The Colonial State in Northern Ghana: The Political Economy of Pacification

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The installation of the colonial capitalist economic system required the creation of certain socio-political structures to ensure the reorganisation of indigenous economies for accumulation. This precipitated the appearance and the gradual and sometimes violent extension of the colonial state into the hinterland of the colonies. The concept ‘colonial state’ is employed here to denote its characteristic difference from the state as it emerged in the context of European capitalism. The state in the colonies was imposed from above and supervised a captive population and economy, which together were ‘protected’ for expatriate metropolitan capitalism, and was largely responsible to the metropolitan state. The latter provided unusual limits to its operation.

Colonial capitalism was a ‘bastard’ form of capitalism as the state’s presence was over-arching and also denied indigenous capitalist entrepreneurs from any substantial participation in the economy. It did this within Ghana through legislation which undercut local and favoured expatriate capital and allowed the latter considerable freedom of operation. The colonial state underwrote the process of expatriate capital accumulation by encouraging labour recruitment (many times forcefully) and the payment of low wages and by restricting labour unionisation. Agricultural producers were denied direct access to markets except through expatriate merchant houses which manipulated prices. Control of the colonial economy affected the process of class formation as the colonial state encouraged differential participation in the economy by various regions and communities among the colonised population.

Trade had existed between African communities and Europeans before colonisation. In this pattern of trade, relatively equal partners had exchanged their goods without the need for domination. Colonisation introduced the domination of one partner. European capital sought to wrest the control of trade and resources from the hands of local traders and reduce them to producers, wage earners or both. This would ensure a constant production of commodities for export which would not depend upon the goodwill of indigenous rulers.

The Colonial State and Pacification

‘Pacification’, as the colonialists described their conquests, was the process through which the weight and strength of the metropolitan state was brought to bear upon pre-capitalist economic and political institutions. The purpose was to
open up the country and lay bare its natural resources, including labour-power, to make them easily available for expatriate capital. This does not mean that the colonial state always served the instrumental needs of every single capitalist. It was responsible for the process of ‘rooting’ capitalism. In *Capital* Vol.1, Chapter 31, Marx describes the role of the state in such circumstances as ‘to hasten, hot-house fashion, the process of transformation (of the feudal mode of production) into the capitalist mode, and to shorten the transition’. The state — ‘the concentrated and organised force of society’ — was used to create and then attempt to maintain the structural conditions for the articulation of the capitalist mode of production with the pre-capitalist societies of the colonies. In the colonies, the initial activities of the state included changes in indigenous production, sometimes enforced through coercive action. The consequences of this, as Mamdani has observed, was that the ‘petty commodity producer became enslaved to metropolitan capital . . .’ In other areas, commodity production was discouraged and able-bodied men were conscripted into wage-earning relations. Yet still in other cases an entrepreneurial class of traditional traders and trading networks was impaired and their positions taken over by expatriate commercial houses and firms.

The colonial state was also a paternalistic state which assumed that it knew what was good for the local population and diligently pursued it. Accordingly, the colonial state perceived itself as balancing the conflicting interests of the indigenous people and the metropolitan bourgeoisie not to mention its own interest in maintaining the colony. The relative autonomy of the colonial state was thus, always and consistently, as an arbiter between capitalist interests as they vied with each other for cheap resources and human labour power. This role involved a complex process of social engineering which was predicated on factors including: (i) the character of local economic and political institutions, (ii) the particular process of integration and the articulation of the indigenous economy with the capitalist system, (iii) the numbers of expatriate interests involved in search of profits in the colony, (iv) the need to find or create local collaborators, and (v) the concrete form of accumulation and the particular resources of the colony that dominated expatriate bourgeois economic interest. The diverse forms of capitalist accumulation in all colonies led to regional differences and provided the basis for the post-colonial politics of regionalism.

The general problems of manipulating conflicting interests compelled the colonial state to act to ensure the survival of the colony and the introduced economic system. Hence, administrative decisions did not offer immediate profit or access to profit-making to all expatriate capital interests. The colonial state could, thus, seem to be an organisation which was ‘distinct from economic enterprise owned by Europeans’, and at times its ‘intervention in creating the technical and social conditions for capitalist enterprise and other forms of production (could be) limited by its fiscal position’ as Wayne argues. However, to conclude from this, as Wayne did, that the state is then autonomous is erroneous. The activities and problems of the state even when it seemed to act in favour of the colonised, or even when it ‘drew back from assisting capital to increase production’, can be explained without denying the historical origins and partisan character of the colonial state. Wayne’s attempt at a liberal-democratic definition of the colonial state in non-economic terms, as a structure of administration which claims to ‘make no a priori assumptions about its relationship to capitalist and other economic enterprises’ is misguided. If we examine the (colonial) state ‘from the
standpoint of how . . . it arose in history and what were the principal stages in its development . . .’, we shall conclude, like Lenin did (in Selected Works Vol.3), that the state is ‘an organisation of the particular exploiting class for the maintenance of its external conditions of production’. The concrete task of the state is reducible neither to political nor to economic domination. It is a task of maintaining the general conditions of accumulation.

The responsibilities of the colonial state (used interchangeably with its administration) were clearly expressed by one colonial Governor in his memorandum to the Colonial Office on the National Congress of British West Africa in 1920. He stated that:

the development of the resources of a colony should be left . . . to private enterprise, which would not be stimulated by government subsidies or any similar expenditure . . . the task of the administration being to open up the country and render its wealth accessible by means of public works (my emphasis).

The wealth includes, invariably, the human resources of society as cheap labour-power.

In performing these duties, the colonial state had to extend and assert itself against indigenous economic and political institutions. In this process it had either to destroy or to restructure some of them. Beyond the initial violence and the general show of force, the imposition of the Pax Britannica also involved a response to and solution of certain important problems. These were, first, an effective pattern of administration to enforce law and order; an administrative apparatus to supervise the transformation of the economy to enhance the production and exportation of resources; thirdly, an effective medium for implementing colonial legislation insofar as it affected local constituencies. This meant the utilisation of the forms of indigenous political institutions to articulate colonial policy and to resolve internal conflicts resulting from policy implementation. The colonial device that was used has been described by Arendt as ‘bureaucracy as a principle of domination’. One of its fundamental characteristics was the ‘administrator who ruled by reports’, and a host of professionals in various wings of the administration. The imposition of the Pax represented a shift from ‘war, trade and piracy’, to investments and production of profit. This required a more stable organisation to encourage, as Arendt put it, ‘the domination of one people, not as before for the sake of its own riches, but for the sake of another country’s wealth’. But this was not a mere bureaucratic organisation. It was an imperial bureaucracy with various regional and local branches which derived their definitive norms of operation (though altered by local realities) from the metropolitan source and were responsive, in the final instance, to the demands of the metropole. In this sense the colonial state was not an entity in itself but a sub-unit of a complex imperial organisation which straddled a resource-world of colonies. In its various regional forms it was responsible for creating and maintaining a politico-economic environment within which expatriate economic interests and some others (including missionaries and proper local interests) were protected and supervised, given or denied privileged positions, directed and regulated by public policies. There were always some areas of conflict between the administration and the varying expatriate interests. However, when these conflicts reached crisis levels they were referred to, and solved, in the metropolitan country.
The solutions to these complex managerial problems were attempted through the creation of institutions like the colonial service which recruited and trained the manpower for colonial administration. In the colonies, legislative and executive councils were created to represent and encourage British economic and political interests as well as to manipulate and contain local interests. As Brett describes it, 'the administrative backbone of Colonial control stretched from the Secretary of State in London through local Governor(s) . . . down to the village headman or chief via the Secretariat and the Provincial and District Administration'.

There was a rigid and respected hierarchy of offices with attendant security of tenure and remuneration for colonial civil servants. Colonial administration attempted to attain an efficiency of operation which would yield both economic, social and political profits for the British colonial political economy.

The Colonial State and Pacification in Ghana
Here we examine the process through which the northern region of Ghana was ‘pacified’. In the course of this the differences between the administration of the north and other regions in Ghana will be pointed out. The differences, it will be argued, were not caused by a policy of ‘neglect’, ‘isolation’ or ‘indifference’ as Staniland and Kimble have argued. On the contrary they should be seen as the consequences of the colonial state’s economic policy in Ghana which turned the region into a ‘labour reserve’ for the new colony.

Installation of the Colonial State; 1844 and after
To understand the pacification and extension of the colonial state and administration of the north it will be appropriate to situate it in the wider context of the colony as a whole. British jurisdiction of any sort was not implemented in Ghana until after 1844. Prior to this centuries of association and trading with European merchants had gradually introduced to the coastal areas, and the immediate hinterland, some European ideas and values of jurisdiction. During this period there was no attempt to colonise the various communities or bring them together into one nation. Threats to and disconant with the European presence and attempted economic monopoly had come largely from Ashanti as she, imperially, coerced and laid occasional siege to the defenceless Fanti and other communities. Ashanti southward imperialism was an attempt to reach the source of coastal trade and break the middleman role of the Fanti and other coastal groups as were similar movements northwards.

After the celebrated Bond of 1844, what seemed like formal British jurisdiction began to be enforced on the coast to the disgust and disdain of some local chiefs. This period saw a change in British relations with coastal communities from that of conciliation to threats, and the use of force to pacify recalcitrant local leaders. The administration slowly tried through deliberations and committees to assert itself but allowed local leaders the chance to express their views and feelings over controversial issues. However, whenever any such leader proved recalcitrant force was immediately applied. It was against this background that in 1854 the Governor of the Gold Coast arrogated to the colonial state the right to accept or reject elected chiefs of local communities.

The case of King Aggrey remains a good example of British policy. In 1865 the colonial administration welcomed the installation of King Aggrey of Cape Coast with the hope that he would prove a faithful ally. However, after Aggrey had

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claimed and demonstrated the autonomy of traditional courts from British jurisdiction, the same administration reported ‘symptoms of disaffection’ on his part. He was banished from his motherland and throne in 1866. ‘The outcome of (this) affair’, Kimble comments, ‘illustrates clearly how in the last resort it was impossible for British jurisdiction to co-exist with the unfettered authority of the chiefs.’ Similar treatment awaited others. The Fanti Confederation of 1868-1873 mobilised among the Fanti chiefs in spite of their long standing loyalty to British authority. The confederation showed a strong sense of independence when in 1868 an exchange of forts, and thus areas of influence, was arranged between the British and the Dutch. Onward to Mankessim the Fanti chiefs trudged, gathered, and asserted their independence from the British. After a vain attempt at persuasion the governor was ready, as Kimble records, to ‘make some salutary examples in order to crush out the spirit of disaffection so glaringly evident in the whole conduct of the people of Cape Coast’.

Another area of conflict and final British assertion concerned the attempt to introduce taxes. A poll-tax was to be levied and agreement to this was demanded from chiefs. To tie them, and therefore the institution of their office, to this scheme, a form of monthly stipend was to be paid to them upon the successful collection of the taxes. In addition, the administration promised to undertake a general development of the various municipalities. None of these promises were seen to have been carried out and by 1854, when the second payment was due, there was widespread resistance. The administration came down hard on the communities where resistance had been rampant, bombarding towns, burning villages and putting up a general show of force with regular troops. All this was done, as the governor put it, ‘as a vindication of the insulted honour of the British Flag’.

Another crisis of power arose in the context of the Native Jurisdiction Ordinance. The intention of this ordinance was, as Kimble points out, to restructure the judicial authority of the chiefs, to ‘substitute for it the central, impersonal machinery of British courts’, and to extend control over the African population. A Native Affairs Department was created in 1902 as a consequence of this ordinance and in 1904 the Chiefs Ordinance usurped all the powers, judicial and others, of the traditional authorities and formally gave the governor the final decision in the depositions and appointments of chiefs. There was pervasive resistance from both chiefs and by now a sizeable, Western-educated African elite, but no unity of interest within the African population. The Western-educated Africans ran into conflicts with both local chiefs and the administration as they demanded their share of power, rights and privileged positions within the new economy. They opposed the chiefs on the basis of their ‘progressive’ attitude and they attacked the colonial administration for its usurpation of power and privilege which they claimed to be theirs. The chiefs on the other hand clung adamantly to their status and privileges against the threat of the colonial economy and of their educated kin. Over and above these two groups the colonial state pursued the expansion of its powers and the protection of the capitalist economy through the modification or destruction of pre-capitalist institutions and relations thereby unleashing a new process of class-formation.

The Western-educated community did not escape the aggression of the colonial state. Through intrigue, seduction, character assassination and imprisonment, they suffered their share of colonial ‘pacification’ as the state gradually installed
itself. In many situations they provided vocal resistance to British ordinances and legislation but the administration showed a readiness either to play the chiefs against their educated kin or, coercively, to silence both. Before 1874 there had been a policy to encourage African education and to place Africans in responsible positions in the administration of the colony, though British suspicion of the Western-educated African was present. In 1868, for example, the Secretary of State for the Colonies had remarked that it would be better to have ‘nothing to do with the educated natives’ as a body. This policy changed when formal colonisation of the Gold Coast Protectorate was effected. Colonisation was declared by Orders in Council in 1874 and required now neither the consent of, nor even admitted an appeal from, the local population or its leadership. The fundamental obligation of the new colonial state was to ‘establish law, order and security’. Caustic remarks about educated Africans began to appear more frequently in Colonial reports and correspondence. Kimble cites A.W.L. Henning of the Colonial Office who, in 1875, registered the view that ‘the educated natives or scholars have always been a thorn in the side of the government of the Gold Coast. They have been at the bottom of most trouble on the coast for some years.’

The educated Africans were, however, undaunted and demonstrated their resilience in 1894, the year of the Lands Bill. The intention of this Bill was, as Kimble puts it, that the whole country should be taken over as ‘Crown land and administered to greater advantage than the inhabitants could do it for themselves’. This led to legislation to vest waste lands, forests and minerals in the Crown. In an organised rally against this inordinate extension of Colonial power the celebrated Aborigines Rights Protection Society (ARPS) was formed by the educated African community. The position of the ARPS was relatively simple. It reminded the administration that the coastal areas and the immediate hinterland, now called colony, had not been acquired by consent, cession or treaty. The protracted debate that ensued was resolved through a modification of the original Bill into the Concessions Ordinance of 1900. In essence, this provided the administration with similar powers to those which the initial Bill would have done and required individuals or communities to establish their ownership to land before conceding or leasing it to speculators. Other legal parameters were set by the Ordinance in relation to land use and title to lands.

The circumstances under which this Bill was conceived and executed gives it some importance in the political economy of colonial capitalism. After 1874, when the Gold Coast was formally colonised, expatriate capitalist interests poured into the country in search of fortune. Stories of land full of gold gained further vigour as speculators offered monies and presents to chiefs and other individuals or groups for land. It was in an attempt to control the ‘anarchic’ course of capitalist development that the colonial state intervened. The state argument for intervention was paternalistic; it intended to protect the interest of African people against greedy speculators. A careful reading between the lines reveals that the colonial state was apprehensive that the mining process was getting out of hand and that profits were evading the state’s taxes. Its intervention, then, was to maintain the conditions of capitalist development that it thought proper but not to deny the development of capitalism. For the same reason the state would intervene and control labour-recruitment and the process of proletarianisation in the north in the interests of capital in the mining industry.

The pacification of Ashanti was more abrupt, more violent and less conciliatory.
For some time Ashanti military power had confounded the British. Hence, British relations with Ashanti had remained largely military and British policy had been mainly directed towards protecting its own traders. Politically, Ashanti power was conceived as presenting a 'potential threat to British trade and influence', as Kimble puts it, and especially the Ashanti monopoly over the northern transit trade. There had been frequent demands from and deputations to the colonial office by the various expatriate Chambers of Commerce to subjugate Ashanti and open the area for trade. In 1874 a military expedition with over two thousand troops marched on Ashanti. Its purpose was to deal an effective and decisive blow to Ashanti and to occupy Kumasi, its capital. A victory here, it was maintained, would guarantee the freedom of inland trade routes. Two decades later Chamberlain, then Colonial Secretary, vowed to put a stop once and for all to the 'intolerable nuisance' of Ashanti which had continued to obstruct the interests of 'civilisation' and trade. Kumasi was occupied in 1897 and the asantehene, Prempeh, deported.

The stage was then set for the construction of the paraphernalia of a colonial state in Ashanti. The military apparatus was established first with an Ashanti Resident who was required to maintain peace and order in accordance with the demands of British colonisation and to encourage and satisfy expatriate economic interest by opening the way to the north. No concessions of land were to be granted without the governor's sanction but a quarter in Kumasi was to be assigned for foreign traders and sites allocated to mission schools. Portions of the Volta region of Ghana were relatively late in coming under British control, but, as Kwaku's exhaustive work on the region demonstrates, similar techniques were employed.

The Colonial State in Northern Ghana, 1902 and After
By 1902, then, when the colonial state was formally extended to the north, it had had considerable experience of 'pacifying the natives'. The Imperial Order in Council of 1902 defined, described and stipulated the principles of political control over about 30,000 square miles of savannah under the Northern Territories Protectorate. The general circumstances that led to this have been described by Thomas. They arose from competition between British, French and German capitalist imperialism as each vied to control the 'trade up the Volta through Salaga to the North' and the other markets 'which are the converging points of roads from the coast as well as from the far interior, and to which caravans and others resort'. British attempts to control the trade and trade routes had been previously ascertained through treaties of 'friendship and freedom of trade', some of them contracted and signed for the British by the African civil servant, George Ekem Ferguson. They were not treaties of protection and no part or section of the treaties implied that the indigenous population had asked for or accepted British protection. In substance, they had allowed British movement and trade in the region. British influence had thus been granted in Northern Ghana with the exception of the narrow strip of land mass at the eastern corner of the country which became Northern Togoland under German colonial control until 1919 when it was given to the British under a League of Nations mandate.

Immediately following the Orders in Council of 1902, military rule was established. In its dealings with the indigenous population it was as curt and precise as military orders. Chamberlain wrote to the Governor of the Colony:
With regard to the Northern Territories I have decided not to proceed with the scheme for appointing an administrator ... it appears to me ... that in some respects the form of administration of the Northern Territories should be different ... speaking broadly, the functions of the Resident or Commissioner in the Northern Territories will for some time to come be largely of a semi-military character, while the resident in Ashanti will be occupied with questions connected with the development of the gold-mining industry.

The specific reason for this was the suppression of the Mamprusi who had rebelled against the appropriation of powers not granted in the treaties. The bitter experience of the British in their confrontation with stubborn Ashanti imperialism made them determined to curb other potential rebellions, which they did with impunity. Secondly, the administration needed, effectively and abruptly, to terminate and/or control the trade relations between the north and its western Sudanese trading partners and to redirect trade southwards. Finally, the administration needed to provide the required structure for forced labour conscription which had begun in the region prior to formal colonisation.

The northern region was integrated into the emerging new economy primarily as a recruiting ground for labour to the capitalist enclaves. Labour recruitment had started as early as 1876 with small-scale conscription into the constabulary force and then into work-gangs for the construction of infrastructure. By the turn of the century, and with the hindsight of ‘successful’ labour conscription, the administration agreed not only to allow labour conscription by the mines but to apply force when necessary and to supervise the process. In 1907, a year after the previously informal conscriptions were formalised through the keeping of records, the Governor informed the Legislative Council that ‘the population of the Northern Territories have usually furnished the bulk of recruits to the Gold Coast Regiment, the balance being made up of the immigrants from neighbouring colonies’ ... and that, ‘the Northern Territories have continued and were still continuing to supply the number of recruits required’. The sporadic forms of labour conscription which ensued to meet the requirements of the ‘expanding’ economy made it necessary that colonial officers in the north be given extensive powers of action without lengthy bureaucratic consultation and letters. Consequently the chief commissioner of the region became a virtual ruler presiding over both civil and criminal courts, while the district commissioners acted like rulers in their own right. These powers were reinforced by the Governor through the exclusion of solicitors and attorneys from the courts of the region. This led to a more repressive local administration than in the south with extensive powers and a blatant use of force in recruiting labourers as northerners failed to respond as ‘rational economic men’ to the opportunity for wage earning.

The administrative structure that was established was constituted of the second battalion of the Gold Coast Regiment with its capital at the heart of the region, Gambaga, and officers who acted as district commissioners commanding detachments to their various areas. This structure was unfavourable to any indigenous political institutions as it became imperative to undercut and subjugate all other forms of political authority. The first essential was to install ‘order’ and to do so a number of ‘Sergeant Major’ Chiefs were created in complete disregard of local institutions. The administration ignored the rules of succession to political office and appointed its own personnel, usually from outside the royal lineage, thus providing new forms of privilege and class. The new patterns and crisis of class formation, new alliances and power struggles as well as the incidents of fratricide and suicide that this led to have been vividly
documented by Braimah and Goody in their work Salaga: The Struggle for Power.

A modification of military rule was carried through in 1906 but what followed was not very different. A constabulary force replaced the army battalion to cut down administrative costs and for the next 30 years was as effective in its supervisory functions as the army had been. It immediately undertook 'physical' measures to neutralise any potential confrontation from the African population. British intelligence reports on Northern Ghana for this period indicate the strategy by which this was done. They were described in a letter from one District Commissioner to the Chief Commissioner of the Northern Territories in 1916:

1. Identifying the fighting strength of every ethnic group by generally taking a census of the sturdy male population;
2. specification of what kind of weapon used in battle by the ethnic group;
3. conscripting the men into the army or the police with a view to depleting the general fighting population;
4. economic potential of any town or village to be noted;
5. all Danish guns owned by the male population to be licensed or confiscated.

Resistance to these measures was violently crushed and the participants conscripted into labour gangs or sometimes imprisoned. Many of them were conscripted into the army or police, hence the inflated numbers of northerners in the ranks of these institutions.

Other methods were directed against indigenous leaders of chiefly rank. These included both demoting chiefs from office and encouraging disrespect for the jurisdiction of their courts. With a series of ordinances, the economic and religious bases of the chiefly class were undermined and consequently desecrated. For example, alluvial gold was the property of chiefs. The River Ordinance of 1903 made river-dredging punishable. In 1908, the Native Customs Ordinance made the 'worshipping of other gods' punishable and, following the Deportation Ordinance of 1918, a deportable offence. In 1927 the Northern Territories Lands and Native Rights Ordinance was passed. As Pogucki explains, this turned 'the whole . . . land of the Protectorate, occupied or not, into crown lands', and thus undercut a further basis of the privileges of the chiefly class.

District Commissioners, acting within the purview of their power, forcefully removed chiefs whose actions were inconsistent with British policy. For example, in January 1926 the Commissioner of Northern Mamprusi removed the chief for refusing to supply labour for the mines. Saaka has accounted for these kinds of activities in terms of the 'idiosyncracies of commissioners who were isolated at the remotest hinterland and thus much less under the supervision of the central government'. Such an explanation is inadequate and does not grasp the extent of the colonial bureaucratic machinery and its operation. It is true that commissioners did sometimes act 'unilaterally'. However, their pursuit of policy, even in the remotest areas, was ascertained through the bureaucratic linkages and organisation of which they constituted a middle level position. Thus specific instructions were given to these officers in the Northern Territories which stated inter alia that 'they were to be given all possible freedom of action' and that 'something more than a perfunctory execution of (instructions) is expected . . . But they must clearly understand that it is their duty to keep the chief commissioner informed of the conditions and progress of their commands'. They did this by keeping official diaries which were sent to their superiors on request.
In the light of this one cannot agree that the district commissioners arrogated to themselves supervisory functions including executive and judicial powers. Saaka's argument begs the question of the linkages between the central administration and its local appendages and under-emphasises the source from which district commissioners derived their norms of operation.

The same extensive powers were used to prevent and later slow down the extension of missionary education in an attempt to supervise the gradual restructuring of pre-capitalist values, institutions and social relations in the north. Permission for the establishment of missions was not granted until the Governor had demanded and considered a report 'as to whether the establishment of the missions... is not detrimental to the status of the white man in this country'. Permits were eventually granted to Catholic rather than Protestant missions on the grounds which Kimble cites that 'natives who have adopted the Roman Catholic religion are much more amenable and law-abiding than those who have embraced other religious beliefs'. This brought the colonial administration in conflict with the Wesleyan missionaries.

District Commissioners were especially required to encourage trade as well as supervise the administration stores and protect the few expatriate merchants who entered the north. They were to explain to the local population that markets had been established to provide them with European products suited to their needs and to impress upon them the necessity of greater industry to earn money to buy such products. These were items such as cheap cotton prints and shirts, tin-sardines, coleman lamps, kerosene, hoes and knives and a miscellany of ordinary items which were once produced by local artisans. And there was the bicycle for the most 'enterprising' northerners. These items of trade would gradually displace local skilled men as they pushed their products out of the markets.

The character of the colonial state in the north was shown in the violence of the measures it took to transform aspects of the economic organisation of the region. There was initially the violence associated with the closure of trading centres and trade routes. There was also the violence associated with the creation of government centres sometimes through burning traditional market areas. Within the northern region, Tamale, Bole and Gambaga, the government centres, replaced traditional markets at Nalerigu, Nyanga and Yendi, which gradually stagnated and slowly lost local artisans and entrepreneurs. These colonial centres attracted a sizeable 'foreign' population and initially put a strain on local food production and supplies. The local population withdrew their participation in the new markets and organised small produce markets in surrounding villages. This led to some shortages of food in the new government centres. In an attempt to solve this, the colonial officers shut down these rural markets and ordered the residents to bring their commodities to the headquarters towns. The Colonial Secretary in a speech to open one of these newly created markets in 1908 explained that:

I have asked you to meet me all together... so that you may all see the new town which we are making the centre of administration and which we have no doubt will very soon form the distribution centre of trade... we are here to encourage trade in your midst... From time to time your commissioner will tell you what is good for trade... and you must follow his advice... (my emphasis).

An important appendage to the creation of the new market centres was the
introduction and circulation of British currency. Most local traders had organised their own trade some way away from the colonial centres to avoid the intervention of colonial officials. British currency was temporarily confined to the colonial centres while the cowrie, the indigenous currency, was pushed into the periphery to be hoarded by traders and others. When the arm of the colonial state reached them, however, cowries could no longer be converted into the ‘official’ currency and cowrie capital became suddenly useless.

The creation of new towns and the destruction of traditional markets and of the indigenous currency should be seen within the general context of the installation of colonial capitalism. The new market with European goods undercut indigenous production and, as Bering describes, the prosperity of the outlying areas diminished. The resources in the region were not to be commercialised into cash crops. While expatriate capitalists showed an interest in the development of the cattle, shea-butter, groundnuts, hides and skins of the north during legislative council debates, the colonial state systematically prevented such developments. The labour reserve of the north was not the product of neglect but of the systematic exclusion of capital investment.

The Colonial State, the Crown Colony and the Northern Region

It was the restructuring of the north as a labour reserve which accounts for the sharp contrast between its administration and that of other regions of Ghana. We have described the installation of a military administration, the replacement of indigenous leaders and the powers of the district commissioners above. We elaborate on this a little further below.

Ferguson and Wilks have described the singular character of the colonial domination in the north: ‘the chiefs are practically powerless . . . they have tended to become sergeant majors through whom the administration can address the rank and file . . . virtually no attempt was made to utilise the pre-colonial system of authority. ‘In reality’, they conclude, ‘the administration is a direct one’.

In the administration of a Crown Colony, the Secretary of State, a cabinet minister in the British parliament, was made responsible for colonial territories. He appointed governors who were responsible for the effective administration of the territory. Within the colony the governor supervised executive and legislative councils with powers conferred on them by the secretary of state. The executive council was constituted of heads of various departments of the administration in the colony. The legislative council, originally established in 1850 in the Gold Coast, was constituted by official and unofficial (expatriate business interests) nominees and, from 1927 after a long struggle, elected African members. The governor supervised local administration through regional and district commissioners and their intermediaries, the chiefs. The place of the chief within this bureaucratic structure is described by Burns as follows:

The election of the chief is left to the people as it always has been, and always must be, for so long as the chiefs remain responsible for priestly as well as civil functions. But the chief is not necessarily the Native Authority recognised by the Governor although as a rule the Governor willingly recognises the chief and his state council as the Native Authority. When the people themselves cannot agree as to the election of a chief, or where the chief and his council prove incompetent to perform the functions of Native Authority, the Governor has power under the law to appoint other persons as the Native Authority.

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The fundamental object of the colonial state was to find a subordinate ruler willing to collaborate and to integrate him into the structure of administration. Those not willing or recalcitrant were dealt with appropriately. The administration that was established in northern Ghana, however, differed remarkably from those in the south. None of the indigenous leaders were included in the day-to-day administration. The British relied on the ‘sergeant-major’ chiefs who possessed no traditional basis of authority, privilege, tribute or reverence. They were not even made responsible for any participation in decision-making. By contrast, from very early on in the southern regions chiefs and local leaders had been included in the administration if only to a very limited extent. In the central region, as Owusu has observed, ‘the so-called absolute and autocratic power (of the governor) in relation to chiefs and people was hardly ever, if at all, exercised’.

A further case in point is that of representation on the legislative council. Guggisberg, Governor from 1917-29, had enlarged the numbers of local representatives on the council, giving Africans a relatively larger voice in central government. The Native Administration Ordinance of 1927 formalised the integration of the southern chiefs as paid officials, subject to the discipline of district commissioners, within the colonial administrative structure. The Ordinance created Provincial Councils for head chiefs where they might discuss and make suggestions to the legislative council to which they were also entitled to elect representatives. The Legislative Council of 1927 had 30 members including the Governor, 15 officials and 14 unofficial members. Of the latter six were paramount chiefs selected by the Provincial Councils, five Europeans represented banking, shipping, mercantile and mining interests and there were three Africans nominated from the Western educated class.

These constitutional reforms were consistent with the general role of the colonial state as it supervised (capitalist) ‘development’ in the colony where the typical British point of view to the end was that what ‘mattered’ in Africa was ‘economic development’, as Wraith put it, and not ‘politics’. And economic development meant that the administration should smooth the path for expatriate business to accumulate profits. Guggisberg defended his decision to give more seats to chiefs than to the Western-educated class on the new legislative council on the grounds that ‘if this small but very noisy minority (the educated African elite) had its way (they) would plunge the Gold Coast into . . . financial and mercantile chaos’ and that should self-government be granted to the colony, which would mean the ascendency of such Africans ‘Manchester merchants would be wise to explore other areas of investment in the world’.

In an elaborate speech which introduced his reforms Guggisberg stated:

The Provincial Councils have been formed to elect head chiefs to the Legislative Council. It is intended to develop them still further by encouraging each Provincial Council to meet and confer on the general welfare of the divisions comprising each province. It is hoped in this way to provide the chiefs with an institution against the disintegrating effects of modern civilisation, while at the same time giving them an opportunity of conferring on the problems which the advent of modern civilisation must inevitably introduce into the country.

It will be seen that the introduction of Provincial Councils is a most important innovation, and is likely to lead to the betterment of the rule of chiefs and their councils, without interfering with native institutions.

Ambitious and paternalistic as this then was in all its intentions, the reforms
were not applied in the northern region where indigenous institutions had suffered the worst abuses. In fact, northern members were deliberately excluded from the legislative council until 1950. Before this date, the north had been 'represented' indirectly through its chief commissioner in whom the governor had vested considerable powers of legislation and decision. Nevertheless his function as a member of the legislative council was strictly limited and fell far short of any power to register discontent on the part of the northern population. One of the Colony's governors alluded to this in reply to questions in 1932:

... I must rule out the order of the Honorable member. Matters affecting the Northern Territories except financial question are not within the purview of this council. I cannot allow this debate to include matters affecting the Northern Territories unless direct questions of finance are involved.

Yet by the 1930s all other provinces were represented in the legislative council by a combination of interest groups, chiefs and Western-educated Africans. Alongside these, but with more privileges were, as Padmore describes, the representatives of 'European banking, shipping, mercantile and mining interests who were the watch dogs of their London and Liverpool offices ... and whose main concern was to oppose legislation affecting their companies'. Padmore describes the relationships between these representatives of capital and the officers of the administration. The former always supported the latter in matters relating to the general economic and social welfare of Africans, while British officials always supported the representatives of capital when radical Africans among elected members tried to interfere with the economic privileges they enjoyed. It was the collusion between the two which enabled the colonial state to pursue consistently its policy of recruiting cheap labour from the north.

Guggisberg had pursued his reforms of the legislative council as if the northern part of the country did not exist. However, he did give vague promises of future developments, albeit to be carefully supervised and only to be instituted when the north was 'ready'. His view of the north was generally that the 'Native Affairs' of the region were less contentious (meaning under firmer control) than in the south. Therefore any constitutional changes which would affect the structure of domination in the region were only to be possible at some later, unspecified, time. It was in this light that the Chief Commissioner, in his memorandum on 'The Policy of the Northern Territories' in 1928, observed that:

Native Administration on sound lines would be a success in the future when the youth of the Northern Territories have been educated to take their places in the native courts, treasuries, prisons, police, public works and chief's councils which it would be necessary to establish; but it will take a decade before any success in that direction will be possible.

The Commissioner's particular concern in relation to constitutional changes was the acute shortage of qualified (Western-educated) northern men to occupy requisite positions. Undoubtedly yes! But his observation conveniently concealed the restrictive educational policy of the administration which had delayed the introduction of education into the region. Thus, while northerners provided cheap labour to the south, it was southerners who were, for example, the teachers in the north — and paid higher salaries than in the south as an incentive to work there.

The administration's sole effort to extend capitalism to the north was through labour recruitment. There was virtually no attempt to provide social services. Expatriate capital was prevented from investing in the north. Consequently the
'benefits' and the 'positive effects' of capital accumulation were not available in the north. Thus colonial policy shaped the process of class formation in Ghana during this period. The extensive use of the north as a recruiting ground would lead to the proletarianisation of the region as a whole so that the rank and file of wage-labourers would be dominated by Northerners. The absence of education retarded the process of their inclusion in the emerging 'bureaucratic bourgeoisie' and professionals in the country. Among Southerners, Northerners were seen as 'behind' and 'uncivilised'. Among the newly emerging African petit bourgeois of commerce — cocoa farmers, cocoa-brokers and enterprising retailers (mainly women) of the expatriate commercial houses (Paterson Zochonis, United Africa Company, United Trading Company, etc.) there were virtually no northerners.

It was not until the 1930s that a government decision was made to consider the possibility of introducing and encouraging 'Native Administration' in the north. This occurred partly in response to embryonic northern consciousness resulting in an organised protest in early 1930 by the few educated northerners and some of the chiefs. They demanded an increase in educational facilities, an end to labour conscription, a gradual replacement of the southern 'expatriates' and the abolition of the special privileges they enjoyed. In 1932, a new Ordinance was presented to the Legislature which the Governor introduced thus:

This part of the Gold Coast has for some 30 years been administered almost entirely on the principle of Direct Rule. That form of administration has not been unsuccessful insofar as it has secured tranquility.

What kind of 'success' had it been? Intensive labour recruitment had been the day-to-day demand on chiefs. Fra-Fra and Mossi resistance to recruitment had been crushed. Educational and health facilities had not been introduced. However, no major change in the administration or in political representation in the north took place until 1946 when the Northern Territories Territorial Council was formed. Already by this time independent government, together with the introduction of a Parliamentary system and of universal franchise, was being demanded in the south.

Conclusion
'Pacification' opened up Ghana and the north to domination by the colonial state and to colonial capitalism. In this process, the northern region was not neglected or isolated but actively dominated and integrated into the economy as a whole. Labour was recruited for the capitalist mining enclaves and other capitalist interests that required labour. The northerners came to provide most of the cheap labour in the southern and Ashanti regions. Force was demonstrated and used to secure the supply of labour and to hasten the restructuruing of the northern pre-capitalist economy. The extension of capitalism to the north in the form of wage labour recruitment underlined the emerging position of northerners in the Ghanaian class formation.

Bibliographic Note
The author acknowledges the valuable comments on the earlier version of this paper offered by Dr E. Hutchful of University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria, and Dr Aton Allahar of University of Toronto, Department of Sociology. A sense of gratitude is extended to Ms Marica Bolabolola for typing the various drafts of the manuscript. I, however, have sole responsibility for any weakness in the argument.


Excerpts from speeches by the Colonial Secretary and by district and regional commissioners are drawn from ADM/56/1/44 (Ghana National Archives, Accra); on the early stages of 'pacification' in the north see also ADM/56/1/46 and ADM/56/1/73 and ADM/1/7 (Ghana National Archives, Tamale).