

CHIEFS, UNION JACK FLAGS AND THE KING'S MEDALS UNDER BRITISH RULE IN GHANA: THE CASE OF ASHANTI (1916-1938)

GHANA'DA İNGİLİZ YÖNETİMİ ALTINDAKİ ŞEFLER,
BİRLEŞİK KRALLIK BAYRAKLARI VE KRAL
MADALYALARI: ASHANTI VAKASI (1916-1938)

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Abstract

Chiefs were instrumental in the pre-colonial and colonial states of Ghana and West Africa. Through the chieftaincy institution, the indigenous medium of socio-political administration, communities were united to form a common identity based on history, religion, and customs. The chief is the first citizen of a native state through whom the ancestral nexus is continued. However, during the age of colonialism, chieftain positions degenerated because the chiefs cooperated with the colonial regime as agents of the Crown. The paper found that during that period of degeneration, chiefs were offered medals with 3- or 2-inch silver gilt chains for their service and contributions to the colonial administration; they were also offered the Union Jack flag and government cane staff if they did "good work" on behalf of the colonial office. Thus, this paper examines the contributions made by Ashanti chiefs to the colonial office between 1919 and 1938, for which they were rewarded with Union Jack flags and/or medals. To unravel that, archival and secondary sources were utilised in the study. The paper asserts that the role of chiefs in the establishment of colonial rule in Ghana has been brought to light by the commendations bestowed upon them by the colonial office in recognition of their diverse services and contributions.

Keywords: Chiefs, Ashanti, Indirect Rule, Union Jack Flags, King's Medals

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Öz

Şefler, sömürge öncesi ve sömürge döneminde Gana ve Batı Afrika devletlerinde etkili olmuşlardır. Şeflik kurumu aracılığıyla topluluklar, tarih, din ve geleneklere dayalı ortak bir kimlik oluşturmak üzere bir araya getirilmiştir. Şef, atalar bağının devam ettirildiği yerli devletin ilk vatandaşıdır. Ancak sömürgecilik çağında şeflerin konumları, kraliyetin ajanları olarak sömürge rejimi ile işbirliği yaptıkları için yozlaşmıştır. Makale, bu yozlaşma sırasında şeflere, sömürge yönetimine verdikleri öneme ve hizmet katkılarına bağlı olarak 3 veya 2 inçlik gümüş yaldızlı zincirlerle donatılmış madalyalar ile sömürge ofisi adına “iyi işler” yapmaları halinde kendilerine Birleşik Krallık bayrağı ve hükümet bastonu teklif edildiğini tespit etmiştir. Bu doğrultuda makalede, Ashanti şeflerinin 1916 ve 1938 yılları arasında sömürge ofisine yaptıkları katkılar ve bu katkılarından dolayı Birleşik Krallık bayrakları ve/veya madalyalarıyla ödüllendirilmeleri ele alınmaktadır. Bu amaçla çalışmada arşiv kaynakları ve ikincil kaynaklardan yararlanılmıştır. Makale, Gana’da sömürge yönetiminin kurulmasında şeflerin rolünün, sömürge ofisi tarafından çeşitli hizmetleri ve katkılarından dolayı kendilerine verilen takdirnamelerle gün yüzüne çıkarıldığını ileri sürmüştür.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Şefler, Ashanti, Dolaylı Yönetim, Birleşik Krallık Bayrakları, Kral Madalyaları

Introduction

Colonisation is when a foreign power physically moves into a territory and assumes complete and domineering control over it. This control could come about through conquest, treaties of protection, and the desire to expand the imperial impulses of the conquering state. This urge for territorial acquisition might be stimulated by regional or continental factors. Nonetheless, the ultimate scheme of colonisation is geared towards “political domination and economic exploitation of the colonized country.”¹ This was the fate of most African states from the 1880s to about the 1960s. In Ghana before 1844, the chiefs were the custodian of their various native states, and they had jurisdiction over them without outside interference. Their authority began to dwindle, first from southern Ghana, when the chiefs of the region signed the Bond of 1844 with the British. Effective colonial changes occurred circa 1880 when the attitude of the colonial government changed concerning the ‘autonomy’² of the indigenous chiefs. Some of the reasons that necessitated the change in attitude of the colonial government, according to Addo-Fening, comprised “allegations of abuses in the traditional courts, ruinous fines,

¹ Stephen Ocheni and Basil C. Nwankwo, “Analysis of Colonialism and Its Impact in Africa,” *Cross-Cultural Communication*, 8:3, 2012, p. 46.

² Robert Addo-Fening, “The Native Jurisdiction Ordinance, Indirect Rule and the Subject’s Well-being: The Abuakwa Experience c1899-1912,” *Research Review*, NS Vol. 6 No.2, 1990, p. 29.

physical torture, bribery, miscarriage of justice, and long detention in native prisons.”³ Thus, the 1844 event marked a watershed in the political and chieftaincy history of Ghana. This Bond was protective against the Asante⁴ state of the interior.

In 1944, as preparations were made to celebrate the centenary of the treaty by the Joint Provincial Councils of the colony proper, i.e. southern Ghana, the governor did not object to schools being granted a holiday by the authorities and further asserted that ‘any government officers who so’⁵ desired could partake in the celebrations. However, the Asantehene,⁶ Nana Osei Prempeh II objected to extending the celebrations to his region. In a letter dated 24 February 1944 to the Ashanti chief commissioner, the Asantehene had the following to say:

My Good Friend,

I have just observed from the issue of the “Ashanti Pioneer” for today the following:

Gold Coast people are sincerely grateful to His Excellency the Governor and his Executive for granting prayer to make Monday, March 6, a Holiday”.

If there is any foundation in the report then I beg to inform Your Honour for the information of His Excellency the Governor that I take a very strong exception to the said Holiday being extended to Ashanti, because neither the Asantehene nor any Ashanti Chief was a party to the Bond of 1844 whose centenary will be celebrated on March 6.

I am,

³ Ibid.

⁴ The Asante state is one of the numerous Akan or Twi-speaking ethnic groups in Ghana. It is the strongest of all the Akan societies and was founded by Osei Tutu circa 1700, with the aid of his fetish priest, Okomfo Anokye. Kumasi is its capital. It waged several war campaigns against different ethnic groupings in Ghana from the early eighteenth century to the beginning of the nineteenth century. This quest to expand led to a series of wars with Gonja, Dagomba, Denkyira, Fante, and the British. Hence, from about the 1760s to 1900, Asante fought severally with the British, who acted as the protectors of the southern ethnic groups, until its annexation to the British Crown in 1901 and made part of the Gold Coast Colony.

⁵ Colonial Secretary, Circular No. 6/44. File No. 4220/S.F.I., ARG 1/1/41, 22nd February 1944, Accra.

⁶ In the Akan language, the term “Ohene” denotes a chief of a sub-division or a town. It is used as a suffix to the name of the division or town in reference by dropping the first letter “O”. Thus, “Asantehene” literally means the “Chief of Asante.”

Your Good Friend,
Osei Prempeh II
Asantehene⁷

This resolute stance taken by Nana Prempeh was because of the British colonial administration's efforts to curtail the powers of the chiefs by enacting several policies and ordinances after the Bond of 1844. For instance, in 1872, the then-Judicial Assessor, Sir David Chalmers, advised the colonial administration to regulate and control the chiefs and to select chiefs who were intelligent and sympathetic to the British government, so they would restrict themselves to the instructions which would be given to them periodically.⁸ Also, the selected chiefs were to be given stipends.

British rule gained roots in the Gold Coast with the defeat of Asante in 1874 by a coalition of British officers and their native coastal allies. However, it was not until after the siege of Kumasi in 1896 and the Ashanti-British war of 1900 that Ashanti was added to the colony in 1901. Ashanti was divided into central, southern, western, and northern provinces⁹ for administrative purposes. In the meantime, what followed the 1874 British victory in southern Ghana was a series of attempts in 1878 under Governor S. Freeling to establish the Native Jurisdiction Ordinance,¹⁰ which was revised in 1883 under Samuel Rowe. The purpose of this ordinance was to regulate the native chiefs' judicial authority. Hence, "a proclamation of a state" under the 1883 ordinance was taken to mean "a reward and a mark of favour given to chiefs who were recognized to be loyal and intelligent."¹¹ From 1884 onwards, native courts that were not registered under the 1883 jurisdiction ordinance were considered as 'arbitrator's court only,' thus verdicts as delivered in those courts were not recognized by the governor and the Supreme Court and this lack of recognition

⁷ Asantehene to the Chief Commissioner, Ref. No. 212/21/44, Kumasi, 24 February 1944, ARG 1/1/41, Kumasi.

⁸ Usman Abass, *British Imperialism, Administration, and Society in Colonial Ghana, 1874-1957*, AYBU Graduate School of Social Sciences, Published PhD Thesis, Ankara 2023a, p. 191.

⁹ The central province comprised the towns of Kumasi, Agona, Ofinso, Kumawu, Nsuta, Mampong, Obogu, and Bompata; the southern province consisted of the towns of Bekwai, Adansi, Mansu Nkwanta, Kokofu, and Danjiasi; the western province comprised Berekum, Wam, Ahafo, Jaman, Wenchi, and Techiman; the northern province included Nkoranza, Atebubu, Kratchi, and Banda and Mo. *See, for example*, Abass, *British Imperialism*, p. 50.

¹⁰ *See, for example*, Usman Abass, "Imperialism and the End of Chieftaincy in Colonial Ghana, 1925-1950", *Gaziantep University Journal of Social Sciences*, 22(2), 2023b, p. 497.

¹¹ Addo-Fening, 1990, p. 30.

extended to the district commissioners' offices who also "refused to recognize any judgements of native courts not approved"¹² under the 1883 ordinance.

By the 1890s, the colonial administration had established dominion over the autochthonous chiefs through the passage of an ordinance to gain full control over them and their courts.¹³ When 1904 arrived, under Governor Matthew Nathan, the chieftaincy ordinance was passed, and it made the governor "the final arbiter of the validity of an election or destoolment of a chief."¹⁴ Under Governor Guggisberg, British supremacy was further ensconced in Ghana between 1925 and 1927, when he got the chiefs to side with him to create the Native Administration Ordinance (NAO). This move was considered a tacit tactic to formally integrate the chiefs into the British bureaucratic structure.

The successful establishment of the indirect rule implied "the abrogation of the political sovereignty of the traditional states and the establishment of British rule over the then Gold Coast."¹⁵ Under indirect rule, the colonial powers used the native chiefs as "the local level of government, empowering them to tax, dispense law and maintain order."¹⁶ The upshot of this feat was that the "traditional system and its functions were slowly merged into the new centralised colonial administrative structure,"¹⁷ with the chiefs now grouped under Native Authorities (NAs) to serve the structure. The colonial administration pushed for indirect rule because it was "a low-cost method"¹⁸ of administration, as it made it possible for "large areas and scattered groups to be ruled effectively through selected Africans who held extensive powers over land and people."¹⁹ This was made possible by the cooperation of the chiefs, who were somewhat in competition with the educated natives as to who deserved to serve as the mouthpiece of the local people in their dealings with the colonial officers.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Abass, 2023a, p. 192.

¹⁴ Alhassan Sulemana Anamzoya, "Our Courts, Our Cases and We are the Judges": Chiefs as Judges in the Houses of Chiefs in Ghana," *Legon Journal of Sociology*, 3(2), 2009, p. 73.

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 72.

¹⁶ Daron Acemoglu, Isaias N. Chaves, Philip Osafo-Kwaako, and James A. Robinson, "Indirect Rule and State Weakness in Africa: Sierra Leone in Comparative Perspective," *NBER Africa Project*, 2014, p. 3.

¹⁷ Richmond Antwi-Bediako, "Chiefs and nexus of challenges in land deals: An insight into blame perspectives, exonerating chiefs during and after Jatropha investment in Ghana," *Cogent Social Sciences*, 4:1456797, 2018, p. 4.

¹⁸ Acemoglu, Chaves, and Robinson, 2014, p. 15.

¹⁹ Stacey Paul Austin, "Impossible Histories, Power, and Exclusion in the Gold Coast and Ghana 1930-2020," *Brill*, 40(1), 2023, p. 180.

The NAs recognised “the chiefs and their traditional councils”²⁰ as bylaw makers, among other things. Similar policies were pursued by the British in Sudan,²¹ the Gambia,²² Kenya,²³ Sierra Leone,²⁴ and Uganda,²⁵ *inter alia*. In Ghana, there were four offices under indirect rule. These were the officers of the chief commissioner, provincial commissioner, district commissioner, and the provincial councils of chiefs. In the chain of command, the latter was subordinated to the first three divisions.²⁶ Through this structure, indirect rule was used to sustain the “subordination and compliance” of the native people with “orders and regulations from the centre,”²⁷ wherein the chiefs were used as the agents to achieve that.

The system worked efficaciously for the British to the extent that native authorities were created and chiefs appointed in acephalous areas. These ‘created’ chiefs became known as “warrant chiefs” in the sense that “they were given warrants to represent the British among the local peoples.”²⁸ By controlling the election and installation of chiefs, the British assumed dominion over the traditional political structure. What followed was the degeneration of the chieftaincy institution and the chiefs themselves as they came to be rewarded for their services to the Crown by being presented with a Union Jack flag upon enstoolment and a king’s medal for contributing to the success of the colonial administration. Hence, it is from this standpoint that the paper attempts to chronicle the contributions made by the chiefs that qualified them to receive the Union Jack and or the colonial medal. The paper is guided by the following research question: What kind of services and

²⁰ Anamzoya, 2009, p. 73.

²¹ See, for example, Raphael K. Badal, *British Administration in Southern Sudan, 1900-1955: A Study in Colonial Neglect*, The University of London, Unpublished PhD Thesis, London 1977.

²² See, for example, Hassoum Ceesay, “Chiefs and Protectorate Administration in Colonial Gambia, 1894-1965,” *Palgrave Studies in African Leadership*, 2014.

²³ See, for example, Boit J. Kipchirchir, Prisca Tanui, and Paul Opondo, “Nandi Colonial Chieftaincy as Social Agency, 1902-1963,” *IJRIS*, Vol VI, Issue XI, 2022.

²⁴ See, for example, Iva Mihaylova, “Perpetuating the malign legacy of colonialism? Traditional chiefs’ power and deforestation in Sierra Leone,” *ELSEVIER: World Development*, Vol. 164, 2023.

²⁵ See, for example, Yokanda Ogola, *Chiefs and Local Government Administration in West Buduma County in Uganda during the Colonial Period, 1900-1962*, Kenyatta University, Unpublished PhD Thesis, Nairobi 2015.

²⁶ Abass, 2023b, pp. 497-498.

²⁷ Ogola, 2015, p. 45.

²⁸ Osei Augustine Duah, “Incarceration of Chiefs: A Colonial and Post-colonial Tool for the Destruction of the Sanctity of the Chieftaincy Institution in Ghana?,” *Abibsem Journal of African Culture and Civilization*, Issue 5, 2012, p. 117.

contributions did the Ashanti chiefs render to the British colonial regime in exchange for the medals, Union Jack flags, and messenger staff?

1. Methodology

This study used the orthodox historical research approach that combines archival sources with secondary sources. The primary sources were obtained from the Public Records Administration and Archival Division (PRAAD) in Kumasi. Subsequently, the secondary sources were used to complement the primary sources to demonstrate the contributions the chiefs of the Ashanti dependency of Gold Coast rendered to the colonial office during the era of colonial rule in Ghana, between 1916 and 1938, to which they were recognized and rewarded for according to the magnitude of their contributions. This, in effect, shows the active participation of the native chiefs in establishing colonial rule in Ashanti and Ghana at large.

2. The Historicity of Chieftaincy and Chiefs in Ghana

The chieftaincy institution in Ghana is “a well-established indigenous political administrative system”²⁹ that is over “five hundred years”³⁰ and antedated any contacts with Europeans. It also served as the nexus for communal identity and unity in indigenous states. For this reason, the inhabitants of these communities viewed chieftaincy as ‘the repository of the history and tradition’³¹ of their states, the trustee of ‘land and property, and customary law’³² and as the arbiter of disputes of varied nature. It consists of “the chief, queen mother, traditional priests, religious practitioners and other traditional functionaries” and constitutes the forum for expressing “social, political, religious and economic authority.”³³ Thus, it comes as no surprise that in 1953, the Asanteman Council wrote to remind the governor of how important chieftaincy was acknowledged by all. The council expressed that chieftaincy had been the cornerstone of governance in the Gold Coast, to the extent that it had been so deeply implanted in the country’s “political,

²⁹ Sampson Enyin Edusah and Ernest Osei-Tutu, “Indigenous People, Leadership and Development: The Role of Chieftaincy Institution in the Development of Ghana,” *AJSD*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 2014, p. 78.

³⁰ George Kojo Oku, “Examining the Historical Development of the Chieftaincy Institutions in Ghana,” *Journal of African Studies and Ethnographic Research*, Vol. 1 No. 1, 2019, p. 70.

³¹ Isaac Owusu-Mensah, “Politics, Chieftaincy and Customary Law in Ghana’s Fourth Republic,” *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 7, 2014, p. 262.

³² Matthew Sabbi, “Who runs the municipality? The intractable interest of neo-traditional actors in Ghana’s local state,” *University of Bayreuth African Studies Working Papers*, No. 22, 2018, p. 4.

³³ Kwame Adum-Kyeremeh, “Politicization of Chieftaincy in Africa: A Case Study of Bono Kyempim, Ghana,” *Nordic Journal of African Studies*, Issue 27 No. 4, 2018, p. 2.

economic and social life that only confusion and lack of social discipline can result from any violence done to the institution.”³⁴

In a typical indigenous state, the chief is regarded as “the first citizen of the village, town or state” based on the “blood relationship between him and the ancestors of the clan.”³⁵ Chiefs are generally elected by the kingmakers of the chieftdom.³⁶ Some rituals are performed before the chief is enstooled or enskinned in some instances, and with these rituals, the new chief receives “the traits of the ancestors, a sacred personality, authority, power, and the legal status to rule.”³⁷ No individual would be considered a chief if the person were a coward. In fact, “cowardice in an *Ohin* (Chief) was and is still a fatal disqualification.”³⁸

The chiefs are in a hierarchy. Indigenous states are generally categorized, inter alia, into traditional areas, divisional areas, and clans, all the way to the family unit. As such, every traditional area is headed by a paramount chief, every divisional area is headed by divisional chiefs under whose authority are “the sub-chiefs,” below whom are “the headsmen (odikros)”³⁹ down to the family head. In the colonial era, these chiefs, as recognised by the colonial administration, were held “responsible by the government for the performance of certain duties.”⁴⁰

Before the establishment of the NAO and colonial rule itself, the chiefs undertook the legislative, executive and judiciary roles of their states along with their traditional councils and other important traditional dignitaries. They were ‘the main actors’⁴¹ of the traditional government structure. They adjudicated all social, political, and economic matters affecting their denizens, as well as undertook developmental projects to uplift their native states. However, this chieftaincy role, under colonial rule, was reoriented towards serving the ‘colonial master’ instead of the local people. Thus, Ceesay was apt when he put forward that the multiple responsibilities of chiefs as tax collectors, dispensers of “native justice,” and guardians of “law and order”⁴²

³⁴ Memorandum from the Asanteman Council to the Governor-in-Council, No. 499/LC/258/51, Kumasi, 1953, ARG 2/2/68, Kumasi, p. 1.

³⁵ Duah, 2012, p. 116.

³⁶ See, for example, Timo Kallinen, “Some Chiefs are ‘more under’ than others: Kinship, ritual, and the concept of political hierarchy among the Asante,” *Academic Dissertation, Research Series in Anthropology*, Helsinki University Printing House, 2004.

³⁷ Adum-Kyeremeh, 2018, p. 2.

³⁸ See, for example, The Gold Coast Chiefs List, 1928-29, ARG 2/1/13, PRAAD, p. 3.

³⁹ Edusah and Osei-Tutu, 2014, p. 79.

⁴⁰ See, for example, The Gold Coast Chiefs List, 1928-29, ARG 2/1/13, PRAAD, p. 1.

⁴¹ Antwi-Bediako, 2018, p. 4.

⁴² Ceesay, 2014, p. 24.

in their districts made them an indispensable tool in colonial rule. Another significant reason why the European imperialists relied on African rulers to colonise their colonies in Africa had to do with little to no proper transportation networks, language barriers, insufficient officers, and unfamiliarity with the African terrain, inter alia.

The British administrative policies were not any different in Ashanti and Ghana at large. Here, too, they used the indigenous chiefs and educated common folks to push their imperial agendas. Under the supervision of European administrative officers, the system transformed the chiefs into agents of the Crown and performed judicial and administrative duties required by the colonial office. Although they worked for the colonial authorities, chiefs in Ghana remained somewhat independent for some time and controlled revenues accrued from local taxes and fines from their tribunals. As established by Lucas, the Europeans in West Africa “enjoyed no ownership and had no sovereign rights,” but they “were tenants who paid rents yearly to the chiefs.”⁴³ The tables were turned gradually on the Gold Coast but thoroughly from the 1920s with the participation of the colony chiefs. Thus, the chiefs asseverated their subordinate role with the establishment of the provincial councils of chiefs in 1925, albeit the move was opposed by the Aborigines Rights Protection Society (ARPS) of the Gold Coast and a section of the educated natives.

The upshot of the formation of this council was that the chiefs came to constitute its membership and elected some of their members as representatives to the legislative assembly. The fact was that the chiefs “were not elected to the legislature by the votes of the people,” which led Kimble to assert that the people were not so “imprudent as to take such a step and violate their own institutions.”⁴⁴ This was because by agreeing to work under European supervisors, the chiefs had devolved the chieftain position and the authorities enshrined in it. Although Kipchirchir et al. maintained that the new roles of the chiefs under colonial rule meant that they had the power to directly confront “the British concerning issues that affected the African people,”⁴⁵ they were rather utilised to ensconce the position of the chiefs in the eyes of the colonial administrators as the right group of people to advance the affairs

⁴³ See, for example, Charles Prestwood Lucas, *A Historical Geography of the British Colonies*, Vol. III, *West Africa*, Oxford 1894, pp. 125, 210-228.

⁴⁴ David Kimble, *A Political History of Ghana: The Rise of Gold Coast Nationalism (1850-1928)*, Oxford University Press 1963, p. 493.

⁴⁵ Kipchirchir, Tanui, and Opondo, 2022, p. 162.

of the indigenous communities towards gaining recognition and accolades from the colonial office.

When the NAO was passed in Ghana, it defined a ‘chief’ as a person “whose election and installation as such in accordance with native law and custom is recognised by the Governor.”⁴⁶ With this authority, the Governor, at his discretion, could subordinate ‘any native authority to any other native authority’⁴⁷ in any manner he considered necessary. Chiefs who infringed on the orders of the Governor were either exiled or deposed. The latter became a bone of contention in the 1930s in Ashanti between a native lawyer, J.W. de Graft Johnson and the Ashanti Chief Commissioner, Major Jackson. When the NAO was enacted for Ashanti in 1935, Johnson expressed that by the ordinance, ‘the government intentionally or unintentionally’ had created a new office, which was “separate and distinct from the old office of Ohene as known to native customary law.”⁴⁸ This was because the native authority made it possible for the government to dismiss or remove chiefs from the list of native authorities if the former was not satisfied with the performance or attitude of the latter. This was contrary to the customary law.

The ordinance was put to the test in 1935. In that year, the chief of the Adansi division of Asante, Nana Kwabena Fori’s name was removed from the list of NAs for failing to comply with the directives of the chief commissioner, Major Jackson. The latter had ordered the chief to return to Fomena from Kumasi, from whence he had gone to beseech the Asantehene to help resolve some matters between him and his wing chiefs. By deleting the chief’s name, Major Jackson regarded the action as the cessation of Nana Fori’s reign. Johnson disagreed with the colonial ruling on the basis that removing him from the list of native authorities did not mean he was not a chief. Johnson wrote to the secretary for native affairs on 31 March 1936, asking the secretary to ‘enlighten’ him “about the position of native chiefs under the ordinance” and argued that

unless and until the customary law is complied with in that regard, he remains an enstooled *Omanhene*⁴⁹ and no one else can undertake the duties which by the same customary law are assigned to the office,

⁴⁶ “The Native Authority Ordinance,” ARG 1/26/1/41, PRAAD, 1935, p. 1.

⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 2.

⁴⁸ “Memorandum on the Position of the Ohene in the Native Constitution as Affected by the Native Authority Ordinance No. 1 of 1935 (Ashanti),” ARG 1/26/1/41, PRAAD 1938, p. 2.

⁴⁹ The term refers to the Paramount Chief or Head Chief of a native state. It is a synthesis of two native words, “Oman”, which means a nation or state and “Ohene”, which refers to a chief.

such as accepting and receiving the oath of allegiance of sub-chiefs, the performance of the sacrificial rites within the room of the Stools, the service and homage of the *Ahenkwa*,⁵⁰ the privileges of offerings of legs or arms of venison etc, the 'Nhyiraa' of his people,⁵¹ etc.

According to customary law, only the kingmakers can remove a chief from his stool. In response to Johnson's letter, the Secretary for Native Affairs, J.C. Warrington, on 14 April 1936, said that the interpretation of the Law was not a part of his duties but that in his opinion there was "nothing in that ordinance" that should be "explained to a lawyer."⁵² Nana Kwabena Fori was prevented from continuing to rule, and the commissioner went ahead to appoint regents and further communicated to Mr Applegate, the then Acting Chief Commissioner, to grant permission to install a new *Omanhene* to the Adansi Stool. Puzzled by the request, Mr Applegate on 14 September 1936 expressed that

until such time as the Adansi Stool is vacant, it is a little difficult to see how another can be elected. Kobina Fori has ceased to be a native authority, and to enable the affairs of the division to be properly run, *the* Government has appointed regents. These regents, therefore, must function for the time being, and I cannot help expressing my sympathy with those who feel a certain diffidence in causing the Stool to be vacated.⁵³

Mr Applegate appeared to fully grasp how the customary law worked and that removing his name from the list did not mean he ceased to be the chief of Fomena. This was the position of Johnson. Subsequently, Kwabena Fori was petitioned by his kingmakers to designate a nominee to officially deputise for him to restore harmony and peace to the division. Kwabena Fori appointed his grandnephew, Amuaku.⁵⁴

The outcome of cases such as the one mentioned above was that it led to the passage of the 'The State Councils (Ashanti) Ordinance' in 1952,⁵⁵ which was a declaration of modification of customary law under section 18(2) of the ordinance. It codified, inter alia, the processes towards enstoolment, election,

⁵⁰ A royal servant.

⁵¹ "Memorandum on the Position of the Ohene in the Native Constitution as Affected by the Native Authority Ordinance No. 1 of 1935 (Ashanti)," ARG 1/26/1/41, PRAAD 1938, p. 3.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid, p. 28.

⁵⁴ Ibid, p. 29.

⁵⁵ See, for example, "Declaration of Native Law and Custom," ARG 2/2/69, PRAAD 30A, 1952.

installation, destoolment, what constitutes stool property, procedures in lodging complaints against chiefs, the time limit for filling vacant stools, and reasons that could cause destoolment of chiefs, as well as the individuals involved and their duties. As independence impended, the chiefs were regarded as the ‘enemy’ of the people for conforming to the demands of the colonial rulers and working under them to oppress their own denizens. Thus, although heretofore the chiefs had played significant roles⁵⁶ in their societies, it was contemplated that their institution should be abolished going into independence because of the role they played in the past and their “apathy towards the nationalist movements.”⁵⁷

However, successive administrations in Ghana decided to maintain the chieftaincy institution but to restrict their formal involvement in open politics. Hence, the 1992 constitution under Article 270 guarantees the existence and continuity of the institution, but “limited their formal roles to chieftaincy and customary issues.”⁵⁸ This decision to allow the chieftaincy institution to exist side by side with the post-colonial governance structure has been referred to as a contributing factor to the country’s ‘stability and success.’⁵⁹ Presently, the chieftaincy institution in Ghana is grappling with numerous challenges, including chieftaincy disputes, land management issues, and in the northern part of Ghana, ethnic conflicts fuelled by chieftaincy conflicts, issues related to colonial era land amalgamation, and allodial land ownership.

The next two sections will look at how chiefs in the Ashanti dependency were rewarded by the colonial administration for doing ‘good work’ in their districts and states in support of the colonial regime between 1916 and 1938. The acts that they did to qualify for insignia of office, such as the Union Jack flag, messenger staff, and the African medal for chiefs, will be highlighted.

3. Medals for African Chiefs during the Colonial Period

Before the Union Jack flags, chiefs in colonial Ghana were rewarded with medals. The record of that, as found through the archives, dates back to 1916. The medal was circular. In the original design, the colonial administration opted to inscribe ‘Gold Coast’ on it. However, the Asanti Chief Commissioner,

⁵⁶ See, for example, Monika Różalska, “Between Tradition and Modernity – the role of Chiefs in the National Development and Local Governance in Ghana,” *POLITEJA*, Issue 3 No. 42, 2016.

⁵⁷ Owusu-Mensah, 2014, p. 266.

⁵⁸ Edem Adotey, “Parallel or Dependent? The State, Chieftaincy and Institutions of Governance in Ghana,” *African Affairs* 184/473, 2019, p. 634.

⁵⁹ Daasebre Osei Bonsu II and Henry Seidu Daannaa, “Conference on Sources and Resolution of Chieftaincy and Land Conflicts in Ghana,” *Chieftaincy Bulletin*, Vol. 1 No. 2, 2011, p. 7.

suggested that the words “For Loyalty” be used on the medals instead of “Gold Coast”⁶⁰ during the design phase. These were called ‘medals for chiefs.’ In that year, there was a proposal for buying 48 medals fitted with silver gilt 3-inch chains and 24 medals fitted with silver 2-inch chains from Spink & Co in London,⁶¹ i.e., a total of 72 chains. For 1917, a sum of £500 was allocated for the purchase of “medals for chiefs”—50 silver-gilt 3-inch medals fitted with silver gilt chains costing £375 and 40 silver-gilt 2-inch medals fitted with silver gilt chains costing £120⁶² for Ashanti. A piece of the silver-gilt 3-inch medal with silver-gilt chains cost £7.10.0, and the 2-inch of the same description cost £3.⁶³ The medals were to bear the words “Ashanti” above and “For Loyalty” below on the reverses.⁶⁴ Thus, it is reasonable to assume that the Colony Proper and the Northern Territories would have had medals that were similar to this one, with the words ‘For Loyalty’ and the name of the division instead of ‘Ashanti.’ The large-sized medals were to be distributed “among the head chiefs and councillors,” while the smaller-sized ones were “for the more important secondary chiefs.”⁶⁵

According to the colonial secretary, the medals were to be presented to the chiefs individually and not to the Stools they occupied. Thus, whilst “gross misbehaviour” was deemed “sufficient reason for forfeiture of *the* medal,” the medals were to be “returned to government on the death of a medal holder and only given to his successor” if the latter proved his “worth and loyalty.”⁶⁶ When the medals finally arrived in Gold Coast, their distribution, in Ashanti, was accompanied by a message from the governor. The message was that the medals were to be regarded as “a token of the governor’s appreciation of the loyal attitude of the Ashantis since the opening of the hostilities and of their generous financial and general assistance.”⁶⁷ The hostilities in question were about the First World War. Thus, the Ashanti chief commissioner requested a list of the chiefs in the provinces and districts that the commissioners thought

⁶⁰ C.156/1916, ARG 1/1/71, PRAAD 2nd October 1916.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² “The Colonial Secretary,” Accra, M.P.G.156/1916, ARG 1/1/71, PRAAD, 15th November 1916.

⁶³ Spink & Son Ltd., AW/MEH, London, ARG 1/1/71, PRAAD, 19th January 1917.

⁶⁴ “Chief Commissioner, Ashanti,” G.156/1916, ARG 1/1/71, PRAAD, 18th December 1916.

⁶⁵ “The Colonial Secretary,” Accra, M.P.G.156/1916, ARG 1/1/71, PRAAD 15th November 1916.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ “Circular No.10 Re Silver Medals for Chiefs etc.,” Ashanti, M.P.C.156/1916, ARG 1/1/71, PRAAD, 23rd July 1917.

should receive a medal, bearing in mind that “only the most important sub-chiefs”⁶⁸ were to receive the second-size medal.

Subsequently, the commissioner of Western Province, Sunyani, recommended 17 chiefs from his province to be presented with silver medals.⁶⁹ The district commissioner of Ashanti Akim also nominated 6 chiefs, 2 for the larger medals and 4 for the smaller medals. Kojo Darkwa, *Omanhin* of Bompata, who was said to have stood alone in the “matter of generosity and willingness to help the Government,” and Kofi Boateng, *Omanhin* of Juaben, who was said to have made a “contribution of £250,” were nominated for the larger medals. For the smaller-sized medals, the chiefs of Juansa, Agogo, Kwamang, and Juaso were selected because while the first was “prominent in helping the Government and his Omanhin financially and otherwise,” the other three were noted “for their loyal and willing attitude on the outbreak of war.”⁷⁰ One other chief, the chief of Adomfe, was said to have been “the only chief to volunteer himself” to East Africa, but could not be added to the list because he was ‘only a very small chief’ and held no Office.⁷¹

Furthermore, the acting commissioner for the northern province of Ashanti said he was ‘unable to select any of the sub-chiefs, from amongst their fellows upon whom the distinction should be conferred,’ but went ahead to present a list only for the *Amanhin*⁷² to whom the larger medal “might be granted.”⁷³ Conversely, the district commissioner for Ejura selected 3 *Omanhins* (Mampong, Nsuta, and Atebubu), and 7 sub-chiefs (Effiduassi, Asokori, Jamasi, Ntonsu, Asamang, Bonim, and Ejura) from his division for the medals. The chief of Ejura, for instance, was selected because he was said to have done “the most useful work on the road”⁷⁴ in the district. The chiefs were selected for their diverse roles in supporting the colonial regime. In 1918, the chiefs of Juansa, Agogo, Kwamang, and Juaso were nominated by their district commissioner to be “decorated with the small medal for war services.”⁷⁵

In 1920, King George V expressed his desire to recognize “the loyal and zealous services” provided by native chiefs and dignitaries in various parts of

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ “Commissioner Western Province,” Sunyani, No. 237/29/1917, ARG 1/1/71, 3rd August 1917.

⁷⁰ “Ag. District Commissioner, Ash: Akim, No.58/17, ARG 1/1/71, 3rd August 1917.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² It is the plural form of “Omanhene.” Hence, it refers to head chiefs or paramount chiefs.

⁷³ “Ag. Commissioner, N.P.A.,” No. 134/3/11, ARG 1/1/71, 24th August 1917.

⁷⁴ “Ag. Dist. Commissioner,” No.200/1/1917, Ejura, ARG 1/1/71, 30th August 1917.

⁷⁵ “Ag. Dist. Commissioner, Ash. Akim,” Juaso, No49/18, ARG 1/1/71, 16th December 1918.

East and West Africa, particularly during the war years, so he instituted a new medal named "The King's Medal for Native Chiefs."⁷⁶ According to the King, the medal should be made of silver and in "exceptional cases of silver-gilt." However, instead of 'For Loyalty' as in the previous years, it was to be designated and styled "The King's Medal for Native Chiefs," and was to be "worn around the neck pendant from a chain of silver or silver-gilt."⁷⁷ The names of the recipients of the medal were to be published in the Government Gazette of their respective territories, or by other means as would be determined. The Royal Warrant applied not only to the British colonies and protectorates in East and West Africa but to other areas under British administration as well. This was a formal backing, by the Crown, of the initiative of the colonial officers in 1916 to reward autochthonous chiefs. The chiefs were to be recognized and awarded for their past and future services to the British Empire. These services were categorised into two, i.e., those carried out or to be carried out 'in time of war' and 'in time of peace.'

In times of war, chiefs were to be rewarded for

(a) any particular and recognized act of loyalty; (b) marked activity continuously exhibited in obtaining carriers and labourers for military purposes or in collecting livestock for transport or supplies; (c) furnishing information as to, or aid in repressing any rising, riots or serious internal trouble, or aid in defence against hostile aggression.⁷⁸

In time of peace "(d) particularly efficient control of chiefdoms, etc.; (e) enlightened acts of service undertaken for the benefit of the community, or to assist the government; (f) special services, and those of a long and faithful nature,"⁷⁹ emanating from the chiefs were to be recognized and rewarded. The expenses associated with procuring the medal were to be "divided between the governments concerned," and each administration was to bear "the cost of the medal awarded to those within its jurisdiction."⁸⁰ Following the latter changes, nominations were strictly limited to not "more than one name" from Ashanti, and were to be accompanied by full particulars of the service for which it was proposed to be recognised.⁸¹ This was a departure from the occurrences between 1916 and 1919, where sundry chiefs were nominated and awarded. With this new reform, the Ashanti chief commissioner decided to

⁷⁶ Downing Street, 1a, ARG 1/1/91, 24th June 1920, p. 1.

⁷⁷ "Royal Warrant," ARG 1/1/91, 26th April 1920.

⁷⁸ Downing Street, 1a, ARG 1/1/91, 24th June 1920, p. 1.

⁷⁹ Ibid, p. 2.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Acting Colonial Secretary, No.6624/S.S.Misc:24/6/20, Accra, ARG 1/1/91, 16th August 1920.

defer 'making any recommendation until' he had had a 'greater opportunity of arriving at an opinion as to the merits'⁸² of the chiefs in his colony.

In that year, the commissioner selected three chiefs, out of whom one was to be awarded. They were Kobina Fori of Adansi Stool, Akwesi Nuama of Dumakwa Stool, and Osei Bonsu of the Bantama Stool (this latter chief later succeeded Akwesi Sekyere to the Mampong Stool in 1917).⁸³ Akwesi Nuama, for instance, was nominated for being "loyal to the government" during the siege of Kumasi, where he assisted "actively in repelling the attacks of the Ashantis and the Fort," and served the government with 'unswerving loyalty.'⁸⁴ Osei Bonsu was also nominated for his loyalty during the siege of Kumasi and his influence in restoring "peace and loyalty among"⁸⁵ the Ashantis of Kumasi. However, it was Kobina Fori who was considered well qualified to receive the medal. His recommendation came from three well-known political administrators, Mr Wheatley, Captain Armitage and Colonel Raw, who had all worked in the southern province of Ashanti. Apart from his loyalty to the government, desire to help in any public work and restoring peace and loyalty among his Adansi subjects,⁸⁶ Kobina Fori was reported to have given, during the war, "four different amounts viz £2000; £300; £150 and £50: for imperial purposes," raised and sent in 50 recruits for the Gold Coast Regiment, built a rest house at Fomena for £1500, provided labour for Ashanti Goldfields Corporation, and started a motor service between Fomena and Akrokerri,⁸⁷ etc.

In 1921, Nana Osei Bonsu was picked to receive the King's Medal because of the assistance he granted to Sir Francis Fuller, and the fact that he discharged his responsibilities with 'ability and dignity,' and retained "the respect and confidence of his people and of the political officers."⁸⁸ Furthermore, in 1923, Akwesi Nuama, who was the Dumakwahin⁸⁹ and head linguist of Ashanti, was recommended for the King's Medal. He and his brother, Kwasi Tua, were said to have been loyal to the government during the siege of Kumasi to the extent that their mother was put to death by the Ashantis.⁹⁰ The king, through the acting governor of the Gold Coast, approved

⁸² "King's Medal for Native Chiefs," Ashanti, 198/M.P. Case 270/20, ARG /1/1/91, 28th August 1920.

⁸³ *See, for example*, "Chief Commissioner," Ashanti, ARG 1/1/91, 1920, p. 1.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ "Confidential," 238/M.P. Confidential 270/20, ARG 1/1/91, 10th November 1920.

⁸⁷ *See, for example*, "Chief Commissioner," Ashanti, ARG 1/1/91, 1920, p. 2.

⁸⁸ "Confidential," Case No 270/20, ARG 1/1/91, 17th March 1920.

⁸⁹ Chief of Dumakwa or sometimes spelt as Domakwae.

⁹⁰ "Confidential," No. 98 M.P. Case 270/20, ARG 1/1/91, 9th March 1923.

the award for Chief Akwesi Nuama in 1924, and urged that the medal presentation be done publicly, and the occasion be made 'a ceremonial one.'⁹¹ It was eventually presented to him on 3 June 1924.⁹² Akwesi Nuama was described as someone who betrayed the Asante cause to side with the British, for which reason he was rewarded by Commissioner Fuller and appointed as Dumakwahin in 1910. For instance, it was said that he, inter alia, "swayed legal outcomes" however he deemed necessary and profited from that, and he got Commissioner Fuller "to push through a significant change in the Asante laws of inheritance."⁹³

Not all the nominated chiefs were given the medal. For instance, in November 1924, the Western Province Commissioner, H.J. Hobbs, identified the Amanhene of Nkoranza, Tekiman, Berekum, Wam, and Wenchi as the chiefs under his jurisdiction who had constructed motorable roads in support of the government. The commissioner expressed that such endeavours were "good public service" but did not "merit the reward of the King's African Medal."⁹⁴ Instead, he advised giving "some official recognition for their services" for which each of the named *Amanhene* was to be "presented with a motor car or lorry."⁹⁵

Since 1924, no other native chief was awarded the medal until May 1929,⁹⁶ when *Omanhene* Kofi Boateng of Juaben was honoured with it. Nana Boateng was recommended for the King's Africa Medal in October 1928 for his unique record of having "no destoolments in his division for over 20 years," which was considered to have surpassed that of any other *Omanhene*; he also had his "own methods of ruling," which were considered "possibly arbitrary" but "certainly effective"; he built a court house and prison, both of which were praised as "excellent structures," as well as a rest house and his *Ahenfie* (Palace).⁹⁷ Although the British commissioners recognized the contributions of chiefs in the intervening years, none of them was thought qualified or did enough to get the king's medal.

⁹¹ "Confidential," Acting Colonial Secretary, No2340/S.S.Misc.22/2/24, ARG 1/1/91, 8th May 1924.

⁹² "Confidential," Chief Commissioner Ashanti, 46/Conf: Case No. 18/1924, ARG 1/1/91, 10th June 1924.

⁹³ Tom McCaskie, "History has many cunning passages: Kwasi Apea Nuama between the Asante and the British," *Africa*, Vol. 88 No.2, 2018, pp. 223, 227.

⁹⁴ "King's African Medal for Chiefs and Presentation of Motor Lorries for Road Service," No.1478/W.P.23/1924, Sunyani, ARG 1/1/91, 19th November 1924.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ See, for example, "Downing Street," Gold Coast, Miscellaneous, ARG 1/1/91, 7th May 1929.

⁹⁷ See, for example, "King's African Medals," No.70/Conf: Case 3/1924, ARG 1/1/91, 24th October 1928.

For instance, the *Omanhene* of Agona, Kwajo Apaw, was recommended for the award in 1927⁹⁸ in the eastern province, but he did not receive the approval of the Ashanti chief commissioner⁹⁹ because his own commissioner said he was “not acquainted” with him, nor had “any knowledge of his work.”¹⁰⁰ Similarly, in the western province, *Omanehene* Yao Kramo of Tekiman was nominated due to the control he had over his sub-chiefs, provided several recruits for the British Army, and contributed to the Red Cross and other War Funds, etc.¹⁰¹ But his nomination was not approved. Furthermore, Nana Kofi Edu of Kokofu’s nomination was rejected because his district commissioner had described him as “autocratic, not sufficiently sympathetic with his people to be an ideal leader and tends to be vindictive” and pursued a policy that ensured his “supremacy by fostering friction between the more powerful of his Ahinful (Chiefs) and their subjects.”¹⁰²

Three native rulers were nominated for the medal in 1930, and for the first time, it included a woman. They were the Queen-mother of Nkoranza, Effua Dapa,¹⁰³ Mallam Sallow¹⁰⁴ (Sarkin Zongo, Kumasi), and Nana Prempeh, Kumasihene.¹⁰⁵ The queen-mother was described as “the mainstay of the whole division and rules it with a rod of iron.”¹⁰⁶ Her influence was said to be a controlling factor for the success of any project in the western province of Ashanti. As such, the commissioner nominated her and hoped that through her, he could obtain Nkoranza’s consent to restrict the “consumption of gin at funeral customs,”¹⁰⁷ which was regarded as a nuisance. Her nomination was

⁹⁸ See, for example, “Medals for African Chiefs,” Confidential, Ashanti, No. 208/62/23, ARG 1/1/91, 21st January 1927.

⁹⁹ See, for example, “Confidential,” 30/Conf. Case 18/1924, ARG 1/1/91, 22nd January 1927.

¹⁰⁰ “Medals for African Chiefs,” Confidential, Ashanti, No. 208/62/23, ARG 1/1/91, 21st January 1927.

¹⁰¹ 47/Conf. Case 18/1924, ARG 1/1/91, 10th February 1927.

¹⁰² “King’s Medal for African Chiefs,” Confidential, No.70/Case E.P.62/1923, ARG 1/1/91, 3rd October 1927.

¹⁰³ See, for example, “Confidential,” No. 178/Conf: Case 18/1924, ARG 1/1/91, 4th December 1929.

¹⁰⁴ See, for example, the Senior Sanitary Officer’s Report on the work done by Mallam Sallow during the Bubonic Plague in Kumasi between 1924 and 1925, “Memorandum: Mallam Sallow Katsina, Serikin Zongo,” 9 December 1929, ARG 1/1/91, Kumasi, pp. 1-3.

¹⁰⁵ See, for example, “King’s Medal for African Chiefs,” No.137/Case.3/24, Commissioner Eastern Province, Ashanti, ARG 1/1/91, 11th December 1929.

¹⁰⁶ Ag. Commissioner- W.P.A., Confidential, Sunyani, ARG 1/1/91, 6th January 1930.

¹⁰⁷ “Effua Dapa, Queen Mother of Nkoranza- Report on,” Confidential, Sunyani, No.71/Conf.W.P.1/1927, ARG 1/1/91, 17th July 1929.

not approved for the medal, but instead, she got "the Gold Coast Certificate of Honour and Badge."¹⁰⁸

With regards to the other two, it was recommended that both be granted the medal in the same year if possible. If not, then Mallam Sallow, who became the Sarkin Zongo of Kumasi in 1918, was handpicked by the commissioner to receive the medal for his long service to Kumasi and the government over Nana Prempeh, who had not been in office for long but was said to be "a loyal, tactful, and valuable chief."¹⁰⁹ It was not found in the records whether both chiefs were honoured in that year, but it was clear that Nana Prempeh received the medal in 1930 because of the events that occurred after he died in 1931. Also, in 1936, it was the Kokofuhene, Nana Kofi Eddu, who was approved for the award because of his 'loyal and long service to the King and Country.'¹¹⁰ The chief was so elated to the extent that he regarded the medal as "a glorious and respectful property for the Stool of Kokofu and the generations to come."¹¹¹

An important clause of the royal warrant granting the medals said that:

Upon the death of any recipient of the medal, it shall forthwith be returned to Our Governor or other Our Representatives as foresaid unless he shall in any instance deem otherwise expedient, but in no case shall the Medal be worn by any other than the Chief or Dignitary to whom it was awarded.¹¹²

Thus, when Nana Edward Prempeh died, the colonial office asked his successor to "return the medal and chain which was given"¹¹³ to the deceased. This indicated that Prempeh was picked for the medal in 1930 over Mallam Sallow. As such, the medals given to the late Kumasihene, Edward Prempeh, the late Mamponghehene, Osei Bonsu,¹¹⁴ the late Juabenhene, Kofi Boateng,¹¹⁵ and the late Dumakwahene, Akwesi Nuamah¹¹⁶ were all returned to the government as specified by the royal warrant.

¹⁰⁸ Commissioner-W.P., Confidential, Sunyani, ARG 1/1/91, 15th December 1930.

¹⁰⁹ "King's Medal for African Chiefs," No.137/Case.3/24, ARG 1/1/91, 11th December 1929.

¹¹⁰ TELEGRAM, ARG 1/1/91, 30 June 1936.

¹¹¹ "King's Medal," Ref: No.92/36, Kumasi, ARG 1/1/91, 2nd July 1936.

¹¹² WARRANT, ARG 1/1/91, 26 April 1920.

¹¹³ "Confidential," No.51/C.18/24, ARG 1/1/91, 9th June 1932.

¹¹⁴ No.66/C.18/24, ARG 1/1/91, 4th August 1932.

¹¹⁵ Late Chief Nuamah – King's Medal Presented to, No.419/Conf.16/24, ARG 1/1/91, 16 February 1938.

¹¹⁶ Late Chief Nuamah – King's Medal Presented to, No.6/Conf.2/29, ARG 1/1/91, 16 February 1938; Kumasihene, Mamponghehene, Juabenhene, and Dumakwahene refer to the chiefs of the Kumasi, Mampong, Juaben, and Dumakwa divisions, respectively.

4. Chiefs, Headmen, and Union Jack Flags as Insignia of Office

The Union Jack flag,¹¹⁷ government cane stick/staff and other insignia emanating from the colonial office were also used during the colonial period in Ghana to reward chiefs and headmen who made exceptional contributions to the colonial regime and to those chiefs who were entitled to hold tribunals. With the enactment of colonial ordinances, the customary native tribunals of the chiefs were “modified and in some instances ceased to exist.”¹¹⁸ Thus, only chiefs who were recognized and whose tribunals derived their mandate from the colonial dictum could hold arbitrations. Hence, these insignia were only given to chiefs whose enstoolment had been approved by the governor.¹¹⁹ For the first time, the flag was given by the government to a chief, but the latter would have to bear the responsibility of replacing it “when soiled or worn.”¹²⁰ The process for acquiring these insignia entailed going through the chain of command, i.e., applying through the office of the native authority for subordinate headmen, then to the district commissioner which would then be forwarded to the provincial commissioner’s office then to the chief commissioner’s office from whence the secretary for native affairs could be involved and subsequently to the governor, if necessary.

For instance, in 1925, the headman (*Sarkin Zongo*) of Bekwai Zongo wrote to his district commissioner to request a Union Jack flag for his office. When the request was put before the Provincial Commissioner’s office, A. Duncan Johnstone, he asked the District Commissioner, O.F. Ross, as it were to inform him of “any good service done by the *Sarkin* which would warrant him receiving such a present,” and how long he had “been Sarkin Zongo.”¹²¹ O.F. Ross reported that the Sarkin Zongo was a good man and had been “Sarkin for about 8 months”¹²² at the time of application. The assistant district commissioner for Obuasi added that his work had been “consistently good, but he has not done anything particularly meritorious” to receive Union Jacks, which were “only awarded to chiefs for some unusually good piece of

¹¹⁷ For the history and evolution of the Union Jack Flag, see, for example, Barrow Cumberland, *History of the Union Jack and Flags of the Empire*, Third Edition, Toronto 1909.

¹¹⁸ Anamzoya, 2009, p. 73.

¹¹⁹ See, for example, “Union Jack for Omanhene of Mampong,” ARG 1/1/114, PRAAD, 10th April 1931.

¹²⁰ “Flags for Chiefs – Replacement of,” No. 1034/E.P. Case 278/1923, ARG 1/1/114, 10th June 1930.

¹²¹ No.544/105/E.P.278/1923, ARG 1/1/114, PRAAD 10th March 1925.

¹²² “Minute 4,” No.544/105/E.P.278/1923, ARG 1/1/114, PRAAD 20th March 1925.

work.”¹²³ Hence, his request was not granted¹²⁴ on the basis that he was “not entitled to hold a tribunal,” but for the good work he claimed he had been doing in Bekwai, the chief commissioner recommended that he should get “a present of money”¹²⁵ instead.

Furthermore, in 1926, another headman, Barba, of Mampong in Ashanti, requested the district commissioner for Mampong to recommend him in obtaining one Union Jack from the government, for which he would be ‘very thankful.’¹²⁶ This headman had applied earlier, on 12 February 1926, for a flag, but the application was not granted on the same basis as that of the Bekwai Zongo headman in 1925. Thus, Barba expressed that he knew flags were only given to chiefs for exceptionally good work, and so since his appointment as Sarikin Zongo, he had done his “duty with all expedition and willingness to the satisfaction”¹²⁷ of the colonial regime. Additionally, Barba said that it was his “highest pride” to obtain one of the flags and was “aware of the value of the flag,” as there would be “nothing done *on* his part to create any regret”¹²⁸ once granted the flag. Despite that, his request was rejected because “he has done nothing exceptional”¹²⁹ to warrant a flag.

On 14 August 1926, the *Omanhene* of Kokofu also requested a Union Jack, a government cane stick, and a pair of handcuffs in support of his official duties on behalf of the government.¹³⁰ While the district commissioner approved the grant of a Union Jack of 6" × 3", he did not approve the cane stick on the basis that it was “only granted as a reward for exceptional work done,”¹³¹ which was lacking then. Thus, in response to that, the acting chief commissioner of Ashanti sent the requested Union Jack to be handed over to the *Omanhene* with a promise to send the handcuffs in October 1926 when they¹³² arrive from England. Furthermore, the acting chief commissioner expressed that “in the absence of a recommendation” from the district commissioner attesting to the good work of the chief in question, he could not consider “the *Omanhene*’s application”¹³³ for the stick.

¹²³ “Minute 3,” No.544/105/E.P.278/1923, ARG 1/1/114, PRAAD 13th March 1925.

¹²⁴ See, for example, “Minute 5,” No.544/105/E.P.278/1923, ARG 1/1/114, PRAAD 25th March 1925.

¹²⁵ 1789/278/23, ARG 1/1/114, PRAAD 8th September 1926.

¹²⁶ 1186/203/E.P.278/23, ARG 1/1/114, PRAAD 15th June 1926, p. 1.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid, p. 2.

¹³⁰ See, for example, 2901/278/23, ARG 1/1/114, PRAAD, 14th August 1926.

¹³¹ 1789/278/23, ARG 1/1/114, PRAAD, 8th September 1926.

¹³² See, for example, 1989/278/23, ARG 1/1/114, PRAAD 9th September 1926.

¹³³ Ibid.

In June 1927, Malam Mahama, the headman for Obuasi Zongo, requested a Union Jack and a message stick, which he intended to use to get the Muslim community to respect his “call or summon when any case is brought”¹³⁴ before him. His request was refused because he was not entitled to hold tribunals. Conversely, in September 1928, the application of Sarkin Zongo of Mampong, Baba Nartha, through the *Omanhene* of Mampong was granted¹³⁵ because the latter was the native authority under whom the former was subordinated. This highlights the importance of going through the chain of command.

Some chiefs were denied Union Jack flags, even though their enstoolments were duly approved by the governor, because they failed to perform their duties. An example was the *Nifahene* (Right-Wing Chief) of Mampong, who doubled as the *Ohene* of Effiduasie. His request for a Union Jack was turned down because, per the constitution of Mampong, he disregarded its “native custom by refusing to act as Omanhene.”¹³⁶ Thus, in October 1931, when the acting chief commissioner of Ashanti forwarded four separate Union Jacks of 12 feet by 6 feet to the commissioner of the eastern province, he reprimanded the latter, should he intend to issue any of the flags to indigenous chiefs, to only issue them “in recognition of good services and on no account be given to unconfirmed chiefs.”¹³⁷

To sum up, before the grant of the Union Jack flags, native chiefs in colonial Ghana were awarded the king’s medals for African chiefs. From 1916 onwards, Ashanti chiefs were recognized and awarded these medals for rendering numerous services and contributions to aid the colonial regime. To answer the research question put forward earlier, some of the services and contributions as carried out by the Ashanti chiefs included their willingness to support the imperial efforts by building road networks in their states to enhance trade, ensured security and maintained the peace, suppressed revolts or dissents against the colonial regime in their states, made generous financial donations to the imperial course, provided labourers, carriers, information and recruits for the British Empire, rendered community services by establishing infrastructure to assist the colonial regime, volunteered to serve in the war with the British officers, abided by de jure native laws as codified by the

¹³⁴ “To the District Commissioner, Obuasi,” ARG 1/1/114, PRAAD, 6th June 1927.

¹³⁵ See, for example, Petition of Baba Nartha, Sarikin Zongo of Mampong through Nana Osei Bonsu, Omanhene of Mampong, to the District Commissioner, Mampong, 27 September 1928, ARG 1/1/114, Kumasi.

¹³⁶ “Union Jack for Effiduasihene,” 1388/E.P. Case 278/1923, ARG 1/1/114, PRAAD 5th August 1930.

¹³⁷ 2671/278/23, ARG 1/1/114, PRAAD 16th October 1931.

colonial administration as well as those contained in the NAO, and pledged their loyalties to the imperial office, *inter alia*.

Conclusion

Chieftaincy is a complex but important administrative structure of governance in West Africa, which has existed since the formation of native states. It underwent great transformations when the indigenous states encountered Europeans. The influence of the latter on the former was so gargantuan to the extent that chiefs and their institutions capitulated to the demands and reforms of the colonial machinery. The establishment of formal colonial rule in Ghana in 1874 progressively led to the institution of indirect rule, which was regarded as a cheap administrative method that used the chiefs as agents of the Europeans to rule the local people. In recognition of their good services, good works, and loyalty to the colonial regime, Ashanti chiefs came to be issued with medals, Union Jack flags, and government cane sticks as insignia of office and recognition of their various contributions. Based on this finding, the paper argued that it was the chiefs who made the system of indirect rule work in colonial Ghana.

Thus, the paper used archival sources to trace the history of the medals and the flags as they were applied to chiefs in the various provinces of Ashanti. The paper further highlighted the various contributions of the indigenous chiefs to the colonial cause that warranted them the medals. In some instances, the medals were greatly treasured and considered as Stool honours, to the extent that the native authorities were reluctant to return them¹³⁸ to the government on the death of the recipients. Thus, with these insignia of office, the native chiefs had demonstrated their involvement in the colonial enterprise and etched their imprints in the history of Ghana as being part of the colonial oppressors. Hence, the paper tried to make contributions to the literature of chieftaincy in Ghana and Africa at large.

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Archival Sources: The archival sources used in this study were obtained from a compendium of colonial records kept at the regional office of PRAAD in Kumasi. They include correspondences between the indigenous states and the colonial officers at district and provincial levels with the colonial secretary's office in Accra and London. They are coded ARG and numbered serially based on their contents. This study relied on ARG1 and 2 collections, which contained correspondences and records touching on subjects such as the

¹³⁸ Late Chief Nuamah – King's Medal Presented to, No.3/Conf.2/29, ARG 1/1/91, 9 February 1938.

King's Medal for Native Chiefs, the Bond of 1844 celebration in 1944, Union Jacks for Chiefs, the Position of Chiefs under the NAO, declaration of native law and custom, and other letters which were exchanged between the chiefs and the political officers of the imperial office.

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