Johannes Spieth, *Togo, Togo Is Supreme* (1912)

Abstract

In 1884, Togo became a German colony by signing a "protection treaty." After the construction of a railroad line in 1905, which enabled the transport of goods such as cotton, cocoa, rubber, peanuts, sisal and coconut from the hinterland, Togo was to prove to be the only financially viable colony of the German Reich and was therefore considered an African "model colony." This song text, which was presumably distributed at Protestant missionary schools, gives an impression of how the German colonial masters saw themselves.

Source

"Togo, Togo is supreme"
("New text set to an old melody")

Togo, Togo, is supreme,
O patron and protector:
Above all other colonies,
That prosper at your pleasure,
Ahead of those in the Far East;
In Africa: East, West, Southwest –
In short, of all the colonies
'Tis Togo that remains the best!

The Germans were indeed the first
To pierce the darkness of our night
With knowledge of the Christian church
And bathe us in its blinding light.
Therefore, today, o'er land and sea
Should sound the message from our tongue:
German lads we'll always be
And ever more so will become.

For the unity and peace enjoyed
By Germans of all stations
We have to thank the industry
And customs of the German nation,
Gone now are the bitter feuds
That once tore our land asunder
And now God's blessing rests upon
This land that we now share as brothers.

German youths we shall remain,
Your subjects prayerful and true,

We cheerfully commit ourselves
To you, dear Emperor, anew.
Should other peoples our homeland
Approach, beating the drums of war,
You and I, we both shall stand
Fast to the flag to defend we swore

To you, dear Emperor Wilhelm
Do swear on this, your natal day,
We from the edges of your realm
This oath with firm solemnity:
As long as God above your head
The Crown of Empire doth hold
By your noble scepter we'll be led
Before all others in the world.

Source: StAB 7, 1025-21/4, [Johannes] Spieth, Anlage 1 zum 1. Vierteljahresbericht der Norddeutschen Missionsschule, Lome, April 1912; reprinted in Thorsten Altena, *„Ein Häuflein Christen mitten in der Heidenwelt des dunklen Erdteils". Zum Selbst- und Fremdverständnis protestantischer Missionare im kolonialen Afrika 1884-1918*. Münster, 2003, p. 513.

Translation: Deborah Cohen

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