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# Identities, Inequalities and Conflicts in Ghana

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### *Abstract*

Ghana's current image of peace and stability is worthy of attention. Compared with its neighbours, Ghana seems to be going through a period of relative stability. Nevertheless the periodic flaring up of conflicts into serious violence has become a source of worry. The paper is an account of the emergence of particular identities and inequalities and their role in promoting instability, conflict and violence. The paper analysed the different elements of the Ghanaian political economy which encourage or discourage particular patterns of peaceful co-existence and conflict. Understanding the emergence and dynamics of certain identities in any place is complicated by a number of factors. Analysts who consider identities such as ethnicity to be primordial are correct in that identities are not simple to assume and discard. Inequalities tend to arise principally out of differences in economic development and to some extent endowment in natural resources. A glaring pattern of inequality in Ghana manifests itself in the North-South dichotomy in development. A number of studies have emphasized the broad disparity between the North and the South of the country in terms of levels of economic development and the general quality of life resulting in the relative backwardness of Northern Ghana in relation to Southern Ghana. Whereas this major divide has never generated conflict in Ghana, it is possible to identify different categories of continuous conflict, some of it violent. These includes inter-ethnic conflicts, mostly centred on control over land and other resources and sovereignty issues; intra ethnic conflicts around land ownership, competing uses of land and the siting of institutions and services, but mostly about chieftaincy succession; and conflicts between state institutions, such as the police and communities, over policing and law and order issues arising from communal conflicts and inter-personal disputes. Although such conflicts are in general similar to other conflicts that arise in the sub-region, it can be generally concluded, though not substantiated in this study, that the conflicts in Ghana have generally been on a relatively lower scale than those of her neighbours, perhaps, accounting for the relative peace and stability in Ghana.

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## **Identities, Inequalities and Conflicts in Ghana**

**By Dzodzi Tsikata and Wayo Seini<sup>1</sup>**

### **1. Introduction and overview**

Ghana's current image of peace and stability is worthy of attention for a variety of reasons, not least because of the striking paradoxes that have created misconceptions about the situation in the country. Compared with its neighbours, Ghana seems to be going through a period of relative national political stability. After close to two decades of rule by Flt. Lt. Rawlings, first at the head of a coup d'état regime (1982-1992) and then for two terms through multi-party elections, elections in 2000 were narrowly won by the then opposition New Patriotic Party (NPP). This unprecedented event in Ghana and in most of Africa occurred amid civil wars and violent national conflicts in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea and more recently Côte d'Ivoire. Ghana's role as head of (ECOWAS) in the last few years has made it a popular venue for peace talks and accords, thus burnishing its image as a peaceful island in a troubled region.

The reality, however, is much more complex. Ghana has been through its own cycles of political and economic instability and coup d'état regimes since Kwame Nkrumah was overthrown in 1966. Especially in the 70s and early 80s, it was the politically unstable and economically unviable opposite of the political continuity and economic prosperity of Côte d'Ivoire.

Moreover, the Ghanaian state has been run for longer by the military wing of its ruling classes than its civilian counterparts, a factor that is also significant. As Table 3.1 in section three shows, the Ghana has been run by no less than eight regimes since independence in 1957, with post-coup d'état and military regimes ruling for much longer periods than constitutionally elected governments. The regular regime changes by coup d'état were accompanied by various forms of political violence and insecurity, with a bearing not only on the state's relations with civil society, and also on relations within civil society.

A second element of the Ghanaian paradox is that its society has been characterised by various longstanding communal conflicts, some of which periodically flare into violent confrontations with the loss of lives and property. In a recent survey of democracy in Ghana, 54 percent of respondents said violent conflicts between different groups in the country occurred "sometimes", "often" or "always" (CDD-Ghana, 2003). This finding is borne out by regular newspaper reports of conflicts. Communal conflicts in Ghana have been traced to colonial policies of indirect rule and the practice of elevating favoured chiefs without sensitivity to the multi-ethnic character of various colonial territories. The periodic flaring-up of these conflicts into serious violence has also been linked with national politics in various ways. For example, there is a perception that military rule tends to drive communal conflicts underground. This is because violent communal conflict has resurged since multi-party constitutional rule. The causal relationship between communal conflicts and civilian governments however, has not been properly established. In the case of Ghana, there have been conflicts irrespective of the

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character of the government in power. Analysts have also argued, more convincingly, that a number of factors have been responsible for the persistence of such conflicts: the ineptitude and bias of governments and coercive state agencies (Brukum, 1995); the lack of clear institutional mechanisms within the state for the resolution of such conflicts (Ninsin, 1995); and the unreasonableness and provocation of dominant groups and their chiefs (Brukum, 1995; Ansah Koi, 1995).

There are several categories of conflicts in Ghana linked with various inequalities and identities. In the CDD-Ghana study referred to earlier, 16 percent of respondents cited boundary or land disputes, 13 percent traditional leadership disputes and 10 percent political rivalries, leadership contests and exclusion as the first most common cause of violent conflicts. In this paper, conflicts in Ghana are classified as inter-ethnic conflicts over land and political power; or intra-ethnic disputes, usually over succession to traditional political office or boundary disputes, and religious disputes between factions of Islam, Muslims and Christians and Christians and adherents of traditional religions. Other conflicts consist of political violence between supporters of various political factions, parties, government and opposition, industrial disputes between workers and employers but also football violence between supporters of opposing teams (often grounded on various ethno-religious identities, See for example, Ninsin, 1995). It is pertinent to note that several of the identities and conflicts listed here are inter-linked and can play reinforcing and complicating roles. Thus inter-ethnic relations are sometimes complicated by religious differences.

Chieftaincy in Ghana is at the centre of several types of communal conflicts, particularly those related to ethnicity, succession to traditional political office and the struggle over land. Thus the fact that chieftaincy has been enjoying a resurgence in Ghana since the late 1980s might also account for the renewal of conflicts of this particular kind. Interestingly, Ghanaian political scientists are divided between those who see a role for chieftaincy in solving communal violence (Boafo-Arthur, 2003) and those who argue that what is needed is a move away from chieftaincy as solution (Ninsin, 1995). Interestingly, the CDD-Ghana study (2003) found that 30 percent of respondents mentioned chiefs' courts as the conflict resolution forum of choice while another 30 percent preferred the armed forces or police. For second resort for conflict resolution, 33 percent mentioned chiefs, 17 percent the armed forces and police, 11 percent the District Chief Executive and 7 percent religious leaders. As the survey analysis remarks, only 2 percent mentioned the courts as forum of first resort, a further 8 percent would consider it as forum of second resort.

The struggle over land and its control is another important aspect of ethnic conflicts and identity politics. There is general agreement in Ghana that the land tenure system and its administration are subject to serious problems that have exacerbated land tenure insecurity with negative implications for national development. These problems include general indiscipline in the underdeveloped and uncertain land markets, indeterminate boundaries of customarily-held lands, a weak land administration system, the problematic articulation of statutory and customary land tenure systems, and confusion over the status of derived interests and customary tenancies.

All these problems are implicated in the land conflicts and tensions all over Ghana. These range from the now-regular demands of disaffected urban youth for a voice in decisions about land sales in Accra and a proportion of proceeds, to the chaos and violence in the urban land markets arising from multiple sales of the same piece of land. The now-regular demands of chiefs for more royalties or total control of natural resources such as gold, timber and salt within their jurisdiction and their agitation for the return of land acquired by the state for development and administration also

reflect this problem. Others are the regular reports of the activities of Fulani herdsmen and hunters pointing to land competition between sedentary farmers and pastoralists on the one hand and farmers and hunters on the other hand. In addition, there are intractable conflicts and tensions between tenant farmers and their landlords, between “strangers” and autochthons and between mining companies and disaffected local populations.

This paper seeks to provide an account of the contribution of spatial inequalities in Ghana to the emergence of particular identities and inequalities and their contribution to instances of instability and violence. Its purpose is to permit a discussion of the different cycles of relative peace and stability and of instability and violence, in order to identify which elements of the Ghanaian political economy encourage and discourage particular patterns of peaceful co-existence and conflict. This also allows comparisons of Ghana with other cases in the sub-region and will provide the basis for a deeper exploration of particular institutions, policies, identities, inequalities and conflicts in the future. The paper is constructed using secondary data-published articles and books, newspaper accounts and archival sources.

The paper is structured as follows. This introduction is followed by a section setting out the nature and dynamics of spatial inequalities, focusing mainly on north-south inequalities and rural-urban inequalities in resources such as education, health, water and infrastructure. This sets the stage for an examination of the emergence and dynamics of various identities in Ghana (section 3). In that section, an attempt is made to highlight emerging identities and particular conflicts in the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial eras. These identities are discussed as they are linked with political processes and economic policies of particular periods of Ghana’s history. This allows an exploration of the relationship between state processes and identity formation. A fourth section then introduces current conflicts in Ghana drawing attention to their key features and manifestations. The preceding four sections form the basis for examining four cases of violent conflicts, two from Northern Ghana and two from Southern Ghana. These have been selected to deepen the discussion about communal conflicts and to explore different elements of the identity, inequalities and conflicts nexus. They include an intra-ethnic succession/chieftaincy dispute (Dagbon), an inter-ethnic secession dispute (Konkomba conflicts), a religious-political dispute (the Ga traditional area vs. religious bodies) and an inter-ethnic boundary dispute (Alavanyo-Nkonya). The case studies are followed by a summary and conclusions.

## **2. Nature and dynamics of spatial inequalities in Ghana**

### **2.1 Introduction**

Inequalities tend to arise principally out of differences in economic development and to some extent endowment in natural resources. In West Africa, the general observation is that there are widening inequalities between a more developed south coastal area and an underdeveloped periphery in the sahelian north. At a lower level of spatial resolution, regional inequalities in levels of development within countries remain crucial.

Inequalities in spatial development give rise to poverty, which then tends to be spatial in nature. In most cases, spatial inequalities are related to resource endowment. In this regard, climate, weather and physical resource endowment are important. This section addresses patterns of such inequalities, the underlying processes that generate them, as well as some indicators of spatial inequalities in Ghana.

## 2.2 Major spatial inequalities: North-South, rural-urban and rural-rural dichotomies

A glaring pattern of inequality in Ghana manifests itself in the North-South dichotomy in development. A number of studies have emphasized the broad disparity between the North (comprising the Northern, Upper East and Upper West Regions) and the South of the country (comprising the remaining seven regions) in terms of levels of economic development and the general quality of life, with Northern Ghana falling relatively behind (Songsore, 1983 and 1989, Ewusi, 1976 and Dickson, 1968). A critical factor in the North-South divide is the uneven distribution of natural resources within Ghana. The forest in the South is an invaluable asset that not only can be exploited directly, but also is a suitable environment for producing cash crops such as cocoa and cola. The fertile soils also support the production of a variety of food crops, including horticultural crops. By contrast, the North is decidedly disfavoured. The short growing season and erratic rainfall reduce the variety of crops that can be grown. Soils are frequently poor and require long fallow periods in the absence of fertilizer. Few mineral deposits of any significance have been discovered, and none are extensively exploited.

An examination of two principal components of development and welfare - (i) a general social welfare indicator and (ii) the literacy rate - bring out clearly this North-South dichotomy (Songsore, 1989). These two factors permit a ranking of regions and districts according to social welfare services, and therefore levels of welfare and development. According to the general social welfare indicator, there exists a sharp and marked inequality between Northern and Southern Ghana. Not a single district in the North was found to be even in the first quartile of this indicator while only the Tamale district appeared in the third quartile. The remaining districts in the North invariably fell within the fourth (lowest) quartile. A very similar pattern emerges for the second factor, literacy. In Songsore's (1989) analysis, all the Northern districts fell at the very bottom of the literacy scale whereas only five out of a total of 37 districts in the South were to be found in the same bottom category. Moreover, out of the five, only one district, Kete-Krachi, was part of the Northern Territories in colonial times. The disparities in education were created by colonial policy to keep the North backward so as to guarantee cheap labour to the South (Bening, 1972). Thus European-style education was introduced only very slowly in the Northern Territories. The first school in the North was opened by missionaries in Navrongo in December 1907 and the first government school was opened in Tamale in 1909.

The North-South divide in Ghana is not peculiar to Ghana alone. It can be found almost in every coastal West African country. In some cases, for example in Nigeria, Northerners have come together to use their large population to gain control of central institutions or at least to exact major concessions in favour of the region. Northern Ghana, with only about 20 percent of the country's population, was never in a position to do this. Nor was Northern Ghana ever able to use its population effectively as Northern Benin. Although it houses just 29 percent of the total population, Northern Benin, by adroit manoeuvring, formed an alliance with one of the two factions of the divided South and appeared at times to dominate national politics. Northern Ghana, on the other hand, suffered from a lack of internal political unity from 1954 onwards and was never able to form significant alliances with Southern forces that needed the North (Ladouceur, 1979).

Ladouceur (*ibid.*) similarly notes that Northern Ghana did not make use of the presence of large numbers of Northerners in the country's armed forces and police as a political resource, as did countries like Nigeria, Benin and Togo. This probably

was because there were no Northern officers before 1970, although very high proportions of the rank-and-file of the Gold Coast Regiment and later of the Ghanaian army were Northerners. In Nigeria, Benin and Togo, on the other hand, young and ambitious Northern officers turned the presence of many Northerners in the armed forces of those countries to considerable political advantage. Further, the presence of Northerners as heads of state in Benin and Togo resulted in considerably increased allocations of government expenditures for their regions of origin (Ladouceur, 1979).

At the next level of spatial inequality in Ghana, there is a contradiction between urban and rural areas. The patterns show a clear advantage for the urbanized regions as regards standards of living. At the sub-regional levels, a sharp contrast exists between rural and urban districts in terms of their performance on the welfare scale. In Northern Ghana, only the Tamale District appears in the third quartile with regard to social services (Songsore, 1989). This is because Tamale emerged as the regional headquarters of the Northern Territories and thereafter became the most significant administrative, commercial and business centre in the area (Songsore, 1977). The better performance of this district reflects the concentration of social services in Tamale town. The policy has always been to locate social services in the administrative centres for the benefit of the bureaucratic elite. Thus, the few urban areas outside Tamale also monopolize the few available social services in the North.

A similar pattern emerges in Southern Ghana. The areas in the South with the best scores for social services include all the regions and most of the districts with urbanized capitals. Analysing the distribution of social welfare services, the rural districts fall into the lowest quartile. There is therefore no question of urban bias in the provision of welfare services, and this is also reflected in the unequal distribution of decision-making power between urban and rural interest groups. In the case of rural districts in the South, the relative lack of social services might be attributed to the fact that they are destinations for most of the rural migrants from the economically distressed areas of the North. When the performance indices are standardized by population size, the migrant workers help to depress them (Songsore, 1989).

Even within certain rural areas, differences in resource endowments emerge between those more closely tied to commodity production for export and those more closely tied to subsistence production by peasants. Nevertheless, rural-rural inequalities are not very clear. For example, the older cocoa-growing rural areas perform much better than the non-cocoa growing rural districts and the new cocoa frontier. Perhaps this stems from the greater bargaining power of old cocoa districts by virtue of their longstanding production of export crops. As in Northern Ghana, the non-export orientated rural regions of Southern Ghana are tucked in the backwoods of welfare. As the foregoing analysis suggests, it is simplistic to take a monolithic approach to the North-South dichotomy in Ghana.

### **2.3 Class, gender and spatial inequalities**

Although this does not emerge from spatial patterns analysis, there is a relationship between class, gender contradictions and spatial inequalities. In the most favoured urban regions with high per capita service ratios, it is a truism that the physical availability of facilities does not necessarily guarantee access to all social classes. The class system bequeathed by colonialism had at its apex the governor, civil servants, soldiers and police, who controlled the state and facilitated the activities of expatriate merchant companies, and mining and banking interests. After independence, the senior military/police bureaucratic group, senior civil servants,





professionals and businessmen filled the upper ranks of the Ghanaian society and principally exercised state power. The next level in the hierarchy included teachers, nurses, senior clerks and some well-established petty traders, all with considerable wealth and status. Those in petty commodity sector, lower-level civil servants and other ranks in the military and police occupied the lower levels of the society. The class system has a gender dimension with women occupying lower positions in class hierarchies and experiencing particular forms of discrimination. For example, out of 200 members of parliament, only 19 are women, and there is only one female cabinet minister. Also whereas all Chief Directors of the ministries are male, about 80 percent of secretaries are female.

The observed North-South and rural-urban inequalities with regards to the welfare scale assume a class and gendered character as different social classes and groups such as women enjoy different levels of educational attainment and access to educational services, major determinants of social mobility. The degree of access by the lower classes to urban-based welfare services is not only much lower than that of dominant classes, but also gets worse when state policies ignore social welfare and focus on cost recovery and efficiency, an example being the imposition of levies under the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). Levies in the form of high school fees for children, high hospital fees (cash and carry), and high transportation, electricity and water costs have worsened the plight of the lower classes and social groups such as women. For example, although educational facilities are available in large towns, the working classes are still forced by economic pressures to keep their children, especially girls, out of school or to be satisfied with the early truncation of their schooling. This, notwithstanding the policy of Free and Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE), ensures the reproduction of class and gender inequalities. The undemocratic character of policy-making processes ensures that the lower classes and disadvantaged social groups such as women are often either ignorant of policy measures that directly affect their interests or unable to challenge the established order. Class and gender discrimination in the enjoyment of social services are complicated by regional and ethnic cleavages.

Access to health services is particularly crucial to the poor and vulnerable classes of Ghana. The cash and carry system has particularly been less favourable to them. It is also argued that globalisation spreads disease and creates its own brand of inequality in societies. The geography of disease has not only been linked to colonisation and industrialisation throughout the now poor world but also to current threats to public health posed by globalisation. In particular the spread of HIV/AIDS epidemic has widened international inequalities in life expectancy with the developed and rich countries coping better than the poor developing countries (Deaton 2004).

The upper classes of the Ghanaian society, which do not necessarily coincide with the formal job sector, have benefited from their control of the colonial and post-colonial economy. These groups have always been concentrated in the major urban centres of Accra, Tema, Kumasi and Sekondi-Takoradi, and at regional and district centres. Not surprisingly, the distributional pattern of welfare services coincides broadly with the location of class interests. For women, urban areas have been a contradictory space. Kept out of urban areas by explicit colonial policy that resulted in largely male rural-urban migration, women became the predominant inhabitants of rural areas in the colonial period (Tsikata, 1989; Roberts, 1987). Most urban employment opportunities were created for men and therefore women who moved into this space found themselves in self-created economic enterprises that were often criminalised. In the post-colonial period, the head start that men had in formal employment has remained an advantage and has ensured them better access to the housing and services that might accompany such work. Women's access to such

services has depended on the class privileges of their spouses and themselves in a minority of cases.

Thus, the urban bias of services reflect specific class and gender interests, as services were established principally to serve particular social groups. The process of stratification in social space also became the process of stratification in geographical space. This, to a large extent, explains the rural-urban contradictions, and the class and gender contradictions within the urban and rural spaces.

Songsore (1989) has argued that once class interests generate a distributional policy in space, these spatial structures, acting independently, reinforce class inequalities. This insight applies to gender differences. Policies governing access to the services and resources in urban areas often assume that they are dealing with a male household head whose interests coincide with those of other household members. Often, women's particular needs as actors in the informal economy – often home-based – are not taken into account. As men's relatively longer absences from the home environment insulate them from some of the more serious environmental problems, women bear the brunt of the deprivations of poor urban areas.

Therefore, spatial, class and gender inequalities, created to a large extent through colonialism, have been exacerbated by the policies pursued by the post-colonial male elite. On the eve of independence, the inter-regional balance of forces was such that a weak and inarticulate elite in the North could not have expected to win any concessions for redressing the imbalance at the national level from the sophisticated and highly-westernized emerging dominant classes of the Colony, Trans-Volta Togoland and the powerful cocoa interests of Ashanti. In the same vein, groups such as the small peasantry, factory and mine workers, teachers, nurses and the artisanal classes throughout the country experienced growing marginalisation as did women of different spatial and class locations.

The import substitution strategy of industrialization pursued after formal independence meant that the urban centres – key to the functional organisation of the colonial economy – attracted all the industrial capital, giving rise to further polarization. The “big three”, Accra-Tema, Sekondi-Takoradi and Kumasi, became the industrial centres. As a result, members of the agro-commercial interest groups relocated in the urban-industrial centres as distributors or industrialists in their own right. The state decided to concentrate its resources, extracted through fiscal and macro-economic policies, in urban-centred investment in social overheads and in manufacturing industries, to the neglect of other urban and rural sector interests. Thus, import substitution policies not only sharpened rural-urban inequalities, and by implication the North-South dichotomy, but also created some urban-urban inequalities. The North could only have benefited from a system-wide redistribution of resources in favour of rural areas and the peasantry (Songsore, 1989).

A glaring form of gender inequality that has attracted a lot of attention is the dichotomy between male and female chiefs referred to as Queen Mothers in Ghana. In the traditional chieftaincy sector of Ghana's political organisation, Queen Mothers are excluded from the local, regional and national houses of chiefs. This, some have argued, is a violation of their right to political participation with detrimental effects on women's rights and health generally, since these traditional institutions make important decisions concerning customary law and customary practices (Struensee 2004). It is to be noted, however, that female chiefs in Ghana are to be found mainly among the Akan ethnic groups who constitute about 42% of Ghana's population.

## 2.4 Indicators of inequalities

Indicators of poverty are in accordance with the pattern of other inequalities in Ghana.

**Table 2.1 Literacy by location (% of individuals above 15 years of age)**

<b>Classification</b>	<b>National average</b>	<b>Average South</b>	<b>Average North</b>
Ghana:	47.9		
Rural		46.2	12.2
Urban		61.5	52.0
Males:	62.3		
Rural		63.9	17.1
Urban		76.3	64.9
Females:	36.4		
Rural		32.3	7.4
Urban		49.8	40.6

Source: Core Welfare Indicators Questionnaire (CWIQ) Survey 1997, Main Report. Ghana Statistical Service (GSS), Accra, Ghana. March 1998.

The 1997 core welfare indicators (CWIQ) survey shows clearly that literacy is not only higher in urban than rural areas, but that it is also higher in South Ghana than in the North. As indicated in Table 2.1, literacy in the urban South is 61.5 percent as compared to 46.2 percent in its rural areas, which is even lower than the national average. The situation is worse when compared with the North. The literacy rate is only 12.2 percent in the rural North, about 36 percent lower than the national average and 34 percent lower than the rate in rural South. The gap between urban South and North is however closer (about 10 percent) only because urban areas in the North-West of Ghana, where Catholic support for education has been present for a long time, has a higher literacy rate that has pulled up the average in the North.

In Table 2.1, it is interesting to note the inequalities in literacy rates by gender. While the national average is 62.3 percent for males, for females, it is only 36.4 percent. The urban-rural and North-South contradictions with regards to gender are also clear in the table. Men in the rural North have only a 17.1 percent literacy rate compared to 63.9 percent for those in the rural South, while for women, the figures are only 7.4 percent and 32.3 percent respectively. Urban females in the North fare better again, only because of the pull effect of North-West of Ghana that has a literacy rate of about 61 percent.

**Table 2.2 Use of health facilities (% of respondents)**

<b>Time to reach nearest health facility</b>	<b>National average</b>	<b>Average South</b>	<b>Average North</b>
30 minutes or less:			
Rural	52.9	45.5	15.1
Urban	52.9	79.3	51.4

Source: Core Welfare Indicators Questionnaire (CWIQ) Survey 1997, Main Report. Ghana Statistical Service (GSS), Accra, Ghana. March 1998.

Further evidence of the pattern of inequalities is indicated by access to health facilities measured by the time it takes to get to a health facility. Though nationally, about 53 percent of respondents require 30 minutes or less to get to a health facility, about 79 percent of respondents in the urban South can get to a health facility within this time, as compared to about 51 percent in the urban North (Table 2.2). The situation is worse between urban and rural areas, and also between the rural North and rural South. Thus, for about 85 percent of rural Northerners it takes more than 30 minutes to get to a health facility.

Access to energy, particularly for lighting, and to drinking water are crucial determinants of the living standards of Ghanaians. Indeed, they are regarded as basic needs. Yet, in terms of their fulfilment, there are marked inequalities along the patterns identified in this paper, as shown in Table 2.3. Over 72 percent of urban Southerners compared with about 51 percent of urban Northerners use electricity. Again, Table 2.3 shows clearly that both the rural South and rural North have very low access to electricity, with only 21.1 percent and 0.9 percent using this source of energy, respectively. Here too the North-South gap is very clear.

**Table 2.3 Access to basic services (% of respondents)**

Classification	National average	Average South	Average North
A. Main Type of Lighting:			
By Kerosene/Oil:	62.2		
Rural		81.0	90.1
Urban		27.1	49.0
By Electricity:	37.0		
Rural		21.1	0.9
Urban		72.4	50.9
B. Main Source of Drinking Water:	14.0		
Pipe in House:			
Rural		1.8	0.8
Urban		28.0	34.6
Protected Well/Outside Tap:	25.9		
Rural		19.7	6.3
Urban		45.8	34.1
Unprotected Well/River/Lake:	34.2		
Rural		50.8	38.0
Urban		11.0	5.3
Borehole:	21.7		
Rural		24.5	54.9
Urban		5.5	15.8

Source: Core Welfare Indicators Questionnaire (CWIQ) Survey 1997, Main Report. Ghana Statistical Service (GSS), Accra, Ghana. March 1998.

With regards to drinking water, Table 2.3 shows that unprotected wells/rivers/lakes, the worst sources of potable water, are the major sources of drinking water for most Ghanaians (34.2 percent). Unsurprisingly, they are the main source of drinking water for about 51 percent of rural Southerners and 38 percent of rural Northerners. For once, the North is better-off than the South, owing mainly to several years of bilateral and multilateral assistance in this area. Much of this assistance has focused on drilling boreholes in the rural North, and about 55 percent of the people rely on this source of drinking water.

**Table 2.4 Distribution of Ghana telecom fixed-telephone subscribers (1997-2003)**

Region	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	% of 2003 total	% increase 2003
Greater Accra	68,933	93,390	109,533	127,000	132,724	184,526	194,588	67.4	5.5
Ashanti	12,846	17,172	18,648	22,462	23,400	27,947	29,175	10.1	4.4
Western	5,024	6,048	8,270	12,153	12,800	17,009	18,607	6.5	9.4
Eastern	3,853	4,921	6,503	7,174	7,400	10,057	10,194	3.5	1.4
Central	3,546	4,100	4,842	5,629	5,883	8,621	9,298	3.2	7.9
Brong Ahafo	1,791	1,808	3,455	5,275	5,513	6,808	7,493	2.6	10.1
Volta	1,711	1,783	2,001	3,441	3,596	6,311	7,653	2.7	21.3
Northern	1,804	2,083	2,369	4,498	4,701	5,438	5,555	1.9	2.2
Upper East	823	992	1,757	2,708	2,830	4,084	4,084	1.4	0.0
Upper West	601	1,000	1,020	1,040	1,087	1,728	1,873	0.7	8.4
<b>National</b>	<b>100,932</b>	<b>133,396</b>	<b>158,398</b>	<b>191,380</b>	<b>199,934</b>	<b>272,529</b>	<b>288,520</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>5.9</b>

Source: Ghana Telecommunications Limited, Accra.

Another source of disparity is in access to telephone facilities. Table 2.4 makes it clear that telephone density is very much skewed in favour of the Greater Accra Region that alone accounts for 67.4 percent of fixed phones. It is significant to note that the three Northern Regions, namely, Northern, Upper East and Upper West (that constitute the North), have a total of 4.0 percent of the fixed telephone facilities in Ghana. Indeed, the southern sector had a total of 277,008 fixed telephones (at the end of 2003) for a population of 15.6 million as compared with 11,512 fixed telephones for a population of 3.4 million in the northern sector. This gives a density of 1/56 for the South compared with 1/288 for the North.

Spatial inequality is further manifest in the incidence of poverty in Ghana. The poverty line is defined in terms of the poor and the extreme poor. The poor are those who earn 900,000 cedis or less (adult equivalent consumption) per year while the extreme poor earn 700,000 cedis or less. The spatial distribution of the incidence of poverty in Table 2.5 shows clearly that poverty is largely located in rural Ghana where about 64 percent of the poor and about 47 percent of the extreme poor were located in 1991/92. In contrast, about 28 percent of the poor and 15 percent of the extreme poor lived in urban areas in the same year. A comparison of the two survey periods (1991/92 and 1998/99) in Table 2.5 shows that even though poverty fell in both urban and rural areas, it generally remains high in the latter.

**Table 2.5 Spatial inequality and incidence of poverty**

Location	Incidence of poverty (%)			
	Poor		Extreme poor	
	1991/92	1998/99	1991/92	1998/99
Accra	23.1	3.8	11.3	1.7
Urban Coastal	28.3	24.2	14.2	14.3
Urban Forest	25.8	18.2	12.9	10.9
Urban Savannah	37.8	43.0	27.0	27.1
Rural Coastal	52.5	45.2	32.8	28.2
Rural Forest	61.6	38.0	45.9	21.1
Rural Savannah	73.0	70.0	57.7	59.3
Urban	27.7	19.4	15.1	11.6
Rural	63.6	49.5	47.2	34.4
All Ghana	51.7	39.5	36.5	26.8

Source: Poverty Trends in Ghana in the 1990s. Ghana Statistical Service (GSS), Accra, Ghana. October 2000.

Table 2.5 also clearly reveals that most of the poor (70 percent) and the extreme poor (59 percent) were to be found in the rural savannah (North) in 1998/99, while less poverty was found in the rural forest (South) – where 38 percent were poor and 21 percent extremely poor. Thus, even though poverty is generally higher in rural Ghana, it is also more pronounced in the North than in the South. As the statistics relating to access to energy, basic services and the incidence of poverty are not disaggregated by gender, it is not possible to explore how gender intersects with the North-South gap and other spatial inequalities.

### 3. The historical emergence and dynamics of identities in Ghana

#### 3.1 The pre-colonial period

Understanding the emergence and dynamics of certain identities in any place is complicated by a number of factors. Analysts who consider identities such as ethnicity to be primordial are correct in that they are not simple to assume and discard. How a group constructs and sees itself is only part of a reality only completed by how others view and relate to that group. The outcomes of those dynamics are not always a foregone conclusion. Moreover, in social and political discourse, different identities are called forth for different purposes. Thus, there is a continuing tension between seeing identities as given and fixed, and being conscious that they are subject to reconstruction, re-invention and change over time. As people embody several identities simultaneously, the interaction of identities also complicates internal group dynamics. The interaction of class, gender and ethnicity, for example, leads to different outcomes for people. This chapter of the paper focuses on how developments in the Ghanaian political economy since the pre-colonial era have marked the ways in which various identities have been constructed. The identities to be considered are ethnicity, religion, gender, political party affiliations, and old students and parent-teacher associations.

In the pre-colonial period, the mass migrations of different ethnic groups that today constitute Ghana, from the East, West and North, was the starting point for the formation of particular ethnic identities. The Guan, who first settled throughout Ghana

in what has been described as the Guan crescent from Bole in Western Gonja (Northern Region) to Winneba (Simpa) on the coast in the Central Region (Brukum, 1995), were soon overrun by many different groups of migrants. Intermittent wars of conquest and state formation by groups such as the Asante, Dagbon and Gonja resulted in the loss of sovereignty and control over land and other natural resources by those groups without centralised political systems. The states established tributary relations and imposed the status of subjects on these groups. Thus several ethnic groups lived in a state of tension and competition over resources exacerbated by events such as the incursions of slave raiders, the establishment of the colonial state, and more recent migrations in the colonial and post-colonial periods (Brukum, 1995).

### 3.2 Colonial economic policies and politics

The British formally colonized the Gold Coast, which became Ghana at independence, in 1901. However, the economic, social and political processes of the colonial era began with the first European (Portuguese) contact with the Coast in 1471. It was an area of about 92,000 sq miles and was made up of a group of territories- the Gold Coast Colony in the South, Asante in the middle belt, the Northern Territories and also, the British administered portion of the trust territory of Togoland in the East, which became a part of the Gold Coast after the First World War (WW1). The differences in how these territories were administered by the colonial state and how they experienced colonial economic policy came to influence the emerging character of ethnic configurations and relations begun in the pre-colonial period. While certain ethnic groups thrived under colonialism and extended their rule over others, others disappeared from official view.

Certain underlying processes generated the patterns of identity formation and equalities in Ghana. These can be found in the dominant mode of production within the social formation. Many scholars cite colonial dependency as the root of inequalities so evident in the Ghanaian economy. In colonial Ghana, the internal production of goods and services had a dual structure: a dynamic modern export sector, and a backward and underdeveloped subsistence sector that also served as a labour reserve for the modern sector. This is at the root of the North-South inequalities and also the other patterns of inequality in Ghana.

The slave trade involved European traders from Britain, the Netherlands and Denmark purchasing and shipping slaves to the Americas from local states that waged war on their weaker neighbours to supply slaves for transportation. It was significant in shaping inter-ethnic relations in that it damaged the human resource pool of many communities and poisoned inter-ethnic relations, already tense owing to migrations and conquests (Adjibolosoo, 2003). After the slave trade, the pursuit of colonial economic interests in primary commodities such as cocoa, gold, other minerals and timber in the forest zone, and the use of the coastal areas for administrative support and as ports for the export of commodities and import of consumer goods made these areas central to colonial economic, political and administrative endeavours. An area carved out by rail and road encompassing the forest and coast became a magnet for the in-migration of forced and voluntary labour from outlying areas as far afield as Northern Ghana, while also serving as a source of money and new consumer goods. Colonial policy thus created a “golden triangle” bounded by Accra in the south-east, Takoradi in the south-west (both on the coast) and Kumasi within Asante in the heart of the middle forest belt.<sup>2</sup> Areas outside the triangle – including Northern Ghana and parts of the Volta and Central Regions – have remained quite poor in relation to the rest of Ghana close to half a century after independence. While connected to the centre of colonial economic, commercial and

<sup>2</sup> The Akwapim and Akyim Abuakwa cocoa-growing areas fell within this triangle.

administrative activity through labour migration to the mines, cocoa farming areas and urban areas, these peripheral areas suffered neglect in the development of infrastructure, social services and economic investment.

In the case of Northern Ghana, however, it has been generally observed that the underlying cause of inequality (economic dualism) pre-dated direct colonialism and was actually in progress during the earlier era of European merchant activity on the coast. Prior to this, the North had enjoyed considerable progress because of the “middleman” role it played in the trade between the forest and the Sudan-Sahel zone further north. The decline of the North started when the trade routes northwards were reoriented south to the coast. This was followed, in the eighteenth century, by the slave trade in which the Gonja Empire was raided for slaves, thereby enhancing the depopulation of the middle belt. This was followed by the export of labour from the North under the British administration. As Ladouceur (1979, p35 ) quoting Wilks (1975, p308) wrote: “it was the consequence of the exploitative nature of the situation that the paramount powers whether before or after 1896 showed little inclination to foster the material advance of the North”. Northern underdevelopment therefore stood in stark contrast to the relative development of the South.

### **3.3 Chieftaincy and the politics of indirect and direct rule**

By the 1950s, many communities in southern Ghana were governed locally by a hierarchy of chiefs. However, these chiefs did not control land as they did in centralised traditional states such as Dagbon, Manpurugu, Gonja and Asante. Groups such as the Ewe and the Ga Adangme appear to have developed these political structures long after the westward migrations. This is because the founders of many Ewe and Ga Adangme communities, in founding myths, were migrating hunters. Contacts with the Ashanti and other Akan groups, and colonial pressures created chiefs in many such communities. Among the Ewes, it has been suggested that contact with Akan groups migrating southwards along the Volta River to flee wars, alliances with some Akan sub-groups in intra-Akan colonial wars and commerce lent an Akan-style structure to Ewe chieftaincy. This is disputed by a claim that when the Ewes settled at Tado and Notsie (in present-day Benin), they already had Kings and in the words of Amenumey (1986), “did not have to wait to copy it from the Akan” (p. 17). While Ewe peoples recalled chiefs such as the Agorkorli and Sri from the past, and indeed some of these chiefs were said to have led the westward migrations of various subgroups, it appears that the type of chieftaincy the Ewe had before their dispersal was different from what pertains today. At the very least, chieftaincy titles which are linked to battle formations such as “dusifia” and “miafiaga” of the Anlo state, for example, are distinctly Akan. Also, the relatively more recent designation of women leaders among the Ewe as queen-mothers is connected to the influence of Akan institutions and practices.

The growing importance of chiefs among the non-centralised ethnic groups was buttressed by the Native Administration system introduced by the colonial Authorities. Recognised chiefs all over the Gold Coast were furnished with an administrative system under the supervision of the colonial state. These institutions were in charge of law and order, taxation and the regulation of other aspects of life in areas under their jurisdiction. Native courts and treasuries were established as part of their paraphernalia. Thus the day to day control and taxation of subjects was left to the chiefs. For the chiefs all over the colony, the economic and institutional changes under colonialism presented both



new opportunities for accumulation and challenges to their hegemony.<sup>3</sup> Quite early on, they were locked in a struggle with the colonial state over the basis of their powers. This the state resolved by passing the Chiefs Ordinance of 1904, which established the colonial state as the source of authority of the chiefs, thus putting an end to the claims of chiefs about their inherent traditional powers (Boafo-Arthur 2003, Tsikata 1996). In addition, these developments resulted in the redrawing of the ethnic maps of certain areas.

Two examples will suffice. In 1912, recommendations from a Commission set up by the Gold Coast government to investigate relations among the South Eastern Ewe led to administrative arrangements dividing the Tongu people among three units under the jurisdiction of the Ada, Akwamu and Anlo Ewe. It was only in 1945 that a separate Tongu Confederacy Native Authority was created. In 1951, with the reorganisation of the local government system, the Ewes in south-eastern Ghana had two administrative units, Anlo and Tongu. Mafi, the only Tongu traditional state under the Anlo unit, rejoined the Tongu District Council. Currently, the Tongu are administratively divided into the South and North Tongu Districts, and are part of the five administrative units constituting the south-eastern Ewe area, the rest being Anlo, Ketu and Akatsi (Amenumey, 1986; Tsikata, 2003). In then Northern Ghana, colonial administrative policy favored direct rule through chiefs. This was said to differ from indirect rule in the sense that the chiefs implemented and enforced colonial directives. They were also given the power to recruit labourers for the mines and road and railway construction (Brukum 1995). In addition, there was a process of consolidating and strengthening selected chiefs. The concept of major and minor ethnic groups resulted in certain smaller groups becoming formal subjects of major ethnic groups. Thus Gonja chiefs in the Northern Region gained formal control of groups such as Nawuri, Nchumuru, Mo and Vagala, thus sowing the seeds for some of the more intensive inter-ethnic conflicts of the post-colonial period (Brukum, 1995). In the 1930s, the colonial state organized conferences for groups such as the Gonja, Dagomba, Kusasi, Mamprusi and Wala, with the view to codify their constitutions and establish the hierarchical order of their traditional states and offices. These conferences, which addressed intra-ethnic relations, ignored relations with the so-called minor ethnic groups that were already beginning to challenge the control of the major ethnic groups, their subject status and tributary relations on grounds of autochthony and alternative accounts of the nature of their relationships. For example, the Nchumuru, a Guan group, has challenged Gonja overlordship since the 1930s with the first clashes between them occurring in 1935 when the Gonja invaded the Nchumuru to punish them for insubordination (Brukum, 1995). Tensions have existed since and violent conflicts have become endemic. Both colonial and post-colonial governments have failed to address the land and sovereignty issues at the heart of these conflicts. The continued administrative invisibility of so-called minor ethnic groups in the post-colonial period has fuelled their sense of discrimination, injustice and exclusion.

As a result of pre-colonial migrations and the extensive labour migrations of the colonial and post-colonial periods, no region in Ghana remained ethnically homogeneous although residence patterns show that each ethnic group has its regional base. Again, while some regions are net receivers of migrants – (Greater Accra, mainly Accra, Tema, Ashaiman), Ashanti (mainly Kumasi and Obuasi) and Western (Bibiani, Tarkwa and Prestea) – because of urbanisation and mining activities, the regions of the old peripheries – the three regions that constitute Northern Ghana, the Volta and Central

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<sup>3</sup> The state gave itself the power to promote, demote and even choose personnel to run these native institutions in order to safeguard its power in troublesome areas such as Asante (Mikell, pp. 87-88 for instances of such appointments, promotions and demotions).

Regions – are net suppliers of migrants (Gyimah-Boadi and Asante, 2003). While certain ethnic groups have become substantial minorities – e.g. Krobo migrants to the Eastern Region cocoa farming areas and the Mande Busanga in the Ashanti Region – the terms and conditions of migration have ensured that they have not integrated into their new homes. These include the seasonal character of migration that changed gradually to permanent migration, the practice of leaving family at home for some migrants and the concept of the stranger in Ghanaian customary law. This continued into the post-colonial period with the result that the large numbers of Tongu Ewe fisher-folk who settled along the Volta Lake have remained strangers. Land relations have been at the heart of this dichotomy between strangers and natives, while the often steep terms of tenancies and related labour relations, the menial and low paid work reserved for migrants, and their social vulnerability and stigmatisation as strangers have worked to keep them separate. In some cases, inter-marriages have softened the sharp demarcations while in other cases inter-marriages have been avoided on both sides. Thus Gyimah-Boadi and Asante (2003) conclude that “a review of the ethnic map in Ghana shows that despite the country’s rich ethnic diversity, easy geographical and social mobility have scattered people from various ethnic groups throughout the country without destroying or weakening their ethnic bonds” (p. 6).

Another aspect of the multi-ethnicity of regions that had implications for inter-ethnic relations is the administrative invisibility of so-called minority ethnic groups. The Northern Region for example is said to have fifteen ethnic groups. And yet, on account of false information and political manoeuvres on the part of certain chiefs and the colonial state’s own political calculations, the ethnic complexity of regions and pre-existing political relations were ignored, and multi-ethnic communities and areas were arbitrarily named after so-called dominant groups.<sup>4</sup> This resulted in strengthening the claims of such groups over land that others had long settled.

### 3.4 The Nkrumah regime

Anti-colonial agitation gathered momentum after World War II culminating in independence in 1957. The multi-ethnic cocktail created by pre-colonial migrations, and colonial economic and administrative policies came to play an indirect role in the configuration of political alliances in the anti-colonial struggle. However, ethnicity took a backseat in the direct politics of the anti-colonial struggle. Instead, class and status became the cleavages along which the society divided. The chiefs who were seen to have a stake in the colonial dispensation were divided from their subjects, and the intelligentsia, the professional and trading classes, from ordinary people. The two main political party contending in the anti-colonial struggle, the UGCC and the Convention People’s Party (CPP) led by Kwame Nkrumah, were seen as representing these two streams in society. The anti-colonial forces, however, were a broad coalition of various classes and groups in the colony who shared the view that their interests were better served by independence. By the late 1940s, the CPP, which in its beginnings was a mass-based political organisation under the leadership of Kwame Nkrumah had become the more dominant political party. The party’s largest constituency was young school-leavers and the non-elite sections of society.

In addition, some ethno-regional parties supported either the UGCC or the CPP based on what they perceived to be the party of their ethnic rivals, or simply their group interests. Thus, in post-colonial politics, warring ethnic groups and certain factions in

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<sup>4</sup> Thus in Northern Ghana, only four groups – Gonja, Nanumba, Mamprusi and Dagomba – are recognised, to the detriment of groups such as the Mo, Vagala, Safalba, Lobi, Kpariba, Tampluma, Kalande, Choruba, Dampu, Konkomba, Basari, Nchumuru, Nawuri, Chakosi and Bimoba (Brukum, 1995).

intra-ethnic succession disputes are considered supporters of rival political parties, with each faction expecting to become predominant if their party should come to power. This is what certain commentators have described as the politicisation of ethnicity.

It is important to mention the rise of Northern nationalism in the pre-independence struggle and beyond. Northern nationalism was epitomized in the formation of the Northern People's Party (NPP) to contest the 1954 elections, with the principal objective of safeguarding Northern culture and influencing the accelerated development of the North to bridge the gap between North and South. The results of that election had major effects on the North itself, particularly in the form of growing conflict between the NPP and the CPP. The NPP came under heavy fire on its home grounds almost as soon as the election was over. Strengthened by the presence of a CPP government with two Northern ministers, and by the reasonably strong showing of the party in the election, the local CPP membership became increasingly bold in its attack on the NPP leadership. These attacks were both frontal, in fora such as the Northern Territories Council, and indirect, at the local level, through attempts to undermine the base of the NPP. In the post-colonial era, all Northern politicians irrespective of their political leanings, and various Northern organizations such as the Northern Youth Association, the Northern Students Association and the Northern Study Group, at one time or another, have carried the banner of Northern nationalism.

Apart from class and the North-South divide, gender inequalities were also highlighted by the anti-colonial struggle, but have not become as important a factor in national politics. This has to do with the character of gender relations as well as the way this issue has been tackled within national politics. While the anti-colonial movement had no serious agenda for addressing gender discrimination, market and other women worked tirelessly in the CPP as supporters and financiers. Their substantial contributions to the anti-colonial struggle were openly acknowledged by Nkrumah and the CPP, and rewarded after independence in 1957. This is partly because social justice, one of the key tenets of the Nkrumah regime's particular brand of nationalism, was reflected in the politics and certain policies of the government. Attempts were made to redress gender discrimination through affirmative action in the political and social spheres. Ten special seats were reserved for women in the National Assembly. There were also women district commissioners and a deputy minister. Others served on boards of corporations, schools and town councils as a reward for loyalty to the party. A few became members of the CPP's Central Committee. These measures, especially the reservation of parliamentary seats was criticised by elements of the opposition (Manuh, 1990; Tsikata, 1996).

In the area of formal employment, the CPP was concerned to find work for its educated activists, some of whom were women. The number of institutions set up by the state in this period made it the largest single employer in the formal sector, a situation which has not changed to this day. Discrimination on any basis, apart from merit, was addressed by provisions in labour legislation. The Industrial Relations Act of 1965, Act 299, for example, outlawed various forms of discrimination including that based on gender. However, its most elaborate anti-discrimination provisions concerned the protection of union leaders. Legislative activities regarding labour issues by successive regimes have mostly been amendments of the main pieces of legislation passed during the colonial period and soon after independence. A few laws passed after this period had some significant provisions. Maternity leave with pay for women in the public service was introduced in 1971 (Manuh, 1984). Also, equal pay for equal work was instituted in 1967 (LI 635 of 1967). In spite of these efforts, the majority of workers in Ghana have remained in the informal economy, outside the ambit of all labour laws.

The Nkrumah Regime also tried to find work for its uneducated activists, many of whom were women. This perhaps underlines a systematic patron-client relationship characteristic of the regime. One of the initiatives in this regard was the introduction of the passbook system, a credit facility which allowed the holders of passbooks access to consumer goods on credit. This device was important for propelling the careers of some CPP women. After the 1966 coup d'état, the passbook system was abolished amidst accusations of corruption and abuse (Manuh, 1990).

The Education Act of 1961 aimed at universal primary education for school-age children in Ghana. While it was not specifically aimed at any social group, it improved enrolment opportunities for girls and people from disadvantaged backgrounds and regions (Graham, 1985). For men and women past school-going age, the mass education programme enabled them to learn to read and write. Free education in Northern Ghana was instituted to reverse centuries of discrimination. The government specifically encouraged the training of women in various male-dominated professions. While these policies did not change fundamentally the situation of women, workers and Northern Ghana, it led to some improvements and set a benchmark by which the politics of future governments would be assessed.

The Nkrumah government took a decision to amalgamate all organisations of the mass movement under the umbrella of the ruling CPP party. These organisations included the Trades Union Congress, the Farmers' Council and the Youth Organisation. The National Council of Ghana Women (NCGW), formed by the CPP from the compulsory merger of diverse independent women's organisations operating in the period, also became a CPP branch organisation. Women's organisations were not only co-opted but also suffered the additional aggravation of forced unity (Tsikata, 1989). This move, as well as a sycophantic attitude to government policies, came to discredit the leadership of these organisations, distance them from their constituents, and weaken group solidarity and consciousness. The loss of credibility and political weakness culminated in the disappearance of most of these organisations after the overthrow of the First Republic, leaving political space for other kinds of groups. For women, there were additional problems. The trader supporters of the party had continued to contribute financially and were rewarded with control of the allocation of market stalls and the distribution of consumer goods. The exposure of this CPP-facilitated patronage system after the overthrow of the First Republic helped to entrench the spectre of the powerful and corrupt female market trader as a scapegoat in Ghanaian politics. This perception of market women in CPP politics, though widely accepted, is grossly exaggerated. Individual women did play crucial roles in the Party. Women's organised participation in mass politics after independence, however, came to consist of praise singing and dancing at rallies. When mass politics degenerated after the co-optation of the organisations of the mass movement, NCGW members were reported to be "seen spreading cloths on the ground for party functionaries to walk on at rallies and harassing opponents of the party and its policies" (Manuh, 1990, p. 126). This contradictory legacy of the Nkrumah years has influenced state policy in subsequent regimes, especially in the area of political practice and social policies. Thus groups such as trade unions, farmers and women organisations continue to be pressed into service by regimes in their search for legitimacy at particular times and marginalised at other times.

It has been argued that certain policies of the Nkrumah Regime diffused ethnic tensions and promoted a Ghanaian national consciousness based on tolerance and respect for all irrespective of their ethnicity. These include the much-maligned Young Pioneers Movement, a national organisation with regional and local branches that promoted nationalism and a pan-African consciousness in young persons. Apart from the Education Act and similarly socially progressive laws, observers have also cited

education policies that oversaw the establishment of boarding secondary schools across the country that could be attended by all young persons irrespective of their regions of origin. Thirdly, the Civil Service practice of regular transfers of all administrative and professional staff – administrators, lawyers, doctors and teachers – enabled people to work and live in all regions of Ghana routinely, and this promoted inter-marriages and long-lasting friendships and bonds among people based on other bases of solidarity. Had these policies been continued by post-Nkrumah governments, Ghana would have had more ethnic harmony (Adjibolosoo 2003). While these policies certainly helped ethnic integration, fundamental issues of inter-ethnic tensions relating to land and sovereignty required other solutions that both colonial and post-colonial governments, including the Nkrumah regime, have failed to address.

### 3.5 The post-Nkrumah period and the military in politics (1966-1979)

In 1966, Nkrumah was overthrown in a coup d'état which ushered in long period of coup d'état regimes interspersed by short periods of attempts at multi-party constitutional rule. The table below sets out in chronological order the different regimes experienced by Ghana since independence. Until the 1992 elections, which resulted in close to a decade of multi-party constitutional government, the military had been in power in Ghana for much of its independence. This has had implications for the political culture and the nature of social groups involved in politics.

**Table 3.1 Ghanaian regimes since independence**

Regime	Leader	Dates	Description
Convention People's Party (CPP)	Nkrumah	1951-1966	Ghana achieved full independence in 1957 and republican status in 1960. Regime overthrown in coup d'état
National Liberation Council Regime (NLC)	Ankrah	1966-1969	Coup d'état regime. Supervised elections in 1969 and handed over to constitutional government
Progress Party Regime	Busia	1969-1972	Second Republic. Overthrown in coup d'état
National Redemption Council (NRC)	Acheampong	1972-75	Military Regime. Composition of executive and name of ruling council changed 2 times after internal power struggles. Overthrown in a military uprising of young officers and other ranks
Supreme Military Council (SMC)	Acheampong Akuffo	1975-78 1978-79	
Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC)	Rawlings	June to September 1979	Supervised elections and handed over to a constitutional government
Peoples National Party Regime (PNP)	Limann	1979-1981	Third Republic. Overthrown in a coup d'état
Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC)	Rawlings	1982-1992	Coup d'état regime. Called elections and succeeded itself
National Democratic Congress (NDC)	Rawlings	1993-2000	Fourth Republic
New Patriotic Party (NPP)	Kuffour	2001 to date	Fourth Republic

With the coup d'état which overthrew the Nkrumah Regime, and abolished the CPP and its constituent organisations came a period where politics in Ghana was focused more on relations between the military, civilians and ethnicity, than on class and gender. With the CPP out of contention, the Progress Party led by Busia, and the National Alliance of Liberals led by Gbedemah, became the two main parties. There

were also several small parties associated with particular regions. Parties came to be associated with particular ethnic groups and this was reflected in their unofficial campaign messages and their performance at the polls. During the Second Republic, the decision to dismiss over five hundred public officials was considered by some analysts as a form of “ethnic cleansing” as the majority of them were Ewe and the government was seen as an Akan party. The Second Republic was prematurely overthrown by the military in 1972, and this institutionalised military-civilian relations as another cleavage in Ghanaian society. Under the umbrella of a <sup>5</sup>military regime, military personnel became more visible in society, and accumulated resources and engaged in commercial farming, especially in the Northern Region of Ghana.

In addition, government officials and other military officers accumulated prime land in Accra and constructed large mansions in suburbs such as Dzorwulu and East Legon. This accumulation took place in the context of an unprecedented collapse of Ghanaian economy and society. Corruption was seen as the order of the day and the chief culprits were identified in rumours and anecdotes as public officials and the commercial classes. Market women came in for particular condemnation as high prices of consumer goods were blamed on them, and young women were accused of corrupting public officials to gain possessions (Tsikata, 1996). The government then tried to perpetuate itself by proposing a union government of military and civilians to replace military rule. A referendum called to settle the question of whether or not to have union government only deepened the contestation when the government declared that the “yes” vote had won. The civilian coalitions opposing the government interestingly had a broad composition: the workers movement, the students’ movement and various professional bodies. Their demands for better terms and conditions of service, greater democratisation and respect for human rights did into tap into ethnic and regional considerations. The country was paralysed by strikes and demonstrations that were violently put down by police and military personnel. Attacks on students at the universities and workers were rife. In this period, ethnicity was largely absent as a basis for political mobilisation.

In 1979, certain junior officers and men of the Armed Forces stepped into the fray and overthrew the government, thereby instituting the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), with Flt. Lt. Rawlings as Chairman. Three months later, the AFRC handed power to the Limann government, after it had supervised elections that were won by a Nkrumahist party, the PNP. The politicking and the elections that had ushered in what was the Third Republic established the so-called Nkrumahist and Danquah-Busia traditions in Ghanaian politics. This was because the main parties declared themselves successors to the traditions of the CPP and the UGCC/PP.<sup>6</sup> The parties were seen to stand broadly for a planned economy with strong social policies on the one hand, and free market and civil liberties on the other hand. However, sceptics argue that much of the rhetoric about ideology and tradition is not borne out by concrete policies as the two parties are actually quite close in outlook and orientation. Even more importantly, party supporters are motivated by ethnic considerations rather than by ideology. The picture is not so cut and dried as has been argued, i.e., that the parties and their supporters spout ideological positions when the real basis of their differences is ethnicity. It is more a complex combination of different identities and differences. As Carbone (2003) has argued in relation to the CPP-PP divisions, “in terms of principles and policy-orientations, this division has often been interpreted as a centre-left versus centre-right

<sup>5</sup> Drum history refers to the oral recitation of historical events in the company of drumming.

<sup>6</sup> This process of tradition-making has been described as a device for legitimation and also allows parties to fix the contest, thus constraining voters’ choices and delegitimising other potential competition (Jonah, 1998; Carbone, 2003).

rivalry, although the 'ideological' cleavage always combined with ethno-regional antagonisms" (p. 8).

### **3.6 The Rawlings regime and its successor (1981-2004)**

Rawlings' second coming to power was more contested than his first stint in 1979. The euphoria that accompanied his first period in power had long since died, and there was concern with what were considered to be excesses, most especially the many incidents of military brutality, instant justice and the execution of members of the overthrown regime. There was apprehension in several quarters about what was in store for the privileged in society. The declaration of a revolution and the government's alliance with political organisations of the left, and the establishment of defence committees in communities and workplaces to enable ordinary people a voice in governance, did not reassure the managerial classes. The take-over of the trade union movement by a group of workers unhappy with the leadership's collaboration with the military and the anti-corruption drive alienated the more affluent social groups and professional bodies. Western governments were also unhappy with the regime, and several Ghanaians went into exile either to avoid being called to account for their wealth or political activities, or to flee political persecution at the hands of the security agencies.

Christian church leaders were among some of the more vocal critics of the government. In the early years of the Rawlings Regime, there was mutual antipathy between the government and churches. The state-owned Ghana Broadcasting Corporation banned sponsored religious programmes. Several churches were attacked by military elements on account of their critical stance to the revolution, allegations of corruption and/or other anti-social activities. Certain religious denominations were banned from Ghana and their premises seized. Interestingly, Masonic lodges were also shut down in this period because the secrecy and class privilege attributed to freemasonry was considered at odds with the egalitarian ethos of the revolution. Years later, government attempts to control the churches through registration failed when it was resisted by the larger and more established churches. By the early 90s, tensions between the Christian churches and the regime had eased somewhat. By the late 1990s, relations had improved to the extent that leaders of charismatic and other churches were accompanying visiting religious delegations to the Castle, the seat of government, and praying for the President, who himself established a tradition of attending church with his family on New Year's Eve. Given the influence of Christianity in Ghana, the tension between church and state was potentially very serious and both sides after initially taking hard stances worked actively to restore the churches to their position of influence in the body politic. Christianity was and remains the dominant religion in Ghana with 69 percent of the population describing themselves as Christian, 16 percent as Muslim, and 9 percent as adherents of traditional religions in the 2000 Population Census. Six percent of the population did not have any religion. The coincidence of religious and regional identities has been observed. For instance 56 percent of people in the Northern Region, representing a third of Ghana's Muslims (34 percent), are muslims, 26 percent of adherents of traditional religion are in Upper East and 22.2 in the Volta Region (Gyimah-Boadi and Asante 2003, quoting the 2000 census).

The first years of Rawlings' rule were marked by several counter-coup attempts, and many acts of military arbitrariness and violence. For example, markets were destroyed and market women's goods seized. Personal scores were settled using military personnel. The ongoing hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Ghana have seen ordinary persons recounting acts of military brutality and human rights abuses. The lowest point of the violence was the murder of three judges and a

retired army officer when it came to light that a member of the ruling People's National Democratic Party (PNDC) had masterminded the murders. The fallouts from this act were potentially destabilising for the regime, which survived in this period largely on account of the support it enjoyed from the workers' movement, and politically-active persons in rural and urban communities.

In 1983, the Rawlings regime adopted a structural adjustment programme. Its implementation culminated in the regime's falling out with its original support base when the reforms began to bite. The regime also fell out with the political organisations of the left and several leading members of these organisations were detained without trial for periods of between 6 and 30 months. This led to the decimation of the two main organisations of the left in Ghana in this period, and muted their brand of politics for years to come. The Trade Unions lost members through labour retrenchments in the civil service and state-owned enterprises. The regime's support base became more diffuse and less coherent as people from the Nkrumahist and Danquah-Busia traditions jostled for positions of influence in the government and persons from different political persuasions were appointed to high office.

By 1986, ethnicity entered the politics formally with the delivery of a lecture by the respected Ghanaian historian, Professor Adu-Boahen, in which he accused the government of being ethnically motivated in appointments to high office. With this speech, the murmurs from the opposition had finally been put on the public agenda. For the rest of Rawlings' rule as Chairman of the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC), the opposition broadened its appeal by adding ethnic bias to the issue of class bias. Certainly ethnicity was an issue that merited discussion in the body politic. After all, research has suggested ethnicity is an important aspect of the identity of people in Ghana; 37 percent of respondents in a recent survey said that apart from their nationality, their language and ethnicity were the most important elements of their identity, while 32 percent cited religion and 19 percent occupation (CDD-Ghana, 2003). In this particular case, the Ewe presence in the Rawlings regime was significant. On the other hand, a statistical analysis of the ethnicity of this and other administrations since Ghana's independence shows that the government was more ethnically balanced than certain past governments and the present regime (UNRISD, cited in Higazi, 2004). Nevertheless, this issue tapped into longstanding political rivalries which, in spite of their strong ideological basis, also had an element of ethno-regional competition. What it achieved was to resurrect political interest in regional balance. The present government, the Kuffuor administration, which has been in power since 2001, is being scrutinised very closely and has been found wanting in its ethnic composition by political commentators.

Apart from separating Rawlings from the left in Ghanaian politics, structural adjustment policies also led to the growing importance of certain identities. The government's community development and "government cannot do it alone" ethos has strengthened hometown development associations, through which chiefs have acquired a new role in community development. Furthermore, old students associations and parent-teacher associations have become much stronger in the face of their growing responsibilities for keeping schools afloat.

Decentralisation, one of the political programmes of the Rawlings era, which is based on the ideals of citizen participation in local government, is considered key to the solution of ethnic conflicts. The argument is that local government enables hitherto marginalised communities and ethnic groups to participate in governance and development, as well as enjoy their share of national resources. Their inclusion institutionalises and legitimises their desire to compete for resources (Ninsin, 1995).



Local government in practice has been complicated by some of the particularities of the systems. For example, competition between government-appointed District Chief Executives and elected members of district assemblies and MPs over resources is a factor which destabilises the system. Even more importantly, the strong interest of chiefs in the institutions of local government and their frontline role in community development projects present a challenge to the citizenship ethos of the District Assemblies, which also strengthens the influence of ethnicity and ethnic politics in the District Assemblies.

In 1992, multiparty elections were held. Rawlings won the presidential elections and was sworn in as President in 1993. Violent ethnic conflicts, that had been much reduced but not absent, flowered along with multi-party politics based on patronage and regional calculations. The Rawlings regime failed to tackle several violent conflicts that broke out in the period, most significantly the Konkomba wars. Certain statements by Rawlings showed sympathy to the Konkomba plight, but no steps were taken to free them from the subject status they were violently contesting and to address the land questions arising from this. There were violent ethnic conflicts across Ghana in the 90s and certain conflicts which did not turn violent simmered. Since the National Democratic Congress (NDC) lost the elections to the NPP in 2000, the same conflicts have broken the peace and caused the new regime concern. The problem is that although these conflicts are localised, they have implications for national politics. The government's handling of a conflict is expected to influence how it performs in parliamentary and presidential elections in that area. Given the close contest between the NPP and the NDC in the last elections in 2000, this could be decisive in winning or losing elections.

One of the legacies of Rawlings' long years in office, whether as a military leader or head of an elected government, was a fundamental change in the dominance of the Nkrumahist and Busia-Danquah traditions in Ghanaian politics. The Nkrumahist parties, divided by competition and contests over the precise nature of the Nkrumah legacy, were dealt a mortal blow by the absorption of some of their leading members into the NDC. While the NPP also suffered some defections, it managed to hold its own as a viable entity strong enough to defeat the NDC in elections. In the 1992, 1996 and 2000 elections, the Nkrumahist parties did not show themselves as serious contenders. In the current parliament of the Fourth Republic, there are no more than four members of Parliament from the Nkrumahist parties. It has been argued, correctly, that the Danquah-Busia and Rawlings traditions are now the two main rival traditions in Ghanaian politics (Carbone, 2003).

#### **4. Violence in Ghana since the 1990s**

##### **4.1 Introduction**

From the foregoing analysis, it is possible to identify different categories of continuous conflict, some of it violent. These include inter-ethnic conflicts, mostly centred on control over land and other resources and sovereignty issues, what Brukum (1995) has described as wars of emancipation or secession. A second category of conflicts are intra-ethnic conflicts partly overland ownership, competing uses of land and the locating of institutions and services, but mostly over chieftaincy succession and conflicts between state institutions, such as the police and communities, over policing and law and order issues arising from communal conflicts and inter-personal disputes. There are also religious conflicts between Muslims, between Christians and Muslims, and between Christians and followers of traditional religious practices, conflicts between members of different political parties and

between supporters of rival football clubs. The above classification does not take into account the fact that often, the violent disputes reported by the media have multiple causes and elements. Thus police-community violence could arise from the policing of a chieftaincy or inter-ethnic dispute and tap into existing mistrust of the police. In the same vein, an inter-ethnic dispute may be triggered by the locating of a facility by the District Assembly.

## 4.2 Inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic disputes

There are several longstanding inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic disputes among various communities across Ghana. In the Volta Region alone, four main conflict areas have been identified. They are the Nkonya/Alavanyo, Nkwanta, Peki/Tsito and Abutia Kpota conflicts (Daily Graphic, 11/6/2003). The first two are inter-ethnic while the last two are intra-ethnic. Three of the conflicts – the Nkonya Alavanyo, Nkwanta and Peki-Tsito – are land conflicts while the Abutia conflict is a chieftaincy dispute.<sup>7</sup> In the Northern Region, there are longstanding often violent inter-ethnic conflicts between the Gonja and the Konkomba (who are also implicated in the Nkwanta area conflicts of the Volta Region) and between Dagombas and Konkomba. In the Brong-Ahafo Region, violent clashes between the Nafana and Ntore ethnic groups at Brohani near Wenchi over land and sovereignty resulted in three deaths and 2,000 persons being rendered homeless. Attempts by the courts to address the conflict were frustrated when the bailiffs and police were attacked as they tried to enforce a judgement debt against the chief of the Ntore (Ghanaian Times, GT, 2/9/97).

Intra-ethnic conflicts in Ghana tend to be either land disputes (Peki-Tsito in the Volta Region; Nsuta-Beposo in Ashanti – GT, 25/1/97, Effiduase-Asokore in the Ashanti Region – GT, 27/4/2000; Weija-Oblogo in the Greater Accra Region – GT 3/5/2003), or more commonly, chieftaincy or succession conflicts. Chieftaincy conflicts in which violence has been reported are Dagbon (2002); the Mossi chieftaincy dispute in Kumasi (2000); Teshie, Accra (1996; 1999); Old Tafo near Kumasi (1996); Donyina in the Ejisu Juaben District of Ashanti (1997); Banda-Ahenkro in the Brong Ahafo Region (1996); Brekusu near Aburi, (August 2003); Mampong, Ashanti (1996); Aplaku, near Bortianor in the Ga District of the Greater Accra Region (1999); Juaso, Ashanti Region (1999); Teshie, Greater Accra Region (1999); Akyem Nkwantanang in the Eastern Region (2000); Asutare in the Eastern Region (2000); Bimbagu, West Mamprusi District of the Northern Region (2000); and Bimbilla (2003) in the Northern Region. There was violence at Tanoso-Subin, Brong Ahafo Region, following the elevation of four traditional areas to paramountcy status by the Asantehene. These areas had hitherto been under the Tachimian stool (GT 2/9/1996). It is estimated that there are over 100 chieftaincy disputes in Ghana, several of which have been complicated when politicians and political parties have supported one or the other faction.

Land use conflicts have been a source of violence between Fulani herdsmen and local farmers in the Northern parts of Ghana. While essentially about land use, this class of conflict is manifest as ethnic conflict between locals and migrants, with Ghanaian nationality as a subtext. In the Central Region, there are also disturbances

<sup>7</sup> The Nkwanta conflict is between the Nawuris and the Adeles, a Konkomba group, while the Peki-Tsito conflict involves two Ewe groups in dispute over boundaries. The Abutia conflict arises because the Battor residents of Abutia Kpota, largely inhabited by Mafi people, installed their headman as chief of the community. Both the Mafi and Battor are Tongu migrant groups that have settled on Abutia land around the Volta Lake (Graphic online news, 11/6/2003).

arising from the activities of itinerant hunters accused of destroying crops by local farmers.

Conflicts over other resources have often been generated by decisions related to decentralisation. For example, it was reported that forty persons had been arrested at Nalerigu in the Northern Region because they had created an illegal road block to prevent people from Gambaga from attending the only medical centre in the area and the market at Gambaga. Tensions between the two Mamprusi towns, five kilometres apart, had arisen because of their differences over the construction of a new administration block for the East Mamprusi District at Gambaga (GT, 15/1/98). Similarly, the youth of Adrobaa in the Tano District were reported to be planning to mount a roadblock to prevent the people of Subriso No. 2, a neighbouring village, from taking part in the weekly community market held at Adrobaa. This was in retaliation for the Subriso community's participation in the inauguration of an area Council at Terchire "without permission". Subriso had been one of a group of communities that had threatened to boycott the activities of the Terchire-Adrobaa area council to protest the siting of the council's headquarters at Terchire instead of Adrobaa, a larger community that had since distanced itself from the protest when it attended the inauguration (GT, 24/8/98). At Fiapre, riots arose from the decision by the chief to grant land to the Catholic church for a University, which was disputed by some members of the community (GT, 10/11/98).

### 4.3 Religious conflicts

While religious conflicts are not on the scale of other countries in the West African sub-region, there are longstanding religious conflicts, some involving intra- and inter-ethnic rivalries, periodically break into violence. There have been violent incidents among Muslims, especially in the Northern, Ashanti and Brong-Ahafo Regions. In 1996, a religious clash between Kotokoli and Dagomba at the Akim Oda Zongo<sup>8</sup> resulted in six deaths, the burning of ten houses and destruction of property worth millions of cedis (GT, 17/9/96). Clashes have been reported between Muslim groups at Wa in the Upper West Region (GTR, 15/12/97), Tamale in the Northern Region (GT, 6/12/1997) and Kumasi in the Ashanti Region (GT, 5/9/98). In 1994 and 1998, there were clashes between the Tijaniya and Al Sunna Muslims at Wenchi in the Brong Ahafo Region (GT, 6/10/97; 29/1/98). The 1998 violence in which four persons died, twenty four others were seriously injured and property destroyed was triggered by a dispute between the two groups over proprietary rights over the Wenchi Muslim cemetery (GT, 19/1/98). There was a suggestion by the then Inspector General of Police (IGP) that there could be non-Ghanaians involved in the conflict, when he stated that if foreigners were found to be behind the violence, they would be deported (GT, 27/1/1998). The Tijaniya and Al-Sunni also clashed at Tamale in the Northern Region, where one person died and several were injured (GT 9/12/97). At another dispute between Muslims at Chereponi in the Northern Region over who should become the next imam after the serving imam died, police were called upon to prevent violence (GT, 15/4/2000). While there have been violent incidents between Muslims and Christians, such incidents are much reduced. In the period when all the intra-Muslim disputes were reported, there were no reports of violence between Muslims and Christians.

A religious conflict which has been much reported and debated is between the traditional religious authorities of the Ga Traditional State and Christian churches

<sup>8</sup> A Zongo is the quarter of a town largely occupied by Muslim migrants from Northern Ghana and from around the West African sub-region. Large towns in Ghana tend to have a Zongo.

operating in several suburbs of the capital Accra. The annual ban on drumming and dancing which precedes the Homowo festival of the Ga people is the point of conflict as several Christian churches have refused to observe the ban and have been attacked by organised unofficial enforcers of the ban. This conflict is discussed more fully later in the paper as a case of religious conflict raising issues of constitutional rights and freedoms.

#### **4.4 Police-community violence**

Clashes between the police and communities have become endemic. Examples of such incidents are an attack against the police at Banda-Ahenkro in the Brong Ahafo Region on 24 November 1996 when they went to police a chieftaincy dispute (GT, 3/1/97). Two years later, about three hundred people in Banda-Ahenkro attacked a police-station to release two detained members of a faction in a chieftaincy dispute and attacked a policeman, forcing five others to flee (GT, 28/11/98). Also in the Brohahi case mentioned earlier, a group of people attacked the policeman and bailiffs when they tried to enforce a judgement debt against the chief of the Ntore in the Brong-Ahafo Region (GT2/9/97). At Amuana Praso in the Birim North District, police and the townspeople accused each of attacking the other over disturbances arising from the death of a citizen of the community (Evening News, 8/9/03). At another incident in Tanoso when police attempted to dismantle an unauthorised roadblock, clashes resulted in five policemen and four civilians being injured (GT 6/6/98). There were also riots at Juaso in the Ashanti Region in which a faction in a chieftaincy dispute clashed with the police that attempted to keep law and order. The Juaso police station was burnt down (GT 5/1/1999).

Eighty people were arrested at Assin Praso in the Central Region after the police were attacked, the police station vandalised and property destroyed; this followed their attempt to arrest a woman on suspicion that she had stolen her estranged husband's property from another community (GT, 26/2/97). In Ablekuma, a rural community in the Ga District of the Greater Accra Region, two policemen were murdered and buried secretly in December 1998 when they attempted to arrest a suspect. A contingent of three hundred policemen over-ran the community, vandalising and burning down property, and arresting suspects. The residents fled for months before returning to their homes (GT, 22/10/99).

In one of the reported cases, the law and order authority in question was the Dakpema Palace Brigade, a traditional law enforcement group linked to a chief. They reportedly clashed with youth at Sabonjida, Tamale in the Northern Region, leading to injuries and gunshot wounds. The conflict had arisen when the Brigade attempted to arrest some youth in the town for showing them disrespect as they went about their duties. The youth in turn accused them of often using excessive force and instituting corporal punishment against the laws of Ghana (GT, 27/9/1996).

The violence involving law enforcement agencies and communities raises questions about policing culture and the loss of credibility of state institutions in conflict management and resolution. Often, the police are suspected of partiality and corruption by one side in communal disputes. This is compounded by the authoritarian police culture and the lack of proper communal violence management skills and facilities, which leaves individual police officers and police property vulnerable to attack.

Other kinds of state-related violence include incidents between communities and companies which have acquired community resources through the award of mining and timber concessions. An example is the reported conflict between the Bonte

Mining Company and farmers in the Atwima District of the Ashanti Region arising from the destruction of a number of diesel drums belonging to the company. The police arrested the farmers and put them before court in Kumasi. The conflict had arisen because of contestations over land acquired by the company for its surface mining activities (GT, 10/3/98). Also, land disputes between communities and state agencies have turned violent. These conflicts have arisen from government acquisition of vast tracts of land for which little or no compensation has been paid. This creates long term disputes with the agencies that have been assigned the land or the individuals to whom they have allocated the land. At Frafraha in the Tema municipal area, land owners were threatening persons who had bought land from the State Housing Corporation which had (also) acquired the land (GT, 25/2/97). There are several such tensions all over peri-urban Accra.

#### **4.5 Political violence**

Political violence between supporters of the different political parties predates independence and has become part of the political scene since the anti-colonial struggle. Violent incidents in the early post-colonial period have included attempted and successful political assassinations, the most famous being the bomb blast at Kulungugu which threatened the life of President Kwame Nkrumah. More common is violence between supporters of rival political parties, which becomes common close to elections. In situations where party membership follows ethnic patterns, such violence feeds on already existing ethnic rivalries. At Bawku in the Upper East Region, on and around 7 December 2000, supporters of rival political parties were locked in bloody conflict in which cleavages were along ethnic lines (GT, 3/1/2001). At Asutuare, violence between supporters of the NPP and NDC injured thirty persons. However, it was reported that political differences had only exacerbated conflicts arising from chieftaincy and irrigated land distribution disputes (GT, 13/2/01).

Political violence of a different order also occurs during coup d'états and over the life course of coup d'état regimes. The military and police are used in such periods for political repression. The student movement in Ghana suffered violent repression by the military and police when they opposed the Acheampong and Akuffo Regimes in the 1970s. In the early 80s when Rawlings seized power, political violence between workers and the factory managers, and between organisations which supported the regime and those who opposed it, were common as were acts of military brutality – beatings, arbitrary arrests, rapes and murders.

#### **4.6 Football violence**

Football violence is common throughout Ghana. Wherever football matches are played, incidents between supporters can occur. However, with larger teams, the propensity for violence tends to be more serious. The great rivalry between the Asante Kotoko and Accra Hearts of Oak football clubs, which have support throughout the country, but are associated with the Ashanti Region and the Greater Accra Region Zongos respectively, has often resulted in violence. The most deadly incident occurred in 2001 after a match at the Accra Sports Stadium when rival supporters began to throw seats at each other. The police intervened with tear gas and in the ensuing stampede, over 120 persons died, most of them trampled underfoot. A Commission of Enquiry later, there is no certainty that future football violence is avoidable. Smaller incidents continue to occur. At Sekondi, a football fan was shot dead by police trying to bring order to an altercation between supporters of rival teams after a football match between Sekondi Eleven Wise and Accra Hearts of Oak (GT, 3/12/98).

## 5. Violent conflicts in Ghana: four cases

This chapter discusses four cases of violent conflicts in Ghana in more detail. The Konkomba case is inter-ethnic and represents a case of disillusionment of the aboriginal/migrant groups with their rulers/landlords. The Dagbon case study is intra-ethnic and represents a conflict embedded in the lack of clarity in traditional norms and practices. The Alavanyo-Nkonya case is a land dispute between two communities of different ethnicities, and the Ga Traditional Area-Religious Bodies case is a conflict between landlords enforcing ethnic traditions and religious organisations steeped in modernity and the protection of constitutional religious freedoms.

### 5.1 The Konkomba conflicts

#### 5.1.1 Introduction

Conflicts and inter-state wars have been part of Ghana's history. However, a disturbing feature in the Northern Region of Ghana since independence has been the intermittent eruption of intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic conflicts. Such conflicts have been more frequent in the past two and one-half decades, with as many as twenty conflicts recorded since 1980. Most inter-ethnic conflicts have involved the Konkomba ethnic group. The Konkombas fought the Nanumbas in 1980, 1994 and 1995, and fought the Dagombas in 1994. The most devastating of the conflicts was the 1994 one, which covered an area of about 50,000 square kilometres, engulfed nine districts and involved about two million people (Brukum, 1995).

Most of the conflicts in Northern Ghana have been between ethnic groups that regard themselves as indigenous, and others that historically invaded and established the traditional kingdoms of the North. The aborigines of Northern Ghana, like those in other parts of modern-day Ghana, did not have centralised political systems. Lineage took the place of political allegiance with many lineages forming a clan. Lineage heads took all important decisions and resolved conflicts between people from different clans. A religious head called the Tindana had spiritual control over the land and people residing in his area. The aborigines found their area invaded around the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, resulting in the establishment of the Manpurugu, Dagbon, Nanun and also the Gonja traditional kingdoms. The new comers usurped political power but were assimilated culturally. It is important to note that the Konkombas are the largest of the "aboriginal" ethnic groups in Northern Ghana.

#### 5.1.2 The Konkombas

According to a report written to the Chief Commissioner of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast (now Ghana) H. A. Blair on 28 November 1933, the Konkomba are made up of the Gbimba, the Nafeba, the Chamba and the Komba tribes. The first three possess organizations under Dagbon Divisional chiefs, with which they seem completely satisfied, probably because the authority of the chiefs in question originated in the protection of those tribes and not in their conquest. Blair describes the fourth tribe, the Komba, as made up mainly of "a latter wave of settlers". Blair described a fifth tribe of the Konkombas, the Monkpimba, as variously scattered and quarrelsome, and above all with no organisation as a tribe (Blair Report, 1933).

During the colonial era, the Konkobas were divided between British and French Togoland. Martinson (1995) reports that the Konkomba in French Togoland had the

habit of assassinating French colonial officials and then fleeing to the Gold Coast: “Whenever they rioted, murdered or refused to pay tax to the French Colonial Administration, all that had to be done was simply to cross the River Oti to the Gold Coast side” (Martinson, 1995, p. 63). Without any extradition treaty with the British, people wanted for crimes were never extradited to French Togoland. Almost invariably, their hosts welcomed them and gave them land to settle and farm. Most of the “French Konkomba” are settled today in Nanumba, Kete-Krachi and some parts of the Yendi District. Martinson (1995) describes them as “diasporan Konkombas” and attributes the Konkomba conflicts in Northern Ghana to them.

It is pertinent to point out that the relationship between the Dagomba and the Konkombas has always been problematic. The Konkombas are not closely related to the Dagomba, yet are included within the Dagomba Traditional Area. When the Dagomba invaded the area, they probably encountered the Konkombas as the original inhabitants and pushed them to the east. Some Konkombas were undoubtedly conquered and incorporated into Dagbon, but those to the east of the Oti River apparently were not. Nevertheless, under the colonial system, the Dagomba were given administrative control over all Konkomba in Northern Ghana (Ladouceur, 1979).

### **5.1.3 Causes of conflicts**

The conflicts between the Konkombas and the traditional kingdoms of Northern Ghana have been described by Brukum (1995) as wars of emancipation, with one group determined to maintain the status quo and the other fighting to overthrow it. Realising the fertile nature of the lands in their host areas, some migrant Konkombas decided to settle as farmers and established permanent villages from Sambu near Yendi in the North, to Dambai in the Kete-Krachi district in the Volta Region. It was however in Nanun that trouble developed between them and their hosts. The main causes of Konkomba discontent were that they were compelled, like everyone else in the area, to put in some days free labour each year on the farms of Nanumba chiefs; that the chiefs also intermittently collected tribute in the form of foodstuff and livestock from their Konkomba tenants; and lastly, that it was compulsory to donate the hind leg of any big animal killed, whether wild or domesticated, to Nanun chiefs during funerals.

Perhaps the most problematic aspect of the settler/host relationship was the fact that the Konkombas were not allowed to settle disputes among themselves, including matrimonial and other interpersonal conflicts. The Konkomba Youth Association (KOYA) was revived in the early 1970s to address some of these problems. Its objectives included projecting Konkomba culture and abandoning obsolete customs. It was also decided that each Konkomba community in the host areas should select their leader to adjudicate petty problems among them. The implementation of the latter involved the Konkombas and their Nanumba hosts in a serious conflict in 1981, resulting in many fatalities.

The causes of conflict become even clearer if one examines the relationship between the Konkombas and their Nawuri and Nchumuru allies on the one hand, and the Gonja, their landlords, on the other hand. After conquering what is now Eastern Gonja, Gonjas claimed to have settled the Nawuri and Nchumuru on the conquered land and put them under Gonja chiefs. The Nawuri and Nchumuru dispute this account of events, insisting that the relationship between them and the Gonja was not one of conquest i.e., between an overlord and subject (Brukum, 1995). Two incidents in Kpandai, the biggest settlement in Eastern Gonja in 1991 provided a spark for conflagration in a relationship that had been full of tension for a long time.

The Gonja Youth Association, renamed the Gonjaland Youth Association in line with their claim to own all land in the Gonja area, decided to hold a meeting in Kpandai, a Nawuri settlement in April 1991. All non-Gonjas decided to boycott the meetings of the Association, pointing out that Gonjas did not own all the land in so-called East Gonja. Tension began to mount and to avert any conflict, the Northern Regional Administration cancelled the meeting. While the Nawuris and their allies regarded the cancellation of the meeting as a vindication of their cause, the Gonjas did not understand why they had been prevented from holding a meeting on land they considered theirs.

Thus tension continued to build up and needed only the slightest incident to spark violence. That incident was provided in April 1991. The Nawuris, regarding themselves as landowners, allocated a piece of land to the Catholic Church for an agricultural project. The Gonjas, on the other hand, sold the same piece of land to a fitter/mechanic to erect a workshop. Arguments over who had the right to allocate land at Kpandai led to fighting, and the Konkombas and other ethnic groups in the area joined hands with the Nawuris.

Konkomba actions in these conflicts arise from their desire for recognition and self-assertion. The Konkombas in the “diaspora” are many and scattered all over many areas in the savannah and transitional areas of Ghana. However, apart from Saboba, they do not have a large settlement anywhere else. The Konkombas in 1993 petitioned the National House of Chiefs to elevate the chief of Saboba to a paramountcy without passing it through the Ya Na, the overlord of Dagbon in which Saboba is situated. This created tension between the Dagombas and the Konkombas. When in 1994 fighting erupted between the Nanumbas and the Konkombas, the Dagombas were drawn into the fighting.

While the factors discussed above provide the basis for potential conflicts between the Konkomba and the traditional states in the Northern Region of Ghana, certain incidents have provided the trigger for violence. The first recorded conflict between the Konkombas and the Dagombas was over the vaccination of cattle against the rinderpest disease. The Konkomba ring-leader, Oninkpil Kodile, claimed that the anti-rinderpest immunization and the annual inoculation of their stock against pleuropneumonia in that year (1940) had claimed many diseased animals (mostly cattle), and since it was the Dagomba chief of Zogbeli who had directed the British Veterinary Officer to the kraal, all Dagombas had to pay for the deaths of Konkomba cows. The Zogbeli conflict in which the chief and several others were murdered is popularly referred to as the “cow war”.

Notwithstanding the punitive measures that were taken against the Konkombas by the colonial government, the Konkombas launched another attack on the Dagomba in 1946 at Sambuli. This time the immediate cause was that a Dagomba man had been found fishing in a pond the Konkombas claimed as theirs. The conflict is also referred to as the “fish war”. The wider conflict between the Konkombas and their allies in 1994 was widely referred to as the “guinea-fowl war” because it was triggered by an argument between a Konkomba man and a Nanumba man over the price of a guinea-fowl.

#### **5.1.4 Attempts at conflict resolution**

Successive governments of Ghana have shown concern whenever conflicts arise in Northern Ghana. When the Konkomba-Nanumba conflict erupted in 1980, the Limann (PNP) government set up the Justice Lamptey Committee to investigate the



underlying causes and make appropriate recommendations to avert future occurrences. After the April 1991 conflict involving the Gonjas, the Nawuris and their Konkomba allies, the government of Rawlings (PNDC) set up the Justice Ampiah Committee to investigate. Again in the wake of the 1994 conflict, the Rawlings (NDC) government set up a Permanent Peace Negotiation Team on Northern conflicts. The team visited many areas of the conflict but never delivered its report. A common thread in all these government efforts is that either the reports are never delivered or the recommendations are never implemented.

Religious bodies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are sometimes encouraged by government to help resolve some of these conflicts. The Catholic Church was on hand to assist in the 1991 conflict. In the 1994 conflict, government encouraged an inter-NGO consortium and the Nairobi Peace Initiative (NPI) under the umbrella of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) to organize and facilitate a series of peace and reconciliation workshops among the warring groups in Northern Ghana.

Perhaps the most positive results of the efforts at conflict resolution were the February, 1996 agreements through the Nairobi Initiative for Peace between the Dagomba on the one hand, and the Konkomba and Basare on the other; and between Nanumbas and Konkombas in,. Under the former agreement, the Konkombas and Basaris accepted that the Ya Na (the Dagbon king) has allodial rights over lands in Dagbon, and that as all the parties were citizens of Dagbon, they were entitled to land without discrimination. The Ya Na also agreed to create a paramountcy among the Konkomba and Basare (which he did) to enable them be represented in the Dagbon Traditional Council and ultimately the Regional House of Chiefs.

In the agreement between the Konkomba and Naumumba, also brokered through the NPI, the Konkomba accepted that they are settlers on Nanumba land. The Namumba in turn recognized the Konkomba as an important segment of the community and they were to be allowed to freely choose their headmen to be blessed by either the Bimbilla Na or his accredited representative.

## **5.2 Dagbon chieftaincy dispute**

### **5.2.1 Introduction**

The Dagbon chieftaincy dispute is a good example of the passions that chieftaincy issues can inflame in Ghana, and of the extent to which these matters have become politicised. In the Dagbon case, a traditional matter has become the main subject of local politics as well as an issue of national politics. The Dagomba people or *Dagbamba* as they call themselves, constitute the single largest ethnic group in Northern Ghana. They speak the Dagbani language, a subgroup of the Mole-Dagbani family of languages, which belongs to the much larger Gur language group.

Some historians have traced part of the ancestral roots of the Dagomba people to Gombe in the Zamfara state of the early Hausa kingdom. Drum history<sup>9</sup>, however, traces the origin of the Dagbon kingdom to ancient Mali whose king had been so impressed with the exploits of Toha-zhie, a wandering hunter, that he recruited him into his service. Toha-Zhie eventually married one of the daughters of the King of Mali called Paga-wobga, who bore him a son – Kpagunimbu. Kpagunimbu is credited

<sup>9</sup> Drum history refers to the oral recitation of historical events in the company of drumming.

with starting the Dagbon migrations from Mali to what is now the Upper East Region of Ghana. Here he married Sihisabigu, the daughter of a Tindana in a place known as Bion, and eventually replaced the Tindana after assassinating him. Kpagunimbu and Sihisabigu had twin sons called Nyamzisheli and Nyarigili, who are believed to be the ancestors of the Talinsi and Nabdam ethnic groups of the Upper East Region. Following his exploits as a warrior, the King of Grumah, Abudu Rahamani married off his daughter, Suhuyini, to Kpagunimbu. Suhuyini gave birth to Gbewaa, two of whose sons Tohugu and Sitobu founded the Mamprugu and Dagbon kingdoms respectively. Sitobu's son, Nyagsi, who reigned between 1416 and 1432, expanded the Dagbon kingdom through wars against aboriginal peoples throughout what is now present-day Dagbon. Thus the Dagbamba came to the area they now occupy as conquerors and established the traditional state of Dagbon, bringing with them the institution of chieftaincy, which had not been found among the original inhabitants. The Dagbon capital is Yendi where the King, whose title is Ya Na, resides.

### 5.2.2 Causes of conflict

The Dagbamba are strongly attached to the institution of chieftaincy, which partly accounts for the intensity with which conflicts over chieftaincy are carried out. Conflicts tend to revolve around questions of succession, since the rules for succession tend to be rather flexible and allow for a number of candidates. Part of the current dispute (known variously as the Dagbon conflict or the Yendi chieftaincy affairs) hinges on whether or not it is a rule of tradition that succession to the throne should alternate between two rival sections of the royal family. These two sections originated in the late nineteenth century, following the death of Ya Na Yakubu who was succeeded first by his son Abudulai and then by another son Andani. Since the death of Andani in 1899, there has been in some measure an alternation between descendants of the two brothers, and the extent to which this rotation constitutes another rule for determining the succession remains unsettled.

In addition to the question of rotation between the two families, there is also disagreement over who has the right to select a successor, and over which particular act in the installation ceremony makes one a Ya Na. Formally, the selection of a successor rested in the hands of four kingmakers. In 1948, the membership of the kingmakers was expanded to eleven with the addition of seven divisional chiefs to form a selection committee. The legitimacy of the Committee, which probably represented a final attempt by the British to codify the rules and procedures of succession to the Yendi skin, has been in dispute.

In the 1940s, the educated elite of Dagbon – most of whom were from its royal families – played a major role in the setting up of the controversial selection committee. The institution of the selection committee coincided with the era of active pre-independence politics, and the pioneer-educated elite was poised to exploit the situation. Having a king who was more amenable to their political ambitions was of vital importance to them. By 1954, there were complaints that the committee system was adopted to protect the interest of the Abudulai family and ultimately eliminate the Andani family from the contest (Sibidow, 1970).

One major source of conflict in modern times is the tradition that “you do not destool a Ya Na”. In former times, a Ya Na who proved unacceptable was simply killed. As this is no longer a practical alternative, once installed a Ya Na cannot be destooled even if he is found to have violated customs. Thus Dagbon custom as a whole is ambiguous on this point if not outright contradictory (Ladouceur, 1972). Such an implicit ambiguity facilitates the intervention of an outside power to settle outstanding

disagreements as to the correct interpretation of tradition. It also serves not only to foment disputes but also to sustain them.

Another source of the Dagbon conflict is intergenerational in nature. Intergenerational conflict arises because of the exclusion from succession of the senior sons of a king by his junior brothers. Conversely, the junior brothers in the older generation could find themselves excluded by the sons of their senior brother. According to Ferguson *et al.* (1970), the critical nature of exclusion is apparent. By virtue of the Dagbon rule that no son may assume a higher rank in society than his father, a candidate's failure to attain office carries with it the implication that none of his descendants may ever aspire to it. Intergenerational conflict appears then to be a structural feature for succession to higher office in Dagbon. There is, however, probably a contingent association between such conflicts and the polarization between rival factions that is also a characteristic feature of the conflict. The candidates from the senior generation may tend to attract the support of the more conservative factions and those from the junior generation, that of the more radical.

### **5.2.2 Origins of the disputes**

The origins of the present succession dispute go back to 1948. Following the death of Ya Na Mahama II, a member of the Andani family, his son who was Regent, put himself forward as a candidate for succession but failed in his bid. Ya Na Mahama III, from the Abudulai family, became king. The regent, Andani, became the Mion Lana, and on the death of Mahama III in 1953, put forward his candidature again. According to the principle of rotation, it should now have been the turn of the Andani family to occupy the office of Ya Na. However, Andani was passed over once again and the Gbon Lana succeeded his father as Abudulai III in March 1954. Dissatisfaction over his ascension continued long after his installation and spilled over into the era of independence.

Shortly after independence, the Andani family mounted a major campaign to have the Ya Na destooled on a number of grounds. They argued, among other things, that it was against Dagbon custom to have a Ya Na with physical deformities. Also, he had not been properly installed by the custodians of the regalia, he had not held one of three gate skins from which Kings were traditionally selected and he was ruling despotically. It is pertinent to note that such a campaign ran counter to an equally powerful Dagbon tradition that a Ya Na, once installed, could not be destooled.

### **5.2.4 The long road to regicide**

Ya Na Abudulai III survived the crisis and died on 14 September 1967. A nineteen year old schoolboy, Mahamadu, became Gbonlana (Regent) and immediately put forward his candidacy to become Ya Na. The Mion Lana Andani, who had earlier in 1954 contested his father, joined the contest. On 21 November 1968, it appeared that the succession had been resolved: the announcement was made that the seventy-year old Mion Lana Andani had been made Ya Na by the unanimous decision of the kingmakers.

Later however, fourteen senior chiefs, including eight out of the eleven-member selection committee, claimed they had actually chosen Gbonlana Mahamadu as Ya Na. After two successive Kings from the Abudulai family, it appeared that both the traditional state council and the selection committee for succession to the Yendi skin was strongly pro-Abudulai. In mid-December 1968, the Ghana government appointed a committee (the Mate-Kole Committee) to inquire into procedures for choosing a Ya Na. While the committee was still sitting, Ya Na Andani III died on 14 March 1969.

On 21 March 1969, Yakubu Andani, a twenty-five year old school teacher, eldest son of Na Andani III, was installed the Gbonlana.

On 4 September 1969, the day after Dr. K. A. Busia became Prime Minister, the Mate-Kole Committee's report was released. It found that Mionlana Andani's enskinment<sup>10</sup> as Ya Na "was repugnant to Dagbon custom" and therefore null and void, and that Gbonlana Mahamadu should be immediately invested as Ya Na. Fighting immediately broke out in Yendi, resulting in the death of the aged mother of the late Ya Na Abudulai III. The Gbonlana, Mahamadu Abudulai, was then enskinned the Ya Na with heavy military presence. This was after the army had been deployed to forcibly eject members of the Andani Family from the Gbewaa Palace they were occupying in accordance with tradition, to perform the funeral of Ya-Naa Andani III. About thirty members of the Andani family were killed in that attack in September 1969. Among the occupants of the palace was the Gbonlana, Yakubu Andani, who had assumed the status of Regent after the death of his father, Ya-Naa Andani III, in 1969.

The matter did not end there. Following an appeal to government, the Ollenu committee was set up in 1972, among other things, to ascertain the correct custom and customary procedure for the nomination, selection and enskinment of a Ya Na, including the correct list of candidates; whether or not the purported deskinment of Ya Na Andani II was justifiable; and whether or not the method adopted in declaring and enskinning Mahamadu Abudulai as Ya Na was in conformity with Dagbon custom. At the end of an exhaustive inquiry, the government accepted most of the findings of the committee. In the main, government endorsed the committee's view that the purported deskinment of Ya Na Andani III was not justifiable and that the purported nomination, selection and enskinment of Mahamadu Abudulai were null and void since he did not occupy any of the gate skins and was not selected by the four-member constitutional body of kingmakers. Thus, Yakubu Andani, who was appointed Gbonlana after his father's death, continued as such, and was subsequently selected and installed as the Ya Na after his father's funeral.

As governments changed, the dispute kept on resurrecting, but this time the matter was referred to the courts. The matter ended up in the highest court of Ghana, the Supreme Court, which by majority decision upheld the recommendations of the Ollenu Commission. Indeed, on December 17, 1986 by a six to one majority, the Supreme Court upheld the Rotational System of ascension to the kingship of Dagbon and declared the matter closed. The rotational system was thus elevated to the status of a national law.

This did not resolve the matter. The continuing crisis eventually led to the murder of Ya Na Yakubu Andani II on March 27, 2002. His murder was connected with a dispute between the two sections of the royal family over the performance of the funeral of former Ya Na Mahamadu IV. Ya Na Mahamadu IV died as a former Ya Na at a time when there was a sitting Ya Na in the person of Ya Na Yakubu Andani II. This means that the Dagbon state had no definite role in conducting his funeral. Also the Supreme Court order on this matter stated:

*"Having regard to the Dagomba Constitution that deskinment is unknown in (Dagbon), all persons who have ever occupied the Nam of Yendi shall without regard to how they ceased to be Ya Na be regarded as former Ya*

<sup>10</sup> In keeping with the practice of calling the office and symbol of chiefs from Northern Ghana "skins" rather than "stools" as pertains in Southern Ghana, the process of making a person a chief or a king is called enskinment in the North and enstoolment in the South.

*Nas. Consequently their sons do qualify for appointment to the gate skins of Savulugu, Karaga and Mion”.*

Thus, Naa Mahamadu IV became a former Ya Na and died in 1988. Although he was not the ruling King when he died, his family and followers insisted that his funeral be performed at the Gbewaa Palace like that of a Ya Na who had died in office. This demand did not find favour with the Dagbon Traditional Council, who argued that it would have been in conflict with the Dagbon custom that no funeral of a Ya Na can be performed at the palace while there is an incumbent Ya Na. The dispute simmered until an attack on the Gbewaa Palace to forcibly evict Ya Na Yakubu Andani II in order to pave the way for the performance of the funeral of former Ya Na Mahamadu IV. The fighting that ensued resulted in the murder of Ya Na Yakubu Andani II and over thirty others.

### **5.2.5 Political interference**

The Dagbon conflict gradually spilled over into the national political arena over the years as each side mustered what forces it could with politicians taking an increasing interest in this and other chieftaincy disputes. Each side in the Dagbon dispute has articulate well-educated spokesmen and, since 1954, prominent national political figures as well. It was largely through their activities that the dispute became a political issue shortly after independence. On the Abudu side was Alhaji Yakubu Tali, Tolon Na, while the Andani side had J.H. Alhassan. Both men had become prominent figures in both Dagbon affairs and in the emerging modern political system in the early 1950s. Both were elected to the Gold Coast Legislative Assembly in 1951 and to Parliament in 1954, the former on the opposition regional NPP ticket and the latter to the governing CPP.<sup>11</sup>

If politicians can make use of their power base in the modern political system to interfere in traditional affairs, some traditional rulers are also quite capable of seizing opportunities presented by national politics to consolidate their own positions. Ya Na Abudulai III, sensing that he might be dethroned, withdrew his support for the opposition and together with his followers, including Alhaji Yakubu Tali, joined the then ruling party, the CPP, en bloc in 1958. Political interference in the Dagbon conflict continued with changes in government. The overthrow of the Kwame Nkrumah government in 1966 marked radical changes in official ideology and priorities. In general terms, the policy of the National Liberation Council (NLC), the military regime, in traditional matters was to restore chieftaincy to its former position and reduce government interference. However, chieftaincy affairs took on an added importance in post-coup Ghana and government interference increased instead of diminishing. In the case of the Yendi dispute, government interference was taken to new heights when in September 1969, the selection and enskinment of Ya Na Andani III was declared null and void by the NLC government. It was felt that a factor in this decision that had objectively benefited the Abudulai family was the presence of B. A. Yakubu, a family supporter, in the NLC government. Thus the murder of Ya Na Yakubu Andani II in March 2002 took place during a time when the NPP government, successor to Prime Minister K. A. Busia's party which succeeded the NLC, was in power and was seen as significant. It succeeded in evoking memories of the killings in the Gbewaa palace in 1969.

<sup>11</sup> Both sides continue to have articulate spokespersons with political influence. One of the authors of this paper, Prof. Wayo Seini, emerged as one of the spokesmen of the Andani family following the murder of the Ya Na. Seini had also been a leading member of the NPP until 2000.

### 5.2.6 Attempts at dispute resolution

Attempts at resolving conflicts related to the Yendi dispute date back to the pre-colonial era. The most prominent that is recounted by drum history relates to the dispute that arose following the death of Ya Na Gungobli in the late seventeenth century (Ferguson *et al.* 1970). There were numerous aspirants to the office, and the decision was taken to consult the Nayiri, the King of the sister state of Mampurugu. The Nayiri had the contestants recite their drum names and chose the youngest, Zangina, as the new Ya Na. To limit the number of candidates who might henceforth present themselves for election, the Nayiri selected three communities whose chiefs could become Ya Na, Karaga, Savulugu and Mion. The Nayiri's ruling may be seen as introducing a promotional principle into the Yendi succession. This was in conformity with the older rule of Dagbamba succession that no son should rise above his father, implying that only sons of previous Kings might attain that office.

In 1930, the British Administration attempted to codify the Constitution of Dagbon with a view, among other things, to eliminating succession disputes. At the end of deliberations, the chiefs of Dagbon agreed that a Ya Na would always be chosen from one of the three divisional chieftaincies designated in the Nayiri's seventeenth-century settlement. Yet conflict of greater or lesser magnitude continued to occur whenever the office of Ya Na became vacant. In the post-independence era, several attempts were made to find a permanent solution. Following moves to deskin Ya Na Abudulai III, the CPP government set up the S. D. Opoku-Afari Commission to inquire into the deskinment charges. Even though the Commission report was not made public, it is generally known that the commission found that the installation of Ya Na Abudulai III was indeed repugnant to Dagbon custom, and recommended that he should be de-skinned and the Mion Lana Andani put in his place. The CPP government, however, decided to allow him to serve his complete term and issued a Legislative Instrument (LI) 59 that spelled out a compromise solution. Essentially, the LI59 set out the rules of succession to the Yendi skin and recognized that succession should alternate between the two royal families, but since the Abudulai family had occupied the skin twice, the Andani family should also occupy it twice and thereafter the alternation would begin. Both families agreed to the new arrangements.

After the death of Ya Na Abudulai II, however, the LI59 was repealed and the dispute raged on until the Supreme Court gave a definitive ruling on the issue, confirming the alternation of succession between the two families. With the ruling, the rotational system of ascension to the status of Ya Na had been raised to the status of law. There was optimism that this had settled the Dagbon chieftaincy dispute once and for all, particularly since a new generation had emerged that did not identify with the emotions associated with the turmoil of the past. This optimism was short-lived. Fifteen months into the NPP administration, the Ya Na was murdered in a most gruesome manner that has set back any hopes for a solution to the conflict in the short term.

### 5.3 The Nkonya-Alavanyo conflict

“For years now, blood has been pouring on that small disputed land, and citizens of the two areas are waiting anxiously for government to come out with a permanent solution”, (Leonard Yaw Gbedebu, a concerned citizen, Letter to the GT, 19/12/96).

The Nkonya Alavanyo conflict, as already mentioned, is one of four major conflicts in the Volta Region. The Nkonya Alavanyo conflict has arisen from an 80-year old boundary dispute between the Nkonya, a Guan group and the Alavanyo, an Ewe

group. Alavanyo is in the Hohoe District while Nkonya is in the Jasikan District. It is not clear what the precise relationship between the two groups are apart from their situation as neighbours sharing land boundaries, but some accounts of the conflict state that Alavanyo settled on Nkonya land with the consent of the Nkonya people years ago. The land in dispute is prime forest land rich in timber species, bamboo and cola nuts, and has also been used for cocoa, oil-palm and food crops. This discussion of the Nkonya-Alavanyo conflict was constructed largely from newspaper reports because of a lack of more scholarly accounts of the conflict.

The first recorded violent incident took place in the colonial period in 1923 during preparations for Empire Day Celebrations. Since then, periodic violent incidents in the disputed area have been reported in 1980, 1983 and 1990. The late 1990s saw several escalations of tensions between the two communities involving the police, with one incident resulting in violence in which five people died. In October 1997, some Nkonya chiefs reported to the Divisional Commander of Police at Hohoe that some Alavanyo residents had trespassed on Nkonya land, and were felling trees and blocking the paths leading to Nkonya farms. Consequently, the police held meetings to mediate the complaints. A counter report that some armed people were cutting timber near Alavanyo farms and an appeal to the police to investigate resulted in their going into the disputed area and confronting some people suspected to be Nkonya people sawing wood, which resulted in a gun battle between the police and the woodcutters. The Hohoe District Chief Executive is quoted to have said that "it was when the team of policemen got to the disputed land that gunshots were fired from the Nkonya side by some unidentified people. The police returned fire immediately to repel the assailants but nobody was injured in the process". According to the report, the Jasikan District Chief Executive corroborated this account of the Hohoe District Chief Executive (GT, 1/11/97). A letter by the chief of Alavanyo referring to this incident alleged that a large Indian hemp farm was also discovered during the exercise (Letter of Togbega Tsedze Atakora VII, Fiaga of Alavanyo Traditional Area, GT, 12/1/98).

The latest troubles can be dated to 2001 when, according to a newspaper report, two Alavanyo men who were illegally cutting timber with a chain-saw in the Nkonya Alavanyo Forest Reserve/Togo Plateau Forest Reserve were attacked by gunmen, resulting in the death of one of the illegal loggers. There was immediate suspicion that Nkonya gunmen were responsible and a report made to the police (GT 23/4/01). In a response to the newspaper report, the Nkonya-Tayi stool clerk wrote to the Ghanaian Times denying that any Nkonya person was responsible as on that day, they were involved in communal labour to build a classroom block. The rejoinder was anxious to correct the impression that Nkonya people were responsible for the killing, in order not to create further confusion between the two communities (Anane-Quist, Nkonya Tayi Stool Clerk, GT, 14/6/01). There were also reports of the murder of a senior linguist of Alavanyo at Nkonya Ahenkro in December 2001.

In 2003, each of the parties accused the other of farming and felling timber in the disputed area, leading to attacks and retaliatory attacks on their citizens. For example, the newspapers have several references to the shooting of an Nkonya man and his daughter on their farm in February 2003, resulting in the death of the man (Chronicle, 4/11/2003; GT, 1/3/03; Evening News 3/3/03). One report said that the murder had been followed by the raiding and looting of farms, food bans and the setting of fire to the forests and hilly slopes damaging farm produce and the environment (Evening News, 3/3/03). A man from Alavanyo also lost his life owing to the conflict in this period (GT, 12/6/2003). It was also alleged that Alavanyo people were inspecting vehicles travelling between Nkonya and Hohoe with the view to attacking Nkonya people on board (Chronicle, 4/11/2003) or at the very least

preventing them from travelling through Alavanyo to Hohoe (GT, 1/3/03). On 21 April 2003, a media report said the police were unable to substantiate allegations that armed men from Nkonya had camped at Akrofu near Ho to attack the people there. The reports had led to the inhabitants of Akrofu fleeing their town. The rumour was that the planned attack was in retaliation for the suspicion that the people of Akrofu were giving moral and material support to the people of Alavanyo in their conflict with the Nkonya. The same report noted that following renewed fighting in the area in February, three people died (Joy on line, 21/4/2003).

There is a strong perception that the conflict has remained insoluble because some people benefit from the dispute. For example, a letter from an Nkonya citizen to the newspapers alleged that some people engage in “unprovoked skirmishes so that in the midst of the ensuing confusion they have a field day to harvest timber, bamboo, cola nuts and cocoa, fell palm trees for palm wine and also engage in the wild and ruthless looting of food crops, poultry, sheep and goats...” (Chronicle, 4/11/2003). This is supported by the MP of Biakoye, a citizen of Nkonya, who has also argued that the area’s soils are rich for food and tree crops, and that disputes are usually generated around the harvesting of Odum, a very valuable timber species (GT, 1/3/03).

While different institutions have been involved in trying to resolve the conflicts, concerted attempts at resolution have only followed violent incidents. For example, the PNDC in November 1992 appointed the Acquah Committee to investigate the dispute and advise the government as to solutions. No hearings took place when hostilities began again. In 1995, the District Chief Executives of Hohoe and Jasikan jointly appointed the Mireku Committee to inquire into and resolve the dispute. Although the Mireku Committee wrote a report, it has not been implemented. There are regular calls for yet more committees. For example, the Alavanyo Youth Association in 1997 called for a high powered committee to look into the dispute and resolve it once and for all, instead of waiting for hostilities to begin and arresting culprits (Letter by Kwame Dzathor, vice president, Alavanyo Youth Association, GT, 15/11/97).

The courts have also been extensively involved in adjudicating the land dispute at the heart of the conflict. According to a rejoinder written by an Nkonya citizen, four court cases between 1957 and 1980 have all been decided in favour of Nkonya (letter from Komla Tom, Chronicle, 4/11/2003). Indeed, one of the arguments made regularly by the Nkonya side has been that the courts have always ruled in their favour. A Mr. Kwabena Onny, spokesperson of the Nkonya chiefs, stated at a news conference that as far that the Nkonya chiefs were concerned, there was no land dispute in the area as it had been settled by the court of appeal in 1975. He therefore concluded that all the trouble in the area was being fomented by the Alavanyo people so that the government would intervene to enable them to re-litigate (Evening News, 3/3/03). Not surprisingly, the Alavanyo side has a different position on the court decisions. They have argued that the 1913 Grunner map on which the decisions were based was not accurate, and too small in scale, and therefore never intended as the basis for boundary demarcations. They, in turn, have cited three colonial and post colonial court cases in support of this position (GT, 15/2/97, Letter of Togbega Tsedze Atakora VII, Fiaga of Alavanyo). This position appears to have the support of the Mireku Committee which has argued that “the implementation of the court’s decision will not help to promote peace between the two traditional areas” (Mireku, quoted in letter of Togbega Tsedze Atakora, Fiaga of Alavanyo, GT, 15/2/97). However, the same Committee has also noted that it did not have the power to set aside court decisions.



Another institution pressed into service is the media. Long letters and rejoinders recounting the sins of each side are regularly published, with each side trying to portray the other as provocateurs and contemptuous of peace, law and order (see for example rejoinder by Komla Tom, Nkonya Ahenkro, Chronicle, 4/11/2003, in response to letter of 17/10, by Justice Vormawor of Alavanyo). Perhaps the proliferation of would-be peacemaking institutions is a function of the intractable character of conflicts. The Nkonya-Alavanyo conflict continues with an ever-present danger of degenerating into violence. The latest to enter the fray has been the Volta Regional House of Chiefs which issued a statement asking the two parties to lay down their arms and exercise restraint. In addition, the house of chiefs appointed a three-member committee under the headship of the paramount chief of the Buem Traditional Area to institute a process of reconciliation. The committee has been directed to meet both factions separately with a view to ending the hostilities (GT, 22/3/03). The multiplicity of institutions and the Mireku committee's comment about its powers in relation to court decisions raises the question of the status of the different institutional efforts to solve the conflict – the courts, the committee, the chiefs, the police and army. The question is pertinent in the sense that these are the institutions regularly called upon to resolve the conflict.<sup>12</sup>

In February 2003, the MP for Biakoye, Dr. Kwabena Adjei, appealed to the government to deploy soldiers to the area to “stem the tide of frequent conflicts and its attendant loss of lives” and also establish a high powered committee to investigate the conflict and define the boundaries of the two areas. This statement, made on the floor of Parliament, was challenged by the MP for Hohoe North. The Majority leader moved to stop further comments on the issue to avoid inflaming tensions (GT, 1/3/03). That same year, the Minister of the region went to Parliament at the behest of two MPs from the Volta Region to answer questions regarding the conflicts and government efforts to resolve them. It was revealed that the Volta Regional Security Committee had deployed a police military taskforce in the Nkonya-Alavanyo area since September 2002. MPs were also invited to help with conflict resolution and held separate meetings with the chiefs and people of the two areas to find solutions to the conflict. A newspaper (Graphic, 26 June 2003) reported that eleven suspects arrested in the joint police-military operation in the Alavanyo Nkonya area for possessing locally manufactured fire arms and Indian hemp (marijuana) had been put before a Kpando Circuit court. The judge had remanded them in police custody until 3 July to allow the police time for further investigations. While it was not stated which side of the conflict the arrested persons were on, the report indicated that the Omanhene of the Nkonya Traditional Area, Nana Kofi Okoto I in whose room three locally manufactured cap guns were retrieved, had been invited to Hohoe for further investigations (Graphic 26/6/2003). In an earlier report, it was said that police and military personnel on patrol duties in the conflict zone had intercepted a large cache of firearms and ammunition being escorted from Alavanyo Deme towards Alavanyo Kpeme.<sup>13</sup> The report further states that the firearms were meant for Alavanyo men deployed in the bush to attack Nkonya people. One Alavanyo man and two women were arrested in connection with the arms. This incident, reported to have taken place on 17 April, appeared in the 12 June edition of the Ghanaian Times

<sup>12</sup> At a recent festival, the Minister for Food and Agriculture, is reported to have asked the Hohoe and Jasikan District chief executives and their members of parliament to team up with the security agencies to solve the Alavanyo Nkonya dispute. The Two MPs are Kwabena Adjei of Biakoye Constituency in the Jasikan District and Nat Aduajoe of Hohoe-North (Gri Newsreel, 20/11/2001).

<sup>13</sup> They included a locally manufactured pistol, 87 pieces of shotgun cartridges and a notebook containing names of 102 people from Alavanyo who had contributed to the purchase of the firearms and ammunition.

(12/6/2003). There are no clear reasons for the two-month gap between the date of the incident and the report in the newspapers. It may not be far-fetched to assume that the different factions to the conflict were actively trying to use the Ghanaian mass media to present their version of events and highlight the alleged wrong-doing of their opponents.

The dispute has clearly been complicated by law and order issues such as the growing of marijuana and the illegal logging of trees from forest reserves. Other dispute-related law and order issues are of course the violent clashes, murders and fire-arms offences. The police tend to focus on these questions of law and order, as do the Regional authorities. Thus the Regional Minister warned that while the Regional Security Committee was trying to find a peaceful settlement to the conflict, it would “not countenance any acts of lawlessness but deal with them appropriately as is allowed by law” (GT, 4/3/03).

Interestingly, both sides reject the Mireku Committee recommendation that the government take over the disputed land.<sup>14</sup> The Nkonya side do so on grounds that the courts have adjudicated in their favour. They demand that those committing acts of violence be brought to justice and the decisions of the courts enforced. Togbega Atakora of Alavanyo argues, for his part, that a government take-over would not address the issue of establishing the proper boundaries of the lands of the two communities (GT, 15/2/97). Instead, he argues that a boundary-cutting exercise be undertaken to expose the Anya trees that were used to demarcate the boundaries decades ago. There is something in this view. Seeing that the state cannot even police forest reserves, how would it police land taken over in the area?

This is not one of the more bloody communal disputes in Ghana. However, its persistence and intermittent flaring makes it expensive. Apart from police and army time, and other resources involved, it disrupts farming and related economic activities in the area, and presents a threat to the livelihoods and human security of the inhabitants of an area where the soils are agreed to be fertile and productive.

### **5.3 The Ga state and the Christian churches conflict**

“There is no constitutional provision that allows any group of religious adherents to impose their beliefs on another group”

Statement by Charismatic church leaders, May 1999.

In the last few years, an ancient tradition of the Ga people on whose ancestral lands, Accra, Ghana’s capital is built, has generated controversy and conflict in Accra. This tradition is an annual one-month ban in and around May on drumming and noise-making as part of the preparations towards the celebration of the Homowo festival. Homowo, which literally means “to hoot a hunger”, is a harvest festival commemorating a famine sometime in the history of the Ga people. The Homowo season begins in May and ends in late September when maize and yams planted in May are harvested. From July, the different divisions of the Ga traditional area mark their actual festival days with ritual cleansing, pacification ceremonies and feasting. A

<sup>14</sup> The Mireku proposal for a government take-over has its supporters. A letter from a concerned citizen of the area has argued that a government take-over would mean that whoever wants to farm in the disputed area would acquire land from the government agent. This would enable the majority of people from the two areas who do not farm in the disputed area to go about their business in peace. The letter recommended that compensation could be paid to the two communities through the execution of a development project of their choice (letter of Leonard Yaw Gbedebu, GT, 19/12/96).

ceremonial food made of maize is sprinkled to the gods and also distributed to friends and relations.

For decades, communities and individuals in and around Accra have broadly observed or ignored the ban on drumming and noise-making without conflict. This situation was to change drastically with two developments in the Accra landscape. One of these was the arrival since the late 70s of a new breed of Pentecostal Christian Churches on the Ghanaian scene. These churches, part of what has been described as the “second Pentecostal wave” in Africa, include the International Central Gospel Church and the Christian Action Faith Ministries. Their membership is drawn from “young, urban, upwardly mobile emerging middle class, aspiring to success and prosperity in life” (van Dijk, 2001, p37). While the older Catholic and Protestant churches have treated Ghanaian culture and traditions in a “live and let live” fashion, these newer churches have an explicit modernising message which condemns various traditional practices as ungodly and demands that adherents make a complete break with the past. In this context, the ban on drumming and noise-making, with its traditional religious implications, is precisely the kind of practice which the church would expect its congregation to ignore and resist.<sup>15</sup>

A second development that has evolved steadily over the years has been a growing sense of frustration among the Ga people over the expropriation of vast tracts of their land by the Ghanaian state, with lack of compensation and the misuse of such land for private purposes becoming a source of tension. The problem is compounded by the profligate and indiscriminate sale of land by the heads of land-owning families to private developers without accountability to the vast majority of family members, some of whom now cannot acquire land for their own use. The poverty and overcrowded conditions in communities such as James Town, Osu, La and Nungua, where the Ga people live in family compounds, is an indication of the seriousness of the problem. The Accra land market has been rendered chaotic by practices such as multiple sale of the same piece of land by the same persons or different factions within a land-owning family, the abuse of litigation, and the use of land guards, the military and police to resolve conflicts over land sales. Lands acquired by government for certain public institutions are being sold by their traditional owners on grounds that they were not compensated for the acquisition or that the compensation was inadequate. These problems, coupled with the high levels of poverty and unemployment already mentioned have created a large body of disaffected Ga youth who often take the law into their own hands on matters pertaining to land sales. This group has been easy to recruit into the conflict between the churches and Ga traditional area as they share the view of the Ga authorities that “strangers” on their lands are not treating the Ga people with respect and are trampling over their cherished customs.

By 1998, the growing conflict and contestation over the monthly ban had become violent. It was reported that on Sunday 31 May 1998, about 50 persons attacked the Lighthouse Chapel International located at Korle-Bu quite close to traditional Accra. The musical instruments of the church were seized and a number of church members beaten up. The attack was said to be because the church violated the ban on drumming. There were accusations and counter accusations in the media. The Ghana Pentecostal Council declared the ban on drumming a violation of the rights of Christians while on the other side, the church, was accused of not respecting

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<sup>15</sup> For a more detailed exposition of the beliefs of such pentecostal churches, see Meyer, 1998; van Dijk 2001.

Ghanaian culture. The NDC government was cautious in its responses, setting up a commission of enquiry, the Awortwi Commission, which however did not resolve the legal constitutional issues raised by the conflict.

In 1999, the Ga Traditional Council once again declared a total ban on drumming and noise-making between 3 May and 3 June. A group of umbrella church organisations – the Christian Council, The Catholic Bishops Conference and the Ghana Pentecostal Council – responded with a statement describing the ban as an infringement of the constitutional rights of the churches in that it was compelling them to observe traditional beliefs contrary to their faith. A statement was also issued by the leaders of some charismatic churches. In addition to arguing that this was a direct attack on their beliefs and constitutional rights, they also stated that the Ga Traditional Council did not have the power to pass and enforce laws.

The stage was set for a confrontation. Several churches were attacked by groups of people armed with weapons, members of congregations were beaten up, and musical instruments and the collection were confiscated. In a series of incidents, a group of about 100 Ga youth attacked the Gospel Light International, the Victory Bible Church and the Christ Apostolic Church, which were in the same neighbourhood. On another day in May, the Apostolic Faith Ministry was attacked and six people seriously injured, one of whom was left in a coma. A Pentecostal leader was assaulted when he tried to secure the return of his seized musical instruments. It has been observed that the attacks were focused on the charismatic churches in keeping with the perception that the mainstream churches were more respectful of the drumming and noise-making ban specifically and of Ghanaian culture in general. Indeed, the head of the Methodist church stated that Christians needed to avoid a blanket condemnation of Ghanaian culture.

The Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ), a constitutional body issued a statement to the effect that the ban on drumming and noise-making had no legal basis and was therefore unenforceable. Therefore the Ga Traditional Council's best course of action was to appeal to the churches to observe the quiet period instead of seeking to impose a ban. The Ga Traditional Council reacted in a hostile manner, accusing CHRAJ of arrogating to itself the functions of the Supreme Court. In response, CHRAJ called for a critical cultural review to harmonize Ghanaian culture with human rights values and norms. While affirming the value of protecting the cultural integrity and validity of various groups, CHRAJ wanted to uphold the 1992 constitutional provision declaring the Constitution to be the supreme law of Ghana and rendering any other law found to be inconsistent with the Constitution void to the extent of its inconsistency (Article 1(2) of 1992 Constitution). In CHRAJ's judgement, therefore, freedom of religion, culture and tradition were subject to the Constitution (Ghana Home Page, 18<sup>th</sup> May 99). Thus while the Ga people had a constitutional right to practice their culture and religion including the ban on noisemaking at a particular period, only those embracing the cultural practice were to be bound by its rules. It could not be extended to others. The unconstitutionality of the ban, according to the CHRAJ statement, lay in its attempt to require others to forgo their right to freedom of worship. The violent acts of seizing or destroying property and attacking worshipers were unlawful and had the potential to result in anarchy. On the other hand, CHRAJ argued that the way the churches exercised their freedom of worship, especially in residential neighbourhoods, could in some cases violate the rights of people in the neighbourhood to peace and quiet, and that this was unlawful and needed to be checked in accordance with the bye-laws (Ghana Home page, 18/5/1999).

The presidential staffer on chieftaincy affairs, on the other hand, called on the churches to compromise, accusing some of them of disrespecting Ghanaian culture. A government meeting with the Ga authorities did not succeed in resolving the tension between respect for tradition and the constitutional right of freedom of worship. The government showed itself unwilling to address the issue in constitutional terms, and it was said that the Ga chiefs had warned the police not to interfere with their enforcement of the ban. Not surprisingly, the police did not arrest even one of the attackers.

The government's response to the continuing problem was to propose a compromise in which the churches would use their drums within their church buildings and not make unnecessary noise, and the Ga authorities would not attack church services. In urging tolerance and understanding on both sides, the government seemed to be steering a middle course in which the ban on drumming and noise-making would be partially observed as a mark of respect for chiefly and religious traditions, and mutual tolerance, and in return, the attacks on churches would become a thing of the past. The then-government's caution stemmed from a number of factors. Its policy on culture regarded Ghanaian traditions as positive and enriching. It had established the National Commission on Culture, which among other things, played a central role in the revival of the Pan African Cultural Festival (PANAFEST), a national programme celebrating Ghanaian music, arts and festivals which was patronised by visitors from outside Ghana, particularly from North America. As well, there was a policy of promoting local festivals to boost Ghana's infant tourist industry. Festivals also provided the occasion for government officials to deliver policy statements at the local level, while chiefs also seized the opportunity to appeal for development projects to their areas.

By this time (1999), all religious organisations had become involved in the conflict. In 2000, umbrella organisations representing the older churches such as the National Catholic Secretariat and the Christian Council of Ghana participated along with the Ghana Pentecostal Council, the Council of Independent Churches, the National Association of Charismatic Churches and several Muslim umbrella bodies in a meeting with the Afrikania Mission, which supported the ban on drumming and noisemaking, and the Ga Traditional Council, in an attempt to resolve the conflict. The outcome of the meeting was a joint declaration which largely shared the government's recommendation about confined drumming in return for the cessation of attacks (van Dijk, 2003). A section of Ga youth declared themselves unhappy with the compromise that they said was impractical as it was not clear what levels of noise were acceptable and who would monitor the levels. For these reasons, it was their intention to enforce a full ban on drumming whether inside or outside the churches. A member of this group explained their position as follows: "supposing we hear a church making unnecessary noise in the course of the ban on Sunday morning or evening, how do we report to the local Standing Committee? Do we go to their houses or their offices? We know that we cannot report to the police because in the past they have been telling us that there is no law backing the ban on drumming" (Dispatch, 19/4/2000).

In spite of the 2000 agreement, the Ga Traditional Council wrote to the religious bodies in May 2001 imposing a total ban on drumming and noise-making, following it up with a press conference. This, according to the Ga authorities, was in response to the many violations of the understandings reached in 2000. The Christian Council reacted, describing the ban as "contradictory, unfortunate and not in the spirit of nation-building". At a press conference attended by the heads of Pentecostal, Independent and Charismatic churches and clergy from the Catholic, Presbyterian and Methodist churches, the President of the Christian Council insisted that the

declaration of the joint-monitoring Committee of the Forum of Religious Bodies and Ga Traditional Council which agreed on limited noise-making was still valid. The Christian Council complained about religious bodies being singled out in the letter about the ban, arguing that there were other sources of noise such as vehicle horns, aeroplanes, soccer games and night-clubs. In response to the charge about churches flouting the ban, the Christian Council said that these offenders had appeared before the Joint Committee and had apologised for their actions. The Christian Council asked for another meeting of the joint monitoring committee but also stated that the Council would not “allow infringements on the constitutional rights of any Ghanaians.” (Joy on line, May 2001). Several violent incidents took place after this stand-off. Two churches, the Christ Apostolic Church at Osu and the El-Shadai Temple in Accra Central, were attacked, with musical instrument seized, and glass windows and car windscreens smashed. In the case of the Christ Apostolic church attack, church youth wielding sticks confronted the Ga youth and succeeded in driving them away. The General Secretary of the Christ Apostolic Church condemned the attacks, defended the response of his congregation as self defence and was quoted as saying, “if they are saying it is traditional law, we also have biblical law which enjoins us to destroy idols”. He argued that traditional law was to be obeyed by traditionalists while Christians were to abide by their doctrinal beliefs. The police administration called for a meeting between the churches and the Ga Traditional Council to work out an amicable solution (Joy on line, 13 May 2001). In late May 2001, the Forum for Religious Bodies in Ghana issued a statement calling for peaceful co-existence and further negotiations with the Ga Traditional Council. Although no agreement was reached, the violence abated and there were no reports of incidents in the last two Sundays of the 2001 ban.

A Parliamentary Committee was set up to examine the issue of the ban. The committee’s November 2001 report made recommendations enabling the Ga authorities and the Forum for Religious Bodies to agree that in the period of the 2002 ban, noise-making by churches should not exceed the levels indicated under existing bye-laws. A monitoring taskforce of Police, the Environmental Protection Agency and the Accra Metropolitan Authority was established to ensure the enforcement of the existing laws on public nuisance throughout the year. This was to be accompanied by a public education campaign aimed at the charismatic churches. These efforts finally began to see results and there were no reported incidents of violence in May 2002 and in the year 2003.

The conflict between the Ga traditional authorities and the Christian churches is often seen as a conflict between tradition and Christianity (Safo, 1999; van Dijk, 2001). The conflict however, has other ramifications in that it touches on the constitutional issue of freedom of worship, and the mutual respect and tolerance of different communities for each other. It also raises the question of whether the Ga traditional authorities have the legal and constitutional powers to make and impose laws outside those made by the Accra Metropolitan Assembly on noise and nuisance. Then, there is also the issue of the extensive alienation of Ga lands and the disaffection of young men from the Ga traditional area. The concept of strangers is one of the more troubling aspects of the Ghanaian land tenure system. People can be strangers even after their ancestors have settled in a place for hundreds of years on grounds of ethnicity.

**Table 5.1 Some facts about the case studies**

Conflict	Nature	Number of Deaths	Location	Protagonists	Resolution
Konkomba (1994)	Land and Recognition	2,600 <sup>1</sup>	Seven Districts in the Northern Region	Konkomba versus Dagombas, Gonjas and Nanumba	Agreement brokered by Nairobi Peace Initiative (NPI) still holds.
Dagomba (1969 / 2002)	Chieftaincy dispute	109 <sup>1</sup>	Yendi in the Dagbon traditional state	Abudu royal family against the Andani royal family	Supreme court ruling in 1986 did not prevent the regicide in 2002
Nkonya / Alavanyo	Land dispute: over 80 year old traditional boundary dispute	Estimated to be over 300 by newspaper reports	Hohoe and Jasikan Districts of the Volta Region	Nkonya (a Guan ethnic group) and Alavanyo (an Ewe ethnic group)	Recommendations of committees of enquiries have not been accepted by both parties
Ga State / Churches	Over annual one month ban on drumming and noise making (usually May)	Not Available	Greater Accra Region	The Ga traditional state and the Christian churches	Government mediation has calmed down conflict over the past three years

<sup>1</sup> Ibrahim Mahama, 2003; Ethnic Conflicts in Northern Ghana, Cyber Systems, Tamale Ghana.

## 6. Summary and conclusions

The paper has provided an account of the emergence of particular identities and inequalities and their role in promoting stability and violence. The paper analysed the different elements of the Ghanaian political economy which encourage and discourage particular patterns of peaceful co-existence and conflict. One of the central arguments has been that although Ghana seems to be going through a period of relative national stability and has managed a peaceful change of government through election in a sub-region wracked by civil wars and election disputes, it is important to recognise that Ghana has been through its own cycles of political and economic instability, and coup d'état regimes since Kwame Nkrumah was overthrown in 1966. Even more importantly, several elements which are potentially destabilising continue to flourish in the Ghanaian political economy, such as the widening inequality between the North and the South of Ghana.

There are also several categories of localised conflicts in Ghana linked with various inequalities and identities. These include inter-ethnic conflicts over land and political power, intra-ethnic disputes usually over succession to traditional political office or boundary disputes, and religious disputes between factions of Islam, Muslims and Christians, Christians and traditional religion supporters, and sometimes between Christians. Other conflicts involve political violence between supporters of various political factions and/or parties, industrial disputes between workers and employers, and football violence between supporters of opposing teams. Chieftaincy in Ghana is, however, at the centre of communal conflicts, particularly those related to ethnicity,

succession to traditional political office and the struggle over land. The struggle over land and its control is also an important aspect of the ethnic conflict and identity politics. Land tenure and administration in Ghana have serious problems that have exacerbated land tenure insecurity and conflict.

Certain inequalities in Ghana arise principally from differences in economic development and to some extent endowment in natural resources. Spatial variations in the level of economic development have been found around the world at different levels. In Ghana, the most striking of these is a North-South dichotomy in development which has geographical and cultural features, but which is largely socio-economic and political, and has been nurtured and reinforced by discriminatory colonial and post-colonial policies. Social welfare indicators and literacy statistics show a sharp and marked inequality between Northern Ghana, comprising Northern and the Upper Regions, and Southern Ghana, that is, the rest of Ghana. While policies to bridge the North and South divide have never been sufficient to bridge the yawning development gap, the nature of elite politics has resulted in political compromises which have kept open violent conflict at bay. Instead, certain communal conflicts in Northern Ghana are rooted in the neglect and marginalisation of the North and its problems.

There are also inequalities in social welfare indicators, access to social services and living standards between urban and rural areas. These point to an urban bias in the provision of welfare services that also reflects the unequal distribution of decision-making power between urban and rural interest groups. Rural-rural inequalities between those rural areas more closely tied to commodity production for export and those more closely tied to subsistence production by peasants also exist in Ghana. However, these are not very clear. For example, the older cocoa-growing rural areas perform much better than the non-cocoa growing rural districts and even than the new cocoa frontier. Perhaps this results from the greater bargaining power of old cocoa districts by virtue of their production of export crops.

Although this does not emerge from spatial patterns analysis, class and gender inequalities complicate spatial inequalities. Even in more favoured urban regions with high per capita service ratios, it is a truism that physical availability of facilities does not necessarily guarantee access by all social groups. The degree of access by the lower classes and women to urban-based welfare services is much lower than that of dominant classes and men. This has been worsened by policies, particularly in the era of Ghana's structural adjustment. In addition to growing job insecurity, and deteriorating work conditions and livelihood outcomes, levies in the form of high school fees for children, high hospital fees (cash and carry), high transport fees, high electricity and water rates – all characteristic of SAP policies – have increased the incidence of poverty among certain social groups particularly workers, small peasants and women. Thus poverty indicators seem to generally support the pattern of inequalities in Ghana. These indicators are mainly in the areas of literacy, and access to health facilities and basic services such as electricity, water and telephones. Spatial inequalities are also supported by the incidence of poverty in the country.

The genesis of inequalities can be found in the dominant mode of production within the social formation. Many scholars cite colonial dependency as the root of inequalities so evident in the Ghanaian spatial economy. In colonial Ghana, the internal production of goods and services had a dual structure: a dynamic modern export sector and a backward and underdeveloped subsistence sector that also served as a labour reserve for the modern sector. This is at the root of the North-South inequalities and also the other patterns of inequality in Ghana.



A number of processes have shaped the formation and sustenance of certain identities in Ghana. In the pre-colonial period, mass migrations of different ethnic groups, which today constitute Ghana, intermittent wars of conquest, and processes of state formation by groups with a culture of centralised political authority such as the Asante, Dagbon and Gonja resulted in the loss of sovereignty and control over land and other resources by other groups. The trans-Atlantic slave trade and colonisation created even more complications in inter-ethnic relations. While certain ethnic groups thrived under colonisation and extended their rule over others, others disappeared from official view. The slave trade damaged the human resource pool of many communities and poisoned already tense inter-ethnic relations. Colonial economic interests and the policies of indirect and direct rule through chiefs established firmly the foundations of the inequalities between Northern and Southern Ghana and the problems of chieftaincy, ethnic rivalries and land conflicts. Apart from consolidating and strengthening selected chiefs, colonial rule also institutionalised the concept of major and minor ethnic groups, resulting in certain smaller groups becoming formal subjects of major ethnic groups.

As a result of pre-colonial migration and extensive labour migration since the colonial period, no region in Ghana remained ethnically homogeneous although residence patterns show that each ethnic group has its regional base. The ethnic cocktail came to play an indirect role in the configuration of political alliances in the anti-colonial struggle. However, ethnicity took a backseat in the direct politics of the anti-colonial struggle. Instead, class and status became the cleavages along which the society divided with chiefs against their subjects, and the intelligentsia and trading classes against school-leavers, small artisans and others. The two main political parties in the anti-colonial struggle, the UGCC and the CPP, were seen to represent the class divisions in society. The two-party dominance and the ethnic factor have become firm features of Ghanaian constitutional multi-party rule. However, after close to twenty years of military and constitutional government led by Rawlings, the CPP tradition has been replaced by the NDC, whose official founder is Rawlings.

In addition to the class, the North-South divide and ethnicity, gender inequalities were also highlighted by the anti-colonial struggle. The Nkrumah government's policies had elements that tried unsuccessfully to tackle gender inequalities. However, gender did not become a factor in national politics in the way the other contradictions have become issues, this notwithstanding the scape-goating of certain groups of women such as market women and young women in times of political crisis, persistent gender inequalities and the struggle of gender activists. Certain policies under the Nkrumah Regime may have diffused ethnic tensions and promoted a Ghanaian national consciousness based on tolerance and respect for all irrespective of their ethnicity. However, the regime's failure to address longstanding inter- and intra- ethnic conflicts, a failure shared by subsequent regimes has led to long-standing fundamental contradictions between the republican national ethos and existing overlord-subject relations which have led to the exclusion and exploitation of certain ethnic groups. The cycle of coup d'état regimes post-Nkrumah have added military and civilian as another set of interacting identities.

Ghana is a country of many ethnic, religious, community, district and regional identities. Conflict and violence do occur within and between these identities from time to time. The cases discussed in this paper represent a sample of the different conflicts. The Konkomba case study is inter-ethnic and represents a case of disillusionment of the aboriginal/migrant groups with their rulers/landlords. The Dagbon case study is intra-ethnic and represents a conflict embedded in the lack of clarity in traditional norms and practices. While the Nkonya-Alavanyo conflict

represents a land dispute between two ethnic groups, the Ga-religious bodies case is an example of a conflict between traditionalist landlords and Christian religious bodies.

All four cases highlight some of the commonalities and specificities of conflicts in Ghana. They can be differentiated by the parties involved and the particular conduct of the conflict. While some conflicts raise constitutional issues of national import, others relate to more localised issues. One common feature is the seeming intractability of communal conflicts and the lack of credibility of the different institutions of the Ghanaian state in their policing and adjudication of conflicts. Some of this lack of credibility results in the proliferation of institutions intervening in the conflicts to little effect. In the case of the police, this has resulted in another kind of conflict commonly reported in the newspapers, between communities and law enforcement agencies. This situation supports Ninsin's (1995) contention that a key problem in the resolution of communal conflicts is the lack of a proper institutional framework and institutions for the resolution of communal conflicts.

Beyond institutional failure is the lack of political will to resolve longstanding questions of injustice (arising from questions of sovereignty and land control) in the relationships between and within certain ethnic groups which fuel conflicts. While such relations contradict the republican values of successive Ghanaian constitutions and therefore should be clear-cut on the face of it. However, complicated political considerations have led to what has been described as the politicisation of conflicts and state indecisiveness in adjudicating conflicts. The calculations of political leaders have led to compromises which have failed to satisfy either side of the conflict.

Regardless of their nature and necessity, conflicts, when they become violent, take a toll on life and property. Studies of violent civil conflicts have identified attacks on non-combatants, especially women and children, as a new increasingly common feature of such wars. In the same vein, communal conflicts are also targeting women and children. In addition to questions of personal security, the pursuit of peaceful economic activities becomes impossible. Looting and arson characterize most of the conflicts discussed in the case studies. The delivery of education, health and other social services also become casualties, a situation worsened by the flight of personnel such as teachers and health workers from conflict areas. In some of the conflicts, physical structures such as school buildings and health centres were destroyed, and health facilities as well as valuable teaching materials were set ablaze or looted. Apart from the cost in terms of human lives and property, the cost of maintaining law and order has always been prohibitive and unplanned for, putting a stress on the national budget. This exacerbates already serious North-South, rural-urban and rural-rural inequalities in access to services. Finally, violent conflicts have an impact on national security, putting into doubt the vaunted cohesiveness and unity of the Ghanaian society.

Nevertheless, the nature of conflict described in this study cannot be said to be different from other conflicts elsewhere in the sub-region. For example the conflicts in Northern Ghana are basically over land ownership and access to land between so-called aborigines and their powerful settlers, just as in the conflict in Nigeria's Plateau State. The difference is, however in the relative intensity of the conflicts where casualties tend to be much higher in Nigeria's case. Similarly, the North/South divide is sharp in the sub-region yet unlike Côte d'Ivoire for example, it has not degenerated into a major conflict in Ghana. It appears therefore that Ghana has some characteristics, particularly in terms of tolerance, that are not shared by these conflictual regional characteristics. However, these are not addressed in this paper and raise pertinent questions for future research.

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- Daily Graphic: 26/6/03; 11/6/03.
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