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# PARTITION OF THE GERMAN TOGO COLONY: ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES<sup>1</sup>

Between the late 1940s and 1960, the so-called "Togoland or Ewe-question" became the first postwar international attempt to determine whether or not the borders drawn by the colonizing powers in Africa should be maintained or changed. In 1884 Togo became a German colony, and southern Togo, populated predominantly by the Ewes, became incorporated into the global market as a producer of agricultural commodities. After Germany's defeat in World War I, the League of Nations divided Togo into a British and a French Mandated Sphere. The western British part became integrated into the neighbouring Gold Coast Colony, whereas the French administered the eastern part as a separate Mandate. During World War II, a strong indigenous reunification movement emerged. At first, it only desired to reunite all Ewes, but later it aimed at reunification of both Togos. The United Nations General Assembly and Trusteeship Council discussed the political future of the former German colony. A 1956 plebiscite supervised by the United Nations rejected reunification. British Togo became part of Ghana in 1957, whereas French Togo emerged as the Republic of Togo in 1960. This essay investigates how the Ewes became fragmented after the partition of the German Togo colony into French and British Mandated Spheres, and traces Franco-British economic policies that contributed to the defeat of Togolese reunification attempts.

Togoland was divided by the Togo mountains, which traversed the colony from southwest to northeast. Togoland was bounded to the west by the Asante (Ashanti), kingdom, and to the east by the kingdom of Dahomey. The north and south had relatively large populations, whereas the centre was sparsely inhabited. The north contained a variety of ethnic groups. The Islamic principalities of Sokodé and Mango were part of a long-distance trading network. Caravans carried kola nuts from Ashanti to Hausaland in northern Nigeria. This traffic also benefitted northern Togoland through the sale of iron, rubber, and food commodities.<sup>2</sup> The south had a predominantly homogeneous Ewe ethnic population. In fact, however, the Ewe consisted of a collection of sub-groups which had settled the region, *i.e.*, the area which later became southern German Togo, plus the extreme southeast of the British Gold Coast (known as the Volta triangle) in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

Despite some obvious differences, this Ewe-region shared common historical, cultural, and linguistic characteristics. Ewe civilization was strongly influenced by Ashanti and Dahomey and by early contact with European traders and missionaries. The latter devised a uniform orthography of the Ewe language on the eve of German colonization. Some Ewe sub-groups had stronger political organizations than others, but a centralized Ewe-state never existed.<sup>3</sup> In the nineteenth century, production and export of palm oil replaced the slave trade in the south. Economic relations between north and south were limited to only two caravan trails, which connected Lomé-Kete-Krachi and Aného-Sokodé via Atakpamé.<sup>4</sup>

When German trading companies felt threatened by local taxes and French expansion, the Second Empire proclaimed a protectorate in the coastal zone of Togo. Subsequent German penetration aimed at reaching Kete-Krachi and Atakpamé in order to profit from the caravan trade in the interior. During German colonization, production of export crops grown by African peasants, particularly palm oil, palm kernels, cotton, cocoa, and rubber, rose considerably. German administrators improved the caravan trails to stimulate trade and production. The construction of a jetty made Lomé an important port. The widening of main roads and the building of feeder road systems developed especially in the south, speeded traffic, and decreased transportation costs. To facilitate control of the north, the Germans

extended the main roads from Lomé, via Kete-Krachi and Sokodé to Mango.<sup>5</sup> Subsequently, forced labourers from Kara and Mango<sup>6</sup> constructed railroad lines that connected Lomé with Aného, Kpalimé, and Atakpamé.

By the time German colonization ended, thousands of seasonal labourers had been migrating annually from southern Togo to the export production areas in the Gold Coast.<sup>7</sup> German colonization forced a new type of economic integration upon Togoland. The northern region's precolonial east-west orientation shifted southward. As a result, a large part of the south became firmly integrated into the global market, and a regularized labour migration pattern developed.

Until the global depression of the 1930s, export production in French and British Togo rose considerably. In French Togo, cocoa and coffee production increased considerably, but stagnated thereafter until 1945. After 1929, economic development in British Togoland decelerated, but its share in the Gold Coast cocoa export rose from 0.2% in 1929 to 4% in 1938.<sup>8</sup> Northern French and British Togo remained sources of seasonal labour supply to the south. After 1920, a few thousand labourers migrated annually from northern French Togo and the area around Kpalimé to cocoa-producing areas in British Togoland and the Gold Coast. In fact, out-migration exceeded internal migration in French Togo, because the emigrants were attracted by higher earnings in the cocoa fields, but they also fled high taxation in French Togo. Apart from some 14,000 forced labourers from the north the French used to construct the Atakpamé-Blitta railroad line, labour migration suddenly ended in 1929, because the economic crisis forced curtailment of the cocoa production. Between 1929 and 1933, cocoa workers returned from the Gold Coast and British Togoland to their homesteads in French Togo. After 1932, only a few hundred labourers migrated annually to British Togoland and the Gold Coast.<sup>9</sup>

The postwar partition of Togoland necessitated a major reorientation in the region's infrastructure and transportation system. Some roads disappeared entirely, and others became relatively unimportant. French Togo improved the roads connecting Sokodé and Mango in order to tighten control of the north without having to depend on the roads in British Togoland. The French also constructed feeder road systems to facilitate their control of densely populated areas, such as Kara and Dapaong, and to expedite the transportation of export production. The post-1929 economic crisis reduced infrastructural development in French Togo almost entirely until 1945. The British, on the other hand, sought the rapid economic integration of British Togoland into the Gold Coast. In 1922, they constructed a road from Accra to Togoland and crossed the Volta River by ferry. In 1930, the administration connected the cocoa-producing areas of British Togoland with Kumasi, Accra, and other coastal towns. Next, the British expanded the feeder road network within the cocoa area, and at the same time they created a new cocoa frontier east of Kete-Krachi. The northern part of British Togoland remained almost totally neglected, with the sole exception of the road to Yendi that was improved. The colonial administration made no efforts to improve communication links between British Togoland and French Togo.<sup>10</sup>

As a result of this neglect that reversed prewar German policy, economic relations between French Togo and British Togoland languished. During the German era, Kpalimé had been the "natural" collection centre of Togolese cocoa production. From there, the cocoa was transported to Lomé. Between 1929 and 1938, the volume of cocoa from British Togoland transported to Kpalimé experienced little change, but the proportion in terms of total production shrank from 90% in 1929 to only 35% in 1938. The bulk of British cocoa production was transported via new roads to the Gold Coast.<sup>11</sup>

Increasing demands for raw materials after World War II stimulated export production in French Togo and British Togoland. Both administrations made large investments in agriculture. In this respect, British Togoland lagged behind France, and made a late start in the mid-1950s. At the time, the administration wanted to compensate for the relative economic neglect of British Togoland after 1940. Both administrations expended large sums on improving the infrastructure of their mandated territories. French Togo improved the main roads and expanded the network of feeder roads. British Togoland also improved the quality of the roads in the south, and constructed a bridge across the Volta River to replace the ferry. Only two new roads crossed the partition line. The northern link soon lost its importance.<sup>12</sup>

Increased labour migration accompanied revived export production in British Togoland. After 1950, labour migration from north to south resumed in French Togo, but by the end of the colonial era, about 10,000 labourers migrated to the Gold Coast and British Togoland from French Togo annually<sup>13</sup> to swell the thousands of labour migrants who moved to British Togoland and the Gold Coast between 1940 and 1945.<sup>14</sup> After 1945, British Togoland also turned more and more into an out-migration area, because new cocoa areas opened up to the west, and because of the increasing attractiveness of Accra as a labour market.<sup>15</sup> In the early postwar period, economic integration of the two Togos appeared impracticable. The only common denominator connecting the two colonies was the cross-border transportation of cocoa.

British Togoland became part of the new Republic of Ghana in 1957. A cocoa tree blight and low prices set by the Cocoa Marketing Board reduced production. Investments in the region's infrastructure languished. Only one hardtop road, from Accra via Ho to Jasikan, remained operational.

In French Togo, however, economic development accelerated after independence in 1960. Regional development corporations and new state organizations promoted coffee, cocoa, cotton, and palm oil production. Even so, in the late 1960s, phosphates discovered near the coast replaced agricultural products as the most important export item. Simultaneously, various industries came into operation in Lomé. After 1966, the government launched an ambitious road improvement programme. By 1980, an excellent road network penetrated all the way to the country's northern and southern borders. Two new railway lines in the south further improved the transportation infrastructure.

Communications links between the two former Togos suffered neglect. Some cocoa still flowed from former British Togoland to the Republic of Togo, especially from the late 1960s until 1971, the peak year. Generally, the traffic remained below the modest levels achieved in the 1930s.<sup>16</sup> This decline was partly due to stricter border controls and occasional border closures. Economic stagnation in Ghana and prosperity in the Republic of Togo kept Togolese migrant labourers in their own country. Migration to Ghana decreased to between one and two-thousand migrant workers annually. They were attracted by jobs in Accra and in the newer cocoa fields to the west. In an attempt to overcome its economic problems, Ghana's government expelled 81,500 Togolese in 1969-1970. Thereafter, labour migration to Ghana shrank to only a few hundred workers annually.<sup>17</sup> In the post-colonial period, economic relations between both parts of the former German Togo colony became marginal.

The German colonizers of Togo had made efforts to consolidate and unify the region by improving the entire area's administrative and transportation infrastructure. Under the French and British rule the divided Togos suffered the effects of sporadic, haphazard, and poorly coordinated economic contacts. After independence, connections between the two former colonies languished, and at times ceased altogether. These disruptive tendencies had a negative impact on indigenous political unification efforts.

The French and British colonial administrations discouraged political opposition by Africans. Initially, however, Africans' concerns centred on economic issues, and desires for ethnic unification had commercial overtones. In 1920, some African traders in Lomé feared being cut off from an important part of their trading area then under British control. They petitioned the British government to reunify both Togos under British rule. In the long-run their fears proved justified.

Shortly after World War I, some petitioners had demanded the unification of all Ewes who were scattered over the Gold Coast, British Togoland, and French Togo.<sup>18</sup> The complainants consisted of the rising Ewe élite, whose members resided in the economically most developed regions, and were the most Europeanized and best educated Africans in both Togos. They had experienced the efficient and progressive German colonization efforts, during which time an Ewe Presbyterian Church came into being. Under German rule, the Ewes had experienced a status that had the semblance of unification of all the Ewes in a unified Togo colony. During the worst years of the economic crisis in the early 1930s, some of the Ewes demanded the restoration of German colonization. A small group of German-educated civil servants, their careers blocked by insufficient knowledge of English and French,

had formed the "Deutscher Togobund." The Permanent Mandates Commission of the League of Nations ignored their request.<sup>19</sup>

The influence of economic relations on the Togolese reunification movement became evident during World War II. The British administration hermetically sealed the border between British and French Togo because the French administration supported the Vichy government. The cessation of Anglo-French economic and social contacts particularly affected the south. In 1943, members of the Ewe élite urged the British government in vain to unite all Ewes. In 1946, Ewes from French Togo, British Togoland, and the Volta triangle held a convention at Accra, followed shortly thereafter by the founding of the All-Ewe Conference by Daniel Chapman, an Ewe from the Volta triangle. This meeting boosted the reunification cause considerably.<sup>20</sup>

Hereafter, Ewe leaders succeeded in placing their unification cause on the international agenda by means of a well-organized campaign, fund raising, and dispatching petitions and representatives to the United Nations Trusteeship Council. In 1946, the Comité d'Unité Togolaise, led by Sylvanus Olympio, won the elections in French Togo. One year later, Olympio pleaded the cause of reunification at the United Nations in New York. As a result of this appeal, the first United Nations Visiting Mission investigated the "Ewe-question" on the spot. In all, three Visiting Missions<sup>21</sup> examined the socioeconomic situation and sounded popular sentiments in both Togos. The Missions held meetings with the local populations, which themselves had a politicizing effect. Ewe nationalists utilized the political rights spelled out in the Trusteeship Agreements to express their views. Gradually, the movement shifted from unifying the Ewe people to reunification of Togo. The political élites were driven by political pragmatism, notably the opportunities offered by the two colonies' Trusteeship status, and to a lesser degree by economic considerations.

Other factors spurred desires for unification as well. Ewe representatives from Ho feared the domination of better-educated Ewe leaders from the Volta triangle, who dominated the All-Ewe Conference. These were more inclined to support independence of British Togoland together with the Gold Coast as a first step towards reunification of all Ewes. Buem, a cocoa-growing area of recent vintage around Kete-Krachi, was populated predominantly by non-Ewes, who feared being overruled by the Ewes. At the 1949 All-Ewe Conferences in Ho, and Kpalimé in 1951, these contradictions became clear and the All-Ewe Conference did not survive them.

Hereafter, Ewe solidarity disintegrated. Some leaders, such as Champman, joined Kwame Nkrumah's independence movement, the Convention People's Party, and others founded the Togoland Congress.<sup>22</sup> In the 1951, 1954, and 1956 Togolese elections the Togoland Congress defeated the Convention People's Party in southern British Togoland. The Convention People's Party also succumbed in the cocoa-growing areas of the Gold Coast, because farmers held the CPP government responsible for the low cocoa prices paid by the Cocoa Marketing Board. The Togoland Congress failed to gain any support in northern British Togoland, where the people favoured the Northern People's Party. This party also represented the northern Gold Coast's ethnic groups, with which the northern British Togolese were allied. In French Togo the Comité d'Unité Togolaise initially advocated unification of the Ewes, then switched to Togo reunification. This shift could not prevent its defeat in the 1952 elections by a combined north-south opposition led by Nicolas Grunitzky.<sup>23</sup>

The third United Nations Visiting Mission in 1955 had to find a solution for the future of British Togoland, because the British government planned to grant independence to the Gold Coast without proposing to continue its trusteeship over British Togoland. The Mission was well aware of the different attitudes in northern and southern British Togoland on the question of reunification. The Commission recommended separate plebiscites for north and south, a plan which the United Nations ignored. In 1956, one plebiscite was held throughout British Togoland.<sup>24</sup> In the campaign preceding the plebiscite the Togoland Congress supported separation from the Gold Coast,<sup>25</sup> whereas the Convention People's Party strongly opposed "separation" on the grounds that British Togoland was economically vital to the Gold Coast. British Togoland produced one-tenth of the country's cocoa exports and had just been drawn into an ambitious and expensive project. The scheme involved the construction of a large dam on the Volta River that would generate hydro-electricity in order to

facilitate industrialization, mainly on the Gold Coast. The Convention People's Party tried to influence the outcome of the plebiscite by accelerating investments in British Togoland's agriculture and infrastructure. The (anti-Convention People's Party) also opposed reparation. Northern People's Party also opposed "separation."<sup>26</sup>

The voting pattern showed large differences between north and south. In the three northern districts, 84%, 81%, and 79% of the electorate rejected "separation." In the cocoa-growing district of Buem-Krachi 60% of the people opposed "separation." Only the two southernmost districts of Kpandu and Ho supported the cause of Togo-reunification. In these two districts only 34% and 28% of the voters opposed "separation."<sup>27</sup> Throughout British Togoland, 58% of the voters opposed "separation" from the Gold Coast. As a result, British Togoland merged with the Gold Coast, and became part of the independent Republic of Ghana the next year.

The Third Visiting Mission, the plebiscite, and the unification of British Togoland with the Gold Coast radicalized public opinion in French Togo. In the 1958 elections the Grunitzky government, which had been advocating Togolese autonomy within the French Union since 1956, suffered defeat by the Comité d'Unité Togolaise, which demanded independence. Two years later, French Togo became the independent Republic of Togo.<sup>28</sup>

Until shortly after World War II, Ewe nationalism was stimulated by the Trusteeship status that split the Ewes ethnically, but was drawn by the same status into an approach that favoured territorial Togolese unity. The influence of economic conditions on reunification is difficult to analyze because the United Nations failed to organize an integral plebiscite in both Togos. It is clear, however, that northern British Togoland opposed reunification because contacts with French Togo were almost totally lacking. Voting behaviour in the cocoa-growing districts was preponderantly ethnically oriented. Only this can explain the difference in voters' choices between Buem-Krachi on the one hand and Ho and Kpandu on the other hand.

Apparently, the weakening of economic links between both Togos ensured that political reunification could not be forthcoming, despite evidences of Ewe ethnic solidarity. This does not mean, however, that voters in the cocoa-growing areas lacked other than ethnic reasons to support reunification. Discontent with Gold Coast cocoa price policy stimulated support for Togolese reunification, but the lack of economic integration between British and French Togo weakened Ewe resolve to support territorial and ethnic unification in sufficient numbers to warrant a successful resolution of Ewe consolidation into a single political unit.

A few months before Ghana's independence, the authorities discovered three military camps in southern British Togoland. The Nkrumah administration nipped the revolt in the bud and arrested the Togoland Congress leadership. In 1958, Nkrumah exacerbated the poor relations with the newly-elected Comité d'Unité Togolaise government. He declared that French Togo must become the seventh region of Ghana. At the time, the Comité d'Unité Togolaise desired a federation with Ghana.<sup>29</sup> In 1960, Ghana's government again discovered a secessionist plot in former British Togoland. Some of its leaders fled to the Republic of Togo. Thereafter, mutual relations deteriorated, and Ghana frequently closed its borders with Togo. With the rise of new political leaders in both countries relations improved.

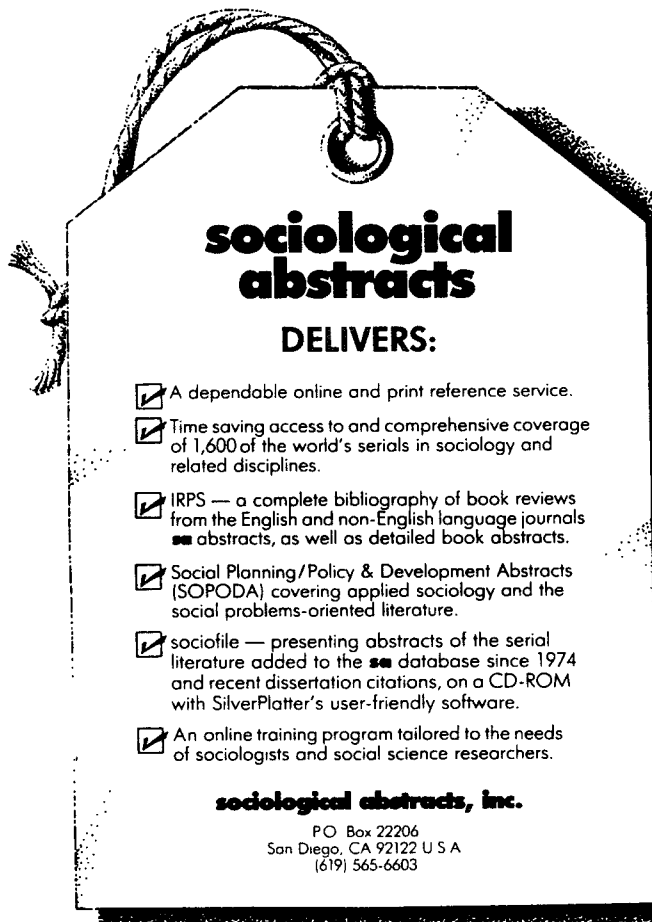
But reunification desires among the Ewe kept on smouldering. At the 1969 and 1971 Pan-Ewe Festivals in Notsé, and in Ho in 1970, revived Ewe nationalism became noticeable. In 1972, Ewe nationalists founded the National Liberation Movement of Western Togoland (TOLIMO). This organization disputed the validity of the 1956 plebiscite, and proclaimed its desire to amalgamate former British Togoland with the Republic of Togo.<sup>30</sup> The Eyadéma administration of the Republic of Togo, which came into power in 1967, supported TOLIMO. The leadership of Eyadéma, a Kabyè from the Kara area in the north, meant an important shift in the political balance of power from southern (Ewe) to northern politicians in the Republic of Togo.<sup>31</sup> Championing TOLIMO ensured Eyadéma the support of the Ewes.

Throughout the 1970s, TOLIMO was active, but its actions were limited to mounting demonstrations and presenting petitions in the Republic of Togo and in Ghana. They aroused no interest in the international community.<sup>32</sup> TOLIMO found scanty support in



- (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), p. 381; and C. Newbury, *The Western Slave Coast and its Rulers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), p. 169.
8. Reports by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the Council of the League of Nations on the Administration of Togoland under British Mandate for the years 1929, 1930, 1931, 1932, 1933, 1934, 1935, 1936, 1937, 1938, Issued by the Colonial Office. (London: H. M. S. O. Press, 1930, 1931, 1932, 1934, 1935, 1937, 1938, and 1939); and G. B. Kay, *The Political Economy of Colonialism in Ghana. A Collection of Documents and Statistics 1900-1960* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1972).
  9. *Rapport Annuel du Gouvernement Français au Conseil de la Société des Nations sur l'Administration sous Mandat du Territoire du Togo pour l'année 1924, 1926, 1928, 1930, 1931, 1932* (Paris: Larose Editeurs, 1925, 1927, 1929, 1931, 1931, 1932, and 1933); and Kuczynski, *The Cameroons and Togoland*, pp.485-549.
  10. *Rapports Annuels pour l'année 1924-1938* (Paris: Larose Editeurs, 1925-1939); and *Annual Reports 1920-1938* (London: H. M. S. O. Press, 1921-1939).
  11. *Annual Reports 1929-1938* (London: H. M. S. O. Press, 1930-1939).
  12. Reports by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the General Assembly of the United Nations on the Administration of Togoland under United Kingdom Trusteeship for the Years 1947 and 1955 Issued by the Colonial Office (London: H. M. S. O. Press, 1948 and 1956); E. Saffu, "Nkrumah and the Togoland Question," *Economic Bulletin of Ghana*, 12, No. 2-3 (1968), 40; P. Gould, *The Development of the Transportation Pattern in Ghana* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1960), p. 48; and *Rapports Annuels du Gouvernement Français à l'Assemblée Générale des Nations Unies sur l'Administration du Togo placé sous la tutelle de la France pour l'année 1949-1954* (Paris: Imprimerie Chaix, 1950-1955; and *ibid.*, *Rapport Annuel pour l'année 1950* (Paris: Imprimerie Chaix, 1951), p. 54.
  13. *Rapport Annuel pour l'année 1952* (1953), p. 13; and E. le Bris, "Migration and the Decline of a Densely Populated Rural Area: The Case of Vo-Koutimé in South-East Togo," *African Perspectives*, 1 (1978), 114.
  14. T. Kumeckpor and J. Looky, "External Migrations in Togo," in S. Amin, ed., *Modern Migrations in Western Africa* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), p. 359.
  15. United Nations Document T/711 (New York: United Nations, 1950); and W. Birmingham, L. Neustadt, and E. Omaboe, *A Study of Contemporary Ghana* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1966), I, 132-133.
  16. D. Brown, "Borderline Politics in Ghana, The National Liberation Movement of Western Togoland," *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 18, No. 4 (1980), 587; and A. Kumar, "Smuggling in Ghana, Its Magnitude and Economic Effects," *Nigerian Journal of Economic and Social Studies*, 15, No. 2 (1973), 285-303.
  17. K. Zachariah, J. Condé, and N. Nair, *Demographic Aspects of Migration in West Africa*, 2. *World Bank Staff Working Paper 415* (Washington: World Bank, 1980), pp. 1-28; and S. K. Gaisie and K. T. de Graft-Johnson, *The Population of Ghana* (Accra: CICRED-University of Legon, 1976), pp. 57-61.
  18. Unity among the Dagombas and Mamprussis in the north, previously divided by German and British colonization, was restored by the incorporation of British Togo into the Gold Coast. J. S. Coleman, "Togoland," *International Conciliation*, 509 (1956), 17-18.
  19. C. Welch, *Dream of Unity. Panaficanism and Political Unification in West Africa* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1966), pp. 58-59.
  20. Coleman, "Togoland," 33; R. Cornevin, *Histoire du Togo* (Paris: Editions Berger-Levrault, 1959), p. 382; J. Prescott, *The Geography of Boundaries and Frontiers* (London: Hutchinson, 1965), pp. 136-138; and Welch, *Dream of Unity*, p. 76.
  21. In 1951, 1954, and 1956. The influence of the U. N. Visiting Missions should not be exaggerated. They demanded, for example, full statistical, constitutional, and budgetary autonomy for British Togo, but tacitly accepted British Togo's total administration from Accra. United Nations Documents A/2150 and A/2152 (New York: United Nations, 1952).
  22. Welch, *Dream of Unity*, p. 86.
  23. *Ibid.*, pp. 96-102; and Cornevin, *Histoire du Togo*, pp. 387-389.
  24. United Nations Document T/1277 (New York: United Nations, 1956), pp. 3-9.

25. At first sight, the choice was between "integration" (with the Gold Coast) or "separation" (from the Gold Coast). At second sight, however, the choice was more complex. "Integration" also meant independence (together with the Gold Coast) within a short time. "Separation" meant officially the separation from the Gold Coast and the continuation of British trusteeship pending the ultimate determination of the political future of British Togo. Coleman, "Togoland," 71-74.
26. Welch, *Dream of Unity*, p. 121.
27. Coleman, "Togoland," 72-73.
28. M. Prouzet, *La république du Togo* (Paris: Editions Berger-Levrault, 1976), p. 23.
29. Saffu, "Nkrumah and the Togoland Question," 39.
30. Brown, "Borderline Politics in Ghana," 583-584.
31. S. Decalo, *A Historical Dictionary of Togo* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1976), p. xiii.
32. C. Legum, ed., *Africa Contemporary Record. Annual Survey and Documents 1975/76 and 1976/77* (London: Rex Collings, 1976 and 1977), p. B 696 and pp. B 578-B 583.
33. Brown, "Borderline Politics in Ghana," 584.
34. Hodder, "The Ewe Problem," p. 280.



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