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Language Between Powers, Power Between Languages

Further Discussion of Education and Policy
in Togoland under the French Mandate, 1919-1945*

In an earlier article I argued that education policy was an integral component of Christian missionary activity in the Volta Basin, and remained central to the German administration's Germanization of Togo. But differences arose as to the choice of language for instruction, as the southern Togolese population took every opportunity to learn English and aggrandize the influence of the new standardized and grammarized Ewe language. While English remained entrenched as the lingua franca, the real victor in the linguistic struggle was the Ewe language. In its written and published form, the Ewe language spread beyond its immediate ethno-linguistic barriers and later proto-nationalist activity in Togo between the two World Wars drew on this linguistic strength. When the Germans were forced out of Togo, however, a new linguistic regime, or rather two parallel regimes, came into being. Much of Togo, including the capital, Lomé, was occupied by the British until 1919. Thereafter, the British pulled back to the Gold Coast Colony and the greater part of Togo fell under the League of Nations Mandate administered by France, with only a small pocket of Ewe speaking territory situated around Ho-Kpando (present day Ghana) remaining under British mandate control. Despite the vocal opposition of a very small number of

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Lomé residents, the French administration was accompanied by schooling and proselytization in the French language.

My focus on the language of education and my interpretation of it via the lens of “linguistic colonialism” has prompted considerable interest and comment. While some have praised my adaptation and employment of Fabian (1986) and Lacan (1977), others have questioned my reluctance to explore the terrain beyond the period of German occupation. Those more familiar with the Togolese field of study have asked me to explain the role of the Mina language/dialect. Furthermore, the nature of linguistic research and the use of language and education data has provoked some to question in which direction oral historical evidence would guide the narrative. I would like to use the opportunity granted by the LACIS research group’s collective project to respond to some questions that have arisen from my article, a version of which appears in a recent volume of the *Cahiers d’Études africaines*, and to raise several more for further discussion (Lawrance 2000). This is only a brief discussion piece, a work-in-progress if you like, and I seek other opportunities to continue the debate.

The evidence for a concerted “language policy” under the French administration is more diffuse than that for the previous German regime, and thus we must examine a wider range of documentation and sources within the broader spectrum of an indigenous response to linguistic change. In 1904 a serious and concerted policy was inaugurated by Graf von Zech¹. Under the French administration, however, a French-only policy was more *de facto* than *de legis* and as historians it behooves us to scrutinize carefully documents produced by Togolese that make direct, or more often passing, reference to the linguistic atmosphere. The evidence I present here for the framework of an indigenous response to, or more preferably “indigenous engagement” with, a nascent French language policy are both documentary and oral. Frank and direct exchanges about the new language regime imposed on the Togolese population were found in many archival repositories, while oral interviews conducted between January and June 2000 in Togo, Ghana and Benin furnished personal memories of the nature of schooling and religious observance under the mandate, which in turn provoked more pointed questions about language use, bias and imposition.

Perhaps partly because the greater part of the evidence was located one archive in Togo and also because few living informants can be found to recall their experiences of education under the German period, the German story as I presented it, appeared neat, clear and precise. Under the French administration, however, conflicting oral accounts and the often alarmist tone of some written communications from Togolese community leaders

1. LANGE (1998: 73) explains it thus: “La politique linguistique met ainsi en lumière, toute l’ambiguïté du projet colonial. Assimiler les indigènes, c’est les rendre semblables à la communauté allemande, et donc, à moyen terme, les rendre égaux. Réaliser une éducation séparée revient à permettre une autonomie culturelle qui peut engendrer des velléités d’indépendance politique.”

demand closer scrutiny. It is sometimes possible to gauge the opinion of certain Togolese of the newly arrived French language, but we can not assume widespread applicability of such opinions. Moreover, there are the intractable questions of the role of the intermediary, the translation and the translator. While I do not propose to deal with these complicated questions, it is necessary to draw attention to the issues of authorship and authenticity of many documents emanating from a population with a very low level of literacy.

The story uncovered in French Togo is more obscure and complex than that for the previous German regime, and no single theoretical device is employed to explain the developments. But the conceptualization of ethnicity, both externally and internally formulated, winds its way through the narrative and links the three subsections: indigenous education, the use of English in the territory, and the policy and attitude toward the Ewe language. The first section is a brief examination of the progress of indigenous education under the French mandate, which has at its center a critical review of the recent work by Marie-France Lange (1998) on the history and role of the school in Togo. The second section presents evidence for the widespread use of English from French and African historical actors, and demonstrates the French territory's embedded anglophilia. The third and final section is a very tentative argument for the status of the Ewe language, and its related dialects, in the broader context of the general French attitude to indigenous language. I suggest that the Ewe ethnic group, unified and influential, was a clear and present threat to the stability of the French mandate administration. The two-pronged response to this threat was to destabilize Ewe ethnic unity by reinvoking old ethnic divisions, and to deploy a "counter-ethnicity" which served to diminish the importance of the Ewe language in education policy.

Les écoliers au Togo: French Schooling and Indigenous Learning

While the German regime launched a grand scheme for the Germanization of Togo in 1903-1904, one would be hard pressed to argue for a similar francophonic phenomenon during the French mandate. French language policy, and more generally French education policy was dispersed, contradictory, irregular and often non-existent. The role and influence of the church in education was sometimes hindered, and at other times welcomed². The distribution of educational institutions was pitifully thin on the

2. In 1927 Bonnacarrère proposed assuming responsibility for the mission schools because of falling standards and financial problems, though the AOF government saw a conflict of interest in such a move (Archives nationales de la France, Section d'outre-mer, Fonds ministériels, Affaires politiques, Togo-Cameroun, carton 610, dossier 8). The Governor did, however, enact laws in 1929 and 1930 to assist in the training of monitors for parochial schools. But a later law of 1937 provided for "l'enseignement aux catéchuménats dans la limite du temps consacré à l'enseignement" (CORNEVIN 1969: 265).

ground and concentrated on the south³, while funding in general was stagnant⁴. Education policy was frequently little more than another form of social engineering, with different trends and approaches expressed variously as segregation or assimilation (Agbobly-Atayi 1980). If there were lasting consequences of education policy under the mandate, they were the accentuation of class difference and bourgeois privilege via learning, and the discouragement of education and schooling among the rural population (cf. Marguerat 2001a forthcoming).

There is less critical historical writing about education under the French administration than for the German period, and the little there is, crudely oscillates around statistical analysis as a gauge of scholastic development and change. This approach is fraught with difficulties and dangers. The recent work of the sociologist Marie-France Lange on the process of scolarization in Togo, containing several historical chapters about the colonial period, is a case in point. Running the risk of being accused of, among other things, criticism out of context, I propose to examine her arguments for the French mandate period. Lange's core evidence comes from the French government reports sent annually to the Permanent Mandate Commission of the League of Nations in Geneva. From these she constructs a picture of scolarization countrywide and juxtaposes it with one for the German period, which is in turn drawn largely from the work of Peter Sebald (1987).

From a theoretical perspective, Lange makes a strong case for role of the school in social reproduction and the legitimation of power within the wider sphere of labor. Deeply indebted to Bourdieu (1970, 1989), among others, she interprets the school itself as well representative of the places and contradictions wherein the movement and flux of society are exacerbated (Lange 1998: 15). The school is also a site and source of violent social change. Moreover, drawing on Jean-Loup Amselle and Elikia M'Bokolo (1985), she interprets the school space as "provoking métissage". Her purpose is to situate the school as a source of contemporary social cohesion and dislocation, an institution that is both adored and demonized in modern Togolese society⁵. In order for her to support this

3. The French administration only once (c.1925) sent a consignment of education materials to the Permanent Mandates Commission in Geneva, the contents of which are to be found in the Section Files of the archives.
4. If we consider the graph produced by Laurent Péchoux, and reproduced in CORNEVIN (1969: 265), despite the increase in expenditure exclusively on education between 1922 (247,500 FF) and 1936 (1,208,000 FF), these sums as a percentage of total government expenditure indicate a decline of almost a half in the same period, from 6.82% in 1922 to 3.9%. Of course the fact that Cornevin uses the same data to argue for an impressive and consistent level of expenditure, as compared with that of the last three years of the German administration, indicates, among other things, the waywardness of statistical data.
5. "L'école, parce qu'elle provoque la rencontre de cultures, de savoirs, parfois concurrents, parfois contradictoires, mais toujours différents, provoque du métissage. Or, c'est bien ce métissage, dans toutes ses contradictions, qu'il est particulièrement difficile d'appréhender, sans entrer dans une logique dualiste ('modernité' contre 'tradition'), dont nous verrons qu'elle ne peut être que réduc-

scholarly epistemology, Lange presents a teleological analysis of the development of the colonial school—carefully distinguishing between “scolariser”, “enseigner”, “instruire”, and “éduquer”—as a source of ethnic and class divisions. In so doing, however, she neglects perhaps the most useful source for the colonial scholastic experience, living informants. Oral historical interviews provide personal memories of the experience of schooling and teaching. They can both flesh out bland and static statistical analysis and furnish crucial counterpoints to colonial biases.

Lange situates the beginning of schooling in the French mandate as a period of “crise” and “bouleversements” caused by the expulsion of missionaries during the Franco-British occupation and the sudden change in the language of education. The plummet in attendance records (indicated by statistical data⁶) is viewed as a consequence of these changes, and not, as Sebald argued, evidence of “forced education” under the Germans. Additionally, the French administration suffered from a lack of qualified, French-speaking *fonctionnaires* (Péchoux 1939: 92f). Despite these negative indicators, Lange argues for a bourgeois renaissance in politics and economics which had a knock-on effect in education (cf. Marguerat 2001b forthcoming).

Schooling under the French mandate was governed by two laws of the 4th and the 27th September 1922, the latter applying mainly to parochial schools⁷. The number of years of schooling and the type of lessons offered differed to those of the German period, and of the neighboring British colony, in that they were fewer and concentrated on “fundamental” education and domestic and agricultural knowledge. In Lange’s words, “[i]l s’agit donc en réalité d’une scolarisation de masse, qui vise à dégrossir le plus grand nombre, et seuls quelques enfants privilégiés ont accès aux rares écoles régionales” (Lange 1998: 94).

With the arrival of the Governor Auguste Bonnacarrère and his reorganization of almost every aspect of the colonial administration, the social engineering begins⁸. Resisting the obvious explanation—that the French

trice et partisane. Réductrice, car les phénomènes sociaux sont bien plus complexes qu’une simple opposition binaire, partisane, car souvent ce propos du chercher ‘déraper’ en choisissant l’une ou l’autre position; et nous nous retrouvons alors devant les représentations stéréotypées de l’école ‘adulée’ ou de l’école ‘diabolisée’” (LANGE 1998: 19).

6. The data Lange uses, as I have stated, is the League of Nations reports. But one only has to turn to the *Rapports des Cercles*, for similar evidence, with its local mutations. For example, the one-third drop in school attendance in the Cercle d’Anécho between 1928 and 1929, reported by the *Commandant du Cercle* (ANT, 8APA, Cercle d’Anécho, *Rapports périodiques des cercles*, dossiers 4-10, 1928-1931).
7. In CORNEVIN’s words (1969: 263), “cette organisation de l’enseignement est simple et pratique”. Three more laws had an important impact on education in the mandated territory; they were date June 28, 1928, October 27, 1933 and January 18, 1935. The latter created special rural schools for “*enseignement populaire rural*”.
8. D’ALMEIDA & GBEDEMAH (1982) provides a transparent analysis of administrative reorganization.

actively discouraged Togolese education in favor of agricultural advancement, compared with the previous German and contemporaneous British administrations⁹—Lange (1998: 96) opts for the more oblique: “[c]es propositions qui visent avant tout à maintenir l’Africain dans son milieu, à réduire les élites scolaires et donc à interdire toute mobilité sociale”. Based solely on the school attendance numbers furnished by the French to the Permanent Mandates Commission, and informed by the debates that raged in the Dakar-based AOF administration, Lange paints a picture of a scholarly population recovering and then once more undergoing rough handling. While the 1920s were characterized by assimilation, with increasing enrollments and aid for mission schools. From 1933, with a reorganization of schooling resulting in an emphasis on rural and urban difference, following the AOF model, segregation became the goal. Financial austerity led to stiff competition for government scholarships¹⁰. Thus “la politique scolaire de la France sous la période mandataire est donc passée, sans transition, de l’assimilation à la ségrégation” (*ibid.*: 97).

Francophone-wide changes were not the only powerful force in education during the mandate, however, according to Lange. Togo is particularly unusual in the West African context because it was parental initiative, serving as the *coup de force*, which led to the creation of scholarship funds, the growth of lycées and educational choice in general. But while parental choice is definitely a recurring theme in *my* oral informants’ personal accounts, Lange does not provide the evidence to support such statements¹¹, preferring a two-dimensional statistical picture. Herein lies the central flaw of the social historical claim of this work.

Parental choice as a profound indication of African agency is one of the most important themes in educational and linguistic history. A critical and thorough reading of colonial archival material can demonstrate core

9. No matter how one looks at the education policies of the 1920s through to the 1950s, the preference for practical, agricultural training, above all else is self-evident. CORNEVIN’s (1969: 233) explanation of the mandate period education policy supports this statement. See PÉCHOUX (1939: 92f).

10. Competition for scholarships was governed by a law of November 26, 1934. Students were sent to Porto Novo for reasons of austerity, and a law was passed on January 17, 1936 making scholarships available for sending Togolese students to Dahomey. Not that we should assume that these changes went unopposed. In fact an organization that formed in 1937 under the name “Comité du guide du Togo”, with Sylvanus Olympio (the future president) at its head made seven demands with respect to the administration. One of these was the “[p]rolongation de la scolarité et institution à Lomé d’une école primaire supérieure” (ANF, Section d’outre-mer, Fonds ministériels, Affaires politiques, Togo-Cameroun, carton 610, dossier 5: “Note sur les revendications de la population indigène”, undated).

11. “Il nous faut de nouveau noter la spécificité du Togo au sein de l’espace africain francophone. Dans ce territoire, ce sont les parents qui prennent l’initiative du départ des jeunes scolaires vers les lycées métropolitains, faisant pression sur le gouvernement qui doit entériner ce ‘coup de force’ et attribuer des bourses aux enfants des notables de la côte” (LANGE 1998: 99).

themes and theories, as I have done for the German period. But while it can pose broad questions and draw links to contemporary social phenomena, it cannot claim to represent the experience of the colonized subject in its complexity. It is not sufficient to interpret the history of indigenous education through a solely colonial lens - in this instance data produced by missionaries and *fonctionnaires* to fulfill the requirements of the Mandates Commission. This is only one part of one side of a many faceted story. The period of the Second World War, dismissed by Lange as "incontournable" because there were no adequate Mandate reports for the duration of the war, demonstrates the pitfalls of such a narrow approach to historical evidence (*ibid.*: 114). A social history of Togolese education and schooling during the mandate can only be complete with oral historical interviews.

In the interviews I conducted between January and June 2000 my informants regularly returned to the themes of schooling, language, parental responsibility and more general aspects of the colonial administration. Of the 121 informants, one third of whom were women, two fifths approximately (exclusively men) attended school of some sort or another. Of this number one third attended more than one educational institution, and ten of these became themselves teachers in public or parochial schools. The stories they recount are fascinating. Those living close to the British-French border, in the villages and towns of Noépé, Aképé, Kpalimé, Assahoun, Kévé and Batoumé, almost exclusively attended schools in the British zone. They travelled across the border, by foot, every day, or they lodged in homes or schools¹². Their parents paid their school fees, though they often worked for this, as houseboys, shepherds or hunters. The more successful competed for exclusive scholarships, and were sent as far as Dakar or Montpellier¹³. Some pupils quit school for financial reasons, others because of familial obligations, others insisted on attending school against their parents wishes. Corporal punishment was *de rigueur*, and children caught speaking Ewe in class and sometimes even in the playfields, were whipped¹⁴. Those who trained to be teachers were often moved yearly up and down the country and even to Dahomey¹⁵. They received considerable

12. Interviews with Amedomé Koudaya in Tabligbo, February 16, 2000; Jonas Kokou Kpegba Tegli II from Danyi Apéyéomé, March 22, 2000.

13. Interview with François Amorin, Cotonou, Benin, June 8, 2000 benefitted from the largesse of the French educational system by becoming one of only 20 pupils from the AOF and Togo to attend the exclusive secondary school in Dakar. Despite his intellectual achievements, he always maintained that the French only offered places to Africans in their secondary schools with extreme reluctance, and that the schools were really reserved for the few children of officers and missionaries who did not receive schooling in the metropole.

14. Interview with Peter Abigua, Kévé, March 20, 2000.

15. Especially during the administrative *Union Personnelle* between Dahomey and Togo (1934-1938). Interviews with Adoté Akuété-Akué, Lomé, February 29, 2000; Komi Adadjo-Binder in Kpalimé, March 29, 2000; Kwami Adzima, Abutia, Ghana, May 15, 2000.

respect from both Togolese and French alike. And to revisit World War Two, the crisis and isolation of the colony during the Vichy period is fresh in the minds of many sixty and seventy years old Togolese¹⁶. The hunger, the smuggling, the absence of school supplies and so forth are the kinds of stories that give flesh to the skeletal framework provided by statistical data.

Lange concludes her analysis of the mandate period by stating that the era is broadly indicative of the whole process of scolarization¹⁷. But if we turn to the words of one of my informants, the immense social change wrought by schooling on a rural level is made clearer. Peter Abigua explained that the relationship between Kévé and its surrounding villages changed fundamentally with the arrival of French schools: “Ce qui est à la base du changement c’est l’école. C’est à cause de l’école que les enfants quittent le village pour aller à l’étranger avant de revenir; ensuite [le Français] a créé des écoles ici et c’est tout ce qui a fait que la ville est devenue une ville civilisée. Lorsqu’on arrive on sait en même temps que c’est une ville, et c’est l’école qui a fait cela”¹⁸. Thus Kévé, equipped with the institutions to give it the necessary standing, maintained its leadership of the canton. Its population grew, its chieftaincy was enhanced, immigrants to the British sector returned, and “civilization” blossomed. Stories like that of Peter Abigua hold the key to understanding the history and role of schooling in both a rural and an urban milieu.

Gaining Currency: the English Language under the French Mandate

Though English was never the official language of the greater part of Togo, it was even before the colonial period and remained throughout the mandate period the most important *vehicular* language. In my earlier article on the German education policy, I observed that despite the concerted attempts of the German administration, the Ewe people of southern Togo did whatever they could to learn, use and function commercially within an English paradigm¹⁹. This *conscious decision* by the bourgeoisie of Lomé and the wider population of southern Togo continued during the French period, and several documents demonstrate that the utilization of and functioning in English served both commercial and ethnic purposes. The British occupied Lomé and a large part of the hinterland for just slightly longer than the duration of World War One. But a wide cross-section of the Togolese population

16. Interviews with an anonymous doctor in Lomé, April and May 2000.

17. “L’étude de cette période permet de mettre à jour la permanence des politiques scolaires, des soubassements idéologiques du fait scolaire, des contradictions engendrées et des échecs rencontrés” (LANGE 1998: 110).

18. Interview with Peter Abigua, Kévé, March 20, 2000.

19. Indeed LANGE (1998: 61) argues that “de fait, la langue anglaise s’imposait comme langue véhiculaire des commerçants, et il semble bien que les populations de la côte envisageaient plutôt un protectorat anglais”.

attempted to capitalize on this brief experiment in anglophony with the handover to the French. The French for their part were equally aware of the failure of the German administration's anti-English measures and the prevalence of the English language.

In 1919, when word of the decision by London to transfer the administration of Togo from Britain to France reached the ears of Lomé's leading citizen, Octavianus Olympio, he lost no time in a futile attempt to forestall. In a series of telegrams in which he purported to represent the population of Togo, he expressed "great apprehension" about the decision, and demonstrated the strong presence of the English language, and commercial influence in a region that had never been a British colony²⁰. His argument was one of the earliest to center on Ewe ethnic and Togolese national identities, which he dubiously elided with that of the British²¹. Olympio was not so foolish as to imagine that an argument structured around African ethnic and tribal unity could sway imperialist minds, however, and thus turned to the Wilsonian Doctrine and the example of Alsace and Lorraine which had informed the writing of the covenant of the League of Nations. He was a master wordsmith, fluent in at least five languages, and a member of the most influential family on the lower Guinea coast²².

In a direct challenge to the authors of the Versailles Peace Treaty, he invoked the conception of self-determination, complaining of racial bias and double standards²³. What is particularly interesting about Olympio's

20. One of these telegrams was addressed to Lord Milner, and BUELL (1965, vol. II: 361-362) discussed this in his influential book. See also MESSAN (1975: 176).

21. "...the absorption of Togoland into France's Colonial Possession will sever members of the Ewe-speaking tribe from Togoland from those in the South-eastern portion of the Gold Coast and seriously interfere with their economic progress... the inhabitants of Togoland are English speaking and loyally British in their sentiments...[as] the acquisition of the English language dates from the first British Occupation prior to 1884... [Indeed] so loyal were the inhabitants to the English language during their occupation that even the Germans could not blind themselves to the fact, and had to accept it as the commercial and popular language... [And] any linguistic changes will materially and adversely affect the working classes by throwing them out of employment thereby encouraging emigration and depopulation" (ADQO, série: SDN, sous-série: Sec. gén. Working Title: Mandats Togo-Cameroun, Petitions 1923-1938. Nr: 622, pp. 643-645).

22. In the words of Bourgeois-Gavardin: "Une des grandes familles de Lomé, la famille Olympio dont le vieux chef, après avoir servi fidèlement les Allemands, nous a fidèlement servis, est un exemple qui me semble typique. Le Docteur Olympio est d'éducation et d'instruction allemandes; il a fait ses études en Allemagne; il a même, sauf erreur, une femme européenne d'origine allemande. M. Sylvanus Olympio est de formation purement anglaise; il a dans le commerce, une grosse situation, puisqu'il est le Directeur au Togo de la 'United Africa Cy'. Enfin, les plus jeunes des Olympio sont, paraît-il, de cœur et d'esprit français" [*sic*] (ANF, Section d'outre-mer, 14 MiOM 2309, série: AOF, sous-série: 17G/111, dossier: "Rapport de Mission Bourgeois-Gavardin").

23. "[T]his annexation [of Alsace and Lorraine] was looked upon as wrong to France by the Allied Nations who have since rectified it... [And] any transfer of Togoland against the wished of the inhabitants will make them feel that their case has been differently treated... Your Lordship's petitioners will be forced to think

argument is that it indicates how well-informed the elite Ewe community was in 1919. Olympio had petitioned before causing not inconsiderable embarrassment to the previous German administration (Marguerat 1999: 189-197). But the phrase, “that as a special request Your Lordship’s petitioners ask that this petition be placed before the League of Nations for due consideration”, indicates that he was immediately aware of the British insistence on the right to petition being part of the covenant of the League of Nations. In fact, in due course the Lomé population would become the most regular and annoying petitioners to the Permanent Mandates Commission, and this telegram, the first petition from an African to the League of Nations, was only a taste of what was to come.

But not to leave any stone unturned, Olympio also telegraphed Geneva and New York, again in English, playing the same ethnic and loyalist card²⁴. The tone is alarmist, but more curious is his willingness to invoke negative images of the African intellect, blurred with elements of environmental determinism²⁵. His arguments were reiterated even more prosaically by J.T. Mensah’s letter to the League’s Secretary-General, Sir Eric Drummond²⁶. Olympio’s persistence is interesting set against the emerging contemporary Pan-African movement under the leadership of W.E.B. Du Bois and others. Though no evidence has yet come to light to suggest the two men had any direct communications, the international nature of Olympio’s

that they have been unjustly dealt with because they belong to a subject race and that pledges held out to the World by the Allied Nations in the time of suffering have not been redeemed” (ADQO, *op. cit.* note 21).

24. Another later petition was addressed by a group of “Ewe leaders” to President Harding on April 26, 1921, and discussed in the *Gazette du Togo et du Cameroun*, 1925, p. 101 reads: “[p]ermettez-nous de dire que la méthode d’administration française est pire que celle des Allemands... sous le régime allemand il y avait certaines méthodes d’administration que nous avons méprisées et contre lesquelles nous avons protesté; maintenant elles ont encore cours dans la colonie, telles que l’impôt de capitation, les taxes de marché, le travail forcé, l’oppression, etc.” MESSAN (1975: 180) remarks: “[l]es États-Unis à leur tour firent la sourde oreille. Mieux, en 1922, ils signèrent un accord particulier avec la France...”
25. “British and French zones with the South-eastern portion of Gold Coast starting from River Volta are inhabited by Ewe speaking tribe whose sentiments are loyally British and a division will disturb both ethnological and geographical conditions and adversely effect the very fabric of our economic existence (stop) In view [of] extensive adoption of British language during war period due to our confidence in pledges [of] Allied Nations[.] [I]ntroduction [of] alien language will be great set back to intellectual progress and will seriously hamper economic developments... any decision to the contrary to our wishes would [be] tantamount to enslavement and exploitation” (ADQO, *op. cit.*, p. 646a, without a date, but c.1919).
26. The letter dated 18/5/1920, League of Nations Archive (SDN), R 20 Mandate for Togoland (3099), Document N° 4900, contained the provocative paragraph: “In this connection I venture to suggest for your consideration, Sir, that the safest way in solving the problem, would be for a mixed commission to be appointed to find out from the Natives concerned, their desire as to the Government they wish their own country to be administered by.”

pleas resonates with that of the African nationalist and Ethiopianist movements, returning us to the universality of the English language among the new African elites²⁷.

Indeed, when Blaise Daigne, the Senegalese Deputy was asked to report on the status of Togoland in 1920, he could only but confirm the anglicized nature of French territory and its inhabitants. Daigne's mission was to examine for the Minister of Colonies, Sarraut, the likely reaction of the local Togolese population to the imposition of the indigenous legal code of Afrique Occidentale Française, the dreaded *Indigénat*. Daigne noted: "[L]e niveau intellectuel, moral et social des indigènes du Togo est, dans l'ensemble, plus élevé que dans les colonies voisines. À Lomé, notamment, la plupart vivent et s'habillent à l'europpéenne et s'expriment correctement en anglais. Quelques-uns même fréquentent les cours de tennis et roulent en automobile." He cautioned Sarraut against any hasty moves and affirmed that "les inconvénients graves... pourraient résulter d'une... décision... Il paraît difficile de rendre applicable à ces éléments évolués, le code de l'indigénat et on s'imagine malaisément leur comparution devant un tribunal de province où des juges indigènes statueront d'après une des coutumes auxquelles ils sont devenus totalement étrangers." And he even went so far as to suggest that in view of the new international system, the anglicization of the colony was an impediment to the proposed judicial regime²⁸.

Twenty years later and very little had changed. The anglophile element in Togo, especially the Loméens, continued to be a thorn in the side of the administration fueling fears of espionage. The Vichy Inspector of Colonies, Bourgeois-Gavardin, described the situation thus: "[l]es Anglais n'ont occupé qu'une partie du Togo, le Sud-Ouest et Lomé, et pendant peu d'années. Mais la proximité de la Gold-Coast, les multiples liens ethniques, familiaux, économiques avec les populations de cette colonie, donnent aux Togolais une parfaite et actuelle connaissance des Britanniques." Bourgeois-Gavardin suggested that the fact that Lomé was only the capital located on an international border, lay at the heart of the problem. But his later comments, acknowledging the influence of anglo-commercial links, belie this earlier statement²⁹.

27. This was one of the many fears of the protestant missionaries who sought to recover control of the Ewe Presbyterian Church. Reverend Allégret claimed that Togo "est menacé par l'anarchie, le panafricanisme, le catholicisme" (Evangelical Missionary Society Archives (SMEP/DEFAP) Paris: Correspondance des champs missions V: Documents; Togo No. 3790).

28. "[J]e gage qu'ils auraient tôt fait de saisir de leurs protestations la Société des Nations, aidés et peut-être poussés en sous-main par les Anglais qui n'ont abandonné qu'à regret l'Administration provisoire de ces régions et seraient vraisemblablement heureux qu'une demande de plébiscite fût faite par la population" (ANF, Section d'outre-mer, série: Affaires politiques, sous-série: Togo-Cameroun, carton 608: "Règlementations de l'indigénat. 2. Décret dû à l'exercice des pouvoirs disciplinaires des Chefs relatif de circonscription ou de subdivision au Togo").

29. "Le commerce anglais n'était-il pas prépondérant même au Togo? La plupart des commerçants ou des 'clerks' indigènes sont de formation anglaise. Nombreux

His Gaullist successor, reporting on the status of the territory at the Brazzaville Conference and its future within the new Union Française, had much the same to say³⁰. The location of the capital was just one aspect, a symptom if you like, of a much grander Ewe unity that rendered nonsensical all international boundaries. Commercial links and financial benefits were the cornerstone of the anglicization of Togo (Buell 1965, vol. II: 364f). Earlier I observed that during the German period the quest for employment and profit drove the desire to learn English, just as proselytization drove the standardization and thus the spread of the Ewe language. During the French period the benefits of English in commerce were equally if not more apparent. In 1923 the Conseil des Notables raised the question of currency, and the Reverend Baëta approached the matter via a discourse of ethnicity. He explained that “la race Evé [*sic*] se trouve partagée entre deux puissances, l’Angleterre et la France. Les mêmes familles, se trouvant séparées par des questions purement administratives, n’en ont pas moins continué de comme[r]cer entre elles, comme avant l’arrivée des Européens, des questions telles que les questions monétaires ont pour résultat de créer des difficultés parmi des gens de même race, séparés seulement par une frontière politique”³¹. His solution was to create “une monnaie unique pour le pays des Ewhés [*sic*]”. Governor Bonnacarrère was not overly excited by this proposal³².

With or without the support of the French, however, English language continued to make headway in the French territory via commerce. In 1921, a “mouvement d’opposition” against “patentes et prestations”, by clerks “d’origine anglaise” gained momentum, largely because of the fiscal liberty of the previous British regime. A petition of leading “citizens” against

sont les Togolais qui parlent anglais... À Lomé même, 45% des habitants sont originaires de Gold-Coast; le président du Conseil des Notables, vénérable vieillard de 82 ans, ne parle pas d’autre langue européenne que l’anglais” (ANF, *op. cit.* note 22, pp. 1-74: “Togo: État moral de la population européenne et indigène 1940-41”).

30. “L’influence de la Gold Coast, à laquelle a été intégré le Togo britannique, n’a jamais cessé de s’exercer sur nos ressortissants. Un certain nombre de notables de Lomé sont originaires du Togo britannique. Une grande majorité des habitants de la ville d’Anécho, deuxième centre politique et commercial du Togo, est apparentée aux natifs de Kéta (Gold-Coast). Les échanges commerciaux entre les deux territoires sont constants. Enfin les courants d’opinions y présentent souvent une certaine synchronisation” (ANF, *op. cit.*, dossier: “Conférence de Brazzaville; Programme Général de la Conférence de Brazzaville (janv. 1944); Exécution de la Circulaire N° 673/CAB du 29 Novembre 1943”).
31. ANT, Archives municipales de Lomé, Compte Rendu des Séances du Conseil des Notables de Lomé: 19 Avril 1923.
32. “Le problème est le même pour le Dahomey, le Togo, la Gold Coast et le Nigeria, surtout pour le peuple Nagot, et cependant dans ces pays Nagots, le franc et la livre anglaise ont gardé leur valeur respective, sans gêner le commerce.” He did, however, acknowledge that even non-Loméens had come to him with the same complaint and conceded that “également qu’une monnaie commune serait une cause d’amélioration dans les relations commerciales” (ANT, *op. cit.*).

personal taxes was also launched. Though this was unsuccessful, it did help to spawn the “Lomé Union” under the leadership of the photographer, Alfred Acolatse. As usual with any local, indigenous agitation of a political nature, the French believed to be “peut-être à des excitations étrangères”³³.

Thus it was really wishful thinking on the part of the Commandant de Cercle de Lomé in 1929, when he wrote: “[L]es indigènes, particulièrement la population évoluée de Lomé, commencent à se rendre compte des grands avantages que présente pour eux le système fiscal français et rares sont ceux qui osent maintenant invoquer l’impôt de capitation, comme prétexte, pour justifier leur départ”. As in the next paragraph he explained how the population of the Lomé hinterland continued to pay their hated *impôt* in English coinage, and even in German³⁴. Money collected to fund the 1933 revolt was mostly British currency³⁵. Indeed a large number of my oral informants spoke of using and calculating in English currency, some right up until the introduction of the Cedi with Ghanaian independence³⁶. One even explained how currency supply differentials created a micro-economy in currency exchange between British and French Togo³⁷. There was nothing the French could do³⁸. One attempt, for example, to remove all foreign coins from circulation in Tsévié met with sore resentment, and necessitated a cash injection only fueling the hostility³⁹.

Throughout the mandate period, English currency, weights and measures governed French Togolese commerce. Bourgeois-Gavardin remarked that “[o]n évalue couramment les valeurs en shilling plutôt qu’en francs”⁴⁰. While his successor, Lacroix, conjoined:

33. ANT, 8 APA, Affaires politiques, Rapports des Cercles, Cercle de Lomé 1920-1922, February 1921.

34. *Id.*, Cercle de Lomé, 3^e trimestre, 1929.

35. The chief of the canton of Akposso-Sud for example, collected the following: 2382.50 F, being 190 F in “billet de la Banque de l’Afrique Occidentale”, 978.50 F in “pièces de jetons togolais” (unknown origin); and 1214 F in “pièces métalliques anglaises” (ANT, 8 APA (1933), carton 1, dossier: “Affaires politiques et administratives, Troubles de 1933”, sous-dossier: “Situation dans l’Akposso-Sud”).

36. Interviews with Peter Abigua, Kévé, March 20, 2000; Soényameto Adeti, Aképé; Jacob Adjowou Eyé EGLA, Assahoun, February 23, 2000; Apéléké Agadza-Ahadji Adzikou, Abobo, February 10, 2000; Raphael Kokou Amedzro, Kpalimé, March 29, 2000; Ehli Amouzou, Ahépé, February 15, 2000; Kossiwa Daka, Kpélé-Elé, March 21, 2000; Koffi Dekou, Assahoun, February 23, 2000; Komi Dzéha, Kuma-Apéyéme, April 3, 2000; Adzowa Eklu, Danyi-Apéyéme, March 22, 2000; Kossi Fiagan, Agoé-nyivé, May 3, 2000; Kpondé Sofawoudé, Kévé, March 27, 2000; Mawuényigan Tikata, Noépé, February 28, 2000; Beta Tossa, Kpalimé, March 29, 2000.

37. Interview with Komi Dzéha, Kuma-Apéyéme, April 3, 2000.

38. Interestingly, two laws were passed with respect to British currency: a law of October 11, 1923 “controlled” the use of Gold Coast coinage; while a law of December 30, 1930 made it “officially illegal” (CORNEVIN 1969: 247). It goes without saying that the evidence from the field proves the complete redundancy of these two laws.

39. ANT, *op. cit.* note 34.

40. ANF, *op. cit.* note 29.

“[l]’attraction économique de la Gold Coast sur le Togo ne date pas de l’occupation française. Les Allemands ont essayé sans résultats d’y soustraire le Togo. Elle se traduit à l’évidence par le fait facilement contrôlable des signes monétaires utilisés ou supposés utilisés dans les transactions. L’autochtone, dans ses échanges, calcule en livres, qu’il transforme ensuite en francs. Tout est donc aligné sur le sterling à tel point que dans les contrats entre particuliers, il est d’usage de faire figurer en regard des sommes stipulées en francs la valeur en monnaie anglaise”⁴¹.

From both commerce and coinage the English language maintained its currency as the principal vehicular language among the Ewe under the French mandate.

Between Dialect and Idiom: the Destabilization of the Ewe Language

As Lange explains, the unquestionable success of southern schooling under the German colonial administration was due in large measure to missionary teaching in a local vernacular language, Ewe. This permitted rapid and easy alphabetization, from which all good scholarship grows (Lange 1998: 66). Of course it was never smooth sailing, and thus one could also maintain that the contradictions of the German colonial project necessitated a standardized and formalized vehicular Ewe. In the view of von Puttkamer, von Zech and others, though Ewe-speakers would never measure up intellectually with German natives, the very least the Ewe language could do, would be to supplant the influence of English. But in spite of all their manifest prejudices, the German authorities supported missionary activities in the field, and by implication such unifying policies. It follows that one of the most important legacies of this period was a united, mobilized and educated Ewe ethno-linguistic group (Lawrance 2000; Amenumey 1989: 27f; Debrunner 1965: 153; Coleman 1956).

As we have seen from the evidence above, this Ewe unity, or at least the plausible image thereof, championed by Olympio, Baëta, Acolatse and others, presented a threat to the French administration. Consequently, among certain circles within the mandate government, the Ewe “tribe” and even the Ewe language were held in great suspicion. This suspicion manifested itself in a variety of ways, some of which can only be briefly mentioned here. Preferential treatment for certain chiefs and cantons, new local administrative structures, *tournées* in the hinterland for demographic purposes, education policy and the general dissemination of information about

41. ANF, Section d’outre-mer, 14 MiOM 2307-08, série: AOF, sous-série: 17G/106, dossier: “Fermetures des Frontières, Togo, 1941-42; Rapport mensuel du Chef de Bataillon H. Lacroix; Officier M. A. du Togo sur les menées anti-nationales au Togo; Mois de juillet 1942”.

the mandate, all served to fracture an ethnic unity—illusory or not⁴². In its place, the French offered a “counter-ethnicity”, and via their treatment of language and other cultural capital, directly and indirectly tried to destabilize the notion of Ewe ethnicity bequeathed them by the Germans. I want to emphasize that what I present here is only some of the evidence for the very tentative argument. But I would like to suggest that this administrative tendency, if we can call it that, corresponded with a similar and contemporaneous attitude among the AOF administration.

In Togo, French was the sole official language of instruction⁴³. A vehicular vernacular was not used to disestablish the universality of English, as it had been under the Germans. Instead vernacular languages were treated with scorn, dismissed and relegated to the role of idiom, just slightly below that of dialect (Lange 1998: 108-109). The refusal of French officials to respond to indigenous requests communicated in English already caused considerable hardship⁴⁴. This was compounded by their total rejection of the Ewe language. This hostility was part of a general AOF-wide discomfort with the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized subject, the latter being identified above all by his language. From a brief but frank exchange in the 1930s, in the wake of the reorganization of schooling in the AOF, one can discern the implications of one element of the paradoxical relationship between the actors of the French colonial project—the absence of a common tongue. Having put in place a French-only schooling policy from the primary level, the Directorate of Political and Administrative Affairs in Dakar turned its attention to the problem of colonial officers who could not communicate with their local subjects. Several decades behind in his linguistic scholarship, Berthet suggested a policy which turned on several key indigenous languages⁴⁵.

42. These themes are discussed in depth in my doctoral thesis entitled *Nationalism and the Construction of Ewe Ethnic Identity under the League of Nations Mandates of Togoland, 1919-1945*, Stanford University, 2001.

43. “Arrêté de 1922”, *Journal officiel du Togo*, p. 213.

44. From the late 1920s any petitions addressed in English, such as those of the Gaba-Adjigo clan, were returned with a note marked “unreceivable”. The cover letter to petition from Gaba 24/6/31 addressed to Geneva reads: “The introduction of French into the schools of French Togoland was of a recent date and with which the children are grappling but the language is unknown to the mass of the people and it would be a pity if difficulties of this kind would be placed before the inhabitants of the French government of the mandated territory to prevent the League of Nations from hearing and determining their grievances” (SDN, R 2337 French Mandate for Togoland (2705), Document N° 2711).

45. “Une politique de ‘standardisation des langues africaines’ qui aurait pour objet, en favorisant officiellement et systématiquement certains idiomes ‘véhiculaires’ opportunément choisis, d’en augmenter la diffusion et d’en généraliser l’emploi sous le contrôle de l’administration locale” (ANF, Section d’outre-mer, 14 MiOM 2796, série: AOF, sous-série: 18G/91, Berthet, directeur du personnel, direction des Affaires politiques et administratives, Dakar 10 Avril 1935 to the Gouverneur général de l’AOF Brévié).

This “initiative” was supported by Brévié, who wrote to the Minister of Colonies several days later suggesting the same thing, accompanied by the “rayonnement” of French for the “développement... de l’enseignement primaire”⁴⁶. The plan was to encourage new colonial officers to train in one of several key, standardized languages at the École Coloniale in Marseilles. While the government maintained that throughout the AOF and the mandates, “il n’existe plus de villages où l’on ne trouve d’anciens élèves de nos écoles, capables de converser en français, de rédiger même un compte rendu de quelques lignes”, they also set about isolating and choosing key languages for the École⁴⁷. Berber, Arabic, Fon and Wolof were among those chosen, but, despite the considerable advances in its scholarly usage, the numerous qualified teachers and the plentiful supply of pedagogical resources, Ewe was omitted.

The neglect of Ewe was very much a case of cutting one’s nose off to spite one’s face. Leaving the AOF and returning to Togo, it must be remembered that several generations of school children had already learned to read and write Ewe. Coupled with the banning of English, they must have been as baffled by the sudden decision to terminate its usage, as the missionary schools were blindsided. Komi Dzéha recalls the incomprehension with which this decision was met; it left no formal avenue for effective communication, and among other things discouraged schooling and encouraged emigration⁴⁸. Lange interpreted this decision as an early French expression of national identity⁴⁹. But while the cultural chauvinism of French colonial policy is abundant and self-evident, it would tendentious to suggest that a coherent concept of nationhood was being imposed on Togo as early as 1922.

Instead I would suggest that this decision was part of a wider administrative tendency that had as one of several aims, the reactivation of the divisions between the Ewe people in order to destabilize the ethnic group’s stranglehold on commerce, religion and education. This reactivation took the form of a “counter-ethnicity”, by which I mean, new and also redundant

46. *Id.*, Gouverneur général de l’AOF Brévié to ministre des Colonies, 6 Mai 1935.

47. *Id.*, *Courrier Colonial*, 4 Octobre 1935: “M. Rollin s’attaque à la question de la connaissance de langues”.

48. Interview with Komi Dzéha, Kuma-Apéyéme, April 3, 2000: “Pendant la période allemande on enseignait l’éwé et l’allemand, pendant la période anglaise, les Anglais ont enseigné leur langue et l’éwé. Mais lorsque les Français sont venus ils n’ont enseigné ni l’anglais, ni l’allemand, c’est uniquement le français qu’ils ont enseigné à l’école. Ils n’ont même pas enseigné l’éwé.”

49. “En fait, la politique linguistique de la France reflète une conception unitaire de la Nation, qui ne peut tolérer les différences culturelles. L’impérialisme culturel français reproduisait simplement la politique menée en métropole, visant à nier, puis à éliminer toutes les particularités linguistiques. Les méthodes pour imposer le français comme seule langue écrite officielle sont les mêmes que celles qui furent employées dans les provinces françaises. En partant du présupposé de la supériorité du français, on provoque la marginalisation et l’infériorisation des autres langues...” (LANGE 1998: 108).

concepts of Ewe identity were disseminated in order to counter those disseminated by champions of the pan-Ewe mindset. It was all too apparent to French colonial officials and to the incoming French missionaries that the Ewe community was invested with immense influence and power. The Reverend Allégret, contemplating the possible assumption of control by the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society of the former German protestant missions remarked: “La population est une des plus intelligentes et des plus travailleuses de la Côte; elle est considérée par tous comme une de celles qui a le plus d’avenir”. He considered as imperative the preservation of the unity of the Ewe church, and by default the Ewe ethnic group⁵⁰.

French government officials, however, did not at all see eye-to-eye with the clergyman’s concerns, but instead sought to exacerbate this division and dethrone the Ewe ethnic primacy. Increasingly, in the 1920s and 30s French officers and journalists spoke of Ewe and Mina as two entirely separate groups⁵¹. At times they complicated this further by splintering Ouatchis from the Ewes and Minas⁵². To be sure, these names and differences existed, and the Mina do trace their roots to El Mina and the Fanti coastline. But Anécho was as impressive a town as any along the coast in the 1920s. Its bourgeoisie was influential and Westernized. Ewe was a written and taught language throughout the south by the end of the German rule. The Ewe language studied and written by children in Tabligbo was the same as that in Ho, Anécho, and Lomé, and it only made to sense to build on these advances. What is happening in this type of discourse, however, is an attempt to detach the two leading towns from their common ethnic and commercial base, and then relink Anécho with its very underdeveloped hinterland. The pseudo-ethnology informing this campaign overwhelmed logic

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50. “L’Église Ewé a toujours été une Église; le partage du Togo est entièrement politique, il n’a pas tenu compte des races, et le peuple Ewé se trouve politiquement coupé en deux... les Ewé sont les plus instruits, les plus évolués, les plus riches de tous. Le Gouvernement ne peut les abandonner à l’influence anglaise, et l’Église ne veut pas être divisée” (MEP/DEFAP Paris: Correspondance des champs missions V: Documents Togo No. 3790; emphasis in the original).
51. A good example of this comes from the paper *L’Empire français*, 1931, in an article entitled “La vie sociale en AOF: les Nigriliens, peuples guinéens”: “...nous arrivons à un pays sous mandat, le Togo. Là encore, se rencontre un ensemble de populations évoluées, désignées sous le nom d’Ewhé, en raison de la langue qu’elles parlent. Les Ewhé peuplent, avec une faible partie de la Côte d’Or, le Bas-Togo, tant anglais que français. Ils ont été l’objet d’études tout à fait remarquables, d’un savant missionnaire allemand, M. Spieth. Ils ont gardé leurs dieux, leurs coutumes juridiques, leurs littératures orales comprennent en particulier les contes qui supportent fort bien la comparaison avec ceux des Oulof et des Mandigues... quelques populations, en général plus primitives du Togo et du Dahomey... les Minnas (ou Guen), dont le centre d’expansion est Anécho, qui sont fortement imprégnés d’éléments Fanti, de la Côte d’Or...” [*sic*].
52. For example, in the censuses for the Cercle d’Anécho, sometime during the late 1920s the commandant decided in favor of a “Répartition des Races”, ANT, 8APA, Rapports de Cercles, Cercle d’Anécho, Rapports trim. 1^o au 4^o 1931.

and reason; it even meant “discovering” ethnic differences between Anécho and its hinterland, in order to explain the inevitable administrative failures⁵³.

Various methods and discourses were employed by colonial officers which resulted in an exacerbation of ethnic divisions. They used the census to tally projected income from the *impôt*, and delegated the census to local indigenous officials, opening it up to fraud and inter-ethnic machinations⁵⁴. By playing one group off against another, the administration endeavored to terminate the Ewe ethnic unity, and replace it with local power bases. The latter were much more easily controlled; one only has to consider the long history of favorable treatment afforded the Lawsonist party in Anécho⁵⁵. This administrative technique was employed throughout the hinterland and succeeded in enhancing the power of local chiefs, and emasculating the regional political cooperation, despite the designs of the younger elites⁵⁶. The French also tried to regroup clans and villages where no historical groupings had previously existed and rode rough-shod over local wishes⁵⁷.

53. *Id.*: Rapports périodiques des cercles; dossier 10. Lettres confidentielles, 26/5/1931, Commandant to Gouverneur: “La population du Cercle d’Anécho se présente sous deux aspects très différents suivants que nous considérons la race de la côte: les Minas, ou la race de l’intérieur les Ouatchis. Les premiers, plus évolués que les autres offrent à l’Administration des points de contact très délicats en raison des luttes politiques qui les divisent. Les Ouatschis ignorent ces dissensions acharnés, toutefois certains chefs déclarant leurs sympathies pour l’un ou l’autre des partis Minas, suivant la politique des derniers.”

54. *Id.*: Rapports périodiques des cercles; dossier 20, 1934-35. Rapports et tournées diverses: “Les différences constatées entre l’ancien recensement et le nouveau prouvent bien que les agents recenseurs indigènes n’apportent pas tous les soins désirables dans ce travail.”

55. *Id.*: Rapports périodiques des cercles; dossier 10. Lettres confidentielles, 26/5/1931, Commandant to Gouverneur: “Le rôle de Commandant de Cercle d’Anécho est de soutenir l’autorité du Chef Lawson et de surveiller attentivement la lutte qui lui est faite car celle-ci dépasse sa portée apparente de rivalité de famille et de personnes. En observant les faits de très près on ne tarde pas à remarquer que derrière les ennemis du Chef nous retrouvons nos propres adversaires.” ANT, *op. cit.*, Rapport Annuel 1933: “La politique adoptée dans le Cercle d’Anécho fut longtemps très favorable au groupement Lawson; depuis 1932, les Adjigos ont obtenu quelques reconnaissances de leurs droits, mais tendent toujours à réclamer davantage.” The results of the 1931 election for the Conseil des Notables speak for themselves: 23 Lawsonites, 4 Adjigos, 3 neutral.

56. ANT, *op. cit.*: Rapports périodiques des cercles, dossier 20, 1934-35, Rapports et tournées diverses.

57. *Id.*: dossier 23. Note sur le Cercle d’Anécho, 1935: “Il n’existe pas de cantons dans le cercle. Un essai de regroupement en cantons tenté en 1928 a été abandonné à peine esquissé. On essaie de suppléer à l’absence de cantons par la création de gros villages tel celui de Vogan. Mais la forme ne semble pas heureuse et pas à préconiser. En effet, les habitants d’un village doivent avoir entre eux des affinités ethniques assez étroites et le chef de la collectivité doit être pour eux autre chose qu’un simple agent administratif. Pour faciliter les groupements cantonaux, il serait indiqué de réunir périodiquement les chefs des villages des zones susceptibles d’être érigées ultérieurement en cantons. Il est à prévoir qu’au cours de ces réunions, l’un ou l’autre d’entre eux émergerait et deviendrait le porte-parole officieux des autres. Il suffirait, dans la suite, de ratifier ce choix

But most destructively, certain officials imagined reasons for local differences where there were none, and attributed these to ethnicity⁵⁸.

Though far from conclusive, the evidence above is highly suggestive of a concerted action—the dissemination of a counter-ethnic discourse—to highlight the divisions between the Ewe ethnic sub-groups for immediate political gain. The Ewe community in southern Togo was influential and powerful. And while certain elements, like the Lawson clan, gave their unwavering support to the French mandate, outspoken critics were all too numerous in Lomé and in the neighboring Gold Coast and British Togoland. Furthermore, the very presence of the British mandate—presenting an alternative interpretation of the terms of the mandate administration, with no direct taxation and less direct interference—was a major threat in itself. But these are subjects that require much more detailed analysis and form the core of my doctoral thesis. At this point it is my intention only to raise for discussion a possible explanation for the different treatment of Ewe language and ethnicity under the German administration and the French mandate.

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The roles of the French and the French language during the French mandate are very ambiguous. While individual administrators' actions are made comprehensible by turning to colonial models and theories, the engagement of the Togolese, and especially the Ewe, is much more mutable. I choose the term “engagement” with care, because it demonstrates intent, but falls

par sa désignation comme chef de canton.” CORNEVIN (1969: 231) colors this policy with a more benevolent hue.

58. The most glaring example comes from a tournée of two villages, Davoukopé et Pedakondji. ANT, *op. cit.*, dossier 26. Rapports trim. 1935: “J’ai rapporté de cette tournée des impressions contraires. J’ai passé les deux premiers jours dans un village pauvre et sale par la faute de ses habitants. Davoukopé donne l’impression d’un village qui meurt. Peu de cultures, partout la brousse envahissante, des visages fermés, un chef sans énergie. Pedakondji, au contraire, est en pleine marche ascendante. Champs prospères, gens en bonne santé, un chef intelligent et décidé. Deux villages tout proches, installés sur des terrains semblables mais peuplés de deux races différentes. À Davoukopé: des Ouatchis venus de Vogan. À Pedakondji aux premiers arrivants se sont mêlés des Mina qui peu à peu ont submergé les descendants de Houmé. Les Minas ont des cases plus propres, des cultures étendues et mieux soignées, ils éprouvent plus fortement le besoin d’avoir de l’eau propre. À Davoukopé, le chef Sagbavi habite une vieille case en terre qui menace ruine. À Pedakondji, Seguibe Edoth demeure dans une maison aux murs de brique et de ciment, plafonnée, couverte de tôles neuves. Les deux villages sont à l’image de leurs chefs... la richesse des indigènes est dans leurs bras” [*sic*].

short of suggesting compliance. Or, drawing on the deliberations of Bourgeois-Gavardin recalling the words of an Ewe elder, the Togolese participation in the mandate administration was very much a case of opportunism⁵⁹.

“Des maîtres nous ont été donnés pour hâter cette évolution et nous guider; le Destin ou la Providence, comme vous voudrez l'appeler, nous a d'abord donné comme maître l'Allemagne; l'Angleterre a remplacé l'Allemagne; la France a succédé à l'Angleterre. Si l'Allemagne était demeurée au Togo, nous ne cachons pas que nous serions restés loyaux envers elle, si l'Angleterre avait continué sa tâche, nous serions restés loyaux sujets anglais. La France nous a été donnée comme éducatrice: nous faisons profession envers elle du loyalisme le plus complet et de la soumission la plus totale et nous donnons notre parole que nous n'entreprendrons rien contre elle, ni directement, ni indirectement”.

This is a tentative explanation of a much grander problematic, and I view this paper as an invitation to debate. It is also a paper to be read alongside my account of the education policy under the German period, and not apart. History, and linguistic history no less so, is a continuum; and as Africanists and historians we are concerned with evidence of change over time. Indigenous education under the mandate was starkly different to that of the German period. French was the only language of instruction, state-funded education increased and emphasis was placed on practical and agricultural training. And yet the school in Togo under the French mandate brought immense social and cultural change to both urban and rural spaces, and statistical sketches require oral historical evidence for substance.

The widespread use of English throughout the mandate territory, but particularly in Lomé, offers an interesting counterpoint to a linear, statistical narrative of educational history. The evidence for this, from both French officials and Africans, demonstrates that the quotidian experiences of the Togolese peasant as much as those of the Lomé merchant were conducted in English or Ewe, but rarely in French. Until the very eve of independence, and despite the designs of government, British currency remained influential. The embeddedness of anglophilia in the French territory was an acute embarrassment for the French, but what is more interesting is the practicality and logic behind the indigenous desire to function within an anglophone paradigm. The practicality was largely financial, whereas the logic expressed was often enveloped in a discourse of ethnicity.

This recourse to Ewe ethnicity appears particularly clarion when juxtaposed with evidence for the treatment of the Ewe language by French colonial officials. Set against the broader context of the French attitude to indigenous languages in the AOF in general, I tentatively propose that within some circles of the mandate administration there was operating an implicit policy designed destabilize Ewe ethnic unity. With its overt anglophilia, the unified and influential Ewe elite presented a clear and real danger

59. From an unnamed Ewe newspaper, dated 1934, ANF, *op. cit.* note 29.

to the French mandate administration. One of the responses to this threat then, was to destabilize Ewe ethnic unity by reinvoking old ethnic divisions, and the “counter-ethnicity” deployed also served to diminish the importance of the Ewe language in education policy.

In this brief article I have tried to spell out several ideas which help us to understand the pedagogic and linguistic atmosphere during the French mandate of Togo. There was no “language policy” as such, but only a series of individual laws and rules obliging missionaries, administrators and the indigenous population to accord special preference to the French language. The story partially uncovered in French Togo remains more obscure and complex than that for the previous German regime. No single theoretical device can explain the separate developments in indigenous education, the prevalence of English nor the governmental prejudice against the Ewe language. But the concept of ethnicity, and especially that which I call “counter-ethnicity”, intertwine the different narratives.

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ABSTRACT

In a follow-up to his article on linguistic colonialism during the German occupation of Togo, in a recent volume of the *Cahiers d'Études africaines*, the author examines the evolution of language and schooling under the French mandate administration (1919-1945). This era, marked by the absence of a concrete government education policy, presents a particularly complex and ambiguous problematic for the historian. Three themes guide the narrative: the development of schooling under the mandate; the anglophilia of the southern Togolese population; and the destabilization of the main indigenous language, Ewe. The first section offers also a critical review of a recent work on the subject by Marie-France Lange. Central to the argument is the desire to provoke a discussion of the role of language in colonial education policy. But above all, in order to further advance the issue of African agency in African history, the author evokes the concept of "engagement" to explain the indigenous participation in their social, and economic and political development.

RÉSUMÉ

La langue entre des pouvoirs, le pouvoir entre les langues : une conversation continuée à propos de l'éducation et de la politique éducatrice au Togo sous le mandat français (1919-1945). — Faisant suite à son article sur le colonialisme linguistique allemand paru récemment dans un numéro des *Cahiers d'Études africaines*, l'auteur analyse l'évolution linguistique et scolaire pendant l'époque mandataire française. Cette ère, ayant été marquée par l'absence d'une politique scolaire gouvernementale définitive ou concrète, présente une problématique plus complexe et plus ambiguë. Trois thèmes guident le récit : le développement de la scolarisation sous le mandat ; l'anglophilie de la population sud-togolaise ; et la marginalisation de la langue indigène principale, l'éwé. Aussi, la première section offre un compte rendu de l'ouvrage récent de Marie-France Lange. L'argument central de notre sujet s'appuie sur le désir de provoquer une discussion sur le rôle du langage dans la politique coloniale de l'éducation. Il évoque l'idée de l'engagement des indigènes dans leur formation sociale, économique et politique afin de faire avancer l'autonomie indigène dans l'histoire africaine.

Keywords/mots-clés: Ewe, Togo, education, ethnicity, language, nationalism/Éwé, Togo, éducation, ethnicité, langage, nationalisme.