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THE IMPACT AND LEGACIES OF GERMAN COLONIALISM IN KETE KRACHI, NORTH-EASTERN GHANA.¹

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Introduction

This paper is about Kete Krachi. It discusses the various historical changes that took place after the area had contact with Germans. The paper points out the profound impact that colonialism had on KeteKrachi. I argue that chieftaincy, boundaries, allegiances trade and agricultural systems were reshaped by colonial policies and institutions under German rule in Kete Krachi.²

Kete Krachi prior to German Colonialism

Kete and Krachi are two important settlements that were gradually joined to become what today is known as Kete Krachi. Krachikrom sometimes shortened as Krachi was the first settlement in the area. Incidentally the name Krachi also applies to the ethnic group. Kete mostly refer to the migrant settlement which got established on the immediate fringes of Krachikrom for purposes of trade. There are several traditions that speak to the origin of the Krachi people. In 1975, the Kaachiwia testified before a Committee of Inquiry appointed by Executive Instrument to enquire into certain matters concerning the Volta Region. He stated inter alia:

¹ This paper is part of an ongoing collaborative research between the author and Professor Jan-Bart Gewald of the University of Leiden, The Netherlands. Discussions on the legacies of German colonialism began in 2008 in Ghana. Subsequently in 2010, through a SEPHIS grant from The Netherlands a conference on German Colonialism was held in Tamale, Northern Region. In 2012, the author was also instrumental in the organization of another conference in Winneba related to the same topic. Since 2008, the author and Professor Jan-Bart Gewald have conducted extensive research in Kete Krachi, Kpandai, Balai, Bimbilla, Yendi and Sang. Archival research was also conducted in the Basel Mission archive in Switzerland, as well as in the Public Records Office, Kew, London and in the archives in Accra, Kumasi, Ho and Tamale. The purpose is to coherently document German colonial activities and legacies in the areas mentioned above.

² The name Krachi refers to both the settlement and the ethnic group. Kete Krachi also refers to the town which was inhabited by both indigenes and the migrants. The common word for the town now is Krachi. In this discussion both terminologies, that is, Krachi and Kete Krachi would be used interchangeably. Kaachiwia, Krachiwura or Kakyiwiaa refers to the paramount chief of the Krachi people. The three terminologies would be used interchangeably.

In ancient times my ancestors were Etsi people who lived somewhere near Awutu on the Coast. They migrated to Larteh Akuapem to join a number of Guan-speaking people who had established pocket communities there. At Larteh, they became heavily indebted to Akyem overlords who used to send messengers to collect tributes in the form of anything which they favoured. Because of these exactions, my ancestors decided to pull out. They were noticed by the Akyem overlords who teased them by saying “ka—akye—won” meaning they had become insolvent. It was a corruption of this statement that the people had the name as Kaa-Akye anglicized as Kratchi.³

There are other traditions that differ from the evidence given above by Chief Mensah on the origin of the Krachi people. One that has gained popularity in Krachi has it that Wulbuare, the sky-God who is the supreme deity created men and women at the same time. He lowered them from the sky by chain which he drew up again. The men were settled on the right bank of the Frao (Volta) river which became known as ‘Nkomi. The women were put on the left bank in a place called Nsugnuae. But this scheme of Wulbuare was not liked by the men who rose up and said, Katye or Kaa-chi, *kaa* which means let us go or migrate, *achi* (to the) women. This movement to join the women has since led to the naming of both the people and the area as Kaachi or Krachi. Till date the remains of these two settlements described above that is Nkomi to the west and Nsugnuae to the east of the Volta, are still visible and are collectively referred to as ‘Kitakpanda’ that is the settlement in ruins.⁴

Besides this original group, other ethnic groups also migrated and settled in Krachi. For example there were the Akans who also came to settle in Krachi in the 1870s and 1880s as refugees. Notable among them were the Ashantis from Nsuta. Even though this group came during the reign of Otebrebe as Krachiwura, when Otebrebe died, they continued to serve any person who came on the stool as Krachiwura. With time they got incorporated into the Krachi ethnic group and became one among the several clans. The Nsuta clan introduced the Kete dance in Krachi, a dance which would soon give Krachi its second name Kete.⁵

³ Kwame Ampene, *History of the Guan speaking People of Ghana*. (Philadelphia: Starprint, 2011), 118.

⁴ Ibid., 119.

⁵ *Kete* is an Akan drum ensemble. The music of kete is reputed to possess the power of attracting good spirits. The instruments of *kete* are the *petia* (small stick drum), *kwadum* (master drum), *apentema* (hand drum), and *abrukua* (stick drum). The *donno* (hour-glass-shaped talking drum) is absent from this group, and the *ntorowa* (gourd rattle) and *dawuro* (boat-shaped, hand-held iron bell). Some traditions have it that the Kete performers were not refugees but rather were noble people who were sent by the Dwabenhene to perform at the Dente shrine in appreciation of the good and protective services that Dente rendered to the Dwaben people.

The refugees from Nsuta were also responsible for entertaining guests with the Kete drums and dance at the Dente shrine anytime strangers came there. They also played an important role in spreading the fame of Dente to other Akan settlements, which include Nsuta, their native hometown, Dwaben and Atebubu in present day Ashanti and Brong Ahafo regions respectively. In fact in Atebubu a mound of the Dente shrine was erected and anytime an individual or a group was attacked they could flee and seek refuge around the mound. Such refugees were later transferred from Atebubu to Krachi to serve Krachiwura.⁶

By the time of the arrival of Germans in Krachi, Krachi had several clans, some of which include Batae, Dentewiae, Nchunyae, Keanae, Sawakye, Otapoe, Kosuwiae, Bruwiase, and Gyamboae. In addition to these clans, Krachi became home also to a number of trader groups such as Hausa, Kotokoli, Zambrama, Mossi and Dagomba among others. But in Krachi the trader group was collectively referred to as Hausa. Some Krachi people and southern groups in Krachi also referred to the Hausa trader group as *Ntafo*, meaning, twins for they all wore almost the same northern dress which made them look alike.⁷

The Hausa element in Kete Krachi is traceable to the profound commercial activities in Krachi. Krachi was located on an important trans-Saharan trade route. Its strategic location made it reachable from most parts of Ghana. One could reach it from Yendi in the north, Salaga to the west, Abome in Togo to the east and by the river to the south as far as Accra. What even increased the number of this trader group in Krachi was the collapse of Salaga as an important trade centre following a series of disturbances in the later 19th century. The first had to do with the British-Ashanti war of 1874. The war changed trade patterns and led to the substantial movement of northern traders from Salaga to Krachi and Accra. The second was the bombardment of Salaga by the Germans. The third were conflicts among Gonjas themselves in Kpembe and Salaga regarding succession to chiefship in 1892 and this led to an addition of Hausa traders to Krachi.⁸

⁶ J.E.K. Kumah, *Kete Krachi Traditions*, (Legon-Accra, Institute of African Studies, 1969)

⁷ Donna Maier, Competition for Power and Profits in Kete-Krachi, West Africa, 1875-1900 *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (1980), 36.

⁸ For the conflicts and their effects see; K. Arhin, *The Papers of George Ekem Ferguson: A Fante official of the Government of the Gold Coast 1890-1897*, (Leiden: African Studies Centre, 1967), also, J.A. Braimah & J.R. Goody, *Salaga: The struggle for power*, (London: Longman, 1967) The Gonja are a Guan group located in the Northern Region of Ghana. The Gonja Kingdom, one of the largest in modern Ghana, was founded by Wadi Naba'a in the sixteenth century. But the territorial expansion of the kingdom to the east and west of the northern part of Ghana occurred during the first half of the seventeenth century under the great leader referred to as Ndwura Jakpa. He ruled Gonja from about 1622-1672. Under the leadership of Jakpa the kingdom expanded

As indicated already, Krachi became the natural choice because it was already located on important trade routes. Secondly, it had a much more favorable transport system via the Volta river. Thirdly, unlike Salaga which lacked enough food and water Krachi was well endowed with food and water.⁹ This third point is crucial in the sense that the trans-Saharan trade relied heavily on porters both human and animal drawn. Both transport systems depend on water for survival. At its peak in the dry season Kete Krachi received in excess of 10,000 traders.¹⁰ This number equally needed a reliable source of water for personal use. With Kete Krachi located close to the river, challenges of adequate water were surmounted. Finally Krachi was close to the kola nut producing centers in Teppa in the Volta Region and Ashanti.

It is evident from the narrative above that Krachi by all accounts was already well placed commercially. However, central to the making of Krachi is the Dente shrine. To this we turn our attention.

Dente and its connections

One cannot discuss Krachi without recourse to Dente because in part the fame of Krachi was very much dependent on Dente.¹¹ The people of Krachi worship Wulbuare through Krachi Dente. Just as there are several accounts regarding the origin of Krachi itself, so there are diverse histories of Dente.

Dente is said by some to be the son of one of the powerful deities called Brukum. Brukum is located in Siare, close to present day Krachi Nkwanta which is about seventy kilometers from Krachi. Tradition has it that chief Odankapo of Krachi sent and begged Brukum to send to Krachi one of his sons through whom they could continue to serve him. Brukum consented and after much travel produced his son Dente. So great was the labour of Brukum in his attempt to

eastwards to include parts of the Oti River Ndewura Jakpa remains a hero in the history and cultural heritage of the Gonja Kingdom. Before the age of Jakpa, Mande communities had arisen at Wa, Bona and Bole. All of these settlements were connected to Ashanti and the Mande trading settlements of Begho in the fourteenth century. The consolidation of the Gonja kingdom in the early 1600s saw the creation of important ruling divisions such as Bole, Wasipe, Kpembe, Tuluwe and Kusawgu which rotate to the highest traditional political office in Yagbon.

⁹ M. Johnson, *Salaga Papers*, acc.no. SAL/9/2. Vol. 1, (Legon: Institute of African Studies, 1965)

¹⁰ D. W. Maier, 'Kete-Krachi in the Nineteenth Century: Religious and Commercial Centre of the Eastern Asante Borderlands. (Northwestern University, PhD thesis), 212.

¹¹ Dente is a shrine located in Kete Krachi. It is consulted by both natives and strangers for the solution of daily life problems and activities, some of which include success in trade and war, agricultural and human re/production, good fortune among others.

provide the people of Krachi with Dente that the mountains near the shrine of Brukum split in two thereby producing the stream at Siare. Along this valley passed Dente only to find his way through the mountain range of the Adele. Dente continued on his way and came at last to the bank of the Frao (Volta) River where he found a kind home. After settling in Krachi, Dente also produced a son, Friko who was also located in the Adele country.¹² Further north of Krachi was also the Kankpe shrine of the Nawuris which was also related to Dente.

A second tradition has it that Dente traditionally came from Larte in the present day Akwapim area of the Eastern Region of Ghana. The tradition holds that Dente was a corruption of its place of origin- Larte. The story continues that when the deity was at Larte it was known as Konkom and its wife was Akonedi another powerful shrine at Larte. But Konkom was offended by the people of Larte and therefore it decided to leave Larte and moved northwards in search of a peaceful and more loving place. It finally turned into a sick young boy when it approached Krachi. The boy requested water from women who were fetching water from the Volta river. The first woman refused to give him water, but the second woman gave him clean water from a new calabash. After drinking the boy left for the forest which was located close to Krachikrom. He was not seen again. In the meantime noise emerged from the forest and the boy resurfaced again but this time he stood by a cave in the forest. The boy instructed the woman who gave him the water that certain rituals be performed by the cave. After the instructions he went back into the cave. The rituals which were performed and the water given him made him to stay permanently in the cave. That marked the origin of Dente.¹³

Among the two traditions of origin of Dente the latter is the more widely believed version in Krachi. However, what is important in these two accounts of the migratory routes of Dente is the extent to which the two stories have become the fundamental basis for the growth and popularity of Dente in most parts of Ghana. The description of Dente as a human being indicates how Dente came to play an important role in the physical lives of people in the area. The stories have also helped in the spiritual mapping of the Krachi people and the control that they came

¹² Public Records and Archive Administration Department (Hereafter PRAAD), NRG 8/1/2, Boundary Dispute, Togoland, 1921.

¹³ J.E.K. Kumah, *Kete Krachi Traditions*, (Accra: Institute of African Studies, 1969), 34.

later to have over ethnic groups along the migratory route of the shrine, which began in the pre-colonial period and continued even unto the time of German colonialism.

Krachi under German Rule

On the 31st of December 1894, the German district of Kete Hedwigswarg was declared open by Lieutenant von Döring. Other officers who were part of Döring's team including Graf Zech, Dr. Gruner, Adams Mischlich, Lt Reick, Lt Semd, Lt Pheler, Lt Kittel, Heiling Bruner, Hinchfeld, Dr. von Raven. Other officers were Helds, Henkel, Dettmann, Sturming, Mucke, Kolberg, Kemper, Fleischere, Brosch, Ottens, Scheider, Brave and Gross. The German team was invited by one Sofo, the then Sarikin Zongo (Zongo Chief) of Kete Krachi. The migrant Hausa and their allies, the Kotokoli, Yoruba, Kanuri among others felt they were constantly threatened by the indigenous people, the Krachi.¹⁴ The series of threats had negative consequences on trade. This occurrence was especially not welcomed by the Hausa since in the first place it was such instability that made them to relocate from Salaga to Kete Krachi. As a result the support of the Germans was sought.

Sofo's daughter who is now over hundred years narrates the arrival of the Germans to Krachi as follows:

They came to my father and that is where they settled (pointing her finger to the German station) I was very young but my senior brothers were grown so they could move around with the Germans. If my brothers were alive they could give details about the flag, the Germans gave my father a flag which he hoisted on the roof. What I can also remember in detail was that when they were leaving, because my father worked with the Germans they presented so many things to him before they left. They gave him a sword and then some guns. They also sent him another thing that shows the time. That one they sent from Kpalime.¹⁵

¹⁴ Heinrich Klose, *Klose's Journey to Northern Ghana, 1894*. Translated by Inge Killick,(Accra: Institute of African Studies (1964), 87.

¹⁵ Interview with Hajia, daughter of Sofo and other family members in Kete Krachi on 5th July, 2014. Hajia is the only surviving child of Sofo, one of the nineteenth century Hausa chiefs in Kete Krachi. Her grandchildren are still into trading just as their grandfather Sofo. However, they do not sell kola nuts and other products that were popular with the trans-Saharan trade. Instead they sell electrical equipment's as well as cloth mostly brought from Accra and Togo.

Documentary evidence, however, does support the narrative provided by Hajia. On their arrival in Krachi the Germans went straight to Sofo's house and not that of the Dente priest.¹⁶ Even though the Germans went to Kete Krachi due to Sofo's invitation, their presence in Krachi was already part of a wider scheme to secure interior trade and trade routes. Germans had discovered soon, after obtaining firm footing on the coast of Lome that their possession of a mere strip of the coast was almost entirely dependent upon trade with the interior. Thus, cramped into this small strip between the Keta Lagoon and the French possession of Dahomey, Germany's aim was to obtain a better seaboard for Togoland in the direction of the mouth of the River Volta which includes Kete Krachi.¹⁷

Kete Krachi was of concern to Germans because of its strategic location. It lay close to Salaga and not too far away from Lome. Salaga at that time was declared a neutral town but was firmly under the control of the British. This situation was due to the fact that in the designing of the policies that would govern the neutrality of Salaga in trade affairs, Europeans only considered geographical location of Salaga without recourse to traditional bonds. Salaga was within the Gonja territory of which the overall ruler- the Yagbonwura was in Nyagne, close to Damongo which then was under British rule. Also in terms of trade, Salaga in part owed its existence to Ashanti which was also under British domination. So, naturally the chief of Kpembe who exercised jurisdiction over Salaga was more sympathetic to British interest in the area. But as far as trade was concerned, the Germans could turn the fortunes of Kete Krachi around and make it an alternative market in the interior since Salaga was already declining as a result of the factors mentioned above.

The power of Germany to establish Kete Krachi as an important commercial centre was not in doubt as already Germans had sent their scouts to the interior whose reports indicated that the only competitors in the interior trade were the British. But Britain was also not too sure about its economic power in the interior and feared instead the Germans. As C.S. Salmon observed:

The rivalry of France is of little moment for however great her possessions, and they are considerable in Africa. Her trade is always limited.... The greatest danger

¹⁶ For detailed account of the arrival of Germans in Krachi see, H. Klose, *Klose's Journey to Northern Ghana, 1894*. Translated by Inge Killick, (Accra: Institute of African Studies (1964)

¹⁷ A. Olorunfemi, 'The contest for Salaga: Anglo-German conflict in the Gold Coast Hinterland', *Journal of African Studies*, Vol. 3. No.1 (1984), 17.

to the trade and commercial supremacy of Great Britain is from Germany. The German houses on the coast rank next to the British in importance. Germans are expert traders; they know many things an English trader would not value.¹⁸

From above it is evident that the invitation of Sofo and the interest of Germans in trade in particular and the interior in general would form an important part of German administrative, political and economic policies in Kete Krachi.

The German Administrative system in Kete Krachi

Kete Krachi was administered as part of the larger German colonial government which was instituted in 1898. As the influence of the government extended inland, military posts were made into administrative units. These units operated within districts with officers administratively responsible to a number of administrative units under their jurisdiction. There were also the *Bizirksleiter* (District leaders) who administered the Northern stations which were far removed from Lome, the capital. German territory of Togo was divided into five *Bezirksamtern* (administrative regions). There were also out-stations which were classified as *Shezirke* (post centres or separate regions) which though not strictly part of the administrative regions were considered autonomous and important to be administered as such.¹⁹

There were three of such regions, namely, Kete Krachi, Sokode and Sansanne-Mango. Their ethnic composition was as follows: Kete Krachi comprised Tepa, Dela, Adele, Ntrubu, Achode, Nawuri and Nchumburu. Sokode controlled the Tem, Chamba, Kabre, Losso and its sub-division of the Bassari and Konkomba of the eastern portion of the river Oti. The region of Sansanne-Mango was made up of the Chokosi, Bimoba, Burma, Lamba, Tamberma and the Yendi sub-division controlled the western Konkomba and Dagomba ethnic groups.

It is evident from above that the arrangement or grouping was in line with German administrative practice of regrouping subject peoples according to similar origin or race. Even though groups such as Chokosi, Bimoba, Burma and Konkomba are entirely different from the

¹⁸ C.S. Salmon, 'Our West African Settlements'. *Contemporary Review*, Vol.XLVIII (1888), 336, as quoted in, A. Olorunfemi, 'The contest for Salaga: Anglo-German conflict in the Gold Coast Hinterland', *Journal of African Studies*, Vol. 3. No.1 (1984), 17.

¹⁹ Cliff Maasole, *The Konkomba and their neighbours: From pre-European period*. (Accra: Ghana universities press, 2006), 195.

Dagomba, Lamba and Teamberma, in the case of Kete Krachi, the Krachi, Adele, Achode, Nawuri and Nchumburu were all of Guan origin. An informant pointed out that, the administrative grouping adopted by Germans was based both on ethnicity and the traditional spiritual allegiance that the members of the Guan ethnic groups already had with Dente and its priest in Kete Krachi.²⁰

In their administrative system Germans also made use of chieftaincy. Individual chiefs of the Achode, Adele, Nawuri and Nchumburu became subordinates of the chief in Kete Krachi-the Krachiwura. Chiefs were invited to Kete Krachi and given specific roles to play. As the German intention for Kete Krachi was to promote trade, much of the emphasis was in the development of transport and communication, and in this chiefs were frequently called to provide labour for construction. In some cases complete strangers were made chiefs over the indigenous groups. For example, in an effort to centralize authority in the Nawuri area, traditional norms and patterns of traditional observance were set aside. In their place the Germans used the warrant system as a way of investing traditional rulers with paramount power. By this policy an immigrant Gonja, rather than an indigenous Nawuri was made the paramount chief of the Nawuri people.²¹ The reliance on chiefs was as a result of the large size of the territory which Germany intended to administer especially as Nawuri, Nchumburu and Nanumba were added to the territory.²² It is evident that chieftaincy was given considerable prominence in the German administrative system in Kete Krachi.

However, the prominence given to chiefs by Germans should not be over emphasized. Even though chiefs were considered crucial in the functioning of German administrative system they were equally punished, deposed or executed at the slightest provocation by the Germans. For example in Nanun, the chief of Bimbilla, Na Salifu was deposed by the Germans in 1909. He was only re-installed by the English in 1917. The Gonja chief, Kanankulaiwura Joro was driven

²⁰ Interview with J.B. Donkor, in Kete Krachi, 27 July 2010. Donkor is a retired registrar of the Krachi traditional council. The council was responsible for coordinating the activities of chiefs in the area. It also served as a link between the government and the chiefs. He also worked for other traditional councils in the Volta region examples of which include Hohoe and Ho.

²¹ Cletus Mbowura, AwaisuImurana and Felix Longi, 'The Ethnic Factor in International Politics: Constructing the role of the Nawuri in the Pan-Ewe Nationalist Movement'. *Historical Research Letter*, Vol. 10, (2014), 20.

²² PRAAD, Tamale, NRG 8/2/211, Enquiry regarding the claims of Nawuri and Nchumburu, 1955.

from Kpandai by the Germans and went to live in the Nchumburu town of Kojobone.²³ Despite the fact that the spiritual map of Dente played an important role in carving out administrative spheres in the Krachi area, and the Dente priest was equally crucial in the spiritual and political lives of the Krachi and the Guans who were under German rule, the Dente priest was not incorporated in the administrative structure of the Germans in Krachi. Instead, the Germans in Krachi worked closely with Sofo, the Sarikin Zongo (Zongo chief) and the Krachiwura. In fact the German administrative machinery worked very hard to destroy the worship of deities and ancestors in the area. The Krachi Dente priest, Nana Jantrubi was executed by the Germans in 1894 the same year that they arrived in Krachi. The excuse for his execution was that he sacrificed human beings to the Dente shrine. A year to the outbreak of the First World War, similar executions by hanging were carried out on the newly installed Dente priest Nana Abrakpa including some of his elders.²⁴

Whereas cultural differences between the people of Krachi and the Germans played an important role in these executions, economic factors could not also be ignored in these executions. Revenue was important for the functioning of German administration in Kete Krachi. There was evidence of the struggle for market and ferry taxes between the Dente priest and Germans. Until the arrival of Germans, the Dente priest collected taxes in the form of portions of whatever was sold in the market and also on the products that were ferried across the Volta River. This was immediately stopped by the German administrators who felt it worked against the revenue returns to the Germans in Krachi. Even though the people of Krachi and the priest still continued to collect some of the taxes it was the executions that finally put a stop to this contest over taxes.²⁵

Regarding the administrative relationship that was established between the indigenes and the Germans, Jack Goody points out that the Germans just as the French and British were all struggling for access to the savannah area. But most of the markets were already being controlled by Britain through Ashanti and to a lesser extent Gonja. As a late comer in the race for territory

²³ Maasole, *The Konkomba*, 198.

²⁴ Samuel Ntewusu, 'Kete Krachi under German Rule: 1894-1920'; in' Wazi Apoh and Bea Lundt (Eds), *Germany and its West African Colonies: Excavations f German Colonialism in Post-Colonial Times* (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2013), 242.

²⁵ Samuel Ntewusu, *Kete Krachi*, 243.

in the savannah it was the Hausa that became the most ideal ally. First they invited the Germans into Krachi, and second, they controlled the trade. Germany was interested most in those who would collaborate with them. As late comers also the Germans understood the use of force in their administrative system as the principal way that could ensure their survival in the savannah region, hence the executions in Krachi. But German atrocities were not limited to Kete Krachi. Earlier Kling, a German official had opened fire at Jukuku near Kusawgu when he was returning from Kintampo. All Germans and their carriers possessed rifles. This well-armed expedition reflects the difficulties of the Germans in the scramble for the savannah region. Germans had to fight hard to carve themselves out a colonial empire which demanded not only fighting Europeans but also Africans as well.²⁶

Just about two decades after the entry of Germans into Kete Krachi, war broke out in Europe. Africa was not spared the war. Von Döring who was among the group that established the German station in Krachi appealed to the British for neutrality because of the economic interdependence of the west African colonies and their common interest in dominating local populations. The Cabinet in London refused the offer of neutrality. In August 1914 a detachment from the Gold Coast Regiment occupied Kete Krachi without resistance, thus ending German colonialism in Kete Krachi. But German colonialism left behind important legacies which merit elaboration.

Of trees, roads and social order: memories and legacies of German colonialism in Kete Krachi

On May 1, 1998, the Ghana News Authority reported that the low water level in the Volta lake had exposed a great part of the old Kete-Krachi town with relics of its German colonial administration and early Islamic commercial influences. On the west bank of the lake, concrete structures said to be the sealed armory of the German colonial administration and remnants of the barracks of West African Frontier Force could be seen. On the eastern bank stands the grave and the mosque of Alhaji Shehu Umar Titibrika, a renowned Islamic scholar who introduced Islam to the Kete-Krachi area. Other places of the old town which emerged from the bed of the

²⁶ J.A. Braimah and J.R. Goody, *Salaga the struggle for power* (London: Longmans, 1967), x-xi.

lake were the slave market, patches of bitumen on the old Kete-Krachi-Accra road, which was lined with trees said to be the mangoes planted by the German colonial administration. The member of parliament for the area, Mr. Samson Apraku, and Mr. Frank Kofi Gah, an official from the Volta region branch of the Ministry of Tourism both stated that the archaeological and historical significance of Krachi showed the need for further historical research and documentation on Kete-Krachi.²⁷

The report above indicates how the legacies of German colonialism could still be discerned in Kete Krachi today. In this sub-section I discuss the lasting legacies of German colonialism in KeteKrachi in the context of trade, communication, agriculture and social relations.

In the course of the research in Kete Krachi, it was evident that what almost all residents in the area remember most about the Germans is the practice of tree planting and forestation. Trees that were known to have been planted during the time of Germans include: mangoes, teak, mahogany, kapok and nim trees. In Kete Krachi, mangos and mahogany were planted along the streets that led into and out of the town. There were also mango plantations that were established close to the Volta river at Krachi. Roads and footpaths leading to villages also had trees planted along. As Donkor narrated:

The German administration was here in Krachi, at the time of Germans we had Krachikrom to the south and Kete to the north. The Germans settled in the middle. It is here that you have all the government agencies, all the bungalows, the offices, the German administrators. They made sure that the middle was well forested. So when you are moving from the old Krachi town to Kete you will not see the sun the whole place had trees. There were mango trees at the edges of the road on both sides. The teak trees were here and when you move up north from 'Kete' towards Yendi, then they planted the kapok trees at the edges of the road to about a mile towards Yendi. That is how it used to be. But now the forest is gone and people have built on the plantations now.²⁸

But one needs to explain further the reasons behind the plantation project of the Germans in Krachi. First and foremost it must be understood that tree planting was part and parcel of the culture of Germans. This culture was directly transferred into the area of administration. But there were also practical ecological reasons for the planting of trees. Kete Krachi is on the

²⁷ Ghana News Agency, 1 May, 1998

²⁸ Interview with J.B. Donkor, in KeteKrachi, 5th July 2015.

fringes of the savannah and the forest belt, but the areas which were under Krachi were all savannah- Kpandai, Bajamusu, Bimbilla, just to mention but few. Tree planting was to help in the greening of the area. The trees also served aesthetic as well as leisure purposes. Trees were mostly planted along roads that were constructed under Germans and that served to beautify such roads. Besides aesthetics porters and travelers normally had their rest under those trees.

There were other immediate uses of the trees. Mangoes became an important economic crop that drew many people from British controlled areas in Northern Ghana into Kete Krachi. It was a fruit that tasted differently from other native fruits in the area. It could be transported over long distances without going bad. Most traders from the Dagomba and Gonja area, even as far as from Sandema and Bawku in present day Upper East region of Ghana travelled to Kete Krachi to buy this newly produced fruit. In a sense the practice of tree planting further helped in promoting Kete Krachi economically.²⁹

The teak trees were also put into immediate use. The trees were cut, dried and used as poles on which telegraphic wires were passed through. In fact in some rare cases even mango trees were used for this purpose. Informants indicate that until about the 1990s, the telegraphic lines laid by the Germans from Kete Krachi to Yendi could still be seen. In Kpando, wires may still be seen hanging on mango trees around the former German official residence.³⁰ The teak trees were also used in the construction industry. The wood was used for roofing and constructing huts, a practice which persists till today. One unintended consequence of the planting of teak trees is the extent to which the leaves are being used for various purposes. The fresh leaves are often plucked and used for packaging of meat and fish by butchers and fishmongers. The dry leaves are burnt and used for medicinal purposes. The ash is said to be very potent in the treatment of all manner of skin diseases. In the same manner the cotton-like fluff obtained from Kapok pods have been used to stuff pillows and the seeds are used in two ways. First oil is extracted from the seeds and used as cooking oil. Also the paste from kapok seeds can be used in

²⁹ Interview with Alhaji Maigida, at Bakpaba on the 7th of July, 2015. Bakpaba is a village near Yendi and about thirty minutes' drive to Yendi. Maigida is currently a farmer and the chairman of one of the political parties in Bakpaba. He is over seventy years. As a youth he traded mostly in the former German territory. He walked with his wares which sometimes include cattle from Yendi and its surrounding areas to Kete Krachi and Kpando. When motorized transport picked up he started sending his products to Accra and mostly sold them in Samoli's house in Tudu, Accra.

³⁰ Field observation by author 5th July, 2015.

preparing soups and stews. The leaves from nim trees are boiled and used in the treatment of fevers. In a sense one could conclude that the German plantation project was a successful colonial policy because of the utilitarian value that local people derived from its cultivation.

Beside plantations trade also flourished under German rule, albeit for a short time. As previously noted one of the most important factors which drew Germans to Kete Krachi was trade. Hence, upon arrival their concern was to secure the trade routes. This they did by flushing out bandits. As a result traders could move freely to Kete Krachi and back to their respective destinations without much problem.³¹ Salt was second in importance to kola nuts in the trade in Kete Krachi, therefore Germans waved the tax on salt that was brought from Ada and Accra. The strategy was to bolster the status of Kete Krachi against Daboya or Wasipe another salt producing town in the Gonja territory which was under British control. The strategy made many traders move from Daboya to Kete Krachi instead to buy salt.

Furthermore Kete Krachi became an important place for the purchase and sale of guns and gunpowder.



Photo 1. A gun bought by a Nawuri hunter, Nana Burukpe at Kete Krachi before WW1. He shot elephants, buffalos and lions and earn the title *wambugiri* (One feared by wild animals), the highest appellation conferred on a hunter among the Nawuris. (Picture by author 2014).

³¹ D.W. Maier 'Kete-Krachi in the Nineteenth Century: Religious and Commercial Centre of the Eastern Asante Borderlands. (Northwestern University, PhD thesis), 236.

Local hunters preferred the guns from Kete Krachi and described their guns as more efficient than those that were brought to Salaga by Ashanti traders. Till date local people still prefer the local gunpowder obtained from Kete Krachi called *gyama*, a corruption of German to any other powder.

Closely related to the above was also the technological transfer of skills by Germans to local smiths. Prior to the coming of Germans into Kete Krachi, local smiths produced a variety of farming and hunting implements; bows and arrows, hoes, axes, among others. Important centres for such implements were Krachi itself, Balai, Katiejeli and Bassari in Togo³². In Krachi, Katiejeli and Balai smiths were trained further in the maintenance of guns and the production of farming implements. Of great technological success was the production of a kind of hoe that was called the *nachamba*. As noted already, Nachamba is a Bassari town in Togo where Germans trained local smiths in the production of various implements, and it was here that the hoe was produced.³³

The hoe was simpler to handle and could fit into any wooden handle, unlike the old type of hoe (*kanawuritia*) which required the joining of three different wooden parts before the blade was fitted. Its simplicity in terms of production and use led many farmers to adopt it. This innovation had significant impact on the agricultural system of Krachi and its surrounding areas. But of great importance in the production of metal implements was the production of a metal explosive device called *imprim*. The name was derived from the sound produced from the device. As indicated already German colonialists were quick to employ military force. In Kete Krachi, not only was the Dente priest executed, but the Dente temple was also blown to pieces. As previously noted, in their areas of jurisdiction local smiths were also taught to produce explosives. The commonest and long lasting one was the *imprim* which was produced by drilling a hole into a metal. Gunpowder is then loaded into the metal and the top sealed with sand. The explosive is then buried under any object that is to be blown off. A thin line of gun powder is

³² For detailed accounts of the iron smiths in Balai and Bassari see P. de Barros, 'Bassar: A Quantified, Chronologically Controlled, Regional Approach to a Traditional Iron Production Centre in West Africa'. *Journal of the International Institute*. Vol. 56, No. 2(1986), 148-174., also, M. E. Kropp Dakubu, 'Research on Vanishing Languages and Practices in the Northern Guang Area in Ghana: a preliminary report'. *Ghana Journal of Linguistics* 2.1: (2013), 79-86.

³³I Interview with Abene in Yendi, 8th July, 2015. Abebe has worked with the Information Services Department under the Ministry of Information for over forty years.

made outside of the object and connected to the metal. A match or a wood with fire is then placed on the gunpowder which burns into the metal and explodes.

Even though Germans produced this to break out hard rocks during road construction or blow up objects such as shrines and buildings of enemies the locals have since incorporated it into their funeral performances. At the death of a prominent person within Kete Krachi and its environs including the Nawuri area, an unspecified number of *imprim* are usually buried under ground and intermittently exploded. In most cases the gunpowder referred to as *gyama* is used. This is done immediately after burial and at the end of the funeral. The sound of *imprim* can be heard beyond ten miles. This shows that this German technology has come to play an important role in the ceremonial life of the people of Krachi.

In terms of administration, Germans were able to unite northern Guans; the Krachi, Achode, Adele, Nawuri, and Nchumburu. It is important to indicate that these groups were already united in the worship of deities of which Brukum and Dente were considered supreme and important. But the German policy of regrouping people facilitated the incorporation and further recognition of northern Guans. This togetherness under German rule was very much reinforced by the refusal of the Nawuri and Nchumburu to serve under the British even though it was evident that the Germans had long since left the scene.

A few years before the outbreak of the First World War, Germans had started training local hunters in the use of guns. These cohorts of hunters comprise those who patronized the guns and gun powder sold in Kete Krachi. They were usually invited to Kete Krachi from time to time and they took part in shooting contests. One could not tell what the motive for this was, but it seems clear that Germans perhaps were nursing the idea of colonial 'peoples militia' that could be relied upon in times of need. Nawuri and Nchumburu hunters were mostly those who were invited. A deeper analysis of the reason why Germans would build up such a group is based on consideration of the geo-political issues of the time. Even though both the British and Germans had agreed on the specific areas of operation, as far as the area to the north-east was concerned the boundary lines were not very clear. The Oti and Dakar rivers were used as boundaries and in most cases there were no straight lines. As the people who inhabited this area, the Nawuris and

Nchumburu seem to have been most suitable to train for purposes of defence against British intrusion.³⁴

At the social level, Germans ensured the functioning of schools. Before the war, Germans had built a school in Kete Krachi in addition to that of the Roman Catholic Church. One of the teachers called Wilhem Henkel was the son of one of the early German staff in Kete Krachi. His father gave him early education in both Kete Krachi and Togo. Back in Krachi he was employed as a teacher. The German school was taken over by the British after the war but none-the-less took most of its students from the former German area. As one of the grand children of Mr. Henkel remarked:

You cannot talk about the development of education in Ghana without mentioning my grandfather's name. He sent Nawuris, Nchumburus and Krachis to school. Apart from Krachi he also taught in a number of places. You know the Ganda family in Wa, he sent them to school. The Kabos especially Abeifa Kabo, they all benefited from my grandfather's education. People in the Builsa or Sandema area also benefitted from my grandfather Henkel. Also in Tumu and among the Sisallas my grandfather was also very popular because he helped all of them to go to school. So almost all parts of the north his name was known due to his impressive educational records- establishing schools and sending children to school. Some even hid their children in hen coups when they saw my grandfather; they hid the children because once he saw them he would send them to school. He was nicknamed *DC Bugum* meaning the 'fire district commissioner'.³⁵

³⁴ An online source from Wikipedia claims that there were civilians that were trained by Germans for the purpose of the First World War. For more on this see: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Togoland_Campaign. Retrieved, 28th April, 2015.

³⁵ Information from Belona Henkel, Tamale, July, 20th, 2015. Belona is the granddaughter of Wilhem Henkel. She is a teacher in Tamale, Northern Region. She lives in Tamale with other relations who all trace their roots to Germans in Kete Krachi.



Photo 2. Picture of Wilhem Henkel (1904-1987). He was awarded the Grand medal of Ghana in 1981 in recognition of his meritorious services to the Nation. (Reproduced with permission from the Henkel family in Ghana)

Despite the contribution of Germans to the development of plantations, trade and education, their social relations with the people of Kete Krachi were very poor. They ruled ruthlessly and their endless competition with the British led to sour relations between them and the British. Even Sofo who invited them to Kete Krachi eventually fell out with the Germans. The position of the Krachiwura which was bolstered initially after the execution of the The Dente priest was undermined when the Germans established their rule in Kete Krachi. They usurped the powers of the chief and began administering Kete Krachi as a German and not a native Krachi town. At a point, the chief had no choice but to complain about the arrogation of power by the Germans over traditional and economic matters. The response he got was that he had already received his reward, which was the peace that he continued to enjoy following the liberation of Krachi from

bandits. It was not surprising therefore that when the First World War broke out and Germany was defeated, majority of the people of Krachi celebrated their defeat.³⁶

Conclusion

It is evident that German colonial administration brought mixed blessings or feelings to the people of Kete Krachi. The German idea of tree planting has remained with the people till date. It has even gained a cultural meaning where children are barred from planting trees. The simple reason for this is that the Germans convinced them that if one plants a tree without taking care of it if the tree dies that person's life would also be forfeit. This explains the reason that areas that formerly were under Kete Krachi have a high concentration of mangoes with Kpandai topping the list. Trade improved under German rule and only collapsed following the construction of the Akosombo dam in the early 1960s, which diverted trade to Dambai a town formerly under Kete Krachi. The firing of guns and *imprim* during funerals have become one of the most enduring military legacies of the Germans in the Kete Krachi area.

The support given to the Hausa over the indigenes by the Germans has remained a constant source of worry. Since the 1990s security concerns have been raised over the celebration of a traditional "Nanaba" festival at Kete Krachi. In 2011 there were open clashes between Muslims in Kete Krachi and the indigenes over the celebration of the festival, which led to the loss of lives and destruction of property worth several millions of Ghana cedis.³⁷ In March this year (2015) this year, some concerned residents also expressed worry at the celebration of the "Nanaba" festival as its celebration late this year was likely to threaten peace in the town. Krachi has not yet fully recovered from the 2011 fatal ethnic clash between the Hausa community and the Krachis. History has it that the first clash ever recorded between the Hausa Zongo Community and the Krachis occurred during the celebration of a similar festival in the 1890s. During that celebration, some Krachis invaded houses of some Hausa residents of Kete and took away property including domestic animals. The victims raised objection, which led to a bloody clash. This clash led to the execution of the Dente priest. German colonialism in Krachi

³⁶ Interview with Tuo Maclean in Accra, August 2012.

³⁷ Daily Graphic, 20th August, 2011, Tension mounts in Kete Krachi over celebration of festival

began with violence and has left Krachi with a history of violence that continues to plague it till this day.

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