa', *The Journal of African History* 44, no. 1 (2003): 29–50; John Parker, 'The Dynamics of Fieldwork among the Talensi: Meyer Fortes in Northern Ghana, 1934–7', *Africa* 83, no. 04 (2013): 623–45.

[85] Adrian Hastings, *The Church in Africa: 1450-1950* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), 254.

[86] See for example Lapointe Gerard, *Table d'enquete sur les moeurs et coutumes indigenes*, Diocese de Navrongo (Mission de Bolgatanga), Tribus de Gurusi – Frafra, Documento n. 020193, Archives Générales des Missionnaires d'Afrique [A.G.M.Afr.], Rome

[87] Benedict G. Der, 'Church-State Relations in Northern Ghana, 1906-1940', *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* 15, no. 1 (1974): 41–61.

catholic converts in Bolgatanga, episodes that do not appear in the British records[88]. Furthermore, thanks to this source I was able to retrace the first unwritten agreement between the chief and the missionaries to lease the land where they built the mission[89]. This will be used as an essential testimony of the changes that were taking place in the land tenure of Bolgatanga in the 1920s and 1930s.

Ethnographic data

Present-day Bolgatanga is composed of fourteen different settlements: Tindonmoligo, Tindonsobiligo, Dapore-Tindongo, Tanzui, Atulbabisi, Zoobisi, Sokabisi, Pobaga, Bukere, Pologo, Dagmeo, Nawongo, Kumbangre, and Boosiyɛ'ɛ[90]. Colonial officers frequently experienced discomfort when trying to put together a comprehensive account of the past of the Gurensi region[91]. The scattered stories they collected differed in many respects[92], causing them mystification and bewilderment. As the first colonial ethnographer to work in the region, Robert Sutherland Rattray, put it, «the history of any of these tribes is always a composite record; it is the history of every clan of which the tribe is composed. The history of a clan is the history of the first head of that clan»[93]. Sixty years later, things had not changed for the ethnographers. Timothy Francis Garrard wrote that

> «[t]his apparent lack of a significant traditional history is due to the form of social organization adopted by the Frafra people. They consist of numerous family and clan units, each with a high degree of autonomy, and although chiefs exist their powers are relatively minor. In consequence the Frafra tend to view history as a record, not of their people as a whole, but of individual families and clans»[94].

Consequently, I am motivated to take indigenous concepts of belonging into account in part by the fact that the ways in which the past is preserved and recollected in the Gurensi region are deeply embedded in ancestors' worship and a cyclical conception of time, elements which affect the

[88] See chapter 5, § 5.4
[89] See chapter 5, § 5.4
[90] See Figure 1
[91] Still in 1932 officers felt frustrated in questioning the people on their past: «Talked about their olden days with their old men. It is very difficult to get to the real truth of all this, as at nearly every place one goes to, one hears a story which quite discounts the story one heard», National Archives of Ghana-Tamale [NAG-T], NRG 8/4/67, Informal Diary Navrongo District, 15.08.1932.
[92] For an insight on the plurality of the myths and their foundational features see Gaetano Mangiameli, *L'origine Plurale. Miti Di Fondazione Kassena* (Milano: Raffaello Cortina Editore, 2017).
[93] Rattray, *The Tribes of the Ashanti Hinterland*, 233.
[94] Timothy Francis Garrard, 'Brass-Casting among the Frafra of Northern Ghana' (Los Angeles, University of California, 1986), 3–4.

conception of space as well[95]. The production of narratives on the past is undoubtedly affected by these ontological pillars of Gurensi thought. Indeed, many scholars have noted that the process of recollecting the past in the Upper East Region is deeply embedded in people's genealogical narratives and territorial belonging, elements that should not be neglected[96].

Both the ethnographic collection of data and the anthropological interpretation of such data have thus proved invaluable for understanding and interpreting interviewees' accounts of their past. When I first arrived in the Upper East Region and conducted my first period of fieldwork in 2013, I focused on the organization of the marketplace in Bolgatanga and its history, interviewing mostly traders. Over time I enlarged the range and scope of my research to cover the whole town. Therefore, when I returned in 2015, I began by focusing not only on the central part of Bolgatanga, hosting its commercial core, but also the other settlements that compose its municipality, such as Bukere, Tanzui, Kumbosko, Gambibgo, in order to collect as many versions as possible of the histories of the various settlements currently included in the town. In collecting these interviews, I was highly aware that the current political agendas of the various factions and families that comprise the town today polarized the information gathered in the field[97]. Shortly before my departure, however, chieftaincy clashes intensified and violence ended up erupting in the town. People from an opposing faction assaulted with cutlasses one sub-chief visiting the other faction[98]. Fighting over chieftaincy was not a novelty in the region[99], but the fact that this incident was deeply embedded in conflicting claims rooted in the past meant that it caused widespread reticence among my informants[100]. It became increasingly dangerous, laborious and fruitless to interview people about the history of the town[101].

Meanwhile, I met Christopher Anabila Azaare, a retired teacher who has spent most of his life researching and writing on Gurensi culture and history. Since the 1970s he has conducted ethnographic research on many of the settlements located in Gurensi country. His work is invaluable

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[95] A work that reflect on the relationship between different notions of past and space in the Gurensi region is Christian Lund, 'The Past and Space: On Arguments in African Land Control', *Africa* 83, no. 01 (2013): 14–35.

[96] Mangiameli, *L'origine Plurale. Miti Di Fondazione Kassena*; Allman and Parker, *Tongnaab*, 20; Ignatov, 'The Skin and the Stool: Re-Crafting Histories of Belonging in Northern Ghana', 153.

[97] Regarding this point, see Richard Kuba and Carola Lentz, *Land Rights and the Politics of Belonging in West Africa* (Leiden: Brill, 2006). For insights into the complexity and interconnectedness of the clashes and conflicts going on in Bolgatanga today, one can see the works of Awedoba, *An Ethnographic Study of Northern Ghanaian Conflicts*; Lund, *Local Politics and the Dynamics of Property in Africa.*

[98] https://www.myjoyonline.com/news/2015/February-21st/5-injured-in-bolga-chieftaincy-clashes.php

[99] Awedoba, *An Ethnographic Study of Northern Ghanaian Conflicts*.

[100] This reticence was aggravated by a dispute between the holders of the tendaanaship and the chief's family and a conflict among the tendaanaship families themselves. Awedoba.

[101] Violent clashes continued in the following years and today they are still ongoing. See https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Five-shot-in-Bolga-chieftaincy-clash-427966#; https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/One-killed-2-injured-in-chieftaincy-clash-in-Bolgatanga-564694#; https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Houses-set-on-fire-in-Bolga-again-over-chieftaincy-dispute-769338; https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/One-dead-in-renewed-Bolga-chieftaincy-clash-725012

because it features accounts from many interviewees who are since deceased. Besides, he has crosschecked much of the information he collected through archival research he conducted at the Public Records and Archives Administration Department in Accra[102]. In this way, when I returned to Bolgatanga in 2018 I was able to conduct more interviews, and, at the same time, collaborate with Mr Azaare in editing part of his work and integrating the data he had collected with the information I had been able to gather during my previous ethnographic fieldworks and archival research. The last phase of my research consisted of analysing and crosschecking the material from the archival sources, the ethnographic data and Mr Azaare's manuscripts. In the course of this thesis, I will indeed compare these sources and examine differences and similarities between them.

Structure of the thesis

The thesis traces the spatial transformation of the settlement of Bolgatanaga in chronological order, from the end of the 19th century to the moment in which Gurensi people began to lease plots in the central part of the town to strangers, with this latter moment considered the definitive rupture with the past settlement pattern. As the thesis intends to present the historical dynamism of the Gurensi settlement pattern and the historical processes that subsumed its transformation, the first part will illustrate dwelling modes in the late 19th century. The main aim of the first chapter is to define the object of analysis, namely the Gurensi settlement, and to historically contextualize Bolgatanga. I present the main features that influenced the planning of the settlements and the drivers that directed their growth. Moreover, I introduce and analyse the popular historical account of Bolgatanga's foundation. This leads me to introduce the political context of Gurensi society at the turn of the century, a moment in which Bolgatanga was only one of many settlements with no political or commercial supremacy over the others. Nonetheless, the region was traversed by a thriving caravan network that linked it to the rest of West Africa. This conclusion clearly contrasts with the biases picture of Gurensi savageness and isolation painted by explorers' reports. This passage is crucial to understanding how and why the British administration considered and interacted with the Gurensi political milieu at the moment of its subsequent military occupation of the region.

[102] Many of his works are still unpublished, as for the published one see Azaare, 'Recollections of Past Events of British Colonial Rule in Northern Ghana, 1900-1956'. Some of Mr. Azaare will be also published in a forthcoming issue of the journal *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, in the *Local Intellectuals Series*.

The second chapter focuses precisely on British military raids and explores how these events framed the future political equilibriums in the region. Starting from the passage of the first colonial officers, the chapter recollects European efforts to conquer and subdue the people of the region. The first decade of the 20th century was critical in the establishment of alliances and liaisons between the British officers and the Gurensi. The chapter addresses the forms of resistance and collaboration enacted by the various communities and the position assumed by the men the British recognized as the "kings" or "chiefs" of the area. Indeed, it was in these years that officers introduced chieftaincy as a tool for the colonial government to control and govern the Gurensi. The chapter questions the supposed success of the British conquest of the area, arguing that the process was intensely negotiated and directed by the Africans. As a matter of fact, the alleged chief of Bolgatanga was able to secure his position of political prominence thanks to British backing and diplomatic and collaborative policy. Moreover, the chapter shows that colonial military intervention did not lead to the pacification and colonial control of the region, but instead introduced new forms of raiding practiced by mercenaries who participated in the British military occupation. In conclusion, I present the events that led to the foundation of the colonial posts in the area.

The third chapter presents the ideas behind the British commercial policies, the implementation of such policies, and how these affected trade balances in the Gurensi region. It focuses on the imposition of taxes and currency control and the ways traders crossing through and living in the region responded to these measures, thereby affecting the itineraries of the caravan routes and the success of the marketplaces. The foundation of colonial posts proved crucial for the success of the markets in their vicinity. Particular attention is devoted to studying of the multiple currencies that were used in the area and people's responses to colonial efforts to impose sterling coinage. The chapter presents the reasons why Bolgatanga became such a heavily trafficked commercial hotspot, explicitly arguing that this growth was a result of traders' efforts to avoid colonial stations in order to eschew British taxes and control over currencies.

The fourth chapter explores how the implementation of British administrative reforms brought about a rupture with the past settlement pattern and Gurensi social organization. I will show the logic behind the administrative division of the newly conquered areas, and how this division process created a close connection between the geographical range of chiefdom and the alleged boundaries of settlements. I then present the implementation of the administrative division of the north-eastern part of the Northern Territories, following the presumed boundaries of the past "Greater Mamprusi" kingdom. This partition was based on mistaken assumptions about the past form of northern societies which put them under the paramountcy of the secular leader of the Mamprusi, the Nayiri. The chapter analyses the role played by colonial intermediaries (mostly chiefs, interpreters and constabulary) in

the implementation of colonial policies. I will outline how colonial bureaucracy was linked to local figures of power in the Gurensi region. Given the way colonial employees and local elites filtered colonial policies, in fact, it is difficult to conclude that officers exercised thorough control over the areas assigned to them. Therefore, I will show that the institution of chieftaincy was secured and managed by the families who were able to acquire it in the moment of military occupation. The rest of the population manifested resentment and powerfully contested this state of affairs, however. The chapter will conclude by presenting the negotiations that took place between the District Commissioner and the chief of Bolgatanga to secure a privileged position for the town in the growing colonial road network.

The last chapter is devoted to Bolgatanga's transformation into a central interregional trade centre and recognized independent chiefdom during the 1920s and 1930s. I will describe how transportation patterns changed in this period and show how these changes related to the growing colonial infrastructural improvement. Trade increased exponentially in these years and with it the migratory flows crossing the town. In the same period, the chief also acquired more prominence in land transactions. The events surrounding the settlement of the White Fathers testify to the first land leasing for building purposes that could be found in the archives. The settlement pattern, therefore, underwent a marked rupture as compared to the past. Plots in the central part of the town were increasingly granted to strangers without interference on the part of the colonial state. The preparation and implementation of indirect rule confirmed this state of affairs. In the end, the political and fiscal centralization brought by this new colonial reform led the chief to manage the town's commercial potentiality directly.

Chapter 1
Bolgatanga in the 19th century

1.1 Introduction

By the end of the 19th century Bolgatanga was not a town, rather the fusion of different settlements the planning of which responded eminently to kinship, agricultural, commercial and ritual needs. These needs also dictated the main guidelines that shaped the compounds' building and location, inscribing in this way the Gurensi social organization in the landscape itself. The settlements were there long before the arrival of the Europeans, but colonial sources suggest that due to the unrest and violence of the 19th century these were close and isolated units. The core argument of this section is that, at the turn of the century, the settlements that composed Bolgatanga were coordinated units, not bounded and isolated as colonial explorers and officers would later describe. The aim is to ascertain how the settlements were connected and how the Gurensi people set their dwelling landscape at the end of the 19th century. What made a community in the Gurensi region? To answer this question, I will consider both the indigenous settlement pattern and the indigenous articulations of the past. As the chapter will show, both are inextricably linked and reveal the reasons behind the Gurensi spatial and social organization.

By 1890s, a high degree of violence and movements of people characterized the political and economic context of what was labelled "Ashanti hinterland", distinguished, nonetheless, by a growing network of trade. Bolgatanga was in the middle of a region inhabited by a cluster of noncentralized societies that weaved contrasting and changing relationships within them and with their more centralized neighbours. The first section of the chapter intends to give an account of these complex set of relationships, showing the economic and political connections that tied the Gurensi with the adjacent societies and the rest of West Africa. The relationships with centralized societies such as those of Mossi and Mamprusi can be sketched highlighting a general pattern and were profoundly

affected by the slave trade. Nonetheless, this did not preclude contact and commerce amongst them. I will therefore show that by the end of the 19th century the Gurensi region was not isolated from the rest of West Africa, as the colonial officers assumed.

The analysis of the internal dynamics of the Gurensi needs a higher focus and a more specific point of view that takes into consideration their social structure and their settlement pattern. As suggested by Carola Lentz, the indigenous concepts of belonging are a useful tool on which to rely to build an analysis for the pre-colonial period on the noncentralized groups that inhabited the Volta Basin[1]. In the case of the Gurensi, these concepts are articulated in the notions of *yire* (house/compound) and that of *teŋa* (settlement). In order to understand the spatial organization of Bolgatanga at the turn of the century, the second part of the chapter will present the Gurensi concepts of belonging in their theoretical articulation and spatial outcome. The first part will deal with the notion of *yire*, the basic architectural and social unit of the region. The house represented indeed the key unit of the settlement pattern, epitomized by the *teŋa*. The analysis of the settlement organization will be the core of the second part, in which I present the settlement pattern of the region. This will be the first stage for the analysis of the process of urbanization of Bolgatanga. The spatial and social configuration of the settlement is our entry point to understand Gurensi planning and its political and economic changes over the years.

The fourth section of the chapter will deal directly with endogenous articulations of the past. Namely, I will present and discuss the foundation histories of Bolgatanga. The analysis of the settlement pattern will be extremely useful for the understanding and contextualization of these narrations. This section will show the different purposes that these histories address and what they reveal about the past of Bolgatanga. The fluid and situational socio-political asset that the region had in the 19th century will be confirmed together with the absence of any institution that could be identified as chieftaincy. These conclusions will be crucial to understand the changes that would later affect the settlements in the colonial period and lead to the process of urbanization. Another element that affected the process of urbanization in Bolgatanga in the 20th century has been its market. The last part of this section will present the role that it had on the broader caravan network by the end of the 19th century.

In conclusion, the Gurensi communities that inhabited the region followed in this period a kinship-based pattern of residence. These relationships resulted in a dispersed outline and affected the spatial organization of the settlement. Even if not completely understood, the Europeans who passed through the Gurensi country soon noticed this characteristic. The first descriptions of the

[1] Lentz, *Ethnicity and the Making of History in Northern Ghana*, 16.

settlements revealed the bewilderment and the bias of the explorers who travelled in the region. They tried to recognize centres, villages or towns in the settlement pattern but were struck by their absence. In making comparisons with the neighbouring communities such as the Mamprusi, and adopting their prejudices, the British officers linked the absence of clearly recognizable urban formation to the primitiveness associated to the Gurensi[2]. The last part of the chapter will then present these colonial prejudices. The analysis of the architectural and social criteria that guided the conceptualization of Gurensi settlements allows overcoming the colonial point of view. It is essential to delineate the relationship and knowledge that colonial officers had on the Gurensi. This operation will indeed clarify the role that the officers had in shaping the future of the town, and the nature of the relationship that bound Africans and Europeans together.

[2] In the next chapter this adoption will be better considered.

1.2 The Gurensi region at the end of the 19th century

The slave trade in the Gurensi region: raiding mercenaries and internal pawning

The Mossi and Mamprusi kingdoms occupied respectively the northern and southern boundaries of the clusters of noncentralized societies of which the Gurensi of Bolgatanga were a part of. The Gurensi kept themselves independent from these neighbouring kingdoms, even though it is not possible to delineate a clear territorial demarcation between them[3]. Nevertheless, their relationship was partly featured by a violent component, in that the latter was prone to raid these territories in search for slaves. Giving an account of the slave trade in these territories is then a necessary step in that it will highlight the kind of historical context in which the Gurensi were living at the end of the 19th century. Showing in which way the slave trade inserted itself in the broader networks of commerce and those who took part in it will help to understand the relationship between them. The slave trade was, in fact, a business in which people from centralized and noncentralized societies, raiding mercenaries, Europeans and passing merchants contributed in their own way, and all parts took their share of the profit, with the exception of the enslaved people.

While the Atlantic slave trade began its decline in the 1820s, the trans-Saharan one continued at least until the first years of the 20th century[4]. In what is today northern Ghana, Benedict Der asserts that before the 18th century the trade in human beings was not flourishing, even though domestic slavery was common among both centralized and noncentralized societies[5]. From 1744, when the Asante invaded the Gonja and Dagbon kingdoms, the latter were compelled to pay a tribute in slaves

[3] For a history of the Mossi-Dagomba societies see Ivor Wilks, 'The Mossi and the Akan States, 1400 to 1800', in *History of West Africa*, by Jacob Festus Ade Ajayi and Michael Crowder, vol. 1 (London: Longman, 1971), 413–55; Alfred Asaana Iliasu, 'The Establishment of British Administration in Mamprugu, 1898-1937', *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* 16, no. 1 (1975): 1–28. On the inexistence of defined borders between Mamprusi and Gurensi see Ladouceur, *Chiefs and Politicians: The Politics of Regionalism in Northern Ghana*, 29; Kwame Arhin, ed., *The Papers of George Ekem Ferguson.*, African Social Research Documents (Leiden; Cambridge: Afrika-Studiecentrum; African Studies Center, 1974), 74.

[4] Joseph E Inikori et al., *The Atlantic Slave Trade Effects on Economies, Societies and Peoples in Africa, the Americas, and Europe* (Duke University Press, 1992); Ghislaine Lydon, *On Trans-Saharan Trails: Islamic Law, Trade Networks, and Cross-Cultural Exchange in Nineteenth-Century Western Africa* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

[5] Benedict G. Der, *The Slave Trade in Northern Ghana* (Accra: Woeli Publishing Services, 1998).

and started to raid their noncentralized neighbours. If Dagomba raided mainly Konkomba, Basari and Moba, Mamprusi attacked the Gurensi/Frafra[6]. According to this interpretation, the area around Bolgatanga was, therefore, a raiding ground for southern marauders. However, Benjamin Talton underlines that these histories of systematic raids became in the colonial period a political tool for the centralized societies to assert their supremacy over the noncentralized ones[7]. Therefore, if raids were carried out, their systematic pattern is doubtful.

The traffic in slaves flourished in the 19th century, and Salaga became one of the major trading towns. Indeed, it grew as the main Asante commercial outpost in Gonja dealing with the caravans from the North, coming as far as the Kano caliphate[8]. The work of Marion Johnson gave us an incredible quantity of details about this centre and the trade it was hosting[9]. A cosmopolitan town, with the Hausa as *lingua franca*, Salaga accommodated merchants and wares from the key trading hubs of West Africa. The primary dealers that sold "Grunshi" slaves were the Hausa and Mossi merchants, who purchased them from the slave raiders or captured them along the trade routes[10]. Among the buyers, there were also the British officers who enrolled these "Grunshis" for their constabulary[11]. After 1874, this trade and Salaga in particular received a sudden decline. With the defeat of Asante by the British army, Gonja and Dagbon stopped paying their tribute in human lives. Both states freed themselves from the tribute to Asante, and gradually their raiding operations ceased[12]. In 1892 a civil war, fomented by British and German antagonism, erupted in Salaga, devastating it[13]. Finally, in 1897 the British entered the town and compelled the chief to sign a treaty that formally banished the trading of slaves.

In this context, the theory of the predatory state against the passive noncentralized victims has proved incorrect and incomplete in that it creates easy dichotomies that misread the historical context[14]. Two main reasons lead to this conclusion. Firstly, the noncentralized societies were not passive victims but were able to defend themselves. A concrete example of this is the architecture of the domestic compound, built to conform to strategic defensive purposes. Secondly, the Gurensi took

[6] Der, 11.
[7] Benjamin Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana: The Konkomba Struggle for Political Equality*, 1st ed (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), 31.
[8] Paul E. Lovejoy, 'Polanyi's "Ports of Trade": Salaga and Kano in the Nineteenth Century', *Canadian Journal of African Studies / Revue Canadienne Des Études Africaines* 16, no. 2 (1982): 245–77.
[9] Marion Johnson, 'The Slaves of Salaga', *The Journal of African History* 27, no. 2 (1986): 341–362; Marion Johnson, *Salaga Papers* (Legon: Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, 1965).
[10] Johnson, 'The Slaves of Salaga'; Der, *The Slave Trade in Northern Ghana*, 19.
[11] Johnson, 'The Slaves of Salaga'; Binger, *Du Niger au Golfe de Guinée*, 2:34.
[12] Der, *The Slave Trade in Northern Ghana*, 19.
[13] Johnson, 'The Slaves of Salaga', 343; Braimah and Goody, *Salaga*.
[14] Martin A. Klein, 'The Slave Trade and Noncentralized Societies', *The Journal of African History* 42, no. 01 (2001): 49–65; Mangiameli, 'L'invenzione precoloniale dei Gurunsi. Le razzie schiaviste e la genesi di un etnonimo in Africa occidentale'; Allman and Parker, *Tongnaab*, 28.

an active role in the trade, selling and capturing people from time to time, although they had never been slave traders. Among them and the other noncentralized societies, slavery was practised mainly through kidnapping and pawning.

Der claims that both these practices were not common in the 18th century, even though they started to flourish later[15]. Pledging was indeed considered a legitimate way of establishing social obligations and therefore, it may have been quite frequent. The Gurensi historian Christopher Azaare, in describing kinship relation in this period writes that

> one important thing also worthy of note is the fact that in those days the parent or father was omnipotent about his power over his children. It was a very common thing for parents to pledge their children for debt and these children became wives to the man who they were pledged with as soon as they were old enough[16].

However, the anthropologist Robert S. Rattray noted in 1928 that this kind of pawning was made mainly among people of the same clan, or it would have meant selling the person[17]. Among the Gurensi, not everyone could practise the slave trade. The only ones allowed to do so were those directly related to Mamprugu through the office of the *naam*[18].

In any case, the slave trade did not end with the fall of Salaga. By the second half of the 19th century, following a broader trend of Muslim expansion in West Africa, a group of warriors and mercenaries, the Zabarima, started to operate as slave raiders in the territories of the noncentralized societies, especially among the Kasena and their neighbours[19]. They first settled in Dagomba, following their leader Alfa Hano, «as traders, mercenaries, or malams, or perhaps as all three»[20]. If they started as mercenaries and raiders, with time they got richer and enlarged their army, becoming a recognized military power in the region. The peak of their activity was around 1880 when Babatu became their leader. He increased their raiding activities and started more campaigns of expansion. The presence and activities of the Zabarima raiders stimulated, therefore, the business of slaves,

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[15] Der, *The Slave Trade in Northern Ghana*, 12; Duperray, *Les Gourounsi de Haute-Volta*, 37. For archival examples of pawning in times of famine see National Archives of Ghana [hereafter NAG] ADM 68/5/1, Zouaragu Station Official Diary, entry for 15.12.1913; NAG ADM 11/1/824, Essays by Assistant District Commissioners on tribal history, Navarro District, p. 18

[16] Christopher Anabila Azaare, 'Bongo Clan and Skin History' (Unpublished manuscript).

[17] Rattray, *The Tribes of the Ashanti Hinterland*, 263. From a juridical point of view, this kind of domestic slavery was not considered illegitimate by the British and therefore was not obstructed. See Northcott, *Report on the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast*, 32–33.

[18] Rattray, *The Tribes of the Ashanti Hinterland*, 260; 264. An example of this is the history of the Azorobisi section of Sumbrungu, originally composed by Mossi slaves owned by the chief of Sumbrungu. See NAG ADM 68/5/5, Zuarungu District Record Book, "Sumbrungu"

[19] For a detailed account of the Zabarima see Jeff J. Holden, 'The Zabarima Conquest of North-West Ghana Part I', *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* 8 (1965): 60–86; Duperray, *Les Gourounsi de Haute-Volta*, 61; Myron J. Echenberg, 'Late Nineteenth-Century Military Technology in Upper Volta', *The Journal of African History* 12, no. 2 (1971): 241–54; Nehemia Levtzion, *Muslims and chiefs in West Africa: a study of Islam in the Middle Volta Basin in the pre-colonial period* (Oxford: Clarendon Pr., 1968).

[20] Holden, 'The Zabarima Conquest of North-West Ghana Part I', 60.

weapons and horses. This led to the rising of new market centres, such as Wa[21]. As Holden puts it, «the Zabarima conquest brought, if not peace and prosperity, at least a greater degree of security for commerce, and a heavier, more diversified, trade network, than had existed before»[22].

In conclusion, the slave trade had two main consequences for the area of study. The first one is that, even if a certain degree of insecurity characterized the area, commerce increased because of the activities of the Zabarima raiding mercenaries. However, the Zabarima were not the only ones who benefited from the slave trade: the Gurensi, the British and the passing merchants also took a share in it. The second consequence was that the slave trade directly influenced the demography of the area[23]. The raids set in motion migrations from the most disturbed regions to the more peaceful ones, such as that of Bolgatanga[24]. The slave trade was part of the caravan commerce that flowed in the region. I will now turn to these routes and how they affected the Gurensi area.

The caravan network: violence and commerce on West African trade routes

Violence and slave raiding were, of course, not the only facets of the relationship between the Mamprusi, Mossi and Gurensi. Mamprugu, a centralized kingdom akin to Mossi and Dagbon and whose influence reached the Talensi area, features in some of the mythical narratives told to recollect the origin of the Gurensi settlements. As I will consider in detail later, Bolgatanga and its region fit in an overall narrative familiar to many noncentralized groups in the Volta Basin that traces the origin of the actual social system to an ancient encounter between an autochthonous clan (the *Tindaanbisi*) and an invading one (the *Nabisi*). However, many Gurensi settlements were independent from the Mamprusi kingdom, even though the two societies were not entirely isolated. This section intends therefore to clarify the connections, especially the commercial ones, between the Gurensi region and their neighbours at the end of the 19th century.

[21] Wilks, *Wa and the Wala: Islam and Polity in Northwestern Ghana*, 112–15.
[22] Holden, 'The Zabarima Conquest of North-West Ghana Part I', 65.
[23] Benjamin W. Kankpeyeng, 'The Slave Trade in Northern Ghana: Landmarks, Legacies and Connections', *Slavery & Abolition* 30, no. 2 (2009): 209–21; Der, *The Slave Trade in Northern Ghana*, 29–30.
[24] Holden speculates that the Zabarima, under the leadership of Alfa Gazare, could have once raided the Gurensi region, near Sirigu. However, by his own admission, this is just an assumption, see Holden, 'The Zabarima Conquest of North-West Ghana Part I', n. 48. Apart from the veracity of it and considering the extent of Zabarima military campaigns, it is highly probable that the Bolgatanga area suffered fewer raids than the other ones. The raiders' movements are difficult to trace, both for the absence of sources and for a certain reticence of the people when talking about the slave trade. However, as I will show in the next chapter, the first British report of the area reveals that destruction and depopulation were not the main features observed in the region. On the contrary, the area distinguished itself for the density of the population. Furthermore, Azaare too states that the end of the 19th century was a period of increased migration to the Gurensi country, especially from Mamprugu and Dagomba. Azaare, 'Life in Bolga'.

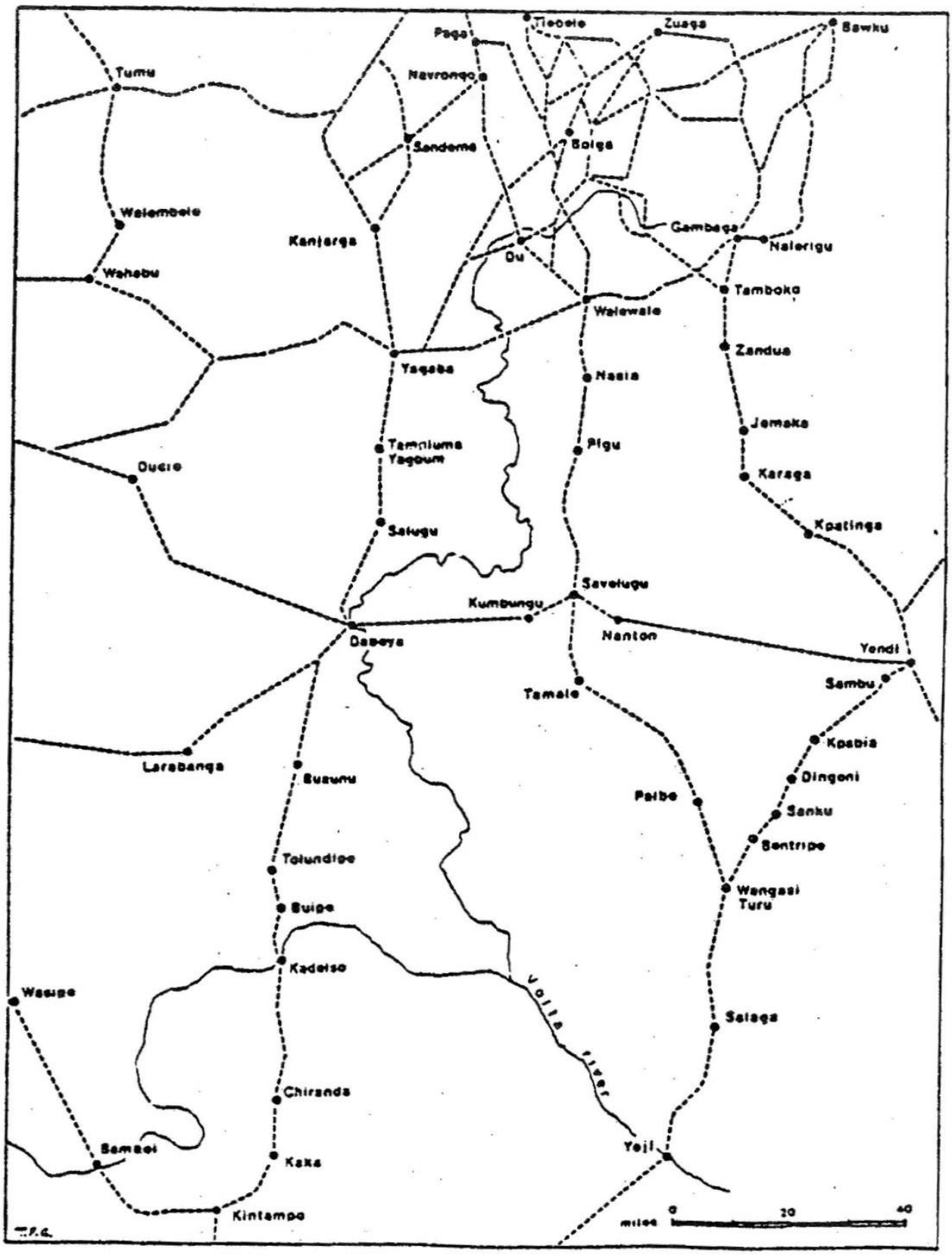

Figure 2. Caravan Routes in the central savanna of Northern Ghana, ca. 1900

Source: Garrard, 'Brass-Casting among the Frafra of Northern Ghana', 58

As suggested by Azaare, the settling of Mamprusi immigrants in the Gurensi region, such as those in Tongo, Bongo and Nangodi, could have been motivated by their interest to intervene directly on the trade network that crossed the region[25], but there are no sources that indicate these movements of people. However, the establishment of merchants' posts in specific points of the caravan network and especially in less peaceful places was not a rarity along these routes[26]. The Gurensi region was indeed in the middle of a long-established caravan network that connected the northern Mossi kingdoms and the Kano and Sokoto caliphates with the Asante and Akan coastal societies[27]. On these routes salt, slaves, kola nuts, cattle were traded using multiple currencies such as cowries, gold and cloth.

The southern caravan routes that served as far as Gambaga and Walewale gave gradually way to a thick grid of footpaths in the Gurensi region[28]. The caravans travelled on this network of smaller paths that crossed the settlements, where often rose the local markets. According to Garrard, the footpaths offered two advantages: efficiency and security[29]. Firstly, their number enabled the merchants to tap the resources of the markets along them in the most efficient manner. Secondly, if a threat arose along one path or climatic conditions such as floods modified the state of the route, the caravan could have rapidly diverted its course to another one. In this dense network, one can easily see the importance of travel experience and the necessity of guides to traverse it. This grid of paths remained the primary communication network in the area of Bolgatanga until the construction of bigger roads in the following years and the future connection with an improved system of motorable roads in the 1920s[30].

The caravan network started to flourish increasingly from the 18th century, as the slave trade took a significant share of it. Heading south, through Walewale, Yendi or Salaga, or going north to Ouagadougou, the merchants on these routes stopped in several towns and attended their markets, determining their prosperity or decline. Apart from the more prominent commercial centres, the network was dotted by smaller local markets too, especially in the Gurensi area, which provided the passing caravans with food, livestock and handicrafts[31]. As Garrard puts it, «the records leave no doubt that Northern Ghana was the scene of vigorous commercial activity, and one is struck by the

[25] Azaare, 'Life in Bolga'.
[26] Kwame Arhin, 'Transit Market in the Asante Hinterland in the Late Nineteenth Century', *Odu* 9 (1974): 5–22; Duperray, *Les Gourounsi de Haute-Volta,* 45.
[27] See Figure 2 for a map of these routes in northern Ghana.
[28] Garrard, 'Brass-Casting among the Frafra of Northern Ghana', 62–67. He attempted to reconstruct in detail this network of paths, finding more than nine small routes that crossed the Gurensi region. For the main trade routes in 1906 see also TNA CO 98/16, Administration Reports, Northern Territories of the Gold Coast, Report for 1906, pp. 8-9
[29] Garrard, 65.
[30] Regarding this point, see chapters 3 and 5.
[31] This feature of the Gurensi settlement pattern will be analysed further.

international character of the trade»[32]. The merchants that participated in the long-distance network and that crossed the Gurensi region were mostly from two ethnic groups: the Mossi and the Hausa[33]. These were also the leading trading communities that settled in Bolgatanga, whose establishment I will consider further. Enid Schildkrout indicates that the Mossi migrations in northern Ghana were particularly strong since the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century[34].

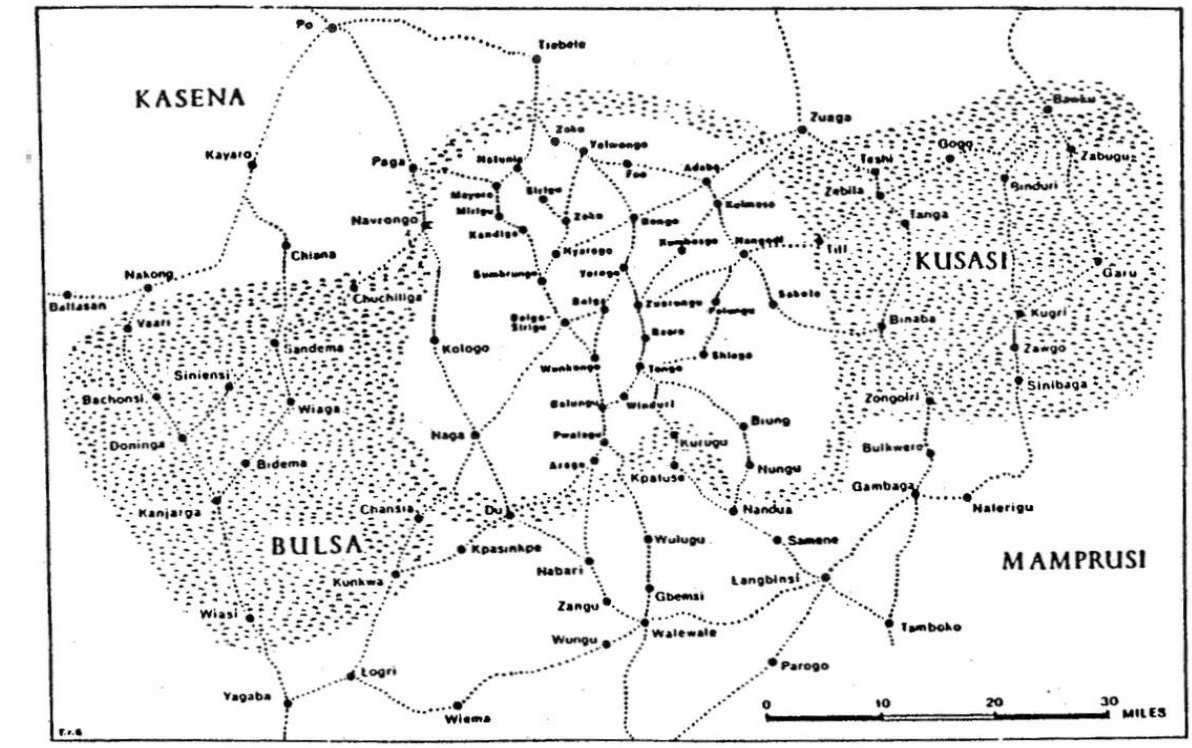

Figure 3. Trade routes through the Bulsa, Frafra and Kusasi areas, ca. 1900

Source: Garrard, 'Brass-Casting among the Frafra of Northern Ghana', 64

A twofold attitude characterized the relationship between the Gurensi and the passing caravans, a relationship not less ambiguous than the one with the neighbouring Mamprusi[35]. Even though the Gurensi traded their agricultural products and purchased the goods carried by the merchants, violence was nonetheless a component of their relations. On one side, the caravans, often moving armed, did indulge in slave raiding along their paths, especially in places where people were not able to defend themselves. On the other side, the Gurensi were prone to banditry and raiding the caravans[36]. Meyer

[32] Garrard, 'Brass-Casting among the Frafra of Northern Ghana', 73.
[33] Arhin, *The Papers of George Ekem Ferguson.*, 100.
[34] Schildkrout, *People of the Zongo*, 57.
[35] Binger wrote: «Les noir eux-memes marchands et autres, ne parlent qu'avec un certain effroi du Gourounsi et de ses habitants» Binger, *Du Niger au Golfe de Guinée*, 2:48.
[36] The Gurensi raiding activities will analysed in the next section.

Fortes suggests that raiding was a legitimate method of "self-help" either for collecting a debt, in severe times of famine or for acquiring more wealth[37].

Even though this created a certain degree of insecurity along the roads, it did not stop the trade network. In the 19th century, violence was part of Gurensi life, but it did not represent the main feature and did not impede communications and the developing of social and commercial networks in the region. As John Parker argues, although the region was not in a peaceful state, «physical movement and cross-cultural interaction were certainly possible»[38]. Goods as salt, brass or iron were essential to Gurensi life, and it would be short-sighted to think that trade was not flowing in the region. As Garrard suggests, by the turn of the 19th century the Gurensi were «by no means cut off from the broader currents of trade»[39].

In conclusion, notwithstanding the violence linked to the slave trade that characterized the region at the end of the 19th century, trade remained steady and increased rather. Moreover, groups of traders usually settled along the caravan routes that crossed the Gurensi area, as in the case of Bolgatanga. However, before taking into consideration the settling of foreign groups of merchants in the Gurensi area, I will consider the indigenous settlement pattern at the turn of the century. This will allow me to present the Gurensi social and spatial organization, one inextricably related to the other.

[37] Fortes, *The Dynamics of Clanship among the Tallensi*, 72–73. The so-called "self-help" method in the noncentralized societies was also used as a way to avoid that small disputes escalated in violent open conflicts. Regarding this point and, more generally, the way feuding was instrumental in maintaining social balance among the Konkomba in the colonial period see Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana*, 47.

[38] John Parker, 'Earth and Shadow: Substance, Medicine and Mobility in the History of Ghana's Tongnaab Shrines', *Anthropology & Medicine* 18, no. 2 (2011): 262.

[39] Garrard, 'Brass-Casting among the Frafra of Northern Ghana', 29.

1.3 The Gurensi settlement pattern at the end of the 19th century

Compound building and the Gurensi domestic unit: the yire

Still today, *yire* is a flexible concept that indicates both the compound in its materiality and the family that inhabits it. There is no distinction between the two in Gurene, as also noted by other scholars for the Talensi, a neighbouring group[40]. This polysemy is revealing about the importance of having a house: a house means family, and family means children, «the vehicles of […] immortality»[41]. The identification between the architecture of the house and the kinship group that reside within it is manifest, and it is a feature shared with most of the noncentralized groups that occupy this part of the Volta Basin. Moreover, as indicated by Lentz, with the similar Dagara concept of *yir*, it transcends ethnic boundaries, and it did not impede mobility and exchange among different groups[42]. Robert S. Rattray was one of the first to study the vocabulary used to indicate the domestic spaces[43]. The Gurensi names referring to the different spaces of the house did not go through a radical change in the last century. Obviously, over the years there have been variations in the composition of the materials used for building and in certain other domestic features (e.g. electricity, water pipes, plastic, zinc and cement). However, when referring to a 'traditional' compound, the layout of the building and the names of the spaces have remained mostly the same[44].

Before taking into consideration the kinship role in shaping the compounds and how it affected the overall arrangement of the settlements, this section will analyse the architectural and material structure of the Gurensi home at the turn of the century. Spatiality and sociality, in this case, house

[40] Meyer Fortes, *The Web of Kinship among the Tallensi* (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the International African Institute, 1949), 44; Labelle Prussin, *Architecture in Northern Ghana: A Study of Forms and Functions* (Berkeley: Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1969), 60.
[41] Fortes, *The Web of Kinship among the Tallensi*, 46; Jean-Paul Bourdier and Trinh T. Minh-Ha, *African Spaces, Designs for Living in Upper Volta* (New York: Africana Publishing Corp., 1985), 174. For the importance of having a child in the Gurensi country see Rattray, *The Tribes of the Ashanti Hinterland*, 131.
[42] Lentz, *Ethnicity and the Making of History in Northern Ghana*, 16–18.
[43] Rattray, *The Tribes of the Ashanti Hinterland*, 247.
[44] A comparison can be made between the names used in Rattray's *The tribes of the Ashanti Hinterland*, those used by Bourdier's and Minh-Ha's *African Spaces, Designs for Living in Upper Volta* and the ones I use in the chapter keeping in mind the slight language variations of the area.

and family, were inextricably associated. The house was indeed the epicentre of Gurensi life, in its social, political and economic dimension. As it will be clear, the compound was the architectural projection of family development and, at the same time, the container of the primary wealth of a family, the livestock and the barn.

Figure 4. The "bagere", the shrine dedicated to the male ancestors

The picture on the left is taken from Smith, Fred T. 'Compound Entryway Decoration Male Space and Female Creativity'. African Arts 19, no. 3 (1986): 52. The image on the right is a sketch drew by the CCNT in 1915 taken from TNA CO 96/557, Despatches, Tong Hill Fetish, Governor to Harcourt, 22.04.1915, enc. Extract from diary of the Chief Commissioner of the Northern Territories.

A basic layout of the compound can be sketched as follows. This layout can be applied to the entire Gurensi country and in part even to the neighbouring people such as the Talensi, the Nabdam and the Kasena[45]. Circular farms (*samane*), interrupted only by radial paths (*sadoo*) that led to the entrances of the compound, surrounded every domestic unit. It was common at the entrance of the house to find a shrine to the male ancestor (*bagere*), usually the one who first built the compound. One of the first British military reports states: «As far as it was possible to see they appear to have a religion of their own, as there are, in cases, altars, or what looks as if meant for that purpose, in front

[45] Ian Archer, 'Nabdam Compounds, Northern Ghana', in *Shelter in Africa*, by P. Oliver (New York: Praeger, 1971); Cassiman, *Stirring Life: Women's Paths and Places among the Kasena of Northern Ghana*; Nick Gabrilopoulos, Charle Mather, and Caesar Roland Apentiik, 'Lineage Organisation of the Tallensi Compound: The Social Logic of Domestic Space in Northern Ghana', *Africa* 72, no. 02 (2002): 221–44; John M. Hunter, 'The Social Roots of Dispersed Settlement in Northern Ghana', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 57, no. 2 (1967): 338–49; Mangiameli, *L'origine Plurale. Miti Di Fondazione Kassena*.

of the compounds»[46]. The *yire* was entirely walled for defensive purposes. The main gate (*yaŋa*) usually pointed West in the opposite direction of the winds that blow in the rainy season. In front of the main gate stood the *zanɔre*, a typical male space, where the residents kept the shrines of their male ancestors. It was followed by a courtyard used as a cattle-pen (*nagedene*). This contained the main wealth of the family: the cattle and the barn (*baarɛ*). As for the Talensi, the barn was, as a tendency, built at the centre of the compound[47], with a small wall (*bɛsega*) that connected the cattle-pen with the rest of the house, the human space. This was a common courtyard (*zinzaka*), linked with the kitchen (*daaŋa*) and the main rooms (*bɔ'ɔrɔ*), a space dominated by women, where the female ancestors' shrines were kept. The first wife of the elder male, the head of the family, was in the room next to his (*deya-aŋa*). This was one of the most important rooms in the house, the one belonging to the first wife of the family head. In this flat-roofed room, a series of ritual services were carried out, as keeping the corpse of a dead relative before the funeral or protecting new-borns in their first days against evil spirits. Usually, the shrines to the female ancestress were kept close to this room. When subsequent wives eventually arrived, more rooms were built to accommodate them and their children, but only one *deya-aŋa* could be in the house.

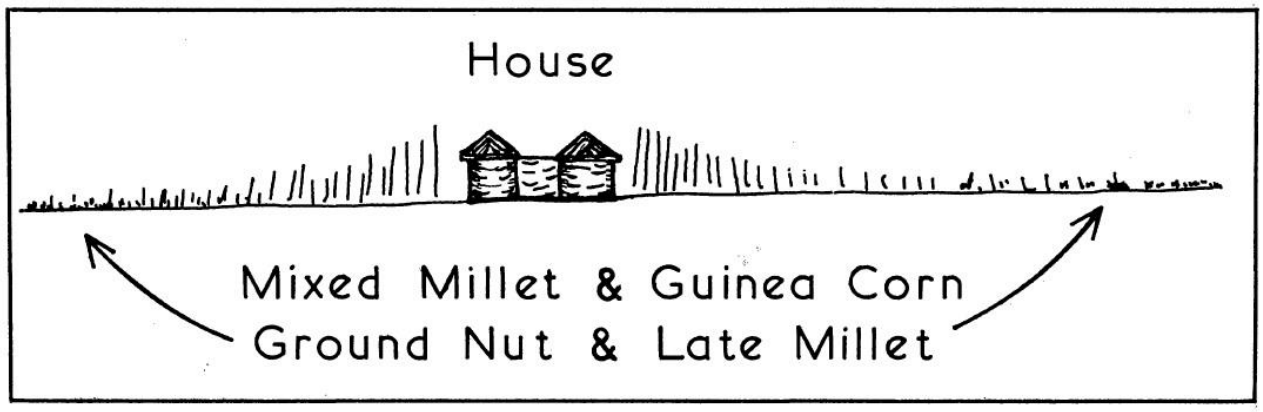

Figure 5. Section of a compound

Source: Hunter, 'The Social Roots of Dispersed Settlement in Northern Ghana', 341

The alignment from East to West was crucial in Gurensi ontology, and the architecture and the orientation of the house reflect this alignment. Starting from the room of the first wife, the feminine space par excellence, the courtyard followed, then the cattle-pen and the barn, to reach the typically masculine space of the *zanɔre* and the male ancestors' shrines. Symbolically this orientation could be intended as the journey from life (represented by the feminine space) to death (the male

[46] TNA CO 879/54, Further Correspondence relating to the Northern Territories, July-Dec. 1898, Director of Military Intelligence to Colonial Office, 28.07.1898, enclosure 1, Report on Mamprusi by Cap. W.G. Murray
[47] Fortes, *The Web of Kinship among the Tallensi*, 56; Northcott, *Report on the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast*, 29.

space)[48]. It is no coincidence that deaths were announced on the west side of the compound and births on the roof of the first wife's room, on the east side of it. This contrasted with the symbolic chiasm of the positioning of the corpse in the burials. In this case, men were interred facing East and women facing West[49].

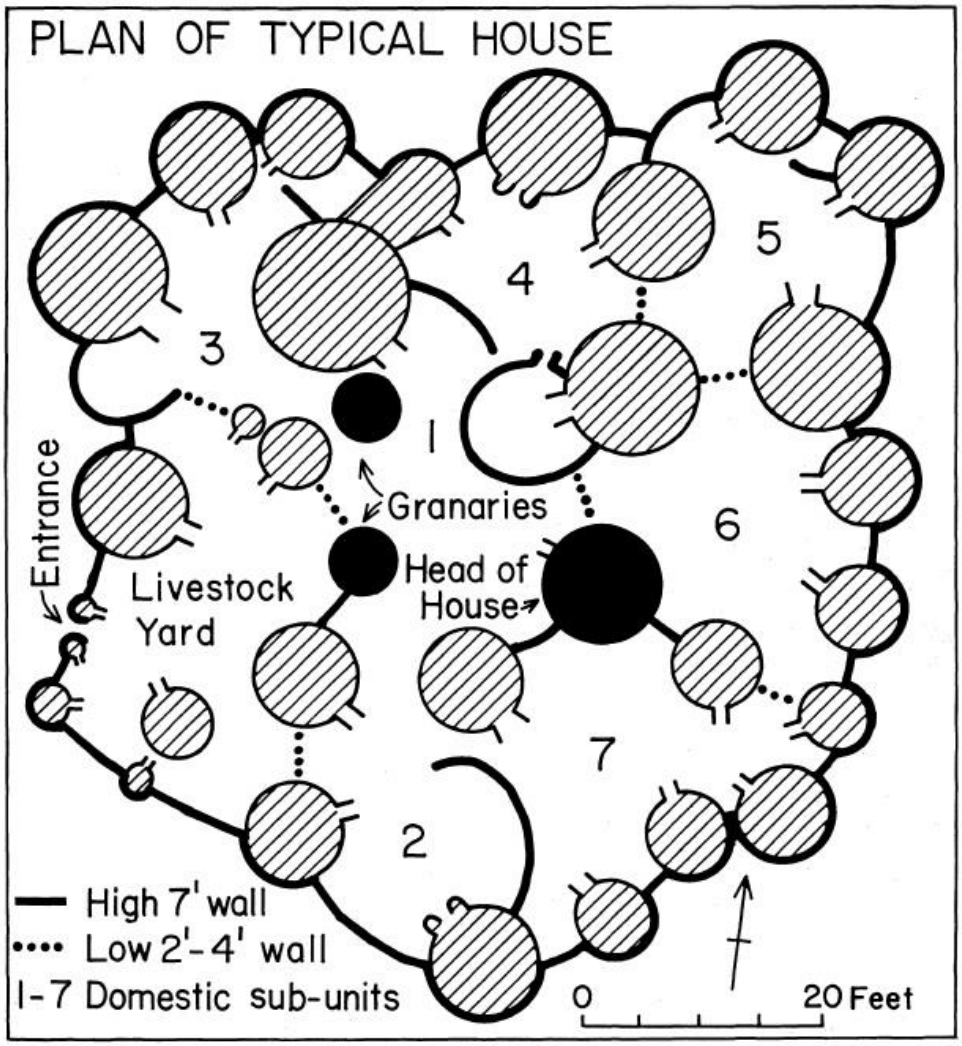

Figure 6. Compound plan

Source: Hunter, 'The Social Roots of Dispersed Settlement in Northern Ghana', 343

As it is clear from the above description, the ancestor cult, agriculture and livestock were integral parts of Gurensi domestic life. However, what shaped the settlements was their kinship and ritual relationships. The next section will provide an account of the social and material conditions that

[48] Ron Eglash stretch further the influence Gurensi ontology has on the vernacular architectural design. He suggests that the compounds' architectural structure follows a fractal principle, whose recursion and scaling echoes the various stages of life. An example of this is childbirth and the rites associated with it, which dictate a gradual path of the child from the *deya-aŋa* to the outermost space. Ron Eglash, *African Fractals: Modern Computing and Indigenous Design* (Rutgers University Press, 1999), 32–34.

[49] This seems to be done to recollect their occupations: the man will see the rising sun and go to farm, and the woman will see the setting sun and start preparing the evening meals. Azaare, 'Life in Bolga'.

guided the planning of the Gurensi settlements. It will show how the development of the single compounds guided the planning of the settlement.

The kinship structure of the settlements: the development of the domestic unit

To understand the processes that shaped the settlements' outline in the region, it is necessary to turn to the spatial development of the domestic units in their spreading over the landscape. Therefore, this section aims to analyse these processes and to show how the domestic units assembled to form a Gurensi settlement following kinship rules. Still today, the land inheritance pattern of the area has indeed been recognized as one of the main drivers of urbanization[50]. In order to analyse the urbanization process in Bolgatanga, it is therefore unavoidable to take into consideration the kinship element in the organization of the settlement. In this first part, I will consider the kinship organization and the material and environmental considerations that guided the compound planning.

There was no a word in Gurune (nor is there one now) to indicate an urban entity such as a town or a village. Rattray already noted it[51], and even Fortes wrote that similarly for the Talensi: «Tɛŋ (pl. tɛs) is the native concept denoting a settlement; but no English translation can convey its exact sense»[52]. The nearest Gurensi word to it is *teŋa* (pl. *tiinsi*). Its meaning is not only settlement, but it blends in it also the meaning of "earth" and "land" in their material and ritual aspects[53]. The Gurensi considered therefore the settlements as appendices and outgrowths of the earth itself. At the same time, the term includes the dwellers that inhabit that land too, maintaining with a precise parallelism the polysemy of the term *yire*.

One essential aspect of the Gurensi settlements was its kinship-based structure. Every *teŋa* was indeed composed of different sections (*yizuto*) that lived in that specific area. These sections were segments of an enlarged family directly related to one or more ancestors. A smaller section of the *yizuto* is a cluster of households, called *deo* (pl. *detto*)[54]. Finally, there is the compound or family

[50] Kleemann et al., 'Peri-Urban Land Use Pattern and Its Relation to Land Use Planning in Ghana, West Africa'.
[51] Rattray, *The Tribes of the Ashanti Hinterland*, 235.
[52] Fortes, *The Dynamics of Clanship among the Tallensi*, 164.
[53] Even in this case, this concept is shared with the western portion of what were the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast. See for example the case of the concept of *teŋ* in Wa in Wilks, *Wa and the Wala: Islam and Polity in Northwestern Ghana*, 17. And generally, for the Dagara, Lentz, *Ethnicity and the Making of History in Northern Ghana*, 18–21.
[54] Rattray, *The Tribes of the Ashanti Hinterland*, 244.

unit, the *yire*. The internal organization of the settlement was, therefore, the outcome of the conceptual development of the *yire*. Family relations were indeed crucial in establishing the place of residence.

Figure 7. "Fra Fra women beating a compound floor", Abangabisi, January 1922

Source: Bodleian Library, Oxford, GB 0162 MSS.Afr.s.1958

At this level, the authority was on kinship and gerontocratic basis, embodied by the *yzukeema*, head of a section of a clan or the *yidaana*, the head of the *yire*. Their power largely depended on the size of the family or the settlement, and thus on the number of people they were able to mobilize. They acted for the peace and equilibrium of their family, managing disputes and setting marriages[55].

The domestic compound, the *yire*, represented both materially and socially a unitary section of the entire Gurensi settlement. The structure of the compound was directly affected by the kinship organization and development. The Gurensi people were (and still are) patrilineal and patrilocal. Therefore, the family tended to expand as a direct consequence of the development of the lineage elder. As several scholars have already stressed, the domestic unit was the concrete expression of the relations of kinship and the patrilineal descent system, in constant motion over the years[56]. The basic unit would have been the family of the elder male. His first wife was in the room next to his (*deya-aŋa*). The sons, once they got married, would either build other rooms as a compound expansion or

[55] Rattray, 261–65.

[56] Cassiman, *Stirring Life: Women's Paths and Places among the Kasena of Northern Ghana*; Fortes, *The Dynamics of Clanship among the Tallensi*; Gabrilopoulos, Mather, and Apentiik, 'Lineage Organisation of the Tallensi Compound'; Hunter, 'The Social Roots of Dispersed Settlement in Northern Ghana'; Labelle Prussin, 'An Introduction to Indigenous African Architecture', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 33, no. 3 (1974): 183–205.

leave and establish their own compounds elsewhere. Division was also the result of the death of the *yidana*, the lineage elder. Informants told me that divisions were caused mainly by internal disputes, lack of arable land and the families' excessive growth in size[57].

The way in which the socio-political organization and the built environment were intimately connected is thus evident. The dispersed settlement mirrored a dispersed authority among these people: power was not static but resulted from the fluid and situational relationships between different clans and families that inhabited the region. These families' separations and expansions have been one of the main driving forces behind the establishment of the Gurensi compounds, and thus behind the planning of the settlement. Nonetheless, the ritual authorities, the *tendaana* and the soothsayer (*bakologo*) mediated the process of selecting land, and they granted permission to farm and live on it[58].

In his ethnographic survey among the Talensi, Meyer Fortes stressed the dynamism of the compound layout and location in relation to family development as one of its basic features.

> Even in a single year one can see how processes of expansion and contraction, of segmentation and incorporation, are at work all the time. Whenever land changes hands by inheritance, or an office passes by succession, or a man achieves economic independence, a minor reshuffle in the collocation of homesteads takes places. The cumulative effects of these processes of slow but progressive readjustment are clearly exhibited in the contemporary structure of a settlement. They are documented in its constitution and layout, in the location of ancestral graves, the ownership of farm plots, and in ceremonial and political relations[59].

It is, therefore, reasonable to assume, that in the Gurensi area, much more affected by population pressure than the Talensi, this dynamism could have caused conflicting claims over land and resources[60].

Only a man, the head of a family, could decide to start the process of building a house. Various factors drove the choice of the proper place for a future compound, as the thermal properties and the fertility of the soil and the presence of wild animals or water. Every action was conceived with and

[57] Interviews with the elders of the chiefs' families in Kalbeo (on 13.02.2018), Mirigu (on 22.05.2018), Sirigu (on 21.05.2018).

[58] As for the choice of the right place for a compound, it should be taken into consideration that the proximity to rivers and ponds was mostly avoided. The vicinity of a river could have caused serious problems such as flooding in the rainy season and the spreading of water-related diseases as onchocerciasis. The hill-shaped and rocky landscapes were preferred for defensive purposes and for their natural help against soil erosion. On this see Rattray, *The Tribes of the Ashanti Hinterland*, 258. Fortes, *The Dynamics of Clanship among the Tallensi*, 156; John M. Hunter, 'River Blindness in Nangodi, Northern Ghana: A Hypothesis of Cyclical Advance and Retreat', *Geographical Review* 56, no. 3 (1966): 398. The soothsayer is a crucial role in Gurensi life, since every action of importance (e.g. marriages, funerals, etc.) need to be organized through his mediation. The role of the *tendaana* will be considered further.

[59] Fortes, *The Dynamics of Clanship among the Tallensi*, 157.

[60] On the competition over resources and land rights as a *longue durée* phenomenon see Kuba and Lentz, *Land Rights and the Politics of Belonging in West Africa*.

authorized by the soothsayer. After a place had been chosen, the man needed the authorization of the *tendaana*, the ritual owner of the land. Only then one could lay the foundation and start the building process. As written by Fortes about the Talensi, this was not a task entrusted to specialists, but a collective effort executed by the family and other relatives[61]. The materials used for a compound needed cyclic maintenance, carried out usually between February and April, a period when the winds stop, and the rains have not yet begun.

When someone happened to leave his or her room permanently, the inhabitants of the compound just stopped the maintenance work for that room. In this way, the structure eventually would collapse freeing its space for future use. In this way, the sizes of compounds had an extensive range. As stated by Allan W. Cardinall, a colonial officer that served for many years in the area, «each compound has about fifteen to twenty inhabitants, but there are some very large ones which hold over one hundred and fifty, and are almost villages in themselves»[62]. Actually, even if a single compound could virtually expand very much, only those of the wealthiest people grew.

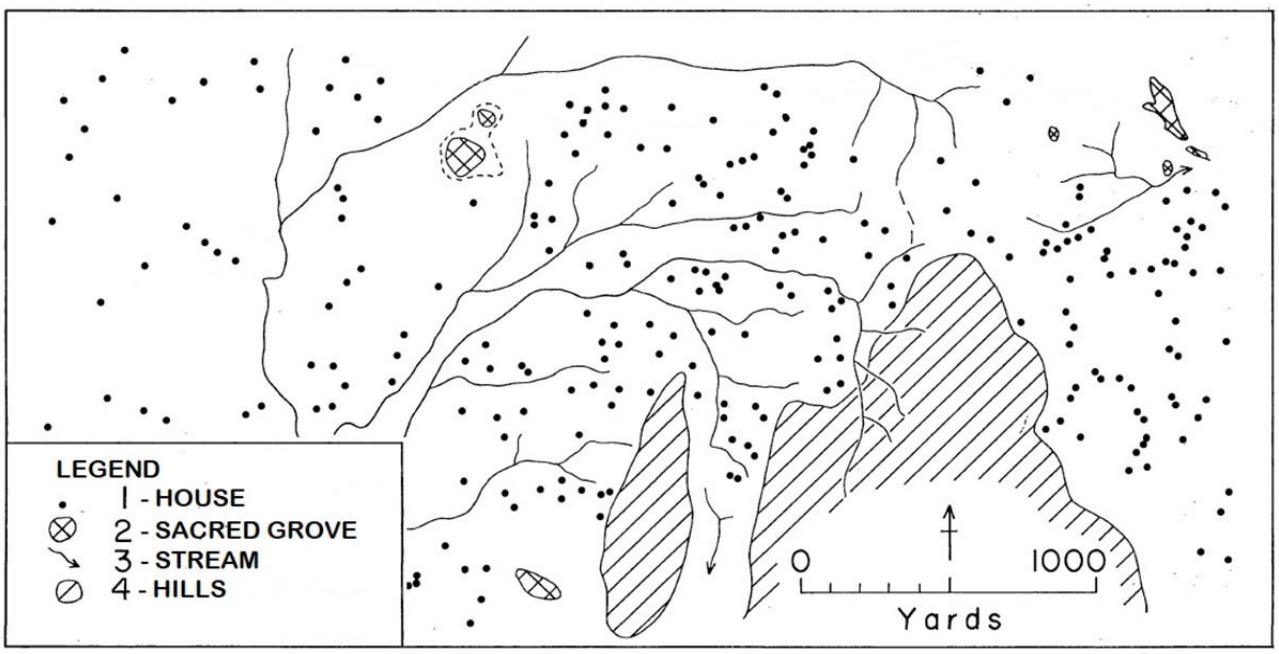

Figure 8. Map of a "dispersed settlement"

Adapted from Hunter, 'The Social Roots of Dispersed Settlement in Northern Ghana', 339

It is easy to figure out how the kinship relations that shaped the organization of the settlement led even to a powerful mnemonic importance of the section and its founding ancestors. Gaetano Mangiameli defined this feature as the "mnemonics of dwelling", in that it creates a strong link between an individual (the founding ancestor), a locality and the community that inhabits it (the

[61] Fortes, *The Web of Kinship among the Tallensi*, 47–48.
[62] Cardinall, *The Natives of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast. Their Customs, Religion and Folklore*, 99–100.

teŋa)[63]. This kind of dispersed settlement pattern inscribes in the landscape the lineage structures of the people that inhabit it. In this way, the landscape becomes «powerfully mnemonic» not only through its natural features but also through its settlements and compounds[64]. Their very existence recollects their history, that of their founding fathers and ancestors. It is no coincidence indeed that in front of the house stands the *bagere*, the shrine to the founding ancestor. It is also no coincidence that one of the founding histories of Bolgatanga is directly related to its mythical founding ancestor, as the last part of the chapter will examine. However, in pre-colonial times rituality influenced the location of the compounds and the allotment of land. Therefore, having assessed the kinship role in shaping the settlements, I will turn now to the element that characterized it: rituality.

Shrines and earth priests: the allocation of land and the absence of territorial boundaries

The Gurensi land tenure and the inheritance rules were – and still are – an essential driver of population pressure and demographic density. Nonetheless, the planning of the settlements in the Gurensi region was not driven exclusively by them. The shrines and their ritual networks also need to be taken into consideration. This section will present Gurensi rituality and its central role in land allocation and in the delimitation of ritual areas in the settlements. The links created by the earth shrines could have been quite wide and represented an influential and respected spatial framework. Every earth shrine, each one with a different earth priest, had a different area of influence over the various communities indeed.

Meyer Fortes underlined three crucial aspects in the connection between locality and community among the Talensi that could as well been applied to the Gurensi. He defined the first one as «utilitarian»: the land to inhabit was chosen for its agricultural value. I have already shown how the farm around the house was an integral part of the compound. The second one was «morphological»: there was an identity between the social unit that inhabited a strip of land and the land itself. These two could not be dissociated, as the above sections have demonstrated. However, there was a third strictly «moral and ritual» aspect[65]. This aspect was closely connected with the earth

[63] "Mnemonics of dwelling" is my translation for the italian "mnemotecniche dell'abitare", see Mangiameli, *L'origine Plurale. Miti Di Fondazione Kassena*, 119.
[64] Allman and Parker, *Tongnaab*, 20.
[65] Fortes, *The Dynamics of Clanship among the Tallensi*, 171.

shrines that were crucial elements in the delimitation of boundaries, community identity and allocation of land.

In the Gurensi region, natural features such as rivers, trees, stones, and caves dot the landscape, and these are believed to be inhabited by supernatural entities. These natural features are shrines that represent important places of worship called *teŋana* (sing. *teŋane*), literally «the skin of the earth»[66]. As with the term *teŋa*, there is no conceptual difference between the land in its materiality and in its spiritual being. These shrines, like the settlements, were considered outgrowths of the land too.

The ritual areas delimited by the earth shrines' influence were the closest entity to territorially bounded regions. In fact, the absence of territorial boundaries characterized the settlements. As suggested by Fortes, the only recognizable borders were those defined by family ties[67]. The compounds had clear social boundaries but lacked a well-defined territorial demarcation. In northern Ghana before colonization, the few clear boundaries were mainly represented by natural features and were mostly defined to avoid disputes on land when competing claims arose[68]. Christian Lund, in his analysis on land tenure in the Gurensi region, affirms that the earth shrine areas «were not necessarily continuous but consisted of various stretches of land, interspersed with areas controlled by neighbouring communities […] and may often overlap with ensuing friction and negotiation»[69]. However, the absence of clear-cut boundaries did not translate into the absence of a landowner. Virgin land was under the ritual jurisdiction of the nearest earth shrine, and therefore under the ritual ownership of the *tendaana*, its earth priest[70]. The occupancy of land was granted indeed by its ritual owner, and this led to fulfill a series of ritual obligations.

The *tendaana* (lit. *teŋa – daana*, "the owner of the land") is the earth-priest whose ritual functions are to regulate and manage the prosperity and well-being of the *teŋa*[71]. This was done mainly through sacrifices and libations offered to the shrines and through its role as peacemaker. Being the ritual authority in the management of the land, he was also entitled to grant and allocate plots to newcomers with the collaboration of the clan elders. Azaare suggests that this role has a

[66] Ignatov, 'Thoreau Goes to Ghana'; Azaare, 'Life in Bolga'.
[67] Fortes, *The Web of Kinship among the Tallensi*, 5.
[68] Raymond B. Bening, 'Indigenous Concepts of Boundaries and Significance of Administrative Stations and Boundaries in Northern Ghana', *Bulletin of the Ghana Geographical Association* 15, no. 1973 (1973): 7–20.
[69] Lund, *Local Politics and the Dynamics of Property in Africa.*, 17.
[70] I have shown before how in the process of choosing the land for a compound a man was compelled to inform and negotiate his decision with the *tendaana* of the area. On this see also Azaare, 'Recollections of Past Events of British Colonial Rule in Northern Ghana, 1900-1956', 135.
[71] Rattray, *The Tribes of the Ashanti Hinterland*, 255–59.

«historic priority» over the *naba*, meaning that before British colonization the *tendaana* was the leading authority over land matters in the region[72].

The importance of the earth shrines also resided in their connection with the ancestors' cult. Rituality associated with the cult of the earth and the ancestors, or as Anatoli Ignatov defined it, the Gurensi «eco-theology» influenced the settlement and its organization[73]. Every section of the settlements had several earth shrines in its area that were believed to command prosperity, success, fertility and rain. The earth priest would have therefore mediated between the people that inhabited the area, their ancestors and the earth shrine itself. Their mediation was crucial in that it allowed to settle, build and farm successfully without attracting the wrath of the earth gods and the ancestors[74]. Nonetheless, there were also shrines with a direct association with settlements and even with the marketplaces[75].

In the colonial period, the importance of the earth shrines in the definition of the settlements was neglected. Even if the figure of the earth priest had been discovered and unofficially recognized at least since 1911, it never found its administrative legitimacy and it never formally entered in the legal management of the land[76]. As the next chapters will show, British officers would prefer for administrative feasibility the role of the chief, introduced by them, rather than that of the earth priest. However, this fact did not imply its disappearance and the various earth priests in the Gurensi area continued to exercise their function throughout the 19th and 20th century.

Having assessed the principal forces that shaped the Gurensi settlement, it is possible now to consider Bolgatanga and the histories of its foundation. In this way, the settlement pattern delineated above will be a useful tool to understand its foundation and social organization. At the end of the 19th century, Bolgatanga did not have clear boundaries nor political or social prominence over the neighbouring settlements. Nonetheless, this period witnessed the rise of the families that will obtain the chieftaincy after the colonial intrusion. To the foundation histories of the town will follow a section that frames Bolgatanga's commercial position in the broader caravan network. Evidence

[72] A common expression on the different functions of these two roles is "Naba suɔ la a nɛriba, tendaana suɔ la a tiŋa" (lit. "the chief is for the people, the *tendaana* is for the land"), Azaare, 'Life in Bolga'. On the conflicts on land issues in the Upper East Region see Lund, *Local Politics and the Dynamics of Property in Africa.*; Awedoba, *An Ethnographic Study of Northern Ghanaian Conflicts*.

[73] Ignatov, 'Thoreau Goes to Ghana', 279. See also Ignatov, 'The Skin and the Stool: Re-Crafting Histories of Belonging in Northern Ghana'.

[74] Ignatov, 'The Skin and the Stool: Re-Crafting Histories of Belonging in Northern Ghana', 158.

[75] This is the case of Kalbeo, a settlement whose name was chosen because of its proximity to the Akalbeo earth shrine and even the case of Bolgatanga and the shrine inside its market, Ayia.

[76] For the first appearances of the earth-priests in colonial sources see NAG ADM 56/1/128, Report on food supply in Frafra, Report on food supply in Frafra by Cap. H. Wheeler, 31.05.1911; NAG ADM 56/1/113, Land Tenure Northern Province, PC to CCNT, 06.09.1911; NAG ADM 56/1/105, Report of the Northern Territories Land Committee, Report on Fra Fra Land Tenure by Cap. S.D. Nash, 18.09.1911

suggests indeed that a commercial centre, attended by migrant traders that crossed the wider caravan networks, was developing in the area at the turn of the century.

1.4 The pre-colonial political and commercial position of Bolgatanga

The foundation of Bolgatanga: interpreting settlement histories

In this part, I will engage with the endogenous articulation of the formation of the town. This will give me the chance to compare different settlement histories as well as different ways of historicizing the events that led to the foundation of Bolgatanga. This part will demonstrate that before the colonial intrusion, there was a communal identity in Bolgatanga, even though it was composed of different settlements. Moreover, the histories surrounding the foundation confirm and endorse the above analysis of the overall Gurensi settlement pattern for the case of Bolgatanga. In the second section, I will demonstrate that Bolgatanga was frequented and inhabited by foreign traders' communities well before colonial arrival, further demonstrating its connection with extensive commercial networks.

The first foundation history on Bolgatanga that I will consider follows a common narrative pattern on the genesis of the settlements in the Volta Basin. This *topos* is based on the encounter between two different groups, one that already lived in the area and another one that migrated from another place to settle there. Robert S. Rattray and Victor Aboya were among the first to write on the first-comers' and late-comers' histories in the Gurensi region[77]. According to them, the kinship-based societies in this region were divided internally into two groups. The first one was that of the pioneers, the first founders of a settlement and owners of the land, who followed the authority of the *tendaana*. Subsequent migrations led other groups on the scene, the ones who brought the office of the *naba*. These two groups mixed together, keeping, however, their different forms of authority and their separate functions[78]. The history that I will present is a synthesis of different versions of it collected through different sources, that however follows this same overall pattern[79]. After its presentation, I

[77] For more details on Rattray and Aboya see chapter 5.
[78] Rattray, *The Tribes of the Ashanti Hinterland*, xii.
[79] The accounts I analysed are gathered from the interviews I made and crosschecked with the unpublished work of Christopher Azaare. Moreover, parts of these settlements' histories were also collected by the White Fathers and in the Zuarungu District Record Book. See Journal de la Mission, Bolgatanga, 22.08.1929 and NAG ADM 68/5/5, Zuarungu District Record Book

will discuss and analyse it in order to understand how it will help to frame the history of Bolgatanga and its settlement pattern.

The name "Bolgatanga" subsumes its mythical foundation and distils the histories of migration of each settlement that today compose the town. In conformity with the settlement pattern depicted in the previous section, the foundation is linked with the kinship relation of all the settlements of the area. The myths recollect indeed that each of the settlements is related through two remote ancestors, Abolga and Anabila[80]. The histories of migration of the descendants of both Anabila and Abolga starts from Yikene, a community not too far from Bolgatanga. From this settlement, the various sons of the two ancestors spread in the area that composes Bolgatanga today. The histories of these migrations reveal conflicts, marriages, famines and slave raiding as the main driving forces behind the new foundations.

Abolga is the apical ancestor from which the town takes its name. He is believed to be the man who founded the first settlement from which all the other clans spread, Yikene. His direct descendants compose the *Tindaambisi*, a macro group of clans divided into four minor segments. The members of the *Tindaambisi* in Bolgatanga are those that by right of descent possess the office of the *tendaanaship*, the ritual ownership of the land. These patriclans live in settlements founded by the sons of Abolga and from where the *tendaanas* of Bolgatanga came by virtue of their ancestry[81]. Since Abolga's shrine was kept under some rocks, then the name Bolgatanga would derive from *Abolga-tanga* or Abolga's rock/Abolga under a rock[82]. This kind of toponymy is widespread in the region. Both Fortes and Azaare confirm indeed that it was not uncommon to give a name to a place from its topographical or geographical features or from a shrine/*teŋane* in the area[83].

Anabila, on the other side, is the founding ancestor of the *Nabisi*, the families who possess the right to be chiefs. As is still narrated by some elders, in a remote past these founding ancestors migrated from Yua to move and settle in Yikene. Here, he found Abolga and his family that decided to grant land to the stranger. This was the pivotal event at the base of the foundation of Bolgatanga, conforming in this way to the *topos* of first-comers and late-comers. Both Abolga and Anabila's sons, in the following years, started migrating and founded the other settlements that today compose the town.

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[80] For the genealogical trees see Azaare, 'Life in Bolga'.

[81] These four settlements are Tindonmoligo, Tindonsobiligo, Dapoore-Tindongo, and Soe. If a calculation should be attempted, then the foundation of these settlements dates back to the early or mid-18th century. The histories of foundation will not be analysed in detail both because this is beyond the scope of this thesis and also because they are today a matter of litigation in Bolgatanga.

[82] Azaare, 'Life in Bolga'. The other history that explain the meaning of Bolgatanga is considered in chapter 2.

[83] Azaare, 'Recollections of Past Events of British Colonial Rule in Northern Ghana, 1900-1956', 135; Fortes, *The Dynamics of Clanship among the Tallensi*, 157–58.

The histories of the first-comers and the late-comers are widespread in West Africa and subsume the main local theories of land ownership and political thought. Even if this narration is still maintained locally[84], some scholars argued that this pattern simplifies the complexity of the historical processes and create easy dichotomies such as invaders and autochthonous, state and stateless, secular and religious, chiefs and priests[85].

Apart from the historical veracity of the mythical narration, Amselle suggests that the *topos* represents an organizing principle of the local political thought[86]. This means that it is a way of defining, explaining and legitimizing political relationships in this area. Lentz also stresses that the configuration between first-comers and late-comers is an outcome of the local balances of power and that these balances affect the histories themselves[87]. As a matter of fact, these recollections are functional to give meaning to a particular socio-political asset, and, at the same time, are useful devices to recall the past, in that they «bundle a multiplicity of diffuse events into a single account that is easily remembered and understood by listeners, condensing protracted processes into a single event»[88]. Moreover, these histories contain narrative patterns that elucidate rules concerning land tenure and inheritance. In this way, they are «a widespread social and cultural grammar» that provided «the framework in which mobility and contact, competition and cooperation, assimilation and segregation could be negotiated»[89].

In conclusion, Lentz argues that there is no one good history, nor one dominant institution that regulates and sanctions it. What makes a narrative dominant over the others is «the social networks and the political power that can be brought into play to support one's own story»[90]. The histories of families' migration and settlements' foundation enclosed in the foundation history of Bolgatanga are therefore narratives functional to the maintenance of the determined socio-political asset of the town.

[84] Apart from the account provided above see also Moses Anafu, 'The Impact of Colonial Rule on Tallensi Political Institutions, 1898-1967', *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* 14, no. 1 (1973): 17–37; Azaare, 'Recollections of Past Events of British Colonial Rule in Northern Ghana, 1900-1956'.
[85] Wyatt MacGaffey, 'The Residue of Colonial Anthropology in the History and Political Discourse of Northern Ghana: Critique and Revision', *History Compass* 8, no. 6 (2010): 431–39.
[86] Jean-Loup Amselle and Marco Aime, *Logiche Meticce: Antropologia Dell'identità in Africa e Altrove* (Bollati Boringhieri, 1999), 89.
[87] Lentz, *Ethnicity and the Making of History in Northern Ghana*, 20.
[88] Kuba and Lentz, *Land Rights and the Politics of Belonging in West Africa*, 36.
[89] Kuba and Lentz, 50.
[90] Kuba and Lentz, 54.

In many foundation histories in the Gurensi region, the invaders or late-comers are usually coming from the centralized societies of the South, such as the Mamprusi, bringing with them the office of the *naam*, what will then become the chieftaincy office in the colonial period. The role of the *na* or *naba* is still today much debated and cause of conflicts and his specific functions before the British arrival in the Gurensi area are difficult to assess precisely. However, based on the studies done on it, it is possible to draw a short historical outline of this figure[91].

The absence of the chieftaincy institution in pre-colonial Bolgatanga

The *naam*, the ritual power needed to exercise the chief's role, is adopted from Mamprusi[92]. Even though the Mamprugu kingdom did not have strict control over the Gurensi region, Mamprusi outposts were founded in places such as Kurugu, Bongo, Tongo, Nangodi[93]. These first migrations are dated around the mid-18th century and could have been stimulated by the necessity to participate in the caravan network and to provide escorts and protection for the passing traders[94]. The immigrant Mamprusis brought with them their political office in the places where they decided to settle.

However, both archival sources and foundation histories point to the fact that in Bolgatanga there was no connection at all with Mamprugu, and therefore there were no *nabas*[95]. What the records suggest, in accordance with the foundation histories, is that relationships between different Gurensi settlements, especially those around Bolgatanga, at the end of the 19th century were constantly

[91] For studies on the contemporary conflicts on chieftaincy see Awedoba, *An Ethnographic Study of Northern Ghanaian Conflicts*; Lund, *Local Politics and the Dynamics of Property in Africa.* For studies related to the historical development of this institution see Ladouceur, *Chiefs and Politicians: The Politics of Regionalism in Northern Ghana*; Azaare, 'Recollections of Past Events of British Colonial Rule in Northern Ghana, 1900-1956'; Ignatov, 'The Skin and the Stool: Re-Crafting Histories of Belonging in Northern Ghana'; Anafu, 'The Impact of Colonial Rule on Tallensi Political Institutions, 1898-1967'; Iliasu, 'The Establishment of British Administration in Mamprugu, 1898-1937'.

[92] For a study on the *naam* see Susan Drucker-Brown, 'The Structure of the Mamprusi Kingdom and the Cult of Naam', in *The Study of the State*, by Petr Skalnik and Henri J. Claessen (The Hague: Mouton, 1981).

[93] Iliasu, 'The Establishment of British Administration in Mamprugu, 1898-1937'; Cardinall, *The Natives of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast. Their Customs, Religion and Folklore*, 11–12; John M. Hunter, 'The Clans of Nangodi', *Africa* 38, no. 04 (1968): 380–81; Ladouceur, *Chiefs and Politicians: The Politics of Regionalism in Northern Ghana*, 30–31; Binger, *Du Niger au Golfe de Guinée*, 2:38–39.

[94] Garrard, 'Brass-Casting among the Frafra of Northern Ghana', 32; Iliasu, 'The Establishment of British Administration in Mamprugu, 1898-1937'; Ladouceur, *Chiefs and Politicians: The Politics of Regionalism in Northern Ghana*, 31; Azaare, 'Bongo Clan and Skin History'.

[95] In a 1913 Intelligence Report, for example, the Zuarungu District Commissioner, S.D. Nash states: «Many times in past days I have asked natives who were working in their farms what chief they followed and the answer generally was "we have no Chief"». NAG ADM 56/1/144, Intelligence Report.

renegotiated. This often led to fighting, divisions, resettlement but also cohesion, alliances and cooperation or «small-scale warfare over resources» within the different settlements that composed the area[96]. The pre-colonial political landscape followed a pattern that was materially visible in the settlements' outline. There was no central authority, no dominant power, but fluid and situational negotiations (in some cases of a violent character) among clans, communities and ritual authorities. The settlements represented the «highest order of identification» and the kinship networks and the marriage dynamics helped to foster peace or create frictions[97].

Some years before the intrusion of the colonial powers in the area, something in the socio-political asset of Bolgatanga changed. The foundation histories recollect that one of the sons of Anabila, the founding father of the *Nabisi*, was Atulba Apase-nyɛlom, the father of the first recognized chief of Bolgatanga[98]. In the same foundational histories, chieftaincy is seen not as something that came from outside but rather as an endogenous political process. In less than two generations, Bolgatanga acquired a chief without external intervention.

Atulba Apase-nyɛlom was indeed not a *naba*, instead he was elected a chief dancer, a *wa-naba*, for his skills in the *yɔŋɔ*, a typical Gurensi dance. According to Azaare he gained this title around 1843 and kept it until 1885[99], when his son, Apase-nyɛlom Adongo collected it. As it has already been noted, in Bolgatanga the chieftaincy was not directly related to Mamprugu. However, the mythical recollections of the installation of Apase-nyɛlom, contain in their details some of the features related to the typical enskinment of a *naba* in the Gurensi region[100]. He got the chieftaincy from another chief, who was therefore entitled to enskin him. From him, he received a red fez, a goat horn believed to possess some "fetish" and was finally legitimized in his functions by the *tendaana* of Dapoore-Tindongo. Nonetheless, he continued to lack any authority or power over the people, being subject to the *tendaana* and the clan heads of Bolgatanga that followed Kumbosego, a settlement not too far[101].

What emerges from this account is that at the end of the 19th century, Bolgatanga did not have a central political role among the other settlements. Instead, it was part of an extensive network of communities with fluid and changing connections that did not lead one to establish clear supremacy over the others. However, this state of affairs started to change with the man who would be the first recognized Bolganaba, Apase-nyɛlom Adongo, the son of Atulba Apase-nyɛlom. The early years of

[96] Allman and Parker, *Tongnaab*, 34.
[97] Keith Hart, 'The Economic Basis of Tallensi Social History in the Early Twentieth Century', in *Research in Economic Anthropology. An Annual Compilation of Research*, ed. G. Dalton (Greenwich: Jai Press Inc., 1978), 189–90.
[98] On the history of Apase-nyɛlom/Apansinyaba see also Ignatov, 'The Skin and the Stool: Re-Crafting Histories of Belonging in Northern Ghana', 159; Awedoba, *An Ethnographic Study of Northern Ghanaian Conflicts*, 93.
[99] This is a personal estimation of Azaare, inferred from NAG ADM 63/5/2, District Record Book Navrongo, p. 57.
[100] The process that lead to the election of a chief in northern Ghana is called enskinment.
[101] NAG ADM 68/5/5, Zuarungu District Record Book, p. 4

his office are difficult to reconstruct because of lack of sources, but most probably he was one of those who indulged in raiding. Captain Donald Stewart in reporting the information gathered on the Gurensi country stated in 1896:

> There is a Chief called Tanganaba, who has established himself at a place called Larey on the main road to Wagadugu. This man has collected all the criminals and refugees from the surrounding countries. He obeys no one, but pillages caravans whenever he can find them; all the people are in terror of him[102].

Apart from the biased point of view of this statement which is distorted by prejudices of primitiveness and the misspelling of the names[103], it did not stray too far from the truth on what was happening in the region. In fact, Adongo has been recognized as one of the many "strong men" in the region who was collecting wealth through raiding[104]. However, as for the case of his father, his authority did not go beyond his family, at least since British intervention.

In conclusion, what the mythical narratives in Bolgatanga suggest then is that the Gurensi region was characterized by an intricate network of kinship, ritual obligations and raiding. This created a context in which relations among settlements were constantly renegotiated without overriding power or authority. However, by the end of the 19th century there were individuals, such as Adongo who were able to gain wealth and a certain privileged status. Nonetheless, *naam* was not unknown in the Gurensi region before British arrival. Evidence points to the fact that already in this period Bolgatanga was attended by foreign traders who also carried with them also their political institutions.

[102] TNA CO 879/48, Further Correspondence relative to Boundary question in the Bend of the Niger, Maxwell to Chamberlain, 05.02.1897, enc.: Stewart to Colonial Secretary, 29.12.1896

[103] They should have been Bolgatanga rather than Larey and Bolga-naba rather than Tanga-naba. Larey and Tanganaba did not make sense also to my informants.

[104] Azaare, 'Life in Bolga'.

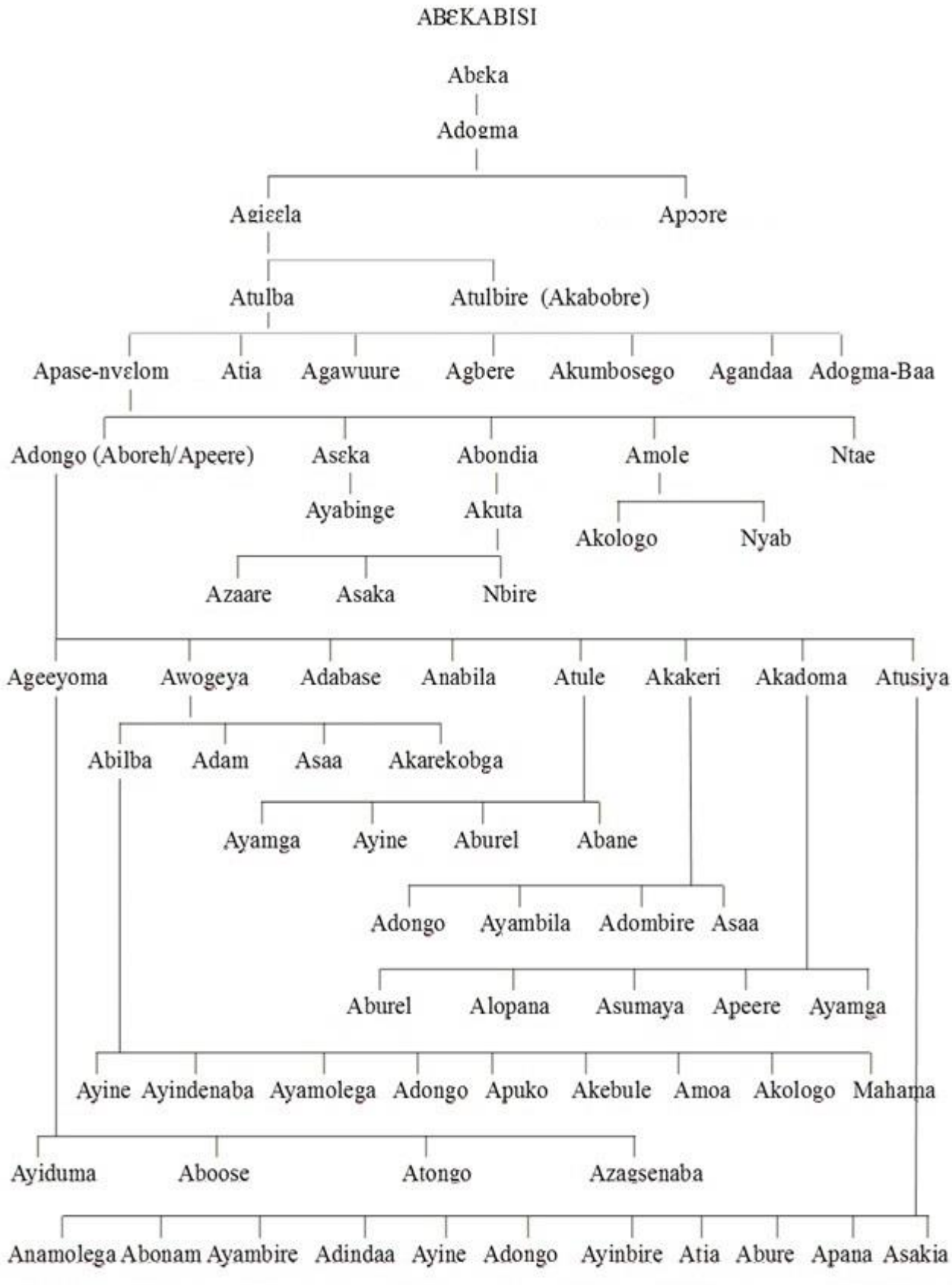

Figure 9. Abɛkabisi (lit. the sons of Abɛka) family tree

Abɛka was the direct son of Anabila, the forefather of the chiefs' families. Source: Azaare, 'Life in Bolga'

Foreign settlers and commercial networks: the importance of the marketplace

The caravan routes that crossed West Africa and the Gurensi country in the 19th century have already been described in the first part of the chapter. In this period, the marketplace in Bolgatanga attracted a certain number of traders that travelled along these routes. This section will present the importance of the central marketplace in Bolgatanga, Ayia Daa[105], and its role in attracting foreign traders, some of whom decided to settle there.

The very existence and success of Bolgatanga's market are locally explained by the presence of one earth shrine, Ayia, that oversees the fate of the market, an occurrence which is not rare in northern Ghana[106]. Ayia, one of the most revered shrines in Bolgatanga, lies today in the heart of the old market, the main marketplace until the 1970s. This shrine is believed to have been discovered by Asamsoo, son of Abolga and the founding ancestor of Dapore-Tindongo, one of the settlements in the centre of Bolgatanga. The name of the earth shrine itself is quite emblematic, Ayia indeed means first, as it was the first earth shrine believed to be discovered in the area.

> Asamsoo was the originator of the Dapore-Tindongo. Some of those [who arrived] first, they have opened [the country] before the settlers come to meet them. […] So, what you believe is that the tree you have been sitting under, is also helping me, so let me worship it. And that's how some of these people came by develop the earth gods. But they do not just take a tree that maybe...they say this is my ancestor...no. The soothsayer would say that, yes, the tree nearby your house, it's where your ancestor is hide. So, you have to perform sacrifices, so a name is given to that tree, and then everybody takes that, a naming ceremony, so the naming ceremony is pouring the libations and sacrificing something. That could be given when your family continue to perform the sacrifices and start taking up to it. So that's how the Ayia develop. It was there just before the Tendaana.[107]

Many people recollect how Bolgatanga market started under the shade provided by the ebony trees that once were part of this shrine. The first traders met there to exchange tobacco, kola, food and *pito* (millet beer) protected by the shrine and far from the places known to be dangerous[108].

[105] Literally "Ayia market".
[106] See for example Jack Goody, 'Establishing Control: Violence along the Black Volta at the Beginning of Colonial Rule (L'établissement Du Pouvoir: La Violence Dans La Vallée de La Volta Noire Au Début de La Colonisation)', *Cahiers d'Études Africaines* 38 (1998): 237; Cardinall, *The Natives of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast. Their Customs, Religion and Folklore*, 54, 96.
[107] Interview with Christopher Anabila Azaare, 05.02.2015, Gowrie
[108] One of these places was the area known as Akantume around the present Bolgatanga Regional Hospital. This was the rallying point of Adongo and his accomplices' looting activities. The place was renamed by the merchants as "N kan tu'n binni", literally meaning "I won't off load there". Azaare, 'Life in Bolga'.

At the beginning of the 20th century, Ayia Daa was indeed one of the many periodic markets that served the Gurensi region[109], held every three days[110]. My informants recollect how this marketplace, like many others in which local beer was brewed and served, was an important centre for the surrounding communities to meet, entertain and possibly find a partner. The social importance of the market is still remembered. One of my elder informants recollected that

> Those days even if you are not selling, you are a guy, there's nothing in the house to entertain, so when you want entertainment is the market, you go to the market to see your friends. So, it was just a common place where they all come to sit and chat. And by then there was no schools, they weren't attending schools, so what they do is get up and if you have to do nothing in your house, you go to the market, and you sit with your friend and chat.[111]

Apart from the shrine intercession, most of its prosperity is believed to reside in the availability and willingness of the people who attended and who still attend it to this day.

> The few people would start and later on the whole town would be developing. So, the Mossi who were coming right from the Mossiland would pass through that market, to Kumasi. So when they get there, and people are selling *pito* or people are ready to help them carrying their thing, so each time they started developing into a big market, because people got to know that the Mossis, when they get there, they would rest, with their donkey, and then they dash people with their kola, so it became expanding, until the White man also arrived, and then the missionaries started. So also, therein Bolga, they've been received and can't get away.[112]

The local success of the market was indeed directly connected with the presence of foreign travellers. By the end of the 19th century, the marketplace represented a pit stop for the passing merchants who were traversing the caravan paths and were looking for food, carrier services or guides. The settled traders would have served many helpful functions for their travelling colleagues. Knowing the surrounding country, they would have advised on looting activities and hostilities; they would have acted as interpreters and hosts and therefore mediated between the foreign traders and the indigenous inhabitants[113].

Foreign traders frequented Bolgatanga market well before the colonial intervention. The market was on a «small caravan route» on which travelled merchants from Walewale and Daboya dealing in salt, cloth, slaves and sheep[114]. Apart from the neighbouring Mamprusi, Gonja and

[109] Garrard, 'Brass-Casting among the Frafra of Northern Ghana', 120.
[110] British colonial sources contradict themselves on the periodicity of this market in this period. In NAG ADM 63/5/2, p. 45, written on the 29/12/1905, it is stated that the market is held «every third day», while on p. 58, the 25/02/1906, Cpt. Fleury wrote that «there are no special market days in the town».
[111] Interview with Nyaba Ayene, Bukere, 30.01.2015
[112] Interview with Christopher Anabila Azaare, Gowrie, 05.02.2015
[113] Azaare, 'Life in Bolga'.
[114] NAG ADM 63/5/2, p. 58. The slave trade continued underground in these years. See chapter 2 and also TNA CO 98/16, p. 14

Dagomba[115], traders such as the Yarse, Hausa and Kotokoli settled in the area. The Yarse, a Muslim class of Mossi traders, was one of the main immigrant groups. This was the most significant group inside Mossi society that dealt with trade[116]. This group had a strong migrating character for the purpose of trade and settlement. In the years following British occupation their migratory trend was enhanced both for trade purposes, as the colonial administration started to pursue a policy of commerce protection[117], and for an exodus from the French territories due to taxing and forced labour policies enacted by the French administration[118].

However, the Hausa and Mossi merchants created a *zongo*[119] in the area of Bolgatanga, recorded by written sources at least since 1911[120], even though it is highly probable that they settled in the area well before that date. In fact, Azaare traces the existence of a Mossi community in Bolgatanga long before British military occupation. This merchant community was under the guidance of a Yarse man called Awudu Mossi, an eminent Muslim cleric[121]. This man features also in the foundational myth of Bolgatanga collected by the colonial officers as the first chief in Bolgatanga[122]. According to this source, indeed, a man called Wuda from the Mossi territories brought the chieftaincy with him, most probably meaning that he was the leading figure of the foreign settlers. He would have been replaced only later by Apasenyelom, the chief dancer[123].

The history of Awudu Moshi is most revealing about the commercial networks that crossed Bolgatanga before the British arrival. His presence and leading role in the Mossi community reveal the presence of foreign traders in the settlement and the importance of Bolgatanga as a trade centre already in the 19th century. The development of Bolgatanga as an attended trade centre will be considered in detail in the next chapter. Now I will turn to the political turmoil that characterized the region in the last decades of the 19th century. On the same caravan routes crossed by the merchants, also travelled the first European explorers who would soon be followed by colonial armies. Since their first visit, the colonial explorers and officers adopted the prejudices of primitiveness attached to

[115] The presence of Dagomba traders in the region has been pointed out by Binger, *Du Niger au Golfe de Guinée*, 2:19. See also NAG ADM 63/5/2, District Record Book Navrongo, p. 57. Azaare states that many of the Mamprusi and Dagomba started to settle in the Gurensi region because of the slave raiding activities of the Zabarima.
[116] For a brief history of this group see Schildkrout, *People of the Zongo*, 34–37.
[117] TNA CO 98/14, Northern Territories of the Gold Coast, Report for 1904, p. 3
[118] Anafu, 'The Impact of Colonial Rule on Tallensi Political Institutions, 1898-1967', 22.
[119] Enid Schildkrout states that the word *zongo*, a Hausa term that indicates the camping place of a caravan, «was used by the British to refer to the section of the town where Muslim traders lived». It can be broadly considered «as a social unit using the concept of a network, insofar as people who identify themselves as members of the zongo have many more social relationships with each other than with outsiders, with whom, most typically, they interact only economically and sometimes politically» Schildkrout, *People of the Zongo*, 67, 94.
[120] NAG ADM 56/1/463, Annual Reports, Annual Medical Report on Zuarungu, 27.01.1912
[121] Azaare C., The genesis of the Mossi chieftaincy in Bolga, unpublished manuscript
[122] NAG ADM 68/5/5, Zuarungu District Record Book, p. 4
[123] *ivi*

the Gurensi by their centralized neighbours. This will be particularly clear in the perceptions the explorers and officers had of the Gurensi settlements and compounds.

1.5 The fall of Babatu and the arrival of the Europeans

The passage of Louis Binger: the first adoption of the primitive bias

This section will highlight the ignorance and prejudice that subsumed the first European perceptions of the Gurensi settlements. The primitive and barbaric bias was projected on the overall spatial organization of Gurensi life. The Gurensi concepts of belonging were not understood at first by colonial officers. For many years their logic remained indeed unintelligible to the European mind. Initially, the officers believed that the main forces behind the organization of the settlements were savageness and isolation. The following part will consider then the first explorers' bewildered reactions to the Gurensi settlements' spatial outline. In the same line of thoughts, the next part will analyse the unfoundedness of colonial assumptions on Gurensi compounds, on which they projected the primitive bias.

In the last two decades of the 19th century French, British and German explorers started to cross the "Ashanti hinterland" to evaluate its strategic and economic value. The first two European explorers that crossed the belt of noncentralized societies were the Germans Gottlob Adolf Krause in 1886 and Kurt von François in 1888, even if they did not pass directly through the Gurensi area[124]. In 1888, the French Louis-Gustave Binger traversed the region. On 1st August he entered Pakhé (Paga) in the Kasena area, and two days later he was received by the Gurensi of Midegou (Mirigu)[125]. From here, not without some misunderstandings with the people and the guides offered to him, he crossed the region passing through Sidegou (Sirigu). This passage was indeed exhausting for the French explorer who, already suffering from dysentery, was also not successful in dealing with the local guides who at the first occasion ran away. He, therefore, traversed the country as fast as he could, collecting little information while he was there[126].

[124] Garrard, 'Brass-Casting among the Frafra of Northern Ghana', 6. For an account of von François' voyage see Kurt von François, *Ohne Schuss Durch Dick und Dünn; Erste Erforschung des Togohinterlandes,* (Esch-Waldems: Eigenverlag von Götz von François, 1972).
[125] Binger, *Du Niger au Golfe de Guinée*, 2:19–25.
[126] Binger, 2:32.

He provided an exemplary description of the biased image that the colonial officers would in future adopt for the Gurensi:

> La population, tout hétérogène, qui peuple cette vaste région paraît avoir été refoulée dans ces bois par des people plus avancés qui l'environnent. Parlant des dialects différents, vivant en constante hostilité entre ells et toujours sur le pied de guerre, ells ont empèché les voies de communication de se developer, de sorte que le reseau en est peu compliqué.[127]

Binger also wrote a revealing note on the ways of communication in the Gurensiland: «Il existe bien, comme partout, des sentiers sauvages reliant les villages les uns aux autres, mais ils sont tellement peu fréquentés, que l'on ne peut y circuler que difficilement sans guide»[128]. This description leads to two conclusions that confirm the pervasiveness of his bias. Firstly, in the mind of the explorer, the primitive label imposed on the Gurensi was so pervasive that the paths themselves acquired a "savage" character. Secondly, he linked the deserted state of the paths to the savageness of the people. However, more likely he did not encounter many people on his paths for two main reasons: safety and farming.

Due to the slave raids of that period, many people were not inclined to approach caravans on the routes. The relationship among the merchants and the local population was indeed quite ambiguous. As I pointed out earlier, during the 19th century slave trade did not stop in these areas, and it represented one of the leading causes of friction between the caravans and the Gurensi. In fact, the former was «not above capturing a local man or two on their way»[129]. On the other side, the traders often reported to the colonial officers the Gurensi raiding activities[130]. Nonetheless, they were not the only raiders the caravans would encounter on their way. Raiding was the most common form of combat and a well-known military tactic of the Mossi cavalry[131]. Caravans, often moving with an armed escort, were aware and prepared for the risks they encountered along the way. However, these incidents, following Garrard, could be defined occasional, and they did not obstruct trade completely[132]. Then, another reason why the French explorer did not find many people is probably because he traversed those territories in August, during the rainy season. In this time of the year the

[127] Binger, 2:35.
[128] Binger, 2:35.
[129] Cardinall, *The Natives of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast. Their Customs, Religion and Folklore*, 98.
[130] Many were the denounces of looting against the Gurensi and the Gurensi's nostalgia for the raids. See for example NAG ADM 68/5/1, Zouaragu Station Official Diary, entry for 04.11.1913. As it will be clear in the next chapter, from the eve of British colonization merchants denounces of banditry were strategically used as a weapon against the Gurensi population.
[131] «Mossi strategy, based upon the primacy of cavalry, was simple yet effective. In small-scale raiding, Mossi cavalry relied upon intelligence, speed and surprise. First, informants would locate a rich land or caravan. Next, taking advantage of their knowledge of the terrain, including the locations of watering places for their horses, Mossi horsemen would proceed in single file until they spotted their prey. They would then effect a quick encirclement of the prey and an equally rapid retreat, pushing the captured slaves and cattle before them», Echenberg, 'Late Nineteenth-Century Military Technology in Upper Volta', 242.
[132] Garrard, 'Brass-Casting among the Frafra of Northern Ghana', 144.

majority of people were busy with their farms. These routes were indeed highly traversed usually six months a year, during the dry season, as the rains made them impracticable. Binger's prejudices were going to be also adopted by British officers and explorers.

George Ekem Ferguson: bewilderment, savageness and the absence of towns

Binger's bias was going to be also shared by George Ekem Ferguson, a Fanti civil servant sent by the British Government to convince people to sign treaties of free commerce north of Asante[133]. Ferguson was sent to ascertain the commercial value of those territories and negotiate treaties with local rulers to keep France out of the area. He undertook two missions, one in 1892 through Gonja and Dagomba, and the other in 1894 when he reached Mamprugu but did not cross the Gurensi area.

As highlighted by Jean Allman and John Parker, his work has been a milestone for the colonial knowledge on the noncentralized people[134]. Basing his observations on the information collected in the neighbouring centralized kingdoms, he concluded on the primitiveness of the "Gurunshi"[135]. Adopting this bias, he shaped the subsequent colonial intervention, stigmatizing these populations as barbarous. However, he also recognized the commercial importance of the area and suggested a policy line of "civilization" through the repression of indigenous hostilities, a method which was pursued in the following years. Since the "barbarous tribes" were not prone to negotiation, the only way to control the area and foster the trade network would have been to "civilize" them through violence[136].

Ferguson adopted soon the same cliché expressed previously by Louis Binger. The degree of violence and the absence of a centralized form of authority among the noncentralized societies were the principal characteristics that nurtured their bias. The same prejudice was pictured again by Ferguson. He wrote:

> They live mostly in family communities and resist intercourse, even among their own selves, with showers of arrows. These people, together with Lobi, Dafina, Nieniege, and Kaprisi, move about in perfect nudity, their lips, noses, and ears, are pierced, into which straws and beads are inserted

[133] For a biography of Ferguson see Arhin, *The Papers of George Ekem Ferguson.*; Roger G. Thomas, 'George Ekem Ferguson: Civil Servant Extraordinary', *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* 13, no. 2 (1972): 181–215.
[134] Allman and Parker, *Tongnaab*, 55–59.
[135] Arhin, *The Papers of George Ekem Ferguson.*, 76.
[136] Arhin, 97–106. The British raids to conquer the area will be considered in the next chapter.

> as ornaments. Some of them, principally those through which caravans fight their way, live in village communities with a strong man (who has arrogated to himself the position of a chief) as the head of the community[137].

The kinship organization was considered as one of the main reason that fostered isolation. Also, Henry P. Northcott, the first Commissioner and Commandant of the Northern Territories, noted that while in other places «the population is collected in town and villages […] bound together in administrative districts», «to the north the family is the unit, and the compounds are scattered at distances of from a hundred yards to half a mile. The farm surrounds the compound, and each head of family is a law unto himself»[138]. From the analysis done in the previous section on the settlement's organization of kinship, it is clear that this conclusion was groundless. On the contrary, the kinship networks created a thick net of relationships amongst the different settlements that conflicted with Northcott's assumption.

The colonial bias on Gurensi compounds would be more durable and unfounded than the one related to the settlements presented here. The next section will show how Gurensi architecture was based on the availability of materials and climatic conditions of the region as well as the social organization of the people. Despite colonial observations that depicted the houses as unhealthy castles, they were one of the best architectural product that could be achieved in those years in that region.

The compounds as "unhealthy castles": colonial biased perceptions and Gurensi functional architecture

Colonial officers projected their vision of Gurensi's primitiveness and isolation also in their perception of the compounds. Often, they reported Gurensi's houses as unhealthy and isolated castles. This section is intended to present these perceptions and confute them. In addition to their social and agricultural organization, outlined in the previous sections, also aesthetical, functional and environmental considerations regulated Gurensi architecture.

[137] Arhin, 100.
[138] Northcott, *Report on the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast*, 27.

Turning back to the material features of domestic architecture, George Ekem Ferguson described the rooms he found in the region as «low circular mud walls with conical grass roofs»[139] with no windows or any sort of ventilation. This had two main implications that perdured in the colonial perceptions of the Gurensi compounds: a strategic defensive purpose and insalubrity. The former was a functional architectural feature of the compounds easily distinguishable by an outsider. According to one of the first British officers sent in the Northern Territories, Henry P. Northcott, these buildings were «easily convertible into strong blockhouses»[140]. Later this was stressed again by Allan Wolsey Cardinall, a colonial commissioner writing in the 1920s. According to him the houses «resemble forts or miniature castles, consisting of a series of round huts connected with walls»[141]. Considering the history of violence that marked the region, defence represented a reasonable explanation for this material feature of Gurensi domestic architecture[142].

However, Cardinall description was later discredited by Meyer Fortes as a «romantic explanation» without foundation of any sort. If the traditional home was a castle, it was believed to be a «psychological» rather than a material one. According to the ethnographer the house should be regarded more as «the stage of his [the Talən's] life's drama», «the centre and fount of his major interests, his dominant purposes, his deepest emotional attachments, and his whole scheme of values»[143].

On the other hand, the insalubrity denounces most probably echoed the sanitation syndrome that was spreading within colonial institutions of that time[144]. The officers' impression was that

> the absence of ventilation renders occupation of a native hut by Europeans almost insupportable, but the owners do not appear to suffer any inconvenience from it even when the vitiated air is thickened with the smoke of a wood fire[145].

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[139] TNA CO 96/277, Ferguson's Mission to the Hinterland, 1894, p. 421

[140] Northcott, *Report on the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast*, 28. See also another description given on Gurensi in 1911: «They are extremely independent, each compound holder, until quite recent years, acknowledging no authority but his own. The compounds are all constructed on the lines of miniature fortresses, built on elevations, surrounded by thick hard walls containing huts with solid flat hard beaten roofs, the object being to resist attack, which it must have done most effectively to a foe armed only with spears, bows and arrows». In NAG ADM 56/1/141, Census 1911, Ag.CNEP to CCNT, 11.10.1911

[141] Cardinall, *The Natives of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast. Their Customs, Religion and Folklore*, 98–99.

[142] Bourdier and Minh-Ha, *African Spaces, Designs for Living in Upper Volta*, 26–28. It is probable that the settlement pattern in the Gurensi region at the end of the 19th century was more packed than the one that developed in the first decades of the 20th. I am inclined to this conclusion by two reasons. The first one is that a more packed settlement was easier to defend from raiding mercenaries, hostile neighbours and slave traders. Furthermore, in 1918 the chief of Bolgatanga declared to A.W. Cardinall that «formerly his people lived in villages much more compact and the ruins are still visible» in NAG ADM 68/5/1, Zouaragu Station Official Diary, entry for 12.09.1918

[143] Fortes, *The Web of Kinship among the Tallensi*, 45–46.

[144] Maynard W. Swanson, 'The Sanitation Syndrome: Bubonic Plague and Urban Native Policy in the Cape Colony, 1900–1909', *The Journal of African History* 18, no. 3 (1977): 387–410.

[145] Northcott, *Report on the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast*, 28.

Moreover, the officers indicated the closeness of the farm to the living quarters as a further feature that made the compounds highly unhygienic. Additionally, Northcott noted: «crops are grown right up to the walls of the houses, and give cover for every kind of insanitary abuse»[146].

Both colonial conclusions on Gurensi compounds, i.e. insalubrity and fortification, did not reflect the complexity of its overall architecture. No better room could have been constructed in a place like that in those years. It was, in fact, one of the most suitable for human living considering the environment, the climate and the availability of building materials. The architectural features of the Gurensi compounds were better studied only in the 1960s by Labelle Prussin, a scholar specialized in African architecture[147]. Prussin explains that the architecture of the Gurensi compounds had well-defined structural planning. First, the round building with one small entrance offered protection against the cold winds, insulation from the temperature leap, enhanced structural strength and the best exploitation of the thermal properties given by the earthen walls. Moreover, from an optical study of its structure and building materials, the compound is arranged in a way that

> the softly rounded, curvilinear surfaces and rough textures of earthen walls typical of savannah architecture eliminate the harsh, irritating contrast between light and dark created by perpendicular intersecting planes, and convert it to softly graded shade and shadow[148].

In the end, the choice of materials was the best considering the clay soils of the savannah and the scarcity of wood. According to Prussin, this kind of building represents an architectural quintessence:

> Perfect balance is achieved between the spaces enclosed and the walls that enclose them. Curvilinear surfaces direct the flow of spaces into one another so that solids and voids merge. Each wall surface, each depression, each space, whether a moulded seat, a bathing enclosure, a conical pillar for nestling fowl, or an ancestral shrine integral with the surface from which it projects, has a raison d'être[149].

Rather than being unhealthy castles, then the houses in Gurensi region were accurately planned and built considering the availability of materials, the degree of insecurity and the local environment. The first colonial reports described these buildings as primitive and insalubrious, while they had precise architectural planning that responded adequately to the needs and the requirements of Gurensi life[150]. The colonial primitive bias continued to characterize the relationships between the Gurensi and

[146] Northcott, 27. Also Louis Binger underlined the insalubrity of Gurensi compounds. Binger, *Du Niger au Golfe de Guinée*, 2:4–5.
[147] Prussin, *Architecture in Northern Ghana*.
[148] Prussin, 'An Introduction to Indigenous African Architecture', 187.
[149] Prussin, *Architecture in Northern Ghana*, 61.
[150] Only in 1937, the architectural functionality of the Gurensi compounds would be recognized by some officers. See TNA CO 96/738/14, Northern Territories Annual Reports, Annual Report on the Northern Territories for the year 1936-1937

British officers. The next chapters will show how these prejudices were used to justify the colonial raiding activities during the military occupation of the region.

1.6 Conclusion

This chapter has depicted the Gurensi settlement pattern and political landscape by the end of the 19th century, until the eve of European military intervention in the area. Bolgatanga was in the middle of a region characterized by a strong noncentralized political organization connected nonetheless with the broader networks that crossed West Africa. The relationship among the people that inhabited this region with their more centralized neighbours was ambiguous and violent. While they were considered with a bias of primitiveness, social and commercial links tied them together. An atmosphere of suspicion and violence brought mainly by the slave raiding did not ease communications, even though these were not absent. The caravan trade network was indeed flowing if not flourishing, especially in the years of the Zabarima expansion.

In this period, Bolgatanga was neither a village nor town. Instead, its formation resulted from the composition of different settlements organized and planned following kinship and ritual principles. Gurensi communities were not politically centralized nor territorially bound. The absence of a centre characterized the dispersed settlement pattern of those years. Instead, a fluid and diffused way of dwelling was the norm. Kinship relations, earth-shrines ritual areas of influence, a strong agricultural basis and the absence of clear-cut territorial boundaries were the main features that distinguished the settlements. Nonetheless, these were thickly interconnected from a social and material point of view, as the organization of the settlements allowed to develop connections and participate in commercial networks inside and outside the region.

The analysis of the settlement pattern allows to clarify the sets of relationships and links among the groups that inhabited the area. Moreover, it allowed me to highlight the main colonial prejudices on the people that inhabited the region. Even though violence was part of Gurensi life, the label of barbarity and isolation perceived by the first colonial explorers and officers concealed «the finely wrought chains of linkages that enabled people, commodities, information, and ideas to circulate through the fragmented and fiercely localized pre-colonial landscape»[151].

The settlement pattern will continue to be a reference element in the course of the thesis in order to understand and analyse the process of urbanization of Bolgatanga. In the next chapters, it

[151] Allman and Parker, *Tongnaab*, 64.

will be the basis to assess the spatial changes that occurred over the 20th century in the area. The second chapter will analyse how British military intervention modified the political landscape of the 19th century and what consequences it had on Bolgatanga. The colonial introduction of chieftaincy led to the consolidation of a political elite over the settlements. In the long run, this will modify the way to organize and dwell in the space, as new territorial boundaries between the settlements would be demarcated and the chiefs acquired authority on land transactions.

Chapter 2
Conquering the Gurensi: defiance, hostility and manipulation (1897-1911)

2.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I have analysed the ways in which the Gurensi settlement pattern mirrored its political and social fragmentation, a characteristic feature of the region. The relations between the settlements were based on negotiations among different patrilineal and gerontocratic kinship groups. The social boundaries of the communities followed the kinship lineages, and the territorial ones were vaguely related to the influence areas of the earth shrines. The British conquest of the region modified this pattern. This chapter intends to analyse the changes that affected Bolgatanga as a settlement. Indeed, its transformation from *teŋa* to town has its foundations in this period.

British military intervention was principally guided by the rush to exclude the other European powers from these territories of which very little was known. After the conflicts between the French and the Zabarima, the British would formally annex the Northern Territories to the Gold Coast at the end of the negotiations. The British military operations in the region took the form of raids intended to suppress caravan robbing and any form of local hostility against the colonial presence. The process of so-called "pacification" was going to last a decade, especially in the Gurensi and Dagarti areas, where hostility and banditry continued to be constant features[1]. However, ignorance of the context and prejudices continued to support these operations.

This chapter will show how the Gurensi opposed the British presence and the results that this opposition had on the future development of their settlements. The analysis of the conquest dynamics

[1] Jack Goody, 'The Political Systems of the Tallensi and Their Neighbours 1888–1915', *Cambridge Anthropology* 14, no. 2 (1990): 1–25; Lentz, *Ethnicity and the Making of History in Northern Ghana*, 35.

departs from the idea that European expansion was not «all-determining» and, at the same time, demonstrates that some of the Gurensi settlements, including Bolgatanga, took advantage of the conquest dynamics. In this way, it will be possible to show «the ways in which power is engaged, contested, deflected, and appropriated» in this context[2].

Resistance was not orchestrated in one coordinated movement against external invasion; instead, it mirrored the socio-political fragmentation depicted in the previous chapter. Every community decided to oppose or comply with British military invasion. In recognizing the importance of African agency in shaping the colonial encounter, I will consider the ways in which the people in Bolgatanga treated colonial officers[3]. On their arrival, Apase-nyɛlom Adongo, the strong man descendant from one of the founding ancestors, decided to collaborate with colonial officers. This choice marked the future of the settlement and the chiefdom. Adongo's compliance with British requests will, therefore, be presented, and the results of this decision will be analysed.

British colonial intervention led to the introduction of the chieftaincy. That is not the creation and imposition of an alien form of authority from zero, but rather the negotiated transformation of the already existing networks of power. The noncentralized political organization started to change, and new intermediaries that enforced the orders of British administrators began to emerge. Apase-nyɛlom Adongo, one of the strong men that lived in Bolgatanga at the end of the 19th century, was able to emerge as the "chief". Exploiting the opportunity given by colonial officers, he was able to gain a more privileged position in his community, even though the rest of the people strongly contested it. The chapter intends therefore to frame the dynamics of British involvement in the Gurensi socio-political context. Indeed, they paved the way for the emergence of Bolgatanga as one of the paramount chieftaincies in the region, breaking, in this way, the pre-colonial socio-political context.

Thinking of the noncentralized societies as the main groups essentially devoted to banditry fosters the colonial bias of savagery introduced in the previous chapter. Nevertheless, this conclusion was not always backed by clear corroborating evidence[4]. The bias certainly helped to legitimize conquest and occupation, in the eyes of the officers, as a just and "civilizing" mission[5]. However, the British arrival did not bring peace nor "civilization". Conversely, the first decade of the 20th century saw the rise of a new type of brigands, better armed and organized than the Gurensi, coming after the ending of warfare between the European powers and the Zabarima and Samory's army. These groups

[2] Cooper, 'Conflict and Connection: Rethinking Colonial African History', 1517.
[3] Cooper, 1529.
[4] Allman and Parker, *Tongnaab*, 63.
[5] In many reports it is expressed the idea that British intervention introduced peace and civilization in the region. See for example NAG ADM 56/1/141, Census, 1911, Ag.CNEP to CCNT, 11.10.1911

occupied the region and raided both the caravans and the local population. Thanks to their association with the colonial armies, they were able to operate undisturbed and with the alleged "credentials of the white man", taking advantage of the distance between the local population and the colonial officers. Colonialism did not have a definite and clear identity in the region, which meant that those who were able to take advantage of it could exploit its "brand". One of these bandits settled precisely in Bolgatanga, contributing to the disturbances in the area. Nonetheless, colonial officers persisted in targeting the Gurensi and their neighbours as ferocious bandits.

The primary purpose that guided British administration in laying its foundations in the Northern Territories was the control of the trade and the caravan network that, despite the state of war, continued to flow in the region. In 1910 a colonial post was founded in the region, precisely in Zuarungu, 5 kilometres from Bolgatanga, in order to maintain control of the trade routes in the unsettled areas. The next chapter will analyse the economic and political consequences of the foundation of this post. The foundation of the colonial garrison in Zuarungu and the ensuing expedition against the Tong Hills can be considered as the completion of the British occupation of the region, an occupation that lasted more than a decade. The last part of the chapter will follow therefore this occupation and its consequences.

2.1 The prelude to British military raids: a biased civilizing project

The British advance and the consolidation of an African prejudice

The first explorers' perceptions on the Gurensi were collected and confirmed by the ones who followed them, i.e. the British officers. Here I will describe how this savageness bias was consolidated amongst the colonial administrators. Although the officers were aware of their biased source of information, which was the Mamprusi ruling class, they continued to preserve it. Banditry and savageness provided a valid justification to the military operations they were going to undertake. I will therefore follow the arrival of colonial troops in what would become the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast in a few years' time. Then I will present the first British military expedition that crossed the Gurensi country and the consequences it had on the officers' project of conquest.

In the last two decades of the 19th century, the political unrest of the area amplified owing to the coming of new powers on the scene. The Zabarima warriors consolidated their position under the leadership of Babatu. In the first years of the 1880s, Babatu rose to power and started more military campaigns to expand their area of control, subjugating the weaker and allying with the major powers in the region. After almost ten years, he was able to take control over a significant part of the noncentralized groups in what is today the upper area of Ghana and southern Burkina Faso, occupying towns such as Navrongo and Wa[6]. However, by the mid-1890s, the power of Babatu experienced its first cracks, which manifested itself through the internal mutiny of one of his captains, Amaria.

By 1896 the turmoil was at its peak. Amaria's revolt against Babatu was still ongoing, and while the French and British troops were approaching, a new power entered on the scene: Samory Turé[7]. In 1895 his army invaded western Gonja and Wa. Although he tried to form a coalition with the Zabarima's leaders, both Amaria and Babatu, his troops were driven away by the French army. In fact, these troops, under the leadership of Lt. Paul Voulet, were able to negotiate a treaty with Amaria, in September, that recognized him as the "King of Grunshi", a brand-new etiquette designed

[6] Holden, 'The Zabarima Conquest of North-West Ghana Part I', 74–76.
[7] For an account on his history see Yves Person, *Samori: une révolution Dyula* (Dakar: IFAN, 1968).

without any historical or social precedent[8]. Nonetheless, this alliance gave the French an advantage over the British. Finally, by the end of the year, the British began preparing their military intervention in the region.

After the alliance between the French and Amaria, and the military attack by Samory against Wa in 1896, British troops were sent into the 'Ashanti Hinterland' to strengthen their presence in this territory. In the same year, under the leadership of Maj. Henry P. Northcott, they occupied Gambaga, the Mamprusi commercial capital[9]. In 1897, Northcott was appointed the first Commissioner and Commandant in the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast[10], a territory whose boundaries were still to be defined. His orders were to occupy the places not already occupied by the French army and continue to pursue, wherever possible, the British advance. In the first half of 1897 two more missions of expansion were undertaken, one in the North-West, under the command of Lt. Henderson, and the other towards the North-East, directed by Cpt. Donald Stewart.

Henderson was able to sign a treaty in Wa but, shortly after, he was attacked and defeated by Samory's army. On this occasion, the explorer George E. Ferguson, who also participated in the expedition, was killed, and Henderson was captured[11]. During 1897, the French troops and Amaria's mercenaries fought and defeated Babatu, backed by the British, and drove him away from Wa[12]. In the following months, the Zabarima experienced their downfall[13]. The agreement with the British did not last long and, by the end of the year, they were compelled to leave British territories by Major Morris and his unit of Mossi horsemen[14]. By 1899 they were definitely stopped, disarmed and forced to settle peacefully in Yendi.

On the other side, Captain Donald Stewart was sent as North as possible to literally put a flag on the territories he encountered. In his mission, he should have reached Ouagadougou. He advanced to Tenkodogo, where he reached an agreement with the French Cpt. Voulet on the neutrality of those territories. He then came back to Gambaga[15]. On his journey, he received rumours about the violence of the "Grunshi" country, and, as I noted in the previous chapter, on the looting activities of the so-called "Tanga-naba", the alleged chief of Bolgatanga. However, this time, British colonial records are more explicit about the source of their information, i.e. the Mamprusi ruling class. In one report

[8] Duperray, *Les Gourounsi de Haute-Volta*, 93–95.
[9] Ladouceur, *Chiefs and Politicians: The Politics of Regionalism in Northern Ghana*, 40.
[10] TNA CO 879/50, Further Correspondence relative to Boundary Questions in the Bend of the Niger, Sept.-Dec. 1897, no. 217, Mr. Chamberlain to Governor Sir W.E. Maxwell, 15.10.1897
[11] Lentz, *Ethnicity and the Making of History in Northern Ghana*, 27–28; Wilks, *Wa and the Wala: Islam and Polity in Northwestern Ghana*, 128–32.
[12] Wilks, *Wa and the Wala: Islam and Polity in Northwestern Ghana*, 132–33.
[13] Duperray, *Les Gourounsi de Haute-Volta*, 105–10.
[14] Holden, 'The Zabarima Conquest of North-West Ghana Part I', 85.
[15] Duperray, *Les Gourounsi de Haute-Volta*, 100.

on a military expedition against the "Frafra", Northcott reveals one of the main factors that biased the British attitude, namely their informants. He wrote:

> the definite nature of the information supplied to me, which included a promise of determined opposition to my advance, is partly to be attributed to the difficulty of procuring an efficient interpreter, and partly, I think, to the desire of the Imam of Gambaga to be revenged on certain of the Frafra Chiefs, who had neglected to make the presents to him demanded by the custom of the country[16].

Indeed, he later remarked that the Gurensi land was «composed of men whose naked savagedom was a by-word of contempt among the more civilised inhabitants of the Mamprusi towns»[17]. Still in 1907, the biased nature of information was recognized by one officer when he wrote that

> the native reports are based on an almost complete want of knowledge of the hilly parts of Fra Fra; they are very frightened of the Fra Fra at home and so build up all sorts of generalities from a few cases of robbery and murder. I have never been able to get definite information from other natives nor to find a man who has lived in the so called bad parts of Fra Fra[18].

Apart from their biased informants, the officers' confusion was amplified by imprecise geographical data and the lack of linguistic knowledge. A map was drawn by Ferguson in 1893[19] using his information and other sources, like the one drawn by Louis Binger[20], but it was mostly inaccurate and full of mistakes (see Figure 10). Moreover, the language differences of the region did not ease their work. In fact, the pronunciation of most of the places differed according to the speaker, and therefore in the map many of the places were misspelt.

In June 1898, the Anglo-French Convention established the 11th degree of latitude as the border between French and British territories. This border indiscriminately cut the societies that inhabited the area of interest. The Anglo-German agreement of November 1899 would follow, and the boundaries would be legally clarified by the Order in Council of 26 September 1901, when the Protectorate of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast was formally declared[21]. The 'Ashanti Hinterland', with its heterogeneous societies, was now under formal British control. However, while the British did not yet administer the area, they were able to set up an agreement with the rival European powers concerning the boundaries of their alleged possessions. Nonetheless, they did not know exactly what was inside the area they circumscribed. They still needed to materially conquer

[16] TNA CO 879/52/2, Correspondence relating to the Northern Territories, Jan.-Jun. 1898, no. 437, Hodgson to Chamberlain, 31.05.1898, enc.: Northcott to Hodgson, 08.04.1898
[17] TNA CO 879/58, Further Correspondence relating to the Northern Territories, 1899, no. 96, Northcott to Colonial Office, 09.07.1899
[18] NAG ADM 56/1/429, Monthly Report Navarro District, District Report, Navarro, June 1907
[19] TNA MPG 1/939/2, Map of the Hinterland of the Gold Coast Colony [now Ghana] Compiled by Mr. G E Ferguson from his own surveys from native information & from existing maps
[20] Binger, *Du Niger au Golfe de Guinée*.
[21] Ladouceur, *Chiefs and Politicians: The Politics of Regionalism in Northern Ghana*, 40.

and subdue the societies that lived within it. The colonial ignorance and prejudices would manifest themselves in the administrative framework that the officers would create for the region.

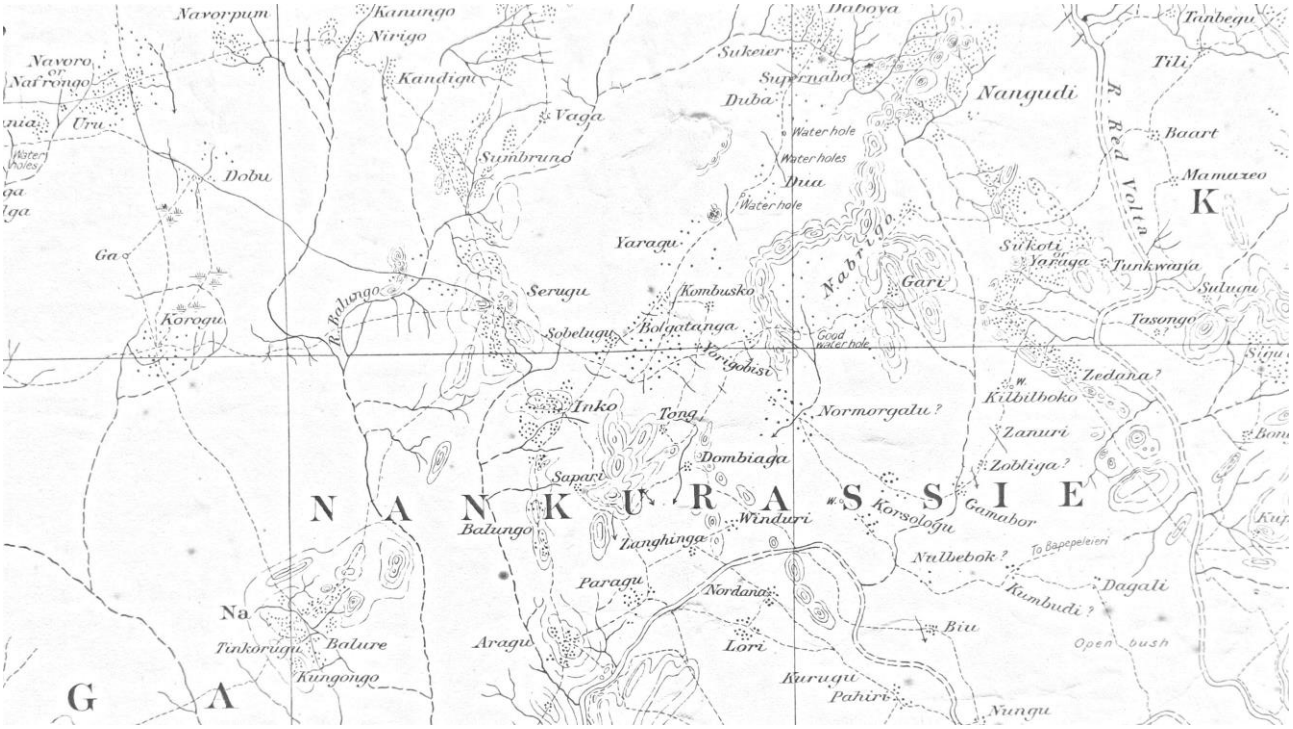

Figure 10. Map of the Gurensi area, derived from Binger's and Ferguson's maps, 1905

Source: NAG MP 56

Since the appointment of Northcott as Chief Commissioner for the Northern Territories, it was believed that the kingdoms north of Asante were in the past both more powerful than their actual status and that they extended much further than they actually did[22]. Thus, Mamprugu, Dagbon, Wa, and Gonja were thought to have been weakened by the incursions of the Zabarima and Samory's army, and therefore lost their supremacy on the noncentralized societies. These societies, in turn, felt into an uncontrolled state of anarchy that enhanced their savagery. In appointing the chiefs, the old and lost paramountcies should be revived for the sake of a working administration. The notion of a "Greater Mamprusi", the old fallen kingdom whose boundaries would have also encircled Bolgatanga, was the highest example of the British efforts to create a hierarchical chain of intermediaries that would have permitted the control and the implementation of their policies over a vast and heterogeneous territory. From the first decade of the 20th century since the implementation of the indirect rule in the 1930s, hierarchies among chiefs started to be created, negotiated, and consolidated, mostly according to loyalty and assistance of administrators[23].

[22] Iliasu, 'The Establishment of British Administration in Mamprugu, 1898-1937'; Jeff D. Grischow, *Shaping Tradition: Civil Society, Community and Development in Colonial Northern Ghana, 1899-1957*, African Social Studies Series, v. 14 (Leiden; Boston [Mass.]: Brill, 2006), 29–33.

[23] Ladouceur, *Chiefs and Politicians: The Politics of Regionalism in Northern Ghana*, 42–44. On this see also chapter 4.

The next chapters will consider in detail the implementation of the first colonial policies and their consequences in Bolgatanga. Before embarking on such a discussion, it is necessary to analyse the details of the first encounters between the colonial army and the people in Bolgatanga. It is in these events that the nature of the manifold relationship of indifference, violence, fear, manipulation and compliance between the officers and the Gurensi entrenched itself. This relationship would affect the future of Bolgatanga and its people, as it would profoundly affect the political balances of the settlement introducing the chieftaincy. In the next section, I will consider the first indirect contact between the British army and Bolgatanga and its alleged chief, the "Tanganaba".

Fighting banditry in the region: the British "civilizing" mission

The first rumours Cpt. Stewart collected in 1896 on Bolgatanga were that it was the home of a ferocious bandit, the "Tanganaba", a man that surrounded himself with rascals and criminals to pillage the passing caravans[24]. This first indirect contact between Stewart and the "Tanganaba" is emblematic for two reasons. Firstly, it further exposes the prejudices of savageness that the British officers continued to have for the Gurensi. These prejudices would indeed serve to legitimize colonial intervention in the area. Secondly, the contact is emblematic because it made explicit one of the primary purposes behind British intervention, i.e. the control of trade. What was considered banditry, and that later would motivate many of the raids of "pacification", was not accepted by the officers. Stewart wrote in his report on the "Tanganaba":

> Later on, if I go to Wagadugu, this Chief might be visited, and, if necessary, an end put to his depredations. The people are only armed with spears and bows and arrows (poisoned), it would be an easy matter to handle them in this open country. A seven-pounder gun ought to be sent here in case it was ever necessary to send an expedition against any village in the future. [25]

As a matter of fact, despite ongoing military operations, the trade in the region continued to flow[26], and with it the ambiguous and sometimes violent relationship between the Gurensi and the caravans[27].

[24] See § 1.4

[25] TNA CO 879/48, Further Correspondence relative to Boundary question in the Bend of the Niger, Jan.-Aug. 1897, no. 65, Maxwell to Chamberlain, 05.02.1897, enc.: Stewart to Colonial Secretary, 29.12.1896

[26] Stewart reported that caravans continued to cross the region despite the state of war. See TNA CO 879/48, Further Correspondence relative to Boundary question in the Bend of the Niger, no. 173, Maxwell to Chamberlain, 31.03.1897, enc.: Stewart to Col. Secretary, 18.02.1897

[27] That same year, a group of Mossi merchants that crossed the region reported that people in the Gurensi area attacked them. The Gurensi would have captured two men and cut them into pieces. In TNA CO 879/48, Further Correspondence

British presence had not yet changed the situation much. The state of insecurity and violence that had characterized the previous decades also proceeded into the last years of the 19th century.

However, in what the officers already regarded as British territory, every act of violence that disturbed this flow had to be sanctioned. Indeed, Northcott's political agenda in the first years after consolidating British power in the Northern Territories relied on the fostering of trade[28]. His policy depended on three pillars: commerce, taxation and peace[29]. Peace was indeed a necessary prerequisite

Figure 11. "Playing at War". Gurensi warriors (1927 ca.)

Source: Cardinall, A. W., 'In Ashanti & beyond', pp. 208-209

to enhance the trade and gain merchants' trust. Thus, banditry and raiding were to be stopped at any cost. Stewart was therefore allowed to use his own discretion in dealing with the "Tanga-naba"[30]. In this way, it is possible to see how the unstable political context of those years – as well as British perceptions of it – allowed the British officers to completely justify their military actions in the alleged

relative to Boundary question in the Bend of the Niger, no. 252, Maxwell to Chamberlain, 05.05.1897, enc.: Stewart to Colonial Secretary, 27.03.1897

[28] TNA CO 879/58, Further Correspondence relating to the Northern Territories, 1899, no. 96, Northcott to Colonial Office, 09.07.1899; see also Alan Edward Garrard Watherston, 'The Northern Territories of the Gold Coast', *Journal of the Royal African Society* 7, no. 28 (1908): 359.

[29] Wilks, *Wa and the Wala: Islam and Polity in Northwestern Ghana*, 142. In the next chapter more space will be devoted to the analysis of British taxation and commercial policies.

[30] TNA CO 879/48, Further Correspondence relative to Boundary question in the Bend of the Niger, no. 94, Maxwell to Chamberlain, 16.02.1897, enc.: Hodgson to Stewart, 10.02.1897

name of pacification and civilization. Further on, I will consider how traders took advantage of this British "civilizing" mission, using denunciations of banditry as an effective weapon of reprisal against the Gurensi.

However, before Cpt. Stewart could begin to use his seven-pounder gun, violence was already associated with Europeans. In these years, the French and German methods of conquest differed from the British ones, who were more prone to diplomacy. Stewart reported that «all the natives are frightened of the white men on account of the Germans on one side and the French on the other shooting freely and burning right and left; this makes it very difficult for them to believe that we are different»[31]. However, this same policy of «shooting freely and burning right and left» would be adopted by some British officers in the following years, making them just another set of raiders in a context of instability and violence. The so-called "punitive" raids would become a feature of British intervention in the Gurensi country in the first decade of the 20th century. Intended to bring peace through military attacks, they targeted the regions that did not comply with their orders and those denounced of robbing the caravans, such as "Lobi" and "Grunshi". Many of these operations were led by young officers who undertook military expeditions to win medals and promotions, not caring too much about diplomacy[32].

The next section intends, therefore, to present these military expeditions, and in particular, those that reached Bolgatanga. These operations were extremely violent, destroying entire settlements, burning the crops and confiscating the livestock. The people in Bolgatanga survived the military operations thanks to the diplomacy that the man the British recognized as the "king" of the town, Apase-nyɛlom Adongo, displayed to the British troops. In this way, the compliance offered by Adongo placed him in a material and political advantage over the other families and communities of the area. Nonetheless, it had an overall protective consequence for the settlement in that Bolgatanga was not destroyed by colonial raiders.

[31] TNA CO 879/48, Further Correspondence relative to Boundary question in the Bend of the Niger, no. 108, Maxwell to Antrobus, 27.02.1897, enc.: Stewart to Maxwell, 11.01.1897

[32] Raymond B. Bening, 'Administration and Development in Northern Ghana', *Ghana Social Science Journal* 4, no. 2 (1977): 63.

2.2 British military raids in the region: the shifting of political balances

The first contact between the British army and the people in Bolgatanga

By the end of the 19th century, both British and French troops crossed into the Gurensi area, trying to make treaties with those they identified as "chiefs" or "kings" and to fight those manifesting any opposition to their presence[33]. The image of the "Tanganaba" created by Stewart was soon denied by the first real encounter between the British colonial army and the people of Bolgatanga. In this section, I will analyse this meeting through archival sources from the colonial archives and compare it with the popular version obtained from Azaare's manuscripts. The first contact between the officers and the Gurensi in Bolgatanga is critical because it had profound consequences for the future approach of the colonial army regarding the settlement. The event, mythologized in the foundation history, exposes within it the multifaceted relationship between colonial officers and the people of Bolgatanga, a relationship that would lead to the urbanisation of the settlement.

The French troops arrived in the Gurensi region before the British ones. Between January and February 1898, Cpt. Scal with his contingent of 80 auxiliaries, 10 spahis and 15 horsemen peul traversed the area and found it to be very crowded, evaluating the population of Zuarungu and Bolgatanga to have between 20,000 and 25,000 inhabitants[34]. Even though he found more than 3,000 armed people, no fight ensued[35]. However, a clash did arise not too far away, around Winduri, where 2,000 bullets were shot and the French suffered only two casualties. On the 5th of February, they reached Aragu, where they convinced the chief to sign a treaty. Afterwards, they went back through Kusasi to Bitou and then Ouagadougou.

In April, Captain Murray was sent into the still unknown Gurensi region to ascertain its boundaries and «make known to the principal villages […] the fact that they are under the exclusive

[33] On British military expeditions see also Goody, 'The Political Systems of the Tallensi and Their Neighbours 1888–1915'; Goody, 'Establishing Control: Violence along the Black Volta at the Beginning of Colonial Rule (L'établissement Du Pouvoir: La Violence Dans La Vallée de La Volta Noire Au Début de La Colonisation)'.
[34] Ouagadougou 11 février 1898. Rapport politique du lieutenant Abbat, resident par interim Archives de Dakar, Sous-série 15 G 190. Quoted in Duperray, *Les Gourounsi de Haute-Volta*, 113.
[35] Duperray, 131.

influence of Great Britain»[36]. In Aragu, Murray found the French flag left by Scal. The rumours were that the French did not use diplomatic methods. Indeed, the chief declared that when the flag was not accepted, the French had shot five men[37]. Nonetheless, Murray continued his expedition through the region. Hostility against the British troops started in the area between Bolgatanga and Nangodi, where they were attacked. The small contingent sent to "inform" the people, and not to sustain any military action, was forced to retreat, killing on its way, according to British sources, 25 men, including their local guide. Officers reported that the attack was carried out by at least one thousand people gathered on the Nangodi hills[38].

Figure 12. The grave of Cpl. W. Field, died in the raid of April 1898, Bolgatanga

Source: Photo by the Author

[36] TNA CO 879/52/2, Correspondence relating to the Northern Territories, Jan.-Jun. 1898, no. 436, Hodgson to Chamberlain, 31.05.1898, enc.: Northcott to Hodgson, 17.04.1898
[37] TNA CO 879/52/2, Correspondence relating to the Northern Territories, Jan.-Jun. 1898, no. 436, Hodgson to Chamberlain, 31.05.1898, enc.: Murray to Staff Officer NT, 17.04.1898
[38] TNA CO 879/52/2, Correspondence relating to the Northern Territories, Jan.-Jun. 1898, no. 324, Hodgson to Chamberlain, (received) 12.05.1898

Therefore, on the 23rd of April 1898 the British set up the first "punitive" expedition planned as a repression of Gurensi hostility and opposition[39]. The British column marched again into the area, this time destroying the places they found deserted or ready to attack and leaving only those who showed a friendly attitude. In fact, not every community opposed the Constabulary, as in the case of Bolgatanga. The diary of the expedition reported that when the contingent reached it,

> the inhabitants were in their houses and unarmed, the King having sent in a message the previous evening that his people had nothing to do with the Kombasko people [those who attacked Murray], and had been recommended to take that course. He was friendly, and was given a present of 10s. in consideration of his friendly disposition towards Captain Murray's party when he was marching through this country[40].

According to the officers, this first expedition brought good results, and the use of force was suggested again if people of this area continued to be «turbulent» and not submissive.

The first contact between Adongo, the population of Bolgatanga, and the British army was indeed peaceful[41]. However, in contrast to the brief and concise report of Murray, Azaare provides a vivid and detailed version of it:

> On reaching Bolga the people came out in their numbers sounding their horns and bugles, beating war drums and singing war songs. Capt. Murray and his soldiers took no notice of the people behaviour and courageously advanced towards them and demonstrated that they did not come for war but rather for peace. When he asked to know who their chief was, Adongo (the regent of the Bolga skin) was thrust forward to receive him. Adongo approached Murray and shook hands with him. His followers desperately followed and did likewise. The people of Bolga and the chief Adongo who were gathered on the Ayia rocks (Ayia-Tanga) gave Murray and his men some very warm reception. […] The British officer in addressing the crowd made the people understand that he was happy with the peaceful nature of the town. And that unlike their neighbours who shot and killed his men the people of Bolga did not show any resistance. […] In the presence of the concourse of people gathered Murray invested Adongo with more titular authority than had ever been wounded by even the clan elders of the town. From then on, he became the medium through whom the orders of the white man were passed to those in authority.[42]

Both versions of this encounter, the one from the British record and the one recollected by Azaare point to the peaceful disposition of the people and the central role Adongo had in the meeting. Rather than a ferocious bandit, Murray found a friendly headman well-disposed to welcome the stranger.

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[39] TNA CO 879/54, Further Correspondence relating to the Northern Territories, Jul.-Dec. 1898, no. 34, Hodgson to Chamberlain, 25.06.1898

[40] TNA CO 879/54, Further Correspondence relating to the Northern Territories, no. 34, Hodgson to Chamberlain, 25.06.1898, encl.: Diary of tour through North-Western Mamprusi

[41] For another very brief account of the encounter see NAG ADM 68/5/5, Zuarungu District Record Book, p. 4

[42] Azaare, 'Life in Bolga'.

The political awareness manifested by Adongo in this critical moment is not to be underrated. His choice to favour British officers to the detriment of the neighbouring communities, a dangerous bet in the unsettled region, was crucial for the future success of his settlement. Taking the risk of being strongly contested by the neighbouring communities, he nonetheless welcomed the British contingent in the settlement. His choice meant that Bolgatanga would not be depredated and destroyed by the following British raids of conquest. Moreover, it would put him in an advantageous position when the future political hierarchies of the region would be planned by the officers. In fact, a few months later, the Gurensi region formally became a part of the British Empire.

The military raids against the hostile settlements intensified, as the British officers were determined to carry out their "pacifying" mission. The next section will analyse the Gurensi's disjointed reaction to the British invasion and the officers' clumsy and violent efforts to conquer the area.

Gurensi's fragmented reactions and colonial violent approaches to conquest

In January 1899, the British sent another expedition into the Gurensi region since the fines requested after Murray's expedition in April 1898 were not yet paid. This one was also of a violent nature, as the hostile settlements were destroyed, the chiefs kidnapped, and at least 17 men were killed. Nevertheless, many of the places they encountered showed no opposition and, during their tour, the British set up their first post in the region precisely in Bolgatanga. In this section, I will consider the events related to the British military expeditions of the Gurensi region in the first years of the 20th century. The dynamics of the colonial raids clearly reveal the high segmentation of the settlements, which conditioned their different responses to the attacks. In this occasion, once again, the people in Bolgatanga did not indulge in violent behaviour; instead, they continued to exercise diplomacy and collaboration. These years were particularly crucial in that the image of Bolgatanga as a friendly settlement and that of the Talensi as untamed people would be produced.

The choice to build a temporary camp in Bolgatanga was probably guided by the friendliness displayed in the previous expeditions and by the strategical position of the settlement at the centre of the region. During the January expedition, the people of the settlement appeared friendly and provided food to the soldiers[43]. Using "Tanga" as their base, the British army attacked the neighbouring

[43] TNA CO 879/58, Further Correspondence relating to the Northern Territories, 1899, no. 80, Low to Chamberlain, 02.05.1899, enc.: Report on Expedition to Fra-Fra country, January and February 1899

communities and burnt and levelled some of them to the ground, such as Kumbosko. This time the officers made their intentions clear. They communicated their main aims to the people in the newly acquired area which were taxes, safe passage for the caravans and messengers, and future requests of labour, that was needed to build new infrastructure, mainly roads.

Several expeditions followed in the subsequent years, as some of the Gurensi showed that they were not ready to accept proposals of submission. Two expeditions, amongst the most violent ones of 1899, are particularly revealing as regards the dynamics and the relationship that developed between the colonial army and the Gurensi. The first one is much more telling for the colonial approach. Two officers, Capitan Irvine and Capitan Fenton, with a small column of Constabulary, were sent in March to collect the previously imposed fines, which had not yet been settled. Once again, they provisionally camped in Bolgatanga. The *modus operandi* of these officers can be considered controversial. Irvine planned to kidnap one of the hostile Gurensi chiefs in order to convince his people to pay the fine. The abduction failed, but the officer decided to take some of the women in the chief's compound as hostages to safely find his way back to the camp. Some days later, taking over the camp from Irvine, Captain Fenton started to collect building materials. For this purpose, he carelessly sent out some of his men, but they never returned. Fenton was indeed assured by Irvine «that all the tribes were friendly», while this was not true[44]. However, after the incident, Fenton decided to raid one of the fined settlements in order to confiscate cattle and, in this way, settle the previous debts. The events related to Fenton and Irvine's behaviour are particularly revealing about the officers' approach and their diplomatic skills. The misunderstandings between them added to the confusion of the political context in which they were operating and amplified the tension with the Gurensi. This resulted in threats, kidnappings, looting, and violence.

On the other hand, the second expedition reflects the ability of the Bolgatanga people to take advantage of their position in the unsettled context of those years. A few days after the incident described above, another officer, Mr Lamptey, was sent again to collect some bundles of grass and sticks. The people he went to ask killed his interpreter, cutting him into pieces. The Gurensi reprisal went further, and that same night the British camp in Bolgatanga was besieged. However, this attack was not unexpected by the colonial officers. The communication networks between the settlements were indeed strategically used by the "King of Tanga"[45] who, during the night, had entered the British camp and informed the officer

[44] TNA CO 879/58, Further Correspondence relating to the Northern Territories, 1899, no. 118, Hodgson to Chamberlain, 28.07.1899; enc.: Fenton to Giffard, 20.03.1899; see also TNA CO 879/58, Further Correspondence relating to the Northern Territories, 1899, no. 129, Hodgson to Chamberlain, 08.08.1899, encl.: Stewart to Colonial Secretary, 24.06.1899

[45] Throughout this source, the so-called "King of Tanga" is not associated with any other name. Since there was no such position in Gurensi society, it is no certain that the man the officers were referring to was always Adongo.

> that the people of Sherigo [Sherigu] had sent messengers to the towns of Tanga [Bolgatanga], Unkum [Winkongo], Tindanmorogo [Tindonmolego], Tindansabilisi [Tindonsobilego], Echemine [Yikene], Kalibigo [Kalbeo], and Gambigo [Gambibgo], asking them to join them in making a night attack, and to drive the white man out of the country[46].

This is a clear case in which the Gurensi activated the networks among different settlements analysed in the previous chapter. However, the "King of Tanga" deliberately decided to decline the call to attack the invaders and, instead, helped the British troops by informing them of the planned attack.

Many Gurensi communities fiercely opposed the British officers, who, for their part, did not do much to create peaceful conditions for negotiation. As a matter of fact, Fenton reacted immediately to the Bolgatanga siege and the next day attacked the hostile settlements with a Maxim gun and 19 men. That same day the Gurensi registered one of their few victories, if not the only one, against the British force. In fact, the colonial detachment was routed and pushed back. However, three months later, Captain Donald Stewart was sent back to revenge this defeat with a column of more than 200 soldiers. This expedition was one of the most violent, and it was also the one in which a clear and defined image of the "hostile Frafra" emerged[47]. As a matter of fact, only after this military operation did the colonial stigmatization of the Talensi (and the "Frafra" in general) as an untamed and rebellious people, and of the Tong Hills as the hub of resistance in the region, start to be constructed.

The mission did not aim initially at Tong and the Talensi, but at the other Gurensi settlements that previously attacked Fenton[48]. Stewart and his column marched through Bolgatanga where, as in previous occasions, he was welcomed in a friendly way. However, he found the old camp destroyed and used as a latrine. The "King of Tanga" promptly reported, once again, Kumbosko as the culprit and showed himself to be particularly supportive, giving useful information on the other hostile settlements. The military operations that followed lasted for almost one month, during which time the unfriendly settlements of Zare, Sherigu and Tong were thoroughly destroyed, their cattle confiscated, their crops burnt, and no fewer than 150 people lost their lives, while the British suffered only two casualties. This operation was indeed one of the biggest and most decisive, which led settlements as far as Paga and Navrongo, about 40 kilometres away, to send messengers declaring their neutrality.

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[46] TNA CO 879/58, Further Correspondence relating to the Northern Territories, 1899, no. 118, Hodgson to Chamberlain, 28.07.1899, enc.: Fenton to Giffard, 20.03.1899

[47] Anafu, 'The Impact of Colonial Rule on Tallensi Political Institutions, 1898-1967'; Allman and Parker, *Tongnaab*, 58–59.

[48] The report of this operations is in TNA CO 879/58, Further Correspondence relating to the Northern Territories, 1899, no. 168, Hodgson to Chamberlain, 25.09.1899, encl.: Stewart to Colonial Secretary, 12.09.1899. For an account of Gurensi and Talensi military tactics see Goody, 'The Political Systems of the Tallensi and Their Neighbours 1888–1915', 11.

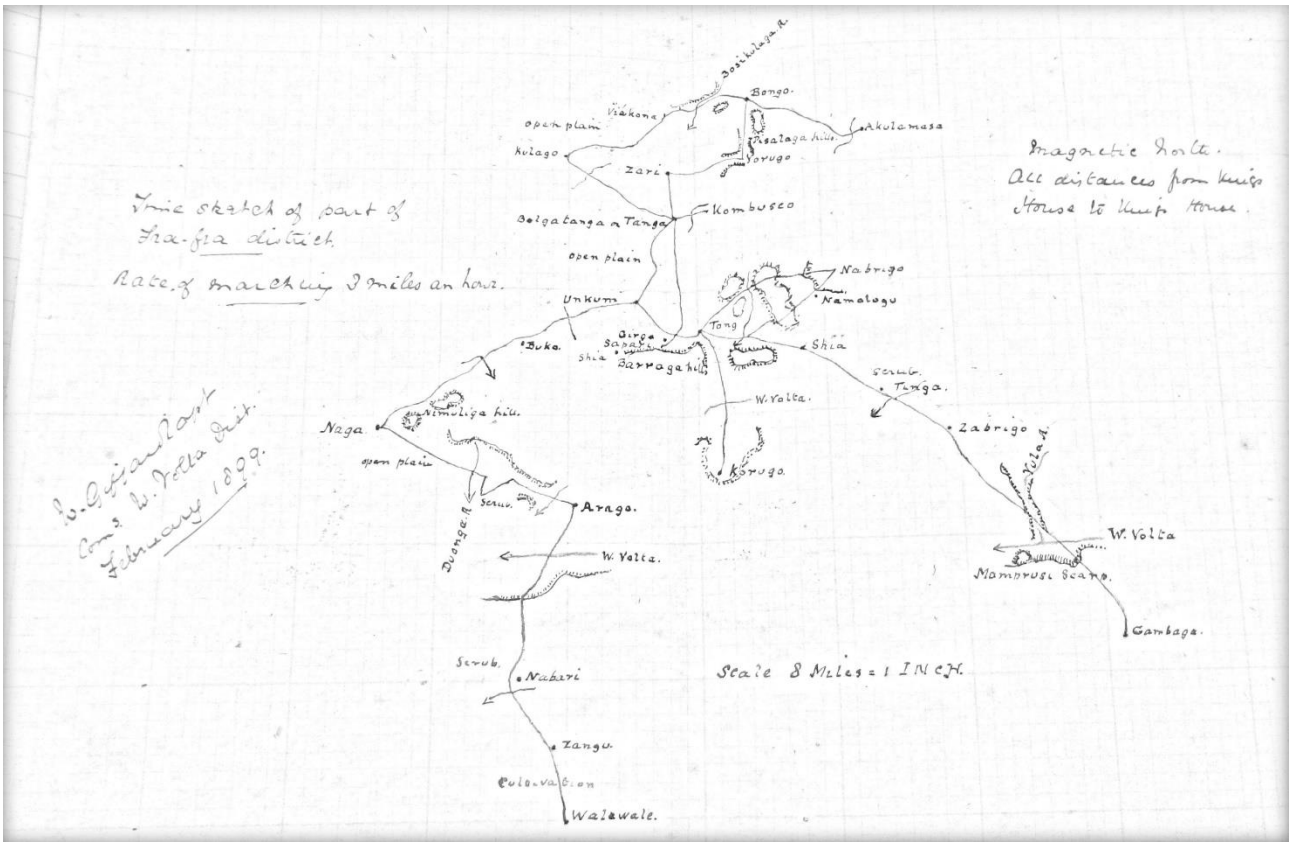

Figure 13. Sketch map of the "Frafra" district drawn by Cpt. Giffard, 1899

Source: NAG ADM 56/1/267, Chief Commissioner's Informal Diary

At the end of the raids, a «most reluctant» confession from the "chief of Tanga" and the prisoners confirmed Stewart's suspicion on the Tong Hills as the core of the "Fra Fra" resistance. The possibility that this information was gathered in a somewhat confused and forced inquiry is confirmed by the epithet given to the *Tongrana*, the chief of Tong, defined by the officers as the «chief fetish priest of all the Fra Fra». As Jean Allman and John Parker rightly note, Stewart was misinformed in that the *Tongrana* was not a «fetish priest»[49] and, moreover, his authority did not go beyond his settlement. By no means, could he have been the chief of all the "Fra Fra". However, by now, British officers had developed a more definite target against which to direct their efforts, the Tong hills. Thinking in terms of one defined enemy was indeed far better than a dispersed landscape of potential ones.

If the hostilities seemed to have come to an end after the last expedition, it was only in the officers' mind. The caravans looting continued and, with it, so did the British raids. In March 1900 the area was attacked again, which led to their compounds being destroyed, their cattle being confiscated, and at least 50 Gurensis deaths[50]. This expedition also provided an opportunity for the slave raiders

[49] Allman and Parker, *Tongnaab*, 58.

[50] TNA CO 879/78, Despatches relating to Field Operations in the Northern Territories, 1899-1902, no. 3, Low to Chamberlain, 04.12.1900, enc.: Morris to Colonial Secretary, 26.03.1900

enrolled in the Constabulary (i.e. the Moshi horsemen) to continue their unlawful activity, negotiating it with the British officers[51]. Two years later, other raids followed with a total of at least one hundred Gurensi casualties[52]. In March 1905 the hostile settlements were once again raided[53].

In conclusion, the so-called "punitive" raids not only did not bring peace to the region but instead they fostered violence and resentment amongst the Gurensi. In this context, the people of Bolgatanga were able to take advantage of the situation by keeping a neutral stance in the hostilities, which would be remembered by the officers for many years to come, as the next chapters will show. In the following years, colonial administration would try to change the political balance through the opening of posts and the appointing of chiefs, aiming at the consolidation of its presence and the defence of its interests in the Northern Territories. This operation induced a long-term transformation in the indigenous power structures. The next parts of the chapters are intended to analyse this change during the first years of British administration.

[51] NAG ADM 56/4/1, Court Cases, Rex. Vs. Abbah, p. 527. The depositions of this trial for slave dealing revealed that Col. Morris allowed the party to catch women with the promise not to sell them afterwards. The raiders did not fulfil the pact. Even French authorities denounced the continuation of slave trade in the Northern Territories. See Duperray, *Les Gourounsi de Haute-Volta*, 274.

[52] TNA CO 879/78, Despatches relating to Field Operations in the Northern Territories, 1899-1902, no. 5, Nathan to Chamberlain, 31.05.1902, encl.: Morris to Governor, 26.04.1902 and no. 6, Arthur to Chamberlain, 19.11.1902, enc.: Irvine to Governor, 23.09.1902

[53] NAG ADM 56/1/2, Duplicate letter book, Irvine to Colonial Secretary, 25.05.1905

2.3 The introduction of chieftaincy in the Gurensi region

Yɛ naba loko, ge pɛkɛ ho miŋa loko.

You shoulder the chief's quiver and put your own at your side.

Supporting someone does not mean neglecting oneself.[54]

The need for a chief: African political segmentation and colonial requests

According to Henry P. Northcott, the first Commissioner and Commandant of the Northern Territories, the formation of the Protectorate immediately meant the creation of a debt between the British government and the "conquered" people. This Hobbesian pact would have been «protection and the means of obtaining justice» from the Government in exchange for labour and political submission[55]. The following sections will analyse the process through which chieftaincy was introduced in the Gurensi region, which enabled Apase-nyɛlom Adongo, the alleged chief of Bolgatanga, to acquire a new status in the colonial administrative structure. The introduction of chieftaincy indeed will represent the main change in the political equilibrium of the region.

At least since 1899, the individuals recognized as local chiefs were regarded as the direct agents of British power in the Northern Territories[56]. Northcott pointed out very soon the role of the chiefs as gatherers of labour to be used for administrative purposes. This was considered an obvious duty as «the power of calling out contingents of labourers has always been vested in the chiefs», an ideal construct that did not have any factual basis in the Gurensi region. This decision did not come from a misunderstanding of the local political context. The fragmentation of the noncentralized societies

[54] Christopher Anabila Azaare, 'Gurene Proverbs and Sayings Directed to Animals, Birds and Reptiles' (unpublished manuscript, n.d.).
[55] TNA CO 879/58, Further Correspondence relating to the Northern Territories, 1899, no. 96, Northcott to Colonial Office, 09.07.1899
[56] *ivi*

of the Volta Basin was quite evident in the eyes of the officers. As a matter of fact, Northcott wrote that

> the task to be performed in this instance was rendered exceptionally difficult from the fact that the sub-district is occupied by a succession of tribelets entirely independent of, and in many cases antagonistic to, each other; the attitude of one of these is no criterion of the feeling of its neighbour, and on moving from the territory of one that has shown a friendly disposition across the invisible boundary between it and the next clan, it is as likely as not that the latter will be met in war array and determined to provoke a conflict[57].

Moreover, as the reports of the following military operations confirmed, the people that the officers considered chiefs did not have any direct authority outside of their own family.

If before the colonial presence the role of the *naba* was to exercise the «mystical attributes of chiefly office» with the aims of prosperity and protection of his people, now its source of power became the District Commissioner[58]. The extent of his functions shifted to the compliance of British requests, such as the preservation of peace, the collection of taxes, and the gathering of labour to build colonial infrastructures. The so-called "free labour" (that was instead forced labour) introduced a change in the way of approaching and managing power[59]. In the 19th century, whatever the origin of the *naba*, his power was characterized by the absence of control over both force and coercion[60]. Before British intervention, violence was a part of Gurensi life, but power was not exercised through coercion[61].

The *naam* was not necessarily a hereditary office, and it could be both bought and sold, a practice that would eventually prosper in the first decades of the 20th century as I will show in the next chapters. Rattray lists the extent of the *naba*'s functions in Gurensi region, and he explicitly stresses how he had no direct control to fine or coerce people to work for him, even though he was entitled to trade in slaves[62]. Fortes suggests how this role, as well as the *tendaana*, did not have any political power, but that they were instead guiding individuals, «the leaders and not the rulers, the

[57] TNA CO 879/58, Further Correspondence relating to the Northern Territories, 1899, no. 80, Low to Chamberlain, 02.05.1899, encl.: Northcott to Colonial Secretary, 06.03.1899

[58] Iliasu, 'The Establishment of British Administration in Mamprugu, 1898-1937', 22; Roger G. Thomas, 'The 1916 Bongo "Riots" and Their Background: Aspects of Colonial Administration and African Response in Eastern Upper Ghana', *The Journal of African History* 24, no. 1 (1983): 72–73.

[59] Allman and Parker, *Tongnaab*, 59; Roger G. Thomas, 'Forced Labour in British West Africa: The Case of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast 1906-1927', *Journal of African History* XIV, no. 1 (1973): 79–103.

[60] Goody, 'The Political Systems of the Tallensi and Their Neighbours 1888–1915', 22.

[61] Nash admitted in 1911: «These people do not now and never did understand what we call an "order". "Give and take" is more their custom. "If you do this for me I will do something for you also" appeals to the native much more than "If you don't do this I will punish you". This applies especially to the authority of the Chiefs» in NAG ADM 56/1/61, Navarro District Handing Over Reports, Handing over report to Captain Warden and half yearly report on the Navarro District, p. 6. See also in the same file: Handing over report to Captain Taylor on the Navarro District, 01.11.1907, p. 12

[62] Rattray, *The Tribes of the Ashanti Hinterland*, 259–60. On the chiefs' inability to request labour and taxes in pre-colonial time see also NAG ADM 56/1/105, Report of the Northern Territories Land Committee, Report on Fra Fra Land Tenure by Cap. S.D. Nash, 18.09.1911

fathers and not the princes of their clan»[63] on which the prosperity of the community and the land was associated. In a rather romantic and evocative way, Rattray suggested in the 1930s how the British conquest of the area led to an «African anomaly», the creation of a local despotic ruler[64].

Colonial officers soon understood that what they had considered being "kings" were not kings at all, having «little or no power»[65], but were rather nominal authorities without real control over the people. The same judgement was also expressed for the "king" of Bolgatanga, who they considered to be «a wretched individual, with very little real power»[66]. This segmentation was an enduring feature in the region and one that was very difficult to manage for the officers. Whoever they considered as "chief" or "king", was essentially unable to coerce people and satisfy their demands. However, for administrative feasibility, they needed intermediaries that would enforce their decision.

Therefore, the next step of the British colonial force was to convince chiefs of their indebtedness to the Government and then to also convince the people of their necessary obedience to the ones they were going to choose as chiefs. In accordance with what was happening in other corners of British West Africa, this period saw «the introduction of various kind of machinery for the administration»[67]. If there were no chiefs, the administration installed new ones. If the ones who were there were not in agreement with the officers, they had to be replaced. In this way, British officers tried to impose a hierarchical and centralized system of authority that clashed with the forms of power already existing in the area. However, this political transformation was done in association with indigenous actors. In fact, British intervention was guided by these actors and, in many cases, colonial officers were not fully aware of the context in which they were operating, as I showed in the previous sections concerning the expeditions in the area of Bolgatanga.

The people chosen as administrative intermediaries found themselves in a difficult position. Supporting the colonial administration would have meant insubordination and hostility from the rest of the population, while backing the population would have attracted punishment from the colonial officers. To complicate the matter, the administration started to reward chiefs who informed them of the behaviour of the people and denounced the ones who committed «serious offences such as murder,

[63] Fortes, *The Dynamics of Clanship among the Tallensi*, 182.
[64] Rattray, *The Tribes of the Ashanti Hinterland*, xvi–xvii.
[65] This was a frequent *cliché* used by colonial officers. See for example the case of Yariga [Yorogo] and Zecko [Zoko] in TNA CO 879/78, Despatches relating to Field Operations in the Northern Territories, 1899-1902, no. 3, Low to Chamberlain, 04.12.1900, enc.: Diary of expedition to the Fra Fra country, 25.03.1900; TNA CO 98/13, Departmental Reports, Report on the Northern Territories for the year 1903. In the following years, denounces of chiefs' lack of power continued to persist. On this see also chapter 4.
[66] TNA CO 879/78, Despatches relating to Field Operations in the Northern Territories, 1899-1902, no. 5, Nathan to Chamberlain, 31.05.1902, encl.: Morris to Governor, 26.04.1902. As it will be cleared further, by this time the people of Bolgatanga and the neighbouring settlements were subjugated by Sana Moshi, an ex-soldier turned to banditry.
[67] M'baye Gueye & Adu Boahen A., 1985, *African initiatives and resistance in West Africa, 1880-1914*, p. 138, in Adu Boahen A. (ed.), General History of Africa, Vol. VII, *Africa under colonial domination 1880-1935*, UNESCO

manslaughter, looting caravans etc.». If this did not happen, «they [the chiefs] render[ed] themselves liable to punishment»[68]. These constraints started a chain reaction in the following years against the chiefs and British rule. Revolts, failed recruiting attempts, prolonged hostilities and suspicion against officers would be some of the results of this balance[69]. The degree of "despotism" exercised by the chiefs was therefore nuanced and negotiated. Officers' complaints on the "incapacity" of the chiefs to comply with their orders persisted, indicating the line of compromise that some of these new political figures started to pursue[70].

Backing the colonial project: Adongo's political foresightedness

Compliance to British rule was gradually obtained in the region, even though it did not translate into unconditional acceptance of the colonial power. The results of the military raids of "pacification" were quite encouraging for the colonial officers. These first acts of violence and military supremacy convinced part of the population to recognize British power. In 1899 many Gurensi "chiefs" went to Gambaga carrying with them presents as a display of friendliness[71]. Among them was Adongo, who once again decided to take the British side, thereby running the risk of becoming unpopular in his settlement. In fact, officers reported that on his return from Gambaga

> with a red fez, the symbol of chiefdom, he was chased by the people from post to pillar, and seems to have held his life in his hands for many years, the people round blaming him for bringing the whiteman to these parts[72].

Recognizing British authority was indeed a hazardous bet on his part. The turmoil in the region was still to be settled and the political balances were still fluid and situational. His position of prominence and his survival was not assured. However, after backing the British raids of conquest, he continued to support the British administration. In the following years, he gathered labour for the construction of infrastructures, such as roads and the fort in Zuarungu, which led to him receiving

[68] TNA CO 98/14, Administration Reports, Annual Report 1904, Northern Territories of the Gold Coast
[69] See chapter 4.
[70] See for example TNA CO 98/16, Northern Territories of the Gold Coast Report for 1907; NAG ADM 56/1/432, Annual Report on the Northern Territories for 1908; NAG ADM 56/1/7, Duplicate Letter Book, Festing to Ag. CCNT, 26.09.1910. And also Watherston, 'The Northern Territories of the Gold Coast', 357.
[71] TNA CO 96/364/47, Despatches, Northern Territories Annual Report '99
[72] NAG ADM 68/5/1, Zouaragu Station Official Diary, entry for 25.11.1913

gratuities and a medallion[73]. In this way, Adongo was able to assert himself as the "chief" in the British sense of the term[74].

Jean Allman and John Parker assert that during British raiding activities Adongo «had worked hard to transform himself from a dangerous bandit into the chief ally of the British»[75]. However, the collaboration with the British armies did not necessarily imply a stop in the raiding activities[76]. Moreover, this transformation was motivated both by strategic purposes and by the fear that British military intervention would have destroyed his settlement, as had happened with the ones who previously resisted. In fact, his choice did have profound effects on Bolgatanga. The British officers spared the settlements from their raiding and looting activities, avoiding losses in both life and wealth. In fact, British raids aimed not only at materially destroying the hostile settlements; they even seized the main riches (i.e. livestock) and burnt the crops, their base for subsistence. While this was the case for many other Gurensi, including the Talensi and Nabdam settlements, Bolgatanga was never raided by colonial troops.

At the same time, Adongo paved the way for his settlement's political prominence over the others. British recognition of him as the "chief" of the settlement started in this period. The hierarchy that the British were going to impose on the indigenous political organization in the following years found, therefore, its first sketch during these military expeditions. Bolgatanga would become, in the following years, one of the main chiefdoms in the area, expanding the settlement's boundaries and centralizing the authority of the chief, as the next chapters will argue. Adongo's allegiance to colonial armed forces led him to come into conflict with other settlements that had claims to ancestral seniority over Bolgatanga, such as Kumbosko, which was attacked and destroyed[77]. In this way, a new hierarchy within the Gurensi communities was created, which was one based on compliance to British orders rather than on ancestral seniority.

In 1909 it was reported that the chosen chiefs in the Navarro District were still encountering a strong opposition: «there is no doubt a large amount of insubordination in Fra Fra. Both the Chiefs of Nangudi [Nangodi] and Balgatanga [Bolgatanga] find it impossible to make their orders obeyed»[78].

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[73] NAG ADM 63/5/2, Navrongo District Record Book, pp. 179-180

[74] Azaare, 'Recollections of Past Events of British Colonial Rule in Northern Ghana, 1900-1956', 141.

[75] Allman and Parker, *Tongnaab*, 58.

[76] In the previous chapter I already pointed out that raiding was a legitimate mean to acquire wealth. Moreover, in the next section I will present the cases of well-known bandits whose collaboration with the British troops was highly regarded by the officers.

[77] «Formerly Bolgatanga was of very little importance and the chief probably followed Kombasago. At the coming of the white man, however, most of the chiefs either fought with them or ran away, but Arongo [Adongo] the then chief of Bolgatanga displayed friendliness and later brought in the other chiefs to salute the whiteman.». NAG ADM 68/5/5, Zuarungu District Record Book, p. 4. The people of Kumbosko would oppose this state of affairs, see NAG ADM 63/5/2, Navrongo District Record Book, p. 363 and chapter 4.

[78] TNA CO 96/495, Despatches, Punitive Expedition, Northern Territories, Fra Fra District – Nangudi, Extract from Monthly Report Navarro District for the month of May, 1909

In response to this "insubordinations", the administration paved the way for Adongo paramountcy: 15 headmen were twice jailed in Navrongo «to learn sense»[79]. These men, who were the spokesmen for most of the settlements that today composes Bolgatanga, did not accept Adongo's authority or his requests of labour. In this way, thanks to British intervention that nullified any direct opposition to his role, he was able to rise to a position of supremacy and authority not only in his community but also among the neighbouring settlements. His choices started to give Bolgatanga a position of pre-eminence in the region that was confirmed in the following years, as I will show in the next chapters.

[79] NAG ADM 63/5/2, Navrongo District Record Book, p. 180

2.4 A hesitant conquest: colonial rule in the first years of the 20th century

The importance of the caravan trade and the foundation of Navrongo

In the first years of the 20th century, the Gurensi people continued to defy British administration. Three examples indicate this state of affairs. The first example was the formal celebration to encourage the supported chiefs held in Gambaga in February 1900. The Chief Commissioner himself consigned lockets as recognition to the chiefs that collaborated with the administration but no Gurensi chief, apart from one (i.e. the chief Bongo, the *Bonnaba*), received any[80]. The second example came the following year when the administration decided to take a census of the Northern Territories, but the Gurensi territory was not counted, «as it would not have been safe to send any one to count them without an escort, which would have defeated its own object»[81]. Third, in 1903, the then Governor of the Gold Coast Colony, Sir Matthew Nathan, started a tour to meet the chiefs of the Protectorate. He did not reach Gurensi land, and no mention of it was made in the entire document[82]. This section will argue that British intervention in the Gurensi region in the first years of the 20th century aimed principally at controlling the trade that was already flowing there. This purpose motivated the foundation of the colonial stations in the region.

In 1903, Irvine suggested in one departmental report that, considering the still hostile behaviour of the "Fra Fra" and their tendency to attack the passing caravans, the opening of one post «in their midst» should be taken into consideration in order to bring them «into closer contact with our pacific methods of administration»[83]. The following year the complaints about their "unruly" behaviour continued so that, in 1905, it was finally decided to open a post in one hotspot of the caravan network, Navrongo[84]. In fact, the primary purpose behind this choice was not principally to "pacify" the area, but rather to have more control and to be able to collect taxes on the caravans. Due

[80] TNA CO 96/357/54, Despatches, Lockets for Chiefs

[81] TNA CO 98/10, Administration Reports, Annual Report for the Northern Territories for the year 1901

[82] NAG ADM 56/1/34, Meetings between H.E. the Governor and Chiefs in the N.T.

[83] TNA CO 98/13, Administration Reports, Report on the Northern Territories for the year 1903

[84] Raymond B. Bening, 'Location of District Administrative Capitals in the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast (1897-1951)', *Bulletin de l'Institut Fondamental d'Afrique Noire* 37, no. 3 (1975): 652.

to the decline in the Imperial fund for the Northern Territories, the administration needed a steady revenue to maintain itself[85] , and since they had failed to impose a tax on the indigenous population, they resorted to taxing the passing traders[86].

The results of the newly established post were quite ambivalent. As the 1905 report states, «it was anticipated that with the opening of a new administrative post at Navarro, these tribes [the Gurensi, Talensi and Nabdam] would come in and make their submission, but not only have they not done so, but they have attacked and ill-treated many of their neighbours who have come in»[87]. In fact, many settlements nearby Navrongo decided not to oppose the British presence. The report continued declaring that

> the result of the formation of this administrative centre has been the complete submission of all the towns in the district with the exception of […] the Nabrigo hills [i.e. the Gurensi area], and the station was completely built by free labour in a little over a fortnight, towns that up to that time had refused all overtures from Gambaga sending in natives to help, and expressing themselves as being slighted in not having been asked to assist.

The successes of opening a station in these territories were mostly commercial. As I will consider in the next chapter, colonial posts gave a boost to the caravan network and the markets that flourished nearby.

Nonetheless, caravan raiding did not stop. In 1906 reports on Gurensis' hostility against British officers and the caravan traders continued to be compiled[88]. As a matter of fact, the result of the British military raids was not the overall pacification of the area. Although colonial officers continued to accuse the noncentralized societies of banditry and savageness, other raiders operated in the region in complicity with the officers themselves. The next section will present these raiders, showing how colonial "pacification" in Bolgatanga was far from being obtained.

[85] Grischow, *Shaping Tradition*, 35.
[86] NAG ADM 56/1/2, Duplicate Letter Book, Irvine to Colonial Secretary, 04.03.1905.
[87] TNA CO 98/14, Administration Reports, Northern Territories of the Gold Coast. Report for 1905
[88] TNA CO 98/16, Administration Reports, Northern Territories of the Gold Coast, Report for 1906

The failed pacification: the freebooters brought by the colonial army

The unsettled condition of the region was increased by the rise of a new type of freebooter that started to spread in those years. The end of the war between the European powers and the Zabarima resulted in a high presence of dismissed soldiers in a region without rulers. Deserters and mercenaries from European and Zabarima armies started to form bands so as to gain wealth through the raiding of caravans and settlements. Looting in the name of the "white man" became, therefore, a common practice. Some of the deserters kept their uniforms precisely for this purpose. In a 1903 report, it was written that

> it is worthy of record that these men [the recruits], when deserting, nearly always leave their equipment and uniform behind them, a matter of such importance when one considers how easily any man dressed in uniform, no matter how ancient, can "blackmail" a village, and impose upon the credulous inhabitant by pretending that he is an emissary from Government.[89]

British officers were indeed aware of this illicit use of their uniforms. It was a well-known practice for the recruited slaves in Salaga, and, in general, among the soldiers of the Constabulary that at some point decided to desert[90].

In this way, many areas without a British post in the Northern Territories became, in the first decade of the 20th century, the bases of the operations for these raiders. The Kasena area, for example, was the base of "Baga/Bagow the Grunshi", the leader of a gang of cattle raiders. Whenever he found active opposition from the settlements he intended to raid, he disguised himself as a trader and denounced them as bandits to the British officers in Gambaga. This tactic, for example, caused an expedition that led to the destruction of an entire settlement[91]. Baga was able to evade conviction and escape arrest by running across the border until a coordinated operation between the French and the British officers led to his arrest in 1907[92]. In the Kusasi area, the settling in Zongoiri of the "King of Mossi" Boukari Koutou, who migrated from the Mossi territories to escape the French[93], led to an increase in the caravan lootings on the routes directed to Binduri and Bawku[94].

[89] TNA CO 98/13, Administration Reports, Report on the Northern Territories for the year 1903
[90] Johnson, 'The Slaves of Salaga', 356; Goody, 'Establishing Control: Violence along the Black Volta at the Beginning of Colonial Rule (L'établissement Du Pouvoir: La Violence Dans La Vallée de La Volta Noire Au Début de La Colonisation)', 238. See also NAG ADM 56/1/38, Proposed establishment of a post in Fra Fra, Fleury to Summons, 14.07.1906; NAG ADM 56/1/61, Navarro District Handing Over Reports, Handing over Report 01.11.1907. I found references to this practice still in 1926, see NAG ADM 56/1/382, Criminal cases – Navrongo District, Rex vs. Avike Nankanni of Zokko, 24.01.1926
[91] NAG ADM 56/1/38, Report on the opening of administrative post at Navarro
[92] TNA CO 98/16, Northern Territories of the Gold Coast, Report for 1907, p. 6
[93] Schildkrout, *People of the Zongo*, 47.
[94] Goody, 'The Political Systems of the Tallensi and Their Neighbours 1888–1915', 12.

Between 1901 and 1907, Bolgatanga itself became the base for one of these new robbers. In fact, one of Colonel Morris' flagbearers, called Asana/Sana Moshi[95], was the head of a gang that looted the place for many years[96]. He and his men were part of the so-called "Moshi horsemen", retainers of Boukari Koutou[97]. They were enrolled in the British Constabulary to be employed in the northern raids, especially in the expeditions against the Gurensi. This military unit was used for war, slave-raiding, but most of all pillaging. In fact, during one of the raids under the British army, one officer complained

> I am disinclined to employ Moshis as on the previous expedition they gave much trouble – looting friendly villages […] these men are the scourge of the neighbourhood – I have punished 7 in the last 3 months for looting and slave dealing and I believe the hostility of the Fra fras is largely due to their unprovoked depredations[98].

However, in the following years, they attracted the praise of many officers as a powerful and helpful brigade[99].

After their dismissal, some of them, headed by Asana Moshi, decided to settle in Bolgatanga. Records show that their presence was not a peaceful one. They continued to loot and raid the neighbouring settlements for slaves, «armed with the credentials of a white man»[100]. It is not excluded that they had the complicity of some Gurensis too[101]. Asana compelled the people in Bolgatanga to build a «castellated residence» for him, the ruins of which were still visible in 1913, and he started to act as a chief, hearing and judging cases[102]. This obviously fostered Gurensis' hostility and suspicion against the British administration[103]. In June 1907 he was arrested and on August 7th he and the other recognized members of the gang were tried for the public murder of two men in Bolgatanga. They

[95] The name itself of this man is emblematic of the kind of relation between Gurensi and Mossi. In Gurune, the term "sana" means "stranger". The actual translation of the name would be so "the Mossi stranger".
[96] There is a file on this case, NAG ADM 56/1/62, Asana Moshis, which unfortunately was not available for consultation at the time of my visits in the archives.
[97] Schildkrout, *People of the Zongo*, 57.
[98] TNA CO 96/363, Despatches, Moshi Horsemen, Sheppard to Colonial Secretary, 24.08.1900
[99] TNA CO 879/58, Further Correspondence relating to the Northern Territories, 1899, no. 168, Hodgson to Chamberlain, 25.09.1899, enc.: Stewart to Colonial Secretary, 12.09.1899; TNA CO 96/364/48, Despatches, Reports on Frafra expedition and Dagomba expedition
[100] NAG ADM 68/5/1, Zouaragu Station Official Diary, entry for 24.11.1913
[101] NAG ADM 56/1/61, Navarro District Handing Over Reports, Handing over report to Captain Warden and half yearly report on the Navarro District, p. 14, and also Handing over Report 01.11.1907; NAG ADM 68/5/5, Zuarungu District Record Book, p. 4; NAG ADM 63/5/2, Navrongo District Record Book, p. 53. See also Hart, 'The Economic Basis of Tallensi Social History in the Early Twentieth Century', 188.
[102] NAG ADM 68/5/1, Zouaragu Station Official Diary, entry for 24.11.1913; NAG ADM 63/5/2, Navrongo District Record Book, p. 179
[103] This soon became clear to the British officers. The DC reported in 1913: «Another reason for the natives past hostility to any kind of central authority was that on our arrival here we were accompanied by a whole crowd of undesirables. These walked the country parading dirty bits of paper and imposed on the people by saying they were sent by the Chief or whiteman», in NAG ADM 56/1/144, Intelligence Report, Report on the fighting strength, arms, tactics, intertribal differences etc. of the people in the Zouaragu District, p. 7

received guilty sentences and were publicly hanged in Gambaga[104]. A month afterwards, during the 1907 expedition to the Tong Hills, Cpt. O'Kinealy discovered that the activities of this gang even reached the Tallensi area, causing much of their hostility towards the "white man" and his emissaries[105].

The defeat of this gang was viewed with optimism by the administration and the officers pronounced themselves to be in favour of future peaceful relations with the Gurensi and the opening of their country[106]. The arrest of Asana Moshi seems to have led to a resurgence of the chief position too[107]. Some officers saw the arrest of the raiders also as a new occasion to reaffirm their power in the unsettled area. In fact, in January 1908, Watherston strongly advised moving the Company of the First Battalion of the Gold Coast Regiment (GCR) to Bolgatanga, a «very large and thickly populated country» where labour could be easily requested in a district still unsettled[108]. However, a lengthy correspondence followed between the Colonial Secretary, Watherston, and the Officer Commanding the 1st Company of the GCR with a series of reconsiderations and postponements on the actual opening of the post[109]. The next section will consider the events that led to the opening of a colonial station in Zuarungu, five kilometres from Bolgatanga. The foundation of the outpost will have profound consequences for the future of the nearby settlements.

[104] NAG ADM 53/4/2, Court Cases, pp. 35, 45, 69

[105] TNA CO 98/16, Northern Territories of the Gold Coast, Report for 1907. See also Anafu, 'The Impact of Colonial Rule on Tallensi Political Institutions, 1898-1967', 20; Allman and Parker, *Tongnaab*, 60; Watherston, 'The Northern Territories of the Gold Coast', 358.

[106] NAG ADM 56/1/428, Monthly Reports Northern Territories, Progress Report on the Northern Territories for the month of July, 1907; and also Report on the Northern Territories for September 1907

[107] O'Kinealy wrote in September 1907: «The chief has – after encouragement – brightened up recently and seems to be gaining authority», NAG ADM 63/5/2, Navrongo District Record Book, pp. 179-180

[108] NAG ADM 56/1/59, Company of the G.C. Regt. Stationed in the Northern Territories, Watherston to the Officer Commanding I Company, G.C.R., 15.01.1908. See also Bening, 'Location of District Administrative Capitals in the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast (1897-1951)', 656.

[109] NAG ADM 56/1/59, Company of the G.C. Regt. Stationed in the Northern Territories

The first colonial garrison in the Gurensi area: the foundation of the post in Zuarungu

Salɛ ka mi naba.

A slippery place does not know a chief.

Dangers do not respect chiefs.[110]

The military nature of the British presence in the Northern Territories was maintained for eight years, until January 1907[111]. On this date, the administration shifted to becoming a civil one, which was considered more appropriate to bring the population closer to British methods of government[112]. The districts were rearranged, and Bolgatanga became part of the North-Eastern Province, with headquarters at Gambaga[113]. During this time, the colonial intervention in the area mostly resulted in active repression of the manifest hostilities and attempts to create a chain of intermediaries to help enforce their decisions. These intermediaries were instrumental in implementing the officers' orders without an inherent authority, a practice based on the idea of «direct rule»[114].

Although contested, Adongo was able to keep his position, but other chiefs were not so capable. In March 1909, after the death of the late chief of Nangodi, a settlement about 20 kilometres from Bolgatanga, the Chief Commissioner Watherston nominated a new chief in the settlement. The choice was evidently «an administrative error», as the Provincial Commissioner Arthur Festing would later define it[115]. The error resided in installing a chief without the people's consent and support. As a matter of fact, in October, the compound of the newly elected chief was burned to the ground in response to this decision. In January 1910 the people of the neighbouring settlements, who did not accept the legitimacy of his election, beheaded the new chief, an event that led to a new punitive expedition[116]. A few days after the murder, the communities recognized as the culprits were levelled to the ground and at least 35 people lost their lives in the battle against the British Constabulary[117]. The following palaver, which was held to accept the submission of the defeated settlements, was described by the Chief Commissioner as one of the biggest ever done in the area[118].

[110] Azaare, 'Gurene Proverbs and Sayings Directed to Animals, Birds and Reptiles'.
[111] Watherston, 'The Northern Territories of the Gold Coast'.
[112] Bening, 'Administration and Development in Northern Ghana', 62.
[113] TNA CO 98/16, Northern Territories of the Gold Coast, Report for 1907
[114] Ladouceur, *Chiefs and Politicians: The Politics of Regionalism in Northern Ghana*, 41.
[115] NAG ADM 56/1/448, Annual Report on Northern Territories for 1910
[116] NAG ADM 63/5/2, Navrongo District Record Book, pp. 171-172, 177-178; for the subsequent punitive expedition see TNA CO 96/495, Despatches, Punitive Expedition, Northern Territories, Fra Fra District – Nangudi
[117] For the report of this expedition see NAG ADM 56/1/7, Duplicate letter book Ag.CNEP to Ag.CCNT, 07.02.1910
[118] NAG ADM 56/1/7, Duplicate letter book, Ag.CCNT to Ag. Colonial Secretary, 22.03.1910

To better control the area and avoid similar incidents, in the same year they opened the first administrative station in the heart of the Gurensi region. The hesitations of Chief Commissioner Watherston came to an end with the murder of the Nangodinaba. The officers driven by administrative and geographical considerations selected Zuarungu, a settlement five kilometres from Bolgatanga, as it was «practically in the centre of the New District»[119]. The works started in April and Adongo helped to build the post with his quota of labour. The fort, a market, stables, and the Residency for the Commissioner were erected in the following months[120]. The location of the headquarters, also chosen for its view on the Tong Hills which were considered the central hub of resistance, is in ironic contrast with what usually happened in the planning of colonial towns. While in most cases the European settlements throughout the African continent were settled on hills, which were the ideal positions from which to 'dominate' Africans, in this case the "untamed" indigenous settlements overlooked the colonial headquarters in Zuarungu[121].

The building of the Zuarungu post was a benchmark in the history of the region. For the first time, the British officers had a permanent structure to reside in. Their presence became more habitual and stable, even though most of the time the Commissioner would be busy touring the district. The chiefs, in turn, had their actions supported by the constant presence of the officers and the Constabulary. However, the first year of permanence was not as peaceful as expected. While the works for the Zuarungu station were still ongoing, Cpt. Nash toured the region to conduct the first census. The results were approximated, and the officers speculated that just two-thirds of the population of the North-Eastern Province were counted[122]. In fact, the census proved to be an arduous task, especially around the Tong Hills and in Nangodi, where resistance and opposition were still being manifested[123].

Hostilities and sabotages against the British presence continued, especially in the Tong area[124]. The tension increased in the following months and finally, in March 1911, officers decided to take strong action against the "disaffected area" and attack the hills. This resulted in one of the most brutal

[119] NAG ADM 56/1/7, Duplicate letter book, Ag.CCNT to Ag. Colonial Secretary, 03.05.1910. The choice of the place was also driven by sanitary considerations, in that the ground around the selected site in Zuarungu was well-drained and in an area not thickly inhabited. See also Bening, 'Location of District Administrative Capitals in the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast (1897-1951)', 657.

[120] NAG ADM 56/1/463, Annual Reports, Northern Territories. North Eastern Province, Annual Report, 1911

[121] On the planning of colonial towns see Thomas Spear, '"A Town of Strangers" or "A Model Modern East African Town"? Arusha & the Arusha', in *Africa's Urban Past*, by David Anderson and Richard Rathbone (Oxford: James Currey, 2000); Home, *Of Planting and Planning*.

[122] The total population of the Bolgatanga area was estimated at 7,150, the most populous in the district where the total population amounted approximately to 51,500. See NAG ADM 56/1/141, Censuses, 1911

[123] NAG ADM 56/1/141, Censuses, 1911; NAG ADM 56/1/7, Duplicate letter book, DC to Ag.PC, 18.06.1910

[124] The building materials were burned, the mail carriers fired on and raids were made in the markets near Zuarungu. See NAG ADM 56/1/7, Duplicate letter book, NEPC to CCNT, 13.01.1911. See also NAG ADM 57/1/448, Annual Report on the Northern Territories for 1910; TNA CO 98/20, Administration Reports, Northern Territories of the Gold Coast, Report for 1911

and violent expeditions against the Talensi, one that would "set fire to the hills"[125]. In less than a week the British siege ended, causing an unknown number of Talensi casualties and a *tendaana* and four elders being arrested. The settlement of Tengzug and its Tongnaab shrine were destroyed, as suspected to be the hub of the rebels. In the end, it was forbidden to build compounds in the area, and the construction of settlements in the hills was outlawed. Moses Anafu suggests that after this expedition the British occupation of the region could be considered complete[126]. However, the occupation did not necessarily imply control. The policy of administering the Protectorate through the chiefs was just at its beginning, and new strategies to overcome the political fragmentation of the region were soon going to be implemented.

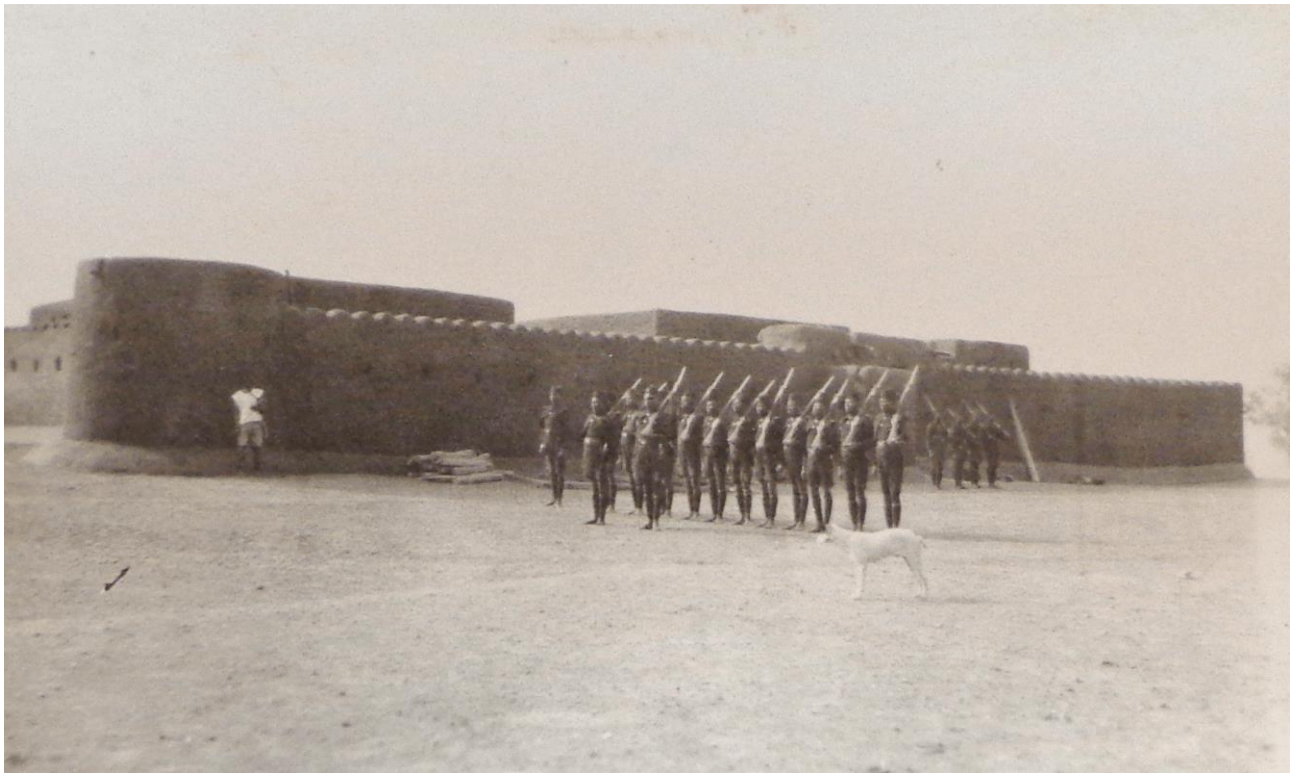

Figure 14. "The Fort and Guard of Honour." March 1922, Zuarungu

Source: Bodleian Library, GB 0162 MSS.Afr.s.1958.

[125] Allman and Parker, *Tongnaab*, 62–71.
[126] Anafu, 'The Impact of Colonial Rule on Tallensi Political Institutions, 1898-1967', 17.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has shown how the British conquest of the Gurensi region was mostly of a violent nature, through raids of "pacification" intended to subdue the indigenous elements of resistance. From the beginning, the Gurensi choice to accept or fight colonial occupation marked the future of their settlements. Resistance was, therefore, unorganized; instead, it followed the fragmented socio-political organization analysed in the previous chapter. The settlements that resisted the British advance were eventually destroyed, such as Kombusko and Tong. Those who decided to comply, such as Bolgatanga, did not follow the same fate. This had two main consequences. The first and most obvious one is that Bolgatanga was not destroyed and its dwellers did not lose their wealth. The second one is that the socio-political organization started to change, as the new political figure of the chief of the settlement began to be recognized by the officers.

Colonial administration introduced a new form of power indeed in the region, vested in the role of the chiefs. The allegiance of Adongo to the British contingent and his ability to negotiate between the administration and the people granted him the officers' support and his election to the chief status. This support was of crucial importance when other settlements opposed his requests. Through this British backing, he was able to disband the opposition by arresting and detaining the contesting headmen in Navrongo. In this way, he was able to establish a centralization of his authority in Bolgatanga. If by the end of the 19th century this *teŋa* did not yet have political pre-eminence, ten years later the situation had started to change. In the fourth chapter, the consequences of the introduction of chieftaincy will be analysed in depth, focusing even more on their relation to the settlement pattern.

The foundation of Zuarungu, with the help of the allied chiefs, affected the future of the area. The next chapters will analyse the consequences of the establishment of the colonial post. From 1910, the centralization of British administrative buildings and activities in the area would increase. An already populous region increased demographically with the transfer and settling of new groups linked to the colonial administration, such as the clerks and the soldiers. The neighbouring markets would be altogether affected by this foundation, registering, as I will show, a growing trend. Contacts between the officers and the population would also increase, leading to the advancement of knowledge and trust between them. The next chapter will, therefore, be devoted to the analysis of Bolgatanga commercial centrality in the region. Colonial policies and the introduction of currency, together with the presence of the British colonial post, indeed directly affected the success of its

marketplace. Even if the settlement remained marginal to the administration, its proximity to the colonial post in Zuarungu would be crucial in the establishment of a parallel commercial centre.

Chapter 3
The prominence of Bolgatanga as a market town (1899-1914)

3.1 Introduction

Growing trade and marketplace attendance in Bolgatanga were crucial drivers of urbanization throughout the 20th century. The market's development from a medium regional site of commerce to an international trade centre stemmed from factors rooted in the first two decades of the 20th century. Its rising importance was inextricably linked to the dynamics triggered by colonial intervention. This chapter will analyse the correlation between the implementation of colonial commercial policies and the geographic scope of the caravan trade, examining how this correlation led Bolgatanga to acquire commercial prominence in the region. The chapter will argue that the rise of the town's marketplace was not intentionally planned by colonial administration; rather, the market grew as a result of adjustments in the trading system which took place in response to British policies. Indeed, the process of founding colonial outposts, fostering indigenous markets and disseminating currency began to change the economic balances in the region, and a new geography of commerce emerged from these new equilibriums. In conclusion, on the eve of the First World War, the market in Bolgatanga was much more active than the dying one in Zuarungu, even though the latter was closer to the colonial station and its attendance fuelled by the administrative intervention.

The first part of the chapter assesses the way caravan itineraries were reconfigured in response to colonial efforts to collect taxes and improve infrastructures. The opening of administrative stations influenced this rerouting, affecting the transportation system in the region. A new road system was planned and built to connect northern colonial outposts, such as Zuarungu and Navrongo, with southern ones such as Gambaga and Tamale. Bolgatanga was selected as a midpoint in this new network by virtue of its vicinity to Zuarungu, and it gleaned much more advantage from this rerouting

than did the colonial station. Attendance at Bolgatanga's market in this period was, therefore, indirectly affected by British policies on trade.

Moreover, the new colonial infrastructure provided the «material framework of the new territorial order» and at the same time the «instrument in defining and asserting it»[1]. The manifestation of colonial administrative control went beyond buildings, however. Officers founded new markets and encouraged the existing one to flourish in order to expand state control over trade. Markets, especially those close to the stations, were thus the sites where this control could be observed unfolding. The chapter will therefore evaluate the extent of colonial control over trade in the Gurensi area through one of the key tools deployed in an attempt to influence it: currency. In the second part of the chapter, I will assess, therefore, the diffusion and success of colonial coins in the Gurensi region. This focus will allow me to ascertain how much influence the colonial commercial intervention exerted over the growth of the market in Bolgatanga, as the use of currency reveals the degree of control the colonial administration had on indigenous economic practices[2]. By doing so, I will be able to demarcate the boundaries of this control and ascertain the position of the Bolgatanga market in relation to these boundaries. This section will thus demonstrate that the market was outside direct colonial intervention.

It was this feature of incomplete colonial control over trade transactions that made markets lying outside the officers' jurisdiction more appealing for traders, as they were ideal places for making «marginal gains»[3]. Indeed, a series of economic practices that would otherwise be hindered or punished could be enacted there, such as the use of multiple currencies or the smuggling of colonial ones. The foreign traders and local people thus took advantage and responded in keeping with the opportunities and obstacles created by the implementation of colonial policies. The chapter will conclude by showing how attendance at the Bolgatanga marketplace increased throughout the 1910s. As considered in the first chapter, this market already hosted foreign traders and buyers before British occupation. Nonetheless, opening the colonial station in Zuarungu further improved its popularity in that it assured security without direct control. In this way, the new favourable position assumed by the marketplace led it to grow substantially.

[1] Lentz, *Ethnicity and the Making of History in Northern Ghana*, 57.
[2] I will use mainly colonial reports and information collected through interviews carried out on the field.
[3] The concept of marginal gain is used here to indicate that «diverse and disjunctive currencies and other registers of value, are used to create margins or frontiers across which asymmetries can be enacted and premiums for access charged», Jane I. Guyer, *Marginal Gains: Monetary Transactions in Atlantic Africa*, The Lewis Henry Morgan Lectures 1997 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

3.2 Road-making and taxation: defining new trade poles

Taxation and the foundation of colonial stations: the development of a new road system

The opening of the outpost in Zuarungu was part of a bigger plan in governing the newly acquired Protectorate, a large region that officials intended to administer at the lowest possible cost. Indeed, Northcott's programme relied on developing a basic structure of state control. Counting on chiefs to serve as gatherers of "free labour" (in the sense of «supplied gratuitously») was only part of this programme[4]. The rest of the plan involved making and policing roads, encouraging trade, introducing currency, taxation and the improvement of markets.

Taxation, considered proof of sovereignty, was implemented in 1899 through the so-called Maintenance Tax, a tax levied directly on population, and the Caravan Tax, a tax imposed on traders. However, the Maintenance Tax did not last longer than its advocate. In 1901, the succeeding Commissioner and Commandant Lt.-Col. A. Morris argued that, while some sort of tribute was already customary among the Dagomba and Mamprusi, in the areas without a centralized form of government, such as the Gurensi region, this form of taxation was a complete novelty; he therefore abolished it. In the period in which the tax was raised (1900-1901), according to the officer, it did more harm than good by fostering extortion on the part of the tax collectors, i.e. the chiefs[5].

With the elimination of the Maintenance Tax, Morris proposed that a much better arrangement for the Northern Territories would be to ask for more "free labour", a suggestion that was readily accepted and implemented until 1936[6]. Since the beginning of the colonial occupation, manpower had been recognized as one of the main assets of the Protectorate and «its one major exportable item»[7]. An article by Roger Thomas points out that, beginning in 1907, the Northern Territories became a labour reservoir for private companies such as the southern mines as well as the colonial

[4] TNA CO 879/58, Further Correspondence relating to the Northern Territories, 1899, no. 96 Northcott to Colonial Office, 09.07.1899. See also NAG ADM 56/1/35, Instructions to Officers in charge of Districts, Re. Administration of the Northern Territories

[5] TNA CO 879/67, Correspondence relating to the Administration of Ashanti and the Northern Territories, no. 97, Governor to Chamberlain, enc.: Morris to Governor, 30.09.1901

[6] Grischow, *Shaping Tradition*, 48.

[7] Ladouceur, *Chiefs and Politicians: The Politics of Regionalism in Northern Ghana*, 47.

government itself, through a system of forced recruitment[8]. The availability of labour was a crucial factor in establishing the new colonial infrastructures. In the Gurensi area, labour recruitment occurred principally for government purposes and took the form of road and bridge-building, masonry and porterage.

The Caravan Tax lasted longer, until September 1908. The process of collecting the tax and selecting the exaction centres started to modify the geography of commerce in the Protectorate. The administration founded headquarters close to the main known trade routes to control better the flow of caravans passing through these trade centres and successfully collect revenues. New posts were established in Wa, Gambaga, Salaga, Kintampo in 1902 and in Navrongo in 1906[9]. In the beginning, however, the introduction of colonial currency and the collection of taxes through this medium led to a slow-down in caravan flows, at least near the collection centres, the places where this control on trade was enacted. A clear example of this is the incident that took place in 1907 in Navrongo. A caravan of Mossi traders was observed stationing for days in Navrongo, close to the tax collection point, waiting to exchange their products for British coins in order to pay the tolls. The only ones able to pay in British currency were the soldiers, one of the few categories of wage workers who «not unnaturally, refused to purchase excepting at quite inadequate prices»[10].

In the first decade of the 20th century, colonial interference in African trade flows was limited to the immediate vicinity of their few outposts in the region, however, small centres of control in a vast, uncontrolled territory. Even though the colonial stations were strategically placed in the geography of commerce, direct colonial control over the multiple trade routes crossing the region was weak, and it was relatively easy for traders who knew the country well to avoid collection centres[11]. The colonial garrisons thus represented small hurdles in the extensive and open savanna landscape of the Volta Basin, obstacles easily overcome by those who did not want their movement stopped by colonial policies.

However, not all traders decided to avoid British outposts. Colonial administration offered protection for those who paid, thereby directly affecting the popularity of the routes[12]. After 1899, virtually no chief was able to exact any tolls without the consent of the administration. Whenever the

[8] Thomas, 'Forced Labour in British West Africa: The Case of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast 1906-1927'. The Protectorate continued its reservoir role also in terms of recruiting soldiers in times of war. I will consider that phenomenon in the next chapter.
[9] Bening, 'Location of District Administrative Capitals in the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast (1897-1951)'.
[10] TNA CO 96/469, Despatches, Caravan Tolls, Governor to the Earl of Elgin, 03.08.1907
[11] Bening, 'Administration and Development in Northern Ghana', 70. The abolition of the Caravan Tax led to an even weaker control over trade, as the officers stopped to collect it from the passing caravans. In 1912, administrators admitted that only half of the passing traders in the Navrongo District were registered. NAG ADM 56/1/147, Trade and trade routes, AgCNEP to DC, 19.07.1912
[12] TNA CO 96/364, Northern Territories Annual Report 1899, Report on the Northern Territories for the year 1899

officers received reports of trade disturbances, a punitive expedition was set out to reassert control over the region, as I showed in the previous chapter. As a result, trade flows increased on the guarded roads[13]. As noted by Raymond B. Bening, the security provided on the roads connecting the different colonial stations was one of the main elements benefiting not only the station themselves but even the settlements located near the routes[14]. Moreover, officers regularly traversed these roads moving from one post to the other, and therefore they were subject to constant supervision. The next section will introduce the "Road revolution" that affected the transportation patterns of the Northern Territories in the first decades of the 20th century. Due to its vicinity to the colonial station in Zuarungu, Bolgatanga benefitted indirectly from this infrastructure improvement.

The "Road Revolution" in the Gurensi region

The trade routes in the Gurensi region described in the first chapter started to change, in relation to the position of colonial headquarters and the itineraries of the trenched roads built in this period. While traders continued to travel along the extensive caravan routes, the numerous small paths they traversed and that characterized the Gurensi region underwent processes of rerouting. This thick grid of footpaths did not disappear; instead, it began to be polarized by the colonial outposts and their new system of communication.

Azaare defines the 1906-7 period as the beginning of the «road revolution» in the entire Gurensi region[15]. Indeed, it was in this period that officers started to plan a new network of roads (the forerunners of the current ones) that led to the development of the new geography of trade[16]. By the end of the 19th century, in fact, the process of dispersion triggered by the settlement pattern meant that there were no main arteries of trade passing through the settlements. As a matter of fact, when the officers opened the station in Zuarungu, they were not able to find any roads other than footpaths

[13] TNA CO 98/16, Annual Report 1906, Northern Territories of the Gold Coast, Report for 1906
[14] Bening, 'Indigenous Concepts of Boundaries and Significance of Administrative Stations and Boundaries in Northern Ghana', 12. Cpt. Nash, in his first remarks on the Zuarungu station, also noted that «there is no doubt that, even if wheeled traffic is never introduced, cleared trenched roads are an inducement to traders as they feel safer on them than when walking through guinea corn 15 feet high and running the risk of a knock out blow from an unseen hand – a by no means uncommon occurrence», NAG ADM 56/1/7, Duplicate Letter Book, General Remarks on Zuarungu District, 26.09.1910
[15] Christopher Anabila Azaare, 'Establishment of British Military Camps and Legacies of Colonial Rule' (Unpublished Manuscript). This process was different from the one occurring in the Colony, where Africans autonomously contracted labor to build roads. See Wrangham, 'An African Road Revolution'.
[16] An improvement in the road network also occurred in the neighbouring French territories, where bridges were built on the Po-Navrongo road. Duperray, *Les Gourounsi de Haute-Volta*, 165.

Figure 15. Map of the Northern Territories and its roads in 1911

Source: TNA CO 98/20, Northern Territories of the Gold Coast, Report for 1911

and concluded that the place was «not on any main Caravan Route», even though the trade was flourishing in adjacent markets, including Bolgatanga[17]. By 1910, however, this situation had changed and Bolgatanga began to be connected to the rest of the region by the new system of colonial roads that in turn affected travellers' itineraries.

[17] NAG ADM 56/1/445, Quarterly Report NEP 1911, Report for the Quarter ending 30th September 1911

The first improvement in the road network that benefited the area was made in 1899. That year the Gambaga scarp was made accessible to caravans for the first time, directly connecting Mamprugu to the Gurensi area and, according to the Chief Commissioner, causing the Mossi traders to be «loud in their expression of gratitude»[18]. A few years later, Navrongo was linked to the other colonial headquarters in the south, such as Gambaga. Colonial planners chose the routes that passed through the Gurensi region, and Bolgatanga was selected as one midpoint along these new links. In 1907, officials began to compile the first reports on these prospective connections[19] and construction work started the following year[20]. These roads were finally completed when the colonial station in Zuarungu was opened in 1910, connecting the new outpost with the rest of the country.

In the following years, the plan was for these roads to be periodically repaired and cleared through labour gathered by chiefs. Indeed, their status was dependant on the chiefs' success in carrying out this task. As I showed in the previous chapter, Adongo, the chief of Bolgatanga, was one of the principal gatherers of labour in the area, not only for building the fort but even for creating and conducting periodic maintenance of the roads around Bolgatanga. In the growing network of trade that was developing in those years, this work placed the settlement in a favourable position.

The improvement of the road network led to an increasing movement along the routes in the first decade of the 20th century, as attested by the intensification of migration flows. Jean Rouch, in his seminal work on migrations in Ghana, indicates the 1910s as the period of «ouverture des routes», in which the first migratory flows started following the improved caravan routes[21]. Even colonial recruiting began in these years. At least since 1908, officers had realized the potential of the Northern Territories as a labour reservoir[22] and the next year they began recruiting for the mines[23], even though many of the recruits ran away before reaching the Gold Coast Colony[24].

British policies to improve trade turned out to be successful. After the abolition of the Caravan Tax, commerce and traders' settlements began to grow near the newly arising markets, as clearly stated in the 1908 Annual Report:

> The internal trade of the Protectorate is developing rapidly. Markets with permanent Hausa Traders in them are growing up in towns which a few years ago were considered unsafe to even go to, owing to the probability of having their loads looted from them en-route. On the main trade

[18] TNA CO 879/58, Further Correspondence relating to the Northern Territories, 1899, no. 96, Northcott to Colonial Office, 09.07.1899
[19] NAG ADM 56/1/429, Monthly Report Navarro District
[20] NAG ADM 56/1/432, Annual Report on the Northern Territories for 1908
[21] Jean Rouch, 'Migrations au Ghana (Gold Coast): enquête 1953-1955', *Journal de la Société des Africanistes* 26 (1956): 50.
[22] NAG ADM 56/1/432, Annual Report on the Northern Territories for 1908
[23] TNA CO 96/495, Despatches, Northern Territories Annual Report, 1909; NAG ADM 57/1/448, Annual Report Northern Territories 1910
[24] TNA CO 96/493, Despatches, CCNT to Ag. Colonial Secretary, 02.12.1909

routes the increasing size and number of the Zongos which exist to supply Caravans with food; all point to the increasing trade which is passing through the Protectorate.[25]

The growth of trade is aptly demonstrated by Timothy F. Garrard in his doctoral thesis on brass casting in the Gurensi area. Garrard demonstrates that trade flourished in the region in the first three decades of the 20th century, and this was especially true for the import and casting of brass, a rare and costly material[26].

Gurensi were able to insert themselves into the broader currents of trade and, in this period, they became the second most important brass-casting centre in the whole Gold Coast. Thanks to the caravan routes and market system serving them, they were able to import a significant number of brass rods. This metal started its journey in Birmingham, and from there it was shipped to West African southern centres of commerce such as Cape Coast and Grand Bassam. In these southern cities, it was purchased by travelling merchants and traded inland, towards Kumasi and Salaga. It reached Bolgatanga through the caravan routes leading to the market, where it was exchanged for other goods, such as cowries or livestock. Garrard calculates a minimum of 7 tons of brass rods per annum imported into Northern Ghana for the 1903-1929 period, and at least 70 tons of these were used by Gurensi casters[27]. Brass rods were very costly, which made them luxury items. However, the metal was subjected to strong depreciation starting from the 19th through the early 20th century, making it increasingly affordable[28]. Therefore, demand increased in the colonial period as confirmed by the significant proliferation of casting activity Garrard maps in the area. In the Gurensi region, Bolgatanga itself was one of the leading casting centres, with the first caster starting to work there around the 1850s in the area of Dapore-Tindongo[29].

The trade network that crossed the Gurensi region underwent a process of growth and infrastructural improvement in this period. The grid of pathways followed by caravan traders shifted in response to the new infrastructure. In the area of Bolgatanga, the flux of traders travelling on the old footpaths was diverted by new trenched roads that connected directly to the southern commercial centres. These colonial roads were the most direct routes to Tamale and Kumasi, in fact. Through these new connections, Bolgatanga was thus confirmed as an intermediate stopover in the growing North-South trade network[30]. The position of the settlement in the new colonial geography intersected with traders' purposes and interests. The position of non-centrality allowed to eschew colonial control

[25] NAG ADM 56/1/432, Annual Report on the Northern Territories for 1908
[26] Garrard, 'Brass-Casting among the Frafra of Northern Ghana'.
[27] Garrard, 176, 463. The brass rods were purchased and cast to produce bracelets, anklets and ornaments for three main purposes, namely prestige, fashion and ancestral veneration.
[28] Garrard, 177–78.
[29] Garrard, 421.
[30] NAG ADM 56/1/7, Duplicate Letter Book, General Remarks on Zuarungu District, 26.09.1910

on trade. The cluster of settlements was close enough to the colonial post to benefit from its advantages such as security, while also being distant enough to host traders who wanted to avoid tax collection. In this way, the road work carried out for government purposes, together with Caravan Tax collection, polarized the trade flows around Bolgatanga. The commercial centrality acquired by the settlement would be an unintended consequence of colonial economic policy.

The next sections intend to demonstrate that the improvement in the communications network corresponded to the absence of a colonial station in Bolgatanga. This correspondence went on to bring more and more visitors to the marketplace and settlement. Despite direct colonial efforts to encourage the market in Zuarungu, in fact, the one in Bolgatanga continued to be the most heavily used.

3.3 Fostering marketplaces: the extent of colonial control

The effects of colonial stations on the markets

In the Protectorate as a whole, opening colonial stations generally led to demographic growth in the chosen settlements and an increase of neighbouring trade[31]. This was due in part to the colonial commercial policy that fostered the marketplaces close to the stations, making them primary sites of state power assertion. This section will argue that, in the Gurensi region, the market in Bolgatanga grew in terms of attendance to the detriment of the one in Zuarungu because it was close enough to the colonial station to benefit from its advantages (infrastructural improvement and safety for example), but distant enough to evade colonial control over trade.

After the Zuarungu station was opened in 1910, African clerks employed by the colonial state and Constabulary were transferred there. This rapid influx of new foreign settlers affected the settlement and the neighbouring markets. Although in the long run most of the colonial personnel ended up peacefully settling in the area and intermarrying with locals[32], initially this relationship was conflictual. The officers admitted that the «sudden influx of troops and followers of the Government has fallen hard on the immediate neighbourhood»[33]. Soldiers were a nuisance the officers knew well, coming to their attention either for abducting women[34], looting of settlements[35] or disturbing the people frequenting the markets[36]. In the case of Zuarungu, however, even clerks were suspected of extortion and a «good deal of pilfering» from the local people[37]. Colonial reports were quite optimistic

[31] Bening, 'Administration and Development in Northern Ghana', 71.
[32] Azaare, Life in Bolga. See also NAG ADM 56/1/463, Annual Reports, Annual Report on the Zouaragu District for the year 1911
[33] NAG ADM 56/1/448, Annual Report N.T. for 1910
[34] NAG ADM 56/1/95, Handing over reports North Eastern Province, Handing over Report from Maj. Festing to Cpt. Warden.
[35] The activity of looting by soldiers on leave is reported in NAG ADM 56/1/59, Company of the G.C. Regt. Stationed in the Northern Territories, PCNEP to AgCCNT, 13.06.1913. The reputation of the "B" Company of the Gold Coast Regiment, some years later, was accompanied by tales of «lawlessness and brutality» in their looting activities between Zuarungu and Wa. See NAG ADM 56/1/59, Company of the G.C. Regt. Stationed in the Northern Territories, CCNT to Officer Comanding GCR, 27.08.1914
[36] NAG ADM 56/1/7, Duplicate Letter Book, General Remarks on Zuarungu District, 26.09.1910. See also NAG ADM 68/5/1, Zouaragu Station Official Diary, entry for 05.01.1914; Journal de la Mission, Navrongo, 23.08.1911, A.G.M.Afr.
[37] NAG ADM 56/1/443, Annual Report for 1910 N.E. Province

about the opening of the post, but there is no doubt that in the beginning, it had a detrimental effect on a population that was not particularly friendly in welcoming the troops from the moment they first settled there[38].

And yet colonial stations also represented a profitable opportunity for both locals and traders. The opening of the station stimulated food production and sales around the station[39]. For example, local women began to farm rice and cook it so that they could sell it to the people who lived at the station[40]. There is no doubt that even foreign traders benefitted from this. In fact, even more than the development of the settlements hosting new colonial stations, colonial policy targeted marketplaces growth.

In her study of trading activities on the Ghanaian borders, Brenda Chalfin points out that markets became pivotal for state control in the policy implemented in this first phase of colonial administration. The restructuring of northern markets and founding of new ones was intended to serve as an extension of the economic boundaries of the colonial state. The marketplace under direct colonial control increasingly developed as «the primary site for the assertion of state power and presence»[41]. However, since there were not many colonial officers present, the expanding market activity could not be controlled in the same way everywhere. This led to a situation of «multi-tiered or parallel marketing system» in which some markets were less heavily monitored than others[42]. In this way, some of them developed under direct colonial intervention while others did not, as the case of Bolgatanga and Zuarungu confirms. Once more, this «geographic form to the reach of the state»[43] stimulated traders to respond by rerouting the caravan network, as I will demonstrate in the following paragraphs. Indeed, the new marketing areas emerged from differentiation in terms of degree of colonial control, and the market in Bolgatanga occupied an area that was outside this direct control.

Officers encouraged growth in the marketplaces located close to the colonial stations by interfering with the «timing, location, parameters, and personnel of market-based exchange»[44]. Chalfin uncovers the case of Bawku market, but this trend can be found throughout the North Eastern Province. In 1907, new markets were opened in the Kasena and Kanjarga areas under the direct intervention of officers[45]. Navrongo provides a clear example. In 1910 the District Commissioner

[38] See chapter 2.
[39] NAG ADM 56/1/463, Annual Reports, Annual Report on the Zouaragu District for the year 1911
[40] NAG ADM 68/5/1, Zouaragu Station Official Diary, entry for 01.01.1919
[41] Brenda Chalfin, *Shea Butter Republic: State Power, Global Markets, and the Making of an Indigenous Commodity* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 96.
[42] Brenda Chalfin, 'Border Zone Trade and the Economic Boundaries of the State in North-East Ghana', *Africa* 71, no. 02 (June 2001): 206.
[43] Chalfin, 207.
[44] Chalfin, *Shea Butter Republic*, 98.
[45] NAG ADM 56/1/429, Monthly report Navarro District

reported that despite a substantial increase in caravan trade, the market was not flourishing[46]. Three years later, officers "resurrected" the market by shutting down the neighbouring ones and pressing people from the surrounding settlements to use it instead[47].

The marketplace in Zuarungu experienced a similar fate. The officers planned to make it the «"port of entry" from French Territory»[48] and, therefore, thanks to direct colonial stimulation, it experienced significant growth in the following years[49]. In this case, stimulation took the form of planned immigration, that is, creating foreign traders' quarters, called *zongos*[50]. This move to establish *zongos* in the main commercial hubs of the Protectorate was indeed directly related to British efforts to combat looting and to favour trade[51]. Since the opening of the station in Zuarungu, the officers proposed that the communities of Mossi and Hausa traders should have built their *zongos* in the vicinity of colonial structures[52]. With colonial permission and without local consent, Mossi and Hausa traders were able to plan and build these quarters[53]. Until that moment, the officers had considered these people «little less than refugees awaiting events» in a country where British authority was far from fully established[54]. With the founding of these new settlements, however, Zuarungu market prospered and trade was encouraged. As a matter of fact, at the outset of colonial presence, the market in Zuarungu was registered as flourishing because of the number of people who frequented it[55]. In 1914, however, just four years after the opening of the post, the trade in the settlement was interrupted, and its market killed off by the withdrawal of the troops for the war and the closing of the station[56].

It is possible, then, to conclude that the prosperity of Zuarungu was closely associated with the presence of colonial power structures. However, this was not the case for the marketplace in

[46] NAG ADM 56/1/463, Annual Reports, Navarro District Annual Report for 1910. The White Fathers, stationed in Navrongo since 1906, commented that the decline of the market was due to the presence of the soldiers: «L'événement le plus important de cette quinzaine a été la résurrection du marché de Navaro; depuis l'arrivée des anglais, ce marché végétait misérablement. Les indigènes n'osaient pas y venir, par crainte des soldats qui les pillaient. Le Capitaine Warden a pris des mesures efficaces pour lui rendre sa splendeur d'autrefois, et il semble avoir réussi», Journal de la Mission, Navrongo, 15.07.1913, A.G.M.Afr.

[47] NAG ADM 56/1/476, Quarterly Report NEP, Report for the quarter ending 30th June 1914; NAG ADM 56/1/144, Intelligence Report, Intelligence Report for the Quarter ending June 30th, 1913

[48] NAG ADM 56/1/443, Annual Report for 1910 N.E. Province

[49] NAG ADM 56/1/461, Quarterly Reports, NEP Report for Quarter ending 30th June 1911; NAG ADM 56/1/467, Annual Report NEP 1912

[50] For the definition of *zongo* see chapter 1.

[51] Watherston, 'The Northern Territories of the Gold Coast', 367–68.

[52] NAG ADM 56/1/7, Duplicate Letter Book, CNEP to AgCCNT, 28.09.1910

[53] NAG ADM 56/1/463, Annual Reports, Annual Report on the Zouaragu District for the year 1911, Annual Medical Report on Zouaragu; NAG ADM 56/1/105, Report of the Northern Territories Land Committee (Land Tenure), Report on Fra Fra Land Tenure, p. 28

[54] NAG ADM 56/1/7, Duplicate Letter Book, AgCCNT to Ag Colonial Secretary, 12.03.1911

[55] TNA CO 98/20, Northern Territories of the Gold Coast, Report for 1911

[56] NAG ADM 56/1/463, Annual Reports, Annual Report on Zuaragu District for the year 1914 and Annual Report on Navarro-Zuaragu Districts for the year 1915

Bolgatanga, just 5 kilometres away from the colonial station. In order to analyse the rise of this market and evaluate its position in the caravan network, I will now consider the relative success of colonial currency in the Gurensi markets. Indeed, this was an element that influenced the trading system of the region and the degree of colonial control over trade and marketplaces.

Currency multiplicity in the Gurensi markets

The diffusion of colonial coins directly influenced the economic system of the Northern Territories and the success and liveliness of the marketplaces. Currency imposition was intended to serve as a way of affirming the colonial state, in that monitoring coinage in the marketplaces was supposed to have made its power «both public and binding»[57]. Indeed, coin circulation was meant to facilitate the policy of direct taxation, control over the caravan trade and commerce development[58]. In the unsettled region of Tong, officers even pointed out the role of colonial currency as a «civilising medium»[59]. Where the officers succeeded, however, control over prices and currency gradually extinguished trade[60]. In order to understand the limited diffusion of colonial currency and how this affected the geographies of trade in the Northern Territories, it is necessary to present some features of the Gurensi system of exchange. I thus provide an overview of the context of multiple currencies and the different stores of value that were common in the Gurensi region at the beginning of the 20th century.

In these first decades of colonial rule, the officers were not able to impose British currency everywhere or ensure its widespread diffusion. In the Gurensi region, this was due in part to the fact that stores of value other than money were in use. Cattle were a high-value currency and the main store of wealth, and therefore the basis of the accumulation process throughout the colonial period. The relationship between wealth and cattle was quite clear to the first colonial officers. In the first medical report on Zuarungu, the Medical Officer Lundie noted that cattle were «used as a convenient kind of large coinage», without being eaten or milked[61]. Livestock was also one of the main and most

[57] Chalfin, *Shea Butter Republic*, 99.
[58] Grischow, *Shaping Tradition*, 45; Helleiner, 'The Monetary Dimensions of Colonialism'; Guyer and Pallaver, 'Money and Currency in African History'.
[59] NAG ADM 56/1/8, Duplicate Letter Book, Ag. CCNT to Lt. Tarrant, n.d.
[60] Bening, 'Indigenous Concepts of Boundaries and Significance of Administrative Stations and Boundaries in Northern Ghana', 12.
[61] Since the first military raids, seizure of cattle was indeed considered a serious sanction against Gurensi settlements. On the importance of livestock as a wealth indication see NAG ADM 56/1/7, Duplicate Letter Book, NEPC to AgCCNT, 18.09.1910, enc.: Medical Report on the New Station at Zouaragu by Doctor A. Lundie W.A.M.S., 12.09.1910. See also

valuable goods traded along the caravan routes, one that did not require porterage and that maintained its high value almost everywhere[62]. These qualities meant it could easily be exchanged for food in times of scarcity. Some of my oldest informants still remember the rates of exchange between cattle and millet. When famine struck, in fact, they resorted to selling off part of their family herds:

> Those days, you know the barter trade? Food for food, animal for animal...that's what they were doing when you have your animal to sell, normally they exchange… one cow is to six sheep, and then when you will run out of food, even though you haven't anything at all to eat and the hunger is aching you, you take one cow, for...they call that one *peu*, we use this millet stocks, that's what we use to weave that *peu*. So, a cow is to that *peu* full of millet, when you are hungry, and you can't get anything there else to take. That's why you send your animal if you have your animals, and then you can't even kill the animals and say "Oh, you have to go and exchange it for that *peu* of millet even to live". And then, maybe, if you don't have cows, then you have some like sheep, you exchange it for a goat, or you want to take a goat to exchange with sheep. A sheep, one sheep, is two goats.[63]

However, livestock was neither the only currency nor the only way of storing value. The system of exchange operating in the region was based on a multiplicity of different currency objects, from livestock to cowries, cloth, hoes and brass rods[64]. In the whole region of the Northern Territories, there was indeed «a fluid economic landscape characterized by a variety of currencies, overlapping currency zones and multiple regimes of value»[65]. Colonial reports documented a widespread diffusion of cowries in the Protectorate, not only in the east but also the western part where they were ubiquitous in most transactions, especially in trading close to the border[66]. Although some sources state that

NAG ADM 11/1/824, Essays by Assistant District Commissioners on tribal history, Navarro District, p. 16. Still in the late 1930s, livestock was the main store of wealth, see TNA CO 96/751/14, "Agriculture in North Mamprusi", Pamphlet by C.W. Lynn (Agricultural Supt)

[62] Northcott, *Report on the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast*, 46, 50–51.

[63] Interview with Akapaŋa Amoah, 17.03.2015, Bukere. Another unit of account used in the markets was, for example, the personal calabash. Buyers visited market stalls and tasted or measured the goods for sale using a calabash they carried with them. Other units of measurement are described by Azaare: «It is also of interest to learn that before the introduction of rulers and tape measures by the white man the early Frafras measured cloths by using the tip of their fingers to the middle of the chest. There were other ways of measuring objects and liquids. One of these was to measure from the elbow to the tip of the fingers and another was to measure with the foot of the leg» Azaare, 'Life in Bolga'.

[64] «Before the advent of the European, […] cowries were used as money, but owing to the limited amount obtainable, could only be used to buy small quantities of food, &c. In other cases, exchange was resorted to and is still largely used in preference to English money» NAG ADM 11/1/824, Essays by Assistant District Commissioners on tribal history, Navarro District. For the use of brass and copper rods as currency see TNA CO 98/14, Annual Report 1904, Northern Territories of the Gold Coast, p. 8. For the hoes see Rattray, *The Tribes of the Ashanti Hinterland*, 170, 184; Garrard, 'Brass-Casting among the Frafra of Northern Ghana', 124.

[65] Swanepoel, 'Small Changes. Cowries, Coins and the Currency Transition in the Northern Territories of Colonial Ghana', 44–45.

[66] See for example TNA CO 98/20, Northern Territories of the Gold Coast, Report for 1911. For their use in the upper western part see Swanepoel, 'Small Changes. Cowries, Coins and the Currency Transition in the Northern Territories of Colonial Ghana'; Philip Evans, 'The Cowrie Economy and the Maintenance of Social Boundaries in Northern Ghana', *Cambridge Anthropology* 10, no. 2 (1985): 29–40; Goody, 'Establishing Control: Violence along the Black Volta at the

cowries were not the main currency in the Gurensi area[67], they were nonetheless used. Crossing the Volta at Aragu in 1888, some 30 km from Bolgatanga, Louis Binger paid the toll in cowries and met Mossi merchants on the other bank of the river ready to cross, loaded with kola and cowries[68]. Forty years later, cowries were still used as currency in the Gurensi markets, or as payment for medicine-men or musicians[69].

In this context of multiple currencies, administrators' efforts to impose the colonial one were quite unsuccessful. The next section will analyse the reasons why attempts to introduce the colonial currency failed in the Gurensi region and how currency diffusion affected the geographies of trade.

The introduction of colonial currency: the limits of market control

Colonial coinage was not a profitable currency for most people, especially for those making everyday trades because of their high value. Moreover, merchants preferred to frequent markets where control was not direct, and officers could not supervise their transactions. In fact, many traders specialized in currency smuggling and agiotage[70], a practice that made British coins even less appealing for the common buyer, as I will demonstrate below. This section argues that most of the marketplaces in the Gurensi region developed outside direct colonial intervention. Taking currency diffusion as an indication of colonial control over trade, I show that this control was exercised only in the close vicinity of the station in Zuarungu, where it was most effective. In the other markets, in fact, transactions were carried out in a system of multiple currencies (such as cowries, cloth, and hoes), a system in which colonial currency was present but not very widespread. The silver, copper and nickel pennies that had been introduced were either melted or smuggled and, in most cases, they were not accepted in the markets.

Silver coins had been introduced in the Protectorate after the British military occupation, as government wages, rewards for chiefs displaying their support or as the only medium accepted for

Beginning of Colonial Rule (L'établissement Du Pouvoir: La Violence Dans La Vallée de La Volta Noire Au Début de La Colonisation)', 239.

[67] Louis Tauxier, *Le noir du Soudan: pays Mossi et Gourounsi : documents et analyses* (Paris: Émile Larose, 1912), 251; Timothy Insoll, Rachel Maclean, and Benjamin Warinsie Kankpeyeng, *Temporalising Anthropology: Archaeology in the Talensi Tong Hills, Northern Ghana*, 2013, 167–68, 218.

[68] Binger, *Du Niger au Golfe de Guinée*, 2:40.

[69] Rattray, *The Tribes of the Ashanti Hinterland*, 154, 168, 173.

[70] Travelling merchants bought the coins at convenient prices in the northern markets, taking advantage of their limited diffusion and people's ignorance of exchange rates, and resold them in the southern ones with an increased gain. For more details see further.

buying European goods sold in the government stores and paying taxes[71]. Nonetheless, officers continued to accept cowries or mediums other than money as payment for fines[72]. A situation that persisted still in 1920, when officers reported cases of fines being requested in arrows, a currency believed to be easier to collect than money[73]. However, beginning in 1908 the first samples of copper coins were proposed in the district. Cpt. Nash held palavers in the main settlements, displaying specimens and explaining to the chiefs how they should be used[74]. Later, in 1912, nickel currency, lighter and cheaper, was introduced in response to the limited diffusion of copper[75]. It was considered more popular than the former, and it indeed enjoyed more success, at least until the First World War at which point the supply of coins was reduced[76].

In the Protectorate, British coins spread mainly around the stations, where it was easy for officers to monitor them[77]. This was also the case for Zuarungu and its market, in which the presence of the constabulary and clerks, the few classes of wage labourers together with porters, further enhanced the diffusion and acceptance of colonial coinage[78]. Their circulation remained limited to the colonial headquarters, however. In the rest of the country, the coins were either rejected in the markets, smuggled or melted down. From the moment it was introduced, in fact, silver was reported to have too high a value, a value which was disproportionate to the everyday exchanges of the markets and therefore could not be appropriately inserted into indigenous economic life[79]. Most of the bronze that was issued almost immediately found its way back to the government treasury through fines and fees[80]. As a matter of fact, when the officers opened the post in Zuarungu in 1910, they ascertained that «there is little else than the barter of livestock and foodstuffs» and «little exchange of either for cash or cloth though money is perfectly understood»[81].

[71] See for example the «present of 10s» given to the chief of Bolgatanga for his supportive conduct in 1898 in TNA CO 879/54, Further Correspondence relating to the Northern Territories, Jul.-Dec. 1898, no. 34, Hodgson to Chamberlain, 25.06.1898, enc. Northcott to Colonial Secretary, 01.05.1898.
[72] TNA CO 879/52/2, Correspondence relating to the Northern Territories, January to June 1898, no. 247, Hodgson to Chamberlain, 07.03.1898, enc. Northcott to Colonial Secretary, 19.01.1898.
[73] NAG ADM 56/1/230, Zouaragu District Native Affairs, AgCNEP to CCNT, 27.04.1920
[74] NAG ADM 63/5/2, District Record Book Navrongo, p. 179
[75] TNA CO 96/471, Despatches, Subsidiary Nickel Coinage; TNA CO 96/481, Despatches, Subsidiary nickel coinage; NAG ADM 56/1/467, Annual Report NEP for 1912
[76] NAG ADM 56/1/464, Annual Report on the Northern Territories for 1912; NAG ADM 56/1/467, Annual Report NEP for 1912; ADM 56/1/463, Annual Reports, Annual Report on Navarro-Zuaragu Districts for the year 1917
[77] Bening, 'Indigenous Concepts of Boundaries and Significance of Administrative Stations and Boundaries in Northern Ghana', 12.
[78] NAG ADM 56/1/441, Monthly Report NEP for 1910; NAG ADM 56/1/59, Company of the G.C. Regt. Stationed in the Northern Territories, PCNEP to AgCCNT, 16.07.1913
[79] TNA CO 98/10, Departmental Reports 1901, Annual Report for the Northern Territories for the year 1901; TNA CO 98/13, Departmental Reports 1902, Report on the Northern Territories for the year 1902
[80] NAG ADM 56/1/471, Annual Report N.E. Province for 1913
[81] NAG ADM 56/1/7, Duplicate Letter Book, AgCCNT to PC, 18.09.1910

Nickel circulation was reported to be successful mostly due to the lesser value of the coins. When it was introduced in the markets, in fact, only the lowest denominations were commonly accepted[82]. These were even easier to manage because their decimal system made it possible to convert them into cowries without much effort, as the Gurensi numeral system is decimal. For example, the tenth of a penny was called *pia*, meaning ten (cowries); ½d was called *pinu*, meaning fifty (cowries); and one shilling was *kwobega*, meaning one hundred cowries[83].

Nonetheless, nickel was unpopular among the local buyers as well, and it was reportedly either melted to make adornments or bracelets or smuggled for cowries along the border[84]. Many officers suspected that melting was one of the principal means through which the local population got rid of coins[85], but a closer reading of the sources suggest that smuggling and agiotage[86] were probably more frequent. First of all, the metals of the coins were not really appreciated by the Gurensi. Indeed, Garrard confirms that silver and copper were not favoured as casting metals[87]. Moreover, smuggling and agiotage were profitable economic practices, especially for traders passing through the area. Cpt. Nash reported that, in the Zuarungu District, it was not melting but rather the «export of money» that led to the almost complete disappearance of the coins[88]. The pennies were collected and «exported» to both the northern French territories and the southern trade centres of the Colony. Many of the traders from the French territories, conversant with money and their rates of exchange, frequented the markets in the British Protectorate to secure coins to use in paying their taxes[89]. On the other hand, those headed south took advantage of the conversion between cowries and pennies to gain from the conversion, exploiting the ignorance of local buyers on the currencies rates of exchange[90]. In this way, the colonial currency lost most of its purchasing power:

[82] NAG ADM 56/1/479, Annual Report Northern Territories 1914
[83] Interview with the elders of the Kalbeo chief's family, 13.02.2018
[84] NAG ADM 63/5/3, Navrongo Station District Diary, entry for 01.06.1915
[85] NAG ADM 57/1/448, Annual Report NT for 1910; NAG ADM 56/1/486, Annual Report Northern Territories for 1916; NAG ADM 68/5/1, Zouaragu Station Official Diary, entry for 17.08.1919
[86] By agiotage I mean the speculation made by the traders in the act of money-changing.
[87] Silver, for example, was closely associated with Islam and considered with suspicion. Garrard, 'Brass-Casting among the Frafra of Northern Ghana', 365–70.
[88] NAG ADM 56/1/463, Annual Reports, Annual report on the Zouaragu District for the year 1911; NAG ADM 56/1/463, Annual Reports, Annual Report on Zouaragu District for the year 1913
[89] Duperray notes that in 1911, almost half of the tax collection in the Cercle du Mossi was in British silver coins. The payment of taxes in British coins was indeed allowed in French territories. Duperray, *Les Gourounsi de Haute-Volta*, 163.
[90] NAG ADM 56/1/489, Annual Report on the Northern Territories for 1917-1918. Relation among traders and locals continued to be characterized by ambivalence and frauds on both sides, in keeping with what has been depicted in the pre-colonial period. For a discussion of Mossi traders' arrogant attittude towards the Gurensi see NAG ADM 68/5/1, Zouaragu Station Official Diary, entry for 04.10.1913; for an example of Mossi fraud against Frafra see NAG ADM 68/4/3, Record Book for North Mamprusi District, p. 6. For a "classic" Gurensi scam against Mossi see NAG ADM 63/5/2, District Record Book Navrongo, p. 240

> A Fra Fra gets 3d from a European or anyone else for a fowl- When trying to change this 3d for cowries he finds he can only get 150 cowries; whereas if he had originally sold the fowl in the market for cowries he would probably have got at least 250.[91]

Foreign traders bought coins at convenient prices in the Gurensi markets near Zuarungu and then spent them in the southern markets at a profit, or to pay taxes in the French colonies[92]. In so doing, they were able to take advantage of the overlapping currency zones that they encountered along their journey and make a «marginal gain» on them[93].

It was, of course, easier for the officers near the station to control this practice, and it was more common in the markets just outside the quarters, where officers did make sporadic inspections, but coins were easy to obtain. Therefore, the markets in the vicinity of Zuarungu became centres for the cheap purchasing of colonial currency, thereby attracting even more foreign traders. In keeping with this trend and with consequent prosperity brought by the closeness to the colonial station, attendance at the market in Bolgatanga grew in these years. The next section will delineate this growth.

[91] NAG ADM 56/1/463, Annual Reports, Annual report on the Zouaragu District for the year 1911. Also in 1920, the exchange rate was disadvantageous. «The chief of Zuaragu came in to complain about the rate of exchange in the local markets. 3 d. is now only worth 120 cowries, some time ago 3 d. was worth 250. The Chief's explanation is that the people in this District don't yet know the value of the whiteman's money, he informed me that the cowries are plentiful. The Chief suggested that there should be a standard rate of exchange laid down», NAG-T, NRG 8/4/10, Zuaragu Informal Diary, entry for 17.05.1920

[92] Agiotage was a longstanding and well-known practice among the Yarse and Hausa traders. Schildkrout, *People of the Zongo*, 36; Tauxier, *Le noir du Soudan*, 423.

[93] Guyer, *Marginal Gains*.

Commercial flows in the Volta Basin, 1900 ca.

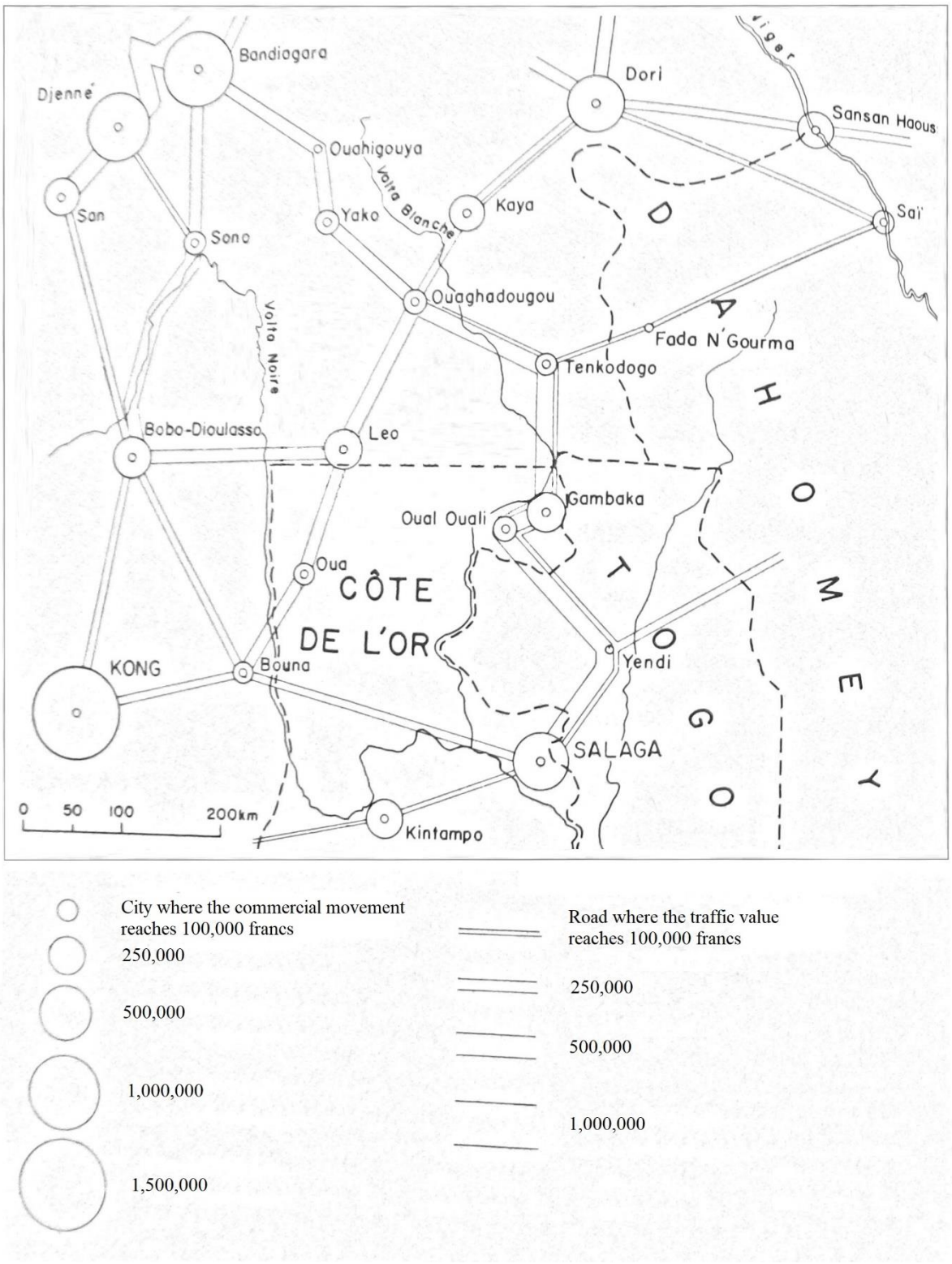

Figure 16. Map of the commercial flows in the Volta basin, 1900 ca.

Source: adapted from Duperray, Les Gourounsi de Haute-Volta, 142

The growth of the Bolgatanga market: local trade and foreign settlers

The opening of the station in Zuarungu and the arrival of new settlers led to increasing attendance at nearby markets. In 1910, at which point the Zuarungu market had not yet been set up, the people living around the colonial station started to frequent the market in Bari, in the Talensi area, as well as the one in Bolgatanga[94]. In the first few months after establishing a presence, therefore, the British further encouraged attendance of these two markets[95]. Then, thanks to the new colonial road system, the initial prosperity enjoyed by Zuarungu was linked to Bolgatanga as well. As a matter of fact, traders coming from the North and the West had to pass through Bolgatanga in order to reach Zuarungu[96].

The perception of savageness associated with the Gurensi, explored in the previous chapters, was so pervasive that colonial officers regarded the "Fra Fra" men as not proficient traders and not interested in trade altogether[97]. However, a closer reading of the colonial sources indicates that this was not the case. Although the officers continued to consider the Gurensi not as traders, at the same time it is possible to find in the colonial archives examples that debunk this bias. The presence of local traders from Bolgatanga is documented in the first District Record Book in 1906, where it is stated that «there are some local traders carrying on business between Wali Wali, Daboya and this town. They trade in salt and it would appear pay no tax»[98]. The Gurensi were therefore occupied in trading activities at least since the British occupation of the region.

Another document attesting to the propensity of some Gurensi from Bolgatanga to invest their assets in trade outside their region is a letter dated June 1908[99]. This letter reports a speech delivered by the District Commissioner A.M. Fleury, in which he urged the people of the district to start trading in cattle with Kumasi in order to raise more revenue for the Protectorate. The officer stressed that local traders should emulate the Mossi and Hausa ones. A caravan was then planned for the following year with any man wishing to participate in the trade required to provide two bullocks for the convoy. Of the 15 Gurensi settlements counted, it was Bolgatanga that provided more prospective traders. The

[94] NAG ADM 57/1/448, Annual Report N.T. for 1910; ADM 56/1/463, Annual Reports, Annual Report 1911
[95] NAG ADM 56/1/441, Monthly Report NEP, Report for month of May 1910; TNA CO 96/506, Despatches, Northern Territories, Military Occupation of Tong Hills, Zouaragu, Orders for Lieutenant Elkan as regards the Tong Hill people
[96] Even the *zongos* in Zuarungu were compelled to be linked to Bolgatanga. See NAG ADM 56/1/33, Catholic Mission Northern Territories, PC to AgCNEP, 29.07.1911
[97] See for example NAG ADM 56/1/463, Annual Reports, Annual Report on the Zouaragu District for the year 1911, Annual Medical Report on Zouaragu
[98] NAG ADM 63/5/2, Navrongo District Record Book, p. 58
[99] NAG ADM 56/1/65, Caravans passing through Bawku, Speech made to the Chiefs, headmen and natives of the Navoro District on the subject of trade. For the list of the traders' names see ADM 56/1/145, Handing over Reports on N.E. Province and outdistricts, Fleury to Nash, 06.07.1908

following year, twenty-two people sent part of their livestock to Kumasi. This did not imply the establishment of a new cattle trade between Kumasi and Bolgatanga[100]. As Cpt. Nash later affirmed, the Hausa and Mossi cattle traders, united in informal "cliques", would have opposed new Gurensi competitors[101]. Nonetheless, this readiness to invest in a new opportunity reveals that some Bolgatanga inhabitants were well inclined to profit from colonial advice and new trading opportunities. Such initiative is not to be underrated given the level of violence and insecurity characterizing that period[102], as shown in the previous chapters.

In the first years of occupation, the colonial presence benefitted Bolgatanga indirectly. Its marketplace grew together with the community of local and foreign traders that made the independent decision to settle or to pass through there, circumventing colonial stations. In 1906 there were at least 25 «resident Mohamedans» in the town, most probably all of whom were traders[103]. In his first report on Zuarungu in 1910, in fact, Cpt. Nash confirmed that Bolgatanga was one of the «chief centres for Moshi and Hausa traders»[104]. On 6 November 1913, when roaming to conduct a road inspection near the town, the same officer discovered that «the market at Bolgatanga has now become quite an important one. Many traders pass through here on their way south and do not touch Zouaragu»[105]. Although he recognized that a significant portion of the trade used this expedient to eschew colonial control, he nonetheless suggested a *laissez-faire* approach, preferring not to interfere directly on traders as doing so would have spoiled the market. Officers continued to endorse this policy in the following years, delegating control over the market to the chief and thereby, as the next chapter will show, creating a strong connection between the political institution of the chieftaincy and the rising economic importance of this trade centre.

[100] Even though there is evidence that Gurensi traders continued this livestock trade with Kumasi, there are no data regarding its extent. See for example ADM 56/1/463, Annual Reports, Annual Report for the Zouaragu District for the year 1912

[101] NAG ADM 56/1/7, Duplicate Letter Book, Exhibit C: General Remarks on Zouaragu District by DC S.D. Nash, 26.09.1910, in CCNT to PCNEP, 14.11.1910

[102] Jean Rouch writes that it was usual for migrants in these years to start their journeys armed. Rouch, 'Migrations au Ghana (Gold Coast)', 52.

[103] NAG ADM 63/5/2, Navrongo District Record Book, p. 58. As pointed out in the first chapter, the main groups of merchants travelling along these routes where indeed the Yarse and Hausa, adherents of Islam.

[104] NAG ADM 56/1/7, Duplicate Letter Book, Exhibit C: General Remarks on Zouaragu District by DC S.D. Nash, 26.09.1910, in CCNT to PCNEP, 14.11.1910

[105] NAG ADM 68/5/1, Zouaragu Station Official Diary, entry for 06.11.1913. Another route was discovered the following year connecting the French territory through Bongo and Bolgatanga NAG ADM 56/1/147, Trade and trade routes, PC to CCNT, 15.09.1914

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that Bolgatanga's commercial prominence in the region had its roots in the first decade of the 20th century. Its success was the result not of intentional efforts by officers but rather a readjustment of the regional economic system stimulated by colonial policies such as taxation, currency introduction and market encouragement. Specifically, the choice to establish colonial outposts and build a network of trenched roads connecting them drove caravan traders to shift their routes. This period can be considered as the beginning of what has been labelled as the «road revolution» in the Gurensi country. The next chapter will show that this revolution continued in the following decade when, at the beginning of the 1920s, Bolgatanga was connected to the "Great North Road", the biggest project of infrastructural development to connect the Protectorate with the Colony.

Currency diffusion and the fact that the area never actually transitioned to the colonial money system reveal that Gurensi markets did not operate under total administrative control. In the Gurensi region, as in the rest of the upper part of the Protectorate, British coins were inserted into a context of currency multiplicity. The introduction was not successful, and before long the coins had disappeared. This was due mainly to the fact that locals refused to accept colonial coins in everyday transactions because of their high value and foreign traders smuggled the money out of the area. Moreover, agiotage and speculation became an attraction for passing merchants, in that they were able to obtain profitable gain from the purchase of colonial currency. The absence of a currency transition, therefore, shows that Gurensi markets were not directly controlled by colonial intervention, even though they were incorporated into more extensive West African trade networks. Nonetheless, in spite of the unsuccess of some of their policies, colonial officers tolerated this state of affairs.

In this economic and geographic landscape, Bolgatanga occupied a favourable position. The settlements were close enough to the colonial station to benefit from its advantages, such as road improvement, security and currency diffusion, and far enough to avoid direct control over transactions and tax collection. The marketplace, already frequented by traders, gained more popularity than it already had. Its growing prominence went on to become consolidated in the following decades, as the following chapter will argue.

Chapter 4
The definition of Bolgatanga paramountcy (1911-1920)

4.1 Introduction

The administrative status of the settlements in the Gurensi region changed during the First World War. This transformation was closely connected to the formation of the chiefdoms, the basic colonial units of administration in the Northern Territories. This chapter argues that the settlements in the North Eastern Province began to take on a new political configuration in this period, one based on the territorially-bounded chiefdoms. In the second decade of the 20th century, Bolgatanga stood out from the others comprising the North Eastern Province as a chiefdom with independent status. Moreover, the Bolganaba was able to impose its paramountcy on the neighbouring settlements thanks to colonial backing. This political position went on to influence not only the territorial extent of the chiefdom but also its land tenure pattern. It is crucial to analyse this transition because it had spatial consequences for the Gurensi settlements by virtue of being imbued with the colonial logic of viewing the spatial reach of chiefs' authority as consistent with the boundaries of their settlements.

The colonial administration implemented a new scheme of government based on identifying chiefdoms with settlements; a process which, in practice, was aimed at defining the boundaries of chiefdoms. The colonial project of delimiting particular social groups on the basis of "tribal" identities and chiefdoms, to facilitate easy administration, was permeated with evolutionist ideas[1]. Nonetheless, officers carried it out even while fully aware that it was rife with real-life impracticalities. In fact, this process was the result of negotiation as well as violent contestation among officers, colonial intermediaries, chiefs and the rest of the population. In implementing this new scheme of government in the North Eastern Province, the officers tried to fix the administrative boundaries of the settlements in which the chiefs were based. In the kind of fluid and noncentralized context the Gurensi region

[1] Grischow, *Shaping Tradition*, 21.

represented, this served to intensify conflicting territorial claims, resulting in a state of affairs in which people were continuously redefining the boundaries of chiefdoms. The chapter will analyse this process following the definition of the Bolganaba as a Head Chief for the "Nankanni tribe" and the promotion of Bolgatanga by the British as a paramount chiefdom over the neighbouring settlements. The results of this process were manifold. If it led to Bolgatanga's prominence both from a commercial and a political point of view, it also started to define the boundaries of its future township.

The first part of the chapter presents the colonial scheme of government introduced in 1912 and the political figures through which the scheme was implemented. It then analyses the spatial changes this scheme brought about in the organization of the settlements. By implementing this scheme, colonial administrators confirmed the chiefs in their new position of authority in matters of land, as gatherers of labour and as judges in the newly established Courts. In this way, the chiefs gradually began to take part in the roles carried out by the earth priests and the family heads. At the same time, from an administrative point of view, the settlements increasingly became political centres with the chiefs as their leading figures. As the rest of the chapter will make evident, this state of affairs was in sharp contrast with the settlement organization of the 19th century.

The second part of the chapter will demonstrate that, for the Gurensi, the process of defining chiefdoms was intensely negotiated and conflict-ridden. Indeed, the territorial transformation of the chiefdoms was gradual, directed and mediated by the people themselves along with the various echelons of the colonial political structure. By analysing this process, the chapter will show that the colonial political structure was not a clear pyramid at all. Subordinates did not simply execute the orders of the commissioners in a thorough and linear way. Instead, such orders underwent various stages of mediation and negotiation through different intermediaries, a process defined as an «impenetrable hedge» by the commissioners. This situation was similar to the 'circle of iron' depicted by Emily Lynn Osborn in her article on the role played by African colonial employees as pivotal figures in disseminating information and knowledge in interactions between French colonial officials and the local population[2].

In the case of the Gurensi, local people often fiercely contested the actual application of officers' orders. The unfolding of the new territorial and political configuration was not without frictions: numerous boundary disputes started to arise in these years. It was increasingly common for the territorial reach of the chiefdoms to be determined by political conflicts and negotiations between chiefs, their subjects and the colonial administration. In the last part of this section, I will present some examples of these negotiations and how they affected the territorial scope of the Bolgatanga

[2] Osborn, '"Circle of Iron"'.

chiefdom. In doing so, I will analyse how the Bolganaba upgraded his position to become Head Chief, the competition that ensued with the other recognized Head Chiefs, and two cases that show the dynamics through which paramountcy was achieved in the region.

The chapter will conclude by showing how the creation and consolidation of the Bolgatanga chiefdom continued to play an essential role in the future of the town but, at the same time, how this new political configuration of the settlement struggled thoroughly take root. The people continued to contest the newly imposed chiefdoms in terms both of their territorial reach and the new role assigned to the chiefs. In the first few years of the First World War, the Bolganaba's authority was highly contested, indeed. I will present some cases of insubordination and defiance in the face of colonial requests that reveal how the changes brought about by the creation of the "Greater Mamprusi" affected the Gurensi social structure, and how the Gurensi reacted.

Finally, I will demonstrate that the Bolganaba intervention was crucial in consolidating his settlement as a prominent commercial centre in the region. In this period, Bolgatanga's marketplace experienced additional growth, maintaining its position outside of colonial trade control. The Bolganaba was able to strategically use his position in the colonial hierarchy to negotiate a favourable position for the market in the emerging colonial infrastructure. Notwithstanding the policy of trade control implemented in this period, Bolgatanga's commercial position as a centre outside direct colonial supervision was matched by the positive view officers' held of it. The various DCs stationed in Zuarungu in these years fostered Bolgatanga's market by protectionist attitude and directly connecting the settlement with the colonial road network. Despite the apparent paradox, this development was consistent with the officers' policy of cultivating the markets in the region without necessarily creating a clear-cut pattern of domination and resistance[3]. The centrality Bolgatanga acquired as a market centre led officers to try and bring the colonial road system in line with the indigenous networks of communication. This matching, a result of indigenous commercial foresight and interested colonial intervention, went on to shape the future of the town in the following decade.

[3] Chalfin, 'Border Zone Trade and the Economic Boundaries of the State in North-East Ghana', 205–6.

4.2 Redefining boundaries: changing settlement patterns

The idea and implementation of "Greater Mamprusi"

Under the mandate of Sir Hugh Clifford (1912-1919), officials considered the Northern Territories to have achieved a peaceful state and implemented a policy to protect the northern peasantry against the influence and "degeneration" from southern educated elites by "modernizing" the "tribal system". As Jeff Grischow notes, this policy was informed by «the colonial trope of interrupted evolution»[4]. According to this colonial evolutionary model, the societies in the far North of the Protectorate had been disrupted in their social evolution by the activities of African slave-raiders. Their "natural" path towards modernisation could be restored under colonial rule, however, by defining geographically-bounded tribes with a hierarchical political system of head chiefs, sub-chiefs and headmen.

A new scheme of local government was launched for the North Eastern Province under the supervision of the Chief Commissioner Cecil H. Armitage that bore many similarities to the administrative vision of Henry P. Northcott discussed in chapter 2. This scheme postulated the existence of an alleged "Greater Mamprusi", a past northern kingdom that controlled all the various peoples of the Province under one ruler, the Nayiri, the leader of Mamprugu[5]. This political entity was an imagined construct without any real basis in local history, but it was highly convenient for administrative purposes. In Armitage's mind, such an arrangement represented a way of imposing a hierarchical power structure on the varied, independent and noncentralized people that composed the Province.

The officers were, of course, aware that this vision did not fit with the area's actual indigenous organization[6]. Indeed, some of them opposed the implementation of the scheme. The Commissioner Arthur Festing, for example, clearly expressed his doubts about imposing external paramount chiefs

[4] Grischow, *Shaping Tradition*, 21.
[5] For an ethnographic study of Mamprusi political centralisation see Susan Drucker-Brown, 'Mamprusi Installation Ritual and Centralisation: A Convection Model', *Man* 24, no. 3 (1989): 485.
[6] See for example the letter by Provincial Commissioner Warden to the District Commissioners of the North Eastern Province that reads: «In the Navarro district there are tribes who have never accepted Mamprussi rule, and his influence is small generally throughout the Zouaragu district. But it is only by supporting him and the minor chiefs, that we can hope to bring about what the Chief Commissioner desires» in NAG ADM 56/1/137, Northern Territories Native Affairs, PCNEP to DCs, 20.07.1911

on the "Frafras". Recognizing that there was neither a clear hierarchy among the chiefs or a strong connection with the Nayiri, he wrote that «to expect these independent warlike people to obey so called paramount chiefs holding the ludicrous portions of say Mamprussi or Dagomba I submit with the greatest respect too much»[7]. His criticism did not have any tangible impact among the higher administrative ranks, however, and the implementation of the scheme continued[8]. The annual report for 1911 read:

> An important feature in connection with native affairs has been the selection and appointment of head chiefs over the principal tribes of the Zouaragu District, and the selection of influential natives to act as sub-chiefs of the various sections of these tribes, where none previously existed: the object of these appointments being to build up a native administration in this district, similar to that followed in other districts of the Protectorate[9].

To proceed with the linear implementation of the scheme, administrators began to locate and designate a hierarchy of chiefs based on their supposed seniority and paramountcy, a process that could be described as the "quest for seniority". I use this phrase to indicate the officers' search for a suitable candidate for chiefship that would fit into the newly imposed hierarchy in which suitable means a candidate willing to comply with their requests. At the same time, the candidate also needed to have a certain degree of "seniority" over the others, understood as the kind of elevated societal status that would make it possible to easily insert the chosen man into the British hierarchy and colonial terms of power. As I will show below, however, the role of the officers played in this quest was guided by African intervention[10].

The "Greater Mamprusi" was formally inaugurated on April 1912, during a durbar held in Navrongo[11]. Five subdivisions were carved out of the North Eastern Province – Mamprusi, Kusasi, Frafra, Gurunsi and Builsa, and in principle each one was to have a single Head Chief located directly under the Nayiri, the Paramount Chief[12]. The Nayiri was to control these subject Head Chiefs, who in turn controlled smaller chiefs and the so-called *kambonaba*[13]. The "Frafra" area was initially divided among three Head Chiefs who saw themselves as more or less legitimately allied with the Nayiri over time[14]. For the Talensi, the Head Chief was the Kunaab (chief of Kurugu); for the

[7] NAG ADM 56/1/7, Duplicate letter book, AgCCNT to AgColonial Secretary, 12.03.1911
[8] Iliasu, 'The Establishment of British Administration in Mamprugu, 1898-1937', 7.
[9] TNA CO 98/20, Northern Territories of the Gold Coast, Report for 1911
[10] Regarding the role of African elites in enacting and guiding colonial policies see Spear, 'Neo-Traditionalism and the Limits of Invention in British Colonial Africa'; Osborn, '"Circle of Iron"'.
[11] Iliasu, 'The Establishment of British Administration in Mamprugu, 1898-1937', 10.
[12] Iliasu, 7.
[13] Anafu wrote: «Kambonaba which, literally glossed, means 'Ashanti-type chief' was an office in Mamprugu and Dagbon, where the Kambonse were captains of the gunmen. The 'new men' of Tallensi politics who were, strictly speaking, leaders of gang labourers, were therefore appropriately called Kambonabas, 'sergeant-major Chiefs'» in Anafu, 'The Impact of Colonial Rule on Tallensi Political Institutions, 1898-1967', 26.
[14] NAG ADM 56/1/445, Quarterly Report NEP 1911, Report for the Quarter Ending 30th September 1911

Nabdams, the Nangodinaba (chief of Nangodi); for the Gurensi the only one initially selected was Bonnaba Ayambire (the chief of Bongo)[15], «the only man with any pretensions to authority» before British arrival[16].

In chapter 1, I discussed the position of Bolgatanga in the region and the absence of strong political connections with the Mamprusi or Mossi societies. This state of affairs made it clearly problematic to implement the British scheme in this area, as subjection to the Nayiri did not have any sort of historical or social legitimacy[17]. Therefore, when the scheme was launched, the Bolganaba was not considered a Head Chief. However, the Head Chief position was not static. Whereas the Kunaab, Bonnaba and Nangodinaba obtained a paramount position from the onset, the Bolganaba gained it over time, as I will show further on in this chapter. In the end, this scheme of local government continued to serve as the formal basis of the colonial administrative structure until 1929, when the indirect rule was implemented.

Having assessed the central role of the chiefs in the new scheme, I now turn to the effects of the scheme on the administrative conceptualization of space and in the actual political organization of the settlements. The colonial process of identifying certain chiefdoms with certain settlements involved demoting the earth priests and family heads and promoting the chiefs. The next section will, therefore, analyse how the new scheme of local government affected pre-colonial dwelling patterns.

Territorial identity linking the chiefdom and the settlement

The process of implementing colonial policies increasingly reproduced and legitimized the officers' evolutionary model for the social groups comprising the Northern Territories. The political reorganization that was administratively introduced through the "Greater Mamprusi" scheme had crucial spatial consequences for the settlements. This section intends to analyse the effects of the scheme on the spatial and social contours of the settlements.

Since the first British military expeditions, the colonial officers had projected their concepts of spatiality and urbanity on the Gurensi settlement pattern, equating the settlements with towns. One

[15] Also called Giba and elected with the skin name Kebule Belesaa, literally meaning: "a young plant or seedling begs rain". Azaare, 'Bongo Clan and Skin History'.
[16] NAG ADM 56/1/144, Intelligence Report, Report on the fighting strength, arms, tactics, intertribal differences etc. of the people in the Zouaragu District, compiled by S.D. Nash, 17.11.1913
[17] A subjection that is the cause of conflicts even today. See Awedoba, *An Ethnographic Study of Northern Ghanaian Conflicts*.

of the first reports of these expeditions described Bolgatanga ('Boliga') as one of «the principal towns». However, the settlements were described as follows:

> All through the part of Mamprusi north of river Volta the towns are differently built. Instead of all the compounds joining each other, as is the case at Gambaga and south of it, each compound is separate, sometimes being two or three hundred yards from another[18].

It became increasingly common for British observers to identify the Gurensi settlements as towns, even though there were no identifiable features that would support such a view. In 1907, the DC Cpt. O'Kinealy cautiously affirmed that «the word town must be taken in a very liberal sense in this district, as the individual compounds are widely scattered and consequently a town, so called, covers several square miles of the country»[19]. Some years later, Cardinall shared the same perceptions, when he wrote:

> One remarkable feature about the District is that nowhere is a town to be found, not even a resemblance to a village. It is asserted that in the past villages did exist, but there are to-day no signs of them, and even in the thicker portions of the bush – in fact, everywhere – one comes across ancient middens of which the origin is unknown and which are situated at a distance one from the other as are the dwelling-places of the people to-day.[20]

However, the way officers identified these settlements with what they imagined as towns directly modified Gurensi customary law and settlement patterns in Bolgatanga through by introducing the administrative unit of "chiefdom".

The colonial chiefdom, theoretically a subset of the tribe, became a category through which colonial power and hierarchy could easily be thought, managed and projected geographically onto the region. Even before the scheme was inaugurated, the officers explicitly imagined a chiefdom to coincide with the supposed town or village that allegedly lay under the direct control of a single chief[21]. This imagined identity was not consistent in any way with the actual organization of Gurensi settlements, however. As shown in chapter 1, the organisation of the settlements reflected kinship and ritual logics, rather than being based on allegiance to one chief and the territorial boundaries of the chiefdom. Furthermore, the chiefs lacked control over their subjects, and the officers were clearly aware of this fact. The scheme, therefore, encountered significant obstacles in terms of implementation.

The duty of applying the scheme in the Gurensi region was entrusted to Captain S. D. Nash, and he soon realized that the same issues which had made the past administration scheme, i.e.

[18] TNA CO 879/54, Further Correspondence relating to the Northern Territories, Jul.-Dec. 1898, Report on Mamprusi by Cap. W.G. Murray, no. 63, Enc. 1, 25.07.1898
[19] NAG ADM 11/1/824, Essays by Assistant District Commissioners on Tribal History, Navarro District, p. 2
[20] Cardinall, *The Natives of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast. Their Customs, Religion and Folklore*, 2.
[21] See chapter 2

recognizing the chiefs as figures of power, impractical, continued to plague the current situation. Nash expressed the same doubts stated by others in the past regarding the expected role of the people designated as chiefs and their subjects' supposed compliance with their authority. In a quarterly report compiled in 1912, he wrote that «undoubtedly the Chiefs […] do their best for us but are the people inclined to support the Chiefs? I don't think they are, mainly because Chiefs as figure heads are alien to their customs»[22]. In fact, as I will show in the next section, the only element lending legitimacy to this recently introduced pyramidal hierarchical structure continued to be «threats of retaliation by the administration»[23].

However, in this period the chiefs' lack of control became evident even from a territorial point of view. As Nash noted in his first months as Commissioner of the Zuarungu District,

> Many of the chiefs do not know the boundaries of their own towns nor the chief headmen in them – and even now they are afraid to give orders to, and report disobedience on the part of their people, because they are not certain that the whiteman is going to remain in the country, and they fear reprisals on the part of the people should we leave.[24]

The report continues, revealing that the officer was aware of the indigenous political and spatial organization. Nash wrote: «on the other hand every town is divided into sections where there is generally a headman very often a Ju-Ju man. These men know all the compounds in their section much better than the chief does». In all likelihood, he was referring here to the two other eminent figures in Gurensi society, the *yzuukema* (clan heads) and *tendaana* (earth-priest). These were indeed the actors who might have a more precise idea of the kinship composition of the settlements and their general geographical extent, by tracing their social boundaries[25]. It is thus possible to state that, as early as 1910, the officers were already aware that the settlements they recognized as chiefdoms did not have any bounded geographical identity. Nonetheless, they were looking to define these geographical and political boundaries for their new administrative units because the chiefs had to have a territory over which to exert their newly acquired power. Therefore, the officers reproduced their European notions of space, power and territory in designing and implementing the scheme.

The spatial and social organisation of the *teŋa* was too blurry for the Europeans and, therefore, not easy enough to manage from an administrative point of view. It is possible to trace the process

[22] NAG ADM 56/1/461, Quarterly Reports, Quarter Ending 30th June, 1912
[23] Iliasu, 'The Establishment of British Administration in Mamprugu, 1898-1937', 8.
[24] NAG ADM 56/1/7, Duplicate Letter Book, General Remarks on Zouaragu District, 26.09.1910
[25] The earth priest knew the extents of their ritual areas, as well as the clan heads knew better than the chiefs the extent of their families. Again, on the kind of boundaries that existed among communities Meyer Fortes put it: «The general rule is that boundaries exist in terms of social cleavages co-ordinated with residential distribution, and not of geographical or topographical features; and this rule applies both to the spatial relations of contiguous settlements and to those of parts of a settlement with one another. Community and locality cannot be dissociated» in Fortes, *The Dynamics of Clanship among the Tallensi*, 163.

through which the officers intended to change this state of affairs by analysing the reports written in those years. The process of imposing territorial boundaries on the settlements started with making the chiefs responsible for land matters. Nash was one of the most «keen social observers» among the officers in the Zuarungu District, and this intention can be clearly discerned in the changes in his reports[26]. In 1911, in a report on land tenure in the "Fra Fra", Nash included the chief as a key figure in the management of land matters. In this document, even though Nash recognized the role of the *tendaana* in the process of land ownership, he discarded the *tendaana*'s land rights and his claims to be the pioneer settler as «purely mythical»[27]. He then equated the role of the chief with that of the *tendaana* and the "elders" as the legitimate authorities to be "propitiated" and consulted in the process of land acquisition[28]. A *tendaana* could, therefore, be elected to manage uninhabited areas, but in «thickly inhabited» ones the land belonged to the chief, at least in theory[29]. Thus, even though the officer did recognize the roles of the *tendaana* and *yzuukema*, he deliberately decided not to grant them a central role in the political structure that was being implemented.

Further on in the same report, in discussing the feasibility of imposing a land tax[30], Nash recognized the spatial configuration of the *teŋa* as the result of a "religious allegiance" (the kinship and ritual element in settlement patterns) and the topography of the area:

> In the present state of this district each small community owes a loose allegiance to some headman; this allegiance is founded on their religion and not on the power of the particular headman to enforce his demands. In most cases the people are not even grouped in villages but form communities according to the configuration of the ground.[31]

He concluded that the only viable administrative solution for effectively controlling and taxing the people in this scattered landscape was «to group these communities under central chiefs»[32]. This assumption was in accordance with the general policy that led to the creation of the "Greater

[26] Allman and Parker, *Tongnaab*, 18.
[27] In the officer's mind the figure of the *tendaana* only developed when an entire community settled in a specific area, therefore there could not have been a 'first' settler.
[28] NAG ADM 56/1/105, Report of the Northern Territories Land Committee, Report on Fra Fra Land Tenure by Cap. S.D. Nash, 18.09.1911. In a previous report the figure of the *tendaana* is considered as being «probably invested with this office by the Chief» even though the chief does not appear in the description of the process of land acquisition. See NAG ADM 56/1/128, Report on food supply in Frafra, Report on food supply in Frafra by Cap. H. Wheeler, 31.05.1911. For similar ambiguities in Navrongo see NAG ADM 56/1/113, Land Tenure Northern Province, PC to CCNT, 06.09.1911
[29] Nash specified that «ownership of land is both collective and individual in this sense that all uncultivated land belongs to the particular community who live round it, but cultivated land belongs to him who puts crops on it i.e. he found the land untilled and unoccupied and by cropping it with consent of Chief and Tindana becomes owner by usage and long possession». Moreover, chiefs together with elders were entitled to allow outsiders to settle and farm plots of land. NAG ADM 56/1/105, Report of the Northern Territories Land Committee, Report on Fra Fra Land Tenure by Cap. S.D. Nash, 18.09.1911.
[30] In continuity with Northcott's vision, this was still seen as a sign of sovereignty. See chapter 3.
[31] NAG ADM 56/1/105, Report of the Northern Territories Land Committee, Report on Fra Fra Land Tenure by Cap. S.D. Nash, 18.09.1911.
[32] *ivi*

Mamprusi". In going against the indigenous settlement pattern, it completely ignored the role of the *tendaana*. We can thus conclude that this was a deliberate choice on the part of the officers as they considered these figures «unfit for appointment»[33] even while recognizing their role.

Captain Nash's effort in implementing this policy was highly regarded by his superior, then Provincial Commissioner Warden. The officer was praised for his «tactful and unremitting perseverance» in quenching antagonisms, with the result that, in less than two years, he had changed a situation where «there was not, in reality, any one who was a Chief except in name, and such influence as he did possess did not extend beyond the compounds in the immediate vicinity of his own». Thanks to Nash's actions, at the time of writing «one chief is recognised as head of each town»[34]. This passage is quite clear in expressing the underlying correspondence between settlements, towns and chiefdoms that the officers put into practice. The chiefdom was not only a territorially bounded unit, but it was also conceptualized as a town or a village in itself.

The over-optimistic tone employed by Warden was not supported by the facts, however. The process of "territorializing" the chiefdoms, in the sense of granting a geographical and territorial dimension to this new unit of administration, ended up lasting much longer than two years and generating many more controversies. In 1922, ten years after the implementation of the "Greater Mamprusi", Allan W. Cardinall, an officer who had spent many years in the District and that was a quite precise observer of the social context in which he was operating, wrote:

> Practically the only cause of friction between chiefs is the question of
>
> Boundaries
>
> It is a difficult matter for here again one is working arbitrarily and on a purely European basis.
>
> One can in safety aver that before our advent in the district:
>
> 1. There were no boundaries between chiefs
> 2. Chiefs had no control over the land at all.[35]

Land disputes were already part of Gurensi social life before the arrival of the British troops in the region, as I showed in chapter 1. However, the act of introducing chieftaincy modified the terms through which such conflicts were resolved. In their new role in land matters, the chiefs started to take an increasingly active and administratively recognized part in these disputes. Meyer Fortes aptly commented almost twenty years later that

[33] Iliasu, 'The Establishment of British Administration in Mamprugu, 1898-1937', 8.
[34] NAG ADM 56/1/471, Annual Report N.E. Province for 1913, Annual Report on the North-Eastern Province of the Northern Territories for 1913
[35] NAG ADM 68/4/3, Record Book for North Mamprusi District, p. 24. Here I replicate the exact graphic structure of the original document (i.e underlined words, sentence arrangement, etc.) to make clearer the author's emphasis.

> The boundary disputes that have become common between chiefs and headmen in recent years turn on the contradiction between the conception of a defined territorial boundary fostered by British rule, and the type of social boundary inherent in the native social structure.[36]

This contradiction was grounded in the fact that kinship relationships dictated most of the boundaries of Gurensi communities. In contrast, the officers considered the chiefdoms' territorial boundaries to also define the territorial extent of the chiefs' authority. This clearly clashed with the indigenous settlement pattern in which the role of the *naba* was not territorialized; it did not overrule the different clan sections, nor did it exert control over the acquisition of land. With the implementation of the "Greater Mamprusi" scheme, however, the chiefdom of Bolgatanga started to have a geographical dimension from an administrative point of view. This geographical dimension matched the boundaries of the Bolganaba's jurisdiction. The new scheme of government created a situation in which the settlements over which the chief was able to assert or claim his paramountcy became part of his chiefdom. This conflict-ridden process went hand in hand with the definition and imposition of the colonial hierarchical structure.

Another conundrum created by the establishment of the "Greater Mamprusi" was that the officers' efforts were directed at building a hierarchy of chiefs based on seniority and sustained by coercion where the indigenous political context was clearly non-hierarchical and did not have structured coercive methods of control. In the case of Bolgatanga, there was also no sort of previous political connection with Mamprugu that might apparently justify these claims. The break with the pre-colonial organization that had begun during the years of conquest was, therefore, enlarged not only in territorial terms but also in terms of methods for asserting. As Allman & Parker argued, in the eyes of the officers, the fortune of many of the chiefs continued to depend «primarily on their ability to mobilize compulsory labor»[37].

However, as I already pointed out in chapter 2, coercion was not the only ingredient in the chieftaincy recipe. The individuals who obtained this status had to balance colonial requests and people's expectations. To be successful, they required «both modern administrative skills as well as tried-and-true strongman strategies that entailed a minimum of redistribution»[38]. One system through which they could rebalance this position was that offered by the colonial courts. In this period, chiefs began to act as judges in the newly established courts in the district headquarters[39]. This represented a sort of continuity with their pre-colonial role of guidance even though the judgements pronounced

[36] Fortes, *The Dynamics of Clanship among the Tallensi*, 163.
[37] Allman and Parker, *Tongnaab*, 86.
[38] Lentz, *Ethnicity and the Making of History in Northern Ghana*, 62.
[39] See for example NAG ADM 56/1/468, Quarterly Report N.E. Province 1913, North-Eastern Province, Report for the Quarter Ending 31st December, 1913

in the colonial courts were a blend of officers' expectations, customary law and the individual interests of the people involved[40]. Moreover, the chiefs now had military backing to enforce their decisions, a situation that could lead to abuse of power[41]. In the eyes of the officers, the chiefs increasingly operated as «sergeant-majors» in the newly established hierarchy[42], even though they were not the only perpetrators of colonial power. The rungs separating the chiefs from the British officers in the colonial ladder were occupied by other figures, grey positions that mediated between them and influenced political equilibriums in the area. The next section is intended to introduce these figures and show their role in the chieftaincy selection process.

[40] Spear, 'Neo-Traditionalism and the Limits of Invention in British Colonial Africa'.
[41] See for example the case of the Bolganaba and his interdiction with the Court in Zuarungu in NAG ADM 68/5/2, Zuarungu District Official Diary, entries for 09.03.1915 and 09.04.1915. The Bolganaba started to judge cases in his own Court in 1918, however. NAG ADM 68/5/1, Zouaragu Station Official Diary, entry for 05.03.1918
[42] Report on Native Administration, Tamale, 20.07.1928, quoted in Iliasu, 'The Establishment of British Administration in Mamprugu, 1898-1937', n. 19.

4.3 The "quest for seniority" in the Gurensi region

The echelons of power: the "impenetrable hedge"

> If your father sends you to the farm to collect ground-nuts, he expects you to take some for yourself.[43]

The clear pyramidal structure designed by Armitage remained no more than an abstract design in that there was no strong, clear policy establishing the extents of chiefs' power. Ten years after the formal creation of the "Greater Mamprusi" administrative units, officers were still speaking up to denounce this lack of clear guidelines. The DC A.W. Cardinall wrote that «the policy which governs our relations with the people and chiefs is not laid down. […] There are no hard and fast rules», and that the only clear rule followed by the administration was that «Chiefs must be supported»[44]. The absence of a well-defined and articulated colonial policy did not mean that there was no policy at all, however. The political spaces left empty by officers were filled by individuals whose functions was to mediate among the different levels of the pyramid.

Chiefs did not usually communicate directly with the officers, primarily because of linguistic barriers. The interactions between them were presided over by the Constabulary and interpreters who served as mediators between the parties. They were involved in carrying out the Commissioners' orders from the moment of pronouncement through to its concrete implementation. As pointed out in chapter 2, the chiefs' newly acquired power over the population was neither taken for granted nor freely accepted. In the first decade of the 20th century, for example, locals contested the Bolganaba's newly acquired role on multiple occasions. The chief was able to disband this opposition thanks to the backing of the British officers and their African military retinues. As a matter of fact, most chiefs

[43] NAG ADM 56/1/486, Annual Report Northern Territories for 1916, Annual Report on the North Eastern Province of the Northern Territories for the year 1916. This statement was made by Lance-Corporal Bayoro Grunshi to justify cattle looting on the part of constables in connection with the civil unrest that occurred that year. See § 4.4 for a discussion of these examples of unrest.
[44] NAG ADM 68/4/3, Record Book for North Mamprusi District

continued to use military support to assert their power over their people and comply with British requests.

This situation persisted in the 1910s as well, as many reports reveal. When faced with a request, such as road-making or carrier service, the chiefs used to ask for a military escort to carry out these orders[45]. For their part, the officers viewed this as a necessary step as long as the chiefs' lack of power remained «ineradicable»[46]. On the other hand, the chiefs explicitly endorsed the presence of the constabulary to show the people that they held limited responsibility in executing colonial orders[47]. However, chiefs also resorted to this sanctioning of violence in order to accumulate personal wealth while acting in the name of the "white man", as deserters or ex-soldiers had done in the past[48]. Some of the chiefs promptly adopted this stratagem in association with soldiers or Mossi crooks to request labour or seize cattle for their own gain[49].

Connections between the chiefs and the colonial retinues grew stronger with the implementation of the new scheme. Once the Zuarungu station had been opened and clerks and constabulary permanently stationed there, they carved out a position of prominence for themselves in the colonial echelons by exploiting the gap of ignorance, prejudice and linguistic barriers that separated the European officers from the local population. Captain Nash defined this newly-emerged class as an «impenetrable hedge» whose interest was to keep the officers divided and isolated from the rest of the population. Shortly after his transfer to Zuarungu, he wrote that

> […] in a district like this, where the natives are so ignorant of our methods and procedure, it is most difficult for the District Commissioner to prevent himself being surrounded (by native officials who are supposed to assist him) by an impenetrable hedge through which no complaints are allowed to come – Soldiers, Constables, their wives and numerous retainers will not allow complaints to be brought to the Court if they are implicated in the matter[50].

The people who composed this «hedge» had a certain degree of control over some positions in the colonial administrative structure. For instance, they were in charge of mediating the selection of interpreters. The Commissioner Arthur Festing remarked that the lack of a reliable interpreter, knowledgeable in the local Zuarungu District languages was due to the actions of the Constabulary, as these latter were determined to maintain a certain degree of manipulation in the interpretation

[45] NAG ADM 56/1/61, Navrongo District Handing Over Reports, Handing over report to Captain Warden and half yearly report on the Navarro District, 1911. With time it was reported that the soldiers were gradually replaced by the «Court bailiff», see NAG ADM 56/1/144, Intelligence Report, Report on the fighting strength, arms, tactics, intertribal differences etc. of the people in the Zouaragu District, compiled by S.D. Nash, 17.11.1913
[46] NAG ADM 56/1/7, Duplicate Letter Book, General Remarks on Zouaragu District, 26.09.1910
[47] Iliasu, 'The Establishment of British Administration in Mamprugu, 1898-1937', 21.
[48] See chapter 2
[49] NAG ADM 56/1/61, Navrongo District Handing Over Reports, Handing over report to Captain Warden and half yearly report on the Navarro District, 1911
[50] NAG ADM 56/1/7, Duplicate Letter Book, General Remarks on Zouaragu District, 26.09.1910

process. Indeed, the young man selected by the officers quit his job, apparently because the soldiers had subjected him to blackmail and brought false charges against him[51]. Another clear example of this was the move to appoint a former member of the «robber gangs» described in chapter 2, at the time a known lawbreaker, as the interpreter in Gambaga. This man was seemingly «hand in glove with the Sergeant and other N.C.O.'s of the Constabulary»[52].

This chance to manipulate the interpretation process gave the Constabulary and chosen interpreters a degree of leverage in the process of selecting chiefs. On October 1913, in fact, a report denounced the large number of individuals who aspired to become chiefs «when the question of Paramountcy was still in its infancy, certainly realized that the Officials […] were there only temporarily, and they and the interpreters took full advantage of their lack of experience»[53]. That same year, the Court interpreter in Zuarungu, Salifu Frafra, was removed from his office because he «carried corrupt practices to an almost unprecedented pitch» by influencing the selection of chiefs, accepting bribes and giving false interpretations[54]. The Provincial Commissioner Warden clearly expressed his suspicion that the Kunaab and this man were colluding in the process of appointing chiefs[55].

This state of affairs persisted in the following years. In 1915, the White Fathers missionaries noted that the process of Court interpretation in Navrongo was quite inaccurate and represented a source of falsification and profiteering[56]. The illicit and extortive methods employed by the interpreter Bassana Moshi, put in charge of the Zuarungu District beginning in 1914, have already been documented by Moses Anafu and John Parker[57]. In this case as well, the man was implicated in a bribery case in connection with the election of a Head Chief[58]. The process of chief selection and appointment was thus not controlled entirely by either the officers or by the chiefs. Instead, this

[51] NAG ADM 56/1/7, Duplicate Letter Book, CNEP to the AgCCNT, 26.09.1910
[52] NAG ADM 56/1/95, Handing over reports North Eastern Province, Handing over report by Travelling Commissioner Warden, 12.11.1910
[53] NAG ADM 56/1/468, Quarterly Report N.E. Province for 1913, North-Eastern Province, Report for the Quarter Ending 30th September, 1913
[54] Native Affairs: Zuarungu [1929], British Library, EAP541/1/2/13, https://eap.bl.uk/archive-file/EAP541-1-2-13, AgDC to CCNT, 07.10.1929; see also NAG ADM 56/1/61, Navarro District Handing Over Reports, North-Eastern Province, Handing-over notes to Captain Warden, February, 1913
[55] He wrote «as for Kurugu I think he is considerably more of a fool, the knave being supplied in the person of Salufu the late Court Interpreter - who during the absence of the Commissoners appeared to think that was no limit to his power, and that he could do absolutely as he pleased» in NAG ADM 56/1/165, Native Affairs and Riots, PC to AgCCNT, 25.06.1913
[56] Journal de la Mission, Navrongo, 01.10.1915, A.G.M.Afr
[57] Anafu, 'The Impact of Colonial Rule on Tallensi Political Institutions, 1898-1967', 22; Parker, 'The Dynamics of Fieldwork among the Talensi: Meyer Fortes in Northern Ghana, 1934–7', 626.
[58] NAG ADM 68/5/1, Zouaragu Station Official Diary, entry for 15.09.1916

process involved intense negotiation among the different ranks of colonial administration and retinues, thereby making the Commissioners' decisions malleable and alterable.

Figure 17. "Bila Moshi, Court Interpreter, March 1922"

Source: Bodleian Library, GB 0162 MSS.Afr.s.1958

The chiefs themselves and the individuals aspiring to become chiefs did have a certain leverage in both the process of chief selection and the "quest for seniority". The next section is intended to outline their role and, in particular, the dynamics through which the Bolganaba was able to acquire Head Chief status and enlarge the territorial boundaries of the settlement. Although this did take place with the officers' consent, it was neither their primary intent nor a result of their premeditated plans. Essentially, the Commissioners sanctioned negotiations in which they did not play a central role and over which did not exercise direct control.

The competition between the Kunaab and the Bolganaba

The introduction of chieftaincy shortly after the British occupation of the Gurensi region intensified competition among individuals striving for the chief position. I already showed some of the dynamics characterising the process through which the Bolganaba was able to eliminate his opponents[59]. As the preceding paragraphs have shown, the main mechanism that intensified this competition was the officers' "quest for seniority" in preparation for the "Greater Mamprusi". Chieftaincy was a rewarding position from many points of view. The chiefs did not yet receive a regular salary from the administration, but they had the power to mobilize labour, and they received gifts and fees from the people whose cases were being judged in the courts and from the appointing of sub-chiefs and headmen[60]. Therefore, the position of chieftaincy allowed chiefs to accumulate wealth and gain a prominent political position in society. The political legitimacy the British gave to the individuals regarded as Head Chiefs and chiefs definitely opened a Pandora's box of chiefship enskinments.

The process of implementing the "Greater Mamprusi" hierarchical division in the Zuarungu District introduced new actors vying for this status and strategies for acquiring chieftaincy. Appointing of chiefs was a dynamic process, as changes in the Head Chiefs' and sub-chiefs' shortlists over the years reveal, and in which both colonial officers and Africans were actively involved. The enskinment or disenskinment of a chief was the result of continuously redefining and reconfiguring the connections between chiefs and officers and among the chiefs themselves. Indeed, as Lund has noted, the role of the paramount chief was frequently and effectively used strategically during both colonial and postcolonial times as a «political instrument of promotion and demotion of chiefs»[61]. Therefore, as in the previous decade, chiefs continued to be rewarded for complying with colonial requests. And this continued to be the case for the Bolganaba as well.

This section aims to show the dynamicity of chieftaincy status and the negotiations involved in obtaining it. Most of the studies on the political institutions of the area in the colonial period focus on the Talensi and the Kunaab[62], whose positions remained stable in the following two decades[63]; none have directly analysed the case of the Bolganaba. Here I will first briefly outline the role of the

[59] See chapter 2
[60] Lentz, *Ethnicity and the Making of History in Northern Ghana,* 63.
[61] Lund, *Local Politics and the Dynamics of Property in Africa.*, 30.
[62] See for example Anafu, 'The Impact of Colonial Rule on Tallensi Political Institutions, 1898-1967', 25; Iliasu, 'The Establishment of British Administration in Mamprugu, 1898-1937', 8; Grischow, *Shaping Tradition,* 37; Allman and Parker, *Tongnaab,* 81.
[63] The Kunaab was elected in 1913 and maintained his position until the creation of Tallensi Federation in 1937. Anafu, 'The Impact of Colonial Rule on Tallensi Political Institutions, 1898-1967', 31.

Kunaab before considering the chiefly succession in Bolgatanga. Finally, I will provide some examples of how smaller chiefships were negotiated, defined and obtained, and what role the Bolganaba and the Kunaab assumed in these negotiations. These cases confirm some of the dynamics already pointed out by the literature[64], such as the role the Kunaab played in selling chiefship without indigenous legitimation or colonial consent and the role officers played in backing the Head Chiefs' positions. Furthermore, they reveal that the chiefdom definitions in this period were highly negotiable and, in some cases, effectively negotiated. This section concludes by showing the very limited role that British officers played in both enskinning the chiefs' in the Gurensi region and defining Bolgatanga's chiefdom. It would be beyond the scope of this thesis to ascertain how each settlement that once composed and currently composes Bolgatanga was annexed to or detached from the chiefdom. However, I will consider two cases as examples to show how the role of the Bolganaba was contested and reaffirmed.

Since opening the Zuarungu station, the officers had sought to find «a native of sufficient influence and qualification to fill the post of Paramount Chief of the 'Fra Fra'»[65]. However, such a man was never found; it was likewise impossible to impose one, and the selected Head Chiefs continued to enjoy equal status. Nonetheless, the lower rungs of the hierarchy, those of the sub-chiefs, *kambonaba*, and headmen were much more open and their seniority was often debated. The Commissioner Arthur Festing described this situation as a source of antagonism and competition:

> In a number of towns many headmen are wrangling amongst themselves about seniority. They have each got a certain amount of followers, and would probably all prefer to be independent, and I am not sure that this would not make for peace and efficient control, besides satisfying local wishes.[66]

When the scheme was formally launched in the Zuarungu District, there was indeed fear that the "quest for seniority" would cause «a considerable amount of jealousy and ill feeling»[67]. As the following discussion will show, these fears proved fully justified.

The "quest for seniority" introduced new political dynamics through new actors and opportunities to ascend the political hierarchy, and not always in accordance with the colonial project. The selection of the Kunaab as Head Chief of the Talensi, for example, represented not the restoration of an ancient order but rather a real revolution in Taleland, as Anafu has pointed out[68]. Even though

[64] See note 61
[65] NAG ADM 56/1/7, Duplicate Letter Book, CCNT to PCNEP, 14.11.1910
[66] NAG ADM 56/1/61, Navrongo District Handing Over Reports, Handing over report to Captain Warden and half yearly report on the Navarro District, 1911.
[67] NAG ADM 56/1/61, Navrongo District Handing Over Reports, Handing over report by Captain Warden to Captain Nash on taking over the administration of the North Eastern Province, May 1st 1912. See also Fortes, *The Dynamics of Clanship among the Tallensi*, 250.
[68] Anafu, 'The Impact of Colonial Rule on Tallensi Political Institutions, 1898-1967', 29.

the Kunaab had some loose electoral and ceremonial functions, his new executive role and authority over Talensi chiefs and headmen were a complete novelty[69]. In 1912, the Kunaab residence was moved from Kurugu to Zuarungu, mainly for administrative convenience. From there he was closer to the Talensi, but his presence and actions started to modify Gurensi political balances as well. Since the Kunaab appointment and transfer to Zuarungu, «shadowy claims» of chiefs' past legitimacy were strategically used to back positions of authority[70]. Through his newly acquired powers, a new class of chiefs and headmen was elected, often without local legitimacy. As underlined by Allman and Parker, the problem became «systemic» in that, through him, «*Kambonaaba* chiefships were bought and sold, bolstered and undermined as the central dynamic of rule in the North-Eastern Province»[71].

The Kunaab took advantage of his new role as chief-maker in the Gurensi area. He offered the opportunity for the smaller chiefs or headmen unsatisfied with their status to modify their situation. The Kunaab took to selling the red fez, one of the symbols of chieftaincy, and this was advantageous in enabling him to expand his control in the region and obtain fees from the contestants. On the other side, buying this symbol of authority benefitted the sub-chiefs or headmen who wanted to become independent or modify the extent of their connection with other chiefdoms. The Provincial Commissioner Warden described the process as causing «friction» in the District, even though he judged it «only natural» that the individuals superseded or drove out by others were «attempting to reinstate themselves by the influence of the Chief of Kurugu»[72]. However, this influence was not welcomed by Gurensi chiefs trying to reinforce their position, and, as in the case of the Bolganaba, possibly acquire Head Chief status. From the moment he was transferred, therefore, the presence and actions of the Kunaab in the Gurensi area were highly contested and indeed effectively blocked, especially by the Bolganaba[73].

[69] This was the case also for the other Head Chiefs.
[70] NAG ADM 56/1/461, Quarterly Reports, Report for Quarter ending September 30th 1913
[71] Allman and Parker, *Tongnaab*, 85. Still twenty years after the inauguration of the "Greater Mamprusi" Rattray would note: «Any man who can raise the money can become a Kambonaba (Chief of the gunmen) as they are called. This system is a pernicious one. A man, having bought the post, proceeds to make what he can out of it to recoup himself for his initial outlay» in Rattray, *The Tribes of the Ashanti Hinterland*, 260. See also NAG ADM 56/1/125, Gambaga District Native Affairs, AgDC Navarro-Zuaragu to CNEP, 08.07.1919
[72] NAG ADM 56/1/468, Quarterly Report N.E. Province for 1913, Report for the Quarter Ending 30th June, 1913; for a registered case of fez selling see NAG ADM 68/5/1, Zouaragu Station Official Diary, entry for 23.03.1916
[73] See for example NAG ADM 56/1/468, Quarterly Report N.E. Province for 1913, Report for the Quarter Ending 31st December, 1913

The election of Adabase

Even though there were no connections with Mamprugu, as early as 1915, the old Bolganaba Adongo was recognized as a Head Chief with the same status as the Kunaab, Bonnaba and Nangodinaba[74]. However, from 1909 on adverse health conditions forced Adongo to leave leadership in the hands of his son Adabase, who started to act in the background[75]. Adongo finally died at the end of 1916, leaving Bolgatanga without a chief[76]. By the end of April 1917, an election was held to establish his successor, an event which was unprecedented in the history of Bolgatanga thus far. For the first time, indeed, a procedure for the selection of the next Bolganaba was laid down by the officers[77]. In this procedure, the electoral body was composed of the headmen of the settlements directly under the former Bolganaba[78]. Only one man presented his candidature, however: Adabase, the son of the late chief. He was thus elected unanimously[79]. The Nayiri did not participate in the election, which went against the arrangement envisaged in the government scheme but was in keeping with the fact that Bolgatanga was not actually connected to Nalerigu. The British officers did play an important role in political legitimation, however, as they were present at the election and were already aware of the coming result[80].

Elections as a method of selecting the chief was clearly a British imposition, and it was incredibly naïve of the officers to be surprised on not seeing any competition. However, the whole event reveals the kind of relationship that existed between the officers and the families holding the chieftaincy in the town. As in the past years of military occupation, the Gurensi enacted the will of colonial power in a manner guided and appeased by their own rules. The successor of the late chief had been already selected from among his sons, following a logic of seniority. At the same time, the officers wanted a democratic method of selection even though they were already aware of the results. When the election was held, therefore, the only candidate presented was the individual already selected to be the new chief of Bolgatanga. Apparently, the officers were not too upset by these results.

[74] NAG ADM 56/1/202, Seniority of Native Chiefs.
[75] Azaare, 'Life in Bolga'.
[76] NAG ADM 68/5/1, Zouaragu Station Official Diary, entry for 27.12.1916
[77] Azaare, 'Life in Bolga'.
[78] These were: Soe, Yipala, Yikene, Tindonmoligo, Tindonsobiligo, Gambibigu, Yarigabisi, Dulugu, Kumbosko, Atulbabisi. See NAG ADM 56/1/137, Northern Territories Native Affairs, DC to PCNEP, 02.05.1917
[79] Castellain commented on this: «Alabassari [Adabase], the son of the late chief was elected, curiously enough without one discordant element. No man was put forward to oppose his claim, this is very unusual in these parts. I was very glad, but I fully expected at least half a dozen rival claimants» in NAG ADM 68/5/1, Zouaragu Station Official Diary, entry for 27.04.1917
[80] See for example NAG ADM 56/1/137, Northern Territories Native Affairs, PCNEP to CCNT, 07.05.1917

Azaare writes that the newly elected Bolganaba Adabase, a «hot-tempered man», used methods which were «autocratic, authoritative and dictatorial» rather than tactful[81]. Some of his informants remembered how the chief was not a particularly fair judge and forced his people to provide labour even when not requested, a behaviour documented in the archival sources as well[82]. Doubtful methods were also used by his successor Abazanam[83], elected in 1922 after the death of Adabase[84]. Abazanam was indeed the first and only Bolganaba to be compelled to "abdicate" because of his misbehaviour[85]. The heavy-handed approach preferred by Adabase and Abazanam could have been another factor that induced some sub-chiefs to try to detach themselves from the Bolganaba and the Bolgatanga chiefdom.

The friction with the Kunaab persisted during the terms of both Adabase and Abazanam. The antagonism was further fomented by detractors of the Bolganaba's paramountcy. Indeed, some chiefs and headmen under Bolgatanga continued to try to gain independence by leveraging the Kunaab's support. In fact, the Bolganaba and Kunaab continued to compete over sub-chieftaincies in the following years[86], a rivalry which manifested clearly in 1918, for example, when the Kunaab publicly insulted the Bolganaba[87]. This competition never really came to an end, but the Bolganaba continued to maintain his position of independence and paramountcy in the area, mainly thanks to the backing of the officers[88]. Worthy of note is the epigram written by Louis Castellain in the letter in which he communicated Adabase's death to the Chief Commissioner:

> the Government has lost a loyal and valuable Chief. His father was always loyal, and, in the old days, his village was used as a base of operations in Frafra country. Alabassari [Adabase] has served the Government since he was a boy, and only succeeded his father in 1917, on the latter's death. He was popular with every Commissioner under whom he served.[89]

The text clearly reveals the Adongo's support in the course of the British conquest of the region was still well remembered by the Commissioners. They continued to have high regard for the role of the Bolganaba. Despite the chieftaincy disputes and his more or less just way of performing his duty, indeed, the officers retained their view of the chief of Bolgatanga as an important ally and a «loyal

[81] Azaare, 'Life in Bolga'.
[82] See for example NAG ADM 68/5/2, Zuarungu District Official Diary, entries for 09.04.1915, 18.09.1915
[83] The name Abazanam conveys the meaning that "chieftaincy is for us all". Azaare, 'Life in Bolga'.
[84] NAG ADM 56/1/181, Informal Diaries Northern Province, entry for 24.04.1922; NAG ADM 56/1/319, Diaries, entry for 21.06.1922
[85] NAG ADM 56/1/196, Appointment and destoolment of Chiefs, PCNP to CCNT, 21.10.1929. More details on this will be given in the next chapter.
[86] NAG ADM 68/5/1, Zouaragu Station Official Diary, entry for 19.04.1917; NAG ADM 56/1/488, Quarterly Report NEP, Report for the Quarter Ending 31st December, 1918; NAG ADM 56/1/270, Informal Diary Navarro-Zuaragu District, entry for 24.03.1920
[87] NAG ADM 68/5/1, Zouaragu Station Official Diary, entry for 26.03.1918
[88] The officers continued to sustain the Bolganaba even in cases with no clear proofs in his favour, see for example NAG ADM 56/1/270, Informal Diary Navarro-Zuaragu District, entries for 28-29.04.1920
[89] NAG ADM 56/1/230, Zouaragu District Native Affairs, PCNP to CCNT, 10.04.1922

supporter» in a region where, as I will show below, colonial rule continued to be widely contested and resisted[90]. The implications of this relationship are that the chiefdom of Bolgatanga not only kept its independence from the others, but the Bolganaba enjoyed increasingly power to negotiate his position and extend the territorial scope of its chiefdom. The next section intends to show how the competition between the Bolganaba and the Kunaab manifested and the ways in which the officers and the chiefs managed it. Moreover, it will show the dynamics of negotiation in the process of defining chiefdoms.

Acquiring paramountcy in Bolgatanga

In this section, I present and compare two examples that I have reconstructed using archival sources, examples that reveal the dynamics of chiefship acquisition and negotiation. In the first case, that of Kumbosko, the chief of the settlement explicitly tried to separate himself from Bolgatanga through his connection with Kurugu, but he was unsuccessful. In the second case, that of Sumbrungu, the Bolganaba paramountcy was bypassed altogether but then reinstated by the officers. The two cases demonstrate how negotiable and dynamic the process of acquiring and managing chieftaincy was. This is a crucial process in the history of the settlements because it was a driving force in the expansion and contraction of their administrative boundaries. Moreover, the two cases reveal some of the channels of negotiation as well as the role the colonial administration played in sustaining the Bolganaba against his opponents.

Kumbosko is a settlement some 15 kilometres from Bolgatanga. As already pointed out in chapter 2, at the time of British conquest the people in this settlement claimed ancestral seniority over Bolgatanga and therefore did not accept the paramountcy of the Bolganaba. However, the fact that the people opposed colonial requests led the officers to ignore this claim. With the Kunaab's arrival on the scene, a new opportunity to restore ancestral seniority presented itself and the chief of Kumbosko took advantage of it to try to restore his claimed superiority or at least become independent of Bolgatanga. This attempt involved asserting his connection to the Kunaab and declaring that the two of them had shared a past allegiance[91]. This attempt was not quite successful, however, as the Bolganaba did not accept his claims of independence and instead reported on him to the District

[90] NAG ADM 56/1/495, Quarterly report, Report for the Quarter Ending March 31st, 1922; NAG ADM 56/1/270, Informal Diary Navarro-Zuaragu District, entry for 19.01.1920.
[91] See for example NAG ADM 68/5/5, Zuarungu District Record Book, p. 162

Commissioner. The chief of Kumbosko was therefore arrested in 1913[92]. In the end, the Bolganaba's paramountcy over the settlement was restored. In the following decades, this opposition continued to play out with more or less the same results. The chief of Kumbosko went on "disrespecting" the Bolganaba and trying to make his settlement independent by paying allegiance to Kurugu, but the Commissioners continued to fine and arrest him, nullifying his independence attempts[93].

The case of Sumbrugu is slightly different. With the British arrival in the region, Sumbrungu was put first under Navrongo and then, from 1910 onward, under Bolgatanga, despite having no definite or established past connection with either[94]. In 1913, Azorobisi, a section of Sumbrungu, tried to claim his past independence from the chief of Sumbrungu, Abengree, thanks to the support of the chief of a neighbouring settlement, Ajebra of Kalbeo. For his part, Ajebra apparently obtained his chiefship by buying a red fez from the Kunaab[95]. The chief of Kalbeo allegedly had enjoyed a past right to make chiefs in Sumbrungu, and renewed legitimation from the Kunaab enabled him to reassert this right. The chief of Sumbrungu did not agree, however, and a stalemate ensued. The District Commissioner Capt. Nash was the officer sent in to resolve the affair. The depositions reveal that the main cause of frictions was that the chief of Sumbrungu was asking the other headmen for labour for porterage, road construction and the maintenance of rest houses, which was in keeping with practices of the previous decade[96]. In the end, the officer convinced the parties involved to maintain Abengree as the leading chief of the area but to consider the chief of Kalbeo as a «big headman» and restore his past rights over Sumbrungu only after Abengree's death[97]. Nash's superiors were full of praise for the tactful way in which the palaver had been settled. In the whole affair, there was no trace of either the Bolganaba or the officers or the chiefs seeking his sanction. On the contrary, Nash's decision implicitly endorsed the Kunaab intrusion.

However, at the time the old chief of Sumbrungu died in 1917, the tables had turned. On election day the people were divided between two candidates, the son of the old chief and a man named Akameri, favoured by the DC Louis Castellain. This time, however, the Kunaab's influence did not enter the picture, and there seemed to be no trace of the alleged past right of the chief of Kalbeo to make chiefs in Sumbrungu. Conversely, by that time the Bolganaba had been recognized

[92] NAG ADM 56/1/137, Northern Territories Native Affairs, AgDC Zuarungu to PC Navarro, 16.07.1913; NAG ADM 63/5/2, Navrongo District Record Book, p. 363
[93] Azaare, 'Life in Bolga'. In October 1928, the DC again rejected Kumbosko's claims and requested that he make amends to the Bolganaba. The chief of Kumbosko not only refused to do so, but attempted suicide by stabbing himself with two arrows. Journal de la mission, Bolgatanga, 08.10.1928, A.G.M.Afr.
[94] NAG ADM 68/5/5, Zuarungu District Record Book
[95] For the full report on the affair see NAG ADM 56/1/174, Sambruno Native Affairs
[96] In chapter 2 I outlined how the main cause of resentment triggered by the introduction of chieftaincy was the chiefs' requests for labour.
[97] NAG ADM 56/1/174, Sambruno Native Affairs, Enquiry held at Sambruno on September 14th, 1913, with reference to the history of the place and settling the question as to who should be Chief

by the officers as a Head Chief, and his position was thus used to influence the elections[98]. Less than twenty days later, Akameri, the Commissioner's choice, was elected chief of Sumbrungu[99].

The cases presented here reveal the political dynamics underlying the formation of the

Figure 18. "Rest House, Paragu. March 1922"

Source: Bodleian Library, GB 0162 MSS.Afr.s.1958

chiefdoms, and the strategies and negotiations the Head Chiefs, chiefs and headmen used in that period to gain authority and influence. In both cases, one of the contestants invoked the Kunaab's authority to claim a sought-after position. However, the Kunaab was not able to assert his power in either Sumbrungu or Kumbosko. On the other hand, in both cases the officers recognized and imposed the paramount position of the Bolganaba for administrative convenience. In this way, the Bolganaba was able to negotiate the extent of his chiefdom and maintain the position of prominence acquired in the previous decade through the implementation of the "Greater Mamprusi" plan.

Over the course of the 1920s, the lists of Head Chiefs in the region continued to include the Bolganaba as the other Head Chief for the Nankanni, the only "tribe" in the Northern Mamprusi District with two different Head Chiefs[100]. This inclusion did not imply any actual allegiance to the

[98] Castellain wrote in his diary: «Personally Akameri is the man I want, and I told Bolgatanga (whom Sambruno is supposed to follow) so, and to use his influence to get the people to unite» in NAG ADM 63/5/3, Navrongo Station District Diary, entry for 06.05.1917

[99] NAG ADM 68/5/1, Zouaragu Station Official Diary, entry for 23.05.1917

[100] NAG ADM 56/1/328, Revised list of Chiefs. The only exception was his demotion in 1925 due to misbehaviour. In 1927 the medallion for Head Chiefs was returned to the Bolganaba Abazanam, NAG ADM 56/1/303, Medallions-Chiefs, Ass.DCNM to AgCNP, 24.03.1927

Nayiri, however, as it represented an evident exception in the scheme that gave birth to the "Greater Mamprusi"[101]. Apparently, there was no need for the Bolganaba to demonstrate any connection with the Nayiri, and the colonial administration did not seem to suffer from this lack. In this case, then, the status of Head Chief status seems to have been effectively negotiated without any explicit, forced compliance with the colonial evolutionary model. Rather, the Bolganaba continued to take advantage of administrative convenience and strategic alliances in order to secure colonial support for his growing paramountcy.

At the same time, however, promotion to the Head Chief position and the paramountcy acquired over the neighbouring settlements put the Bolganaba in a highly contested position. On the one hand, the officers increasingly recognized him as a reliable ally and the Head Chief of the area. On the other hand, residents of the neighbouring settlements in which chieftaincy did not have the same administrative significance continued to fiercely contest his newly acquired power. The next section will thus analyse the consequences of the rise of the Bolganaba paramountcy. While the chief himself advantageously used his status to confirm Bolgatanga's strategic place in the emerging colonial road network, it also led to conflicts and resentment.

[101] The situation changed with the implementation of indirect rule, as the next chapter will show.

4.4 Contestation and trade centrality: the effects of Bolgatanga paramountcy

Resentment and reprisals against chiefs' authority

Relations among the people of the District, the officers and the chain of intermediaries worsened during the First World War. As soon as the Constabulary moved from Zuarungu to Gambaga in August 1914, «some of the young men are said to have got a little bit uppish», even though the officers reported «it was nothing serious», and no incident occurred[102]. However, there were more complaints of insubordination in the following months[103]. From the beginning of British occupation, people had believed that the colonial presence was only temporary and that one day the "white man" would leave. In this period this shared hope intensified, giving rise to an increase in insubordination and threats to the chiefs[104]. To exacerbate relations and increase the tension, at the beginning of 1915 it was discovered that the Tong Hills were still being frequented and another military raid was carried out against them[105].

In 1916 the situation had declined to such an extent that violence finally erupted in the so-called Bongo Riots. What the officers had defined as 'riots', were not in fact riots at all, as Roger Thomas has shown in his seminal article on this incident. The term 'riots' suggests that these were sudden outbursts of violence disturbing the peaceful conditions established by the colonial state. In reality, however, «they were symptomatic of continuing popular discontent with the structure of African administrative intermediaries that the British had imposed»[106]. Many actors came under serious attack in this period, not only Africans but also the officers themselves, and these 'riots' were only the most evident expression of a resentment that could be retraced to the first years of conquest.

[102] NAG ADM 56/1/471, Annual Report NEP for 1913, Annual Report on the North-Eastern Province of the Northern Territories for the year 1914. In that same year a «bagarre générale» took over in the kassena and nankanni villages on the French side Duperray, *Les Gourounsi de Haute-Volta*, 178.
[103] See for example NAG ADM 68/5/2, Zuarungu District Official Diary, entries for 12.03.115, 01.04.1915, 20.05.1915 and NAG ADM 63/5/3, Navrongo Station District Diary, entries for 26.07.1915, 04.08.1915, 24.08.1915
[104] Thomas, 'The 1916 Bongo "Riots" and Their Background', 72.
[105] Allman and Parker, *Tongnaab*, 76.
[106] Thomas, 'The 1916 Bongo "Riots" and Their Background', 59.

A fight between two different sections in Bongo erupted, apparently over a land dispute. As the chief of Bongo was not able to quell the conflict, constables were sent in by the Commissioner. The soldiers were likewise unable to calm the situation and fighting ensued. In the following quarrel, one of them died. The officers' reactions to the constable's death were reminiscent of the violence characterising the years of conquest. The military raids that followed were backed by a «strong line of policy» that led to the «usual compound-destroying and driving in of cattle»[107]. The officers' actions in response to the unrest were so violent and heavy-handed that Governor Clifford accused them of «inhumanity, hypocrisy, insufficient travelling, and a failure to investigate incidents before taking indiscriminate punitive action»[108].

Although the Bongo Riots represented one of the most violent colonial retaliation against popular discontent in the region, insubordination and protest against the colonial political structure continued[109]. The following year the same factions that have been involved in Bongo fought once again, this time over an attempt to recruit soldiers[110]. Indeed, in 1917 there was a drastic change in the recruiting methods used in the Northern Territories. Although the call for soldiers started with the outbreak of the War, not many individuals were enlisted before 1917[111]. The initial method of holding meetings to persuade people to join the army did not prove very successful, and recruiters then proceeded to make direct requests to headmen in every settlement. However, Chief Commissioner Armitage found this approach too coercive and soon replaced it with one in which the chiefs were ordered to produce a certain number of men[112]. The results of this last method are particularly revealing of the widespread resistance and non-compliance with British requests. In the first instance, insubordination and resentment against chiefs increased. Even though chiefs presented a certain number of men, therefore, these individuals either quickly deserted or were «unsuitable» by virtue of being too young, too old, or not physically fit. This was probably a strategy some chiefs employed to comply with colonial requests without depriving their settlements of able-bodied men and causing

[107] TNA CO 96/570, Despatches, AgCNEP to CCNT, 12.08.1916, quoted in Governor H. Clifford to A. Bonar Law, 18.09.1916, quoted in Thomas, 66.
[108] Thomas, 69. For an account of the debate and tensions among officers following the 'Riots' see also Elizabeth Wrangham, *Ghana during the First World War: The Colonial Administration of Sir Hugh Clifford*, African World Series (Durham, North Carolina: Carolina Academic Press, 2013), 200–204.
[109] Worthy of note is the fact that, in the course of the 'riots', the Bolganaba continued undisturbed to supply labour for building rest houses. This indicates how relatively easy it was for him to request labour even in times of open conflict. NAG ADM 68/5/1, Zouaragu Station Official Diary, entry for 23.06.1916
[110] NAG ADM 56/1/461, Quarterly Reports, Report for the Quarter Ending 30th September 1917
[111] Roger G. Thomas, 'Military Recruitment in the Gold Coast during the First World War.', *Cahiers d'études africaines* 15, no. 57 (1975): 57–83.
[112] Thomas, 74.

too much resentment[113]. However, the recruitment shortly became «a high-stakes game of hide-and-seek», with the officers looking for recruits and the young men hiding from them in the fields[114].

The role of the Bolganaba as a recruiter was praised and awarded by the officers[115], but it led his chiefdom to the verge of violent reprisal. On 22 November 1917, the Bolganaba reported a case of resistance and death threats encountered his recruiting attempts. Two constables were sent to deal with the situation, but they were in turn threatened with bows and arrows. The similarities between this incident and the beginning of the 'Riots' the previous year were quite evident. This time, however, the memories of their consequences were still fresh, and the constables were ordered not to provoke open fighting. That same day, the DC Louis Castellain, the man who carried out the field operations during the 'Riots', went to visit the compound but found that it was deserted, along with eleven others nearby[116]. The inhabitants of the compounds had fled to avoid colonial retaliation. Nonetheless, nine days later the DC arrested three men connected with these events. One of the culprits, Akanyele, was able to escape and hide in Vea, a settlement between Bongo and Bolgatanga. Nothing occurred until the Bolganaba notified the DC of Akanyele's return almost six months later.

On 7 May 1918, an expedition composed of the DC Allan W. Cardinall, three constables, the interpreter Bila Moshi, the Bolganaba Adabase, the Zuarungunaba Afeara and some of the chiefs' followers marched from Bolgatanga to Akanyele's compound. The man was waiting for them on the roof of his house, armed with a bow and arrows and displaying no intention of surrendering, «as his fathers had called him that day»[117]. A stalemate then ensued, followed by a shooting[118]. Akanyele was murdered with five shots while on the other side there was only one injury, the interpreter, who took an arrow to the shin. From the depositions collected after the incident, it appears that all the people who lived in Akanyele's compound and the neighbouring ones were present to witness the events but none of them took an active role. The DC feared reprisal from Akanyele kinsmen immediately after his death, but such a counterblow never came. Rather, all the witnesses' depositions

[113] Thomas, 78.
[114] Allman and Parker, *Tongnaab*, 90.
[115] NAG ADM 56/1/461, Quarterly Reports, Quarter ending 30th Sep. 1917 and Quarter Ending 31th Dec. 1917; NAG ADM 56/1/326, Chiefs general, AgPCNEP to DC Navarro-Zuaragu, 08.06.1918
[116] NAG ADM 68/5/1, Zouaragu Station Official Diary, entries for 22.11.1917 and 30.11.1917; NAG ADM 56/1/461, Quarterly Reports, Quarter Ending 31th Dec. 1917. Where not specified, the following details on the facts came from the depositions and reports contained in NAG ADM 56/1/336, North Mamprusi Native Affairs and NAG ADM 56/1/230, Zouaragu District Native Affairs
[117] NAG ADM 56/1/336, North Mamprusi Native Affairs, Deposition of Allan Wolsey Cardinall, 15.05.1918
[118] The dynamics of the shooting are not clear. The deposition of the DC differed from the first report he submitted to the CNEP. In the report he compiled the 8th May he declared that Akanyele fired the first arrow as soon as he was preparing his rifle to shoot. According to the other testimony he gave later on 15th May, Cardinall shot first to the roof of the house as he «thought that the explosion of the first cartridge would bring him to his senses». See NAG ADM 56/1/336, North Mamprusi Native Affairs, Deposition of Allan Wolsey Cardinall, 15.05.1918 and AgDC to the CNEP, 07.05.1918

underlined the fact that, if the DC had not killed Akanyele, people would have risen up. The Zuarungunaba commented:

> […] if the Commissioner had gone away without firing on the man every one would have turned out with bows and arrows. They would have said that Akanyele's fetish was too strong for the whiteman[119].

Apart from the support that the constables and chiefs comprising the expedition gave to the DC, the Governor himself praised Cardinall for his «courage» and defended his actions[120]. The death of this man did not lead to any violent reprisal against the chief or the constabulary in the following years.

The cases outlined above show that people in the Gurensi region mounted a fierce resistance against the colonial hierarchical political structure in this period. Moreover, by investigating the unfolding of this resistance, we have seen how colonial orders were enforced through mediation on the part of headmen, chiefs, interpreters and constables. The events connected surrounding Akanyele's death quite clearly reveal that, at least for some of the sections making up Bolgatanga, the Bolganaba's authority was strongly backed by the Commissioner and his entourage. Resentment against chiefs illustrates a more profound social rupture, however, one closely related to settlement patterns and the way they were being transformed.

This resistance reveals how the imposition of the new colonial order disrupted Gurensi political organization. The colonial officers identified the leaders of the dissent as people who did indeed have a recognized leadership role in society, i.e. the family heads (*yzuukema*) and the earth priests (*tendaama*). The role assumed by the chiefs, sharply diverging from pre-colonial patterns, evidently disrupted this organization. As I have shown, the chiefs began to take on a position alongside the *tendaana* by becoming involved in land matters. They were also the tools through which the administration mobilized labour and judged court cases, thereby antagonising the *yzuukema*, the only ones who might exercise a degree of control over workforce and authority over their families or sections. The friction and resentment that continued to manifest in these years point to the conflict between these two different systems of power.

Thanks to military backing, therefore, the chiefs were gradually taking on some of the roles previously played by the earth priests and family heads. An excerpt from the 1916 Annual Report written by the Chief Commissioner Armitage, romanticizes this social struggle from a colonial point of view:

> The elders inflame the passions of the youth of the Country by tales of their fighting prowess in the old days, and compare the visits, however frequent, of a Commissioner from a neighbouring

[119] NAG ADM 56/1/230, Zouaragu District Native Affairs, Deposition of Afeara, 15.05.1918
[120] NAG ADM 56/1/230, Zouaragu District Native Affairs, Ag Colonial Secretary to CCNT, 04.07.1918

> District to those of a Hausa Trader – "here today and gone tomorrow". The Authority of the Chiefs is openly flouted and the most trivial incident may arouse all the savagery lying dormant in the hitherto tractable aboriginal.[121]

This quotation is from a passage written in part to justify the unrest following the Bongo Riots[122] but could also be taken as a comment on the lines of division that had been running through Gurensi society since the first appointment of the chiefs. Indeed, the Chief Commissioner reached similar conclusions in the next few years[123].

This struggle was highly visible in places where the authority of the chief was growing at a faster rate, such as Bolgatanga. One year after settling in the town[124] the White Fathers commented on the conflict among the elders, chiefs and the catholic priests, a conflict which the elders were perhaps right to view as a new threat to their influence over the younger generations. Monsignor Morin wrote in his report:

> L'autorité du chef se constitue lentement chez eux; avant l'arrivée des Européens, les chefs n'avaient du chef que le nom; l'autorité du chef de famille était la seule connue, imposée qu'elle était par des moyens peu tendres. Actuellement l'autorité des parents s'affaiblit de plus en plus, le recours aux grands moyens n'étant plus possible depuis qu'il y a un juge à Zuarongo, chef-lieu du district. Par contre, le chefs prennent de l'ascendant, soutenus qu'ils sont par l'autorité européenne; les moyens qu'ils emploient pour se faire obéir sont souvent discutables, mais comment faire?[125]

The passage confirms the division and political opposition that broke out in Gurensi society, and Bolgatanga especially, in that period. The two different systems of administering power were based on two different ways of conceptualizing space. The earth priests and family heads continued to operate in accordance with the settlement pattern analysed in the first chapter, epitomized by the *teŋa*. In contrast, the colonial administrative structure was gradually putting a different way of defining space into practice, a spatial logic epitomized by the chiefdom. It is not hard to imagine how this opposition affected the settlements, undermining the kinship patterns that usually directed planning and creating conflicts of authority. The pattern characterising *teŋa* planning was gradually changing as a result of coming into contact with the chieftaincy system. This shift in the kinship pattern became more and more marked in the following years as the role of the chiefs and the size of their territories were solidified, increased migrations fuelled generational conflicts and trade in Bolgatanga rose, as

[121] NAG ADM 56/1/486, Annual Report Northern Territories for 1916
[122] NAG ADM 56/1/193, Zuarungu District Native Affairs, CNEP to the CCNT, 20.11.1916
[123] See for example NAG ADM 56/1/489, Annual Report on the Northern Territories for 1917-1918 and NAG ADM 56/1/491, Annual Report on the N.T. for 1919
[124] The White Fathers opened their mission in Bolgatanga in 1925. For more details on the missionary activities see chapter 5
[125] Préfecture Apostolique de Navrongo, Rapport de Mgr Morin, 1926-27, p. 8, A.G.M.Afr

the next chapter will show. The next and last section will consider how the market developed as the chiefdom gained prominence and consolidated its position as a trading centre operating outside colonial control.

Bolgatanga as a recognized trade centre

In the previous chapters, I followed the growth of Ayia Daa, the market in Bolgatanga, between the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century showing that it was a trafficked centre in the West African trade networks. This centrality contrasted strikingly with the relatively marginal position the market occupied in the colonial infrastructure network. In the years of the First World War, the officers slightly changed their approach as they tried to bring the two different networks into line with each other and expand their fostering policy to non-controlled markets as well.

In 1914, authorities decided to close the market in Zare, a settlement 6 kilometres from Bolgatanga, to improve attendance at the latter[126]. A similar policy was implemented the same year for the markets in the colonial stations of Navrongo and Zuarungu, which were experiencing a significant decrease in size[127]. In this way, the success of Bolgatanga's market was again closely connected to the rerouting of the trade network. Locals continued to redefine the grid of footpaths, roads and caravan routes in response to the presence or absence of colonial stations and the scope of colonial controls over trade. This section will analyse this rerouting and show how negotiations between the Bolganaba and the British officers eventually consolidated Bolgatanga as a key trade centre in the region, a position it still maintains today. Indeed, the Bolganaba made the most of his privileged political position to once more become an active agent of change in his settlement.

During the First World War, the agenda for the Gold Coast Colony under Governor Hugh Clifford was focused on infrastructure development and welfare, although in the end this development project was never implemented because the necessary funds were instead rerouted with the outbreak of war[128]. In the Northern Territories, however, labour for road making was compulsory and, in the area of Bolgatanga just as in the other areas outside the range of the Public Works Department in Tamale, such labour was managed by the Political Department and the District Commissioners

[126] NAG ADM 56/1/210, Informal Official Diary for NT, entry for 21.08.1914
[127] NAG ADM 63/5/3, Navrongo Station District Diary, entries for 12.05.1914, 23.06.1914; TNA CO 98/25, Northern Territories Annual Report for 1915; NAG ADM 68/5/2, Zuarungu District Official Diary, entry for 05.01.1915
[128] Wrangham, *Ghana during the First World War*, 141.

themselves[129]. Therefore, the state of war did not affect colonial road construction in the area of Bolgatanga. Roads continued to be built and repaired in the Gurensi region, both those intended to connect up the various stations and rest houses[130] and those intended to foster trade by providing connections with the rest of the Colony. The trade-oriented roads, in turn, were more and more frequently traversed by travelling merchants[131].

Figure 19. "Fra Fra Carriers", March 1922

Source: Bodleian Library, GB 0162 MSS.Afr.s.1958

Even though the lack of any accurate records makes it is difficult to provide a definitive assessment of the trade trends in the war years, it is possible to formulate an estimate based on the few available data. Until 1918, according to some reports, trade was on the increase in the region, and the *zongos* in the more inhabited parts of the Protectorate also registered growth[132]. In 1917, however, there appears to have been a decrease in attendance of the Bolgatanga market. Then, at the beginning

[129] The Public Work Department was opened in Tamale in 1909, but it did not supervise road work in the outer districts. MacGaffey, 'A History of Tamale, 1907-1957 and Beyond', 111; Nana James Kwaku Brukum, 'The Northern Territories of the Gold Coast under British Colonial Rule 1897-1956: A Study in Political Change' (Toronto, University of Toronto, 1997), 228–29. The development of an efficient system of transportation in the far North was left to the officers themselves. In the Zuarungu District, roads were under the supervision of the Political Department, supervised by the DCs. See Annual Reports: Northern Territories [1926], British Library, EAP541/1/3/8, https://eap.bl.uk/archive-file/EAP541-1-3-8

[130] See for example NAG ADM 56/1/463, Annual Reports, Annual Report on Navarro – Zuaragu Districts for the year 1917

[131] Journal de la mission, Navarro, 18.03.1915, A.G.M.Afr.; NAG ADM 56/1/489, Annual Report on the Northern Territories for 1917-1918, Annual Report on Northern Territories for 1918

[132] NAG ADM 56/1/486, Annual Report Northern Territories for 1916, Annual Report on the Northern Territories for the year 1916; NAG ADM 56/1/488, Quarterly Report North-Eastern Province – Gambaga, Report for the Quarter ending 30th September, 1918

of 1918, the Bolganaba, empowered by his Head Chief position, decided to actively influence commercial trends and suggested to the Commissioner that the neighbouring markets be closed, a policy already pursued by the officers as indicated above. The DC reported:

> The Chief of Bolgatanga came to see me and brought with him the Chiefs of Sherigu, Winkogo and Zare. He reported that the market at Bolgatanga was not well attended and said that it was due to markets having been started, during the last year, at the above mentioned villages. After discussion it was decided to close down the markets at Sherigu, Winkogo and Zare it being better to have one big market instead of a lot of small markets.[133]

The settlements mentioned were under the Bolganaba in terms of chieftaincy hierarchy, and therefore he was able to make such a decision with backing from the DC. Moreover, this passage reveals that officers had increasingly begun to recognize the central role this market played in the area, and they agreed to cultivate it even though they would not have exercised control over it. The lack of colonial control did constitute one of the features drawing foreign merchants to Bolgatanga and fuelling its growth.

In this period, the market reinforced its central position in relation to the traders' networks because of the opportunities that it offered to eschew colonial control. The end of the First World War brought with it the spread of the Influenza and cerebrospinal meningitis epidemics, at the end of 1918 and the beginning of 1919 respectively[134]. These epidemics caused the death of more than 18,000 people in the North Eastern Province alone[135]. Although the Northern Territories suffered the highest death rate from the epidemic, it seems that the negative social and economic impact of the disease was only temporary[136]. In this period people stopped frequenting the markets[137] and trade was of course negatively affected by the epidemic[138]. Nonetheless, it did not cease altogether.

In this state of affairs, the geography of the trade routes was once again modified by colonial intervention. This time such intervention took the form of a *cordon sanitaire* put up by the French

[133] NAG ADM 68/5/1, Zouaragu Station Official Diary, entry for 19.01.1918

[134] By the end of May 1918, however, the area of Bolgatanga had already been struck also by a measles epidemic that killed 425 people, mostly children.

[135] According to the same officers this number is an underestimation. For the Navarro-Zuaragu District alone, at least 15,000 deaths were calculated. See NAG ADM 56/1/463, Annual Reports, Annual Report on Navarro-Zuaragu Districts for the year 1919. For the first death estimations and the measles outbreak see NAG ADM 56/1/489, Annual Report on the Northern Territories for 1917-1918, Annual Report on Northern Territories for 1918; NAG ADM 56/1/488, Quarterly Report NEP, North-Eastern Province, Northern Territories. Report for the Quarter Ending 30th June 1918; NAG ADM 68/5/1, Zouaragu Station Official Diary, entry for 25.05.1918; NAG ADM 63/5/3, Navrongo Station District Diary, entry for 06.01.1919. For a revised calculation of Influenza's deaths see David K. Patterson, 'The Influenza Epidemic of 1918-1919 in the Gold Coast', *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* 16, no. 2 (1995): 205–25.

[136] Patterson, 495. The epidemic also caused an escalation of witchcraft accusations. See John Parker, 'Northern Gothic: Witches, Ghosts and Werewolves in the Savanna Hinterland of the Gold Coast, 1900s–1950s', *Africa* 76, no. 03 (2006): 363.

[137] NAG ADM 68/5/1, Zouaragu Station Official Diary, entry for 20.12.1918

[138] NAG ADM 56/1/463, Annual Reports, Annual Report on Navarro-Zuaragu Districts for the year 1919

authorities to impose quarantine restrictions against the spreading of the Spanish Influenza[139]. The roads passing through Bolgatanga were not affected by the French restrictions, however, and trade consequently, benefited once again from this rerouting. In the report for 1918, it was stated that the route through Bolgatanga became «very popular» as it enabled the traders to circumvent the French *cordon sanitaire*[140]. Similarly, two years later, the livestock trade traffic converged on the routes leading to Bolgatanga in order to avoid similar restrictions on livestock due to a rinderpest epidemic[141]. Thus, the trade routes passing through Bolgatanga allowed traders to evade both British and French restrictions on trade.

These alternative paths were even traversed by many French subjects who wanted to migrate to the Gold Coast. Between 1910 and 1920, North-South migratory movements began to fall into a stable pattern[142]. From 1911 throughout the War years, observers also recorded a voluntary and cyclical annual movement of people from the North Eastern Province to Kumasi and the South[143]. Then, in 1912 military conscription was introduced in the French territories, giving rise to a steady flow of people moving into the British territories, especially from the area around Leo[144]. People also engaged in a cyclical movement from the French "nankanni" area to the British ones in an effort to evade the collection of French taxes[145]. The migrants passed through the Zuarungu District, cautiously avoiding the British colonial station[146] and passing through Bongo and Bolgatanga[147]. Indeed, these roads were preferred because they allowed travellers to avoid the duties and the migration checks imposed by the French authorities[148].

British officers persevered in the same *laissez-faire* approach to trade and migration from French territories that had characterized the previous decade. As a matter of fact, officers and the Governor himself officially recognized this exodus as vital for supply workforce to the colony[149].

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[139] Duperray, *Les Gourounsi de Haute-Volta*, 194–95.
[140] NAG ADM 56/1/463, Annual Reports, Annual Report on Navarro-Zuaragu Districts for the year 1918
[141] NAG ADM 56/1/488, Quarterly Report North-Eastern Province - Gambaga, Report on North Eastern Province for Quarter Ending 30th June, 1920 and Report for the Quarter ending 31st March, 1921
[142] Rouch, 'Migrations au Ghana (Gold Coast)', 52.
[143] NAG ADM 56/1/463, Annual Reports, Northern Territories. North Eastern Province, Annual Report, 1911; NAG ADM 56/1/464, Annual Report on the Northern Territories for 1912; NAG ADM 68/5/1, Zouaragu Station Official Diary, entry for 14.10.1913; NAG ADM 56/1/471, Annual Report N.E. Province for 1913; NAG ADM 56/1/463, Annual Reports, Annual Report on Zuaragu District for the year 1914; NAG ADM 56/1/486, Annual Report Northern Territories for 1916; TNA CO 98/30, Annual Report for the N.T. 1918
[144] NAG ADM 56/1/471, Annual Report N.E. Province for 1913. See also Duperray, *Les Gourounsi de Haute-Volta*, 177.
[145] NAG ADM 56/1/132, Foreign Affairs, Governor-General of French West Africa to H.E. the Governor of the Gold Coast, 25.04.1912. See also Bening, 'Indigenous Concepts of Boundaries and Significance of Administrative Stations and Boundaries in Northern Ghana', 13.
[146] NAG ADM 56/1/469, Annual Report on the Northern Territories for 1921
[147] NAG ADM 56/1/500, Annual Report N.T., 1922-23, Northern Province – Northern Territories, Annual Report for the Quarter ending 31st March 1923
[148] NAG ADM 56/1/319, Diaries, entry for 09.12.1922
[149] NAG ADM 56/1/489, Annual Report Northern Territories for 1917, Annual Report on the Northern Territories for 1918

After the war, however, a more direct line of policy governing trade networks ensued. Work was scheduled to improve the colonial road network and authorities planned to make Bolgatanga formally part of this network. In 1919, the DC A.W. Cardinall, who was in charge of the roads in his district, engaged in negotiation with the Bolganaba over the possibility of making his settlement a nodal point in the growing road network:

> At Bolgatanga had a long talk with the chief about the possibilities of his place becoming the centre for roads from Naga v Kintampo, Naga v Salaga, direct route to Wale-Wale, and the numerous roads going north. He told me that many people were now passing and I saw several herds go by and several loads.[150]

This passage provides yet another illustration of how the officer recognized the settlement as constituting an already established indigenous trade centre. Moreover, it is possible to discern the officer's intention to make the colonial infrastructural network correspond to the indigenous trade networks. Indeed, the connecting road to Naga was completed that same year, and Bolgatanga officially became part of the colonial infrastructure[151]. This incorporation produced fruitful results for trade and the centrality of the marketplace in the following years, as the next chapter will argue.

[150] NAG ADM 68/5/1, Zouaragu Station Official Diary, entry for 04.01.1919
[151] NAG ADM 56/1/491, Annual Report on the N.T. for 1919, Annual Report, North-Eastern Province, year 1919

4.5 Conclusion

It is undeniable that the "quest for seniority" and the appointment and demotion of chiefs under colonial rule led to a profound socio-political transformation in the Gurensi region. This chapter analysed this change, especially in connection with the political organization of the settlements. Before colonization, the Gurensi settlement pattern was based on the absence of a political centre in the sense that the settlement was not a defined political entity in and of itself, independent of other settlements, but rather the result of kinship and ritual connections. Chiefly authority did not have a specific territorial scope, juridical power nor a coercive function in requesting labour. In the overall pattern, when the chiefs were present, they played only a minor role in managing political power in the settlements.

With the implementation of the "Greater Mamprusi" scheme of government a radical change spread in the Gurensi region as well as the rest of the northern part of the Protectorate. The scheme introduced a hierarchy of chiefs based on invented historical connections among the people of the Province. In the Zuarungu District, however, this process was not entirely in the hand of the British officers. The chapter has demonstrated that both chiefs and the African entourage surrounding the officers enjoyed a significant degree of leverage. It is thus safe to assert that this scheme was not wholly imposed, but rather negotiated on different levels. I have shown some of the negotiations that led to the Bolganaba's acquiring the status of Head Chief in the Province and enlarging the associated chiefdom, in his competition with both the other Head Chiefs and sub-chiefs. In this process, the military backing of the colonial apparatus was a crucial element in the assertion of power. The consolidation of the Bolgatanga chiefdom was, therefore, the result of the political agency of the Bolganaba and his collaboration with the Constabulary and District Commissioners. His reputation as an ally in the colonial project that had initially been built in the years of conquest was maintained in this period as well.

Establishing the Bolgatanga's paramountcy over the neighbouring settlements had significant consequences in terms of its growth and definition as a town. The chapter has shown that this process of political change was neither peaceful nor quietly accepted. One significant effect was the disruption of the Gurensi political organization and previous settlement pattern, a disruption caused by the introduction of the new scheme. The chiefs increasingly took over the role played by the earth priests

and the family heads in the management of land and labour respectively. In response to colonial requests, therefore, local people continued to express resentment and outright contestation against all the echelons of the administrative structure. Despite being fiercely disputed, however, the Bolganaba was able to maintain and assert his position.

Another important consequence was the consolidation of the Bolgatanga chiefdom, a process that led to its consolidation as a commercial centre in the region. Bolgatanga's market continued to occupy a position of non-centrality compared to the colonial infrastructure network. This was in contrast to its centrality in the trade flows crossing the region, as I demonstrated in the previous chapter. However, in this period colonial officers and the Bolganaba came to a negotiated decision to bring these two different networks into line and cultivate the marketplace. This development led to closing the small neighbouring markets and confirming the Bolgatanga market's position of prominence in the region. The imposition of a single larger market marked another substantial change as compared to the pre-colonial settlement pattern in which multiple markets had dotted the region. The trade dispersion that had characterized the region in previous decades was increasingly disrupted. Moreover, the marketplace continued to attract traders who wanted to avoid colonial controls and therefore it did not suffer from the trade restrictions imposed at the end of the war. Quite the opposite, it was supported by the officers and connected to their growing infrastructural network.

Several few years before the inauguration of the 'Great North Road', the first motorable road connecting the rest of the colony with the Northern Territories, Bolgatanga was recognized as a central trade centre and therefore incorporated into the colonial infrastructure network. This connection later proved to be crucial for the future of the settlement. In the next chapter, I will present the consequences of this connection for Bolgatanga and discuss how the implementation of indirect rule increased the process of territorialising Bolganaba's chiefdom.

Chapter 5
The birth of a town: the transformation of the settlement pattern (1921-1939)

5.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses the radical transformation of the spatial configuration of Bolgatanga between the 1920s and the 1930s. The urban space lost gradually the features of the dispersed settlement to acquire new ways of configuring space. The constituents that characterized the Gurensi settlements, such as the small, numerous markets, the thick net of footpaths, the fragmentation of political power and the observance of the ritual boundaries of the earth shrine areas changed. The marketplace in Bolgatanga became one of the leading regional trade centres. The Gurensi region started increasingly to be crossed by motorable roads. From a juridical point of view, the Bolganaba became the leading authority in charge of the land, while the role of the *tindaama* continued to be neglected. Plots in the central area of the town started increasingly to be leased. The town changed definitely its face in this period. The chapter will follow this transformation, analysing the causes and consequences of the processes and the actors that led to it.

The chapter is divided into three parts. The first part examines the infrastructural changes that occurred in the Northern Territories after the First World War, and, in particular, those that affected the area of Bolgatanga. Following a policy that fostered economic development in the Protectorate, new projects of road building were carried out, resulting in a more extensive motorable road network that connected the south of the Gold Coast Colony with the Upper Volta. The privileged position of Bolgatanga in the network, acquired through the chief's intervention described in the previous chapter, bears its fruits in this period. From 1921, the "road revolution" started in the Gurensi region

in 1906 intensified and the transport pattern changed accordingly. From the thick grid of footpaths that characterized the Gurensi landscape at the beginning of the century, now Bolgatanga stood at the centre of the main crossroads of the region. Gradually, porterage and caravans would give way to lorries and individual traders. Moreover, the road building further enhanced the marketplaces' attendance and the flow of migrants. The town, with its market and lorry park, became a pit-stop for travellers that took long journeys. The trade increased and continued to be influenced by the absence of colonial controls and taxation, directly affecting the attendance and size of the marketplace in Bolgatanga. It is then difficult to argue that colonial intervention aimed directly at Bolgatanga's commercial success, considering the *laissez-faire* approach of the officers. Notwithstanding its trade centrality, the town continued not to feature in colonial cartography. Even though one of the main crossroads in the region grew at its centre, Bolgatanga continued to be absent from colonial maps until 1934[1].

The second part of the chapter will show the transformation of the customary law in Bolgatanga and its political and territorial consequences. The first section intends to demonstrate the limited role that the colonial officers had in the political life of Bolgatanga. Here, I will point out how Bolgatanga's customary law was influenced more by the "royal" families[2] than by the colonial officers. The latter just assumed the role of formal executioner of the choices formulated by the former. The commissioners indeed tended to not interfere too much in the process of chief selection. The events connected with Abazanam's election and his forced renunciation clearly demonstrate this. The customary law was modified in this occasion to restore order, solving the predicament created by the chief's misbehaviour. Moreover, the political crisis brought by Abazanam's conduct stimulated the British colonial records to reveal more details on the dynamics of power in Bolgatanga. In the previous chapter, I showed the way in which the people that encircled the colonial officers had consistent leverage in the local political life. In this chapter, I will show the role of the families related to the chiefs and their leverage in the selection of the chief.

Then, the second section of this part will examine the first registered case in Bolgatanga of land leasing for building purposes. The arrival of the White Fathers and their settling in the town was granted, in fact, by an informal agreement conducted between the missionaries, the Bolganaba and the *tendaana*. The result of the agreement was the concession of land for the mission and the payment of annual rent. The case has no historical precedents, and therefore it testifies the profound change that was going on in the land management and the settlement pattern of the town.

[1] Compare Figure 22 and Figure 23

[2] By "royal" I mean those families who had a direct connection with the regent chief, the right by descent to ascend to chieftaincy and whose elders composed the chief's council.

The last part of the chapter will consider the definitive change in the spatial organization of the town that occurred after the implementation of the indirect rule. The territorial and financial control that the Bolganaba acquired with the new reforms strained the settlement pattern further, assuming the correspondence between land ownership, political control and territorial demarcation. Despite the efforts of part of the colonial administration, the officers failed to insert the figure of the *tendaana* in the administrative structure. In 1933, the northern districts were officially put under the Mamprusi Native Authority[3]. In this way the Nayiri, the paramount chief of the Mamprusi, was finally able to claim jurisdiction over a territory larger than his kingdom, overruling the Kusasi and Frafra people over which he had no historical jurisdiction[4]. The creation of the Native Authorities introduced two significant changes in the political organization of the settlement. Firstly, the Bolganaba was put formally under the Nayiri's authority. This led to a change in the process of chief selection, even though it did not change it drastically. The chief of Bolgatanga was reconfirmed as the paramount authority over the smaller chiefdoms in the Gurensi area south of Bongo. Secondly, the Bolganaba and his council of elders were definitely sanctioned as the authorities in charge of lands in the town.

The last sections will show the consequences that the trade growth and the new political configuration had on the settlement. With the opening of the Pwalagu ferry in 1936, the regional trade centre for the kola nuts shifted from Walewale to Bolgatanga. The market grew further, becoming a central one in the whole Mamprusi District. The population of the town increased exponentially following the trade trends. The main consequence of this was the closing of the farms in the vicinity of the commercial area and the leasing of the lands freed in this way. In 1938 the town was officially recognized from a legal point of view, as a town survey was conducted and some years later a Town Authority was created. The leasing of town plots was officially put in the hands of the chief and, in parallel, the government issued legal agreements for leaseholds managed by the chief and the colonial officers. However, in the following years, the majority of the land allocated to new settlers was ceded with the sanction of the chief, relegating the government involvement to the background.

[3] Iliasu, 'The Establishment of British Administration in Mamprugu, 1898-1937', 24.

[4] Iliasu, 24; Ladouceur, *Chiefs and Politicians: The Politics of Regionalism in Northern Ghana*, 169–74; Michael Schlottner, '"We Stay, Others Come and Go": Identity among the Mamprusi in Northern Ghana', in *Ethnicity in Ghana: The Limits of Invention*, by Carola Lentz and Paul Nugent (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan, 2000), 61.

5.2 The introduction of motor transportation in the Gurensi region

The improvement of the road network in the Protectorate

Under the mandate of Sir Frederick Gordon Guggisberg (1919-1927), colonial investments in infrastructure improvement and large-scale promotion of export increased[5]. This was mainly the result of the Governor's visions for the development of the Gold Coast, a vision in which the Northern Territories featured significantly[6]. In order to achieve this, transport and infrastructures building figured as "the first plank in the policy of progress"[7]. However, the colonial administration was primarily concerned with the building of a railway, leaving aside the road network[8]. This opened an internal debate that was going to influence the future of transport in the Protectorate. On one side, there was the southerner officers' idea that the scarce economic potentiality of the North did not justify the expenses of a railway network. On the other hand, the northerners argued that the North's economy did not flourish precisely because of the lack of a railway[9]. The "Northern Territories' Railway debate" between the northerner and southerner administrators began before the war and continued under Guggisberg's mandate without any tangible result. In the end, the railway was not built, and the only other viable system of transportation for the Protectorate remained the motorable roads.

The main colonial project completed during Guggisberg's mandate was the building of a road connection between the Colony and the Northern Territories. One of the results of this project was the completion of the main artery of trade that connected Kumasi with Tamale; this road became famous in the colonial discourse as 'the Great North Road'[10]. Although the works started in 1907, it was only completed in 1920. On this date, Guggisberg traversed in his car all the way from Kumasi to Tamale, and the next year up to the border with the Haute Volta marking a «milestone in

[5] For the ambivalent relationship between colonial government and private firms in these years see Chalfin, *Shea Butter Republic*, 104.
[6] Grischow, *Shaping Tradition*, 60.
[7] Gold Coast Legislative Council, 1919-20, p. 27, quoted in Heap, 'The Development of Motor Transport in the Gold Coast, 1900-39', 25.
[8] Tsey, *From Head-Loading to the Iron Horse*; Anthony G. Hopkins, *An economic history of West Africa* (New York: Longman, 1993), 192.
[9] Soeters, 'Tamale 1907-1957: Between Colonial Trade and Colonial Chieftainship', 52.
[10] Ntewusu, 'The Road to Development'.

transportation»[11]. For the first time, a motorable road enabled the connection of the northern areas of the Northern Territories with the rest of the Colony.

In the first years following the completion of the road, an enormous increase in motor traffic was registered. If in 1921 the number of vehicles registered at the Yeji ferry was just 27, four years later it increased to 1562[12]. Allan W. Cardinall, who traversed it in the course of his career as a commissioner, described it in a rather celebratory and romantic tone in his published memoirs:

> What a road that is! For construction it might well be a high road in England; but for traffic it must be well-nigh unique. This road, used by a vast of all conditions of men, leads to Timbuktu, the desert, and to unknown mysteries of Africa. There is none quite like it in all the world.[13]

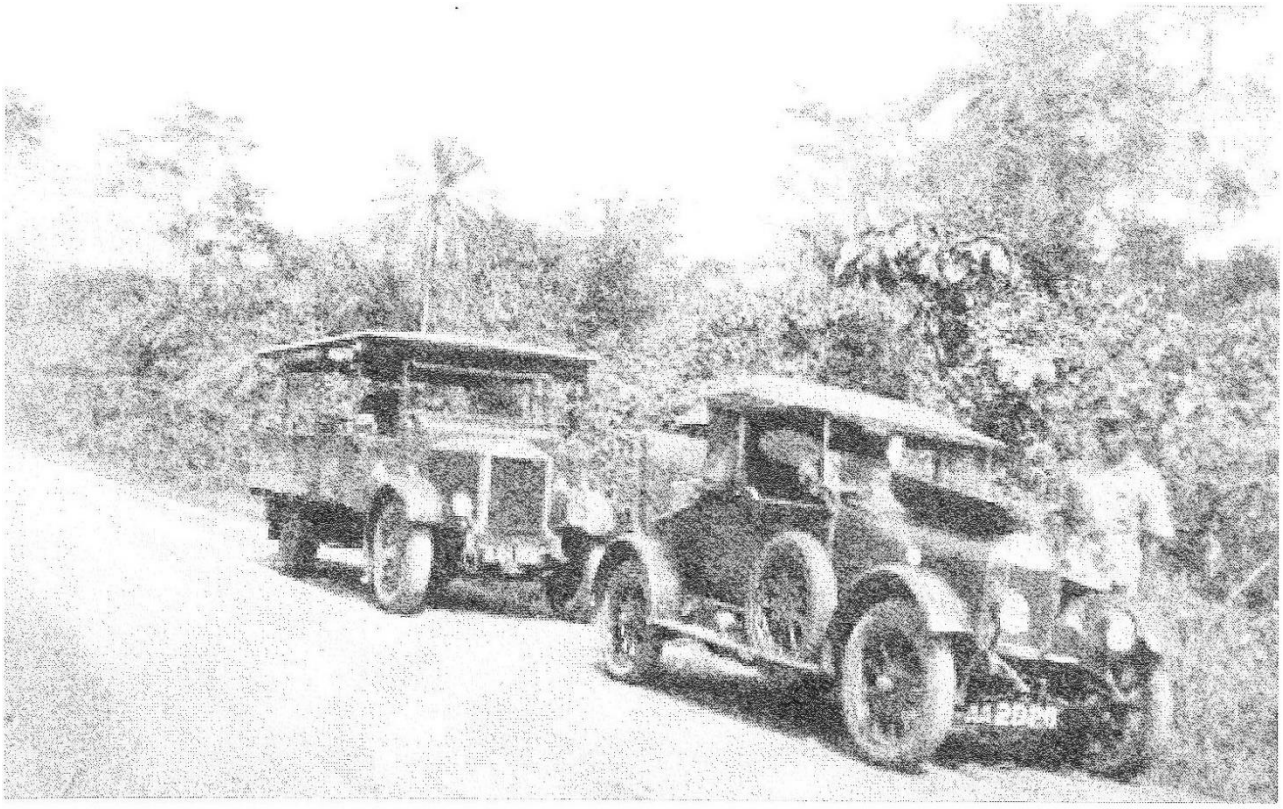

Figure 20. "Going North for the first time 1930 - Bullnosed Morris and Government Lorry"

Source: Lynn, C. W, Marjorie Lynn, and Sylvia Lynn. The Long Garden Master in the Gold Coast: Life and Times of a Colonial Agricultural Officer in the Gold Coast, 1929-1947, 2012, 27

[11] TNA CO 98/36, Administration Reports, Northern Territories of the Gold Coast, Annual Report for 1921
[12] NAG ADM 56/1/500, Annual Report N.T., 1922-23; TNA CO 98/42, Annual Report 1924-25
[13] Alan Wolsey Cardinall, *In Ashanti & beyond: The Record of a Resident Magistrate's Many Years in Tropical Africa, His Arduous & Dangerous Treks Both in the Course of His Duty & in Pursuit of Big Game with Descriptions of the People, Their Manner of Living & the Wonderful Ways of Beasts & Insects* (Philadelphia; New York: Lippincott Johnson, 1927), 99.

As a matter of fact, the road and its feeders were traversed in those years by an increasing number of lorries, cars, caravans, walking groups of migrants and individual traders. In a short time, it became the infrastructural backbone of the Northern Territories[14].

Figure 21. "Pwalagu dry season drift, 1934"

Source: Lynn, 'The Long Garden Master in the Gold Coast', 81

The improvement in the road system led to tangible and immediate results in the transportation patterns, some of which had not been expected by the colonial government. One such consequence was the gradual disappearance of the large and walking caravans that crossed the savannah landscape of the Protectorate at the beginning of the century. The big groups of merchants travelling together gave way to small groups of relatives or individuals. The case of the Yoruba travelling merchants, studied by Jeremy Eades, reveals clearly how the increasing improvement of the road system made the caravan an obsolete method of travel[15]. The improved security on the roads, the maintenance of long arteries and the increasing use of lorries and cars made the journey faster, more comfortable and safer. In this way, even small groups of merchants could participate in the trade flows of the Gold Coast Colony and the Northern Territories.

[14] Ntewusu, 'The Road to Development'.
[15] Eades, *Strangers and Traders*, 30–31.

The new and improved roads affected not only the traders' travel system but also the future of porterage. Motor transportation, with its single owner-driver model of business, began to substitute the headload services[16]. Indeed, many people entered into the motor transportation business in these years. At the beginning of the 1920s, the first private transportation companies began to operate in Tamale, substantially affecting its economy and growth[17]. Most of the drivers were ex-servicemen returning from the First World War who had decided to take advantage of their driving skills in this new business[18]. In the area of Bolgatanga, lorry transportation started gradually to replace porterage, especially by wealthy traders for long journeys during the dry season[19]. The caravans did not disappear, instead, they reduced their size sensibly. Therefore, the carrier service remained an essential feature in those parts of the country without roads and during the rainy season, when the passage of lorries decreased[20].

In fact, a significant part of the roads in the whole Protectorate was, in these years, at the mercy of the weather and its seasonality[21]. The rainy season thoroughly washed some of them out in the area of Bolgatanga. A clear example of this was the Pwalagu drift, a key connection between the Zuarungu District and the South, 20 km from the town. The drift allowed to easily cross the White Volta river, the natural barrier that divided the Gurensi from the Mamprusi. The making of the drift was described in 1930 as «a stupendous job which has to be done each year, and unfortunately all the materials, wood and stone ha[d] to be collected afresh as they [were] washed away»[22]. However, the road's seasonality did not completely compromise trade. Under the astonished eyes of the commissioners, a number of cars and lorries, although reduced, loaded with trade goods continued to flow on the roads even when these where not in a good state, or in a state that «would have taxed the capabilities of a "Tank"»[23]. In this way, trade was not interrupted but it just changed its material conditions and created new opportunities. The changing geography of the routes in the rainy season led indeed to the increase of foodstuffs' prices in the most isolated parts of the district[24]. Therefore,

[16] Soeters, 'Tamale 1907-1957: Between Colonial Trade and Colonial Chieftainship', 44.
[17] NAG ADM 56/1/505, Annual Report NT 1923-24, Annual Report of the Northern Territories for 1923-1924. See also Soeters, 72.
[18] Soeters, 86.
[19] NAG ADM 56/1/512, Annual Report, Northern Province. Annual Report for the year ending 31st March 1926; TNA CO 98/50, Annual Report on the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast for the Year 1927-28
[20] Annual Reports: Northern Territories [1926], British Library, EAP541/1/3/8, https://eap.bl.uk/archive-file/EAP541-1-3-8; NAG ADM 56/1/512, Northern Province - Northern Territories, Annual Report 1927-28; Fortes, *The Dynamics of Clanship among the Tallensi*, 4.
[21] NAG ADM 56/1/505, Annual Report NT 1923-24, Annual Report of the Northern Territories for 1923-1924; TNA CO 98/46, Report 1925-26
[22] NAG ADM 56/1/408, Northern Territories Administration, Handing over of, Northern Territories Handing over Report. A few years later Fortes would describe this periodical rebuilding as a taxing and much talked-about event by the population of Tongo Meyer Fortes, 'Culture Contact as a Dynamic Process. An Investigation in the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast', *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 9, no. 1 (1936): 49.
[23] NAG ADM 56/1/181, Informal Diaries Northern Province, Precis of North Mamprusi informal diary for July 1922.
[24] NAG ADM 56/1/461, Quarterly Reports, North-Eastern Province. Report for the Quarter ending 30th June 1912

as Jeremy Eades suggests, the impediments caused by the rains were transformed by some traders into commercial advantages. Whether motorised or not, some traders were able to make the best deals specifically during the rainy season, when the competition reduced, and the demand for goods increased in the isolated parts of the country[25]. The outskirts of Bolgatanga were, for example, such a place.

However, in the course of the 1920s and 1930s, there was a marked improvement in the road network. The town was going to be inserted into the growing colonial infrastructural network that developed in these years. The next sections will analyse the infrastructure improvement in the area and assess the social and commercial consequences of it.

The road through Bolgatanga: the town at the crossroads

The big project of the 'Great North Road', the road that connected Kumasi to Tamale, was going to be integrated by the improvement and construction of smaller roads. These projects were pursued in the Gurensi region, promoting Bolgatanga indirectly. The centrality acquired by Bolgatanga in 1919 was reconfirmed and further enhanced, putting the settlement at the centre of the

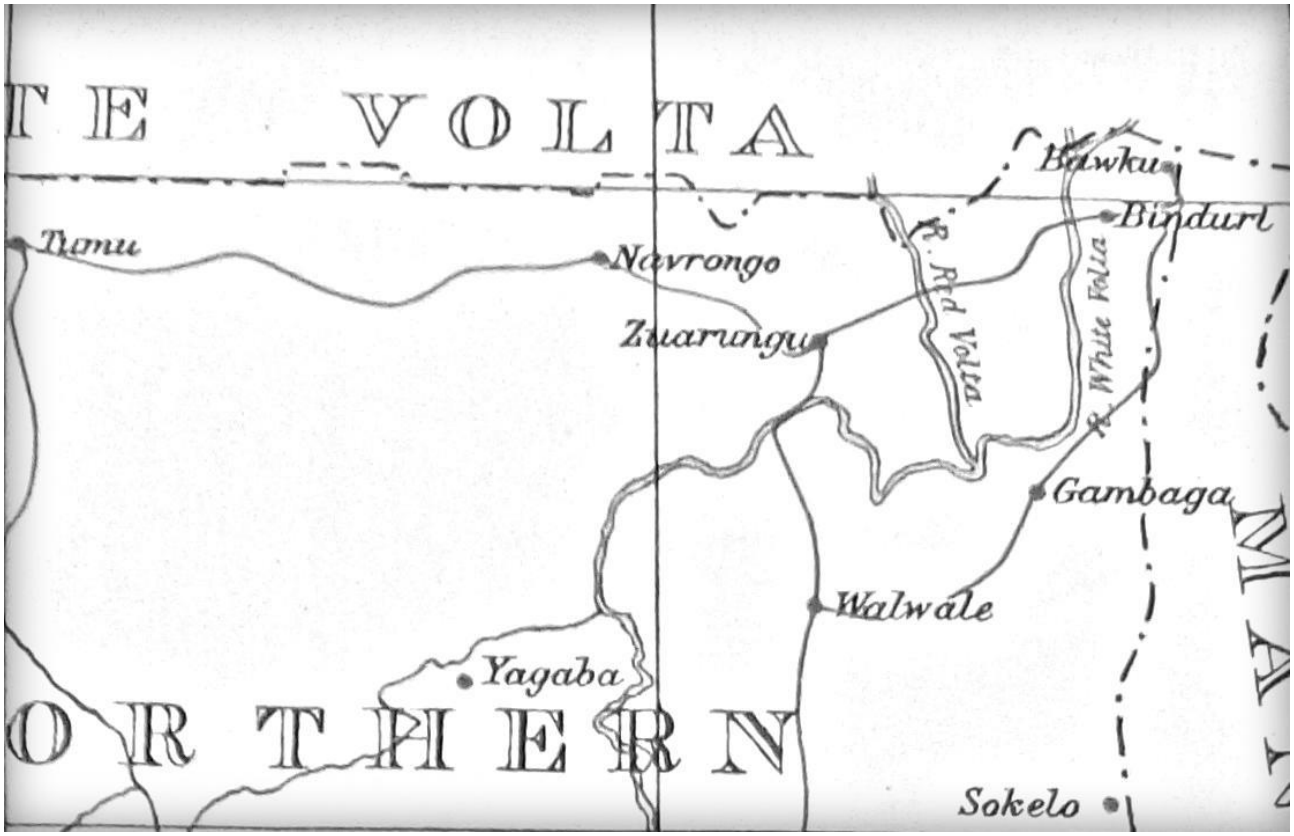

Figure 22. Colonial road network in the Gurensi area in 1926

Source: TNA CO 98/46, Northern Territories of the Gold Coast. Annual Report for 1925-26

[25] Eades, *Strangers and Traders*, 36–37.

main crossroads of the region and granting an all-weather connection with the French territories in the North and the southern part of the Gold Coast Colony.

The 1920s were the years in which the itineraries of former roads were consolidated and new ones designed. The improvement of the infrastructures done for the Governor's visits in 1921 and 1925 increased the road building in the Northern Province and the Zuarungu District, making the existing roads motorable and giving priority to the ones passing through Bolgatanga, as a midpoint between the colonial stations[26]. Attention was indeed given to the maintenance and the building of roads that connected the three colonial stations in the north-eastern part of the Protectorate, i.e. Navrongo, Zuarungu and Bawku. These roads converged exactly in Bolgatanga, making the settlement the centre of the main crossroads of the region[27]. The roads that connected the stations were also those frequently traversed by the officers and therefore were better maintained, granting a better carrying capacity. Moreover, the road through Bolgatanga was now given preference to other ones through Zuarungu even for its distance from the Tong Hills. As a matter of fact, after some robberies in the Talensi area in 1921, the Commissioner in charge of the road making decided to divert all the traffic that passed through Zuarungu to Bolgatanga[28].

The work on road network continued throughout the 1920s. In 1926, it was optimistically stated that «practically every part of the country can be reached by motor car»[29], and the improvements continued until 1928 when it was realized that there were not enough resources to maintain more roads[30]. In 1930, however, the road building restarted in the area of Bolgatanga, when it was planned to make the link to Navrongo with an all-weather road[31]. In the following years, these roads continued to be periodically maintained and consolidated, even though they remained easily accessible only in the dry season[32]. In 1931, in the Northern Province 1129 miles of roads were counted, 15% of which were all-weather ones[33].

[26] NAG ADM 56/1/488, Quarterly Report NEP, Report on the North-Eastern Province for Quarter ending 31st December 1920; NAG ADM 56/1/469, Annual Report on the Northern Territories for 1921, Annual Report of the Northern Province of the Northern Territories for the year 1921; NAG ADM 56/1/270, Informal Diary Navarro-Zuaragu District, entries for 08.01.1921, 20.01.1921, 22.01.1921, 01.02.1921

[27] NAG ADM 56/1/314, Diaries, entries for 17.06.1924, 05-08.11.1924; NAG ADM 56/1/511, Annual Report Northern Territories 1924-25, Northern Province – Northern Territories Annual Report, 1924-1925; Journal de la mission, Bolgatanga, 14.05.1926, A.G.M.Afr

[28] NAG ADM 56/1/270, Informal Diary Navarro-Zuaragu District, entry for 11.02.1921

[29] TNA CO 98/46, Report 1925-26

[30] TNA CO 98/50, Annual Report on the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast for the Year 1927-28

[31] Annual Report on Navrongo District for the Year Ending 31/3/30 [1930], British Library, EAP541/1/3/29, https://eap.bl.uk/archive-file/EAP541-1-3-29; Annual Report for Zuarungu District [1930-31], British Library, EAP541/1/3/34, https://eap.bl.uk/archive-file/EAP541-1-3-34

[32] Annual Report for the Zuarungu District [1931-32], British Library, EAP541/1/3/38, https://eap.bl.uk/archive-file/EAP541-1-3-38; TNA CO 96/719/1, Northern Territories, Report for 1933-34; Report on the Northern Territories for the Year 1934-35 [1934-35], British Library, EAP541/1/3/46, https://eap.bl.uk/archive-file/EAP541-1-3-46

[33] Census Report [1931], British Library, EAP541/1/3/40, https://eap.bl.uk/archive-file/EAP541-1-3-40

As a hotspot in the new flows of traffic, Bolgatanga in the 1930s also became the sorting centre for the mails delivered throughout the whole district and some years later a Post Office was built in the town[34]. However, the event that marked a sensible change in the stream of motor traffic in the district was the construction in 1936 of the ferry in Pwalagu, 20 km south of Bolgatanga. The ferry replaced the drift that made the White Volta river crossable only for a limited period of the year in the dry season. The completion of the ferry, following a project of almost £10,000, was a vital integration to the "Great North Road" that permitted the all-weather connection between Kumasi and Ouagadougou[35]. The White Fathers missionaries commented enthusiastically that «les temps héroiques» of the past would vanish thanks to this improvement, remembering how much the travels from the northern outskirts of the Protectorate to the southern towns of the Colony were hazardous and fatiguing[36].

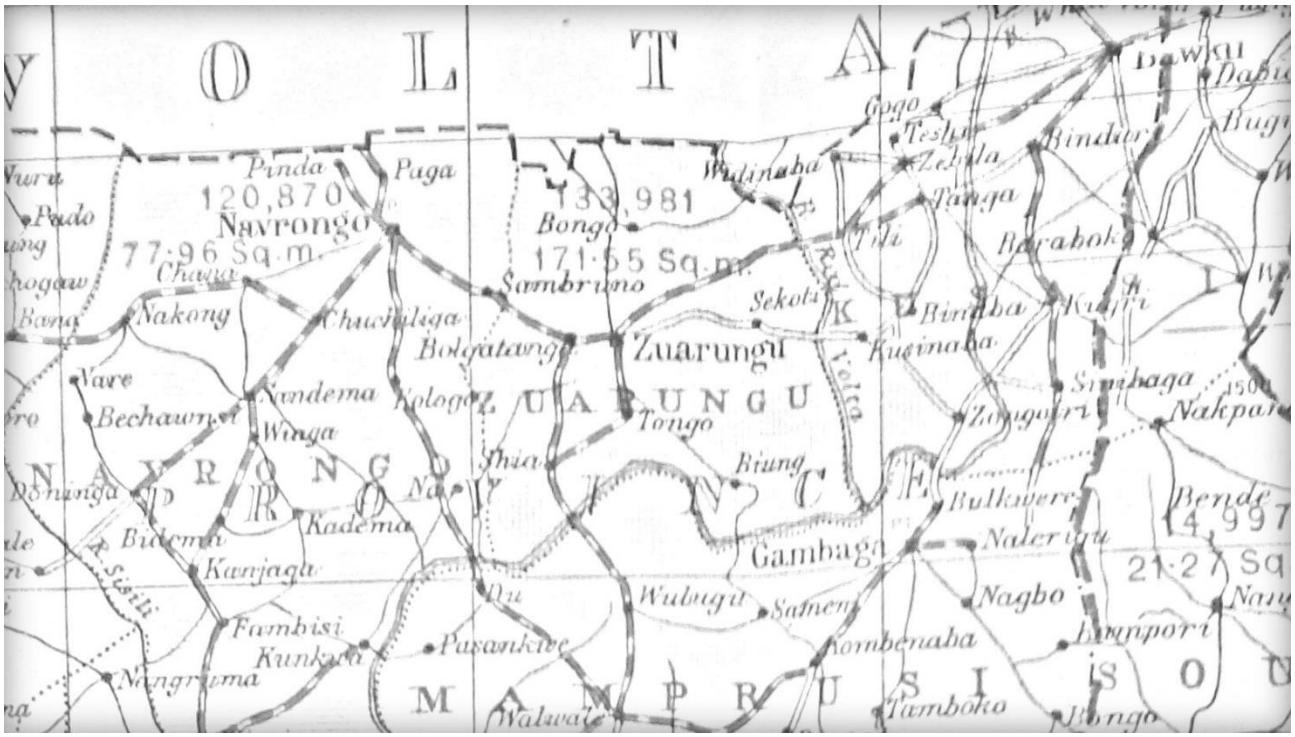

Figure 23. Colonial road network in the Gurensi area in 1934

Source: TNA CO 98/64, Departmental Reports

[34] NAG ADM 56/1/408, Northern Territories Administration, Handing over of, Northern Territories Handing over Report (1930); NAG ADM 56/1/374, Report on the activities of the Northern Territories, Brief account of the more important activities in Mamprusi District, 1942

[35] NAG ADM 56/1/374, Report on the activities of the Northern Territories, Annual Report for 1935-1936; TNA CO 98/738/14, Northern Territories Annual Reports, Annual Report on the Northern Territories for the Year 1936-1937. The portion of the road from Pwalagu to Bolgatanga was sponsored by the manager of the gold mine that opened in Nangodi in 1935. For an overview of gold mining in the area see Elisha P. Renne, 'Small-Scale and Industrial Gold Mining Histories in Nangodi, Upper East Region, Ghana', *Journal of West African History* 1, no. 2 (2015): 71.

[36] Journal de la mission, Bolgatanga, 13.07.1936, A.G.M.Afr. For the settlement of the White Fathers in Bolgatanga see §5.3

The recruiting and employment of labour for road building also changed its characteristics. In the course of the 1920s, the building and maintenance of the roads continued to be granted by the chiefs' ability to gather "free" labour. The Bolganaba endured in complying with the officers' requests with the same zeal of the preceding years[37]. In 1924 he was even rewarded with a medal for the work he was able to gather[38]. Contestations to chiefs' requests in part decreased as there were no reported cases of violence as severe as those of the previous decade. Moreover, the cases of defiance were promptly sanctioned by the chief through fines[39]. However, in the 1930s, the implementation of the indirect rule and the Forced Labour Ordinance marked a substantial change with the past methods of recruiting. The officers' requests for forced labour stopped, and coercion became illegal[40]. The management of the works, done previously by the Political Department, fell increasingly under the Native Administrations. Therefore, the compulsorily arranged gangs of workers were gradually replaced by permanent groups of waged labourers, resulting, according to the officers, in «a great reduction in the quantity of labour employed on road maintenance with a great improvement in the quality»[41].

Having assessed how the road network development affected Bolgatanga's area in its material implementation, I will now turn to the social and commercial consequences of this infrastructure improvement for the town.

The flows of trade and migration through the town

The increase in motor traffic implied an intensification in the movement of goods and people in the region. Consequently, both trade and migration increased exponentially. Throughout the 1920s and the 1930s, trade rocketed in the northern markets. Commenting on the rise of traffic, in 1926 the Chief Commissioner commented in the Annual Report:

> There is no doubt that nearly every class of trade is on the increase and that this is caused by the opening of the various motor roads, which make it possible for goods and foodstuffs to be exported to the markets of the South, where the demand is steadily on the increase, in such quick

[37] NAG ADM 56/1/363, Handing Over Reports NT, Handing Over Report of North Mamprusi, April 1924
[38] NAG ADM 56/1/512, Annual Report, Annual Report for North Mamprusi District for the year 1924-1925
[39] See for example NAG ADM 68/4/3, Record Book, North Mamprusi District, Rex v Adini Nankanni of Gambeigu, 14.04.1927; Rex versus Ayubodogia Nank. and Appam Nank. of Bolga, 29.09.1927. The White Fathers commented that this was the main source of income in the chief's budget. Journal de la mission, Bolgatanga, 06.10.1927, A.G.M.Afr
[40] Staniland, *The Lions of Dagbon*, 79. See also §5.4 below
[41] TNA CO 98/738/14, Northern Territories Annual Reports, Annual Report on the Northern Territories for the Year 1936-1937

time that the traders are now beginning to realise the benefit of a quick turn over, of which they are taking full advantage.[42]

Giving an accurate account of the amount of trade passing through Bolgatanga is not possible. The absence of any reliable data is mainly due to its feature of being outside colonial control[43]. In continuity with what had happened in the previous decade, Bolgatanga continued indeed to be targeted by the unregistered flow of trade that crossed the region. Throughout the 1920s and the 1930s, due to French and British taxation and veterinary restrictions for rinderpest, traders continued to prefer the uncontrolled roads that allowed to avoid the exaction centres. Once again, the trade routes reconfigured according to colonial controls, passing where these were not enforced. Therefore, the route through Bolgatanga continued to have substantial advantages over the others[44]. This rerouting, for the officers' admission, made the statistics on trade collected in the 1920s imprecise, as all the traders that did not pass through the stations, suspected to be a large number, were not counted[45].

It is nonetheless possible to have an idea of the leading trade trends that interested the town. Bolgatanga was a trading centre in-between Navrongo and Bawku in the North and Yeji in the South, the main entry and exit points of the routes in the Protectorate. Therefore, assumptions can be made on the trends registered in these places, even though they remain hypothetical. The statistics collected by the officers reveal a substantial increase throughout the 1920s in every good traded[46]. It is reasonable thus to assert that Bolgatanga participated in this commercial growth. Clear evidence of this trend is the trade in fowls. In this case, the commercial activity of the people from the Northern Province, especially the "Frafra", was finally recognized by the officers, putting aside the colonial prejudices of laziness and primitiveness highlighted in chapter 3. In these years, a marked increase in the fowls' export from the "Frafra" region was indeed registered. Fowls were easy to farm and produced a discreet profit in the southern markets. Starting from 1921, the Gurensi, Nabdams and Talensi traders were increasingly able to sell their fowls in the markets of Kumasi and the Colony,

[42] TNA CO 98/46, Northern Territories of the Gold Coast, Annual Report for 1925-26

[43] See for example the comments in NAG ADM 56/1/512, Annual Reports, Annual Report for North Mamprusi District for the year 1925-26; Northern Province, Northern Territories, Annual Report 1927-28; Annual Report on the Zuarungu District Northern Territories, for the year ending 31st March, 1928

[44] NAG ADM 56/1/181, Informal Diaries Northern Province, Precis of North Mamprusi Diary for month of December, 1922; NAG ADM 56/1/319, Diaries, entry for 09.12.1922; NAG ADM 56/1/495, Quarterly reports 1922-24, Northern Mamprusi District, Report for the Quarter Ending 31st December 1922; Report for the Quarter Ending 31st December 1923; Report for the Quarter Ending 31st March 1924; Report on the Northern Territories for the Year 1934-35 [1934-35], British Library, EAP541/1/3/46, https://eap.bl.uk/archive-file/EAP541-1-3-46

[45] NAG ADM 56/1/505, Annual Report NT 1923-24, Northern Province – Northern Territories Annual Report, 1923-24; NAG ADM 56/1/511, Annual Report Northern Territories 1924-25, Northern Province – Northern Territories Annual Report 1924-1925; NAG ADM 56/1/512, Annual Report, Northern Province – Northern Territories Annual Report 1925-1926; NAG-T NRG 8/3/43, Northern Territories Census Report 1931

[46] See NAG ADM 56/1/407, Trade Statistics; NAG ADM 56/1/310, Yeji trade statistics. For useful tables based on this data see Soeters, 'Tamale 1907-1957: Between Colonial Trade and Colonial Chieftainship', 59–63; 234–36.

and the trade grew steadily[47]. It experienced a slight decrease in 1930, following the trends triggered by the world crisis, but increased again in 1935[48]. In 1937 the Superintendent of the Department of Agriculture in Zuarungu, Charles W. Lynn, noted that «there is scarcely a single compound in North Mamprusi that does not engage in the export trade in fowls to Kumasi»[49].

The amplified flow of goods and foodstuffs that began to travel from the Northern Territories to the South, such as the fowls mentioned above or the case of groundnuts, was also favoured by the new colonial economic agenda for the Northern Territories. This aimed at making the Protectorate the auxiliary source of foodstuffs and labour for the south of the Colony[50]. In this way, the trade depression of the end of the 1920s and the early 1930s was hardly felt in the North[51]. This growth pattern also characterized the area around Bolgatanga. Although in this period it suffered from localized food shortages due to irregular raining and locust invasions[52], not every area was struck, and the overall trade growth in the region continued[53].

As a matter of fact, the marketplace in Bolgatanga continued to be one of the leading commercial hotspots in the Northern Province for the trading of fowls, as well as of many other trades[54]. In the course of the 1920s and especially by the end of the decade, it experienced a steady process of growth that followed the improvement of the road network and the intensification of trade. The market, known as Ayia Daa by the name of the shrine that is inside it, grew both in its attendance[55] and size, as lorries started increasingly to pass through the town and stop there[56]. In the 1930s a lorry

[47] NAG ADM 56/1/469, Annual Report on the N.T. for 1921; NAG ADM 56/1/505 Annual Report N.T. 1923-24; TNA CO 98/46, Northern Territories of the Gold Coast. Annual Report for 1925-26

[48] Northern Province-Northern Territories Annual Report 1930-31 [1930-31], British Library, EAP541/1/3/26, https://eap.bl.uk/archive-file/EAP541-1-3-26 ; Report on the Northern Territories for the Year 1934-35 [1934-35], British Library, EAP541/1/3/46, https://eap.bl.uk/archive-file/EAP541-1-3-46

[49] TNA CO 96/751/14, "Agriculture in North Mamprusi", Pamphlet by C.W. Lynn (Agricultural Supt), p. 33

[50] Chalfin, *Shea Butter Republic*, 119.

[51] NAG ADM 56/1/374, Report on the activities of the Northern Territories, Northern Territories Protectorate. General Administration; TNA CO 96/719/1, Northern Territories, Report for 1933-34. See also Heap, 'The Development of Motor Transport in the Gold Coast, 1900-39', 31.

[52] Préfecture Apostolique de Navrongo, 1927-28, Rapport de Mgr Morin, A.G.M.Afr.; TNA CO 98/53, Report on the Northern Territories for the year 1928-29; NAG ADM 56/1/512, Annual Report, Annual Report on the Zuarungu District Northern Territories for the year ending 31st March, 1928; TNA CO 98/55, Report on the Northern Territories for the year 1929-1930

[53] Jean Allman and John Parker clearly explain this apparent contradiction: «Great care is needed when considering changing levels of food production and nutrition in the region and when making connections between these and broader dynamics of social history. Data are extremely scanty and where they do exist are often too vague to allow anything more than the most impressionistic glimpse of historical change. Highly localized incidence of rainfall alone meant that in any given season one part of the countryside may have had an abundant harvest while another part less than ten miles away may have experienced crop failure and food shortages. Within communities, moreover, households and even individuals could be affected by subsistence crises in very different ways» in Allman and Parker, *Tongnaab*, 184–85.

[54] NAG ADM 56/1/511, Annual Report for 1924-25 NT; TNA CO 96/751/14, "Agriculture in North Mamprusi", Pamphlet by C.W. Lynn (Agricultural Supt), p. 33

[55] NAG ADM 56/1/314, Diaries, entry for 17.06.1924

[56] NAG ADM 56/1/512, Annual Report, Northern Province, Northern Territories, Annual Report 1927-28; Annual Report on the Zuarungu District Northern Territories for the year ending 31st March, 1928; TNA CO 98/55, Report on the

park was built close to the market[57]. The importance of the lorry parks is not to be underrated. They were indeed useful halting places where both traders and migrants would have collected crucial information for the planning of their journeys (such as the conditions of the roads and the presence of colonial controls)[58]. In the town, the lorry drivers were also one of the primary connections with the rest of the world, thanks to their radios[59].

The period between 1920 and 1939 also experienced an increasing number of migrants travelling on the roads[60]. Shortly after the end of the Influenza epidemic, and throughout the next two decades migration from the French territories increased exponentially, becoming a «veritable hémorragie»[61]. The completion of the 'Great North Road' facilitated enormously this movement of

Figure 24. "Tamale. Sur le marché. Remarquer les paniers à volailles sur le haut de la remorque", n.d. (1940 ca.)

Source: 511-58-10, Masson I-129-1, Phototeque, A.G.M.Afr.

Northern Territories for the year 1929-30; Blue Book Report for 1929-30 [1929-30], British Library, EAP541/1/3/15, https://eap.bl.uk/archive-file/EAP541-1-3-15

[57] NAG ADM 68/5/5, Zuarungu District Record Book, p. 142

[58] Rouch, 'Migrations au Ghana (Gold Coast)', 73–74.

[59] The news on the outbreak of the Second World War was broadcasted in Bolgatanga through the lorry drivers' radios. Journal de la Mission, Bolgatanga, 03.09.1939, A.G.M.Afr.

[60] Rouch, 'Migrations au Ghana (Gold Coast)', 53.

[61] Duperray, *Les Gourounsi de Haute-Volta*, 206.

people[62]. The Commissioner A.W. Cardinall described in this way the groups of northern migrants that he encountered on the 'Great North Road':

> Now there comes running and singing and shouting a band of young men, almost naked, with only a loin-cloth of white native-made cotton. These are men coming south to earn some money at the mines, or "sell their hoes" as they term it, which means to work on the Ashanti farms. Here is a line of their brothers returning – clothed, and generally with a small iron chest on the head, containing presents for the folk at home and odd trifles picked up during its owner's sojourn in the south.[63]

The people from the Gurensi area started to migrate to the neighbouring territories well before the implementation of the road system, as noted in the previous chapters. During the 1920s and 1930s, however, their migrations to the cocoa farms and mines in the Asante and into the cities of southern Ghana increased, following the main migration trends of the period[64].

In the course of the years, the purposes and stimuli that induced people to move could have been various[65]. Some migrated because of a spirit of adventure or just curiosity[66], others to escape conscription, chiefs' extortions or taxation[67]. In fact, before 1945, the migrations from the French territories were mostly motivated by dissatisfaction with the political situation[68]. Most of the migrants also travelled because of their desire to gain money participating in the growing cocoa industry of the 1920s[69]. As a matter of fact, Meyer Fortes, in his article on culture contact in the Talensi society, underlines how the most popular explanation for migration adduced by the people was the desire for cash[70]. In addition to the migrants, there was also an increasing and steady flow of pilgrims. Most of them came from the southern part of the Colony and were directed to the Tong Hills. The shrines in the hills, starting from 1915 and increasingly in the 1920s, acquired indeed particular fame thanks to

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[62] Fortes, 'Culture Contact as a Dynamic Process. An Investigation in the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast', 42; Ntewusu, 'The Road to Development'.
[63] Cardinall, *In Ashanti & Beyond*, 99–100.
[64] Keith Hart, 'Swindler or Public Benefactor?: The Entrepreneur in His Community', in *Changing Social Structure in Ghana; Essays in the Comparative Sociology of a New State and an Old Tradition*, by Jack Goody, 1975, 13–14. For more on Gurensi migrations see also Fortes, 'Culture Contact as a Dynamic Process. An Investigation in the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast'; Hart, 'Migration and Tribal Identity among the Frafras of Ghana'.
[65] As noted by Soeters, migration to the mines must be distinguished from that directed to the cocoa farms. If the recruiting of the former was centralized and highly coercive, the latter was of a more spontaneous nature. Soeters, 'Tamale 1907-1957: Between Colonial Trade and Colonial Chieftainship', 69.
[66] Journal de la mission, Navrongo, 16.09.1920
[67] Duperray, *Les Gourounsi de Haute-Volta*, 207.
[68] Rouch, 'Migrations au Ghana (Gold Coast)', 194; Anthony I. Asiwaju, 'Migrations as Revolt: The Example of the Ivory Coast and the Upper Volta before 1945', *The Journal of African History* 17, no. 4 (1976): 577–94.
[69] Rouch, 'Migrations au Ghana (Gold Coast)', 194.
[70] Fortes, 'Culture Contact as a Dynamic Process. An Investigation in the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast', 42.

the activities of shrine franchising, as ritual entrepreneurs started to spread their cult in the southern parts of the Colony[71].

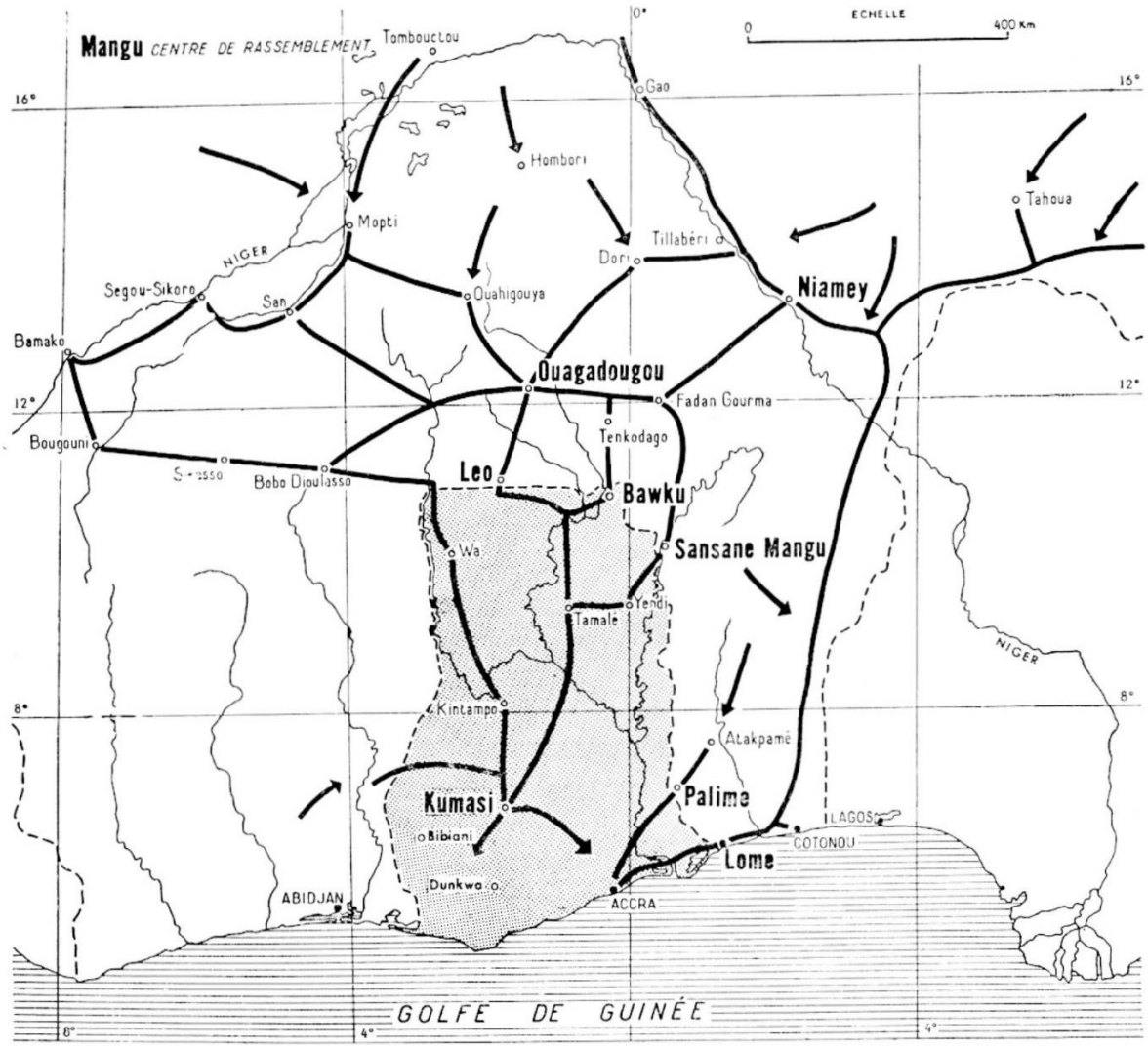

Figure 25. Main migratory routes between 1946 and 1956

Source: Rouch, 'Migrations au Ghana (Gold Coast)', 69

In conclusion, in the two decades analysed, Bolgatanga became a nodal point in the northern infrastructures of the Protectorate and was reconfirmed as an important commercial hotspot in the African trade networks. Thanks to the improvement of the roads, Bolgatanga was connected to the motorways that crossed the country, occupying the centre of the main regional crossroads. The favourable position fostered the growth of the marketplace that continued to be also attended by traders who wanted to avoid colonial taxation and control. Moreover, a lorry park was built, making the town a pit-stop in the North-South migration routes. Bolgatanga became thus both a centre of departure of the Gurensi migrants and a transit centre for those coming from the North and the South.

[71] Fortes, *The Dynamics of Clanship among the Tallensi*, 253; Allman and Parker, *Tongnaab*.

Increasingly, this would lead people to settle and live in the town as I will demonstrate in the next sections. However, before dealing with the population increase and the definitive change in the settlement pattern of the town, it is necessary to present the political dynamics of the 1920s and especially those that paved the way to indirect rule. The political changes of the chieftaincy in Bolgatanga will clarify the respective roles of the officers and the traditional authorities in shaping and managing the town.

5.3 The colonial and African roles in defining the customary law

The contingent plasticity of the chieftaincy institution

In the course of the 1920s, the role of the colonial officers in the definition and management of the chiefdom of Bolgatanga continued to be secondary. This section intends to highlight how, in the case of Bolgatanga, the officers' political agenda continued to be characterized by a certain degree of *laissez-faire*. This is clearly manifest in their role in the selection of the chiefs' successors, as the commissioners left the choice in the hands of the royal family. The aim of this section is precisely to show this secondary role analysing the events before and after the Bolganaba's election in 1922. It will be indeed clear that the officers just gave a formal sanction of the chief's selection, but they were not involved in the process of the selection itself.

Despite the policy of chieftaincies amalgamation launched by Guggisberg at the beginning of his mandate, the Northeastern part of the Protectorate was not affected by substantial changes in its structure in the course of the 1920s[72]. The administrative division created after 1912 and analysed in the previous chapter perdured, with its system of Head Chiefs, *kambonaaba* and headmen. The only modification of the *status quo* was the creation in June 1921 of the "North Mamprusi District", amalgamating the Zuarungu, Navrongo and Bawku Districts[73]. However, this did not have substantial consequences for the chiefdom of Bolgatanga and the wider Gurensi area.

The death of the Bolganaba Adabase in 1922 opened a new contest to select his successor; the chief's death meant indeed that a new one had to be selected. The process that ensued exhibited the characteristics of the patchwork between Gurensi traditions and colonial expectations, typical of the African customary laws[74]. In continuity with what had happened in the previous decade after the death of Adongo, a prospective chief was selected among the family who owned the chieftaincy, and the choice was then formalized by a public election. This took place in Bolgatanga with the same conditions as the previous one. With DC's approval, an "electoral college" was formed consisting of elders, clan heads and subchiefs. This time the only difference was that the Nayiri attended the event

[72] Grischow, *Shaping Tradition*, 63.
[73] Raymond B. Bening, 'Foundations of the Modern Native States of Northern Ghana', *Universitas*, 1975, 121.
[74] Spear, 'Neo-Traditionalism and the Limits of Invention in British Colonial Africa'.

too. His presence, however, did not have significant consequences as he did not «have a say in the election»[75]. It was only a formal request made by the officers.

Azaare's description of the event reveals that a customary rule was followed in the choice of the successor. The candidates' qualities should have been «popularity, large followers and supporters, devotion to work and one's loyalty to the British colonial government», as in the previous one[76]. The winner of the election was the fifteen-year-old boy Abazanam, the direct son of Adabase. More than the boy's debatable possession of the qualities mentioned above[77], what made him win the contest was precisely the fact that he was Adabase's most senior son. Azaare writes that the selection process was not straightforward. Before Abazanam was proposed and elected, the royal family selected Awogeya, Adabase's brother, as the successor. This would have been a sounder choice, in that Awogeya was a man with much more experience and diplomatic skills as he spent most of his life counselling the brother and working in the market as a tribute collector. However, he declined because «chieftaincy in Bolga in those days passed from father to son and not brother to brother»[78]. Therefore, his acceptance of the proposal would have meant an evident rupture with the customary law. The day of the election, the young boy Abazanam stood therefore as the only competitor[79]. His selection was then clearly influenced by a customary rule of chieftaincy inheritance.

The events that followed the elections, on the other hand, reveal the plasticity of the same customary rules. Abazanam's conduct led shortly to a political crisis in the chiefdom. In the course of his mandate, there was indeed a strong change in the line of policy. In the first years of rule, the boy was backed by a selected body of elders chosen from his family to counsel him, among which the same Awogeya. Azaare recollects that, in this way, the young chief was able to settle disputes and comply with British requests quite successfully[80]. However, a few years later he decided to follow just one of his uncles, a choice that resulted in his "misbehaviour", as it is today still recollected[81]. He gradually lost respect and control over the people in Bolgatanga practising extortions and disrespectful behaviours, such as theft and alcoholism[82]. This led to an increase of insubordination, culminating with the withdrawal of the medals given to the previous chiefs[83]. The unsatisfaction of the officers with the chief's behaviour continued so that in August 1929 the DC commented: «I

[75] Azaare, 'Life in Bolga'.
[76] Azaare.
[77] The Gurensi society was and still is profoundly gerontocratic.
[78] Azaare, 'Life in Bolga'.
[79] NAG ADM 56/1/230, Zouaragu District Native Affairs, CNP to CCNT, 27.04.1922
[80] Azaare, 'Life in Bolga'.
[81] Interview with clan elders in Atulbabisi, 17.01.2015
[82] See for example the case of a tentative cattle extortion in NAG ADM 68/4/3, Record Book, North Mamprusi District, Rex versus Aborda Nank., Apoira Nank., Asaskoma Nank. of Bolgatanga, 13.09.1927
[83] Journal de la mission, Bolgatanga, 24.03.1927, A.G.M.Afr.

wonder whether it would be a good thing to make Bolga 'follow' some bigger chief – e.g. Zuarungu, or Bongo – at least for a time»[84]. However, the officer's intention was not going to be realized. As soon as the young chief's behaviour changed, the backing of the royal families stopped. Azaare supports the thesis that the same family of Abazanam operated actively behind the scenes to remove him from his office[85]. It is undoubtful, in any case, that there was a close collaboration between the royal families and the DC to produce evidence to compel the boy to abdicate.

From the colonial archival sources, it is possible indeed to follow the unfolding negotiations between the officers and Abazanam's family. In 1929, the young chief continued to "misbehave" when he was finally jailed in September for the alleged extortion of a cow[86]. An inquiry was made in collaboration with the chiefs' family, and a genealogical tree was produced to prove that Abazanam was not the legitimate successor of his father Adabase. The Commissioner Percy Whittall concluded that the «native custom» was disrupted and the boy was not the rightful successor. According to the officer, the custom in Bolgatanga allegedly established that the brother of the chief should have been elected in place of his direct son[87]. The fact that this conclusion was clearly contrasting with the reason behind Abazanam's selection, i.e. a customary law of succession, was not mentioned. Furthermore, the officer's conclusion was also in contrast with what had happened with the previous chiefs, each of which was the outgoing's direct son. Then, the confirmation of the election results given by two commissioners in 1922 was considered as a simple validation of the popular choice. This last observation is particularly revealing about the degree of colonial involvement in the whole process.

Finally, in the course of an interview made in jail to Abazanam, the DC received the young chief's proposal of resignation. A few days later, his resignation was accepted:

> Bazanam [Abazanam], having been proved to be not in the direct line of succession, and certainly not having been such a great success as to warrant a departure from it, resigned voluntarily. Awogia [Awogeya] continues to act as chief[88].

How 'voluntarily' Abazanam resigned from his office is not known, even because he was, in fact, in direct line of succession. However, he accepted the DC's decision and did not present his candidature in the next chieftaincy contest. Taking advantage of Abazanam's arrest in October, his uncle Awogeya substituted him as the new acting chief until July 1930, when he was officially elected[89].

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[84] NAG ADM 68/5/4, Zuarungu District Record Book, entry for 22.08.1929
[85] Azaare, 'Life in Bolga'.
[86] According to the information collected by the White Fathers, the chief was not directly involved, rather the stealing was done by his entourage. Journal de la mission, Bolgatanga, 26.09.1929, A.G.M.Afr.
[87] NAG ADM 56/1/196, Appointment and destoolment of Chiefs, Northern Province, CNP to CCNT, 21.10.1929
[88] NAG ADM 68/5/4, Zuarungu District Record Book, p. 171. I replicate here the underlining in the original source.
[89] NAG ADM 68/5/4, Zuarungu District Record Book, p. 171. On the day of the election, appeared another contestant, Atule, the «crook» that miscounselled Abazanam, that however did not have any supporters. The officers gave a second

The events related to Abazanam's chieftaincy lead to two conclusions that further demonstrate that the political equilibrium in Bolgatanga was primarily balanced by the royal families. The first one is that Abazanam's renunciation shows the contingent plasticity of the Gurensi customary law in Bolgatanga. With this, I mean the ability of the royal families to shape the chieftaincy's unwritten constitution in response to different events and situations that occurred along the years. In the course of the thesis, I already highlighted this feature[90], and the case presented above is another example of this. The families that possessed the chieftaincy constantly modified its unwritten constitution to comply successfully with historical contingencies[91].

The second conclusion, a consequence of the first, is that the leverage that the commissioners had on Bolgatanga's chieftaincy affairs was limited. Concisely, the Bolganaba and his entourage were not the "rag dolls" of the colonial administrators. Instead, the families who were able to acquire political prominence through colonial support, managed it proactively, taking advantage of it to reach their purposes. On the other side, the officers involved themselves in the chieftaincy affairs of Bolgatanga as little as they could. The approval given by the commissioners to the initial selection of Abazanam is a clear testimony of the degree of their involvement in the selection process. The dynamics of Abazanam's renunciation are further evidence of this. In the end, the chiefs' selection in Bolgatanga was not directly influenced by the officers.

The secondary role that the colonial officers had in the political life of the town is then clarified. Even though they were recognized as paramount authorities by the royal families, they did not have full control over them. In this way, the shaping of the customary law of the town remained mainly in Gurensi hands. Their formal approval was secondary to the family decision and even on this, they had weak influence. As Thomas Spear puts it in his seminal review on the works on customary law and tradition in British colonial Africa, the colonial officers «became subject to local discourses of power that they neither fully understood nor controlled»[92]. Even though he refers to the period of indirect rule, in Bolgatanga this could be traced even before. This conclusion is valid not only for the chieftaincy affairs but also for the land tenure. Therefore, the next section will analyse the first registered case of land leasing in Bolgatanga, an event that marked a clear rupture with the past settlement pattern.

chance to Abazanam to retry to gain his chiefly position «if in future years he should prove worthy and the people should want him», even though it never happened.

[90] See for example the introduction of chieftaincy analyzed in chapter 2, or the "quest for seniority" in chapter 4.

[91] And they continued to do it after independence. See Awedoba, *An Ethnographic Study of Northern Ghanaian Conflicts*.

[92] Spear, 'Neo-Traditionalism and the Limits of Invention in British Colonial Africa', 9.

From customary law to commodification of land: the first land leasing in Bolgatanga

By 1905, following a series of anticlerical laws promulgated by the French government following the Dreyfus Affair, the White Fathers decided to move from the Mossi region to the Northern Territories[93]. Here the missionaries expected the permission to settle in the British territories, an expectation soon disappointed by the refusal given by the CC Watherston[94]. However, following a series of negotiations, by 1906 they settled in Navrongo where shortly after they opened the first school in the region[95]. In their first settling in Navrongo, the Fathers reached an agreement regarding the concession of land with the colonial officers in 1912 when they signed a written indenture for the lease of land[96]. When some years later they decided to settle also in Bolgatanga this did not happen. The Fathers would have reached an informal agreement with the town's traditional authorities, while the colonial government remained outside the agreement. This section will analyse the events that led to the stipulation of the first documented case of land leasing for building purposes in Bolgatanga, as a way to show the radical change in the settlement pattern that interested this period.

In 1924 the White Fathers decided to enlarge their diocese and asked permission to the British officers to open another station to the East of Navrongo. Their first choices were Bongo and Tongo[97]. However, following a series of discussions, they reached a compromise with the Governor in Accra that permitted them to open the mission either in Bolgatanga or Nangodi. Therefore, in 1924 the missionaries went touring both places, talking with the chiefs and explaining their projects[98]. Finally, in 1925 they decided to settle in Bolgatanga. Their decision was principally motivated by the high population density of the area. The same day they visited the town, the diarist commented

> A Bolgatanga nous saluons le jeune chef, Azanam, ainsi que son oncle Aogéa. Tous les alentours sont couverts de cases. À cette vue Monseigneur decide que le nouveau poste sera à Bolgatanga. En effet la population est très grande et le chef a autorité sur les chefs de Sérigo, de Sambrungo et de Woukou. Tous ces villages sont très peuplés.-Deo gratias![99]

After their final decision, they consulted the Bolganaba and the *tendaana* of Daporetindongo, who granted them permission to settle temporarily not too far from the marketplace on the 4th of February 1925[100].

[93] Der, 'Church-State Relations in Northern Ghana, 1906-1940', 41.
[94] Der, 41.
[95] Der, 43. The principal reason that led the officers to grant permission to the missionaries was their schooling project
[96] NAG ADM 56/1/33, Catholic Mission Northern Territories
[97] NAG ADM 56/1/511, Annual Report for 1924-25 N.T., Northern Province – Northern Territories Annual Report 1924-1925
[98] Journal de la mission, Navrongo, 19.02.1924, A.G.M.Afr.
[99] Journal de la mission, Bolgatanga, 02.02.1925, A.G.M.Afr.
[100] Journal de la mission, Bolgatanga, 04.02.1925, A.G.M.Afr.

Figure 26. "Bolgatanga. Les P.P. Leclerq et Balch retrouvent des connaissances au marché"

Source: 511-58-11, Masson I-127, Phototeque, A.G.M.Afr.

The White Fathers struggled in their first decades of evangelization in the Gurensi region. Even though the Fathers' dispensary was attended during the first years[101] and they were able to open a school in 1926[102], they did not have a wide success in terms of the number of conversions in the area of Bolgatanga. After four years of permanence, they began baptizing and received the official permission to celebrate marriages[103]. However, in the next ten years, the numbers of converts remained low, and the results of the missionaries were rather disappointing[104]. Even though Bolgatanga was the most populated region in which they were operating, it kept the lowest rate of conversions in the whole Protectorate[105]. In 1937, for example, in Bolgatanga there were just 167 catechumens against the 670 of Navrongo or the 4118 of Nandom[106]. That same year, Monseigneur

[101] Rapport de Mgr. Morin, Prefecture Apostolique de Navrongo, 1926-27, A.G.M.Afr.
[102] Journal de la mission, Bolgatanga, 29.03.1926, A.G.M.Afr.
[103] Journal de la mission, Bolgatanga, 10.08.1929 and 26.12.1929, A.G.M.Afr.
[104] Rapports, 1925-1936, A.G.M.Afr.
[105] The missionaries were able nonetheless to build the first church in the town in 1933, see Journal de la mission, Bolgatanga, 1933, A.G.M.Afr.
[106] For the extraordinary success of the Fathers in the North West see Lentz, *Ethnicity and the Making of History in Northern Ghana*, 153.

Morin would comment with disappointment that the people inhabiting Bolgatanga were the most «réfractaire au progres» of the whole Northern Territories[107]. Moreover, the British officers were not the only ones in showing an ambivalent attitude towards the missionaries. In the course of the years, the relationship with the Bolganaba fluctuated from formal acceptance and generosity to open contrast and even violence[108].

The settlement of the missionaries, however, brought significant changes to the history of Bolgatanga for various reasons. It was the first permanent settlement of Europeans in the town and, more importantly, it represented the beginning of the evangelization of the Gurensi region that led to its language and culture codification. The missionaries' settlement, however, left also the first documented case of land leasing in Bolgatanga. In this regard, their case is exceptional and needs consideration as it reveals the fundamental changes that were occurring in the town and land management in those years. Thanks to the Fathers' diaries, it is possible indeed to retrace the phases through which the officers and the traditional authorities collaborated to grant land for the mission.

The first temporary place, as soon as they arrived, was negotiated by the DC, the Bolganaba and his elders and the *tendaana* of the area. However, the assigned land was not an ideal one. The missionaries complained indeed in their diaries that the soil granted was too poor and the area uninhabited[109]. Azaare recollects that the land was deserted for a reason:

> According to the old men the area was believed to be occupied by all sorts of evil or obnoxious spirits including ghosts, witches etc. That area was given them so that they would suffer the wraths of the ghosts and evil spirits.[110]

The missionaries decided nonetheless to remain there temporarily, although some months later asked the Commissioner for more land. He, in turn, responded that the government did not possess the land in the area of Bolgatanga and that they should discuss the matter directly with the Bolganaba and the *tendaana*[111]. The customary laws on land tenure produced in the previous decade and analysed in chapter 4 were therefore followed. In this way, the District Commissioner not only confirmed the primary role of the chief in the land matters, but he also stood back for any further responsibility on

[107] Rapports de Mgr. Morin, Prefecture Apostolique de Navrongo, 1936-37, A.G.M.Afr.
[108] The Bolganaba participated for example to many Christmas' masses, in some instances bringing cows as gifts. See Journal de la Mission, Bolgatanga, 01.01.1932, 27.01.1935, 25.12.1936, 25.12.1937, A.G.M.Afr. In other cases, violent reprisals and market patrols were organized against the Christians. See Journal de la mission, Bolgatanga, 25.12.1933, A.G.M.Afr. For a case of insubordination organized by the Christians against the chief see §5.4
[109] Journal de la Mission, Bolgatanga, 06.02.1925, A.G.M.Afr.
[110] Christopher Anabila Azaare, *The White Fathers And Brothers Missionaries Activities*, vol. 6, Agurumyela Series 1 ((forthcoming), n.d.).
[111] Journal de la Mission, Bolgatanga, 29.07.1925, A.G.M.Afr.

it[112]. In the end, another piece of land was granted to the White Fathers, this time accepted without complaints. Soon after they started to build their missionary station.

This grant is the first agreement, most probably unwritten, of land leasing for building purposes and rent payment in Bolgatanga present in the archival sources[113]. There is little doubt that the second meeting with the *tendaana* and the Bolganaba led indeed to an agreement of lease. As a matter of fact, in 1926 the Bolganaba collected for the first time an annual rent in cash that the missionaries continued to pay in the following years with the approval of the Commissioners[114]. The agreement and its dynamics reveal the will of the District Commissioner to not intervene directly in land matters in the area of Bolgatanga. This attitude also perdured through the following decade and was nurtured by two contrasting colonial philosophies on land tenure as the last section of the chapter will explain. However, the Bolganaba and his elders were ready to come to terms with the Catholic missionaries. The grant and the agreement that followed represent the first recorded commodification of land for renting. The case indicates quite clearly the rupture with the past settlement pattern and the customary rules regarding land transfer in the area of Bolgatanga. Because of the unwritten nature of the agreements, it is difficult to retrace and analyse other cases concluded outside the colonial or missionary gaze. However, the settling of the missionaries testifies that at least since 1925, land leasing outside colonial jurisdiction was a viable form of land transfer. The confirmation that this process became a trend comes only in the late 1930s, precisely when the officers became interested in land transfers in Bolgatanga and documents were produced for it, as I will show further.

There is no reason to think that the urbanization of the *teŋa* did not continue in the following years. The next sections will show the processes through which indirect rule was implemented in the Gurensi region and how, at the end of the 1930s, Bolgatanga became a pivotal trading centre in the Protectorate. The small markets and the grid of footpaths that characterised the landscape at the beginning of the century would give way to a central marketplace and motorable roads. Following this trend, the population of the town increased sensibly, creating a strong demand for land, especially in the commercial area. The chapter will conclude, therefore, showing how land leasing for the accommodation of foreigners became the rule in the town, marking a definitive change from the previous settlement pattern.

[112] The Government would formally alienate lands only in 1927 with the Land and Native Rights Ordinance, as the next section will explain.

[113] The sources did not specify if there was a written contract, nor what the role of the *tendaana* in the meeting was. With all probability the agreement remained unwritten. I retraced the earliest reported case of land leasing for farming in June 1917 in Zuarungu, when a landowner wanted to evict his tenants for insolvency. See NAG ADM 68/5/1, Zouaragu Station Official Diary, entry for 01.06.1917

[114] For the first payment see Journal de la Mission, Bolgatanga, 30.11.1926, A.G.M.Afr. See also the entries on 07.07.1929, 22.01.1931, 30.11.1931

Paving the way to indirect rule: the "revival" of the tendaana

In the course of the first half of the 20th century, a debate within the colonial administration over land tenure ensued. Two different philosophies were conflicting: one with a "Lugardian" approach that aimed at the "natural" evolution of the African land tenure from a primitive stage to an advanced one without direct colonial action, and to the success of the colonial administrative structure; another one that followed Guggisberg's promotion of new modernised Native States[115]. The latter found its legal solution in 1927, with the promulgation of the Land and Native Rights Ordinance. This ordinance placed all the lands under the control of the colonial government, the sole institution judged capable enough to manage land. The formal aim of the Ordinance was to prevent alienation of land from non-natives, defending the locals from the speculation of foreigners. In this way, all the lands of the natives were declared public and placed under the control of the Governor, but the actual result of this was the alienation created by the Government itself[116]. Moreover, the ordinance paved the way to the implementation of indirect rule and the creation of Guggisberg's modernised Native States[117]. The Ordinance allowed indeed the alienation of land by the government for development purposes, and in its further emendation in 1932 would also put the Native Authorities in charge over land tenure.

The following sections will analyse the process through which the Bolganaba was formally put in charge of the lands in Bolgatanga and allowed to ask a rent over them. This process was in part the result of administrative compromises resulting from the inherent paradoxes of indirect rule. The two philosophies cited at the beginning of the paragraph collided in the actual implementation of the reforms. However, before the officers reached an agreement that basically confirmed the *status quo*, the land in Bolgatanga was already managed by the chief. This section will introduce then the preparatory work that led to the implementation of the indirect rule in Bolgatanga. This preparatory work consisted mainly in a "revival" of the figure of the *tendaana* among the officers, that, however, did not bring any results.

In the Zuarungu District, the problems relating to delimiting the chiefdoms' boundaries endured at the end of the 1920s and continued to be the cause of disputes among the Gurensi[118].

[115] Lund, *Local Politics and the Dynamics of Property in Africa.*, 26.
[116] Lund, 32.
[117] The ordinance was partially revised in 1931 to empower the government to appropriate land for development purposes and to transfer the legal powers on land to the Native Authorities. See Grischow, *Shaping Tradition*, 105; Raymond B. Bening, 'Land Policy and Administration in Northern Ghana 1898-1976', *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* 16, no. 2 (1995): 227–66.
[118] Chiefs: Zuarungu District [1927-28], British Library, EAP541/1/2/11, https://eap.bl.uk/archive-file/EAP541-1-2-11

Further studies on the organisation of the northern societies were however carried out to improve the colonial knowledge in view of the coming implementation of indirect rule. These studies resulted in the rehabilitation of the role of the earth priest in the officers' vision of the northern noncentralized societies[119]. The role of the *tendaana* was indeed recognized central in his society, and many officers proposed a possible integration of this figure in the administrative structure.

Seminal in this regard was the work of Robert Sutherland Rattray[120]. Rattray was an amateur ethnographer sent by the Government who began his research work in the Northern Territories in 1928. He was sent North so that his research would have facilitated the implementation of indirect rule. Shortly after his arrival, he started a collaboration with the White Fathers who taught him the local languages and introduced him to his Gurensi informant, Victor Aboya[121]. Aboya would collaborate with Rattray and follow him throughout the research the ethnographer carried out in the Gurensi area[122]. Rattray started his work in the area around Bolgatanga, precisely in Winkogo, Aboya's *teŋa*. The area was selected as the initial (and most conspicuous) field of operations because

> this is one of the most thickly populated areas, partly because it was the most remote from civilization, and partly because it was the only portion of the country concerning which there existed any previous literature.[123]

Supported by his Oxford-based formation in evolutionary anthropology, he published some years after his research in the Protectorate *The tribes of the Ashanti Hinterland*, a book that stands as «the beginning of academic ethnography of the Northern Territories»[124].

Rattray's writings are an invaluable source of information for the study of both the Gurensi and the British colonial thought. As a matter of fact, parts of his ethnography were written by Aboya himself in Gurune and then translated into English, being the first Gurensi written source. Apart from the incredible wealth of ethnographic details collected and its intrinsic value, the source represents a shared ethnographic effort that pictures Gurensi society at the end of the 1920s. In their ethnography, it is possible to follow the arguments and reasoning of both the British anthropologist and the Gurensi intellectual[125]. But Rattray and Aboya's writings also reveal the expressivity of the British colonial record and the unevenness of the «understanding of the relationship of colonial officials to the

[119] Lund, *Local Politics and the Dynamics of Property in Africa.*, 28; Lentz, 'Colonial Ethnography and Political Reform'; Grischow, *Shaping Tradition*, 74.
[120] For accounts on Rattray's life see Lentz, *Ethnicity and the Making of History in Northern Ghana*, 94; Allman and Parker, *Tongnaab*, 107.
[121] Journal de la mission, Navrongo, 18.01.1928, A.G.M.Afr.
[122] Rattray, *The Tribes of the Ashanti Hinterland*, 130.
[123] TNA CO 98/50, Report by the Special Commissioner or Anthropology for the year April 1927 – March 1928. In the quotation he was referring to the work of Cardinall, *The Natives of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast. Their Customs, Religion and Folklore*.
[124] Lentz, *Ethnicity and the Making of History in Northern Ghana*, 94.
[125] See chapter 1 for a discussion on the foundation myths and the value of Rattray and Aboya's writings today.

imperial project of indirect rule»[126]. Rattray's was indeed in contrast with many officers, mostly because he denounced the neglect of the role of the *tendaana* in the administrative structure[127]. He theorized that the advent of despotic rulers (the chiefs) in the Protectorate was the result of the officers' ignorance of the real social organisation of the people. According to him, the real rulers were the *tendaama* that remained in the background during the British conquest[128]. The implementation of indirect rule could have been therefore an occasion to restore their authority from a juridical point of view.

Rattray's vision encountered many critics among the colonial staff[129]. This was especially true for the Commissioner of the Northern Province, Percy F. Witthall, offended by the anthropologist's accuses of the officers' ignorance[130]. Through the years, a series of documents were indeed presented to attest the officers' knowledge of indigenous customs and contribute to the implementation of the indirect rule. One such document is "A Digest of the Religion and system of land tenure of the Kasena Tribe" written by Witthall himself with the help of the White Fathers and the interpreter in Navrongo, Bali Cypriani, educated in the missionaries' school[131]. The value of this document in attesting the evolving and differing interpretations on indigenous land tenure produced by colonial officers is clear. As such, the document testifies the evolution of the registered customary law and its co-authored process of creation.

A comparison of this report with the one written by Cpt. Nash in the 1910s, analysed in the previous chapter, reveals the different approaches and influences of the officers[132]. This time much more emphasis was given to religious matters, unsurprisingly considering the officer's informants. The introductory note presents indeed the ways in which religion affected the life of the people in the district. Nonetheless, the identity between chiefdoms and settlements expressed by Nash continued to be asserted even in this report. The definition of town in the document is indeed quite telling on this: «Towns as we know them here are areas under one Chief»[133]. Nonetheless, this time much more space was allowed to the role of the "Landmaster", a blurred figure between the *tendaana* and the *yzukeema*. This was the one who was allowed to manage land, even though he was not the owner.

[126] Ignatov, 'The Skin and the Stool: Re-Crafting Histories of Belonging in Northern Ghana', 155.
[127] Lentz, *Ethnicity and the Making of History in Northern Ghana*, 95.
[128] Rattray, *The Tribes of the Ashanti Hinterland*, xvi–xvii.
[129] Allman and Parker, *Tongnaab*, 195.
[130] See for example NAG ADM 56/1/91, Laws and Customs N.T., CNP to CCNT, 07.06.1930. In this letter Whittall defended the officers of the Northern Province, stating that the role of the *tendaana* was well-known by them. He asserted that the officers had even produced a "Tindana map of the Zuarungu District", which however was never presented.
[131] NAG ADM 56/1/113, Land Tenure Northern Province, A Digest of the Religion and system of land tenure of the Kasena Tribe
[132] NAG ADM 56/1/105, Report of the Northern Territories Land Committee, Report on Fra Fra Land Tenure by Cap. S.D. Nash, 18.09.1911
[133] NAG ADM 56/1/113, Land Tenure Northern Province, A Digest of the Religion and system of land tenure of the Kasena Tribe

The question of the ownership of land, however, was not directly faced. On the other hand, in Whitall's report, the chief figured as a secondary role in land matters, one that could not interfere with the decisions of the Landmaster. In the end, Whitall's report stated that «there are no signs that any of these customs are beginning to die out, and the system of Land Tenure is rigidly adhered to»[134]. However, what would happen in Bolgatanga in the following years clearly contradicts this crystallizing view of the Gurensi land tenure. As a matter of fact, the people of the town and the chief himself became increasingly involved in renting land to strangers, as the next section will prove.

In conclusion, the "revival" of the *tendaana* did not have any consequence in the design of the indirect rule. Rattray's effort to revaluate the earth priests led indeed to proposals to delimit the boundaries of the ritual areas together with those of the chiefdoms[135]. Nonetheless, these proposals did not find any results in the implementation of the indirect rule. The administrative workability of the chief continued to be preferred to the role of the *tendaana*[136]. The next section will present therefore the process that led to the creation of the Bolgatanga Sub-Native Authority. This formally confirmed the position of the Bolganaba in the chiefs' hierarchy in the region. Moreover, it also sanctioned his role in the management and allocation of plots of land.

[134] *ivi*
[135] Bening, 'Indigenous Concepts of Boundaries and Significance of Administrative Stations and Boundaries in Northern Ghana'; Grischow, *Shaping Tradition*, 79.
[136] Lund, *Local Politics and the Dynamics of Property in Africa.*, 37; Lentz, *Ethnicity and the Making of History in Northern Ghana*, 102.

5.4 From *teŋa* to town: Bolgatanga's increasing urbanization

The creation of the Bolgatanga Sub-Native Authority

By the end of 1929, under the mandate of Governor Ransford Slater, the new policy to implement indirect rule was launched. The reforms intended to amalgamate the chiefdoms of the Northern Territories, thus putting the chiefs at the head of the new Native States from a territorial, juridical and financial point of view[137]. This section will analyse the political negotiations that led to the creation of the Bolgatanga Sub-Native Authority, and the consequences it had on the town from a political point of view. The foundation of the Native Authority was, in fact, strictly related to the relationship that the Bolganaba developed with the Nayiri. In the end, with the colonial support, the latter was able to put the Gurensi chiefs under his jurisdiction.

The indirect rule did not find an easy implementation in the Northern Territories, both from an administrative and a practical point of view. The old guard of the officers who worked in the North for years objected against the new reforms. According to them, these would not have really changed anything, as the "rule through chiefs" was already their motto in the North since the beginning of the British occupation[138]. In the end, the acceptance and discussion of the reforms led to a renovation in the colonial staff. Those who did not accept and favour the implementation of the indirect rule, after debates over it, were finally replaced with new officers coming from the South[139].

The introduction of taxation in the Protectorate was considered to be the collar bone of the policy. According to the Government, the time was ripe for taxes in the Northern Territories for two main reasons. Firstly, the Native States were considered mature enough to sustain a system of taxation. Secondly, more pragmatically, the administration was not ready to financially maintain the Native States in the wake of the Depression[140]. Moreover, following the Geneva convention of 1930, the requests for forced labour were banned, depriving the officers of their share of "free labour"[141].

[137] Grischow, *Shaping Tradition*, 87.
[138] Staniland, *The Lions of Dagbon*, 80.
[139] Staniland, 78. Soeters argues that the debate among officers on indirect rule represented more a deterioration of relationship than an ideological divergence between them. Soeters, 'Tamale 1907-1957: Between Colonial Trade and Colonial Chieftainship', 110.
[140] Grischow, *Shaping Tradition*, 98–99.
[141] Staniland, *The Lions of Dagbon*, 79.

Taxation became, therefore, the primary concern for the administration in order to create a Native Jurisdiction. In this context, the definition of clear boundaries between the Native States became crucial, as it would have facilitated the collection of taxes[142].

In 1932, the districts that covered the north-eastern part of the Protectorate were, therefore, finally amalgamated under the Mamprusi District[143]. Between 1929 and 1932, however, the hierarchies and boundaries of the Native States continued to fluctuate and be discussed. The initial internal borders delineated by the officers in 1929, which followed alleged «ethnic limits» were soon renegotiated and changed (see Figure 27)[144]. The idea of a Mamprusi Native State that overruled the Kusasi, Kasena-Nankanni, "Frafra" and Builsa did not find much success among both the officers and the chiefs. The Bolganaba, for example, at first did not accept the subordination to the Nayiri and therefore Bolgatanga did not feature in the first design of the scheme, marking a strong parallelism with the implementation of the "Greater Mamprusi" analysed in the previous chapter. In the previous decade, the Bolganaba was indeed able to maintain his chiefdom independent from Mamprugu. In theory, the creation of the "Greater Mamprusi" implied his submission, even though there were little consequences in practice. In this case, an ahistorical submission of the northern societies to the Mamprusi was theorized again by the colonial scheme. However, with the creation of the Native Authorities, things were going to change.

In the course of the debate that ensued among the northern officers in 1931, the District Commissioner for Zuarungu, R.E. Page, cleared his mind to the Commissioner of the Northern Province, stating that the Mamprusi never really had any claim on his district, especially for Bolgatanga. He proposed then to build the Native Administrations on the existing arrangements, where the Bolganaba featured as a Head Chief, although as an "independent" one. Granting space for negotiation with the chief, he commented that «all except Bolgatanga acknowledge the Na as paramount Chief and I do not expect that Bolgatanga would object to falling into line with the others»[145]. The officer recognized the independence of Bolgatanga from Mamprugu, and, at the same time, he recognized the diplomatic character of the chief. However, Page opposed to the idea that

[142] Bening, 'Indigenous Concepts of Boundaries and Significance of Administrative Stations and Boundaries in Northern Ghana', 15.
[143] Grischow, *Shaping Tradition*, 95.
[144] Bening, 'Foundations of the Modern Native States of Northern Ghana', 126.
[145] Native Administration [1930-31], British Library, EAP541/1/2/22, https://eap.bl.uk/archive-file/EAP541-1-2-22

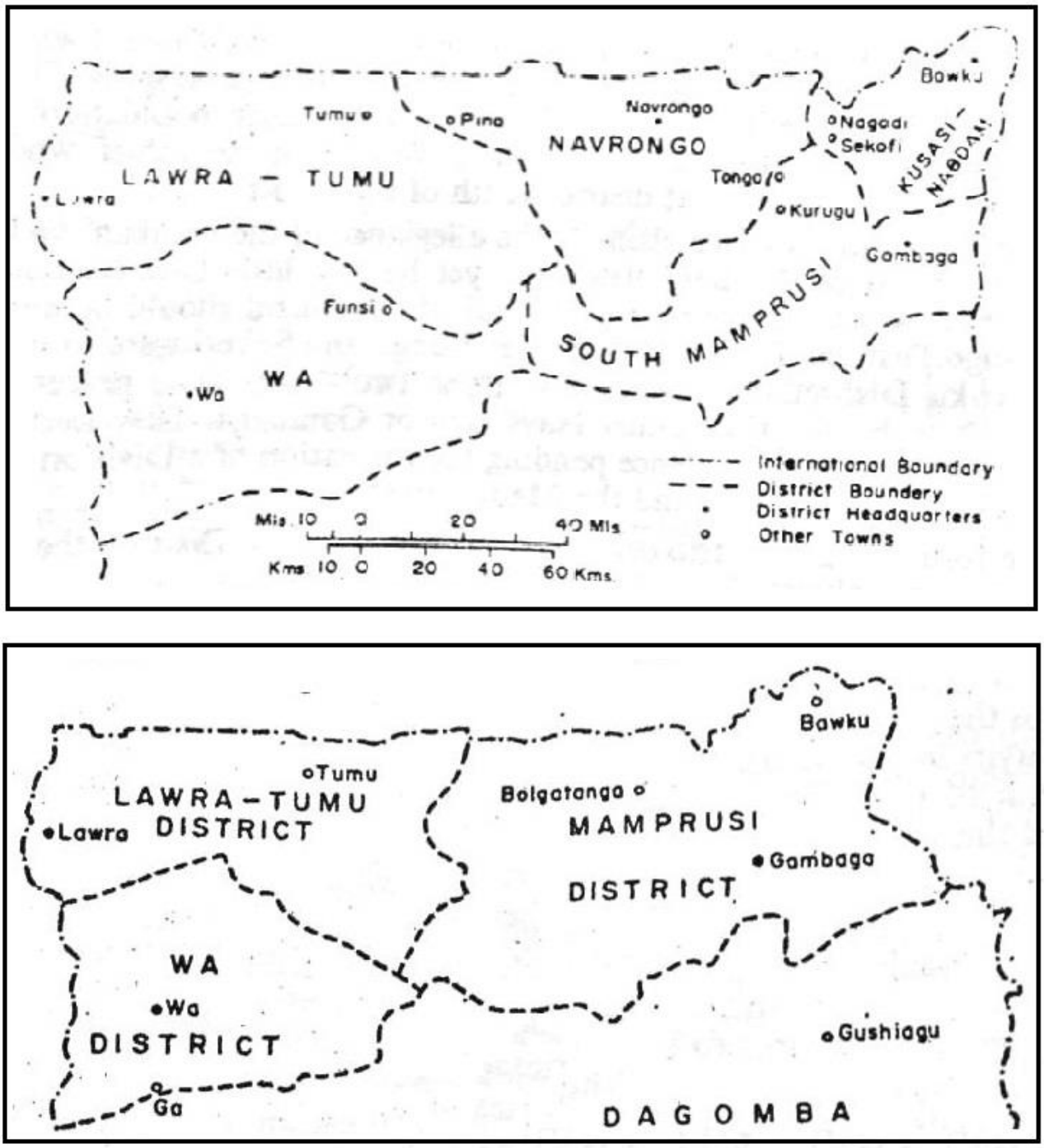

Figure 27. Proposed administrative areas, Northern Province, 1931 (up) and the actual administrative division, 1932 (below)

Source: Raymond Bening, 'Foundations of the Modern Native States of Northern Ghana', 127, 129

> […] Sekoti or Bolgatanga should sacrifice their independence and become subject to any Chief except the NA. Both these places suffered great hardship from the surrounding peoples on account of their assisting the white men on their first coming. No doubt as a reward for their help they were treated as independent chiefs[146].

The passage is quite revealing. Even though the officer accepted a potential submission to the Nayiri, he would not have accepted a demotion for the chiefdom of Bolgatanga. The excerpt also reveals the long-lasting appreciation that the officers continued to exhibit for the Bolganaba. In 1931, Adongo's collaboration in the military conquest at the beginning of the century was still put forward to preserve the privileged status of Bolgatanga. Nonetheless, in his answer to Page, the Provincial Commissioner Whittall appeased the officer, underlining that his idea was «to get each tribe organised AS FAR AS WE CAN under one Chief, not so much as their ruler but their mouthpiece later when the formation of a Native State becomes possible»[147]. In this way, the officers recognized the fragmentation and independence of the Gurensi, and space was left open for negotiation. Nevertheless, the reforms still had to be implemented.

Awogeya officially expressed his submission to the Nayiri in 1931[148]. In 1932, as a result of the formalization of the indirect rule scheme, the South Mamprusi, Navrongo, Zuarungu and Kusasi Districts were amalgamated into the Mamprusi District, and the Zuarungu colonial station was closed down[149]. In this way, the position of the Zuarungu District, together with Bawku, the Kasena-Nankani and the Builsa were confirmed as subordinate and part of the kingdom of Mamprusi, under the authority of the Nayiri[150]. In December of the same year, a conference was held to confirm the allegiance of the chiefs of the North East to the Nayiri[151]. The Bolganaba attended it, submitting again to the Mamprusi Native Authority.

The decision to accept the Nayiri's paramountcy marked a substantial change in the methods of the selection of the chiefs. Previously, the Bolganaba was selected by the royal families, a selection formally sanctioned by the commissioners, as described earlier in the chapter. With this new subordination, the chief was now subject to the Nayiri's confirmation too[152]. As a matter of fact, Awogeya was compelled to go to Nalerigu to be reconfirmed in his position. According to the White

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[146] Native Administration [1930-31], British Library, EAP541/1/2/22, https://eap.bl.uk/archive-file/EAP541-1-2-22
[147] Native Administration [1930-31], British Library, EAP541/1/2/22, https://eap.bl.uk/archive-file/EAP541-1-2-22. Emphasis in the original.
[148] Annual Report for the Zuarungu District [1931-32], British Library, EAP541/1/3/38, https://eap.bl.uk/archive-file/EAP541-1-3-38
[149] Report on the Northern Territories [1932-33], British Library, EAP541/1/3/43, https://eap.bl.uk/archive-file/EAP541-1-3-43
[150] Grischow, *Shaping Tradition*, 94.
[151] Report on the Northern Territories [1932-33], British Library, EAP541/1/3/43, https://eap.bl.uk/archive-file/EAP541-1-3-43
[152] Azaare, 'Life in Bolga'.

Fathers' diarist, this journey was a heavy burden for the chief's budget. In order to be reconfirmed in his position, the missionaries registered that the Bolganaba paid a generous "gift" to the Nayiri[153]. However, in December 1933, the Bolgatanga Sub-Native Authority was finally created by the Nayiri[154].

After 1933, the administration showed a keener interest in recognizing the political fragmentation of the so-called "Frafra"[155]. The implementation and development of a customized constitution in the Talensi area was greatly enhanced by the work of Meyer Fortes, «an anthropologist of unquestionable ability»[156] that worked in the Tong Hills between 1934 and 1937[157]. Fortes has been the subject of much more attention than Rattray both in colonial and scholarly circles[158]. However, in his research, he avoided Bolgatanga as well as Zuarungu, as they were probably recognized as centres highly influenced by the "culture contact" due to the presence of the officers' headquarters in the latter, and the station of the White Fathers in the former. Thus, even though his seminal monographs and articles on the Talensi are a treasure in ethnographic details and analysis, they did not give direct evidence on the development of Bolgatanga[159]. Nonetheless, most of the information collected in his works is of great value for comparison.

The work that Fortes carried out among the Talensi led to the substitution of the chief of Kurugu by the Tongrana, the chief of Tongo. In June 1937 the Kurugu Native Authority was indeed abolished during a meeting held in Zuarungu. This conference was, however, an important event also for another reason. In this occasion, the boundaries of the Bolgatanga Sub-Native Authority were rediscussed and defined again. The Nayiri ordered the amalgamation of Zuarungu into Bolgatanga and the passage of Winkogo from Bolgatanga to the new Talensi Native Authority[160]. A year after this arrangement, the Nayiri, in accordance with the administration, gave the Bolganaba the power to enskin the chiefs under him, comprising the Zuarungunaba. The implementation of indirect rule

[153] The White Fathers wrote that to be reconfirmed Awogeya send to Nalerigu 18 cows, 3 donkeys, and 3000 shillings. Journal de la Mission, Bolgatanga, 20.12.1932, A.G.M.Afr.
[154] NAG ADM 68/5/5, Zuarungu District Record Book, p. 142
[155] Iliasu, 'The Establishment of British Administration in Mamprugu, 1898-1937', 24.
[156] NAG-T NRG 8/3/49, Annual Report for the Northern Territories, 1934-1935
[157] Allman and Parker, *Tongnaab*, 182.
[158] See for example Timothy Insoll, 'Meyer Fortes and Material Culture: The Published Image and the Unpublished Resource', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 16, no. 3 (2010): 572–587; Parker, 'The Dynamics of Fieldwork among the Talensi: Meyer Fortes in Northern Ghana, 1934–7'; Peter M. Worsley, 'The Kinship System of the Tallensi: A Revaluation', *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 86, no. 1 (1956): 37. For a recent article on the development of his theoretical framework see Keith Hart, '«Structural Dynamics: Forms, Networks, Numbers. (Meyer Fortes in the 1940s)»', accessed 21 August 2019, http://www.berose.fr/?Structural-Dynamics-Forms-Networks-Numbers-Meyer-Fortes-in-the-1940s.
[159] Fortes, *The Dynamics of Clanship among the Tallensi*; Meyer Fortes, 'Communal Fishing and Fishing Magic in the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast.', *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 67 (January 1937): 131; Fortes, *The Web of Kinship among the Tallensi*; Meyer Fortes and Sonia L. Fortes, 'Food in the Domestic Economy of the Tallensi', *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 9, no. 2 (1936): 237–76.
[160] NAG ADM 68/5/5, Zuarungu District Record Book, pp. 4, 27, 142

confirmed then the subordination of the chiefs put previously under the Bolganaba. In this way, in 1938 the Bolganaba had officially under him the chiefs of Sumbrungu, Kumbosego, Yorogo, Gambibigu, Zaare, Yikene, Zuarungu, Dulugu, Yarigabisi and Sirigu[161].

The new political balances created with the indirect rule confirmed the Bolganaba's jurisdiction over the smaller chieftaincies in the Gurensi area. Thanks to the Nayiri's intervention he also acquired prominence over Zuarungu, the former district capital. In the end, the diplomatic skills employed by the Bolganabas in the first decades of British colonization led the chiefdom to grow steadily in importance and authority. Even though insubordination continued, the different Bolganabas were able to negotiate their supremacy over their neighbours. The colonial period marked then a political transition for the settlement of Bolgatanga. The intrusion of the colonial apparatus in the fluid and situational relationships among settlements created a space of action that was promptly exploited by the Bolganabas: a hierarchy was created where there was none before.

The creation of the chiefdom and the preservation of its independence from the other ones was crucial in the development of the town. With the creation of the Bolgatanga Sub-Native Authority, the Bolganaba and his council of elders were formally entitled to manage revenue and land. The next section will show, therefore, how this influenced the town's spatial configuration. The settlement pattern, and especially the land tenure in the central part of the town were indeed profoundly modified. With the sharp increase of population due to the commercial success of the marketplace, the people ceased to farm their land and started to lease it. The circular plantations of millet that surrounded the compounds were gradually substituted by new rectangular buildings rented to strangers.

Market growth and infrastructure development

The implementation of indirect rule led to a gradual change in the approach of the chiefs to the management of their community, or, at least, in the officers' vision of this role. The change implied the vanishing of the «warlike strongman of the first generation» to the «capable and […] obedient administrator who allowed himself to be incorporated in the bureaucratic hierarchy»[162]. In

[161] NAG ADM 68/5/5, Zuarungu District Record Book, p. 142
[162] Lentz and Nugent, *Ethnicity in Ghana*, 126.

general, it can be stated that the period after the implementation of indirect rule led to a gradual change in the relationship between the chiefs and the people in the Gurensi region, due to the cessation of forced labour[163]. The new reforms were indeed intended to facilitate this transformation. The abolition of forced labour and the cessation of the officers' request for work on roads, rest houses, and porterage started to soften the frictions that arose between the chiefs and the population[164]. Moreover, in 1934 in the Mamprusi District the figure of the *kambonaba* was finally abolished[165].

When Awogeya was proposed as the successor of the outgoing despotic and iniquitous Abazanam, he was saluted as the ideal candidate. Awogeya, elected in 1930, was indeed old enough to inspire trust and wisdom within the people[166]. Moreover, for most of his life, he worked as a tax collector in the market, an effective laboratory for the development of diplomatic and political skills and the enlargement of personal networks[167]. Immediately after the creation of the Bolgatanga Sub-Native Authority, the officers acclaimed indeed the work done in court by Awogeya, as he made «patient and careful enquiry into all matters brought before him»[168]. However, Awogeya's diplomatic skills did not lead to a calm acceptance of his overrule. Chieftaincy continued to be contested by the rest of the population. In Bolgatanga the proposed elimination of the *kambonaba* and the imposition of a tax raised indeed another wave of insubordination against the chief. In order to ease the implementation of the reforms, a conference was held in Bolgatanga on 14th February 1936 where the Chief Commissioner saluted the new era of direct taxation and the end of forced labour. After the conference, a group of catechumens from the White Fathers' mission decided to refuse to comply with the chiefs' requests of tributes and labour. An argument then ensued between the chief and the missionaries who vehemently defended their catechumens[169].

Nonetheless, the chief and his council of elders continued to pursue a development policy regarding the town and especially the marketplace. In Bolgatanga, the chief's family was already in charge of the collection of tributes well before the creation of the Native States. In 1919, the DC Cardinall started a system of regular police patrols in the markets of the district[170] and the chiefs'

[163] Thomas, 'The 1916 Bongo "Riots" and Their Background'.
[164] TNA CO 96/738/14, Northern Territories Annual Reports, Annual Report on the Northern Territories for the Year 1936-1937
[165] Report on the Northern Territories for the Year 1934-35 [1934-35], British Library, EAP541/1/3/46, https://eap.bl.uk/archive-file/EAP541-1-3-46. For the definition of *kambonaba* see note 13, chapter 4.
[166] Journal de la Mission, Bolgatanga, 01.11.1929, A.G.M.Afr.
[167] Azaare, 'Life in Bolga'.
[168] Report on the Northern Territories for the Year 1934-35 [1934-35], British Library, EAP541/1/3/46, https://eap.bl.uk/archive-file/EAP541-1-3-46
[169] Journal de la mission, Bolgatanga, 23.03.1936, A.G.M.Afr. The relationship between the missionaries, their catechumens and the chief's family was however rough. In 1933, for example, the chief and his supporters organized armed patrols in the market against the Christians. See Journal de la mission, Bolgatanga, 25.12.1933, A.G.M.Afr.
[170] Navrango-Zuarungu Informal Diary: (B4/1919) [1919], British Library, EAP541/1/4/3, https://eap.bl.uk/archive-file/EAP541-1-4-3

family was the one entitled to collect fees and maintain the peace in the market[171]. A "lord of the market" or "market chief", usually from the chief's family, used to levy a tribute in kind from the sellers on market days. However, in 1934, the Government officially handed over the control and revenues over the markets to the Native Authorities. This implied little change, as already before this date, the chiefs were entitled to control and manage the markets, even though the Government collected revenues on the slaughterhouses and on the permanent stalls[172]. Nevertheless, in 1934, the figure of the "lord of the market" was formalized in a «fee collector»[173].

As argued by Carola Lentz, the link between the chiefs' income and the revenue of the Native Authorities led to the chiefs' growing interest in the investments that could increase their income, such as the infrastructural works (for example caravanserais, markets, and courthouses)[174]. This was also the case for Bolgatanga. The revenue collected was soon spent in public works to develop the market. In 1937 the Bolgatanga Sub-Native Authority built, for example, new market sheds and a butchers' stall in the marketplace[175]. In these years it also became the central grain storehouse for the whole area as for other markets in the District[176]. The investments and development of the market were clearly directed to its development and to enhance its success.

The end of the 1930s was marked by a shift in the kola trade centre in the region. As a matter of fact, Bolgatanga took the place of Walewale in this regard. The kola nut traders were among those that often rerouted their itineraries in response to the presence of colonial stations and the levying of duties. This was the case in the 1920s when a decline was registered in the first half of the decade in the results of the statistics. The decline was a consequence of the rerouting as part of the trade passed through uncontrolled routes, such as those through Bolgatanga[177]. In fact, since 1924 the registered trade increased notably because of the elimination of the French tax on it, and the return of the traders to the main routes[178]. Therefore, by the end of the decade, Bolgatanga and the neighbouring area was an already established centre for this trade[179]. However, in the second half of the 1930s, it acquired

[171] Interview with clan elders in Atulbabisi, 17.01.2015
[172] TNA CO 96/719/1, Northern Territories, Report for 1933-34
[173] TNA CO 96/719/1, Northern Territories, Report for 1933-34
[174] Lentz, *Ethnicity and the Making of History in Northern Ghana*, 110.
[175] TNA CO 96/738/14, Northern Territories Annual Reports, Annual Report on the Northern Territories for the year 1936-1937
[176] TNA CO 96/751/14, "Agriculture in North Mamprusi", Pamphlet by C.W. Lynn (Agricultural Supt), p. 56. In 1938, an Italian company, managed by Mr. Borracelli, built permanent storehouses for grain storage. Journal de la Mission, Bolgatanga, 07.01.1938, A.G.M.Afr.
[177] See for example NAG ADM 56/1/500, Annual Report N.T., 1922-23; NAG ADM 56/1/505 Annual Report NT 1923-24; NAG ADM 56/1/511, Annual Report Northern Territories 1924-25
[178] NAG ADM 56/1/511, Annual Report Northern Territories 1924-25; Annual Reports: Northern Territories [1926], British Library, EAP541/1/3/8, https://eap.bl.uk/archive-file/EAP541-1-3-8
[179] As a matter of fact, Meyer Fortes, shortly after his arrival, suspected that much of the wealth of the country was coming from the kola trade. See TNA CO 96/715/5, Tour of the Governor in the Northern Territories, Diary of N.T. Tour, 5th January to 11th February 1934

definitive central importance. After the construction of the Pwalagu ferry in 1936, that improved communications in a substantial way, Bolgatanga became the most important kola nut trading centre, substituting Walewale, 50 km south in the Mamprusi District. The advantages of Bolgatanga resided again in the fact that it was a junction between the trade routes that connected to the North, East and West entry points in the Protectorate such as Navrongo, Bawku and Bongo[180]. Therefore, trade continued to steadily increase throughout the 1930s as the marketplace expanded. The war years

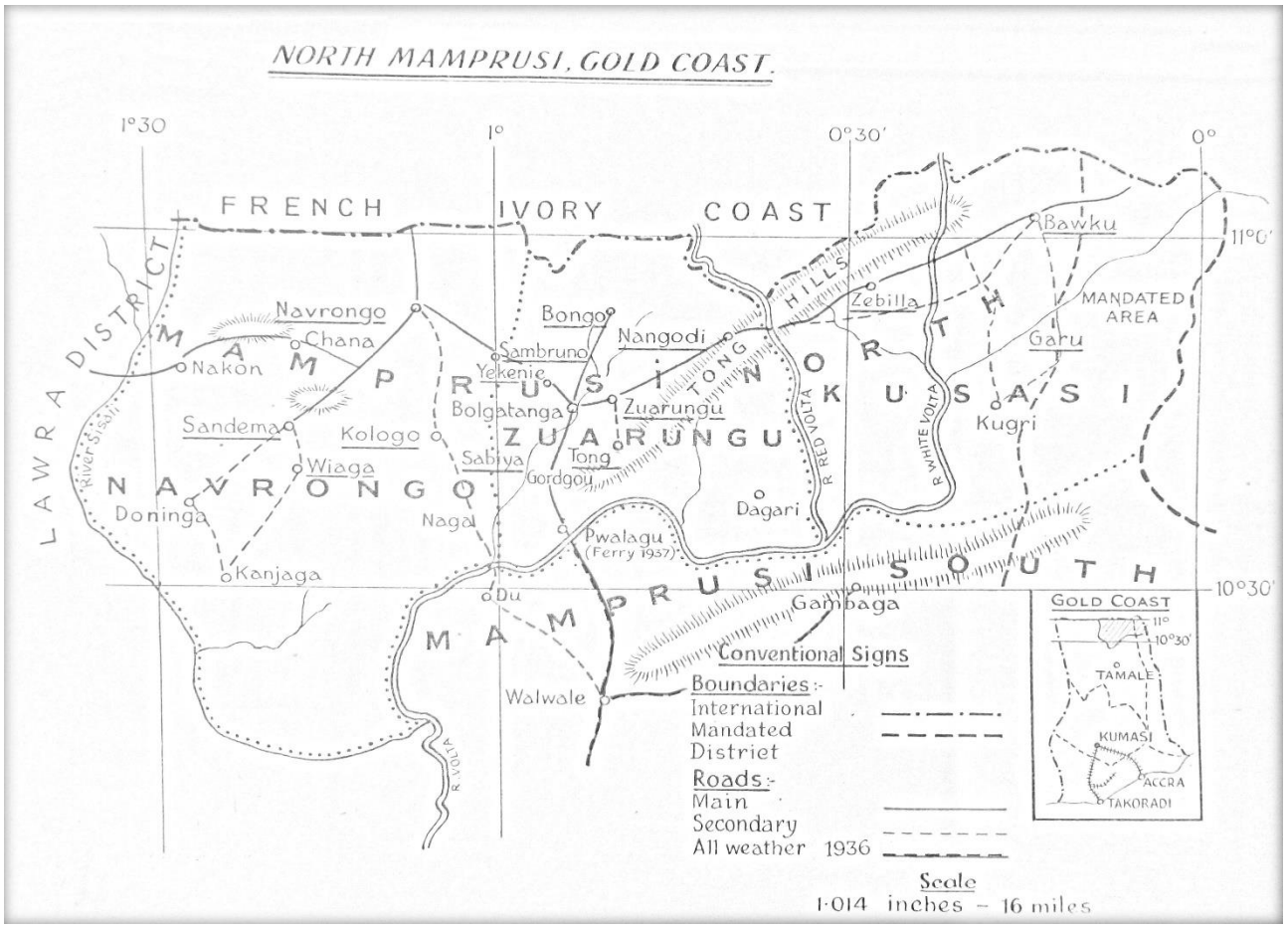

Figure 28. Colonial road network in North Mamprusi (1937)

Source: TNA CO 96/751/14, "Agriculture in North Mamprusi"

would not affect this trend, and it developed as one of the very few trade centres in the region where cattle were brought to market for sale[181].

By the end of the 1930s then the marketplace in Bolgatanga acquired much more centrality in the whole region. The development was made possible by the geographical position of Bolgatanga, both for its presence on the improved road network and for its distance from colonial stations. The town continued to attract traders that increased the attendance and the size of the market, the consequences of which will be presented in the next section. In the 1930s, permanent buildings began

[180] NAG ADM 68/5/5, Zuarungu District Record Book, p. 190
[181] NAG ADM 56/1/374, Report on the activities of the Northern Territories, Activities 1941, Mamprusi District

to be built in it, and, therefore, the marketplace too participated in the spatial change that affected the town in these years. The medium market of the beginning of the century, one among many others, gave way to a big interregional market, one over many others.

The population increase and the change in the settlement pattern

The growth of trade in the 1930s and the improvement of the road network led to a substantial increase in the population of traders in Bolgatanga. New traders started to cross the roads, increasing the already established flows of merchants and migrants[182]. The area close to the lorry park and the

Figure 29. Traders at the market in Bolgatanga (1940 ca.)

Source: 511-58-14, Masson I-127-5, Phototeque, A.G.M.Afr.

[182] For example, the numbers of Yoruba migrating to the Northern Territories started to increase exponentially. See Eades, *Strangers and Traders*, 15. Moreover, the increasing presence of Muslims in Bolgatanga was recorded by the Christian missionaries especially at the end of the decade. See Journal de la Mission, Bolgatanga, 18.10.1939, A.G.M.Afr.

market experienced in these years a rising overpopulation. Between 1939 and 1945 the permanent traders in Bolgatanga nearly doubled. The floating population during market days in 1947 was estimated between 10,000 and 15,000 people[183].

In the central area of the town, this demographic growth resulted in the radical modification of the settlement pattern. C.W. Lynn, the Superintendent of Agriculture, recorded an evident change in the spatial organization in 1937; he noted that, especially in the vicinity of the market and in the nearby lorry park, buildings started to be erected without the usual distance among each other, resulting, according to him, in the «formation of towns»[184]. Due to the overflow of people that wanted to settle for trading purposes, the first areas to get crowded were thus the commercial ones, not too far from the chief's palace. However, before the officers decided to formalize legally the leasing of lands in Bolgatanga, the latter had already found an agreement with the established new settlers. This section intends to analyse the role of the officers and the traditional authorities in the management of

Figure 30. Cloth traders in Bolgatanga (1940 ca.)

Source: 511-58-13, Masson I-127-4, Phototeque, A.G.M.Afr.

[183] NAG ADM 68/5/5, Zuarungu District Record Book, p. 190. The population increase was recorded, however, as a general trend in the whole Frafra region, and the population pressure considered as a serious problem to face, see for example TNA CO 96/738/14, Northern Territories Annual Reports, Annual Report on the Northern Territories for the year 1936-1937, and Grischow, *Shaping Tradition*, 115.

[184] TNA CO 96/751/14, "Agriculture in North Mamprusi", Pamphlet by C.W. Lynn (Agricultural Supt), p. 6

the land tenure in the central part of Bolgatanga in the late 1930s. It will show that the colonial state entered into land leasing only later and without incisiveness. Its intervention was in fact disregarded by the population of the town and the new settlers that preferred to operate transactions outside colonial control.

Starting from 1938, the officers assumed a different attitude towards Bolgatanga and its land tenure[185]. The planning and development of the town started to be taken more seriously, and a town layout was demarcated after a survey[186]. This was meant to facilitate prospective sanitation and further commercial development[187]. However, the collaboration and the proactive stance of the people was crucial to increase the land to allocate for building purposes. In this occasion, those living in the central part of the town near the marketplace voluntarily and autonomously gave up their farms[188]. The Assistant District Commissioner Kerr noted in his diary with some surprise that

> The 40 compounds in the town boundary offered not to plant corn within any of the town in future. I told them that I was delighted at the offer, but that I thought it would be very hard on some of them, and that I did not expect to stop high crops in the town all in one year. However, they insisted on sticking to their offer, and I said that if so we would try to get something special in the next estimates to benefit them.[189]

The land freed in this way was promptly allocated to locals and foreigners who were asking for it and the new settlers started immediately to build on it.

Of all the people that settled in the area, no one paid the government for the land. Nonetheless, an agreement with the local authorities was made. In drawing this conclusion, I am following Christian Lund's argument that most probably land transactions in Bolgatanga were operated «out of the legal and administrative horizon of government and the state»[190]. Lund takes into consideration the fact that the number of the issued Certificates of Occupancy by the government[191] in the next years remained very low while the town grew exponentially. Even though the conclusion is correct, in that the land leases were negotiated without the government sanction, it could be misleading. The land transactions were concluded outside governmental terms and conditions, nonetheless, the officers were aware of this. The people that moved to the town and settled there conducted agreements

[185] The District Commissioner started to take an interest also in the direct planning of the town. In 1938, he impeded the building of a school farm close to the mission station because he wanted to expand the borders of the town and to build another lorry park. See Journal de la Mission, Bolgatanga, 04.07.1938, A.G.M.Afr. On the project of developing a mixed farming for the Gurensi area see Grischow, *Shaping Tradition*, 115.
[186] TNA CO 96/758/5, Annual Reports, Annual Report for 1938-39
[187] Right of Native Authorities to Lease Plots to Non-Native in Certain Circumstances [1939-48], British Library, EAP541/1/1/23, https://eap.bl.uk/archive-file/EAP541-1-1-23
[188] *ivi*
[189] Informal Diary: Zuarungu 13/1938 [1938-39], British Library, EAP541/1/4/85, https://eap.bl.uk/archive-file/EAP541-1-4-85
[190] Lund, *Local Politics and the Dynamics of Property in Africa.*, 37.
[191] See below

with the local authorities, the chief and the *tendaana*, to acquire land. The fact that after the amendment of the Land and Rights Administration Ordinance in 1932, virtually the government was in charge of the lands did not modify the situation. The traditional authorities continued to operate independently of colonial laws, granting land to those who asked for it. The colonial officers were aware that the land leasing in Bolgatanga was going on without their control, yet, despite this, they did not take part in it, as the case of the missionaries demonstrates, even because there was no legal way for them to intervene. This challenge was a clear result of the conflicting ideas that subsumed the indirect rule policy, as I will explain further. However, efforts to solve this situation were put forward the moment the Bolgatanga Town layout was designed. Shortly after, the officers started a debate on how the allocation of plots in the town was going to be managed.

In July 1939 Mr Tetteh Blankson, a trader from the South, decided to develop his plot in Bolgatanga partly as a beer shop, partly as living quarters and partly as a small store. He, therefore, asked instructions to the District Commissioner in Gambaga. With his letter, he opened a debate between the District Commissioner and the Chief Commissioner on how to regulate the plot leasing in Bolgatanga and what part should the Government take in it[192]. The debate subsumed the principal contradiction in the implementation of indirect rule, especially concerning land tenure, that is «the cross purposes between the ideal command by the colonial authorities and the necessity to rule via some local legitimate authority»[193]. The conundrum is particularly evident in the correspondence. The heart of the matter was to what extent should the government participate in land leases. The debate lasted for the whole of 1939, also involving the Land Department in Accra until February 1940, when it concluded. It was decided that the «Bolganaba and his Elders will look after Bolga Town subject to the general authority of the Bolga Sub-Native Authority». However, the officers left an opportunity open for the government to participate in land allocation, through the issuing of Certificates of Occupancy. Therefore, the people interested in obtaining a plot should have either had a Certificate of Occupancy from the Government or an agreement with the Bolganaba and his elders[194].

In practice, the *status quo* was acknowledged and formalized, but to it was added the possibility for the government to alienate and allocate land. The conclusion of the debate and the legal inclusion of the government in the land transfers did not change much whatever was happening in the town. In the following years, the population continued to increase, and this raised the demand for

[192] Right of Native Authorities to Lease Plots to Non-Native in Certain Circumstances [1939-48], British Library, EAP541/1/1/23, https://eap.bl.uk/archive-file/EAP541-1-1-23
[193] Lund, *Local Politics and the Dynamics of Property in Africa.*, 41.
[194] The contract created in this instance was used as a model for the rest of the Northern Territories. See Right of Native Authorities to Lease Plots to Non-Native in Certain Circumstances [1939-48], British Library, EAP541/1/1/23, https://eap.bl.uk/archive-file/EAP541-1-1-23

land. In 1947, more plots were made available after an extension of the town plan was carried out and they were soon occupied, especially by wealthy traders coming from the South[195]. However, the majority of those who took a plot in Bolgatanga preferred to come to terms with the chief, rather than sign the government's Certificate of Occupancy that, as already mentioned, remained unpopular also in the following years.

The main effect that the officers' debate had was to officially put the chief and his council of elders in charge of the land in Bolgatanga[196]. In the following years, a part of the administration attempted again unsuccessfully to insert the *tendaana* in the legal management of land[197]. In 1940 a Town Council for Bolgatanga was established[198]. The next year a new Town Authority was elected, putting at the side of the Bolganaba representatives from the "Frafra" and from the communities of foreigners such as the Dagomba, Mossi, Yoruba and Kotokoli[199], the traders' communities that inhabited the town. The revenue raised through the market fees continued to be used for the improvement of the town during the war years. The Town Authority spent it in policing and administration and in the building of roads, dams, tree planting and market sheds[200]. The spatial organization of the *teŋa*, with its kinship and ritual organisation, was therefore substantially modified. Increasingly Bolgatanga became the result of different ways of structuring and planning urban space.

[195] NAG ADM 68/5/5, Zuarungu District Record Book, p. 190
[196] This would lead in the future to competing claims over jurisdiction and resources. Lund, *Local Politics and the Dynamics of Property in Africa.*; Awedoba, *An Ethnographic Study of Northern Ghanaian Conflicts*.
[197] Lund, *Local Politics and the Dynamics of Property in Africa.*, 37.
[198] NAG ADM 56/1/374, Report on the activities of the Northern Territories, Northern Territories, Report on Activities for the year 1940
[199] NAG ADM 68/5/5, Zuarungu District Record Book, p. 190
[200] NAG ADM 68/5/5, Zuarungu District Record Book, p. 191

5.5 Conclusion

The chapter has shown the transformation of the spatial configuration of Bolgatanga in the years between the two world wars. The population of the town increased thanks to its commercial success, which was due to the strategic position in the trade network that continued to be preserved in these years. However, the chapter has analysed not only the demographic and economic change that interested the town but also the respective roles that African and colonial actors had in these changes. In order to ascertain the responsibility that Africans and colonial officers had in planning and developing the urban formation of Bolgatanga, this last chapter has also analysed its political evolution. The actors and processes that shaped the town were plural and multifaceted, and in many instances their intertwining was difficult to trace. Nonetheless, it has been possible to show that Africans were the main actors that directed the forces that moulded Bolgatanga in the process of urbanization. There is no doubt that colonialism affected these forces, but it remained a secondary element. Urbanization was a reaction in which colonialism stood as a minor catalyst. Colonial officers were indeed not the main characters behind the urban planning of Bolgatanga, but rather participants *ex machina*. Only on specific occasions their presence was felt and had substantial results. The everyday life of the town continued to be directed by the Gurensi and the other people that decided to settle there.

The building of the road network was planned by colonial officers and driven by colonial needs. The main stations of the Protectorate had indeed to be connected with the rest of the Colony. The commercial flows should have converged in places where it was possible to control and tax them although once the roads were built, the officers did not choose who and how could have crossed them. Colonial officers planned the roads, but the Africans were those who walked over them. Bolgatanga developed as a trade centre because the town was a point of convergence of two distinct trade geographies, the colonial and the African ones. The town preserved in the years this feature, which was further enhanced by the growth of its market. Its commercial success remained in the hands of the African and Gurensi traders who attended it. Colonial officers did not have any control over it, if not through the Bolganaba.

The chief of Bolgatanga remained a contested but central figure in the development of the town. Even though the officers backed him, he was not a puppet controlled by them. The various

Bolganabas and the councils of elders that came in succession exercised different lines of policy according to their personalities or interests yet the main political changes that affected the town were guided by their political foresight or diplomatic skills. This chapter has shown this through the analysis of the customary law. The definition of the customary law can be considered as the point of convergence between the colonial and Gurensi political thought. On one side, it was the product of the necessity to administer and give an order to an unknown social *milieu*. On the other, an opportunity to create or consolidate a privileged position of authority. In Bolgatanga, the customary law was constantly produced and reproduced, especially in chieftaincy affairs. Even in this case, the officers' role was secondary. The events related to the chiefs' election and demotion clearly demonstrate this. The commissioners were just at the final stage of a selection process over which they had little influence. In the writing of the customary law in Bolgatanga, the primary authors continued to be the Africans.

This had significant consequences for the development of the town. The terms and conditions for the land transactions changed drastically over these two decades. The management and allocation of the plots in Bolgatanga increasingly followed a procedure in which the chief figured prominently. As demonstrated for the case of the missionaries or the new settlers in the central area of the town, the role of the Bolganaba as the sanctioning authority for land leasing became the norm. The *tendaana* did not disappear, but it was not inserted officially into the colonial legal framework. Then, the government started to legally clarify its involvement in land matters only after 1939. However, most of the allocations that were granted in the town disregarded this involvement. In fact, the majority of land transactions continued to be operated outside colonial control.

Finally, the overpopulation of the town led to a radical change in its spatial configuration. Farms disappeared in the central area, leaving space for a growing market, a lorry park and new buildings intended to accommodate goods and people. The dispersed settlement pattern, with its kinship logic and its rural outlook, was modified to pursue new interests and purposes. The *teŋa* was gradually taking the shape of a town.

Conclusion

In 1961 Bolgatanga was selected as the capital of the Upper Region of independent Ghana, and in the late 1960s it was reported to be the door through which «the modern world» entered into Gurensi life[1]. Throughout the 1950s, irrigation and dam schemes, a piped water supply, village cooperatives, cash crops, meat and tomato-processing factories, public offices, a hospital and educational facilities became part of the landscape of this savanna town. Much of the government expenditure in the first half of the 1960s went to making Bolgatanga one of the regional capitals of Ghana: a post office, commercial bank, regional library and regional headquarters were built[2]. Bolgatanga acquired a «cosmopolitan» character complete with even those features that Meyer Fortes defined as «the usual excrescences on urbanisation», namely «beer shops with juke boxes, hawkers, prostitutes, thieves and scroungers, as well as a regiment of beggars and vagrants»[3].

The transportation system in the region was also further improved in this period, with some of the roads passing through the town asphalted and bridges built to substitute ferries[4]. The marketplace in Bolgatanga became the biggest in the area and one of the most heavily frequented in all of northern Ghana[5]. As a result, the town developed to serve as the economic heart of the Gurensi region and provided many Gurensi with the opportunity to become wealthy entrepreneurs[6]. In the years, the pattern of the North-South migrations also changed as the number of migrants came to outnumber significantly that of traders[7]. However, Bolgatanga maintained its status as a pivotal hotspot in networks of mobility and commerce[8]. Indeed, people went on planning their itineraries based on the reputation of the customs posts they were to traverse, and the town continued to occupy

[1] Hart, 'Migration and Tribal Identity among the Frafras of Ghana', 23.
[2] Ladouceur, *Chiefs and Politicians: The Politics of Regionalism in Northern Ghana*, 199.
[3] Meyer Fortes, 'Some Aspects of Migration and Mobility in Ghana', *Journal of Asian and African Studies; Leiden* 6, no. 1 (1971): 5.
[4] Eades, *Strangers and Traders*, 58.
[5] Wayne McKim, 'The Periodic Market System in Northeastern Ghana', *Economic Geography* 48, no. 3 (July 1972): 333; Vernon G. Fagerlund and Robert H. T. Smith, 'A Preliminary Map of Market Periodicities in Ghana', *The Journal of Developing Areas; Macomb* 4, no. 3 (1970); G. J. van Apeldoorn, University of Ghana, and Social Institute of Statistical and Economic Research, *Markets in Ghana; a Census and Some Comments. Vol. 1: Northern and Upper Regions [by] G.J. van Apeldoorn.* (Legon: Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research, University of Ghana, 1971).
[6] Hart, 'Swindler or Public Benefactor?', 21.
[7] Rouch, 'Migrations au Ghana (Gold Coast)', 192; Schildkrout, *People of the Zongo*, 38.
[8] Fortes, 'Some Aspects of Migration and Mobility in Ghana', 4.

a favourable position in this regard[9]. In the same way, the chieftaincy maintained its crucial importance in the politics of the North during the late period of colonial occupation and even after independence[10]. In Bolgatanga, contestations of the chief and his supposed subordination to the Nayiri continued as well[11].

At the same time, the town remained part of the typical "dispersed" settlement pattern of the Gurensi region[12]. Lying at the border between urbanity and rurality, Bolgatanga was the only recognizable urban outpost in a landscape that continued to defy outsiders' perceptions of what constituted the spatiality of a Gurensi settlement. When colonial rule eventually came to an end, it was still difficult for a Westerner to ascertain where one community ended and the next one began. In 1956, a missionary stated in his report that Bolgatanga was the biggest town, and one of the few centres recognizable as such, in a countryside dotted with «nombreuses habitations séparées»[13]. Similarly, in 1965 it was written that «au-delà de Bolgatanga, la population est totalement dispersée, les localités […] comprennent des communautés agricoles vivant en groupes disséminés, rarement avec des limites identifiables»[14]. The town was, therefore, a notable exception in the area, an exception that displayed some of the same features as the rest of the Gurensi settlements while also developing a spatiality of its own.

This thesis has illustrated and explained this difference, namely the features that made Bolgatanga an urban centre in the 20th century. I have mapped out and analysed the socio-economic transformations that affected this particular settlement, in terms of its local implications for the spatiality of Bolgatanga but also in terms of its broader connection with the rest of West Africa. The thesis thus analysed the process of urbanization of a small West African town in the light of socio-political changes as well as commercial and mobility networks. I was able to demonstrate that this process was directed primarily by the commercial and political prominence that the town acquired in the region during the 20th century. At the same time, I had the opportunity to illustrate the complexities and ambiguities of the relationship between the British and Africans, and how such complexities affected urbanization. The town developed outside of direct colonial control; indeed, it was the actions of its inhabitants that shaped it.

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[9] Rouch, 'Migrations au Ghana (Gold Coast)', 73.
[10] Nana James Kwaku Brukum, 'Chiefs, Colonial Policy And Politics In Northern Ghana,1897-1956', *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana*, no. 3 (1999): 101–22.
[11] Ladouceur, *Chiefs and Politicians: The Politics of Regionalism in Northern Ghana*, 124; Bening, 'Foundations of the Modern Native States of Northern Ghana', 130.
[12] And the town still maintains it today, see Kleemann et al., 'Peri-Urban Land Use Pattern and Its Relation to Land Use Planning in Ghana, West Africa'.
[13] Gerard Lapointe, Table d'enquete sur les moeurs et coutumes indigenes, Diocese de Navrongo (Mission de Bolgatanga) Tribus de Gurusi – Frafra, A.G.M.Afr
[14] T. E. Hilton, 'Le Peuplement de Frafra, District Du Nord-Ghana', *Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Afrique Noire, Série B: Sciences Humaines* 27, no. 3 (1965): 684.

Considering that the definition of urbanity is contingent on each specific process of urbanisation, the thesis has aimed to depict the specificity of the urban phenomenon in Bolgatanga. The theoretical framework underlying the research asserted the importance of multidimensional analysis, an analysis capable of making sense of the multiplicity of social processes that are involved in the urbanization process. Therefore, I broke the kaleidoscopic urban entity down into three different, broad layers of growth, namely space, power and economy, which intertwine to compose the backbone of the phenomenon of urbanization in Bolgatanga. I demonstrated that by following their interrelations, it was possible to create a solid analytic outline to explain the profound transformation that affected the settlement in the 20th century. The theoretical fulcrum of the thesis consists of the effort to shed light on the ambiguous relationship between sociality and spatiality, planning and making, causality and fortuity. Indeed, I have sought to demonstrate that a specific spatial setting, such as the settlements, markets, footpaths or roads, was planned, created and recreated according to social, political and economic stimuli and, *vice versa*, that spatiality simultaneously and incidentally affected social, political and economic outcomes. My analysis of the history of Bolgatanga through these three layers of growth points to this conclusion.

The town did not appear in a day. Its selection as a regional capital after independence and the building of modern facilities represented only one more step in a longstanding process of spatial and social change. The inhabitants of Bolgatanga were already modifying its face long before "modernity" materialized in the town. As a matter of fact, the main features of its urban landscape have their roots in the late 19th century and throughout the 20th century. When the first colonial explorers passed through the region, adopting African prejudices regarding Gurensi savageness, they traversed an unsettled area that hosted both widespread violence and slave-raiding but also trade and communication. In this period, Bolgatanga was one among many Gurensi settlements planned according to kinship and ritual logics, without any commercial or political prominence over the others.

Nonetheless, British military intervention at the turn of the century created the conditions for a change. The Gurensi communities independently decided whether to fight or collaborate with the invaders, a choice that conditioned the future of each of the settlements. Those who manifested hostility against the colonial army were attacked and their settlements destroyed, while those who cooperated had a different fate. The political prominence the chiefdom of Bolgatanga went on to acquire in the following years was therefore deeply rooted in this initial period. The man recognized by colonial officers as the chief of the settlement was able to promote and secure his position, in the face of fierce contestation from the rest of the population.

The consolidation of colonial rule during the 20th century brought with it two main changes in the settlement, namely the introduction of territorially-delimited administration based on the unit of the chiefdom and the newly favourable commercial conditions for the marketplace. Although colonialism was the catalyst that ignited these changes, they were directed by Africans and, in this way, the stage was set for the transformation of the Bolgatanga settlement. From a political point of view, the introduction of chieftaincy in the Gurensi region was intensely mediated by indigenous political figures; one of these was the Bolganaba, who was able to carve out a position of prominence for himself and his settlement in the newly imposed colonial hierarchy. This position granted him a more privileged social status and the power to request labour and fines as well as to allocate land, thus representing a rupture with the past settlement pattern. The non-politically-centralised pattern characterising Gurensi settlements of the 19th century increasingly gave way the political centrality of the chiefdom of Bolgatanga. The Bolganaba actively negotiated his paramountcy over the neighbouring settlements with the colonial officers and the other Head Chiefs, a process that was often conflict-ridden. Bolgatanga's political prominence in the area was, therefore, the result of the political agency of the Bolganaba and his collaboration and negotiation with the colonial political structure.

Colonial commercial policies and the diffusion of coins, together with the presence of a British post in the area, directly affected the success of the marketplace. Although the town remained marginal in the colonial administrative geography, its proximity to the colonial garrison in Zuarungu was decisive to its success as a parallel commercial centre. As a matter of fact, the commercial prominence the marketplace acquired was the result of readjustments in African commercial networks in response to colonial taxation, currency introduction, the promotion of certain markets and infrastructural improvement. The diffusion of colonial coins revealed that the Gurensi area never actually transitioned to the colonial money system and, therefore, most markets lay outside of direct colonial control and operated independently, as the case for Bolgatanga indicates. Bolgatanga occupied a more and more favourable position in the changing trade geography of the Northern Territories. Due to its vicinity to the colonial station in Zuarungu, Bolgatanga benefitted from the security and road improvement brought by colonial rule; at the same time, it was far enough from colonial control over currency transactions and tax collection.

Since the outset of colonial rule, officers had sought to enhance trade by building roads and improving infrastructure, creating the framework for a «road revolution» that gradually changed the transportation pattern of the Northern Territories[15]. In the Gurensi region, the small footpaths

[15] Azaare, 'Establishment of British Military Camps and Legacies of Colonial Rule'.

traversed by bulky caravanserais were substituted by roads and lorries that augmented and accelerated the flows of goods and people traversing the country. Throughout this transition, however, Bolgatanga maintained a central position in African trade networks and a marginal and parallel one in the colonial geography. In the 1920s, thanks to its connection to the "Great North Road", the first motorable road linking Kumasi to Tamale, the African networks and the colonial roadmap intersected precisely in Bolgatanga, rendering it a more and more popular destination or stopover for traders and migrants. While it was the colonial officers who planned the building of the road network and colonial needs that fuelled the endeavour, the task of directing the traffic on these roads remained mostly in African hands.

Between the 1920s and the 1930s, the market in Bolgatanga became the main commercial centre in the area. Rather than being an (un)intended consequence of colonial action, its success was a planned outcome of African strategies. While traders continued to choose it because of its favourable position, the Bolganaba negotiated to ensure its prominence over the other smaller neighbouring markets that were closed thanks to colonial backing. The Gurensi landscape of the 19th century, dotted with small and numerous markets, changed once again in favour of commercial centralization in Bolgatanga. The market increased in size and attendance following the infrastructural improvements and trade trends of this period. The market's commercial success, in turn, led to a substantial increase in Bolgatanga's population. By the late 1930s, many plots in the central area of the town were leased to strangers who settled in the town for trade purposes. The settlement of foreigners was not regulated by the colonial government, however, but instead by Bolgatanga "customary" rules.

The creation of the chiefdom of Bolgatanga had significant consequences in terms of the definition of customary law and its relevance to land allocation in the town. The introduction of chieftaincy disrupted Gurensi socio-political organization and its associated spatiality. The chief assumed more and more control over the management and allocation of land, while the role of the earth priests and family heads waned throughout the colonial period. Christian Lund correctly argues that «the discovery of the earthpriest produced a challenge to the colonial administration» at the end of the 1920s when Indirect Rule was prepared[16]. However, the documentation presented in this thesis shows that the challenge has already been launched at least 20 years before when the officers prepared the first accounts of Gurensi land tenure and put the chiefs in charge of lands. British officers continued to ignore the role of the *tendaana* mostly for administrative convenience, in keeping with what Benjamin Talton indicates as a common feature of European colonial rule, namely the «failure

[16] Lund, *Local Politics and the Dynamics of Property in Africa.*, 40.

to see beyond their preconceived political goals to consider alternatives»[17]. As a result, the chief occupied an increasingly central role in land matters.

As Carola Lentz has stated, the British regarded the tribe as the «natural political community» ruled by one paramount chief[18]. The officers implemented a process of territorialising chiefs' personal networks and reorganizing them according to their planned hierarchy. Lentz has defined this process as «terminological deceit», as the officers «redefined the personal networks of the strongmen, their kin and client relationships, as territorial spheres of authority»[19]. Nonetheless, this process was not guided entirely by the officers. The various Bolganabas and their advisors and counsellors were able to secure their position and promote it despite popular contestation. Customary law became a field in which to assert the legitimacy of their power and authority, depending on the historical events that they faced. Although the rules defined as "customary" were the outcome of the African and European colonial encounter and represented the unfolding of the political agendas of both, in Bolgatanga the Gurensi occupied a primary role in producing this body of law. Indeed, the families entitled to chieftaincy constantly recreated the conditions for it, a process that is still going on today.

The definition of the chiefdom and chieftaincy changed the terms and conditions for land transactions in the town. The allocation of plots in the central area came to be highly mediated by the chief, as demonstrated in the case of the missionaries or new settlers who leased land in the central area of the town. The earth priests and family heads were not completely disregarded in the actual transactions; however, they did not feature in the colonial legal framework, as this framework instead granted the primary role to the chief. In the same way, even though the colonial government legally clarified its involvement in land matters in 1939, most of the allocations continued to be conducted outside of its control and without its legal approval[20]. Moreover, the people living in the central area decided to modify the arrangement of their compound, ceasing to farm the land surrounding their houses so that they might lease it instead. This generated a radical change in the spatial configuration of the town, as farms disappeared from the central area so as to allocate that space for commercial and residential activities. The 19th-century settlement pattern was, therefore, definitively modified and a new way of planning and considering space began to shape the town.

[17] Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana*, 54–55.
[18] Lentz, *Ethnicity and the Making of History in Northern Ghana*, 51.
[19] Lentz, 51.
[20] The ambiguous legal status of land in Bolgatanga persisted after independence as well. The study conducted by Christian Lund further confirms that land transactions remained a shadowy legal arena in independent Ghana, and especially in Bolgatanga. For example, when the town was selected as a regional capital and plots for administrative facilities were needed, even the government of Ghana «failed to legally acquire the land it seized». Lund, *Local Politics and the Dynamics of Property in Africa.*, 52.

Figure 31. "Bolgatanga. Le marché" (1940 ca.)

Source: 511-58-12, Masson I-127-3, Phototeque, A.G.M.Afr.

On a broader scale, the relevance of this case study is polyvalent. The thesis confirms the argument posed in the introduction according to which a multidisciplinary approach and openness to different lines of research can prove extremely prolific for urban studies. A multi-layered analysis is needed to take into account the multiplicity of social processes that affect and change a town over time. The process of urbanization is not only political nor economic; it is multi-layered and deeply embedded in and conversant with its historical roots. On the other side, it is also highly dependent on the management of the specific resources that an urban entity possesses and whether or not it serves as a social, political or economic hub in more extensive networks. In fact, it is impossible not to consider the specificity of each case. Taking into account the local concepts of urbanity and human dwelling is essential to understanding the growth, evolution and transformation of towns. Moreover, the process of urbanization is an analytical prism through which it is possible to read and make sense of the local ramifications of broader socio-historical processes, such as colonialism. In this thesis, for example, I was able to unpack the multifaceted relationship between Africans and Europeans, showing that it was much more nuanced and elusive than a simple colonizer/colonized or ruler/subject dichotomy might imply.

Figure 32. The central part of the old market in Bolgatanga (April 2018), the walled structure encircles the earth shrine Ayia

Source: Photo by the Author

Furthermore, the case of Bolgatanga confirms that any univocal categorization of town into boxes such as pre-colonial, traditional or colonial, is neither helpful nor insightful in the study of urbanity. Providing such a definition, in this case, would have meant freezing the object of study for the sake of a theoretical prop. Quite the opposite, this thesis demonstrates that urbanization is a dynamic process in which different communities intersect and substantiate the political, social and economic intentions which tie them together in a certain point for a specific period of time. The definition of this encounter is in constant motion over time and the acceleration of its transformation depends on the historical processes that currently affect and have affected it. One crucial element in this process is the nature of the networks that intertwine and link communities and individuals in these intersections, colouring and structuring their spatiality. A town is, therefore, nothing less than this multi-layered accumulation of human connections.

I want to conclude by once again stressing the peculiarity and uniqueness of the case of Bolgatanga. The town's growth and urbanization have been characterized by counter-intuitive features throughout its history, features that remained unexplained in the literature[21]. While most of

[21] I discussed this literary void in the Introduction.

the neighbouring communities fought and opposed British troops, the people in Bolgatanga welcomed them. Whereas colonial officers directly affected the success of particular marketplaces, the one in Bolgatanga grew autonomously and in opposition to their efforts. Although a colonial station was opened in Zuarungu, it was Bolgatanga that benefitted the most from this decision. The colonial officers regarded Gurensi society as inherently savage and lodged in rural backwardness, but many people in Bolgatanga were able to successfully exploit and manipulate the commercial and political opportunities created by the colonial intrusion. In the end, the planning of Bolgatanga always remained in the hands of its inhabitants.

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ADM 56/1/412	Monthly Report Black Volta District
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ADM 56/1/429 Monthly Report, Navarro District
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ADM 56/1/441 Monthly Report N.E.P. for 1910
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ADM 56/5/2 Diary
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ADM 63/5/3 Navrongo District Informal Diary
ADM 63/5/6 Informal Diary
ADM 68/4/3 Record Book for North Mamprusi by A.W. Cardinall

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CO 879/43/7	Mr G E Ferguson's missions and the extent of the sphere of British influence in the hinterland of the Gold Coast colony; further correspondence
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CO 879/78/3	Field operations in the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast; despatches
CO 96/277	Despatches
CO 96/289	Despatches
CO 96/356/47	Northern Territories expenditure
CO 96/357	Despatches
CO 96/358/42	Death of Captain Stewart
CO 96/360-1	Despatches
CO 96/363	Despatches
CO 96/364/24	Northern Territories expenditure
CO 96/364/25	Northern Territories expenditure
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Abstract

The thesis analyses the urbanization of Bolgatanga, the regional capital of the Upper East Region of Ghana in the 20th century identifying the main forces that shaped this process. The main argument is that the commercial and political prominence that the town acquired in the region at the beginning of and throughout the 20th century created the conditions for its urbanization. The thesis explores the changes in the settlement pattern, economic trends and political organization that affected the urban landscape of Bolgatanga in this period. In particular, the centrality acquired by the marketplace in the international trade flows and the political prominence of the chiefdom over neighbouring ones subsumed the urbanization of the settlement. These two processes were closely intertwined, and both caused the radical change in the town's settlement pattern. Moreover, the thesis explores the multifaceted relationships between Africans and Europeans in Bolgatanga during the colonial period and how this relationship shaped the urbanization process. The town developed without any British urban planning policy, but its dwellers did take advantage of the opportunities created by the colonial administration and acted to direct its growth. The thesis intends to present endogenous changes in the actual production and conceptualization of urbanity. It focuses thus on the processes that led to a radical change in the town's settlement pattern from the end of the 19th century up to the moment in which people began to commodify their land and ceded their compound farms to new settlers in the late 1930s. This moment represents a rupture with past land tenure practices and, at the same time, the start of a new way of conceptualizing and occupying space. The aim is to analyse both connections and disruptions in conceptualizing urbanity in light of the socio-economic changes that instilled them. The study of Bolgatanga's urbanism is framed in the thesis through three broad, and interrelated layers of growth of the town. The first of these layers concerns spatiality and indigenous concepts of belonging. It is devoted to the study of historical changes in the settlement pattern of the people who lived in Bolgatanga. The second layer takes into consideration the dynamism of the town's political landscape, analysing how the local figures of power interacted with colonialism. The study of the economic networks that connected Bolgatanga with the rest of West Africa represents the third layer of town development. The thesis demonstrates thus that by following the three layers interrelations, it is possible to create a solid analytic outline to explain the urban process that transformed Bolgatanga in the 20th century.