

THE GOLD COAST

A Survey of the Gold Coast and
British Togoland, 1919-1946

By F. M. BOURRET

\$4.00

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Almost overnight the Gold Coast, on the great Western bulge of the black continent, was recognized as strategically and economically important to the Allies in World War II. The region has had a fascinating history from the very beginning—it is told here with particular emphasis on the period from post-World War I to post-World War II.

At present there is a tendency in most colonies for political progress to outstrip economic and social development. A lack of equilibrium, brought on by overambitious political plans, often results. This problem as it applies to the Gold Coast is studied in some detail in this book.

Another timely problem dealt with in these pages is the question of how much of indigenous civilization and culture should be preserved and to what degree European attitudes should be encouraged.

At the present time colonial policies in general are subject to much controversy and misunderstanding. A case study such as this, of an individual colony where the day-by-day working out of policy can be seen in detail, is more helpful than a generalized treatment for a clearer understanding of these problems.

This is the first general survey of one of the richest and most promising of all the African colonies. The manuscript was prepared at the Hoover Library at Stanford University, which has one of the finest collections of Gold Coast documents in the United States. The author is currently with the history department at San Francisco College for Women.

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and British Togoland*

1919-1946

By

F. M. BOURRET

*History Department
San Francisco College for Women*

1949

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FOREWORD

The Gold Coast has been in contact with Europe since the beginning of modern times, but modern times in the Gold Coast began only a few generations ago.

A decade before his discovery of America Columbus visited the rocky surf-swept Gold Coast. He helped adventurous Portuguese who built the grim fortress of São Gorge. Other fortresses rose along the Guinea coast to give shelter to traders of half a dozen nations who came to these shores for gold, ivory, and pepper. Later the need for labor in the West Indian and American colonies made trade in human beings more profitable than the luxury goods of the earlier days. For two centuries the slave trade flourished until, in the nineteenth century, the conscience of the Western world decisively aided by changing economic interests first condemned, then outlawed, and finally ended this shameful traffic.

The Gold Coast did not lost contact with the outside world, for it possessed natural resources suited to the requirements of the new industries and the expanded trade of the power age. The demand for palm oil, for example, greatly increased, and the Gold Coast could produce it in large quantities. The most spectacular growth was in the cocoa industry. In 1891 the Gold Coast exported 80 pounds of cocoa; forty years later the export was 300,000 tons.

There has always been a market for gold which, as its name suggests, the Gold Coast possesses. New industrial processes have created a market for industrial diamonds, manganese, and bauxite, which are also found in this territory.

From the first trading ventures down to the beginning of the nineteenth century, Europeans treated the Gold Coast as they treated so many other outlandish places, as a region where profits could be made by exchanging European manufactured goods for more valuable human and natural materials. Traders of several nations engaged in this trade without fighting about sovereignty over the area. Gradually, however, the British established their ascendancy and assumed responsibility for regulating relations between Europeans and Africans.

Since 1874 when Great Britain formally annexed the Gold Coast

as a colony, educational and political institutions have developed in the rhythm of such developments in the empire. In recent years, and especially in the period covered by this monograph, the tempo of development has been tremendously increased.

The Gold Coast has become, first economically, and later politically, a part of the world community. The economic well-being of its people has been linked to the world market and their prosperity depends on the economic health of Western Europe and America. The security of the Gold Coast people is no longer a hazard of war between the Ashanti and Fanti tribes or between Africans and British. The security of the Gold Coast depends, as World War II demonstrated, on peace between Germans and British, Russians and Americans, Japanese and Chinese.

With this dependence on the world community for well-being and security, there has also developed a demand for the right of participation in that community, not as a second-class member, or as the current usage has it, as a nonself-governing territory, but as a self-governing, full-fledged member of the community of nations.

The transition of regions like the Gold Coast—and there are many—from colonial status to independence and self-government, at a time when the security of all regions depends more and more on the recognition of interdependence and the surrender of full sovereignty, is one of the most important and interesting problems of these times.

Dr. Bourret has told with great clarity and sympathy the story of how one nonself-governing territory has moved from dependency toward self-government under the tutelage of the government that has had the most experience in guiding this historical process. The setbacks and the achievements of British imperial policy since World War I are reflected in the story of one of the smaller but most interesting members of the empire. This story is a contribution to our understanding of one of the most significant and complex issues of our generation.

HAROLD H. FISHER

PREFACE

The world's present struggle to achieve a pattern of peace has brought the problem of dependent peoples to the forefront. Many of the nonself-governing areas are in Africa where rapid economic and political changes are drawing the continent, at an ever increasing tempo, into the full current of world activity. The recognition of this development supports the need for a scientific study of those factors which are determining the present progress, not only of Africa as a whole, but of each separate division with its own characteristics and problems. A case study of an individual colony where the day-by-day working out of policy can be seen in detail is often more helpful than theoretical discussions, and avoids the dangers of sweeping generalizations. This book is an attempt to provide such a survey of the Gold Coast. The Dependency is a comparatively small area with only four million inhabitants, but the Gold Coast Africans are an intelligent people who are facing with vigor the basic problem of adjustment to modern conditions. Their territory is one of the richest and most promising of West Africa and it is not unlikely that they will exercise much influence in the future development of the continent.

With the end in view of providing a general picture of recent Gold Coast history, this study traces the political, economic, and social development of the Dependency during the last quarter-century. While the years 1919-1946 mark a definite period of achievement culminating in the 1946 constitution, it has seemed wise, in several instances, to carry the narrative beyond the latter date by including a brief discussion of the 1947 Togoland petition to the United Nations and of the 1948 disturbances in the Gold Coast Colony. As for territorial scope, the survey considers the Gold Coast Colony proper, and in less detail Ashanti, the protectorate of the Northern Territories and the trusteeship of British Togoland, since all four divisions are under the administrative authority of the Gold Coast governor.

The primary sources on which the work is based are the publications of the Gold Coast and British governments and the debates of the Gold Coast Legislative Council. Use has also been made of Gold

Coast newspapers and of the reports of various African societies dedicated to the further development of the country.

I was fortunate in having the manuscript read by several authorities who have had long experience in Gold Coast affairs, either in official capacity or in African political groups. I am most grateful for their criticisms and suggestions and regret that I cannot express my appreciation in a more specific manner.

Throughout the planning and writing of this survey, I have had the encouraging help of Professor Carl Fremont Brand of Stanford University. Professor Harold Fisher, chairman of the Hoover Institute and Library, has read parts of the manuscript and I am indebted to him for the constructive criticism which he has generously given. I also wish to acknowledge the kind assistance of Professor William Bascom of Northwestern University.

The Hoover Library has an excellent collection of Gold Coast documents and, with few exceptions, the materials quoted are from this source. Miss Nina Almond, librarian and consultant in research of this institute, has spared no time or effort to obtain needed materials and to help with bibliographical problems. It is a pleasure to acknowledge the courtesy and devotedness of the Hoover Library and Stanford Library staffs and especially of Mr. Philip McLean, Mrs. Ruth R. Perry, and Miss Minna Stillman. In conclusion, I wish to mention my indebtedness to Mr. Patrick Hulede of Achimota Teacher-Training College in the Gold Coast, whose untiring interest in searching out manuscript material and in collecting African publications has been invaluable to me.

F. M. B.

MENLO PARK, CALIFORNIA
March 25, 1949

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