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**Traditional Chieftaincy or "Administrative Police" in Togo under Colonial Rule (1884-1960)**

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**Abstract**

The colonial administration of Togo was carried out with the collaboration of local chiefs, whose power was institutionalized. Put at the bottom of the hierarchical structure of the colonial administration, traditional power had a mission of administrative policing in the territory. The exercise of the administrative police mission by local chiefs is the concern of this study. The exploitation of archival documents, periodicals, and bibliography on the colonial system in Togo has made it possible to note that the traditional chiefs were invested with the power to maintain order. The German (1884-1914) and French (1919-1960) administrations in Togo used authoritarian, energetic, and active chiefs to impose colonial order on the populations, even those who were far from administrative centers. Under the German administration, chiefs administered justice and had disciplinary powers. The French administration, on the other hand, had entrusted them, namely with missions of general police, rural police, and judicial police for the maintenance of “colonial peace.”

**Keywords:** Maintenance of order, colonial peace, general police, judicial police

**Résumé**

L’administration coloniale du Togo s’est faite avec la collaboration des chefs locaux, dont le pouvoir était institutionnalisé. Placé au bas de la structure hiérarchique de l’administration coloniale, le pouvoir traditionnel avait une mission de police administrative dans le territoire. L’exercice de la mission de police administrative par les chefs locaux est la préoccupation de cette étude. L’exploitation des documents d’archives, des périodiques et de la bibliographie sur le système colonial au Togo a permis de relever que les chefs traditionnels furent investis du pouvoir de maintien de l’ordre. Les administrations allemande (1884-1914) et

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française (1919-1960) du Togo eurent recours aux chefs autoritaires, énergiques et actifs, afin d'imposer l'ordre colonial aux populations, même les plus éloignées des centres administratifs. Sous l'administration allemande, les chefs rendaient justice et disposaient de pouvoirs disciplinaires. L'administration française, quant à elle, les avait chargés, notamment de missions de police générale, de police rurale et de police judiciaire pour le maintien de la « paix coloniale ».

**Mots-clés :** Maintien de l'ordre, paix coloniale, police générale, police judiciaire.

### Introduction

In the anti-colonial struggle of the 1950s, African nationalist leaders attacked the chieftaincy as the basic cog in the colonial administration<sup>12</sup>. This proves that the colonial system was established through the institution of traditional chieftaincy. The colonial administration in Togo relied on local chiefs. Institutionalized, the power of chiefs served to strengthen colonization in Togo. The traditional chiefs were agents of the colonial administration. They were thus invested with the power to maintain order in their territorial jurisdictions. Through them, the colonial order was exercised in the most remote areas. They judged, repressed, ordered, ensured security, maintained peace, gave orders received from the administration, ensured the good administration of their areas, etc. These different missions, qualified as administrative police, were decisive in the imposition of the order of the German (1884-1914) and French (1919-1960) colonizers<sup>13</sup>. This is why the following question arises: how did traditional leaders carry out administrative policing missions in Togo under colonial rule between 1884 and 1960?

<sup>12</sup> The Democratic Party of Guinea (affiliated with the RDA) of Sékou Touré thus led a fight against chieftaincy, because it was convinced that the colonial system had its roots in it.

<sup>13</sup> Between 1914 and 1919, Togo was co-administered by the Allied powers (France and Great Britain). Following the division of the German remains between the two powers in 1919, the British-occupied part was administered as a district of the Gold Coast from 1914 on. As a result, the chieftaincy in British Togo did not evolve in the same way or have the same powers. The political principle of Indirect rule has tinged British liberalism in the administration of this area (Lawrance 284-294). This aspect could be the subject of a later study. The present study deals with Togo during the German period and, from 1919 onwards, with what fell to France under the international regime of mandate and then trusteeship.

The deciphering of the problem of this study leads to two secondary questions. How was chieftaincy institutionalized by the German colonial administration following the conquest of the present territory of Togo? What was the mission of the administrative police exercised by traditional chiefs under the French administration?

It is these missions of policing and maintaining public order in the administration, devolved to the traditional chieftaincy, that this study is intended to do. It aims to show that traditional colonial chieftaincy was an important institution in the colonial domination of Togo.

The methodological approach used stems from the exploitation of archival documents, periodicals, and a bibliography on the workings and institutions of the colonial administration. The comparison and cross-checking of all this documentation have provided material for analysis. Structured in four axes, the present study first shows the establishment of chieftaincy following the German colonial conquest of Togoland. It then analyzes the foundations of traditional chieftaincy under the French administration and examines the law-and-order missions of the chiefs under the same administration. Finally, it looks at the effect of the authoritarian power of traditional chiefs in the establishment of French colonial peace. It is worth noting that "law and order" refer to public safety and tranquility. In this case, maintaining law and order means deciding what measures to take to prevent or stop disturbances in the territory. In the case of this study, law and order measures relate to the general policing and the judicial role that traditional leaders exercised.

## **1. The German Conquest of Togo and the Imposition of Order by Traditional Chiefs**

The chieftaincy was generalized in the territory following the German colonial conquest, with the appointment and imposition of chiefs in the communities of Togo. It became an institutionalized body in the administration of the territory.

Indeed, as the colonial conquest penetrated the interior of Togo, the Germans relied on the local authorities, with whom they had signed agreements or contracts of "protectorate". Between July 5, 1884 (the date of the signing of the protectorate treaty between the emissaries of the *Reich* government and the representatives of the religious authorities of Togoville), and 1885, the Germans Randad and Ernst Falkenthal raised

the German flag in Porto-Seguro (today's Agbodrafo)<sup>14</sup>, Glidji and Petit Popo (the current Aného) with the agreement of local chiefs, who thus became the intermediaries of the colonial administration and the first indigenous collaborators. German influence spread inland to the northwest with treaties signed in March 1885 between Falkenthal and the chiefs of Tovégan, Kévé, and Agotimé. It reached the mountainous areas of Kpalimé in 1887, with the action of the interim imperial commissioner Paul Grade and Ernst Henrici. Traveling up the Mono valley, the medical explorer Ludwig Wolf, who left Aného on March 29, 1888, reached the Tem kingdom on May 1<sup>er</sup> where he was received by King Ouro Djobo Boukari (Assima-Kpatcha et al. 27-29; 32).

But the German administration had to deal in the north with populations without centralized power, except for the Anoufo kingdom, as well as the Moba, Gourma, Mamproussi, and Mossi chieftainships.<sup>15</sup> The Bassar and Kabiye were among those peoples who were fought boldly by the Germans between 1897 and 1898 before the imposition of chiefs. Even the Nataka clan had centralized political power.<sup>16</sup> With Kabiye people, for example, the appointment of chiefs took place in 1898 after the conquest that began in January of the same year. Dr. Kersting, who led the first military operations against the Kabiye people, put it this way:

From January 19 to 30, I undertook a tour in the northern part of my region, the Kabure district, which I had not yet penetrated. After the first shock, I moved around in peace. I had chiefs elected in the southern part, which is in permanent conflict with Dako and Bafilo, and I placed these territories under the dynamic chief of Dako. (Tcham 179)

The Kabiye people experienced military expeditions in January 1898. It was following these military campaigns that the imposition of

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<sup>14</sup> Randad received the agreement of Chief Mensah of Porto-Seguro on November 18, 1885, after failed negotiations in July and September 1884 and in April 1885.

<sup>15</sup> For more details, see Gayibor (202-214; 291-297).

<sup>16</sup> The Nataka clan held, in reality, a spiritual and less reinforced political power, which was recognized by several surrounding villages. The power was diffused between several clans claiming to be indigenous. The different groups that participate in the formation of the Nataka clan were each custodian of specific ritual functions. The role played by these groups contributes to reducing the power of the sovereign. The Bitchabé and Kabou were, however, independent localities. The term "impossible Bassar kingdom" (Gayibor 354-358) says it all.

colonial authority through the appointment of local chiefs began. The following chart is illustrative.

**Chart N° 1: The Kabiye traditional leaders appointed by the German administration in 1898**

Leaders	Grouping (Village)	Year of Appointment
Tchamdja Tchéyi (Kaning)	Bohou	1898
Telou	Tchitchao	1898
Kondo Tchouloum	Lama (southern massif)	1898
Ali Potchona (Bodjona)	Kidjan (Kouméa)	1898
Koudjowkoum	Lassa	1898
Nkalou Asoti	Lama-Dessi	1998
Akalambim	Agbandé	1898
Nigde Piyapito	Yaka	1898
Kare Kossoum	Léon (Lyè)	1898

Source : Tanai (438) ; Tanang (155).

Thus, the German administration signed recognition agreements with chiefs where chieftaincy existed, sometimes relying on their army to conquer other peoples<sup>17</sup>. In the case of the Kabiye, for example, the German administration was able to create a new chieftaincy in the area where the chieftaincy did not exist, appointing chiefs according to their wishes and the hospitality offered to them. With Kabiye people, the choice was made among those who had gone to meet her or those who had shown themselves to be cooperative during military campaigns (Labante 164; Pata 22-23; Tcham 179-180).

From the time of the appointment of local chiefs, chieftaincy became an institution of colonial administration, because it was institutionalized and integrated into the territorial organization. The territory was progressively organized following the German occupation into administrative districts, later renamed administrative constituencies, at the head of which sat the chiefs of the constituency. At first, an administrative district (*Amtsbezirk*) was created in the localities of Baguida and Lomé in 1886, Bismarckburg in 1888, Aného in 1889, Missahohé in

<sup>17</sup> The Semassi warriors of the Tem kingdom of Tchaoudjo were recruited by the Germans against the Kabiye between 1898 and 1902.

1890, Kete-Kratchi in 1894,<sup>18</sup> Sansané-Mango in 1896, Bassari in 1897, Sokodé in 1898,<sup>19</sup> and Lomé-campagne in 1905. Secondary stations were created to facilitate the management of the territory. These included Tokpli in 1900, Palimé (today Kpalimé), Nuatja (today Notsé), and Yendi (today in Ghana) (Sebald and Tcham 51-56).

In all of these administrative jurisdictions, the heads of districts, who were white administrators, had as their direct collaborators the chiefs of the district and the village chiefs. Some chiefs of district could be promoted to senior chiefs. The traditional chiefs numbered approximately 5,000 under the German administration (Sebald and Tcham 61). Their power was reinforced by some police officers assigned to their service. This reality of their power is described by Ali-Napo (19-20) as follows:

the conditions that favored the recruitment of workers from the North for the development of the South were: the military conquest of certain regions with the capture of many prisoners of war, the rapid organization of the population's management by the creation of several chiefdoms with many chief policemen and, above all, the presence of a well-armed police force in the two stations (Sokodé-Bassar and Mango-Yendi).

In the two stations of Sokodé-Bassari and Mango-Yendi, the kabiyè, bassar, konkomba dagomba and anoufo peoples had put up a warlike resistance against the conquest of their various territories. This explains the strong presence of the police. With the Kabiyè people, for example, Labante (164) writes

Chief Tchédié was able to carry out his missions properly thanks to Taza Lomou and Tchaa Sama, who were in charge of protecting the town. They were people who had received military training. This allowed them to vigorously support the chief whose mission was to reorganize the workers in Kara as well as in all the regions under the authority of the said locality.

The traditional chieftaincy was thus transformed into an administrative chieftaincy, which sometimes contradicted the customary realities of the populations. In some areas of southern Togo, the populations resisted this new authority by electing a customary chief

<sup>18</sup> Kpandou and Ho, now in Ghana, were set up as secondary stations.

<sup>19</sup> When Sokodé was created in 1898, the two posts were merged under the name of Sokodé-Bassari district.

responsible for overseeing customs. Particularly with the Ewe people, one often encountered "chiefs of the land" living clandestinely alongside those who had a purely administrative mission.

In their administrative role, traditional leaders used repression to deter their rebellious constituents. Each village chief was obliged to follow orders directly from the district chief and also to obey the administration. The police officers who were placed at his disposal strengthened his power over the population. With their support, the village chief had to report to the chef de constituency at regular intervals (Sebald and Tcham 62). Thus, the administration assigned them important missions to maintain public order. Nabe (277) presents the main mission of traditional leaders under the German administration as follows:

The role of the chiefs was no less important. In German justice, chiefs had a privileged position; they could impose fines for "breach of the peace", insults, disobedience of orders, etc., up to a maximum of 50 marks (100 marks for senior chiefs). The share of customary fees left to them (10% of the amount of the court costs) was considerable.

In a decentralized manner, the chiefs had disciplinary powers, which sometimes evolved into arbitrariness. They were given the latitude to inflict punishment (Nabe 257). These administrative missions of the chiefs were diversified, with some nuances, under the French colonial administration.

## **2. The Traditional Chieftaincy under the French Administration**

The French administration has defined the attributions that are devolved to the chiefs. But, the exercise of the administrative police by the chiefs required skills, among others, authority and rigor.

### **2.1. The General Missions of Traditional Chiefs under the French Administration**

It was by decree N° 405 of September 3, 1926, completed by the circular of October 7, 1926 that the French administration defined the indigenous customary power and its missions. Contrary to the German period, the local chiefs under the French administration did not impose legal penalties. The decree of April, 21, 1933 reorganizing indigenous justice did not give them the power to judge. Throughout the colonial period, texts were often issued to readjust the indigenous command. On

May 6, 1936, the administration issued decree N°. 171 on the organization of the indigenous command in the territory. Later, in 1944, 1945, 1947, and 1949, other decrees were issued without giving the chiefs the power to judge. They were asked to ensure:

- the general police, i.e. the public order in the village;
- Rural police: the chief was responsible for planting and harvesting, as well as for the maintenance of the nurseries created in the villages;
- Roads, i.e. the maintenance of roads and paths in the village;
- hygiene: the chief was obliged to report to the chief of the district the case of contagious diseases, rinderpest, or any other epizootic;
- justice: the chief did not judge but his role was to reconcile the parties;
- tax collection (Sossou 353).

The general police, the rural police, and justice constitute the missions that entered, in line with the vision, in the policy of the administrative police or the maintenance of order. Their exercise led to the accomplishment of others. In fact, by keeping the populations in colonial peace, the maintenance of roads and paths, hygiene, and the collection of taxes were assured. The chiefs had to contribute to ensuring the execution of the colonial order. This is why, as soon as the territory was occupied, the French administration looked for authorities having qualities of "authority", "energy" or "intelligence". These qualities presided over the choice of chiefs in the French colonial territory.

In addition, there was a hierarchy in the traditional chieftaincy. The canton chiefs are the hierarchical superiors of the village chiefs. It was from among the canton chiefs that the administration chose the superior chief. They could be rewarded according to the skills and missions they rendered to the administration.

## **2.2. Some Qualities of Leaders sought after under the French Administration**

The less influential leaders and those who were deemed to be "rebels" to the administration during the 1914-1918 occupation were removed, while the more influential and loyal ones were retained. Cards established for this purpose disqualified certain leaders from serving under the French administration. For example, in the Sokodé-Bassari district, Chief Ouro Tagba in Bassar was described as "a 60-year-old chief of no



importance. In Ouro Atacora of the village of Djaripagua<sup>20</sup>, it is written: "Since the occupation of Togo by the French authorities, does nothing in Sokodé despite several summonses. In disdain, he does not think to depend on Sokodé, but on Yendi where he was [for] to make his submission".<sup>21</sup>

The so-called "young," "dynamic," "influential," "committed" and "authoritarian" chiefs were reappointed. The circle of Sokodé-Bassari offers another example, that of Chief Djobo of Paratao. He was rated "Very Good". The following can be read on his appraisal: "Great chief of the Cotocolis, rallied clearly to the French cause from the beginning of our occupation, has influence, very great devotion, he would be useful to the commander of this village in his command. He was made king by the Germans to replace his deceased brother Tsiagodomou"<sup>22</sup>. Another example, that of Ouro Bagna of Koussountou, reveals this: "A young chief, very committed, very obedient, gives satisfaction to the authorities of Sokodé"<sup>23</sup>.

In the annual report of 1924, the French administration spoke of the replacement of certain chiefs in the circle of Klouto in these terms:

Many new chiefs were appointed during the past year, due to deaths or the inertia of the incumbents. In Assahoun, for example, Chief Avlimé, old and impotent, proved unable to continue to exercise his functions. [...]. Similarly, in Noépé, an important commercial center, the lazy, unintelligent and unauthorized chief Nyonator had to be deposed. The population met in the presence of Nyonator himself, the notables, and the district chiefs, and an election was held. Alakpa, Nyonator's cousin, was elected. The choice was a good one, since then perfect calm has

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<sup>20</sup> Djarkpanga

<sup>21</sup> ANT-Lomé, 2 APA, cercle de Sokodé, dossier 1 (add.) : Liste des chefs de cantons et de villages du cercle au moment de l'occupation du territoire par les troupes françaises (1914-1918). NB. Certains noms de chefs sont suivis d'appréciation de l'autorité, 1914-1918.

<sup>22</sup> ANT-Lomé, 2 APA, cercle de Sokodé, dossier 1 (add.) : Liste des chefs de cantons et de villages du cercle au moment de l'occupation du territoire par les troupes françaises (1914-1918). NB. Certains noms de chefs sont suivis d'appréciation de l'autorité, 1914-1918.

<sup>23</sup> ANT-Lomé, 2 APA, cercle de Sokodé, dossier 1 (add.) : Liste des chefs de cantons et de villages du cercle au moment de l'occupation du territoire par les troupes françaises (1914-1918). NB. Certains noms de chefs sont suivis d'appréciation de l'autorité, 1914-1918.

reigned in this canton and the villages are clean and the plantations well maintained.<sup>24</sup>

In fact, in the southern part of Togo, the chieftaincy was subject to the hereditary rules of devolution of traditional power and not dependent on elections as in the north of the territory. So, to speak of a good election, in this case, is undoubtedly a maneuver of the colonial authority.

The different abilities of chiefs desired by the administrators lasted throughout the colonial period and it is in this capacity that traditional chiefs served as a link between the administration and the populations.

In 1942, the chief of the Bassari subdivision proposed to the circle commander of Sokodé the reorganization of the village of Nangbani and the replacement of Chief Naboudja because of his lack of vigor, which did not help to establish colonial authority. He wrote to him:

Honor to propose to you the reorganization of the villages of Ouadandé and Nagbani of the canton of Bassari.[...] In fact, neither of these two villages is anything other than an administrative grouping of real villages, sometimes quite distant from each other. This system would not be bad if the chiefs were good and disciplined, but this is not the case, and I have been able to observe in all circumstances the incapacity of these two chiefs, Agba for Ouadandé and Naboudja for Nagbani. [...] The role of the canton chief, currently a young, energetic and capable chief, is made very difficult by the fact that half of the Bassaris are placed under the direct orders of null and disobedient village chiefs. While all Bassari villages have had excellent yields in the various product campaigns[...], Ouadandé and Nagbani have always been very much behind. Often, the intervention of the guards has been necessary. [...] The village chief of Nagbani is quite liked, but he is very soft.<sup>25</sup>

This quotation confirms everything that is known about traditional chiefs. They were the servants of the colonial administration. Their work was not appreciated in terms of satisfying the needs of the people being administered. The chiefs were also praised by the colonial authority for their ability to maintain order in their various jurisdictions.

<sup>24</sup> Rapport annuel à la SDN, 1924 (138).

<sup>25</sup> ANT-Lomé, 2 APA, cercle de Cercle de Bassari, dossier 2 (add.) : Administration générale et politique. Fiche de renseignements sur les villages de Bassari, de l'Oti et de canton de Bangeli, de canton de Kidjaboum. Rapport au commandant de cercle de Bassari. Correspondances, 1949-1952.

### 3. Traditional Leaders in the Maintenance of Public Order

The chieftaincies, auxiliary bodies of the administration, participated in the maintenance of order sought by the administrators. In this respect, they exercised both general police and judicial police functions.

#### 3.1. Traditional Leaders and the General Police: Ensuring Public Order and Colonial Peace

Theoretically, traditional leaders were the advocates for their citizens. The instructions that they had to carry out had to be in keeping with this dynamic. In this way, they were obliged to keep the head of the subdivision or the circle commander informed of the wishes of the population, to intervene personally to put an end to abuses of all kinds of which their constituents might be victims, to report to the head of the subdivision on exactions or excesses of zeal committed by agents of the administration, and to report on the unfortunate repercussions that administrative measures might have (Tanang 194). In practice, the execution of administrative orders was primarily in the interests of the colonizer. Any uprising or disobedience to the chief was punished by the white man himself. The decree N° 636 of August 29, 1949 states:

All acts, words, gestures, maneuvers, and all voluntary abstentions likely to constitute an opposition to the legitimate authority of a customary chief, invested or recognized by the administration, and thus to affect public order or to hinder the proper functioning of administrative services, were punishable by police penalties.

Concerning the general police, customary chiefs had extensive powers to maintain order and public peace. They were first and foremost guardians of public order and peace within their territorial jurisdiction. Their power was exercised over all the inhabitants of the village, including those who were passing through, regardless of their race.<sup>26</sup> They had to find out everything that was happening there. In this way, they were to prevent acts of disorder, either by intervening themselves in time to remove the causes of the disorder or by reporting in good time to the subdivision chief on what was likely to happen. The district chiefs had to identify and denounce troublemakers to the authorities. They were required to keep an eye on strangers and to bring before the head of the

<sup>26</sup> Textes officiels publiés au territoire de 1939 et 1946 (3).

subdivision any person whose behavior seemed suspicious to them. They also reported to the authorities the various noises that circulated in the townships. The district chiefs (in the towns) were obliged to keep abreast of what was happening there, especially in the "Zongo", because, according to the administration, "it is there above all that criminals seek to hide".<sup>27</sup>

It is in this logic that we can understand the message of the chief of the district of Kéméni, Ouro Koura Guéffé, addressed to the commander of the Cercle of Sokodé on July 22, 1952, concerning the brigands in his village. He writes the following:

I have the honor to come and respectfully ask your high benevolence to send a helping hand to save the inhabitants of my village Kéméni from the plundering of some bands of brigands. During the night of July 20 and 21, thieves entered the huts by torchlight and took with them everything they found in the poor houses. On the first night, they demolished five boxes in two rooms in the same district. [...]<sup>28</sup>

In June 1959, the chiefs and notables of Akata Township provided information to the Circle Commander of Kloto to oppose the practice of apostolic religious worship in their locality. The object of the protest was the disturbance of order and peace in their various villages<sup>29</sup>. They said:

We,  
Regent of Akata Township,  
The notables of the 4 villages of the Akata canton,  
The chief of the village of Akata-Adamé,  
gathered on June 17, 1959, for deliberation on the case concerning the dissension existing between the population and a group of villagers practicing the apostolic religion;

<sup>27</sup> ANT-Lomé, 2APA/Cercle d'Atakpamé, Dossier 72 : Correspondance a/s de la réorganisation du commandement indigène, élection et nomination de chefs de cantons, de villages et leurs secrétaires. Arrêtés portant répression de l'opposition à l'autorité des chefs coutumiers. Liste des chefs et des secrétaires, des cantons et villages, 1937-1962.

<sup>28</sup> ANT-Lomé, 2APA, cercle de Sokodé, dossier 51 : Administration générale et politique. Rapports mensuels des secrétaires de chefs de canton de Koumaïdè, Guaratao, Tchamba, Fazao, Kéméni, Kri-Kri et Sotouboua, 1951.

<sup>29</sup> The authors of the letter are: the regent of Akata Township (Kluga Petro), the notables of the 4 villages of Akata Township (Reinfried Konu, Tigoe Dake, Robert Letsu, Godwin Hotowokua, Cornelus Adzeyi, Komla Ata, Kokou Mati, Kumavi Kpodo, Michel Adadzo, Yawo He Tse) and the chief of the village of Akata-Adamé (Koffi Gbini)

Noting that the conduct of the members of the (sic) apostolic sect of our village has become in our social affairs, a very thorny problem giving rise to incessant disturbances thus harming UNION, ORDER, PEACE, and especially the desirable PROGRESS of community development work of the township;

Noting that the practice of the rites of religion, such as it is proceeding in the canton - specifically in the village Agamé - is not in conformity with the goals of the apostolic religion that we have known until now and that in reality, they are only subversive and dangerous activities to the authorities directly responsible for the canton;

Noting with regret that the presence of this apostolic group in the canton is only a source of division, hatred, and continuous animosity that can never allow the evolution of the canton;

Let us denounce that the group practicing religion in Akata is indeed only an opposition party, hidden under the apostolic cloak, determined to harm the authorities of the canton in any social matter;

Considering that, in front of the insurgents (members of the sect, spurred on by Pastor Vodzogbe), how the African gendarme Mr. Kofi Francklin had reprimanded the village notables who tried to calm the dissension existing between the population and the group as only an encouragement to the actions that unfortunately the said gendarme did not stop. Kofi Francklin had reprimanded the notables of the villages who tried to calm the dissension existing between the population and the group as only an encouragement to the actions that unfortunately the aforementioned gendarme did not bother to know the background before making his reflections[ ...] Declare to the authorities administering the circle, in the name of the village leaders and my name that for PEACE, UNION, ORDER, and PROGRESS in the canton, we stop the practice of worship from this 17/6/59. [... ]<sup>30</sup>

In exercising all these general police functions, the canton chiefs acquired the habit of taking initiative and intervening in person with the

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<sup>30</sup> ANT-Lomé, 2APA, cercle de Klouto, dossier 480 : Correspondance avec le commandant de cercle. Demandes d'ouverture des écoles évangéliques. Rapport de protestation contre l'église apostolique d'Akata Adamé, 1920-1960.

help of their village chiefs to force people to comply strictly with the measures and orders of the administration. The canton chiefs thus had extensive powers to maintain law and order. According to the administration, this contributed to strengthening their authority over their constituents. This can be read in a correspondence addressed to the chiefs:

This way of proceeding can give at the beginning much occupation to the canton chiefs, but thereafter they will realize that their authority will be consolidated considerably and that they will not have to intervene often, because the people will understand that if their canton chief is their father, it is a father who hears and gives firmly to hear that each one, in his place, lives as an honest man and as a peaceful man respectful of the rules.<sup>31</sup>

The village chiefs, who were even closer to the population, were responsible for rural policing, and the protection of crops, plantations, and harvests (Assima-Kpatcha 98). In this way, they were empowered to provide information on any planter who should necessarily protect his plantation. The report of a traditional chief on one of his constituents had to be as complete as possible. It had to mention in particular the name and marital status of the culprit, the place, date, or time when the act occurred, the nature and circumstances of the act, and possibly the wishes of the culprit.<sup>32</sup>

The chiefs also played an important role in controlling the possession of fire weapons in the territory. They contributed to the pursuit of clandestine possession of fire weapons and ammunition, especially trafficking. This is why Kessigniga Assih<sup>33</sup> says that: "People hid their weapons a lot. If someone had a gun without a permit, they would not allow their children or wife to talk about it publicly. If someone was suspected of illegal possession of weapons, the chief would send the police for verification and arrest." (Tanang 196)

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<sup>31</sup> ANT-Lomé, 2APA/Cercle d'Atakpamé, Dossier 72 : Correspondance a/s de la réorganisation du commandement indigène, élection et nomination de chefs de cantons, de villages et leurs secrétaires. Arrêtés portant répression de l'opposition à l'autorité des chefs coutumiers. Liste des chefs et des secrétaires, des cantons et villages, 1937-1962.

<sup>32</sup> ANT-Lomé, 2APA/Cercle d'Atakpamé, Dossier 72 : Correspondance a/s de la réorganisation du commandement indigène, élection et nomination de chefs de cantons, de villages et leurs secrétaires. Arrêtés portant répression de l'opposition à l'autorité des chefs coutumiers. Liste des chefs et des secrétaires, des cantons et villages, 1937-1962.

<sup>33</sup> Assih Kessigniga, 71 years old, farmer, was interviewed in Pya on July 18, 2008.

It was also the responsibility of village chiefs to count the number of firearms held by the inhabitants of their respective villages and to report to the canton or subdivision chiefs, or even to the Cercle commanders, any holder of an undeclared rifle (Nabe 277). As a result, the canton and village chiefs conducted investigations on behalf of the Cercle commanders into the illegal possession of firearms. When law and order were disturbed somewhere, the civil authority called in the security forces to restore it. The Civil Authority

has the duty of military requisition, unless impossible, as soon as the public peace is threatened, to advise the military authority likely to be required, verbally or in writing, by telegraph or telephone, of the situation, to keep it informed of the various phases of the events and to provide it with all the elements of appreciation useful so that the help which will be required can arrive in due time and under the conditions deemed necessary by the requesting authority".<sup>34</sup>

The chiefs thus played an important role in providing information to the colonial authority for colonial peace. Notwithstanding their important law enforcement duties, chiefs under the French administration could not judge.

### **3.2. A Restriction of the Judicial Role of the Chiefs under the French**

The judicial role of the chiefs under the French administration was reduced compared to that of the German period. Due to the policy of indigent, which was abolished in 1946 with the IV<sup>th</sup> French Republic, the chiefs could not inflict punishment. Through the decree of November 22, 1922 on the organization of indigenous justice, the French administration dispossessed the local chiefs of the judicial power they exercised under the German administration. Other decrees, such as that of April 21, 1933 reorganizing indigenous justice, were issued without giving the chiefs the power to judge.

Indeed, until July 1, 1946, the judicial organization included, on the one hand, indigenous courts of the first degree at the level of the chief town of the subdivision and, on the other hand, courts of the second

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<sup>34</sup> ANT-Lomé, 2E, Dossier 23 : Maintien de l'ordre public : correspondance et projets de textes, 1931-1933.

degree at the chief town of the circle<sup>35</sup>. Presided over by the head of the subdivision or the commander of the circle, these courts ruled in civil matters and criminal matters for the trial of crimes. They applied local customs specific to the parties involved and according to the nature of the dispute. For this reason, the presidents of these courts were assisted by assessors chosen from the notables.<sup>36</sup> These same tribunals, ruling on criminal matters (correctional and criminal), also applied the penalties provided for by the offenses submitted to them.<sup>37</sup>

It was under these conditions that several disciplinary cases were handled. In 1926, 19 cases of gunpowder smuggling were referred to the indigenous courts<sup>38</sup>. In 1935, misdemeanors and contraventions under the jurisdiction of the courts of first degree reached 320 judgments, compared to 208 in 1932, 248 in 1933, and 211 in 1934. In criminal matters for the same year of 1935, 34 cases were referred to the criminal courts for, among other things, assault and battery resulting in death, looting and robbery in gangs and with a weapon, kidnapping, abduction and sequestration of persons, rape, disturbance of the internal peace of the territory, and embezzlement of public funds.<sup>39</sup>

However, the canton and village chiefs were themselves auxiliaries of the judicial police. They assisted the police and gendarmerie in judicial investigations. They were authorized to take emergency measures to help maintain order. They were agents of public authority, that is, delegates of circle commanders and subdivision chiefs in their cantons. The chiefs were custodians and guardians of the instructions and executors of their orders (Assima-Kpatcha 98). In the event of knowledge of a crime, they could act to arrest the offender or the criminal. Similarly, they could arrest and detain an offender in their homes before transferring him to court. The named A. Adjagbé had spent the night at the house of Chief Boko

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<sup>35</sup> Above these courts was the colonial court of appeal sitting in Lomé. Finally, there was a chamber of annulment sitting in Dakar.

<sup>36</sup> The French administration had, by decree No. 52 of February 17, 1922, set up councils of notables in the chief towns of the various circles, appointed based on a proposal from two lists presented by the canton or district chiefs on the one hand, and by the principal heads of the family on the other. The notables' advisors give advice and make wishes. Their suggestions dealt with a variety of legal and judicial matters, socio-economic problems, especially taxation, and political difficulties arising from colonial boundaries (Gbedemah 193-195).

<sup>37</sup> Rapport annuel du Togo à l'ONU, 1947 (44-45).

<sup>38</sup> Rapport annuel à la SDN, 1926 (8).

<sup>39</sup> Rapport annuel à la SDN, 1935 (33).



Tété in Agotimé (Kloto Cercle) when he was arrested by the indigenous police on November 7, 1940, for illegal possession of a trading weapon and gunpowder<sup>40</sup>. The chiefs could also investigate and have the culprit taken immediately to the subdivision chief with a report. It was the latter who proceeded to arrest criminals, delinquents, and escaped prisoners.<sup>41</sup> An example of this can be found in the circle of Dapaong. In 1955, the superior chief of the Moba, Laré Kolani Barnabo, referred to the Circle Commander the matter of illegal sales of rifles of which he had been informed by the village chief of Bakpansouga. He ordered the Circle Commander to arrest seven people from the village in the interest of order and security in his jurisdiction (Laré 203-205).

Thus, traditional leaders contributed in many ways to the maintenance of order and peace in the territory.

On the other hand, in the social aspect, the role of conciliation was not exercised since the chiefs had to impose themselves on the people, give them the order of the administrator and ensure that the order was respected without any other form of negotiation. Even in the resolution of family conflicts, the chief exercised a repressive role. The "good" chief generally had a "tone that does not admit of retaliation - which pleases the circle commander - a tone that leaves no room for grievance. In Tokpli Vokoutimé, in the circle of Aného, the colonial administration noted that Chief Noudéglo commanded his constituents well. This was expressed in the following terms: "the inhabitants show a remarkable spirit of discipline, which proves how much they are held in the hands of a chief who is entirely devoted to us" (Sossou 353). This is a clear indication of an authoritarian leader. This is how the chiefs maintained dissuasion over their constituents.

#### **4. The Authoritarianism of Traditional Leaders and the Reign of Deterrence for Colonial Peace**

Through the various measures of disciplinary, general, or rural police, the chiefs were pushed to authoritarianism. The fact that some chiefs were rewarded by the administrative authority for their influence

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<sup>40</sup> ANT-Lomé, 2APA/ Cercle de Klouto, Dossier 109 : Taxe sur les armes de traite. Cession des armes perfectionnées. Demande d'explosifs. Recensement des armes de traite et des armes perfectionnées. Détention illégale d'armes. Transfert de munitions. Demande de retrait de fusils et achat de poudre et cartouches. Contrôle des armes.

<sup>41</sup> JOT du 16 décembre 1949, p. 1145.

led to a strong-handed policy, exaggeration, and even to authoritarianism in the colonial administration. The archives of the circle of Sokodé-Bassari provide examples of authoritarian chiefs, qualified as "energetic" by the colonial authority, and the gratifications that were granted to them. The following chart is a perfect illustration.

**Chart N° 2: Qualities and rewards of traditional chiefs in the Sokodé-Bassari circle in 1934**

Leaders <sup>42</sup>	Townships	Qualities/appreciation/merits	Annual bonus
Tiagodemou	Superior Chief of Tem in the subdivision of Sokodé	Has significant influence; brings in taxes; facilitates the recruitment of workers to the various work sites in the subdivision.	1 800 f
Palanga Tchadre	Superior chief of the Kabiyè in the subdivision of Lama-Kara	Has given dedicated service; successfully handled tax collection during 1934; deserves encouragement.	700 f
Bante	Chief of the canton of Bassari	Has made commendable efforts during 1934; deserves to be encouraged by the same allowance as the previous year.	300 f
Takassi	Chief of Kabou Canton	Energetic and zealous leader; continues to give satisfaction; seems to be able to do well with support.	300 f
Issaka	Chief of the Tchamba canton	Active township chief; energetic and zealous; took part personally in the layout of the Tchamba trail.	625 f
Bangana	Chief of the canton of Bafilo	Made efforts in 1934 to bring in his taxes more quickly; took care in a satisfactory way of the supply of stone and wood for the construction of the school of Bafilo.	200 f

<sup>42</sup> Archival records do not allow us to find all the first names.

Bangana Assante	Chief of Kri-Kri Township	Has brought in his taxes well; second in a satisfactory manner the administrative action; deserves the same allowance as in 1934.	200 f
Djioua	Chief of the canton of Kodjéné <sup>43</sup>	A dedicated leader who handles the administrative operation of his township with zeal and efficiency; should be encouraged.	200 f
Yerima	Chief of the Dako canton	Very good auxiliary of the administration; contributed to giving satisfaction during the year 1934; deserves to be rewarded for his service.	200 f
Assi	Chief of the canton of Piya	Active and intelligent leader; continued to support "our" action well during 1934; deserves the same allowance as before.	100 f
Moussa Tialiman	Iman de Dédauré, member of the council of notables of Sokodé	By his influence on the inhabitants of Dedauré; has begged the deficiency of the village chief who is old and still sick; deserves the same allowance as in 1934 as an encouragement.	200 f
Dalare	Chief of the Nawaré canton	Active young leader; seems devoted to the French administration; has successfully handled the collection of taxes; deserves to be encouraged	200 f
Koundo	Chief of the Oti canton	Made a serious effort during 1934; as such deserves to be supported and encouraged	125 f
Nada	Chief of the Kidjaboun canton	A young and active leader of goodwill; deserves a small allowance for the various services of order that he rendered in 1934	100 f
Ouyambo	Chief of the Katchamba canton	The active chief who continues to be one of the best chefs in the Kpankpamba region <sup>44</sup> ; has a very	100 f

<sup>43</sup> Today Kouméa.

<sup>44</sup> Konkomba.

		good relationship with the administration; deserves to be supported and encouraged	
Leki	Head of the Bapuré canton	Appears to have improved greatly during 1934; deserves a small bonus as an incentive	75 f
Tiare	Chief of the Canton of Guérin-Kouka	Has shown goodwill during 1934; seems to want to continue; deserves a small stipend as an incentive	75 f

Source : Table from the archives (ANT-Lomé, 2 APA, cercle de Sokodé, dossier 8 (add)).

It appears that the qualities of "good chiefs" were attributed according to the results achieved in the colonial policy, especially in the development. In addition to these various merits, traditional chiefs were given honorary distinctions. The following chart provides examples from the Dapaong region, which are instructive in many ways.

**Chart N° 3 : Chiefs decorated in February 1958 in the circle of Dapaong**

Leaders	Profession	Nature of the decoration
Tiem Yendabré	Superior Chief of the Canton of Pana	Legion of Honor Star of Benin Star of Anjouan Nichan Star Agricultural Merit
Oudano Dobré	Chief of the Korbongou canton	Black Star of Benin Agricultural Merit
Fridja	Chief of the Biankouri canton	Star of Anjouan
Sambiani Matéyendou	Chief of the Canton of Bombouaka	Star of Benin Agricultural Merit
Padam Lamboni	Chief of the Bidjenga canton	Nichan El Anouar
Sanwogou Lamboni	Chief of Naki-Lare Township	Black Star of Benin

Labdiédo Yendame	Chief of Kantindi Canton	Star of Benin
Tiem Soaré	Chief of Naki-West Canton	Black Star of Benin
Mateyi Digli	Chief of the village of Ourgou (Dapaong)	Nichan El Anouar
Namétante Pandja	Chief of the village of Toaga (Dapaong)	Nichan El Anouar
Oudano Tantandja	Chief of the village of Namoudjoga	Agricultural Merit
Tambo Yentchabre	Chief of the canton of Pogno	Black Star of Benin
Padjare Damédjaté	Chief of the village of Tambangou	Black Star of Benin
Yemboate	Chief of the village of Louanga (Kantindi)	Nichan El Anouar
Lokatié Mintré	Chief of the village of Margba (Kantindi)	Nichan El Anouar
Bombiagou Lamboni	Chief of the Loko canton	<sup>45</sup>
Baté Laré	Chief of the canton of Lotogou	-
Kombaté Laré	Chief of the canton of Nioukpourma	-
Dabré Kombongou	Chief of the Warkambou canton	-

Source : Table from the archives (ANT-Lomé, 2 APA, cercle de Dapaong, dossier 7).

Terms such as "prestigious, authoritarian, excellent, dynamic, good, energetic, good relations with the French authority" reflect the service rendered to the colonial administration by these chiefs. But the memory of their constituents leaves them with memories of oppressors. Chief Lamboni Tchélique Laré, alias Patefao, in the canton of Bitchenga is an example. In the testimony of Kolani (62-63), it is said that

For the native of Bitchienga, the name Patéfao is synonymous with suffering, especially since there are countless facts reflecting the dictatorial character of his regime. These facts represent only exaggerated actions emanating from the chief's desire to perform his duties well to please the superior colonial authority. In this way,

<sup>45</sup> No distinction is made.

inhuman punishments were inflicted on Bitchienga's subjects in the Patéfao court. More common was caning, which involved both the guilty and the undisciplined who refused (for some, it was incapacity) to obey the orders of the chief. The pole supporting the roof of Patéfao's palace was used as a clamping instrument to immobilize the offenders with a rope, the belly was placed against the pole and the fire of the stick fell on the buttocks: it was necessary to be a tough and courageous boy to receive corporal punishment at Patéfao. Otherwise, when you got home, you died. After the lashes, the chief could at pleasure, throw the responsible person in one of his largest field areas[ ...]

The chiefs sometimes imposed inhumane punishments. In addition, arbitrariness reigned in the accomplishment of their missions of general police or the maintenance of order. The charisma of certain chiefs allowed them to impose themselves over vast areas. There are many examples<sup>46</sup>. During his visits to the Dapaong district between 1953 and 1955, the district commander, G. Chaumell, said: “The chief of Korbongou effectively commands a fairly large area extending from Namoundjoga (where his brother Tantandja works very well) to Koudjouré, where he rarely goes, but which his secretary visits regularly”.

Colonization was able to flourish in collaboration with the traditional chiefs. In a report to the Mandates Committee of the League of Nations in 1924, France described in no uncertain terms the extent of the association of the chiefs with colonial policy in northern Togo. It stated:

If in the whole of Upper Togo a participation of the natives by their delegates in specially constituted councils could not be established as widely as in the South, it should be indicated that the chiefs, natural representatives of the population, have not ceased to lend to the administrators a collaboration as active as devoted. All these notables are animated by an excellent spirit and make commendable efforts to adapt to our methods. They regularly accompanied the administrator on a tour of their canton and the latter tried to involve them in work that would

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<sup>46</sup> ANT-Lomé, 2APA, cercle de Dapaong, dossier 15 : Relevés des rapports de tournées effectuées dans le cercle par le commandant ou son adjoint durant les années 1950, 1953 à 1955.

interest them in our civilizing work and give them prestige in the eyes of their subjects. Whether it is a question of road construction, population census, or settlement of disputes between villages, they prove to be useful auxiliaries, and their opinion is regularly requested before the application of any measure concerning the region placed under their command. [...]. Among those who are distinguished by the extent of their command and influence, let us cite in the Sansanné-Mango circle, the energetic and intelligent chief of Pana, who enjoys great prestige in the entire Moba region; in the Sokodé circle, the superior chief of the Cabrais<sup>47</sup> Palanga, the chiefs of Kodjene<sup>48</sup> and of Kadjalla. But the superior chief of the Cotocolis<sup>49</sup>, who represents more than 65,000 individuals, is certainly the most important person in the whole territory.[ ...]. Thus, the communities of Upper Togo are slowly evolving into the calm.<sup>50</sup>

Local chiefs were a link in the colonial system in Togo. Their administrative policing enabled colonial administrators to maintain calm in the territory. But this calm was precarious, as it was shattered in the late 1950s by nationalist fever.

## Conclusion

The integration of local chiefs into the colonial administration has contributed to the weakening of the resistance against the military campaigns of conquest and German domination between 1884 and 1914. Under the French administration, the chiefs investigated the actions of the populations, their state of mind, and their movements. They helped the administration to disarm them and dispense justice for the sake of "colonial peace. The chiefs under the German and then French administrations were thus a powerful instrument in the administration of the territory. They contributed to straightening out, repressing, and dissuading the local populations even in the most remote localities, out of the colonial administrator's sight. The various missions of the general police and judicial police in the service of maintaining public order

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<sup>47</sup> Kabiye.

<sup>48</sup> Today Koumèa.

<sup>49</sup> Kotokoli, which are Tem.

<sup>50</sup> Rapport annuel à la SDN, 1924, p. 140-141.

contributed to annihilating all attempts at opposition to the colonial order. The authority and respect of the colonizer were reinforced and lasted for years of colonial domination and exploitation until independence in 1960. From then on, the fate of traditional chieftaincy depended on the relationship chiefs had with the new ruling elites<sup>51</sup>.

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Assih Kessigniga, 71 years old, farmer, was interviewed in Pya on July 18, 2008.

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<sup>51</sup> Some chiefs who served as pawns of the colonial system were removed by an order of February 22, 1960 (Pata 76).



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