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The Contributions of the Dagomba Tribes to the Spread of Islam in the Interior of West Africa during the Nineteenth Century: The Gold Coast as a Case Study

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Abstract

The Dagomba Kingdom, located south of the Volta River, contributed to the spread of Islam in the interior of Africa after Islam reached the region through the Hausa and Wangara peoples. The kingdom relied on two distinct approaches: the first involved political and social relations with other kingdoms, while the second consisted of migration routes and commercial exchanges connecting major Islamic and trading centres in the north with the inland savannah region and the Atlantic coast to the south.

During the nineteenth century, Muslim scholars emerged in the kingdom, including Muhammad Buba and Mahama Toure, who undertook the task of consolidating Islamic teachings through the instruction of Qur'anic sciences, Hadith, and Islamic jurisprudence. This development influenced various aspects of Dagomba social life, including marriage, birth, and death rituals. It also affected the political sphere, contributing to the decline in the status of the Tindamba institution, which was replaced by the council of the Naa Limam.

Keywords: (Dagomba, interior of West Africa, Islam, Tindamba, Naa Limam.)

Introduction

The nineteenth century constituted an important period in the history of Islam in the interior of West Africa in general, and among the Dagomba tribes in particular. This was not because it marked the initial arrival of Islam in the region, but rather because of the expansion of its presence and the strengthening of its religious, social, and political standing. Historical sources indicate that Islam had reached these areas at an early stage through trade and migration routes. However, the transformations that took place during the nineteenth century contributed to enhancing the position of Muslims across several spheres, including politics, society, and religious outreach.

During this period, the Islamic presence developed through the wider dissemination of Islamic rituals and religious practices, alongside the growth of religious and educational institutions, such as mosques and Qur'anic schools. Islam also became increasingly integrated into the daily practices of the Dagomba people, gradually interacting with and becoming intertwined with

the local religious and cultural structures.

Accordingly, this research paper aims to examine the effects of Islam on the Dagomba Kingdom during the nineteenth century and its contributions to the spread of Islam in the interior of West Africa. It does so by identifying the factors that facilitated the consolidation of Islam and analysing the roles played by Muslim scholars and the methods they employed.

To what extent did the Dagomba tribes contribute to the spread of Islam in the interior of West Africa? What were the main methods they employed to achieve this? And how did pagan and Crusader forces react to this expansion?

I. the Dagomba Tribes and Identifying Their Homeland

The Dagomba tribes (Dagomba) are among the oldest ethnic groups inhabiting the northern savannah region, north of the Gold Coast—the territory of present-day Ghana. They belong to the larger Akan ethnic group and speak Dagbani, a language belonging to the Gur language family.[1]

Numerous legends have developed around the Dagomba people, although most historians agree that they originated east of Lake Chad, from where they migrated through Zanfara, in present-day Nigeria, and then proceeded to Mali before crossing Gurma and the Volta River into what is now northern Ghana.

Historians further maintain that the legendary ancestor of the Dagomba, known as “Toha-Zai,” helped the people of Mali eliminate a threat posed by a red cow that was preventing them from accessing water. He fashioned a garment from the animal’s hide. Following this incident, he became known as the “Red Hunter.”[2] Since then, the Dagomba have traditionally worn cowhide garments to commemorate the heroic deeds of their ancestors.[3]

The Dagomba people traditionally practised African religions, particularly those associated with spirits and supernatural forces. However, from the beginning of the sixteenth century, a gradual shift towards Islam and adherence to its teachings began to take place. These teachings were largely compatible with Dagomba beliefs, for which the Dagomba found explanations within the framework of Islam. According to recent statistics cited in the source, approximately 80 per cent of the Dagomba population is Muslim.

In the fifteenth century, the leader Na Gbewanja established a kingdom of their own, known as the Dagbon Kingdom. Its capital was initially located in Bosuko before being transferred to Yendi.[4]

The Dagomba Kingdom had a well-organized and coherent political system, headed by a king known as the Ya-Naa, who represented the highest authority in the kingdom and combined political and spiritual power. He was assisted in governing the kingdom by the chiefs of its various regions or administrative districts[5]. Socially, Dagomba society was divided into major clans whose roles were reflected in matters of marriage, inheritance, and identity. Although the matrilineal system was closely associated with these clans, its influence did not extend beyond these areas. The political system remained patrilineal, with the king's son inheriting the throne; matrilineal succession was rarely used in the transfer of political power[6].

During the late nineteenth century, the Dagomba Kingdom experienced a period of internal unrest and intense conflicts among its constituent groups, which hastened its fall under British colonial rule. More than forty kings are said to have ruled the kingdom, among the most notable of whom was Naa Zangina, during whose reign the kingdom flourished and important centres of Islamic learning were established.

Oral traditions preserved by praise singers, drummers, and poets among the Dagomba trace their origins to the Hausa region, north of Yorubaland in present-day Nigeria. According to these accounts, the Dagomba migrated along trade routes established by the Mossi people through Upper Volta, now Burkina Faso, before moving southwards into what is now northern Ghana. There, they settled and established their homeland, which included the principal district of Yendi and several other districts, such as Kamashugu, Tolon, and Karaga.[7]

The Dagomba succeeded in establishing their kingdom, through which they confronted their enemies and repelled all campaigns that attempted to penetrate their territory. This was made possible by a well-organized political and social system. Power was concentrated in the hands of the king, known as the "Ya," who was assisted in administration by councils of chiefs and elders[8], within a strict hierarchical system that was reflected in the social class structure. Meanwhile, the army, composed of members of the tribe, was responsible for maintaining security.

II. **Islam in Dagomba: Most accounts suggest that Islam reached Dagomba through the following group:**

1. The Wangara

The Wangara settled in the region between Senegal and the Niger River and were known by several other names, including the Dyula, Kasonke, Bambara, Jalonke, and Soninke[9]. They are credited with founding numerous Sudanic kingdoms in West Africa[10]. As merchants, they travelled along the principal trade route that passed through the city of Djenné and continued into Mossi territory before reaching Dagbon, where they engaged in trade and established their own settlements. These settlements remained evidence of the region's historical significance as a meeting point for trade and commercial caravans[11].

As Muslims, the Wangara sought to demonstrate the teachings of their religion and their Islamic culture through their commercial dealings. They upheld fairness and justice in weighing goods, avoided usurious transactions, and conducted their sales honestly. These practices earned the admiration of the Dagomba people and led them to embrace Islam voluntarily.[12]

To be fair, the Wangara did not participate in any systematic campaign to spread Islam in Dagomba. Rather, they maintained relations with its rulers to facilitate trade and preserve their economic standing. They also kept their distance from the local population during their trading journeys through the villages. Their main points of contact with the local communities involved supplication, divination, medicine, agriculture, and the provision of spiritual services.[13]

Over time, the Dagomba began to act as intermediaries in the Wangara's trading activities. They subsequently adopted certain funerary traditions from the Wangara[14], including burying the dead, beating drums to announce a death, and gathering at the deceased's home on the third and seventh days following their death.

2. The Hausa

Hausa Muslims arriving from the northern part of Yorubaland—present-day Nigeria—contributed to the spread of Islamic teachings in Dagomba. They are credited with facilitating the conversion to Islam of King Naa Zangina[15]. Praise singers extolled their contributions, accompanying their praises with drumming.

It is believed that the first Hausa Muslim to arrive in Dagomba during the reign of King Naa Zangina was a man known as "Malam Mahama," [16]a designation referring to a teacher or someone entrusted with the task of teaching. The Hausa settled in the Kamshagu area, east of the capital, Yendi, where traces of their presence remain to this day.[17]

Some local inhabitants also believe that the spread of Islam in Dagomba should be attributed to King Naa Zangina, who grew up in Sabali, an area with a predominantly Muslim population. This point will be examined further in the third section.

3. **King Naa Zaninak**

King Naa Zangina is regarded as the sixteenth king of the Dagomba Kingdom. He grew up in Sabali, an area with a predominantly Muslim population, which exposed him to Islamic ideas and traditions from an early age. Through his interactions with Hausa Muslims, he developed close ties with them after

ascending to the throne, granting them prominent political and religious positions. Malam Mahama, for instance, was appointed Kamasha, the chief of Kamshagu,[18] and became one of the leading Muslim clerics in Dagbon. It is worth noting that the Kamasha regularly presented the king with gifts and offerings[19].

A council of imams was also established, known locally as Nayili Limama (nayili limama), or the palace imams. This council was responsible for Islamic affairs and occupied a prestigious position within Dagbon's political hierarchy. Its members performed various duties within the royal palace, including offering counsel, providing spiritual healing, leading prayers, and discussing matters of importance to the kingdom.

The imams also served as healers and diviners among the general population, which helped encourage many local inhabitants and household heads to embrace Islam. Furthermore, the king permitted them to acquire plots of land on which to build stone mosques. These privileges enhanced their standing to such an extent that they came to rank immediately below the traditional chiefs in the Dagomba political hierarchy.[20]

King Naa Zangina also sent groups of students to Hausa lands to pursue religious education for periods ranging from five to ten years. There, they studied religious sciences, the Qur'an, Arabic, Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh), and Hadith. Upon returning to their homeland, they served as imams or teachers, instructing people in Islamic teachings and overseeing the Islamic centres established for this purpose.[21]

King Naa Zangina contributed to the early spread of Islam in Dagomba by introducing religious knowledge and transforming the hierarchy of traditional leadership[22]. Nevertheless, the local population retained some of its traditional customs and rituals, which continued to be practised alongside the adoption of Islam.

The Wangara and Hausa communities played a pivotal role in the spread of Islam in the Dagomba Kingdom. They are credited with facilitating King Naa Zangina's conversion to Islam, which, in turn, gave a significant impetus to the religion's expansion in the region. Through his conversion, his encouragement of Islamic scholars, and his efforts to send students to Hausa lands, the king strengthened the spread of Islam among the local population

III. Islamic Religious Practices and Rituals among the Dagomba Tribes:

● Traditional Rituals among the Dagomba Tribes:

-The Political Institution

The Dagomba Kingdom operated a highly sophisticated political and administrative system in which leadership positions and the conditions for attaining them were clearly defined, offices were allocated, and responsibilities were delineated. The king, known as the Ya-Naa[23], held all financial, judicial, legislative, and executive powers. His control over these powers was a manifestation of his authority; however, it did not necessarily imply despotism or the monopolisation of governance.

The king was assisted by a Council of Elders, a consultative body whose role was to review and correct the king's decisions, ensuring that they served the interests of the kingdom.The kingdom's provinces and villages, meanwhile, were governed by local chiefs who were selected through traditional rituals and a series of established procedures.[24]

-Birth and Death Customs

The Dagomba observe specific rituals to mark the birth of a new member of the community. The arrival of a newborn is announced through ululation, and the child's gender is indicated by the number of ululations performed by an elderly woman: three for a boy and four for a girl. The child is named seven days after birth. Children bear their fathers' names, which are often combined with names of ancestors, priests, or even days of the week, resulting in compound names[25].

Death ceremonies, by contrast, are extremely costly, involving the preparation of large quantities of food and the attendance of the entire village or tribe. Among ordinary people, burial takes place promptly once news of the death becomes known[26]. In the case of chiefs, however, funeral ceremonies are held three days later to allow chiefs from other areas to attend. Drumming, along with the performance of traditional incantations and chants, is also an essential part of these ceremonies.[27]

A week after the death, another feast is held, attended by all the deceased's relatives and members of the tribe. During this gathering, a diviner is responsible for determining the cause of death. If the death is deemed to have occurred naturally, those present wish the deceased a happy life in the next world. However, if witchcraft is identified as the cause, fear spreads throughout the tribe, and suspected practitioners of witchcraft are summoned to a trial. Anyone found responsible is banished from the tribe.[28]

-Marriage Customs

Among the Dagomba, girls are permitted to marry upon reaching the age of sixteen, while boys are allowed to marry once they are over twenty. Polygyny is also generally permitted. According to traditional customs, wedding celebrations last several days. During the ceremony, the bride is escorted to her husband's house or hut by a large gathering of people. Upon her arrival, a chicken is slaughtered to ward off evil spirits, as an auspicious gesture intended to bring happiness to the couple's household, and to honour the guests and relatives who accompanied her in the wedding procession.[29]

All wives reside with the head of the household in a circular residential compound, where the wives' huts are arranged according to several criteria, including birth order, the number of children, youth, and beauty. Divorce was reportedly uncommon among the Dagomba.

Accordingly, the family institution constituted the fundamental unit of Dagomba society. All family members were expected to obey the head of the household, namely the father. Children received their earliest education within the family, which was primarily based on respect for customs and the observance of social hierarchies. Boys did not leave the family household until they reached a certain age, whereas girls remained with their families until marriage.[30]

-Women's Lives

Women in Dagomba society enjoyed a prominent social standing and were entrusted with the education and upbringing of children, as well as the instruction of other women. Many historians, particularly Western scholars, argue that women within the tribe served as the collective memory of the Dagomba people. They were regarded as important custodians of oral tradition, preserving poetic epics and legendary accounts that commemorated the heroic deeds of their ancestors. These narratives were passed down to children and young people to inspire them, strengthen their resolve, and reinforce their sense of belonging and communal identity.[31]

- Succession and Inheritance

Following the father’s death, his eldest son succeeded him as head of the family and became the sole owner of all his property. If the deceased had only daughters, however, his possessions passed to his brothers’ sons. If he had no children, his estate was inherited by the eldest member of the family and the chief of the tribe. It can therefore be argued that succession and inheritance in Dagomba society followed a patrilineal principle, while women were entirely excluded from inheritance.[32]

●The Role of Islam in Transforming Traditional Dagomba Rituals

Following the Dagomba people’s conversion to Islam, many customs and rituals changed, while others were refined to bring them into conformity with Islamic teachings. The arrival of Hausa and Wangara scholars in the northern territories of present-day Ghana contributed to the spread of Qur’anic studies, Hadith, Islamic jurisprudence, and the biography of the Prophet Muhammad. This, in turn, helped reduce

ignorance and illiteracy among the various segments of Dagomba society. King Naa Zangina's decision to send students to Hausa lands undoubtedly played a significant role in this development.[33] This transformation encompassed customs and rituals across society. Clothing, for instance, evolved from animal skins that left parts of the body uncovered to dignified, full-coverage garments made of cloth. Forms of adornment and displays of opulence among rulers, kings, and tribal chiefs also changed. They began wearing turbans and caps, as well as golden crowns that symbolised authority, prestige, and dignity.

The king, in turn, established an advisory council composed of senior Muslim scholars, who enjoyed a high standing and contributed to governance by offering the king advice and guidance. Moreover, Dagomba society retained its social hierarchy, while mutual respect between its different social strata was maintained. Although women had already enjoyed a distinguished social standing, Islam safeguarded their rights, particularly with regard to inheritance and stability[34].

As mentioned earlier, children were given compound names incorporating the child's own name, the father's name, and the day of birth, in addition to one of the Most Beautiful Names of Allah, such as Abdullah (Servant of Allah), or one of the names of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, such as Muhammad (the Praised One), Ahmad (the Most Praiseworthy), Mahmoud (the Praised One), or Taha [35](a Qur'anic name traditionally associated with the Prophet Muhammad, whose precise meaning remains disputed).

During birth and death ceremonies, Dagomba society moved away from magical practices and embraced the Islamic belief in divine decree and predestination. This shift, in turn, contributed to the development of medicine and the use of herbal remedies and natural mixtures, moving away from astrology and sorcery[36].

Among the Dagomba, the abandonment of magic and sorcery was accompanied by the adoption of healing practices based on the Holy Qur'an and adherence to the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. It is also worth noting that circumcision became an essential practice in Dagomba society.[37]

IV. The Role of the Dagomba in Spreading Islam on the Gold Coast :

More than two centuries after the establishment of the Dagomba Kingdom, specifically in the early eighteenth century, Islam began to take firm root, particularly during the reign of King Muhammad Naa Zangina, who is credited with contributing to the wider spread of Islam[38]. To examine this development more closely, this section is divided into two parts:

1. The Role of the Dagomba in Spreading Islam before the Nineteenth Century

Following their conversion to Islam, the Dagomba became a prominent religious presence south of the Volta River. Their Islamic customs and traditions imparted a distinctive and complex Islamic character to the region, combining instruction in the Qur'an, Hadith, and the biography of the Prophet Muhammad with an emphasis on Islamic ethics, including enjoining what is right, setting a good example, practising gentleness, and respecting other religious communities.[39]

At the same time, many traditional local rituals were retained, including dancing, drumming, social mixing, offering sacrifices to spirits, and seeking blessings through ancestors. These practices existed within a worldview that acknowledged the power of Almighty Allah while recognising the limitations of human understanding in comprehending everything that surrounded them.The Dagomba did not perceive any fundamental contradiction between belief in Allah and respect for their ancestors, nor between religious faith and recourse to divination, medicines, and amulets. Rather, they regarded these practices as ways of navigating a complex reality governed by both visible and invisible forces.[40]

This approach had a considerable influence on neighbouring peoples, who embraced Islam by following the Dagomba example and adopting their practices. It cannot, however, be asserted with certainty that other religious communities welcomed or accepted this expansion. Nevertheless, Islam significantly affected the status of traditional leaders and curtailed magical and sorcerous practices, which

had, in turn, reinforced social stratification and systems of subordination within African societies.[41]

The Dagomba engaged in several existential struggles against those who opposed them, including adherents of traditional and pagan religions, as well as other Muslims. Among these conflicts were the following:

1. **Wars against Pagan Kingdoms**

- **Wars against the Ashanti**

The Ashanti are generally described as a predominantly warlike people, and historical sources agree that they engaged in several conflicts with the Fante, between whom a number of agreements were also concluded. The Ashanti's expansionist ambitions extended northwards towards both pagan and Islamic kingdoms[42]. During the reign of King Naa Gbewaa, the Ashanti attacked the Dagomba Kingdom, seeking to overthrow its rulers and seize its territory and resources.

In the early eighteenth century, King Aboko Ware (1731–1750)[43] succeeded in invading the Dagomba Kingdom, capturing its capital, and plundering its wealth. The Muslim historian Gbonja reported that the Ashanti sacked the capital, Yendi, in 1745[44]. Meanwhile, the British consul in Kumasi, M. G. Dewey, asserted that the Ashanti burned the Dagomba capital in 1827[45]. The Dagomba were also compelled to pay tribute consisting of 500 enslaved people, 200 cows, 400 sheep, and textiles.[46]

Some local historians argue that accounts of the Ashanti wars against the Dagomba constitute a colonial narrative intended to distort the local history of the Gold Coast, thereby facilitating colonial control over the entire region[47]. However, a review of the available local sources, particularly oral traditions preserved by drummers and praise singers, does not justify dismissing these conflicts as entirely fictitious. Rather, it suggests that British colonial accounts may have exaggerated their scale and exploited them to serve expansionist interests[48].

The Dagomba also waged wars against neighbouring peoples who had not established clearly defined kingdoms or states, such as the Gurunsi and the Konkomba. The Dagomba Kingdom expanded into their territories and brought these populations under its authority.[49]

2. **Wars against Islamic Kingdoms**

- **Wars against the Gonja Kingdom**

Given the periods of stability that the Dagomba Kingdom experienced throughout much of its history, many neighbouring kingdoms regarded it as an easy target for conquest and a source of wealth to be seized. This was the case with the Islamic Kingdom of Gonja, which engaged in border conflicts with the Dagomba over several centuries. During the reign of King Muhammad Naa Zangina, the Gonja took advantage of the turmoil surrounding the Dagomba throne and launched an attack against the kingdom, whose capital lay only 30 kilometres away[50].

One of King Naa Zangina's cousins led the army in repelling the Gonja campaign and defeating their forces. In 1713, the Gonja launched another attack against the Dagomba. This time, however, the conflict came at a considerable cost to King Naa Zangina. One of his cousins agreed to repel the Gonja invasion on the condition that the king relinquish the throne. This marked the end of a significant period in the history of the Dagomba Kingdom.[51]

- **Wars against the Kingdom of Samori Ture (the Manding State)**

In the second half of the nineteenth century, Samori Ture succeeded in establishing the Manding State to confront French colonial expansion. France had gained control over the Senegambia region and continued advancing towards the Gulf of Guinea in an effort to bring it under its control. However, the alliances forged by Samori Ture helped prevent this expansion.[52]

The British and French colonial powers concluded several agreements with the leaders of pagan and Islamic tribes, stipulating that the European forces would be permitted to take control of their respective spheres of influence, while the chiefs would retain their positions of authority. This provoked the ire of Samori Ture, who declared war on them and became embroiled in a series of wars of attrition, as was the case in his conflict with the Islamic Kingdom of Gonja between 1896 and 1898. The conflict did not end there; Samori Ture's forces advanced towards the Kingdom of Dagbon and subsequently towards the kingdoms in Côte d'Ivoire, Togoland, and Dahomey, moving through the forests and mountain ranges bordering the southern reaches of the Upper Volta Plateau.[53]

Like other kingdoms, Dagbon confronted Samori Ture's expansion. However, its weakened state and internal conflicts prevented it from effectively resisting his advance, hastening its eventual fall into British hands at the end of the nineteenth century.[54]

3. **Wars Against British Colonialism:**

The Guinean coastal region witnessed intense competition among European powers from the early sixteenth century onwards. However, the shifting balance of power during the nineteenth century intensified this rivalry, particularly between France and Britain[55]. This competition led to the convening of the Berlin Conference in 1884–1885, through which the African continent was partitioned among the European powers. France gained control over most of West Africa and the region formerly known as Western Sudan, which it designated French Sudan, while Britain established its dominance in the east, retaining control over Yorubaland and the Gold Coast after French forces failed to penetrate these territories.

Local tribes resisted this expansion, including the Ashanti and Fante, as well as smaller tribes in the north, such as the Gonja, Nanumba, and Dagomba, among others.[56]

Due to the internal turmoil that plagued the Kingdom of Dagbon, as well as the fragmentation of its leadership and the struggle for power, the kingdom was unable to resist the British campaign, hastening its fall at the end of the nineteenth century. The British subsequently transferred their administration to the kingdom in 1907.[57]

4. **The Role of the Dagomba in the Spread of Islam during the Nineteenth Century:**

The Dagomba contributed to strengthening the Islamic movement in the northern part of the Gold Coast and the western part of Togoland through their commercial dealings and various activities. The Kingdom of Dagbon became home to important centres of Islamic learning, which hosted numerous scholars and imams, including Muhammad Boba and Mahama Ture, who devoted themselves to spreading Islam through peaceful means.[58]

The role of the Dagomba in spreading Islam was shaped by several factors, which can be summarised under three main points:

- The growing influence of Muslim scholars and their appointment to numerous prestigious political positions, which afforded them considerable influence and prestige among both the ruler and the general population.[59]

- The expansion of Islamic trade, conducted with Muslim and non-Muslim kingdoms, as well as with Europeans.[60]

- The conversion of various social classes within Dagomba society to Islam, meaning that the new religion was no longer confined to the ruling and scholarly classes.[61]

Most historians agree that the Dagomba's adoption of a commercial approach and their religious coexistence with other religious communities contributed to strengthening their role in spreading Islam during the nineteenth century[62]. Their influence was reflected in the adoption of Islamic funeral rites, the teaching of the Qur'an and the sciences of Hadith and Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh)[63], as well as the use of

Islamic names and the practice of circumcision and marriage according to Islamic traditions.[64]

Conclusion

Based on the foregoing discussion, the following conclusions can be drawn:

This article has established that Islam reached the Dagomba through trade routes connecting Islamic centres in the north with the forest regions in the south, traversed by the Hausa and Wangara peoples. The Dagomba subsequently adopted this same approach to spread Islam into the interior of West Africa. The influence of Islam on the Dagomba extended to most aspects of their social, political, and economic life.

The Dagomba's contributions were not limited to spreading Islam in neighbouring regions; they also sought to consolidate its teachings through the instruction of the Holy Qur'an, Hadith, the Prophetic biography (Sīrah), and Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh). This task was undertaken by local scholars such as Muhammad Boba and Mahama Ture. Their efforts contributed, in turn, to the decline of traditional and pagan religions and their associated institution, the Tindamba, which was gradually supplanted by Islamic councils of elders headed by Muslim imams and scholars.

The presence of Islam in Dagomba society also brought about several developments and transformations within its political institution. Following the conversion of the king to Islam, councils known as the Naayili Imama were established and attained considerable prestige. This development fostered the flourishing of Islamic scholarship, the construction of schools and mosques, and the dispatch of students abroad to pursue their studies. These interactions and competing influences also affected the Dagomba and their language, which incorporated numerous terms from other local languages. Furthermore, this period witnessed the outbreak of wars against neighbouring pagan and Islamic kingdoms, as well as against the British colonial power, which brought the kingdom under its control at the end of the nineteenth century.

Notes

[1] Nour Eddine Chaabani, **The History of the Spread of Islam and Its Civilization in the African Jungles**, 1st ed. (Algeria: Dar Al-Fa for Publishing and Documentation, 2023), p. 201.

[2] Ibid., p. 201.

[3] Staniland, M., **The Lions of Dagbon: Political Change in Northern Ghana** (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University P4ress, 1975), p. 25.

[4] Yendi: The capital of the Dagomba Kingdom.

[5] Staniland, M., ibid., p. 25.

[6] Ibid., p. 25.

[7] Ibid. p. 15.

[8] Kuga-na's Elder, Dahamani, et al., **Enquiry into the Constitution and Organisation of the Dagbon**, p. 29.

[9] Djenné: A historic city and an important Islamic centre in West Africa, renowned for its mosques built in the Sudano-Sahelian architectural style. It is located in present-day Mali. See Rimsha Khalid and Sabah Naz, "**The Djenné Mosque: Form, Function and Architecture,**" Al Qamar Journal, vol. 8, no. 4 (October 2025), pp. 78–79.

[10] The Mossi: An ethnic group in West Africa associated with the Upper Volta region, in present-day Burkina Faso. They established several important kingdoms, including the Kingdom of Ouagadougou and the Kingdom of Tenkodogo. See Robert Pageard, "**Une enquête historique en pays mossi,**" Journal de la Société des Africanistes (1965), p. 13.

[11] Muslim traders of Malinke origin, known as the Dyula, engaged in commerce. The Mossi called them the Yarse, while the Dagomba referred to them as the Wangara. See Nehemia Levtzion and Nina Godneff, "**Commerce et islam chez les Dagomba du Nord-Ghana,**" p. 728.

[12] Abdul Aziz Shamhuna, **Islam and the Dagbon Traditional Political System**: Nazangina's Reign, p. 36.

[13] Ibid., p. 19.

[14] Nour Eddine Chaabani, op. cit., p. 211.

[15] Praise singers: performers who compose and recite poetry commemorating the achievements, heroic exploits, and history of their ancestors. They are an important source of oral tradition in West Africa.

[16] After ascending the throne of the Dagomba Kingdom, King Nazangina converted to Islam under the guidance of a Fulani jurist from Hausaland named Muhammad al-Kashnawi. See Nour Eddine Chaabani, op. cit., p. 213.

[17] Kamashugu is one of the provinces comprising the Dagomba Kingdom, alongside the capital, Yendi, and Tamale.

[18] The gift consisted of a red cap and a pair of trousers. Before this, the Dagomba had worn animal hides, particularly cowhide.

[19] Abdul Aziz Shamhuna, op. cit, p. 38.

[20] Ibid., p. 37.

[21] Nehemia Levtzion, **Muslims and Chiefs in West Africa** (London: Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1968), p. 86.

[22] The Council of Elders consists of twelve traditional chieftaincies that perform various functions and are subject to the authority of the king, known as the Ya Na. See Jacob K. Olupona, **Spiritual Foundations of Dagbamba Religion and Culture**, p. 4.

[23] Kuga-na's Elder, **Dahamani, et al., Enquiry into the Constitution and Organisation of the Dagbon**, p. 29.

[24] Abdul Aziz Shamhuna, ibid., p. 18.

[25] Issahaku Jamo Sadia, The Structure and Style of the Dagamba Dirge, p. 15.

[26] Abdulai Salifu, "Names That Prick: Royal Praise Names in Dagbon, Northern Ghana" (2008), p. 30.

[27] Abdul Aziz Shamhuna, op. cit, p. 20.

[28] Salifu Asdel Seidu, **The Influence of Islam on the Dagbamba in the Twentieth Century** (University of Ghana, Legon, April 1989), p. 64.

[29] Ibid., p. 65.

[30] Abdul Aziz Shamhuna, op. cit, p. 17.

[31] Ibrahim Mahama, **History and Traditions of Dagbon** (Tamale, Ghana: GILLBT Printing Press, 2004), p. 19.

[32] Abdul Aziz Shamhuna, op. cit., p. 51.

[33] Agnes Akosua Aidoo, "**Women in the History and Culture of Ghana**," Contemporary Journal of African Studies, vol. 9, no. 2 (2022), p. 189.

[34] Abdul Aziz Shamhuna, op. cit., p. 19.

[35] Harouna Abdallah Imam, "**Change and Cultural Survival in Dagomba**," International Journal of Innovative Research and Advanced Studies, vol. 2, no. 9 (September 2015), p. 31.

[36] The decline of traditional rituals in the Dagomba Kingdom adversely affected the traditional priesthood, known locally as the Tindamba. See Harouna Abdallah Imam, op. cit., p. 32.

[37] Kuga-na's Elder, Dahamani, et al., **Enquiry into the Constitution and Organisation of the Dagbon**, p. 10.

[38] Jacob K. Olupona, **Spiritual Foundations of Dagbamba Religion and Culture**, p. 5.

[39] Harouna Abdallah Imam, op. cit., p. 33.

[40] According to Dagomba beliefs, the spirits of their ancestors watch over and protect them, but may also punish them if offerings are not made. For this reason, they set aside a special room in their homes for the deities representing their ancestors. Their religious system was polytheistic, with individual deities having their own shrines and receiving offerings. See Jacob K. Olupona, Op. cit.

[41] Nour Eddine Chaabani, op. cit., p. 215.

[42] Youcef Slimani, **The History of the Ashanti and Buganda Empires**, lecture notes prepared for first-year Master's students in the History of Sub-Saharan Africa programme, Department of History, Faculty of Social and Human Sciences, Djilali Bounaama University, Khemis Miliana, Algeria, 2020–2021, p. 23.

[43] W. Walton Claridge described the ruler Abokwari as the "Conqueror of Dagomba." See W. Walton Claridge, **The History of the Gold Coast and Ashanti** (London), p. 590.

[44] The Ghanaian Muslim historian Gbonja stated: "The accursed infidel Abokwari entered the city of Yendi and plundered it in February 1745." See Alhassne Kodua, **Book of Light** (Ghana, 2020), p. 31.

[45] Kumasi: The capital of the Ashanti Kingdom.

[46] M. J. Doua, **Journal of Residence in Ashanti**, p. 229.

[47] Adomako Manu Kufuor, "**Ashanti History: Akwamu, Abuakwa and Dagomba Wa**r," ModernGhana.com, 8 April 2013, p. 3.

[48] In this context, it is worth noting that the Dagomba held prestigious administrative and religious positions at the royal court of the Ashanti Kingdom, particularly during the first half of the nineteenth century. They also participated in negotiating external agreements between the kingdom and the British. See Salifu Asdel Seidu, **The Influence of Islam on the Dagbamba in the Twentieth Century** (University of Ghana, Legon, April 1989), op. cit., p. 149.

[49] Nour Eddine Chaabani, op. cit., p. 212.

[50] Ibidem

[51] Abdullah Abdul Razzaq Ibrahim, **Muslims and European Colonialism in Africa** (Kuwait: Alam al-Ma'rifa, July 1989), p. 127.

[52] Iddrisu Mahama, "Samori's Relations with Gonja, 1895–1897," 17 July 2018, p. 2.

[53] Jacob Songsore, **Regional Development in Ghana: The Theory and the Reality**, new edition (Accra: Woeli Publishing Services, 2011), p. 27.

[54] Sofiane Abed, "**The Second Berlin Conference (1884–1885) and Its Repercussions for the African Continent**," African Studies Journal, no. 6 (2018), p. 13.

[55] Youcef Slimani, op. cit., p. 15.

[56] Staniland, M., The Lions of Dagbon, op. cit., p. 16.

[57] Nehemia Levtzion, Muslims and Chiefs in West Africa, op. cit., p. 115.

[58] Ibid, p. 114.

[59] Nehemia Levtzion and Nina Godneff, "**Commerce et islam chez les Dagomba du Nord-Ghana**," op. cit., p. 728.

[60] Abdul Aziz Shamhuna, "**Islam in Dagbon," Department of Religious Studies,** Islamic University College, Ghana, January 2022, p. 9.

[61] Nehemia Levtzion, Muslims and Chiefs in West Africa, op. cit., p. 114.

[62] Goldsbury is considered the first European to have entered the city of Yendi. See Harouna Abdallah Imam, "**Change and Cultural Survival in Dagomba**," op. cit., p. 30.

[63] Ibidem

[64] Harona abdallah Imam, op cit ,p30.