

African Resistance to Colonial Conquest: The Case of Konkomba Resistance to German Occupation of Northern Togoland, 1896-1901

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ABSTRACT--- *In spite of the evidence provided by recent studies on armed resistance, it is still widely believed that centralized societies were the only ones that resisted colonialism by the use of arms. In the narratives of local resistance to the German conquest of northern Togoland, it is still believed that only the centralized kingdoms of Nanumba and Dagomba resisted the German occupation of the region. No mention is made of the exploits of the non centralized peoples like the Konkomba. This study shows that the Konkomba, a non-centralized society, did not also choose armed resistance against the German occupation of their territory in northern Togoland, but they also succeeded in resisting the German occupation for a longer period than their centralized neighbours. It further buttresses the argument that it is completely false to assume that only centralized societies chose armed resistance as a reaction to colonialism. The data used in this study was obtained from archival documents and oral information collected by the author between June and July of 2009 and January, 2012.*

Keywords--- Indigenou resistance, Collaboration, Konkomba, German Togoland, non-centralized societies, centralized societies

1. INTRODUCTION

The issue of African resistance to colonial imposition has been discussed at length in a number of existing works [1]. But most of these discussions, until recently, tended to focus on Robison and Gallagher's concept of 'collaborators' and 'resisters'. In their work, "The Partition of Africa" R. E. Robison and J. Gallagher distinguished between two categories of African societies, those societies that resisted colonial rule and those that collaborated with the colonizers. According to them, African resistance was a 'romantic reactionary struggle against the fact'. Collaboration and resistance were believed to be a function of a society's social structure and that, societies that depended so much on the 'luxury of slave raiding, plunder and migration' would oppose colonial imposition whilst more urbanized, commercial and bureaucratic societies would collaborate with the colonizers [2].

This hypothesis was easily dismissed by Africanist historians who argued, quite rightly, that resisting societies were not necessarily different from collaborating ones as almost all African societies employed both collaboration and resistance at different times to deal with the threat of losing their sovereignty. But most of these historians, including T. O. Ranger, were still prepared to accept that for a society to either collaborate or resist the colonial imposition, it required a certain level of centralized political organization. In his influential article, "African Reaction to the Imposition of Colonial Rule in East and Central Africa", T.O. Ranger, argued that for a society to collaborate or resist colonial imposition it had to "be of a sufficient scale and political organization for decisions to be made" and that resisters or collaborators have common features that are different from those small-scale societies that were capable of neither resistance nor collaboration [3]. The impact of the Ranger theory was that, historians of African resistance came to emphasize centralized societies as those that chose armed resistance against colonial rule while the stateless societies remained indifferent to colonial intrusion.

Over the past few decades, a number of scholars have rejected this emphasis on centralized societies in favour of a more inclusive approach that shows that the non centralized societies were just as capable of putting up a determined armed resistance against European occupation as the centralized ones [4]. In a later work, T. O. Ranger has repudiated his earlier argument that non centralize societies were capable of neither resistance nor collaboration. He admitted that

he was mistaken to have argued that the societies that engaged in either resistance or collaboration had more in common with each other “than with those small-scale societies that could neither resist nor exploit colonial rule” [5]. Shula Marks, in her study of “Khoisan Resistance to the Dutch” has demonstrated that the ‘Bushmen’ of Southern Africa, who were said to have no centralized political organization, resisted the Dutch for nearly two decades. In West Africa, the non centralized peoples such as the Igbo, Baule, Agni have all been shown to have fiercely resisted the European occupation of their territories. The Baule, for instance, put up a strong resistance against the French from 1891 till 1902. In northern Ghana, the only serious armed resistance to British occupation was presented by the so called stateless groups such as the Dagara and the Talensi [6]. Similarly, in northern Togoland it was the so called stateless societies like the Konkomba that presented the stiffest resistance to the German conquest of the region. Unfortunately apart from Robert Corniven’s account of the Konkomba encounter with the Germans at Bapure [7], no serious attention has been given to the exploits of the Konkomba during the German conquest and occupation of Northern Togoland. This article examines the Konkomba resistance to the German conquests of the Northern Togoland and explores the nature and mechanics of this resistance. It then re-enforces the argument that it is completely false to suggest that only centralized societies chose armed resistance to colonial imposition.

2. THE EXTENSION OF GERMAN RULE INTO NORTHERN TOGO

The colony referred to as German Togoland was made up of the territories of modern day Togo, the Volta region and parts of the northern region of Ghana including Yendi. The establishment of the colony began in February 1884 when a group of German soldiers kidnapped the chief of Anecho and forced him into negotiations aboard a German warship called ‘the Sophie’. Through similar strategies all the coastal areas of the colony were acquired [8]. During the colonial period the German Togoland was often portrayed as a financially self sufficient colony that should serve as a model colony for all German possessions in Africa. But some historians have disputed this view pointing out the harsh treatment of the natives by the German officials in this colony through abominable taxation and labour policies [9]. It is often said that the French used more militant methods in acquiring and administering their territories in West Africa than the British but the Germans were more brutal in this regard. As Hugh Clifford observed, the Germans appeared on the colonial scene “as a roaring lion walketh (sic) about seeking who (sic) to devour” [10]

When Germany entered the colonial contest, she was a latecomer and so she was more aggressive in her acquisition of territories in Africa. By 1884, when the Germans established their control over Lome, the areas adjacent to the Slave Coast were already being annexed by the French and the English, and so Germany felt compelled to extend the authority inland. By 1892 Germany had acquired a greater part of the interior of Togoland through treaties with the English. What was left was to extend her authority to those areas. This was done through what the Germans called scientific expeditions [11]. The German occupation of the coastal territories was without resistance and “all that Germany had to do was to distribute German flags to the chiefs of the relevant districts as notice that they were thenceforth under German rule, and to take measures to substantiate the claim of the protectorate over them” [12]. The German occupation of the interior on the other hand, was not without opposition from the local people.

In the face of determined resistance from the local people, the German administration began to create an expeditionary force called *Polizeitruppe* (Police Force). In 1886 this force was started with a nucleus of twenty-five Hausas which increased in strength over the years and by 1894, its strength had reached 144. After the contingent had been raised to 500 men, the commander of the police force, von Massow observed that “the time has come to move toward definitive control over the territory” [13]. By the 1890s the German administration began to send this force on expeditionary campaigns as a means of extending their authority to the interior to establish their rule in that part of the colony. This Campaign into the interior started at Kpando in 1894. After subduing Kpando, a coordinated program for occupation was worked out and measures were taken to subdue the northern peoples including the Konkomba all of whom were within the Neutral Zone [14].

In the year 1888 an agreement was reached between England and Germany, by which the whole of East Gonja and Nanumba territory up to the Oti River stretching northwards just outside Sansane Mango had been declared a Neutral Zone [15]. Per this demarcation, Salaga, Bimbilla, Yendi and all Konkomba territories were within the Neutral Zone. By this agreement the area was to remain open to commercial activities of both Britain and Germany but both powers were precluded from signing political treaties within the zone. Thus, only treaties of trade were opened to the two powers in the Neutral Zone. But the French who were advancing from the north were not bound by such a treaty and could sign treaties of protection and therefore acquire the territories within the zone at the expense of both Germany and Britain. Consequently by 1895, treaty had been abandoned in the face of the French threat. It was not only the threat from the French that forced the British and the Germans to throw the neutral zone agreement overboard but also distrust and suspicion soon emerged between the two powers. By September 1894 the Germans were already complaining about the English activities in the neutral Zone. In November 1894 a publication in the *Kreuz-Zeitung*, a German newspaper, alleged that Salaga, Gambaga, Wale Wale, Sansane Mango have all been put under English protection together with Wagadugu which violated the neutral zone agreement [16]. The German complains were completely unjustifiable. In fact, all the above mentioned towns in the exception of Salaga fell outside the neutral zone. More importantly, the treaties

of Ferguson did not violate the terms of the neutral zone agreement because Ferguson's treaty with the Kpembewura during his first visit in 1892 was purely commercial. On his second visit during which the treaties of protection were made, they were made on behalf of both Germany and England [17]. In all intent and purpose, Ferguson's treaties were intended only to keep out the French from the neutral zone. But the Germans became suspicious of the content and nature of Ferguson's treaties because they were not privy to the details of Ferguson's activities in the neutral zone. The Germans therefore made preparations to occupy Yendi and all the other territories north of Kete-Krachi which were all in the neutral zone. The first armed confrontation with the German occupation was presented by the Nanumba but it was the Dagomba who gave a serious fight at the battle of Adibo.

3. THE BATTLE OF ADIBO AND THE ROLE OF THE KONKOMBA

The German expedition into northern Togo began from Kete-Krachi on November 23rd 1896. Earlier on in April of the same year, a German expedition under the command of Lt. von Carnap-Quernheimb had subdued the Gonja *en route* to the Mossi country and had established an administrative post at Sansanne Mango [18]. After the German northern headquarters had been firmly established at Mango, the territories between Kete-Krachi in the South and Mango in the North were far from secure. There were fears that the French would advance on Mango from the North and more importantly, the Konkomba and the Dagomba continued to attack German messengers interrupting the free movement of traders in the area. It was to secure a strong hold on the territories between Kete-Krachi and Mango that, Dr. Gruner was appointed Resident of Sansanne Mango in July 1896. Instead of proceeding to Mango through Sokode and Basari from his station at Misahohoe, he was ordered to pass through Kete-Krachi and bring the chiefs of Bimbilla and Yendi under the German rule [19].

Dr. Gruner concluded that his expedition would be met with resistance and began to take every precaution to ensure the success of his campaign. He assembled his expeditionary force at Tariasu, ten miles north of Kete-Krachi which consisted of five Europeans- Dr. Gruner, the political head, von Massow, the military head, Thierry, N.C.O. Heitmann and Pinto da Silveira, a Portuguese, in charge of the medical department but who, it appears, also had the responsibility of keeping the records of the expedition. The others included ninety-one soldiers armed with breech loading rifles, forty-one carriers similarly armed, and 231 unarmed carriers [20]. The expedition arrived at Kpandai on November 27 and was warned that the chief of the next territory intended to attack the white man as soon as he entered his land. Dr. Gruner then sent messengers to the Nanumba town of Wulensi to obtain a safe passage to Yendi but the request was denied [21]. This made Gruner to attack the Nanumba upon entering their territory and some fighting took place at Wulensi and Bimbilla in which the Nanumba were decisively defeated and their king fled in the direction of Chamba [22].

The defeat of the Nanumba was followed on Wednesday, December 4th by the complete defeat of the Dagomba at the battle of Adibo, a village six kilometers south of Yendi. In the Dagomba drum history which serves as the major oral source of the history of local resistance to colonial imposition in northern Togo, the Konkomba presence at Adibo is not mentioned [23]. But according to the Konkomba oral account, they fought alongside the Dagomba at Adibo on the request of the Yana [24]. The account of the battle as recounted by the German source also suggests that the Konkomba were present at Adibo and that the fiercest opposition was presented by the Konkomba and not the Dagomba. According to this source the Dagomba put forward 2,500 gunmen, 130 horsemen, and about 2,000 bowmen [25]. The number of firearms used by the Dagomba in this battle should not be doubted. The Dagomba acquired the use of firearms from Asante in the mid-eighteenth century when the latter invaded Yendi and captured their king, Na Gariba. Even though Asante had imposed a restriction on the distribution of firearms to the northern states before the mid eighteenth century, such a restriction had been lifted by the closing decades of that century and Ashante agreed to establish the Kambose (Gunmen) as the third arm of the Dagomba army [26]. Consequently, by 1780s Dagomba had only a few muskets but by the mid-nineteenth century, all the inhabitants of one Dagomba town, east of Yendi, were said to have guns [27].

It must, however, be pointed out that the possession of firearms alone could not be a sufficient factor for military success. As Fisher and Rowland observes the lack of training in the use of firearm vitiates the advantages of firearms in battles. Firearms 'implied a change in tactics, both if they were to be used effectively and if they were to be effectively withstood' [28]. But the Dagomba seemed to have had little or no training in the use of firearms. The *Kambon' na Kpema*, the commander-in chief of the Dagomba army, was said to have wielded two guns and a sword all by himself. After firing the two guns he could not reload and began to wave his sword. This made him vulnerable to the enemy and it is not surprising that he was among the 500 dead on the battlefield [29]. The Dagomba did not only lack training in the use of firearms, but their war dress was not suitable for free movement in the tall grasses on the battle field. This was what an eye witness had to say:

On Gruner's left were the Dagombas from Sambu (Miong), many of them mounted and all clothed in the war apparel of their nation. This is loosely (sic) fitting trousers and a jerkin all covered with charms and mascots. It is not the best sort of clothing for mobility in thick grass and standing guinea-corn [30].

But on his right side, Gruner had a different enemy to deal with. These were 'the Konkomba levees who fought stark naked and armed not with guns but with poisoned arrows' [31]. It is unlikely that all Dagomba warriors could have been

clothed in this rather expensive war dress [32]. Only the war chiefs could have been dressed in this war regalia described by the German source. Nevertheless, the big smocks worn by the Dagomba could have made it impossible for them to move freely in the standing guinea corn on the battle field. A more important reason for the Dagomba poor showing was the lack of tact and circumspection. It is reported that after the initial retreat of the Germans during the fighting, the Dagomba began jubilating and chasing their enemy down the hill which generated a kind of pandemonium among them. It was during this pandemonium that bullets began to whistle round them and Kambo'na kpema fell, as bullets pierced through his chest [33]. This lack of tact on the battle field coupled with inferior weaponry brought about the defeat of the Dagomba at Adibo. Whilst the Dagomba used a considerable number of firearms in this battle, (250 as against the German 137) these were muzzle-loading as compared to the breech-loading rifles of the Germans. In addition, a considerable number of the Dagomba gunmen, also deserted at the peak of the battle. Considering all these shortcomings of the Dagomba army, one can guess correctly that a considerable resistance was given by the Konkomba bowmen rather than the Dagomba army. In fact, it is believed that the only white soldier among the four losses of the Germans at Adibo, Heitmann, died from a wound he sustained from a poisoned arrow [34].

What is however not clear is why the Konkomba came to the assistance of the Dagomba at Adibo. The option of the Konkomba warriors being used as mercenaries at Adibo should be dismissed because it is against Konkomba customs to go to war for material gains. At least two plausible explanations can be given as to why the Konkomba went to the assistance of the Dagomba at Adibo. The first possibility, which is quite unlikely, is that the Konkomba were aware of the Germans intend to overrun their country en route to Mango and therefore they found it expedient to help the Dagomba as a defensive measure against the invading German force. As we shall see, the Konkomba did not collaborate among themselves in any significant way against the Germans. There is therefore no reason to think that the Konkomba collaborated with the Dagomba for the purpose of preserving their sovereignty. The second possibility, which is much more likely, is that the Konkomba who went to Adibo were subjects of the Dagomba. In the seventeenth century, when eastern Dagbon was invaded by the Dagomba, some Konkomba tribes were undoubtedly conquered and had come under the rule of the Yana. For instance Chaar was invaded and occupied by the Dagomba and their town became present day Yendi [35]. In the course of time, attempts were made to integrate or assimilate these conquered Konkomba tribes into the Dagbon society and this was done by assigning military titles to the Konkomba. But in most cases these attempts were not successful. Obviously at the battle of Adibo, the Konkomba fought as a distinct group situated at the right side of Dr. Gruner. According to the German sources, they were brought by the chief of Demon as part of his fighting force. Clearly, those Konkomba who went to Adibo were defending their overlords because as subjects of Dagbon, they were obliged to defend the kingdom against outside invasion.

Whatever the reason for Konkomba presence at Adibo, the combined Dagomba and Konkomba force was unable to halt the German advance. The local force was defeated and the German expedition passed through Yendi to Sansanne Mango. The Germans therefore came face to face with the Konkomba on their way to Sansanne Mango. It was at this time that the Konkomba presented a spirited defense of their territory and for the next four years the Konkomba would hold the Germans at bay, preventing any serious implantation of the German rule in their territory.

4. GERMAN ENCOUNTER WITH THE KONKOMBA

The Germans carried out two major expeditions against Konkomba between 1897 and 1898. The first was against the Konkomba east of the Oti River and the second was against those on the western side of the Oti. According to Cornevin, the German military expedition to the Konkomba country in 1897 was to quell an insurrection [36]. It must be pointed out that before 1897 the Konkomba country was neither a protectorate nor a colony of Germany. It would therefore be erroneous to claim that the 1897 invasion into the Konkomba country was to quell an insurrection. Neither was it a tour of inspection as conducted in the Dagara/Dagaba territories by the British colonial officials in the north-west. Properly understood, the German expedition to the Konkomba country in 1897 was for the purpose of conquest and occupation.

After their victory at Adibo, the Germans marched through Yendi and burnt it without any resistance. The Yana himself was smuggled out of town into hiding. Surprisingly the Germans refused to waste any time in Yendi and proceeded to Sekpiego, a village six miles north of Yendi where preparations began for the Konkomba encounter [37]. Robert Cornevin is of the view that the German confrontation with the Konkomba was as a result of the irresponsible behavior of some of Gruner's men. He asserts that when Gruner's forces were passing through the Konkomba country, some of his men fired upon the Konkomba' [38]. It must be noted that in May of 1896 when von Carnap was returning from his mission to Mango he was attacked by the Konkomba even though he encountered no resistance from the Dagomba [39]. It is, therefore, probable that Gruner would have taken a cue from this experience and would not want to be taken by surprise and therefore ordered his troops to fire upon the Konkomba. The action by Gruner's men received an immediate reaction from the Konkomba resulting in the wounding of one of his soldiers. A fierce battle therefore ensued between the German forces and the Konkomba warriors in which 79 Konkomba were reported killed and 20 wounded. Dr. Gruner managed to fight through the Konkomba villages to Mango arriving there only two weeks before the French expedition [40].

On the east of River Oti the Germans had succeeded in establishing their base in Bassar in 1892. For reasons still not known, a Konkomba force attacked the German troops near Bassar station then under the command of von Massow. The Germans responded by attacking and defeating the Konkomba villages of Bangeli, Bapure, Kouni, Katchamba and Nali and establishing German outposts in them. von Massow then left some troops at the outposts and proceeded northwards to Mango [41]. After some time, the Konkomba managed to mobilize their warriors and attacked the outpost at Bapure. While the German post at Bapure was being attacked, the Konkomba laid ambush for any reinforcement that the Germans were likely to send from Mango. A reinforcement of thirty soldiers and several native horsemen and carriers was sent under Dr. Gruner [42]. It must be pointed out that the rank and file of the German forces that invaded the Konkomba country was made up of Chakosi and Kotokoli warriors. The Germans had entered into a military alliance with the Kotokoli in the south and the Chakosi in the north in their quest to conquer the Konkomba. The force under Gruner fell into a Konkomba ambush attack and several of his soldiers were killed with poisoned arrows. Dr. Gruner, however, managed to reach Bapure but no Konkomba was found. They had burned down the German post and deserted the village. The Bapure chief who pretended to be on Gruner's side had also vanished from the town. By this, the Konkomba combined an ambush strategy together with the strategic withdrawal tactic employed by Samori Toure against the French.

After the destruction of Bapure, Dr. Gruner was forced to abandon his post in the town and set up a Camp outside it. But the camp was constantly being attacked by the Konkomba and the strength of his expedition had seriously diminished due to the Konkomba persistent attacks. Dr. Gruner was therefore forced to retreat to Banyeli. During the retreat he was constantly being surrounded by the Konkomba warriors but he managed to arrive at Bassar. At Banyeli Gruner met Assistant Britch who was on his way to Mango from the coast as a result of the Konkomba blockade, the two men marched back to Bassar [43]. At this point, the German military command had begun to accord the Konkomba great respect. At Bassar the two men met Heinrich Klose who offered to put the whole of his expeditionary force which comprised three white men, ten soldiers and another twenty soldiers from Krachi, at the disposal of Gruner. This would have raised the strength of Gruner's troops to fifty soldiers and five white men. But Dr. Gruner still did not feel confident to advance towards Mango, through the strongly occupied Konkomba territories [44]. The Konkomba had succeeded in beating off the German intrusion but this turned out to be just for a brief moment.

Dr. Gruner soon obtained the necessary reinforcement and came to re-open the German outposts among the Konkomba. Almost immediately the Konkomba also resumed their attacks. Initially the Konkomba resorted to guerilla warfare but later they decided to attack the outposts and forced the latter to call for reinforcement for the second time. When Gruner requested for reinforcement, a carefully selected Chakosi fighters, under the leadership of Thierry, headed south for the Konkomba country. For the second time the German reinforcement fell into a Konkomba ambush and was annihilated but Thierry managed to escape and returned to Mango [45]. On July 19, 1897 Gruner, again requested for reinforcement, this time from Lome. The reinforcement started its journey on August 8 and was impeded by heavy rains and only arrived at Bassar on August 26. The troops at Bassar were under the command of von Massow. But von Massow did not mount any attack on the Konkomba until November 20 [46]. This delay is difficult to explain but the evidence seem to suggest that the expedition was suspended because another expedition had begun into the Konkomba areas west of Oti. It appears that the Germans could not sustain a two front war against the Konkomba and therefore had to suspend the Bapure Campaign until late November. Such a strategy was most valuable for the Germans because, by November, the long grass and dense forest providing a superb cover for the Konkomba warriors would have been consumed by the perennial wild fires. Without this excellent 'cover', the Konkomba became defenseless and could not withstand the German artillery. Clearly the superiority of the Konkomba in 'bush warfare' has been demonstrated by their earlier victories over the Germans and therefore the Germans had to wait until November, the approach of the dry season, to re-launch their attack on Bapure.

5. THE WESTERN EXPEDITION

In the period between August and 20 November 1897, when the Germans renewed their attack on Bapure, the Germans turned their attention to the Konkomba territories west of Oti. This was the second expedition into the Konkomba country. This expedition began from Sansanne Mango through Chereponi up to Samboli. From the perspective of the Konkomba in this area, it was the Chakosi who directed the Germans to their territory [47]. It appears the Konkomba in this area were completely ignorant of what had happened to their kinsmen at Bapure. They were unaware that the invasion of their country by the Germans was only a matter of time. It is not clear why the Konkomba west of Oti had not anticipated a German invasion of their country. This might be the result of lack of collaboration and coordination in the defense of their country vis-à-vis a foreign threat. The Konkomba did not coordinate and collaborate among themselves against the Germans. As Uzoigwe observes, one of the factors for the defeat of African armies was the serious lack of solidarity and co-operation among African peoples [48]. As will be shown, all the Konkomba villages held out against the Germans without the assistance of the neighbouring villages. The lack of collaboration enabled the Germans to defeat them one after the other. But it also enabled the Konkomba to resist German occupation for a longer period since the defeat and surrender of one village did not imply the surrender of all the Konkomba.

The German onslaught on the western Konkomba began in the village of Sanguli. It is reported that immediately the Germans crossed the Chakosi boundary into the Konkomba territory, they began to fire gun shots. It is not clear why a well trained officer like Thierry will order his men to fire shots without any target. The possibility is that the village of Nambiri which was the first Konkomba village after Chereponi was being attacked [49]. Whatever was the case, the consequence of the gun shots was clear, it warned the Konkomba of Sanguli of an imminent danger. A war alarm was raised and the Konkomba quickly put forward a fighting force of about two hundred warriors. The Konkomba warriors met the German force at a small stream two kilometers north of Sanguli. In the battle that ensued eight Konkomba were killed and several others wounded. Although the Konkomba could not match the German artillery, they held the German force until noon before surrendering. After some negotiation with the elders of Sanguli the Germans agreed to go back to Mango but took along with them six men as hostages. The next day, Labarl, the elder of Sanguli, followed up to Mango to demand the release of his men. The men were only released after he had agreed to pay twelve cows as ransom and also to recognize the German authority over his country [50].

The next day the Germans came to Sanguli and crowned Labarl as the chief of Sanguli in the presence of a large gathering. He was given a German flag and a crown and was instructed to hoist the flag in his compound to signify his acceptance of the German power. He was also given the responsibility of selecting people to carry the white man [51]. Labarl therefore became the first Konkomba chief to be crowned by the Germans. As a representative of the colonial authority, Labarl was required to provide labour for carriers, road repairs and build government rest houses.

From Sanguli the next village that would have come under the German gun fire was Kpeegu. But Labarl averted a German onslaught on Kpeegu by claiming sovereignty over it. The next village, Sobiba was also spared the German assault because a white flag was hoisted at the entrance to the village on the advice of Labarl. Both Kpeegu and Sobiba had friendly relations with Sanguli so Labarl sought to protect the two villages from a German battering. It is said that after the crowning of Labarl the Germans went back to Mango and it took them more than a week for another attack to be launched on Saboba [52]. It seems the German decided to delay an attack on Saboba so that they could catch the Konkomba unaware. It was clear that the Konkomba in Saboba would have gotten hint of the German invading force after their attack on Sanguli and adequate preparation would have been made for war by the Konkomba. The delay was to lure the Konkomba into slumber so that they could be caught unaware. The German adopted surprise and shock tactics in order to avoid any serious battle with the Konkomba. In adopting the surprise attack, the German may have had at the back of their minds the ability of the Konkomba to resist the German gun fire at Bapure. This strategy which the Germans adopted obviously points to the respect they seem to have had for the Konkomba.

With the villages of Kpeegu and Sobiba out of their way, the German forces marched straight to Saboba. At Saboba the Konkomba warriors met the German force at Boagbaln. According to some accounts all the clans around Saboba came to the aid of Boagbaln except the Nalogni people who stayed aloof [53]. The battle was said to have been fierce. Detailed information about the size of the Konkomba army in this battle is hard to find at present, but according to some estimates the Konkomba presented a force of about 2000 men armed with bows and arrows. A force of 2000 warriors in 1897 is obviously an exaggeration, considering that the population of Lome the capital of German administration of the colony of Togoland in 1895 was only a little over 2000 [54]. As late as 1931, the population of Saboba was around 629 and even the largest Konkomba village, Samboli was only 936 [55]. Judging from the population figures, it is very unlikely that the Konkomba of Saboba could have put forward a fighting force of 2,000 men in 1897. As Adu Boahen has observed, African armies were not usually numerically superior; in fact, in many cases they were numerically inferior to the European armies [56]. In this particular case the German expeditionary force in alliance with the Kotokoli and the Chakosi probably outnumbered the Konkomba.

In this battle the Konkomba were said to have lost more than half of their warriors. Only one Chakosi, fighting on the German side, was reported killed. Unlike Sanguli, the people of Saboba did not surrender but rather escaped into the bush. Their homes were set on fire and their cattle and goats taken to Mango. In addition to the animals one man called Findi was captured and sent to Mango [57]. One account relates that Findi was a cripple and was unable to run away. Other accounts maintained that Findi was a brave young man who refused to run away. The latter account seems to be more reasonable considering that the German force intended to take the captive to Mango, a cripple could not have been a reasonable target. It is highly probable that Findi was an able bodied man who was captured and taken to Mango. He was sent back to Saboba with the message that the people should choose between war and peace. He was given an iron and a grain, representing war and peace. The people chose the grain and Findi was sent back to Mango to deliver the message. When the Germans heard that the people wanted peace, they were happy and called for a great Durbar in which they decided to crown Findi as the chief of Saboba. But the young man declined and proposed that his uncle, Pejul, who was the most senior Elder of the community, be made the chief. Pejul was therefore crowned by the Germans as the first chief of Saboba and given a 'red cup' [58]. During this expedition, the Germans began to employ the strategy of taking hostages and appointing chiefs among the Konkomba. The hostages were used as bargaining chips to avoid protracted fighting with the Konkomba whilst the chiefs provided the central authority through whom the agreements were made. With their experience with the Konkomba at Bapure, the Germans were well aware of the Konkomba ability in guerilla

warfare and therefore it was for the purpose of avoiding protracted fighting with the Konkomba that the Germans began to appoint chiefs among them.

The next Konkomba village to be attacked by the Germans was Sambuli. When information about the German attack on Saboba got to Samboli, rather than come to the aid of their kinsmen, the people of Samboli prepared for the defense of their village. When the Germans finally got arrived at Samboli, they people of Samboli gave battle but their war leader, Dana, and several others were killed [59]. The defeat of Sambuli marked the pacification of the western Konkomba. Meanwhile the Konkomba at Bapure had not been subdued. Their conquest had only been suspended. After completing the pacification of the western Konkomba, the Germans then turned their attention to their unfinished business at Bapure. And on November 20 von Massow left one officer and seventeen men at Bassari and headed north. They arrived at Bapure on November 24. From Samboli, Thierry and his men continued the march to meet von Massow. For the second time Thierry and his forces fell into an ambush and a fierce battle was fought in which Thierry was wounded in the head by an arrow. But his troops managed to proceed towards Bapure. von Massow and his men managed to hold their own against the Konkomba warriors and destroyed the village of Nali on their way to Bapure. The two columns finally met at Kountja and the Konkomba were finally subdued. Surveillance posts were erected at Bapure and Katchamba [60]. And in 1900 the Germans built a fortress at Iboubou, the first in Konkomb country, known to the Europeans as ‘Roman Fort’. Built as a symbol of authority and intimidation, the fortress was nothing more than ‘a big mud wall, surrounding a huge conglomeration of native huts....’ [61] In spite of this fortress the people of Iboubou continue to attack the Germans at their base and other Konkomba villages such as Chare, Paboale and Kuopone continued to make a routine declaration of war on the Germans. The Germans continued to face the threat of poisoned arrows from Konkomba Snipers and Germans continued to live in fear of the prospect of a Konkomba attack. For instance, in 1901, a German soldier was killed by a Konkomba sniper at Sansoegou. This continued resistance of the Konkomba so much angered von Massow that he ordered a rapid military tour of Konkomba country, rounded the Konkomba up and exterminated them mercilessly [62]. This ruthless action of 1901 ended the Konkomba resistance to German occupation of northern Togoland.

The seriousness of the Konkomba armed resistance to the German colonial campaign explains the brutality meted out to the Konkomba by the Germans. The enormity of this brutality has been aptly described by Cliff Maasole:

Old Konkomba men could show their right hand thumbs severed, a fool-proof method (sic) for limiting their armed resistance as they could no longer use bow and arrow... the left toe of a [the] Konkomba was also usually severed, for the Germans believed that they used the left toe on the ground to gather momentum while the right arm released the dangerous arrow from the bow that caused havoc [63].

After the final pacification of the Konkomba country, they turned to another form of resistance; non co-operation, tax and force labour evasion, and frequent rioting and revolts. Up until the 1930s the British continued to refer to the Konkomba country as ‘a festering sore on an otherwise healthy administration’ [64]. Colonial writers have explained Konkomba non co-operation with the colonial administration as a characteristic of a savage and barbaric tribe. But the Konkomba attitude should be seen as a concomitant of their modest military successes against the white man. Unlike the other tribes in northern Togoland, the Konkomba had sufficiently measured their strength against the white man and saw no reason why they should submit to him and hence their inclination to be aggressive towards him.

6. THE KONKOMBA DISADVANTAGE AND THE GERMAN VICTORY

That the Konkomba were finally defeated was not because of inferior tactics or cowardice but it was simply the case of what the British writer sums up as:

Whatever happens we have got

The maxim-gun and they have not [65].

The Konkomba have been described as skillful at war and saw retreat as a disgraceful act. They fought with enthusiasm and skill but eventually they had to surrender to the machine guns of the German forces. The remains of which can still be found at Iboubou where at one battle the Konkomba were said to have lost more than a thousand warriors [66]. The Konkomba were skillful at war but their bows and arrows were no match for the repeating rifles of the Germans. The Konkomba might have seen or heard of guns before the German invasion of 1896 but no evidence suggests that the Konkomba had any at all. They used mainly bows and poisoned arrows. Its effective range of was said to be about fifty to seventy-five yards [68]. Up to that distance, the arrow was capable of substantial penetration and damage but beyond that range it was practically ineffective. Moreover, there were defenses against the arrows. The Germans were said to have used blankets and other articles to render the Konkomba arrows ineffective [69]. The poisoned arrows could only be effective at the exposed parts of the body.

Firearms were certainly more dangerous and effective. The German rifles were capable of doing damage at greater distances than the arrow. The typical West African musket was said to have an effective range of up to two hundred

yards [70]. This was almost three times that of the arrow. It was this inferior weaponry of the Konkomba to the Germans' firearms that brought about the defeat of the Konkomba.

7. CONCLUSION

Unlike the centralized states of Nanumba and Dagomba, who were easily knocked out by the Germans in 1896, the Konkomba were able to resist the German occupation of Northern Togoland for close to five years. Clearly the view that only centralized societies chose armed resistance against European occupation cannot be upheld in the case of Northern Togoland. What has, however, emerged from this study is that whereas the centralized states of Nanumba and Dagomba adopted a direct military engagement and employed large armies, the non centralized societies mounted resistance by using the classical guerilla tactics of hit and run. The Konkomba resisted village by village and managed to frustrate the German expedition to a point where they gave up the hope of a quick victory. The Konkomba knew that they could not win pitched battles against an enemy who was far more powerful and better armed than they were and therefore they resorted to guerilla warfare which was the best tactic under the circumstance. Since each village resisted independently there was no identifiable army to be defeated and this enabled the Konkomba to resist the German occupation for a much longer time than their centralized neighbours. After the Konkomba had frustrated the Germans by the guerilla warfare, the latter resorted to the strategies of capturing hostages and appointing chiefs among the former, which they used as bargaining chips to avoid 'guerilla warfare'. Clearly the change in the strategy of the Germans demonstrated the extent to which the Konkomba posed as a threat to the German expansion into Northern Togoland.

The Konkomba were however defeated as a result of the superior weapons of the Germans. Indeed the Machine guns won the battles for the Germans. Although in terms of tactics, the Konkomba were very effective, they had to succumb to the German machine guns. No historian of Africa resistance disputes this technological superiority of the Europeans and its importance in the defeat and conquest of African states but an equally important factor in the defeat of the Konkomba was the assistance the Germans received from the Kotokoli and the Chakosi. Indeed, the view that Africa was conquered by 'Africans trained and officered by Europeans' was not more true anywhere than German conquest of Northern Togoland. The rank and file of the German force that invaded the Konkomba country was made up of Chakosi and Kotokoli warriors. In spite of their technological and numerical disadvantage the Konkomba gave a good account of themselves and it took the Germans and their allies more than four years to completely subdue the Konkomba.

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