Colonial Constructions and African Initiatives: The History of Ethnicity in Northwestern Ghana

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ABSTRACT The article discusses the colonial construction of ethnic categories, their linkage with precolonial models of identity and the multiple meanings which ethnicity has assumed for different groups over the past decades, using the example of northwestern Ghana—a region which, in the precolonial period, was neither politically centralized nor knew distinct ‘tribes’. The article analyses how ethnic categories, boundaries and institutions were created and continually redefined by colonial officials, anthropologists, chiefs, labour migrants and educated elites, and how the different ethnic discourses fed into each other. It also draws on some of the older literature on ethnicity in Africa because it can still contribute to our understanding of the making of ethnic identities when framed in a deeply historical approach.

KEYWORDS Ethnicity, colonialism, tribes, labour migration, elites, Ghana, West Africa

Whoever concerns themselves with ethnicity in Africa today is faced with a paradox. On the one hand, Western scholars are generally agreed that much of precolonial Africa did not consist of ‘tribes’ (or in today’s language ‘ethnic groups’), with clear-cut cultural, linguistic and politico-territorial boundaries. Rather, the most prominent characteristics of precolonial African societies were mobility, overlapping networks, multiple group membership and the context-dependent drawing of boundaries. Only in few cases did precolonial community ideologies resemble the European eighteenth and nineteenth centuries’ thinking about ‘nations’. Most African communities based themselves on neighbourhood, kinship or even common loyalty to a king, but this did not absolutely have to include a common language and culture. Many historians of Africa are convinced that ethnic community ideologies only developed in contact with the European ‘thinking about tribes’ which the missionaries and colonial officers brought to Africa.
with them, in short: that ‘tribes’ and ‘tribalism’ in Africa are by and large a colonial ‘invention’ (Southall 1970; Iliffe 1979; Ranger 1983; Vail 1989).

On the other hand, however, ethnic community ideologies have rooted themselves in Africa strongly. Whether ‘tribalism’ is valued positively as holding on to a cultural tradition or negatively as illegitimate nepotism (Ekeh 1990), it is a solid element of public political discourse – and this, incidentally, also in Europe, in the usual media explanation that the present-day civil wars in Africa are the product of traditional ‘tribal feuds’ (Kaplan 1994). The dominant view here is almost diametrically opposed to that of the constructivist historians: today’s ethnic groups count not as recent creations but as the relics of a long past.

This is, of course, an over-simplified account of a much more complex debate in which the opposition of ‘invention of tribes’ versus ‘continuity’ theses cannot be neatly equated with an opposition of Western versus African voices. There are African scholars like Archie Mafeje (1971) who have, from a Marxist point of view, formulated a sharp critique of the colonial (and anthropological) ‘invention of tribalism’ quite early. There are European scholars who insist that ethnicity was an important phenomenon in precolonial Africa (Heusch 1997). But there is, in recent decades, a certain polarization between constructivist scholars and essentialist popular and political opinion.

Partly in reaction to African critiques of the ‘colonial invention of tribes’ thesis, scholarly emphasis in the past few years has shifted from the concept of ‘invention’, which accords too much weight to European initiative, to the concept of ‘imagination’, which does more justice to the multifaceted, long-term processes of creating new, and rearranging older, elements – processes in which many actors with diverse intentions and interpretations are involved (Ranger 1993). Researchers especially who work on precolonial kingdoms have drawn attention to the limits of the ‘invention’ of ethnicity by cultural brokers (Lentz & Nugent, forthcoming). Political interests alone, as J.D.Y. Peel (1989) argues, cannot single-handedly create ethnic groups, but must take up older local models of community. The ambiguity and multiple meanings of present-day ethnicity have been emphasized. John Comaroff (1995:250) underlines that the conditions which give rise to ethnic identities are not necessarily the same as those that sustain it. John Lonsdale (1992, 1994) examines, e.g., how in Kenya ‘being a Kikuyu’ marks out a social space in which moral norms, the legitimacy of political leadership, the rise of social classes and gender relations are discussed.

My research into the history of ethnicity in northwestern Ghana deals with both aspects: the colonial construction of ethnic categories and their em-
beddedness in precolonial models of identity. I am particularly interested in the multiple meanings which ethnicity has assumed for different groups over the past decades. I analyse how ethnic categories, boundaries and institutions were created and continually redefined by colonial officials, missionaries, anthropologists, chiefs, labour migrants and educated elites in a region which, in the precolonial period, was neither politically centralized nor knew distinct ‘tribes’. In this article, I also draw on some of the older literature on ethnicity in Africa because it can still contribute to our understanding of the making of ethnic identities when framed in a deeply historical approach. However, I do not intend to present a general survey of the history of ethnic community ideologies in Africa nor a history of academic discourse on African ethnicities. Rather, I will sketch the history of the various discourses on and uses of ethnicity in northern Ghana – European and African, colonial and postcolonial, scholarly and practical-political.

A note on my use of the term ‘ethnicity’: the creation of ethnic identities is a historically and regionally specific process; the labels ‘ethnic group’ or ‘tribe’ prove to be extremely simplifying collective terms for a multiplicity of different forms of community creation. It may therefore be better to speak not of ‘ethnicity’ in Africa, but of ‘ethnicities’ (Fardon 1996). A working definition of ‘ethnicity’ must therefore suffice: ethnic discourses generally argue in an essentialist manner and naturalize social relationships by explaining descent and common origin, usually in combination with language, culture and territory, as the decisive constituents of community.

In what follows I will first discuss the precolonial models of community in northwestern Ghana, then turn to the colonial ideologies of ‘tribes’ as political communities, the post-war linguistic-cultural turn in the understanding of ethnicity and the local intellectuals’ quest for ethnic unity. I will then look at the role of labour migration for the anchoring of ideologies of ethnic belonging and the political elite’s uses of ethnic discourses.

House, Clan and Earth Shrine: Precolonial Strategies of Community Building

In the precolonial period, apart from the small kingdom of Wa (Wilks 1989), the majority of the people in present-day northwestern Ghana, speaking different Dagara and Sisala dialects, were not organized in large political units. They lived in more or less scattered groups of farmsteads and subsisted primarily on agriculture (shifting cultivation) and hunting. The prevalent precolonial community ideologies, group names and types of boundedness cannot
be reconstructed with certainty from the available resources. However, there are good grounds for assuming that there was no local ideology, let alone any social and political reality, corresponding to what the British colonial officials represented ideal-typically as a tribe, that is, a population group linked through descent with a common language and culture, living in a particular territory and ruled by a council of elders or a chief. There is no term in the Dagara and Sisala language whose range of meaning would be comparable to ‘tribe’ or ‘ethnic group’. In the British model, everyone belonged to one and only one tribe; women were not treated in their own right but tacitly ascribed to the tribe of their husband, even when they had married into it from another tribe. The African world was represented as a map made up of a mosaic of tribal names, each piece of the mosaic representing one tribe. A second image that shaped British colonial officers’ thinking about tribes was that of a family tree, bringing in the dimension of time, migration and increasing differentiation, and offering an explanation for the undeniable similarities between distinct ‘tribes’.

Both images, the mosaic and the family tree, hinder our understanding of the Black Volta region. In order to do justice to the dominant reality of the precolonial period, with its small, mobile groups of relatives, overlapping networks (for example, in cults) and flexible boundaries, one must think rather in terms of images of networks and clusters, of shifting centres and peripheries. Yir (Dagara) or gyaa (Sisala), which can be interpreted, according to context, as house, residents of a house or patriclan, and tengan (Dagara) or tie/too/tebuo (Sisala), earth-shrine (area), were the two central building blocks of local societies and are still meaningful today.\(^3\) The first principle, the one perhaps closest to a European descent ideology, though it could incorporate outsiders, constituted a potentially translocal community, defined by ties forged in the past. The second is based on ritually strengthened neighbourhoods which mark out a relatively pacified internal space. Boundaries between ‘us’ and ‘the others’ were (and still are on the local level) drawn within the framework of these two forms of belonging. Language played no central role here. Kinship associations and earth-shrine areas could integrate people of different dialects and languages and required only some core elements of cultural similarity (recognition of the earth deity, the rights of first settlers, etc.). This is also shown, incidentally, in the locally employed names with which the Dagara and the Sisala identify one another. These names allude not to linguistic boundaries but to differences in settlement strategy: Dagara call Sisala langme, ‘remaining together’; Sisala call Dagara kyielo, ‘eagles, mobile people’.\(^4\)
Map 1. The study area: northwestern Ghana/southwestern Burkina Faso. The ethnic nomenclature on the map follows the actual self-designations of the various groups.
However, because the northwest was never isolated from the greater political developments of the Niger bend, there were also other types of boundaries, already beginning to resemble an ‘ethnic’ map, which went beyond such local community ideologies. The difference between Wala and Dagaba belonged here, marking the religious and political boundary between Wa as a centre of Islamic learning and state power, and the ‘heathen’, a cephalous population surrounding it. Babatu and his followers, mounted war leaders from the eastern part of the Niger bend who, at the end of the nineteenth century, raided the villages of the Black Volta region, adopted such names and added to them, for example, Grunshi (Gourounsi). Grunshi was applied not only as a toponym to the raid-affected area but also as an ethnonym – sometimes translated as ‘the wearers of leaves’ or ‘fetish worshippers’ – to the Sisala-, Kasena- and partly also Dagara-speaking groups living there. In addition, the Mande-Dyula traders from the west of the Niger bend (and later the war leader Samori) also must have devised mental maps on their expeditions to the goldfields of the Black Volta, which, for example, differentiated between peaceful and less peaceful, linguistically related and unrelated groups. In this context the label Lobi (probably ‘those who practice the dyoro/loor cult’) and possibly also Dagara and Dagaba (probably ‘the stammerers, those who cannot be understood’) supposedly emerged. It is, however, unlikely that such external classification had already been translated into any internal group consciousness, much less group cohesion. Nevertheless, when the British and French incorporated the Black Volta region into their colonial empires and undertook their first tours through the area, they took up this ‘ethnic’ nomenclature, not least through the influence of their interpreters, who were mostly Wala Muslims among the British and Mande-Dyula among the French. To conclude this section with a general observation: It is this process of grounding colonial ethnic terminologies in older nomenclatures which lends the newly delimited groups the appearance of historical depth; the continuity of names is easily (mis)taken for a continuity of the communities themselves — a process which several studies of the ‘invention of tribes’ school have analysed in detail (Dozon 1985; Ranger 1989 and Worby 1994).

The Tribe as a Colonial Political Model

The first written report on the ‘hinterland’ of the Gold Coast, as the British called present-day northern Ghana until it was declared a British Protectorate in 1898, came from the pen of George Ekem Ferguson (printed in Arhin 1974). Ferguson, a Fante from the coast of Ghana, had been trained in geog-
raphy and surveying, partly in London, and in the service of the British Crown travelled through the ‘hinterland’ of the Gold Coast in 1892 and 1894. His task was to conclude friendship and trade agreements with the Dagomba, Gonja, Grunshi, Mossi and other groups, though he complained that this could often hardly be satisfactorily managed because the ‘political relations of the larger States with the weaker tribes’ were constantly changing (ibid.: 74). Borders were not permanently fixed territorially but defined through temporary alliances between local chiefs and strong men. As a result, Ferguson had to pay attention to their ‘various degrees of capacity for political negotiations’ (ibid.: 116). In this context, he classified the population of the region and distinguished between ‘countries with organized government’ and ‘barbarous tribes’ living in small, independent ‘family communities’, constantly feuding with one another, and above all incapable of negotiations with Europeans (ibid.: 99–100).

Clearly, Ferguson shared the Fante and Asante contempt of the northern ‘barbarians’. But his opposition between tribes and states was also influenced by European evolutionary ideas of the time, namely the model of a ‘natural’, inevitable political development, from families to clans, clans to tribes, tribes to tribal federations and finally to nations which political philosophers and others had developed in the latter part of the nineteenth century. The notion of ‘tribe’, however, had a double meaning, as a normative classification in the political order and a relatively neutral description for a heterogeneous population. While in one extract Ferguson opposed the Dagomba and Wala as states to the tribes of the Lobi, Dagarti and Grunshi, in the next paragraph he describes the Dagomba and Mossi, too, as ‘warlike’ or ‘semi-barbarous tribes with a form of organized government’ (1974:74, 109).

Yet on the other hand, all the variability in the use of the term ‘tribe’ went along with the strong resilience of ethnic categories and names. The ethnic map with the ‘tribes’ of the Wala, Dagarti, Lobi and Isala, which the British sketched on their first tours through the northwest at the beginning of this century, shaped the colonial view of this area into the 1950s and is still present in the heads of many local actors. Colonial officers were convinced that they were simply discovering these tribes, not inventing them. However, particularly from the British category Lobi it becomes clear just how much the ethnic map was constructed from the perspective of the administrative centre and city state of the Wa. While the French insisted that the British Lobi were actually Dagarti in the linguistic sense, they were certainly Lobi in the eyes of the British, because they had proved harder to pacify than the Dagarti and seemed as uncivilized to them as the ‘true’ Lobi west of the Black Volta.
Ethnic categories were and still are sketched ‘in the plural’, as a system of differences, and such differences were defined by both British and French colonial rulers with reference to strategic military and technical administrative requirements. This is how the stereotypes could change in the course of time, while the categories remained in place: the British *Lobi*, for example, were first regarded as especially anarchic and dangerous, and later as hospitable, attached to their home and hard-working, while the Dagarti were seen first as more civilized than the *Lobi*, but later as more sullen and reserved and less progressive. The territorial anchoring of ethnic groups also changed. The British found the precise definition of ethnic boundaries extraordinarily difficult, and at tribal borders especially the classification of villages could change in the course of time, often many times. Thus in the 1920s the category *Lobi* experienced an enormous extension, subsuming not only the Lawra but also the Nandom and even the Jirapa areas. Later, a trend towards ‘Dagabarification’ caught on in British documents too, one which had already long prevailed among labour migrants and chiefs because they wanted to distance themselves from the stigma of primitiveness which stuck to the *Lobi*. Despite this, the *Lobi* never quite disappeared from the ethnic map of the British. Residual categories like *Lobi-Dagarti* contributed to the stability of the categorical frame, even when the differences became increasingly questionable in detail.

It was in no way hidden from the British that the ‘tribes’ played no role in the political reality of the northwest. ‘There is no tribal organisation [among the Dagarti] and no ceremonies of initiation to the tribe. A man that was born in the country and had never seen his father country would be considered to be a Dagarti’, wrote, for example, Captain Moutray Read in 1910 in his first comprehensive report on the ‘laws and customs’ of the North-West Province he was to administer. Read was profoundly dissatisfied with the absence of clear-cut tribal boundaries and institutions. Some administrators assumed that the old tribal order had only broken apart in the political turmoil of the nineteenth century. Lieutenant-Colonel A.E.G. Watherston, Chief Commissioner of the Northern Territories from 1905 to 1909, blamed the periodic attacks of the war leaders Babatu and Samori for the ‘break-up of what were in a certain sense kingdoms’ (1907–8:356). Other officials were convinced that, except for Wa, chiefdoms and politically united tribes had never existed in the northwest. One such sceptic was Lieutenant Duncan-Johnstone, a young Scottish military officer stationed in Lawra from 1917 to 1921 as District Commissioner and especially proud to have ‘trained’ the chiefs whom
his predecessors had appointed and to have successfully incorporated them in a hierarchical order. To him it was certain that, before the arrival of the British, each farmstead had claimed political autonomy, ‘a little republic unto itself’, and that the chiefs were ‘an entirely new creation’ by the British.\(^{11}\)

However, even officers like Duncan-Johnstone believed that each ‘native’ belonged to a tribe, even if the latter had not yet developed into a political community. The two lines of thought only differed in respect of the question whether the political future could take up an evolutionary stage which the ‘lawless tribes’ had already reached but then lost again, or whether they first had to take a fresh step in the direction of the chiefdom and tribe. In any case, the tribe counted as a political model and represented a significant step on the way to a civilized nation, the ultimate goal of all political evolution. Colonial political development, the British officers held, should be guided by a philosophy of ‘progressive traditionalism’. Chiefdoms and districts should therefore take tribal boundaries into account. The tribe was the natural political community, and ‘native customary law’ its constitution and criminal and civil law.\(^{12}\)

Obviously, the model of congruence between ‘tribes’ and ‘native states’ could not be realized in practice, which also did not remain hidden from the British. The head or paramount chiefs who were established were simply made paramount over particular villages, in a sort of process of trial-and-error. If the paramount chief first named by the British – often a relative of the earth priest, a rich farmer or merchant or an experienced warrior (Lentz 1993) – was not in a position to mobilize his sub-chiefs and compound heads for maintenance work on roads and resthouses, he was replaced with a more influential candidate. The existing local power structure and alliances on the one hand and the British model of small territorial states with hereditary kingdoms on the other therefore gradually adapted themselves to each other.

Right into the 1930s, the British were still trying to make chiefdoms and tribes congruent. All Isala and Dagarti were to be united under one paramount chief and made subject to the overlordship of the King of Wa as supreme ruler of the whole northwest. But such plans failed in the face of the opposing interests of the smaller chiefs, who saw themselves robbed of their influence. It was therefore not a matter of tribes being organized in chiefdoms; rather, chiefdoms, whose borders were influenced through quite different factors than ethnic ones, were provided belatedly with ethnic labels. Thus from the 1930s, the Nandom Division counted as Lobi-Dagarti, Lawra as Lobi, Jirapa, Kaleo, and Nadawli as Dagarti, Wa as Wala and finally Lambussie and Tumu as Sisala.
In the interests of the continuity of their new rule, the chiefs devised ‘tribal’ histories for themselves, which reinterpreted the older models of migration histories, focused on the patrilineage, in terms of the new ethnic categories. Local people translated British concepts of tribe into notions of kinship, and vice versa: colonial administrators extrapolated tribal history from local legends about kin – an effective co-production of history and culture by local chiefs and elders, on the one hand, and, on the other, colonial officers, which later fed into school curricula and text books that were to influence the emerging educated elite.13

Certainly neither the British nor the local discourses on tribes were monolithic. The settlement history of the region was as intensively debated as the question of the precolonial political order. Especially in the context of the administrative reforms of the 1930s (the introduction of ‘indirect rule’), British voices acknowledged that the patriclans and the earth-shrine areas were the actually relevant autochthonous forms of organization. Just like the older tribal models, these new anthropological insights had political and normative dimensions which shaped the view of ‘primitive society’. Lawra District Commissioner Eyre-Smith (1933), for example, idealized the institution of the earth shrines as a centuries-old, stable and just system of original democracy, which it was time to re-establish. In Eyre-Smith’s conviction, the original tribal alliances had long since dissolved through many migrations and therefore could no longer form the basis of a political community. R.S. Rattray, too, who had studied in Oxford with Marett and became the first professional anthropologist to carry out ethnographic studies in the northwest in 1928–9, considered the current ethnic categorical frame to be erroneous. Behind the tribal names used by the British, remarked Rattray critically, were concealed mostly groups formed from clans of quite different origins. This did not prevent him, however, from organizing his ethnography exactly according to these tribal categories and even delivering up an anthropological basis for the usual distinction between Lobi and Dagarti, namely that the former indicated a strongly ‘matrilineal’ tendency and therefore stood at a lower evolutionary stage than the latter, who were purely ‘patrilineal’ (1932:425 ff.).

Regardless of the refinement of ethnographic knowledge, the united tribe under a strong chief remained for most colonial officers in the inter-war period the dominant model to which political reform should be oriented, even though this model could nowhere be translated into practice. Because the tribe played such a central role as a political model and helped to legitimate the policy of indirect rule, even contradictory evidence was hardly able to
cast doubt upon the British colonial belief in the existence of tribes. At the same time, this belief and, more precisely, the ethnic nomenclature and the model of the ‘native state’, as a political community based on ‘natural’ loyalties, was appropriated by the local chiefs and learned in school by their sons who were to be the political leaders of the post-war decades.

The Post-War Cultural and Linguistic Turn

With the post-war reforms of local government, which replaced the native authorities with local councils and restricted the political role of the chiefs, the concept of tribe was depoliticized, but only as far as official discourses of the British and, following independence, Ghanaian governments are concerned. This reversal in official discourse on ethnicity is best described as a linguistic and cultural turn. Tribes no longer count as the natural basis of a political community (except when referring to the past) but as groups marked off from one another by language and cultural traditions, which have to be taken into account (and partly ‘modernized’) in the interests of lasting economic development and the cultivation of the national cultural heritage. In official usage, since the 1960s the term ‘tribe’ has been replaced with ‘ethnic group’ or simply ‘culture(s)’ – but ‘tribes’ certainly live on in popular discussions.

These shifts in official discourse reflect, to a certain degree, increasing doubts in anthropology about the analytical usefulness of the term ‘tribe’. However, the doubts did not amount to abolishing the received colonial tribal nomenclature altogether: tribes were still retained as units of research, as the ‘X’ for whom ethnographic descriptions should be valid. This paradox of deconstructing and maintaining the concept of tribe (or later: ethnic group) becomes particularly clear in Meyer Fortes’s and E.E. Evans-Pritchard’s *African Political Systems* (1940). The introduction criticized the assumption of clear-cut territorial-political boundaries which the current image of the tribe implied. The problem of boundedness was especially clear in Meyer Fortes’ example of the Tallensi of the northeast of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast (and certainly applied to the segmentary societies of the northwest), but affected state societies equally. Tallensi lineages – the main fields of political action – were overlapping among each other as well as interlocking with neighbouring peoples who shared ‘the same basic culture’ (1940:239). To characterize the Tallensi and their neighbours as tribes was obsolete because they lacked political cohesion and precise boundaries. On the other hand, however, Fortes continued to speak of ‘the’ Tallensi, ‘as an aggregate of communities speaking one dialect and having more cultural nuances in common and
more social bonds with one another than any of them have with neighbouring “tribes” (1940:240). The other contributions to *African Political Systems* equally used the colonial tribal names, census data and maps to demarcate their units of research.

This procedure also shaped the *Ethnographic Survey of Africa*, a project of the International African Institute realized after the Second World War, which was to survey the available knowledge about the ‘tribal societies of Africa’ and indicate gaps in research. The contributions to the *Survey* implicitly reified tribes, despite the authors’ introductory criticism of this terminology. ‘Tribes tended to emerge inside the green covers’, writes Elizabeth Tonkin, ‘through the standard constitutive categories of kinship, political structure, traditions of origin and the like which imply and get their meaning from the assumption that there are bounded social units’ (1990:41–2). Tonkin blames above all the desire for a complete description of the African world and the functionalist paradigm of wanting to analyse a social whole for this reification.

The *Survey*’s study of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast by Manoukian (1951) took over the current ethnic classification scheme more or less uncritically. Manoukian’s protestation that her classification into tribes followed linguistic criteria remained, at least in distinguishing the *Wala, Birifor* and *Dagaba*, a mere assertion. Already Rattray (1932) had merely reproduced the administrative and military colonial nomenclature of 1905 and claimed only in retrospect that tribal boundaries corresponded with dialect ones. He had been interested above all in the distinction between *Lober* (= *Lobi*) and *Dagaba* for reasons of evolutionary theory, as an intermediate stage between a matrilineal and a patrilineal kinship system. Manoukian’s study was committed rather to a functionalist anthropology, but like Rattray’s it altered but little the continuity of the ethnic classification of the first district commissioners.

Even the work of Jack Goody, who has carried out much field research in the northwest since the 1950s and published extensively on it (see, for example, 1954, 1956, 1962), remained caught up by the paradox between deconstructing and retaining these ethnic categories. On the one hand, he convincingly established that it was not ‘tribes’ but a flexible, situation-specific and context-dependent system of group formation with variable, directional actors’ and observers’ names that shaped and still shapes local societies. Conventional ethnic names such as *Lobi* and *Dagarti* could only be grasped if one understood them to be concepts with which local actors described their neighbours in particular situations with regard to specific cultural practices (1956: 16–26). But, says Goody further, this situational labelling does not result in a
Source: 1960 Population Census of Ghana, Special Report E. Note how the colonial concept of clearly delineated and territorially fixed groups (i.e., 'tribes') is graphically represented here.
clear, permanent, ethnic nomenclature. A person can thus be described in one context as Dagarti and in another as Lobi. For purposes of anthropological comparison, however, Goody felt it necessary to devise his own nomenclature. With his distinction between the LoDagaa (subdivided into the Lo-Dagaba and LoWiili) with dual descent and the patrilineal Dagaba, he returned finally to the old colonial boundaries between Lobi and Dagarti.

These ambiguities in anthropology’s critique of the concept of tribe may have contributed to the fact that the established colonial scheme of classification – and thus the idea of a landscape filled with tribes – altered little. This is particularly clear for the category Lobi. Goody’s dissolution of this category met the same fate as Rattray’s or Eyre-Smith’s remarks earlier: they did not erase the Lobi from either official or popular discourse. Lobi were still counted in the 1960 census, and some of my interview partners claimed no less that the inhabitants of Nandom and Lawra were Lobi who once immigrated from present-day Burkina Faso, in contrast to the Dagaba, who supposedly came from the Wa area or from even further east, from the Dagomba kingdom.

The Dagara Intellectuals’ Work at Ethnic Unity

Goody’s contention that in the northwest ‘there are no tribes in the accepted sense of the word’ (1956:17) may well have reflected the day-to-day life of the village in the 1950s. Outside the village, however, ‘tribes’ had long begun to take shape in the minds (and actions) of labour migrants. Since the late 1940s, paramount chiefs and the emerging educated elite used tribal discourses when justifying political claims. And by the 1970s a good number of Dagara (and a few Sisala) intellectuals – priests, teachers, university students, professors and others – started to write up their own ethnographies and historiographies. Until today none of them links his work to the constructivist approach that has become mainstream anthropology in the West. In the local intellectuals’ writings, which range from locally circulated pamphlets and mimeographs, to Master’s and PhD dissertations and articles in academic journals, ethnic names, stories of origin, religious traditions, the precolonial political organization, and language are intensely debated, but it goes without saying that the Black Volta region was and continues to be peopled by historically deeply rooted ethnic communities.14

One of the most intriguing debates is the one on the correct ethnic name. A common name and a shared history are vital to the authentication of the ethnic community. Naming and mapping collective subjects was part of the
colonial reconfiguration of the political landscape and continues to be intrinsically intertwined with questions of power. \(^{15}\) Colonial tribal categories and anthropological classifications have been rather divisive, and much of the effort of the local intellectuals, who accuse external observers of a ‘lopsided interest in the dissimilarities’ of different sub-groups, is directed at healing these rifts (Kuukure 1985:26). ‘[C]ustomary and dialect variations’, insists Paul Bekye, have been ‘mistaken by the European colonial administrators and ethnologists for different ethnic groups’, but the ‘Dagaaba’ themselves have always known ‘that they are one people’ (1991:95–6). Many of the colonial ethnic labels, and particularly the name Lobi, have been stuck with the stigma of primitivism and political anarchy, and there is consensus that a replacement of the derogatory names is a prerequisite to claim a respectable place among the whole of the Ghanaian ethnic groups.

However, the question which term should be propagated as the proper ethnic name – Dagara, Dagaba or some other label – is controversial. The controversy is about group boundaries and the degree of exclusivity as well as about hegemony within the group. It is precisely the boundary which colonial officials and anthropologists had drawn between the allegedly matrilineal Lobi and the patrilineal Dagarti (or Dagaba) that is at the centre of the debate. Some maintain the marking off of the Dagaba from the supposedly primitive Lobi and stress instead the nearness between Wala and Dagaba (Tuurey 1982). Others, conversely, put forward the more comprehensive concept of a Dagaba/Dagara community which dissolves the category Lobi (Der 1989; Bekye 1991). This second concept, of a large community of Dagara speakers transcending boundaries, also shaped the ethnic map of the Mission of the White Fathers, who converted thousands of people to Catholicism in the northwest after 1929. Using the criterion of language, from the outset the missionaries drew no distinction between the British Lobi of Lawra and Nandom and the Dagarti of Jirapa and Kaleo (Naameh 1986; McCoy 1988). This comprehensive concept of a Dagaba/Dagara community takes up the popular trend towards ‘Dagabification’, which dominated among labour and educational migrants when, far from their home regions, they wished to attach themselves to a community and to define themselves in relation to other Ghanaian ethnic groups. On the other hand, however, pressure for the creation of additional districts and competition for the existing ones, together with the employment opportunities and other resources they entail, as well as conflicts about which dialect to privilege in church, adult education or language courses at the university, keep the debate on ethnic names and boundaries alive. \(^{16}\)
Defining ‘who we are’ involves knowing ‘where we come from’ and much of the controversy over ethnic identities is cast in terms of a debate on history. Here again, the intellectuals’ struggle for a convincing account of the origins of the Dagara/ Dagaba arises partly from the absence of political centralization and an official, unitary account of the past, and partly from the current strife of different local factions for hegemony. Among Dagara villagers, ‘history’ exists in the form of many migration stories of different patrician segments, which all in all convey a picture of a piecemeal agricultural migration of small kin groups. Reference to an earlier home may provide a charter for extra-village networks, but by and large the stories are much less concerned with origins than with political as well as land rights at the present site. Colonial officials, on the other hand, found it difficult to explain the puzzling ethnographic make-up of the northwest without recourse to a history of large-scale collective migrations, conquest and intermarriage. The colonial historiography borrowed from myths of origin of the centralized polities rather than from indigenous patrician migration stories and was informed by European images of ‘Völkerwanderung’, conquest and mass exodus of the weaker peoples – a history ultimately driven by the expansionism of more highly developed states while stateless tribes such as the Lobi or Dagarti were confined to the role of victims (see, e.g., Eyre-Smith 1933). Until very recently, West African university and secondary school history textbooks continued to focus on ‘the growth of the different states, kingdoms and empires’ (Buah 1986:ix) whereas stateless groups appear as a general mass of ‘people without history’. It is against both backgrounds, the villagers’ oral traditions and the colonial historiographies, that the local intellectuals’ efforts to rewrite history need to be understood.

While some of these new historiographies perpetuate evolutionist or cultural-diffusionist models of ‘tribal’ migration (Tuurey 1982; Naameh 1986; Der 1989), others dismiss colonial (and European anthropologists’) conjectures on the grounds of ‘what the Dagara themselves say about their origins’ (Somda 1989:6; Hébert 1976). All attempt to restore historical initiative to the Dagara and other local groups and present their historiographies as an authentic voice of their respective communities. One of the first history projects took shape in the mid-1960s, when two young Dagara priests from Upper Volta, under the guidance of the French White Father Jean Hébert, collected patrician migration stories in about fifty Dagara villages on both sides of the Ghanaian–Upper Volta border. The resulting document aimed to ‘help the Dagara country to know its past a little better, serve as a basis for a broader
knowledge of the Dagara, and contribute to the development of an authentic Dagara future' (Hébert 1976:2). After an introductory outline, in the ‘ethnographic present’, of the social and political institutions of the Dagara which was designed to refute stereotypes of their anarchy and primitiveness, the main text documented migration data, genealogies and praise songs in detail down to village level. Asserting that Dagara actually means da-gaara = a man in revolt (ibid.:30), Hébert believes that the Dagara once seceded from the Dagomba kingdom, but he also quoted oral evidence supporting an Accra origin of at least some of the Dagara clans (ibid.:33–40). Most subsequent authors have adopted the Dagomba rather than the Accra thesis. Tuurey, for instance, narrates in vivid detail how towards the end of the fifteenth century the new ruler over Dagomba, Na Nyagse, ‘brutally put down’ an indigenous rebellion against his claims to power. The ‘Dagaba’-to-be followed their ‘natural desire for political freedom and free enterprise [...] and much like the Beni-Israel without a Moses went westwards’, to settle in their present habitat in the northwest (1982:30–1). Der (1989), however, asserts that it was not the Dagaba presently living in the southern parts of the Upper West, but the Dagara from the Lawra and Nandom areas who originally migrated from Dagomba.

Despite such disagreement quite a number of local intellectuals espouse the Dagomba rebellion thesis. What makes it attractive? Firstly, the exodus as one tribe warrants the unity of the ethnic community; linguistic and cultural differences are explained by the posterior contact with subsequent immigrants in the new habitat. Secondly, the image of ‘rebellion’ reinterprets the statelessness of the northwestern peoples: it is no longer an indication of a low evolutionary stage, but bears witness to ‘love of freedom’ and inherent democratic virtues. Thirdly, the Dagomba origin thesis is readily compatible with the dominant northwest direction reported by many patriclan migration stories. And finally, it harmonizes well with the school and university textbook format of West African history. It manages to present the past of a stateless population within a framework dominated by the historiography of states without betraying the record of acephalousness and indigenous migration stories.

There are evident parallels with the cultural production of ethnicity that has been studied in other African societies. In all of these cases, the intellectuals aim at creating a unified account of history and culture that can both distinguish the community from its neighbours and cope with increasing internal heterogeneity. Assertions that the ethnic group shares a common cultural heritage as well as certain basic traits of character attempt to bridge the widening gap between educated elite, labour migrants and illiterate farmers.
At the same time, the texts aim at inscribing the local community in the wider world of written history (and of world religions – which is the implicit agenda of numerous works on ‘traditional religion’). The reflections of local political struggles in the texts easily escape the external reader but are evident for the local reading public and partly determine the acceptability of the texts. The relations of the local intellectuals’ texts with Western ethnography are complex. As examples from Uganda (Cohen 1991) show, local writers adopt older European ethnographic texts not by mere copying, but by re-arranging and re-interpreting them in ways that fit new needs and contexts. The Dagara intellectuals often use a straightforward critique of colonial and academic European ethnographies as their starting point. Inevitably, processes of appropriation and critique of exogenous ethnographies by local scholars and vice versa, closely intertwined with questions of power, will become much more prominent in the future.

The reception of the intellectuals’ texts by a wider local public is a question which needs to be studied more closely. It is not easy to assess, for instance, what popularity the Dagomba rebellion thesis has gained among Dagara peasants and labour migrants. Some of my village informants claimed never to have heard of it while others insisted on distinguishing between the migration stories as guaranteed by their forefathers and the Dagomba story usually heard from educated Dagara. The different stories of origin – indigenous and intellectual, clan and collective – seem to coexist as two different registers of historical narrative, and even the same person will invoke a different register in a different context. The lineage narratives provide charters for local boundaries and rights while the ‘tribal’ histories publicize the Dagara as a political community within a modern state. Similar processes can be observed for other aspects of the intellectuals’ cultural work.

**Ethnicity and Labour Migration**

Even if the Dagara intellectuals’ writings have as yet little effect on the minds of villagers and labour migrants, the latter have been important creators of ethnic identity(ies) in their own right. Not only did they subvert the colonial ethnic terminology by insisting on calling themselves Dagarti or Dagaba instead of Lobi, they also created a much wider community than the colonial officers’ ‘native states’ envisaged.

Early Africanist scholars and, importantly, colonial officers interpreted the adaptation of rural migrants to the urban environment as a problematic process of ‘detribalization’. In opposition to this, the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute’s
research on southern-central Africa and the Rhodesian Copperbelt insisted that the town and rural ‘tribal homes’ represented different social fields. It was in the context of these studies that the colonial administrative and ethno-scientific reification of ‘tribes’ was first undermined. According to Gluckman (1960), ‘tribalism in towns’ meant not the extension of rural institutions and modes of behaviour but an autonomous urban phenomenon. Mitchell, for example, examined how different actors marked off tribes in different ways and how the insistence on ethnicity, when used externally, served the ‘categorical interaction’ between anonymous townsmen (1956; 1970:85). Used internally, ethnicity became the basis for friendship networks and mutual aid associations. Epstein (1958) showed that in Rhodesian mining towns the new urban ethnic categories were rarely identical with those of the workers’ home areas. He concluded that traditional loyalties and values were not at issue here; ethnicity in the mining towns was rather the expression of new urban social inequalities. Other studies such as Mitchell’s volume *Social Networks in Urban Situations* (1969) underlined the significance of individual decisions in the shaping of ethnic identity. In summary, it can be said that all these studies brought out the situational flexibility and manipulability of ethnic belonging in the town. However, the existence of rural tribes clearly and permanently marked off from one another and deeply anchored in precolonial history was still hardly brought into question.

Much of these findings can be applied to the northern Ghanaian case, but there is one significant difference: the Ghanaian mining industry never introduced pass laws, and all attempts at controlling the labour migrants more rigidly failed (Crisp 1984). Migrants could go back fairly easily to their homes and circulate at chosen intervals between village and mine (or southern cocoa and yam farms). ‘Home’ and ‘town’ were much more closely interwoven than in the Copperbelt, and the ethnic categories created away from home fed back into rural discourses on social belonging and vice versa. One of the first essays on migration and ethnicity in northern Ghana, which took another look at the Tallensi studied by Meyer Fortes, discussed precisely this reverse effect of urban ethnic categories. Using the example of the Frafra, a collective term for Tallensi and neighbouring Nabdam, Gurensi and Nankanni, Keith Hart (1971) showed how new tribal units were created in the interplay of recruitment for the military, the mines and the colonial administration. In the course of time, the migrants and their relatives at home took over the new tribal name of Frafra as their own self-description. The insistence on this larger community made itself felt above all in the context of economic
survival as domestic servants, small traders and small businessmen in the towns of opportunity, but also in maintaining relations with the region of origin. Similar processes of the creation of a ‘supertribe’ out of smaller segmentary societies have been observed by Southall for the Kenyan Luyia, and it was with this in mind that Southall embarked on a general critique of the ‘illusion of tribe’, later taken up by the ‘colonial invention of tribes’ school. Many contemporary ‘tribes’, wrote Southall, were created ‘through a combination of reasonable cultural similarity with colonial administrative convenience, which in more recent times has often coincided with people’s own sense of need for wider levels of organization to enable them to exert more effective pressure on events’ (1970:35).

In the northwestern Ghanaian case, however, the colonial ethnic boundaries and the new communities created by the labour migrants did not coincide entirely. In addition, the latter could change in their degree of inclusion over time and according to context. From the start of the century, young men from the northwest worked in ever increasing numbers in the south of the country, first recruited for the goldmines and construction work, but soon migrating on a voluntary basis to the mines, and to cocoa and yam farms.\(^\text{23}\) ‘Ethnic’ belonging, on the basis of a shared language (even though often in different dialects) and similar cultural practices, created networks which were much wider than the patriclan and the home village and which helped in seeking work, obtaining accommodation and providing assistance in emergencies such as funerals.

However, the migrants did not only organize themselves of their own free will. In many towns and mines, employers, local chiefs and colonial administrators expected the migrants to come together under so-called tribal headmen, who were supposed to function as intermediaries. In cases of conflict with members of other ‘tribes’, for example, these headmen were supposed to play the role of justices of the peace, collect occasional taxes for local chiefs and in cases of walkouts by their fellow tribesmen command them back to work. Conversely, the tribal headmen were frequently the first arrival point for new migrants, providing bail when they were arrested and helping to inform relatives back home in cases of death and to bury the deceased (Lentz & Erlmann 1989). Today, the role of tribal headmen has often been taken over by associations with formal statutes and elected boards, in which migrants from a home region come together with the aim of mutual help and, in addition, the desire to contribute to the development of their home region.

Whether self-organized or imposed from above, when one examines more
closely who comes together with whom away from home over a longer pe-
riod, it becomes clear that the ethnic boundaries that form the basis of this 
coming together are thoroughly fluid. In many mining towns, for example, 
all migrants from the Northern Territories first came together under a single 
tribal headman, mostly a Dagomba, a member of one of the precolonial king-
doms of the north. They behaved as if they all belonged to a single ‘tribe’, 
namely the ‘northerners’, and their employers and fellow workers hardly dis-
tinguished the different groups of northerners but described them all with 
the same nickname, for example NTføs (people from the Northern Territo-
ries) or pepeni (meaning unclear). With the increase in the number of mi-
grants from the north came also the need for further sub-division, and addi-
tional tribal headmen were established for smaller groups. This definition of 
new ‘tribes’ was frequently set in motion by conflict. The seceding group would 
accuse the old headman of not concerning himself properly with their cus-
toms and practices, particularly in cases where Muslims and non-Muslims 
formed part of the old headman’s constituency. Similar processes operated 
later in the ethnic associations: as soon as the number of members rose, so 
did a tendency towards further fragmentation. Thus one can sometimes hear 
today mine workers from the northwest saying that migrants from Jirapa belong 
to another ‘tribe’ than those from Nandom. In particular situations, however, 
the more widely defined communities, such as ‘Dagaba’, ‘northwesterners’ 
and ‘northerners’, continue to have meaning. In summary, we can observe 
among the migrants – and this goes beyond the findings of the older research 
on migration and ethnicity – a complex layer of potential ethnic communi-
ties, with different degrees of inclusion and defined by stressing different com-
ponents of commonality (language/ dialect, descent, territorial origin, etc.), 
which can be mobilized according to context.

**Ethnicity as a Political Resource**

The appeal to a relatively vaguely defined common origin, speech and culture 
can be a sufficient basis for mutual support in foreign parts. Whether com-
mon territory and ethno-linguistic-cultural identities are congruent is less relev-
ant to solidarity away from home. However, this question becomes decisive 
as soon as ethnicity is used as a political resource – when, for example, urban-
based ethnic associations aim at ‘developing’ their home regions and have to 
decide on which territorial basis to formulate their claims on state resources.

That appeals to ethnic identity can be part of shrewd strategies of demand-
ing concession’s for one’s own group *vis-à-vis* the central government, has
become commonplace in the debate on ‘political tribalism’ in the newly independent African states. However, in much of this debate the building blocks of the ‘ethnic political machinery’ (Tambiah 1989:343) – the ethnic communities – have been taken too much for granted. When explaining why competition over education, income, infrastructure and political influence in the new states was dealt with in terms of ethnicity rather than class (or religion), Robert Bates (1974), for instance, pointed to the spatial differentiation of modernization processes which favours certain (ethnic) groups over others and will prevent that the educated elite comes together as a pan-ethnic, national ruling class. This argument presupposes a correspondence between territoriality and ethnicity which is problematic, and a number of scholars, including African researchers like Nnoli (1994) and Osaghae (1994), have recently emphasized the manifold internal rivalries between regional or cultural sub-groups which emerge within or on the margins of the new ethnic formations.

How a regional consciousness gradually developed in northern Ghana in the wake of the administrative reforms of the post-war period and how this ‘northerner’ identity underwent an early fragmentation through sub-regional, ethnic and party-political conflicts of interest is the theme of an instructive study by Paul Ladouceur (1979). Since Ladouceur’s research the tendency towards fragmentation has strengthened still further, especially since the many years of effort by politicians from the northwest to acquire a region of their own, with its administrative capital in Wa, were rewarded in 1983. A similar dynamic of fragmentation can be observed on the level of districts and local councils, which fight together to be awarded ‘a greater piece of the national cake’, as politicians express it, only to fall out afterwards over the further division of that ‘piece of cake’.

The actors taking part in these conflicts of interest cannot be described as ‘ethnic groups’ without further ado. Quite clearly, most are territorial units like the chieftdoms and districts which acquired political relevance in the colonial period. Colonial officials and the newly appointed chiefs had attached ethnic categories – Lobi, Lobi-Dagarti, Dagarti and Sisala – to these units. However, when the boundaries of ethnic groups are defined according to criteria of language and culture, they often run right across chieftdoms and districts. Both definitions of ethno-communal identity can be played off against each other, the territorial one of the ‘native state’ and the cultural-linguistic one. The latter is mostly made valid as a basis of common political interests when one desires to alter the relevant territorial and political division or to exclude particular neighbours from political participation. I will give two examples of this
multifaceted process of ' politicized ethnicity', the first of which also gives an idea of the way in which the local political elite appropriated the colonial 'tribal' terminology.

In the course of the local government reforms of the 1950s, the chief of Birifu presented various petitions expressing Birifu's wish to be awarded its own local council and to 'break away from Lawra' because of the latter's 'political maltreatment'. In the precolonial and early colonial days, Birifu had been an independent settlement, just like Lawra and other neighbouring villages. Lawra, however, was made the seat of the British District Commissioner, and in the setting up of the native authorities in the 1930s, the chief of Birifu became subordinate to the paramount chief of Lawra. Unsurprisingly, the precise history of the relations between Birifu and Lawra is contentious, but it is clear that Birifu's political leaders attempted to use the general political situation of the 1950s to reclaim what they felt was their historical due, namely political autonomy. The secessionists complained that Lawra 'plundered' Birifu for taxes without giving any 'development' in return, but the thrust of their argument was based on the alleged 'tribal discrimination' and 'hereditary [sic] hatred between the two towns since time immemorial'. Despite the manifold cultural and linguistic similarities between the Dagara from Lawra and Birifu, the petitioners emphasized that 'Burifo [sic] is an entirely different tribe to that of Lawra and our customs are not the same [...], this difference resulting from our dialectal speech and tribal disconnection'. The secessionist project failed, but it is a typical example of the dynamics of fragmentation and local rivalry, clad in the language of ethnicity.

The second example concerns one of the ethno-regional associations which the educated elite from the northwest has formed since the 1970s and which aim at developing their home regions. Here, we can observe the potential tension between cultural-linguistic and territorial definitions of ethnic boundaries at work. The statutes of the Nandome Youth and Development Association (NYDA) lay down that, on the one hand, it can in no way accept all the inhabitants of the chiefdom of Nandom to the association, but only the Dagara, while on the other hand, Dagara who migrated away from Nandom in recent decades because of land shortages and settled in neighbouring Lambussie should be members. When the NYDA came out strongly for a common Nandom-Lambussie district, many Sisala chiefs and the educated elite of Lambussie expressed concern that they might be politically marginalized by the numerically stronger and better educated Dagara. Leading members of the NYDA blamed the 'tribalism' of the Sisala elite for the failure of their
district plans, which they themselves considered not at all ethnically motivated. And they reproached the youth association of Lambussie, the Issaw West Development Union, for neither wanting to accept Dagara farmers into the association nor allowing them to the NYDA. The paramount chief of Nandom, on the other hand, accused the NYDA of having demanded a district extending over the borders of the Nandom chiefdom and thus of having caused conflicts with Lambussie.\textsuperscript{29}

Ethnic and territorial loyalties compete with one another here. And if one includes in the analysis the complicated network of alliances and enmities which the different factions of Nandom and Lambussie maintain in the neighbouring chiefdoms, it becomes clear that there can be hardly any discussion of clearly defined ethnic blocks. Rather, the boundaries and significance of ‘ethnic’ communities are increasingly objects of conflict and negotiation. The formula ‘ethnicity as a political resource’ should thus be understood as an invitation to more accurate historical research rather than as shorthand for a clear research outcome.

Conclusion

If the starting point of this article was the recent polarization, with respect to ethnicity, between scholarly constructivism and popular and political essentialism, it has become clear that this did not always prevail. In the past, the situation was indeed often the opposite, with academics and colonial officers attempting to delineate clear-cut ethnic boundaries while locals categorized themselves in more fluid ways. It is revealing to observe the multiple ways in which the different discourses on ethnicity – colonial and African, academic and practical-political, etc. – fed into each other. Nineteenth-century anthropologists’ evolutionary ideas on tribes shaped colonial officers’ thinking; colonial ‘tribalism’ was appropriated by African chiefs and labour migrants; indigenous intellectuals write ‘against’ Western anthropologists; and local politicians draw on colonial and the indigenous intellectuals’ concepts.

The ethnic boundaries and identities thus created remain multiform, ambiguous and mutable. Ethnicity can become an idiom of personal and collective self-confidence in situations of strangeness and uncertainty, for example among migrants. It can mark out a moral space in which the status of the elite and the claims of less well-off tribesmen to redistribution can be contested. It can also become a resource for political mobilization in the contexts of competition for education, jobs or generally for larger grants from the state, to whom the colonial ideas of ethnic solidarity are useful. Ethnic
ideologies construct a picture of a natural, unalterable and primordial identity and solidarity – particularly attractive and useful to ‘displaced’, ‘uprooted’ subjects such as migrants, intellectuals and politicians. But ethnic ideologies are powerful and strategically efficient to many precisely because they hide space for multiple interpretations and processes of negotiation.

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Notes
1. A number of articles survey the history of ethnicity itself or the history of research in ethnicity in Africa or both; see, e.g., Amselle 1985; Berman 1998; Cohen 1978; Fardon 1996; Lentz 1995; Ranger 1983, 1993; Vail 1989; Young 1986.
2. Berman’s (1998) synthesis of the general trends in the colonial bureaucratic creation and the postcolonial politicized uses of ethnicity in Africa is very insightful. However, the similarities which he detects stem mainly from the similarities of the colonial projects; for an understanding of the local appropriations of the new ethnicities, a focus on the whole of Africa cannot do justice to the multiplicity of ways of creating and redefining ethnic boundaries to which I draw attention in this article.
3. See Goody 1956 and 1962 on the Dagara social organization (whom he calls LoDagaà, see below), see also Somé 1969; on the Sisala see Mendonsa 1982 and Tengan 1991.
4. There are less sympathetic explanations of the names (such as, e.g., langme = cowards, and kyielo = aggressive), but none refers to language.
7. See particularly the various reports on tours of inspection of the first decade of this century; National Archives of Ghana, Accra (NAG), ADM 56/1/50.
8. See, e.g., the debate between the Lawra District Commissioner and the Commandant de Cercle of Gaoua reported in the Lawra District Record Book, NAG, ADM 61/5/1, 11 Oct. 1913. For more details, see Lentz 1993, 1994b and 1998.

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12. On the anthropological ideas of British colonial officers, see Kuklick 1991, chaps. 4–6; see also, however, the Goody’s critique (1993:191–208) of Kuklick’s oversimplified account of the feedback between colonialism and anthropology.
13. See Lentz 1994a:468–72 for an early example of this co-production of tribal history in the Lawra District. Similar processes have been observed in a number of African cases; see, e.g., Dorward 1974 on the Tiv in Nigeria and the case studies on southern Africa in Vail 1989.
15. See, e.g., the illuminating case study of Worby 1994.
16. For more details on the debate, see Lentz 1998, chap. 11. On the conflicts over the various Dagara dialects, see Bemile (forthcoming).
17. Tuurey picked up where Goody 1954:16 and Jones 1962:9 had left off with their brief references to a possible westward migration in the wake of the Dagomba killing of the earth-priests.
20. For Dagara examples, see Kuukure 1985; Naameh 1986; Bekye 1991 and critically Hawkins 1996.
22. For such interactions in European and American fieldwork, see Brettell 1993.
24. See Schildkrout 1979 on some of these processes of labelling/naming.
25. An important starting-point of this debate was Clifford Geertz’s article (1973, first 1963) on the manipulation of ‘primordial sentiments’ in postcolonial ‘civil politics’. For an overview, see Young 1986 and Berman 1998; on ‘political tribalism’ versus ‘moral ethnicity’ also Lonsdale 1994.
27. Ibid.
29. For details, see Lentz 1995b and 1998, chap. 16.

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