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Socio-Cultural Traits and Connection among the Ethnic Clans of Bimoba, Konkomba, Sissala and Dagaaba in Northern Part of Ghana

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Abstract:

The research was conducted on the theme, "Socio-cultural connection among ethnic Bimoba, Konkomba, Sissala and Dagaaba in the Northern part of Ghana. The objective was to identify common traits and historical factors that connect the selected ethnic groups. The entire study was qualitative with a case study survey across the areas under discussion. The research tools were mainly interview, backed by photographic documentations. It came to light that most of the ethnic groups had long-standing historical linkages with bodily evidence. Others were found to be related based on totemic foundation. There were however distinct foreign religious influences and some of the languages were odd among the lots. It was recommended that the groups involved, embark on re-discovery pilgrimages to re-unite and revamp the phenomenal ties that each group had preserved, observed and transmitted through generations over the years. The objective of the study was achieved.

Keywords: Bimoba, Ngadong, totem, slave raiders, ancestor, ties, pilgrimage, Puli, Kunakib, Targong, Binnaba, Dagaaba, Dagao, Di-kpielle, Nayeli, Nanchala, Yibigan, Komkutiib, Konkomba, Sissala, Bemm, Dagbam

1. Background

What triggered this research was that anytime a Bimoba who has tribal marks finds himself around Tumu in the Upper West Region, he is met with exchanges of pleasantries in the Sissala language. It is the same thing that happens to a Sissala in a vice versa. Much had not been known about the native history of the two groups mentioned above regarding the mistaken identity. This suspicious identification scenarios often happen because of the identical tribal marks associated with the two ethnic groups. Also, in the erstwhile Northern Region, there had been this circulating unconfirmed history among the ethnic Bimoba that the Ngadong clan is related to the 'Bekwom' (Komba) among Konkomba because both groups do not eat crocodile.

The third thought-provoking instance traces its route to 2013 when a relative in courtship with a Dagao lady resolved to ask her hand in marriage. One morning, they left Tamale for Nandom-Koo in the Upper West Region, to formally introduce the man and his family to the lady's parents. They were in transit at Baabile to be led by an indigene. Upon reaching the family house and exchanging pleasantries and introduction, the elders asked for their mission and wanted to know much about the origin of the young man. The prospective groom mentioned his clan's name and his mother ethnic group. According to his narration, there was this inquisitive middle-aged man who probed further to know their totem as a people. He replied; 'I taboo Crocodile'. "They starred at one another", he said. After a few minutes, they told him he had his family members around. He exclaimed, thinking that those people were perhaps on an educational tour or on a government job mission. "Who are they?" He asked. They told him they were people who also had the history of crocodiles as their totem, so they taboo it. They listed among others, some clans such as Birfo, kusiele and Kpiele which also taboo the crocodile. What happened next was that they then sent the team to Nandom-Tom to a popular settler called Kuukole Bekyoore Mginekakone (died at age 90 in 2018) and another representative, Emmanuel Aakyir to come and partner my brother as his relatives and the customary rites were successfully performed. It was exciting and yet surprising to make that historical discovery. The other side of quandary was the thinking that the lineage, probably, might have migrated from somewhere, or could be victims of abduction and had become assimilated into the larger Dagaabas. Mr. Kuukole Mginekakone until his demise had since remained the link between our in-laws and the entire Ngadong ethnic clan. If you were the one would you not bother to delve into the discovery? As a young anthropologist, the discovery became a source of investigation to establish the kind of relationship or otherwise that might have existed in ancient times. It is against this background that the research was conducted.

1.1. Research Objectives

The research aimed at finding out the elements of common traits and historical factors that connect the said ethnic groups, the circumstances that led to the distant separation of the exogamous clans, a comparison of the genealogical

ties and the sacredness of the totems which are still being observed. Further, the research was to ascertain the possibility of establishing a common putative ancestor or ancestress. Finally, this study was meant to advocate the re-union of the lineages and clans of blood relationship.

1.2. Research Questions

- What language elements connect the groups?
- What is the totem of each ethnic group (clan)?
- How did the various ethnic groups settle at their present locations?
- When and where did some historic events relating to the ethnic groups take place?
- Which common identical markings can be found among the people?

1.3. Methodology

To succeed in such a Ghanaian based Ethnographic Case Study, a survey was imperative as opined by Opoko, J. Y. (2005) theory. It tries to describe this type of methodology as one that involves the articulation of facts to make statements that best give meaning to genealogical sequence of events or phenomena. The sample was drawn from four (4) large ethnic groups namely: Bimoba, Dagaaba, Konkomba, and Sissala and the characteristics obtained enabled the researchers to infer the corresponding characteristics in the larger populations.

The researchers' main instruments were, structured questionnaire and interviews with seasoned indigenes and oral academic laureates for in-depth information. The essence of this research was so pertinent to the researchers. Therefore, to ensure the reliability of instruments, the interview items were scrutinized by historians and administered to two (2) different resource persons. Amendments were then made before the field work was conducted. Secondary data were obtained from documentary sources at libraries and Internet sources.

The researchers engaged twenty (20) people in various interviews comprising five (5) each, of purposively selected indigenous elders from Nanchalla and Yibigan at Nabugbelle, Pieng and Bujang, of Sissala, then Di-kpielle and Nayeli of Dagaaba. The rest were from Maanteng and Naboor from the Komba area in the newly created Yunyoo-Namong District and the Komkutiib of the Konkomba ethnic group, resident at Konkonzoli in the Saboba District of the Northern Region. The others were the Ngadong, Puli, Dikperu, Luook and Ngaauk clans of Bimoba, now in the newly created North-East Region.

1.4. Procedure for Data Collection

The researchers embarked on a fact-finding tour around the listed communities that were associated with the making of specific tribal marks and the crocodile as their totem among the Sissala and Dagaaba communities of the Upper West Region. The other communities visited were Maanteng and Naboor, Najong No. 2 and Gbankoni (Ngadong clan) who recognize the crocodile as their totem. The team administered a series of structured interview guides relating to the oral history on totems and the rationale for the tribal marks of the people.

The other notes that were taken were basic greetings, names and common house-hold communication words. While the interviews were on-going, the audios were recorded on tape which were played back for clarification. The data were then coded and analyzed on tables and diagrams, and transcribed according to related headings on along narrative discussion to help uncover the historical connections and the transitions that created the vast distance.

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1. Ethnic Compositions

Goody (1954) in his 'Ethnography of the Northern Territories' notes that the history of wars, raids and kidnapping is said to have arrived in modern Ghana from other ethnic backgrounds. Opoku-Agyemang (2002) also adds that captives and servants who were brought from their native homelands became assimilated into the families where they found themselves (Buah, 1998). The slave camps at Sakpuli and the Paga slave markets had been used for the exchange of slaves to and from the east, and to and from the west. In support of this assertion, Rattray (1932), a renowned cultural anthropologist in his 'History, Tribal and Clan Organisation' gives us the understanding that most tribes got constituted as a result of a mixture of assimilated captives, the vanquished and indigenes and the like.

He goes ahead to indicate that Sissala and Dagaaba are undoubtedly a very mixed stock of people comprising under this name, elements which were "Isala", "Lobi", Wala, and possibly others (Rattray, 1932). On the other hand, Barker (1986), classifies the dialect spoken by distinctive Dagaaba under the Gur language which includes the languages of ethnic Bimoba, Konkomba and Basari. But he cites Tuurey saying that Dagaaba are an acephalous group which split away from Dagomba. All these assertions call for further probe to find where we actually came from.

Halliburton (1992) in his 'Celebrations of African Heritage' notes that Totems are usually animals forbidden by members of communities who claim brotherhood with the spirits contained in these animals and will not kill those animals (Halliburton, 1992). He adds that most of the Totems are often rendered in sculptural statutes and reserved for periodic ritual appeasement and supplication. The documentation of Rattray (1932) again offers us a clear direction to trace the roots of scattered Bimoba who have now been absorbed into the main tribes of their newfound lands. He writes:

...many of those who were originally of this stock have merged politically or otherwise in neighbouring tribes. The only traces of their former origin in some cases, is the presence of the original clan totems and sometimes the retention of certain distinctive customs which mark them

out as different from the tribes in which they have become absorbed. The former clue to their original stock, i.e. the possession of a clan totem found among a neighbouring or even distant tribe, is however, often obscured because the original totem's name has been changed into a different language by which the animal is known in the new tribe among whom the emigrants had settled. Thus, unless the meaning of the words in the various vernaculars are known and compared, there may not be any apparent connection between the terms employed, although in reality the totems which the different names designate may be identical.

What this passage means, and supported by Bary (1909) is that the name of a totem animal might have changed from one's original tribe to the new tribe within which one has settled. However, once the person continues to uphold the totem, he is bound to be able to trace his root to his original tribe. Rattray (1932) again opines that the possession of common tribal names in the northern territories never not postulate with any degree of certainty, but the avoidance of a common totem is what identifies the tribes that are of blood relation to one another and people from those tribes are expected not to inter-marry. Distance and decades of generational multiplicity will however not debar the issue of inter-marriages but would continue to forbid those in close proximity.

In his foot notes, he hinted that the 'Isala' tribe contains many groups now calling themselves 'Isala', who originally belonged to other tribes [including the Ngadong Bimoba] and spoke [their] languages. The Ngadong clan of Bimoba, the Di-kpielle/Nayeli clans of Dagaaba, the Yibigian and Nanchalla clans both of Sissala share a common totem being the crocodile.

2.2. Geographical Locations

In their various accounts, Barker, Assimeng and Kpeebe opine that the Bimoba tribe is one of the most scattered sub-groups [with relations living in Togo, Burkina Faso and even Central African Republic] of the Gur of the Oti-Volta, relating in language with the Basari and the Konkomba people. It is made up of 34-patri-clans with their territorial units (Barker, 1986, Assimeng, 1990, Kpeebe, 1992, and 2010). They occupy a territory in the north-east of the Northern Region of Ghana and extend into parts of northern Togo and southern Burkina Faso. Ward in his book titled "History of Ghana," also identifies the Dagaaba people on the other hand as located in the then Upper Region and they extend to parts of south-western Burkina Faso. Migration and enclave settlements have a history as old as mankind and it is an on-going process of the present. The movement of one linguistically distinct group into the traditional homeland of another can give rise to a variety of situations (Ward, 1966).

The map below shows the traditional home lands of those for whom the languages listed are their mother tongue, or first language. These will normally be areas within which that language is the primary means of communication and any outsider who really wishes to become a part of those societies is expected to learn the language. "In Ghana, Language boundaries do not necessarily correspond to the national boundaries" (Hall, 1983).

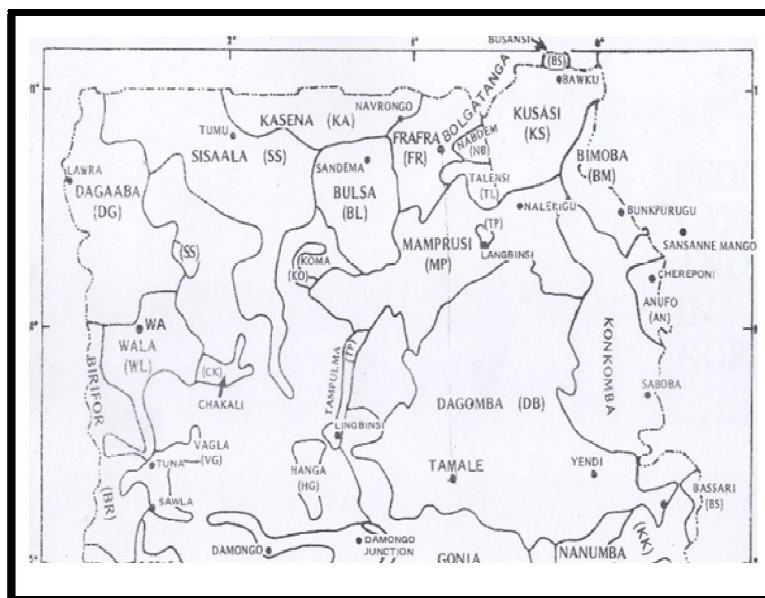


Figure 1: Map of Northern Ghana Languages and People
Source: Peter Barker, 1986

The people were thought to maintain separate cultural and geographical identities. However, the actual situation is far more complicated than a glance at the map seems to indicate. The map shows a simple picture of uniform, non-overlapping language communities and a few uninhabited areas. But even many of the apparently uninhabited regions are traditional lands of one tribe or another, though without considerable research it is difficult to draw meaningful boundaries in areas such as southern Sissala or central Gonja. It should also be noted that language boundaries do not necessarily correspond to national boundaries and this is a situation found in many countries in the world (Davis, 1984). Their close linguistic and cultural relationships between the two tribes desire considerable inquiry.

But often, the speakers of the same language living on either side of a national boundary recognize their inherent oneness, even though the recognized name for their language may be different in the two countries. For example, "Dagaare" in Ghana is called "Dagara" in Upper Volta, and "Bimoba" in Ghana is called "Moba" in Togo. Also, the Ivoirians say "Anyi" as against "Aowin" in Ghana. There is probably no area of Ghana which is linguistically uniform, but different levels of complexity have developed through processes of migration, conquest, urbanization and assimilation (Barker, 1986).

2.3. *Bimoba*

According to Rattray (1932), it was later in the 20th century some Bimoba descendants lived near Bawku with pockets of Bisa (the Busanga tribe) and became their playmates. They lived across the river at Widana in northern Togo at the present day Cincansse. The playmates (Bisa) were people who liked fried groundnuts and always brought goods to the Bimoba people in exchange for fried groundnuts. The story says it happened that one day, a Busanga visitor was due to come for groundnuts from his Bimoba friend. Unfortunately, there had been a heavy down pour which soaked the grasses, resulting in the Bimoba man's failure to provide his friend the fried groundnuts. From there, the mannerism became founded and they playfully called his settlement as 'Sinn-kansinn'Sinn-kansinn'. That was how the name came as (Sinn-kansinn, meaning 'groundnuts cannot be fried'). The rampant slave harassment in the mid-1700s forced most of the ethnic groups including the Bimoba population to flee further southwards along the Oti-Volta on the hill top and settled at Nakpanduri, living a few down the hill (Der, 1986). Other siblings scattered all over the hilltop extending to Bimbagu, Najong No. 2, Najong No. 1, Bombil, Kambatiak, Gbankoni, Nanyiar, Kambagu, Yunyoo, Balalong, Jilik, Kpentaung and Bunkpurugu.

Despite that, geographically, the Ngadong clan in particular and the Bimoba people in general occupy different village enclave areas farther away from one another in the Northern and Upper West Regions, there are very common similarities in their belief systems, taboos and totems as well as naming structure. The Konkombas are closer and still share a boundary with the Bimoba people. One common taboo whose story sounds similar to the Bimoba and Konkomba people is the taboo to eat the crocodile (Rattray, 1932, & Barker, 1986). Both clans (Ngadong [meaning the landlord] and the Di-kpielle/Nayeli&Komkutiib owe allegiance to the crocodile that they believed did save their great grandfather in his struggle to cross a river. They both hold that their great grandfather was trying to cross a river and took the reptile for a floating tree trunk. He sat on it to paddle across. To his surprise, the crocodile swam with him across without hurting him. So, his neighbours, specifically the Bisa and the Kusaasi people in the North-East of Ghana and a few who joined him called his settlement by his tribal identity, 'Bim' He got married and populated and was then called Bim-naab now known as Binnaba. The Kusaasi side of the settlement was, and is still known as Kusanaba.

2.3.1. The Ngadong Clan of the Bimoba People

It is said that the ancestor of Bimoba in general or Moba people as they call themselves (in Togo), who had operated excellently as soothsayer mercenary-aids (Nambont, 1974) to the Mossi kingdom prior to the migration in the 18th Century had become a target to the raiders for capture. The raiders knew that if they succeeded in capturing Kunagib (ancestor to the Ngadong clan), they would be able to penetrate into the Moshi-southern hinterland to make conquest.

Oral history of the two clans suggests that during the infamous slave-raid spree in the 1700s, Der (1998), the family of the great grandfather by name Kunagib whose mother was called Datouk from the Dagbamba tribe was ransacked and some of the boy-children scattered in opposite directions after they had successfully crossed a river with the aid of a crocodile. While one took towards the west (most probably present day upper west), the other ran towards the east (most probably towards present eastern corridor), farther away from the Bimnaab former settlement around present day Binnaba (Barker, 1986, Tonlaar, 2012, Kpeebe, 2010).

But prior to the attack, then on the opposite bank of the river, Kunakib (the great grandfather) swore an oath that: "never will his descendants kill nor eat the flesh of a crocodile". He used his head mask as a symbol of the scales of the reptile. He recited incantations and collected soil from the spot at the river bank into the mask and formed it into a medium of worship and supplication. He made the sons (Buik, Sakinpauk, to taste the soil from the mask as a symbol of obedience, loyalty and continuity of the oath. But Sakinpauk alone declined the orders. In spite of the fact that the children scattered, recent documentaries by Rattray related to this story show that the other two up-held the oath wherever they settled.

One school of thought tells that during their attempt to escape from the raiders, Sakinpauk who had been a very inquisitive child from infancy was always challenging his father. Apart from his misconduct that led the raiders to discover their hideouts which resulted in the attack, he vowed to eat the crocodile. So, their father [Kunagib] alienated him to a far distance towards a big river which is presently known as the White Volta. Dickson and Benneh in 'Geography for Ghana'. The account given by Nawaung-Laar (1988) says that the great grandfather, however, did not disown him but he ran away and settled at a nearby river where he married and his lineage became the Puli-teeb (the Puli Clan). The adolescent boys were very brave and could easily be identified, so, to save him was to travel to an unknown destination.

The great grandfather kept saying that some of his dear sons had been displaced and had never been found till his death. It appears the one who took refuge in the west did not forget his cultural identity and did not desecrate the taboo forbidding crocodile as meat. What would have re-united Biuk with his brothers was to be a return hunting expedition towards the North. But this did not happen due to old age and the turbulence created by the Colonial masters who had also started fighting to colonize the people in the northern territories.

The German forces in search of strongmen to help fight for their share of Africa during the scramble for Africa, compelled one of his renowned sons called Targong to move to present day Gbankoon (Gbankoni). His children also

scattered and settled at Gberuk, Najong, Balalong, Namunjuak and Bombil. He made a promise to the shrine on account of getting a wife; he would dedicate all his material and human wealth on earth to it. He had heard of a migrant Hausa family who traded in salt with many girl children; so he moved and settled at a new site near a major trade route that was leading merchants to Daapaoung (Dapango) and to Gambaak (Gambaga) down to Yaan (Yendi) in order for them to transit. Unfortunately, the Muslim religion did not permit him to win the heart of the Hausa ladies.

Juxtaposing what Rattray explains in his 'Tribes of Ashanti Hinterland' that the crocodile clansmen found in Lawra claim to have originally come from Tapara (Tampara in Bimoba language refers to the tribal mark) in the French Territory but are now at Pieng and Sobele in present day Sissala East District of the Upper West Region, one would draw the conclusion that there is a percentage of connection between the two cultures. These revelations give us room to deduce that the descendants of the lost sons found their way and assimilated into the Dagaaba and Sissala tribes where they populated the lineages to become the Di-kpielle/Nayeli clan in the present day Upper West Region. Their totem is evidently shown in Rattray (1932p.480) in a photograph below.



Figure2: A Crocodile and Adi-Kpielle Clanswoman

Source: Rattray, 1932. Figure133

2.3.2. The Contact of Ngadong with the Komba (Konkombas)

It took a few years before he married again. His search for a wife from the Hausa salt traders did not yield any fruits so he migrated again several hundreds of miles southwards and settled near a konkomba community where he called Naboos-Santaann within present day Ghana. The community was a popular path which wild cattle plied to a water source after grazing. There was good catch from the hunting and he always shared with the neighbouring settlers. He carved a large wooden bench associated with the crocodile and carried it along with him and continued worshiping it as a totem.

Due to his generosity in sharing his abundant bush meat, he was offered a wife from the konkomba tribe (Japenn Kombat, 2017). He populated after a few years and thought of relocating due to his hunting career. This time, he did not move further southwards because konkomba people were already there occupying the vast land. So, he left with some of the children and settled about 40 kilometres away at Yinyeuk. He drilled a well along the river bank at 'maluk ni' and planted a Sommuuk to keep the well watery and also harvested the stalks for use in fixing arrow heads. Sommuuk is a grass species that produce a long strong accurate straw, suitable for fixing arrow heads for hunting purposes.

Again, we heard this oral history during the biennial seasonal sacrifice to the wooden carved Crocodile-Bench shrine since childhood until we read it in secondary sources to confirm it; and this research necessitated the interview with key and seasoned local statesmen of over 90 years. So, the account by Dakabsuk in 1999 and repeated at a long narration session with Chamba Japenn Kombat (2017) was that, the founder of the Ngadong clan left Pusik, now called Yinyiɔk or Yunyoo (in Mampruli), and settled at present day Bunbuna where he again planted his sonmuuk. It was at this place that he carved a Big Bench to symbolize the totemic animal – the Crocodile, which he carried along. This Bench (Bauŋ) though used as a seat, became the shrine of the ancestral Crocodile Totemic abode. He significantly revealed that the bench had a 'DNA' covenant with a lineage of the Komba ethnic group from which he made a son during his contact with them, but could not marry the woman.

Oral history from the elderly natives of the Ngadong tells that it was that child who became adult, married and his populated descendants became the families of Akaa, Jampakir and Bangoub of Bunbana, and also Nambaung of Kaulik all in the newly carved out Yunyoo District of the Northern region of Ghana (see Barker, 1986). All these lineages were in close contact with the Ngadong clan and made several attempts to carry the bench back with the belief that they were entitled to the custody of the Totemic stool (bench). Unfortunately, they had never succeeded in taking it away. They finally gave up the struggle at the time Gunguann Jarik was heading the family as the Chief Priest around the 1920s. They were advised to continue to uphold the totem and also attend the biennial sacrifice in order to maintain the family ties. Other close relatives who got assimilated into the main stream Konkombas the Komkutiib Clan and satellite lineages currently living further southwards at Konkonzoli in the Saboba District also recognize the crocodile as their Totem. The totemic Bench shown in the figure below and the axe that he used in carving the bench, which are both tourist attractions aside being a

shrine, are currently in the custody of the Fuling-Kong family lineage at Najong No.2, kept in the Shrine gallery at Kangman Sakab's house.



Figure 3: The Totemic Bench of Ngadong
Source: Duut' 2018, Figure 12

2.4. Historical Account of the Sissala People

The account by Gia Bahalaree, a 78-year old man, and the only surviving founding settlers of Pieng was that their great grandfather first settled in Kassena-Po in today's Burkina Faso. From there, he moved further westwards and transited at its current location. As they populated, the lineages relocated to other fertile lands since they were predominantly farmers. That is how come they founded the Bujang, Pieng and Nabugbelle communities all in the Sissala East District.

To get valid and reliable facts about the history, another native of the Nabugbelle extraction, Dubie Bawie Bukari, a 91-year old (by estimate) offered very significant information in addition regarding their religious affiliation. He outlined that the family in which their great grandfather got himself affiliated for protection against invaders practised Islam and also engaged in Islamic merchandise. So, he eventually practised the Islamic religion throughout the exodus up to this current generation. His conclusion was that in spite of the adaptation of the Islamic religion, the great grandfather kept to forbid the crocodile as a binding totem which has never been desecrated by them up to date (Sarpong (2002).

2.5. Historical Account of Dagaaba Language

Baker (1986) cites authorities listed below that the Upper West Region is ethno linguistically diverse according to sources, with at least eight languages spoken in the region surveyed (Cardinal 1925: Rattray (1932), Barker 1984: Kropp-Dakubu 1989). The diversity presumably reflects the acephalous social structure characteristic of many people of the region. Lentz (1998, 2000) has written extensively on changing ethnicity among the Dagaaba people and neighbouring groups. Other materials can be found in Kumbour (2002), Dipala (2001), Taabazuing & Siekpe (2001), and Alenuma (2002).

Boadi (1994) points to the fact that the etymology of a language due to proximity is eminent. Also, languages, according to their geographical areas, are said to have different varieties of dialects and lineages probably due to migration for greener pastures or for asylum seeking. What this means is that proximity to the nearest economically and or politically more dominant language will turn to have impact on the emerging dialect being spoken by the lineage in the diaspora. The language then continues to suffer more adulteration as a typical consequence of the migration isolation and natural barriers such as mountains, lakes and big rivers. Again, as noted by linguistic authorities, language is not static but subject to constant change, a situation where distance and the lack of access to frequent transportation as in the case of the Di-kpielle/Nayeli clan, resulted in their dialect being metamorphosed into a full language (Hall E., 1983). The speeches of the contemporaries are equally bound to differ from that of their great grandparents. The name similarities in all, except the Sissala stock and the ancestral routings mentioned in Bimoba oral history call for this research to establish the substantial relations among the four (4) ethnic clans.

2.6. Popular Culture of Marriages and Naming Ceremonies

Another area of the investigation was marriage and the mode naming ceremonies. Sarpong (1977), in "Girls' Nubility Rites in Ashanti" opines that the rite is an induction session of the inductee to be joined to a partner for procreation. He again noted that one of the key principles of a lineal society is the principle of exogamy. That is a situation where one gets married to another individual outside one's own clan. All the clans under investigation were practising exogamy. Religiously, only the Sissala people among the whole lot of ethnic groups were believed to largely practise the Islamic system of marriage. The other tribes practised Christian marriages alongside the traditional system. There were no cases of incestuous marriages among the ethnic groups (Sarpong, 2002). Outdoor or naming ceremony is a worldwide rite of passage that is essential in every human society. It is an occasion that is welcomed by the immediate and extended spiritual forces of life that oversee the wellbeing of that family and society as a whole in the physical world (Sarpong, 2002). Rattray also similarly connects the Dagaaba [Di-kpielle and Nayeli] clans with the Bimoba people in general, an assertion confirmed by Barker when he says that when a baby is born, especially shortly after the death of a family member, the soothsayer consults the oracles for direction as to which ancestor is 'annexing' the newly born. In such a case, the re-incentive instrument is cast to insinuate the outcome of the category of name (Rattray, 1932).

Compared to the Sissala people, no similarities were found, largely because their way of life has greatly been influenced by the Islamic religion. So, all those rites of passage and religious names have mostly drifted towards the Arabic style. This is where names related to death and re-incarnation in Dagaaba culture had names such as Wadekuu, Kuupol, Kuunyal, Polkuun and Kuutieri given to the children (Kpreebi, 1992, Nukunya, 1992). Similar to nearly-same names are given among the Bimoba people such as Yaan, Kuun-yal, Kuugbenn, Gbarragboo, Ting-gbenn, Pol-kuun, Kuun-pol, Kaat-gbenn.

On the flip side, when a baby is born to a male parent who had gone through the erstwhile Bimoba 'Bush School' system and acquired names like Duut, Konlan, Laar, Kombat, among others, the baby is given a succession-name which in English is referred to as Junior (Jnr). So, Duut goes with Duut junior (Jnr – Bik) such as Duubik, konlanbik, kombat-bik and the like. This was a way to keep the trend of immortalization of the departed family members (Duut, 2019). None of the analogous clans had ever practised the indigenous Bimoba 'Bush School' system.

2.7. Tribal Mark Similarities with Someclans of Bimoba, and Nanchala / Yibigan Clans of Sisaala

Fuzzy (1981) classifies Bimoba people who kept to tribal markings into two (2) groupings. That is the "Bem" and the "Dagbam". The explanation here is that, the "Bem" are the clans that make three (3) vertical marks along the ear. The "Dagbam" on the other hand are those clans that make three (3) horizontal marks close to the mouth. The focus of this research however is delimited to the "Dagbam" Clans whose tribal marks seem to connect with that of the Sissala people.

Apart from the extensive historical documentations, the approach that was used to articulate the possible connection between sections of Sissala and Bimoba was to use the tribal marks. Max Assimeng (1981), discussed the social structure of Ghana in 1981 and noted that ethnic groups once used such markings to identify one another in times lost. He added that tribal marks aided in re-uniting families who had been evacuated from disaster zones for safety. He described some of the scratches as beautiful short horizontal marks along the cheeks. He notes, however that others make multiple vertical scratches all over the cheeks and across the forehead thereby destroying the facial smoothness of the individual. He speculated that the lives of some infants might have been lost through excessive bleeding from the multiple cuts.

3. Approach to Finding Common Linkages among the Ethnic Groups

A recap of the unlisted questions guided the entire investigation and the data obtained were analysed in the following tables and diagram.

- What language elements connect the groups?
- What is the totem of each ethnic group (clan)?
- How did the various ethnic groups settle at their present locations?
- When and where did some historic events relating to the ethnic groups take place?
- Which common identical markings can be found among the people?

Description of Similarities							
		A. Totem Crocodile bench	B. Tribal Marks	C. Dialect Spoken & Common words	D. Names Phonology	E. Religious adaptation/ affiliation	F. Other practices (Traditional, Christian/ Islam) Marriage, Funeral, Birth and Naming ceremonies
1	Bimoba						
a	Ngadong	Crocodile	Same	Same	Np	Christian	Tra-Christian
b	Puli,	--	Same	Same	Np	Christian	Tra-Christian
c	Dikperu,	--	Same	Same	Np	Christian	Tra-Christian
d	Luook,	--	Same	Same	Np	Christian	Tra-Christian
e	Ngaauk,	--	Same	Same	Np	Christian	Tra-Christian
f	Japaak	--	Same	Same	Np	Christian	Tra-Christian
g	Nakuuk	--	Same	Same	Np	Christian	Tra-Christian
2	Dagaaba						
a	Di-kpielle	Crocodile	--	Slightly Similar	Np	Christian	Tra-Christian
b	Nayeli	Crocodile	--	Slightly Similar	Np	Christian	Tra-Christian
3	Sissala	Crocodile					
a	Nanchala	Crocodile	Same	--	--	--	Tra-Islamic
b	Yibigan	Crocodile	Same	--	--	--	Tra-Islamic
4	Konkomba						
a	Bekwom	Crocodile	--	Slightly similar	--	Christian	Tra-Christian
b	Komkutiib			Slightly similar			

Table 1: A Table Showing Common Traits among the Ethnic Groups under Discussion

To be able to understand the findings on the Table let's take note of the key:

- Bimoba are represented by the figure '1'. So, 1a, b, c, d, e & f are the clans under '1'
- Dagaaba are represented by the figure '2'. So, 2a & 2b are the clans under '2'
- Sissala are represented by the figure '3'. So, 3a & b are the clans under '3'
- Konkomba are represented by the figure '4'. So 4a & b are the clans under '4'
- Crocodile totem is represented by the letter 'A'
- Also note that:
- Tribal marks is represented by the letter 'B'
- Dialect/Common words is represented by the letter 'C'
- Names Phonology is represented by the letter 'D'
- Religious affiliation is represented by the letter 'E'
- Other practices is represented by the letter 'F'

3.1. Name Similarities in Dagaare (Dagaaba Language) and Their Meanings in (Muar) Bimoba Language

Dagaare	Bimoba	Bimoba to English	Dagaare	Bimoba	Bimoba to English
Wadeku	Wadiikuun,	To overpower death.	kuupol	Kuunpol,	death is closed
Polkuun	Polkuun,	Seal death.	Kuutieru	Kuuntiaru	death remembrance
Tengviel	Tingfial,	Earth seizes.	Danikuu	Danikuun	injuries death
Naabuolo	Naanbolu	a kind of royalty	Nanglakong	Nanglakong	hatred befalls an initiate
Lewaa	Liwaa	if it follows you	Bangfudaar	Bangfodaar	ring survives by day
KankpeyEng	Kankpenyan	won't return empty	Kpikaakpi	Kpikaakpi	kill in turns
Kooburo	Baburo	Soothsayer	Kodaah	Kudaan	funeral pito
PooDaan	Poodaan	Pito-woman			

Table 2: Table Showing Similarities in Names in Both Clans with Meanings in Bimoba Language

3.2. Sentences/Words in Konkomba Language and Their Meanings in Bimoba Language

In Konkomba	in Bimoba	English
A cha laa	A sa lia?	Where are you going?
Biyia la	Bi yia be?	What is your name?
Mma	Nna	Mother
Mbial	Mba	Father
Li tan	ting	Ground
Li kuul	Kuul	Hoe
Mnyum	Nyun	Water
Unikpel	Nikpel	Elder

Table 3: Table Showing Similarities in Kpinkanl and Muar

Due to the proximity of the two ethnic groups, all these similarities are prominent with the Konkomba who speak a slightly twisted dialect as the Bimoba unlike the slight difference in word morphology with that of the distant Dagaaba.

3.3. Names in Muar (Bimoba Language) Which Have Been Corrupted by Anglicization.

Usual name	Autonym in Muar
Muar	Moor
Nakpanduri	Nakpandoor
Bunkpurugu	Bunkperuk
Kambagu	Kambaauk
Najong	Naajoung
Jilig	Jiilik
Konlan	Konlaan
Laary	Laari
Laary	Laar

Table 4: A Table Showing the Autonyms of a Few Bimoba Names

3.4. Comparison of Tribal Marks (Bimoba and Sissala)



Figure 4: Three-Quarter View of Typical Tribal Marks of a Bimoba and a Sissala

The Bimoba people make an additional mark on the right cheek while the Sissala people do not. (Source: researchers' field work' 2018)



Figure 5: Typical Tribal Marks of Sissala and Bimoba Have an Additional Mark on the Left Cheek
Source: Researchers' Field Work' 2018



Figure 6: Three-Quarter View of a Typical Sissala and a Bimoba
Both Left Cheeks Have The Same Number of Scratches

Despite that the practice of tribal markings has become very unpopular among contemporary Bimoba and its analogous tribes, some cultures still do it to keep track of their identity. The figure below shows typical examples.

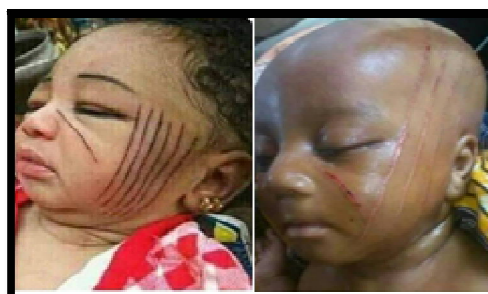


Figure 7: Tribal Marks Still In Practice Among Some Ethnic Groups
Sources: Courtesy Of Social Media, 2018

5. Findings

5.1. Religious Characteristics

Table 1 column 'F' shows the foreign religious affiliations of the ethnic groups. According to Peter Barker's (1986) preliminary report on the "Peoples, Languages, and Religion in Northern Ghana", on religious patronage in Northern Ghana, the Dagaaba people accepted Christianity in the 19th century and have since remained largely with the Catholic doctrine. Another study on the influence of Christian religion by Duut, (2019) revealed that the socio-cultural practices of Dagaaba had been admirably fused into the Catholic doctrine to the extent that they still hold on to their totems and traditional names.

Bimoba and Konkomba from Table '1' seem to have widely embraced Christian religion as against Islamic religion. In Barker's report, it was stated that while Bimobawere introduced to Christianity in 1949, Konkombas had theirs in the 1960s. The analogous ethnic groups have remained loyal to Christianity. Also, about the Sissala people, at the time of this research, there were no Church buildings at the communities for the study – an indication that the Christian religion was very negligibly practised among them. As at 1986, the ratio of Traditional, Muslim and Christian religions was in a ratio of 73:18+:5+ respectively. The trend of religious practice among Sissalas is therefore said to be largely drifted towards Islam as shown in the table above.

5.2. Tribal Marks.

From the field study, among the four ethnic groups, only Sissalas and the Bimobas were found to have tribal markings. The ethnic marks of some Bimoba clans including the Ngadong clan are three (3) small incised lines on both left and right sides of the mouth, for both sexes. In the case of a male, a single scratch is made extending from the left side of the nose towards the lower cheek. This can be found among the Isala (Sisala)-Yibigian, Nabugbelle and other lineage people mentioned in Rattray's (1932), 'The Tribes of Ashanti Hinterland'. The images below indicate a typical Nanchalla lineage which has now assimilated into the Sissala ethnic stock and a typical native of the Ngadong clan also in the Bimoba ethnic stock.

The questionable difference in the tribal marking between Bimoba and Sissala is the single short stroke that runs from the nose in both sexes which during the interview, Gia Bahalaree explained that the variations were to breed new generations to facilitate easy access to wives for procreation. The Bimoba people make three (3) marks at both cheeks just as the Sissala people. The Bimoba people again make one (1) on the left cheek of a male and on the right cheek of a female. The Sissalado not make that mark in both sexes. See figures 4 and 5 above for the details.

5.3. Organ Gram of Similarities

Diagram presenting the cultural similarities of the ethnic groups. The Ngadong clan in the diagrams is the centre of all the ethnic clans with cultural relation.

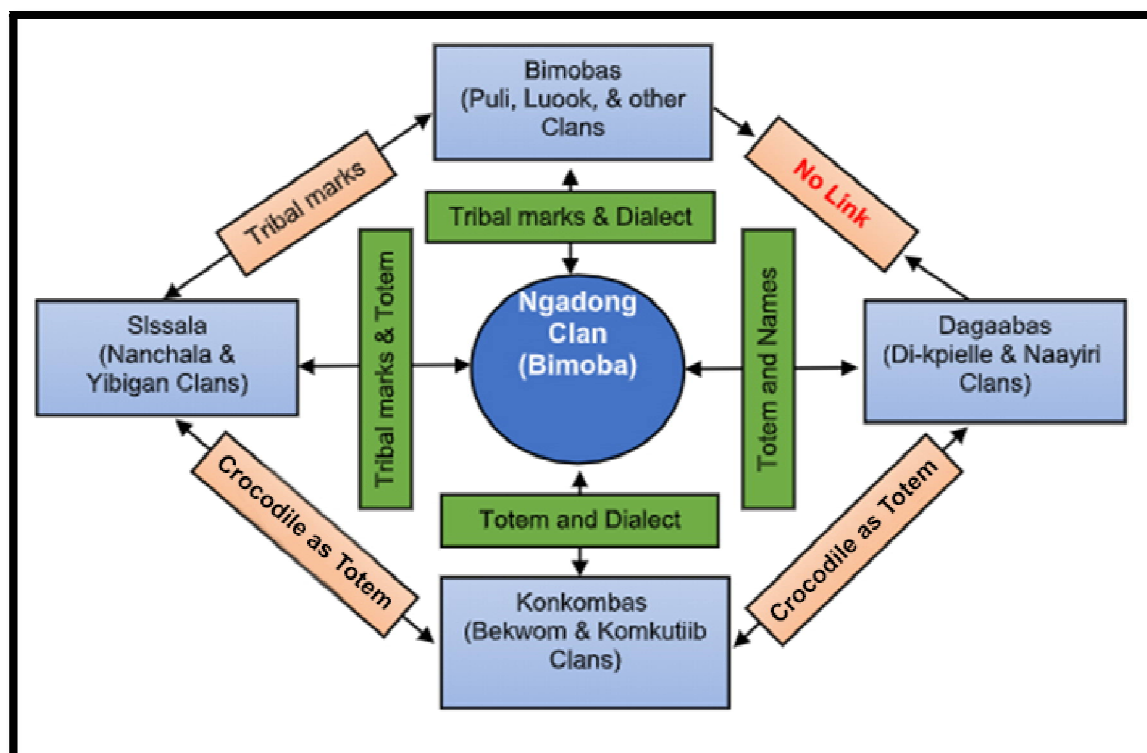


Figure 8: A Diagram Showing How the Clans Are Related to One Another

Source: Researchers' Desk 2019

6. Summary of Findings

- One significant find was the association of Tribal Marks and the Crocodile as a Totem of the Ngadong clan of the Bimoba people and the tribal marks and crocodile of the Sissala people which in both cases are still being upheld. (1a intersects with 3a & 3b at 'A') and (intersects with 3a & 3b at 'B')
- The study established that Tribal Marks connect all Bimoba listed in the Table with Sissala also in the Table, to a common route. (1a, b, c, d, e, f, g intersect with 3a & 3b at 'B'). There was also religious relationship between all Bimoba and Dagaaba (1a, b, c, d, e, f, g relates with 2a & b at 'F')
- It was found that, there were historical connections with a section of the Kombas (Konkomba), not only in terms of the crocodile totem but also through the shrine. But they were not found to have continued with tribal marks as in the case of Sissala. (1a intersect with 4a & b at 'A')
- The study discovered that, notwithstanding the long distance between the two cultures on the Ghana map, the phonology of names of Dagaaba was very closely related to that of Bimoba in general and sections of Konkomba but not Sissala, despite that they are geographically close. (1a, b, c, d, e, f & g intersect with 2a & 2b and also 4a & 4b at 'C')
- Apart from the Crocodile Totem, there was no other form of linkage between the Nanchala and Yibigan Sissala and the Di-kpielle/Nayeli Dagaaba despite that they are geographically close. (2a, b intersect with 3a, & 3b as well as 4a & b at 'A')
- During the mapping of Bimoba tribal marks with other ethnic groups in Table 1 above, there was also no trace of the tribal markings on the Di-kpielle/Nayeli Dagaaba and Konkombas as was found with the Nanchala and Yibigan of Sissala. The photographic evidence above authenticates that finding regarding Bimoba and Sissala people.
- Of the four (4) ethnic groups, the only odd language was the Sissali. It did not have any common phrase or word phonology with any of the others.
- Of the four tribes also, Konkomba and Dagaaba did not have tribal marks similar to Bimoba and the Sissala.
- Of all the ethnic groups, Only Sissalas were largely practising Islamic religion. The rest practiced Christianity.

7. Conclusion

Revisiting the objectives of finding symptoms of genealogical ties, historical connections, circumstances to the distant separation of the acephalous groups and the sacredness of the totems to advocate the re-union of some lineages and clans, it is obvious to conclude that the study was successful since all the objectives were met. In spite of the fact that there may be other schools of thought that may offer slight variance in the backgrounds to the institution of the totems, there are close ties of connections in the cultures and that must be upheld for posterity to re-discover one another as a family.

The significant outcomes arising from tribal marks, totems and historical articulations supported by Rattrays and other anthropological assertions offer us a clue to conclude that the Konkombas among Konkomba in Northern Region, the Di-kpielle/Nayeli clans in the Lawra area of Dagaaba, Yibigan and Nanchalla clans at Nabugbelle, Bujang and Pieng communities all in the Sissala District who forbid the crocodile just like the Ngadong Bimoba people are related. Rattray captures these historic facts among others, one of the totems Eba (crocodile) and explains that a clan's totem is known as "kyirun", (in Sissala language) and "chirun" as pronounced and spelt in Bimoba language which also means "haunt" (to be haunted by a spirit).

8. Recommendations

The study recommends that taking a clue from the Ashanti people who embarked on exchange programmes with others in the diaspora who were found to have migrated and settled in the Northern Volta region and others in Brazil and the Seychelles Island, it would be prudent to institute a home coming summit in the form of periodic exchange pilgrimages among the Clans concerned.

Also, bearing in mind the long period of disconnection, several generations have evolved with genetically improved immune systems and DNAs; as it stands now, intermarriages have undisputedly largely taken place across the clans under discussion (subject to another study) without any challenges and should therefore continue and be encouraged.

It is passionately recommended for the clans involved to design comprehensive historic exchange programmes to dramatize the exodus of their respective factions to their current places of settlement with the motive of renewing bloody ties to foster unity. These programmes could be biennial and rotational among them. As an indigene among the group, I would offer my ideas as to how the programme design and implementation could become a reality.

There is the need to also thoroughly investigate the unconfirmed (not captured by the earlier anthropologists) history of two (2) other clans among: Kassena (at Paga) and Frafras at Bongo Soe who also have a very serious covenant with the crocodile and integrate them into the 'Crocodile Totem family'. Some Kassena clans believe the crocodile led their ancestor to a source of water and saved his life. Since then, they made it their taboo. The two communities are believed to be related.

It is also recommended for further study the relevance of tribal marks in modern time, stoppage among some cultures and continuity among other ethnic groups as we see in figure 7 above.

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