

Examining the Anoufom- Dagomba Tribe in Northern Ghana the Case of a Master-Servant Relationship?



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ABSTRACT

The general view of most scholars and indigenes is that the Anoufom have always been subjects of the Dagomba. Others have however opposed this view and speak strongly about it. This paper sets out to find the actual relationship between the Anoufom and the Dagombas in Northern Ghana. Is it a subject-master relationship? This study was qualitative in nature. Data was collected from extensive oral interviews conducted with knowledgeable elders from the Dagbon ethnic groups of Kumbungu, Tolon and Yendi in the Northern Region of Ghana. The same was carried out among the Anoufom of Ghana (Nalori) Chereponi and those in Sansane - Mango in the Northern part of present-day Togo. A scrutiny and analysis of the data gathered indicated that the Anoufom have never been subjects of the Dagombas, whether through war or conquest, or peace treaty. What indeed brought about that perception was a result of colonial administrative policies carried by the British colonial administrators. This was done by merging smaller ethnic groups with that of a larger one for administrative convenience. It was revealed that the Anoufom had never been subjects of Dagombas. This research adds to the existing literature on political relations among the various tribes in Northern Ghana.

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INTRODUCTION

The *Macmillan English Dictionary* defines a subject as “someone who lives in a country that is controlled by a king or a queen.” “Subjection” is defined as the action of defeating someone and forcing them to obey you; that is, a situation in which someone controls you and you have to obey him.”¹

There has always been a controversy over the actual relations between the Anoufom and the Dagomba. Some authors like G.E. Metcalfe and Ibrahim Mahama have classified the Anoufom as subjects of the Dagomba. The Anoufom themselves, however, claim that at no point in time did they go under Dagomba hegemony, or even protection. These conflicting claims constitute a dominant theme in Anoufom political life and the relations between the Anoufom and the Dagomba. Thus such a sensitive subject needs detailed research. This paper, therefore, sought to examine the origins and basis of these arguments to synthesise the concrete data and be able to construct a clear portrait of the political relations between the Anoufom and the Dagomba. This was done through extensive oral interviews conducted with key stakeholders (elders) from the Dagbon ethnic groups of Kumbungu,

¹ *The Macmillan English Dictionary for Advance Learners: International Student Edition* (London: Macmillan Publishers Ltd, 2002), 1430.

Tolon and Yendi. Other in-depth interviews were carried out among the Anoufom of Ghana (Nalori)-Chereponi and those in Sansane - Mango in the Northern part of present-day Togo to ascertain the veracity of this claim. The results of this research have been presented in the subsequent sections. This is preceded by a review of relevant literature on the subject.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Anoufom of Nalori share a border with the Dagomba, through Nalori, which is the most remote subdivision of the Eastern Dagomba District, 100km North of Yendi. Nalori (Chereponi) is bounded on the north by the Yamole River and on the East by the river Oti, both of which form a border between Ghana and Togo. It is bounded in the South by the Bitchabob Konkomba at Nambiri and by the Nafieba at Zagbeli, and on the West by the Komba at Waku.²

Ibrahim Mahama writes about the origins of the Dagomba and touches briefly on that of the Mamprusi and the Nanumba. He defines Dagbon as the traditional state of the Dagomba. According to Mahama, “Even though it is mainly Dagomba who inhabit Dagbon, there are some subject tribes mainly in the East. These tribes are Konkomba, Chokosi (Anufo), Basari (Chamba), Bimoba, Kotokoli and Kabre.”³ He concludes in a paragraph by mentioning the main towns of Dagbon such as Yendi, Tamale, and Chereponi. “Chereponi and Saboba, which are inhabited by the subject tribes, have populations of 6,241 and 3, 670 respectively.”⁴ From the above, Mahama classifies the Anoufom (Chakossi) as subjects of the Dagomba, but he does not give a historical account as to how and when the Anoufom became subjects of the Dagomba.

According to G.E. Metcalfe, “Dagomba has an organised and despotic monarchical government, the king residing at Yendi Mamprusi, a Grunshi tribe, and Chakossis, a colony of Sefui people, together with Pampamba [Konkomba], who are feudatories to Dagomba. Sansane-Mango and Pampamba have often tried to assert their independence of Dagomba, and it is only recently that the king of Yendi returned from punishing the latter tribe.”⁵

Metcalfe considers the Anoufom among other tribes to have been feudatories to Dagomba. The feudal system or feudalism, according to the Macmillan Dictionary, “is the social system that existed in Europe in the Middle Ages in which land belonged to powerful lords and the people they allowed to live on the land had to work and fight for them.”⁶ In Africa, the status of the Anoufom would be comparable to slaves or subjects who had little or no rights of their own and the land they lived on belonged to the “Lord” or the King. Metcalfe, states that the Anoufom and the Konkomba have in recent times tried to assert their independence to extricate themselves from the shackles of Dagomba imperial power.⁷ No doubt the status of Konkomba and Anoufom are no different as far as the Dagomba is concerned. But as far as the Anoufom are concerned, this claim is far from reality.

According to Walter Rodney, under communalism, there were no classes and there was equal access to land, and equality at distribution at a low level of technology and production; however, feudalism on the other hand involved great inequality in the production of land and social products. The landlord class and its bureaucracy controlled the state and used it as an instrument for oppressing peasants, serfs, slaves and even craftsmen and merchants.⁸ There were in feudal societies, clashes between the landlord and peasant classes and later on between the landlord and merchant classes. Rodney believes that the movement from communalism to feudalism in every continent took several centuries, and in some instances interruption of internal evolution never allowed the process to mature.

² Jon P Kirby, *God, Shrines, and Problem-Solving among the Anufo of Northern Ghana*, Collectanea Instituti Anthropos ; Vol. 34 (Berlin: D. Reimer, 1986), 22.

³ Ibrahim Mahama, *History and Traditions of Dagbon* (Tamale: GILLBT Printing Press, 2004), iii.

⁴ Mahama, *History and Traditions of Dagbon*, iii.

⁵ George Metcalfe, “Great Britain and Ghana : Documents of Ghana History, 1807-1957,” *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 4 (1966): 393–95, 456.

⁶ *The Macmillan English Dictionary for Advance Learners: International Student Edition*, 1430.

⁷ Metcalfe, “Great Britain and Ghana : Documents of Ghana History, 1807-1957.”

⁸ Walter Rodney, “How Europe Underdeveloped Africa (Introduction by Vincent Harding),” *Abuja: Panaf Publishers*, 2009, 43-44.

He, however, stated in no uncertain terms that “In Africa, there is no doubt that the societies which eventually reached feudalism were extremely few.”⁹ From both oral traditions of the Dagomba and the Anoufom, there has never existed any period in their respective histories that portrayed a master-servant relation like in the case of the Denkyera and Asante before 1701. The Anoufom had always controlled their lands and had never served any Dagomba chief. The infallible testimony of history bore witness that at no point in time did the Anoufom try to reassert their independence from the Dagomba as claimed by Metcalfe.

The Governor of the Gold Coast, Major Sir M. Nathan, during his meetings with Chief Abdullai of Kpabia and followers of Kpabia on Sunday, 19th April 1903, asked the Chief, “Under whom is the village called Fun?”, the Chief replied, “I do not know of a village by that name.”¹⁰ The governor’s query in the above dialogue, suggests that colonial governors and their agents did not have adequate knowledge of the ethnography and geographical areas of the people they claimed to be their subjects. The ignorance on the part of the governor is revealed in the fact that he seemed to have had names of villages on paper which on the ground did not exist or at least were not known by the indigenous people. Writers who have unknowingly taken all that Rattray and others have written as the whole truth, would probably have to carefully check for possible distortions to set the records straight.

METHODOLOGY

This study was qualitative in nature. Data was gathered from oral interviews. From the 8th to the 11th of January, 2011, the researcher conducted some research interviews in Dagbon in the Northern Region of Ghana. Eight (8) people were interviewed. They were made up of four (4) chief drummers (Tolon Lung-Naa, Kumbung Lung-Naa, the chief Drum chant of Zohe- Yendi and Dugu lung-Naa, Yendi). Others included an Islamic scholar from Zaamiu-Kumbungu, a malam at Yendi, an Educationist from Tolon as well as a Prince from Kumbungu. The areas researched covered Tolon, Kumbungu and Yendi. The researcher wanted to find out the relations between the Anoufom and the Dagomba; whether the Chakossi or Anoufom were part and subject of Dagbon. Various and different answers were given by the interviewees.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The researcher observed that information in the section of Western Dagomba, Tolon and Kumbungu, the people seemed not to have any knowledge about the Anoufom. Drum language or chant, known in Dagbani as *Bangsi*, plays an important role in the oral tradition of the Dagomba. However, the *Lungnas*, Chief drummers, in both Tolon and Kumbungu appeared not to have the least idea about the Chakossi (Anoufom).

Tolon and Kumbungu play a very significant role as far as the Dagbon local army is concerned. According to A.A. Iliasu, “In the centre of the Dagomba army, for instance, were the fighting men of Savulugu, Kumbungu and Tolon.” The Logbuliya were commanded by the chief of Kumbungu while the Warizahonema came under the chief of Zandua, with the Tolon Na as deputy commander.”¹¹ According to the chief drummer (*Lungna*) of Tolon, Abu Alhassan, “The Mossi and Chakossi are considered as one people. The Chakossi are also considered playmates of Dagomba. The Dagomba do not count the Chakossi as their relations. ‘*Timin ba yalla daadibikper taba*’ he said, meaning “we had no closer relations”. Nonetheless, according to him, the Tolon Regent has enskinned some white men as *chiefs* but we have no relations. For example, a Negro from America who wanted to trace her roots in Ghana, was enskinned “*Maltiti Na*”, so if the Chakossi also decided to do the same, I cannot know”, he added.¹² The above account gives credence to the fact that the relations between the Anoufom and

⁹ Benedict G Der, “The Traditional Political Systems of Northern Ghana Reconsidered,” *Regionalism and Public Policy*, 2001, 35–65, 38.

¹⁰ Public Records, and Archives Administration (PRAAD), Accra, ADM. 56/1/34.

¹¹ A.A Iliasu, “The ‘Kambose’ of Mamprusi and Dagomba,” *Seminar Paper Presented to the Department of History Legon, Accra.*, October 29, 1968, 2.

¹² Interview with Abu Alhassan (Tolon lung – Na) chief dunna [Na Mahaman kurli year 80] , Tolon Tamale 8th January , 2011.

the Dagomba as compared to that of the Mamprusi and the Gonja is of recent origin; that is, in the colonial era, from the 1920s to present times.

The chief drummer (*Lungna*) of Kumbungu, Zibrila Mahamaru, in an interview, said, “I know of Gourmas as Ya Na’s *Gonje* (Local guitarists) but I do not know of the Chakossi.” Asked which people he does praise or mention when drumming, he replied “Zambalsi. (Zambarima) and Zaba’si (Gonja), who were fought during the reigns of Na Mahami Billa and Na Luro respectively, as for the Chakossi, we have not heard of them.”¹³ Abubakar Hajj Mohammed, an Islamic Scholar, had this to say: “*La taakul malaissa bihiilmu*”, meaning, ‘One must not comment on a subject on which he has no knowledge. I do not know the origin of the Chakossi; neither do I have the least idea about them.’¹⁴ Yakubu Mahama, a Principal Superintendent of the Ghana Education Service at Tolon, said, “I don’t know anything about the Chakossi, I have to make research”.¹⁵ Ibrahim Waluru, on his part, believes that the Chakossi and Dagomba are not blood-related. “They are on Dagomba land; they were acephalous and they had only an ‘elder’. It was during the time of Na Mahaman Kurli that the Chakossi had a chief. Nalori is part of Sunson Na’s Land and Chakossi is part of Dagbon. The Dagomba have never gone to war with the Chakossi; it is possible that the Anoufom begged to settle on the land.”¹⁶

From the above accounts, there is ample evidence that chief drummers who are custodians of the tradition ought to have had an idea about the relations between the Anoufom and the Dagomba if there were any. If there had been a war between the Anoufom and the Dagomba and the former were defeated, the Dagomba drum chants would have recorded it. If the Anoufom in time past had requested land from Dagomba to settle on, it would have also been recorded by the Dagbon drummers. The fact that most of the Dagomba have faint or no idea about the Chakossi in the Western part of Dagbon, attests to the fact that there is very little in common between the Dagomba and the Anoufom. That is why the issue of the Anoufom becoming subjects of the Dagomba as claimed by some people from both the Anoufom ethnic group and that of the Dagomba must be subjected to further scrutiny and investigation. So far, from the available evidence gathered, the question of Anoufom being subjects of the Dagomba through wars of conquest or peaceful arrangements by asking for land to settle on is not supported by any authentic evidence.

To subject the problem to an in-depth investigation and analysis, it is not only expedient but also prudent to analyse and interpret the data gathered from Yendi. These are people who have at least average knowledge about the Anoufom as a result of proximity, neighbourliness, and the fact that both people had been ruled by the Germans and the British at different times.

Mahama Alhassan (*Zohe Sanpahi Na*) told the researcher in an interview that the Anoufom were independent and that the Dagomba did not give them any land. According to him, when a Chereponi chief went or visited Mango, he was received as a *Kambona* [a fighter], but when in Yendi he was regarded as a chief. “Sunson Na is independent and the Chereponi chief is also independent. Chereponi does not belong to Sunson Na. The Chakossi of Sansane fought and settled on their lands.”¹⁷ Alhaji Abdul-Rahaman Zakaria, a Malam and businessman, does not express an opposing view. He says, “Anoufom are warriors. Their origins are from Nzimba (Nzema) and they were the first to introduce *Marfa* [guns] or firearms there in the North. The Konkomba only had *Piema* [bow and arrow] and the Dagomba had the *Kpana* and *Takobi* [spears]. How could anyone have fought them?”, he asked. Chereponi is for the Chakossi. The Dagomba territorial limit is at Zagbeli and Sunson”, he added.¹⁸ The fact that Anoufom was the first to introduce guns in the North must be given critical

¹³ Interview with Zibrila Mahamaru [kumbung Lung –Na] Chief Drummer, 67years, Lung-na Yili, Kumbungu, Tamale , 9th January, 2011.

¹⁴ Interview with Abubakar Hajj Mohammed, Islami Scholar , 85years, Zaamiu area, Kumbungu, Tamale 9th January , 2011.

¹⁵ Interview with Yakubu Abdulai Mahama, Teacher, 52years, Limam Fong Area, Tolon-Tamale. 8th January, 2011.

¹⁶ Interview with Ibrahim Waluru, Prince , 81yrs, Yarnas Palace, Kumbungu –Tamale, 9th January, 2011.

¹⁷ Interview with Mahama Alhassan, Zohe Sanpahi Naa , A chief Drum Chant, 90 years, Zohe Area, Yendi 10th October, 2011.

¹⁸ Interview with Alhaji Abdul–Rahaman Zakaria, Business man / Mallam, 80yeas, Hno: BGBL328 Gagbuni –Balogu Area, Yendi. 11th January, 2011.

scrutiny. B. G. Der, in his book *The Slave Trade in Northern Ghana*, recounts how the Asante used guns in the wars with the Gonja in the 1730s and the Dagomba in 1744–45.¹⁹ Clearly, the Anoufom by this time had not yet migrated from the La Cote d'Ivoire to the North. It cannot, therefore, be true that they were the first to introduce guns to the region, but guns became more popular after the arrival of the Anoufom in the second half of the eighteenth century.

Dugu Lung-Na, Damba Bukari believes that during Ya Na Abudu's era, a District Commissioner visited Chereponi and they did not have a chief. They pointed to a certain man as their elder. The Anoufom brought Malba Kurli [original or old Malba] to Na Abudu to enskin him. Na Abudu told him to go and take care of them [your people], hence "*Kul ti Malba*". This was the origin, according to him, of the Malba Skin in Chereponi. "Their being subjects to the Dagomba was not as a result of conquest, alliance or treaty but rather through colonial rule", he added. According to Bukari, there has been a cultural adaptation programme by the Anoufom in Nalori. Zang [Zongo] chief drummer, Mahama went to Chereponi to teach Malba and his people how to play Dagomba drums, he said.²⁰ The above assertion that the Dagbon king, Na Abudu introduced the Anoufom of Chereponi to chieftaincy cannot be supported by the facts. By 1910, the Anoufom already had a chief in the person of Malba I. According to a colonial document, the said Abdulai [Abudu] was appointed Regent in 1917 and confirmed in 1920 and could not have introduced the Anoufom to the institution of chieftaincy. According to this archival document, for a considerable time, Abdulai gave free labour for the building of the Junior Trade School at Yendi and he also supplied "free labour for the construction of the Kulkpini Bridge."²¹

Martin Staniland has written in detail about the introduction of indirect rule in Northern Ghana and for that matter Dagbon which Chereponi or Anoufom were associated with. No attempt will therefore be made to duplicate this except to point out that the originators of indirect rule were H. A. Blair and A. C. Duncan-Johnstone and some D.C.s. Blair was said to have "provided the intellectual and cultural foundations of Indirect Rule, and Duncan Johnstone provided the drive and authority which ensured its implementation and the other officers put it into operation with both energy and patience."²² The vision of development envisaged by Duncan-Jonstone involved "the graduation of Gold Coast nation through the creation of progressively larger monarchies... where they could be fused into one or two big kingdoms."²³ The idea of maintaining Paramount chiefs and putting the minority groups under them was a widely held colonial policy. This is supported by the facts on the ground as the below quotation indicates.

Our policy must be to maintain any paramount chiefs that exist and gradually absorb under these any small communities scattered about. What we should aim at is that someday the Dagombas, Conjas (Gonjas) and Mamprusi should become strong native states.... I would like the Chief Commissioner to draw up and submit to me in due course a policy for the Northern Territories, sharing a definite scheme for fostering the formation of these big states.... I shall be glad if you will please endeavour to ascertain from your office files whether the Governor's instructions were carried out in so far as Mamprusi is concerned.²⁴

In the Northern Territories, several minority tribes protested this arrangement. For instance, in April 1932, the people of the Northern Province registered their displeasure and disapproval of the arrangement that put them before the Manprusi king. A portion of the letter reads, "the people and chiefs of this district most emphatically do not recognise the Na (Nayire) as their Over-Lord and have always provided presents etc. from time to time by direct order of the White Man."²⁵ The Anoufom

¹⁹ Benedict G Der, *The Slave Trade in Northern Ghana* (Woeli Pub Serv, 1998), 8-10.

²⁰ Interview with Damba Bukari Dugu Lung-Na, 95 years, Nayil-Fong Area, Yendi, 10th January, 2011.

²¹ NRG 8/2/10/, letter No. 103/10/1927, file No.10, dated 7th February, 1928.

²² Martin Staniland, *The Lions of Dagbon: Political Change in Northern Ghana* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 84.

²³ Staniland, *The Lions of Dagbon: Political Change in Northern Ghana*, 84.

²⁴ PRAAD, NRG8/2/20: Confidential, letter No. 1,159/Conf.8/1928, dated 20th October, 1928.

²⁵ PRAAD, NRG8/2/27, letter No. 158/25//1931, N.T. 597, dated 6th April, 1932.

seemed not to have protested formally against such an arrangement because they had never regarded themselves as subjects of the Ya Na. Traditional chiefs in the Northern Territories did not wield much power as one was made to believe; power rested in the hands of the D.C. s and the Chief Commissioners. They could make and unmake a chief.

Based on the above-mentioned objective of Duncan Johnstone, the Colonial Officers organised the Dagomba Conference which was occasioned in a grand style on 24th November 1930 in the presence of some 6,000 people.

The administration made plans to establish a Dagomba Native Authority and to adjust district boundaries so that they would coincide with those of native states (for Gonja and Dagomba in the Southern Province and eventually for other districts, as native authorities were set up elsewhere in the Northern Territory). The first step was to draft a Native Authority Ordinance, which came into effect on 30 January 1932 and was followed by Orders constituting Dagomba Native Authority (the Ya Na and his Council) and thirteen Subordinate Native Authorities (the various divisional chiefs and their elders).²⁶

From the above analysis, one can appreciate how indirect rule was introduced in the Northern Territories with regard to the Dagomba Native Authority and how the Anoufom in Chereponi came to be part of that Assembly. Abukari Munkaila Malba, a former regent, has stated above that his grandfather Malba was invited to Yendi by the British to constitute the Yendi Traditional Council. If this assertion is anything to go by, then, it sounds reasonable to say that Chereponi Feme [Chief], Malba, was in attendance at the 1932 august occasion that witnessed the inauguration of the Council. This could be said to be the date when the Anoufom of Nalori or Chereponi were brought under the Dagomba Traditional Council. Indeed, this has been the basis on which that perception has been created as if the Anoufom being part of the Dagomba Traditional Council was tantamount to being their subjects.

Maasole has stated that when this idea of indirect rule was first conceived by Sir, Gordon Guggisberg in 1920, the then Chief Commissioner Major Walker Leigh, an astute administrator and a political clairvoyant, cautioned his superiors of the ramifications of bringing different and minority tribes under the so-called centralised states but his piece of advice was not heeded. "They preferred the one which entailed the recognition of a powerful African ruler where subject peoples were not only from the ruler's ethnic group but stretched to include minority ethnic communities."²⁷

R. B. Bening documented a similar proposal for Administrative Unions in the 1920s, when Major F.W.F. Jackson, the Officer commanding British forces in Togoland, submitted proposals for administrative union between the three component units of the Gold Coast and sections of Western Togoland. This arrangement was to be based on ethnic, ethnographic, linguistic and political considerations. The Nanumba, who were part of the Krachi District, were annexed to that of Yendi. The Nawuri who had always obtained their Paramount Chief from Kpembe but had different customs and language from Gonja recommended that the two ethnic groups should be absorbed into the adjoining Salaga District.²⁸ Accordingly, the transfer of the Krachi District to the protectorate came into force on September 1, 1922, and with this re-organisation, the Nanumba area was separated from the Krachi District to become part of the Yendi District.

The above political arrangement did not go down well with the villages along the Salaga-Nchumuru boundary. They were not comfortable with the idea of coming under the Gonja Chief who had exercised some political jurisdiction over them before colonisation. "The Nahamuru feared that the Gonja would try to increase their hold over them although that was the only practicable and convenient alternative. These villages were, therefore, amalgamated with the Kpembe Division in the Salaga District."²⁹

²⁶ Staniland, *The Lions of Dagbon: Political Change in Northern Ghana*, 87.

²⁷ Cliff S. Maasole, "Inter-Ethnic Conflicts In Northern Ghana" (University For Development Studies, 2011), 75.

²⁸ R Bagulo Bening, *Ghana: Regional Boundaries and National Integration* (Ghana University Press, 1999), 36.

²⁹ Bening, *Ghana: Regional Boundaries and National Integration*, 41.

An analysis of the above state of affairs points out the fact that the government had a clear policy to amalgamate different ethnic groups for the sake of the smooth running of her administration. No matter the grievances or reservations about this political re-organisation an ethnic tribe had, it was a foregone conclusion on the part of the Government; administrative convenience took precedence over any other grievances in the case of the Nchumuru. The above-mentioned political grouping was a necessary ingredient for the introduction of Indirect Rule in the 1930s in the Northern Territories.

The policy of ethnic amalgamation by the colonial government for administrative convenience was not exclusive to the Northern Territories in British Togoland. According to Amenumey, the people of Kpando (Akpini), Buem, Avatime and Asogli (Ho), were amalgamated to constitute administrative units in 1932. The administration encouraged the amalgamation of the sixty-eight or so separate divisions that existed in South Togoland into four or five major classes and subsequently, the Native Administrative Ordinance conferred on these amalgamated states the right to function as Native Administrations.³⁰ The argument here is that though the ethnic factor was a consideration in carving out administrative jurisdiction, minority tribes had often been under larger tribes for administrative convenience. That was why administrative regions were not carved out purely on ethnic grounds. The Trans-Volta Togoland administrative regions were made up of both Ewes and non-Ewe groups. For instance, the Ada and Ewe were not of the same ethnic group, yet before 1947 Keta was part of the Ada District in the Gold Coast Colony.³¹ Based on the above information, the author thinks and has a strong opinion that the Anoufom were not put under Dagomba because they were subjects of the Dagomba, but they were put under the Dagomba purely because of administrative convenience.

The Version of the Anoufom of Mango

The researcher interviewed some knowledgeable people to seek their understanding of the relations between the Anoufom and the Dagomba. The Anoufom of Sansane-Mango had the following answers concerning the above subject matter. According to Elhaji Anzoumana Issifou, never in the history of the Anoufom has the Dagomba ruled them. “Their chief’s relic, (*Bantiri*), (underwear) is in Badara here.”³² However, he could not show the relic to the researcher for reasons best known to him. In the words of Fambari Alassani Ja Jakpa, all the tribes that call the word *Touwon zaafi* or *T. Z.* as *sag-bo* were all defeated by the Anoufom; “*Bouna Bantiri Wo Anoufom Do*”-the Dagomba; their grandfather’s underwear is with the Anoufom. He went further to say that the “Anoufom were the first to introduce a gun in the region.”³³ It is historically incorrect as stated above to say that the Anoufom were the first to introduce guns to the northern part of Ghana. It is equally an exaggeration on the part of the Anoufom to claim that any tribe or ethnic group in the northern part of Ghana who called the word *T.Z.* as *sa’ab* in their dialects were all defeated by them. The Dagaba and Wala used the same word *sa’ab* or *sagbo*, yet, they were not engaged in a war with the Anoufom let alone to be defeated. A renowned Islamic scholar, Al-Sheikh Hashimi Seidou, minced no words by saying, “Anoufom have never been under anybody. Going to Yendi, by some few Nalori people to be enskinned gives that wrong impression, if not it is never true.”³⁴

According to El Hadj Alassani Mahama, the Dagomba have never controlled an Anoufo. Asante Kotoko came to Yendi to fight but some Anoufom were there. They drove the Asante up to Yeji. When the Asante played their Atumpan [local drum] *Wo Kum apem a, apem beba*, which literally means, ‘If you kill thousand, thousand will come’ the Anoufom replied, through their Atungbani [local drum], “*Chakossi, chako Broum Broum, ko ntam bra ntam.*” Their [Dagomba] chief’s *bantiri* is in

³⁰ Divine Edem Kobla Amenumey, *The Ewe Unification Movement: A Political History* (Ghana Universities Press, 1989), 82.

³¹ Amenumey, *The Ewe Unification Movement*, 85.

³² Interview with Elhadji Anzoumana Issifou, Prince, 78years, Badara area, Mango –Togo, 9th October 2010.

³³ Interview with Fambari Alassani Ja Jakpa, prince and elder of the Jabou royal clan, 80years, Jabou area, Mango –Togo, 10th October, 2010.

³⁴ Interview with Al-sheik Hashimi Seidou, Islamic Education Unit and Vice Chairman of the Muslim Council of Mango , 59 years, Fomboro Area , Mango- Togo , 12th October , 2010.

Mango here, he added.³⁵ This oral tradition is a popular one among all Anoufom whether in Nalori or Mango. As to whether Anoufom drove the Asante up to Yeji in support of Dagomba is something which has little or no historical validity. When asked what the meaning of *Chako Broum Broum* was, he said it was an appellation just like the Asante's "*Wo kum apem a, apem beba.*" To wit 'when you kill a thousand, a thousand would turn up.'

The Views of the Anoufom in Nalori of being Subjects to the Dagomba

In an interview with the researcher, Abukari Munkaila Malba said, "We [the Anoufom of Nalori] were never subjects of the Dagomba. I will continue to tell the truth till I die. We [the Malba family] borrowed the kingdom from my uncles at Andoh. Nna Malba was selected to represent his uncle during the German era. He continued to play this role as the chief when the British arrived in Nalori as the colonial master. At the Yendi Traditional Council, everybody was to be independent. A silver medal, a cap and a stick were given to him as symbols of his sovereignty and authority."³⁶ The interviewee stated that the British were the ones who gave his great-grandfather Malba, the regalia but could not tell when it was given. The inability of the author to lay hands on a list of chiefs and their dates of enskinment of the Chereponi or Malba royal family has not facilitated the author's work. The family could not recollect the dates.

The above statement of Abukari Malba corroborates the fact that prior to the advent of the Germans in Nalori, his father's uncles, the Andoh people, were already chiefs. It, therefore, appears according to him "ridiculous for people to think that we were acephalous." Malba [I], who was Bonkani's nephew and messenger boy, according to Kirby, was put in charge of the affairs of the chieftaincy. "It gradually became evident that Malba was really in control because he had the 'white man's askaris or police (*dansanda*) at his disposal."³⁷ This quotation from Kirby clearly indicates that Malba was a chief because he had the backing or support of the white men and not that of any Dagomba chief.

The above period in contention was during the advent of the Germans in Togoland in 1897 and their defeat by the Allied forces in 1914. Kirby further claims that from 1914 to 1920, Nalori was a "no man's land", disputed by the French and the British, in which traditional politics was reduced to the level of kinship relations in and among the various Nalori groups. The ties with the patron houses in Mango were eased and those with Dagomba in Yendi had not yet begun. This made each village or group of villages sharing the same Mango patronymic or clan and kinship autonomous. The largest of these groups was Ando (i.e. those who sent tribute to the commoner "houses" of Ando in Mango), controlled by their headman Bonkani.³⁸

The above statement of Kirby clearly indicates that in the pre-colonial era, or before the advent of the Germans in the 1880s, Bonkani was a representative, headman, or an "ambassador" of the patronymic Ando House of Mango in Nalori. His duty as a representative was to send tributes [foodstuffs] to his royal masters in Mango. Notwithstanding Bonkani's social or political status, his position showed his link to a royal family. It would therefore be unfair for any person to classify the Nalori people as acephalous. They were vassals of the Metropolitan Anoufom state of Sansane-Mango from whom they took instructions.

Available archival documents indicate that in 1910, Malba, unlike most chiefs who were headmen, was the chief of "Djereponi" (Chereponi). He bore a title of a chief enskinned in 1910.³⁹ The chiefs mentioned in a letter with registration number, NRG8/2/10, which was titled, "Return of Medallions in possession of chiefs, Eastern Dagomba District", included the Chereponi chief with

³⁵ Interview with Alhaji Alassani Mahama, Elder of Kabtiebou, Kabatiebou area, Mango –Togo 12 -10 2010.

³⁶ Interview with Abukari Munkaila Malba, Regent of Chereponi, former palace, Chereponi 56years Chereponi – N/R, 27th December, 2010.

³⁷ Kirby, *God, Shrines, and Problem-Solving among the Anufo of Northern Ghana*, 41.

³⁸ Kirby, *God, Shrines, and Problem-Solving among the Anufo of Northern Ghana*, 41.

³⁹ PRAAD, Accra, ADM.56: CASE No.48/1919. Subject: List Of Chiefs: Northern Territories; Revision of List.

details as Name of chief: Malba, Skin: Deжереponi [Chereponi], Presented by the DC, in the year 1925 and was remarked for good work done.⁴⁰

Der, in his article “The Role of Chiefs’ Medallions in Northern Ghana”, throws more light on the origin, concept and aims of the introduction of these medallions. It all began in 1898, when Henry P. Northcott, the first Commissioner and Commandant of the then Northern Territories visited the north-western part of that region. It was at a period when there was stiff competition between Britain and France for control of the area. To undo his opponent, Northcott decided to introduce his currency reforms. It had a dual aim of replacing the British coins with traditional cowries and at the same time popularising the British monarch as the sovereign of the people, but the chiefs of Tangasia, Kaleo and Nadawli were not enthusiastic about the idea. Northcott observed the reluctance of the Dagaba to accept English coins in a letter to the Colonial Secretary at Accra as follows: “The Dagarti’s (Dagaba) do not recognise the value of specie, and I was only able to induce them to display any interest in the coins by explaining that each of them bore a portrait of Her Majesty. On hearing this, they accepted them with some alacrity.”⁴¹⁴² It then occurred to Northcott that if he could make an oval locket of glass which will bear the portrait of Her Majesty on one side and that of a coloured reproduction of the Union Jack on the other, as an effective form of presents to the people and their chiefs, “would also be an indication of their being subjects of England.”⁴³

The first Commissioner’s idea was improved upon by his successor, Lt. Colonel A. E. Watherston and was perfected by Captain Cecil Hamilton Armitage, in 1916 with the introduction of the silver medallions which according to Der, was the most important regalia introduced under British Colonial Administration. Medallions came to represent a political symbol; its award to a chief was coterminous to his official recognition by the Chief Commissioner or the District Commissioner. Its confiscation also symbolised the dismissal of a chief. “The award of medallions also formed a prominent part of the administration of the District Commissioners. Accurate records were kept by the District Commissioners showing chiefs who possessed medallions and given the dates when these were presented, who presented and the particulars as to why the medallions were granted.”⁴⁴

It must be noted that Yendi in Eastern Dagomba was not part of the 1911 census because by then the place had not yet become part of the Gold Coast, and neither was Chereponi. Both were still under German Imperial Authority with Sansane-Mango as the district capital.⁴⁵ A letter number: 24/2/1919, dated 1st February 1919, had its address as *Yendi Togoland*. It was addressed by the Yendi District political officer to the Chief Commissioner of the Northern Territories at Tamale. The status of Yendi had not yet been determined as part of the British Protectorate.⁴⁶ It is an indisputable fact that no sooner was Germany defeated in 1914 than the British took over Yendi which eventually became the headquarters of an Eastern Dagomba District.⁴⁷

Colonial rule, Staniland is of the view lasted in Dagbon for over fifty-six years and had to go through two cardinal reconstructions or phases. The first process was the merger of the German and British sections after the First World War. It was not until July 1919, under the terms of the Milner-Simon Agreement that the British were given Eastern Dagomba and other parts of ex-German Togo under the League of Nations mandate and were given authority to administer the northern areas as integral parts of the Northern Territories Protectorate. The second reconstruction was about the introduction of indirect rule in the thirties. Staniland was emphatic that at the beginning, the Yendi

⁴⁰ PRAAD, Tamale, NRG8/2/10: Return of Medallions in Possessions of Chiefs, Eastern Dagomba District.

⁴¹ B. G. Der, “The Role Of Chiefs’ Medallions In Northern Ghana”, *Drum Speak, Journal of The Faculty of Arts*, No.1, (1996): p.34

⁴² B.G. Der, “The Role Of Chiefs’ Medallions In Northern Ghana,” *Drum Speak, Journal of The Faculty of Arts* 1 (1996):34.

⁴³ Der, “The Role Of Chiefs’ Medallions In Northern Ghana,” 34.

⁴⁴ Der, “The Role Of Chiefs’ Medallions In Northern Ghana,” 33.

⁴⁵ PRAAD, Accra ADM.56/109:CCNT-Northern Territories no. 74/1910.Subject:CENSUS TAKING 1911.ACC. No.1374.

⁴⁶ PRAAD, Accra, ADM.56/1/229, CASE No.35/1918, SUBJECT: Yendi Official Diary, ACC. No. 1394.

⁴⁷ Staniland, *The Lions of Dagbon: Political Change in Northern Ghana*, 42.

Mandate Section was administered as a distinct district known as the Eastern Dagomba District, however, from 1932 there was a single Dagomba District, with headquarters at Yendi.⁴⁸

As of January 1923, the status of natives of the British sphere of Togoland (Chereponi and Eastern Dagomba) had not yet been determined. A letter from the Colonial Secretary, Maxwell, issuing instructions to the Chief Commissioner of the Northern Territories with regard to their status, read as follows:

I am directed by the Governor to inform you, with reference to the national status of natives of the British sphere of Togoland, that the Attorney General has advised that the position is that they are to be treated as if they were British Protected Persons.⁴⁹

The above archival document further indicates or authenticates the fact that by the period 1923, the status of both the subjects of Yendi and Chereponi had not yet been determined let alone for Yendi to claim lordship over the Anoufom in Nalori. It is therefore difficult to reconcile this archival evidence and that of the Dagomba oral tradition that it was Na Abudu who first introduced Nalori people and for that matter, Malba to the chieftaincy institution by enskinning him in the 1930s.

According to the current chief of Chereponi, Jaminja Gommna Malba, oral traditions have it that friendship as a result of sharing the same colonial masters after 1919, was the reason why the Anoufom started going to Yendi because they belonged to that Traditional Council. Malba, on his sick bed, said that the Dagomba never enskinned him and after his death, the Anoufom should not go there for any enskinment; but go there after the election of the chief and tell him [Ya Na], this is our chief. "If you allow a Dagomba to put a robe on your neck, he has put a rope on your neck." Part of the impression of being enskinned by the Ya Na has been the problem of intruders that is 'sons' competing with 'fathers' for the skin. Secondly, being part of the same traditional council has created that impression. Aggrieved sub-chiefs also rebel by going to Yendi to swear allegiance to the Ya Na, thereby creating the Malba factions and the Ya Na factions among the chiefs of Nalori", he added.⁵⁰

Kofi Fousseni Jaminja said Malba chose to visit Yendi chiefs because of their friendship and the good road, else it would have been Mamprugu. "Nna [my grandfather] Malba was never enskinned by Dagomba. If anybody was to have enskinned him, that should have been the Mamprusi because they are our traditional friends."⁵¹

Yakoubou Koukoura added that "The Mamprussi are our friends; the Anoufom should have gone there for enskinment. The Mamprusi used to enskin the Dagomba, but the white men came and stopped it because of distance. Anoufom are never under the Dagomba; as regards the going to the Yendi for enskinment, I have no idea, he added.⁵² The above assertion by Yakoubou that the Mamprusi used to enskin the Dagomba is historically incorrect. Emmanuel J. Kandoh supported Yakoubou Koukoura's view that "the Anoufom should have gone to Mamprugu for enskinment but because of the nature of the roads in those days and because of wild animals like *awobam*. The reason why Malba visited Yendi was not for enskinment but rather, according to what he was told, was for spiritual fortification; to get *Gbagno* [local bulletproof], among other things. "We fought Dumon people and their chief's *bantiri* is in Mango. The Anoufom have never been subjects of the Dagomba."⁵³

Abass Gyiwah, a former regent of Wencheke, was of the view that as long as some Nalori chiefs went to Yendi for enskinment, they were their subjects.⁵⁴ This author, begs to differ in opinion with Gyiwa that the actions of those few chiefs did not make the larger majority of the chiefs and

⁴⁸ Staniland, *The Lions of Dagbon: Political Change in Northern Ghana*, 11-12.

⁴⁹ PRAAD, Accra, ADM.56: Letter No.227/S.S.978/22; 29TH January, 1923.

⁵⁰ Interview with Jaminja Gommna Malba, Chief of Chereponi, 105years, Chief palace Masa Wose, Chereponi, 26 December, 2010.

⁵¹ Interview with Kofi Fousseini Janja, Elder, Hno.217, Chereponi East Area, 80 years, Chereponi .26th December, 2010 [8:30-9:40 am].

⁵² Interview with Yakoubou Koukoura, Elder, 85 years, Bungalow area, Chereponi .26 December 2010.

⁵³ Interview with Emmanuel J. Kandoh, Ghana Health Services Tamale, 51years, Hill-Top Area, Chereponi. 26 December, 2010.

⁵⁴ Interview with Abass Gyiwah, ex-regent of wencheke, teacher, 47 years, Chereponi-N/R, 27th December, 2010.

people of the area subjects of the Dagomba. Chimsi Issaka emphasised that the Mamprusi gave the Anoufom land to settle. Malba decided to go to Yendi for enskinment because of proximity and not because Dagomba gave them land to settle or conquered them.⁵⁵ The Chereponi Chief Malba Jaminja Gomna has, however, stated emphatically that the Ya Na does not enskin the Chereponi chief as the prospective chief is determined by the Malba Family.

In the words of the Nayire, Na Mahami Abdulai Bohagu, “Anybody who says any tribe within the northern zone ever conquered a Chakossi man is a liar.”⁵⁶

According to David Tait, “... there were also two Tshakosi (Chakossi) chiefdoms that are included in the Dagomba state ... How it happened that these two chiefdoms came to be attached to Dagomba rather than to the Mamprusi, I do not know.”⁵⁷

The above analysis elucidates why and how the Anoufom [Chakossi] came to be attached to the Dagomba rather than to the Mamprusi. It clearly authenticates the fact that the Anoufom had a close historical affinity with the Mamprusi than the Dagomba. Many people or readers would find themselves in the shoes of Tait, not understanding why the Anoufom had not attached themselves to the Mamprusi but rather to the Dagomba.

Author’s Views on the Subject

From the above critical analysis, it is clear that the assertion that Anoufom were subjects of the Dagomba derived from the writings of anthropologists like Metcalfe (whose works were subsequently quoted massively by other writers, and the oral traditions of Dagomba), appear to have no concrete historical foundations to such a claim. Metcalfe and others have classified the Konkomba as acephalous people. If the Anoufom and Konkomba were considered feudatories of the Dagomba it goes to imply that the Anoufom were also acephalous and for that matter subjects of the Dagomba. But from the above analysis, it would be a historical fallacy to say that the Anoufom were acephalous. With regard to the question of them being subjects of the Dagomba, it was not as a result of their being conquered and subdued by the Dagomba; neither did they beg for land from the Dagomba to settle nor did a treaty of protection signed between the Anoufom and the Dagomba. It was as a result of the colonial policy that the Anoufom became part of the Dagomba Traditional Council or District which became their administrative capital. The chieftaincy institution is equally a human one and some people will do whatever it takes to protect and defend what they believed legitimately belonged to them. In spite, of the fact that one or two Anoufom Chiefs in Nalori decided to go to the Ya Na at Yendi for enskinment, still does not invalidate the point that indeed, the Anoufom were not subjects of the Dagomba.

CONCLUSION

The exact relationship between the Anoufom and Dagomba is shrouded in controversy. Is it a matter of subject-master relations? The Dagomba claim the Anoufom are their subjects which the latter denies. Extensive research carried out in both Dagbon in the northern region of Ghana and the Anoufom in Sansane-Mango in present-day Northern Togo and Chereponi in the North-Eastern part of Ghana attest to the fact that the Anoufom have never been subjects of the Dagomba. However, what has contributed to this perception of the Anoufom being subjects of the Dagomba was the British colonial administrative policy that sought to bring minority tribes, in this case, the Chereponi people in Northern Ghana under larger ethnic groups. The key finding of this paper is that the Anoufom had no relations with the Dagomba and were never subjects of the Dagomba. The people that the Anoufom had a relationship with were the Gonja and the Mamprusi. Indeed, this myth of the Anoufom being subjects of the Dagomba has been broken.

⁵⁵ Interview with Bu-Naba Chimsi Issaka, chief of Burugu, West Mamprussi Traditional Area, Chief Palace, Burugu, 81 years. 02-01-2011.

⁵⁶ Interview with The Nayiri (overlord of the Mamprugu traditional area), Naa Mahami Abdulai Bohagu, 84years, chief palace, Nalorigu-N/R. 5th January, 2011.

⁵⁷ David Tait, *The Konkomba of Northern Ghana* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), 8.

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