

# WHAT'S IN A REGIME CHANGE? ANALYSING THE SOCIAL HISTORY OF TRANSFORMATION IN A "PROBLEMATIC REGION"

The Southern Volta Region, 1966–1972

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**ABSTRACT:** The south of Ghana's Volta Region, a theatre of secessionist mobilisation under colonial rule and an area of oppositional activity under the Nkrumah regime, is a privileged test case for social and political change during the early phase of the "long 1970s" (between 1966 and 1972). At the same time, it is one of Ghana's regions for which better analysis of the regional archives (the Ho Branch of the PRAAD) makes a huge difference. This article discusses the effect of the regime change after Kwame Nkrumah's 1966 overthrow with recourse to these abundant archival records, interpreting security fears, local panics against secessionism, and the redefinition of opposition. It also approaches social change in the fields of "traditional policy," in terms of modified discussions of legitimacy of chiefs and contenders for chieftaincies, and of cross-border contraband and its local impact. This study examines the three fields in light of the expectations of 1966 as principal argument, and in relation to the xenophobic policy introduced by Kofi Busia's PP government in 1969.

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## Introduction

Between 1966 and 1972, Ghanaians experienced three different governments.<sup>1</sup> This article interrogates the practical meaning of such rapid regime change at the start of Ghana's "long 1970s" in key areas of social life, in the process demonstrating what Ghana's hitherto neglected regional archives (PRAAD branches) can offer in terms of that analysis. This approach provides new insights into the local significance of the overthrow of the Kwame Nkrumah regime in 1966, and the policies of the National Liberation Council (NLC, 1966–1969) and the Progress Party (PP)/Kofi Busia government (1969–1972) in the Volta Region.

The Volta Region boasts a particularly rich historiography, especially compared to other Ghanaian regions, given its history of cross-border relations, networks, and movements, including ethnic Ewe identification and mobilisation, as well as separatism and smuggling.<sup>2</sup> However, rich as this historiography might be for the period between 1880 and 1966, existing scholarship mostly presents the "long 1970s" as an afterthought. Paul Nugent's observations on the reconfigurations of power and patronage at the local level of the Volta Region during the Nkrumah period are important. For instance, he explains the choice of the city of Ho over Hohoe as regional capital as a decision taken to punish a local opposition stronghold.<sup>3</sup> Conversely, his observations on the years from 1966 to 1972

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2. Divine E. K. Amenumey, *The Ewe Unification Movement: A Political History* (Accra: Ghana University Press, 1989); Paul Nugent, *Smugglers, Secessionists & Loyal Citizens on the Ghana-Togo Frontier: The Lie of the Borderlands Since 1914* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press; Oxford: James Currey; Legon: Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2002); Kate Skinner, *The Fruits of Freedom in British Togoland: Literacy, Politics and Nationalism, 1914–2014* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Alexander Keese, *Ethnicity and the Colonial State: Finding & Representing Group Identifications in Coastal West African and Global Perspective (1850–1960)* (Leiden: Brill, 2016).

3. Nugent, *Smugglers*, 213.

only skim the surface.<sup>4</sup> In Edem Adotey's work on decolonisation at the border, discussion of the NLC and Busia years is absent.<sup>5</sup> The same is true for Emmanuel Akyeampong's long-term environmental history of the Keta Lagoon, in which the only references to the period between 1966 and 1972 are for the relocation of the capital of the Volta Region to Ho, as "nothing much happened during the NLC and PP eras where Keta's environmental problems were concerned."<sup>6</sup>

Nugent has also given a vital account of the modifications of smuggling practices in the Volta Region as a border region between Ghana and Togo, but, again, coverage of the years between the overthrow of the Nkrumah regime in 1966 and the successful coup d'état of Ignatius Acheampong in 1972 is far less detailed and analytical.<sup>7</sup> For the Volta Region after 1966, there is so far no in depth account that would be comparable to Alice Wiemers's analysis of the village and region of Kpasenkpe in Ghana's north, which details local interests and initiatives, political interventions, and reactions during the "long 1970s" and the 1980s.<sup>8</sup> But there is much potential, as is apparent from Jeffrey Ahlman's recent analytical overview of Ghanaian history, which points to many interesting research perspectives for the years 1966 to 1972. Granted, Ahlman's discussion relies on the press as the principal primary source type for the period in question, but it leads the consideration of the NLC regime and the Busia government away from simplistic tropes of "crisis years" and presents a detailed examination of the experience of Busia's Progress Party as well as its xenophobic policies from 1969.<sup>9</sup>

However, the historiography of the "long 1970s" needs to advance in three important ways. First, a regional focus would clearly be useful, through discussion of fields in which regime change affected local dynamics. Second, as xenophobic mobilisation became a characteristic strategy of the Busia government, it is an important task to seek out its effects on

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4. Paul Nugent, *Boundaries, Communities and State-Making in West Africa: The Centrality of the Margins* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 391–392, 438–442.

5. Edem Adotey, "An imaginary line? Decolonisation, bordering and borderscapes on the Ghana–Togo border," *Third World Quarterly* 42, no. 5 (2021): 1069–1086.

6. Emmanuel Akyeampong, *Between the Sea & the Lagoon: An Eco-social History of the Anlo of Southeastern Ghana c. 1850 to Recent Times* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press—James Currey: Oxford, 2001), 184–185, 204.

7. Nugent, *Boundaries*, 461–476.

8. Alice Wiemers, *Village Work: Development and Rural Statecraft in Twentieth-Century Ghana* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2021).

9. Jeffrey Ahlman, *Ghana: A Political and Social History* (London: Zed Books, 2023), 124–139.

these local dynamics. So far, the existing historical analysis on institutionalised xenophobia in Ghana is very limited.<sup>10</sup> Samuel Fury Childs Daly's recent article on the later Nigerian xenophobic policy wave directed against Nigeria's Ghanaian residents in the early 1980s might represent one new important way of looking at such strategies, but there is nothing comparable to be found in Daly's article for Ghana's long 1970s, as his pages on the policy of the Busia government are merely a prelude for understanding the logics and experience in the Nigerian case.<sup>11</sup> Third, historians need to acknowledge that the period between 1966 and 1972 is a privileged one in terms of archival records, which are particularly abundant both at the level of the regions and also in the PRAAD headquarters in Accra, where that period offers far more interesting records on political processes than those available for the Nkrumah period. As I will show, the PRAAD branch or regional archives in Ho are particularly dense for that period (generally, the Ho archives should be far more thoroughly utilised both for the colonial and the postcolonial period).

Therefore, the southern Volta Region is in a way an impressive case study through which to discuss social transformation and shifting political preoccupations in view of regime change. Its characterisation as a "troubled region," of strong and complex political mobilisation between 1945 and the early 1960s (at least), makes it an area where the internal effects of external change were among the strongest. It certainly belongs to the regions where violent repression under the Nkrumah regime, not least through "preventive detention," played a massive role. And it is a case where the widely neglected, abundant records of the regional archive make a huge difference for historical interpretation.

The following article is organised into four sections. First, I discuss the particular situation with regard to archival sources for the (southern) Volta Region between 1966 and 1972. I then address the social and political repercussions of the rupture initiating the long 1970s through analysis of change in three different fields, namely, the sense of opposition in the NLC

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10. Margaret Peil, "The Expulsion of West African Aliens," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 9, no. 2 (1971): 205–229; Ousman Kobo, "'We are Citizens too': the Politics of Citizenship in Independent Ghana," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 48, no. 1 (2010): 67–94; Nana Osei Quarshie, "L'expulsion en masse comme outil d'exclusion intérieure: Raids de police et emprisonnement des migrants d'Afrique occidentale au Ghana (1969–1974)," in *L'Afrique en prisons*, eds. Frédéric Le Marcis and Marie Morelle (Lyon: ENS Éditions, 2022), 259–275.

11. Samuel Fury Childs Daly, "Ghana Must Go: Nativism and the Politics of Expulsion in West Africa, 1969–1985," *Past & Present* 259, no. 1 (2023): 229–261, 244–246.

and PP government years in a region widely seen as oppositional at the moment of Ghana's independence in 1957; the changing importance and prestige of "traditional rule"; and, extending Nugent's important scholarship, the practice and repression of smuggling as a key activity close to the border. Most histories of the southern Volta Region were written as trans-border histories between the Gold Coast, British Togoland, and French Togo before 1956/57, or between Ghana and Togo after 1957. However, when attempting to understand the local impact of regime change in this border region, Togolese history fades into the background. Therefore, it is a history of the southern Volta Region within Ghana that I present here.

### Reconsidering the Regional Archive

The archival collections at the PRAAD branch in Ho appear as references in various studies on the history of British Togoland before its integration into Ghana and, on very rare occasions, also in analysis of the postcolonial period. However, these references are relatively few, partly because the Ho archives were, in the first decade of the twenty-first century, still complicated to use. Despite the early existence of detailed inventories and file numbers, it was often difficult to obtain the files one requested. With a new archival team in place, conditions gradually improved during the 2010s, but these improvements did not lead to much analysis of the records in contemporary publications. Then, in 2020/21, during a global pandemic, the archives underwent a spectacularly successful renovation, thanks to external funding. This process improved the storage conditions of the Ho Archives: after general refurbishment and reorganisation, these archives are now likely to be among the most convenient and important archival collections at a regional level available in West Africa. A new, detailed inventory covers many of the files, and researchers can expect ease of access to these files.<sup>12</sup>

Some dossiers held by the branch are from the interwar period, but most cover either late colonial British Togoland between 1945 and 1956 or the period between 1957 and 1972, which are extraordinarily complete. On the contrary, the Acheampong period from 1972 is less well represented in the archives (or at least in the collections that are accessible through the vast inventories), especially for the years after 1975. The archives

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12. Alexander Keese and Annalisa Urbano, "Researching Post-independence Africa in Regional Archives: Possibilities and Limits in Benin, Cabo Verde, Ghana, and Congo-Brazzaville," *Africa* 93, no. 4 (2023): 542–561, 552–554.

concerning the period between 1966 and 1972 are very rich and practically unexploited, and I argue here that they are crucial resources, especially if historians adapt to the fact that some of the dossiers that are full of rich correspondence still rely on perspectives of chieftaincies and “traditional” divisions, while others represent different administrative priorities. The files in question contain abundant local voices and perspectives, as I show in the following analysis.

Security reports constitute a principal type of record. In the case of the Ho archives, they can be linked to further correspondence between different levels of the administration. Although the otherwise well-detailed inventories are sometimes less comprehensive in their categories regarding the nature of administrative correspondence on alleged security threats, historians can nevertheless find them. These security reports give impressive detail regarding fears and rumours, and administrative countermeasures, allowing for an understanding of local initiatives and reactions, especially with regard to the three themes outlined earlier.

While “traditional rule” was a logic of classifying regional processes that might seem anachronistic at first glance, this is certainly not the case for the early years of the long 1970s. Chiefs had an essential role in demanding political change through separation from larger communities and in formulating claims against intraregional migrants, debates which peaked in the eighteen months after the 1966 coup d'état. Local historical accounts were mobilised. Two very early examples of that strategy suffice to illustrate its importance. In Have, the coming to power of the NLC led to the “traditional authorities” explaining in detail the division's role in the legendary historical migrations of Ewe-speakers, using historical interpretations established by scholars. The hope was to see the head chief promoted and to get independent status recognised.<sup>13</sup> In December 1966, the Chief of Wusuta Gadze attempted to mobilise the NLC against the “greedy” behaviour of “settlers” coming from the other part of the division, who he accused of occupying land although they already had plots.<sup>14</sup> In the following years, many of these early debates would feed into more durable calls for rectification of “traditional politics,” which I analyse here.

Finally, the archival holdings at Ho offer a rather dense documentation of border proceedings and the fight against contraband (the files are richer

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13. Public Records and Archives Administration Department, Ho Branch (PRAAD-Ho), VRG/1/51, Togbe Asemtsra IX (Fiaga of Have Traditional Area) to Lieutenant-General J. A. Ankrab, Chairman of the NLC (missing first page, missing date).

14. PRAAD-Ho, VRG/1/176, Togbe Nyangbotsi IV to Nathan Quao, Secretary of NLC, *Wusuta Gadze Lands Affairs*, December 14, 1966.

for the Nkrumah period, and slightly weaker on practices under the NLC and the Busia government). As I show in the section discussing changing experiences with contraband trade, these archives shed light on a major scandal of 1969, the Dzodze incident, which illustrated a sentiment of more general malaise in the border areas. They also offer much detail on the inner workings of a key operation against smugglers in 1970, known as Operation Octopod. Finally, they include later comments on these occurrences by the Acheampong regime, which will aid understanding of how the administrators after 1972 described the problems of the border and the anti-smuggling policies of the predecessor regime.

Given the research conditions in the Ho archives, it is necessary to insist that, for the history of the Volta Region, they entirely disprove the argument calling for “shadow archives,” i.e. the heavy reliance on archives outside of the African continent, which historians of postcolonial Africa have carried forward from Jean Allman’s ground-breaking article.<sup>15</sup> For the social history of that region, any “postcolonial African archival pessimism,” as rightly criticised by Nana Osei-Opare, is especially absurd.<sup>16</sup> The following analysis, which is divided into three sections, demonstrates what the interpretation of records from the Ho archives can actually deliver.

### **Oppositional Moods, Security Dilemmas, and the Beginnings of Xenophobic Strategies**

The 1956 referendum showed the force and the limits of Kwame Nkrumah’s Convention People’s Party (CPP).<sup>17</sup> The party was in a minority position in what was then southern British Togoland, but politically successful in mobilising important electoral support in certain divisions. Discussing the “cipipisation” of the Volta Region, Nugent shows how some communities obtained substantial privileges in terms of access to infrastructure and status by their alignment with the winning party.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, as British

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15. Jean Allman, “Phantoms of the Archive: Kwame Nkrumah, a Nazi Pilot named Hanna, and the Contingencies of Postcolonial History Writing,” *American Historical Review* 118, no. 1 (2013): 104–129.

16. Nana Osei-Opare, “If you trouble a hungry snake, you will force it to bite you’: Rethinking Postcolonial African Archival Pessimism, Worker Discontent, and Petition Writing in Ghana, 1957–66,” *Journal of African History* 62, no. 1 (2021): 59–78.

17. Julius Heise, “Partitioning Togoland by Nullifying the Right to Petition,” in *The United Nations Trusteeship System: Legacies, Continuities, and Change*, eds. Jan Lüdert, Maria Ketzmerick, and Julius Heise (Abingdon: Routledge, 2023), 67–94.

18. Nugent, *Smugglers*, 212–213.

administrators at the very end of the late colonial period held it, local communities used “the Plebiscite [the risk of a referendum result refusing integration of the region into Ghana, to which the CPP was committed] to blackmail [the still existing British] Government into giving or promising particular development works.”<sup>19</sup> Second, political repression against “pro-secessionist” individuals became normal. Both chiefs and party politicians linked to the CPP’s rivals were targets and, immediately after the incorporation of the Volta Region into Ghana, preventive detention was already a common strategy. After 1957, the southern part of the Volta Region had a prominent group of political prisoners, but also a sizable community of exiles who had sought refuge in neighbouring Togo.<sup>20</sup> In principle, this constituted a strong potential for anti-CPP engagement.

The political elite of the Nkrumah regime thus discussed measures to counter what they interpreted as local malaise. Their idea was to release several opposition leaders, excluding those seen as especially “dangerous,” and to offer amnesty to some high-profile exiles in Togo, such as the Howusu, former paramount chief of Ho, Mote Kofi II.<sup>21</sup> The fact that Ghanaian travellers visiting the Togolese city of Kpalimé were badly beaten up by refugees in 1961 served as an argument for such a strategy.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, some exiles went back, but found themselves stripped of social status and privileges. For example, prominent figures Togbe Ashiagbor of Dakpa and Togbe Anikpi of Ho-Heve did not receive the formal sanction by the paramount chiefs of their region after their return.<sup>23</sup>

Even so, a considerable degree of anger and frustration remained in the Volta Region, which in 1966 the National Liberation Committee expected to mobilise. However, the NLC had difficulties dealing with ethnic grievances and regionalism. On March 30, 1967, administrators of the NLC-installed Regional Committee of Administration of the Volta Region accused former regionalist politicians who had earlier opposed the CPP of secessionism, criticising them for ethnic Ewe agendas, and warning them “to desist from

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19. PRAAD-Ho, VRG/1/395, T. A. Mead to Secretary of Kwame Nkrumah, *Togoland Plebiscite Weekly Assessment* (n° 038/sf.9/155), April 24, 1956, 1.

20. Skinner, *Fruits*, 174–182, 216–222.

21. PRAAD-Ho, VRG/1/398, H. K. Boni (Regional Commissioner, Volta Region (henceforth VR)) to Kwaku Boateng (Minister of the Interior) (n° 127/14), May 14, 1962.

22. PRAAD-Ho, VRG/1/395, Regional Office, Ho, *Notes of the 6th Meeting of the Volta Regional Intelligence Committee held in the Regional Office, Ho, on Saturday 9th April, 1961*, April 29, 1961.

23. PRAAD-Ho, VRG/1/149, M. D. Missinou (District Administrative Officer, Ho District), *Ho District Report for Month Ending 31st October, 1971*, without date, 3–4.



doing anything likely to disturb Ghana's newly-won freedom."<sup>24</sup> General sentiment in the region branded this lack of sympathy for the regionalist claims as unfair and authoritarian; wider rumours also discussed general discrimination against the Ewe as typical of the new NLC regime.<sup>25</sup> In the Volta Region, Ewe-speakers were rumoured to be the principal targets of upcoming lay-offs in the State Construction Company.<sup>26</sup> This situation quickly multiplied the expression of local dissatisfaction with ongoing political transformations.

In the region, administrators were especially frightened about a return of Kwame Nkrumah, which led to rigid control of periodicals "published abroad" and prompted letters of denunciation.<sup>27</sup> Sergeant M.B.K. Vedomey centralised these security measures for the regional administration. Mobilizing hearsay, such as "suspicious" conversations between a fisherman and a former CPP member (Atta Foe) and Nigerian residents working for Foe, Vedomey reported enemy infiltration and "fifth columns," suggesting that Nkrumah could possibly use an airstrip in the Volta Region for a return.<sup>28</sup> The administration was initially ready to react to any denunciation, including anonymous accusations.<sup>29</sup> In October 1967, a massive detachment of police and security forces detained an alleged group of "conspirators" in Kadjebi.<sup>30</sup> Yet the "Kadjebi network" case actually shows a change in the repressive atmosphere, as the security council would hold the arrest to be

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24. PRAAD-Ho, DA/4/400, Lieutenant-Colonel E. N. N. Dedjoe (Regional Committee of Administration, VR) to Cleland Cofie Bruce, Chief of Staff (Ghana Armed Forces), *Ewe-Togoland Unification Movement* (n° 038/SF9/Vol.III/394), March 31, 1967.

25. Skinner, *Fruits*, 224–225, on purges in the civil service.

26. PRAAD-Ho, DA/4/400, R. S. K. Owusu (Regional Labour Officer, VR) to Regional Labour Officer, Accra, *Monthly Intelligence Report October, 1967* (n° LVR.85C/85), November 11, 1967.

27. PRAAD-Ho, DA/4/400, E. A. B. Mayne (Regional Administrative Officer, VR), *Report of the Volta Regional Intelligence Committee* (n° 038/SF9/Vol.III/370), February 4, 1967.

28. PRAAD-Ho, DA/4/400, A. K. Adzam (Regional Administrative Officer, VR), *Minutes of an Emergency Meeting of the Regional Security Committee held on Monday, 11th September, 1967* (n° 038/SE9/Vol.3/461), September 11, 1967, 1; PRAAD-Ho, DA/4/400, Sergeant M. B. K. Vedomey (NCO i/C FSS Detachment Ho Garrison) to DMI and Chairman of the Administration Committee, *Ex President Nkrumah's Activities* (n° MOGAR/101/FSS/F), September 19, 1967, 1–2.

29. PRAAD-Ho, DA/4/400, C. Y. Sanpan, *Spying by Emmanuel Donkor Kodzo of Krachi Local Council and Seth Kwasi Kumah of University Accra*, December 1, 1967, 1–2.

30. PRAAD-Ho, DA/4/400, E. A. B. Mayne (Regional Administrative Officer, VR), *Minutes of the Meeting of the Regional Security Committee held on Monday, 23rd October, 1967* (n° 038/SF9/Vol.III/478), October 24, 1967, 2.

the fruit of false accusations resulting from a chieftaincy conflict.<sup>31</sup> Despite that judgement, earlier interventions had already seeded local fury regarding the new administration.

The effect of this discontent is well known: Kofi Busia's Progressive Party lost what should have been an easy win, since the PP was an anti-CPP force endorsed by the NLC during the 1969 elections. None of the Southern Togoland seats, with the exception of the two northernmost ones, were taken by the PP—an outstanding regional defeat.<sup>32</sup> This was all the more remarkable because, in the late 1950s Ho and Kpandu had been strongholds of the PP's predecessor party, the United Party, and were characterised by constant, border-crossing flows of rumours and anti-CPP propaganda.<sup>33</sup> After the electoral disaster in the southern Volta Region, the regional administration changed its strategy, trying to build emotional links to the republic locally. In September 1970, for the first anniversary of Ghana's democratic elections and the installation of the Busia government, officials organised bonfires and torchlight processions at the Ho Civic Centre. With participation better than expected, the members of the Regional Administration expressed their hopes to “normalise” the Volta Region and to win it back to their side.<sup>34</sup>

But structural difficulties complicated that goal. In 1971, the Volta Region's populations were affected by a price hike of one-third for basic foodstuffs, despite a successful yam harvest.<sup>35</sup> Land conflicts, multiplied by cross-border ownership and tenancy of property or sharecropping relations, had been common but became more of a structural issue in 1970 and 1971. In the Adaklu area, political patronage by “prominent citizens” in Ho in land conflicts between landowners and cattle breeders created friction.<sup>36</sup> Resistance against social intervention, termed “modernisation,”

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31. PRAAD-Ho, DA/4/400, A. B. K. Ahodetor (Assistant Superintendent, VR) to the Assistant Commissioner, VR (Ghana Police Service), *Complaint of Daniel Mensah of Jasikan* (n° SF/R.36/2/VOL.43/1610), November 10, 1967, 1–2.

32. Nugent, *Smugglers*, 219–221.

33. PRAAD-Ho, VRG/1/395, D. Heaton (acting Secretary to the Regional Commissioner of the Trans-Volta Togoland) to E. Okoh (Prime Minister's Office), *Monthly Security Appreciation—May, 1958* (n° 038/sf.9/231), June 12, 1958.

34. PRAAD-Ho, VRG/1/149, M. D. Missinou, *Ho District Monthly Report for September, 1970*, without date, 3.

35. PRAAD-Ho, VRG/1/149, M. D. Missinou, *Ho District Monthly Report for September, 1971*, without date, 2.

36. PRAAD-Ho, VRG/1/149, M. D. Missinou, *Ho District Monthly Report for June, 1971*, without date, 2–3.

was equally frequent. It is described in much detail for Dabala, where the District Committee of Administration used police repression to impose a new market site.<sup>37</sup> The constant call for unpaid communal labour, such as for the construction of basic schools, also likely led to exasperation.<sup>38</sup> The officials of the Regional Administration tried to counter widespread annoyance, and the now entrenched anti-governmental mood, by calling for discipline in speeches with titles like “Discipline and National Progress.”<sup>39</sup> At the same time, frustration and distrust reigned within the Progress Party itself regarding its lack of success in the region. In August 1970, leaders of the PP youth formulated allegations about malpractice against the management of the Ho Urban Council, indicating the possibility of future confrontations.<sup>40</sup>

Given these frustrations, the politics of xenophobia promoted by the Busia government had enormous impact in the region. After 1969, the populist policy of the Aliens Compliance Order, which led to the deportation of migrants (foreign and, sometimes, internal) from Ghana, became politically important in the Volta Region. It also progressively changed debates about the land question. The Togolese now being defined as “aliens,” letters of denunciation accused “Ewe-speakers from the Togo Republic” in particular of being “people who bought vast lands from our fore-fathers at very low prices and now have prospered and respect nothing,” as stated by J. C. Quarcoo, from L.A. Primary School, in a prime example of the tone of denunciation, by one of the prolific writers of such letters in the region.<sup>41</sup> The definition of “aliens” often remained complicated; for example, when xenophobia was turned against Dagomba from Kadjebi, who were

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37. PRAAD-Ho, VRG/1/149, T. K. D. Kumaku (District Administration Officer, Ho District), *Ho Monthly Report for February, 1970*, without date, 2–3.

38. There are indications of that kind for Agotime. See PRAAD-Ho, VRG/1/149, M. D. Missinou, *Ho District Monthly Report for June, 1971.*, without date, 2. For “communal labour” as compulsory labour in a long-term perspective: Alexander Keese, “Between Community Development Effort and Hidden Colonial Forced Labour: The Long History of ‘Communal Labour’ in Gold Coast/Ghana, 1927–2010,” in *Global Agricultural Workers from the 17th to the 21st Century*, eds. Rolf Bauer and Elise van Nederveen Meerkerk (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 384–407.

39. PRAAD-Ho, VRG/1/149, M. D. Missinou, *Ho District Monthly Report for May, 1971*, June 16, 1971, 4.

40. PRAAD-Ho, VRG/1/149, M. D. Missinou, *Ho District Monthly Report for August, 1970*, without date, 1.

41. PRAAD-Ho, VRG/1/439, J. C. Quarcoo (L.A. Primary School) to unclear recipient, *Baglo, Kute and Baglo-Odumasi*, May 17, 1970, 1.

Ghanaian citizens, which pointed to the many opportunistic redefinitions of the issue.<sup>42</sup>

In 1971, writers of the frequent denunciation letters warned against the clandestine return of deported “aliens,” who were said to be “entering into Petty Trading even more than before.” The principal accusation was now directed against “Lagosians.”<sup>43</sup> Within the influential Ghana Private Road Transport Branch Union, the branch secretary, P. Y. Kumah, complained to the local police that many “aliens” had only feigned leaving the country but continued to work as lorry park overseers; he called for renewed measures.<sup>44</sup> Only with the January 1972 coup d'état did the xenophobic mood of the Busia years recede: “aliens” like Dahomean Peter Togbe were allowed to return, and discussions generally mentioned their misfortune, no longer their profiteering.<sup>45</sup> In July 1972, the regional administrative officer appealed to the National Redemption Council to call the remaining clandestine foreigners out of their hiding places.<sup>46</sup> The effects of the populist policies of the years 1970 and 1971 had found considerable support in the Volta Region; however, they ultimately came too late to change the region's oppositional mood, which the NLC had clearly left behind as an entrenched element.

### Rediscovering “Traditional Rights” and Scrutinizing “Abuse”

The Nkrumah regime is said to have curtailed the power of “traditional” chiefs, while the NLC regime and the Busia government are said to have (partly) re-established these privileges. These views need to be qualified. As Richard Rathbone has shown, the chiefs who lost positions between

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42. PRAAD-Ho, VRG/1/149, M. D. Missinou, *Ho District Monthly Report for April, 1971*, without date, 1.

43. PRAAD-Ho, RAO/3/83, C. K. D. Kusi, Kadjebi to Regional Chief Executive, Ho, VR, *Re-Entry of Aliens—Volta Region*, January 11, 1971.

44. PRAAD-Ho, RAO/3/83, P. Y. Kumah (Secretary of Ghana Private Road Transport Branch Union of TUC, Nchumuru Branch, Chinderi (via Kete-Krachi)) to Superintendent (Ghana Police Service, VR), *Alien Lorry Park Overseers in Nchumuru Area Branch—Union of T.U.C.*, January 1971.

45. PRAAD-Ho Branch, RAO/3/83, F. J. Ahiabile (Assistant Commissioner, Ghana Police, VR), *Peter Togbe—Alien* (n° VR/CID.1/VOL.9/5), May 11, 1972.

46. PRAAD-Ho, RAO/3/83, A. K. Asem, District Administrative Officer, *Aliens Compliance Order* (n° AS.DRAO/AS/2), July 29, 1972.

1957 and 1966 were certainly those opposing the Nkrumah regime.<sup>47</sup> For the years between 1966 and 1972, the situation was equally as complex.

Two examples of extreme local reactions during the final months of the Busia period illustrate the power and limits of chiefs under a central government that was allegedly sympathetic to their prestige. During a cholera outbreak in spring 1971, chiefs imposed rules on what they regarded as their local subjects, but in Klave the residents refused to comply and the administration held that the days of the influence of chiefs were over.<sup>48</sup> Conversely, when in Adaklu/Anyigbe the local council collectors only received eight percent of the expected tax in September 1971, local magistrates and the administration called for mediation by the chiefs to convince the locals.<sup>49</sup> Therefore, two competing visions of the future role of chiefs prevailed: one in which they were politically irrelevant, and one in which they were the most effective political agents.

At the same time, 1966 was a key point of reference for local debates: some government officials held that the so-called “CPP chiefs” needed to be removed after the coup d’état as they owed their positions exclusively to the former ruling party.<sup>50</sup> The opposing reference was to “wild rumours in the Region that the N.L.C. has been destooling C.P.P. Chiefs and enstooling U.P. Chiefs in their places,” allegedly leading to a new group of chiefs who had no right to be in their position.<sup>51</sup> Conflicts over the paramount chieftaincy at Ho and the rural division of Weta, Klikor, and Afife illustrate clearly these contestations and change.

Ho, an important paramourcy, was a principal site of conflicts around chieftaincy. Competing claims had passed through German and British

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47. Richard Rathbone, *Nkrumah and the Chiefs: The Politics of Chieftaincy in Ghana 1951–60* (Oxford: James Currey—Accra: F. Reimer—Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2000).

48. PRAAD-Ho, VRG/1/149, M. D. Missinou, *Ho District Monthly Report for May, 1971*, June 16, 1971, 4.

49. PRAAD-Ho, VRG/1/149, M. D. Missinou, *Ho District Report . . . 31st October, 1971*, without date, 2.

50. PRAAD-Ho, VRG/1/176, Togbe Abiu Gedodoe (Adontenhene of Wusuta) to Minister of Justice and Local Government, *Alleged Destoolment of Togbe Dzaba III Paramount Chief of Wusuta* (prepared by Raphael L. A. Lawson), January 6, 1964, 1; PRAAD-Ho, VRG/1/30, District Administrative Officer, Kpandu, to Regional Administrative Officer, VR, *Alavanyo Agome Stool Affairs* (n° NA.10/vol.4/687), August 14, 1968, 1; see also Nugent, *Smugglers*, 213–215, on the CPP’s “traditional policy” in the Volta Region.

51. PRAAD-Ho, DA/4/400, E. A. B. Mayne, *Minutes of the Meeting held on Friday, 25th August, 1967* (n 038/SE9/Vol.3/456), August 29, 1967, 2.

colonial rule and the period of the Nkrumah regime.<sup>52</sup> In Ho-Dome, in 1968, local protesters published an open letter in the newspaper *The Pioneer*, attacking the behaviour of the Chairman of the Volta Region Administrative Committee. They referred to their suffering as staunch opponents of the Nkrumah regime, claiming that they had paid a heavy price for that opposition and were now again being punished by the “Nkrumahists” in the Committee. The destoolment of Howusu XII and the installation of Asor as paramount chief of the division seemed to be evidence of this for the protesters. They claimed that the regional administrator supported Asor, “who was raised to that status illegally by that man-made Messiah Nkrumah, whose ‘MYTH’ was broken on February 24, 1966 by members of the Armed Forces and the Police” and that the same official was “wrongly advised by some ex-C.P.P. elements.” They further argued that they had been “denied all facilities of development.”<sup>53</sup> In 1972, Howusu XII was indeed reinstalled, but he never got his outstanding allowances for the years 1967 to 1970 and continued to protest for his rights under the Acheampong regime.<sup>54</sup> Thus, in Ho-Dome, the outsize expectations for change following 1966 were widely disappointed.

In other, mostly smaller, chieftaincies, campaigns and protests came later, starting only under the Busia government. In Weta, a division of the Anlo State, the paramountcy would be disputed over the course of eight years. The Volta Regional House of Chiefs had confirmed the suspension of Ashiakpor IV as chief of Weta until clarification of the existing complaints in January 1966, weeks before the fall of the Nkrumah regime. The NLC had sent the issue back to the Anlo Traditional Council, which confirmed Ashiakpor’s suspension.<sup>55</sup> Subsequently, the case dragged on. The Council

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52. Benjamin N. Lawrance, “Bankoe v. Dome: Traditions and Petitions in the Ho-Asogli Amalgamation, British Mandated Togoland, 1919–39,” *Journal of African History* 46, no. 2 (2005), 243–267, 266–267.

53. PRAAD-Ho, VRG/NA/24, Jonathan Kodzo Deccu, Extract from *The Pioneer*, 16th February, 1968—Open Letter to the Chairman, Volta Region Administrative Committee, without date.

54. PRAAD-Ho, VRG/1/149, P. B. M. Aryetee, District Administrative Officer of Ho District, *Ho District Report for the Month of June, 1972*, without date, 2.

55. PRAAD-Ho, VRG/1/190, F. R. Y. Dotse, Clerk, Volta Region House of Chiefs, to Togbe Adrakpanya III, Chairman, Wheta-Afife-Klikor Joint Traditional Council, Afife, *In the matter of Chief Sorkpor II & 14 ors. of Weta . . . Plaintiffs vrs Togbi Ashiakpor IV, Fiaga of Weta . . . Defendants—Suspension of Togbi Ashiakpor IV Fiaga of Weta from Weta—Afife—Klikor Joint Traditional Council* (n° VR/HC.77/53), January 3, 1966; PRAAD-Ho, VRG/1/190, F. R. Y. Dotse to Togbe Adrakpanya III, *Chief Sorkpor II & ors. of Weta . . . Plaintiffs vrs Togbi Ashiakpor IV, Fiaga of Weta . . . Defendant* (n° VR/HC.77/78.), May

was supposed to ultimately adjudicate the case in 1971, but it did not, as the plaintiffs never deposited the monetary guarantee. Neither the Wheta-Afife-Klikor Joint Traditional Council nor the Anlo Traditional Council registered Ashiakpor's suspension, and his adherents protested that the plaintiffs had no real interest in settling the issue.<sup>56</sup> Only under the Acheampong regime would the affair be readdressed, with a new acting paramount chief being installed. Ashiakpor thus contested his destoolment, and migrant associations from Weta organised in the Weta Unions of Accra and Kumase mobilised in his favour and presented documentation from 1966.<sup>57</sup>

But that was not all. At the same time, the chief of Klikor, Addo IV, attempted to approach Kofi Busia during his tour of the Volta Region in 1971, trying to convince the prime minister that Klikor, Weta, and Afife should be separated from the Anlo Traditional Council. In his interpretation of the migration accounts of Ewe-speakers, Addo IV held that these communities had been separate from Anlo but had been incorporated due to the arrival of refugees and settlers from the Anloga and Keta region in precolonial times, and then due to a conspiracy of Anlo paramount chief Sri II and the British colonisers. The Nkrumah regime had restored the independence of the three divisions, but this had again changed with the 1966 coup d'état. In Addo's view, the NLC, having been dominated by Anlo members, had done everything with a goal "of expanding Anlo Kingdom internally," including through illegal means.<sup>58</sup> A democratic government like Busia's had the moral obligation to "declare the unrepresentative Gov-

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28, 1966; PRAAD-Ho, VRG/1/190, F. A. Adabla, Clerk of Dzodze Local Council, to Togbe Ashiakpor IV, Paramount Chief of Weta, *In the matter of Chief Sorkpor II & 14 ors. of Wheta . . . Plaintiffs vs Togbi Ashiakpor IV, Fiaga of Weta . . . Defendant—Suspension of Togbi Ashiakpor IV Fiaga of Weta from Weta—Afife—Klikor Joint Traditional Council* (n° DLC/R.2/98), August 10, 1966.

56. PRAAD-Ho, VRG/1/190, Ashiakpor IV, Fiaga of Weta, to Secretary and Treasurer of Anlo Traditional Council, Anloga, *Pending Case—In the matter of Destoolment Charges prepared by: Chief Sorkpor II and 14 ors of Wheta . . . Plaintiffs vs Togbi Ashiakpor IV, Paramount Chief Wheta . . . Defendant*, May 3, 1973.

57. PRAAD-Ho, VRG/1/190, E. K. F. Zormelo, Chairman of the Wheta Easter Meeting, and A. K. Zormelo, Secretary of Kumase Branch of Weta Union and Member of Management Committee, *Recognition of one Paramount Chief for Weta*. (n° W/2/73.), August 13, 1973.

58. PRAAD-Ho, VRG/1/190, Togbe Addo IV, Fiaga of Klikor, to Kofi A. Busia, *Petition on Res[t]oration of Paramountcy and Traditional Council for Indissoluble States of Weta, Afife and Klikor by Torgbi Addo IV, Fiaga of Klikor to Professor K. A. Busia, Prime Minister of Second Republic of Ghana, on Occasion of his Regional Tour of Volta Region*, March 29, 1971, 1.

ernment decree null and void.”<sup>59</sup> The administration accepted most of these arguments, although it supported centralisation, as a means to achieve economic and social progress. While insisting on the NLC’s good intentions, the Busia government had to accept the democratic claims of the locals even if they retook original CPP positions.<sup>60</sup> The same constellation of opinions appeared regarding the solution to other “old chieftaincy disputes,” such as in Goviefe, Sokode, Agotime, and Tsibu.<sup>61</sup>

After 1969, some local chiefs attempted to profit from the government’s new xenophobic policy. Kofi Kokuroko of Boraé, in the far north of the Volta Region, spoke against “aliens” remaining and accused them of having created their own transport union.<sup>62</sup> Others directed local anger against those they characterised as “foreigners,” who allegedly refused to participate in communal labour for development projects. In one such example, Baglo’s Togolese resident landowners rejected the chief’s orders, with one such “alien” affirming that “when he came to Baglo no chief helped him to buy his land.” In response, anonymous letter writers took disobedience of the “traditional” chiefs as justification for expulsions.<sup>63</sup> Chiefs thus appear to have quickly discovered the leverage offered by the dominant xenophobic mood, and to actively tie their “subjects” to that course by stimulating drastic action. This strategy lost its efficacy due to the change in policies following the 1972 coup d’état.

### **Renegotiating the Macro (and Micro) Economic Border: The Survival of Smuggling and the Transformation of Local Frustrations**

Smuggling had long been an essential practice at the Ghana–Togo border, which did not change under the Nkrumah regime. As Nugent briefly points out, price differentials between the two states provided incentives for producers and merchants to transport cocoa and coffee towards the Togolese

59. PRAAD-Ho, VRG/1/190, Togbe Addo IV to Kofi A. Busia, *Petition*, 2.

60. PRAAD-Ho, VRG/1/190, Special Assistant Police Commissioner to Regional Administrative Officer, VR, 3 June 1971; PRAAD-Ho, VRG/NA/37, Togbe Addo IV to Kofi A. Busia, *Petition*, March 29, 1971.

61. PRAAD-Ho, VRG/1/149, M. D. Missinou, *Ho District Monthly Report for June, 1971*, without date, 2.

62. PRAAD-Ho, RAO/3/83, Nana Kofi Kokuroko (Boraehene) to Regional Commissioner, VR, *Re-Awulu Kotokoli (alias Coach)—Alien*, September 9, 1972.

63. PRAAD-Ho, VRG/1/439, J. C. Quarcoo to unclear recipient, *Baglo, Kute and Baglo-Odumasi*, May 17, 1970, 1.



side of the border, and to bring consumer goods into Ghana that had been shipped in through the port of Lomé.<sup>64</sup> Under the Nkrumah regime, coffee smuggling was characterised by attempts at its repression by the police and the Preventive Service, by xenophobic accusations against Nigerians, and by interventions of certain pro-CPP chiefs criticising the effect of smuggling on Farmers Councils.<sup>65</sup> Under the NLC, policies were initially more lenient, opposing calls of certain regional administrators to more rigidly control the waterways.<sup>66</sup> However, with the election of the Busia government in 1969, smuggling became tied to the xenophobic programme expressed through the Aliens Compliance Order. The battle against foreigners running contraband networks thus represented a common trope in discussions, sometimes repeating earlier interpretations.<sup>67</sup>

The decrease in anti-smuggling operations after 1966 had led to conflict between different police services at the border.<sup>68</sup> The local police openly accused the border guards (and hence the Ghanaian state) of a weak performance, and even of collusion with smugglers. A scandal at Dzodze was the culmination of these incidents. On July 26, 1969, the Assistant Superintendent of Police at the Ave-Afiadenyigba Border Guard Station, S. A. Quaye, was detained by the Dzodze police squadron while patrolling the border between the Togolese town of Noepe and Keve and conducting a convoy of three vehicles back to his station to collect duty. Quaye's being manhandled by the Dzodze police agents led to a full enquiry by the

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64. Nugent, *Smugglers*, 245–247.

65. PRAAD-Ho, VRG/1/409, J. Acquaye (Assistant Superintendent at Leklebi-Dafo, Ghana Police) to Assistant Commissioner, VR (Ghana Police Service), *Smuggling of Coffee to the Republic of Togoland* (n° LD/DCID.8/SF.2/24), February 17, 1961; PRAAD-Ho, VRG/1/409, Togbe Agboka V, [Declaration] (made at Leklebi Dafo Station), February 5, 1962; PRAAD-Ho, VRG/1/409, R. Y. Asante, Assistant Commissioner, VR, to Secretary of the Regional Commissioner, VR, Ho, *Smuggling in the Volta Region* (n° 801), November 28, 1964.

66. PRAAD-Ho, DA/4/400, M. D. Missinou, (then) District Administrative Officer, Sogakope, to Regional Administrative Officer, VR, *Smuggling* (n° SO.1/91), 4 December 1967; PRAAD-Ho, DA/4/400, A. K. Adzam, *Minutes of the Meeting of the Regional Security Committee held on Friday, 29th December, 1967* (n° 038/SF.9/Vol.III/544), January 2, 1968, 2.

67. On continuities of suspicions from the Nkrumah regime to the NLC, see PRAAD-Ho, DA/4/400, A. K. Adzam, *Minutes of the Meeting of the Regional Security Committee held on Friday, 10th November, 1967* (n° 038/SF.9/Vol.III/494.), November 11, 1967.

68. The trend of cocoa smuggling increased further after 1969, see Nugent, *Boundaries*, 441.

customs department.<sup>69</sup> The report stated that there was insufficient proof to incriminate Quaye for colluding with smugglers, but also referred to testimony of customs inspector Augustus Ewool and Dzodze police constable S.B.K. Som detailing how Quaye had met Nigerian merchants and smugglers Jacob Lagos and Jacob Oni over drinks in Togolese Noepe.<sup>70</sup>

The scandal showed the growing exasperation within the security forces and the porousness of the border, which allowed for regular visits of Ghanaian residents to Togolese towns. In January 1970, B. T. Madjitey, the Comptroller of the Volta Region, called for military support against regional smuggling.<sup>71</sup> Only some months later did his call result in concrete action: in August, the police and a division of soldiers patrolled alleged smuggling routes in a combined exercise called Operation Octopod.

Octopod's patrol reports are very detailed. They discuss the absence of a smuggling network in most cases, even if "some of the offenders were real die-hard smugglers."<sup>72</sup> They explain strategies of individuals bringing in contraband via the main border post at Aflao close to Lomé and via Denu, claiming they transported merchandise "in bits to Accra," and also tracking down "tourist[s]" travelling with single contraband items from the Togolese capital.<sup>73</sup> Between Ho and Agotime-Kpetoe, smuggling activity was found to be "only on [a] small basis" and "with few bottles of drinkables, perfumes and cigarettes."<sup>74</sup> In some places of patrol activity, like in the Keta Lagoon region, the operation failed utterly, probably because some drivers warned

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69. PRAAD-Ho, VRG/1/409, S. K. Sakye (Assistant Commissioner, VR, 2 I/C) to Assistant Commissioner, VR (Ghana Police Service, Ho), *Assault on A. S. P/Mr. S. A. Quaye and Detention of Vehicles allegedly conveying Contraband—Goods through Dzodze Station* (n° VRHQ/16/5), August 20, 1969, 1–4.

70. PRAAD-Ho, VRG/1/409, E. K. Ahiahonu, Collector in Charge, to Chairman, Regional Committee of Administration, Ho, *The Arrest and Detention of Vehicles at Dzodze Report of* (n° HO/PREV/3), 6 August 1969, 3; VRG/1/409, Sakye to Assistant Commissioner, VR, Ho, *Assault*, August 20, 1969, 6–7.

71. PRAAD-Ho, VRG/1/409, B. T. Madjitey (Comptroller), to Regional Chief Executive, Regional Administration, Ho), *Smuggling Activities*, January 12, 1970.

72. PRAAD-Ho, VRG/1/409, F. B. Sarfo (Lieutenant, Patrol Commander, Medium Mortar Regiment, Volta Barracks, Ho), *Patrol Report—Op Octopod* (n° 6), August 14, 1970.

73. PRAAD-Ho, VRG/1/409, B. K. Kyeremateng (Lieutenant, Patrol Leader, 'A' Battery, Medium Mortar Regiment, Volta Barracks, Ho), *Patrol Report—Operation Octopod* (n° ABTY/13019/G), August 14, 1970, 1.

74. PRAAD-Ho, VRG/1/409, J. K. Ameyibor (Lieutenant, Patrol Leader), *Patrol Report—Operation Octopod*, without date.

the other individuals passing through of road blocks.<sup>75</sup> Therefore, while smuggling was often described as an activity of wide and dangerous networks, the reports on Operation Octopod point to the contrary, describing these practices as frequent and widespread but not as being in the hands of “masterminds” and “criminal associations.”

The debate on what smuggling in the Volta Region signified for the Busia government was also propelled into local party politics. The Member of Parliament for Kadjebi, Osei Nyame, member of the oppositional National Alliance of Liberals (which held nearly all of the seats in the Volta Region), was stopped by the police and confronted with a substantial fine and seizure of his goods.<sup>76</sup> In the camp of the ruling Progress Party, in which frustration about the 1969 regional electoral blunder remained very strong, the anger of local PP supporters turned against what they regarded as the Busia government’s weakness in dealing with smugglers. They tied their anger to the start of the xenophobic policies: “if the Government of Ghana is permitting these aliens to trade within these vicinities, where they could always go through and flow with their goods then what is the check on smuggling?”<sup>77</sup> Disappointment also reigned in the Juapong section of the PP, where the party leadership called for immediate intervention of the government against “foreigners.”<sup>78</sup> For the Baglo region, the writers of letters of denunciation described Togolese landowners as being a principal factor in smuggling produce to the other side of the border, calling for strict action against them.<sup>79</sup> If regime change meant less policing of smuggling, which clearly was the case, PP militants were very vocal in calling for more robust action—which is likely to have made them even more unpopular with a majority of voters in the southern Volta Region.

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75. PRAAD-Ho, VRG/1/409, V. A. Mensah-Poku (Lieutenant), *Patrol Report—Operation Octopod*, without date.

76. PRAAD-Ho, VRG/1/409, L. K. Lumor (Deputy Superintendent, Ghana Police Service) to K. M. Arthur (Assistant Commissioner, Ho Division, Ghana Police), *Re-Contraband Goods Seized from Mr. Osei Nyame M. P. for N.A.L. representing Kadjebi Area* (n° DCID.1/VOL.2/92), September 15, 1970.

77. PRAAD-Ho, RAO/3/83, G. B. Ebudzah (Branch Secretary of the PP in Kpeve) to General Secretary of the Progress Party, Accra, *Is the Government encouraging Smuggling?*, September 23, 1970.

78. PRAAD-Ho, RAO/3/83, Attah Bediako (Chairman, PP, Juapong Branch) to Volta Region Chief Executive, Ho, March 22, 1971.

79. PRAAD-Ho, VRG/1/439, J. C. Quarcoo to unclear recipient, *Baglo, Kute and Baglo-Odamasi*, May 17, 1970, 3.

However, it was only after the Acheampong coup d'état in 1972 that repression of smuggling again became systematised. The return to the more stringent course proposed by the National Redemption Council needed years for its implementation. Still in 1976, H. B. Banda, the Regional Administrative Officer in Ho, insisted that it was necessary to “reinforce the strength of the Border Guards in the area” to cope with smuggling, to impose Ghanaian sovereignty on locals who “are at loss as to where they belong,” and to act against “successionist [*sic*] infiltrations,” which the officials of the Acheampong regime had once again started to fear.<sup>80</sup> The rhetoric of repression did not mean more successful control at the border.

## Conclusion

The rich and detailed regional archives held at the PRAAD branch at Ho are essential for understanding the transformations in the southern Volta Region. They help explain the social conditions and local mentalities in the first six years of the long 1970s. Giving voice to numerous individuals taking part in the transformation process—administrators and police agents, informants and chiefs, anonymous letter writers informing on “aliens” and smugglers, and petitioners of a range of social positions—these archival records reveal the crucial importance of the 1966 coup d'état as a point of reference and as a kind of catchall for a broad range of expectations. It also clarifies the intensity and limits of a xenophobic reordering of local society through the Aliens Compliance Order and its aftermath.

The violent regime change of 1966 was indeed a source of massive expectations. The opponents of “cipipisation” thought it would rehabilitate not only them, as former victims of repression, but also several of their leaders who had been political prisoners or exiles. The members of “traditional” ruling families who had not been close to the CPP hoped that the NLC would bring them into local power and eventually address issues with internal migrants in the different regions where migrants had enjoyed some protection under the earlier regime. And residents at the border generally wished for a milder practice in contraband control while the wider population of the Volta Region was clearly divided concerning the issue, with the police force and some of the border guards insisting on continuity or even a deepening of repressive practices.

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80. PRAAD-Ho, VRG/1/409, H. B. Banda (Regional Administrative Officer, VR) [*Report: Smuggling at Tinjase*], May 18, 1976.

Faced with such contradictory demands, the NLC attempted a zigzag course of action which was difficult to express as coherent policy. In 1969, the Busia government inherited a Volta Region in which many of the original expectations had already been disappointed. The electoral defeat in what was once seen as a region of oppositional sentiment, where the locals hoped for their chance for revenge against the Nkrumah regime, was the most visible result of that disappointment. Much of what the new administration attempted between 1969 and its downfall in January 1972 were punctual interventions to remedy these frustrations, and to instil a fresh, patriotic link to the new republic, which it hoped would be strong enough to counter local irritation.

While often described as irrational and fruitless, and judged according to its violent nature which encouraged opportunistic behaviour and denunciation, the Busia government's xenophobic strategy from 1969 was, as far as the southern Volta Region is concerned, widely "successful" (for the PP elite, that is, though certainly not for the victims of xenophobic and populist politics). A sizeable group of the southern Volta Region's population effectively participated in the xenophobic programme. The local administration managed to mobilise support more successfully when referring to new patriotism, which from its inception excluded the "aliens." Chiefs could take fundamental roles in the identification of "foreigners," by locally imposing discipline on these individuals. This was a new source of legitimacy especially in contexts where their prestige was already severely, or entirely, weakened. Concerning the culture of contraband in the border areas, which was so strongly entrenched in local society, the xenophobic redefinition of Ghanaian politics gave smuggling a new meaning: it pitched the authorities against imagined cross-border activities organised in Togo or in Nigeria, and characterised smuggling as something anti-national and dominated by "foreigners."

The coup d'état of 1972 thrust Ghanaian society into a different dynamic, which was more clearly militarised and authoritarian, and whose protagonists set their hopes on self-sufficiency and a different form of nationalism. It presented new challenges to the communities of the southern Volta Region. However, to understand the evolution of the region through the 1970s and the 1980s, I regard the effects of the triad of challenges under the Busia government as essential. Its security, chieftaincy, and anti-contraband policies perpetuated the role of the region and its populations as separate from Ghana's political and social mainstream experience in the 1970s and into the 1980s.

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