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Wazi Apoh, *Revelations of Domination and Silence: Unearthing the Buried Past of the Akpini, Akan, Germans and British at Kpando*, Ghana. Accra: Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2019. 362 pp. ISBN 9789988883041. Paperback: £40.00.

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Without mincing words, Wazi Apoh's "Revelations of Dominance and Silence" is a gift to the academic community and both anthropologists and historians could lay equal claim to it. The book's uniqueness and salience are not in the excellent account of British and German imperial domination and colonial experiences or in the account of the and the people of Kpando. Its novelty is revealed as the author has masterfully employs a combination of oral account, archaeology, anthropology and history to arrive at a fulsome account of how the history of a marginalised people and their culture could be silenced in dominant narratives; a fact that emboldens the author to put forward a claim: "Of particular importance and considerable interest is that the book is probably the first to focus on different colonial systems in the same context and how they manifested themselves in the oral, historical and archaeological record" (p. xxii).

This classic autoethnography emerges from several years of the author's doctoral research in the Kpando area of the present-day Volta region of Ghana. Positioning himself as an insider, or more accurately a 'citizen anthropologist,' the author investigates the life and history of his own ancestors. The book draws heavily on oral, archaeological, historical and ethnographic approaches to data collection "to reveal very important aspects of the nature and course of the dual colonial experiences of the Kpando people" (p. xxi). Approaching the discussions from a bifurcated perspective, the author provides an in-depth, critical analysis and strong critique of the processes of imperialism and domination at two separate levels; the precolonial domination struggle between the Akpini and other groups of Akan origin (from the Asante kingdom) and that between the foreign colonial/imperial powers (Germans, British) and the indigenes of the Volta Basin.

Although the author uses a combination of different data collection approaches, he seems to give priority to archaeology over all others. Making reference to Chinua Achebe's famous proverb that "until the lions have their own historians, the history of the hunt will always glorify the hunter", the author's heavy reliance on archaeology to drive home his argument seems understandable and justifiable. As the author notes, data collected through "oral traditions and historical documents are subject to manipulation to suit a particular economic, social or political agenda, both in the past and in the present" (p. xxii). Being mindful of the now-accepted critique that history is always written from the winner's perspective and that historical sources could be highly biased in favour of dominant forces or ideology, the author relies extensively on archaeological excavations to reveal the silences and dominations that have characterised historical narratives of the local people of Kpando.

In chapter one, the author documents historical moments of local and foreign domination, imperialism, and resistance that once took place between the local people of Kpando (identified as the minority ethnic group) on the one hand, and the Asante, Akwamu, British and Germans on the other hand, from the seventeenth to twentieth centuries. The author also reveals the tensional and domineering moments that characterised Asante-Akwamu and German-British relationships. Through in-depth oral accounts and deep archaeological

excavations and discoveries, the author uncovers cases where history and culture have been repeatedly silenced, changing the history and culture of the dominated, less powerful and marginalised groups in the local space of Kpando and, more generally, the Volta Basin. Demonstrating scholarship through archaeological empiricism, the author shows how the history of early Akan migrants/settlers (Abanu) came to be silenced by the dominant Akpini (Ewe). In a similar vein, the book reveals how the history of the local people of Kpando have been distorted and silenced in Asante/Akwamu dominant narratives, while German colonial rule and domination (in terms of influence of education, architecture and other material culture forms) of the Kpando people have also silenced the history of the latter in discourses of colonialism and imperialism in Africa. In much the same way the author has used intensive archaeological techniques to unearth cases of silencing marginalised ethnic groups and their cultures. He has equally employed, with dexterity, archaeology as a novel tool to show how “the layer by layer ‘excavations’ of past encounters can lead to desilencing and revelations of such conscious and unconscious dominative practices as a way of giving them [minority and marginalised groups] agency and voice” (p. 2).

The author provides detailed revelations about the origin, geographical, vegetative, socio-economic and politico-cultural dynamics of Kpando in Chapter Two. Relying largely on archaeological discoveries (but also native oral accounts), the author deconstructs competing claims and debates about issues of settlement, autochthony and belonging in the Kpando traditional area. This chapter also examines the subjugation of the indigenous Akpini people by the warring Asante/Akwamu, who raided the Kpando area, captured slaves and imposed tribute payment on the indigenes.

The book elaborately engages with the theme of indigenous belief systems, religion and missionization of the Kpando people in Chapter Three. It documents an in-depth account of the local, indigenous religious beliefs and ritual practices of the people in the pre-colonial era before the arrival of Western Christianity in Kpando in the late nineteenth century. The missionaries’ aim was to overhaul the religious beliefs and practices of the ‘unenlightened’ local Ewes and make them to accept the canonized values of their civilizing mission. The missionaries sometimes engaged in open trade in the colonised spaces and were seen by locals to be partnering with colonial political agents to promote colonialism and European values. They nevertheless eventually succeeded in dislodging “the power of the indigenous priests and priestesses over rites of passage of young adults into adulthood when pupils began attending schools created by the missions” (p. 83).

Writing on dual colonial experiences, the author painstakingly takes the reader through the processes and dynamics of colonization in the German Togoland, the Volta Basin and the British/Western Togoland in Chapter Four and Chapter Five. The book discusses in detail the colonial administrative and governance structures and processes (as well as unjust policies relating to trade, slavery, etc.) in both German Togoland and British Gold Coast/Western Togoland. It also critically unpacks, with dispassion, the political agenda of the British and the sustained systematic pursuit of the union of British/Western Togoland with Ghana in Chapter Five.

Chapter Six is an amalgamation of the political encounters of both German and British colonial rule in the Kpando landscape. It examines how such colonial and imperial contact has impacted on the indigenous local (Akpini) institutions, resources and lifeways. While the German colonial government made efforts to enhance agricultural production and trade in Kpando, it, at times, interfered with and desecrated Akpini indigenous institutions such as chieftaincy. Such interference, the author argues, were partly “founded on German fears of uprisings and challenge to their political authority” and this “led to unpopular changes in chieftaincy institutions and orders of succession” in this traditional area (pp. 189). Here, the author notes with sincerity the ‘racist’ outlook of both the German and British colonial powers

and draws attention to segregation tendencies. Like the Germans, the British pursued a policy of segregation, effectively promoting and prioritising European/British values over local Akpini (or Ewe) values. This section of the book also discusses the origin of the idea/ideology about the creation of an independent Volta region/state, the persons and institutions that promoted this course and the reasons for the failure of this ambitious project (whose fate was determined by the 1956 plebiscite).

The author devotes Chapter Seven to the practical subtleties and nuances of field findings of archaeological excavations in the Kpando area and demonstrates deeply how archaeology could be used as a novel tool to expose or unearth the buried past and domination arising out of the combined dual colonization of the German-British hegemony. Excavating four main indigenous sites on the Kpando Todzi settlement, the author confronts his readers with incontrovertible archaeological fossil records and evidence that unmask the buried past and desilences existing historical narratives in order to assert the actual cultural position of the local indigenous Akpini in the context of European colonialism, imperialism and domination. As the author rightly suggests, excavated findings about the architectural designs of British/Germans officials are “seen as material culture of domination of colonials over indigenes” (p. 238).

Before unveiling his reflections on the dual German-British colonialism in the last chapter, the author engages with the subject of ‘post-mortem’ remembrance and rapprochement of the German government, scholars and civil society with ex-African colonies. The book examines the ongoing efforts being made by the German government (through the German Federal Foreign Office) and German scholars as well as civil society to ‘reconcile’ with ex-German colonies and to promote the decolonization of its cityscape and museums hosting colonial exhibits. The overriding aim for this rapprochement, the author contends, is “to desilence the discourse on the archaeology of German colonialism in Africa” (p. 240).

This book asserts its importance and novelty in academic scholarship of African studies by employing the often less explored archaeological, fossil or material excavation method “to reveal blurred boundaries [that] has implications for understanding the context of ‘hidden’ or silenced histories that are not always recounted in documents and oral accounts” (p. 238).

The book is extensively researched and densely referenced. The use of very plain and simple language makes the work accessible to the general reader. Throughout the book, the author makes good use of graphic images including pictures of important personalities, towns, colonial buildings, archaeological sites and excavated materials to reinforce the reader’s mental engagement and understanding of the issues being discussed. I however find it curious that an excellent anthropological book such as this failed to include list of acronyms (or abbreviations) or a glossary of unfamiliar local/foreign words. With extra vigilance, the minor typographical errors in the book (e.g. pages 281 and 285) could have been avoided. Despite these minor defects, I recommend the book highly for undergraduate and postgraduate students of African studies, anthropology, history, politics and international relations.

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