

Ethnicity and the Colonial State

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Ethnicity and the Colonial State

*Finding and Representing Group Identifications
in a Coastal West African and
Global Perspective (1850–1960)*

By

Alexander Keese



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(Conversation between Sylvanus Olympio, spokesman of the All-Ewe Conference, and Ralph J. Bunche, Director of the UN Trusteeship Division, before the 11th meeting of the Trusteeship Council, 8 December 1947, Lake Success, New York, United States.) UN Photo Archives, Photo 166842. Copyright by United Nations.

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All maps are based on original maps being courtesy of the Perry Castañeda Library of the University of Texas.

Introduction

Ethnicity does *not* matter in the long-term perspective. Such was the conclusion formulated by a new generation of 'Africanists' in the 1970s and 1980s, and it was a kind of scientific revolution. Its defenders held that in sub-Saharan Africa, ethnicity had mainly been created through European colonial rule, and was, therefore, an entirely artificial concept.¹ For a period that roughly coincides with the 15 years between 1975 and 1990, the attack against the well-established idea of primordial ethnic groups in Africa – which had dominated anthropological thought from the colonial period onwards – seemed to win the day.² In spite of Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger's initiative to understand the 'invention of tradition' with a view to identifying the creation of group sentiment in a comparative and global approach, however, reflections of historians working on group identity in the African continent have rarely entered the debates on global history.³ While migration and connection – for example, over the Atlantic or the Indian Ocean – are essential themes in global historical studies, they do not yet interact with the analysis of ethnicity that

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- 1 This is neatly summarised in Amselle, Jean-Loup, 'Ethnies et espaces: pour une anthropologie topologique', in Jean-Loup Amselle and Elikia M'Bokolo (eds.), *Au cœur de l'ethnie: ethnies, tribalisme et État en Afrique* (Paris: La Découverte, 1985), 11–48, 23 ('La cause paraît donc entendue: il n'existait rien qui ressemblât à une ethnie pendant la période précoloniale').
 - 2 Key texts of this trend are the following: Amselle and M'Bokolo (eds.), *Cœur*; Amselle, Jean-Loup, *Mestizo Logics: Anthropology of Identity in Africa and elsewhere* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 11–8; Ranger, Terence, 'The invention of tradition in colonial Africa', in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 211–62, 247–50; Ranger, Terence, 'The invention of tradition revisited: the case of colonial Africa', in Terence Ranger and Olufemi Vaughan (eds.), *Legitimacy and the State in Twentieth-Century Africa* (London: Macmillan, 1993), 62–111; Vail, Leroy, 'Introduction: Ethnicity in Southern African History', in Leroy Vail (ed.), *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa* (Berkeley – Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991 [reprint of James Currey, 1989]), 1–19, 6–7; Ranger, Terence, 'Missionaries, migrants and the Manyika: the invention of ethnicity in Zimbabwe', in *ibid.*, 122–3; Jewsiewicki, Bogumil, 'The Formation of the Political Culture of Ethnicity in the Belgian Congo, 1920–1959', in *ibid.*, 324–49, 326–30.
 - 3 Sachsenmaier, Dominic, *Global Perspectives on Global History: Theories and Approaches in a Connected World* (Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 57.

has been at the heart of debates in African history.⁴ This book hopes to make a contribution to finding the connection.

In the public debate about ethnicity, the new interpretations from social anthropology and historical research on sub-Saharan Africa have had very little impact from the outset.⁵ Even the 'subjects of analysis', including elites that would eventually read such studies, do not at all seem to feel that they live according to roles constructed by others. Among the local populations, we encounter a general feeling of *certainty* that ethnic criteria explain group affiliation and group hostilities.⁶ One might even argue that while ethnicity was deconstructed as a guiding principle by historians and anthropologists, the concept has become *increasingly* important for political and social relations in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa. Not only is it employed by political analysts and journalists from outside, who wish to simplify African topics for their readers or audience,⁷ but African populations seem to embrace it, without being manipulated to do so: categories of ethnicity appear to play an essential role in their life.

A good example of the reappearance of ethnic solidarity after periods of rupture is the effect of the 2007 elections in civil-war-torn Sierra Leone. In this small West African country, ethnic categories had been eclipsed in many areas during the 1990s, as a consequence of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebellion.⁸ The civil war dramatically destabilised the existing patron-client networks based on ethnic labels.⁹ However, ethnic categories had not disappeared from national politics, as exemplified by the surprise win in the electoral

4 Manning, Patrick, 'African and World Historiography', *Journal of African History* 54(2), 2013, 319–30, 325–6.

5 MacGaffey, Wyatt, 'Changing Representations in Central African History', *Journal of African History* 46(2), 2006, 189–207, 189–91.

6 Chabal, Patrick, and Jean-Pascal Daloz, *Africa Works: Disorder as Political Instrument* (Oxford: James Currey – Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 61–2.

7 See the critical discussion in MacEachern, Scott, 'Genes, Tribes, and African History', *Current Anthropology* 41(3), 2000, 357–84, 361–3.

8 Gershoni, Yekutiel, 'War without End and an End to a War: The Prolonged Wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone', *African Studies Review* 40(3), 1997, 55–76, 60; Richards, Paul, *Fighting for the Rainforest: War, Youth and Resources in Sierra Leone* (Oxford: The International African Institute – James Currey, 1996), 90–5, Keen, David, *Conflict & collusion in Sierra Leone* (Oxford: James Currey – New York: Palgrave, 2001), 13–4, 82–92; others challenge the complete breakdown of ethnic solidarity, see Bangura, Yusuf, 'Strategic Policy Failure and Governance in Sierra Leone', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 38(4), 2000, 551–77, 543.

9 Van Gog, Janneke, *Coming back from the bush: Gender, youth and reintegration in northern Sierra Leone* (Leiden: African Studies Centre, 2008), 79–84.

contest of 2007 on an ethnic ticket of the All People's Congress (APC) candidate Ernest Bai Koroma. The APC victory seemed to indicate a return to the experiences of the late 1950s and 1960s, when the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) and the APC had fought for electoral victory, before the country had become a one-party state in 1978.¹⁰ Bai Koroma was supposed to have won the presidency as the candidate of the Temne, one of the two largest ethnic groups in Sierra Leone (together with allied groups from the north of the country).¹¹ It seemed that ethnic thinking had (again) taken the lead in this West African country, and had not been destroyed through the destabilising experience of widespread banditry, warlordism, and gang wars.

However, other examples from West Africa appear to show the opposite trend, at least at first glance. In Senegal, electoral behaviour and ethnicity do not seem to be at all linked: it has been held that ethnicity has lost its role and that the independent Republic of Senegal has been remarkably free from ethnic dispute as a consequence of successful social management.¹² The obvious exception has been the separatist rebellion in Senegal's southern province of Casamance, where the Mouvement des Forces Démocratiques de Casamance (MFDC) is undoubtedly dominated by Jola-speakers. Nevertheless, the movement's leaders often describe their goals as 'regionalist' and not as 'ethnic' (while Wolof-speakers in the region indeed fear the 'Jola' as dangerous 'autochthons').¹³

In other Senegalese regions, it is far more difficult to find signs of tensions arising around ethnic labels. It would, however, be worthwhile investigating

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- 10 Fisher, Humphrey J., 'Elections and Coups in Sierra Leone, 1967', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 7(4), 1969, 611–36.
 - 11 Fridy, Kevin S., and Fredline A.O. McCormack-Hale, 'Sierra Leone's 2007 elections: monumental and more of the same', *African Studies Quarterly* 12(4), 2010/11, 39–57.
 - 12 Diouf, Makhtar, *Sénégal: Les Ethnies et la Nation* (Dakar: Les Nouvelles Editions Africaines du Sénégal, 1998), 233.
 - 13 Diouf, Mamadou, 'Between Ethnic Memories & Colonial History in Senegal: The MFDC & the Struggle for Independence in Casamance', in Bruce Berman, Dickson Eyoh, and Will Kymlicka (eds.), *Ethnicity and Democracy in Africa* (Oxford: James Currey – Athens/OH: Ohio University Press, 2004), 218–39, 218–9; Toliver-Diallo, Wilmetta J., 'The Woman Who Was More than a Man': Making Aline Siteo Diatta into a National Heroine in Senegal', *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 39(2), 2005, 338–60, 346; Foucher, Vincent, 'Les 'évolués', la migration, l'école: pour une nouvelle interprétation de la naissance du nationalisme casamançais', in Momar Coumba Diop (ed.), *Le Sénégal contemporain* (Paris: Karthala, 2002), 375–424, 388; Evans, Martin, 'Insecurity or Isolation? Natural Resources and Livelihoods in Lower Casamance', *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 39(2), 2005, 282–312, 302; Interview with 'I. Sow', Kabrousse, 28 Jan. 2006.

whether hostilities of an ethnic nature existed in earlier phases, i.e. during periods of the nineteenth and twentieth century. Wolof-speakers and Sereer-speakers seem to have been hostile to each other, and the 'Pëls' (Fulbe), as cattle owners, were an obvious target of negative stereotyping.¹⁴ As we will see, closer analysis of available archival documentation helps to recover narratives that were for a long time obscured, simplified, and standardised, in local memory and 'traditional' accounts.¹⁵

In the present-day Trans-Volta Region of Ghana and in south-west Togo,¹⁶ ethnic allegiance is presented as irrelevant by central authorities. However, it has remained an important category of self-definition and has been crucial during moments of violent regime change. In particular, the Ewe-speakers of Ghana's Trans-Volta Region claim to have been an underprivileged minority before the ascendancy to power in Accra of Flight-Lieutenant Jerry Rawlings in the 1980s and the electoral victories of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) after 2008. The Ewe case relates to the question of stability of national boundaries, as the Ewe language community can be found on both sides of the international border between Ghana and Togo. Cross-border claims of the Ewe-speaking community in the 1940s are, probably, the most outstanding West African case of political leaders demanding a revision of colonial borders and the creation of an ethnically homogenous territory.

All over West Africa – and elsewhere during the twentieth century, including in Western Europe as Bambi Ceuppens and Peter Geschiere have shown – ideas of autochthony and of ethnic claims have frequently been intertwined with questions of an 'authentic' or 'traditional' organisation of power.¹⁷ In the colonial period, this search for 'authenticity' was both a rural and an urban

14 'Pël' is an expression in Wolof. Whenever I refer to the label given to members of this group, I will generally use 'Fulbe' or Fulfulde-speakers (Pulaar-speakers).

15 Interview with Ajjumà Niane, (Sereer) village chief of Niack-Sérère, in the hinterland of M'Bour, Senegal, 1 February 2008. Interestingly, the memory of those tensions has largely disappeared nowadays, but the many episodes of violence are vivid in evidence from the 1950s.

16 I will speak of the 'Trans-Volta Area' – seen from Ghana – in describing the geographical zones of what is today Ghana's Volta Region, the eastern part of Ghana's Eastern Region (the Keta Peninsula and the region of Aflao and Denué), and the Republic of Togo's Maritime and Plateau Regions (including the *Préfectures* of Golfe, Zio, Vo, Yoto, Haho, and Klouto).

17 Ceuppens, Bambi, and Peter Geschiere, 'Autochthony: Local or Global? New Modes in the Struggle over Citizenship and Belonging in Africa and Europe', *Annual Review of Anthropology* 34, 2005, 385–407.

phenomenon.¹⁸ Colonial administrations needed collaborators at the regional and local level in order to guarantee the payment of taxes, the organisation of 'native justice' and of forced labour, and the exercise of political and social control. So-called 'headmen', 'chiefs', and 'paramount chiefs', and their eventual competitors, therefore all had a say when it came to defining local histories and ethnic identifications.¹⁹ This engagement normally followed a clear logic, as questions of identification could be useful in making claims to 'authenticity' and 'authentic rule'.²⁰ Chieftaincy as a principle came under attack in the late colonial period and partly after independence; but it was only in rare cases fully removed, and it retained a role in the maintenance of 'tradition'.²¹

In the border area between Togo and Ghana, chieftaincies are, to the present day, still fairly intact, at least on the surface of the institution. In current-day Ghana, chiefs appear to have considerable social prestige, while the decades of the Eyadéma dictatorship have made them a kind of 'traditional bureaucrat' in neighbouring Togo.²² By contrast, in the case of Senegal, chiefs lost their official role in district administration after 1959, although the institution continues to exist at village level.²³ In Sierra Leone, the power of the chiefs waned only slowly under the independent state from 1961, as 'traditional rulers' continued to be of some importance during electoral events and in local

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- 18 On terminology, compare Farrar, Tarikhu, 'When African Kings Became 'Chiefs': Some Transformations in European Perceptions of West African Civilization, c. 1450–1800', *Journal of Black Studies* 23(2), 1992, 258–78, 259–60; Terray, Emmanuel, 'Sociétés segmentaires, chefferies, Etats acquis et problèmes', in Bogumil Jewsiewicki and Jocelyn Letourneau (eds.), *Mode of Production. The Challenge of Africa* (Sainte Foy: Safi Press, 1985), 106–15.
- 19 Catherine Boone has offered masterful reflections on the relationship between regional elites – chiefs and others – and the nascent central states, see Boone, Catherine, *Political Topographies of the African State: Territorial Authority and Institutional Choice* (Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 34–6.
- 20 Lombard, Jacques, *Autorités traditionnelles et pouvoirs européens en Afrique noire* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1967); Gocking, Roger S., 'Indirect Rule in the Gold Coast: Competition for Office and the Invention of Tradition', *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 28(3), 1994, 421–46, 433–4. The expression 'chieftaincy' will be used in the absence of a better term.
- 21 Spear, Thomas, 'Neo-Traditionalism and the Limits of Invention in British Colonial Africa', *Journal of African History* 44(1), 2003, 3–27, 15–6.
- 22 Rathbone, Richard, *Nkrumah and the Chiefs: The Politics of Chieftaincy in Ghana 1951–60* (Oxford: James Currey – Accra: F. Reimer – Athens/OH: Ohio University Press, 2000), 2–3; Nieuwaal, E. Adriaan B. van Rouveroy van, *L'Etat en Afrique face à la chefferie: le cas du Togo* (Paris: Karthala, 2000), 48–9.
- 23 Interview with Ajjumà Niane, (Sereer) village chief of Niack-Sérère, 1 February 2008.

administration. In spite of the civil war experiences of the 1980s and 1990s, Sierra Leone's chiefs retained some of their prestige in the rural areas.²⁴

Ethnic claims are thus strongly connected to problems of the local and regional organisation of power, and therefore remain, in the contemporary period, an important category of political discussion.²⁵ Although this does not yet prove the importance of the concept under pre-colonial and colonial conditions, it needs to be taken into account as a factor. In a second step, global historians need of course to ask if this trend only holds importance in sub-Saharan Africa. On the conceptual level, I will therefore discuss, later in this introduction, how the category is used in different parts of the world, and in the second chapter I will analyse the broader set of identifications on which individuals and groups relied in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

It is indubitable that in the post-colonial period, a number of major conflicts in the African continent have been caused or reinforced by perspectives of ethnic group antagonism.²⁶ 'Autochthons' have been mobilised against 'strangers', and violence has been justified by rhetoric about different 'tribes' and the stealing of rightfully possessed land.²⁷ In this context, the shock of the Rwanda, Burundi and Congo massacres had the most forceful impact on research paradigms and on the view of African group solidarity in a global comparison.

The Shock of the Great Lakes Massacres

With regard to violence defined as 'ethnic', post-colonial West Africa has rarely been on the centre-stage (with the exception of northern Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire in the 1990s and 2000s). On the contrary, the Central African experience of the 1990s has had a massive impact on public and scientific debates, and led to a revision of central premises in research on Africa. The Rwandan

24 Jackson, Paul, 'Reshuffling an Old Deck of Cards? The Politics of Local Government Reform in Sierra Leone', *African Affairs* 106(422), 2007, 95–111, 101–2.

25 In Boone, *Topographies* – the main comparative approach to African policies in West Africa – ethnicity only has minor importance, see 335.

26 Bayart, Jean-François, *L'Etat en Afrique: La Politique du Ventre* (Paris: Fayard, 1989), 79.

27 Azam, Jean-Paul, 'Looting and Conflict between Ethnoregional Groups: Lessons for State Formation in Africa', *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 46(1), 2002, 131–53, 133; Boone, Catherine, *Property and Political Order in Africa: Land Rights and the Structure of Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 91–9. See also the new magisterial Lentz, Carola, *Land, Mobility, and Belonging in West Africa: Natives and Strangers* (Bloomington/IN: Indiana University Press, 2013).

massacres were debated in the media as 'tribal killings' to be read through a primordial pattern of ancient solidarities and blood feuds.²⁸ Amongst scholars, events in Rwanda, Burundi and Congo-Kinshasa strengthened the case of those who had continued to argue for the primordialist view. It was undeniable that the massacres of 1994 in Rwanda had found widespread support with a population that had defined itself as 'Hutu', and that the events were linked to ethnically-framed violence that had taken place between 1959 and 1962. 'Constructivists' had to admit that the ethnic categories played the decisive role in the violence, although they insisted that the categories were not at all predetermined, but actively created and maintained under colonial rule, and manipulated by a weakened post-colonial regime.²⁹ These scholars continued to emphasise that the Tutsi and Hutu are only marginally distinct with regard to factors like language, which are usually referred to in order to define ethnicity; and that the distinction was originally crafted through social facts.³⁰

The position held by Central Africa in the discussion about ethnicity as a historical factor brings us to questions as to whether such observations can be generalised for other parts of sub-Saharan Africa. An astonishing number of studies on African history and cultures do not even expound the problem that 'Africa' is only a geographically defined ensemble and, moreover, an artificial concept of thought, but not a cultural entity. It is very probable that the particular idea of a joint 'African culture' refers to a political dimension, which was developed during the colonial period and has been confirmed by the argumentations of leaders and intellectuals of emancipationist movements active from the interwar period. It is difficult to see why 'African cultures' should be part of a united culture, except if these cultures are described as 'Black cultures'.

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- 28 Eltringham, Nigel, 'Debating the Rwandan Genocide', in Preben Kaarsholm (ed.), *Violence, Political Culture & Development in Africa* (Oxford: James Currey – Athens/OH: Ohio University Press – Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2006), 66–91, 88–90; Cooper, Frederick, *Africa since 1940: The past of the present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 2; Lemarchand, René, 'Genocide in the Great Lakes: Which Genocide? Whose Genocide?', *African Studies Review* 41(1), 1998, 3–16.
- 29 Mamdani, Mahmood, *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda* (Oxford: James Currey, 2001), 56–102; Chrétien, Jean-Pierre, *Le défi de l'ethnisme: Rwanda et Burundi, 1990–1996* (Paris: Karthala, 1997), 30–7; Gahama, Joseph, and Augustin Mvuyekure, 'Jeu ethnique, idéologie missionnaire et politique coloniale: Le cas du Burundi', in Jean-Pierre Chrétien and Gérard Prunier (eds.), *Les ethnies ont une histoire* (second edition, Paris: Karthala, 2003), 303–24, 312.
- 30 Wimmer, Andreas, 'Elementary strategies of ethnic boundary making', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 31(6), 2008, 1025–55, 1034; Prunier, Gérard, *The Rwanda Crisis, 1959–1994: History of a Genocide* (London: Hurst, 1997), 35–40.

Evidently, phenotype as a criterion for group definition is absurd and unacceptable for any scholar working on sub-Saharan Africa (or at least it should be). But if sub-Saharan Africa cannot automatically be considered as a homogeneous cultural unit, there are some other aspects that contribute to common experiences, at least for a couple of larger regions. Coastal West Africa, between the mouth of the Senegal River and the Niger Delta, offers a good selection of cases from a larger region, and these cases invite comparison. Historical experience fills the gap between communities. The regional trajectory of colonialism and the contact of the region with the system of the Atlantic slave trade, are in fact two forceful common experiences. They were shared by many African populations, at least by those of West and Central Africa's coastal belt between 1450 and 1960. It has to be pointed out that this emphasis on the experience of contact with the wider world does not imply a Eurocentric perspective; the history of contact and of the evolution of colonial rule was crucial for the historical experience of populations.

Ethnicity and Global History (and Historiography)

While ethnicity has become a factor in studies that are part of the move towards global history, such studies have mainly favoured the question of networks and shifts in identification during migration and diaspora situations.³¹ The move towards a global labour history is exemplary for showing the importance of processes in 'non-western' parts of the world.³² More often than not, however, it has not tackled concepts that are very much 'reserved' for one particular world

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- 31 Zeuske, Michael, 'Historiography and Research Problems of Slavery and the Slave Trade in a Global-Historical Perspective', *International Review of Social History* 57(1), 2012, 87–111; Davis, Nathalie Zemon, 'Decentering History: Local Stories and Cultural Crossings in a Global World', *History and Theory* 50(2), 2011, 188–202; Mohapatra, Prabhu P., 'Eurocentrism, Forced Labour, and Global Migration: A Critical Assessment', *International Review of Social History* 52(1), 2007, 110–5; Mckeown, Adam, 'Global Migration, 1846–1940', *Journal of World History* 15(2), 2004, 155–89; O'Rourke, Kevin, and Jeffrey Williamson, *Globalization and history: The evolution of a Nineteenth Century Atlantic Economy* (Boston: MIT Press, 1999); Bose, Sugata, *A Hundred Horizons: The Indian Ocean in an Age of Global Empire* (Cambridge/MA: Harvard University Press, 2006); Manning, Patrick, *Navigating World History: Historians Create a Global Past* (Basingstoke – New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).
- 32 Eckert, Andreas, 'What is Global Labour History Good For', in Jürgen Kocka (ed.), *Work in a Modern Society: The German Historical Experience in Comparative Perspective* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2010), 169–81; Bennett, James, 'Reflections on Writing Comparative and

region, or, as I will point out, has not attempted to interfere where the categories and parameters used for a concept of importance in historical interpretation – like ‘ethnicity’ – are quite different for each particular world region.³³ Understanding ethnicity as phenomenon in a larger region and putting it into a broader framework of interpretation is therefore an essential approach.³⁴ At the same time, it is fully compatible with demands for a global history that argue with the moral importance of the issue: it belongs to Jerry Bentley’s moral wagers to test the importance of a concept for one region – coastal West Africa in our case – and to put it afterwards into a larger framework of global debate.³⁵

Some scholars argue that ‘ethnicity’ as a factor of cultural difference works similarly in entirely distinct geographical arenas of the world.³⁶ Their argument is perhaps not completely groundless, but existing designs that compare, for example, conditions in the Balkans with ‘tribes’ in Central Asia and warring groups in Sierra Leone, lack historical grounding and reflection about the categories of group identification. In other words, before attempting a comparison that brings in examples from various continents, it would be preferable to obtain more reliable analytical results for the history of ethnic affiliation in any of the regions taken as exemplary. Also, the use of ‘ethnicity’ as a category needs to be more broadly questioned.

The incongruent employment of ethnic affiliation as a category is indeed very problematic for global historical studies, and an immense concern for any study that wishes to bring African history into broader, global debates.

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- Transnational Labour History’, *History Compass* 7(2), 2009, 376–94; Van der Linden, Marcel, *Workers of the World: Essays toward a Global Labor History* (Leiden: Brill, 2008).
- 33 This fits essentially into the (somewhat polemical) critique in Chakrabarty, Dipesh, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Levander, Caroline, and Walter Mignolo, ‘The global south and world dis/order’, *The Global South* 5(1), 2011, 1–11.
- 34 See Manning, *Navigating*, 7.
- 35 Bentley, Jerry H., ‘Myths, Wagers, and Some Moral Implications of World History’, *Journal of World History* 16(1), 2005, 51–82.
- 36 Fearon, James D., and David D. Laitin, ‘Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War’, *American Political Science Review* 97(1), 2003, 75–90, 78; Mueller, John, ‘The Banality of ‘Ethnic War’, *International Security* 25(1), 2000, 42–70, *passim*; Henderson, Errol A., ‘Culture or Contiguity: Ethnic Conflict, the Similarity of States, and the Onset of War, 1820–1989’, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 41(5), 1997, 649–68, 650–1; Montalvo, José G., and Marta Reynal-Querol, ‘Ethnic Polarization, Potential Conflict, and Civil Wars’, *American Economic Review* 95(3), 2005, 796–816, 803; Bonneuil, Noël, and Nadia Auriat, ‘Fifty Years of Ethnic Conflict and Cohesion: 1945–94’, *Journal of Peace Research* 37(5), 2000, 563–81, 571–4.

The abundant number of very different definitions is striking, confusing, and makes onerous the attempt to get to a more precise picture.³⁷ Particularly remarkable is the extremely variable use of the word 'ethnic' itself; slightly different meanings in different languages further confuse the issue; and, most problematically and most importantly, the employment of the expression in different geographical contexts is enormously divergent.³⁸ A view on the global dimensions of ethnicity as a phenomenon will therefore help with the understanding of categories for a discussion of identifications within global history.

For sub-Saharan Africa, 'ethnicity', as a trope, has somewhat replaced the colonial concept of 'tribe'. In academic use, 'tribe' has become an unacceptable term – and rightly so, as it is based on a biased and negative image of static communities and of underdevelopment, an image that follows colonial traditions. The terminological change towards 'ethnicity' probably enhanced the accuracy of group descriptions and eradicated some biases. 'Ethnic group' now appears to be a widely accepted concept for the African continent, whether scholars regard those groups as 'primordial' or as 'constructed'.

However, specialists of sub-Saharan Africa tend to forget that the picture is different in other geographical zones. In the Americas, the notion of ethnicity as a concept to describe group identifications is far more hybrid, and often contradictory. As for Amerindian groups as a subject of study, the expression 'ethnic group' is employed for smaller communities, and, ultimately, also for language groups (like Apache, Crew, etc).³⁹ The same is true for the descendants of Maroon communities – communities of refugee slaves organised in

37 Alonso, Ana María, 'The Politics of Space, Time and Substance: State Formation, Nationalism, and Ethnicity', *Annual Review of Anthropology* 23, 1994, 379–405, 390.

38 It is impressive to note on which geographic regions genuine 'ethnographic' work has been done (and which have been totally left out), see the map in Naroll, Raoul, and Richard G. Sipes, 'A Standard Ethnographic Sample: Second Edition', *Current Anthropology* 14(1/2), 1973, 111–40, 113.

39 See, for example, Talbert, Carol, 'The Resurgence of Ethnicity Among American Indians: Some Comments on the Occupation of Wounded Knee', in Frances Henry (ed.), *Ethnicity in the Americas* (The Hague: Mouton, 1976), 365–83, 374–7; Albers, Patricia C., 'Changing Patterns of Ethnicity in the Northeastern Plains, 1780–1870', in Jonathan D. Hill (ed.), *History, Power, and Identity: Ethnogenesis in the Americas, 1492–1992* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1996), 90–118, 92–4; Operé, Fernando, *Historias de la frontera: el cautiverio en la América hispánica* (Buenos Aires – Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica de Argentina, 2001), 15–21. A change can be identified in some more recent studies, such as Reséndez, Andrés, *Changing National Identities at the Frontier: Texas and New Mexico, 1800–1850* (Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 45–55, although he still speaks of 'detrribalized Indians'. For a comparative view on (older) research on sub-Saharan African and Amerindian groups, see Leach, Edmund, 'Tribal Ethnography: past, present

the hinterland of the Caribbean and North American plantation zones. For those communities of the American continent, 'ethnic group' is sometimes used as an expression interchangeable with the older 'tribe', which still occasionally appears.⁴⁰ However, in the context of the nation-states in the Americas, 'ethnicity' embodies a completely different concept. Here, it is linked to the origins of immigrant communities or to the status of 'autochtony' (for *native groups* or *indígenas*, for example). Particularly with regard to immigration into the United States, groups defined as 'ethnic groups' would be 'the Irish' or 'the Italians', 'the Polish', or 'the Latinos' (ultimately distinguished in sub-groups like the Cubans, Puerto Ricans, Mexicans etc).⁴¹ This use of the concept of 'ethnic group' already refers to origins expressed through a 'national' or 'proto-national' community. In these examples, the Afro-Americans are usually presented as a singular 'ethnic group'.⁴² For the Americas, this employment of the concept creates a simplified and artificial contradiction between 'tribal zones' and 'organised societies' where the 'ethnic' identification of immigrants is linked back to an established national community. The examples of classification in the Americas therefore show how complicated (and biased) the employment of the category of ethnicity frequently is.

Concerning Europe, the use of classifications prompts similarly worrying reflections. The expression 'ethnic' appears to be mainly reserved for the Balkans region, and much less for the broader area of Eastern Europe.⁴³ It is very unlikely that the category of 'ethnic group' would be employed for the Czechs or the Slovaks when discussed in the context of the Austro-Hungarian

and future', in Elizabeth Tonkin, Maryon McDonald, and Malcolm Chapman (eds.), *History and Ethnicity* (London: Routledge, 1989), 34–47, 44.

40 See the 'classical overview' in Price, Richard, 'Introduction: Maroons and Their Communities', in Richard Price (ed.), *Maroon Societies: Rebel Slave Communities in the Americas* (third edition, Baltimore – London: Johns Hopkins, 1996), 1–30, 20–2, 29.

41 A new example is Wirth, Christa, *Memories of belonging: descendants of Italian migrants to the United States, 1884–present* (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2015).

42 'White ethnicity' was then formulated against the Afro-American 'otherness', see Stein, Howard F., and Robert F. Hill, *The Ethnic Imperative: Examining the New White Ethnic Movement* (University Park – London: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1977), 23–6; Alba, Richard D., *Ethnic Identity: The Transformation of White America* (New Haven – London: Yale University Press, 1990), 23–5; and, especially, Merton, Joe, 'Rethinking the Politics of White Ethnicity in 1970s America', *Historical Journal* 55(3), 2012, 732–56.

43 Some exceptional studies do not have these geographic limits. See Northrup, David, 'Becoming African: Identity Formation among Liberated Slaves in Nineteenth-Century Sierra Leone', *Slavery & Abolition* 27(1), 2006, 1–21, 2, or Jalali, Rita, and Seymour Martin Lipset, 'Racial and Ethnic Conflicts: A Global Perspective', *Political Science Quarterly* 107(4), 1992–3, 585–606, 591–2, 594–5.

Empire before 1918 (here, scholars tend to employ the expression ‘multi-national’ instead of ‘multi-ethnic’).⁴⁴ By contrast, for the conflicts in the Balkans in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, ‘ethnic group’ is a typical category of distinction.⁴⁵

In public debates, this choice might again reflect a certain kind of racist preconception. The inconsistent employment of the concept of ‘ethnicity’ in different zones of Europe is at least suspect: from this perspective, the Balkan wars as somewhat ‘archaic’ incidents where groups clashed over deep ‘ethnic’ roots and allegiances, appear as fundamentally different from conflict in ‘civilised’ parts of Europe. From such a point of view, the use of the expression ‘ethnic cleansing’, which became popular in representing the massacres of ‘Serbo-Bosnian’ troops and of the Yugoslav (‘Serbian’) army during the two war phases in the first and the second half of the 1990s, is not really surprising. The category of ‘ethnic group’ is also employed in order to describe the different sides during the conflict in former Yugoslavia.⁴⁶ In some cases, the use of this expression seems simply absurd, and is, from an empirical point of view, contradicted by facts: thus, during the 1990s civil war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, any distinction through ethnic criteria is entirely inappropriate, while religious practice was partly crucial for mobilisation. Attempts to publicly brand the Muslim population of Bosnia-Herzegovina as ‘Turks’, show the artificial nature of ethnic concepts in this context. Individuals speaking the Shtokavian variant of the Serbo-Croatian language, and not being descendants of migrant populations were defined as ‘Turkish’ in war propaganda because of their Muslim religious practice: this demonstrates very well how flexible definitions of belonging can be

44 There is a certain notion of describing a ‘tribal phase’ for Europe only for the period until the early medieval incursion of migrating groups, see Armstrong, John A., *Nations before Nationalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 27–32; Applegate, Celia, ‘A Europe of Regions: Reflections on the Historiography of Sub-National Places in Modern Times’, *American Historical Review* 104(4), 1999, 1157–82, 1181–2.

45 This remarkable fact is often implicitly understood, but rarely discussed, see Hobsbawm, Eric, ‘Ethnicity and Nationalism in Europe today’, *Anthropology today* 8(1), 1992, 3–8, 3. Groundbreaking new studies for the context of ethnic mobilisation in the Balkans under declining Ottoman rule are Mirkova, Anna M., “Population Politics” at the End of Empire: Migration and Sovereignty in Ottoman Eastern Rumelia, 1877–86’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 55(4), 2013, 955–85, and Nielsen, Jørgen S., *Religion, ethnicity and contested nationhood in the former Ottoman space* (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2012).

46 See Mueller, ‘Banality’, 44–58; Chrétien, Jean-Pierre, ‘Introduction’, in Jean-Pierre Chrétien and Gérard Prunier (eds.), *Les ethnies ont une histoire* (second edition, Paris: Karthala, 2003), v–xvi, xi.

handled.⁴⁷ This being said, it remains an impressive fact that the expression ‘ethnicity’ only very rarely appears in other European contexts. Outside of south-eastern Europe, violent conflict between the central state and regional groups has rarely led analysts to employ the term ‘ethnic’.⁴⁸

The Spanish state is the obvious Western European example to illustrate the terminological differences inside European history. Few of the observers would call ‘the Spanish’ an ethnic group (even in a study of migration); but, likewise few scholars would address ‘the Catalans’ or ‘the Basques’ or other regional identifications as ‘ethnic’ (although this position has recently changed through the manipulative effort of Catalan ‘nationalist’ politicians).⁴⁹ On the contrary, in academic studies, those group solidarities would probably be called ‘regional identities’ and described as ‘nations’ in (mostly politically motivated) analyses that favour the autonomist positions of some regionally active political movements (in which ‘nation’ reflects an older sense, with a meaning of regional group in a neutral sense).⁵⁰ However, it remains to be asked why Catalan (or, perhaps, Bavarian, or Auvergnat), should count as a ‘regional identity’ – but Wolof, Temne, or Ewe is characterised as an ‘ethnic group’.

More worrying and confusing from the global historical point of view, and very close indeed to similar problems to be found in North America regarding immigrant communities, it frequently occurs that individuals of (allegedly) visible African or Caribbean origins are described as members of an ‘ethnic group’, namely as ‘Black’ (ultimately vis-à-vis ‘Caucasian’).⁵¹ The latter complication in

47 See the (thought-)provoking discussion in Cahen, Michel, *La nationalisation du monde: Europe, Afrique – L'identité dans la démocratie* (Paris – Montreal: Harmattan, 1999), 179–94.

48 Cohen, Ronald, ‘Ethnicity: Focus and Problem in Anthropology’, *Annual Review of Anthropology* 7, 1978, 379–403, 384.

49 See for the long-term perspective, Elliott, John H., ‘Self-Perception and Decline in Early Seventeenth-Century Spain’, *Past & Present* 74, 1977, 41–61, 46, 60; Payne, Stanley, ‘Nationalism, Regionalism and Micronationalism in Spain’, *Journal of Contemporary History* 26(3–4), 1991, 479–91, 484–5; Ben-Ami, Shlomo, ‘Basque Nationalism between Archaism and Modernity’, *Journal of Contemporary History* 26(3–4), 1991, 493–521, 504, 514–5. More recent studies based on the analysis of archival data are Valverde Contreras, Beatriz, *El Orgullo de la Nación: la Creación de la Identidad Nacional en las Commemoraciones Culturales Españolas (1875–1905)* (Madrid: CSIC, 2016); and Harrington, Thomas S., *Public Intellectuals and Nation Building in the Iberian Peninsula, 1900–1925: the alchemy of identity* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2015).

50 Inglehart, Ronald F., and Margaret Woodward, ‘Language Conflicts and Political Community’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 10(1), 1967, 27–45, 37–9.

51 Patterson, G. James, ‘A critique of the new ethnicity’, *American Anthropologist* 81(1), 1979, 103–5.

labelling will be discussed when we come to the relationship between the concepts of 'ethnicity' and 'race', but the severe problems of this definition are evident from the outset. Racial preconceptions are visibly inherent in the process of labelling: as we have seen, even in scholarly debates – mostly in sociology, political science, and migration studies – the expression 'ethnic' is mainly reserved for Africans, Amerindian North Americans, and groups of 'tribal Asia' – such as in 'failed states' like Afghanistan – or for 'Arab tribes', or for foreigners in the context of immigration. Therefore, the use of the concept is often employed for regions imagined as marginal, and for groups perceived as still not integrated into orderly political settings.⁵² Certainly, this does not mean that scholars *consciously* regard those groups as socially or culturally inferior, but the difference in the employment of the categories is, without any doubt, biased and disturbing.

Exemplary Experiences in West Africa

I will attempt in this book to come from one broader, West African region to results on global issues of identification and community-building. My comparative design will include the Wolof living today in the post-colonial countries of Senegal and the Gambia, the Temne of present-day Sierra Leone, and the Ewe of the contemporary countries of Ghana and Togo (Map 1). Much more than some weak linguistic similarities and resemblances with regard to patrilineal family structures, the three groups share a broader historical experience. I will in what follows enumerate relevant factors; the early interaction with European merchants, the spread of larger religions imported from outside, and the confrontation with measures of colonial control and activities of taxation, are quite similar for all cases.

All linguistic groups that are known about had been fairly stable in their group structures in West Africa's coastal regions.⁵³ They all had an early experience with European merchants coming to their respective coasts to trade, mostly in relation to the traffic of slaves.⁵⁴ The Wolof-speakers in the states of Kajoor, Bawol, Siin, or Saluum in Senegal and the different smaller communities

52 Poutignat, Philippe, and Jocelyne Streiff-Fenart, *Théories de l'ethnicité* (second edition, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1999), 59.

53 Hair, P.E.H., 'Ethnolinguistic Continuity on the Guinea Coast', *Journal of African History* 8(2), 1967, 247–68, 266–8.

54 Fage, J.D., 'Slavery and the Slave Trade in the Context of West African History', *Journal of African History* 10(3), 1969, 393–404, 396.

ruled by Wolophone elites in the region of the Gambia River participated as much in the trade as groups on the Sierra Leonean coast and African merchants in the Volta River region and the coastal lagoons further eastwards.⁵⁵ Even populations that refused an active participation in the trade, had to position themselves with regard to such practices.⁵⁶

Therefore, the Wolof, Temne and Ewe, and their neighbours, were influenced by their early interactions with Europeans.⁵⁷ Wolof-speakers had been neighbours of French factories and fortresses since the later seventeenth century (and they had known other European merchants from the fifteenth century).⁵⁸ Temne-speakers had to cope with the neighbourhood of the British colony of Sierra Leone only from 1787, but they had earlier contacts with Europeans.⁵⁹ The Ewe were integrated in networks at the Keta Lagoon that linked them to the Danish in the region, and with British merchants at Little-Popo.⁶⁰ The three regions therefore had a considerable number of middlemen as catalysts in a certain political and cultural homogenisation of the societies: such as the Signares in Gorée, Creole settlers and their Temne partners; and intermediaries in the Gold Coast's southern coastal plains.⁶¹

In religious terms, all three groups were entangled, during the period between the mid-nineteenth century and the 1960s, in a process of religious conversion and homogenisation. This process has sometimes been discussed in the literature as a reaction to the shock of colonisation and of the

55 Thornton, John K., *Africa and Africans in the making of the Atlantic World, 1400–1680* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 68–9; Law, Robin, and Kristin Mann, 'West Africa in the Atlantic Community: The Case of the Slave Coast', *William and Mary Quarterly* 56(2), 1999, 307–34, 316–9.

56 Klein, Martin A., 'The Slave Trade and Decentralized Societies', *Journal of African History* 42(1), 2001, 49–65, 56–7; Searing, James F., "'No Kings, no Lords, no Slaves:": Ethnicity and Religion among the Sereer-Safèn of Western Bawol, 1700–1914', *Journal of African History* 43(3), 2002, 407–29, 412–3.

57 Eltis, David, and Lawrence C. Jennings, 'Trade between Western Africa and the Atlantic World in the Pre-Colonial Era', *American Historical Review* 93(4), 1988, 936–59, 952–3.

58 Sinou, Alain, *Comptoirs et villes coloniales du Sénégal: Saint-Louis, Gorée, Dakar* (Paris: Karthala – Editions de l'ORSTOM, 1999).

59 Kup, Peter Alexander, *A history of Sierra Leone: 1400–1787* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961), 68–81, 89–91.

60 Strickrodt, Silke, 'A Neglected Source for the History of Little Popo: The Thomas Miles Papers ca. 1789–1796', *History in Africa* 28, 2001, 293–330.

61 Spitzer, Leo, *The Creoles of Sierra Leone: Responses to Colonialism, 1870–1945* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1974), 75.



MAP 1 Case studies on ethnicity in West Africa

Afro-European cultural encounter.⁶² It was a slow process. The vast majority of Wolof-speakers or Temne-speakers cannot be considered practising Muslims in the second half of the nineteenth century: the Wolophone elites had officially become Muslims, but even after Nasir al-Din's jihad in the seventeenth century, the effect of Islam on the majority of the Wolof populations remained limited before the 1870s.⁶³ Temne-speakers of Sierra Leone lived in regions adjacent to the geographical centres of jihads of the eighteenth century, but the majority of the Temne did not come under a stable Muslim influence before around 1900, in spite of relative proximity to religious centres such as Timbo and Forékaria.

Both communities – Wolof and Temne – were less concerned by the effect of jihads, but most of their members turned to the Muslim faith through the long-term work of itinerant clerics ('marabouts'). The process often advanced more notably under the conditions of colonial rule, when the 'pacification' of large regions had enhanced the mobility of preachers. The European colonisers in the end became the staunchest collaborators of the Sufi brotherhoods. They favoured the social role of those religious groups, and employed them as

62 Crowder, Michael, *West Africa under Colonial Rule* (fourth edition, London: Hutchinson, in association with Benin City: Ethiope Publishing Corporation, 1976 [1968]), 31–42.

63 Curtin, Philip D., 'Jihad in West Africa: Early Phases and Inter-Relations in Mauritania and Senegal', *Journal of African History* 12(1), 1971, 11–24, 13–4.

auxiliaries in the task of controlling the zones of the West African interior – in particular in the cases of the Muridiyya and the Tijaniyya in Senegal, for example.⁶⁴ At the end of the colonial period, the Temne and Wolof populations had in their overwhelming majority become Muslims.

The religious evolution of the Ewe is analogous to the advancement of Islam in Senegambia and Sierra Leone. In the region east of the Volta River, the new impact of the Christian religion followed similar patterns. Protestant missionary efforts protected by the German and British colonial rulers, later followed by Catholic colleagues, guaranteed that Ewe-speakers gradually converted.⁶⁵ The link to official colonial policies of this missionary effort was even stronger than cooperation with Islamic leaders in other parts of West Africa: missionaries more directly took part in educational matters, and they held the keys to access to particular linguistic and professional skills that helped to start careers under colonial rule (something that Muslim brotherhoods could not offer). In all three cases, European officials regarded religious leaders as allies and collaborators in the control of the region, regardless of whether they were Christians or Muslims.⁶⁶

Reactions to socio-economic change under European rule are also comparable. All three communities were inclined to resist the tax demands of the new colonial states. The Hut Tax War by the Temne-speakers in 1898 rebelling against British tax measures was the most impressive case. In the Volta River area, Ewe-speakers evaded tax demands using the colonial border, which they also profited from for contraband trade.⁶⁷ In the coastal regions of Senegal south of Dakar and Rufisque, mass flights happened as well, although the refugees were Sereer-speakers rather than Wolof-speakers. In the Gambia, Wolof-speaking groups also fled from tax payments using their 'borderland situation'.

We can thus rely on a set of common experiences shared by the three larger population groups that are the focus of my study.

64 Robinson, David, 'France as a Muslim Power in West Africa', *Africa Today* 46(3–4), 1999, 105–27; Grandhomme, Hélène, 'La politique musulmane de la France au Sénégal (1936–1964)', *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 38(2), 2004, 237–78, 244–6.

65 Debrunner, Hans, *A Church between Colonial Powers: A Study of the Church in Togo* (London: Lutterworth, 1965), 134–6.

66 Ellis, Stephen, and Gerrie ter Haar, 'Religion and Politics in Sub-Saharan Africa', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 36(2), 1998, 175–201, 187–92.

67 Nugent, Paul, *Smugglers, Secessionists & Loyal Citizens on the Ghana-Togo Frontier: The Lie of the Borderlands Since 1914* (Athens/OH: Ohio University Press – Oxford: James Currey – Legon: Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2002), 35–8.

I will also show that another factor – that of the basic political organisation of communities – is crucial to the use of ethnic categories. For this reason, it makes sense to compare communities with important differences in their political structures, which were influential from 1850 or earlier onwards.⁶⁸ The negative relationship between the formalisation and the strength of state structures on the one hand, and reliance on solidarities formulated through ethnic terms on the other hand, will be a principal observation in this analysis.

Political entities in Senegambia were mostly ‘strong pre-colonial states’ within a ‘relatively stable political system’.⁶⁹ They were dependent upon larger pre-colonial administrative routines and institutions – including regular taxes, ruling dynasties, and a certain type of provincial government and officials. In the southward direction towards the Gambia River, Wolof-speakers still held political power, but the units in place were far smaller: in many cases, these Wolophone rulers were themselves subjects of Mandinka-speakers or Fulfulde-speakers. Therefore, for the Wolof-speaking members of such communities, political institutions were experienced as far less reliable.

Both the Temne and the Ewe had less elaborate political structures than those existent in Senegambia. Among Temne-speakers, political leaders never controlled larger territories. Some had at least a certain charisma as war leaders, but they did not command a provincial administration in their own right. Amongst the Ewe, the picture is mixed. Anlo on the Keta Lagoon, and Peki close to the Volta River, are two political units that could rightly be counted as pre-colonial states. After 1833 Peki had a certain influence, for decades, over a larger group of Ewe-speaking inhabitants of the region. Anlo made a name for itself, in the coastal areas, as a rather important political player. However, as I will discuss in detail, political leadership did not bring with it any more formalised, more durable position of power. I will shed light on the relationship between the pre-colonial political experience, and the emergence of identifications in the colonial period, through the long-term perspective used in this study.

Finally, we come to the effect of urbanisation as an experience under colonial rule, with beginnings that are even older. All three cases involved rural populations that fed one or more growing urban centres in the vicinity of their main regions of settlement – Accra and Lomé in the case of Ewe-speakers; Dakar and, to a much lesser degree, the agglomeration of Bathurst in the Gambia for Wolof-speakers; and Freetown and the Sierra Leone Peninsula for

68 Compare the methodology chosen in Boone, *Topographies*, 38–42.

69 Colvin, Lucie Gallistel, ‘Theoretical Issues in Historical International Politics: The Case of the Senegambia’, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 8(1), 1977, 23–44, 24–5.

Temne-speakers.⁷⁰ While it is an exceedingly linear vision to consider the migration experiences into these urban centres as an automatic process of language homogenisation among neighbouring ethnic groups, it is nonetheless evident that migration and concentration of groups helped to reinforce cultural change. The unknown living conditions in the urban environment could, however, also strengthen ethnic modes of self-identification: in the sense of identities that facilitated getting along in a foreign and possibly hostile environment.⁷¹ These changes eventually spilled back into the communities of origin, by processes of constant exchange between the latter and the migrant communities in the cities.

Therefore, we find on the one hand considerable similarities in the historical trajectories of the three population groups used as case studies: their integration into the Atlantic slave trade, their early encounters with European merchants and company personnel, their similar experience of the European conquest, and the colonial contribution to the rise of a regional majority religion, which all follow comparable patterns. These common historical trajectories posed similar problems for the communities in question, and, in particular, for their political elites and rulers. On the other hand, the three groups analysed find themselves at very different degrees on the scale of pre-colonial state organisation. I will still discuss 'state' and 'state institutions' as one variable for forming identifications, in contrast to ethnic status, community affiliation, family group, or religion.

A comparison of three groups is challenging. This is even more the case if the results are supposed to be put into a global historical perspective. The approach necessitates a methodology that diverges from the standard repertoire of area studies, and is flexible to the needs of comparison and integration into larger trends.

The Methodological Panorama: A (Critical) Return to Colonial Sources and the Afro-European Encounter

Global history has long gone beyond the point where it had to receive input from specialists on sub-Saharan Africa to overcome its Eurocentric nature, as

70 Tabouret-Keller, Andrée, 'Language Use in Relation to the Growth of Towns in West Africa – A Survey', *International Migration Review* 5(2), 1971, 180–203, 191–4, 196.

71 Unfortunately, the study of John Wiseman on post-colonial urban riots in West Africa completely omits the variable of ethnicity, see Wiseman, John, 'Urban Riots in West Africa, 1977–85', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 24(3), 1986, 509–18, 512–3.

Steven Feierman had expressed it in the 1990s.⁷² Historians, who are trying to discuss regional phenomena against the background of global patterns or trends, are now aware that Eurocentric biases are present in many of the written sources.⁷³ For comparative studies which often need to follow situations seen as scandals and larger themes of discussion that were defined by the interaction of the colonial state and local populations, these written sources remain the principal resource. It is frequently a considerable challenge to identify them, and to put them into comparative designs. As long as a global historian starting out from regional analysis in Africa is able to tackle the problem of Eurocentrism in the written sources, these sources are crucial for new, comparative designs. This is not at all a step back into conservative views on methodology and source material. It needs to be seen as a re-evaluation of sources for important open questions to find broader designs that are interesting for global history.

Historians working on sub-Saharan Africa have, over the last five decades, established new standards in the employment of source material. They have become increasingly opposed to the Eurocentric and sometimes openly racist vision that characterised research on Africa until independence (and sometimes far beyond).⁷⁴ This vision has been tackled by ambitious area studies, where historians have sought interdisciplinary approaches through the employment of field interviews and the quest for oral traditions in particular.⁷⁵ The principal idea was to find alternative voices and to bypass the monopoly of documents written by the colonisers. This process has been successful in many respects, and particularly so where detailed regional studies on small communities are concerned.

72 Feierman, Steven, 'African histories and the dissolution of world history', in Robert H. Bates, V.Y. Mudimbe, and Jean O'Barr (eds.), *Africa and the Disciplines: The Contributions of Research in Africa to the Social Sciences and Humanities* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 167–212.

73 Iriye, Akira, *Global and Transnational History: The Past, Present, and Future* (Basingstoke – New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 11–2; Lucassen, Jan; Leo Lucassen and Patrick Manning, 'Migration History: Multidisciplinary Approaches', in Jan Lucassen, Leo Lucassen, and Patrick Manning (eds.), *Migration History in World History: Multidisciplinary Approaches* (Brill: Leiden – Boston, 2010), 3–35, 12.

74 As becomes evident from Ali Mazrui's critical comment on Hugh Trevor-Roper's discussion of 'African history' in a public television lecture, see Mazrui, Ali A., 'European Exploration and Africa's Self-Discovery', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 7(4), 1969, 661–76, 668–70.

75 Chrétien, Jean-Pierre, 'Confronting the Unequal Exchange of the Oral and the Written', in Bogumil Jewsiewicki and David Newbury (eds.), *African Historiographies: What History for Which Africa?* (Beverly Hills – London – New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1986), 75–90, 88–9.

Obviously, the reliance upon oral information brings a number of problems with it regarding the verification of empirical data. Documents can be re-encountered, but for interviews the situation is mostly impossible to reproduce.⁷⁶ A number of historians have discussed these problems in more detail, and have given practical advice for the use of oral information.⁷⁷ In spite of these debates, some of the broader implications that a strong reliance of the historian upon field interviews causes would still need more discussion. I do not intend to offer such a discussion in my book, as my study can only employ these results from more regional and local approaches to question my own interpretation. My study will hopefully give a basis for new fieldwork. The research design employed here is not that of a local history; therefore, oral interviews do not have the same importance. Comparative analysis cannot be based on the isolated, village-level field interviews, and not even upon unsystematic interviews with political and social leaders, which are also typical for local histories. A good comparison of identifications over broader regions needs particular moments in which these identifications are mobilised; these moments are spread over a region and can often only be found with recourse to the unifying effect of the colonial encounter, and to colonial observations. Crucial moments of mobilisation are the situations of – administrative – encounters with agents of the colonial power, when spokeswomen or spokesmen of communities presented their identifications to these agents. This historical encounter can mainly be found in written sources, of which an important percentage has remained entirely uninterpreted.

For the broad and comparative research design, I will thus rely on an approach where the interaction between local populations and structures of colonial rule guides us towards the critical encounters in which identifications were presented and renegotiated. This approach allows me to profit from archival documentation in new, innovative ways (concentrating on ‘the African voice’ *inside* this documentation). Oral testimony may give additional illustration, and

76 Cooper, Frederick, ‘Africa’s Pasts and Africa’s Historians’, *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 34(2), 2000, 298–336, 315; Wright, Donald R., ‘Requiem for the Use of Oral Tradition to Reconstruct the Precolonial History of the Lower Gambia’, *History in Africa* 18, 1991, 399–408, 399–400. If the interviews are not recorded, the methodological problem is even greater. Nevertheless, many ‘Africanists’ have decided that it is better to renounce the recording of oral data. For example, Adam Jones remarks that ‘some informants were disturbed’ by the use of tape recorders; therefore, he only very rarely employed them, see Jones, Adam, ‘Some reflections on the oral traditions of the Galinhas Country, Sierra Leone’, *History in Africa* 12, 1985, 151–65, 151.

77 Tonkin, Elizabeth, *Narrating our pasts: The social construction of oral history* (Cambridge – New York – Victoria: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 113–5.

insights from neighbouring fields – namely anthropology – will certainly be employed, but I will mainly rely upon lifting new archival sources, and giving an important reinterpretation of others that are already known.⁷⁸

Oral testimony still holds another role. Anthropological observations by European visitors were often integrated into local perceptions and group identification. In some cases, the results of interviews held in the colonial period were used in local strategies of argumentation. For example, the ‘traditional ruler’ of Kudje in Buem State in former British Togoland, as a local informant, referred explicitly to European scholarship in a 1964 complaint to post-colonial Ghanaian president Kwame Nkrumah. In this account, with which the ruler tried to foster his claims for an independent paramount chieftaincy, Akuamoia IV referred to the early correspondence of missionaries in the area. This correspondence, which Akuamoia had read in its published form, then became the cornerstone of the chief’s argumentation. His ingenious employment of available historical information, reinterpreted as part of his oral narrative, shows that informants were quite apt to integrate older oral information they had found in published form.⁷⁹

Also – in the same region – the monumental account on the Ewe by Jakob Spieth was reread in its German version by locals who had obtained proficiency in the German language before 1914. They subsequently translated their impressions into demands for political privileges in the 1950s, for example with regard to the conflict between the communities of Ho-Dome and Ho-Bankoe disputing the paramount chieftaincy of Ho Division. The two communities in conflict based their claims on oral narratives that consistently built in references to the authority of the ‘Western scholar’!⁸⁰ Similar

78 Henige, David P., *The Chronology of Oral Tradition: Quest for a Chimera* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), 55–70.

79 Public Records and Administration Department, Ho Branch, Ghana (PRAAD (Ho Branch)), NA/47 (unclassified dossier), Nana Akuamoia, *Nifahene* of Buem Traditional Area and Chief of Kudje, to Kwame Nkrumah, President of Ghana, *The Humble Petition of Nana Akuamoia IV, Nifahene of the Buem Traditional Area, Volta Region, most respectfully sheweth*: (without number), 15 August 1964, p. 4.

80 Public Records and Administration Department, Accra, Ghana (PRAAD (Accra)), ADM 39/1/458, Hayi Komla, Stool Father of Bankoe; Philip Keh, Regent of Bankoe; Joseph Akpo, Stool Owner of Bankoe; and others, *Resolution of Bankoe Divisional Council with Constitutional, Political, and Historical Backgrounds for Recognition as Independent Division in Ho Town*. (without number), 2 Aug. 1951, p. 1. The Assistant District Commissioner asked the Bankoe Community to lend him this German work! See PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/458, Assistant District Commissioner of Ho to Hayi Komla (n^o 0106/S.F.9/Vol.2/8(3)), 3 September 1951.

attempts have occurred in many other zones of coastal West Africa, and they show the openness of the material to reinterpretation, even with the help of 'European results'.

Migration claims are one of the typical elements of information that was orally given to colonial administrations in moments of interaction. Informants, who wished to sustain the privileges of their group, were often engaged in presenting long traditions of such migration.⁸¹ While the experience of long-distance movement has become a principal issue of global historical approaches, little has been achieved in view of understanding traditions of migration as claims for political primacy and demands for land. In a global history perspective, it would be an important future challenge to discuss the role of such traditions in the world and over time.⁸²

It appears, therefore, to be reasonable to concentrate here on African voices as they appear in documentation. This appearance is, as I will show, very frequent. The key moments are characterised by the entanglements of the colonial encounter, in which informants had to 'sell' their role and their privileges, i.e. present them as 'authentic' to the colonial authorities. However, this approach naturally brings us to question, once again, the reliability of written material. If we want to use it to analyse the mobilisation of identifications and even claim that the voices of Africans can be filtered out of Eurocentric biases, we need to discuss its problems. Obviously, much of the documentation was produced by an administration of rulers who were relatively unfamiliar with local realities, whose impressions were skewed by cultural preconceptions and stereotypes, and who did not quite understand the strategic elements of using group labels – such as 'Temne', 'Wolof', or 'Ewe'.

Colonial administrators were interested in a number of basic tasks, such as taxation and recruitment of labour. Self-perceptions of colonial subjects were not necessarily a part of their concerns. From the nineteenth century onwards, some European officials were nevertheless engaged in pseudo-academic classification, as ethnographic 'amateurs', although largely in an insensitive and unreflective manner. However, some of these filters have become better

81 Those legends of migration are frequently very problematic, see, among others, the critiques of Forkl, Hermann, 'Publish or Perish, or How to Write a Social History of the Wandala (Northern Cameroon)', *History in Africa* 18, 1990, 77–94, 88–9; Laumann, Dennis, 'The History of the Ewe of Togo and Benin from Pre-Colonial to Post-Colonial Times', in Benjamin Lawrance (ed.), *A Handbook of Eweland: The Ewe of Togo and Benin* (Accra: Woeli Publishing Services, 2005), 14–28, 16.

82 See, however, Lentz, *Land*, 212–23.

understood, as far as the role of anthropology under colonial rule and its shaky categories are concerned.⁸³ Local Africans were seen as indispensable as a labour force, but ‘modernisation’ was only an issue with regard to a small group of them. For the rest of the colonial subjects, regarded as members of static communities, European officials took the ‘tribal’ group criteria that were no longer considered useful for ‘modern’ national societies, as adequate and inevitable.⁸⁴ This created flawed categorisations and an idea of simple social mechanisms. Moreover, as Emily Lynn Osborn has pointed out, translators and other intermediaries in West Africa (and in other colonial contexts) swamped European colonial administrations with manipulated information or erroneous interpretations.⁸⁵

Nowadays, the critical historian is able to cope with these challenges. Moreover, administrative reports carry an underestimated amount of voices of African informants – and the historian, with some precautions, is able to analyse them in order to explain group solidarities.⁸⁶ Also, the colonial context needed some element of accurate reporting and of engaged analysis, and information coming from ‘native clerks’ normally had sufficient grounding in their societies of origin to bring in at least some of the respective narratives circulating in these societies.⁸⁷ In other words, even if intermediaries attempted

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- 83 Urry, James, “Notes and Queries on Anthropology” and the Development of Field Methods in British Anthropology, 1870–1920’, *Proceedings of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 1972, 45–57, 48–50; Sibeud, Emmanuelle, *Une science impériale pour l’Afrique?: la construction des savoirs africanistes en France 1878–1930* (Paris: Editions de l’EHESS, 2002); Conklin, Alice, *In the Museum of Man: Race, Anthropology, and Empire in France, 1850–1950* (Ithaca/NY: Cornell University Press, 2013); Grosz-Ngaté, Maria, ‘Power and knowledge, the representation of the Mande world in the works of Park, Callié, Monteil and Delafosse’, *Cahiers d’Etudes Africaines* 28(3–4), 111/112, 1988, 485–511; Lentz, Carola, *Ethnicity and the Making of History in Northern Ghana* (Accra: Woeli Publishing Services, 2007 [first published Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006]), 93; MacGaffey, Wyatt, ‘Death of a king, death of a kingdom? Social pluralism and succession to high office in Dagbon, northern Ghana’, *Journal of Modern African Studies* 44(1), 2006, 79–99, 82.
- 84 Cooper, Frederick, *Decolonization and African society: the labor question in French and British Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 48, 58–60, 154.
- 85 Osborn, Emily Lynn, “Circle of Iron:” African Colonial Employees and the Interpretation of Colonial Rule in French West Africa’, *Journal of African History* 44(1), 2003, 29–50.
- 86 Moreover, rumours and gossip appear in European documents from the colonial period – but the rumours conveyed by the colonial documentation are the contemporary rumours. See White, Luise, *Speaking with Vampires: Rumor and gossip in colonial Africa* (Berkeley – Los Angeles – London: University of California Press, 2000), 58–85.
- 87 Derrick, Jonathan, ‘The ‘Native Clerk’ in Colonial West Africa’, *African Affairs* 82(326), 1983, 61–74, 70–1.

to manipulate European officials, not everything they transmitted as information was incorrect or invented.

With regard to political entities and their relationship to communities, European administrators were particularly interested in more strongly centralised regional structures, which they perceived as being in a 'decadent' or 'primitive' state, but as *comparable* to the results of nation-building in the European continent and elsewhere in the world.⁸⁸ Where no identifiable structures were immediately found, it was often judged appropriate to create them, to in effect give the locals back 'what had been theirs'. Classifying the customary behaviour of the surrounding 'people', or 'peoples', was thus regarded a necessary undertaking in order to govern those groups in 'appropriate ways'. It is evident that such an enterprise again left much space for misunderstandings and mistakes, and opened the doors to processes of invention of traditions – even if Europeans understood some of the basic terminology of group labels in the region.

It is a central goal of this book to understand whether the labelling of groups was only a top-down process fuelled by the colonial administration and by its closest collaborators. Several scholars have made this point over the years, but they have rarely analysed the concrete situations where communities or some of their representatives explained or 'sold' their group identifications to the agents of the colonial state. Therefore, I will attempt to understand under which conditions such concepts were crafted and received, adapted and utilised over time by the locals themselves. I will then interpret the preconditions of group conflict in the different West African regions.

Mediated by the colonial documents, it is possible to find out when local groups relied on particular arguments and labels to engage in a creative communication, in which those labels assisted them eventually to gain their point. During the colonial period, locals had no choice but to engage in discussion of those categories when approaching European administrators. Access to land, quests for political leadership, demands for administrative autonomy were all issues in which opinions about ethnic solidarity were important. Many of those formulations are documented, through petitions, letters, and process minutes. What they tell us about ethnic affiliation may not be the established truth over the centuries, nor need they reflect the effective cultural bonds during a circumscribed period. Nonetheless, such documents describe the limits of formulating solidarity, they correspond to how far local leaders could go in

88 Wilks, Ivor, 'Asante nationhood and colonial administrators', in Carola Lentz and Paul Nugent (eds.), *Ethnicity in Ghana: the limits of invention* (Basingstoke: Macmillan – New York: St. Martin's, 2000), 68–92.

calling for group solidarity; they also show on which occasions an ethnic argument is really feasible.

This debate over ethnicity and solidarity is an aspect that in documents makes itself visible in important ways. For colonial documents whose authors had an established knowledge of the employment of local information, and with an awareness of the vested interests of informants appearing within the sources, profound analysis is nonetheless possible. Unsurprisingly, it is still more difficult to describe the situation at the end of the pre-colonial period through European documentation. However, even in that period, European visitors sometimes show good knowledge of local conditions and group relations, and in the more important cases it appears plausible that they must have repeated claims of reliable local informants (although this has to be pointed out on a case-by-case basis). Although such travellers' accounts are, of course, 'Eurocentric' in the sense that we do not normally learn who exactly their informants were, there is no need to reject the information contained therein altogether, particularly if these accounts are compared with later, colonial sources.⁸⁹ The changes of the conquest period (between 1840 and 1900 for our West African cases) lead in practice to an engaged discussion of group solidarities, and to the temporary appearance of extremely violent struggles. During these struggles, both the support of the European invaders, and that of imagined ethnic brethren, were frequently welcome. It is thus unsurprising that those circumstances offer us a large range of material, as local populations had to redefine their alliances and to reformulate their claims, which they did by interaction with the European conquerors.

The approach chosen in this study is, given the complexities outlined above, both modest and bold. I hope to interpret how, in their interactions with a frequently under-informed European administration, African communities (and, usually, their elites and spokesmen) in coastal West Africa presented themselves. Under which circumstances did they refer to ethnic labels? Can we make out a sort of consistent pattern that describes such recourse to ethnicity? Did the establishment of colonial rule after the turbulent period of conquest stimulate a more frequent employment of such ethnic labels – through their imposition on local societies by colonial classification, for example, as has frequently been argued in the literature? Or would the stabilisation of (alien) political structures mean that the recourse to ethnicity became less attractive? And, finally, how could such results usefully be put into a panorama of global patterns, concerning the use of ethnic claims?

89 Ross, David, 'Mid-Nineteenth Century Dahomey: Recent Views vs. Contemporary Evidence', *History in Africa* 12, 1985, 307–23.

Africans used their claims to belong to groups of a particular identity under very divergent circumstances. In the phase of colonial conquest, such claims were usually made to 'inform' a potential European partner about the legitimacy of warfare in a given region. The goal was to convince Europeans of the necessity of intervening in favour of the 'traditionally legitimate' party. In the post-conquest phase, with local warfare effectively banned, questions of local power inside the colonial structures, and access to land, became more important. The conquerors set up or employed 'authentic' native courts, where such questions would abundantly be discussed.⁹⁰ European administrators became increasingly convinced until the end of the First World War, that an 'authentic' local administration was both useful and just. Officials in the field were thus eager to understand the group settings in the regions they ruled, and were more and more open to accepting information from the African side. African local authorities were the first to approach colonial agents, in order to obtain the latter's support in land cases in which they referred to the 'traditional rights' of their respective group in a number of cases.⁹¹ However, while the brokering of 'traditional rights', and access to traditions of origin, were normally linked to local power, other individuals were not necessarily excluded from the process. In fact, particularly for the well-known case of the pre-colonial state of Asante coming under British control, it is frequently claimed that locals, including socially marginal groups such as unmarried young women, were very quickly informed about loopholes in the new set-up of administrative regulations that would allow them to obtain more individual rights.⁹² The same seems to have happened regarding access to land, and land claims in which individuals were remarkably capable in finding tactics to bypass the authority of local elders and chiefs were a common phenomenon in many zones under colonial rule.⁹³ It did not take these individual applicants a long time to see the value of well-presented versions of group history. Therefore, they quickly began to submit their own 'traditional' claims before the colonial administration.

90 Benton, Lauren, 'Colonial Law and Cultural Difference: Jurisdictional Politics and the Formation of the Colonial State', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 41(3), 1999, 563–88, 571.

91 Berry, Sarah, 'Debating the Land Question in Africa', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 44(4), 2002, 638–68, 644–5.

92 Allman, Jean, 'Rounding up Spinsters: Gender Chaos and Unmarried Women in Colonial Asante', *Journal of African History* 37(2), 1996, 195–214, 209–13.

93 Austin, Gareth, "'No Elders were present.'" Commoners and Private Ownership in Asante, 1807–96', *Journal of African History* 37(1), 1996, 1–30, 20–2.

For a comparative historical study, using the European administrator as an involuntary intermediary, who collected, filtered, and interpreted claims of different forms of group allegiance, still bears the risk of a distortion of facts due to misinformation, misunderstandings, or simple lack of interest from the European side. Nevertheless, this method also has simple but unquestionable advantages. Accessibility and testability of the employed documentation is one part of this picture.⁹⁴ Moreover, the engagement of the European administrators also allows the historian to formulate a broader perspective on processes. In a way, the colonial administration, by collecting material, already guides the scholar to locations where ethnic mobilisation was perceived to be strongest. By contrast, the fact that in some broader regions ethnicity does not appear at all as a particular topic in administrative reports, has – even in accepting the misunderstandings conveyed in some of the material – usually some significance. Obviously, in these cases, the historian is first obliged to inquire if the regional administration was particularly uninterested or inactive, or if the local situation was particularly complex to understand: however, long-term absence of any notions of ethnic classification, by a number of different individual administrators, given the growing interest of the metropolises in drafting ‘authentic native legislations’, is certainly a significant fact.⁹⁵

In the context of colonial rule, it is equally necessary to keep in mind that the different European administrations bear some distinctions, although those distinctions were perhaps not as influential as scholars have long believed them to be.⁹⁶ In their discourse, British administrators laid far more emphasis on the maintenance of ‘authentic’ local structures. One might thus expect that in the British-ruled territories appearing in my West African comparison – Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast Colony, Togoland under British Mandate from 1914, and to a certain extent the Gambia – the engagement of the administration in classifying individuals according to ethnic criteria would have been far greater. However, the French concept of ‘association’ led to the same effects. This concept became part of the French strategy of administration in the first two decades of the twentieth century, and more strongly so after the First World War. All in all, while theory and rhetoric emphasised a

94 This is indirectly admitted even for Central Africa in Vansina, Jan, ‘Deep-down Time: Political Tradition in Central Africa’, *History in Africa* 16, 1989, 341–62, 364.

95 The view of Stephen Ellis on source problems, mainly formulated for the post-colonial period, is also true for the pre-colonial and colonial phases, see Ellis, Stephen, ‘Writing Histories of Contemporary Africa’, *Journal of African History* 43(1), 2002, 1–26, 12–4.

96 Goldberg, Melvin, ‘Decolonisation and Political Socialisation with Reference to West Africa’, *Journal of Modern African Studies* 24(4), 1986, 663–77, 666–72.

fundamental difference between British and French ways of administration, the administrative reality of both appears to have been rather similar. The two colonial regimes attempted to cope with local structures and to integrate them into the system of administration (which was an inevitable necessity as both administrations remained unwilling to invest too much of their funds in direct local administration).⁹⁷ Therefore, it is, despite difficulties, possible to base a large, comparative study of African group affiliations on the information conveyed in documentation produced in these contexts. Of course, to come to innovative results, I need to point out the strategies and interests of the African informants; I will show how they can be disentangled from the broader, generalising, simplifying, and racist perspective of the European officials working in sub-Saharan Africa.

Structure, Sources, and Limitations

Ethnic labels, whether long-standing or recent, constructed or 'primordial', are not only an African phenomenon but a problem that needs to be discussed in a global panorama. Moreover, such labels are never the only marker of identification. The nature of ethnicity is, quite frequently, defined on unstable grounds, and different scholars speak of different things when discussing questions of 'identity'. The picture is complicated further by the obvious links of ethnic sentiment to other modes of self-definition, such as 'religion', 'nation', 'state', or, even, 'race' (the latter as a highly problematic, imagined category usually relying on perceptions of phenotype), plus, whenever we cross over into a more local arena, feelings of family or kin solidarity. Family and kinship are difficult to conceptualise in a broader matrix, as they are dominated by more localised patterns. The other different categories can, however, be deployed in a larger debate, in which they either combine with and ultimately reinforce the effects of ethnic group sentiment, or function as alternatives and counter-elements.⁹⁸

Chapter 2 will engage in a conceptual discussion of ethnicity and of the various other categories of identification that can be set in relation to ethnic

97 Dimier, Véronique, *Le gouvernement des colonies, regards croisés franco-britanniques* (Brussels: Ed. de l'Université de Bruxelles, 2004), 206–14; Kiwanunika, M. Semakula, 'Colonial Policies and Administrations in Africa: The Myths of the Contrasts', *African Historical Studies* 3(2), 1970, 295–315, 302–3.

98 Guyer, Jane I., 'Household and Community in African Studies', *African Studies Review* 24(2/3), 1981, 87–137, 90–2, 97–102.

sentiment, in West Africa and the world. My discussion will here at first address the frequently confusing debate about ethnicity as a category, including an overview of the contrasting positions of 'primordialists' and 'constructivists' and an evaluation of the unstable 'compromise' formulated during the last two decades. This chapter also needs to address the often unclear use of the expression 'ethnic' in different disciplines and contexts.⁹⁹ I will give an outline of my own approach in discussing identifications for group-building processes and mobilisation, which is partly obliged to Daniel Posner's concept of rational behaviour in the employment of categories of 'identity' during elections in sub-Saharan Africa and elsewhere. Consequently, in my approach, the reader will need to understand ethnic affiliation as one alternative in a portfolio: 'the nation', 'the state', 'religion' and 'racial factors' can have, under particular circumstances, a stronger appeal to group members in order to build a larger, coherent community. The discussion of the different categories of identification will allow for the presentation of alternative possibilities for group mobilisation, and those will subsequently be discussed in the case studies.¹⁰⁰

As has been explained above, my comparative analysis of processes of ethnic mobilisation will rely on three principal case studies, each of which involves a larger community that is, today, considered to be an ethnic group (the Wolof, Temne, and Ewe). This analysis will naturally include the complex relations of the three communities with their direct neighbours. Relationships with neighbours are obviously important factors, as the concept of 'otherness' formulated on either side, often characterises the process of creating, maintaining, and employing internal group identifications.

Given the limitations of oral methods for this larger and comparative approach, which I have amply discussed above, my analysis will mostly rely on archive-based interpretation. For each territory, the interpretation of processes over a period of, roughly, 110 years (and some decades more in the case of Sierra Leone, where the process of pre-conquest diplomatic interaction becomes important by the first half of the nineteenth century), will be based on a larger territorial and one or two smaller, sub-regional narratives. The territorial narrative relies on the interpretation of 'self-perceptions' that local populations

99 It has to be emphasised that, already, the terminology 'primordial' versus 'constructivist' is quite obsolete. Barbara Ballis Lal proposed 'compulsory ethnicity' versus 'ethnicity by consent', but this vocabulary presents the same problems, see Ballis Lal, Barbara, 'Perspectives on Ethnicity: Old Wine in New Bottles', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 6(2), 1983, 154–73, 166–8.

100 Posner, Daniel N., *Institutions and Ethnic Politics in Africa* (Cambridge – New York – Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2005), *passim*, esp. 217–49.

offered to the officials of the colonial state. I claim that those officials, while frequently misunderstanding elements of local relations and identifications, had a strong interest in pointing out problematic regions that were marked by constant conflicts. Even if not always consciously, the same officials normally have a tendency to indicate if those group conflicts had to do with tensions referring to particular group labels. Such a research technique does of course not simply amount to reproducing the many schematic stories about ancient 'tribal' (ethnic) enmities, which so fascinated many officials in the field. On the contrary, where group mobilisation is concerned, local individuals themselves approach the administration with 'traditional claims' and 'traditional histories'. Those are frequently preserved in the official documentation. As has been pointed out above, those claims do not necessarily enlighten us about the precise facts of regional and local identifications – local claimants frequently crafted stories to underline their claims – but, by following over the decades the strategies of locals to 'sell' their identifications to the colonial administration, it is possible to point out evolutionary patterns and, if applicable, the modes of employment of the concept of ethnic solidarity.

The sub-regional setting describes, per case, one or two local regions, which appear particularly promising in relation to the larger territorial conditions. The more detailed cases can be found in regions where the group regarded for the comparison had a complex standing, normally because of conflicts with other groups, ups and downs in the assertion of political power, and shifts in the perspective on local identifications. The sub-regions – like the Petite Côte around Joal-Fadiouth in Senegal and Lower Saloum in the Gambia in the case of Wolof-speakers; the region of Port Loko for the Temne-speakers; the surroundings of Avatime in regard to the Ewe-speakers – are analysed in detail through data from an in-depth study of archival information. For the local view on group interactions I also use data from some selected local interviews (which with regard to the analytical approach taken, only guided as to principal patterns and questions). It has to be emphasised that I consider the regions selected as sub-regions as representative for the cases discussed, exactly because they tend to be encountered at the conflict-ridden margins of regions inhabited by the respective groups, where identifications often had an even more crucial function for group cohesion.

Six West African and nine European archives have been consulted during the work on this comparative study. Among the West African archives, those of Ho in Ghana (the former administrative capital of British Togoland), those of Lomé in Togo, and those of Banjul in the Gambia have very rarely been used in studies on colonial history, and their interpretation can be regarded as highly innovative. The National Archives of Ghana in Accra contain a vast selection of

documents, utilised successfully for the historiography of the coastal regions (Asante and the Fante states, Accra and the regions east of the Volta River). However, they are far less studied for the history of the Trans-Volta region and Togo. (The more recent books of Paul Nugent, Benjamin Lawrance, and Sarah Greene, and the older studies of D.E.K. Amenumey, can only be considered as a start that still leaves many questions open). The Sierra Leone Archives are characterised by a problematic process of reorganisation, and reliance upon them is more complicated.¹⁰¹ Finally, the Archives Nationales Sénégalaises are one of the most-consulted African archives, but also the home of an outstandingly large selection of documents, including both the administrative files on the French Colony of Senegal, and those concerning the Government-General of French West Africa. The latter give access to documents concerning eight former French territories.

Each of the three cases discussed here is first presented in a general panorama, introducing the different (language) groups to be found in the respective territories, the more generalising results of sociological studies on those groups, the religious situation, and the specific experience of European conquest. Depending on the case, I also address a certain 'state-of-the-art' on ethnic interpretations, presenting the existing knowledge around 1850, and attempting to comment on the sources of those broader descriptions, and on their terminology and perspective. In subsequent parts of each chapter, I will concentrate on situations of intense regional debate about group rights, as they were defined in the interaction with colonial administrations. In this context, all the case studies have to follow a certain chronology that addresses key moments of community evolution in relation to the colonial encounter.

We find three typical situations for discussion about group labels led by the local populations themselves, belonging to particular phases. First, the actual situation of conquest, embedded in complex diplomatic exchange, is of great importance. It forced local populations to explain to the coloniser their predilections for certain forms of regional or local organisation, and it allowed ambitious individuals to counter established rules and narratives, and formerly subservient groups to elicit a reorganisation of local structures of power and dependency. The second key phase has to do with the reorganisation of administrative structures, during attempts at installing civilian rule, in the period of the First World War and the early 1920s. From that moment onwards, candidates with a claim to 'authenticity' had more chances to succeed. However, they had to know how to employ group labels and 'traditional

101 I am very thankful to Christine Whyte for generous research support with regard to the Sierra Leone Archives.

histories' in the dialogue with the colonial administrators. Finally, the introduction of political reforms and participation rights between the end of the Second World War, and the mid-1950s, was an impetus from outside, but was rapidly appropriated by the locals. In all sub-regions analysed here, these stages entirely changed the equilibrium of forces. The possibility for a growing number of local individuals to vote, and therefore to influence, at least in part, the political evolution of their constituencies would now link group identifications to party allegiance and tensions between political movements. This has been aptly put by Carola Lentz in the formula of 'the time when politics came'. Lentz's analysis also points out that the introduction of party politics in sub-Saharan Africa was, for many rural populations, a far more impressive rupture than was national independence.¹⁰² The integration into larger political structures made it necessary for groups and their leaders to reconsider the importance of their group sentiments, eventually using them as a lever of mass mobilisation.

For those, and for the other more singular periods, I will thus analyse cases of mobilisation and identification of locals, in their interaction with the colonial officials. This analysis will, in theory, privilege our principal sub-regional cases, but integrate them in a broader, global discussion of local identity politics and mobilisation strategies. In Chapters 3 (on Senegambia), 4 (on northern Sierra Leone), and 5 (on the Trans-Volta Region and Western Togo), I will point out how, over the above-mentioned period of approximately 110 years, local populations 'sold' their group identifications to colonial administrators, sometimes, if not frequently, with clear tactical motives. The explanations given for the different processes will be strongly linked to the role of political organisation and statehood; in other words, it will be shown that ethnicity had a role especially where the mechanisms of statehood failed or were non-existent.

This brings us back to the limitations of this study. First of all, given the conclusion of the methodological discussion, I do not regard it as practicable to carry out any statistically significant or larger qualitative interview series; my approach favours a broader perspective. Indeed, this should in the end be one of the particularly strong points of the present book. Second, the broader approach will be grounded in reliable local and sub-regional case studies, but it depends on the perspective of the representatives of the colonial power for the act of *selecting* those cases. Nevertheless – as argued above – while it might be correct to describe the colonial administration as racist, generalising, and often ill-informed, colonial officials had a natural interest in finding and defusing group conflicts, and they were the usual persons to be approached in conflicts

102 Lentz, *Ethnicity*, 199.

for land and power. They thus collected what was offered to them as 'local tradition'. Only the employment of this pre-selecting mechanism allows us to bring the huge amount of potential source material into a manageable form.

Third, the source material appears, at first glance, to sometimes be uneven. While the cases of the Wolof and the Ewe rely on documents that are mainly retrieved from African archives, and – at least for the twentieth century – on documentation that has so far scarcely been used or that is even unknown, the discussion of Temne interaction with colonial structures needs more input from European archives, which is due to conditions of access to materials. The different locations of documents can also lead to certain (although rather slight) differences concerning the time period studied. On the Wolof, the archival documentation is more or less balanced, with a strong input from archival documents stored in France and the United Kingdom for the period before 1914, and a near exclusiveness of the more detailed documentation from African archives for the period after the Second World War. The Temne case, on the contrary, has a certain bias in favour of the second half of the nineteenth century and the 1920s, two periods during which British officials were most interested in bundling documentation and depositing it in the Colonial Office. In the Ewe case, early documentation is particularly available from (sometimes printed) British files kept in the Colonial Office, and from the documents of the German administration of the new colony of Togo, while the British administration in Keta also left some valuable dossiers in the National Archives of Ghana in Accra. From 1915, this picture is completely reversed, with an increasing amount of detailed local descriptions, most of those to be found in Accra, Lomé, and Ho.

Those biases are no real obstacle to carrying out the comparison. On the contrary, the approach permits us to bridge certain lacunae in local material. Moreover, the existence of missionary societies in all three geographical arenas – most prominently the Pères du Saint-Esprit (Holy Ghost Fathers) in coastal Senegal, the missionaries of the Church Missionary Society in Northern Sierra Leone, and those of the Norddeutsche Missionsgesellschaft (Bremen Mission) in the area east of the Volta River – also contributes to making the individual regional situations more comparable. This refers, above all, to missionary documentation in the second half of the nineteenth century, before the actual conquest, when those missionaries had a more pronounced diplomatic role.¹⁰³

103 See also: Van der Geest, Sjaak, and Jon P. Kirby, 'The Absence of the Missionary in African Ethnography, 1930–65', *African Studies Review* 35(3), 1992, 59–103, 84.

In sum, even with the given limitations, the detailed and research-based comparative approach represents a study design that is as such entirely novel for historians of sub-Saharan Africa. The results can therefore be expected to lead to new interpretations, and will consequently be brought into a debate on group affiliation that links the perspectives of African and global history. Such a perspective constitutes important progress in debates on ethnicity.

Group Identifications: African and Global Categories

Defining African Ethnicities against a Global Background

Discussions about group identifications in sub-Saharan Africa, and elsewhere in the world, are today dominated by a somewhat odd parallelism between different concepts, which are rarely understood as alternatives. This relates to the factors of ethnicity, religion, and the post-colonial nation-building projects: in the case of West Africa, for some regions, like Nigeria, the debate now favours religion almost exclusively as a divisive problem; in Ghana and Sierra Leone, regional and ethnic factors are broadly discussed; for Côte d'Ivoire, scholars seek explanations for what they regard as the failure of nation-building. The different factors, to which we can add family, kinship, and models of political organisation, are rarely brought into a larger panorama. Moreover, they are not really seen as different options for identification for an individual or for a group.¹

The current chapter endeavours to give the reader a solid general idea about ethnic sentiment as a conceptual factor in sub-Saharan Africa and in its global dimensions. It addresses key problems in this context: the debate about the nature of ethnicity, with its slowly changing arguments over the last five decades; and the quest for a working definition of ethnic groups. Concerning the former, it is necessary to engage with a basic discussion of whether ethnic identification is a long-lasting 'traditional' fact or a construction under conditions of colonial rule: that is, would a member of a certain community have automatically been inclined to identify herself or himself as belonging to her or his ethnic group, or was she or he usually led or even manipulated to do so? The second problem is also quite intriguing. As we will see, scholars from different fields and experts on different geographical regions fill the flexible adjective 'ethnic' with quite distinct meanings. This situation makes it necessary to elaborate a useful definition for our context. Finally, the sub-chapters will refer to various elements of mobilisation, through alternative forms of identification. While religion is more evident as a factor, and will be directly

1 Diouf, Mamadou, 'Des Historiens et des Histoires, pour quoi faire? L'Histoire africaine entre l'état et les communautés', *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 34(2), 2000, 337–74, 347–8.

tackled in the case studies, it has to be questioned from the outset how 'ethnicity' can be imagined in its relation to the nation-building project, to 'racial' phenotypes, and to the political organisation of communities.²

As we have seen, the recourse to ethnic group mobilisation appears to be widespread in many of the recent conflicts in very different zones of sub-Saharan Africa. Moreover, in everyday life, individuals frequently refer to their own ethnic characteristics, and still more to those of 'strangers' and 'others'.³ The same individuals might make jokes about the 'typical' character of members of other ethnic groups; during elections they vote for candidates they regard as members of their own ethnic constituency; they tend to introduce themselves to visitors and conversation partners as part of the respective community.⁴ In this respect, it is difficult even for the most critical and 'constructivist' observer to discuss away ethnic allegiance as a factor in contemporary African societies, especially where the distribution of resources is at stake. For other parts of the world, the problem is not posed as such, with the exception, again, of 'native' communities of the Americas or 'tribal structures' in Asia.

Obviously, this observation does not give an answer to whether ethnicity, as a factor in community life, has long been such an important variable in group perceptions and a longstanding, historical problem in community relations.⁵ Also, in sub-Saharan Africa it has been a conceptual challenge that is hotly disputed by scholars. Today it is occasionally claimed that at least the academic conflict is more or less resolved.⁶ However, the attempts to formulate a coherent opinion or even a consensus on the historical role of ethnicity have not produced any more recent syntheses; all in all, there is still no broader analysis of the changes in African ethnic identification over time, or one that would include a view on ethnicity in other parts of the globe.

After nearly forty years of intense discussions, most scholars tend to use the concept of ethnicity as one variable regarding identifications of individuals,

2 Wallerstein, Immanuel, 'The Construction of Peoplehood: Racism, Nationalism, Ethnicity', in Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein (eds.), *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* (London – New York: Verso, 1991, translation of orig. Paris: La Découverte, 1988), 71–85, 77–9.

3 Hargreaves, John D., 'From Strangers to Minorities in West Africa', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 31, 1981, 95–113, 98–9.

4 De Jong, Ferdinand, 'A Joking Nation: Conflict Resolution in Senegal', *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 39(2), 2005, 389–413, 400–1.

5 Burgess, M. Elaine, 'The resurgence of ethnicity: myth and reality', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 1(3), 1978, 265–85, 278–80.

6 Nevertheless, as Carola Lentz argued, it is surprising how rapidly the frontlines reappear in some discussions, see Lentz, Carola, "'Tribalism" and ethnicity in Africa: a review of four decades of Anglophone research', *Cahiers des Sciences Humaines* 31(2), 1995, 303–28, 307–8.

and for group solidarity. However, there is no impetus anymore towards discussion, in broader designs, of the historicity of the phenomenon of ethnic solidarity, which continues to be little illuminated.⁷ Arguably, the most representative recent opinion (if seldom taken as the explicit point of reference) is presumably expressed in Bruce Berman's discussion on ethnic groups. According to Berman, most of Africa's ethnic labels existed already in the nineteenth century, that is, at the moment of colonial conquest, and probably earlier. However, they would have changed their meaning entirely, and their importance as a medium of group solidarity would have grown over the years. The crucial point in Berman's argumentation is probably the claim that none of the ethnic groups of post-colonial times had already been present *as such* (with an important function as regards group mobilisation) in the pre-colonial phase of sub-Saharan Africa.⁸ While thought-provoking, this idea is probably too simple: both P.E.H. Hair's and Walter Rodney's studies make it clear that many of the labels had a meaning for group organisation before 1850 – and if it was structurally different, one would need to ask what the difference was.⁹

In any case, nowadays a number of studies, frequently through the employment of a micro-perspective, refer to a rather flexible interpretation of ethnicity as a factor of group identification. The scholars in question discuss evolutions inside particular groups, which in the post-colonial period are understood (and describe themselves) as ethnic groups. They claim that the experiences of the respective communities are flexible ones, and they attribute much of the process of developing larger and more cohesive group identifications to the necessities of frequently complicated conflicts and alliances, increased by the insecurities of resource distribution in the post-colonial states. According to such a perspective, ethnicity becomes both a previously existing concept of group solidarity, and a particular tool in concrete situations of group conflict. This interpretation does not really explain the *motives* and the context for the use of ethnic solidarity instead of other emotional affiliations. Nonetheless, on the widely agreed platform of such a compromise, the once-impulsive scholarly debates about ethnicity have become far less aggressive.

This had indeed been very different in the 1970s and 1980s. It is useful to recall the origins of the debate, as this enhances our understanding of the

7 Scherrer, Christian P., *Ethnicity, Nationalism and Violence: Conflict management, human rights, and multilateral regimes* (Aldershot – Burlington: Ashgate, 2003), 50–3.

8 Berman, Bruce, 'Ethnicity, Patronage and the African State: the Politics of Uncivil Nationalism', *African Affairs* 97(388), 1998, 305–41, 325–6.

9 Hair, 'Continuity'; Rodney, Walter, *A History of the Upper Guinea Coast 1545–1800* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970).

crucial issues still at stake in current discussions about ethnic identification. In fact, the debate was in part so extraordinarily heated due to the particular colonial legacy in anthropology (with its effects on historical studies). In this context, the constructivist view was a sharp attack against research positions that had remained influential in the first phase after the independence of most colonial territories. Although to a lesser degree, the disciplines of history and sociology also became entangled in the debate.

Many of those European researchers, who had started to work under the financially well-equipped late colonial administrations of the 1940s and 1950s, shared a number of common scientific ideas (or working hypotheses) about African and other 'tribal' populations. These ideas were thus linked to the 'ideological' background of colonial rule. In part, they conformed to the approaches of European administrators who had been engaged in classifying groups to facilitate their own administrative work.¹⁰

The basic assumption that, in Africa and 'tribal Asia', identity was mostly related to 'tribal' solidarities remained for colonial administrations one essential basis of relations with such populations. As a basis for defining Africans and 'tribal Asians', it encouraged the analysis of their group organisation according to seemingly reliable 'tribal' characteristics. Modernisation, and the introduction or strengthening of principles of capitalist economy in local communities, seemed to have an impact on those 'tribal' structures, but, still, the latter were considered as essential and stable.¹¹ The employment of the expression 'ethnicity' (as an alternative to 'tribal' or 'tribe') starts only in the 1940s and in the early phase of the discussion, the meaning of this expression is blurred. Not until the 1970s did 'ethnicity' develop into a 'pertinent category' in the broader debate about group relations in sub-Saharan Africa, and other regions where research on regional groups was carried out.¹²

Other factors were soon pointed out as having an influence in the consolidation of ethnic ties, but the interrelations were rarely explained.¹³ Religion was often understood as such a factor: it stands either in competition with other, including ethnic, solidarities; or it can claim universal adherence, trying (under

10 This is reflected in works like Kirk-Greene, A.H.M., 'The Peoples of Nigeria: The Cultural Background to the Crisis', *African Affairs* 66(262), 1967, 3–11, 5.

11 Balandier, Georges, 'Structures sociales traditionnelles et changements économiques', *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines* 1(1), 1960, 1–14, 6–7.

12 Poutignat and Streiff-Fenart, *Théories*, 22, 24–6.

13 Berman, Bruce; Dickson Eyoh, and Will Kymlicka, 'Conclusion: African Ethnic Politics & the Paradoxes of Democratic Development', in Bruce Berman, Dickson Eyoh, and Will Kymlicka (eds.), *Ethnicity and Democracy in Africa* (Oxford: James Currey – Athens/ON: Ohio University Press, 2004), 317–23, 318.

most conditions with little success) to make other forms of allegiance disappear. In certain cases, religions appeared to be a vehicle for ethnic group-building, and in some occasions they even offered a lever for ethnic change.¹⁴ Regarding the many existing African religions, it was not only the conversion to Islam or Christianity that made such a fundamental impact. Some other, more local religions also had a significant impact on group identifications. As in the case of the cult of Tongnaab in northern Ghana, new followers of local religions took other ethnic labels.¹⁵

Professional situation and the related status position is another category that might overlap with ethnic sentiment: effectively, where 'ethnicity' is employed as a concept to describe situations of migration, it has been argued by sociologists that the disappearance of professional and status difference contributes to a diminution of ethnic tensions.¹⁶ Migration, mainly from rural into urban contexts, can have an influence on the ethnic self-perception of an individual: this problem, which had already been discussed by colonial officials, also became an early standard subject for anthropologists working on sub-Saharan Africa.¹⁷

'Tribes', as a central category for early anthropologists, were mostly regarded as static units. The 'primordialist' view treated the members of those groups as inevitably connected, although it usually remained undiscussed whether this bond was to be explained through 'genetic' links, or through a centuries-long experience of 'cultural' unity.¹⁸ Anthropology and colonial administration interacted strongly in this process of creating the image of timeless communities.¹⁹

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- 14 Devisse, Jean, 'Islam et ethnies en Afrique', in Jean-Pierre Chrétien and Gérard Prunier (eds.), *Les ethnies ont une histoire* (second edition, Paris: Karthala, 2003), 103–15, 110–2; Brown, Graham K., 'Legible Pluralism: The Politics of Ethnic and Religious Identification in Malaysia', in Joseph Ruane and Jennifer Todd (eds.), *Ethnicity and Religion: Intersections and Comparisons* (London – New York: Routledge, 2011), 31–52.
 - 15 Allman, Jean, and John Parker, *Tongnaab: The History of a West African God* (Bloomington – Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2005), 144.
 - 16 Hechter, Michael, 'The political economy of ethnic change', *American Journal of Sociology* 79(5), 1974, 1151–78, 1176.
 - 17 Gluckman, Max, 'Tribalism in Modern British Africa', *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines* 1(1), 1960, 55–70, 57–8.
 - 18 Alonso, 'Politics', 392; Zolberg, Aristide R., 'The Structure of Political Conflict in the New States of Tropical Africa', *American Political Science Review* 62(1), 1968, 70–87, 73–4. These positions link to older anthropological theory, such as that of Lévi-Strauss, Claude, *Race et Histoire* (Paris: Denoël, 1987 [1952]), 19–23; Van den Berghe, Pierre L., *The Ethnic Phenomenon* (New York – Oxford: Elsevier, 1981), 20–7.
 - 19 Miller, Joseph C., 'History and Africa/Africa and History', *American Historical Review* 104(1), 1999, 1–32, 15.

European officials, at least the ones who were more interested in crafting an 'adequate' administration of colonial populations, took much of the information they utilised for local governance from the work of early anthropologists. Those results contributed in colonial Africa to an administrative worldview, in which the ethnic affiliation of the African subjects was a key variable. It was a particularly prominent concept when those officials discussed the practical organisation of the territories, and whenever they attempted to make local structures more 'authentic'.

A large percentage of the European administrators believed themselves to be facing homogeneous 'tribes', and they became used to simply taking them as a reality. However, a form of administration that was based in theory on the principle of ethnic ('tribal') categorisation, suggested the use of specialists in anthropology. In the interwar period and under the late colonial states, colonial governments financed a growing number of missions of anthropologists that were to study the structures and 'customs' of certain circumscribed groups. The authority of these scholars gave further strength, of course, through the practice of their work in the field, to the idea of the African continent and some parts of Asia as worlds of 'tribes'.²⁰ In turn, European officials gladly 'profited' from the fresh information on the subject, and built on more recent interpretations offered by the specialists. In these ways, colonial anthropology also had an impact on political organisation in sub-Saharan Africa: based on anthropological results, administrators attempted, for example, to limit the number of candidates for chieftaincies – as structures of 'indirect rule' – to 'eligible candidates', who belonged to the right 'tribe' and 'traditional' family, according to the rules and customs of the 'tribe'.²¹ The close relation between the administrative and the academic sector guaranteed the dominance of the 'primordialist' view until the decade of the 1960s, and it also appeared to be destined to shape the newly emergent scholarly field of African history.²²

20 See the sublime analysis of Ekeh, Peter P., 'Social Anthropology and Two Contrasting Uses of Tribalism in Africa', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 32(4), 1990, 660–700, 662–6.

21 Waller, Richard, 'Acceptees & Aliens: Kikuyu Settlement in Maasailand', in Thomas Spear and Richard Waller (eds.), *Being Maasai: Ethnicity & Identity in East Africa* (Oxford: James Currey – Dar-es-Salaam: Mkuki Na Nyota – Nairobi: EAEP – Athens/OH: Ohio University Press, 1993), 226–57, 237–42.

22 Mercier, Paul, 'Remarques sur la signification du "tribalisme" actuel en Afrique noire', *Cahiers Internationaux de Sociologie* 31(2), 1961, 61–80, 78–9; Gluckman, Max, *Order and Rebellion in Tribal Africa* (London: Cohen and West, 1963), 223–4; Stevenson, Robert F., *Population and Political Systems in Tropical Africa* (New York – London: Columbia University Press, 1968), 160–87; Van Velsen, J., *The Politics of Kinship: A Study in Social Manipulation among the Lakeside Tonga of Nyasaland* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1964), 6–7.

In 1961, the respected specialist of Togolese history – and former district administrator in Togo – Robert Cornevin could still write that ‘The black person of Africa feels spontaneously the value of the history of his ethnic group’.²³ Within the historiography of various world regions, this position was doubtlessly strongest for the African continent, while for West Asia, Central Asia, the Indian sub-continent, and especially China, historians focused more rapidly on the nation-state projects, and ethnic groups were regarded as unmodern minorities.²⁴

As we have seen, the 1970s and 1980s marked a change in the scientific study of group organisation in sub-Saharan Africa. This change led to the dominance of a ‘constructivist’ perspective, according to which both agents of the colonial power and African political leaders with a clear interest in gaining and maintaining the control of potential followers, had a stake in the creation (or, ultimately, ‘invention’) of ethnic groups.²⁵ By the 1960s, some scholars were pointing to the flexibility of ethnic self-assertions, particularly again in the case of migration to urban centres, where for the sake of local protection, individuals were observed to sometimes turn to members of other ‘tribes’, building patronage networks independently from ethnic solidarity.²⁶ In 1970, Aidan Southall argued that many groups in sub-Saharan Africa and ‘tribal Asia’ did not conform to the classical criteria of ‘tribe’, as those solidarities had not existed before in their own and their neighbours’ perception. In accordance with this particular vision, ethnic groups had only come into being during the colonial period as a response to certain problems.²⁷ However, scholars still distinguished between a *de facto* core of ethnic identification, and parts that could be more easily manipulated.²⁸

23 Cornevin, Robert, ‘L’Histoire des Peuples de L’Afrique Noire: Branche de L’Ethnologie ou Science à Part Entière?’, *Journal of African History* 2(1), 1961, 15–23, 19.

24 McCarthy, Susan, *Communist Multiculturalism: Ethnic Revival in Southwest China* (Seattle – London: University of Washington Press, 2009), 37–8.

25 Bierschenk, Thomas, ‘Rituels politiques et construction de l’identité ethnique des Peuls au Bénin’, *Cahiers des Sciences Humaines* 31(2), 1995, 457–84, 474–7.

26 Wallerstein, Immanuel, ‘Ethnicity and National Integration in West Africa’, *Cahiers d’Etudes Africaines* 1(3), 1960, 129–39, 133; Sandbrook, Richard, ‘Patrons, Clients, and Factions: New Dimensions of Conflict Analysis in Africa’, *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 5(1), 1972, 104–19, 115–8.

27 Southall, Aidan W., ‘The Illusion of Tribe’, *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 5(1–2), 1970, 28–50, 34–5.

28 Mitchell, James Clyde, ‘Perceptions of Ethnicity and Ethnic Behaviour: An Empirical Explanation’, in Abner Cohen (ed.), *Urban Ethnicity* (London: Tavistock, 1974), 1–35, 15–20.

The discussions of the 1970s were the first step in the reversal of research positions on ethnic identification, and this reconfiguration had a clear focus on the African continent.²⁹ This was followed by the impact of the books of Amselle and M'Bokolo during the 1980s: their arguments shattered the 'primordialist' position.³⁰ The latter was pushed onto the defensive and nearly unable to respond for a period. The existence of primary affinities and the automatic affectivity of individuals to members of groups identified as ethnic peers was apparently refuted.³¹ However, even under these unfavourable circumstances, the 'primordialist' view on ethnic sentiment was not entirely defeated; moreover, during the whole of the 1980s, it notably continued to retain its hold over public discussions in the media, where the same images of irrationality and 'savageness' continued to prosper, especially for Africa, but also for some Asian regions.³² With more academic impact, it also continued to dominate over parts of research in political science.³³ These facts only added to the vigorousness of 'constructivist' critique. The aggressiveness of the debate made even more moderate formulations of 'primordialist' views unacceptable.

'Constructivist' scholars often attempted to link their arguments to other contemporary debates, such as around clientelism and migration contexts. Wherever particular importance is given to the impact of client-patron networks – which, in view of their social and economic role, are an essential category particularly in both colonial and post-colonial African regions, and probably also under pre-colonial conditions – this could be connected to the creativeness of ethnocultural solidarities. In fact, René Lemarchand had already in the 1970s interpreted ethnocultural ties as a translation of patron-client relationships.³⁴

29 Gallagher, Joseph T., 'The Emergence of an African Ethnic Group: the Case of the Ndendeuli', *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 7(1), 1974, 1–26, 1–3.

30 Southall, Aidan W., 'The Ethnic Heart of Anthropology', *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines* 25(100), 1985, 567–72, 572.

31 Eller, Jack David, and Reed M. Coughlan, 'The poverty of primordialism: the demystification of ethnic attachment', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 16(2), 1993, 183–202, 195–6.

32 Campbell, Aidan, 'Ethical Ethnicity: A Critique', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 35(1), 1997, 53–79, 57–60; Vanhanen, Tatu, 'Domestic Ethnic Conflict and Ethnic Nepotism: A Comparative Analysis', *Journal of Peace Research* 36(1), 1999, 55–73, 66.

33 Collier, Paul, and Anke Hoeffler, 'On the Incidence of Civil War in Africa', *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 46(1), 2002, 13–28, 22; Bates, Robert H., 'Ethnicity and Development in Africa: A Reappraisal', *African Economic Review* 90(2), 2000, 131–4, 134.

34 Lemarchand, René, 'Political Clientelism and Ethnicity in Tropical Africa: Competing Solidarities in Nation-Building', *American Political Science Review* 66(1), 1972, 68–90, 69–70; Isaacman, Allan, and Derek Peterson, 'Making the Chikunda: Military Slavery and Ethnicity

A very different contribution came from researchers writing about ‘ethnicity’ as a category during migration – in which the variable had a distinct sense.³⁵ The first generation of scholars who were engaged in this field normally worked on the sociology of migration in so-called industrial countries. They came, nonetheless, to some substantially similar results concerning ethnocultural sentiment. Hence, in relation to the classic country of migration studies, the United States, scholars argued that the awareness of ethnic links rose in particular periods.³⁶ For example, Cuban exiles migrating into the US in the 1960s appeared to underline their Cuban ethnicity only from the 1970s onwards, to obtain socio-economic advantages. (As I will discuss below, it is questionable whether a scholar working on sub-Saharan Africa would accept ‘Cuban’ as an appropriate ethnic category, but for the sociology of migration such data as given by interviewees is widely accepted.)³⁷ Another alternative in those migration contexts, however, was to seek joint group identities with other communities, so that different origins were fused into a common identification and led to a new ethnic sentiment in its own right. This describes the classic case of ‘Hispanic identity’ in North America, which is mirrored in other cases of immigrant groups.³⁸ Such phenomena, typical for ethnicity in migration contexts, are much more rarely documented for sub-Saharan Africa.³⁹ It is unsurprising that ethnicity as a category in global historical studies on migration, such as in settler colonies, also functions in the same sense.⁴⁰ However, the global historical debate on migration was based on an idea of groups that left very much open when and why the classification as ‘ethnic group’ was ultimately adequate.⁴¹

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- in Southern Africa, 1750–1900’, *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 36(2), 2003, 257–81, 263–4, and, Newitt, Malyn, ‘Kinship, Religion, Language and Political Control: Ethnic Identity among the Peoples of the Zambesi Valley’, in Alexander Keese (ed.), *Ethnicity and the long-term perspective: the African experience* (Berne: Peter Lang, 2010), 67–92, 88–9.
- 35 Francis, E.K., *Interethnic Relations: An Essay in Sociological Theory* (New York – Oxford – Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1976), 172–89.
- 36 Modood, Tariq, ‘Multiculturalism, Ethnicity and Integration: Some Contemporary Challenges’, in Tariq Modood and John Salt (eds.), *Global Migration, Ethnicity and Britishness* (Basingstoke – New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 40–62.
- 37 Portes, Alejandro, ‘The rise of ethnicity’, *American Sociological Review* 49(3), 1984, 383–97, 386.
- 38 Nelson, Candace, and Marta Tienda, ‘The structuring of Hispanic ethnicity: historical and contemporary perspectives’, *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 8(1), 1985, 49–74, 53.
- 39 Hirst, Michael A., ‘Tribal Migration in East Africa: A Review and Analysis’, *Geografiska Annaler, Series B*, 52(2), 1970, 153–64, 163.
- 40 Bashford, Alison, ‘Immigration restriction: rethinking period and place from settler colonies to postcolonial nations’, *Journal of Global History* 9(1), 2014, 26–48, 45.
- 41 Manning, Patrick, *Migration in World History* (New York – London: Routledge, 2005), 4, 103–5.

In the 1990s, some attempts were made to find a conclusion for the debate around ethnicity. Various scholars insisted that while ethnic groups were *originally* invented, they now constitute a strong reality.⁴² Even with the invention of group identifications in the colonial period, they claim that ‘the historicity does not diminish the reality’. As for the Taita of Kenya, Bill Bravman defended the interpretation that, under particular circumstances, groups (including Africans) created a necessary feeling of community, expressing it through formulations of ethnic sentiment.⁴³ For other geographical zones, like the Upper Volta region, scholars hold that, while ethnic labels existed before 1850, ethnicity was, between the second half of the nineteenth century and the 1920s, no vital criterion, and did not lead to alliances between village communities.⁴⁴ Mahir Şaul and Patrick Royer argue that, at least in this broader region, descent groups were usually ‘multi-ethnic’, ‘ethnicity itself was unstable’, and that ‘we simply do not know what labels such as “Bobo”, “Marka”, or “Bwa” might have meant at that time’.⁴⁵

However, while the tone of the debate has become less aggressive, many scholars maintain the idea of a dominant role that (colonial) invention had in the formation of ethnic solidarity especially in Africa. This is well exemplified by Gerald Wright’s latest article on colonial manipulation. According to Wright, formulating group identities was a complicated process in which, however, ethnic arguments were negligible before the nineteenth century. Concerning the Gambia River region, he holds that many individuals now defining themselves as part of the ‘Mandinka tribe’ refer in their self-identification to the results of European studies from the colonial period. Thereby, they accept a label found for them by Europeans and even read the products of older, mostly

42 Bayart, *Etat*, 76–8; Berman, Bruce; Dickson Eyoh, and Will Kymlicka, ‘Introduction: Ethnicity & the Politics of Democratic Nation-Building in Africa’, in Bruce Berman, Dickson Eyoh, and Will Kymlicka (eds.), *Ethnicity and Democracy in Africa* (Oxford: James Currey – Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004), 1–21, 3.

43 Bravman, Bill, *Making Ethnic Ways: Communities and Their Transformations in Taita, Kenya, 1800–1950* (Portsmouth/NH: Heinemann – Nairobi: EAEP – Oxford: James Currey, 1998), 14. See also: Gordon, David M., ‘History on the Luapula Retold: Landscape, Memory and Identity in the Kazembe Kingdom’, *Journal of African History* 47(1), 2006, 21–42, 35–7.

44 Colleyn, Jean-Paul, and Danielle Jonckers, ‘Ceux qui refusent le maître, la conception du pouvoir chez les Minyanka’, *Africa* 53(4), 1983, 43–58, 52–3.

45 Şaul, Mahir, and Patrick Royer, *West African Challenge to Empire: Culture and History in the Volta-Bani Anticolonial War* (Athens/OH: Ohio University Press – Oxford: James Currey, 2001), 15–6.

European and North American, scholarship in order to refine their own 'traditional' accounts on group experiences.⁴⁶

Carola Lentz offers a more balanced conclusion. She argues in her overview of tendencies in the debate on ethnicity that it now seems to be obvious that ethnic labels were not purely invented under colonial rule, although the colonial impact had certain distinguishable effects. Social inequalities induced by the colonial rulers, the work of cultural brokers between European administrations and local populations, and the tendencies towards more essentialism as provoked by the integration of interested groups of persons into structures of collaboration and 'indirect rule', all seem to have contributed to the local fixation on ethnic identifications. In this context, Lentz comments that certain conditions made the maintenance of those modified group identifications attractive for individuals and group leaders, and that this did not only happen under colonial rule.⁴⁷

Other scholars also emphasised that while ethnic labels are constantly used, they can, nonetheless, easily be changed. In cases when they suit the individual, such switches of identification appear rather often. For example, some individuals claim at a given moment never to have belonged to a certain group, although their migration background from a particular region seems to be obvious. Examples of this type might be cited from a large number of African regions and related studies, and have been amply discussed for Gikuyu-speakers ('Kikuyu') settling in or close to Maasai communities in Kenya.⁴⁸

A 'softer' variant of this position towards the construction of ethnic identification refers to processes of 'assimilation' and to the permeability of groups. This perspective does not entirely discard the idea of distinguishable ethnic entities 'existing before', but holds that they became activated under specific circumstances, namely in frontier situations. This position was quite early formulated by Fredrik Barth, who held that, from the anthropologist's point of view, the decisive criterion for group cohesion should not be the range of cultural elements defining the group from inside, but its boundaries with neighbouring communities. In this perspective, borders between groups are

46 Wright, Donald R., "What Do You Mean There Were No Tribes in Africa?": Thoughts on Boundaries – and Related Matters – in Precolonial Africa', *History in Africa* 26, 1999, 409–26, 420–1.

47 Lentz, Carola, "'Tribalismus' und Ethnizität in Afrika – ein Forschungsüberblick", *Leviathan* 23, 1995, 115–45, 134–5.

48 Galaty, John G., "The Eye that Wants a Person, Where Can It Not See?" Inclusion, Exclusion & Boundary Shifters in Maasai Identity', in Thomas Spear and Richard Waller (eds.), *Being Maasai: Ethnicity & Identity in East Africa* (Oxford: James Currey – Dar-es-Salaam: Mkuki Na Nyota – Nairobi: EAEP – Athens: Ohio University Press, 1993), 174–94, 188–9.

permeable when it comes to individuals.⁴⁹ Newer studies on 'borderlands' do not directly follow the perspective of Barth, as they do not regard boundaries as either division lines or permeable membranes, but focus on the creative use of the border to the advantage of populations on both sides and on the creation of 'borderland identities'.⁵⁰ By contrast, Barth's position finds an echo in other fields of research from the 1990s.⁵¹

As we can see from those discussions, colonial simplification is definitely only one part of the picture of ethnic group-building. Today, the 'primordialists' certainly have more to say than just repeating colonial 'knowledge'.⁵² Moreover, their position continues to correspond more strongly to the contemporary visions expressed by African and other 'tribal' populations. In the post-colonial period, it would be unusual to meet locals who would admit that their group of reference has changed its ethnic allegiance over the decades. If one takes at face value the accounts of interviewees, the 'primordialist' perspective appears as natural.⁵³ Informants tend to give versions in which, normally, they themselves and their forefathers have never modified their identity. Only language and religion are potentially changeable; ethnocultural sentiment, on the contrary, appears to be immutable. This means we still find an undiscussed (but important) contradiction between the dominant perspective on identity elaborated by most researchers – a vision of ethnicity as largely crafted and flexible, albeit ultimately linked to local modalities – and the results won through a principal methodological tool that scholars on African societies tend to employ. To formulate it the other way round: 'constructivists' who rely on contemporary oral interviews are likely to come up with results that contradict their expectations.

However, while the grounds for giving a clear definition of concepts of ethnic solidarity are extremely shaky, I will nonetheless attempt to formulate a

49 Barth, Fredrik, 'Introduction', in Fredrik Barth (ed.), *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: the social organization of cultural difference* (Bergen: Univ. Forl., 1969), 9–38.

50 Nugent, *Smugglers*, 272–3; Saïbou, Issa, *Ethnicité, frontières et stabilité aux confins du Cameroun, du Nigeria et du Tchad* (Paris: Harmattan, 2012).

51 Wimmer, 'Strategies', 1038–41; Lamphear, John, 'Aspects of 'Becoming Turkana': Interactions & Assimilation Between Maa- & Ateker-Speakers', in Thomas Spear and Richard Waller (eds.), *Being Maasai: Ethnicity & Identity in East Africa* (Oxford: James Currey – Dar-es-Salaam: Mkuki Na Nyota – Nairobi: EAEP – Athens/OH: Ohio University Press, 1993), 87–104, 92–5.

52 Poutignat and Streiff-Fenart, *Théories*, 101.

53 Williams Jr., Robin M., 'The Sociology of Ethnic Conflicts: Comparative International Perspectives', *Annual Review of Sociology* 20, 1994, 49–79, 58.

working definition.⁵⁴ Given the strongly varying forms of employment of the category, this definition needs to be congruent with the latest results of scholarship, but avoid the larger debate on so-called ‘ethnicity’ of migrant communities. This definition necessarily has a ‘constructivist’ note: because what individuals *claim to be* plays an important role in the creation of solidarity – which is obviously not the only criterion of belonging, but cannot simply be left out of the discussion. Ethnic groups can be described as self-declared communities whose spokesmen define them as groups with a common history and traditions, and who cling to this common identification independently from state structures and institutions. By contrast, a sentiment relying on political institutions is also imaginable and may in the widest sense be called ‘state patriotism’, or, if the relationship between the largest existing political structure and the population within its borders is the central factor of identification, may refer to the equally vague concept of ‘nation’. Ethnocultural solidarity exists, however, independently of the state; on the one hand, its implications are thus narrower than those of the inhabitants of particular (and, ultimately, reasonably ‘successful’) states that have, as a group, become somewhat galvanised into a broader community identification. On the other hand, ethnic solidarity thus defined supersedes the frontiers of the village and kinship level, and is normally abstract from the level of the family: one village community would usually not be sufficient to circumscribe an ethnic identification, and in many cases the local identification as translated through village solidarity, rivals rather than supports ethnic feelings. The crucial role of self-representation during encounters explains why my study is especially interested in the exchange between groups and the colonial powers.

Ethnic solidarity as defined by the accounts given by individuals is in most cases reinforced through certain cultural factors, although this picture is complicated.⁵⁵ Certainly, the most important markers of ethnic identification tend to change from community to community, and even within communities.⁵⁶ Language is one typical basis for inducing an ethnocultural community sentiment: most communities claiming ethnic solidarity have one idiom. Nonetheless, not every linguistic group is an ethnic group, and this criterion is

54 De Vos, George, and Lola Romanucci-Ross, ‘Ethnicity: Vessel of Meaning and Emblem of Contrast’, in George De Vos and Lola Romanucci-Ross (eds.), *Ethnic identity: Cultural Continuities and Change* (Palo Alto: Mayfield, 1975), 363–90, 364.

55 Banton, Michael, ‘The sociology of ethnic relations’, *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 31(7), 2008, 1267–85, 1275.

56 Mahmood, Cynthia K., and Sharon L. Armstrong, ‘Do ethnic groups exist? A cognitive perspective on the concept of cultures’, *Ethnology* 31(1), 1992, 1–14, 9.

not obligatory for constituting ethnic solidarity: in particular, the spectacular case of Rwanda provides an important counter-example, where language difference was not at stake.

Cultural forms and types of behaviour, such as common institutions of organisation, festivals, folklore like dances or songs, professional particularities, marriage patterns, or architecture can obviously contribute to ethnic solidarity. They are frequently commented on whenever group leaders explain the nature of their ethnic community, but their existence is not crucial for the identification. These elements are thus important whenever a dominant discourse within the group identifies them as crucial, not, as older anthropological research has tended to make us believe, automatically. More important is the question of historical tradition, which is always more or less invented, but gives legitimacy to the feeling of unity inside the community, and the idea of a common destiny. I insist that such a definition is useful for a global historical perspective, and not at all only for sub-Saharan Africa or 'tribal Asia'. Its use challenges the view according to which the concept is irrelevant in the 'western world', without conceding to the view of the historians of global migration, who often do not find any distinction between 'ethnic group' and 'nation'.

During the decades of colonial rule, anthropologists tended to link the category of 'tribe' to physical attributes. Even with the colonial bias in studies of ethnicity attacked by contemporary scholarship, those ideas continue to circulate and to play a role in public debates both in the former metropolises, in the international media, and in African societies. The notion of 'race', however, also plays another role in the African context in particular. Under colonial rule, opinion leaders in different African societies attempted to forge a pan-African identity, and under those conditions, questions of both 'race' – as a common element for the colonial subjects – and 'ethnicity' – described as 'tribalism', and as the main obstacle to the objective of African unity – were discussed as diametrically opposed.

Race

'Race' is a category that according to its variable definitions overlaps with 'ethnicity' in many popular, but also in some scientific, contexts of discussion.⁵⁷ Categorisation by the criterion of 'race', in the sense of a fictitious, phenotype-based category, gains importance by being an essential problem of relations between colonial rulers and ruled populations during the period of European domination. Moreover, 'racial issues' were sometimes employed to minimise

57 Poutignat and Streiff-Fenart, *Théories*, 45.

inter-group conflicts through the definition of scapegoats, which tied together, for a normally limited period, the members of hostile groups.

Racial conflict is especially typical for sub-Saharan Africa under colonial rule insofar as it defines in large parts the relations between colonisers and colonised elements inside the system. It obtained a particular and very aggressive meaning whenever the colonial encounter involved frequent contact situations between African populations and European settlers. This factor is less important for the populations of West Africa, where European settlement was uncommon. The inter-community conflicts between West African populations compared in this book, cannot be described as conflicts characterised by the phenotype of the individuals concerned. Members of one group were not able to identify those of a different and, ultimately, hostile group through the latter's physical appearance (although they might sometimes believe they could).⁵⁸

In the interior of West Africa, we nonetheless find some regions in which 'racial' conflicts exist. In parts of the Sahel zone, where 'mixed' populations with different skin colourings are neighbours, 'Moorish' populations in Mauritania and part of the Tuareg communities in Mali and Niger, are defined as 'white' population groups.⁵⁹ However, apart from several itinerant clerics who enjoyed considerable respect among Muslims in West Africa, members of those groups did not appear in West Africa's coastal regions.

'Race' as a concept of categorisation plays a role both for reasons of terminology, and for the above-mentioned fact that 'racial issues' could be utilised to bridge existing conflicts between West African communities. The first point will bring us back to the pitfalls of theory. I have already highlighted the problem of overlapping categories of identifications: since in migration contexts and migration studies regarding Europe and the Americas, 'ethnicity' is now sometimes equated to skin colour, it is important to make these distinctions. Linking our discussion to broader and global questions of belonging and identification, 'race' is indeed a complex element of distinction and mobilisation. Its relationship to ethnocultural sentiment is remarkably variable. On the one hand, elements perceived as 'racial', which are normally expressed by skin colour, can support perceptions of ethnic difference.⁶⁰ On the other hand,

58 These alleged genetic differences as reflected in phenotype are still presented as a matter of fact in older, pre-genocide literature; see: Van den Berghe, *Phenomenon*, 29.

59 Féral, Gabriel, 'Administrations comparées en pays nomade', in Edmond Bernus, Pierre Boilley, Jean-Louis Triaud and Jean Clauzel (eds.), *Nomades et commandants: administration et sociétés nomades dans l'ancienne A.O.F* (Paris: Karthala, 1993), 105–12, 111.

60 Other (constructed) physical-biological categories, like racial 'odour', could be added to these imagined differences, see Beer, Bettina, 'Geruch und Differenz: Körpergeruch als Kennzeichen konstruierter "rassischer" Grenzen', *Paideuma* 46, 2000, 207–30, 221–3.

'race' can be understood, in a way, as an alternative concept to ethnicity. A 'racial' perspective frequently excludes the existence of smaller ethnic identifications and facilitates more global interpretations.

The very notion of 'race' as a factor of distinction is frequently imprecise. In some cases, so-called 'racial' aspects overlap with issues of 'ethnicity', often in ways that make it complicated to distinguish well between the employments of the two terms. This has had a strong impact on academic analysis, in particular on sociological studies. It is also mirrored in the everyday use of the word 'ethnic minorities', which frequently refers to coloured immigrants in European countries and even to Afro-Americans in the case of the United States. The terminological problems imported with such a methodological concept, whenever it is used in a context of immigration (or for migration studies), are easily understandable: they lead us into situations in which, for example, Americans or Europeans with African descent are defined as an 'ethnic minority' or 'ethnic group'. From a perspective of categories, this is highly problematic. In the North American case, the African origins of the individuals concerned are usually, of course, at a distance of at least two centuries, and the 'Afro-Americans' imagined as an 'ethnic minority' do not, furthermore, really have common cultural characteristics, their own language, or historical traditions (although, obviously, the latter are sought in revivalist movements). For historians it should be absurd that the 'Afro-American' community is defined as an 'ethnic group', with skin colour as the near-exclusive criterion of distinction, ultimately paired with a group history of particular social differences that is, however, unlikely to be a convincing element of any possible ethnic group identification.⁶¹

Furthermore, one needs to question the values conveyed by the term 'race', even if this term is employed in a purely academic sense. Indeed, this category is inappropriate as it relates to imagined characteristics seen as typical for a group of a particular skin colour. We thus need, obviously, to strictly apply it in terms of phenotype, describing visible physical characteristics of a person that are perceived by others and considered by them to be 'racial'.⁶² The term as I employ it, as expressing an element that can cause a certain amount of group affiliation through perceived otherness, describes a basis of racist hostility, which is legitimised through both visible and imagined bio-physical distinctions.

Occasionally, those 'racial' definitions have enjoyed a considerable influence in the argumentation of elite groups, both of the European rulers formulating

61 See a discussion of this problem in Aronson, Dan R., 'Ethnicity as a Cultural System: an Introductory Essay', in Frances Henry (ed.), *Ethnicity in the Americas* (The Hague: Mouton, 1976), 9–19, 13–5.

62 Nayak, Anoop, 'After race: Ethnography, race and post-race theory', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 29(3), 2006, 411–30, 411, 414, 419.

a doctrine of superiority, and, in the case of the African populations, as a forceful counter-mobilisation. With respect to the African 'racial argument', this perception related to the experiences of African visitors going to Europe in greater numbers from the late nineteenth century. Originally, those visitors had mostly arrived as missionary students and guests, but, later on, a small number became enrolled as more or less regular students at European public universities. Those Africans were confronted with racial definitions in the metropolises, and they developed a strong self-perception of being entirely different from the colonial rulers. The experiences followed established patterns: from the beginnings of the Atlantic slave trade, European merchants had sent their Eurafrican offspring to Europe in order to give them a (Christian) education, and these were soon accompanied by the sons of some African traders.⁶³

However, from the second half of the nineteenth century, the group of African residents in different European contexts became substantially larger. As students coming from the African continent were frequently concentrated in restricted areas, this created a sort of pan-African experience of living in Europe. Such an experience was closely related to hostilities that those migrants faced in their transitional living environment because of their skin colour.⁶⁴ Therefore, Africans having lived in Europe were more eagerly ready to take a pan-African perspective – in ways that individuals from various parts of Asia did not experience. From the first half of the twentieth century, those impressions increasingly led to situations in which, confronted with the colonial systems, individuals defined themselves principally as 'African'.⁶⁵ It is no surprise that after the Second World War, under the impact of the wave of colonial reformism, African student organisations in Europe, such as the famous *Fédération des Etudiants d'Afrique Noire en France* (FEANF), became the most ardent supporters of the idea of a pan-African liberation. They formulated far more radical positions than the 'nationalists' who had lived permanently in their African countries.⁶⁶

63 Northrup, David, *Africa's discovery of Europe: 1450–1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 147–9; Pasquier, Roger, 'Un Explorateur Sénégalais: Léopold Panet, 1819?–1859', *African Historical Studies* 2(2), 1969, 307–17, 313–4.

64 Bah, Thierno, 'Les étudiants de l'Afrique noire et la marche à l'indépendance', in Charles-Robert Ageron and Marc Michel (eds.), *L'Afrique noire française: l'heure des Indépendances* (Paris: CNRS Editions, 1992), 41–56.

65 Derrick, Jonathan, *Africa's 'Agitators': Militant Anti-Colonialism in Africa and the West, 1918–1939* (London: Hurst, 2008), 91–7.

66 Benoist, Joseph-Roger de, 'FEANF and the colonial authorities', in UNESCO (ed.), *The role of African student movements in the political and social evolution of Africa from 1900 to 1975* (Paris: UNESCO, 1994), 109–21.

From the European point of view, the definition of Black Africans as ‘alien beings’ had been a typical phenomenon during the whole of the early modern period. Such alienation was sometimes probably only instrumental: it justified enslavement, and somehow legitimised the fact that Christian European planters imported, exploited, mistreated and killed Black African slaves in ways that were mostly unimaginable in European countries. The tremendous expansion of the practice of slavery within the plantation zones of the Americas posed a moral problem which needed to be resolved.⁶⁷ The practice of denigrating Black Africans as the literal offspring of early biblical sinners made sense in this context: it allowed the European sellers and owners to regard the enslavement of Black Africans as retribution and justice.⁶⁸ This argumentation made it possible for the European colonial establishment in the Americas to maintain a regime in which the roles of master and slave were factually distributed according to skin colour.⁶⁹ At the beginning of the period of colonial conquests, around 1850, racial conceptions were thus already deeply entrenched in European perspectives. With regard to the African continent, they led – mediated through the above-mentioned life experiences of African individuals in Europe – to counter-formulations from the African side, which were then conveyed back to local movements.

However, while racial conflict is mostly discussed regarding the relations between African populations (Black) and European merchants and colonisers (White), it has to be pointed out that the phenomenon appears in the African continent in a number of very diverse circumstances. These are equally as important as the role of the pan-African argument. As I have indicated for parts of West Africa, another typical sphere of ‘racial’ conflicts is that between ‘Arabs’ and ‘Black Africans’ in the Southern Sahel Zone: in those regions, ‘Arab’ or ‘Moorish’ raiders, landlords, and traders introduced Black Africans for trade into slave networks leading to North Africa and, less frequently, to the Middle East.⁷⁰ The legacy of the related conflicts can still be felt in what is today described in the media as a ‘racial border’, running through the contemporary

67 A useful starting point is Forster, Robert, ‘Three Slaveholders in the Antilles: Saint-Domingue, Martinique and Jamaica’, *Journal of Caribbean History* 36(1), 2002, 1–32, 4–7.

68 One example is Jordan, Winthrop D., *White over black: American attitudes toward the Negro, 1550–1812* (fifth edition, Chapel Hill: University of South Carolina Press, 1979).

69 Drescher, Seymour, ‘White Atlantic? The Choice for African Slave Labor in the Plantation Americas’, in David Eltis, Frank D. Lewis, and Kenneth L. Sokoloff (eds.), *Slavery in the Development of the Americas* (Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 31–69.

70 Clarence-Smith, William Gervase, *Islam and the Abolition of Slavery* (New York – Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 70–2.

state of Mauritania eastward through Mali, Niger, and, with a particular impact, Chad and Sudan. In Mauritania, the 'Moorish' majority periodically treats 'Black' Mauritians as 'foreigners' and as 'Senegalese', although these populations have settled for a period of many centuries – at the very least – north of the Senegal River. Questions of social status, relating to the fact that 'Black Africans' frequently have slave ancestors, have kept this situation in a problematic imbalance: indeed, in the post-colonial 'Islamic Republic', political alliances between 'Black' and 'White' Mauritians, while frequently existent, appear to be far less stable than those created on either side of the colour line.⁷¹

The role of pan-African mobilisation is, however, far stronger when confronted with non-European immigrant groups in the territories south of the Sahara. For West Africa, Lebanese immigration is a phenomenon that led to a 'racially' defined antagonism. The three regions discussed in the case studies are principal territories of Lebanese immigration. These immigrant families had very different backgrounds in relation to their regions of origin: they were from both Christian (mainly Maronite) and Shiite or Sunni Muslim backgrounds, and village networks from Lebanon played a decisive role in this immigration. Lebanese traders subsequently enjoyed considerable success in local retail trade in West African territories.⁷²

It has to be said that, as far as historians have been able to judge, Lebanese merchants have been an important factor within the colonial economies emerging in West Africa since the late nineteenth century. The Lebanese only partly pushed other, Black African contenders out of the retail market. In many cases, such a market had never really existed, at least not in any larger form. Lebanese merchants and their families simply occupied an obvious niche in local trade networks, which had been left unfilled by African traders.⁷³ In rural Senegal, for instance, those merchants are remembered as a rather beneficial force: interviewees have a tendency to claim that with Lebanese participation in the local retail trade (which at present has largely disappeared in rural areas), the access to vital goods had been far easier than is the case nowadays.⁷⁴

71 McDougall, E. Ann, 'Setting the Story Straight: Louis Hunkanrin and "Un Forfait Colonial"', *History in Africa* 16, 1989, 285–310, 285–6.

72 Winder, Bayly, 'The Lebanese in West Africa', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 4(3), 1962, 296–333, 301, 305.

73 Falola, Toyin, 'The Lebanese in Colonial West Africa', in J.F. Ade Ajayi and J.D.Y. Peel (eds.), *People and Empires in African History: Essays in Memory of Michael Crowder* (London – New York: Longman, 1992), 121–41.

74 Centre des Archives Diplomatiques de Nantes, France (CADN), Fonds 'Anciennes Colonies', Fonds Dakar, 197, Lami, French Governor of Senegal, *Territoire du Sénégal – Cercle de Thiès: Rapport Politique 1950* (without number), 20 March 1951, 18.

Nevertheless, the Lebanese were the victims of recurrent riots in most West African countries. This was in particular the case for urban communities with a certain degree of prosperity.⁷⁵ As I will discuss below concerning the question of 'nationality', economic crises in the years of the First World War and the 1930s, growing infrastructural engagement of the colonial powers from 1945, and perceived injustice in the acquisition of wealth by Lebanese businessmen all provoked violent encounters between these merchants and local street mobs. Such tensions also led to the formation of associations and parties that had a clear anti-Lebanese programme. Frequently, the colonial powers indirectly allowed for such tensions and for the subsequent violent clashes. Even if European officials sympathised with the Lebanese settlers and understood their difficult position, they would normally not intervene against rioters, or would only intervene very slowly. As the British administrators of the Sierra Leonean Port Loko District argued, it was sometimes rather difficult to take sides in conflicts between 'raw natives with the most elementary ideas' and 'vile Syrians'.⁷⁶

The example of Lebanese immigration shows that 'racial' tensions were indeed not only limited to racism of the colonisers towards the colonised populations. The existence of those different 'racial' lines of conflict does, however, not mean that the creation of difference through colour is in any way inevitable. Hostilities between Black and non-Black inhabitants of sub-Saharan Africa were typical for the colonial period and probably widespread before, but the 'racial' frontier was far from being impenetrable: aspects of phenotype were never deterministic in creating regional hostilities, and they did not constitute an effective barrier for individuals.

I already referred to Fredrik Barth's assumption that groups define themselves mainly through designation and constant redefinition of the frontier separating them from other local communities. Gunnar Haaland has found evidence of that phenomenon for Darfur, in Sudan: the agricultural 'Black' Fur of the region could, at least for many decades until the early post-colonial phase, rather easily become integrated into the group of the nomadic 'Arab' Baggara. In those processes of shifts between identity groups, skin colour did not obviously impede the change from one community to the other. It is plausible that such

75 Kaniki, Martin H.Y., 'Attitudes and Reactions towards the Lebanese in Sierra Leone during the Colonial Period', *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 7(1), 1973, 97–113, 101–3.

76 The National Archives, Public Record Office, Kew, London, United Kingdom (TNA, PRO), CO/267/595, District Administrator of Port Loko District, *Annual Report 1921: Port Lokko District, Northern Province* (without number), without date, 2.

phenomena of blurred 'racial' boundaries are typical for many 'racial border regions'.⁷⁷

Evidently, 'racial' solidarity as a category is far more difficult to *create* than is ethnic sentiment, for the simple reason that it needs to rely on the perception of physical otherness. Except in cases where ethnic hostilities were deliberately linked to elaborate stories of physical distinction, these 'racial' issues were thus not complementary to ideas of difference through ethnic solidarity. On the contrary, 'racial' images could help to extinguish temporarily the impact of ethnic or other community conflicts, by giving a platform of unity.⁷⁸ In the African case, such 'unity' could be directed both on a pan-African ideological basis against the 'White' colonisers, or, far more often indeed, against third parties, such as Lebanese immigrants in West Africa. Like 'race', other overarching concepts also surged and were set against ethnic distinction; this is the case of the idea of 'nation' that became popular in the colonial world from the inter-war period, and in sub-Saharan Africa after 1945.

The Problem of Nation

Like ethnicity, the group identification described as 'nation' refers to a sentiment that transgresses communal and regional frontiers.⁷⁹ Having been formulated as a socio-political concept in Europe and European settler colonies in the Americas, the 'nation' is an 'imagined community' that involves, like ethnic groups, a common tradition, language (in most cases), and common cultural aspects.⁸⁰ Indeed, some scholars do not distinguish between the two concepts: they rightly point to the fact that a distinction is frequently artificial,

77 Haaland, Gunnar, 'Economic Determinants in Ethnic Processes', in Fredrik Barth (ed.), *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: the social organization of cultural difference* (Bergen: Univ. Forl, 1969), 58–73, *passim*; see also Cooper, Frederick, *From Slaves to Squatters: Plantation Labor and Agriculture in Zanzibar and Coastal Kenya, 1890–1925* (New Haven – London: Yale University Press, 1980), 163.

78 Falola, Toyin, and Kwame Essien, 'Introduction', in Toyin Falola and Kwame Essien (eds.), *Pan-Africanism, and the politics of African citizenship and identity* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 1–10.

79 The 'classical text' on the nation as 'imagined community' continues to be Anderson, Benedict, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), 83–111.

80 Interestingly, in the debate about emerging concepts of 'nation', scholars also distinguish between 'primordialists' and 'modernists', see Smith, Anthony David, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford – New York: Blackwell, 1986), 7–13.

and they follow in a way the terminology employed by early European travellers. The latter had classified the populations they encountered 'overseas' (including in sub-Saharan Africa) as 'nations', without, however, insinuating the same idea of community that the concept of 'nation' would describe in the nineteenth century.⁸¹ By contrast, other scholars see an incompatibility between the concepts of 'nation' and 'ethnic group', and hold that the appearance of ethnic solidarity in a given country normally challenges the cohesion of the 'nation', through 'tribalist' political activities or autonomous cultural manifestations.⁸²

For Africa, the case becomes still more complicated because the concept of 'nation' arrived later than in Europe, in the Americas, and in East Asia – and it is important for the global historian in particular to compare these trajectories. It was an imported concept taken from the European colonisers, and employed and redefined by a new African elite educated in colonial and metropolitan institutions.⁸³ These 'educated natives', 'évolués', or 'assimilados', as they were called in the different colonial terminologies, rapidly pointed to the tensions between 'national' goals and ethnic solidarities.⁸⁴ Thus, most aggressively in the late colonial period and in the first years after decolonisation, Africa's political elite coming to power juxtaposed the 'modern' concept of the 'nation' with the 'ancient' and 'irrational' notions of ethnicity.⁸⁵ The constant attacks of African statesmen against 'tribalism' – frequently contradicted by the hidden patronage networks favouring the respective ethnic constituencies of the several national leaders – made it difficult to discuss in a more neutral way the distinction between ethnic and national solidarity.⁸⁶

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- 81 Brass, Paul R., *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison* (New Delhi – Newbury Park – London: Sage Publications, 1991), 62–3.
- 82 See, also: Wherry, Frederick F., 'The nation-state, identity management, and indigenous crafts: Constructing markets and opportunities in Northwest Costa Rica', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 29(1), 2006, 124–52, 145–6.
- 83 Rotberg, Robert I., 'African Nationalism: Concept or Confusion?', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 4(1), 1966, 33–46, 39–40, 46.
- 84 Davis, Thomas J., and Azubike Kalu-Nwiyu, 'Education, Ethnicity and National Integration in the History of Nigeria: Continuing Problems of Africa's Colonial Legacy', *Journal of Negro History* 86(1), 2001, 1–11, 6.
- 85 Emerson, Rupert, 'The Problem of Identity, Selfhood, and Image in the New Nations: The Situation in Africa', *Comparative Politics* 1(3), 1969, 297–312, 299.
- 86 Kymlicka, Will, 'Nation-Building & Minority Rights: Comparing Africa & the West', in Bruce Berman, Dickson Eyoh, and Will Kymlicka (eds.), *Ethnicity and Democracy in Africa* (Oxford: James Currey – Athens/OH: Ohio University Press, 2004), 54–71, 64–5.

Obviously, we cannot make a distinction between 'nations' and larger 'ethnic groups' that would cover all cases to a sufficient degree.⁸⁷ A key difference between the two concepts can be found in the relation of group identification to territory, and in the insistence of 'nationalists' that they be governed by unitary political institutions.⁸⁸ The emergence of the concept of 'nation' as a historical process during the nineteenth century is a filling out of geographical space. In many cases, imagined or already existing practical borders had to be filled by a nascent national community.⁸⁹ For ethnic solidarity, this relationship is far less evident: the link of ethnicity to tradition highlights the role of important or even sacred places, but the idea of control over a geographical territory is far less prominent.

Another of the criteria of distinction between the categories might be found in the distinct role of culture, as defined for 'national communities' by Ernest Gellner. He held that the concept of 'nation' includes a deterministic belief in the superiority of the national community's culture, imagining a future situation of 'national control' of this culture over a certain territorial space.⁹⁰ By contrast, the concept of 'ethnic group' is more strongly referring to the past, and to past group 'rights', either inherited or 'spear-won'. Another tendency to define 'national sentiment' as distinct from 'ethnic solidarity' refers to the extension of the programme: according to this view, only communities of a larger size could develop a national perspective. Again, however, it seems that such terminology is unlikely to be applied for African groups. These reflections bring us back to the role of borders in the African continent.⁹¹

As I have mentioned above, 'nation' as a concept has importance for West Africans in the post-colonial period.⁹² From the transitions of power, African government leaders have more or less energetically attempted to forge the different groups of inhabitants in the respective territories into national communities. This project was declared a major goal of African parties by the late colonial states of the 1950s, but, in the long-term perspective, 'nations' as imagined communities rarely emerged in the African continent. It belongs to the wisdom of political scientists analysing African politics that the instability of

87 Poutignat and Streiff-Fenart, *Théories*, 46–7.

88 Hobsbawm, 'Ethnicity', 4.

89 Balibar, Etienne, 'The Nation Form: History and Ideology', in Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein (eds.), *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* (London – New York: Verso, 1991, translation of orig. Paris: La Découverte, 1988), 86–106, 96–100.

90 Gellner, Ernest, *Nations and Nationalism* (London: Blackwell, 1983), 55–8.

91 Poutignat and Streiff-Fenart, *Théories*, 52–3.

92 Fage, J.D., 'Continuity and Change in the Writing of West African History', *African Affairs* 70(280), 1971, 236–51, 243–4.

post-colonial states can partly be attributed to this lack of support for national projects, which appears to be an essential problem in many African societies after independence.

It is easy to understand that, when it comes to the question of institutions, the very nature of African post-colonial states is highly unfavourable to stimulating such national loyalty. State structures in post-colonial sub-Saharan Africa are frequently weak. Those structures were transferred without much preparation from a model of control introduced by the European rulers, and they have proven to be largely inadequate to guarantee the protection and a rudimentary well-being of the inhabitants of many of the countries in question. In the 'normal' pattern of evolutions of post-colonial African states – a pattern that has remained prominent from independence to the end of the twentieth century and beyond – we mainly find the particular type of state that has so masterfully been discussed by Jean-François Bayart: state structures with a core of activity around the centre of political power, and with concentric circles of patronage networks around this centre.⁹³ Large parts of the African societies have not been covered by those structures. The representatives of the state in the more peripheral or remote regions of the countries, are frequently regarded as completely detached from local interest and local necessities, or even despised as parasites by the local inhabitants.⁹⁴ Access to resources has been uneven in such structures: only those populations enjoying a regular presence in the capital or in key areas of the country as defined by the ruling elites, or those belonging to patronage networks through influential intermediaries, have been able to participate in the exercise of and the struggle for political power.

This weakness of post-colonial African state structures can be illustrated through an analysis of the particular situations of political crisis that were already common in the decade after the transitions of power. Whenever the governments of the post-colonial states were challenged, this challenge rarely concerned groups outside of the core community and the key regions. Not surprisingly, the first coups d'état in sub-Saharan Africa after decolonisation, in the 1960s, left the countryside rather untouched.⁹⁵ After a phase of initial destabilisation and violent protest in the capital, army leaders profited from the occasions and exploited the 'national' crisis to usurp political power.

93 Bayart, *Etat*, 281–308.

94 Wunsch, James S., 'Refounding the African State and Local Self-Governance: The Neglected Foundation', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 38(3), 2000, 487–509, 498.

95 Nkendirim, Bernard A., 'Reflections on Political Conflict, Rebellion, and Revolution in Africa', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 15(1), 1977, 75–90, 79.

Starting in Congo-Brazzaville in 1963, this same pattern was repeated several times over. Dahomey (present-day Benin) in 1963 or Upper Volta (present-day Burkina Faso) in January 1966 are two more examples of urban protests led by trade union militants that gave the national army the excuse to topple the elected presidents. It has to be emphasised that in all those cases, ethnic sentiment, if it was at all mentioned, played a minor role. On the contrary, the logics of the nation-state as they had been defined by the nationalist discourse, and the lack of a power base for the dominant elites, permitted the military to claim political leadership in the respective states. This process started nearly always at the centre of the state structure, in the capital and its urban agglomeration.

The weak links between the urban centres and their agglomerations as cores of political power and the 'countryside' have been very powerful obstacles, which ultimately disallowed a leading function for 'national' feelings in the identification repertoires of African groups and individuals. In Europe, in the United States, and in the former British Dominions (and in parts of Latin America that had long been dominated by European settlers converted into a Creole elite) conditions were different: here, the process of nation-building started in the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth century, and it consequently had a longer-lasting impact on local solidarities. Notably, and perhaps more importantly, in the respective cases, such creation of widely important national sentiment went hand in hand with a forceful penetration of the countryside by political structures.

It is true that in the different geographical areas of the above-mentioned larger zones of Europe, former European settler colonies, and Latin America, nationalist fervour was, in part and mostly in the beginning, an elite sentiment. However, in the course of the nineteenth century, in most cases, it began to have a strong effect on the rural zones and became, to a certain degree, a mass phenomenon. Broader access to an education system that was increasingly unified and controlled from above; army conscription; mass elections, and a considerable use of sites of memory and cultural manifestations were behind the widespread dissemination of nationalist ideas. Due to the limitations inherent in the colonial systems, all these phenomena are partly or completely absent from the political scenery of colonies. However, for the African territories before 1960 this effect was strongest for the large majority of populations that lived far away from the administrative capitals.⁹⁶ While the colonial powers commemorated their respective empires as part of their own 'national agenda', and celebrated the deeds of the 'heroes' of the colonial period; while

96 Young, Crawford, *The Politics of Cultural Pluralism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1976), 65–77.

the colonial administrations sometimes turned to the commemoration of fraternity between Africans and Europeans (referring, for example, to the African contribution during the World Wars, which was immense in the case of the French war effort), they were not inclined to give room to any 'national' feeling that could be turned against the metropole.⁹⁷

However, even after independence and in the first two decades after decolonisation, larger efforts to create such national sentiment inside the African states remained relatively rare. While most African statesmen continued to pay lip service to 'the nation', we do not find much concrete engagement to foster feelings of national unity. In the field of the (physical) sites of memory, there were some occasional efforts to stimulate the growth of national sentiment. Nevertheless, it is occasionally difficult to decide if a 'national monument', such as the costly *arc de triomphe* of Banjul (erected after the 22 August 1994 coup d'état), in the Gambia, was really constructed as an embodiment of an imagined nation's glory, or for the apotheosis of a particular leader.⁹⁸

Moreover, in the case of the African states, an additional problem for the distribution of the concept of the nation-state is posed by the rather banal fact that the physical borders of colonial territories, which became independent countries, had naturally been set by external forces. As has been discussed over decades, colonial borders have, in a huge majority of cases, no connection whatsoever to boundaries of pre-colonial states or groups as they existed before 1850.⁹⁹ Not surprisingly, the 'primordialists' amongst historians and anthropologists claim that colonial borders create, as a matter of fact, serious problems. According to the 'primordialist' position, these

97 Michel, Marc, "Mémoire officielle", discours et pratique coloniale: le 14 juillet et le 11 novembre au Sénégal entre les deux guerres', *Revue Française d'Histoire d'Outre-Mer* 77(287), 1990, 145–58; on the lack of 'African' sites of memory, see also Fall-Sokhna, Rokhaya, and Abdoulaye Touré, 'Les lieux de mémoire: des sources historiques encore peu exploitées au Sénégal', in Ibrahim Thioub (ed.), *Patrimoine et sources historiques en Afrique* (Dakar: Université Cheikh Anta Diop de Dakar – Union académique internationale, 2007), 105–11, 108–10.

98 Wiseman, John A., 'Letting Yahya Jammeh off Lightly', *Review of African Political Economy* 72, 1997, 265–76; Mbodj, Mohamed, 'L'invention d'une tradition: anciens sites et nouvelle mémoire ou les ambiguïtés de la célébration de l'indépendance de la Gambie en 1965', in Odile Goerg (ed.), *Fêtes urbaines en Afrique: espaces, identités et pouvoirs* (Paris: Karthala, 1999), 229–54, 243–9.

99 Deveneaux, Gustav K., 'The Frontier in Recent African History', *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 11(1), 1978, 63–85, 74–5.

borders cut the communication between members of the same 'tribe', or ethnic group.¹⁰⁰

Given the existence of those 'artificial borders', the evolution of self-perceived nations in the sense of the nineteenth century, as was typical for the European experience, is quite distant for some regions in their post-colonial phase, but especially for the African realities after independence. Where African leaders appeal to the 'nation' as a principle of unity, they transpose an artificial concept, which is questionable in its appropriateness for the particular, historically-grown situations in the African continent. At best, from this point of view, such an appeal might be a weak call to mobilise a certain number of individuals, just like a slogan coming from a charismatic leader. However, it is highly unlikely to make the same individuals respond to it in a sustained emotional way. Such an interpretation would mean that 'nation' as a concept cannot really become an element of reference in the identification repertoire of an African individual.¹⁰¹

These prognostics about a possible role for 'the nation' in the African context seem to follow a clear, historically-grounded logic in a global comparison. However, as with other group categories, the reality on the ground is not as schematic. In the following pages, I will demonstrate this through a number of incongruities between the classical perspective that insists on the inadequacy of the conception of 'nation' for sub-Saharan Africa, and some empirical findings in a global history perspective which at least cast doubt on this vision.

First of all, boundaries in the sense of borders between 'nations,' may have been artificial constructs, but they have nonetheless been filled with an emotional meaning. This becomes obvious from the agency of the African residents in the redefinition of certain border regions, which has been pointed out in many innovative ways by Paul Nugent. Although the boundaries in themselves had been negotiated by representatives of the European colonial powers, and although these borders frequently cut through language groups and ethnic communities, they became in many cases themselves a vivid and

100 Davidson, Basil, *The Black Man's Burden: Africa and the Curse of the Nation-State* (London: James Currey – Harare: Baobab Books – Nairobi: E.A.E.P. – Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 1992), 224–42; Fanson, Verkijika G., 'Traditional and colonial African boundaries: concepts and functions in inter-group relations', *Présence Africaine* 137–40, 1986, 58–75. See an early challenge in Zartman, I. William, 'The Politics of Boundaries in North and West Africa', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 3(2), 1965, 155–73, 160.

101 For 'dual citizenship' in Kenya, with reference to both the nation and the ethnic groups, see Ndegwa, Stephen N., 'Citizenship and Ethnicity: An Examination of Two Transition Moments in Kenyan Politics', *American Political Science Review* 91(3), 1997, 599–616, 613.

advantageous part of the local reality.¹⁰² Even as a European concept, which had only scarcely been remodelled by African leaders for their own purposes, the separation of two ‘nations’ by a physical border could develop its own dynamics.

Obviously, the experience of national borders in sub-Saharan Africa is far less related to military conflict and to objectives of territorial control than elsewhere.¹⁰³ The latter motives had been common in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Europe, with tensions and military clashes being frequently linked to a perceived necessity of ‘national expansion’. This being said, and while West African governments have mostly respected the territorial integrity of neighbouring countries, it would be an exaggeration to claim that conflicts between governments of neighbouring African post-colonial states have never been related to questions of the national border.¹⁰⁴ At least within nationalist arguments and in attempts for mobilisation, reference has abundantly been made to the suspected aggressive goals of neighbouring national governments. An instructive case for this problem, particularly for the 1960s, is the example of Ghana and Togo.

After national independence of both West African states, the Ghana-Togo border has been a constant source of friction. These tensions have a long pre-history. Togo had had its first colonial border with the then-British colony of the Gold Coast during its period under German rule; until 1914, this German colony included regions further to the west and covered parts of the current-day Ghanaian Volta Region. On those (colonial) grounds, the first independent Togolese governments formulated territorial claims towards an entire region governed by the neighbouring country. By contrast, the Ghanaian governments in Accra insisted on their rights for control over large parts or even the whole of the independent Togolese territory. They argued that in 1960 a majority of the ‘Togolese people’ had been robbed of their desired opportunity to unite with the Ghanaian state.¹⁰⁵ Both claims are nowadays largely, if not always, detached from any ethnic perspective, although they are not ignorant of the

102 Nugent, Paul, ‘Arbitrary lines and people’s minds: a dissenting view on colonial boundaries in West Africa’, in Paul Nugent and A.I. Asiwaju (eds.), *African Boundaries: Barriers, Conduits and Opportunities* (London – New York: Frances Pinter, 1996), 35–67, 41–6.

103 Kacowicz, Arie M., ‘“Negative” International Peace and Domestic Conflicts, West Africa, 1957–96’, *Journal of Modern African Studies* 35(3), 1997, 367–85, 382.

104 Kornprobst, Markus, ‘The Management of Border Disputes in African Regional Sub-Systems: Comparing West Africa and the Horn of Africa’, *Journal of Modern African Studies* 40(3), 2002, 369–93, 388.

105 Austin, Dennis, ‘The Uncertain Frontier: Ghana-Togo’, *Journal of Modern African Studies* 1(2), 139–45, 142; and Bening, R. Bagulo, ‘The Ghana-Togo Boundary, 1914–1982’, *Africa*

fact that border-crossing communities have continued to have an existence in both states. The example of the Ghana-Togo border shows that, for a period of some decades, even violent conflicts were an imaginable outcome during border tensions between two post-colonial African states. In this case as in others in sub-Saharan Africa, the governments of both states formulated their claims with clear reference to national territorial demands and necessities. Therefore, the employment of national demands as justification for aggressive state behaviour is, in principle, an option in sub-Saharan Africa as it was in other parts of the post-colonial world. However, claims for nation-building often remained as a concept in the drawer, and have in any way been less prominent than in Europe and other parts of the globe.

Obviously, border conflicts are not the only way in which a 'national' perspective has played a role for individuals and groups in sub-Saharan Africa, in particular for the period after independence, but sometimes even before. As in Europe, particularly in the case of post-First World War Eastern Europe, the term 'nation' could be employed to construct a concept of a regional community, but in a sense that clearly was to exclude certain 'minority groups'. In comparable ways to settings of conflict between groups distinguished as different on 'ethnic' terms, such distinctions between we-groups and outsiders were sometimes based on mainly emotional behaviour. As the concept of 'nation' is, however, a particularly young category in the case of the African continent, the exclusion of individuals from the national community can mostly be interpreted as a step to change and polarise the balance in a country's resource distribution.

In these scenarios, out-groups are usually accused not only of belonging to another ethnic group, but also of holding their allegiance to another nation (and, if these distinctions are made, to the government of another state). In many cases, this argumentation is overtly connected to questions of ethnicity.¹⁰⁶ The 'nation' is, in such circumstances, formulated as a frontier against an internal enemy, as David Cappell has expressed it for Côte d'Ivoire as an African example. The situation in that country between 2002 and 2011 is very probably the most illustrative recent West African example for inclusion and exclusion under concepts formulated as 'national', and for its overlaps with ethnic claims.¹⁰⁷ The conflict appears at first glance as one between northern and

Spectrum 18(2), 1983, 191–209. The turbulent relations of Ghana and Togo will reappear in chapter 5.

106 Smith, *Origins*, 154–7.

107 Cappell, David A., 'The Nation as Frontier: Ethnicity and Clientelism in Ivorian History', *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 22(4), 1989, 671–96.

southern alliances of ethnic groups, combined with a religious antagonism between Muslims and non-Muslims.¹⁰⁸ However, this simplified picture corresponds more to rhetoric and less to long-standing allegiances. With increasing force during the 1990s, Ivorian governments, and leading politicians in the electoral context, had employed a discussion of different variants of a national community, to mobilise the involved groups. During the years of civil war, this national argument was formulated by both sides. Côte d'Ivoire therefore constitutes an excellent example of how these mechanisms work, in the African continent and beyond.

The growing national dimension of conflict in Côte d'Ivoire was, however, particularly the work of President Laurent Gbagbo and his Front Populaire Ivoirien (FPI) government in power in Abidjan until 2011. The propaganda of the FPI based itself on the question of the *ivoirité* (the Ivorian identity) of any resident, as a principle of adherence to the Ivorian nation.¹⁰⁹ It was formulated in sufficiently vague terms, in order to be enlarged when necessary, so as to include allies of the government. After 2000, this principle was crucial in decision-making processes, as it allowed integrating individuals in or excluding them from the in-group of citizens. The northern rebel groups were of heterogeneous composition, but could thus be lumped together as an external threat.¹¹⁰ They were often characterised as 'Mossi foreigners' (Mosi being the main language group in the northern neighbouring country), as 'Burkinabè', and, consequently, as intruders from Burkina Faso paid by the government of the neighbouring state. This strategy did not always work. However, more often than not, inhabitants of southern Côte d'Ivoire proved to be sensitive to those arguments, and their impact might explain in part the resilience of the troops supporting the Gbagbo government.¹¹¹

108 Vidal, Claudine, 'La brutalisation du champ politique ivoirien 1990–2003', in Jean-Bernard Ouédraogo and Ebrima Sall (eds.), *Frontières de la citoyenneté et violence politique en Côte d'Ivoire* (Dakar: CODESRIA, 2008), 169–81, 174–6.

109 Zoro, Epiphane, "Je suis un Sidibé de Tiémélékro". L'acquisition de la nationalité ivoirienne à titre originaire: critère juridique ou critère anthropologique?, in Jean-Bernard Ouédraogo and Ebrima Sall (eds.), *Frontières de la citoyenneté et violence politique en Côte d'Ivoire* (Dakar: CODESRIA, 2008), 79–87, 84–6; Arnaut, Karel, 'Mouvement patriotique et construction de "l'autochtone" en Côte d'Ivoire', *Africa Development* 33(3), 2008, 1–20, 8–10.

110 A polemic view is given in Blé Kessé, Adolphe, *La Côte d'Ivoire en guerre: le sens de l'impoture française* (Paris: Harmattan, 2005).

111 Colin, Jean-Philippe, Georges Kouamé, and Débénoun Soro, 'Outside the autochthon-migrant configuration: access to land, land conflicts and inter-ethnic relationships in a former pioneer area of lower Côte d'Ivoire', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 45(1), 2007,

This type of conflict, in which the limits between ethnically defined violence and a struggle for inclusion into or exclusion from 'the nation' are blurred, appears to have become typical throughout the whole of sub-Saharan Africa, at least from the 1990s. In East Africa, the logics of the group conflict in Kenya in 2007/08 have some striking similarities with the civil war in Côte d'Ivoire.¹¹² Coming briefly back to the region of Central Africa, it can be argued that a similar strategy of exclusion was for a long time successfully employed in Congo-Kinshasa, during the late years of the decades-long reign of authoritarian President Joseph-Désiré Mobutu. The Banyamulenge, a numerous, Tutsi-speaking group in the east of the country, were labelled 'Rwandans' by the Congolese government, thus excluding them symbolically from the 'nation' and portraying them as tools of a genuinely 'foreign' movement. Again after 1998, this stigmatisation through a 'national' argumentation made the Banyamulenge 'foreigners' fair game for plunderers from other groups in eastern Congo. Ironically, these attacks made the Banyamulenge actively seek contact with the Rwandan government, in order to obtain protection, and the group's 'Rwandan-ness' therefore became a self-fulfilling prophecy. It did not follow any determined paths, but it became true through the permanent violence against a group having been a part of the range of communities living in Congo-Kinshasa, which after its exclusion from the Congolese 'nation' needed a protector from outside in order to survive.¹¹³

In the three African cases mentioned, as in others, important material resources were at stake. Under their attraction, the reference to 'the nation' allowed local groups to claim the rights of locals ousting foreigners from the unauthorised use of such 'national' resources. This mechanism of designating

33–59, 49–53; Babo, Alfred, *L'«étranger» en Côte d'Ivoire: crises et controverses autour d'une catégorie sociale* (Paris: Harmattan, 2013).

- 112 Odhiambo, E.S. Atieno, 'Hegemonic Enterprises & Instrumentalities of Survival: Ethnicity & Democracy in Kenya', in Bruce Berman, Dickson Eyoh, and Will Kymlicka (eds.), *Ethnicity and Democracy in Africa* (Oxford: James Currey – Athens/OH: Ohio University Press, 2004), 167–99, 173–4; Muigai, Githu, 'Jomo Kenyatta & the Rise of the Ethno-Nationalist State in Kenya', in *ibid.*, 200–17, 211–2. On the evolution of 2007/08 post-electoral violence, see Anderson, David, and Emma Lochery, 'Violence and Exodus in Kenya's Rift Valley, 2008: Predictable and Preventable?', *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 2(2), 2008, 328–43; and Bratton, Michael, and Mwangi S. Kimenyi, 'Voting in Kenya: Putting Ethnicity in Perspective', *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 2(2), 2008, 272–89.
- 113 Vlassenroot, Koen, 'Citizenship, Identity Formation & Conflict in South Kivu: The Case of the Banyamulenge', *Review of African Political Economy* 29(93–4), 2002, 499–515; Willaume, Jean-Claude, *Banyarwanda et Banyamulenge: Violences ethniques et gestion de l'identitaire au Kivu* (Brussels: CEDAF, 1997), 83–99.

certain groups as 'non-nationals' and, consequently, as out-groups, appears in many places. Quite visibly, these measures were even easier to employ if the attacked group was an overseas immigrant group, where so-called 'racial' factors as discussed above could be brought into the discussion. I have already pointed to the Lebanese in West Africa as targets in such processes, and the Indians and other Asians in South and East Africa constitute a second large immigrant group in the African continent.¹¹⁴ The experiences of these different communities are important here because they represent the earliest targets of the employment of arguments that we could describe as 'national', or 'proto-national' – the latter term is appropriate if we want to point out that they started to be used long before national independence.

The Lebanese communities of West African territories and countries, such as Senegal, the Gambia, Guinea-Conakry, Sierra Leone, or Ghana, were from 1900 and over many decades the victims of 'racial' riots initiated by local African inhabitants. These riots had begun to occur well before the end of colonial rule: they had a certain long-standing tradition and notoriety.¹¹⁵ The representatives of the colonial state occasionally contributed to those hostilities, particularly if they favoured principles of colonisation that tended to 'protect' African societies from obnoxious 'foreign' influences. However, if colonial administrators encouraged African militants to attack Lebanese settlers, this was mainly so through their passiveness in policing activities. There is little doubt that it was usually local African groups themselves who took the initiative against the 'foreigners'.

In 1919, African inhabitants of the city of Freetown in Sierra Leone destroyed the stores of 'Syrian' merchants established there for some decades already. What appeared to be a spontaneous riot was probably a pre-organised action, and quite representative of the negative opinion the locals had developed towards the immigrants.¹¹⁶ Similar disturbances would reappear again and again, in different West African territories, under different colonial rulers. In the 1940s and 1950s, the protracted anti-Lebanese sentiment in large parts of the African (urban) populations could even be manipulated by European settler leaders – a marginal community in the West African context – who

114 Ogotu, Matthias A., 'Commercial Specialisation and Adaptation of Ethnic Groups', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 11(3), 1973, 465–9.

115 Arsan, Andrew, *Interlopers of empire: the Lebanese diaspora in colonial French West Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

116 Abdullah, Ibrahim, 'Rethinking the Freetown Crowd: The Moral Economy of the 1919 Strikes and Riot in Sierra Leone', *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 28(2), 1994, 197–218, 208–9.

wanted to hide their own racist positions about Africans behind a common front against Lebanese merchants.¹¹⁷

Under colonial conditions, the arguments employed by rioters against such 'Asian' immigrant groups were a mixture between 'racial' and territorially defined claims. According to this logic, the Lebanese were regarded as excluded from a community that can best be described as 'proto-national'. This does not mean that during the violence against Lebanese inhabitants of Dakar or Freetown the rioters would clearly define themselves as 'Senegalese' or 'Sierra Leoneans'; mostly, this feeling of community spirit against 'foreign' groups was only defined through the criteria of exclusion. Nevertheless, it is remarkable that the motions of hatred that mobilised the urban African groups against foreigners excluded from the 'proto-nation' were, in many cases, highly effective.¹¹⁸

Hostile positions of the African inhabitants of different West African regions towards Lebanese settlers continued after national independence, and have frequently entered the national institutions.¹¹⁹ Individuals from Lebanese families have now been living on African soil for generations, but their generally negative image has been well preserved into the post-colonial period.¹²⁰ In the last five decades, the legacy of the anti-Lebanese hostilities has had an impact on the legislative process in a number of countries, as many national governments have introduced laws tending toward the gradual exclusion of the Lebanese from citizenship and the related rights. These measures were ultimately identifiable as concessions to frustrated supporters of the governments; the Lebanese seemed to be a suitable scapegoat for the failure of 'the nation's' economic and social efforts.

For our understanding of 'nation' as juxtaposed with 'ethnicity', the argumentation in favour of those measures is as interesting as the similarities in the more general rhetoric of exclusion. Indeed, we encounter the same strategy of

117 Keese, Alexander, 'Colons français, politiciens africains et marchands libanais au Sénégal colonial', *Africa (Roma)* 60(2), 2005, 201–20; Bierwirth, Chris, 'The initial establishment of the Lebanese community in Côte d'Ivoire, ca. 1925–45', *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 30(2), 1997, 325–48; Archives Nationales Sénégalaises, Dakar, Senegal (ANS), 11D1/162, Forget, Assistant Commissioner of Bignona, to Police Commissioner, commanding the Fourth Mobile Unit of Sûreté, Ziguinchor, *Comportement des Libano-Syriens* (n° 73), 7 November 1956, 1–3.

118 Leighton, Neil O., 'The Lebanese in Sierra Leone', *Transition* 44, 1974, 23–9, 28.

119 Luke, David Fashole, and Stephen P. Riley, 'The Politics of Economic Decline in Sierra Leone', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 27(1), 1989, 133–41, 137–8.

120 Leichtman, Mara A., 'The legacy of transnational lives: Beyond the first generation of Lebanese in Senegal', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 28(4), 2005, 663–86, 668–9.

argumentation as in the case of the above-mentioned conflicts in Côte d'Ivoire or in Congo-Kinshasa: the main argument brought forward against the rights of citizens or residents of Lebanese origin relies on the assumption that the Lebanese adhere to a foreign 'nation'. They are said to be unlikely to show loyalty to the African state, as they are identified as clients of a Middle Eastern government.¹²¹ 'The Lebanese' are thus defined as an out-group with respect to 'the nation', in much the same way as 'unwelcome' ethnic groups in other contexts. The case of 'the Indians' in East and Southeast Africa resembles the Lebanese experience up to a point. Populations of Indian origin had quickly assumed a dominant position in many parts of the commercial sector, which they maintained over the decades of colonial domination. As 'foreigners', they became a convenient scapegoat for late colonial and post-colonial mobilisation.¹²² In East (and southern) Africa, the impact of the colonial heritage was very strong in those respects. In territories where the colonial rulers had favoured a kind of segregation based on skin colour, the segmentation into different 'racial' groups thus imposed long outlived, in the minds of the populations concerned, the end of colonial domination. It eventually led to the legal discrimination of 'Indian' residents.¹²³

From these cases we can point to a number of facts concerning group identifications and the concept of 'nation' in sub-Saharan Africa, as opposed to global historical patterns. First, differences in skin colour ('racial' differences) were helpful for militants, proto-national and nationalist leaders, and politicians, to define certain groups as out-groups from the perspective of the 'nation'. This made groups of long-distance immigrants, such as Middle Eastern or South Asian groups, particularly easy targets of violence. Second, the principle of 'nation' could also be turned against particular ethnic groups by claiming that the latter were 'foreigners'. Third, conflicting territorial claims by post-colonial governments, such as in the conflict between Ghana and Togo, or a devastating civil war, such as in Côte d'Ivoire or in Eastern Congo-Kinshasa, added to the violence of such clashes. However, the different categories of conflict were not obligatory: it appears that the exclusion of the 'other' from the

121 Akyeampong, Emmanuel K., 'Race, Identity and Citizenship in Black Africa: The Case of the Lebanese in Ghana', *Africa* 76(3), 2006, 297–323.

122 Power, Joey, 'Race, Class, Ethnicity, and Anglo-Indian Trade Rivalry in Colonial Malawi, 1910–1945', *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 26(3), 1993, 575–607, 584–7; Gregory, Robert G., *South Asians in East Africa: An Economic and Social History, 1890–1980* (Boulder – Oxford: Westview Press, 1993).

123 Don Nanjira, Daniel D.C., *The Status of Aliens in East Africa: Asians and Europeans in Tanzania, Uganda, and Kenya* (New York etc.: Praeger, 1976).

'proto-nation' was a very useful principle even when all those above-mentioned conditions were non-existent.

In the African continent, we find an early tendency to attack individuals defined as 'nationals' (one might again be inclined to say 'proto-nationals' for the late colonial period) of a neighbouring territory under conditions when such 'foreigners' were competitors for positions and goods. A dramatic example from the late colonial period, from 1958, is the experience of Togolese and Dahomean workers living in Abidjan. During an upsurge of apparently socially motivated riots, these 'foreign' labourers became the victims of attacks and many were transported out of near-independent Côte d'Ivoire and back to their countries of origin, with the tacit consent of the then autonomous Ivorian government.¹²⁴ Since the advent of national independence in Ghana, particularly at moments of internal social tensions, the same has regularly occurred with Nigerians employed as labourers on Ghanaian soil, who were expelled in several situations.¹²⁵ In the latter cases, 'proto-national' or national criteria were introduced into the debate, as members of the in-group hoped to obtain resources withdrawn from the expelled 'foreigners'. Moreover, the ensuing riots allowed reaffirming alliances of different ethnic groups that could thus be built to back the newly independent governments.¹²⁶ However, scholars should not underestimate the (perhaps surprisingly) emotional bond of the involved individuals to the national principles in question; there is no need to regard them as entirely instrumental. As in nineteenth- or early twentieth-century Europe, questions of national exclusion could have a great impact on the sentiment of individuals as group members and transform themselves into entrenched attitudes.

Some factors under colonial rule benefited the emergence of 'proto-national sentiment' among populations that had not known any former links between their respective communities. Thus even before the independence of the African states, such a sentiment was created through the implementation and experience of territory-wide elections. It was, obviously, the European administrations that formulated the initial rules of the game and installed new institutions according to territorial principles. However, the African elites internalised this territorial and 'proto-national' perspective of emergent mass

124 Keese, Alexander, 'Introduction', in Alexander Keese (ed.), *Ethnicity and the long-term perspective: the African experience* (Berne: Peter Lang, 2010), 9–29, 13.

125 Peil, Margaret, 'The Expulsion of West African Aliens', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 9(2), 1971, 205–29, 206, 212, 218.

126 Brydon, Lynne, 'Ghanaian Responses to the Nigerian Expulsions of 1983', *African Affairs* 84(337), 1985, 561–85, 563–4.

democracy. They regarded themselves as being in connection with a particular territory whenever they had to interact with the delegates of other colonial units. In the federal institutions of colonial French West Africa, for example, the 'Dahomeans' and the 'Senegalese' above all, but also the 'Ivoriens', the 'Nigeriens', the 'Guineans' or the 'Soudanese' appear on the political stage as clearly distinguished, self-conscious groups (in spite of existing overlaps). Their representatives often focused on the well-being of the populations of a (proto) national territorial space.¹²⁷ More than any 'tribal' solidarities, the obligations of governments to this national self-definition contradicted the pan-African rhetoric that, on the surface, appeared to be so dominant in the public sphere in the 1950s and 1960s.

It might be argued that, in spite of these examples, 'national' criteria of affiliation have been less important for many African individuals than they are for Europeans, Americans, or Asians. Nevertheless, those 'national' feelings began to play a role rather early in the colonial phase, and they continue to express their real presence through simple acts of affiliation. National enthusiasm on the occasion of sports events, particularly regarding football, and becoming most visible during the Africa Cups, is a significant sign of the importance of this national affiliation. In some earlier, particularly spectacular cases, such as the near football war between Gabon and Congo-Brazzaville in 1962 leading to the deportation of hundreds of 'foreigners', national sentiment produced through such events could even be transformed into political conflict between the governments of states.¹²⁸

These notions of national sentiment are now sometimes, and under particular circumstances, stronger than ethnic solidarities. While we have no study so far attempting to analyse the relationship between the two categories from a long-term perspective, it can nevertheless be underlined that in some cases members of an ethnic group separated by a border, identified more with the community defined through the 'nation', than with their ethnic peers at the other side of the borderline.¹²⁹ This also eclipses any identification as 'borderlanders' in the sense of Nugent's reflections. As in the case of the border between Benin and Nigeria, both sides hold explicitly national stereotypes of

127 Benoist, Joseph-Roger de, *La balkanisation de l'Afrique Occidentale française* (Dakar: Nouvelles Editions Africaines, 1979), 238–9.

128 Keese, 'Introduction', 13–4; Clignet, Rémi, and Maureen Stark, 'Modernisation and Football in Cameroun', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 12(3), 1974, 409–21, 416–7.

129 Miles, William F.S., and David A. Rochefort, 'Nationalism versus Ethnic Identity in sub-Saharan Africa', *American Political Science Review* 85(2), 1991, 393–403.

the others.¹³⁰ It must of course be repeated that available research on ‘national’ versus ethnic and regional sentiment in border areas and beyond is, for sub-Saharan Africa, still quite insufficient. Nevertheless, the examples mentioned give us indications that the ‘national’ variable can, at least sometimes, be the more important one. Thereby, many regions of the African continent join a global mainstream.

As a whole, we need to draw one major conclusion from this discussion: we have to take ‘national’ sentiment into account as a point of reference for African individuals. Moreover, in its ‘proto-national’ forms – with reference to a territory created by colonial conquest and administrative organisation – it figures far earlier in regional histories than the nationalist manifestations of the post-Second World War period, and, afterwards, the independences. We can show cases of ‘proto-national’ solidarity and mobilisation from the manifest establishment of colonial rule over large parts of sub-Saharan Africa around 1900. This sentiment grew through the decades of setting up a colonial administration through territorial institutions. It may be true that the conditions for the emergence of such solidarities were clearly set from outside, but Africans soon referred to those solidarities. These references included the outright reappropriation and employment of ‘proto-national’ and ‘national’ perceptions in the struggle for material resources, in which African leaders applied those criteria quite masterfully. National feelings nonetheless have remained a weaker factor in sub-Saharan Africa, as compared to other regions. This being said, they had an impact on the portfolio of identifications that African individuals have. As we have seen, this can under some circumstances even lead individuals into a type of violent action that has, in fact, nothing to do with ethnic solidarities.

States and Their Rulers

Consequently, it is correct to say that the populations (or a part of the populations) of a given territorial unit can define themselves as a ‘nation’ – but that this is not a *necessary* process. Such a perspective emphasising the merger of different populations, in which the state is a ‘hybrid paterfamilias...building community out of difference’ is a *possible* outcome of such processes – but it is not an automatic result.¹³¹ The national perspective might give particular

130 Flynn, Donna, “‘We are the border’: identity, exchange and the state along the Bénin-Nigeria border”, *American Ethnologist* 24(2), 1997, 311–30, 326.

131 Alonso, ‘Politics’, 396.

opportunities for an extremely emotional link between the territory and its inhabitants, as is typical in Europe or North America, and less frequent in sub-Saharan Africa. However, individuals could also have the option to directly identify with existing structures of political power, expressed through 'the state'.¹³² In this case, it is not of particular interest for an individual to formulate a tradition concerning 'national' language and culture. It is amply sufficient for the individuals in question to be accustomed to interact with institutions of local power, and to address those institutions to ultimately obtain basic needs, in particular protection. Such customary behaviour will potentially lead local groups to identify in more durable ways with the political structures.

Obviously, the relations of an individual with institutions of power are not at all necessarily depersonalised. Without referring too much to the Weberian model of ideal types of organisation of power, we could clearly say that traditions of power and charismatic elements are very much part of the relations between a local group or an individual and political structures that can be described as 'state' structures.¹³³ In many cases, the individual feels and expresses solidarity with the representative of power, such as the local ruler, while the ruler of course does not know the individual personally. 'Crown', 'state' or 'realm' are here, in their effects of binding the loyalty of the individual, to be understood in a similar function. The range between a feeling of adherence to a *patria* in the early modern sense of the word, which is allegiance to the power of a crown and of a ruling dynasty, and an impersonal state patriotism formulated, in particular, in post-Second World War Europe as an 'antidote' against ideological radicalisation, may be quite wide. Nonetheless, the effect of adhering to particular institutions of power, being expressed through reference to concrete persons or not, is, as a category in an individual's identification repertoire, nearly the same.

Through such a conclusion, we will also avoid engaging too deeply in the debate about the definition of 'the state', as this debate often focuses on questions of terminology, and suffers greatly from misunderstandings between different languages within the different countries of scholarship. Indeed, Anglophone researchers are frequently at odds in their terminology with colleagues from European countries. In particular, German-speaking scholars have in the past been very strict in their terminology regarding the criteria of

132 Connor, Walker, 'A Nation is a Nation, is a State, is an Ethnic Group, is a...,' *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 1(4), 1978, 377–400, 380–2.

133 Weber, Max, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft: Grundriss der verstehenden Soziologie* (fifth edition, Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1980 [1922]), 153–4.

definition of the 'state'. According to Wolfgang Reinhard's outstanding monograph on the evolution of statehood, it would be gradually allowable only from the late eighteenth century for territorial units to be addressed as states (or 'modern states'). Evolutionary criteria such as a certain degree of bureaucratisation, specialised offices, and a tax and contribution system abstracted from the person of a ruler or the tradition of a ruling dynasty, are regarded as mandatory in defining this 'modern state'.¹³⁴

Anglophone historians are less strict when it comes to characterising territorial rulerships as states. For them, the decisive criterion is the existence of structures of power related to territorial control, but these structures do not need to be too formalised. 'State' in this sense is a more flexible concept. Its existence would be defined more through the results of successful control over larger population groups, than through the methods applied and through their degree of formalisation.

This second, more flexible approach allows us to discuss political units under colonial rule, including in sub-Saharan Africa, between the period before the European conquest and the end of the colonial regimes according to their degree of 'statehood', meaning the level of centralisation and effective control over populations. It is difficult to understand those results in their eventual continuity with earlier pre-colonial periods: our limitations are extreme, due to a lack of sources. Any attempt to analyse the nature of West African political entities of the pre-colonial period faces the near-irresolvable problem of distinguishing mythical from historical elements. We can be rather certain, however, that territorial entities before 1800 were in general little 'advanced' regarding a formalisation of power structures. This is not dissimilar to other parts of the globe, as in the same period in both Europe and the Ottoman Empire, and in other Muslim empires of Asia and North Africa, excessively formal institutions were also rather the exception than the rule.¹³⁵ Although the level of territorial control was in many cases already far more successful than in the African continent, the government of territories remained frequently organised through a web of patronage relations, hereditary functions, and efforts to discipline the periphery.

134 Reinhard, Wolfgang, *Geschichte der Staatsgewalt: Eine vergleichende Verfassungsgeschichte Europas von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart* (second edition, Munich: C.H. Beck, 2000), 16–7.

135 See the analysis of Christian Windler on the *beylik* of Tunis before the French protectorate in 1881 in Windler, Christian, *La Diplomatie comme Expérience de l'Autre: Consuls Français au Maghreb (1700–1840)* (Geneva: Droz, 2002), 282–90.

In this context, it has to be said that it also makes little sense to imagine, for the period before the nineteenth century, a Europe that has already advanced from 'feudalism' to a type of pre-bourgeois period in contrast to a sub-Saharan Africa still dominated by 'feudal' structures. Marxist scholars have made this claim for the African context – where, interestingly enough, it connects to the logic of Modernisation Theory, the 'capitalist' theory with its apogee in the 1960s and still influential afterwards, which explains different levels of economic development in distinct world regions with velocities in the evolution of socio-political structures. However, any attempts at classifying sub-Saharan African power structures as 'feudal' are entirely artificial.¹³⁶ Within African political entities, control of land and control of the means of production are rather unimportant compared to the factor of access to manpower, as expressed in the concept of 'wealth-through-people': it is difficult to imagine larger African communities as 'feudal'.¹³⁷ On the contrary, early West African states have been discussed as successful in regard to the two basic tasks of organising essential 'services', notably in a savannah region where access to food and stability of trade routes were the central goals, or in a coastal tropical forest zone, where slave-raiding and a higher population density made smaller units with appropriate protective power more attractive. Perhaps the greatest obstacle to any process of bureaucratisation in the African continent was the absence of reliable and widely available script systems to be employed for administrative processes; even with some local languages expressed in a written form with Arabic characters, we do not know, for West Africa, any broader process of appropriation of written languages for the purposes of control and raising of tribute, for example.¹³⁸

Following the strict definition according to Reinhard, many of these entities could not be considered as 'states'. With several rulers of West African political units attempting, in the course of the eighteenth century, to improve the efficiency of their structures – perhaps in relation to the expansion of slave trade-related contacts – the situation slowly changed. While such efforts may seem minimal in contrast to European developments in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, they sharpened nonetheless the discrepancies in West African regions between more strongly centralised political entities and their neighbours organised at village level. Building on a tradition that involved the use of

136 Jensen, Rolf, 'The Transition from Primitive Communism: The Wolof Social Formation of West Africa', *Journal of Economic History* 42(1), 1982, 69–76.

137 See Levtzion, Nehemia, *Ancient Ghana and Mali* (New York: Africana, 1980).

138 Herbst, Jeffrey, *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 41–6.

professionalised army units, some rulers elaborated, above all, a more sophisticated structure of military organisation. This was backed up, however, by the employment of a more formalised and increasingly effective system of tax-raising, tributes, and internal administration.¹³⁹

The pre-colonial entities of Asante and Dahomey, being forerunners in the eighteenth century, are classical examples for such processes of 'state-building' in West Africa. Asante appears as most strongly developed in those respects: in the Asante capital, Kumase, we even find attempts at formalising rules through the employment of Arabophone scribes by the territorial administration. As written language was discovered as a particularly efficient means for the codification of rules, these attempts illustrate a broader change within the mentalities of regional representatives of power.

However, regarding the nature of local repertoires of identification in West Africa, these refined methods and trends towards bureaucratisation as employed by Asante's officials were probably not a necessary factor for an attachment of locals to the power structures they lived in. Even with somewhat looser institutions, the regular appearance of representatives of administrative power amongst them, either for tribute-raising or for protection, clearly shaped the perceptions of local populations. Moreover, in the more densely populated coastal zones, where a large number of smaller political units (again called 'states' in the less strict English terminology) existed, the representatives of political power were active in sometimes quite engaged attempts at local diplomacy and alliance-building. Such diplomatic efforts, whose outcomes were frequently known to the subjects, contributed to the creation of an in-group perception that referred to the 'state': the success of diplomacy was regarded as success for the whole community.¹⁴⁰

It appears that state-related solidarities could in some cases produce even stronger effects on the individual. For Akyem Abuakwa in present-day Ghana, for which we have one of the most detailed analyses of such sentiments in the population, Richard Rathbone has argued for the emergence of a feeling of 'citizenship'. This *akyemfo* sentiment, to refer to the expression in the Twi language, is clearly separated from ethnic and 'national' notions. It allowed local

139 In English terminology, it thus seems appropriate to distinguish between 'specialised states', 'segmentary states', and 'stratified communities', see Southall, Aidan W., 'State Formation in Africa', *Annual Review of Anthropology* 3, 1974, 153–65, 155–7.

140 Boahen, A.A., 'Fante diplomacy in the eighteenth century', in Kenneth Ingham (ed.), *Foreign Relations of African States* (London: Butterworths, 1974), 25–49; Irwin, Graham W., 'Precolonial African Diplomacy: the Example of Asante', *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 8(1), 1975, 81–96.

populations to identify themselves as belonging to a given political structure. In a process that was both from the top down and from the bottom up, the inhabitants of Akyem Abuakwa relied on and felt obliged to the pre-colonial 'state'.¹⁴¹ In this context, it has rightly been pointed out that it would be improper and overzealous to assume that in similar cases state identification naturally overlaps with a particular ethnic identification. As Archie Mafeje has made clear for Bunyoro and other interlacustrine kingdoms in Central Africa, many African states were indeed multi-ethnic projects.¹⁴²

It would be interesting to follow the evolution of such sentiments of state loyalty during the colonial and post-colonial phases. We find little research carried out concerning this particular question.¹⁴³ In most studies, the state as an independent variable is superseded with regard to the motivations of local populations by ethnicity or 'the nation'. For the pre-colonial situation, it is frequently claimed that African populations were mainly organised by kinship groups and networks, which would have blended into a loose-knit framework of larger political entities. From such a perspective, one could then argue, for the colonial period, that the institutions created by the colonisers were regarded as a reality that was so foreign and distant in comparison to the former local realities that these new institutions did not allow for any identification.¹⁴⁴ However, we need to review that opinion in light of the above-mentioned experience of slow centralisation of some political units in West Africa before the end of the nineteenth century.

Moreover, it is a well-known and remarkable fact that African elites were in time won over to cultural values introduced from the colonial metropolises, and that a considerable number of those Africans actively 'assimilated' to European cultural standards, as French colonial officials called it.¹⁴⁵ While the colonial

141 Rathbone, Richard, 'Defining Akyemfo: The Construction of Citizenship in Akyem Abuakwa, Ghana, 1700–1939', *Africa* 66(4), 1996, 506–25.

142 Mafeje, Archie, *The Theory and Ethnography of African Social Formations: The Case of the Interlacustrine Kingdoms* (London: CODESRIA, 1991), 47.

143 An exception (but with a limited empirical fundament) is Englebort, Pierre, 'Pre-Colonial Institutions, Post-Colonial States, and Economic Development in Tropical Africa', *Political Research Quarterly* 53(1), 2000, 7–36.

144 Ekeh, Peter, 'Individuals' Basic Security Needs & the Limits of Democracy in Africa', in Bruce Berman, Dickson Eyoh, and Will Kymlicka (eds.), *Ethnicity and Democracy in Africa* (Oxford: James Currey – Athens/OH: Ohio University Press, 2004), 22–37, 28; Herbst, *States*, 90–3.

145 Sabatier, Peggy, 'Did Africans Really Learn to Be French? The Francophone Elite of the Ecole William Ponty', in G. Wesley Johnson (ed.), *Double Impact: France and Africa in the Age of Imperialism* (Westport – London: Greenwood Press, 1985), 179–87.

state was in many cases nearly invisible in the more peripheral regions of the colonies, it is nevertheless a crucial task to analyse how it was regarded by inhabitants of the regions where the European presence could be felt more directly. The processes of identification with colonial rule and the particular forms of administration created by the Europeans still await such analysis. The meagre data that has so far been presented concerning the question of African attitudes towards the colonial state as substitute for the pre-colonial political entities does not even allow us, for the moment, to speculate upon these attitudes.

Finally, for the post-colonial situation, we also lack in-depth studies pointing to such identifications of individuals with the state structures they lived in. It has been argued – as I pointed out – that the post-colonial African state is an expression of the ‘politics of the belly’, but it is unclear whether individuals that constantly had to interact with the organisms of the state, however inefficient, might feel they *belong* to the respective entity.¹⁴⁶ Nonetheless, there has been a consensus that the leaders of dominant African parties, and indeed of other political movements as well, were eager to create their own symbols of affiliation: in many cases their leadership included its own variant of identity politics, with the formulation of founding myths as an alternative to ethnic solidarity and to ‘harden’ the national structures.¹⁴⁷ Finally, the gap between the state level and its agents on the one hand, and the (marginalised) local populations on the other hand, might have led to the creation of a certain type of ‘civil society’ – but we still do not know how these forms relate to either the existing state structures or to ethnic sentiment.¹⁴⁸ With those different variables of identification presented, it remains now for me to discuss how they relate to each other in the empirical cases and in a broader, global, history, and to interpret under which model conditions we can imagine them to interact.¹⁴⁹

146 Bayart, *Etat*, 309–13.

147 Hayward, Fred M., and Ahmed R. Dumbuya, ‘Political Legitimacy, Political Symbols, and National Leadership in West Africa’, *Journal of Modern African Studies* 21(4), 1983, 645–71, 652–3, 658–9; Forrest, Joshua, ‘The Quest for State ‘Hardness’ in Africa’, *Comparative Politics* 20(4), 1988, 423–42, 435–7.

148 Lemarchand, René, ‘Uncivil States and Civil Societies: How Illusion Became Reality’, *Journal of Modern African Studies* 30(2), 1992, 177–91, 186–7; Owusu, Maxwell, ‘Domesticating Democracy: Culture, Civil Society, and Constitutionalism in Africa’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 39(1), 1997, 120–52, 129–30; Nyang’oro, Julius E., ‘Reform Politics and the Democratization Process in Africa’, *African Studies Review* 37(1), 1994, 133–49, 147.

149 Hopkins, A.G., ‘The New Economic History of Africa’, *Journal of African History* 50(2), 2009, 155–77, 171–3.

The Complexities of Choice

According to 'constructivist' theories, ethnic affiliation is a question of decisions made consciously or in reaction to decision processes carried out at a certain level of the individual's community. Village communities, clans, or migrating groups are all possible entities within which to locate this level of decision.¹⁵⁰ Normally, scholars seek decision-making processes at a very high level: the main protagonists are believed to be regional politicians, party leaders, and sometimes the heads of rebellious groups. Still more typical, according to the analysis frequently presented in contemporary 'constructivist' scholarship, the architects of ethnic sentiment are very often foreign to the local communities: they might be representatives of the colonial power, or, in another very prominent setting, the members of a new political elite that, with decolonisation, became powerful through ethnic manipulation. As I remarked, the latest 'constructivist' historiography does not necessarily continue with this radical position and is more differentiated, but the principal idea of external manipulation continues to be an essential element of the debate.

There remains, however, the question from which basis the mobilisation through identifications starts, or where exactly the manipulators begin with their work.¹⁵¹ A model that seeks to explain ethnic solidarity convincingly probably needs to approach the fact that in at least apparently similar situations, groups are mobilised through notions of ethnic sentiment, of religion, of social status, of regional interest, or others, the latter including the categories of 'race', 'nation' and 'state solidarity' that I have discussed in detail. John Thompson, while focusing excessively on the interplay of 'ethnicity' and 'class' to the detriment of other alternatives, has rightly pointed to the fact that all complex societies are characterised by what he calls 'structural ambiguities'.¹⁵² Such alternative choices have likewise been discussed for the importance of the categories of 'ethnicity' and 'race' in relation to 'religion'.¹⁵³

150 Owusu, Maxwell, 'Democracy and Africa – A View from the Village', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 30(3), 1992, 369–96, 383–4; Geschiere, Peter, 'Applications of the Lineage Mode of Production in African Studies', *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 19(1), 1985, 80–90, 92–3.

151 Ake, Claude, 'Charismatic Legitimation and Political Integration', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 9(1), 1966, 1–13, 10–1.

152 Thompson, John L.P., 'The plural society approach to class and ethnic mobilization', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 6(2), 1983, 127–53, 131–2.

153 Stanczak, Gregory, 'Strategic ethnicity: The construction of multi-racial/multi-ethnic religious community', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 29(5), 2006, 856–81, 870–2.

This leaves us with the question of agency, which, in the African case, is so often sought in the activities of either colonial officials or African opinion-makers. We find a recent counter-attempt to lay the emphasis on the potential of decision-making as held by local populations. This explanatory attempt alleges that individuals are able to 'calculate' the usefulness of ethnic solidarity, and activate this variable when it is advantageous or promising for larger goals. This idea had already been elaborated, under the keyword of 'situational ethnicity', in scholarly approaches of the early 1980s.¹⁵⁴ However, only in most recent times has this perspective been at the forefront of studies.

In a recent monograph, Daniel N. Posner measures the potential of 'situational ethnicity' for understanding the ethnic factor in sub-Saharan Africa during post-colonial elections. He creates a model according to which individuals are perfectly able to play the ethnic card whenever they really believe this choice to be useful. Posner holds that the individuals concerned can select from a repertoire or portfolio of affiliations, which include ethnicity, but which also comprise other variables such as 'race', religion, or region of origin. As far as this is rationally possible, voters of African countries seem to calculate (or estimate) the respective strength of different available group configurations, and then select the appropriate element on which to rely for electoral success. In some cases and for some individuals, ethnic affiliation is likely to be the right choice.¹⁵⁵

Nonetheless, even as part of an identifications repertoire, the local voters can define the category of 'ethnicity' in quite different ways. Focusing on the case of elections in post-colonial Zambia, Posner characterises 'language' and 'tribe' as the two main variants available for a definition of ethnic group solidarity, at least in this particular South Central African country. However, the author comments that other identifications can also be addressed as parts of (and, thus, integrated into) the concept of ethnic identification, such as, in particular, religion and regional sentiment. Thus, in Posner's view, the category of ethnic solidarity has a great flexibility; it depends on an ad hoc consensus of the community to decide about the basic criteria for describing the ethnic in-group.¹⁵⁶

154 Okamura, Jonathan Y., 'Situational ethnicity', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 4(4), 1981, 452–65, 454–5.

155 Decalo, Samuel, 'The Process, Prospects and Constraints of Democratization in Africa', *African Affairs* 91(362), 1992, 7–35, 9–10, 13.

156 Posner, *Institutions*; see also: Salomone, Frank A., 'Becoming Hausa: ethnic identity change and its implications for the study of ethnic pluralism and stratification', *Africa* 45(4), 1975, 410–25, 422; Schultz, Emily A., 'From Pagan to Pullo: Ethnic Identity Change in Northern Cameroon', *Africa* 54(1), 1984, 46–64, 50–1.

Posner's point of view is highly stimulating insofar as he offers a usable interpretation of the aspect of choice in group identifications. Moreover, he also explains the limits of such choice. His individuals and groups have their instrumentalist perspective of ethnic affiliation: they decide their affiliation by an (attempted) perspective of finding the best strategy to secure power and material assets through electoral success.¹⁵⁷ Nonetheless, the more essential point of Posner's analysis is his claim that individuals live with a certain portfolio of ways of identification, with which they ultimately have to work in order to succeed. The same portfolio, however, does not offer an infinite range of alternatives of identification for a given situation: possibilities of choice are sensibly limited by the elements that are present inside it. Other social scientists have possibly already expressed the idea of an identifications repertoire, but Posner's perseverance has been crucial to point out the importance of the idea.¹⁵⁸

While Posner's perspective is inspiring, its basic conclusions are, of course, impossible to simply transfer from the restricted field of electoral behaviour in a particular southern African country to the more general patterns of ethnic alliance-building and ethnic conflict in sub-Saharan Africa and in global history over the last decades and centuries. It is correct that, in recent decades, strong links have been found between the ethnic self-description of group members, and their voting behaviour.¹⁵⁹ In the post-independence years, leading African politicians held that parliamentary democracy had to be eliminated on the grounds that elections were likely to wake 'tribal' dissension. This idea seems to be partly confirmed by recent scholarly studies.¹⁶⁰

157 Mozaffar, Shaheen; James R. Scarritt, and Glen Galaich, 'Electoral Institutions, Ethnopolitical Cleavages, and Party Systems in Africa's Emerging Democracies', *American Political Science Review* 97(3), 2003, 379–90, 388.

158 Posner, Daniel N., 'Measuring Ethnic Fractionalization in Africa', *American Journal of Political Science* 48(4), 2004, 849–63, 852–4.

159 Gray, Robert F., 'Political Parties in New African Nations: An Anthropological View', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 5(4), 1963, 449–61, *passim*.

160 Mousseau, Demet Yalcin, 'Democratizing with Ethnic Divisions: A Source of Conflict?', *Journal of Peace Research* 38(5), 2001, 547–67, 551–2; Smith, Zeric Kay, 'The Impact of Political Liberalisation and Democratisation on Ethnic Conflict in Africa: An Empirical Test of Common Assumptions', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 38(1), 2000, 21–39, 34; Udogu, E. Ike, 'The Issue of Ethnicity and Democratization in Africa: Toward the Millennium', *Journal of Black Studies* 29(6), 1999, 790–808, 804–6; Jackson, Robert H., and Carl G. Rosberg, 'Popular Legitimacy in African Multi-Ethnic States', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 22(2), 1984, 177–98, 188–91.

Voting is a process with established rules, to which all participating parties commit themselves at least for the given moment, and the final act of voting is introduced by a long and normally relatively safe preparatory phase.¹⁶¹ During this phase, individuals have a range of opportunities to study the given situation, including from some distance, and reflect upon electoral strategies. In other situations in which conflicting parties do not have a regulatory framework it is obviously far more difficult to see behind choices of allegiance an elaborated strategic behaviour.¹⁶² Nevertheless, there have also been attempts to look at ethnically motivated civil wars through the prism of rational choice.¹⁶³ Information is again an important factor in this context. In rural settings and in areas of underdeveloped infrastructure in particular, it is plausible that individuals positioning themselves as group members had only scant information about the more general panorama and suffered from a lack of means of communication.¹⁶⁴

Nonetheless, while it is obviously impossible to transpose Posner's model on to situations of group conflict in general, his approach gives important impetus. In particular, his idea of identification repertoires is quite fertile.¹⁶⁵ In my own analysis, I will gladly draw on a part of Posner's approach. In the case studies, I will focus on ethnic affiliation as part of a portfolio, together with other factors, which might under particular circumstances rival its role. Those factors must be regarded as viable alternatives in some phases of the existence of groups, and more so under conditions of colonial rule.

The approach of more or less rational (sometimes also emotional) choice gains credibility by the fact that many of the local identifications are far from being contradictory to ethnic sentiment. In some cases, they even seem to interact with one another; and, according to Thomas Hylland Eriksen, a 'semi-override' of conflicting identities between two groups can be observed in cases in which group members or group leaders, or both, declare another category of

161 Horowitz, Donald L., *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley – London: University of California Press, 1985), 261–440; Londregan, John; Henry Bienen, and Nicolas van den Walle, 'Ethnicity and Leadership Succession in Africa', *International Studies Quarterly* 39, 1–25, 21.

162 Muller, Edward N., and Erich Weede, 'Cross-National Variation in Political Violence: A Rational Action Approach', *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 34(4), 1990, 624–51, 628–9.

163 Azam, 'Looting', 137–41, 146–8.

164 Smith, Susan J., 'Negotiating ethnicity in an uncertain environment', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 7(3), 1984, 360–73, 365–7.

165 On additional approaches on the 'autonomy of the individual', see Douglas, Mary, 'How Identity Problems Disappear', in Anita Jacobson-Widding (ed.), *Identity: Personal and Socio-cultural* (Uppsala – Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International – Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1983), 35–46.

identification as more appropriate for the solution of a particular problem.¹⁶⁶ Thus we find indications that individuals, in the process of group-building, have a tendency to draw on various alternatives, to evaluate them according to their immediate needs, while respecting as well existing alliances based on these allegiances, which make it difficult to simply change the latter.¹⁶⁷ Moreover, larger groups appear to be favoured over smaller units when it comes to processes of ethnic mobilisation. This result points to the strategic context of ethnic visions.¹⁶⁸

In a recent article, Rogers F. Brubaker and Frederick Cooper have argued that insistence on the flexibility of categories of identification questions the concept of 'identity' in itself. They have also warned against the use of categories that play a role for individual or group identifications, as these categories have to be accounted for by demonstrating at which particular moments they gain importance.¹⁶⁹ While the first point is of course justified, it must nevertheless be said that there are myriads of ethnic, religious, social, and other allegiances that are effectively *barred* to an individual or to a group of individuals. Therefore, if the researcher keeps in mind that the repertoire has its (frequently rather strict) limits, the concept of different and overlapping categories of identification retains its importance. Brubaker's and Cooper's second point corresponds to what I intend to do in this book.

The West African case studies will thus attempt to address the different aspects of discussing group identifications. They will analyse the evolution of ethnic identifications according to the recent, consensual approach that regards ethnicity as a complex mixture of pre-colonial (although not necessarily 'primordial') and later 'constructed' affinities. Their examination will set ethnic solidarity in the matrix of repertoires, in which it has to position itself in relation to aspects of identification such as 'the nation' and 'race', not omitting regional and smaller, village solidarities. It will also bring the state into this panorama as another, strongly neglected, problem for both the pre-colonial political entities and the colonial state. Finally, I will question the plausibility of rational behaviour as an explanation for position changes regarding the individuals' group identities, and bring the results into a global historical perspective.

166 Eriksen, Thomas Hylland, 'Complexity in social and cultural integration: Some analytical dimensions', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 30(6), 2007, 1055–69, 1062.

167 Green, Elliot G., 'Understanding the Limits to Ethnic Change: Lessons from Uganda's "Lost Counties"', *Perspectives on Politics* 6(3), 2008, 473–85, 480–1.

168 Cohen, David William, and E.S. Atieno Odhiambo, 'Ayany, Malo and Ogot: Historians in Search of a Luo Nation', *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines* 27(107), 1987, 269–86, 277–9.

169 Brubaker, Rogers, and Frederick Cooper, 'Beyond "Identity"', *Theory and Society* 29(1), 2000, 1–47, 6, 11–2.

Wolof and Wolofisation: Statehood, Colonial Rule, and Identification in Senegal

Unwelcome Identifications: Colonial Conquest, Independence, and the Uneasiness with Ethnic Sentiment in Contemporary Senegal

The ethnic friction which characterises classic interpretations of African states is remarkably absent in Senegalese society. Senegal is often presented as a society dominated by Wolof-speakers, particularly in the urban agglomeration of Dakar, which has assimilated large groups of immigrants both socially and linguistically.¹ This has increasingly led scholars to define Senegal as a predominantly ‘Wolof society’, whose language is spreading widely (which is sometimes seen as being linked to Murid Islam as well). The Wolof language has migrated from the region of the capital and other urban communities, such as Saint-Louis, Tivaouane, Thiès, Diourbel, and Kaolack, into the southern coastal belt towards the Gambian border. This has strongly influenced the interpretation of the history of what is present-day Senegal. Pre-colonial states are therefore often described as ‘Wolof states’; their ruling dynasties – if there were any – are defined as ‘Wolof’. The Wolof nature of Senegal’s political structures is not seriously in question.²

As Senegambia is located on the early modern sea routes to India and the slave ports of the so-called Guinea Coast, information on its inhabitants was available to Europeans from an early period. Such information was also provided by Eurafricans, who were most strongly present in Casamance and the Cacheu-Bissau area.³ Moreover, European officials managed commercial factories on Senegalese land for centuries, starting as early as the sixteenth century, although their interest was often focused more on the acquisition of slaves and less on the concrete political realities in the hinterland. Nevertheless,

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- 1 Diouf, Mamadou, ‘Assimilation coloniale et identités religieuses de la civilité des originaires des Quatre Communes (Sénégal)’, *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 34(3), 2000, 565–87, 570.
 - 2 Diop, Abdoulaye Bara, *La société Wolof: tradition et changement: Les systèmes d’inégalité et de domination* (Paris: Karthala, 1981), 16–7.
 - 3 Mark, Peter, ‘The Evolution of “Portuguese” Identity: Luso-Africans on the Upper Guinea Coast from the Sixteenth to the early Nineteenth Century’, *Journal of African History* 40(2), 1999, 173–91.



MAP 2 Senegambia

commercial activities brought early contact with pre-colonial states such as Kajoor, Bawol, Waalo, Jolof, Siin, Saluum, Fuuta Tooro, Bara in present-day Gambia, and Kaabu in Casamance (Map 2).⁴

From the time of the French conquest in the second half of the nineteenth century, the available source material on local communities becomes more reliable. After the final French victory in the internecine wars in the interior of

4 Becker, Charles, 'Histoire de la Sénégambie du xve au xviiie siècle: un bilan', *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines* 25(98), 1985, 213–42, 230.



MAP 3 *The Petite Côte in Senegal*

Senegal, colonial domination allowed for a more comprehensive documentation of the political realities of the territory: after 1850, the French had an early presence on the coast in the settlements of Joal and, for some time, Nianing, and in the nascent peanut production centre of Kaolack in Saluum, and the town of Fatick in Siin (Map 3).⁵ To the south, the British enclave colony of the Gambia,

5 Brooks, George E., 'Peanuts and Colonialism: Consequences of the Commercialization of Peanuts in West Africa, 1830–70', *Journal of African History* 16(1), 1975, 29–54, 43–4; Klein, Martin A., *Islam and Imperialism in Senegal: Sine-Saloum, 1847–1914* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1968), 114–7.

and the French Casamance completed European control. The remaining rebel movements from the pre-colonial states were in the end unable to cope with the European conquest. The groundwork was thus laid for further investigation into local communities, in an attempt to create a working administration.

Nonetheless, before the 1920s the French did not create any blueprints for a 'good administration' according to what they regarded as ethnic customs. Priorities were, indeed, very different. Senegal was considered an early model colony, characterised by prosperous peanut cultivation, which absorbed a considerable part of the colonisers' economic concerns.⁶ Senegal was also one of the most 'Europeanised' African colonies in terms of political participation. Following earlier experiments, in 1848 the emerging Second French Republic had conferred voting rights on the Black African and *métis* (mixed) populations of France's Senegalese colonies.⁷ Immigrants to the early French outposts, the so-called *Quatre Communes* (Four Communes: Saint-Louis, Rufisque, Gorée Island, and the future capital of Dakar, becoming a settlement area in the 1860s), were thus able to enjoy, at least in the long term, the corresponding political privileges, which by 1900 came close to those of European citizens.⁸ These privileged Senegalese were in stark contrast to the large majority of more than 90 per cent of *sujets* (subjects) living outside of the territory of the four towns, and were in 1914 the first constituency to send an African representative into a European parliament, the French National Assembly. This distinction would long be at least as essential in political terms as any categorisation on ethnic grounds; it also defined a rural-urban divide.⁹ Later, Senegalese nationalism consequently came to be built on the idea of the urban elites representing the 'civilised centre' of West Africa.¹⁰ In the post-colonial state of Senegal, the legacy of this tendency towards an elitist and 'Europeanised' political culture

6 Kanya-Forstner, A.S., *The Conquest of Western Sudan: A Study in French Military Imperialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 28–44; Klein, *Islam*, 43–4.

7 Diouf, Mamadou, *Le Kajoor au XIX^e siècle: Pouvoir cédde et conquête coloniale* (Paris: Karthala, 1990), 130–3; Johnson, G. Wesley, *The Emergence of Black Politics in Senegal: The Struggle for Power in the Four Communes, 1900–1920* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1971), 26–8.

8 Diouf, 'Assimilation', 582; Hargreaves, John D., 'Assimilation in Eighteenth-Century Senegal', *Journal of African History* 6(2), 1965, 177–84, 181–2; Johnson, Nancy Kwang, 'Senegalese "into Frenchmen"? The French Technology of Nationalism in Senegal', *Nationalism & Ethnic Politics* 10(1), 2004, 135–58.

9 Diouf, Mamadou, 'L'idée municipale: Une idée neuve en Afrique', *Politique Africaine* 74, 1999, 13–23, 21.

10 Bornstein, Ronald, 'The Organisation of Senegal River States', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 10(2), 1972, 267–83, 282; Foltz, William J., *From French West Africa to the Mali Federation* (New Haven – London: Yale University Press, 1965), 137–8.

was represented by the Parti Socialiste Sénégalais (PSS), successor of the Union Populaire du Sénégal (UPS), and by political leaders Léopold Sédar Senghor and Abdou Diouf.

Ethnic sentiment in Senegal has not in an outright way been denied by the post-colonial political elite, but between the Second World War and the 1970s it was largely downplayed. Ethnic labels appeared in official demographic statistics of the post-colonial Republic of Senegal, but not in elite discourse.¹¹ In the rhetoric of political leaders, any existing cultural difference was compensated for by a general feeling of harmony and unity. New attempts in the 1990s to create ethnic associations in Senegalese territory largely failed.¹² This might explain why scholars have often accepted the idea of a post-colonial Senegal that was harmonious with regard to ethnic oppositions.

In linguistic terms, the post-colonial country has indeed become a largely Wolofophone society; this dominance had already become visible in the 1950s. In the present day, up to 90 per cent of the Senegalese are more or less fluent in Wolof.¹³ Fluency in the colonial language, French, has dwindled to a mere 20 per cent, and knowledge of some French vocabulary has rather become a mark of distinction for urban speakers.¹⁴ Already in the nineteenth century, even among the African elites of the French outposts, Wolof had enjoyed the role of a *lingua franca*.¹⁵ If we accept the results of anthropological research from the

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- 11 Adamolekun, Ladipo, 'Bureaucrats and the Senegalese Political Process', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 9(4), 1971, 543–59, 551–2; Barker, Jonathan, 'Political Space and the Quality of Participation in Rural Africa: A Case from Senegal', *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 21(1), 1987, 1–16, 11–2; Fatton, Robert, 'Clientelism and Patronage in Senegal', *African Studies Review* 29(4), 1986, 61–78, 71–2; Beck, Linda J., 'Senegal's "Patrimonial Democrats": Incremental Reform and the Obstacles to the Consolidation of Democracy', *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 31(1), 1997, 1–31, 8–9; Boone, Catherine, 'State Power and Economic Crisis in Senegal', *Comparative Politics* 22(3), 1990, 341–57, 345–7.
- 12 Coulon, Christian, 'La tradition démocratique au Sénégal: histoires d'un mythe', *Studia Africana* 10, 1999, 69–83, 81.
- 13 McLaughlin, Fiona, 'Senegal: The Emergence of a National Lingua Franca', in Andrew Simpson (ed.), *Language & National Identity in Africa* (Oxford etc.: Oxford University Press, 2008), 79–97, 90–1.
- 14 McLaughlin, 'Senegal', 96–7; McLaughlin, Fiona, 'Dakar Wolof and the configuration of an urban identity', *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 14(2), 2001, 153–72.
- 15 Jones, Hilary, 'From Mariage à la Mode to Weddings at Town Hall: Marriage, Colonialism, and Mixed-Race Society in Nineteenth-Century Senegal', *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 38(1), 2005, 27–48, 35–6; Jones, D.H., 'The Catholic Mission and some aspects of assimilation in Senegal, 1817–1852', *Journal of African History* 21(2), 1980, 323–40, 328; Sackur, Amanda, 'The Development of Creole Society and Culture in Saint-Louis and Gorée, 1719–1817' (unpublished PhD thesis, School of Oriental and African Studies, 1999), 96–100.

colonial period, the role of Wolophone merchants and Murid marabouts helped to steadily broaden the language community between 1890 and 1960.¹⁶ It appears to have pushed other language communities such as the Pulaar (the regional variant of Fulfulde), Sereer, and Jola into the background; from 1945 migration flows to and from the urban centres of Dakar and Saint-Louis had a strong effect on this process. Many of the immigrants became almost exclusively Wolof-speaking.¹⁷ Social pressure also had a linguistic impact on such processes, in particular in post-colonial public education. For a long period there was little opposition to this trend.¹⁸

Official figures on ethnic groups over the post-colonial period do not mirror the trends in linguistic affiliation: in 1988, the 'Wolof' percentage of the population is given as 43.7 per cent, compared with 14.8 per cent 'Sereer', 12 per cent 'Pël', 11.2 per cent 'Tukolor', 5.5 per cent 'Diola', and 4.6 per cent 'Mandinka'; other, smaller groups (counted as ethnic) include the 'Sarakole' with 1.1 per cent, the 'Bambara' with 1 per cent, the 'Balante' with 0.7 per cent, and the 'Laobe' with 0.4 per cent. The 'Lebu' are counted as part of the Wolof population in the 1976 and 1988 censuses.¹⁹

Contrary to studies of Wolof language, Wolof as an identification from a historical perspective is barely present in research on Senegambia. Current historical research focuses much more on 'Wolof' institutions and religion than on the broader identification of the communities. Many scholars seem simply to consider it to be expected that in states where the ruling dynasty was Wolophone, most of the local populations defined themselves as 'Wolof'. In the interpretation of oral historical traditions, the categories of language on the one hand, and cultural group identification on the other hand, are also frequently blurred.²⁰

16 Mersadier, Y., *Budgets Familiaux Africains: Etude chez 136 familles de salariés dans trois centres urbains du Sénégal* (Saint-Louis: Centre IFAN – Sénégal, 1957), 13.

17 Barbary, Olivier, 'Dakar et la Sénégambie: Evolution d'un espace migratoire transnational', in Momar Coumba Diop (ed.), *Le Sénégal et ses voisins* (Dakar: Sociétés – Espaces – Temps, 1994), 142–63, 144–8.

18 Flis-Zonabend, Françoise, *Lycéens de Dakar* (Paris: François Maspero, 1968), 29–30.

19 Lopes, Carlos, *Kaabunké: Espaço, território e poder na Guiné-Bissau, Gâmbia e Casamance pré-coloniais* (Lisbon: Comissão Nacional para as Comemorações dos Descobrimentos Portugueses, 1999), 54–72.

20 This relationship remains usually quite vague, as in Diouf's monograph on Kajoor: 'Il existe une unité et une identité de stratification sociale dans la société Wolof malgré la pluralité des formations politiques, dont les fonctions varient selon les désignations ou des charges spécifiques à tel ou tel royaume'; see Diouf, *Kajoor*, 43; Gamble, David P., *The Wolof of Senegambia: together with notes on the Lebu and the Serer* (London: International

With regard to post-colonial issues, it seems difficult to define what 'Wolof' as an identification really means. One of the leading sociologists working on Wolof culture during the post-colonial period, Donal Cruise O'Brien, points out this problem: 'Informants often find it difficult to specify either in general terms who can be identified as a Wolof, or even whether they themselves should be categorised as Wolof ... There are no fixed ethnic boundaries here, no lines of battle drawn up by colonial experience, on the whole no primordialism, rather what may be (for the state) a helpful ambiguity and flux'.²¹ Historians working on group relations in Senegambia normally do not share this view. In Vincent Monteil's classic studies, the Wolof ethnicity already appears as a homogeneous bloc and as a vital factor within the political entities.²² James Searing, in his important studies on the structure of the Senegambian states of Kajoor and Bawol in the nineteenth century, argues for group identity along the same general lines, and the Islamic Muridiyya brotherhood is often presented as the group religion of 'the Wolof'.²³

But Wolof language also seems to have a role in underscoring the power of dignitaries of one particular community. Praise and song performances were essential cultural elements in both pre-colonial and colonial times to sustain customary rights to land and status for the Wolophone nobility. This social function of the language continues to be important. As regards the performances,

African Institute, 1957), 44–5; Diop, *Société Wolof*, 138–52; Barry, Boubacar, *Le Royaume du Waalo: Le Sénégal avant la Conquête* (Paris: François Maspero, 1972), 87–106; Diop, Samba, *The Oral History and Literature of the Wolof People of Waalo, Northern Senegal: The Master of the Word (Griot) in the Wolof Tradition* (Lewiston/NY – Queenston – Lampeter: Edwin Mellen, 1995), 69–125; Sonko-Godwin, Patience, *Ethnic groups Of The Senegambia: a Brief History* (Banjul: Sunrise Publishers, 1994 [1988]), 20–7; Fall, Yoro, 'Les Wolof au miroir de leur langue: quelques observations', in Jean-Pierre Chrétien and Gérard Prunier (eds.), *Les ethnies ont une histoire* (second edition, Paris: Karthala, 2003), 117–23, 117, 121–2; and Diouf, *Kajoor*, 31–5, 37–40.

- 21 O'Brien, Donal Cruise, 'The shadow politics of Wolofisation', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 36(1), 1995, 25–46, 27.
- 22 Monteil, Vincent, *Esquisses Sénégalaises (Wâlo – Kayor – Dyolof – Mourides – Un visionnaire)* (Dakar: Publications de l'Institut Fondamental d'Afrique Noire, 1966), 72, 121.
- 23 Searing, James F., *'God Alone Is King': Islam and Emancipation in Senegal. The Wolof Kingdoms of Kajoor and Bawol, 1859–1914* (Portsmouth/NH: Heinemann, 2002), xxi–xxii; Sy, Cheikh Tidiane, *La Confrérie Sénégalaise des Mourides: Un Essai sur l'Islam au Sénégal* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1969), 76–87. See also Glasman, Joël, 'Le Sénégal imaginé: évolution d'une classification ethnique de 1816 aux années 1920', *Afrique & Histoire* 2, 2004, 111–39, 112.

those were carried out by a particular *griot* or praise-singer caste, the *jéwél*, who managed social relations between Wolof-speakers.²⁴

Obviously, the test case for the importance of an ethnic Wolof identification was contact with 'others'. In coastal Senegambia, Wolof-speakers historically neighboured the groups of the 'Tukolor', the 'Sereer', the 'Jola', the 'Fulbe' (or 'Pël'), the 'Lebu', and the 'Mandinka', in addition to some smaller communities. Their interaction with the Wolophone populations was essential for the latter's self-description.

The Tukolor, a Fulfulde-speaking group, are in Senegambia most prominent in the north-east, but they can also be found in pockets in all of its northern parts, and even in the southern coastal regions and in Casamance. Tukolor cultural identifications are mainly regarded as being linked to the Tijaniyya branch of local Islam, and to the region of Fuuta Tooro, which for the pre-colonial period is now sometimes depicted as a genuine 'Tukolor state'. In Fuuta Tooro, the Tukolor have kept their distance from Wolophone communities and have rarely intermarried.²⁵

As concerns Fuuta Tooro, its populations were characterised by the Jihad experiences of the marabout Nasir al-Din in the late seventeenth century, and the campaigns of Al-Hajj Umar Tall and his successors between 1850 and the 1880s.²⁶ From the beginning of the twentieth century, Tukolor populations increasingly started to migrate to the population centre of Dakar. Initially, they showed a clear tendency to marry inside of their own group, which was maintained into the early 1960s. Yet in linguistic terms, acculturation to the Wolof language was strong, although it was criticised by a part of the local elite of Fuuta Tooro.²⁷

24 Patterson, Amy S., 'A Reappraisal of Democracy in Civil Society: Evidence from Rural Senegal', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 36(3), 1998, 423–41, 431; Irvine, Judith T., 'When is Genealogy History? Wolof genealogies in comparative perspective', *American Ethnologist* 5(4), 1978, 651–74; Leymarie, Isabelle, *Les griots wolof du Sénégal* (Paris: Maison-Neuve & Larose: 1999), 32–4.

25 Cantrelle, Pierre, 'L'endogamie des populations du Fouta Sénégalais', *Population (French Edition)*, 15(4), 1960, 665–76, 666–7; Dilley, Roy M., 'Spirits, Islam and Ideology: A Study of a Tukolor Weavers' Song ('Dillere')', *Journal of Religion in Africa* 17(3), 1987, 245–79, 253.

26 Perinbam, B. Marie, 'Islam in the Banamba Region of the Eastern Beledugu, C. 1800 to C. 1900', *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 19(4), 1986, 637–57, 641; Robinson, David, 'The Umarian Emigration of the Late Nineteenth Century', *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 20(2), 1987, 245–70, 252–3.

27 ANS, 11D1/973, *Plan de Protection [du Territoire du Sénégal]: Chapitre 11: Hypothèses* (without number), without date [1957], 11; Diop, Abdoulaye Bara, *Société Toucouleur et Migration*

In contrast to the Tukulor, the Sereer populations of Senegambia were, in the nineteenth century, not concentrated in one major political structure. Some, including the Noon, the Safèn, and other Sereer-speaking groups, lived on the margins of the political entities; they were said to reside in autonomous 'clans' in the forest. Sereer-speakers were known for matrilinearity and spirit worship and were thus characterised by overgeneralising French administrators and anthropologists.²⁸ Generally, some scholars have drawn a distinction between 'true Sereer' and those being 'assimilated to Wolof culture'. From this perspective, some Sereer groups refused to have any stratified political organisation, and employed the label 'you Wolof' (*nga Wolof*) as an insult, while some 'Sereer states' were said to be ruled by a 'Wolof elite', such as in the case of Siin.²⁹

These opinions seem to find some support in the fact that in the 1860s the *Buur Saluum* (the ruler of the pre-colonial state of Saluum) had a senior official specifically responsible for the administrative and military coordination of the local elite, an official who was called *Jaraf Wolof* – which seems to point to a state organisation, in which the elite defined itself as 'Wolof'.³⁰ For Siin, French documents from the conquest phase indicate that its population was predominantly Sereer. However, the reports of Ernest Noirot, the first French administrator of a short-lived Sine-Saloum district, already cast doubt on this view. Noirot argues that while the majority of Siin's inhabitants appear to be Sereer,

(*Enquête sur l'Immigration Toucouleur à Dakar*) (Dakar: Publications de l'Institut Français d'Afrique Noire, 1965), 186–7; McLaughlin, Fiona, 'Haalpulaar Identity as a Response to Wolofization', *African Languages and Cultures* 8(2), 1995, 153–68; Diouf, *Kajoor*, 20.

- 28 Barker, Jonathan, 'Stability and Stagnation: The State in Senegal', *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 11(1), 1977, 23–42, 31.
- 29 Ba, Abdou Bouri, 'Essai sur l'histoire du Saloum et du Rip', with 'Avant-propos' by Charles Becker and Victor Martin, *Bulletin de l'IFAN, Série B* 38(4), 1976, 813–60, 816–26; Sarr, Alioune, 'Histoire du Sine-Saloum (Sénégal)', with 'Introduction, bibliographie et notes', by Charles Becker, *Bulletin de l'IFAN, Série B*, 46(3–4), 1986–1987, 211–83, 247–51; Gamble, *Wolof*, 14; Diouf, *Kajoor*, 21; Gosselin, Gabriel, 'Ordres, castes et Etats en pays Sérèr (Sénégal): Essai d'interprétation d'un système politique en transition', *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 8(1), 1974, 135–43, 136–7; Klein, *Islam*, 9–21; Searing, James F., 'Conversion to Islam, Military Recruitment and Generational Conflict in a Sereer-Safèn Village (Bandia), 1920–1938', *Journal of African History* 44(1), 2003, 73–94, 92.
- 30 ANF, Papiers Ernest Noirot, 148/AP/3/1/4, Noirot, administrator of Sine-Saloum, to De la Mothe, Governor of Senegal, *Rapport sur la participation des contingents du Saloum à la campagne dirigée contre le Bourba Djiolof*. (without number), without date, transcription in Martin, Victor; Charles Becker, and Mohamed Mbodj (eds.), 'Trois documents d'Ernest Noirot sur l'histoire des royaumes du Siin et du Saalum (Sénégal)', *Bulletin de l'IFAN, série B* 42(1), 1980, 37–85, 56.

the *ceddo* (the members of the military) are to be seen as a rather sizeable, separate group.³¹ The unreliable early statistics tell a similar story: the first census of the new protectorate of Siin indicates a huge majority of Sereer-speakers, and, indeed, no Wolof-speakers at all!³² The more detailed censuses for the newly-created district of Thiès, which included many coastal communities formerly belonging to Siin, show that at least in the areas of Joal and Nianing, huge groups of local Wolof-speaking inhabitants had previously been subjects of the *Buur Siin*.³³ In Saluum, the great majority of its inhabitants in the interwar period could be described as Wolof-speaking, and the adoption of the language by the rest of the local communities has been presented as an ongoing process.³⁴ These contradictions show how complex the issue of identifications on the Petite Côte was, even at this early stage.

- 31 ANF, Papiers Ernest Noirot, 148/AP/3/3/111, Noirot, *Notes sur le pays de Sine: Ses frontières – son sol – sa population – sa constitution – ses cultures – son commerce – dénombrement de la population – état de la population par villages et par catégorie d'individus*. (without number), without date [1892], in Martin, Becker, and Mohamed Mboj (eds.), 'Documents', 64–5.
- 32 Becker, Charles; Victor Martin, Jean Schmitz, and Monique Chastanet, with contribution by Jean-François Maurel and Saliou Mbaye, *Les premiers recensements au Sénégal et l'évolution démographique: Présentation de documents* (Dakar, ORSTOM, 1983), 14–29, reproduces data from Noirot's first census of Siin in 1891, to be found in ANS, GGAOF 22G 42, and from Lefiliatre's 1904 census, kept in ANS, GGAOF, 1G 290.
- 33 Becker, Martin, Schmitz, Chastanet, Maurel, and Mbaye, *Recensements*, 94, reproduces data from the 'Recensement du Cercle de Thiès de 1904'; CADN, Fonds 'Anciennes Colonies', Fonds Dakar, 293, Gautier, Inspector of Administrative Affairs, Territory of Senegal, *Rapport au Chef de Territoire – Exécution de l'ordre de mission n° 3903 du 15 Juin 1957: Etude des possibilités éventuelles de la réunion des deux cantons de Sanghaïe et Ngayokhème en province de Sanghaïe-Ngayokhème – (application des dispositions de l'article 28 de l'arrêté n° 1978 APA/2 du 20 Mars 1957)* (n° 17C/IAA/JJG), 10 Aug. 1957, 5; CADN, Fonds 'Anciennes Colonies', Fonds Dakar, 192, Michel, Inspector of Administrative Affairs, *Rapport: Subdivision de Fatick (Affaires Politiques)* (n° 1), 11 March 1945, 1, 3.
- 34 Péliissier, Paul, *Les paysans du Sénégal: Les civilisations agraires du Cayor à la Casamance* (Saint-Yrieix: Fabrègue, 1966), 384–5, 452–3. On the legends of 'Wolof immigration' into Saluum, see CADN, Fonds 'Anciennes Colonies', Fonds Dakar, 293, Gautier, Inspector of Administrative Affairs, Territory of Senegal, *Rapport au Chef de Territoire – Exécution de l'ordre de mission n° 3903 du 15 Juin 1957: Etude des possibilités éventuelles de la réunion des trois cantons de Djilor, Sokone et du Niombato en une province dite du Bas-Saloum (application des dispositions de l'article 28 de l'arrêté n° 1978/APA.2 du 20 Mars 1957)* (n° 10C-IAA/JJG), 3 Aug. 1957, 7. On the 'Wolof majority' in statistics of the subdivision of Foundiougne, see 19. For Wolof group behaviour in seasonal migration, see CADN, Fonds 'Anciennes Colonies', Fonds Dakar, 195, Administrator of Subdivision of Foundiougne, *Subdivision de Foundiougne – Rapport Politique, Année: 1956* (without number), without date, 4. On

The Lebu of the Cap-Vert Peninsula (concentrated in settlements such as Yoff, N'gor, and early Dakar) have been treated as a singular ethnocultural group in anthropological studies throughout the twentieth century, although some researchers see them as speaking a 'dialect' of the Wolof language.³⁵ The ethnic distinction was made in professional and religious terms. The Lebu are presented as specialists in fishery, and as followers of their own Islamic-syncretist religious brotherhood, committed to the rules set in the late nineteenth century by Saidi Limamu Laye, a Sufi saint venerated on the Peninsula of Cap Vert.³⁶

However, the Layen brotherhood was not exclusive to the Lebu. Wolophone immigrants from the Waalo became a majority of its members, although they eventually became 'assimilated' (*lébouisés*). The Lebu apparently had a clear notion of insiders and outsiders as regards membership of the group but what it meant to be a 'convert' was complicated, and land rights were connected to 'Lebu-ness' and Lebu political rights. This idea of a community developed from the start of the French protectorate over the Cap-Vert Peninsula in 1857.³⁷

As in the case of the Lebu, Sufi Islam, with its strong emphasis on the personal relationship between the marabout and his disciples, offered an alternative approach to group organisation.³⁸ Religious leaders attempted to avoid the

Saluum, see Blundo, Giorgio, 'Mbootaay: istituzioni associative tradizionali dei Wolof Saalum-Saalum (Senegal)', *Africa (Roma)* 45(3), 1990, 384–409.

- 35 Versluys, Eline, 'Multilingualism and the City: The Construction of Urban Identities in Dakar (Senegal)', *City & Society* 20(2), 2008, 282–300, 286; Duchemin, G.J., 'La République lébou et le peuplement actuel', *Etudes sénégalaises* 1, 1949, 289–308; Diouf, Mamadou, 'Identité ethnique et vie politique municipale: Les Lébu de Rufisque', in Jean-Pierre Chrétien and Gérard Prunier (eds.), *Les ethnies ont une histoire* (second edition, Paris: Karthala, 2003), 283–302. Some local historians seem to hold that the Lebu are a mixture ('brassage') of Sereer and Wolof; Mamadou Diouf points to lack of research since 1990, see Diouf, *Kajoor*, 19.
- 36 Gallais, Jean, 'Dans la grande banlieue de Dakar: les villages lébous de la presqu'île du Cap-Vert', *Cahiers d'Outre-Mer* 26, 1954 (avril-juin), 137–54.
- 37 Laborde, Cécile, *La Confrérie Layenne et les Lébou du Sénégal: Islam et culture traditionnelle en Afrique* (Bordeaux: Centre d'Etudes d'Afrique Noire, 1995), 47, 62–3; Diop, Momar Coumba, and Mamadou Diouf, 'Enjeux et contraintes politiques de la gestion municipale au Sénégal', *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 26(1), 1992, 1–23, 7; CADN, Fonds 'Anciennes Colonies', Fonds Dakar, 293, Claude Michel, Administrator of the Banlieue of Dakar and *chargé du village indigène* of Médina, *Note sur l'Organisation Coutumière (Sociale et Politique) de la Collectivité Léboue de Dakar – Texte écourté pour être rendu plus objectif, suivant les indications de la Direction des Affaires Politiques et Administratives.* (without number), 1st Nov. 1933, 1–2.
- 38 Diop, *Société Wolof*, 247–62.

divisive effect of tensions between regional and language groups. From 1850 until the independence of Senegal, the Tijaniyya and the Muridiyya, two strong Sufi brotherhoods, were particularly influential. The Tijaniyya, over the nineteenth century, played a leading role in two Jihads and expanded geographically into the Sokoto Caliphate of Northern Nigeria; parts of present-day Mali; the north-eastern areas occupied by Tukolor populations (and some Fulfulde-speaking nomads) of Senegal; and the city of Kaolack. Tijani power was built on an alliance, negotiated from the last decades of the nineteenth century, between the French authorities and Ibrāhīm Niasse and other Tijaniyya leaders.³⁹

The Murids, following the early attempts by their erstwhile leader Cheikh Amadu Bamba, won over the populations of both Bawol and Kajoor.⁴⁰ Their success has often been seen as a challenge to the 'feudal order' within 'Wolof' peasant communities. In creating new villages in the area of Diourbel, the disciples of Amadu Bamba attempted to make belonging to Murid Islam the dominant sense of identification. Nevertheless, while this approach does not pay much attention to ethnic solidarities, in recent studies Murid Islam has often been described as a religion exclusive to the Wolof populations, and as a dividing line between the ethnic categories of 'Wolof' and 'Sereer'.⁴¹ For instance, the negative characterisation of the 'Wolof states' as states inhabited by plunderers in much of the research – as exemplified in Cheikh Anta Babou's discussion of the 'devastating effect of political violence in the Wolof society' – mainly reflect a Murid vision of 'pagan' state organisation.⁴² The troops of these pre-colonial states, the *ceddo*, were largely regarded by the Murids (and the Tijanis) as alcoholic heathens.

Other forms of identification operated as alternatives to possible ethnic solidarity, but also to religious group-building, in Senegal. Under colonial rule the status of slave or former slave, informally maintained long after the emancipation of the late nineteenth century, was one such factor.⁴³ Profession

39 Seesemann, Rüdiger, *The Divine Flood: Ibrāhīm Niasse and the Roots of a Twentieth-Century Sufi Revival* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Kané, Mouhamed Moustapha, 'L'empreinte de l'islam confrérique sur le paysage commercial sénégalais: islam et société en Sénégalie', *Islam et sociétés au sud du Sahara* 8, 1994, 17–41, 20–2.

40 Behrman, Lucy, 'The Political Significance of the Wolof Adherence to Muslim Brotherhoods in the Nineteenth Century', *African Historical Studies* 1(1), 1968, 60–78.

41 Charles, Eunice A., 'Shaikh Amadu Ba and Jihad in Jolof', *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 8(3), 1975, 367–82, 369; Seering, 'God', 20–1; Babou, Cheikh Anta, *Fighting the Greater Jihad: Amadou Bamba and the Founding of the Muridiyya of Senegal, 1853–1913* (Athens/Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2007), 56, see also 80.

42 Babou, *Fighting*, 55.

43 Moitt, Bernard, 'Slavery and Emancipation in Senegal's Peanut Basin: The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries', *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 22(1), 1989, 27–50, 30–1.

could have a similar function, and lead to very divisive identifications, particularly if they were linked to caste traditions.⁴⁴ Some of these caste identifications could be interpreted as ethnic: thus, jewel making was a reputed domain widely associated with ‘the Wolof’, and river navigation and piloting with the ‘Sarakole’.⁴⁵

Group relations on Senegal’s Petite Côte and in the large hinterland of this coast were particularly complex as this region was an area of frequent and significant contact between groups that came to be regarded, in the post-colonial state, as clearly different: specifically, the Sereer and Wolof. Here, Wolof-speaking inhabitants constantly had to deal with neighbours from different linguistic groups. For this reason, the geographical setting provides us with some outstanding material that shows how sense of identification changed over time. These results will be contrasted with conditions in the territory of the former pre-colonial states of Kajoor and Bawol to the north – ruled by Wolophone dynasties – and with those in the British-ruled Gambia to the south.

An Ethnic Pattern in the Mid-Nineteenth Century? Perception and Negotiation of Wolof Group Identification at the Brink of the French Conquest

With the expansion of French control and the establishment of colonial rule, the encounter between colonial administrators and Wolof-speakers led to a certain perception of the colonial subjects, bolstered by newly obtained information. Started by the Governor of Senegal, Léon Faïdherbe, in the 1840s and 1850s, the French intensified their military campaigns in the region from the 1870s, relying on a complex network of allies.⁴⁶ In this early phase, systematic information-gathering was difficult, as conditions within the French colonies only became more stable after 1900.⁴⁷

44 Diouf, *Kajoor*, 28; Diop, *Société Wolof*, 33–45; Tamari, Tal, ‘The Development of Caste Systems in West Africa’, *Journal of African History* 32(2), 1991, 221–50, 225.

45 On jewel makers, see ANS, 11D1/5, District (Cercle) Commissioner of Bas-Sénégal, *Notice sur Villes de l’A.O.F.: Satisfaction à 3358/C. du 16 Mai 1940* (n° 5), without date; on river navigators ANS, 11D1/1059, Security Service of Senegal, *Renseignements Généraux* (without number), without date, 1–2.

46 Barrows, Leland Conley, ‘Some paradoxes of pacification: Senegal and France in the 1860s’, in B.K. Swartz and Raymond E. Dumett (eds.), *West African culture dynamics: archaeological and historical perspectives* (The Hague – Paris – New York: Mouton, 1980), 515–44, 537–40.

47 ANS, GGAOF, Fonds Ancien, 1D11, Lafont to Faïdherbe, Governor of Senegal (without number), 7 March [1858]; Crowder, *Africa*, 75–80; Echenberg, Myron, *Colonial conscripts*:

Nevertheless, some information coming from the Senegalese populations was indeed processed during this early colonial period, and from the first decades of the twentieth century colonial administrators were instructed to collect historical accounts of the different regions. The stabilisation of colonial political structures on the ground altered the conditions of how local populations defined their ethnic identification. Another factor was the decreasing importance of 'assimilation' as a theoretical objective of the colonisation. Where important local positions had not in the meantime been filled with favourites of French officials, official policy returned to a tendency of restoring the 'traditional dynasties,' favouring in particular veterans who were members of 'noble families'. The seven former states on Senegalese territory ceased to exist, but their dynasties retained some influence because of the colonial policy, which used anthropological work as well to find 'authentic' political structures.⁴⁸

In the four-tiered system of the French administration in the West African colonies, the power of 'traditional' chiefs (*chefs de canton*, who sometimes formally served a 'traditional', honorific *chef de region*, and who were superior to village chiefs or headmen, the so-called *chefs de village*) cannot be underestimated. Older research has portrayed the chiefs as mere puppets of the French administrative system. However, in practice the chiefs had a relatively large amount of room for manoeuvre, and could use the colonial structures (the native code or *indigénat*, and their own role in the recruitment of forced labourers and soldiers) to intimidate local opponents and unwilling peasants.⁴⁹

Within the search for 'authenticity', French administrators felt encouraged to codify 'indigenous customs'. The 'native codices' (*coutumiers*) classified what the administrators 'identified' as different ethnic communities. 'Native courts' (*tribunaux indigènes*) were the practical expression of this new policy. The chiefs would accordingly have to prove that they were really competent

the Tirailleurs sénégalais in French West Africa, 1857–1960 (Portsmouth/NH: Heinemann – London: James Currey, 1991), 63–4; Michel, Marc, *Les Africains et la Grande Guerre: L'appel à l'Afrique (1914–1918)* (Paris: Karthala, 2003), 23; Lunn, Joe, *Memoirs of the Maelstrom: A Senegalese Oral History of the First World War* (Portsmouth/NH: Heinemann, 1999), 121–30.

48 Conklin, Alice, *A mission to civilize: the republican idea of empire in France and West Africa, 1895–1930* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 162–70; Robinson, David, 'Ethnography and customary law in Senegal', *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines* 32(126), 1992, 221–37, 232–4.

49 Zucarelli, François, 'De la chefferie traditionnelle au canton: évolution du canton colonial au Sénégal 1855–1960', *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines* 13(50), 1973, 213–38, 234–5.

and knowledgeable regarding the 'customs' of their populations.⁵⁰ This new demand for authenticity indicated a clear sympathy for 'traditional' and ethno-cultural arguments, and also showed local and regional opposition groups a way to challenge the existing rulers: the opposition could accuse these rulers of being 'unauthentic'.⁵¹

Before the middle of the nineteenth century, the labels of 'Jolof', 'Jaloffa', or 'Gyloffa' appear in many European reports from local representatives and travellers.⁵² It remains rather unclear what is meant by the labels. In many cases, however, the expression did not refer to language; 'visitors' were more interested in political power, and knowledge about the earlier existence of the Jolof Empire as a pre-colonial political entity, destroyed long before the establishment of the first commercial outposts by Europeans, explains most of these views. On the whole, 'Jolof' appears as a *political* entity, but the name 'Wolof' had variable meanings in the sources.

Documentation on local political entities during the early phase of the French conquest, in the 1840s and 1850s, is still scant. From the 1860s, our material platform broadens: the process of a changing use of ethnic labels in the conquest phase is documented through a multitude of reports describing interactions between Africans and Europeans and highlighting 'the African voice'. The monograph of Abbé David Boilat, an African priest who had spent much time in France, arguably represents the first such document. Boilat explicitly described himself as a 'child of the land', eager to point out the 'correct terms' for the different Senegalese groups. Significantly, he was the first to criticise the tendency of European travellers to regard all Pulaar (or Fulfulde-speakers) as members of a single group; he insisted that the group name 'Pël' only described the semi-nomadic and acephalous cattle-breeder societies, but not other Fulfulde-speakers in the region, such as the Tukulor.⁵³

In his account, Boilat holds that distinguishing Senegalese groups by sight was extremely difficult and he discarded any racial-biological distinction. The reference to language is obvious for his description of groups, but Boilat also regarded the Lebu as 'Wolof' who had simply taken a different name. Therefore, local groups would have chosen their labels to suit their needs. With regard to the Sereer-Noon, Boilat distinguished them from the other inhabitants of the

50 Van Hoven, Ed, 'Representing Social Hierarchy: Administrators-Ethnographers in the French Sudan: Delafosse, Monteil, and Labouret', *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines* 30(2), 1990, 179–98, 186–9.

51 Zucarelli, 'Chefferie', 221.

52 Hair, 'Continuity', 249–50.

53 Boilat, David, *Esquisses sénégalaises* (Paris: Librairie Bertrand, 1853), 384.

region, including from other Sereer-speakers.⁵⁴ Of course, this is in plain contradiction to later descriptions, both from French administrators and anthropologists, and from local interviewees, who all presented the Noon populations as a definite part of the Sereer ethnic group. However, it is likely that Boilat reflected exactly how the members of this latter group wished to be characterised in the middle of the nineteenth century.

Unlike earlier European accounts, the observations of Boilat tackle in part the question of Wolof sense of identification, although, as in the case of Kajoor, he mostly associates Wolofness with the Muslim religion. Citing Fara Kaba, the military leader (*farba ju rëey*) of the *Damel* Meysa Tend Joor, Boilat makes 'the Wolof' appear as converts to Islam, in contrast to the Sereer-Noon and Sereer-Safèn, described by the Kajoor nobility as savage 'tribes'.⁵⁵ However, the author did not enquire about traditional stories of their origins from the Wolof-speakers. On the contrary, he returned in this respect to Sereer identifications and origins, for which he relied on Tukolor sources describing them as immigrants from the Fuuta Tooro who had finally settled in Bawol.⁵⁶ Boilat's account of Siin is perplexing, as he holds that while the Sereer played a strong numeric role in this state – he frequently mentions the role of Siin's 'Sereer aristocracy' as part of the state hierarchy – he believed these Sereer populations accepted Wolof rule, in particular that of the Muslim king Ramat Diouf.⁵⁷ On Saluum, Boilat's information is far less precise.⁵⁸

In contrast to Boilat's study, Yoro Diaw's account shows how a sentiment of Wolofness could be formulated by the local elites. Diaw was a member of a noble family from Waalo, the pre-colonial state in the northern interior of Senegal, who had undergone an education at the *Ecole des Otages* in Saint-Louis – a school where selected sons of rulers under French domination obtained, while being hostages of the colonial power, a 'French education'. As chief in the Waalo region, his translated accounts convey a perception of common Wolof identifications.⁵⁹ However, Diaw's notebooks illustrate the same

54 Boilat, *Esquisses*, xv, 43, 59.

55 Boilat, *Esquisses*, 174; Klein, Martin A., 'Social and Economic Factors in the Muslim Revolution in Senegambia', *Journal of African History* 13(3), 1972, 419–41, 427; Diouf, *Kajoor*, 150–1.

56 Boilat, *Esquisses*, 179.

57 Boilat, *Esquisses*, 123, 141, 145–6. It is worth noting that this contradicts the argument of Klein, *Islam*, 8–9.

58 Boilat, *Esquisses*, 180.

59 Boulègue, Jean, 'A la naissance de l'histoire écrite sénégalaise: Yoro Dyao et ses modèles (deuxième moitié du XIX^{ème} siècle, début du XX^{ème} siècle)', *History in Africa* 15, 1988, 395–405, 395–6. As is usual for studies on Wolophone communities, Boulègue represents

initial fixation present in many parts of the colonial administration – the classification of locals according to clear categories – and his account was very much a product of a particular type of ‘colonial thinking’.⁶⁰

A third major account on the situation in the 1860s is the exhaustive report by Emile Pinet-Laprade on the Sereer. This was a colonial document, based largely on information provided to its author by Wolof merchants active in the Cap-Vert peninsula and on the Petite Côte. The informants describe the Sereer with a clear view from outside.⁶¹ The Sereer appear in this report as first-comers on the Petite Côte, having been led into the region by the Gëlwaar dynasty; the Gëlwaar are said to have come from Kaabu, and they would have been relatives of Jola groups from which they had broken away. According to the Pinet-Laprade account, the children of the founding father of those Sereer conquerors, Massa Wali Dione, had established the states of Siin and Saluum. The ‘traditional’ explanation is that Sereer groups entered geographic spaces that were uninhabited, and then became isolated, forming sort of ethnic pockets.⁶² However, in Eastern Bawol, the Sereer groups were said to have mixed with the Wolof; they would have adopted a language derived from Wolof, and were distinguished in the period of the author as ‘M’Balugiafèn’.⁶³ The account shows complexities for which even the contemporary informants had no answer, and which contradict later ethnic interpretations of group solidarity.

The French, for their part, quickly built up their own know-how in administering larger groups within the Senegambian territories. Intruding more and more into the political scenario of the Cap-Vert peninsula, then of the Petite

Diaw’s work from an ethnic perspective, without giving sufficient explanation on this issue: ‘Il était le premier Wolof à écrire l’histoire de son peuple’ (395).

- 60 Dyâo, Yoro, ‘Légendes et coutumes sénégalaises: les cahiers de Yoro Dyâo’, in *Revue d’ethnographie et de sociologie*, 3–4, 1912, published and annotated by Henri Gaden (Paris: E. Leroux, 1912), 119–37, 191–202; Sall, Tamsir Oumar, ‘Yoro Dyao, un aristocrate Waalo-Waalo dans le système colonial’, *Cahiers du CRA* 5, 1987, 161–76, *passim*.
- 61 Despite Bathily’s claim in Bathily, Abdoulaye, ‘Aux origines de l’africanisme: Le rôle de l’œuvre ethnohistorique de Faïdherbe dans la conquête française du Sénégal’, in *Cahiers de Jussieu 2: Le Mal de Voir* (Paris: Union Générale d’Editions, 1976), 77–107, 97–100, Léon Faïdherbe’s own studies are far less fertile on the group identity of Wolophone populations, see Faïdherbe, Léon, *Notices sur la Colonie de Sénégal et sur les pays qui sont en relations avec elle* (Paris: Arthus Bertrand, 1859), 28–43, and Faïdherbe, Léon, *Le Sénégal: La France dans l’Afrique Occidentale* (Paris: Hachette, 1889), 153, 354, 364, 431, 482.
- 62 ANS, GGAOF, 1G 33, Pinet-Laprade, Governor of Senegal, *Notice sur les Serères peuplade répandue sur la partie des côtes occidentales d’Afrique, comprise entre le Cap Vert et la rivière de Saloum* (without number), without date, 1–5.
- 63 ANS, GGAOF, 1G 33, Pinet-Laprade, *Notice...*, 3.

Côte, French officials increased their knowledge of the different pre-colonial states.⁶⁴ Inquiry into group identifications around the new administrative posts of Rufisque, Dakar, Joal and Kaolack allowed a number of new comments about the social relations of local groups. As far as it concerned the Wolof-speaking rulers of the Senegalese interior, such as in Bawol and Kajoor, the French were obviously concerned with 'states' as a main category. Much of the information usually came from informants at the upper level of the social hierarchy. The process of identifying population groups soon advanced for Kajoor, whose rulers were forced to formally cede a part of their territory in 1858; the rest of the state was finally annexed after the defeat of the war leader and ex-Damel, Lat Joor, in the battle of Dexxelé in 1886. From the 1870s, the French believed they had identified distinct ethnic groups within this state: namely 'Wolof', 'Lebu', 'Sereer', and 'Peul'. Such a conclusion was in plain contradiction with the official version given by informants from the upper echelons of the political hierarchy of Kajoor.⁶⁵ The *Damel* of Kajoor and his provincial officials described the composition of their state according to three criteria: in terms of the warrior profession of the *ceddo*, the military elite at the service of the dynasty; the importance of local Muslim clerics providing the religious framework for the inhabitants of the region; and the authority of the *Damel* himself, and of the ruling families. It is not surprising that the ruling authorities of Kajoor wished to give the French such an image of a homogeneous entity. Even so, ethnocultural conflict between groups was not indicated as a factor in the official account of the mid-nineteenth century.⁶⁶

For Bawol, the second so-called 'Wolof state' on Senegalese territory, which controlled, on the Petite Côte, the growing fishing village of M'Bour, the situation was basically the same in the second half of the nineteenth century.⁶⁷ Members of French military campaigns against this political entity attempted to identify different groups of subjects of the *Teeñ*, the paramount ruler of the territory, as belonging to particular ethnic groups.⁶⁸ However, this categorisation largely failed: due to confusing social relations within this pre-colonial state, the

64 In 1900 there was one big attempt to bring knowledge on Senegal's 'races' into a single study, based, however, on group stereotypes, see Lasnet, Alexandre-Bernard, 'Les Races du Sénégal. Sénégalie et Casamance', in *Exposition Universelle de 1900, Les Colonies françaises, Une mission au Sénégal, Ethnographie, botanique, zoologie, géologie par MM. Dr. Lasnet, Aug. Chevalier, A. Cligny, P. Rambaud* (Paris: Challamel, 1900), 1–190.

65 Diouf, *Kajoor*, 181–215.

66 ANS, GGAOF, 1G 36, *Notice sur le Cayor* (without number), ca. 1870.

67 Diouf, *Kajoor*, 153–4.

68 The French also attempted to compile an 'ethnicised' history of the state of Bawol. This pointed to 'Sereer kings' before the takeover of power of the Wolophone *geej*, but the

French mainly focused on Bawol's large population of Sereer-speakers, which were, in reality, at the margins of political power and of 'Wolof institutions'.⁶⁹

Following the accounts of informants from Saluum, French visitors and diplomats claimed at an early stage that this state consisted of different communities, but that such categories of belonging did not affect its political organisation. French Spiritan missionaries coming to the court of the successive *Buur Saluum* Bala Adama N'Diaye, Koumba Ndama Mbodj, and Samba Laobe Fall in the course of the 1850s commented with surprise that the state contained a pluri-lingual society, where the languages of Wolof and Sereer were both very much in use.⁷⁰ In his own correspondence with the French authorities in Gorée, the *Buur Saluum*, Samba Laobe Fall, expressed the same particular concept of rule over a community defined by criteria of the dynasty.⁷¹ The central elements of this concept were the loyalty of the different *jaraf*, the provincial notables, and of the *ceddo* troops, to the local throne. The *Buur Saluum* never referred to any ethnocultural characteristics of the populations under his rule.⁷² However, when questioned by British military officer Smyth O'Connor in 1855, the *Buur Saluum* Koumba Ndama Mbodj gave an image of 'his' subjects that mixed supposed ethnocultural and state loyalty: the ruler held that beyond the borders of his state lived the 'wild tribes' of Bawol; the Sereer and the Lebu; and even the inhabitants of Siin were presented as physically and culturally different.⁷³ Those who lived 'in tribes' stood outside the state's society; there was no need even to mention identification as Wolof.

The *Buur Saluum*'s fellow ruler, the *Buur Siin*, ruler of the neighbouring state closer to the coast, was in conflict with recalcitrant populations who had challenged his authority and later managed to be included in the French zones of influence and protection around Portudal, Nianing, and Kaolack.⁷⁴ These

'tradition' is far from clear. See for that Martin, Victor, and Charles Becker, 'Les Teeñ du Baol: Essai de chronologie', *Bulletin de l'IFAN*, série B, 38(3), 1974, 449–505, 463.

69 ANS, GGAOF, Fonds Ancien, 13G 312, Aquilichini, Resident of Portudal, to French Commissioner of Gorée (n° 74), 6 April 1866.

70 AGCSE, 3 I 1.5a5, Gallais, *Quelques notes sur l'origine de Joal, sur les Wolofs et les Cérers, extraites des lettres datées de Joal* (without number), without date [ca. 1850], 16.

71 On Saluum genealogy, see Boulègue, Jean, 'Contribution à la chronologie du royaume du Saloum', *Bulletin de l'IFAN*, série B 28(3–4), 1966, 657–62, *passim*.

72 ANS, 11D1/1111, *Traduction d'une lettre du roi de Salum arrivée à Gorée en Juin 1859* (without number), without date.

73 Smyth O'Connor, Luke, 'Account of a Visit to the King of Bur Sin, 64 Miles to the North of the Gambia', *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of London* 3(6), 1858–1859, 377–9, 378–9.

74 Diouf, *Kajoor*, 176.

coastal 'Sereer' had, from the point of view of the *Buur Siin*, Koumba Ndoffène Fa Mak Diouf, decided to leave the good political order of things, which was reflected in the use of the ethnocultural group label for these outsiders.⁷⁵ Nonetheless, Siin counted for the French and local sources as a Sereer entity.⁷⁶ Massa Wali Dione, the abovementioned Sereer hero, was described by informants from Joal-Fadiouth as the founding father of the state of Siin. However, the relationship of this state to other, 'Wolof', entities was not very clear from such accounts.⁷⁷ Early European visitors to Siin agreed that the pre-colonial state and its existing institutions were the point of reference for local populations, not language or customs – and they argued that these political institutions were quite close to comparable ones in Kajoor, Bawol, and Saluum.⁷⁸ The missionaries visiting the court of the *Buur Siin* Amadiouf Gnilane Faye Diouf in 1851 were eager to remark that he behaved 'exactly like a Wolof leader'. Such instances of behaviour that was 'typical for Wolof aristocrats' perplexed the early missionaries.⁷⁹ It is, however, interesting to note the aftermath of the 1871 assassination of *Buur Siin* Koumba Ndoffène Fa Mak Diouf during a visit to the town of Joal, now belonging to the French zone on the coast of Senegal. A short struggle for the throne which occurred between Semu Mak Diouf, the son of the late *Buur*, and Sanu Mone Faye, his half-brother, was mediated through the dynastic rules of the Gélwaar. Those dynastic rules, Spiritan missionaries explained, were not ethnic customs, but the norms of a pre-colonial state.⁸⁰

After those initial descriptions of self-definition on the basis of the state hierarchies, it is useful to have a closer look at regional cases. In the settlements of the region of the Petite Côte belonging to the state of Siin, in particular in those close to Joal, there was no notion of an 'automatic' Sereer

75 On Koumba Ndoffène Fa Mak Diouf as *Buur Siin*, see Diouf, Niokhobaye; Charles Becker, and Victor Martin, 'Chronique du Royaume du Sine, suivie de Notes sur les Traditions Orales et les Sources écrites concernant le Royaume du Sine', *Bulletin de l'IFAN, série B* 34(4), 1972, 702–77, 725–30.

76 Reinwald, Brigitte, *Der Reichtum der Frauen. Leben und Arbeit der weiblichen Bevölkerung in Siin/Senegal unter dem Einfluß der französischen Kolonisation* (Münster – Hamburg: LIT, 1995), 61 (on the use of Wolof language in Siin), 67–71.

77 AGCSE, 3 I 1.5a5, Gallais, *Complément des notes sur la mission de Joal. Royaume de Sine – Sérères – Wolofs – Joal* (without number), without date [ca. 1850], 1; Reinwald, *Reichtum*, 154–65.

78 Compare ANS, GGAOF, 1G 33, Pinet-Laprade, *Notice sur les Serères...*, 7–8.

79 AGCSE, 3 I 1.5a5, Gallais, *Notes sur la mission de Joal* (without number), without date [1851], 37.

80 AGCSE, 3 I 1.1b3, Lamoise to Schwindenhammer, Provincial Superior of the Spiritan Mission (without number), 12 Dec. 1871, 5.

identification. This was so even with a majority of the region's inhabitants speaking Sereer languages, although in towns like Guérèr, according to observations made by missionaries, lived a considerable number of Wolof-speaking families. However, the main difference given by the local inhabitants themselves was defined in religious and social terms: a line was drawn between 'Marabout' and 'ceddo' families, which meant allegiance either to Islamic religion or to an institution of the states that was opposed to Islam. The category of 'Sereer' indicated a clear distinction.⁸¹ However, the Sereer-speakers of the hinterland of Joal, living, during the early phase of French conquest, under the rule of a 'war chief', Akana Dione, described themselves, according to their sub-group, as Noon. These Sereer-Noon, as a community living under constant military pressure, had formulated the strictest rules concerning group endogamy: marriages with 'foreigners', as defined on an ethnocultural base, were strictly forbidden.⁸² For such a seemingly isolated group, its members had, however, an impressive language capacity that contrasted with the insistence of other Sereer-speakers, of N'Dong and of Joal, for example, on not speaking a word of Wolof. When the Spiritan missionary Gallais reached the larger village of N'Dong in 1851, he was surprised how many villagers spoke Wolof.⁸³ By the 1880s, this had become even more the case: young men among the Noon of the Guérèr region were quite fluent in Wolof. The inhabitants of Diafura, close to Guérèr, who approached the Spiritan missionaries as Noon, frequently *claimed* they did not understand a word of Wolof, and the missionaries at first believed that it was Sereer which they had to learn. Finally, however, nearly all adults spoke good Wolof. As the Spiritans realised after longer contact with villagers on the Petite Côte, there was no fixed boundary between the openly Wolophone part of the inhabitants of Guérèr, and the openly Sereer-speaking individuals in Diafura and its surroundings.⁸⁴

Several rural populations, in their interactions with French missionaries and officers, had obviously understood the political opportunities generated by insistence on their difference from the Wolophone populations of the region. With the Spiritan missionaries, those villagers were relatively successful:

81 AGCSE, 3 I 1.1b3, Strub to Kobès, Coadjuteur (in function of bishop) of the Two Guineas (without number), 8 May 1885, 2.

82 ANS, 10D5/12, *Monographie des Sérères Nones: Les Nones* (without number), without date, 4. The idea of the Sereer being an acephalous society with ad hoc war chiefs is, however, difficult to sustain from the archival sources, which are hardly explicit.

83 AGCSE, 3 I 1.5a5, Gallais, *Notes sur la mission de Joal* (without number), without date [1851], 6.

84 AGCSE, 3 I 1.1b3, Strub to Kobès (without number), 13 May 1885, 3.

the missionaries believed for a time that the Noon, as an important 'independent tribe', had the right to rule over the whole geographic zone to the fringes of the French posts of Pout and Thiès and enjoyed a fair claim to protection as an independent unit against Bawol and Siin. Those claims were entirely fictitious in terms of political history, as the Sereer Noon were only a dispersed group at the margins of those political entities. French military personnel coming into the region from the 1880s were from the outset far more sceptical towards Akana Dione's claims.⁸⁵

Further northwards on the coast, in Popenguine, there was another type of community organisation to be found, which came rather closer to ideas of ethnic distinction. In Popenguine, communities were classified into the Sereer town and the White (*tuubab*) settlement, meaning, effectively, French and Wolof town. This distinction between both settlements was already part of the local vision in the 1880s.⁸⁶ In this case, language appeared to define the notions of ethnic identity, but the distinction was made elsewhere: under pre-colonial conditions, prominent Wolophone individuals and French merchants were regarded as loyal subjects of the ruler, while the inhabitants of the 'Sereer town' were more resistant towards the demands of the rulers and notables of Siin (and, ultimately, of Bawol, as Popenguine occasionally changed hands between both states during periods of warfare). Thus in the end, the question of political affiliation played a more important role than ethnic sentiment.

From the 1850s to the 1880s, such demands were still part of a normal regional practice. In earlier decades, the *Buur's* political decrees for the collection of tribute had usually been a prelude to plunder. The definition of ethnic groups did not play a role in the payment of those 'taxes': there was no distinction between Sereer-speakers and Wolof-speakers as concerning treatment by the authorities of Siin.⁸⁷ Tribute relations and eventual reprisals were estimated on the basis of allegiance to agents of the state. In the 1860s, different groups attempted to escape the control of the *Buur* and to obtain French protection, such as in the coastal villages of Dionwar and Niodior, whose inhabitants were imprisoned and severely beaten under the orders of local ruler N'Diarnou, a vassal of the *Buur Siin*. The state (or the opposition against the state) was the point of reference of group loyalty, not the ethnic group.

85 AGCSE, 3 I 1.11b3, Strub to Kobès (without number), 25 May 1885, 4–5.

86 AGCSE, 3 I 1.11b3, Strub to Kobès (without number), 27 Oct. 1885, 2; AGCSE, 3 I 1.11b3, Strub to Kobès (without number), 4 Jan. 1886, 1.

87 ANS, GGAOF, Fonds Ancien, 13G 314, Bandis to Cools, Commissioner of Gorée (without number), 29 Jan. 1868.

Loyalties on the Petite Côte, and in particular in the interior eastward from the coastal belt, were rendered still more complicated by the religious conflicts of the 1860s. Several of the village rulers in question, who had come to power since 1850, owed their nomination to Islamic zeal and to their installation by Ma Bâ, an anti-French religious leader operating in the Siin-Saluum area and preaching Islamic Jihad in middle and southern coastal Senegal.⁸⁸ In the whole of his personal correspondence with the French side, Ma Bâ insisted that 'Muslim villages' in the area of the Siin and Saluum Rivers were threatened by 'pagan communities', and his own followers never had recourse to ethnic terms. Ma Bâ's alliance with ex-Damel Lat Joor was also built on Islamic credentials.⁸⁹ Religion thus overshadowed other solidarities within the Wolophone communities of this particular region.⁹⁰

Nonetheless, it was above all the nature of state organisation in Senegambia that caused the absence of ethnic criteria. The ethnic variant of group categorisation was mostly limited to groups at the periphery, and at the margins of state control. The Wolof-speakers, wherever they were a leading group in pre-colonial state structures, never referred to their own ethnocultural sentiment in their conversations with the French conquerors. On the contrary, the elders and leaders of those communities that were victims of plunder and violent tribute campaigns tried the counter-strategies they had at hand: they claimed their distinctness from the ruling elite of the pre-colonial states in question. Especially the Sereer, but also the Tukolor groups of the Petite Côte, and the Lebu, all resorted to these means to prepare armed resistance.

The Petite Côte and its hinterland provide, in the decades after 1850, a number of detailed examples of these different processes of group resistance. During the era of slow French conquest of the Senegalese interior, many local

88 ANS, GGAOF, Fonds Ancien, 13G 314, De Beaurepaire to Cools (n° 356), 8 Feb. 1868.

89 ANS, GGAOF, Fonds Ancien, 13G 318, *Lettre [de Maba] parvenue le 10 Juin 1864* (without number), without date; ANS, GGAOF, Fonds Ancien, 13G 318, Ma Bâ to Faïdherbe (without number), without date (May 1864); ANS, GGAOF, Fonds Ancien, 13G 318, Ma Bâ to Pinet-Laprade, Commissioner of Gorée, and Faïdherbe (without number), without date; ANS, GGAOF, Fonds Ancien, 13G 318, Ma Bâ to Pinet-Laprade (without number), without date; Klein, *Islam*, 79–93; Diouf, *Kajoor*, 231; Getz, Trevor R., *Slavery and Reform in West Africa: Toward Emancipation in Nineteenth-Century Senegal and the Gold Coast* (Athens/OH: Ohio University Press – Oxford: James Currey, 2004), 146–7.

90 The movement of Ma Bâ has later been described as a 'Tukolor movement' in the style of Al-Hajj Umar's group of followers, but the overwhelming part of his militants were Wolof-speakers. See CADN, Fonds 'Anciennes Colonies', Fonds Dakar, 192, Michel, Administrative Inspector of the Colony of Senegal, *Rapport: Subdivision de Niore du Rip* (n° 3), 20 April 1945, 5–6.

leaders saw their chance to profit from the decrease of state control, and attempted to build up a reputation of their own. Some of those *jaraf* even established their own autonomous strongholds in the vacuum of power that was the consequence of the loss of control by the *buur*. They still referred to the same system of state organisation: thus, even if the rebellious officials led a large number of non-Wolophone followers, they usually did not try to build their revolt on ethnocultural sentiment, but on networks and resource redistribution. As one example, the chief of Fadial, Moussa Diahame, who had been deposed by the *Buur Siin* and fled before the advent of the latter's *ceddo* in June 1868, was especially prestigious. He built up most of his prestige as a result of active patronage, through the distribution of his cows and sheep.⁹¹

During the chaotic political situation of the years between 1850 and 1890, however, some regional group solidarities crossed the boundaries of the states. Wolof-speaking traders from Joal on the Petite Côte and from Gorée strongly relied on links to other regions for their commerce. In those networks, they cooperated with members of their families and other Wolophone partners, but not in the sense of an ethnic solidarity.⁹² The Wolof-speaking chiefs of the areas near Nianing and Kaolack saw no problem in collaborating with Fulbe raiders in order to enhance their local power base. New patronage networks emerged in which ethnicity continued to play no role. One of these local warlords was Songho, operating first as an ally of Makodu, the erstwhile *Damel* of Kajoor, and attempting at the same time to befriend the French.⁹³ Ten years later, after the French had put the region of M'Biguen under their own protection, their relationships towards local rule and individual leaders were complex: Songho had remained a regional leader in the hinterland of the Petite Côte in the 1860s and the 1870s, and while he officially cooperated with the French-installed *chef de canton*, he claimed, at the same time, to be under the authority of Lat Joor, now pretender for the damelship of Kajoor. While the erosion of Kajoor, Bawol, and Siin thus led to the establishment of leaders working individually, parties in the resulting conflicts nonetheless still operated with clear reference to the pre-colonial states.

91 ANS, GGAOF, Fonds Ancien, 13G 314, Noël to Commissioner of Gorée (n° 394), 3 June 1868.

92 ANS, 11D1/1111, Kobès, Acting Bishop of Modon, *Divers points qu'il serait important de régler dans les négociations avec le roi de Sin en faveur de la Mission de Joal* (without number), 10 Dec. 1855.

93 ANS, GGAOF, 1G 33, Gorée, Cabinet du Commandant, *Note annexée à la Carte du Baol et de la partie méridionale du Cayor dressée d'après les renseignements fournis par les Indigènes pour le Chef de Bataillon du Génie Pinet Laprade* (n° 71), 10 Nov. 1860, 3–4.

The French attempted to inspire the creation of a rival network, including the major Wolof-speaking chiefs and some Sereer-speaking headmen in the coastal area. To better control the region of the Petite Côte from 1890, French officials wished to counter the claims of Songho, but they also planned eventually to eliminate those chiefs in the region who were still formally loyal to the *Buur Siin* or to the *Teeñ*.⁹⁴ However, many local leaders established their own network of clients and managed to ignore for years the overlordship of the French-installed *Alcati* of Nianing, Moktar Diop, and of Lamane Gamou, the French stalwart in the region of M'Biguen. The 'Pël' – the armed Fulbe communities of cattle-breeders who were readily mobilised for attacks – played a central role in this local network; moreover, they were frequently engaged on both sides.⁹⁵

During these events, the *Buur Siin* also felt – after the conquest of Fatick by the French in 1859 and new French territorial claims – that he had to explain his own point of view. In his argumentation towards the French opponents, the *Buur Siin* claimed, first, that the villagers in the area in question would manipulate information to artificially create tensions between him and the French governor. His second and main argument remained dynastic. The *Buur Siin* claimed that he and his fellow ruler and 'brother', the *Buur Saluum*, were the representatives of the region's 'traditional' ruling families, holding a centuries-old right to govern. This was also explicitly stressed in the context of other dynastic claims, such as in the cases of Lat Menguey, former *Buur Saluum*, or of Koumba Ndoffène Fa Mak Diouf, the *Buur Siin*, who wished to defend his rights of succession in Bawol.⁹⁶ In 1868, the *Buur Siin* sent more envoys to intimidate and discipline the inhabitants of Fadiol and of other villages that had attempted to break away from the state. At the same time, local chiefs and translators were dispatched on behalf of the French to insist upon the treaties of local communities with the French residents in Nianing and

94 ANS, GGAOF, Fonds Ancien, 13G 314, Noël, Administrator of Post of Joal, to Commissioner of Gorée (n° 28), 17 March 1868; ANS, GGAOF, Fonds Ancien, 13G 314, Noël to Commissioner of Gorée (n° 399), 16 June 1868.

95 ANS, GGAOF, Fonds Ancien, 13G 314, Reygane, District Commissioner of Bidjine, to Commissioner of Gorée (n° 2), 2 Jan. 1870.

96 ANS, GGAOF, Fonds Ancien, 13G 318, Lat Menguey, son of Bala, former *Buur Saluum*, to Majojo, *Damel* of Kajoor, and Faïdherbe (without number), without date (arrived 20 June 1864); ANS, GGAOF, Fonds Ancien, 13G 318, Koumba Ndoffène Fa Mak Diouf, *Buur Siin*, to Faïdherbe, Governor of Senegal (without number), without date (arrived 12 Oct. 1864); ANS, GGAOF, Fonds Ancien, 13G 318, Bakar Thilas to Faïdherbe (without number), without date (arrived 1 March 1864).

Joal.⁹⁷ For our discussion, it is most interesting that in those negotiations, the question of ethnic belonging did not appear. Conflict on the Petite Côte remained fixed between the pre-colonial state and local communities, without any need for the conflicting parties to refer to group identifications in an ethnic sense.⁹⁸

Only when the political situation became particularly menacing from the point of view of the ruling dynasties did the rulers of Siin or Saluum occasionally formulate the danger of a 'foreign' threat represented through a 'stranger' ethnic group. This appeared to help them to close ranks. Such was the case during the conflict between the French and Makodu, who had then become a contender for the throne of Siin. Makodu insisted in his speeches and letters that the inhabitants of Siin ought to expel all the 'foreigners', particularly the 'Tukolor' – thus mobilising against the auxiliary troops of the French army.⁹⁹ However, in the nineteenth-century context, such claims were rare. Makodu was already in a desperate situation – and the ethnic card appeared only as a last resort in situations in which religious, communal or state solidarity no longer produced the desired effects.

At least, this was the case for the rulers and authorities of the pre-colonial states. By contrast, for smaller groups, such as the Lebu, Sereer, or Tukolor living in Western Senegal, the situation was quite different. They were under far more pressure, and on the Petite Côte their communities could normally not rely on any protective state structure. Their former *modus vivendi* with Wolophone rulers of the pre-colonial states had been eroded through the constant warfare in the region from the first half of the nineteenth century. Groups

97 ANS, GGAOF, Fonds Ancien, 13G 314, Noël to Koumba Ndoffène Fa Mak Diouf (without number), 16 June 1867; ANS, GGAOF, Fonds Ancien, 13G 314, Noël to Administrator of 2^e Arrondissement in the Colony of Senegal, *Supplément à la lettre N° 399* (without number), without date; ANS, GGAOF, Fonds Ancien, 13G 314, Noël to Commissioner of Gorée (number illegible), 20 June 1868.

98 ANS, GGAOF, Fonds Ancien, 13G 318, *Lettre [du Roi de Sine] parvenue le 6 Juin 1859 [Traduction]* (without number), without date; ANS, GGAOF, Fonds Ancien, 13G 318, *Lettre [du Roi de Sine] parvenue le 6 Juin 1859 [Traduction]* (without number), without date; ANS, GGAOF, Fonds Ancien, 13G 318, *Buur Siin* to Commissioner of Gorée (without number), September 1859; ANS, GGAOF, Fonds Ancien, 13G 318, Farba Diaraf Waly to Mayor of Gorée ('Toubou Saint Jean') (without number), without date (arrived 8 July 1860); ANS, GGAOF, Fonds Ancien, 13G 318, *Buur Siin* to Faïdherbe (without number), without date (arrived 1861); ANS, GGAOF, Fonds Ancien, 13G 318, *Buur Siin* to Pinet-Laprade and Faïdherbe (without number), July 1860.

99 ANS, GGAOF, Fonds Ancien, 13G 318, Bakar Thilas, *Buur Siin*, to Faïdherbe (without number), 13 June 1863.

at the margins of political units now still more frequently became the victims of plunder. In situations of conflict, such communities occasionally relied on ethnocultural mobilisation strategies as a tool for obtaining group cohesion.

In some attempts at classification already carried out by the French in the 1820s, all West Africans under French rule appear as '*lébous*'.¹⁰⁰ This might partly be based on a misinterpretation of African information, but it is also probable that 'Lebu' in the first half of the nineteenth century was more flexible as a group label. In Jander, a peripheral province of Kajoor in 1860, a French agent collected yet another explanation of 'Lebu' group identity. According to his report, the criterion of difference was mainly based on religious identification: those called 'Leybou' were simply the inhabitants of villages untouched by Islam, where alcohol could be consumed.¹⁰¹ To the *Damel* of Kajoor and to the *Teeñ* of Bawol, the 'Lebu' outside of their area of direct control were therefore regarded as legitimate targets of military campaigns.¹⁰² This called for creating stronger group cohesion between the victims of plunder campaigns, under this label, to counter the existing threats.

In the regions between Bargny and the mouth of the Tanma River, traditions held the local populations to be a 'mixture' of Lebu and Sereer.¹⁰³ By contrast, close to M'Biguen, in Jander, a province of Kajoor slowly detaching itself from the *Damel's* control and coming under French influence, the locals described the inhabitants of large zones of the area as 'Ouolofs lébous!' This contradicted the logics of ethnic identification. The populations in the region spoke a dialect of Wolof (as indeed did several groups of Sereer in Jander, in spite of having a different group label). The great majority were non-Muslims, devoted to more local cults.¹⁰⁴ Their precarious position regarding the Wolophone rulers of the neighbouring pre-colonial states made it attractive to rely on this common identification in cases of crisis. Only after the French conquest did the Lebu communities no longer *need* the group distinction, and it could then entirely be replaced by religious affiliation to the teachings of the Layen.

100 ANS, GGAOF, 1G 9, Villosz, *Rapport fait à la commission de Statistique coloniale relativement à l'examen des divers mémoires envoyés au Ministère de la Marine et des colonies en réponse aux demandes de renseignements statistiques faites par le ministère concernant le Sénégal et les établissemens qui en dépendent* (without number), dated 1825.

101 ANS, GGAOF, Fonds Ancien, 1D17, Vincens, Chef de Génie, *Rapport sur la reconnaissance militaire exécutée dans le Diander du 24 au 27 8bre 1860* (n° 1), 15 Sep. 1860, 4.

102 ANS, GGAOF, 1G 33, Commissioner of Gorée, *Note sur l'Organisation du Diander* (without number), without date.

103 ANS, GGAOF, 1G 33, Pinet-Laprade, *Notice sur les Serères...*, 3–4.

104 ANS, GGAOF, 1G 33, Pascal, *Notes sur le Diander recueillies par Mr. Pascal, Lieutenant D'Infanterie, Commandant le Poste de M'Biguen* (without number), without date.

Such processes of self-definition of local groups towards Wolophone rulers are still more complex for the Fulfulde-speakers of Senegal who lived outside of the Fuuta Tooro region. In the coastal regions, the 'Tukolor' appeared as a clearly distinctive group, still much more than the Lebu or the Sereer. They were perceived as such not only by the French, but also by the other local groups, including notably the Wolof-speakers. For the second half of the nineteenth century, this distinction had obvious political reasons. Samba Niang, head of a trading firm, reacted to a number of attacks on Fulfulde-speaking merchants in the area of Portudal with a new emphasis on Tukolor solidarity. Niang managed to mobilise the members of this group to form a strong defensive association; a common group identification justified joint action.¹⁰⁵

These Tukolor merchants and soldiers were migrants from three different regions in the north-east, including Fuuta Tooro. Wolophone informers told Martin, the French Resident of Portudal, that the 'Tukolor traders' formed a sort of dangerous, 'tribal', 'secret society'. Indeed, the Tukolor of Bawol, of Siin and of Saluum, feeling exploited by the ruling dynasties and by the administration of the pre-colonial states, all stressed, in the second half of the nineteenth century, their particular group identification. Apart from adherence to the Tijaniyya, their emphasis lay on terms of geographic origin, and the Fulfulde-speaking merchants described themselves as 'Muslims from Fuuta Tooro'. 'Being Tukolor' was thus an important trope, repeated over and over again even in written correspondence with the French.¹⁰⁶

In Dakar, the identification as 'Tukolor' was regarded by the Wolophone residents as a problematic other, expressed through strong and negative stereotypes. 'Here, "Tukolor" is above all a synonym for plunderer, thief and liar', commented the French official Martin. Among Sereer-speakers, the opinion on the 'Tukolor' was similar. In fact, the above-mentioned Samba Niang, self-styled 'Tukolor leader', was able to mobilise some hundred warriors of the Fulfulde-speaking community on the coast to attack and to plunder the Sereer village of Fallokk, in a vengeance campaign for Sereer banditry. They also attacked Joal. During such episodes, the feeling of solidarity between the Muslim 'Tukolor' was remarkably high: some of the warrior-traders involved in the campaign even interrupted their lucrative commercial business in other parts of the coast and came down with their arms and dependents into the Joal region to defend their 'brethren' against the Sereer. Nevertheless, ultimately this group was not large enough to match the French counter-activities: Niang

105 ANS, GGAOF, 1G 28, Martin to Commissioner of Gorée (without number), 11 June 1863.

106 ANS, 11D1/1111, *Traduction d'une lettre reçue des Toucouleurs de Salum. en Juin 1859* (without number), without date.

and his officers were defeated and rather easily captured by French troops and their Wolophone auxiliaries.¹⁰⁷ The events in themselves were, however, quite significant for an ethnicised style of group mobilisation in Senegambia's coastal areas during a certain period of insecurity. After the failure of Samba Niang's campaign and the stabilisation of political conditions on the Petite Côte through rapid French expansion, the 'Tukolor identity' of individuals in that region and in the Siin-Saluum became dormant for much of the early twentieth century. It only reappeared in the period immediately before independence, although in an unexpected way.

In the 1860s and 1870s, the Sereer on the Petite Côte had their own visible moments of ethnic mobilisation, albeit through a very complex process. Many Sereer-speaking communities were obviously content to be spared, by the French intervention in this part of the future colony of Senegal, from the constant tribute-raising and raiding by *ceddo* troops sent by the rulers of the inland states. French protection, although combined with new tax obligations, had nonetheless led to an improvement in their overall economic situation. For those reasons, the inhabitants of many Sereer-speaking village communities in the region were ready to collaborate with the Wolof-speaking *Alcati* of Nianing. In the Tanma, the former Sereer-speaking region of Kajoor at the northern margin of the area analysed here, only a remarkably small number of Sereer villages refused from the outset to pay their taxes to this 'Wolof' middleman.¹⁰⁸

Other, smaller groups in the coastal area attempted to obtain more political rights through the French conquest of the region of Kaolack. In Nianing, the Sarakole and Bambara inhabitants managed first to be treated differently with regard to the payment of taxes. Members of both groups argued for their distinctness as different ethnic groups. In this newly created *canton* – a colonial administrative unit – the strategy was increasingly successful. After a short period, the French residents started to regard them as communities that had nothing to do with the 'majority populations' (Sereer and Wolof) of their immediate surroundings. The creation of a local tradition emphasising their distinct experiences had the central role in this process, which eclipsed the earlier reality of the Nianing region as an area of very different communities belonging to one entity.¹⁰⁹

107 ANS, GGAOF, 1G 28, Martin to Pinet-Laprade, Commissioner of Gorée (without number), 23 June 1863.

108 ANS, GGAOF, Fonds Ancien, 13G 318, Pinet-Laprade to Faïdherbe (first page is missing, missing page numbers), missing date, *passim*.

109 ANS, GGAOF, Fonds Ancien, 13G 312, Aquilichini, French Resident in Portudal, to French Commissioner of Gorée (n° 99), 31 Jan. 1867.

Many Sereer communities were, between 1850 and 1900, characterised by internal land conflicts having to do with early peanut production, and which were detached from any clear Sereer-Wolof dichotomy. This became obvious in a series of conflicts of the 1870s in the zone around the French fortress of Portudal. After the burial of the paramount chief Dione in early March 1878, several hundred 'Sereer' warriors assembled in Niangol.¹¹⁰ The French had been warned by Wolophone informants about the 'savagery' of 'the Sereer'. However, the reality was far more complex: Dione had ruled a group of both Wolof-speakers and Sereer-speakers, and he was a former subject of the *Buur Siin*, and a colleague of the *Alcati* of Nianing supported by the French into the 1880s. The 'Sereer' who then attacked the French garrison were a specific group, the inhabitants of two villages, namely Malikunda and Ginko. These warriors continued their traditional feud with Sango, the village chief of Niangol, who was himself a Sereer-speaker.¹¹¹ During these particular troubles, the lines of conflict were thus between smaller communities, and, as such, entirely misunderstood by the French authorities. The latter planned a retaliation campaign against 'the Sereer' as a whole, but such measures did not correspond to the realities of group affiliation in the region.¹¹²

The case of Dibur, installed as a tax official by the French in the region of Saly in the 1870s, is also instructive. Dibur encountered serious difficulties during his task, and was even attacked by Sereer-speaking warriors from Malikunda and Cacune.¹¹³ Subsequently, the populations of N'Gankul and of Saly armed themselves, and defended, as they regarded it, their territory against the marauders from the neighbouring villages. The Wolof-speaking *canton* chief, N'Dende Diagne, announced that he felt powerless against the raiders. The French resident promised a 'pacification campaign' in the region, but French troops were now occupied in the east of Senegal, and the campaign did not materialise. Consequently, the coastal populations mobilised themselves. In the vacuum of power and under instability, the Wolophone settlers of Saly took up arms against a 'Sereer enemy'. Although this enemy was no homogeneous Sereer army, but rather a group of pillagers coming from various villages

110 ANS, GGAOF, Fonds Ancien, 13G 313, Administrator of 2^e Arrondissement in Dakar to Brière de l'Isle, Governor of Senegal, *Attaque du poste par les Sérères* (n° 53), 9 March 1878, 1; ANS, GGAOF, Fonds Ancien, 13G 313, Administrator of Post of Portudal to Brière de l'Isle (n° 564), 8 March 1878, 1–2.

111 ANS, GGAOF, Fonds Ancien, 13G 313, Sabatier, *Rapport au sujet des faits qui se sont passés au poste de Portudal le 5 et le 6 mars 1878* (without number), 10 March 1878, 1–3.

112 ANS, GGAOF, Fonds Ancien, 13G 313, Administrator of 2^e Arrondissement in Dakar to Brière de l'Isle (n° 54), 15 Feb. 1879, 2.

113 ANS, GGAOF, Fonds Ancien, 13G 313, George to Brière de l'Isle (n° 19), 8 Feb. 1879, 1–2.

in the interior of the coastal belt, formulating an ethnic antagonism was here for once a helpful strategy.¹¹⁴

It is essential to point out that mobilisation of that type remained a *last resort* in nineteenth-century coastal Senegambia, employed when the other, established structures, which had been useful in containing local violence between communities, were ineffective. At the end of the 1870s, the pre-colonial states had broken down, and the colonial state did still not work. Under those circumstances, ethnic sentiment was sometimes operational as an alternative.

The Difficult Balance: Wolof-Speaking Elites and Local Group Opposition, 1900–1945

A part of the colonial conquest involved the creation of structures of authority amongst ‘acephalous people’. A large percentage of the local populations on the Petite Côte had before been used to overlords from the states of Siin, Saluum, and Bawol. Some others, however, had been members of isolated groupings. They were now the target (and the victims) of the installation of new chiefs, who were, in this early phase, mostly the old allies of the French from the military campaigns.¹¹⁵ This development put a strain on the relations between rulers and locals, as many of these new chiefs came from other parts of Senegambia, that is, from the north and north-east.¹¹⁶ This occasionally allowed for forms of ethnic mobilisation, but it did not translate into a simple antagonism of (newly installed) Wolof rulers and Sereer subjects.

The Wolophone ruler Madiouf Diouf, installed as chief of Fatick in 1888, is an instructive case. He had serious problems in imposing his rule in the area, but the Sereer-speakers of Fatick were not his principal enemies. His Sereer subjects had no clear opinion about the changes under colonial rule in comparison to the rule of the *Buur Siin*. Diouf’s main adversaries were Wolophone merchants from the coastal towns who belonged to a strong network.¹¹⁷

114 ANS, GGAOF, Fonds Ancien, 13G 313, Lenoir, Director of Political Bureau of Senegal, to Administrator of 2^e Arrondissement (without number), 14 Feb. 1878, 1–2.

115 Bruschi, Francesca, ‘Politique Indigène et Administration au Sénégal (1890–1920)’, *Politico* 70(3), 2005, 501–22.

116 Klein refers to the example of the chiefs Mandiaye Bâ and N’Deri Kani, who were frowned upon by Sereer and Mandinka villagers because of being ‘Wolof’, see Klein, *Islam*, 154–5.

117 ANS, GGAOF, Fonds Ancien, 13G 52, Alsace, French Administrator of Sine-Saloum Protectorate, to Aubert (n^o 560), 9 June 1898; ANS, GGAOF, Fonds Ancien, 13G 52, Nirot,

Some chiefs, who were former veterans and warriors of the French campaigns, encountered great difficulties as they were challenged under ethnic labels. Thus, Ismaïla Diop was indeed frowned upon by the Sereer-speaking populations of Joal. On religious terms, Diop was a Muslim who had to rule over Joal's Christian community; but he was also attacked by the locals as a 'Tukolor', a 'foreigner' who did not belong to the local community. However, after 'traditional' rule had become established in the Joal region, the 'Tukolor' identification of chiefs originating from the north of Senegambia ceased to be discussed on the Petite Côte.¹¹⁸ It only reappeared, in some cases, in the late 1940s, when the macro-political configuration in Senegal had again changed.

Situations in which parties nonetheless referred to arguments of group affiliation, include questions of commercial rights and licenses, applications for administrative posts open to African candidates, and land disputes. The case of 'foreign merchants' was quite typical. In certain circumstances, chiefs and rich planters in coastal Senegambia attempted to profit from ethnic arguments sustained by the colonial discourse. Those chiefs held that it was more appropriate for their communities to sell to particular persons from their own ethnic grouping. Such strategies worked to exclude 'foreigners' to the advantage of family members or clients. However, under colonial rule it was Lebanese traders who took over much of the retail commerce, and local rulers came to terms with those conditions.¹¹⁹

Furthermore, in the case of local quarrels for chieftaincies, it also remained a typical strategy of local pretenders to argue from the perspective of their 'land of origin'. Such quarrels became more infrequent in the course of the first half of the twentieth century, with the creation of the structures of the colony of Senegal being largely completed, but they did not entirely disappear. In 1955, Sada Maka Sy, an infamous commercial agent, petitioned for obtaining a chieftaincy in Goudiry in Senegal's east, arguing that the *canton* in question was his home region, and that he was descended from the former ruling dynasty.¹²⁰

Land disputes were a problem in many zones which had shortly before come under French 'protection', as in the Gossas region of the old kingdom of

District Commissioner of Sine-Saloum, *Bulletin Individuel de Notes* [Madiouf Diouf] (without number), without date.

118 ANS, GGAOF, Fonds Ancien, 13G 52, Alsace, *Bulletin Individuel de Notes* [Ismaïla Diop] (without number), 25 April 1898, 1.

119 ANS, 11D1/960, Momar Fall, delegate of the inhabitants of Louga, to the President of the General Council of Senegal (without number), 27 December 1946.

120 ANS, 11D1/1059, Sada Maka Sy to Jourdain, French Governor of Senegal (without number), 7 April 1955.

Bawol. Occasionally, the ethnic issue was exploited during those disputes, in particular if ethnic argumentations were a useful strategy to counter claims that referred to the traditions of the pre-colonial states. To give one example, when Mamadou Seck, a wealthy merchant, bought a licence to exploit as his property a number of fields he had acquired in the village of Thiénaba, he ran into serious difficulties with the locals. A group of Sereer-speaking cultivators, led by a certain Khaly M'Boup, contested the rights of 'the Wolof' Seck. The latter had bought his land title from the *Buur Siin* Koumba Ndoffène Fa Mak Diouf: he thus based his claim on the historical rights of the pre-colonial states. His opponents emphasised their 'Sereer identity', and argued that only the 'sons of the region' should have the right to own land. This created an 'authentic' claim, which was older than any transactions made with a dynasty of questionable rights. M'Boup and the other claimants insisted that the rulers of Siin were a clan of 'strangers' and non-Sereer.¹²¹

During most of the operations involving the reorganisation of political rule under the nascent colonial state on the Petite Côte, transforming the former rule of states such as Bawol, Siin or Saluum, one notion of ethnic sentiment remained, nevertheless, notably absent: 'Wolof identity' was not a major criterion for Wolophone populations to define themselves in dealings with the colonial authorities. The label of 'Wolof' was nearly exclusively employed by *non*-Wolophone populations, including in their mobilisation against traders, former mercenaries, and Murid marabouts.

Many members of these groups were selected and installed as chiefs of communities or obtained private control over local land.¹²² Sereer-speakers of the whole of the Petite Côte reacted swiftly and aggressively to this perceived threat. In 1905, representatives of various Sereer-speaking communities complained bitterly to the Resident of the 'Sereer Countries' in former Bawol, Jacques, that they were now subject to an 'invasion' of 'Ouoloffs' from the region of the Gandiolais in the north. The Sereer-speakers thus described themselves as 'autochthons', and condemned Wolophone newcomers as 'intruders'; they demanded from the French a substantial change in colonial organisation.¹²³

121 ANS, 11D1/960, Administrator of Subdivision of Moyen-Saloum to District Commissioner of Sine-Saloum, *Réclamation Daouda M'Baye* (n 2652/MS.), 30 Dec. 1936.

122 Moitt, Bernard, 'Peanut Production, Market Integration and Peasant strategies in Kajoor and Bawol before World War II', in Charles Becker, Saliou Mbaye, and Ibrahima Thioub (eds.), *AOF: réalités et héritages: Sociétés ouest-africaines et ordre colonial, 1895-1960* (Dakar: Direction des Archives du Sénégal, 1997), 577-92, 585-7.

123 ANS, 11D1/1348, Jacques, Deputy Administrator of Thiès, Resident of *Pays Sérères*, *Rapport sur la tournée effectuée à travers les Provinces Sérères (du 13 au 21 Mars 1905) par*

However, those tensions in the region disappeared rather quickly in the post-conquest period. This is particularly visible in the case of the new Wolophone paramount chief in Nianing, Abd-el-Kader, who had initially had great problems in making himself accepted as chief. After 1912, his enemies ceased to be Sereer-speaking community leaders. Like in Fatick in the 1880s, the opposition movement against the important Wolophone chief consisted of the Wolophone elite, and was led by a Wolof-speaker, Babakar M'Bodj, who was an employee of the commercial house Maurel & Prom. M'Bodj saw his chance to win over a group of Sereer followers through an outright invention of tradition; he hired *gëwël* (griots) to establish a proper genealogy that included Sereer antecedents, to win local Sereer support.¹²⁴ In the end, nevertheless, this was insufficient to mobilise the Sereer-speakers against a ruler who had learned to show sufficient regard for the interests of the rural populations. The year 1912 therefore marked a turning point in the relations between Wolof-speakers and Sereer-speakers in Nianing.

The community of the Pulaar-speaking Fulbe ('Pël') was excluded from this process of diminishing inter-group violence. In the second half of the nineteenth century, they had advanced as cattle-breeders and warriors in zones under French control, and were described as a clear 'other' by all the other communities and the colonial rulers themselves.¹²⁵ Under the rule of Kajoor, the Fulbe populations had come to be administered by a political official whose post had been created specifically for their control: the post of the *diahigué*. In the state of Kajoor, during the second half of the nineteenth century, and notably in the regions of Kaël and Kantar, this post had become a sinecure for aged *ceddo* warriors.¹²⁶ The sense that 'the Fulbe' were distinctive continued after the French conquest.

Similar mechanisms can be demonstrated for the Laobe, a community that probably did not claim to be an ethnic group in its own right in the nineteenth century, but presented itself as a community of professional specialists.¹²⁷ In Kajoor, the Laobe had a chief of their own installed by the *Damel*. Under French administration, this post remained, like the *diahigué*, a reward for successful and loyal Wolophone warriors. Ogo Yoro, who was the last of those

l'administrateur L. Jacques adjoint au Commandant du Cercle de Thiès (without number), 7 April 1905, 33.

124 ANS, 11D1/1357, Marcel de Coppet, District Commissioner of Thiès, *Situation Politique pendant le mois de Juillet 1912* (without number), 1 Aug. 1912, 1.

125 Dupire, Marguerite, 'Réflexions sur l'ethnicité peule', in *Itinérances...pays peul vol. 2* (Paris: Mémoires de la Société des Africanistes, 1981), 165–81.

126 ANS, GGAOF, Fonds Ancien, 13G 51, Rocaché, *Bulletin Individuel de Notes [Baïdo Guèye, diahigué des peulhs du Kaël et du Kantar]* (without number), without date.

127 Diouf, *Kajoor*, 49.

'chiefs of the Laobe', was removed in 1902 because of illegal tax demands which he had forced his subjects to accede to. Only then did the French decide to abolish the chieftaincy altogether.¹²⁸

On the Petite Côte, Fulbe cattle-breeders were less prominent than they were in the interior provinces of Kajoor, but both the *Buur Siin* and the *Buur Saluum* had 'Pël regiments'.¹²⁹ The early phase of French rule in the region was characterised by an influx of cattle herds from the Fuuta Tooro profiting from French protection on the coast. This led to conflicts in several zones, notably in the region of Popenguine.¹³⁰ The sentiment of strong difference, formulated by Wolof and Sereer-speakers on the Petite Côte towards Fulbe communities at this particular time, is still very present in oral testimony.¹³¹ Eventually, the fact that the Sereer-speakers appear to have been traditionally regarded by the Fulbe as both allies and potential slaves may have exacerbated those tensions.¹³²

We have little information about the motivations that underlie conflicts between Fulbe and other communities in the Petite Côte region. Comparison with the north and north-east of the new Colony of Senegal, for which documentation is better, helps to explain some conflicts.¹³³ French administrators were convinced that the pattern of these conflicts was similar in the different regions. Clashes between sedentary groups and Fulbe herdsmen were very frequent in the territory of the former pre-colonial state of Jolof, specifically in the region around the city of Louga. Bouna N'Diaye, the chief of the province, attempted in 1913 to muster French support against the evasiveness of the Fulbe who migrated between Jolof and Gët (Guet) (a former province of Kajoor

128 ANS, GGAOF, Fonds Ancien, 13G 51, Ferrenes, Administrator-Resident of Thiès, *Enquête sur les faits reprochés à Ogo Yoro chef des Laobés* (without number), 30 Aug. 1902; ANS, GGAOF, Fonds Ancien, 13G 51, Vienne, Administrator of Thiès, to Director of Native Affairs of the Government-General of French West Africa, *Remplacement des chefs convaincus de détournements* (n° 145), 27 Oct. 1902, 1–2.

129 ANF, Papiers Ernest Noirot, 148/AP/3/1/4, Noirot to De la Mothe, Governor of Sénégal, *Rapport sur la participation des contingents du Saloum à la campagne dirigée contre le Bourba Djiolof* (without number), without date, transcription in Martin, Becker, and Mbodj (eds.), 'Documents', 45–6.

130 ANS, 11D1/1348, Jacques, Adjunct Administrator of Thiès, Resident of Pays Sérères, *Rapport sur la tournée effectuée à travers les Provinces Sérères (du 13 au 21 Mars 1905) par l'administrateur L. Jacques adjoint au Commandant du Cercle de Thiès* (without number), 7 April 1905, 33–4.

131 Interview with Ajjumà Niane, village chief of Niack-Sérère, 1 February 2008.

132 On the 'traditional' perspective of Fulbe informants on the Sereer, see Monteil, Charles, 'Réflexions sur le problème des Peuls', *Journal de la Société des Africanistes* 20(2), 1950, 153–92.

133 Weicker, Martin, *Nomades et sédentaires au Sénégal* (Dakar: ENDA, 1993), 52.

now transformed into an administrative *canton*) and thereby escaped their tax obligations.¹³⁴

Group conflict between Fulbe and other communities remained a typical factor for the whole of the colonial period. The enraged Wolophone aristocracy ruling over the different provinces of the region repeatedly discussed with French officials what they described as a hereditary conflict with the 'Pël'.¹³⁵ In this context, the 'Fulbe' were more easily targeted than 'the Sereer' on the Petite Côte: they evaded the disciplinary measures mobilised by the state, and their ways of life questioned the legitimacy of the state structures the colonial system had recreated.

Ironically, the outcome of this conflict was far from what the paramount chief of Jolof had wished to obtain. The French administrator concluded that if the 'Pël' were so different from Wolof culture, they had to be protected and administered separately! In the province of Jolof, the French thus nominated two 'tribal leaders', who subsequently stabilised their position by helping the administration to recruit Pulaar-speakers as soldiers for France's Moroccan campaign and the First World War.¹³⁶ The colonial state took those accounts as a reason to redefine structures through ethnocultural 'traditions'.

The political organisation of Senegal under established colonial rule illustrates the absence of a formulated 'Wolof' group identification. When it came to declaring his case for obtaining a local chieftaincy in the area of the Petite Côte, Omar Bayo Fall, member of a notable family from the surroundings of Diourbel, did not refer to being Wolof. He argued from the platform of the particular origins and claims of his family. Consequently, the term 'Wolof' does not even once appear in the French administrative documents commenting on this application.

Although descended from dynasties of Wolophone dignitaries, Omar Bayo Fall showed no interest in pointing out the ethnic side of his family links. He could indeed claim descent from Ely Manel Fall who had once ruled the *canton* of M'Bayar in the Diourbel region and the province of Bawol Oriental. Still more important, however, from the dynastic point of view, Ely Manel Fall's granduncle had been Meysa Tend Joor, who had been *Damel* of Kajoor and *Teeñ* of Bawol at the same time. This ruler was, still in the 1940s, described by both the French and the Wolophone elite as the 'last great king of Senegal'.¹³⁷

134 ANS, 10D4/11, Administrator of Louga, *Situation politique* (without number), 1 June 1913.

135 ANS, 10D4/11, Administrator of Louga, *Situation politique* (without number), 1 March 1913.

136 ANS, 10D4/11, Administrator of Louga, *Situation politique* (without number), 1 Nov. 1912, 1–2.

137 ANS, 11D1/95, Omar Bayo Fall, *Notice de Renseignements (Article 12 de l'Arrêté 1688 APA. du 17.7.43): Candidature: Chef Adjoint du M'Bayar* (without number), 25 Feb. 1947; ANS,

Wherever this was in any way possible for the Wolof-speaking claimants, the reference to the pre-colonial states was, henceforth, the most popular way to claim political rights.

In a similar case, Ely Manel N'Diaye, son of Kode N'Diaye and chief of the 'mixed' *canton* of Diaganiao (settled by both Wolophone and Sereer-speaking populations) had to explain his origins to French officials. He could boast of being a grandson of Sanor N'Diaye, the ex-ruler of the Diobass and ally of the French in the conquest of the Siin-Saluum region. Ely Manel N'Diaye sustained the heritage claim of his dynasty to bolster his own claims half a century afterwards – without ever insisting on its ethnic characteristics.¹³⁸

During most of the nineteenth century, and well into the first half of the twentieth century, Wolof-speaking communities and their leaders thus show no inclination to insist on their 'Wolof identity'. This does not mean that the concept of 'being Wolof' did not exist. As we have seen, individual leaders *could*, on particular occasions, resort to this concept. However, it is likely that they only did so when a conflict did not leave any other reasonable course of action: other categories such as religion and loyalty to the local community, but also and essentially allegiance to the local state (even if it was a *ceddo* state relying in part on plunder), normally played the more important role. In the phase after the French conquest, state functions were taken over by the colonial state. Wolophone elites were very prominent on the colonial side: many Wolophone individuals accepted the new principles of the local order as favourable, and also decided they did not need the identification as 'Wolof' in political life.

An exception were the clashes between Wolophone peasants and Fulbe cattle-breeders that appear as 'ethnicised' conflicts over the whole of Senegal's colonial period. However, they were strictly limited to certain contact zones, although they did not disappear over time.¹³⁹ It is thus useful to mention here

nD1/95, Frament, Administrator of Subdivision of Diourbel, *Notes de l'Administrateur* (without number), without date.

138 ANS, nD1/1393, Lemoine, Administrator of Subdivision of M'Bour, *Notes sur la Manière de Servir de N'Diaye Ely Manel Chef de 9^e classe* (without number), 31 March 1953, 1.

139 ANS, GGAOF, 17G 90, Berthet, Director of Political Affairs of the Government-General, to Le Coppet, Governor-General of French West Africa (n° 2811/AP/2-1), *Rapport sur l'activité de la Direction Politique (Décembre 1936–Décembre 1937)*, 22 Nov. 1937, 13; CADN, Fonds 'Anciennes Colonies', Fonds Dakar, 193, District Commissioner of Linguère, *Situation Politique du Cercle de Linguère* (without number), without date, 1; Guèye, Mamadou Bara, *Conflicts and alliances between farmers and herders: a case study of the 'Goll' of Fandène village, Senegal*, translated by Jean Lubbock (London: International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), 1994), 5–6.

a spectacular climax of such conflicts: the battle between the two villages of Vereck and Kër Matar Binta in 1955.¹⁴⁰ This physical battle followed a long-lasting land dispute. The cattle breeders of Vereck claimed the (re-)possession of a strip of land that belonged, through cession, to the neighbouring peasant village, which specialised in peanut and food cultivation.¹⁴¹ The inhabitants of Vereck, being in an unfavourable legal position, demanded access to the land on the grounds of first ownership as 'Pël autochthons', i.e. the 'real natives' of the land.¹⁴² They affirmed that the 'others', the 'Ouoloffs', had never had any historical claim to the land. Also, the tomb of Damba Gagne Peinda, Fulbe leader and warrior, was said to be situated under a tamarind tree on the land in question.¹⁴³

In 1955, the low-key conflict transformed into a violent battle over the disputed land, in which ethnic mobilisation was the exclusive strategy of the cattle-breeders. By contrast, the mostly Wolophone populations of Kër Matar Binta emphasised not their ethnocultural but their religious identification. The cleric, Ady 'Hajj' Touré, who was a Muslim leader belonging to the Tijaniyya brotherhood and a Fulfulde-speaker, had on earlier occasions been the mediator between the two communities. Now he was rejected as an arbiter by the peasants of Kër Matar Binta, who demanded that a Murid cleric should lead the negotiations.¹⁴⁴ The different interests at the heart of the conflict led to a complex mixture of religious versus ethnocultural claims of mobilisation, which made mediation difficult and kept the conflict alive for years to come.¹⁴⁵

Such conflicts between 'Pël' and 'Murids' were still rather frequent in the 1950s. While we find other violent encounters, as, for example, between Fulfulde-speaking herdsmen and Tukolor or Sarakole settlers, Wolophone

140 ANS, 11D1/960, Telegram from Administrator of Subdivision of Darou-Mousty to Amouroux, District Commissioner of Louga (without number), 6 April 1955.

141 On the principal specialisation of rural Wolophone populations in the profession of peanut planters, see Ross, Clark G., 'A Village Level Study of Producer Grain Transactions in Rural Senegal', *African Studies Review* 25(4), 1982, 65–84, 68.

142 ANS, 11D1/960, Amouroux to Jourdain, Governor of Senegal, *Rixe entre Peulhs et Ouoloffs du 7 Avril 1955 Région Darou-Marnane* (n° 147/C), 15 April 1955.

143 ANS, 11D1/960, Sall Massamba Kangué, chief of *canton* of Guet, to Amouroux (n° 511), 7 April 1955, 1–2.

144 Glover, John, "The Mosque is one thing, the administration is another": Murid *Marabouts* and Wolof Aristocrats in Colonial Senegal, *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 33(2), 2001, 351–65.

145 ANS, 11D1/960, Officer of Muslim Affairs in Senegal, *Note sur l'affaire de Keur Matar Bineta (Ouoloffs) contre Véreck (Peulhs) (Compte-Rendu verbal de l'Officier des Affaires Musulmanes à son retour de tournée)* (without number), without date, 1–2.

peasants were very frequently seen as the ‘natural opponents’ of the Fulbe cattle-owners.¹⁴⁶ We learn from El Hajj Mustapha Sarr, a Murid cleric in Guinguinéo, that in the village of M’Baré-Banth in Waalo, a similar dispute led to constant violence between the Wolof-speaking planter and landlord Mamadou Boy and his agricultural workers on the one hand, and Fulbe cattle-breeders on the other.¹⁴⁷ Ethnic terms were rendered particularly attractive by the fact that the Fulbe as a group continued to be underrepresented in the political structures of the colonial administration, and felt marginalised within the colonial state.

However, where Wolof-speaking populations had no immediate conflict with Fulbe groups, the situation under colonial rule was less clear. For example, Celle N’Diaye, son of the deposed *Buur N’Jambur* – the former regional ‘governor’ under the *Damel* of Kajoor – Birima N’Diaye, who had erected a sort of autonomous administration in his region, claimed to be the head of a dynasty which had ruled in the region since 1882, and he challenged the *canton* chiefs whom the French had installed. Indeed, Sidy Khouya Diop of Diadj-Oulingara and Cheikh Toko Diop of Nar-Niomré complained bitterly about the patronage network which N’Diaye employed. The latter made it clear that his protection was built on the ‘tradition’ of the pre-colonial state, which was not only created for the ‘Wolof’, but also for the ‘Fulbe’.¹⁴⁸

In the end, the colonial state partly reiterated those pre-colonial state structures. While all of the states ruled by Wolophone leaders formally disappeared with the French conquest, chiefs retained important prerogatives, at least from the perspectives of the ruled subjects. As Wolophone individuals were favoured for the respective posts, many readily relied on those new structures, using them as had been the case with functions and posts inside the pre-colonial

146 ANS, 11D1/973, *Plan de Protection [du Territoire du Sénégal]: Chapitre 11: Hypothèses* (without number), without date [1957], 11.

147 ANS, 11D1/960, El Hadj Moustapha Sarr, marabout in Guinguinéo, to Jourdain, French Governor of Senegal (without number), 4 Feb. 1955.

148 ANS, 11D1/960, Birima Cellé N’Diaye to Quinquaud (without number), 7 May 1938, 1–2; ANS, 11D1/960, B. Cellé N’Diaye, cultivator at Oulingara N’Diaye, Canton of Diadj-Oulingara, *Cercle* of Louga, to Deschamps, French Governor of Senegal (without number), 21 May 1943, 1–2; ANS, 11D1/960, District Commissioner of Louga, *Résumé de l’Affaire Birima Cellé N’Diaye c/Sidi Khouya Diop* (without number), 27 Jan. 1939, 1–2; ANS, 11D1/960, *Procès-Verbal d’audition de Témoin, Affaire Sidi Diop et Birima Cellé n’Diaye* (6), 1–2; ANS, 11D1/960, *Procès-Verbal d’audition de Témoin, Affaire Sidi Diop et Birima Cellé n’Diaye* (1) (without number), without date.

states. These new structures were independent of ethnic terms.¹⁴⁹ Moreover, in urban environments, Wolof-speakers often appeared as 'assimilated' Senegalese, and they pointed out their Frenchness.¹⁵⁰

After the First World War, the importance of ethnic affiliation in Senegal appeared to grow, as many French officials wished to create an 'appropriate administration', conceived on ethnic terms, and they engaged ever more strongly in the collection of information and 'traditions'. The attempt to write, from the end of the 1920s and mostly in the 1930s, reliable codices 'of native customs', is part of this initiative.¹⁵¹ In these monographs, which were potentially useful for legal decisions, the administrators assembled data about what they held to be the mechanisms of ethnic group organisation. Although the risk of misunderstandings was considerable, these works give important information about perceptions. They illustrate how Wolophone (and Sereer-speaking) populations of the colony, among others, 'sold' – or described – their group characteristics in conversation with the administrative staff.

In the administrative *cercle* of Thiès, French administrators realised that 'the Sereer' were considered to be eternally 'turbulent' and 'savage' by the Wolophone chiefs – the years of colonial rule did not change anything in this respect. By contrast, the Wolophone populations were characterised as 'repressive' by Sereer-speakers. The French officials believed that these negative opinions and stereotypes were the fruit of 'an animosity that continues to exist', a type of eternal, primordial hostility.¹⁵²

149 Gastellu, Jean-Marc, 'Politique coloniale et organisation économique des pays serer, Sénégal, 1910–1950', in Charles Becker, Saliou Mbaye, and Ibrahima Thioub (eds.), *AOF: réalités et héritages: Sociétés ouest-africaines et ordre colonial, 1895–1960* (Dakar: Direction des Archives du Sénégal, 1997), 564–76, 569–71.

150 ANS, 11D1/1303, Administrator of Subdivision of M'Bour to District Commissioner of Thiès, *Remplacement Socé Fall Chef Canton M'Bayar Nianing* (n° 205/C), 28 December 1945, 1; Austen, Ralph, 'Interpreters Self-Interpreted: The Autobiographies of Two Colonial Clerks', in Benjamin N. Lawrance, Emily Lynn Osborn, and Richard L. Roberts (eds.), *Intermediaries, Interpreters, and Clerks: African Employees in the Making of Colonial Africa* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 159–79, 166.

151 Ginio, Ruth, 'Negotiating Legal Authority in French West Africa: The Colonial Administration and African Assessors, 1903–1918', in Benjamin N. Lawrance, Emily Lynn Osborn, and Richard L. Roberts (eds.), *Intermediaries, Interpreters, and Clerks: African Employees in the Making of Colonial Africa* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 115–35, 124–5.

152 ANS, 10D5/12, Administration of Cercle of Thiès, *Coutume des Sérères Nones* (without number), without date.

The Sereer, being strongly represented (if not over-represented) in the collection of colonial data, remained nonetheless enigmatic from the point of view of the French officials. Intra-group differences posed a strong problem. Thus, even though an important criterion of 'Sereer-ness' seemed to be matrilineal group organisation, it was exactly the Sereer-Noon – apparently the most prototypically 'Sereer' of all those communities – that did not correspond to this pattern, as they favoured a patrilineal community organisation!¹⁵³

Through the codices, French administrators arrived in the end at questions of pre-colonial state organisation and its heritage. In their monograph on the 'Ouoloffs de Cayor', the officials of the Thiès *cercle* (district) commented that some chiefs, being descendants from the traditional families of royal slaves, were actively insisting on the prerogatives their families had won through participation in state structures. This helped them demand, quite successfully (if entirely illegally), the *asaka* from the local peasants: a tithe of the yearly harvest.¹⁵⁴ While the French officials had found rather a lot to say on the different groups classified as 'Sereer', they felt unsure about 'Wolof culture'. In respect to the ethnic census of the *cercle* of Thiès carried out in December 1932, those officials commented that discussing 'the Sereer' was far more interesting than discussing 'the Wolof'. Although the latter group represented more than fifty per cent of the *cercle*'s inhabitants, according to the colonial census data, it was held that 'the Sereer' were far more 'significant' as a group than the Wolophone populations!¹⁵⁵ The French administration had visible difficulties in defining Wolof cultural group identification, given its *denial* of ethnic criteria.

This picture was different in zones where Wolophone rulers had only obtained a real foothold in the course of the French wars of conquest, as in the Wuli and in other parts that were to become the *cercle* of Tambacounda.¹⁵⁶ In Siin, the context of classifying local populations was also more complex: while French administrators were tempted to depict the old pre-colonial state as 'Sereer', they came, repeatedly, to the very confusing conclusion that most of

153 ANS, 10D5/12, *Monographie des Sérères Nones: Les Nones* (without number), without date, 7–9, 14; ANS, 10D5/12, *Coutumes des Sérères N'Doute* (without number), without date, 2, 5, 7.

154 ANS, 10D5/12, Administration of Cercle of Thiès, *Cercle de Thiès: Coutume des Ouoloffs du Cayor* (without number), without date, 14.

155 ANS, 10D5/12, Administration of Cercle of Thiès, *Codification des Coutumes Indigènes: Coutume Sérère (Exécution Circulaire 128 B.P. du 19 Mars 1932 de M. le Gouverneur Général de l'Afrique Occidentale Française)* (without number), without date, 1.

156 ANS, 10D5/12, Hamidou Sy, *Commis expéditionnaire à la Résidence de Tambacounda, Essai de monographie du pays qui forme le cercle Tambacounda établie par le Commis expéditionnaire Hamidou Sy – Prescriptions Circulaire N° 234 A1 du 25 Octobre 1930* (without number), 7 Feb. 1939, 2–4.

the Wolophone chiefs now, in the 1930s, claimed to be the heirs of the ancient state.¹⁵⁷ The cultural influence of Wolof-speakers in the pre-colonial state was so subtle that at first glance it remained unnoticed by the agents of the colonial power.

The information assembled by the French did not lead to many concrete results, although it did provoke French interference in the structure of the councils of dignitaries. On the level of political organisation, we definitely find few references to ethnic affiliation, either by the French administrators and/or by their local informants. Only in Dagana and adjacent *cantons* did African collaborators of the administration argue with the classifications of 'ouolof' and 'peul'. Given the fact that Dagana is to be found at the margins of the former pre-colonial state structures, and that the abovementioned regular conflicts between Pulaar-speaking cattle breeders and Wolophone peasants had a particularly strong impact in this region, the recourse to ethnic distinctions corresponded to a certain logic.¹⁵⁸

In the southern district of Kaolack – in the former region of the pre-colonial state of Saluum – some individuals holding leading positions in the 'traditional' hierarchy were referred to as being 'ouolof' or 'sérère'. French administrators were, however, mostly interested in a former state that had had a very complex set-up of different 'nobilities'.¹⁵⁹ For the other district reports there is no indication at all of a possible allegiance of councillors to particular ethnic groups. This includes the *cantons* close to the Petite Côte at the margins of the former pre-colonial states of Bawol and Siin before 1945.¹⁶⁰

157 Moreover, reports pointed repeatedly to tensions between inhabitants of former Siin and former Saluum, which remained hostile to each other, even with the official disappearance of the states in question. See CADN, Fonds 'Anciennes Colonies', Fonds Dakar, 293, Gautier, *Annexe concernant les Terres « Sérère – Sine » du Canton de Gossas* (without number), without date [1957], 5; ANS, 10D5/12, *Coutume Sérère (Région du Sine): Exécution de la circulaire n° 128 AP. du 19 Mars 1931 de Monsieur le Gouverneur Général* (without number), without date, 1–9.

158 ANS, 10D1/36, Philippe, Administrator of Subdivision of Dagana, to District Commissioner of Bas-Sénégal, *Conseil des Notables* (n° 74/C), 6 Dec. 1947.

159 ANS, 10D1/36, Administrator of Subdivision of Foundiougne to District Commissioner of Kaolack (n° 241), 12 Sep. 1947; ANS, 10D1/36, Administrator of Subdivision of Foundiougne to District Commissioner of Kaolack, *Renouvellement Conseil Notables* (n° 315), 17 Nov. 1947, 1–2.

160 ANS, 10D1/36, Glangeaud, Administrator of Subdivision of Guinguiné, to District Commissioner of Kaolack (n° 1764), 15 Nov. 1947, 1–2; ANS, 10D1/36, Administrator of Subdivision of Kaolack, to District Commissioner of Kaolack and Wiltord, Governor of Senegal (without number), 6 Nov. 1947; ANS, 10D1/36, Lhomme, Administrator of Subdivision

Elections, New Spoils, and the Flaring Up of Ethnic Struggle: Senegal in the Late Colonial Phase, 1945–1960

The remarkable absence of ethnic categories within the group of Wolophone inhabitants of Senegal was subject to serious challenges in the 1940s. Politically, the end of the Second World War opened up new horizons. A phase of intense reform within the French colonial system led to the creation of new political roles for local and territorial elites, including as elected councillors at different levels, accompanied to a greater or lesser degree by privileges. The local chiefs, moreover, now enjoyed access to larger funds, distributed through the French economic modernisation programmes. This made the posts even more inviting.

Quite visibly, the Vichy experience and the subsequent phase of, first, war economy and, then, liberalisation profoundly changed the political framework in which ethnic solidarity was defined.¹⁶¹ For Senegal, this meant from 1944 that apart from the particular rights of the inhabitants of the *Quatre Communes*, larger groups of Senegalese inhabitants now became entitled to vote. The number of enfranchised persons rose from election to election. The voters decided, among other issues, upon Senegalese deputies for the French National Assembly (one for the ‘citizens’ of the *Quatre Communes*, one for the bulk of Senegal’s colonial populations living outside of this circumscribed area), and they elected delegates for a territorial council. These territorial councils were concerned with questions that directly affected local life.¹⁶²

At first glance it seems as if the changes of 1944/45 were destined to have little impact on group sentiment. After all, before the more profound reforms towards semi-autonomy voted through the *loi-cadre* of 1956, the prerogatives of the new posts were, usually, only consultative.¹⁶³ This fact, however, did not really diminish the attractiveness of the position of deputy. These positions were an ideal platform for the creation of patronage networks, which allowed the delegates to mobilise resources via their territorial and inter-territorial

of Fatick, to District Commissioner of Kaolack, *Renouvellement Conseils Notables*. (n° 1848), 12 Nov. 1947, 1–2.

161 Ginio, Ruth, *French Colonialism Unmasked: The Vichy Years in French West Africa* (Lincoln – London: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 182; Lawler, Nancy, ‘Reform and Repression under the Free French: Economic and Political Transformation in the Côte d’Ivoire, 1942–45’, *Africa* 60(1), 1990, 88–110, 94–8.

162 Chafer, Tony, *The End of Empire in French West Africa: France’s Successful Decolonization?* (Oxford: Berg, 2002), 61–4, 74–5.

163 On the *loi-cadre*, see Chafer, *End*, 166–7; Keese, Alexander, ‘“Quelques satisfactions d’amour-propre”: African elite integration, the Loi-cadre, and involuntary decolonisation of French Tropical Africa’, *Itinerario* 26(1), 2003, 33–57, 42–4.

parties, and it helped them build a reputation with the European administrators. Being gatekeepers and brokers of contacts with the colonial rulers, the councillors rapidly came to enjoy a considerable prestige. Their position was, in theory, a direct threat to the power of the chiefs who had formerly strongly monopolised access to the upper echelons of the colonial hierarchy, together with the African employees of the same administration. In the end, however, both concepts continued to exist in Senegal up to the political threshold of independence: the chiefs found themselves patrons among the councillors, and the councillors sought to bolster their own prestige with that of having chiefs as clients. Occasionally, they would even attempt to bring about the installation of a family member to the post of an important *chef de canton*.¹⁶⁴ This increased the material attraction of the chieftaincies.

Moreover, French attempts at democratisation at the territorial level also opened new spaces at the local level: activists called for a position for themselves. Schemes and intrigues endangered the position of some formerly well-entrenched 'traditional rulers' who came under significant pressure. This process included the case of Meïssa Fall, *chef de canton* of Joal, whose strategies for coping with the challenge will be analysed in detail below.

Many other chiefs also came under pressure: Meïssa Fall's colleague and fellow Fulfulde-speaker, Konko Ciré Bâ, was faced with similar problems, but he was initially successful in dealing with them. His *canton*, Fandène on the Petite Côte, was, as the French characterised it, a 'mixed canton', mainly peopled by Wolof- and Sereer-speaking populations. Bâ was an outsider from an ethnic point of view: he was 'Tukolor', with a large family in the north of the colony, in the district of Matam. From the 1940s, he was subject to constant pressure from local political activists who wanted to see him removed; nonetheless, he restored his authority and maintained it well into the 1950s. Only in 1957 did the now aged chief lose his standing: his prestige finally evaporated, as a consequence of a revived campaign against his status as 'stranger'. Frustrated, Bâ wished to return to Matam, in his 'region of origin'. Nevertheless, he still attempted, as had been normal in the decades before the Second World War, to nominate a successor of his own choice and from his family. In fact, colonial officials in the region had supported such procedures over the decades since the French conquest, but the political situation had now changed. The French administrators thus felt uneasy about the intentions of the 'foreigner' Bâ.

164 The only comparative study on 'global chieftaincy' is Newbury, Colin W., *Patrons, Clients, and Empire: Chieftaincy and Over-Rule in Asia, Africa, and the Pacific* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); see also Keese, Alexander, *Living with Ambiguity: Integrating an African Elite in French and Portuguese Africa, 1930–1961* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2007), 86–91.

While they sympathised with the goals of their long-standing collaborator, they did not want to enforce a dynastic succession. Thus, in the late 1950s, even the positions of well-established 'traditional rulers' had become difficult to maintain if they were attacked because of their 'origins'.¹⁶⁵ In 1958, Bâ's family therefore lost the chieftaincy of Fandène.

The upsurge of similar conflicts between different communities included Wolof-speakers and other groups in different regions of the colony after the Second World War. While before the early 1940s, local political power had relied on the pre-colonial states and the colonial order, ethnicity now came back into play. Interestingly, French reports commented that antagonisms of 'ethnic groups' in Senegal had *diminished* after the Second World War, due to increased contacts between different groups through migration and better lines of communication, particularly between 'Wolof' and 'Tukulor'. It is obvious that labour migration after the Second World War and in the urban areas was indeed an important phenomenon.¹⁶⁶ However, such reports were generally written in ignorance of the new, political dimension of struggles in the rural communities. Observers from the colonial administration were correct in that there was no ethnicisation of larger territorial politics in Senegal: there was no emergence of 'ethnic parties'. The main political parties in the territory absorbed voters in various regions, although it is true that the Senegalese branch of the *Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière* (SFIO) – for a short period after 1945 being the strongest political party in the whole of the colony – had the particular support of the inhabitants of the *Quatre Communes*.¹⁶⁷

From the experiences of the conquest period, Sereer-speakers on the Petite Côte had shown potential for a mobilisation on ethnic terms. Under the colonial regime before the Second World War, we do not find such initiatives by Sereer-speakers. Even after 1945, on the Petite Côte, when Sereer-speaking communities started to migrate in large numbers (particularly to Rufisque, and later on to Dakar), this had little effect. In the urban context, Sereer-speakers avoided forming there a diaspora that would have defined itself through ethnocultural criteria. Consequently, there was no reflux of ethnic

165 ANS, 11D/1382, Grasset, Administrator of Central Subdivision of Thiès, to District Commissioner of Thiès (without number), 7 January 1959.

166 ANS, 11D1/973, *Plan de Protection [du Territoire du Sénégal]: Chapitre 11: Hypothèses* (without number), without date [1957], 10.

167 The Union des Toucouleurs and the Union des Irlabés remained entirely marginal, see ANS, 11D1/973, *Plan de Protection [du Territoire du Sénégal]: Chapitre 11...*, 11.

group sentiment back from the urban areas into the coastal region further southwards.¹⁶⁸

Instead, in the hinterland of M'Bour, Nianing, and Joal, Sereer-speakers employed ethnocultural terms for their regional political goals. As in the two last decades of the nineteenth century, such claims were mostly made in relation to land problems. When on Mar-Lotte Island in the Siin-Saluum delta, a Wolof-speaking merchant purchased a large part of the land and attempted to drive the local peasants from their fields, the whole area became the scene of a dramatic xenophobic outbreak. The locals claimed that, as 'Sereer', they had the obvious entitlement to the land and would not accept the merchant Fabirima Sarr as landowner, as he was a 'stranger' to the country. Agents of the new owner were attacked and wounded. Sarr himself never dared to travel to Mar-Lotte because he feared for his life!¹⁶⁹

Before the mid-1940s, Sereer-speaking populations had rarely challenged the Wolof-speaking paramount chiefs on ethnic terms; now for a while it became frequent.¹⁷⁰

In the case of the chieftaincy of Diaganiao, where the French administrators had strongly demanded a candidate who would be appropriate from an ethnocultural point of view, the representatives of the colonial government did finally claim they could not find a suitable 'Sereer candidate' for the post. After a hasty quest for reliable information on the attitudes of local populations, they considered that the appropriate candidates were all Wolof-speaking and came from the small group of individuals forming the local elite of merchants, middle-level officials and veterans. Contrary to what the colonial administrators had initially feared, the local populations accepted the procedure employed by the colonial state; there was not the slightest sign of resistance along ethnic lines.¹⁷¹ However, Sereer-speakers now emphasised some local cultural traits that were regarded as quite different from 'Wolof customs'. They assembled in secret meetings, from which 'Wolof strangers', even if they were officially powerful, were excluded. This counter-culture was espoused by a

168 ANS, 11D1/1303, Administrator of Subdivision of M'Bour, *Notice de Renseignements concernant le Chef de Canton Sossé Fall – Canton du Bayar-Nianing (Subdivision de M'Bour)* (without number), 14 Aug. 1944.

169 ANS, 11D1/1148, *Extrait du Rapport N° 56 IAA du 29 Mai 1953 de Mr. l'Inspecteur des A.A. Le Rolle: Subdivision Fatick* (without number), without date.

170 ANS, 11D1/1303, Rey, Governor of Senegal, to District Commissioner of Thiès, *Au Sujet Chefferie canton Diaganiao* (n° 1112/APA), 30 June 1941, 2–3.

171 ANS, 11D1/1303, Administrator of Subdivision of Thiès (Guilatteau?) to District Commissioner of Thiès (n° 2/S.T.), 15 Sep. 1941.

number of young locals on the Petite Côte and in the Siin-Saluum region, and became stronger after the Second World War.¹⁷²

Over the decades of French rule, obvious networks of patronage and payments had flourished in many of the chieftaincies in the region.¹⁷³ The paramount chiefs had profited from connections they had established with Wolof-speaking merchant families, employing them for their own ends. In particular they attempted to market peanuts from collective fields on their own account, bypassing any community institutions. Such attempts enraged the cultivators and, in the overall atmosphere of reform in the second half of the 1940s, occasional revolts occurred against 'traditional rulers' who had behaved in what was perceived as 'shady' ways. Even formerly powerful rulers like the *canton* chief, Socé Fall, had to learn that, given the conditions of slow liberalisation of colonial rule, 'their' subjects were no longer disposed to accept exploitative practices.¹⁷⁴

Existing patronage networks provoked many political problems on the Petite Côte after 1945. As one major example, Kode N'Diaye, the former chief of the *canton* of Nianing-M'Bayard, had built his network on a strictly personal base. This included individuals from many linguistic groups and avoided 'ethnic patronage'.¹⁷⁵ Local headmen, who campaigned against N'Diaye's reinstatement in the 1940s, were mainly Sereer-speakers, but they did not have any ethnic agenda. They attacked what they described as N'Diaye's corrupt character, not his 'Wolofness' or lack of authenticity.¹⁷⁶

A second similar case is, again, in the *canton* of Diaganiao, where the election process of a new chief had not led to stable results. Locally, mostly Sereer-speaking populations protested against the behaviour of Wolof-speaking chief

172 ANS, 11D1/1303, Théron, *Enquête sur les incidents qui se sont récemment produits dans le canton de Diaganiao (Cercle de Thiès)* (n° 29), 4 June 1941, 2–3.

173 After 1958, the *chefs de canton* were either removed or integrated into regional administrative structures. In the latter case, they were controlled by the prefects and became employees of the post-colonial state; nonetheless, they were still expected to be active in 'native jurisdiction'. See Le Roy, Etienne, 'L'évolution de la justice traditionnelle dans l'Afrique francophone', *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 9(1), 1975, 75–87, 77–8.

174 ANS, 11D1/1303, Administrator of Subdivision of M'Bour to State Advocate in Dakar, *Plainte pour abus confiance contre ex-chef canton Sossé Fall* (n° 104/C.), 29 April 1946, 1.

175 ANS, 11D1/1303, Telegram from Larrue, Administrator of Subdivision of M'Bour, to District Commissioner of Thiès, *Retour Codé N'Diaye Canton Diaganiao [sic]* (n° 23f/C), 22 July 1946; ANS, 11D1/1303, Larrue to Etcheverry, director of journal 'Réveil' (without number), 17 May 1947.

176 ANS, 11D1/1303, Larrue to District Commissioner of Thiès, *Codé N'Diaye* (n° 23f/C), 1st June 1945.

Ely Manel N'Diaye. Crowds of discontented inhabitants of the *canton* assembled in front of his residence and demanded his resignation.¹⁷⁷ Nonetheless, this was not Sereer ethnic xenophobia: N'Diaye had simply gone too far in bribing some dignitaries with gifts of cattle so as to lay his hands on the lucrative export trade in the *canton*. Moreover, during elections, N'Diaye had supported the SFIO, which by 1951 had cost him the rest of his local support.¹⁷⁸ Most of the locals were adherents of the Bloc Démocratique Sénégalais (BDS), founded as a split-off from the Socialist movement in 1948 and led by the popular poet-politician Léopold Sédar Senghor (a 'son of the land'); local BDS militants despised the patronage given by the chief to a Wolof-speaking merchant elite that remained, for a time, linked to the SFIO.¹⁷⁹

However, despite the ethnic arguments used against him, Ely Manel N'Diaye managed to come to terms with the opposition of a part of the Sereer-speaking populations. As the conflict in Diaganiao was about abuses of power and not ethnicity, N'Diaye obtained the chance to rebuild his reputation – and he took it. On the verge of independence, after an active campaign of courting the *canton's* populations between 1952 and 1958, he again enjoyed the very vocal support of these populations.¹⁸⁰

The Sereer-speakers in the region of the Petite Côte continued to accept Wolophone candidates for some of the *canton* chieftaincies. When in the late 1940s two Wolof-speakers became *chefs de canton* of important and politically-contested units – Cheikh Diack in M'Badane-Sassal, and Armand N'Diaye as *canton* chief of M'Bayar – the Sereer-speakers of the two administrative entities did not attack their nomination, although this would now have been easy. The chiefs satisfied the Sereer-speakers through a moderate political programme, while some local Wolof-speaking merchants and settlers led the

177 ANS, 11D1/1393, Buffet, Administrator of Subdivision of M'Bour, to District Commissioner of Thiès (n° 132), 25 Sep. 1951, 1.

178 ANS, 11D1/1393, Goujon, Secretary-General of Senegal, to District Commissioner of Thiès, *Recensement Diaganiao* (n° 824/APA/2), 7 July 1952, 1; ANS, 11D1/1393, Amelot, Administrator of Subdivision of M'Bour, to District Commissioner of Thiès (n° 723/P.), 26 March 1948.

179 CADN, Fonds 'Anciennes Colonies', Fonds Dakar, 197, *Cercle de Thiès: Rapport Politique Année 1951* (without number), without date, 4bis–5bis.

180 ANS, 11D1/1393, Buffet, Administrator of Subdivision of M'Bour, *Notes sur la Manière de Servir de N'Diaye Ely Manel Chef de 10^e classe* (without number), 14 June 1952, 1; ANS, 11D1/1393, Buffet, *Notes sur la Manière de Servir de N'Diaye Ely Manel Chef de 10^e classe* (without number), 7 Jan. 1953, 1; ANS, 11D1/1393, Administrator of Subdivision of M'Bour, *Bulletin Individuel de Notes [Ely Manel N'Diaye]* (without number), 22 Oct. 1958, 1.

opposition.¹⁸¹ In places where merchant networks were absent, as in the case of the Wolof-speaking *canton* chief of Thor-Diander (part of the former Jander), a *canton* dominated by Sereer-speakers, the quest for a *modus vivendi* was less complicated. Accordingly, the colonial authorities considered Mamadou Fall M'Backé to be a very popular chief, although they found it very surprising.¹⁸² Whenever the local chiefs conformed to the expectations of their 'subjects', there were few tensions expressed in ethnocultural terms.¹⁸³

In the case of the reinstatement of Socé Fall, this time as *canton* chief of Nianing, the same mechanisms prevailed. Fall was an heir to the former ruling family of Kajoor, through his connection to the lineage of Amady N'Goni Fall. In his correspondence, he described himself as a member of the family of the *Damel*, and avoided any reference to being a 'Wolof' ruler.¹⁸⁴ He again became chief after promising to give up the abuses that had led to his earlier dismissal. However, as an SFIO follower, he ran into serious trouble with a large group of the Sereer-speakers in his *canton*. After the sequence of electoral defeats of the SFIO from the end of the 1940s, these protesters increasingly started to attack Fall verbally. In the villages of N'Gaparou and Babel, local unrest created a small but full-scale rebellion.¹⁸⁵ The Sereer-speakers of Malikunda-Sérère even sent petitions to Senghor's BDS in which their spokesmen demanded Fall's

181 ANS, 11D1/1303, Administrator of Subdivision of M'Bour, *Notes sur la Manière de Servir de Ndiaye Armand Chef de 7^e classe* (without date), without date [1957], 1; ANS, 11D1/1303, Administrator of Subdivision of M'Bour, *Notes sur la Manière de Servir de Chef de canton classe du sixième (6^e) [Armand N'Diaye]* (without number), 17 March 1958; ANS, 11D1/1303, Administrator of Subdivision of M'Bour, *Notes sur la Manière de Servir de Ndiaye Armand Chef de 8^e classe* (without number), 31 Dec. 1953, 1; ANS, 11D1/1303, Jean-Louis Clavier, Administrator of Subdivision of M'Bour, to District Commissioner of Thiès, *Armand N'Diaye* (n° 64/C.), 24 June 1949; ANS, 11D1/1303, Administrator of Subdivision of M'Bour, *Bulletin Individuel de Notes [Armand N'Diaye]* (without number), 20 Feb. 1948; ANS, 11D1/1303, Larrue to District Commissioner of Thiès, *Nomination Armand N'Diaye intérimaire M'Bayar-Nianing* (n° 50/C), 12 Aug. 1946.

182 ANS, 11D1/1303, Lami, District Commissioner of Thiès, to Bailly, Governor of Senegal (n° 676/AGC), without date, 1.

183 On M'Backé's successor in 1957, Samba Amadu Diop, see CADN, Fonds 'Anciennes Colonies', Fonds Dakar, 293, Gautier, *Note pour Monsieur le Chef du Territoire du Sénégal: Ordre de mission N° 5234 du 29 Novembre 1957 pour se rendre à Thiès...* (n° 15 C.IAA/J.I.G.), 19 Dec. 1957, 3.

184 ANS, 11D1/1303, Administrator of Subdivision of M'Bour, *Notes sur la Manière de Servir de Fall Sossé Chef de 6^e classe du Canton de Nianing* (without number), 20 March 1958.

185 ANS, 11D1/1303, Lemoine, Administrator of Subdivision of M'Bour, to Cornut-Gentille, Governor-General of French West Africa (n° 157), 25 Sep. 1953, 1.

immediate dismissal.¹⁸⁶ The BDS organised an active movement for his removal, peaking during the electoral campaigns of the early 1950s.¹⁸⁷ The 'traditional authority' in neighbouring M'Bayar *canton*, Armand N'Diaye, a BDS party member, did his best to further add fuel to the fire: he discredited his colleague before the colonial authorities through a large number of denunciatory letters.¹⁸⁸ Even under these conditions, Socé Fall adapted to the changing environment and survived politically. In 1958 he had obviously managed to establish good relations with the many Sereer-speaking personalities dominating village politics.¹⁸⁹ Only in 1959 did Socé Fall pay the price for his long-standing anti-BDS position: the new leaders of government belonging to the Union Progressiste Sénégalaise (UPS), the successor movement of the BDS, removed him as revenge for his earlier political attitudes.¹⁹⁰

In view of this last instance, we have to be careful to avoid an impression of an ethnic bipolarity of political parties. It would be incorrect to define, on the Petite Côte and in the Siin-Saluum region, the BDS as the 'Sereer party' and the SFIO as the 'Wolof party'. Among leading Sereer-speaking dignitaries, there was a respectable minority of SFIO supporters and candidates, and the newly appearing 'ethnic' debates of the late 1940s cannot simply be translated into political allegiance. Ethnic terms only entered into the political battle when it was useful on tactical grounds to denounce the 'otherness' of a rival in party competition.¹⁹¹ The French administration had, rather clumsily, contributed to creating the opportunities for conflict expressed through such ethnic terms. The colonial village organisation increasingly used ethnic labels: in the 1940s,

186 ANS, 11D1/1303, Socé Fall, *canton* chief of M'Bayar, to Administrator of Subdivision of M'Bour (without number), 27 June 1951, 1.

187 ANS, 11D1/1303, Goujon, Secretary-General of Senegal, to District Commissioner of Thiès, *Chefferies Cantons Nianing et Thor Diander* (n° 1175/APA/2), 8 Nov. 1951.

188 ANS, 11D1/1303, Socé Fall to Administrator of Subdivision of M'Bour (without number), 26 June 1951, 1–2. On Armand N'Diaye and party politics, see ANS, 11D1/1303, Armand N'Diaye, Chief of *canton* of M'Bayar, to Administrator of Subdivision of M'Bour (without number), 17 June 1952, 1.

189 ANS, 11D1/1303, Berthet, substitute for Goujon, acting Governor of Senegal, to Administrator of Subdivision of M'Bour (n° 1616/APA/2), 15 March 1954; ANS, 11D1/1303, Administrator of Subdivision of M'Bour, *Notes sur la Manière de Servir de Fall Sossé Chef de 6° classe du Canton de Nianing* (without number), 20 March 1958, 2.

190 ANS, 11D1/1303, Valdidio N'Diaye, Senegalese Minister of the Interior, *Arrêté portant fin de détachement d'un Chef de Canton* (n° 11261/MINT/APA), 5 Nov. 1959.

191 ANS, 11D1/1303, Lemoine to District Commissioner of Thiès, *Chefferie du canton de l'Agagohé* (without number), 21 May 1954, 2.

more settlements than ever had an 'ethnic name'.¹⁹² Some of these names had existed under pre-colonial conditions: in the case of the Siin-Saluum region, an ethnocultural form of settlement had had to do with defence against pillaging campaigns of the *ceddos* of the local states. Some of the inhabitants of so-called 'Sereer', 'Tukulor' and 'Bambara' villages in the area underlined their distinctiveness through the respective names already in existence at the moment of French conquest; and we have references of that type from Boilat's monograph and from reports by early French administrators and Spiritan missionaries.¹⁹³ However, due to the activity of the French administration, such labelling became a normal colonial routine in the interwar period. In the 1940s, we also find a good number of villages labelled as 'Ouoloff'.¹⁹⁴ Even if much of this labelling was due to the interpretation by administrators, such administrative labels proved to be a point of reference that could lead to aggressive group relations and violence.

In contrast to the first wave of violence that had targeted some 'foreign' chiefs on the Petite Côte but had not predominantly relied on ethnic distinctions, the electoral campaign of 1951 antagonised villages under different administrative-ethnic labels. The first to be hit were communities that were smaller and more vulnerable than those of the Sereer-speakers, as in the violence between Malikunda-Sérère and Malikunda-Bambara. The Bambara-speakers voted by a large majority for the Socialists, which provoked the outrage of the Sereer-speakers of the neighbouring village and developed into a violent struggle for land: the Sereer obviously hoped to expel Bambara-speakers from the region as 'strangers' and lay their hands on their fields! There were no signs of older tensions: it was only under the impact of post-war political rivalries, orchestrated on the side of the BDS by political envoy Jacques d'Erneville, that Sereer-speaking villagers began to consider the 'alien' character of long-standing neighbours.¹⁹⁵ In the case of Malikunda and its region, this created unprecedented troubles, which, however, did not lead to the final expulsion of Bambara-speakers.

192 ANS, GGAOF, Fonds Ancien, 13G 52, Alsace to Director of Native Affairs of Senegal (n° 455), 12 June 1897.

193 ANS, 11D/1382, Grasset, Administrator of Central Subdivision of Thiès, to District Commissioner of Thiès (without number), 5 Dec. 1958; Boilat, *Esquisses*, 264.

194 ANS, 11D/1417, Lami, District Commissioner of Thiès, to State Advocate in Dakar, *Affaire de M'Badane Sassal* (n° 401/AGC), 26 Sep. 1950; ANS, 11D/1417, Philippe to Lami, *Affaire Cheikh Diack* (n 95/C), 25 Sep. 1950.

195 ANS, 11D1/1303, Socé Fall to Administrator of Subdivision of M'Bour (without number), 27 June 1951, 1.

Such friction was only one possible outcome of administrative situations, and not an inevitable result. In the village and surroundings of Tiamboledj, during the electoral campaign of 1949, the Sereer-speaking village chief Godène Diouf had encouraged the villagers to attack neighbouring settlements that were regarded and labelled as 'Bambara' and 'Wolof'. Godène's own brother, Rok Diouf, distanced himself from the chief and protested against these ethnically legitimated attacks. Obviously, Rok Diouf acted in his own interest: by convincing the locals to resume their allegiance to the Wolof-speaking *canton* chief, Socé Fall, he also managed in the long run to bypass the dynastic rules of his family. Nonetheless, it remains an important fact that both men, Rok Diouf and Socé Fall, created a workable alliance that functioned even under conditions of ethnic tensions. It brought the former into the position of village chief instead of his brother, and allowed Fall to enlist a group of supporters that had previously been on the verge of challenging his rule over the *canton* on the ground of their being 'Sereer' and him being a 'Wolof' chief.¹⁹⁶ This shows that the ethnic terms between 'Sereer' and 'Wolof' could be flexible. The interests of smaller groups and of individuals remained more important than any 'primordial sentiment'; only where it was safe to attack a group on ethnic grounds, and where the antagonism was linked to clear political party opposition, did it remain a continuous phenomenon.

Therefore, even the ethnocultural identifications of smaller groups, like the 'Sereer', were never homogeneous. Oppositions under group labels could be reformulated, as sub-group affiliations were also employed for mobilisation within the Sereer-speaking regions. During 'internal' political struggles in 'Sereer villages' in the second half of the 1940s and in the 1950s, there was no trace of any feeling of solidarity 'between all Sereer'. Most prominently, in parts of the *canton* of M'Bayar-Nianing, the regional Safèn subgroup of the Sereer-speakers claimed a proper group identity for themselves. As we have seen from the early missionary reports from the Petite Côte, such forms of behaviour were not entirely new, but they now returned with a stronger political impact. The 'Safèn' distanced themselves quite ostentatiously from other groups that were normally all considered 'Sereer'. Thus, it was all the more complicated to turn a joint Sereer identity against Wolophone chiefs. Grudgingly, the representatives of the colonial power reacted to such unwelcome 'complications'. In problematic villages where friction between formerly rather unnoticed 'sub-groups' appeared, such as in Kéniabour, the French decided to select diligent

196 ANS, 11D1/1393, Clavier, Administrator of Subdivision of M'Bour, to District Commissioner of Thiès (n° 43/C), 23 May 1949.

headmen, like Sindak Dione, as village chiefs, who could exert influence on the 'occasionally turbulent Safèn populations'.¹⁹⁷

Besides conflicts between subgroups, cleavages between generation sets were another source of conflict that greatly complicated front lines in the 1940s and 1950s. In the village of Godaguène, the (mostly Sereer-speaking) village headmen had forced the Wolophone village chief to resign. As a successor, they agreed on a local, Sereer-speaking candidate. This decision, however, was immediately challenged by a group of young, Sereer-speaking male inhabitants of the settlement, who favoured the return of the dismissed chief who had been considerably younger than the new head of the village!¹⁹⁸ Hence, in this particular case, aspects of generation overruled ethnic solidarities: the younger generation preferred to have a sympathetic Wolof 'stranger' as village chief to being ruled by a candidate of the elders.

In contrast to changes on the Petite Côte, where the political reforms sometimes favoured a limited return of 'ethnic allegiance' into the political arena, it has to be said that many other parts of the colony remained largely unaffected by such mobilisation strategies. This was particularly the case for the north-western area of Senegal, where the absence of ethnic arguments is impressive in comparison. The legacy of even stronger former state structures – the uncontested dominance of, namely, Kajor and Waalo – during the pre-colonial period made it easier for the local rulers to keep any ethnic discussions out of the debate on local power. This was clear for Amadou Salla Diop, the paramount chief of N'Guick. He was accepted as a sufficiently valuable ruler by the local populations despite being a 'foreigner' in his *canton*, and there was no movement against him that would have been comparable to the 'troubles' occurring temporarily in many places on the Petite Côte.¹⁹⁹ The key issue was that Diop's family had long held the 'hereditary rights' to the positions in the *canton*.²⁰⁰ The regions north of Louga, called Thiol in Pulaar by the many Fulfulde-speakers settling there, were accepted as the stronghold of the Fall

197 ANS, 11D1/1303, Administrator of Subdivision of M'Bour to District Commissioner of Thiès (n° 2290), 4 June 1943.

198 ANS, 11D1/1393, Chief of *canton* of Diaganiao to Administrator of Subdivision of M'Bour (without number), 2 Sep. 1946.

199 ANS, 11D1/960, Deschamps, Governor of Senegal, to District Commissioner of Louga (n° 891/APA/2), 22 Sep. 1943, 1.

200 ANS, 11D1/960, Telegram from District Commissioner of Louga to Deschamps, *Cantons Nord Louga. Désignation nouveaux Chefs du Gandiolais et du Mérina Installation de Chef Intérimaire du K/Bacine* (n° 147/cf), 18 Nov. 1943, 1; ANS, 11D1/960, Michel, Inspector of Administrative Affairs, *Note au sujet des chefferies du Cercle de Louga (lettre n° 100 du 13 Septembre 43)* (n° 78/IAA), 15 Sep. 1943.

family.²⁰¹ In both cases, the point of reference was clearly the pre-colonial structure of provinces, which excluded any conflict for power on ethnic grounds.

In Kebemer, another *canton* of north-western Senegal, French officials, in a rigorous inquiry, identified 'Wolof', 'Fulbe', 'Moors', 'Lawbe', 'Sereer' and 'Bambara' populations.²⁰² However, what stabilised social relations in Kebemer was its past as part of a province of the pre-colonial state of Kajoor, and as the stronghold of the Sall dynasty – such as in the case of Sangone Sall in the ancient province of Gët – who had the support of Sufi clerics.²⁰³ Presenting themselves as the heirs of 'traditional' families that had played a role in pre-colonial Kajoor was, in fact, a line of argumentation that automatically excluded ethnic arguments. Many such families claimed, in terms of origin, ancestors in different regions of Senegambia: it would have been problematic to associate them with one ethnocultural heritage. This is obvious from the example of Sakhevar Diop, *canton* chief of Tiilmakka, a region neighbouring Kebemer. He claimed the heritage of the families of the Diop and the Sall, and declared that they were two 'mixed' families, with historical links to both leading Wolof-speaking families and to the Fuuta Tooro nobility. Moreover, Sakhevar Diop had long established a network of patronage in his *canton*, a network which was fully non-ethnic. This form of organisation of patronage was typical for northern Senegal.²⁰⁴ The same type of patronage was exerted by Massamba Kangue Sall,

201 ANS, 11D1/960, Lalourette to Deschamps, *Chefferies des Cantons du Nord de la Circonscription de Louga* (n° 100), 13 Sep. 1943, 1.

202 ANS, 11D1/1393, Administrator of Subdivision of Kebemer, *Notes sur la Manière de Servir de Sangoné Sall chef de Quatrième classe* (without number), without date [1958/59], 1.

203 ANS, 11D1/1393, Armand, Administrator of Subdivision of Kebemer, *Notes sur la Manière de Servir de Sangoné Sall chef de Quatrième classe* (without number), 3 Mars 1958, 1; ANS, 11D1/1393, Piganiol, Administrator of Subdivision of Kebemer, *Notes sur la Manière de Servir de Sangoné Sall chef de 4^e classe* (without number), 23 April 1957, 1–2; ANS, 11D1/1393, Administrator of Subdivision of Kebemer, *M. Sangoné Sall – Chef de Canton de N'Doyène Daga Ne Dour* (without number), without date. The situation remained so even after the disappearance of the Sall family from local power. In the 1960s, the Kebe lineage defended its authority on the same grounds, losing it thereafter to the 'Fall clan', see Cottingham, Clement, 'Political Consolidation and Centre-Local Relations in Senegal', *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 4(1), 1970, 101–20, 106.

204 ANS, 11D1/1393, Auchapt, Administrator of Subdivision of Kebemer, *Notes sur la Manière de Servir de Diop Sakhévar chef de hors classe* (without number), 30 March 1958; ANS, 11D1/1393, Armand, *Notes sur la Manière de Servir de Diop Sakhevar chef de 9^{ème} classe* (without number), 30 March 1958; ANS, 11D1/1393, Piganiol, Administrator of Subdivision of Kebemer, *Notes sur la Manière de Servir de Sakhaver Diop chef de Canton stagiaire* (without number), 27 Feb. 1957, 1.

another representative of the Sall family who successfully ruled over Wolof-speaking peasants and Fulfulde-speaking herdsmen. While being identified by the French as ‘Wolof’, his dynasty, the Sall, claimed to be a ‘Tukulor warrior family’ linked to the former ruling family of Fuuta Tooro.²⁰⁵ Meïssa M’Baye Sall, the *canton* chief of M’Baouar, argued effectively with the same mixture of group affiliations – and he enjoyed a very similar success in his *canton*.²⁰⁶

In northern Senegal, this authority, based on pre-colonial state experience, was even more stable, although it could be threatened by the intensification of conflicts between Pulaar-speaking cattle-breeders and Wolophone peasants. From the 1940s, Fulbe leaders became more organised and increasingly aggressive. Fulbe headmen wished, as French administrators interpreted it, to ‘escape Wolof tyranny and defend their land against Murid control’. As we have seen with regard to the battle of Vereck, the propaganda of Fulfulde-speaking leaders was indeed directed both against the activities of an oppressive ‘other’, ‘the Wolof’, in terms of an ethnic group, and against the attempts at religious monopoly by the Murids.²⁰⁷ Under these circumstances, even feared chiefs such as Sangoné Sall had considerable difficulties and often failed to ensure the loyalty of the Fulbe inhabitants of the area. In particular, the marginal zones of such *cantons* became unruly places until the independence of the colony.²⁰⁸ Here – but only here – sporadic tensions relying on an ethnocultural basis could be perpetuated into long-lasting struggles.

The evolution of the 1940s and 1950s, with a renewed popularity of ethnic arguments peaking in some parts of the Petite-Côte, but which was normally not very lasting in the coastal zones and their hinterland, is reflected in the discussion about ‘tradition’. Unfortunately, we face a lack of transcribed material, as the oral ‘traditions’ of Senegalese *gëwel* (griot) culture were only rarely written

205 ANS, 11D1/1393, Administrator of Subdivision of Kebemer, *Notes sur la Manière de Servir de Sall Massamba Kangué chef de hors classe* (without number), 30 March 1958, 1; ANS, 11D1/1393, Auchapt, Administrator of Subdivision of Kebemer, *Notes sur la Manière de Servir de Sall Massamba Kangué chef de Canton Hors classe* (without number), 20 June 1959.

206 ANS, 11D1/1393, Auchapt, *Notes sur la Manière de Servir de Sall Meïssa M’Baye chef de la hors classe* (without number), 20 June 1959; ANS, 11D1/1393, Administrator of Subdivision of Kebemer, *Notes sur la Manière de Servir de Sall Meïssa M’Baye chef de la hors classe* (without number), without date [1958], 1; ANS, 11D1/1393, Pigioli, Administrator of Subdivision of Kebemer, *Notes sur la Manière de Servir de Sall Meïssa M’Baye chef de Hors-classe* (without number), 27 Feb. 1958, 1.

207 ANS, 11D1/973, *Plan de Protection [du Territoire du Sénégal]: Chapitre 11: Hypothèses* (without number), without date [1957], 11.

208 ANS, 11D1/1393, Administrator of Subdivision of Kebemer, *Notes sur la Manière de Servir de Sangoné Sall chef de Quatrième classe* (without number), 3 Mars 1958, 1.

down. The French only slowly started with such collections in the interwar period and after the Second World War, and they never created any larger corpus. Nevertheless, some 'traditions' were put in writing during the period. The Library of Saint-Louis in 1941 registered a 'traditional account' by Amadu Wade, a member of the former ruling dynasty of Waalo, which can be regarded as 'authorised'. Wade's account is significant as it provides an 'official' founding myth of Waalo. This founding myth presents perceptions of different groups that are highly relevant to our discussion.²⁰⁹

The presentation of the distinct groups is enlightening. The narrator of the account identifies the 'Peulhs' and the 'Sérères' as part of a refugee group coming from the north, and being involved in the foundation of the new states in the region, like Fuuta Tooro and Waalo. The subjects of the *Buur Siin*, who comes from the south to swear allegiance to the dynasty of Waalo, are explicitly characterised as Sereer.²¹⁰ In reality, the emergence of the Wolof language, which, according to the account, had not existed as an 'indigenous language' before, is described as result of the effort of the inhabitants of Siin and Waalo to *create* a state language for the Grand Ouolof, a large territorial structure that can be identified with the mythical Kingdom of Jolof. Here, the legendary N'Diadiane N'Diaye (or Njajaan Njaj), first *Brak* of Waalo, becomes the first king.²¹¹

The occasionally confusing account shows clearly, in accordance with my interpretation of 'Wolof identification' in the pre-colonial and colonial periods, a conception of 'being Wolof' that is entirely different from other group labels in the region. In the Wade account, the quality of 'Wolof-ness' is deliberately connected to state structures. It is also true that other family traditions like that of the Diass, asserting themselves as centuries-long claimants to monarchic power in Waalo, present things differently.²¹² Their version is closer to the influential report given to the French at the end of the nineteenth century by Yoro Diaw. The Chief Legbi Bigué N'Diaye, in his account of the foundation of Waalo, claims that 'Wolofs and Peuls arrived together in the Jolof'. This version thus distinguishes from the outset the two labels as different ethnic groups and distinct units. However, it has to be said that the Diass legend was

209 Bomba, Victoria, 'Genealogies of the Waalo matrilineages of Dioss, Logre and Tédiègue: versions of Amadou Wade and Yoro Dyao', *Bulletin de l'IFAN, Série B sciences humaines* 41(2), 1979, 221–47.

210 ANS, 10D4/33, *Le Oualo*, account given by Amadou Wadde ('de Dagana'), translated into French by Cissé Amadou Bassirou, librarian in Saint-Louis (without number), May 1941, 1–2.

211 ANS, 10D4/33, *Le Oualo...* (without number), May 1941, 6.

212 The most recent discussion of the founding myths takes the importance of 'Wolof' group sentiment as a given, see Sall, Samba Lampsar, *Ndiadiane Ndiaye et les origines de l'empire Wolof* (Paris: Harmattan, 2011).

little more than a very brief account in comparison to the more substantial and influential founding legend given by Wade.²¹³ Finally, Boucar Boydo's 'founding legend of the Fulbe' was also very different from the account of 'the Wolof': the Fulbe myth refers from the outset to the 'Peul' as an ethnic community. The Fulfulde-speakers felt marginalised in the confrontation with Wolophone peasants and rarely took part in the material improvement from which the colony profited between 1945 and 1960. During their mobilisation attempts, leaders emphasised strongly their Fulbe identification.²¹⁴

As a whole, even with the politicisation of rural regions in the colony of Senegal after 1945, the component of ethnic conflict still remains small. Only occasionally and for some communities, does the researcher find a local awareness of the opportunities given by ethnic arguments, particularly in order to oust 'strangers' and to obtain their positions or land. However, as a sentiment, it was of little appeal, unstable, and mingled with feelings of allegiance to other sub-groups. In this situation, most of the Wolophone chiefs in the northern, but also in the southern coastal hinterland of Senegal, were easily able to recover their reputation after attacks. To stabilise their position against local unrest, potential riots, and the critique from the colonial administration, they needed to adapt to a degree in terms of political style. Such Wolophone chiefs kept a low profile and abandoned some of the abuses that had characterised former methods of local rule, or those of their predecessors.

In the regions between the Senegal River and the Siin-Saluum area, the category of being 'Wolof' was rarely voiced in any conflicts. It was atypical as a category used to organise group mobilisation. While Wolophone populations appear to have been aware of the possibility of referring to 'Wolof identification', they rarely did. State structures as point of reference, eventually bolstered through a centuries-long historical experience, were far more important in local perceptions. Where under colonial rule the continuities were evident, as in the *cercle* of Louga or in parts of the *cercle* of Thiès, this legacy of self-categorisation was easier still to maintain. Here, important families relied explicitly on accounts of their past glory, which linked them to dynasties of provincial influence, as in Kajoor, Waalo, or, to a lesser extent, Bawol. Further southwards, the existing state structures had been removed, and while some of the new, Wolophone chiefs had links to the dynastic families of Siin or Saluum, most did not boast such important relatives. Nonetheless, after the

213 ANS, 10D4/33, *Chronique des Diass (communiqué par le Chef Legsi-Bigué N'Diaye du Yeng-Yeng Géboul)* (without number), without date.

214 ANS, 10D4/33, Ka Boucar Boydo, *Congrès de l'Union des Peuls: Rapport d'ensemble par M. Boucar Bayde* (without number), 9 Oct. 1957, 1, 5.

disappearance of the pre-colonial states, the colonial administration had immediately filled the vacuum in provincial organisation by imposing its own order. Most of the Sereer-speakers in the region had bowed, after the French conquest, to continuities from the former order, oppressive sometimes, yet mostly 'reliable'. The democratisation of the 1940s did not rapidly change this basic assumption: although Sereer-speakers occasionally challenged the ruling authorities through ethnic mobilisation, internal fissures and ambivalences within the group ultimately made this challenge very ineffective. Remarkably, the word 'Wolof', and the 'Wolof identity' of one side of an eventual conflict, continued to be very rarely mentioned. Finally, the violent experiences of the Fulbe herdsmen in their relations with Wolophone populations posed the only real challenge within a situation in which the ancient state structure became a considerable antidote to tensions expressed through ethnic difference.

Joal-Fadiouth: Centre of Multiple Identifications and Place of Strategic Employment of Allegiances (1840–1960)

The city of Joal-Fadiouth on the Petite Côte represents an outstanding case study for illustrating in still more detail the processes related above. The originally separate communities of Joal and Fadiouth, which then became fused into a single urban centre under colonial rule, were an early zone of contact between a number of Wolophone settlers of which at least a part had directly immigrated from the north, and other ethnic groups, among which the Sereer-speakers represented the large majority. At the same time, in the nineteenth century, the inhabitants of Joal had to cope with the influence of different pre-colonial state structures. Siin was obviously the most engaged of the entities in the region, and Joal remained during large parts of the first half of the century in a tributary relationship to the *Buur Siin*. However, the rulers of Saluum and Bawol were also occasionally active in the region, mostly during military campaigns. The immediate surroundings of Joal are, consequently, a highly interesting case to investigate the logic of solidarities.

As a community, the inhabitants of Joal defined themselves as 'mixed'. This condition concerned ethnocultural terms, but, later, also a reputation as being a 'neutral zone' between Muslims and Christians. The informants of the Spiritan missionaries explained at a very early stage to the Order of the Holy Ghost Fathers that they were 'half Sereer and half Wolof'.²¹⁵ Leaders of

²¹⁵ AGCSE, 3 I 1.5a5, Gallais, *Complément des notes sur la mission de Joal. Royaume de Sine – Sérères – Wolofs – Joal*. (without number), without date [ca. 1850], 16.

local political life in Joal often boasted that they were able to employ the two languages; bilingualism was a fact elsewhere on the Petite Côte, but in the town it was much referred to. As an additional element in complex group relations, a good part of the local elite referred in parallel to their 'Portuguese' identity, as early missionaries had indeed been Portuguese, and Eurafican populations of Portuguese descent were a longstanding factor on the coast.

At first glance, the members of the community of Joal thus had a group identification marked through various factors. More remarkably, however, the inhabitants of the town distanced themselves in their conversation with French representatives from the use of both local languages, Wolof and Sereer – although speaking both languages in everyday life. The judgment on the Sereer language was damning: the residents of Joal held that Sereer was 'primitive'. Nonetheless, the leaders of the community argued that Wolof could not be employed either in any important local context, as the 'Sereer' spirits living in the interior of the holy Baobab trees of the region would regard the employment of the 'foreign' idiom as a sacrilege; they would avenge themselves and slay the Wolof-speakers on the spot if this language became too prominent!²¹⁶

This overall context leads to a very peculiar picture. Joal was a mixed society in many respects, but one in which the regional prejudices of both of the two dominant local language groups were found, and were used against the world outside of the town. In this context, it is also apparent that a consciousness of particular ideas referring to different ethnic groups was clearly existent, if mostly combined with the criterion of language. However, this was not really *decisive* during the second half of the nineteenth century: for the inhabitants of Joal, the designation of themselves and of others as 'Wolof' or 'Sereer' was part of a larger repertoire, which was still more flexible than in other communities on the Petite Côte.

Indeed, the populations of Joal had enlarged this repertoire by adding other historical components, such as their 'Portugueseness' and their relationship toward the pre-colonial state of Siin. As concerns the latter, the leaders of the community held that the rulers of the most powerful political entity in the area represented the central point of reference. The claim of 'being Portuguese' expressed the demand to be free from any legitimate control by the pre-colonial state of Siin. On religious terms, the elite of the town was, in the early 1870s,

216 AGCSE, 3 I 1.5a5, Gallais, *Quelques notes sur l'origine de Joal, sur les Wolofs et les Cérers, extraites des lettres datées de Joal* (without number), without date [ca. 1850], 2–4.

fiercely opposed to the attempts of the Muslim section of the Wolof-speakers in the city to erect a mosque.²¹⁷

The elite of Joal actively engaged in securing its effective independence from Siin during the 1860s and the 1870s, and also attempted to obtain guarantees of continuous French support against other claims coming from Bawol and Saluum. However, the link to the authorities of Siin remained present in the memories of the local leaders of the Joal community. The inhabitants of the town behaved, very visibly, as *former* subjects of the *Buur Siin* that had not forgotten their ancient relationship. This behaviour of local leaders was evident during the visits of Koumba Ndoffène Fa Mak Diouf in their particularly reverential style. During the tragic events of 1871, when the *Buur Siin* was murdered during his visit to the town, a possible outbreak of war between the army of Siin and the soldiers of Joal was avoided through the numerous relations that existed between the town and the royal troops. Those were easily sufficient to guarantee that even in a case as grave as the assassination of the *Buur*, the warriors from Siin spared the city (including the sparsely manned French post) from destruction.²¹⁸

Between 1900 and 1945, the relationship between the different ethnic groups within the urban community had no place in local discussion. Sereer-speakers were theoretically in the majority, but the local hierarchy was led by Fulfulde-speaking and Wolophone notables. Both the ethnic and the religious dimension remained in the background for several decades: the centre of Joal-Fadiouth was a place where different linguistic communities coexisted, and where the Murid Muslims enjoyed a status similar to that of the Catholic community.

This picture changed in the 1940s. With the impact of post-war reform, Joal lived through a period of important political troubles in which the question of belonging to communities was newly and consistently posed. For the decades of relative tranquillity, Meïssa Fall, the Fulfulde-speaking chief of the *canton* of Joal-Gohé (whose family came from Fuuta Tooro) including the town, had had a rather uncomplicated task in governing the inhabitants of the region. He was undoubtedly known to rule with a relatively firm hand, but – like Ely Manel N'Diaye in Diaganiao and Socé Fall in M'Bayard-Nianing – he had become popular in the region. He was one of those 'traditional rulers' who had rapidly learned to play the game, even before the first movement against abuses committed by chiefs that flared up in the 1940s: Fall respected well enough the political prerogatives of local headmen, he pleased the wishes of the highly

217 AGCSE, 3 I 1.11b3, Lamoise, French missionary in Joal, to Schwindenhammer, Provincial Superior of the Spiritan Mission (without number), 30 June 1871, 3.

218 AGCSE, 3 I 1.11b3, Lamoise to Schwindenhammer (without number), 12 Dec. 1871, 2–4.

corporatist Sereer-speaking fishermen, and he did his best to protect the local artisans from outside competition and to improve conditions of marketing and sales of local products. The chief had visibly ‘succeeded in Sereer territory’.²¹⁹ As a local partner, Meïssa Fall was also held in high esteem by the French administrators.

An attack came, rather unexpectedly, in May 1946. The assault against Meïssa Fall’s chieftaincy was in part an affair of the territorial politics discussed above; it reflected the shifts in the regional balance of power under the impact of the reforms instituted in 1945. The central figure linking the local affairs concerning Joal and Fadiouth to the new territorial assembly of Senegal in Saint-Louis, was, again, Jacques d’Erneville, a sort of personal envoy of the recently elected deputy of Senegal, Léopold Sédar Senghor. The latter was in 1946 still in the ranks of the SFIO from which his followers would only split in late 1947. Senghor’s envoy visited, in the first half of 1946, the different settlements in the area between M’Bour and the Siin-Saluum River Delta. After passing through Joal and meeting with members of the nascent party living there, he wrote a long letter to his patron about the particular case of Meïssa Fall.²²⁰ D’Erneville remarked that Fall, who was hostile to SFIO activities during this period, had absolutely no right to stay in the post he held, as he was a ‘foreigner’, not an *originaire* of the region. The party was to return him to live in a *canton* of his own region of origin (*‘dans un canton de chez lui’*), insisted d’Erneville.²²¹

The French *cercle* commander, informed about these proceedings, was less certain about the facts presented by the Senegalese deputy and his auxiliary. He believed that both Senghor and d’Erneville were manipulating the facts in the interest of their party. Undoubtedly, many of the powerful chiefs in the coastal *cantons* were still not used to making alliances with the new political class, namely with the leaders of the SFIO, later with the BDS. Therefore, Meïssa Fall, like many of his colleagues in rank ruling in the region, was considered an enemy by the party militants. They held that Fall retained a disquieting power base to influence the voting decisions of his ‘subjects’, and SFIO politicians used all means to discredit the legitimacy of such a potentially hostile ‘traditional ruler’. With Fall, this seemed to be easy: his detractors

219 ANS, 11D1/1303, Rey, Governor of Senegal, to District Commissioner of Thiès, *Au Sujet Chefferie canton Diaganiao* (n° 1112/APA), 30 June 1941, 2.

220 On the local powers of deputies between 1944 and 1957, see ANS, 10D1/36, Lami, District Commissioner of Thiès, to Bailly, Governor of Senegal, *Plai[n]te de Mr. le Député Senghor* (n° 28/AGO), 24 Jan. 1951.

221 ANS, 11D/1382, d’Erneville, envoy of Léopold Sédar Senghor, to Senghor (without number), 7 May 1946.

brought forward claims that cast doubt on the chief's rootedness in the *canton*.²²²

The representatives of the colonial power attempted to judge the 'ethnic legitimacy' of local protests. Hence, in 1947, Larrue, the administrator of the subdivision of M'Bour, carried out additional research on the Sereer-speakers in the Joal area. He felt considerably perplexed by the results. According to his informants, the Sereer-speakers of the region were a mosaic of different sub-groups: the 'Sereer Siin' and the 'Sereer Dieguène' of Aga-Gohé *canton* were, if each one was at all to be taken as a group in its own right, in cultural and linguistic terms completely different from the 'Sereer Fadiouth' of the area of the town. Larrue held that the Socé family of Joal, with its close links to the Sereer headmen, had exerted a real 'tyranny' over the two former groups; only the French takeover of the town in 1864 had 'liberated those oppressed people'. Larrue's information corroborated the existence of new pan-Sereer tendencies, but his report insinuated that such tendencies were only the result of goals of political mobilisation for momentary gain.²²³

The police reports from Joal, transmitting details from political meetings in the region, give us an extensive picture of propaganda after 1945: most of the campaign was in fact directed against the paramount chief, and thus had to be anti-Tukulor. Some anti-Wolof and pan-Sereer agitation also flared up in Joal-Fadiouth. This peaked at moments of electoral campaign activity by d'Erneville and Senghor in 1946. However, we find little inclination on the part of regional SFIO leaders to continue their engagement on an ethnic ticket after the electoral support of the *canton* had been won.²²⁴

The politically-motivated campaign against the paramount chief, led with ethnic arguments, did not fail to have an impact on the administrative realities in the region. While colonial officials tended to be sceptical about the activities of Senegalese party politicians, they did not remain entirely unaffected by the ethnic claims. Cazenave, the French district commissioner in Thiès, in the end employed the same ethnocultural terms for the description of the political situation in the area of Joal-Fadiouth. This had repercussions on the discussion

222 See, among others, the cases of the struggle between SFIO and BDS for the chieftaincies in Kaolack in ANS, 11D1/1148, Security Service of Kaolack, *Renseignements: Nomination de Chef de quartier* (n° 405/c/SU.), 11 June 1949, and for Tambacounda in ANS, 11D1/1059, Sada Maka Sy to District Commissioner of Tambacounda and Senghor (without number), 20 Sep. 1956.

223 ANS, 11D1/1320, Larrue, Administrator of Subdivision of M'Bour, to Cazenave, District Commissioner of Thiès, *Projet création Subdivision Joal* (n° 199/C), 31 Oct. 1947, 3.

224 ANS, 11D1/1320, Minot, commander of the *Gendarmerie* Post of Joal, to Larrue (n° 34/4), 16 Oct. 1947, 1.

of administrative reforms, which were conceived in ethnic terms. The outcome of the plans for ethnic reorganisation was, however, surprising.

Based on the information about ethnic difference he had so constantly received, Cazenave now proposed a neat separation of the towns of Joal and of Fadiouth on an ethnic basis. He argued that the fishermen of Fadiouth, 'all Sereer', were a 'clan à part'. They were to be treated as such, and to be administered separately. However, the inhabitants of Joal, while being seen as immigrants, mostly spoke both Sereer and Wolof, and they had manifold contacts, including through family links, with the Sereer-speakers of Fadiouth. Thus it proved difficult to truly establish them as a homogeneous group. When Cazenave attempted to enforce the administrative separation, it became evident that the locals of Fadiouth did not want this particular reform at all.²²⁵

Cazenave then tried to organise a complete reorganisation of the *canton* on ethnically-defined group terms. However, the headmen of both Joal and of Fadiouth came to protest vehemently. They explained to the French official that they entirely refused the partition of the town area, a measure against which they would violently mobilise if necessary! Sereer-speaking fishermen sided with Wolophone artisans in this wave of protests. Finally, the French administrators gave way and silently buried their project.²²⁶ The resulting solidarities coming from a common experience of the past went beyond ethnicity – and beyond simple community solidarity, as Joal and Fadiouth had long been distinct communities, and there was no automatic siding between their inhabitants.

Nevertheless, Meïssa Fall did not in the long run escape the political troubles. Local agitation on the grounds that Fall was a 'Tukolor stranger' continued in the background: the local organisers of party campaigning in the 1950s, now representing the BDS, clearly hoped for the spoils after Fall's downfall; and for this reason, the ethnic card would in his case be successfully maintained. Fall fought back in a determined manner; only in the post-colonial state was his presence no longer feasible, and the ever-increasing pressure from a section of the local population finally led to his removal.²²⁷ However, even in a circumscribed local arena of the Senegalese coast, it becomes obvious that ethnic solidarities were often not the most important element of group identity. Notably, common political experiences were far more essential.

225 ANS, 11D/1382, Cazenave, District Commissioner of Thiès, to Durand, Governor of Senegal (n° 432/AG/CC), 23 July 1946.

226 ANS, 11D/1382, Larrue, Administrator of Subdivision of M'Bour, to Cazenave (n° 214/C), 26 July 1946.

227 ANS, 11D/1382, Sow Abdul Karim, '*Chefferies et Combines*' (without number), without date.

Into the Independent State: 'Wolofisation' and the Integration of 'Tribal' Thinking in Northern Senegal's Post-Colonial Political Language

After the independence of Senegal in 1960, the existence of ethnic groups as primary poles of allegiance became an accepted fact among politicians. The leaders of the Union Progressiste Sénégalaise (UPS), the unity party that was the successor movement of the BDS and BPS, in a fusion with the SFIO and some splinter parties, claimed to represent the entire Senegalese population. This claim appeared to make an engagement with ethnic issues highly necessary. At least at the local level, UPS politicians decided that there was a strong demand for ethnic claims, which led to a new double language. Following the nationalist logic of most post-colonial African states, Senegalese statesmen and diplomats normally avoided mentioning the impact of the different ethnic groups in their country, or, at most, they drew a picture of particular 'tribal harmony'. In this, the Senegalese political elite employed a discourse that, like in other West African countries, condemned the nefarious effects of 'tribalism'. The UPS leaders gave this discourse a particular attention, presenting Senegal as a very special society where ethnicity was balanced by the friendly relations of groups.

However, on the local level, the references were entirely different, at least in the first years after decolonisation, including on the Petite Côte and its hinterland. The Minister of the Interior, Valdiodio N'Diaye, while visiting the town centre of Fatick in the former region of Siin pointed insistently to the role which the Sereer populations of Senegal had played in the process which had led to national independence.²²⁸ Instead of a 'regionalist' he played an 'ethnic' card. Prime Minister Mamadou Dia was even more explicit regarding ethnicity during a speech delivered in the same region: he presented the ancient ethnic conflicts as no longer existent in Senegal, but the ethnocultural groups continued to exist and to play an important role as points of reference: 'as the Tukolor that I am, [I was glad] to be adopted by the Sereer of Siin'.²²⁹

228 MAE, DAM, Sénégal, 3117, Valdiodio N'Diaye, Minister of the Interior of Senegal, *Discours prononcé à Fatick le 29 Mars 1962 par Me Valdiodio N'Diaye à la Cérémonie d'Inauguration du Monument de l'Indépendance* (without number), without date, 4; MAE, DAM, Sénégal, 3117, Hettier de Boislambert, French Ambassador in Senegal, *Compte-rendu hebdomadaire N° 13* (n° 435/CP), 2 May 1962, 3–4.

229 MAE, DAM, Sénégal, 3117, Hettier de Boislambert, *Compte-rendu hebdomadaire N° 33* (n° 1.044/CP), 20 Aug. 1962, 1.

Some groups, whose leaders felt excluded from the state structures, maintained more aggressive ethnic formulations. This was the case for the members of the Union des Peuls du Sénégal et de la Mauritanie, a movement founded in the wake of political reform and autonomy in the territory, and rapidly banned by the then independent government in 1960. The most distinguished leader of this association, Boucar Boydo, bitterly complained in 1957 that 'in our ministries, our ministers speak Wolof and do not master the Peul dialect'.²³⁰ Boydo's position was, and remained, a minority view after independence. For a semi-democratic government, it was easy, in the 1960s, to remove institutionalised 'tribal' associations like the Union. Fulbe mobilisation against Wolof peasants remained a minor source of tensions in the post-colonial state.²³¹

In the end, the transformation from colonial rule to the post-colonial period seems to have allowed for a continuation of loyalty to state structures that characterised at least northern coastal Senegal. The role of the Cap-Vert Peninsula, and, in particular, of the city of Dakar, has contributed to this continuity. Community life under urban conditions has not led to a stronger segregation of regional and self-declared ethnic groups, as in Senegal the political structure dominated over ethnic sentiment. The urban setting of Dakar allowed for rapid linguistic assimilation, including all the phenomena of multilingual individual life that I discussed in the introduction to this chapter. As long as there was no regional feeling of exclusion from the state structures, even the argument of 'Wolofisation' was unlikely to lead to counter-mobilisation along ethnic lines. The exception to this rule is Casamance, where conditions had been extremely different in the period of the French conquest, and were exacerbated by a relatively recent immigration of Wolophone settlers. The Gambia is even more interesting as a comparative example, with a similarly fragile state structure but an older Wolof presence.

A Glance into the Gambia: Wolof Identification at the Margins of the 'Wolof State' of Senegal

The communities of the territory of the British colony of the Gambia had been in longstanding contact with pre-colonial states ruled by Wolophone dynasties,

230 ANS, 10D4/33, Ka Boucar Boydo, *Congrès de l'Union des Peuls* (without number), 9 Oct. 1957, 5.

231 See ANS, Vice-Présidence et Présidence du Conseil de Gouvernement du Sénégal (VPP), 000203, Abdoulaye Fall N'Dar, Kalif of the 'Baye Fall' Murids, to Mamadou Dia (without number), 29 May 1959.

and had areas administered by Wolophone paramount chiefs. At the same time, they also lived under the influence of the British style of colonial organisation.²³² In 1876, the troops of Saluum attacked Badibu, a local political entity, in retaliation for the support that Badibu's Jihad ruler, Mahmud N'Dare Bâ, had given to Mâ Bâ, the cleric fighting Saluum's pre-colonial dynasty.²³³ Moreover, the Wolophone *Buur Saluum*, Sadiuka Mbodj, held several dignitaries in the central and upper river regions in a tributary relationship, which would only lessen with the gradual loss of power of Saluum in the 1870s and 1880s.²³⁴ The ruler of Badibu had his family origins in Kajoor: like his brother, Ama Bâ, he had established himself in the river area. His enmity with Sadiuka Mbodj destabilised the whole region to the north of the river. Further eastwards, there was some Wolophone immigration into the Upper Niani, apparently from the Fuuta Tooro; these settlers were quite aggressive and violent towards Wolophone commercial agents working for the Compagnie Française de l'Afrique Occidentale (CFAO). French troops, in retaliation for incidents with members of this group, attacked the town of Kutchar in 1889.²³⁵ The polarisation of identifications in the Gambia River region went hand in hand with Jihads.²³⁶ War had started on the northern bank in the 1840s and pitted 'Soninke' and 'Marabouts', according to local terminology, against each other. The *Almami* (religious-spiritual and political leader) of Badibu was a champion of enforced conversion to Islam.²³⁷ The discourses of group leaders during the conflict in Badibu and other small political units of the area were completely dominated by religious questions. Mahmud N'Dare Bâ had an ethnically mixed following,

232 Diouf, *Sénégal*, 34.

233 TNA, PRO, CO/879/13, African Confidential Print No. 152, Cooper, British Acting Administrator of the Gambia, to Kortright, Governor of Sierra Leone (without number, Enclosure 1. in No. 1), 29 June 1876, 2.

234 Quinn, Charlotte A., *Mandingo kingdoms of the Senegambia: Traditionalism, Islam, and European expansion* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1972), 36.

235 TNA, PRO, CO/879/28, African (West) Confidential Print No. 360, Manager of McCarthy's Island to Acting Administrator (n° 103, as Enclosure in No. 57.), 25 July 1889.

236 British observers of the 1840s – following Mungo Park's example – already attempted to distinguish Gambian Mandinka, Wolof, and Fulbe through their physical features, compare Grey, Earl, 'Abridged Account of an Expedition of about 200 Miles up the Gambia, by Governor Ingram', *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London* 17, 1847, 150–5, 153. In the 1890s, the British were convinced they had found five different 'races' (Wolof, Mandinka, Jola, Sarakole, Fulbe) in the Gambian territory, see Denton, George C., 'Twenty-Three Years in Lagos and the Gambia', *Journal of the Royal African Society* 11(42), January 1912, 129–40, 133–4.

237 TNA, PRO, CO/879/11, African Confidential Print No. 124, Brown to Carnavon (without number, n° 12 in series), 8 Feb. 1877, 2.

whose members were eventually identifiable as 'Mandinka', 'Wolof', 'Fulbe', and others, but united through the Islamic religion.²³⁸ Amongst the Mandinka-speakers, questions of status also outweighed those of ethnic affiliation: slavery remained a fact until at least the end of the First World War, as Mandinka slaves, while being integrated into the Mandinka-speaking leading families, were considered as socially inferior. Therefore, settlements of rebellious or refugee slaves were the primary target during military campaigns.²³⁹

In other parts of the Gambia River region, local populations at the margins of the more reliable state structures had more frequent recourse to ethnic identifications. Also, with the extension of their small river colony in the second half of the nineteenth century, British officials attempted to sustain 'authentic structures' and to find the appropriate 'tribes'. Colonial ideology and practices of colonial rule thereby created fundamental differences in the behaviour of Gambia's Wolof-speakers.²⁴⁰

In the late colonial period, the Gambia was characterised by the slow takeover of an 'educated elite' around the United Party (UP), which represented the commercial interests of Bathurst and was regarded by the British as the natural candidate to lead the post-colonial country after independence.²⁴¹ However, on the occasion of the 1962 territorial elections, the People's Progressive Party (PPP) took power in the then autonomous territory, to the general surprise of experienced commentators in the region.²⁴² This development was frequently interpreted as the result of a 'green uprising' in which 'the Mandinka' as a rural majority defeated the aspirations of an elite of 'strangers': the urban Wolof-speakers concentrated

238 TNA, PRO, CO/879/13, African Confidential Print No. 152, Brown to Carnavon (without number), 19 Sep. 1877, 1.

239 Bellagamba, Alice, 'Slavery and Emancipation in the Colonial Archives: British Officials, Slave-Owners, and Slaves in the Protectorate of the Gambia (1890–1936)', *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 39(1), 2005, 5–41, 13, 25; Webb, Patrick, 'Guests of the Crown: Convicts and Liberated Slaves on McCarthy Island, the Gambia', *Geographical Journal* 160(2), 1994, 136–42, 140.

240 On the 'Wolof' as a group in the Gambia, see Hughes, Arnold, and David Perfect, *A Political History of the Gambia, 1816–1994* (Rochester/NY: University of Rochester Press, 2006), 16–7. The *navétanat* in Senegal reappears as 'strange farming' in the Gambia, see Swindell, Ken, 'Family Farms and Migrant Labour: The Strange Farmers of the Gambia', *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 12(1), 1978, 3–17, 4–5, 14–6.

241 Hughes and Perfect, *History*, 132–3, 136–7, 144–5.

242 See MAE, DAM, Sénégal, 3117, Hettier de Boislambert, *Compte-rendu hebdomadaire N° 23* (n° 722.CP), 11 June 1962, 9. On the mobilisation of Mandinka 'tradition' by the PPP, see Bellagamba, Alice, 'Entrustment and its changing political meanings in Fuladu, the Gambia (1880–1994)', *Africa (London)* 74(3), 2004, 383–410, 399–400, for the distribution of the vote, Hughes and Perfect, *Policy*, 150–1.

in the population centre of Bathurst.²⁴³ Later, however, President David (Dawda) Jawara increasingly played the card of regional solidarity with Dakar to protect his rule, and these tactics were interpreted as 'Wolof networks'.

In the current-day Gambia, unlike in Senegal, the idea of 'ethnic harmony' is not a part of national elite ideology. 'Ethnicity' is frequently debated as a factor to explain contemporary political frictions in Gambian politics. In 1981, the government of Dawda Jawara, the eternal political leader of independent Gambia, was menaced by a coup d'état, allegedly by Jola-speaking army units rebelling against the marginalisation of their ethnic group in a Mandinka- and Wolof-dominated society.²⁴⁴ Jawara was saved by Senegalese troops, and this was eagerly read as an introduction of 'Wolof rule' to the detriment of other 'ethnic' groupings, in a country where a 'Mandingo party' – the PPP – had dominated political life.²⁴⁵ The subsequent and final fall of Jawara, due to a putsch of the Gambian army under Yahya Jammeh in 1994, has since been regarded as the normalisation of the ethnic balance of power in the small country.²⁴⁶

These views on ethnicity need to be tempered by a more local perspective. In the Gambia's Lower Saloum District, chieftaincy conflicts and group solidarities illustrate a complex pattern. First of all, conflicts existed within the 'chiefly family'. In August 1950, the Lower Saloum District became a place of constant unrest after the return of its former *seyfu* ('traditional chief'), Bara Turay.²⁴⁷ Turay, a Wolof-speaker, had been dismissed by the British administration for abuses and had been in exile in Senegal for a couple of years. During this exile, his material possessions had repeatedly been used by 'trustees' in their own interest. His successor had been his own son, Ali Turay, who had no sympathy for his father and had confiscated his father's possessions to support his personal and dynastic position in the district. This led to a fierce conflict arising after Bara Turay's return, which brought questions of broader group

243 Hughes, Arnold, 'From Green Uprising to National Reconciliation: The People's Progressive Party in the Gambia, 1959–1973', *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 9(1), 1975, 61–74, 63–4.

244 Sallah, Tijan M., 'Economics and Politics in the Gambia', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 28(4), 1990, 621–48, 635–6.

245 There is no reference to the ethnic dimension of Senegalese involvement in the Gambia in the early 1980s in most studies, see Hughes, Arnold, 'The Senegambia Confederation', *Contemporary Review* 244(1417), 1984, 83–8.

246 Hughes, Arnold, "Democratisation" under the military in the Gambia: 1994–2000', *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 38(3), 2000, 35–52, 48; and Hughes and Perfect, *History*, 280–1.

247 NRSTG, PUB 13/12, *Minute*, 30 April 1951.

solidarities in the Lower Saloum District onto the agenda.²⁴⁸ For decades, the declared objective of the British administration had been to guarantee an 'ethnically appropriate' administrative set-up for this district. However, in 1950 the administration was faced with the historical dimensions of 'Jola' and 'Wolof' identifications in the Saloum district and its vicinity.

When Bara Turay had been unseated in 1941 as paramount chief of the district because of his 'constant abuses', the local British administrators had been convinced they would not find any other candidate acceptable to all of the district's populations. They believed the population of Lower Saloum was so unstructured and diffuse that there was no collective loyalty or group of identification large enough: 'no single man, without...active canvassing [of the district administrator], could secure a majority if left to the people.'²⁴⁹

The decade-long vulnerability of political structures in many parts of the pre-colonial territory later becoming the Gambia, including the area of Lower Saloum, is crucial to this instability. Since 1880, the British colonial government had been engaged in establishing a stable administrative structure on the middle and upper Gambia River and installing 'authentic' chieftaincies in small districts. The British tried to interpret the situation according to ethnic classifications, which proved to be difficult.

This brings us back to the pre-colonial history of group identifications of the future colonial districts of Lower (and Upper) Saloum. In the nineteenth century, this region was evidently a complex geographical ensemble, the political realities of which the British conquerors did not quite understand. Originally, the new district had been part of Balangar, an autonomous political entity, albeit under the political influence of the *Buur Saluum*. Patron-client relations were more explicit between Saluum and the various smaller entities of Kaur, in the eastern part of what was to become the Lower Saloum District; the rulers of the latter had to pay tribute to the *Buur*. Their rulers were Wolof-speakers and they had been in power before the European conquest.²⁵⁰ These

248 NRSTG, PUB 13/12, Neil Weir, Senior Commissioner, *Lower Saloum District Administration* (without number), 9 Jan. 1945; NRSTG, PUB 13/12, Bara Turay, *Extract from Enclosure 136 on M.P.HQ. 358/1942*. (without number), without date; NRSTG, PUB 13/12, *Brief Report on the Lower Saloum District Administration* (without number), without date; NRSTG, PUB 13/12, Commissioner of the North Bank Division, *Lower Saloum District Administration* (n° DIC.30/1(12)), without date; NRSTG, PUB 13/12, Humphrey Smith, [*Confidential Note on Bara Turay*] (n° c/7/71), 15 Aug. 1950, 1–2.

249 NRSTG, PUB 13/12, Lian, District Commissioner of MacCarthy Island Province, to Colonial Secretary of Gambia (without number), 26 May 1942.

250 NRSTG, PUB 13/12, Lian to Colonial Secretary of the Gambia (without number), 26 May 1942, 2; NRSTG, PUB 13/12, G.A. Evans, Commissioner of MacCarthy Island Province, *The*

Wolophone chiefs did not, however, show much solidarity as members of the same 'ethnic group'. If something tied them to a larger ensemble, it was indeed the loyalty to the *Buur Saluum*.

The British colonial administrators sought first-hand information about 'tribes', but had to admit that in 'normal' times they did not find any real 'ethnic identity'. 'Sub-groups' dominated the picture, while larger 'tribal identities' were pushed into the background. The description of the Wolophone communities of Lower Saloum emphasised the fact that 'the Jolofs of this District are anything but a pure strain' and that 'even the Turays are said to be more Tillibonko than true Jolof'. The British claimed that 'the Jolof language and dress is assumed by traders, settlers and in-laws as much as an alien in Europe changes his nationality by naturalisation'²⁵¹ Therefore, in the Gambian case, language and chosen identification depended a great deal on the professional situation of an individual, and 'Wolof-ness' rarely appeared as a stable ethnic identification.

In linguistic terms, the majority of the inhabitants of the district in 1860 appeared as Mandinka-speakers, in spite of the formal overlordship of the Wolophone *Buur Saluum*. Therefore, at the moment of conquest, the Jane family from Janekunda managed to make credible claims to the British that they held the 'authentic' right to the chieftaincy of the district: the principal argument they presented to the British authorities was that of being 'Mandinka' and representing the 'autochthons'. Mansajo Jane and his direct successor Amuli Jane thus became the first paramount chiefs of the newly created Lower Saloum District under British rule in the Gambia.

The information on which the British based their decision to favour the Jane family was extremely limited. British administrators did not have any accurate details about the specific elements of the pre-colonial situation, and often misunderstood the older, border-crossing solidarities. Initially unnoticed by the colonial authorities, remarkable shifts in ethnocultural loyalties were under way. From 1860 to 1940, the *reported* population distribution in the Lower Saloum changed in an impressive and unexpected way. Suddenly, the 'Wolof' appeared in the British documents as a clear majority of the population.²⁵²

Administrative position in the Saloum M.I.P. subsequent to the removal of the Seyfou, Lower Saloum, and some possible lines of reorganisation (without number), 31 July 1942; NRSTG, PUB 13/12, *Brief Note on the History of the Chieftainships of the Saloums Compiled by Professor Daryll Freds* (without number), 14 May 1945.

251 NRSTG, PUB 13/12, Lian to Colonial Secretary of the Gambia (without number), 26 May 1942.

252 *Ibid.*

This major shift was to play an important role in local politics. The successive Wolophone candidates for the chieftaincy, Bara Turay and Ali Turay, profited from these changing perceptions: now they could compete for the paramount chieftaincy and base their claim on the colonial statistics of ethnicity.

It is difficult to find an explanation for such changing numbers and percentages. First of all, while there were migratory flows crossing the Senegalese-Gambian border over the whole of the colonial period and beyond, this was not a principal factor, as migration was never confined to a single linguistic community or cultural group.²⁵³ Only the Fulfulde-speaking herdsmen of Lower Saloum were significantly more mobile than other local population groups, while Wolof-speakers and Mandinka-speakers show patterns similar to each other.

More importantly, there was a notion of remarkable flexibility in identifications. One particular factor was the affiliation of the large numbers of domestic slaves to the powerful, Wolof-speaking merchant families. Over the decades, the former slaves came to be counted as 'Wolof', regardless of their former group origins. This integration of slaves into kinship groups was an essential mechanism to provoke change in identifications (which is difficult to analyse in other regions, such as northern Senegal). Multilingualism also added to flexibilities.

The leading Wolophone families in the region based their influence on contacts in Senegalese territory, to which the links were easy to maintain. Wolophone populations regularly crossed the border into the region of Kaolack.²⁵⁴ However, ethnic solidarity was not the decisive criterion within these networks: Omar Sisi, the twice-deposed paramount chief of Upper Saloum District during the 1910s and 1920s claimed that he was a direct heir to the ruling dynasty of Saloum, the Gëlwaar, and mobilised a 547-year old 'tradition' for his cause...²⁵⁵ Here again, solidarity with pre-colonial states was the more attractive option, but the British conquest had cut contenders off from this alternative source of legitimacy. If they wanted to play the game under the conditions set by the British colonial state, they had to refer to ethnocultural links, but these links could be 'adjusted' if necessary. This becomes clear from contrasting a number of local elite biographies in the region for the 1950s, including local dignitaries who were not Wolophone.

253 ANS, 10D4/4, Alsace, to Director of Native Affairs of Senegal (n° 936), 9 Aug. 1893, 1–2.

254 TNA, PRO, CO/87/226/17, Macklin, [Report] (without number), 26 Jan. 1927, 21.

255 TNA, PRO, CO/87/226/17, E.F. Small, Editor of 'Gambia Outlook', *Memorandum of the Case of Omar Sisi Paramount Chief of Upper Saloum, River Gambia*. (without number), 6 July 1927, 1.

One such personality is Biram Bâ. Over long periods of the first half of the twentieth century, Bâ was regarded as the most important representative of the Fulfulde-speakers in the district and a possible candidate for a chieftaincy in the Saluum area. However, Bâ was not at all an 'indigenous' candidate. He was, in the geographic ensemble of Senegambia, a 'northerner': his cultural-linguistic origins were Tukolor, and while he was a Tijani Muslim, he was detached from the local Fulbe. Nonetheless, he managed to become the spokesman of the Fulbe herdsmen, as he was attractive as a representative of a certain standing.

In the Lower Saloum District, local dignitaries voted in chief elections. However, the latter's electoral behaviour does not fit at all with the picture of strict 'ethnic loyalties' in the Gambia. Such complexities in the behaviour of local headmen spoiled the possible career of Kebba Jane. He was a Mandinka-speaker and candidate of the mighty Jane family that had held the paramount chieftaincy of Lower Saloum for a couple of decades after British conquest. After the dismissal of Bara Turay in 1941, he was thus one of the obvious favourites for Bara's succession. To obtain the paramount chieftaincy, he most urgently needed the votes of all the headmen of the region of Janekunda, the majority of whom were Mandinka. However, somewhat against any 'ethnic' logic, many of these dignitaries elected Katar Cissé, the Wolof-speaking chief of the neighbouring district of Upper Saloum, who had also become a candidate for Bara Turay's succession. Cissé was appreciated as an efficient ruler; this seemed to be the most important criterion for his voters. The British administrators, waiting for a result that followed 'tribal logics', were completely perplexed. While Katar Cissé in the end did not receive as many votes as Ali Turay, his relative success is remarkable: the votes of the majority of the Mandinka went to the Wolof-speaker Cissé, which destroyed the chances of the 'Mandinka candidate'.²⁵⁶

Ethnic solidarity was more attractive in the Gambia than in the case of the French colony, due to the structures of British colonial organisation. They allowed for mobilisation via 'ethnic' arguments, if it was possible in a given situation to explain to potential followers that a rival for material or political resources (or both) was an 'outsider', someone having immigrated later with 'his people' into the region.²⁵⁷ However, Wolof-speakers in Lower Saloum

256 NRSTG, PUB 13/12, *Saloum District: 1st Ballot taken on 8:2:45 to choose a new Head Chief* (without number), without date; NRSTG PUB 13/12, Weir, *Lower Saloum District Administration: Four Observations in your letter No. DIC 30/1/(12) of May nth 1945* (without number), 12 June 1945.

257 Bellagamba, 'Entrustment', 385.

District did not have enough motivation to follow such 'ethnic' arguments. Wolophone merchants already controlled the majority of local resources as related to trade and were at the core of a network; several of the most powerful individuals in the district had originated from families who had their former regions of origin further northwards, but were now well entrenched.

Regarding this background of migration, the Jane, members of the influential family of 'Mandinka chiefs' in the region, had an easy task in labelling the Wolof-speaking merchants as 'strangers'. Kebba Jane tried hard to convince the British district commissioner that the 'Wolof' knew nothing of local customs, and had pre-colonial knowledge 'in matters of trade and customs but not in the court'.²⁵⁸ However, even with this emphasis on cultural difference and autochthony, the Jane were not able to win the majority of Mandinka-speakers in the district for their claim. The victory of Ali Turay was possible through an interethnic alliance.²⁵⁹

In such conflicts, the crossing of ethnic boundaries was simple in the Gambia: when it was useful for the creation of alliances, the involved groups did not show any hesitation. After 1962, the Wolof-speakers in Upper and Lower Saloum, who had before been unwavering adherents of the urban, Wolophone Bathurst elite dominating the United Party, switched sides to the PPP. The chiefs and local dignitaries hoped that this change of side would allow them to obtain the same benefits concerning national investment that had been promised by the autonomous government of Jawara to the Mandinka-speaking PPP followers among the 'traditional rulers' in the neighbourhood.²⁶⁰ However, even in the post-colonial period, alliances in the local environment *could* be forged on ethnic terms whenever this was regarded as useful. Thus during the 1975 election of a new *seyfu* of Lower Saloum, the Wolof-speakers of Ballanghar attempted again to play the ethnic card to prevent the victory of a candidate of the Mandinka-speaking dynasty. On this occasion, the Fulbe of the district nominated their own 'ethnic' candidate.²⁶¹

The case of the Gambia shows that different systems of indirect rule created distinct conditions for ethnic solidarity, although the question of the pre-colonial political situation remained the most decisive variable. While it is true that in the

258 NRSTG, PUB 13/12, District Commissioner of McCarthy Island to Colonial Secretary of the Gambia (number illegible), 19 Aug. 1942.

259 NRSTG, PUB 13/12, Bailes, Commissioner of Central Commission, to Senior Commissioner of Protectorate Administration, *Ex-Seyfu Barra Turay* (n° DI.7.42/6/102.), 15 July 1950.

260 Hughes, 'Uprising', 66.

261 Kingsland, James, 'A Gambian Chieftaincy Election', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 15(4), 1977, 651–6, 652–3.

Gambian case, the category of being 'Wolof' has often not been the essential one, it fulfils an important function more frequently than in Senegal. In questions of land rights and rights to chieftaincies, contenders were aware of the importance of the category; they even attempted to use colonial statistics on ethnic groups in a given district whenever those calculations worked in their favour. Unlike in Senegal, the states could not have a major role in shaping local identifications, as the early British insistence in focusing on 'tribally' correct political units encouraged ethnic mobilisation. In the northern parts of Senegambia, i.e. in Senegal, such identifications had been considered as not being very useful by the colonial power.

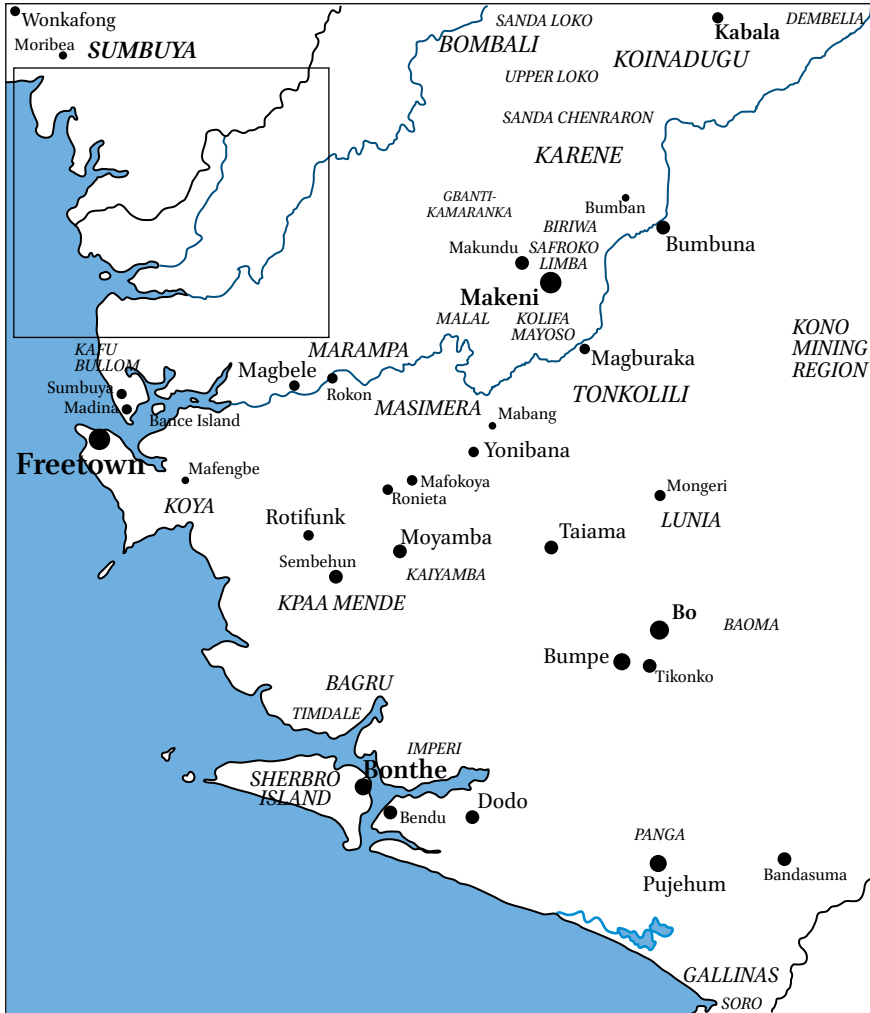
Fragmentation and the Temne: From War Raids into Ethnic Civil Wars

The Temne and Their Neighbours: A Long-Standing Scenario of Inter-ethnic Hostilities?

The former British colony of Sierra Leone is today regarded as one of the classic cases of a society that is politically polarised by ethnic antagonism. By the 1950s, the decade before independence, ethnic fault lines had an impact on local political life and the inhabitants of the colony appeared to practise ethnic voting. Both the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) government formed after 1957, led by Milton Margai, and the All People's Congress (APC) government of Siaka Stevens coming to power in 1967/68, relied on ethnic support and created ethnic networks: the SLPP appeared to be 'southern' and 'eastern', and Mende-dominated, the APC 'northern' and Temne-led.¹ Between 1961 and the 1990s, such voting behaviour can be found in sociological and political science survey data.² However, the period of brutal civil war in the 1990s weakened some of these community links, as local communities were more interested in their survival than in ethnic solidarities.³ We have seen that the 2007 legislative elections contradicted this apparent trend.

Before the second half of the nineteenth century, the territory of present-day Sierra Leone was politically fragmented into a number of different small structures, which were often much smaller than the pre-colonial states of Senegambia (Map 4). The only regional exception was the 'federation' of Morea, which, however, was an unstable entity. The slave trade and the 'legitimate commerce' in palm

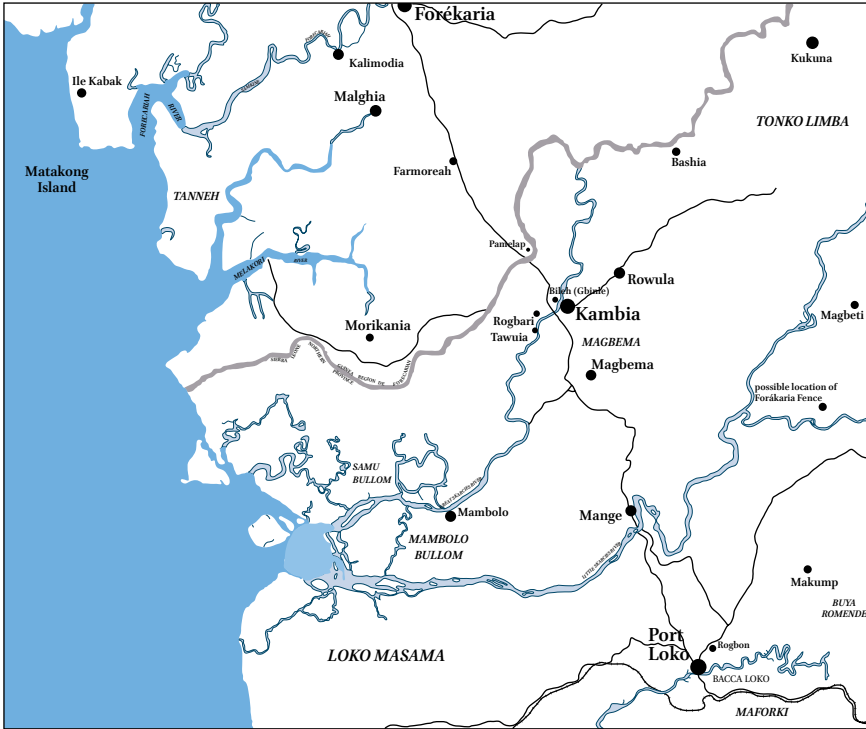
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- 1 Cartwright, John R., *Politics in Sierra Leone 1947–67* (Toronto – Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1970), 101–2, 128; Fisher, 'Elections', 621–3; Riddell, J. Barry, 'Beyond the Geography of Modernization: The State as a Redistributive Mechanism in Independent Sierra Leone', *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 19(3), 1985, 529–45, 532; Kandeh, Jimmy D., 'Politicization of Ethnic Identities in Sierra Leone', *African Studies Review* 35(1), 1992, 81–99, 93–4.
 - 2 Kandeh, 'Politicization', 97; Hayward, Fred M., and Ahmed R. Dumbuya, 'Changing Electoral Patterns in Sierra Leone: The 1982 Single-Party Elections', *African Studies Review* 28(4), 1985, 62–86, 66–7; Riddell, J. Barry, 'Internal and External Forces Acting upon Disparities in Sierra Leone', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 23(3), 1985, 389–406, 402–4.
 - 3 Hirsch, John L., *Sierra Leone: Diamonds and the Struggle for Democracy* (Boulder – London: Lynne Rienner, 2001), 52–4.



MAP 4 Sierra Leone

products in the nineteenth century did not lead to political centralisation. The region also knew little linguistic coherence; in the early nineteenth century, European missionaries complained that it made little sense to learn Temne as it was not a *lingua franca* among the northern languages.⁴ The fragmentation may explain

4 Archives of the Church Missionary Society, University of Birmingham Library, Birmingham (CMS), C A1/E5A – 95, Gustav Nylander, CMS missionary, to Pratt, Secretary of the Church Missionary Society (without number), 19 Dec. 1816, 2; CMS, C A1/E6 – 42, Nylander, *Statement of Yongroo Somoh* (without number), 25 March 1817, 2.



MAP 5 Northern Sierra Leone and Southern Guinea border regions

the absence of more detailed studies, as ‘Temne’ settlements such as Port Loko, Magbele, and Rokon, or rural political units such as Marampa, Koya, and Masimera, but also their non-Temne-speaking neighbours such as Morekania, Kalimodia, or Malghia, had only some thousand inhabitants each (Map 5). None of these small entities was a pre-colonial state in a larger sense.⁵

In contrast, once Sierra Leone had become independent, ethnicity as a category was everywhere. The census of 1963 gave detailed statistics about ‘tribal groups’: from an estimate of 2.18 million inhabitants in the country, 30.9% were classified as Mende, and 29.8% as Temne; among the smaller ethnic communities, 8.4% were Limba, 3.1% Susu, 3% Loko, 2.3% Mandinka, 2.2% ‘Kissi,

5 Fyfe, Christopher, *A History of Sierra Leone* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962); Wylie, Kenneth C., *The Political Kingdoms of the Temne: Temne Government in Sierra Leone 1825–1910* (New York: Africana Publications, 1977), 92; Caulker, Patrick S., ‘Legitimate Commerce and Statecraft: A Study of the Hinterland Adjacent to Nineteenth-Century Sierra Leone’, *Journal of Black Studies* 11(4), 1981, 397–419, 399–400, 413–5.

and 1.9% Creole.⁶ Anthropological research from the colonial period, which had established stereotypes of dressing and walking styles of members of the different ethnic groups, also emphasised 'tribal histories' of migration.⁷ Those were subsequently transformed into 'official' narratives of the pre-colonial past.⁸ As Christopher Fyfe and Vernon Dorjahn have pointed out, this perspective overstated the idea of patterns of group migration.

In the colonial period, generalisations were more complicated, in spite of administrators' wishes to establish clear categories.⁹ In colonial census data, 'the Mende' and 'the Temne', as the large ethnic communities are categorised, are very unstable in size. Changes in ethnic identification, as reported in interviews, are enormous. Thus, in his Annual Report for 1922, the governor of Sierra Leone, Raymond Slater, claimed that 'the Mendes are far more numerous than the other tribes'.¹⁰ Only one year later, the picture drawn by the same census officials was entirely different: there were suddenly many more 'Temne', and the administration reported near-parity between the two groups.¹¹

Also, British administrators slowly learned that linguistic unity did not necessarily mean cultural homogeneity: differences in family organisation between the Temne of the different regions of Karene, Bombali, Port Loko, and Koinadugu were remarkable.¹² Even so, a stereotype of Temne-ness survived

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- 6 Devis, T.L.F., 'Fertility Differentials among the Tribal Groups of Sierra Leone', *Population Studies* 27(3), 1973, 501–14, 508, 513.
- 7 Little, Kenneth L., *The Mende of Sierra Leone: A West African People in Transition* (second edition, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967 [1951]), 70–1; Clarke, Robert, 'Sketches of the Colony of Sierra Leone and Its Inhabitants', *Transactions of the Ethnological Society of London* 2, 1863, 320–63, 325–7, 350–63.
- 8 Kup, Peter Alexander, 'An Account of the Tribal Distribution of Sierra Leone', *Man* 60, 1960, 116–9, *passim*. The idea of massive migration into the coastal area has been questioned in Jones, Adam, 'Who were the Vai?', *Journal of African History* 22(1), 1981, 159–78, 175–8; Dorjahn, Vernon R., and Christopher Fyfe, 'Landlord and Stranger: Change in Tenancy Relations in Sierra Leone', *Journal of African History* 3(3), 1962, 391–7, 393.
- 9 Renner, G.T., 'Geographic Regions of Sierra Leone', *Economic Geography* 7(1), 1931, 41–9, 44–6.
- 10 TNA, PRO, CO/267/599, Slater, Governor of Sierra Leone, *Sierra Leone: Annual General Report for 1922* (without number), without date.
- 11 TNA, PRO, CO/267/603, *Sierra Leone: Annual General Report for 1923* (without number), without date, 2.
- 12 TNA, PRO, CO/267/595, Stanley, Provincial Commissioner of the Northern Province, [*Report on the Northern Province*] (without number), 12 April 1922, 2; Oyètádé, B. Akintúndé, and Victor Fashole Luke, 'Sierra Leone: Krio and the Quest for National Integration', in Andrew Simpson (ed.), *Language & National Identity in Africa* (Oxford etc.: Oxford University Press, 2008), 122–40, 126.

into the post-colonial state. Moreover, in public discourse, Temne-speakers poured scorn upon the 'savage', and 'generally backward and unclean', Limba – a neighbouring group living in the north-eastern interior of Sierra Leone. They characterised the Mende-speakers as plunderers and marauders. Regarding the Loko, who mostly settled in close proximity to or jointly with Temne-speakers, the discourse was also unfriendly, and 'Loko' equated with potential slave.¹³

As in the case of the Wolof of Senegambia, interaction with neighbouring groups was also essential for the Temne of Sierra Leone, both in the late pre-colonial and colonial periods. It is thus necessary to elaborate briefly on these communities. Like Temne-speakers in the north, the Mende-speakers were organised in rather small local communities without much centralisation, although the presence of female rulers constituted a difference.¹⁴ Settlements like Panguma, Bumpe, Mongeri, and Tikonko played a role in the political stabilisation of the region and regional commerce.¹⁵ Apart from that, Mende-speakers were particularly proud of their reputation as fearsome warriors, and they appeared as mercenaries in several of the conflicts in northern Sierra Leone. From the 1880s, British visitors called a certain region 'Mendi-Land', a label exclusively based on language, as early missionaries in the coastal Sherbro had not even heard of the category of 'Mende'.¹⁶ Early anthropological reports also point to a certain 'fragmentation' of Mende identifications: in the 1940s, Mende-speakers in eastern Sierra Leone pointed to the inhabitants of the region of Kpaa Mende, the most renowned source of mercenaries, as being 'not really Mende' or

13 Dorjahn, Vernon R., 'Migration in central Sierra Leone: the Temne chiefdom of Kolifa Mayoso', *Africa* 45(1), 1975, 29–49, 45–6. Temne-speakers did sometimes consider the 'Limba' as part of the 'Mandinka' of the north, see TNA, PRO, CO/879/17, African Confidential Print No. 206, Lawson, Secretary of Native Affairs in Freetown, to Rowe, Governor of Sierra Leone (without number, Enclosure No. 1), without date; TNA, PRO, CO/879/15, African Confidential Print No. 173, Rowe to Hicks Beach, British Secretary of State for the Colonies (n° 200, in series as No. 11), 18 Dec. 1878, 2.

14 Jambai, Amara, and Carol MacCormack, 'Maternal Health, War, and Religious Tradition: Authoritative Knowledge in Pujehun District, Sierra Leone', *Medical Anthropology Quarterly, New Series* 10(2), 1996, 270–86, 279; Nyerges, A. Endre, 'Ethnography in the Reconstruction of African Land Use Histories: A Sierra Leone Example', *Africa (London)* 66(1), 1996, 122–44; Day, Linda, 'Nyarroh of Bandasuma, 1885–1914: A Reinterpretation of Female Chieftaincy in Sierra Leone', *Journal of African History* 48(3), 2007, 415–37, 416–7, 435–6.

15 Little, *Mende*, 29; Alldridge, T.J., 'Wanderings in the Hinterland of Sierra Leone', *Geographical Journal* 4(2), 1894, 123–40, 126.

16 CMS, C A1/E7A – 52, Cates, CMS missionary, to Pratt (without number), 19 April 1819, 1–2.

'half-Temne'. Even in the 1950s, the solidarities among Mende-speakers often concentrated on the local community. Mende-speakers had their own Poro secret societies, but those were not particularly linked to ethnic sentiment.¹⁷ Only with the establishment of the SLPP regime in the late 1950s is it possible to speak of a 'Mende solidarity', expressed in common voting behaviour.

The Limba-speakers in northern Sierra Leone were regarded, by many Sierra Leoneans, as a community of 'deep autochthons' – who lived in the country before all the other immigrants – and were both peaceful peasants and occasional plunderers of caravans.¹⁸ Scholarly research tends to characterise this group in a simplified manner, as particularly homogeneous. However, during the nineteenth century, the Limba-speaking ruler, *Almami* Amadu Suluku, formed a small pre-colonial state in Biriwa ruling over a diverse group of inhabitants with a variety of languages.¹⁹ Group solidarity among the Limba was not automatic, and they had no exclusive political entity.

Communities of speakers from the Mande linguistic group have certainly been privileged by scholarly attention. This is particularly so for the Dyula family networks active in regional commerce in the river system, including Forékaria, Melikori, and the Skarcies Rivers. Dyula families also established political power and Islamic influence in some cases, and Dala Modu Dumbuya, a Dyula merchant and leader of warriors from the city of Wonkafong between 1801 and 1841, was instrumental in this process.²⁰ However, these conversion processes were sometimes slow and we have to avoid over-simplification: even the town centre of Wonkafong only became a Muslim settlement around 1880, and other communities only converted under colonial rule later in the

17 However, it is true that several expressions describing Mende Poro have been imported into the Temne language, see Turay, A.K., 'Language contact: Mende and Temne – a case study', *Africana Marburgensia* 11(1), 1978, 55–73, 56–7.

18 Fanthorpe, Richard, 'Limba "Deep Rural" Strategies', *Journal of African History* 39(1), 1998, 15–38, 17–9.

19 Fyle, C. Magbaily, *Almami Suluku of Sierra Leone c. 1820–1906: The Dynamics of Political Leadership in Pre-Colonial Sierra Leone* (London – Ibadan: Evans Brothers Ltd., 1979), 4–6, 12–3; Finnegan, Ruth, 'How to Do Things with Words: Performative Utterances Among the Limba of Sierra Leone', *Man, New Series* 4(4), 1969, 537–52, 542–4.

20 TNA, PRO, CO/270/8, Reverend J. Bright, *Journal of Mr. Bright's Expedition to the Mandingo Country performed in Sept. and Oct. 1802* (without number), 50–1; CMS, C A1/E1 – 57, Hartwig, CMS missionary, to Pratt (without number), 10 May 1806; Skinner, David E., 'Islam and Education in the Colony and Hinterland of Sierra Leone (1750–1914)', *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 10(3), 1976, 499–520, 501; Skinner, David E., 'Mande Settlement and the Development of Islamic Institutions in Sierra Leone', *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 11(1), 1978, 32–62, 35–7, 47.

twentieth century.²¹ Although we do find cultural transfer, as Temne-speaking rulers took part of their titles and government terminology, but also ideas of social stratification, from Mande models, Temne Islam remained integrated in local cults and Poro practices.²² Moreover, even with gradual Islamisation amongst the Temne-speakers, the role of Muslim preachers was strongly identified with a 'Mandinka ethnicity'.²³ But itinerant preachers ultimately made considerable progress in the northern part of the Protectorate, and the Temne-speaking regions of late colonial and post-colonial Sierra Leone therefore became predominantly Muslim.²⁴

From their first encounters with European diplomats and representatives, Susu, Yalunka, Mandinka, and Koranko spokesmen had periodically insisted on being part of a larger 'Mandingo group'.²⁵ In northern Sierra Leone, 'Mandinka' and 'Susu' appear as the adversaries of the Temne-speaking populations for much of the nineteenth century. Susu-speaking war leaders exerted strong pressure on Temne communities and conquered important settlements inhabited by large groups of Temne-speakers, like Port Loko and Kambia. Then, in the twentieth century, both the Susu and the Mandinka found themselves cut off from the political life of Sierra Leone by the colonial border between this colony and the French territory of Guinea-Conakry.

Urban experiences through migration from an early date brought Temne-speaking individuals into contact with other groups from more distant regions. The larger town centres of the Temne-speaking zones – such as Kambia, Port Loko, Rokel, or Magbele – were too close to the Sierra Leone Peninsula and, in

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- 21 TNA, PRO, CO/879/18, African Confidential Print No. 226, Simineh Simba, *Translation of a letter written in Arabic addressed to his Excellency the Administrator-in-Chief, from King Simminee Simba, of the Soombuyah Country*. (without number), 3 Dec. 1880, 1.
- 22 Anwyl, T.C., 'The Timne and Other Tribes of Sierra Leone', *Journal of the Royal African Society* 16(61), 1916, 36–51, 38–40; Wylie, Kenneth, 'The Influence of the Mande on Temne Political Institutions: Aspects of Political Acculturation', *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 7(2), 1974, 255–71, 261, 265.
- 23 Alldridge, T.J., 'Wanderings', 136–7.
- 24 Yambasu, Sahr J., 'Order and Disorder: the Mende and Missionary Case', *Paideuma* 39, 1993, 111–34, 115–9.
- 25 TNA, PRO, CO/267/595, Stanley, [Report on the Northern Province] (without number), 12 April 1922, 2; Jackson, Michael, *The Kuranko: Dimensions of Social Reality in a West African Society* (London: Hurst, 1977), 1–4; Bah, M. Alpha, *Fulbe Presence in Sierra Leone: A Case of Twentieth-Century Migration and Settlement among the Kissi of Koindu* (New York etc.: Peter Lang, 1988), 44–6.

the nineteenth century, uninteresting as an alternative for immigration.²⁶ Therefore, migrants concentrated in Freetown. In the urban settlement under British rule, alliances between different inhabitants were possible, for example against Lebanese merchants who became victims of violent mobs.²⁷ Even so, as in Senegambia, urban settings could also strengthen an ethnic solidarity based on professional identification, as for the Kru community from the south, who specialised in navigation and piloting.

Temne-speaking regions were politically unstable, partly because of their participation in the slave trade and the creation of slave villages that occasionally turned against the Temne rulers. Instability expressed itself in widespread plundering campaigns, comparable again to Senegambia. Localised wars thus dominated much of the nineteenth century.²⁸

In the next sections of this chapter, I will analyse the evolution of solidarities between different Temne-speaking groups north of Freetown when faced with the colonial presence. As we have seen, the Temne case is one where any stronger pre-colonial state structures were notably absent – and thus an important example. The methodological approach to the discussion of pre-colonial Temne identifications will be slightly different to that of the cases of the Wolof and the Ewe. The documentation relevant to a study on the Temne still mainly comes from British archives, although additional analyses have been carried out at the Sierra Leone National Archives.

In the early nineteenth century, British residents in Sierra Leonean territory were much more active than the French in Senegal. The colony of Freetown and its population of 'liberated slaves' played the crucial role in this respect, as they treated the 'Temne' regions as the 'hinterland' of this settler colony.²⁹

26 Riddell, J. Barry, and Milton E. Harvey, 'The Urban System in the Migration Process: An Evaluation of Step-Wise Migration in Sierra Leone', *Economic Geography* 48(3), 1972, 270–83, 279.

27 Abdullah, 'Rethinking', 210–1.

28 Rashid, Ismail, 'Escape, Revolt and Marronage in 18th and 19th century Sierra Leone', *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 34(3), 2000, 656–83, 664–8; Mouser, Bruce L., 'Rebellion, Marronage and Jihād: Strategies of Resistance to Slavery on the Sierra Leone Coast, c. 1783–1796', *Journal of African History* 48(1), 2007, 27–44, 38; Mouser, Bruce L., 'Trade, Coasters, and Conflict in the Rio Pongo from 1790 to 1808', *Journal of African History* 14(3), 1973, 45–64, 56–8.

29 Sibanda, M.J.M., 'Dependency and Underdevelopment in Northwestern Sierra Leone, 1896–1939', *African Affairs* 78(313), 1979, 481–92, 481; Wyse, Akintola J.G., 'The Sierra Leone Branch of the National Congress of British West Africa, 1918–1946', *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 18(4), 1985, 675–98, 684; Eluwa, G.I.C., 'Background to the

The liberated slaves or 'Creoles' residing in the settlement represented just as much of a crucial factor in the process as white administrators.³⁰

The Temne-speakers living close to the Freetown peninsula initially attempted to destroy the settlement, and the 1790s and early 1800s were characterised by regional wars.³¹ The British administration therefore depended upon comparatively good information about its neighbours, and detailed reports on group identifications already existing in the nineteenth century. The British also set up networks, which had the function of opening trade routes and facilitating contacts with different communities. Through these activities, British residents rapidly knew that the region lacked stronger pre-colonial state structures, except the Almaminate (or 'federation') of Morea some fifty kilometres to the north, which appeared as a composition of many different communities.³² In the political networks of this region, Susu- and Mandinka-speakers were the more prominent among the rulers, but several local leaders spoke Temne, Bullom, Sherbro or Loko as their first language. It is also questionable, in the context of the early nineteenth century, to speak of a Mande-Dyula 'nationalism'. The British would have wished to classify local populations into clear-cut 'tribal' groups, such as 'Mandingo' and 'Soosoo', but in most cases of local warfare, the smaller political units were the decisive

Emergence of the National Congress of British West Africa', *African Studies Review* 14(2), 1971, 205–18, 206–8.

- 30 Goerg, Odile, 'From Hill Station (Freetown) to Downtown Conakry (First Ward): Comparing French and British Approaches to Segregation in Colonial Cities at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century', *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 32(1), 1998, 1–31, 11–2; CMS, C A1/O 83/1, John Henry Davies, CMS native catechist, [*Report from Magbele 1857*] (without number), without date [1857], 1, 10–1.
- 31 Deveneaux, Gustav, 'The turbulent frontier: aspects of relations between the colony of Sierra Leone and Koya, 1787–1890', *Africana Research Bulletin (Fourah Bay, Sierra Leone)* 15, 1981, 81–125, 90.
- 32 In 1879, the Almami Bokari of Morea claimed that the Bullom and the Digsing Temne – the northernmost Temne-speaking group – had been subjects of the rulers of the federation for over 200 years already! This might be exaggerated, but at least it shows the conception of the Federation of Morea as a 'multi-ethnic entity', see TNA, PRO, CO/879/17, African Confidential Print No. 206, *Statement of accredited Messenger from Alimamy Bocarry with reference to the Island of Matacong* (without number, Sub-Enclosure No. 5.), 18 July 1879, 2; Mouser, Bruce L., 'Continuing British Interest in Coastal Guinea-Conakry and the Fuuta Jaloo Highlands (1750 to 1850)', *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines* 43(172), 2003, 761–90, 771–3; Howard, Allen M., 'The Relevance of Spatial Analysis for African Economic History: The Sierra Leone-Guinea System', *Journal of African History* 17(3), 1976, 365–88, 370–2; McGowan, Winston, 'The Establishment of Long-Distance Trade between Sierra Leone and Its Hinterland, 1787–1821', *Journal of African History* 31(1), 1990, 25–41, 30–2.

point of reference.³³ Timbo in the Fuuta Jallon constituted perhaps the most notable exception to this pattern. While coastal communities with Muslim rulers accepted for part of the nineteenth century the religious overlordship of the *Almami* to whom they gave the honorary title of *abbas*, they nevertheless referred to the inhabitants of the Fuuta Jallon as 'Fula plunderers'. However, this was probably by far the strongest ethnic line drawn in the region, and its effects were exceptional.³⁴

British activities against the slave trade intensified European contact with groups in the region, as it was part of the anti-slavery strategy to convince local rulers of the advantages of alternative forms of production and to open new trade routes. Ironically, the new restrictions on the slave trade led to more brutal practices of enslavement and to the imprisonment of a large number of victims concentrated in one place. They also provoked more violent wars.³⁵ This again drew the British more closely into the political developments of the broader region beyond the Freetown Peninsula, and led to more interaction with Temne-speakers. Much of this interaction was initially carried out by 'Creole' officials working for the colonial government, who introduced their own opinions into the discussion and generally regarded local populations as 'primitive'. In the second half of the nineteenth century, Creoles like J.C.E. Parkes and Thomas George Lawson held the post of Secretary of Native Affairs of the Sierra Leone

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- 33 Mouser, Bruce L., 'The 1805 Forékariah Conference: A Case of Political Intrigue, Economic Advantage, Network Building', *History in Africa* 25, 1998, 219–62; CMS, C A1/E1 – 57, Hartwig, CMS Missionary at Wonkafong, to Pratt, CMS Secretary (without number), 10 May 1806, 1; CMS, C A1/E3 – 39, Renner, CMS Missionary at Bashia, to Pratt (without number), 24 Dec. 1812, 1–4; Keese, Alexander, 'Who's King Tom? Being a "Temne", "Mandinka", or "Susu" between identity, solidarity and ethnic shifts in early nineteenth-century Sierra Leone', in Alexander Keese (ed.), *Ethnicity and the long-term perspective: the African Experience* (Berne etc.: Peter Lang, 2010), 191–211, 206–8.
- 34 TNA, PRO, CO/267/149, Campbell, Governor of Sierra Leone, to Glenelg, British Secretary of State for War and the Colonies (without number), 19 May 1838, 19.
- 35 Bethell, Leslie, 'The mixed commission for the suppression of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade in the nineteenth century', *Journal of African History* 7(1), 1966, 79–93, 80–82; Turano, Maria, 'La commission mixte luso-britannique à Boa Vista et le procès du bateau "Leão"', in Centro de Estudos Africanos da Universidade do Porto (ed.), *Trabalho forçado africano – articulações com o poder político* (Porto: Campo de Letras, 2007), 117–34, 117–8; Howard, Allen M., 'Nineteenth-Century Coastal Slave Trading and the British Abolition Campaign in Sierra Leone', *Slavery & Abolition* 27(1), 2006, 23–49, 32; Wylie, *Kingdoms*, 62; Siddle, S.D., 'War-Towns in Sierra Leone: A Study in Social Change', *Africa* (London) 38(1), 1968, 47–56.

Colony and strongly influenced the colonial view on local communities.³⁶ Even so, before the 1870s, much of the contact with the Temne was still based on a foundation of diplomatic exchange rather than domination.

The creation of the Protectorate in Sierra Leone in 1898 changed the political scenery. Firstly, within the organisation of the colonial presence at the end of the nineteenth century, it is possible to speak of the end of Creole influence in the colonial administration. A new racist tendency undermined the role of the 'Creoles', although it was somewhat mitigated by the lobbying of 'Creole intellectuals' and Christian networks.³⁷ Even so, in the interwar period, the Freetown Creoles reappeared as leaders of political movements and as activists in strikes and social protests, which partly spilled over into the Protectorate.³⁸ Secondly, the creation of the Protectorate entrenched the position of important paramount chiefs. However, Creole politicians quickly learned how to use bodies like the Legislative Council to their benefit. In terms of flows of information and discussion about identifications, information was now more consistently transmitted by immigrants to Freetown coming from the Protectorate. Moreover, sons of 'native chiefs' enjoyed education in Fourah Bay (now part of Freetown), in Bo, and other college institutions, which guaranteed the link between the urban centres and the rural constituencies.³⁹

Between the Second World War and the independence of Sierra Leone in 1961, the dominant position of Creoles in emergent politics was undermined. Administrators, who feared Communist infiltration in the colony, were particularly negative about the Creole 'educated natives' of Freetown, such as party leader Isaac T.A. Wallace-Johnson.⁴⁰ The removal of the boundary between 'Colony' and 'Protectorate' was a means to neutralise Creole influence. The Freetown elites attempted nevertheless to broaden their support base in the

36 Hargreaves, John D., 'The Establishment of the Sierra Leone Protectorate and the Insurrection of 1898', *Cambridge Historical Journal* 12(1), 1956, 56–80, 58; Howard, 'Trading', 38; Skinner, David E., *Thomas George Lawson: African Historian and Administrator in Sierra Leone* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1980), 43–9.

37 Goerg, Odile, 'Between Everyday Life and Exception: Celebrating Pope Hennessy Day in Freetown, 1872–c. 1905', *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 15(1), 2002, 119–31, 123; Fyfe, Christopher, and David Killingray, 'A Memorable Gathering of Sierra Leonians in London, 1919', *African Affairs* 88(350), 1989, 41–6, 44–5; Hair, P.E.H., 'Africanism: The Freetown Contribution', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 5(4), 1967, 521–39, 533.

38 Goerg, Odile, 'Sierra Leonais, Créoles, Krio: La Dialectique de l'Identité', *Africa* 65(1), 1995, 114–32, 117–9.

39 Wyse, Akintola J.G., *The Krio of Sierra Leone* (London: Hurst, 1989), 105–11.

40 Spitzer, Leo, and LaRay Denzer, 'I.T.A. Wallace-Johnson and the West African Youth League', *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 6(3), 1973, 413–52, 422.

1951 and 1957 elections. The Creole-dominated United Progressive Party (UPP) showed some successful resistance against the progress of the SLPP, a party with rural support bases, and won a number of Protectorate seats in the elections. However, with the help of the British administration, Milton Margai's party in the end began to dominate the institutions in the territory.⁴¹ This led to a retreat of the Creole elite from politics, and to their concentration on elite posts in the administration, education and the economic sector, where they could still profit from their advantages of formal school graduation. Only after 1964 did tendencies towards a full removal of the political opposition awaken the resistance of the Creole inhabitants of the capital and the peninsula. Influential members of Freetown's Creole elite contributed to a paving of the way for Siaka Stevens to take political power.⁴² This shows that the particular culture of Creole activity from the capital remained influential during the interwar period, decolonisation, and into the post-colonial Sierra Leonean state. Creoles continued to influence strongly the ways in which political discourses were formulated, and they thus had an impact on the manner in which the different parts of Sierra Leonean society would describe themselves. The Temne were the first to borrow categories and concepts of group cohesion to present themselves as an ethnic group with a common destiny.

Living at Knifepoint: The Silent Temne Majority in Northern Sierra Leone, 1820–1850

The experiences of Temne group identification in the period before the colonial conquest were therefore shaped by a complex interplay of relations to neighbouring linguistic communities, which involved cultural contact with Creoles in Freetown. Political entities were frequently fragmented. This situation needs to be contrasted with claims by Temne-speakers to have a common culture of political institutions, a common tradition of land rights and customs of land use, and various founding myths propelled into a legendary past. In Temne accounts collected in the early twentieth century, only the 'Bai' were regarded as sovereign political rulers, while the positions of 'Alkali', 'Pa Suba',

41 Wyse, Akintola, *H.C. Bankole-Bright and Politics in Colonial Sierra Leone 1919–1958* (Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 133–62.

42 Allen, Christopher, 'Sierra Leone Politics since Independence', *African Affairs* 67(269), 1968, 305–29, 308, 314; Riley, Stephen, and Trevor W. Parfitt, 'Party or Masquerade? The All People's Congress of Sierra Leone', *Journal of Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 25(2), 1987, 161–79.

and ‘Santigi’ were understood to be clearly subordinate functions. In the nineteenth century, however, such a vision was as idyllic and fictional as the idea of six ‘original’ Temne sub-groups, which is sometimes discussed in ‘traditional’ accounts.⁴³ British travellers regularly obtained information about an earlier, more united Temne *nation* – but this was obviously what they were looking for! For some of the more ambitious Temne-speaking rulers, as in Port Loko or Masimera, this was also an occasion to formulate claims as informants.⁴⁴

Organisation of access to land may explain the political fragmentation of Temne communities. Collective control over land, in the sense of the ‘crown lands’ of Senegambia, was rare. Land was mainly organised through its individual use and possession by free men, an arrangement in which the local rulers could rarely interfere. Such land practices are in contradiction to the practice of *lambê* that regards the land as principally leased by the rulers – a practice that had disappeared at least by the end of the nineteenth century.⁴⁵ With regard to origin legends, it is striking that founding myths contained very little about autochtony (like for Wolof-speakers) or long-distance migration (like for Ewe-speakers). Some of the Sierra Leone Creoles, as discussed by a member of the Freetown elite, depicted the Temne as identical with the ‘Mane’ – but they relied, as ‘authority’ on this apparently vanished group, on the classic seventeenth-century account by the French merchant Jean Barbot, and attempted to bolster the position of their linguistic community by the alleged link to the legendary conquerors.⁴⁶

Traditions collected by British administrators in the late nineteenth century appear to reflect the tense relations between Susu-speakers and Temne-speakers during a good part of this century: in fact, some Temne-speaking informants claimed that the Temne had been able to push the Susu coastwards over a period.⁴⁷ Esu Biyi, one of the important Creole informants of the 1910s, referred to such an account: it claimed that the Temne-speakers had formerly lived in the vicinity of the Rio Nuñez, namely in Melikori, but had been driven out by Susu and Mandinka groups. The categories employed, however, remain

43 Schlenker, C.F., *A Collection of Temne Traditions, Fables and Proverbs with an English Translation*,... (London: Church Missionary Society, 1861), iv–vi, 3–13; Biyi, Esu, ‘The Temne People and How They Make Their Kings’, *Journal of the Royal African Society* 12(46), 1913, 190–9, 192–3, 198–9.

44 Griffith, T.R., ‘On the Races Inhabiting Sierra Leone’, *Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 16, 1887, 300–10, 304–5.

45 Anwyl, ‘Timne’, 47; Biyi, Esu, ‘Temne Land Tenure’, *Journal of the Royal African Society* 12(48), 1913, 407–20, 411.

46 Biyi, ‘People’, 191–192.

47 Anwyl, ‘Timne’, 37.

vague.⁴⁸ While the formulation of a history of origins with regard to the groups remains therefore sketchy, the evolution of Temne group sentiment, which had such a huge impact on the political panorama of the post-colonial country, must be sought in a long process of conflicts within pre-colonial and colonial experiences.

We can find information about Temne-speakers in European reports before 1787. The label 'Temne' existed already in the sixteenth century, but accounts concerning the Sierra Leone coast switch repeatedly between this and other labels. Accounts of major events, such as the so-called 'invasion' of the 'Mane', suggest that there may have been a different or overarching group identification described as 'Sape', but its long-term influence is unclear.⁴⁹ Some slaves transported into the Caribbean by the British Royal Africa Company – present on Bance Island from 1678 – were sold as 'Temne' in the eighteenth century, but it remains unclear what this label referred to.⁵⁰

In the first half of the nineteenth century, the British near-obsessive effort to create 'open trade routes', and to finish with slavery and the sale of slaves altogether, led to increased information on the 'hinterland' of Freetown.⁵¹ British administrators hoped to mediate in conflicts and to create zones of fertile production and of importation of useful trade goods, to benefit the interests of the metropolitan industry. Slowly, this gave an increasing impression of local solidarities. Initially, the missionaries of the Church Missionary Society were the main contact partners for Temne-speaking communities in the area of Port Loko or further northwards. The CMS organised teaching in the Creole villages of the Sierra Leone Peninsula, but also created mission stations in different parts of the 'hinterland' of Freetown, including in the Temne-speaking settlements such as Port Loko and, for a period, Magbele and Kambia. Missionaries were not really concerned with political relations, and they usually only interacted with different rulers when they had to travel overland and needed to receive permits and food rations. In the second half of the nineteenth century,

48 Biyi, 'Temne', 192–3.

49 Brooks, George E., *Eurafricans in Western Africa: Commerce, Social Status, Gender, and Religious Observance from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century* (Athens/OH: Ohio University Press – London: James Currey, 2003), 167; Hair, 'Continuity', 254–5.

50 Rodney, *History*, 229; Hall, Douglas, *In Miserable Slavery: Thomas Thistlewood in Jamaica 1750–86* (Kingston: University of West Indies Press, 1999 [1750–1786]), 135.

51 For an account of slave villages in the Port Loko area from the 1850s to the 1870s, see the report of active CMS missionaries in CMS, C A1/O 83/1, John Henry Davies, CMS native catechist, [*Report from Magbele 1857*] (without number), without date [1857], 4–5; CMS, CA1/o 60/55, Reverend Archdell Burtchaell, *Six days itinérance in the Temne Country from Port Loko to Mangay* (without number), 16 June 1879, 3, 7.

'native pastors' educated by the mission partly replaced the white missionaries, but they did not get into the leading positions.⁵² In spite of the lack of interest of the CMS personnel in political matters, they were, however, interested in the linguistic affiliations of villagers in the region, as they were engaged in translating their catechisms into Temne, Susu, and Bullom.

Regional solidarities were changed in the second half of the nineteenth century by the decline of the Federation of Morea. The *Almami* had always had to create his own alliances with chiefs *within* his own federation. After 1850, this ruler and his allies found themselves in a weak bargaining position in negotiations with French and British diplomats who were attempting to establish a protectorate over Forékaria. For the Temne-speaking rulers, and their Susu-speaking or Limba-speaking colleagues, the room for manoeuvre increased. Local authorities from now on turned to the British administration in Freetown.

With the exception of certain groups during the succession in Morea and around the wars with the Freetown Colony after 1800, the different Temne-speakers involved in these wars had been little inclined to employ ethnic identifications as criterion for mobilisation. In this, the Temne-speakers of northern Sierra Leone were at a clear disadvantage in comparison with the Susu, and the Fulbe of the Fuuta Jallon Highlands. British travellers normally identified the Temne-speaking inhabitants of the Koya region as members of one homogeneous 'Timanee' tribe, but this tendency was clearly a simplification for European convenience. CMS missionaries touring these villages make it clear that their inhabitants did not normally speak about larger group solidarities.⁵³

However, the Temne of Koya were faced with pressures exerted by the Freetown settlers, and needed strategies to cope with this situation. They gradually turned existing linguistic ties into categories according to ethnicity. As in the case of Port Loko, mobilisation under the ethnic label allowed conditions to be improved in war-torn Koya, in the face of a growing Creole settler presence. The behaviour of Temne-speakers on Bance Island, the small British settlement originally set up for slave-trading purposes, is instructive in this respect: to build a military alliance with different Temne-speaking leaders on the mainland in 1809, they insisted on their common roots.⁵⁴

52 Lynch, Hollis R., 'The Native Pastorate Controversy and Cultural Ethno-Centrism in Sierra Leone 1871-1874', *Journal of African History* 5(3), 1964, 395-413, 409-10.

53 CMS, C A1/E7 - 99, Johnson, CMS missionary, *Journal of an Excursion taken by Mr. Johnson J.B. Cates, Wm. Tamba & others round the Colony of Sierra Leone* (without number), without date [January 1819], 24-5.

54 TNA, PRO, CO/267/28, Thompson, Governor of Sierra Leone, to White, Governor of Cape Coast (without number), 8 Nov. 1809, 1; TNA, PRO, CO/267/28, Sierra Leone Legislative

Otherwise, on the European side, the vision of the Temne as a cultural and political bloc prevailed. British officials in Freetown were convinced that land questions between the Creole settlements under British rule and their neighbours in Koya, or problems existing between Freetown and adjacent communities, could be negotiated through general 'tribal' agreements.⁵⁵ Some of the Temne-speaking chiefs understood this particular 'tribal character' of British interpretations and attempted to draw individual profit out of it. These chiefs in some negotiations claimed to have an authoritative voice to speak 'for all Temne': in 1819, the Temne-speaking headmen from Koya, Pa London and Ka Canko, attempted to improve their weak bargaining position, and thus to maintain some access to land in negotiations with the governor in Freetown, Charles MacCarthy. To bolster their standing in these negotiations they claimed to represent a 'tribal Temne King', Pa Naimbana.⁵⁶

Such rhetorical tactics, which initially were no more than instrumental, had still little to do with the political realities in the coastal areas north of the Freetown Peninsula, where incursions by armed groups remained commonplace. Thus, in 1826, various coastal populations mobilised in a large alliance against the pillaging campaigns of a member of the local Tina family, Amurati, who, as a Dyula, had started to control a considerable part of the coastline. Bullom-speakers and Susu-speakers used ethnic arguments; Temne-speaking rulers who had entered this alliance only selectively, normally did not. Amurati was finally defeated by a 'multi-ethnic' coalition, and his own Tina kinship network let him down; it did not help Amurati to be a 'Mandinka', as other Mandinka-speaking chiefs joined the camp of his opponents. Ethnic allegiance was not a reliable factor.⁵⁷

In the following decades, British intermediaries attempted to organise meetings, bringing together various groups. British officials intervened in the selection of the new ruler (*Alkali*) of Port Loko in 1825, and British arbitration was also decisive in 1826, when *Almami* Amura stepped down and a new ruler had to be elected.⁵⁸ European residents believed they mainly had to arbitrate between Mandinka-speaking and Susu-speaking rulers, and hoped that, in the

Council, *Council Session* (without number), 14 Oct. 1809, 1. Fyfe, *History*, 108–9, relates the riots on the island, but omits to mention the attempts at creating a Temne solidarity with mainland populations.

55 TNA, PRO, CO/267/47, MacCarthy to Bathurst (n° 208), 19 July 1819, 2.

56 TNA, PRO, CO/267/49, MacCarthy, Pa London and Ka Canko, *Convention* (without number), 5 May 1819.

57 TNA, PRO, CO/267/72, Macauley, Governor of Sierra Leone, to Bathurst (n° 57), 4 July 1826, 1–3.

58 TNA, PRO, CO/267/72, Macauley to Bathurst (n° 57), 4 July 1826, 6–8.

meantime, the Temne-speaking rulers would accept and abide by these agreements. Indeed, the Temne-speakers initially retained a low profile in the conflicts about the internal relations within Morea.

However, constant warfare in the 1830s, partly fuelled by slave-raiding, changed the whole political panorama. In 1836, the political situation in the triangle between the Sierra Leone Peninsula, the city of Forékaria and the Rokel River had become so insecure that a general peace conference was desirable to many of the local rivals for power. These leaders seem to have become exasperated with the permanent threat of destruction that hung over their communities. The governor of Sierra Leone, Henry Dundas Campbell, was chosen as a neutral intermediary, and he attempted to identify and invite the maximum number of different groups to negotiate.⁵⁹ The peace conference was held in the town of Magbele. Dala Modu Dumbuya, the Susu-speaking chief of Madina, most formidable ally of the British in the north and major spokesmen of the peace initiative, described the meeting as an ‘all-ethnic conference’: ‘the foulahs, Soosoos, Bundues and all the countries join with the Timanees, and said we put our Country in Your [Campbell’s] hands’, Dala Modu stated.⁶⁰ Most of the other participants also assured the British that this was a previously unknown inter-group initiative.

The British side was clearly too optimistic that a ‘tribal’ solidarity amongst the Temne would help to solve the conflicts. They believed that the Temne as one ‘nation’ or ‘tribe’ would be able to end the conflicts if they only wanted to. These misinterpretations explain in part the resulting confusion.⁶¹ A paradigmatic event was the destruction of the ‘Forékaria Fence’ stockade, where battles had continued. A column of Royal African Corps soldiers of West Indian origins and a local ruler, Bai Sherbro of Kafu Bullom, burnt down the place, with the British commander, Lieutenant Findlay, believing that this was necessary to expel ‘foreign’ marauders.⁶² This led to uproar amongst the allies of the defeated party at the peace conference, and Campbell had to set up for Findlay a local ad hoc court and to discuss with the different leaders their interpretations of local politics. The discussions confirmed that networks of different

59 TNA, PRO, CO/267/149, Campbell to Glenelg (without number), 19 May 1838, 1–2; Fyfe, *History*, 205–6.

60 TNA, PRO, CO/267/149, Campbell, *Investigation relative to the Complaints of Namina Seacka, Bocary Soree and Maly and the destruction of the Fouricaria Fence* (n° 865), 24 April 1837, 48–9.

61 TNA, PRO, CO/267/149, Group of Freetown traders to Dala Mahomadu, Chief of Madina (without number), 21 Jan. 1837, 1.

62 TNA, PRO, CO/267/149, Campbell to Benwick, Captain of Royal African Corps (without number), 28 April 1837, 1–3.

rulers, such as those of Fatima Brima of Port Loko or the Bai Sherbro, were essential in the region, not membership of local ethnic entities. The few instances of recourse to ethnocultural labels were largely confused (e.g. the British commander of the operation erroneously described the Susu-speaking general Dala Mahomadu as 'one of the leading men belonging to the Limba Army').⁶³ 'Limba' and 'Loko' were not present; the 'Loko' and their ruler, Bancha, were described as 'warlike' and dangerous; the 'Limba' as 'savages' and 'slave-catchers'.⁶⁴ Mandinka-speakers occasionally described themselves as being a group apart, and they were threatened – as a particularly strong 'other' – by headmen and warriors from Port Loko and from the Kafu Bullom.⁶⁵ Even so, at Forékaria Fence, one leader, Mali, as a Mandinka, cooperated with two Temne-speaking rulers, Namina Siaka and Boba Sori – as they pointed out when they testified as witnesses at the Magbele peace conference.⁶⁶

Ethnic tropes were important concerning the Fulbe, who were conceived as a dangerous group, as the *Almamis* of the Fuuta Jallon were not only the masters of regional commerce, but also inclined to send punitive expeditions. There was no envoy of the ruler of Fuuta Jallon present in Magbele, but the fear of the 'Fulas' remained omnipresent. An important additional motive for the peace conference was to prevent yet another Fulbe incursion.⁶⁷ But the winners of the peace conference were Susu-speaking communities of the northern riverine areas, who were not only successful in slowly conquering villages of Limba-speakers, but also in portraying these activities as defending themselves against dangerous 'savages' – while many of the rulers present were

63 Fyfe, *History*, p. 206, regards the background story as an ethnic war 'between Susu and Limba'. See also TNA, PRO, CO/267/149, Findlay, Lieutenant of Royal African Corps, [*Detailed Report of Lieutenant Findlay*] (without number), 20 April 1837, 7–8; TNA, PRO, CO/267/149, Findlay to Benwick (without number), 23 April 1837, 1.

64 TNA, PRO, CO/267/149, Campbell to Glenelg (without number), 19 May 1838, 12.

65 TNA, PRO, CO/267/149, Findlay, [*Report of Operation to Fouricaria*] (without number), 27 March 1837, 5–6; TNA, PRO, CO/267/149, Findlay, [*Detailed Report of Lieutenant Findlay*] (without number), 20 April 1837, 20; TNA, PRO, CO/267/149, Campbell, *Investigation relative to the Complaints...* (n° 865), 24 April 1837, 103; TNA, PRO, CO/267/149, Copley, [*Report*] (without number), without date, 2.

66 TNA, PRO, CO/267/149, Abbott to Copley, both captains of Royal African Corps (without number), 9 April 1837, 1; TNA, PRO, CO/267/149, Findlay, [*Detailed Report of Lieutenant Findlay*] (without number), 20 April 1837, 18; TNA, PRO, CO/267/149, Findlay, *Statement of Bogoro Sorey* (without number), without date; TNA, PRO, CO/267/149, Campbell, *Investigation...* (n° 865), 24 April 1837, 59.

67 TNA, PRO, CO/267/149, *Investigation*, 15; Howard, 'Trading', 28; TNA, PRO, CO/267/149, Campbell to Benwick (without number), 25 April 1837; TNA, PRO, CO/267/149, Campbell, *Investigation...* (n° 865), 24 April 1837, 4.

sceptical about the activities of the rulers further north, they at least agreed on the negative vision of Limba populations.⁶⁸ Fatima Brima of Port Loko also was on the winning side: he managed to convince the British that he was a kind of spokesman of the Temne-speakers. During the negotiations in Magbele, the different sides used interpreters, although many individuals appear to have been well able to communicate in either language. The ostentatious use of competing languages during the deliberations was a ploy to mark group difference.⁶⁹

The peace agreement of Magbele, signed by all regional leaders, brought only a temporary relaxation of tensions. Over the whole of the 1840s, the interest of the involved parties was not great enough to find a formula to ban the use of force. As long as life on a knife-edge continued from the point of view of most local communities, questions of ethnic hostilities were indeed not the decisive obstacle to a general peace: Temne-speakers fought Temne-speakers, Susu-speakers were engaged in warfare against other Susu-speakers, with only the 'savage' others, namely the Limba, being shunned as alliance partners in ways that were formulated through ethnic stereotypes. From the 1850s, however, successive waves of still more unbounded military violence emerged in the power vacuum left in the north by the decline of the federation of Morea. These regional events led to an increase in the use of ethnic formulae.

'Susu Invasions', Larger Alliances, and the Integration of the Temne into the British Sphere of Power, 1850–1875

On the whole, the situation in the riverine north of Sierra Leone had remained unstable in the first half of the nineteenth century, and changing military alliances and the predominance of small political units in the area prevented solidarity among Temne-speakers. Identifications in the region were relatively fluid. In regions such as Kolifa Mayoso, the clan and family histories of individuals indicated mixed Temne, Susu, Koranko and other origins, giving a picture that resisted clear distinctions and stereotypes.⁷⁰

The battles for the city of Kambia and the adjacent region in the 1850s constituted a turning point, as they stirred up a wave of cooperation between

68 TNA, PRO, WO/32/7620, War Office, Intelligence Branch, *Précis of Information concerning the Colony of Sierra Leone* (without number), 1887, 8.

69 TNA, PRO, CO/267/149, Campbell, *Investigation...* (n° 865), 24 April 1837, 6, 70–1, 73, 92–3, 111.

70 Dorjahn, 'Migration', 36.

Temne-speakers. This led, just before the British conquest starting in the 1870s, to a clearer feeling of mutual solidarity between members of these communities. Such experiences coincided with the effects of Temne immigration into the urban area of Freetown, where the colonial administration increasingly pressured immigrants into following the category of 'tribal' identification. Already in the decades before, British clerks had begun to count the escaped slaves from adjacent regions according to a simplified ethnic background model: they were defined as 'Kosso', 'Temne', 'Koranko' or 'Sherbro'. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the same model was increasingly applied to the free immigrants coming to the colony as workers. This administrative effort for 'authenticity' finally spilled back into the different rural communities. During the internecine warfare in Sierra Leone that was so typical of the 1850s and 1860s, local populations and their leaders used such concepts to build their own alliances.⁷¹

The conquest of the important town and trade post of Kambia in the area of the Great Skarcies River, by a well-organised war band led by two Susu-speaking leaders – Satan Lahai and Bori Lahai – in late 1857, had an enormous impact in the region. As Christopher Fyfe has pointed out, Satan Lahai had Temne relations through his mother. However, in 1857/58, this fact does not seem to have played a role: the Temne-speaking chiefs of the region constantly described the other side as 'Susu invaders', and Satan Lahai relied mainly on Susu-speaking warriors. Significantly, in 1876, the same Satan Lahai presented his case in an entirely different way – as I will later discuss.⁷²

The army units of the Lahais not only took the town, but also controlled large parts of the area between the Skarcies Rivers and the Colony of Sierra Leone. Until mid-January 1858, Temne-speaking headmen in the region attempted to create an alliance against the Lahais, but this was unsuccessful, and the latter's troops were still making progress. Only with British support did these rulers manage to expel the Lahais from Kambia, which was burnt to the ground during the battle, and to drive them back into the northern interior. Their opponent destroyed the mainly Temne-speaking settlements of Rogbari and Rokon at the Rokel River.⁷³

71 TNA, pro, CO/267/261, Hill, Governor of Sierra Leone, to Lytton, British Secretary of State for the Colonies (n° 129), 13 July 1858, 5.

72 Fyfe, *History*, 283–4, who claims that Satan Lahai is very likely to have had a 'Temne mother'.

73 TNA, PRO, CO/267/260, Hill to Labouchere (n° 23), 13 Feb. 1858, 6, 17; TNA, PRO, CO/267/260, Wise, British Commander at the Guinea Coast, to Grey, British admiral, *Reporting operations conducted against the Sooso Chiefs by H.M. Naval Forces up the Rr.*

Temne-speaking communities in the region had continued with plundering campaigns ever since the peace talks at Magbele. However, the impact of the temporary loss of two major Temne-speaking population centres, and the threat by the Lahais and their followers, reawakened the idea of Temne solidarity that had already been visible as a possibility during the talks at Magbele. As a common base for an alliance, the idea that they defended Temne territory against a 'foreign' invader was a useful kind of commitment for local communities. This strategy was, all in all, remarkably successful, although the coalition remained, in practice, fairly dependent on British military support.⁷⁴ This alliance, based on ideas of ethnic solidarity was visibly expressed in the existence of a joint command of different Temne chiefs during the campaign – which was an unusual step in the politically fragmented rivers of northern Sierra Leone.⁷⁵ This command was not too efficient, but in the end the coalition marched against Romangi, the settlement of one of the paramount chiefs of the alliance, and retook it from the troops of the Lahais in June 1858, with British help and after protracted struggles.⁷⁶ This success illustrated the usefulness of the alliance.

In the meantime, the new politics of 'Temne unity' also had an effect on the diplomatic front, as the Temne-speaking chiefs of the alliance were able to convince the British side that *they* had the authentic claim to rule over Kambia. The Lahais had insisted, on the contrary, to the governor of Sierra Leone that their family had an ancient right to rule over the city; but chiefs from the coalition successfully challenged this view through the simple notion that Kambia was a 'Temne city'! Both amongst the British authorities and British and Creole merchants, the idea prevailed indeed that Kambia was a 'Temne city' that had to be protected against 'Susu raiders'.⁷⁷ For the British, the rhetoric of an all-Temne campaign was all the more impressive, since in other conflicts in the region, such as those over the control of the former Federation of Morea between Sumbuya, Moralo, and Forékaria, ethnic terms played no role at all.⁷⁸

Scarcies on the 29th, 30th & 31st of Janr. & the 1st, 2nd & 3rd of February 1858 (without number), 5 Feb. 1858, 2–3, 7.

74 TNA, PRO, CO/267/260, Hill to Labouchere (n° 3), 1 Jan. 1858, 2–3.

75 TNA, PRO, CO/267/260, Wise to Grey, *Reporting operations...* (without number), 5 Feb. 1858, 8.

76 TNA, PRO, CO/267/260, Hill to Stanley (n° 117), 26 June 1858, 2–3.

77 TNA, PRO, CO/267/260, Hill to Bori Lahai (without number), 16 Jan. 1858, 1; TNA, PRO, CO/267/260, Hill to Satan Lahai (without number), 16 Jan. 1858, 1; TNA, PRO, CO/267/260, Pratt, Williams, Spilsbury, Walker, Kidd, and Drake, members of the Committee of the Mercantile Association in Freetown, to Hill (without number), 17 Feb. 1858, 1.

78 TNA, PRO, CO/267/260, Hill to Stanley (n° 118), 28 June 1858, 1–2; TNA, PRO, CO/267/261, Hill to Stanley (n° 123), 8 July 1858, 1–2. In contrast, in earlier documents the rulers of

It seems that the formulation of a Temne group identification found itself reinforced through commercial activities of that period. Christopher Fyfe has emphasised this point in relation to growing tensions between Temne-speaking peddlers and Freetown merchants, the latter belonging mainly to the group of the 'Aku' who originated from former slaves from the Bight of Biafra. In those conflicts, the Temne-speakers gave an impression of evolving into a larger community.⁷⁹ The British regarded this process both as a confirmation of a 'tribal' interpretation of local politics, and as problematic, as it collided with the more aggressive strategy now being implemented by the colonial administration against the populations of Koya, neighbours of the urban area of the Sierra Leone Peninsula. After the battle of Kambia, the British officials in Freetown proceeded to a new peace conference, which strove to underline the character of ethnic harmony in the north.

However, the usefulness of being counted as 'Temne' was quickly realised by other leaders. A number of rulers whose communities were not Temne-speaking claimed they needed to be counted as part of the larger Temne group. Kala Modu, a chief of Madina on the Bullom Shore, insisted on being included in the overall peace procedures and complained that the treaty was too exclusive.⁸⁰ The new sense of group unity among the Temne-speakers thus had its attractiveness among neighbouring rulers, who attempted to enter the networks in spite of ethnic solidarity.

By contrast, some Temne-speaking individuals, with experience as mercenaries further southwards, tried to create for themselves their own strongholds in the southern coastal zones of Sierra Leone. In 1858, Pa Lamina, a former resident of Bumpé and Sembahun and successful leader of a warrior group, claimed from the British authorities the paramount chieftaincy of what he called the whole of the 'Mende territory'. The British were sceptical and did not take these claims too seriously. It later came out that the self-styled ruler was perfectly Temne-speaking and had an obvious Temne name!⁸¹ Such initiatives went against the British logic of categorising communities through ethnic

Morea normally described themselves as 'Mandinka' chiefs, see TNA, PRO, CO/879/15, African Confidential Print No. 173, Almami Amura Turé; Gabbidon, and Savage, the latter being traders on the island of Matakong, [*Declaration*] (without number, Enclosure No. 5), without date [1825], 1. On the evolution of Morea, see Skinner, *Lawson*, 72–77.

79 TNA, PRO, CO/879/14, African Confidential Print No. 159, Rowe to Michael Hicks Beach (n° 100, as n° 12 in series), 28 June 1878, 2–3; Fyfe, *History*, 415–6.

80 TNA, PRO, CO/267/261, Hill to Lytton (n° 144), 30 July 1858, 1–2.

81 TNA, PRO, CO/267/261, Pa Lamina, *The humble Petition of Pa Laminah Native Chief of the Mendi Nation residing at Sanahu, in the Mendi Country* (without number), 14 Sep. 1858, 2, 8; TNA, PRO, CO/267/261, McCormack to Hill (without number), 16 Oct. 1858, 3.

labels, and European officials feared ‘unauthentic’ rulers, who were quite contemptuously called ‘robber chiefs’.⁸²

In consequence, the 1850s and 1860s saw two contradictory tendencies. Caught in a web of violent conflicts, and under the influence of the British authorities who remained adamant in their belief that they had to achieve, ultimately, the opening of interregional trade routes, the long-established dynasties such as those in Morea, but also the more powerful individual rulers like those in Port Loko, lost their remaining control over the regional warfare. This was a good opportunity for leaders of ‘war gangs’ to establish their own strongholds in the area. Similar processes had started earlier in the south of Sierra Leone, where the political entities were even weaker. In the north, on the contrary, we find at first other developments that had the reverse effect. Above all, the impression created by the invasion of Susu-speaking raiders under the Lahais had an impact far stronger than the expressions of a general weariness of warfare that had characterised the peace negotiations of the 1830s. In the late 1850s, the worries about an expansion of dangerous, Susu-speaking war parties led for the first time to a more sustained movement of Temne unity. For the time being, these trends towards a new solidarity, however, remained fragile: many Temne-speaking leaders of armed groups preferred the alternative of themselves aspiring to a primary position as war leader.

The conquest of political power by such rulers constituted a challenge for the British, who had to explain why overarching group identifications were so unsuccessful. In the most well-known case, it was even worse: the new rulers attempted to formulate their territorial claims through a sub-group identity – that of the ‘Yoni’ – instead of referring to broader Temne ethnic sentiment. This confused the British, who held that many of the adversaries in the battles to come, like the Yoni and the populations of Masimera, were just ‘families of the Timmanee tribe’.⁸³ The Yoni war, therefore, was a watershed as regards influencing and understanding group identifications of the Temne.

Group Polarisation and Warfare: The Yoni Affair and the Hut Tax War (1875–1898)

After a less active period in the 1860s and 1870s, the British administration in Freetown attempted to formalise its presence in the surroundings of the Sierra

82 TNA, PRO, CO/267/270, Hill to Duke of Newcastle (n° 34), 12 March 1861, 2–3.

83 TNA, PRO, CO/879/15, African Confidential Print No. 173, Rowe to Hicks Beach (n° 90, as n° 2 in series), 22 Nov. 1878.

Leone Peninsula during the following decade. The French success in bringing the territory of Forékaria – the former heartland of the ‘Federation of Morea’ – under their control alarmed the British.⁸⁴ This provoked a more aggressive appearance of British representatives and a more marked approach to the classification of communities. To bring order to their ideas of the composition of groups in the Sierra Leonean territory, the Freetown Native Affairs Department became quite active in collecting more (and more detailed) accounts of informants that seemed useful for an understanding of group loyalties in the region.

In the southern and eastern parts of current-day Sierra Leone, Mende-speakers were engaged in crafting regional alliances. Temne-speaking communities of the north were after only a short period well-informed about those events, as political developments in the whole of the coastal region were reported and widely discussed.⁸⁵ In Koya, the region adjacent to the Sierra Leone Peninsula, the activities of Loko-speaking refugees led to a situation in which Temne appeared to fight Loko. This type of tension had disappeared for a good part of the period after 1837, and only now reappeared in the spotlight; in this context, the Loko-speakers were described by their Temne-speaking neighbours as an entirely distinct ‘people’.⁸⁶ Koya’s Temne-speakers had, in the late 1870s, and in consequence of conflicts between settlements, been engaged in capturing and selling as slaves a number of the inhabitants of some Loko communities. These acts then led to retaliation, and the conflict intensified friction in the whole region, as a good part of Koya’s Temne-speakers and Loko-speakers lived in the villages in question, and it was quite difficult for both observers and the populations themselves, to find categories of distinction.⁸⁷

Around the Temne-speakers in the north, there were also important community changes taking place. In Sumbuya, the area of the northern rivers around Wonkafong and Moribea, it was Susu-speakers who pushed considerable numbers of Bullom-speaking individuals out of the region. However,

84 Schnapper, Bernard, *La Politique et le Commerce Français dans le Golfe de Guinée de 1838 à 1871* (Paris – The Hague: Mouton, 1961), 235–9.

85 TNA, PRO, CO/879/10, African Confidential Print No. 114, Rowe to Carnavon, Secretary of State for the Colonies (n° 89A.), 19 June 1876, 4; TNA, PRO, CO/879/11, African Confidential Print No. 139, Rowe, *Memorandum by Dr. Rowe, C.M.G.* (without number, Enclosure in No. 36), 1st Aug. 1877, 2.

86 TNA, PRO, CO/879/15, African Confidential Print No. 173, Bome Rufa and Bome Warrah, ‘Queens of Quiah’; Balu Modu, Chief of Koya, and others, *Address of the Queens of Quiah and other Chiefs* (without number), 22 Jan. 1879; TNA, PRO, CO/879/15, African Confidential Print No. 173, Lawson to Rowe (without number, Enclosure No. 5), 6 Jan. 1879, 3.

87 TNA, PRO, CO/879/15, African Confidential Print No. 173, Rowe to Hicks Beach (n° 200, in series as No. 11), 18 Dec. 1878, 1–2.

Temne-speakers, like the Susu-speakers, were gaining ground. The presence of the Temne-speaking Digsing in the interior of the Samu region was a visible sign of the expansion of the Temne language and of Temne-speakers in the second half of the nineteenth century.⁸⁸ It also shows, together with the events of Sumbuya, that Sierra Leone was, only two decades before the creation of formalised colonial rule, a region where the migration of armed groups was still possible, and even an increasing phenomenon, quite unlike Senegambia in the same period.

It is interesting to note what, in the years leading up to this, became of Satan Lahai. In the 1850s, this leader had acted as a feared 'Susu warrior chief'. In the 1870s and early 1880s, he not only maintained his base as ruler of Rowula but he increasingly appeared as member of a political ensemble (and network) of Temne-speaking chiefs! He used this as an act of political propaganda.⁸⁹ During the peace talks in the Skarcies Rivers region in 1876, the ruler of Rowula presented himself as spokesman of Temne-speaking fellow rulers, such as *Almami* Lusani of Digsing. Lahai also occasionally presented himself as a 'delegate' of Bai Farima of Kambia.⁹⁰ In 1878, he was therefore sometimes described, by the British and even by some of their informants, as 'Temne'!⁹¹ In 1881, Satan Lahai, like 'other Temne chiefs', was criticised for carrying war from the Temne into the Susu territory.⁹² Finally, Lahai was able to profit from these more flexible descriptions to act as a mediator between the Limba-speakers and the Susu-speaking population of Kukuna, who were in a violent conflict regarding the question of refugee slaves.⁹³

88 TNA, PRO, WO/32/7620, War Office, Intelligence Branch, *Précis of Information concerning the Colony of Sierra Leone* (without number), 1887, 8.

89 TNA, PRO, CO/879/17, African Confidential Print No. 214, Bokari, [*Declaration*] (without number, Enclosure 3 in No. 104), 9 July 1880.

90 TNA, PRO, CO/879/10, African Confidential Print No. 114, Samuel Rowe, Governor of Sierra Leone; Almami Satan Lahai of Rowula; Bai Farima of Magbeti and Kambia; and other chiefs, *Agreement signed by the Chiefs of the Scarcies Rivers on the 10th June, 1876*. (without number), 10 June 1876; TNA, PRO, CO/879/14, African Confidential Print No. 159, Rowe to Hicks Beach (n° 100, as n° 12 in series), 28 June 1878, 3.

91 TNA, PRO, CO/879/14, African Confidential Print No. 159, *Status of Parties to the Agreement made at Kambia, Great Scarcies River, on the 27th April 1878, between the Timmanees and Soosoos*. (without number, Enclosure 6), without date, 1.

92 TNA, PRO, CO/879/18, African Confidential Print No. 226, Streeten to Almami Satan Lahai, 'king of Rowula'; Bai Farima, 'king of Kambia und Magbeti'; Bai Inga, 'king of Small Scarcies' (n° 1, as Enclosure 5, in No. 27.), 4 Jan. 1881.

93 TNA, PRO, CO/879/14, African Confidential Print No. 159, *Proceedings of a Meeting held at Kambia, Great Scarcies River, 24th April 1878 [25th April 1878]*. (without number), without date, 6.

Other 'Susu' were also flexible about operating in collaboration with different sides, in clear contrast with the picture of a fundamental Temne-Susu antagonism, which the British believed themselves to be faced with. Sankong, another Susu-speaking warrior leader, appeared as an important ally of Lusani of Digsing, and Karlilu of Bashia also sided openly with Temne-speakers.⁹⁴ All in all, while the Temne-speakers had shown their intention, between the 1850s and the 1870s, of selling themselves to the British as a homogeneous population, Susu-speakers of the north were seriously threatened by fragmentation.⁹⁵ The rulers in opposition to Bokari in Forékaria, while conceding that Morea was the home of a population different 'from their neighbours, the Timmanees and Soombuyahs on the north and south', insisted that there was no central power in the country, and that indeed the Susu-speakers should be seen as being divided into different 'tribes'.⁹⁶

As the Temne-speakers of Digsing felt threatened by the growing presence of Susu-speaking war leaders in their region, and were determined to defend their autonomy, and as Satan Lahai was again, in 1876, actively expanding his own area of influence, the Temne-Susu antagonism appeared again to be at a new peak.⁹⁷ This was also visible in new forms of diplomatic interaction promoted by the British: agreements were now read in Susu, Temne, and Limba, while before they had mainly been presented exclusively in Temne. This reflected the progress that specialised British officials had made with proficiency in the latter two languages, but it was principally an expression of a

94 TNA, PRO, CO/879/11, African Confidential Print No. 139, *Memorandum on French and English Treaties with Chiefs of the Moriah and Samu Countries* (without number), without date, 1; TNA, PRO, CO/879/14, African Confidential Print No. 159, Rowe to Michael Hicks Beach (n° 100, as n° 12 in series), 28 June 1878, 3; TNA, PRO, CO/879/14, African Confidential Print No. 159, Bai Farima of Magbeti and Kambia; Satan Lahai, of Rowula, in the Casseh Country; and others, *Agreement made at Kambia, Great Scarcies River, the 27th day of April 1878, between the Timmanees and Soosoos and the Chiefs of Surrounding Countries*. (without number, Enclosure No. 2), 27 April 1878, 1.

95 TNA, PRO, CO/879/15, African Confidential Print No. 173, Satan Dawoda and others, [Statement] (without number, Enclosure No. 4), 18 July 1879, 2.

96 TNA, PRO, CO/879/11, African Confidential Print No. 139, Rowe to Carnavon (n° 148, n° 49 of series), 29 Sep. 1877, 3; TNA, PRO, CO/879/17, African Confidential Print No. 206, Lawson, [Installation of Alimamy Bokharry] (without number, Sub-Enclosure No. 11), 3 Nov. 1879; TNA, PRO, CO/879/17, African Confidential Print No. 206, *Notes, Geographical and Political, on the position of the French port at Binty in the Mellicourie River, on the Kissi Kissi Country, and on the Native Tribes on its Borders* (without number, Sub-Enclosure No. 13), 3 Nov. 1879.

97 TNA, PRO, CO/879/14, African Confidential Print No. 159, Rowe to Hicks Beach (n° 45, as n° 2 of series), 21 April 1878.

deeper awareness of the group-building role of these idioms.⁹⁸ However, the apparently clear antagonism was again superseded by other interests, and by engagement in plunder. The town of Bileh on the Great Skarcies River, a local centre of Islamic scholarship, was burnt down during the war although both sides spoke in a reverential manner of the school lessons in Muslim scripts and consequently had ample reasons to spare the teachers.⁹⁹

In the early 1880s, with the battles in the Skarcies Rivers region coming to a halt, the momentum of inter-Temne cooperation in the north seemed to disappear. Given the absence of notable threats – Susu-speaking communities were occupied in local warfare amongst ‘themselves’; the rulers in Forékaria were fairly weak and engaged in a conflict to decide for or against a French protectorate; the Fuuta Jallon had, with internal wars and the campaigns of Samori Touré in the interior of West Africa, been increasingly distracted from any interest in the coastal regions – ethnic difference was obviously not of a sufficiently great attraction to be a guiding principle. Only in situations of the most extreme emergency had it been tested as a useful strategy; now, it again became obvious that pan-Temne solidarity did not help villagers in smaller conflicts.¹⁰⁰ Instead, as had already been the case in the late 1860s, individual Temne-speaking leaders took the opportunity to create for their own power bases.

The most successful process of creation of such a local armed power-base occurred in a region more than a hundred kilometres east of the Sierra Leone Peninsula, in the so-called ‘Yoni Country’. In 1885, a group of warriors formed an aggressive alliance with other local war groups. Over the next two years these warriors intensified their engagement in plundering campaigns in the surrounding lands. We do not find any stronger centralised power behind this Yoni expansion. Since 1879, the Yoni group had no longer had a Bai Sherbro, which had during former decades been a form of ‘paramount chief’. Although this position had never fulfilled the role of a ‘supreme ruler’ as imagined by British officials, the Bai Sherbro had been, in the case of military conflict, a coordinating force. However, the Yoni group did not seem to need such a ruler to be successful in warfare. The different local leaders, informally headed by Kapra Toli of Ronieta and Pa Kundi of Makundu, organised with huge success

98 TNA, PRO, CO/879/14, African Confidential Print No. 159, Rowe to Hicks Beach (n° 46, as n° 2 of series), 29 April 1878, 3.

99 TNA, PRO, CO/879/14, African Confidential Print No. 159, Rowe to Hicks Beach (n° 84, as n° 9 in series), 14 June 1878, 2. On Bileh’s function, see Skinner, ‘Islam’, 55.

100 CMS missionaries reported in 1879/80 on a good number of villages in the region of Magbele and Port-Loko, from which all the inhabitants had fled; see CMS, C A1/O 29/7, Alley, *Journal Jan. 1st – March 31. 1880* (without number), without date, p. 18.

an alliance that engaged in successful pillaging across the whole of the region. In these activities, the Yoni troops showed no respect for the 'Temne identity': in 1878, they had destroyed Magbele, the once important town centre and symbolic place of nascent Temne unity during the 1836/37 peace conference.¹⁰¹ Furthermore, while the Yoni managed to include in their alliance Bai Simera of Rokon and some other important Temne-speaking leaders, they never had any ethnic programme.

The coalition of their opponents, which had been created under British influence, mostly had members who were not Temne. These included mainly Mende-speakers, but also the odd chief from the Sherbro. However, some members of the anti-Yoni alliance, such as the participating rulers of Koya, were Temne-speakers. Their participation against the Yoni was partly the expression of their dependence on Freetown as they were held to fulfil the terms of an earlier peace agreement, but their presence gave the anti-Yoni coalition a clear non-ethnic character.¹⁰² In the description of subsequent events, the perception of British commanders in Freetown was evidently distorted. Seeing the power within this part of the Temne 'tribe' as having been 'highjacked' by 'robber chiefs', the British were eager to 're-establish' what they regarded as 'traditional systems'. They believed that the defeat and removal of Kapra Toli and of Pa Kundi were appropriate steps to return the Yoni to their proper place within the Temne community.¹⁰³

However, when the British Commander, Colonel Francis de Winton, advanced in 1887 to Mafengbe and started to defeat the Yoni leaders in battle with the mixed group of allies under his command, he quickly learned that local populations did not at all interpret the conflict according to ethnic categories.¹⁰⁴ Therefore, the British also tended to deal with the different groups of Temne-speakers under other, regional labels such as 'Masimeras' or 'Mabangs'. Some officials reporting to the Secretariat of Native Affairs were quite afraid of a future 'alliance between Yonnis and Timanee'; in which they showed their failure to understand that the Yoni were themselves Temne-speakers!¹⁰⁵

101 TNA, PRO, CO/879/15, African Confidential Print No. 173, Rowe to Hicks Beach (n° 192, as n° 3 in series), 28 Nov. 1878.

102 TNA, PRO, WO/32/7620, War Office, Intelligence Branch, *Précis of Information concerning the Colony of Sierra Leone* (without number), 1887, 11–3.

103 TNA, PRO, WO/32/7620, Edward Stanhope, British Secretary of War, to Colonel F. de Winton (n° 074/419), 21 Oct. 1887.

104 TNA, PRO, WO/32/7620, De Winton to War Office (without number), 15 Nov. 1887; Fyfe, *History*, 475–6, gives little background information about the British view on communities at the River Rokel.

105 TNA, PRO, WO/32/7620, De Winton to War Office (without number), 22 Nov. 1887, 1, 3.

Only when the fighting became more intense, and when they stood with their backs to the wall, do the Yoni appear to have made appeals for joint identification with a larger Temne community. They obviously hoped to obtain, at the last possible minute, increased support from other Temne-speaking rulers in spite of their devastating defeats. Nevertheless, at this moment the war was already nearly lost after the destruction of Mafokoya and the fall of Ronieta. Through their new, pan-Temne rhetoric, the Yoni leaders seem to have kept the rulers of Masimera and Marampa in their camp until the very end of the hostilities – British officials were quite surprised to find them amongst the enemies, the more so as those chiefs had remained formal allies of the British governor in Freetown! Here, the British clearly underestimated the capacity of Yoni chiefs to mobilise fellow Temne-speakers through arguments of a common ethnic identification; the British side had thought that all ‘Temne’ would turn against the ‘robber chiefs’.¹⁰⁶ However, in the last phase of the struggle, when under immediate military pressure, the ‘Yoni’ successfully employed ‘Temne’ group solidarities. This situation of alliances clearly points to fault lines defined through ethnic affiliation. Only when the British pushed hard to destroy the rest of the dispersed Yoni units, did some Temne-speaking chiefs try to return to the British camp. One such was Bai Simera, who claimed that the Yoni had alienated him by killing his son.¹⁰⁷

Over the following years, ethnic solidarity again became more feasible as a motive for taking up arms. On the occasion of peace talks in the Rokel River region, Pa Suba and other Temne-speaking participants insisted categorically that, as a first step to an agreement, all Mende troops be withdrawn from the region. To ‘reintegrate the Yoni’ into the larger Temne community, it seemed adequate to define a common enemy: ‘the Mende’, who were now described as stereotypical opponents.¹⁰⁸ Also, the assembled Temne-speaking chiefs claimed the right to reinstate Sey Masa as a fellow ‘Temne’ Bai Sherbro of the Yoni area. This was despite the fact that this act was in open contradiction to

106 TNA, PRO, WO/32/7620, De Winton to War Office (without number), 8 Dec. 1887, 1; TNA, PRO, WO/32/7620, De Winton to War Office (without number), 9 Dec. 1887, 1–2.

107 TNA, PRO, WO/32/7620, Ernest Parkes, Secretary of Native Affairs of Sierra Leone, *Notes of Interview between Sir Francis de Winton and Bey Simmerah, King of Masimera, and the Chiefs of Masimera, Marampa, and Kwaia, 4th December 1887* (without number), 4 Dec. 1887, 2.

108 Different Mende chiefs, including Bai Lal of Malal and Madam Yoko, also showed a common group profile on that occasion: they would send ‘Mende envoys’ and formulate demands on behalf of the whole ethnic community, see TNA, PRO, CO/879/29, African Confidential Print No. 361, Hay, Governor of Sierra Leone, to Knutsford (n° 375, as No. 13 in series), 20 Nov. 1888.

earlier proceedings of elections of rulers in the region, as only 'the Yoni' had been called upon to designate their new leaders. The assembled chiefs argued that, as representatives of 'Temne groups', they had the right to decide over the future of a community that was regarded as having a part in the process.¹⁰⁹ There was a widespread feeling that the whole affair, although mediated by the British, had been resolved in the end by 'Temne' group solidarity.¹¹⁰

This process led to a new dimension of Mende–Temne antagonism. While, as we have shown, some group stereotypes had previously existed, open hostility on ethnic terms had been scarce (which was also partly due to geographic distance).¹¹¹ In 1891, the trend was confirmed: during negotiations for another regional peace agreement held in Taiama, and sponsored by the British governor, James Shaw Hay, mutual accusations between 'Temne' and 'Mende' were very present.¹¹² There was a clear potential for this conflict to transform into a larger and ethnically motivated war.

However, the Hut Tax War of 1898 interrupted this trend. There has been broader research on this particular event, which led to effective British conquest, and which need not be reiterated here. It is important to point out that the rebellion against increasing British control and new tax demands had a double face. First, it was an anti-colonial war of several local rulers against the British, but also a generational and social struggle. Moreover, the colonial power had relied heavily, in its organisation of an efficient frontier police during the 1880s and 1890s, on the employment of immigrants from the 'hinterland' of Sierra Leone, many of these being of lower social status or even descendants of slaves. The revolt exploded when these policemen quite aggressively voiced the British demand for a generalised tax.¹¹³ Second, the rebellion

109 Finally, the decisive conference was, unsurprisingly from a symbolic perspective, held at Magbele, and was indeed an exclusive 'Temne affair', see TNA, PRO, CO/879/29, African Confidential Print No. 361, Parkes, *List of Chiefs and Santiggies (Principal men) present at Meeting at Mabelin on the 9th instant, when Almamy Conteh was formally handed over to his people.* (without number, Enclosure in No. 36.), without date; and TNA, PRO, CO/879/29, African Confidential Print No. 361, Parkes, *Notes of Conversation between His Excellency Governor Hay, C.M.G., and Chiefs at Magbelin, at meeting on the afternoon of Sunday the 9th December.* (without number, Enclosure 2 in No. 36), 10 Dec. 1888.

110 TNA, PRO, WO/32/7620, De Winton to War Office (without number), 21 Nov. 1887, 1–2.

111 It appears difficult to prove Kup's claim that there was a huge Mende invasion in northern Sierra Leone at the end of the eighteenth century, see Kup, *History*, 155–6.

112 Garrett, G.H., 'Sierra Leone and the Interior, to the Upper Waters of the Niger', *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society and Monthly Record of Geography, New Monthly Series* 14(7), 1892, 433–5, 453.

113 Hargreaves, 'Establishment', 64.

was a result of the permanent tensions between 'Creole' merchants and the populations of Port Loko, who felt insulted by the aggressive behaviour of these Creole resettlers and at a disadvantage in trade.

I will look in more detail later at changing mentalities in the town of Port Loko during the Hut Tax War. In any case, it is remarkable that it was not only the British who regarded the revolt as a 'Temne uprising'. In fact, local communities who were not Temne-speakers attempted to remain neutral because they did not want to be drawn into a 'Temne affair'; several of their chiefs were eager to demand a possibly lucrative role as mediators because of not being Temne, as was the case with the Limba leader Suluku from Bumban.¹¹⁴ In the end the rebellion spread into the Mende-speaking regions, but this was at a different stage, and it was now impossible to create a larger alliance between Mende-speaking and Temne-speaking leaders.

In 1898, not only were the firepower and military skills of northern Sierra Leonean communities insufficient to sustain battles with British troops, but even a charismatic war leader such as Bai Bureh, of Loko origins but a long-standing leader of Temne-speaking mercenaries, was incapable of keeping the ranks of the troops together after the first heavy defeats.¹¹⁵ Even so, ethnic mobilisation was an obvious tool. In a follow-on from the 'Yoni War', Temne-speakers had finally begun to appreciate the ethnic dimension of Temne-ness as a welcome means of mobilising the different local communities. After the defeat of 1898, these war solidarities could partly be translated into principles of local organisation. For the part of the colonial rulers, the creation of 'native districts' of a new protectorate worked these existing group affiliations from war periods into the tissue of the emerging civil structures of colonial rule.

Chieftaincy and Reorganisation in the Protectorate Period: The Case of the Northern Province (1898–1945)

The end of the Hut Tax War profoundly changed the political and social conditions of community life in northern Sierra Leone. The creation of the Protectorate and of official provinces gave the initiative to European officials. Moreover, British 'pacification' led to a situation in which local groups, having formerly coexisted in a situation of rather unorganised and frequently bloody rivalry, now had to live alongside one another under the rule of paramount

114 Abraham, Arthur, 'Bai Bureh, the British, and the Hut Tax War', *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 7(1), 1974, 99–106, 104–5.

115 Fyfe, *History*, 432.

chiefs. British district administrators expressed this process in racist terms as effects of their 'civilising mission', but they indeed had direct control over most of the Protectorate chiefs. Groups that had in a long process in the second half of the nineteenth century decided to define others as arch-enemies, now had to find ways to coexist within the new structures of 'indirect rule'. This evolution was in part mediated through the creation of Protectorate-wide structures: British authorities canalised the 'education' of both future chiefs, and of their councillors and clerks as in Senegal, through education facilities for the sons of chiefs who were obliged to use them, and later on, through the Bo School of Administration whose graduates developed their own corporate identities as 'old boys'.¹¹⁶

In spite of colonial taxation and forced labour, the colonial state in Sierra Leone had the paradoxical effect of allowing communities to live free from experiences of destruction and pillage, in relative safety. In isolated districts of the Sierra Leone Protectorate, British control was of course less immediate and European officials and merchants and Lebanese traders had to rely on porters to distribute information and goods. Here, the power of local leaders was less controlled, as was the case in the district of Karene before the 1920s.¹¹⁷ Even for such remote regions, the existence of the urban centre of Freetown with its range of labour opportunities became a mighty attraction. What had slowly started before 1898, soon expressed itself in a steady flow.¹¹⁸ Instead of refugee slaves, these immigrants were now mostly free labourers, although 'domestic slavery' remained a problem in Sierra Leone, as it was in early twentieth-century Senegambia.¹¹⁹ Subsequent provincial commissioners of the Northern Province claimed that the flight of slaves had become infrequent, and that many slaves had a strong preference for staying with their masters, thus explaining away the dilemma. However, in general, these reports were erroneous. The commissioners only repeated the opinion of the Temne-speaking paramount chiefs, and thus avoided the delicate task of interfering in master-slave relations.¹²⁰

116 Corby, Richard A., 'Bo School and Its Graduates in Colonial Sierra Leone', *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 15(2), 1981, 323–3, 331–2.

117 TNA, PRO, CO/267/607, Lyon, District Commissioner of Karene District, *Annual Report of the Karene District for 1924* (without number), 19 March 1925, 32–3.

118 Little, *Mende*, 24.

119 Rashid, Ismail, "Do dady nor lef me make dem carry me": Slave resistance and emancipation in Sierra Leone, 1894–1928', *Slavery & Abolition* 19(2), 1998, 208–31, 216–9.

120 TNA, PRO, CO/267/595, Stanley, Provincial Commissioner of the Northern Province in Mahump, [*Report on the Northern Province*] (without number), 12 April 1922, 10.

The issue of slavery and the question of refugees moving into Freetown created a consensus amongst many of the local paramount chiefs, within and beyond the Temne-speaking area, who opposed any unilateral measures on the part of the colonial administration. The British government in Freetown regarded a unilateral decree of abolition as dangerous, as they argued that this could lead again to revolt and 'civil war', in the style of the Hut Tax War. However, many officials admitted that a large number of the slaves were less than content with their personal situation.¹²¹ The influx of refugees furthered the permanent presence of a rapidly increasing group of 'foreigners' in Freetown, who were important for processes of social change.

Freetown could indeed have been a large melting pot, where ethnic sentiment could have been fused into urban group identification. Allen M. Howard holds indeed that the colonial capital knew, in the first three decades after 1898, several conflicts of a strongly social character that united inhabitants of different ethnic origins.¹²² Strikes and mobilisation against Lebanese merchants during the 1919 riots are typical of this form of social conflict.¹²³ However, the British administration was active from the early twentieth century in countering these trends by the employment of principles of 'indirect rule'. To protect 'tribesmen' from 'detrribalisation' in the population centre of Freetown, British officials now increasingly relied on the system of 'tribal rulers'. For the newly created Headquarters District, they now based selection processes for chiefs on what they believed were solid anthropological results.¹²⁴ This new approach of searching for 'authentic chiefs' coincided, interestingly, with a second tendency that helped these rulers to build up a considerable authority.¹²⁵ Both the Temne-speakers and the Mende-speakers of Freetown appear, in the 1920s, to have largely accepted the role of those suburban chiefs as their principal spokesmen. Individuals arriving in the urban agglomeration as refugee domestic slaves respected the prestige of the city's 'tribal chiefs'.

121 TNA, PRO, CO/267/604, Slater, Governor of Sierra Leone, *Slavery: Reviews history of – in S.L. & action taken to abolish it & submits recommendations for accelerating the abolishment* (without number), 20 June 1924, 4.

122 Howard, Allen M., 'Contesting Commercial Space in Freetown, 1860–1930: Traders, Merchants, and Officials', *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 37(2), 2003, 236–68, 261–2.

123 See, also, for the 1930s Abdullah, Ibrahim, "'Liberty or Death": Working Class Agitation and the Labour Question in colonial Freetown, 1938–1939', *International Review of Social History* 40(2), 1995, 195–221.

124 Goerg, Odile, 'Chefs de quartier et 'Tribal Headmen': Deux visions des colonisés en ville', in Jean-Pierre Chrétien and Gérard Prunier (eds), *Les ethnies ont une histoire* (second edition, Paris: Karthala, 2003), 267–82, 272.

125 Northrup, 'Becoming', 12.

This allegiance of Temne-speakers to the 'tribal ruler' in the urban agglomeration played a major role, although it would have been relatively easy for members of the group to leave the suburban areas where Temne-speaking immigrants normally settled. This occurred only rarely.¹²⁶ The Temne community, having established itself during the course of the second half of the nineteenth century as the numerically strongest group in the urban area of the colonial capital, showed a remarkable degree of cohesion.¹²⁷ Other communities, such as the Kru in Freetown who were a longer-established group of new settlers and quite numerous, were far more subject to internal struggles and challenged the chiefs installed by the colonial power.¹²⁸

In the 1920s and 1930s, however, the importance of ethnic links became notably weaker, both in the urban environment and in the rural districts. In the Headquarters District, the Temne-speaking (and, also, the Limba-speaking) populations were slow to elect new, 'tribal' paramount chiefs after the deaths of the former post-holders. The British complained of a surprising lack of interest on the part of the communities. The post of 'Temne tribal ruler' was not filled for 22 months after the death of the old chief in November 1922. The Limba-speakers did not hold any election whatsoever after their 'tribal ruler's' death in 1923.¹²⁹ Former attempts of Temne 'tribal rulers' to bring under their control the Limba community in the urban agglomeration were abandoned. 'Tribal' politics in the region of the capital slid into the background.¹³⁰

In the rural constituencies of northern Sierra Leone, the reliance of groups – both Temne-speakers and their Loko-speaking and Limba-speaking neighbours

126 TNA, PRO, CO/267/595, *Annual Report on the Headquarters District 1921*. (without number), without date, 2.

127 Harrell-Bond, Barbara E.; Allen M. Howard, and David E. Skinner, *Community Leadership and the Transformation of Freetown (1801–1976)* (The Hague: Mouton, 1978), 77–9.

128 TNA, PRO, CO/267/595, Maxwell, Acting Governor of Sierra Leone, to Churchill, British Secretary of State for the Colonies (n° 157), 18 April 1922, 10; TNA, PRO, CO/267/595, 'Representatives of Kroomen in Freetown' to R.J. Wilkinson (without number), without date, 1, 4; TNA, PRO, CO/267/595, Delegates of Freetown's Kru Community to Maxwell (without number), without date, 1; Frost, Diane, *Work and community among West African migrant workers since the nineteenth century* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), 135.

129 TNA, PRO, CO/267/607, James, District Commissioner of Headquarters District, *Annual Report of the Headquarters District for the Year 1924* (without number), without date, 4.

130 Moseley, K.P., 'The Safroko Limba of Freetown, I: *taingains* time', *Africana Research Bulletin* (Fourah Bay, Sierra Leone) 15, 1985, 41–80. On abuses by Temne-speaking chiefs – in which ethnic allegiance did not play any role – see SLA, Box 698/3, Bai Maro Camarah and Folah Camarah, Mamara, Koya Chiefdom, Port Loko District, to Taylor, Acting District Commissioner of Port Loko (without number), 28 Jan. 1931, 1–2.

– on ethnic formulae relaxed even earlier. This development was in fact a reverse trend to British colonial planning: the administration clearly wished to organise the inhabitants of the new districts according to an ethnic perspective. The British authorities, who, in the immediate aftermath of the Hut Tax War, had for a while concentrated on removing opponents and rewarding allies, tried to establish principles according to which the northern chiefs were reinvested with considerable power and influence.¹³¹ The organisation of local rule was expressed in ethnic terms. This had effects on the terminology used by local rulers in their dealings with the British Native Administration: in the different rural zones of Sierra Leone, ‘strangers’ coming from other regions were now normally described according to their ethnic affiliation. This became quickly visible in court records in all of the districts.¹³²

In Karene District, the British district commissioner distinguished between four main groups in 1924, pointed out to him by the respective local auxiliaries of the administration. On the basis of such information, he categorised them as ‘Limba’, ‘Susu’, ‘Loko’, and ‘Temne’, referring thus to the pre-colonial labels. In his comments, however, the British official admitted that with reference to ‘social customs and law’, those groups were ‘very similar’. He also described the two first and the two last as overlapping as to their political entities. With this comment, the colonial official merely generalised on military events of the late nineteenth century, as Limba-speakers of the district had been victims of aggressive incursions by Susu-speakers, and Loko-speakers had been attacked and enslaved by Temne-speakers. He insisted that the four groups were nevertheless clearly distinguishable, as their members discussed in oral accounts. In those accounts, language was the principal criterion of distinction: thereby, informants from all four groups insisted on their uniqueness in linguistic terms.

Much of ‘Temne-ness’ was defined by locals with reference to ‘stranger’ minority groups living in the district, such as ‘Fulbe’, ‘Mandinka’ or ‘Koranko’. The members of such smaller communities were to be denied the right to self-rule: Temne-speaking informants argued that such ‘foreigners’ had never before had their own chiefs or political privileges. They were to be kept in ‘benevolent’ networks of patronage.¹³³ As with the Laobe and Sarakole of

131 Dorjahn, Vernon R., ‘The Changing Political System of the Temne’, *Africa (London)* 30(2), 1960, 110–40, 114–5; Sibanda, ‘Dependency’, 488.

132 See TNA, PRO, CO/267/600, Bowden, Chief Commissioner of the Central Province, *Enquiry into the Causes of Discontent in the Lunia Chieftdom* (without number), 17 to 31 August 1923, 33.

133 TNA, PRO, CO/267/607, Lyon, *Annual Report of the Karene District for 1924* (without number), 19 March 1925, 2–3.

Senegambia, Temne-speaking chiefs and headmen attempted to minimise the political role of small groups, in order to enlarge their own constituencies.

While it seems obvious that self-perception on ethnic terms during the first thirty years of the Protectorate could have advantages, the principle actually *lost* some of its appeal, instead of, as propagated by the colonial power, becoming the decisive criterion of local organisation. During conflict-ridden chieftaincy successions in the north in the 1910s and 1920s, we find few attempts by local groups to take over chieftaincies through ethnic claims. Even in the cases of Upper Lokko or Sanda Chenraron, inhabited by a majority of Loko-speaking populations with a minority of Temne-speakers, the conflicts around the succession in those chieftaincies were remarkably free from ethnic propaganda. The respective claims of 'traditional families' were essential for the succession, and these claims mobilised both Temne-speaking and Loko-speaking electors.¹³⁴

Just as in the south of Sierra Leone, where the identification as 'Mende' did not become the critical variable for some time, the north also did not obey ethnic principles. There was no policy of 'Temneisation' in the Northern Province. Even so, some conflicts re-emerged after a period of tranquillity: and it was indeed the members of smaller communities who claimed that they were being mistreated by Temne-speakers. In the 1920s, some protests occurred in different districts of the north, which became louder and deplored the fact that 'the Temne' attempted to marginalise other populations by dominating the chieftaincies. In Bombali, where Loko-speakers and Limba-speakers defended a minority position in six of the 28 chiefdoms, they protested against attempts to impose on them a native authority dominated by Temne-speakers. The Limba and Loko populations of the six chieftaincies insisted that they should not be put under Temne majority rule.¹³⁵ This aggressive rhetoric by Limba-speakers was, however, contradicted by internal conflicts of the Limba community. In Bombali District, the two Limba-speaking chiefs of Tamiso and Biriwa were caught in deep mutual hostility, and were thus unable to work together. During their struggles, the then Chief of Tamiso manipulated Limba-speaking populations in his chiefdom, in an attempt to bring the neighbouring Limba under his own control.¹³⁶ This led to frictions and benefited the Temne-speaking chiefs in the district, who profited from

134 TNA, PRO, CO/267/607, Lyon, *Annual Report of the Karene District for 1924* (without number), 19 March 1925, 12.

135 TNA, PRO, CO/267/595, Kemp, District Commissioner of Bombali, to Provincial Commissioner of the Northern Province (without number), 1 Feb. 1922, 1, 4.

136 TNA, PRO, CO/267/595, *Annual Report 1921: Koinadugu District* (without number), 8–9.

the weakness of the Limba chiefs to enlarge their control over local populations.¹³⁷

As regards the interwar period, the most important picture in the north is one of remarkable stability and absence of violence on ethnic terms. Several of the abuses that led to rural revolt in the 1950s already existed, but their existence was not linked to ethnically expressed conflict. In other words, in this phase of the colonial period, the trends towards ethnic polarisation that had become apparent in the wars of the late nineteenth century, were not yet transformed into long-lasting hostilities. All in all, rural Sierra Leoneans appear to have been very eager once again to lock the principle of ethnic identification in the closet, without any clear perspective that it would become useful in the future.

Ironically, during these years, it had the 'benign' effect that local paramount chiefs and their families were mostly detached from any political interest in Freetown, as the decline of Creole power had made obsolete any attempts by this group to enlarge their influence in the countryside. The racist assumptions of British officials effectively shut the chiefs out of political networks, except from their presence in Protectorate assemblies, where they sat, however, in a quite reduced number and amongst themselves, and united on collectively interesting issues, such as the above-mentioned problem of refugee slaves. The politicisation of first the urban agglomeration, and then the rural constituencies after 1945, entirely changed this picture. It drew Sierra Leone's north (and, indeed, other rural provinces) into a process in which ethnicity again became an emotive variable.¹³⁸

Polarised Democracy? The Creation of Electoral Bodies, Ethnic Mobilisation, and the Challenge of the Northern Chieftaincies, 1945–1961

In the colonial territory of Sierra Leone, we first find violent protests against the authorities in the late 1920s and the 1930s. Those protests were initially an urban phenomenon mainly in Freetown and the Sierra Leone Peninsula. They were connected to economic decline in the context of the Great Depression, to falling wages of dock workers and urban personnel, and to the energetic activities of

137 Fanthorpe, Richard, 'Locating the Politics of a Sierra Leonean Chiefdom', *Africa* 68(4), 1998, 558–84, 568–70.

138 Cartwright, *Politics*, 75–6.

some leading personalities of the urban area, such as Isaac T.A. Wallace-Johnson.¹³⁹ During these struggles – which were often interpreted by British authorities in the context of very diffuse anti-Communist fears – the ‘northerners’, and, more clearly, the ‘Temne’ in the Headquarters District, were regarded as conforming exactly to ethnic patterns: they seemed particularly loyal to their elected ‘community leaders’.

After the Second World War, the northern parts of the Protectorate appeared to remain largely untouched by any conflicts between ethnic groups. Colonial officials believed that the slow material improvement of local societies would further weaken ethnic group sentiment. Kenneth Little, leading British sociologist of the Mende working in the late 1940s with the British government, commented that ‘tribal affairs’ would be of limited importance in the future.¹⁴⁰ For the Temne-speaking parts of Sierra Leone, the late 1940s seemed to confirm these claims, as was argued in a detailed report on the social relations within the districts of the Northern Province. In Bombali District, Temne-speaking and Limba-speaking groups (the Biriwa Limba) were now said to ‘live amicably side by side’: reports pointed to a large number of intermarriages, and in the chiefdom of Mapaki, one paramount chief governed two linguistic ‘sections’ that were roughly equal in size.¹⁴¹ In Kambia District, the same was reported for Temne-speaking and Bullom-speaking populations, as the latter seemed practically absorbed into the larger group.¹⁴² However, further northwards, old fissures remained present. Susu-speakers did not mix with the Temne-speaking majority, reflecting old rivalries. In Sanda Loko, distinctions between Temne-speakers and Loko-speakers were alive in the institutional set-up: the paramount chief in the 1940s insisted on maintaining two different sections with their respective representatives.¹⁴³ Fulbe pastoralists were regarded with suspicious glances by members of all the other communities in these northern districts, which in part reflected the past fears of invasion from the Fuuta

139 See Spitzer, Leo, and LaRay Denzer, ‘I.T.A. Wallace-Johnson and the West African Youth League. Part II: The Sierra Leone Period, 1938–1945’, *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 6(4), 1973, 565–601, 585.

140 Little, Kenneth L., ‘Social Change and Social Class in the Sierra Leone Protectorate’, *American Journal of Sociology* 54(1), 1948, 10–21.

141 TNA, PRO, CO/1018/65, Cox, [*Lord Hailey’s Questionnaire*], *Bombali District* (without number), without date [1948], 1.

142 TNA, PRO, CO/1018/65, District Commissioner of Kambia, *Kambia District* (without number), without date.

143 TNA, PRO, CO/554/1993, David Edwards, Commissioner of Inquiry in Makeni, *Report under Section 36(2) Protectorate Ordinance (Cap. 185): Sanda Loko Chiefdom – Paramount Chief Bai Samura* (without number), 28 Jan. 1957, 1.

Jallon.¹⁴⁴ In some cases, cattle-breeders were forced to pay levies that were of doubtful legality or were even clearly illegal according to colonial law, on the grounds that they had to support financially the agricultural efforts of the Temnes' as the real 'natives'.¹⁴⁵

Most important, however, was the renewed conflict between 'Temne' and 'Mende'. Bai Kobolo, interviewed by Lord Hailey in 1948 during the latter's stay in Freetown, argued that the fundamental differences between Temne-speakers and Mende-speakers were expressed in the organisation and the powers of the secret societies, the Poro: he claimed the Temne Poro were stronger and more authentic; he also held that among Temne-speakers, cultural homogeneity was strong, and far more important as a factor of allegiance than Islamic faith. This was a constructed opposition that had little to do with trends in political life.¹⁴⁶ Still, in the Northern Province in the late 1940s, the incidence of group hostilities was at its lowest.

In 1948, the Temne-speakers tended to rely on the ruling dynasties for nominating successors, which reduced the number of effective conflicts.¹⁴⁷ In most of the northern chiefdoms, the paramount chiefs ruled with their inner circles of trusted councillors rather than with the native authority. Most British officials believed that this state of things was, more or less grudgingly, accepted by the populations and by headmen who stood lower in the hierarchy, which preserved local peace in a principally illegal, but 'informally correct', manner.¹⁴⁸ Only in the second half of the 1950s would those officials see their mistake.

The picture changed considerably during the 1950s. A number of increasingly violent rural revolts against local paramount chiefs hit different communities all over the Protectorate. While it is difficult to construct a political connection between such events – as opposed to the Senegambian case where one could point to the impact of party politics – the riots nonetheless amounted to a strong challenge to the prestige of 'traditional rulers' in general, with the northern areas also being increasingly affected.¹⁴⁹

144 TNA, PRO, CO/1018/65, District Commissioner of Kambia, *Kambia District* (without number), without date, 4.

145 TNA, PRO, CO/554/1993, Edwards, *Report under Section 36(2) Protectorate Ordinance (Cap. 185): Gbanti Kamaranka Chiefdom – Paramount Chief Kande Ture III* (without number), 28 Jan. 1957, 4.

146 TNA, PRO, CO/1018/65, Cox, *Chief Bai Kobolo* (without number), without date, 3.

147 TNA, PRO, CO/1018/65, Burns, Acting Provincial Commissioner, [*Remarks to Lord Hailey's Questionnaire:*] *Northern Province – Makeni. 13th March*. (without number), without date, 5.

148 TNA, PRO, CO/1018/65, Cox, [*Lord Hailey's Questionnaire:*] *Port Loko District, Present – D. Bayley, District Commissioner, Port Loko* (without number), 12 March 1948, 1–2.

149 Tangri, Roger, 'Conflict and Violence in Contemporary Sierra Leone Chiefdoms', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 14(2), 1976, 311–21, *passim*.

Anti-chieftaincy riots became typical for the whole of the Protectorate in the 1950s.¹⁵⁰ Some of the formerly most prominent paramount chiefs thus came under serious pressure. The pressure groups included in some cases the 'native authorities', the councils of dignitaries elected according to 'customary rule': they used the tendency towards introducing voting rights for an all-Sierra Leonean Parliament to challenge the autocratic power of individual paramount chiefs. The protests targeted the exploitative ways in which these chiefs behaved. Over the course of the 1950s, as a result of the protests, a large number of Protectorate chiefs were implicated in trials for the overstepping and misuse of their administrative powers.¹⁵¹ In the north, out of the six most important paramount chieftaincies, at least four were under suspicion of serious abuse of power. Flexibility and improvisation now made it possible for contenders to present themselves, without relying on the strict rules often written down in the Government guidebooks of customary law. Remarkably, these processes were at first almost confined to the Mende-speaking south of the Protectorate, but from there they made themselves known further afield, with an impact in the Limba, Loko and Temne zones of the Northern Province. As will become clear from the four most violent and most exemplary cases of local unrest in late colonial Sierra Leone which were reported from regions all over the country, it is possible to identify a general pattern of protest, which, as we will see, was in its initial phase non-ethnic. This general pattern subsequently became a certain model for the events in Temne-speaking regions, and, therefore, it is necessary to discuss the territorial typology of events. Four particularly large scandals illustrate the initial similarities of protest all over the Protectorate, and it makes sense to have a look at them.

In Luawa in Kailahun District – a Mende-speaking region in the far south-east of the Protectorate – Paramount Chief Sama Kailundu Banya had reintroduced since the interwar period the ancient practice of Manje forced-labour farms. This practice had been an instrument for producing food for warfare, and had as such been omnipresent in southern Sierra Leone before 1898, but it had disappeared under British Protectorate rule.¹⁵² Manje practices were not automatically an abuse from the point of view of the local populations. Indeed,

150 Rashid, Ismail, 'Rebellious Subjects and Citizens: Writing Subalterns into the History of Sierra Leone', in Sylvia Ojukutu-Macauley and Ismail Rashid (eds.), *The Paradoxes of History and Memory in Post-Colonial Sierra Leone* (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2013), 13–36, 29.

151 TNA, PRO, CO/554/1993, Dorman, Governor of Sierra Leone, to Eastwood, Assistant Under-Secretary at the Colonial Office (without number), 16 Feb. 1957, 1–2.

152 TNA, PRO, CO/267/701/1, Hancock, Provincial Commissioner of the Northern Province, *Report on the Evidence on Charge against Paramount Chief S.K. Banya* (without number), 9 July 1950, 1.

when Banya had started with these practices, he had behaved according to the expectations and with the encouragement of the nobles of his chieftaincy. As he had obtained the chieftaincy at quite a young age, and had thus started with a rather weak standing, the headmen had advised him to strengthen his authority by creating such Manje farms.¹⁵³ This plan went undeniably wrong. When Banya had become an established ruler, with a secured authority, he became more demanding towards the labourers, and used them openly for his own private profit. Contrary to the former practice that had conformed to local usages, this was no longer tolerable from the point of view of the headmen. The latter in the end agreed to mobilise the populations through the Native Authority, and in consequence expelled the paramount chief from Kailahun.¹⁵⁴

Baoma in Bo District in the South-western Province, a mixed Mende-speaking region, was a similar case. Here, the three 'ruling houses' of the Kondor, Kragbate, and Demby had competed for the chieftaincy during the whole of the colonial period.¹⁵⁵ Alfred C. Demby's coming to power in 1912 had found the support of the headmen. Afterwards, Demby had pursued the nomination of his own appointees to the Tribal Authority, but this was a rather 'normal' practice, and had thus not caused any protest from the populations. However, when the paramount chief overstepped his rights and privileges, these abuses aroused a storm of protest. In the event, Demby attempted to force his subjects into unpaid road labour – reviving a practice that the colonial power had tacitly banned after the Second World War. He also directed a rather large state payment for rice exportations from his chiefdom into his own pocket.¹⁵⁶

In this particular case, the Tribal Authority was passive – which is not surprising because it consisted mainly of Demby's followers and clients. Nevertheless, local populations were organised enough to help themselves out of this situation. In 1949, the opponents of Demby's rule created a protest

153 TNA, PRO, CO/267/701/1, Bang, Nassama, Morikku, Assessors of Enquiry against Sama Kailundu Banya, *Report of the Assessor Chiefs on the Commissioner's Report* (without number), 11 July 1950.

154 TNA, PRO, CO/267/701/1, Bluk, P.C. Sama Kailundu Banya (without number), 16 Oct. 1950; SLA, Box 567, Waldock, Acting Commissioner of the Southeastern Province to Hancock, Acting Chief Commissioner of the Protectorate at Bo, *Disturbances at Luawa*. (without number), 30 Oct. 1950, 1; SLA, Box 567, Hancock to Colonial Secretary at Freetown, *Luawa Chiefdom*. (n° C.C.P.1346), 9 Nov. 1950.

155 TNA, PRO, CO/267/701/8, Weir, *Baoma Chiefdom Disturbances, November 1948: Report of Commission of Inquiry* (without number), 31 Oct. 1949, 5–7.

156 TNA, PRO, CO/267/701/7, Beresford-Stooke to Griffiths (n° 76/7069/12(T.S.)/CONF.), 22 April 1950, 1, 3.

movement that became, over the weeks and months, increasingly violent. The activities of this movement forced the chief into exile, and persuaded the British administration to agree to the nomination of another, allegedly more popular candidate. Nonetheless, the members of the protest movement respected the ancient rights of the 'traditional' ruling houses, and, significantly, they chose the new candidate from the ranks of these houses.¹⁵⁷

In Soro in the Pujehun District of South-western Province – a Mende-speaking region – we have all the typical components of forced labour abuses and exploitation, which united to give rise to the violent protests of local populations. The paramount chief, Mana Luseni, had had a ruling strategy different from that of Sama Kailunda Banya, or Alfred Demby: he relied on a violent group of supporters. The strength from this support also allowed him for a time to exact forced labour to have his own land cultivated, which was not only against the colonial legislation, but violated the 'Mende Customary Laws' that the colonial power had codified in the 1930s.¹⁵⁸

Luseni soon went too far. In consequence, a coalition emerged against him amongst the Native Authority headmen, who called upon the local populations to expel their ruler from the chiefdom. Luseni saw the signs and simply chose not to return from one of his prolonged stays outside of the province, choosing exile to avoid physical attacks. Even in his absence, however, the memory of Luseni's particular brutality was enough to provoke an especially violent aftermath. After it became obvious that the chief had fled the region, the local people destroyed the houses of the former ruling family, to symbolically punish the Luseni dynasty for the old chief's behaviour.¹⁵⁹

Finally, in Kaiyamba chiefdom in Moyamba District – a Mende-speaking region, but with a strong Temne-speaking minority – violent clashes were motivated by a succession conflict. In 1951, this conflict was triggered by debates about the right of Ella Koblo Gulama, daughter of the deceased chief

157 TNA, PRO, CO/267/701/8, Weir, *Baoma Chiefdom Disturbances, November 1948: Report of Commission of Inquiry* (without number), 31 Oct. 1949, 35; SLA, Box 567, D.L.G. Gbenga, Secretary of the 'Political Honours Scrutiny Committee', Bo, to Governor of Sierra Leone (without number), 4 June 1950; SLA, Box 567, Tommy Tendia, Amara Saowa, Alpha Kondoh, 'Members of the Opposition Party, Baoma Chiefdom' to 'the Organising Secretary' of the West African Youth League (without number), 27 June 1950, 1.

158 TNA, PRO, CO/554/704, Beresford-Stooke to Lyttelton, British Secretary of State for the Colonies (n° 193/S.L.M.P./11216), 13 Nov. 1951, 1; TNA, PRO, CO/554/704, Childs, Chief Commissioner, Southwestern Province, Bo, to Lyttelton, *Paramount Chief Mana Luseni* (n° 1361/50/C.C.P.), 29 Oct. 1951 (Appendix).

159 TNA, PRO, CO/554/704, Osborne, Head of West African Department, Colonial Office, [*Comment*] (n° 193), 13 Sep. 1951.

Julius Gulama, to herself become chief of Kaiyamba. The headmen in the Native Authority had decided in her favour, obviously respecting the prestige of the ruling family and its eventual right to nominate a successor.¹⁶⁰ A minority of those headmen complained, however, that the election was unfair, as Julius Gulama had installed his own favourites in the local institutions. The beginnings of differentiation on ethnic terms were a part of these complaints: Gulama's opponents argued that the old chief had ruled with the particular support of Temne 'strangers', and pointed to the fact that his daughter was married to an influential Temne-speaker which was perceived as treason.¹⁶¹ The discussions first resulted in a political deadlock, then in major disturbances all over the region of Kaiyamba. The result of the dispute was that Ella Kobolo took the chieftaincy in 1952, but the local community remained bitterly divided over this question.

Thus, in all four cases – and in several others that did not reach such a violent stage – the conflicts in the hinterland of Sierra Leone were not a revolt against outmoded 'traditional rule'. They were, on the contrary, part of a process of renegotiating and redefining how chieftaincy ideally had to function. Protesters and rioters in rural Sierra Leone demanded that the behaviour of chiefs had to be more sensitive to the clear interests of the local populations. The targets of revolt (where it happened) were, at first, those who had committed the most blatant abuses; they suffered violent, vengeful reactions. Chieftaincies were prestigious enough to attract new contenders who wished to profit from the outrages committed by the former title-holders. In the case of the well-respected Sierra-Leonean chiefdoms, many rival candidates appeared; however, they were normally members of a maximum of three or four eligible houses and there was less space for outsiders. British colonial policy in the 1950s had difficulties in coping with such tensions, and administrators oscillated between, on the one hand, the idea of supporting 'democracy' under all circumstances, and, on the other hand, the need for good cooperation with long-standing rulers. The emergence and evolution of political parties only complicated this picture. The British authorities agreed to the position formulated in London that it was useful to work increasingly through well-educated and elected representatives of the local populations and the Executive Council

160 TNA, PRO, CO/554/710, Rowland to Williamson, official of the West African Department, Colonial Office (without number), 15 Sep. 1952.

161 TNA, PRO, CO/554/710, Sandercock, District Commissioner of Moyamba, to Childs (without number), 22 Sep. 1952. On the career of Ella Koblo Gulama, see, also, Lucan, Talabi Aisie, *The Life and Times of Paramount Chief Madam Ella Koblo Gulama* (Freetown: PenPoint Publishers, 2004).

in the colonial capital, and they promoted networks between the 'ministers' in council in Freetown and local clients.¹⁶²

This allowed the same ministers to create for themselves a following of chiefs or to introduce chiefs into their own parties, which is also typical of the situation in Senegambia, and, amongst multiple approaches, in the Trans-Volta area. The second objective of the colonial state, namely to create a good and 'fairly democratic' everyday policy in the chiefdoms, remained weak, however.¹⁶³ British administrators in the end focused on guaranteeing a relatively smooth transfer of power at the level of the central government. The fact that violence in the 1950s never seemed to represent an attack against the colonial power seemed to be reassuring.¹⁶⁴ Also, at the start of the 1950s, while British officials had rapidly understood that chieftaincy continued to matter, they did not comprehend in which sense the continuing role of the chiefs would function, and the party leaders in Freetown were unable to explain to the British the basic reasons for rural conflict. As the representatives of the colonial power did not want to 'overcharge' themselves with too many inquiries regarding those issues, they rather decided not to interfere in the hope that they would finally grind to a halt.¹⁶⁵

Such a strategy of non-intervention and putting off taking action regarding the conflicts around local power till a future time, was difficult to maintain. Party politics lurked everywhere, as the leaders of the newly formed political movements in Sierra Leone were extremely active in creating themselves an appropriate following.¹⁶⁶ Therefore, in the violent dispute about the Kaiyamba chieftaincy, Milton Margai and Siaka Stevens, the leading politicians in the new representative structures in Sierra Leone, each supported a different

162 TNA, PRO, CO/554/710, Beresford-Stooke to Lyttelton, *Negotiations between the Government of Sierra Leone and the Sierra Leone Selection Trust* (n° 1088), 29 Oct. 1953.

163 On the inherent contradictions, see TNA, PRO, CO/554/710, Wallace-Johnson, Secretary-General of the West African Liberties and National Defence League and West African Youth League (Sierra Leone Section) to Colonial Secretary of Sierra Leone (without number), 27 Aug. 1952.

164 TNA, PRO, CO/267/701/4, Beresford-Stooke, *Extract from Letter from Governor, Sierra Leone, to Mr. L.H. Gorsuch, dated 22nd January, 1951* (without number), without date.

165 TNA, PRO, CO/554/710, *Extract from a letter from the Governor of Sierra Leone to Mr. W.L. Gorell Barnes dated 21st January, 1953* (Orig. in WAF 62/4/02) (without number), without date.

166 Fred Hayward rightly argued that both Milton Margai and the leaders of the movement later transforming itself into the APC, did not play the ethnic card from the outset, see Hayward, Fred M., 'Political Leadership, Power, and the State: Generalizations from the Case of Sierra Leone', *African Studies Review* 27(3), 1984, 19–39, 22–3.

candidate.¹⁶⁷ This meant that both Ella Gulama and her main opponent, Lamina Kpangbavi, obtained help through unofficial channels and sought political patrons. Leading members of the Sierra Leone People's Party particularly set the tune in 'Mendeland', their home region, where they now also began to intervene in chieftaincy issues in favour of family members. In the most famous case, in the chiefdom of Imperi in November 1960, Hjabu Sei Kenja, the wife of the Prime Minister, secured for herself the paramount chieftaincy with the support of the SLPP machine.¹⁶⁸

The experiences of 'Mendeland' constituted a general trend for the whole of the Sierra Leone Protectorate. As C. Magbaily Fyle rightly points out, chiefs were, from the 1950s, put in place by different political patrons. Nonetheless, Fyle is mistaken in claiming that those political measures 'distort traditions'.¹⁶⁹ On the contrary, the battle for rulerships had been similarly flexible in the nineteenth century, as had been the tactics of ethnic affiliation. Only from the perspective of the colonial power did those problems now emerge at the forefront of consciousness, particularly because the British administration had planned to finish with the power of the paramount chiefs and to come to 'modern forms' of government. In Sierra Leone's Northern Province, both objectives were seriously challenged.

I have discussed the broader panorama of the spectacular cases of 'chieftaincy troubles' in Sierra Leone in such detail, because we need to interpret the events in the Northern Province through this prism. In the first weeks of 1957, the tide of anti-chieftaincy riots reached a first spectacular climax in this province. The immediate cause was the misdeeds of the paramount chief of Safroko Limba, *Almami* Dura II, a Limba-speaking ruler. Dura was a central figure of local relations in the north: he was president of the Bombali District Council and a staunch SLPP supporter. He was part of a patronage network of paramount chiefs and sub-chiefs in the region, and enjoyed high prestige among his group of peers, who contributed a large number of presents on the occasion

167 TNA, PRO, CO/554/710, Rowland to Williamson (orig. WAF/C.66), 4 Oct. 1952, 2; TNA, PRO, CO/554/710, M.S. Turay, George Kebby, and others to Colonial Secretary of Sierra Leone, *Re the Appointment of two Assessor Chiefs to go into and examine the Constitutional set-up that is, to verify the credentials and appointment of existing members of the Kaiyamba Tribal Authority* (without number), 27 Aug. 1952, 1.

168 TNA, PRO, CO/554/2363, Telegram from Dorman, Governor of Sierra Leone, to Macleod, Secretary of State for the Colonies, *Imperri Chiefdom Election* (n° 92/1/019/1), 27 Jan. 1961; TNA, PRO, CO/554/2363, *Sierra Leone* (without number), without date.

169 Fyle, C. Magbaily, 'Oral Tradition and Sierra Leone History', *History in Africa* 12, 1985, 65–72, 67.

of his installation to the presidency.¹⁷⁰ In 1956, this reputation among fellow paramount chiefs was still unspoilt – but clearly this was no longer the case amongst local populations.

Regarding this context, we know Dura's own point of view in detail, and it is obvious that the changes in the attitudes of his subjects were, for him, entirely inexplicable: he believed himself to be behaving in 'traditional' ways. Dura claimed he had 'always' organised 'traditional' labour services, and did not understand why this was now to become a problem.¹⁷¹ However, the Temne-speaking spokesman of the Tribal Authority, Samba Koromah, sent the district commissioner details of an overwhelming number of abuses – forced labour and illegal levies – which are in fact representative of the general situation in the north:

That the Chief caused unpaid Labour to be used for his farms of both land and swamp and those of some of his Chiefdom officers. He even used forced Labour on Children under age (both male and female) even without food and without any pay. More aggravating was his practice of sending people to imprisonment [sic] for failing to do the work. They remained in prison until they paid whatever fines he further imposed.

A levy was forced from us for the purpose of buying himself a car he later disposed of, to Sahid Mohamed, Syrian Trader, Makeni. Another levy was imposed on us for the purchase of a lorry for him which was also disposed of, to late Paramount Chief Alimamy Kalawa of Bumban, Biriwa Chiefdom. Another levy for a purchase of a Humber car costing £1,200 one thousand two hundred pounds was imposed on us; and this car was disposed of, to Mr. R.C. Metzger, Motor Fitter, Makeni. A further levy was again imposed on us for the purchase of another car which [he] in turn disposed of, to Mr. J.M. Gbakiwa, Secretary, Bombali District Council, Makeni. Another levy still was imposed on us for the purchase of a car

170 TNA, PRO, CO/554/1993, Edwards, *Report under Section 36(2) Protectorate Ordinance (Cap. 185): Bombali Seborá Chiefdom – Paramount Chief Bai Seborá Kamal II – Alhaji Kamara* (without number), 29 Jan. 1957, 3; TNA, PRO, CO/554/1993, Edwards, *Report under Section 36(2) Protectorate Ordinance (Cap. 185): Gbanti Kamaranka Chiefdom – Paramount Chief Kande Ture III* (without number), 28 Jan. 1957, 1.

171 Dura's networks with Lebanese merchants, combined with his engagement to appear as a pious Muslim, brought him the invitation to travel to Lebanon in 1952. See CADN, Fonds 'Anciennes Colonies', Fonds Dakar, 374, Bureau d'Etudes of the Government-General of French West Africa, Dakar, *Sierra Leone: Un Paramount Chief invité à se rendre au Liban.* (n° 611), 21 June 1952.

whilst he visited the United Kingdom; this car he used was costing £1,700, now also disposed of, to Mr. Berthan Macauley, a Barrister in Freetown.¹⁷²

His extravagant lifestyle had allowed Dura to create a network of supporters – but in the 1950s this was no longer tolerated by the locals. His abuses led to serious riots. As a result of the protests, Dura was swiftly removed by the British administration. This interplay between violent challenges and British removals of chiefs became a familiar pattern in the Northern Province.¹⁷³ Currently, we only have a small number of documents on these events in Sierra Leone's Northern Province in the former National Archives, and the civil war has made memories of the late colonial phase in this particular region highly unreliable. It therefore makes sense to view these repeated events through the available data from the commissions of inquiry. Herbert Cox, a former Gold Coast Provincial Commissioner, was the first of a group of British officials who reported information from the chiefdoms. The ethnic dimension remained notably absent from the actual group relations reflected in this testimony, while social conflict was very much commented upon.

In most cases, practices of forced labour were the central issue of the riots. In Marampa Masimera, the second speaker of the chiefdom, Yamba Bia, had organised compulsory labour on his land, with the agreement of the paramount chief, Bai Koblo Patbana. 'Illegal fines' were less important in the case of Marampa, as such fines appear to have been organised with the active help of many of the section chiefs, who now reappeared as plaintiffs.¹⁷⁴ In Samu, where Temne-speakers had eclipsed the Bullom-speakers over the decades, the main argument in interpreting local riots was the rivalry between two local families. The Yek family, excluded from the paramount chieftaincy, was behind many of the local confrontations: a strike movement they organised against the labour policy of the paramount chief 'degenerated' into widespread violence, during which a number of police constables were killed.¹⁷⁵

172 TNA, PRO, CO/554/1993, Samba M. Koromah, spokesman of the Native Authority of Safroko Limba, to District Commissioner of Bombali (without number), 25 Feb. 1957, 2.

173 See Moseley, K.P., 'Land, labour and migration: the Safroko Limba case', *Africana Research Bulletin* (Fourah Bay, Sierra Leone) 7, 1979, 14–44.

174 TNA, PRO, CO/554/1993, Harold Willan, Commissioner of Inquiry, *Report under Section 36(2) Protectorate Ordinance (Cap. 185): Marampa Masimera Chiefdom – Bai Koblo Pathbana; Alimamy Sheriff – First Speaker; Yamba Bia – Second Speaker* (without number), 19 Dec. 1956, 2–3.

175 TNA, PRO, CO/554/1993, Paul Storr, Special Commissioner in Kambia, *Samu Chiefdom – Paramount Chief Bai Sherbro Yumkella II* (without number), 23 Nov. 1956, 1, 3; TNA, PRO, CO/554/1995, Godden, *Summary for position in Samu Chiefdom* (without number), without

In Makeni, the question of abuses was less acute: Paramount Chief Bai Seborá Kamal II employed a 'regionalist' strategy that concentrated taxes on 'strangers', thus provoking criticism from the British officials. Local *santigis* (sub-chiefs) were, nonetheless, quite annoyed about the autocratic style of this Temne-speaking ruler, who had, in spite of being an 'educated' ex-employee of the United Africa Company – a large retail company belonging to Unilever – not had the necessary tact towards his subjects and had apparently insulted the different representatives of the local authority.¹⁷⁶ Kande Ture, the paramount chief of Gbanti Kamaranka, had also practised strategies of exclusion and of financial exploitation of 'strangers', particularly targeting the Fulfulde-speaking herdsmen. However, he had also demanded unpaid labour on his farms from the Temne-speakers, and by 1955 this led to widespread riots.¹⁷⁷

In Sanda Loko, as regards which area I have already pointed to the more strongly 'ethnic' style of local organisation, Paramount Chief Bai Samura was accused of having demanded illegal fines, and of staffing his own farm in Makoli with involuntary labourers, abusing the institution of 'chiefdom labour', a type of 'traditional' regional labour tax. The commissioner saw the findings of the Cox Report as a plot. Even so, Bai Samura was removed as a consequence of the protests.¹⁷⁸ In Loko Masama, the issue was again forced labour, with Paramount Chief Bai Sama exonerated by the commissioner of inquiry on the grounds that he had long been in his post, and had been used to employing compulsory labour on his farms.¹⁷⁹ The situation was similar in Buya Romende, where Bai Banta Bento admitted the recourse to forced labour on eight plantations, but was also accused of confiscation of land and of having beaten a local headman. In Mambolo, accusations were similar.¹⁸⁰

date; TNA, PRO, CO/554/1995, Telegram from Provincial Commissioner of the Northern Province, to Lennox-Boyd, British Secretary of State for the Colonies (n° 16), 15 Jan. 1957.

176 TNA, PRO, CO/554/1993, David Edwards, Commissioner of Inquiry in Makeni, *Report under Section 36(2) Protectorate Ordinance (Cap. 185): Bombali Seborá Chiefdom – Paramount Chief Bai Seborá Kamal II – Alhaji Kamara* (without number), 29 Jan. 1957, 3.

177 TNA, PRO, CO/554/1993, Edwards, *Report under Section 36(2) Protectorate Ordinance (Cap. 185): Gbanti Kamaranka Chiefdom – Paramount Chief Kande Ture III* (without number), 28 Jan. 1957, 2, 4.

178 TNA, PRO, CO/554/1993, Edwards, *Report under Section 36(2) Protectorate Ordinance (Cap. 185): Sanda Loko Chiefdom – Paramount Chief Bai Samura* (without number), 28 Jan. 1957, 2–6.

179 TNA, PRO, CO/554/1993, Willan, *Report under Section 36(2) Protectorate Ordinance (Cap. 185): Loko Massama Chiefdom – P.C. Bai Sama – Alimamy Koroma – Alimamy Kamara* (without number), 25 Nov. 1956, 6.

180 TNA, PRO, CO/554/1993, Willan, *Report under Section 36(2) Protectorate Ordinance (Cap. 185): Buya Romende Chiefdom – Bai Banta Bento* (without number), 6 Dec. 1956, 3–4; TNA,

In Malal, the chief and his speakers had enforced involuntary labour on the roads and confiscated part of the rice harvests.¹⁸¹ Among the Yoni, 'traditional labour' was institutionalised in the form of a labour tax of two days of work payable to the paramount chief. Moreover, the Yoni chief, Bai Sherbro III, took immense fees through the local branch of the Poro Society, and brutally punished critics among the local headmen.¹⁸² Most shocking, however, from the point of view of the colonial government, was the evidence given by Bai Farima Tass II of Magbema, ruling over the Temne-speakers of Kambia and its surrounding region. The paramount chief, conversing in fluent English with the commissioners of inquiry, being a Minister without Portfolio in Milton Margai's government, and whose eldest son was living as a law student in the United Kingdom, was nonetheless convicted of practising extensive forced labour on his farms.¹⁸³

Thus, in Port Loko and other districts of the Northern Province, Temne-speakers discussed widespread abuses, with forced labour being at the centre of the conflicts. British officials still believed they could, with an energetic approach of removing all those that stood in the way of good government, re-establish both the prestige of chieftaincy as an institution, and of the (slowly Africanised) administrative organisation.¹⁸⁴ The British did not expect that at this point, ethnic interpretations would come back into play.

Like elsewhere in West Africa where chiefs had come under attack in the late 1940s and the 1950s – I have already pointed to similar processes in Senegal – tensions seemed to have social motives and little significance in ethnic terms.

PRO, CO/554/1993, Willan, *Report under Section 36(2) Protectorate Ordinance (Cap. 185): Mambolo Chiefdom – Paramount Chief Bai Sherbro Woni Kebir II – Pa Kumrabai* (without number), 18 Jan. 1957, 3.

181 TNA, PRO, CO/554/1993, Edwards, *Report under Section 36(2) Protectorate Ordinance (Cap. 185): Malal Chiefdom – Paramount Chief Bai Bairoh and Alimami Koroma (Speaker of Manewa)* (without number), 28 Jan. 1957, 2–4.

182 TNA, PRO, CO/554/1993, Edwards, *Report under Section 36(2) the Protectorate Ordinance (Cap. 185): Yoni Chiefdom – Paramount Chief Bai Sherbro III* (without number), 28 Jan. 1957, 4–6.

183 TNA, PRO, CO/554/1993, Willan, *Report under Section 36(2) Protectorate Ordinance (Cap. 185): Magbema Chiefdom – Paramount Chief Bai Farima Tass II. – Alimami Morifoday – Alimamy Kamara* (without number), 13 Jan. 1957, 2–4, 7–8. On the situation in Kambia District, see also SLA, Box 576, Commissioner of the Northern Province to Chief Commissioner of the Sierra Leone Protectorate, *Tonko Limba Chiefdom – Kambia District* (n° C.F.498/10), 6 Sep. 1957, *passim*.

184 TNA, PRO, CO/554/1993, Telegram from Dorman to Eastwood (without number), 19 Feb. 1957, 1–2.

In Sierra Leone's Northern Province, the ethnic point of view appeared even less important than in the struggle between Sereer-speakers and Wolof-speakers on the Petite Côte: a chief like Dura II might have favoured Limba-speaking partners, such as the chief Kalawa of Biriwa Chiefdom, but his network included a large number of Temne-speakers. Even so, we find a rapid evolution from challenges against chiefs who had ultimately wished to present themselves as 'tribal leaders' to a renaissance of ethnic thinking, which was then reflected in voting behaviour in the new Sierra Leonean institutions.

In the second half of the 1950s, the leaders of the SLPP and the future APC almost simultaneously changed their political strategy. The future APC politicians decided they were marginalised in the political institutions, and felt that a programme mainly appealing to the northerners, as distinct from, in particular, Mende-speakers, could turn the tide. At first, voters did not respond to the use of ethnic formulae. However, when Siaka Stevens became more aggressive in his tone, claiming that the Northern Province and, more directly, the Temne-speakers were excluded from both appropriate political representation and from the benefits of late colonial investment, the argument began to have more effect. The Margai brothers and other SLPP leaders, noticing that the north had increasingly become a difficult terrain for their electoral campaigns, focused more strongly on securing the entirety of the Mende-speakers as a reliable support base.¹⁸⁵

However, while slowly ethnicising their campaigns, politicians from both parties remained eager to maintain in their camp at least some prominent support from the respectively opposing geographical region. Therefore, the Margais were active in courting a number of prominent Temne-speaking chiefs, even giving them government posts (although rather marginal ones). These chiefs now profited from SLPP protection when their abuses were related to the British governor in the late 1950s. This explicitly linked the interests of 'traditional' authorities and of ethnicised party politics for the last years of the colonial state. Not all of the paramount chiefs stood against a homogeneous opposition; in the case of Samu, the chiefdom was divided between the adherents of two families fighting each other, although belonging to one dynasty.¹⁸⁶ In other cases, however, the resistance movement was far more violent.

The patronage of the autonomous government of the two prominent paramount chiefs, Bai Farima Tass II of Magbema and Alkali Modu of Maforki, led to a chain reaction. In view of various abuses, the British governor nonetheless

185 Wyse, *Bankole-Bright*, 164–78.

186 Minikin, Victor, 'Indirect Political Participation in Two Sierra Leone Chiefdoms', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 11(1), 1973, 129–35, 130–2.

vacillated considerably in removing them from their positions. In 1957, these two had remained the only prominent Temne in Margai's leading and British-supported SLPP.¹⁸⁷ Such hesitations created fresh outbursts of anger among the Temne-speaking populations: local headmen interpreted the SLPP as a party of 'southerners' merely wanting to keep its two remaining clients in the north in their positions, supporting corrupt structures and exploitation.

Finally, the two chiefs in question stepped down, but the reputation of the SLPP government in Sierra Leone's Northern Province was entirely ruined. The perception that the SLPP wanted to aid corrupt allies at the expense of the interests of the region's inhabitants was widespread. In the following five years, this experience made the Temne-speakers in the north very hostile towards politics formulated in Freetown.¹⁸⁸ It was an easy task for Siaka Stevens and the other opposition leaders to convince the local populations that abuses in the north were the fruit of a 'Mende' conspiracy. Only then, and because of a conflict that involved the modes of chieftaincy in general far more than any ethnic dimension, did the latter criterion again enter Sierra Leonean politics, through the back door.

The documentation of the 1950s leaves no doubt about the fact that the battles over chieftaincy were decisive in the process of ethnicisation. The affairs of Kaiyamba and elsewhere in Sierra Leone's south – the former involving Temne-speaking chiefs – had expressed a general feeling: chiefs were to be reminded that they had to work 'for the common good':

The time when Chiefs were looked upon as Gods is past. It is the duty of the Tribal Authority to advise the Chief, particularly a young Chief, when they see he is going astray. Should he not heed to their advice, worse still should he fine someone for giving such advice, they ought to report him to the District Commissioner, who, undoubtedly, would at most give him a warning for the first time. The Tribal Authorities have a duty to perform, and they should not fear to do so, or else the Chieftom is bound to go wrong.¹⁸⁹

The late colonial state was unable to react to these changes. Such passivity allowed politicians in Freetown to integrate the 'traditional structures' into their own networks of patronage: those structures would easily survive well

187 TNA, PRO, CO/554/1993, Dorman to Eastwood (without number), 16 Feb. 1957, 2.

188 TNA, PRO, CO/554/1993, Godden to Bennett, Assistant Secretary of West African Department, Colonial Office, and Eastwood (without number), 26 Feb. 1957, 2.

189 TNA, PRO, CO/267/701/1, Bang; Nassama; Morikku, *Report* (without number), 11 July 1950.

into the post-colonial state. However, locals in the north began to interpret the shortcomings of both the colonial administration, and, in particular, of the SLPP government in punishing abusive chiefs as the result of an ethnic conspiracy.¹⁹⁰

The political realities were complemented by particular patterns of migratory behaviour, which differed strongly from the more relaxed situation of the interwar period. During the 1950s, migratory movements in rural areas had taken forms that tended to reinforce the self-perception of groups as ethnic blocks. Vernon Dorjahn has shown, for the example of Kolifa Mayoso, that between 1955 and 1963 the rate of immigration from other, 'non-Temne' chiefdoms became extremely low, while 'Temne' migrated increasingly either into Temne-speaking towns, or into the Temne-speaking immigrant settlements of the Sierra Leone Peninsula.¹⁹¹ With the transition into the post-colonial state, such forms of closing ranks translated themselves into a clear allegiance to a regional and ethnic pro-Temne party, the APC – and made Siaka Stevens's take-over of political power and the end of the Sierra Leonean democracy possible.

Through the Conjuncture of Ethnic Mobilisation and 'Peaceful Coexistence': Port Loko as a Crossroads in Northern Sierra Leone

At the moment of the arrival of European administrators and black settlers on the Sierra Leone peninsula, Port Loko was already a significant commercial and political centre. In a strategically important position at an easily accessible creek, this city had control of a considerable hinterland.¹⁹² The rulers of Port Loko underlined this claim through the raising of tribute in smaller villages, where they regularly appeared.¹⁹³ Superficial Islamic proselytisation had given these rulers the title of 'Alkali', and a certain prestige as protectors of the Muslim faith. Nevertheless, CMS missionaries quickly described the town as a particularly promising base for Christianisation in the region. This subsequently led to an early European presence in the settlement – and to European source material on Port Loko's political situation. Freetown Creoles coming as

190 Allen, 'Politics', 308.

191 Dorjahn, 'Migration', 34.

192 Howard, Allen M., and David Skinner, 'Network Building and Political Power in Northwestern Sierra Leone, 1800–65', *Africa* 54(2), 1984, 2–28, 10–7.

193 CMS, CA1/o 60/55, Burtchaell, *A day's itinerancy in the Temne Country Port Loko to Romanka* (without number), without date [1879], 2.

merchants and British diplomats also felt attracted by the strategic position of the town. In the nineteenth century, when Port Loko for the first time transformed itself into an ostensibly Temne settlement, these exchanges reflected a stronger ethnic identification.

When the British established themselves on the Sierra Leone Peninsula, Port Loko was all but an exclusively Temne-speaking community. In the town and hinterland, Mōri Burēma, a Susu-speaking ruler and successful Muslim war leader of the Sanko family, had established his own stronghold in the early 1800s.¹⁹⁴ The extension of his power at first went unnoticed by the British whose had at that time been absorbed by warfare against settlements in Koya and by their subsequent diplomatic efforts in Morea. In the first decade of the century, they seem to have largely ignored the importance of the neighbouring town. When the British started to become more active in the area of Port Loko, Mōri Burēma had already fortified his position in the port centre and challenged British control over the region. One of Burēma's major sources of income (running counter to British goals since the Abolition of 1807) was his major involvement in the sale of war captives. For this particular reason, British authorities in Freetown oscillated between the attempt to establish good relations with the ruler and support for his adversaries.

British observers unanimously believed throughout the decade that Burēma was a 'stranger' and, as such, a usurper. However, it is obvious that in the period around 1810, Burēma was popular with at least a section of the local political hierarchy. He had originally come from a Mandinka-speaking settlement further northwards, and had brought with him a warrior band, whose military force had helped him to secure control over the town. Subsequently, he played in part the card of ethnic affiliation by concentrating his Mandinka followers in the newly-built town centre of Romakbum outside of the fortifications of Port Loko. This policy provoked some resistance.¹⁹⁵ However, Burēma courted several of the local Temne-speaking chiefs to stabilise his rule, and they proved to be reliable partners during a whole decade. He masterfully played the card of group identifications whenever it suited him, although in this respect the British reports from Freetown are full of exaggerations, as British officials regarded the 'Mandingos' as the principal slavers, and as members of a dangerous and hostile network. Even so, Burēma mobilised diplomatic contacts with the Mandinka rulers in regions in the north and north-west of Port Loko

194 Fyfe follows later British documentation that sees this ruler as a Muslim of Sarakole origins, see Fyfe, *History*, 6.

195 TNA, PRO, CO/267/45, MacCarthy to Bathurst (n° 37), 5 Aug. 1817, 2.

through the ethnic argument, which made him an influential political player in the whole of the river region.¹⁹⁶

Similar strategies of selectively using ethnic group identifications can be seen in some comparable biographies, notably in the case of the career of the 'Mandingo' Dala Modu Dumbuya in the first half of the nineteenth century. Although this leader never controlled the city of Port Loko, he remained an impressive figure in the immediate neighbourhood and major peace broker between different rulers and different ethnic groups at Magbele in 1836. As early as 1815, Dala Modu was playing the instruments of identity policy in the most ingenious ways: he even managed to procure for himself a leading position amongst the Baga populations of coastal Sierra Leone, although the latter were hostile to Islam. At the same time, 'the Almami' had secured the primary position among the many Muslim rulers of the Bullom Shore.¹⁹⁷ Furthermore, he had already started to build up enormous prestige among Temne-speaking rulers, to become even greater over the next decades, as a reliable spokesman for the common interest.

While being less documented than the case of Dala Modu, the family of the Sanko in Port Loko is another example of such Dyula politics, although most of the information we have to hand is retrospective and slightly questionable. Some of the facts are nevertheless obvious. In 1816, various local families revolted against the rule of the Susu-speaking Sanko ruler, Brima Konkuri, and expelled his family from the town. The overthrow of the ruler did not initially mean the expulsion of all 'Susu': Port Loko, for some time, remained a 'mixed community'.¹⁹⁸ However, in the long run, the politics of identification proved counter-productive. This began with diplomatic relations with the Europeans: in order to obtain the sympathies of the British in Freetown, the rebels emphasised their Temne-ness, claiming that they had just expelled a dynasty of 'strangers'.

In 1825, a British mission to Port Loko intervened in the succession of the city's ruler, the so-called 'Ali Karlie', *Alkali* Moriba Kindo Bangura. This British intrusion in local affairs was due in particular to worries about the trade routes, which, in this area, were already frequently interrupted by the wars between different Temne-speaking chiefs and other leaders, 'Mandinkas' or 'Susus'. The British governor, Charles Turner, did not have a deep understanding of any of

196 TNA, PRO, CO/267/29, Dawes, *Observations on the Situation of Sierra Leone with respect to the surrounding Natives* (without number), without date, 4–9.

197 TNA, PRO, CO/267/47, MacCarthy to Bathurst (n° 156), 20 July 1818, 3–4.

198 Howard, Allen M., 'Mande Identity Formation in the economic and political context of North-west Sierra Leone, 1750–1900', *Paideuma* 46, 2000, 13–35, 24–6; Wylie, *Kingdoms*, 37–41; Fyfe, *History*, 127.

the group conflicts around the turban of the *Alkali*; he admitted to being not at all certain who amongst the contenders was a 'correct' candidate from an ethnic point of view. The fact that one contender for the throne had made himself a name as a protector of warrior bands that plundered 'the Fulas', regarded as the main slave merchants in the region, obviously was a point in his favour. Consequently, Turner's support guaranteed that Fatima Brima, the nephew of the late ruler, obtained the position: in this context, the British governor insisted that Brima had in any case been the true heir and favourite of a majority of Port Lokkans.¹⁹⁹

In the immediate surroundings of Port Loko, Temne-speaking residents had quickly learned their lesson from this event. In Bara Loko, after the death of Pa Moriba, the representatives of the Bara and Sankong families obtained Turner's support as partners in keeping the trade roads open. They managed to present themselves as former victims of an invasion of Susu 'strangers'.²⁰⁰ During the 1840 succession of the *Alkali* of Port Loko, the Susu-speakers in the region were not able to interfere, although the announcements during the ceremonies were still made in Temne and Susu.²⁰¹

As a whole, such manoeuvres were quite successful from the point of view of a section of the leading Temne-speaking families. Susu-speakers in the area lost their access to central power and the chance to make another claim for the position of Port Loko's ruler. The events of the 1810s and 1820s were locally interpreted as an ethnic takeover. They remained as such in the collective memories of the populations of the region, and, particularly of those who had lost out as a result of the settlement enforced by the British. This was confirmed during the invasion by the Lahai war bands in the 1850s – one or two generations after the political changes in Port Loko. The Susu-speaking warrior group of the Lahais occupied Kambia and wreaked havoc in many of the Temne-speaking communities of the Skarcies Rivers region, but they had another, more important, target. Numerous informants explained to the British commander that the Lahais wished, in particular, to take the town of Port Loko.²⁰²

199 TNA, PRO, CO/267/66, Turner to Bathurst (n° 91), 20 Dec. 1825, 3–9.

200 TNA, PRO, CO/267/66, Turner, *Convention between His Excellency Major General Charles Turner B. Captain General and Governor in Chief of Sierra Leone and its Dependencies &c. &c. and Caremo, Senior and Chief of the Barra Family, ...and Possessors of the Bacca Loco Territories* (without number), 12 Dec. 1825, 2–3.

201 CMS, CA1/o 87/15, Reverend Nathaniel Denton, *Journal extracts for the quarter ending Dec.r 25th 1840* (without number), without date, 2–3.

202 TNA, PRO, CO/267/260, Wise, British Commander at the Guinea Coast, to Grey, British admiral, *Reporting operations conducted against the Sooso Chiefs...*(without number), 5 Feb. 1858, 2–3, 7.

This was a risky operation, as the bases of the Susu army in the region of Kambia were on the whole not safe; but the campaign seemed necessary for 'historical reasons'. The informants claimed that the Lahai brothers, as Susu-speakers, considered the historical events in Port Loko as dishonouring their ethnic group, and wished to 'reconquer' the settlement to avenge the disaster of the 1820s.

Missionary documentation from the Port Loko area, where the CMS became slowly re-entrenched after 1875, points to growing polarisation of identifications in ethnic group terms as a direct consequence of the episode of the Lahai invasions. The rulers of Port Loko, *Santigi* Kondito and the *Alkali*, now began to identify more intensely as Temne. They thereby attempted to mobilise the different families in the region of the settlement to support more firmly the *Alkali's* power.²⁰³ In these discussions, the Temne-speaking adherents of the ruling family notably deplored the fact that Rogbon, a city in the surroundings of Port Loko, was still ruled by 'a Susu man'.²⁰⁴

Religion did not help to overcome these differences. Strangers were often marked as 'Mandinka', and this in spite of the growing tendency in Port Loko towards Islamic conversion: no bridges were built between the different communities in Sierra Leone's north. The elites of Port Loko (and, indeed, the informants of the British residents) favoured defining non-Temne speakers as fundamentally different.²⁰⁵ In Port Loko, the dominant discourse of the 1880s concentrated, however, on attempts to obtain British material support for local projects, including infrastructure and armament. In this context, the *Alkali* and leading chiefs were eager to present those projects as joint initiatives of various Temne communities, although neighbouring chiefs did not accept the claims of Port Loko's rulers. The strongest effect that this pan-Temne rhetoric had was on the British. Sometimes, the identification of the 'Temne' as one united group was quite negative: it led British Major Festing, passing through the town during travels, to remark that 'the Timinis are a

203 CMS, C A1/o 29/4, John Alfred Alley, *Journal* (without number), without date [1879], 25; CMS, C A1/o 29/6, Alley, *Journal October 1879* (without number), dated 1879.

204 CMS, C A1/o 29/4, Alley, *Journal* (without number), without date [1879], 23.

205 CMS, C A1/o 29/5, Alley, *Journal From July to September 1879. J.A. Alley* (without number), without date, 5. Trusted Muslim advisors of the local rulers were exempted from this rhetoric, such as the 'Susu man' of Masimera, see CMS, C A1/o 29/8, Alley, *Journal April – June 30th 1880* (without number), without date, 7. Others amongst the preachers came from regions far more to the north and northeast, i.e. the Fuuta Jallon or even Fuuta Tooro in Senegambia, see CMS, CA1/o 60/55, Burtchaell to Rosler, Secretary of Church Missionary Society (without number), 22 Nov. 1878, 2.

despicably dilatory lot, they want the white man to help them all they can and render none in return'.²⁰⁶

In the reality, there was still no permanent ethnic confrontation amongst local communities in the Port Loko area. As in the rest of the north of present-day Sierra Leone, this process of community-building was in decline after the creation of the Sierra Leone Protectorate in 1898. With the end of the devastating regional warfare that had characterised the region in the second half of the nineteenth century, ethnic claims were no longer useful. During much of the first three decades of the twentieth century, in which the city became the centre of the paramount chieftaincy of Maforki, arguably the most important chiefdom of Sierra Leone's north, aggressive ethnic formulations were very much absent.²⁰⁷

At the end of the 1940s, Port Loko had grown into a fairly sizeable regional centre, and the local elite boasted the highest level of European-style education in all of the Northern Province. For decades, during the whole of the inter-war period, the discourses on ethnicity had been dormant; in the end there was little to discuss. There were no open conflicts in the town's community, and no initiatives to highlight the settlement's Temne identity.²⁰⁸ It is, of course, difficult to assess the importance of ethnic sentiment in the everyday life of individuals, but it had no political role. In the course of the remobilisation in the north after the Second World War, these identifications reappeared on the stage with renewed importance.

In the context of Port Loko, this process was more strongly visible than in other parts of the north: the controversial memory of group hostilities defined through ethnic terms had remained alive, and it was now eagerly employed during the new conflicts. In the late 1940s, while the north seemed still generally calm and largely unaffected by ethnic hostilities, the Temne-speaking and

206 TNA, PRO, CO/879/29, African Confidential Print No. 366, Festing, *Major A.M. Festing's Mission to Almamy Samodu – Diary* (without number), without number, 7.

207 SLA, SPA 507/1, Death and Elections of Paramount Chiefs, Maforki Chiefdom, Acting Commissioner of the Northern Province at Makump, to Colonial Secretary at Freetown (n° 66/10(4)), 5 Feb. 1923; SLA, SPA 507/1, Death and Elections of Paramount Chiefs, Maforki Chiefdom, Mac Robert, Commissioner of the Northern Province; Pa Kumrabai, Acting Chief, and others for the New Port Loko Section; Santigi Salifu of Bendugu and others for Sendugu Section; Alimami Suri of Kabata and others for Kabata Section; Alimami Konte and others for Romaka section; Alimami Suri of Karene and others for Rogberi Section; Alimami Kanu of Rotal and others for Malal Section; Santigi Tauya for Tauya Section, *Agreement* (without number), 5 April, 1949.

208 TNA, PRO, CO/1018/65, Cox, [*Lord Hailey's Questionnaire:*] *Port Loko District, Present – D. Bayley, District Commissioner, Port Loko* (without number), 12 March 1948, 6.

Susu-speaking communities of the Port Loko region demonstrated a longer memory. In that period, the Susu-speaking minority began to isolate itself entirely from the Temne-speakers, in a sort of non-violent but hostile separation.²⁰⁹

In 1955, violent conflict suddenly shook the Port Loko region. However, it antagonised, in the first instance, different groups of Temne-speakers. Alkali Modu III, the paramount chief of Maforki residing in the city, became the target of furious protests. Modu had installed a relatively 'authoritarian' regime that now, with moves toward political democratisation in the Protectorate, became more difficult to uphold. He had relied on forced labour to cultivate rice and maize on his own farms (he claimed that this was necessary to guarantee sufficient food stocks in the rural areas of Port Loko, but the British commissioners of inquiry would not believe him). Moreover, he demanded regular gifts from headmen of the surrounding villages, and would levy them if they refused to bring the respective goods. His right hand as messenger of the Native Authority, Sergeant Morlai, was infamous for his brutality towards any non-compliant headmen, and Modu III had also ordered corporal punishment for village leaders called to the Native Authority Court in Port Loko.²¹⁰

These authoritarian practices had in themselves a certain ethnic note. While the paramount chief did not necessarily distinguish on group terms between individuals required for forced labour or headmen 'encouraged' to bring presents, he nonetheless treated Limba-speakers significantly worse than all the others. In court, Alkali Modu III was quite keen to imprison Limba-speaking debtors who, for 'being Limba', would remain in the *barri* until their debts were cleared, and who could obviously expect more frequently the recourse of the court to corporal punishment.²¹¹ However, these distinctions were not sufficient to turn the Limba-speakers against the Temne-speaking majority in the chiefdom. On the contrary, the short wave of riots in the 1950s was led by activists among the Temne-speaking headmen who were eager to finish with the Alkali's style of rule.²¹²

209 TNA, PRO, CO/1018/65, Bailey, *Details required by Lord Hailey. Port Loko District. Northern Province* (without number), 5 Feb. 1948, 1.

210 TNA, PRO, CO/554/1993, Harold Willan, Commissioner of Inquiry, *Report under Section 36(2) Protectorate Ordinance (Cap. 185): Maforki Chiefdom – Alikali Modu III* (without number), 7 Nov. 1956, 2, 6–7.

211 *Ibid.*, 7.

212 SLA, Commission of Enquiry: Letters Submitted, Port Loko District, CE/P/77, Bowerson Decker to Chairman of Commission of Inquiry at Port-Loko (without number), 6 April 1956; SLA, Commission of Enquiry: Letters Submitted, Port Loko District, CE/P/77,

As we have seen, Alkali Modu III belonged to the influential chiefly members of the SLPP, and his good contacts to Milton Margai gave him a certain degree of protection against the attacks of his adversaries. The members of the alliance of headmen, seasonal migrants, and young militants who protested against his exactions were particularly angered by these manoeuvres. Modu's removal came too late to calm their spirits. Furthermore, the machinations from Freetown to save the chief from removal only broadened the alliance in the region, and allowed for bridging the potential gap between Limba-speakers and Temne-speakers in the chiefdom, who thus found grounds for political cooperation. Only the Susu-speakers continued in opposition to the political majority in the district.

After the expulsion of the old chief, the overwhelming majority of Port Loko's political militants remained negative towards the dominance of 'southerners' in Freetown. In early 1961, the political activities of Siaka Stevens's All People's Congress, the new main opposition force on the scene in Sierra Leone, were warmly embraced by these militants who loudly demanded constitutional guarantees in order not to be marginalised in a future independent state.²¹³

It can be said that Port Loko was indeed a microcosm that reflected very well the tendencies in Sierra Leone's Temne-speaking north. From the early conflicts between Temne and Susu that still had a very local perspective, to the second, more global wave of conflicts starting in the 1850s, to a period of relative calm under colonial rule and the renaissance of the principle of ethnic mobilisation in the 1950s, the chronology is quite representative. In Port Loko, however, rather than its being a commercial centre that knew the passage of a relatively high number of 'foreigners', the conflicts between Temne-speakers and others were particularly bitter. They illustrate that, in the absence of other binding principles, the call to ethnic solidarity was always an option.

Into the Bipolar Ethnic State: The All People's Congress and the Second Politicisation of Temne-ness

The emergence of the All People's Congress in 1960 was, from the point of view of the colonial authorities and of the ministers of Sierra Leone's autonomous

Kumaka, Bollom, Kaffeh, to Chairman of Commission of Inquiry at Port-Loko (without number), 7 April 1956.

213 TNA, PRO, CO/554/2363, *Resolutions passed at a Mass Meeting held at {Port Loko} on 17th February, 1961*. (without number), 17 Feb. 1961.

government, a serious problem – but, initially, not at all in the sense of an ethnicisation of political programmes in a country that was on the brink of national independence. For Milton Margai and his ministerial crew, the APC was dangerous because it appeared to forge a coalition of urban inhabitants, in the same way as the defunct UPP had attempted before, but without being too clearly a ‘Creole party’. Also, the SLPP politicians were worried about their opponents’ campaign against corruption. This touched upon Milton Margai’s transactions, involving his own urban villa, with the Lebanese building company Milhem, and the obscure commercial activities of the ministers of finance and housing, Mohammad Sanusi Mustapha and Cyril Rogers-Wright.²¹⁴ The British authorities remained relatively worried about this development, and their observations give us a picture that, while being distorted and Eurocentric, allows us nonetheless to follow step by step the APC strategies in the last months before Sierra Leone’s independence. British officials regarded Stevens’s party as, at the least, a movement ‘inspired by Marxist propaganda’, and they held that the APC received payments from Moscow and that Siaka Stevens had Soviet contacts organised via Ghana and Sékou Touré’s ‘Communist state’ in Guinea-Conakry.²¹⁵

Indeed, Stevens was able to mobilise a section of the urban electorate, and the victory of the APC in the November 1960 municipal elections in Freetown was celebrated as a paradigmatic surprise success. APC leaders claimed their electoral success was based on the support of very different ‘tribes’.²¹⁶ The party sought close collaboration with the leaders of the nascent Sierra Leonean

214 TNA, PRO, CO/554/2363, Telegram from Dorman to Macleod, British Secretary of State for the Colonies, *Security Situation* (n° 245), 24 April 1961, 1.

215 TNA, PRO, CO/554/2363, Telegram from Dorman to Office of the British Prime Minister and Commonwealth Relations Office; Greenhill; King (without number), 26 April 1961, 1; TNA, PRO, CO/554/2363, Telegram from Dorman to Macleod (n° 79), 24 April 1961, 1; TNA, PRO, CO/554/2363, Telegram from Dorman to Macleod, *Internal Security and Political Situation*. (without number), 18 April 1961; TNA, PRO, CO/554/2363, Logan, British Embassy in Conakry, to Dorman (n° 5), 17 April 1961, 1; TNA, PRO, FO/371/147540, British Embassy in Conakry, *Guinea Affairs* (without number), without date; TNA, PRO, CO/554/2363, *Sierra Leone* (without number), without date; MacDonald, Mairi, ‘A vocation for independence: Guinean nationalism in the 1950s’, in Tony Chafer and Alexander Keese (eds.), *Francophone Africa at Fifty* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 30–43.

216 TNA, PRO, CO/554/2363, Siaka Stevens for APC Working Committee, *Sierra Leone’s Forthcoming Independence – Points to Ponder: An Appraisal of the existing political situation in Sierra Leone, prepared by the All People’s Congress of Sierra Leone (A.P.C.)* (without number), 9 Feb. 1961, 6.

trade unions, namely Marcus Grant and George Stone from the Sierra Leone Council of Labour, and gave itself the image of a social movement. In early 1961, Stevens and other APC leaders reacted with outrage to the refusal of the Margai government to hold new elections before independence and called for social protests. Stevens and another two dozen APC politicians even ended up in prison for some time.²¹⁷

However, even with its social rhetoric, the APC was equally successful in the Temne-speaking regions of Sierra Leone's north, and it also won the vote of the Limba-speakers of the same region. British observers were perplexed about Stevens's success. In their view, Stevens was, like the SLPP leaders, a typical 'urban' politician and very similar to Margai.²¹⁸ They were therefore quite surprised at the landslide mobilisation which the APC was able to achieve in the areas of Port Loko and Kambia, and also in mainly Temne-speaking Marampa, where the opposition party made visible inroads from 1960.²¹⁹

The developments of the 1950s had not been forgotten. The impression that 'southern' or 'Mende' politicians had attempted to change the distribution of resources in the territory, was long-lasting. According to inquiries by British administrators who wished to guarantee a smooth transfer of power in the territory, the distrust of Temne-speakers towards Mende domination in the Freetown autonomous government had even grown. The behaviour of local leaders reflected these impressions: in the northern centres of Magburaka, Makeni, Kambia, and Port Loko, Temne-speaking adherents were assembled to loudly demand constitutional changes and elections before independence. Although these assemblies had no immediate effect – both the SLPP government and the British authorities were determined to proceed with the process leading to independence – their impact was strong in directing the formerly diffuse grudges of local Temne-speakers towards a clearer political programme.²²⁰ Even

217 TNA, PRO, CO/554/2363, Telegram from Dorman to Macleod (n° 71), 15 April 1961, 1; TNA, PRO, CO/554/2363, E.C. Burr, Principal of International Relations Department, Colonial Office, to Aaron Emanuel, Assistant Secretary, West African Department of the C.O. (without number), 3 March 1961; TNA, PRO, CO/554/2363, Telegram from Dorman to Macleod, *Security Situation* (n° 245), 24 April 1961, 1; TNA, PRO, CO/554/2363, Telegram from Dorman to Macleod (without number), 18 April 1961, 1.

218 TNA, PRO, CO/554/2363, [*Revision of Draft to Mr. Tilney*] (without number), 7 March 1961, 2.

219 TNA, PRO, CO/554/2363, Sierra Leone Intelligence Committee, *All People's Congress (A.P.C.): Appendix 'A' to S.L.I.C. Report for September, 1960* (without number), without date, 2.

220 See, particularly, TNA, PRO, CO/554/2363, *Resolution of Participants of Public Meeting in Kenema [Bombali District]* (without number), 17 Feb. 1961, 2; TNA, PRO, CO/554/2363, *Resolutions passed at a Mass Meeting held at {Port Loko} on 17th February, 1961.* (without

more, this mobilisation spilled back into the urban agglomeration of Freetown, where it further strengthened the APC support base. The ‘Temne Hungry Unions’ of Temne-speaking unemployed in the urban area became a very vocal instrument of Siaka Stevens’s attempts at mobilisation.²²¹

In 1961, this renaissance of Temne ethnic mobilisation was still insufficient to bring the APC into power. The unequivocal support of the British government for the Margai administration, and the years-long control of SLPP ministers over the levers of power, would not disappear overnight. However, the foundations were laid. During the 1960s, the combination of a party politics that relied on cooperation with paramount chiefs, and the evolution of a bipolar ethnic constituency, perpetuated itself. The memory of the late 1950s, which led Temne-speakers of the north to regard the SLPP elite as southern, corrupt, and hostile, remained vivid, and would have consequences for the post-colonial state.

After 1969, the APC would repay in kind.²²² Relying on a Creole–Temne/Loko/Limba alliance, and winning the votes of discontented populations from other parts of the new state, Siaka Stevens became the new ruler of Sierra Leone. Instead of attempting to end the ethnic polarisation that had (re-)emerged in the 1950s, the new government perpetuated the confrontation by installing a cabinet and a senior administration dominated by Temne-speakers and Loko-speakers. Moreover, in the Mende-speaking regions, they replaced paramount chiefs with their own clients, paving the way for a new wave of discontent.²²³ With this platform of ethnic mobilisation, the Stevens government repeated a pattern that had started as forms of ethnic mobilisation over the nineteenth century, and had only been interrupted by relative stabilisation of regional resource distribution by the colonial state.

number), 17 Feb. 1961; TNA, PRO, CO/554/2363, ‘Makeni District Community’ to District Commissioner of Makeni, *Resolutions passed by the Bombali District Community at a mass meeting held at Makeni on the 17th February, 1961*. (without number), without date, 1; TNA, PRO, CO/554/2363, ‘Tonkolili District Community’ to District Commissioner of Magburaka, *Resolutions passed by the Tonkolili District Community at a mass meeting held at Magburaka on the 17th February, 1961*. (without number), 17 Feb. 1961.

221 TNA, PRO, CO/554/2363, Sierra Leone Intelligence Committee, *All People’s Congress (A.P.C.): Appendix ‘A’ to S.L.I.C. Report for September, 1960* (without number), without date, 3.

222 Zack-Williams, Alfred B., ‘The Ekutay: Ethnic Cabal and Politics in Sierra Leone’, in E. Ike Udogu, *The Issue of Political Ethnicity in Africa* (Aldershot etc.: Ashgate, 2001), 125–47, 130–3.

223 Fanthorpe, Richard, ‘On the Limits of Liberal Peace: Chiefs and Democratic Decentralization in Post-War Sierra Leone’, *African Affairs* 105(418), 2005, 27–49, 42.

'Ethnic Identity' as an Anti-colonial Weapon? Ewe Mobilisation from the Late Nineteenth Century to the 1960s

The Ewe: A Case of Aggressive Solidarity

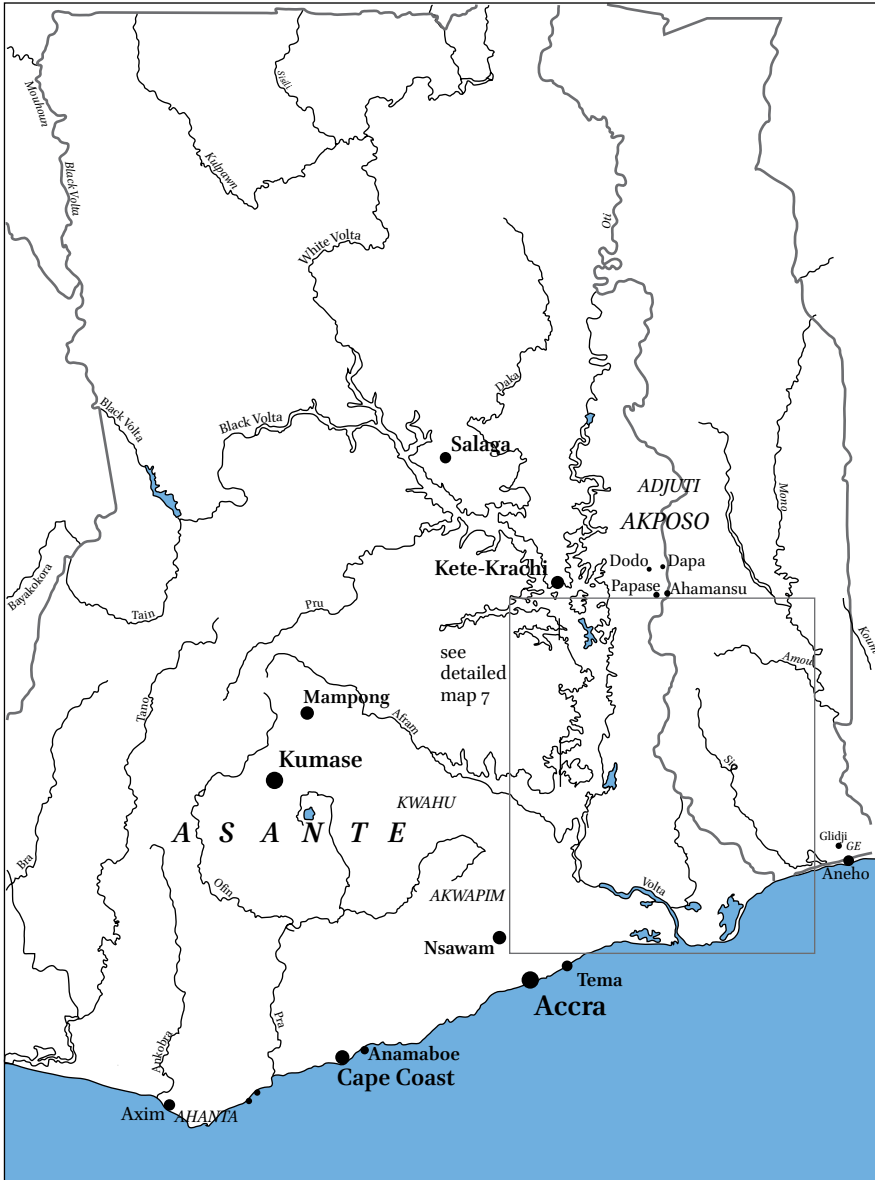
Unlike for Wolof-speakers or Temne-speakers, the ethnic identity of 'the Ewe' was an issue of public and even international debate from the 1940s. Their spokesmen won some fame as the first case of an African political movement attempting to use the stage of the United Nations.¹ The Ewe unity movement seemed to be an institution with ancient roots, defined through identification with a common ethnicity.² However, for the Ewe-speakers like for the Wolof and Temne, the interrelations of the different layers of identifications are complex and it is crucial to understand how they 'sold' themselves to European residents and colonisers over the decades.

The relation between Ewe identification and Avatime identification is reminiscent of the complex relationship between the categories of 'Wolof' and 'Sereer' in coastal Senegambia. Today, the Avatime speak both the Central Togo minority language of the same name and Ewe. Their historical vision regards the Avatime as second-comers in an area having been inhabited by a quasi-mythical older population, the so-called 'Bayas', and as having arrived before any Ewe-speakers. However, the more significant event in this respect is the Asante invasion of the late 1860s.³ During these struggles, the Avatime presented their relationship to other Ewe-speakers as a military

1 The broad context appears in Welch, Claude E., *Dream of Unity: Pan-Africanism and Political Unification in West Africa* (Ithaca/NY: Cornell University Press, 1966), 42–73.

2 This was first formulated by Amenumey, D.E.K., 'The pre-1947 background to the Ewe unification question: a preliminary sketch', *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* 10, 1969, 65–85, 65–6, 71.

3 Brydon, Lynne, 'Rice, Yams and Chiefs in Avatime: Speculations on the Development of a Social Order', *Africa* 51(2), 1981, 659–77, 659–60; Brydon, Lynne, 'Constructing Avatime: Questions of History and Identity in a West African Polity, c. 1690s to the Twentieth Century', *Journal of African History* 49(1), 2008, 23–42, 32–4.



MAP 6 Gold coast (Ghana) and Togo

brotherhood. A century later, the ruling family of Fume describe themselves as victims of the 'anti-Ewe policy' of the Nkrumah regime at the end of the 1950s.⁴

4 Interview with Kwame Asiah, Regent of Fume on behalf of his brother, Fia Togbe Adzesi Iv, Fume, 17 August 2007.



MAP 7 The Togo-Ghana borderlands

The Avatime thus had a continuous relation with the larger ensemble of ‘the Ewe’ in the late nineteenth century and the twentieth century.

At first glance, Ewe group mobilisation seems exceptional, and the experience of the group has attracted much interest in scholarly research on sub-Saharan Africa. Their activity appears to be an impressive protest against artificial division by a colonial border (Maps 6 and 7).⁵ As Togo became, from 1919, a League of Nations trusteeship territory, then a United Nations mandate administered by the French and British colonial powers, the question of Ewe

5 Callaway, Barbara, ‘Local politics in Ho and Aba’, *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 4(1), 1970, 121–44, 129.

unification also allowed nationalist Asian governments and the Soviet Union to launch attacks against colonial rule. But the Ewe movement of the late 1940s was in the end unsuccessful. It could not prevent the incorporation of the trusteeship territory of British Togoland, as the main settlement zone of Ewe-speakers under British rule, into the independent state of Ghana (it was later renamed as the 'Volta Region'). The French mandate became the independent Republic of Togo, but in 1957 – at the moment of the creation of Ghana and Togo – scholars still believed that the issue of 'Ewe identity' was significant. Indeed, Ewe irredentism remained a constant preoccupation of the governments of Ghana and of Togo through much of the 1960s and into the 1970s, leading to unfriendly border regulations, mutual accusations, and short-lived separatist movements.⁶

In post-colonial Ghana, the Ewe seem to have followed a distinctive voting pattern. They were opponents of various Ghanaian presidents before 1979. In the 1980s, they turned into staunch supporters of Flight-Lieutenant Jerry Rawlings and his successors under the National Democratic Congress (NDC).⁷

In the more authoritarian post-colonial country of Togo under Gbassinje Eyadéma, the military ruler in power since his coup d'état of 1967, the role of Ewe-ness in politics has been more severely limited. While local populations in the south of Togo continue to regard themselves as 'Ewe', ethnic identification has receded as a factor of political group behaviour. Before Eyadéma's introduction of single-party rule in the late 1960s, both dominant parties – the Comité d'Union Togolaise (CUT) and the Parti Togolais du Progrès (PTP) – were

6 Pauvert, Jean-Claude, 'L'évolution politique des Ewe', *Cahiers des Etudes Africaines* 1(2), 1960, 161–92, 161; Austin, 'Frontier', 144–5; Nugent, *Smugglers*, 202–30; Brown, David, 'Borderline Politics in Ghana: The National Liberation Movement of Western Togoland', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 18(4), 1980, 575–609, 586–90.

7 Ametewee, Victor K., 'Ethnicity and Ethnic Relations in Ghana', in Steve Tonah (ed.), *Ethnicity, Conflicts and Consensus in Ghana* (Accra: Woeli Publishing Services, 2007), 25–41, 34, 38; Morrison, Minion K.C., and Jae Woo Hong, 'Ghana's political parties: how ethno/regional variations sustain the national two-party system', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 44(4), 2006, 623–47, 634; Brown, David, 'Sieges and Scapegoats: The Politics of Pluralism in Ghana and Togo', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 21(3), 1983, 431–60, 439–41; Brown, David, 'Who are the Tribalists? Social Pluralism and Political Ideology in Ghana', *African Affairs* 81(322), 37–69, *passim*; Chazan, Naomi, 'Ethnicity and Politics in Ghana', *Political Science Quarterly* 97(3), 1982, 461–85, 465, 475; Fridy, Kevin S., 'The Elephant, Umbrella, and Quarrelling Cocks: Disaggregating Partisanship in Ghana's Fourth Republic', *African Affairs*, 106(423), 2007, 281–305, 285, 292–4; Owusu, Maxwell, 'Rebellion, Revolution, and Tradition: Reinterpreting Coups in Ghana', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 31(2), 1989, 372–97, 380–1; Nugent, Paul, 'Living in the past: Urban, Rural and Ethnic Themes in the 1992 and 1996 Elections in Ghana', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 37(2), 1999, 287–319, 307.

similarly dominated by Ewe-speaking politicians, which precluded a tradition of 'ethnic voting'. In 1985, on the occasion of the second elections under the Eyadéma government, there was no sign of any ethnic mobilisation against the ruling party on an Ewe ticket, although Eyadéma's Rassemblement du Peuple Togolais (RTP) had the reputation of being a vehicle for non-Ewe-speaking northerners.⁸ Even so, the dominant approach in historical research takes information on the Ewe as an ethnic movement for granted, and does not analyse their dialogue with the colonial state in a long-term perspective.⁹

An additional problem is the question of whether particular communities belong ultimately to the group of Ewe-speakers or not. The community of Accra, under the rule of the Ga Manche, and the communities of Ada on the western side of the Volta River close to its mouth, and those of Krobo with the towns of Odumase and Kpong, form a western socio-geographic boundary of 'Eweland'. Those communities speak Gã or Adangme, which distinguishes them from the Ewe, although they actually claimed political influence over Ewe-speaking communities during the first half of the nineteenth century.¹⁰ One particular Adangme-speaking group, the Agotime, live as a pocket among Ewe-speakers. Further to the north-west, Ewe-speakers bordered Twi-speaking groups. Akwamu, a small pre-colonial political entity, was the most immediate neighbour, but the relationship with the Asante was the crucial variable in the broader region. The Asante demanded tribute from a number of Ewe-speaking communities, and their invasions in the late 1860s were a traumatic experience for the latter.

8 Barbier, Jean-Claude, 'Jalons pour une sociologie électorale du Togo: 1958, 1985', *Politique Africaine* 27, 1987, 6–18, 14–15; Brown, 'Sieges', 437, 444–5.

9 Amenumey, D.E.K., *The Ewe in Pre-Colonial Times* (Accra: Sedco, 1986), 4–5; Gayibor, Nicoué Lodjou (ed.), *Histoire des Togolais. Vol. 2: De 1884 à 1960* (Lomé: Presses de l'Université du Bénin, 2005); Nugent, *Smugglers*; Lawrance, Benjamin N., *Locality, Mobility, and 'Nation': Periurban Colonialism in Togo's Eweland 1900–1960* (Rochester/NY: University of Rochester Press, 2006); Meyer, Birgit, *Translating the Devil: Religion and Modernity among the Ewe in Ghana* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999); Greene, Sandra, *Gender, Ethnicity and Social Change on the Slave Coast: A History of the Anlo-Ewe* (Portsmouth: Heinemann – London: James Currey, 1996); Amenumey, D.E.K., *The Ewe Unification Movement: a political history* (Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 1989); Agbedor, Paul, and Assiba Johnson, 'Naming Practices', in Benjamin N. Lawrance (ed.), *A Handbook of Eweland: The Ewe of Togo and Benin* (Accra: Woeli Publishing Services, 2005), 161–82, 164–6.

10 European slave-traders in the early eighteenth century were largely unable to distinguish between Ewe-speakers and neighbouring groups speaking other languages, see Lohse, Russell, 'Slave-Trade Nomenclature and African Ethnicities in the Americas: Evidence from Early Eighteenth-Century Costa Rica', *Slavery & Abolition* 23(3), 2002, 73–92.

To the north, the region of Buem was dominated by Lefana-speakers, a smaller language group, and by the Akposo. The Avatime live in the region between Kpandu to the north and Ho, a second important town centre in the region, to the south. In the east, the regions of Agu, Kuma, and Be, and the area of Notsie, are clearly part of the Ewe-speaking ensemble, but it becomes more complicated with Ge on the coast. Here, the language employed is Guin or Mina, which has similarities to Ewe, but whose alleged origins from the Gã language of the Accra region allow this community to claim that it is distinct from the Ewe-speaking cultural ensemble. While the rulers of Aného, the major town centre of the Ge community, have sometimes presented themselves as overlords of all of southern Togo, it remains questionable whether they ever were in such a situation. The representatives of other communities in Togo's south-east, such as Glidji, are today unwilling to categorise themselves as 'Ewe', and refer to their manifold bonds in the eastward direction.¹¹ As a whole, it is, therefore, quite complicated even to give the current geographical limits of Ewe identifications.

Both Nugent and Lawrance treat the question of local group identifications as being at the heart of their particular perspectives. Nonetheless, while both approaches integrate several examples of conflicting layers of group identification, their implications do not point to the same problems that I intend to analyse from a comparative point of view. Nugent is interested, in particular, in how local populations made use of the colonial border, first between the British and the Germans, from 1884 to 1914, then between the British and the French from 1914 to 1957. Moreover, his study favours Likpe and the region of Buem over the Ewe-speaking areas to the south and south-east. Finally, Nugent does not concern himself with Ewe or non-Ewe group relations before the First World War.¹²

Lawrance focuses on a very particular perspective, which he calls the 'peri-urban' dimension of 'Ewe identity': he concentrates on Ewe-speakers as inhabitants of the surrounding towns of a large city – Lomé – where an exceptional network of roads and railroads would have created an extraordinary setting for political mobilisation.¹³ This approach is stimulating – and Nugent's even more so – but it does not question the basic principle of Ewe ethnic solidarity, nor does it discuss any alternative concepts to Ewe-ness. It is therefore challenging to focus on the engagement of the different groups and individuals

11 Information given during an audience at the palace of the royal family of Glidji, Togo, 8 August 2009.

12 Nugent, *Smugglers*, 18, 96, 132–46.

13 Lawrance, *Locality*, 13–8.

that are potentially concerned with Ewe identification and Ewe mobilisation, with pre-colonial diplomacy and cultural relations, and with the colonial system.

Sandra Greene regards Ewe identification as a principle mainly formulated in the 1930s, as a weapon in the struggle for resources in the Gold Coast, which was on its way towards modernisation. For the Wifeme group in Anlo – a pre-colonial state ruled by Ewe-speakers – Greene has shown that the view of the Wifeme as ‘strangers’ was increasingly questioned over the years, as members of the group tended more and more to appeal to a joint ‘Ewe identity’ that connected them to the other clans and kinship groups within the state.¹⁴

Ewe-speaking groups had contact with the Atlantic world through their early participation in the slave trade. Many of the local traditions collected by British anthropologists, above all in the 1920s, point to a strong engagement of different local groups in the trade.¹⁵ Aného (‘Little Popo’) was the largest of the small ports of the immediate coastline of the later colony of Togo.¹⁶ Far more important, however, was the port of Ouidah with its three European fortresses, in present-day Benin, which was linked to the Ewe-speaking areas further westwards. This also brought the Ewe-speakers into indirect contact with the Kingdom of Dahomey, although Dahomean political activity was oriented eastwards.¹⁷ On the western side of the coastline, Keta was the most important slaving port for communities living close to the Volta River.

After colonial conquest, the different European powers drew borderlines that had an impact above all on the viability of trade networks in the region. They also proceeded with a rationalisation of power structures, and modified the latter through the organisation of ‘indirect rule’. German officials had a tendency to weaken rather than to strengthen existing political structures, while the French gave part of the local power back to the *chefs de canton*, but held them on a short leash.¹⁸ In contrast, British administrators believed, long before the protest movement of Ewe spokesmen in the 1940s, in the prior

14 Greene, *Gender*, 147–51.

15 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 11/1/1624, Rattray, *Report by Mr. R.S. Rattray* (without number), without date, 42 (Vakpos); 44 (Tafi about Avatime).

16 Strickrodt, Silke, ‘Afro-European Trade Relations on the Western Slave Coast, 16th to 19th Centuries’ (unpublished PhD thesis, Univ. of Stirling, 2002).

17 Gayibor, Nicoué Lodjou, *Le Genyi: Un Royaume oublié de la Côte de Guinée au Temps de la Traite des Noirs* (Lomé: Haho – Paris: Karthala, 1990), 176–82; Law, Robin, *Ouidah: The Social History of a West African Slaving ‘Port’ 1727–1892* (Athens/OH: Ohio University Press – Oxford: James Currey, 2004), 19.

18 Amegan, Francis Kwassivi, ‘Les administrateurs allemands de la ville de Lomé (1884–1914)’, in Nicoué Lodjou Gayibor, Yves Marguerat, and Gabriel K. Nyassogbo (eds.), *Le Centenaire*

existence of larger political structures, that is chiefdoms, which had lost power through the twists and turns of history. In this logic, paramount chiefs were strengthened as rulers of 'states', political entities created by 'amalgamation' of 'divisions', on normally entirely ahistorical grounds, and frequently against the passive resistance of the locals.¹⁹

Today, the Ewe-speakers – if we exclude Adangme-speakers and Guin-Mina-speakers – are a community of roughly one million individuals.²⁰ According to Jakob Spieth, missionary of the Norddeutsche Missionsgesellschaft (or Bremen Mission) and author of a monumental account on the 'Ewe tribes' based on interviews conducted in the early twentieth century, the Ewe-speakers were proud of their language, and used it strongly for their self-definition.²¹ Nevertheless, we have to take into account the bilingualism of many individuals in the region, which makes the definition of one single 'Ewe' identification through language alone rather complicated. Also, concrete regulations for marriage and family structure seemed to vary 'from tribe to tribe'.²²

This problem was again expressed, in 1968, by B.W. Hodder who held that 'the area in which the Ewe call themselves Ewe for purposes of political action is not the same as the area inhabited by the Ewe "tribe"'.²³

de Lomé, Capitale du Togo (1897–1997): Actes du colloque de Lomé (3–6 mars 1997) (Lomé: Presses de l'Université du Bénin, 1998), 95–109, 104–7.

- 19 Nugent, Paul, "A few lesser peoples": the Central Togo minorities and their Ewe neighbours', in Carola Lentz and Paul Nugent (eds.), *Ethnicity in Ghana: The Limits of Invention* (London – New York: Macmillan – Saint Martin's Press, 2000), 163–82, 167–8. The 'native states' were Akpini, Asogli, Awatime (written as such), and Buem, joined by the Tongu Confederacy after 1945. On criticisms coming from local rulers, see PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/458, V.M. Kofi II., *Howusu* of Ho, to Rooke, District Commissioner of Ho (without number), 24 Dec. 1951.
- 20 This concerns the Ewe-speaking Watchi groups, or the populations of Atakpamé. Part of the confusion becomes visible in Robert Cornevin's response to D.E.K. Amenumey's attempts to draw a map of 'Eweland', see Cornevin, Robert, 'Note au Sujet Des Limites de L'Eweland', *Journal of African History* 9(3), 1968, 501–2. On the Watchi, see Lovell, Nadia, 'The Watchi-Ewe: Histories and Origins', in Benjamin N. Lawrance (ed.), *A Handbook of Eweland: The Ewe of Togo and Benin* (Accra: Woeli Publishing Services, 2005), 90–114, 95–8.
- 21 Spieth, Jakob, *Die Ewe-Stämme: Material zur Kunde des Ewe-Volkes in Deutsch-Togo* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer (Ernst Vohsen), 1906), 57*.
- 22 Spieth, *Ewe-Stämme*, 62*.
- 23 Hodder, B.W., 'The Ewe problem: a reassessment', in Charles A. Fisher (ed.), *Essays in Political Geography* (London: Methuen, 1968), 271–83, 276.

In the last four decades, we have not really come closer to a profound analysis of these contradictions and to a definition of Ewe claims for a collective identity. These complications go back to interpretations of testimonies from as early as 1912.²⁴ It is unsurprising that European officials were frequently quite confused about local genealogies and conflicting claims to chieftaincies. Regents were nominated by the communities and often constituted an additional force, as did stool fathers, often being the authority to nominate the candidates, and *Mankradowo*, i.e. leading political councillors.²⁵ 'Amalgamation' of divisions in British Togoland led to even more confusion – in extreme cases, such as Nkonya, a divisional chieftaincy could remain vacant for eight years.²⁶

At the heart of these struggles, we find references to a certain notion of Eweness. This is related to the idea, uncritically reiterated in some of the literature, that 'the Ewe' relied on 'decentralised' institutions, expressed through the role of the *dufia* (chief), with restricted powers, and under the obligation to cooperate with a council of elders representing the important lineages, the *fomewo*.²⁷ A certain political language was connected to such institutions, as different contenders argued about 'the customs of Eweland'.²⁸ In such cases, European officials were frequently only too ready to accept such references to customs, and to attack what was presented to them as 'most unusual in an Ewe tribe and [that] should be regarded with suspicion'.²⁹ However, states whose rulers claimed to be at the core of 'Ewe identity' had political institutions that were very similar to those of neighbouring 'Akan' or 'Adangme' states. Thus, Anlo was, from the eighteenth century onwards, organised with a ruling chief with his 'wing chiefs', similar to those of Twi-speaking communities like Akwamu or even Asante.³⁰

24 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 11/1/1068, Crowther, Secretary of Native Affairs of the Gold Coast, *Extract from Notes of Evidence given before a Commission of Inquiry held in the Quittah District by Francis Crowther, Esquire...* (without number), 13 April 1912.

25 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/569, Acting Senior District Commissioner of Ho to Commissioner of the Eastern Province, *Nkonya Native Affairs* (n° S.0046/8.), 19 Dec. 1947, 2.

26 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/96, Senior District Commissioner of Ho to Chief Commissioner of Gold Coast Colony, *Election and Installation of Chiefs*. (n° S.0062/11012.), 12 Sep. 1951.

27 Verdon, Michael, *The Abutia Ewe of West Africa: A Chieftom that Never Was* (Berlin – New York – Amsterdam: Mouton, 1983), 37–74; Laumann, 'History', 18–9.

28 Pauvert, 'Evolution', 167–8; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/460, S.K. Afege, *Asafoatse* of Atsiati, to District Commissioner of Ho (without number), 14 Nov. 1946.

29 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/460, District Commissioner of Ho to Commissioner of the Eastern Province, *Akoepo Native Affairs*. (n° 0106/S.F.1/7.), 4 Dec. 1946.

30 TNA, PRO, CO/96/738/6, Warrington, Commissioner of the Eastern Province, *Annual Report for the Eastern Province for the Year 1936–1937* (without number), without date, 10.

Moreover, the political map in the southern region of the Volta River was not dominated by any larger pre-colonial states, in contrast to the case of northern Senegambia: small political units were the rule, superseded in some cases by the few existing states. Only on occasions of massive external threats – as had become obvious during the Akwamu and Asante invasions in the Volta River Region – would the other communities seek military alliances with the paramount rulers of Peki or Anlo, the largest entities with Ewe-speaking rulers, and accepted for a *transitory* period the payment of tributes.³¹ Apart from that, 'localism' ruled in Togoland, much to the regret of the British:

Patriotism here is extremely local, and very strong: The natural psychological tendency of the Togoland people is not to unite to create greater groups, but to split up into ever smaller ones. I once reported that the people of the Akpini State, for instance, do not call themselves by the name of their State, Akpinis, but rather by the names of their divisions – Kpandus, Sovies, Alavanyos etcetera [sic] in fact the process is more extreme than that; even inside a division people will call themselves by the names of their own towns and think primarily of the interests of their towns before they think of the interests of their division, – thus in the Gbi division they call themselves Wegbes, Attabus, Kpoetas, Blas etcetera, before they call themselves Gbis. And it does not stop there; every week a Captain in some Sub-Chief's town collects his people together and they go off to form a new town elsewhere; having set up on a new site he will call himself a Sub-Chief with Captains or Asafohenes of his own.³²

Local divisional chiefs who were pressured to become part of larger politico-administrative entities were not at all happy with such developments. British administrators were certain that most chiefs would have preferred simply to continue with the 'German situation', where hundreds of so-called 'divisions' had had their autonomous jurisdiction. In 1942, 96 so-called sub-chiefs even petitioned to reinstate the system existing before 1931, in which each group had had its own native court.³³

31 Amenumey holds, on the contrary, that only an 'unfortunate' eighteenth-century rivalry between Anlo and Ge accounts for the non-emergence of an Ewe state, see Amenumey, *Ewe*, 27.

32 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/288, Mead, Acting District Commissioner of Kpandu, to Commissioner of the Eastern Province (n^o 1755/165/1931), 27 Nov. 1942, 1–2.

33 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/288, W.R. Goskell, Commissioner of the Eastern Province to Secretary of Native Affairs (without number), 1 Dec. 1942, 1.

While in the 1920s the different populations of the Ewe-speaking zones of the Gold Coast and the Togolands would intermittently mention their Ewe identification, this is difficult to corroborate as being a long-standing tradition. In the eighteenth century, Danish and British residents at Accra and Keta had had early contacts with the rulers of Akwamu, then a pre-colonial state in the interior, but they knew nothing of any 'Ewe' category.³⁴ British and German officials, or missionaries from the Basle Mission or the Bremen Mission, were active in carving out this identification. There is nothing to indicate that Ewe-speakers defined themselves as a homogeneous group; only later, did the idea of Ewe unity become fashionable, and linguistic studies seemed to sustain it.³⁵

Moreover, pre-colonial states like Anlo and Peki had a complicated relation to Ewe culture, whether or not we take it as a historical construct. The 'traditional ruler' of Peki, the *Pekihene* (or *Deiga* in Ewe), who later claimed the overlordship of much of the Volta Area, stood, during the first quarter of the nineteenth century, in a close relationship to the very efficient military state of Akwamu; only around 1833 did the rulers of Peki finally break this bond. By then the *Pekihene* was attempting to profit from close cooperation with Ewe-speaking rulers further eastwards. The case of Anlo is even more complex and needs to be studied with caution.³⁶ The *Awoame Fiawo* (the 'traditional rulers') of Anlo were long-standing allies of the *Akwamuhene*, in spite of 'the sharp cultural, social and linguistic differences between the two states'.³⁷ Although in Anlo oral traditions from the 1980s, elders had an

34 Amenumey, *Ewe*, 32–6. Harnæs, Per, 'African Power Struggle and European Opportunity: Danish Expansion on the Early 18th-Century Gold Coast', *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana, New Series* 7, 2003, 1–92, 2–13; Wilson, Louis E., 'The "Bloodless Conquest" in Southeastern Ghana: the Huza and Territorial Expansion of the Krobo in the 19th Century', *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 23(2), 1990, 269–97, 274, 290; Hair, 'Continuity', 261; Rupp-Eisenreich, Britta, 'L'ethnicité, critère descriptif au XVIII^e siècle: le cas de la traite danoise', in Jean-Pierre Chrétien and Gérard Prunier (eds.), *Les ethnies ont une histoire* (second edition, Paris: Karthala, 2003), 49–60, 55–6.

35 Spieth, *Ewe-Stämme*, II*.

36 Rosenthal, Judy, 'Religious Traditions of the Togo and Benin Ewe', in Benjamin N. Lawrance (ed.), *A Handbook of Eweland: The Ewe of Togo and Benin* (Accra: Woeli Publishing Services, 2005), 183–96, 193–4.

37 Kea, Ray, 'Akwamu-Anlo relations, c. 1750–1813', *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* 10, 1969, 29–63, 29. The central account of Anlo origins emphasised the participation and leading role in the mythical flight from Notsie, but also presented the forefathers of the Anlo communities as relatives of many local groups, not only the Ewe-speakers. See ANT, 2APA, Cercle de Klouto, 331, *A Brief Ethnographic Account of the Ewes of the Anlo State. The Common 'Ewe' Origin and the Central Group of Royal Authority* (without number), without date [dated by French Administration of Togo as '1918'].

obvious tendency to understate the power of the Anlo ruler – they forgot that it was not until the 1930s that Togbe Sri II was affected by sickness and became a weak leader – Anlo was a crucial political entity but much less important as a cultural centre.³⁸

We find a dispute amongst Ewe-speakers during the colonial period as to which were the 'traditionally' important Ewe states. Most traditions emphasised the role of the *Pekihene*, Kwadzo De IV, and of his successor, built up in the wars against the Anlo and the Asante, and which gave a pre-eminence to the Peki stool (the 'traditional' throne). However, even these claims were challenged. In 1946 Adai Kwasi Adem IX of Awudome – then belonging to the administrative Native Authority of Peki State – demanded Awudome's separation from Peki on the grounds that both 'states' had only once formed a military alliance against the Asante, and that Awudome had by far been a larger territory than Peki. The British district commissioners were unable to verify this argument: hereditary rights seemed unclear.³⁹

Questions of language were also complex. The German Ewe mission, undertaken by the Bremen Mission and the Catholic Mission of Steyl, and continued, after the First World War, by the Ewe Presbyterian Church, was decisive when it came to standardisation and promotion of Ewe as a common language. Local populations, who only became part of the Ewe-speaking linguistic community through these efforts, are a conceptual problem, much like groups becoming Wolof-speakers in Senegal during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.⁴⁰ Colonial administrations took it for granted that a common language united populations, which was often a simplistic perception. Speakers of 'minority

38 Greene, Sandra E., 'The Past and Present of an Anlo-Ewe Oral Tradition', *History in Africa* 12, 1985, 73–87, 74; TNA, PRO, CO/96/738/6, Warrington, *Annual Report for the Eastern Province for the Year 1936–1937* (without number), without date, 69.

39 PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D 302 (also contained in DA/D 307), Adai Kwasi Adem IX, *Fia* of Awudome, *Petition of the Fiaga and People of Awudome* (without number), 7 May 1946, 1, 9; PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D 307, Acting District Commissioner of Akuse to Provincial Commissioner (n° 1141/190/1920.), 28 May 1946, 1; Amenumey, *Ewe*, 81.

40 Meyer, Birgit, 'Christianity and the Ewe Nation: German Pietist Missionaries, Ewe Converts and the Politics of Culture', *Journal of Religion in Africa* 32(2), 2002, 167–99, 176–80; Lawrance, Benjamin N., 'The History of the Ewe Language and Ewe Language Education', in Benjamin N. Lawrance (ed.), *A Handbook of Eweland: The Ewe of Togo and Benin* (Accra: Woeli Publishing Services, 2005), 215–29, 218–20; Alsheimer, Rainer, *Zwischen Sklaverei und christlicher Ethnogenese: Die vorkoloniale Missionierung der Ewe in Westafrika (1847–ca. 1890)* (Münster etc.: Waxmann, 2007), 231–45, 270–1; Azamede, Kokou, *Transkulturationen? Ewe-Christen zwischen Deutschland and Westafrika, 1884–1939* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2010).

languages' at the margins of the Ewe-speaking zone were thereby forcibly integrated into administrative units. A good example is that of the Lefana-speakers of Buem. In 1967, administrative officers in the Volta Region of independent Ghana were astonished by the campaign of the Kudje Head Chief, Akuamoah IV, to break away from the Buem Traditional Area, in spite of speaking the same language and allegedly belonging to the 'same culture' as the 'traditional rulers' of Buem:

Why then has Nana Akuamoah IV, whose people could be said to belong to the same stock and speak the same language of Lefana as the Buems of Jasikan, Borada, Guaman and Nsuta, found it necessary to declare himself independent of Nana Akpandja [the paramount chief of Buem]?⁴¹

The Kudje Chief held that it was erroneous to see all the Lefana-speakers as belonging to the same group – and he argued that the same 'mistake' had often been made for their 'Ewe' neighbours:

The two different groups of people, the Kedjeomas (Kudjes) and the Boradas and others, were total strangers to each other and although they all spoke (and still speak) the same Lefana dialect yet that, in itself alone, is no ground for any assumption that all of them were one and the same people similarly as all the Ewe-speaking peoples of the Volta Region or the Nkonyas, Anums and Bosos or the Akims and Akwamus, for instance, do not, besides their common citizenship of the Republic of Ghana, claim a common origin because they all speak Ewe or Guan or Twi, respectively.⁴²

Occasionally, however, local authorities and elders formulated clear antagonisms based on language. In the founding legend of the Ewe-speaking Anfoega community, the Asante war of the 1860s was explicitly explained as a conflict between language groups: the Twi-speakers from the west of the Volta, led by the Asante, battling the Ewe-speakers.⁴³ The idea of solidarity between

41 PRAAD (Ho Branch), NA/47 (dossier not classified), S.G. Okraku, District Administrative Officer in Jasikan, to Regional Administration Officer, Ho, *Buem Traditional Council* (SA.1/164), 28 Sep. 1967, 1.

42 PRAAD (Ho Branch), NA/47 (dossier not classified), Nana Akuamoah IV, *Nifahene* of Buem Traditional Area and Chief of Kudje, to Clerk of Volta Region House of Chiefs, *Buem Traditional Affairs* (without number), 10 May 1965, 4.

43 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/216, *Abstract of Anfoaga Traditional History* (without number), without date, 1.

Ewe-speakers thus existed in the nineteenth century, as a *potential* category of identification and of mobilisation.

Founding legends helped to sustain this possibility. The famous Notsie myth was a principal point of reference for Ewe-ness; and it appeared indeed in many of the local histories collected by Europeans in the first decades of the twentieth century. A number of allegedly Ewe-speaking groups were said to have escaped from the cruel methods of government of a legendary ruler of Notsie, Agokoli III. The myth appears within the account on the history of Ho by Spieth, and in the early anthropological work of the British scholar-administrator, John Sutherland Rattray, in the 1920s; it was also told to the British officials in the Keta Lagoon Area. The myth is ever-present as a symbol of a broader group experience.⁴⁴ Even so, a number of non-Ewe communities also claimed to have been in Notsie; details of the myth changed over the decades; and we do not have sufficient archaeological data to confirm elements of the legend.⁴⁵

The accounts of scholar-administrators such as Captain C.C. Lilley and John Sutherland Rattray were well known to literate persons in Togoland communities, who re-employed these British attempts at classification. Thus, in a succession dispute, the elders of the small community of Tokokoe criticised Lilley for describing their group as not having come from Akwapim sixty years before, but having migrated over hundreds of years.⁴⁶ These elders held that they knew the community's history better than any outsider! Like many other examples, this incident points to the flexibility of information on group origins. At best, an Ewe ethnic identification existed in principle in the late nineteenth century, but perhaps only as a latent possibility in competition with

44 Spieth, *Ewe-Stämme*, 1 (for 'Togoland'); Akyeampong, Emmanuel Kwaku, *Between the Sea & the Lagoon: An Eco-social History of the Anlo of Southeastern Ghana c. 1850 to Recent Times* (Oxford: James Currey – Athens/OH: Ohio University Press, 2001), 24–6 (for the Keta Lagoon area).

45 Gayibor, Nicoue Lodjou, 'Agokoli et la dispersion de Notsé', in François de Medeiros (ed.), 'Peuples du golfe du Bénin – aja-éwé: colloque de Cotonou' (Paris: Karthala, 1985), 21–34, 33; Greene, Sandra, 'Notsie Narratives: History, Memory, and Meaning in West Africa', *South Atlantic Quarterly* 101(4), 2002, 1015–41, 1019–20, 1032–4; Gayibor, Nicoue Lodjou, and Angèle Aguigah, 'Early Settlements and Archaeology of the Adja-Tado Cultural Zone', in Benjamin N. Lawrance (ed.), *A Handbook of Eweland: The Ewe of Togo and Benin* (Accra: Woeli Publishing Services, 2005), 1–13, 9–10. This is erroneously taken by D.E.K. Amenumey (*Ewe*, 2–6) and Benjamin Lawrance (*Locality*, 27–8) as corroborated.

46 PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D/296, Peteprebi Danyi (of Avenyi); and others, to District Commissioner of Ho, *Ref: Tokokoe Dispute, Buankrah vrs Agama*. (without number), 12 April 1934.

other more local (or 'divisional') experiences. The narratives were often substantiated by recourse to the European interpretation.

European administrative information was subject to a number of changes. After the slow disappearance of the Danish presence by 1850, the British showed only lukewarm interest in territorial control over regions close to the Volta River. Until the 1880s, the British were mainly focused on neutralising the power of the Asante State in the west and north-west, and their alliances in the Volta Region were subsidiary to campaigns financed from Accra by the local community. The British interpretation of events east of the Volta River was therefore clearly biased through an 'Accran' perspective.

The sudden German interference in political issues on the 'Slave Coast' changed the whole picture. The protectorate agreement signed in Aného in 1884 consigned large parts of the coastline between Keta and Ouidah to German administration; it provoked a more aggressive competition and led both the British and the Germans to hastily collect information on the local communities. In 1890, the colonial border was finally negotiated, allowing both colonial powers to establish their own style of rule. British administration adhered to the principle of indirect rule and wished to take the cultural and political structures of the 'divisions' of Peki and Anlo, which had become part of the colony, as a model. The 1912 report of the Secretary of Native Affairs, Francis Crowther, reflected this bias in favour of claims coming from the rulers of Anlo and Peki, which continued well into the 1920s. In the 1930s and 1940s, the British administration remained generally interested in 'traditional' issues, which, they felt, had to be addressed in the regular reports to the League of Nations in Geneva.

The German version of colonialism, on the other hand, was far less attentive to the formulation of local identifications.⁴⁷ While the Bremen missionaries were quite active in 'research' on Ewe culture, the interest of administrators in these issues was limited. The French, who occupied a part of the German colony in 1914, and received Lomé and large parts of the Ewe-speaking zone around the town centres of Kpalimé and Notsie at the end of the decade, shared these attitudes, and concentrated on the economic exploitation of the colony and on taxation. Only with the outbreak of a spectacular revolt at the heart of the Ewe-speaking zone under French rule, did these attitudes begin to change. On 24 and 25 January 1933, Lomé, now the capital of the French mandate in Togo, was the scene of an immense tax revolt, which led to widespread violence and a brutal reaction from the colonial government. As a consequence

47 Zurstrassen, Bettina, *Ein Stück deutscher Erde schaffen': koloniale Beamte in Togo 1884–1914* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2008), 29–39.

of these events, French officials improved their system of information-gathering, and French Governor Robert de Guise pressured officials to keep in closer contact with village authorities.⁴⁸ Even with the very technocratic style of modernisation that was *en vogue* in Togo under the French mandate from 1945, officials remained inclined to converse with Ewe-speakers concerning their particular group identification. Under these circumstances, the perspective of the interaction of Ewe-speakers with the British administration is the most informative one, but can be contrasted with reports from German missionaries for the period before the First World War, and information from French sources mainly after 1933.

Apocalypse Now: The Test for a Larger Ewe Community, 1867–1914

The label 'Ewe' is not a colonial creation. Paul Nugent's claim that 'Ewe' as a category probably appeared for the first time in 1884 does not take into account the missionary activities of the Basle Mission and, in particular, of the Bremen Mission in the Volta area.⁴⁹ As early as 1858, Reverend J. Bernhard Schlegel wrote an article on the history of the 'Eweer', based on local sources.⁵⁰ However, it is plausible that this broader label was only reactivated during the traumatic incursion by armies coming into the region from the exterior, that is, in the late 1860s. In that sense, Nugent would be right.

The Asante campaign of the 1860s polarised the whole region.⁵¹ Asante commanders and individual Asante war-gang leaders cooperated with some local communities to attack villages and political units on the eastern side of the Volta River. Asante was allied with the Twi-speaking Akwamus – a small

48 ANT, 2APA, Cercle de Lomé, 18, De Guise, Governor of Togo, to District Commissioner of Lomé, *Visite à Tsévié du 20 Février* (n° 173), 8 March 1933, 1.

49 Nugent, Paul, 'Putting the History Back into Ethnicity: Enslavement, Religion, and Cultural Brokerage in the Construction of Mandinka/Jola and Ewe/Agotime Identities in West Africa, c. 1650–1930', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 50(4), 2008, 920–48, 939. Elsewhere, Nugent holds that the term is 'not in common currency before 1920', which seems more adequate, see Nugent, Paul, 'A Regional Melting Pot: The Ewe and Their Neighbours in the Ghana-Togo Borderlands', in Benjamin N. Lawrance (ed.), *A Handbook of Eweland: The Ewe of Togo and Benin* (Accra: Woeli Publishing Services, 2005), 29–43, 29.

50 Schlegel, J. Bernhard, 'Beitrag zur Geschichte, Welt- und Religionsanschauung des Westafrikaners, namentlich des Eweers', *Monatsblatt der norddeutschen Missionsgesellschaft* 8(94), 1858, 406–8.

51 Johnson, Marion, 'Ashanti East of the Volta', *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* 8, 1965, 33–59, 44–7.

but well-organised community – but also with the rulers of Anlo, an Ewe-speaking community.⁵² Anlo had entered into a protracted war with the neighbouring, politically stratified, communities of Accra and Ada through the instigation of Attehogbe, otherwise known as Geraldo Lima, the ex-companion of a Portuguese slave trader active on the coast, who was soon described by the British as the main ‘villain’ in the region.⁵³

During these conflicts, the alliances in the region bridged linguistic differences between the groups and complicated the picture: for instance, the Ewe-speaking communities of Volo and Dufor sided with Akwamu and were active as pirates on the Volta River; the Ewe-speaking state of Anlo remained allied to Akwamu and Asante; the Gã-speaking community of Accra, and the ruler of Ada, were opposed to the raiders, and allies of the majority of Ewe-speaking groups east of the Volta River. Among the latter groups, Peki was the most prominent of the groups in the anti-Asante coalition. The British only had more detailed information from the areas close to Accra and Keta, and from Basle and Bremen missionaries who at the end of the 1860s lived in Keta, in Odumase in the pre-colonial state of Krobo, and in Ho. This distorts our picture of political activities, because the missionaries were not very interested in political matters and gave only a minimal amount of information. Mounting pressure on them by Asante raids increased their activity in information-gathering.

Anlo, Akwamu, and Asante invasions have a particular role in ‘traditions’ amongst Ewe-speakers and other neighbours. For the Avatime, Lynne Brydon described the experience of the invasion of the late 1860s as a ‘cataclysm’ shaking the very fundamentals of the group – which was anchored in collective memory – and this seems to have been also the case for other communities.⁵⁴ The different groups regarded as ‘Ewe’ and interviewed by Rattray in the 1920s integrated these events into their accounts: the Akwamu wars and the Asante incursions appear as traumatic incidents, which could be reinterpreted as a common ‘Ewe experience’.⁵⁵

52 TNA, PRO, CO/96/88, *Memo embracing a brief sketch of the facts connected with the existing disturbances in the Volta District from the commencement in March 1865 to the present date, drawn up for the information of His Excellency the Governor General.* (without number), without date, 32–3; Amenumey, D.E.K., ‘The extension of British rule to Anlo (South-east Ghana), 1850–1890’, *Journal of African History* 9(1), 1968, 99–117, 103–4.

53 TNA, PRO, CO/96/88, Lozogbagba, (*Awoame Fia*); and others, to Kennedy (without number), 10 May 1871, 1.

54 Brydon, ‘Constructing’, 28; Interview with Kwame Asiah, 17 August 2007. Spieth’s knowledge of the same event must come from a different version, see Spieth, *Ewe-Stämme*, 19*.

55 See Rattray’s decisive remarks on the ‘Ewe’ in the 1920s in PRAAD (Accra), ADM 11/1/1624, Rattray, *Report by Mr. R.S. Rattray* (without number), without date, 46–7.

For European officials, the 1860s brought the very first experience in the interior of Voltaland. From 1869, British administrators and military officers were active in battling 'pirates' on the Volta River. Thereby, they met Ewe-speaking communities in the hinterland of the Volta Estuary, such as those of Volo and Dufor. In the late 1870s and the first half of the 1880s, the British enlarged their control of the coastline to include Anlo. In 1888, British troops initiated a campaign to support the pre-colonial state of Peki against groups that had, two decades before, sided with the Asante invaders.

This latter operation made it possible to mark out territory against German activities. It also represented an attempt to avenge the murder of a British envoy in the Volta River Area, who had been assassinated by the followers of the ruler of Taviefe, a small Ewe-speaking community in the vicinity of Ho. For many of the local groups, this British campaign was quickly identified as a chance to take revenge against the few communities who had sided with the Asante and the Akwamu, to which Taviefe notably belonged.⁵⁶ Local communities participated strongly in 'informing' about group relations, as they bombarded the British with a huge number of narrations and petitions. The same participation by Ewe-speaking informants happened on the German side and featured in Spieth's account.⁵⁷

Some of the early British views are influenced by the Accra *Ga Manche* (the highest 'traditional ruler'), Tackie, who claimed the overlordship of the south of the territories in the Volta River Region, including Anlo.⁵⁸ Informants from Accra described the 'Volloes and Doffors' as 'part of the Aquamboe tribe', and thus 'tribally' juxtaposed with the other groups in the Volta Region.⁵⁹ This does not go together with the regional pattern of linguistic groups, but it did not matter: the populations in question were often simply referred to as 'eastern tribes'. The Accra leaders only had rudimentary ideas about the political organisation of the respective groups. The same applies to the coastal region beyond Anlo, where the Accra dignitaries had contacts with allies in the region of

56 Louis, Wm. Roger, *Great Britain and Germany's Lost Colonies, 1914–1919* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), 20–3.

57 Spieth, *Ewe-Stämme*, 76*–7*.

58 Akurang-Parry, Kwabena O., 'The administration of the abolition laws, African responses, and post-proclamation slavery in the gold coast, 1874–1940', *Slavery & Abolition*, 19(2), 1998, 149–66, 154.

59 TNA, PRO, CO/96/84, King Cudjoe of Accra; and others, to Ussher, *The Petition...to His Excellency Herbert Taylor Ussher Administrator of the Gold Coast* (without number), 11 Feb. 1870, 1; TNA, PRO, CO/96/81, Lutterodt; Hesse; and others, to Russell, British Chief Commandant in Accra (without number), 14 Aug. 1869, 4.

Lomé.⁶⁰ Before the creation of the German protectorate, European knowledge about the coastline was limited. Basle missionaries based in the Krobo capital, Odumase, provided some information on the Lomé region.⁶¹ With regard to Ewe-speaking political entities, it was equally difficult for the British to make out details of the relationships of different groups with one another.⁶² The Akyem war chief Dompere was one source for British officials that was independent from their Accra connection, as he was directly involved as an ally of the Ewe-speakers fighting incoming Asante and Akwamu troops. In August 1869, Dompere operated in the Avatime hills, where most of the Ewe-speakers had sought refuge under the command of the *Pekihene* (which contradicts oral accounts from the 1920s, in which the Avatime themselves attempted to give the most outstanding role to their own efforts, and in which other groups claimed they had not sided with Peki). At the same time, Anlo troops, in cooperation with units from Mlamfi and Volo, attacked the Agotime, burnt the city of Ho that had according to Dompere previously been under Agotime control, and also destroyed Sokode, another important settlement in the Ho area.⁶³

In 1869, the *Ada Manche* took the role of the advocate of the Agotime populations in dealings with the British authorities, and accused the Anlo of banditry and treason. In Agotime, the situation was obviously critical at the beginning of the dry season. The Ada ruler insisted that he was particularly concerned by the events in Agotime; he named the Agotime his 'brothers' and strongly solicited a British intervention in the matter.⁶⁴ This behaviour strengthened local claims of difference from their local neighbours and set the emphasis on language. Agotime informants confirmed this allegiance in 1888, insisting that the Agotime, while now being under 'Krepi rule', 'belong to the Adangme tribe', and 'to Mr. W.N. Ocansey, of Addah [the *Ada Manche*]'.⁶⁵

60 TNA, PRO, CO/96/81, King Dosu Okanzie; King Oklu; and others to Acting Administrator in Cape Coast (without number), 28 Aug. 1869, 3; TNA, PRO, CO/96/81, Simpson to Chief Administrator of Sierra Leone (n° 108), 3 Sep. 1869, 3.

61 TNA, PRO, CO/96/81, Simpson to Chief Administrator of Sierra Leone (n° 108), 3 Oct. 1869, 2–4; TNA, PRO, CO/96/81, Saketi, *Krobohene*, to Lees (without number), 24 Aug. 1869, 2.

62 TNA, PRO, CO/96/81, Simpson to Lees (without number), 21 Aug. 1869, 4.

63 TNA, PRO, CO/96/81, Dompere to Addo (without number), 27 Aug. 1869, 1, 3. The later Ho tradition excludes such a dependency of the city from Agotime, perhaps due to the quest for historical primacy by the *Howusu* of Ho; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 11/1/1624, Rattray, *Report by Mr. R.S. Rattray* (without number), without date, 33.

64 TNA, PRO, CO/96/81, Dosu, *Ada Manche*, to Simpson (without number), 7 Oct. 1869.

65 TNA, PRO, CO/879/28, African Confidential Print No. 351, Williams, British District Commissioner of Volta District, *Statement taken by C. Riby Williams, District Commissioner, Volta District* (without number), 2 July 1888, 144bis (1 of 1).

However, in later accounts the Agotime changed their mind about the identification of their group – in this way, Ada traditions were no longer reflected afterwards in Agotime accounts of the war and of the history of the group in the second half of the nineteenth century.⁶⁶ While the language difference between them and their neighbours remained, of course, an existing fact for the Agotime, their legend of migration, which declares them distinct from the bulk of the Ewe-speakers, can also be found in a number of other communities. According to Spieth, the populations of Ge – in the area between the River Haho and the River Mono – presented themselves in an analogous way, as former inhabitants of Accra, who had had to flee an Akwamu invasion.⁶⁷

For the Asante incursions, Spieth believes that 'while this war brought few advantages to the Ewe, it had nonetheless as its consequence that they began to get an understanding of their common tasks, tasks that would lead them to a slow but gradual sense of unity'.⁶⁸ In the British documents discussed above, however, the question of Ewe solidarity – so prominent also in retrospect in the interviews held with community leaders and chiefs in the 1920s – did not play the slightest role. On the contrary, one of the conflicts in which British troops and auxiliaries from Accra were most involved, the conflict between the small constituency of Bator and the warriors of Volo and Dufor, and a second that involved the Mafi and the ruler of Anlo – the latter four being allied to the Akwamu – was exactly a military conflict *between* different Ewe-speaking communities.⁶⁹ The *Fiawo* of Volo still commemorated the lost battle against British troops more than 80 years later, as the employment of a British warship left Volo populations with traumatic memories, but without remembering the

66 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/216, *The Preliminary History of the Agotime*. (without number), without date; this account taken in the 1920s is strongly negative to any Agotime connection with Ada; in a probably earlier account, the Agotime claim they have in the past been *erroneously* regarded as Adas, see PRAAD (Accra), ADM 11/1/1624, Rattray, *Report by Mr. R.S. Rattray* (without number), without date, 39. However, in the early 1960s, Agotime was confirmed to be primarily Adangme-speaking, with Ewe as an important, but only secondary language. See Sprigge, R.G.S., 'Eweland's Adangbe: An Enquiry into an Oral Tradition', *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* 10, 1969, 87–123, 92–3; which stands in contrast to the assertion of Spieth, who regarded the Adangme language as disappearing, while Ewe was taking over; see Spieth, *Ewe-Stämme*, 41*.

67 Spieth, *Ewe-Stämme*, 38*.

68 *Ibid.*, 55*.

69 TNA, PRO, CO/96/85, Ussher to Kennedy (n° 80), 22 June 1870, 7; TNA, PRO, CO/96/85, Glover to Kennedy (without number), 22 June 1870, 5; TNA, PRO, CO/96/84, Cleland to Lees (without number), 11 Dec. 1869, 1; TNA, PRO, CO/96/85, Kennedy to Granville (n° 71), 4 July 1870, 2–3.

ancient enmity between Ewe-speaking communities.⁷⁰ In the discussions about the creation of a Tongu Confederacy – a new ‘Native Authority’ organised in the 1940s – the *Fia*wo of Volo and of Bator were close allies in diplomatic campaigns, as leaders of two ‘Ewe communities’ with long-standing friendly links.⁷¹ Notably, both the *Fia* of Volo and of Bator now attempted to characterise the Akwamu as distinct from the ‘Ewe’ of ‘Voltaland’, and thus demanded the separation of their villages from Akwamu, and their admission into the Tongu Confederacy.

The role of the Agbosome, a coastal Ewe-speaking community east of Keta, which had built up, in the bights of Lomé and Ve, a sort of free harbour for contraband trade into the territory of the British colony, was another apparently complex case.⁷² The British became increasingly interested in this community after the German intrusion and during the partition of the Volta Region between Berlin and London. The Agbosome were active as raiders on Anlo territory, the territory of the mighty Ewe-speaking *Awoame Fia*, and were long-standing enemies of an Anlo sub-group, the Anyako. Once again, cultural identification was not the principal motive for solidarity here.⁷³

The British tested the coherence of communities on the coast during their conflict with Anlo.⁷⁴ In January 1885, Assistant Inspector Stewart was sent to Keta and Anloga to obtain information about the prospective enemy. Based on oral reports of his Keta informants, Stewart described ‘the Awoonahs and the Anyakos’ as the two major distinct groups, ‘with many tribes who pay them feudal allegiance’.⁷⁵ With such terminology, Stewart managed to point out the

70 PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D 311, *Togbe Kwasi Abliza III, Dufiaga* of Volo State, Tongu Confederacy Council, to Dixon, Senior District Commissioner of Ho (n° KA 275/SP30/50), 27 Feb. 1950, 1–2.

71 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/108, *Togbe Kwasi Abliza III* to Senior District Commissioner of Ho (without number), 30 April 1949, 1.

72 TNA, PRO, CO/96/157, Young, Governor of the Gold Coast, to Derby (n° 255), 29 April 1884, 34–8.

73 TNA, PRO, CO/96/157, Firminger, Inspector of Gold Coast Colony in Keta, to Acting Colonial Secretary (without number), 26 March 1884, 4–7, 12–13; TNA, PRO, CO/879/21, African Confidential Print No. 268, Assistant Inspector Stewart to Colonial Secretary of the Gold Coast (without number, Enclosure 3 in No. 86), 30 Jan. 1885, 2.

74 TNA, PRO, CO/96/166, Captain Brydon to Colonial Secretary of the Gold Coast (n° 190), 4 Oct. 1876, 2–3.

75 TNA, PRO, CO/879/21, African Confidential Print No. 268, Assistant Inspector Stewart to Colonial Secretary of the Gold Coast (without number, Enclosure 3 in No. 86), 30 Jan. 1885, 1.

nature of Anlo as a pre-colonial state, while Bremen missionaries described it as a chaotic, 'republican tribe'.⁷⁶ The state was segmented and obviously rather weak, and many of its different communities operated autonomously: the Anyako were very probably acting without any control on the part of the *Awoame Fia*.⁷⁷ When, after intensive British shelling of the coastline, the different villages gave up the war, they offered their capitulation on individual terms.⁷⁸

Still more interesting for our analysis is the fact that informants from the interior described community relations in the region in the sense of a clear difference between Anlo and 'the Crippies' (Krepis). However, for years it remained uncertain what exactly 'Krepi' meant.⁷⁹ This label for an imagined community in the interior of the coastal region practically ceased to exist at the moment of the final Anglo-German partition of the Volta Region.⁸⁰ The British claimed that they had bought the right of protection over a community named 'Krepi' from the Danish residents in Keta in 1850, but, once again, this was a label without concrete meaning!⁸¹ In 1858, Thomas Birch Freeman in his report of a journey into the interior described Kwadzo De IV as 'Paramount Chief of the Krepis'. Even so, afterwards he commented that the *Pekihene* only ruled over his 'subject towns', while neighbouring 'divisions' such as Sokode

76 TNA, PRO, CO/96/88, Binder, Bremen missionary in Keta, to Kennedy (without number), 6 May 1871, 1; TNA, PRO, CO/96/85, Ussher to Kennedy (n° 90), 8 July 1870, 17–8; Meyer, *Translating*, 5.

77 TNA, PRO, CO/879/21, African Confidential Print No. 268, Chase Parr, Commander of HMS Frolic, to Young (without number, Enclosure 1 in No. 86.), 5 Feb. 1885.

78 TNA, PRO, CO/879/21, African Confidential Print No. 268, Dudley, Acting Inspector-General, to Colonial Secretary of the Gold Coast (without number, Enclosure 2 in No. 86), 5 Feb. 1885, 2.

79 TNA, PRO, CO/96/166, *Information collected from Mr. W.A. Blavo, about the police Station* (without number), without date, 1, 3. European eighteenth-century accounts had described that, according to local usage, 'Krepi' was 'all the land lying east of River Volta and north of this lake [east of Ada], as well as several hundred miles up river', see Rømer, Ludewig Ferdinand, *A Reliable Account of the Coast of Guinea (1760)*, translated and edited by Selena Axelrod Winsnes (Oxford etc.: Oxford University Press, 2000 [originally 1756 and 1760]), 129. On the vagueness of the term see also Amenumey, *Ewe*, 66–7.

80 In 1888, British administrators were still convinced that Krepi was a political institution in its own right, including nearly 500,000 inhabitants. See TNA, PRO, CO/879/28, African Confidential Print No. 356, Williams, District Commissioner of Volta District, to Griffith, British Governor of the Gold Coast (n° 1), 2 January 1888, 451 (1 of 1).

81 ANT, Fonds Allemand, FA1/196, *no title* (without number), 11 Feb. 1887, 1–2; ANT, Fonds Allemand, FA1/196, British Embassy in Berlin, *Memorandum on British and German Claims with Respect to the Crepee or Peki Country* (n° 15585.), 18 Dec. 1887, 2–4.

were perfectly autonomous. During Freeman's negotiations with the 'Krepi' chiefs for the introduction of a poll tax as compensation for British protection, Adzatekpor of Avatime, Dagadu of Kpandu, and most other leading chiefs of the area were apparently present. However, none of them accepted the *Pekihene's* overlordship and none suggested that his community was part of a larger identity group.⁸²

Thirty years later, most observers regarded 'Krepi' as the name of the territory dominated by Peki. Basle missionaries who visited Kpandu and Peki in the 1880s were convinced that the *Pekihene* was the ruler of a federation over 'the Efe' (including Kpandu), referring to the alliance against the Asante. The *Pekihene*, Kwadzo De VI, did his best to give credence to this view, claiming 'Krepi' to be his territory.⁸³ However, most of the other communities involved on the side of Peki and Ho in the Taviefe war, were not at all amused by such discourses of the *Pekihene*. They resisted accepting Peki's lasting overrule, although Kwadzo De initially had British support, as the British hoped to use his 'rights' as an argument against German territorial claims. The German Commissioner of Togo, Jesko von Puttkamer, in June 1888, obtained information on the western parts of the German protectorate, mainly on Agotime and Ylo, and described 'Krepi' as an ancient 'federation', which had included Peki, Akwamu, Avatime, Agotime and others of the Volta Region communities and had ceased to exist sometime before 1850.⁸⁴

The Avatime made a competing claim. In 1888, Adzatekpor of Vane, the ruler (and later paramount chief) of Avatime, had still been virtually unknown to British officials.⁸⁵ However, in 1894 the Avatime received a British confirmation that *they* were the rulers of the former state of Krepi (although they were

82 TNA, PRO, CO/879/28, African Confidential Print No. 356, Freeman, *Extract of Report of Mr. Freeman to Major H. Bird, dated 7th July 1858* (without number), without date, 1, 3.

83 [Christaller, J.C.], 'Recent Explorations in the Basin of the Volta (Gold Coast) by Missionaries of the Basel Missionary Society', *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society and Monthly Record of Geography, New Monthly Series* 8(4), 1886, 246–56, 253, 256; TNA, PRO, CO/879/28, African Confidential Print No. 351, Bennett, District Commissioner of Akuse, to Griffith, Governor of the Gold Coast (n° 219., as Enclosure 1 in No. 18), 4 April 1888; TNA, PRO, CO/879/28, African Confidential Print No. 351, Kwadzo De 'of Krepe' to Bennett (without number), 3 April 1888, 1.

84 TNA, PRO, CO/879/28, African Confidential Print No. 356, von Puttkammer, (*Extract.*) [*Memorandum on Peki*] (without number, Enclosure 2 in No. 44), 30 June 1888, 1–2.

85 TNA, PRO, CO/879/28, African Confidential Print No. 351, Akers, British Assistant Inspector in Gold Coast, *List of Countries for which English Flags are required* (without number), 3 July 1888, 146bis.

now situated on German territory).⁸⁶ Based on this confirmation, the Avatime demanded in the 1920s to hold the leading role in a new 'state' created through 'amalgamation'.⁸⁷ The role of the ruler of Kpandu, whose territory finally came under German rule, was equally contested.⁸⁸

In 1888, the Taviefe War, starting with the murder of British Assistant Inspector John Scott Dalrymple on 11 May 1888, again allowed for a refinement of local identifications and regional solidarities between the British conquerors and Ewe-speaking groups.⁸⁹ Dalrymple's mission had been to discipline Taviefe, Matse, and Adaklu, former allies of the Asante and Akwamu in 1870 and opponents of Peki between 1875 and 1877 – information on their 'behaviour' had come from Kwadzo De VI and the ruler (*Howusu*) of Ho, and they were described as 'traitors' to the Ewe-speaking community.⁹⁰ The British inspector had defined Kwadzo De VI as legitimate king 'of all of Krepi' threatened by unruly subjects. The British neither understood the interest of the Peki ruler in presenting the facts in a particular way, nor did they see that the alliance of the *Pekihene* included a number of Twi-speakers, in particular from Boso and Anum.⁹¹

After the failure of a planned peace conference with the Taviefe ruler, Bele Kobina, and Dalrymple's death, an alliance organised by the British district

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- 86 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/253, Griffith, District Commissioner of Keta, to Adzatekpor I of Vane, Avatime (as 'King Adjatekpor of Crepe' [sic]) (n° 462/413), 9 Nov. 1894.
- 87 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/238, Adzatekpor I, Paramount Chief of Avatime, to District Commissioner of Ho (without number), without date [1927].
- 88 Bundesarchiv, Berlin (BArch), R1001, 4310, Zimmerer, Acting Governor of Cameroon, to Bismarck, German Imperial Chancellor (n° 158), 6 Oct. 1887.
- 89 TNA, PRO, CO/879/28, African Confidential Print No. 351, Griffith; Evans, Colonial Secretary of the Gold Coast; Charles Pike, Treasurer, *Minutes of the Proceedings of a Meeting of the Executive Council, held at Christiansborg Castle, on Monday the 28th day of May 1888* (without number, enclosure in No. 17), without date, 54.
- 90 TNA, PRO, CO/879/28, African Confidential Print No. 351, Dalrymple, Colonial Inspector, to Griffith (without number, enclosure in n° 11), 30 April 1888, 46 (1 of 2); TNA, PRO, CO/879/28, African Confidential Print No. 351, Kwadjo De VI, *Pekihene*, to Bennett, District Commissioner of Akuse (without number), 3 April 1888, 76 (1 of 1); TNA, PRO, CO/879/28, African Confidential Print No. 351, Evans to Dalrymple (without number, Enclosure 3 in No. 18), 9 April 1888, 76bis (1 of 2); TNA, PRO, CO/879/28, African Confidential Print No. 351, Dalrymple to Evans (without number, Enclosure 8 in No. 18), 20 April 1888, 78 (1 of 2). The nineteenth-century 'tradition' collected by Spieth in Ho, describes the Taviefe as classic robbers and 'highwaymen', Spieth, *Ewe-Stämme*, 12–4.
- 91 TNA, PRO, CO/879/28, African Confidential Print No. 351, Dalrymple, [*Conversation with Kwadjo Dei in Savie, 18 April 1888*] (without number), without date, 78bis (1 of 2); TNA, PRO, CO/879/28, African Confidential Print No. 351, Dalrymple to Evans (without number, Enclosure 12 in No. 18), 24 April 1888, 80bis (2 of 2).

commissioner of Akuse, Akers, with the *Sakiti* of Krobo and the *Pekihene*, quickly conquered Taviefe and Matse. After atrocities by British Hausa mercenaries and in view of the stern positions taken by the *Pekihene*, Taviefe, Matse, Adaklu, and Waya again took up arms and were again defeated. The *Pekihene* and the *Howusu* also accused the communities of Anlo of sympathising with and supporting their opponents. The campaign changed the balance in favour of Kwadzo De: even messengers from Agotime, Avatime, and Twi-speaking Anum, who before had fiercely insisted on their autonomy, now claimed that their area had always been a 'portion of Crepee', and that they belonged to Peki rule. In 1888, these claims nearly provoked a diplomatic conflict between the British and the Germans.⁹² German diplomats were angry about the alleged British prerogatives in 'Krepi', and British officials loudly demanded the acquisition of the Ve Country including Lomé, in order to stop the contraband trade via this coast.⁹³ The British were more concerned to find an 'authentic' solution. This may explain why they retreated in the end, being uncertain if they had understood the territorial dimensions of 'Krepi'. They also gave up their

- 92 TNA, PRO, CO/879/28, African Confidential Print No. 351, Bennett, District Commissioner of Ho, to Evans (n° 277), 11 May 1888, 87bis (1 of 2); TNA, PRO, CO/879/28, African Confidential Print No. 351, Bennett to Evans (n° 280), 14 May 1888, 89 (1 of 2); TNA, PRO, CO/879/28, African Confidential Print No. 351, Evans to Brennan, Assistant Inspector, Gold Coast Constabulary (n° 2406), 17 May 1888, 86 (2 of 2); TNA, PRO, CO/879/28, African Confidential Print No. 351, Akers to Evans (without number, Enclosure in No. 22), 5 June 1888, 98 (2 of 3); TNA, PRO, CO/879/28, African Confidential Print No. 351, Bennett to Evans (n° 329), 6 June 1888, 110bis; TNA, PRO, CO/879/28, African Confidential Print No. 351, Akers, *Interview with Taviefe Messengers* (without number), 23 June 1888; TNA, PRO, CO/879/28, African Confidential Print No. 351, Akers to Evans, *Report on Taviefe Expedition* (without number, Enclosure 1 in No. 34), 29 June 1888, 135–6; TNA, PRO, CO/879/28, African Confidential Print No. 351, Griffith to Knutsford (n° 237), 7 July 1888, 129bis; TNA, PRO, CO/879/28, African Confidential Print No. 351, Agbovi, Head Chief of Potoi; Akakpwaley, Head Chief of Mawlu Agotime, and others, [*Declaration*] (without number), 3 July 1888, 143bis (1 of 1); TNA, PRO, CO/879/28, African Confidential Print No. 351, Riby Williams, District Commissioner, to Akers (without number), 2 July 1888, 144 (1 of 2); TNA, PRO, CO/879/28, African Confidential Print No. 351, Williams, *Statement taken by C. Riby Williams, District Commissioner, Volta District* (without number), 2 July 1888, 144bis (1 of 1); TNA, PRO, CO/879/28, African Confidential Print No. 351, Bogbi, Chief of Adaklu; Adzatekor I, Chief of Avatime; Yaw Chei, Chief of Taviefe; and others, [*Declaration*] (without number), 3 July 1888, 143bis–144; TNA, PRO, CO/879/28, African Confidential Print No. 351, Kumi, 'Chief of Anum and Head Chief of Buem', [*Declaration*] (without number), 3 July 1888, 144.
- 93 TNA, PRO, CO/879/28, African Confidential Print No. 356, Maurice Burt to Griffith (without number, Enclosure in No. 6), 3 March 1888, 446bis–447 (1 and 2 of 2).

claim for Agotime, in spite of earlier assurances given to the rulers of the Agotime villages who were abandoned to the Germans; and Kwadzo De was unsuccessful with his protest. The *Pekihene* was implicitly acknowledged by the British as formal paramount ruler over Agotime, but this gave him no political prerogative – and the colonial border effectively separated Peki from Agotime territory.⁹⁴

Buem, further to the north and at the margins of the Ewe-speaking area, had interested the British because of its strategic position for inland trade. The British had also (quite erroneously) concluded that the inhabitants of Buem spoke a language similar to the Ewe-speakers and were thus 'naturally' members of a British protectorate.⁹⁵ Further south, the German and the British governments continued to discuss the 'possession rights' over Kpandu, Ho, Avatime, and Adaklu, until the border was fixed in 1890, with most of these 'divisions' remaining in German territory, and the Adaklu villages divided between the Keta District of the Gold Coast and the Misahöhe District of German Togo.⁹⁶

As British officials struggled to come to an 'authentic' organisation of local political units, many participants from the African side used their chance to sell themselves as rulers of their respective community. Issues of being an ethnolinguistic group did not play a role in that process. Smaller communities, such as Taviefe, Adaklu, or Ho, and pre-colonial states with Ewe-speaking rulers, such as Anlo and Peki, dominated questions of group identification. However, the hardening of the colonial border had an impact on categories, as had missionaries of the Bremen Mission in defining Ewe culture and politics. These missionaries and some linguists and early anthropologists, showed a

94 TNA, PRO, CO/879/28, African Confidential Print No. 356, Evans to Akers (without number, Enclosure 1 in No. 23), 13 July 1888, 459 (2 of 2); TNA, PRO, CO/879/28, African Confidential Print No. 356, Evans to 'Chiefs of Agotime' (without number, Enclosure 2 in No. 23), 13 July 1888; TNA, PRO, CO/879/28, African Confidential Print No. 356, Evans to Kwadzo De VI, 'King of Krepí' (without number, Enclosure 3 in No. 23), 459 (1 of 1).

95 TNA, PRO, CO/879/28, African Confidential Print No. 356, *Extract from Mr. Firminger's Report of the 20th March 1888* (without number, Enclosure 1 in No. 7), without date, 447–447bis (1 and 2 of 2); TNA, PRO, CO/879/28, African Confidential Print No. 356, Williams to Griffith (n° 2), 25 July 1888, 465 (1 of 1); TNA, PRO, CO/879/28, African Confidential Print No. 356, *Notes of Statement made by King of Buem, July 25, 1888* (without number), without date, 465–465bis (1 and 2 of 2).

96 TNA, PRO, CO/879/28, African Confidential Print No. 356, Puttkamer, German Commissioner of Togo, to Griffith (without number, translation, Enclosure 1 in No. 14), 31 May 1888, 452bis–453 (1 to 2 of 2); TNA, PRO, CO/879/28, African Confidential Print No. 356, Griffith to Puttkamer (n° 351), 9 June 1888, 453 (1 of 1).

marked curiosity for the structure of the *Eweer-Stämme* (the Ewe tribes), but the German administration in districts such as Lomé-Land and Misahöhe was relatively uninterested in the 'tribal structure' of Togo and focused on taxes and forced labour without a classification through a census.⁹⁷ It appears that only the Bremen Mission and the Catholic Steyl Mission in the German colony vigorously attempted to understand what they regarded as 'Ewe group identity', in their attempts at setting up a rudimentary education system.⁹⁸

It is very easy to claim, with hindsight, that the different Ewe-speaking communities had already had a strong feeling of unity under German rule.⁹⁹ However, there is no proof for such a hypothesis. German administrators were very much focused on labour issues, and attempts at engaging with community structures were mainly to be found where the ever-present problem of labour and labour evasion was particularly acute, as in the region of Sukpe. In this region, the administrator defined local populations as being members of the 'Aveno tribe', who had settled in the region only in 1850. These 'Avenos' would have bought land from the Ave, Agotime, and Adaklu communities, earlier settlers in the region.¹⁰⁰ However, while in these concrete cases the Germans commented on the existence of different 'divisions', we find little inclination (and information) to point out larger solidarities or to install

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- 97 ANT, Fonds Allemand, FA3/3079, District Administrator of Lomé-Land, [*Jahresbericht Lomé-Land 1908/09*] (without number), 3 Oct. 1909, 4–8; ANT, Fonds Allemand, FA3/3079, District Administrator of Lomé-Land, *Berichtsjahr 1909/10* (without number), 2a–f, 5; ANT, Fonds Allemand, FA3/3079, *Bezirksamt* Lomé-Land to Von Zech, Governor of Togo, *Berichtsjahr 1910/11* (n° 805/14), 10 May 1911, 2–2(1), 4–5; ANT, Fonds Allemand, FA3/3079, *Bezirksamt* Lomé-Land to Brückner, Governor of Togo, *Berichtsjahr 1910/11* [*sic!*] (n° 991/12), 19 May 1912, 2–2a, 5; ANT, Fonds Allemand, FA3/2123, Gruner, District Administrator of Misahöhe, *Jahresbericht 1907/08*. (without number), without date, 4–5; [Zöller, H.], 'Togo-Land, the German Protectorate on the Slave Coast', *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society and Monthly Record of Geography, New Monthly Series* 7(6), 1885, 377–80, *passim*; Jehle, A., 'Soul, Spirit, Fate: According to the Notions of the Tshi and Ewe Tribes (Gold Coast and Togo, W. Africa)', *Journal of the Royal African Society* 6(24), 1907, 405–15, 414; Smith, Woodruff D., 'The Ideology of German Colonialism, 1840–1906', *Journal of Modern History* 46(4), 1974, 641–62, 657–9.
- 98 Vischer, Hanns, 'Native Education in German Africa', *Journal of the Royal African Society* 14(54), 1915, 123–42, 124–30; Ustorf, Werner, "'Survival of the Fittest": German Protestant Missions, Nazism and Neocolonialism, 1933–1945', *Journal of Religion in Africa* 28(1), 1998, 93–114, 101–2.
- 99 Schuerkens, Ulrike, *Du Togo allemand aux Togo et Ghana indépendants: Changement social sous régime colonial* (Paris: Harmattan, 2001), 37–8, 52, 58.
- 100 ANT, Fonds Allemand, FA1/92, Schlettwein, Acting District Administrator of Misahöhe, [*Bereisung von Sokpe*] (n° 527/12), 24 April 1912, 1–2.

'authentic chiefs'.¹⁰¹ The German approach ultimately remained extremely pragmatic: it focused on success in tax collection and labour recruitment, and checks for more ambitious local leaders.

In contrast, the British (as in the Gambia or in Sierra Leone) wished to create a chieftaincy based on 'traditional rules' – which in Togoland opened the gate to constant disputes. In Ewe-speaking communities, a typical cause of disputes was the previously mentioned role of the 'stool father' (the *zikpuito*), whose function was unclear to the colonial rulers.¹⁰² With their agenda, the British had a clear objective of classifying populations according to their imagined larger affiliation. After 1915, the British imported these patterns into the western part of former German Togo, based on some established models. At the same time, not only British rule but also the Ewe language expanded. Ewe entered in the 1890s into regions such as South Akposo; in 1900, the Bremen Mission station official at Amedzofe, Ernst Bürgi, also reported a spectacular rise in the use of the language.¹⁰³ This process started with an influx of refugees from the area between Lomé and Kpalimé, fleeing northwards from the reprisals of German soldiers and their auxiliaries. Other local populations also discovered the language to be useful.¹⁰⁴ Moreover, German Catholic and Protestant missionaries contributed to this process by using Ewe as the principal language in education and codifying it, which was grudgingly accepted by the German colonial government. From 1904 onwards, an Ewe-speaking elite formulated its own interests, including in language politics.¹⁰⁵ These elites were very vocal after the British conquest in 1914.

However, European rulers remained unsure as to how to employ 'Ewe' as a group label. In geographic terms, the Germans called the area of Asome,

101 See Lawrance, Benjamin N., 'Bankoe V. Dome: Traditions and Petitions in the Ho-Asogli Amalgamation, British Mandated Togoland, 1919–39', *Journal of African History* 46(2), 2005, 243–67, 250.

102 PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D/301, *Memorandum on Kpandu Native Affairs*. (without number), without date, 13.

103 Staatsarchiv Bremen, 7, 1025 (Norddeutsche Missionsgesellschaft), 5/3, Bürgi, Mission Station principal at Amedzofe, Avatime, to Mission Inspector (without number), 28 April 1901, 2.

104 Staatsarchiv Bremen, 7, 1025 (Norddeutsche Missionsgesellschaft), 6/1, Bürgi to Mission Inspector (without number), 27 October 1901, 2.

105 Staatsarchiv Bremen, 7, 1025 (Norddeutsche Missionsgesellschaft), 6/2, Bürgi to Mission Inspector (without number), 29 Sept. 1904, 2; Erbar, Ralph, *Ein 'Platz an der Sonne': die Verwaltungs- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte der deutschen Kolonie Togo 1884–1914* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1991), 285–302; Crabtree, W.A., 'Togoland', *Journal of the Royal African Society* 14(54), 1915, 168–84, 176–8.

Dalave, Tsévié and Gbli 'Ewe' (or 'Evhe') in the 1890s, and its populations 'Evheer' – without referring to language.¹⁰⁶ At the same time, the category of 'Ewe' was also occasionally utilised as a larger group name referring mostly to the language, such as for the Waya, Ve, and Akposo.¹⁰⁷ Moreover, the effects of immigration within the Trans-Volta region exacerbated the question of belonging, as 'strangers' were often mistreated by local rulers with regard to tax payments, forced labour, and physical punishment.¹⁰⁸ 'Strangers' attempted to use the European obsession with 'tribal' groups to protect themselves. In particular, Twi-speakers in the region started to define themselves as persecuted 'Akan' and to demand rights as a homogeneous immigrant group.

In general, the experiences after colonial conquest do not confirm the hypothesis of a strong and continuous pan-Ewe sentiment that challenged colonial boundaries. Many locals attempted to obtain improved positions by reference to former allegiances and dependencies. 'Ewe-ness' was a marginal part of this picture at best – in spite of the linguistic efforts of the missionaries.

The New Border and the Quest for 'Authentic' Arrangements: British and French Readjustments of 'Ewe' Institutions after the First World War, 1914–1945

The French and British invasions of the German colony of Togo led to an extension, and, eventually, to an exacerbation of the administrative separation of different groups of Ewe-speakers. Local elites attempted, however, to 'choose' what they regarded as the more benign European power of tutelage; and to improve trade contacts, as Lomé merchants hoped for free access to the port of Keta. Important spokesmen of the coastal elite, such as Octaviano Olympio, actively lobbied for British rule over Lomé. However, it has to be asked how far these actions were motivated by a feeling of Ewe-ness, as was suggested by D.E.K. Amenumey.¹⁰⁹

106 Staatsarchiv Bremen, 7, 1025 (Norddeutsche Missionsgesellschaft), 19/6, Bürgi, *Errichtung einer zweiten Küstenstation in Lome* (without number), 22 Aug. 1891, 3, 6.

107 Staatsarchiv Bremen, 7, 1025 (Norddeutsche Missionsgesellschaft), 19/6, *Kommentar zum Stationsbau* (without number), without date [1898].

108 PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D/296, Taifota Tahuma to District Commissioner of Ho (without number), 6 April 1933.

109 Louis, 'Great Britain', 56–8; Nugent, *Smugglers*, 31–5; Lawrance, Benjamin N., 'Petitioners, "Bush Lawyers," and Letter Writers: Court Access in British-Occupied Lomé, 1914–1920', in Benjamin N. Lawrance, Emily Lynn Osborn, and Richard L. Roberts (eds.), *Intermediaries, Interpreters, and Clerks: African Employees in the Making of Colonial Africa* (Madison:

Two examples show the complexity of this interpretation. During the First World War, the *Awoame Fia, Togbe* Sri II, continued with the claims of overlordship of the eastern Volta Region, which Anlo rulers had already been formulated in the 1860s and 1870s. This explains the Anlo war effort in favour of the British side. Further east, the Lawson family in Aného appears to have claimed in 1922, under French rule, overlordship of populations in the south of Togo. However, again the label of 'Ewe' is nowhere employed in the evidence.¹¹⁰ From a broader perspective, it is also significant that we find no attempt by local populations to bring the question of the perils of the 'Ewe community' before the League of Nations. European officials would have been sensitive to identifying what they saw as correct 'tribal' settings. 'The Ewe', however, did not play a prominent role in European reports on the Togoland mandate written in the 1920s. In the British 1927 report on the Togoland mandate sent to the League of Nations, the authors, while briefly mentioning the Ewe language, recommended installing 'Akan' structures of local government wherever possible!¹¹¹ Even in the anthropological work of the famous scholar-administrator John S. Rattray, who interviewed communities about their Notsie experience, the fact of 'Ewe-ness' and wish for Ewe unity do not at all appear.¹¹²

After the British conquest of western and southern Togo in 1914/15, claimants from the Gold Coast Colony and the Gold Coast Protectorate demanded their rights of political rule over 'natives from Togoland'. The 'Togoland communities' themselves were more interested in revising local hierarchies installed by the Germans, like of the Adele paramount chief over the Adjuti. The other goal was to prevent a return of the German administration. In Ho, Noepe, Adame, Aflao, and Lomé, the chiefs petitioned for the continuation of British rule, pointing to German atrocities with regard to forced labour, violent tax requisition, and corporal punishment; and the Anfoega tried to free themselves from the Kpandu authority, imposed on them by the

University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 94–114, 108–9; Akyeampong, *Sea*, 191–2; Alsheimer, *Sklaverei*, 12–3, 269.

110 Lawrance, *Locality*, 45, 48, and 52–3 (in the latter pages, Lawrance interprets a respective song text).

111 *Report by his Britannic Majesty's Government to the Council of the League of Nations on the Administration of Togoland under British Mandate for the Year 1927*, 6, in TNA, PRO, CO/96/681/13.

112 On Rattray's work in Asante, see Von Laue, Theodore H., 'Anthropology and Power: R.S. Rattray among the Ashanti', *African Affairs* 75(298), 1976, 33–54, 52–3; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 11/1/1624, Rattray, *Report by Mr. R.S. Rattray* (without number), without date, 21–2, 24, 28, 33–42, 46–7.

Germans. Moreover, there was also little enthusiasm for coming under the French mandate.¹¹³

Contrary to Amenumey's assumptions, local populations did not mention any idea of Ewe cohesion, and although some held that they 'do not want the Krepe tribe again split up between two separate European Governments'; others, like the Agotime, now insisted that they had nothing to do with 'Krepi'.¹¹⁴ Indeed, communities in Togoland under British mandate were content to see the power of Anlo and Peki curtailed. The British obsession with the creation of 'native states' generated new tensions, as many chiefs refused any participation in that. To give one representative example: when the 'Divisional Chief' of Taingbe applied to exert a levy to improve the infrastructure of Taingbe Town, he learned he was no longer the legal authority entitled to charge such a levy.¹¹⁵ In British administrative politics, 'native jurisdiction' and 'native treasury' became the privilege of 'states' that had been a product of 'amalgamated divisions', which only created more problems. The French officials, while choosing a less elaborate terminology, basically attempted the same: local communities were put into *chefferies de canton*, without consultation.

In subsequent community conflicts before the 1940s, previous struggles between pre-colonial states were much more a point of reference than ethnic solidarity. One good example for British Togoland is the land conflict between the inhabitants of Taingbe and Tokokoe (in the zone north-east of Ho). Both sides mobilised historical 'tradition', but did not refer at all to their common 'Ewe past'. During a stool dispute within Tokokoe, between Agamah and Buankrah II, which remained a constant problem through the whole of the

113 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 11/1/572, Hobs, District Commissioner of Mpraeso, Kwahu, to Commissioner of the Eastern Province (n° K./30/14.), 26 May 1915; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 11/1/572, Messum, British District Political Officer, to British Senior Political Officer in Lomé (n° 29/1/14), 15 Nov. 1914, 4; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 11/1/1621, Furley, [*Report of a Tour through the districts of Togoland*] (without number), 17 April 1918, 5–8; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 11/1/1622, Furley, *Notes of Statements taken before the Secretary of Native Affairs on his Tour in Togoland* (without number), without date [1918], 10–3; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 11/1/1620, Nani Hode, Head Chief of Anfoega, *An extract of the manuscript of the History of Anfoe* (without number, Enclosure VI in Report), 9 Feb. 1918, 2; Crabtree, W.A., 'The Conquest of Togoland', *Journal of the Royal African Society* 14(56), 1915, 386–91, 390.

114 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 11/1/1621, Furley, [*Report of a Tour through the districts of Togoland*] (without number), 17 April 1918, 14.

115 PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D/292, Assistant District Commissioner in Ho, to Divisional Chief of Taingbe, *Collection of Levy* (n° 288/28/1929.), 15 March 1930.

1930s, both sides based claims on accusations that the others had collaborated with the Asante invaders.¹¹⁶

The question of the new border and its effects were another obvious problem. Most extreme was the situation of Agotime, where 29 villages became part of the French zone, while two villages, including the village of Kpetoe of the Agotime head chief, remained under the British.¹¹⁷ Another difficulty was the continuous importance of the former border between German Togo and the British Gold Coast Colony, now translated into an administrative border between Gold Coast and Togoland under British mandate. Some chiefs wished to settle old scores, as in the case of Agbosome, which continued its aggressive politics from the nineteenth century. The chief of Agbosome laid claim to the towns of Some and Have and thereby challenged Anlo rule.¹¹⁸ In all these conflicts, demands of the former pre-colonial states and the interests of smaller communities were far more important than any idea of larger (ethnic) group solidarity.

On the French side of the mandate, the situation was similar. In a 1930 report on the situation in the *Cercle* of Klouto, with the administrative centres of Kpalimé and Misahöhe, the French dealt with the 'Ewe problem' in a very ambivalent way. The district commissioner argued that even in view of the common Notsie legend, the 'Ewe race' did not seem to know any more sustained solidarity. 'The village is the true ethnic group', the French commented on the fragmentation of political solidarity in the area. The same comment applied to the border regions of Mission Tové and Akoviepe.¹¹⁹

116 PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D/292, Kwaku Agama, Divisional Chief of Tokokoe, to District Commissioner in Ho, *Re: Anka Yawoe vs. Amedume Apomah* (without number), 3 May 1934; PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D/292, Anku Yawoe, resident of Taingbe Dzafe, to District Commissioner in Ho, *Anku Yawoe vs. Amedume Apomah* (without number), 26 Sept. 1934, 1; PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D/296, Kwashikuma Peteprebi Dzogu to District Commissioner of Ho (without number), 30 Oct. 1934, 2; PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D/296, Assistant District Commissioner of Ho to District Commissioner of Kpandu, *Tokokoe Stool Dispute* (n° 521/14/1929.), 31 July 1933, 4.

117 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/199, Jackson, Commissioner of the Eastern Province, *Memorandum on Anglo-French Togoland Boundary* (without number), without date, 1–2; Nugent, Paul, 'The Historicity of Ethnicity: Mandinka/Jola and Ewe/Agotime Identities in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries', in Alexander Keese (ed.), *Ethnicity and the long-term perspective: the African experience* (Berne etc.: Peter Lang, 2010), 127–53, 141–2.

118 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/199, Adamah II, *Fia* of Agbosome, to District Commissioner of Keta (n° 014/31), 26 Dec. 1930, 1.

119 ANT, 1APA/1, *Monographie: Cercle de Klouto* (without number), without date [1930], 7–8; ANT, 2APA, Cercle de Tsévié, 2, Nativel, Administrator of Subdivision of Lomé, *Rapport de la tournée effectuée par l'Administrateur-Adjoint des Colonies Nativel, Chef de la Subdivision*

The main pressures of the interwar period came, once again, from the 'traditional states' in the region, Anlo and Peki. In particular, the *Pekihene* hoped after 1915 for the creation of a larger regional paramountcy and reminded the British of earlier promises. The chiefs of Anfoega, Hlefi, Dsocho, Goviefe and Akrofu, Adaklu, Agotime, Dakpa, Zofe, Logba, and Botoku were all against any such paramountcy; the inhabitants of Akuope and Taingbe were even more explicit about the historical background, and they accused Peki of passiveness during their 1860s conflict with Anlo; and even in Abutia, which was initially positive, integration into Peki State was complicated.¹²⁰

In the latter case, the *Pekihene* demanded the integration of Abutia into the state between the early 1920s and 1945, until the final refusal of the head chief of Abutia in July 1945 and Abutia's admission into the newly created Asogli State in Togoland. The Asogli solution helped to favourably solve land conflicts with neighbours.¹²¹ Within Abutia, the sub-chief of Abutia Kloe – one of Abutia's communities – tried to obtain Peki's help against his own paramount chief and nearly provoked a Peki intervention under Kwadzo De X. This initiative was brought down with British support.¹²² The ruler of the second largest community in the Abutia 'division', the *Dufiaga* (sub-chief) of Agove, Adja Dra V, had long been uninterested in the Peki initiatives. However, in 1933, he suddenly decided to back the petitions coming from Peki, and sent representatives into the Peki State Council. The conflicts with the paramount chief of

de Lomé dans les cantons d'Akoviépé et de Mission-Tové du 25 Janvier au 27 Janvier et du 5 Février au 8 Février 1934 (without number), without date.

- 120 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/238, Ellershaw, District Commissioner of Ho, to Commissioner of Eastern Province in Koforidua (n° 542/725/28.), 5 Sep. 1928, 1; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/238, District Commissioner of Ho to Commissioner of the Eastern Province (n° 548/166./27.), 15 March 1927, 1; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/238, District Commissioner of Ho to Commissioner of the Eastern Province (n° 48/240/27.), 30 April 1927; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/238, Dalton, Assistant District Commissioner of Ho, to Commissioner of the Eastern Province (n° 545/212/27.), 14 April 1927.
- 121 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/250, Abutia Kusadjo Gidi II, *Fiaga* of Abutia, to Acting District Commissioner of Ho (without number), 10 July 1945.
- 122 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/250, Assistant District Commissioner of Ho to District Commissioner of Kpandu, *Abutia Kloe Stool Dispute* (without number), 27 July 1930; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/250, Martin Yawo substituting Samuel Kofi, Stoolfather of Abutia Kloe, to District Commissioner of Ho (without number), 27 April 1931; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/250, Kwadzo De X, Paramount Chief of Peki, to Abutia Kwadzo XII (n° 331/24/29.), 1 Sep. 1930; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/250, *Fiaga* Abutia Kwadzo XII of Abutia to Assistant District Commissioner of Ho (without number), 2 Sep. 1930; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/250, T.A. Mead, Assistant District Commissioner of Ho, to District Commissioner of Kpandu, *Abutia Native Affairs*. (without number), 13 July [1944].

Abutia were reason enough for such a change of opinion; however, when the Agove headmen realised that the British would not concede to them even a loose federation with Peki, they came to terms with the Asogli solution.¹²³

In 1945, in a last-minute attempt, the Agove sub-chief, S.K. Kumah, and the *asafohene* (military society leader) of Teti (the central division), Okai Debra, allied to call for integration of Abutia into Peki. The situation was little favourable for such an attempt: the Peki Ruler, Kwadzo De X, was seriously ill, and the British were not eager to change their established line of politics.¹²⁴ Even so, Kumah and Debra mobilised part of the local populations, and organised a showdown at a divisional meeting of Abutia, where the Regent of Peki, Ayim V, and the *Howusu* of Ho as President of Asogli State, explained their claims. Even so, the attempt did not win a majority except in Agove, and in spite of the massive protests of the Peki authorities, the British urged Ayim V and his successor as regent, Donko, to renounce their claims. In the end, the Peki initiative remained fruitless.¹²⁵

We have discussed the Peki-Abutia affair in so much detail because it was exemplary for many similar cases of the interwar period. Against their earlier preferences before 1914, in which the British had favoured a regrouping of

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- 123 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/250, Adja Dra V, *Dufiaga* of Agove Abutia; and subchiefs of Agove, to Dufia Abutia Kwadzo XII, of Teti-Abutia, *In the Meeting held at Agove-Abutia Before Togbe Adja Dra V Fiaga. His subchiefs. Amanklatos. Stoolfathers. Linguists and Elders on the 17th day of March 1932* (without number), without date, 1; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/250, Assistant District Commissioner of Ho to District Commissioner of Kpandu, *Abutia Division*. (n° 152/4/1929), 28 March 1933, 1–2; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/250, Assistant District Commissioner of Ho to District Commissioner of Kpandu, *Abutia Affairs* (n° 1112/4/1929.), 18 Dec. 1943.
- 124 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/250, S.K. Kumah, *Fiaga* of Agove; and others, to Kwadzo De X, *Pekihene* (without number), 12 May 1945; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/250, Assistant District Commissioner of Ho to District Commissioner of Kpandu, *Abutia Divisional Affairs* (n° 725/4/29.), 20 June 1945, 1.
- 125 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/250, Tsagbey, Peki Native Administration Secretary, *Report on Abutia Amalgamation Meeting held at Abutia-Teti on the 27th October, 1945, to the District Commissioner, Volta River District, Akuse*. (without number), 31 Oct. 1945, 1–2; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/250, Tsagbey, *Minutes of the Peki and Abutia Re-Union Meeting held at Agove-Abutia on Thursday the 15th. November, 1945*. (without number), without date, 1–2; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/250, Duncan, District Commissioner of Ho, to Commissioner of the Eastern Province, *Proposed Amalgamation of Abutia Division with the Asogli State*. (n° 20/4/1929.), 31 Oct. 1945, 1–2; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/250, McDevitt, Acting District Commissioner of Akuse, to Donko, Regent of Peki State, *Abutia-Asogli Amalgamation*. (n° 2320/183/43.), 26 Nov. 1945; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/250, Donko to McDevitt, *Abutia-Asogli Amalgamation*. (n° 312/25/37.), 7 Dec. 1945, 1.

different groups – ‘Evhe-speaking tribes...from Nuatja’ who had allied against the Asante under Peki leadership – under Peki authority the British had to concede in the interwar period that voices from Nkonya, Ve, Fodome, Liati, Sokode, Abutia or Kpeve, while seeing the Gold Coast-Togoland border as negative, had no inclination to accept the paramountcy of Peki.¹²⁶

The experience of the Anlo rulers was similar: after their engagement for a larger political unit with common cultural characteristics during the First World War, they were unable even to create stronger relations with the Adaklu chiefs as a neighbouring community. Both groups were Ewe-speakers, adherent to a common version of the Notsie legend, and had been allies of the Asante in the late 1860s. However, this was insufficient.¹²⁷ Discord between the two communities was expressed in an ‘oral tradition’ centred on an attack of Anlo units against Adaklu villages shortly after 1870, which had forced the Adaklu to flee into their strongholds near Adaklu Mountain. The respective tradition was rebuilt in the 1920s against attempts at integrating Adaklu villages into Anlo State.¹²⁸ In a second oral tradition, reinterpreting events during the mythical exodus from Notsie, the Adaklu founding father, Foli Kuma, was described as equal of the founder of Anlo, Wenya. This tradition thus refused Anlo any pre-eminence.¹²⁹

Thus Adaklu elites moulded their own, independent politics in the region, and refused integration into Anlo, but also into the new Asogli State around Ho. With regard to the latter, the Adaklu spokesmen claimed that subjects of the *Howusu* had regularly stolen land from them and were therefore long-standing enemies.¹³⁰ When British pressure on Adaklu community leaders became stronger, the Adaklu adapted their traditions: they now held that their

126 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/238, District Commissioner of Ho to Commissioner of the Eastern Province (n° 479/116./27.), 18 Feb. 1927, 1–3; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/238, Secretary for Native Affairs of Gold Coast to Commissioner of the Eastern Province, *Unification of Tribes separated by the old Anglo-German Boundary*. (n° ...1713/1924.), 23 Nov. 1929, 1.

127 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/254, Gbogbi III, Headchief of Adaklu, to District Commissioner of Ho (without number), 30 Sep. 1929.

128 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/254, Assistant District Commissioner of Ho, *Adaklu Affairs*. (without number), 11 Feb. 1944, 4.

129 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/254, *An Account of the Adaklus as from the Ancient Times – Our Origin and our Travels* (without number, attached n° 2), without date, 2–3.

130 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/254, Gbogbi III, *Fiaga* of Adaklu; Lablulu, *Asafohenega* of Waya; and others, to Commissioner of the Eastern Province (without number), 26 July 1946, 1; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/254, Gbogbi III and others, to Assistant District Commissioner of Ho (without number), 17 Feb. 1938, 1.

community had always been isolated from other 'Ewes', already during the mythic settlement phase in Notsie, and that they originally spoke a different language (an argument that was strongly disputed by the British authorities). They commented that they even preferred Anlo rule to overlordship from Ho.¹³¹ At the same time, the Adaklu community laid claims for control over land that had been alienated from them, in favour of the Mafi. *Fia* Gbogbi III attacked Mafi occupation of Adaklu land that had allegedly started since the First World War; and also demanded the removal of Mlefi and Avenor settlers, who retained allegiance to rulers further southward.¹³² To complicate matters, the inhabitants of Dakpa from the Gold Coast Colony side formulated a parallel claim, in which they demanded authority as paramount chiefs in Adaklu areas, in which, they said, they had traditionally ruled!¹³³

Both these conflicting goals of different communities, and the very existence of the territorial border between the Gold Coast Colony and Togoland, prevented a strengthening of Anlo State as a genuine Ewe-speaking political unit. British officials believed that it was easier first to tackle the question of Ewe-speaking groups that stood under the rule of the *Ada Manche* – also situated in the Gold Coast Colony – and to profit in this context from the circumstance that the paramount chief of Ada State had been suspended.¹³⁴ The district commissioners of Keta and Ada assembled the 'Ewe chiefs' of Ada State in Tefle and inquired whether they wished to leave Ada overlordship. Most of those chiefs indeed claimed they would prefer to belong to Anlo, as they said 'for reasons of tribal links' – using the British 'tribal' argument. Some chiefs, such as of Sukpe and Bator, who had been suspended and expected to be destooled before the British initiative took shape, used the development to save their position.¹³⁵ Thus, the divisions of Agave, Sukpe, Tefle, Vume, Bakpa, Bator, and Mepe – 'the Ewe Divisions' – within Ada State, made a 'request for

131 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/254, Assistant District Commissioner of Ho to Commissioner of the Eastern Province (n° 888/32/29.), 7 Oct. 1943, 1–2.

132 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/254, Assistant District Commissioner of Ho to District Commissioner of Kpandui, *Adaklu Divisional Affairs*. (n° 550/32/1929.), 17 May 1945; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/238, District Commissioner of Ho to Commissioner of the Eastern Province, *Adaklu Villages in Keta District*. (n° 29/469/27), 6 Oct. 1927.

133 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/238, Guteh, Assistant District Commissioner, *Report on the Tribes separated by the old Anglo German Boundary*. (without number), without date, 2.

134 TNA, PRO, CO/96/738/6, Warrington, Provincial Commissioner, *Annual Report for the Eastern Province for the Year 1936–1937* (without number), without date, 62.

135 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/303, Lilley, District Commissioner of Keta, to Commissioner of the Eastern Province, *Report on the Keta-Ada District for the March Quarter 1942*. (n° 810/4/31.), 6 May 1942, 3.

independence', in spite of, or rather because of the chaotic internal situation that was so characteristic of most of them.¹³⁶

Agave is the best illustrated of these cases. The Agave did not argue with questions of 'Ewe identity', but focused on relations between political entities: they claimed they had fought constant wars with Anlo, and that they had been the overlords of the *Ada Manche* and were thus on the same level as the *Awoame Fia!* Language was only an additional argument, with the Agave pointing out that as Ewe-speakers they were distinct from Ada's Adangme-speakers. It is remarkable that they styled themselves with Ewe titles on this particular occasion, but relied elsewhere on a political terminology, the 'wing system', that was normally defined as 'Akan'.¹³⁷ As a whole, the demand of Ewe-speaking rulers from Ada State was pending for a period, and then merged into the large current of Ewe activities of the immediate post-Second World War years, which I will analyse below.

In Anlo State itself, the rhetorics of power also became increasingly confused, as the *Awoame Fia* lost control over the state council based in Anloga, which many chiefs of the neighbouring 'divisions' did not attend anymore. In 1943, the 'Ewe Union', a nascent pan-Ewe institution counting in its ranks many 'intellectuals' and a good part of the less influential chiefs of the state, showed its strength. The *Awoame Fia's* tax policy had enraged many of the local chiefs even further, and had provoked the opposition of the Ewe Union.¹³⁸ However, the main thrust of resistance against any more centralised politics came from the old Anlo capital of Anloga, whose headmen, in 1944/45, virtually paralysed Anlo State.¹³⁹

136 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/303, District Commissioner of Keta to Commissioner of the Eastern Province, *Report on Keta – Ada District for Quarter ending 31st December, 1942*. (without number), without date, 3.

137 PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D 311, Togbe Hlitabo II, 'Fiaga of Agave', and others, *Petition addressed to His Excellency Sir Charles Noble Arden-Clarke K.C.M.G. ...* (without number), without date, 2–3. See Stahl, Ann B., 'Ethnic Style and Ethnic Boundaries: A Diachronic Case Study from West-Central Ghana', *Ethnohistory* 38(3), 1991, 250–75, 255, 262–3.

138 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/303, District Commissioner of Keta to Commissioner of the Eastern Province, *Report on Keta – Ada District. Quarter ending 30th June 1943*. (without number), 24 July 1943, 1; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/303, District Commissioner of Keta to Commissioner of the Eastern Province, *Report on Keta – Ada District. Quarter ending 30th September 1943*. (n° 2519/4/31), 28 Sep. 1943, 1.

139 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/303, Mead, *Report on Native Affairs – Keta District. Quarter Ending December 31st, 1945*. (without number), without date, 3; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/469, Elder Seshie Zodanu Kwashie, 'Head of Chief James Ocloo III. of Keta Stool Family', to Commissioner of the Eastern Province, *Petition of Elder Seshie Zodanu Kwashie, etc.* (without number), without date, 2.

Doubtless, the colonial border between German and British, then between French and British possessions, created its own dynamics that had an effect on identifications. Illicit commerce and seizures of cattle and even land were typical.¹⁴⁰ In Kuma on French territory, villagers complained about the confiscation of their lands lying in the now-British zone by Togoland villagers, with the alleged tacit support of the administration; in the opposite direction, villagers of Bogo Achlo in the French zone had occupied land belonging to peasants of Baglo, who were now living in British Togoland.¹⁴¹ Such acts, started first during the general instability of the war years, created new, long-lasting enmities.

Migration from the French into the British mandate also became typical. Those migrants were described by the inhabitants of the Volta area as 'natives of the French zone' and became the occasional victims of xenophobic rhetoric from a 'proto-national' perspective, even if they were Ewe-speaking. Therefore, aside from local discourses, and before the idea of Ewe unity became important, the image of the 'proto-national' stranger, with reference to the colonial territory of origin, already had an impact.¹⁴² There were some more 'ethnically' oriented exceptions to this rule. An early example was given by the political evolution of Buem in the British zone, where the populations were, in their large majority, not Ewe-speakers and did not share in the Notsie tradition.¹⁴³ As in the cases of Asogli and Awatime States, British administrators wanted to

140 ANT, 2APA, Cercle de Klouto, 10, Administrator of Subdivision of Klouto, *Cercle du Centre, 1937 – 2^{ème} Trimestre: Main d'Œuvre* (n° 10), 13 Oct. 1938; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/241, District Commissioner of Ho to Administrator of *cercle* of Klouto, French Togo (without number), 17 Jan. 1927, 1–2.

141 ANT, 2APA, Cercle de Klouto, 10, Administrator of Subdivision of Klouto, *Cercle de Centre, Subdivision de Klouto: Rapport Trimestriel, Année 1938 – 4^{ème} Trimestre* (without number), 23 Jan. 1939, 5.

142 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/212, Ellershaw, District Commissioner of Kpandu, to Commissioner of the Eastern Province, *Krachi – Kpandu District Boundary*. (n° 147/82A/1921.), 17 Feb. 1937, 2; ANT, 8APA/3/37, District Commissioner of Klouto in Misahöhe, *Rapport Trimestriel pour le 2^{ème} Trimestre 1922* (without number), without date, 1; ANT, 2APA, Cercle de Tsévié, 2, Perret, *Rapport de la tournée effectuée du 19–20 et 29 Février 1936 dans le Canton de Dalavé par l'Adjoint des S.[ervices] C.[oloniaux] Perret*. (without number), without date, 4–5.

143 See, for example, PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/212, *A Short History of Dodi*. (without number), without date. See, also, Fred-Mensah, Ben K., 'Bases of traditional conflict management among the Buems of the Ghana border', in William Zartman (ed.), *Traditional Cures for Modern Conflicts: African Conflict 'Medicine'* (Boulder – London: Lynne Rienner, 2000), 31–47, 32–3.

create a 'native state'.¹⁴⁴ 'Divisions' dominated by Twi-speakers, like Worawora, Kadjebi, Ahamansu, Asatu, and Apesokubi, campaigned under these circumstances for their separation from Borada; the tone in this conflict only became very sharp after the Second World War. The chiefs of these communities argued that the Lefana wished to destroy their identity 'as a Twi tribe'. In the 1950s, the Twi-speakers were followed by the Lolobi community, who also demanded separation from Buem State, and the leading role in the Akpafu Division.¹⁴⁵ The spokesmen regretted, with regard to the Lolobi and the Akpafu, 'the mere and casual accident of speaking the same dialect'; on historical grounds, the two communities were separated by the traumatic Asante invasion, in which the 'bold resistance' of Lolobi Chief Kekerebesi, and the 'betrayal' of Akpafu Chief Kwahu Kadiabe had underlined the difference and created a long-lasting enmity.¹⁴⁶ In these conflicts, Buem showed a way of using historical, linguistic, or ethnic difference when that was suitable to obtain political advantages. This was a clear model for Togoland Ewe-speakers.

Hence, we do not find an ethnic Ewe movement in the interwar period, and Ewe identifications were weak if they existed. The question is whether, as Amenumey suggests, such solidarities were simply implicit, or if incidents like the tax revolt in Lomé on 23 January 1933 can be read as expression of Ewe unity, as is held by Benjamin Lawrance. We do not have the slightest evidence in that regard, to say the least.¹⁴⁷ As exemplified by the Bund der

144 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/212, Nana Kwaku Ntim Gyakari, *Omanhene* of Tapa State, and others, *Reference Tapa State, and Buem State Amalgamation* (without number, from Tapa Ahenekrom), 2 Aug. 1935; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/268, Nana Yaw Nyarko II, *Ohene* of Worawora, and others, *To the President and Members of the Buem State Council: Memorandum of the Akan Section of Buem State*. (without number, from Buem-Kadjebi), 20 May 1944, 1, 4; PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D 309, Nana Akuamoaa II, Acting President, Buem State Council, and others to District Commissioner of Ho (without number), August 1946, 2; PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D 309, Nana Yaw Nyarko II, *Omanhene* of Worawora, and others, *Reminder Petition of the Akan Section of Buem State to His Excellency Sir Alan Cuthbert Maxwell Burns...* (without number), 1 Aug. 1946, 2.

145 PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D/299, Mackay, Provincial Commissioner of the Eastern Province, to Chief Commissioner of Gold Coast Colony (n^o 1308/2009/45-), 27 March 1946, 1.

146 PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D/299, Sub-Chief Jacob Akoteh; Sub-Chief Marious Gymanos; and others to Burns (without number), without date, 2–3 and 7–8.

147 Amenumey, *Movement*, 22–7; Pauvert, 'Evolution', 178; Lawrance, Benjamin, 'La Révolte des Femmes: Economic Upheaval and the Gender of Political Authority in Lomé, Togo, 1931–33', *African Studies Review* 46(1), 2003, 43–67, 58–60; with the argument being more limited in Lawrance, *Locality*, 69–89. See PRAAD (Accra), ADM 11/1/1624, *Lome Disturbances* (without number), without date [1933], 1–2.

Deutsch-Togolaender, an association led by German-trained Lomé traders and clerks, it is possible to find a curious initiative to get back under German colonial rule, but this initiative did not involve any ethnocultural visions.¹⁴⁸

Succession conflicts under the French mandate were similar to situations in British Togoland – and frequent in the rural constituencies, in particular those close to Kpalimé, even with the theoretically stricter French control of African authorities. In Agu-Nyogbo, one of the large districts, the death of the paramount chief, Kofi Pebi, in 1939, led to weeks-long troubles.¹⁴⁹ In the case of Danyi, historical 'traditions' were mobilised: Paramount Chief Bassa having been replaced by Gabla, there was an intense production of evidence relating to the dispute, promoted by an Ewe Presbyterian Church (EPC) preacher from Kete-Krachi, Reverend Wampah. This 'tradition' separated two groups in the region, the Daye Kakpa and the Daye Atigba, which both had Ewe origins and had been in Notsie before migration. According to this 'tradition' it had always been the first-comer of the two groups that had had the right to the paramountcy.¹⁵⁰

148 TNA, PRO, CO/96/758/2, Fisher, Brigade Major, Gold Coast Regiment, Royal West African Frontier Force, *Intelligence Report for Period ending 30th June, 1939*. (without number), without date, 1–2; ANT, 2APA, Cercle de Klouto, 10, Administrator of Subdivision of Klouto, *Cercle de Centre, Subdivision de Klouto: Rapport Trimestriel, Année 1938 – 3^{ème} Trimestre* (without number), 13 Oct. 1938, 3; ANT, 8APA/3/37, *Renseignements: a/s. Togo Bund* (n° 491/BC), 22 Dec. 1949, 1; Amenumey, D.E.K., 'German Administration in Southern Togo', *Journal of African History* 10(4), 1969, 623–39; Nugent, *Smugglers*, 63; Kwaku, Ken, 'Tradition, Colonialism and Politics in Rural Ghana: Local Politics in Have, Volta Region', *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 10(1), 1976, 71–86, 77–8; Blackshire-Belay, Carol Aisha, 'German Imperialism in Africa: The Distorted Images of Cameroon, Namibia, Tanzania, and Togo', *Journal of Black Studies* 23(2), 1992, 235–46, 237–8; Ekoko, A. Edho, 'The British Attitude towards Germany's Colonial Irredentism in Africa in the Inter-War Years', *Journal of Contemporary History* 14(2), 1979, 287–307, 299–300.

149 ANT, 2APA, Cercle de Klouto, 10, Orly, Administrator of Subdivision of Klouto, *Cercle de Centre (Subdivision de Klouto): Rapport Trimestriel, Année 1939 – 4^{ème} Trimestre* (without number), 5 Jan. 1940, 3.

150 ANT, 2APA, Cercle de Klouto, 330, Wampah, Teacher of the Ewe Presbyterian Church in Kete Krachi, to Bourguine, Commissioner of Togo (without number), 4 Sep. 1934; ANT, 2APA, Cercle de Klouto, 330, Mary, District Commissioner of Klouto, to Bourguine, *Canton d'Atigba (Daye)* (without number), 1st Oct. 1934, 1, 4; ANT, 2APA, Cercle de Klouto, 330, Bassah III, *Chef de Canton* of Daye-Atigba, and Seth Akrodou, Secretary of the Paramount Chieftaincy, *Lettre de permission à Monsieur le Commandant, Chef de la Subdivision de Klouto (Palimé)* (without number), 2 Feb. 1945, 1–3; ANT, 2APA, Cercle de Klouto, 18 add., Goujon, *Rapport Concernant les Tournées Effectuées par l'Administrateur des Colonies Goujon, Commandant de Cercle de Klouto Dans les régions de Daye Kakpa et Daye Atigba. Pendant le mois de Mars 1935*. (without number), without date, 2–3.

In other cases, land was at stake: such as between the two Kpele villages of Goudève and Elé, or Woame and Mayondi. Issues were complicated if the land in question was to be found between two villages lying in different *cantons*, such as between Bogo Achlo and Daye.¹⁵¹ Only rarely did the creation of 'traditional histories' to be used in land disputes have to do with Ewe myths. Finally, even the immigration of Muslim populations from the north into the *zongos* ('Muslim quarters') of Lomé and Kpalimé failed to trigger a discourse on 'otherness' directed against northerners on the part of the Ewe-speakers.¹⁵² Thus mobilisation under ethnic banners never became a particularity of the Ewe-speaking communities of Lomé, Kpalimé, and Tsévié, at least not before 1945.

As regards urban environments, Ewe identifications were discussed in the urban diaspora in the Gold Coast Colony, notably in Accra. However, categories of identification for these immigrants varied. In 1934, the *Ga Manche*, as the most important 'traditional ruler' in the capital, wished to install one Sotomy as elected 'by a large section of the Ewe speaking people'. Immigrants from the French mandate, referring to themselves as 'Ganyi' or 'people from French Togoland' asked for the nomination of Akalamakpe Ansa, as their own headman. Organised in an association called the Glidji Union, their spokesmen exerted pressure. The petitioners were Guin-Mina speakers (a language similar to Ewe, but that was not exactly Ewe) who attempted to enlist the help of *Fia Agbano* of Genyi, in the French part of Togo, and even of the Commissioner of Togo, de Guise.¹⁵³ According to their discourse, distinctions were far more important than language unity:

151 ANT, 2APA, Cercle de Klouto, 10, Administrator of Subdivision of Misahöhe, *Cercle de Centre: Rapport Trimestriel, Année 1938 – 2^{ème} Trimestre* (without number), 18 July 1938, 3; ANT, 2APA, Cercle de Klouto, 10, Administrator of Subdivision of Klouto, *Cercle du Centre: Rapport Trimestriel, Année 1937 – 4^{ème} Trimestre* (without number), without date, 3; Nugent, *Smugglers*, 64–72; ANT, 2APA, Cercle de Klouto, 10, Administrator of Subdivision of Klouto, *Cercle de Centre, Subdivision de Klouto: Rapport Trimestriel, Année 1938 – 4^{ème} Trimestre* (without number), 23 Jan. 1939, 5.

152 ANT, 2APA, Cercle de Klouto, 10, Administrator of Subdivision of Misahöhe, *Cercle de Centre: Rapport Trimestriel, Année 1938 – 2^{ème} Trimestre* (without number), 18 July 1938, 4.

153 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/295, Rutherford, District Commissioner of Accra, to Johnson, known as Ansah (n° 1463/87/34.), 4 Oct. 1934, 1; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/295, Ansah to Rutherford (without number), 6 Oct. 1934; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/295, Commissioner of the Eastern Province to Secretary for Native Affairs of Gold Coast, *Headman of the Ewe speaking People and the French Togoland Community in Accra.* (n° 3916/2223/34), 21 Nov. 1934; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/295, District Commissioner of Accra, to Commissioner of the Eastern Province (n° 1652/87/34.), 31 Oct. 1934, 1–3; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/295, John Feliga Adeku and others ('Tomb 11 A'Nuk Pa we'); Abraham Kpakpo Akueson, Secretary of 'French Togoland Community', to Northcote, Acting Governor of the Gold

We are Natives of that part of Togoland known as the French Togoland and we are called and styled 'Ganyi' by all the people who are described by the Gold Coast Government as the Ewe speaking people. We are entirely a race or tribe different and distinct from the rest of the Ewe speaking people. We have different customs and ceremonies. Our ceremonial rites are entirely different. Our names are distinct from the rest of the Ewe People and thus you see, we do not form part of either the Anlos and the Pekis who are known as the Ewe speaking people.¹⁵⁴

Exaggerations abounded during this power struggle between different Ewe-speaking or related groups in Accra. However, whenever such groups felt threatened, as by Paramount Chief Keami Osaabo in the Akwapim town of Nsawam, they eventually applied to the British authorities pointing to their common 'Ewe nationality'.¹⁵⁵

Even so, in the British-controlled territories, most conflicts and discussions between Ewe-speakers tended towards rather 'regular' land conflicts, and were unrelated to any questions of Ewe solidarity. The relations between the settlements of Ziavi and Klepe (west of Ho) are typical for such conflicts.¹⁵⁶ Sometimes, these land conflicts were reported upon in connection to histories of loyalty and betrayal, such as in the conflicts between the Fiervier community and the chief of Sukpe, both Ewe-speaking units within Ada State before 1945. Each side claimed that the other had immigrated into the land and had been sheltered by their own group, with the Fiervier suggesting that the Sukpe had illegally taken over power. This conflict went on in the 1940s when both entities belonged to the Tongu Confederacy, with the Sukpe paramountcy finally being confirmed through the intervention of the colonial power.¹⁵⁷

Coast (without number), 16 Oct. 1934, 3–4, 7. See Sanjek, Roger, 'Cognitive Maps of the Ethnic Domain in Urban Ghana: Reflections on Variability and Change', *American Ethnologist* 4(4), 1977, 603–22, 610–4.

154 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/295, John Feliga Adeku and others...to Northcote (without number), 16 Oct. 1934, 5.

155 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/295, Gbekor, Secretary of 'Ewe Community' of settlers in Nsawam; J.A. Darku, Headman of the 'Ewe Community'; and others, to District Commissioner of Kpandu (without number), 8 Aug. 1936, 1–2; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/295, Gbekor to Commissioner of the Eastern Province (without number), 8 Aug. 1936.

156 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/35, Togbe Anku Saklie VI to Assistant District Commissioner of Ho (without number), 1 Jan. 1934; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/39, Adja Mensa Ado, Chief of Klepe Achatime, to Assistant District Commissioner of Ho District, *The Rueful Ill-Humour in Klepe-Achatime and its Desistance of*. (without number), 11 Jan. 1944.

157 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/294, Commissioner of the Eastern Province to District Commissioner of Ada (n^o 2220/34.), *Tongu Confederacy: Sukpe – Fiervier Dispute*,

In Sokode Division, smaller communities also mobilised history to escape from the allegedly abusive Sokode paramount chief. Thus the Hoviepe elders complained they had once, in the battles against Asante, Akwamu, and Taviefe, accepted the *Fia* of Sokode, Ampim Danku II, as leader in a war alliance. Now, the current Sokode chief, Tenkloe Koku II, had created a false myth of the Hoviepe settlers coming from Klepe. Gbogame, another 'subdivision' of Sokode, followed the Hoviepe initiative and also claimed 'independence' from a false political dependency.¹⁵⁸

Finally, we need to come back to identifications in Agotime during the inter-war period. The *Dufia* of Agotime living in Kpetoe, Hene Hoe Keteku II, was subject to opposition in the 1920s, as he was challenged by a legal complaint from the Chief of Agotime Afegame, Mahumasro, before the Supreme Court of the Gold Coast. The latter claimed that the paramount chiefs of 'the Agotime nation' had 'always' come from Afegame and that the preference for Kpetoe had been a product of German misunderstandings and manipulation by one Mati Sukpor. After Keteku's destoolment, i.e. his removal, the Afegame claim was again intensified in the early 1940s, with the *mankrado* in Afegame also advocating Agotime's integration into Asogli.¹⁵⁹ Again, an opposition between rightful

December 1945; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/294, Captain Ahoklo II of Fiervier, Ada District, to Commissioner of the Eastern Province (without number), 28 Jan. 1938, 1; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/137, Togbe Kwami Hajor II, *Fiaga* of Bakpa, President of Tongu Confederacy Native Administration, and A.A. Dugbazeh, Secretary, *Report on Enquiry of Fervier and Sokpoe Native Affairs* (without number), 9 April 1949, 5.

158 PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D 290, Acloo, and others of Sokode Gbogame, to District Commissioner of Ho (without number), 23 April 1940, 3; PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D 290, Elders of Hoviepe, Ho District, Asogli State, to Assistant District Commissioner of Ho (without number), without date; PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D 290, Assistant District Commissioner of Ho to District Commissioner of Kpandu, *Sokode Native Affairs* (without number), 30 Aug. 1940; PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D 290, E.K. Adintsriju, and others, all Sub-Chiefs; 'Elders' of Sokode Gbogame, to Assistant District Commissioner of Ho (without number), 4 June 1942 [?], 1.

159 PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D 288, Hene Hoe Keteku II, Divisional Chief of Kpetoe Agotime, to Assistant District Commissioner of Ho, *Mankralo Dza & others vs: Adonu & others*. (without number), 25 June 1926; PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D 288, Supreme Court of the Gold Coast Colony, Eastern Province, *Affidavit of Mahumansro the Head Chief of Agotime Afegame* (without number), 10 Nov. 1930; PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D 288, Mahumasro, Chief of Agotime Afegame, to Assistant District Commissioner of Ho (without number), 8 July 1932; PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D 288, Ahoto Legba to District Commissioner of Ho (without number), 13 Dec. 1937; PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D 288, Elvert, District Commissioner of Kpandu, to Assistant District Commissioner of Ho, *Kpetoe Native Affairs*. (n° 425/108A/1930.), 18 May 1937; PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D 288, Regent of Kpetoe

rulers and outsiders was invented to win the case, to build a divisive argument against the tradition of rule from Kpetoe. However, it became obvious that no one knew how to define a 'stranger' in Agotime during the interwar period. 'Anlos' and 'Kwahus' were counted as such, but also 'Nigerians'. These different groups tried to nominate headmen to defend their interests, selecting in 1943 one Christoph Mensah Kefe as representative of the entire 'stranger community', while the settlers from Anlo later attempted to have their own headman. Hene Hoe Keteku II even feared that the ruler of Anlo could attempt to get leverage over the migrants from Avenor and other populations living in Agotime.¹⁶⁰

All in all, the British may have hoped, in the interwar period, for a pan-Ewe 'tribal' feeling that would have allowed them to better control the territory. As Anlo or Peki were too weak to be used for political matters in Togoland, some British authorities had indeed hoped in the 1930s that 'an Ewe Confederacy will in due course settle this matter'. This did not seem to happen.¹⁶¹ Ironically, however, the category of Ewe unity suddenly enjoyed unexpected successes after 1945, and the British would in the end be forced to fight this idea of unity.

The International Agenda: Ewe-ness as an Anti-colonial Weapon, 1945–1957

The panorama of group mobilisation in the Trans-Volta region, which in the interwar period gave little room for discussions of Ewe community sentiment, changed completely in the 1940s. In 1945, the question of Ewe unification seemed easily to overshadow all the other political problems. A strong lobby group of so-called Ewe 'unificationists' had a clear intuition for the French political and military weakness after the war, and its members started an impressive campaign.¹⁶² The transition of the official administration of the

Agotime to District Commissioner of Ho (without number), 20 March 1938, 1. PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D 288, Hene Hoe Keteku II to Assistant District Commissioner of Ho (without number), 15 Feb. 1943, 1–2; PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D 288, Klu Fiagbedzi and others to Assistant District Commissioner of Ho, *Agotime Chieftaincy Dispute* (without number), 22 July 1943; Nugent, 'Historicity', 137–9.

160 PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D 288, Azasu Kafe and others ('elders') to Assistant District Commissioner of Ho (without number), 18 Dec. 1942, 1; PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D 288, Hene Hoe Keteku II to Assistant District Commissioner of Ho, *The Installation of the Anlo Headman* (without number), 7 Dec. 1944.

161 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/250, McDevitt to 'John' (n^o 2140/183/43.), 5 Nov. 1945, 2.

162 Kent, John, *The internationalization of colonialism: Britain, France, and Black Africa, 1939–1956* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992), 119–26, 239–62; Michel, Marc, 'Le Togo dans les relations

former German colonies to United Nations control raised these hopes.¹⁶³ First resolutions for Ewe unity appeared quite rapidly, and parts of the pan-Ewe movement, notably its leader in the French-mandated part of Togo, Sylvanus Olympio, also hoped for British support.¹⁶⁴

The pan-Ewe movement operated, during its roughly two decades of existence, under different labels, but the All Ewe Conference (AEC) was the most famous of all those groups. AEC leaders initially enjoyed enormous prestige at the local level, instead of being just an elitist movement: from 1945 to 1947, the offspring of the AEC as a political party, the Comité d'Union Togolaise (CUT), won the elections in Togo under the French mandate; Sylvanus Olympio became a deputy in the French National Assembly, and the CUT dominated the Territorial Assembly in Lomé. By 1948, the party could count on a considerable grass-roots support in southern Togo. This was followed by a period of decline, which was due both to French repression and to disappointment of party members with the apparent failure of the rather ambitious unification plans. The Parti Togolais du Progrès (PTP), the main competitor party, also had its strongest base among Ewe-speakers, but distanced itself from any pan-Ewe programme.¹⁶⁵

In British Togoland, the All-Ewe Conference was also influential, but it soon lost out against the Togo Union (TU), later transformed into the Togoland Congress. As AEC activists appeared too radically ethnicist, the non Ewe-speakers of the Volta Region refrained from taking part in their initiatives. The TU easily captured these voters and the more moderate Ewe-speaking electorate.

internationales au lendemain de la Guerre: prodrome de la décolonisation ou "petite mésentente cordiale"? (1945–1951)', in Institut de l'Histoire du Temps Présent (ed.), *Les Chemins de la Décolonisation de l'Empire Colonial Français* (Paris: CNRS Editions, 1986), 95–107, 100–4; Michel, Marc, 'The Decolonization of French Africa and the United States and Great Britain, 1945–1958', in Roy Bridges (ed.), *Imperialism, Decolonization and Africa: Studies Presented to John Hargreaves* (London – New York: Macmillan, 2000), 153–77, 160–2.

163 Lawrance, *Locality*, 43.

164 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/339, A.K. Amegashie; A.K. Anku; D.A. Chapman; and others, *A Resolution on Eweland* (without number), 31 Dec. 1945; see also Fieldhouse, David K., 'British Merchants and French Decolonization: UAC in Francophone Africa (1945–1960)', in Charles-Robert Ageron and Marc Michel (eds.), *L'Afrique noire française: l'heure des Indépendances* (Paris: CNRS Editions, 1992), 489–98, 491–2.

165 Keese, Alexander, 'Rigged elections? Democracy and manipulation in the late colonial state in French West Africa and Togo, 1944–1958', in Martin Thomas (ed.), *The French Colonial Mind Vol. 1* (Lincoln – London: University of Nebraska Press, 2011), 324–46, 335–6; Amenumey, *Movement*, 156–61.

In its early phase the pan-Ewe movement sought a particular 'Ewe tradition', which was both reinvented and popularised through the effort of Ewe-speaking journalism. An important role in this context was played by the *Ewe News-Letter*, a journal edited by the Anlo-born activist Daniel Chapman. Chapman and his collaborators greatly extended the length and scope of the 'tradition', stretching 'Ewe legends' beyond the Notsie myth back to Oyo and the Nigerian city-states. The authors of the *Ewe News-Letter* also tended to use an inclusive approach that involved all the communities of southern Togoland, whether they were in the end Ewe-speaking or not.¹⁶⁶ Chapman also came to the (rather problematic) conclusion that the 'pure' Ewe groups had been 'Peki', 'Anlo', and 'Tongu', in spite of the fact that the creation of the Tongu Confederacy after the Second World War was mainly a colonial idea.¹⁶⁷

British and French officials attempted to formulate a joint position with regard to the Ewe claim, but this was complicated, given that the French regarded this claim as subversive and invented by Communists, and did not have much interest in discussing the 'truth' behind the ethnic arguments.¹⁶⁸ Inside the British administration, the position was more ambiguous. In June 1945, the French commissioner of Togo, Jean Noutary, turned the Ewe argument against them: if a 'majority' of the Ewe lived under French rule, this was all the better for them. To prove their point, the French counted all speakers of languages related to Ewe as ethnic Ewe, changing their older categorisations, according to which not more than 14.4 per cent of their mandate was to be seen as 'Ewe'. It was a particularly weak point of the AEC that the movement had no response to these claims.¹⁶⁹

166 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/339, Daniel A. Chapman; A.K. Mensah; G. Ameche, *The Ewe News-Letter* 1, 21 May 1945, 1–2; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/339, Daniel A. Chapman, *The Ewe News-Letter* 3, July 1945, 3.

167 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/339, Daniel A. Chapman, *The Ewe News-Letter* 4, August 1945, 3. The idea of a 'Tongu identity' is, however, referred to in Amenumey, *Ewe*, 16.

168 Keese, Alexander, 'A Culture of Panic: "Communist" Scapegoats and Decolonization in French West Africa and French Polynesia (1945–1957)', *French Colonial History* 9, 2008, 131–45, 138. The leaders of the PTP, as the major rival of Olympio's CUT, increasingly served up this argument in their electoral propaganda. See, for example, ANT, 5APA/16, Parti Togolais du Progrès, [*pamphlète sans titre*] (without number), 2 June 1951.

169 ANT, 8APA/3/37, District Commissioner of Klouto, *Rapport: Cercle de Klouto* 1951 (without number), without date, 1; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/303, Mead, *Report on Native Affairs – Keta District. Quarter Ending September 30th, 1945*. (without number), without date, 3. On the questions of categories such as 'Minas', 'Watchi', and 'Ewe', compare the early historical account on Togo by the scholar-administrator Robert Cornevin, who only distinguishes the 'Adangme-Ga' from the 'Ewe', in Cornevin, Robert, *Histoire du Togo* (Paris: Editions Berger-Levrault, 1962), 76–7.

For British officials, it was seemingly easier to accept the basic assumption that ‘the Ewe’ as defined by the activists, were indeed a single unit and that there had previously been ‘Ewe states’, such as Peki and Anlo.¹⁷⁰ ‘Ewe identity’ now became an issue in the Togoland Reports to the United Nations committee, where the British authors claimed that ‘Ewe’ was the majority culture in all of the southern section of Togoland, with the single exception of Buem State, where ‘Akan’ was said to be dominant. Smaller, non Ewe-speaking groups were said to be totally ‘eclipsed’ by ‘the Ewe or the Akan’. British officials had thus entirely bought the story of ‘Ewe unity’: the Central Togo minorities, or the Lefana in Buem, no longer counted.¹⁷¹ Nevertheless, British officials argued that the two mandates could not be integrated into the Gold Coast – although they sympathised with Ewe ‘tribal’ sentiment.

Officials on both sides of the colonial border were in agreement about seeing a ‘strong national feeling’ among Ewe-speaking populations. When Ewe-speakers from Anlo went to clinics recently built in the nearby Lomé area, British officials held that ‘the Ewe people do not consider themselves French and British, but simply Ewe’.¹⁷² Even so, these observations frequently overlooked the other, parallel, discourses. One of those favoured Togoland identifications over Ewe identifications, and drove some of the All-Ewe Conference activists under British rule into the arms of Kwame Nkrumah’s Convention People’s Party (CPP). The latter benefited from these contradictions by winning a part of the Ewe-speaking electorate of the southern section of Togoland, during the Legislative Assembly Elections of the 1950s and during the Togoland Referendum of 1956. Togolese politicians in French institutions also played on both concepts, that is Togolese versus Ewe identifications.¹⁷³ Some of the former sympathisers of the Ewe reunification idea

170 TNA, PRO, CO/96/790/3, *Extract from the Report of the Committee on Constitutional Reform in the Gold Coast*. (without number, as Annex 11), without date.

171 Colonial Office, *Report... to the General Assembly of the United Nations on the Administration of Togoland under United Kingdom Trusteeship for the Year 1948* (London: His Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1949), 5, to be found in TNA, PRO, CO/96/790/3.

172 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/668, Jas Turner, Director of Medical Services, Medical Department in Accra, to Colonial Secretary of the Gold Coast (n° 1560/13), 28 Aug. 1948; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/668, J.C. Murphy, Medical Officer, Medical Department, Keta, to Turner, *French Medical Authorities – Medical Treatment to Gold Coast Citizens*. (n° K128/48–9.), 18 Aug. 1948.

173 Marguerat, Yves, “‘Nous ne sommes pas des AOFiens’: Les difficiles relations du Togo et de l’AOF”, in Charles Becker, Saliou Mbaye, and Ibrahima Thioub (eds.), *AOF: réalités et héritages: Sociétés ouest-africaines et ordre colonial, 1895–1960* (Dakar: Direction des Archives du Sénégal, 1997), 273–82, 280.

amongst the chiefs, like Léléklélé I of Agu-Agbetiko, became supporters of the 'Togoland idea'.¹⁷⁴

British administrators accepted the claim for an ethnic 'Ewe identity', but worried from the outset about the 'chauvinism' of 'the Ewes' who wished to marginalise other southern Togoland populations, as for example in Buem.¹⁷⁵ However, during the peak of pan-Ewe militancy, in the late 1940s, we even find a conflict within the movement about the definition of 'Ewe-ness'. The activists did not want to see a Peki or Anlo dominance within the movement, as those communities were not original 'Togoland'.¹⁷⁶ The meetings of the chiefs of the four existing 'native states' on Togoland territory under British mandate, Akpini, Asogli, Awatime, and Buem – officially discussing the nomination of a delegate of the southern section of Togoland to the Legislative Council in Accra – had indeed an ambiguous position towards pan-Ewe statements. The Togo Union rapidly dominated these occasions, and most chiefs lost their sympathies for the more radical positions of the All-Ewe Conference. Therefore, 'Ewe unification' disappeared from the agenda by the late 1940s.¹⁷⁷

Between 1944 and 1949, however, the question of 'Ewe identity' also became part of a generational conflict. In Anlo, the younger literate populations supporting the Ewe Union campaigned for pan-Ewe activist Daniel Chapman of Achimota as future 'Ewe representative' for the Gold Coast Legislative Council in January 1945, against the candidate of the *Awoame Fia*, Julius Tamakloe.¹⁷⁸ In British Togoland, young activists rebelled against their limited rights under 'Ewe customs', which subordinated them in political communication to their *asafotawo* (age set leaders) and their stool fathers. Under the cover of Ewe

174 ANT, 2APA, Cercle de Klouto, 350, District Commissioner of Klouto to Cédile, French Commissioner of Togo, *a/s chefferie du Canton d'Agou-Nyongbo: examen des requêtes en date du 14 et du 21 Novembre 1949 du Chef Léléklélé, du village indépendant d'Agou-Agbétiko* (n° 305.), 25 Feb. 1950, 3.

175 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/94, Chief Commissioner of Gold Coast Colony, *Note: [Situation in Southern Togoland]* (without number), 30 April 1949.

176 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/446, District Commissioner of Kpandu, *Quarterly Report on the Kpandu Area of the Ho/Kpandu District for the Quarter ending 30th June, 1946*. (without number), without date, 1; Callaway, 'Politics', 127.

177 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/94, Dixon, Senior District Commissioner of Ho, to Mangin, Chief Commissioner of Gold Coast Colony (n° S.0167/16), 21 Dec. 1948; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/94, Dixon to Mangin, *Representation of the Southern Section of Togoland in the Legislative Council* (n° S.0167/25), 11 Jan. 1949, 1.

178 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/303, Assistant District Commissioner of Keta, *Keta District Native Affairs Report 1st Quarter, 1945*. (without number), without date, 1.

activism, they attacked 'traditional' structures and what they described as autocratic rule.¹⁷⁹

The Togo Union and the Togoland Youth Association pushed the Ewe issue increasingly into the background in favour of the joint Togoland discourse – which turned against the 'Gold Coast Ewes' organised first in the AEC, and, later on, in the CPP. The inhabitants of southern Togoland complained that 'foreigners' were attempting to take over political power in 'their country'.¹⁸⁰ In French Togo, the political competition between two 'Ewe' leaders pursuing distinct programmes lowered the interest in the Ewe issue from the late 1940s. The colonial administration believed in 'Ewe propaganda' as a conspiracy by the Nkrumah government in Accra to annex the French-mandated territory.¹⁸¹ This was a misinterpretation. While Sylvanus Olympio and the CUT achieved unexpected political success in 1958 and took over political power in the mandate, the Ewe issue had by then long disappeared from the CUT's agenda.

In British Togoland, we find until 1953 an odd parallelism between local demands and British belief in the amalgamation of divisions that followed the strategies of the interwar period. This became obvious during a 1949 meeting of representatives of the four 'native states' and of delegates from the 'unamalgamated divisions' in Sovie. The Ewe issue had disappeared; the All-Ewe Conference was not present; and Ewe-speakers from the Gold Coast Colony were excluded from the discussions.¹⁸² In local conflicts, some 'Ewe

179 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/446, Hammerhurst, District Commissioner of Ho, *Quarterly Report on Ho District for the Period 1st January, 1946 to 31st March, 1946*. (without number), without date, 1.

180 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/94, Michael Batse, Secretary-General of the Togo Union, to Trygve Lie, Secretary-General of the United Nations, *Togoland Affairs* (without number), 11 May 1951, 3; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/94, Andrews S.K. Ekpey, Secretary of Togoland Youth Association, to Trygve Lie, *Togoland Affairs and Urgent Demand*. (without number), 31 July 1951, 2; see Skinner, Kate, 'Writing and Rallies: The Politics of "Freedom" in Southern British Togoland, 1953–1956', *Journal of African History* 48(1), 2007, 123–47, 132; and the brand-new Skinner, Kate, *The Fruits of Freedom in British Togoland: Literacy, Politics and Nationalism, 1914–2014* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 122–53.

181 See ANT, 2APA, Cercle de Klouto, 10, District Commissioner of Klouto to Péchoux, Commissioner of Togo (n° 97/CK), 18 Sep. 1952; ANT, 2APA, Cercle de Klouto, 10, *Procès-Verbal – Introduction sur le Territoire du Togo du Journal « Motabiabia » publié en langue indigène (Ewe), par le nommé Alfred Kpedu, de Kpedze* (n° 227), without date, 1; ANT, 2APA, Cercle de Klouto, 23, *Examen du Plan Secret du Gouvernement du Gold-Coast Relatif à l'Annexion du Togo sous Tutelle Britannique – Divulgué en Juillet 1953 – Traduction in extenso* (without number), without date, 2, 5.

182 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/94, Dixon, Senior District Commissioner of Ho, to Mangin, *Representation of the Southern Section of Togoland in the Legislative Council* (n° S.0167/25),

divisions' wished to break away from Peki State (belonging to the Gold Coast) and ultimately to enter Togoland. Apparently – according to observers from Nkrumah's CPP – Ewe-speaking groups of Togoland and Ewe-speaking groups of the Gold Coast Colony did not seem to feel many sympathies for one another. Electoral violence in the Anlo region added to the antagonism.¹⁸³

In 1951, in Togoland under British mandate, the pan-Ewe idea had lost its impetus. The question now was whether Togoland could become an independent territory outside of the Gold Coast, and leaders of the Togo Union now accused the Gold Coast CPP of 'subverting' the region and lobbied for a common territory for all 'Togoland'.¹⁸⁴ Nevertheless, Nkrumah's CPP made inroads in parts of the populations of Voltaland's southern section and won the support of discontented populations of several smaller areas. This was not sufficient to win the referendum for integration into the Gold Coast in the southern part of the trusteeship territory – they received the necessary votes through an overwhelming CPP majority in the north – but the regionalist 'Togolander' sentiment, even in the south, only had a narrow majority. As the votes were counted as a single regional block, British Togoland finally became Ghana's Trans-Volta Togoland District in 1957.¹⁸⁵

In French Togo, the CUT's 1958 electoral victory made Olympio the Prime Minister of a now autonomous state, and brought about the country's independence in 1960. This could have brought the unification issue back onto the agenda of the larger region, but it did not. Leaders of Olympio's party were content to establish CUT rule in the 'recalcitrant' parts of the country and to punish PTP supporters through levies for having voted for the 'wrong party'.¹⁸⁶

11 Jan. 1949, 1; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/94, Chief Commissioner of the Colony, *Note: [Situation in Southern Togoland]* (without number), 30 April 1949.

183 PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D 307, *Copy: Draft Statement by the Minister of Justice* (without number), without date; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/120, President of Ewe Youth Movement in Keta, to Arden-Clarke, Governor of Gold Coast, *The Shooting Incident at Suipe in Avenor, Anlo State* (without number), 10 Nov. 1950, 1.

184 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/94, Michael Batse, Secretary-General of Togo Union, to Trygve Lie, Secretary-General of the United Nations, *Togoland Affairs* (without number), 11 May 1951, 2; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/94, Andrews S.K. Ekpey, Secretary of Togoland Youth Association, to Trygve Lie, *Togoland Affairs and Urgent Demand*. (without number), 31 July 1951, 1.

185 Nugent, *Smugglers*, 189–92.

186 These *règlements de comptes* become visible in a number of documents, see ANT, 2APA, Cercle de Klouto, 23, Kokevi to District Commissioner of Klouto-Kpalimé (without number), 22 Dec. 1958; ANT, 2APA, Cercle de Klouto, 23, *Aff. Sowonou Antonio* (without number), 27 Dec. 1958; ANT, 2APA, Cercle de Klouto, 23, *Adjoint du Chef de Circonscription* of

This settlement of scores went on at the regional level until the assassination of Olympio in 1963: former important advocates of the Ewe issue such as Paramount Chief Pebi IV of Agou Nyogbo took an active part in persecuting local PTP politicians as henchmen of 'French oppression'.¹⁸⁷ Far from being resurrected, the pan-Ewe project was buried. Sylvanus Olympio was not at all ready to give up any of his power, and the unification idea only remained a source of irritation between the two independent governments.

'The Bigmen Get Small; The Small Ones Big':¹⁸⁸ *The Regional Scope of the Battle for Autonomy and Resource Allocation*

Apart from the international discussion, the reorganisation of Togoland in the British-mandated part, and communal reform on the French side, created a hidden local dimension of conflict and change, in which 'Ewe mobilisation' had a different sense.¹⁸⁹ Some local struggles involved established paramount rulers and sub-chiefs, others mobilised so-called 'youngmen'.¹⁹⁰ These conflicts appeared, above all, in Anlo and the Tongu Confederacy: they led to the creation of militias – such as by the *fiawo* of Tefle, Sukpe, and Vume – and to violent clashes in the first half of the 1950s.¹⁹¹ Everyone referred to United Nations trusteeship: in September 1945, the divisional chiefs of the mainly Ewe-speaking communities of Liati, Fudome, and Vli refused to pay

 Klouto, *Etat des sommes perçues par les dirigeants du C.U.T. après les élections du 27-4-1958 et 9-4-61 dans les villages Agou Nyongbo Dalave et Agou Nyongbo Agbetiko* (without number), 28 Oct. 1963; Nieuwaal, E. Adriaan B. van Rouveroy van, 'Ewe Chiefs and Ewe Legal Traditions in Togo and Benin: The Evolution of Traditional Authority, 1940–1990', in Benjamin Lawrance (ed.), *A Handbook of Eweland: The Ewe of Togo and Benin* (Accra: Woeli Publishing Services, 2005), 145–60, 157.

187 ANT, 2APA, Cercle de Klouto, 350, E.K. Peby IV, Paramount Chief of *canton* of Agou Nyogbo; Hilaire Biem, President of CUT section of Agou Nyogbo, and others, to Administrator of Subdivision of Klouto (without number), 24 March 1962, 1.

188 Quote is from Interview with *Togbe* Kutumua VIII, Village Chief of Agou Kebo Dzigbe, Agou Region, Togo, 22 March 2009.

189 For the example of Have, see Kwaku, 'Tradition', 79–80.

190 See, on these generational conflicts, Waller, Richard, 'Rebellious Youth in Colonial Africa', *Journal of African History* 47(1), 2006, 77–92, 89.

191 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/712, Caldwell, Assistant District Commissioner of Keta, *Quarterly Report – Keta District January – March, 1951*. (without number), 13 April 1951, 1; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/342, Gardner, Assistant District Commissioner of Keta, to Commissioner of the Eastern Province, *Dabala Riot* (without number), 4 Feb. 1947, 2.

the taxes that the Akpini State Council had introduced with reference to New York!¹⁹²

Anlo in the 1940s was a particularly violent case. The nobility of Anloga was annoyed that *Togbe* Sri II preferred to live in Keta, close to the office of the British district commissioner.¹⁹³ The issue of 'Ewe-ness' was strategically used to impress the colonial power: the Anloga headmen claimed that the *Awoame Fia*'s 'absence' damaged the administration of taxes, which led to a lack of funds for the New Africa College, according to them the best such institution 'in the entire area occupied by the Ewe speaking tribes'.¹⁹⁴ Also, during the internal debates in Anlo before 1949, representatives of the 'Ewe parties' were duly invited to boost the prestige of the chiefs.¹⁹⁵ Reference to Ewe-ness was, however, most useful when it came to excluding groups on 'traditional grounds'. In 1946, the *Awoame Fia* of Anlo withdrew authority from the Atiavi Council, and defined the Lostofi clan as autonomous from the Atiavi. Furious, the Atiavi chiefs first tried to convince the *Awoame Fia* of his 'error'. Then, in a long petition to the British authorities, they explained that they were the descendants of the respective Ewe groups coming from Notsie and settling in Anlo, and that the Lostofi were former slaves coming from somewhere else. Thereby, the Atiavi managed to bring ethnic matters to the fore against a local decision regarded as unfair.¹⁹⁶ The second issue involved discussions about pre-eminence amongst clans within the states: the members of the kinship group

192 PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D/301, Asafoche Gavi, Chief of Liati Division, Akpini State, to Goldsworthy, Governor of the Gold Coast, *The Petition of the People of Laiti [sic], Fudome and Vli* (without number), 25 Sep. 1945, 1.

193 Greene, Sandra E., 'Sacred Terrain: Religion, Politics and Place in the History of Anloga (Ghana)', *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 30(1), 1997, 1–22, 12–5.

194 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/120, Kotsikui II, *Asafohene* in Tsiamé, Ve Division; Sogbe II, *Asafohene* in Tsiamé; Senu II, *Asafohene* in Tsiamé, all from the vicinity of Anloga, Anlo State, to Burns, Governor of Gold Coast (without number), 13 Nov. 1944.

195 See PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/120, Sri II, *Awoame Fia* of Anlo, as president; and other *asafohenewa*, and S.E. Akrobotu, Councillor and President of the Ewe Union in Keta, *Anlo State Council Resolution – No. 3 of 1943: Resolution passed by the Anlo State Council in Regard to the Appointment of Finance Board Members*. (n° 3), 4 March 1943; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/120, District Commissioner of Keta to Commissioner of the Eastern Province (n° 207/35/S.F.g.), 30 April 1945.

196 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/120, Atiavishi, Fetish Priest, self-declared Descendant of 'Ancestor Dzoglamate'; Chief Adia II, President of the Town Council of Atiavi; and others, *Petition from all the Chiefs and the Members of Atiavi Addressed to His Excellency the Governor Sir Alan Burns, K.C.M.G etc. against Encroachment upon the National Rights of the People and the Continuous Injustice meted out to them by Hon. Togbi Sri II, C.B.E.* (without number), 15 March 1946.

of Adzovia, regarding themselves as the 'Paramount Ruling Tribe' of Anlo, protested against the particularly powerful position of the Anlo *Awadada*, Awusu Katsriku II, holding that in Peki such deviations from the 'customary rules' would be impossible.¹⁹⁷ In 1952 the state council even suspended the *Awoame Fia*, which meant the end of de facto power of Anlo institutions over neighbouring communities. This was not what young protesters in Keta or Anloga had wanted, and it provoked new riots, now in favour of a strongly conservative cause.¹⁹⁸ These activities seriously disturbed the creation of a newly elected body, the South Anlo Local Council. The Nkrumah government employed police forces against rioters, as this government was hostile to the sympathisers of *Togbe* Sri II and feared for its own party members as victims of the riots. In 1953, a 'mob' of 'youngmen' plundered the houses of 'separatists', leading to the murder of the councillor of Avevor and the disappearance of Chief Adjorlolo of Atorkor. Many voters from the other constituencies in the region went straight over to the CPP in fear of these riots; the uproar on the Keta Peninsula only calmed down around the 1956 election.¹⁹⁹ In this context, it is absolutely remarkable that the 'traditional authorities' in Anloga and Keta did very little to reactivate the question of Ewe solidarity during this particular conflict. Quite obviously, the principle of Ewe unity was no longer seen as appealing enough to be mentioned in local conflicts – even in Anlo.

The *Pekihene* encountered a period of similar difficulties in the 1940s and the rest of his power eroded. The *Fia* of Awudome and *Benkumhene* of Peki State, *Togbe* Adai Kwasi Adom IX, withdrew from this native state, challenging the 'traditional paramountcy' of Kwadzo De X of Peki. The Awudome supported this decision with alleged 'historical tradition', claiming that their community had been the first to revolt against Akwamu rule, back in 1829. They also demanded, repeatedly, a United Nations inquiry into the matter. However, the British, who at this point were still convinced that the future lay in Ewe

197 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/120, Agotelor to Mangin, Chief Commissioner of Gold Coast Colony (without number), 10 June 1949, 1; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/712, Peake, Assistant District Commissioner of Keta, *Quarterly Report – Keta District. October – December, 1950.* (without number), 17 Jan. 1951, 2.

198 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/712, Cowley, Government Agent in Keta, *Quarterly Report – Keta District April – June, 1952.* (without number), 14 July 1952, 3; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/712, Cowley, *Quarterly Report – Keta District July – September, 1952.* (without number), 14 Oct. 1952, 1, 3.

199 Callaway, Barbara J., 'Transitional Local Politics: Tradition in Local Government Elections in Aba, Nigeria; Keta, Ghana', *African Studies Review* 15(3), 1972, 403–12, 406–8.

unity, ignored these pledges.²⁰⁰ While in the end the paramount chief of Peki and the district commissioner of Akuse managed to convince the Regent of Awudome, Etiku, to accept continued allegiance to the Peki Native State, the *Fia* and other chiefs refused to pay taxes and to participate in state organisations.²⁰¹ In 1952, Peki technically became a part of the Volta District, under the administration of the Government Agent (former district commissioner) in Ho, but even this did not bolster the *Pekihene's* lost reputation. The members of the Awudome State Council again demanded their independence from Peki, relying on a relatively sterile 'Eweland' argumentation, which insisted on an 'Ewe custom' that favoured divisions over 'native states'.²⁰²

In the 'amalgamated states', problems were similar, and the power of the paramount chiefs waned. In the case of Akpini, the state council in Kpandu failed to intervene in the struggle for the chieftaincy of Wusuta, which had become increasingly violent.²⁰³ In Alavanyo, the Akpini State Council also attempted to press the reinstatement of formerly destooled ex-chief Godwin Anku as Atakora V, but failed as much as in Tsrukpe.²⁰⁴ As no established mechanisms had been created for conflict resolution, 'native states' such as

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- 200 PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D 302, Togbe Adai Kwasi Adom IX, *Fia* of Awudome; Togbe Adzesi Dzago VI, *Fia* of Avenui; and others, *Resolution* (without number), without date; PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D 307, Acting District Commissioner of Akuse to Commissioner of the Eastern Province (n° 1141/190/1920.), 28 May 1946, 1; PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D 302, Acting Provincial Commissioner of the Eastern Province to Chief Commissioner of Gold Coast Colony, *Awudome-Peki Relation* (without number), 24 June 1946, 1–2; PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D 302, Adai Kwasi Adem IX, *Fia* of Awudome, *Petition of the Fiaga and People of Awudome* (without number), 7 May 1946, 4–5.
- 201 PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D 302, District Commissioner of Akuse to Chief Commissioner of Gold Coast Colony, *Awudome Affairs*. (n° 0141/SF.5/56), 29 May 1951.
- 202 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/529, Crawford for Chief Commissioner of Gold Coast Colony, to Government Agent in Akuse (n° 554/13), 27 May 1952; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/529, Saka Vume, Secretary of Awudome State Council, *Address of Welcome by the People of Awudome to the Government Agent Ho on 1st Official Visit*. (without number), 29 July 1952.
- 203 PRAAD (Accra), Ho Branch, DA/D/301, John Green, Assistant District Commissioner of Kpandu, to Acting Senior District Commissioner of Ho, *Wusuta Native Affairs* (n° 0019/S.F.1/2), 18 June 1947, 1–2; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/673, *Togbe Abiu Gedodoe, Adontenhene* of Wusuta Division, Akpini State, to Assistant District Commissioner of Kpandu, *Wusuta Constitutional Dispute* (without number), 13 Oct. 1951.
- 204 PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D/301, Senior District Commissioner of Ho to Chief Commissioner of Gold Coast Colony, *Alavanyo Native Affairs* (n° S.010/SF.3/26.), 24 April 1948, 1; PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D/301, Senior District Commissioner of Ho to Chief Commissioner of Gold Coast Colony, *Amalgamation of the Tsrukpe Division with the Akpini State* (n° S.0097/23.), 21 May 1948, 1.

Akpini were very vulnerable to conflicts in their key division: when in Kpandu, after the death of Dagadu IV, a stool conflict broke out between stool father Charles Agbodra and self-installed Paramount Chief Dionisius Yao Nyavor, this paralysed not only Kpandu but the whole 'native state'.²⁰⁵

In these internal conflicts, the attention was focused on hostilities between the 'central division' of the 'native states', and groups in other 'divisions', which led to memoranda and reflections on pre-colonial history. The asset of 'Ewe unity', and the related 'traditions', seemed useful for a short time. Even so, very quickly after the peak of international pan-Ewe campaigns, the Ewe issue disappeared as an argument. In 1953, divisional chiefs within the Tongu Confederacy even demanded the deletion of the reference to 'Ewe states' in the State Councils (Colony and Southern Togoland) Ordinance No. 8, to the astonishment of the British administrators.²⁰⁶

Many Togoland communities believed nonetheless that they needed legal protection against future interventions of the *Pekihene* or of the *Awoame Fia*: the fear of the 'classical' states lingered on. This was in part irrational, but chiefs such as in the Tongu Confederacy tried to shut out the *Awoame Fia* and the *Pekihene* from Trans-Volta Togoland regional entities forever. Local chiefs feared historical prerogatives of these 'traditional Ewe rulers'. Even so, most local rulers did not refrain from strategic alliances with Anlo and Peki, whenever they were politically advantageous.²⁰⁷

A good example of the manoeuvres of population groups between states are the Mafi, who were divided between Anlo and Ada, and later the Tongu Confederacy. In 1912, the British had described this separation as 'traditional'. This idea was based on Mafi behaviour in an 1865 war, and indeed supported by the Anlo Mafi Union – an association that included many local dignitaries.²⁰⁸ In the 1940s, however, many leaders of Mafi villages wished to bring the

205 PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D/301, *Memorandum on Kpandu Native Affairs*. (without number), without date, 16–7.

206 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/697, Acting Senior District Commissioner of Ho to Chief Commissioner of Gold Coast Colony, *Tongu Confederacy Resolution*. (n° S.0114/10.), 23 April 1948; PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D 311, *Togbe C.K. Ruipah III, Fiaga of Mepe*, President of the Tongu Confederacy; *Togbe Hlitabo II, Fiaga of Agave*; and others, *Tongu Confederacy Resolutions*. (without number), without date, 1.

207 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/712, Caldow, Assistant District Commissioner of Keta, *Quarterly Report – Keta District October – December, 1951*. (without number), 28 Jan. 1952, 1, 3; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/712, Caldow, *Quarterly Report – Keta District January – March, 1952* (without number), 8 April 1952, 1.

208 PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D/300, *Appendix 'C': Summary of the Historical Background to the Division of the Mafis*. (without number), without date [1950?].

whole of the group into the Tongu Confederacy, as taxes were lower than in Anlo, and prospects of political influence greater. As a 'traditional' narrative, these Mafi petitioners argued they had a 'natural heritage' that made them 'Tongus', which was 'et[h]nologically' proven and involved 'common dialectical, cultural, religious and industrial characteristics'; thus they were members of a 'Tongu race' that was 'ethnical[ly] homogenous'. All groups in question spoke Ewe – there was thus no particular advantage in referring to Ewe identification, in particular because Anlo was a principal 'Ewe state'.²⁰⁹ However, the petitioners claimed that as part of the 'Ewe nation' they could better understand the injustice of refusing to allow people of one stock to live together in one country!²¹⁰

In a pending case whose resolution remained unclear until 1953, representatives of Mafi communities from both sides of the Gold Coast-Togoland border employed the Notsie myth of 'all Ewe tribes' and the joint exodus.²¹¹ A minority part of the communities on Gold Coast territory refused the new arrangement

209 PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D/300, Kwazi Abliza III, *Fia* of Volo and President of Tongu Confederacy Council; Hadjor II, *Fia* of Bakpe and Vice-president; J.K. Zogah, *Fia* of Sukpe; C.K. Asipati III, *Fia* of Mepe; *Tongu Group Council Meeting – Fifth Session at Mafi Abidome on Wednesday the 17th of January, 1945*. (without number), without date; PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D/300, Assem III, *Fia* of Mafi; J.K. Asafo III, *Makralo* of Mafi; and others, *Petition passed by the Mafi Divisional Council held at Adidome on the 14th Day of June, 1950, under the Presidency of Togbe Assem III, of Mafi and the following members...* (without number), 14 June 1950, 1; PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D/300, Togbe Assim III, *Fia* of Mafi; E.K. Awittor-Bedi, Secretary of Mafi Division, to Chairman of Select Committee on Local Government and Chief Commissioner of Gold Coast Colony, *Re Unification of Mafi Divisions and Joining of Tongu Confederacy Council*. (without number), 13 Sep. 1950, 1.

210 PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D/300, Assem III and others, *Petition passed by the Mafi Divisional Council held at Adidome on the 14th Day of June, 1950 ...*, 2.

211 PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D/300, 'People of Northern Side Mafi', including Assem III, *Fiaga* of Mafi and others; to Chief Commissioner of Gold Coast Colony (without number), 7 Sep. 1951, 2; PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D/300, Asafo III of Mafi to Gbedemah, Minister of Local Government of Gold Coast, *Resolution passed by the Mafi State Council held at Adidome this 27th Day of July under the Chairmanship of Mankralo J.K. Asafo III., of Mafi.: Resolution of the Unification of North/South of Mafi*. (without number), 27 July 1951, 1; PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D/300, Kwasiyini Agyeman III, Chief of Adidome, *Copy: Declaration* (without number), 17 Oct. 1948, 1; PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D/300, Assem III, *Fiaga* of Mafi State; Mankralo Akpafo VI; and others, to Arden-Clarke, Governor of the Gold Coast, *Resolution of the People of Anlo Mafi and Mafi Dugame for Reunion*. (without number), 12 June 1953, 1; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/712, Assistant District Commissioner of Keta, *Quarterly Report – Keta District – July – September, 1950*. (without number), 4 Oct. 1950, 2.

of a joint Mafi division under *Fia* Assem III, and argued from the standpoint of their own historical 'tradition'. Most of the new Voltaland administration installed by the Nkrumah government favoured Assem's position, but the complaint caused endless inquiries.²¹²

In some more marginal communities, the use of the Ewe argument in local conflict was even more attractive. We have already seen this for rulers of 'Ewe' communities which had previously been part of Ada State, who knew how, when it suited them, to play on the concept of Ewe unification to further their interests. In January 1945, spokesmen of these communities had convinced the district commissioner that '56,000 Ewes being controlled by the Ada Manche' needed to be liberated. It was unclear how this was supposed to happen. The chief of Agrave, one of those 'Ewe units', refused to become a future member of a joint division of the eight communities as he feared Anlo interference.²¹³ Other chiefs agreed with this critique.

Another issue was the relationship of the communities of the Volta Region to the state of Akwamu. The relations between Ewe-speaking locals and the Akwamu authorities – descendants of the 'plunderers' of the 1870s – were particularly interesting. In the 1940s, the region of Volo, now a small *fiagadom* (rulership), had been exempted from Akwamu rule and become part of the newly created Tongu Confederacy.²¹⁴ After some violence in 1937, the *Akwamuhene* also accepted that Dufor would leave Akwamu rule.²¹⁵ However, the Akwamu Native Authority reserved for itself a part of its rights

212 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/712, Caldwell, Assistant District Commissioner of Keta, *Quarterly Report – Keta District April – June, 1951*. (without number), 20 July 1951, 4; PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D/300, Thomas, Government Agent in Sogakope, to Regional Officer of Trans-Volta Togoland Region, *Report on Mafi Unification and the possible Reorganisation of the Central Tongu Local Council* (n° TO.4/55), 17 Nov. 1952, 1–2; PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D/300, G.K. Dordoye, Councillor of Mafi State; A. Die-Dordoye, Secretary-General of Mafi Youth Association (MYA); J.K. Nutakor, Chairman of Central Tongu Local Council, and others, to Arden-Clarke, *Unification of Mafi*. (without number), 20 Aug. 1953, 1; PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D/300, J.A. Cowley, Acting Regional Officer of Volta Region, to Secretary of Governor of the Gold Coast, *Mafi Unification* (0020/SF.4/Vol.2/315), 15 Oct. 1953, 1; PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D/300, *Appendix 'A': Mafi Unification – Villages visited in Mafi Dugame Division* (without number), without date.

213 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/303, Assistant District Commissioner of Keta to Commissioner of the Eastern Province, *Native Affairs Report [for Keta] – 4th Quarter, 1944*. (n° 116/4/31.), 13 Jan. 1945, 3.

214 PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D/295, District Commissioner of Keta to Commissioner of the Eastern Province in Koforidua, *Duffor Native Affairs* (n° 0010/35), 26 Nov. 1946.

215 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/250, Abutia Kwadzo XII, Chief of Abutia Teti, to Assistant District Commissioner of Ho (without number), 21 Dec. 1937.

in some of the particularly rich villages and towns, which continued to cause problems.

Frankadua, a small town but with an important market, was a test case. Kwasi Abliza III, the *Fia* of Volo, claimed rights over this town.²¹⁶ The British administrators east of the Volta intended to solve the issue, but their colleagues in the Gold Coast Colony were more interested in maintaining the prestige of the *Akwamuhene*.²¹⁷ For a period of five years, the situation of Frankadua thus remained unclear: tax payments were suspended; police forces from both Akwamu and the Tongu Confederacy occasionally entered the town and several inhabitants were shot.²¹⁸ The 'Volos' in Frankadua produced numerous pages of 'traditional claims', explaining why the town had to be separated from Akwamu. The Akwamu councils argued with 'traditional rights'.²¹⁹ Kwasi Abliza III accused 'the Akwamus' of having usurped the land Volo had been given in 1873.²²⁰ Part of Abliza's interest was in improving his own position in Dufor, where he was a contested ruler, through success in the Frankadua issue and the hereditary conflict with Akwamu.²²¹ In the 1950s, the debate became even more heated. The Volo headmen pointed to a census in which 607 inhabitants of the market town defined themselves as 'Ewe' (and, oddly, 50 more as 'Ewe-Volo'), while only 12 had identified themselves as 'Akwamu'.²²² Volo rulers were now insistent that the inhabitants of Frankadua were 'Ewe' who wished to live with their 'kinsmen'

216 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/108, P. Gardner, Acting District Commissioner of Keta, to Kwasi Abliza III, *Fia* of Volo (n° 1881/SAD/45.), 24 Oct. 1946; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/108, Acting Senior District Commissioner of Keta to Commissioner of the Eastern Province, *Volo-Akwamu Dispute over Frankadua* (n° EO.S.0073/4.), 31 Oct. 1947.

217 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/108, T.R.O. Mangin, Chief Commissioner of Gold Coast Colony, to Colonial Secretary of Gold Coast, *Frankadua (Akwamu State) Native Affairs*. (n° 025/SF.12/33.), 5 Feb. 1948, 2; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/108, Senior District Commissioner of Ho to Chief Commissioner of Gold Coast Colony, *Volta River – Ada Districts Boundary – Akwamu – Tongu Affairs* (n° 0409/41), 30 Aug. 1950.

218 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/108, Senior District Commissioner of Ho to Chief Commissioner of Gold Coast Colony, *Frankadua Affairs* (n° 0409/33), 31 July 1950.

219 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/108, Senior District Commissioner of Ho to Chief Commissioner of Gold Coast Colony, *Akwamu – Tongu Native Affairs* (n° 0409/47), Sept. 1950, 1–2.

220 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/108, Kwasi Abliza III, *Fiaga* of Volo, to Creasy, Governor of the Gold Coast, *Volo – Akwamu Dispute: Petition of Kwasi Abliza III Dufiaga of Volo State for and on behalf of the Duffor-Volo Native Authority* (without number), 11 Oct. 1948, 1.

221 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/713, Acting District Commissioner of Keta to Commissioner of the Eastern Province (n° 2070/94/96), 14 Nov. 1946.

222 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/108, *Frankadua (Extracted from file 300&4PS124-125)* (without number), without date.

in the Tongu Confederacy. Although many Ewe-speakers had had functions in the Akwamu State, the claim had the sympathies of most British administrators in Togoland who agreed that ‘those places with a preponderance of Ewes should be administered by Tongu.’²²³

In 1953, the village chief of Frankadua, Kofi Tulasi II, and a number of the community’s leaders won over the deputy of the Volta Region in the Gold Coast Legislative Assembly, P.D. Adjani, to their cause. They complained bitterly in Keta that ‘from time memorial [*sic*] we the inhabitants of Frankadua are Ewe speaking people’; that they felt like Ewe and were part of the ‘Tongu sub-group’ of their ethnic grouping; and that they wished to become part of a local council that only involved Ewe communities.²²⁴ British officials were sympathetic to the campaign, but the final decision was left to the Nkrumah government.²²⁵ Even nowadays, Frankadua retains its difficult legacy, after becoming a part of the Volta District in post-colonial Ghana. As recently as in 1999, ‘ethnic tensions’ provoked a near-battle between ‘Anlos’ (now meaning the Ewe-speakers of the town, which is somewhat curious) and ‘Akwamus’.²²⁶

Smaller groups like the Togome and Fodjoku followed the Volo and Dufor initiatives, and in November 1946 they obtained, after protests, the promise of the paramount chief of Akwamu to be integrated within the Tongu Confederacy. The question of symbolic allegiance to the *Akwamuhene* was, however, a problem.²²⁷ In a meeting before the Akwamu Native Authority, ‘traditions’ were mobilised. The *Wirempihene* challenged the Togome claim, criticising the group because they ‘speak Ewe, yet...stay on Akwamu land’. According to this

223 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/108, Dixon to Kerr, Senior District Commissioner in Akuse (n° 0068/SF.3/125), 5 Dec. 1950, 1.

224 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/108, Smeham, *Frankadua* (n° 0068/S.F.3), 14 Feb. 1953; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/108, Kofi Tulasi II, *Tefia*, and others; to Gbedemah, Minister of Local Government of the Gold Coast (without number), 12 Feb. 1953; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/108, District Commissioner of Keta to Adjani (n° S.0068/SF.3/149), 15 Feb. 1953.

225 PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D 311, George Sinclair, Regional Officer of Togoland, to Secretary of Government of the Gold Coast, *The Tongu Confederacy* (n° S.0114/117), 20 Oct. 1952, 2.

226 United Nations, Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), *Reports submitted by States Parties under Article 9 of the Convention – Seventeenth Periodic Reports of States Parties due in 2002: Addendum Ghana, 31 May 2002* (Geneva: United Nations, 2002), 31; Khan, Naefa, ‘The Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice in Ghana: Working in the micro and around the macro’, in Parlevliet, Michelle, Guy Lamb, and Victoria Maloka (eds.), *Defenders of Human Rights, Managers of Conflict, Builders of Peace?* (Cape Town: University of Cape Town, 2005), 64–82, 76–7.

227 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/713, District Commissioner of Akuse to Commissioner of the Eastern Province, *Togome and Forjoku Affairs*. (n° 2715/186/08 Vol.III.), 22 Nov. 1946.

version, the Togome were 'strangers' tolerated by the *Akwamuhene*, while the Togome described themselves as 'autochthons' on the land.²²⁸

British officials agreed that those groups 'are quite clearly Ewes' and 'should join their brothers in the Tongu Confederacy', but they struggled to understand the old Akwamu-Togome-Fodjoku alliance or the realities of local rule. Nkwanta, the *Fia* of Togome, insisted on the existence of a historical border with Akwamu; the Fodjoku added to the confusion by holding that the Togome were 'Anlos' and, hence, another type of 'Ewe'. Also, the accounts of behaviour during the Akwamu invasion were very contradictory.²²⁹ At the end of the 1940s, the senior district commissioner in Ho was desperate: the Togome and Fodjoku communities were 'Ewe speakers' and wanted to 'join their Ewe brethren', but had various claims against each other. This led colonial officials to fear the worst for other, larger cases.²³⁰

'Ewe' solidarity in times of the impressively large, ethnically expressed group mobilisation of the AEC and of similar organisations, was often only a part of the picture. Elsewhere, the old, local conflicts continued unaffected by the pan-Ewe idea. At the heart of the various 'native states', conflicts were often local: within the Tongu Confederacy, Tefle inhabitants claimed they had to defend themselves against Bakpa attempts at occupying their land; the paramountcy of the Ho Division – the central division of the Asogli Native State – was contested over decades between the villages of Dome and Bankoe.²³¹ In the latter case as in many, ethnic arguments were *sometimes* employed, when convenient: thus the contenders from Ho-Bankoe accused the *Howusu* of being a member of a 'stranger' group that had only learned its proficiency in the Ewe language after its arrival in the Ho region.²³²

228 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/713, *Discussion on Togome and Forjoku Affairs – during Akwamu Native Authority Meeting on Tuesday 12th November, 1946*. (without number), without date.

229 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/713, Gardner, District Commissioner of Keta, to Commissioner of the Eastern Province, *Togome and Forjoku Affairs*. (n° 0048/5), 2 Dec. 1946 [dated '2 Dec. 1936'], 1–2; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/713, Judd, Acting Commissioner of the Eastern Province, 23-10-33: *In the Supreme Court of the Gold Coast Colony, Eastern Province, held at Akuse on Monday the 23rd Day of October 1933, before his Worship Leonard Warner Judd, Acting Commissioner Eastern Province. – Chief Asamoah Nkwanta – Plaintiff Appellant vs: Agobodjo & Chief Afum Asare – Defendants – Respondents*. (without number), without date, 1, 6, 12, 15.

230 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/713, Senior District Commissioner of Ho to Commissioner of the Eastern Province (without number), without date [1948].

231 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/712, Caldwell, Assistant District Commissioner of Keta, *Quarterly Report – Keta District July – September, 1951*. (without number), 16 Oct. 1951, 5.

232 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/458, Assistant District Commissioner of Ho, *Comments on the Resolution of the Bankoe 'Divisional' Council dated the 2nd August 1951*. (without number), without date, 1.

As we have seen, in the Adaklu community the break with Anlo had been an obvious goal until the end of the Second World War. However, after 1945 the Adaklu suddenly wished for a 'return' to Anlo rule. They referred to the ancient political Anlo–Adaklu alliance formed against Ho and 'the other Ewe divisions' and their old cooperation with the Asante invaders.²³³

The debate on Ewe-ness could even be employed as argument for local debates in non-Ewe-speaking regions, such as Buem. It was used in the conflict about local education policy and the creation of schools in the first half of the 1950s. Buem elites refused to send their children to Ho Secondary School, as they feared compulsory education in the Ewe language. Under pressure, the British officials had to assure that 'no student is compelled to study Ewe'. However, as the conflict between Twi-speakers and Lefana-speakers escalated in the 1950s, the Ewe question faded into the background.²³⁴ In that respect, the *Omanhene* of Buem accused the Twi-speaking militants of 'tribalising' the conflict. Other, minority linguistic communities such as the Bowiri joined in the protest; and it also became connected to internal conflicts about the hierarchy of divisions and their leaders within the Buem Native State, but this was no longer about the Ewe.²³⁵

- 233 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/254, Gbogbi III, *Fiaga* of Adaklu; Lablublu III of Waya; Agbi III of Goefe; Krakani III of Helekpe, and others, to Togbi Sri II, *Awoame Fia* of Anlo (without number), 20 Feb. 1945, 1; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/254, Mead, District Commissioner of Ho, to Commissioner of the Eastern Province, *Adaklu Division (Ho/Kpandu and Keta Districts)* (n° 325/107/31.), 13 Feb. 1946, 1; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/454, W.J. Caldwell, Assistant District Commissioner of Keta, to Senior District Commissioner of Ho, *Southern Adaklu Affairs*. (n° 0093/101.), 16 May 1951.
- 234 PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D 309, Mangin, Chief Commissioner of Gold Coast Colony, to Commissioner of the Eastern Province (n° .../9/38), 13 July 1945, 1–2; PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D/298, Nana Akuamoah IV, *Omanhene* of Buem, to Arden-Clarke, *Jasikan Native Affairs*. (without number), 8 May 1953; PRAAD (Ho Branch), File No. 2009/29, Sub-File No. 'A', *Omanhene* of Buem, *Petition to His Excellency the Governor, Sir Alan Cuthbert Maxwell Burns, K.C.M.G., etc. etc. on the Occasion of his Visit to the Buem State, Borada. 16th. February 1943*. (without number), without date, 2; Dickson, A.G., 'Mass Education in Togoland', *African Affairs* 49(195), 1950, 136–50, 137.
- 235 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/268, Nana Yaw Nyako II, *Ohene* of Worawora; Nana Akompi Firam III, *Ohene* of Kadjebi; Nana Kwasi Adu, and others, *Petition...* (without number), March 1945, 1; PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D 309, Nana Akuamoah IV, Acting President, Buem State Council, to District Commissioner of Ho, *Buem Native Authority Election of [sic]* (without number), 19 June 1946, 1; PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D 309, Nana K.O.Brantuo III, *Adontenhene* of Buem, Chief of Jasikan, and *asafohenes* and *stoolfathers*, *Petition...* (without number, translated from Lelemi), 11 Sep. 1946, 1; PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D 309, Nana Yaw Nyako II, *Woraworahene*, to District Commissioner of Kpandu (without number),

However, 'Ewe mobilisation' was used as a model outside of the Ewe-speaking areas. In the case of the tensions between the Lolobi and Akpafu in Buem, the Lolobi profited from their knowledge of the Ewe process to express political protest. Lolobi dignitaries argued that they should have been represented in the important debates at Lake Success in the United States, where the spokesmen 'of the Ewe' formulated their claims towards the trusteeship council of the United Nations. They claimed they did not, of course, have an 'Ewe identity', but they believed that even smaller ethnic groups should have the same right of mobilisation.²³⁶ Therefore, the Ewe example had an immense impact as a blueprint for local rhetorics.

The border continued to have its own dynamics. In 1943, the *Fiaga* of Bator had, in a land claim, described his opponents as 'Kpele strangers from Eve'; we find no solidarity between 'Ewe' when land rights and immigration were involved. Frequently, Ewe-speaking local councils voted for the expulsion of Ewe-speaking immigrants from community land, and if the latter came from the other side of the colonial border, they would often be insulted as 'French strangers'.²³⁷ By the same logic, in Agu Tafié, at the French side of the border in the Kpalimé region, the elders refused to accept the nephew of the retired paramount chief, Aboyo, as new 'traditional ruler', on the grounds that he had lived for the largest part of his life in the Gold Coast and thus adopted foreign manners!²³⁸ The colonial border could in that regard be exploited, in the perception of locals, beyond the ethnic solidarities.

In the region of Kpalimé, CUT leaders attempted to restore the popularity of their movement, which had come under mounting pressure in 1950, through

6 Oct. 1946; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/571, Duncan, Assistant District Commissioner of Kpandu, to District Commissioner of Ho, *Bowiri Affairs – Abdication of Divisional Chief* (n° 2729/85/1921.), 27 Nov. 1946; PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D/297, District Commissioner of Ho to Chief Commissioner of Gold Coast Colony, *Petition from the Natural Rulers and Elders of Worawora Division* (n° S. 0053/SF.2/Vol. 6/521.), 8 Dec. 1950, 2; PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D/298, Telegram from Nana Asafohene and Nana Ampeh Taphahene, 'on behalf of Akan group', Kadjebi, to Senior District Commissioner in Ho (n° S. 0109/Vol.3/246.), 23 July 1952.

236 PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D/299, Sub-Chief Jacob Akoteh, and others, to Burns (without number), without date, 2.

237 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/5, Kofi Djerekey, Acting *Mankralo* of Bator, and Kodjo Fiagbor Wusu Yao, to Colonial Secretary of the Gold Coast (without number), 12 October 1943; PRAAD (Ho Branch), NA/47, Nana Kataboa II, *Agosokubihene* and *Krontihene*; and elders, to Amanyagbe, and others, *A Letter of Warning* (n° AP3/1/56), 5 May 1956.

238 ANT, 2APA, Cercle de Klouto, 10, Administrator of Subdivision of Klouto, *Cercle de Centre, Subdivision de Klouto: Rapport Trimestriel, Année 1938 – 4^{ème} Trimestre* (without number), 23 Jan. 1939, 5.

their appearance as brokers in local conflicts involving parties from both the French and the British side of the border. In Baglo, P. Dogli offered the appropriate services to the paramount chief, Nana Buaka IV, in organising a meeting with the British district commissioner.²³⁹ This role of the CUT had nothing to do with the Ewe issue.

Most of the conflicts in the Kpalimé area remained on the strictly local level. They essentially reflected problems with decisions taken in the pre-colonial period, such as, in particular, fusions of villages in the Kuma region. The inhabitants of Totsi and Yokele complained that, during the confusions of the Asante incursions, the leader of Tsame had usurped the chieftaincy over the sub-region of the *canton*. This was then connected to longstanding land conflicts between Tsame and Totsi, which went on from the 1930s to 1970. Other, internal, conflicts as in Kuma-Apoti, or in Agu-Apegame, were also linked to the traumatic experience of the Asante invasions, but not the Ewe legends.²⁴⁰ Finally, the fate of the chiefs of Agu Nyogbo Agbetiko was discussed during the whole of the late colonial and the post-colonial phases: in the 1950s, this particular conflict was linked to the battles between the PTP (still in territorial power) and the CUT, hostilities that reappeared once again in 1970.²⁴¹ As in

239 ANT, 2APA, Cercle de Klouto, 23, District Commissioner of Klouto to Cédile, French Commissioner of Togo, *a/s requête du Chef Nana Buaka IV de Baglo* (n° 115/c.), 18 Sep. 1950, 1.

240 ANT, 2APA, Cercle de Klouto, 358, Kossi Fiasi, Planter, representative of *Collectivité Bokovi Asuka Edi* in Totsi, to District Commissioner of Klouto (without number), 25 Oct. 1951; ANT, 8APA/3/37, Tourot, District Commissioner of Klouto, to Péchoux, French Commissioner of Togo (n° 011/Cf.), 7 Feb. 1953, 1–2; ANT, 2APA, Cercle de Klouto, 358, Bokovi Emmanuel, Secretary of Chief Edi II of Kuma-Totsi, *Discours à Monsieur l'Administrateur de la F.O.M. Commandant le Cercle de Klouto; à l'occasion de l'Introduction de Joseph Koffi Edi II, Chef de Village de Kouma-Totsi – Le 6 Septembre 1958*. (without number), 6 Sep. 1958, 1; ANT, 2APA, Cercle de Klouto, 358, W.M. Kludea; Bassah Eben-Ezer, Secretary; Thomas Gbago; Fritz Komassi, *Jugement N° 35 du 27 Juillet 1959 du Tribunal Coutumier de Palimé: Affaire de Chefferie. Nyassem Assi Amoua Cultivateur à Kouma Apoti. Contre Gustave Amedome Chef du village Kouma Apoti*. (without number), 27 July 1959; ANT, 2APA, Cercle de Klouto, 358, CFF, *Note d'Information: Différend entre les villages de Kouma-Tsomé et Kouma-Totsi*. (n° 26.C/CFF), 6 Oct. 1969, 1.

241 ANT, 2APA, Cercle de Klouto, 350, Gidéon Avogan, notable; and others, all designed as 'Notables, Anciens et Le Chef Léléklélé I du village autonome d'Agou Agbétiko', to Commander of Brigade of the Gendarmerie Nationale, *Suppression inéluctable des faits rapports et plaintes injustes de notre village*. (without number), 15 Oct. 1953, 1, 3; ANT, 2APA, Cercle de Klouto, 350, K. Franklin West, Adjudant-Chief of the Gendarmerie Nationale; Gabriel Agbo, Gendarme, *Procès Verbal* (numbers illegible), 13 Oct. 1970, 1–5; ANT, 2APA, Cercle de Klouto, 350, Laurent Y. Agboyi, Secretary of Chief of Agou-Nyogbo-Agbetiko, to

most parts of British Togoland and of the Ewe-speaking regions of the Gold Coast Colony, ethnic mobilisation in French Togoland also had relatively little success. Under French rule, Ewe-speakers focused less on 'traditions' expressed through pre-colonial states, and more exclusively on village conflicts.

In rare situations, Ewe identification had importance as an argument in the French zone, but mainly with regard to local issues. An obvious example is the 'village' of Fongbe close to Tsévié, in the population centre of Lomé. In 1948, the *chef de quartier* (town ward headman) of Fongbe Apedome, Keïssou Abena, and his colleague in Fongbe Boeti, bitterly complained about the administrator of the subdivision of Tsévié, because the latter had confirmed the election of one Agama Dali, *chef de quartier* of Fongbe Zogbedji, to the position of chief of the whole 'independent village'. The claimants said they were extremely angry that, while the inhabitants of Apedome were 'Mina' originating from Ada, and those of Boeti 'Ewe' with their origins in Notsie, the colonial administration made a 'Fon' from Dahomey their chief. They cited the spokesmen of the All-Ewe Conference to make their point clear:

Here we refer to the notion of the Councillor of the French Union, Mr Savi de Tove, who defends a principle adopted as well by our representatives in the Local Assembly, which says the following: 'The nomination of the Ewe chiefs by the administration is not in line with the indigenous customs. *This is the reason for great troubles.* From this motive, it is necessary to abolish the decree [speaking of the text from 1st March 1945, about indigenous rule in Togo] and *leave the people their liberty to choose their chiefs to their convenience. This would be far more democratic*'.²⁴²

In spite of such threats coming from local elites, most local inhabitants, including the Ewe-speakers and Mina-speakers, were not at all interested in creating a real conflict. When the chief was elected, the 'stranger' Adama Dali managed to maintain, with support of a group of elders, that he was the 'traditional heir' of the ruling family, and he celebrated a crushing victory over his Ewe-speaking

F.D. Ali, Acting Togolese Minister of the Interior (without number), 19 Oct. 1970, 1; ANT, 2APA, Cercle de Klouto, 350, Antoine Agbenou, Attaché of the Administration, to Ministry of the Interior of Togo (n° 874/CK), 22 Oct. 1970.

242 ANT, 2APA, Cercle de Tsévié, 4, Keïssou Abena, chief of ward of Fongbe Apedome; and others; Zotaé Torglo, chief of ward of Boeti; Goli Apenon; Sogbo Awli, notables of Fongbe Boeti; to District Commissioner of Lomé, *aff. des Fongbés* (without number), 3 Nov. 1948, 1–3. The citation is on pages 2–3, passages in italics are underlined in the original text.

contender. Again, under the stabilising conditions of colonial rule, local political traditions were stronger than any ethnic solidarity.²⁴³

Therefore, the reference to Ewe identifications was subject to rather strong limitations. First of all, it obviously needed an ‘otherness’ present on the spot that could be defined as ethnically different, as against a ‘Fon’ in Fongbe, or between Ewe-speakers and the linguistic groups of Buem. Reference to Eweness did not serve as a language of reconciliation in matters of conflicts between different smaller Ewe-speaking communities. Even in the territory of Togo under French mandate, which lacked other larger political entities to rely on, ethnic mobilisation did not, in the local practice, become a particularly important principle.

Ewe from Outside: The Avatime and the Question of Ewe Solidarity

To illustrate these points through a local case over the decades, we will now go back to the Avatime communities. The Avatime as speakers of a Central Togo language are, of course, at first glance distinct from Ewe-speakers in linguistic terms.²⁴⁴ Nonetheless, in the late nineteenth century the community’s mastership of the Ewe language was so outstanding that German Governor Jesko von Puttkamer remarked that, in contrast to other Ewe-speakers, the people of ‘Awatimé have the pure Ewe dialect!’²⁴⁵ As in the mixed and fluent communities of Joal-Fadiouth and Port Loko, Avatime settlements thus represented a local view on different options and cleavages at different times.

In the 1920s, Avatime informants redefined ‘historical tradition’ into a more independent narrative: only some of them had come from Notsie, the rest from Ahanta in the Gold Coast (setting them apart from the majority of Ewe communities). Also, according to this version, the Avatime had formerly been Twi-speakers, and were linguistically part of the groups west of the Volta River. This version seems to be a clear invention and is particularly curious.²⁴⁶ Under

243 ANT, 2APA, Cercle de Tsévié, 4, D. Videau, Administrator of Subdivision of Tsévié; J. Houessou, Interpreter, *Procès-Verbal de consultation coutumière pour la nomination du Chef de Village Indépendant de Fongbé*. – (without number), 28 Oct. 1949, 1–4.

244 [Christaller,] ‘Explorations’, 256.

245 TNA, PRO, CO/879/28, African Confidential Print No. 356, von Puttkamer, German Governor of Togo (*Extract.*) [*Memorandum on Peki*] (without number, Enclosure 2 in No. 44), 30 June 1888, 2.

246 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 11/1/1624, Rattray, *Report by Mr. R.S. Rattray* (without number), without date, 28.

German rule, the Avatime rulers had claimed to represent the 'lost state' of 'Krepi', a political entity. These claims were probably wrong – Kwadzo De IV was more influential in the Trans-Volta area of the 1870s than was Adzatekpor – but they show that the Avatime dignitaries had no difficulties in presenting their community as an Ewe-speaking political entity.

European residents helped with this idea, as German missionaries tended to treat the Avatime as an 'Ewe tribe'. African missionary personnel recruited for work in the area around Gebi Mountain were obliged to undergo training in Ewe, even if destined for the more isolated Avatime villages, such as Kolenin. Moreover, the growing group of Christian converts was, in this early phase, rather eager to accept an all-embracing Ewe culture (including the Notsie founding legend).²⁴⁷ Missionary attitudes in the 1900s were ambivalent and mixed with very practical issues. Consequently, as one example, the Bremen Mission recruited local recruits from Avatime, such as Godwin Banimanve, who were installed as auxiliary teachers in places like Amedzofe, because they were able to teach undergraduates in the local language. In 1890, Andreas Aku, a Bremen Mission catechist from Keta, described villages such as Amedzofe and Gbadzeme as bilingual. In Spieth's account, the Avatime are implicitly considered to be one of the 'Eweland tribes'. Around 1900, the Avatime thus had the two options of ethnic identification in their repertoire.²⁴⁸

After the First World War, the Avatime populations attempted to maintain the image of being a particularly 'independent' community, and as especially anti-German. They accused their neighbours, the Tafi, of having been the first to 'defect' to the Germans in the 1890s, and described them and the Logba as 'weak' as opposed to the fierce cruelty of their own warrior community; the Agotime and the Adangbe north-east of Lomé have the same origin legend that emphasises cruel acts during wars. It makes good sense that three Trans-Volta communities thereby underline their

247 Staatsarchiv Bremen, 7,1025 (Norddeutsche Missionsgesellschaft), 6/2, Schosser to Härtter (without number), 5 Aug. 1904, 1; Staatsarchiv Bremen, 7,1025 (Norddeutsche Missionsgesellschaft), 6/2, Schröder, missionary at Amedzofe, to Ohly, Mission Inspector (without number), without date, 2.

248 Staatsarchiv Bremen, 7,1025 (Norddeutsche Missionsgesellschaft), 19/6, Andreas Aku, Bremen Mission catechist in Keta, to Mission Inspector, *Eine Ferienreisebeschreibung* (without number), 20 to 25 Feb. 1890, 10; Staatsarchiv Bremen, 7,1025 (Norddeutsche Missionsgesellschaft), 6/2, *Stations-Konferenz: Besetzung des Amedzowe-Bezirks 1907* (without number), 4 July 1906, 3; Spieth, *Ewe-Stämme*, 49*, 65*. According to Avatime legends, the community once had a female chief for the female population – a tradition that is, if I am not mistaken, not found anywhere else in the Trans-Volta region.

autonomous group identification at the margin of the Ewe-speaking pre-colonial divisions.²⁴⁹

The British 'amalgamation' project of the late 1920s brought the Avatime under stronger pressure to define their group identification in relation to neighbouring communities. They continued to reject Peki's leading role, as the Peki had been, from that perspective, a weaker ally during the Akwamu and Asante incursions.²⁵⁰ Their discussion with British administrators did not yet touch on the question of 'Ewe identity'. With regard to Anlo, the Avatime claimed that there had never been any tributary arrangements, but only trade relations between partner 'states' on equal terms.²⁵¹

In the 1920s, Adzatekpor nevertheless became nominated an arbitrator in stool disputes within 'Ewe' communities. For the Wadze Stool Dispute, he also claimed to have 'knowledge of the native customs' of the Ewe.²⁵² The Avatime chief managed to impress the British so much that in 1931 he was exclusively spared from confiscations to enforce the payment of debts. However, this relative success made the head chiefs of neighbouring divisions strongly suspicious of Avatime intentions: the divisional chiefs of Honuta, and, obviously, of Tafi were hostile to the creation of an 'amalgamated state'. The Avatime reputation for violence did not help. In early 1928, Avatime warriors from Dzokpe destroyed the village of Tafi Atome, which antagonised not only the Tafi but also the Logba, and poisoned the atmosphere in the region.²⁵³

249 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 11/1/1621, Furley, [*Report of a Tour through the districts of Togoland*] (without number), 17 April 1918, 12; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/235, *History of Avatime Division*. (without number), without date, 1, 3; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 11/1/1624, Rattray, *Report by Mr. R.S. Rattray* (without number), without date, 38; ANT, 2APA, Cercle de Lomé, 9, Nativel, Assistant District Commissioner of Lomé, *Tournée effectuée par l'Administrateur-Adjoint Nativel au cours du mois de Septembre 1930 dans les cantons d'Adangbé, Gati, Kodjo et Haavé* – (without number), without date [October 1930], 3–4; Nugent, 'Historicity', 131–2.

250 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/238, District Commissioner of Ho to Commissioner of the Eastern Province (n° 479/116./27.), 18 Feb. 1927, 2.

251 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/253, Adzatekpor, Head Chief of Avatime; and others; to District Commissioner of Ho (without number), 12 Sep. 1927, 1.

252 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/253, Ellershaw, Assistant District Commissioner of Ho, to Adzatekpor, *Fiaga of Avatime* (n° 665/536/28.), 23 July 1928.

253 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/253, Lilley to Adzatekpor (n° 380/30/1929.), 11 Oct. 1929; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/258, *Avatime Djokpo – Tafi Atomo disturbances*. (without number), 1 Nov. 1927, 6–7; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/258, V.W. Bratton, Assistant District Commissioner of Kpandu, to District Commissioner of Ho (n° 769/2/20), 19 Nov. 1927; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/258, Assistant District Commissioner of Ho to Commissioner of the Eastern Province in Koforidua (n° 794/13/28.), 11 Jan. 1928, 1; PRAAD (Accra), ADM

While Avatime informants presented the Tafi as spoilers of peace agreements, the rulers of the other communities were infuriated by the Avatime attack and refused any future cooperation. In June 1930, Adzatekpor V finally gave in and agreed to the restitution of pillaged Tafi possessions and to legal arbitration from Accra. This also opened discussions on identifications. The villagers of Tafi stated that they were the autochthons on the land in question, and the Avatime held that their Dzokpe branch had 'spear-won' the same land. Some reference was made to the Notsie legend, but none to 'Ewe' identity.²⁵⁴

In 1932, 'Avatime State' nonetheless became created as a larger political unit; this new 'native state' promoted by the British was an entity that included many Ewe-speaking communities including former adversaries. In the 1930s, the new State Council began to engage in questions of infrastructure, land use and heritage in Ewe-speaking places like Dudome or Izola. However, Adzatekpor, as president of the 'native state', was regularly shunned by the *fiawo* of the different Ewe-speaking communities in the state who preferred to apply directly to the British authorities.²⁵⁵ Avatime State remained a loose alliance of practically equal partners, in which the rulers of Avatime did not really manage to mark any dominance.

With regard to group identifications, the Avatime and other members of the 'native state' were hostile to immigrants regarded as 'Peki'. The question of making Philip Tekedu the headman of the 'Pekis' of Honuta was thus controversially discussed; the communities feared that this headman would act as a

39/1/258, Assistant District Commissioner of Ho to Commissioner of the Eastern Province (n° 791/346/28.), 10 May 1928, 1; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/501, Wimshurst, Acting Commissioner of the Eastern Province, to Chief Commissioner of Gold Coast Colony, *Logba Division (Akpini State) Affairs*. (n° 0179/S.F.5/4.), 6 Oct. 1947.

254 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/258, *An account of incidents on 24th October, 1927*. (without number), without date, 1; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/253, District Commissioner of Kpandu to Commissioner of the Eastern Province (n° 651/2/20), 15 Oct. 1929, 2; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/216, District Commissioner of Kpandu to Adfa Kodadia, Head Chief of Tafi in Atome, *Tafi-Avatime Land Dispute*. (n° 491/65/1920.), 14 June 1930, 1; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/216, *Adfa Kodadia, Headchief of Tafi Adome vs: Adodome Kpondolo, Dufia of Avatime Djokpe and others* (n° 24/28), without date, 1, 3, 4, 12, 14.

255 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/280, Maniye Gbagbo, Acting Adzatekpor V, Avatime State, *Adja Tekpo V's Hearty Address to the Gathering of Today, 16th June, 1932* (without number), 16 June 1932, 1; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/66, *Talafan-Dodome State Meeting* (without number), 27 Nov. 1931; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/66, Assistant District Commissioner of Ho to Paramount Chief of Avatime (n° 773/193/1932.), 24 Nov. 1932, 1; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/66, Adzatekpor V to Assistant District Commissioner of Ho (without number), 24 Oct. 1942, 2, 4.

vassal of the *Pekihene*.²⁵⁶ The paramount chief of Avatime wished to integrate these 'Pekis' into the native state and satisfy some of their wishes, given that they included an economically important group of cocoa planters. By contrast, the *Pekihene* demanded that Tedeku was to be installed as headman for all the 'Ewe' in Avatime State. Kwadzo De used the terms of 'Peki' and 'Ewe' as interchangeable, which was seen as a clear provocation by many Ewe-speakers in Avatime State. However, Adzatekpor did not challenge this claim in his correspondence with the other divisional chiefs, and with the British administration: instead, he described the 'Ewe' as a *tribe* of 'strangers' living in Avatime (and Avatime State) and being different from Avatime residents.²⁵⁷ Therefore, we find an interplay between linguistic elements, political prerogatives, and vague ethnic notions.

During the 1930s, Adzatekpor's rule over the core lands of Avatime became shaky. The paramount chief had reached a peak of unpopularity by introducing the head tax, which was attacked by many elders and other opponents as a return to practices from German times.²⁵⁸ The resistance of the 'youngmen' with open and outspoken support by many elders became in the end untenable, and the stool father, Traugott Tekpe, even called for the destoolment of Adzatekpor in November 1937.²⁵⁹ In 1938, the Avatime chief was no longer being invited to the court sessions of his own State Tribunal, and he was replaced there by the chief of Amedzofe. However, neither the British nor the members of the other 'divisions', agreed to Adzatekpor's destoolment. In 1939, an uneasy peace was brokered between Adzatekpor V and the 'youngmen' engaged in a symbolic cleaning procedure of the Vane-Dzolo-Kpoeta road.

256 PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D/293, Tachi Agble, Stool Father, in Hanvigba Station; to Assistant District Commissioner of Ho, *Petitional Grounds of the Recidental [sic] Pekis for the Election of a headman at Luvudo* (without number), 15 Oct. 1931, 1.

257 PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D/293, Adzatekpor to District Commissioner of Ho, *Election – Luvudo* (without number), 15 Oct. 1931; PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D/293, Assistant District Commissioner of Ho to *Fiaga* of Avatime, *Election of Luvudo* (n° 941/571929), 23 Oct. 1931; PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D/293, Adzatekpor to Assistant District Commissioner of Ho, *Re Headman Appointment for Luvudo Community*. (without number), 2 Oct. 1931.

258 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/280, Obia, Adaimsa; Stool Father Dako Tekpe substituting Traugott Tekpe, and others, to Lilley (without number), 21 Sep. 1937, 1.

259 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/280, Heads of *Sohes* (*youngmen*), Lawrence K. Adzoto and others, to Commissioner of the Eastern Province (without number), 29 July 1937, 1–3; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/280, Fr. Traugott Adobo, Stool Father of Vane Avatime, to District Commissioner of Kpandui, *Deposition and Installation Reports*. (without number), 6 Nov. 1937, 1–2.

However, the prestige of the Avatime ruler was seriously damaged.²⁶⁰ Adzatekpor reacted with a kind of publicity campaign, in which he demanded support for more moderate tax policies and investment in secondary schools from the colonial power.²⁶¹

The emergence of the pan-Ewe campaign, in 1942, came at the right time. It gave a new opportunity to Adzatekpor to change the odds, and the tone of the Avatime paramount chief became different. He appeared at the forefront of the Ewe unity adherents, where he emphasised the necessity of Ewe reunification. After seven decades of a discourse insisting on Avatime's distinctiveness, this community was suddenly no longer different from the 'Ewe'. Adzatekpor V demanded Ewe unification on the grounds that the borderline 'deprives us, the Ewe from our privileges for trade as due to the effects of the war of 1914' and he wished 'that we the Ewes enjoy our former privilege for harmony of our works in Togoland'.²⁶² The ruler obviously tried to satisfy some of the divisional chiefs inside Awatime State, but also to profit from the widespread enthusiasm. The British official in charge in Ho commented in 1945 that Awatime State as an entity was indeed 'entirely Ewe'!²⁶³ Over

260 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/280, S.W. Atsridom IV, Divisional Chief of Kpedze Awlime, to District Commissioner of Kpandu (without number), 9 May 1938, 1–2; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/280, District Commissioner of Ho to District Commissioner of Kpandu (without number), unclear date, 1; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/288, Assistant District Commissioner of Kpandu to District Commissioner of Ho (without number), without date, 1–2; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/280, Adzatekpor V, *Fiaga* of Avatime; and Avatime chiefs, to District Commissioner of Kpandu and Commissioner of the Eastern Province (without number), 27 May 1939, 1; PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D 309, *Handing over Notes from Mr. John Green – Ag. District Commissioner, to Mr. R.W. Woolley – District Commissioner* (without number), without date, 7.

261 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/288, Duncan-Johnston, Acting Commissioner of the Eastern Province in Koforidua, to Captain D.C. Walker, District Commissioner of Kpandu (n° 3730/2186/32.), 5 Sep. 1939; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/288, Secretary of Native Affairs, Accra, to Commissioner of the Eastern Province (n° 444/34/11.), 27 June 1939; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/343, Adzatekpor V, Paramount Chief of Avatime, to Chairman of District Education Committee, *Petition from Adzatekpo V. for the Opening of a Senior School at Vane* (without number), 15 Jan. 1947.

262 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/288, Adzatekpor V, *An Address and Petition of Felix Kwami Adza Tekpo V. during his Visit to Wane Awatime on the 17th Day of February, 1943*. (without number), 17 Feb. 1943, 1. Italics are by the author.

263 PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D 309, *Handing over Notes from Mr. John Green – Ag. District Commissioner, to Mr. R.W. Woolley – District Commissioner* (without number), without date [1945], 3; Colonial Office, *Report...to the General Assembly of the United Nations on the Administration of Togoland under United Kingdom Trusteeship for the Year 1948*

decades, Avatime leaders had refused such a view, but with the ruling dynasty under pressure, the pan-Ewe issue had now become attractive. Moreover, seasonal labour migration into other parts of Togoland during the 1940s helped to cement this perception among a larger group of the Avatime populations.²⁶⁴ Thereby, Avatime easily and quite successfully blended into the mass of pan-Ewe demands!

This surprising flexibility of 'tradition' – which demonstrates the particular usefulness of our approach of 'colonial history on the ground' through written accounts – can notably be compared with Agotime. Like the Avatime, the members of this community normally presented themselves as non-Ewe, but could appear as part of 'the Ewe' whenever this was useful. In the 1920s, 'traditions' showed a clear sense of flexibility with regard to relations between Agotime and Ewe-speakers.²⁶⁵ Some of these 'traditions' insisted there had been Ewe settlers as part of the original Agotime community foundation, and argued that the schism between the Agotime and the *Howusu* of Ho had appeared through a misunderstanding during the Asante war. Mahumasro as a chief and candidate for the stool of the head chief in 1932 probably had his own reasons in promoting such a version, which became accepted.²⁶⁶

Therefore, members of the so-called Central Togo Minorities or the Adangme-speaking Agotime were quite capable of managing their identifications according to the regional necessities. In the late nineteenth century, the political entity was the central point of reference. However, these entities suffered under the German intrusion, and the Avatime Native State was only a shadow of the pre-colonial states. During the Ewe unification campaign, these chiefs supported the grand project, although their communities had over the years quite often insisted that they were not Ewe. Where the interest of the ruling dynasty was at stake, flexibility in identification was very possible.

(London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1949), 5, to be found in TNA, PRO, CO/96/790/3.

- 264 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 11/1/1624, Rattray, *Report by Mr. R.S. Rattray* (without number), without date, 38; Ward, Barbara, 'Some Notes on Migration from Togoland', *African Affairs* 49(195), 1950, 129–35, 131; Ward, Barbara, 'An Analysis of the Distribution of Population in a Town in British Togoland', *Man* 55, 1955, 35–9, 35–6.
- 265 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/216, Commissioner of the Eastern Province to Secretary for Native Affairs of Gold Coast, *Preliminary History of Agotime* (without number), 15 Feb. 1932, 1–2; Nugent, 'Putting', 939.
- 266 PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/216, *The Preliminary History of the Agotime*. (without number), without date, 1–2.

Outlook: Political Ewe-ness in the Ghana Volta Region, Neutralised Ewe-ness in Togo

British Togoland lost its status as a separate territorial unit in 1957. In spite of more than twelve years of Ewe unification campaigns, and of some ten years of Togoland reunification propaganda, the CPP was successful against the programme of the Togoland Congress (TC). Some of the local chiefs participated actively in the defeat of the TC, such as in the case of Anfoega where *Togbe Tepre Hodo* intimidated TC activists and organised riots against TC electoral campaign meetings.²⁶⁷

After the CPP victory in the Trans-Volta Togoland Region, the Nkrumah government started to become more relaxed about Ewe issues in its rhetoric, and even to invoke 'Ewe solidarity' whenever this was useful. With regard to communities like Mafi, Awudome, Fodjoku, and Togome, Nkrumah's cabinet members urged politicians and chiefs from Togoland to consider more cooperation with 'Ewes in the Gold Coast'. This could now easily be used as an argument to refuse political reform.²⁶⁸ Nevertheless, and in spite of the electoral victories of the CPP in the TVT Region, the representatives of the new Ghanaian administration remained distrustful. In Ho, in the first half of the 1960s, the majority of civil servants in place were deliberately not taken from the group of Ewe-speakers.²⁶⁹ Such decisions alienated former supporters in the area from the CPP politics. The idea that particular 'forces' in the region worked for secession and armed resistance existed over decades.

In Togo, there was a similar uneasiness about a possible arms trade and a possible Ghanaian invasion in the region of Kpalimé.²⁷⁰ However, the post-colonial centralised state focused on controlling the local communities and their chiefs through the *préfets* (district commissioners), and on local distribution of resources. These conditions played *against* ethnic allegiance. In the *canton* of Agu, the seat of the paramount chief was removed from Kebo Dzigbe to Toubadji.²⁷¹ In the neighbouring *canton* of Kuma, the long-standing

267 PRAAD (Ho Branch), RAO G 1035, Animdi, Assistant Regional Secretary of Togoland Congress, to Registration Officer of Jasikan, *Registration & Revision for Legislative Assembly and Local Council Elections, 1956*. (without number), 1 June 1956; Rathbone, *Nkrumah*, 152–3; Nugent, *Smugglers*, 212–3.

268 PRAAD (Ho Branch), DA/D 307, *Copy: Draft Statement by the Minister of Justice* (without number), without date, 1.

269 Callaway, 'Politics', 141.

270 ANT, 2APA, Cercle de Klouto, 358, Habel Akpama, Inspection Group of the Ministry of Finance, to 'Fofu' (without number), 12 Dec. 1961, 1.

271 Interview with Togbe Kutumua VIII, Village Chief of Kebo Dzigbe, Agu Region, Togo, 22 March 2009.

centre of power in Tokple being at its apogee under the rule of Dom Gamety V in the 1950s, the post-colonial state led to the installation of a parallel *canton* chief from Dame.²⁷² Identification with 'Ewe-ness', which could have been employed to reconcile local communications, remained very much in the background.

The category of 'Ewe' retained some of its importance in land issues and similar administrative practices. This can be shown in the numerous conflicts in the Kpalimé region of Togo during the 1960s and 1970s, as during those between Village Chief Léléklélé II and the youth association of Agbétiko.²⁷³ Similarly, when in 1972 an alliance of dignitaries and elders attempted to remove Théophile Dom Gamety V as paramount chief (*chef de canton*) of Kuma, they claimed that among other alleged misdeeds he had betrayed common Ewe origins. The fact that Dom Gamety V had not participated in the yearly festivities in Notsie, was employed to demand his retirement.²⁷⁴ This shows that sensitivities with regard to Ewe culture could indeed be employed under particular circumstances.

However, most group conflicts in Gbassinje Eyadéma's Togo remained concentrated on the local level, including on issues of identification and group mobilisation. In the context of migration to Lomé, locals organised in associations of *originaires*. As in the case of Agu Nyogbo Agbetiko, these associations would attempt to influence developments in their village community of origin, but would no longer represent a larger group idea. Ewe-ness was unimportant in comparison to local affiliation.

Amongst the Ewe-speakers, ethnic solidarity was one option of mobilisation. It became more attractive as pre-colonial political entities such as Peki or Anlo often did not manage to offer a convincing alternative. Even so, it remained in the background for a long period, as 'divisional' group identities continued to be the principal form of group identifications in the Trans-Volta Region. The pan-Ewe mobilisation of the 1940s was a spectacular exception. However, it had a surprisingly low impact on the long-term situation, as it did not enduringly eclipse local orientations.

272 Interview with Grégoire Kofi Dom, grandson of Dom Gamety V in Kuma-Tokple, Kouma Region, Togo, 22 March 2009.

273 ANT, 2APA, Cercle de Klouto, 350, K. Franklin West, Adjudant-Chef of the Gendarmerie Nationale; Gabriel Agbo, Gendarme, *Procès Verbal* (numbers not legible), 13 Oct. 1970, *passim*.

274 ANT, 2APA, Cercle de Klouto, 358, P.G. Amevor, Administrator of Subdivision of Klouto; E.K. Apetoh, district secretary, *Procès-Verbal d'enquête sur le Chef de Canton de Kouma Dhéha Théophile Gameti V* (without number), without date [1972], 3.

Conclusion

The Hidden Factor: Experiences of Statehood and Ethnicity in the Long-Term Perspective

Comparing the evolution of forms of group solidarities over the long-term perspective is a complex project. Nevertheless, the case studies discussed in this study allow me to formulate a number of more general conclusions. Before bringing these conclusions into a larger panorama, and engaging in the broader discussion of their implications, I will first recapitulate some results with a focus on a particular point of culmination, which has become evident in our empirical cases: the start of the last phase of reform under late colonial rule, just before decolonisation. As we have already seen in the different case studies, the years between roughly, 1942 and 1957 represented a particular challenge to established community patterns.

In different communities of coastal West Africa, they constituted a phase of aggressive political claims, which in turn produced challenges to established local or sub-regional systems of ‘traditional government’ under colonial rule. In the historiography of sub-Saharan Africa, this phenomenon has only partially been commented on. Normally, in studies on Africa’s decolonisation, local violence has been interpreted as a reaction to a modernising world, in which new forms of political expression had become available, and in which the representatives of the Old Regime – the chiefs, frequently regarded as a product of colonial rule – were increasingly understood as a relic that was to be removed as quickly as possible. Other scholars have insistently referred to waves of discontent in the wake of the decolonisation process, which targeted, through protest against the chiefs, the very structures of European domination.

In both variants of interpretations, which are often intertwined, the focus lay very strongly on issues of ‘modernisation’ and ‘liberation’. It has apparently been impossible for some time to link the protests of the late colonial period to phenomena of ethnic solidarity, and to speak of ethnic mobilisation. Of course, there were those new political parties that, in the literature, were occasionally categorised as ‘tribalist’ – but such parties were, seemingly inevitably, doomed to fail, while the westernised movements demanding a nation state appeared to win the day.¹

1 Chabal, Patrick, ‘Emergencies and nationalist wars in Portuguese Africa’, *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 21(3), 1993, 235–49, 242.

From this point of view, the chances for mobilisation of 'ethnic protest movements' seemed to be minimal in the whole of sub-Saharan Africa: at best, we identify a 'traditional electorate' that had to be convinced through ethnic arguments, even during the mobilisation campaigns of the new anti-colonial politicians. However, the occasional ethnic slogans used were, by definition, a necessary evil that, for the nationalist leaders, were nothing more than a tool.

My analysis of processes in the selected West African coastal areas in the 1940s and 1950s, has given us a distinct picture. Local populations resorted, at certain periods very strongly, to ethnic formulae; these strategies appeared in all case studies, and repeatedly. They were employed in an attempt to carve out opposition against unpopular chiefs, who were now defined by the protesters as 'strangers', and as 'usurpers' of posts for which they had no 'traditional' claim. At the same time, ethnic argumentations made the rounds in the struggle for attractive posts at the heart of reformed administrations, and in newly created territorial governments. These posts were new assets, and, as such, they frequently enjoyed considerable prestige.

We have seen that the Wolof-speakers of the Petite Côte and beyond had previously been mostly passive in their employment of ethnic formulae. In the pre-colonial period, but also under colonial rule, the larger category of 'Wolof' was something that existed only at the margins of the community. If it was mentioned at all, it remained an obsession of European visitors and residents, and, in particular, of the colonial officials organising the new local administration in the second half of the nineteenth century and in the twentieth century. The 'Wolof' would appear as a category in administrative reports and statistics. However, the practical importance of this category was extremely limited: very few cases of a particular Wolof mobilisation and solidarity existed during this period. Also, no signs can be found that the colonial engagement in categorisation triggered a more frequent self-definition of local Wolof-speakers under the ethnic label of 'Wolof'. Where groups of this category had been drawn into conflicts, local leaders gladly used European anthropological work, but there was no push from the side of the colonial subjects to employ the category more regularly.

On the contrary, the different groups of Sereer-speaking neighbours of the Wolophone populations challenged Wolof-speakers, who they held as a distinct ethnic group. The respective mobilisation processes were strongest in the two phases of extreme sociocultural change in coastal Senegal, that is, in the second half of the nineteenth century during colonial conquest, and in the 1940s and early 1950s, during colonial reform and territorial democratisation. On both occasions, Sereer-speakers reacted to a new situation. They attacked the 'Wolof dominance' (i.e. the dominance of Wolof-speaking rulers and dignitaries) in the pre-colonial political units, and their supremacy in structures of

'traditional rule' during the colonial period. Even under pressure from Sereer-speakers, Wolof-speakers remained unwilling to resort to ethnic formulae, which continued to be exceptional in the political discussion. Only after the independence of Senegal did the numerical dominance of Wolof-speaking populations of Senegambia become translated into an active ethnic discourse, but even the dimensions of this 'Wolofisation' are still unclear. The process was different in the British colony of the Gambia (and in the southern regions of Casamance), where Wolof-speakers before colonial conquest had been a minority endangered by endemic warfare and characterised by the absence of reliable pre-colonial state structures. The reliance of the British colonial administration in the Gambia on 'ethnic principles' of organisation led to recurrent friction and conflicts after independence. Under these circumstances, local leaders and their populations 'discovered' the use of ethnic arguments as a promising means of group mobilisation. In this context, 'Wolof' was far more popular as a label of group mobilisation than was the case in northern Senegambia.

The Temne of northern Sierra Leone also mobilised in the 1950s against a group of local 'traditional' rulers, but the context of this mobilisation was entirely different from the Senegalese experience. Temne-speakers had actively employed the label of 'Temne' during all of the conflicts of the nineteenth century. In difficult political situations, that is under the pressure of neighbouring ethnolinguistic groups, they had been engaged in creating group cohesion through the employment of ethnic arguments. While the context in which we can make the use of these pre-colonial slogans visible, is limited to the ways in which Temne-speaking leaders reported upon mobilisation strategies in discussions with the future colonisers, it is, nevertheless, quite evident that these ethnic solidarities *were* employed during the nineteenth century. The use of the ethnic label was subject to fluctuations according to conditions on the ground, and was less frequent in some particular periods. Even so, it remained a constant factor for self-identification and mobilisation beyond village and town communities.

Only after 1900 did ethnic solidarity among Temne-speakers become less prominent and less aggressive – and only in the 1950s, considerably later than was the case for similar processes in the southern parts of Sierra Leone, did Temne-speakers again engage in widespread mobilisation under ethnic labels. After 1960 (but not before), these mobilisation strategies became increasingly dominant in Sierra Leone's political arena. Unlike in Senegambia, where the multi-party system introduced in the mid-1940s was from the outset linked, as in the case of the Sereer-speakers, to ethnic sentiment, Sierra Leone's United Progressive Party and its successor, the All People's Congress, were only slowly

transformed into an ethnic platform of Temne-speakers and other 'northerners'. However, their ethnic mobilisation had far more enduring effects than was the case in Senegal.

The experience of the Ewe-speakers is different again. In the late 1940s, Ewe-speaking leaders managed to create a spectacular political movement, which had an impact even at the international level, through the appearance of these leaders on the stage of the United Nations. However, the temporary success of organisations like the All-Ewe Conference stood in contrast to the visible ups-and-downs of Ewe ethnic mobilisation during the second half of the nineteenth and the whole of the twentieth century. Ewe solidarity had experienced its first peak during the 1860s and 1870s, mainly caused by the inability of different Ewe-speaking community leaders to organise an efficient defensive coalition against massive Asante and Akwamu raids. The incursions of the armies from neighbouring regions, under these circumstances, not only had a traumatising effect on the local societies, but they also led to the employment of ethnic solidarity as a 'last resort' in order to stop the pillaging groups. As is evident from the many 'traditional histories' written between 1880 and 1930, this experience had a lasting impact on the collective memory of the members of Ewe-speaking communities.

However, the German and British occupations of the area east of the Volta River led to the rapid demise of ethnic principles in the region: in spite of the promotion of 'tribal solidarity' through missionaries and part of the colonial administration, the local populations focused (or probably refocused) on the political unit that the British would in the future call 'division'. In the ways in which locals 'sold' their larger group identification to the colonial powers, in the form of the above-mentioned local histories, they would still refer to the Ewe solidarity that had helped them during the Asante incursions, but we find no tendency to overstate these issues. In other arenas, such as land claims, succession claims, and other legal issues, the locals were quite content to relate to their 'sub-regional' identification, that is, at 'division' level. The British administration was frustrated with this tendency of local populations to ignore 'tribal' bonds, and some ambitious leaders of the pre-colonial states that now stood under European rule, like Anlo's *Awoame Fia*, remained active in justifying an enlargement of their authority through ethnic arguments. Normally, however, Ewe identification did not play a prominent role in political issues during the interwar period.

It was only from the early 1940s, when a group of British-educated and French-educated middlemen discovered the Ewe issue as a vehicle for political mobilisation on a broader, international stage, that the problem of the larger ethnic identification of 'the Ewe' again became a point of intense debate. For some years, local leaders and their opponents attempted to jump on this bandwagon

by using the issue in their own interests. However, after a relatively short time, the question of Ewe solidarity became marginalised in the reform discussions in both British Togoland and French Togo. Most activists of the political forces turned to other rallying cries, including regional solidarity or social progress. It appears that after 1957/58, in the new independent state of Ghana that would include a part of former German Togo, being 'Ewe' remained a pertinent category because of its appeal under conditions in which several inhabitants of the Trans-Volta Togoland Region felt excluded from the distribution of resources. In the Republic of Togo, 'Ewe-ness' did not become more than a category that was occasionally used for administrative issues, and as an additional argument during struggles in the local arenas.

I will now attempt to give an explanation of the tumultuous processes of the years after 1945 in the long-term perspective in view of my empirical results. In three coastal West African areas, we find similarities with regard to challenges facing the 'traditional structures' in the post-Second World War period. However, the reactions and types of community mobilisation described were sometimes extremely dissimilar. How can we explain the diverging degrees of recourse, by the different communities, to ethnic mobilisation? In the initial parts of this study, I have pointed out that one technique with which to analyse differences in the forms of local identities is to follow them over the long-term process. In this book, I have limited the perspective to the period between initial stronger European engagement in the respective West African regions (around 1850) and decolonisation (around 1960). If one looks at the numerous examples, in which local spokesmen of groups 'sold' their identifications to colonial officials, in direct conversation, during land and succession conflicts, in local histories put together for very different reasons, and regarding alliances between communities that had been forged over the years and even under colonial rule, we encounter a remarkable picture: the variable that defined the recourse to ethnicity, seems to have been 'the state' as a political unit – or, to describe this phenomenon in more precise terms, the local and regional 'experience of statehood'. Both in its pre-colonial and in its colonial meaning, the presence of larger state structures gave a political answer to the frequent problems of the nineteenth and twentieth century, while the absence of such entities deprived those groups of alternative means for creating cohesive communities. Where entities of statehood existed, communities ultimately had no need to rely on ethnicity in moments of insecurity and external pressures.²

2 On the relationship between weak states and warlordism, see Reno, William, *Warlord Politics and African States* (Boulder – London: Lynne Rienner, 1999), 18–35.

As we have seen, among the Wolophone populations of the Petite Côte and beyond, ethnic identifications did not play a central role for the communities. While their neighbours, in particular those belonging to Sereer-speaking groups, frequently formulated their 'Sereer identity', Wolof-speaking individuals, in contact situations with the colonial authorities – but also in their direct interactions with Sereer-speaking inhabitants – insisted on their identification as members of one of the pre-colonial states. They identified as being a subject of the *Damel* of Kajoor, of the *Teeñ* of Bawol, of the *Brak* of Waalo, the *Buur Siin* or the *Buur Saluum*. This seems to have been far more important for the local definition of individual and group identifications than any overarching Wolof solidarity.

It has to be emphasised that the experiences Wolophone populations had within these pre-colonial states were mixed. The basic mechanism of all larger political units in Senegambia was the extraction of tribute and of contributions: to arrive at these goals, the rulers of the political entities relied on the *ceddo* system, in which specialised warriors obtained the desired contributions, sometimes through coercion and intimidation, sometimes through outright plunder. Wolophone village communities were subject to regular visits of envoys with *ceddo* troops, and suffered under this irregular system of tribute-raising. In contrast, in other areas, the pre-colonial state provided a certain platform to rely on, as the administrative units and troops guaranteed a relative degree of protection, and the scenario of conflicts between pre-colonial rulers predisposed certain arrangements in the case of conquest, although the sale of captives as slaves remained a reality until the end of the nineteenth century.

For the Wolof, the 'statehood experience' eclipsed the concept of ethnic solidarity. Furthermore, the widespread success of Islam in all the Senegalese regions peopled by Wolof-speakers combined in part with this trend. On the one hand, it offered a potential second path through which to formulate a non-ethnic group identification, which was useful in situations of conflict and rivalled ethnic mobilisation. On the other hand, however, many representatives of local dynasties became engaged supporters of the Muridiyya in the interwar period. Membership of the brotherhood gave them an additional legitimacy.

After the First World War, the direct link to the – now largely disappeared – states became weaker in the memory of Wolof-speaking populations. The pre-colonial entities were, in any case, less frequently mentioned in the traditions through which locals 'sold' the characteristics of their group to the agents of the colonial power. Nonetheless, this was not a massive change. In particular, individuals among the paramount chiefs who could claim to be in a family line to the former ruling dynasties continued to enjoy considerable prestige. Therefore, it would be correct to say that the memory of relations with the pre-colonial

political entities remained the central point of reference for Wolof-speakers – together with membership of the Muridiyya or, eventually, the Tijaniyya. This general panorama continued as a stable pattern until independence. The major exception – to be found in some parts of the Petite Côte, but, most strongly, in the region of Louga – was conflict between Wolophone peasants and Fulfulde-speaking cattle-breeders. This latter type of conflict was fought out at village level, but it concerned vital resources. It is not surprising that the usual primary reference to the pre-colonial state did not help under these conditions, as the states had always rather protected the Fulfulde-speakers on their territory; they had been economically useful subjects and potential auxiliary troops. On the contrary, the opposition constructed between Wolof and 'Pël' on ethnic grounds, which was quickly resorted to during these conflicts, was linked to the tensions between the Sufi brotherhoods: Wolof-speakers would turn to Murid marabouts for support during these struggles, while Fulfulde-speakers would mobilise the backing of the Tijaniyya.

An interesting and highly significant alternative path is the experience of Wolophone populations in the territory of what later became the British colony of the Gambia. Here, local Wolof-speaking populations, like their neighbours of other linguistic communities, could not rely on similarly stable pre-colonial state structures. They thus did not have a positive 'statehood experience'. In the area of the Gambia River, the existing unstable units deteriorated further after the Jihads led by rulers of political entities. In this overall panorama, Gambian Wolof-speakers were far more eager to claim solidarity on ethnic terms than were Wolophone populations further northwards. The situation was similar in Casamance, where Wolophone immigrants lived under instability and threats of violence, and were more eager to insist on their ethnic identification. It is possible to consider this factor of an ethnic counter-mobilisation of 'Wolofs' as a principal motive for the Casamance revolt of 1982.

On the Petite Côte – to come back to the region discussed as the case study – the emphasis of the Wolophone elite on state identification instead of ethnic identification created a possible way out of the political struggles of the 1940s and 1950s. The setting allowed opposed chiefs, such as Ely Manel N'Diaye, to 'disarm' opposition movements that were working with ethnic claims. The Wolophone paramount chiefs could always claim to represent a 'tradition' that had nothing to do with ethnic solidarities; they were the heirs of political structures of authority, and they could claim to enjoy this authority also, at least in part, with the Sereer-speaking communities. The success of this strategy explains, more than anything else, the surprising downturn in ethnically motivated mobilisation in this coastal region around 1951/52; it allowed a number of heavily attacked local leaders to survive politically.

As far as the effects of pre-colonial 'statehood' are concerned, the region of northern Sierra Leone was entirely different from our examples from Senegambia. Among Temne-speakers, we had to consider a notable lack of any stronger political institutions. Port Loko, the main centre of the region, was merely a sort of small 'city-state'. The latter expression could be used for a town controlling a part of its surroundings, with little impact on the life of the inhabitants of the neighbouring villages, and only over certain periods of the nineteenth century. Other town centres, such as Kambia, Magbele or Marampa, were similarly organised, and their rulers also had little impact in controlling any broader regions. The *Alkali* of Port Loko tried at least to claim a regional paramountcy in the second half of the nineteenth century, but he failed with these plans. He and his fellow Temne-speaking rulers did not find a formula of alliance, nor indeed any political overlordship of larger population groups.

Unlike the rulers of pre-colonial states in Senegambia, the leaders of 'city-state' communities in northern Sierra Leone were usually unable even to claim regular tributes from a greater number of settlements in the region. Similarly, they were never in a position to give *protection* to the populations of broader regions. This situation became obvious in the nineteenth century during the different waves of incursions of Susu-speaking troops, or during the Yoni War – occasions during which the Temne-speaking rulers showed to the fullest their inability to limit the effects of warfare. Under these circumstances, the only means of the rulers of the larger Temne-speaking settlements to affect the lives of populations in their vicinity was through plunder and small skirmishes. Campaigns of this type were indeed carried out regularly.³ They added to the general feeling of insecurity in the region, and created, for the local populations, a 'statehood experience' that was entirely negative – at least if one holds that the local political units had any of the characteristics of 'states'.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, but probably continuing a situation from the eighteenth century, Temne-speaking communities were situated at the margins of two larger pre-colonial entities: the federation of Morea, an alliance dominated by Mandinka-speaking rulers, and the *Almamis* of Timbo, in the Fuuta Jallon. However, the latter had only been interested in control of the caravan trade routes to the coast, although they remained the object of widespread fear. The *Almami* of Forékaria, leader of the federation of Morea, was unable to discipline even the chiefs in his closest surroundings, and from

3 This can be considered as a counter-model to the evolution of the pre-colonial state of Segu, as described by Jean Bazin in 'Etat guerrier et guerres d'Etat', in Jean Bazin and Emmanuel Terray (eds.), *Guerres de lignages et guerres d'Etats en Afrique* (Paris: Editions des archives contemporaines, 1982), 321–74, 336–40.

the 1870s, the French administration soon destroyed what remained of his political prestige. The colonial border thus prepared and ultimately fixed on the colonial maps effectively cut off northern Sierra Leone from both Forékaria and from the hierarchy of dignitaries that survived the French conquest of the Fuuta Jallon in the 1890s.

The absence of state structures in the region of northern Sierra Leone made wars smaller as regards scale. However, it is also evident that these wars were far more destructive than the average Senegambian conflict. Rules of warfare were less reliable, if they existed at all, and Temne-speaking villagers could not turn to any entity or institution that would have intervened on their behalf. In the 1830s, the ongoing presence of such destructive warfare brought widespread despair even at the level of local rulers, and led to the invitation to British envoys from Freetown to become intermediaries in the regional conflicts. The type of warfare, conditioned by political fragmentation of the area, also explains with much plausibility the constant employment of an ethnic argumentation. Whenever settlements were menaced by a threat that could be classified as non-Temne, the ethnic card was a last resort to concentrate forces against the attackers.

The presence of Limba-speaking, Loko-speaking, and, above all, Susu-speaking war bands in the region created the motive to resort to these strategies of ethnic solidarity. During the decades of British diplomatic activity in future Sierra Leone over the whole of the nineteenth century, the diplomats from Freetown were again and again confronted with the criterion of Temne-ness used in a number of contexts. Mainly, this criterion appeared as an argument to forge alliances between local Temne-speaking rulers and communities which, given the lack of reliable state structures, needed these argumentations as a sort of last resort whenever they were threatened with complete destruction.

In this logic, it is not surprising that with the imposition of the British protectorate, the eagerness of locals (and local elites) to emphasise their 'Temne identity' seems to have declined or even evaporated. The label was no longer really needed. As, after the Hut Tax War, destructive warfare in the formerly typical style was no longer possible, local populations could now turn to less existential problems. This is not to say that British rule over the Sierra Leone Protectorate was benign: as I have pointed out, among other abuses, British officials maintained a system of chieftaincy that allowed for the use of forced labour. In particular, farms and buildings of chiefs were in many cases maintained by the locals without receiving any payment. However, in chieftaincy issues including conflicts for power, there was at the beginning, in the new patterns set by the colonial state, no need to emphasise ethnic configurations. The whole period between the start of the century and 1945 was rather 'peaceful'

in terms of broader rural relations. Even the paramount chieftaincies, in which local groups of the different language communities now had to coexist, were comparatively free from inter-community strife. In this context, ethnic argumentations remained a marginal phenomenon.

The view became quite different, however, as soon as populations of Sierra Leone's north started to believe that a government dominated by a distinct group in Freetown was attempting to withdraw from them the state guarantees of protection (and, for the late colonial period, the roughly even distribution of resources) from which they had profited under the colonial state. This general feeling led to a process of counter-mobilisation, starting at the local level, but slowly becoming a larger phenomenon. The mobilisation campaign went on for years, but, in the end, the sentiment of marginalisation in a renegotiated state laid the ground for a renaissance of ethnic Temne sentiment. The argumentation remobilised an old formula. The idea that only the reliance on ethnic solidarity would save the Temne-speakers from a 'dictatorship' of the 'Mende southerners' had major importance for voting behaviour in post-colonial Sierra Leone, where ethnicity remained the dominant cleavage. Ethnic voting retained its role at least until the 1990s.

In the panorama of results, I have thus pointed out Senegambia as an example of a region whose trajectory was dominated by fairly strong pre-colonial political units (states), which offered an alternative means of mobilisation to ethnic solidarity, while northern Sierra Leone can be considered as a zone where the absence of any larger political entities made the fixation on ethnic mobilisation sometimes almost inevitable. My third case, the Volta River region, can be considered as a case between those two extremes. In the present-day border region between Ghana and Togo, some of the political units were indeed stronger than those of pre-colonial Sierra Leone: Peki in the hinterland of the coast, and Anlo at the Keta Lagoon, developed the most visible activities towards political centralisation during the nineteenth century. The presence of extremely coherent and militarily successful pre-colonial states in their neighbourhood played an essential catalytic role in these processes: Peki had a political and military organisation modelled on Asante and Akwamu, and Anlo had, at the moment of British conquest, at least partly developed in the same direction.

After colonial penetration into the area, the British as colonial rulers further strengthened these solidarities, by transforming both Anlo and Peki into so-called 'native states'. This decision preserved a part of the authority of the respective two leaders. It is thus no surprise that during political unrest in Keta and Anloga, particularly during the 1940s, the different sides involved all claimed that they had the prosperous future of Anlo State in mind. Although

the All-Ewe Conference was at its peak of mobilisation capacity during this period, the conflicts in Anlo proceeded without even mentioning the factor of Ewe-ness. However, it is also true that the creation of the colonial border cut off the *Pekihene* and the *Awoame Fia* from the constituencies for which they claimed effective rule. Although both leaders, and other leading figures, attempted to play on links with the pan-Ewe movement, they did not manage to return to the centre of the regional politics of Ewe-speakers.

This played all the greater a role since in other parts of the region, mostly under German rule from 1884 (or at the latest 1890), the impact of pre-colonial statehood, or 'statehood experience', was entirely negative. In the 1860s, many Ewe-speakers of the Trans-Volta area had learned a bitter lesson about the limits of state power, in the event of destructive raids from outside. Faced with an Asante and Akwamu invasion, Peki was literally swept away. The *Awoame Fia*, in contrast, sided with the invaders, which left the rulers of Ewe-speaking communities of the region with an even more significant impression. In this particular situation, it appeared necessary to have recourse to ethnic rallying cries. It was only by invoking a joint Ewe identification – probably also by insisting upon the origin myths of common migration – that the *Pekihene* and other leaders managed to forge a durable alliance. Although dramatically inferior in its military means in comparison to the Akwamu and Asante raiders, this alliance allowed them to at least organise a more or less effective resistance in the hilly reaches east of the Volta River.

The memory of this cooperation remained a factor within the political situation of the region. Such a conclusion is obvious from the ways in which the events of the 1860s and 1870s, often combined with reflections on the Taviefe War of 1888, continuously appear in the historical 'tradition' recounted by members of the most different communities. However, in its practical dimensions, the effects of this ethnic identification were largely dormant until 1945. We do not have any convincing proof for D.E.K. Amenumey's claim, which insinuated that the *Awoame Fia* of Anlo and other Ewe-speaking rulers repeatedly referred to this common ethnic heritage before the Second World War. This problem can today no longer be approached through oral interviews, and the written sources (including the transcripts of, and notes on, the 'tradition' of local communities written down in the interwar period) suggest that Ewe solidarity was not a reality in the interwar period. By contrast, in the 1940s, Ewe-ness was rediscovered as a successful means of mobilisation. In the regional logic, the reliance on ethnic Ewe mobilisation seemed first – and obviously not successfully – to be a means to obtain the control of an independent territory, although the plans of many of the leaders of the pan-Ewe movement were not very precise. During the 1940s and 1950s, Ewe-ness would then, however, also

be employed as a lever in more local conflicts, as in Atiavi in Anlo State. Nonetheless, the appearance of the ethnic variable was normally carefully chosen, and it never became the only principle in inter-community conflicts.

The Colonial State: A Limited Impact

The findings of this study reverse, for the examples from coastal West Africa, a number of dominant views on processes of ethnic mobilisation. This is important as conventional wisdom on ethnicity in sub-Saharan Africa still holds that the role of the colonial administration had an immense impact in the process of transforming ethnic solidarity into aggressive and even genocidal activities. While no historian, and probably no anthropologist, would today still defend the idea that colonial officials and European missionaries *alone* 'invented' the existence of the different 'ethnic groups', and then transposed these categories upon passive and manipulated populations, it is still a common view that the colonial methods of administration played their part in triggering the clearer bond to ethnic elements in the identifications of African individuals and African groups. My comparative discussion does not challenge the importance of European rule for the reconstitution of local solidarities and communities. However, it provides a different interpretation of processes and chronologies.

This study does not defy the view that colonial officials of all European systems of rule, influenced by the ideas of racial and national difference that were *en vogue* between 1875 and 1945 in the respective metropolises, were largely convinced that it was most appropriate to categorise colonial populations in 'tribal' ensembles. Nevertheless, there is little evidence in coastal West Africa that they ever implemented these views practically, nor that they forced them upon the minds of passive African recipients. In many cases, the structures supported by the agents of the colonial administration already had their reference points in pre-colonial political units. The administrators might have weakened the political prerogatives of these entities, they might occasionally have made their rulers appear ridiculous, or as mere instruments of European wishes, particularly when it came to tax enforcement or the organisation of forced labour for the colonial state. However, colonial engagement did not automatically cut the connection to previous 'statehood experience'. The experience populations had with these political entities continued to matter.

Northern Sierra Leonean chieftaincies reproduced, if anything, the rule of established dynasties from the nineteenth century; in the Gambia, the effects were weaker, but in their basic mechanisms similar. Local populations had in both regions used ethnic arguments for mobilisation before, but these

mobilisations had had nothing to do with European intermediaries, nor had they had any lasting effect on the structure of regional political units. In Senegal, the French never imposed any ethnic principles of rule. They did not even tackle the stereotypical problem of 'Wolof chiefs' ruling over 'Sereer peasants' in part of the Petite Côte and its hinterland; during the peak period of theories expressing the adequateness and necessity of 'tribal rule', these officials stuck to their deployment of a Wolophone chieftaincy, whether the communities under its rule were in their majority Wolophone- or Sereer-speaking. In the Volta River area, both the Germans and the British relied on a type of 'division', which they would, in retrospective view, describe as the successor entities of the former political units. Later on, the French *cantons* followed this pattern. It is true that at least the British, after 1920, tended to treat administrative divisions as quasi-ethnic groups. However, this point did not have many practical consequences in the future, and the parallel practice of creating 'amalgamated states' ran counter to any attempts at 'ethnic categorisation'. Amalgamation created other bonds through political practice; it even pushed populations that were, although sometimes selectively, not always part of the 'Ewe' ensemble (according to missionary and early anthropological reports), to work closely together with the different leaders of Ewe-speaking divisions. In the case of the Avatime political hierarchies, and of other leading groups of 'divisions', this phenomenon might, paradoxically, have created unexpected results: in the end, under appropriate circumstances, very different local authorities could claim to be 'Ewe' and mobilise within the pan-Ewe movement. In Senegal and northern Sierra Leone, the gathering together of different linguistic groups in administrative entities also helped, although in less sustained ways, to diminish effects of group hostility in the sense of ethnic antagonisms.

A glance at comparable cases in coastal West Africa seems to confirm these findings – although it would need to be pursued further through analytical research. In the Gold Coast, the British were not very active in encouraging the creation of ethnic identifications in the Colony (the southern part of current-day Ghana) and the Ashanti Protectorate. While they did not block the emergence of a Fante sentiment among coastal populations, the appearance of this sentiment was nonetheless a pre-colonial process of the second half of the nineteenth century, and it mainly transformed a political federation and the traumatic experience of Asante pressure into a formulation of group identifications. Asante as an important 'traditional authority' was maintained under British rule, but, then, this British engagement resulted in the preservation of a *political structure*, where 'statehood experience' was in spite of all existing opposition broadly shared, and where it had strong, participatory elements.

In Côte d'Ivoire, the French also did very little to formalise any ethnic rule in the case of the larger language groups, such as the 'Baule' or the 'Agni'. The *chef-ferie supérieure* of the Baule was a rather recent construct, and it had not been created as a result of the initiative of colonial administrators. It took a long time to transform 'the Baule' into a dominant and politically active group, and this only happened in the face of the political tensions of the post-colonial period.⁴ In the case of Nigeria's Yoruba-speaking groups, the pattern was similar. Although the emergence of an autonomous Yoruba literature was an earlier phenomenon which allowed an identity-building process to be pushed forward through a 'Yoruba historiography', this was a process not reflected in *conscious* provincial administration. For this administration, British officials still relied on political and state structures (as they did in the north of the colony with the Sokoto Caliphate and Bornu).

In the case of the future South-western Region of Nigeria, British colonial planning meant a practice in which the authorities of the leading city-states like Oyo or Ibadan still retained a leading role. The role of these authorities survived for a time, in spite of the massive socio-economic transformations triggered by internal migration movements.⁵ These led only in the end to new challenges and conflicts in which the power of these authorities was subject to sometimes violent contestation, of which the first electoral campaigns of the 1950s were the beginning. Moreover, the ethnic variable could be activated in the repertoire of many locals as a means both in internal struggles and in the defensive position against groups and populations coming in from other parts of Nigeria.⁶ This, again, was not a colonial activity. It was due to a process of change from the late colonial period, which relied on principles of cultural homogenisation that had eagerly been absorbed by local elites.

The patterns of behaviour as related to ethnic identifications and the state, as I have proposed them here, also give an explanation for the violent

4 Lesourd, Michel, 'Une remise en cause de l'ethnicité: Le comportement sociospatial des Baule émigrés dans le sud-ouest de la Côte d'Ivoire', in Jean-Pierre Chrétien and Gérard Prunier (eds.), *Les ethnies ont une histoire* (second edition, Paris: Karthala, 2003), 76–90.

5 A different approach is taken in Apter, Andrew, 'Yoruba Ethnogenesis from Within', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 55(2), 2013, 356–87. While Apter's method discounts the question of political opportunities much too quickly, his main findings are complementary with my results for other groups of coastal West Africa, especially when it comes to flexibility and the question of gains.

6 Ikpe, Ukana B., 'The patrimonial state and inter-ethnic conflicts in Nigeria', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 32(4), 2009, 679–97; and, especially, the new Adebani, Wale, *Yorùbá Elites and Ethnic Politics in Nigeria: Obáfemi Awólowo and Corporate Agency* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

reactions during the initial introduction of colonial tax systems as discussed in Chapter 1. The Temne-speakers of northern Sierra Leone, the Wolophone populations of the Gambia, and the Ewe-speakers of the Volta River region – who had shown the most immediate and strongest reaction to the introduction of colonial taxation – had had their most far-reaching hopes set on the protective function of the future administrations. These hopes were strongest where a pre-colonial ‘statehood experience’ did not exist, and where only ethnic mobilisation had been known as a broader principle of mobilisation, although with unreliable successes over the decades. The ease with which colonial officials could, from the 1850s, secure far-reaching agreements over regional protectorates, was not only due to deceit, to misunderstandings, and to the impressiveness of the force displayed by European armies from about 1850. In the three above-mentioned zones, locals also actively sought protectorates because of the insecurity under which they lived, either during a phase of weakness of the existing pre-colonial states, or in a position at their margins and as victims of plundering campaigns of these states. Sometimes (as in the case of the communities neighbouring Morea in northern Sierra Leone, or those adjacent in their territory to the area claimed by Peki or Anlo) they had lost their trust in the protection offered by neighbouring pre-colonial states. As we have seen, in northern Sierra Leone, the British protection seemed to guarantee security from destruction as in the event of the brutal inter-community wars that had characterised this region over the whole of the nineteenth century; in the Gambia, Wolof-speakers expected help against the rampages of the Jihad troops of Foday Sylla and other war leaders; in the Ewe-speaking regions of the Trans-Volta area, the British engagement seemed to offer at least some protection against the campaigns of Akwamu and Asante armies (or at least a middleman role in obtaining this help from the Kings of Accra), which in the 1870s and even the 1880s were still a shock fresh in local memories.

However, it is obvious that these hopes were quickly disappointed. On the European side, the erection of a system of ‘native tax’ was regarded as one of the vital and necessary parts of colonial rule. The motivations for the creation of exploitative tax systems, and even for the tax obsession that some European colonial administrators would show, were manifold: attempts to make the territories lucrative for the metropole, and racist preconceptions that saw the imposition of constraint to force Africans to work as inevitable, both led to these tax decisions. The impact of the relatively high tax levels was evidently felt in many parts of West Africa, and led to resistance. However, regions in which local populations had not been confronted with previous systems of taxation, and where, normally, tribute was demanded on an irregular basis by oppressive outsiders, became geographical centres of revolt and tax evasion.

The experience with pre-colonial state structures thus not only characterised the patterns of ethnic mobilisation, but also contributed to the reaction of communities on the colonial experience of taxation.

Most of the themes in African history that have gained great prominence over the last twenty years have been contributed to by cultural studies: syncretist religion, the impact of gender, and questions of generational relations, for instance, are all subjects that have greatly broadened our view of African societies. However, if we wish to understand decisions of groups to choose identifications, and to show solidarity in given moments, we have to bring the experience of 'statehood' back into the picture. In a way, this conclusion also strengthens the case for a new political history of African populations – but one that analyses the agency of locals choosing their form of mobilisation and solidarity in the face of manifold challenges, including the conditions of colonial conquest.

West African Ethnicity and Global History

The comparison of the three coastal West African examples, in view of their historical dimension, suggests a model of explanation for ethnic mobilisation in a long-term perspective. The influence of pre-colonial states, of a 'statehood experience' (even if in still rudimentary forms), and the ways in which state structures were taken as a point of reference, is quite important. Where such structures were at work, they normally eclipsed the ethnic argument. In other words, where stronger state structures existed, the recourse to ethnic mobilisation was not normally regarded as a necessary strategy. By contrast, in the absence of reliable state structures, locals eventually turned to an insistence on ethnic solidarity to reach their goals.⁷

What could these results mean for the debate on global history? Would it be possible, as Toyin Falola has claimed, for the experiments with nationhood in sub-Saharan Africa after independence to put ethnic mobilisation in a global perspective?⁸ As I have pointed out in the first two chapters of this book, many of the categories of group cohesion and mobilisation – 'ethnicity', 'nation',

7 This relationship between ethnic identity and security is also alluded to in a number of studies and handbooks, which, however, do not normally draw any larger and analytic conclusions from the matter, see Collins, Robert O., and James M. Burns, *A History of Sub-Saharan Africa* (Cambridge et al: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 366–7.

8 Falola, Toyin, 'Writing and Teaching National History in Africa in an Era of Global History', *Africa Spectrum* 40(3), 2005, 499–519.

'state' – are very relevant for groups in various parts of the globe, and it is crucial to put the coastal West African experience into this view.

I suggested in the discussion on the use of categories in a global perspective that 'ethnicity' was artificially reserved for sub-Saharan Africa, 'native America', and 'tribal Asia', as if these world regions had been characterised by an entirely different type of group organisation. Obviously, the combination of colonial domination and repression, and the belief of the European colonisers that they had to classify local subjects according to racialised and negative stereotypes, had an impact on group organisation. However, it is dangerous to see in the importance of ethnic labels the import of such labels from European invention. Global history has notably made it possible to approach the agencies in entangled processes such as European colonialism (and beyond Eurocentric interpretations), but at the same time to take into account the fact that European expansion changed the perspectives of this agency.

In the decades before colonial conquest, and in the conquest phase itself, many parts of West Africa were characterised by massive insecurity for communities. This insecurity was at least partly provoked by European activities on Africa's coasts: the European demand for slaves to be transported into the Americas fuelled violent conflicts between communities; the change in export patterns from 'human merchandise' to 'legal' export crops intensified the use of slave labour in some agrarian zones, and therefore slave-raiding; in the conquest phase, European residents became the allies of local rulers who wished to increase their regional position and who used this support to attack neighbouring communities. The presence of European residents also had an impact in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century South and South-east Asia, where European participation in local conflicts in some cases changed the balance and ultimately intensified violence. However, the pressure on communities where state structures were relatively weak, was probably strongest in the context of West and West Central Africa, given its involvement in the late period of the slave trade and subsequent systems of enslavement.

After the establishment of colonial structures, these pressures diminished. Clearly, the colonial states – in sub-Saharan Africa, but also with regard to several communities in South and South-east Asia – had their own impact in creating 'traditions' according to European imaginations of either useful or 'authentic' rule. However, the period between 1918 and 1945 may have been characterised by abuses and the creation of systems of patronage in rural areas, but not as much by ethnic mobilisation.⁹ The problems of exploitation under

9 Mamdani, Mahmood, *Citizen and subject: contemporary Africa and the legacy of late colonialism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

European domination were of another nature, and the recourse to ethnic arguments remained rare. This does not mean that such conflicts were entirely absent under colonial rule.¹⁰ Even so, it is remarkable that local communities rather mobilised the reference to existing state structures, and used these 'traditions' as principal arguments. It would obviously be an interesting next step to put these colonial experiences from the African continent into an even larger, comparative analysis of different cases, including other regions, namely in Asia.

The late colonial period after 1945 has, for many contexts, been described as a phase of attempted modernisation and of experimentation with enlarged democratic structures. Interestingly – at least in the context of sub-Saharan Africa – the evolution of the colonial systems after the Second World War seemed to create a massive feeling of instability in the regional zones, far from the processes of centralised politics in the capital cities of the late colonies. As I have argued, in the case of many African regions, this situation can be regarded as the starting point of processes – processes that, after the end of the colonial period, led to a preference of local populations for ethnic instead of other forms of mobilisation. It is for the global historian, of course, a challenging question to ask whether other parts of the colonial world knew a different path to the creation of post-colonial societies. A principal difference might lie in the existence of stronger pre-colonial administrative traditions in large parts of South and East Asia, so that the transition left fewer opportunities for mobilisation via ethnic solidarities.

It is interesting to discuss the effects of state and administrative structures versus ethnic mobilisation in view of the many conflicts discussed as 'ethnic' in the post-colonial world. From the late 1970s, the emergence of ethnic mobilisation in parts of the Middle East and of Central Asia seems to point in this direction – although we are probably still too close to the events and they would indeed need to be disentangled from religious elements of mobilisation and freed from the simplifications that one often finds in political science discussion.

The important European cases of ethnic mobilisation that we find in the twentieth century also fit into the model of interpretation that interprets the results of my comparative view on West Africa. The cases of ethnic conflict in the Balkans, for instance, seem to indicate a rise of such mobilisation at the principal moments of the breakdown of administrative structures, both before the First World War and after the collapse of the Yugoslavian state in the early 1990s. Ethnicisation of debates in the case of Spain has frequently had to do with principal conflicts over

10 Falola, Toyin, *Colonialism and Violence in Nigeria* (Bloomington – Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2009).

the internal distribution of resources and influence – and it belongs to this picture that the ethnic character of the contestation always remained ambiguous in cases such as Catalunya or the Basque Country.

Therefore, it would be totally erroneous to assume that ethnicity was a factor of mobilisation ‘automatically’ belonging to African communities. The mobilisation of regionalist solidarities based on an idea of cultural-linguistic unity in a circumscribed region, was an option in many parts of the globe. It was an adequate reaction to many cases of insecurity: an insecurity that could be created by the absence of stronger administrative structures to offer protection under conditions of violence; but it could also appear as a response to changes in more formalised administrative patterns, in which particular communities regarded themselves at an unfair disadvantage.

The principal factor of insecurity, as a central background condition for ethnic mobilisation, also builds the link to studies on migration, namely in a global historical perspective, in which ‘ethnicity’ is employed as an element of group identification, but with a different meaning. The bridge between both ways of formulating ‘ethnicity’ lies in the creation of solidarity through bonds that substitute in part for a lack of protection. However, European and Chinese migrants in the principal global migration systems – and more so from the eighteenth century – already had a reference to larger existing state structures that they mixed with references to a common language. By contrast, populations living in contexts of insecurity and within very small political-administrative units, did not have any such points of reference. For the global historian, this distinction needs to be very clear. An interpretation that takes both types of group solidarities as the same phenomenon of ‘ethnicity’ is not helpful.

Regional solidarities in Europe, the settler Americas, China or India, for example, in particular if discussed from the end of the early modern period, are not automatically different from those of groups analysed as ‘ethnic groups’ in the African continent, or in parts of Asia and the Americas. The need to activate these regional solidarities, and the modalities of their employment by local populations and their leaders, are, however, different, as structures of rule (or state administrations) offer another framework on which these populations can rely. The existence of the latter often makes it unnecessary to mobilise the more regional forms of group identification in the interest of the group’s security. In other words, it appears that if the structures of states and administrations provide a somewhat reliable set of rules, ‘ethnicity’ as a factor of group mobilisation is usually not needed.

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