Political Agency and Resistance in Colonial Southern Ghana:
Counting the Cost of Confrontation in Cape Coast
(1860 – 1932)

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Introduction

Colonialism as a project of control encountered resistance. The unfolding of this development in the discourse of the various African colonial experiences is intriguing. Philip Curtin for instance establishes three major forms and sources of African resistance to colonial rule, namely, military resistance to conquest or primary resistance, formation of highly resistant political structures, and the eventual modern nationalist movements that achieved ultimate victory for African independence.[1] In a similar vein Les Switzer observes that Africans resisted the world they were forced to live in, drawing on concrete social practices to challenge their respective colonial experiences.[2] Furthermore, Hubert M. Blalock in his general theory of power and conflict defines social conflict and resistance as intentional mutual exchange of negative sanctions among two or more parties, who might be individuals, political, or loosely knit quasi groups.[3] Powerful groups and individuals tended to dominate and exploit others. In such instances, conflict or resistance might be the only mechanism through which subordinated parties could hope to turn the tables, gain a measure of freedom, or seek redress from exploitative relationships. Blalock points out that sometimes such threats were effective in making the stronger party back off.[4] These modes of resistance occurred within and without the fabric of organized African politics, and were experienced in the protocol, etiquette, rituals, ceremonies, festivals, and other routines of everyday life.[5] Southern Ghana's confrontation of colonial rule revolved around aspects of the above modes. This article proceeds with the nascent resistance to the emerging British colonial administration and projects King Aggery's determined confrontation as the culmination and model for the subsequent attitude of Cape Coast. It looks in detail at Aggery's resistance to colonial judicial and military efforts. The article then examines the measures of the colonial

administration, namely, stripping of the capital city status and the denial of railway infrastructure, which became detrimental to the development of Cape Coast.

The emergence of colonial rule in Southern Ghana was shaped by subtle administrative alternations between British merchants and officials, a process that took advantage of the kindness of local communities. In view of these alternations, the point at which the people began to conceptualize their encounter with Europeans, particularly British, as colonial masters was difficult to determine. The colonial government increasingly pushed its power and jurisdiction beyond the forts and castles; while doing this pushing, the administration reneged on its responsibility to protect the coastal communities.

This dereliction of duty became obvious when the Ashanti invaded the Fanti coast in 1863. The Fanti suffered heavy losses; as a result, their confidence in British protection waned. The problem was that the governor's promise of protection was thwarted by the insistence of the Colonial Office that he should "not . . . interfere in any quarrels with the King of Ashantee [*sic*], and that the kings and chiefs should be left to settle their own differences."[6]

As if that denial of protection were not provocative enough, local colonial officers decided to impose an annual license fee of £2 on all wine and spirit traders. It was intended to check the traffic of those commodities rather than increase revenue for the government. However, the people, especially consumers of alcohol saw the fee as an indirect tax on them to increase revenue for a government that did little or nothing at all to protect them. The chiefs and people of Cape Coast resisted this fee arguing that they were not British citizens and should therefore not be taxed without prior consultation. In his defense, Governor Richard Pine insisted that he observed due process in consulting some of the chiefs, influential men, and traders, who should have conferred with their constituencies. Local investigations revealed, however, that the governor had overstepped his bounds in not properly seeking the explicit consent of the chiefs. To avoid disgrace, the British secretary of state delayed implementation, leaving the proposed license fee hanging.[7] These events constituted the immediate circumstances preceding the first major confrontation between the burgeoning colonial administration and the indigenous people, eventually leading to decisions that smacked of punitive measures on the part of the

former. Although the nascent colonial administration exhibited occasional confusion and uncertainty, its presence in Cape Coast posed a formidable challenge to the indigenous political order. This obvious struggle between the two opposing political structures was not without consequences for both parties.

Omanhin, or King John Aggery, who came to office with a deep commitment to the indigenous mandate led the resistance in Cape Coast. As king, he was the ultimate embodiment of the indigenous political order that he was required by oath to support. Aggery has gone down into history as probably one of the earliest and loudest challengers of British power in West Africa. Compared to King Ja-Ja of Opobo, Nigeria, Aggery's circumstances and motives were different. While the former was a more dominant character and had stronger economic reasons for confronting the British, the latter typically defended the indigenous political order.

The circumstances surrounding Aggery's assumption of office were intriguing. After the requisite indigenous rites British authorities in Cape Coast decided to hold a coronation ceremony for him. This decision was not insignificant for Aggery as he saw an accentuation of his claim to sovereignty and equality with his counterpart in Britain. Troops in Cape Coast fired a twenty-one gun salute, and Aggery was given the privilege of inspecting a guard of honor.[8] What was even more significant was the omission of the oath of allegiance to the Queen.[9] All of these occurrences confirmed Aggery's belief that the prominent kings in Southern Ghana should prepare for self-government in order to "relieve the British Government of a task they seemed so anxious to get rid of."[10] Indeed, Aggery was a well-informed man, for he followed the political debates in Britain that were published in the *African Times,* a journal of the African Aid Society in London.

From the reading of these debates Aggery learned about anticolonial advocates as well as African Advancement groups and their influence on British public opinion. These pressure groups managed to force the government to insert a clause regarding an eventual self-government for colonized peoples into the British Parliamentary Report of 1865. Some of the considerations that led the Select Committee to its conclusion were that the protectorates in Southern Ghana had become an indefinite British responsibility without any adequate advantages.[11] The prevailing arrangement weakened the chiefs, giving them the inclination to both depend on and resist local officials. According to the committee,

the most reasonable thing to do in these circumstances was to halt all further extensions of territory in West Africa. In its final report, the committee resolved that the object of British policy should be to encourage the inhabitants to exercise those qualities that would enable the transfer administration of governmental functions to them, with a view to Britain's ultimate withdrawal. Therefore, Aggery prepared for the eventual withdrawal that would pave the way for kings and chiefs to assume complete control. After the coronation ceremony, the governor received Aggery at the Government House as a "Christian King."[12]

No sooner had the red-carpet treatment ended than the first tremors of confrontation were felt. Aggery set himself to resist the colonial administration in nearly every move. Initially, he gave counter orders to that of the governor and also confronted him directly whenever he had the opportunity to do so. In 1865, he and Governor Conran clashed over the issue of the limits of Asafo, or the indigenous organization for young men and women, displays and firing of musketry. Conran insisted that these indigenous ceremonies must be done within the confines of either the military parade grounds or salt winning compounds, both of which were reasonable distances away from the town center.[13] Aggery objected to this insistence, arguing that those locations were reminiscent of past Asafo conflicts; he therefore ordered that the displays and firing should not be done at all. The companies obeyed the Omanhin rather than the governor.[14] Later Conran decreed that markets should not be open on Sundays and also banned free-range animal rearing in order to rid the streets in Southern Ghana, particularly Cape Coast, Accra, and Anomabu of pigs, cattle, and fowls.[15] Aggery countered that the latter decree was "a great injury to the poorer people who raised them as their only means of livelihood."[16] Furthermore, Conran attempted to regulate the activities of fishermen with a ban on fishing operation within the vicinity of the castle and Aggery accused him of confiscating canoes and appropriating the space for his own purposes. Aggery averred that the beach near the castle had, from time immemorial, been one of the fishing grounds of Cape Coast.[17] These initial divergent views led to a widening gap between Conran and Aggery as well as the respective institutions they represented.

The Clash of Courts

The most far-reaching conflict between Aggery and the colonial administration was judicial. The administration established new courts in spite of existing indigenous ones giving rise to confusion regarding the nature and extent of respective jurisdictions.[18] Either by design or coincidence, ordinary people in the society, particularly the poor, took advantage of the confusion. For example, a certain man was sentenced at the indigenous court for attempting to poison his neighbor. He escaped and appealed to the English court, which found the magistrate of the indigenous court, Joseph Martin, guilty of technical assault. Aggery was compelled to pay the fine on behalf of Martin.[19]

Governor Pine lambasted the proceedings of the indigenous court, accusing it of cruelty and injustice. He described its operations as "unlawful, unconstitutional, and unwarrantable," palpably in conflict with "the compact understanding, spirit, and usages" existing between the government and the people under its protection.[20] Pine further charged that the indigenous court was irresponsible and could not be recognized, because it did not support appeals to the British judiciary. He ordered an annulment of all proceedings and immediate transfer of cases to the English court.[21] In addition, Pine ordered Aggery to hold discussions with him on the constitution of a court, the operations of which must be acceptable to the colonial administration.[22]

Aggery rejected these terms, which he considered insulting to his person and office. In reaction to the governor's complaints and accusations, Aggery unleashed a vitriolic attack on what he saw as an establishment that sought to grab more power than was reasonable.[23] Apparently, it was unacceptable—even unthinkable—to Aggery that, as a king, he should be directed regarding what he could and could not do. Consequently, Aggery expressed his disapproval of the questionable Bond of 1844, the British claim to power and authority in Southern Ghana, which George Maclean and his successor coerced a group of chiefs from Southern Ghana to sign. According to Aggery, the Bond was created in a peculiar manner that wrenched power from the hands of kings, chiefs and other indigenous political leaders. Aggery charged that Maclean:

> Placing himself at the head of a handful of soldiers, had been known to travel to the remotest parts of the interior, for the purpose of compelling Kings, Chiefs, and head men to obey his Excellency's summons or to comply with his decrees.[24]

This view amounts to Aggery's perception of the British colonial enterprise exercised force, fear, and intimidation through the use of soldiers.

Confronting Colonial Militarism

The initial batch of soldiers for the colonial administration was drawn from a detachment of the West Indian Regiment and therefore did not know the local languages and customs. Consequently, they were ruthless and uncompromising in the discharge of their duties. These soldiers provided the government with intelligence service, kept the population in check, and suppressed rebellions.[25] Later, the establishment of the Gold Coast Artillery worsened the degree of military terror. For instance, the military institution at the time was disparaging to people of prestigious social background; therefore, its membership comprised people who had been freed from various forms of bondage and servitude. Given these people's bitterness against society and their strong desire for revenge, it was quite an uphill task for military officers to control them. These freed people were put in positions of power and authority, which enabled them to enforce the law on their former masters.[26] Because most of the chiefs kept many persons in bondage and servitude, they suffered much indignity as these soldiers exploited the slightest excuse to settle personal scores. Furthermore, their perceived low social status made it impossible for people of reputable standing to obey them.[27]

According to Aggery, colonial rule thrived on troops of soldiers and battalions of policemen who were swift to carry out the governor's orders. Indeed, Governor Pine made a statement that, more than anything else, confirmed aspects of Aggery's assertion. Pine retorted that, in Governor George Maclean's days, matters would be settled with a dispatch of a few troops, but "now I can do no such thing."[28]

In September 1865, yet another incident offered Aggery the opportunity to call the bluff of the colonial administration. It was a clash between soldiers stationed in Cape Coast and some young men. The former went on a drinking spree and the clash occurred as a result. Two young men lost their lives, and a soldier disappeared. As usual, the soldiers were quick to show their military and mechanical might. Aggery protested officially to Conran, that:

> [a] frightful tragedy has been enacted . . . soldiers of the garrison have suddenly issued forth at night … have treated this town as if they had taken it by assault in time of war . . . how it came to pass that the troops were rushing about the town in detached bodies, armed with muskets, bayonets … forcibly entering houses of sleeping persons … it was not a riot on the part of the people; it was an attack on the town.[29]

The administration was conciliatory and protective of a private soldier whom the acting chief justice found culpable of the murders in the clash, and was consequently sentenced to death. The governor, exercising his executive prerogative, commuted the sentence to life imprisonment with hard labor on the advice of the Executive Council because the soldier was on duty trying to suppress a riot.[30] The governor criticized Aggery and his advisors for wanting to use the incident, as well as the funerals of the victims, to incite the town against the administration. Apparently, the Asafo of the town had paraded the coffins through the town amid drumming, singing, and firing of musketry within the precincts of the castle where the colonial administration was stationed.[31]

Aggery, suspecting that the colonial officials were using shady means to have their way, wrote a letter to Governor General William Blackall, who was visiting Southern Ghana. Blackall, as a superior officer to Governor Conran, should "respectfully define the relationship between the indigenous court and the English court, between the King and the Governor, and between the King and his brother Kings in Southern Ghana."[32] Aggery was fed up with undue interference in his rule as the head of the indigenous political order. He opined that in comparison with other kings, chiefs, and indigenous leaders in Southern Ghana, his efforts to rule were constantly frustrated because the center of the colonial administration was in his town, which also stifled his finances. The government collected all customs, excise, and other revenues that originally accrued to his predecessors. Besides giving a litany of past grievances, Aggery served notice that, in view of the unnecessary show of force on the part of the colonial administration, he would be compelled to constitute his own army to resist the colonial government and for self-defense. He threatened to transform the Asafo into a professional and well-armed group. [33]

The government's response was characteristic of military regimes intolerant of the slightest resistance to their rule. The administration described Aggery's language as seditious.[34] Governor Conran took serious exception to it and requested Blackall's support in putting down this "insolent, ignorant, and stubborn man" whom he suspected of wanting to overthrow British rule and substituting it with his own.[35]

When report of these confrontations reached England, a debate ignited as to whether the colony was worth all the problems in view of the high annual costs of its administration.[36] The Colonial Office feared that, if the administration continued in Southern Ghana, officers would suffer perpetual resistance from the kings and chiefs. Moreover, in the event of the colonial agenda being pushed forward, kings, such as Aggery would have to be prevented from setting up armed forces, which would "certainly be made up of the worst of characters."[37] Blackall was intolerant of Aggery's resistance to the colonial administration and showed strong support for Conran. He saw Aggery's warning as mischievous and his claim to a share of the revenue inadmissible; therefore, those pretentions must be effectively checkmated. Although the administration proved adamant in dealing with Aggery, it also worked frantically to avoid—or at least minimize—the possibility of local resistance in Cape Coast. As a result, the seat of judicial authority was moved to Freetown, Sierra Leone.[38] Unfortunately, enough bad blood had developed between the colonial administration and the people that this effort was too little, too late.

To make matters worse, Conran refused to work with Thomas Hughes, an official of Aggery's palace responsible for assisting the indigenous political establishment with maintenance of order, development, and welfare. This refusal sparked a full-blown crisis, and protests became rife under the influence of the leaders of the Cape Coast Asafo companies.[39] Aggery unleashed yet another condemnation of the colonial government. He described its refusal to cooperate with Hughes as an attempt to "withhold civil liberties of the people in a manner unprecedented in any civilized country."[40] Conran released a number of people imprisoned by the indigenous court following the submission of private petitions. According to him, the sentences were cruel and repugnant to the letter and spirit of British law.[41] Aggery, encouraged by a large public

meeting of his supporters, sent Conran an official letter of protest even more scathing than usual to Conran:

> The time has now come for me to record a solemn protest against the perpetual annoyances and insults that you persistently and perseveringly continue to practice on me in my capacity as legally constituted King of Cape Coast. I presume your object is . . . to incite me and my people to enact more of those fearful things that took place in Haiti that I have heard of.[42]

Interestingly, both combatants had reached the limits of their tolerance levels and Conran got convinced that rather than let Aggery act first, he would. What was of grave concern to the colonial administration was Aggery's reference to the Haitian Revolution. Conran insisted that Aggery must be made to answer questions relating to the unguarded reference to that revolution, which could mean an end to British authority over Southern Ghana. Consequently, Aggery was arrested after he failed to honor the governor's summons. Aggery retorted that he did not know who Conran was, and that, as king of Cape Coast, he had nothing to do with the Queen's representative. The colonial administration deposed him and also abolished the indigenous court. Aggery was immediately exiled to Sierra Leone on a departing mail boat.[43]

With Aggery out of the way, the colonial authorities, mindful of the incessant resistance, took some preventive measures. They quickly declared the office and kingship title abolished. In its place, the authorities insisted on that of a headman to swear an oath of allegiance to the Queen of England and obedience to the governor as her representative.[44] When the Asafo and the Western-educated elite of Cape Coast resisted these conditions, the administration realized that Aggery's removal did not solve the seemingly interminable resistance.

Removal of Colonial Capital to Accra

The next move of the administration was the abandonment of Cape Coast Castle as the seat of government. The Earl of Carnarvon referred to this plan in a speech before the House of Lords in London and identified three considerations necessary for a new choice.[45] These essential considerations included military motives, commercial concerns

and the sanitation situation. However, the timing of these factors made the decision to abandon Cape Coast quite curious because the town had remained the seat of British operations since their arrival in Southern Ghana, especially in 1621 when some form of officialdom was created. After the confrontation with the combined forces of Aggery, the Asafo, and the Western-educated elite, the colonial government considered Accra and Elmina as alternative seats.

As far as the military consideration was concerned, the colonial government indicated that Cape Coast had no significant advantages and that Accra, to the east, was a more desirable place. The latter town presented itself as a strategic location, especially with the proposed consolidation of the Lagos and Southern Ghana settlements. Also, Elmina to the west of Cape Coast had a hilly district, a good water supply, and a port with the capacity to receive ship weights in the neighborhood of 40 to 50 tons.[46] Although either Accra or Elmina could be the place of choice, the Earl of Carnarvon's opinion was that the real seat of the colonial government in time of war must be a strategic refuge place in the hills for the governor and his staff. Simple buildings, such as a stockade, could be connected with the seat of government on the coast by roads and other systems of communication. Accra was about 30 miles from Aburi on the Akwapim ridge, which served as a principal base for many European missionaries and their families. In view of this previous European settlement, popular preference among the colonial administration favored Accra, a relatively poor coastal landing place.[47]

Cape Coast was also abandoned on account of alleged sanitation problems. But the health and sanitation history of Southern Ghana, in principle, neither absolved Cape Coast nor supported the clean bill of health that the administration gave to Accra and Elmina.[48] The 4th Earl of Carnarvon, Henry H. M. Herbert, exaggerated the sanitation situation of Cape Coast with the words:

> perhaps one of the worst places that could have been selected. The soil was saturated through and through with sewage. There was decaying vegetable matter everywhere, and the houses were crowded on one another. It deserved more than perhaps any other place the appellation of the White man's grave."[49]

Although these observations were greeted with shouts of "hear, hear,"[50] in the House of Lords in England, public opinion in Cape Coast dismissed the dissension as sour grapes,

particularly in view of the fact that the town had served for many years as the seat of the colonial government and the place of residence for many Europeans.

European residents and visitors to Southern Ghana left questionably graphic accounts of disregard for proper planning that supposedly impacted sanitation and health. Charles Alexander Gordon, an army surgeon, had this to say about Cape Coast:

> The part of the town occupied by the poorer people consist of houses terribly huddled together, along the opposite faces of what is a deep valley, along which, in the rainy season, a considerable torrent runs, and where, during the dry, all kinds of filth the most abominable accumulate.[51]

These descriptions were corroborated by Brodie Cruickshank, who indicated that houses in Cape Coast were "huddled together in the most crowded manner . . . without the slightest regard to light . . . air, or the convenience of approach."[52] Some intellectuals of Cape Coast responded to these denigrating descriptions of their town. The lack of proper planning had nothing to do with the cultural imperative but was rather the direct result of the stalemate between the colonial administration and the indigenous political authority.[53] This stalemate was exacerbated on account of growing population due to increasing birth rate and the influx of people bent on taking advantage of commercial and educational opportunities. The colonial administration overshadowed and suppressed the power and authority of the kings and chiefs, who in their own ways also frustrated the former. This scenario presented a situation where institutions under these two conflicting powers were rendered weak, dysfunctional, and ineffective.

In the pre-colonial era, the indigenous political system, under the aegis of the Asafo, had a system of municipal administration responsible for sanitation, town planning, public works, and other communal projects that were effectively managed through the ward system. The colonial government's constant interference and attempts at regulating the indigenous political organizations led to a near abandonment of most of these indigenous arrangements. The Asafo could do nothing but struggle for survival under colonial pressure. Lamenting this situation, John Mensah Sarbah alleged, "Today we are being ruled as if we had no indigenous institutions, no language, and no national characteristics."[54] Joseph Casely-Hayford also observed that "the effect of intercourse

with Europeans on the part of the people of the coastal towns has been a disorganization of former municipal arrangements."[55] In a sense, the administration interfered so much with chiefs and their people that, although it was unable to govern effectively, it also ended up preventing the chiefs from discharging their responsibilities.

The politics of sanitation is not uncommon in the history of colonial urban Africa. Studies of colonial medical efforts tell much about the attitudes, objectives, and priorities of European rulers in Africa.[56] Colonial governments embarked upon major projects of social engineering with relocations of people deemed inferior, dangerous, and undesirable in certain prestigious places.[57] Powerful sanitation, disease, and epidemiological metaphors shaped perceptions and also went a long way to influence and even justify official action in most places in colonial Africa.[58] In some of these places, colonial authorities acted on the supposed sense of medical menace that the African presence posed in certain towns.[59]

Consequently, a pattern emerged that set African and European urban communities physically apart. To ensure a foolproof system, in some cases, colonial medical authorities created sanitary cordons of uninhabited space between those communities to forestall the spread of "African diseases" into European residential areas.[60] The outbreak of epidemics provided justification for the suddenness with which segregation was imposed and the concomitant relocations of undesirable people. For instance, the bubonic plague in Dakar, Senegal, justified the abrupt manner in which the policy of residential segregation supplanted the earlier pattern of coexistence. Upon the advice of medical authorities, the colonial government created Medina as a separate African quarter.[61] Again, the bubonic plague, cholera, and small pox in South Africa, particularly in the Transvaal and Natal regions, provided justification for segregating Indians and Africans living in municipal locations. This strategy was not peculiar to Africa because precedents in European societies formed major sources of inspiration for the responses of colonial authorities to social problems on the continent.[62]

However, in Cape Coast, the sanitation situation provided justification for a different kind of action. Instead of the colonial government creating sanitary cordons to offset the threat of an epidemic, it elected to relocate to a city in which sanitation was no better than that of Cape Coast. Consequently, this action lent a powerful credibility to the

suspicion that the motive was more political than sanitary or medical. In their correspondence, colonial officers repeatedly referred to the congestion of the town, from which all other sanitation problems emanated.[63] However, the congestion was apparently due to the fact that Cape Coast, as the capital of the colony, became the place of choice for many from other parts of the country. In the end, the administration used the supposed sanitary situation in Cape Coast as one of the official justifications for abandoning Cape Coast as the colonial capital in 1877 and relocating to Accra in the east.

Exclusion from Railroad Infrastructure

Apparently relocation of the capital was not the only detrimental measure. Cape Coast was denied a crucial component of infrastructural development that the colonial government embarked upon in the early twentieth century, especially during the boom in the Southern Ghana cocoa industry. The prosperity of Cape Coast was closely connected with its position as a market that linked European trading establishments with traders from inland territories, the forest, savannah, and beyond to the Niger and the Sahel regions.[64] By the late nineteenth century, Cape Coast had become one of the few centers of trade that delivered the wealth of both local and international trade. In the absence of a modern harbor, vessels anchored some considerable distances away, and local canoes maneuvered back and forth to do business. The lack of infrastructure offered brisk employment for the fishermen and others who were willing and able to convey goods to and from the vessels. Furthermore, in the absence of modern road and railroad infrastructure, goods had to be carried on the head or rolled in casks along bush paths.[65] Again, this means of transportation brought considerable money into the economy of Cape Coast as its young men and women endured the tedium of these trips back and forth. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the expanded trade in agricultural produce added to the enormous economic advantages. The boom in the cocoa industry during the first and second decades of the twentieth century also helped the development of this coastal town. People from neighboring coastal towns as well as the interior came to seek employment, mainly as carriers and general laborers.[66]

This progress became a nine day wonder, for, with the introduction of railroad into Southern Ghana the colonial government's final program created a difficult situation in Cape Coast. In 1894, the British Chamber of Commerce started pushing for an

improved transportation infrastructure in Southern Ghana. The Railroad Ordinance, enacted in 1898, empowered the colonial administration to acquire land for tracks and stations. In that same year, railroad construction began in Sekondi with further expansion of the infrastructure in the 1920s under Governor Frederick Gordon Guggisberg. [67] However, the construction of the Central Province Railroad from Huni Valley to Kade in 1927 stirred suspicions in Cape Coast. When that phase was proposed in 1922, the chiefs and people demanded that the line connected Cape Coast to the network or that the town be made the major terminus. They expressed the foreboding that, if the government excluded their town, an ancient commercial center, from the network, their city would be ruined. Omanhin Mbra III, with the consent of his chiefs, headmen, and elders presented a petition to the secretary of state for colonies in London on the issue and called for a reconsideration of Guggisberg's decision not to construct a railroad with its base at Cape Coast.[68]

Guggisberg stated categorically that he was unable to grant the request because he was equally obliged to consider other towns through whose districts the proposed Central Province Railroad would pass.[69] He pointed out that the construction of a railroad with its base in Cape Coast would adversely affect towns such as Winneba and Saltpond. Guggisberg further indicated that the exclusion of Cape Coast was not a personal decision because he acted upon the advice of his council of experts. He argued that, if any more extensions and inclusions were made to the Central Province Railroad scheme, costs increase by an additional £30,000 per annum in maintenance and about 50 percent more locomotives and rolling stock would be required.[70] Mbra and his council countered that the inhabitants of Cape Coast below the proposed Central Province Railway line were the responsibility of the administration and therefore entitled to official consideration. Regarding the issue of maintenance costs, Mbra and his council were quick to point out that the expected revenue from the line advocated by Cape Coast would take care of all expenses. To support this argument in detail, they reminded Guggisberg of his own statements on the cost-benefit analysis of rail transport.[71] In his address to the Legislative Council on March 1, 1923, Guggisberg had observed that railroad was the cheapest form of transportation with the potential for recovering maintenance and capital cost.[72] Therefore, Mbra and other petitioners could not

comprehend how these optimistic observations would not apply in the case of a line with its base at Cape Coast.[73]

Concerning the colonial government's charge that the Cape Coast district might not have enough agricultural produce to feed the railroad, the petitioners argued that there would be adequate supply when the line was fully laid.[74] Again, Guggisberg had indicated in one of his many official speeches that farmers living far away from the railroads with loads of unsold cocoa would have no justifiable incentive to extend their farms until they knew that the government was going to provide the necessary infrastructure. Once it became certain that a railroad was going to be constructed in a particular district, cocoa farms would increase in number.[75] For instance, owing to the rumor that a Central Province Railroad would be built in Western Akim, farmers in the neighborhood of Nsuaem, Akim Swedru, and Akyease increased their production. This increased production, the petitioners argued, would be replicated in the Cape Coast district. Therefore, Mbra and others insisted that it was preposterous for Guggisberg to argue that he was acting on expert counsel to exclude Cape Coast.[76] After all, two of his predecessors, J. P. Rodger and A. R. Slater, had made promises of railroad for Cape Coast, and these governors were equally advised by experts, who gave the matter serious consideration. Slater raised taxes on cocoa in order to help provide funds for establishing important infrastructure that included a railroad for Cape Coast. He was emphatic in his assurances when he said that the provision of a railroad for Cape Coast was "for the most part urged on us years ago, and had been well thrashed out, but had been suspended for the last 5 years."[77]

Building upon these previous promises, Mbra and his council reiterated formidable economic reasons for demanding a railroad for Cape Coast. In the past, the town was the principal port in Southern Ghana and traded with the inland kingdoms, such as Ashanti and Gyaman, which produced large quantities of gold dust for export to Europe and the United States. With time, monkey skins, guinea grains, maize, and other items, including rubber, were added.[78] At that time, the nature of those commodities did not require railroads. To help the mining industry in the Tarkwa district, the colonial government constructed a railroad from Sekondi to Tarkwa that did not interfere with the booming trade of Cape Coast. When the Ashanti Goldfields Corporation started its

operation in Ashanti, all of the machinery came through Cape Coast and was carried in bits and pieces to the mine. With labor plentifully supplied from the coast and its neighborhoods, Cape Coast kept in touch with the interior, and its trade grew to an all-time high. Later, the Ashanti Goldfields entered into an arrangement, with the government and the railroad was extended from Tarkwa to Kumasi.[79]

When the cocoa industry to the east of the farther districts of the Accra port became vibrant, the government contemplated the construction of another railroad. Governor Rodger, bearing in mind the effects of infrastructural developments in other parts of the country and in sympathy with Cape Coast, expressed the view that the risks of trade depression and other complaints on the subject were not altogether unfounded.[80] For instance, owing to the fact that Kumasi had become an important trading center and that a railroad had been connected to it and the Sekondi port, he expressed the foreboding that Cape Coast might never again have the same practical monopoly over the Ashanti trade that it had enjoyed in the past. However, Rodger asserted that, with courage and determination, Cape Coast would be able to make up for its share of the hinterland trade that it might lose by developing other agricultural resources.[81] Turning his attention to the question of transportation, Rodger acknowledged the unsuitability of the few roads in the Central Province for motor traffic. As a temporary solution, he suggested the increased use of cask rolling, as in the Eastern Province. For a long-term solution, Rodger promised to improve and extend the road network, hoping that, with increased agricultural resources, a railroad would eventually be constructed to connect Cape Coast to the planting districts of the interior like the Accra network.[82] This promise, according to Mbra, was seconded by Provincial Commissioners W. C. F. Robertson, H. C. Grimshaw, and E. C. Eliot, all of whom travelled the district and gave assurances.[83]

With the steady growth in cocoa production, the people of Cape Coast found it necessary to remind the colonial government of the several promises of a railroad. Governor Hugh Clifford pointed out that he had just assumed office, with much unfinished business on his desk to attend to. These projects included harbor construction, water supply, and other infrastructural projects in Accra and Sekondi; therefore, Governor Clifford noted that it would be unwise for him to take up any more projects.[84] Nevertheless, by the end of Clifford's tenure, a promissory bill on the issue of a railroad

for Cape Coast had been passed as Ordinance No. 7 of 1919. Naturally, this made the people happy because they felt reassured that their dream was about to be realized. Again, when Governor Guggisberg initially took over the reins of government, he gave indications of some action being taken on proposed projects for Cape Coast. On his first visit to the town, he held a public meeting at the Castle, where he announced his policy regarding the needs of the colony. It was on this occasion that he made his "Cape Coast will not be forgotten" statement.[85] Even though he was not specific about what that statement meant, it filled the people with thoughts that it had to do with the realization of their expectations of the railroad.

Later, however, when Guggisberg announced his program for the improvement of the colony the plan showed a Central Province Railroad that excluded Cape Coast. The people saw the program as a calculated attempt to ruin their town because the line would take away the produce that should be exported through it. They protested officially to Guggisberg, but he was unfazed, describing their eagerness to have a railroad based at Cape Coast as a narrow-minded attitude.[86] The Omanhin and his council did not hide the fact that the governor's comments and other strongly disparaging remarks in reference to Cape Coast were hurtful.[87] In response, the governor insisted that the proposed railroad scheme would pass so far north of Cape Coast that it would not substantially injure its trade.[88]

Contrary to this assurance, the consequences for Cape Coast were crippling when the line was completed in 1927, and all the cocoa from Nsuaem and Kade were lifted by rail to Sekondi. The carriers who transported cocoa to Cape Coast, as well as boatmen who took the produce to the waiting vessels, lost their jobs. And because cocoa was the most profitable commodity shipped through Cape Coast, this situation sparked a gradual decline in the fortunes of the town.[89] Many of the firms that thrived on the export and import operations of the port had to go where the economic pendulum swung, namely Accra and Sekondi. Some merchants moved and others closed down. Money became scant, and artisans, as well as educated young men and women, moved out of Cape Coast, while those who remained were deprived of their means of livelihood.

Undoubtedly, the neglect of Cape Coast during the modernization of Southern Ghana's economic infrastructure did not improve that town's relations with the colonial

government. The people saw the exclusion of their town from the benefits of the Railroad Ordinance as a punishment of sorts on the part of the colonial administration, especially Governor Guggisberg.[90] These perceived accumulated detrimental measures created ill-feelings on the part of the people of Cape Coast towards the colonial government and were palpably expressed in the town's resistance to the new proposal of direct local taxation in 1929. This tax proposition was part of a comprehensive plan for the reform of local administration. The need to raise money came as a result of pressure from London to get the colonies to bear a larger share of the financial burdens of governance. Expenditures on local development were increasing, particularly in education and sanitation, and the Colonial Office argued that local populations should directly bear part of the cost. Even well into the end of the 1920s, Southern Ghana was the only British colony in Africa without any form of direct taxation, and introducing it was crucial for the government but completely unacceptable to the people.[91]

To this end, the Income Tax Ordinance was planned to rope in all persons with incomes above £40 a year.[92] The major reason for beginning with that strategy was to single out the rich in order to dissipate resistance to the tax. This plan failed because the resistance remained adamant and the majority of the people of Southern Ghana banded together to fight it. The coastal Western-educated elite, who would have been hardest hit, led the campaign with slogans that condemned taxation without representation as exploitation and this caught on very well with the ordinary people. There were violent protests from all the provincial councils. In some coastal towns, the chiefs mobilized their people to demonstrate and also joined delegations to the local colonial officers. The campaign gained currency with the participation of the local European mercantile community. The climax came at the end of October 1931, when violent riots occurred in Cape Coast and led to the abandonment of the tax proposal.[93]

Conclusion

Governor T. W. S. Thomas's remark, regarding the troublesome nature of the people of Cape Coast was quite apt, yet it failed to account for the equally difficult and contentious nature of colonialism. Persistent and resolute agency on the part of coastal communities of Southern Ghana, especially Cape Coast, underscores the notion that colonial officials did not have their way in all things all the time. This notion makes

colonial rule in Southern Ghana one of diverse experiences. Coastal communities eventually understood the nature and ways of colonial rule, especially the fact that it was a project of control. Thus, these communities remained active in having their way as well. This agency in Cape Coast had particularly surprising and intriguing outcomes compared to occurrences elsewhere. The administration responded by stripping the town of its original colonial capital status and finished it off with the denial of a much needed railroad infrastructure. The pointed agency compelled the administration, every now and then, to seek reconciliatory opportunities while at the same time taking detrimental measures in the removal of the capital and denial of the railroad infrastructure; however, the people of Cape Coast, like others in colonial Southern Ghana, in turn, pursued a path of confrontation beginning with Aggery resistance to Conran, the administration's militarism, and the income tax proposal; they endured the consequences, and remained defiant.

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