

THE WALA KINGDOM

When the power of Mali was at its apogee the Mandingoes who then controlled the trade in gold became mostly long distance traders. Their main aim was to monopolize the gold trade so that they could play the role of middlemen between the producers and the Arab traders who risked everything to take the Trans-Saharan Caravan route across the desert down to the Niger area purposely to get gold.

The Mandingo indulgence in the long distance trade took them to all parts of Africa. They carried their wares such as beads, rocksalt etc. made available to them by the Arabs to all parts of West Africa. They traded in these wares and Islam for local products like foodstuff, cattle and slaves. They easily made homes wherever they went and this explains why they founded colonies in all their trading centres throughout West Africa. It was in the pursuit of this long distance trade that some time in the course of the fourteenth century that some of the Mandingo traders tumbled over into a Lobi settlement sited in a place that came to be known as Wa. Here they founded several colonies that later developed into what are called Taghrayiri, Limamyiri, Dondoli and Kabanya. According to J. C. Dougan in his "Wa and its Peoples" the Kabanya Moslems migrated into Wa from Laribanga.

A section of the Moslem community has not yet been accounted for. The ancestors of the people of Zangbeyiri (Gyanbeyiri in Wali dialet) definitely were not Mandingo and did not come from Mali. Zanghera in the local dialects of the Mole language means "Hausa". This term is a big pointer to the place of origin of the ancestors of the Zangbeyiri Moslems. D. H. Jones has pungently observed that for many centuries what is now Northern Ghana has been a meeting centre of "two great currents of external influence". He mentioned one to be descending south-westwards from Hausaland, Lake Chad and beyond and the other coming down in south-easterly direction from the Upper Niger area. Along the first some Hausa traders found their way into Wa. It is not known when this happened. They founded a colony in a

place called Zangbeyiri and descendants of these Hausa traders who were moslems are the Zangbeyiri people in Wa today.

The members of the Moslem community in Wa are the direct descendants of the Mandingo and Hausa colonists who founded their colonies in Wa. The founders of the Moslem community settled in Wa long before both the Black Dagomba elements i.e. the Balume and the Wala princes settled in the place. The only people who could have preceded the Mandingo and Hausa traders were the Lobi. The Moslem immigrants simply traded with the Lobi in Wa and ran their own affairs including their Koranic schools. No attempt was made by them to convert the Lobi to Islam. All their activities were dominated by the desire for profit through trade.

The ancestors of the Wala princes came to Wa from the east much like their Mole-speaking kinsmen before them about one hundred or more years previously. They arrived from Dagbong (Dagomba) and/or Mamprushi. The founding father of the ancestors of the Wala princes was a Dagomba prince, and a native of Diari. He travelled to the Mamprussi capital where he married one of the daughters of the Nayiri. His descendants continued to stay in the Mamprussi capital and they once attempted to seize the Mamprussi chiefship but failed. This was a betrayal enough and the Mamprussis drove them out of the Mamprussi kingdom. They returned to Diari to rejoin their kinsmen there. In their war of expansion the Gonjas, under the leadership of the Wasipewura of Daboya fought the Dagombas whose capital, now known as Yendi Dabari, was situated very close to Diari. In a battle for Daboya between the Gonja and Dagomba, the Dagomba were soundly defeated and Daboya was wrested from them. The Gonja conquest of Daboya had made the Dagomba capital vulnerable and therefore threatened. The Ya Na, Na Dariziogo had lost his life in the battle with the Gonja for Daboya. The next Ya Na, Na Luro, decided that, in the given circumstances, it was politic to remove the Dagomba capital to a safer place. Accordingly, the Dagomba capital was removed to Konkomba country in the east and the modern Yendi was built as a result.

With the removal of the capital from Yendi Dabari to modern Yendi the security situation around Diari became precarious. Diari itself could be sacked at any moment by the Gonja. Fear seized the natives of Diari and those of them who had recently been sacked from Mamprussi decided to imigrate from Diari. Their leader, Sonlia, to avoid the ever encircling power of Gonja, decided to go northwards and then westwards. He led his people northwards but it is not known whether they reached the Gurunni country in the north before they turned westward. It is however known that they spent a number of years sojourning between Diari and Gbatore. Some of them were reported to have settled permanently at Funsu, Walembelle and Kojopari. There had not been any report of their meeting opposition in the Wa area or anywhere else. In fact all penetration into Dagao was generally peaceful despite the insecure nature of the times in the area.

The ancestors of the Wala princes first settled at Gbatore a few miles east of Wa. Their leader Sonlia died here and the man in charge of his stables, the Widana, (the lord of the horses) called Gura, seized power from the princes. It was Gura who led the Walas into Degu some four miles east of Wa where they made a permanent settlement. Meanwhile one of the sons of Sonlia was growing up at Balum in Wa, his mother's paternal home. This son who was called Pel^upo was given a wife by his avuncular relatives among whom he was living. He had become elderly and much respected by his mothers people. He was one of them in everytbing but birth. It so happened that the Yidana or priest-chief of the Balume died and the people elected Pel^upo because of his advanced age to succeed him. Pel^upo immediately created a constitutional revolution. He declared himself as a secular chief and not a priest-chief and thereby reoganized his avuncular relatives as tengdamba (priest-chiefs) His immediate plan was to fight the usurper Gura at Degu. He conquered Degu as the people of Degu deserted Gura and supported Pel^upo and brought his people into Wa and ruled over them.

Gura was exiled to either Duori or Mangu where he died. Pelpuo brought his fathers sons from Degu into Wa and founded the Wala state. From Wa the Wala princes went out to the satellite villages where they precariously established their rule and created divisional chiefdoms.

WALA KINGDOM BECOMES A VASSAL STATE TO
THE BOLEWURA

The members of the Ikye clan which formed the ruling estate of the Wala chiefdom wore severe sacrifications engraved on their arms, legs, checks, breasts and dorsal muscles that strongly resembled the Gonja tribal marks which were identified as Bambara tribal marks.

George E. Ferguson has in his letter addressed to Governor Griffiths, dated 19th November, 1892, thrown some light on the origin of the Wala clannish sacrifications. Ferguson had previously been sent to sign treaties of friendship with Bole, Lobi, and Wa, in a bid to bring them into British sphere of interest. Ferguson signed such treaty with Bole but did not sign with Wa. He explained that Gardiari (Gazari) Zabrama slave trader had conquered Wa but was very demanding so the Wala appealed to the Bolewura to drive out Gazari from Wa for them. The Bolewura accordingly attacked Wa and drove Gazari out. But he (the Bolewura) in turn colonized Wa from which he exacted annual tribute. A small colony of Gonja (the Mantin Zabaghi) was planted at Mangu to collect the annual tribute from the Wala for the Bolewura. The procurement of the items of the annual tribute by the Wala for the Bolewura used to generate trouble between the Wala and their neighbours to the north. The Wala were also ordered to wear the Gonja tribal marks. So by the time Ferguson arrived at Wa, the Wala chiefdom was a vassal state to the Bolewura. Ferguson explained in writing that:

"Wa was feudatory to Gonja for suzerainty has been claimed over it by Gonja since Gardiari (Gazari) attacked it and Bole went to its protection." (Vide "Great Britain and the Gold Coast Documents of Gold Coast History"

Ferguson therefore explained that in this case Wa became British sphere of influence by treaty with Bole. So the Wala clannish scarification were imposed on them by the Gonja.

The Wala chiefdom became a satellite and a vassal state to the Gonja and this state of vassalage lasted up to the time the British acquired and incorporated both the Gonja and Wala states into the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast.

During the Gonja civil war of 1873 in which the Ahante sided one party against Yagbongwura Nyantachi, the Wala fought on the side of the Bolewura, Jakpa Sai, their overlord and Banda-wura Kinking. The opponents of Yagbongwura Nyantachi won a brilliant victory and Yagbongwura Nyantachi was defeated. After this victory over the Yagbongwura, the Wala, under Mampa Fuo, the Wala Na, and prince Bajari of Yigyih gate, the Wala army commander, were very proud. Bajuri wanted to use their military victory over Yagbongwura Nyantachi to advantage.

He planned Wala military incursions into places like Doriman, Charia, Papu, Sankana, Kanyini and Naro in order to procure the items of the Wala annual tribute for the Bolewura. The Wala projected military invasions of Charia and Naro did not materialize because of the threatened military intervention by the Manlarla State. For the case of Dorimon they came into a belated understanding with that state and the campaign had to be called off. The Wala however scored military success in their campaigns against Kanyini and Papu simply because Kaleo did not intervene militarily. In the case of Papu the Sankana people who are squatters on Papu land had to go to their help. All the same the Wala won an easy victory.

The Wala then threatened Sankana for helping Papu in the Wala - Papu war. This time the Manlarla state through their elder Gbarni of Kaleo, warned the Wala not to attempt to go to war against Sankana. The Wala refused to heed the warning and attacked Sankana. The Manlarla there upon went to the help of the Sankana people and the Wala were dishonourably routed by the Sankana people.

Bajuri's pride was wounded by this humiliating defeat. He was looking for a suitable occasion whereby he would avenge himself by defeating the Sankana people and if possible, also the Manlarla in order to blot out the disgrace of the defeat the Wala had so humiliatingly suffered at the hands of the Sankana people. To make Wala victory over the Sankana people doubly sure Bajuri invited the Zabrama leader Barbatu to help the Wala achieve this objective. He promised Barbatu one hundred slaves, one hundred fowls and one hundred guinea-fowls if Barbatu would accept to give military aid to the Wala so as to enable them to conquer not only the Sankana people but particularly the Manlarla chiefdom. Barbatu agreed to the deal in its entirety. Bajuri never doubted the success of his undertaking, for as he thought the Manlarla could not stand the military might of both Barbatu and the Wala combined. And from a defeated Manlarla state he would exact every item of the provisions of the deal into which he and Barbatu had entered. A defeated Sankana people would be forced to pay the annual tribute to the Bolewura. Because Bajuri was so sure of the Wala victory over the Manlarla chiefdom and Sankana he found it neither prudent nor necessary to brief his compatriots about the provisions of the Wala-Zabrama deal nor did he even mention it to anybody.

Intelligence reports had warned the Manlarla about the military preparations of the Wala and their Zabrama mercenaries. The Manlarla and the Sankana people took a defensive position at Sankana, the traditional cock-pit of the area to fight to the death in defending their political, social and economic liberty against the promoters of aggression whose unjustifiable war aim was booty. The war was fiercely fought and it was surprising that the Wala and their Zabrama allies were ignobly defeated. They were completely routed, prisoners of war were taken and sold into slavery and the remnants of the invading troops chased, as eye witness reports indicated, all the way to the outskirts of Wa town, some actually shot down on the way. Eye witness

reports confirmed that Bajuri lost his war dress to the thorny bushes in his mad flight for life. He was reported to have fled from the scene of fighting at Sankana to Ghansa from where he found his way into Wa.

This was not the end of the story. The Wala and their Zabrama allies had lost the war but the provisions of the deal were neither forgotten by Barbatu nor were they yet redeemed by Bajuri. Barbatu sent his captains to demand and collect every item of the provisions of the deal. In the realities that obtained in the aftermath of the Wala - Zabrama humiliating defeat Bajuri could not possibly satisfy the provisions of the deal and told the Zabrama captains so. The Zabrama captains told him that since there was no condition in the deal that if the campaign failed he would not deliver the goods he had to honour the provisions of the deal. Bajuri understood the force of their argument but was helpless. He had not got the heart to inform his compatriots of what was happening between him and Barbatu. Barbatu after waiting in vain for Bajuri to satisfy the provisions of their deal, led his army into Wa in order to lend force to the issue of his demand. Wa was accordingly sacked. As a result of this raid Barbatu had had more than his fair share of the provisions far in excess of what the deal had provided for.

After this sad and unfortunate Wala disaster engineered by their own military chief and diplomat blame could only be heaped on nobody but on two Wala people, the Wa Na, Maman Fuo and his military and political adviser prince Bajuri who was outwardly brave but inwardly as a hyena. After this political and military disgrace Bajuri could no longer bear his head up in Wa. He left Wa in disgrace on a self-imposed exile for the Gonja country. He later died at Jentilpe near Bole where he was buried. Maman Fuo the Wa Na, committed suicide because he knew the Wala were fed up with his useless and costly military campaigns and were plotting his removal.

There were immigrations into north-western Ghana by Moshi elements from the Moshi country in the north. These people came into the area in approximately three waves at different times and by different routes. Their descendants now form the ruling estate in the Manlarla state centred on Kaleo and at Wecheau. The descendants of the rest of these Moshi elements are found at Kulmasa and at Kumbeshi. The ancestors of the Kumbeshi and Kulmasa people seem to be the latest to arrive and the story about them is that they sold a horse to the Wa Na who failed to pay for it. This debt forced some of them to stay back in order to collect the money. Unfortunately the Wa Na died before he could pay for the horse. This forced them to build their village which they called Kumbeahi so that from there they could press to collect the money for the horse. Whenever a new Wa Na is installed they remind him of the debt incurred by his predecessor. He normally and customarily pays something to them. The advanced party of this group settled at Kulmasa and became the ancestors of the Kulmasa people.

GONJA RAIDS ON BONA (GBONA)

The old idea that tropical Africa can have no history in conventional sense because it has no written documents is now found to be simply not true and therefore must be disabused. If tropical Africa lacks a continuous methodical record of public events and the study of growth of nations, it does not lack a whole train of events connected with past Empires and states, their prominent Kings or Sovereigns and other things. The Gonjas are Mandingos who migrated from Mande, a state within the Malli Empire in the Sudan. The Sudan Zone may be divided into three historical regions. Senegalese chieftaincies, Sanake and Mandinka states between the Niger and Senegal, and the Songhay region of Upper Niger; all of which together with central Mande peoples, were embraced within the sphere of the empire of Malli.

At some time between 1550 and 1575 the great Askia Dawud of Songhai found that the supplies of gold from the southern producers had begun selling some of their production to Portuguese and other European traders along the seaboard.

Askia Dawud accordingly despatched a force of Mandinka armed cavalry to see what could be done. Dawud's armoured horsemen, the bulldozing tanks of those times, rode south from the neighbourhood of Jenne until they reached the Black Volta bend of modern Ghana. The Gonjas discovered that cavalry could not operate in the dense forest where the Akan lived and smelted gold. The Gonjas stayed at Biewu (Begho) and the recitals of Gonja drum history tells of the Gonja having fought wars at Sewfi, Birim, (a town near a river) Jape (which possibly is Japekrom) and Longoro.

The Mandingo/Gonja expeditionary force was headed by seven leaders, each leader being the head of a separate lineage. The leaders who arrived in Bono Manso were, according to their seniority, 1. Lamba (Naba'a) 2. Wam, 3. Lata or Lanta, 4. Lemu, 5. Jaffa, 6 Mamfa and 7 Chari. Lamba was regarded as sovereign and after his death in 1595/6 he was succeeded by Wam. The Techiman and Nkuranza people fought against Wam and Wam was killed in the war. There was a dispute amongst the remaining leaders about the succession and this caused the leaders to break up. Lata or Lanta, the third leader, who was also known as Dingoro (Mandingo) Jakpa left the area and settled at Kapuyase near the Black Volta River. Lanta, Dingoro Jakpa was the father of Ndewura Jakpa and the ancestor of the Lata Ngbanya (Gonja).

Lemu, the fourth leader took command of the forces under Jaffa, the fifth leader and Mamfa, the sixth leader, in addition to his own, and fought the following countries which lie north-west of Bonduku which he subdued: Palaga, Kong, Jimini, Awuasu, Kongolu, Kusayini and Samata. He marched on Gbona (Bona) and he sacked the town. He was pacified with a house and a number of cattle. This was the first attack of Bona by the Mandingo/

Gonja army with which Dingoro Jakpa was associated. Lemu died at Gbona and Jaffa, the fifth leader succeeded him and came to Bole with his people. Mamfa, the sixth leader also died at Bole. Jaffa then marched towards the east and fought the Dagomba and conquered the Kparba countries of Kpanshegu, Jantong and Kikpande where he and the descendants of Lemu and Maffa established their rule over the Dagombas.

The sixth leader Chari became the sovereign ~~in~~ to succeed Wam and after staying at Bono Manso for some time he also moved to build the Gonja capital Manwule. He was lord of the Longoro people and his chieftaincy title was Manwura Chari.

Lanta (Lata), Dingoro Jakpa in course of time became Burewura (Bur-wura) in 1634/5. When he became very old he put his army under the charge of his son Ndewura Jakpa in 1675. It was Ndewura Jakpa who actually founded the Gonja Kingdom and became its Emperror.

When Ndewura Jakpa died in 1697/8, he was succeeded by Limu for 2 months and fifteen days. Limu was succeeded by Banga for 8 months. ~~an~~Banga was succeeded by Bur Lannyo for 40 days when he was driven away from Gbipe by an Akan army.

Bur Lannyo was succeeded by the first Tuluwewura Abbas in about 1700. He reigned for eight years and two hundred days as Yagbongwura elect before he was officially installed as Yagbongwura and he died one hundred days after his installation, and his reign was from 1700 - 1709.

An Arabic manuscript written by Imam Imoru Konadi and Al-Hajj Mahama giving dates from 1564 A.D. records about Abbas as follows:

"Then a war broke out between Abbas and the chief of Longoro, in which many people were killed... this lasted for twelve years, until peace was made between them.

Then the Chief of Longoro died, and the power was left in the hands of Abbas and his brother (Bur') Lannyo.

"Forty days after this (i.e. the death of the
in the hands of Abbas.

But Abbas would not take over the office of
Chief (Yagbongwura) until the time came for him to die,
although he kept the power always in his own hands (as
Yagbongwura elect.)

He sat on the Chief's skin (was installed) for
hundred days and then Tinaur (Akans) came and killed
him.

Behold his power was as great as that of his
father, who was a strong man, among the sons of Lanter.

In the time of Abbas many people came under his
sway exceeding in number those who had followed his
predecessors. In power and in lands, he exceeded all
his brothers, he also surpassed them in riches and
liberality.

He surpassed his brothers in intelligence, in
beauty and in religion; as a believer he acted like his
father Lantar, who was Jakpa....

Behold Abbas the victorious, he even made war
against Bona (Gbona) and conquered it.

/very Bona is a large city....On the day that he
destroyed Bona, on that day was Abbas hailed as Chief
(sovereign) of Gonja.....

After Bona he made war against Fula.....

The Chief went with his brothers to Fula where
thanks to the help of Moslems they were victorious,
but in the course of the victory Abbas was slain.

This was in the month of Rabilawal the fifteenth
day of the month in the year of the Hegira 1121 (i.e.
on 25th May, 1709)"

Abbas was the Sovereign of Gonja at the time he invaded Bona.
He was also the son of Bur-wura Lanta, Dingoro Jakpa, and the younger
brother of Ndewura Jakpa. It would not be wrong therefore for

people to say that it was Jakpa who raided Gbona and destroyed it.

In Jula (Wangara) language Jakpa is Jaa Kpong meaning "brave hearted" and nde wura means "my son is grown". The general title of the Yagbongwura (in Gonja is Gbinipe-wura (Ngbine pe wura) meaning "Chief of the home of the brave hearted") Ndewura Jakpa therefore means "grown son with a brave heart".

As a result of Abbas (being referred to as Jakpa) storming of Bona caused the political situation in the Dorimon area in the Wa district to undergo a revolutionary change. The Dorimon princes of Bona, as a result of the invasion, crossed the Black Volta to the West bank. The princes confirm that their ancestors formed part of the ruling estate in Bona but that their ultimate place of origin was Dagbon (Dagomba)

The strange Bona intruders managed to impose themselves as rulers on the Mole-speaking people who had previously occupied the area after their exile from Dagbon. It would appear that some of the non-princely Bona refugees who had fled Bona with the ancestors of the Dorimon princes into the Dorimon area pressed further ahead, some settling in places like Zang, Wogu, Kaluri and some even passed to "doli" i.e. stretch further to "Nadoli", Kalsegra and Charikpong.

The ripples of war go very far, and spread wildly.

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