

CHAPTER FIVE: MUSLIMS WITHIN THE COLONIAL STATE

By the 1930s, if not earlier, the colonial authorities in the Northern Territories had gradually lost interest in the surveillance of Muslims and had dropped any plans of promoting a pro-Muslim policy in the North. The colonial disinterest in Muslim affairs is most marked in the minimal reporting about the development and formation of ‘Muslim spheres’ in the region. It is therefore more or less impossible to get an overall picture of the development of Islam during the colonial period in the North by using colonial records. There are, however, some few remarks here and there in the records about Muslim affairs, shedding some light on issues such as the formation of ‘Muslim spheres’, most notably the establishment of *zongos* and tied to it, the issue of ‘strangers’ and ‘foreigners’, the existence of precolonial Muslim settlements, the celebration of Muslim festivals and the issue of the *hajj* or the pilgrimage to Mecca, and the use of Islamic Law and its (limited) impact, including the question of Muslim marriage. The colonial records are very uneven and in most cases reveal the tip of the iceberg; therefore, the presentation here is only able to provide some snapshots and glimpses. The end result will be – without being able to do further interviews for the time being – only a collage.

1. THE FORMALIZATION OF *ZONGOS* IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORIES

One of the key elements of the development and formation of ‘Muslim spheres’ in the North is the *zongo*. The word *zongo* is derived from a Hausa word which (today) means a segregated quarter on the periphery of towns and cities.¹ Originally, the word – *zango* – meant (bush) camp or transitory settlement,² which was established by Hausa and other traders along the trade routes. Such temporary campgrounds could, over the decades, develop into sites of diaspora communities, a common feature throughout the Sahel and Sudan savannah (and not only linked to the expansion of Hausa trading networks).³ According to Adamu, a general feature of the *zango* was and is that it consists of people with hardly any blood relationship, the only unifying factors being their common desire to better themselves through their own professions and their membership of one cultural entity, i.e., the Hausa. Within the *zango*, the immigrants tried to create societal structures similar to those prevailing in Hausaland, and communicated with the local communities on administrative

¹ Kirby 1998, 141.

² Abraham 1962, 967.

³ See further Lovejoy 1980, 53.

matters mainly through the *sarkin Hausawa* (the chief of the Hausa). Thus, while being an outsider, immigrant and foreigner in a foreign land and community, a Hausa would cease to be a foreigner socially after settling in a *zango*.⁴

In Ghana, on the other hand, the word *zongo* is more specifically used to refer to the residentially segregated quarters where strangers, especially Muslims or at least people influenced by Islam, settle.⁵ Both in Southern as well as Northern Ghana, the formalization of *zongos* started during the colonial period and was tied to the attempts by the colonial authorities to regulate the development of townships.⁶ Although communities of Muslim (long-distance) traders of Mande Wangara descent, Hausa *fatake* (long-distance traders) or Mossi caravan traders had existed before the colonial period in both Asante and in the North, including in Kumasi,⁷ Wa,⁸ Kintampo, Atebubu,⁹ Kete,¹⁰ Salaga and Yendi (Gamaji)¹¹, there was little formal regulation apart from two offices, namely the *sarkin zongo* (chief of the *zongo*) and the imam. The most remarkable feature of the relationship between the inhabitants of the precolonial *zongos* and the local rulers was the nomination of a *sarkin zongo* to act as head of the community. His duty was to be the representative

⁴ Adamu 1978, 16.

⁵ Migeod 1920, 120; Sarfoh 1986, 73–74; Mumuni 1994, 35.

⁶ Schildkrout 1970a, 370. Apart from Kumasi and Accra, larger *zongos* in the South were established during the colonial period in Ejura, Wenchi, Obuasi and Koforidua (Migeod 1920, 120; Anderson 1954, 272, 274, 283; Hiskett 1980, 138). Specified returns were given for some *zongos* in the South in the 1931 census. According to the census data, Nkoraza *zongo* included 12 compounds and housed 93 inhabitants. Wenchi *zongo* counted 305 compounds and 4,504 inhabitants, making it one of the largest *zongos* in the Gold Coast at that time. Ejisu *zongo* had 36 compounds and 309 inhabitants, Ejura's Galadima *zongo* consisted of 9 compounds and had 80 inhabitants. Yeji had two *zongos*, Gerigi *zongo* and Yeji *zongo* proper, with a total of 93 compounds and 645 inhabitants (Return of Population Censused on Form A/villages, *The Gold Coast 1931*, 150, 158, 163, 172, 219). The biggest *zongo* was that of Kumasi, which was said to number about 12,000 inhabitants during the mid-1920s (RH Mss. Afr. s. 593 Duncan-Johnstone, The Ahmadiyya [unpubl. ms, 1931], 10).

⁷ Schildkrout 1970a, 371. Following an outbreak of plague in Kumasi in 1924, the colonial authorities decided to pull down the old *zongo* and to rebuild it on modern lines (Cardinall 1932, 42). A few years later 75 compounds in the Ejura *zongo* were destroyed by fire in 1928. Here, too, the colonial authorities decided to rebuild the *zongo* and even bore part of the reconstruction costs (RH Mss. Afr. s. 593 [1,2–14], Duncan-Johnstone, Informal Diary [Ashanti], entry for 24.2.1928).

⁸ Wilks 1989, 62–63.

⁹ On Atebubu and Kintampo, see Arhin 1974b, 8, 11–12, 16, and Arhin 1979, 106–121.

¹⁰ Maier, 1980, 35.

¹¹ Withers Gill, s.a., 12; Lubeck 1968, 9; Ferguson 1972, 246–248. According to Ferguson's data, the first strangers' settlement in Yendi was Madugufon early in the second decade of the nineteenth century. However, with the growth of long-distance trade and an increasing number of Hausa traders travelling through Yendi on their way to Gonja, the facilities in Madugufon soon proved to be inadequate and a new caravanserai had to be built. Consequently, a new strangers' settlement was established by Muhammad b. Dā'ūd. He was the son of Malam Dā'ūd, a Hausa from Katsina who had arrived in Yendi during or shortly after the *jihad* in Hausaland and had become the leading *maigida* (landlord) in Madugufon. According to local traditions (Withers Gill, s.a., 12; Ferguson 1972, 247), the name of the new strangers' settlement, Gamaji, was derived from the Hausa expression 'ga mai ji', "here is one who understands us." Ferguson dates the creation of the office of *sarkin Gamaji* to the first quarter of the nineteenth century (Ferguson 1972, 296 Table 6). See also Chapter II.3.

of the *zongo* at the ruler's court, to act as a middleman between the ruler and the inhabitants of the *zongo* as well as to collect the taxes. Internally, the *zongo* was an autonomous judicial community and the *sarkin zongo* had the right to hear civil cases within the *zongo* and which included members of the *zongo*. The *zongo* itself could be made up of different ethnic groups, whose leaders were their respective headmen. In most cases, however, the Hausa would constitute the most influential, if not major, ethnic group and, thus, the *sarkin Hausawa* would usually be nominated as *sarkin zongo*.

The establishment of colonial rule in the North resulted in a formalization of the *zongos*. The most remarkable feature was the nomination of the *sarkin zongo* by the colonial officials as well as the regulation of the physical space and economic life of the *zongos* by colonial law. Both British and German colonial authorities tried their best to dominate and control the *zongo* communities in their spheres of the Gold Coast/Togo hinterland. One of the most remarkable early interventions occurred in Kete in the German-controlled area around the year 1900 when the German authorities deposed and jailed the *sarkin zongo* Aufu (Abdullah) Badi after a quarrel with the German Resident.¹² The German Resident – presumably Adam Mischlich – thereafter nominated a new *sarkin zongo*. A few years later, Mischlich again influenced the nomination of a leading person of the Kete *zongo* – this time the nomination of a new imam. Thanks to his interference and support, one ‘Umar ibn Abū Bakr ibn ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Alī al-Kabbawī al-Kanawī, who later was to be known as Imam ‘Umar or Alhaji ‘Umar, was given the position of Imam of Kete.¹³ In Yendi, too, the Germans intervened and appointed Lubbo b. Ahmad, a Fulani trader, as *sarkin zongo* in Yendi. However, according to some of Lubeck's informants, he was deposed by the British when they took over in 1914/15. Other informants claim that Yusuf Karami (Yūsuf Karamī b. Yūsuf) was the first *sarkin zongo* during the German period, followed by ‘Abd al-Qadir (‘Abd al-Qādir), a Dendi of Wangara origins, whom the Germans deposed and expelled to Salaga. After him, Lubbo was appointed and was able to keep his position during the next 35 years (although this is unlikely as his successors were said to have been in office for the next 38 years and Lubeck conducted his interviews in 1968 – Lubbo would thus have been appointed by the Germans in about 1895 whereas they conquered Dagbon only in the year 1900!). Eventually, the next *sarkin zongo* following Lubbo was ‘Uthman (‘Uthmān), a Beriberi from Zinder, who held the office for three years and was

¹² Kete had been established as a *zongo* in 1877 and the Muslim community had witnessed a remarkable increase after the civil war in Salaga in 1892–1893. As early as 1891, the German official Kling had intervened in a conflict in the Muslim community and confirmed one Sofa as the first *sarkin zongo* of Kete and Aufu Badi as the second. In 1894 the Germans intervened in a bloody power struggle between the Muslims in Kete and the Dente Dosomfo in Krachi and established a military post between the two settlements. In 1895, however, due to the manipulations of the Krachiwura, *sarkin zongo* Sofa was replaced by Aufu Badi. See further Maier 1980.

¹³ Ferguson 1973, 29; Maier 1980, 40; Pilaszewicz 2000, 14.

succeeded by Muhammad Ba-Zamfarawa, who died in 1965 after having been in office for 35 years.¹⁴ In fact, the Germans interfered in the nomination of the imams in a similar way as they did in Kete: they called all the *malams* in Yendi together and ordered them to read the *Tafsīr* of al-Jalālayn. Only Yaqub (Ya'qūb) could read it and (therefore?) was selected as *imam al-jum'a* (Friday Imam).¹⁵ Those *malams* who could not read the text were beaten by the Germans.¹⁶

1.1. *Zongos* and 'Alien' Communities in the North

The British, too, controlled and regulated the affairs of the *zongos*. In 1908, when the colonial government in the Gold Coast issued the *Rules with Respect to the Regulations of Tamale Township*, one of the key aspects of the order was to regulate the physical space of the planned capital of the Northern Territories. Hausa and other traders were invited, if not forced, to settle in the town, but the type of housing was to be restricted. This provoked some criticism from the colonial officials in the North, including Acting Chief Commissioner A. Irvine, who, in a letter to the colonial secretariat in Victoriaborg, argued that

... if the Hausa traders are only to be permitted to build one hut, on their allotments, very few, if any of the building sites will be taken up, as natives of these territories and those of the interior generally, prefer having a number of small huts enclosed in a compound to one large one, it being the invariable custom for each wife with her children to occupy a separate hut in her husband's compound.¹⁷

Whatever the reaction of the officials in Accra, the influx of Hausa and other traders was very noticeable and after one decade, Tamale had already developed into perhaps the major centre in the North.¹⁸ There is a reference to the Tamale *zongo* as early as 1914 but it seems as if the term denoted the non-Dagbamba community of traders in the town. In 1917, however, a special *zongo* was established when the Mossi *zongo* was laid out, taking its name from the demobilized Mossi troops who settled

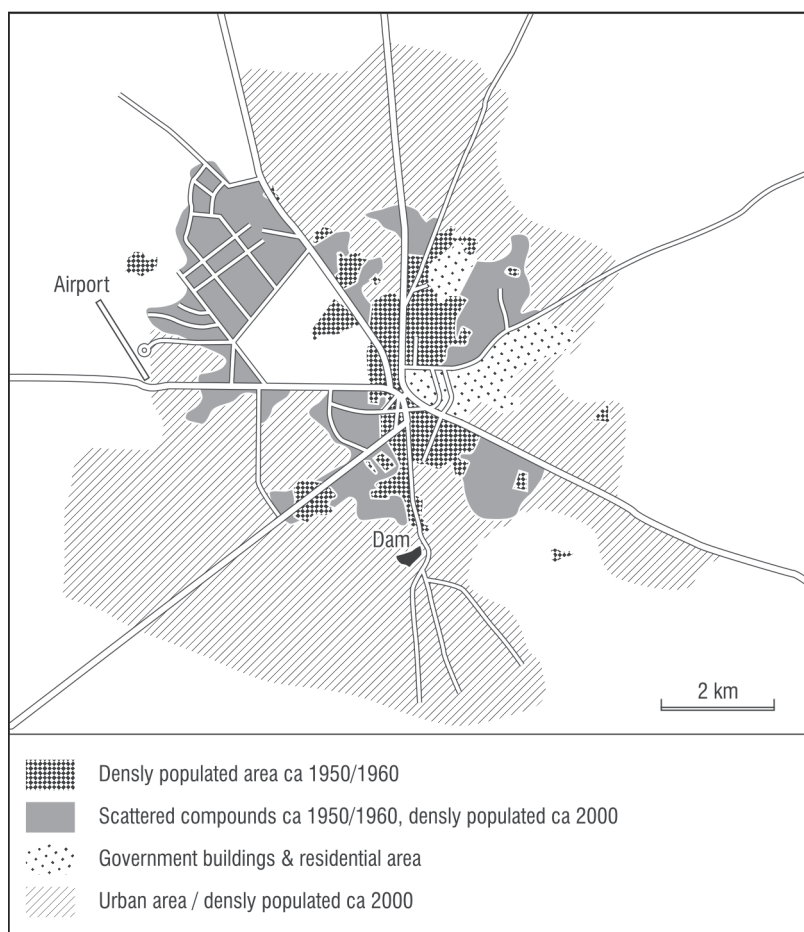
¹⁴ Lubeck 1968, 4, 17, 35. However, Lubeck's information is conflicting. Other informants told him that Lubbo was made *sarkin zongo* by the British in 1919 and that his successor was a Beriberi named Abu Bakr (Lubeck 1968, 11, 36).

¹⁵ According to Moro's informants, the Germans and Ya Na Andani had built a mosque for the Friday prayer and when the *imam* of this mosque died, Yaqub was nominated as the new Friday Imam (Moro 1968, M3/ page5). Another of Moro's informants said that it was the *sarkin zongo* and the Germans who insisted on putting up a Friday Mosque in Yendi (Moro 1968, M25).

¹⁶ Lubeck 1968, 39, 44.

¹⁷ PRAAD/A ADM 56/1/67, Letter from Act CCNT R.A. Irvine to Act. Col. Secr. Victoriaborg, Tamale 27.8.1908.

¹⁸ According to Alhaji Abdulai Adam, Regional Chief Imam of Tamale, his grandfather and his uncle built the first Friday mosque. Before his grandfather's initiative, there was a Muslim called *Nakawhana* (Chief Butcher) Braimah who hosted one Afa [Malam] Dahaman and they demarcated a spot with stones for prayers until his grandfather built the first mosque. ZNGFN1/2001, Interview 1.



Map 17. Tamale (1950–2000).

there. A few years later, the Hausa *zongo* was established.¹⁹ At the end of 1920, the Hausa *zongo* was inhabited by Mahama Sannie (occupying plot 1+2), Madugu (3 + one new plot), Sulay (4), Mahama Wanzam (plot 5), Mahama Mandowili (plot 6), Gariba Butcher (plots 7+13), Maaiki (plot 8), Gariba Basempari (plot 9), Musa Wanzam (plots 10+11), Malam Kasim (plot 12+two new plots), Malam Banfie (plots 14+15), Ajara²⁰ (plot 16), Mahama Sokoto (plot 17).²¹ However, the newly established Hausa *zongo* did not seemingly attract all Hausa traders and in 1923, the *sarkin zongo* complained to the District Commissioner that not many Hausas of Tamale had settled in the *zongo*. The *sarkin zongo* further complained that the situation in the *zongo* was not very satisfactory and suggested the *zongo* to be removed to a more favourable location behind the market on the left hand side of Savelugu Road.²² The request, however, was turned down.

¹⁹ Eades 1994, 31.

²⁰ Interestingly, the name of the occupant indicates that it was a female tenant, perhaps a widow?

²¹ PRAAD/A ADM 56/1/67, Tamale Township (1908–1930): Tamale *zongo*, list of occupiers (31.12.1920).

²² PRAAD/A ADM 56/1/276, Extracts from Informal Diary Tamale, entry for 18.10.1923.

The influx of Hausa and other ‘alien’ traders had been a remarkable one in Tamale during the 1920s and 1930s. According to the 1931 census, 917 Hausa, 305 Yoruba, 96 Wangara and 994 Mossi were counted as being resident in Tamale, apart from some 7,400 Dagbamba. Most of the ‘alien’ population were Muslims, including most, if not all, of the Hausa and the Wangara, the majority of the Yoruba and most probably a majority of the Mossi, too. Thus, of a total population of some 9,101 (according to another figure, the population of Tamale was almost 13,000²³), about a quarter of them belonged to the ‘alien’ population of Tamale.²⁴

Foreign or ‘alien’ communities were located throughout the Northern Territories, although there was a clear pattern in the geographical distribution of the various groups. The dispersion of the various foreign groups correlated with the historical



Plate 12. Hausa Zongo Road, Tamale, 2005; photo: HW.

²³ Cardinall 1932, 158 = Tamale: 12,941 inhabitants in 1931.

²⁴ PRAAD/T NRG 8/3/42, Census SP 1931.

development of the two main trading (and, by extension, scholarly) networks: the Wangara or Mande/Juula network along a north-south axis and the Hausa network along an east-west axis. These two networks had expanded during the precolonial period and overlapped in what was to become the Northern Territories. As a consequence, therefore, the majority of those belonging to the Hausa network would have been living in the eastern part of the Protectorate during the early colonial period while those belonging to the Mande network were in the western part, following the main trade links that had developed via Wa towards Asante. However, with the establishment of colonial rule and the slow but steady integration of the Protectorate into the colonial economy, new groups, such as Yoruba traders, had established new trading networks in the North. At the time of the 1931 census, the change was in full swing. Not surprisingly, the bulk of the Hausas, or some 4,500 persons, lived in the eastern part of the Southern Province: in Tamale Town, Tamale District or Western Dagomba, Eastern Dagomba and Eastern Gonja.²⁵ In addition, some 1,250 Hausas were living in three other districts, namely Western Gonja, Kusasi and Krachi Districts.²⁶ In comparison to the Hausa, the Mossi and Wangara, i.e., those people connected to the north-south network, were found throughout the Protectorate, although there are gaps in the figures of the 1931 census. According to the 1931 census of the Southern Province, the majority of the Mossi lived in Tamale and Western Dagomba. The Wangara were mainly found living in Eastern Gonja District (see further Table 3).²⁷

District\Group	Hausa	Yoruba	Mossi	Wangara	Bazaberimi
Tamale Town	917	305	994	96	128
Tamale District	389	85	1746	...	188
W Gonja District	81	...	133	313	...
E Gonja District	2413	93	634	715	373

N.B. The total amount of Muslim Yoruba and Mossi is not known, however, I assume that at least a substantial minority of them were Muslims. (Source: PRAAD/T NRG 8/3/42, Census SP 1931)

Table 3. Census returns for Muslim groups in the Southern Province, Northern Territories, 1931.

Apart from Tamale, there were a few other towns and large villages which had a substantial Muslim population. Some of these places were identified in the colonial records as ‘old’ Muslim settlements, or at least had such a large Muslim population – local and ‘alien’ – that the existence of a distinct ‘Muslim sphere’ was noticeable by

²⁵ In fact, about 2,400 out of the 4,500 Hausas living in the eastern part of the Southern Province lived in Eastern Gonja District (PRAAD/T NRG 8/3/42, Census SP 1931).

²⁶ PRAAD/T NRG 8/3/42, Census SP 1931; PRAAD/T NRG 8/3/43, Census Kusasi District 1931; PRAAD/T NRG 8/3/45, Census SP 1931 – Section of the British Sphere of Mandated Territory of Togoland.

²⁷ PRAAD/T NRG 8/3/42, Census SP 1931.

outsiders. The most prominent of the precolonial ‘Muslim’ settlements was Salaga, which although declining as the major regional market in 1921, had 18 mosques. Salaga was already known as a Muslim centre during the nineteenth century, but due to the political turmoil and the civil war at the end of the nineteenth century as well as the relocation of the flow of trade as a consequence of both Asante and (British and German) colonial trade policies, many traders had emigrated and moved to other places such as Kintampo and Kete-Krachi. The relocation of Muslim traders and scholars continued during the first decades of British rule, including to the large *zongos* at Atebubu and Ejura.²⁸

Wa, too, was known to be a major Muslim centre during the late precolonial period. Before the sack and destruction of Wa by Babatu in 1887 and the abandonment of the town during the turmoil in 1897, there were some 6,000 inhabitants and it boasted a large mosque,²⁹ thereafter its population declined and counted only 2,810 in 1921. Ten years later the population of Wa had almost doubled to about 5,300 inhabitants.³⁰ Following Wilks’ outline, there were several old Muslim wards and communities in the town itself. Tagarayiri, Kabanya and Limanyiri were the three traditional Muslim communities or *kabilas*³¹ in the town. Tagarayiri was an old Muslim community and seat of the Wa Yeri Na (Chief of the Yerihi or ‘Old Muslims’). According to Wilks, the Tagarayiri *kabila* probably also included the Dzangbeyiri ward, i.e., descendants of nineteenth-century Hausa traders. Limamyiri was the *kabila* of later Muslim immigrants and included several wards, such as Limamyiri proper in the centre of the town and Dondoli on its outskirts. The Wangara, on the other hand, lived in Jabagayiri and Buguliyiri wards. The *zongo*, however, was established during the colonial period. Wilks assumes that it included many of the 365 Southern Nigerians, 556 Wangara, 268 Hausa and at least some of the 1,405 Fulani enumerated within the Wala District in 1948.³²

The third major Muslim settlement in the Protectorate was Larabanga, which was identified by the colonial authorities as a Muslim stronghold – the chief and imam asserted that not a single ‘pagan’ lived in the village in 1912.³³ However, the attitude of the colonial officers towards the inhabitants of Larabanga was split: on the one hand, the Muslim community was praised for its cooperation and vitality, on the other hand, the same community was regarded as being stubborn and neglecting their “duties” towards the colonial administration and Native Authorities. The chief

²⁸ PRAAD/A ADM 56/1/241, Census taking 1921 – Northern Territories; Census Report Southern Province 192, para 71–72.

²⁹ PRAAD/A ADM 56/1/267, Mackworth: *Report on Wa* (1898); Wilks 1989, 108, 132–133, 137.

³⁰ Cardinall 1932, 158.

³¹ According to Wilks, the locally used term *kabila* (Arabic *qabila*) refers to a community defined by origin rather than by location (Wilks 1989, 25). It connotes to the Hausa term *asali* (Lovejoy 1980). See further Chapter II.3.

³² Wilks 1989, 25–26.

³³ PRAAD/A ADM 56/1/464, AR NT 1912, pages 34–35.

of Larabanga, who in 1928 was also the imam, was believed to have no influence.³⁴ A similar situation prevailed in Dokrupe and Dabori [Dagbori?]. The former was inhabited by people who had moved there from Larabanga, the latter was an offshoot of people who had fled from Dokrupe before the invasion of Samori's troops in 1898.³⁵ As in Larabanga, the Muslims of Dokrupe and Dabori tried to minimize their contact with the colonial authorities, which annoyed some colonial officers:

I do not know why but I can never get on with these Mara[bout]s, most of the people professing Islam are poor workers but they are amusing and well mannered, these of Larabanga are neither and seem quite unable to answer the most simple question truthfully.³⁶

However, one should challenge the negative British perception and instead interpret the actions of the Muslim communities of Larabanga, Dokrupe and Dabori as a clear sign of an active engagement by the local community to develop a distinct Muslim sphere within the colonial state – one which tried to minimize the influences of external changes and pressures.

Other important Muslim settlements, which dated from the precolonial period, were situated in Daboya, Gambaga and Yendi. However, compared to the two major 'Muslim' towns, i.e., Wa and Salaga, and the above-mentioned three Muslim settlements, the Muslim community in Daboya, Gambaga and Yendi constituted only a section of the total population. In these towns, the development of a 'Muslim sphere' had already been underway at the beginning of the colonial period. A similar situation prevailed in some other towns and larger settlements in Dagbon and Nanun. The formal establishment of *zongos* during the colonial period further accelerated and strengthened this process.

The situation in Yendi can be taken as an example of the changes introduced and provoked by the colonial situation. When the British took over the administration of Eastern Dagbon (i.e., Eastern Dagomba District) they conducted a survey of Yendi in (ca.) 1916. At that time, some 1,500 persons were supposed to be living in the town itself. Like all other towns, Yendi was divided into eight sections, three of which were inhabited by Dagbamba: the first section under the Zohe as headman, the second section under Headman Balorga, and the third section under Headman Imam (Limam) Abudulai and Zohe Imam Sieni. The fourth section was inhabited by Bazabarimi (Zabarima) under Headman Mama Zaza and the fifth was the Yoruba section under Headman Ali. Two further sections were controlled by Headwomen, namely Patuga (Kpatuya) and Kulogo. In addition, there already existed a *zongo* which was controlled by Headman Labaran Sokoto.³⁷ Labaran Sokoto was a Hausa,

³⁴ PRAAD/A ADM 58/5/2, Informal Diary Bole, entry for 11.2.1928.

³⁵ PRAAD/A ADM 58/5/3, Informal Diary Bole, entries for 2.7.1931 and 18.11.1933.

³⁶ PRAAD/A ADM 58/5/3, Informal Diary Bole, entry for 18.11.1933.

³⁷ PRAAD/A ADM 67/5/1, Informal Book Yendi, page 1. Further information in PRAAD/A ADM 11/1/824, Blair, *An Essay upon the Dagomba People* (1931), pages 60–61: Elders of the Na, but who have been presented to small villages: Zohe-Na (Priest of the Fetish Yenili and Chief of Zohe), Kum-

who was paid 30 shillings per month by the government and was entitled *sarkin zongo* (“siriki Zongo”) and was held responsible for cleanliness, order and the collecting of fees. During his period as *sarkin zongo*, the Yendi *zongo* expanded both in size and importance and in 1933 he retired on a pension (£4.13.6 p.a.). He died in 1936.³⁸

Unfortunately, there is not much information on the expansion and relative importance of the Yendi *zongo*. However, there exists some data for the early British period, i.e., from 1916 to 1918. Although the number of people passing through Yendi had declined from almost 34,000 in 1912 to about 10,000, trade was believed to be increasing (1916: 17,698 persons passing through; 1917: 25,696; 1918: 23,676).³⁹ The importance of the *zongo* is best reflected in the return of revenue from this period: more than half of the sum collected in revenue consisted of *zongo* tolls (See Table 4). The relative fiscal importance of the Muslim community in Yendi is further highlighted by the fact that almost all butchers in the town were Muslims. Only the Chief Butcher, at the time of reporting one Sulemanu, paid Slaughter Fees to the colonial government, which were at the rate of £3 per quarter. The other butchers paid him 1 shilling and 6 pence per cow and 3 pence per sheep or goat slaughtered.⁴⁰

	1916	1917	1918
Court fees and fines	23-13-0	6-2-0	1-0-0
<i>Zongo</i> tolls	93-12-6	107-13-5	98-17-11
Farm Produce	37-4-0	27-18-11	16-13-3
Market stalls	6-15-6	6-2-6	6-7-0
Slaughter fees	19-15-6	12-0-0	12-0-0
Rent, mainly <i>zongo</i>		1-14-0	2-2-0
Total	181-0-6	161-10-10	137-0-2

Table 4. Return of Revenue in Yendi, 1916–1918 (£-s-d). Source: PRAAD/A ADM 67/5/1, Informal Book Yendi, page 262.

The Yendi *zongo* was described as being well designed and built in 1916. Its shape was a hollow square, the sides being formed by groups of 4 houses connected by walls; the doors of the houses opened outwards and the small ground enclosed was no man’s land. The responsibilities for the affairs of the *zongo* were divided

Lana (Kumlana, in charge of burials of deceased Nas’ and with a quarter of Yendi to look after), Balo-Na (Balona, in charge of a quarter of Yendi known as Balogo), Bunglana (in charge of a quarter of Yendi), Malli (in charge of the Na’s quarter). There is an obvious contradiction regarding the identity of the *sarkin zongo* in Yendi: according to the entrance in the Informal Book, it was one Labaran Sokoto, according to Lubeck’s informants, it was one Lubbo b. Ahmad (see further page 249).

³⁸ PRAAD/A ADM 67/5/1, Informal Book Yendi, page 268.

³⁹ PRAAD/A ADM 67/5/1, Informal Book Yendi, page 277. On the Hausa kola trade through Northern Togoland before WWI, see Norris 1984, 181.

⁴⁰ PRAAD/A ADM 67/5/1, Informal Book Yendi, page 166.

between the *sarkin zongo* and the colonial government. The *sarkin zongo* collected daily tolls and paid monthly tolls to the government. The colonial government was in charge of the maintenance of the *zongo*. Already during January 1916 new roofs were constructed and in November 1918 the *zongo* was thoroughly repaired. Further repairs followed in January 1922 and annual repair works were undertaken during the next years (1924–1928). In 1932, the *zongo* was handed over to the newly established Native Administration. Due to the transfer, the Dagomba Native Authority took over responsibilities from the colonial administration and paid the *sarkin zongo* in return for their receiving the tolls. One year later, the Yendi *zongo* was to a large extent destroyed and relocated due to the expansion of the Yendi market.⁴¹

A similar expansion of the *zongo* and its activities also occurred in Wapuli. The old *zongo*, which had been maintained by the chief of Wapuli, was closed in 1919 and a new one was built with Captain Poole's consent. The colonial authorities allowed the *sarkin zongo* to charge the inhabitants 1d per head. The *zongo* was expanded in 1921 when the chief and the *sarkin zongo* had six more huts built in the *zongo* out of *zongo* profits.⁴² A further expansion occurred in 1924 when the DC had eight more huts laid out. At that time, a Hausa was put in charge of the Wapuli *zongo*.⁴³

The expansion of the *zongo* was also noted in Chereponi, Bole and Bawku. As in Yendi and Wapuli, the colonial authorities welcomed the steady influx of 'alien' traders,⁴⁴ but, on the other hand, tried to monitor the physical space of the *zongo*. For example, in Bole the DC complained about the unregulated conditions that prevailed in the *zongo*: "It is very difficult at the Zongo to make anything like streets as the houses are at present all anyhow, and there is no road to build on the sides of."⁴⁵ Another problem for the colonial authorities was the floating population of the *zongos* which increased during market days and periods of increased trade activities. Eventually, the fluctuation of the population was only a statistical (and security) problem; the influx of traders was not. However, with the increase of 'alien' traders, some towns, such as Bawku, could undergo a dramatic change in their ethnic make-up. Bawku was the most important town in Kusasi District. The district itself was generally known to be more or less inhabited by non-Muslims. With the expansion of trade, the ethnic situation in Bawku changed and in 1931, out of some 3,752 inhabitants, 722 were Hausa. These Hausa seemed to dominate mainly in the kola trade and as brokers (50 out of a total of 108), butchers (10 out of 23), leather workers (7 out of 16). Furthermore, some Hausa were tailors, shoemakers, weavers, blacksmiths and salt traders. In addition to the Hausa, there

⁴¹ PRAAD/A ADM 67/5/1, Informal Book Yendi, pages 268–269.

⁴² PRAAD/A ADM 67/5/1, Informal Book Yendi, page 36.

⁴³ PRAAD/A ADM 56/1/276, Extracts from Informal Diary Yendi, entry for 11.2.1924.

⁴⁴ PRAAD/A ADM 56/1/276, Extracts from Informal Diary Yendi, entry for 14.2.1924.

⁴⁵ PRAAD/A ADM 56/1/276, Extracts from Informal Diary Bole, entry for 28.11.1923.

were 109 Zabarima and 15 Wangara in Bawku, consequently making the total ‘alien’ (and probably Muslim, too) population almost one quarter of the total inhabitants.⁴⁶

2. MARKING A ‘MUSLIM SPHERE’ WITHIN THE COLONIAL SPACE

The relationship between the colonial state and the Muslim communities was not restricted to the observation by the former of the development of *zongos* and the use of Muslim scholars as intermediaries. Various actions on the part of the colonial authorities influenced, if not interfered within the ‘Muslim sphere’. As has been mentioned, there existed no blueprint for a distinct colonial policy towards the Muslims and there were no guidelines to promote or restrict the religious and social life of the Muslims. On the contrary, it seems as if the general colonial policy was non-interference as long as the Muslim community and the Islamic order did not challenge the Pax Britannica. As a consequence, positive interaction between the colonial authorities and the Muslim community only occurred when there was a situation when the Muslims stepped out of their ‘space’ in order to perform some public duties, the performance of which could collide with either the colonial or ‘native’ (non-Muslim) order. Negative interaction could occur if frictions within the Muslim community could not be solved by the community themselves and thus posed a threat to political stability. Interference by the colonial authorities added to the demarcation of the otherwise invisible ‘Muslim sphere’ in the Northern Territories, as the interference sometimes left its mark in the colonial records. However, like the ‘disappearance’ of the Quran schools from the colonial records, the rather irregular records on questions such as Ramadan, the *hajj* and Muslim marriage makes the narrative very uneven. On the other hand, the few entries in the records do give a glimpse into the existence of a ‘Muslim sphere’ in the Protectorate as the five pillars of Islam, which constituted the Islamic order, were, when possible, fulfilled and performed.

One of the most visual signs of the existence of a Muslim ‘sphere’ was the celebration and observation of Islamic festivals such as the *‘id al-fitr* and the *‘id al-adha*. Muslim communities were in general allowed to celebrate their religious festivals, but they had to ask permission from the District Commissioners to do so. In fact, the DCs’ position resembled that of the precolonial local authorities which would grant the Muslims permission to celebrate in public. The relationship between the Muslims and the colonial authorities would become manifest during Ramadan, resembling the precolonial situation: the Muslims would pay a visit to the DC and salute him before the festival. Or vice-versa, Muslim leaders would in some locations, such as in Kumasi, visit Christian festivals. For example, the *sarkin zongo* of Kumasi together with his retinue attended Easter Church service in

⁴⁶ PRAAD/T NRG 8/3/43, Census NP 1931; PRAAD/T NRG 8/3/43, Census Kusasi District 1931.

1928.⁴⁷ The DC's position and action resembled that of the precolonial authority: he would grant permission to drum, he would give permission for the ritual slaughter of the sheep and he would give the Muslim authorities, the imam(s) and *sarkin zongo*(s) presents.⁴⁸ Sometimes the DC might use his position to compel the Muslim community to undertake a public duty, such as the case in Bawku in 1933 when the DC demanded that the Muslim community finish the repair of their mosque before starting the *'id al-fitr*.⁴⁹

The negotiations between the colonial and the Muslim authorities over the terms of celebrating the *'id al-adha* or *Chimsi-chugu* (as the feast is called in Dagbanli) could sometimes be problematic. One major problem was caused by the increasing colonial interference in matters of public sanitation and hygiene. Sanitary reforms were introduced by the colonial government in order to prevent the spread of diseases and promote public sanitary conditions, especially in the urban areas. One consequence of the colonial sanitary reforms, which included the construction of drains, slaughter-slabs and pit latrines, was that the ritual slaughter of animals during the *'id al-adha* was to be contested by some colonial sanitary officers during May 1930 at least in Tamale. The problem in Tamale emerged when the Provincial Commissioner of the Southern Province, A.C. Duncan-Johnstone, after having consulted the Medical Officer, granted permission to the Imam of Tamale, the *sarkin zongo* (Hausa), the *sarkin moshi* and the *sarkin yoruba* and their followers to



Plate 13. Tamale Old Town, 1999; photo: HW.

⁴⁷ RH Mss. Afr. s. 593 (1,2–14) Duncan-Johnstone, Informal Diary (Ashanti), entry for 8.4.1928.

⁴⁸ PRAAD/A ADM 68/5/2, Informal Diary Zuarungu, entry for 20.10.1915; PRAAD/A ADM 56/1/221, Informal Diaries Tamale District, entries for 27.8.1920.

⁴⁹ PRAAD/A ADM 57/5/2, Informal Diary Bawku, entry for 6.4.1933.

slaughter sacrificial sheep on the feast of *dhu al-hijja*. According to the CSP's order, no more than one sheep per compound was to be slaughtered and all sheep were to be passed by the Animal Health Department before being slaughtered. In addition, after the sacrificial slaughter, the compounds were to be cleaned and inspected by the Medical Officer of Health. Finally, Duncan-Johnstone ordered that no portions of the sheep were to be sold.⁵⁰

However, Duncan-Johnstone's order was met with stiff criticism by the Veterinary and Medical Officers. The Principal Veterinary Officer (PVO) argued that it would be impossible for any of his officers to inspect all the compounds and claimed that the sacrificial animals had "always" been slaughtered at the abattoir. The only exception, he claimed, had been when a cow was slaughtered in the Dakpiema's compound after his death. According to the PVO, one could make an exception for an "old Dagomba custom" but not for the demands of "... alien natives practicing an alien religion, whose rites cannot have any significance as regards the ground locally. [...] Alien natives, e.g., Hausas, Moshis, Yorubas, should conform with the laws of the town."⁵¹ The Medical Officer of Health (MOH) backed the opinion of the PVO by stressing the impossibility for his department to inspect all compounds and urged the CSP to compel the Muslims to conduct their ritual slaughters at the abattoir.⁵² Duncan-Johnstone, in his turn, stated that the PVO and MOH had misunderstood him: the officers were not to inspect the meat in the compounds but to examine the animals, which could be done at the abattoir. He further sarcastically remarked to the PVO that "with regard to the 'alien' natives as you call them, it should not be forgotten that it is from them that the income of the future Health Board will come."⁵³ In his diary, Duncan-Johnstone further stressed that the imam of Tamale was not an alien but a Dagbamba of Tamale and that the principal mosque was 'Dagomba', not Hausa (i.e., 'alien').⁵⁴

Duncan-Johnstone's real intention behind his granting permission to the Muslim community of Tamale to perform the ritual slaughter in their compounds is revealed in his answer to the MOH. In the letter, he underlines the sacred condition and religious importance of the slaughter to the Muslims: "The reason that the Moslems wish to slaughter in their compounds is that they firmly believe that the libation of blood poured on the ground will bring them luck throughout the coming year." Consequently, as he stressed, the blood of an animal slaughtered in the abattoir did not have any religious significance or value. He further emphasized the social

⁵⁰ PRAAD/A ADM 56/1/351, Laws & Customs N.T., file 27, Letter by the CSP, 5.5.1930; RH Mss. Afr. s. 593 Duncan-Johnstone, CSP Informal Diary, May 1930, entry for 7.5.1930.

⁵¹ PRAAD/A ADM 56/1/351, Laws & Customs N.T., file 28, Principal Veterinary Officer to CSP, 7.5.1930.

⁵² PRAAD/A ADM 56/1/351, Laws & Customs N.T., file 29, Memorandum by Medical Officer of Health, 7.5.1930.

⁵³ PRAAD/A ADM 56/1/351, Laws & Customs N.T., file 30, Confidential letter from CSP to PVO, 9.5.1930.

⁵⁴ RH Mss. Afr. s. 593 Duncan-Johnstone, CSP Informal Diary, May 1930, entry for 7.5.1930.

importance of the ritual slaughter as the meat was cut up and distributed as alms to the poor, the lame and the blind. However, Duncan-Johnstone's main reason for permitting the slaughter was that the Muslim community in Tamale was at the time very anxious about future prospects. The uneasiness among the Muslim community had been caused by an invasion of locusts during the autumn of 1929,⁵⁵ and letters in Arabic from "Sakel" [Bakel?] to the Muslim religious leaders in the Gold Coast had further stirred the tension. In the letters the Muslims were warned of a terrible famine due to locust invasions, which would be followed by a pestilence in which many people would die.⁵⁶ Malam Halidu was one of the local scholars, who had received the warning, although only indirectly. In April 1930 he had received two letters, one from Imam 'Umar of Kete and another from Malam Salo, *sarkin zongo* Kumasi, who showed them to Duncan-Johnstone. It turned out that Imam 'Umar initially had received a letter from one Shehu Mahama Farid who, according to Duncan-Johnstone's information, was a 'marabout' living at a place called Gago in the French Sahel.⁵⁷ As a consequence, the Muslim community in Tamale was urged by their leaders to observe strictly all religious customs, to pray and to give alms to the poor in order to try and avert the predicted calamity. Duncan-Johnstone's argument was that the colonial government should not interfere in the rituals and religious customs of the Muslim community during times of stress, especially as such an action would interfere with a ceremony which was believed vital to the well-being of the Muslims.⁵⁸

However, despite Duncan-Johnstone's permission, the DC of Tamale under the instigation of the PVO ordered the Dakpiema to beat a gong-gong stating that no sheep were to be killed in the compounds but were to be taken to the abattoir. The DC further warned that anyone who challenged his order would get into trouble. Not surprisingly, the Tamale Muslim community was embittered. However, instead of engaging in an open clash with the colonial authorities and challenging the DC's order, the Muslims refused to go to the Slaughter House to perform their ritual slaughtering and stayed at home with the animals. For three days, the situation was rather tense in Tamale as the Muslims were not able to perform the ritual slaughter in their compounds. The stalemate was solved only after the intervention of the CSP (who had been away from Tamale). A deputation of tamale Muslims, including the Chief Imam and the *sarkin zongo*, visited Duncan-Johnstone on the 12th of May 1930 and, after new consultations with the MOH, the CSP reissued his permission to the Muslim community to slaughter the animals in their compounds and admonished

⁵⁵ On the 1929–1930 locust invasion, see Weiss 2004b.

⁵⁶ PRAAD/A ADM 56/1/351, Laws & Customs N.T., file 30, Confidential letter from CSP to MOH, 9.5.1930. On the 1931 famine in the Sahel savannah, see Fuglestad 1974 and Gado 1993.

⁵⁷ RH Mss. Afr. s. 593 Duncan-Johnstone, CSP Informal Diary, April 1930, entry for 23.4.1930.

⁵⁸ PRAAD/A ADM 56/1/351, Laws & Customs N.T., file 30, Confidential letter from CSP to MOH, 9.5.1930.

the DC and PVO for having interfered with the religious customs of the people at a critical time.⁵⁹

A few months later, the problem concerning the ritual slaughter in the Muslim community in Tamale was solved after discussions between the CSP and the Muslim leaders. It was decided that future slaughters would not be performed within the compounds but not in the abattoir either. Instead, a special plot near the African Club was marked out by the CSP on a piece of wasteland. The plot was to be cleared by the Muslim community and trees were to be planted. Duncan-Johnstone, at least, was relieved: "That is the end to what promised to be a difficult question and all the Moslems seem delighted."⁶⁰ Unfortunately, but not unexpectedly, the colonial records are silent about the feelings and attitudes of the Muslim population.

The slaughter question provides a limited, but interesting, piece of information about the existence and outline of the 'Muslim sphere' in Tamale. Presumably, the matter would not have caused any concern if some of the colonial authorities had not interfered in a religious tradition. Up to 1930, and seemingly again after the tension had been defused, the religious aspects of festivals and celebrations were to be outside the 'colonial sphere', i.e., an area in which the colonial authorities would not interfere. Seen from another perspective, the Muslim community would regard any colonial interference within the religious or 'Muslim sphere' as an intrusion. Therefore, although invisible, the borders between the colonial and the Muslim 'sphere' had to be marked, if not physically, at least mentally. The colonial authorities were shut out of the Muslim 'sphere', in part due to them being non-Muslims and therefore not being members of the community, in part due to the recognition of both sides of a kind of religious peace accord. The colonial officers were, from a Muslim perspective, 'aliens' and 'strangers'; one could cooperate with them on certain, neutral, issues, but reject any interference in religious and cultural matters. Thus, as with the Quran schools, the Muslim scholars and leaders maintained their control over religious and cultural matters.

The slaughter incident in Tamale in 1930 also reveals some other demarcations of the Muslim 'sphere'. The fear of an imminent famine and epidemic, stirred by locust invasions and aggravated by messages from other Muslim scholars who – presumably – interpreted the situation as a 'sign of the hour', i.e., as signs of the coming Day of Judgement, made the performance of the rituals a matter of the utmost importance. Had the colonial authorities not backed down from prohibiting the ritual slaughter of animals in the compounds, the cosmic order of the Muslim 'sphere' would have been seriously challenged. Therefore, the whole matter was not just a question of hygiene and sanitation but one that seriously put the existence

⁵⁹ PRAAD/A ADM 56/1/351, Laws & Customs N.T., Note by CSP, 28.5.1930; RH Mss. Afr. s. 593 Duncan-Johnstone, CSP Informal Diary, May 1930, entries for 11.5.1930 and 12.5.1930.

⁶⁰ PRAAD/A ADM 56/1/351, Laws & Customs N.T., includes Extract from the CSP's diary for July 1930, entry for 15.7.1930.

of the welfare of the Muslim community in danger. In fact, the 1930 incident can be taken as a sign of a clash between a modern, secular, progressive and technically oriented worldview of some colonial officers and an ‘other’ (Muslim) perception of the prevailing moral order.

In the end, due to CSP Duncan-Johnstone’s intervention, a clash was averted in Tamale. However, it can be argued that his decision was not based on a positive perception of Islam and the Muslim community (on the contrary), but rather on political considerations: if the colonial authorities would not relent, then the threat of a Muslim uprising might be imminent. Following the British policy regarding their Muslim subjects, a clash between the colonial authorities and the Muslim community was to be avoided if the cause of tension would not challenge the foundations of the Pax Britannica.

Last, but not least, the colonial records of the Tamale incident reveal some other interesting facts about the Muslim ‘sphere’. The slaughter of animals during the *‘id al-adha* was not only important in terms of fulfilling the duty of sacrifice and ensuring the cosmic well-being of the community for the next year. The meat of the slaughtered animals was divided among the poor members of the community, thus underlining the social and moral bonds between those who give and the recipients of alms. The giver was able to fulfil a moral duty and could be sure of reward in the next world; the recipient would thank Allah and the giver for his open-handedness.⁶¹ The distribution of alms left no traces in the colonial records, apart from a entry in Duncan-Johnstone’s diary. While attending – as an invited guest – a night service at the mosque in the Kumasi *zongo* in March 1928, he made the following observation:

Last night I attended the all night service at the Mosque the night of Leila al Kadiri when the Koran is read from start to finish. [...] The Limam Malam Babbali proceeded to recite the Suras by heart while all the Malams sat with their Korans open in front of them to catch him out. [...] I believe there is only one other Malam in the Gold Coast who can do this. It is no easy task for the audience is all literate, and highly critical, following every verse in their own Korans. We all gave alms half-way through and I was amused to watch the Limam still mechanically chanting, casting his eye from time to time on the presents being brought in.⁶²

However, this total silence did not mean that almsgiving was unnoticed by the colonial authorities, as Duncan-Johnstone’s remark reveals. Rather than being a matter of unimportance (and thus not worth recording), it can be argued that almsgiving was considered to be an integral and ‘untouchable’ part of the ‘Muslim

⁶¹ Seidu (1989, 167) gives an interesting description of the distribution of meat during the festival in Dagbon. Part of the meat is distributed among the poor, but in some cases, some is distributed on a reciprocal basis among certain families. According to Seidu, if the head of a family does not get meat from another, he does not give meat in return.

⁶² RH Mss. Afr. s. 593 (1,2–14) Duncan-Johnstone, Informal Diary (Ashanti), entry for 20.3.1928.

sphere'.⁶³ In fact, as the colonial government in the Protectorate was not able to cater for the social welfare of its subjects, the distribution of alms among poor and disabled members of the Muslim community emerges as a very important and visible sign of the Muslim 'sphere'.⁶⁴

2.1. Colonial Intervention: The *Hajj*, the Mosque and *Shari'a*

Colonial surveillance of, if not interventions in, the 'Muslim sphere' were also noticeable in matters of inter-Muslim contacts and jurisdiction. In the case of the former, the key question was whether the colonial authorities should control and regulate the *hajj*, the pilgrimage to Mecca, or not. For a Muslim, the performance of the *hajj* was a religious duty and was therefore not negotiable. However, in West Africa, the tradition of making the *hajj* had never been a very widespread one. This was mainly due to the very long distance to travel and the dangers encountered en route to Mecca. Among some Muslim scholars, such as those belonging to the Kunta tradition, the performance of the *hajj* was not regarded as an individual duty.⁶⁵ A similar position was taken by scholars attached to the Suwarian tradition, including those in the precolonial Voltaic Basin. In addition, the official position towards the *hajj* in the Sokoto Caliphate seems to have been rather lukewarm, if not hostile, as the *hajj* was regarded by the Muslim rulers and the court scholars as a sign of dissidence, if not open rebellion. The negative position towards the *hajj* on the part of the key scholars in Sokoto, such as Muhammad Bello and Abdullahi dan Fodio, can be traced back to Mukhtār al-Kuntī, who had argued that the conditions for making the *hajj* were not suitable throughout the Sudan savannah. Furthermore, the Sokoto scholars were very anxious about the popular notion in Hausaland that connected the *hajj*, the *hijra* and the coming of the Mahdi.⁶⁶ It is not known whether Muslim scholars in Gonja and Dagbon articulated a similar, critical position towards the *hajj* during the nineteenth century.

With the imposition of colonial rule in the region, the performance of the *hajj* was to become debated and, for a period, even contested. All colonial powers in the region, the British, the French, and the Germans, were rather suspicious about itinerant preachers as they might be potential Mahdists and therefore a threat to their rule. However, it was clear to the colonial authorities that not every itinerant Muslim preacher was a potential troublemaker. On the contrary, the colonial authorities were overwhelmed with the sheer number of Muslims travelling east on their way to Mecca, although, at times, the colonial authorities would suspect these travellers of

⁶³ Weiss 2003a.

⁶⁴ The provision of social welfare among Muslims in Ghana is discussed in my forthcoming monograph on almsgiving among Muslims in contemporary Ghana.

⁶⁵ Al-Naqar 1972, 46–49.

⁶⁶ See further Last 1965, al-Naqar 1972, Biobaku and Al-Hajj 1966/1980.

being both disguised slave traders and secret antagonists. The key question for the colonial authorities was whether or not to impose restrictions on people travelling and crossing the borders. This was a dilemma as such restrictions would also hurt long-distance trade. Therefore, the various colonial governments were not able to come up with a common policy. Instead, they would, at times reward cooperative Muslim leaders and scholars by providing assistance in performing the *hajj* but would simultaneously be extremely suspicious of ‘foreign’ pilgrims trespassing on ‘their’ territory.⁶⁷

The British policy towards the *hajj* in the Northern Territories is unclear. The main reason for this is due to the minimal number of records that are available to engage in a study of the *hajj*. In fact, it seems as if the *hajj* never developed into a serious problem or a question that needed special consideration in the Protectorate. Consequently, no records were kept on permission for Muslims to go to Mecca or matters concerning the issuing of passports for Muslims who wanted to perform the pilgrimage. I have found three cases when a Muslim wanted to perform the *hajj* and all of them were rather similar. In 1913, Imam ‘Umar together with one of his wives and his son Muhammadu Labbu started the *hajj* from Misahöhe with the assistance of the German District Head (*Bezirksleiter*) Adam Mischlich.⁶⁸ In



Plate 14. Regional Chief Imam Alhaji Abdulai Adam (second from right, outside his home in Tamale; he died in 2007), 2000; photo: HW.

⁶⁷ On British policies in Northern Nigeria, see Lovejoy & Hogendorn 1993 and Loimeier 1997; on French policies, see Loimeier 1997.

⁶⁸ Mischlich 1942, vii.

1921, one Alhaji Khadili wanted to make another visit to Mecca, i.e., perform the *hajj* for a second time. He seems to have been regarded by the colonial officers as a reliable man, and had perhaps acted as an intermediary between the colonial and local authorities. He also seems to have been engaged in local politics as he was known for trying to influence the election of a new chief of Savelugu. Unfortunately, it is not known whether Alhaji Khadili was given permission to go to Mecca for a second time.⁶⁹ The third case dates from 1929 when the chief of Kpandai asked the District Commissioner of Krachi for permission to visit Mecca together with three followers. The DC discussed the matter with the CSP and noted that the chief of Kpandai was prepared to put up £400.⁷⁰ The CSP's answer was straight forward: "I see no reason why he should not go, it is quite easy nowadays."⁷¹

The common denominator of all three cases was the involvement of the colonial authorities in one way or another. All of the three persons held influential positions or had been cooperating with the colonial authorities. It seems as if the permission to perform the *hajj* was seen by the colonial authorities as a kind of reward or thanks for their services. One could also argue that only those chiefs and Muslim scholars, who, in the eyes of the colonial authorities, were seen as allies or influential leaders who were to be tied closer to the colonial government received permission, if not assistance. It seems unlikely that the British authorities would have given permission to unreliable persons (although one could speculate about this as someone who really wanted to perform the *hajj* would not ask permission from the authorities but simply leave his village).

A third aspect of the *hajj* in these cases was that all three persons were to make use of modern means of travelling – by boat – instead of walking along the savannah towards the Red Sea. What seems to have been taking place was a profound change in the opportunities for a West African Muslim to perform the *hajj*. The precolonial and traditional argument of Sidi Mukhtār al-Kuntī was no longer valid as modern means of transportation and, in fact, the Pax Colonia, transformed the pilgrimage from a decade-long journey to a one-year, if not shorter, trip. Such a development paved the way for a social transformation within the Muslim community when an increasing number of Muslims were able to perform the *hajj* and return to their communities and hometowns as an Alhaji or Hajia. As during the old days, the social status and sometimes even spiritual position of being an Alhaji meant a rise in

⁶⁹ PRAAD/A ADM 56/1/276, Informal Report April 1921, entry for 27.4.1921.

⁷⁰ PRAAD/A ADM 56/1/343, file 72, DC Krachi to CSP, 15.10.1929; RH Mss. Afr. s. 593 Duncan-Johnstone, CSP Informal Diary, October 1929, entry for 26.10.1929.

⁷¹ PRAAD/A ADM 56/1/343, file 73, CSP to DC Krachi, 28.10.1929. CSP Duncan-Johnstone remarked in his diary that the trip was nowadays very easy: one takes the steamer to Marseilles, then on to Jeddah and from there to Mecca by train. However, it seems as if the Chief of Kpandai never went to Mecca. In March 1930, he explained to Duncan-Johnstone that he had put off his pilgrimage due to anticipated political changes in Gonja (RH Mss. Afr. s. 593 Duncan-Johnstone, CSP Informal Diary, October 1929, entry for 26.10.1929, and Informal Diary, March 1930, entry for 9.3.1930).

social rank and order within the community and sometimes even gaining increased influence in the affairs of the community.

Another aspect in negotiating and demarcating the borders between the colonial and the Muslim 'spheres' was the control of physical space, especially with regards to the building of mosques. Mosques and praying grounds were visible markers of the existence of a 'Muslim sphere' and therefore, the permission to build a mosque was a political and ideological, if not strategic, question. The key question was whether or not a Muslim community or a Muslim scholar should get permission from the colonial authorities to build a mosque – even if the granting of such permission could be judged by non-Muslims as giving preference, if not official backing, to the Muslim community? The matter was even more complicated as the physical space was contested by different groups – the colonial state, the local ruler and the Muslim community. Both during the precolonial and the colonial period, permission to build a mosque (but not to establish a praying ground) was given to a Muslim leader by the political authority, formerly the local ruler, thereafter the District Commissioner. However, after the mosque had been built, it was no longer part of the 'colonial sphere' and no longer colonial space. Instead, it was a closed space to the non-Muslim outsiders, controlled by the imam and his followers. The permission to build, rebuild or to enlarge a mosque was used by the colonial state as a way of controlling the Muslim community – reliable and cooperative *malams* and imams would be rewarded, difficult ones could be refused permission. Such was the case in Krachi during the 1920s when Imam 'Umar (Alhaji Umar) applied for permission to build a new mosque for the Hausa community. As he was one of the most trusted Muslim scholars in the Gold Coast, if not the leading imam of his times he received immediate permission from the DC, who also marked out the ground for the new mosque.⁷² In 1930, when Imam 'Umar asked the DC to allowing him to be buried in the mosque, the colonial authorities did not object but even issued him a written note of permission.⁷³

Apart from monitoring the celebration of religious festivals and the performance of the *hajj* as well as controlling the physical space of the Muslim community, the colonial government wanted to control the juridical sphere. This was to be done in two ways. First, Muslims were to swear by the Quran by using the following formula: I swear by the Quran to the truth, if I speak lies may I die. If a copy of the Quran was available, the right hand was placed on it while the words were spoken. However, from a colonial perspective, the whole matter was not regarded as being too important as the instructions regarded the oath as valid even without swearing on the Quran.⁷⁴ On the other hand, from a Muslim perspective, the validity of such

⁷² PRAAD/A ADM 56/1/276, Extracts from Informal Diary Krachi, entry for 27.12.1923.

⁷³ PRAAD/A ADM 56/1/343, file 78, CSP to DC Krachi, 22.1.1930; file 82, DC Manner to CSP, Krachi 8.2.1930.

⁷⁴ PRAAD/A ADM 56/1/227, Native forms of oath, NTs.

an oath was questionable, if not a mere joke (and it is unclear whether the colonial officers were aware about this fact or not): although swearing an oath on the Quran was morally binding for a Muslim, the colonial, non-Muslim context could be viewed by some Muslims as making such an oath as being less binding and if one would not even swear on the Quran, then the oath – from an Islamic point of view – was, in principle, not binding at all.

Second, colonial investigations had declared that Islamic Law was not applied in any kingdom of the Protectorate. Early colonial investigations into Islamic Law in Wa even sweepingly claimed: “The only trace of any such influence is that a man if he has a lot of property will also wear clothes in the shape of Mahomedan robes.”⁷⁵ However, if a Muslim was being accused or if both parties were Muslims, Islamic Law would, in some places, be applied.⁷⁶ For example, in precolonial Mampurugu, the Nayiri was supposed to give his judgement in accordance with the opinion of all *malams* present if the accused was a Muslim. In Bole, on the other hand, Islamic Law was only applied when both parties were Muslims.⁷⁷

The only area where Islamic Law was regarded by the colonial authorities as having an important role was in terms of family law. Although Islamic Law was said to have no or only a very limited influence on marriage and family customs among the Mamprusi, Dagbamba, Gonja and Wala, marriage and family relations among Muslims themselves was a total different case.⁷⁸ In fact, Provincial Commissioner Moutray-Read’s investigation into Islamic Law in Wa, which first claimed its non-existence (or at least limited use) in the kingdom, gave a very lengthy description of marriage within the Muslim community and even claimed that marriage ceremonies were conducted according to Islamic Law. Moutray Read’s description is a very interesting one, mainly due to the fact that he seems to rely entirely on information provided by his two informants, Malam Isaka and Malam Abudulai, who were the two leading Muslim scholars of Wa.

The description of the two *malams* reveals that marriage customs among the Muslims in Wa followed Islamic rules and common Muslim traditions. Muslim men in Wa were allowed to marry non-Muslim women but would not allow their daughters to marry outside the community. Polygyny was permitted, i.e., a Muslim man was allowed to marry up to four women, but polyandry was not. The rights and duties of husband and wife followed Islamic Law but their observance was said

⁷⁵ PRAAD/A ADM 11/1/824, B. Moutray-Read, *Wa or Wala*, (22.11.1908), page 19, 44.

⁷⁶ PRAAD/A ADM 11/1/824, E.A. Irvine, *Mamprusi* (28.12.1908), page 37.

⁷⁷ PRAAD/A ADM 56/1/288, A.W. Cardinall, *Correlated Report on Native Customs* (1927), part IV. Account of the judicial organisation, page 9 and 17. (Based on material collected by Irvine [1908] and Moutray Read [1908].)

⁷⁸ PRAAD/A ADM 11/1/824, F.W.F. Jackson, *Bole District* (s.a.), section 4 and 12; PRAAD/A ADM 11/1/824, H.T.C. Wheeler, *A description of the Customs of the Gonja Tribe, Salaga District* (1906), part II page 3; PRAAD/A ADM 11/1/824, E.A. Irvine, *Mamprusi* (28.12.1908), pages 8, 10; PRAAD/A ADM 11/1/824, H.A. Blair, *An Essay upon the Dagomba People* (1931), page 29.

to be not very strict.⁷⁹ It seems as if Moutray-Read was not familiar with Muslim concepts and regulations on divorce, and therefore he dwelled at length on this particular matter:

By the Koranic Law a husband may not repudiate a wife at will, but he has little difficulty in obtaining a divorce. A woman can obtain a divorce from her husband for ill-treatment, which if it was continuous would be complained of by the wife to her family who would report it to the mallams who would put spies on to watch the conduct of the husband for one month. Should they then report that the wife is being ill-treated the husband is called before the mallam who constitute a court, and a separation is ordered; after this the woman is free to marry another man. A divorce can be obtained also by the wife should she be driven out of her husband's house for no sufficient reason, in this case also the parents of the wife take up the cause and a fine of two cloths is imposed by the court if the case is proved to their satisfaction. If a quarrel, a frequent occurrence, arises between husband and wife the wife will return to her parents, who at the expiration of her period of menstruation will send to her husband and ask if he wishes her to return to him. [...] Should she not marry anyone else and the former husband decide that he wants her to come back he must do one of the three thing (1) fast for two months (2) buy and give away 60 baskets of guinea corn or (3) adopt a boy and teach him to read and write the Koran for three months, in either case he must not see the woman for two months as well. Should a man already have his full complement of four wives and he desires to take a new one he may send one of his wives away, but only with her consent and she may not be either his first wife or his last married wife, he must also give her a present of cloths and money. If no mutual agreement can be made in this way the man may not take another wife. There is however no penalty should he drive one away or otherwise get rid of the one he does not want, but this is against the Laws of the Koran and he would be answerable for it to Allah.⁸⁰

Apart from the description about marriage and divorce within the Muslim community in Wa, information was obtained about penalties for adultery – 80 lashes in theory but they were never carried out to the full extent in practice, according to the *malams*. Furthermore, the *malams* informed Moutray-Read that children born in wedlock were the property of their father whereas illegitimate children born to a married woman belonged to the husband and not to their father. (If illegitimate children were born to an unmarried woman, they were considered as belonging to her, but if she married the father afterwards, they belonged to him.) However, it was stressed that there was no social distinction between illegitimate children and children born in wedlock. Finally, the *malams* discussed the question of guardianship. One very common case was to send a boy to a *malam* to learn to write and read the Quran. The *malam* in this case assumed the right of guardianship and the boy could not be reclaimed by his parents until the guardian considered his education to be complete. However, the boy could receive permission to work for short periods for his father. At the termination of this guardianship, there was a ceremony and the guardian

⁷⁹ PRAAD/A ADM 11/1/824, Moutray-Read, *Wa or Wala* (1908), pages 22–24.

⁸⁰ PRAAD/A ADM 11/1/824, Moutray-Read, *Wa or Wala* (1908), pages 24–26.

received £3 and a cow from the boy's father. The cow was killed and eaten by relatives at the feast. The ordinary cause for guardianship, however, was the death of the parents of a child or in the case of lunacy. The latter was regarded as equal to the situation of the death of a father. Again, the case of the lunatics gives a glimpse into the social and moral dimension of the 'Muslim sphere':

Idiots are looked upon as harmless and little notice is paid to them, they are allowed to wander about at their will and are not interfered with, they are always provided with food and necessaries by their people. Lunatics showing a tendency to homicidal mania are put under restraint, often ironed, and are treated with native medicines. If statistics were available I think they would show that the life of a lunatic under this treatment is not a long one.⁸¹

The colonial officials had at first little disagreement about the use of Islamic Law. Its use was confined to the Muslim community and had – according to the British assessment – no official recognition in the various kingdoms. Seen from another perspective, Islamic Law – or at least part of it – regulated the daily life and social conditions among the Muslim communities. As a consequence, from a Muslim perspective, the application of Islamic Law constituted a fundamental marker of the Muslim order and the 'Muslim sphere'. Therefore, the colonial authorities had little interest in changing this situation – apart from demarcating the juridical borders between colonial, native and Islamic Law. However, such a demarcation was problematic and meant a restriction of the use of Islamic (and native) Law.

The first restriction was already introduced with the imposition of colonial rule. According to the Administrative Ordinance of 1902, the chiefs were authorized to "exercise the jurisdiction heretofore exercised by them in the same measure as such jurisdiction has been heretofore exercised."⁸² As none of the traditional jurisdiction had been based on *shari'a*, the use of Islamic Law was therefore ruled out.⁸³ However, corporal punishment could only be imposed by the Chief Commissioner and the District Commissioner's court would deal with criminal cases. With the introduction of the Native Tribunals Ordinance in 1932, Native Authority Courts were established which were empowered to hear certain types of cases and to impose certain punishments.⁸⁴ Islamic Law was again ruled out and no Muslim courts were ever established. Thus, although the colonial officials believed

⁸¹ PRAAD/A ADM 11/1/824, Moutray-Read, *Wa or Wala* (1908), pages 24–28.

⁸² Quotation from Ladouceur 1979, 42.

⁸³ As Ferguson's investigation has demonstrated, Islamic Law was certainly applied in precolonial Dagbon. However, perhaps due to the fact that Dagbon was split by the Anglo-British agreement, and the capital (and presumably most Muslim settlement) Yendi was placed under German rule, the situation in Western Dagbon seemed to have been somewhat chaotic. Whereas the Germans continued to promote the application of Islamic law in Yendi, the British did not bother to launch a thorough investigation in their part of Dagbon. Also, due to the 1902 Ordinance, the application of Islamic Law in the North was, in effect, ruled out. Eventually, when Eastern Dagbon came under British rule, Muslim courts were abolished (Ferguson 1972, 200–203).

⁸⁴ Staniland 1975, 89–90; Ladouceur 1979, 54.

that the various juridical regulations would not infringe on the ‘Muslim sphere’ – their argument being that Islamic Law was not applied – what happened was an outright intervention. Although a case involving two Muslim parties still could be dealt with by a Muslim scholar or the *sarkin zongo*, his jurisdiction was very limited and, in fact, not based on an officially recognized law.⁸⁵ Even worse from a Muslim perspective, if a case was taken to the Native or Colonial Court, Islamic Law would not be applied.⁸⁶

Family matters and marriage was the only field in which Islamic Law was eventually officially recognized in 1931 although as an outcome of Western legislation. According to the Chief Commissioner, the Muslim population suffered considerable inconvenience through the absence of any legislative provision for the registration of marriages and divorces. In fact, a marriage or divorce under the auspices of a *malam* was not legitimate in the Protectorate and if a Muslim required documentary evidence of his or her marriage or divorce, he or she had to travel to Kumasi to have the ceremony performed and legalized as the *Gold Coast Marriage of Mohammedans Ordinance* also applied to Ashanti.⁸⁷ Therefore, the Chief Commissioner asked to have a similar ordinance issued for the Protectorate, which was approved by the colonial authorities in both Accra and London. However, the colonial officials did not confer with local Muslim scholars or officials from the Protectorate when drafting the ordinance; the *Northern Territories Marriage of Mohammedans Ordinance* (generally referred to as *Mohammedan Marriage Ordinance*) followed the Gold Coast one.⁸⁸ Therefore, the implementation of the *Mohammedan Marriage Ordinance* was at first greeted with suspicion – not by the Muslim scholars but by some colonial officials in the Protectorate. It was said that the Ordinance had been formulated and worked out in Accra without taking the conditions of the Muslim population into consideration and at least the DC of Bole was rather skeptical about its application:

The Mohammedan Marriage Ordinance has come as a surprise to me and I must admit that section 6 (i) would seem to be rather difficult with people living at say:- Buipe. Most of the priests are old men and if they are not included they will lose the benefit under section 8. The practice, so often, in

⁸⁵ Anderson 1954, 255.

⁸⁶ According to Anderson (1954, 263), this was at least the case at the Yendi Native Court.

⁸⁷ This was the 1907 *Marriage of Mohammedans Ordinance*. The Ordinance stated that the Commissioner of each district shall be the local registrar of Muslim marriages and divorces and shall keep a book called the ‘Mohammedan Marriage and Divorce Register’. However, the Governor could grant a licence to any Muslim ‘priest’ applying for the position who, in his opinion, is a “fit and proper person” to perform the duties imposed by the Ordinance. The register and certificates must be signed by the bridegroom, the bride’s *wali* (guardian), two witnesses and a Muslim ‘priest’ holding a licence, who must certify that the marriage is “valid according to Mohammedan law.” A similar register was kept for divorces. See further Anderson 1954, 249. For an investigation on the working of the Ordinance in the Gold Coast Colony, see Hiskett 1976.

⁸⁸ TNA CO 96/698/19, Northern Territories. Marriage of Mohammedans Ordinance, Report by the Attorney-General, 30.4.1931.

force in the Colony of sending round drafts of new Ordinances to Districts for comments would appear to me good.⁸⁹

Despite the criticism, the Ordinance was introduced in 1931 and thereafter regulated Muslim marriages and divorces. The most important element was that Muslim marriages (and divorces) were officially recognized. However, the recognition was only legal if the marriage or divorce had been witnessed by a *malam* who had received a so-called marriage licence. There was one major problem with this system, namely that only a few *malams* and imams were allowed to apply for a licence. The main reason for this was that a *malam* or imam holding such a licence was ordered to keep a register of marriages and divorces and to issue documents to the partners involved. In addition, he had to pay the DC for the licence, but would, in turn, receive a registration fee of 5 pence. However, only a minor part of the Muslim scholars and imams, who previously had dealt with marriages and divorces, were to receive such a licence. For example, only four licences were issued in the Northern Province in 1931, namely to Asamana Wala in Wa, Malam Mama Hausa and Imam Mahamadu Moshi in Lawra-Tumu District and Imam Issa Hausa in Bawku.⁹⁰ In Eastern Dagomba District, on the other hand, licenses were granted to Imam Fusieni (Ya Na Imam of Yendi), Zemole Mumuni and Malam Halidu (Zohe Imam of Yendi) as well as Imam Abukari (Imam of Sambo), Imam Darimari (Imam of Zabzugu), Imam Seidu (Imam of Kworli) and Imam Abu (Imam of Bimbila). In 1932, Imam Abdulai, who was Imam of Gushiegu, was also granted a licence. Further licenses were handed over to Issahaku Dagomba of Yendi in 1937 and Imam Zakari Hausa of Tamale in 1937. In the same year, the Ya Na Imam and the Zohe Imam of Yendi died and the licences were transferred to their successors, Malam Sulemanu Dagomba, the new Ya Na Imam, and Malam Zibirim Dagomba, the new Zohe Imam.⁹¹ Unfortunately, the colonial records are very patchy, and at this stage, it is not possible to give a total assessment of how many licences were issued. What is striking, however, is the difference between Wa and Yendi, although one could argue that the actual situation in Wa is not reflected in the records as I have found data on Wa only for the year 1931.

Another problem was that not all Muslim marriages (or divorces) were legalized, i.e., the partners paid the fees and their marriage/divorce was registered. This was a matter that even the British authorities were much concerned about. In Tamale, CSP Duncan-Johnstone soon realized that the local Muslim population had little knowledge of the Ordinance and that its provisions never had been properly laid out to them. As a consequent, he went to the Dakpiema and gave him a copy of the ordinance. In addition, he translated Part VI. of the Ordinance into Hausa

⁸⁹ PRAAD/A ADM 58/5/3, Informal Diary Bole, entry for 11.5.1931.

⁹⁰ PRAAD/T NRG 8/19/4, Mohammedan Marriages and Divorces.

⁹¹ PRAAD/A ADM 67/5/7, Yendi. Marriage Certificate Book 1931–1939.

and duplicated it in Ajami.⁹² Again, records are missing for everywhere but Yendi; therefore, one cannot draw any general conclusions. The data for Yendi is presented in Table 5.

	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938	1929	total
Yendi	2	28	21	31	18	17	19	11	10	157
Gushiegu	...	...	...	8	1	...	...	...	...	9
Tamale	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	...	...	1

Table 5. Muslim marriages in Yendi, Gushiegu and Tamale, 20.10.1931–1.6.1939. (Source: PRAAD/A ADM 67/5/7, Yendi. Marriage Certificate Book 1931–1939)

As indicated in the Table, there was a peak of marriages in Yendi during the early part of the 1930s. About half of the marriages were registered by the three licensed imams in 1932, 1933 and 1934. Much fewer marriages were registered in Gushiegu, although there existed a licensed imam already in 1932. What is striking is the lack of registered marriages in Tamale during the latter half of the 1930s – either the records are missing or are archived in another file or the marriages were not registered. (Before 1937 there was no licensed imam or *malam* in Tamale.) The lax attitude towards keeping marriage and divorce registers was also observed by J.N.D. Anderson when he toured the Gold Coast in 1951 for his investigation on Islamic law.⁹³ According to him, the outlines of Ordinance were little known by Muslim scholars. In some localities, neither the DC nor anyone else were even aware of its existence. Even in places where the register was kept, Anderson supposed that only a small fraction of the total number of marriages were registered. On the other hand, Anderson also noted that unregistered marriages and divorces were regarded by the local population as valid and binding both under Native Law and custom and according to Islamic Law.⁹⁴ Marriage ceremonies certainly took place and *malams* were engaged. In Dagbon and elsewhere, where Islam had affected marriage customs at least to some extent, *malams* were called on the wedding day to participate in the ceremonies. The striking point is that the *malam* (at least in Dagbon) was paid a fee of about 9 pence (9d).⁹⁵ One is tempted to argue that most of the families did not bother to pay the registration fee to the licensed imams to get their marriage declared legitimate since a ‘traditional’ marriage ceremony conducted by an ordinary *malam* was already regarded as being valid in their eyes (and also from the perspective of the Muslim community).

Another aspect of Islamic Law that was applied, but received even less attention from the colonial officers, was the rules on inheritance. In Yendi, Anderson was

⁹² RH Mss. Afr. s. 593 Box 2, Duncan-Johnstone, CSP Informal Diary, November 1931, entry for 23.11.1931 and CSP Informal Diary, January 1932, entry for 6.1.1932.

⁹³ He visited Prang, Salaga, Kpembe, Yendi, Tamale, Larabanga, Wa and Bole.

⁹⁴ Anderson 1954, 250.

⁹⁵ PRAAD/A ADM 11/1/824, Blair, *An Essay upon the Dagomba People* (1931), page 29; Anderson 1954, 259 (Yendi), 264 (Wa).

informed, Muslims frequently consulted local *malams* on this subject, especially Alhaji Abdulai, who was regarded as the most learned local *malam* and who usually consulted the *Risāla* of Ibn Abī Zayd al-Qayrawānī, one of the key Maliki textbooks, when forming his judgements. However, only personal property fell under these rulings; land and houses exempt from such treatment as they were viewed as family rather than personal property. At the Yendi Native Court, only the distribution of the estate of ‘strict’ Muslims was upheld according to Islamic principles while ‘laxer’ Muslims and the rest of the population would arrange inheritance within the family and not consult a *malam* or the court. Inheritance by patronage (*wala*’) was also known and applied when there was no natural heir. In Tamale Anderson observed that Maliki inheritance rulings were much less strictly followed than in Yendi and senior members of a family would give something to junior members but, contrary to Islamic Law, nothing to daughters, mothers or widows.⁹⁶ In Wa, on the other hand, cases of inheritance seldom come to the court at all, and, according to Anderson, never from the Muslim community!⁹⁷

A special case, it seems, was the situation in Prang, where Islamic Law was applied within the Muslim (*zongo*) community and also by the Prang Native Court in litigation between Muslims. Native (Muslim) Courts had been established in the Prang *zongo* as well as in the Yeji *zongo* by an order of CSP Duncan-Johnstone already in 1929.⁹⁸ In Anderson’s view, the situation in Prang differed from other native courts in the Northern Territories as the rules of Islamic Law were applied in the following cases: 1) a genuinely misused wife would be granted a divorce without repayment, 2) the *’idda*⁹⁹ of divorce is generally enforced and 3) the rules of inheritance are not only followed in private by ‘stricter’ Muslims but were also upheld by the court.¹⁰⁰

Consequently, the result of the short discussion about the application of Islamic Law in the North is that this was a typical issue where the colonial authorities seldom, if ever, intervened and thus had little actual knowledge of what was going on in the Muslim communities. If colonial interference within the ‘Muslim sphere’ was unwanted by the Muslims themselves, then Muslims themselves were not supposed to invite the colonial authorities to help them in matters concerning their social conditions. Marriage and the search for a suitable partner was certainly such a matter. It was therefore amusing for the local chief and the DC as much as it was

⁹⁶ Anderson 1954, 262–264.

⁹⁷ Anderson 1954, 265. The Wa Native Court consisted of two Sunni Muslims, two Ahmadis and four non-Muslims. Muslim rules governing inheritance were followed even less in Gonja. According to Anderson (1954, 269), inheritance normally went by customary law even among Muslims and few cases ever came to the court. Not surprisingly, the ‘immigrant’ (i.e., Hausa) community in Salaga applied Islamic rules.

⁹⁸ RH Mss. Afr. s. 593 Duncan-Johnstone, CSP Informal Diary, August 1929, including ms. ‘Native Administration’, page 15.

⁹⁹ The period during which a divorced wife may not remarry.

¹⁰⁰ Anderson 1954, 270.

annoying for the head of the Muslim community in Kunyukuong when the *sarkin zongo* approached the DC in 1918 with a rather extraordinary request, namely to help him find a wife. The *sarkin zongo* had been a bachelor for some time and had no one to cook for him and seems to have been desperate. He said to the DC that, on the one hand, he would not marry a local Lobi woman as he could not agree to drink *pito* with her, and on the other, accused the women in the *zongo* of lacking virtue and being greedy. The DC was rather amused with the case and discussed the matter with both the chief [of?] Nanweni as well as his Muslim associate, one Alhaji. Whereas the chief had a good laugh and promised to help the *sarkin zongo* with his problem, the Alhaji was very annoyed and chastised the *sarkin zongo* for a breach of Muslim etiquette.¹⁰¹

3. INTERNAL DEVELOPMENTS

A common point of contact among the Muslim community, the rulers and the colonial authorities was the nomination of chiefs and leaders of the *zongo*. Clearly, this procedure highlights the limits of the ‘Muslim sphere’, both in the traditional and the colonial society. Although the Muslim communities had a relatively free internal autonomy, in terms of the nomination of their representatives, they depended on the will of the political authorities. In this case, precolonial structures were carried over into the colonial period, but whereas in the former period the ruler would nominate the representative of the stranger/Muslim community, this power was transferred to the District Commissioner. As a consequence, if the Muslim community or a party within the *zongo* was not pleased with their leader, they could not depose him themselves but had to call for the intervention of the colonial authorities.¹⁰² However, as long as a Muslim leader or a *sarkin zongo* was regarded by the colonial and indigenous authorities as a reliable partner and middleman, his position was rather strong. The problem with such a system was obvious from the view point of the Muslim leader as he, in the end, was not responsible to his community but the colonial state. On the other hand, from a colonial perspective, the Muslim leader was not regarded as part of the colonial political structure as such, rather he was supposed to be responsible for the internal affairs of the Muslim community or the *zongo*.

¹⁰¹ PRAAD/A ADM 56/1/209, Extracts from Informal Diary Lorha [Lawra] District, entry for 27.4.1918.

¹⁰² For example, in 1930 Imam ‘Umar (Alhaji ‘Umar) asked CSP Duncan-Johnstone to intervene in the Omanhene of Krachi’s nomination of an ex-Grunshi slave as the head of the Kete *zongo*. Although the nominated *sarkin zongo* was a Muslim convert, the *zongo* community in Kete opposed his nomination. Duncan-Johnstone backed Imam ‘Umar’s argument and said that the people of the Kete *zongo* should be allowed to chose their own headman to represent them. RH Mss. Afr. s. 593 (1,2–14) Duncan-Johnstone, CSP Informal Diary, March 1930, entry for 5.3.1930.

Frictions within the Muslim community or the *zongos* were usually due to grievances about the misuse of power and the position of the Muslim leader or the *sarkin zongo*. A common case was the division of the Muslim community or the *zongo* along (supra-)ethnic lines or origin (*kabila/asali*). Such a division was already common place during the precolonial period and continued to exist thereafter. In this sense, the colonial structures built on an existing division which suited their rule perfectly. However, seen from the perspective of the various (supra-)ethnic groups, the system had some definite drawbacks. The most important one was that large and old *kabilas*, such as the Hausa, the Mande/Wangara and the Mossi, would have a relatively stronger position and more influence than what new and smaller groups possessed, such as those of the Yoruba or the Lebanese. It was common that an influential person of a large and old *kabila* was nominated as leader or *sarkin zongo*, which meant that smaller communities which were placed under the *sarkin zongo* easily felt that their specific problems were not of primary importance. Although open clashes within the *zongo* or the Muslim community were very rare, dissension within the community was not. In some cases, the discord would lead to the division of the community and the establishment of a new *zongo* with its own leader.

An early case of dissension within the Muslim community and *zongo* occurred in Tamale in 1914. In May 1914, Acting Provincial Commissioner Howard was notified by Malam Osumanu from Kumasi about growing dissent in the Tamale *zongo*. According to Malam Osumanu, the inhabitants of the *zongo* were dissatisfied with *sarkin zongo* Madagu, whom they accused of being incapable of organizing the affairs in the *zongo*. Similar complaints had also been made to Malam Osumanu by visiting traders from the Kumasi *zongo*. Howard decided not to react at this point, but later changed his mind when there were new complaints against Madagu. It seems as if Howard finally lost confidence in Madagu when the Caravanserai Agent accused Madagu of interfering with his duties. Consequently, Madagu was removed from his post by Howard and one Silife Kassim was appointed as the new *sarkin zongo*.¹⁰³ At first, *sarkin zongo* Kassim was hailed by the colonial authorities for doing a good job and being very popular, but after some years, new dissent was evident. In 1920, he was accused of having sworn a false oath, although it is not clear from the records who was the plaintiff – the DC or some inhabitants of the *zongo*.¹⁰⁴

If a *sarkin zongo* was constantly open to criticism, so too was a headman of an ethnic group. For example, in August 1919, five Yoruba traders in Tamale, Baba Egba Raji, Baba Oloto Badaru, Salami Awe Adebkr [Abubakr], Lawani Ilorin Sanni and Allassan Akadiri, handed a petition to the DC demanding the deposition of the

¹⁰³ PRAAD/A ADM 56/1/67, Acting CSP Howard to CCNT, Tamale 8.8.1914.

¹⁰⁴ PRAAD/A ADM 56/1/67, Tamale *zongo*, list of occupiers (31.12.1920).

Headman of the Yorubas, Bello of Ibadan.¹⁰⁵ The situation became complicated in 1930 when the relationship between the Mossi and the Hausa communities in Tamale became increasingly constrained. Information about the conflict was biased as the CSP's interpreter sided with the Hausa whereas the DC's interpreter was pro-Mossi. The background of the trouble was that some Hausa from the Hausa *zongo* had moved to the Mossi *zongo*, with the effect that they refused to obey none of the headmen anymore:

If the Sarikin Zongo called them for work or to answer any case against them they replied that they are not under him but under the Moshi chief because they lived in the latter's Zongo. If the latter called them they replied that they were Hausas and not Moshis. I had them all up in my office where the Moshi NA told me that he had no wish to quarrel with Sarikin Zongo but that the renegade Hausas were always trying to make trouble between them.¹⁰⁶

At the meeting, Duncan-Johnstone found out that the ring leaders of the Hausa party were one Mamma Sokoto and one Baba Kano. Duncan-Johnstone realized that he knew Mamma Sokoto from before: in 1919 he had found Mamma Sokoto causing troubles between the Hausa and the Mossi in Lawra and had kicked him out of the town.¹⁰⁷ In Bole in 1933, the Hausa of the *zongo* disliked the *sarkin zongo* (though the DC did not know why) and wanted another person. The case was taken to the Bolewura, who settled the matter and appointed a Fulani as *sarkin zongo*.¹⁰⁸

Neither the dissidence in Tamale or in Bole led to an open clash or a division of the community. On the other hand, in rare occasions did inter-ethnic tensions erupt into riots and open clashes. One of the few cases this occurred was the Kumasi riots in September 1932. The Hausa community, led by the *sarkin zongo* Kumasi, clashed with the Mossi, Grunshi and Yoruba inhabitants of the *zongo*. In Tamale, CSP Duncan-Johnstone feared that the clashes could divide the local Muslim community. Once again he called the leaders of the Mossi, Yoruba and Hausa for a meeting and warned them not to pack lorries with sympathizers and send them to Kumasi. The situation never escalated in Tamale. In Kumasi, on the other hand, the *sarkin zongo*, Malam Salo, had been deposed and left Kumasi and moved to Katsina (Northern Nigeria).¹⁰⁹ However, sometimes the local and the colonial authorities were not able or not capable of reconciling the differences or of finding a solution to the problem. One of the best documented cases was the split of the *zongo* of Atebubu in 1926.¹¹⁰ The *zongo* of Atebubu was run by Malam Halidu, who, according to the

¹⁰⁵ PRAAD/A ADM 56/1/67, Petition of five Yoruba traders, 18.8.1919.

¹⁰⁶ RH Mss. Afr. s. 593 (1,2–14) Duncan-Johnstone, CSP Informal Diary, February 1930, entry for 21.2.1930.

¹⁰⁷ RH Mss. Afr. s. 593 (1,2–14) Duncan-Johnstone, CSP Informal Diary, February 1930, entry for 21.2.1930.

¹⁰⁸ PRAAD/A ADM 58/5/3, Informal Diary Bole, entries for 26.6.1930 and 28.6.1930.

¹⁰⁹ RH Mss. Afr. s. 593 (1,2–14) Duncan-Johnstone, Diary of the Acting CCNT, September 1932.

¹¹⁰ Atebubu was not part of the Northern Territories but part of Ashanti.

DC, had been elected as *sarkin zongo* in the proper manner by the older residents before he had been nominated by the DC. However, his election was not supported by the younger men of ‘foreign’ extraction. As a consequence, there was a split in the *zongo* community into the ‘old party’, which chiefly comprised Gonja people from Salaga, and the younger immigrants, who mainly had come directly from Hausaland (Nigeria) and were under the leadership of Dan Azimi. Matters reached a crisis at the end of 1926 when the Omanhene of Atebubu decided to side with side with Dan Azimi. A riot followed and Malam Halidu decided to move away from Atebubu together with his retinue.¹¹¹ According to the DC, Malam Halidu was to blame for the crisis as he had tried to usurp the powers of the Omanhene and therefore lost the goodwill of the Administration in Ashanti. However, he was regarded as a “strong man” by the colonial authorities, in addition to being a very important cattle trader. He had also given his support to the colonial government by supplying labour for roadwork and town sanitation. The colonial authorities were not willing to discard a person whom they regarded as being both a useful ally and an influential middleman. Therefore, with proper “supervision” by the colonial authorities, Malam Halidu would still be allowed to serve as an intermediary and leader of his community.¹¹²

After his departure from Atebubu,¹¹³ Malam Halidu and his community of about 1,000 persons were given permission to settle at Prang in Western Gonja by the CCNT. Here Malam Halidu established a *zongo* in May 1927 and was elected and nominated *sarkin zongo* in January 1928. After his death on the 20th of July 1929, his son Malam Mahama Danufwawa was elected and nominated the new *sarkin zongo* of Prang.¹¹⁴ With the settlement of Malam Halidu’s retinue at Prang, the village itself more than doubled its number of inhabitants.¹¹⁵ From a colonial perspective, the development of the *zongo* proved very satisfactory, and Malam Halidu regained the confidence of the colonial authorities.¹¹⁶ In July 1927, he was nominated by the colonial authorities to be chancellor at the court of the Buipewura.¹¹⁷ From a Muslim perspective, the *zongo* at Prang developed into a distinct Muslim community. A court was established and records of the proceedings were taken

¹¹¹ PRAAD/A ADM 56/1/343, file 36 DC Krachi Cardinal to CSP, 21.12.1926.

¹¹² PRAAD/T NRG 8/2/9, Report by DC Eastern Gonja, 15.6.1927. Also RH Mss. Afr. s. 593 (1,2–14) Duncan-Johnstone, CSP Informal Diary, August 1929, entry for 18.8.1929.

¹¹³ The *zongo* of Atebubu continued to be a relatively large one even after the departure of Malam Halidu and his community. According to the 1931 census, Atebubu had three *zongos*, namely the Grunshi *zongo* (2 compounds with a total of 27 inhabitants), the Jatto *zongo* (21 compounds/127 inhabitants) and the Shafa *zongo* (24 compounds/118 inhabitants). See further Return of Population Censused on Form A/villages, *The Gold Coast 1931*, 171.

¹¹⁴ PRAAD/A ADM 64/5/2, Salaga District Record Book, page 86.

¹¹⁵ PRAAD/T NRG 8/3/42, Census SP 1931, also PRAAD/T NRG 8/3/45, Census E Gonja D 1931. In 1921, the population of Prang was 462; in 1931, it was 2,640.

¹¹⁶ “Inspected Prang Zongo & was very pleased with what has been done.” RH Mss. Afr. s. 593 (1,2–14) Duncan-Johnstone, CSP Informal Diary, September 1929, entry for 8.9.1929.

¹¹⁷ PRAAD/A ADM 58/5/2, Informal Diary Bole, entry for 22.7.1927.

down by the *malams* in Ajami.¹¹⁸ The number of the inhabitants increased steadily and by the mid-1930s, the ‘foreign’ population of Prang, i.e., the inhabitants of the *zongo*, numbered already about 3,000.¹¹⁹ The leadership of the *zongo* stayed within Malam Halidu’s family: his grandson, Malam Ibrahim (died on the 22nd of July 1945), was elected after Malam Mahama, and was followed by a close relative, Bukari Barua.¹²⁰

Malam Halidu’s case shows that the colonial authorities interfered in the affairs of the Muslim community on certain occasions: if there were rifts and dissent within the community, if the community refused to cooperate with the local authority or if members of it challenged the stability of society at large. It can be argued that this policy was based on the old fears of Mahdism and a politicization of Islam. Although Muslim scholars were useful as clerks and intermediaries, their influence was to be limited to the ‘Muslim sphere’, i.e., they should not interfere with local traditions and customs. Such a position was problematic as the British officials were well aware of the interaction between Muslim scholars and local society. The quarrel between the chiefs of Miong and Kpabia serves as a good example. In May 1920, the chief of Miong made a complaint to the DC against the chief of Kpabia, accusing him for having placed a “Mohammedan fetish” [my interpretation: a talismanic object] at Miong for the purpose of bringing about his death. The DC made an inquiry into the matter and found that the chief of Kpabia in fact had placed a ‘fetish’ in Miong, but it had not been his intention to harm the chief of Miong but to ward off disease. Further investigations followed as the situation remained tense and the DC came to the conclusion that the *malam* in Kpabia was the root-cause of the unrest. As a consequence, the *malam* was warned by the DC and ordered to stop meddling in local business.¹²¹ A similar case occurred in the Bawku area about fifteen years later. The chief of Buguri complained that the Muslim community of Alhaji Mahamudu at Wirinyanga flouted his authority. In addition, Alhaji Mahamudu was accused of constantly interfering with the surrounding Kusasi and Bimoba villages and refusing to pay any dues to the chief of Buguri.¹²²

¹¹⁸ PRAAD/A ADM 56/1/374, file 85: Activity Report for the Northern Territories 1929. The Muslim identity of the *zongo* in Prang was highlighted noted by Duncan-Johnstone, RH Mss. Afr. s. 593 (1,2–14) Duncan-Johnstone, CSP Informal Diary, October 1929, entry for 30.10.1929.

¹¹⁹ PRAAD/T NRG 8/3/58, AR NT 1936–1937, para 17.

¹²⁰ PRAAD/A ADM 64/5/2, Salaga District Record Book, Genealogy of Malam Abdu Rahamani. Malam Halidu’s family came from Nupe. His father was Malam Abdu Rahamani of Bida (Nupe, Nigeria). Malam Abdu Rahamani had two sons, al-Haji Abdu Mumuni, whose son was Bukari Barua (the fourth *sarkin zongo* of Prang), and Malam Halidu. Malam Halidu’s sons were Malam Mahama (the second *sarkin zongo* of Prang), Salifu and Abu Bakr, who was *waziri*. Malam Ibrahim’s mother was Malam Abdu Rahamani’s daughter Marianna who was married to Malam Mahama.

¹²¹ PRAAD/A ADM 56/1/221, Informal Diary Tamale District, entries for 12.5.1920, 19.5.1920 and 20.12.1920.

¹²² PRAAD/A ADM 57/5/2, Informal Diary Bawku, entry for 16.8.1934. Alhaji Mahamudu’s community was said to be a large village of Mossi Muslims who had settled at Wirinyanga about 1918, perhaps after or as a consequence of the 1918 Influenza Pandemic.

Apart from the colonial authorities, the local rulers, too, wanted to limit the influence of Muslim literati. However, they could do little to restrict Muslims from interacting with local society. In Bole, for example, the *malams* were forbidden from participating in the festive dances which celebrated the enskinment of a new Bolewura. However, when the DC participated in the enskinment of the Bolewura in 1936, he witnessed (to his amusement) the full participation of the *malams* in the dances:

The floor was swarming with is wearing for the most part sun helmets, flowing robes like surplices, all carrying sticks and smoking cigarettes. This I learnt on enquiring was the Gobi dance and [I] am not surprised at the ban placed on the Bole mallams prohibiting them from dancing it. It was impossible to distinguish Mandari from Bole people so I am afraid some of the Bole mallams indulged in their forbidden pastime.¹²³

However, the preparation and sale of Muslim amulets caused much more concern in the eyes of the colonial authorities than the participation of Muslims in the local festivals. In fact, the “traffic in charms” was constantly reported by the DCs, especially when itinerant Muslim preachers prepared and sold their amulets to non-Muslims in the Northern (more or less non-Muslim) Province who readily bought them.¹²⁴ Whereas the local population regarded some Muslim scholars as having supernatural power, the colonial authorities condemned such practices as “pure chicanery.”¹²⁵

The traffic in charms as well as their misuse was also discussed by Duncan-Johnstone while he was stationed as DC in Juaso (Ashanti) during the early 1920s. Late in December 1922 a Hausa female trader named Dagarti Hauza was robbed while travelling from Atebubu to Accra. An itinerant Muslim scholar, Malam Yaya, who made his living by producing charms and amulets, told Dagarti Hauza that he would be able to find the thief to her provided that she paid ten pounds to him. Unfortunately for both, Malam Yaya had failed to do so but kept the money. Angered for being cheated, Dagarti Hauza complained to the colonial authorities and Duncan-Johnstone arrested Malam Yaya. During the investigations it was found out that Malam Yaya alias Mahama alias Najato was a well-known character with a dubious, if not bad reputation. He seemed to have had a bad eye with the British authorities earlier as he was said to have commanded a ‘thieves zongo’ in Juansa before he was expelled. Duncan-Johnstone did not hold such ‘lesser’ *malams* in a very high esteem: “These Mallams are I think dangerous people and do a lot of harm against ignorant people.”¹²⁶

¹²³ PRAAD/A ADM 58/5/4, Informal Diary Bole, entry for 12.9.1936.

¹²⁴ E.g., PRAAD/A ADM 56/1/492, AR NEP 1920, para. 36; PRAAD/A ADM 56/1/493, AR Wa 1923–1924, para 37.

¹²⁵ PRAAD/A ADM 56/1/493, AR NP 1922–1923, para. 116.

¹²⁶ RH Mss. Afr. s. 593 1/1, Duncan-Johnstone, Confidential Diary (Juaso, Ashanti), entry for 23.12.1922.

What the colonial authorities – but certainly not the local rulers – misunderstood was that there was an ongoing but slow process of Islamization in the North, both in the Southern and in the Northern Province. Although sometimes officers noted that new mosques had been built, most notably those in Salaga, Yendi and Bawku,¹²⁷ generally Muslims made few headlines. Whether it was the consequence of some persons going as migrant labourers to the South and there engaging with Muslims or through the influence of local Muslims, Muslim practices such as prayer and fasting or some outward ‘Muslim’ markers, such as the wearing of ‘Muslim’ costume, started to be noted by the DCs during the 1920s. However, the colonial officials were not able to make much sense of what they were reporting about. From their perspective, the noticeable spread of Muslim habits and Islamic customs seemed odd, especially as it merely seemed to be an outward sign or ‘lip-service’ by those individuals who presented themselves as ‘Muslims’. Thus, one District Commissioner of Wa observed about returning migrant labourers:

When a mines labourer returns with a pocket full of money he will frequently buy himself a white robe and a red fez and before any length of time has elapsed, he is a sort of a Mallam. Very few of the so-called Mallams can even write in the Arabic Script, and only 2 to my knowledge have ever become “Alhaji” by making the pilgrimage to Mecca.¹²⁸

A similar critical attitude was reflected by one District Commissioner of Lawra:

Some of them go through the form of prayer, and do not respect the fasts, but only the feasts which they are always ready for. It is not uncommon sight to see a so called Mohammedan enter the court with his headgear off and his shoes on his feet, in spite of the fact that for a Moslem to remove his turban or head gear when in public is regarded as an insult, and contrary to all rules of Moslem etiquette.¹²⁹

However, the attitude of the Muslim population and especially the Muslim scholars towards these converts is little known. Sometimes, such as in Yendi during the 1910s, part of the Muslim population – those who were later were labelled ‘true’ Muslims – were critical about the prevailing syncretism and the selective performance of Islamic duties and rituals.¹³⁰

On the other hand, the crucial point is the question of what was and is meant by Islamization. Was it the point where an individual or a group of persons considered themselves as Muslim, when Islam became part of their social and cultural identity? In this case, the remarks by the District Commissioners clearly identify a process of Islamization, at least in the Northern Province (and certainly, too, in the Southern Province). If, however, Islamization is understood as a process where the societal

¹²⁷ RH Mss. Afr. s. 593 Box 2, Duncan-Johnstone, Diary of the Acting CCNT, July 1932, entry for 11.7.1932.

¹²⁸ PRAAD/A ADM 56/1/493, AR Wa 1923–1924, para 37.

¹²⁹ PRAAD/A ADM 56/1/489, AR Lorha 1918, page 10.

¹³⁰ BMA D-1,104, file 16, Otto Schimming’s letter to the Missionary Headquarters in Basle, “Un-sere Beziehungen zu den Muhammedanern (‘Our relationship to the Muslims’),” dated 11.9.1913.

structures and norms are changed,¹³¹ then this was not the case in the Northern Territories. As will be seen in the following subchapters, one can identify a steady process of Islamization of the first type in the Northern Territories during the colonial period. While this process did not challenge the colonial state or the colonial 'sphere', it was to cause turmoil within the Muslim 'sphere'. However, if Islamization is understood as a process of creating a framework for Muslim services, as Ferguson (1972) has demonstrated for Dagbon and Wilks (1989) for Wa, then the process was already well on its way in some of the kingdoms during the nineteenth century. However, such a process should not be confused with the conversion of individuals. This dual process, however, was not grasped by the colonial officers. In their view, Islamization was equated with 'true' Islam and they found only a tiny minority of practicers of this in the North. The conversion of individuals was a 'silent' process and was propagated through the emergence of a public, colonial sphere and a private, 'Muslim sphere'. As Ferguson has demonstrated for Dagbon and especially Yendi, the visible sign of the Islamization of individuals was the spread of the ward-mosque system. But this development belonged to the 'Muslim sphere' and was invisible to the colonial authorities as long as the Muslim community did not challenge colonial peace and order.

3.1. The Ahmadiyya and the Schism in Wa

Up to the 1930s, the Muslim community and their leaders were quite capable of dealing with the colonial authorities. They were able to negotiate the borders between the colonial and the Muslim 'spheres' and as a consequence, achieved a relative independence. Internal affairs and especially Muslim education were under their control. However, with the strengthening of the colonial presence in the Protectorate and especially with the beginning of a slow but steady process of modernization, the colonial state developed an increasingly lukewarm attitude towards the Muslims. What was needed were young people who had a Western education who could meet the new demands of both the colonial state and the colonial economy. Consequently, a few Western-type schools were established in the Northern Territories and in one of them, a Muslim of a new, modern type was engaged as teacher. He was Mr. D.A. Mahama who was a 2nd Division Teacher at the Tamale Junior Trade School in 1931. In addition to being a teacher in a Government School, he was also a member of the Ahmadiyya.

The advent and establishment of the Ahmadiyya opened a new chapter in the history of Islam in Ghana. The Ahmadiyya is a modern Muslim organization that originated in the Indian sub-continent. From a Sunni perspective, however, the Ahmadi doctrine of the Prophethood of their founder Ghulām Ahmad was not only

¹³¹ My discussion on the process of Islamization is inspired by Esposito 1998.

eccentric but contravenes Sunni Islam.¹³² Other divergent concepts were those of the Mahdi and of *jihad*. According to the Ahmadi perception, the Mahdi will be a man of peace (and not a warrior as in the Sunni concept) and that his mission will bring peace on earth. Much emphasis was placed on *tabligh*, missionary activity, and on peaceful *jihad* “with the help of the Quran” and not by the sword.¹³³ Such a pacifist doctrine gave them the backing of the British authorities. In addition, in contrast to many Sunni communities, the Ahmadiyya usually cooperated with the British authorities and had a very positive attitude towards Western education. Not surprisingly, the British authorities regarded the Ahmadiyya as a useful partner if their activities were accepted by the local Muslim community. However, the British were also well aware of the tension that could emerge with the establishment of the movement in a Muslim area. The lesson from the turmoil in India at the end of the nineteenth century had made the British colonial authorities aware of one basic fact: both Sunni and Shia Muslims regarded the Ahmadis as heretics and would not easily tolerate their presence.¹³⁴

Over the next decades, the Ahmadi missionaries spread throughout the British Empire and established missions in, among other places, East and West Africa. Indian Ahmadi missionaries came first to Lagos and from there moved on into the Gold Coast where they were successful in establishing a mission in Saltpond in 1922 which afterwards became their headquarters. From their local headquarters, the Ahmadis started to open missions in the Colony and in Ashanti.¹³⁵

By 1930, the Ahmadiyya claimed 5,000 followers in the Gold Coast and had started to extend their activities to the North.¹³⁶ The first converts from the Northern Territories were migrant labourers, who had come to the Colony, but soon the mission also wanted to send missionaries to Ashanti and the Northern Territories. However, their attempt to establish a mission in Kumasi in 1920s was vigorously opposed by the Sunni community of Kumasi *zongo*.¹³⁷ The Muslim leaders of the *zongo* had warned the colonial authorities that they would not be responsible for the consequences if an Ahmadi mission was started in or nearby the *zongo*. Despite the negative atmosphere in Kumasi, the Gold Coast head of the Ahmadiyya, Maulvi Fadl-ur-Rahman Hakeem,¹³⁸ asked DC Duncan-Johnstone to arrange a meeting

¹³² Mirzā Ghulām Ahmad was born about 1835 in Punjab. By the early 1880s, he was claiming to be a *mujaddid*, a renewer of Islam. A decade later, he declared himself both Messiah and Mahdi, and formally inaugurated the Ahmadiyya movement. He died in 1908.

¹³³ Wilks 1989, 178.

¹³⁴ RH Mss. Afr. s. 593 (V), A. Duncan-Johnstone, The Ahmadiyya Movement in the Gold Coast 1921–1931 (Tamale 5.11.1931), 1–2; Hiskett, 1984, 291.

¹³⁵ RH Mss. Afr. s. 593 (V), Duncan-Johnstone 1931, 3–4; Fisher 1963, 119; Wilks 1989, 179; Samwini 2006, 87–88.

¹³⁶ RH Mss. Afr. s. 593 (V), Duncan-Johnstone 1931, 5.

¹³⁷ RH Mss. Afr. s. 593 (V), Duncan-Johnstone 1931, 10; Hiskett, 1984, 291.

¹³⁸ He was the head of the Ahmadiyya in the Gold Coast for two periods, namely 1922–1929 and 1933–1935. Samwini 2006, 151 fn 418.

with the Muslim leadership to discuss the matter in 1925. The DC called a meeting, which was attended by several key Muslim scholars, including Imam ‘Umar of Kete and the *sarkin zongo* of Kumasi, Malam Salo Katsina. However, the listening ended in a dispute between Imam Umar and Maulvi Hakeem and the Muslim delegation left. Despite the failed first contact between the Ahmadi leader and local Muslim scholars, the movement was able to get a footing in Kumasi.¹³⁹ Maulvi Hakeem visited Kumasi again in April 1928. At this time the local Ahmadi community counted already about one hundred converts, including two local Muslim scholars. Once again, Maulvi Hakeem asked the DC to arrange a meeting with the local Muslim scholars as he wanted to ask for permission to build a mosque for the Ahmadi community. Not surprisingly, the increased activities of the Ahmadiyya in Kumasi were viewed with increased suspicion by the Sunni Muslims.¹⁴⁰ Once again an open meeting was arranged, but this time Maulvi Hakeem was challenged by Alhaji Duku, a scholar from Northern Senegal who had studied for 15 years at al-Azhar in Cairo. The meeting took place in an open space in the *zongo* on the 30th of April 1928 and was attended by all local Muslim scholars as well as several Europeans and local traditional authorities.¹⁴¹ Duncan-Johnstone was an eyewitness of the public dispute:

The principal debaters were seated at tables heaped with Korans and other religious books. When Hakeem expounded his doctrine that Christ did not die on the cross but retired to Kashmir where he died the spectators grew abusive and would not let him proceed. The argument had to be based on the Koran alone, no reference to the Hadis traditions being permitted. The debate was finally abandoned after two hours as Hakeem could not get a proper hearing.¹⁴²

Duncan-Johnstone was visited by Malam Salo Katsina and a Sunni delegation a few days after the public dispute. The *sarkin zongo* once again urged the British authorities not to allow the Ahmadi mission to establish itself in Kumasi and repeated his warning that if this happened, then the Muslim leadership was not able to guarantee peace and order in the *zongo*.¹⁴³ The situation in Kumasi was to remain tense for some time as the colonial authorities did not block the establishment of the Ahmadiyya. On the other hand, the conflict did not escalate further either.

At the beginning of the 1930s, the Ahmadiyya was starting preparations to expand its activities to the Northern Territories. Therefore, the question of their presence in the Northern Territory was highly problematic from the British perspective: how would the local Muslim communities react?

¹³⁹ RH Mss. Afr. s. 593 (V), Duncan-Johnstone 1931, 11.

¹⁴⁰ RH Mss. Afr. s. 593 (1,2–14), Duncan-Johnstone, Informal Diary (Ashanti), entry for 9.3.1928.

¹⁴¹ RH Mss. Afr. s. 593 (V), Duncan-Johnstone 1931, 11–12.

¹⁴² RH Mss. Afr. s. 593 (1,2–14), Duncan-Johnstone, Informal Diary (Ashanti), entry for 30.4.1928.

¹⁴³ RH Mss. Afr. s. 593 (V), Duncan-Johnstone 1931, 12–13.

At first, the colonial authorities were skeptical about the plans of the Ahmadiyya for operating in the Northern Territories and wanted to block the advance of the movement.¹⁴⁴ However, in June 1931, the head of the Gold Coast Ahmadiyya Movement, Maulvi Nazir Ahmad Ali,¹⁴⁵ visited Salaga and Tamale. He gave three public lectures in Salaga, but failed to meet the most important religious leader in Salaga, Imam Alhassan, who boycotted his meetings. In Tamale, on the other hand, the local traditional chief, the Dakpiema, and the Chief Imam addressed the meetings.¹⁴⁶ At that time, there seems to have already been a small Ahmadi community in Tamale.¹⁴⁷ In a subsequent letter to the Chief Commissioner, Maulvi Ahmad Ali claimed that his visit had been a very successful one and that many people had come to listen to his sermons. One theme of his sermons was about the coming of the Mahdi, whom he described – in accordance with the Ahmadi doctrine – as the Promised Reformer who would preach Islam by love, service and reason. He informed the CCNT that he had told the audience about the pacifist message of Islam and that Islam did not sanction the propagation of religion by the sword or religious wars: “If any Mahdi comes and uses sword to preach his Religion, I told them, that Mahdi would not be a Muslim and his religion not Islam.” In his letter, he also claimed to have initiated 126 persons, mainly Hausa, Dagbamba and Mossi, into the movement. According to his testimony, the respective imams made lists of the male converts from each tribe, and declared in writing their faith in the peaceful Mahdi and his interpretation of Islam. However, the names of women and children could not be written and were not included in this figure. Among the important persons who were said to have joined the movement was one Alhaji Qudus and a Dagbamba chief.¹⁴⁸

Maulvi Ahmad Ali also had a meeting with the Superintendent of Education, Mr. Thompson, where they discussed matters of education. According to the Ahmadiyya head, the local Muslims he had met were anxious to receive a Western education and referred to the Malams Class in Salaga as a support for his statement. On the other hand, he regretted that very few Muslim children attended government schools. According to him, the Muslim parents’ main reason for not sending their children to school was that they were afraid that the children would desert their

¹⁴⁴ Iddrisu 2002, 336.

¹⁴⁵ He was twice the head of the Ahmadiyya, namely 1929–1933, 1936–1937 and 1946–1950. Samwini 2006, 151 fn 418.

¹⁴⁶ RH Mss. Afr. s. 593 (V), Duncan-Johnstone 1931, 5–6. Maulvi Nazir Ahmad Ali had replaced Al-Hajj Maulvi Fadl-ur-Rahman as head in 1929.

¹⁴⁷ According to Iddrisu, one Mr. Wemah, who was a tutor at the Tamale Premier School, had joined the movement and had been able to convince about six or seven of his students to accept the Ahmadi doctrine (Iddrisu 2002, 337).

¹⁴⁸ PRAAD/T NRG 8/19/1, Letter from M. Nazir Ahmad, Local Head of the Gold Coast Ahmadiyya Movement, Saltpond, to CCNT, 25.6.1931. According to Duncan-Johnstone, the local chief who was said to have joined the movement was the Dakpiema, but Duncan-Johnstone himself doubted his conversion (RH Mss. Afr. s. 593 (V), Duncan-Johnstone 1931, 6).

faith when they go to school. He notified Thompson about the problem, but the Superintendent was not convinced. Instead, Thompson argued that there was no religious instruction at all in government schools, nor was there any attempt to draw Muslim children away from their faith.¹⁴⁹

However, Maulvi Ahmad Ali's positive perspective about missionary work in the Southern Province proved unrealistic. Even he himself had noted the critical position of the leading Sunni scholars of Salaga towards the Ahmadiyya. Consequently, the Ahmadi efforts were concentrated on Tamale and two missionaries were sent there in late 1931 or early 1932. The colonial authorities, too, were uncertain about the coming of the Ahmadiyya to Tamale. CSP Duncan-Johnstone made some private investigations concerning the movement, and in November 1931 prophesied: "It is not bad so far but may lead to trouble in the future."¹⁵⁰

Whatever happened in Tamale during 1932 is not known. Duncan-Johnstone noted that a Fanti Ahmadi missionary was distributing leaflets in Tamale, but avoided the Hausa *zongo*. He stayed with the Dagbamba Imam and seemed to concentrate on the Dagbamba section of the town.¹⁵¹ For a while a clash between the Ahmadis and the Sunnis looked inevitable, Duncan-Johnstone feared:

I think that the activities of the followers of Ahmed have shocked these venerable and orthodox disciples of Maliki out of their complacency and there is bitter antagonism between the two schools, for the orthodox Hausa, Wangara and other Western Sudanese look upon Mirza Ghulam Khan founder of the Ahmadiyya as the false Mahdi [...] There is nothing one can say against the Ahmadiyya, at present in its infancy and apparently a loyal peaceful and legitimate movement, but as it grows it may come into collision with the orthodox followers of the Prophet ... and such collision may lead to trouble.¹⁵²

It seems as if the initial success of the Ahmadiyya in Tamale was not a lasting one and the colonial authorities noted that most of their adherents had left them after a short time. By the end of the year, the mission was closed and the missionaries had left Tamale.¹⁵³

Although the Ahmadiyya mission in Tamale ended in failure, they did not give up their attempt to establish a mission in the Northern Territories. The "second" coming of the Ahmadiyya occurred in 1933 when a certain Malam Salihu (Sālih b. al-Hasan, ca. 1896–1961) from Wa, joined the movement. He was the leader of a

¹⁴⁹ PRAAD/T NRG 8/19/1, Superintendent Thompson to the Director of Education, Accra, Tamale 15.6.1931. Maulvi Ahmad also informed Duncan-Johnstone, then Acting CSP, about the negative position of the Muslim parents towards Western education (RH Mss. Afr. s. 593 (V), Duncan-Johnstone 1931, 6).

¹⁵⁰ PRAAD/T NRG 8/3/140, Informal diary of CSP 1931. Duncan-Johnstone's private investigations resulted in his November 1931 report on the Ahmadiyya (RH Mss. Afr. s. 593 (V), Duncan-Johnstone 1931).

¹⁵¹ RH Mss. Afr. s. 593 Duncan-Johnstone, CSP Informal Diary, January 1932, entry for 5.1.1932.

¹⁵² RH Mss. Afr. s. 593 Duncan-Johnstone, CSP Informal Diary, July 1932, entry for 11.7.1932.

¹⁵³ PRAAD/T NRG 8/3/46, AR NT 1932–1933, para 70.

group of traders and cocoa farm workers from Wa who lived in the Adanse District of southern Ashanti. Malam Salihu had first heard Maulvi Ahmad Ali preach in 1932 and decided to follow him to Saltpond. After his return to his community, he induced others to join the Ahmadiyya. In 1933, Malam Salih sent three of his Wala Ahmadis to preach in Wa. On the 1st of June 1933, they were received by Wa Na Pelpuo and Wa Imam Al-Hajj Muhammad b. ‘Uthman Dun, but their attitude was rather hostile towards the preachers and their message. Tension mounted and within a few days the Ahmadis were from their family dwellings and obliged to stay outside the town. When the Nalum Council ordered the Ahmadis to stop their activities, the District Commissioner intervened. On the 14th of June 1933, the DC met the Wa Na, the Wa Imam and the local ‘*ulama*’. The Sunni Muslims demanded the expulsion of the Ahmadi missionaries from Wa, but the DC was hesitant to do so openly. Instead, knowing that the movement enjoyed the tacit support of the Gold Coast Government, he thought to address a request for the withdrawal of the preachers through the Ahmadiyya headquarters in Saltpond. However, the DC’s dilemma was solved when the three Ahmadis, in the face of intense hostility in Wa, decided to return to Adanse.¹⁵⁴

Malam Salihu made a new attempt to enter Wa in February 1934. This time he himself went to Wa and defended his beliefs before the Wa Imam and the Wa Na, but in vain. Due to the daily protests of the Sunni ‘*ulama*’ to the DC, he bowed to the pressure after a month and was expelled. Salih’s brother together with some eight or nine other Ahmadis stayed behind in Wa and hid in the *zongo*, but soon the situation was unbearable for them, too, and they left the town. In March, a group of twenty Wala migrant labourers returned from the South. All of them had become Ahmadis. At that time, however, the opposition of the Sunni community, allegedly orchestrated by the Wa Imam, was extremely fierce towards the Ahmadis: families refused them accommodation and no one would allow his daughter to marry an Ahmadi.¹⁵⁵

Malam Salihu, however, was not inactive, either. On the 9th of May 1934, he brought his grievances to Chief Commissioner Jones, who eventually ruled that the Ahmadis could not be excluded from Wa. On the 8th of August 1934, Malam Salihu returned to Wa, challenging the authority and influence of the Wa Imam. Not surprisingly, the situation immediately became extremely tense. The Wa Imam issued orders to block Malam Salihu’s family from moving out of their compound and to refuse them entry to the ponds for water, the farms and the market. He also requested the DC to expel the Ahmadis again. The Ahmadis had no other choice but to disregard the Wa Imam’s order. Clashes and riots followed and on evening

¹⁵⁴ Hiskett 1984, 291–292; Wilks 1989, 179–180. According to Stewart’s informant, the controversy in Wa also initiated a response by Imam ‘Umar (Alhaji ‘Umar) who was regarded as the spiritual head of the Sunni Muslims of the Gold Coast. However, the influence of Imam ‘Umar in the Wa controversy is not known and he died in 1934. See further Stewart 1965, 35.

¹⁵⁵ Wilks 1989, 180.

of the 15th of August 1934 there was fighting in the Dzedzedeyiri ward. The DC and the police intervened, cleared the streets, and eventually had Malam Salihu expelled for a second time from Wa. Instead of feeling defeated, Malam Salihu again took his case to the Chief Commissioner, who, after lengthy consultations, once again decided that the Ahmadis could not be kept out of Wa.¹⁵⁶ CCNT Jones main argument for his decision was that the colonial government policy was to assure complete freedom of worship and not to favour a particular religion or sect.¹⁵⁷

When Malam Salihu returned to Wa in late 1935 or the beginning of 1936, Wa was virtually an armed camp. The DC had called in police forces from the surrounding areas and had declared to the Wa Na that he was ready for battle if the Chief Commissioner's orders were not followed. Despite the DC's intervention, Malam Salihu, his family and his followers were subject to considerable persecution throughout the year and, eventually, had to be protected by a police guard.¹⁵⁸ Wa Imam Al-Hajj Malik b. 'Uthman, who had been nominated as Wa Imam in March 1937 after Wa Imam Al-Hajj Muhammad had died in September 1936, constantly complained to the DC about the undertakings of the Ahmadis, including their converting a dwelling in Dzedzedeyiri into a mosque, running a school of their own and collecting dues from their followers. The DC, on the other hand, accused the Wa Imam and his immediate followers of harassment and regarded their negative attitude towards the Ahmadis as the cause of the problems.¹⁵⁹

Despite the warnings of the DC or the CCNT's order, the situation in Wa did not ease. Time and again, the Sunni community petitioned the DC to have the Ahmadi community expelled from Wa whereas Malam Salihu made efforts to establish new Ahmadi centres throughout the Northern Territories.¹⁶⁰ The situation in Wa worsened again in 1940. This time the DC accused the leaders of the Ahmadiyya of causing the unrest by their tactlessness and provocative behaviour. The colonial authorities had earlier reached an agreement with the Ahmadi Headquarters in Saltpond that the Ahmadiyya community at Wa should establish themselves outside the town. However, the local Ahmadi community decided to ignore the decision. Tension mounted in Wa when the Ahmadiyya decided to construct a new mosque in the town.¹⁶¹ Once again, the colonial authorities intervened, but friction continued during the following years.¹⁶² At this point, the DC was 'fed-up' with the quarrels

¹⁵⁶ Wilks 1989, 180–181.

¹⁵⁷ PRAAD/T NRG 8/3/53, AR NT 1935–1936, para 133.

¹⁵⁸ PRAAD/T NRG 8/3/53, AR NT 1935–1936, para 133.

¹⁵⁹ Wilks 1989, 181, 183.

¹⁶⁰ In 1939, Malam Salihu made a visit to Tamale, where he was able to establish a small community (Fisher 1963, 120). A mission house was built there during the 1940s with communal labour (Iddrisu 2002, 337).

¹⁶¹ PRAAD/T NRG 8/3/109, AR Wala 1940–1941, page 3.

¹⁶² PRAAD/A ADM 56/1/374, file 170 a: Activity Report for the Northern Territories 1941; PRAAD/T NRG 8/3/122, AR Wala 1942–1943, page 6; PRAAD/T NRG 8/3/127, AR Wala 1943–1944, page 7.

and tug-of-war in Wa and sarcastically stated: “A good slogan for Wala Muslims would be ‘Influence minus responsibility’.”¹⁶³

By 1943, the problems in Wa were further increased when Wa Na Hamidu was removed from office. As Wilks notes, a new dimension to the religious schism in Wa was added when the secular struggles that surrounded the choice of the new Wa Na took on a religious character. One candidate, Mumuni Koray, threatened to pull down the mosque of the Sunni community whereas the Sunni said they would do the same thing with the Ahmadi mosque. During this disturbed period, Wa Imam Al-Hajj Malik died. However, with the nomination of a new Wa Na and Wa Iman, things gradually started to change. In 1944 the Ahmadis, with the help of the Head of the Ahmadiyya community in the Gold Coast, Maulvi Ahmad Mubashir, petitioned the Governor of the Gold Coast, Sir Alan Burns, for redress for the wrongs done to the Wala Ahmadis. The matter was carefully investigated and the outcome was that the Ahmadi right to freedom of worship was endorsed by the governor. Having secured the position of his community in Wa, Malam Salihu decided to undertake the pilgrimage to Mecca from where he returned in 1945.¹⁶⁴

However, frictions started anew when Alhaji Salihu returned to Wa. The Sunnis tried – again – to limit the physical space of the Ahmadi community in Wa by demanding that they should only be allowed to use certain roads and enter the market only by one entrance. Once again they urged the DC to expel the Ahmadis from Wa, but the demand was rejected. This time, however, the Wa Na also decided to side with the Ahmadis in the struggle, which led the Sunni community to question their allegiance to him. According to the Ahmadi version, Wa Na Sumaila even invited the Ahmadis to say prayers to him. When Wa Na Sumaila died, the Sunnis were to find themselves overtaken by events when Mumuni Koray became Wa Na in November 1949; he was an Ahmadi and made no effort to reconcile the Sunnis to his election. Instead, Alhaji Salihu as the Ahmadi imam, presided over his formal installation, and Mumuni Koray had his skin and the other paraphernalia of the Nam placed in the Ahmadiyya mosque.¹⁶⁵

According to Wilks, there were several factors that can explain the schism in Wa. One was that the Ahmadiyya Movement seemed to echo old themes in the history of the Dzedezeyiri faction. Malam Salihu belonged to that faction, which had been effectively leaderless since the death of Friday Imam Ishaka (died 1931). Under Friday Imam Ishaka, the Dzedezeyiri faction had pursued a pro-British policy. So, too, did the Ahmadiyya. Malam Salihu was even seen by Wilks as the effective successor of Friday Imam Ishaka in the leadership of the Dzedezeyiri faction. In fact, Wilks even believes that the ‘*ulama*’ of Dzedezeyiri had remained more firmly committed to the old Suwarian tradition of peaceful coexistence, a stance which

¹⁶³ PRAAD/T NRG 8/3/109, AR Wala 1940–1941, page 11.

¹⁶⁴ Wilks 1989, 183–184.

¹⁶⁵ Wilks 1989, 184–185.

easily could be taken over by the Ahmadi position. The most interesting point Wilks makes is that the Ahmadiyya can be seen as a kind of liberating movement of young Wala men. They saw the Ahmadiyya as having the potential to free them from the constraints of the Wa Na and the whole apparatus of the traditional policy. In addition, by becoming an Ahmadi, one was able to challenge the authority of the conservative '*ulama*'.¹⁶⁶

By the end of the 1940s, the Ahmadi community was firmly established in Wa. Their number had gradually increased from about 100 male members in 1939 to about 600 in 1949 and they had made converts in the Wala villages.¹⁶⁷ However, this establishment had come about at the expense of the unity of the Muslim community: by 1949 Wa was split between a Sunni and an Ahmadi community. Not only was the Muslim community at large affected but the schism divided families and wards. Those who joined the movement were cast out of their homes by their own families and often deprived of their wives and children by their wives' families. Sunni families refused to let their daughters marry Ahmadi men, and patrilateral cross-cousin marriages had to be practiced. Consequently, although gradually expanding, the Ahmadi community of Wa was restrained from fully participating in Wala society.

4. TOWARDS THE POSTCOLONIAL DISCOURSE

Apart from the schism in Wa, not much was reported by the colonial authorities about the internal development in the Muslim communities in the Northern Territories or its relationship to the Native Authorities and the colonial administration. It seems as if both the colonial authority as well as the Muslim leaders regarded the unofficial arrangement of the existence of two relatively independent spheres, the colonial or political and public and the Muslim or communal and private, as one which worked relatively well. As long as neither party tried to challenge the existence of the other or to impose its will on the other, the situation was – at least from a colonial perspective – regarded as stable. However, the arrangement was a hierarchical one: at the top the colonial authorities following the local political authorities and the Muslim leaders were subordinate to them both. The case of the Ahmadi-Sunni schism in Wa openly demonstrated this hierarchy.

The Northern Territories were regarded by the colonial authorities as a kind of mixture between a Muslim and a non-Muslim dependency at the end of colonial rule. The British description of the religious situation at that time depicted the North as being inhabited mainly by people professing what was called '*monotheistic paganism*'. The observers drew attention to what was termed '*Muslim*' dress, to the

¹⁶⁶ Wilks 1989, 182, 185, 204.

¹⁶⁷ Wilks 1989, 185. However, according to Anderson (1954, 265), there were about 250 male Ahmadis in Wa in 1951.

celebration of ‘Muslim’ festivals and the fact that many people would fast during Ramadan and swear in court upon the Quran, yet despite such signs, one would still not regard the North as being ‘truly’ Muslim.¹⁶⁸

British authorities sometimes mentioned the spread of Islam among the local population, but did not regard this process as a negative one. In Navrongo, for example, Islam was said to have gained a small foothold in the town by the mid-1940s, but it was not believed to have made any deep impact on the local non-Muslim population, apart from the ‘typical’ feature of the increased use of ‘Muslim’ costume and amulets.¹⁶⁹ A similar situation prevailed in Mamprusi District where Islam was supposed to have gained a thorough foothold in the towns but not among the rural population.¹⁷⁰

However, in terms of counting the numerical strength of the Muslim population in the North, not to mention producing statistics on religious affiliation, the British authorities had come to the conclusion that all previous censuses, the 1911, 1921 and 1931 censuses, were insufficient, based on undercounts and mere guesses or were in other ways unreliable. As a consequence, no data on religious affiliation was collected in the 1948 census! Instead, missionary authorities were asked to provide data on their membership. In the end, there were only numbers on the Ahmadiyya available as there were no Muslim missionary or other organizations which could provide any figures for the census authorities.¹⁷¹ Although the census authorities lamented the missing figures for the Muslim population, the lack of data was not perceived to be problematic. More than anything else, such a consideration demonstrated the fact that the Muslim population was at that time not regarded as posing a threat to the colonial system nor of being a possible ally. In fact, one could even argue that the whole matter of counting – or at least estimating – the number of Muslims was of little interest to officials in Accra or London.

However, from a regional perspective, the matter of religious adherence was still an important issue, especially in those areas where the District Commissioners had been confronted with large numbers of Muslims, in particular in the Southern Province. The 1949–1950 Annual Report for Dagomba District stated – for the first time since the 1911 census – that most Dagbamba and Nanumba were Muslims.¹⁷² Unfortunately, the emergence of Dagbon as a ‘Muslim’ region was not commented upon at all by the officials. In fact, it is clear that those officials who wrote and read the 1949–1950 report did not reflect on the change of the religious affiliation

¹⁶⁸ See, for example, PRAAD/T NRG 8/3/141, AR NT 1946–1947, para 57.

¹⁶⁹ PRAAD/T NRG 8/3/127, AR Navrongo 1943–1944, para 63.

¹⁷⁰ PRAAD/T NRG 8/3/137, AR Mamprusi 1944–1945, page 4.

¹⁷¹ According to figures returned from the Ahmadiyya mission, the number of the Ahmadis in the Gold Coast had increased from 3,110 in 1931 to 22,572 in 1948. The regional breakdown was as follows: Colony 16,197, Ashanti 4,250, and Northern Territories 2,125 (*The Gold Coast. Census of Population 1948. Reports and Tables* [1950], page 37).

¹⁷² PRAAD/T NRG 8/3/167, AR Dagomba District 1949–1950, page 22.



Plate 15a. Tamale Central Friday Mosque, 1999, photo: HW.

among the inhabitants in Dagbon: there was no reference to earlier censuses or to the cause (or causes) for the change. It seems as if the colonial authorities had not recognized the process of Islamization in Dagbon at all. Another possibility was that the religious sphere, whether Christian, Muslim or African Traditional Religion, was not regarded as part of the ‘colonial sphere’ (as long as religious affairs did not jeopardize the colonial peace and economy). What had happened in Yendi (at least) was a remarkable expansion of the ward-mosque system. Whereas there were only a few mosques in Yendi at the beginning of the British period, in 1960 there were already 25 ward-mosques. At the same time, there were some 1,375 compounds in the town, therefore, following Ferguson, there was one ward-mosque for every 55 compounds. On average, the size of the community of a ward-mosque then tended to be between 40–50 men and about 10–15 elderly women. More than anything else, Ferguson’s data clearly highlights the change from the precolonial to the late colonial situation in Dagbon, i.e., the growth of the Muslim population from a minority to constituting the majority of it.¹⁷³

However, the situation in the North was to change tremendously during the late 1950s and early 1960s. The rise and fall of the Muslim Association Party (MAP) during the early 1950s had demonstrated to the colonial and postcolonial rulers that religious affiliation could be used for political means (see below). Although the politicization of the Muslims in the end was unsuccessful – it turned out that in no part of the country did Muslims constitute a regional majority – the cry of the Muslim population for political participation had demonstrated that religion

¹⁷³ Ferguson 1972, 310.



Plate 15b. Tamale Central Friday Mosque, 2000; photo: HW. Visible signs of development and progress or ‘positive change’. The government had started to invest in the infrastructure (during my following visits, the road was finished), the Muslim community had again received some funding to continue the construction of the Central Friday Mosque.

(Islam) could be used as an attempt to unify an opposition to the ruling party and the political order. The crucial question, therefore, was how many the Muslims were throughout the country and, even more important, if there were ethnic groups who already were predominantly Muslim. One southern Muslim political leader, Bankole Awooner-Renner, even argued on the eve of the 1954 election that “... the Muslims formed about 60 % of the police force, about 90 % of the army and about 80 % of the labour force of the country,”¹⁷⁴ clearly an exaggeration but still a critical issue which both the colonial as well as the nationalist leaders, not least Kwame Nkrumah and his Convention Peoples’ Party (CPP), had to take into consideration. Although the politicization of the Muslims ended in a resounding defeat in the 1954 general election, religion remained a political issue throughout the 1950s. By 1958, all parties based on ethnic, religious, or regional affiliations were declared illegal by the Nkrumah government.¹⁷⁵

Clearly – by 1960, religious affiliation was a political issue and religious affiliation was again assessed in the upcoming 1960 census. However, the key problem was the categorization of religious affiliation. Should it be actual belief in and practice of the religious rites or should it be formal affiliation, i.e., should one concentrate on ‘true’ or ‘pseudo’ believers? As has been shown for the 1921 and 1931 censuses, the question was a political one. ‘True’ believers could turn out

¹⁷⁴ *The Pioneer*, 1 December 1953, quoted in Allman 1991, 14.

¹⁷⁵ Allman 1991, 18.

to be radicals, ‘pseudo’ ones (usually) not. ‘True’ believers were those individuals who had internalized the faith; ‘pseudo’ ones were only members of a community of believers. Not surprisingly, the census officials decided to focus on the ‘true’ believers, taking as their sole criterion for religious affiliation a person’s own declaration or profession of a religious faith. Following this criterion, the census, based on a Post Enumeration Survey (P.E.S.), claimed that 42.8 percent of the Ghanaian adult population were Christians, 38.2 percent were adherents of African Traditional Religions and 12 percent were Muslims.¹⁷⁶ A further breakdown of the P.E.S. data showed that Islam was a largely urban religion: 17 percent of the urban population in Ghana were Muslims, but only 10.4 percent of the rural.¹⁷⁷

In fact, as outlined in Table 6, the P.E.S. seemed to indicate that Islam was mainly a religion of foreigners and Northerners. The census used the concept ‘country of origin’ in the same way as earlier colonial censuses had used the term ‘alien’, and one could even argue that the former was a ‘modernized’ version of the latter. Like religion, the concept of origin was a political one. Aliens and foreigners could be deported if they posed a political threat, as had been done under the 1957 Deportation Act. The population of Ghana was divided into four categories, of which category ‘D’ consisted of language groups most of whose members were stated to be of foreign origin: Yoruba, Ibo, Hausa, Lobi, Songhai and Fulani. A total of 827,000 foreigners were reported, of which some 35 percent or 290,000 had been born in Ghana, i.e., they were descendants of immigrants. The predominantly Muslim ‘tribes’ were mainly ‘foreigners’: Hausa (98.1 percent Muslim), Songhai (93.8 percent Muslim), Fulani (91.7 percent Muslim). Other groups were classified as party foreign, such as the Wangara (83.7 percent Muslim) or Pilapila (92.8 percent Muslim).¹⁷⁸ Among the Northern Language Groups, the Mole-Dagbani in general seemed to have responded positively to Islam – 21.9 percent of them claimed to be Muslims. A breakdown on a ‘tribal’ basis further strengthened the picture of a rough division between ethnic groups in the North that had been partly or strongly affected by Islam and others who had more or less immune: Tem (Kotokoli, 96.6 percent Muslim), Mossi (70.5 percent Muslim), Dagomba and Nanumba (53 percent Muslim), Gonja (43.7 percent Muslim), and Chamba (37.7 percent Muslim) as compared to Konkomba (0.3 percent Muslim), Kasena (0.6 percent Muslim) and Builsa (1.1 percent Muslim).¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁶ 1960 *Population Census of Ghana. Special Report E.* 1964, lxxxii.

¹⁷⁷ 1960 *Population Census of Ghana. Special Report E.* 1964, Table 4.11.6.

¹⁷⁸ 1960 *Population Census of Ghana. Special Report E.* 1964, xxxv and Table 4.11.2.

¹⁷⁹ 1960 *Population Census of Ghana. Special Report E.* 1964, Table 29. According to Ferguson (1972, XVII), the percentage of Dagomba Muslims has to be adjusted upwards to ca. 60 percent. Unfortunately, the census does not provide any data on the Wala. However, according to Wilks (1989, 24), most villages in Wa District had a growing Muslim component and one can therefore assume that the Wala, too, must be included among the predominantly Muslim groups.

Another indicator of the impact of Islamization on a particular ethnic group was the frequency of Muslim marriages. An overall lower percentage of registered Muslim marriages than the actual number of Muslims was reported, namely 5.1 percent of all entered marriages. Not surprisingly, a relative high frequency of Muslim marriages was noted among the Hausa (57.1 percent), the Fulani (38.8 percent), the Pilapila (37 percent), the Wangara (36.5 percent) and the Tem (35.9 percent). However, the number of Muslim marriages among the Dagomba and Nanumba was appallingly low – only 1.8 percent!¹⁸⁰ The low frequency of Muslim marriages among the Dagomba and Nanumba could be an indication of either the slow acceptance of certain aspects of Islamic traditions or, perhaps more likely, the recent conversion of large numbers of Dagomba and Nanumba to Islam. However, the most likely explanation to the low number of Muslim marriages among the Dagomba and Nanumba is perhaps that only a few of the Muslim marriages had been registered and had thus been counted – assuming that only registered marriages were included in the census report.

In numerical terms, the groups with the largest number of Muslims were the Hausa, the Mossi and the Dagomba – about 37,500, 55,000 and 58,000 members respectively – followed by the Tem (Kotokoli, ca. 24,000), the Wangara (ca. 18,000), the Fulani (ca. 15,000) and the Gonja (ca. 13,500).¹⁸¹ However, a careful reading of the census reveals a much more complex picture. As the authors of the census report noted, the division between foreign and indigenous groups was sometimes difficult to make. Even more problematic was the fact that some groups, such as the Hausa, also comprised of so-called ‘Ghanaian’ members, i.e., had lived in the country for more than three generations. In the case of the Hausa, the ‘foreign’ Hausa were mainly found in the southern part of the country and had immigrated to the country during the colonial and postcolonial periods.¹⁸² On the other hand, in the northern part of the country, there existed an older ‘alien’ but, in the 1960 classification, no longer foreign strata: the ‘stranger’ communities of the Wangara and Hausa. In fact, the P.E.S. data even revealed that the majority of the Hausa (as well as the Wangara) lived in the South – only 12.2 percent of Hausa born in Ghana and 8.7 of Hausa born abroad lived in the Northern Region (the former Northern Territories), the proportions of the Wangara living in the North was even less: 4.9 respectively 4.7. Ashanti Region, in fact, had the highest proportion of both Hausa and Wangara.¹⁸³

What conclusions can be drawn from the 1960 census? The first and obvious one is that the number of Muslims in the Gold Coast/Ghana was increasing. If the 1960 data is compared with the data provided in the 1921 and 1931 censuses – inaccurate though they were and thus highly problematic to use – the expansion of

¹⁸⁰ 1960 Population Census of Ghana. *Special Report E*. 1964, Table 29.

¹⁸¹ 1960 Population Census of Ghana. *Special Report E*. 1964, Table 29.

¹⁸² 1960 Population Census of Ghana. *Special Report E*. 1964, xxxviii.

¹⁸³ 1960 Population Census of Ghana. *Special Report E*. 1964, Table 4.3.3.

Islam in the Northern Territories/Northern Region was a remarkable one. Secondly, the process of Islamization in the North was a very uneven one; it was mainly confined to those areas where Muslims had settled and had made an impact on local societies: Dagbon, Wa, and, to a lesser extent, Gonja and Nanun. The precolonial pattern of Muslim ‘stranger’ communities linked to the kingdoms and their social structure continued during the colonial period. In fact, it seems as if the position of the Muslim communities was strengthened in these societies during the colonial period. An interesting anomaly to this pattern was in Mampurugu. Here only some 11.6 percent of the population was Muslim according to the 1960 census. The situation in Mampurugu can be explained by the different position among the ruling elite, especially the ruler and his court, towards Islam. Compared to the rulers in Dagbon, Wa and Nanun, the link between the Nayiri and the Muslim community had never been a close one during the precolonial period (rather, the Muslim leadership was kept at a distance which was emphasized by the removal of the capital from Gambaga to Nalerigu), and this situation continued during the colonial period despite a short period of British-Muslim alliance at the beginning of the colonial period.

A third factor to be highlighted was the hollowness of any claim that the majority of Muslims were living in the northern part of Gold Coast at the end of colonial rule. Although some regions in the North can be singled out as partly or even predominantly Muslim (Dagbon, Wa, to a lesser extent Nanun and Gonja), it seems as if the bulk of the Muslim population was living in the South, in Ashanti and in the (former) Colony. One could single out Tamale as a predominantly Muslim city, but in absolute numbers, more Muslims were living in Kumasi and Accra. The overall increase of Muslims in the Gold Coast happened in the South during the colonial period; it was here in the *zongos* and in the communities of mine and cocoa farm labourers that non-Muslim immigrants from the North as well as from other parts of West Africa found in Islam (and not Christianity) spiritual relieve and were given social and perhaps also economic support by the Muslim communities. As Grindal and Pellow note, upon arrival in Accra, someone barely affected by Islam, say a ‘Grunshie’ or Sisala, if he or she settled in one of the *zongos* (which was very likely), would very often adopt Islam and usually be integrated into the *zongo* community. In fact, the outcome was that an Islamic-based sense of community and social order was to establish an outward cohesion among the *zongo* communities whereas within the Muslim community, ethnic identification still mattered.¹⁸⁴

Last, but not least, a few comments on ‘colonial silence’. At least in some regions in the North, especially in Dagbon, there must have been a rather profound process of Islamization. However, apart from the establishment of the Ahmadiyya in Wa and the schism among the local Muslim community, the colonial authorities, whether those on the spot or those at headquarters, did not notice, or at least report,

¹⁸⁴ Grindal 1973; Pellow 1985. Also Sarfoh 1986, 78–79.

the increase of Muslims in Dagbon. If the early and the late colonial period are compared, the difference in attitude of the colonial authorities towards Islam and Muslims is striking. One could even say that there was almost an obsession with identifying Muslims during the early period whereas the religious factor received almost no attention during the latter period. Such a situation poses several problems for an outside observer. Whereas the story of Mahdism and the limited impact of itinerant preachers during the early colonial period can be traced rather easily, the process of Islamization during the first part of the twentieth century cannot be traced in the written files. It seems as if the colonial authorities more or less followed their principle of non-interference in religious matters and their policy of freedom of religions. What was defined as being part of the Muslim sphere was not a matter of concern for the colonial authorities as long as the Muslims did not jeopardize colonial peace and order. Thus, it is not possible, for example, to reconstruct through the colonial files the gradual spread and impact of the Tijaniyya Sufi Order under colonial rule. What is evident from the 1960 census, however, is the fact that some individuals or perhaps groups must have had a tremendous impact on local society. But this was a silent process, or at least invisible to colonial eyes.

4.1. Muslim Education Re-enters the Stage

British disinterest in Muslim affairs in general and their policy of non-interference in the Muslim 'sphere' meant that anything belonging to that sphere which did not challenge the colonial order would become invisible – at least in the colonial files. One case of colonial invisibility was Muslim education and Quran schools, which continued to exist. Despite official assertions, people still sent their children to the *malams*. Only very rarely, colonial authorities would even note the existence of such schools in their reports,¹⁸⁵ and one easily gets the impression that Muslim education was not regarded as of being of any interest to the colonial state. In fact, colonial authorities in general regarded Muslim education to be of little value for the colonial system as it only provided 'religious' instruction and did not educate the children in 'useful' skills needed in a 'modern' (colonial) society.¹⁸⁶ When the colonial government, and since the 1930s the Native Authorities,¹⁸⁷ slowly but gradually, started to focus on the development of education it meant the introduction and development of Western education. Priority was given to primary education as well as some selected post-primary education units. Funds were invested by the local governments in the maintenance and erection of school buildings, providing

¹⁸⁵ One of the few reports where Muslim education is mentioned is the 1943 Activity Report for Kete-Krachi (PRAAD/A ADM 56/1/374, File 184).

¹⁸⁶ PRAAD/T NRG 8/3/141, AR Dagomba 1946–1947, para 63; PRAAD/T NRG 8/3/155, AR Dagomba 1947–1948, para 71.

¹⁸⁷ The existing (government) schools were taken over by the Native Authorities in 1935.



Plate 16. Quran School in Salaga, 2000; photo: HW. The proprietor of this school is Shaykh Ali ‘Umar, Chief Imam of Salaga.

furniture, equipment, books, food and clothing. In addition, they also paid the salaries of student-teachers while the colonial government paid the salaries of trained teachers. The interest of both the colonial and the local government in the promotion of Western education was obvious: the pressing need for a literate Native Administration staff. Eventually, Western-educated administrative personnel would replace the Hausa *malams* as clerks and treasurers, and Western education was needed for dispensers and health superintendents.¹⁸⁸ Therefore, although the introduction of Indirect Rule in the Protectorate was not a conscious attempt to cut off the ‘Muslim sphere’, the outcome of the administrative reform in fact meant that there was less and less need to engage Muslim scholars in the administration.

However, the colonial authorities had to admit that Muslim education – at least in the Muslim part of the Protectorate – was regarded by the parents as being more valuable than Western education.¹⁸⁹ According to Seidu, the main reason for this was that many Muslim parents feared that if their children were allowed to attend Government Schools, there was the danger of the children to distance themselves from their faith. Muslim education was preferred by the parents and, consequently, continued to exist, if not expand.¹⁹⁰ Therefore, it is not surprising that the 1960 census would report that out of ca. 18,000 ‘past school attendants’, almost 4,000 had been to ‘Arabic’ schools in the Northern Region.¹⁹¹ Most attendants of ‘Arabic’ schools

¹⁸⁸ Bening 1990, 87–88.

¹⁸⁹ Iddrisu 2002, 336.

¹⁹⁰ Seidu 1989, 141.

¹⁹¹ As Wilks notes, it is unclear what the 1960 census officials actually meant by ‘Arabic’ schools.

were to be found in Tamale U.C. (955 boys and 76 girls out of 4,005 boys and 1,112 girls) and Wala L.C. (818/50 out of 1,878/340). A further analysis of the data reveals some interesting features. First, of all 'past school attendants' in all of Ghana, only 3.8 percent had been to an 'Arabic' school whereas in the Northern Region alone, it was almost a quarter (24.2 percent). Second, 'Arabic' school attendance had been largest in Nanumba L.C (56.7 percent), Eastern Dagomba L.C. (44 percent), Wala L.C. (43.5 percent) and Eastern Gonja L.C. (37.7 percent).¹⁹² Thus, with such figures at hand, one could claim that the Northern Region was indeed the most Muslim part of Ghana and that the most Muslim regions were Nanumba, Dagbon (Yendi), Wa and Gonja (Salaga). Such an impression – or representation – of the North was to prevail and take root as the common understanding in postcolonial Ghana.

But the 1960 data also revealed two other things. First, a comparison between the actual numbers of past attendants of Arabic schools reveals that the majority of pupils in Arabic schools were to be found outside the Northern Region. The largest numbers were found in the Ashanti Region (4,320 or 23.6 percent out of all 'past Arabic school attendants') and Accra Capital District (3,082 or 16.8 percent). In fact, Accra and Kumasi stand out as the most important centres for Quran education. Second, Muslim education had been almost totally male biased, especially in the Northern Region. Whereas a total of 188,190 girls in the whole country had received some education, only 2,815 or 1.4 percent of them had attended Quran schools. In the Northern Region, only 307 girls had been to 'Arabic' classes, which was 8.9 percent of all female pupils in the Northern Region, 10.9 percent of all female Muslim pupils and 0.16 percent of all female pupils in Ghana.¹⁹³ Another observation, perhaps more problematic from a Muslim perspective, was that there had been a change from the Arabic to the public school system. According to the 1960 census data, attendance at Arabic schools was declining when 'present' attendance was compared with 'past' attendance. For example, Gonja males down from 46 percent to 25.4 percent, Pilapila males down from 80.2 to 77.1 percent, Dagomba and Nanumba males down from 77.0 percent to 32.2 percent and even Hausa males down from 76.4 to 43.2 percent. At the same time, the number of pupils in primary schools was increasing, for example, Dagomba and Nanumba males rose from 5.5 percent to 53.3 percent and Hausa males rose from 7.4 to 40.0 percent.¹⁹⁴

The fate of Muslim education was not left unnoticed by some Muslim groups. By the late 1940s it had become apparent that the Muslim population was lagging behind the rest of the inhabitants in terms of (modern) education throughout the Gold Coast. Only a few Muslims had received higher, Western education, and

According to Wilks (1989, 25), in Wa at least, it seems as if only the Ahmadiyya schools were included in the calculation. Those Wala who had undergone or were undergoing instruction in a Quran school appear to have escaped enumeration, Wilks notes.

¹⁹² *Ghana 1960 Census Vol III Demographic Characteristics* 1964, Table 5.

¹⁹³ *Ghana 1960 Census Vol III Demographic Characteristics* 1964, Table 5.

¹⁹⁴ *1960 Population Census of Ghana. Special Report E.* 1964, Table 21.

even less were enrolled at the University College at Accra (Achimota) – only 3 or 4 Muslims out of 400 students in 1954. In Ashanti and the Colony, therefore, the Gold Coast Muslim Association (GCMA) had established Islamic elementary schools by the early 1950s. These schools combined Arabic and English classes. However, due to lack of funding, the standard of the schools was not very high, and some even had to be closed down. Still, the Muslim Association planned to run seven Islamic schools in Accra alone and another 45 throughout the country.¹⁹⁵ The Ahmadiyya, too, was providing modern schools, mainly in the Colony and Ashanti¹⁹⁶ but also, including others, in Tamale (Ahmadiyya Primary School at Zogbeli) and Wa.¹⁹⁷ However, according to a report presented to the Colonial Office by the Aga Khan's East African Muslims Welfare Society, Muslim education in general was embryonic at best in the Gold Coast and the colonial government was not sympathetic towards the 'Islamic cause'. Not surprisingly, it was extremely hard to find educationally qualified persons to represent Muslim interests in the Councils of the Administration.¹⁹⁸

4.2. Visible Signs of Friction within the Muslim Community

The first challenge to the unity of the Muslim community in the North was the advent of the Ahmadiyya. This open friction was duly noted by the colonial authorities, who at times tried to intervene. However, what the colonial officials did not realize was that the Muslim community was undergoing major changes during the twentieth century.¹⁹⁹ The first was the spread of the Tijaniyya Sufi Order, first mainly among Hausa but after WWII increasingly among other Muslims, too. Though peaceful in general and apolitical, for the most part, in the Northern Territories, the Tijaniyya or rather members of the Tijaniyya were to become involved in the schism in Wa when they formed the opposition to the Ahmadiyya.²⁰⁰ This had already happened during the 1930s, when Wa Imam Muhammad had organized the opposition, and it was to continue for the following decades. However, the friction within the Muslim community and between 'sincere' and 'ordinary' Muslims would become acute

¹⁹⁵ TNA CO 554/1317, Moslem Problems in Africa: Copy of Report of Travel by the East African Muslims Welfare Society [Aga Khan] to Ghana, June 1954.

¹⁹⁶ The first secondary school, the Ta'lim Islami' at Ahmadiyya Secondary School, was opened by the Ahmadiyya in Kumasi in 1950. Samwini 2006, 90–91.

¹⁹⁷ Fisher 1963, 177; Wilks 1989, 25; Iddrisu 2005, 59. The Ahmadiyya Primary School in Tamale was established in 1940, although their first attempt to open a school in 1932 backfired due to financial constraints. The curriculum in the Ahmadi schools was [and is] mainly secular and most of the pupils were not Muslims (Iddrisu 2002, 338).

¹⁹⁸ TNA CO 554/1317, Moslem Problems in Africa: Copy of Report of Travel by the East African Muslims Welfare Society [Aga Khan] to Ghana, June 1954.

¹⁹⁹ In general, Muslims in the Gold Coast Colony were described in colonial publications as a quiet, non-turbulent group before the advent of the Ahmadiyya. See Brown 1927; Price 1954.

²⁰⁰ On the spread of the Tijaniyya in Ghana, see Stewart 1965. Also Samwini 2006, 69–72, although he relies on information provided by Stewart.

during the 1960s – not only in Wa but throughout the country. This was due to the emergence of reformist or Wahhabi groups, called *Ahlus-Sunna* (*Ahl as-Sunna*) in Ghana, and caused a doctrinal rift among the Sunni Muslims (and will be discussed in Chapter VI).²⁰¹

Another change, which the colonial officials did not seem to have paid much attention to, was the spread of Islam in the North. At the end of the 1940s, however, the changes were too obvious to be belittled – the main reason being that Muslims were starting to become politically active. The 1949–1950 reporting from Dagbon is of special interest as it also states that the leaders of the Muslim community, the imams, had gained political influence: “The Chiefly system is reinforced by a powerful organisation of Limans and Mallams who have built themselves into the political structure.” However, in the same vein, a ‘new’ type of problem within the Muslim community was emerging: “It is recognised by sincere Muslims that the Islam of these Mallams lacks the austerity of orthodox Islam.”²⁰² The first signs of a change were already visible at the end of the 1940s. Colonial officials noted that the teachings of one Alhaji Abudulai (Abdallahi) had had a great impact on the population in and around Tamale and the number of Muslims was said to be increasing, at least in Yendi, Tamale and Kumbungu in Dagbon.²⁰³

A further step towards the Islamization of Dagbon seems to have occurred during the early 1950s. When Ibrahimia (Ibrāhīm) Niasse, the Senegalese leader of the Niassene branch of the Tijaniyya,²⁰⁴ visited Kumasi, he received an invitation from the Ya Na, the Gulpe-Na and leaders of the Muslim community in Tamale to come to Tamale. Together with Ahmad Baba (Ahmad Bābā al-Wā’iz),²⁰⁵ al-Hājj Hārūn and al-Hājj Muhammad al-Hādī b. Mawlūd Fāl, Ibrahimia Niasse went to the North by air in May 1952.²⁰⁶ The Acting Chief Commissioner was impressed by the overwhelming enthusiasm with which Shaykh Ibrahimia was greeted by the Muslims in Tamale. According to the Acting Chief Commissioner, 6,000 people had come to the airport to meet him.²⁰⁷ In Yendi, where Ibrahimia Niasse also went, he was again welcomed by huge crowds. Thousands were said to have been initiated into the Tijaniyya, ‘uncountable’ numbers converted to Islam,²⁰⁸ and a well-known

²⁰¹ Ryan 1996, 313, 323.

²⁰² PRAAD/T NRG 8/3/167, AR Dagomba District 1949–1950, page 22.

²⁰³ PRAAD/T NRG 8/3/155, AR NT 1947–1948, para 56.

²⁰⁴ On Ibrahimia Niasse, see further Seesemann 2004.

²⁰⁵ Ahmad Bābā al-Wā’iz (1915/16–1982), who was *sarkin zongo* in Kumasi, was one of Ibrahimia Niasse’s early associates and his *muqaddam* (Arabic: deputy) in Kumasi. He had joined Ibrahimia Niasse already in 1948. Another of Ibrahimia Niasses early followers was Muhammad Ciroma, who was the Friday Imam of Kumasi from 1952 to 1968. Seesemann 2004, 507–508, 511.

²⁰⁶ Hiskett 1980, 107; Seesemann 2004, 507, 510.

²⁰⁷ Quoted in Hiskett 1980, 107.

²⁰⁸ According to Ba, in his book *Cheikh Ibrahimia Niasse*, some 8,000 persons were claimed to have converted in Yendi alone. Quoted in Seesemann 2004, fn 119. In Yendi, Ibrahimia Niasse stayed in Alhaji Abdallahi’s house. Alhaji Abdallahi was the son of Shaykh al-Hasan, through whom he had received the Tijani *wird* ca. 1900. See further Stewart 1965, 41. A *wird* (Arabic) is the special litany



Plate 17. Two Northern Muslim scholars: Alhaji Issah Usman, Chief Imam of the Old Imam’s Mosque in Yendi and Afa Razaq, 2000; photo: HW.

local Tijani, Shaykh ‘Abdallāh b. al-Hasan Yendi, became one of Ibrahima Niassé’s leading *muqaddam* (Arabic: ‘deputy’).²⁰⁹ Another Tijani scholar, who joined the movement during the visit and was nominated as *muqaddam*, was Abdallah Mai Kano from Prang, who later became the spiritual leader of the Tijaniyya in Ghana from the 1970s to his death in 2003.²¹⁰ As a result, Ibrahima Niassé’s visit to Tamale and Yendi sparked off the spread of the Tijaniyya and Islam not only among the Dagbamba but among other groups as well. According to Ibrahima Niassé’s testimony, he was visited by Hausa, Djerma, Dagomba, Yoruba, Mossi, Wangara, Mamprusi, Kotokoli, Fra-Fra, Gonja, Gurma, Fulani, Busaga, Wala, Gurunsi, Lobi and Borgu.²¹¹ Hiskett, on the other hand, argues that Niassé’s influence was strongest among the Hausa community and most members of his *Jamā’at al-fayda* or the ‘Community of Grace’ were Hausa from the North, and the most influential Ghanaian *muqaddam*, Malam Mai Kano, was of Hausa origin.²¹²

However, not all Tijani were impressed by Ibrahima Niassé and his movement, the Niassene branch of the Tijaniyya.²¹³ In Wa, where the Tijaniyya had gained

of prayers that members of a Sufi order recite.

²⁰⁹ Hiskett 1980, 107. Within a Sufi framework, a *muqaddam* is a person who is authorized to initiate others into a Sufi order.

²¹⁰ Seesemann 2004, 511 fn 114.

²¹¹ *Ar-Rihla al-Kannāriyya wa-l-Kumāsiyya*, quoted in Seesemann 2004.

²¹² Hiskett 1980, 102, 110–111; Seesemann 2004, 510–512.

²¹³ Apart from the Tijani community in Wa and Wenchi, Ibrahima Niass was generally recognized

a strong foothold among some leading families of Muslim scholars, Wa Imam Muhammad b. ‘Uthman Dun and his sons were to dominate the Tijani community. Both of Wa Imam Muhammad’s sons, Alhaji Malik and Alhaji Sa’ad declared to Charles Stewart in the 1960s that their community did not follow the teachings of Ibrahima Niassa which they denounced as “corrupt,”²¹⁴ and Mervyn Hiskett noted in his study that the Mande/Juula Tijani scholars in general declined to join the ‘Community of Grace’.²¹⁵

The local British authorities did not perceive the spectacular advance of Islam in Dagbon during and immediately after Ibrahima Niassa’s visit as a problem. Others, however, were concerned about what was going on. The French colonial authorities were known by the British for their notorious fear of politically active Muslims and were thus suspicious not only of Ibrahima Niassa’s activities and the spread of his network and influence in West Africa but also of the Ahmadiyya. Consequently, the French authorities sent off M. Mangin to make enquiries in the Gold Coast and Nigeria about the status quo of Islam and Muslims in these two British colonies. Mangin, who made his trip during February and March 1952, was rather critical about the lax attitude of the British authorities in the Gold Coast and later told the British Consulate-General in Dakar, D.G. Pirie, that he did not meet anyone there whom he considered as having a sufficient interest in Muslim affairs.²¹⁶ Pirie, too, criticized his colleagues in Accra for being too busy drawing up a new constitution but also recognized that they were understaffed. Muslim affairs, it seemed to both Mangin and Pirie, were not an issue:

I wrote to the Ministry of Defence and External Affairs, Accra, on the 5th June asking for certain information about an eminent Marabout from Senegal who had been visiting the Gold Coast, and have not yet received a reply in spite of a reminder sent on the 19th August. There are in the eyes of that administration more important issues than those of Muslim affairs, especially when these do not seriously involve Anglo-French relations and provided these are not going to involve a fresh threat to law and order as in December 1951.²¹⁷

Similar critical remarks about the disinterest of the local British authorities were made by W.H. Ingrams at the Colonial Office in London, who complained that “... in the Gold Coast I never met one who had more than the vaguest knowledge of the subject and to my knowledge the Gold Coast has never taken any interest in Islam,” and further stated that “British ignorance of what is possible in Islam plus

as the spiritual leader of the Tijanis (Stewart 1965, 44).

²¹⁴ Stewart 1965, 38, 51.

²¹⁵ Hiskett 1980, 107.

²¹⁶ TNA CO 554/746, Reports on Moslem problems in the Gold Coast, No 3.: Letter from D.G. Pirie, British Consulate-General in Dakar to W.N. Hillier-Fry, African Department, Foreign Office, 24.9.1952.

²¹⁷ TNA CO 554/746, Reports on Moslem problems in the Gold Coast, No 3.: Letter from D.G. Pirie, British Consulate-General in Dakar to W.N. Hillier-Fry, African Department, Foreign Office, 24.9.1952.

too literally applied indirect rule have resulted in crystallizing Islamic institutions in West Africa and protecting them from evolutionary changes.²¹⁸

Pirie's reference to the troubles in December 1951 referred to the clash between the Ahmadiyya and Sunni Muslims in Wa. As stated above, Mangin and the French in general were worried about the expansion of the Ahmadiyya in West Africa. In contrast to British policies, the French policy in French West Africa was to look for support from the Sunni Muslims and the advance of the Ahmadiyya was not welcomed at all. On the contrary, from a French perspective, there was an obvious danger of political unrest and religious turmoil if the Ahmadiyya would to spread unhindered and unchecked.²¹⁹ Even worse (from a French perspective), there were already some 30,000 Ahmadis on the Gold Coast, the movement was spreading and, worst of all, was in the hands of Pakistanis.²²⁰ The development of the schism in Wa had therefore been closely watched by the French. By the early 1950s, it was reported that the Ahmadiyya had started to send missionaries to the Upper Volta.²²¹ At the same time, the December 1951 riot occurred, which resulted in 30 injured taken to hospital.

4.3. Muslims and Politics

The 1951 riots in Wa opened the eyes of the political authorities to a new development within the Muslim community, namely the combination of politics and religion. As Wilks highlights, when the Gold Coast was preparing for elections in 1951, party affiliation in Wa went along doctrinal lines. Wa Na Mumuni Koray, who was an Ahmadi and had been elected to the Legislative Assembly in 1951, tended to embrace the politics of the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC). In reaction to this, the Sunni families aligned themselves with Nkrumah's Convention Peoples Party (CPP). In June 1951, while Mumuni Koray was attending to his duties in the Legislative Assembly in Accra, Wa Imam Muhammad Saghīr died. The Sunni '*ulama*' quickly filled the vacancy and made Alhaji Sa'id Soribo, Friday Imam and Tijānī *muqaddam*, the new Wa Imam. Mumuni Koray, however, refused to recognize the election and instead appointed Alhaji Salih, the Ahmadi Imam, as Wa Imam. Tension increased again in Wa. On the 11th of December 1951, the situation exploded. Speakers at a CPP rally were challenged by an Ahmadi and two days of

²¹⁸ TNA CO 554/746, Reports on Moslem problems in the Gold Coast, Minutes: Remarks by W.H. Ingrams, 2.12.1952.

²¹⁹ TNA CO 554/745, Activities of the Moslem Community in West Africa, extract from Summary Record of Anglo-French talks 22/3 + 23/3, 1953.

²²⁰ TNA CO 554/746, Reports on Moslem problems in the Gold Coast: Synopsis of M. Mangin's report (1952).

²²¹ TNA CO 554/746, Reports on Moslem problems in the Gold Coast, No 3.: Letter from D.G. Pirie, British Consulate-General in Dakar to W.N. Hillier-Fry, African Department, Foreign Office, 24.9.1952.

rioting followed. The DC and the police tried to intervene without much success at first. The Wa Na mobilized his warriors and further fighting occurred. Only with the arrival of armed reinforcements from Tamale was order finally restored. Despite the intervention of the CPP representatives as well as the colonial authorities, the situation in Wa remained tense.²²²

Despite the involvement of the Ahmadiyya in the tensions in Wa, the British authorities – in contrast to the French – still regarded the sect as relatively harmless and pro-European. According to Major Burdon, the Chief Regional Officer in the Northern Territories in the early 1950s, French fears as regards the importance of the Ahmadiyya in the Gold Coast were exaggerated. More importantly, he regarded the activities of the Ahmadiyya as having very little political or constitutional significance, but saw it mainly as an “opposition sect to the orthodox Muslims.”²²³ In fact, Islam in itself was even regarded as a positive force to be utilized by the British in their task of ‘nation building’ in Africa, or as Ingrams noted:

Quite accidentally our view of what colonial aims should be fits much better with Islamic ideas. Islam provides a religious basis for nationalism, cuts across racial barriers (even though it leaves the Arabs as the noblest of races) and endows those who adopt it with a whole culture often very suitable to their needs. Since our policy is nation building it is far more in accord with Islamic ideas than the French and so, of course, the respect we have always accorded to Islamic religion, law and custom gains greater confidence for us than it would if we were trying to turn them into British.²²⁴

In Ingrams’ view, there was nothing wrong with the Ahmadiyya either— termed by him as a modern, heretical sect and organized as a Muslim mission order on Western lines.

Following such rather positive perceptions about Islam and Muslim activities, one is not surprised that some British officials were rather sympathetic towards politically active Muslims, especially when they tried to establish an opposition to Nkrumah’s party in the Colony and in Ashanti. This was the case at the end of 1953 when Muslims in Kumasi – mainly Hausas and other ‘foreigners’ – joined their efforts with the *zongo* Muslims in Accra and transformed the Gold Coast Muslim Association (GCMA) into the Muslim Association Party, MAP.²²⁵ Officials at the Colonial Office notified the political debate in the Gold Coast, but soon realized that the MAP would not be able to challenge the dominance of the CPP. For a while there was a heated debate in Accra in 1953, where Muslims were either urged to

²²² Wilks 1989, 187–188.

²²³ TNA CO 554/746, Reports on Moslem problems in the Gold Coast, No 13.: Note by T.B. Williamson, 4.6.1953.

²²⁴ TNA CO 554/746, Reports on Moslem problems in the Gold Coast, Minutes: Remarks by W.H. Ingrams, 2.12.1952.

²²⁵ The roots of the Muslim Association Party reach back to 1932 and the foundation of the first modern Muslim association in the Gold Coast, the Gold Coast Muslim Association (GCMA). Its founders and a majority of its members were migrant (‘alien’) Muslim settlers in the Colony; its emphasis was on social and educational issues. See further Chapter VI.

back MAP candidates or not to mix religion with party politics.²²⁶ The Gold Coast Muslim Association further blamed the CPP for having failed the Muslims and called upon all Muslims in the CPP to surrender their membership cards whereas the Imam of Accra declared that any Muslim who did not vote for a Muslim candidate could not be considered faithful.²²⁷ However, at least in the Colony, the MAP had little success, and some CO-officials doubted its overall impact:

In the Gold Coast the Moslem Association has achieved prominence largely because of the tactlessness of the CPP. But it is doubtful whether it can become anything like an effective opposition, particularly as so many of its leading members are Nigerians. In neither territory have we any cause to fear subversive Islamic movements fostered from outside. From my point of view therefore there does not arise any general problem on which at the moment it would seem necessary to give advice to the Governors of the Gold Coast and the Gambia.²²⁸

Another report was even more sceptical about the efficiency of the MAP. The report commented on the “noticeable” trend towards a raised political consciousness among Muslims in the Gold Coast, but argued that most issues that had been debated so far had been purely local in character. However, the report concluded that

Nevertheless there is a definite suggestion that Moslem interests, which have close connections with Nigeria and are often led by Nigerians, have received less than their proper share of attention from the CPP. The difficulties spring as much from the fact that many Moslems come from Nigeria and from a ‘foreign’ community as from religious differences.²²⁹

The only region where politics and religion were to become a hot issue was Ashanti. The Muslim community in Kumasi was comprised of two different segments, the stranger community in the ‘Mohammedan quarter’ or *zongo*, on the one hand, and the Asante Muslims or *Asante Nkramo*, i.e., local Asante Muslims and those from the Asante hinterland on the other. In fact, as Allman notes, although Islam did not bridge the gap between *zongo* Muslims and *Asante Nkramo* in Accra, it constituted a powerful homogenizing force within the *zongo* itself. During the 1950s, the distinction between *Asante Nkramo* and the *zongo* Muslims was also articulated in political terms as the former were ardent supporters of the CPP whereas the latter formed the Muslim Association Party.²³⁰ However, the establishment of the MAP did not lead to a unification of Muslim voters behind a single religious party. On the contrary, the CPP had formed an organisation known as the Muslim Youth

²²⁶ TNA CO 554/746, Reports on Moslem problems in the Gold Coast, No. 18: Extract from the West African Press Survey No 196, 1.9.1953 – *Daily Echo* 18.8.1953, *Daily Graphic* 22.8.1953.

²²⁷ TNA CO 554/746, Reports on Moslem problems in the Gold Coast, No. 18: Extract from the West African Press Survey No 196, 1.9.1953 – Accra Press.

²²⁸ TNA CO 554/1317, Moslem Problems in Africa: Minutes by R.J. Vile (7.4.1954).

²²⁹ TNA CO 554/1317, Moslem Problems in Africa. No 1.: Confidential. Moslem Problems in British African Territories (1954), Appendix A.

²³⁰ Allman 1991, 4.

Association (MYA).²³¹ In effect, the Muslim community of Kumasi was split – Muslims, who were members of the CPP would not attend the same mosque as those belonging to the MAP.²³²

In the Northern Territories, on the other hand, there was little politicization of the Muslims. Apart from the split in Wa, politics and religion were generally not mixed. The educated elite, who in most cases were active in politics, were Western-educated. In fact, the disengagement of the Muslim leaders from politics was appalling. However, one might argue that the Muslim leaders, and especially the Muslim scholars, were maintaining the division between the colonial (political-public) ‘sphere’ and the Muslim (religious-private) ‘sphere’. Therefore, the criticism of colonial rule, the emergence of political parties and the formation of the Northern Territorial Council were not Muslim affairs per se. Instead, it was the new Northern Western-educated elite, consisting mostly of teachers, who formed a small association in Tamale to promote Northern interests as early as 1936 – however, without much success.²³³

After the Second World War, British as well as local political strategies changed. The British authorities started to promote the political integration of the Northern Territories into the Gold Coast and therefore established a consultative body, the Northern Territorial Council (NTC), as a non-statutory body in 1946. According to Brukum, the aim of the NTC was partly to provide a vehicle for the advancement of educated chiefs and commoners. In principle, however, the body mainly consisted of the heads of the Native Authorities, thus making the NTC, in effect, a ‘council of the chiefs’ or at least the mouthpiece of the traditional leaders and rulers. Consequently, religious affiliation was not of any importance or even an issue.²³⁴

Soon, however, the NTC was dragged into nationalist politics. In focus was the question of a new constitution for the Gold Coast. Selected members of the NTC were to be included in the Coussey Committee which was to study and to make recommendations on the Watson Commission.²³⁵ At that time, the main issue at stake was the question of the constitutional future of the Gold Coast and the Colony, especially, was driving for self-government. The key issue in the North was the integration of the Northern Territories with the Colony and Ashanti. At the end of the 1940s, it was already evident that the NTC was in opposition to the nationalist politicians of the Colony, mainly Nkrumah and his call for immediate

²³¹ Schildkrout 1970, 384–385. See further Chapter VI.

²³² TNA CO 554/1317, Moslem Problems in Africa. No 7.: Brief and Secret. Anglo-French Ministerial Discussions: Muslim Problems in British West African Territories (1954), Appendix B.

²³³ Brukum 1998a, 18–19.

²³⁴ Brukum 1998a, 19.

²³⁵ The Watson Commission of 1948 was to make an inquiry into the effects of the 1946 Burns’ Constitution and especially to investigate the disturbances in February 1948. The Coussey Committee was given the task of preparing a new constitution for the country in 1949. See further Boahen 2000 [1975], 163–164.

self-government. The main argument of the NTC was that the North was not ripe for self-government due to the political, economic, social and educational backwardness of the territory. However, their voices were not heard. Nor was any account taken by the Legislative Assembly in Accra of their memorandum of 1953, calling for economic development before constitutional advance. The dissatisfaction of the Northern members of the Legislative Assembly reached its peak when its leading member, J.A. Braimah, had to resign over a bribery case, the government failure to extend the railway to the North, and the decision of the CPP to field candidates in the North for the impending 1954 elections. As a consequence, the Northern elite, backed by the NTC, decided in April 1954 to form the Northern People's Party (NPP) and to contest the elections.²³⁶

The NPP emerged as a regional party. It was not a religious party, but had close links with the NTC and was strongly backed by the Nayiri. Not surprisingly, therefore, the NPP had its strongest base in Mampurugu. In Gonja, Dagbon and Wa, however, the situation was much less clear. In Wa, the Ahmadiyya supported the NPP candidate, the Sunni leadership the CPP. In Gonja, the Yagbumwura was moderately pro-CPP, whereas in Dagbon, the Tolon Na was a NPP candidate. The outcome of the 1954 elections reflected the split. Tolon Na Yakubu Tali, who had close connections with Ya Na Abdulai III (ruled 1954–1967), won the seat of Dagomba West and J.A. Braimah, another NPP-leader, won the election in Salaga (Gonja East). The CPP, however, was able to win the seats in Dagomba East (J.H. Alhassan) and Gonja West (E.A. Mahama). In Mamprusi and Wa Districts, the NPP candidates won. All-in-all, the NPP won twelve out of twenty-six seats allocated to the North, and established itself as the largest party in the region.²³⁷

The major ally of the NPP in the North was the MAP. In fact, the close relationship between the two parties was highlighted by the fact that the NPP did not contest the elections in Tamale where the MAP was making the race and its candidate, Alhaji Osumanu, eventually won the seat. However, as Ladouceur underlines, Islam as such was not an issue during the election. The strength of the Muslim party lay among the Muslim immigrant communities, the *zongos*, but the MAP was not able to attract many indigenous Muslim voters.²³⁸ In fact, as the MAP did not win any seats in Ashanti or the Colony, Alhaji Osumanu turned out to be the only member of the MAP in the Legislative Assembly.

The NPP found itself – unexpectedly – to be the largest opposition party in the Legislative Assembly as its major allies, the MAP and the Ghana Congress Party, only won a few seats. The position of the CPP was further enhanced with the formation of the National Liberation Movement (NLM), which was established

²³⁶ Brukum 1998a, 20–23.

²³⁷ Ladouceur 1979, 119. In the 1954 elections, the NPP won 12 seats, the CPP 7 seats, the MAP one seat and the independent candidates, who mostly sided with the NPP, won 6 seats.

²³⁸ Ladouceur 1979, 117.

in September 1954 as an Asante nationalist movement. What followed in Ashanti were violent clashes between the NLM and the CPP. However, although for a while during the mid-1950s it looked as if Nkrumah and the CPP would lose the race, the outcome of the 1956 elections was a landslide victory for Nkrumah. The CPP won 71 seats, the NLM only twelve seats (all in Ashanti), the NPP fifteen seats (all in the North). The main weakness of the two opposition parties was that they were regional parties. After the election, the various opposition parties, the NLM, the NPP, the MAP, the Togoland Congress and the Anlo Youth Organisation and the Ga Shifimo Kpee, decided to fuse and establish a united front against the CPP. The outcome was the United Party, which was established in 1957.²³⁹

As stated above, religion played little, if any, role in politics in the North during the 1940s and 1950s. Perhaps due to the alliance between the MAP and the NPP, the Muslim factor was never an issue in the North. In theory, at least in the kingdoms, Islam could have been used by the politicians as a unifying factor. However, compared with the situation in the *zongos* of Kumasi or Accra, the Muslims themselves did not constitute a homogeneous group. Although the MAP tried to establish itself in the North, it had to take into consideration the position of the NTC, the Native Authorities and the position of the various Muslim groups within Northern society. Therefore, the MAP remained a '*zongo*' party whereas the NPP emerged as the political wing of the NTC and the Native Authorities.

Party politics and the nationalistic movement were part of the public sphere. As during the precolonial and the colonial period, the public sphere had been and was controlled by others, not the Muslim scholars or the Muslim leaders. Even more important was the fact that the public sphere increasingly became the battlefield between the 'traditionalists', the chiefs and the NPP, and the 'modernizers', the CPP. The crucial question was the takeover of the colonial state: would the Native Authorities gain a similar position as they held in the colonial state? As long as the tug of war concerned political influence, religion mattered little. The key issue in the North was the fear of becoming (or remaining) a cheap labour reserve, a un- or underdeveloped backyard and an economic and political periphery. In the rhetoric of the NPP, one can clearly hear 'the threat of the South', but the 'South' was never presented as a Christian threat. Indeed, one could claim that the NPP could not and would not engage in religious rhetoric: in several regions, especially in what was to become the Upper Region, Christianity had made progress and had emerged as a new identity marker for some groups. Islam, therefore, could not be used by the NPP as a unifying factor.

For the Muslims, too, it seems as if politics in the North during the 1940s and 1950s was not to be combined with religion. Individual Muslims could be active in any party – the NPP, the MAP or the CPP. The argument of Wilks and others,

²³⁹ Ladouceur 1979, 143–144, 164; Brukum 1998a, 25–26; Boahen 2000, 186–188. See further Chapter VI.

that the choice of political affiliation was a way for individuals to signal whatever dissatisfaction, is evident. In Wa, the Ahmadiyya could not back the CPP as the Sunni leadership had decided to give their support to the CPP. In Dagbon and Gonja, those who criticized the support of the NPP by some chiefs would vote for the CPP and vice versa. However, as long as political decisions were made by the chiefs and the representatives of the government – either the colonial authorities or their postcolonial successors – religion was a private matter. Only if there was a threat that might put in question the well-developed and working relationship between the political authorities and the Muslim scholars or if the relative autonomous position of the Muslim sphere was jeopardized, one could argue that the religious factor may have become politicized. In the end, however, this never happened. Although the MAP was more or less erased by the CPP and the 1957 Deportation Act, Nkrumah himself was eager to present Islam as a positive, ‘non-alien’ factor. His public appearances with Ibrahima Niassé gave at least in public the impression that the Niassé branch of the Tijaniyya had his backing or, even more spectacularly, that he had close connections with Niassé and that particular Sufi Order.²⁴⁰ However, this development took place during the postcolonial period, which will be covered in the next chapter.

5. CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

The establishment of British colonial rule in the Gold Coast and its hinterland at the end of the nineteenth century did not change many of the prevailing conditions that regulated the relationship between the *zongo* communities and the outside society. In fact, the Muslim leadership was quick to align themselves with the new rulers and were in most cases able to achieve a similar internal autonomy for their communities as that which had previously existed – apart from the fact that Islamic Law was no longer applied. The autonomy of the Muslim community was further strengthened by the colonial state when it legalized Muslim marriages through the Mohammedan Marriage Ordinance (which is more or less still in use in contemporary Ghana).

British colonial rule set the course for the relationship between Muslims and the state and vice versa. While the guiding principle of the colonial authorities was that if the Muslim community did not challenge the colonial order, its internal autonomy would not be challenged, the general principle of the Muslim political and

²⁴⁰ An interesting question, which I have not been able to follow up further, is the triangular relationship among Nkrumah/the CPP, the Ya Na and Ibrahima Niassé. In 1952, Ya Na Mahama III was among those who invited Ibrahima Niassé to come to Tamale. I do not know whether or not the Ya Na joined the Niassé branch of the Tijaniyya. However, his follower, Ya Na Abdulai III, at least indirectly supported the NPP in 1954. What was his relationship to the *faida*? At least in Kumasi, the two key MAP-activists were *sarkin zongo* Ahmad Baba and Imam Muhammad Ciroma who also were close associates with Ibrahima Niassé (Allman, 1991, 9; Seesemann 2004, 517–518).

religious leadership was the continuation of accommodation. However, there was a clear difference in the perspective of both parties. While the colonial authorities increasingly started to regard the Muslim minority as having a marginal societal influence and impact and did not attempt to integrate them into the colonial order, the Muslim community at large pursued a policy of preventing the Westernization of its members. This was most evident in the case of education. Whereas the colonial state slowly, but gradually, created a modern, Western educational system throughout the colony, in part run by the colonial state, in part by Christian missionary societies, Muslim leaders regarded Western education as a threat to their Muslim identity. As a consequence, Muslim parents, both in the North and in the South of the colony, only in rare cases sent their children to get a Western education. Instead, Muslim children continued to be sent to the *makarantas* or Quran schools, with the result that although the Muslim sphere was kept intact, Muslim individuals were increasingly marginalized in the colonial society as neither the state nor the modern, Westernized society had any need for their services or skills. But this was not a major issue for the British colonial administration as Islam in the Gold Coast was not perceived as a fundamental problem. When asked by the French colonial authorities in West Africa to keep an eye on the Muslims in the mid-1950s, the British authorities replied that “there existed no Islamic problem” in the colony²⁴¹.

Apart from the situation in Northern Nigeria, where the British colonial authorities closely monitored internal religious developments, the rest of British West



Plate 18. A Muslim scholar and his library: Shaykh Baba Abdallah Duah, District Chairman of the Islamic Council and operator of Anwar Duah Islamic school, Tamale, 2000; photo: HW.

²⁴¹ TNA CO 554/1317 Moslem Problems in Africa, Minutes by R.J. Vile (7.4.1954).

Africa was regarded as ‘unproblematic’. When commenting upon an investigation into the impact of Islam on Tropical Africa by the Africa Section of the Colonial Office, M.G. Smith echoed earlier claims that, apart from in Northern Nigeria, Islam would not play an important political role. This was mainly due to the fact that only in Northern Nigeria was there a Muslim ruling class whereas elsewhere in British West Africa there was no such political development nor had there emerged an consciously Islamic community. Smith was not impressed by the possibilities of a large-scale Islamization of West Africa or the potentials of Islam for being a force for modernization and societal development:

The African may gain membership of a world club by accepting Islam, but it is a very insufficient and ill-educated club which speaks of the past glories of Arabic sciences and philosophy, but has no present technical advantages to offer.²⁴²

Therefore, Islamization, in his view, was not a solution for the Africans, especially if it rested on traditional forms of knowledge and was introduced by Muslims who had been trained (‘indoctrinated’) in North Africa or the Middle East. Instead, Smith encouraged the Westernization of the Muslim educational system: “The answer to El Azhar is not a British university ... but an Islamic institution like the Kano school.”²⁴³ Thus, what Smith propagated for (but, in the end, was never applied) was a reformulation of British colonial educational policies with regard to Muslim education. Instead of having it outside the ‘colonial sphere’, i.e., outside the control and direction of the political authorities, this section of the ‘Muslim sphere’ should come under closer surveillance, if not being actually integrated into the ‘colonial sphere’. However, even the actual revised CO-report (ca. 1959) did not regard the situation in West Africa as signalling any alarm: the potential for the spread of radical forms of Islam from North Africa into Northern Nigeria were believed to be limited as long as the emirs and the Muslim leadership were believed to be conservative. The rest of West Africa was even less likely to succumb to radical Islam, it was believed, though the close relation between Nkrumah in Ghana and Nasser in Egypt was viewed with some anxiety.²⁴⁴ However, a few years later, much had changed in West Africa, not least the departure of the former colonial masters. Whatever policies that were to be applied to the Muslims had to be redefined by the postcolonial state and its political authorities. The question at independence, not least in Ghana, was: how was the relationship between the Muslims and the postcolonial state to be negotiated?

²⁴² TNA CO 847/71, The Impact of Islam on Tropical Africa, Minute 1. by M.G. Smith, 25.11.1958.

²⁴³ TNA CO 847/71, The Impact of Islam on Tropical Africa, Minute 1. by M.G. Smith, 25.11.1958.

²⁴⁴ TNA CO 847/71, (Report on) The Impact of Islam on Tropical Africa. Second Revision (ca. 1959).

