

## ***Kulturkampf* in Lomé: German and Ewe Identification and Alienation In Togoland, West Africa, 1884-1913**

John Gregory Garratt

In 1884, German officials signed a treaty with King Mlapa III of Togoville ceding *de jure* and *de facto* sovereignty to Imperial Germany, while under the threatening auspices of German battleship *Möwe*. German Togoland, located between the Gold Coast and Dahomey, was now under Germany's "protection." After the initial "Scramble for Africa," German military campaigns from 1895 to 1899, under the unassuming titles of scientific expeditions, forcefully incorporated the northern autonomous regions of Togoland into Germany's colonial system.<sup>1</sup> German colonizers constructed language and cotton schools, missions, railroads, and an African military police. The Ewe, the principal ethnic group in the protectorate's south, suffered thirty years of colonial oppression by Germany until the British and French invaded in 1914. Before Germany's removal as a global colonial power, German imperialists designated Togoland as a model colony (*Musterkolonie*) because of the ostensible, albeit problematic, implementation of Germanification and economic reorganization of the Ewe economy.

Togoland as a "model colony" has come under vigorous criticism by historians Peter Sebald and Dennis Laumann, who argue that historians have incorporated colonial rhetoric of the "civilizing process" into the historical narrative by centering on Togoland's colonial administration, economic development, and the complicity of missionaries as forerunners to colonial rule. Until relatively recently, African perspectives in the scholarship of German colonialism have been largely omitted.<sup>2</sup> The present article's analysis examines the intersection of German imagination on an individual level and everyday Ewe/German interactions, suggesting that German and Ewe discourses evolved by modifying and incorporating aspects of each other's cultures. While conventional German discourses about modernization remained entrenched, German individuals moderated these prejudices to reflect lived experiences through market interactions or by adopting African family members into their families. Conversely, Ewe celebrations of European holidays maintained use of their own drums, but also enacted politics that partially recognized German legitimacy through petitions. It is through this pendulum process between imaginary and action seen on an individual and group level that historians can interpret how discourses conform and distort based on living within a specific colonial space.

This article should be seen as continuing a trend to incorporate Ewe perspectives into narratives of German Togoland, but combining an analysis of the German imaginary at a local

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Originally from Ellicott City, Maryland, John Gregory Garratt earned his Bachelor of Arts (2009) from Elon University and is currently a fourth-year PhD student at George Washington University, who will be researching in Berlin from 2013 to 2014 on a DAAD long-term research grant.

<sup>1</sup> Peter Sebald, *Togo 1884-1914. Eine Geschichte der deutschen "Musterkolonie" auf der Grundlage amtlicher Quellen* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1988), 173-176.

<sup>2</sup> Representative of this scholarship is Ralph Erbar's, *Ein Platz an der Sonne? Die Verwaltungs und Wirtschaftsgeschichte der deutschen Kolonie Togo* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1991), 8.

level, specifically Togoland's capital Lomé.<sup>3</sup> Historians Sandra Greene, Birgit Meyer, and Sara Pugach use Christianity and ethnography as a lens to view Ewe and European interactions in West Africa.<sup>4</sup> Developing on their research, the article approaches Togoland and Lomé through social space and its construction, contestation, and perception between Ewe and Germans as an analytical tool to explore cultural and political relations. In the late nineteenth century, Lomé was a culturally dynamic space demonstrating cross-cultural interactions on a day-to-day basis. Germans relied on Ewe and other colonial intermediaries such as Afro-Brazilians to conduct colonial business and missionary education.<sup>5</sup> Considering the close proximity and intimacy of these interactions in Lomé, using social space as an analytical tool is useful in examining cultural and political contestation and co-operation by Ewe and Germans.

In defining social space, Kristin Ross wrote, "To constitute 'social space' as an object of analysis is to confront the difficulty of focusing on the ideological content of the socially created space. Our tendency, that is, is to think of space as an abstract, metaphysical context, as the container of our lives rather than the structures we help create."<sup>6</sup> In the context of Lomé, Germans and Africans contested how the city, market, and homes would be re-structured to fit the new social relations based on German political hegemony after 1884. In approaching evidence, Ross reveals how historians can conceptualize space as historically changing. Space is constructed, disputed, and reconstituted to reflect changing social relationships. While Europeans retained sovereign control over the colonial apparatus and the hegemonic use of violence in Lomé, principally corporal punishment and punitive fines, the Ewe and other Africans residents intruded upon the German cultural sphere.

This article argues that through the contestation of space and meaning between German colonizers and Ewe, Germans experienced a cultural ambivalence through internal reflections and an external pressure from Ewe. As they pursued cultural adaptation by incorporating parts of German culture, principally celebrating traditional European holidays through drums and contesting political power through the perceived legitimate methods of petitions and urban mobilization, the Ewe estranged and prompted some Germans to reconsider the efficacy of colonial evangelizing and civilizing Lomé. These actions compounded German cultural isolation in Togoland and added to the German spatial imagination that Lomé was unordered, unhygienic, and emasculating, yet paradoxically projected Lomé as a European city bordering the African bush. Building Protestant and Catholic churches and missions, European government buildings, and a pier to facilitate global trade, discourses about Lomé's urban modernity literally paved over Ewe society omitting recognition of ethnic fluidity within the city. While Protestant and Catholic missionaries expounded rhetoric of cultural superiority of Christianity to Ewe, in private, some expressed doubts about evangelizing, temperance teachings, and bringing

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<sup>3</sup> See Ansa Asamoah, *The Ewe of South-Eastern Ghana and Togo on the Eve of Colonialism: A Contribution to the Marxist Debate on pre-Capitalist Socio-Economic Formations* (Tema: Ghana Publishing Corporation, 1986); Dennis Laumann, "A Historiography of German Togoland or the Rise and Fall of a Model Colony," *History in Africa* 30, (2003): 195-211; Andrew Zimmerman, *Alabama in Africa: Booker T. Washington, the German Empire, and the Globalization of the New South* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010); and Nicoué Lodjou Gayibor, *Le Togo Sous Domination Coloniale, 1884-1960* (Lomé: Les Presses de l'UB, 1997).

<sup>4</sup> Concerning the relationship between Ewe, missionaries, and Christianity, see Sandra Greene, *Sacred Sites and the Colonial Encounter* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002); Birgit Meyer, *Translating the Devil* (Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press, 1999); and Sara Pugach, *Africa in Translation: A History of Colonial Linguistics in Germany and Beyond, 1814-1945* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012).

<sup>5</sup> Werner Ustorf, *Bremen Missionaries in Togo and Ghana*, trans. James C.G. Greig (Legon, Ghana: Legon Theological Studies, 2002), 178-9.

<sup>6</sup> Kristin Ross, "Rimbaud and the Transformation of Social Space," *Yale French Studies* 73 (1987): 104.

“Civilization.” Although German colonizers exercised political and military control, Ewe cultural practices isolated and encroached upon the Germans’ own ability to practice their traditions.<sup>7</sup> In turn, this encroachment compelled Germans living in Lomé to accentuate and exaggerate their cultural practices. These cultural struggles should be set in context in Lomé, the political center and one of the two economic hubs of Togoland. Lomé served as contested and negotiated urban space.

To support this argument and to acknowledge the limitation of colonial sources, I use Meredith McKittrick’s theory that colonial documents reveal a co-production of sources in addition to revealing African agency. She wrote, “... mission records, while not representing ‘reality’ per se, are nonetheless products of both a European *and* an African context—and they thus provide a valuable window into African societies in the earliest years of mission endeavors. The value of this cannot be overstated.”<sup>8</sup> The principal texts this article employs are a series of letters, reports, and books published from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries from German missionaries, businessmen, and ethnographers, in addition to the Anglophone pan-African-Asian newspaper, the *African Times and Orient Review*.<sup>9</sup> In interpreting German and British colonial sources, I attempted to extricate the African subject and agency from European observations as Africans participated in the creation of these colonial documents. Part of this extrication is an acknowledgement that Europeans and Africans coproduced colonial documents. This is not to state that the documents reflect symmetrical power relationships in colonial sources, but to recognize that under colonial rule, Africans demonstrated measured control over what Europeans recorded. Part of this coproduction is recognizing that the documents used in this article rely on personal and newspaper accounts that reflect an intimate lived experience in Lomé’s urban environment, which was reflected by both Germans and Africans. Official documents lack this intimacy, instead displaying a sterile distant portrayal of Lomé and its daily ebb and flow. By using these sources, the analysis attempts to remove the veneer of colonial order by exploring the production of cultural ambivalence and contestation by Lomé’s residents on an individual or small group basis.

Finally, the article builds upon Benjamin Lawrance’s *Locality, Mobility, and ‘Nation,’* in where it analyzes periurban zones, which is defined as “a rural zone within the orbit of a major market town or urban zone.”<sup>10</sup> Fundamental to Lawrance’s approach is revising the urban/rural dichotomy by addressing mobile transportation and social institutions, such as Ewe *dukowo*, arguing that this dichotomy faded after the removal of Germany as a colonial power.<sup>11</sup> After the First World War, French colonial policy installed sympathetic chiefs bridging urban and rural areas through periurban spaces.<sup>12</sup> Developing Lawrance’s analysis is that under German colonial

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<sup>7</sup> When possible, I specified in the analysis if the sources differentiated between African ethnic groups. German sources or in the newspaper accounts by the *African Times and Orient Review* often omitted ethnicity.

<sup>8</sup> Meredith McKittrick, “Capricious Tyrants and Persecuted Subjects: Reading Between the Lines of Missionary Records in Precolonial Northern Namibia,” in *Sources and Methods in African History: Spoken, Written, Unearthed*, ed. Toyin Falola and Christian Jennings (Rochester: University of Rochester, 2003).

<sup>9</sup> Ionie Benjamin, *The Black Press in Britain* (Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, England: Trentham Books Limited, 1995), 13-14.

<sup>10</sup> Benjamin Lawrance, *Locality, Mobility, and “Nation:” Periurban Colonialism in Togo’s Eweland, 1900-1960* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2007), 2.

<sup>11</sup> *Dukowo* were Ewe village units that were on the outskirts of cities connecting the countryside to the urban centers. See Lawrance, *Locality, Mobility, and “Nation,”* 17-18 and 21-26. Additionally, see Sandra Greene’s *Gender, Ethnicity, and Social Change on the Upper Slave Coast* for a thorough analysis of the Anlo Ewe’s matrilineal kinship system and its permutations in response to West African migration and Akwamu aggression.

<sup>12</sup> Lawrance, *Locality, Mobility, and “Nation,”* 3.

control, Lomé experienced an economic and political centralization that preceded the rise of periurban spaces as a product of an active French colonization.<sup>13</sup> By examining Lomé under German hegemony and using the approach of social space, the ideological construction of urban/rural through German cartography, ethnography, and diaries reflect the perceived geographical bifurcation, whereas French colonial policy, as Lawrance argues, undermines this colonial approach.

### “Constructing” and “Disciplining” Lomé

The German imperial imagination desired to construct Lomé as a modern European city, yet often everyday experiences with Ewe and living in West Africa undermined these colonial attempts, creating a tension and ambivalence about the efficacy of this colonial transformation.<sup>14</sup> After 1884, German colonizers manipulated and distorted the contemporary socio-economic relations in Lomé by measures ranging from issuing fines and checking tax cards to simple but symbolic changes such as renaming streets. In 1884, 3,000 Africans lived in the city, as compared to the more populous areas in the north and to the east, which comprised over 700,000 people in 1906.<sup>15</sup> Describing the city, Henrich Klose, a missionary who participated in the *Kulturentwicklung* (cultural development), wrote,

The city of Lomé, which in the last years had acquired a greater importance and owes its existence to the German colony...Until Nachtigal's time, in 1884, Lomé was only a small, miserable fishing village, which consisted of a few negro huts. Today it is a city of approximately 3,000 residents, of which 60 are white, and there are 13 trade posts owned and led by Europeans and some natives.<sup>16</sup>

Klose described Lomé as a city in transition, a dynamic colonial hub specializing in commerce. From a primitive fishing village to an economic and political center for the German empire, Lomé underwent a “modernizing” transformation, which, according to Klose, could be traced to Germany achieving protectorate status over Eweland in 1884. Gustav Küster, a German businessman in Lomé, similarly condemned the city as a “primitive fishing village” (*Fischdorf*)

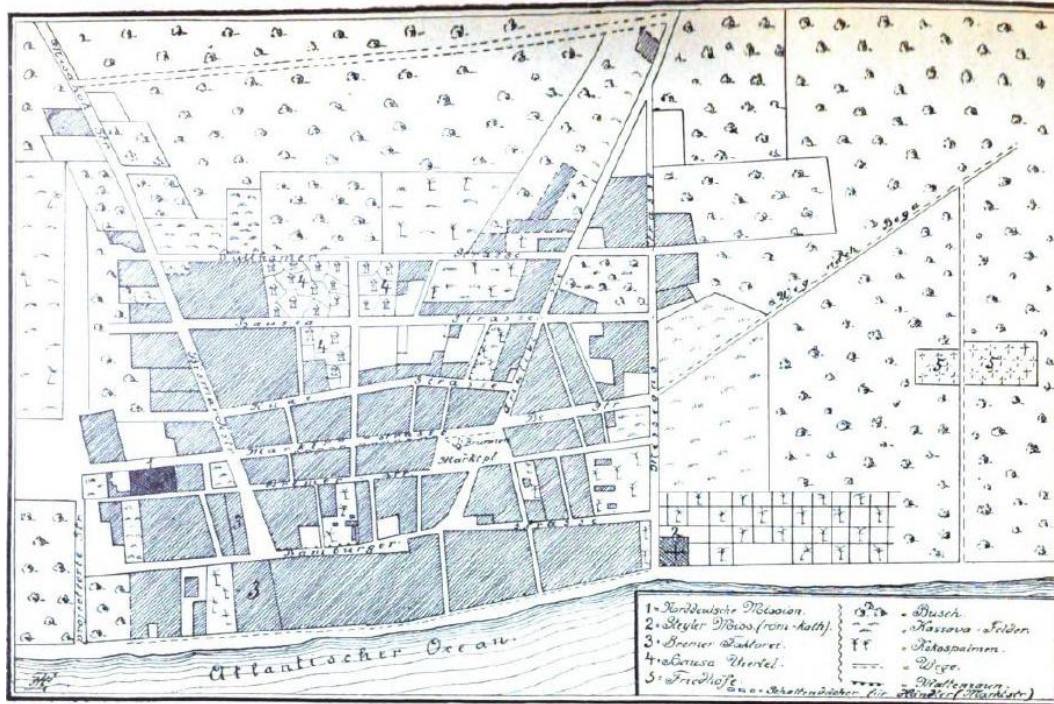
<sup>13</sup> Lawrance, *Locality, Mobility, and “Nation,”* 33-35.

<sup>14</sup> Example discourses from the metropole emphasized a privileged German racial identity juxtaposed to primitive Africa, jingoistic heroics fighting savage tribesmen, and Africa in need of “benevolent” German humanitarianism. See Sarah Friedrichsmeyer, Sara Lennox and Susanne Zantop, eds., *The Imperialist Imagination* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1998); Volker M. Langbehn, ed., *German Colonialism, Visual Culture, and Modern Memory* (New York: Routledge, 2010), Michael Schubert, *Der Schwarze Fremde: Das Bild des Schwarzafrikaners in der Parlamentarischen und Publizistischen Kolonialdiskussion in Deutschland von den 1870er bis in die 1930er Jahre* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2003); and Joachim Warmbold, *Germania in Africa* (New York: Peter Lang, 1989).

<sup>15</sup> Rudolf Fitzner, *Deutsches Kolonial Hand-Buch* (Berlin: Hermann Paetel, 1908), 5-7. The population figures do deviate in terms of total population, yet the statistics of the Western population in Togo suggest a general consensus. See *Vierteljahrshefte zur Statistik des Deutschen Reichs*, ed. Kaiserliche Statistische Amt (Berlin: Puttkammer & Mühlbrecht, 1901), 4:261; Arthur von Fircks, *Bevölkerungslehre und Bevölkerungspolitik* (Leipzig: Hirschfeld, 1898), 41; and Max Becker, *Die Entwicklung und Besiedelung der deutschen Kolonien* (Berlin: Paul Parey, 1907), 263.

<sup>16</sup> Heinrich Klose, “Küste und Vorland in Eweland: Die Stadt Lome,” in *Togoland unter Deutsche Flagge* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 1899), 26.

with unlevel streets made out of sand. Yet, in 15 years, he triumphantly observed the Germans improved the roads using clay-like soil to modernize Lomé's infrastructure.<sup>17</sup> In these quotes, discourses about modernity in Africa reveal German ambition in the continent, but it obscures how illustrations such as through cartography make explicit the connection between value-laden space and modernization.



Plan von Lomé 1896 (zu S. 26).

In the map above, Lomé reflected an ethnic gradient from left to right and bottom to top, which reinforced an ethnic superiority and “separateness” to German and African cultures.<sup>18</sup> The first two roads beyond the beach were Hamburg and Bremen streets with the colonial government offices to the city’s west side. The trade depots and North German Mission, represented by the numbers one and three, are on the left part of the map. Bismarck street was the vertical avenue on the left, moving diagonally. Yet, as one moves up and to the right on the drawing, the street names and buildings were named after African ethnic groups and geographical features. One exception was the German Catholic Mission located by the cemetery on the eastern periphery near the ocean, underscoring Catholicism’s liminal space within the German empire.<sup>19</sup> The Hausa neighborhood represented by the number four lay north of the second to last horizontal road called Hausa street. Unlike the dark shaded regions, which

<sup>17</sup> Gustav Küster, *Briefe und Bericht aus Togo 1903/4 und 1913*, ed. Uwe Schott (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2000), 27.

<sup>18</sup> This map is located in Jakob Spieth, *Die Eweer* (Glückstadt: J.J. Augustin, 1906), 29.

<sup>19</sup> While the *Kulturkampf* had ended by this period, Protestant and Catholic political conflict reemerged by 1907 with a colonial scandal in Togoland. See Rebekka Habermas, “Der Kolonialeskandal Atakpame – Eine Mikrogeschichte Des Globalen,” *Historische Anthropologie* 17 (2009): 295–319.

represent European buildings, the Hausa quarters were demarcated by small huts, reflecting German discourses towards the Hausa as unmodern and backward. In describing the Hausa, Gustav Küster wrote, “The Hausa is a good trader...An old white haired Hausa has mostly markedly Jewish features.”<sup>20</sup> Explicitly connecting the Hausa’s role in West African commerce to European stereotypes of Jews, the cartographer visually segregated and differentiated Germans and Africans in urban planning. Similarly, the framing of the drawing reflected a larger discourse about Togoland’s northern regions as “bush,” represented by little circles which filled the majority of the picture’s right side. The map demonstrates the desire for German imperialists to visualize and differentiate between German and African areas of Lomé.

The German imaginary illustrated Lomé in Manichean terms, primarily urban/rural and modern/unmodern. Supporting Lawrance’s argument, the German colonial government attempted to hinder the development of periurban spaces as fundamental economic hubs to the colony. In essence, the colonial depictions created idealized and separate ethnic spaces. In reality, Lomé displayed a cultural and ethnic fluidity belying the attempts to inculcate an ethnic separateness. This, in turn, created a tension between the civilizing mission to “lift up” the Ewe and a desire to cordon off the Ewe and Hausa as an “Other.” One explanation of this tension was the contestation and cooperation of the colonial project between multiple groups within Lomé that created a complex system of values and relationships that at times converged and diverged depending on specific circumstances.<sup>21</sup>

While the German colonial imagination desired a racial and ethnic division between German colonizers and the African residents in depictions of urban space, the everyday activities and population movements appeared fluid. Historian Yves Marguerat wrote, “Whereas elsewhere, colonial authorities imposed more or less brutally their schemes of racial segregation (usually referred to as “hygiene”), Lomé escaped this fate. Thus, to the east of the town, African and European merchants cohabit in streets that parallel the beach; and to the west, the administrative quarter included the military barracks and a prison for Africans.”<sup>22</sup> In contrast to the desires of certain German colonizers, the populations were entangled. The visual depiction of space was one attempt to transform the reality of everyday interactions within the city to inculcate discourses and individual actions based on racial differentiations. Nevertheless, one should be reminded that there was a regime of corporal punishment and the whole array of colonial coercion existed in Togoland, meaning one should not consider the colony as exceptional within the German colonial empire.

Broadly speaking, the map’s veneer of orderliness and calm, almost sterile, depiction of Lomé betrayed the potentiality of violence. Colonial officials decreed that all Togolese must pay a *Kopfsteuer*, a head tax, principally through forced labor. After completion, one received a tax card, which a *Schutzmann* checked to ensure people had “paid.” In July 1913, an author known as Quashie wrote in the *African Times and Orient Review*,

Go to the outskirts of Aflao, Djodje, and several other adjacent villages, ask from the poor villagers the “tax ticket” of the Kaiser, which his Government has given them to

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<sup>20</sup> Gustav Küster, “Zur Psychologie des Ewenegers” in *Briefe und Bericht aus Togo*, 38.

<sup>21</sup> Concerning the North German Mission’s role as problematic harbingers of formal colonialism in Togoland, see Werner Ustorf, *Bremen Missionaries in Togo and Ghana*, 43-53. Additionally, Lomé residents attempted to co-opt Germany to protect against British incursion and influence within Eweland, see Yves Marguerat, “Lomé: The Political and Social History of an Exceptional City,” in *A Handbook of Eweland: The Ewe of Togo and Benin*, ed. Benjamin Lawrance (Accra: Woeli Publishing Services, 2005), 115-122.

<sup>22</sup> Marguerat, “Lomé: The Political and Social History of an Exceptional City,” 120.

hang round their neck, to verify my statement and they will produce them for you to see. They will show you also the bayonet wounds inflicted by the hired assassins Polizeitruppen.<sup>23</sup>

The Ewe integrated the punitive taxation system into their oral culture. Gustav Küster related a contemporary Ewe story set in Lomé, which incorporated a *Meermensch*, a sea deity. He recounted that when the sea deity was detained by a *Schutzmann* about his tax card and could not produce it, the policeman sent the *Meermensch* to a colonial court, where he was sentenced to one lash. After suffering his punishment, the *Meermensch* visited and complained to the local chief about the penalty's unrighteousness. Soon afterwards, both of them used boats to destroy the German-built pier in Lomé.<sup>24</sup> The pier, a decidedly European development project, served as a symbolic object for destruction. The Ewe's use of the *Meermensch* was an adaptation of their religious deities called *Trowo* [*Tro*, singular], or smaller gods under *Mawu* who was ostensibly their supreme being.<sup>25</sup> *Trowo*, according to Ewe's Voudon traditions, manifested themselves in everyday life creating mischief or prosperity in Eweland. In this instance, the Ewe adapted their established religious traditions using the *Tro*'s disobedience against German rule. The story presents Lomé as a political struggle through a cultural milieu as Ewe attempted to live an ordinary life without the potential of corporal punishment.

Germans envisioned these tax card checks would instill discipline and order Ewe space, turning it into the aforementioned cartographer's map. In 1913, an anonymous author in *The African Times and Orient Review* wrote, "With regard to internal regulations, the German in Togoland may appear to be arbitrary in that he legislates for domestic, if not personal, cleanliness—a discarded tin in the backyard, a broken jug half filled with water...an unswept doorstep, or a defective roof, will subject the delinquent to a fine of £1."<sup>26</sup> Generally highly critical of colonialism, this article critiqued other European powers in favor of the German example. The author defended this German arbitrary exercise of power, as it produced an environment so the "most fastidious may enjoy a promenade in any part of Lomé."<sup>27</sup> Implicit in the author's logic was that if the Ewe governed themselves, they would revert to an unhygienic and disorderly life. Only arbitrary fines supported by "enlightened" German colonial rule could ensure Lomé safe for European strolling. Sifting through the rhetoric of applauding German colonialism, the use of fines and violence pervaded the urban experience in Lomé by severely restricting economic and political freedoms, constructing the superficial appearance of cartographic Lomé. The sterile, albeit modern, attempt at constructing Lomé in terms of the German imagination was to make the city a European Eden in Africa.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> *African Times and Orient Review*, July 1913.

<sup>24</sup> Gustav Küster, "Zur Psychologie des Ewenegers" in *Briefe und Bericht aus Togo*, 44.

<sup>25</sup> *Mawu* was a regional deity that Christian missionaries such as the North German Mission attempted to standardize as the supreme deity for all Ewe to inculcate ideas of monotheism and the Christian God. See Birgit Meyer, *Translating the Devil*, 64-65 and Sandra Greene, *Sacred Sites and the Colonial Encounter*, 19-23.

<sup>26</sup> *African Times and Orient Review*, Feb-March 1913.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, Feb-March 1913.

<sup>28</sup> The colonial Garden of Eden image accompanied with an African Eve figure tempting young white men was used in German literature. See Marianne Bechhaus-Gerst's chapter "Schwarze Eva: Konstruktion der Afrikanische Frau in der Kolonialliteratur," in *Frauen in den Deutschen Kolonien*, ed. Marianne Bechhaus-Gerst, Mechthild Leutner, Hauke Neddermann (Berlin: Christoph Links Verlag, 2009).

## German Ambivalence in Lomé

In addition to conflicts in Lomé's markets and neighborhoods, German colonizers had a paradoxical relationship with their new territory absent in the map's depiction. At times, Togoland was a "place in the sun," where Germans could escape the over-industrialized, congested German lands, or Africa could also be "the White Man's Grave," a continent riddled with disease, poisonous fauna, and a malaise-inducing weather that sapped men of their industriousness. Colonial imaginations juxtaposed Togo's pleasant coastal climate and mortal threats located in and around Lomé. Similar to the potential danger of having a *Schutzmann* asking Lomé's Africans residents to procure their tax cards, the fears afflicting Germans were hidden, either bacterial, hiding in the sand, or too small to casually observe, only making its presence known through a painful bite or a slithering under one's skin.

Emma Küster, Gustav's wife, loved to promenade through the streets and watch the ships approach the pier. Frau Küster reminisced about the agreeable walks filled with handshakes, laughter, and multilingual pleasantries of "morning, morning," "good evening," and "Guten Morgen" and "Guten Abend."<sup>29</sup> Similar to Emma Küster's walks in Lomé, Magdalene von Prince accompanied her husband to Africa. While in German East Africa, she explored the cities and towns she visited and reveled in the perceived exotic. She recorded one parade with 800 African war dancers pounding *Ngomas* (drums) or reflected peacefully in her diary about her traipses through streets busied with people and imagining that open doors were inviting her in.<sup>30</sup> As a wife to a military officer, von Prince was mobile and had opportunities to record and interact with many African cultures through photographic trips and her daily reflections, whereas Emma Küster generally remained within the confines of Lomé raising a family.

The German ambivalence exaggerated the feelings associated with promenading or photographing the benign exotic, but in turn, exaggerated fears of scorpions on pleasant beaches or guinea worms in stagnant water. Gustav Küster described Togo's weather as "immer schön;" dropping to 20 degrees Celsius at night and rising to 30 degrees during the day, which was accompanied by an ocean breeze. Alternatively, worms absorbed the German imagination. Gustav described the guinea worm as "a dark, long worm, which wanders under the skin in the body and grows bigger."<sup>31</sup> The worm thrived in stagnant water and upon contact with open sores or swallowed, the worm grew painfully inside the body. Drinking water or showering, vital to cleanliness and living, involved a possibility of infection. Whereas Germans claimed Africans to be unhygienic, the act of cleaning and hygienic practice carried the possibility of infection for German colonizers, inverting hygienic discourse on its head.

These dangers and perceived dangers isolated Germans from their *Heimat*, which forced some Germans such as Emma Küster to proceed with her life as if she lived in a European city or prompted other to recognize Lomé as a scientifically peculiar space. On Emma Küster's walks, she enjoyed the company of her adopted African children, whom she infantilizing, and arguably dehumanizingly, called "boys." She ordered them to kill scorpions with flotsam to clear her

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<sup>29</sup> Emma Küster, *Briefe und Bericht aus Togo*, 9.

<sup>30</sup> Magdalene von Prince, *Eine deutsche Frau im inneren Deutsch Ost-Afrikas* (Berlin: E.S. Mittler, 1908), 97 and 127.

<sup>31</sup> Gustav and Emma Küster to Parents and Siblings, Lomé, September 29, 1903 in *Briefe und Bericht aus Togo*, 12.



way.<sup>32</sup> To civilize the foreign environment, the Küsters' hemmed their newly born son's mosquito net with white silk.<sup>33</sup> Alternatively, scientific discourses acknowledged Lomé as an incubator for mosquitoes. In 1901, the *Journal of Tropical Medicine* observed that a unique species of mosquitoes could be found in Lomé, but not in Little Popo, which contributed to the African peculiarity of Lomé as a space for natural dangers.<sup>34</sup> To prevent contracting malaria, one Dr. Ziemann recommended draining stagnant water and urged Europeans to drink boiled water with "closely fitting covers" to prevent contamination.<sup>35</sup> Part of this discourse was that the Tsetse fly killed draft animals, which was part of the economic reorganization and "modernizing" of Ewe economy. With the failure of introducing beasts of burden, Africans literally yoked themselves to till the fields.<sup>36</sup>

Similar to other perceptions throughout the African colonies such as in German East Africa was the discourse that the African women and environment could furtively sap German men's whiteness and culture. Emma Küster acted as a cultural role model for her husband to ward off the "degrading" African influences.<sup>37</sup> Lomé's climate appeared to make German men tardy for meals, compelling Frau Küster to install a clock outfitted with a bell, ringing to signify meal times. She equated punctual and regular meals with good health, maintaining her husband's industriousness and virility. Revealing her disdain for her counterpart's malingering, she wrote, "Who is not here, shall eat the leftovers cold."<sup>38</sup> The installing of a loud clock, promenading through Lomé as if it was a European city, and sewing silk onto a mosquito net demonstrate how Germans intensified their cultural practices hoping to maintain their "Europeaness" and to dispel the ambivalence created by the Ewe and living in West Africa. While the evidence analyzed in this section speaks to the Küster's cultural and social habits maintaining cultural ties to the metropole and a brief glimpse into Lomé as a scientific object to be studied, the sources reveal a certain intimacy and peculiarity around the urban space that official documents cannot articulate. Despite daily cultural interactions with Ewe and Hausa, and the exotic fauna and flora, there was a seemingly blind, almost Sisyphean, desire to transform Lomé into a German city by acting if it already was.

### Ewe Cultural Appropriation

Holidays such as Christmas and the Kaiser's birthday served as events for Ewe and other Africans to adapt and appropriate cultural traditions, often disorienting Germans in the capital city. In Togoland, the presence of Europeans was extremely significant, but their numerical presence was exceedingly small. In 1891, 30 Germans lived in Togoland with five other

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>33</sup> Emma and Gustav Küster, Lomé 24. January 1904 in *Briefe and Bericht aus Togo*, 18.

<sup>34</sup> Hans Ziemann, "Malaria and Mosquitoes on the West Coast of Africa," *Journal of Tropical Medicine* (January, 15 1909), 31.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Andrew Zimmerman, *Alabama in Africa* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 144-45.

<sup>37</sup> On the relationship between gender and race in the German colonies, see Robbie Aitken, *Exclusion and Inclusion: Gradations of Whiteness and Socio-Economic Engineering in German Southwest Africa, 1884-1914* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007); Daniel J. Walther, *Creating Germans Abroad* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2002); and *Frauen in den Deutschen Kolonien*, Marianne Bechhaus-Gerst, Mechthild Leutner, Hauke Neddermann, ed (Berlin: Christoph Links Verlag, 2009).

<sup>38</sup> Emma and Gustav Küster, Lomé, September 29, 1903 in *Briefe und Bericht aus Togo*, 7.

Westerners. In 1907 Lomé, there were approximately 6,000 Africans and 164 Westerners. Expanding this out to include all Africans in German Togoland, there were 981,900 Africans and 288 Westerners engulfed in Eweland.<sup>39</sup>

The traditional Ewe drum symbolized the distinction between how Ewe and Germans celebrated the same colonial holidays. Gustav Küster complained about the Ewe's wild merriment and odious drumming on Christmas. He concluded, "Thus passes in Ewe-land many men celebrating the holy night with noisiness, drums, and dancing, whereas in old Christendom families celebrate the still night in their houses near candle light."<sup>40</sup> Holidays allowed Ewe to exercise cultural traditions in a colonial milieu. By doing so, the drums and boisterous behavior impeded upon the Germans' ability to piously and quietly enjoy Christmas in their residences. The imbibing of alcohol served to remind missionaries that their temperance teachings had little impact on behavior. During holidays, Ewe controlled the outdoors—the streets and external spaces—in joyous celebration, whereas Germans and other Europeans chose to quietly observe Christ's birth indoors. This contestation suggests that the map of Lomé omits the depiction of the Ewe's temporary inversion of power relations through the celebrations of European holidays and festivals. Compared to von Prince's enjoyment of the drums in German East Africa, the drums on Christmas incorporated an exotic practice into a known celebration. When the drums were used in perceived suitable contexts, i.e. festivals and parades outside of traditional European holidays, the perception of African cultures was alluring, yet conversely it provided a means to disorient Germans within a European cultural milieu.

In the confluence of German and Ewe cultures, Ewe continuities persisted. Despite missionary and colonial official desires, cultural traditions remained symbolized through the Ewe drum. Francis Potackey, the head of the Roman Catholic Senior Boys' School in Keta, recorded an Ewe custom, the *Nyiko*, which used drums. The *Nyiko* custom punished people who practiced witchcraft, stole, lied, or acquired debt by condemning them, depending on context and number of offenses, to death.<sup>41</sup> The convicted would be asked by a family member to fetch an object in a neighboring village, who would be housed for the night. Then, the condemned person would be woken up and asked to lead an elderly man to a latrine on the outskirts of the village. Walking into the bush, a group of men would wait for his appearance and proceed to beat him with blunt objects until he died. Afterwards, a messenger would run to tell drummers that the offender was dead. The drum's significance warned everyone to stay inside. The assailants reserved the right to kill if they were stumbled upon, as it was customary to keep the assailants' identities a secret. Ending the story, Potackey concluded, "Now that Europeans are masters in the country they have suppressed this custom, as they have done other cruel ones. The *Nyiko* drums, as well as the place called Agbakute still exist; but they are no long objects of dread, and are looked upon now more as relics of a custom of past ages than as instruments of death or torture."<sup>42</sup> Yet, the usage of drums during Christmas and on the Kaiser's birthday demonstrated that they were not relegated to "past ages," but suggests that they were active agents in colonial resistance. The drum remained a vital method in exercising Ewe culture, and a method to compel Europeans into their houses to avoid the drum's full auditory effects. Conversely, the *Nyiko* confirmed German

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<sup>39</sup> Figures derived from population data in the cited *Deutsches Kolonial Hand-Buch*, 5-7.

<sup>40</sup> Gustav Küster, "Zur Psychologie des Ewenegers" in *Briefe und Bericht aus Togo*, 37.

<sup>41</sup> Diedrich Westermann, *A Study of the Ewe Language*, trans. A. L. Bickford Smith (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), 238-246.

<sup>42</sup> Francis Potackey, "A Strange Way of Punishment Among the Awunas," in Westermann, *A Study of the Ewe Language*, 246.

discourses about the perceived unmodern Ewe culture that appeared uncivilized and barbaric. Potackey's comments reflected a European desire for the drum to lose its relevance and to depict Lomé as progressing from its backward heritage as a "*Fischdorf*."

In other instances, a strict line cannot be drawn between Ewe and Germans because of the presence of colonial educated Africans participating in European businesses and governance, who experienced a cultural estrangement.<sup>43</sup> Ewe Adolf Kodjovi Johnson, born in October 1888, grew up in Little Popo and attended a French missionary school in Dahomey. After 1900, he worked for J.K. Vietor, a prominent supporter of the North German Mission, who also employed Gustav Küster in the Vietor trading company.<sup>44</sup> Adolf Johnson helped coordinate the business's day-to-day affairs, attended the North German Mission's school in Lomé, and became the adopted son of Emma and Gustav. From 1906 to 1908, Johnson traveled to Halle, Germany to complete his German studies.<sup>45</sup> In a letter addressed to Gustav, Johnson expressed wonderment at how Germans in the metropole celebrated the Kaiser's birthday. Recounting a visit to a winter garden, he described a group of military officers irreverently playing and singing. He wrote, "Those who played were laughing to death, but said nothing for the Savior. I was still during the whole time. I could not say a word because it was all alien to me. Everything they played was foreign to me...I wondered to myself, that these people prefer to play rather than seek peace."<sup>46</sup> The Küsters, who raised Johnson, accentuated their European traditions in the colonial context, and, in turn, this accentuation and distortion of German society and culture was taught to Johnson. Due to his colonial education, Germany appeared united and Christian, which did not account for divisions between Catholics and Protestants, Socialist agitation, and the continuing debates over empire in the Reichstag. While Johnson expressed adoration for the Kaiser and desired a moment for solemn reflection, Johnson experienced a cultural estrangement because the Germans soldiers he encountered were not "German" but an aberration according to his colonial education in Togoland. Similar to Gustav Küster's apprehensions about how Ewe "unruly" celebrated Christmas, this ideological ambivalence was sustained through Johnson as an African intermediary. This cultural ambivalence was a product of the tension created between the idealized German colonizing mission and education with his experience of German society outside the colonies.

In contrast to imagined German desires to how Lomé should be spatially or culturally organized, Africans politicized Lomé's urban space by protesting in the city's western quarters. In 1913, Lomé's African population seeking redress for grievous colonial atrocities, principally killing prisoners under the governorship of Georg Hans von Doering, voiced their concerns about colonial governance in a seven-point petition. As reported by the author "Anti-Prussian" in the *African Times and Orient Review*, Africans attempted to petition the Secretary of State of the Colonies, Dr. Solf, to curb violence, end the poor treatment of prisoners, and garner a modicum of political rights.<sup>47</sup> Specifically, the group petitioned for,

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<sup>43</sup> In addition to Ewe intermediaries, Afro-Brazilians were an influential colonial merchant class in Togoland. See Alcione M. Amos, "Afro-Brazilians in Togo: The Case of the Olympio Family, 1882-1945," *Cahiers d'Études Africaines* 41, no. 162 (January 1, 2001): 293-314.

<sup>44</sup> Ustorf, 35-45.

<sup>45</sup> Adolf Kodjovi Johnson, *Meine Zeit sowie mein Leben ist mir wie ein Ratsel*, ed. Uwe Schott (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2000), xi-xii. This is a collection of letters from Johnson to his adopted parents and to their biological children.

<sup>46</sup> Adolf Johnson to Gustav Küster, February 1, 1906 in *Meine Zeit*, 3.

<sup>47</sup> *African Times and Orient Review*, Nov-Dec 1913, 249-251.

1. A better organization of legal administration; 2. Abolition of punishment by chain-gang and flogging; 3. Better arrangement of prisons; 4. Admission of presentation of the native at the sessions of the Government Council; 5. Introduction of a general code of laws for the country; 6. Reduction of taxation; 7. Freedom of Trade for the natives.<sup>48</sup>

Furthermore, they elaborated on each point. For example, point number two, which discussed chain gangs and corporal punishment, the petition explained the “adjacent colonies call us ‘children of the chain and rod,’ to our very great shame.”<sup>49</sup> In what had been a cultural struggle transformed into a political movement to reform colonial rule.

While the petition itself demonstrated the seriousness of the political demands, the manner in which they handed the petition to the governor exposed them to physical punishment, which lay under the aforementioned colonial veneer of order. Meeting at a house, they organized themselves and arrived at the governor’s quarters at four o’clock. They asked for the Secretary of State’s audience, who was visiting Lomé. They were told to go to the beach side of the building to be received, which they soon realized that it was a ploy to distract them. As they rushed to the front of the house, the Governor had nearly escaped in his automobile. After a reportedly lively discussion, the group’s leaders handed Governor Doering the petition, who told them to return tomorrow for a formal response. The next day, the Secretary of State largely dismissed the petition, arguing that the governor had made the correct decision concerning prisoner treatment. He concluded that the colony was too young for structural administrative change as demanded in the petition.

Despite its failure, the petition movement demonstrated the importance of space in political organization and dialogue. Gustav Küster wrote, “For the most part, Europeans were invited to have coffee in the Governor’s house, and to watch from the veranda the public entertainment of the natives.”<sup>50</sup> The Governor’s house was designed as a depoliticized space between Germans and the Ewe, consisting of a constructed patriarchal relationship where Germans played the fathering role to “educate and civilize” Africans. The Lomé residents, petition in hand, politicized the Governor’s house, altering the social relations between the city’s residents and colonial administration similar to Christmas celebrations. The physical construction of the building had a role in presenting the petition. The house, symbolizing colonial strength, changed to a temporary penitentiary for Doering, as he attempted to mislead the petitioners around the building to allow him a chance to escape. This movement suggests that Africans within Lomé cultivated a common identity with a shared experience under German rule. The article omitted stating whether the group was entirely Ewe or contained Hausa and Afro-Brazilians. With this movement, a political ideology formed that would continue to grow after the First World War, but the use of a petition, a written document, was an appropriation of European emphasis on paper and documentation as a legitimate means to mitigate the deleterious effects of colonial rule.

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 250.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Gustav Küster, *Briefe und Bericht aus Togo*, 30.

## Conclusion

German discourses about colonial modernity through urban development and civilizing Lomé reflected the cultural contestations by Ewe. Refusing to acknowledge this contestation and complicated ethnic fluidity, the German portrayal of Lomé's urban modernity was not an observation of colonial effectiveness in Germanization and discipline, but rather its absence. This absence produced a cultural ambivalence for German colonizers, especially through intimate experiences of individuals and groups in Lomé. It is on this level that historians can clearly see the influence of German/Ewe coproduction in discourses. Ewe and Germans modified these existing discourses to specific needs of cultural continuity, political reform through petitions, or based on individual needs, such as Emma Küster maintaining her marriage. Simply stated, this coproduction and contestation often preceded, or at minimum informed, the civilizing discourses in Lomé. Methodologically, this article used social space to explain the dialectical process between discourse and action. Through analyzing the German imagination and how Ewe contested urban spaces, this article argues that German colonizers desired Lomé to be an aseptic European city with African elements to civilize, yet the aforementioned map suggests an underlying cultural ambivalence between Germans and Ewe. Ironically, the ostensible appropriation of German and European cultural traditions produced the ambivalence within German colonizers. The unintended consequences of this civilizing process created a cultural isolation for the German community within the colony. Germans expressed this isolation through ideological tropes such as the "White Man's Grave" or largely ignoring that Lomé was in Africa by recreating Europe within a small urban space