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## Kpando, Volta Region, Ghana. Archaeology and ›Shared Heritage‹ of German Colonialism in Former Togoland. Research in 2022 and 2023

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## KPANDO, VOLTA REGION, GHANA Archaeology and ›Shared Heritage‹ of German Colonialism in Former Togoland



Research in 2022 and 2023

### Commission for Archaeology of Non-European Cultures of the German Archaeological Institute

by Cornelia Kleinitz, Wazi Apoh, Ernest K. Fiador,  
Dietmar Kurapkat, Jörg Linstädter, Kathrin Loges,  
Ute Verstegen, Annika Zeitler



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**Team:** W. Apoh, E. Fiador, C. Hartl-Reiter, C. Kleinitz, D. Kurapkat, J. Linstädter, K. Loges, R. Tagoe, U. Verstegen, A. Zeitler.

*Ein Kooperationsprojekt zur Archäologie und zum ›gemeinsamen Erbe‹ des deutschen Kolonialismus in der ehemaligen Kolonie Togoland bringt Kapazitäten ghanaischer und deutscher Partner aus den Bereichen Archäologie, Geschichte, Ethnographie, Architektur/Historische Bauforschung und Vermessung/Kartographie zusammen. Das Projekt zielt darauf ab, das bauliche Erbe aus der deutschen Kolonialzeit in enger Abstimmung und Zusammenarbeit mit den lokalen Behörden und Gemeinden zu dokumentieren, zu erforschen, zu erhalten und zu präsentieren. Aufbauend auf den umfangreichen archäologischen Forschungen zur deutschen Missionierung und Kolonisierung Togolands, die Wazi Apoh samt Studierenden in den letzten 20 Jahren durchgeführt hat, konzentrieren sich die Projektpartner zunächst auf archivarische und baugeschichtliche Untersuchungen einschließlich Schadenserfassung und Restaurierungs-/Sanierungsplanungen sowie auf (GIS-)Kartierungen. In diesem Bericht werden die vorläufigen Ergebnisse der vorbereitenden Arbeiten im Jahr 2022 und einer ersten Feldkampagne Anfang 2023 in der Volta-Region Ghanas vorgestellt und mögliche Wege für weitere Arbeiten aufgezeigt.*

*A cooperative project focusing on the archaeology and ›shared heritage‹ of German colonialism in the former Togoland colony brings together capacities from Ghanaian and German partners in the fields of archaeology, history, ethnography, architecture/building archaeology and surveying/cartography. The project aims to document, research, preserve, and present built heritage from the German colonial period in close consultation and cooperation with local authorities and communities. Building on extensive archaeological research on German missionisation and colonisation of Togoland led by Wazi Apoh and students over the past 20 years, the project partners initially focus on archival and building archaeological research, including damage assessments and restoration/rehabilitation planning in addition to (GIS-) mapping. This report outlines preliminary results from preparatory research in 2022 and a first field season in the Volta Region of Ghana in early 2023, and it highlights possible avenues for further work.*

## Introduction

1 Under the auspices of the Commission for Archaeology of Non-European Cultures (KAAK) of the German Archaeological Institute (DAI), the project ›Archaeology and (shared) heritage of German colonialism: Materialities of colonisation, resistance and cultural entanglement on the African continent‹ was launched in 2020 by Cornelia Kleinitz and Jörg Linstädter [1]. It aims to contribute archaeological perspectives to research in other disciplines as well as to current public debates on the impact of German colonialism in Africa. Initially, the project was developed on the basis of a series of inquiries that had reached the DAI concerning the study and preservation of material remains of the German colonial past on the African continent. Since then, opportunities for scientific exchange and/or cooperation projects with partners from countries affected by German colonialism (i. e. [Ghana ↗](#), [Togo ↗](#), [Cameroon ↗](#), [Namibia ↗](#), [Tanzania ↗](#), [Rwanda ↗](#) and [Burundi ↗](#)) have been established. Within the framework of this ›umbrella project‹, joint research on the material ›shared heritage‹ of the German colonial period is facilitated, and questions are raised

concerning the preservation, presentation and future use of this often difficult heritage.

2 Since 2021, a new cooperation project focusing on the former German Togoland colony in what are today parts of the Volta Region and Oti Region of Ghana has been developed together with Wazi Apoh from the Department of Archaeology and Heritage Studies at the University of Ghana, where colonial period heritage has long been a focus of research (Fig. 1). The project was joined in 2022 by colleagues from the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Applied Sciences (Ostbayerische Technische Hochschule) Regensburg and the chair of Christian Archaeology at Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg.

3 Within our joint project, the ›Volta-German Shared Colonial Heritage Project‹, we bring together capacities from Ghanaian and German partners in the fields of archaeology, history, architecture/building archaeology and surveying/cartography. Building on extensive archaeological, archival and ethnographic research led by Wazi Apoh over the past 20 years [2], the project partners initially focus on archival research, building archaeological research, including damage assessments and restoration/rehabilitation planning, as well as GIS-mapping. The project aims to document, research, preserve, and present built heritage from the German colonial period in close consultation and cooperation with local authorities and communities. This report outlines preliminary results from preparatory research in 2022 and a first field season in the Volta Region in early 2023, and it highlights possible avenues for further work.

## Historical Background

4 The German Togoland colony (1884–1914) once included parts of what are today the Volta, Oti, Northern, North East and Upper East Regions of Ghana. Already in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, Christian missionaries arrived in what was to become Togoland, founding mission stations and transforming the religious landscape. They were followed by merchants setting up trading stations. Competing with British and French interests, treaties in the name of the German emperor were signed with local authorities in 1884. In 1885,



1 Ghana and Togo with the borders of the former Togoland colony superimposed.  
(Map: Christian Hartl-Reiter)

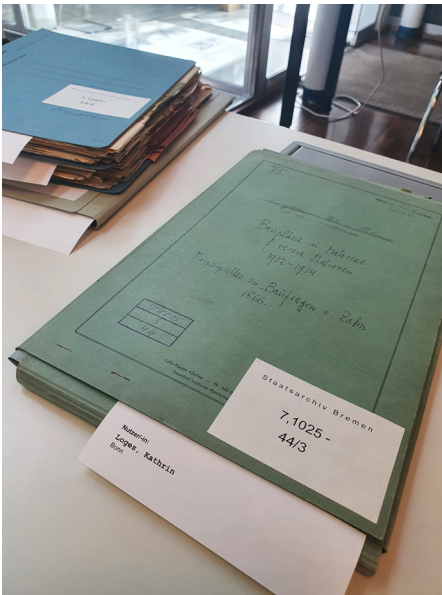
Togoland was recognised as a German colony by other Western powers. Soon after the formal establishment of the Togoland colony, Lome became seat of the colonial government. First, along the coastal region and subsequently, in the interior of the colony, a web of new administrative seats was established. Infrastructure projects were launched together with a plantation economy using forced labour. Christian missionisation was expanded, and numerous military expeditions were undertaken, eventually transforming Togoland into a colonial space of coercion.

- 5 During the 1890s, the German colonial administration tried to implement the concept of ›effective occupation‹. From a German perspective, and compared to Germany's other colonial projects, Togoland was referred to as a ›model colony‹ (Musterkolonie). It remained Germany's sole economically viable colony, as high taxes imposed on the population of the colony evened out the otherwise notoriously bad financial situation of the colonial enterprise. With the beginning of World War I, German colonial rule ended. Togoland was split up between Great Britain and France and, after the end of the war, put under the oversight of the League of Nations. British Togoland (today Volta, Oti, and parts of Northern, North East and Upper East Regions of Ghana) voted in a plebiscite in 1956 to be in union with Gold Coast and, in 1957, became part of the independent nation of Ghana [3].

### Archival Research

- 6 Archival records documenting the process of German colonisation in what became the Togoland colony are scattered across archives in Ghana, Togo and Germany. The two largest collections of records of the colonial government of German Togoland are situated in the Archives Nationales du Togo in Lomé and in Germany's Federal Archives, the Bundesarchiv in Berlin. These collections detail the planning efforts of establishing an administration that would be capable of managing the colony, which relied heavily on treaties with local authorities. While general decrees were issued from the Imperial Colonial Office in Berlin (Reichskolonialamt), the actual administration of German Togoland lay in the responsibility of the colonial General Government (Generalgouvernement) in Lome that delegated tasks to the District





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2 Bremen, Germany. Archival materials at the Staatsarchiv Bremen: Building plans and materials 1902–1914. (Photo: Kathrin Loges)

3 Kpando, Ghana. Main building of the ›government station‹ at Kpando-Todzi under the German imperial flag, as seen from the west. (Postcard no. 685 4789, Publishers of the Catholic Mission in Lome, photo before 1914, digitised by the British Museum Af,B85.48 (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0))

Offices (Bezirksämter). Most of the files recording land surveys, mapping, and street planning carried out in the Togoland colony were transferred to the Archives Nationales in Lomé.

7 Apart from archives related to the administration of Togoland, there are numerous archival collections that were accumulated by other actors, such as merchants and missionaries who were involved in the informal colonisation process. Their activities predate the onset of the formal colonial administration by more than three decades. For example, the missionaries of the North German Missionary Society (Norddeutsche Missionsgesellschaft) set up their station at Ho in 1859. The mission's historical archive contains a vast photo collection, as well as reports of day-to-day life on the mission's many stations, such as at Peki, Keta, Anyako and Adaklu Waya. This mission archive was transferred into the holdings of the Bremen State Archive (Staatsarchiv Bremen) in 2005 (Fig. 2).

8 Those who travelled the colony as merchants, missionaries, colonial officers or explorers oftentimes kept letters, photos and annotated reports as well as maps in their private possessions. Some of these archival holdings have found their way into the special collections of institutions such as the Berlin State Library (Staatsbibliothek Berlin). One example is the collection of Karl Fies (1864–1937). He was among those deployed to Ho by the North German Missionary Society as a missionary and kept diaries when he was first travelling to Togoland.

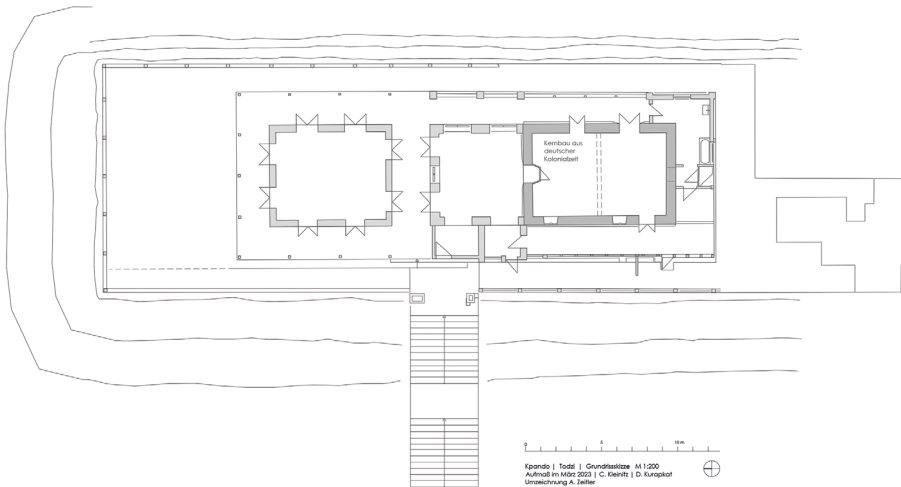
9 While the various archival sources were originally supposed to serve different purposes, they all contain information on the steps taken by different actors to form the colonial landscape of Togoland (Fig. 3). In preparation for fieldwork in the Volta Region, several of the above-mentioned archives were visited, and archival holdings were consulted according to their relevance to our project's questions on the built heritage of missionisation and colonisation of Togoland.

### Building Archaeology

10 During the 2023 field season, our work focused on the urban centre of Kpando, which had been the main location of Wazi Apoh's long-term



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4 Kpando, Ghana. Aerial view of the main building of the former ›government station‹ at Kpando-Todzi from the northwest. (Drone photo: Rodney Tagoe)

5 Kpando, Ghana. Sketch of the preserved main buildings on the high terrace of Kpando-Todzi from German and British colonial rule. (Measurements in March 2023: Cornelia Kleinitz and Dietmar Kurapkat, redrawing: Annika Zeitler)

research on relations of domination and resistance between the Akpini, Akan, Germans and British, as well as on the resulting dynamics of colonial entanglements (see Fig. 1) [4]. Three building complexes with a relation to German colonialism were subjected to a first investigation from a building archaeological perspective: The seat of the colonial administration on top of a ridge at Kpando-Todzi, the palace of the Paramount Chief in the centre of Kpando as well as the nearby school buildings of the Steyler Catholic Mission. These building complexes represent three essential aspects of the colonial system of rule – German administration, local authority and Christian mission – as well as various traces of intercultural building practices. In each case, a preliminary investigation and documentation of the buildings in their present condition was undertaken.

- 11 Our research at Kpando was facilitated by the Municipal Chief Executive, Geoffery Kodzo Badasu and the local Survey Department; the Head of Kpando Prison at Kpando Todzi; the Paramount Chief of Kpando, Okpekpewuokpe Torgbuiga Dagadu X. and Elders of Kpando; and the Catholic Church at Kpando. We are grateful for the support we received from our local partners, without whom the work undertaken in this project would not have been possible.

### *Buildings of the German Colonial Administration*

- 12 The buildings at Kpando-Todzi are located on top of a ridge to the west of the city centre overlooking the town. Established as a ›government station‹ (Regierungsstation) at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, these structures served as the local seat for the German colonial administration and its police forces (see Figs. 3. 4. 5). Archaeological excavations at Kpando-Todzi under the direction of Wazi Apoh have illustrated the lifeways of the various occupants of the station over time, beginning with the German colonial period and its ›material culture of domination‹ [5]. Before becoming the seat of the colonial administration, this locality had been the site of a local cult and served as a place of worship for the surrounding population. During construction of the colonial period buildings this locale was destroyed [6].





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6 Kpando, Ghana. Palace of the Paramount Chief as seen from the southwest. (Photo: Dietmar Kurapkat)

7 Kpando, Ghana. Palace of the Paramount Chief: Upper floor wooden joints in the manner of late 19<sup>th</sup> century European carpentry with mortise, dovetail, rabbet marks and chamfers ending in front of the joints. (Photo: Dietmar Kurapkat)

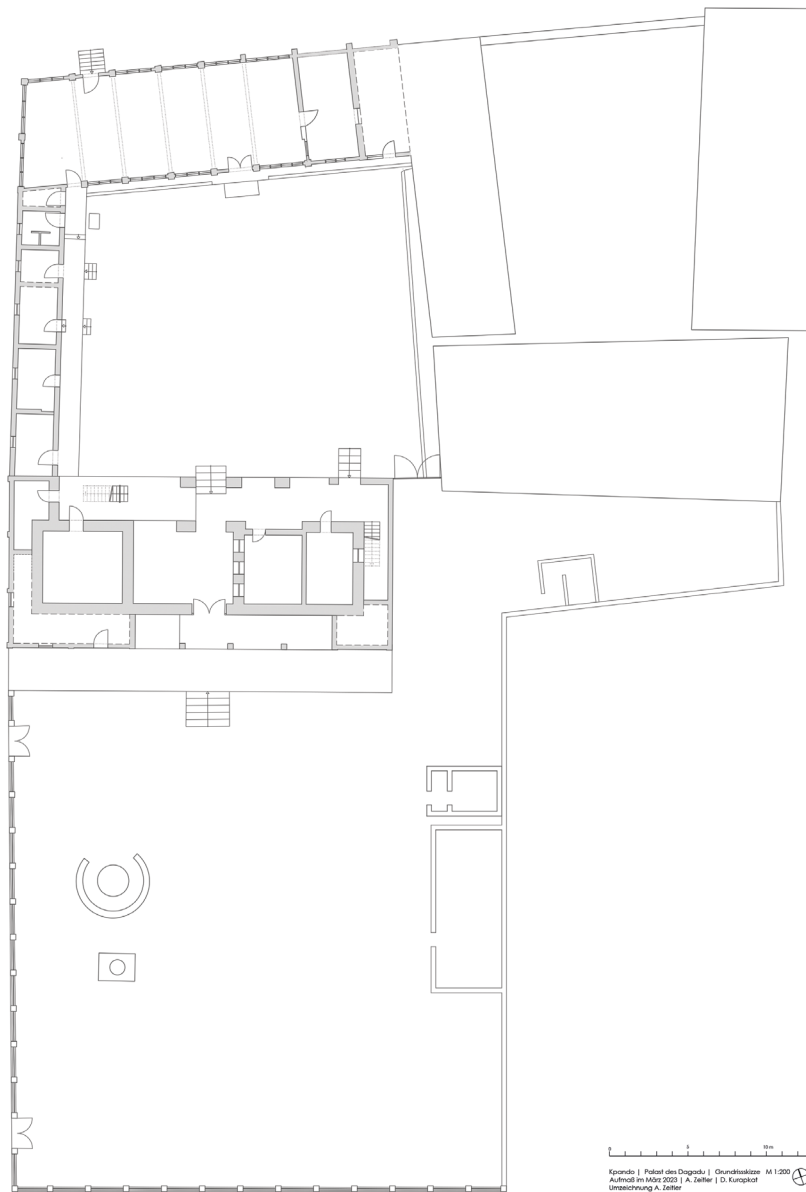
13 The choice of location for the administrative buildings of the colonial authority probably had strategic, climatic as well as socio-political reasons. The main buildings were lined up under the German imperial flag on a north-south running high terrace and dominated the lower-lying urban area to the East (see Fig. 3). These buildings were accessed from the west via a single flight of steps leading from a long rectangular square flanked by other structures from both the German and British colonial periods (see Fig. 4).

14 Of the buildings preserved today, only one in the southern section of the ensemble can be assigned to the initial building phase with some certainty (see Fig. 5). Another building, visible in historical photos at the northern end of the terrace, was traced archaeologically in Wazi Apoh's excavations [7]. Notable for the core building is not only its massive construction but especially its equipment with imported elements such as iron window frames. According to preliminary research, some of the other buildings visible today were added at the end of German colonial rule, with the majority constructed during British colonial rule (post-1914 to 1956) and after independence in 1957.

#### *Palace of the Paramount Chief*

15 Due to the small number of German government representatives, the German colonial administration relied on tasking local authorities with, for example, tax collection and a low-level dispensation of justice. The palace of the Paramount Chief of the Akpini, the Dagadu, is located in the centre of Kpando, forming a strong contrast to the location of the former seat of the German administration at some distance on Todzi Hill. The palace was structurally transformed during the German colonial period and subsequently modified. Imported materials and fittings from Lome were used, as well as local building materials, and the construction crew included trained local artisans (Figs. 6. 7) [8].

16 Today, the palace serves as a representative and ceremonial building and is part of a larger building complex. The two-storey main building with surrounding loggias lies behind a street-side forecourt with a central tree and an offering place (Fig. 8). Influence of building traditions and construction



8 Kpando, Ghana. Ground plan of the building ensemble with the palace of the Paramount Chief. (Measurement in March 2023: Annika Zeitler and Dietmar Kurapkat, redrawing: Annika Zeitler)

techniques from Germany is tangible, among other things, in details of the timber construction of the upper floor loggia roof, where carpenter-style timber joints with dovetail halvings, joinery marks, and chamfered timbers typical of late 19<sup>th</sup> century Germany are preserved (see Fig. 7).

- 17 A central passageway leads to an interior courtyard bounded by one-story outbuildings to the west and north and by the partition wall to the neighbouring residence of the Paramount Chief as well as auxiliary buildings to the east (see Fig. 8). While some of the outbuildings have recently been remodelled, they include an audience hall with sheet metal roofing under which a wooden roof construction with shingle roofing can be observed.

#### *Buildings of the Steyler Catholic Mission*

- 18 The Christian missionisation of the local population by various European religious orders is closely linked to the state-administrative colonisation process and probably paved the way for it in part. Christian missions established and operated educational institutions, such as the Steyler Catholic Mission, which arrived in Kpando in the 1890s and constructed a complex of buildings that served educational purposes in the centre of Kpando (Fig. 9).
- 19 Grouped parallel to each other around a central courtyard, the two two-storey buildings with their outer staircases and loggias primarily contained classrooms (Fig. 10). The buildings had been used as school buildings until about two decades ago. A lack of maintenance has led to their deterioration and abandonment and, finally, to their use as a rubbish dump. The core of both buildings is made of fired bricks in the German ›Reichsformat‹ (25 x 12 x 6,5 cm). The southern building, in particular, displays representative architectural forms, such as neo-Gothic-looking pointed arch windows, which can perhaps be understood as a deliberate reference to European Medieval religious architecture. The remains of differentiated colour finishes on the plaster surfaces also attest to a high level of design (Fig. 11). The northern, slightly narrower building could have been erected somewhat later and was certainly modified after the German colonial period had ended.





9



Kpando | Gebäude der Steyler Mission  
Ansichtsskizze M 1:200  
Umzeichnung A. Zeitler

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9 Kpando, Ghana. Aerial view of the former school buildings of the Steyler Mission in the centre of Kpando from the northeast. (Photo: Rodney Tagoe)

10 Kpando, Ghana. Sketch of the courtyard facade of the southern building of the Steyler Mission. (Measurement in March 2023 and redrawing: Annika Zeitler)

### *Preservation of Architectural ›Shared Heritage‹*

- 20 The above-mentioned buildings from the period around 1900 can be understood as intercultural heritage and have a high testimonial value for the close links between the German colonial administration of the time, local elites and Christian missions at Kpando. In response to requests by local partners, our project can aid the preservation and rehabilitation of these material manifestations of colonial-period relations of authority and power while also supporting local discussions as to their public presentation and future functions.
- 21 The preliminary construction and damage documentation undertaken during our fieldwork in Kpando in March 2023 showed that the buildings are very differently preserved: The exterior of the palace of the Paramount Chief is in a rather good condition, but large parts of its upper floor are vacant and in need of rehabilitation. On the basis of more detailed building research and planning for historic preservation, the rehabilitation of the palace could be achieved most easily in comparison to the other buildings studied. The buildings of the Steyler Catholic Mission, as well as those of the colonial administration at Kpando-Todzi, are less well preserved, require a more elaborate analysis of the damage patterns, and certainly structurally profound rehabilitation measures. Due to the progressing damage patterns, however, timely damage assessments are also recommended to be undertaken with regard to the mission buildings, which can then form the basis for the development of renovation and restoration concepts as well as new use scenarios.

### **Surveying and Mapping**

- 22 For the documentation of the present state of preservation of building ensembles from the German colonial period in Kpando, we employed photogrammetric methods based on hand-held and drone-based photography from which 3D point clouds and models, as well as orthophotos, were generated. Overview datasets from drone flights were collected for all three building complexes that were the subject of the preliminary building archaeological documentation efforts. The main buildings at all three sites were



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11 Kpando, Ghana. Polychrome paintwork at the southern building of the Steyler Mission. (Photo: Jörg Linstädter)

12 Kpando, Ghana. Point cloud generated from a series of ground and drone-based photos of the palace of the Paramount Chief. (Photos: Cornelia Kleinitz and Rodney Tagoe, 3D-modelling: Christian Hartl-Reiter)

subjected to a first, more detailed photographic documentation with the aim of creating 3D models and orthoimages of these buildings that could supplement condition and damage assessments and aid future renovation and restoration projects (Fig. 12).

23 Research on the various archival materials and the built colonial period heritage of the study region calls for the development of adequate solutions for the organisation of the generated data. Spatial dimensions of the process of colonisation and of the various aspects of colonial rule can be visualised through various mapping solutions provided by the DAI through its open-access database applications and/or Geographical Information Systems (GIS). This third strand of our project is in development. We plan to incorporate historic maps as well as new data from field surveys for the mapping of colonial-period buildings, townscapes and landscapes. A visit to the city of Ho with its early buildings of the North German Missionary Society during the past field season showed the potential of such endeavour with a view of better understanding the process of missionisation and subsequent colonisation of the region.

## Outlook

24 In addition to initiating building archaeological research, our fieldwork opened up new perspectives for further avenues of investigation. One example is the study of colonial period soundscapes. The undertakings of the various missionary societies, for example, are not only present because of their architectural and spatial legacies in the cityscapes of Kpando and Ho. The landscape encountered by missionaries was also fundamentally transformed by clearing, settlement and agricultural development measures in the vicinity of the mission stations and the establishment of stations on mountain ranges. This included sound-spatial imprints. On the site of the former mission station at Ho, there is still a bell that was cast in 1857 by the foundryman Wilhelm Pelargus in Stuttgart for the North German Missionary Society (Fig. 13). Another bell was encountered by the survey team at Logba between Kpando and Ho, where it is used as a school bell today.





13 Ho, Ghana. The bell at Ho. (Photo: Ute Verstegen)

- 25 Systematic documentation of the mission bells in the study region could, on the one hand, provide information on the imprint of missionary activities and spaces on the soundscape of the former Togoland colony and the introduction of ›bell-time‹ regimes. On the other hand, such a study could provide valuable information on bell foundries of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries in Germany because the former stock of bells of this time was severely decimated in Germany itself by the ›bell deliveries‹ of the First and Second World Wars, which led to the smelting of bells for the respective ›war effort‹.
- 26 One of the important concerns of our project is how the data and research results can be made accessible to partners in Ghana, be they researchers, local authorities or communities. This is especially relevant also for the archival records that are usually in the German language, often handwritten and available in European archives only. Here, the project, as well as present and future partners, can help bridge the language divide on the one hand and, on the other hand, discuss options for opening up these archives to (research) communities in Ghana and beyond.

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