

UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

NAWURI-GONJA CONFLICT, 1932-1996

BY

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that except for references to other works which have been duly acknowledged, this thesis is the result of my own original research, and that it has not been presented, either in part or in whole, for another degree elsewhere.

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CERTIFICATION

We hereby declare that the writing of this thesis was supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of thesis as laid down by the School of Research and Graduate Studies, University of Ghana, Legon.

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the causes of the Nawuri-Gonja conflict, which broke out in 1991 over allodial land rights. In Alfai, as is the case of other Ghanaian societies, the modes of measuring allodial land rights are embedded in the historical traditions of the people. By right of autochthony and autonomy, allodial land rights in Alfai in the pre-colonial period resided in the Nawuri. However, Alfai's encounters with the colonial enterprise led to the evolution of new constructs of allodial rights in land, which challenged established traditions and provided the opportunity for the immigrant Gonja community to appropriate land.

In 1913 the Germans issued a warrant to Kanankulaiwura Mahama Karatu, the Gonja head chief in Alfai then, making him the overlord of the area for the sake of political expediency. This began Gonja rule over the Nawuri, which was made irreversible when the British colonial authorities subsumed Alfai into the Gonja kingdom in 1932 following the introduction of indirect rule in the Northern Territories. This led to series of encounters between the autochthonous Nawuri and their Gonja overlords over allodial rights in land, which expressed itself in social, political and economic debate in Alfai in the colonial and post-colonial times.

By the dawn of independence, Alfai continued to remain as an integral part of the Gonja Traditional Area, thus strengthening Gonja claim that the land belonged to them. As the Nawuri and the Gonja continued to jostle each other over allodial land rights in Alfai in the post-colonial times, and as the dispute remained unresolved, war between them became a possibility. This study argues that the conflicting claims over allodial land rights in Alfai between the Nawuri and the Gonja served as the nexus that connected the multiplicity of layers of issues that underlay the conflict.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background Study of Alfai

Until 1991 when war broke out between the Nawuri and the Gonja, Alfai¹ was settled by the Nawuri (the indigenes), the Gonja (the overlords) and other immigrant ethnic groups. The immigrant ethnic groups included the Konkomba, Bassari, Kotokoli, Chakosi, Kabre, Dagomba, Ewe, Ada and some Akan extracts.² Each of the ethnic groups had their overlords. Historically, in every Nawuri settlement, there was a Nawuri overlord or chief with jurisdiction over the settlement. However, for a brief period – 1951-1988 Kpandaiwura Nana Atorsah Agyeman I (1951-1968) doubled as the Nawuriwura, while Nawuriwura Nana Bakiansu (1968-1988) doubled as the Kpandaiwura, though all the Nawuriwuras with the exception of Nana Bakiansu were Kpandai Nawuri. This was not dictated by any historical political tradition; it was mainly for the purposes of administrative expediency. It was intended to consolidate power in the hands of the Nawuriwura to make him effective and enhance his mobilization of Nawuri resources to resist Gonja overlordship.

With the exception of the Konkomba and the Bassari, it is difficult to establish the exact date of the immigration of other immigrant ethnic groups to Alfai. In 1922, a

¹ The area has been variously referred to as Alfai, Nawuri area, Nawuriland and Kanankulai. Archival documents show a preponderate use of the name 'Alfai' to refer to the area, though the Nawuri prefer to refer to it as Nawuriland or Nawuri Area. For the sake of simplicity, I prefer to refer to the Nawuri Area in present-day Northern Region of Ghana as 'Alfai Area' or 'Alfai' for short. For, Alfai has been used as the cognate name of the Nawuri area in many of the colonial documents. Etymologically, Alfai is derived from the Nawuri words *alfa* and *ai* which mean 'Muslim' and 'home' respectively. Historically, Alfai was initially used to refer to the home of the first Muslim settler in the Nawuri area. It was the colonial authorities who later broadened its usage to refer to the Nawuri settlements in present-day Northern Region. It is significant to note that the name does not cover the Nawuri settlements across the Oti River in present-day Volta Region. These settlements include Njare, Disare, Awuratu, Oprusai, Linkpan and Suruku, and many more.

² The indications were that prior to the 1930s, the authority of Nawuri chiefs was acknowledged though the Gonja denied such assertions.

small band of the Konkomba and the Bassari arrived in Alfai.³ From then onwards, many Bassari and Konkomba arrived in Alfai. The Konkomba-Bassari expression “Nchanawul”, meaning (“I am going to Nawuri area or Nawuriland”) was reference to the known migration of the Konkomba and the Bassari to Alfai.⁴ Most of the early Konkomba and Bassari immigrants settled with the Nawuri and thus established a good rapport with them. This probably explains why there were more intermarriages of the Nawuri with the Konkomba than any other ethnic group in Alfai. Some Gonja claim that Nawuri-Konkomba intermarriages were the key reasons why the Konkomba supported the Nawuri in the second and third phases of the war.⁵ Apart from intermarriages between the Nawuri and the Konkomba, there were a few intermarriages between the Nawuri and the Gonja; the Nawuri and the Bassari; and the Gonja and the Kotokoli.

Between 1931 and 1948, the population of Alfai increased by over one hundred and forty percent, with the population of Kpandai, the capital, multiplying by about six times.⁶ In 1951, the population of the various ethnic groups in Alfai was given as follows: Basari 1,863; Chakosi 211; Dagomba 232; Gonja 436; Konkomba 2,281;

³ J. Dixon, *Report of Mr. J. Dixon, Administrative Officer Class I, on the Representations Made to the Trusteeship Council of the United Nations Organization, Concerning the Status of the Nawuris and Nanjuros within the Togoland Area of the Gonja District* (Accra, Gold Coast Government, 1955), 10. Dixon was mandated in 1955 by the Government of the Gold Coast to investigate local government arrangements and grievances of the Nawuri and the Nchumuru in Alfai and Nchumuru areas of the East Gonja District. It is important to note that the Nchumuru are divided over three regions in Ghana – Northern, Volta and Brong Ahafo Regions. “Nanjuro” is the name of the Nchumuru in Northern Region. They are so called because “Nanjuro”, Nchumuru capital in Northern Region, led the agitation of the Nchumuru in the then Northern Territories against Gonja rule. Some of the Nchumuru settlements under Nanjuro included Begyamesi, Ekumidi, Kabeso, Jamboai, Kachinke, among others.

⁴ Ninkab Manim: “Evidence to Ampiah Committee in Tamale on 31 October, 1991.” See: *Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Gonjas, Nawuris and Nanjuro Dispute*, 1991, Part II, 97. This committee is popularly called the “Ampiah Committee” (hereafter, Ampiah). The Ampiah Committee of Inquiry was established by an Executive Instrument 23 (E.I. 23) by the Government of the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) on September 27, 1991, to investigate the causes of the Nawuri-Gonja conflict. For the membership and report of the committee, see chapter six of this study.

⁵ Some of the Gonja informants, who held this view included the following: Bawa Alhassan of Kpembe, Salifu Sachibu of Kpembe, Mohammed Jafa of Katiejeli, Dramani Imoro of Salaga, Karimu Maliya Fatima of Kpembe and Hajia Laadi of Katiejeli.

⁶ Aitol, T.E., *Ghana Population Atlas* (Accra: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd, November 1959).

Kotokoli 510; Nawuri 1,195; and Nchumuru 250.⁷ Between 1948 and 1970, the populations of the various Nawuri settlements increased tremendously.⁸ For example, the population of Kpandai increased from 1,718 inhabitants in 1948 to 4,438 in 1970; that of Kabonwule from 309 in 1948 to 784 in 1970; and Kitare from 211 in 1948 to 991 in 1970.⁹ In 1984, the number of inhabitants in Kpandai, the capital of Alfai, stood at 5252 of which only 700 were Gonja.¹⁰ The rest of the inhabitants were primarily Nawuri.¹¹

Alfai is both a farming and fishing area. The land is suitable for the cultivation of food crops and animal husbandry. Indeed, in 1935, the inhabitants of Alfai were described as:

an industrious hardworking people. They produce a surplus of foodstuffs for sale and rear good herds of cattle, which are said to be some of the finest in the Northern Territories.¹²

Of the plethora of food crops cultivated in Alfai, yam is the dominant with cattle and goats as the dominant livestock.¹³ There are also fishing communities dotted along the tributaries of the Oti River in Alfai, particularly Kitare, Njare, Bladjai, Nkanchina, Awuratu and Linkpan.

Since 1980 Northern Ghana has witnessed intermittent eruptions of either intra-ethnic or inter-ethnic conflicts and:

⁷ PRAAD (Tamale) NRG 8/2/210 Nawuri and Nchumuru under United Nations Trusteeship: Letter from the Chief Commissioner for the Northern Territories to the Secretary, Ministry of Defence and External Affairs, dated February 1, 1951.

⁸ "Population Census Special Report D", Northern and Upper Regions of Ghana, 1970", Census Office, Accra, December 1971, 25.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Population Census of Ghana, 1984 (Ghana Statistical Service, 1984).

¹¹ Justice Ampiah, *Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Gonjas, Nawuris and Nanjuro Dispute* (Accra: Gov. of Ghana, 1991), part II, 215.

¹² Colonial Office Report on British Sphere of Togoland for 1935, p.12.

¹³ Other food crops cultivated in Alfai include maize, sorghum, cassava and beans.

the tolls in terms of lives lost, injuries to residents, destruction of property including loss of critical social and economic infrastructure that the conflicts have caused have been staggering.¹⁴

There have been conflicts between the Nanumba and the Konkomba in 1981, 1994 and 1995; between the Bimoba and the Konkomba in 1984, 1986 and 1989. Other ethnic wars that occurred in Northern Ghana over the past three decades included the intra-ethnic conflict of the Dagomba at Karaga and Gushiegu in 1991 and another at Yendi in 2002 that resulted in the murder of Ya-Na Yakubu II.¹⁵ In addition, one may mention the Mossi-Konkomba war in 1993; and the intra-ethnic war of the Gonja at Yapei and Daboya in 1992 and 1994, respectively. Furthermore, over the past three decades, the Mamprusi and the Kusasi have fought about four times in Bawku. In 1991 and 1992 the Nawuri and the Gonja fought each other three times over conflicting claims to allodial land rights in Alfai.

By and large, the root causes of inter-ethnic conflicts in Northern Ghana are traced to the colonial policy of subordination which resulted in the amalgamation of different ethnic groups for the sake of political expediency. However, there are dichotomies in the local issues of conflict generated by the operation of the colonial system. For instance, the Nawuri-Gonja conflict was over claims to allodial rights in Alfai. This was not the case of the Konkomba-Nanumba and Kusasi-Mamprusi conflicts. The underlying cause of the Kusasi-Mamprusi conflict was the dispute over chieftaincy in Kusasi-dominated areas though encapsulated by ownership rights in these areas. The

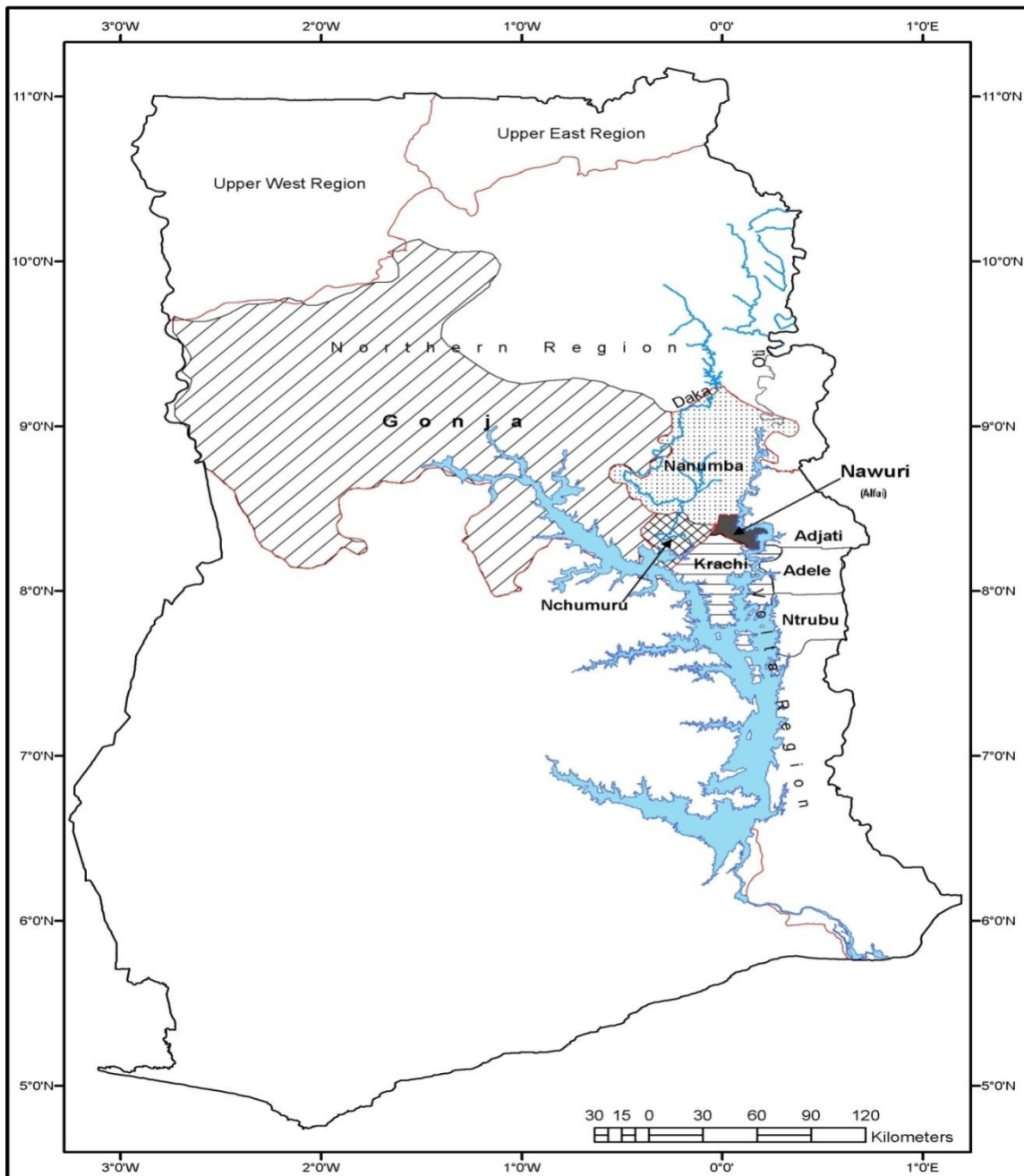
¹⁴ N.J.K. Brukum, *The Guinea-Fowl, Mango and Pito Wars: Episodes in the History of Northern Ghana, 1980-1991* Accra, Ghana Universities Press, 2001, 1.

¹⁵ With the exception of the Bimoba-Konkomba wars, almost all the inter-ethnic wars in Northern Region have been between the so-called “minority” and “majority” while the intra-ethnic ones have been among the majority, largely stemming out of chieftaincy dispute. For a detailed account of the murder of Ya-Na II, see Ibrahim Mahama, *The Murder of an African King: Ya-Na Yakubu II*. New York, Vantage Press, 2009.

Konkomba-Nanumba conflict was caused by Konkomba agitations for autonomy and recognition of their identity.

This study did not offer a comparative discussion of the Nawuri-Gonja conflict and other ethnic conflicts in the Northern Region. Rather, it discussed the political situation in Alfai, offering an understanding of how local actors exploited colonial and post-colonial situations to arouse the sentiments of the Nawuri and the Gonja against each other. Thus, from a non-comparative perspective, the study discussed the causes; conduct and resolution of the Nawuri-Gonja conflict, and argued that the conflicting claims over allodial rights in land by the Nawuri and the Gonja was the nexus that connected the multiplicity of issues that underlay the Nawuri-Gonja conflict.

Map 1: Map showing the location of Alfai, which is indicated by the dark shaded area on the map.



Source: Lands Department, Accra, (n.d.), map of Alfai adapted

1.2 Definition of Concepts and Terms

1.2.1 Conceptualizing the term ‘Ethnicity or Ethnic Group’

The definition of the term ethnicity or ethnic conflict is a problematic issue. As Lentz puts it, “ethnicity is an enigmatic, unstable and problematic notion.”¹⁶ Indeed, the terms ‘ethnicity’ and ‘ethnic group’ are often used in the academia as terms that “frequently absorb, overlap or replace other concepts such as ‘race’ or ‘tribe’ which have come to be seen as problematic for one reason or the other.”¹⁷ Ethnicity draws on all aspects of culture; it draws from traditions of origin, cultural and social traits including religion and language. It shapes societies and their histories and also determines the patterns of actions and attitudes of a group of people. Indeed, it possesses an immense power to dictate the likes, dislikes, biases and idiosyncrasies of a group of people.

Scholarship on the definition of ethnicity or ethnic groups is varied. John Middleton’s four-volume work, *Encyclopaedia of Africa South of the Sahara* published in 1997 is said to contain the authoritative and standard definition of ethnicity in Africa.¹⁸ In his book *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Cultural Difference*, Barth identified ethnicity as a form of social organization and shifts the focus of studies on ethnicity to the ethnic boundary that defines the group rather than the cultural traits embedded in it.¹⁹ Comaroff considers ethnicity as a “totemic consciousness”, a consciousness which arises in comparison and in contrast with other

¹⁶ C. Lentz, *Ethnicity and the Making of History in Northern Ghana* (Accra: Woeli Publishing Services, 2007), 3.

¹⁷ C. Lentz and P. Nugent (eds.), *Ethnicity in Ghana: the Limits of Invention* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 2000), 3

¹⁸ Many but fruitless attempts were made to obtain a copy of the book. There were hints of the availability of the book in the library of the Institute of African Studies, Legon, but attempts to obtain a copy had been painfully unsuccessful. This, notwithstanding, references were made to definitions of ethnicity by other authorities.

¹⁹ Fredrik Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Cultural Difference* (London: Allen and Urwin, 1969), 15.

ethnic groups.²⁰ Quaker-Dokubo applies the term ethnicity or “ethnic group” in reference to “organized activities by persons linked by a consciousness of a special identity, who jointly seek to maximize their corporate political, economic and social interest.”²¹ Thomson defines an ethnic group as “a community of people who have the conviction that they have a common identity and common fate based on issues of origin, kinship, ties, traditions, cultural uniqueness, a shared history and possibly a shared language.”²²

The above definitions show that ethnicity “remains an imprecise terminology that can be used for several forms of social identity.”²³ Notwithstanding the plurality of the definition of ethnicity, two perspectives on it exist. The first is the Primordialist perspective, which argues that ethnicity is rooted in past historical traditions, which is based on a presumption of a shared descent or tradition of origin. The implication of this argument is that ethnicity in Africa predated the operations of the colonial enterprise; it is rooted in the pre-colonial historical traditions of African peoples and societies. The Constructionists, on the other hand, argue that ethnicity is mutable, malleable and subject to manipulations. The Constructionist view has led to a proliferation of studies on ethnicity which overemphasized the role of the colonial enterprise, missionaries, anthropologists and politicians in the creation and reshaping of the notions of ethnic categories and stereotypes in Africa. The argument is that prior to colonization,

Africans belonged simultaneously to a bewildering variety of social networks – nuclear and extended families, lineages, age sets, secret societies, village communities, diasporas, chiefdoms, states and empires. Loyalties and identities were complex, flexible and relatively amorphous, and certainly did not add up to clearly demarcated tribes living in well-defined and bounded territories. These multiple identities ... continued into the colonial period.²⁴

²⁰ John Comaroff and Jean Comaroff, *Ethnography and the Historical Imagination* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), 51.

²¹ As quoted in Jude Cocodia, *op.cit.*, pp. 910-930.

²² As quoted in Jude Cocodia, pp. 910-930.

²³ Steve Tonah (ed.), *Ethnicity, Conflicts and Consensus in Ghana* (Accra: Woeli Publishing Services, 2007), 7.

²⁴ Lentz and Nugent, *op.cit.*, 5.

It is further argued that the introduction of Christianity, Western education, industrialization, globalization and Westernization led to the proliferation of new identities in Africa. Largely, however, the Constructionists argue that the invention of ethnic groups or tribes was a product of colonial policy, but was “nourished by the active participation of African actors who moulded political and cultural traditions in accordance with their own self-interest.”²⁵

In this study, the term ethnicity or ethnic group is used to refer to a consciousness of a common identity of a group of people based on a collective sense of a distinctive history, culture, customs, norms, beliefs and traditions. This study combines the Primordialist and Constructionist arguments of ethnicity as it discusses ethnicity in Alfi historically from the pre-colonial to the post-colonial times. This approach breaks through the barriers of pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial notions and characteristics of ethnicity and helps to fully account for the dynamics, complexities and nuances of ethnicity in Alfi.

Though mindful of the fact that the term ‘ethnic group’ is highly problematic, it is used in this study to refer to collective actors, without wading into how the Gonja and Nawuri were able to constitute themselves into collective actors to fight against each other. Suffice it, however, to say that local political actors such as political leaders, chiefs, youth association executives and leaders as well as the educated elite provided the leadership for the mobilization of the Nawuri and the Gonja into collective actors. These leaders exploited the local political order, history as well as social space networks such as activities of youth associations to mobilize individuals into collective Nawuri and Gonja actors. In few cases, the authority of these ‘ethnic entrepreneurs’ was challenged by local actors who emphasized biological considerations. A Nawuri with maternal ties

²⁵Ibid.

with the Gonja sought Gonja interests; the reverse was also true. However, these local actors influenced by biological considerations rarely constituted themselves into competing factions.

The processes, mode and nature of Nawuri and Gonja as collective actors were determined by the dynamics and nuances of the manifestation of ethnic identity in Alfai. Ethnic identity in Alfai was viewed in terms of ascribed membership of the Nawuri and the Gonja to cultural, historical and religious traditions. The encounter between the Nawuri and the Gonja in Alfai in the pre-colonial times was one of allies. In the colonial and post-colonial times, it changed into an encounter between the autochthones (first-comers) and immigrants (late-comers).

Colonialism also created conditions for the manifestations of ethnic identities of the Nawuri and Gonja in Alfai. It made the Gonja the overlords of Alfai, and thus converted the hitherto generally cooperative relations between the Nawuri and the Gonja into one of the “ruled” and the “ruler”. Colonialism created an opportunity for the Gonja to subjugate the Nawuri and to claim allodial rights to Alfai lands. The result was that between 1932 and 1991, the identity of the Nawuri and the Gonja was seen as one of subjects fighting for their autonomy and allodial rights, on one hand, and overlords fighting to hold to their overlordship and supposed allodial rights to Alfai lands on the other.

Apart from the ruled-ruler categorization, colonialism ascribed other forms of identity to the Nawuri and the Gonja. Early colonial education policy provided educational opportunities to the children of the Gonja chiefly family to the detriment of those of the Nawuri. As a result, an educated and enlightened Gonja family was established in Alfai in the 1930s and 1940s. Few Nawuri men such as S.G. Friko, J.K. Mbimadong and Yaw Atorsah – the first Nawuri people to be educated – gained

opportunities to be educated in the late 1940s and early 1950s. By the 1970s, however, education had become pronounced among the Nawuri and the Gonja in Alfai. Nonetheless, the differences in the periods of education opportunities offered to the Nawuri and the Gonja created some notions and stereotypes. The categories “enlightened” and “unenlightened” or “civilized” and “uncivilized” came to be used as descriptions of the ethnic identities of the Gonja and the Nawuri, respectively. Irrespective of the level of education of the Nawuri, he was still seen as unenlightened or uncivilized in the eyes of the Gonja. On the other hand, an uneducated Gonja was seen by the Gonja community as enlightened and civilized by virtue of his membership of the ethnic group. As the Nawuri attempted to “exorcise the ghost” of these stereotypes and stigmatizations, street fights often occurred between the youths of the two ethnic groups, especially in the 1970s and 1980s.

To a lesser extent, social activities in Alfai were ethnicized. In the late 1980s, two football clubs in Alfai, Iron Breakers and Soccer Millionaires Football Clubs, gained prominence and qualification to the National Division One League (hitherto known as National Division Two League). The financiers, founders and supporters of Iron Breakers Football Club were Gonja in ethnic identity. On the other hand, though Soccer Millionaires Football Club was founded and financed by the Kotokoli, it drew its support largely from the Kotokoli and the Nawuri. With Gonja and Nawuri support divided between the two clubs, the activities of the clubs soon became ethnicized and turned into a Nawuri-Gonja affair. Frequent disturbances, usually under the guise of football rivalry, broke out between Nawuri and Gonja youths, creating a tense atmosphere in Alfai. So tensed was the atmosphere that it became increasingly evident that the rivalry between Nawuri and Gonja supporters of the two clubs could degenerate into war. In 1990, the Northern Regional Branch of the Ghana Football Association, then chaired by Alhaji

M.N.D. Jawula, a Gonja, was compelled to ban the two football clubs for security reasons. As a result, the two football clubs were dissolved, Nawuri-Gonja rivalry over football matters was minimized, and tension in Alfai dwindled.

As a corollary to the above, ethnic identity in Alfai also crept into religious matters. Most of the Gonja were Muslims, but the Nawuri were largely Christians, mostly Catholics in denomination. The result was that matters of dispute between Muslims and Catholics in Alfai largely took ethnic dimensions. It is in this context that one understands the reason why the Nawuri opposed the Gonja from selling a parcel of land hitherto acquired by the Kpandai Roman Catholic Church to some fitter-mechanics.

In the politics of Alfai between 1932 and 1991, ethnic identity was a tool for the mobilization of resources to gain advantage in situations of competition and conflict between the Nawuri and the Gonja. At different points, Nawuri-Gonja relations were cooperative, competitive and conflictual. There were familial and friendly relations as well as economic partnerships between some Nawuri and Gonja kinsmen. In times of skirmishes, misunderstandings and communal violence, the familial, friendly and economic partnership networks between members of the two ethnic groups melted away. In its ruins, emerged a hostile attitude, hatred and the passion to mobilize ethnic strength and all other resources to attack each other. Hence a Nawuri man married to a Gonja would fraternize with his Nawuri kinsmen to attack the Gonja, including his in-laws; the vice versa was also the case.

1.2.2 Conceptualizing Conflict

The term 'conflict' has been conceptualized in different ways. Largely, the concepts have been constructed within the frameworks of philosophy, sociology and political

science. Invariably, the concept ‘conflict’ has been used variously to explain radical changes in different segments or structures of a society.²⁶

The term ‘conflict’ as used in this study simply denotes a state of dispute and antagonism between the Nawuri and the Gonja in Alfai over a broad layer of issues. It is also used in reference to skirmishes, physical confrontations and war between the two ethnic groups. In Alfai, the period between 1932 and 1990 was generally one of antagonisms, disputes and skirmishes between the Nawuri and the Gonja. The only notable skirmishes between the two ethnic groups in this period occurred in 1935 and 1952. In this study, the term ‘conflict’ is strictly used to refer to Nawuri-Gonja antagonisms, disputes and skirmishes in the period between 1932 and 1990. On the other hand, the terms ‘conflict’ and ‘war’ are used interchangeably to refer to the communal violence between the Nawuri and the Gonja and the resolution attempts between 1991 and 1996.

1.2.3 Understanding the concept of ‘Allodial rights’ in land

The term “allodial rights” is used in this study to denote the ownership rights that a group of people have in land(s). It is difficult to discuss the issue of allodial rights without making reference to legal discourse on the topic. In Ghanaian customary land law, the title of allodial rights “normally belongs to the community with the highest degree of occupation of the land,” though there could be an extinction of allodial rights in land arising out of abandonment, conquest, outright and compulsory acquisition by the

²⁶ O.J. Bartos and P. Wehr, *Using Conflict Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 12. For example, scholars who conceptualize conflict from the philosophical Hegelian perspective, see it as an inherent means of social order and development and that society is made up of forces, whose actions produce counter-forces. Other scholars conceptualize conflict in three broad sociological perspectives. On the one hand, conflict is conceptualized in the Marxist perspective, which categorizes conflict as a class struggle between the proletariat and capitalists. On the other hand, some scholars give it an Emile Durkheim-conceptualization (known as the functionalist approach). They see society as a functioning organism and that every aspect of the custom and practices of a people or society are important for a stable, cohesive society. To the functionalist, the chief factor for social conflicts is crime. In a third sociological perspective, conflict, as conceptualized by Alan Sear (a Canadian sociologist), is caused by social inequalities.

state.²⁷ Customary land law in Ghana determines allodial rights in land using a number of variables such as occupation, sale, lease, gift, conquest, abandonment. According to Woodman, though Ghanaian courts

regard all land as having been owned for at least two and a half centuries, it is not clear that all land has been occupied throughout that time. It is necessary therefore to find a basis, other than occupation or settlement, of legitimate claims to the allodial title to land which has been unoccupied at some point during that period.²⁸

Mindful of the dynamics of allodial rights in land, this study seeks to construct the notion of allodial rights in Alfai from the historical point of view, using as determinants, variables such as autochthony or first-settler rights, overlordship, and conquest to interrogate the question of allodial rights to land in Alfai in the pre-colonial period. In the colonial and post colonial periods, evidence was gleaned from records, especially reports and correspondences, to examine whether allodial rights in Alfai lands resided in the autochthonous Nawuri or the immigrant Gonja. The problematic issue of allodial rights in Alfai has been the fulcrum around which all other issues relating to Nawuri-Gonja relations from the 1930s to 1991 revolved. Thus the question of who owns Alfai, whether the autochthonous Nawuri or the immigrant Gonja, was the fundamental cause of all the various outbreaks of violence between the Nawuri and the Gonja between 1932 and 1991. In other words, beneath the wrangle between the Nawuri and the Gonja over local government arrangements in Alfai, social and economic issues from the 1930s to 1991 was the question of allodial rights to Alfai land.

In Alfai, as is the case of other Ghanaian societies, the modes of measuring allodial rights are embedded in the historical traditions of the people. In Alfai, claims to

²⁷ Gordon R. Woodman, *Customary Land Law in the Ghanaian Courts* (1994), 55-58.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 55.

allodial rights in land were dynamic as notions of allodial rights changed from the pre-colonial to the colonial times. By right of autochthony and autonomy, allodial rights in Alfai in the pre-colonial period resided in the Nawuri. In the colonial period, however, the notions of overlordship, conquest and abandonment became the basis of measuring allodial rights in land in Alfai. These notions challenged established traditions and made it possible for the Gonja to claim allodial rights in land. It was these dynamics in the notions of allodial rights in land which led to the conflicting claims of allodial land rights in Alfai by the Nawuri and the Gonja in the colonial and the post-colonial times, eventually leading to the outbreak of war between them in 1991.

1.3 Statement of Problem

The causes of ethnic conflicts in Northern Ghana are varied. They range from politics of succession to allodial rights and issues of identity. The roots of the Nawuri-Gonja conflict are traced to colonial policy of subordination. In 1913 the Germans issued a warrant to Kanankulaiwura Mahama Karatu, the Gonja head chief in Alfai then, making him the overlord of Alfai for the sake of political expediency. This began Gonja rule over the Nawuri, which was made irreversible when the British colonial authorities subsumed Alfai into the Gonja kingdom in 1932 following the introduction of indirect rule in the Northern Territories. The policy of indirect rule led to a categorization of societies in Northern Ghana into centralized and non-centralized societies.²⁹ With the

²⁹A S H. Pul, "Exclusion, Association and Violence: Trends and Triggers of Ethnic Conflict in Northern Ghana," Duquesne University: unpublished M. A. Dissertation, 2003) 23. The designation "non-centralized" was used to refer to societies that did not recognize a single individual as a repository of political authority. In these societies, the roles and responsibilities of the office of chief were vested in the most senior member in the priestly clan, often the tendana (clan head). Societies classified by the colonial authorities as non-centralized included those of the Nawuri, Nchumuru, Mo, Vagla, Konkomba, Frafra, B'Moba, Komba, Kusasi, Tamplusi, Builsa, Sissala, and Chakosi. On the other hand, the term "centralized states" was used to describe states that had a single individual as the centre of political power. Societies considered centralized included Nanum, Dagbon, Gonja, Wala and Mamprugu states. The classification cannot be accepted as wholly true as available evidence pointed to the existence of chiefly offices, including those of paramount chiefs, among many of the so-called non-centralized states.

categorization, the so-called smaller and non-centralized societies were amalgamated with the centralized ones. The result was that:

numerous and unassimilated groups such as the Nawuri, Nchumuru, Mo and Vagla, were grouped under the Gonja chiefs; large numbers of Konkomba and Chakosi were made subject to the Dagomba kingdom; the Frafra and B'Moba to the paramount chief of Mamprusi; and the Dagarti and Sisala in the Wala District to the Wala chiefs. In this way the British hoped to rationalize existing social and political structures for administrative purpose.³⁰

The ruler-ruled political encounters between the Gonja and the Nawuri in Alfai created by the British colonial authorities provided opportunities for the Gonja to interfere and exercise rights in land under the guise of overlordship much to the disgust of the Nawuri. This sowed the seeds of the conflicting claims by the Nawuri and the Gonja over allodial rights in Alfai in the colonial and post-colonial times.

1.4 Research Objectives and Questions

In broad terms, the objectives of this study are to examine the causes of the Nawuri-Gonja conflict to establish the extent to which colonialism created new notions of jurisdiction and claims to land in Alfai; to establish the encounters between the Nawuri and the Gonja from the pre-colonial to the post-colonial times; to interrogate Nawuri-Gonja encounters over allodial rights in land; and to discuss the extent to which the conflicting claims over allodial land rights in Alfai served as a nexus connecting the multiplicity of layers of issues that underlay the Nawuri-Gonja conflict.

The study was not based on a hypothesis; it was built around a number of research questions which interrogated Nawuri-Gonja political relations, colonial policy, allodial

³⁰ Paul André Ladouceur, *Chiefs and Politicians: the Politics of Regionalism in Northern Ghana* (London: Longman, 1979), 43.

rights, causes, conduct and resolution of the Nawuri-Gonja conflict. Some of the key research questions are: what was the nature of the relations between the Nawuri and Gonja in the pre-colonial period? What evidence is there to point to autochthonous rights in Alfai in the pre-colonial period? What were the earliest political decisions taken by the German and British colonial Administration in Alfai and how did they affect claims to allodial ownership in the area? What specific colonial policies altered the power relations between the Nawuri and the Gonja and how did the former react to such policies? What factors caused the Nawuri-Gonja conflict? To what extent did claims to allodial rights to Alfai land influence the political, social and economic dimensions of the Nawuri-Gonja conflict? To what extent did the political activism of the Youth Associations of the two ethnic groups reflect the question of allodial rights? What attempts were made to resolve the layers of issues of dispute between the Nawuri and the Gonja and how successful were they? What strategies were adopted for the prosecution of the Nawuri-Gonja War of 1991 and 1992, and what were its effects?

1.5 Historiographical Context

In many African states, communal violence and civil strife have posed a challenge to peace over the past four decades or so. It has claimed thousands of human lives and led to “flagrant abuses of fundamental human rights and freedoms, and to crime, violence, apathy and environmental irresponsibility.”³¹ War or violent conflict, which is generally viewed as the extreme manifestation of human struggles, has attracted the attention of scholars.

³¹ J. Cocodia, “Exhuming Trends in Ethnic Conflict and Cooperation in Africa: Some Selected States” in *African Journal on Conflict Resolution* (2008, volume 8, number 3), 910-930.

Vast literature on war, stretching back to the ancient times, exists.³² The task of attempting a general review of the vast literature on war or violent conflict in this study is arduous, if not impossible. As such this study focuses on the more recent material central to debates about post-Cold War conflicts in Africa. Of the plethora of conflict theories, a common line runs through five of them which can be conveniently categorized into the nation-state, 'poverty', 'the new barbarism', 'the greed not grievance', and the ethnography debates or theories, though there are some degrees of differences. Most of these theories are rooted deeply in European thought of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.³³

One of the most popular and enduring theories of the sources of conflicts in Africa is the nation-building theory. This theory sees conflicts in Africa as an intrinsic phenomenon of the multi-ethnic nature of African states. It emphasizes that the multi-ethnic African state is inherently conflictual and that stability necessarily requires that the ingrained "tribalism" be transcended through modernization. The thrust of this theory is that conflict is an inherent phenomenon of the multi-ethnic nature of African states as it creates competition of cultures and clash of identity. The theory emphasizes that ethnic consciousness emerges at the boundary between groups, rather than being intrinsic to the group itself, and that the multiplicity of ethnic groups in African states created conditions for ethnic consciousness.³⁴ The result is that ethnicity or cultural difference becomes a means of mobilizing resources for violent conflict. The proponents further argue that as African states were modernized they adopted a Western form of government. However,

³² Paul Richards, "New War" in Paul Richards ed., *No Peace No War: An Anthropology of Contemporary Armed Conflicts* (Athens and Oxford: Ohio University Press and James Currey, 2005), 1-21. Much of the literature on war falls into two broad categories – prosecution or defense mechanisms against war and what can be termed as 'war as metric'. According to Richards, "the purpose of the first kind of literature is to train soldiers or advise practitioners of statecraft. 'War as metric', in contrast, uses violent conflict as a yardstick for assessing or promoting other concerns."

³³ Paul Richards, op.cit., 1-21.

³⁴ Ibid.

they failed to transform the disparate ethnic groups into an integrated and consolidated polity; they failed to divest themselves of all the nuances of ethnicity or ‘tribalism’; and that due to the difficulty of national integration, the need arose for an authoritarian and coercive power to pre-empt conflicts. Unfortunately, African states’ adoption of democracy as a form of government increased ethnic conflicts on the continent. This has denied the state unfettered use of its coercive power to freeze inter-ethnic conflicts as was the case in hegemonic (one-party states) or military regimes. Some of the proponents of this theory are Cohen, Cocodia and Rothchild.³⁵

There is no denying the fact that the pluralism of ethnic groups in present-day Northern Region serves as a potential source of ethnic conflicts. However, the theory fails to explain why conflicts erupt in non-democratic regimes in Africa, and therefore cannot be used to explain the Nawuri-Gonja conflict, which occurred in 1991 when Ghana was under a military regime.

The surge of ethnic conflicts in Africa at the end of the twentieth century has led to the evolution of new schools of thought by social scientists. One of such theories was the ‘new barbarism’ theory. There are two approaches to this theory – the ‘instincts’ approach and the imperial and/or Super-Power approach. The ‘instincts’ approach explains that Africa was in a state of flux and turmoil before the imposition of colonial rule in the 1880s. The proponents of this theory argue that the ethnic groups in Africa had age-long hatred for one another. This was evidenced by the numerous inter-ethnic wars such as the Asante-Fanti Wars, Asante-Akyem Wars, and Dagomba-Gonja Wars. Colonialism put a lid on the ‘barbaric instincts’ of Africans, and thus prevented the

³⁵ For details see: A. Cohen, *Custom and Politics in Urban Africa: a Study of Hausa Migrants in Yoruba Towns*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969); J. Cocodia, “Exhuming Trends in Ethnic Conflict and Cooperation in Africa: Some Selected States.” In *African Journal on Conflict Resolution*, (2008, volume 8, number 3), 910-930; Rothchild in Paul Nkwi, “A Network for Comparative Studies, Monitoring and Evaluation of Ethnic Conflicts and Social Transformation in Africa” in *Ethno-net Africa* (2001). As quoted in Cocodia, op.cit. Also available at www.unesco.org; A. Kuper, *Culture: the Anthropologists’ Account* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).

eruption of conflicts on the continent. As soon as colonialism ended, Africans descended into barbarism, maiming and killing each other. The proponents further argue that the ethnic animosities explain why the colonial authorities failed to melt away ethnic consciousness in the nation-states created. The imperial and the Super-Power approach blame all ethnic conflicts in post-colonial Africa on the colonial enterprise and or the Cold War. The proponents argue that the so-called surge of the 'new barbarism' in Africa is a consequence of colonialism, which created ethnic categories and consciousness. It sees conflicts on the African continent as 'the unfinished business from the colonial era, and ties the causes of ethnic conflicts in Africa to the colonial policy that forcibly agglomerated people of diverse ethnic backgrounds into one nation, which "produced essentialized ethnicities from what were once fluid political groupings,"³⁶ and the "exploitation of the colonists, which compounded already strained inter-ethnic relations."³⁷ As Jennifer Cole puts it:

soon after France colonized Madagascar in 1895, General Governor Joseph Gallieni imposed a modified form of indirect rule called *la polirique de races*, dividing the peoples of Madagascar into different groups according to their customs so as to facilitate the colonial administration. The result of this division and codification, which produced essentialized ethnicities from what were once fluid political groupings, endures today.³⁸

In other cases, the proponents of this theory impute conflicts in Africa to the Cold War. They view conflicts on the continent as un-extinguished bushfires from the Cold War. According to them, until the collapse of the Cold War in 1989, war in world history was generally seen by many scholars as a monopolized phenomenon by the major powers; that every conflict was "in some way shaped by the ideological struggle between East and West, [and that] the chief protagonists – the United States and the Soviet Union

³⁶ Jennifer Cole, *Forget Colonialism? Sacrifice and the Art of Memory in Madagascar* (London: University of California Press, 2001), 6.

³⁷ Cocodia, op.cit., 910-930.

³⁸ Jennifer Cole, op.cit., 36.

– fought wars by proxy in Africa, Southeast Asia and Central America.”³⁹ The thrust of this argument is that the “Super-Power balance of nuclear terror kept the lid on many local conflicts”⁴⁰, but once the Cold War competition ended, “endemic hostilities reasserted themselves.”⁴¹ It holds that “the upsurge of ethnic conflicts in Africa in the 1980s and 1990s was a reaction to events in Eastern Europe. The collapse of the old order in Eastern Europe in the late 1980s and early 1990s had a tremendous impact on the fragile nation states of Africa.”⁴² It further holds that globalization led to the ‘westernization’ of the world and that this global culture cannot be produced without difficulty and conflict.⁴³

In short, conflicts in Africa are caused by the age-long hatred of ethnic groups for one another. The hatred could be the product of pre-colonial wars of conquest and annexation for the establishment, maintenance and expansion of states and kingdoms or could be a colonial creation born out of colonial policies.

Some scholars of the ‘new barbarism theory are Kaplan, van Creveld, Jennifer Cole, Bailey, Scholte, Waters, Nnoli, Suberu, A. Avugma, Attali, Barber and Lerche.⁴⁴ This study is not situated within this theory because the Nawuri-Gonja conflict

³⁹ Paul Richards, op.cit., 1-21.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Cocodia, op.cit., 910-930.

⁴³ P.O. Sijuwade, “Globalization and Cultural Conflict in Developing Countries: The South African Example,” in *Anthropologist* 8(2) (Kamla-Raj publisher, 2006), 125-137.

⁴⁴ The works of the proponents of this school of thought as quoted in Cocodia, J., op.cit., are: G.A. Bailey, “Rebirth of the Non-Western World,” *Anthropology Newsletter* 35 (9), 1994; Okwudiba Nnoli, *Ethnic Conflicts in Africa*, Nottingham, Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA), 1998; Rotimi T. Suberu, *Ethnic Minority Conflicts and Governance in Nigeria*, (Lagos: Spectrum Books Ltd, 2003); Adongo Avugma, “Tribalism, Colonialism and Capitalism”, in *The Socialist Standard. Quoted in Cocodia, op.cit., 910-930.* Also available at www.feedback@worldsocialism.org; A. Tindwell, and C. Lerche “Globalization and Conflict Resolution”, in *International Journal of Peace Studies*, Volume 9, Number 1, Spring/Summer 2004. The rest are: Jacques Attali, *Millennium: Winners and Losers in the Coming World Order*, New York, Times Books, 1991; Benjamin R. Barber, *Jihad vs. McWorld* (New York: Times Books, 1995); Lerche and O. Charles, “The Conflicts of Globalization,” in *International Journal of Peace Studies*, 3 (1), 1998, 47-66. Jan Art Scholte, “The Globalization of World Politics,” in John Baylis and Steve; Waters, Malcolm eds., *Globalization*, London, Routledge, 1995.

cannot be traced to any pre-colonial antagonistic relations between the Nawuri and the Gonja. The study traces the roots of the conflict to the operations of the colonial system, but identifies the issue of allodial rights to be more pivotal and central to the conflict.

Other scholars have also identified a link between poverty and conflict. There are two perspectives on this theory. One perspective holds that poverty and deprivation were often the unintended consequences of civil wars on the African continent, and that conflicts generally threaten and destroy livelihoods, infrastructures and resources in Africa. Another variant perspective blames conflicts in Africa on poverty. It argues that poverty, the uneven distribution of resources and economic opportunities in Africa, lack of human needs and opportunities create competitions and conflicts on the African continent. Some proponents of this theory are Homer-Dixon, Burton, Nathan, Gurr, and Sandbrook.⁴⁵

There is no gainsaying that conflicts result in the destruction of properties of all kind, which can cause poverty and deprivation. However, it is difficult to use this theory to explain conflicts in Northern Ghana. Its adoption involves constructing a macro-history of poverty as the source of conflicts in Northern Ghana and other regions of the country considered poor, a task which is onerous and arduous, if not impossible.

⁴⁵ T.F. Homer-Dixon, "On the Threshold: Environmental Changes as Causes of Acute Conflict." *International Security* 16(21), 1991, 76-116; "Environmental Scarcities and Violent Conflict: Evidence from Cases", in *International Security* 19 (1), 1994, 5-40; *Environment, Scarcity and Violence* (Princeton: NJ and Oxford, Princeton University Press, 1999); J. Burton, *Violence Experienced: The Source of Conflict Violence and Crime and Their Prevention* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1997); L. Nathan, *Crisis, Resolution and Conflict Management in Africa* (Cape Town: Centre for Conflict Resolution, University of Cape Town, South Africa, 2003); R. Sandbrook, *The Politics of Basic Needs*, (Heinemann: London, 1982); T. Gurr, *Why Men Rebel* (Princeton, 1970). As quoted in Brian-Vincent IKEJAKU "The Relationship between Poverty, Conflict and Development" in *Journal of Sustainable Development*, Vol. 2, No. 1, March 2009, 15-28; Paul Richards, "New War", in Paul Richards ed., *No Peace No War: Anthropology of Contemporary Armed Conflicts* (Athens/Oxford: Ohio University Press/James Currey, 2005), 1-8.

The ‘greed, not grievance’ theory is yet another theory of great influence in the debates about post-Cold War conflicts in Africa. The theory emphasizes that “internal wars are explained as much by economic considerations as by inter-group hatreds.”⁴⁶ The thrust of this argument is that the desire by some unscrupulous and greedy persons to gain unfettered control over the exploitation of some natural resources often leads to conflicts in Africa. In such situations, “belligerents gravitate towards resources to fight.”⁴⁷ The proponents argue that in the cases that conflicts erupt as a result of the attempt to gain control over the exploitation of minerals, greed but not grievance, is the underlying factor. This was particularly the case in Angola, Congo and Sierra Leone where conflicts erupted as result of the greed of individuals and groups to gain control of what has been described as ‘conflict diamonds.’ The proponents of this school are Berdal, Keen, and Malone.⁴⁸

Scholarly work on the psychoanalysis of greed as a source of conflicts in Northern Ghana hardly exists. Besides, the only natural resource pivotal to the Nawuri-Gonja conflict is land, but it is difficult to assign any psychological values to Nawuri and Gonja attempts to control it.

The fifth theory is the ethnographic approach to the study of the sources of conflicts. The theory views conflicts as a “long-term struggle organized for political ends, commonly but not always using violence. Neither the means nor the ends can be understood without reference to a specific social context.”⁴⁹ The proponents of this theory do not view war as a product of “mindless response to stimuli such as population

⁴⁶ Paul Richards, *op.cit.*, 9.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁴⁸ M. Berdal, and D. Keen, *Violence and Economic Agendas in Civil Wars: Some Policy Implications. Millennium Journal of International Studies* 26 (3), 1997, 795-815; M. Berdal, and D. Malone eds., *Greed and Grievance: Economic Agendas in Civil Wars* (Boulder Co., Lynne Rienner, 2000).

⁴⁹ Paul Richards, *op.cit.*, 4.

pressure or cultural competition.”⁵⁰ They argue that conflicts should be seen in terms of a continuum, which involves long periods of uneasy peace punctuated by occasional eruptions of violence. Some of the proponents are Paul Richards, Mats Utas, Sten Hagberg, Sverker Finnström, and Bernhard Helander.⁵¹ This study adopted the ethnographic approach to the explanation of conflicts in Africa. It presented the dispute over allodial rights to Alfai land as a continuous struggle between the Nawuri and the Gonja which involved long periods of uneasy peace punctuated by occasional eruption of violence which reached a climax in 1991 when war broke out.

Intellectual discourses on conflicts in Northern Ghana, whether inter-ethnic or intra-ethnic, have more or less pointed accusing fingers at the colonial enterprise. Historiography on conflicts in Northern Ghana has discussed the causes of conflicts from the context of chieftaincy dispute, land rights, competition for authority and representations both on local and national government bodies. Irrespective of the multiplicity of causes, the approach to discourse on conflicts in Northern Ghana can be categorized broadly into two. The first discourse or approach imputes the causes of inter-ethnic conflicts in Northern Ghana to colonialism.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Paul Richards, “New War.” Paul Richards ed., *No Peace NoWar: An Anthropology of Contemporary Armed Conflicts* (Athens and Oxford: Ohio University Press and James Curry, 2005), 1-21; S. Hagberg, “Dealing with Dilemmas: Violent Farmer-Pastoralist Conflicts in Burkina Faso” in Paul Richards ed., *No Peace NoWar: An Anthropology of Contemporary Armed Conflicts* (Athens and Oxford: Ohio University Press and James Curry, 2005), 40-56; S. Finnström, “For God and My Life: War and Cosmology in Northern Uganda,” Paul Richards ed., *No Peace NoWar: An Anthropology of Contemporary Armed Conflicts* (Athens and Oxford: Ohio University Press and James Curry, 2005), 98-116; B. Helander, “Who Needs a State? Civilian, Security and Social Services in North-East Somalia” in Paul Richards ed., *No Peace NoWar: An Anthropology of Contemporary Armed Conflicts* (Athens and Oxford: Ohio University Press and James Curry, 2005), 193-202.

The proponents of this view included Bombade, N.J.K. Brukum, Hippolyt Pul and Peter Skalnik.⁵² The thrust of their argument is one or a combination of the following points: that the colonial enterprise imposed notions of state and state power on Northern Ghana without taking into account the conceptual differences in outlook between centralized and non-centralized societies; that colonialism, with its policy of indirect rule, was the major cause of inter-ethnic conflicts in Northern Ghana because it created lots of antagonisms, grievances and festering relations between ethnic groups; and that in some instances state actors themselves have fomented or condoned war.

The second discourse or approach is led by scholars such as Ladouceur, Carola Lentz, Dzodzi Tsikata and Wayo Seini, Julia Jonson and Benjamin Talton.⁵³ This school of thought establishes the causes of conflicts in Northern Ghana beyond the colonial enterprise. The proponents of this thought acknowledge the role colonialism played in

⁵² Emmanuel Bombade, "Conflicts, Civil Society Organisation and Community Peace Building in Northern Ghana" in Steve Tonah ed., *Ethnicity, Conflicts and Consensus in Northern Ghana* (Accra: Woeli Publishing Services, 2007), 196-228; Peter Skalnik, "Questioning the Concept of the State in Indigenous Africa" in *Social Dynamics*, 9 (2), 11-28; Peter Skalnik, "On the Inequality of the Concept of the 'Traditional State'" in *Journal of Legal Pluralism and Unofficial Law*, Nos. 25 & 26, 1983; Peter Skalnik, "Outwitting Ghana: Pluralism of Political Culture in Nanum" in Peter Skalnik ed., *Outwitting the State* (New Brunswick, 1989), 145-168; N.J.K. Brukum, "Chieftaincy and Ethnic Conflicts in Northern Region of Ghana, 1980-2002" in Steve Tonah ed., *Ethnicity, Conflicts and Consensus in Ghana* (Accra: Woeli Publishing Services, 2007), 98-115; N.J.K. Brukum, *The Guinea-Fowl, Mango and Pito Wars: Episodes in the History of Northern Ghana, 1980-1991* (Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 2001); N.J.K. Brukum, "Ethnic Conflicts in Northern Ghana: An Appraisal" in *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana*, New Series, Nos. 4 & 5, 2000-2001, 131-147; N.J.K. Brukum, "Chiefs, Colonial Policy and Politics in Northern Ghana, 1897-1956" in *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana*, New Series, No. 3, 1999, 101-122; N.J.K. Brukum, "Ethnic Conflict in Northern Region of Ghana. A Study of the Gonja District, 1980-1994" in M. Oquaye ed., *Democracy, Politics and Conflict Resolution in Contemporary Ghana* (Accra: Gold-Type Publications Ltd., 1995), 138-153; A.S.P. Hippolyt, "Exclusion, Association and Violence: Trends and Triggers of Ethnic Conflicts in Northern Ghana" (Duchesne University: unpublished M. A Dissertation, 2003).

⁵³ P.A. Ladouceur, *Chiefs and Politicians: The Politics of Regionalism in Northern Ghana* (London: Longman, 1979); Carola Lentz, *Ethnicity and The Making of History in Northern Ghana* (Accra: Woeli Publishing Services, 2007); D. Tsikata, D. and Wayo Seini, op.cit. Julia Jonson, "The Overwhelming Minority: Traditional Leadership and Ethnic Conflict in Ghana's Northern Region" (Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity (CRISE) Working Paper No. 30, 2007); Benjamin Talton, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana: The Konkomba Struggle for Political Equality* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

the outbreak of ethnic conflicts in Northern Ghana, but consider the social and economic factors as preponderant. They argue that education, modernization, questions of allodial rights, the activities of ethnic youth associations fostered consciousness of identity, ethnicity and inequalities in Northern Ghana; and that an explanation of ethnic conflicts in northern Ghana must necessarily take account of the role of ethnicity, identity and inequality.

This thesis builds on the argument of the second discourse or approach. It traces the root causes of the Nawuri-Gonja conflict to the colonial policy of amalgamation, and views the conflict as a product of the long period of antagonism between the Nawuri and the Gonja. The thesis establishes the role that colonialism played in the outbreak of the Nawuri-Gonja conflict, but argues that the conflict was an illustration of the extent to which conflicting claims to allodial rights impinged on political, social and economic debate in Alfai in the colonial and post-colonial periods. In other words, the issue of allodial rights served as a nexus connecting the multiplicity of issues that underlay the Nawuri-Gonja conflict.

1.6 Literature Review

A study of the Nawuri-Gonja conflict must necessarily take into account literatures on Nawuri, Gonja, colonial rule, land tenure and conflicts in Northern Ghana. A substantial amount of literature exists on Gonja history and colonial rule in Northern Ghana. The earliest known references to Gonja in written literature are contained in the works of Arab writers. The *Chronicles from Gonja: A Tradition of West African Muslim Historiography* contains an array of texts translated, with commentaries, by Ivor Wilks,

Nehemia Levtzion, Bruce and Haight.⁵⁴ These texts provide a first-hand account of the foundation of Gonja, its economic and social systems. The accounts are largely narrative and do not provide any argument of Nawuri-Gonja encounters. Neither do they provide any detail discussion of Nawuri-Gonja relations in pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial times. Nonetheless, the texts are significant to this study as they give anecdotal history of the relations between the two ethnic groups.

J.A. Braimah and J.R. Goody examine the Kpembe Civil War of 1892-93, and analyze the causes, conduct and effects of the civil war.⁵⁵ The authors also discuss the effects of the policies of Kanankulaiwura Mahama Karatu (later Kpembewura Jawula) on the Nawuri and the Nchumuru.⁵⁶ The work of Braimah and Goody was limited to the Kpembe Civil War, and argues that the conflict was caused by internal wrangles over the Kpembewura Skin among the three eligible clans of Lepo, Singbung and Kanyase. Their work has little detail on Gonja policy towards the Nawuri, but gives glimpses into Nawuri-Gonja political alliance in the pre-colonial period as it contained few passages of Nawuri support to the Lepo Gonja in the civil war.⁵⁷ However, their work is useful to this study because it provides glimpses into Gonja rule over the Nawuri, which can provide a basis for a more exhaustive enquiry.

In “The Over-Kingdom of Gonja”, Jack Goody provides a detailed account of nineteenth-century Gonja. He discusses the foundation of Gonja, its economic and social

⁵⁴ Ivor Wilks, Nehemia Levtzion and Bruce M. Haight, *Chronicles from Gonja: A Tradition of West African Muslim Historiography* (Cambridge: CUP, 1996).

⁵⁵ J.A. Braimah and J.R. Goody, *Salaga: The Struggle for Power* (London: Longman, 1967).

⁵⁶ *Kanankulaiwura* is the title of the Gonja head chief in Alfai. The title is derived from the Nawuri words “Kanan”, which means meat, “Kule” which means chunk, and “wura” which means ‘lord’ or ‘master’. Hence “Kanankulaiwura” in Nawuri means the ‘chief or master of chunks of meat.’ It was also possible that the title *Kanankulaiwura* was derived from Nawuri words *Kanankulai* (another name of the Nawuri area), which literally means ‘land of abundance of meat’, and *wura*, which means ‘master’, ‘lord or ‘chief’. Hence *Kanankulaiwura* means the master, lord or chief of *Kanankulai*. For the origin of the office of the *Kanankulaiwura*, see chapter two of this study.

⁵⁷ The Gonja in Alfai prior to colonial rule were members of the Lepo clan from Kpembe. This probably explains why the Nawuri supported the Lepo clan in the Kpembe civil war.

systems, and the historical framework of outside contacts.⁵⁸ His work does not give much else beyond the internal and external relations of nineteenth-century Gonja. It hardly provides any clue to the relations between the Gonja and the Nawuri in the nineteenth century. Nonetheless, Goody's work provides useful information about the foundation of Gonja, which is helpful to this study.

While the body of literature on Gonja is appreciably substantial, there is a paucity of literature on Nawuri history. The few written works on Nawuri history include the works of Ampene, Braimah, Cardinall, Tamakloe, Wilks, Levtzion, Haight, Ward, Jones and Mathewson. These works provide two schools of thought on Nawuri history. On the one hand is the school of thought led by Braimah, Cardinall, Tamakloe, Wilks, Levtzion and Haight.⁵⁹ This school makes Nawuri subordinate to Gonja and impliedly upholds the latter's allodial claims in Alfai land. The thrust of their arguments is that Nawuri history is an appendage to that of Gonja; and that the Gonja were the historical overlords of the Nawuri and owners of Alfai.

In contrast to this view is that of a second school of thought consisting of Ampene, Jones, Ward and Mathewson.⁶⁰ The main arguments of this second school of thought are that the Nawuri were the indigenes of Alfai; that there was no common tradition of origin that linked the Nawuri to the Gonja; that it was with the Nawuri and other indigenous Guan groups that the Gonja from Mandeland intermingled to acquire

⁵⁸ Jack Goody, "The Over-Kingdom of Gonja" in Daryll Forde and P.M. Kaberry eds., *West African Kingdoms in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), 179-205.

⁵⁹ J.A. Braimah, *The Two Isanwurfos* (London: Longman, 1967); A.W. Cardinal, *Tales in Togoland* (London: Oxford University Press, 1931); E.F. Tamakloe, *A Brief History of the Dagbamba People* (Accra: Government Printer, 1931); Ivor Wilks, Levtzion and Haight, *Chronicles from Gonja: A Tradition of West African Muslim Historiography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

⁶⁰ Kwame Ampene, *History of the Guan-Speaking Peoples of Ghana* (Boso: Laterian House, 2003); D.H. Jones, "Jakpa and the Foundation of Gonja" in *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana*, 1962, Vol. VI, 1-28.; W.E.F. Ward, *A History of Ghana* (London: George Allen and Urwin Limited, 1966); R.D. Mathewson, "Kitare: A Preliminary Note" in *Archaeological Sites in Ghana* (Legon: University Press, 1965).

their Guan dialect; and that the Nawuri communally settled at Kitare before moving out to found other settlements in Alfai. These viewpoints provide a basis for interrogating the respective claims of the Nawuri and the Gonja to allodial rights in Alfai as well as their political relations in the pre-colonial and colonial eras.

On colonial rule and land tenure in Northern Ghana, there is a lot of literature with differing perspectives and viewpoints. In his book, *Priests and Power: The Case of the Dente Shrine in Nineteenth-Century Ghana*, Maier recounts the history of Krachi and Kete-Krachi District in the nineteenth century, and evaluates the impact of German rule on Krachi and the Kete-Krachi District in general.⁶¹ Maier's work made few references to Alfai in the Kete-Krachi District under German rule, which provides a basis for an exhaustive research.

R.B. Bening discusses the evolution of the regional boundaries of Ghana in a work published in 1999.⁶² He explains in detail the evolution of the boundaries of the Northern Territories (now Northern Ghana), and examines the impact of colonial political policies on traditional political and social structures in Northern Ghana. Bening explains the extent to which the colonial policy of administrative expediency contributed to the amalgamation of Alfai with the Gonja kingdom. His work helps this study to assess the role of colonial policies in the context of Nawuri-Gonja conflict.

N.J.K. Brukum has examined political changes in Northern Ghana from 1897 to 1956.⁶³ He shows how colonialism established new notions of ethnic relations, awakened northern consciousness, ethnicity and elitism. Though this work does not examine

⁶¹ D.J.E. Maier, *Priests and Power: The Case of the Dente Shrine in Nineteenth-Century Ghana* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983).

⁶² R.B. Bening, *Ghana: Regional Boundaries and National Integration* (Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 1999).

⁶³ N.J.K. Brukum, "The Northern Territories of the Gold Coast under British Colonial Rule, 1897-1956: A Study in Political Change" (University of Toronto: unpublished PhD thesis, 1996).

conflicts in post-colonial Northern Ghana, it provides considerable information on the operation of the colonial system. This will help this study to interrogate the extent to which the colonial system was culpable for the ethnic conflicts in modern-day Northern Ghana.

The earliest work on land tenure and utilization of land in Northern Ghana was authored by R.J.K. Pogucki.⁶⁴ In his book, *Gold Coast Land Tenure: A Survey of Land Tenure in Customary Law of the Protectorate of the Northern Territories*, Pogucki explains how group rights in land were executed by the *Tindana*. He explains the processes which led to the 'tribalization' of land, establishment of allodial rights in land, rights of usufruct as well as common rights in land in the Northern Territories. His work does not contain specific conclusions about land tenure and allodial rights in Alfai; nonetheless it is significant for this study as it contains useful clues by which an interrogation of allodial rights and land tenure in Alfai in the pre-colonial period could be made.

Ollennu provides a perspective by which claims to allodial rights of the Nawuri and the Gonja can be interrogated. In his book, *Ollennu's Principles of Customary Land Law in Ghana*, he discusses allodial rights, utilization and distribution of land within the context of customary land law in Ghana.⁶⁵ Ollennu identifies four variables upon which allodial rights in land in Ghana are based - birthrights (first settlers), conquest, gift and lease. Though his work does not deal with land tenure in Alfai, it nonetheless contains useful knowledge on customary land law in Ghana which will be helpful to this study. Besides, it helps this study to interrogate the respective allodial claims of the Nawuri and the Gonja to Alfai based on his set of criteria.

⁶⁴ R.J.H. Pogucki, *Gold Coast Land Tenure: A Survey of Land Tenure in Customary Law of the Protectorate of the Northern Territories* Vol. I (Accra: Gold Coast Lands Department, 1955).

⁶⁵ N.A. Ollennu, *Ollennu's Principles of Customary Land Law in Ghana* (Birmingham: Carl Press, 1985).

Abudulai (1986) examines the legal, administrative and proprietary structures in respect of land in Dagbon.⁶⁶ He also examines the nature and the extent of rights of both chiefs and agricultural land users. His work seeks to make a distinction between rules that regulate the acquisition and use of land and those that make the distribution of power and prestige. The work was restricted to the Dagbon state, but it provides lessons about administrative and proprietary structures in respect of land upon which a study of allodial and proprietary rights in land in Alfai could be based.

In his article, “Land Policy and Administration in Northern Ghana, 1898-1976,” R.B. Bening explains the nature of colonial land policy and its impact on Northern Ghana.⁶⁷ He explains how the colonial government ignored the claims of families, groups, ethnic groups and individuals to land, how the colonial government interfered in traditional system of land tenure and how it assumed general control over land. He also explains the impact of land administration based on colonial laws, and the attempts made by the people of Northern Ghana to harmonize legislation affecting land. His work provides a basis for critiquing colonial land policy in Alfai and showing the extent to which it contributed to the Nawuri-Gonja conflict.

Richard Kuba and Carola Lentz see rights in land as a mark of identity. They explain that land was the pivot around which the politics of belonging in West Africa revolved, and that land was at the centre of conflicts in West Africa.⁶⁸ The work of Kuba and Lentz helps this study to interrogate the extent to which the question of the ownership of Alfai land serves as a nexus connecting the multiplicity of issues that underlay the Nawuri-Gonja conflict.

⁶⁶ M.S. Abudulai, “Land Tenure among the Dagomba of Northern Ghana: Empirical Evidence” in *Cambridge Anthropology*. Vol., II, Issue 3, 1986, 72-103.

⁶⁷ R.B. Bening, “Land Policy and Administration in Northern Ghana, 1898-1976” in *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana*, New Series, Vol. XVI, 2, No.1, 1995, 227-266.

⁶⁸ R. Kuba, and Carola Lentz, eds., *Land and the Politics of Belonging in West Africa* (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 1975).

Woodman discussed in detail customary land law in the Ghanaian courts. He established allodial rights and their extinction through occupation or settlement, abandonment, conquest outright compulsory acquisition of the state.⁶⁹ Woodman's study does not make reference to land cases in Alfai determined in court under customary land law in Ghana. Nonetheless, it provides useful information to measure allodial rights in Alfai and determine the extent to which Nawuri self-exile in 1943 constituted an abandonment or renunciation of their rights in land.

Over the past three decades scholars have researched on the causes and resolution of conflicts in Northern Ghana. First among them was Staniland. From the perspective of a political scientist, Staniland constructed the political history of Dagbon from 1900 to 1974. His work examines how the traditional structure of authority in Dagbon responded to the political changes ushered by colonial administration.⁷⁰ Staniland's work limits itself to the root causes of the Ya-Na Skin dispute without attempting to identify the root causes of ethnic conflicts in Northern Ghana at large. Nor does he attempt to establish a clear linkage between colonial rule and the Ya-Na Skin dispute of 1968. Despite its limitations, Staniland's work is useful to this study because it serves as a nexus for the understanding of the Dagbon crisis and conflicts in other parts of Northern Ghana.

Paul André Ladouceur's work, *Chiefs and Politicians: The Politics of Regionalism in Northern Ghana*, focused on the colonial enterprise, its policies and national politics in Northern Ghana.⁷¹ It focuses on the general, historical factors and antecedents to regionalism in Northern Ghana. By and large, Ladouceur's work examined the course of political and economic evolution of Northern Ghana in response

⁶⁹ Woodman, op.cit., 51-58.

⁷⁰ M. Staniland, *The Lions of Dagbon: Political Change in Northern Ghana* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1975).

⁷¹ Ladouceur, op.cit.

to both external and internal factors, and the relation between the region and the rest of Ghana. Ladouceur identifies the colonial policy of amalgamation, which rationalized existing pre-colonial social and political structures for administrative purposes as partly responsible for conflicts in modern-day Northern Ghana. He also explains how Nkrumah's political policies undermined inter-ethnic harmony. Ladouceur's contextualization of the causes of conflicts in Northern Ghana within the framework of the colonial enterprise is significant for this study. It serves as a foundation for this study which seeks to discover the role colonial rule played in the outbreak of ethnic conflicts in Northern Ghana.

In a number of articles, Brukum examined the pre-colonial power relations between chiefs and their subjects as well as the nature of inter-state relations. He traced the imposition of colonial rule and explained how its policies made inter-ethnic wars in Northern Ghana a possibility.

Brukum also discussed the immediate causes of some of the conflicts in Northern Ghana.⁷² Beyond colonial policy and the immediate causes of conflicts, Brukum gives little information about the conduct of wars, conflicts management and effects. Nonetheless, his works are useful to this study insofar as they help it discover the colonial causes of conflicts in Northern Ghana, particularly in the case of the Nawuri-Gonja conflict.

⁷² N.J.K. Brukum, "Chieftaincy and Ethnic Conflicts in Northern Region of Ghana, 1980-2002" in Steve Tonah ed., *Ethnicity, Conflicts and Consensus in Ghana* (Accra: Woeli Publishing Services, 2007), 98-115; N.J.K. Brukum, *The Guinea-Fowl, Mango and Pito Wars: Episodes in the History of Northern Ghana, 1980-1991* (Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 2001); N.J.K. Brukum, "Ethnic Conflicts in Northern Ghana: An Appraisal" in *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* New Series, Nos. 4 & 5, 2000-2001, 131-147; N.J.K. Brukum, "Chiefs, Colonial Policy and Politics in Northern Ghana, 1897-1956" in *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana*, New Series, 1999, No. 3, 101-122; N.J.K. Brukum, "Ethnic Conflict in Northern Region of Ghana. A Study of the Gonja District, 1980-1994" in Mike Oquaye ed., *Democracy, Politics and Conflict Resolution in Contemporary Ghana* (Accra: Gold-Type Publications Ltd., 1995), 138-153.

Hippolyt Pul's thesis traced the genesis of inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic conflicts in Northern Ghana since 1957. He assesses the colonial policy of indirect rule which amalgamated smaller polities with the bigger ones. Like Brukum, he blames the causes of conflicts in post-colonial Northern Ghana on the colonial enterprise. Pul also identifies another cause of ethnic conflicts in Northern Ghana as the activities of youth associations and the political elite.⁷³ His work provides the pointers by which to examine the causes of the Nawuri-Gonja conflict.

In a number of articles, Peter Skalnik examines the nature of the Nanum polity in the pre-colonial and colonial eras.⁷⁴ Using Nanum as a case study, Skalnik argues that post-colonial conflicts in Northern Ghana were the result of the imposition of an alien power model on societies by the colonial authorities. His works confirm the traditional argument that colonialism is largely blamable for the conflicts in Northern Ghana.

Julia Jonson provides a perspective to the traditional argument that sees conflicts in Northern Ghana as the long-term effects of the colonial enterprise.⁷⁵ Jonson also identifies other causes, namely, the categorization of the peoples of the Northern Region of Ghana into "majority" and "minority" with its associated stereotypes; activities of youth associations; notions about traditional political authority and allodial rights. Her argument, which is shared by Dzodzi Tsikata and Wayo Seini, demonstrates the extent to which the struggle for traditional leadership underlay economic, social and political

⁷³ A.S.H. Pul, "Exclusion, Association and Violence: Trends and Triggers of Ethnic Conflicts in Northern Ghana" (Duquesne University: unpublished M. A. Dissertation, 2003).

⁷⁴ Peter Skalnik, "Questioning the Concept of the State in Indigenous Africa" in *Social Dynamics*, 1983, 9 (2), 11-28; Peter Skalnik, "On the Inequality of the Concept of the 'Traditional State'" in *Journal of Legal Pluralism and Unofficial Law*, 1987, Nos. 25 & 26, 301-325; Peter Skalnik, "Outwitting Ghana: Pluralism of Political Culture in Nanum" in Peter Skalnik ed., *Outwitting the State* (New Brunswick, 1989), 145-168.

⁷⁵ Julia Jonson, "The Overwhelming Minority: Traditional Leadership and Ethnic Conflict in Ghana's Northern Region" (Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity (CRISE), 2007, Working Paper No. 30).

matters, and generated conflicts in the Northern Region.⁷⁶ The works of Jonson, and Tsikata and Seini provide a generalization which runs counter to the central argument of this study, namely, that the question of allodial rights in Alfai lands serves as a nexus connecting the multiplicity of issues that underlay the Nawuri-Gonja conflict. Their works are significant for this study because they provide a dimension for a deeper interrogation of the causes of the Nawuri-Gonja conflict.

In his work, *Politics of Social Change in Ghana: The Konkomba Struggle for Political Equality*, Benjamin Talton sees the causes of Konkomba conflicts with the Nanumba and Dagomba in terms of a struggle for social and political equality.⁷⁷ Talton argues that “for Konkomba and Konkomba leaders in particular, the 1981 conflict pushed their struggle for social and political equality from a local to a national issue.”⁷⁸ He also implied that government policies helped promote conflicts in the Northern Region of Ghana. His work helps this study to assess the extent to which government policies helped promote the Nawuri-Gonja conflict.

In *Ethnicity and the Making of History in Northern Ghana*, Carola Lentz examines the colonial encounter, the evolution of ethnicity and the production of history in Northern Ghana.⁷⁹ Lentz’s focus of study was the Dagaba of Lawra-Nandom area. Lentz explains the impact of colonial policies on Lawra-Nandom area. Beyond, the colonial enterprise, Lentz sees land ownership as central to the conflicts in the Lawra-Nandom area. Though Lentz’s work was limited to the Lawra-Nandom area, it is useful to this study as it provides an insight into conflicts arising out of land ownership elsewhere in the North.

⁷⁶ D. Tsikata and Wayo Seini, *Identities, Inequalities and Conflicts in Ghana* (2004, CRISE Working Paper 5).

⁷⁷ Benjamin Talton, op.cit.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 166.

⁷⁹ Carola Lentz, *Ethnicity and the Making of History in Northern Ghana* (Accra: Woeli Publishing Services, 2007).

Emmanuel Bombande's study "Conflicts, Civil Society Organisation and Community Peace Building in Northern Ghana" discusses conflicts in Northern Ghana since 1980. The study makes a number of arguments and points out useful lessons.⁸⁰ He concludes that the policies of British colonial administration were the central cause of conflicts in Northern Ghana, and outlines the various processes of peace building and conflict mediation in Northern Ghana. Bombande's work does not discuss the Nawuri-Gonja conflict at length. Nonetheless, it is significant because it underscores the argument that sees conflicts in Northern Ghana as the long-term effects of the policies of the colonial enterprise. In addition, it is useful to this study as it provides information about conflict resolution mechanisms in Northern Ghana.

In his article, "Bawku is Still Volatile: Ethno-Political Conflict and State Recognition in Northern Ghana", Christian Lund discusses the political actors in Bawku.⁸¹ His study explained how national political actors contributed to the Kusasi-Mamprusi conflict. Rooting the causes of the conflict in colonial policy, Lund explained how the interventions or meddling of post-colonial governments of Ghana, particularly the Government of the Convention People's Party (CPP), led to increasing politicization of the conflict over the years. His work provides a basis for the interrogation of the operation of the colonial system in Alfai and how the actions and inactions of post-colonial governments of Ghana contributed to the Nawuri-Gonja conflict.

From an anthropological perspective, A. K Awedoba discusses a variety of conflicts, both past and recent, in Northern Ghana.⁸² As part of the broad study of

⁸⁰ Emmanuel Bombande, "Conflicts, Civil Society Organisation and Community Peace Building in Northern Ghana" in Steve Tonah ed., *Ethnicity, Conflicts and Consensus in Northern Ghana* (Accra: Woeli Publishing Services, 2007), 196-228.

⁸¹ Christian Lund, "Bawku is Still Volatile: Ethno-Political Conflict and State Recognition in Northern Ghana". In *Journal of Modern African Studies* 41(4), 2006, 87-610.

⁸² Albert K. Awedoba, *An Ethnographic Study of Northern Ghanaian Conflicts: Towards A Sustainable Peace* (Accra: Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2009).

conflicts in Northern Ghana, Awedoba discusses the Nawuri-Gonja conflict, its causes, remote and immediate, and its effects and mediation efforts. Though Awedoba's discussion has little detail of the Nawuri-Gonja conflict, it is useful to this study as it provides a basis upon which an exhaustive account could be constructed.

1.7 Justification of the study

Literature abounds on Gonja history, colonialism and conflicts in Northern Ghana. In contrast, there is a paucity of literature on Nawuri history and Nawuri-Gonja relations. Scholars in the past made only passing references to Nawuri history and Nawuri-Gonja relations and conflict, treating them as an appendage to Gonja history or to a discussion of ethnic conflicts in Northern Ghana in general. This study seeks to change that by creating a body of researched historical knowledge on the Nawuri-Gonja conflict as a contribution to scholarship on conflicts in Northern Ghana.

1.8 Justification of Time Frame

The year 1932 is a significant period in the history of the Nawuri-Gonja conflict. In that year, Alfai was amalgamated with the Gonja kingdom for the sake of administrative expediency. By the new administrative arrangement, the Nawuri completely lost their autonomy and were simply absorbed into the Gonja kingdom as subjects. Hence they were compelled to recognize the authority of the Yabumwura of the Gonja and his sub-chiefs as their overlords, and pay allegiance to them. The arrangement turned the hitherto allied relationship between the Gonja and the Nawuri into one of "ruler" and "ruled", and laid the foundation for the Nawuri-Gonja conflict.

The year 1996 is historically significant as far as the Nawuri-Gonja conflict is concerned because it marked the end of the systematic attempts to resolve the conflict. In

1994, when a number of inter-ethnic conflicts broke out in the Northern Region, the Government established the Permanent Peace Negotiation Team to resolve these perennial conflicts. After two years of negotiations, the warring factions signed a peace accord on March 28, 1996. The Nawuri and the Gonja, however, refused to sign the peace treaty. Since then, no further systematic attempts were made to resolve the conflict.

1.9 Research Methodology and Design

The approach adopted in this study is the orthodox approach to historical enquiry that combines archival research with published materials and oral evidence from the field. The study makes extensive use of primary sources obtained from a corpus of first-hand or original data on the history of the relations between the Nawuri and the Gonja. The primary sources include archival materials, Salaga Papers, and reports of Committees of Enquiry⁸³ as well as reports of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). The bulk of the archival data was derived from the under-listed documents.

PRAAD (Accra) 1/7. M.P. 7469/28; PRAAD (Accra) ADM 11/1/1380; PRAAD (Accra) ADM 11/1/603; PRAAD (Accra), ADM 11/1/1621; PRAAD (Accra) ADM 11/1/1622; PRAAD (Accra) 1/7; PRAAD (Accra) ADM 56/1/7; PRAAD (Accra) ADM 56/1/61; PRAAD (Accra) ADM 56/1/144; PRAAD (Accra) ADM 56/1/137; PRAAD (Accra) ADM 56/1/160; PRAAD (Accra) ADM 56/1/121; PRAAD (Accra) ADM 56/1/123; PRAAD (Accra) ADM 56/1/200; PRAAD (Accra) ADM 56/1/219; PRAAD (Accra) ADM 56/1/258; PRAAD (Accra) ADM 56/1/265; PRAAD (Accra) ADM 56/1/273;

⁸³ Reports of Committees of Enquiry utilized for this study included the following: Justice Ampiah, *Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Gonjas, Nawuris and Nanjuro Dispute* (Accra, Government of Ghana, 1991); R.I. Alhassan, *Report of the Committee on Ownership of Lands and Position of Tenants in the Northern and Upper Regions* (Accra, Government of Ghana, 1978); and J. Dixon, *Report of Mr. J. Dixon, Administrative Officer Class I, on the Representations Made to the Trusteeship Council of the United Nations Organisation, Concerning the Status of the Nawuris and Nanjuros within the Togoland Area of the Gonja District* (Accra, Gold Coast Government, 1955).

PRAAD (Accra) ADM 56/1/324; PRAAD (Accra) ADM 56/1/335; PRAAD (Accra) ADM 56/1/7; PRAAD (Accra) ADM 56/1/431; PRAAD (Accra) ADM 56/1/461; PRAAD (Tamale) NRG 8/3/34; PRAAD (Tamale) NRG 8/2/210; PRAAD (Tamale) NRG 8/2/211; PRAAD (Tamale) NRG 8/3/82; PRAAD (Tamale) NRG 8/3/95; PRO ((London) CO 96/790/3 Series; and PRO (London) CSO 21/25/1.

Primary sources were supplemented by secondary sources. The secondary sources listed in the bibliography at the end of the work included monographs such as journal articles, books, unpublished theses and periodicals. They provided the study a considerable store of analyzed data from scholars about conflicts in Northern Ghana, the history of the Nawuri, the Gonja, and their relations as well as the political developments in Alfai from 1932 to 1991.

Furthermore, field researches were conducted to get on-the-spot information and to gather the oral traditions of the Nawuri and the Gonja. Data from field researches were cross-checked with data from documentary sources, and were particularly useful in the reconstruction of the pre-colonial history of the Nawuri and the Gonja and the Nawuri-Gonja war, on which there is a paucity of documentation.

Finally, the study also adopted a qualitative approach by which a systematic enquiry is made into historical issues relating to the study to distil facts, make a sense of, and interpret, phenomena within particular historical contexts. The study also adopts a multi-disciplinary approach by using facts derived from other disciplines, particularly Linguistics, Political Science, Archaeology, Anthropology, and other Social Science disciplines, to supplement data obtained from historical sources.

The sources were not without limitations. Most of the archival materials were colonial discourses or were written by colonial authorities with imperialist interests in

mind. In few instances, it was difficult to use colonial officers' discourses to understand the local population's concepts and forms of organization. Similarly, the use of oral evidence was fraught with problems. There were problems of inconsistencies of versions, problems of feedback as well as problem of shortening and lengthening of some portions of oral narratives. These problems made it difficult to reconstruct the pre-colonial and early colonial developments from oral narratives as local actors used history as weapons in their battles. To overcome these problems, the contents of sources were carefully scrutinized, compared, evaluated and synthesized.

1.10 Organization of the Study

The study is organized thematically into the following chapters:

Chapter One: Introduction: This chapter provides the background to the study, the historiographical context, the statement of the problem, and the justification of the study. It reviews the existing literature relevant to the topic of study, and discusses the methodology utilized. Finally, it outlines the structure of the study.

Chapter Two: The Nawuri and the Gonja in Pre-colonial Times: It describes the geography of Alfai, interrogates the traditions of origin of the Nawuri and the Gonja, and the history of the settlement of the two ethnic groups in Alfai. Finally, the chapter investigates the allodial ownership of Alfai land in the light of available evidence from the pre-colonial history of the Nawuri and the Gonja.

Chapter Three: Understanding the Colonial Antecedents of the Nawuri-Gonja Conflict, 1899 to 1932: This chapter outlines the processes leading to the imposition of colonial rule on the Northern Territories in general and appraises German rule in Alfai. It also explains the processes that brought Alfai under British rule and the introduction of

indirect rule in Alfai. Finally, the chapter examines the Yapei Conferences, the terms of the amalgamation of Alfai with the Gonja kingdom in 1932, and its significance.

Chapter Four: The Political Causes of the Nawuri-Gonja Conflict: It discusses the first stirrings of the misunderstanding between the Nawuri and the Gonja after the former was subsumed under Gonja in 1932. It discusses four phases or stages of the escalation of the conflict, i.e., the activities of the Alfai Native Authority, the activities of the Alfai Native Council, chieftaincy dispute, and the politics of the Togoland Question.

Chapter Five: The Drift towards the Nawuri-Gonja Conflict: Social and Economic Causes: The chapter assesses the extent to which social issues, the political activism of Youth Associations, the interferences of the Gonja ruling class in Nawuri cultural values and practices, and the struggle for identity, contributed to the outbreak of the Nawuri-Gonja Conflict. It also explains how economic factors such as tribute exactions, the exercise of allodial rights and utilization of land in Alfai since 1932 contributed to the outbreak of war between the Nawuri and the Gonja in 1991. Finally, it traces the course of the drift towards the Nawuri-Gonja war.

Chapter Six: The Nawuri-Gonja Conflict: Phases, Outcomes and Resolution: It examines the prosecution of the Nawuri-Gonja war, in particular strategies, logistics, weaponry, alliances and outcome of each battle. Finally, the chapter explains and evaluates the effects and the attempts at resolving the Nawuri-Gonja conflict.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion: This chapter is a summary of the study in which the major conclusions of the thesis are highlighted.

CHAPTER TWO

THE NAWURI AND THE GONJA IN PRE-COLONIAL TIMES

2.0 Introduction

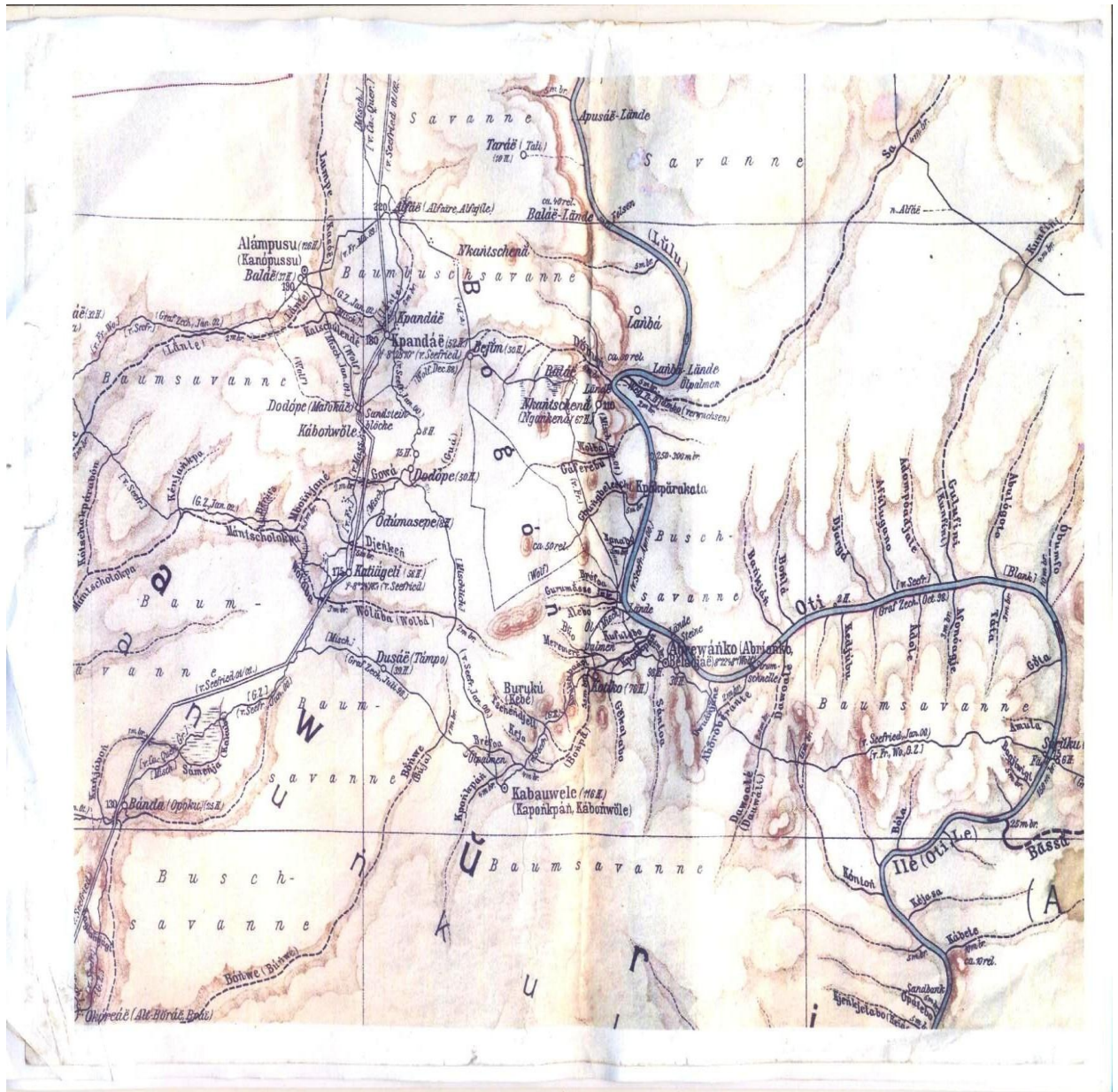
This chapter discusses the settlement history of the Nawuri and the Gonja. It also interrogates the ownership of Alfai territory in the pre-colonial period, using, as determinants, concepts such as birthrights, conquest, and overlordship. What were the patterns of settlement of the Nawuri and the Gonja in Alfai? Did the Nawuri occupation of Alfai land follow as a sequel of their collaboration with the invading Gonja army? Were the Nawuri the indigenes of Alfai? Is there any record of their having ever been conquered by the Gonja? Which of the two ethnic groups held allodial ownership to Alfai land in the pre-colonial period?

2.1 Location of Alfai

Alfai is located in the eastern corridor of the Northern Region of Ghana. The area was inscribed on a 1906 German map with the name “Nawuri” written along longitude 10-15° to the right.¹ On the map of modern Ghana, Alfai is located approximately between latitude 8° 20' and about 8° 28' North. It stretches from longitude 0° 05'W to 0° 15'E. Alfai shares boundaries with the Achode and Adele to the east, the Nchumuru to the west, the Krachi to the south and the Nanumba to the north.

¹ Map of Togo (Karte von Togo), a German map of German Togoland produced in 1906. Located in the Public Records and Archival Administration Division (hereafter PRAAD), National office, Accra.

Map 2: Alfai as it appeared on Karte von Togo, 1906.



Source: PRAAD, ACCRA

Some of the early settlements of Alfai include the following: Kpandai, Katiejeli, Balai, Bayim, Dzoedigbe, Nkanchina, Dodope, Kobonwule, Kotiko, Kitare, Bladjai, Oprusai, Njare, Awuratu and Buya.²

2.2 Origin and Settlement History of the Nawuri

The migration-and-settlement history of the Nawuri suggests that they were part of the autochthonous Guan groups who inhabited present-day Ghana over a thousand years ago.³ Accounts of the origins of the Nawuri are varied. One account traces their origins to the Afram Plains to the south of the Volta and from there they first moved further south to Larteh-Akuapem. As hunters, fishermen and farmers, they found the mountainous area of Larteh unsuitable for their occupations, and so retraced their steps northwards. Another account locates the original home of the Nawuri in Larteh Akuapem. The account maintains that the Nawuri originally lived in Larteh Akuapem with other Guan groups such as the Larteh, the Anum, the Nkonya, the Krachi, the Nchumuru, and the Achode. According to this tradition, a sense of insecurity generated by frequent dissensions in the fourteenth century caused a general exodus of some Guan stocks to search for new lands to settle.

The two versions of the tradition of origins of the Nawuri seem to agree on Larteh-Akuapem as the central point of the Nawuri dispersal. They also identify Nana Kruk paw as the leader of the Nawuri at the time they moved out of Larteh Akuapem. From Larteh, the Nawuri moved alongside other Guan groups like the Achode, the Krachi, the Nchumuru and the Nkonya. The accounts indicate that the wandering of the

² Today, the Alfai in the Northern Region forms part of the Kpandai District and Constituency. The Kpandai District consists of the Nawuri and the Nchumuru Areas. Previously, it was part of the East Gonja (Salaga) District. In 2007, these areas were taken out of the East Gonja District and created as the Kpandai District. For the location of Alfai on the map of Ghana, see chapter one of this study.

³ Ampiah, *op.cit.*, Part I, 11.

Guan stocks from the Larteh area first took them southwards towards the Volta River at Senchi. The river was not fordable at that point; nonetheless the Nkonya who were ahead of the column managed to cross and moved eastwards.⁴ The Nawuri who were behind, having retreated, followed the course of the river.

From the point at Senchi, the accounts differ in the direction of movement of the Nawuri. The first account indicates that the Nawuri moved along the Senchi River northwards and crossed it at Akrosu in present day Kete-Krachi and settled at *NawuriKupo*.⁵ The second account indicates that the Nawuri moved westwards along the tributaries of the Volta River till they reached the Afram River. On reaching the Afram River, they travelled along its banks towards the Kumawu area, where they crossed the river, moved eastwards and settled at *NawuriKupo*. Here, the Nawuri leader, Krupaw, died, and was buried in the forest. The Nawuri moved further north along the Oti River and settled at Otisu for a short period. Later, they moved along the Oti River and finally crossed it, settled and founded their present-day settlements in the Northern and Volta Regions of Ghana. Nawuri oral traditions relate that Kitare was their last communal settlement. From there clans and lineages moved out and founded a number of settlements in the Northern Region and across the Oti River in present day Volta Region.

Were the Nawuri the first to inhabit Alfai land? There is no concrete evidence to show that Alfai land was inhabited by any groups of people at the time the Nawuri arrived. Mathewson's archaeological studies on the ruins of Kitare suggest that the settlement was first established by Hausa traders from Northern Nigeria in the fifteenth

⁴ As the Nkonya were about to cross, by-standers shouted "san wankyi" to warn them to retreat as the place was too deep. Hence the settlement that sprang up around that part of the Volta River became known as Senchi.

⁵ *Kupo* is a Nawuri word, which means forest. *Nawuri Kupo* was said to be a place the Nawuri made a brief stop-over near Dwan in present-day Brong-Ahafo Region on their way to their present settlement in the Northern and Volta Regions of Ghana. *Nawuri Kupo* still exists and it is still known as such. See, Ampiah, op.cit., Part I, 11-12.

century before Nawuri arrival; and that Kitare served as a rest post for the Hausa traders in their long distance trade from Hausaland to Salaga in the famous Trans-Saharan Trade. He gives no additional information beyond the description of the architecture of Kitare.⁶ For example, he failed to explain how the Nawuri came to occupy Kitare, whether the Nawuri encountered the Hausa traders and drove them out or the Hausa traders had deserted Kitare at the time the Nawuri arrived.

Gonja traditions, however, suggest that the Konkomba inhabited Alfai at the time the Nawuri arrived. The thrust of this claim is that when the Nawuri arrived in Alfai, they encountered sparsely populated Konkomba inhabitants, drove them out and occupied it.⁷ The premise of the claim is that the Nawuri shared a common origin with the Gonja; that the Nawuri were part of the original invading army of the Gonja in the seventeenth century; and that the Nawuri advanced to Alfai ahead of the main Gonja army. The claim lacks supporting evidence of any sort.⁸ Besides, it lacks logic as it suggests that the Nawuri and the Gonja arrived in Alfai simultaneously and that they belonged to the same ethnic and cultural group.⁹ Ethnically, the Nawuri and the Gonja are different. For example, according to Kanankulaiwura Mahama Karatu, notwithstanding the fact that he was imposed and styled by the Germans as the head-

⁶ R. Duncan Mathewson was a Research Fellow in the Department of Archaeology, University of Ghana, Legon. In the 1960s, he carried out a number of archaeological excavations in the Gonja Traditional Area, including Kitare in Alfai. According to Mathewson, Kitare was a walled settlement with three embankments. These were the outer, middle and inner embankments. These embankments also had three gates: the west, east and south gates. According to Mathewson, there were small interconnecting banks radiated between the outer and middle embankment, and that these banks most likely represented boundaries that would have demarcated definite areas between the outer and middle embankment. The purpose of the architecture of Kitare was politically motivated. In event of a war, raid or invasion, the entrances of the settlement were shut to prevent the enemy from penetrating into the settlement. For the picture of Mathewson's excavation of Kitare, see Appendix I of this study.

⁷ Dixon, op.cit., 4; Cliff S. Maasole, *The Konkomba and their Neighbours from the Pre-European Period to 1914: A Study in Inter-Ethnic Relations in Northern Ghana* (Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 2006), 53-56.

⁸ Dixon, op.cit., 4. The Gonja claim is questionable as Nawuri traditions do not make reference to the presence of or an encounter with any autochthonous Konkomba group in Alfai when they arrived. The difficulty in accepting the Gonja claim is compounded by the lack of archaeological evidence or any other concrete evidence of the inhabitation of Alfai lands prior to the arrival of the Nawuri.

⁹ The tradition of origins of the Gonja, as discussed in subsequent pages, shows that the Gonja do not share a common origin with the Nawuri.

chief of the Nawuri, he and his people were ethnic Gonja and that ethnically the Gonja and the Nawuri are different. This was implicit in his statement which read:

the chief of Kpandai (Mahama Karatu) who came out to meet me with his Elders ...said that before the German occupation he served under Kpembe, the Head-Chief of the Salaga District, but that the Germans had forced him to go under Kete Kratchie (sic).He is now styled Head-Chief of the “Nawuri Tribe”, but **he and his people are undoubtedly Gonja ... and hope to return to their allegiance to Kpembe after the war.** (emphasis mine).¹⁰

2.3 The origins and foundation of Gonja

The history of the origins of the Gonja is already substantially contained in a number of monographs. Suffice it, however, to state that Gonja traditions trace their origins to a place in the northwestern part of the Niger bend in modern day Mali. That area has been variously referred to by historians as Mande, Mandingo and Manlinke, and was at various times part of the Songhai Empire.¹¹

Two different reasons, though not mutually exclusive, have been adduced to explain the migration of the Gonja from Mande. One reason points to the Moroccan invasion of Songhai in 1592, which created anarchy and insecurity in the empire.¹² The insecurity caused a general flight of the Mande from their homeland, and that the Gonja formed part of this flight. As the Gonja moved out of Mande, they embarked on wars of conquest, dislodged the autochthones and sized their territories.¹³

¹⁰ PRAAD (Accra) ADM 11/1/1621 Extract from Report of Enquiry on the Sphere of Occupation in Togoland: “Memorandum with Reference to the Wishes of the Togoland Natives as to the Future Administration of their Country”, 10th January 1918, 3.

¹¹ For details, see: J.A. Braimah and J.R. Goody, *Salaga: the Struggle for Power* (London: Longman, 1967). Also see N.J.K. Brukum, “The Northern Territories of the Gold Coast under British Colonial Rule, 1897-1956: A Study in Political Change” (University of Toronto: PhD Thesis, 1996), 41-43. The traditional story of the origin of the Gonja as collected by Duncan Johnstone is contained in the following documents: PRAAD (Accra) ADM 56/1/240 and PRAAD (Accra) ADM 11/1/1380.

¹² Jones, op.cit., 1-29. According to Jones (14-15), as a result of the Moroccan invasion of Songhai “security gave place to danger, wealth to wretchedness ... the greatest possible disaster spread everywhere”

¹³ Ibid.

Another version indicates that the migration of the Gonja from Mandeland was due to commercial reasons. It holds that prior to the 17th century, the northern part of the Gold Coast and the gold and kola producing districts of the forest region of the country were engaged in lucrative trade links with the Western Sudan, the sub-Saharan terminus of the famous trans-Saharan trade route. The trade led to the growth and expansion of previously small settlements into brisk commercial centres such as Begho. By the 17th century, the trans-Saharan trade had not only lost its vibrancy; the gold and kola exported to the Western Sudan through the commercial centres in Northern Ghana had also broken down. Mande Kaba (King of Mande) sent Ndewura Jakpa and his Ngbanye (Gonja) army on a punitive expedition against Begho for cutting off the trade in gold and kola with Mande. When the Gonja army arrived at Begho, they found a sizeable number of Mande settlers and therefore avoided it. Indeed, the army moved beyond Begho and embarked on conquests which led to the foundation of the Gonja kingdom. This version is supported by stories in Gonja traditions which indicate that the king of Mande sent Jakpa to conquer Segu, and that having marched from there, Jakpa entered the neighborhood of Bona or Wa, embarked on his conquest expeditions, founded the Gonja kingdom and imposed Gonja rule over the conquered groups. According to Gonja traditions, Jakpa's conquests stretched from the Cote d'Ivoire frontier in the west to Salaga in the east.¹⁴

Administratively, the Gonja kingdom was divided into Kpembe, Tuluwe, Wasipe, Kusawgu, Kong, Kadia and Bole divisions, each with a Divisional chief and sub-chiefs.¹⁵

¹⁴ Approximately, Gonja kingdom represents about sixty percent of the landmass of the Northern Region and about ten percent of the total landmass of Ghana.

¹⁵ Until the third decade of the nineteenth century, each of these Divisions was eligible to ascend to the Paramount Skin of the Gonja (Yabumwura) on a rotational basis. In 1830, following a civil war in the Gonja kingdom occasioned by the attempt by the Kong Division (supported by the Kadia Division) to distort the rotational system, the Kong and Kadia Divisions were removed from the line of eligible Divisions to the paramount skin of the Gonja.

The ruling class of each of the divisions claimed agnatic descent from Jakpa.¹⁶ Kpembe Division was the eastern-most division of the Gonja kingdom, and shared a common boundary with Nchumuru to the east. Following the introduction of indirect rule in Northern Ghana in 1932, the Nchumuru and Alfai areas were absorbed into the Kpembe Division of the Gonja kingdom.

The narratives of Gonja arrival in Alfai are varied and somewhat obscure. It is difficult to show by clear evidence how the Gonja arrived in Alfai. Nonetheless, both the Nawuri and the Gonja admit that they were allies in the pre-colonial period; that when the first Gonja immigrants arrived in Alfai, the Nawuri helped them to establish their farms and houses; and that the early relations between the two ethnic groups were cordial as there were intermarriages and mutual collaborations among them.¹⁷

Specifically, there are three accounts of Gonja arrival in Alfai. The accounts linked Gonja arrival to the general history of the foundation of the Gonja kingdom in the 17th century. One account maintains that the Nawuri and the Gonja shared a common tradition of origin; that the Nawuri and the Gonja originated from Mandingo and originally spoke the Mande language; that the Nawuri formed part of the army of the founders of Gonja; that the generals or war captains in Jakpa's army were the Nawuri and Nchumuru; and that Jakpa settled the Nawuri in Alfai to serve one of the sons he appointed as the overlord of the area after he had driven out the autochthonous

¹⁶ Goody, op.cit., 179-205; M. Johnson (compiler), *Salaga Papers* (Legon, Institute of African Studies), acc. no. SAL/17/10. Society in Gonja was stratified into three estates. These were the rulers (*Ngbanya*), the pagan commoners (*Nyemasi*) and the local Muslim community (*Karamo*). In addition, there were strangers or settlers (*bfo*) and slaves (*anye*). In each case, membership was determined by paternal affiliations, though conversion to Islam qualified a commoner, slave or settler to belong to the Muslim community. The *Ngbanya* were the descendants of Ndewura Jakpa Lanta and the founders of the Gonja kingdom, while the *Nyemase* were the descendants of the indigenous ethnic groups conquered and made subjects of the Gonja. These ethnic groups included Chorba, Damputu, Mpre and Beri. The *Karamo* were the descendants of the Mande Muslims who formed part of the invading Gonja army, though in most cases a commoner's conversion to Islam bestows on him or her a *Karamo* status.

¹⁷ For details of the pre-colonial relations between the Nawuri and the Gonja immigrants in Alfai, see: Cletus K. Mbowura, "Nawuri-Gonja Relations, 1913-1994" (University of Ghana, Legon: Mphil thesis, 2002), 34-36; Awedoba, op.cit., 169.

Konkomba inhabitants.¹⁸ By and large, this account asserts that the Nawuri are a subgroup of the Gonja.

The question of whether the Nawuri and the Gonja share a common tradition of origin needs to be interrogated. It is one of the arguments that the Gonja used to advance their claim to ownership of Alfai lands. The basis of this argument is that the Nawuri of Katiejeli, like the Gonja of Kabelma and Kalendi, originated from Techiman. This view originated from a statement that the people of Katiejeli are said to have made to a senior officer of the Northern Territories Administration that they did come from Techiman.¹⁹ Added to this was the tradition that the Nawuri of Dodoai came from “Kafaba in Gonja territory and that there is an exchange of burial customs between these places.”²⁰

The common origin thesis as an explanation of Gonja presence in Alfai is too tenuous to be accepted. In the first place, it is known that the “ruling classes in Mamprusi, Dagomba, Gonja and Wala are not of the same origin as the [indigenous] people. They are said to have come from the Mandingo country.”²¹ In the light of this evidence, the ruling Gonja class and their Nawuri subjects in Alfai could not have had a common tradition of origin. Secondly, the common origin thesis is not supported by Nawuri traditions. They deny that any group of their people originated from Techiman or shared a common tradition of origin with Gonja. If any of the people of the village of Katiejeli came from Techiman, they were likely to have been immigrants that subsequently became “naturalised” or “assimilated” Nawuri, rather than autochthonous Nawuri.²² Granted that the people of Katiejeli and Dodoai shared a common tradition of origin with the Gonja, can this fact be generalized to the entire Nawuri ethnic

¹⁸ PRAAD (Accra) ADM 56/1/240 Salaga Native Affairs: Case B.6/531/1921 Letter from the District Commissioner of Salaga to the Commissioner of Southern Province, (n.d.), 2.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ PRAAD (Tamale) NRG8/3/53 Annual Report of the Northern Territories, 1935-36: 4.

²² PRAAD (Accra) ADM 56/1/240 Salaga Native Affairs: Case B.6/531/1921 Letter from the District Commissioner of Salaga to the Commissioner of Southern Province, 2.

community? Furthermore, the traditions of origin of the Nawuri as narrated above give no clues to a common origin with the Gonja.

Culturally and, to some extent, linguistically, the common origin thesis is questionable. If the Nawuri were a subgroup of the Gonja ethnic group, their culture would naturally be expected to bear some affinity to those of the Gonja. On the contrary, in every particular of culture, deportment and custom, the gap between the Nawuri and the Gonja is pronounced. The work of Keith Snider has shown that the Nawuri language is more related to Achode than to Gonja.²³

In addition, the Nawuri do not share such Gonja cultural traits as three long marks running downwards on either side of the cheek, a peculiar tattoo round the navel, and the use of the skin as a symbol of political authority.²⁴ Furthermore, in Gonja, chiefs are enskined, and have the Skin as the symbol of authority. The chiefly classes are also enrobed in smocks over loose trousers or pantoloon and wear a cap. By contrast, Nawuri chiefs are enstooled, and use the Stool as a symbol of their political authority. They also wear cloth and a crown.²⁵ This view was supported by the Ampiah Committee when it said in its report that:

²³ K.L. Snider, *North Guang Comparative Wordlist: Chumurung, Krachi, Nawuri, Gichode, Gonja* (Legon: Institute of African Studies, 1989). Of many of the words compared, Nawuri and Gichode shared many more common words than any of the other dialects. For example, both Nawuri and Achode refer to 'arm', 'eye', 'head', 'brains', 'nose', 'tooth' and 'shoulder' as *giba*, *gumu*, *m-pɔ*, *ɔɲaŋ*, *gini* and *gi-bakpaŋ* respectively. The Gonja equivalents for these words are *ka-bri*, *ɲfyira*, *ka-ɲmona*, *kɔ-nɔ*, *ki-ɲi* and *ki-batumo*, respectively.

²⁴ For details, see: Kwame Arhin, *The Papers of Geroge Ekem Ferguson: A Fanti Official of the Government of the Gold Coast, 1890-1897* (Leiden, Afrika-Studiecentrum, 1974), 71. This observation was supported by H. Klose, who, though concluded that there were different marks, pointed out that the common marks found on the Gonja were the three parallel marks on either cheek. For details, see: M. Johnson, *Salaga Papers* (acc. no. SAL/17/10.) The traditions of Gonja claim that they shared a common origin with the Kalendi, Kabelma and Chakosi. This claim is supported by cultural evidence. Like the Gonja, the Kalendi, Kabelma and Chakosi have three long marks running downwards on either side of the cheek, a peculiar tattoo round the navel, and the use of the skin as a symbol of political authority. It is true that cultural practices can be borrowed, but this supports, rather than discounts the fact that the Nawuri did not share a common tradition with the Gonja. If the practices were borrowed, it meant that they were traditional cultural traits of one of the ethnic groups – Gonja, Kalende and Chakosi – and that as a result of common origin and social interactions of the Gonja, Kalende and Chakosi, these traits were borrowed.

²⁵ Maasole, op.cit., 56.

... evidence shows that the Gonja Ruling Class, as was established by the Gonja history, were and are mostly Moslems; they wear balloon trousers and smocks, with a towel on the shoulder, (that is the Chiefs). Their symbols of Chiefly power and authority are the Skins and Horses. The Nawuris ... have [different] ... characteristics and culture: (a) they use black stools as symbols of their Chiefly power. (b) They sit on Chairs whilst the Gonjas sit cross-legged on Skins.²⁶

In short, these differences do not only provide clues to the northern and southern background of the Gonja and the Nawuri respectively; they also show that the two ethnic groups are unlikely to share a common tradition of origin.

There are indications in Gonja traditions that Alfai was conquered by the Gonja or that the Nawuri were Gonja captives settled in Alfai in the pre-colonial period. This view is tenuous and lacks basis in fact.²⁷ A more accurate account, which both ethnic groups agree to, but with some degree of differences, holds that in the pre-colonial period, the Nawuri and the Gonja were allies.²⁸ According to this account, it was the Lepo clan of the Kpembe Division, which first immigrated to Alfai.²⁹ The immigration of the Gonja was touched off by the activities of a Dagomba Muslim (commonly called *Alfa*) in Alfai. *Alfa* was a herbalist, a witch-doctor and a diviner acclaimed for his healing powers. He was said to be capable of curing any ailment. Alfa's power of preparing charms for successful hunting expeditions appealed to the Nawuri and they sought his assistance.³⁰ A rheumatic Gonja patient from Kpembe treated successfully by Alfa relocated to Alfai with his kinsmen, and formed the nucleus of the Gonja immigrant community in the territory.

²⁶ Ampiah, *op.cit.*, Part I, 61.

²⁷ For details of the supposed Gonja conquest of the Nawuri, see subsequent sub-sections of this chapter.

²⁸ Dixon, *op.cit.*, 4; Ampiah, *op.cit.*, Part I, 39.

²⁹ In the Kpembe Civil War of 1892-93 which pitted the Kanyase against the combined army of the Lepo and the Singbung ended in the defeat of the Lepo and the Singbung.

³⁰ Ampiah, *op.cit.*, Appendixes: Ray Kakrabah-Quarshie, "A Brief Account of Nawuri History to the Committee of Enquiry into the Gonja-Nawuri Land Conflict", 5.

Two probable dates have been suggested for the possible increases in the population of the Gonja in Alfai. The first, 1744-45, coincided with the Asante invasion of eastern Gonja. It was claimed that as allies, the Nawuri supported the Gonja against the Asante.³¹ In addition, it was claimed that the Asante invasion caused total unrest and general insecurity in Kpembe and Salaga, and sparked off the migration of sections of the Gonja. Some of these migrants, kinsmen of the Lepo Gate, settled in Alfai. Another probable date for the possible increases in the population of the Gonja Alfai coincided with the Kpembe Civil war of 1892-93.³² It is asserted that the civil war sparked off waves of Gonja migration from Kpembe to Alfai and other parts of the Kete-Krachi District.³³ For example, a German source reported that:

as a consequence of these events (battles) all the merchants resident in Salaga, tired of the constant state of disorder and insecurity which prevailed there, undertook a regular exodus from the place, so that Salaga, which is now deserted and in ruins, has thereby lost its last vestige of commercial and political importance.³⁴

In another report, it was indicated that at the end of the civil war, Napo, the defeated Kpembewura, fled from Kpembe with his supporters to Krachi.³⁵ Both the Nawuri and the Gonja agree that there was Gonja migration, mainly members of the Lepo Clan, to Alfai after the civil war though the exact numbers cannot be determined.

2.4 Interrogating the allodial rights to Alfai Lands in the pre-colonial period

Who owned Alfai lands in the pre-colonial period? How does settlement of territory confer allodial rights, by conquest, lease or overlodship? Answers to these

³¹ Wilks, Levtzion and Haight, *op.cit.*, 197.

³² For details of the causes, prosecution and effects of the Kpembe Civil war, see J.A. Braimah and J.R. Goody, *Salaga: The Struggle for Power* (London: Longman, 1967).

³³ Nana Lempo Akitayie of Bladjai [personal communication]. November 3, 2011.

³⁴ M. Johnson, *Salaga Papers* (Accra, Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, Legon), Acc. no. SAL/88/1.

³⁵ Maier, *op.cit.*, 131.

questions necessarily have to define the criteria of allodial rights in land in Ghana. Before interrogating the issue of allodial rights in lands in Alfai in the pre-colonial period, it is important that it is preceded by modes of acquisition of allodial rights in land. In 1911 and in the 1920s, attempts were made by the British colonial authorities to understand the land tenure system and allodial rights to lands in the Northern Territories.³⁶ Based on research, scores of data on the roles of *Tendanas*, the methods of allocation of land and the identity of allodial owners of lands in the various parts of the Northern Territories were established. For example, in the Konkomba territory of Eastern Dagomba, it was established that:

... the Na of Yendi is Lord Paramount of all the land by virtue of the title obtained by his ancestors by right of conquest. All people know and realize this. The wild Konkomba living away in the bush, clad only in skins knows that the Na of Yendi owns the land.”³⁷

Conclusions about allodial rights in the Kete-Krachi District, to which Alfai was a part, were unclear. The indications were that allodial rights resided in the indigenous peoples, villages or communities; that temporal and spiritual powers were either combined in the office of the *Tendanas* or separated; that the right of allocation of land was exercised by the *Tendanas*; and that the Government could make anyone a chief, but no such appointed chiefs would ever be recognized to the same extent as the *Tendana* with powers to allocate land, though the subjects might verbally acquiesce.³⁸

In Northern Ghana “the basic group owning allodial rights in land is a kinship group,” and that the kinship group “may be a maximal lineage or clan.”³⁹ In 1955,

³⁶ PRAAD ADM 56/1/3375 Land Tenure: “Answers to Questionnaire to Chief Commissioner Northern Territories”; PRAAD 56/1/113 Land Tenure in Northern Province (Case No. 8/1911).

³⁷ PRAAD ADM 56/1/3375 Land Tenure: “Answers to Questionnaire to Chief Commissioner Northern Territories”, 29.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 44-45.

³⁹ Pogucki, *op.cit.*, 19.

Pogucki drew attention to the fact that in various parts of Northern Ghana such as South Mamprugu, Dagbon, Nanum, and partly also Gonja, allodial rights in lands were “ethnicized”, that is, the ethnic group was seen as the basic group owning allodial rights. In these societies, allodial rights in land resided in the paramount chief; that the sub-chiefs only represented the paramount chief in connection with the land; and that they did not hold any rights of their own.⁴⁰

The notion of ethnic ownership of land is not a peculiar feature of land ownership in Mamprugu, Dagbon, Nanum and Gonja states; it is a general customary land practice in most parts of Ghana. For example, in most Akan states, particularly Asante and Akyem, allodial rights in land resided in the ethnic group and are held in trust by the Paramount Stool.⁴¹ Generally, in Ghana, the Stool or Skin, community or village is regarded as the embodiment of the soul and spirit of a family, an ethnic group or a nation. Thus, the Stool, Skin, village or community is generally regarded as the embodiment of the collective authority of a people. As such, the Stool, Skin, village or community is said to be the overriding repository of allodial rights in land.⁴²

According to Pogucki, ‘tribal’ rights in land in Northern Ghana are derived largely from conquest.⁴³ Nonetheless, the subject groups, and occasionally some members of the ruling families, usually assert that allodial ownership of land resided in the subjects, the indigenes of the land.⁴⁴ This naturally gave rise to rival claims of land ownership by the “rulers” and “ruled” despite the general assertion in Northern Ghana

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ollennu, *op.cit.*, 8.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Pogucki, *op.cit.*, 19.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

that absolute rights in lands are exercised by chiefs, irrespective of the influence the *tendanas* exerted in the utilization of land.⁴⁵

Scholars have used a number of variables to interrogate allodial land rights in land in Ghana. Sarbah has identified variables such as the occupation of uninhabited land, conquest, and alienation through gift, sale and succession as the criteria for a community or an ethnic group's acquisition of allodial rights in land.⁴⁶ This view is supported by Danquah. He asserts that the acquisition of land by a community, Stool or Skin is determined by three factors. These are "conquest, settlement, and purchase or gift."⁴⁷ Ollennu also gives a perspective on the variables that determine allodial rights. According to him, generally, ownership of land is acquired by birthrights (traceable to the first settlers), conquest, gift and lease.⁴⁸ Ollennu's assertion was grounded on a court judgement, which established that:

there are four principal ways by which a stool acquires land. They are conquest and subsequent settlement thereon and cultivation of the subjects of the stool; discovery, by hunters or pioneers of the stool, of unoccupied land and subsequent settlement thereon and use thereof by the stool and its subjects; gift to the stool; purchase by the stool.⁴⁹

In the dispute over allodial rights in Alfai, three main variables, autochthonous or first settlement rights, conquest, and overlordship, resonated in all the arguments of the Nawuri and the Gonja. In the words of the Ampiah Committee Report:

⁴⁵ Ollennu, *op.cit.*, 8. The *tendanas* were the priests of the earth-gods. They made sacrifices to the earth-gods for fertility and prosperity. Until the arrival of the state-builders of Gonja, Dagomba, Nanumba, Mamprusi and Wala, most societies in Northern Ghana were said to be uncentralized – that is they did not live in organized centralized states nor did they have chieftaincy institutions. Prior to the arrival of the state-builders, the system of government in the uncentralized societies was patriarchal in nature; legal institutions were not only unknown, but also there were no political leaders solely performing secular roles. The *tendana* "controlled the people under his immediate care by threats of punishment which the spirits of their ancestors would inflict upon them if they continued in their evil ways." With the establishment of chiefly institutions by the state-builders, the authority of the *tindanas* gradually waned as societies came to be governed by laws rather than religious threats. See PRAAD (Tamale) NRG 8/3/53 Annual Report on the Northern Territories, 1935-1936, 5.

⁴⁶ As quoted in Ollennu, *op.cit.*, 15.

⁴⁷ As quoted in Ollennu, *ibid.*

⁴⁸ As quoted in Ollennu, *ibid.*, 17.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

the land tenure system among the Nawuris ... is closely related to the sequence of arrival of the various ethnic groups which now occupy that part of the East Gonja District east of the Daka River and claims of suzerainty by their Gonja overlords.⁵⁰

2.4.1 Autochthonous rights

According to Pogucki, the occupation of land, whether hitherto inhabited or uninhabited, by settlers forms the underlying principle on which the concept of ownership of allodial rights in land is based.⁵¹ Who were the first settlers in Alfai? On the question of “first-comership”, the traditions of origins of the Nawuri assert that the Nawuri were the first to settle in Alfai, and that the area was uninhabited at the time they arrived. The clearest statement that the Nawuri were the first settlers in Alfai was made by the Ampiah Committee of Enquiry of 1991. The Committee established that the:

Gonjas met a sizeable number of the Nawuris where the latter ethnic group now live. Although the Gonjas claimed that the Nawuris are subject to them it has not been clearly indicated how the overlordship was established.⁵²

The traditions of the Gonja, however, insist that the Nawuri met the Konkomba inhabitants and drove them out. The Gonja do not dispute the Nawuri claim of “first-comership”. Their argument is that the Nawuri were part of the invading Gonja army and that they went ahead of their main army as an advance party to acquire Alfai. In the words of Dixon, “the Nawuris had already accepted the overlordship of the Gonjas before arriving in the (Alfai) area and had gone ahead of the main Gonja invasion (army) to drive out the Konkomba inhabitants of what must have been very sparsely inhabited.”⁵³ The argument is speculative and lacks concreteness of detail.⁵⁴ There is

⁵⁰ Ampiah, op.cit., 39.

⁵¹ Pogucki, op.cit., 21.

⁵² Ampiah, op.cit., Part I, 39.

⁵³ Dixon, op.cit., 4.

evidence to suggest that Alfai was neither inhabited by Konkomba nor any other ethnic group prior to the arrival of the Nawuri.⁵⁵ In the first place, Nawuri traditions do not make reference to their encounter with Konkomba or any other ethnic group when they arrived in Alfai. In addition, Mathewson's archaeological studies of Kitare do not show any contacts between the Nawuri and the Konkomba in Alfai. Archaeological studies to confirm the view that Konkomba inhabited Alfai prior to Nawuri arrival are non-existent.

Furthermore, if the Nawuri were not the autochthonous people in Alfai, how does one explain the fact that names of all settlements in Alfai are in Nawuri language? Names of settlements such as Kpandai, Balai, Dodoai, and Bladjai end with the suffix *ai*, a Nawuri word which means 'home'. Others such as Nchanchina, Mmofokayin, Buya, Kabonwule, Beyim, Kitare, are etymologically derived from Nawuri words. Furthermore, the names of streams in Alfai are all in Nawuri language.⁵⁶

Finally, all the deities in Alfai such as *Nanjulo*, *Boala*, *Kachilenten*, *Nana Esuwele*, *Kankpe*, *Buiya* are owned by the Nawuri. In times of impending disaster, the Nawuri propitiated and pacified these deities to avert danger. Again, when a problem arose about strayed animals, which were generally regarded as earth-shrine property, the Gonja turned to the Nawuri for solution. The Gonja did not attempt to handle these problems because they feared they would risk severe punishment by the earth-god. The Gonja assert that the Nawuri were their *tendanas* whose sole responsibility was the discharge of religious duties in the area. This is unacceptable because it is inconsistent with the practice all over Northern Ghana. Historically, except in some cases in present-day Upper East and Upper West Regions, the state-builders of Northern Ghana

⁵⁴ According to Dixon, his argument is the most reasonable explanation of the absence of war between the Nawuri and the Gonja when the latter arrived in Alfai. However, Dixon failed to give concrete historical evidence to support his argument. See Dixon, *op.cit.*, 4.

⁵⁵ Dixon, *op.cit.*, 4.

⁵⁶ Some of the names of the streams are *Kuwaa*, *Kudja*, *Wassawasa*, *Wullinbun*, *Dobun*, *Bunkpa*, *Bula*, *Kpassa*, and *Buya*.

succeeded in absorbing the *tendana* families into their ethnic categories and transferred the *tendanas'* power and control over land rights to their secular authority.⁵⁷ They did not seek to destroy the priestly roles of the *tendanas*, but accorded them a place in their system of government to operate.⁵⁸ This was not the case in Alfai. The Nawuri lived as a separate ethnic group from the Gonja. The *tendanas* and Nawuri chiefs continued to exercise power and control over land in Alfai. It was after 1932 when the area was amalgamated with the Gonja kingdom that the Gonja chiefly class arrogated such rights.

2.4.2 Conquest

Throughout history, there have been accounts of military campaigns, conquests and annexations of territories. Since antiquity, war has been a major means of territorial aggrandizement by states all over the world. In Africa, the ancient Sudanese empires of Ghana, Mali and Songhai expanded territorially through conquest and annexation.⁵⁹ Similarly, West African traditional states such as Denkyira, Akwamu, Dahomey, Oyo and Asante grew into great empires between 1500 and 1800 by means of conquests and annexations. Historically, it was always the case that the conqueror assumed territorial and jurisdictional rights over the annexed or conquered territories without necessarily appropriating ownership rights in lands in the territories. For example, until 1874 when Asante was defeated by the British, Asante had conquered almost three-fourths of the territories of modern Ghana. While exercising overlordship rights over the conquered territories, Asante allowed the conquered peoples to retain allodial titles to the vast stretches of land they conquered subject to payment of tributes and control of trade. The

⁵⁷ Abdulai, *op.cit.*, 75.

⁵⁸ PRAAD (Tamale) NRG8/3/53 Annual Report on the Northern Territories, 1935/36, 4.

⁵⁹ For details of the conquests and territorial annexations of ancient Ghana, Mali and Songhai, see: Albert Adu Boahen, *Topics in West African History*, (London, Longman, 1986); Basil Davidson, *A History of West Africa, 1000-1800*, New Edition (London, Longman, 1977); Kevin Shillington, *History of Africa*, Revised Edition (Macmillan, 2005).

British defeat of Asante in 1874 freed the conquered states from these exactions and controls and restored the status quo ante in land rights to them.⁶⁰

Between 1600 and 1800 Northern Ghana suffered conquests by the so-called invaders or state-builders of Gonja, Mamprugu, Dagbon, Wala and Nanum, who went on to occupy and founded kingdoms.⁶¹ Besides, the colonial policy of amalgamation in Northern Ghana (1932) introduced new notions of conquests.⁶² The purpose of the amalgamation policy, which was to create larger states to facilitate administration created the opportunity for the reinvention of history by the centralized states. They did so by representing the so-called non-centralized societies subsumed under their states as territories conquered by them prior to the British contact. This laid the basis for their claim to allodial land rights in those territories.

The use of conquest as a basis of claims to allodial rights in land in Northern Ghana requires a general understanding of its application and legitimacy in traditional Ghanaian context. According to Ollennu, conquest is an accepted mode of measuring allodial rights in lands in Ghana. However, he states that conquest by itself alone does not necessarily guarantee allodial rights in land by the conqueror. Instead, allodial rights in land are based on the extent of the conquered lands that the conquerors are able to effectively bring under their occupation and political control.⁶³

In the view of Pogucki, the acquisition of allodial rights in land by means of conquest are of two types. The first is the arrival of a small kinship group in a particular

⁶⁰ For Asante conquests, annexations and policies, see: J.K. Fynn, *Asante and its Neighbours* (London: Longman, 1971); C.C. Reindorf, *History of the Gold Coast and Asante*, Third Edition (Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 2007); W.E.F. Ward, *A History of Ghana*, Second Edition (London, George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1958).

⁶¹ For details, see: N.J.K. Brukum, "The Northern Territories of the Gold Coast under British Colonial Rule, 1897-1956: A Study in Political Change" (University of Toronto: PhD Thesis, 1996); N.J.K. Brukum, *The Guinea-Fowl, Mango and Pito Wars: Episodes in the History of Northern Ghana, 1980-1991* (Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 2001); Martin Staniland, *The Lions of Dagbon: Political Change in Northern Ghana* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1975); Benedict G. Der, *The Slave Trade in Northern Ghana* (Accra: Woeli Publishing Services, 1998).

⁶² For the amalgamation policy, see chapter three of this study.

⁶³ Ollennu, *op.cit.*, 17.

area of land, which, through force, succeeded in driving away the previous inhabitants and occupied the land. Pogucki explains that the instances of the first type of conquest may be probably found in many areas of the Northern Territories. The second is the conquest of vast areas by invaders, which resulted in the formation of an overriding political authority in the form of a state. The Mamprusi, Dagomba, Nanumba and M'Gbanya (Gonja) conquests are of this second group.⁶⁴ Pogucki elaborates by saying that Gonja claims to land in Northern Ghana stemmed:

purely from the fact of conquest of the subject tribes, and that as subject tribes "belong" to the Yabumwura, the land owned by kinship groups of the subject tribes must of course in consequence also be his property. Though this quasi-feudal conception is expressed by many M'Gbanya (Gonjas), usually senior chiefs, and although local chiefs do always admit that they do not possess rights of their own, but that they act simply as representatives of the paramount chief, nevertheless one finds often even a Kagbannya (a Gonja) who will admit that the land in fact belongs to a kinship group of the first settlers, whether they be M'Niamase (members of subject tribes) or of Gbanya (Gonja) origin
.....⁶⁵

In other words, even though the Yabumwura makes such claims without being contradicted openly, M'Gbanya chiefs are by no means unanimous on the validity of their claims. Some Gonja chiefs often admit to the claims of autochthonous kinship groups in the so-called conquered areas to ownership as first settlers, though Pogucki did not give examples to illustrate his point.

Did the Gonja conquer and annexed Alfai? Stories about the so-called Gonja conquest and annexation of Alfai are of two types. One of the stories of Gonja conquest of Alfai told by Dixon maintains that the area was hitherto occupied by the Konkomba; that the autochthonous Konkomba, out of fright, fled and abandoned their lands on hearing of the advances of Ndewura Jakpa; that Jakpa occupied the area and shared the

⁶⁴ Pogucki op.cit., 23.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 21.

lands of Alfai among his brothers and sons; and that Jakpa settled the Nawuri in Alfai and placed them under the political control of his son, Djoro, the chief of Alfai.⁶⁶ This story contains historical inaccuracies and lacks basis in fact. Dixon was uncertain about the veracity of his claim. Unsure of his claim, Dixon put forward what he called an “alternative theory” to explain Gonja immigration into Alfai. He states that the Nawuri did not share a common tradition with the Gonja; that the Nawuri were the autochthones of Alfai; that the Nawuri were overrun by the Gonja without a fight when the latter arrived in Alfai in the 17th century; and that the absence of war between the two ethnic groups was because the Nawuri had already accepted Gonja overlordship before they arrived in Alfai.⁶⁷ In his own words,

the most reasonable explanation of the absence of any fighting arising from Gonja invasion or infiltration, linked with the comparatively very small number of Gonjas living in the area, is that the Nawuris had already accepted the overlordship of the Gonjas **before** arriving in the area ... [emphasis mine].⁶⁸

Dixon failed to explain why the Nawuri accepted Gonja overlordship. His explanation begs a number of questions. What were the points of Nawuri-Gonja contact before the Gonja arrived in Alfai? Why did the Nawuri accept Gonja authority before the latter arrived in Alfai? Did the Nawuri invite the Gonja to rule over them or did the Gonja enter Alfai on their own? These are key questions that Dixon failed to answer, and which make his explanation unconvincing. Dixon seemed to impute Nawuri acceptance of Gonja overlordship to a common origin between the Nawuri and the Gonja. As has already been pointed out, the common origin thesis is unfounded and lacks basis in fact.

Dixon also imputes the absence of war to the demographic differences between the two ethnic groups in Alfai. He argues that the first Gonja stock that arrived in Alfai

⁶⁶ Ampiah, *op.cit.*, Part I, 40.

⁶⁷ Dixon, *op.cit.*, 4.

⁶⁸ Dixon, *op.cit.*, 4.

was overwhelmingly small compared to the population of the Nawuri; that due to the demographic disadvantage, the Gonja decided not to fight the Nawuri; and that for some unknown reasons the Nawuri resolved not to resist the Gonja but rather accepted them as their overlords.⁶⁹ His explanation that the Gonja failed to fight the Nawuri for reasons of numerical disadvantage is inconsistent with historical record. It is known that irrespective of the numbers of Jakpa's troops, its deployment of horses, superior weaponry and discipline gave it a decided advantage in all encounters.⁷⁰ Besides, historical records show that Jakpa and his Gonja army did not encounter effectively organised states in Northern Ghana capable of resisting them. Hence they conquered the whole area now comprising the Gonja chiefdoms with relative ease.⁷¹ Given these facts, therefore, numerical disadvantage could not have been a reason that prevented the Gonja from conquering and annexing Alfai to the Gonja kingdom.

Furthermore, it is uncertain whether Ndewura Jakpa carried his military expeditions across the Daka River into the countries lying to the east of it.⁷² The Nawuri and Nchumuru states are located to the east of the Daka River from the direction of Salaga. In fact, Dixon was not oblivious to this fact as implied by his acknowledgement that there is a lack of evidence to show that Jakpa and his invading Gonja army ever reached Alfai. In his own words, there was no conclusive proof that Ndewura Jakpa "reached Balai, which is a little west of Kpandai, the headquarter town of the Alfai area, or whether he was still further west with some of his people scouting ahead."⁷³ One wonders then the basis of Dixon's conclusion that the Nawuri were overrun by the Gonja without a fight in the light of his own acknowledgement that there is lack of evidence to show that Jakpa and his invading Gonja army reached Alfai.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Jones, *op.cit.*, 4.

⁷¹ Ibid, 4-5.

⁷² Ibid., 4.

⁷³ Ibid. Balai is the first Nawuri settlement from the direction of Salaga or east of Dakar River.

Another version of the so-called Gonja conquest of Alfai claims that the Nawuri were originally of a Konkomba stock. The story gained currency in the works of Cardinall and Tamakloe.⁷⁴ In the words of Cardinall, Jakpa raided:

the Bo, Tashi, and the Bassari people who took refuge in their mountain passes but had to leave great herds of cattle for the raider to carry off. The Kpamkpamba (Konkomba) were then attacked; the fighting was very furious indeed, but the tactics of the Ngbanye (Gonja) were superior to those of the savages, who were routed and taken prisoners, with thousands of oxen, sheep, and goats. Jakpa then returned to Salaga by the same route. He planted the captives taken from Kpamkpamba, between Nchumuru, Salaga, and Nanumba, to cultivate the soil, and to supply the Kpembe-wura with food-stuff. They multiplied greatly, and built many towns such as: Kpandai, Bayim, Baladjai, Kotiko, Nkatchina, Balai, and Katiegeli.⁷⁵

In short, the story asserts that the Nawuri were originally of a Konkomba stock living in the Konkomba country; that Jakpa invaded the country and took with him some Konkomba captives and war booties; that Jakpa resettled the captives in Alfai; and that in the course of time the captives multiplied and founded present-day settlements in Alfai.

The account is fictional, to say the least. In the first place, Alfai was not a settlement of Gonja foundation. Its foundation pre-dated Gonja arrival and its founders were the Nawuri. Second, it raises a number of interesting questions. If the Nawuri were originally of Konkomba stock, how, when and why did these Gur-Konkomba ‘transplants’ metamorphose into Nawuri? Is it conceivable for the Konkomba ‘transplants’ to have lost their former language and culture and to have become assimilated to the Kwa linguistic group in the Alfai area within a space of two centuries? The account failed to explain how, when and why the Konkomba transplants later acquired the ethnic identity name of “Nawuri”. If the captives that Jakpa was said to

⁷⁴ A.W. Cardinall, *Tales Told in Togoland* (London: Oxford University Press, 1931), 260-261; Foster E. Tamakloe, *A Brief History of the Dagbamba People* (Accra: Ghana Publishing Corporation, 1931), iii.

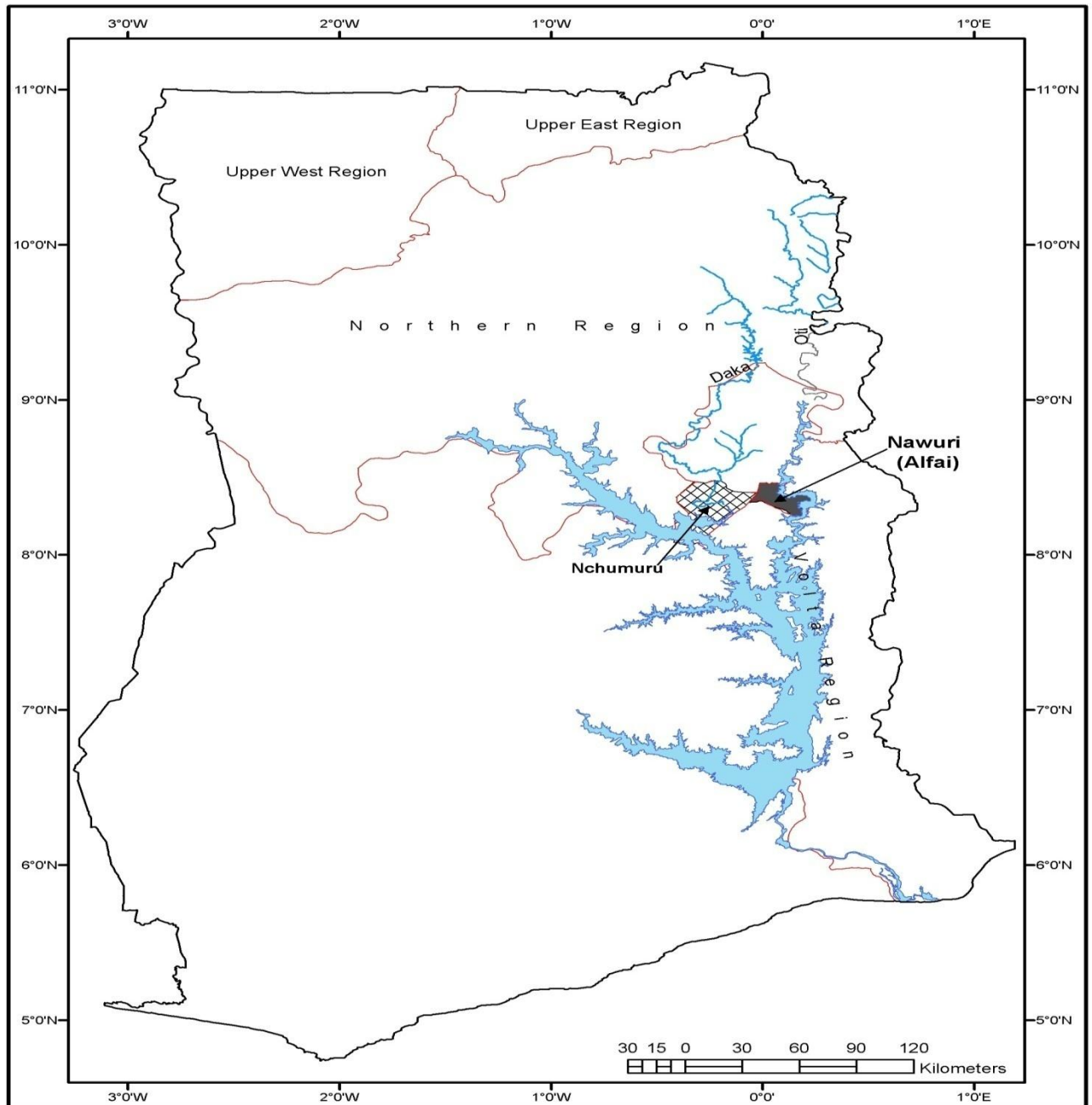
⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 260-261.

have resettled in Alfai were genetically Konkomba, one would have expected to see a genetic relationship between the language of the captives and that of the parent Konkomba stock. Linguistically, it is inconceivable and impossible for the captives to have abandoned the original Konkomba language entirely to evolve a new one, Nawuri. Therefore, the Cardinal version is too simplistic and improbable on linguistic grounds.⁷⁶

In addition, granted that some Konkomba captives were settled in Alfai by Ndewura Jakpa, it is impossible for them to have acquired an entirely new language (Nawuri) if that language was not already in use in the vicinity. In other words, for the Konkomba captives to have picked up the Nawuri language, its original speakers must have been living in the vicinity prior to the resettlement of the Konkomba captives in the area. Only in that situation could the Nawuri language and culture have been available to the resettled Konkomba captives to adopt. Alternatively, if, as Cardinal suggests, Ndewura Jakpa placed the Konkomba captives under the suzerainty of the Gonja in Alfai, one would expect them to have been assimilated to Gonja culture instead of Nawuri culture. None of these conditions was the case, and that casts doubt on the validity of Cardinal's thesis.

⁷⁶ George Akaling-Pare, lecturer of Linguistics Department, University of Ghana, Legon [personal communication], November 18, 2011.

Map 3: Map Showing Nchumuru, Alfai and the Estuary of the Daka River



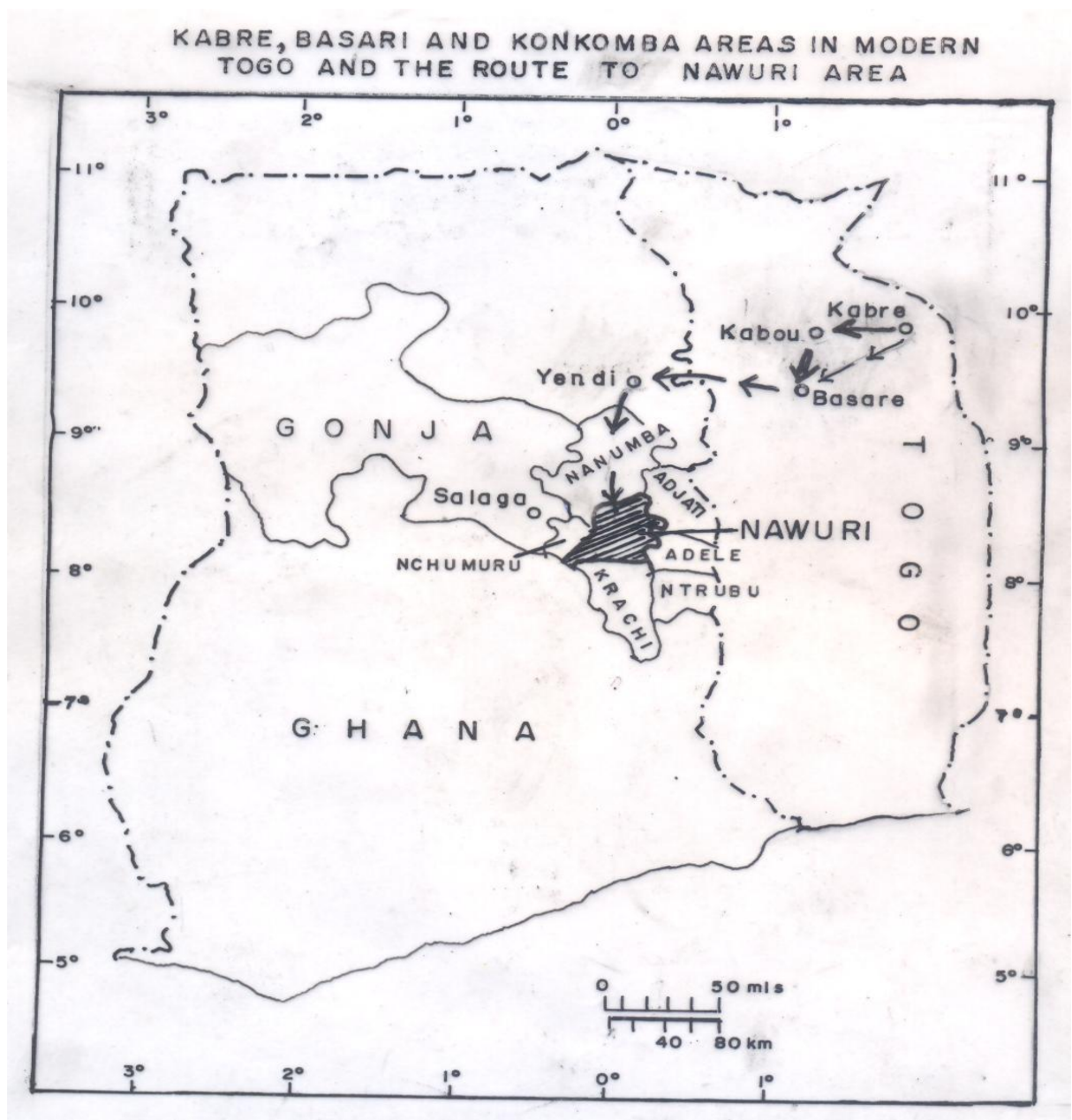
Source: Lands Department, Accra, (n.d.), map of Alfai adapted.

Furthermore, Jakpa was said to have invaded the Konkomba country in modern-day Togo from Eastern Gonja after marching through the territories of Nanum and Dagbon states. For Jakpa to have penetrated into the Konkomba area in Togo, he would unavoidably have had to engage the Dagomba and the Nanumba in a number of battles. It is doubtful if Ndewura Jakpa's military expeditions penetrated into territories in modern-day Republic of Togo. There is no historical evidence to that effect. Gonja traditions maintain that the invading Gonja army sought permission or, probably, struck a truce with the Dagomba, for example, to gain free passage through Dagbon territory to the Konkomba country. There is no hint of any such agreement, nor of its contents, terms and execution in available documents.

Besides, the pattern of Gonja political control in Alfai does not provide any clues to a Gonja conquest. Generally, Gonja, like the Mole-Dagbon and Wala invaders, effectively occupied the conquered areas, established their own political institutions and imposed their rule over the indigenous people. By this the Gonja succeeded in completely transferring the power and control over land rights from the indigenous *tendana* to their secular authority. In addition, they appropriated the land deity of the indigenes, assimilated or attempted to assimilate the *tendana* family into the privileged class of Gonja and worshipped their land deity.⁷⁷ This was not the case in Alfai. No attempts were made by the Gonja to establish this pattern of political control.

⁷⁷ Abdulai, *op.cit.*, 75. According to Abdulai, the second pattern of political control in pre-colonial Northern Ghana consisted of the imposition of a mere political control over the conquered peoples. In this case, the political institution of the conquered – the office of the *Tendana* – was retained and through which the political authority of the invaders was exercised. This was rarely the case in northern Ghana except in few places in modern-day Upper East and Upper West Regions.

Map 4: Kabre, Basari and Konkomba Areas in Modern Togo and the Route to Nawuri Area



A personal sketch of the maps of Republics of Ghana and Togo showing the locations of the “Konkomba country” in Togo, Alfai in Ghana, and the possible route the Gonja invaders used from the former to the latter.

The *tendana* family remained characteristically Nawuri while the rituals and ceremonies connected with the earth deities remained exclusively in Nawuri hands. More importantly, Nawuri *tendanas* continued to exercise their traditional powers as custodians of the land and the embodiments of power and control over land rights of their respective settlements. The fact that the pattern of Gonja political control in Alfai was different from the general pattern of political control that the Gonja imposed on conquered territories elsewhere shows that the Gonja intrusion into, and political control of, the area was not based on conquest.

Finally, the evidence brought before the Ampiah Committee which investigated the Nawuri-Gonja conflict in 1991 made no reference of Gonja conquest of the Nawuri.⁷⁸ On the contrary, the evidence showed that in the pre-colonial period, the Gonja and the Nawuri were allies and that they fought together against the Asante invasion of Eastern Gonja in 1744-5.⁷⁹ Existing historical record shows that a combined army of the Gonja, the Nawuri and other ethnic groups (possibly the Nchumuru and the Krachi) fought against the Asante when they invaded Eastern Gonja in 1744-5. According to documentary evidence, when the Asante arrived, they:

met the sultan of Kunbi (Kpembe) with his troops ... and the sultan of Alfāyi with his troops, the Nācūri [Nawuri] ... They all fought against Asay (Asante) until the people of Asay (Asante) overcame them and they ran away.⁸⁰

Another point that illustrates the fact that the Nawuri and the Gonja were allies in the pre-colonial period was that the Nawuri assisted the Gonja of Lepo Gate in the Kpembe civil war of 1892-3.⁸¹ According to Braimah and Goody, in the Latinkpa battle of the civil

⁷⁸ For details of the investigations of the Ampiah Committee, see chapter six of this study.

⁷⁹ Ampiah, *op.cit.*, Part I, 61.

⁸⁰ Wilks, Levtzion and Haight, *op.cit.*, 197.

⁸¹ The bulk of the Gonja in Alfai were members of the Lepo Gate.

war, for example, “about 500 Nawura [Nawuri] lost their lives on the battlefield” as they fought as allies of the Gonja of the Lepo Gate.⁸²

In conclusion to this section, it should be emphasized that there was no hint of Gonja conquest of the Nawuri since “neither the Gonjas nor the Nawuris claim that fighting took place between them” in the pre-colonial times.⁸³ Conquest could only be used as a legitimate mode of determining allodial rights if the conqueror succeeds in annexing and imposing a political control over the conquered territory. Since no war between the Nawuri and the Gonja occurred when the latter arrived in Alfai, there could not have been any Gonja conquest and annexation of Alfai lands.⁸⁴

2.4.3 Overlordship

Related to the Nawuri-Gonja dispute over ownership of Alfai lands is the controversy about political hegemony. There is a paucity of documentation on the pre-colonial relations between the Nawuri and the Gonja. Nonetheless, available evidence suggests that the Nawuri were an autonomous people, and that the two ethnic groups were political allies in the pre-colonial period. In its report, the Ampiah Committee explained that the Nawuri:

were an indigenous people in Alfai area who had complete autonomy and lived in friendly association with the Krachis and Nchumurus ... nowhere in the evidence had it been stated that the Nawuris were at any time conquered by the Gonjas. The evidence holds that the Nawuris and the Gonjas were allies and fought together during the Asante invasion of the Area ...the ...ethnic groups existed as a loose association since they met in the now Eastern Gonja Area for common

⁸² Braimah and Goody, *op.cit.*, 31. The authors give an ordeal of one of the Nawuri warriors, who “had a wound in the stomach and his intestines were protruding. He was taken prisoner Sulemana [a Gonja warrior of the Kanyase Gate] and brought to Latinkpa, where he was tied to a tree. He asked Sulemana to push his guts back in place, but some fat prevented this and so he asked him to cut it away with a knife. This Sulemana chivalrously did and pushed the man’s intestines back into his stomach.”

⁸³ Ampiah, *op.cit.*, Part I, 4.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 47.

purposes; fighting the common enemies like Asantes and others and protecting their lands.⁸⁵

Each Nawuri settlement was ruled by an *eblisaa* (chief or political leader) with the *Wurabu* exercising jurisdictional powers over the entire Alfai area.⁸⁶ There was also evidence of the existence of the office of the Kanankulaiwura in the pre-colonial period, but its origin is obscure.⁸⁷ Traditions tie its origin to the arrival of one Dagomba Muslim, called Alfa, who settled in Alfai, and a Gonja man who was cured of his rheumatic illness probably in the eighteenth century. The Muslim was said to be a powerful medicine-man and a diviner. The traditions maintain that the Muslim prepared charms for Nawuri hunters to help them in their hunting expeditions. Nawuri hunters presented the Muslim with chunks of meat in appreciation of the charms he prepared for them. According to the traditions, a rheumatic Gonja patient visited the Muslim for healing. The Nawuri extended their hospitality to the Gonja man who had come for treatment. As the Alfa tabooed meat of unslaughtered animal, he passed on the lumps of meat to the Gonja man. Over time the Gonjaman:

because of the regular flow of lumps of meat ... came to be known as 'kununkuliwura', that is, the 'chief of lamb (sic) of meat' ... he [later] requested [from the Nawuri] to be a Zongo Chief [and] his request was granted. Hence the title or name 'Kanankulaiwura'."⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Ampiah, op.cit., Part I, 61-62.

⁸⁶ *Eblisaa* is the Nawuri word for elder. The *ablisaa* of each Nawuri community exercised political powers. The title *Wurabu* is etymologically derived from two Nawuri words, *wura*, which means 'master', 'chief' or 'lord', and *bu*, which means 'estate' or 'state'. *Wurabu* literally means the lord or paramount chief of Alfai. The title appeared in colonial records as *Wurubon* (see: Annual Report on British Sphere of Togoland for 1926, p. 10). In the 1950s, the title of the paramount chief of the Nawuri was changed from *Wurabu* to *Nawuriwura* to give it an ethnic identity as in the case of the Krachi – Krachiwura. The title *Nawuriwura* was first used in a Nawuri petition of November 3, 1951.

⁸⁷ The earliest reference to the office of the Kanankulaiwura in recorded sources was in 1751. In that year, it was reported that civil disturbances occurred at Kpembe following the dispute over succession after the death of Kpembewura Morukpe. Then under Asante, Kpembe was occupied by Asante forces and it was reported that the "Kpembewura [Nakpo] and two subordinate skin holders – the Kulupiwura and probably Kanankulaiwura – were arrested, and sent to either Kumasi or Mampon." See Wilks, I., 1975, *Asante in the Nineteenth Century: The Structure and Evolution of a Political Order* (London: Cambridge University Press), 265, 275.

⁸⁸ Ampiah, op.cit., Appendixes: Ray Kakrabah-Quarshie, 5. Accounts of what Alfa did with the meat before the Gonja man came vary. Some Nawuri accounts show that he exchanged the meat for foodstuff from the Nawuri, while others show that he gave it to his Nawuri friends, buried or gave it out to his dogs.

The Nawuri maintain that they conferred the title on the Gonja man, who did nothing, apparently, to deserve the title after the Dagomba Muslim had declined it. It was possible that the Gonja in Alfai or the rheumatic Gonja man must have remained visible in the Nawuri landscape over generations or for a long time to make it possible for a status transformation of the sort that enabled the Nawuri to confer the *Kanankulaiwura* title on him. Nawuri traditions hold that the *Kanankulaiwura* was often invited to attend meetings of the Nawuri council of elders after he was made the head of the Zongo community.

The Gonja deny the Nawuri tradition of the origin of the institution of *Kanankulaiwura*. According to them, the institution of *Kanankulaiwura* was a Gonja creation, born out of the wars of conquest of Jakpa and the foundation of the Gonja kingdom. They maintain that:

most of the people who now call themselves Nawuris (Nawura) arrived at the Alfai area with Ndewura Jakpa as part of the Gonja invading army. The Alfai area was originally not inhabited and they were settled there. As Jakpa was advancing to the Bassare country he left one of the Gonja princes to take charge of the area and the headquarters was then at Alfai ... The Gonja chief under whose jurisdiction the area fell was the **Kanankulaiwura**. The ruling family of the Alfai area, i.e. the family from which **Kanankulai** chiefs are appointed are part of the Lepo family who live in Kpembe.⁸⁹

Question marks are raised about the Gonja claim. The import of the claim is that the Nawuri and the Gonja share a common origin, but as has been indicated earlier, the common origin thesis is untenable. Besides, the words *Kanankulaiwura* and *Kanankulai* are not Gonja words; they are Nawuri words. Indeed, *Kanankulai* was one of the cognate names the Nawuri used to refer to Alfai.⁹⁰ As the Ampiah Committee pointed out:

⁸⁹ "Memorandum submitted by the Gonjas on the Peace Negotiations in the Northern Conflict, September, 1994, 4-5.

⁹⁰ Etymologically, the term 'Kanankulai' is derived from the Nawuri words "Kanankule" (lumps of meat) and "ai" (home). Hence Kanankulai means 'home or land of lumps of meat.' The Gonja word for lumps of meat is "eblankul", and home is "pe". If the area was founded and named by the Gonja and that the literary

the words ‘ALFAI’ and ‘KANANKULAI’ are Nawuri words and could have been used only by the Nawuris to describe their land, and that the names of all the Rivers, Streams and Villages in the Kpandai area are all Nawuri names; a fact which supports their claim to the land (emphasis mine).⁹¹

It is significant to note that until 1913, the Kanakulaiwura was a Zongo chief, whose jurisdiction was limited to the Gonja and other ethnic groups living in the settler community – Zongo. He exercised no authority over the majority Nawuri population.⁹² There was no hint of the Kanankulaiwura having exercised political jurisdiction over the predominant population in Alfai in the pre-colonial period. As concluded by the Ampiah Committee, there is no record or hint of Nawuri political leaders swearing oaths to the Kanankulaiwura or any Gonja chiefs.⁹³ Neither is there any evidence to support claims of voluntary Nawuri submission to the Gonja through the swearing of an oath. Historically, “it is only the swearing of oath by one chief to another that binds the two chiefs traditionally.”⁹⁴ In traditional Ghanaian societies of the south, allegiance was personal and a function of oath-swearing; it was not transferable.

Some Gonja traditions give faint, though tenuous, claim of the “supposed” Gonja suzerainty over the Nawuri in the pre-colonial period. The traditions accept the autochthonous rights of the Nawuri and that no evidence existed of a Gonja conquest of the Nawuri. But they claim that the Gonja met the Nawuri around the Techiman area where the latter accepted Gonja overlordship, moved ahead of the main Gonja army to

meaning of the name of the settlement is ‘home or land of lump of meat’, then it would have been called “Eblankulpe” in Gonja but not “Kanankulai” in Nawuri.

⁹¹ Ampiah, op.cit., Part I, 68.

⁹² According to the Gonja, the following Kanankulaiwuras were the predecessors of Kanankulaiwura Mahama Karatu, who was recognized by the German colonial officials as the political overlord of Alfai: Djoro I (1689-1715), Sanda I (1715-1745), Jawula I (1746-1758), Turmi I (1758-1803), Sabalwu Abudu (1894-185), Sabalwu Darami (1836-1845), Mahama Napo (185-1871), Mahama Joro (1872-1879), Atuma (1880-1882), and Mbema (1882-1912). See: “Memorandum submitted by the Gonjas on the Peace Negotiations in the Northern Conflict, September, 1994”, 5.

⁹³ Ampiah, op.cit., Part I, 49.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

Alfai, conquered and annexed it to the Gonja kingdom.⁹⁵ This suggestion is far-fetched as there is no such mention of Techiman in the testimony of Nawuri in their traditions of origins from Larteh area to Alfai. The suggestion rests on the contention that the Nawuri of Katiejeli came from Techiman. As argued earlier, assuming that this component of Nawuri society came from Techiman and accepted Gonja overlordship, it is inconclusive to generalize that all sections of the Nawuri community came from Techiman and that they accepted Gonja overlordship.⁹⁶

As has been stated earlier, the evolution of the institution of Kanankulaiwura predated the imposition of German colonial rule on Alfai in November 1899. Dixon argues that the office of the:

Kanankulaiwura and its relationship with the Nawuris must have been satisfactorily established long before the arrival of the Germans, since it would be quite unreasonable to suppose that the Gonjas, who were in a minority, could have imposed an overlord on a people who were under a foreign administration and comparatively independent.⁹⁷

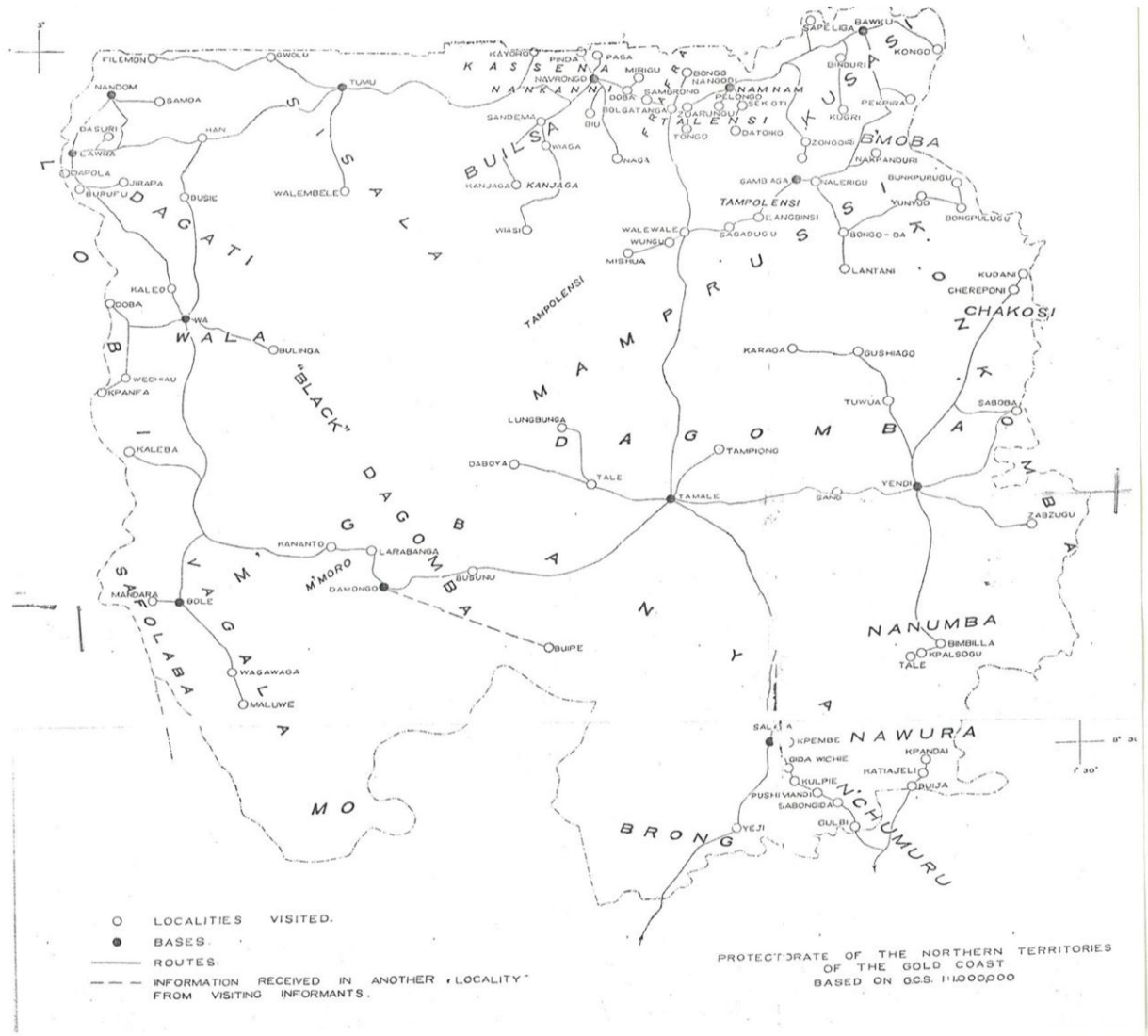
While the office of the Kanankulaiwura pre-dated the imposition of German rule on Alfai, it remains doubtful whether its origin was coincidental with Gonja intrusion and suzerainty in the area. From the uncertainty of the origins of the office of the Kanankulaiwura, Dixon seems to have assumed that the existence of the Kanankulaiwura chiefly office in Alfai was a consequence of the establishment of Gonja suzerainty over the Nawuri.

⁹⁵ Dixon, *op.cit.*, 4.

⁹⁶ Nawuri community in Alfai is made up of a number of settlements. It is made up of Kpandai (the capital of Nawuri), Balai, Nkanchina, Jadigbe, Katiejeli, Kabonwule, Bladjai, Kitare, Njare, Suruku, Kotiko, Oprusai, Awuratu and Linkpan.

⁹⁷ Dixon, *op.cit.*, 8.

Map 5: A map showing ethnic groups with allodial rights to lands in the Northern Territories



Source: Pogucki, 1955.

2.5 Conclusion

Several key conclusions emerge from this chapter. The first is that the Nawuri and the Gonja did not share a common origin as their traditions point to different places of origin. The differences in the origins of the Nawuri and the Gonja are supported by the cultural differences between the two ethnic groups.

Besides, the Nawuri settled in Alfai long before the arrival of the Gonja. The area was uninhabited when the Nawuri arrived; and that there was no war between the Nawuri and the Gonja when the latter immigrated into Alfai.

The chapter has also shown that the Nawuri and the Gonja were allies in the pre-colonial period; that when the first Gonja immigrants arrived in Alfai, the Nawuri helped them to establish their farms and houses; that the Nawuri also assisted the Gonja when the Asante invaded eastern Gonja in the 1744-45, and the Gonja of the Lepo Gate in the Kpembe civil war of 1892-3; and that the early relations between the two ethnic groups were cordial as there were intermarriages and mutual collaborations among them.

Furthermore, there was no hint of Gonja conquest of the Nawuri since no war took place between them in the pre-colonial times. The traditions of both the Nawuri and the Gonja do not confirm the view of the history of invasions and conquest, but pointed to the peaceful immigration of small groups of the Gonja to Alfai. The Nawuri were an autonomous people in the pre-colonial period and that until 1913 when the Germans recognized Kanankulaiwura Mahama Karatu, he and his predecessors had no political authority over the Nawuri.

Finally, the chapter has shown that allodial rights in Alfai land in the pre-colonial times resided in the Nawuri by reason of the fact that they were the first to settle in the area. They were also unassimilated; neither did they forfeit allodial rights to Alfai land through conquest.

CHAPTER THREE

UNDERSTANDING THE COLONIAL ANTECEDENTS OF THE NAWURI- GONJA CONFLICT, 1899-1932

3.0 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the patterns of arrival of the Nawuri and the Gonja and allodial rights in Alfai in the context of pre-colonial times. It argued that in the pre-colonial times, ownership of lands and overlordship in Alfai resided in the Nawuri by reason of autonomy and autochthonous rights. This chapter discusses the processes leading to the imposition of colonial rule on the Northern Territories, the nature of German rule in Alfai, and the introduction of the system of indirect rule by the British. The chapter seeks to explain ways in which colonial rule changed the locus of jurisdictional authority and thereby altered notions of allodial rights in Alfai. It seeks answers to the following questions: what were the effects of German rule on traditional political arrangement of the Nawuri? Why was the introduction of indirect rule in the Northern Territories delayed till the 1930s, though it was theoretically conceived in the 1910s and thought out in the 1920s? How did the Yapei conferences of the Gonja create conditions for the integration of Alfai into the Gonja kingdom and for what reasons? What effects did the amalgamation of Alfai with the Gonja kingdom have on the Nawuri?

3.1 Imposition of German Rule on Alfai: Antecedents

In 1884 Germany proclaimed a protectorate over Cameroon despite the fact that British traders had been active along the coastline. Dr. Gustav Nachtigal, a German explorer, arrived in Cameroon in July 1884 and annexed the Douala coast. Over time, the

Germans moved inland, extending their control and their claims. From the Cameroon, the Germans extended their activities to Togo in West Africa from where expeditions were made to Northern Ghana. In 1886 and 1888, two German expeditions were sent to present-day Northern Ghana. These two expeditions led by Krause and Captain von Francois, respectively, paved the way for the Germans to establish contacts with settlements in present-day Northern Ghana. Savelugu, Yendi, Salaga, Gambaga, Karaga and Nanton were visited with the intention of getting their chiefs to accept a German protectorate.¹

German penetration of Northern Ghana alarmed the British as it threatened their commercial interests in the region. It was in British interest that her various coastal possessions in Southern Ghana be not cut off from the trade of the interior.² In particular, Britain's attention was fixed on Salaga, an important trade centre, and the caravan routes that converged on it. For these commercial reasons, Britain was determined to prevent the region from falling under the control of the Germans or the French, both of whom were pushing into Northern Ghana from Togoland and Cote d'Ivoire, respectively. As the scramble for Northern Ghana between Germany and Britain intensified, the two powers signed a bilateral treaty to determine their spheres of control. A joint Anglo-German Commission was established in 1887 to define the future limits of British and German protectorates and spheres of influence in the territories lying in the interior of the Gold Coast Colony and the German Togo Protectorate.³ The Commission established the boundaries of the British sphere in the Gold Coast and that of the Germans in Togoland. In addition, the Commission established a Neutral Zone to separate the British sphere of control in the Gold Coast from that of the Germans in Togoland. A

¹ Staniland, op.cit., 9.

² R.B. Bening, R.B., "The Definition of the International Boundaries of Northern Ghana, 1888-1914" in *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* 1973, Vol. XIV, 229-261.

³ Ibid.

conventional line was drawn on the latitude of the estuary of the river Daka, and the two governments agreed:

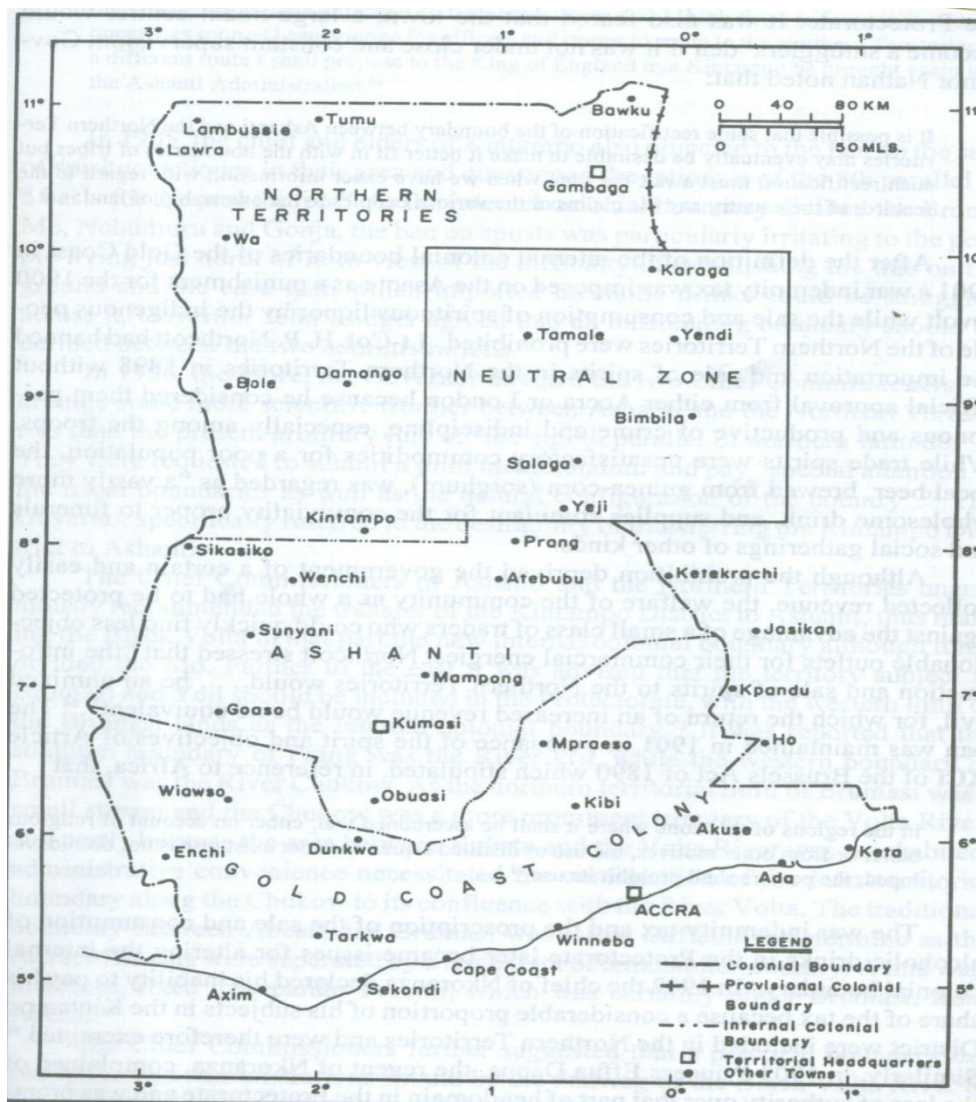
to regard the territories lying to the north of this line, within the limits marked on the accompanying map, as neutral ground, and to abstain from seeking to acquire within them protectorates or exclusive influence.⁴

The Neutral Zone stretched from Karaga in the North to Yeji in the south. Included in the Neutral Zone were settlements such as Tamale, Yendi, Karaga, Bimbilla, Kpembe, Salaga, Yeji and the whole of Alfai. The establishment of the Neutral Zone was significant as it limited the advances of either power into Northern Ghana. The agreement was, however, unclear about advances of a third party into the Neutral Zone. Britain feared French advances into the region, which could jeopardize her commercial interests. Hence she considered it strategically expedient to negotiate treaties of friendship and trade with local rulers within the Neutral Zone. In 1892 and 1894, the British sent George Ekem Ferguson, a Gold Coast Surveyor, on an expedition to Northern Ghana to sign treaties with the chiefs. During his first expedition in 1892, George Ekem Ferguson's instruction was to "make treaties with powers north of the nine degree latitude, outside of the Neutral Zone and to its west and north."⁵ In addition, Ferguson was instructed to conclude treaties with chiefs, who had parts of their territories falling within and outside the Neutral Zone. By the time Ferguson embarked on his second expedition in 1894, the British had become apprehensive of the possibility of the French venturing into the Neutral Zone to sign treaties with the chiefs. Hence they instructed Ferguson to conclude treaties of "friendship and freedom of trade." His instructions did not include treaties of "protection" with the chiefs in the Neutral Zone.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ R.G. Thomas, "George Ekem Ferguson: Civil Servant Extraordinary" in *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* 1972, Vol. XIII, 181-215.

Map 6: The Neutral Zone



Source: R.B. Bening, *Ghana: Regional Boundaries and National Integration* (Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 1999), 29.

Just like Britain, Germany also had a vested interest in Salaga due to its commercial significance. A statement in the German newspaper, the “Post”, in reference to the competition between Britain and Germany over Salaga, advised that “the possession of “Salagaland” must be one of Germany’s inflexible demands.”⁶ Despite the interests of the British and the Germans in Salaga and other parts of the Neutral Zone, both powers refrained from proclaiming a protectorate over the states in the zone. Eventually, in 1899 Britain and Germany agreed to the partition of the Neutral Zone.

The traditional reason assigned for this agreement is that it was occasioned by the commercial rivalry between Britain and Germany in the territory. While acknowledging this view, it is also significant to look at other considerations such as the interferences of Germany in the affairs of the states in the Neutral Zone and British desire to annul the Neutral Zone agreement. Indeed, evidence shows that the Germans continually interfered in the affairs of the peoples in the Neutral Zone against their wishes and Britain’s. For instance, it was reported in Count Zech’s journey to Salaga that in March 1897 two German officials arrived in Salaga and endeavoured to induce the king to accept the German flag. This was followed by another attempt in May the same year by another German official. The report indicated that in the May attempt, Salaga was destroyed and the Germans caused the removal of some of its inhabitants to Krachi.⁷ The report further suggested that Germany’s endeavour to induce the King of Salaga to accept the German flag, the destruction of the town and the removal of some of its inhabitants contravened the existing engagements between Great Britain and Germany in regard to the Neutral Zone.⁸ Another report which regarded German interferences in the affairs of the states in the Neutral Zone as part of the reasons for its partition referred to Britain’s repeated

⁶Marion Johnson, *Salaga Papers*, Vol. II (Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, Legon, [n.d.]) Acc. no.SAL/98/1.

⁷Ibid., Acc. no. SAL/99/1.

⁸Ibid.

warnings to the German authorities in Togo to refrain from interfering in the affairs of the states in the Neutral Zone. They were also warned to avoid taking any steps, which might be construed as a breach of the agreement between the two nations.⁹ Similarly, Britain showed signs of annulling the agreement that established the Neutral Zone. Britain did not only instruct George Ekem Fegusson to sign treaties of protection with chiefs in the area; she also contemplated annulling the Neutral Zone agreement. A letter from the Colonial Office to the Foreign Office dated May 13, 1897, stated:

... it appears to Mr. Chamberlain, that if Germany is to be prevented from reaping the advantage of the unscrupulous proceedings of German officers, Her Majesty's Government must, without delay, denounce the Agreement of 1887, and authorize the Governor of the Gold Coast to occupy Yendi and other places in the Neutral Zone. So far as this Department is concerned, the only question is whether the Gold Coast Government is in a position to occupy these places before the Togoland Government can do so, and, on learning that Lord Salisbury sees no objection to the denunciation of the Agreement, Mr. Chamberlain will consult Sir W. Maxwell, as to the possibility of effecting the occupation.¹⁰

On November 14, 1899, Britain and Germany signed a convention partitioning the Neutral Zone. Article five of the agreement stated that:

in the neutral zone the frontier between the German and English territories shall be formed by the river Daka as far as to the point of its intersection with the ninth degree of north latitude, then the frontier

⁹Ibid., Acc. no. SAL/87/1. The politics of the scramble for Northern Ghana by Germany and Britain should be understood in the wider context of the General Act of February 26, 1885 of the Berlin Conference, 1884-85. The Act outlined a number of measures in respect of the control of European powers in Africa. One of the stipulations of the Act was the doctrine of spheres of influence "to which was linked the absurd concept of the hinterland, which came to be interpreted to mean that possession of the coast also implied ownership of its hinterland to almost unlimited distance." Article 34 of the Act stipulated that if any European nation took possession of an African coast or declared the coast a protectorate such a European nation must bring its action to the notice of the signatories of the Berlin Act in order to have its claims ratified. Article 35 of the Act stipulated that "an occupier of any such coastal possessions had also to demonstrate that it possessed sufficient authority there to protect existing rights, and, as the case may be, freedom of trade and of transit under the conditions agreed." In this respect, it was agreed that a signed treaty or agreement with African rulers formalized the interest of the European nation in the hinterland and, indeed, was a valid testimony of an effective occupation of the hinterland by the European power. For details, see G.N. Uzoigwe "European Partition and Conquest of Africa: An Overview" in A.A. Boahen ed., *UNESCO General History of Africa: Africa under Colonial Domination, 1880-1935* Vol. VII (California, UNESCO), 19-44.

¹⁰ Metcalfe, op.cit., 495.

shall continue to the north, leaving Morozugu to Great Britain and shall be fixed on the spot by a mixed commission of the two powers, in such manner that Gambaga and all the territories of Mamprusi shall fall to Britain, and that Yendi and all the territories of Chakosi shall fall to Germany.¹¹

Germany appeared somewhat content and satisfied with her share (the eastern portion) of the Neutral Zone, from statements that glowingly extolled the agricultural and commercial significance of her portion. In a statement, the Germans remarked:

the importance possessed in the former days by the much vaunted market of Salaga has in reality steadily diminished with the advance of the white man into the interior ... The eastern portion of the Neutral Zone which has fallen to Germany includes the fertile shore of the Oti, and the trade route Mango-Yendi-Kete-Kratschi, which represents the most valuable part of Dagomba. With the acquisition of the whole of Chakosi and of the trade route through Yendi, German ambition is satisfied. The assignment to England of remote Mamprusi and of Western Dagomba, is a compensation of no importance.¹²

The partition of the Neutral Zone placed Alfai under German influence. One significant consideration in the processes that led to the German colonization of Alfai was the absence of military confrontations between the colonizers and the colonized.¹³

3.2 German colonial rule in Alfai: Nawuri resistance and its impact

German rule in Alfai, just as in other parts of Africa, was exploitative. For instance, “from the late 1890s onward all adult males were required to provide the German Government a certain number of days of labour – later it was set at 12 days annually and from 1909 onward the alternative of paying 6s. annually was instituted.”¹⁴

¹¹ As quoted in Bening, *op.cit.*, 229-261.

¹² As quoted in Bening “The Definition of the International Boundaries of Northern Ghana, 1888-1914” in *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana*, 1973, Vol. XIV, 229-261. It is significant to note that the Mango-Yendi-Kete-Krachi trade route passed through Alfai.

¹³ A key element of the general historiography on the processes of the colonization of Africa touched on the European conquest and occupation of their spheres, which historians have described as the Wars of Pacification.

¹⁴ Maier, *op.cit.*, 164.

Oral evidence gathered from field research shows that the Germans attempted to encourage the Nawuri to cultivate cotton on a commercial scale.¹⁵ For this purpose, the Germans adopted measures to break Alfai's subsistence or rural economy based on agricultural activity. They instituted severe punitive measures aimed at making the Nawuri industrious and curtailing what they perceived as 'laziness' and 'idleness'. Flogging was instituted for various offences including 'laziness.' The Germans attempted to make inhabitants in Alfai industrious by truncating leisure hours. Furthermore, some of the youths were flogged and admonished not to waste precious time on leisure. Forced labour was also instituted by the German authorities. By this policy, youths in Alfai were 'bundled up' and forced to work either on the roads or on farms in Bimbilla or Kete-Krachi under the supervision of colonial officers.¹⁶ Thus, the German administrators, as Ranger argued, "tended to be exceedingly strict and in some cases unduly severe and cruel, [leading to] ... dissatisfaction and sometimes injustice."¹⁷

One perspective of the historiography on African resistance to colonialism argues that the rapid rate of the imposition of colonial rule on Africa within a space of a quarter of a century proved the fact of African non-resistance. Recent researches have shown that this view is inaccurate. It has been established that in almost every society, African peoples and rulers put up strong resistance to the imposition of colonial rule. As Ranger indicated, "virtually every sort of African society resisted, and there was resistance in virtually every region of European advance."¹⁸

¹⁵ The Nawuri were asked to travel to Krachi to obtain new varieties of cotton introduced from the agricultural station there to complement the local varieties available in Alfai. However, the attempt to transform the subsistence farmers in Alfai into commercial cotton growers failed for a number of reasons.

¹⁶ Field researches conducted in Alfai 2011. In almost every Nawuri settlement that the research was conducted, the excessive punitive measure of the German administrators against Nawuri youths resonated.

¹⁷ David Laumann, "A Historiography of German Togoland, or the Rise and Fall of a "Model Colony" in *History in Africa* Vol. 30, 2003, 195-211. Available on <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3172089> Accessed on 17 June 2011.

¹⁸ T.O. Ranger, "African Initiatives and Resistance in the Face of Partition and Conquest" in *UNESCO General History of Africa: Africa under Colonial Domination, 1800-1935* Vol. II, ed.Boahen (California: UNESCO, 1985), 45-62.

In Alfai, the Germans did not engage the Nawuri troops in bloody wars in the process of the imposition of colonial rule. Neither did the Nawuri take to arms to resist the imposition of German colonial rule. Nonetheless, the Nawuri resorted to non-combative forms of resistance such as hiding. Nawuri resistance to German rule was bloodless; they were unarmed and non-confrontational. The chief strategy of Nawuri resistance was hiding. On hearing of the arrival of a German colonial officer, the Nawuri would run into hiding, mostly in the shrines of their settlement deities, which were usually located in the outskirts unknown to immigrants and strangers. Here, the Nawuri sought the spiritual protection of the gods against 'capture' by German colonial officers. The traditions of most Nawuri settlements maintain that while seeking spiritual protection, some men were chosen and 'fortified' spiritually to enable them sneak out from the shrines to their farms to secure foodstuffs.

There is no denying the fact that religious fervour played a role in African resistance. Nonetheless, it is an over-exaggeration to describe such resistance as one dictated by 'witch-doctors'. In Alfai, just like in most African societies,

religious teachings and symbols often bore very directly on the question of sovereignty and legitimacy. Rulers were legitimized through ritual recognition, and when a ruler and his people determined to defend their sovereignty they naturally drew heavily on religious symbols and ideas.¹⁹

In the light of this African conception of legitimacy and sovereignty, the Nawuri, as Walter Rodney observed about some African peoples, resisted the German colonial powers, not only in "material terms but also with their own metaphysical religious weapons."²⁰

By the beginning of 1900 when German rule was firmly introduced in Alfai, the area was inhabited by the Nawuri and the Gonja. The Nawuri were distributed over the

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ As quoted in Ranger, *ibid.*

various settlements in Alfai, Kpandai, Balai, Nkanchina, Bayim, Katiejeli, Mofukayin (now Dodoai), Kabonwule, Bladjai, Kitare, Njare, Oprusai, Awuratu and Buya. Each of these settlements was ruled by a Nawuri political overlord or chief known as *wura* (which in Akan means ‘lord’/‘master’) or *eblisaa*.²¹ Indeed, the titles borne by chiefs in Nawuri are suffixed with *wura* as in Kpandaiwura, Balaiwura, Nkanchinawura, Bayimwura, Katiejeliwura, Dodoaiwura, Kabonwura, Bladjaiwura, Kitarewura, Oprusaiwura, Njarewura, Awuratuwura and Buyawura, respectively. Wurabu, later changed to Nawuriwura, was the title of the head chief of the Nawuri.

The Gonja immigrants were domiciled only in Kpandai and Katiejeli, and owed allegiance to the Kpandaiwura and Katiejeliwura, respectively. The Gonja, however, had their own leaders or chiefs for their communities in Kpandai and Katiejeli, known by the titles of Kanankulaiwura and Dusaiwura, respectively. As chiefs of a immigrant Gonja community in Alfai, it was probable that the Kanankulaiwura and the Dusaiwura implicitly, if not explicitly, recognized the authority of the Kpandaiwura and Katiejeliwura, respectively, as well as the authority of Nawuriwura, the Nawuri paramount or headchief of Alfai. Judging from the cordial relations of the two ethnic groups in the pre-colonial times, it was also probable that there were no strict demarcations of the political roles and functions of Gonja and Nawuri chiefs in Kpandai and Katiejeli.

German rule in Alfai impacted negatively on Nawuri political institution and created conditions for the establishment of Gonja rule over the Nawuri. It created a political vacuum as the Nawuri deserted their villages on hearing of the approach of

²¹*Ewura* in Nawuri is equivalent to chief. *Eblisaa* (plural *ablisaa*) is a Nawuri word which means Elders or Leader. For details of chieftaincy among Nawuri and Gonja in Alfai, see Chapter Four of this study.

German officials to avoid harassment. Like their Nanumba neighbours of Wulensi²², they frequently abandoned their settlements leaving only a few strangers behind.²³ The Nanumba neighbours of Wulensi, by contrast, did not desert their settlement with their chief. The same was true of the Gonja community and their chief, the Kanankulaiwura. This provided the opportunity for the Kanankulaiwura to project himself as *de jure* head or paramountchief of Alfai.²⁴

In 1913, German officials recognized Mahama Karatu as the head chief of Alfai because they needed a leader, who would be disposed to collaborate with them to pursue their agenda. Indeed, in 1913 when the Germans recognized Mahama Karatu as the overlord of Alfai, he “had only come to Nawuri (Alfai in German Togoland) a short time before the outbreak of war” (World War I).²⁵ In the estimation of the Germans, Nawuri chiefs were unenlightened and unreliable for the realization of their objectives. Just like their Nchumuru counterparts, Nawuri chiefs were considered primitive, poor and unintelligent.²⁶ By contrast, they considered Mahama Karatu who was literate in Arabic, as enlightened. He was also described as an “experienced man who had travelled much

²² Wulensi was a Nanum Division which is bounded to the south by Alfai. Both areas were under the Kete-Krachi District under German Togoland until 1922 when the entire Nanum area was carved out of the district. On February 2, 1915, Furley was reported to have visited Wulensi. It was reported that Wulensi was “practically deserted, everybody apparently having left it with the exception of some few strangers” and the Wulensi chief when Furley’s visit was mistaken for the visit of the Chief Commissioner for Lome. Furley was reported to have assured the chief that British “Commissioners did not travell (sic) through the country harassing the people.” He ordered the chief to get all his people back so that he could see them going about their normal duties on his return. See: PRAAD (Accra) ADM 1/11/603 Notes on Togoland People: Senior Political officer’s Diary, 18th January to 8th March 1915, 26-27.

²³ The stranger community was usually made up of extracts from the Gold Coast. With a relatively friendly rapport with the British, the strangers lived under the illusion that the Germans, like their British imperial counterparts, did not harass their subjects. Hence they did not run into hiding on hearing of the visit of German officials.

²⁴ In a number of field researches conducted in Alfai, it was discovered through interactions with informants that the visiting German officers interacted with the leadership of the Gonja and gave them instructions which fell within the larger picture of German economic and social policies. It was also discovered that in all instances, the Gonja informed the Nawuri about the instructions when the latter resurfaced after the departure of the German officers from Alfai.

²⁵ PRAAD (Accra) ADM 11/1/1621 Report of Enquiry on the Sphere of Occupation of Togoland: Report by SNA on Enquiry into Togoland Affairs, 17th April 1918, 19. Mahama Karatu had lived for most of his life in Salaga in the Gold Coast.

²⁶ PRAAD (Accra) ADM 11/1/1621 Report of Enquiry on the Sphere of Occupation of Togoland: Report by SNA on Enquiry into Togoland Affairs, 17th April 1918, 18-19.

in the course of trade.”²⁷ It was for these reasons that the German colonial authorities in Kete-Krachi recognized him as the overlord of the entire Alfai area in 1913. As was the case of the warrant chiefs in Nigeria under British rule, the Germans issued a ‘warrant’ to Kanankulaiwura Mahama Karatu to exercise authority in Alfai that he had never exercised before. A document to that effect dated September 5, 1913, signed by Dr. Ravon, was given to Mahama Karatu as the basis of his mandate as overlord of Alfai. It read:

with the authority of Kaiserlichen station Kete-Krachi, the Native Mahama-Kratu of Kpandai is today to become Head Chief ... These villages are placed under him: (1) Kpandai, (2) Katiageli, (3) Balae, (4) Beyim, (5) Nkantschena, (6) Dodope, (7) Kabuwele, (8) Kotito, (9) Abrionko, (10) Suruku.²⁸

With his endorsement as the headchief of Alfai, Mahama Karatu took precedence over Nana Boila, the substantive Nawuriwura and his sub-chiefs. The result was that Kanankulaiwura Mahama Karatu and his successors were considered by the Germans and later the British as superior to Nawuri chiefs.²⁹ The endorsement of Mahara Karatu as the overlord of Alfai sowed the seed of the subsequent rancorous relationship between the Nawuri and the Gonja. Indeed, the roots of the Nawuri-Gonja conflict are traceable to it. As Dixon clearly pointed out:

the modern history of this dispute can be said to begin with the reign of the successor of Atuma, Kanankulaiwura Mahama Karantu Kankarantu, who was made Kanankulaiwura on the 5th of September, 1913 ...³⁰

²⁷ Braimah and Goody, *op.cit.*, 70.

²⁸ *Ibid.* Also see, Dixon, *op.cit.*, 8.

²⁹ Ampiah, *op.cit.*, 73. According to the Ampiah Committee Report, “at the time of the alleged ‘election and acceptance’ by the Nawuris of the Kanankulaiwura [Mahama Karatu] as their overlord, the British and the German administrators regarded the successors of Sumaila Ndewura Japka, no doubt, as superior chiefs to the Nawuri Headmen or Chiefs.”

³⁰ Dixon, *op.cit.*, 8.

Imperial Germany's recognition of Mahama Karatu as the overlord of Alfai was construed by the Gonja as a validation of their claim of sovereignty over the Nawuri. The Nawuri dared not protest "as everybody knew what a strong arm the Germans used in their administration."³¹ This strengthened the hand of Kanankulaiwura Mahama Karatu over Alfai. A year before German colonial Authorities in Kete-Krachi recognized Mahama Karatu as overlord of Alfai, the British Commissioner for the Northern-Eastern Province had cautioned against hasty subordination of some chiefs to others. It read:

we must go very slowly indeed with regard to the paramountcy of the various chiefs, the relations of their sub-chiefs to each other, and also of the people to their various chiefs. It is useless to blind our eyes to this fact and to put down on paper that one chief is paramount to another ... unless carefully watched the present scheme may really be a fruitful source of discord and tend to divide the people into even worse cliques than at present, instead of being a useful method of consolidating the various clans.³²

When Alfai came under British sphere of Togoland in 1919, the British colonial authorities, for the sake of expediency, simply maintained the super-imposition of the Gonja as the overlords of Alfai. Through the instrumentality of Mahama Karatu, Alfai was eventually absorbed into the Gonja District in 1932. Kanankulaiwura Mahama Karatu was said to have had a good friendship with Duncan-Johnstone, the Commissioner for Southern Province. It was through him that Mahama Karatu got the British colonial authorities to absorb Alfai into the Gonja District when the Krachi District was dismembered in 1932.³³ Braimah and Goody conclude that:

no living Gonja will forget the part he (Mahama Karatu) played in the Alfai area over which he ruled... Later he became on very good terms with Mr. A.C. Duncan Johnstone, the Provincial Commissioner (of the

³¹ Braimah and Goody, *op.cit.*, 70-71.

³² As quoted in Ampiah, *op.cit.*, Pat I, 19.

³³ Kanankulaiwura Mahama Karatu was the Kpembewura with the title name Jawula I from 1931 to 1936. He was said to be a good friend of Duncan-Johnstone, the colonial officer, who spearheaded the Gonja Conference of 1930 in which a decision was taken to add Alfai to the Gonja District.

Northern Territories), and no one could harm him in the British area. He became a terror in Alfai ...³⁴

In short, as a sequel to German recognition of Mahama Karatu as the overlord of Alfai, the Gonja took steps towards establishing and consolidating their overlordship over the Nawuri. As the overlord, Mahama Karatu and his Gonja kinsmen embarked on a scheme to “Gonjaize” Alfai, claim allodial rights in Nawuri lands, exact tributes from the Nawuri, and refuse recognition to Nawuri chiefs. He also made false representations about allodial rights and the general pre-colonial history of Alfai. He claimed that allodial rights in the area resided in the Gonja and that the territory was hitherto part of the Gonja kingdom.³⁵ In his report on the tour of German Togoland, Furley noted in his diary that he met with Mahama Karatu and his sub-chiefs who showed him the boundary of his jurisdiction. It read:

in evening had meeting with the chief Mahame and some of his sub-chiefs. His division Nawuri or Alfai extends as far as Samenya stream on the south, Luna stream on north, nearly to the Oti River ... on west” (emphasis mine).³⁶

Kanankulaiwura Mahama Karatu indeed claimed jurisdiction over areas beyond Alfai as far as the Nchumuru state. Furley reported that Kanankulaiwura Mahama Karaku claimed the fishing rights in the Daka River between the villages of Kamabre and Chokoli in the Nchumuru state, though the German Commissioner for Kete-Krachi had warned him against it.³⁷

³⁴Braimah and Goody, op.cit., 70-71.

³⁵ PRAAD (Accra) ADM 1/11/603 Notes on Togoland People: Senior Political officer’s Diary, 18th January to 8th March 1915, 24-26.

³⁶Ibid.,25.

³⁷Ibid., 24.

3.3 The British era and the system of Indirect Rule

German rule was short-lived, lasting only for fifteen years (1899-1914). In August 1914, the Gold Coast Regiment under the command of Captain Barker, accompanied by H.S. Newlands, a political officer, entered German Togoland, conquered and occupied it.³⁸ To administer former German Togoland, the British and the French colonial powers agreed to a partition. Based on a provisional agreement signed in Paris on 10th May 1919, former German Togoland was partitioned. The western portion of the colony fell under British administration while the eastern portion fell under French administration.³⁹ Besides, Alfai, then administered as part of the Kete-Krachi District under former German Togoland, came under British rule.

Initially, the entire Kete-Krachi District was placed under the Ashanti Province.⁴⁰ As British colonial authorities began to consolidate their administration in the Mandated Territory, they soon encountered the problem of poor communication and transportation network. The only motorable road passed through the district in a north-south direction. Kete-Krachi was “almost cut off from Kpandu and Ho by several unbridged and difficult river crossing.”⁴¹ The all-weather road to Kete-Krachi was “through the Protectorate via Yendi.”⁴² This made it difficult to effectively administer Kete-Krachi from Kumasi. For the sake of administrative efficiency, the Colonial Secretary and the Chief Commissioners for the Ashanti Province and the Northern Territories agreed on 1st

³⁸ For details of the expedition of the Gold Coast Regiment to German Togoland, see: Annual Report on British Mandated Togoland for 1920-1921, 4 and 5.

³⁹ In July 1922, the League of Nations ratified the agreement and granted mandates to Britain and France over their spheres of influence in Togo.

⁴⁰ The Kete-Krachi District was made up of five divisions. These were Krachi proper, Achode, Nawuri (Alfai), Nchumuru and Nanumba.

⁴¹ R,B Bening, *Ghana: Regional Boundaries and National Integration* (Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 1999), 41.

⁴² There was no direct telephone link between Kete-Krachi and Kumasi. Besides, there was only one motorable road passed through the Kete-Krachi District north-southwards to Kumasi. The result was that the administration of the Kete-Krachi District from Kumasi became problematic. For details see, Bening, op.cit., 41.

September 1922 to carve out the Kete-Krachi District from Ashanti Province to the Northern Territories.⁴³

In 1923 the British sphere of Togoland was divided into two parts for purposes of administrative convenience, the northern and southern sections. By the British Sphere of Togoland Order-in-Council of 1923:

it was decreed that 10,577 square miles (the northern section) of Mandated Territory should be administered as an integral part of the Northern Territories.⁴⁴

Until 1932, the northern portion included Kete-Krachi, Eastern Dagomba and Kusasi measuring 3911, 4609, and 385 square miles, respectively.⁴⁵ The Northern Section of British Togoland was placed under the Northern Territories while the Southern Section was placed under the Eastern Province of the Gold Coast colony. This administrative arrangement was driven ostensibly by a so-called desire to integrate ethnic and traditional ties. In the words of Bourret, “it was because of tribal relationships that some two-thirds of the mandate was united with the Northern Territories, while only a small part was left for south Togoland.”⁴⁶

Meanwhile, with the exception of the Nanum state which was carved out of the Kete-Krachi District in 1922, the district was not dismembered; it still remained intact. It was made up of Krachi proper, Alfai, Nchumuru and Achode areas with other tiny

⁴³ Bening, op.cit., 41.

⁴⁴NRG8/3/53 Report of the Northern Territories for the Year 1935-1936, 5. The geography of the northern section of British Togoland varied considerably. From east of Wurupon in the Southern Section and extending to latitude 7° 35' North is a range of hills with steep sides but with the top forming an undulating plateau. To the south ridge are a number of minor ranges and isolated scarps. To the extreme north is the Gambaga Scarp which lies at about latitude 10° 37' North.

⁴⁵ F.M. Bourret, 1949. *The Gold Coast: A Survey of the Gold Coast and British Togoland, 1919-1946* (London: Geoffrey Cumberlege), 98.

⁴⁶Ibid., 97-98. It is important to note that the Permanent Mandates Commission had no intention of letting the mandatory power think that the territory thus administered was eventually to drift into annexation. However, this was not the case as the territory was eventually annexed to the Gold Coast (Ghana).

territories such as Agou (Chanlah), Adele and Ntrubo areas. With the exception of the Krachi who were divided between the Northern Territories and Ashanti, no other ethnic group came under the administrative control of two District Commissioners.⁴⁷ With this administrative arrangement, the Nawuri continued to live as an undivided people. Their head chief, Nana Boila, continued to represent them on the Kete-Krachi Traditional Council until the introduction of the policy of amalgamation in 1932.

3.4 The Ideological Underpinnings of Indirect Rule

Between 1901 and 1907 the British initially administered the Northern Territories with military staff.⁴⁸ In the latter year, a civilian administration was established. Initially, British policy was to create tiny territorial units called native states. The object was to divide the people and obviate a possible combination against the colonial administration.

However, by 1910 the British colonial authorities had come to the conclusion that a concerted revolt of the peoples of the Northern Territories was an impossibility. Consequently, they began to conceive of a new administrative arrangement based on larger native states. This idea was first conceived by Lt.-Col. H.P. Northcott, the first Commissioner and Commandant of the Northern Territories, when he hinted that in every phase of administration, the British would employ local chiefs as agents of the colonial administration. He also hinted that the chiefs would be supported and empowered to deal with all cases except in matters of their relationship with

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ For details of the imposition of colonial rule on the Northern Territories, see G. Metcalfe, *Great Britain and Ghana: Documents of Ghana History, 1807-1957* (Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd, 1964), 523-4.

neighbouring chiefs and of offences of a capital nature.⁴⁹ In 1921 Governor Guggisberg underscored the importance of forming larger and stronger native states when he stated:

there is the tendency of the bigger states to break up to the detriment of development and trade.....our policy must be to maintain any paramount chiefs that exist and gradually absorb under these any small communities scattered about. What we should aim at is that someday the Dagombas, Gonjas and Mamprusis should become strong native states. Each will have its own public works department and carry on its own business, with the political officer as a Resident Advisor. Each state will be more or less self-contained.⁵⁰

This statement foreshadowed the imminent introduction of amalgamation policy, the introduction of indirect rule, and unflinching official support for chiefs of proven loyalty to the Government. The ultimate result was the re-drawing of the traditional boundaries in the Northern Territories for purely administrative expediency, and the subsuming of smaller traditional states under the Gonja, Dagbon, Mamprugu, Wala and Nanum states in the Northern Territories.

Until 1927 when Rattray's anthropological investigation was undertaken for the Northern Territories, British colonial officials had only a vague idea of the history and culture of the northern peoples.⁵¹ Hence initially they allowed the chiefs to continue exercising their traditional jurisdiction. No effort was made to define its extent exactly, or reorganize native tribunals.⁵² Despite the vagueness of the local administrative structure, the Northern Territories continued to be administered directly by British colonial authorities till the 1930s when effective measures were taken towards the

⁴⁹ PRAAD (Accra) ADM 56/1/258 Occupation of Yendi: Minutes of Meeting Held at Tamale, 11th March 1921, 2; R.G. Bening, "The Evolution of the Administrative Boundaries of Northern Ghana, 1898 to 1965" (University of London, Unpublished PhD Thesis, 1971), 160. Hereafter Bening 2.

⁵⁰ PRAAD ADM 56/1/258 The Occupation of Yendi: "Minutes of Conference at Tamale, 11th March 1921", 1-3.

⁵¹ Before this study, it was generally believed that the Protectorate and the surrounding territory had been invaded some four or five centuries earlier by state-builders from the northeast. It was also inappropriately believed that the "newcomers set up the Mamprussi, Dagomba, and Gonja kingdoms in localities which still bear these names, and forced their language and customs on the original inhabitants", see Bourret, *op.cit.*, 92.

⁵² Bourret, *op.cit.*, 95.

introduction of indirect rule.⁵³ The purpose of the policy of indirect rule was ostensibly to repair the damage of the past by reuniting split ethnicities and kingdoms in order to build up larger states which would allow for the establishment of an efficient and effective form of local government.

Why was the introduction of indirect rule delayed till the 1930s, though it was theoretically conceived in the 1910s and thought out in the 1920s? The reasons for the long delay in the practical implementation of the system were varied. In the first place, the British, as pointed out earlier, foresaw some inherent problems, and needed to adopt a cautious approach.⁵⁴ Accordingly, no practical steps were taken to introduce indirect rule in the Northern Territories until after Rattray's report. Rattray concluded that it was possible to regard the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast as a more or less "homogeneous cultural and – to a lesser extent – linguistic area, rather than a mosaic comprising of a welter of tongues and divergent customs."⁵⁵

There was need for a clearer definition of policy including a cession to the peoples of "a share in the government of the country."⁵⁶ To this end, attempts were made to restore the authority of chiefs, to structure and sanitize power relations amongst chiefs, enhance the powers of nominal chiefs and establish a hierarchy of traditional authority. In the North-Eastern and North-Western Provinces, for instance, considerable time was spent to appoint local chiefs, paramount chiefs or enhance the powers of nominal chiefs among the Frafra, Sisala, Kanjarja, Grunshi, Kusasi and Tallensi, and impose the

⁵³ Lord Lugard defines indirect rule as a system of colonial administration which not only relied on the indigenous authorities for local government but was constantly goading them to improvement. Indirect rule worked based on government policy which made provision for chiefs to govern their people, not as independent, but as dependent rulers, while at the same time the chiefs themselves were controlled by government in policy and matters of importance. Consequently, the colonial government used chiefs as agents of the administrative system. For details on indirect rule, see: Michael Crowder (1968), *West Africa Under Colonial Rule*, London Hutchinson, 1968, 217ff.

⁵⁴ See the earlier portions of this section.

⁵⁵ R.S. Rattray, *The Tribes of the Ashanti Hinterland* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1932), 1.

⁵⁶ PRAAD (Accra) 1/7. M.P. 7469/28: Minutes by His Excellency the A.G. Governor.

authority of the Nayiri of Mamprugu and the Wa-Na of Wala over most territories in present-day Upper East and Upper West Regions, respectively.⁵⁷

The colonial government needed to organize various conferences in the Northern Territories to codify the traditional constitutions, rules of successions and the relationship between the various ethnic groups. It was not until the early 1930s that drafts of traditional constitutions were completed. The most important of these conferences were held in Gonja (1923, 1930 and 1932), Dagomba (November, 1930), Kusasi (March, 1931), Mamprusi (1932) and in (July, 1933).⁵⁸ The British colonial authorities, in conferences held of the 1930s, also appointed paramount chiefs over the various peoples and districts. The ideal was one for each district. Chiefs were encouraged to visit and cooperate with one another in the hope that their positions and their control over their people would be enhanced.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ For details, see: PRAAD (Accra) ADM 56/1/7 Armitage to Major Festing, November 14, 1910; PRAAD (Accra) ADM 56/1/121 Armitage, "Report on Tour of Inspection, North-Eastern Province"; PRAAD (Accra) ADM 56/1/61 "Handing over Report to Capt. Warden and Half-Yearly Report on the Navarro District (Half-Year of January-June 1911) by Capt. S.D. Nash", July 1911; PRAAD (Accra) ADM 56/1/121 Major Festing: "Circular of July 20, 1911, to District Commissioners of Gambaga, Bawku and Zuarungu; PRAAD (Accra) ADM 56/1/121 Armitage to Colonial Secretary, September 11, 1911; PRAAD (Accra) ADM 56/1/123 Warden to Armitage, August 23, 1911; PRAAD (Accra) ADM 56/1/7 Major Festing to the Colonial Secretary, March 12, 1911; PRAAD (Accra) ADM 56/1/431 Tumu District Diary, June 2, 1914; PRAAD (Accra) ADM 56/1/137 Nash to the Provincial Commissioner, North-Eastern Province, December 23, 1913; PRAAD (Accra) ADM 56/1/160 Zuarungu District Diary, October 15, 1913; PRAAD (Accra) ADM 56/1/200 Berkeley to Armitage, May 4, 1915; PRAAD (Accra) ADM 56/1/200 Oakley to Ag. Provincial Commissioner, North-Western Province, March 31, 1915.

⁵⁸ For details, see N.J.K. Brukum, "The Northern Territories of the Gold Coast under British Colonial Rule, 1897 – 1957: A Study in Political Change" (University of Toronto, unpublished PhD Thesis, 1997), 275 – 76.

⁵⁹ PRAAD (Accra) 56/1/461 Bawku District: Report for the Month of December, 1917, 2. In 1917 the Chief Commissioner for the Northern Territories noted that prior to the outbreak of World War I, the inhabitants of the Northern Territories were, on a whole, "an amenable people, living under their tribal chiefs, who in their turn, paid allegiance to their paramount chiefs, through whom the administration worked as far as possible." He also noted that the policy of imposing chiefs on peoples met with a very considerable amount of success. For details, see: PRAAD (Accra) 56/1/219 Extract from the Chief Commissioner's Memorandum to His Excellency the Governor on Recruiting in the Northern Territories, 1.

3.5 The Yapei Conferences

The conferences organized to codify the traditional constitutions and rules of successions of the Gonja kingdom were known as the Yapei Conferences.⁶⁰ Three conferences were held at Yapei in 1923, 1930 and 1932, respectively, to draft a scheme for the introduction of indirect rule in the Gonja kingdom.

The idea of convening a conference of all principal Gonja chiefs was originally conceived in 1922 at a meeting of Bole chiefs. Its purpose was to solicit views from the chiefs on the prospects of their kingdom which was “gradually splitting up into small independent chieftainships.”⁶¹ The Kpembewura, in particular, was becoming increasingly autonomous, and it was important to find out if he would attend the meeting.⁶² He supported the idea and proposed Yapei as the appropriate venue for the conference, but he could not attend in person as Gonja customs prohibited him from crossing the Volta River as well as coming face-to-face with another big Gonja chief such as the Yabumwura and the Bolewura.⁶³

By June 1922 when preparations were made for the conference, Alfai then under the Kete-Krachi District, formed part of the Ashanti Province instead of the Northern Territories. Consequently, the Kanankulaiwura was technically ineligible to attend a

⁶⁰They were so called because the conferences were held at Yapei, a Gonja settlement in present-day Central Gonja. Yapei was chosen for the conferences because it was located in the centre of the Gonja kingdom unlike Yanga, the seat of the Yabumwura, which was located in the interior of Western Gonja. The report of the 1930 Conference which was of more importance has been coded as “Enquiry into the Constitution and Organization of the Gbanya Kingdom,” while that of 1932 has been titled “Gbanya Division Conference of Chiefs.” See: PRAAD (Accra) ADM 1/1380 Gonja Native Affairs.

⁶¹ PRAAD (Accra) ADM 56/1/324 Gonja Conference: A letter from the Commissioner of Southern Province to the Commissioners of Tamale and Salaga, dated 17 June 1922.

⁶²Ibid. It was the custom of the Gonja then that the Kpembewura did not come face to face with another big Gonja chief such as the Bolewura, Debrewura and Yabonwura. In addition, he was prohibited from crossing the Volta River. In the light of these prohibitions, the Kpembewura declined attendance. Consequently, he delegated one of his sub-chiefs to attend the conference. See PRAAD (Accra) ADM 56/1/324 Gonja Conference: A letter from the District Commissioner of Salaga to the Commissioner of Southern Province dated 23 June 1922.

⁶³ PRAAD (Accra) ADM 56/1/324 Gonja Conference: A letter from the Chief Commissioner of the Southern Province to the Chief Commissioner of the Northern Territories dated 28 June 1922. Yapei was chosen for the conference because it is said to be located in the centre of the Gonja state.

meeting of Gonja chiefs organized under the auspices of the Northern Territories Administration.

Nonetheless, the British Colonial Authorities deemed it important to allow the Kanankulaiwura to attend the conference.⁶⁴ By the time the conference was held in 1923, Alfai and the entire Kete-Krachi District had been placed under the Northern Territories Administration.

The 1923 Conference marked the first attempt by the British colonial authorities to bring the Gonja together as a united people. Prior to the Conference, the central authority (the Yabumwura) was weak. Indeed, the five major divisions, Kpembe, Bole, Tuluwe, Kasawgu and Wasipe (Daboya), existed more or less as autonomous states. It was at the 1923 Conference that a scheme to integrate the Gonja divisions into a kingdom was drawn up. Naturally, the Yabumwura commended the attempts of the colonial officials to consolidate the Gonja and asked for the inclusion of the Tampulima areas in the Wa District. He claimed that:

the Chief of Tampluma (sic) near Ducie in the Wa District who is the heir to the Kandi chiefdom wished to attend but was forbidden to do so by the Chief Commissioner of the Northern Territories. Yabumwura informed the conference that he wished the return of this country and was told to put up his claim separately through the District Commissioner, Western Gonja ...⁶⁵

A significant landmark of the 1923 Conference was that it drew a scheme, which succeeded in getting the various divisional chiefs of the Gonja kingdom to renew their

⁶⁴ PRAAD (Accra) ADM 56/1/324 Gonja Conference: A letter from the Chief Commissioner of Southern Province to the Chief Commissioner of the Northern Territories dated 28 June 1922. The British colonial authorities contemplated whether the Chief Commissioner for the Ashanti Province would permit the Kanankulaiwura to attend the conference. The Provincial Commissioner for the Southern Province was of the view that the Chief Commissioner for the Ashanti Province would not object to Kanankulaiwura's attendance of the conference.

⁶⁵ PRAAD, Accra: ADM 11/1/1380 Gonja Native Affairs: "Enquiry into the Constitution and Organization of the Gbanya Kingdom" (n.d.), 9.

allegiance to the Yabumwura as their paramount chief and overlord. As the Commissioner for the Western Province put it, the five:

great Gonja states are in fact as entirely independent as the majority of independent states in the Colony. It is true that as a result of the Gonja conference of 1923 they rather reluctantly agreed to make certain small customary presents to Yabum. I am of the opinion that this was not an admission of Yabum's sovereignty but had a religious significance. There is no doubt that this custom had been dropped many years before the 1923 conference, and after that was only occasionally observed after pressure by the District Commissioners on the complaint of Yabum.⁶⁶

As far as Nawuri-Gonja relations were concerned, the 1923 Conference marked the first step in the process towards the inclusion of Alfai in the Gonja kingdom. The Conference was attended by Kanankulaiwura Mahama Karatu, who used the opportunity to meet with other Gonja chiefs for the first time. To the Gonja, the Kanankulaiwura's attendance of the Conference was an admission of the sovereignty of the Yabumwura over Alfai and, by extension, of his allodial rights in Alfai lands. It was on the basis of this assumption that the Kanankulaiwura Mahama Karatu initiated steps for the eventual absorption of Alfai into the Gonja kingdom.

The discussions at the Conference had forebodings for Alfai.⁶⁷ The first was Gonja claims to Nchumuru which foreshadowed their intentions towards Alfai. They asked for the inclusion of Nchumuru lands in the Gonja District, which were at the time in the Kete-Krachi District.⁶⁸ In the discussion that ensued, the colonial officers explained "with some difficulty by examples ... that at the present time no Mandated Territory land could be alienated owing to the fact that the Government only held the mandate for this land, under the League of Nations, and had to obey the rules laid down

⁶⁶ PRAAD (Accra) ADM 11/1380 Gonja Native Affairs: "A letter from the Provincial Commissioner's Office, to the Secretary for Native Affairs", dated November 11, 1931.

⁶⁷ PRAAD (Accra) ADM 56/1/324 Gonja Conference: "Gonja Conference held at Yapei, 10th and 11th February 1923.

⁶⁸Ibid, 3.

by that body.”⁶⁹ Though the Gonja chiefs did not make direct claim to Alfai lands, it signaled their intentions to appropriate territories in the Kete-Krachi District with some historical connection, however tenuous, to the Gonja kingdom.

The second issue that foreshadowed the imminent inclusion of Alfai in the Gonja kingdom had to do with Gonja fears about the possible loss of the Kpembewura’s authority over the Kanankulaiwura if Alfai remained part of the Kete-Krachi District. The Gonja chiefs posed the question: “supposing the Chief Kombe (sic) sent for Alfai, was it necessary for Alfai to send all the way to Krachi to ask permission of the District Commissioner Krachi to visit Kombi (sic), especially as the matter might be important?”⁷⁰ The answer was that in such a scenario the Chief Commissioner should make arrangements with the District Commissioner for the Krachi District to ensure permission.⁷¹ The Nawuri are uncertain whether the Kanankulaiwura took advantage of his regular visits to Kpembe to plot with the Kpembewura to the detriment of Alfai interests.

The 1923 Conference prepared the ground for the 1930 Conference. It established the scheme for the unification of the Gonja kingdom and the renewal of the allegiance of divisional chiefs to the Yabumwura. In 1930 the colonial authorities convened another conference at Yapei to draft a constitution and modes of succession for Gonja. The delay of seven years was necessitated by the long period of time spent by the colonial authorities in propagating the message of unity and deciding firmly on the date of the introduction of indirect rule in the Gonja kingdom.⁷² The 1930 Conference was in session from May 17 to 21. It was organized under the auspices of Duncan Johnstone, the Acting

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² PRAAD, Accra: ADM 11/1/1380 Gonja Native Affairs: “Enquiry into the Constitution and Organisation of the Gbanya Kingdom” (n.d.), 21.

Commissioner for Southern Province, and was attended by a number of Gonja chiefs, including the Kanankulaiwura Mahama Karatu.

One of the key issues raised in connection with the 1930 Conference was about representation for the Nawuri and the Nchumuru as distinct groups.

One account states that the Gonja opposed it, maintaining that the Nawuri representation was through the Kanankulaiwura.⁷³ In effect the Gonja insisted that the Nawuri had no autonomy. Another account maintains that the Nawuri sent their representatives to the Conference, though their names did not appear in the records of the proceedings. The Nawuri dispute that and maintain that they were neither invited nor did they attend or send representatives to the 1930 Conference.

The purpose of the 1930 Conference was to “discuss the constitution and organization of the (Gonja) kingdom with a view to re-instating the chiefs in their original positions, and returning to them a great proportion of the power they had lost at the British occupation.”⁷⁴ Beyond this, the 1930 Conference had other objectives. The Conference was meant to bring the Gonja chiefs together in a stronger and administratively effective kingdom not only in the Gonja Traditional Area, but also in other areas subsumed under Gonja rule.

In addition, the Conference was to consolidate the Gonja kingdom, which had been in a state of atrophy since the 1890s. Indeed, the Kpembe Civil war of 1892-93 had soured the relations between the Singbungwura and the Kanankulaiwura, two sub-divisional chiefs of the Kpembe Division, leaving them in a state of rivalry and mistrust over the question of seniority. Besides, by 1930 the powers of the Yabumwura had

⁷³ Alhaji M.N.D. Jawula, “Oral evidence given to the Ampiah Committee of Inquiry into the Gonjas, Nawuris and Nanjuros Dispute on October 23, 1991” in Ampiah, *op.cit.*, Part II, 22.

⁷⁴ PRAAD, Accra: ADM 11/1/1380 Gonja Native Affairs: “Enquiry into the Constitution and Organisation of the Gbanya Kingdom” (n.d.), 1.

diminished as divisional chiefs failed to pay him allegiance. Braimah and Goody affirm that:

the centralized state [of the Gonja] established by conquest gradually gave way to a federation of locally autonomous divisions under the overlordship of the Yagbumwura of Nyanga, a process which began with the death of Abbas ... in May 1709.⁷⁵

The Yapei Conference of 1930 was significant because it made far-reaching decisions. It resolved the impasse between the Kanankulaiwura and the Singbungwura. It was at the Conference that the Yabumwura “settled the question of seniority once and for all and [declared] that Kanankulai (sic) took precedence of Sunbung”.⁷⁶

The Conference affected the relations between the Nawuri and the Gonja. Of singular significance was the Conference’s *de jure* recognition of Alfai as an integral part of the Gonja kingdom. The colonial authorities agreed at the Conference that Nawuri and Nchumuru lands under Kete-Krachi District be carved out from that district and added to the newly constituted Gonja District. By endorsing the integration of Alfai with the Gonja kingdom in the interest of administrative expediency, the Conference laid the foundation for Gonja appropriation of the allodial title to Alfai land. In addition, it consigned the Nawuri to a subject status and made the Gonja the ruling group in Alfai.

⁷⁵ J.A. Braimah and J.R. Goody, *op.cit.*, vi. A number of factors accounted for the decline in the authority of the Yabumwura. This was partly due to the division of the Gonja kingdom into different administrative districts. Also see R.B. Bening, “Foundations of the Modern Native States of Northern Ghana” in *Universitas* 1975, New Series, Vol. 4, No. 2, 117-137. According to Bening, the Yabumwura, paramount chief of the Gonja, was relegated to the background and held in low esteem due to the division of the Gonja territory into two separate parts with the “Volta as the boundary and with little contact between these areas, and the Yagbungwura ... [Consequently] the chiefs of Bole and Kpembe (near Salaga) virtually became the rulers of Western and Eastern Gonja respectively while the Daboya area of Gonja was merged with the Tamale District to provide enough carriers for the conveyance of goods landed by boat at Yapei to Tamale.” Largely, however, it was due to the fact that the five great Gonja divisions, for a longer time, exercised authority as entirely independent divisions. In addition, the various smaller chiefs or sub-divisions did not “fully serve one or other of the big Five, although this is probably an evolution of time resultant on weakness caused by internecine warfare and slave raids.” It was not until the Conference was convened that the various Gonja sub-chiefs renewed their allegiance to the Yabumwura by signing a “document setting forth their desire to serve the Yabumwura as their overlord and chief of a united Gbanya (Gonja) state.” See, PRAAD (Accra) ADM 11/1/1380 Gonja Native Affairs: Letter from the Secretary for Native Affairs to the Commissioner for the Southern Province, dated October 3, 1931, 8.

⁷⁶ PRAAD (Accra) ADM 11/1/1380 Gonja Native Affairs: Letter from the Secretary for Native Affairs to the Commissioner for the Southern Province, dated October 3, 1931, 1.

Thus the fate of the Nawuri in all issues concerning their land and administration was placed entirely in the hands of the Gonja.

Admittedly, provisions were made at the Conference for the *teindanas* of the Nawuri and the Nchumuru in the Kpembe Division of Eastern Gonja to settle land cases locally. Indeed, three of them were to be appointed to sit on the tribunal of the Kpembe Division. In practice, however, the Gonja assumed authority over the adjudication of land disputes.⁷⁷ As overlords of the Nawuri, the Gonja claimed allodial rights to Alfai land, and the right of control over the distribution and utilization of parcels of land. With the inclusion of Alfai in the Gonja kingdom, the Nawuri lost their autonomy and their rights to allodial title and distribution of land in Alfai.

The 1930 Conference gave considerable power to the Yabumwura and his sub-chiefs over areas and subjects brought under Gonja rule. It bestowed on the Gonja ruling class a considerable amount of power, which allowed them to exercise a measure of their “old jurisdiction and settle civil and criminal cases in their own courts.”⁷⁸ At the same time, the Yabumwura and his Divisional chiefs were warned against exercising power bestowed on them arbitrarily and for their personal benefit.⁷⁹ The general feeling at the Conference was that though the Gonja Divisional chiefs still gave their allegiance to the Yabumwura,

both he and they had lost much of their ancient power, and had indeed become nothing more than figureheads, leaving the administration of their country almost entirely in the hands of the District Commissioners.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ See chapter five.

⁷⁸ PRAAD (Accra) ADM 11/1/1380 Gonja Native Affairs: Letter from the Secretary for Native Affairs to the Commissioner for the Southern Province, dated October 3, 1931, 3.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

Finally, the Yapei Conference of 1930 was significant because it succeeded in streamlining the rules of succession and lines of claimants eligible to ascend the Yabum Skin, listing the precedence of Divisional chiefs, and establishing the list of Divisional chiefs eligible for election to the Yabum Skin. The Conference also established a list of councillors for the Gonja Traditional Council. In short, the Conference drew up a constitution for the Gonja kingdom, and succeeded in bringing sanity into the modes of succession in the Gonja kingdom.

As a follow-up to the 1930 Conference, another conference was held at Yapei in 1932. Thirty-three Gonja chiefs, including the Kanankulaiwura, attended the 1932 Conference.⁸¹ Four issues constituted the agenda: confirmation of documents signed in the 1930 Conference, resolution of the land dispute between Bole and Tuluwe, the introduction of taxation, and the future headquarters of the Gonja kingdom.⁸² Of these, two, the issue of taxation and the question of the future headquarters of the Gonja kingdom, took prominence in the deliberations of the Conference. Chiefs were informed of the imminent introduction of taxation and were educated on its mode and their responsibilities.

On the question of the future headquarters of the Gonja kingdom, the Gonja chiefs declined the proposal of the colonial officials to move it from Nyanga to Yapei, claiming that their headquarters “had always been at Yanga (sic) ... [though] Yapei was nearer and much easier to get to for those living in Eastern Gbanya (Gonja).”⁸³

As far as the future status of Nawuri-Gonja relations was concerned, the most important issue discussed at the 1932 Conference was taxation. The discussions about

⁸¹ PRAAD (Accra) ADM 11/1/1380 Gonja Native Affairs: Letter from the Chief Commissioner to the Secretary for Native Affairs, dated April 18, 1932.

⁸² PRAAD (Accra) ADM 11/1/1380 Gonja Native Affairs: “Gbanya Division Conference of Chiefs Held at Yapei on 28th and 29th March, 1932”, 1.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 4.

taxation were not only about the liability of subjects placed under the Gonja; Gonja chiefs were to be empowered to collect the taxes from their subjects. While most of the chiefs at the Conference expressed misgivings about the introduction of taxes, Kananklaiwura Mahama Karatu enthusiastically extolled the idea.⁸⁴ He emphasized that there was no problem paying taxes to the British colonial government, for, after all, “he and his people had paid taxes in the German times, every young man ... had to pay six shillings and there was no bother about paying.”⁸⁵

In conclusion, two points need to be emphasized about the Yapei conferences. The first is that the Yapei Conference of 1930 is positively remembered for drawing a constitution for the Gonja. At the same time, it is notorious for laying the foundation of the subsequent Gonja claim to allodial rights in Alfai through its decision to place Alfai under Gonja rule for the sake of the successful implementation of the system of indirect rule. This was achieved with the apparent connivance of the colonial government as suggested by the concluding remarks of Duncan Johnstone’s Report:

in conclusion I would like to bring to your notice the very excellent work performed by Mr. A.W. Cardinall and Captain E.F. Burn. Were it not for the patient preliminary spade performed by these Officers in touring Districts, spreading propaganda and obtaining confidence of their Chiefs, and without the excellent notes made by Mr. Cardinall on the Gonja Constitution and Customs, the Conference would not have been the complete success that it was and I could not have written this report. In conclusion I should like to emphasise the importance of striking while the iron is hot, the enthusiasm of the Kagbanya (Gonja) Chiefs is still at white heat ...⁸⁶

Furthermore, as far as Nawuri-Gonja relations were concerned, the Yapei Conference of 1932 was only significant to the extent that it empowered Gonja chiefs (including the Kanankulaiwura) to collect taxes from the Nawuri. It was these payments

⁸⁴ Ibid, 8.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ PRAAD, Accra: ADM 11/1|1380 Gonja Native Affairs: “Enquiry into the Constitution and Organisation of the Gbanya Kingdom” (n.d.), 21.

of taxes, as shall be discussed in chapter five, that gave an economic dimension to the wrangles between overlord and subject, between the Gonja and the Nawuri.

3.6 The Amalgamation Policy

In the view of the British colonial authorities, the Northern Territories comprised a multiplicity of native states, most of which were too tiny to be administered as viable districts. In order to ensure the efficiency of the system of indirect rule, the colonial authorities decided to reconfigure them. The tiny states were amalgamated with the bigger states, thus placing the people of the smaller states under the rule of the chiefs of the relatively bigger states. For example, the Nawuri and the Nchumuru, hitherto autonomous peoples, were placed under Gonja Native Authority with the Yabumwura of Gonja as their overlord.

After completing all processes, indirect rule was finally introduced in the Northern Territories in 1932. This was accompanied by a re-defining of districts and traditional boundaries. Traditional boundaries were redefined to make them coterminous with, and tangential to, administrative boundaries of districts. The number of the districts was reduced from eleven to six to ensure that their boundaries coincided with those of the Native Authority Areas.

The six districts were Mamprusi, Dagomba, Gonja, Wala, Lawra-Tumu and Krachi Districts.⁸⁷ It was hoped that the redefinition of the districts would remove the obstacle to

⁸⁷ The Mamprusi District consisted of the Mamprusi state, Kasena-Nankani, Builsa and Kusasi areas. Dagomba District was made up of the Dagomba state, Nanum state as well as the lands of the Konkomba and Chakosi. The Gonja District consisted of the Gonja kingdom and the lands of Nawuri and Nchumuru. Wala District was made up of Wala, Sisala, Lobi and Dagarba areas while the Lawra-Tumu District was made up of the areas of Lawra (much of which was Sisala), Nandom, Jirapa, Lambussie and Tumu. The Krachi District was made up of the Krachi, Adele and Achode areas. For details see, NRG8/3/53 Report on the Northern Territories for the Year 1935-1936, 28-52; Report on the Northern Territories for the Year 1936-1937 (Balme Library, University of Ghana), 18-49

the development of local government which the imposition of artificial international boundaries presented.⁸⁸ The tiny states in the Northern Section of British Togoland were subsumed under the bigger ones. In this light the traditional boundaries of tiny states such as Nawuri, Nchumuru, Kusasi, Chakosi and Konkomba were obliterated as they were subsumed under the bigger ones. The report on British Togoland for 1932 showed that the Northern Section of British Togoland was reorganized as follows:

Mamprusi – all the land lying within the Northern section subject to the Na of Mamprusi and occupied by the Kusasi, B'mowba and Konkomba tribes. Dagomba – all tribal lands lying within the northern section: subject to the Na of Dagomba; or Belonging to the Konkomba and Chakosi tribes; or Subject to the Na of Nanumba. Gonja – all the tribal lands lying within the northern section: belonging to the Owura of Nchumuru; or belonging to the Nawuri tribe and subject to the chief of Kpandai. Krachi – all lands within the northern section and subject to the Head chiefs of Kete-Krachi, Adele and Adjuati (Achode).⁸⁹

If the British colonial government had applied the confederate system to determine the administration of the newly organized Gonja District as it did for the Lawra area, perhaps the seeds of discord which ultimately led to the Nawuri-Gonja conflict would obviously not have been sown.⁹⁰ The reasons why the British colonial government amalgamated Alfai with the Gonja kingdom are not far-fetched. In the first place, it was to actualize the colonial government's dream of indirect rule. As it has already been pointed out, amalgamation was intended to solve the problem of plurality of states in the Northern Territories in order to facilitate the introduction of indirect rule. By 1918, that is fourteen years before the introduction of indirect rule in 1932, the British colonial government

⁸⁸NRG8/3/53 Report of the Northern Territories for the Year 1935-1936, 7.

⁸⁹ Colonial Report on British Togoland for the year ended 1932, 6-7.

⁹⁰ Faced with the problem of establishing a large centralized state in the Lawra area of present day Upper West Region of Ghana, the colonial government created the Lawra Confederacy for the four equal divisions of Lawra, Jirapa, Nandom and Lambussie. Under the arrangement, the presidency of the confederacy rotated from one division to the other. It was envisaged that if the colonial government had created a confederate state for the Gonja, Nawuri and the Nchumuru, the Nawuri-Gonja conflict would not have arisen. Unlike the Lawra Confederacy, the Nawuri and the Nchumuru were simply subjugated to the Gonja, and imposed the Kanankulaiwura and the Singbunwura, Gonja sub-chief chiefs in the Kpembe Division on the Nawuri and Nchumuru respectively. For details of the Lawra Confederacy, see: Lentz, C., *op.cit.*, 108.

had decided to institute an amalgamation policy to unite divided states, create larger ones or reflect the wishes of the people.⁹¹

Furthermore, the amalgamation of Alfai with the Gonja kingdom was based on misrepresentations made to the colonial officials by the Gonja. As far back as 1915, Kanankulaiwura Mahama Karatu claimed that Alfai was a division of the Gonja kingdom.⁹² This claim was reported by Furley in his memorandum of the wishes of the peoples of Togoland.⁹³ On another occasion, the Kanankulaiwura misrepresented the facts to the colonial authorities by claiming that his position as the “Head-chief of the Nawuri Tribe” rather than of the Gonja, was a German creation, and that he and his people were undoubtedly Gonja and that they wished to renew their allegiance to the Kpembewura.⁹⁴ Besides, there were instances when Gonja chiefs assumed a Nawuri ethnic identity or posed as Nawuri chiefs for the various Nawuri settlements in Alfai. For example, on February 23, 1918, the Secretary for Native Affairs met with the chiefs of the “Nawuri Division” (Alfai).⁹⁵ The names of the chiefs of the various Nawuri settlements in attendance were not Nawuri names but those of the Gonja. The Gonja posed as chiefs of the various Nawuri settlements in Alfai to the extent that a Gonja from Kalende, a village near Kpembe (which is about sixty kilometres away from Alfai), also

⁹¹ PRAAD (Accra), ADM 11/11/1621 Enquiry on the Sphere of Occupation in Togoland: “Memorandum with Reference to the Wishes of the Togoland Natives as to the Future Administration of their Country by the Chief Commissioner for the Northern Territories, 10th January 1918”; PRAAD (Accra) 56/1/258 Minutes of a Conference Held at Tamale, dated March 11, 1921, 1-2; PRAAD ADM 56/1/258 The Occupation of Yendi: “Minutes of Conference at Tamale, March 11th, 1921”, 3-4.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ PRAAD (Accra) ADM 11/1/162 Enquiry on the Sphere of Occupation in Togoland: “Memorandum with Reference to the Wishes of the Togoland Natives as to the Future Administration of their Country” by the Chief Commissioner for the Northern Territories, 10th January 1918”, 3.

⁹⁴ PRAAD (Accra) ADM 11/1/1621 Enquiry on the Sphere of Occupation in Togoland: “Memorandum with Reference to the Wishes of the Togoland Natives as to the Future Administration of their Country” by the Chief Commissioner for the Northern Territories, 10th January 1918”, 3.

⁹⁵ PRAAD (Accra) ADM 11/1/1622 Notes of Statements Taken Before SNA on Tour in Togoland and Enclaves, 26th January 1918-, 14th March 1918, 55.

attended the meeting and posed as a Nawuri chief.⁹⁶ There is no evidence that the Gonja chiefs claimed Nawuri ethnic identity. Nonetheless, in such situations, Gonja misrepresentation of the historical facts to the Secretary for Native Affairs (SNA) was a distinct possibility. It was not surprising that Kanankulaiwura Mahama Karatu was reported to have made the following claims:

we are under Salaga for a very long time. I belong to Salaga. I am a prince of Salaga. My father is Chief of Pembi (Kpembe). He sent me from Salaga to look after this country. For myself I say my father has been under the English for a long time, and I want to be under the English too. The first time there was no boundary and we were under the English. When the boundary was made we were given to the Germans ... we like to be English and follow our father at Pembi (Kpembe) again. We liked the English before and we like to be under them again. I myself only came here just before the war.⁹⁷

The quotation contains three misrepresentations. The first is the claim of Alfai's subjection to Kpembe from the pre-colonial times; the second is that before the Anglo-German boundary was fixed in 1899 Alfai was under the British; and the third is that the Nawuri preferred to be under the English. Kanankulaiwura Mahama Karatu's claims are false, to say the least. Alfai's subjection to Kpembe was a product of Nawuri-Gonja political encounters in the pre-colonial times⁹⁸; neither was it under British control prior to the establishment of the Anglo-German boundary, but rather it formed part of the Netural Zone.⁹⁹ Given the representation of the Gonja in the meeting, it was more likely that they, rather than the Nawuri, expressed the willingness to be under the British and be

⁹⁶Ibid. The names of the chiefs of the "Nawuri Division" as contained on the list were: "Headchief Mahama of Kpandae; Chief Kweku Kadja of Katiejeli; Kasiku represented by Owusu of Kabonwule; Chief Kpebu of Kpladgai [Bladjai] (Abrewonko); Chief Alfai of Beyim; Chief Ekomo represented by Memoru of Balai; Chief Hishebo represented by Idi of Kalende (Kpimarima); Chief Kunkuni represented by Dari of Nkanchina (Nkanchina); and Chief Taninsa of Dodope." With the exception of perhaps names such as Kpebu and Dari, which appeared to be Nawuri, all other names listed are either Gonja or unknown. In such instances, it was obvious that the meeting with the SNA would turn into a "Gonja affair."

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ For details, see chapter two of this study.

⁹⁹ For details, see page 70 of this chapter.

united with the Gonja kingdom as they did earlier.¹⁰⁰ Kanankulaiwura Mahama Karatu's claim showed how the Gonja used flattery and distortion of Nawuri-Gonja history to take advantage of the new opportunities offered.¹⁰¹ Such inventions of Nawuri-Gonja history were replicated in other reports.¹⁰² In short, the misrepresentations distorted the pre-colonial Nawuri-Gonja history by denying Nawuri autochthonous rights, their allodial titles to Alfai, and their origin.¹⁰³

In 1932, Alfai and Nchumuru lands under the Kete-Krachi District were carved out and added to the Gonja District. The report on the British Sphere of Togoland for 1932 contained information about the absorption of Alfai and Nchumuru lands in the Gonja District. It read:

the area of the Krachi district has been reduced by the removal from it of the lands belonging to the Nchumuru and Nawuri tribes with populations, in round figures, of nine hundred and two thousand, six hundred respectively.¹⁰⁴

The quotation signified that allodial rights to lands in Alfai and Nchumuru territories belonged to the Nawuri and Nchumuru, respectively, but not to the Gonja, and that the territories were added to the Gonja District for reason of administrative expediency. The absorption of Alfai into the Gonja District was the defining moment in the history of Nawuri-Gonja relations. It sowed the seeds of discord between the Nawuri and the Gonja in a number of ways. It established power relations between the Nawuri and the Gonja by making the latter the overlords of the former. It defined the relations between the Gonja and the Nawuri in Alfai as one between the "ruler" and the "ruled", respectively.

¹⁰⁰ PRAAD (Accra) ADM 11/1/1621 Report of Enquiry on the Sphere of Occupation in Togoland: "Memorandum with Reference to the Wishes of the Togoland Natives as to the Future Administration of their Country" by the Chief Commissioner of the Northern Territories, 10th January 1918, 3.

¹⁰¹ For the pre-colonial Nawuri-Gonja history, see chapter two of this study.

¹⁰² For details, see PRAAD (Accra) ADM 11/1380 Gonja Native Affairs; PRAAD (Accra) 56/1/240 Gonja Native Affairs; Colonial Report on British Sphere of Togoland for the year 1932, 10.

¹⁰³ For the pre-colonial history of the Nawuri and Gonja, see chapter two.

¹⁰⁴ Colonial Report of British Togoland of 1932, 10.

By the new administrative arrangement, the Nawuri completely lost their autonomy. They were simply absorbed into the Gonja kingdom as subjects. Hence they were compelled to recognize the authority of the Yabumwura of the Gonja and his sub-chiefs as their overlord, and pay allegiance to them. Consequently, the Kanankulaiwura and his Gonja sub-chiefs in Alfai assumed a high profile as opposed to the Nawuriwura and his sub-chiefs. This arrangement was the precursor of the later antagonism between the Kanankulaiwura and the Nawuriwura over seniority.¹⁰⁵ The new administrative arrangements set the Nawuri and the Gonja on a collision course over allodial rights to Alfai land.

Colonialism led to the evolution of new modes of allodial rights in Alfai which inured to the benefit of the Gonja. As overlords, the Gonja served as the legal guardians of Alfai land. They also arrogated to themselves the right to allocate parcels of land to immigrants. As Dixon pointed out:

briefly, therefore, the relationship between the Gonjas and the Nawuris in the matter of land is that the Gonjas have not interfered with tribal ownership but have, on the lines of modern state, assumed the right to control immigration and to act as the legal guardians of the Alfai land.¹⁰⁶

Overtime, a notion of Gonja allodial rights in Alfai derived from these functions emerged. This led to series of encounters between the Nawuri and the Gonja over allodial rights in Alfai in the colonial and post-colonial times. The battle lines were henceforth drawn for the political, social and economic confrontations that ensued in the area from 1932 to 1991.

¹⁰⁵ For details, see chapter four.

¹⁰⁶ Dixon, *op.cit.*, 25.

3.7 Conclusion

A number of key conclusions emerge from this chapter. The first is that German rule led to a vacuum in Nawuri traditional polity as their chiefs deserted their villages on hearing of the advances of German officials. This created conditions for German recognition of Kanankulaiwura Mahama Karatu as the overlverlord of Alfai, whose recognition laid the foundation for Gonja rule in the area, which was later consolidated by the British.

Second, the Yapei conferences altered the relations between the Nawuri and the Gonja as they absorbed Alfai into the Gonja kingdom, turned the Nawuri from an autonomous people into Gonja subjects, empowered the Gonja over the Nawuri. As overlords of Alfai, the Gonja claimed allodial rights to Alfai land and established Gonja rule over the Nawuri.

The chapter has also shown that Gonja misrepresentations of Alfai and the principle of administrative expediency, rather than Gonja annexation of Alfai in the pre-colonial times, explain why the British colonial authorities amalgamated Alfai with the Gonja kingdom in 1932.

Finally, the amalgamation of Alfai with the Gonja kingdom transformed the relationship between the Nawuri and the Gonja into one of “ruler” and “ruled”, and led to the loss of Nawuri autonomy and control over their ancestral lands. It laid the foundation for the antagonism between the Nawuri and the Gonja over allodial rights to Alfai lands, which expressed itself subsequently in political, social and economic spheres.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE POLITICAL CAUSES OF THE NAWURI-GONJA CONFLICT

4.0 Introduction

In intellectual discourses on conflicts in Northern Ghana, whether inter-ethnic or intra-ethnic, the root causes have invariably been traced to the colonial enterprise.¹ While the root causes of the conflicts in Northern Ghana may be justifiably blamed on colonialism, the intellectual discourse on these conflicts cannot ignore the roles of chieftaincy, ethnic identity, struggle for autonomy and allodial ownership of lands, especially in post-colonial conflicts. The Nawuri-Gonja conflict of 1991 and 1992 was an illustration of the extent to which the question of land ownership pervaded local government arrangements, chieftaincy, social and other economic issues.

This chapter investigates the political causes of the Nawuri-Gonja conflict in the light of colonial and post-colonial events. It seeks to underline the causes of the conflict in so far as they relate to internal politics of the Alfai Native Authority, the Alfai Local Council, chieftaincy disputes, and the politics of the Togoland Question. All these were dominated by the wrangle over autonomy of and allodial rights in Alfai.

4.1 The Alfai Native Authority and Nawuri-Gonja Confrontations

In the previous chapter, it was pointed out that in 1932 Alfai was amalgamated with the Gonja kingdom. As part of the local government structure, the Yabumwura of

¹ For more details, see N.J.K. Brukum, *The Guinea-Fowl, Mango and Pito Wars: Episodes in the History of Northern Ghana, 1980-1999*. (Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 2001); N.J.K. Brukum, "Ethnic Conflicts in Northern Ghana" in *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* (Hereafter, THSG), Nos. 4 & 5, 2000-2001, 131-147; N.J.K. Brukum, "Chieftaincy and Ethnic Conflicts in Northern Region of Ghana, 1980-2002" in Steve Tonah ed., *Ethnicity, Conflicts and Consensus in Ghana* (Accra: Woeli Publishing Services), 2007, 98-115; N.J.K. Brukum, 1995; "Ethnic conflict in Northern Region of Ghana. A study of the Gonja District, 1980-1994" in M. Oquaye ed., *Democracy, Politics and Conflict Resolution in Contemporary Ghana* (Accra: Gold-Type Publications Ltd.), 138-153.

Gonja and his Council were appointed by an Order No. 11 of 1933 as the Native Authority for the lands subject to the Yabumwura of Gonja. Such lands were defined as situated within the Northern Territories and within the Northern Section of Togoland under British Mandate.² By Order No. 19 of 1933, the Gonja Divisional Native Treasury was established for the Gonja Division at Bole in the West of the Division.³ Nyanga, the headquarters of the Native Authority, was far removed from the settlements in East Gonja. In order to avoid over centralization and ensure smooth administration, the Gonja Native Authority, like those of Mamprusi, Wala and Dagomba, was divided into subordinate Native Authorities, and a gradation of Tribunals established. The Yabumwura's Tribunal was designated as a Grade I Tribunal; Divisional chiefs' Tribunal as Grade II, and sub-Divisional chiefs' Tribunals as Grade III. The Yabumwura's Tribunal was established at Nyanga while the Grade II Tribunals were established in the divisions of Kong, Bole, Buipe, Kande, Kusawgu, Kpembe, Tuluwe and Daboya. In Alfai, a Grade III Tribunal was established.⁴ These courts possessed:

defined civil jurisdiction over civil actions of debt, demand and damages, suits for divorce and other matrimonial causes, suits to establish the paternity of children and suits relating to the succession to property, and in addition ... hear suits relating to the ownership of land.⁵

Under the local government arrangement, Alfai was placed under the Kpembe Division; and an Order No. 13 of 1933 appointed the Kpembewura and his Council as a subordinate Native Authority for the Division.⁶ A sub-treasury for the Kpembe Division

² As quoted in Dixon, *op. cit.*, 14.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ For details, see: PRAAD (Accra) ADM 11/1380 Gonja Native Affairs: "List of Tribunals."

⁵ PRO (London) CO96/790/3 Report to the United Nations: "Administration of Togoland", 65.

⁶ Dixon, *op.cit.*, 14.

was later established at Alfai as a branch of the main treasury. The Alfai Native Authority was established as a sub-divisional tribunal of the Kpembe Division.

Membership of the tribunals was spelt out in the provisions. They were largely made up of the Gonja ruling class, but provision was made for representation for subordinate ethnic groups. The president of the Alfai Native Authority was the Kanankulaiwura, the Gonja head chief in Kpandai. Other members of the tribunal included Dusaiwura, Njarewura, Bladjaiwura, Mbowura of Kpandai, the Kasewura (Asasewura) of Kpandai, Wuriche (Gonja Queen Mother of Kpandai), and the Asasewura of Balai.⁷ The Nawuri were given three seats in the tribunal, but they refused to occupy them in protest against the appointment of the Kanankulaiwura as the president.⁸ The Nawuri argue that in the 1930s, the Gonja enskinned ethnic Gonja chiefs for Bladjai and Njare and they occupied their seats in the local government. The remaining three Nawuri seats were occupied by Konkomba and Bassari political leaders.⁹

The skewed representation on the Alfai Native Authority caused bad blood between the Gonja and the Nawuri. The Gonja justified the composition of the Alfai

⁷ PRAAD (Accra) ADM 11/1380 Gonja Native Affairs: "Tribunals of the Gbanya State." The Dusaiwura was the Gonja chief in Katiejeli, and the Wureche, the Gonja queenmother in Alfai. The titles "Njarewura" and "Bladjaiwura" were political titles of Nawuri chiefs of Njare and Bladjai respectively. Traditionally, the titles of Gonja chiefs in Alfai were not derived from the names of the settlements in the area. However, for reasons of increasing Gonja representation in the Alfai Native Authority, parallel Gonja chiefs were enskinned for Njare and Bladjai with the titles Njarewura and Bladjaiwura respectively. Ironically, throughout Gonja history in Alfai, there had never been Gonja inhabitations in these settlements. Indeed, the inhabitants of the settlements were essentially Nawuri. The Gonja chiefs became more or less absentee chiefs, who had never been to or known the settlements which were about thirty kilometers (in the case of Bladjai) or fifty kilometers (in the case of Njare) away from Kpandai, the headquarter town of Alfai where the Gonja resided. The Gonja styled-chiefs Njarewura and Bladjaiwura occupied the seats in the Alfai Native Authority, thus denying the legitimate Nawuri chiefs of those settlements. Three seats were, however, reserved for the Nawuri for the Mbowura (war captain) of the Nawuri of Kpandai, Asasewura (tindana) of Kpandai, and the Asasewura (tindana) of Balai.

⁸ These were the seats for the Njarewura, Bladjaiwura, Mbowura of Kpandai, Asasewura of Kpandai and Asasewura of Balai.

⁹ Nana Akatayin Lampo, Oblisa of Bladjai [personal communication], December 15, 2011. Historically, there were no ethnic Gonja chiefs in Alfai except in Kpandai and Katiejeli. Indeed, there were no Gonja inhabitants in these two settlements. The inhabitants of the settlements were essentially belonged to the Nawuri and Konkomba ethnic groups. The Gonja enskinment of ethnic Gonja chiefs for Njare and Bladjai in the 1930s had no precedence.

Native Authority on the basis of their historical rule over the Nawuri, and their allodial ownership of Alfai. They dated their rule over the Nawuri back to pre-colonial times and they argued that they conquered and absorbed Alfai into the Gonja kingdom in the pre-colonial period under Ndewura Jakpa. The Nawuri, on their part, were dissatisfied with the composition of the tribunal as it ignored their position as the autochthones of Alfai. Nawuri political leaders wanted the Alfai Native Authority to be presided over by their head chief, rather than a Gonja chief, and its membership to be dominated by Nawuri chiefs and elders.¹⁰ Consequently, they (the Nawuri) naturally refused to acknowledge the mandate of the Alfai Native Authority and also refused to occupy the three seats reserved for them.

Ominous signs of a smouldering conflict between the Nawuri and the Gonja soon began to appear. Soon after the amalgamation of Alfai and Nchumuru territory with the Gonja kingdom in 1932, two major events cast their shadows over the relations between the Nawuri and the Nchumuru on the one hand, and the Gonja on the other. The first event was a 1935 Nawuri and Nchumuru revolt against the amalgamation policy. The Nawuri and the Nchumuru staged an open revolt against the Gonja aimed at securing autonomy. The revolt began in the Nchumuru settlements and spread to some parts of Alfai. The Gonja blamed the revolt on Nchumuru insubordination, stemming from their greater “enlightenment.” Goody and Braimah describe the Nchumuru as a people enlightened by their travels, especially to Ashanti and the Gold Coast Colony, their experience of how the people lived under modern conditions.¹¹ The colonial report for 1936 attributed the Nchumuru “movement for autonomy” to their desire to serve the

¹⁰Nana Anasinchor Moses, Oblisa of Bladjai [personal communication], December 15, 2011.

¹¹ Braimah and Goody, *op.cit.*, 72-73.

Krachiwura and the Krachi Dente.¹² The Gonja were not oblivious to other reasons, which caused the Nchumuru to seek to renounce their allegiance to them. Mackenzie-Inglis, for instance, reached the conclusion that the Nchumuru revolt was occasioned by the tribute extortions of the Singbungwura, the Gonja sub-chief of the Kpembe Division under whose sub-division the Nchumuru were placed.¹³

The Nchumuru revolt for autonomy turned out to be short-lived. It was crushed by Kpembewura Jawula (1931-1936), who invaded the Nchumuru territory with a party of district security and “at least the tacit support of District Commissioner (Salaga) Guthrie Hall” to compel the Nchumuru to submit to the Gonja.¹⁴ In the process some Nchumuru were murdered while others got drowned in their attempt to flee across River Daka in canoes. The Kpembewura Jawula invaded the Nchumuru territory as far as Wiae, and was heading for Kpandai, the Nawuri capital, to crush the incipient Nawuri revolt when he was recalled by the District Commissioner.¹⁵ Even before the Kpembewura was stopped from proceeding further to Kpandai, the Nawuri had abandoned the revolt when they got news of how the Nchumuru had been crushed. Some of the Nawuri instigators were said to have gone into hiding while others left their settlements in anticipation of invasion by the Kpembewura. The Nawuri took a cue from the failure of Nchumuru revolt for autonomy and decided to remain docile until an opportune time in the future. Though the 1935 revolt was unsuccessful, it left no one in doubt that a state of tension existed between the Nawuri and the Gonja over the

¹²British Colonial Report for 1936, 12. Krachi Dente was a powerful deity of the Krachi. In the pre-colonial times, its fame spread far and wide; that the Nawuri, the Nchumuru, the Krachi and the Gonja worshipped Dente; and that it was the basis of their political alliance.

¹³ As quoted in D.P. Lumsden, “Nchumuru Social Organization and the Impact of the Volta River Project” (University of Cambridge: unpublished PhD Thesis, 1973), 127.

¹⁴ Lumsden, *op.cit.*, 128.

¹⁵Lumsden, *op.cit.* 129. On page 12 of the British Annual Report for 1936, the invasion of the Nchumuru territory by the Kpembewura was dismissed and regarded as merely an investigation into Nchumuru affairs.

subjugation of the former under the terms of the amalgamation of Alfai with the Gonja kingdom.

The second ominous sign of smouldering conflict between the Nawuri and the Gonja developed over the forcible recruitment of Nawuri for World War II. The “rising discord between the Nawuris and the Gonjas came to a climax” in 1943 when the Nawuri were compelled by the Gonja to contribute to the quota of troops demanded from the Yabumwura by the colonial government to assist in Britain’s war efforts.¹⁶ The Nawuri paid him £200 to hire Mossi soldiers in Kumasi Zongo to take their place,¹⁷ but that notwithstanding, the Kpembewura came back to demand recruits from the Nawuri. The Gonja explanation was that many of the Mossi soldiers they had hired and paid in advance proved physically unfit.¹⁸ The Nawuri felt that the Kpembewura had swindled them of £200, and refused to accept liability. The Gonja and the colonial government interpreted the Nawuri position as an act of defiance, and gave the Nawuri the option of migrating from their settlements in the Gonja District to those in the Krachi District on the eastern bank of the Oti River. In anger and frustration, a group of Nawuri attacked the Gonja in Kpandai with clubs and inflicted wounds on them. This created a chaotic situation in Alfai. As war between the Nawuri and the Gonja became imminent, the Kanankulaiwura made a report to the Kpembewura, and T.R Talbot, then District Commissioner for Salaga, visited Kpandai and met the Nawuri and the Gonja.¹⁹ He told the Nawuri that Alfai belonged to the Gonja and ordered them to be either submissive or vacate the area.²⁰ Nana Atorsah, who led the Nawuri delegation, opted for migration from Alfai. Consequently, the Nawuri in Kpandai moved away to the portion of Kitare in

¹⁶ Dixon, *op.cit.*, 15.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 15-16. Also see, Ampiah, *op.cit.*, Part I, 19-20.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Ampiah, *op.cit.*, Part II, 49-50.

²⁰ *Ibid.* He was reported to have said that so long as the Nawuri “stayed on Gonja land, they would have to follow the Gonjas. If they did not want to follow the Gonjas they would have to leave their land for them,” Ampiah, *op.cit.*, part II, 50.

Kete-Krachi District; the Nkanchina Nawuri migrated to Banda in Kete-Krachi District; while a section of the Balai Nawuri moved away to Chifeli in the Nanumba District.

By an agreement supposedly entered into between the Nawuri and the Gonja, the Nawuri were said to have renounced their claim to their land in Alfai.²¹ The Provisional Agreement purported to have been reached between the Nawuri on the one hand and the Gonja and the Krachi on the other, and dated 10th February 1943, read in part:

... from and after the time when we shall have commenced to live on Krachi Native land agree to serve the Krachi Native Authority and to renounce all right and interest in such lands within the Gonja Native Authority Area as we have considered as belonging to us; we will surrender, on leaving Gonja land, all our immovable property to the Gonja Native Authority.²²

The Nawuri denied entering into any such agreement before migrating. They insisted that the said Nawuri signatories listed on the document were impersonators as their thump-prints did not belong to their leaders. The document has many question marks. In the first place, the agreement was described as “provisional,” rather than definitive. It was thus not meant to be final or conclusive. It could be interpreted as conditional upon their remaining in the Krachi District. Their return could nullify the agreement.

Secondly, as the evidence suggests, it was only the Nawuri of Kpandai, Nkanchina and a section of the Balai Nawuri, who migrated to the Krachi District. The Nawuri in other settlements in the Gonja District – Bayim, Dodoai, Katiejeli, Kabonwule, Bladjai, Oprusai and Kitare – did not migrate. Therefore, it would be untenable to conclude that the agreement, if indeed it had a binding force, was binding on the Nawuri as a political community. It would amount to a travesty of justice to

²¹ Dixon, *op.cit.*, 16.

²² PRAAD (Tamale) NRG 8/2/211 Enquiry Regarding the Claims of the Nawuri and Nchumuru: “Provisional Agreement” signed at Banda on 10th February 1943.

extend the effect of an agreement with an unrepresentative minority of Nawuri to a majority who were not a party to it.

The agreement appears to have been drafted by a Gonja, but not R.K. Talbot, then District Commissioner for Salaga, as was suggested. This deduction can be made from the mis-spelling of the word “Nawuri.” In almost all records, the colonial authorities, and the Nawuri themselves, always referred to the Nawuri ethnic group as “Nawuris.” The Gonja, by contrast, referred to them as “Nawuras.”²³ The use of the Gonja version creates the suspicion that the document was authored by the Gonja.

Besides, the District Commissioner was privy to the events leading to the migration of the Nawuri from Alfai, and yet one looks in vain for mention of the agreement in an official report. Strange to say no reference of it exists in the Annual Report on British Togoland for 1943 or in any of the colonial records.²⁴ To date, the only record of the agreement is the Gonja copy, which was produced before Dixon in 1955. It was likely that the agreement never took place and that the document was fictitiously created by the Gonja.

In doubting the authenticity of the document, it is significant to point out that it only expressed the intent of abandonment by the supposed signatory Nawuri. As Ampiah puts it:

whatever may be the legal force of the “agreement” there is no doubt that it did express the intentions of the signatories to leave the Gonja

²³ For details see documents in PRAAD (Tamale) NRG 8/2/211 Enquiry Regarding the Claims of the Nawuri and Nchumuru; PRAAD (Tamale) NRG8/2/210 Nawuri and Nanjuro (NTs) under United Nations Trusteeship. It is important to note that except in cases when the colonial authorities relied on Gonja Government Agents for information about the Nawuri and Alfai in general, the colonial authorities referred to the Nawuri as an ethnic group as “Nawuris”. On occasions that the colonial authorities relied on the Gonja for their report on the Nawuri, they referred to the Nawuri as “Nawura”. They also used Gonja words such as *Kigbriwura* (fetish priest), *Enemu* (Elder) instead of their Nawuri equivalents to refer to Nawuri personalities.

²⁴ Ampiah, *op.cit.*, Part II, 50. According to the Gonja the document was prepared by the District Commissioner and executed by the parties before him. Three copies of the document were prepared, one for the Gonja, one for the Nawuri and one for the District Commissioner.

Native Authority for good and all; and had the Nawuris adhered to it present day troubles might not have arisen.²⁵

The import is that the Nawuri, if indeed they signed the agreement, did not carry out their threat to “leave the Gonja Native Authority for good and all.”

The Nawuri self-exiles lived in the Kete-Krachi and Nanumba Districts for only five years, that is, until about 1948. According to the Gonja, a delegation of about seven Nawuri chiefs and elders led by Kojo Balai and accompanied by the Kpembewura’s Linguist went to Damango in 1948 to plead with the Yabumwura to allow their return. The Yabumwura was alleged to have agreed to their plea, permitted them to return to Alfai and imposed a fine on them.²⁶ A document was allegedly prepared to that effect by J.A. Braimah, then Clerk to the Gonja Native Authority. Triplicates of the document were said to have been signed by the Nawuri with a copy each kept by the Yabumwura, Kpembewura and the Nawuri, but no record of it exists in the Yabumwura’s palace or in Gonja archives and the national archives. In addition, both the Gonja and the Nawuri could not produce copies of it before Dixon in 1955; neither could copies be made available to the Alhassan Committee of 1978 nor the Ampiah Committee of Inquiry of 1991. As in the case of the 1943 document, the 1948 document acknowledging the return of the Nawuri to Alfai appears to be fictitious. Besides, it was reported that the Kpembewura informed Mr. Syme, the District Commissioner for Salaga at the time, of the execution of the document for the return of the Nawuri.²⁷ However, Syme did not make any reference to it in any of his records.

The exile and subsequent return of the Nawuri had a number of effects. The exile brought the issue of allodial rights in Alfai lands to the fore. It created the impression in government circles that the Nawuri had renounced all rights and interests in their land in

²⁵ Ampiah, *op.cit.*, Part I, 20.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, Part II, 51.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

Alfai within the Gonja Native Authority. The effect of that myth which was perpetuated was that the Gonja evinced themselves that they owned allodial rights in Alfai land.²⁸

The migration episode intensified the rising discord between the Nawuri and the Gonja, and made allodial title to Alfai land the central issue of the wrangle between the two ethnicities. It diminished further the political influences of Nawuri chieftains as the Gonja used it as a pretext to seize their chieftaincies.²⁹ According to the Nawuri, the Gonja took advantage of their exile and usurped the chieftaincy positions in their settlements of Kpandai, Nkanchina and Jadigbe (Bayim). Dixon belittles the Nawuri claim by alleging that they did not have chiefs in the aforementioned settlements before their exile.³⁰ Rather, there were headships occupied by Headmen comparable in rank to the Odikro in the Akan areas in the GoldCoast and that the Germans acknowledged their existence in 1913.³¹ The distinction between “Headman” and “chief” arose from British ignorance of the pre-colonial governance structure of the Akan. The word Odikro is a combination of two words, *ode* (he who owns) and *kro* (settlement). The Odikro was thus a chief albeit of the lowest ranking category. He possessed a black stool and in the 1920s some of them in Southern Ghana were authorized by the British to hold courts.

The Nawuri returnees were said to have lived in peace with the Gonja for only a year as they could not countenance Gonja rule. By the “end of 1949 and the beginning of 1950 the Nawuri were planning to migrate to the Krachi District under the Krachiwura.”³² In February 1950, the Nawuri and the Nchumuru jointly petitioned the Trusteeship Council of the United Nations, detailing a number of issues concerning their

²⁸ Dixon, op.cit., p. 16.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ampiah, op.cit., Part II, 20. Also see, Dixon, op.cit., 17; PRAAD (Tamale) NRG 8/2/210 Nawuri and Nanjuro under United Nations Trusteeship: “Resolution Adopted by the People of the Nanjuro and Nawuri in the Kpandai Area of the Trust Territory of Western Togoland at a Meeting Held at Banda on the 8th Day of November, 1950.

plight. The petitioners claimed that they had lost their autochthonous rights and status under Gonja rule; that the Gonja treated them as strangers; that they had been forced to provide free services for the Kanankulaiwura; and that they were compelled to obey native customs contrary to theirs.³³ They demanded a return to the Krachi District, and threatened that they would not pay taxes to the Gonja Native Authority if their demand was not met.³⁴ In its 17th and 20th meetings, the Ad Hoc Committee on Petitions of the United Nations Trusteeship Council examined the petition and adopted a draft resolution, which dismissed the petitioners' allegations and demands.³⁵

While the political leadership of the Nawuri was planning to go into self-exile again by 1950, some Nawuri educated elite were said to have campaigned for acceptance of their subject status under Gonja rule. One Kodjo Police, a Nawuri from Katiejeli, for instance, was alleged to have played a prominent role in this campaign. A letter to this effect dated April 7, 1950, and allegedly written by Kojo Police, was addressed to the Yabumwura. It declared:

we [the Nawuri] have learnt to live with the Gonjas and will not wish for any change of any kind. Our customs have been wedged into that of Gonja and a change of administration will bring a change into our customs. Ref. Section 11 of para. 7 of the Mission's Report which states of a petition having been sent in by the Headman of Nawuras(sic) we should term the petition as surreptitious. A few Nawuras(sic) who have migrated (sic) into the Krachi Area due to a conflict between them and the Kanulaiwura (sic). One of them has put in the petition on behalf of all of us so that we might be drawn into the Krachi Division. We Nawuras(sic) within the Gonja State still cling fast to Gonja and will not wish to be separated from it.³⁶

³³ PRAAD (Tamale) NRG8/2/210 Nawuri and Nanjuro under United Nations Trusteeship: "Ad Hoc Committee on Petitions of the United Nations Trusteeship Council."

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid. It held that the Government had advised it on the issues in Alfai and that the traditional ties of the Nawuri lay with the Gonja; that there were no grounds for considering any change in their position; that there was no evidence whatsoever of any hardship being caused to the Nawuri and the Nchumuru; and that there was no justification for the complaints regarding forced labour.

³⁶ PRAAD (Tamale) NRG 8/2/210 Nawuri and Nanjuro under United Nations Trusteeship: A letter from Kodjoe Police to the Yabumwura through the Kpembewura, dated April 7, 1950.

Question marks have been raised about the petition. The use of the word *Nawuras* to refer to the Nawuri suggests that the petitioner was not a Nawuri. In all the documents relating to Alfai, the Gonja referred to the Nawuri as *Nawuras*, as against *Nawuris* used by the Nawuri and most colonial officials. The obvious inference is that the petitioner was neither Kojo Police nor a Nawuri. Besides, Kojo Police, who was literate and probably wrote the petition himself, was a leading Nawuri critic, rather than a collaborator of Gonja rule in Alfai. Indeed, he was said to have led the Nawuri of Katiejeli to resist Gonja rule, especially Gonja appropriation of Nawuri land. In July 1954, together with Kwaku and three other unnamed Katiejeli Nawuri, Kojo Police challenged the Kanankulaiwura's appropriation of lands in Katiejeli in the Native Court in Salaga.³⁷ The following quotation confirms Kojo Police as a critic of Gonja rule rather than a traitor to the Nawuri cause:

... there is at present a breach of relations between the **Nawuris** and the Gonjas brought by a land dispute ... the plaintiff, well aware of this, has taken a civil action against us at the Gonja Native Court in order to secure a judgement against us, which judgement is bound to be bias and prejudice ... The incident forming the dispute for which the plaintiff is instituting a claim has taken place on **Nawuri land and should therefore not be investigated by the Gonja or Kpembe Court** (emphasis mine).³⁸

³⁷ Motion on Notice in the Matter of “Kanankulaiwura of Gonja (Plaintiff) versus Kojo Police, Philip Kwaku and Three Others of Katiejeli (Defendants)”, dated July 30 1954.

³⁸ Affidavit Sworn by Kojo Police at Salaga, dated on July 30 1954. The quotation illustrates Kojo Police's use of the official plural of Nawuri (Nawuris) and his resistance against Gonja rule in Alfai. Hence it was likely that he was not the petitioner of the 1950 petition named above. The Gonja claim that it was probable the statement was not that of Kojo Police since it was an affidavit.

4.2 The Alfai Local Council and Nawuri-Gonja Confrontations

On November 21, 1951, a Draft Instrument of the Alfai Local Council was published.³⁹ Prior to its publication, the Nawuri had petitioned the government for a majority of seats on the Council on grounds that they were the autochthones of “Nawuriland.” They deplored the Government’s use of overlordship, instead of autochthonous status, as a basis for the allocation of seats on the Alfai Local Council.⁴⁰ A.C. Spooner, the Assistant Chief Commissioner for the Northern Territories, visited Kpandai on December 2 and 3, 1951, to meet with the Nawuri and the Gonja to discuss the Draft Instrument of the Alfai Local Council.⁴¹

The question of the allodial ownership of Alfai lands dominated the discussions at the meeting. Both the Nawuri and the Gonja outlined their respective claims to ownership of Alfai lands. The Nawuri not only demanded the presidency and a majority of seats on the council; they proposed that the council should bear the name of ‘Nawuri Local Council,’ instead of ‘Alfai Local Council.’⁴² Alternatively, they requested that Alfai be carved out of the Gonja District and added to the Krachi-Buem District

³⁹ The Local Government Ordinance, 1951: Instrument Establishing the Alfai Local Council. Also see: Ampiah, *op.cit.*, 22. The Instrument provided for two categories of members on the Council: first, six Traditional Members appointed by the Kanankulaiwura according to customary procedure; second, Representative Members elected by adult suffrage. Furthermore, the Instrument provided that the Council shall consist of seventeen Representative Members and four Traditional Members. The Instrument divided Alfai into twelve wards with representations as follows: Ward A (Balai) one; Ward B (Bladjai) two; Ward C (Buya) two; Ward D (Djadigbe) one; Ward E (Dodoai) one; Ward F (Kabonwule) one; Ward G (Katiejeli) two; Ward H (Kitare) one; Ward I (Kpandai) three; Ward J (Lugni) one; Ward K (Nkanchina) one; and Ward L (Tangelan) one. It also provided that the presidency of the Council shall be occupied by the Kanankulaiwura or by his customary representative if he was unable to attend.

⁴⁰ PRAAD (Tamale) NRG 8/2/210 Nawuri and Nanjuro under United Nations Trusteeship: A Letter from the District Commissioner of the Gonja District to the Chief Commissioner of the Northern Territories, dated October 26, 1951; PRAAD (Tamale) NRG 8/2/210 Nawuri and Nanjuro under United Nations Trusteeship: “Resolution Adopted by the People of Nanjuro and Nawuri in the Kpandai Area of the Trust Territory of Western Togoland at a Meeting Held at Banda on the 8th Day; PRAAD (Tamale) NRG 8/2/210 Nawuri and Nanjuro under United Nations Trusteeship: “Confidential”: A letter from the Governor of the Gold Coast to the Colonial Secretary, London, dated February 24, 1951, 7; PRAAD (Tamale) NRG 8/2/210 Nawuri and Nanjuro under United Nations Trusteeship: Ad Hoc Committee on Petitions of the United Nations Trusteeship Council; PRAAD (Tamale) NRG 8/2/210 Nawuri and Nanjuro under United Nations Trusteeship: “Extract from Draft of the Ad Hoc Committee Petitions of the United Nations Trusteeship Council, Resolution V: Petition from the People of Nanjuro and Nawuri in Kpandai Area. T/PET.6/215.” Also see: Ampiah, *op.cit.*, Part I, 21.

⁴¹ Dixon, *op. cit.*, 49.

⁴² Dixon, *op.cit.*, Appendix XIII, 1.

Council.⁴³ Spooner dismissed the demands of the Nawuri as an attempt to monopolize membership of the proposed Alfai Local Council. He decided that as Alfai was compact, it should be maintained as an administrative unit; that for the sake of administrative expediency the Government should not consider the question of autochthonous status as a basis of the composition of the Alfai Local Council nor institute any enquiry to investigate their claims. He recommended the rejection of Nawuri request because it could lead to resentment among the ruling Gonja family in Alfai.⁴⁴ Spooner's judgement was clearly influenced by administrative expediency rather than the concerns of the autochthonous people of Alfai and history in determining the structure of the Alfai Local Council.

Nana Atorsah, the leader of the Nawuri delegation, insisted that he was the Nawuriwura and senior in rank to the Kanankulaiwura. He was elected and enstooled by the Nawuri as the Nawuriwura according to their custom in October 1951. Like his predecessors, Nana Atorsah was the head chief of the autochthonous Nawuri people. However, he and his predecessors were neither recognized by the British colonial authorities nor gazetted. The local government arrangements in Alfai only recognized Gonja chiefs or any other chiefs recognized by the Gonja Traditional Council. Against this background, the position of a chief of any ethnic group in Alfai was regarded legitimate if he was recognized by the Gonja traditional authority. To the Government, as long as Nana Atorsah was not recognized by the Gonja traditional authority, his position as Nawuriwura was illegitimate. In line with the official colonial administrative procedure for the recognition of chiefs in Alfai, Nana Atorsah's claim that he was senior

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 3.

in rank to the Kanankulaiwura was regarded as baseless. Nawuri attempts to impress on the Government to recognize him failed.⁴⁵

The denial of Nana Atorsah's demands subsequently sparked off a Nawuri riot against Gonja rule on January 22, 1952.⁴⁶ The riot was apparently precipitated by a quarrel between a Gonja boy and a Nawuri girl in the market square in Kpandai against a background of the existing tense political situation in Alfai. The quarrel soon exploded into an inter-ethnic fight between the Gonja and the Nawuri in Kpandai.⁴⁷ It is also suggested that the disturbance broke out because "some malcontents among the Nawuri in opposition to the Kanankulaiwura had moved from Kapiliagi (sic) [Katiejeli] ... and had had a brush with the Chief's (Kanankulaiwura) supporters in Kpandi (sic)."⁴⁸ About twenty people sustained various degrees of injuries at different scenes of fighting.⁴⁹

Coincidentally, Mr. McLaren, the Assistant District Commissioner for Salaga, was in Kpandai on the day of the disturbance, and he took a number of contingency

⁴⁵PRAAD (Tamale) NRG 8/2/210 Nawuri and Nanjuro under United Nations Trusteeship: Letter from Nawuri Elders to the District Commissioner for Salaga, dated October 14, 1951. The document read, in part: "we the undersigned, Elders of the Nawuri Land having gathered on Sunday, at Katiejeli, to elect our Chief for the proper administration of our Land (Nawuri), have this day elected, by popular election of the Nawuris, our accredited and popularly elected CHIEF for all the Nawuri Land, LUDJAI NAWURI. The said LUDJAI NAWURI, owing to old age has relegated his election as Chief of the Nawuris to the next popularly accepted CANDIDATE, ATORSA NAWURI. Therefoer (sic), by popular consent CHIEF ATORSA NAWURI has been elected CHIEF OF THE NAWURI LAND this 14th day of October, 1951, taking the place of LUDJAI NAWURI ... Therefore, it has been agreed upon by the populace that Sunday, the 28th of October 1951, shall be the day of stalling CHIEF ATORSA AS THE CHIEF OF THE NAWURIS." On other occasions, the Nawuri expressed dismay about the refusal of the Government to recognize Nana Atorsah. PRAAD (Tamale) NRG 8/2/210 Nawuri and Nanjuro under United Nations Trusteeship: Petition of Elders of Nawuri Land to the District Commissioner for Salaga, dated November 1, 1951; Petition of Elders of Nawuri Land to the District Commissioner for Salaga, dated November 3, 1951; Petition of Elders of Nawuri Land to the District Commissioner for Salaga, dated November 5, 1951. All the petitions were copied to the Minister of Local Government.

⁴⁶ PRAAD (Tamale) NRG 8/2/210 Nawuri and Nanjuro under United Nations Trusteeship: "Note of a Meeting Held in the Ministry of Local Government on the 12th February 1952; PRAAD (Tamale) NRG 8/2/210 Nawuri and Nanjuro under United Nations Trusteeship: Letter from the Chief Commissioner, Tamale, to the Chief Secretary, Accra, dated January 25, 1952.

⁴⁷ PRAAD (Tamale) NRG 8/2/210 Nawuri and Nanjuro under United Nations Trusteeship: A letter from the Gold Coast Police, Tamale, to the Assistant Commissioner, Criminal Investigation Department, Accra, dated January 26, 1952.

⁴⁸ PRAAD (Tamale) NRG 8/2/210 Nawuri and Nanjuro under United Nations Trusteeship: Unaddressed letter copied to the Chief Commissioner of the Northern Territories, dated January 25, 1952.

⁴⁹ PRAAD (Tamale) NRG 8/2/210 Nawuri and Nanjuro under United Nations Trusteeship: Letter from the Assistant District Commissioner for Salaga to the Acting Senior District Commissioner of the Gonja District, Damango, dated February 22, 1952, 1.

measures. He made an unsuccessful attempt to remove Nana Atorsah from Kpandai in order to diffuse tension.⁵⁰ In addition, McLaren arranged with A.J. Townsend, the District Commissioner for Yendi, and the Chief Commissioner for the Northern Territories, to provide security to contain the situation. A.J. Townsend arrived in Kpandai in the evening with one sergeant and six armed police constables. On the following day, another contingent of about twenty police arrived in Kpandai in a Police van from Tamale led by an Inspector of Police.⁵¹

The police made a number of arrests and charged the rioters with breach of the peace. One report puts the number of arrests at thirty.⁵² The actual number charged with breach of the peace and convicted by the Magistrate Court at Salaga was twenty-six. Nineteen persons were fined 30/- or in the alternative, two weeks imprisonment with hard labour; four persons were fined 40/- or one month imprisonment with hard labour; one person was fined £10 or two months imprisonment with hard labour and two were sentenced to two months imprisonment with hard labour. All the fines were paid.⁵³ The identities of the convicts were, however, unknown.⁵⁴ The arrests and prosecutions brought calm to Alfai, but they did not solve the underlying cause, the dispute over the ownership of Alfai land.

⁵⁰Ibid., 2. The letter read: "I found Atorsa sitting under cover of one of the walls with many of the elders I have previously met in Katiejeli. I warned him that I considered the situation had become very serious. I told him he must prevent his followers from leaving the compound. Stated that I wanted him to leave Kpandai. I offered to escort him and his people to the outskirts of the town to guarantee them as far as possible a safe passage. His followers, however, stated that they were going to stay in Kpandai."

⁵¹ PRAAD (Tamale) NRG 8/2/210 Nawuri and Nanjuro under United Nations Trusteeship: "Report on Disturbance at Kpandai – January 22, 1952." Letter from the Chief Commissioner, Tamale, to the Chief Secretary, Accra, dated January 25, 1952.

⁵² PRAAD (Tamale) NRG 8/2/210 Nawuri and Nanjuro under United Nations Trusteeship: Letter from the Assistant District Commissioner for Salaga to the Acting Senior District Commissioner of the Gonja District, Damango, dated February 22, 1952.

⁵³ PRAAD (Tamale) NRG 8/2/210 Nawuri and Nanjuro under United Nations Trusteeship: A letter from the Gold Coast Police, Tamale, to the Assistant Commission, Criminal Investigation Department, Accra, dated January 26, 1952. Also see: PRAAD (Tamale) NRG 8/2/210 Nawuri and Nanjuro under United Nations Trusteeship: Letter from the Chief Commissioner, Tamale, to the Chief Secretary, Accra, dated January 25, 1952.

⁵⁴ It appears all the convicts were Nawuri in ethnic identity. This conclusion is based on the fact that the colonial authorities blamed the Nawuri for the disturbance. Besides, it was only Nawuri rioters, who were identified; their Gonja counterparts were not. See: PRAAD (Tamale) NRG 8/2/210 Nawuri and Nanjuro under United Nations Trusteeship: "Report on Disturbance at Kpandai – January 22, 1952." Letter from the Chief Commissioner, Tamale, to the Chief Secretary, Accra, dated January 25, 1952, pp. 1-3.

On 12th February 1952, a meeting was held at the Ministry of Local Government to gather first-hand information about the underlying currents of the disturbance. At the meeting, Nana Atorsah insisted that as the allodial owners of Alfai, the Nawuri deserved to be granted a local council of their own. He made it clear that the Nawuri were “in no way satisfied with the arrangements by which they were ... included in the Alfai Local Council.”⁵⁵ The Minister made two decisions on the demands of the Nawuri: first, he asked for the Nawuri representatives on the Alfai Local Council to table their views in the sessions of the Council; second, that the Nawuri should convey their wishes to him through the Alfai Local Council and the Chief Commissioner of the Northern Territories.⁵⁶ The meeting came under severe criticisms from the Chief Commissioner of the Northern Territories because Nana Atorsah’s position as a chief in Alfai was not recognized by the Government; neither was he recognized by the Gonja Traditional Council.⁵⁷

4.3 Local Council Elections in Alfai

On May 1, 1952 the Gonja-Volta District Council was established with headquarters at Damongo. The Council was divided into twelve wards, namely, Bole, Buipe, Damongo-Yagbum, Wasipe, Tuluwe, Kasawgu, Debre, Kpembe, Alfai, Mo, Yeji

⁵⁵ PRAAD (Tamale) NRG 8/2/210 Nawuri and Nanjuro under United Nations Trusteeship: “Note of a Meeting Held in the Ministry of Local Government on the 12th February, 1952. Nana Atorsah Agyeman I was the Nawuriwura from 1951-1968. He was the first headchief of the Nawuri to use the title “Nawuriwura.” Prior to his usage of the title, the title of the headchief of the Nawuri was “wurabu.” He was militant in character and thus favoured militancy as a means by which the Nawuri could wrestle the allodial rights to Alfai land and jurisdictional authority in the area from the Gonja.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ PRAAD (Tamale) NRG 8/2/210 Nawuri and Nanjuro under United Nations Trusteeship: Letter from Chief Commissioner for Northern Territories to the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Local Government, dated February 21, 1952. The letter read, in part: “I have to refer to your letter No. AE1.1/62 of the 4th of February, regarding the Alfai Local Council and to inform you that the man known as Atorsah has no right to the title of chief as he had neither been recognized as a chief by any traditional body nor by the government. Accordingly, I must register my objection to such title being applied to self-elected persons who attend at your Ministry. The reply given to the delegation in regard to any representations by the Nawuris is likely to assist in the ultimate disposal of this difficult local question (emphasis mine).”

and Prang. The Council consisted of twenty (20) representatives elected by adult suffrage and ten (10) nominated traditional rulers.⁵⁸

The first elections of the Alfai Local Council were scheduled for April 8, 1952. Alfai was divided into twelve wards of varying number of representatives.⁵⁹ Officers made round trips to the settlements in Alfai and educated the inhabitants on the Draft Local Government Instrument. Qualified people were registered subject to proof of payment of taxes. The Nawuri, who had earlier refused to pay taxes made a volte-face and unsuccessfully tried to pay up all their tax arrears. However, they could not gain access to tax officers in time to pay up their tax arrears. They alleged that Gonja tax officers deliberately refused to collect taxes from them in an attempt to disenfranchise them.⁶⁰ It may well be that the Nawuri were unable to clear their arrears due to their impecuniousness rather than obstruction by Gonja tax officers in order to disenfranchise them.⁶¹ As a result of the Nawuri inability to pay their taxes, over two thousand, seven

⁵⁸ Gold Coast, Local Government Ordinance, 1951: The Instrument Establishing the Gonja-Volta District Council, 1. The breakdown of the elected members is as follows: three each from Bole and Kpembe wards and two each from the wards of Alfai, Debre, Damongo-Yagbum and Tuluwe. The remaining six wards elected a representative each. The traditional members on the council consisted of seven (7) appointed by Yagbumwura and his council, one by the Mo Chief's Council, Yejihene and his council, and Pranghene's (Sarikin Prang) joint Council of Elders.

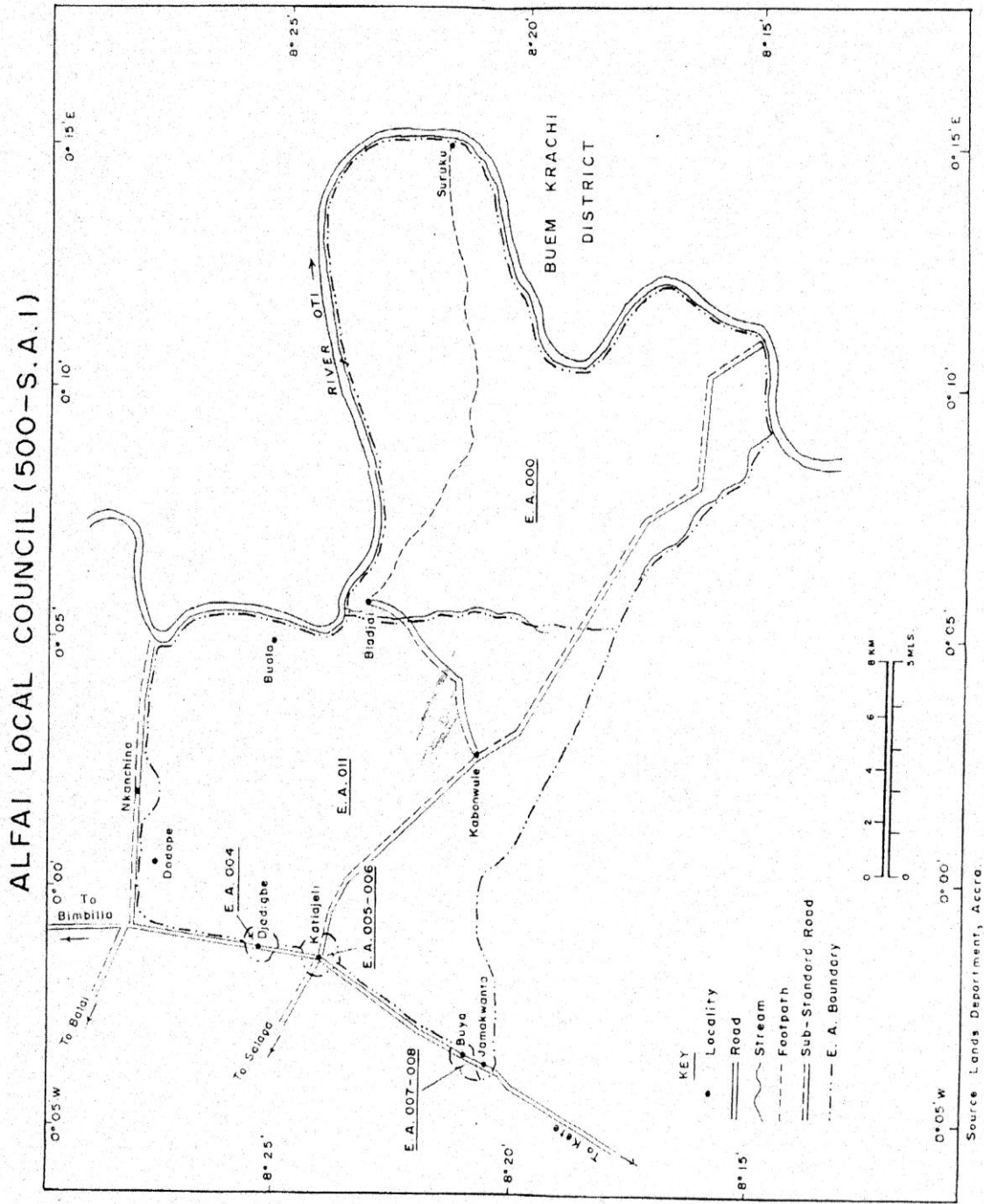
⁵⁹ The wards and representations were as follows: Balai 1; Bladjai 2; Buya 2; Djadigbe (Bayim) 1; Dodoai 1; Kabonwule 1; Katiejeli 2; Kitare 1; Kpandai 3; Lugni 1; Nkanchina 1; Tangelan 1. A total of 17 representatives were to be elected by adult suffrage.

⁶⁰ Telegram communication from Nana Atorsah to Minister of Local Government dated February 21, 1952. Also see: PRAAD (Tamale) NRG 8/2/210 Nawuri and Nanjuro under United Nations Trusteeship: Letter from Nana Atorsah to the District Commissioner for Salaga, dated December 24, 1951. In the telegram message, Nana Atorsah states: "Gonja Levy collectors refused to take levy from Nawuris and register them though fully qualified for elections local councils stop Instructions and advice by you to co-operate form one council with Gonja despite our ardent desire to join Buem-Krachi has therefore been stultified by minority Gonjas who by virtue of native administrations ordinance have legal armour to commit any crime without question stop unless you instruct them take basic rates from Nawuris and allow them to vote their people to local council it will mean in future quote no representation no taxation unquote stop two thousand seven hundred Nawuris qualified for registration stand firm demanding quickest action from government stop Acknowledge receipt."

⁶¹ Nana Akatayin Lampo of Bladjai, Oblisa of Bladjai [personal communication], December 15, 2011. According to Nana Lampo, who claimed to be in his early forties at the time, most of the Nawuri had accumulated over ten years tax arrears. He further stated that within the limited time most of them could not mobilize enough money to clear the arrears.

hundred of them were disenfranchised.⁶² Ultimately, only three Nawuri out of a total of seventeen Representative Members were elected to the Council.

Map 7: Alfai Local Council Area



⁶² Telegram communication from Nana Atorsah Agyemang to Minister of Local Government dated 21st February 1952.

The Nawuri claim that they would have won a landslide victory in the polls if their kinsmen had not been disenfranchised. Dixon casts doubt on this claim.⁶³ Neither Dixon nor the records of the Alfai Local Council gave the breakdown of the roll of tax-payers in Alfai at the time. Nonetheless, Dixon's view was based on the high number of immigrants in Alfai by the 1950s, which led to a high migrant population in the area.⁶⁴ The immigrants were predominantly settled in the three Nawuri towns of Kpandai, Katiejeli and Buya along the Yendi-Kete-Krachi trunk road.⁶⁵ These three settlements together were allotted seven seats on the Council. The remaining ten representatives were to be elected by the other settlements with high density of Nawuri population, and the probability of the Nawuri winning would have been high if all of them were registered.

The Nawuri formed a minority in the Local Council that was inaugurated. In and outside the Council they continued to raise the issue of allodial ownership of Alfai lands. In the first session of the Council, the three Nawuri representatives reiterated their claim to allodial rights in Alfai land. The Konkomba representative of Kabonwule contested the claim, arguing that Alfai belonged to the Gonja. He stated that:

when the Konkomba first came to settle in Kabonwule they were told by the Kabonwule-Enumu [probably Kabonwule chief] that the land

⁶³ Dixon, *op.cit.*, 33. He said "the Nawuris claim that all their people who are eligible to vote have not been registered and that if they had been registered the Nawuris would have swept the polls is not borne out by an examination of the current nominal roll of tax-payers in the area. The Register of Voters will be revised in connection with the next Local Council elections, which are due to take place early next year, and the result of the elections should prove conclusively whether the Nawuris' claim to be able to elect a majority of members in the Council is valid or not."

⁶⁴ Beginning in the 1920s, Konkomba, Basari, Kotokoli, Dagomba and Chakosi immigrants began to settle in Alfai. By the 1950s, the population of the immigrants outstripped that of the Nawuri. For example, in 1951, the breakdown of the population in Alfai was given as follows: Basari 1,863; Chakosi 211; Dagomba 232; Gonja 436; Konkomba 2,281; Kotokoli 510; Nawuri 1,195; and Nchumuru 250. For details, see PRAAD (Tamale) NRG 8/2/210 Nawuri and Nchumuru under United Nations Trusteeship: Letter from the Chief Commissioner for the Northern Territories to the Secretary, Ministry of Defence and External Affairs, dated February 1, 1951.

⁶⁵ PRAAD (Tamale) NRG 8/2/210 Nawuri and Nchumuru under United Nations Trusteeship: "Note on the Kpandai Area", undated, 1.

was for the Gonjas and that the Chief (Kanankulaiwura) is stationed at Kpandai.⁶⁶

The Konkomba statement cannot be relied on as they were divided on the issue. For example, the Basari of Kpandai and Konkomba of Katiejeli supported the Nawuri claim to allodial rights in Alfai lands.⁶⁷ In the sessions of the Alfai Local Council, the debate about the allodial rights in Alfai lands became more and more intractable. The Nawuri representative of Katiejeli moved a motion for the transfer of Alfai to the Kete-Krachi District. The motion was defeated by twenty-nine votes to three.⁶⁸ The Nawuri took their case beyond the Local Council to the Government of the Gold Coast and the United Nations Organization. In a joint petition by the Nawuri and the Nchumuru to the Governor of the Gold Coast in 1952, they asserted that:

this land is ours by right and by right must we own it ourselves so as to shape our own future and not to be misguided by foreign raiders, the Gonjas. And with Your Excellency's wise judgment we must now and forever shake off the foreign yoke.⁶⁹

The above quotation reiterated the Nawuri view that aboriginal status and allodial rights should have formed the basis of the composition of the Alfai Local Council.

In another petition in 1954, the Nawuri questioned the justice of the amalgamation of their land with the Gonja District.⁷⁰ The Government did not

⁶⁶ Dixon, op.cit., Appendix XI, 2. *Enumu* is a Gonja word, which means "elder". Hence the title *Kabonwule-Enumu* means 'the Elder of Kabonwule'. It is unclear whether the title referred to a Gonja or a Nawuri elder in Kabonwule, but since there were no ethnic Gonja in Kabonwule, the term was probably used to refer to the Nawuri elder.

⁶⁷ PRAAD (Tamale) NRG 8/2/210 Nawuri and Nchumuru under United Nations Trusteeship: "Note on the Kpandai Area", undated, 1.

⁶⁸ Dixon, op.cit., Appendix XI, 2.

⁶⁹ PRAAD (Tamale) NRG 8/2/210 Nawuri and Nanjuro under United Nations Trusteeship: "Joint Address of Welcome of Nana Atorsah Agyemang I, Nawuriwura, and Nana Kojo Kuma, Nanjurohene, to the Governor, Sir Arden-Clarke, dated November 24, 1952.

⁷⁰ PRAAD (Tamale) NRG 8/2/210 Nawuri and Nanjuro under United Nations Trusteeship: Petition of the Nawuri and the Nchumuru to the Governor of the Gold Coast, dated February 1, 1954. They said, "is there any worst injury to a tribe whose dialect, customs and culture are not identical to each other, and forced that tribe in his (sic) own God-Given-Land to subjugate entirely to the tribe, who (sic) is in no way superior in anything to the aborigines, when from time immemorial, there is nothing whichever connected us with the Gonjas ..."

acknowledge receipt of the petition; neither did it break its silence about repeated Nawuri petitions and resolutions. The Nawuri regarded the Government's posture as a serious challenge to their integrity.⁷¹ Together with the Nchumuru they petitioned the United Nations Trusteeship Council, but the Ad Hoc Committee on Petitions rejected their demand for autonomy,⁷² and advised them to seek redress from the Government of the Gold Coast.⁷³ In July 1954, the Trusteeship Council adopted the resolution of the Ad Hoc Committee on the petition of the Nawuri and the Nchumuru.⁷⁴

At last, on March 2, 1955, the Government of the Gold Coast agreed to investigate the grievances of the Nawuri, and appointed Mr. J. Dixon for that purpose.⁷⁵ About four hundred copies of the notice of enquiry were said to have been distributed in Damango, Salaga and Alfai.⁷⁶

Three reasons explain why the Government took the initiative in 1955 to investigate the grievances of the Nawuri. In the first place, the Government sought by the

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² PRAAD (Tamale) NRG8/2/210 Nawuri and Nanjuro under United Nations Trusteeship: "Seventy-Seventh Report of the Standing Committee on Petitions (T/L.466) on the Petition from the Paramount Chiefs and Elders of the Nawuris and Nanjuros concerning the Trust Territory of Togoland under British Administration", dated 2 June 1954. These petitions have been labeled as T/PET.6/332, T/CBS.6/7 and T/L.466 respectively.

⁷³ Ibid. The draft resolution of the Committee on these petitions of Nawuri and Nchumuru stated: "having examined the petition from the Paramount Chiefs, Chiefs and Elders of the Nawuris and Nanjuros concerning Togoland under British Administration in consultation with the United Kingdom as the Administering Authority concerned (T/PET.6/332, T/CBS.6/7, T/L.466), reaffirms its resolution 401 (IX) which it adopted on petition (T/PET.6/215) concerning similar requests from the petitioners; requests the petitioners to represent their grievances to the Administering Authority; and requests the Administering Authority to hear the petitioners with sympathy, with a view, if possible, to settling their grievances satisfactorily and to restoring their confidence, and to report to the Council at its fifteenth session on the steps taken to this end."

⁷⁴ PRAAD (Tamale) NRG8/2/211 Enquiry Regarding the Claims of the Nawuri and the Nchumuru: Letter from the Office of the Secretary to the Governor of the Gold Coast to the Permanent secretary, Ministry of Local Government, Accra, dated 31 December 1954.

⁷⁵ PRAAD (Tamale) NRG 8/2/211 Enquiry Regarding the Claims of the Nawuri and Nchumuru: "Extract from Minutes of the Eighth Meeting of the Advisory Committee Held on 2nd March, 1955. Dixon was a Colonial Officer in-charge of agriculture. He was appointed by the colonial government in 1955 to investigate the grievances of the Nawuri and the Nchumuru.

⁷⁶ PRAAD (Tamale) NRG 8/2/211 Enquiry Regarding the Claims of the Nawuri and Nchumuru: "Enquiry at Kpandai" dated March 12, 1955.

enquiry to put on record the issues in contention and attempts made at resolving them.⁷⁷ The sheer importunity of Nawuri petitions could not also be ruled out. A memorandum by the Secretary to the Governor dated January 1955 commented that though the Nawuri dissidents were numerically small, they “have proved intractable and have sent a series of petitions to U.N.O.”⁷⁸ There was also the fear that the Nawuri might be persuaded to support the propaganda for Togoland unification if nothing was done about their complaints. This fear was expressed in the memorandum by the Secretary to the Governor already referred to.⁷⁹ It read:

in view of the fact that the [Nawuri] malcontents are likely to be persuaded to support the cause of Togoland unification if nothing is done about their complaints it seems desirable at a time when a Visiting Mission is due to arrive before long and when a plebiscite may shortly be held, to investigate these grievances fully and to ascertain whether there is any discontent among other groups.⁸⁰

Dixon’s terms of reference were to investigate Nawuri and Nchumuru representations made to the Governor in December 1954 and to advise on the administrative arrangements in Alfai and Nchumuru areas and, in particular, local government organisation.⁸¹ In his report, Dixon recommended the creation of two additional seats for the Nawuriwura and his Elders to increase their seats on the Alfai

⁷⁷ PRAAD (Tamale) NRG8/2/211 Enquiry Regarding the Claims of the Nawuri and the Nchumuru: Letter from the Office of the Secretary to the Governor of the Gold Coast to the Permanent secretary, Ministry of Local Government, Accra, dated 31 December 1954, p. 2. The Government concluded that it was advisable for administrative reasons to institute an enquiry into Nawuri-Nchumuru grievances so that a copy of the report could be made available to the next Visiting Mission of the United Nations for study. The enquiry was also necessitated by the need by the Government to report to the Trusteeship Council at its next meeting “on the steps taken in the light of the petition to settle, if possible, the grievances of the petitioners and to restore their confidence.”

⁷⁸ PRAAD (Tamale) NRG 8/2/211 Enquiry Regarding the Claims of the Nawuri and Nchumuru: Advisory Committee, “Memorandum by the Secretary to the Governor”, January 1955.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ PRAAD (Tamale) NRG 8/2/211 Enquiry Regarding the Claims of the Nawuri and the Nchumuru: Letter from the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Local Government to the Secretary to the Governor, dated January 20, 1955.

Local Council to three. The appointments were, however, to be made by the Kanankulaiwura.⁸² The Nawuri accepted the creation of two additional seats for their chiefs, but rejected the Kanankulaiwura as the appointing authority. In a letter to the Governor of the Gold Coast dated December 13, 1955, the Nawuri stated:

we should like to make the election ourselves. Otherwise, there may be some inconvenience. Sir, in paragraph two...of your letter, it is stated that the Nanjurowura has been added to the panel of the Kpembe Native court. I should be grateful if we are also considered in that line .We should be very glad to accept the two seats in the Alfai Local Council if it would be given to us. But we do not accept the condition attached to it. We shall still demand our rights. We wish to consider more about our case.⁸³

Dixon also recommended to the Government to reject Nawuri demand that their chief, Nana Atorsah, be made the president of the Alfai Local Council. He advised the Government not to do anything to upset the status quo in the Alfai Local Council, which vested the presidency of the Council in the Gonja. His view was that it was impossible to undermine the new system of local government, which was based on statutes. While conceding the importance of tradition, he reminded the Government that “power in the local government has now passed to the electorate irrespective of tribe or ownership of land.”⁸⁴

⁸² Letter from His Excellency, Governor Arden Clarke to Commissioner for Salaga dated 13th December 1955.

⁸³ Ibid. In recommending that the Kanankulaiwura should appoint the Nawuri chiefs to the Alfai Local Council, Dixon simply reaffirmed the colonial administrative arrangement which subjected the Nawuri to Gonja overlordship and made them powerless in the face of the overawing power vested in the Kanankulaiwura. Clearly, the investigations of Dixon were a subterfuge by the Administering authorities meant to hoodwink the Nawuri into believing that the Government was not “anti-Nawuri,” and that its policies in respect of the Nawuri were innocuous. He emphasized: “we should like to make the election ourselves. Otherwise, there may be some inconvenience. Sir, in paragraph two...of your letter, it is stated that the Nanjurowura has been added to the panel of the Kpembe Native court. I should be grateful if we are also considered in that line .We should be very glad to accept the two seats in the Alfai Local Council if it would be given to us. But we do not accept the condition attached to it. We shall still demand our rights. We wish to consider more about our case.”

⁸⁴ Dixon, *op.cit.*, 31.

The Government refused to publish Dixon's report on grounds that its publication would create an unfortunate precedence.⁸⁵ Nonetheless, copies were made available to the Nawuri, the Gonja and the Nchumuru.⁸⁶ In line with Dixon's recommendations, the Government refused to grant the Nawuri request. It claimed that it was not committed to any subsequent course of action concerning the local government arrangements in Alfai and Nchumuru areas under Gonja rule.⁸⁷ Government refusal to grant the Nawuri request prolonged the dispute between the Nawuri and the Gonja. The Nawuri aspiration remained unaddressed at the dawn of Ghana's independence. No change was made in the local government arrangement in Alfai, and Alfai continued to be administered as part of the larger Gonja kingdom under which it had been subsumed in 1932.

4.4 International Politics of the Togoland Question

In the late 1940s and the early 1950s the question of the future status of French and British territories of Togoland dominated political discussion in the French and British Territories of Togo. Various oral and written representations were made to the Trusteeship Council of the United Nations by peoples in these territories concerning their vision of the French and British territories of Togoland.

In Alfai, the politics of the Togoland Question was complicated in the 1950s by the unresolved problem of the allodial ownership of the territory. As in the issue of

⁸⁵ PRAAD (Tamale) NRG 8/2/211 Enquiry Regarding the Claims of the Nawuri and Nchumuru: A letter from A.F. Greenwood, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Local Government, to Secretary to the Governor, dated 14 July 1955.

⁸⁶ PRAAD (Tamale) NRG 8/2/211 Enquiry Regarding the Claims of the Nawuri and Nchumuru: Petition of Nana Atorsah I, Nawuriwura, "Protest Against the Commission of Inquiry, Mr. Dixon's Report in the Nawuri/Nanjuro Gongga (sic) Affairs at Kpandai on 30th March – 1st April, 1955, to His Excellency the Governor of the Gold Coast", dated August 30, 1955; A Letter from A.L. Adu, Secretary for External Affairs, to the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Local Government, dated November 17, 1955; A Letter by Secretary of External Affairs to the Chief Regional Officer, Tamale, dated November 17, 1955; Chief Regional Officer, Tamale, "Nanjuro/Nawuri Affairs, dated November 30, 1955.

⁸⁷ PRAAD (Tamale) NRG 8/2/211 Enquiry Regarding the Claims of the Nawuri and Nchumuru: Advisory Committee, "Memorandum by the Secretary to the Governor", January 1955, 2.

representation in the Alfai Local Council, the Nawuri insisted that they be represented by their own nominee in all bodies established to determine the status of Togoland.

On 14th July 1950, the French and the British, as the mandated powers in Togoland, created the Enlarged Joint Togoland Consultative Commission (EJTCC) as a platform for consultation with the peoples in their respective territories of Togoland on their future.⁸⁸ Alfai and Nchumuru areas under the Kpembe Division of the Gonja Native Authority were designated as one constituency. Of the fifteen seats reserved for British Togoland, the two areas mentioned above were to elect one representative to the EJTCC. On 29th August 1950, the Nawuri and the Nchumuru called a meeting to elect Mr. Sawli Godfred Friko, as their representative.⁸⁹

Two weeks after the election of Friko, the Kpembewura visited Kpandai. With the help of a party of police personnel, he occupied Kpandai from the 10th to the 13th of September 1950, and forcibly took away all documents attesting to the election of Friko.⁹⁰ In addition, the Gonja filed criminal charges against Friko at the Magistrate Court at Salaga, but they were subsequently dismissed.⁹¹ The Nawuri countered by filing a civil suit against the Kpembewura in the Magistrate Court at Salaga for interferences and unlawful seizure of documents attesting to Mr. Friko's election.⁹² The Court, presided over by one J.H. MacGiffen, ruled that jurisdictional and allodial rights in Alfai resided in the Gonja, and as such it was within the powers of the Gonja to

⁸⁸ The Commission was to consist of forty-five representatives – twenty eight from French Togoland and seventeen from British Togoland – freely elected. The Administering powers later increased the representation from French Togoland to thirty, thus bringing the total membership of the EJTCC to forty-seven.

⁸⁹ Resolution Adopted by the People of Nanjuro and Nawuri in the Kpandai Area of the Trust Territory of Western Togoland at a Meeting held at Banda on 8th November 1950.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ PRAAD (Tamale) NGR 8/2/210 Nawuri and Nanjuro under United Nations Trusteeship: "Mandate of the Nawuri, Enlarged Consultative Commission." It was claimed that the criminal case preferred against Friko was dismissed at a considerable expense of the Nawuri as a result of the engagement of solicitor.

⁹² Petition by Council of Nawuri Elders, to Assistant District Commissioner, Salaga dated 26th April, 1951.

appoint a person to represent Alfai and Nchumuru areas on any political platform.⁹³ Armed with this judgement, the Gonja hand-picked Mr. Alhassan Jawula, a Gonja, to represent Alfai and the Nchumuru areas on the EJTCC.

The Nawuri and Nchumuru naturally became disgruntled, and protested against the selection of Alhassan Jawula. Attempts to annul Alhassan Jawula's membership on the EJTCC came to nothing.⁹⁴ Furthermore, Nawuri petition for the Krachi representative, Wilhelm Henkel, to represent Alfai, to present their oral and written petitions to the Commission proved futile. The Governor was reported to have prevailed upon Wilhelm Henkel not to raise the matter in the Commission but promised that he would have the matter investigated and furnish the Nawuri with an explanation why Mr. Wilhelm Henkel could not be regarded as speaking on behalf of any of the people living in the Gonja area of Togoland under United Kingdom Trusteeship.⁹⁵ As was becoming characteristic of contestations between the Nawuri and Gonja for power and allodial rights in Alfai, the wrangle over the election of a pro-Gonja representative to the Commission precipitated physical confrontations, usually at pito bars and at the market square in Kpandai on market days.⁹⁶

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ PRAAD (Tamale) NGR 8/2/210 Nawuri and Nanjuro under United Nations Trusteeship: "Mandate of the Nawuris: Enlarged Consultative Commission." The petition recounted the circumstances surrounding the election of Mr. S.G. Friko and lamented the Gonja action. They described Mr.S.G. Friko's election as popular choice by the indigenous people. At the tail end of the petition, the Nawuri stated: "...we the undersigned natural rulers and only recognized indigenous people of Nawuriland do hereby appoint, and vest in, the Krachi Representative Mr. Wilhelm Helkel on the Enlarged Consultative Commission our full MANDATE ... to put forth our full facts of our ultimate demands ..."

⁹⁵ PRAAD (Tamale) NGR 8/2/210 Nawuri and Nanjuro under United Nations Trusteeship: A letter from the Minister of Defence and External Affairs to the Chief Commissioner of the Northern Territories, dated June 6, 1951. Unfortunately, no investigations were carried out, but the Government had planned to hoodwink the Nawuri that investigations had been done and that Alhassan Jawula had been confirmed as sole Gonja representative on the Commission. The relevant portions of the letter read: "I am accordingly to request you to arrange for a reply to be sent to these letters on the lines that further investigations have been made which have confirmed that Mr. Alhassan Jawulla has been duly elected to represent the people of that areas."

⁹⁶ The physical confrontations usually occurred on Kpandai Market days because on such occasions Nawuri kinsmen from other Nawuri settlements trekked to Kpandai. With the large number of the Nawuri, it provided a perfect opportunity to attack the Gonja in Kpandai with or without provocations.

The Enlarged Joint Togoland Consultative Commission was short lived: it functioned for only one year, and was replaced by the Joint Togoland Council in July 1952. The change came after the British and French administering Authorities sent a memorandum to the Trusteeship Council requesting for the implementation of effective political and fiscal policies in Togoland to take account of the wishes of the people.⁹⁷ Alfai and the Nchumuru areas were together offered one seat on the new Commission, to be occupied by a representative elected by adult suffrage.

A United Nations Visiting Mission visited the various sections of British Togoland in 1952 and collated views of the people concerning the future status of British and French territories of Togoland. The Mission reported that the leaders of the “Mamprusi, Dagomba and Nanumba tribes asked again as they have done in the past for continued integration with the Gold Coast.”⁹⁸ Alfai was the only exception to the rule. The three Nawuri members on the Alfai Local Council supported unification of British Togo with Togo under French Administration and asked for their state to be transferred to the southern section.⁹⁹ The Mission dismissed their petition as not being directly relevant to the Togo problem.¹⁰⁰

The Nawuri and the Nchumuru authorised Mr. H.E. Anku Morny to represent them at the UN General Assembly’s session in October 1952.¹⁰¹ His mandate was to protest against the amalgamation of Alfai with the Gonja kingdom, to demand the

⁹⁷ D.E.K. Amenumey, *The Ewe Unification Movement: A Political History* (Accra, Ghana Universities Press, 1989), 101. The Authorities also maintained in the Memorandum that, the political organization of the territories must be economically, fiscally and politically practicable. They called for the setting up of a Joint Togoland Council with Executive and Legislative powers to extend over both territories. The Council was to be made up of members of the two territories of Togoland. The United Nations Trusteeship Council approved of this idea, and the Joint Togoland Council was established.

⁹⁸ Amenumey, op. cit., 176.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. UN visiting Mission noted that their demand was quite secondary to their controversy with the Gonja; and that this controversy had arisen because the Nawuri were subjected to the Gonja under the Native Authority system.

¹⁰¹ H.E. Anku Morny was a Southern British Togolander and a member of the Togoland Congress. He, together with Antor visited Nawuri state periodically to campaign for separation of British Togoland from the Gold Coast and to listen to the Views of the Nawuri.

transfer of their area from the Northern Territories to the Southern Section of Togoland, and to demand the unification of British and French spheres of Togoland.¹⁰² In the same year, the Nawuri and other ethnic groups in the Northern Section of British Togoland mandated Alhassan Chamba to present their oral and written representations to the U.N. General Assembly in 1952.¹⁰³

Meanwhile, elections to the Joint Togoland Council were held in all constituencies of British Togoland except in Alfai and Nchumuru areas. The Gonja-dominated Alfai Local Council was called upon to vote between Alhassan Jawula, a Gonja, and J.K Mbimadong, a Nawuri. By seventeen votes to three, they chose the former.¹⁰⁴

By 1953, the Alfai Local Council had decided to withdraw its representation on the Joint Togoland Council, since the Dagomba, Nanumba and Mamprusi areas had declined representation. On 17th June 1953, the Council voted to discontinue participation in the meetings of the Joint Togoland Council, without consulting the various ethnicities in Alfai and Nchumuru areas.¹⁰⁵ The Nawuri criticized the action of the Alfai Local Council as unilateral¹⁰⁶, and demanded the review of composition of the

¹⁰² Mandate from the Chiefs, elders and Peoples of Nawuri and Nanjuro in that part of Togoland under the United Kingdom trusteeship situated Between Krachi and Nanumba states Authorising Mr. H.E. Anku Morny to speak on their Behalf at the General Assembly of the U.N.O., dated 20th October, 1952.

¹⁰³ Alhassan Chamba (the father of Mohammed Ibn Chambas) was a Nanumba Native in the Northern Territory of British Togoland. He was one of the few supporters of the Togoland Congress in Northern Territory of British Togoland. He accused government officials in the territory of conducting propaganda on behalf of those who wanted integration, and argued that the only solution possible was a plebiscite under the supervision of the United Nations Organization. See: Amenumey, op.cit., 244.

¹⁰⁴ PRAAD (Tamale) NRG 8/2/210 Nawuri and Nanjuro under United Nations Trusteeship: "No.178/SF.9/185 Petition dated 1st February 1954 from Nawuris and Nanjuros." Also see: PRAAD (Tamale) NRG 8/2/210 Nawuri and Nanjuro under United Nations Trusteeship: "Petition from Paramount Chiefs, Chiefs and Elders of the Nawuris and Nanjuros (T/PET.6/332).

¹⁰⁵ PRAAD (Tamale) NRG 8/2/210 Nawuri and Nanjuro under United Nations Trusteeship: A Letter from the Government's Agent, Damango, to the Chief Regional Officer of the Northern Territories, dated May 8, 1954, 2. It was reported that 14 of the members of the council voted in favour while none voted against the motion to discontinue representation on the Joint Togoland Council. The remaining three members, who were Nawuri, abstained from voting.

¹⁰⁶ A Letter from Nana Atorsah Agyeman I, Nawuri-wura to the Government Agent, Salaga, Northern Territories, dated 19 June, 1953.

Alfai Local Council.¹⁰⁷ The Government turned down Nawuri demand on the grounds that they were a minority population, about a third or more of the population in Alfai and Nchumuru areas.¹⁰⁸ A petition by the Nawuri and Nchumuru to the Trusteeship Council of the United Nations Organization predictably received no favourable answer. The Council merely requested the Government of the Gold Coast to hear them with sympathy.¹⁰⁹ In 1954, the Nawuri and the Nchumuru mandated Alhassan Chamba and S.G. Antor to lay their concerns before the United Nations General Assembly.¹¹⁰ The content of the mandate was the same as that of 1952.

Pending general elections slated for 1954, the Gold Coast Government decided to suspend the participation of its Trust Territory in the Joint Togoland Council. Consequently, the Joint Togoland Council collapsed, and with it Nawuri attempts to internationalize their dispute with the Gonja. Occurring at a time when the two ethnic groups were locked in a struggle for dominance in the Alfai Local Council to support their respective claims to allodial rights in Alfai, the Togoland Question seemed to offer the Nawuri a leverage, and they seized upon it to advance their claim to allodial rights in Alfai lands. Though Nawuri efforts came to nought, their involvement in the Togoland Question contributed to the escalation of the discord between them and the Gonja.

¹⁰⁷ PRAAD (Tamale) NRG 8/2/210 Nawuri and Nanjuro under United Nations Trusteeship: Petition of Paramount Chiefs of Kpandai and Nanjuro and Elders to Governor, the Minister of Local Government, and the Secretary-General, UNO, dated February 1, 1954.

¹⁰⁸ PRAAD (Tamale) NRG 8/2/210 Nawuri and Nanjuro under United Nations Trusteeship: A Letter from the Chief Regional Officer of the Northern Territories to the Secretary and Advisor, Ministry of Local Government and Housing, and the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Defence and External Affairs, dated May 22, 1954.

¹⁰⁹ PRAAD (Tamale) Nawuri and Nchumuru under United Nations Trusteeship: "Annex:Draft Resolution Proposed by the Committee (T/L.466) on Petition from Paramount Chiefs, Chiefs and Elders of the Nawuris and Nanjuros Concerning the Trust Territory of Togoland under British Administration (T/PET.6/332).

¹¹⁰ Mandate from the Chiefs, Elders and peoples of Nawuri and Nanjuro in that part of Togoland under United Kingdom Trusteeship situated between Kete-Krachi and Nanumba states Authorizing S.G. Antor and A.A. Chamba to speak on their behalf at the U.N. General Assembly's meeting, dated 30th October, 1954.

4.5 Chieftaincy disputes

The political causes of the Nawuri-Gonja conflict were not only limited to the activities of the Native Authority, Native Administration and the Togoland Question; chieftaincy matters contributed as well. Chieftaincy disputes between the Nawuri and the Gonja may be categorized into two broad issues. The first was the non-recognition of Nawuri chiefs; and the second, the dispute over Kanankulaiwura Skin. Underpinning each dispute was the question of the allodial ownership of Alfai land.

4.5.1 The Concept of Chief

It is not certain when chieftaincy as understood by the British from their experience in Southern Ghana or the centralized states in the Northern Territories developed among the Nawuri. What is known is that the Nawuri and other Guan-speakers were the most politically advanced population that the Gonja immigrants met with in Northern Ghana.¹¹¹ The trace of the origin of chieftaincy among the Nawuri has been a source of debate between the Nawuri and the Gonja. The Nawuri maintain that chieftaincy was an immemorial political institution among them, while the Gonja maintain that its evolution is recent. The Gonja indeed maintain that the Nawuri have been their subjects from time immemorial and that chieftaincy among them developed in the 1950s.¹¹² As the officially designated overlords of the Nawuri since 1932, the Gonja refused to recognize Nawuri political leaders as chiefs.

The question about the historicity of Nawuri chieftaincy institution was first raised in 1951. In that year, the Nawuri enstooled Nana Atorsah as the Nawuriwura amidst opposition of the Gonja. Yabumwura Ewuntoma questioned the legitimacy of

¹¹¹ Jones, *op.cit.*, 8.

¹¹² Ampiah, Part II, 18-25.

Nana Atorsah's enstoolment, claiming it had no historical precedence.¹¹³ Dixon supports the Yabumwura's view. He maintains that the "claim of 'Nana Atorsah Agyeman I' to the 'paramountcy' of Alfai was spurious and not based on traditional precedent."¹¹⁴

Viewed against the genealogy of Nawuri chiefs, Dixon's argument appears untenable as the genealogy of Nawuriwuras shows that about nine Nawuriwuras reigned before Nana Atorsah.¹¹⁵ Indeed, the office of the Nawuriwura existed alongside the chiefly offices in the various Nawuri settlements since time immemorial.¹¹⁶

The etymology of the suffix *wura* is significant. In Nawuri, as in Gonja and other Guan languages, it means "master", "boss" or "lord". Hence a chief in Nawuri is regarded as an overlord or master of his settlement.¹¹⁷ It is important to note that colonial interests, rather than 'customary' legitimacy and history determined whether the colonial authorities recognized one political leader and not the other. For instance, in Southern Ghana, "kings" like Nana Amoako Atta I (1867-1887) whose dynasty had a history going back to at least the 1630s was refused formal Government recognition for his jurisdiction till 1899 simply because the British found him hostile to their interest.¹¹⁸ So the fact that the British, and subsequently the Gonja, did not recognize Nawuri

¹¹³ A letter from Yagbubumwura Wuntoma to Nawuri Elders, dated 26 October 1951.

¹¹⁴ Dixon, op. cit., 33

¹¹⁵ Mbowura, op.cit., 55. Nana Krunkpaw : Nawuriwura who led the Nawuri from Larteh to Nawuri Kupo. Nana Attara : Nawuriwura who led the Nawuri from Nawuri Kupo to Kitare. He was also the founder for the walled town of Kitare. Nana Abisa: Nawuriwura during whose reign slave raiding was conducted in Nawuriland by the Asante and the Dagomba. Nana Bresiam Okore: said to be the bravest Nawuriwura. Nana Akonshi : Nawuriwura, who was said to have helped the Gonja against the Asante invasion of Eastern Gonja in 1744-5. Nana Elu : Nawuriwura when Germans arrived in Nawuriland in the 1880s. Nana Dari: Nawuriwura, who fought on behalf of the Lepo against the Kanyasiwura in 1894. Nana Boila : Nawuriwura at the time Mahama Karantu Kankaranfu was installed as the Kanankulaiwura in 1913. Nana Bunyaluwei: The Nawuriwura, who was allegedly poisoned to death at Kpembe and Nawuri chiefly regalia taken by the Gonja. Nana Lowugyayin: The Nawuriwura at the time Nawuri seceded to the neighbouring areas of Krachi and Nanumba in 1943. He was destooled for old age and was replaced by Nana Atorsah in 1951.

¹¹⁶ Ampiah, op.cit., 56.

¹¹⁷ Some of the titles of Nawuri chiefs are *Kpandaiwura*, *Balaiwura*, *Nkanchinawura*, *Katiejeliwura*, *Jadigbewura*, *Kabowura*, *Bladjaiwura* and *Kitarewura*.

¹¹⁸ For the hostility of King Amoako Atta I to British interest, see: Robert Addo-Fening, *Akyem Abuakwa, 1700-1943: From Ofori Panin to Sir Ofori Atta* (Trondheim: Department of History, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, 1997), 66-85.

chieftaincy does not prove that the institution was unknown among them till the twentieth century. It is also worthy of note that following the enactment of the Native Administration Ordinance (NJO, 1883), the legitimacy of “chief” ceased to be inherent in immemorial custom and the will of the ancestors but in the caprice of the Governor. As far back as 1903, the colonial Government hinted at supporting rulers who had it in their power to assist the Government in the carrying out of their national interests.¹¹⁹ To this end, the power of the major chieftaincies of Gonja, Mamprusi, Dagomba and Wala was consolidated and supported.

In addition, the colonial authorities in Northern Ghana invested in ordinary people with chiefly power for the sake of administrative expediency and without recourse to custom.¹²⁰ In Taleland, for example, the colonial government appointed chiefs without recourse to the custom of the people. Iliasu describes them as:

mere sergeant-majors through whom the administration addressed the rank and file. Most of them had not the slightest claims to authority under the traditional political system; their authority rested solely on the threats of retaliation by the administration if their peoples showed any disinclination to obey them.¹²¹

At the same time, the colonial Government “installed a Mamprusi chief, the Kunab, chief of the Kurugu Division of Mamprusi, to act as head chief of the Tallensi, in an effort to overcome the administrative problems raised by the segmentary nature of

¹¹⁹ Ladouceur, *op.cit.*, 41.

¹²⁰ A.A. Iliasu, “The Establishment of British Administration in Mamprugu, 1898-1937”. *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana*, Vol. XVI, 1975, 1-28; In the 1920s, there were indications that the colonial government appointed chiefs in the Kete-Krachi District, which included Alfai. This is deduced from a report which stated that the Government could appoint a chief, but the appointed chiefs were recognized as in reality as the *Tindana* with powers to allocate land, though the subjects might verbally acquiesce. See: PRAAD (Accra) ADM 56/1/3375 Land Tenure: “Answers to Questionnaire to Chief Commissioner Northern Territories”, pp. 44-45.

¹²¹ I A.A. Iliasu, “The Establishment of British Administration in Mamprugu, 1898-1937” in *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana*, Vol. XVI, 1975, 1-28.

Tallensi political organization.”¹²² Similarly, in Igboland, the colonial regime appointed chiefs by issuing them with warrants to exercise authority that they had never exercised before. Known as “Warrant-chiefs, they were given unrestrained authority and control over courts, and were “seen by their people as miniature tyrants.”¹²³

In the light of these examples, the Gonja claim that the Nawuri had no political leadership can only mean that their rulers did not receive the colonial stamp of approval. The Gonja claim that the Nawuri were one of the uncentralized societies in pre-colonial Northern Ghana. They maintain that historically and culturally, the leaders of Nawuri societies were *ablisaa* (clan heads) appointed since time immemorial by the Kanankulaiwura. This begs the question of who were appointing them prior to the Gonja arrival. The Gonja also claim that *ablisaa*, who rendered good services were elevated to the rank of *Mbowura* (War Captain) and stools were created for them.¹²⁴ The Gonja further maintain that it was Kanankulaiwura Mahama Karantu who created stools for Boila of Kpandai, Awiagah of Jadigbe and Asafu of Nkanchina.¹²⁵ The Gonja view is untenable. The Gonja, as Muslims, did not use stools as part of chiefly symbolism. If the Gonja claim that the *Mbowura* were appendages of the Kanankulaiwura was true, one would expect them to have created sub-skins rather than sub-stools for them. It is culturally inconceivable for a Gonja chief who sits on a skin to have created stools for his Nawuri subject chiefs or captains. It was in the light of the cultural illogicality of the Gonja position that Dixon maintained that there was the possibility that each Nawuri headman had his own family stool, though he did not rule out the probability of the

¹²² Ladouceur, op.cit., 43.

¹²³ J.B. Webster and A.A. Boahen, *The Revolutionary Years: West Africa Since 1800* (London: Longman, 1967), 206.

¹²⁴ Dixon, op.cit., 11.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

Gonja creating War Captain Stools for some special reason for the Nawuri headmen of Kpandai, Jadigbe and Nkachina.¹²⁶

4.5.2 Proof of Chieftaincy in Nawuri before Amalgamation

The history of the application of the term “chief” in the Gold Coast makes the Gonja claim that the Nawuri were an uncentralized polity untenable. Historically, the term was applied in the northern part of the Gold Coast by the British from their experience and encounters with political leaders in the south. Up to 1900, small Akan towns and villages in Southern Ghana were known as “Oman” (polity) without distinction and their leaders as “ohene”/”odikro” (ruler).¹²⁷ Several of these “aman” formed themselves into a bigger “oman” (state) headed by a supreme ruler known as “Omanhene” (state ruler). In Casely Hayford’s words, the traditional state was a highly decentralized one as it was an aggregation of villages and towns “federated together under the same laws, the same customs, the same faith and worship ... speaking the same language and owing (sic) allegiance to a paramount King or president who represented the sovereignty of the entire nation.”¹²⁸ It was after the enactment of the NJO of 1883 that rulers were categorized into sub-chiefs, chiefs and paramount chiefs. Indeed, between the 1880s and 1900, the British simultaneously used the terms “king” and “chief” to refer to rulers of all kinds in Northern Ghana. For example, rulers such as those of Kpembe (Salaga), Daboya (both divisions of the Gonja kingdom), Ya-Na, Nayiri and the Yabumwura of the Gonja continued to be referred to as “kings”, while in other cases the titles “king”, “chief” and “headmen” were used to refer to different

¹²⁶ Ibid., 5.

¹²⁷ J.E. Casely Hayford, *Gold Coast Native Institutions* (Frank Cass & Co, 1903), 19. Quoted in R. Addo-Fening, “The Relevance of Traditional Governance” in Baffour Agyeman-Duah ed., *Ghana: Governance in the Fourth Republic* (Accra: Centre for Democratic Development [CDD], 2008), 32-56.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

categories of traditional political rulers in Northern Ghana.¹²⁹ The terminology “chief” only fully came into vogue in the North approximately after 1900. It was subsequent to the British encounter with the ethnicities in Northern Ghana after 1900 that initiated the application of the term “chief” to traditional political leaders. With their experience in Southern Ghana, the British were quick to describe the bigger states in Northern Ghana as centralized and their political leaders as chiefs. On the contrary, all the smaller states were labelled as uncentralized and the terms “priests” and “clan heads”, rather than “chief”, were applied to their political leaders. Whether it was appropriate to describe all the smaller states as uncentralized or not, it is important to note that in all uncentralized states as in both Southern and Northern Ghana, allegiance to a shrine, a common territory and a common culture and language were the reference points of identity and political unity. The priests wielded religious authority that was fused with political authority. They were the final authority in matters that went purely beyond clan interests. Inappropriately, however, the British colonial authorities did not regard them as chiefs. It is important to note that, unlike Europe where religious wars and conflict eventually led to the separation of ‘religion’ (church) and ‘state’, in traditional states of Africa the two were inseparably linked, as was the case in the Papal state of Rome.

In some of their petitions, the Nawuri referred to their society as a “stateless” one. For example, in one of their petitions, they stated that:

from time immemorial, Nawuri society had been an ascephalous (sic) society (i.e. **without chiefs**) but had political organization with power

¹²⁹Johnson Marion (compiler), *Salaga Papers*, Legon, Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, Acc. Nos. SAL/86/1; SAL/43/1; Kwame Arhin, *The Papers of Ekem Ferguson: A Fanti Official of the Government of the Gold Coast, 1890-1897* (Leiden/Cambridge, African Studies Centre, 1974), 108-111; “Treaty with Nadawle, 11 January, 1898” in G.E. Metcalfe, *Great Britain and Ghana: Documents of Ghana History, 1807-1957* (London, Thomas Nelson & Sons Ltd. on Behalf of University of Ghana, 1964), 502-503. The preamble of the treaty read: “the **King, Chiefs and Principal Headmen** of Nadawle, having declared that they have not made any treaty with any other Power, do hereby voluntarily place their country under the protection of Great Britain (emphasis mine).

in the hands of clan heads. The few Gonjas who came to settle at Kpandai started practicing chieftaincy as known in Gonjaland and with time the few Gonjas attempted to extend and superimpose their system of administration on the Nawuris but we have always resisted it. Owing to early formal education received by many Gonjas, their sons and daughters have monopolized high government appointments in the Northern Region, and thereby actively supported the Gonja chiefs to cross to Kpandai to prop up the chiefly inclination of a few Gonjas there with the view to extending Gonja hegemony throughout Nawuriliand.¹³⁰

Nawuri usage of the term “acephalous” to describe their society was simply in conformity with the contemporary lexicon and cannot be used against them. They were merely using an expression that had become part of colonial idiom, for want of a better term. There is ample documentary evidence to show that the Nawuri were historically a centralized polity and that at the time of the European encounter they had chiefs, who served as locus of political authority. For instance, a 1926 colonial report stated:

there are five divisions or tribal areas [in Krachi district]: Krachi, Nawuri, Chumuru, Adjuati and Adele. Each is governed by its own Head Chief and Sub-chiefs who are assisted by consellers. These chiefs are not elected but are appointed, from among other chiefs by a system of rota. Such chiefs are all of one family in each division. Their titles differ: Krachi is governed by Omanhin. **Nawuri is governed by Wurubon (Wurabu)**, Adjuati is governed by Asasewura, Nchumuru is governed by Owure and Adele is governed by Ejudele (emphasis mine).¹³¹

In the same year, another report lent credence to the fact that chiefly offices existed among the Nawuri. The report read:

the aim of the colonial Administration which was continued by the Gonjas over the Nawuris was not to repair the damage of the past but

¹³⁰ Petition of Nawuris to the Chairman, PNDC, dated 2 April, 1991.

¹³¹ Annual Report of British Sphere of Togoland for the year ended 1926, 10.

by continuing to treat the NAWURIS as serfs, **refusing to recognize their chiefs** ... [emphasis mine].¹³²

These reports referred to above leave no doubt that chiefly offices existed among the Nawuri prior to the amalgamation of 1932, though the Gonja refused to recognize them. The non-recognition of Nawuri chiefs was an attempt by the Gonja to deny them a separate political identity to justify their incorporation into their state. Writing to the Acting Chief Commissioner for the Northern Territories in August 1927 about the award of medallions to chiefs in Krachi, Kpandai, Siari, Tutukpene and Nanjuro, the Provincial Commissioner for Southern Province stated:

no medallions have been issued to the KRACHI DISTRICT. The Acting District Commissioner suggests, and I recommend that the following chiefs be given medallions. Omanhene – Krachi – 4 inches, **Wurobon (Nawuri chief) – Kpandai – 3 inches**, Osuriwura – Siari – 2 inches, Eju Dele – Tutukpene – 2 inches, Owure – Nenjero – 2 inches (emphasis mine).¹³³

If the Nawuri did not have chiefs would the colonial government have considered the *Wurabon* fora medallion meant for paramount chiefs? The Gonja have tried to belittle the award of the medallion to the paramount chief of the Nawuri, claiming it was given for meritorious services in respect of roadwork. It is unacceptable to make such a claim for it suggests that all the chiefs listed including the Krachiwura received the medallions not in recognition of their status as chiefs but for their meritorious services in respect of roadwork.

¹³²Ampiah, op. cit., 19.

¹³³PRAAD (Accra) ADM 56/1/234 Letter from the Provincial Commissioner, Southern Province to the Acting Chief Commissioner dated 17th August 1925. Accordingly, a three-inch medallion, number 61, was awarded to the Nawuriwura. It is not quite clear whether the medallion given to the Nawuri paramount chief (Wurobon) was awarded to him on the date stated above or later since the date of award stated in the document preceded the request by the Commissioner of Southern Province to award him and three of his colleagues medallions.

The legitimacy of Nawuri chieftaincy was a function not so much of history as of official recognition based on the exigencies of indirect rule. Indirect rule turned the relations between the Nawuri and the Gonja into one of “ruled” and the “ruler”, and recognized the Gonja chiefs and their traditional structure as the official locus of political authority in Alfai. On the contrary, Nawuri chiefs and their traditional structure were not recognized. From the introduction of indirect rule in the Northern Territories in 1932, the Nawuri had persistently petitioned the colonial authorities to recognize their chiefs in the expectation that the Gonja would take a cue from that and do the same; but the government failed to do so. It was the government’s failure to heed to the petition of Nawuri chiefs that encouraged Gonja intransigence.

Central to the dispute about the historicity of chieftaincy among the Nawuri was the wrangle over allodial rights to Alfai lands. As long as the question of allodial rights to Alfai lands remained unresolved, the recognition of Nawuri chiefs was a threat to Gonja interests. Besides, its recognition would have armed the Nawuri with the ‘arsenal’ to contest for the presidency of the Alfai Native Authority and Local Council respectively. With the presidency of these local government bodies residing in the Nawuriwura, the Nawuri would naturally have pushed for allodial rights in Alfai.

In addition, as the president of these local government bodies in Alfai, the Nawuriwura would have assumed the authority of determining the distribution and allocation of land in the area, a position the Gonja dreaded.¹³⁴

From the 1950s, the legitimacy of the Nawuri chieftaincy institution was one of the thorny issues in the wrangle and antagonism between the Nawuri and the Gonja.

¹³⁴ Most Nawuri, Konkomba, Bassari and Kotokoli informants maintain that the Gonja position was dictated by the fear that a recognition of Nawuri chiefs would obviously be inconsistent with Gonja rule over the Nawuri; that as long as the view that the Nawuri were historically uncentralized prevailed, Gonja rule over them and its implied claim to allodial rights in Alfai would be justified; that the recognition of Nawuri chiefs had the potential – as the actions of Nana Atorsah had shown – of triggering off Nawuri insurgence for autonomy and ownership of Alfai. On the other hand, the Nawuri used the claim, especially in the 1950s, to justify their demand for the presidency on the Alfai Native Authority and Local Council respectively. As the presidency was inappropriately interpreted as a justification of Gonja rule and allodial rights in Alfai, Nawuri position and its indirect demand for the presidency on the Native Authority and Local Council signaled an implied claim to sovereignty and allodial rights in Alfai.

Some Gonja statements unwittingly conceded chieftaincy in Nawuri society, at least in the 1980s. For example, in his letter dated on 29th November 1988, and addressed to Nana Gyakon Benfiane of Nkanchina, the Kanankulaiwura, Alhaji Ademu, stated:

while acknowledging yours dated 28th November 1988 on the above topic and in Cognizance with the norms and practices of the Gonja Traditional council, as established by the Regional House of Chiefs as well as the National House of Chiefs and the Chieftaincy secretariat, I have the pleasure, with reference to the D.S.P. Salaga's letter No. DC.1.0.15 Vol.3/36 dated 30th December 1987 and copied to you to grant you permission to install as the Nawuri-wura, for the Nawuri community in the Alfai area of the Gonja Traditional Council. This is of course the result of the popular acceptance of the Nawuris to the rotational system of the Head chief which has been rightly bestowed on the Nkanchina clan of the Nawuri Tribe in Alfai area, after it had passed from Kpandai to Balai and now to Nkanchina, Katiejeli, Bladjai, Kitare and Kabonwule...¹³⁵

The letter implied Gonja recognition of the Nawuriwura effective from 1987, but this was not the reality in the 1990s. After war broke out between the Nawuri and the Gonja in 1991, the Kanankulaiwura rejected radio appeals for a mediation meeting between the factions, claiming that reference to Nawuri leaders as chiefs was unacceptable.¹³⁶

4.5.3 The Dispute over the Kanankulaiwura Skin

To understand the extent to which the question of land ownership pervaded chieftaincy matters and how that contributed to the rising discord between the Gonja and the Nawuri necessarily requires an examination of the Kanankulaiwura Skin dispute. The

¹³⁵ A letter from Kanankulaiwura Aponnibisee Alhaji Ademu to Nana Gyakon Benfiane Nkachina, dated 29 November, 1988.

¹³⁶ Ampiah, *op.cit.*, 6. The Kanankulaiwura said: "you are no doubt aware that as the Kanankulaiwura, I am the direct representative of the Kpembewura who is the divisional chief of Kpembe including Alfai area. In the Alfai area, I am the direct representative of the Kpembewura who is the divisional chief of Kpembe including Alfai area. In the Alfai area, I am assisted by Dusaiwura, Bladjaiwura, Njawrewura and the Chowura. Apart from these chiefs mentioned, there are no other chiefs in the Alfai area. Your Excellency, I am making this point because in your radio announcement inviting us to this meeting you mentioned Nawuri names with titles 'Nana'... I want to make it clear at this initial stage that throughout the Gonja Traditional Council area no chief bears the title 'Nana.'"

Kanankulaiwura Skin dispute began in 1968 when two Gonja claimants – Enemu Haruna and Alhassan Jawula – contested it.¹³⁷ The matter was referred to the Nawuri and the Gonja Traditional Council respectively.¹³⁸ The Nawuri traced the origins of the office of the Kanakulaiwura to the appointment of a leader for the Zongo community in Kpandai. As the owners of Alfai, they had, by tradition, always elected a new Kanankulaiwura whenever the office became vacant. This was the custom until the 1930s when they lost their right to elect a new Kanankulaiwura as a result of the amalgamation of Alfai with the Gonja kingdom in 1932. The Native Authority Ordinance of 1932 subjected them to the Gonja and allowed the latter to arrogate that right to themselves. Since then the Gonja have exercised that prerogative.

No direct documentary evidence exists to support the Nawuri position, but there is circumstantial evidence.¹³⁹ When Kanankulaiwura Mahama Karatu was elected as the Kpembewura in 1931 he vacated the office of the Kanankulaiwura. Colonial officials began to wonder whether the Nawuri would elect one of their own kind or another Gonja as successor. In a letter from the District Commissioner for Kete-Krachi District to the Provincial Commissioner of the Northern Territories dated September 4, 1932, the former commented:

I am sorry to hear poor man Kpembe (Kpembewura) is gone but he was too old and sick for the job and any-how the Kanukulaiwura will make an excellent successor and being educated he should do much for the prosperity and advancement of the division, he is not a man that the natives can take liberties with. **The interesting point now is what are the Nawuris going to do? Are they going to submit to another Gonja chief or are they going to try and get a chief of their own** (emphasis mine)?¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ Letter from Nawuri Chiefs to the Yagbunwura, 25 February, 1971.

¹³⁸ Nana Atorsah Bresiam Okore I, Kpandaiwura [personal communication], December 17, 2011.

¹³⁹ PRAAD (Accra), ADM 39/1/32 “Letter from the District Commissioner of Kete-Krachi to the Provincial Commissioner of the Northern Territories”, September 4, 1932.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

The Kanankulaiwura Skin dispute opened up festering wounds and contributed to tension between the Nawuri and the Gonja in a number of ways. Enemu Haruna (a Gonja) and his supporters sought Nawuri support to assert his claim to the Skin, a development which opened up to the Nawuri the possibility of using him to advance Nawuri claims to allodial rights to Alfai lands and regain their autonomy.

One version of the story is that Enemu Haruna entered into an unwritten pact with the Nawuri to advance his ambition to the Kanankulaiwura Skin in return for Gonja recognition of Nawuri allodial ownership of Alfai lands. The other position denied that any such pact was ever made. Both the Gonja and the Nawuri agree that Nawuri support for Enemu Haruna was crucial in influencing the decision of the Gonja Traditional Council to make him the Kanankulaiwura in 1968. Both ethnic groups agree that the Nawuri attempted to send a delegation, led by Nana Atorsah, to the Gonja Traditional Council in Damango to make a case for the installation of Enemu Haruna as the Kanankulaiwura. The delegation reached Tamale but was persuaded by unknown Gonja bigwigs to return to Alfai. The dispute rekindled Nawuri resolve to regain autonomy and provided an opportunity for them to meddle in Gonja affairs. It also provoked physical confrontations between Gonja factions, with almost all the Nawuri supporting Haruna's faction.¹⁴¹

Haruna reigned as the Kanankulaiwura from 1968 to 1971. He was harassed by Alhassan Jawula, a Gonja and Haruna's contender, who was naturally embittered by his failure to secure the appointment. Alhassan Jawula appealed to the Gonja Traditional Council, and received the support of Isanwurfo Ababio Jawula, then the reigning

¹⁴¹ These were the views of many of the respondents interviewed. Indeed, many of the Kotokoli interviewees strongly these views. They included Mama A. Hassan, Haruna Mohammed, Musah Kasimu and Abdulai Moru, all interviewed on November 14, 2011. The rest were Tahiru Mohammed (aka Kabobo), Alhassan Abukari, Nuhum Jafaru, Alhaji Alaja and Zibilla Sumaila, all interviewed on November 15, 2011.

Kpembewura.¹⁴² Clashes between the two factions became quite frequent, and peace in Alfai could no longer be guaranteed. The increasing violent acts in Alfai compelled the Gonja Traditional Council to refer the dispute to the National Liberation Council (NLC) for arbitration.¹⁴³ It was in the course of the arbitration that Kanankulaiwura Haruna died in 1971. With the death of Kanankulaiwura Haruna, Alhassan Jawula secured the Kanankulaiwura Skin.

The Nawuri resented Alhassan Jawula's perceived usurpation and his accession to the Kanankulaiwura position, claiming it was done without their customary approval.¹⁴⁴ The key arguments of the petition which they sent to the Gonja Traditional Council were that Alhassan Jawula's position as the Kanankulaiwura was illegitimate as far as the Nawuri were concerned; that as the aborigines, they had a stake in the selection of Kanankuwuras; and that a Kanankulaiwura's position could not be legitimate without prior consultation with, and consent of, the Nawuri was not sought before his selection.¹⁴⁵ These key issues were raised in another Nawuri petition dated March 5, 1971, which was emphatic that:

... anything done without our prior consultation or without the consent of we Nawuriland owners of Kpandai area in the Gonja

¹⁴² Petition of Nawuri Chiefs and Naimi (Chief Imam) of Kpandai to the Prime Minister, 5th March, 1971.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Nana Atorsah Bresiam Okore I, Kpandaiwura [personal communication], 17th April 2001. He is the reigning Kpandaiwura, and was the son of Nana Atorsah Agyeman I, Nawuriwura from 1951-1968.

¹⁴⁵ Letter from Nawuri Chiefs to the Yabumwura, 25th February, 1971. It read: "we the chiefs and people of Kpandai district are becoming increasingly concerned about the Kanankulaiwura dispute and wish to remind you and the Traditional council about the need to maintain the decision of the Traditional Council which recognized the late Kanankulaiwura Haruna as the rightful chief of Alfai ... we fear that the rumours now circulating are likely to prejudice the fair and impartial hearing of this matter and may well create a tie like the Dagomba issue. We do not think that the death of Kanankulai(sic) Haruna creates any advantages to Mr. Alhassan Jawula as it is rumoured over here. He, according to rumours, appears to be impressed with the lie that he is now unopposed in his joint bid with his brother Kpembe-wura to flout customary procedure...we want to make it clear that if any decision is to bring harmony then it must be based on the Traditional Council's decision as laid down upholding the Kanankulaiwura as chief of Alfai. The after (sic) the principle that was followed by the council will have to be followed in the selection of the next Kanankulaiwura. Anything short of this will be met with the strongest opposition."

East Constituency will be regarded as untraditional and shall consequently spark troubles in Kpandai area [emphasis mine].¹⁴⁶

The Gonja Traditional Council held an emergency meeting at Damongo on February 26, 1971, and despite Nawuri protestations, proclaimed Alhassan Jawula as the ‘de facto’ Kanankulaiwura.¹⁴⁷ The Nawuri found Alhassan Jawula’s reign dreadful. They described it as tyrannical and “injurious to peace and harmony” in Alfai.¹⁴⁸ Some of the Nawuri and the Gonja consider the reprisal action taken by Alhassan Jawula against his opponents to have fuelled resentment against Gonja rule. They also claim that consequent upon Alhassan Jawula’s measures, war would have broken out between the Nawuri and the Gonja in the 1970s or 1980s if Nana Atorsah’s successor – Nana Asaseadwo – had been as belligerent as his predecessor.

Though war did not break out, Alhassan Jawula’s actions poisoned the relations between the two ethnic groups, and further increased Nawuri yearning for autonomy. In November 1971, Nawuri chiefs protested to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Electoral Commission against the amalgamation of their council with that of the Salaga Local Council. They claimed that the minority Gonja in Alfai were using their privileged position to force the Kpandai District Council area to join the Gonja Local Councils of Debir, Tulewe, Kasawgu and Salaga Local Councils.¹⁴⁹

In a petition addressed to Mr. N.Y.B. Adade, Minister of Internal Affairs, the Nawuri repeated their opposition of the amalgamation of Alfai with the Gonja kingdom. For the first time, they opted to be part of the Nanumba Traditional Area. The petition was presented to the Minister when a five-member Nawuri delegation led by Nana

¹⁴⁶ Petition of Nawuri Chiefs and Naimi of Kpandai to Prime Minister, 5th March 1971.

¹⁴⁷ Letter from Yabumwura Ewuntomah to Nana Asasedwo and Ten others, 20th March, 1971

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ *Daily Graphic*, Friday, 19 November 1971, 4.

Asaseadwo paid him a courtesy call.¹⁵⁰ Reacting to the Nawuri petition, the Gonja addressed their own to the Minister on November 25, 1971.¹⁵¹ Jawula Ababio I, then Kpembewura, repeated the Gonja claim.¹⁵² The Kanankulaiwura Skin dispute rekindled Nawuri yearning for the unification with Togoland. In 1975 the Nawuri sent a delegation to Lome to attend a meeting of Togolandese to discuss the Togoland Question as a means of gaining their autonomy from the rule of Kanankulaiwura Alhassan Jawula. The Nawuri delegation was made up of J.K. Mbimadong, Attah Karikari and S.G. Friko. Two of them – Mbimadong and Attah Karikari – were arrested by the Government of the National Redemption Council (NRC) upon their return. The third – S.G. Friko – managed to escape.¹⁵³ The two were subsequently released, and nothing was further heard about Nawuri participation in the Togoland Question.

4.6 Conclusion

The chapter discussed the extent to which local government arrangements in Alfai and Nawuri attempts to internationalize their grievances with Gonja fuelled the tension between the Nawuri and the Gonja. It also examined the historicity and structure of chieftaincy in Nawuri before the advent of colonial rule as well as the Kanankulaiwura Skin dispute in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The key conclusions that

¹⁵⁰ Petition of Nawuri Chiefs to N.Y.B. Adade, Minister of Internal Affairs dated November 19, 1971.. The petition was signed by twenty-four chiefs of the Kpandai District Council.

¹⁵¹ Petition by the Kanankulaiwura and his sub-chiefs to the Minister of Internal Affairs and Electoral Commissioner dated 23rd November 1971.

¹⁵² Petition by Kpembewura Jawulla Ababio II, to Minister of Internal Affairs and Electoral Commissioner, dated 25th November 1971. The Kpembewura urged the Minister to ignore the petition of the Nawuri and branded the Nawuri chiefs that signed the petition as self-styled chiefs. It read: “these settler tribes have no hegemony, being attached to the Gonjas and that the titles claimed by the signatories to petition are borrowed ones if not non-existent. At best the self-styled paramount chiefs could be described as headmen of their respective villages. The whole Gonja tribe has only one paramount chief, the Yagbunwura, who resides at Damongo.”

¹⁵³ Petition of Nawuriwura, Nana Bakiansu Asasiadwo, and the Head Asafoache, Kpandai, Atta Karikari, to the special Action Unit, National Redemption Council, dated September 22, 1975. The petition read: “... it is the Gonja marital rule we have for long been struggling to remove the yoke from our necks that has led Messers J.K. Mbimadong and Friko, our advisors and honorary secretaries to associate themselves with the Western Togolandese for Separation in order to free us from Gonja dominion...Frankly speaking, we want to remain in Ghana and have our Local council retained at Kpandai without Gonja dominion or interference...”

emerge from this chapter are the following: first, the question of allodial rights was the underlying factor in the wrangle between the Nawuri and the Gonja over local government arrangements in Alfai. Questions about the composition, legitimacy, presidency and activities of the local government arrangements in Alfai throughout the colonial period were all tied to the dispute between the Nawuri and the Gonja over allodial title to Alfai lands.

In addition, the unresolved problem of the allodial ownership in Alfai complicated the politics of the Togoland Question in the 1950s. However, Nawuri hopes of using the Togoland Question to secure their autonomy from Gonja rule proved unsuccessful. In vain, they demanded representation on the political platforms of the Togoland Question, associated themselves with the Togoland Unionists, petitioned the Government of the Gold Coast, and sent delegations to the United Nations General Assembly about their allodial rights to Alfai lands and the burden of Gonja overlordship. The Togoland Question contributed to the escalation of the discord between the Nawuri and the Gonja. Occurring at a time when the two ethnic groups were locked in a struggle for dominance in the Alfai Local Council to advance their respective claims to allodial rights in Alfai, the Togoland Question seemed to offer the Nawuri a leverage, and they seized upon it.

Besides, chieftaincy among the Nawuri existed since the ancient times. The chieftaincy dispute between the Nawuri and the Gonja – whether it was over Gonja refusal to recognize Nawuri chiefs or over the rivalry of the office of the Kanankulaiwura affair –was intricately linked to benefits inherent in the exercise of allodial and jurisdictional rights. Gonja refusal to recognize Nawuri chiefs contributed to the tension between the two ethnicities in Alfai. The Kanankulaiwura Skin dispute in the late 1960s and early 1970s rekindled Nawuri resolve to regain autonomy and provided an opportunity for them to meddle in Gonja affairs.

CHAPTER FIVE

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CAUSES AND THE DRIFT TOWARDS THE NAWURI-GONJA CONFLICT

5.0 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the political causes of the Nawuri-Gonja conflict. It pointed out that underneath the political causes was the conflicting claim between the Nawuri and the Gonja over allodial land rights in Alfai. This chapter discusses the economic and social issues of the conflict and the drift towards the Nawuri-Gonja war of 1991 and 1992. It concludes that socio-cultural factors and economic dimensions of allodial land rights combined with the ambitions and bias of the Gonjaland Youth Association (GJA) precipitated the outbreak of the Nawuri-Gonja conflict.

5.1 Social and Cultural Factors

5.1.1 Attempts at interference in Nawuri Religious and Cultural Traditions

The socio-political and economic lives of the traditional Nawuri were deeply rooted in their belief in their deities – *Idakpa*. Each Nawuri community had its *idakpa*; so did individuals and families. Among the most powerful *idakpa* in Alfai were *Nnanjulo*, *Nana Esuwele*, *Chulin*, *Joogon* and *Kankpe*. The *esiepu* (fetish priest) of *Kankpe* occupied a prominent position in Balai religious and political affairs, and was held in high esteem. Customarily, it was the prerogative of the Elders of the Balai Nawuri to elect and enrobe a new *Kankpe esiepu*. However, in 1951, the Gonja interfered in this customary practice.¹

¹ NRG 8/2/210 Nawuri and Nanjuro under United Nations Trusteeship: Petition from Alechu, Balai Kojo and Yaw Mamfio to the District Commissioner, Salaga, 27th August 1951.

Two variant accounts of the interference exist in the records. One states that the Kanankulaiwura, acting in collusion with the Yabumwura and government agents, attempted to usurp the customary right of the Balai Nawuri to enrobe a new *Kankpe esiepu*. In August 1951, the office became vacant. The Gonja sought to impose one Amoani, whom they preferred, to the rightful candidate, Alechu Balai.² As a result, a disturbance ensued between the Balai Nawuri on the one hand and the Kanankulaiwura and his entourage on the other.³

The second account dated 29 August 1951 and written by the Assistant District Commissioner for Salaga denied any charge of Gonja interference in the enrobing of the *Kakpe esiepu*, and described the Kanankulaiwura's actions as customary:

I was informed that the old Balaiwura who is an important Kibiriwura or Fetish Priest and a Nawura (sic) had died on August 9th. According to custom the people of Balai had asked the Kanankulaiwura to attend the funeral custom of the Balaiwura which took place in Balai on Friday 17th in the morning. After the festivities the Kanankulaiwura, as is the Nawura (sic) custom, called a meeting of the Nawuras (sic) of Balai and the other people of Balai (mainly Konkombas) to elect a new Fetish Priest (who would become the Balaiwura).⁴

The quote suggests that the Kanankulaiwura only assembled the Balai Nawuri; that his action was customary; and that there was no suggestion that he compelled the assembly to elect any particular person. These suggestions are not entirely true. The right of assembling the Nawuri of Balai to elect the *Kankpe esiepu* did not reside in the

²Ibid.

³NRG 8/2/210 Nawuri and Nanjuro under United Nations Trusteeship: Telegram communication from Alechu Balai to the Chief Commissioner of the Northern Territories, dated 21 August 1951. A telegram communication to this effect read: "Gonjas numbering about forty strong led by two native authority policemen and Kanankulaiwura from Kpandae (sic) came to Balai in Nawuriland in Trust Territory Togoland Friday and tried forcibly to instal (sic) fetish priest in succession to late one who died contrary to custom stop During discussion Kanankulaiwura told meeting the district Salaga Kpembewura and Yabumwura instructed them take such action stop Elders and king makers Balai refused stop Police and Gonjas discriminately beat Balai people with sticks stop People wounded and deserted the village stop Situation getting worse to feel secured under British trust we humbly solicit your immediate intervention."

⁴NRG 8/2/210 Nawuri and Nanjuro under United Nations Trusteeship: "Report on Visit to Kpandai Area Occasioned by Telegram Sent by One Alechu Care Bimbilla Native Authority" by the Assistant District Commissioner for Salaga, dated 29 August 1951.

Kanankulaiwura; it resided in the office of the *Asasewura (Tendana)* of Balai, the investing authority. The Kanankulaiwura's arrogation of such right to himself amounted to interference.⁵

The *Kankpe esiepu* position was based on seniority and membership of the priestly family. Alechu was senior to Amoani, and by custom was the next in line.⁶ But the Kanankulaiwura seemed determined to impose Amoani, who was his nephew, on the Balai Nawuri. Nana Mbimadong Obimpeh's oral evidence to the Ampiah Committee stated:

I know Amoani Balai. He was a nephew to Kanankulaiwura of Kpandai. My elder father was to be the accredited Fetish Priest, but Gonjas helped Amoani to claim that post from my father ... it was not his turn to become the Fetish Priest. The day of the installation it was the Gonjas who went there to fight for him and gave the post to him. This Fetish Priest post is a Nawuri post.⁷

With a party of police men, the Kanankulaiwura was said to have uncustomarily installed his nephew Amoani as the *esiepu* without the approval of Nana Kojo (the investing authority at the time) and the Elders of Balai.⁸ It was reported that upon the arrival of the Kanankulaiwura and his retinue at Balai:

they went to one Mr. Amoani a nephew to the Kanankulaiwura, and after a while came out together themselves under a tree in the town when they sent for Opanyin Kojo, Fetish Priestmaker (sic) of Balai, Alechu the accredited successor to the Fetish Priesthood, and the Elders of Balai. The Kanankulaiwura, upon their arrival informed them that he came with his retinue **to instal (sic) the Fetish priest in the person of his nephew Amoani ...[and] installed Amoani as Fetish Priest of Balai ...** After the policemen and the Gonja youngmen (sic) have beaten the Nawuris to their satisfaction, they went to the spot where customary rites are performed for the installation of Fetish Priests and ... **installed Amoani as Fetish Priest of Balai without the knowledge and consent of the Priestmaker (sic) and the Elders of Balai [Emphasis mine].**⁹

⁵ NRG 8/2/210 Nawuri and Nanjuro under United Nations Trusteeship: Petition from Alechu, Balai Kojo and Yaw Mamfio to the District Commissioner, Salaga, 27th August 1951; Ampiah, op.cit., Part II, 86.

⁶ NRG8/2/210 Nawuri and Nchumuru under United Nations Trusteeship: "Report on Visit to Kpandai Area Occasioned by Telegram sent by one Alechu care Bimbilla Native Authority", 2.

⁷ Ampiah, op.cit., Part II, 86.

⁸ NRG 8/2/210 Nawuri and Nanjuro under United Nations Trusteeship: Petition from Alechu, Balai Kojo and Yaw Mamfio to the District Commissioner, Salaga, 27th August 1951.

⁹ Ibid.

Clearly, the Kanankulaiwura's action was uncustomary and amounted to some sort of interference. Nowhere in the Gonja Traditional Area did the Gonja interfere in the religious and customary traditions of their subjects. Neither was it a practice in the so-called centralized states of Northern Ghana for the rulers to necessarily extend overlordship to the cultural and religious realms of their subjects. Besides, the office of the *Kankpe Esiepu* was a religious, and not a chiefly or political office. Historically, neither the Gonja nor any of the so-called centralized states in Northern Ghana chose *tendanas*; it was the prerogative of the autochthones. Furthermore, there is no evidence to show that the Gonja enrobed *Kankpe Esiepus* before or subsequent to Amoani. If the Gonja action was customary, the historical record would have the enrobing of all *Kankpe Esiepus* before and after Amoani by Gonja officials.

Three reasons explain why the Kanankulaiwura interfered in the *Kankpe esiepu* affair. In the first place, he acted upon the instructions of his superiors and government officials. The Kanankulaiwura was fully aware that he did not have the customary right to assemble the Balai Nawuri; neither did he have the powers to install or instruct the priest-makers to install a candidate of his choice, but the instructions of his superiors and government officials encouraged him to do so.¹⁰ In a petition dated August 27, 1951, the Elders of Balai stated that:

the Kanankulaiwura insisted and said that he knew that it does not fall their lot (sic) to come and interfere with our customs, but that he was instructed by the Kpembewura, the Yagbumwura and the District Commissioner [for Salaga] to come and instal (sic) a man suitable for him, therefore whether we liked it or not they have chosen Amoani.¹¹

It would appear that the Gonja sought to indirectly control one of the three seats in the Alfai Local Council allotted to the appointees of the Nawuri, namely, the *Kankpe*

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

esiepu of Balai and the *asasewura* (*tendana*) and *Mbowura* (war captain/chief) of Kpandai. Amoani was in fact the nephew of Kanankulaiwura Mbema, the Kanankulaiwura at the time; hence the latter took a direct interest in the *Kankpe esiepu* affair. His nephew could be a direct ally and a useful tool to Gonja attempt to consolidate their claims to allodial rights in Alfai.¹² It was for this reason that Amoani was said to have “subjected himself to the Gonjas and was not among the Nawuris. All those who followed him became [more or less] Gonjas.”¹³

The Gonja sought to use the emigration of Alechu and his family from Balai to Chifeli under Nanumba Native Authority in 1943, to disqualify Alechu from contesting the *Kankpe* priesthood.¹⁴ According to a report by the Assistant District Commissioner for Salaga dated August 29, 1951:

from the files in Salaga it is apparent that these Nawuras (sic) from Chifeli have been causing difficulty since 1943 when they agreed to leave the Kpandae (sic) area. An agreement was signed by five prominent Nawuras (sic) including one Kwadjo Balai (Kojo Balai) in 1943 to renounce all claims to land and property rights if they left. Apparently various troubles have arisen from time to time, including the sending of telegrams and complaints to the police which have had no foundation. Kojo Balai who seemed to be the chief supporter of Alechu, has figured prominently in these disturbances. Mr Syme wrote in 1943 that he and others who had agreed to go would be ‘told to get out of Gonja forthwith or suffer the consequences.’¹⁵

The Gonja accepted the fact that eligibility to the *Kankpe* priesthood was based on a candidate’s seniority and membership of the priestly family. Their argument was that Alechu’s family was disqualified lawfully as a result of their emigration in 1943. Hence the eligibility of Alechu or any member of his family had lapsed. The basis of

¹² . Petition of Alechu Balai and others to the Minister of Local Government, undated. The relevant portion of the petition read: “... on their arrival they went to one Mr. Amoani a nephew to the Kanankulaiwura ... The Kanankulaiwura ... informed them (the Balai Nawuri) that he came with his retinue to instal (sic) the Fetish Priest in the person of his nephew Amoani ...”

¹³ “Oral Evidence of Nana Mbimadong Obimpeh to the Ampiah Committee”: Ampiah, op.cit., Part II, 86.

¹⁴ NRG 8/2/210 Nawuri and Nanjuro under United Nations Trusteeship: “Report on Visit to Kpandai Area Occasioned by Telegram Sent by One Alechu Care Bimbilla Native Authority” by the Assistant District Commissioner for Salaga, dated 29 August 1951, 3.

¹⁵ Ibid.

Gonja argument that Alechu and his family had given up their rights in Balai matters was the 1943 document acknowledging the emigration of the Nawuri from Alfai, whose authenticity has been questioned.¹⁶

Gonja intervention in the 1951 *Kankpe esiepu* affair led to disturbances in Balai. In the disturbance, Balai youths, particularly Alechu's supporters, were brutalized and chased out of the village.¹⁷ The Yendi police got wind of the disturbance through one Yawovi Datsa, a news reporter of the *Daily Graphic*.¹⁸ However, the police failed to charge the Kanankulaiwura for unlawful interferences and breach of the peace because they claimed that the disturbance in Balai was rather perpetrated by Alechu and his supporters against the Kanankulaiwura¹⁹ and that Nawuri claims were unfounded.²⁰

With the backing of the Kanankulaiwura, Amoani's position as the *Kankpe esiepu* was not annulled. Having received the support of the Kanankulaiwura, Amoani allied himself with the Gonja to the extent that he and his family were described by the

¹⁶ For details, see chapter four of this study.

¹⁷ Telegram communication from Alechu Balai to the Chief Commissioner of the Northern Territories, dated 21 August 1951 in file number NRG 8/2/210 titled "Nawuri and Nanjuro under United Nations Trusteeship."

¹⁸ See, Letter from the Superintendent of the Northern Territories, Gold Coast Police, to the Chief Commissioner of the Northern Territories, dated 3 September, 1951 in file number NRG 8/2/210 titled "Nawuri and Nanjuro under United Nations Trusteeship." In the letter, the Superintendent reported that a disturbance ensued between a group of Balai Nawuri and the Gonja at Balai over a dispute concerning the appointment of a fetish priest

¹⁹ Report on Visit to Kpandai Area Occasioned by Telegram Sent by One Alechu Care Bimbilla Native Authority by the Assistant District Commissioner for Salaga, dated 29 August 1951, 1& 3 in file number NRG 8/2/210

titled "Nawuri and Nanjuro under United Nations Trusteeship."

²⁰ See, Letter from the Superintendent of the Northern Territories, Gold Coast Police, to the Chief Commissioner of the Northern Territories, dated 3 September, 1951 in file number NRG 8/2/210 titled "Nawuri and Nanjuro under United Nations Trusteeship"; NRG 8/2/210 Nawuri and Nanjuro under United Nations Trusteeship: Letter from the Acting Senior District Commissioner, Damongo, to the Chief Commissioner of the Northern Territories, dated 7 September 1951. The relevant portions of the letter read: "I refer to your letter No.NT.0615/SF.1/61 of 24th August, 1951, and confirm that a report of the incident at Balai is expected from the Assistant District Commissioner, Salaga. This report will also contain a report on the same incident made by the police Yendi after a party of police had been sent to Balai to investigate the alleged disturbance. Possibly Your Honour may consider replying to Mr. Alechu Balai's telegram and suggesting that he come to Tamale and give a fuller account of this incident. As Your Honour is no doubt aware a considerable amount of unnecessary work is caused in Alfai area by frivolous reports of "atrocities" and disturbance and it would have a salutary effect if the authors of some of these reports had to justify the action they had taken."

Nawuri as Gonja in ethnic outlook. As the *Kankpe esiepu*, Amoani occupied a seat in the Alfai Local Council, and represented Gonja's parochial interests.²¹

The 1951 disturbance at Balai was significant for two reasons. In the first place, though the enrobing of Amoani was successful, the unity of Nawuri resistance forced the Gonja to refrain from further interferences in Nawuri customary practices in order to avoid war. As a result, no further Gonja interferences were made in the *Kankpe Esiepu* affair; neither did they extend such interferences to the enrobing of *esiepu* in other Nawuri settlements. Secondly, Gonja attempts to dabble in Nawuri religious affairs increased the tension and mistrust between them and the Nawuri. More importantly, the *Kankpe esiepu* affair created in Nawuri minds the impression that the Gonja were hell-bent on interfering in their age-long customary practices as part of Gonja agenda to legitimize their claim to allodial rights in Alfai.

5.1.2 Ethnic Identity and Stereotyping

Ethnic identity in Alfai was not merely a matter of assimilation to cultural and religious traditions; it expressed itself in social, economic and political forms. In the politics of Alfai between 1932 and 1991, ethnic identity was a tool for the mobilization of resources in situations of competition and conflict between the Nawuri and the Gonja. At different points, Nawuri-Gonja relations were marked by co-operation, competition and conflict. There were familial and friendly relations as well as economic partnerships between some ethnic Nawuri and Gonja. In times of skirmishes, misunderstandings and communal violence, however, the familial, friendly and economic partnership networks between members of the two ethnicities melted away. On their ruins, emerged hostility, hatred and ethnic particularism.

²¹ Ampiah, op.cit., 86 and 87.

Nomenclatures such as “enlightened” and ‘unenlightened’ or “civilized” and “uncivilized” became stereotypes by the Gonja and the Nawuri for describing opponents. Irrespective of the level of education attained by a Nawuri, he was still seen as unenlightened or uncivilized in the eyes of the Gonja. On the other hand, the uneducated Gonja was seen by the Gonja community as enlightened and civilized by virtue of his membership of the ethnic group. These stereotypes and stigmatizations often led to lots of street fights between the youths of the two ethnicities, especially in the 1970s and 1980s. The Gonja expressed their supposed superiority over the Nawuri through stereotyping. They referred to the Nawuri as *nduwurana*, which means ‘people with tails’, *binye* (slaves), and *nyamasi* (derived from the Mande word *nyama*, which means “refuse”). By implication, the Gonja disrespected the Nawuri, and such insinuations often generated petty squabbles between the two ethnic groups. Predominantly Muslim, the Gonja frowned upon alcoholism and the rearing of pigs. Mostly in Kpandai and usually on market days, their youths killed pigs and beat up intoxicants they encountered with impunity.²² Victims of Gonja “Islamic gangs” were mostly the Nawuri, Konkomba and the Bassari, who were either Christian or pagan, and tended to draw them closer together.²³ Gonja-Nawuri confrontations thus tended to take on the character of religious clashes, and at other times it exploited social exigencies as well.²⁴

5.1.3 Western Education and the Nawuri Elite

Early colonial education policy provided educational opportunities to the children of the Gonja chiefly family to the detriment of those of the Nawuri. Nawuri earliest

²² Kpandai market day is based on a six-day week or circle. From Kpandai, market days are observed in Lungni, Katiejeli, Ekumidi, Bladjai, Kitare in that order and then to Kpandai.

²³ For the nuances and dynamics of ethnic identity in Alfai in the colonial and post-colonial times, see pages 7-10 of this study.

²⁴ For an understading of how Nawuri-Gonja confrontations exploited social exigencies in Alfai in the post-colonial times, see pages 9 and 10 of this study.

opportunity of accessing western education occurred in 1943 when John Kwesi Mbimadong (now the Balaiwura), gained admission to the Krachi Primary School under the guise of a son of the Krachiwura.²⁵ It was not until 17 February 1947, with the establishment of the Native Authority Village Day School at Kpandai that Western education was brought to the doorsteps of the Nawuri.²⁶ Unfortunately, the Kanankulaiwura's periodic visits to the school scared off Nawuri pupils. Besides, the Kanankulaiwura used his position as the Chairman of the Management Committee of the School to effectively reduce or prevent the admission of Nawuri children.²⁷ The late 1950s and early 1960s saw a great surge in the number of Nawuri children embracing and gaining access to Western education. Prominent among them were Yaw Fedelis Atorsah, S.G. Friko and Agbedji.²⁸ It was this batch of Western educated Nawuri elite that provided the furnace in which Nawuri political activism against Gonja rule was fashioned.

Mbimadong became the Regional Secretary of the Togoland Congress for the Northern Section of British Togoland and later the Member of Parliament for the East Gonja Constituency on the ticket of the National Alliance of Liberals (NAL). These positions provided him the leverage to demand Nawuri autonomy and claim to allodial land rights to Alfai lands.²⁹ Mbimadong and his contemporaries masterminded the

²⁵ Ampiah, *op.cit.*, 81.

²⁶ *Kpandai Village Day School's Log Book*, 2

²⁷ Nana Okumankwe, Nkanchinawura [personal communication], March 4, 2012. For the Kanankulaiwura's periodic visits to the school and chairmanship of the Management Board, see pages 2 and 6 respectively of the *Kpandai Village Day School's Log Book*.

²⁸ Nana Okumankwe, Nkanchinawura [personal communication], March 4, 2012.

²⁹ Amenumey, *op.cit.*, 142. He was a member of the delegation that the Togoland Congress sent to make oral representations to the Trusteeship Council in December 1952, and he exploited the opportunity to express the wish of the people of the Northern Section of British Togoland. Mbimadong declared that contrary to what the Committee had often been told, the people of the Northern section of British Togoland were anxious to be united with Togoland. He further intimated that the people of Northern section of British Togoland were certain that their progress would be far more rapid if a single government administered the whole of Togoland. Mbimadong further asserted that the only reason why the inhabitants of North British Togoland had not expressed their wish for unification earlier was the pressure they were being subjected to.

formation of the Nawuri Youth Association (N.Y.A) in the early 1980s and used it to mobilize ethnic resources to resist Gonja rule. Ultimately, the result was an intensification of Nawuri resistance against Gonja claim to allodial rights in Alfai land, which steadily led to the outbreak of the communal violence between the two ethnicities in 1991.

5.1.4 Ethnic Activism of the Gonjaland Youth Association

The Gonjaland Youth Association was born out of the socio-political exigencies of the 1970s such as education and physical developments, which sparked off the exploitation of ethnic resources and mobilization of local actors as tools for accelerating development in rural Northern Ghana. It is difficult to give the exact sequence of events that led to the mushrooming of ethnic youth associations in the Northern Region. Suffice it to say that by the 1970s a number of them had been formed and by the 1980s ethnic youth associations had become vibrant and possessed considerable clout.

Like the Konkomba Youth Association (KOYA) formed in 1977, all ethnic youth associations in the Northern Region became “part of a larger trend in political activism and self-help.”³⁰ The political activism of ethnic youth associations became a contributory factor in conflicts in the Northern Region of Ghana. The activities of KOYA, for example, were responsible for the ethnic conflict between the Nanumba and the Konkomba in 1981.³¹ The Gonja Youth Association and the Vagla Youth Association also played instrumental roles in the Vagla-Gonja conflict of 1984 in the

³⁰ Talton, *op.cit.*, 151.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 158. To quote Talton: “in Bimbilla, therefore, KOYA entered an ongoing dispute. Part of the KOYA agenda was to remove the influence of non-Konkomba chiefs over Konkomba. Their strategy was to assert their own claims to tradition to undermine the legitimacy of “traditional” Nanumba and Dagomba authority over Konkomba populations. Simply put, KOYA leaders argued that the two traditions were incompatible and that Konkomba should not be ruled by *nas* who did not understand Konkomba practices. To confront what they argued was exploitation by the Bimbilla Na, KOYA recommended that Konkomba farmers in the area stop paying tribute and, instead, appoint their own Konkomba elders to adjudicate internal disputes ... [in order] to promote Konkomba self-reliance and to settle their disputes in a manner that reflected their local culture.”

Sawla area of the Bole District. It was to stem the rising tide of ethnic-related conflicts that the Northern Regional Security Committee (REGSEC) banned the two associations “in the interest of peace, law and order.”³²

The Gonja Youth Association was formed in 1978 as a catalyst for development of the area. Its formation triggered the formation of similar ethnic youth associations by non-ethnic Gonja groups in Gonja-controlled areas. These non-Gonja ethnic groups included the Nawuri, the Vagla, the Nchumuru, the Mo, the Basari, and the Kotokoli.³³ In the 1980s, a Gonjaland Youth Association was formed to incorporate all other ethnic groups in the Gonja Area of the Northern Region.³⁴ The exact date of the formation of the Gonjaland Youth Association is in dispute. The years 1980 and 1984 have been suggested as the possible dates for its formation. According to the Gonja, the inaugural meeting was held in Salaga in 1980. It was, however, in 1984 that the first reference to the existence of the Gonjaland Youth Association was made, thus suggesting that it was formed in that year.³⁵ Its first public act was a letter of protest against a ban imposed on the Gonja and Vagla Youth Associations following the violence between the two ethnic groups in the Sawla area of the Bole District. In the letter, it described itself as the “Gonjaland Youth Association” and claimed that:

³² Ampiah, *op.cit.*, Part I, 29. Youth associations were apt to make inflammatory pronouncements about conflicts in the region. In July 1981, KOYA, for example, issued a press statement which sought to correct the wrong notions about the Konkomba and their motives in their war against the Nanumba. Other reports have shown that the Dagomba Youth Association (DAYA), the Chamba Youth Association, the Konkomba Youth Association, the Gonjaland Youth Association, among others, have issued a number press releases about one conflict or the other and that in many cases the releases were satirical, critical and inflammatory about the Dagomba-Konkomba and Nanumba-Konkomba wars in 1994, and the findings of the Ampiah Committee of Inquiry into the Gonja, Nawuri and Nchumuru conflict respectively. For details, see Akapule, “Memorandum Press Statement Submitted by Konkomba Youth Association (KOYA) to his Excellency, the President, Dr. Hilla Limann on his Visit to the Northern Region to Settle the Nanumba/Konkomba Conflict,” dated 11 July 1981; “Press Conference Held by the Dagbon Youth Association on 15 February 1994 on the Dagomba/Konkomba Crisis”; “Protest Statement Issued in Reaction to the Gonjaland Youth Association to the Findings of the Ampiah Committee Report”; A letter from Chamba Naa’s Palace titled “Chamba Konkomba Situational Report (31 August 2002) – Rejoinder,” to the Regional Minister, Tamale, dated 15 October 2002.

³³ Ampiah, *op.cit.*, Part I, 29.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, Part II, 13.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, Part I, 29.

... the Gonjaland Youth Association includes all inhabitants of Gonjaland irrespective of their ethnic groups. It therefore stands to reason that Gonjas, Nchumurus, Konkombas, Nawuris, Lobis, vaglas, to mention a few, all belong to the Gonjaland Youth Association ...”³⁶

The letter made a distinction between the Vagla and the Bole Youth Associations on the one hand and the Gonjaland Youth Association on the other, and condemned the ban, describing it as hypocritical, unethical and a calculated attempt by “unprogressive elements within the revolution [the Government of the Provisional National Defence Council] to jeopardize any attempt to bring development in Gonjaland.”³⁷

From the early 1980s, the Gonjaland Youth Association became a vibrant force and an instrument for the implementation of Gonja policies. Its first Chairman was Sulemana Gado. In 1988 he was replaced by Alhaji M.N.D. Jawula. According to the Gonja, the Nawuri and the Nchumuru attended the inaugural meetings of the Gonjaland Youth Association in 1980 and 1984. Available evidence, however, shows that neither in 1980 nor in 1984 were the Nawuri and the Nchumuru invited to an inaugural meeting of the Gonjaland Youth Association.³⁸ Nor did they attend the inaugural meeting or any of the meetings of the Gonjaland Youth Association.³⁹ The Ampiah Committee, commenting on the Gonja claim that the Nawuri and the Nchumuru had not given any good reason for their failure or refusal to attend the meetings of the Gonjaland Youth Association, suggested that it was “obvious from the evidence of the Nawuris and the

³⁶Ibid., Part I, 29. In fact, Article III of the Constitution of the Gonjaland Youth Association stated its membership as follows: “a. all Gonjas; b. all Nchumurus; c. all Nawuris; d. all Mos; e. all vaglas; and e. any person(s) or any ethnic group who are settled on any land owned by Gonja Traditional Area.” Quoted in Ampiah, op.cit., Part II, p. 13.

³⁷ Ibid.d. Appendix: “Protest of Gonja Youth Association Against the banning of the Gonjaland Youth Association” (n.d.), 3.

³⁸Ibid. The report stated that “on 28 April 1984, the Secretary to the Gonjaland Youth Association, on the direction of the Association, wrote inviting certain Chairmen of the ethnic Youth Associations to a meeting. Significantly, the Chairmen of the Nawuri and Nchumuru Youth Associations were not invited.”

³⁹Ibid., 15.

Nchumurus, that they had taken a strong objection to the formation of that Association.”⁴⁰

The Gonjaland Youth Association was scheduled to hold its conference in Kpandai for 28th-30th March 1991.⁴¹ As part of the preparations towards that conference, “the Executive Committee requested the National Secretary, Mr. Jeduah, to travel to the venue of the next meeting with a view to holding discussions” about the impending meeting with the various ethnic groups in Alfai.⁴² No records exist of any preliminary meetings between Mr. Jeduah, the National Secretary of the Gonjaland Youth Association, and the Nawuri prior to the conference as claimed by the Gonja.

The Nawuri protested against the intended holding of the Gonjaland Youth Association’s conference in Kpandai. Underpinning the Nawuri protest was the festering question of allodial land rights in Alfai. The protest was not against the Gonja holding any conference or meeting in Kpandai *per se*, but against Gonja claim to allodial land rights in Alfai connoted by the designation “Gonjaland Youth Association.” The Ampiah Committee suggests that:

the positive assertion by the Gonjaland Youth Association that the land on which the Nawuris and the Nchumurus lived was part of Gonjaland was so repugnant to the thinking of the Nawuris and the Nchumurus as to arouse in them old and smothered belligerent feelings and their objection of Gonja the Gonja “overlordship”.⁴³

This view was confirmed in a Bureau of National Investigation’s (BNI) report, which stated:

...major issue at stake now is not necessarily the holding of the Gonjaland Youth Association Conference. The most important issue now to be

⁴⁰Ibid., Part I, 30.

⁴¹Ibid. The last conference of the Gonjaland Youth Association held at Damongo, decided to hold its next conference at Kpandai in Alfai in the Easter of 1991. The Easter period was chosen for the Kpandai conference because it was hoped that the Easter break would enable all the members of the Gonjaland Youth Association across the country to take advantage of the Easter holidays to attend.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ampiah, *op.cit.*, Part I, 30.

resolved is 'the ownership of KPANDAI and surrounding area.' Due to claims by the Nawuris that KPANDAI and surrounding areas belong to them they are of the view that any conference tagged 'GONJALAND' should not take place there.⁴⁴

The Nawuri maintained that "the only ethnic group that has the inalienable right of titleship to land in Kpandai is Nawuri"; and that the Gonja were attempting through their Gonjaland Youth Association to usurp their lands.⁴⁵

Tension began to mount in Alfai as Nawuri protests gathered momentum. From Kpandai, news of an imminent war between the Nawuri and the Gonja soon trickled down to Salaga and the various Nawuri settlements in Alfai. Formal reports on the escalating tension in Kpandai were made to the Secretary of the East Gonja District at Salaga on 12th and 13th March 1991.⁴⁶ Accordingly, the District Security Committee (DISEC) of the East Gonja District Assembly took measures to de-escalate tension. It held four separate meetings with the Gonja, the Nawuri, the Police and Cadres of the Kpandai Zonal Secretariat.⁴⁷ At the meeting, the Nawuri stated unequivocally that they:

were not prepared to compromise with the Gonjas any longer. They added that apart from abstaining from the Gonjaland Youth Conference to which they were invited, they would use force to stop the holding of the meeting in Kpandai."⁴⁸

The BNI carried out investigations and advised REGSEC accordingly. Acting upon the advice of the BNI, REGSEC set up a committee to meet with the Nawuri and the Gonja in order to reach a compromise. It was proposed that a sub-committee be formed at a later date to determine the ownership of Kpandai and other settlements in

⁴⁴Ibid, 31.

⁴⁵Ibid., Appendix: A letter from the Nawuri Youth Association titled "Petition Against the Venue of the Gonjaland Youth Association Convention at Kpandai, 28-31 March 1991", to the Secretary of Interior, dated 12 March 1991.

⁴⁶Ibid., Appendix: "Memoranda Presented to the Committee of Inquiry into the Gonja/Nawuris and Nanjuros Conflict by the District Security Committee (DISEC) East Gonja District Assembly" (n.d.), p. 2.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

Alfai.⁴⁹ REGSEC invited Nawuri and Gonja leaders to a meeting in Tamale at which it banned the holding of the Gonjaland Youth Association conference at Kpandai. It also banned the holding of the Gonja Traditional Council meeting which had been scheduled to take place in Kpandai simultaneously with the Gonja Youth Association conference. REGSEC also dispatched a number of Police personnel to Kpandai on 25th March 1991 to “strengthen the security of the area.”⁵⁰

The measures failed to de-escalate tension; neither did they succeed in preempting the eventual outbreak of war between the Nawuri and the Gonja. In the meantime, the Nawuri celebrated the ban as a sign of victory for them, despite REGSEC’s warning to either side to refrain from claiming victory. The Nawuri returned to Kpandai “in a taxi cap (sic) amidst drumming and dancing, to the displeasure of their Gonja counterparts who protested verbally through the PNDC Secretary to REGSEC.”⁵¹ The Gonja began to think of possible ways of revenging themselves on the Nawuri for their provocation. Thus the stage was set for a “confrontation between the Gonjas and the Nawuris with regard to their respective claim to ownership of land. This brought out all the pent-up feelings of the Nawuris with regard to their unresolved grievances.”⁵²

An attempt at explanation of the failure of the measures of REGSEC to de-escalate tension or prevent an outbreak of hostilities must necessarily take account of the scale of the tension and altercations generated by the proposal to hold the Gonjaland Youth Association conference in Kpandai. The unanimous view of informants on this matter was that the drift had brought the two sides to the brink of war from which retreat seemed impossible.

⁴⁹Ibid., 5.

⁵⁰Ibid., Appendix: “Memoranda Presented to the Committee of Inquiry into the Gonja/Nawuris and Nanjuros Conflict by the District Security Committee (DISEC) East Gonja District Assembly” (n.d.), p. 3.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Ampiah, Part I, 31.

5.2 Economic factors

The economic causes of the Nawuri-Gonja conflict can be categorized into two: first, the wrangling over the payment of tribute and compensation, and second, land allocation and utilization in Alfai. In both cases, the issue of allodial rights was at the core.

5.2.1 Tributes and compensations

As in all traditional systems of government, Gonja demand for tribute from the Nawuri was an incident of their overlordship. As the political “overlord,” and “supposed” owner, of Alfai, the Kanankulaiwura claimed tribute rights from the Nawuri and other inhabitants in Alfai. The tribute took various forms. In the beginning, hind-legs of all large animals killed, whether domesticated or wild, by all subjects were given to the Kanankulaiwura as tribute.⁵³ In addition, elephant tusks and ears as well as skins of wild animals such as lions, leopards and hyenas were also given to the Kanankulaiwura as tribute.⁵⁴ This form of tribute had its beginnings in the origin of the Kanankulaiwura chiefly office. Until Gonja rule was established over the Nawuri in 1932, it was not obligatory for Nawuri hunters to give the Kanankulaiwura lumps of meat; it was a personal decision of individual Nawuri hunters. From 1932, however, the Gonja compelled the Nawuri to give hind-legs of all animals killed to the Kanankulaiwura. In the course of time, the obligation of giving lumps of meat to the Kanankulaiwura was extended to the Kpandai abattoir as well.

For the use of the land and other natural resources in Alfai, the Nawuri and other subject ethnic groups were obliged to provide foodstuffs to the Kanankulaiwura during

⁵³ Dixon, *op.cit.*, Appendix VI: “The Kanankulaiwura and his Elders of the Alfai Area in Gonja District Part of which now Lies in Togoland under the United Kingdom Trusteeship”, dated 25 March 1955.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

Gonja festivals such as *Damba*, *Abrotie* and *Akyang*.⁵⁵ Similarly, it was the duty of all fisher folks to provide baskets of fish or their equivalent to the Kanankulaiwura every Friday and during Ramadan as part of the privilege of fishing in tributaries of the Oti River in Alfai.⁵⁶

In a number of petitions, the Nawuri decried the tribute exactions by the Gonja. They described them as exploitative and unjust. They also maintained that they were the legitimate owners of Alfai and as such their chiefs rather should be the recipients of all tributes paid in respect of the land in Alfai. Similarly, the Nawuri proposed that the tributes collected from the fisher folks be paid to the Oti River Fetish Priests. Dixon, however, rejected this proposal in his report.⁵⁷

The Gonja also demanded labour services from the Nawuri and other ethnic groups in Alfai. They were obliged to send their people “annually to make a farm for the Kanankulaiwura for the use of his household being part of the tribute owed by the inhabitants to their sovereign (Kanankulaiwura).”⁵⁸ Provision of labour services to the Kanankulaiwura caused a lot of discontent among the Nawuri, and was one of their main grievances against the Gonja. In their view, the labour obligations that the Gonja imposed turned them from legitimate owners of Alfai to serfs. In one of their petitions against this policy, they stated that they had been treated as serfs under the watch of

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Dixon, op.cit., 28. He stated: “the object of this proposal – it cannot be described as a grievance – is obscure. In the first place Fetish Priests are not supported by Local Councils unless they also hold a traditional office entitling them to membership of a Council; and, secondly, according to the Gonjas, the Fetish Priests never did receive regular payments from the fishermen who, in point or fact, paid sundry dues to the Kanankulaiwura. The only reasonable explanation for this proposal is that the Nawuris seek to obtain the support of the River Oti Priests to confirm their claim that in the olden days they had a boundary at the River. This is a matter which can very well be left to the Alfai Local Council.”

⁵⁸ Ibid.

District Commissioners, and that the government agents failed to ameliorate their plight.⁵⁹

Gonja appropriation of compensations under their conferred status as owners of Alfai further contributed to the rising tension between them and the Nawuri. The Gonja laid claim to, and received compensation for, parcels of land in Alfai inundated by the construction of the Akosombo Dam, which should have been paid to the Nawuri.⁶⁰ The only way open to the Nawuri to exorcise the ghost of Gonja's arbitrariness seemed to be war.

5.2.2 Land allocation and utilization in Alfai

The question of who owned lands in Alfai in the pre-colonial period appears to have been answered by the Ampiah Committee. The Committee found that allodial land rights resided in the Nawuri. As already discussed⁶¹, the amalgamation of Alfai with the Gonja kingdom was a function of the introduction of indirect rule in the Northern Territories in 1932. Having been declared overlords, the Gonja went on to appropriate Alfai land. From that date the Gonja exercised authority in the allocation and utilization of land in Alfai. Ironically, the 1932 Native Administration Ordinance that delimited the boundaries of the Gonja District acknowledged Nawuri ownership of the lands in Alfai implicitly, by defining the Gonja District to include:

all the tribal lands lying within the Northern section:- (a) **belonging to the Owure of Nchumuru; or (b) belonging to the NAWURI TRIBE**

⁵⁹Letter from Nana Atorsah (Nawuri) and Nawuri Elders to District Commissioner for Salaga, dated 24th December, 1951. The relevant portion of the petition read: "it is true that we the Nawuris have been treated as serfs under the direct "nose" of the District Commissioners without their (sic) raising a finger ..."

⁶⁰ Ampiah, op.cit., 31. As Ampiah Committee puts it: "one of the complaints of the Nawuris was that when the Akosombo Dam was about to be constructed, compensation was paid to the owners of the land as well as those who had their crops on the land. The Gonjas put in a claim for compensation. Even though they were not the owners of the land and had no crops on the land, the Kpembewura Alhaji Baba A. Jawula Ababio I and his relatives in Kpandai received compensation as owners of the land acquired. The Nawuri claim that this amounted to embezzlement by the Gonjas."

⁶¹ For details, see chapter three of this study.

and subject to the chief of Kpandai [Kanankulaiwura]” (Emphases mine).⁶²

If the Nawuri were not the allodial owners of Alfai, how could the lands have been said to belong to them? The phrase “subject to the chief of Kpandai” cannot be construed to have vested allodial rights in the Kanankulaiwura.⁶³ As was the custom among the Akan, for instance, the Paramount Chief did not ordinarily own the lands of the villages and towns attached to the paramount stool. They were only obliged to contribute periodically to the support of the paramountcy.⁶⁴

Besides, the accounts of immigrant settlers in Alfai such as the Konkomba and the Bassari seemed to confirm that allodial rights in Alfai in the colonial period resided in the Nawuri. According to the Ampiah Committee Report,

Ninkab Manin, who has lived in the area (Alfai) from around 1929 – at the time of Capt. C.C. Lilley, confirmed that the Nawuri had been exercising rights over the land for a very long time despite the “overlordship” of the Gonjas. With regard to the acquisition and allocation of land in Alfai area the Konkombas and the Bassares said they had always approached the Nawuri and that they dealt with the Gonja in matters relating to chieftaincy and political affairs only.⁶⁵

Finally, a colonial record affirms that customary law in Alfai was in principle identical with the general customary land law in the Northern Territories. The implication is that allodial rights in land were held by kinship groups, which, in this

⁶² Annual Report on British Sphere of Togoland, 1932, 6.

⁶³ Ampiah, op.cit., Part I, 46.

⁶⁴ See: Robert Addo-Fening, *Akyem Abuakwa, 1700-1943: From Ofori Panin to Sir Ofori Atta* (Trondheim: Department of History, Norwegian Univ. of Science and Technology, 1997), p. 23. According to Addo-Fening, “by the middle of the nineteenth century the convention seems to have been established that sub-chiefs were the ‘immediate owners’ of the lands attaching directly to their sub-stools, subject to the sovereign rights and interests of the paramount stool.” This view was reiterated by Kojo Amanor. He states that In Akyem, “most of ... [the] land lay under the authority of town chiefs, and the Okyenhene had very little land under his direct control” (see page 144 of his work). Kojo Amanor, “Customary Land, Mobile Labour and Alienation in the Eastern Region of Ghana”. Richard Kuba and Carola Lentz (ed.), *Land and the Politics of Belonging in West Africa* (Leiden/Boston: Koninklijke Brill, 2006), pp. 137-159.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 47.

instance, were the Nawuri.⁶⁶ The same account further states that in Gonja, political rights were not identical with rights in land; that generally allodial rights in land were, with one or two exceptions, vested in Gonja in groups of various ethnic distinctions; and that politically, all these distinct ethnicities formed part of the Gonja kingdom.⁶⁷

The colonial administration in Alfai did not specifically obliterate Nawuri allodial land rights though the Gonja seemed to be bent on claiming such rights. Both ethnic groups exercised rights in allocating parcels of lands in their areas of occupation or settlement to people for settlement and commercial activities. Beginning in the 1940s and 1950s, a number of factors such as Nawuri migration from Alfai in 1943, local government arrangements in Alfai, Gonja overlordship systematically weakened and eroded Nawuri's exercise of their allodial land rights in Alfai. As already noted, some of the Nawuri went into self-exile in 1943 and were deemed by the Gonja to have renounced their allodial rights in the land. Though the authenticity of the document to that effect was questioned, it became the basis of Gonja argument that the Nawuri had given up their allodial land rights in Alfai.⁶⁸ It appears that when the Nawuri went into exile, they temporarily transferred allodial land rights in Alfai to the Bassari for the duration of their exile. An official record states:

evidence of Nawura (sic) migration was found mostly in Kpandai itself. The Basare (sic) there maintained that the Nawura (sic) to whom the land belonged transferred rights in land to the senior Basare (sic) lineage; and there are indications – although to be treated with a certain suspicion – that the allodial rights themselves were transferred from Nawura (sic) to the Basare (sic) on the former abandoning the land upon migration.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ NRG/8/2/210 Nawuri and Nanjuro under United Nations Trusteeship: "Note on the Kpandai Area" (n.d.), p. 1.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁶⁸ For details on Nawuri migrations from Alfai in 1943, see pp. 105-107 of this study.

⁶⁹ NRG/8/2/210 Nawuri and Nanjuro under United Nations Trusteeship: "Note on the Kpandai Area" (n.d.), 1.

Upon their return to Alfai in 1949, the Nawuri resumed the exercise of their allodial land rights, but were resisted by the Gonja. Don Theobald, a missionary who founded the Evangelical Church of Ghana in Kpandai, confirmed that he acquired a parcel of land from the Nawuri to establish a Mission house and that he acquired another parcel from the Gonja to establish a leprosarium after Nawuri departure in 1943.⁷⁰ The Bassari in Kpandai also claimed in 1951 that they obtained land from the Nawuri.⁷¹ In the same year, a Konkomba man also claimed that he and his family acquired parcels of land in Kabonwule from the Nawuri chief of the town.⁷² However, in the same year, a Dagomba man claimed to have obtained land in Kpandai from the Gonja.⁷³

Backed by colonial power, the Gonja increasingly interfered with parcels of land effectively under use by the Nawuri. Indeed, they sometimes confiscated Nawuri farm lands under effective occupation. The Ampiah Committee remarked that it was in cases when the Gonja attempted to interfere with land in possession of the Nawuri under the guise of “overlordship” that trouble always arose between the two ethnicities.⁷⁴ A case in point occurred in 1951 when Kotokrow of Kitare, a Nawuri, had his palm plantation seized and sold out by the Kanankulaiwura. Kotokrow filed a civil writ in the Alfai Court, but the verdict went in favour of Kanankulaiwura.⁷⁵ Kotokrow could not file an appeal in the Kumasi High Court to overturn the verdict for financial reasons.⁷⁶

In July 1954, a land dispute arose between some Nawuri kinsmen, Kodjo Police, Philip Kwaku and three others of Katiejeli on the one hand, and the Kanankulaiwura on

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid. Also see Ampiah, *op.cit.*, Part I, 42.

⁷² NRG/8/2/210 Nawuri and Nanjuro under United Nations Trusteeship: “Kpandai: 10th January 1951”, 1.

⁷³ Ibid. Also see Ampiah, *op.cit.*, Part I, 42.

⁷⁴ Ampiah, *op.cit.*, 49.

⁷⁵ Vincent Kwame Okeso, Ghana Police Force, Takoradi on Civil Case of Appeal – “Kotokrow Kitare” - to Nawuri Elders, dated 17th March 1959.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

the other.⁷⁷ The Kanankulaiwura filed a civil suit against them in the Gonja Native Court in Salaga.⁷⁸ Fearing that there would be a miscarriage of justice, the defendants petitioned for the transfer of the case to the Magistrate's Court at Salaga.⁷⁹ In an accompanying affidavit, the defendants stated:

... there is at present a breach of relations between the Nawuris and the Gonja brought about by a land dispute ... the plaintiff, well aware of this, has taken a civil action against us at the Gonja Native Court in order to secure a judgement against us, which judgement is bound to be of bias and prejudice (sic) ... The incident forming the dispute for which the plaintiff is instituting a claim, has taken place on the Nawuri land and should therefore not be investigated by the Gonja or Kpembe Court.⁸⁰

The defendants' petition for a transfer of the case went unheeded, and the Native Court proceeded to adjudicate the case. The Gonja dominated Native Court ruled in favour of the Kanankulaiwura.

As overlords of Alfai, immigrants into Alfai needed to seek Gonja permission to live in the area or utilize any parcel of its land. Since the 1950s, immigrants, mostly Konkomba, Bassari, Kotokoli and Dagomba, have had to seek Gonja consent to settle or use parcels of land in Alfai. Later, immigrants came to think or assume that Alfai belonged to the Gonja. A Konkomba representative on the Alfai Local Council, for example, stated in 1951 that:

when they first came to settle at Kabonwule they were told by the Kabonwule-Enumu (tindana) that the land was for the Gonjas and that the Chief (Kanankulaiwura) is stationed at Kpandai. They were introduced to the Kanankulaiwura by the Enumu of kabonwule. They still, he said, believe that the right owner of the land was for the Kanankulaiwura ...⁸¹

⁷⁷ Motion on notice in the matter of : "Kanankulaiwura of Gonja – Plaintiff versus, Kodjo police, Philip Kwaku – Defendants and three others at Ketiajeli" dated 30th July, 1954.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Affidavit sworn by Kodjo Police at Salaga on 30th July, 1954.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ NRG/8/2/210 Nawuri and Nanjuro under United Nations Trusteeship: "Kpandai: 10th January 1951", p. 1.

In 1952-3, the Nawuri failed to contest a land suit in dispute in respect of the boundary between Alfai and Nanumba, and by default gave opportunity to the Gonja to affirm that Alfai was theirs.⁸² In the view of the Gonja the fact that they fought a land case on behalf of Alfai without Nawuri objection implicitly meant that allodial rights in the area resided in them (the Gonja).⁸³ The Gonja cited the land suit as proof of their right to allodial land title in Alfai. Over time, the Gonja propaganda about the symbolic significance of the land suit entrenched the view among the settlers that they were the *de jure* owners of Alfai.

Hardly any record about the court proceedings of the land dispute survives.⁸⁴ The only existing records show that a meeting was held for the Gonja and the Nanumba at Kpandai on 5th and 6th March 1940 under the auspices of Mr. E.O. Rake, Assistant Chief Commissioner for the Northern Territories, in which the respective claims of the Gonja and the Nanumba were heard.⁸⁵ Judgement of the dispute was then entered in favour of the Gonja. In his report, the Assistant Chief Commissioner stated that the

⁸²“Land Dispute between Gonja and Nanumba.” A letter from the Ministry of Communications and Works to the Chief Commissioner of the Northern Territories, dated May 7, 1952; “Land at Lungni.” A letter from the Government’s Agent of the Dagomba District, Yendi, to the Bimbilla Na, dated November 5, 1953.

⁸³ Dixon, *op.cit.*, 25.

⁸⁴ Ampiah, *op.cit.*, Part I, 48.

⁸⁵ Judgement of the “Nanumba-Gonja Boundary Dispute” by Mr. E.O. Rake, Assistant Chief Commissioner of the Northern Territories, dated March 21, 1940. In attendance were Capt. J.A. Armstrong (District Commissioner for Dagomba under whose administration the Nanumba state was placed) and Mr. J.K.G. Syme (District Commissioner for Gonja). Representing Nanumba were Dadinkai Gbumbaligana, Chepura Wulehema, Wumbiaye Gundana, Napon Chambana, and Salerli Tinaligana. The Gonja were represented by Sulemani Kpembewura, Sulemani Kanyasewura, and Mbema Kanankulaiwura. Other records about the land dispute are: “Land Dispute between Gonja and Nanumba.” A letter from the Ministry of Communications and Works to the Chief Commissioner of the Northern Territories, dated May 7, 1952; “Land at Lungni.” A letter from the Government’s Agent of the Dagomba District, Yendi, to the Bimbilla-Na, dated November 5, 1953. Indeed, the 1952 letter was signed by J.A. Braimah, a Gonja, on behalf of the Ministry. On the other hand, the 1953 letter was purported to have been signed by the Government Agent of the Dagomba District, but his name was not indicated.

“boundary is to remain as before, that is to say as given in the Report on Nanumba in 1931 by Mr. Amherst ...”⁸⁶ The opinion of the Ampiah Committee was that:

as there are situations where an occupier of land can and should take action in respect of land, without further particulars of the cases supra, it would be wrong to hold it against the Nawuris and Nchumurus as the relinquishment (sic) of the rights in the land.⁸⁷

The Gonja claim lacked legal basis, but the high density of the immigrant population in Alfai contributed to the entrenchment of the view that the Gonja were the owners of Alfai. In the 1950s, Nawuri population was estimated at about one thousand, two hundred as against two thousand, three hundred and fifty Kotokoli and Bassari alone, excluding Konkomba, with the highest number of immigrants in Alfai.⁸⁸ As more and more immigrants dealt with the Gonja in matters of land allocation and utilization, they gradually came to accept as a matter of fact that allodial land rights in Alfai resided in the Gonja, and not in the Nawuri.

Slowly but steadily the exercise of Nawuri authority over the allocation of land in Alfai to immigrants diminished. In an endeavour to arrest the erosion of their allodial land rights in Alfai, the Nawuri took some initiatives. In 1951, they destooled their chief Nana Lowugyayin, who was considered to be too old and feeble to lead them.⁸⁹ In his place, they enstooled the young and energetic Nana Atorsah in August 1951, to lead them to resist Gonja rule and reassert Nawuri allodial rights in Alfai.⁹⁰ They also sent a number of petitions and oral representations to the Government of the Gold Coast and

⁸⁶ Judgement of the “Nanumba-Gonja Boundary Dispute” by Mr. E.O. Rake, Assistant Chief Commissioner of the Northern Territories, dated March 21, 1940, p. 3. The Assistant Chief Commissioner further noted that “no survey of this region has been made recently, and it is recommended that when the Survey Department can do so a survey should be made of the boundary between Nanumba and Gonja, and to be attached to this report.”

⁸⁷ Ampiah, *op.cit.*, Part I, 48.

⁸⁸ NRG/8/2/210 Nawuri and Nanjuro under United Nations Trusteeship: “Note on the Kpandai Area”, p. 1.

⁸⁹ A letter from Nawuri chiefs and elders to the Minister of Local Government, dated 14 October 1951.

⁹⁰ For the activities of Nana Atorsah, see chapter four of this study.

the United Nations Organization about their plight. Besides, they agitated for an increase in Nawuri membership of the Alfai Local Council, and that their head chief, the Nawuriwura, should be made the president of the council. Furthermore, the Nawuri made fruitless attempts to get Alfai transferred to the Kete-Krachi or Nanumba District. The initiatives yielded no positive results and the Nawuri increasingly turned their minds to war as the only viable option through which they could reassert their allodial rights in Alfai. It was this mentality together with the escalating tension between the two ethnic groups that created a volatile situation in Alfai.

By the dawn of independence, three scenarios about Nawuri-Gonja encounters emerged. Alfai continued to remain as an integral part of the Gonja Traditional Area, which continued to strengthen Gonja conviction that the land belonged to them. Furthermore, the dispute over allodial rights in Alfai remained unresolved; the two ethnic groups continued to jostle each other over claims to allodial land rights. In addition, both ethnic groups continued to exercise rights in Alfai land. The Nawuri allocated and utilized their lands without let or hindrance from the Gonja. The Gonja also did likewise without hindrance from the Nawuri.⁹¹ The practice did not cause problems so long as these allocations and utilizations did not interfere with the rights of the other ethnic group. The problem arose when one ethnic group interfered in the other's attempt to allocate land for utilization. As the Ampiah Committee pointed out:

The Nawuris and Nchumurus have allocated and utilized their lands without let or hindrance from the Gonjas. The Gonjas have also allocated and used land which are in their possession without let or hindrance so long as these allocations and utilizations did not interfere with the rights of the other ethnic groups – Nawuris, Nchumurus, etc. It is only where the Gonjas have attempted to interfere with the land in the possession of the

⁹¹ Ampiah, *op.cit.*, Part I, 49.

Nawuris and the Nchumurus in the guise of ‘overlordship’, that the trouble has always arisen.⁹²

5.3 War Clouds on the Horizon

The first event that presaged a drift towards war occurred in 1935 when the Nawuri resisted the amalgamation of Alfai with the Gonja state.⁹³ The drift accelerated in the 1940s as a result of the attempts by the Kpembewura in 1943 to recruit Nawuri men as soldiers for the West African Frontier Force.⁹⁴ It took the intervention of the colonial officials to prevent the outbreak of communal violence between the two ethnic groups.

In the 1950s and 1960s, the imminence of war was signalled by skirmishes arising from Nana Atorsah’s militant posture. In the 1970s and early 1980s, however, significant progress was made towards peace owing to the peaceful disposition of the reigning Nawuriwura, Nana Asaseadwo, who favoured dialogue rather than militancy. Following his death in 1986, the drift towards war intensified. Nawuri youths had begun to acquire hunter’s guns following the outbreak of the Konkomba-Nanumba war of 1980, and by the late 1980s at least every average family could boast of one.⁹⁵

The Nawuri and other ethnic groups in Northern Ghana subject to the Gonja, Nanumba and Dagomba appear to have banded together to fight to regain their autonomy. They took practical measures to acquire sophisticated modern weapons and train the Nawuri in their use. A letter by a group of people, who referred to themselves as

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ For details, see chapter four of this study.

⁹⁴ For details, see chapter four of this study.

⁹⁵ Nana Anasinchor Moses, *Oblisa* of Bladjai [personal communication], December 15, 2011. The guns were purchased ostensibly for hunting purposes. However, the ulterior motive behind their purchase was to build up arms to a level that could boost the military strength of Nawuri in the event of an outbreak of hostilities between them and Gonja. The Nawuri of Kpandai deny this claim. They maintain that they did not have enough ammunition at the onset of the war, and that this was due to the fact that they failed to anticipate war.

the “National Liberation Movement of Western Togoland”, reveals that a meeting was held in Kpalime in modern Togo in April 1989 at which a consensus was reached to assist the Nawuri to attack the Gonja in Alfai.⁹⁶ The letter read:

there is a general consensus that Alfae (sic) should be liberated before Yendi, which will definitely need more men and equipment. Another school of thought has it that we should wait until the PNDC government hands over power to civilian government before we tackle the Yendi issue since the government may not stay aloof to see our plans go through ... We have taken delivery of the arms and ammunition through Mr. Njoriam and the three training (sic) of the Nawuri Youth to handle the weapons has begun. It is hoped that by September, they will be prepared to annihilate the Gonjas from Alfae (sic) area. It is feared that by this time we may not have enough ammunition to keep the enemy ...⁹⁷

The outbreak of war between the Nawuri and the Gonja was only a matter of time. It only needed a trigger. Two events provided the triggers that caused the outbreak of a communal violence between the Nawuri and the Gonja in 1991. The first event was a clash of egos of Nawuri and Gonja women. Mid-morning of April 7, 1991, street fight broke out following an argument that occurred between some Nawuri and Gonja women over land and the politics of ethnic identity. It initially began as an innocuous argument but soon became partisan as scores of the two ethnic groups joined. Ultimately, a free fight ensued.⁹⁸ The fighters pelted each other with stones and sadistically wounded themselves with manoeuvrable objects of any kind. After almost an hour of a free fight, the fighters finally dispersed. Though the fight was not widespread in scope, it was significant because it heightened the already tensed atmosphere in Alfai, particularly at

⁹⁶ A letter by the General Secretary of the “National Liberation Movement of Western Togoland” to its members dated 6 June 1989. It should be pointed out that the movement was the brainchild of some Konkomba elite. It was not surprising that the leadership of the movement was made of Konkomba elite. Its interim executive members included Philip Dedabe, Joshua Jagre, Mabiba Abudu and Njoriam, all Konkomba elites.

⁹⁷ Ibid. Significantly, the Nawuri deny knowledge of any training of their youths to fight the Gonja and that if such training took place in Alfai, the trainees could not have been Nawuri youths but their Konkomba counterparts.

⁹⁸ Nawuri and Gonja informants claim that the tension-laden, temperamental and ethnicized atmosphere that emerged in Kpandai as a result of the street fight between the women of the two ethnic groups was an event that made war inevitable.

Kpandai. It signalled the preparedness of both groups to resort to war to sort out their differences, and served as a dress-rehearsal for a more violent and widespread confrontation between their male counterparts.

The second event that set the Nawuri and the Gonja on a collision course was the physical confrontations that occurred between Nawuri and Gonja men subsequent to the fracas between their women. As the embers of the fight between the Nawuri and Gonja women began to flicker out, an intense verbal confrontation ensued between some Nawuri and Gonja men. The confrontation began when Nana Atorsah Bresiam Okore I, the Nawuri chief of Kpandai, confronted “Abe-Chairman”, a Gonja, over a disputed piece of land.⁹⁹ Nana Atorsah Bresiam Okore objected to the attempted sale of the land to three fitter-mechanics. The confrontation between the two, which initially was an argument about allodial rights, soon degenerated into violence when a number of Nawuri youths joined.¹⁰⁰

Nana Atorsah Bresiam Okore was said to have reported the matter to the Kpandai Police, though the station diary did not show any entry of this report.¹⁰¹ The Nawuri, particularly the congregants of the Roman Catholic Church, were enraged by the attempt

⁹⁹ Ampiah, *op.cit.*, 33.

¹⁰⁰ The piece of land on which was in dispute was adjacent to the Kpandai Roman Catholic Church, the Christian denomination to which a majority of Nawuri belonged. Few minutes after the confrontation had begun, the Kpandai Roman Catholic Church coincidentally ended its Sunday Service. On seeing Nana Atorsah in a verbal confrontation with the Gonja man, the Nawuri congregants of the Roman Catholic Church rushed to the scene and assaulted the Gonja man and the three fitter-mechanics.

¹⁰¹ Ampiah, *op.cit.*, 33. Like his father (Nana Atorsah Agyeman I, 1951-1968), Nana Atorsah Bresiam Okore favoured militant measures against the Gonja. In his capacity as the Kpandaiwura, Nana Atorsah Bresiam Okore did everything possible to halt the right of the Gonja to allocate parcels of land in Kpandai to developers. The Gonja blame the outbreak of the war on Kpandai. They allege that Nana Atorsah Bresiam Okore personally and single-handedly mobilized Nawuri warriors and ordered them to attack them. There was no doubt that Nana Atorsah Bresiam Okore, like his father in the 1950s and 1960s, and like his other Nawuri chiefs, played a prominent role in Nawuri affairs before and after the outbreak of war between the Nawuri and the Gonja in 1991. However, concrete evidence does not exist to implicate him in the outbreak of the war. As the Ampiah Committee (Ampiah, *op.cit.*, Part I, 71) pointed out, “the evidence is not sufficient to implicate Messrs Felix Kwaku Atorsah [Nana Atorsah Bresiam Okore] ... Joseph Kwesi Mbimadong [Nana Obimpeh –Balaiwura] ... and Nana Nkpanibake Oclass [Kitare-Disanewura] ... as the instigators of the disturbance, though it is obvious that they have contributed a lot in the assertions of the rights of the Nawuris and have been very articulate in their presentation of the grievances of the Nawuris.”

of the Gonja man to sell the piece of land which was purported to have been sold earlier to the Kpandai Roman Catholic Church. The Nawuri congregants claimed the piece of land as their property, and would not let go of it. They saw the attempted sale as part of “the wider Gonja scheme of a wanton sale of Nawuri lands.”¹⁰²

One account indicates that the Nawuri belligerently moved into the Gonja quarters in Kpandai to perpetrate what they called “the crusade of stopping the Gonja from the wanton sale of Nawuri lands”.¹⁰³ The Nawuri crusade was ill-timed and misguided. It was embarked upon at a time that peace was fragile following the episodic physical confrontations of the Nawuri and Gonja women, and was carried into the heart of Kpandai, where most of the Gonja resided. Naturally, it attracted the ire of the Gonja, and set the stage for a physical confrontation. A street fight ensued, which degenerated into a war between the two ethnic groups.

Another account attributes the war to the bellicosity of the Gonja. According to the account, the Gonja verbally assaulted the Nawuri congregants of the Roman Catholic Church as they made their way home from Sunday Church service.¹⁰⁴ At the point of intersection of Gonja and Nawuri quarters of the town, some Nawuri Roman Catholic congregants ran into a fight between their kinsmen and some Gonja people. In the encounter, two Nawuri men – Kwame Beyifine and Samuel Ntiamoah – were reportedly stabbed by some Gonja men. The Nawuri victims were reportedly rushed first to the Police Station and then to the Clinic accompanied by one Isaac Aboamane Kasta, a Nawuri youth activist.¹⁰⁵ Gonja casualties included Basiru Tahiru, Barichisu Abdulai and

¹⁰²Nana Samson, Okyeame of Kpandai [personal communication], November 1, 2011.

¹⁰³ Samuel Ntiamoah [personal communication]. November 1, 2011.

¹⁰⁴ Geographically, the Roman Catholic Church in Kpandai was sited at the southern end of the town. The Nawuri congregants of the Church, who lived at the northern end of the town, had to pass through the heart of the town, the Gonja quarters, to and from Church.

¹⁰⁵ Ampiah, *op.cit.*, 34.

Kasim Lasseni.¹⁰⁶ Hell broke loose after Anekor, a Nawuri and the war's first victim, was shot and killed by Asimani, a Gonja. At this stage everybody began to run for their lives. Both sides immediately mobilised their forces for war and attacked each other, thus beginning the Nawuri-Gonja war.

5.4 Conclusion

Six major conclusions emerge from this chapter. Firstly, the chapter pointed out that a multiplicity of socio-cultural factors and economic dimensions of allodial rights combined with the ambitions and political activism of the Gonjaland Youth Association (GJA) precipitated the outbreak of the Nawuri-Gonja conflict.

The *Kankpe esiepu* affair contributed to the rising tension between the Nawuri and the Gonja. It created in Nawuri minds the impression that the Gonja were hell-bent on interfering in their age-long customary practices as part of Gonja agenda to legitimize their claim to allodial rights in Alfai.

Furthermore, Gonja stereotyping of the Nawuri caused uproar and set the stage for communal violence between the two ethnicities. In addition, western education contributed to the build-up of the tension between the Nawuri and the Gonja as Nawuri educated elite rallied the Nawuri and intensified their resistance to Gonja rule in Alfai.

The political activism of the Gonjaland Youth Association was provocative to the Nawuri. The re-designation of the erstwhile Gonja Youth Association as "Gonjaland

¹⁰⁶ Ampiah, o.cit., Exh X8, 1. The exhibit, which was a clinical report of the World Evangelization Crusade showed that Basiru Tahiru (a Gonja) was stabbed in the abdomen, Kwame Beyifine (a Nawuri) had a deep cut in his left hand face, Barichisu Abdulai (a Gonja lady) had a deep cut on her head, Kasim Lasseni (a Gonja man) had five bullet wounds on head, arm and back; Issah Abudu (a Gonja man) had seven bullet wounds on his left hand and legs; Issah Abudu (a Gonja man) sustained two bullet wounds in his left hand; Braimah Alhassan (a Gonja man) sustained six bullet wounds in his head and arms; Abdulai Chafour (a Gonja) had a deep cut on his head; and Samuel Ntiamoah (a Nawuri) sustained a deep cut on his left hand, face and lost one tooth.

Youth Association” was suggestive of an act of imperialism in furtherance of Gonja claim to allodial rights in Alfai.

In addition, the imposition of tribute on the Nawuri after 1932 was repugnant to the Nawuri as it implied non-recognition of their status as autochthones of Alfai. This caused bad blood between the two ethnicities and set them on collision course.

Finally, the exercise of allodial rights by both the Nawuri and Gonja contributed to the rising tension in Alfai. The allodial rights of the Nawuri in Alfai lands were steadily and gradually eroded over time. The attempts of the Nawuri to reclaim their allodial rights in Alfai eventually led to outbreak of war between them and the Gonja in 1991. The fundamental cause of all the various outbreaks of violence between the Nawuri and the Gonja was the wrangle over who held allodial title to Alfai lands – the autochthonous Nawuri or the immigrant Gonja.

CHAPTER SIX

THE NAWURI-GONJA CONFLICT: PHASES, OUTCOMES AND RESOLUTION

6.0 Introduction

On Sunday April 7, 1991, church services of Christians in Alfai were disrupted by communal violence which broke out between the Nawuri and the Gonja. The war that ensued passed through three phases during which the pendulum of victory and defeat oscillated between the warring factions. The Gonja emerged victorious in the first phase, while the Nawuri won the second and third.

Apart from the loss of human lives and property, the Gonja-Nawuri war disrupted economic and socio-cultural activities in Kpandai and its environs. It also led to internal displacement of people with its attendant social and economic repercussions. For close to two decades after the communal violence, Alfai continued to experience the rippling effects of the war. All attempts made at resolving the conflict since 1991 have failed. This chapter attempts to establish the chronology and trajectory of the Nawuri-Gonja conflict of 1991-1992, and assess its outcomes and attempts at resolving it.

6.1 Phases of the Nawuri-Gonja conflicts

6.1.1 The First Phase (April 1991 to June 1991)

The first phase which erupted on 7th April 1991 lasted till June the same year. It has been tagged the *First Atorsah Yakoro*.¹ The first phase was not carefully coordinated, especially the initial strategies of attack. As a result, the war took on the character of sporadic shootings and uncoordinated combats. Some Gonja families lived in the Nawuri quarters in Kpandai, while others, including some Nawuri families, lived in mixed quarters separated from those of their ethnic groups. Naturally, it took considerable time for persons trapped in the enemy territory to escape to join their kinsmen.

The fighting forces of both factions in this phase were relatively small as the first fighting was localized, that is restricted to Kpandai. The relatively small numbers of combatants were increased when Nawuri and Gonja troops from other settlements joined. The Nawuri forces were strengthened by the arrival of ethnic Nawuri troops from other Nawuri settlements in Alfai, those of the Gonja, by the arrival of a sizeable fighting force from Salaga and other parts of Gonjaland. It was the arrival of these fighting forces that caused the war to escalate. The weaponry deployed by both factions in the early

¹Yakoro is a Hausa term which means “driving out somebody/something by another.” First Atorsah ‘Yakoro’ means the first exodus sparked off by Nana Atorsah Okore I. Nana Atorsah Okore I was the Kpandaiwura at the time of the outbreak of the conflict and was said to have been the leading figure, who instigated the Nawuri to take to arms against the Gonja. This terminology appears to be a misnomer because it obscures the role played by other leading Nawuri figures such as Nana Mbimadong Obimpeh (Balaiwura), and Nana Oklas Nkpanibaki Oklapunye (Disanewura). These figures and many other figures played leading roles in getting the Nawuri to remain resolute on their threat that there would be war if the Gonja went on to have their Gonjaland Youth meeting in Kpandai. Indeed, in one of the meetings with a mediation team from Tamale before the eruption of the conflict, Nana Oklapunye was the Nawuri spokesperson, and in that capacity, swore that he and his Nawuri kinsmen were prepared to die rather than to allow the Gonja to have their youth meeting in Kpandai. In the light of this, it is inappropriate to name any phase of the conflict after one of the leading Nawuri leaders except to find the logic of the explanation in the fact that it was named after Nana Atorsah Okore I because the Nawuri agitations which led to the wars began in Kpandai. Hence the naming of the phases of the conflict after the then Nawuri chief of Kpandai. For the roles played by leading Nawuri figures, including Nana Atorsah Bresiam Okore, see: Ampiah, *op.cit.*, Exh. X¹: “Confidential: Nawuri Threat to Impeding Gonjaland Youth Association Conference Scheduled for Kpandai Between 28th and 30th March, 1991” – A Letter by Bureau of National Investigation (BNI), Tamale, to The REGSEC, Tamale, dated March 18, 1991, pp. 2 and 3; “REGSEC Sub-Committee’s Visit to Kpandai Area: Notes Taken”, p. 3; “Minutes of Meeting of REGSEC on One Side with Leaders of Gonja and Nawuri on the Other in Connection with Peace Negotiations Following the Gonja-Nawuri Conflict Held on Tuesday, 7th May, 1991”, 1.

phase of the war was of inferior quality. It consisted of short, locally manufactured hunters' guns, clubs and machetes. The arrival of the Gonja forces from Salaga and other parts of Gonjaland drastically changed the nature of weaponry deployed. Some warriors now wielded modern weaponry such as AK47.²

The Nawuri had the upper hand in the first two days of fighting. They chased the Gonja into the Kanankulaiwura's house, where they sought refuge. Nawuri warriors besieged the house, but were unable to break into it partly because of police intervention.³ The pendulum of victory swung on the third day towards the Gonja when a fleet of vehicles from Salaga arrived at Kpandai carrying Gonja warriors, estimated at around two thousand. Beefed up by the reinforcement from Salaga, the Gonja launched a full-scale attack on the Nawuri and expelled them from their villages.⁴ The Nawuri fled from their settlements and sought refuge in Nkwanta and Nanumba Districts.⁵

The ease with which the Gonja defeated the Nawuri is attributable to the sudden arrival of Gonja warriors from Salaga and other parts of Gonjaland. It increased their numbers and fire power, and thus put them in an advantageous position. The Nawuri lost the first phase partly due to the technological superiority enjoyed by the Gonja. While

²Yaw-Dou [personal communication], November 2, 2011. Though Yaw-Dou was illiterate, his descriptions and illustrations were suggestive of the fact that the Gonja used modern weaponry. According to him, the bullets used by the Gonja warriors were tiny and piercing. Yaw-Dou gathered a number of the shells of the bullets, and many of the police officers I showed them to, identified as bullets of AK47 rifles.

³ This was the consensual view of both Nawuri and Gonja informants. This view is collaborated by the number of casualties sustained by both ethnic groups in the first day of the war. The clinical report of the World Evangelization Crusade on 7 April 1991 showed that of all the casualties reported at the clinic, only two involved Nawuri; the rest were Gonja. See Ampiah, *op.cit.*, Exh X8, 1.

⁴ On their way to Kpandai, the Gonja warriors from Salaga first attacked Balai. In a fierce encounter, which lasted for a day, two lives were lost – one on each side. Nawuri houses in Balai were set ablaze and their properties looted. Later on the same day, the Gonja warriors set ablaze Nawuri houses in Kpandai, which were already deserted. The Gonja then carried the war to Katiejeli, Kabonwule, Bladjai and Kitare – all Nawuri settlements – on the 10th, 11th, 12th and 13th of April 1991, respectively and destroyed them.

⁵ The bulk of the refugees were in Nanumba District in places such as Tampoi (Tampoaye), Kajasu, Kpengasei, Jimang, Lungni, Wulensi and Bimbilla.

the Gonja used sophisticated weapons such as AK-47 rifles and double-barrel guns, the Nawuri used inferior weapons such as single-barrel guns, machetes and clubs.⁶

Lack of political unity of the Nawuri also accounted for their defeat. After the death of Nawuriwura Asaseadwo Bakianesu in 1986, the Nawuri Traditional Area passed through a period of schism as a result of a protracted chieftaincy dispute. The event divided the Nawuri between two claimants – Nana Gyakon of Nkanchina and Nana Atorsah Okore I of Kpandai.⁷ Central authority atrophied and Nawuri attacks lacked a central direction.

One cannot also rule out the fact that the Nawuri were taken unawares. There is no doubt that the Nawuri made feverish preparations for war when tension in Alfai heightened following the impending Gonjaland conference at Kpandai. Indeed, Nawuri warriors were deployed from other settlements to Kpandai to prevent the Gonja from holding their conference. However, their warriors were de-mobilized and disbanded soon after the ban of the Gonjaland conference. They assumed that peace would necessarily follow the cancellation by the Northern Regional Security Committee (RESEG) of the impending annual conferences of the Gonjaland Youth Association and of the Gonja

⁶Nana Oklapunye Oklas, [personal communication], November 20, 2011.

⁷ By the Nawuri rotational system, a candidate from Nkanchina should have been installed as the Nawuriwura. By design or due to Kpandai being the capital of the Nawuri, all previous Nawuriwuras except Nana Asaseadwo Bakianesu (1968-1986), who was a Balai Nawuri, were Kpandai kinsmen. As a result the Nawuri of Kpandai did not find it a problem to combine the office of the Kpandaiwura and Nawuriwura in one person. The problem arose when Nana Asaseadwo Bakianesu from Balai became the Nawuriwura. Some Kpandai Nawuri kinsmen raised eyebrows when the office of the Kpandaiwura was combined in the person of Nawuriwura Asaseadwo Bakianesu. After his death, however, the Kpandai Nawuri vowed to separate the office of the Kpandaiwura from that of the Nawuriwura. Hence they decided to install Nana Atorsah Bresiam Okore, a Kpandai Nawuri, as the Kpandaiwura. The Nkanchina candidate became uncomfortable with such arrangement and challenged the legitimacy of the Kpandai Nawuri's action. He maintained that the Nawuriwura must necessarily be the Kpandaiwura as well since the sources of revenue of the Nawuriwura had been usurped by the Kanankulaiwura; that the Nawuriwura could not function effectively in that capacity alone; and that the action of the Kpandai Nawuri amounted to usurpation. The Kpandai Nawuri disagreed, arguing that only a Kpandai Nawuri can be installed as Kpandaiwura; that it is their prerogative to decide whether or not to combine the office of the Kpandaiwura with that of the Nawuriwura; that if the office of the Kpandaiwura should necessarily be combined with that of the Nawuriwura, then changes should be made in Nawuri chieftaincy culture to make it possible for a Kpandai Nawuri kinsman to be installed as a chief in any of the Nawuri settlements; and that as long as the other Nawuri settlements were not willing to accept a Kpandai Nawuri as their chief, then they were also not willing to accept a Nawuriwura from any of the Nawuri settlements as the Kpandaiwura.

Traditional Council meeting scheduled to take place in Kpandai. Indeed, the Nawuri went into a joyous mood, interpreting the cancellation as a sign of victory. They never anticipated an outbreak of war.⁸ They hired a taxi, and:

were seen in Tamale busily buying calico from the market. The impression created of the white calico was that the Nawuris had achieved victory. No wonder the Nawuris in their taxi proceeded to Kpandai on the 5th of April 1991, clad in these white robes and publicly proclaimed that the Government had given the land to them. This naturally created a big stir among the Gonja population.⁹

In response, the Gonja, who were naturally unhappy about the turn of events, secretly prepared for war as Alhaji Haruna (a Gonja) transported ammunition to Kpandai, the midnight prior to the outbreak of hostilities.¹⁰ It was the element of surprise that tipped the scales in favour of the Gonja.

The Police in Kpandai played a part in Nawuri defeat by showing bias against them.¹¹ On 6th April 1991, they searched Nawuri homes for firearms and seized them. An entry in the Ghana Police Station Diary, Kpandai, for that day confirmed that a “search was made in some unspecified houses in Kpandai and a quantity of firearms was retrieved.”¹² At dawn of 7th April the Police received intelligence that the Gonja had offloaded ammunition from the car of Mr. Alhaji Haruna to his house at midnight, but took no action.¹³

The Nawuri suffered from the desertion of the other ethnic groups in Alfai, particularly the Konkomba. Previous to the outbreak of war, the minority ethnic groups in the Northern Region, spearheaded by the Konkomba, had formed the “National Liberation Movement of Western Togoland” and had shown intent in 1989 to support the

⁸ Ampiah, op.cit, Exh.C., “Background History of Gonja/Nawuri Conflict”, 7.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ampiah, op.cit., Part I, 33.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

Nawuri to fight the Gonja.¹⁴ The Nawuri naturally considered the Konkomba as allies. Unfortunately, the Konkomba failed to offer the Nawuri the anticipated support. No official explanation exists as to why the Konkomba failed to support the Nawuri when the war broke out. The general opinion of informants, however, was that the Konkomba were divided on the issue. The withholding of Konkomba support from the ill-prepared Nawuri contributed to their defeat. Outnumbered and overpowered by the Gonja warriors, the Nawuri were easily defeated in the first phase of the conflict.

Yet another reason for Nawuri defeat was the betrayal of their war secrets and strategies to the Gonja. Some Nawuri families in Kpandai, Nkanchina and Dodoai were influenced by their maternal ties with the Gonja to ally themselves with the Gonja. Prior to the outbreak of the war, members of these families eavesdropped on Nawuri meetings and obtained a lot of information about Nawuri plans which they passed on to the Gonja.¹⁵ In the course of the hostilities, it was these Nawuri-turned-Gonja, who showed the Gonja the routes to use in attacks on Nawuri settlements. These Nawuri-turned-Gonja also spied on the Nawuri and, on other occasions, led the Gonja warriors from one battle field to the other.¹⁶

The dominant strategy adopted by the Nawuri in the first phase was the use of stockade and village-to-village defence. This strategy proved effective initially, but eventually led to their defeat because of its inherent weaknesses. In the first place, it made it difficult for the Nawuri to fight the Gonja with a united front as each Nawuri contingent built a separate stockade and fought as a separate unit in defence of its

¹⁴ A letter by the General Secretary of the “National Liberation Movement of Western Togoland” to its members dated June 6, 1989. For details, see chapter five of this study.

¹⁵ Some Nawuri informants think that the pro-Gonja inclinations of some of the Nawuri was conditioned by their belief that it was expedient to ally themselves with the Gonja whom they considered were militarily superior to the Nawuri.

¹⁶ Nawuri informants and those of the settler ethnic groups such as Konkomba, Basare and Kotokoli maintained that known Nawuri kinsmen – Omot – in Kpandai and Nkanchina, Yaw Business in Katiejeli, and many other Nawuri families in Dodoai fraternized with the Gonja.

village. Reminiscent of experiences in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries when the so-called non-centralized states in Northern Ghana confronted the state-builders of Dagomba, Nanumba, Mamprusi and Gonja, each Nawuri village or town decided to protect its settlement and became preoccupied with the defence of its parochial interests instead of deploying troops to Kpandai to defeat the Gonja.¹⁷ The lack of coordination weakened the Nawuri militarily and rendered them susceptible to defeat. Fighting from behind stockades, and from behind trees and walls limited their targets as manoeuvrability became difficult.

There was a two-month lull after the defeat of the Nawuri in the first phase. During that period, the exigencies of cultivation of the land took precedence over political debate. The communal violence had disrupted farming activities, which had just begun in April. The Nawuri dispersed into the hinterlands in order to cultivate crops and weed their farms. Throughout the period that the Nawuri were engaged in farming activities, hostilities ceased.¹⁸ The lull was also due, in part, to Gonja failure to pursue the Nawuri to their hideouts to rout them. Though they had reliable information from their spies about Nawuri hideouts, the Gonja were unwilling to annihilate them.¹⁹

The two-month lull in fighting was used to strategise for another battle. The Nawuri used the period to mobilize and despatch contingents from their various hideouts

¹⁷ It is historically incorrect, and indeed, a fallacy of similarity to assume that the similarity of the military strategy of the Nawuri and those of the non-centralized states in Northern Ghana in the pre-colonial period was an indication of their uncentralized polity. This is because in some of the conflicts in Northern Ghana over the past three decades, some of the ethnic groups (hitherto centralized or non-centralized ones in the pre-colonial period) adopted uncoordinated strategies. For example, in the 1981 and 1994 Nanumba-Konkomba conflicts, the Nanumba communities fought as separate units defending their communities. As the Konkomba communities formed a locus around the Nanumba settlements, it became militarily dangerous, if not impossible, for the Nanumba to deploy their troops to a central point. Hence their strategies were uncoordinated. Similarly, the Gonja of Kitoe, Kayeresu and Kulipi fought the combined warriors of the Nawuri, Konkomba, Nchumuru and Basari as separate units in 1992, thus sharing similarity with the military strategies of the non-centralized states in pre-colonial Northern Ghana.

¹⁸ Mahama A. Hassan, a Kotokoli [personal communication], November 2, 2011. As Hassan puts it, “the pursuit of economic activities by the Nawuri has been the dynamo of the explanation of the two-month lull after the first battle.”

¹⁹ Nana Okumanque, Nkanchinawura, [personal communication], March 4, 2012.

to Balai, a Nawuri settlement located about two kilometres away from Kpandai.²⁰ At Balai, Nawuri troops rehearsed their strategies before moving to the garrisoned town of Kpandai.

6.1.2 The Second Phase (The Second Atorsah Yakoro) – June 1991

After a two-month lull, hostilities resumed again on 17th June 1991. The Nawuri launched an attack at dawn when the Gonja and their Muslim counterparts were in the Mosque praying.²¹ The attack was inspired by a desire to revenge themselves on the Gonja for their defeat and loss of properties in the first phase.²²

By mid-April Gonja warriors from other parts of the Gonja kingdom, who had been brought to garrison Kpandai, had returned to their respective bases. An entry in Police Diary at Kpandai confirmed that “Gonja mercenaries or warriors who had besieged Kpandai area from about 7 April stayed until after 16 April when they were persuaded to leave the area.”²³ Following the departure of Gonja warriors from Kpandai, the Nawuri returned from their hideouts and launched a full-scale attack against the Gonja in Kpandai.

The second phase lasted for three days. In the first phase fighting had occurred sporadically in the various Nawuri settlements, but in the second fighting was limited to Kpandai. The fighting was so concentrated and intense that within three days the fighters were exhausted, ammunition was depleted, morale was low, and the fighting came to a stop.

²⁰Yaw-Dou [personal communication], November 2, 2011.

²¹ The second battle was known as the *Second Atorsah Yakoro*. The term *second Atorsah Yakoro* meant ‘the second exodus sparked off by Atorsah

²² Ampiah, op.cit., Part I, 36. In the first battle, the Gonja attacked and plundered all Nawuri settlements in Alfai. The Nawuri returned to attack and also plunder the Gonja in revenge.

²³Ibid. While some Gonja warriors persuasively left Kpandai, a sizeable stayed for about two more months until the first week of June 1991 when they finally left.

A Gonja view of the second phase of the war was that it resulted from a breach of trust on the part of the Nawuri, who were determined to flout all the mediation processes outlined by the Northern Regional Security Council.²⁴ They maintained that mediation meetings after the first phase of the war had made progress and the indications were that the warring factions agreed to live in peace. The Gonja explained in a memorandum that it was in consideration of that understanding that “the Nawuris were given the green light to return to their villages as all Gonja defenders returned to their homes.”²⁵ The Nawuri, with the support of the Konkomba and the Basari, broke that trust by launching a surprise attack on the Gonja, chasing them out of Kpandai and burning down their houses.²⁶ The Gonja claim is not exactly true. The mediation efforts by the Northern Regional Security Council (REGSEC) and the Bimbilla-Na could not achieve the desired goals because both parties remained uncompromising.²⁷

Besides, no ceasefire pact was signed, neither was an agreement reached for Nawuri return.²⁸ The actions of the Gonja after the Bimbilla mediation meeting convinced the Nawuri that their return to Kpandai could only be guaranteed if they resumed hostilities and succeeded in expelling them (the Gonja). A number of incidents

²⁴ “Memorandum submitted by the Gonja on the Peace Negotiations in the Northern Conflict”, September, 1994, Appendix III, 4.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ampiah, *op.cit.*, Part I, 35; “Memoranda Presented to the Committee of Inquiry into the Gonja/Nawuris and Nanjuros Conflict by the District Security Committee (DISEC) – East Gonja District Assembly”, 3 and 4.

²⁸ In a document: “Speech by Alhaji Musah Jawula at a Meeting of the Gonja and the Nawuri at Bimbilla-Na’s Palace, on 7th June 1991”, the Gonja made the following demands: that Nawuri would be allowed to return to Kpandai on condition that they would be resettled in the outskirts of the town; that Nawuri would pay a war indemnity as would be determined by the Yabumwura; that the Nawuri would provide regular services such as provision of labour on the farms of the Kpembewura and the Kanankulaiwua, though this could be paid off in cash; and that Nawuri would pay annual tributes in the form of cash and agricultural products to the Kanankulaiwura during Damba festivals. In a Memorandum submitted at a Reconciliation Meeting with the Northern Region Security Committee (REGSEC) held at Tamale on Tuesday, 7th May 1991, in connection to the Nawuri-Gonja Conflict, the Nawuri also made the following demands: that they should be recognized as the allodial owners of Alfai; that their chiefs should be recognized and gazetted; that the Kpembewura should be prosecuted for presiding over the slaughter of a Nawuri Service person at Salaga; and that the Kpandai branch of the Ghana Private Road and Transport Union (GPRTU) of the Trade Union Congress, dominated by the Gonja and used by them to extort money from poor Nawuri farmers should be dissolved.

showed that the Gonja, rather than the Nawuri, showed belligerency and made a resumption of hostilities necessary. After the Bimbilla meeting, Nana Nkpanibake Oklapunye Oclas of Kitare-Disane attempted to go to Kitare through Kpandai. The Gonja seized him and attempted to kill him. The Police rescued him and rushed him out of Kpandai in an armoured car.²⁹ It was reported that a pregnant Nawuri woman from Kabonwule, who attempted to go to Kpandai market to trade was pulled out of the truck on which she was travelling by “Gonja women and beaten up.”³⁰ A young Nawuri man, Kofi Mbowura, who misinterpreted the Bimbilla meeting as a sign of a ceasefire, returned to Kpandai to clear the debris of his house, but was chased away by Gonja warriors. Indeed, he would have been killed if the Police had not intervened and rescued him.³¹ The Gonja either chased away or attempted to kill Nawuri farmers who attempted to go to their farmlands in Kpandai to work. In his evidence before the Ampiah Committee, Nana Nkpanibake Oklapunye Oclas said that:

in June I was informed the Nawuris who had their farms in Kpandai went round to work on their farms and each time they went they were driven away by the Gonja warriors. This continued until 17th June.³²

From the above, it is evident that the vindictiveness of the Gonja made the resumption of hostilities inevitable.

The second phase exhibited some significant differences. Unlike the first phase, the Gonja had the upper hand initially. Their warriors succeeded in pushing the Nawuri warriors out of Kpandai in the first two days of hostilities, and killed a number of their warriors, including their leader. Tactically, the Gonja adopted a strategy that the Nawuri found difficult to counteract. Some of their warriors armed with rifles positioned themselves on the tower of the central Mosque in Kpandai from where they spotted the

²⁹ Ampiah, *op.cit.*, Part II, p. 106.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 107.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

Nawuri from all directions and shot at them from a distance.³³ The pendulum of victory swung in favour of the Nawuri on the third day of the hostilities, when Asimeni, the Gonja war leader, was killed.³⁴ The Gonja lost morale, retreated and sneaked out of Kpandai at night. The Nawuri warriors entered Kpandai on the fourth day without encountering any resistance, and looted Gonja properties in revenge.³⁵

Nawuri victory in the second phase is explained first by the fact that, unlike the first phase, their attacks were coordinated. Nawuri warriors fought as a single body, not as divided units as in the first phase. They overcame their political disunity and rallied behind Nana Atorsah Bresiam Okore as their leader.

The Nawuri adopted a deceptive and effective strategy on the third day of the hostilities. They divided their army into three groups – the advance unit, the rear guard and reinforcement unit.³⁶ The advance and reinforcement units laid an ambush, while the rear guard shot indiscriminately into the air to deceive the Gonja into attacking the Nawuri rear guard. This strategy drew the Gonja into the ambush set by the Nawuri, resulting in the murder of their leader, Asimeni. This forced the Gonja to retreat and end hostilities abruptly.³⁷

³³An eye-witness account of Donkor Gawu. He explains how the Nawuri leader was hit by a rifle bullet by one of the Gonja warriors positioned at the central Mosque. According to him, the distance between the central Mosque and the spot where the Nawuri leader was killed was over two hundred metres. Donkor supported his view that the Gonja wielded rifle guns by saying that the shells of the bullets they picked at the spot where the Nawuri leader was killed were not the shells of ordinary cartridges that they were familiar with.

³⁴In fact, the murder of Asimeni was gruesome. He was burnt alive and chopped into pieces. Some Nawuri respondents explain that the gruesome murder of Asimeni was retaliation for the way one William Takpa, a Nawuri National Service person, was murdered in the palace of the Kpembewura. They maintained that Mr. William Takpa was abducted at Salaga while on his way to work. He was dragged along the two-kilometre stretch of distance from Salaga to Kpembe where he was slaughtered like an animal amidst chants of war songs.

³⁵Ampiah, *op.cit.*, 36. The general view gathered from first hand eyewitness accounts of settler ethnic groups in Kpandai suggests that the Gonja systematically embarked on a looting scheme as they carried the first battle from one Nawuri village to the other.

³⁶Yaw-Dou [personal communication], November 2, 2011. Yaw-Dou became the Nawuri leader after Kwabena Balai, their leader was killed. He was said to have shown a considerable amount of valour in the second battle. He marshaled the few Nawuri warriors, picked a few skilful shooters to form the advance wing of the Nawuri fighting force.

³⁷Yaw-Dou, [personal communication], November 2, 2011.

Support of their kinsmen in the Nanum state and the Konkomba also contributed to the success of the Nawuri.³⁸ Troops from the Nawuri settlements of Tampoai, Kpengase, Kajasu, and Jimang in the Nanum state³⁹, and the support of the Konkomba proved invaluable.

Resort to rituals and charms contributed to the victory of the Nawuri in the second phase. The Nawuri were said to have acquired charms from the Konkomba chief of Lugni, a powerful and well-acclaimed juju man. The use of the charms inspired them with a sense of invincibility and immunity from gunshots.⁴⁰ By predicting victory for the Nawuri, the juju man psychologically inspired the Nawuri troops.⁴¹

Finally, the Gonja defeat in the second phase resulted partly from the fact that their warriors were cut off from supplies of food and reinforcement from Salaga. This affected their morale and weakened them militarily.⁴²

The Gonja blame the Northern Regional Security Council (REGSEC) for their defeat in the second phase of the war. In a petition dated November 25, 1998, the Gonja Traditional Council explained their expulsion from Kpandai by stating that it was:

³⁸ Nana Okumanque, Nkanchinawura, [personal communication], November 2, 2011.

³⁹ It is important to note that these conglomerations of Nawuri-speakers in the Nanumba state belonged to the large cultural complex of Nawuri-speakers in the Northern and Volta Regions of Ghana. They did not immediately respond to pleas from their Nawuri kinsmen under Gonja rule for military support because it was alleged that initially the Bimbilla-Na prevented them from doing so.

⁴⁰ Yaw-Dou [personal communication], November 2, 2011.

⁴¹ Donkor Gawu [personal communication]. 13 December 2011. Donkor is a famous witch-doctor in Kpandai. He believed strongly that it was the charm of the Lugni Konkomba chief that tilted the fortunes of the second battle in favour of the Nawuri. According to him, since time immemorial charms have played an important role in fortifying roles for battles. He holds strongly to the view that there are a lot of witch-doctors in northern Ghana and that warriors possessed charms of various degrees; and that for one to be a successful warrior in this region, the one must possess powerful charms. It is difficult to determine the exact percentage of the impact of psychological factors in conflicts in northern Ghana in general. However, it appears that in almost all the wars in the region since the 1980s, psychological factors have played a significant role in the conduct and the gory imaginaries of the wars.

⁴² This was the view of many of the respondents of settler ethnic groups in Kpandai. In fact, many of the Kotokoli respondents strongly support this view. They included Mama A. Hassan, Haruna Mohammed, Musah Kasimu and Abdulai Moru, all interviewed on November 14, 2011. The rest were Tahiru Mohammed (aka Kabobo), Alhassan Abukari, Nuhum Jafaru, Alhaji Alaja and Zibilla Sumaila, all interviewed on November 15, 2011.

unconceivable that the Gonjas were driven away from Kpandai by the Nawuris through conquest as they claim. As our memory can serve us right, it will be recalled that the Northern Regional Security Council, **for reasons best known to it, at the time**, ordered and really supervised the evacuation (sic) of Gonjas from Kpandai, the result of which the Gonjas have since become refugees in their own country.⁴³

Nonetheless, the Gonja applauded the evacuation scheme of the REGSEC as it solved the deplorable conditions in which they found themselves at the Kpandai Police Station.⁴⁴

6.1.3 The Third Phase – the Alhaji Musah battle

For almost one year after the second phase, Alfai enjoyed some respite. With the exception of the Gonja, almost all the inhabitants of Alfai who fled in the wake of the communal violence in the first and second phases of the war returned to their settlements and carried on brisk business and farming. The rural and commercial life in Alfai began to revive but on 23 May 1992, Alfai was plunged into another phase of the war when the Gonja launched an attack.⁴⁵ This phase of the war is known as the *Alhaji Musah* phase.⁴⁶ The *Alhaji Musah* phase began when a fleet of vehicles reportedly carrying Gonja warriors from Bole, Damongo, Salaga and Kpembe arrived at Kpandai to fight the Nawuri.

This phase was precipitated, in part, by the delay in the release of the Government's White Paper on the Justice Ampiah Committee's Report. The Justice

⁴³ Petition of the Gonja Traditional Council, "Gonja-Nawuri Dispute over Kpandai Lands", to the Chairman of the Permanent Peace Negotiation Team (PPNT), dated November 25, 1998.

⁴⁴ "Memorandum submitted by the Gonja on the Peace Negotiations in the Northern Conflict", September, 1994, Appendix III, 4.

⁴⁵ Social life appeared to be normalized as activities of schools became institutionalized once again. Besides, festivities of all sorts, which formed an integral part of social life in Alfai began to exert enormous influence on the inhabitants. Significantly, the memories of the war and the rumours or nightmares of an impending Gonja attack began to fade into thin air.

⁴⁶ It is so called because Alhaji Musah, a Gonja, led Gonja troops from Kpembe to Kpandai to attack the Nawuri. He was said to have instigated the third phase as he was said to have 'fortified himself spiritually', gathered a band of Gonja warriors, and invaded the Nawuri on May 23, 1992.

Ampiah Committee set up, in part, to investigate the causes of the Nawuri-Gonja conflict, was inaugurated in Tamale on 9th October 1991. It held proceedings in Tamale, and visited the villages affected by the war. In its report submitted to the government in February 1992, the Committee made a number of recommendations for the government to implement. Among others, it recommended that the Nawuriwura should be accorded recognition as the paramount chief of his people; that Nawuri sub-chiefs should also be recognized as chiefs in their respective areas; that Nawuri chiefs should be registered in the National Register of chiefs and be gazetted accordingly; that a separate Traditional Area and Council presided over by the Nawuriwura should be created for the Nawuri⁴⁷; and that the Nawuriwura should be allowed to take his seat at the Northern Region House of chiefs, and, in accordance with the practice obtaining at the House, he should be given the opportunity to represent the House at the National House of Chiefs without any discrimination.⁴⁸ No White Paper was issued on the Committee's report; neither did the Government make attempts to implement its recommendations.

Security failure was the main factor which precipitated the renewal of hostilities in the third phase.⁴⁹ Following the communal violence in the first and second phases, a state of emergency was declared over Alfai, and the task of maintaining peace in the area assigned to the Armed Forces. The Military arrived in Kpandai on June 23, 1991, and their presence not only helped restore peace in Alfai but also enabled some ethnic Gonja to return to Kpandai to harvest their crops.⁵⁰ Barriers mounted at some notable points in and around Kpandai checked and prevented violence, though rumours of imminent

⁴⁷ Ampiah, *op.cit.*, 74-75.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 75.

⁴⁹ Ampiah, *op.cit.*, Part I, 63.

⁵⁰ Later, the Military facilitated the escort of Gonja returnees from Salaga to Kpandai under armed guards. The Gonja returnees were sheltered in a Primary School. The resettlement scheme failed as the Gonja returnees found life unbearable and voluntarily left for Salaga. It is the view of informants that the return of the Gonja from Salaga to Kpandai was unnecessary as no structures or arrangements to house and feed them were adequately put in place.

Gonja attack to chase the Nawuri out of Alfai were rife. After six months of operation the Task Force was withdrawn from Kpandai, and paved the way for the Gonja to return and renew the war against the Nawuri.⁵¹ In addition, question marks were raised as to how the Gonja warriors from Damango, Bole and other parts of Gonjaland passed through unnoticed all Police barriers mounted at Tamale, Yendi and Salaga, to attack the Nawuri in Alfai.⁵² It is claimed that the laxity of the security probably resulted from the fact that Mr. John Bawah, the PNDC Regional Secretary and head of the Regional Security Committee (REGSEC) as well as Mr. John Seidu Karim, the PNDC District Secretary for Salaga and head of the District Security Committee (DISEC), were both ethnic Gonja.⁵³

With the help of charms acquired by Alhaji Musah, the Gonja war captain in the third phase, Gonja warriors were emboldened by the aura of spiritual protection and invincibility created around them.⁵⁴ Initially, the scales of the third phase tilted in favour of the Gonja as the Nawuri were taken unawares. The Gonja expelled them, occupied Kpandai and celebrated what they referred to as “an easy victory.”⁵⁵ The Nawuri warriors withdrew into the bush to plan their strategies. They were joined by some Konkomba and Bassari warriors. The Konkomba joined the Nawuri to revenge themselves on the Gonja for the killing of a Konkomba man. The alliance of Nawuri, Konkomba and Bassari warriors launched a three-pronged attack on the Gonja. The

⁵¹ It was the general view of informants that the withdrawal of the Military Task Forces was premature, a security blunder, and that the third phase of the war would not have occurred if the Military Task Forces were not withdrawn from Kpandai.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ampiah, op.cit., Part I, 63.

⁵⁴ Indeed, Alhaji Musah was said to have acquired a lot of ‘charms’ and ‘spiritual’ protections that enabled them to gather all the Gonja warriors around him to ‘vanish’ with them in the event that the pendulum of the battle swung against them. He was also said to have spiritually gathered a swarm of bees around his armpit, which he could unleash to attack his adversaries.

⁵⁵ Kwesi Yankah, “Woes of a Kwatriot: The Massacre Up North,” *The Mirror*, 6 June 1991, 7. After receiving homage from the Kotokoli and some sections of settler ethnic groups, the Gonja warriors were said to have matched to the butcher’s shop in an incessant jubilation and chanting of war songs and seized chunks of meat. They were also said to have moved to the Kpandai Yam Market and seized many tubers of yam to prepare their meal.

Gonja were taken unawares and fled towards the Kpandai Police Station for refuge.⁵⁶ The allies pursued them to the Police Station and killed them. The Police was unable to prevent the massacre because its personnel were overawed and outnumbered.⁵⁷ They had only one armoured car at their disposal.⁵⁸

Hostilities of the third phase spread from Kpandai to Salaga and its environs. After laying ambush for two days, the allies attacked Kpembe and Salaga. They were prevented from destroying these settlements by the timely arrival of military peacekeeping forces but not before some of the Konkomba warriors from the western side of Salaga had managed to make their way into that section of the town and destroyed much property. They also attacked the Gonja villages of Kitoe, Kayeresu and Kulupi.⁵⁹ The *Alhaji Musah* phase of the war ended with the defeat of the Gonja, thanks to the overriding support of the Konkomba and the Bassari to the Nawuri.

6.2 Outcomes of the Nawuri-Gonja conflict

The Nawuri-Gonja conflict ended with the loss of many human lives. In the first and second phases of the conflict, the death toll was put at twenty.⁶⁰ The number increased to seventy-eight when hostilities were resumed in 1992.⁶¹

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ampiah, op.cit., Appendix 12, 1. It was reported that the number of Police Personnel during the first battle stood at thirty-five – thirty-three subordinates and two officers; Kwadjo Atorsah (aka Akatapori) [personal communication], 14 December 2011. According to him, the sheer number of the Nawuri-Konkomba-Basari force struck panic in the Police. Besides,

⁵⁸ The narrow strip of the compound of the Police Station made it impossible to manoeuvre the armoured car from one point to the other to disperse the overwhelming Nawuri-Konkomba-Basari troops.

⁵⁹ Kwesi Yankah, “Woes of a Kwatriot: The Massacre Up North,” *The Mirror*, 6 June 1991, 7.

⁶⁰ Ampiah, op. cit., Part, 37. Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) in Northern Region at the time, William Atu Kumi, gave the breakdown of the death toll as follows: fourteen deaths in the first war of whom five were Nawuri, seven were Gonja and two from other ethnic groups. DCP Kumi further explained that in the second clash there were five (5) deaths; four (4) Gonja, one (1) Nawuri and one (1) Frafra.

⁶¹ Ada van der Linde and Rachel Naylor, op.cit., 35. Report on the death toll in the conflict in Friday issue of the *Daily Graphic* dated May 25, 1992, however, puts the death toll at one hundred. If one considers the number that sustained wounds and died later and those who were probably killed in the bushes and were not included in the official figure, the number would be higher.

Loss of material property was another effect of the war. Property such as houses, physical cash, motor bikes, bicycles and vehicles belonging to both factions were burnt or looted during the war. In all, three hundred and twenty-three (323) houses in Alfai were burnt down in the wake of the conflict. Other pieces of property destroyed included two tractors, a corn mill, a flourmill, two old Bedford trucks, one Mercedes Benz car, and a tractor, and a cargo vehicle belonging to the Nawuri and the Gonja.⁶²

The conflict caused internal displacement of people. The Nawuri fled from their settlements and sought refuge in Nkwanta and Nanumba Districts.⁶³ The Nkwanta District alone harboured about four thousand, five hundred refugees in Kecheibi, Tutukpene, Ketane, and Kpasa. A few others were found in Nkwanta and Damanko.⁶⁴ The Gonja also sought refuge at Salaga and Kpembe.

Economic activities ground to a halt as people lived in constant fear. Sale of yams produced by the majority of farmers became a problem because the yam buyers who were mostly from the south, feared to go to Alfai. The glut of the produce significantly reduced rural incomes. Many of the harvests were left on the farms to rot. This cast a gloom over the farming industry. All the three phases of the war erupted at the peak of the farming season: a time when new farms were prepared. The 1991 farming season was characterised by poor harvests because of the insecurity in the area.⁶⁵

The restoration of peace came at a huge cost to Government. As of June 1994, the Government was said to have spent 5.05 billion old Ghana cedis on the operations to

⁶² Daily Graphic, Friday, May 25, 1992.

⁶³ The bulk of the refugees were in Nanumba District in places such as Tampoai (Tampoaye), Kajasu, Kpengasei, Jimang, Lungni, Wulensi and Bimbilla.

⁶⁴ *Daily Graphic*, Wednesday, 24th April 1991, 16.

⁶⁵ According to informants, some farmers could not prepare land for the cultivation of foodstuff. Obviously, in the short and long runs, this affected agricultural activities in the area due to lack of planting materials and incentives, neglect of farms and many others.

restore peace and order in Alfai and other conflict areas in the Northern Region.⁶⁶ For close to two decades after the Nawuri-Gonja conflict, Alfai continued to experience its rippling effects. The conflict engendered a dispute over the ownership of immovable properties, particularly houses owned by the Gonja in Kpandai.⁶⁷ The conflict also led to Nawuri struggle for political space in Alfai as the expulsion of the Gonja diminished their control over the Nawuri.

This renewed the Nawuriwura chieftaincy dispute between Nana Atorsah Bresiam Okore of Kpandai and Nana Abugabah I of Nkanchina with serious security implications for the Nawuri, Alfai and the Northern Region in general.⁶⁸

⁶⁶*Daily Graphic*, Saturday, June 11, 1994, 9.

⁶⁷ Beginning with a law suit in January 2010 by one Fulera in the Magistrate Court in Salaga to claim ownership of her house in Kpandai taken by a Nawuri as war booty, dispute over Gonja houses in Kpandai reached a peak by May the same year with pronouncements of war by the Kpembewura. In a petition to the Northern Regional Security Committee dated May 8, 2010, the Kpembewura threatened war if action was not taken against the Nawuri claiming or destroying Gonja houses in Kpandai. In the short term, the controversy over the ownership of Gonja houses created tension in Alfai as the Nawuri demonstrated and chanted war slogans. In the long run, it signalled that absolute peace in Alfai could not be guaranteed and that war between the two ethnic groups was imminent as both ethnic groups could seize upon any opportunity to renew hostilities. For details, see: Kpandai District Assembly's "Report on protest march against the court suit being initiated by madam Fulera Adam to claim ownership of house number C 28 in Kpandai after the Nawuri-Gonja conflict of 1991/1992"; "Protest against the court suit being initiated by Madam Fulera Adam to claim ownership of house number C28 in Kpandai after the Nawuri-Gonja conflict of 1991/1992" by the league of Nawuri Women Against Violent Conflict; Kpembewura Kibasibil's Petition, "Criminal destruction of Gonja houses in Kpandai", to the Northern Regional Security Council, dated May 8, 2010; A petition by Nawuri chiefs and elders of Kpandai, "Petition against the Kpembewura's claim of houses in Kpandai", to the president of Ghana, dated September 27, 2010.

⁶⁸ To date the chieftaincy dispute continues to threaten peace in Alfai as the two factions continue to make war pronouncements. It has also caused a schism among the Nawuri and led to the pronouncement of libellous statements against Government functionaries and the two contestants, Nana Atorsah Bresiam Okore, Kpandaiwura, and Nana Abugabah I of Nkanchina. More importantly, the chieftaincy dispute has renewed the festering wounds between the Nawuri and the Gonja as the Nkanchina faction sought Gonja support. For details, see: "Kpandai Sitting on Time Bomb," *The Chronicle*, Vol. 18, No. 213, Thursday, August 6, 2009, p. 8; Letter from the Nawuriwura's palace, Kpandai, to the Northern Regional Minister, April 27, 2007; Letter from Nana Abugabah I to the Minister of the Interior, 18 June 2008; Letter from the Denkeri palace, Kitare, to the Northern Regional Minister, September 6, 2008.

6.3 Resolving the Nawuri-Gonja Conflict, 1991-1996

Between 1991 and 1996, three main attempts were made to resolve the Nawuri-Gonja conflict. These were the Bimbilla Na's mediation effort in 1991, the Ampiah Committee of Inquiry of 1991, and the attempts of the Permanent Peace Negotiation Team (PPNT) from 1994 to 1996. In the pages that follow an attempt is made to explain the nature and modalities of the attempts, proposed terms of settlement, and the reasons for the failure of the mediations.

6.3.1 The Bimbilla Na's Mediation of June 1991

At its meeting in Tamale on April 23, 1991, the Northern Regional Security Committee (REGSEC) decided to visit Alfai.⁶⁹ The REGSEC met representatives of the Nawuri and the Gonja at Tamale on May 7, 1991, to obtain first-hand information about the causes of the Nawuri-Gonja conflict, and to outline the arrangements for its resolution.⁷⁰ The parties agreed to submit themselves to the Bimbilla-Na for mediation.⁷¹ On 7 June 1991 the Bimbilla Na met representatives of the Nawuri and the Gonja at his palace in Bimbilla. The Bimbilla Na impressed on the factions to disarm, agree to a ceasefire and live in peace while efforts were made by him, the Government and other mediation bodies to resolve the question of the allodial rights to Alfai lands. He also impressed on the Gonja to allow the Nawuri to return to Kpandai. Unfortunately, the BimbillaNa's attempt to resolve the conflict failed to yield positive results.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 34.

⁷⁰ Justice Ampiah, *op. cit.*, part 1, 35. There were nineteen (19) and twenty-two (22) Gonja and Nawuri representatives respectively. The meeting was chaired by Mr. John. E. Bawah, a Gonja and PNDC Northern Regional Security. For details, see, "Minutes of Meeting of REGSEC on One Side with Leaders of Gonja and Nawuri on the other in Connection with Peace Negotiations Following the Gonja-Nawuri Conflict Held on Tuesday 7th May, 1991."

⁷¹ The REGSEC decided at the meeting that the PNDC District Secretaries for East Gonja and Bimbilla should team up with the Deputy Regional Administrative Officer and the Registrar of the Northern Region House of Chiefs to visit Kpandai on 25 May 1991. The team visited Lungni, the border town between Nanumba and East Gonja Districts where some of the Nawuri had sought refuge. They were also mandated to inform and liaise with the Bimbilla-Na to meet the Nawuri and the Gonja to resolve the conflict as soon as possible.

6.3.2 The Ampiah Committee of Inquiry, 1991

Known officially as the “Committee of Inquiry into the Gonjas, Nawuris and Nanjuros Dispute”, the Ampiah Committee was a four-member body set up by the Government of Ghana in October 1991 to investigate the causes of the conflict between the Gonja and the Nawuri on the one hand, and the Gonja and the Nanjuro (Nchumuru) on the other.⁷² It was established by an Executive Instrument (E.I.) 23. Its terms of reference were:

(a) to investigate the circumstances that led to the Communal Violence at Kpandai on 7th April and 12th June 1991 and find out the extent of loss and damage resulting from the incidents; (b) to determine the nature of the tenure system in the Kpandai area and to define the right of the Gonjas, Nawuris and Nanjuros in the allocation and utilization of land; (c) To determine the nature and practice of traditional allegiance of the Nawuris and Nanjuros to the Gonjas and to determine whether any inequities or anomalies exist in the system (d) To investigate any other matters that is in the opinion of the committee incidental there to; and (e) To submit its findings and recommendations to the Provisional National Defence Council within three months.⁷³

After its inauguration in October 1991 in Tamale at the premises of the Northern Region House of Chiefs, the Committee began sitting on 21 October 1991 and ended on 4 December 1991. The Committee identified four broad layers of the causes of the Nawuri-Gonja conflict. These were the colonial policy of indirect rule and its attendant consequences, the failure of the Gold Coast Government and the United Nations Trusteeship Council to realistically deal with the grievances of the Nawuri, questions of allodial rights, and the activities of the Gonjaland Youth Association, which impacted

⁷² The committee consisted of Justice A.K.B Ampiah, Chairman, Togbe Tepre Hodo III (Paramount chief of Anfoega), member, Professor R. B. Bening, member, and E.K. Musah Esq., secretary. It is popularly named Ampiah Committee after its chairman.

⁷³ Executive Instrument, E.I. 23. “Committee of inquiry into the Gonjas, Nawuris and Nanjuros Dispute Instrument, 1991.”

negatively on peace and security in Alfai.⁷⁴ As part of its terms of reference, the Committee investigated allodial rights, land tenure system and nature of traditional allegiance in Alfai.

The Committee made thirty-one findings. Significant of these findings was that the rights of aborigines of Alfai resided in the Nawuri; that the Nawuri were never conquered by the Gonja in the pre-colonial period; and that the Nawuri formed an autonomous state prior to the introduction of indirect rule in the Northern Territories in 1932.⁷⁵ It stated:

the Nawuri and Nchumurus were on the land before the arrival of Jakpa and his Gonja Army and that there was no fighting between the Gonjas and ... the Nawuris and that neither of the two peoples, i.e. the Nawuris and the Nchumurus were ever conquered by the Gonjas. During the invasion of Gonja land by the Ashantis, the Nawuris and the Nchumurus fought as allies.⁷⁶

The Committee's findings about allodial rights and land tenure in Alfai were that the Nawuri were the allodial owners of Alfai and that both the Nawuri and the Gonja simultaneously exercised the right to allocate parcels of land to settlers after 1932 when the Gonja were made the overlords of the Nawuri. In its own words, it stated:

⁷⁴ For details, see Ampiah, *op.cit.*, Part I, 14-33. It should be pointed out that the Committee's report was in two parts. Part One was a seventy-nine page document which contained the associated causes of the Nawuri-Gonja conflict, the findings and recommendations of the Committee. Part Two was a two hundred-and-twenty-two page document containing the verbatim report of proceedings from 21 October to 13 November 1991 and the submissions of the legal councils of Nawuri, Gonja and Nchumuru

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 39-66. The Committee stated that "(6)...the Nawuris and the Nchumurus were on the land before the arrival of Jakpa and his Gonja Army and that there was no fighting between the Gonjas and either the Nawuris or the Nchumurus, and that neither of the two peoples, i.e. the Nawuris and the Nchumurus were ever conquered by the Gonjas. (7) During the invasion of Gonja land by the Ashantis, the Nawuris and Nchumurus fought as allies of Gonjas..." It also found that there was no immediate boundary between the Gonja and the Nawuri; that the words 'Alfai' and 'Kanankulai' were Nawuri words and could have been used only by the Nawuri to describe their land; that the names of all the Rivers, streams and villages in the Kpandai area were all Nawuri names; and that the Gonja had "possession only to that part of the Nawuri lands which they have reduced into their possession and effectively occupied. The Ampiah Committee also found that there was no evidence of the swearing of allegiance by the Nawuri to any of the Gonja chiefs; that the failure of the Gonja to recognise Nawuri chiefs and give them representation on the Gonja Traditional Council was a grave anomaly in the nature and practice of the traditional relationship of the Nawuri and the Gonja.

⁷⁶ Ampiah, *op.cit.*, Part I, 67.

allodial title in the lands occupied by the Nawuris in KPANDAI area resides in the Nawuris ... The Gonjas have possession only to that part of the Nawuri lands which they have reduced into their possession and effectively occupied. In matters affecting the land in the Kpandai area, the stranger-settlers, including the Bassares and the Konkombas, have dealt only with the Nawuris and that, the position slightly changed when the Gonjas claimed overlordship over the Nawuris.⁷⁷

Another significant finding of the Committee was about the nature and practice of traditional relationship between the Nawuri and the Gonja. It stated that:

the only inequity or anomaly we find in the nature and practice of the traditional relationship of the Nawuris and the Nchumurus with the Gonjas is the failure to accord the former recognition as Chiefs and to have them represented in their traditional administration in the area ... there was no allegiance found between the Nawuris ... and the Gonjas ... There was however a loose relationship based on the so-called system of overlordship.⁷⁸

The Ampiah Committee made a number of recommendations for the Government to implement. Among others, it recommended the creation of a separate Traditional Council for the Nawuri, the gazetting of Nawuri chiefs, the elevation of the Nawuriwura to paramount status, the creation of a separate District Assembly for the Alfai and Nchumuru areas, and the improvement of the health and police facilities in Alfai.⁷⁹

Signed by members dated January 31, 1992, the report was subsequently submitted to the Government for consideration. Excerpts of it were read on Radio Ghana and Ghana Television on 29 and 30 March 1992. Unfortunately, the PNDC government failed to act upon the Committee's report. No White Paper was issued on the report; neither were attempts made to implement its recommendations due largely to lack of political will.⁸⁰

⁷⁷Ibid., 68.

⁷⁸Ibid., 71.

⁷⁹Ibid., 74-77.

⁸⁰Prof. R.B. Bening [personal communication], March 15, 2012. The informant was one of the members of the Ampiah Committee. In his view, the recommendations of the Committee did not go in favour of the "heavyweights" (the Gonja). As such the Government found it extremely difficult to implement the recommendation. He maintained that the Government's attempt at implementing the recommendations of the Committee would obviously be met by Gonja criticisms, especially the Gonja 'heavyweights' in Government.

6.3.3 The Permanent Peace Negotiation Team (PPNT) and the Kumasi Accord

A disturbing phenomenon in the Northern Region of Ghana in 1994 was the continual outbreak of inter-ethnic conflicts.⁸¹ The conflicts pitted the Konkomba against the Dagomba, Konkomba against the Gonja, and the Konkomba against the Nanumba.⁸² At the end of the wars, the government set up the Permanent Peace Negotiation Team (PPNT) in 1994 to resolve all inter-ethnic conflicts in the Northern Region.⁸³ The PPNT toured the areas of conflict in the region and organised reconciliatory meetings with representatives of the various ethnic groups in Tamale, Accra and Kumasi. After six mediation meetings at Kumasi with the warring factions, opinion leaders and Government Agents, the PPNT brokered a peace treaty with the warring factions on March 28, 1996.⁸⁴ The Nawuri and the Gonja, however, refused to sign the peace treaty though they recognized that there were “several outstanding issues of dispute between them that require peaceful resolution”, thus bringing to nought the attempt of the PPNT to resolve the issues of dispute between the Nawuri and the Gonja.⁸⁵

⁸¹ Linde and Naylor, *op.cit.*, 40. The war escalated when the Konkomba extended hostilities to the Dagomba. On February 2, 1991, the Konkomba attacked and burnt down the Dagomba village of Nakpachei. Other Dagomaba settlements around Yendi were also attacked and burnt down. Subsequently, the war spread to the Salaga District in which combined Konkomba-Nawuri troops attacked the Gonja. The seven districts affected included Nanumba, East Gonja (Salaga), East Dagomba (Yendi), Gushiegu-Karaga, Zabzugu-Tatale, Saboba-Chereponi, West Dagomba. The main areas of fighting were Nakpayili, Wulensi, Bimbilla, Chamba, Yendi, Salaga, Gushiegu, Sekpiegu, Zabzugu-Tatale, and Kpandai.

⁸² It began as a dispute over the price of a guinea-fowl between a Nanumba and a Konkomba at Nakpayili market near Bimbilla in the Bimbilla District on 1st February 1994, and spread to other districts in the Northern Region within three days of fighting. Government declared a state of emergency in the seven districts on 10th February 1994, and extended the task of maintaining law and order to the military. For details, see: Linde and Naylor, *op.cit.*, 40-46.

⁸³ The PPNT was made up largely of chiefs drawn from other regions of the country and headed by a Member of the Council of State. Its terms of reference were to investigate the causes of the conflicts, and to mediate between the warring factions in order to foster peace and reconciliation.

⁸⁴ At the fourth workshop organized in February, 1996, the “delegates severally and jointly agreed to a draft document which outlined the agreements reached on the contentious issues presented in the negotiations.” Amendments were made to the draft accord in a fifth workshop in March 1996, and the accord was eventually signed by representatives of the warring factions on March 28, 1996. For details, see: *Kumasi Accord on Peace and Reconciliation Between the Various Ethnic Groups in the Northern Region of Ghana*, 1.

⁸⁵ *Kumasi Accord on Peace and Reconciliation Between the Various Ethnic Groups in the Northern Region of Ghana*, 6.

6.4 Reasons for the Failure of the Attempts to Resolve the Nawuri-Gonja Conflict

The attempts to resolve the conflict failed to yield any positive results. The failure was due, in part, to the intransigence of the Nawuri and the Gonja. In the mediation attempts of the Bimbilla-Na and the PPNT, the warring parties expressed misgivings about the possibility of living together and refused to enter into a peace ceasefire agreement or a peace treaty if their demands for allodial rights and overlordship in Alfai were not met.⁸⁶ The Gonja also insisted, among others, on a resettlement scheme for the Nawuri, payment of war indemnities and labour services from the Nawuri, but the Nawuri refused to accept them.⁸⁷ Similarly, the Nawuri demanded, among others, the recognition of their allodial rights to Alfai lands, recognition of their chiefs and that total mandate in bodies and institutions in Alfai be vested in them.⁸⁸

Question marks over neutrality were part of the reasons for the failure of the attempts to resolve the conflict. The office of the Bimbilla Na had in various ways demonstrated a lack of credibility in chieftaincy disputes, land litigation, and debates regarding the autonomy of Alfai. For instance, in the heat of the wrangles between the Nawuri and the Gonja over chieftaincy in the 1950s, Na Natogma, the Bimbilla Na at the time, offered his support to the Nawuri.⁸⁹ Similarly, in 1952-53, the Bimbilla Na

⁸⁶ "Speech by Alhaji Ademu Issaka at a Meeting of the Northern Regional Security Committee on the Alfai Conflict", dated April 30, 1991. Nawuri demands were contained in a petition earlier submitted to the REGSEC and titled "Memorandum Submitted by Nawuris at a Reconciliation Meeting with the Northern Regional Security Committee (REGSEC) Held at Tamale on Tuesday, 7th May 1991 in Connection with the Nawuri/Gonja Conflict."

⁸⁷"Speech by Alhaji Musah Jawula at a meeting of the Gonja and the Nawuri at Bimbilla-Na's Palace, on 7th June 1991".

⁸⁸ Nawuri memorandum titled: "Memorandum submitted at a Reconciliation Meeting with the Northern Region Security Committee (REGSEC) held at Tamale on Tuesday, 7th May 1991 in connection to the Nawuri-Gonja Conflict."

⁸⁹A letter from Bimbilla Na Natogma to Nana Atorsah through the organizing Secretary of the Installation Ceremony, dated October 26, 1951. In the said letter, Bimbilla-Na Natoma promised to attend the ceremony, if invited, and that he was prepared to help the Nawuri in all things possible to make the installation of Nana Atorsah as the Nawuriwura a success. Against the backdrop of Gonja attempts to prevent the installation ceremony, the Bimbilla-Na's gesture appeared to be some sort of sabotage against the Gonja aristocracy.

claimed ownership and jurisdiction over some territories of Alfai lands.⁹⁰ Again, in the 1970s, after the failure of seeking the transfer of Alfai to the Kete-Krachi District, the Nawuri turned their attention to the Nanumba District. In a number of petitions, the Nawuri, with the apparent tacit support of the Nanumba, sought the creation of a Nanumba-Nawuri District.⁹¹ The resultant effect was that the Gonja raised question marks over the neutrality of the Bimbilla Na; hence their confidence in him waned. Similarly, the PPNT failed to resolve the conflict because the Nawuri had a suspicion that it was biased in favour of the Gonja. Nonetheless, the Nawuri leaders made assurances to intensify their confidence-building and peace-education activities, but they refused to sign the peace accord it brokered.⁹²

Security failure in Kpandai and the exigencies of the time also explained why attempts to resolve the Nawuri-Gonja conflict failed. The success of the Bimbilla-Na to conclude a ceasefire agreement with the factions and to ensure the return of the Nawuri to Kpandai was contingent upon the security situation in Alfai. Unfortunately, two security lapses impeded his success. The first consisted of a series of persistent attacks at night by unidentified individuals against the Gonja in Kpandai. The Gonja naturally blamed the attacks on the Nawuri, interpreted them as a breach of trust, refused to engage in further mediations, and turned their attention from mediation to

⁹⁰ In 1952-53, the Nanumba and the Gonja fought in court a boundary dispute between Alfai and the Nanumba state. The Bimbilla-Na was said to have claimed parts of Alfai lands and that the land dispute estranged his friendship with the Yabumwura, paramount chief of the Gonja. See: A letter from the Chief Commissioner of the Northern Territories, Tamale, to J.A. Braimah of the Ministry of Communications and Works, Accra, dated May 10, 1952; A letter from the office of the Ministry of Communications and Works, Accra, signed by J.A. Braimah, to the Chief Commissioner of the Northern Territories, Tamale, dated May 17, 1952; A letter from the Government Agent, Damango, to the Bimbilla-Na, dated November 5, 1953.

⁹¹ "The Proposed set up of Nanumba/Kpandai District Council": A letter from the Nawuri to the Chairman of the Delimitation Commission, dated February 23, 1971; "Nanumba/Kpandai District Council": Petition of the Nawuri to the Minister of Internal Affairs, dated November 10, 1971.

⁹² "Kumasi Accord on Peace and Reconciliation between the Various Ethnic Groups in the Northern Region of Ghana", 6.

vindictiveness.⁹³ The second security flaw was the failure of the Police in Kpandai to disarm the Gonja as part of the mediation process to guarantee a peaceful return of the Nawuri. The police attempt to disarm the Gonja made matters worse as a strayed bullet from one of their men's rifle accidentally killed a Gonja warrior.⁹⁴ Enraged by the careless action of the police, the Gonja refused to submit themselves to the disarming scheme. Eventually, the scheme was aborted, and the Bimbilla-Na's attempt to resolve the conflict was jeopardized.

Similarly, security concerns and the exigencies of the time prevented the Government of the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) from issuing a White Paper on the Ampiah Committee report. In a petition to the Government against the Ampiah Committee report, the Gonja threatened that peace would be jeopardized if the Government issued a White Paper on it.⁹⁵ In the light of this threat to peace, the Government adopted a cautious approach. Besides, the timing of the release of the Ampiah Committee report in 1992 did not help matters. As the country prepared for general parliamentary and presidential elections, the Government found it politically

⁹³ "Memoranda Presented to the Committee of Inquiry into the Gonja/Nawuris and Nanjuros Conflict by the District Security Committee (DISEC), East Gonja District Assembly" (n.d.), 4.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ "Protest Statement Issued in Reaction to the Findings of Committee Report on the Gonja-Nawuri Conflict by the Gonjaland Youth Association to the Government." In the said protest statement, the Gonja threatened that their troops were already mobilizing to march to Alfai to fight. The relevant portions of the statement read: "the Government has not issued its own statement on the Ampiah report is not lost on us. Yet it is apparent that Government is not unbiased in this matter. The massing of troops in the East Gonja District immediately prior to the radio and television broadcast is ample evidence of its prejudiced stance on the matter. We therefore wish to seize the opportunity to urge Government to carefully consider its intended action, as any jaundiced perception of the issue will be catastrophic."

unwise to implement its recommendations.⁹⁶ The same was the case with the attempts of the PPNT to resolve the conflict.⁹⁷

Apart from the Ampiah Committee, the efforts at resolving the conflict were half-hearted. For example, the Bimbilla-Na met the warring factions once on June 7, 1991, and for unknown reasons, no further efforts were made to dialogue with the warring factions. Naturally, the Bimbilla-Na's failure to continue to dialogue with the factions made it impossible for him to succeed in his attempt at resolving the Nawuri-Gonja conflict. In the same vein, the PPNT also failed to dialogue with the Nawuri and the Gonja after its attempts in 1996 to resolve the layers of dispute between them failed. Indeed, the failure of mediation bodies to sustain the spirit of mediation is a major reason why most conflicts in Northern Ghana have remained unresolved. The result is that reconciliation of Northern Ghana in general "remains elusive, not because of the intractability of positions and problems, but because the positive steps taken in the mid to late 1990s were not built upon. As the Northern Region stabilized most of the potential

⁹⁶ The Government feared that any attempt to implement the recommendations of the report would negatively affect its political fortunes in the impending general parliamentary and presidential elections. As the Gonja pointed out, "the timing of the news broadcast [on the report] has exacerbated the on going (sic) conflict which is raging with klieg intensity" and it could possibly mar the chances of National Democratic Congress (NDC), the party of the Government of the PNDC, from winning elections in Gonja constituencies in the Northern Region. See: "Protest Statement Issued in Reaction to the Findings of Committee Report on the Gonja-Nawuri Conflict by the Gonjaland Youth Association to the Government."

⁹⁷ The Peace Accord was concluded in 1996, a year in which general presidential and parliamentary elections were held in the country in which the political temperature was at a 'fever pitch.' This was particularly the case when the 1994 conflicts in the Northern Region of Ghana were given political labels. In the 1994 conflict, the "political debate descended into threatening and insulting language, including in parliament, fuelling press speculation and suspicions. In two-party systems of government and opposition such as Ghana's one party is often identified as being more supportive of the interests of a particular group, whether this is an ethnic community or an intra-ethnic subgroup such as royal family or gate, leading to the interpretation of political events in terms of salient conflict narratives. Even vague comments by prominent politicians may be interpreted through conflict narratives, a situation which has rendered the Ghanaian state understandably unwilling to interfere in inter-communal relations." NGOs' proposal for consultations with warring factions in the Northern Region of Ghana scheduled for 2-3 August, 2007, and titled: "Twelve Years after Inter-Communal Violence in the Northern Region: Engaging in Dialogue to Sustain Peace in Ghana's Golden Jubilee Year" (Accra: NGOs, 2007), 2.

inter-ethnic organisational links, forums and projects faded as funding dried up and attention was focused on problems elsewhere.”⁹⁸

The main reason for the failure of the attempts to resolve the Nawuri-Gonja conflict was the failure to tackle the issue of the allodial rights to Alfai lands, which was the fundamental issue of the conflict. Though the findings of the Ampiah Committee vested allodial rights in Alfai lands in the Nawuri, the Government lacked the political will to implement its recommendations. Similarly, the Bimbilla-Na mediation and the PPNT did not resolve the dispute over allodial rights to Alfai lands. This made their peace initiatives unimpressive and unsatisfactory to the Nawuri and the Gonja. To date, no peace pact has been signed between the Nawuri and the Gonja; neither was the allodial ownership of Alfai lands determined. A state of conflict still exists between the two ethnic groups.

6.5 Conclusion

The chapter discussed the prosecution of the Nawuri-Gonja conflict, weaponry deployed, outcomes and attempts at resolving it. Key conclusions emerge from the chapter. The first is that the war was prosecuted in three phases. In the first phase, the Gonja emerged victorious, but the Nawuri won the second and third phases.

Secondly, various types of weaponry were deployed in the war. These ranged from locally manufactured short-hunter guns to modern sophisticated weapons such as AK47.

Besides, the war ended at a huge cost to human lives, properties and Government recurrent budget. It also disrupted economic and socio-cultural activities in Alfai, caused

⁹⁸ NGOs’ proposal for consultations with warring factions in the Northern Region of Ghana scheduled for 2-3 August, 2007, and titled: “Twelve Years after Inter-Communal Violence in the Northern Region: Engaging in Dialogue to Sustain Peace in Ghana’s Golden Jubilee Year” (Accra: NGOs, 2007), 1.

internal displacement of people, and continues to have rippling effects on Alfai and Nawuri-Gonja relations.

Finally, three systematic attempts were made to resolve the conflict. These were the attempts of the Bimbilla-Na in 1991, the Ampiah Committee of Inquiry in 1991 and the PPNT from 1994-1996. But these attempts failed due largely to issues ranging from security problems to allodial rights.

CONCLUSION

The Nawuri were settled in Alfai long before the arrival of the first nucleus of Ghana immigrants in the late seventeenth century. There was no Gonja conquest of the Nawuri when the former arrived in Alfai; neither was there war between the two ethnic groups in the pre-colonial period. Besides, aboriginal and allodial rights in Alfai in the pre-colonial period resided in the Nawuri. In addition, the two ethnic groups were political allies in the pre-colonial period and that there was no evidence of Gonja overlordship in Alfai.

Prior to German colonial rule in Alfai in 1899, the Kanankulaiwura was a Zongo chief; he did not have territorial jurisdiction over Alfai. In 1913 the parameters of Nawuri-Gonja relations began to alter when the Germans recognized Kanankulaiwura Mahama Karatu as the overlord of Alfai purely for the purposes of political expediency. The resultant effect was the creation of Gonja aristocracy, dynasty and overlordship in Alfai. When Alfai came under the British sphere of Togoland in 1919, the British colonial authorities, for the sake of expediency, simply maintained the super-imposition of the Gonja as the overlords of Alfai.

In 1932, Alfai was amalgamated with the Gonja kingdom. This was done without recourse to the cultural, historical and linguistic differences of the Nawuri and the Gonja. With the new administrative arrangement, the Nawuri completely lost their autonomy and became subjects of the Gonja. The arrangement turned the Nawuri into Gonja subjects, empowered the Gonja to rule over them and defined the relations between the Nawuri and the Gonja as one of the “ruled” and the “ruler.” As overlords, the Gonja claimed allodial rights to Alfai lands. This set the stage for a wrangle between the two ethnicities over allodial rights to Alfai lands, which expressed itself in the political, social and economic factors of the Nawuri-Gonja conflict.

From 1932, political issues such as membership, presidency and functions of local government arrangements in Alfai, chieftaincy dispute and the politics of the Togoland Question provided the furnace in which the wrangle over allodial rights to Alfai lands was fashioned. This was complicated by Gonja interferences in Nawuri religious and cultural traditions, imposition of tributes on the Nawuri, Gonja exercise of the right to allocate lands in Alfai, and the political activism of the Gonjaland Youth Association. The resultant effect was the deterioration of the relations between the two ethnic groups, leading to sporadic disturbances and mayhem.

The colonial and post-colonial Governments of Ghana as well as the United Nations Organization were not oblivious to the deteriorations in the relations between the Nawuri and the Gonja. This was evidenced by the importunate petitions of the Nawuri to the Governments of Ghana and the United Nations Organization about their abhorrence of Gonja rule and claim to allodial rights to Alfai lands. Unfortunately, nothing realistically was done to address the concerns of the Nawuri, and this further deepened the discord between the two ethnicities.

In 1991, the deteriorated Nawuri-Gonja relations were complicated by the REGSEC's ban of the holding of the Gonjaland Youth conference at Kpandai scheduled for March in that year. Immediately, tension began to mount rapidly and this made war between the two ethnicities inevitable. The outbreak of war was only a matter of time, and it only needed a trigger. Through a number of security measures, the DISEC and REGSEC attempted to de-escalate tension in Alfai, but the measures failed as the deteriorations in the relations between the two ethnicities brought them to the brink of war from which retreat seemed impossible.

On April 7, 1991, street fights between the Nawuri and the Gonja resulting from a dispute over a parcel of land, degenerated into an ethnic conflict. The ensuing Gonja-

Nawuri war passed through three phases. Throughout the phases, the pendulum of victory and defeat oscillated between the warring factions. The Gonja emerged victorious in the first phase, while the Nawuri won the second and third. The war claimed human lives and property, disrupted economic and socio-cultural activities in Alfai, caused internal displacement of people and continues to have rippling effects on the Nawuri and Alfai in general.

Three major attempts have been made to resolve the Nawuri-Gonja conflict by the Bimbilla-Na in 1991, the Ampiah Committee of Inquiry in 1991, and the PPNT from 1994-1996. Unfortunately, the attempts failed to yield positive results for reasons ranging from question marks over the neutrality of some of the mediation bodies to the unresolved issue of the allodial owners of Alfai lands.

Major Conclusions of the Study

Key conclusions emerge from this study. Contrary to the arguments of Cardinall and Tamakloe that the Nawuri were Gonja captives, this study established that the Nawuri were the autochthones of Alfai, who settled in the area long before the arrival of the Gonja. There was no war between the Nawuri and the Gonja when the latter immigrated into Alfai; neither was there evidence of Gonja conquest of the Nawuri. As the first-comers, unconquered, unassimilated or un-subjugated group in the pre-colonial period, allodial rights in Alfai naturally resided in the Nawuri.

There were cultural and historical differences between the Nawuri and the Gonja. Nonetheless, the two ethnic groups were political allies in the pre-colonial period. As political allies, the Nawuri assisted the Gonja when the Asante invaded Eastern Gonja in the 1744-45. They also assisted the Gonja of the Lepo Gate (the Gate to which the Alfai Gonja belonged) in the Kpembe civil war of 1892-93. The conclusion that the Nawuri

and the Gonja are culturally and linguistically different is contrary to the suggestion of Braimah and Goody that the Nawuri were a sub-group of the Gonja, a suggestion which impliedly upholds the view that the two ethnic groups share the same cultural traits.

The Nawuri were an autonomous people in the pre-colonial period and that they were ruled by their own chiefs. Though the Kanankulaiwura existed in the pre-colonial times, he did not have political authority over the Nawuri. Rather, he was merely a Zongo chief, whose jurisdiction was limited to the Zongo community in Alfai. The parameters of political authority in Alfai were altered in 1913 when the Germans gave a 'warrant' to Kanankulaiwura Mahama Karatu and recognized him as the overlord of Alfai. This laid the foundation of Gonja overlordship in Alfai, which the British built upon. Thus, contrary to the argument of Braimah, Wilks and Goody, Gonja rule in Alfai did not pre-date colonial rule in the area.

Early relations between the Nawuri and the Gonja were generally cordial. This was evidenced by the fact that when the first Gonja immigrants arrived in Alfai, the Nawuri helped them to establish their farms and houses. The relations began to deteriorate from 1932 onwards, and though the colonial and post-colonial Governments of Ghana as well as the United Nations Organization were not oblivious to the issue, nothing realistically was done to deal with it. The failure of Governments and the United Nations Organization to deal realistically with the problem further deepened the discord between the two ethnicities.

Allodial rights in Alfai in the pre-colonial times resided in the Nawuri by reason of the fact that they were the first to settle in the area; they were unassimilated and did not forfeit their allodial rights to lands in their territory to the Gonja through conquest and suzerainty. Gonja claims of allodial rights in the Kpandai area based on overlordship is dismissed entirely as it is not grounded in facts of conquest or voluntary Nawuri

submission to them through the swearing of an oath. Gonja sovereignty over the Nawuri was purely a function of colonial policy rather than any historical evidence. This conclusion builds upon the argument of Ampene, Jones and Ward which makes the Nawuri autochthones of Alfai and impliedly upholds their allodial land rights in the area.

The amalgamation of Alfai with the Gonja kingdom in 1932 was for the expediency of the local government policy of indirect rule. The local government arrangement was the defining moment in the history of Nawuri-Gonja relations. It sowed the seeds of discord between the Nawuri and the Gonja, and established power relations between the Nawuri and the Gonja by making the latter the overlords of the former. Furthermore, it defined the relations between the Gonja and the Nawuri in Alfai as one between the “ruler” and the “ruled” respectively. By the new administrative arrangement, the Nawuri completely lost their autonomy and were turned into subjects of the Gonja. Hence they were compelled to recognize the authority of the Yabumwura of the Gonja and his sub-chiefs as their overlord, and pay allegiance to them. Consequently, the Kanankulaiwura and his Gonja sub-chiefs in Alfai assumed a high profile as opposed to the Nawuriwura and his sub-chiefs. As overlords, the Gonja assumed allodial rights to Alfai lands, which set the stage for the wrangling between the Nawuri and the Gonja over allodial rights. This conclusion builds upon the argument of Brukum, Bombande, Skalnik and Pul that the policy of amalgamation by the British colonial authorities sowed the seeds of the multitude of ethnic conflicts in Northern Ghana.

Through the super-imposition of the Gonja on the Nawuri, colonial rule sowed the seeds of the Nawuri-Gonja conflict. It transformed the hitherto pre-colonial allied relations between the Gonja and the Nawuri into one of “ruler” and “ruled”, respectively, and led to the loss of Nawuri autonomy and control over their ancestral lands. This laid the foundation for the antagonism between the two ethnic groups over

allodial rights to Alfai lands, which expressed itself subsequently in political, social and economic spheres.

The colonial political structure and space in Alfai created by the British authorities led to the evolution of new constructs of allodial rights, which were inimical to established traditions and provided opportunities for the Gonja to appropriate land in Alfai. This resulted in the series of encounters between the two ethnic groups over allodial rights in the colonial and post colonial times. This conclusion supports the argument of Bening that colonial land policy in Northern Ghana challenged established traditions on land rights and land tenure.

A multiplicity of factors of political, social and economic outlook caused the Nawuri-Gonja conflict. Mostly rooted in the colonial local government policy, the factors were overtime complicated by Nawuri resistance to Gonja claim of allodial rights to Alfai lands. More than any issue else, the wrangle over allodial rights in Alfai served as the nexus that connected all the multiplicity of factors that caused the outbreak of war between the Nawuri and the Gonja in 1991 and 1992. It determined the position of the two ethnicities and the character of the political, social and economic causes of the Nawuri-Gonja conflict.

Politically, the questions about the composition, legitimacy, presidency and activities of the local government arrangements in Alfai throughout the colonial period were all tied to the dispute between the Nawuri and the Gonja over allodial title to Alfai lands. Besides, the unresolved problem of the allodial ownership of Alfai complicated the politics of the Togoland Question in the 1950s. Occurring at a time when the two ethnic groups were wrangling over dominance in the Alfai Local Council to advance their respective claims to allodial rights to Alfai lands, the Togoland Question seemed to offer the Nawuri a leverage, and they seized upon it.

Chieftaincy among the Nawuri existed since the ancient times. Super-imposed on the Nawuri as overlords in 1932, the Gonja, however, refused to recognize Nawuri chiefs. Gonja refusal to recognize Nawuri chiefs contributed to the tension between the two ethnicities in Alfai, and set the two ethnicities on a collision course. The Kanankulaiwura Skin dispute in the late 1960s and early 1970s also provided the Nawuri the opportunity to meddle in Gonja chieftaincy affairs and to re-echo their aboriginal and allodial rights. The chieftaincy dispute between the Nawuri and the Gonja – whether it was over Gonja refusal to recognize Nawuri chiefs or over the the Kanankulaiwura Skin dispute –was intricately linked to benefits inherent in the exercise of allodial and jurisdictional rights in Alfai.

Ethnic stereotyping, growth of Nawuri elite, Gonja interferences in Nawuri religious and traditional ceremonies, imposition of tributes on the Nawuri, and the political activism of the Gonjaland Youth Association were social factors which provided the furnace in which Nawuri-Gonja antagonism was fashioned out. The resultant effect of these factors was that they created in Nawuri minds the impression that the Gonja were hell-bent on claiming allodial rights to Alfai lands. Of the plethora of the social factors, the political activism of the Gonjaland Youth Association was prominent. Its political activism was provocative to the Nawuri. The re-designation of the erstwhile Gonja Youth Association as “Gonjaland Youth Association” was suggestive of an act of imperialism in furtherance of Gonja claim to allodial rights in Alfai. The REGSEC’s ban of its conference at Kpandai scheduled for March 1991 led to mounting tension and brought the Nawuri and the Gonja to the brink of war from which retreat became impossible. This conclusion supports the arguments of Julia Johnson and Benjamin Talton that social space networks, actors and factors such as stereotyping, roles of educated elite and youth associations in conflicts in Northern Ghana.

The exercise of allodial rights by both the Nawuri and Gonja contributed to the rising tension in Alfai. Problems arose when one ethnic group attempted to interfere in the right of the other ethnic group to allocate land in Alfai or attempted to interfere in land under effective use by members of the other ethnic group. As subjects, Nawuri's allodial rights in Alfai lands steadily and gradually eroded over time. Their attempts to reclaim their allodial rights and prevent the Gonja from exercising the right to allocate parcels of land in Alfai eventually led to an outbreak of war in 1991.

The Nawuri-Gonja conflict passed through three phases in which the pendulum of victory and defeat swung between the warring factions. In the first phase, the Gonja emerged victorious due largely to lack of unity among the Nawuri, their unpreparedness, their usage of inferior weaponry, inherent weaknesses in their strategies and the existence of fifth columnists among them as well as the withholding of support of settler ethnic groups to them. The Nawuri won the second and third phases largely because of the effectiveness of their strategies and the support of the Konkomba and the Bassari. The war ended at a huge cost to human lives, properties and Government recurrent budget. It also disrupted economic and socio-cultural activities in Alfai, caused internal displacement of people, and continues to have rippling effects on Alfai and Nawuri-Gonja relations.

Attempts made by the Bimbilla-Na, the Ampiah Committee of Inquiry and the PPNT have failed largely due to security problems, the uncompromising positions of the warring factions, question marks over the neutrality of the mediation bodies, lack of political will on the part of Government, and the unresolved issue of allodial rights to Alfai land.

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G. List of Informants**Table of Informants**

Name	Sex	Ethnicity	Place of Residence	Date of interview	Age
Prof. R.B. Bening [Lecturer, University of Ghana]	Male	Sisala	Univ. of Ghana, Legon		-
Dr. Akaling-Pare [Lecturer, University of Ghana]	Male		Univ. of Ghana, Legon		-
Nana Akitanyi Lempo II [Eblisaa of Bladjai]	Male	Nawuri	Bladjai	15 th Dec. 2011	102
Samson Kwaku Donkor [Okyeame, Kpandai]	Male	Nawuri	Kpandai	4 th March 2012	59
Nana Atorsah Bresiam Okore [Kpandaiwura]	Male	Nawuri	Kpandai	4 th March 2012	59
Nana Okpanibake Oklapunye Oclass [Kitare-Disanewura]	Male	Nawuri	Kitare-Disane	5 th March 2012	52
Yaw-Do	Male	Nawuri	Kpandai	2 nd Nov. 2011	52
Nana Anasinchor Kofi	Male	Nawuri	Bladjai	15 th Dec. 2011	87
Jampa Attah Ben	Male	Nawuri	Katiejeli	15 th Dec. 2011	28
Denteh Asante	Male	Nawuri	Katiejeli	15 th Dec. 2011	54
Nana Okumankwi I, Nkanchinawura	Male	Nawuri	Nkanchina/Kpandai	4 th March 2012	59
James K. Atorsah	Male	Nawuri	Kpandai	4 th March 2012	48
Okuma Yakubu Piki	Male	Nawuri	Kpandai	4 th march 2012	53

Atta Kofi Andrew	Male	Nawuri	Kpandai	4 th march 2012	39
Mr. Mohammed Jafa		Gonja	Katiejeli	15 th Dec. 2011	51
Karimu Maliya Fatima	Female	Gonja	Kpembe	11 th March 2012	38
Alhassan Sulemana	Male	Gonja	Salaga	11 th March 12012	39
Enemu Aduna	Male	Gonja	Kpembe	11 th march 2012	75
Hajia Ladi	Female	Gonja	Katiejeli	11 th March 2012	67
Dramani Imoro	Male	Gonja	Salaga	12 th March 2012	55
Bawa Alhassan	Male	Gonja	Salaga	12 th March 2012	46
Salifu Sachebu	Male	Gonja	Salaga	12 th march 2012	38
Inusah Mahama	Male	Gonja	Kafaba	12 th march 2012	36
Fredrick Bukari Tahiru	Male	Gonja	Kpembe	12 th march 2012	33
Dari Sadat	Male	Gonja	Kafaba	12 th march 2012	30
Iddi Salisu Sanda	Male	Gonja	Salaga	12 th March 2012	30
Tahiru Mahama	Male	Gonja	Salaga	12 th march 2012	31
James Njebi	Male	Konkomba	Kpandai	8 th March 2012	47
Kadir Nasali	Male	Konkomba	Kpandai	8 th March 2012	48
Edward Niyi	Male	Konkomba	Kpandai	8 th March 2012	55
Nnaful Napare	Male	Konkomba	Kinyinpan	8 th March 2012	45
Ngecha Kawi	Male	Konkomba	Kpandai	8 th march	45

				2012	
Uborti Takai [Konkomba chief]	Male	Konkomba	Bladjai	8 th March 2012	70
Kifuibe Binagma	Male	Konkomba	Kinyinkpan	8 th March 2012	52
Nande Nwianu	Male	Konkomba	Jadigbe	9 th March 2012	43
Nwanam Bindipim	Male	Konkomba	Jadigbe	9 th march 2012	48
Ngmajomba Boripom	Male	Konkomba	Jadigbe	9 th march 2012	41
Balimor Razak	Male	Konkomba	Kpandai	9 th March 2012	49
Danah Mbalimor	Male	Konkomba	Kpandai	9 th March 2012	47
Pastor Njebi	Male	Konkomba	Kpandai	9 th March 2012	82
Makunda Kaadi	Male	Konkomba	Kpandai	9 th March 2012	48
Tamanja Blogma	Male	Konkomba	Bladjai	15 th Dec. 2011	84
Ntigma Dogo	Male	Konkomba	Bladjai	15 th Dec. 2011	84
Awiagah Kofi	Male	Chanla	Jadigbe	9 th March 2012	44
Kojo Adunwule	Male	Chanla	Jadigbe	9 th March 2012	43
Yakuma Adunwule	Female	Chanla	Jadigbe	9 th March 2012	48
Bikpemi Nakpan	Male	Bassari	Kpandai	6 th March 2012	56
Kwasi Kpapu	Male	Bassari	Kpandai	6 th March 2012	60
Chetri Gaou	Male	Bassari	Kpandai	6 th March 2012	65
Simale Nabin	Male	Bassari	Kpandai	6 th March 2012	61
Razak Bepenbi	Male	Bassari	Kpandai	6 th March 2012	52
Napor Nyande	Male	Bassari	Kpandai	6 th March 2012	48
Moses Ninkabs	Male	Bassari	Kpandai	7 th March 2012	48
Kanbo Gao	Male	Bassari	Kpandai	7 th March 2012	52
Ninkab Samuel Bunju	Male	Bassari	Kpandai	7 th march 2012	52
Kpanti Gbati	Male	Bassari	Kpandai	7 th March	54

				2012	
Nyong Agalasi	Male	Bassari	Kpandai	7 th March 2012	55
Nakpan Bepenbi	Male	Bassari	Kpandai	7 th March 2012	53
Polpol Nyong	Male	Bassari	Kpandai	7 th March 2012	74
Nabin Yakpan	Male	Bassari	Kpandai	7 th march 2012	75
Donkor Gao	Male	Bassari	Kpandai	7 th March 2012	56
Faal Kanu	Male	Bassari	Kpandai	10 th March 2012	80
Nabine Kunkpala	Male	Bassari	Kpandai	10 th March 2012	78
Kwame Gbati	Male	Bassari	Kpandai	10 th march 2012	50
Mama A. Hassan	Male	Kotokoli	Kpandai	10 th March 2012	60
Haruna Mohammed	Male	Kotokoli	Kpandai	10 th March 2012	55
Musah Kasimu	Male	Kotokoli	Kpandai	10 th March 2012	53
Abdulai Moru	Male	Kotokoli	Kpandai	10 th March 2012	52
Tahiru Mohammed (aka Kabobo)	Male	Kotokoli	Kpandai	10 th March 2012	48
Alhassan Abukari	Male	Kotokoli	Kpandai	10 th March 2012	58
Nuhum Jafaru	Male	Kotokoli	Kpandai	10 th March 2012	45
Alhaji Alaja	Male	Kotokoli	Kpandai	10 th March 2012	58
Zibilla Sumaila	Male	Kotokoli	Kpandai	10 th March 2012	54

H. Witnesses of the Ampiah Committee of Inquiry

Gonja

1. Alhaji Mohammed Nuurideen Jawula
2. Mr. Zakaria Alhassan Jawula
3. Alhaji George Amadu Mahama

Nawuri

1. Mr. Joseph Kwesi Mbimadong (now Nana Obimpeh I, Balaiwura)
2. Mr. Nikab Manin
3. Nana Nkpanibake Oclass (Kitare-Disanewura)

I. Others

1. “Press Conference on the State of Affairs in the Nawuri Area of Kpandai District of the Northern Region held on September 21, 2011 by the Chiefs and Elders of Nawwuri land.”
2. Letter from the Kpandaiwura’s palace to the Minister of Local Government and Rural Development, January 28, 2011.
3. A petition by Nawuri chiefs and elders of Kpandai, “Petition against the Kpembewura’s claim of houses in Kpandai”, to the president of Ghana, dated September 27, 2010.
4. Petition by Nanan Abugabah I, “Re: Adelibam Bunyaluwe aka Dadie and Nine Others and Petition to Transfer Case to Accra”, to the Attorney General and Minister of Justice, dated September 15, 2010.
5. Kpembewura Kibasibil’s Petition, “Criminal destruction of Gonja houses in Kpandai”, to the Northern Regional Security Council, dated May 8, 2010.
6. In the Magistrate Court Held at Bimbilla in the Northern Region on Monday, the 15th Day of July, 2009 Before His Worship Mr. Amadu Issifu, District Magistrate: Suit No. 46/09 – Judgement.

7. Letter from Nana Abugabah I to the president of the Republic of Ghana, February 16, 2009.
8. Letter from Nana Abugabah I to the Minister, Northern Region, September 26, 2008.
9. Letter from Nana Abugabah I, paramount chief to the Minister of the Interior, 18 June 2008.
10. Letter from the Nawuriwura's palace, Kpandai, to the Northern Regional Minister, April 27, 2007.
11. "Memorandum submitted by the Gonja on the Peace Negotiations in the Northern Conflict", September, 1994.
12. "The Proposed Set-up of Nanumba/Kpandai District Council": A letter from the Nawuri to the Chairman of the Delimitation Commission, dated February 23, 1971; "Nanumba/Kpandai District Council": Petition of the Nawuri to the Minister of Internal Affairs, dated November 10, 1971.
13. Nawuri and Nchumuru Chiefs' "Petition for the cessation of the payment of levies to the Salaga District Assembly" to the Secretary, Local Government, dated July 22, 1991.
14. "Speech by Alhaji Musah Jawula at a meeting of the Gonja and the Nawuri at Bimbila-Na's Palace, on 7th June 1991".
15. "Memorandum Submitted by Nawuris at a Reconciliation Meeting with the Northern Regional Security Committee (REGSEC) Held at Tamale on Tuesday, 7th May 1991 in Connection with the Nawuri/Gonja Conflict."
16. "Minutes of Meeting of REGSEC on One Side with Leaders of Gonja and Nawuri on the other in Connection with Peace Negotiations Following the Gonja-Nawuri Conflict Held on Tuesday 7th May, 1991."

17. Petition of Nawuris to the Chairman, PNDC, dated 2 April, 1991.
18. A letter by the General Secretary of the “National Liberation Movement of Western Togoland” to its members dated June 6, 1989.
19. A letter from Kanankulaiwura Aponnibisee Alhaji Ademu to Nana Gyakon Benfiane Nkachina, dated 29 November, 1988.
20. “Re: Application for A Pass – Enstoolment and Outdooring of a Nawuri-wura Chief”. Petition on behalf of Nawuri by Kwakye, Gyambrah and Co Chambers to the Superintendent of Police, Salaga, dated March 26, 1985.
21. Petition of Nawuriwura, Nana Bakiansu Asasiadwo, and the Head Asafoache, Kpandai, Atta Karikari, to the special Action Unit, National Redemption Council, dated September 22, 1975.
22. Petition by Kpembewura Jawulla Ababio II, to Minister of Internal Affairs and Electoral Commissioner, dated 25th November 1971.
23. Petition of Nawuri Chiefs and Naimi (Chief Imam) of Kpandai to the Prime Minister, 5th March, 1971.
24. Letter from Nawuri Chiefs to the Yagbunwura, 25 February, 1971.
25. Mandate from the Chiefs, Elders and peoples of Nawuri and Nanjuro in that part of Togoland under United Kingdom Trusteeship situated between Kete-Krachi and Nanumba states Authorizing S.G. Antor and A.A. Chamba to speak on their behalf at the U.N. General Assembly’s meeting, dated 30th October, 1954.
26. Philip Kwaku and Three Others of Katiejeli (Defendants)”, dated July 30 1954.
27. Affidavit Sworn by Kojo Police at Salaga, dated on July 30 1954.
28. A letter from the Government Agent, Damango, to the Bimbilla-Na, dated November 5, 1953.

29. A Letter from Nana Atorsah to the Government Agent, Salaga, Northern Territories, dated June 19, 1953.
30. A letter from the Chief Commissioner of the Northern Territories, Tamale, to J.A. Braimah of the Ministry of Communications and Works, Accra, dated May 10, 1952.
31. A letter from the office of the Ministry of Communications and Works, Accra, signed by J.A. Braimah, to the Chief Commissioner of the Northern Territories, Tamale, dated May 17, 1952.
32. Telegram from Nana Atorsah Agyemang, Kpandai via Krachi to Local Government, Accra dated 21 February 1952.
33. A letter from Bimbilla-Na Natogma to Nana Atorsah through the organizing secretary of the installation ceremony, dated October 26, 1951.
34. A letter from Yagbubumwura Wuntoma to Nawuri Elders, dated 26 October 1951.
35. Gold Coast, Local Government Ordinance, 1951: The Instrument Establishing the Gonja-Volta District Council.
36. Motion on Notice in the Matter of “Kanankulaiwura of Gonja (Plaintiff) versus Kojo Police.
37. “Memorandum Presented to the Committee of Inquiry into the Gonja/Nawuris and Nanjuros Conflict by the District Security Committee (DISEC), East Gonja District Assembly.”
38. A petition of Chiefs and Odikros of the Nawuri Traditional Area, “Petition of presidential consideration of the Nawuri plight”, to the president of the Republic of Ghana, n.d.

39. Kpandai District Assembly's "Report on protest march against the court suit being initiated by madam Fulera Adam to claim ownership of hose number C 28 in Kpandai after the Nawuri-Gonja conflict of 1991/1992" to the Northern regional Minister.
40. "Protest against the court suit being initiated by Madam Fulera Adam to claim ownership of house number C28 in Kpandai after the Nawuri-Gonja conflict of 1991/1992" by the league of Nawuri Women Against Violent Conflict.

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GLOSSARY

1. BNI	Bureau of National Investigation
2. CCNT	Chief Commissioner for the Northern Territories
3. D.C.	District Commissioner
4. DISEC	District Security Committee
5. EJTCC	Enlarged Joint Togoland Consultative Commission
6. GYA	Gonjaland Youth Association
7. KOYA	Konkomba Youth Association
8. NTs	Northern Territories
9. PRAAD	Public Records and Archival Administration Division
10. REGSEC	Regional Security Committee
11. SNA	Secretary for Native Affairs
12. THSG	Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana
13. WAFF	West African Frontier Force