The issue of amalgamation has featured prominently in recently scholarly works on the discourse on ethnic identity and chieftaincy disputes in the southern section of British Togoland. This article examines the various protestations that characterised the implementation of the policy of amalgamation and the reactions of the colonial government. Almost all existing scholarly literature on Britain’s African empire emphasises the relative weaknesses of the colonial state, particularly in the pre-World War II period. There are pertinent examples from West Africa that demonstrate the weakness of the colonial state in terms of its capacity to alter social and economic behaviour amongst its subjects. First was the drawn out and only semi-effective process of ending the trade in slaves and the practice of domestic slavery in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.¹ Second, the colonial state had difficulties in establishing an effective system of taxation in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, whether taxes of people or of goods. In fact, in the southern section of British Togoland, direct taxation did not come into effect until 1945. Similarly, until 1931 there was no direct taxation in the Gold Coast, except the collection of town rates in Accra, Cape Coast, and Sekondi.² Third was the role of local farmer initiative, rather than state policies or agencies, in the major transition from a slave-exporting economy to an economy based on the export of agricultural goods. In West Africa many farmers became cash croppers in their own right and by their own volition. For example, until the 1920s, African initiative was key in cocoa production in the Gold Coast, and as Reid puts it, the ‘colonial state was relatively unimportant in bringing about socio-economic change in the Gold Coast’.³

It is against this background of limited state power to intervene in everyday life that historians have come to understand the shifts in policy regarding local/indigenous authority. Whilst there are prominent examples of African rulers who were exiled at the onset of British colonial rule (notably Prempeh I of Asante kingdom), by the 1930s the British had evolved a strategy of ‘indirect...
rule’ which was justified partly in terms of its lower costs to the British taxpayer, and partly in terms of the need for African societies to pass through ‘transitional phases’ of social and political development which would make selective use of ‘tradition’ under tutelage. In this respect, Native Authority became an important feature of the policy of indirect rule.

This article focuses on Ewedome because the region makes a particularly interesting case study. In the era of the slave trade in West Africa, Europeans called the region between the Volta and the Bight of Benin the Slave Coast, and Ewedome formed part of its hinterland. The Danish were the first Europeans to have contact with Ewedome, and in the early eighteenth century, they gave the name Krepi to the area occupied by the northern Ewes. By the nineteenth century, the area began to appear in European sources as Krepi or Crepee. But the name ‘Krepi’ was unsatisfactory because it was a Danish corruption of the name Peki. Peki was arguably the most influential political unit in this region, but Krepiland was more than just the state of Peki, the exact delimitation of which historians find difficult. The Ewe-speaking people call the area occupied by the northern Ewe ‘Ewedome’, which is more accurate if one wants to focus on the northern Ewe.

Ewedome was ethnically and linguistically diverse, and was a true ‘frontier’ or ‘refuge’ region throughout the pre-colonial period. Although the Ewe were the dominant ethnic group, the area had a large number of Guans and so-called Togo remnant groups. The area was first colonised by the Germans, and thus the local inhabitants did not think only in terms of the models of rule that the British put in front of them, and the British were not working with a blank sheet of paper. For these reasons, coupled with the peculiar status of the region as a League of Nations Mandate, developments in Ewedome and responses to British political initiatives were rather different from those of the Gold Coast, and without a decent understanding of this it is difficult for scholars to analyse properly the nature of decolonisation and the postcolonial state in this ‘fringe’ of modern-day Ghana.

Ewedome in 1932

When Britain took over the administration of Ewedome region, following the expulsion of the Germans, there was a conspicuous absence of ‘big chiefs’ as compared to much of the Gold Coast. The grant of a tribunal to every chief and sub-chief by the Germans exacerbated the problem. The net result was a multiplicity of divisions with a stupendous number of tribunals: 243 were counted

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7 RAG/H RAO 134/2, Statement by Governor A. Ransford Slater to the League of Nations Permanent Mandate Commission, October 1928; NA CO 746/7, Annual Report to the Permanent Mandate Commission, 24-25 October 1938. All CO papers cited in this article are at the National Archives, Kew, London. [Hereafter, NA CO].
8 Any head of family who had left the parent village and founded a new one was allowed by the Germans to style himself a sub-chief. See NA CO 746/7, Annual Report to the Permanent Mandate Commission, 24-25 October 1938.
in 1920.\(^9\) Admittedly, it was impossible to give every head chief of every division in Ewedome the same powers as were given to a paramount chief in the Gold Coast. Consequently, a special Native Administration (Southern Section of British Togoland) Ordinance of 1932 was passed.\(^10\) This replaced the 1924 ordinance which had allowed the continued application of the German system of direct rule in the territory. Specifically, the ordinance provided for the appointment of Native Authorities (NAs) and prescribed their powers and duties. Divisional and state councils were to be constituted, as well as native tribunals with well-defined powers and jurisdiction. These councils would then complement efforts by the colonial government in matters such as the administration of justice in the territory. The ordinance sought to place the native administration of southern Togoland on a proper statutory basis, analogous to that which had been provided in other territories such as Tanganyika, the Gold Coast and Nigeria.

If the British colonial government was to be successful in implementing the 1932 ordinance in Ewedome in tune with the dictates of indirect rule and local government, then she had to commit fully to restructuring the fragmented region. This would culminate in the creation of large states with ‘big chiefs’ comparable to paramount chiefs in the Gold Coast. Large political units, it was envisaged, might be able to direct a well-defined policy for the mutual benefit of all divisions in the territory. In addition, as Hailey pointed out, amalgamation of small chiefdoms was to create states of sufficient size and population to allow for the establishment of local government on a proper basis.\(^11\) By the provisions of the ordinance, the term ‘state’, which hitherto applied loosely to all divisions, could no longer be used. The British government insisted that the term ‘state’ could only be applied to amalgamated areas. Therefore, states that had existed prior to amalgamation in Ewedome were designated as divisions, and their divisions became sub-divisions.

One of the benefits of amalgamation was that the paramount chief’s tribunal was given greater powers to hear cases which hitherto went to the District Commissioner. Treasuries were also to be established so that the NAs would be empowered to act as agents of development in the provision of such facilities as clinics, schools and roads. Since the increased powers would be given to amalgamated divisions, it followed that those divisions which did not amalgamate would lose whatever powers they already had.\(^12\) Divisions which agreed to amalgamate were given a British flag, not only to commemorate their amalgamation but also to serve as a symbol of authority.\(^13\)

By 1932, it became obvious that the colonial government had envisaged the creation of three amalgamated states in Ewedome. Captain C. C. Lilley, the architect of the policy of amalgamation in the southern section of British Togoland, was said to have gone through the German archives and discovered a German document which had pencilled Awatime, Ho, Kpando, Hohoe and Buen chiefs as the seniors in the southern section of British Togoland.\(^14\) Hohoe was, however, less significant in the pre-colonial history of Ewedome and did not feature prominently in the early research conducted by colonial officials. It was in the 1920s that Hohoe assumed significant importance in Ewedome because of its position as a cocoa marketing centre, though the

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\(^9\) Ibid.
\(^10\) PRAAD/A ADM39/1/559, Native Administration Ordinance to Togoland, Case No.2/35/31, 1932. ALL PRAAD/A papers cited in this article are at the Public Records and Archives Administration, Accra. Ghana. [Hereafter, PRAAD/A].
\(^12\) PRAAD/A ADM39/1/25, Amalgamation of Divisions, 23 October 1931.
\(^13\) PRAAD/A ADM39/1/216, Ho-Kpando District Affairs, Case No. 154/32, Petition by Togbe Delume III, 14 July 1932.
\(^14\) It is important to note that Buem which lies north of Ewedome was not originally an Ewe-speaking area, although it was increasingly populated by Ewe-speaking migrant farmers in the inter-war period.
cocoa did not come from Hohoe itself.\footnote{The point is also made in Paul Nugent, \textit{Smugglers, Secessionists and Loyal Citizens on the Ghana-Togo Frontier: The Lie of the Borderlands since 1914} (Athens, OH, 2002), p. 53.} Therefore the focus was on Awatime, Asogli (Ho) and Akpini (Kpando) as the seats of the amalgamated states (NAs). In the words of Debrunner, ‘the kings of Ho, and Kpando had distinguished themselves particularly in the resistance against Asante and now exercised a kind of leadership based on the reputation they had won’.\footnote{Hans W. Debrunner, \textit{A Church between Colonial Powers} (London, 1965), p. 19. It is important to note that Debrunner’s work was based on oral traditions that he collected in the territory from 1959-1960.} Awatime, though a small state, also wielded a lot of political influence in the nineteenth century.\footnote{Lynne Brydon, ‘Constructing Awatime: Question of Identity in a West African Polity, c. 1690s to the Twentieth Century’, \textit{Journal of African History}, 49 (2008), pp. 23-42.} Therefore, a clear picture had emerged in by the 1920s as to how many NAs should be created in Ewedome.

### Reactions to the Political Reorganisation

Criticism of the 1932 ordinance in the Gold Coast press was severe.\footnote{NA CO 96/705/8, Report on an Ordinance of the British Sphere of Togoland (Southern Section), Amendment Ordinance 1932, 29 June 1932.} A government report quoted the press as having regarded the ordinance as a sinister move to impose direct taxation using chiefs.\footnote{Section 3 of the ordinance, which gave the Governor power to constitute any administrative area or appoint any chief, was subjected to the most severe attack. The contention was that the ordinance gave the colonial government unfettered powers to control the NAs. Specific reference was made to the provision allowing the governor to regulate orders issued or issuable by the NAs, which in the view of the press would reduce chiefs to the status of government appointees.\footnote{PRO CO 96/705/8, Petition from \textit{Fiawo}, 25 September 1932. \textit{Fiagawo} is an Ewe word for ‘Paramount Chiefs’, whereas \textit{Fiawo} means ‘chiefs’.} Even among the colonial administrative officers, there was some scepticism. De Hart, the acting Attorney General, questioned the feasibility of introducing such a highly complex and technical legislative instrument in a territory composed largely of an illiterate population.\footnote{Ibid.} Arguably, it was one thing being successful, as a chief, in exercising jurisdiction and administering justice under native custom, but it was quite another making written bye-laws in accordance with the tenets of an ordinance whose language and technicality a chief could not comprehend. In Ewedome itself, protest against the policy was spontaneous, particularly from divisions that were to amalgamate with the so-called Paramount Chiefs. Mass meetings were held throughout the smaller divisions to elicit the views of the people regarding the ordinance, after which 23 \textit{Fiagawo} and \textit{Fiawo} met to petition the Secretary of State for the Colonies.\footnote{Ibid.} They called for the withdrawal of the ordinance.\footnote{Togoland Native Administration Ordinance, 1932. Sections 19 and 41.} The real difficulty was that the authority of some chiefs was seen to be enhanced, while others feared that their status was being reduced.\footnote{Ibid.} Opponents of the policy further argued that the subordination of a stool’s territorial independence was not needed to achieve the political and
administrative reconstruction of the territory. It was contended by the divisional chiefs, sometimes referred to as ‘smaller chiefs’, that the position of the paramount chief of a state should be that of *primus inter pares*. Another contention of the smaller divisions was that the definitions of terms such as ‘sub-Divisional Chief’, ‘Paramount Chief’, and ‘State’, as well as the interpretations of those terms in the text of the ordinance, implied and postulated subordination of one independent stool or division to another stool or division. For example, there was some confusion with regard to the definition of the term ‘Paramount Chief’ and *Fiaga*. *Fiaga*, which is the Ewe equivalent of an Akan ‘Paramount Chief’ or *Omanhene*, had existed in the region long before amalgamation. The differences were that the territorial area of jurisdiction of the *Fiaga* was relatively small and the stool of a paramount chief (*omanhene*) in the Akan areas owned lands, whereas in the Ewedome area most land was family-owned. Again, ‘a state’ in the traditional sense referred to a *duko* in Ewedome. However, as we observed earlier, so far as the ordinance was recognised, ‘a state’ was a number of *duko* (pl. *dukowo*) coming together and owing allegiances to one central paramount authority. This obvious problem of terminology persisted throughout the period of NAs and constituted a major source of disagreement well into the post-independence period.

Similar to the concern raised by the Gold Coast press, the divisional chiefs objected to the provision which gave the Governor the power to appoint and dismiss NAs and to prescribe their powers. The government noted that the purpose of this particular provision was to define the executive functions of the NAs. Another ground of protest was the fact that the tribunals established under the ordinance would be subject to the supervision of administrative officers, and liable to supervision if they were found to have abused their powers or to be incapable of administering justice impartially. The fact that the NAs were new and were required to administer a complex legal regime made supervision necessary. The lack of such supervision in the Gold Coast Colony accounted for the growing unpopularity of the 1927 Native Administration Ordinance among the people of Ewedome. A close examination of the ordinance, however, shows that the chiefs generally had greater freedom and power in exercising their judicial functions under the 1932 ordinance than they had had under the Germans. In the German period, no authority was conferred on chiefs to enforce judgement; such enforcements were permissible only with the approval of a political officer who had absolute discretion in the matter. The 1932 ordinance, on the other hand, vested the power to enforce judgement in the chiefs. This enhanced the status of the chiefs by substituting the right of effective jurisdiction for the arbitration powers which they had possessed under the Germans. However, this was not enough to placate the divisional chiefs, who were determined to hold their own against the policy.

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25 A similar situation occurred amongst the Ga people of Accra when the Native Authority Ordinance of 1927 was introduced. See John Parker, *Making the Town: Ga State and Society in Early Colonial Accra* (Portsmouth, NH, 2000), p. 227. A ‘stool’ is a symbol of authority of a *Fia* or *Fiaga* (a ‘chief’ or a ‘paramount chief’).


28 Togoland Native Administration Ordinance, 1932.


30 PRO CO 96/705/8, Petition, 25 September 1932.


32 *Ibid.* Part IV.
Another source of protest was in relation to section 32(2) of the 1932 ordinance, part of which read:

‘Any native proved to be in possession of stool property who, after being ordered by the state council to deliver up the stool property, fails to do so shall be guilty of an offence, and shall, on conviction by a State Council, on which the necessary jurisdiction is hereby conferred, be liable to a fine not exceeding one hundred pounds or to imprisonment with or without hard labour for any term not exceeding six months...and the one would be ordered to deliver the said property within one month from the date of such order and on failure to comply with such order his private property may be attached and sold to recover such value.’

On the face of it, this clause looked innocuous, but an understanding of the events which informed its insertion explains why it generated so much indignation. From the beginning of British control over the area, the institution of chieftaincy began to witness a gradual change towards greater authority and power. This was in sharp contrast to the German period when the institution was not altogether an enviable one, so people did not see the need to contest the stools. The coming of the British triggered an increase in chieftaincy disputes. In some cases, people hid stool property in order to prevent the enstoolment of a chief whose selection they had opposed.

A typical example was in Ho-Dome, where a dispute arose in 1930 regarding the right of succession to the stool. The stoolfather (**Zikpuitor**), being dissatisfied with the decision of the elders, hid the stool. When all efforts to locate the stool proved futile, a new stool had to be consecrated for the newly elected chief. A similar incident occurred at Kpedze in 1932 where the original stool was removed by those who had custody of it because they objected to the chief elected. This trend provided the basis for the necessity of inserting section 32(2) into the ordinance. It was the intention of the British government not to interfere in any way with the choice of a chief, if the choice was unanimous. At the same time, when there was a considerable dissension among the divisions as to who to elect as a chief, the government was bound to intervene to some extent, in the interest of law and order. Aside from protests emanating from the provisions of the ordinance, the ‘smaller chiefs’ took strong exception to the principles that were to govern the formation of large states. One such principle was that government would not give legal recognition to the amalgamation of a division with a state, unless the said division was unanimously in favour of amalgamation. To achieve unanimity on the issue of amalgamation in

33 The Native Administration (Southern Section) Ordinance of 1932, p. 13.
34 PRAAD/A ADM39/1/285, Amalgamation of Divisions, Case no. 2184/32, Chieftaincy Dispute in Alavanyo, 1944.
35 The Stoolfather or **Zipkuitor** is the head of the family which produces the chief and he is the custodian of the stool. The proximity of the stoolfather to the stool made him a very powerful person in the chieftaincy set-up. See Michael Verdom, *The Abutia Ewe of West Africa: A Chiefdom that never was* (Berlin, 1983), p. 92.
36 See detail of this incident in PRAAD/A ADM39/1/281, The Asorgli State, Case no. 194/1932.
37 PRO CO 96/705/8, Togoland Native Administration Ordinance, 1932, Official Government Despatch, No. 867, 8 December, 1932.
Ewedome proved to be very difficult because many of the divisions were disturbed by internal strife emanating from the policy. Factions emerged within divisions as a result of struggles for political power. There were also disagreements over which particular state the divisions should amalgamate with. In 1931, for instance, the chief of Goviefe, Sasraku VII, petitioned Captain Lilley against the decision of the chief of Woadze to amalgamate with Dagadu of Kpando. Sasraku, who claimed to be the paramount chief over Have and Woadze divisions, wanted all divisions under him to amalgamate with the Ve territorial area. The decision of the chief of Woadze to go contrary to the wish of the chief of Goviefe generated tension between the two divisions.

Similarly, in 1932, the chiefs, elders and people of the various divisions of Wli state sent a petition to Lilley at Kpando in which they expressed their objection to the decision of their paramount chief to amalgamate with Gbi (Hohoe). The people of Wli claimed that traditionally, they had had a long relationship with Dagadu of Kpando, and that it was their wish to amalgamate with Akpini state under the paramountcy of Dagadu. They went further, destooling their paramount chief and enstooling another person. This generated chieftaincy disputes in Wli traditional area. In the same vein, the paramount chief of Ve was destooled in 1932 for amalgamating with Dagadu, because some divisions in Ve objected to amalgamation with Kpando. Again, the decision of the paramount chief of Adaklu to amalgamate with Ho instead of Peki created tension between the paramount chief of Adaklu and his subjects. In Aveme area, while some of the citizens cited proximity as one of the reasons why they preferred to join Kpando (Akpini), others objected. Those who opposed the idea made reference to a land dispute between Kpando and Aveme which led to conflict between the two states in 1926. In addition, some divisions had chieftaincy disputes which made unanimity unachievable. A typical example was Asogli state. Chieftaincy disputes in Ho division had their origins in 1930, when Lilley made Howusu, the sub-divisional chief of Ho Dome, the paramount chief of Asorgli state. Consequently, Togbe Afede of Ho-Bankoe lost his position as the head chief of Ho division from 1930 to 1958. Howusu himself had serious problems when he was enstooled in May 1930. The stoolfather refused to give him the stool because he did not recognise Howusu’s right to be a chief. Consequently, a new stool had to be made for Howusu. It therefore came as no surprise when, in October 1930, thirteen head chiefs agreed at a meeting in Tanyigbe to elect Togbe Afede as their paramount chief of Asorgli state, in defiance of Lilley’s directive. The Ho incident became one of the contentious issues which made amalgamation of other divisions with Asogli a source of great resentment.

Protests against the use of Oaths

One principle which generated great controversy and protest was that ‘amalgamation was recognised only if native custom of a particularly binding nature had been performed by the

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39 RAG/H No. 48/21, Address by Captain Lilley to the Chiefs of Ho Division, 28 October, 1931.
40 PRAAD/A ADM 39/1/338 Amalgamation of Chiefs, 13 July 1932.
41 Ibid.
42 PRAAD/A ADM39/1/338, Amalgamation of Chiefs, 13 July 1946.
43 PRAAD/A ADM, Amalgamation of Divisions, Aveme Native Affairs, 1937.
44 In 1958, following the findings of a Commission of inquiry into the dispute, the paramountcy was given back to Ho-Bankoe and Afede has since been the head of Asogli State. See Inquiry into the Chieftaincy Dispute in Ho in 1958. For details on the origin of the dispute, see PRAAD/A ADM 39/1/456, Quarterly Reports, Ho District. This incident was also recounted in Barbara J. Callaway, ‘Local Politics in Ho and Aba’, Canadian Journal of African Studies, 14 (1970), pp. 121-144.
Before the advent of colonialism, no customary observance of a binding nature had ever existed among the various independent divisions. It was not a common practice for any chief within a ‘state’ (duko) to contemplate performing a custom that would bind him and his town or the whole ‘state’ to a chief of another division. However, considering the importance which the inhabitants attached to oaths, the colonial officials found it expedient to use them as an important instrument for forming and cementing large states for the purpose of local government.

Generally, there were two types of oaths among the Ewes: the chief’s oath and the so-called fetish oath. In this article, the focus will be on the chief’s oath, discussion of which will illuminate why the use of oaths to enforce amalgamation became highly contentious. A chief’s oath can be described as an act of making reference to a disaster or tragedy that befell a particular ethnic group, state, town or even a chief. The disaster could take the form of a defeat in war or the tragic death of a chief, either through a strange illness or through assassination. In most cases, the day on which the disaster occurred became a taboo. A chief’s oath could also originate from the ritual performances involved in instituting a stool. A stool could therefore have one or more oaths. Any reference made to those disasters was tantamount to swearing an oath which had very serious implications for the one who swore the oath, the state, and the chief whose oath was sworn.

In the traditional Ewe worldview, veneration of ancestral spirits was essential. The power and respect that every chief enjoyed among his people was due largely to the fact that the chief occupied the stool which housed the ancestral spirits. Swearing a chief’s oath was therefore a very serious matter because it had the potential to evoke the wrath of the spirits of the ancestor(s) involved in the said disaster. Therefore, the swearing of the oath would bring supernatural sanctions down upon the head of either the individual who swore it or the individual against whom it was sworn, depending on the outcome of the dispute.

In very dire circumstances, people could resort to the oath in order to save their lives, institute an action or prove their innocence. For example, if someone had been wronged, or someone accused someone else of an offence, then swearing of an oath underlined the seriousness of the accusation, forcing the accused to respond (often by swearing their own oath) or to concede their guilt. Thus, if anybody who was accused of a crime said, ‘meka Hoawo fe fie (literally meaning ‘I swear by the evening of Ho’), or ‘meka Dagadu fe Kwasida’ (‘I swear by Dagadu’s Sunday’), ‘he/she was making a very solemn declaration of his/her innocence’. The chief whose oath was sworn was then obliged to investigate the allegation. In the same vein, if two people were involved in a quarrel and one of them felt his or her life was in danger, he or she could swear the oath of any stool. Once the oath was sworn, the quarrel had to stop immediately because the swearing of oath introduced a new dimension into the dispute; the matter at stake ceased to be a mere quarrel between the two individuals, and instead, it assumed importance at the state level. Both parties had to present themselves to the chief whose oath was sworn for the matter to be investigated.

A chief could also swear an oath for two main reasons. First, he could use the oath of his stool as an instrument of enforcing his orders, which under normal circumstances could be

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47 PRAAD/A ADM 39/1/545, Memorandum on Amalgamation in British Togoland.
48 The word ‘fetish’ is a complex word, incorporated into the local usage from the Portuguese word feitico and commonly used to refer to anything to do with the African spiritual realm, but still retaining problematic and sometimes derogatory overtones.
50 Ibid. The evening of Ho refers to the eve of Asante invasion of Ho in 1869 and Dagadu’s Sunday is in reference to the day Dagadu III lost his two sons in a blazing fire.
51 People could swear the oath of a stool outside their town if they felt that they would not get a fair hearing in their own town or if they had any reason to believe that the oath in their town was not potent enough.
disobeyed by his subjects. Second, a chief could swear an oath pledging his allegiance to his superior chief. This happened particularly within a duko, where sub-chiefs in charge of villages swore an oath of allegiance to the chief of their parent settlement. The senior chief would reciprocate by swearing his own oath to affirm his commitment to protecting the subordinate chief. In such cases, the swearing of the oath was preceded with elaborate ritual performances. Chiefs could not swear an oath without holding and stretching out the ‘oath-sword’ (atamkayi), the most visible symbol of the authority of a chief. The swearing of an oath of allegiance by Delume, the paramount chief of Ve, to Dagadu IV, the paramount chief of Kpando, to mark the entry of Ve into the amalgamated Akpini state vividly illustrates the seriousness attached to a chief’s oath and its relevance in cementing the formation of large states in Ewedome. On 24 July 1946, after Delume had failed to form his own amalgamated state, he finally decided to join Akpini state. Before Delume swore Dagadu’s oath to pledge his allegiance, a sheep was slaughtered and Delume dipped his left foot and his linguist stick into the blood of the sheep. This ritual signified the admission of Delume into Akpini state. Both chiefs then drank palm wine from the same calabash as a sign of unity. Dagadu then dipped his finger into the blood of the sheep and touched the tongue of Delume with the blood. The significance of the ritual was that it reminded Delume of the need to remain truthful. It was also meant to serve as a seal of the whole transaction. Delume then held the ‘oath-sword’ in his hand, stretched it towards Dagadu and proceeded to swear the oath of allegiance thus: ‘If Dagadu called me either by day or night and I failed to respond to his duties or I disobeyed him, then I shall be guilty of Dagadu’s Sunday (Dagadu fe Kwasida)’. Dagadu also got up, took the ‘oath-sword’ and assured Delume of his resolve to protect Ve traditional area at all times.

By swearing the oath of Dagadu, Delume was in fact subordinating himself, all stools in Ve area, and the people of Ve to Dagadu and his stool. Thenceforth, the people of Ve had to do the bidding of Dagadu. While there was nothing in the Native Administration 1932 ordinance by which the territorial rights of a particular stool were conveyed to another stool, the swearing of oaths of allegiance and the rituals associated with it tended to subordinate one stool to the other. The swearing of an oath, together with the definition of ‘state’ as contained in the ordinance, sought to confer on the so-called big chiefs greater powers of principium over ‘smaller chiefs’. In the traditional sense, such greater powers could only be exercised by the ‘big chiefs’ if they had acquired the territories of the smaller divisions, either by right of conquest or through cessation. Therefore, the explanations given by Lilley and other administrative officers - that the oath of allegiance conferred no right on the paramount chiefs of amalgamated states over the lands of the stools subordinated to them - was difficult for the smaller chiefs to fathom.

The Government Reaction to the Protests

It became apparent that amalgamation was not going to be achieved easily, and that the government could not rely on the goodwill of the people to achieve total amalgamation. Although by 1932 the government was able to start creating the three amalgamated states it had envisaged for Ewedome (Akpini, Awatime and Asorgli), total amalgamation was some way off. There were still fourteen divisions in Ewedome which refused to join any of those states. The total population

\[52\] The stool itself was not to be seen in public. In fact, in some localities, even chiefs were not allowed to see the stool.

\[53\] PRAAD/A ADM 39/1/338, Amalgamation of Chiefs, 13 July 1946.

\[54\] Ibid.

\[55\] Ibid.

\[56\] Ibid.
of unamalgamated states at the time was 32,534.\(^{57}\) Lilley expressed his frustration in 1936 when he said 'I have been preaching this doctrine of amalgamation for some years and it was just two years ago that my preaching met with some success.'\(^{58}\) Meanwhile, the delay in the full implementation of the policy slowed down the development of the territory. In 1937, for example, the colonial government was accused of doing little to improve amenities in the Togoland mandated area.\(^{59}\) It was reported that it took almost as long to get a reply from Ho to a letter posted at Accra as it did to get one despatched to London.\(^{60}\) Kpando had no telegraphic or telephonic communications with the outside world. Mails were sent from Accra to Ho and Kpando through Adidome, an Ewe town in Gold Coast Colony, by runners on foot.\(^{61}\) There was no hospital in the area.\(^{62}\) The plan was that, when established, the NAs could be empowered to begin addressing the developmental needs of the territory.

Initially, the government decided to go ahead with the implementation of the policy despite the protests, with the view that its implementation would alleviate the disquiet among the chiefs and those who had already agreed to amalgamate. Meanwhile, the policy received support from the members of the Permanent Mandate Commission.\(^{63}\) But as protests against the policy grew, the government was forced to re-examine the ordinance and the principles under which amalgamation was to proceed. This led to the postponement of the formal application of the ordinance from July to October 1932.\(^{64}\) There seems to be a clear case of misunderstanding of some terms in the ordinance itself, owing largely to language limitations. Linguistic difficulties had always been a problem for colonial officials in the region. Often, one came across many shades and gradations of the English language which had no exact counterpart in the local language, as in the people’s conception of ‘state’ as against its interpretation in the ordinance. This created some confusion amongst the inhabitants.\(^{65}\) It was also realised that mere persuasion was not enough to achieve total amalgamation in Ewedome.\(^{66}\) This was not due to any weakness in the persuasive power of the administrative officers. Rather, it was partly as a result of the extraordinarily fierce local patriotism. It was clear that the divisions were resolutely protective of their age-old loyalties and were not in the mood to brook any interference in their domestic affairs. Some degree of coercion was necessary if the policy of creating large states was to be effective.

As a first step, an amendment to the ordinance was effected in 1936. One of the key issues in the amendment was the enforcement of amalgamation, aimed at forcing ‘stubborn’ divisions to amalgamate.\(^{67}\). It gave a further boost to the power of the chiefs by making it possible to arrest anybody who refused a directive to appear before a NA, Provincial Commissioner or Administrative Officer.\(^{68}\) In addition, unanimity would no longer be required before giving legal recognition to

\(^{57}\) Figure computed from the 1931 census.
\(^{58}\) RAG/H, Address by Captain C. C. Lilley to the people of Takla, 23 October, 1936.
\(^{60}\) Ibid.
\(^{61}\) CO 724/2, Annual Report on British Togoland 1920-21, p.33.
\(^{62}\) The West African Review, 120 (September 1937), p. 39
\(^{63}\) See PRO CO 96/705/8, Notes on the petition from Natural Rulers Society. 25 September 1932.
\(^{64}\) PRO CO 96/705/8, From the Acting Governor of the Gold Coast to Secretary of State of the Colonies, 8 November, 1932.
\(^{65}\) RAG/H RAO 755/155/124, Dispatch from the DC, Kpando to the Commissioner of the Eastern Province, Koforidua, 1932.
\(^{66}\) Ibid.
\(^{67}\) PRO CO 96/728/9, Togoland Native Administration Legislation, Amendment to 1932 Ordinance, 22 August 1936; RAG/H, Supplement to the Gold Coast Government Gazette, 10 July 1936. (Not Filed).
\(^{68}\) PRO CO 96/728/9, Togoland Native Administration Legislation. Amendment to 1932 Ordinance, 22 August 1936.
amalgamated states. Once there was a definite majority in support of amalgamation in a division, the process could go on. This particular amendment proved quite successful, as it lessened the tension on divisions where the people were divided on the issue of which particular state they should join. We observed that some divisions were unable to amalgamate because a minority was apparently opposed to the policy. Consequently, Aveve was allowed to join Akpini state in 1941 although only two-thirds of the population were clearly in favour. Also as a result of this new directive, only ten divisions remained unamalgamated by 1941.

In 1936, divisions which refused to amalgamate were debarred from exercising jurisdiction over their own subjects by means of a tribunal, until those divisions became members of a state. Cases that arose in those divisions had to be sent directly to the District Commissioner. From the traditional point of view, judicial power was the basis for efficient government. Therefore, the decision by the administrative officials to prevent unamalgamated states from exercising legal jurisdiction over their subjects was found to be an effective means of bringing ‘recalcitrant’ divisions to heel. Indeed, Taviefe finally succumbed to amalgamating with Asorgli state in 1941 as a result of this directive. Similarly, Adaklu, which refused to amalgamate with Ho, was forced to join Asorgli state in 1945 for want of a tribunal.

Apart from the grant of tribunals, colonial officers also resorted to the use of resource allocation as an instrument to coerce divisions to amalgamate. For instance, divisions such as Anfoega, Gbi, Have, Kpedze, Tsrukpe and Ve which refused to amalgamate were denied the supply of gun-powder and social amenities such as water, clinics and grants for education. Another case in point was the decision taken by Lilley in 1935 to stop the construction of a bridge between Have and Vakpo. This was in reaction to Have’s refusal to amalgamate with Kpando. The bridge was to be built across River Dayi, but when the people of Have insisted that they would not join Kpando to form Akpini state because of a long standing dispute between the two states, Lilley called for work on the bridge to stop. All materials were removed from the site. However, the construction of the bridge was of utmost importance to the people of Have. Thus, they had no choice other than to amalgamate with Kpando (Akpini).

**Formation of Atando State**

In 1938, Abutia, Adaklu, Anfoega, Gbi, Goviefe, Tsrukpe and Ve, together with non-Ewe states such as Likpe, Nkonya and Santrokofi, formed what they called the Natural Rulers’ Society (NRS). This group had its origins in a meeting in 1932 of 25 divisions protesting against the ordinance. Since then, the number had dwindled in size to ten, following the amendment of the ordinance in 1936. The NRS intensified their protest from 1936, in apparent reaction to the decision by the colonial officers to close down tribunals of divisions which had not amalgamated. Another of their objectives was to protest against Lilley’s return to the district in 1938. Furthermore, the group

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69 RAG/H RAO 221/3, Amalgamation of Chiefs-British Togoland, 1935.
70 RAG/H RAO 33/45, Akpini State Affairs, 1933.
72 PRAAD/A ADM 39/1/280, No. 475/2185/32, Agotime Native Affairs, Amalgamation of Taviefe with Asorgli State at Agotime Kpetoe, 8 March 1943.
74 PRAAD/A ADM 39/1/662, Joint Welcome Address by the Independent States to the Governor of the Gold Coast, 15 October 1949.
77 Captain Lilley had gone to England for treatment and was due to return to the district in 1938.
was of the view that the provision that paramount chiefs of amalgamated states were to be considered as first among equals was contradictory. As one chief rightly said, ‘if someone is going to be first the rest of us are going to be second’. In 1940, the NRS decided to petition the Acting Commissioner of the Eastern Province, stationed at Dodowa in the Gold Coast Colony. The NRS suggested that a federation with a rotational presidency would uphold the sacred right of self-government, leaving every division perfectly free to regulate its internal affairs, but subject to the constitution of the federation. The amalgamated state, in their view, was ‘a completely strange and novel form of political union which was suited for a conquered state’.

In 1941, the Commissioner, apparently despondent about the refusal of some of the smaller states to amalgamate, advocated the breaking up of amalgamated states altogether in the entire southern section of British Togoland. The pessimistic view of the other officials, particularly those working in the territory, was that any act of recognition of a confederation would result in attempts to break up the already established states. The officers therefore insisted it was not in the interests of the colonial government to show any sign of weakness in administering the mandated territory. Conceding to the NRS’ proposal would negate the government’s intention of fostering state consciousness among the Ewe states. Worse still, the proposal by the NRS for a confederacy instead of a centralised state would mean that the divisions which would form the confederacy would have a constitution fundamentally different from other states in the southern section of British Togoland. Two problems confronted the officers: firstly, how to protect the newly formed states from breaking up, and secondly, how to deal with the unamalgamated divisions. There were two options that the officers could explore. First, they could wait with the hope that the unamalgamated divisions would change their mind and join one of the states. In this way, the officers would not be forced into making any changes to the policy towards any particular group of divisions within the same territory. Besides, if the three existing states proved to be viable NAs which delivered material benefits to the people, they might have an impact on the attitude of the diehards. The obvious disadvantage of this option was the likelihood that the officers would wait in vain.

Second, the officers could allow the unamalgamated divisions to form a state of their own, in default of a better solution. This second option was a difficult one, in view of the differences that existed among the members of the NRS. The group was heterogeneous, with different laws, customs and languages, which made any attempt at affecting a sympathetic union between them a difficult proposition. It did not look likely that the non-Ewe states in the NRS, such as Nkonya, Santrokofoi and Likpe, would want to cooperate with Ve, Gbi, and Anfoega. Even among the Ewe states, Ve wanted to be seat of such a state, something Gbi and Anfoega opposed. Anfoega was situated very close to Kpando but it refused to join Akpini state because Dagadu II had orchestrated the German attack on Anfoega in 1894. Anfoega also felt that by virtue of its contribution to the British war effort in 1914, its head chief should be considered as a paramount chief. Eventually, the officers decided to go with the first option and concentrate their energies on improving the workings of the already established NAs. The independent divisions were left on their own. Their chiefs had certain duties as NAs but they did not have legal means of exerting their authority, because their tribunals were closed down. All civil and criminal cases emanating from those divisions had to go to the Magistrates’ courts at Ho or Kpando. The situation remained unchanged.

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78 RAG/H RAO 048/20, Native Affairs, Ho District, 25 September 1932.
79 Ibid.
until 1949, when the government agreed to allow Ve, Gbi, Likpe and Santrokofi to form Atando Native Authority. The hope was that Anfoega would also change its mind and join the new state.  

The irregular Atando NA was therefore a confederacy in its structure and operations. The members rejected the term ‘paramount chief.’ No division was made to swear allegiance to any other division. Instead, they elected a president among themselves to preside over the state. The president had no suzerain power except that of *primus inter pares*. In this case, there was no subordination of one division to another. The president would hold office for three years, after which he would be eligible for re-election. Federal meetings were to be held quarterly, but the president could call an emergency meeting at any place within the federal divisions. The formation of Atando in 1949 finally brought the process of amalgamation in Ewedome to a close. It must, however, be noted that total amalgamation was still not achieved because Anfoega division refused to join any of the states right up to when the NAs were abolished in 1951. Three main factors accounted for the colonial government’s decision to recognise Atando state. First, Sir Alan Burns, who took over as governor of the Gold Coast in 1941 was dissatisfied with the policy of amalgamation. In his words ‘the policy as regards Native Authorities had gone astray.’ He noted a similarity between institutions among the Ewe and those of Iboland in Nigeria and came to the conclusion that the administrative officers were making the same mistake in Togoland that they had made in Iboland, in trying to impose upon the territory a native administration which was not native to the area. Burns therefore became sympathetic towards the NRS. Second, it was observed that the combined population of Gbi, Likpe, Santrokofi, Ve at the 1931 census was 17,521. This figure was considerably more than the number considered sufficient for Awatime NA to be recognised. There was therefore no need to prevent the above states from forming a NA. Third, the idea of setting up a committee following the 1948 disturbances in the Gold Coast, to investigate into constitutional matters and to make recommendations for implementation, made the pursuit of amalgamation in Ewedome a less important issue in the political scheme of things.

**Conclusion**

The British officials were sincere in their bid to follow pre-colonial political organization and affiliations in creating NA areas in Ewedome. Their research into the history and ethnography of the region led to a reasonable understanding of local realities. Nevertheless, it became obvious that it was one thing for the chiefdoms to develop loyalties of their own, and quite another to force them to form states with binding legislations that they did not have a hand in formulating. Lentz noted that though the officials were sincere in their attempt to formulate policies based on their knowledge of the societies, ‘a gap existed between ethnographic knowledge and colonial practice’. From the protests against the policy, one is inclined to tender that if the seat of the paramount chief had been rotational, the policy would have met less resistance. Tribunals were

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81 Buem Native Authority in the north of Ewedome was also created under the NAO of 1932, making four NAs in the southern section of British Togoland.
82 PRAAD/A ADM 39/1/545, Petition from Independent Divisions to the Governor of the Gold Coast, 19 October, 1945.
84 For the intransigence of Anfoega, she was denied government grants throughout the period of the existence of the NAs. See Nugent, Smugglers, p. 131.
85 PRO CO 96/780/4, Native Administration, Allan Burns to G.H. Creasy, 9 December 1944. See also Nugent, Smugglers, p. 128.
eagerly sought after by every chief because they enhanced the status and power of chiefs and their elders, not to mention the financial inducement that the tribunals offered. The policy encountered difficulties because the cultural heterogeneity of Ewedome, even among the Ewes, gave rise to conflicting interests and tensions.

Be that as it may, the policy of amalgamation cannot be dismissed as a failure. To this day in Ewedome, as in the whole of the present-day Volta Region of Ghana, amalgamation endures as a viable option. Several divisions amalgamated to operate one divisional (Traditional) council. Despite the problems evinced by the implementation of the policy, the relative success laid the structure for the new local councils that were to follow in 1951, and signified the nature of the British colonial government’s contribution to the development of the area. The delay in completing the process was inevitable, for the British administrative officials ‘had to lead and the people to follow, often reluctantly’.87

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87 RAG/H, Memorandum on the Administration of the Southern Section of British Togoland, 1946 (Not Filed).
Wilson K. Yayoh: Protests against Amalgamation in Colonial Ewedome

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