PART III

MUSLIM POLITICAL AND SOCIETAL ACTIVITIES IN THE CONTEMPORARY ERA

CHAPTER SIX:
MUSLIMS AND POLITICS: MARGINALIZATION OR VISIBILITY?

For much of the twentieth century, Islam and Muslims made few headlines in the British colonial as well as in the independent Ghanaian state. Thus, from the perspective of both the colonial as well as the postcolonial state, the Muslims in Ghana represented a relatively easy and quiet minority, having little political influence and an even smaller economic impact on the national level.

However, as will be argued in this chapter, the picture of a relatively humble minority is but one side of the coin. Beneath the surface and within the Muslim community in Ghana, there is a vibrant discussion about the position of and the challenges facing the Muslims in Ghana. On the other hand, tensions between various Muslim communities and demarcations have time and again erupted and led to bloodshed and made headlines in the national newspapers. Whereas the Muslim minority in Ghana perceives and portrays itself as a marginalized minority, non-Muslim observers are increasingly worried about the potential for a radicalization of Muslims. The central issue at stake is whether the Muslim communities regard the modern, secular state as a positive factor and identify themselves as citizens of that state or if this state is dismissed as an anomaly or alien/un-Islamic element with which a 'true' believer should interact as little as possible, if at all. Both projections are possible, though it is unclear, and highly speculative, whether or not one can identify a growing politicization of Islam in contemporary Ghana.

The changing position of the Muslim minority in the postcolonial state also reflects the changes in the political and economic conditions in society. First, there was the new role of the state and the central government as the agent of social and economic change. Whereas the economic and political activities of the colonial state at large can be labelled patriarchal, the Nkrumahist state especially tried to enforce its vision of economic and societal modernization. Subsequent regimes, both military and civilian, oscillated between minimal and maximal state domination of the political and economic spheres of society. As the state was the key political and economic actor in Ghana, the question was who would control the state and its apparatus? In this respect, the societal division between a relatively wealthy and modernized South and a backward North proved unfortunate not only for Northerners at large but also for the Muslim minority both in the North and in the South. The colonial roots of the North-South cleavage were and continue to be hard to be overcome in contemporary Ghana.

Second, while the North has remained the 'underdeveloped' backyard of contemporary Ghana, the shift from a colonial to a postcolonial perspective even further

highlighted the 'alien' position of the Muslim minority in the country. Whereas the colonial authorities had a rather regional perspective, namely one which, when appropriate, would take into account the Muslim communities and even approach them and their leadership, as was especially the case in the kingdoms in the Northern Territories, the perspective of postcolonial governments was a different one. Their perspective was Accra-centred, which meant that the Muslim communities in Ghana had both to form new alliances and to renegotiate their distinctive religious, cultural and political space, i.e., the potentially autonomous 'Muslim sphere', with the new authorities. Thus, whereas Islam had spread throughout the country, the visibility of Muslims in the eyes of the political authorities diminished. This was accentuated by the Accra-centeredness of politics; the old centres of Muslim activities in the North, such as Salaga, Gambaga or Kintampo, diminished lost in importance and new centres, especially Accra, emerged as the new focal points for the Ghanaian Muslim community.

1. FROM COLONIAL GOLD COAST TO POSTCOLONIAL GHANA

The Gold Coast was the first sub-Saharan African colony to gain its political independence the 6th of March 1957. Anti-colonial agitation, which had gathered momentum after World War II, culminated in the transformation from a British controlled colonial state to an African postcolonial state, with all the ups and downs that were to follow during the next decades. Many of the problems that the Nkrumah government tried to tackle were the result of the political and economic structures that had been laid down during the colonial period whereas others were caused by the actions of postcolonial civil and military rulers. As a result, Ghana was to witness a long period of political instability and economic chaos, especially during the 1960s and 1970s. However, since the 1980s, Ghana has slowly recovered, regaining at least relative political and economic stability in the 1990s. The presidential elections in both 2000 and 2004 marked the transition of Ghana into a mature democracy.[1]

Having gained its independence, Ghana was first ruled by a civilian regime, the CPP (Convention Peoples' Party) government under the leadership of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah. Nkrumah and the CPP had in fact already been in power during the late colonial era; the CPP had won all elections during the 1950s (1951, 1954 and 1956) and Nkrumah had headed the then Gold Coast government since 1951. His administration replaced a British colonial government but was built upon British colonial political and economic structures.[2]

Anti-colonial agitation and the struggle for independence was basically a southern affair. This fact clearly reflected the political and economic conditions of the colonial state: politically, what was to become Ghana consisted of one colony,

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[1] For an overview, see Boahen 2000 [1975]; Buah 1998; Leith and Söderling 2003.
[2] Apter 1955, 133; Austin 1966, 30. See also Rathbone 2000, and Tsikata and Seini 2004, 15–17.

the Gold Coast, and two protectorates, Ashanti and the Northern Territories, in addition to the British administered portion of the Trust Territory of Togoland in the east. All the entities were part of the British Empire, headed by the ruler in London and his/her representative, the Governor General in Accra. The transformation from three entities of an empire to a modern nation-state, however, proved more difficult as the three entities all had different political histories and disparate administrative and bureaucratic traditions. As if the political conditions were not challenging enough, the economic situation at the eve of independence was that of a relatively wealthy South in contrast to an economically backward and underdeveloped, if not non-developed, North.

Internally, colonial economic policies and politics had a dual structure. It is clear that this dual structure, marked by a dynamic modern export sector in the South and an underdeveloped subsistence sector in the North that also served as a labour reserve for the modern sector, were at the root of the North-South cleavage and other patterns of inequalities in postcolonial contemporary Ghana. The forest zone, which comprised the Colony and much of Ashanti, received the attention from the colonial government, especially in terms of investment.[3]

The centre of the colonial economy was located in the 'golden triangle' bounded by Accra in the Southeast, Takoradi in the Southwest and Kumasi in the heart of the middle forest belt. The main export commodities, such as cocoa, timber, gold and other minerals, were produced in this area, and it was opened up and linked to the Atlantic World Economy through a dense network of railway tracts and roads as well as the construction of two modern deepwater ports, Takoradi and Tema. Social services were developed in this area, including a modern (Western-based) education system.[4] In the coastal societies, there existed an old, Western-oriented African middle-class who, though losing much of their economic position due to the economic depression during the latter part of the nineteenth century, were to develop a marked sense of political self-esteem. They first challenged the British colonial authorities on issues of landownership at the end of the nineteenth century, which led to the formation of the Aboriginal Rights Protection Society. Leading intellectuals such as John Mensah Sarbah (1864–1910) and J.E. Casely Hayford (1866–1930) protested against colonial chauvinism and claimed their right to participate in the colonial legislative assemblies and executive councils.[5] It was also in the Colony that political anti-colonial agitation grew up during the 1920s and 1930s, including the founding of the National Congress of British West Africa (NCBWA), the West African Youth League (WAYL), and the West African Students' Union (WASU).[6] Cocoa farmers organized themselves in the Gold Coast Farmers

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[3] Tsikata and Seini 2004, 14. See further subchapter 2.
[4] Oelbaum 2004, 247.
[5] See further Kimble 1963; Boahen 1987, 68–70.
[6] Langley 1973, esp. pp. 163–177, 219–224 (both on the NCBWA), 226–228, 332 (WAYL); Boahen 1987, 82–83. Also Weiss 2007c.

Association, and tried – unsuccessfully – to protest against falling cocoa prices during the 1930s, especially during the severe depression of 1930–1934. Political anti-colonial agitation gained new momentum after WWII with the 1945 Fifth Pan-African Congress held in Manchester, where representatives from the Gold Coast, including Kwame Nkrumah, G. Ashie-Nikoi and Bankole Awooner-Renner, played a leading role.[7] Furthermore, the Gold Coast had suffered economically from supporting the British war effort, and Gold Coast soldiers, who had fought in the name of 'liberty' and 'democracy', were embittered as these same rights were denied them when they returned after the war. Not surprisingly, many realized the moral bankruptcy of colonialism. On the other hand, the successful independence struggles of Ireland, India and Pakistan inspired Gold Coast nationalists.[8]

Colonial economic politics and administrative policies created what Tsikata and Seini label a multi-ethnic cocktail.[9] Mass migrations of different ethnic groups that today constitute Ghana were already a prominent feature of the precolonial period. Intermittent wars of conquest and state formation by groups such as the Asante, Dagbamba or Gbanya resulted in the loss of sovereignty and control over land and other natural resources by those groups without centralized political systems. What followed was the subordination of many groups into tributary relationships under centralized states, resulting, in some areas, in an increased competition over resources whereas other groups became the targets of slave raiders. The establishment of colonial rule, which was justified by some Europeans as their attempt to bring peace and stability,[10] added another dimension to the multi-ethnic cocktail. While certain ethnic groups thrived under colonialism and extended their rule over others, as was the case in the North, others disappeared from official view. Colonial economic policies, especially the promotion of the export sector, further strengthened the multi-ethnic cocktail. By regarding the North as economically worthless, its only value being its labour force, the region as well as adjacent French territories ended up as the labour pool for the southern export sector. Young males, but later to a large extent also women, annually went to work in the South, but later they settled in the urban and mining centres or at the cocoa plantations in the South.[11]

The role and position of the chiefs, too, changed. The 1904 Chiefs' Ordinance had established the colonial state as the source of the authority of the chiefs, thereby putting an end to the claims of the chiefs about their traditional powers. The Native Administration system introduced by the colonial authorities during the 1930s

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[7] Padmore 1956, 162–166; Austin 1966, 10; Langley 1973, 353–356.
[8] See further Austin 1966, 55–60; Boahen 1987, 92. Austin, among others, further highlights the internal causes, especially the discontent among the young, educated middle-class as well as economic unrest and discontent among the cocoa farmers in the South.
[9] Tsikata and Seini 2004, 13.
[10] Armitage 1913.
[11] See further Brukum 1998b. The classical study on labour migration in the Gold Coast/Ghana is Hill 1997 [1963].

effectively underlined the fact that the authority of the chiefs no longer derived from the consent of the ruled but from the ordinances passed by the colonial legislative councils. Whereas the chiefs had the power in precolonial societies, whether in the coastal societies, in Asante or in the kingdoms in the North, their religious, social, economic and political positions came under attack during the colonial and early postcolonial periods. The chiefs' primary duties had been the maintenance of peaceful relations within their communities through the settlement of disputes, defence against external aggressors, and performance of religious rituals in order to ensure the welfare of their people, including good health, a plentiful harvest and the fertility of the members of society. Christian converts, however, increasingly questioned the spiritual role of the chiefs and refused to participate in the rituals because they regarded them as 'idolatrous'. Politically and administratively, the chiefs were made part of the colonial administrative setup as minor partners, their roles being the day to day control and taxation of their subjects.[12] The chiefs were under the surveillance of the colonial state, and chiefs who were regarded as potential threats, such as the Asantehene, were removed and expelled.[13] In other regions, the colonial state 'invented' chiefdoms, as was the case among the so-called chiefless or stateless societies in the Northern Territories.[14]

Whatever type of administration the British authorities had decided upon, the Native Authorities were increasingly regarded by the younger generation of African nationalists as the tools of the colonial authorities. However, the chiefs were backed by the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC), which was, before the breakaway of Nkrumah in 1949, the main political force in the Gold Coast. Class and status became the cleavages along which society was divided during the independence struggle, whereas ethnicity only played a minor role. The two main parties, the UGCC and the Convention People's Party (CPP),[15] were seen as representing two broad streams of society, the former being mainly the elite sections of society, the latter having its largest constituency among young school-leavers and the non-elite section of society, the so-called Veranda Boys. However, at least during the 1950s, ethno-regional parties, such as the National Liberation Movement (NLM), led by Dr. Kofi Abrafa Busia and based in the Ashanti Region,[16] as well as the Northern

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[12] Rathbone 2000, 10–18; Brempong 2001, 2–4.

[13] Kimble 1963, chapter XII; Sowatey 2005.

[14] See further Chapter VI.1.4.

[15] The UGCC had been founded in 1947 by Joseph Danquah and other nationalists. Among its leading members was Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, who led the group's campaign for representative self-government. However, the coastal elite and Asante chiefs, who dominated the UGCC, felt threatened by Nkrumah's radical populism, and when they ousted him in 1949, he founded the Convention People's Party (CPP). The CPP was to develop into the first genuine mass movement, in contrast to the UGCC. See further Austin 1966, 52, 84–85.

[16] The NLM was the successor of the UGCC and was the main opponent to Nkrumah and the CPP during the 1954 election.

People's Party (NPP, see Chapter V.4.3.), which encapsulated Northern nationalism,[17] tried to challenge Nkrumah and the CPP, though without much success. There were two visions of the future, independent state politically at odds: should it be a federal state with regional governments as the NLM and the NPP wanted, or should it be a 'unitary' state, as the CPP advocated?[18] With Nkrumah and the CPP winning both the 1954 and the 1956 elections,[19] and with the Ewe Question solved by vote (the majority of British Togoland residents voted for unification with an independent Gold Coast[20]), the stage for independence and a nonfederalist state were set.

At independence, modern Ghana was a multi-ethnic society and has remained one ever since. Although certain ethnic groups (or 'tribes'[21]) predominate in the five, later ten,[22] regions, none of the regions are ethnically homogeneous.[23] Economically, the first years of independence were marked by the rapid expansion of the state engagement in economic development, and making provisions for the establishment of a modern social welfare state. However, the drop in cocoa prices, the main income-earning commodity, during the early 1960s, undermined the financial viability of Nkrumah's ambitious programmes and by the mid-1960s Ghana's debt threatened its financial stability and living standards declined.[24] Politically, Nkrumah moved to suppress opposition and to strengthen the unitary state. Shortly after independence, the Avoidance of Discrimination Act (1957) banned all regional and religious parties.[25] Another political act, the Deportation Act (1957), was aimed at removing from the country aliens found to be offering support and financial assistance to those opposed to the government.[26] To counteract Nkrumah's

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[17]　The UGCC made an attempt to establish itself in the North at the end of the 1940s, but without much success. See further Saaka 1987, 10.

[18]　Oelbaum 2004, 258.

[19]　The CPP gained 79 out of 104 seats in the 1954 election and 71 out of 104 in the 1956 election. For details, see Austin 1966.

[20]　On British Togoland nationalism, see Nugent 2002.

[21]　According to Oelbaum (2004, 248), the definition 'ethnic group' does not neatly fit with Ghanaian social formations which is why he prefers to use the problematic word 'tribe' as it describes, following Clapham, "a combination of indigenous cultural patterns, colonial administrative practices and competition for benefits in the modern sector." See further Clapham 1975, Oelbaum's quotation from page 21.

[22]　After independence, Ashanti was split into two entities, the Ashanti Region and the Brong-Ahafo Region (1959), whereas the Western and Eastern Regions were broken up and regrouped into the Western, Central (1960), Eastern and Greater Accra Region (1957: Eastern Region South; 1964: Greater Accra). In 1960, the Northern Region was split into two entities, the Northern Region and the Upper Region. In 1983, the Upper Region was further split into the Upper East and the Upper West. See Bening 1999.

[23]　Oelbaum 2004, 245–250.

[24]　Leith and Söderling 2003, 11–23.

[25]　Not only the Nkrumahist state, the so-called First Republic, and the 1960 constitution, but all other civil and military governments as well as the 1969, 1979 and 1992 constitutions had banned the formation of parties along ethnic, religious or regional lines. See further Higazi 2004, 7.

[26]　Rathbone 2000, 103–107, 137. E.g., two influential Muslims and leaders of the Moslem [Muslim] Association Party (MAP) from Kumasi were deported (Austin 1966, 377). See also Chapter V.4.3.

measures, the opposition parties merged to form the United Party (UP), led by Busia and the leader of the NPP, S.D. Dombo. Political tension increased the following year when the government passed the Emergency Power Act and the Preventive Detention Act.[27] In 1960, Nkrumah declared Ghana a republic and won a landslide victory over Dr. J.B. Danquah, the candidate of the UP opposition,[28] in the presidential election. In 1964, Ghana was declared a one-party state under the CPP.[29]

Politically, Nkrumah's aim was to create a strong, centralized state which would promote a Ghanaian national consciousness based on tolerance and respect for all, regardless of their ethnicity. This he wanted to achieve by amalgamating all organizations of the mass movement under the umbrella of the CPP, including the Trade Union Congress, the Farmers' Council, the Youth Organization and the National Council of Ghana Women.[30] One aim with the reforms was to put popular political activity in the forefront on all levels, another to undermine the influence and powerbase of the chiefs.[31] At the same time, Nkrumah regarded himself as the paramount chief among paramount chiefs, adopting the official title of *Osagyefo*, i.e., victor in battle.[32] Powerful chiefs were seen as harmful but indigenous political rituals were seen by him as useful symbols of communication.[33] As will be outlined in the following subchapter, Nkrumah's policies and ideas also had an effect on the relationship between the state and the Muslim community: whereas Muslim leaders either had to obey the political authorities or be expelled, Islam, as a non-Western religion, was regarded as a valuable cultural and ideological asset.[34]

However, the increasing economic mismanagement and the authoritarian political situation eventually led to Nkrumah's fall. In 1966, Nkrumah and his government were overthrown in a coup d'état and a joint military-police junta, the National Liberation Council (NLC), took over. The new regime banned the CPP and abolished its constituent organizations, released political detainees, suspended Nkrumah's major development schemes and proclaimed a market economy. Trade

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[27] The Emergency Power Act gave powers to the government to deal more firmly with the unrest and the disturbances in the country whereas the Preventive Detention Act empowered the government to detain without a court trial, up to a period of five years, any person found or suspected of being engaged in activities detrimental to the security of the nation (Austin 1966, 380–384; Buah 1998, 184).

[28] Busia had left the country as a political refugee.

[29] Austin 1966, 386–391, 413–414; Leith and Söderling 2003, 12.

[30] Austin 1966, 384.

[31] This was mainly achieved through the Local Government Act of 1957 and the Chiefs (Recognition) Bill of 1959 which undermined the authority of the traditional rulers. See further Rathbone 2000, esp. pp 142–146; Brempong 2001; Sowatey 2005, 111.

[32] Okafor 1997, 134. Okafor's translates the title Osagyefo as 'chiefs of chiefs'. According to him, by claiming this title Nkrumah implied that all traditional rulers, even the Asantehene, mostly lost their divine and traditional rights to rule, govern or legislate without Nkrumah's consent. On the issue of chieftaincy in contemporary Ghana, see also Boafo-Arthur 2003.

[33] Rathbone 2000, 148; Brempong 2001, 42.

[34] Pobee 1992; Ryan 1996, 319; Okafor 1997, 137–138.

liberalizations and reductions in taxes won favour among small proprietors and market women, and there was a revival of chieftaincy under the regime. Class and gender, which had been in the focus of politics during the Nkrumah era, were replaced by the relations among the military, civilians and ethnic groups.[35]

A new shift in national politics occurred in 1969, when the NLC junta handed over power to a new civilian government under Dr. Busia. Busia, who had returned from exile to head the Progress Party (PP), won the 1969 election. Backed by a coalition of the Southern elite and Akan chiefs, Busia's government continued the NLC policy of economic conservatism, but his era came to an end in 1972 when the military again took power. At that point, both the political as well as the economic conditions of Ghanaian society were in turmoil, if not in chaos. The country was hard hit by a financial crisis caused by yet another fall of the cocoa price on the world market (1970 and 1971) and the austere, but ineffective measures by the government to counterbalance the situation. Rising commodity prices and the devaluation of the Ghanaian currency did not help nor did cutting government spending. However, such measures gravely hit the Ghanaian citizens, whose assets diminished.[36] When the government even proposed to cut military spending, the officers stepped in. The new military government, known as the National Redemption Council (NRC) and led by Colonel Ignatus Kutu Acheampong, reversed many of the policies of the NLC and the Busia government. Most notably, the NRC nationalized several companies and declared a moratorium on debt payments, which led the International Monetary Fund, IMF, to suspend its credit. For a short while, the NRC enjoyed popularity when rising cocoa prices revived the economy in 1972, but ongoing economic mismanagement, corruption, rising oil prices and a persistent drought in the north soon changed the overall picture. Not surprisingly, Ghana's economic woes only deepened and the economic turmoil continued. Political activities, too, were banned,[37] and Ghana moved increasingly towards being a militarily mismanaged, corrupt authoritarian state. Acheampong's attempt to solve the crisis by transferring power to a new Supreme Military Council (SMC), which excluded his rivals in the NRC, had little effect. The regime then tried to perpetuate itself by proposing a 'Union Government' (Unigov) of military and civilians to replace military rule, but the plan was greeted with strikes by professionals and students, followed by a wave of authoritarian brutality when the police and military put down the strikes. In addition, the ethnic factor re-emerged as a significant political instrument, and by 1977, ethnic forces had been mobilized against the SMC to protest exclusion from

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[35] On Ghana under military rule, see Pinkney 1972.

[36] Leight and Söderling 2003, 24–36.

[37] The NRC banned political activities by the ex-PP and the ex-CPP politicians alike in addition to actively propagating against manifestations of ethnicity in politics and even the state itself. In the latter case, the word 'tribe' was banned from all government documents. The NRC even advocated the elimination of tribal names as surnames and the cessation of the practice of ethnically distinctive facial-marking. See further Chazan 1982, 464–465.

the core of state activities and to articulate dissatisfaction with the regime.[38] At the height of the chaos, the SMC replaced Acheampong with General Akuffo,[39] who appointed a constitutional assembly and scheduled elections for 1979.

On the eve of the 1979 elections, a group of junior officers and men of the Armed Forces stepped into the fray, overthrew the military regime on the 4th of June 1979, and installed itself as the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) with Flt. Lt. Jerry John Rawlings as Chairman. Elections took place as scheduled, while the AFRC purged state offices of corrupt SMC appointees and executed Acheampong and Akuffo as well as NLC-head, General Afrifa. After three months, the ARFC yielded power to a civilian government under Dr. Hilla Limann, who won the presidential election in 1979 and whose party, the Peoples National Party (PNP), which was a Nkrumahist one, had won the majority of seats in the parliament. Though the spectrum of Ghanaian political parties usually included several parties, the bottomline was the tug-of-war between the UGCC/UP (or the so-called Danquah-Busia tradition) and the CPP (or the Nkrumahist tradition) over the general concept of political leadership, economic policies and, to a large extent, political outlook mixed with ethnic orientations. However, this grand narrative of Ghanaian politics was to change during the second rule of Jerry Rawlings. Staging his second coup in December 1981, he overthrew the Limann government and headed the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) regime.[40] In 1992, multiparty elections were held which were won by a landslide victory for Rawlings' party, the National Democratic Congress (NDC), defeating Limann's Nkrumahist People's National Convention (PNC).[41] The main opposition party, the New Patriotic Party (NPP), had boycotted the presidential elections.[42] Rawlings won the presidential elections and was sworn in as President in 1993. Both he and his party were able to win the next election in 1996, but in 2000, the NDC candidate Professor John Atta Mills and the NDC lost the elections to John Agyekum Kufuor and his New Patriotic Party (NPP). In 2004, Kufuor and the NPP were able to retain their hold of both the presidency and parliament.[43]

Despite Rawlings long period as head of state, Ghana remained a rather divided country politically. Though the Nkrumahist parties more or less disappeared from the political arena during his rule, the country remained a patchwork in terms of

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[38] Chazan 1982, 466–473.
[39] General Akuffo's regime was termed SMC2.
[40] For an overview the Rawlings/PNDC era, see Nugent 1995.
[41] The Nkrumahist block was, in fact, divided into several contesting parties. The 1992 election signalled the end of the CPP/Nkrumah factor in Ghanaian politics (Nugent 1999, 291).
[42] The NPP was founded by the leaders of the Busia/Danquah tradition to contest the 1992 election (Nugent 1999, 291). The NPP under the late Professor Albert Adu Boahen boycotted the parliamentary elections after losing to Rawlings in the presidential elections. In 1992 the elections were held on different days, since 1996 they are held on the same day.
[43] Tsikata and Seini 2004. On the 1979 elections, see Chazan 1982. On the 1992 and 1996 elections, see Nugent 1999; on the 2000 election, see Nugent 2001, van Walraven 2002, and Ayee 2002.

political voting. What changed was its pattern. Whereas the Nkrumahist parties had first been strong in the southern part of the country and eventually also in the North, the Asante region stood out throughout the decades as predominantly anti-Nkrumahist, giving support to the parties of what is called as the Danquah-Busia-Kufuor tradition. While the Nkrumah, and to some extent also the Rawlings, tradition can be seen as representing the idea of the 'strong' state, blended with radical and sometimes even socialistic rhetoric, the Danquah-Busia-Kufuor tradition comes close to being conservative.[44]

1.1. The North in Postcolonial Ghanaian Politics

What was the position of the North in postcolonial Ghanaian politics and in the postcolonial Ghanaian state? According to Ladouceur, the central government in Accra was only minimal influence on the great masses of the people of the country at independence. Its influence varied according to the degree of modernization and Westernization, thus being greater in South and rather weak in the North:

> In Northern Ghana, an area little touched by […] modernization, the traditional way of life survived with little change, after the initial accommodation to colonial rule at the outset of the century, and even the colonial administration had exercised only a minimum of control over the population. For many Northerners, migratory and compulsory labour constituted a form of integration into the 'modern' sector, but a superficial and negative one.[45]

Due to the colonial policies of Indirect Rule via the Native Authorities and their administrations, the chiefs held a much stronger position in the North than in the South, especially in the Colony. Though there had emerged a Western-educated elite in the North during the 1950s, it was small and the key political players were the chiefs, especially the Nayiri of Mamprusi (Mampurugu). The faction of the Northern elite, who were critical about Nkrumah's and the CPP's centralist visions, rallied together and formed the Northern People's Party (NPP), which had close links to the Northern Territories Council (NTC), the mouthpiece of the chiefs and their supporters.[46] The NPP emerged as the key advocate of Northern regionalism during the 1950s and vehemently defended a federalist vision for the postcolonial state. Politics in the South were perceived as highly problematic, and there was a fear among both the chiefs and the NPP that the North was being betrayed by the British in their negotiations with Nkrumah. The Mamprusi Chiefs' Meeting of 1955 went even further, claiming that the British would have to respect their treaties

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[44] Nugent 1999; Paul Nugent, personal communication, May 2003. Also Hughes 2003. Oelbaum defines the Nkrumah–Rawlings traditions as populist and the Danquah–Busia–Kufuor tradition as liberal. See further Oelbaum 2004, 245, 262.
[45] Ladouceur 1979, 190.
[46] Austin 1966, 184–187.

and that Mamprusi (as well as the other kingdoms) "ought to be left in the way the British met them."[47] However, their attempt to address their demands in London failed – the Mamprusi delegation was lumped together with the NLM delegation which arrived at the same time in London in August 1956 and was collectively referred to as the 'opposition delegation' and was disregarded by the Colonial Office as well as the Secretary of State for the Colonies. Thereafter, the Asante and Northern 'opposition', i.e., the NLM and the NPP, which formed a tactical alliance, as well as the NTC, attempted a different approach, namely demanding separate independence, but in vain.[48]

The end of Northern nationalism came when the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lennox-Boyd, visited Tamale in January 1957. When asked if they would publicly declare their opposition to independence, the Northern leaders backed down. According to Lennox-Boyd, their answer meant that there was nothing to stop independence, and he further argued that any separate treaties with the North were impossible. Ladouceur summarizes the British viewpoint as follows:

> Independence would mean de facto abrogation of the treaties, since there was no way that the British Government could retain a special relationship with a part of an independent country. […] It would not be possible for the British Government to deal with a part of an independent country, but only with the central government.[49]

Thus, the essence of the change from the colonial to the postcolonial period in the North was that the North remained subordinate. The North was to have no special position within a centralized state, and the distribution and amount of whatever resources were available for economic and social development was to be decided in Accra.

For Nkrumah and the ruling CPP, however, Northern regionalism was a problem that had to be dealt with. After independence, the North, together with Asante, stood out as a bulwark against the CPP and Nkrumah's visions. Two opposition parties dominated these regions, the NLM in Asante and the NPP in the Northern Region. But the position of the NPP was contested in the Northern Region by the CPP, which was able to secure the backing of certain groups and influential individuals. While Mamprusi was more or less dominated by the NPP, with the Nayiri as its most firm backer, Gonja, Dagomba (Dagbon) and Wa were split. The Nkrumahist state, therefore, aimed at the integration of the Northern elite into national institutions as well as the infiltration of local and regional institutions by agents and ideas emanating from Accra. Since the Nkrumahist state was negative towards ethnicity and ethnic distinctions as it ultimate policy was the forging of a united and unified society, particularistic parties had to be eliminated. Moreover, on a regional and

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[47] Quoted in Ladouceur 1979, 157.
[48] Ladouceur 1979, 158–160.
[49] Ladouceur 1979, 161.

local level, new administrative structures were to be put in place as an attempt to recreate the political order in Ghana. For this, the government had its allies in the North, namely old party members, who had already had backed the CPP during the 1950s, as well as some traditional leaders, who saw in the new government an ally in their disputes over chieftaincy.[50]

Two conflicts were to highlight the involvement of the Nkrumahist state in the North. One intervention was directed against the Nayiri and his position as paramount chief, the other was the role the government played in the Dagbon succession crisis. The 1958 Local Government (Amendment) Bill had as its main target the Mamprusi District Council, which was split into three, Frafra, Kusasi and South Mamprusi, thereby giving recognition to the Frafra and Kusasi State Councils as the highest traditional councils in their respective areas. As a consequence, the formal ties between Mamprusi and the two regions were cut and the Nayiri lost his position as a paramount chief over the chiefs in these regions. Furthermore, the 1958 Regional Assembly Bill resulted in the dissolution of the NTC, where the Nayiri had held a central position. Eventually, the Nayiri declared his support for the CPP government.[51]

In Dagbon, the enskinment of Abdulai as the new Ya Na in 1954 had created a local chieftaincy conflict the effects of which were felt as late as the Yendi Crisis of March 2002. Abudulai's election was highly contested by the other branch of the royal family, the Andani, who argued that Abudulai's enskinment had broken the rotational principle in Dagbon. According to this principle, after the death of a ruler of the Abudu-branch, the next Ya Na should be chosen from among the eligible candidates of the Andani-branch. Abudulai's predecessor also belonged to the Abudu-branch. Matters became complicated as Ya Na Abdulai III (1956–1968) was known as an ardent supporter of the opposition. Consequently, national politics were battled out in Yendi, where Minister J.H. Alhassan, who was an old CPP-activist but also a member of the Andani-branch, tried to use his position to deskin (depose)[52] Abdulai in 1958. Although the Andanis were unsuccessful at this point,[53] the conflict resulted in a politicization of the two royal branches in Dagbon. When one family sided with Nkrumah's CPP, the other family would back the opposition

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[50] Ladouceur 1979, 181–188. The Yagbumwura was one of the paramount chiefs who gave his support to the CPP whereas the Ya Na and the Nayiri supported the NPP. In Dagbon, the MP for Dagomba West, Tolon-Na Yakubu Tali, was a member of the NPP while the MP for Dagomba East, J.H. Alhassan, was CPP; J.A. Braimah, MP for Gonja East was NNP while E.A. Mahama, MP for Gonja West was CCP; in Wa, the orthodox Sunni leadership supported the CPP whereas the Ahmadiyya supported the NPP (Ladouceur 1979, 119–120).

[51] Ladouceur 1979, 165–169; Lund 2003, 590–593.

[52] Northern chiefs are enskinned when they assume power and deskinned when forced to abdicate or removed from power (Kirby 1998, 53).

[53] The Yendi chieftaincy dispute was taken to court and in 1960, a verdict was given, stating that after Abudulai, the Andani-branch would occupy the skin twice in succession, then again the Abudu-branch (Ladouceur 1979, 227).

parties, the MAP (Moslem [Muslim] Association Party) and especially the NPP (Northern Peoples' Party). As an outcome, the Andani faction was to evolve as a pro-CPP and later a pro-NDC group whereas the Abudu were known for their ties to the Busia and Kufour platform.[54]

The consequences of these two conflicts were already felt during the 1969 election. In fact, the Dagbon conflict had already resumed in 1967 when Ya Na Abdulai III died and the Mion-Lana Andani was enskinned as his successor during a period of confusion when the Abudu-branch tried to get their candidate recognized as the new ruler and the NLC regime seemed to back their claim.[55] A visit by the PP-leader Busia to Dagbon before the election in 1969 was therefore widely interpreted giving support to the Abudu claim in exchange for Abudu support for him and his party in the forthcoming election. In Kusasi, the policies of the NLC to restore the chieftaincy to its former position through the Chieftaincy (Amendment) Decree, NLCD 112, of 1966, resulted in the restoration of the status ante quo in the region: most pro-Kusasi chiefs appointed in 1958 were later deskinned in favour of pro-Mamprusi chiefs, and the Bawku Naba reverted to his status as a divisional chief under the Nayiri.[56] As in Dagbon, these political decisions led to an increasing polarization in society, where one party sided with the PP (the pro-Mamprusi section), the other with the NAL[57] (the pro-Kusasi section). Thus, although the 1969 election resulted in a landslide for the PP, including in the North, both in the Dagomba District and in the Kusasi District, the election was a draw and the contesting parties gained more or less equal numbers of seats (Kusasi District = PP: 2; NAL: 2; Dagomba District = PP: 3; NAL: 4).[58]

Apart from the conflicts in Dagbon and in Kusasi, the North has seldom made big political headlines in the national news during the Nkrumah era or since then. Not all of the Northern traditional and modern elite had given its support to the Northern nationalist or regionalist cause, and after the ban on ethnic parties and the formation of the UP in 1958, the NPP was left as the Northern Regional Branch of the United Party, which itself was dominated by non-Northerners. The dissolution

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[54] Staniland 1975, 136–137, 140–147; Ladouceur 1979, 119; Fayemi, Jaye & Yeebo 2003, 64 (67?); Tsikata & Seini 2004, 36; Sowatey 2005, 112; MacGaffey 2006, 83–84.

[55] The 1969 Yendi conflict provoked historians, such as Ferguson, Wilks Ladouceur and Staniland, to present their analyses of the situation and the complexities of the Dagbon rotational system. Unfortunately, none of these analyses seems to have been read by politicians or political scientists, as little seems to have been learnt of the complexity of the crisis in Dagbon. The following conflicts, that of 1986 and the tragic 2002 clash, which led to the brutal killing of Ya Na Yakubu Andani II, have so far attracted little interest, not even among historians, Ghanaian or others. An exception is MacGaffey's (2006) study on the 2002 Yendi Crisis.

[56] However, the NLC did not have in mind a total revival of the chieftaincy. Its aim was to maintain the distinction between the traditional and secular administration. Therefore, the Mamprusi District Council was not reconstituted (Ladouceur 1979, 217).

[57] The National Alliance of Liberals (NAL) was a Nkrumahist party.

[58] Ladouceur 1979, 228–230. For a long-term assessment and analysis of the conflict in Bawku, see Lund 2003.

of the NPP signalled, too, the end of a distinct Northern political entity, which was already highlighted by the establishment of the Northern Region as a regional administrative entity within the modern Ghanaian state in 1957. By 1959, most of the Northern leaders and politicians had either defected or gradually moved towards the CPP camp, and the last remnant of Northern regionalism, the newly established Northern Regional Assembly, was dissolved in March 1959.[59]

Seen in retrospect, the Nkrumah era was a period of many hopes and some economic and social development for the North but, at the same time, it was also a continuation of the political marginalization of the North on the national level.[60] The following decades of military and civilian rule were equally problematic. None of the accusations against the Nkrumahist state, such as patronage, mismanagement and embezzlement of funds as well as corruption, was dealt with properly, despite public assurances by both incoming military and civilian leaders about finding a solution for the societal malaise. Especially on a national level, the North was becoming increasingly unimportant during the 1970s and 1980s as the contest for political power and influence was concentrated in the national capital. One reason for this was the 1966 coup which swept away one generation of Northern politicians; most of them never returned to politics. Thus, whereas there had emerged some influential Northern politicians during the 1950s and early 1960s, such as Tolon-Na Yakubu Tali, Mumuni Bawumia and J.A. Braimah, few of them were to be active during the so-called Second Republic. A new generation of politicians certainly emerged during the Rawlings era, but their story is not yet told nor have their activities been analyzed in the way Paul André Ladouceur has done for the first two decades of Northern regionalism.[61]

Seen from a Northern point of view, the 1979 elections resembled to some extent the earlier elections manifesting the obvious split of Northern political interests into those of the Northern Region and those of the Upper Region. Of the six parties running in the election, three had influential candidates from the North. The People's National Party (PNP) was constructed on the old CPP organization, but with a new guard of young men. The moving force of the PNP was a Northerner, Imoru Egala, who had been a CPP-activist since 1966. Dr. Hilla Limann, the PNP

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[59] Ladouceur 1979, 163–165.
[60] Ladouceur 1979, 182–185.
[61] So far, to my knowledge only the late Mumuni Bawumia (1924–2002) has written his memoirs. See Bawumia 2004.

presidential candidate,[62] was a Sisala from the Upper Region and Egala's nephew.[63] The Popular Front Party (PFP) was the self-proclaimed successor of the PP. The presidential candidate of the PFP was Victor Owusu, who had founded the party, with Alhaji Yakubu Tali as his running mate as vice-presidential candidate. Whereas the three other contesting parties had few, if any, links to the North, the Social Democratic Front (SDF) revealed itself as a localized configuration with roots in the North that put forward Ibrahim Mahama, a lawyer and a leading member of the Andani gate, as its presidential aspirant. Not surprisingly, the Northern votes were split, the PNP winning both in the Northern Region (7 of 14 seats) and in the Upper Region (15 of 16 seats), with the PFP and the SDF gaining some success in the Northern Region (4 and 3 seats, respectively).[64]

But Limann's government did not stay in power long, and for over a decade there was little political activity in the North. However, when the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) declared a return to constitutional government in the early 1990s, political activities resumed. Though many of the old political activists, both of the Nkrumahist and of the Danquah–Busia tradition, tried to recreate or rebuild their former bases of influence in the North, the Rawlings' factor took both traditions by surprise. In the 1992 presidential elections, Rawlings and the NDC were strong in all of the three regions whereas Limann and his PNC gained the majority only in some constituencies in the Upper East and Upper West. The only constituency where the presidential candidate of the NPP, the late Professor Albert Adu Boahen, was able to win the majority was Yendi.[65] Similar voting patterns were displayed during the 1996 elections with Rawlings and the NDC gaining a further hold of the North. The PNC remained a regional party, largely of the Upper West and Upper East, in terms of backing Dr. Edward Mahama, the PNC candidate, in the presidential election, but not in terms of the parliamentary elections where the party won only one seat in the whole of the North – in the Northern Region.[66] The Northern Region, again, emerged as a NDC bastion, apart from Eastern Dagbon[67]

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[62] According to Mumuni Bawumia, Egala had originally asked him to be the presidential candidate of the PNP, but as it was unclear whether or not he would be disqualified for nomination by the Attorney General, Egala decided to nominate Limann. Despite this, Mumuni Bawumia was committed in the party and in the 1979 election but was ignored when it came to the nomination for cabinet posts. However, during the PNDC era, Mumuni Bawumia was appointed ambassador to Saudi Arabia where he served between 1988 and 1992. After returning to Ghana, he served as Chairman of the Council of State during the NDC era. In 1999, the Nayiri chose Alhaji Mumuni Bawumia to become the Kpeli Naa, one of the four paramount chiefs in Mampurugu (Bawumia 2004, 190–194, 228–233, 238–239, 263).

[63] The vice-presidential candidate was J.W. de Graft Johnson, an Akan.

[64] Chazan 1982, 475–476. The PFP won the remaining seat in the Upper Region.

[65] Nugent 1999, 299 Map 1.

[66] Nugent 2001 map: Bimbila = PNC; Mion = PCP; Yendi, Wulensi + Gukpegu/Sabongida = NPP.

[67] i.e., Gukpegu/Sabongida (Tamale) and Mion.

and Nanun, which voted for the opposition parties as criticism for the way the NDC government had (mis-)handled the 1994 Northern conflict.[68]

The Rawlings-era and the rule of the NDC came to an end with the 2000 presidential and parliamentary elections. Whether or not the three Northern regions played a decisive role is a matter of debate, but compared with the 1996 election, Mills lead in the Northern Region was almost nil (51.10 to 48.90), and Kufuor was able to double his votes in the two Upper regions (Upper East: from 17.4 to 42.83; Upper West: from 11.2 to 38.03).[69] In the parliamentary elections, however, the NPP was not able to 'conquer' the North – the Northern Region remained NDC-dominated in terms of parliamentary seats (18 to the NPP 3 [Yendi, Gukpegu/Sabongida, Damango/Daboya] and others 2), as did the Upper East (8 NDC against 2 NPP and 2 others) whereas all the seats in the Upper West were taken by the NDC.[70] The 2004 election did not change the voting patterns, although the NDC was able to retake some of the constituencies in the Northern Region.[71] Thus, though the end of the Rawlings era did not result in the implosion of the NDC – as some political analysts were arguing – Ghanaian politics have turned into a two-party-system, where the core of one party, the NPP, are mostly Akan voters while the other party, the NDC, is supported by those who for one reason or another are critical about an Akan predominance in Ghana.[72] As a consequence, both in 2000 and in 2004, the North has largely remained critical of the Busia-Kufuor tradition, the NPP; instead, the NDC and PNC are dominating.[73]

Thus, voting is still very much of a regional issue in Ghana, but it is complicated and complex. It is also the politicization of history, which to a large extent seems to be the case in the North. In Southern Ghana, the ghosts of Asante imperialism, Nkrumahism and Ewe nationalism still haunt.[74] However, in the North, the fault lines are between the 'minority' and 'majority' groups as well as between competing royal gates or 'skin-holders' and their followers.[75] Both in Bawku and in Yendi, the past affects the present: if one party is backed by Kusasis or seems to lean towards

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[68] Nugent 1999, 306, Table 1+ Table 2, 309–311.

[69] Oelbaum 2004, 259.

[70] van Walraven 2002, 190 Table 2. For an analysis of the 2000 election, see Nugent 2001. According to him, Kufuor's share of the votes actually declined in the Northern Region between 1996 and the first round of the 2000 poll. In terms of parliamentary voting, the NPP gained one seat and lost another in the Northern Region (i.e., Wulensi). Most notably, Nugent (2001, 424) notes that: "But when northern voters deserted the NDC, they tended to switch their votes to the PNC [which had been] construed as a northern party, whereas the NPP was perceived as alien."

[71] Unfortunately, no analyses of the 2004 election were available to me at the time of writing. According to information given to me by Alhaji Mumuni, the NPP won a seat in Upper West (Wa East) for the first time. As a result of this, the NPP was able to gain seats in all the three northern regions.

[72] As already noted by Nugent 1999, 305–306.

[73] Fayemi & Jaye & Yeebo 2003, 62; HW personal observations.

[74] Oelbaum 2004.

[75] See, for example, Lentz 2002 on the situation in the Upper North West.

the Kusasi case, the other party will get the votes of the Mamprusi, and as long as the Abudu-branch has its political connections, the Andani-branch will have theirs.[76] But if regionalism is still a factor in modern Ghanaian politics, at least in the North there exist many competing versions of it. Since the split of the region in 1960 and, again in 1983, there has been no basis for a distinctive, unifying Northern regionalism. Instead, political identification has become fragmented, following local ethnic/ tribal as well as historical lines, but, as will be outlined in the next subchapters, also following religious demarcations. History has become a contested ground and various readings of history are presented in inter-community conflicts. Though this was already the case in the precolonial era, a new situation emerged during the postcolonial era when the earlier 'minority' or stateless/chiefless societies started to question precolonial and colonial forms of hegemony and political dominance. This new political awareness can be exemplified by Mr. John Ndebugre's, the PNDC Regional Secretary of the Upper East Region, reply to the Nayiri about the latter's claim to have jurisdiction over the Mamprusi in Bawku District: "If the Nayiri was concerned with the fate of the Mamprusis, he could just settle them in his and their own place, the Mamprusi District in Northern Region."[77]

But what about the religious factor in postcolonial Ghana? What happened to the Muslim communities and their working relationship with the colonial state in postcolonial Ghana? Can one identify a politicization of religion in contemporary Ghana, especially within the framework of inter-ethnic/tribal or communal conflicts?

2. MUSLIM POLITICAL ACTIVITY FROM THE COLONIAL TO THE PRESENT PERIOD

Despite colonial disinterest in Islam and the Muslim community in the Gold Coast, the colonial system itself was to generate changes in the Muslim community and in the religious setup of the colony. Labour migration, colonial policies as well as the opportunity for trade in the South moved Muslims to settle in the Southern towns

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[76] The politicization of the conflict in Dagbon has yet to be thoroughly studied by an objective and neutral observer. What seems clear, however, is that any influential Dagbamba is either linked with the Abudu gate (B.A. Yakubu as well as the following members of the 2000–2004 NPP government: Vice President Aliu Mahama, National Security Advisor Joshua Hamidu, former Minister of the Interior Malik Alhassan Yakubu and Major Sulemana, member of the National Security Council, as well as the Northern Region Minister, Prince Moro Andani, and the Yendi District Executive, Mohammed Habib Tijani, as claimed in Fayemi, Jaye & Yeebo 2003, 67) or the Andani gate (Dr. Ibrahim Mahama and Professor Wayo Seini, the latter was a leading member of the NPP until 2000 and emerged as spokesman for the Andani family following the murder of the Ya Na [Tsikata and Seini 2004, 36 fn 11]. Seini joined for some years the NDC, but left the party before the 2004 election and rejoined the NPP. However, he lost his seat to the NDC in the election [Mumuni, personal information 2005]).

[77] Quoted in Lund 2003, 596.

and production centres. However, with independence, the postcolonial situation meant that instead of having to come to terms with a religiously rather indifferent colonial political apparatus, the Muslim leadership had to deal with an African leadership. From being subjects of the British Empire, which at times boasted that it had the largest number of Muslims under its rule, the Ghanaian Muslim community found itself as constituting a minority within an officially secular state, but predominantly Christian society. The established working relationship with the political authorities had to be renegotiated. The question was how and with whom? During the colonial period, there was already a distinctive North-South divide in terms of the relationship between the political authorities and their perception of the Muslims. A key factor was the regional character of the relationship: in the Northern Territories there was one policy whereas in the southern parts, especially in the Colony, there was another. As long as the three colonial entities were to a large extent autonomous, though at the same time part of the same empire and thus under similar colonial policies that were, in the end, drawn up and decided in London, the local colonial authorities were given a relatively free hand to decide which policy towards the Muslims the colonial authorities were to have. As a consequence, there never existed nor emerged a distinctive British Muslim policy in the Gold Coast.

When Nkrumah took over the colonial state, he also inherited the fluid relationship between the Muslim community and the political authorities. But what had changed dramatically from a Muslim perspective was that political authority was now localized in Accra, no longer far away in London, and due to Nkrumah's centralist policies, any attempt to build up a similar relationship with the political authorities that had existed before, i.e., on a regional or even a federal basis, were doomed to be ineffective. Thus, what happened for the first time was that there was a recognizable shift of Muslim political activities from the North to the South, or, to be precise, recognizable and visible activists who were to establish links to the state authorities and were recognized by the state as representatives of the Muslims. As with Northern political activities, which had to shift to Accra, the Muslim leadership became centred in the capital.

Islam in the North emerged as a peripheral factor in independent Ghana, mainly due to the shift of power relations in the postcolonial state and the increasing political and economic marginalization of the North. Though the peripheral position of the North had already been a political and economic fact during the colonial period, one could argue that this had not been the case for the relationship between the local Muslim communities and the political authorities. In the North, Muslims were either recognized as 'strangers' or indigenes; in the South, however, they were regarded as 'migrants'. In the northern traditional political setup, the strangers could and did have some political influence, but as migrants in the South they could not. In the North, at least officially, the Muslim communities were seen as stable and only slowly expanding, whereas in the South, the *zongo* communities, which were,

from an outside perspective, regarded as Muslim quarters, were fluid entities as migrants would settle there for a time and then return to their home villages. Thus, when broad generalizations about the religious setup in the late colonial Gold Coast were made, a common argument was that the North was inhabited by Muslims whereas the South was predominantly Christian.[78] Furthermore, as generally stated by British colonial officers and even British experts on Islam in Africa, there existed no problem with Islam in the Gold Coast.[79]

However, some early reports about Islam in Ghana revealed another picture. In 1959, Pierre Benignus toured Africa, investigating the activities of Muslims and the impact of Islam in both West and East Africa on behalf of the International Missionary Council (IMC) Administrative Committee. Commenting about the situation in Ghana, he noted:

> It is impossible to say now that the North of Ghana is Moslem and the South is not. Statistics, as far as one can believe them, seem to show that the opposite is true. Committed African Christians recognise that Islam is advancing, slowly but surely. The problem which it raises would appear to be more acute in the South than in the North.[80]

Muslim settlements had been established in coastal towns and villages since the late nineteenth century, and in some cities, such as Accra, some local inhabitants converted to Islam.[81] However, as much as Islam had for centuries been the religion of strangers in the North, it was to emerge as the religion of migrants in the South during the colonial period. Whereas most of the migrants to the South had left their homesteads as non-Muslims, they would in most cases settle in the South in the *zongo*s and convert to Islam there. Islam thus became an identity-marker and served as supra-ethnic glue for the migrants as well as the strangers. As Jean Rouch noted about the impact of Islam on the migrants in the early 1950s,

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[78] TNA CO 874/71, The Impact of Islam in Africa. Second Revision (1959).
[79] Seesemann 2004, 514. See further Chapter V.5.
[80] TNA CO 847/71, Pierre Benignus, Islam in Africa. Journey in East and West Africa, January–April 1959, p. 18.
[81] The nucleus of the early Muslim community along the coast was made up of Muslims among the Hausa Constabulary, who arrived in the Gold Coast in 1872, Muslim traders from the interior, who had arrived after the decline of Salaga [about 1850: arrival of Naino Iddris, a Muslim Hausa trader from Katsina; 1881: establishment of Salaga quarter in Ussher Town/Accra]. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Muslim community in the coastal towns had risen to about 1200, most of whem were engaged in trade, either the kola trade to Lagos or the livestock trade from Salaga to the South. TNA WO 33/2756, *Military Report on the Gold Coast, Ashanti and the Northern Territories* (1912), p. 50; Mumuni 1994, 9–12, 30; Pellow 2002, 45; Samwini 2006, 35–38. However, the first Muslims along the coast were the Tabon. These were freed African slaves who had returned from Brazil and settled in Accra in 1836 as well as former African recruits in Dutch service in Java, who returned to Elmina and settled at Java Hill in 1836 (Brown 1927; Mumuni 1994, 8). The arrival of the Tabon is closely linked to the large-scale repatriation of ex-slaves from Brazil in the aftermath of the Great Bahia slave-revolt of 1835. This revolt involved predominantly Muslims (Reis 2003). Not only in Accra, but also in Ouidah, the first Muslim community, the Mano quarter, was made up of Muslim repatriates from Brazil (Law 2001).

> … Islam has been brought into the Gold Coast entirely by migrants, but this religion undergoes certain modifications there; religious zeal becomes very much increased and every lukewarm Muslim becomes a fervent member of the faith in the Gold Coast. Even those who are not completely islamised in their own countries […] are caught up in the movement, adopting first the dress, then the custom and then the rites.[82]

Rouch regarded Islam as a strong urban factor, especially in the South, and underlined that Islam served as a 'super-tribal' (supra-ethnic) glue in the *zongo*s. However, J.N.D. Anderson, a British academic and specialist on Islamic Law, who about the same time made a study on Islam in Africa, regarded the influence of Islam to be rather weak in the Gold Coast.[83] In the end, Rouch's and Anderson's opinions reflected the dual position of the Muslim *zongo* communities in the South and, as well, the position of the Muslim stranger communities in the North. From an outside perspective, the Muslim communities seem to represent one homogeneous group, and they were treated as such by both the precolonial and colonial authorities. Thus, Dretke notes that:

> … (t)his pattern of treatment contributed something to a feeling of community among Muslims. They were recognized as a unit. They were forced to live together as a unit. They were, for all practical purposes, a community.[84]

Thus, one could claim that both in the North as well as in the South, this 'enforced' community evolved as a special mark of the 'Muslim sphere'. Most importantly, as Dretke states, they were recognized by others as constituting such a community. However, at the same time one should not lose sight of the forces of division and fission within that 'imagined' community:

> The forces of division, however, were still so strong that although eating together, living together, intermarrying, and often worshipping together, the Muslim community was still a kind of heterogeneous nonentity that appeared or disappeared according to the needs and fancies of the many individuals and tribes who made up the community.[85]

Despite this – or perhaps because of it – Islam constituted a unifying factor among migrants – Muslims, but also other 'strangers' from the North – in the *zongo* communities in South. During the colonial period, so-called Muslim chiefs were established in the *zongos* to coordinate their activities effectively as a minority group on the coast. In order to have a stronger societal influence, the Muslim chiefs came together to form the Council of Muslim Chiefs in Accra during the late 1950s.[86]

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[82] Rouch 1954, 63.
[83] Anderson 1954, 249, 258.
[84] Dretke 1968, 75.
[85] Dretke 1968, 75.
[86] Today there are at least eleven recognized *zongo*s in Accra: Accra Central, Sabon Zongo, Nima, Newtown (Lagostown), Adabraka, Alhamdu, Abeka, Darkoman, Shukura, Mallam and Madina. Each has its *zongo* chiefs, its mosques and imams, but all recognize Accra's central mosque at

Since then, the council – formalized in 1969 and presently termed the National Council of Muslim Chiefs (NCMC) – has become the mouthpiece of Muslims in Ghana in their relationship with the traditional and the state authorities.[87] The prominent position of the council is further enhanced due to its role in the selection of the National Chief Imam.[88]

The first organised Muslim political organisation that emerged during the colonial period was the Gold Coast Muslim Association (GCMA) in 1932.[89] At that point, the GCMA only concentrated on welfare and social organization in the interest of migrant Muslims.[90] During the 1942 Accra Municipal Council elections, the GMCA backed the Accra lawyer and former communist, Panafricanist and founding member of the West African Youth League, Bankole Awoonor-Renner, who had converted to Islam in about 1940.[91] In 1948, the GCMA supported the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC), but after the split of the party, the GCMA decided to follow Nkrumah and the CPP. The leadership of the GCMA included Imam Muhammad Abass, National Chief Imam resident in Accra, and Alhaji Ahmad Baba, *sarkin zongo* of Kumasi. However, when the association turned its attention to politics Bankole Awooner-Renner rose to prominence in the leadership. The GCMA contested the 1953 Accra Municipal and 1954 Kumasi Town Council elections with its own candidates and was relatively successful.[92] To further

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Abossey Okai and its Chief Imam as their spiritual leader (Pellow 2002, 38; Mumuni, personal communication).

[87] Though all of these chiefs headed communities in Accra, they also claimed authority and struggled for leadership over the entire Muslim community in Ghana (Mumuni 1994, 34). However, there has been some dissent among some Muslim factions about the representation of chiefs in the NCMC. In an editorial, the editor of the *Muslim Searchlight* articulated this problem:

> "Apart from Northern Ghana, the rest of the membership of the National Council of Muslim Chiefs are made up of tribes whose ancestry (not nationality) are traced to neighbouring countries. Thus, Ga, Ashanti, Akim, Kwahu, Fanti etc Muslims are not represented on the council." *The Muslim Searchlight*, Vol 1 No 32, 4–17 October 2002 .

[88] The Chief Imam in Accra also represents the country as the National Chief Imam. The main reason for this is, according to Mumuni, practical and out of necessity: imams do not receive any salary and there is no official residence for a National Chief Imam. Therefore, the selection of the National Chief Imam is not based on scholarship but on convenience and the office does not rotate among candidates from other regions (Mumuni 1994, 113). Since the 1960s, the office has tried to establish a strictly neutral and non-political position on the national level. Especially during the elections in 2000 and 2004, various political groups tried to receive the backing of the National Chief Imam during election campaigns, which has led to strong reactions from the Office of the National Chief Imam. "'I'm Neutral' – national Chief Imam tells Ghanaians," *Accra Daily Mail* 1.3.2004, http://www.accra-mail.com/story.asp?ID=9269 (17.3.2004).

[89] Austin 1966, 187. The best study on Muslim NGOs in Accra is Mumuni 1994. An abridged version is available in Mumuni 2002.

[90] The first sign of the politicization of Muslims in Accra occurred as a consequence of the earthquake disaster in Accra in 1939. Muslim leaders felt that the British colonial authorities paid little attention to the needs of the *zongo* communities after the earthquake. See further Mumuni 1994, 97.

[91] On the political activities of Bankole Awoonor-Renner, see further Weiss 2007c-e.

[92] Austin 1966, 187–188; Mumuni 1994, 98–99. The GCMA won two seats out of 27 in Accra and in 4 out of 24 wards in Kumasi.
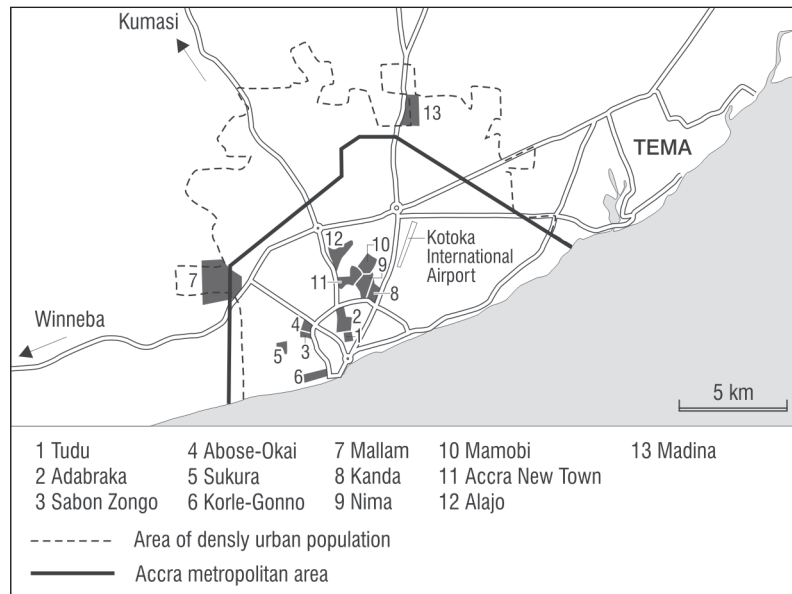
Map 18. Accra – Districts with substantial Muslim population.

strengthen its political influence on the national level, the GCMA was transformed into the Moslem [Muslim] Association Party (MAP) in 1954.[93]

The establishment of the MAP was an attempt by some politically active Muslims to form an opposition to the Convention Peoples' Party (CPP), especially in the Gold Coast Colony and in Ashanti.[94] However, what followed was a rift within the Muslim community in the South and the emergence of rival Muslim political bodies in the Gold Coast. The best known was the Muslim Youth Congress (MYC, also known as Muslim Youth Association or MYA), which was formed in Accra in 1950. The two leading figures of the MYA/MYC were Z.B. Shardow of Accra and Malam Mutawakkilu of Kumasi. The role of the CPP in the formation of the organization is contested. According Allman, the MYA/MYC was CPP-inspired whereas Mumuni claims that the CPP fuelled the formation of the MYA/MYC to undermine the leadership of the GCMA and to curb its political influence in the country. In effect, the MYA/MYC was a wing of the CPP and represented mainly younger Muslims who were more interested in the progress towards independence. They saw themselves as a progressive force, in contrast to the older generation who ran the GCMA. When the GCMA changed its name to the Muslim Association Party, the MYA/MYC also changed its name to the Gold Coast Muslim Council (GCMC).[95] When the CPP took power, the GCMC was transformed into the Muslim

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[93] Schildkrout 1970; Balogun 1987, 179; Allman 1991, 5–8; Mumuni 1994, 96–100; Ryan 1996, 318; Ahmed-Rufai 2002, 109. See further Chapter V.4.3.
[94] This was definitively the case with Awoonor-Renner's political activities: starting as one of Nkrumah's close allied and backer, he had turned in 1953/54 into one of his main opponents. See further Weiss 2007e.
[95] Austin 1966, 187; Allman 1991, 9; Ryan 1996, 318; Ahmed-Rufai 2002, 110–111.

Council of Ghana (MCG).[96] However, after the 1966 coup d'état, the MCG was banned by the National Liberation Council (NLC).[97]

In the Northern Territories, on the other hand, there was little politicization of the Muslims and the emergence of political parties or the formation of the Northern Territorial Council (NTC) was not per se a Muslim affair. Instead, it was the new, northern, western-educated elite who constituted the core of the Northern People's Party (NPP) in 1954. As already noted in Chapter Five, the NPP was a regional party, not a religious party, and had close links to the NTC and the traditional rulers. Though the MAP was the major ally of the NPP, Islam was not an issue during the elections in the North in the 1950s.[98]

The political activities of the MAP came to an end at the independence of Ghana. Together with the other opposition parties, the MAP was banned by the Nkrumah (CPP) government. Further legislative actions curbed Muslim political activities. The Avoidance of Discrimination Act of 1957 banned political parties formed along religious lines and the 1957 Deportation Act enabled the deportation of two influential MAP-leaders, Alhaji Ahmad Baba and Alhaji Uthman Ladan, to Kano in Nigeria.[99] Similarly, one woman, Madam Goma, who was a small trader in the *zongo* of Kumasi as well as the heads of the Gao (i.e., Songhay) and Mossi communities in Kumasi, Amadu Gao and Amama Moshie, were deported in addition to several others.[100] The National Chief Imam, Alhaji Muhammad Abass, who was known as a supporter of the MAP, was also removed from office and was replaced by Malam Futa, a MYC functionary.[101] However, despite Nkrumah's harsh actions against Muslim political activities, he himself was eager to present Islam as a positive, 'non-alien' factor in Ghana. Nkrumah's personal position towards Islam was further highlighted by his close (spiritual) relationship with the Senegalese Tijani Sheikh, Ibrahima Niasse, the leader of the Niassene branch of the Tijaniyya Sufi Order.[102]

Political activities, which had been banned during the NLC regime (1966–1969), resumed in 1969. However, there was neither at this point nor thereafter any attempt to revive the MAP or to form another Muslim party. Instead, Muslim voters were split among the contesting parties during the 1969 election. Among

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[96] Mumuni 1994, 104–105, 139–140.
[97] Dissolution of Ghana Moslem Council and National Council of Ghana, 1966, N.L.C.D. 15.
[98] Austin 1966, 228–229.
[99] Deportation Act [No 14., 1957, 25.7.1957] and Deportation (Othman Larden and Amadu Baba) Act, 1957 [No 19, 1957, 23.8.1957]. Alhaji Uthman Ladan (Alhaji Alufa Othman Larden Lalessie) was the imam of the Hausa community in Kumasi. Alhaji Amadu Baba returned to Ghana after the 1966 coup.
[100] Skinner 1963, 313.
[101] Mumuni 1994, 103–104.
[102] Balogun 1987, 180–181; Allman 1991; Ryan 1996, 319; Ahmed-Rufai 2002; Seesemann 2004, 520–521. However, his close connections with Egypt and Gamal Abdul-Nasser were not an expression of Nkrumah's Muslim sympathies but his and Nasser's mutual interest in socialism.

the Muslims, especially the Hausa and Yoruba communities in Ghana, the Busia government (1969–1972) is remembered with mixed feelings. In 1969, the government passed the Aliens Compliance Order which led to the deportation of many 'alien' Muslims, most of them to Nigeria (as they were defined by the Ghanaian authorities as non-Ghanaians).[103] On the other side, the deportation of many 'alien' Muslims from Ghana led to an increasing 'indigenization' of Islam in Ghana when Ghanaian Muslims in many cases replaced Hausa and other 'alien' Muslim leaders and imams.[104]

When the Busia government was overthrown by the military, the Muslim leadership had to negotiate with the new rulers, the National Redemption Council (NRC, 1972–1975) and its successor, the Supreme Military Council (SMC, 1975–1978), as they have had to with all subsequent civil and military governments. What has changed since the dissolution of the MAP and the constitutional prohibitions against forming religious parties is the absence of religiously-orientated political parties. In addition, Muslim collective political activities have so far been marginal apart from individual Muslims taking an active role in party politics and in government. For example, Muslim leaders backed the PNP during the 1979 election but without gaining any larger success either in transforming the party into a 'Muslim' party or it becoming the political voice of the Muslims.[105]

On the other hand, as a potential political block, the Muslim voters started to receive attention during the last two presidential and parliamentary elections (2000 and 2004). During the 2000 election, the NDC accused, among others, the NPP for being anti-Northern, anti-migrant and anti-Muslim, thereby playing on the memories of the Hausa and Yoruba minority of the Busia government's expulsion order of 1969.[106] Moreover, both the NDC and the NPP chose to nominate Muslims as their vice-presidential candidates with the clear aim of attracting Muslim voters – the latter as an aim to negate the NDC-accusations of merely being a vehicle for Asante hegemony.[107] Whether or not the Muslims really mattered is another question, but during the 2004 election campaign, Alhaji Mohammed Mumuni, the
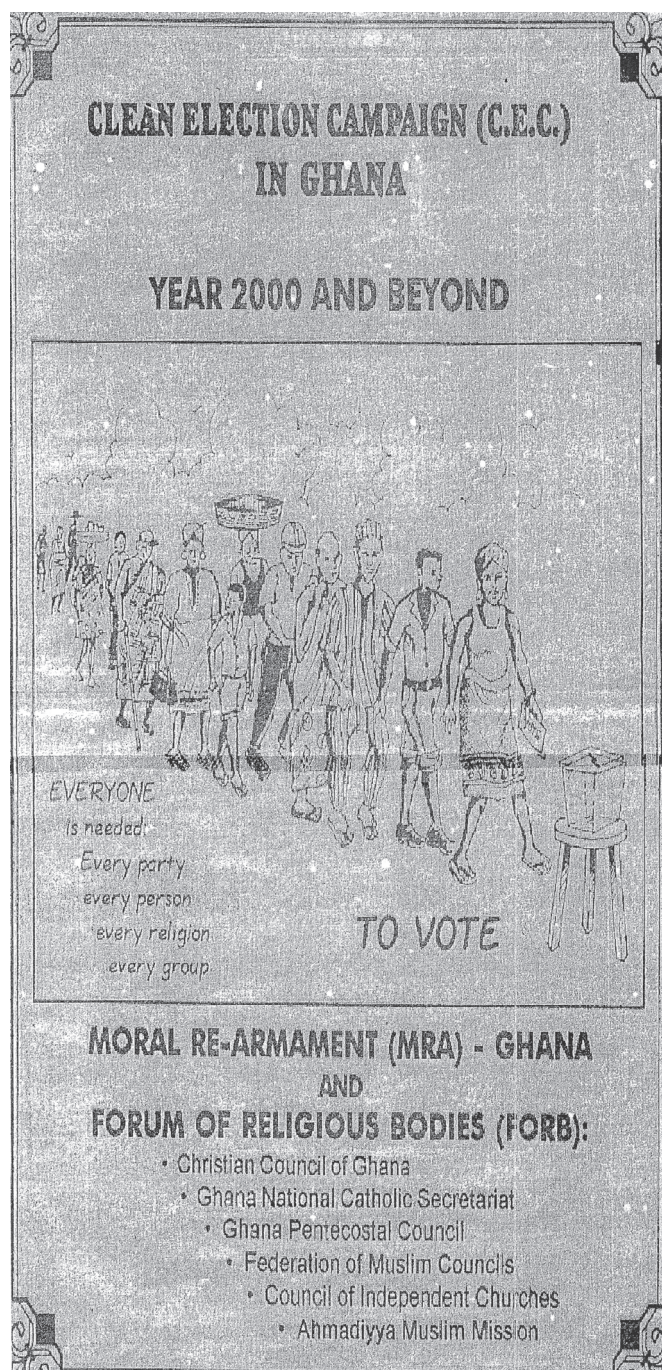
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[103] Peil 1971.

[104] Mumuni, personal communication.

[105] Chazan 1982, 476.

[106] Oelbaum 2004, 253. Oelbaum further notes that in October 1996 the general secretary of the NPP referred to Muslims and other residents in the Nima *zongo* as 'uneducated people' and of being a 'low grade breed' (ibid.). However, the negative comment was actually made against the residents in Alajo and Accra New Town (Ayawaso Central), not the Muslim in Nima (Ayawaso East) – information given to me by Alhaji Mumuni in 2005.

[107] The running mate of the NDC presidential candidate in 2000 was Martin Amidu, who was a Northener but not a Muslim. In the 2004 presidential election, the NDC nominated Alhaji Mohammed Mumuni, a Northerner and a Muslim, as Atta Mills running mate. The NPP nominated Alhaji Aliu Mahama as their vice-presidential candidate in both 2000 and 2004. A third Muslim, an Ahmadi, nominated as vice-presidential candidate in 2000 was Alhaji Ibrahim Mahama who was the running mate of the CPP presidential candidate George Hagan.

**CLEAN ELECTION CAMPAIGN (C.E.C.)
IN GHANA**

YEAR 2000 AND BEYOND

EVERYONE
is needed!
Every party
every person
every religion
every group

TO VOTE

**MORAL RE-ARMAMENT (MRA) - GHANA
AND
FORUM OF RELIGIOUS BODIES (FORB):**
· Christian Council of Ghana
· Ghana National Catholic Secretariat
· Ghana Pentecostal Council
· Federation of Muslim Councils
· Council of Independent Churches
· Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission

Plate 19. Ghana Election 2000: Call for a Clean Election Campaign. This advertisement was published in The Independent, October 19th 2000. The call was signed by key religious bodies, including the Federation of Muslim Councils and the Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission. The text reads: "Everyone is needed: Every party, every person, every religion, every group."

NDC vice-presidential candidate, even believed that the elections would be decided by the voters of the *zongo*s.[108]

However, as has been stated above, one cannot speak about a 'Muslim factor' in contemporary Ghanaian politics: most, if not all, of the Muslim politicians are members of (secular) national parties, they serve a (secular) national government

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[108] *Africa Confidential* 45: 24 (3 December 2004). However, some Muslim leaders urged the 2004 vice-presidential candidates to refrain of using Islam in politics, "NGO commends NPP and NDC for electing Muslims as running mates," ´GRi Newsreel 4.10.2004, http://ghanareview.com/review/index.php?date=2004-10-04&id=7553 (9.11.2005).

Plate 20. Foundation stone of the Accra Central Friday Mosque at Aboosey Okay Road, 2003; photo: HW.

and make a clear distinction between their personal faith and the secular constitution of the Ghanaian state. This is most evident in the case of Vice-President Alhaji Aliu Mahama (NPP). When making public appearances, he is the spokesperson and defender of the Ghanaian (secular) civil society and political order, and when appearing at Muslim gatherings and events, his mission has been to bridge the gap between the Muslim community and the (secular) government, urging the Muslims to fully integrate into Ghanaian civil society.[109]

The political split of the Muslim voters in contemporary Ghana is also reflected in the various attempts by the Muslim leadership to create a unified platform for the various Muslim groups in Ghana. Despite there being no Muslim party, several of the Muslim NGOs have been politically active or have been established as voices of the Muslim community. However, as noted above, unity among the Muslims has been a chimera – at least since independence, if not before. There is not one unifying body but several contesting councils, each representing a particular segment of the Muslim population and usually reflecting either ethnic or factional divisions. Despite the attempts by the Nkrumah government to establish one unified body, fissural tendencies have marked the Muslim community at large and have

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[109] Other influential Muslim politicians are Alhaji Iddrisu Mahama, who was Minister of Defence in Rawlings NDC government (1996–2000), Issifu Ali (Chairman of the NDC before 2000), Huudu Yahya (General Secretary of the NDC before 2000), Alhaji Malik Alhassan, who served as Minister of the Interior in the first NPP government before his resignation due to the Dagbon Crisis in 2002 (but is currently/2005/ the Second Deputy Speaker of Parliament), and Sheikh I.C. Quaye, Greater Accra Region Minister since 2001.

Plate 21. Accra Central Friday Mosque, 2003; photo: HW.

become evident since the dissolution of the Muslim Council of Ghana in 1966. As a consequence, a new, basically non-political, organization, the Ghana Muslim Community (GMC) was created in 1966.[110]

The formation of the GMC signalled a new direction for Muslim organizations. Though the GMC was to be a mouthpiece for the Muslim community, its aim was to serve as the representative of the Muslim community at large in its dealings with the state authorities. However, the GMC refrained from actively taking part in national, regional or even local politics. However, the attempt of the GMC to serve as a unifying factor was soon challenged by segments of the Muslim population who questioned the prominent role of the Hausa and Yoruba Muslim leaders. Furthermore, the Hausa and Yoruba communities had been decimated due to of the 1969 deportations.[111] As a result, in 1969 some Ga Muslims and Muslims from the northern parts of Ghana established the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (SCIA), thereby actualizing the internal rift of the Ghanaian Muslim community.[112] In an attempt to overcome this rift, the GMC and the Ghana Muslim Mission (GMM), an organization representing the Ga Muslim community in Accra,[113] formed a single

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[110] See further Mumuni 1994, 105–108.

[111] Mumuni 1994, 106.

[112] The aim of the SCIA was to serve as a mouthpiece for Muslims not only in Accra but in Ghana as a whole (Mumuni 1994, 67, 71, 141–142).

[113] The Ghana Muslim Mission was founded in 1957 by, in Dretke's words, "new orthodox Muslims" who were open to new trends and the modern world (Dretke 1968, 92). At first, the aim of the GMM was to champion the cause of the Ga Muslim converts. Today, the GMM has regional branches in six regions although most of its activities are still concentrated to the South. The organization regards itself as being the representative of 'indigenous' and newly converted Muslims; in 1967 it established a women's wing, the Muslim Women's Fellowship, and in 1970 a youth organization, the Ghana Muslim Youth League (Mumuni 1994, 66, 117–122).

loose body, the Ghana Islamic Council (GIC) in 1971. However, unity did not last for long as the GMM soon withdrew.[114] In 1973, a new umbrella organization for all Muslims was formed under the auspices of the military regime, the Ghana Muslim Representative Council (GMRC); the GMC, the GMM and the SCIA being its component bodies.[115] However, in 1977 the GMRC had already lost its credibility when the GMC decided to withdraw from the body. Its main, if not only, political statement was in 1978 when the GMRC together with most of the Muslim chiefs gave its support to Acheampong's idea of creating a so-called Union Government (UniGov).[116]

After the failed attempts during the late 1970s to establish a united platform, a new Islamic council named the United Ghana Muslim Representative Council (UGMRC) was formed in 1984,[117] thus challenging the already existing GMRC. Rivalry soon emerged between the two bodies and in 1985 another new organization, the National Islamic Secretariat (NIS), was formed as an umbrella platform for all Muslim organizations in the country. A few years later, in 1988, the NIS was transformed into the Federation of Muslim Councils (FMC).[118] In the same period, a national Muslim women's organization, the National Assembly of Muslim Women, was founded in 1981.[119] Since then, there has been an upsurge of Muslim women's groups, which led to the establishment of the Federation of Muslim Women Associations of Ghana (FOMWAG) in 1997.[120]

A further change in the landscape of Muslim umbrella organizations occurred in 1989. In that year, the PNDC government passed a law requiring the registration of the various religious organizations in Ghana as an attempt at surveillance due to the upsurge of new, mainly Christian, religious movements.[121] However, for the

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[114] On the GIC, see Mumuni 1994, 142–143.

[115] On the GMRC, see Mumuni 1994, 144–149; Samwini 2006, 124. E.g., the objective of the GMRC was to supervise *hajj* preparations and to mediate in the appointment and dismissals of imams. Additionally, the GMRC was supposed to cooperate with the Ghanaian government in the promotion of Muslim educational facilities. However, especially the mishandling of the *hajj* operations was to cause immense criticism from the Muslims in Ghana and, eventually, the task was taken away from the GMRC. See further Chapter VI.4.3.

[116] Pobee 1992; Mumuni 1994, 67, 71–72; Ryan 1996, 320–321; Okafor 1997, 147.

[117] Members of the UGMRC included the GMC, the Ansaru-Din-il-Islamiyyah, the Islamic Research and Reformation Centre, the National Council of Ulama and Imams, the Council of Muslim Chiefs and the Association of Muslim Elders (Mumuni 1994, 74, 155–156).

[118] Mumuni 1994, 158–159; Ryan 1996, 321.

[119] Mumuni 1994, 71.

[120] Mumuni 2002, 149.

[121] Religious Freedom Report 1999: Ghana, 1; Religious Freedom Report 2000: Ghana, 1; Religious Freedom Report 2001: Ghana, 2. The law was vehemently criticized by Christian organizations, who argued that the law was in contrast to the concept of religious freedom in the country. In 1992, the law was repealed. However, religious institutions that wish formal recognition are required to register with the Registrar General's Department, which is said to be a formality. The content of the registration includes Name of the Organization, Date of Formation, Name of Trustees, Membership of an Executive Council, Address, Declaration of Income and Property, and Requirements for an Annual General meeting. In addition, the organization has to pay fees for the application form
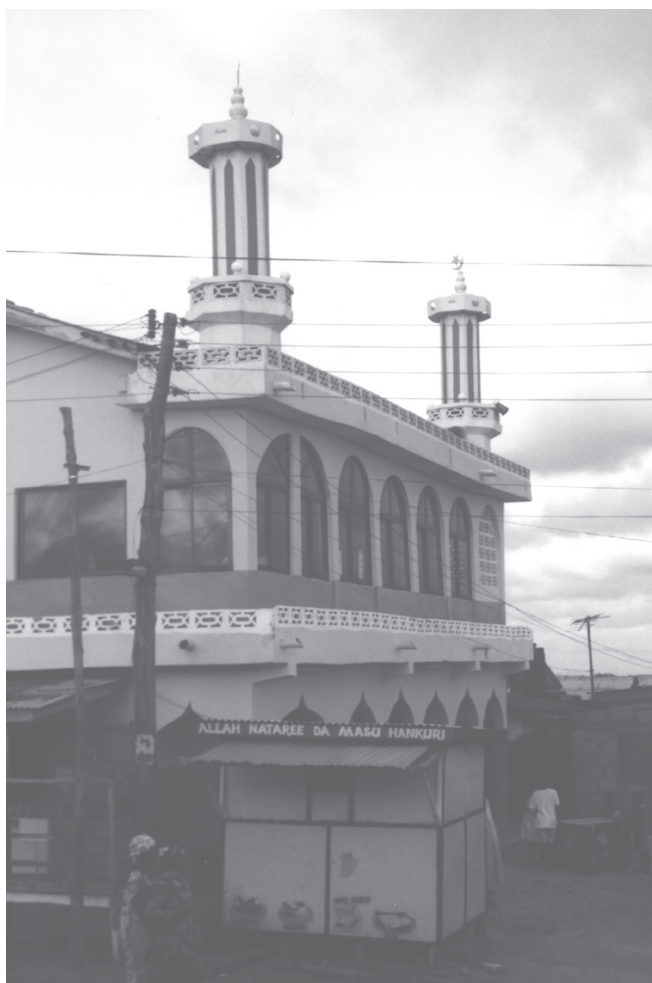
Plate 22. Residence and mosque of the National Chief Imam, Tesano/Accra, 2003; photo: HW.

Muslim community and the various Muslim organizations, the 1989 Religious Bodies Registration Law was problematic due to the constant internal conflicts and disunity. Thus, yet another Muslim platform, the Dinil-Islam of Ghana (DIG), was created in 1991, aiming at covering all Muslim organizations. The idea was that only the DIG would be registered, but the attempt was challenged by the FMC, which also applied for registration. Both bodies were eventually registered.[122]

At the time of writing [i.e., 2005], the GMRC, the FMC and the DIG are more or less low-activity organizations and their national impact is minimal. Within the Muslim community, the office of the National Chief Imam as well as the National Council of Muslim Chiefs seems to have a more profound influence. The weakness of the various organizations is mainly due to their lack of financial resources and weak administrative structures. Even worse, according to Linden, the potential of

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(in 2004, GHC 5000), the registration form (in 2004, GHC 35,000), for the registration (in 2004, GHC 610,000), and for the annual renewal of the registration (in 2004, GHC 150,000). The point is, however, that formally recognized religions are exempt from paying tax on ecclesiastical, charitable, and educational activities that do not generate income from trade or business. Business activities that generate income are not exempt (Religious Freedom Report 2004, 51).

[122] Mumuni 1994, 162–164; Samwini 2006, 109–110.

the various Muslim bodies for peace-building has been and is correspondingly low. This is mainly due to the fact that the Muslim leaders assembled in the various councils represent different Islamic groups and factions and seek to sustain the legitimacy of their own position as Muslim interlocutors with the government.[123]

Another problem with the various Muslim bodies has been the dominating role of the state in the formation of some of these organizations. Various Ghanaian governments and regimes have been eager to present themselves as encouraging for the unity of the Muslim community and engaging the Muslim community in its national policies. Thus, the Nkrumah government was active in the formation of the MCG, the Busia government in the formation of the SCIA, the Acheampong regime in the establishment of the GMRC, and the PNDC regime in the foundation of the NIS and the DIG. Government influence was perhaps most direct in 1982 when Rawlings established the National Muslim Task Force with the aim to mobilize the Muslim population for his programme for national economic recovery.[124] The end effect, however, of government involvement was that none of the Muslim Councils was regarded by the Muslim masses as their own initiative and, consequently, received little backing from them. This resulted in many of the councils turning out to be playing grounds for a few activists.[125]

The assessment by Muslim intellectuals and scholars – especially among the Ahlus-Sunna (see below) – not affiliated with these bodies is that they have failed to achieve their main objective, namely to unite the different Muslim factions and that large sections of the Muslim population are not represented in these bodies.[126] Thus, with the rise in political activity among Muslims during the last decade, the call for unity has been made the top priority and is championed by the Coalition of Muslim Organisations – Ghana (COMOG). This umbrella platform was formed in 2002 as an attempt to tackle the issue of weak leadership among the Muslims and to champion the cause of Muslims in Ghanaian society. The idea to establish yet another Muslim platform was proposed in a radio programme on VIBE-FM at a discussion on Muslim leadership and was continued at a conference on Muslim national leadership held at Legon in August 2000. The outcome of the conference was the formation of a Muslim task force which was entrusted with starting a dialogue with the existing Muslim leadership institutions concerning the need to establish an effective and efficient national platform[127]. In December 2002, a second

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[123] Linden 2004, 6.
[124] Rawlings' first takeover in 1979 created some friction between the Muslim leadership and the new rulers when Rawlings repeatedly accused the Muslim community of being the source of much of the economic corruption, especially in the area of illegal currency exchanges and dubious business dealings. However, during his second stay in power, Rawlings did not raise much criticism and thus the potential conflict abated. Mumuni 1994, 174; Ryan 1996, 321.
[125] Mumuni 1994, 71–72, 138, 167–168.
[126] HW field notes and observations 1999–2005. Also noted in Linden 2004.
[127] "Muslims tackle leadership problem," The Accra Mail Online, 19.10.2000, http://www.africa-online.com.gh/accramail/210118/public1.html (22.1.2001).

leadership conference was organized which led to the formation of the COMOG. During the first years, the core group of the platform was the Interim National Executive Committee (INEC), headed by Major (rtd) Alhaji Mohammed Eassah, who is currently the President of the COMOG.[128]

The aim of the COMOG is to create a vibrant Muslim leadership body which should include all Ghanaian Muslim organizations, institutions and representatives of different doctrinal orientations.[129] Furthermore, to actualize its national outreach, the platform is supposed to establish itself at the regional and district level. To some extent, the COMOG has been successful in its organizational aspirations.[130] However, as during the previous attempts to create a unified body, the establishment of the COMOG has not been applauded by all Muslim groups. Right from the beginning, the FMC and the GMM have boycotted the platform. In an interview, the National Coordinator of the FMC, Alhaji Abdallah Showmi Williams stated that it is the FMC which has been actively involved in improving the conditions of the Ghanaian Muslim population due to their internaction with the Ghanaian government and non-governmental organizations, such as the Forum of Religious Bodies (FRB). Instead, he invited the COMOG to join the FMC.[131] Another group that is suspicious of the COMOG is the Council of Muslim Chiefs. Consequently, the main problem of the COMOG is the lack of trust in the organization on the part of the Muslim community, especially from the old Muslim leadership. The National Chief Imam, among others, has regarded the COMOG as a rival who wants to take over power. The Muslim members of the Ghanaian government were also initially suspicious of the organization and did not want to deal with it or even recognize its existence. On the other hand, the National Imam of the Ahlus-Sunna supports the organization.[132]

During the last years, however, the COMOG seems to have been able to establish a working relationship with both the National Chief Imam and the Ghanaian government. Whereas its attempt to engage in the peace process after the 2002

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[128] Mumuni interview 11.3.2005. Other key members are Malam Adam, First Chairman of the taskforce, Alhaji Mumuni Sulemana, Second Chairman of the taskforce and First Vice-President of the COMOG and Shaykh Ishaq Nuamah, Second Vice-President of the COMOG. Alhaji Moham-med Baba Alhassan serves as the General Secretary of COMOG. The formation of the coalition was positively acclaimed in the Ahlus-Sunna journal, which carried a two-page coverage of the confer-ence, "Towards a unified Muslim leadership," *The Muslim Searchlight*, Vol 1, No 36, 10–23 January 2003.

[129] In 2005 the COMOG comprised about 153 Muslim associations throughout the country, includ-ing the Ahlus-Sunna, Tijaniyya, Shiʿa, Muslim student groups, Muslim women groups as well as Muslim professionals. "HAJJ Pilgrimage difficulties far from over," *Ghanaian Chronicle*, 7.6.2005, http://db.ghanaian-chronicle.com/thestory.asp?id=6172 (25.10.2005).

[130] Up to July 2003, taskforces have been inaugurated for the Upper East Region, the Western Re-gion and the Greater Accra Region. "Let's Unite By Deeds – Nii Futa Urges Muslims," *Accra Mail Online*, 31.7.2003, http://allafrica.com/stories/printable/200307310592.html (25.10.2005).

[131] "Why we boycotted Muslim leadership conference – FMC and Muslim Mission explain their stand," *The Muslim Searchlight*, Vol 1, No 37, 24 January – 10 February 2003.

[132] Mumuni interview 11.3.2005.
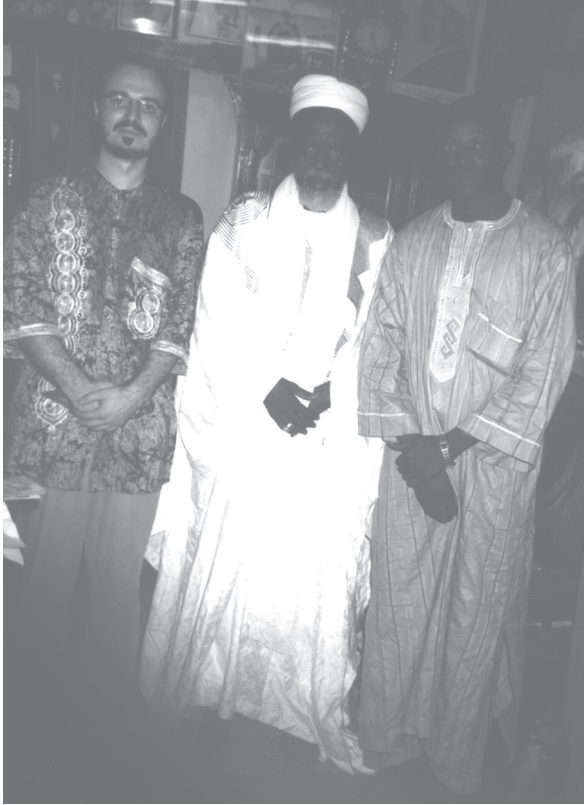
Plate 23. His Highness National Chief Imam Shaykh Uthman Nuhu Sharubutu and Alhaji Mumuni Sulemana, 2003; photo: Yunus Dumbe.

Yendi Conflict – the COMOG presented a plan for peace and confidence building in the Northern Region, especially Dagbon – was disregarded by the government, its engagement in resolving the *hajj* problem has opened new avenues for it, though has not silenced its critics.[133]

3. THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY, THE CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE SECULAR STATE

As discussed above, Islam is not a political factor in contemporary Ghana. However, one could argue that there is a latent 'Muslim factor' present in Ghanaian national politics – and most certainly on a regional and local level. The 'Muslim factor' can be defined as the attempt to create or formulate a religious identity as a unifying marker rather than using ethnic affiliation. This has clearly been evident during the last two elections. However, there is no uniform Muslim community in Ghana – as there is no uniform Christian community, either. Ghanaian Muslims are split along ethnic and 'sectarian' lines. Seen from a local standpoint, there are so-called 'alien' and 'national migrant' Muslims (a definition following a nationalistic concept commonly in use in Ghana), in addition to indigenous ones. Doctrinal, not ethnic

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[133] Mumuni interview 2005; "COMOG organizes HAJJ Conference," *Accra Daily Mail* 5.4.2005, http://www.accra-mail.com/mailnews.asp?ID=12487 (18.4.2005); "Hajj Pilgrimage difficulties, clarifications – Another view," *Ghanaian Chronicle* 16.6.2005, http://www.ghanaian-chronicle. com/thestory.asp?id=6324 (25.10.2005).

or political, issues have caused rifts among the Ghanaian Muslim community and have led to tensions among different Muslim groups (or 'sects' as they are termed in Ghana).

Doctrinal divisions had not been an issue during the precolonial period, though there had been some Muslim scholars who were critical about the accommodationist approach that was the common norm of interaction. Some scholars even publicly challenged the prevailing status quo with revivalist agitation, but these were generally local affairs in the North. Muslim militant reform movements that swept over most of the Sudanic savannah left the Voltaic Basin and Asante more or less untouched. However, there was an increasing tension in the region starting from the end of the nineteenth century. Some Hausa scholars started to criticize local Muslims for their lax behaviour, and at the beginning of the twentieth century, itinerant Mahdistic preachers caused turmoil among the non-Muslim population in the North. Whereas the Hausa critics never turned to violence but rather tried to clearly demarcate their own religious and cultural sphere in their *zongo*s, the activities of the Mahdistic preachers were soon checked by the colonial authorities and Mahdism never gained any roots in the Gold Coast. At the same time, a more invisible process was going on within the Muslim community, namely the peaceful spread of the Tijaniyya. This Sufi Order seems to have been introduced at the end of the nineteenth century and was soon to become the most influential order in the region. Since the 1950s, if not earlier, the Tijaniyya has become the most dominant Muslim group in Ghana and today there are only a few adherents of the other influential West African Sufi Order, the Qadiriyya, in the country.[134] A clear sign of the prominence and influence of the Tijaniyya is that, so far, one of their scholars has always been elected National Chief Imam, the present one being Shaykh Uthman Nuhu Sharubutu.[135]

The first doctrinal rift among the Muslim community occurred when the Ahmadiyya mission started its operations in the Gold Coast during the 1920s, but their impact has mainly been in some localities in the Central Region as well as in Wa in the Upper West Region.[136] During the 1940s and especially since independence, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission has expanded its activities in the North, primarily concentrating on Tamale. Here the Ahmadi community has had a remarkable increase in numbers during the 1990s, rising from 400−500 adherents in 1995 to about two thousand in 2000.[137] However, it is in the South where the Ahmadiyya has its strongest presence and it is there, at first in Saltpond (Central Region) but

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[134] The main source on the establishment and development of the Tijaniyya in Ghana is still Stewart 1965. See also Mumuni 1994, 46–47. The spiritual head and leader (*muqaddam*) of the Tijaniyya in Ghana was until 2005 the late Shaykh Abdallah Ahmed Mai Kano (Maikano), one of the followers of Shaykh Ibrahima Niasse. He lived in Prang in the Brong-Ahafo Region. ("Sheikh Maikano," *Accra Daily Mail*, 23.9.2005, http://www.accra-mail.com/mailnews.asp?ID=14134 (8.2.2006).

[135] Mumuni 1994, 1994, 45, 49.

[136] See further Chapter V.3.1**.**

[137] Ihle 2003, 85.

Plate 24. National headquarters of the Ahlus-Sunna, Nima/Accra, 2003; photo: HW.

nowadays in Nyaniba Estate, Osu in Accra, where the Ghanaian headquarters is located and where the National Head of the Ahmadiyya, Maulvi Abdul Wahhab Adams,[138] resides. The Missionary Training College for West Africa, an Ahmadi institution, still remains in Saltpond.[139] Although the relationship between members of the Ahmadiyya and the Tijaniyya were strained until the 1950s, since the 1970s there have been few reports about conflicts between the Ahmadiyya and other Muslim groups. Instead, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission has become an integral part of the Ghanaian religious landscape during the last decades. However, whilst the Ahmadiyya leadership has cordial relations with the Tijaniyya, they have little to do with the Ahlus-Sunna.[140]

A much more serious doctrinal rift within the Sunni Muslim community was caused by the dissemination of Islamist and Wahhabi ideas. The influence of

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[138] Maulvi Wahhab Adams was nominated in 1982 (Mumuni, personal information 2005; according to Samwini 2006, 151 fn 418, he has been head since 1974) and is the first Ghanaian to hold the post. The headquarters of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission is located in London.

[139] For an outline of the institutional organization, programmes and activities of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission (AMM) in Ghana, see Samwini 2006, 147–172.

[140] Mumuni, personal information 2005; Samwini 2006, 166, 193–198. However, Samwini underlines that the relationship between the Tijanis and the Ahmadis remained strained until the 1990s.

Islamism and Wahhabism in Ghana goes back to the late 1950s and early 1960s, namely when Egypt and Saudi Arabia opened their diplomatic missions in Ghana. Several organizations have been established since the late 1960s to champion the cause of Islamism, including the Institute of Islamic Studies, the Islamic Research and Reformation Centre, the Supreme Council for Islamic Call and Research, and the Islamic Charity Centre for Women Orientation.[141] In 1997, the Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jamaʿah (ASWAJ) was established as an umbrella organisation for all Wahhabi-inspired organizations in Ghana, and the movement is led by their own National Imam, Shaykh ʿUmar Ibrahim Imam[142] (see further below, Chapter VI.4.3.).

Intra-religious conflicts within the Muslim community have a global dimension. Though links between local Muslim scholars and the outside world have existed for centuries, a political dimension to these connections was added as a consequence of the establishment of diplomatic contacts with Middle Eastern countries during the twentieth century. During Nkrumah's era, Ghana established diplomatic links with Egypt (1957) and Saudi Arabia (1960/1974). These contacts enabled Ghanaian Muslim students to go abroad and study at universities in these countries. Another consequence of these Middle Eastern contacts was the beginning of direct and indirect support for Ghanaian Muslim organizations by various Islamic governmental and non-governmental bodies. Muslim students were [and still are] studying at al-Azhar University in Cairo, thereby being influenced by a vibrant Sunni Muslim cosmopolitan atmosphere, although it seems as if Ghanaian students had little contact with radical Egyptian Muslim organizations, such as the Muslim Brotherhood. Egyptian influence in Ghana was most profound during the Nkrumah era when the Centre for Islamic Studies in Accra, which was linked to the Ghana Muslim Council (GMC), was supported by Nasser and served as a link between Ghanaian and Egyptian Muslims. With the downfall of Nkrumah and the dissolution of the GMC, the Centre was also closed down.[143]

However, since the 1970s, Saudi Arabia together with some other Gulf countries have become the most important partners of Ghanaian Muslim organizations and councils.[144] Muslim students who went to Saudi Arabia to study at the Islamic

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[141] Mumuni 1994, 51–53; personal observations November 2001. Also Linden 2004, 3–4.

[142] Shaykh ʿUmar Ibrahim Imam, who studied in Egypt (1958–1960) and Saudi Arabia (1961–1968), was among the first Ghanaian Muslims to graduate from the Islamic University in Medina, Saudi Arabia. He returned to Ghana in 1968 and started to preach in the Kado (Nima Central) mosque. Samwini 2006, 173–174, 183.

[143] Balogun 1987, 182; Ryan 1996, 320.

[144] The question of Saudi influence in Ghana is not well-researched. Some observers argue that large Arab international Islamic organizations, such as the Saudi-based Muslim World League (MWL) are increasingly involved in the training of Muslim preachers and youth leaders (Hock 2003, 45; Mc-Cormack 2005, 5–6; Linden 2004, 5–6). This seems to be a well-established fact at least in Nigeria, but is more problematic in the case of Ghana. Though the Saudi-connection in Ghana is evident, the MWL-link is perhaps more indirect as the organization has no office in Ghana (http://www.muslimworldleague.org/mwlwbsite_eng/new_page_3.htm [17.10.2005]). On the other hand, some Ghanaian Muslim organizations, such as the FMC, GMM, GMRC and the National Assembly of

Plate 25. Headquarters of the Supreme Council for Islamic Call and the Muslim Family Counselling Services, Nima/Accra, 2003; photo: HW.

universities had often become ardent followers of the 'Islamic' way, i.e., assumed a Wahhabi interpretation of Islamic norms and legal – Hanbali – traditions. However, this new religious identity has so far not been politically articulated in Ghana. Instead, the returnees have directed their energy towards the internal affairs of the Ghanaian Muslim community, leading to a clash between the old Muslim elite and the foreign-trained 'teachers' who received an education in a version of Islam that emphasizes the importance of the global Islamic community against the local traditions and is modelled on a more exclusivist, often anti-sufi, form of Islam. These foreign trained teachers and imams have been able to establish new, financially more effective networks, and, Linden notes that:

> [W]hile imams trained under these circumstances may not accept the "full package" ideologically – some may react strongly against it – most would look first to their mission societies for funding for Mosque and school building on their return. A few may also receive monthly stipends for their work approved by the societies.[145]

Most importantly, however, was the open rift in the Muslim community that has emerged with the establishment of the foreign links. In Ghana, the Ahlus-Sunna group refused to join any of the existing Muslim umbrella bodies. Instead, as noted

Muslim Women [but not FOMWAG], have been and are affiliated with the MWL (Mumuni 1994, 122, 131, 153, 162). In addition, Shaykh I.C. Quaye, Greater Accra Regional Minister in the current NPP government, is the Ghanaian representative to the MWL (Mumuni interview 11.3.2005).
[145] Linden 2004, 6.

Plate 26. Headquarters of the Islamic Council for Development and Humanitarian Services, ICODEHS, Accra New Town/Accra, 2003; photo: HW. A view of the Orphans Sponsorship Program Department. There is also a library attached to the headquarters.

above, they formed the national platform in 1997 and selected their own National Imam.[146]

Further dimensions to the global outreach of Ghanaian Muslim connections were added during the 1970s and 1980s. Ghana established diplomatic links with Libya (1961–1968, and, again, after 1979/81) and Iran (1974/1982), and in both cases the 'Muslim factor' has been present, especially during the 'revolutionary' period of the Rawling's era. Both countries have actively tried to set up links with Muslim organizations and councils in Ghana. During the 1970s and 1980s, Libyan engagement in Ghanaian Muslim affairs was profound, especially due to the activities of the World Islamic Call Society (WICS), a Libyan international organization, under whose auspices the Ghanaian National Islamic Secretariat (NIS) was transformed into the Federation of Muslim Councils (FMC) in 1987. Since then, the FMC has been affiliated with the World Islamic Call Society and the Muslim World League.[147] However, due to the international boycott of Libya during the 1990s, Libya's connection and influence in Ghana has become rather

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[146] Linden 2004, 6; Samwini 2006, 174. On the ASWAJ in Ghana, its organization and activities, see further Samwini 2006, 172–187. The national headquarters of the Ahlus-Sunna is in Nima. Regional offices exist in Kumasi, Accra, Akwatia, Agona Nyakrom and Tamale.
[147] Mumuni 1994, 158–162. However, according to Samwini (2006, 210), the friendship between the WICS and the FMC became constrained in 1998.

weak, though still exists[148] – mostly channelled through the Libyan Arab Culture Centre in Accra – and, at least before the clashes in Tripoli in 2000, a few thousand Ghanaians were living in Libya.[149]

The Iranian connection, on the other hand, has gained prominence since the 1990s. Muslim students have been studying at Iranian universities, some of them returning to Ghana as Shiʻa converts. A small, but vibrant, Shiʻa community of Ghanaians has since then emerged in Accra and also in Tamale.[150] However, the coming of yet another Muslim group has not been without frictions within the Ghanaian Muslim community, and there have been disputes about mosques in Accra during the early 1990s. However, these conflicts have been solved since then and, with the active engagement of the Iranian embassy, the Shiʻa community has gained respect among the Sunni Muslim community in Accra. At present, the key institution of the Ghanaian Shiʻa community is their Central Mosque in Mamobi in Accra, in addition to the Fatima bintul Zahra Vocational Training Centre for Muslim Girls (Mamobi), the Ahlul-Bayt Theological Institute (in Dzorwulu, Accra) – which serves as a West African centre for the Shia community. Additionally, the World Ahlul-Bayt Assembly constitutes an umbrella organization for the Ghanaian Shiʻa community.[151]

The most profound effect, however, of the Gulf connection has been the transfer of development aid and assistance from Muslim countries and international Islamic organizations to Ghana.[152] These links were first established on a private basis when Ghanaian returnees from the Middle Eastern countries established philanthropic and educational institutions which started to receive financial assistance from Muslim countries. After the oil boom, and especially since the 1990s, the Ghanaian state, too, has received development aid, investments and loans from Muslim countries and Islamic banks, such as the Saudi-based Islamic Development Bank (IDB), or through Islamic aid organizations, such as the Saudi-based International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO) or the Kuwaiti African Muslim Agency (AMA). Due

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[148] For example, in 2003 the WICS together with some Ghanaian Muslim NGOs sponsored the Seventh Annual Islamic Quiz Competition for Secondary Schools. See further "Exhibit high moral standards – Muslim youth urged," *The Muslim Searchlight*, Vol. 1 No 44, 20 June–3 July 2003.

[149] "Ghanaians flee Libyan attacks," *BBC News* 9.10.2000, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/963215. stm (29.1.2006). Since then, the Ghanaian-Libyan connections are lukewarm at best. In 2004 some 6,000 Ghanaians were deported from Libya. However, most of the 10,000 – 20,000 Ghanaians residing in Libya in 2004/5 were waiting for (illegal) shipment to the European Union and the Ghanaian, "Ghana defends rights of illegal immigrants in Libya," *afrol News* 11.3.2005, http://www.afrol. com/articles/15868 (29.1.2007)

[150] According to Annette Haber Ihle, the Shiʻa community in Tamale was established by Shaykh Abdul Mumin ('Abd al-Mu'min, who converted from an Ahlus-Sunna affiliation to Shiʻism after a visit to Iran and further studies at the Imam Husein University in Karachi (Pakistan). The Shiʻa community in Tamale has about two hundred members and, since 1994, a mosque in the Tamale suburb of Fuo. The community also runs a boarding (PS and JSS level) school there. See further Ihle 2003, 94–95.

[151] Mumuni 1994, 54–56; Ryan 1996, 321–323; Mumuni 2002; Dumbe 2005.

[152] The impact and influence of Muslim NGOs in Ghana is discussed in Weiss 2007a.

to these connections, there is a risk of giving economic assistance a religious label: the Christian NGOs as well as the Ghanaian state receive most, if not all, of their international assistance from Western donors whereas 'Muslim' money is transferred to Muslim organizations. So far, however, the religious factor has not been played out on the national level: official Saudi and Iranian investment, for example, is generally presented to the Ghanaian public as being for the common good of the Ghanaian people.[153] Such a position is also articulated by local Muslim philanthropists, such as Shaykh Tahir Swallah Saleh, the Director of the Bureau for the Service to Islamic Institutions (BSII),[154] when he commissioned a well for a predominantly Christian community in the Central Region and told the audience: "The well we are commissioning is not for the Muslims in this village but for the entire people of Brabedze."[155] One cannot, on the other hand, disregard the religious factor, either. 'Muslim' investment has increasingly made itself visible in the form of hundreds of newly-built mosques throughout the country, thereby competing in visibility with the mushrooming of new churches and chapels of the various Christian denominations.[156]

Consequently, the loyalty of the Muslim population towards the secular Ghanaian state is at stake: is it the secular state which is to provide social welfare and security or not? Seen from a Muslim (scholarly) perspective, the Ghanaian secular state is weak and is historically based on a Western/Christian civilizing mission. Modernity, too, is a problematic issue, though especially the leadership and members of the Ahlus-Sunna are to a large extent not hostile to the modern society as such. However, to a large extent it is not the Ghanaian state which provides basic social welfare for the *zongo* communities but non-governmental organizations, mostly Muslim but also others. Spiritual relief and social comfort are also provided by Muslim leaders, and a Muslim would first turn to his imam or Muslim chief for help. These, in turn, might run an NGO or some other council which, in turn, receives 'Muslim' funding. A Muslim would chose to send his children to an Islamic or Arabic-English Kindergarten, Junior and Senior Secondary school or

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[153] Mumuni 1994, 188. According to information from the homepage of the Saudi Fund for Development (SFD), all its loans to Ghana have been directed towards the improvement or construction of infrastructure, educational facilities and health centres, in total 301.65 million SAR (= ca. 64.5 million EUR). See further The Saudi Fund for Development, Appendix 1, Cumulative Loan Agreements Signed by SFD during 1394/1395–1424/1425 (1975–2004 AD), http://www.sfd.gov.sa/english/Appen.htm (17.10.2005). When Mumuni Bawumia served as ambassador to Riyadh during the late 1980s and early 1990s, he tried several times to get Saudi economic assistance and investment for both general Northern and particularly Muslim development and religious projects, but mostly these attempts failed. He rather bitterly commented in his memoirs: "By 1992, my hope in the Arabs as Muslims who could assist fellow African Muslims had faded." (Bawumia 2004, 232).

[154] The BSII is a Ghanaian Muslim NGO, formerly known as Islamic Bureau for the Disabled. See further Weiss 2007a.

[155] "Let Islam reflect our lifestyles – Sheikh Tahir," *The Muslim Searchlight*, Vol. 1 No 32, 4–17 October 2002.

[156] HW, personal observations 1999–2005.

visit – if available – a health clinic run by a Muslim NGO. All of these institutions would either directly or indirectly have received 'Muslim' funding and donations from Muslim NGOs. Thus, Hock's assertion about the perceived positive impact of foreign and local Islamic NGOs by the Muslims on an African scale,[157] holds true for Ghana, namely that these donor organizations – such as the MWL, WICS, IICO[158], AIC[159] or OIC[160] – have contributed to the rise of greater social and political self-assertion among Ghanaian Muslims.

However, how is this new self-assertion articulated within the secular Ghanaian state? Or, put differently, are the foundations of the modern secular state questioned by Ghanaian Muslims? Despite the fact that the contemporary Ghanaian secular state has been weakened by its own economic mismanagement during the 1960s and 1970s and, following Structural Adjustment Programmes and other austere economic programmes, had to reduce its activities to become the provider of minimal, instead of optimal, social welfare and security, the secular structures of the state are not put into question by the Muslim leadership. Ghana has witnessed the emergence of a very vibrant civil society since the 1990s, of which the various Muslim communities are increasingly becoming an integral part. The rise of Muslim NGOs in Ghana can be viewed as part of this process: Muslim organizations and councils are part of, not apart from, Ghanaian society. Muslim organizations are active within the limits of the Ghanaian constitution and legal system: whenever a new organization is established, it is registered by the Ministry of Employment and Social Welfare since if it were not registered, it would be illegal and could not receive any funding from abroad.

The position of the Muslim community in Ghana vis-à-vis the global community and the secular order was further tested after the WTC- and Washington terrorist attacks in September 2001. How would the Muslim community react? It was known that there had been criticism on part of the Muslim leadership of Western policies in the Middle East, of Western inactivity in the war in Bosnia and Chechnya and of the 1991 Gulf War. The response of the Muslim leadership, Tijani, Ahlus-Sunna, Ahmadi and Shiʿa, and the various Muslim councils after 9/11 was one of dismay and repudiation. A unanimous declaration of sympathy for the victims followed as well as reassurances that Islam does not back terrorism. In his Ramadan message in November 2001, Kwame Nsiah summarized much of the Ghanaian Muslim position:

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[157] Hock 2003, 45.
[158] International Islamic Charitable Organization, a Kuwaiti-based donor organization.
[159] African Islamic Centre, originally founded in Omdurman in 1967 and restructured as the International University of Africa. Its impact in Ghana has, to my knowledge, been negligible.
[160] Organisation of the Islamic Conference. So far, the OIC has had few contacts with Ghanaian Muslim NGOs. The OIC has showed some interest in establishing links with the FOMWAG, but nothing concrete has emerged so far. Mumuni, personal information 2005.

> The politics of many a Muslim nation has been characterized with much unrest and with much bloodshed which tend to give Islam a bad name, and make it seem that the world would have been a more peaceful place without Islam.

Writing critically about the killing in the name of Islam in Algeria, Indonesia and the Sudan as well as condemning the death sentences by Northern Nigerian Sharia courts, he adds: "There also exists among Muslims the suicide bombers who claims to be in the order of Jihad of Islam. And Jihad has since been given a weird interpretation to put us in doubt about peace in Islam."[161]

However, there were critical voices about the subsequent US invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq. Kwame Nsiah ended his 2001 Ramadan message by questioning the ethical grounds for the US threat of bombing Afghanistan.[162] In 2003, some Ghanaian Muslim scholars asked Allah to destroy the US in their supplications. This event led to a fierce reaction including from the leadership of the Ahlus-Sunna. Shaykh Hidr Idris declared that the prayer was not directed literally at American citizens, "but at the enemies of Islam and Muslims who are at the helm of affairs in America."[163] However, during recent years, much of the hostility has faded away, mostly because of the determined policy of the US embassy in Accra to create an atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding. This policy has rested on two pillars: first, to invite representatives of the Muslim intelligentsia and members of the various Muslim political bodies to visit the USA and to become acquainted with the lives of Muslims in the US, and, second, to make contributions to Muslim communities during Muslim Festivals and to establish a dialogue with the Muslim leadership.[164] So far, the US policy has been fruitful and has led to the establishment of a new Muslim platform, the Friends Against Global Terrorism (FAGLAT). Among others, the National Imam of the Ahlus-Sunna, Shaykh Umar Ibrahim Imam, changed after his visit to the USA to a pro-US mood. Previously, he declared in an interview, he had at most been lukewarm, if not indifferent, to American policy. Since then, both he and Alhaji Shaiub Abubakar, another key figure of the Supreme Council of Islamic Research and Call, have joined FAGLAT. Similarly, the office of the National Chief Imam of Ghana maintains good relationships with the US embassy.[165]

However, any analysis of Muslims in contemporary Ghana falls short if the Muslim community and Islam are perceived as monolithic and a uniform entity. They are not. While the Muslim leadership at the national level are keen to work

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[161] Kwame Nsiah, "Ramadhan is here again," *The Ghanaian Chronicle*, 14.11.2001.

[162] Kwame Nsiah, "Ramadhan is here again," *The Ghanaian Chronicle*, 14.11.2001.

[163] "Prayer of Ulama not Directed at Americans," *The Muslim Searchlight*, Vol 1 No 36, 10–23 January 2003.

[164] Religious Freedom Report 2005, 54; "America is not against Islam – US Embassy," *Accra Daily Mail*, 2.11.2005, http://www.accra-mail.com/mailnews.asp?ID=14532 (8.2.2006).

[165] Dumbe 2005, 79–83; HW, interview with Shaykh Umar Ibrahim Imam, 22.10.2003; HW, Hajj Mumuni personal communications, 2003–2005.

Region	Total population	Muslim population
Upper West	576,583	185,899
Upper East	920,089	207,434
Northern	1,820,806	1,022,331
Brong Ahafo	1,815,408	292,840
Ashanti	3,612,950	477,214
Eastern	2,106,696	128,407
Volta	1,635,421	83,350
Western	1,924,577	164,394
Central	1,524,577	147,166
Greater Accra	2,905,726	295,759
Total population	18,912,079	3,004,794

Table 6. Returns of the 2000 Census. (Source: 2000 Population & Housing Census. Summary/Report of Final Results. Ghana Statistical Service, Accra, March 2002, Table 7)

for a good relation with the secular state, one can find local scholars and individuals who put the secular nature of the state in question. The Nigerian example, with some states applying Muslim Law and others not, might serve as an example for some radicals to propose a similar solution for Ghana, especially in the Muslim-dominated kingdoms of the North. Despite the fact that the Muslim leadership on a national level are committed to the maintenance of a vibrant, multi-cultural and multi-religious civil society, the position of individual Muslims and local communities is as much determined by subjective as objective factors, namely the perception of Muslims that they are a large but still socially, politically and economically marginalized group in Ghana and that the Ghanaian government and state are Christian-dominated.

Academic as well as US government surveys have underlined that, for the time being, it is unlikely that Ghana will become a haven for international 'terrorists'.[166] Although there are politically active Islamist groups in Ghana, radical 'political Islam' in Ghana is mainly concentrating on local, Ghanaian issues, especially the Northern Conflict (see below). In addition, despite the perceived unity of Islam and the Western perception of a rather monolithic Muslim community, local Islamic traditions and the Muslim society in Ghana are distinctively original and diverse.

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[166] "Africa in 15 years: Where will Ghana be?," *Accra Daily Mail*, 31.5.2005, http://www.accra-mail.com/mailnews.asp?id=13060 (8.2.2006).

3.1. Undercounting Muslims? Contesting the 2000 Census Results

Since independence, the Muslim communities have become a more visible part of civil society than they had been during the colonial period. This is in part due to the increase in the number of Muslims living in Ghana, although the outcomes of the various population censuses, most notably the 2000 Population and Housing Census, have been highly contested, especially by the Muslim leadership. At stake is not only the demographic issue of how many Muslims there are in Ghana but the political consequence of the surveys. According to the results of the 2000 Population and Housing Census, out of a total population of 18.9 million Ghanaians, some 2.9 million or 15.6 percent were Muslims whereas more than two-thirds of the population, or 68.8 percent, were Christians (see Table 6).[167] These preliminary results led to an outcry among some Muslim groups, including the Coalition of Muslim Organisations – Ghana (COMOG), who rejected the census. According to Shaykh Seebaway Zakaria, a spokesperson for the COMOG, the census result was an understatement of the strength of Islam in the country. He further stated that the census figures contained serious flaws and therefore could not be used as reliable data for planning and projecting the country's development agenda.[168]

The core argument of the COMOG is that the 2000 census is an undercount of the Muslim population. They claim that the population of Ghana should be about 21.3 million and that the number of Muslims should be about 30 percent of the total population.[169] However, the claims by the Coalition were promptly rejected by the Ghana Statistical Service. According to Dr Kweku A. Twum-Baah, Acting Government Statistician, the Coalition had no basis for rejecting the figures and described the figures presented by the Coalition as resting on an unscientific basis.[170]

Much of the so-called "census war" of 2002 was based on different readings of past censuses and the use of population projections. The COMOG questioned the figures in the 2000 census which seemed to indicate that the Muslim population was more or less static in comparison to earlier censuses. According to the 1960 population census, the population of Ghana was projected at 6.9 million out of which 12 percent were Muslims, 42.8 percent were Christians and 38.2 percent adherents of African Traditional Religions.[171] However, religious classification was
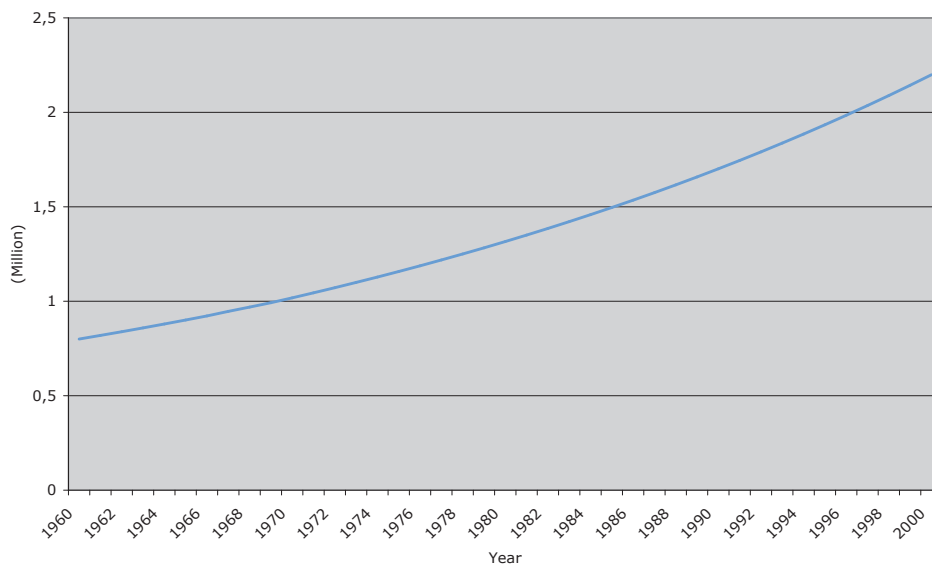
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[167] *2000 Population and Housing Census*, 2002.
[168] Amos Safo, "Muslims cry foul over population figures," *Africanews* – 71 – February 2002, http://web.peacelink.it/afrinews/71_issue/p8.html (19.4.2005).
[169] Amos Safo, "Muslims cry foul over population figures," Africanews – 71 – February 2002, http://web.peacelink.it/afrinews/71_issue/p8.html (19.4.2005).
[170] "Statistical Service rejects claims by Muslim Coalition," GRi Newsreel 10.1.2002, http://www.mclglobal.com/History/Jan2002/10a2002/10a2n.htm (11.1.2002); "Muslims acted too quickly – Director of Statistics," *Daily Graphic*, 12.1.2002, http://www.mclglobal.com/History/Jan2002/12a2002/12a2r.htm (15.1.2002).
[171] *1960 Ghana Population Census*, 1964, lxxxii. Also reproduced in Brempong 1997.

already questioned in the 1960 census,[172] and subsequent Ghanaian censuses did not even collect data on religious affiliation – seemingly in an attempt to depoliticize the religious factor. Any registration of religious affiliation is problematic for the reason that one individual might perceive it as a registration of one's actual belief and religious practice whereas another might take it as an indicator of his or her formal affiliation to a religious community or congregation. However, both Christian and Muslim organizations made their own calculations on how many members they had, either to impress foreign donors or to use their figures in domestic politics. A Ghanaian commentator, Amos Safo, concluded that "it is not so much Muslims' fear of being marginalised in a Christian-dominated country, but that the age-old fear of Islam playing second fiddle to Christianity could be at play once more."[173]

Thus, various Muslim figures for the total number of Ghanaian population can be interpreted as a deliberate attempt to question a Christian 'hegemony' in Ghana. What followed after 1960 was a wide range of projections of the number of Muslims, estimates usually ranging from 25 to 35 percent of the total population during the 1980s and 1990s.[174] Malam Basha, the proprietor of the Nuriyya Islamic Institute in Tamale, claimed in 1996 that seven million people out of a total population of 15 million in Ghana are Muslims![175] Some reports, such as the 1999 Annual Report on International Religious Freedom by the US Department of State, even stated that the majority of the Muslim population lived in the Upper West and Upper East!


Diagram 1. Hypothetical projection of Muslim population 1960–2000. Source: See Appendix I.

[172] *1960 Ghana Population Census*, 1964, xi.
[173] Amos Safo, "Muslims cry foul over population figures," Africanews – 71 – February 2002, http://web.peacelink.it/afrinews/71_issue/p8.html (19.4.2005).
[174] Balogun 1987 (33 percent); Religious Freedom Report 1999: Ghana (27 percent); Higazi 2004, 17; Samwini 2006, 186.
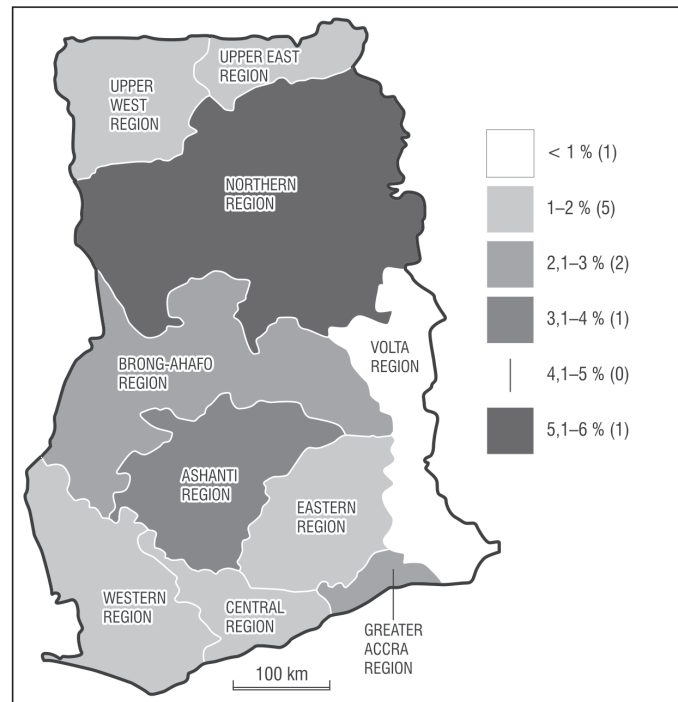[175] Sey 1997b, 150.
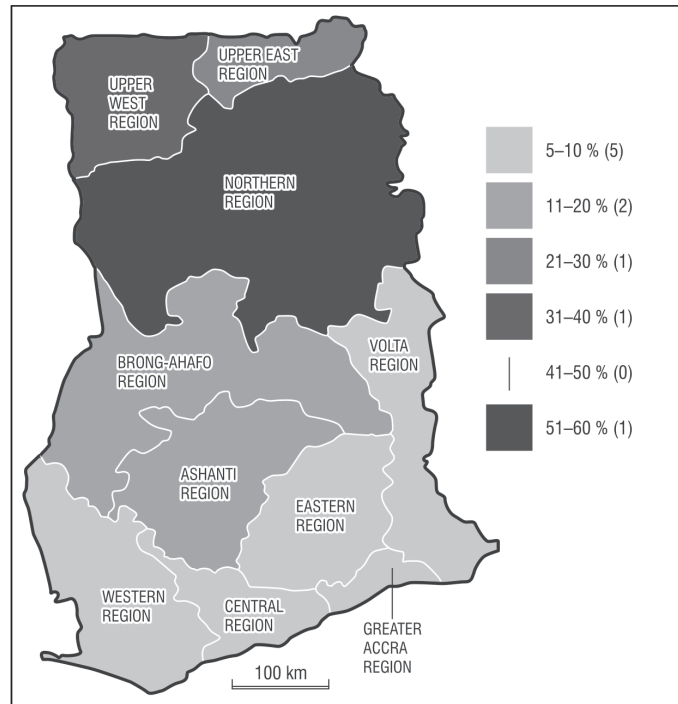
Map 19a. Results of the 2000 census: Percent of Muslims as part of total (number of regions). (Source: Appendix II)
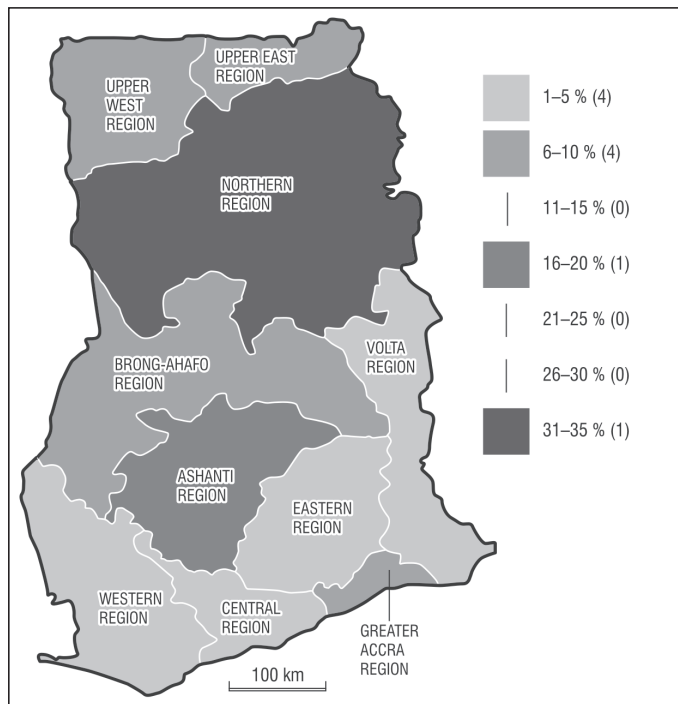
Map 19b. Results of the 2000 census: Percent of Muslims per region as part of total Muslim population (number of regions). (Source: Appendix II)

Map 19c. Results of the 2000 census: Percent of Muslims per region as part of total Ghanaian population (number of regions). (Source: Appendix II)

However, subsequent issues of the report corrected this statement, and – rightly – note that the majority of the Muslims are living in urban centres, such as Accra, Kumasi, Sekondi-Takoradi, Tamale and Wa as well as in the northern areas of the country.[176] Even the data provided by the CIA as late as in 2002 gave the impression of a rather impressive Muslim minority in Ghana – the figures presented by the COMOG in 2002 (Muslims 30 percent, Christians 34 percent and African Tradition Religions 38 percent) were taken from the homepage of the Central Intelligence Agency.[177] Although the CIA World Factbook, has corrected its census data for Ghana since then – in 2005[178] it presented the 2002 census data – the older (and seemingly erroneous) CIA data continues to be used in Islamic statistics, such as the website islamicpopulation.com.[179]

Thus, there is much at stake in Ghanaian censuses, especially with regards to the religious affiliations of the population. Seen from a Muslim perspective, 15.6 or 16 percent seems like a gross miscalculation, if not a politically deliberate attempt

[176] Religious Freedom Report 1999: Ghana, 1; Religious Freedom Report 2000: Ghana, 2; Religious Freedom Report 2001: Ghana, 1; Religious Freedom Report 2002: Ghana, 1; Religious Freedom Report 2003: Ghana, 1. Interestingly, in each International Religious Freedom Report issued, the percentage of the Muslim population was lower than the previous year (1999: 27 %; 2000: 25 %; 2001: 25 %; 2002: 16 %; 2003: 16 %).

[177] Amos Safo, "Muslims cry foul over population figures," Africanews – 71 – February 2002, http://web.peacelink.it/afrinews/71_issue/p8.html (19.4.2005).

[178] http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/gh.html (19.4.2005).

[179] See African Muslim Population, http://islamicpopulation.com/africa_general.html (19.4.2005): Ghana = total population in 2003 20.50 million, 30 percent Muslim (6.15 million).

to downsize the Muslim population and with it, its potential political influence. However, if one compares the figures of the 1960 census with the figures of the 2000 census, the claim of 'undercounting' Muslims could be valid from a strictly statistical point of view. Diagram 1 presents a hypothetical projection of the Muslim population between 1960 and 2000, but instead of taking a 30-years mean annual growth rate for the Ghanaian population, I adjusted the projection to the statistically assumed growth rates. First, since 1960 the growth rate of the Ghanaian population seems to have decreased from 4.2 percent (1948–1960) to between 2.4 (1960–1970) and 2.6 percent (1984–2000). If the 1960 figure for the Muslim population is taken as a base line, then there were some 0.8 million Muslims in Ghana at that time. Forty years later, with an annual growth rate of 2.6, the number of Muslims would have been about 2.2 million. Compared with the calculated number of Muslims in 2000, i.e., 3 million, the increase of Muslims in Ghana did not only follow the annual population growth, but also included a number of converts.

However, it is the expansion of Christianity as well as its statistical relationship to Islam in Ghana which is the key. Both religions have expanded since 1960 at the expense of African Traditional Religions.[180] Seen from a statistical perspective, the various Christian denominations have been able to increase the number of their adherents more than the various Muslim groups. Whereas the expansion of Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches in Ghana has been noted by several researchers, Muslim missionary activities have generally been said to be restricted to the *zongo*s. It could therefore be argued that Sunni Muslim missionary activities only had a restricted impact before the 1970s and 1980s, and only after the mid-1980s was there a profound change in the religious composition of the population even in the Northern Region, as claimed by Kirby.[181] In fact, until the early 1980s, Islam had remained a '*zongo* religion' in the South and was largely confined to certain ethnic groups in the North, such as the Dagomba, the Wala, the Mamprusi and the Gonja. Grindal's research on Isala migrants in Accra exemplifies this: conversion to Islam occurred in the *zongo* in the South but not among the Isala in the North.[182] In a local context, however, Muslim preachers, be they Sunni or Ahmadi, could have a profound impact in the South, resulting in the conversion of families and even villages, as Sey noted in the development of the Muslim settlement of Kamgbunli (Nzima East District, Western Region),[183] or the swelling of the Ga

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[180] According to Okafor (1997, 133), the official numbers of adherents of African Traditional Religions declined from 66 percent in 1948 to 21.4 percent in 1980 whereas the number of Christians had increased from 30 percent to 62.6 percent and the number of Muslims from 4 percent to 15.7 percent. Though these numbers indicate a tremendous increase of the Muslim population, this occurred mainly between 1948 and 1960 (from 4 % to 12 %).

[181] Kirby 2002, 42; Kirby 2003, 195.

[182] Grindal 1973, 335.

[183] Sey 2000.

Muslim community in Accra since the 1940s,[184] or the activities of the Ahmadiyya among the Fanti in the Central Region.[185]

Whether or not the total number of Muslims in the 2000 census is too low or not, the census reveals some interesting basic facts about the Muslim population in Ghana (see Table 6 and Map 19a–c). About one third of the Muslim population is found in the Northern Region, which stands out in the census as the most Muslim one of Ghana's ten regions – about one million of the 1.8 million inhabitants of the Northern Region are Muslims (i.e., 56 percent). Other regions with substantial Muslim populations are Ashanti Region (about 477,000 Muslims or 13 percent of the total population) and Greater Accra Region (almost 300,000 Muslims or 10 percent), Brong Ahafo Region (about 293,000 or 16 percent), Upper East Region (some 207,000 or 22 percent) and Upper West Region (about 186,000 or 32 percent).[186]

Unfortunately, the data of the 2000 census cannot easily be compared with previous data on religious affiliation. However, there are two tendencies that one can identify. First, there has been a profound change in the religious factor since the 1970s. Second, the spatial distribution of the two major foreign religions, Islam and Christianity, almost coincides with the division of the country into the northern half that is poor and disadvantaged and the southern half which is wealthy and more developed – despite the fact that the majority of Muslims are living in the seven southern regions![187] When Levtzion made his inquiries about Islam in Dagbon during the mid-1960s, his conclusion echoed earlier studies made by British colonial authorities:

> The majority of the Dagomba commoners do not pray at all; these are often denoted Dagbandu. The Dagbane word for 'a pagan' is chefera (from Arabic kafīr). This term applies mainly to non-Dagomba tribes, such as the Konkomba and the Tchamba (Bassari), who are completely untouched by Islam. It implies that the Dagomba are regarded less pagan than the Konkomba… Islamic influence reaches the commoners in a diluted form through their chief's courts. In the pre-colonial period communication between Muslims and commoners seems to have been casual only, while that between Muslims and chiefs became institutionalized…[188]

However, thereafter Northern Ghana and especially the Northern Region have witnessed an increasing religious polarization. Since the 1970s, Kirby noted a new Islamic presence throughout the region:

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[184] Mumuni 1994, 43.
[185] Fisher 1963; Samwini 2006, 91.
[186] *2000 Population and Housing Census*, 2002, Table 7: Religious Affiliation of Population by Region and Sex.
[187] Gyimah-Boadi and Asante 2003, 6. In fact, this was already the case during the colonial period. See further Chapter IV.3.2.
[188] Levtzion 1968, 109.

> As the chiefly peoples are more and more coming to identify themselves
> as Muslims their traditions are changing. Old myths and oral histories are
> being retold from an Islamic perspective. Dagomba and Gonja culture are
> becoming increasingly Islamized.[189]

According to Kirby, while Dagbamba commoners had converted to Islam in small
numbers by the 1960s and 1970s, the conversion of the royals and the chiefs took
place only in the late 1980s and 1990s, thereby signalling a profound change
in the religious setup of Dagbamba society.[190] This information seems to be in
conflict with Phyllis Ferguson's argument that Dagbon had already been Islamized
by the late precolonial era, but, on the other hand, confirms Brigitte Benzing's
counterargument.[191] Both, however, might be right. Following Ferguson, one could
argue that Dagbon was a 'Muslim' kingdom in the sense that religious affiliation of
a royal or even a commoner was mixed and that the majority of Muslims followed
an accommodationalist approach. Even the Hausa minority, which had criticized
the lax adherence of local Muslims, followed such an approach in the North. With
the advent of the 'foreign', i.e., Egyptian and especially Saudi-trained Muslim
clerics and teachers, the situation changed. Thus, when Kirby notes that those who
convert to the new 'brand' of Islam, i.e., the Ahlus-Sunna, no longer maintain their
traditional religiosity "but are moving toward a new religiosity and new ways of
achieving status,"[192] I would identify these Muslims as following a rejectionist
approach. What follows is that Islam, in contrast to earlier periods, has become an
identity marker.

The increased religious (Islamic) activity in Dagbon is also commented upon
by Annette Haber Ihle. She, too, notes an increased visibility of Muslims and Islamic
practices, such as prayers, in Tamale. Most notable has been the construction of
new mosques. Whereas there were only seven *jum'a* (Friday) mosques in Tamale
before 1990, 26 new mosques were built during the 1990s. In spite of the massive
expansion of mosques and praying grounds in the town, the numbers of adherents
seem to increase even more rapidly. Both Ihle and I have witnessed packed mosques
during the Friday prayers when people have to pray outside the mosque as there is
no more room for them inside.[193]

3.2. The 'Islamic Factor' in Ghanaian Civil Society

With the increase of the Muslim population, not only in the North but throughout
Ghana, the Islamic factor has become more manifest in public life. Two visible
components of the 'Muslim sphere', namely Ramadan and the *hajj*, which were

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[189] Kirby 1998, 4; also Kirby 2003, 195.
[190] Kirby 2002, 43.
[191] See Chapter II.2.3.
[192] Kirby 2002, 44.
[193] Ihle 2003, 97–98.

more or less absent in the colonial public sphere, have started to attract public interest. However, as will be discussed in subsequent subchapters, the increased visibility also meant that clashes within the Muslim community were exposed and critically discussed in the media and by the political leadership. Another factor, which Muslim leaders usually condemn, is the increased politicization of the 'Muslim sphere', i.e., the attempt by political parties to align with Muslim leaders and communities in an attempt to increase their political base or to use Muslim groups in national politics.

Muslim festivals and Islamic religious customs, such as the daily prayers (*salat*), Ramadan and Muslim festivals, such as the *'id al-fitr* and the *'id al-adha*, and the *hajj*, have been part and parcel of the Ghanaian 'Muslim sphere' since the coming of Islam into the region. The Islamic mode of worship has been the key marker of Muslim public life, but although seen and noticed by non-Muslims, neither the colonial nor the early postcolonial state officially noticed these rites or interfered with them. Ritual action, such as the observance of the daily five prayers, is seen by the Muslims as the standard of differentiation between believers and non-believers. Congregational prayers are preferred to individual prayers and throughout Ghana one can today find mosques and prayer places in marketplaces, lorry stations, and in every town quarter where Muslims reside. In Dagbon, Muslims refer to prayer as *jingli* and the same word is used for mosque. However, the Friday prayer is not observed in the local mosques but rather in the much bigger Friday mosques, which are found in every larger town in Ghana. The importance of the Friday prayers is due to the *khutba* or sermon which the Friday Imam delivers. Usually it is read in Arabic and then translated into the local languages understood by the majority of the congregation. The language of the sermon has led to some controversy. During the 1970s and 1980s, there was a debate among the Muslim scholars and laypersons in Dagbon whether the sermon should be read in Arabic or in the language understood by the majority of the congregation.[194]

The *hajj* or the pilgrimage to the Holy Cities on the Arabian Peninsula is a visible element of the 'Muslim sphere' in contemporary Ghanaian society which is discussed in the newspapers. At times, political leaders would support imams in performing the *hajj*, as was the case in 2005 when the Omanhene of Sefwi Wiawso sponsored the imam of the town, Alhaji Umar, to make the pilgrimage.[195] However, the most debated issues during recent years have been irregularities and trouble in organizing the annual *hajj*. The main problem has been the ineffective government

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[194] Seidu 1989, 163–164. An attempt to solve the language debate was made in 1986. A one-month course organized for selected imams all over Ghana was held at the University of Ghana, Legon, under the auspices of the Royal Embassy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia where the imams were told that there was no harm in delivering their sermons in the local languages.

[195] "Omanhene sponsors Imam," *Accra Daily Mail*, 29.3.2005, http://accra-mail.com/mailnews. asp?ID=12432 (18.4.2005).

involvement.[196] For decades, the organization of the annual *hajj* had been the task of the GMRC, but there were usually irregularities and problems with in organizing it: misuse and embezzlement of *hajj* funds, ineffective and unprofessional organization and over-reliance on political patronage on part of the *hajj* organization. Since 1993, the appointment and supervision of the Hajj Committee, an annual ad hoc organization, has been taken over by the National Commission on Culture,[197] but with little change apart from *hajj* operations becoming highly politicized during the PNDC and the NDC regimes and party loyalists taking over the Hajj Committee. Though the NPP government declared at an early stage that it tried to eliminate bottlenecks associated with the *hajj*,[198] not much was achieved during the following years.[199] Thus, after yet another chaotic pilgrimage season, the Coalition of Muslim Organisations – Ghana (COMOG) held a conference in April 2005 together with the office of the National Chief Imam and the National Council of Muslim Chiefs to discuss the *hajj* problem.[200] The key issue of the conference was the need for the establishment of a permanent Hajj Board, an idea that was already proposed by some concerned Muslim leaders in 2001.[201] However, when the COMOG presented its final report on the *hajj* to Vice-President Aliu Mahama,[202] the National Chief Imam, who had nominated a nine-member Fact Finding Committee, had already approached the President with a different report on the issue.[203] Not surprisingly, the two parties ended up quarrelling in public. One Dr. Alhasan Mohammed criticized the COMOG for seeking publicity and deliberately misinforming the public about the intentions and position of the National Chief Imam:

> (S)hould we now infer that Major Easah considers himself the overall boss of all Muslims of Ghana that even the National Chief Imam should answer to him or his COMOG? […] Unlike the COMOG, the National Chief Imam presented his report to Government without fanfare but with elegant maturity.[204]

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[196] "Clouds hang over Hajj 2001," *Accra Daily Mail,* 18.1.2001, http://www.africaonline.com.gh/accramail/210118/news10.html (22.1.2001); "UGM National Vice-chairman calls for investigation into alleged arson," GRi Newsreel, 12.1.2001, http://www.mclglobal.com/History/Jan2001/12a2001/12a1n.html (22.1.2001); "More Hajj Woes... As Ghanaian pilgrims send SOS home for help," *Accra Daily Mail*, 8.2.2005, http://www.accra-mail.com/mailnews.asp?ID=12020 (18.4.2005).

[197] Mumuni 1994, 176.

[198] "Government to make Hajj affordable and less cumbersome," GRi Religion, 1.10.2001, http://www.mclglobal.com/History/Oct2001/01j2001/01j1g.htm (3.10.2001).

[199] "After a US$600,000 bailout this year Government wants no hand in Hajj Politics," *Accra Daily Mail*, 14.4.2005, http://www.accra-mail.com/mailnews.asp?ID=12622 (18.4.2005).

[200] "COMOG organizes Hajj Conference," *Accra Daily Mail*, 5.4.2005, http://www.accra-mail.com/mailnews,asp?ID=12487 (18.4.2005).

[201] "Clouds hang over Hajj 2001," *Accra Daily Mail*, 18.1.2001, http://www.africaonline.com.gh/accramail/210118/news10.html (22.1.2001).

[202] "COMOG Submits Hajj Conference Report To Government," [GNA 8.6.2005] http://www.ghana.gov.gh/living/article.php?id=0000009780 (25.10.2005).

[203] "HAJJ Pilgrimage difficulties far from over," *Ghanaian Chronicle*, 7.6.2005, http://db.ghanaian-chronicle.com/thestory.asp?id=6172 (25.10.2005).

[204] "Hajj Pilgrimage difficulties, clarifications – Another view," *Ghanaian Chronicle*, 16.6.2005,

In their reply, the COMOG defended their position and their report. They further claimed that their critics are doing more harm than good for the Muslim population:

> We would like to emphasize that CQMQG [sic] has no problem and does not wish to have any problem with Muslim authorities including our spiritual leaders in this country. We are always mindful of the Islamic and constitutional demands of respect for authority. […] Dr. Alhassan and his ilk or cronies are on record to have often undermined and consequently discouraged people who make genuine efforts like ours to uplift Islam in this country.[205]

Despite the public quarrel, a new Hajj Council was eventually formed. As with the earlier bodies, the legitimacy, constitution and credibility of the new council was immediately questioned by some Muslim groups.[206] It seems as if the problems in connection with the *hajj* will stay as long as there are groups that, for one reason or another, feel left out or that their influence in the organization of the *hajj* is being discounted.

The legality of Muslim marriage is another visible element of the Islamic sphere and is sometimes a publicly debated matter. Since the colonial government issued the *Mohammedan Marriage Ordinance* for the Colony in 1907 and for the Northern Territories in 1935, Muslim marriages (and divorces), if registered, have officially been regarded as legal. The Ordinance has never been changed, but was integrated into the Ghanaian legislation as CAP 129.[207] However, the crucial point is the registration of the marriage, which is only seldom undertaken by the imams. In fact, only a licensed imam is legally empowered to register Muslim marriages and divorces, but there are only a few of them. Therefore, most marriages or divorces are never registered and, thus, are not legal and have no statutory backing. Even worse, many Muslims are not aware of the Ordinance and only few a district assemblies keep registers of Muslim marriages.[208] Matters got more complicated in 1985 with the stipulation of Intestate Succession Law, PNDC LAW 111 of 1985. Muslims argue that this law has drastically reduced the practical utility of the Ordinance/CAP 129 as it undermines the Islamic rules of inheritance. As one Mr. Mohammed Abbas explained, if a Muslim wanted to have Islamic Law apply as his personal law in matters of inheritance of property, the only way was to get married under

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http://www.ghanaian-chronicle.com/thestory.asp?id=6324 (25.10.2005).

[205] "Hajj pilgrimage difficulties clarifications – Another view," *Ghanaian Chronicle*, 28.6.2005, http://www.ghanaian-chronicle.com/thestory.asp?id=6488 (25.10.2005).

[206] "Pilgrimage Board encounters problem," CHOICE FM, 21.10.2005, http://www.choicefmghana.com/Oct%2021%20Pilgrimage%20Board%20encounter%20problems.htm (25.10.2005).

[207] An attempt was made in 1985 to redraft the Ordinance and replace it with a new law, the Marriage of Muslims Law, but it was never implemented ("Most Muslim Marriages Illegal?" *The Muslim Searchlight*, Vol 1 No 31, 20 September–3 October 2002).

[208] "Muslims call for review of ordinance," *Daily Graphic Online*, 22.10.2002, http://www.graphicghana.com/printpage.asp?artid=205 (22.10.2002); "Most Muslim Marriages Illegal?" *The Muslim Searchlight*, Vol 1 No 31, 20 September–3 October 2002.

CAP 129. The Ordinance/CAP 129 allows for the property of a deceased person whose marriage or divorce is registered under the legislation to be passed on in accordance with Islamic law. However, by the provisions of Law 111, the residue of the property of the intestate cannot devolve under Islamic Law, since it states that Islamic Law cannot be the customary and personal law of a Ghanaian.[209]

Although the *hajj* seems to be a continual mess – at least for the newspaper-reading Ghanaian public, Muslim or not – and, at least from a secular, judicial perspective, most of the Muslim marriages and divorces are not legal and thus not binding, the Muslim population has also gained positive visibility in the public space during the 1990s. In 1996, two Muslim festivals, the *'id al-fitr* and the *'id al-adha*, were given official status by the Ghanaian government. The beginning of the fasting month of Ramadan is noted in the major newspapers, and during this month Muslim scholars and journalists sometimes publish religious articles in the newspapers, reminding their adherents of their duties as Muslims but at the same time stipulating an example for non-Muslims.[210] For example, in 2002 Kwame Nsiah published a sermon where he underlined the moral meaning of fasting and almsgiving for a Muslim during Ramadan, claiming:

> Indeed it is good for man to go hungry religiously and formally to appreciate hunger; it is good to give freely to the needy to experience the joy of giving and the relief in receiving. In the process of observing the Fast, the Muslim sort of lives outside himself to create harmony within himself and in others of his neighbours. And he must live that much harmony ever afterwards in the cause of continuous struggle to attain excellence of virtuous life.[211]

At other times, Muslims would be urged to pray for unity among the Muslims and for peace in society – especially during times of political and intra-religious unrest. Thus, after the 2002 Yendi Conflict, sermons during Ramadan and the *'id al-fitr* prayers underlined the necessity of Muslims praying for a peaceful resolution of the crisis.[212] The climax of the fasting period is the festival of the 'breaking of the fast', the *'id al-fitr*, when the Muslim congregations are assembled throughout the country in massive, special Id-prayers. As such, these *'id*-prayers are public manifestations of the Islamic order in Ghana and can be seen as an occasion when the Muslim

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[209] "Muslems Urged to Kick Against PNDC Law 111," *Ghanaian Chronicle*, 25.8.2003, http://allafrica.com/stories/printable/200308251000.htm (26.8.2003).

[210] During my stay in Ghana in November 2001 I was able to read the following newspaper articles on Ramadan: "Ramadhan is here again," *Ghanaian Chronicle*, 14.11.2001; "Muslim students make appeal," *Daily Graphic*, 14.11.2001; "Ramadan fasting message," *Ghanaian Times*, 26.11.2001; "Don't deny Muslim students their right," *Daily Graphic*, 26.11.2001. See also Alhaji Muhammad Alidu, "The Concept of Fasting as a Worship in Islam," *Accra Daily Mail*, 20.11.2003, http://www.accra-mail.com/story.asp?ID=8412 (25.2.2004).

[211] Kwame Nsiah, "The Ramadan of Muslims," *Ghanaian Chronicle*, 8.11.2002, http://allafrica.com/stories/printable/200211080846.htm (20.11.2002).

[212] "Ramadan is here: Time for us to pray for peace," *Accra Daily Mail*, 1.11.2002, http://www.accra-mail.com/story.asp?id=326 (1.11.2002); "Muslims urged to unite to win Allah's mercies," *Accra Daily Mail*, 27.11.2003, http://www.accra-mail.com/story.asp?ID=8467 (25.2.2004).

sphere merges with the public sphere of the Ghanaian society as representative of the government – usually both the President and the Vice-President give speeches to the assembled Muslims. On the other hand, in 2004 the representation of the political establishment at the *'id*-prayers went even further. As it was celebrated a few months before the presidential election, both government and opposition politicians as well as Muslim leaders made their presence felt and addressed political as well as social issues in their speeches.[213]

4. THE RELIGIOUS FACTOR IN GHANAIAN SOCIETY

Islam, just like Christianity, has emerged as a local religion in Ghana during the twentieth century. Just as Christianity has global dimensions and links between local churches and outside, mostly Western (US and European) countries, local Islam is part of and linked to the Muslim world. Whereas both the colonial as well as the postcolonial state in principal were secular, the Christian and the Western factor were closely linked together in the public perception. Though Christian and Muslim communities exist throughout the country, there is a clear North-South divide with Christians dominating southern Ghana and the Muslim presence being relatively strong in the northern kingdoms (but negligible among the so-called stateless societies in the North). The North-South dimension is further highlighted by the economic and social division of Ghana. But in spite of these North-South differences, the political, economic and social division has so far not been articulated in religious terms nor has it escalated into inter-religious clashes involving Muslims and Christians, apart from the role of the religious factor in the so-called Northern Conflicts (see below).[214]

4.1. Potential Inter-religions Conflicts

Historically, there have been no reported clashes between Christians and Muslims. This was to a large extent due to the fact that the colonial state served as a buffer between the two religions.[215] Although the various Christian Churches wished to convert Muslims, they had little success. Further, due to the religious dualism during the colonial period – Christian missions dominating in the South as well as in the extreme North among chiefless/stateless societies; Muslims being present, if not dominating, in the Northern kingdoms – there were few situations where inter-religious conflicts could have erupted. Rather, one could even argue that Muslims

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[213] Mohammad Shardow, "Muslims end fasting with national prayers," *Public Agenda*, 19.11.2004, http://www.ghanaweb.com/public_agenda/article.php?ID=2911 (20.4.2005).
[214] Higazi 2004, 18.
[215] Azumah 2000.

and Christians lived more or less in 'splendid isolation' from each other in the Gold Coast during the colonial period.

However, a potential source of inter-religious conflict has since then arisen due to Christian missionary activities directed towards Muslims in Ghana.[216] Since the mid-1980s, there has been an upsurge in evangelistic endeavours, most notably the emergence of Neo-Pentecostal or 'Charismatic' churches, and from the early 1990s there has been an increasing uneasiness among the Christian communities about Islam. Islam is seen as posing a challenge to Christianity in three main dimensions: in the competition to convert adherents of African Traditional Religions, in attempts to convert Christians, and in averting Christian attempts to convert Muslims. Some Christian groups, such as the Catholic Church and the Christian Council of Ghana, have adopted a dialogue approach to Muslims, resulting in, for example, the Inter-Religious Dialogue Committee of the Catholic Church in 1991 and the Project For Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa (PROCMURA) in 1987,[217] which in Ghana has been known as the Committee on Islam (nowadays Inter-Faith Committee) and is part of the Christian Council.[218] Other Christian (evangelical) organizations, such as the Ghana Evangelism Committee (GEC), the Ghana Fellowship of Evangelistic Students (GHAFES), Christian Outreach Fellowship (COF) and the Scripture Union (SU), have chosen a more activist approach, which has caused uneasiness among some Muslim groups. The most ardent among the Christian activist missionary groups, however, are the Converted Muslim Christian Ministries (CMCM) and the Markaz Al Bishara. The CMCM started to use open-air crusades to preach to Muslim-dominated *zongo* communities, which led to protests by the Muslim leadership in the *zongo*s. In 1995 and in 1996, tension escalated to open conflicts and violent clashes between Muslims and Christians in Kumasi, Tamale and Takoradi. Peace was restored through the combined efforts of the mainstream Christian bodies, the Federation of Muslim Councils and the Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission. Since then, open clashes have been averted as the CMCM and other Christian missionary organizations have withdrawn their open-air crusades. Instead, the missions have shifted to person-to-person evangelism and the use of literature and the electronic media in reaching out to Muslims.[219]

On the other hand, there is a latent potential for the eruption of inter-religious clashes, especially in *zongo* communities inhabited by both Christian and Muslims and at the university campuses at Legon, Cape Coast, Kumasi and Tamale, since many

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[216] On early Christian missionary strategies towards Muslims in the Gold Coast/Ghana during the 1950s and 1960s, especially the Islam in Africa Project (IAP) of the World Council of Churches, see Dovlo and Asante 2003, 218–219.

[217] Hock 2003, 51; Dovlo and Asante 2003, 221; Samwini 2006, 212–219.

[218] The PROCMURA is the successor of the Islam in Africa Project (IAP) which was established by the World Council of Churches in 1959. Both projects emphasize a spirit of mutual respect and understanding rather than confrontation (Dovlo and Asante 2003, 220).

[219] See further Dovlo and Asante 2003, 221–223, 226–227, 230–232. Since the 1995/96 clashes, the CMCM reorganized itself and uses the name Straightway Chapel in their evangelistic work.
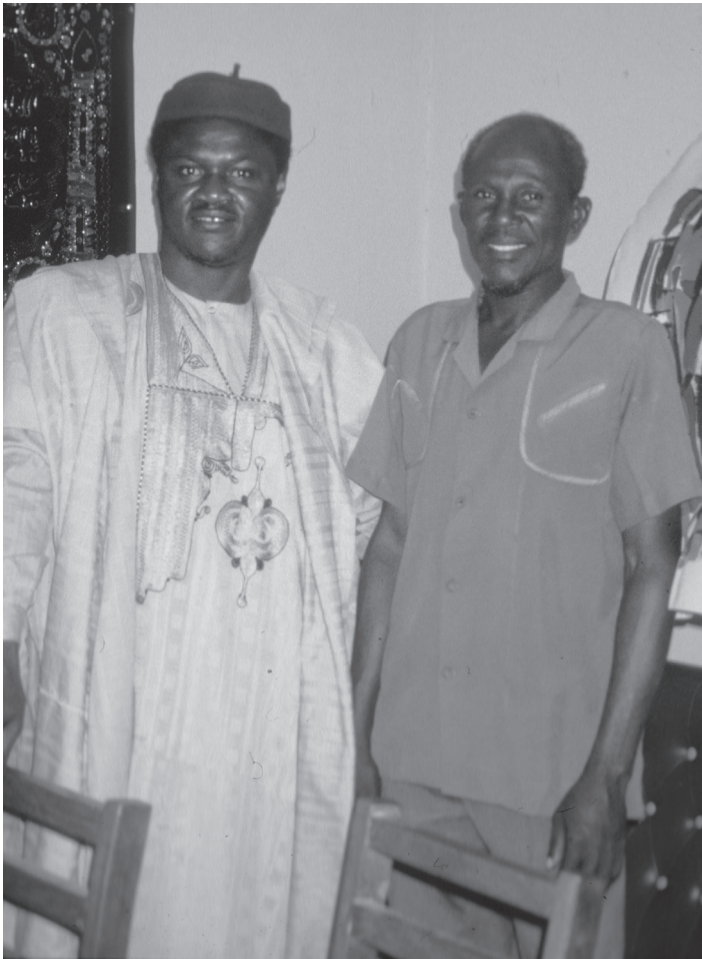
Plate 27. Alhaji Ali Hussein Zakaria (left), Executive Director of the Community Development and Youth Center in Tamale, and Afa Razaq 2000; photo: HW.

active Muslims regard Christian activities as negative intrusions and disturbances.[220] Another source of conflict has been the issue of obligatory religious services at schools and the restriction of Muslim students' worship. In September 2000, the Ghana Muslim Students' Association (GMSA) sent a petition concerning acts of discrimination against Muslims in public educational institutions to the Ministry of Education. A meeting followed where government representatives discussed the matter with the GMSA, after which the Director General of the Ghana Education Service directed all schools to respect the religious rights of all students.[221] On the

[220] Dovlo and Asante 2003, 234–235; HW personal observations 1999–2005. One of the latest inter-religious clashes occurred in Agona Nyakrom in the Central Region in November 1999. A dispute during a football game between an Islamic middle school and a Methodist middle school led to arson and the destruction of property, including three mosques. A group of youths also attacked Muslims in the area. Although the police intervened, part of the Muslim population moved out of the area as they felt insecure (Religious Freedom Report 1999: Ghana, 4). Another incident occurred in 2003 when the mosque in New Adenta was demolished by the Tema Municipal Assembly on the premise that the builders had not acquired the necessary documentation and permission to build the mosque. The act led to demonstrations by the Muslims, who attacked a local pastor's house and church. However, the prompt intervention of Muslim and Church leaders calmed the situation ("Muslims and Christians smoke peace pipe – after rumpus over New Adenta mosque," *The Muslim Searchlight*, Vol. 1 No 44, 20 June–3 July 2003).

[221] Religious Freedom Report 2001: Ghana, 2; Religious Freedom Report 2002: Ghana, 2. It is oblig-

Legon campus, the GMSA criticized the decision of the university authorities to halt the construction of a mosque in Akuaffo Hall, one of the campus residential halls, in April 2003. According to university officials, the mosque's design did not fit into the university's architectural design. Following the critique by the GMSA, the Muslim students were given temporary spaces for worship in residence halls, but the construction of a centrally located mosque was aborted.[222]

On the other hand, Christian organizations are critical of government financial assistance to English/Arabic schools, which both Christian and Muslims alike agree is indirect support to the promotion and propagation of Islam.[223]

Although there was a general tendency in Africa for the establishment of a Christian-Muslim dialogue in the 1960s and 1970s, the theological dialogue soon found itself in a *cul-de-sac*. However, since then another avenue has been opened by Christian as well Muslim organizations to enable a peaceful interaction between the two communities. Leaving theological unsolvable 'truths' aside, the present dialogue focus on establishing a *modus vivendi* which may satisfy the minimum expectations of both communities without disrupting the nation.[224] In Ghana, and particularly in the North, conflict mediation and peace-building has emerged as the cornerstone for creating a common platform for a dialogue.[225] The Catholic Church has been notably active in this respect. CARITAS, the International Catholic Charity organization, as well as local Catholic initiatives, such as the Inter-Religious Dialogue Committee and the Tamale Institute of Cross-Cultural Studies (TICCS), have been engaged in conflict mediation and peace-building efforts since the 1990s. On the Muslim side, the various Muslim Councils, lately especially the FMC, COMOG, and the Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission have also tried to mediate in intra-, inter- and non-religious conflicts. In addition, Muslim and Christian bodies have been involved in mediation through the Northern Interfaith Committee.

The Inter-Religious Dialogue Committee (IRDC) in Tamale is an interesting local platform. Its background is the Christian-Muslim reflection group that was set up in 1991. During the first years, the group met regularly to discuss a theme chosen by the participants and alternatively presented by a Christian and/or by a Muslim according to the subject. As the group grew, it restructured itself into the

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atory for all students in public schools up to the equivalent of junior secondary school level to attend a daily "assembly" or devotional service. This has been a Christian service and includes the recital of The Lord's Prayer, a Bible reading, and a blessing. Students at senior secondary school level are required to attend this service three times a week whereas students at boarding schools are required to attend a nondenominational service on Sundays (Religious Freedom Report 1999: Ghana, 2).

[222] Religious Freedom Report 2004, 52. At present, there is one mosque on the Legon campus, but it is situated outside the main campus area and is thus not easily accessible for students.

[223] Azumah 2000, 3.

[224] Hock 2003, 51–52. For example, the Religious Bodies Forum of Ghana and the World Faiths Development Dialogue organized a workshop in Accra in October 2003 to discuss the contributions of faith communities to Poverty Reduction Strategies in Ghana. See further http://www.wfdd.org.uk/programmes/ghana.pdf (19.4.2005).

[225] Higazi 2004, 19–21.

Dialogue Committee. Its Executive comprises an equal number of Christians, both Catholics and representatives of the Christian Council, and Muslims, both Sunnis (but not Ahlus-Sunna) and Ahmadis; the chairperson is a Muslim, Alhaji Hussein Zakaria. The aims of the Committee are to promote peace and mutual understanding, encourage cooperation and collaboration between Christians and Muslims in dealing with common problems such as poverty, illiteracy and disease, and enhance religious freedom. A key activity has been to establish local Christian-Muslim Study Groups in Secondary and Tertiary Institutions and Training Colleges in Tamale. In addition, talks and workshops have been organized for "out of school youth", and sessions on Inter-Faith relationships have been organized for adults in some parishes and districts throughout the Northern Region. At the time of the 1994 Northern Conflict (see below), the group played an active role in mediation and, after the conflict, in peace-building. At the end of the conflict, Christian and Muslim members of the IRDC went on a joint reconciliation mission to the different areas in the Northern Region and organized an Inter-Religious Prayer in Yendi. In recent years, the IRDC has also started a programme on Radio FM-Tamale, which, according to Sister Marie-Renée Wyseur, the Coordinator of the IRDC, has provoked a lot of reactions in town. Though some Christian and Muslim groups, especially the Ahlus-Sunna, are still sceptical about the need for an inter-faith dialogue, some positive gestures have been made by members of the upper religious hierarchies: Bishop Vincent Boi-Nai of Tamale writes each year to the main imams and *shaykh*s of Tamale and surrounding areas a letter of good wishes to the Muslims on the occasion of the *'id al-fitr* whereas the Regional Chief Imam Abdulai Adam of Tamale expressed his good wishes for Christmas for the Christians through Radio FM-Tamale.[226]

Some prominent Muslim politicians, such as Shaykh I.C. Quaye, Greater Accra Region Minister, have also called on Muslims respect other faiths. In an opening speech for an orientation course for the League of African Muslim Scholars in Accra in 2004, he pleaded with Muslims not to attack other religious groups, underlining that Ghana is a multicultural and multireligious society: "(E)ach of us has the right to live in this same society regardless of beliefs and views."[227]

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[226] Sister Marie-Renée Wyseur, Christian-Muslim Relations Northern Region of Ghana, http://soeurs-blanches.cef.fr/interreligieuxa.htm (19.4.2005). Also Samwini 2006, 214–216. Another example of the attempts to create an inter-faith platform for peace-building was the 2002 workshop on Culture-drama and Peacebuilding, held at the Catholic Conference centre in Nsawam. The aim of the workshop was to bring together representatives of the parties in the 1994 conflict between the Konkomba and the Dagomba, including Muslims, Christians and adherents of African Traditional Religions. See further Kirby 2002.

[227] "Be fair to one another – I.C. Quaye," *Accra Daily Mail*, 18.8.2004, http://www.accra-mail.com/story.asp?ID=10951 (12.10.2004).

4.2. The Northern Conflicts and the Religious Factor

Whereas the religious factor did not play any major role in politics during the colonial period – apart from the clashes between the adherents of the Ahmadiyya and the Tijaniyya in Wa during the 1930s – religion has become politicized in contemporary Northern Ghana. One example of this is the obvious Islamization of Dagbon, Nanun and Mampurugu since the 1960s. During the expulsion of 'aliens' and 'foreigners' by the Ghanaian authorities at the end of the 1960s, many Hausa and Yoruba Muslims had to move to Nigeria.[228] The result of this act was the indigenization of Islam in Ghana. Whereas Hausa scholars had especially been the pillars of the Muslim communities before, indigenous Muslims took over the leadership of the communities. At the same time, Middle Eastern countries started to send financial aid to Muslim groups in Ghana. A turning point was the 1983 famine in Northern Ghana when Muslim Aid groups were prominent in establishing themselves in the North. As Kirby notes, over the next two years, the situation in Dagbon radically changed and by 1985 almost everyone identified him- or herself as a Muslim. The positions became solidified during the Guinea Fowl War: among the combatants, the conflict was also perceived as a clash between Muslims (the Dagbamba, the Gonja and the Nanumba) and non-Muslims (the Konkomba, the Mawuri and the Nchumurru).[229]

The Northern Conflicts must be regarded as complex in the sense that one can identify different levels and sets of competing geographical and historical narratives. One issue is the desire for political recognition by various ethnic groups in the North. Another is about landownership, and both are closely interwoven.

One is able to detect a macro-narrative, namely that of the creation of colonial structures which established a close link between the kingdoms and the colonial and subsequent postcolonial authorities.[230] Faced with the task of establishing a working model for administering the North, the colonial authorities picked and placed sometimes randomly chosen persons as heads or chiefs over communities without rulers, the so-called stateless societies. Though the colonial authorities in the North were aware of the misinterpretation of local political and ritual authorities, they decided not to change the system they had established. "The present Native States or as they are now styled Divisions", the 1930–31 Annual Report of the Northern Territories declared, was divided into three groups, namely "a) divisions under the old traditional ruler – the Priest-King now functioning as a chief in the modern sense, and known under various names as Tinda-na, Koro, Kasaliwula and Asase-wura," – in fact, this was true only in a few cases, although some British officers tried to install some of the 'old traditional rulers' as chiefs during the late 1920s

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[228] Eades 1994, 1.
[229] Kirby 2001, 8; Katanga 1995, 17–18, filed in BMA D-41,2,1; Brukum 2000–2001.
[230] Ladouceur 1978; Bening 1995; Brukum 2000–2001; Der 2001. See also Weiss 2007b.

and 1930s, but without much success[231] – " b) divisions ruled by dynasties of alien origin," – these were the ruling houses in the northern kingdoms, thus stigmatized as being 'alien' – "[and] c) divisions under chiefs whose position date from the time of European intervention and owe their position to Government."[232] An earlier, confidential, report, already noted the weak position of the 'new' chiefs:

> In Gonja, Dagomba, Mamprusi, Dagati and Wala countries there is a hered-itary line of chiefs fully understood by the people and recognised by them. Amongst these tribes the chiefs opinion and word carries weight. Amongst the other tribes the chiefs are really our creation and they would have no power without Government backing.[233]

Especially in the North, the colonial political and administrative reforms were to have implications for inter-ethnic relations as the so-called minority groups – which, in fact, constituted the majority of the population – became administratively invisible. The colonial remaking of the political landscape in the North, sometimes deliberately due to the colonial state's own calculations and other times based on false or one-sided information, ignored the ethnic complexity of the region and the pre-existing political relations. As a consequence, communities and multi-ethnic areas were arbitrarily placed under so-called dominant or majority groups, the Gonja, the Nanumba, the Mamprusi and the Dagomba.[234] Not surprisingly, some groups, most notably, the Konkombas, already started to question these arrangements during the 1930s. At first, and for a long time, the reaction of the 'minority' groups was either ignored or violently suppressed. However, although these conflicts were regarded as minor nuisances by the colonial authorities – they never came near to even challenging the political foundations of the colonial state – colonial and early postcolonial policies did nothing to solve the problem. Instead, they seemed to have been swept under the carpet, and were seldom articulated in public. However, with the increasing economic and political instability of the Ghanaian state during the 1970s, the 'minority' issue in the North entered the stage again, erupting into what has been labelled the 'Northern Conflicts' during the 1980s and 1990s.[235]

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[231] See further Grischow 1998; Lentz 1998, Lentz 1999, Lentz 2000a; Hawkins 2002.

[232] PRAAD/T NRG 8/3/14, AR NT 1930–31, page 6.

[233] PRAAD/T NRG 8/2/5, Native Administration: Confidential Report 237/799/Conf. 8/1928 (Ta-male 21.7.1928).

[234] From a British perspective, the matter was purely administrative: "In cases where a Chief is not recognized I consider it essential that some form of Administration is desirable; therefore, I have made provisions by which, I will have the power to create the necessary machinery for administering an area without a leader by the appointment of a 'Native Authority'. Further, it is my intention to en-deavour to group together possibly three or four of the smaller tribes into one Administration under a 'Native Authority' composed of a representative of each tribe, thereby doing away as far as possible with the present large number of uninfluential bodies of people or tribes." PRAAD/T NRG 8/2/4, Memorandum on the Proposed Northern Territories Native Administration Ordinance, page 2.

[235] Apart from the Northern Conflicts, there are several other longstanding inter- and intra-ethnic conflicts among various communities in Ghana. In the Volta Region, four main conflict areas have been identified, including the Nkoya/Alavanyo, Nkwata, Peki/Tsito and Abutia Kpota conflicts. Whereas the first three are land conflicts, the last one is a chieftaincy dispute. In the Brong-Ahafo

The establishment of Native Authorities and Native Administrations had far-reaching consequences in terms of taxation and land ownership. Though British investigations had pointed out that a common feature in the North was the nonexistence of the concept of individual landownership, the control of land was transferred to the Native Authorities. Furthermore, although the British authorities were aware of the religious and symbolic position of the earth priests, the *tindana*s, as the ritual owners of the land, their position was overlooked when the new Native Authorities were established or when the political structures of the old kingdoms were codified. Last, but not least, by defining the stateless groups as 'minority people', the colonial − and also postcolonial − vocabulary created an image that the centralized states comprised the majority of the population in the North. Various censuses, however, pointed in a different direction: those groups that were termed minorities constituted the majority of the inhabitants in the Northern Territories − and still do so in contemporary Northern Ghana.[236]

The case of the Konkomba clashes highlights the escalation of the conflict. Being regarded as unruly and troublemakers by both the colonial and the Native Authorities, the Konkomba were placed under the control of the Ya Na and the Dagbamba chiefs of Sunson and Zagbeli. Some (British) colonial authorities even acknowledged the Dagbamba version of history, namely that the first rulers of Dagbon had, on their arrival in the area (Toma or Western Dagbon), slain all *tindana*s or married their daughters. Through this act, Western Dagbon was regarded as 'pure Dagombaland', whereas Eastern Dagbon, including the Yendi region, was a different case. Here the ritual authority of the local *tindana*s was preserved, but politically, the Konkomba were regarded as being subject to Dagbamba rule. A Konkomba reading of history argues that the Dagbamba version is fiction: no Konkomba group is said to have regarded the Ya Na as their overlord.[237]

The establishment of colonial boundaries confused the situation even further. When Dagbon was divided between the British and the Germans, Eastern Dagbon and, with it, the majority of the Konkomba were placed under German colonial rule. After the First World War, when former German Togoland was divided between the British and the French, Eastern Dagbon was united with British Dagbon. However, the making of a colonial geographical landscape resulted into the politicization of geography. Following the new colonial division of indigenous inhabitants and alien groups, the Konkomba were begun to be regarded by both Dagbamba and Nanumba as alien immigrants and foreigners.[238]

Region, violent clashes over land have frequently erupted between the Nafana and Ntore (Tsikata and Seini 2004, 25, 37–41).

[236] On the issue of colonial (mis)interpretations of stateless societies and the role of the Earth Priests, see Lentz 2003 and Grischow 1998. On colonial censuses in the Northern Territories, see Chapter IV.3.2. On minorities in contemporary Ghana, see Gyimah-Boadi and Asante 2003.

[237] Tait 1955, 194, 206; Talton 2003.

[238] Tait 1961.

	Ortschaften	Gehöfte	Hütten	
Reich Jendi	47	107	4004	
Guschiegu (Dagomba)		465	1966	
Guschiegu (Konkomba)	71		351	
Kulpanga	13	104	282	1)
Gnali	14	204	664	
Kunkon	18	113	315	
Demon, Palba	24	265	810	
S.Song, Nakpambone	16	135	468	
Wapuli	21	197	757	
Segberi	14	117	396	
Dagomba u. Konkomba	238	2819	10031	2)

Konkomba bezw. Kpunkpamba unter Dagomba Herrschaft: 1176 Gehöfte[3]

Selbstständige Konkomba zusammen: 250 Ortschaften / 3413 Gehöfte / 9487 Hütten[4]

Zusammenfassung [Summary]:

	Ortschaften	Gehöfte	Hütten	Einwohner	Prozent
Dagomba		1643	6355	13345	6 %
Konkomba	238	238			
(unter Dagomba herrschaft)		1176	3676	11028	
Konkomba	250	3413	9487	28461	21,5 %
Kpunkpamba	186	804	2956	8868	
Diakossi-Nadyago-Stämme	165	1753	8807	18494	8,2 %
Kumongu, Dyie Legwol	68	836	3269	8172	4 %
Moba	336	5895	20288	60864	27,1 %
Gurma	211	3984	13158	39474	17,5 %
Manyamli	15	86	311	777	0,3 %
Kusasi	36	1237	4397	13191	6 %
Namba	35	1872	4578	13734	6 %
Taberma	10	1180	4072	8144	3,6 %

Legend: Ortschaften = settlements; Gehöfte = compounds; Hütten = huts; Einwohner = inhabitants

1) Dagomba and Konkomba live mixed together in the main villages; 2) Of which 6355 Dagomba and 3676 Konkomba; 3) Konkomba resp. Kpunkpamba under Dagomba rule; 4) Total number of independent Konkomba

Table 7. Copy of German hut and population census in northern Togo, 1908. (Völker- und Hüttenzählung 1908, Bezirk Mangu-Jendi, filed in Basel Missionsarchiv, Basle, D-1,87, No 122)

The outcome was two different historical and geographical narratives. A good example of the Dagbamba narrative is the presentation of Ibrahim Mahama's account of the Northern Conflicts.[239] According to him, the Konkomba had no claim to landownership or political self-representation since they were foreigners, their 'homeland' being in Togo. Such a perception is heavily criticized by the few Konkomba intellectuals, such as Justice Katanga. They rightly point out the politicization of the argument and the subjective interpretation of the historical geography of the region.[240] However, there is more at stake than just two subjective versions of political geography. It could be argued that the Dagbamba position rests on a British position, i.e., one that takes into account the situation in Western Dagbon, while the Konkomba position has a German twist in the sense that one of its central documents is the 1908 hut-count (*Hüttenzählung*) in German Dagbon. This document has either not been known to Dagbamban historians or it has been deliberately disregarded (see Table 7).[241]

The German census is interesting, despite its pitfalls. A critical analysis of the document reveals the vague nature of the German undertaking: how many huts were not counted and what were the foundations for the German assumption that a certain number of people would inhabit one hut? Though the count must be regarded as a mere estimate, the document as well as other archival sources indicate some interesting points. First, though the Dagbamba constituted one of the major ethnic groups, there were more Konkomba living in the Jendi (Yendi) Sub-District. Second, the matter of granting the Dagbamba a leading role in the German colonial administrative setup was questioned not only by some German Residents but also the Basel Missionary Society which had established itself in Yendi in 1913. However, before 1914 not much was done mainly due to the fact that the *Realpolitik* of the German authorities echoed British colonial praxis, basing their rule on a working relationship with the kingdoms.[242]

The relationship between the Konkomba and other groups became problematic under British colonial rule. Reading British colonial files, one gets the impression that both the colonial authorities as well as the local rulers regarded the Konkomba as disturbing elements. Time and again, there are reports in the colonial files about the 'unruly' Konkomba, their refusal to deliver taxes to their Dagbamba overlords and their quarrels with and fights against the Dagbamba.[243] Such events seem to

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[239] Mahama 2003.

[240] Katanga 1995. Tait declared that the linguistic evidence points strongly towards accepting the Konkomba claim that they once occupied the Tamale region (Tait 1955, 195–201, backed by Stevens 1955).

[241] The German document is used by Katanga in his attempt to refute Dagbamba claims of the 'foreign' origin of the Konkomba in Ghana.

[242] Weiss 2007b. See further Chapter III.4.4.

[243] For example, during the mid-1930s, there was a combined French-British effort to take nominal rolls of Konkomba villages and to disarm all Konkomba on the French side. According to the DC, the effort "had a sobering effect on the Konkombas." (PRAAD/T NRG 8/3/52, AR Dagomba Dis-

have fortified the negative perception of the Konkomba as being freedom-loving, unsettled and dangerous bushfighters.[244]

Eventually, the expansion of the Konkomba farmers into Nanun and Eastern Gonja was to lead to the bloody clashes in the 1980s and the Guinea Fowl War in 1994. One crucial factor behind the conflicts was the 1978 Land Law, according to which all issues of land ownership and usufruct were placed under the authority and control of the Traditional (i.e., formerly Native) Rulers[245]. This meant that no Konkomba had a right to land and their alienation became legal. However, in some areas in Eastern Gonja and especially in Nanun, the Konkomba already constituted the majority of the population and started to claim the right to local representation and land ownership, thereby questioning the authority of the local rulers. In Eastern Dagbon, too, Konkomba political groups, especially the Konkomba Youth Association (KOYA), started to rally for the establishment of an independent Konkomba Native Authority. The strained relationships in the Northern Region burst into open violence in 1994, leaving at least 2,000 persons dead and about 100,000 refugees.[246]

The Guinea Fowl War never made big headlines in the news. At the time, the international media were more concerned about the escalation of the conflict in Rwanda, and, at the national level, the conflict seemed to strengthen southern Ghanaian preconceptions about the North. Seen from a southern standpoint, the Northern Conflicts did not challenge the stability of the state, though state authorities on a regional level generally branded the Konkomba and other 'minority' groups as the troublemakers. Government reaction – when it came – resulted in military intervention: the minority groups had challenged both the geographical and political status quo. Though the parties in the conflict were able to engage in peace negotiations, which resulted in a cease fire and, eventually, an unstable peace treaty, government authorities were criticized for having neglected an important aspect of the conflict and the following peace process, namely the religious dimension.[247]

None of the Northern Conflicts have been labelled as being religious ones; instead, the usual label is ethnic or intra-ethnic conflict that erupted in 1981 and, again, in 1994. According to Brukum, these conflicts should be even categorized as 'wars of emancipation' since they were fought between what Brukum refers as

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trict 1935–1936 [Cockey], para 8–14.) In the early 1950s, it was reported that the treatment of Konkombas and Basasis by Dagomba Courts "continues to appear harsh, but here again complaints or appeals are extremely low." (PRAAD/T NRG 8/3/173 AR Dagomba District 1950–1951, para 21)

[244] Tait 1961; Katanga (1995), 10–11.

[245] According to the law, all lands in the North were transferred from the President of the Republic in trust for the chiefs and people of the chiefs of the various Traditional Authorities in the Northern and (then) Upper Regions (Bawumia 2004, 187).

[246] On the 1994 Guinea Fowl War as well as other Northern Conflicts during the 1980s and 1990s, see Bogner 1998. Shorter analyses are provided in Akwetey 1996, Bogner 1996, Brukum 2000–2001, Bogner 2000, and Tsikata & Seini 2004, 29–32.

[247] Kirby 2003.

the 'indigenous people of the region' and others he refers to as 'invaders', i.e., the chiefless people and the 'landlords': on the one side the Konkomba, the Kusasi, the Nawuri and the Nchumuru, on the other, the Gonja, Mamprusi, the Nanumba and the Dagbamba.[248]

However, as Jon Kirby has noted, to downplay or even exclude the religious factor in conflict resolution will not provide any lasting peace in the North.[249] In a way, the Northern Conflicts reflected the historical position of the North in the Ghanaian context as well as the 'Northern Factor' in the Ghanaian political and religious landscape. In a narrow sense, the 'Northern Factor' in Ghanaian history was and is about the spread and impact of Islam. In fact, there has been a slow, but ongoing, politicization of religion in Northern Ghana. It went almost unnoticed at first during the 1950s and 1970s, but since the 1980s it has been a noted fact.[250] As Kirby notes:

> The growing rift between Islam and Christianity in Northern Ghana is more political than religious and it involves the difficult transition from a hierarchical traditional State to a modern democratic one… [However,] the increase in politically motivated religious polarization is a serious threat to peace and justice, freedom and democracy. Religious institutions, even more than others because of their fundamental nature, tend towards dogmatism. […] Suddenly all Christians are suspected because some are inimical toward the 'traditional state'. And all Muslims are suspected by 'minorities' precisely because Islam has always aligned itself with the 'traditional state'.[251]

Although it was soon realized that the Northern Conflicts were in themselves not religiously motivated, the clash between the Konkomba and others was in a sense also perceived as a clash between African traditional religions and Islam since the Gonja, Nanumba and Dagbamba were believed to be Muslims. Following Kirby, one cannot reduce the Northern Conflicts to only representing a 'typical' inter-ethnic conflict, but in case of the conflict between the Konkomba and the Dagbamba (and similarly between other chiefless/stateless societies and chiefly societies in the North), one has to recognize the cultural complexity of the conflict. Kirby summarizes the complexity of the conflict by pointing towards four cultural aspects that creates a negative synergy. First, the question of aggression vs. compliance and avoidance, defined by Kirby as the unequal relationship between the 'Hit-people' and the 'Run-people', i.e., patterns of the aggressive and the submissive. Second, the question of 'big-men' versus 'small-men', i.e., power pathways including the issue of chiefs, their position, status and influence. Third, the conflict between the 'Land-people' and the 'Earth-people', i.e., economic pathways, most notably the issue of land ownership. Fourth, the metaphysical or religious dimension, namely the

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[248] Brukum 2000–2001, 133, 139.
[249] Kirby 1999; Kirby 2002; Kirby 2003.
[250] Ryan 1996; Kirby 2001.
[251] Kirby 1998, 4, 6.

Plate 28. Shaykh Abdul-Rahim Abu Bakar, Chief Imam of Zogbeli (left), the author and Shaykh Jabir Abdallah, Second Imam of Zogbeli, Tamale, 2000; photo: Afa Razaq.

relationship between the universal 'God-people' and the particular 'Earth-people'.[252] By playing down or even unlinking the religious dimension from an analysis of the Northern Conflicts, or not including the religious factor in an analysis of the causes and consequences of the conflicts, as well as not including the religious dimension in the peace process, will make the peace process in the North instable, if not impossible.[253]

4.3. Intra-Muslim Clashes

Despite the increasing religious split in the North, most observers do not regard an outright inter-religious conflict to be imminent. The main reason for their assumption is that the Muslims, the Christians or the adherents of African Traditional Religions would not politically gain from such a conflict and that the Muslims are at least officially backing the secular constitution of the Ghanaian state. However, as was the case in the Guinea Fowl War, the religious factor can be mobilized in political conflicts. Contemporary Ghana has time and again been shattered by intra-religious conflicts, especially within the Muslim community. The usual background for these is a dispute about the leadership of the local community and the local mosque. Such disputes have caused fights among members of the Tijaniyya, the Ahmadiyya and

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[252] Kirby 2002, 15.
[253] Kirby, HW personal communication (2001–2005).

the Ahlus-Sunna.[254] Though these clashes are usually localized ones, they are part of a more serious debate about who has the right to interpret what is wrong and what is right. Moreover, the disputes between the Tijaniyya and the Ahlus-Sunna are part of a general struggle between 'pure' Islam and 'local' Islam, between a 'modern' and a 'traditional' Islam. Whereas the spread of the Ahlus-Sunna in Ghana is part of a general politicization of Islam (or, rather, the Islamization of politics)[255] and the spread of political Islam in West Africa, the adherents of the Tijaniyya stress a moderate approach and defend their Sufi interpretation.[256]

Intra-religious clashes within the Muslim community are not a new phenomenon. In general, tensions within the Muslim community in the Voltaic Basin, in Asante and the Gold Coast were at first mainly personal and concerned the political leadership of the (*zongo*) community or the religious leadership of a particular mosque community. Outside intervention by non-Muslim political authorities occurred if the Muslim community was unable to solve their difficulties, as was the case in Kete-Krachi at the end of the nineteenth century when the German colonial authorities intervened in the selection of both the *sarkin zongo* as well as the local imam (see further Chapter III). In the coastal Muslim enclaves, for example those in Accra, conflicts over imamships and about the position of leader of the community[257] several times resulted in the split of the community and the foundation of new *zongo*s.[258] Another type of problem, that of ritual and doctrinal purity, is also evident at the end of the nineteenth century and was emphasized in the criticism by mainly Hausa scholars, such as Malam Halidu (Khālid) in Yendi, about the lax adherence of Islam among the Dagbamba Muslims in the town (see further Chapter III). Another longstanding controversy among the Muslim leadership, both in Accra and elsewhere, has been as to define the exact dates for Ramadan.[259]

Until the end of the colonial period, intra-religious tensions rarely ended up in violence between two contesting parties – apart form the open conflict between the Ahmadiyya and the Tijaniyya in the North. Tensions within the Muslim communities were largely linked to ethnicity such as among the Hausa, the Fulani (FulBe) and the Yoruba about leadership in Accra or between Hausa *malam*s and others in the North about the commitment to ritual 'purity' and the degree of permitted 'mixing' of Islamic norms and non-Islamic traditions. Few of these intra-community conflicts

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[254] Hughes 2003; Tsikata & Seini 2004.
[255] Hodgkin 1998, 199–200.
[256] Hunwick 1997.
[257] Mumuni 1994, 33; Pellow 2002, 51. The controversy over the leadership of the Muslim community in Accra created a deep rift between the leadership of the Hausa and the Yoruba communities in the first part of the twentieth century. In 1915, the Hausa imam Muhammad Bako was blocked from entering the Makola Mosque, the main mosque in Accra, and due to the increased tension in Accra, the Makola Mosque was without an imam until 1923.
[258] Pellow 2002, 55, 58. Similarly, the foundation of the *zongo* in Atebubu was the outcome of a split among the Muslim community in Yeji (see further Chapter V).
[259] Mumuni 1994, 20.

ever made any headlines or alarmed the colonial authorities if they did not directly question the political foundations of the colonial sphere, i.e., the position of the local rulers or the colonial authority. However, some leading Muslim intellectuals, such as Imam 'Umar (Alhaji 'Umar) of Kete-Krachi, felt increasingly disturbed about the ongoing tensions among, for example, the Muslim community in Kumasi or in Accra. They would underline the futility of the conflicts and would stress the unity of the community, or, as Imam 'Umar in one of his last poems pointed out, Islam was not and is not linked with ethnicity or tribe but stands above such pettiness. Commenting on the dispute between the various ethnic groups in Accra, he wrote in ca. 1931/32:

> Everyone who enters Islam is a brother, be he an Arab, or non-Arab. He is of equal standing in the religion… The Berber… Slav… Hindi… Turk… Copt… Kra.. They are all equal in religion, and there are no distinctions. If a Grunshi or a Gao becomes a Muslim, they become our brothers without grudge. Do not say, 'I am a Hausa and my country is Kano'; he is a dull man, and his country is Afadwa (the land of the ignorant ones).[260]

Up until the late colonial period, conflicts among the Muslim community in the Gold Coast and its hinterland remained largely inter-tribal and only to a lesser extent doctrinal. Whereas French colonial authorities in French West Africa became increasingly aware of the upsurge of what they perceived as a radical minority of 'Arabized' Muslim scholars, British authorities, as previously stated, had little to say about such trends in the Gold Coast, and even regarded the whole issue as unimportant.[261] However, in retrospect one can see that the British authorities missed the emergence of a new Islamic identity. Perhaps as early as the late 1940s, but certainly during the 1950s, a few Muslim scholars started to preach and act in a way which previously had been more or less unknown in the Voltaic Basin and the Gold Coast, with the exception of the few itinerant Muslim or Mahdistic preachers at the beginning of the twentieth century. The impact of these 'radical' Muslim scholars was soon felt and by the 1960s, the Ghanaian (Sunni) Muslim community was already split into two openly adverse groups, known as the Tijanis or *Naawun Nyariba*, 'those who see God' (Dagbanli), and the Ahlus-Sunna or 'rejecters' (*Munchire*) as they are called in Dagbon.[262]

The beginning of the Ahlus-Sunna in Ghana is only superficially known. Research on similar socio-religious movements in West Africa points towards some common trends and conditions for the upsurge of them and can be used to discuss the general framework for the rise of 'Wahhabism' or what some researchers have termed the process of Arabization and 'reformism' in contemporary West Africa.[263] In

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[260] IAS/AR/132, quoted in Dretke 1968, 180.
[261] Seesemann 2004, 514.
[262] Seidu 1989. 291, 298; Alhaji Mumuni, personal information 2005.
[263] See further Kaba 1974; Brenner 1993; Westerlund 1997; LeBlanc 1999; Loimeier 2006. The term 'reformism' is preferred by Soares to designate various 'reformist' ideas, including anti-Sufi
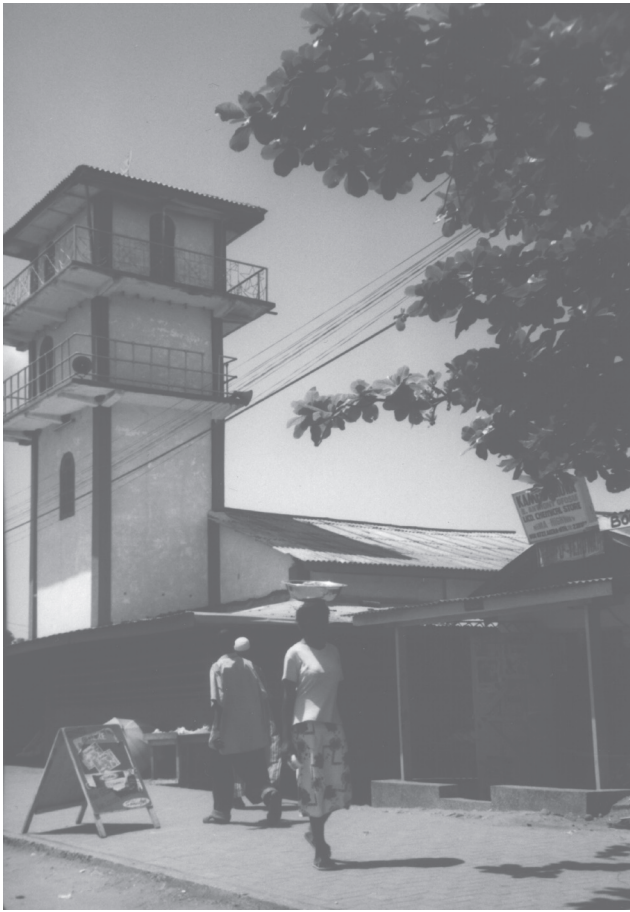
Plate 29. Nima Central Friday Mosque, Accra, 2005; photo: HW.

general, the rise of the Ahlus-Sunna can be identified as an intra-religious conflict, as a gerontocratic clash and a reorientation and renegotiation of the 'Muslim sphere' in the modern world. At stake are both one's Muslim identity and one's position as a Muslim in society. Differentiation among the (Sunni) Muslim community in Ghana involved and still contains several layers and processes. On the one hand, there is the doctrinal clash between the Sufis and those who claim that Sufism, the Tijaniyya in Ghana, is mixing Islamic and non-Islamic practices. This is clearly a Wahhabi/'reformist' argument, being itself traceable to the eighteenth century. The basic argument of the attackers is that the *salat al-fatih*, a special prayer in praise of the Prophet and one of the cornerstones of Tijani spirituality, is regarded as *kufr*, unbelief, since the Tijanis claim that the recitation of the *salat al-fatih* once is equivalent in merit to reading the whole Quran six thousand times. Furthermore, Tijani scholars are attacked for negatively 'mixing' Islamic and non-Islamic practices when they make and sell amulets and talismans. This practice is regarded as *bid'a* or 'unlawful innovation' and is also rejected as unbelief. Tijani scholars are criticized for adopting and following 'un-Islamic' practices when they act as diviners or when they claim to have the power to treat infertility in women, impotence and mental problems. The Ahlus-Sunna or *Munchire* are vehemently 'anti-traditionalist' in

and Wahhabi currents. See further Soares 2005, 181.

the sense that they regard any attempt to include local traditions, '*urf*, such as the veneration of saints or the worship of any other than Allah alone, within Islamic practices as unbelief, *kufr*, or polytheism, *shirk*.[264]

However, the conflict between the Tijanis and the Ahlus-Sunna is not only about doctrines and norms. Two communitarian concepts are at odds: the egaliatarian approach of the Ahlus-Sunna versus the elitist network of the Tijaniyya.[265] It is a conflict between different types of knowledge and different ways to achieve knowledge. A key weapon of Ahlus-Sunna scholars in Ghana has been to mock Tijani scholars for their superficial knowledge of Arabic. This argument is repeatedly brought forward in the debate about which form of education Muslim children are supposed to received, namely a traditional one which emphasizes the mnemonic-style teaching of the Quran schools or the modernized one of the English/Arabic schools.[266] The debate about the type of education goes beyond the question of socialization of Muslim children. At the root lies the difference between who is to interpret Islam and who has the knowledge and position to do so: is it the esoteric Tijani Sufi *shaykh* or the modern *ustadh*, teacher, of the Ahlus-Sunna?

Language, knowledge and ritual practice become closely interlinked, which, as many researchers have noted, is not a new process in West African Islam.[267] However, as LeBlanc has stated, the distinctiveness of the contemporary Arabized version of Islam is that it relies on a democratization of literacy, in contrast to the 'restricted' literacy of the precolonial and colonial eras. What follows is that Arabic is no longer confined to rituals, the ultimate understanding of which is restricted to a few ritual specialists (the Sufi *shaykh*s), but becomes the language of more daily activities, both ritual and secular, which is understood, at least in principle, by all adherents.[268] The democratization of language is part of a 'social revolution' that is taking place among Muslim communities, both in Ghana and elsewhere. Due to their formal training in Arabic and the Quran, LeBlanc argues, educated young Muslims claim greater knowledge and a closer adherence to the 'real rules' of Islam; elders, especially Sufis, are associated with a range of religious practices which are portrayed as *bid'a*, *kufr* or even *shirk*.[269] However, though many of these 'younger' Muslims have at some stage visited Saudi Arabia, and many have even studied there at Islamic universities, the Ahlus-Sunna in West Africa in general, and in Ghana in particular, cannot easily be regarded as mere propagators of a Saudi/Wahhabi version of Islam or as the mouthpieces of Arabo-Islamic imperialism in Sub-Saharan Africa. Intellectual links from West Africa to the Arabian Peninsula have existed as

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[264] Hiskett 1980; Seidu 1989, 293–295.
[265] Ihle 2003, 160.
[266] See further Weiss 2007a. A similar debate has been going on in other West African Muslim countries, such as Senegal. See Loimeier 2002.
[267] Brenner and Last 1985; Soares 2005.
[268] LeBlanc 1999, 490.
[269] LeBlanc 1999, 501.

long as Muslim pilgrims have performed the *hajj* and returned home, and Tijanis are still today performing the *hajj* and developing close links with Middle Eastern countries without being converted to Wahhabism or 'reformism'.

On the other hand, the establishment of diplomatic links with the Gulf Countries, especially Saudi Arabia, gave a new, if not vital, impetus for the upsurge of Islamism and Wahhabism/'reformism' in West Africa, in Ghana in particular. As stated above, the early beginnings of the Ahlus-Sunna/*Munchire* in Ghana are not well known. In Dagbon, at least, several readings are possible. One is the gerontocratic conflict, perhaps closely linked with a political framework, namely the conflict between an older generation of scholars and some younger ones who also have political ambitions. Two of the most prominent Muslim scholars in Tamale during the 1940s and the early 1950s were Malam Nasiruddin and Malam Mutaka; both were Tijani *shaykh*s. During the time of political mobilization in the North, all important scholars, including Malam Mutaka and Malam Nasiruddin, openly supported the Moslem Association Party (MAP). However, many younger scholars, such as Alhaji Yusuf Ajurah or Afa Ajurah, were supporters of the CPP. The rift between the two groups of scholars became an open one when the Tijani scholars questioned the nomination of Afa Ajurah as the Northern representative in the Ghana Muslim Council.[270] Another point of friction was the visit of Ibrahima Niasse to Tamale and Yendi in 1950. Although his visit prompted a massive conversion to Islam in Dagbon, not all local scholars were supportive of the spread of the Tijaniyya. Afa Ajurah arose as the key adversary to the Tijaniyya; his argument was that the order was dominated by the Wangara and especially Hausa communities. As a result, Afa Ajurah distanced himself from the Hausa and Tijani *'ulama'*. In 1953, he started to build the Sakasaka Mosque, economically supported by the Saudi Arabian embassy.[271]

At this stage, Afa Ajurah seemed not yet to have broken with the Muslim community in Tamale, though it is obvious that the rift between him and the Tijaniyya must have gradually deepened. The split became an open one in 1967 when Afa Ajurah started to perform the Friday prayers in his mosque. Thereafter, he emerged as the leader of the 'reformists' in Dagbon. The visible division of the Muslim community in Tamale was and is further heightened due to the existence of two main mosques in town, the Friday Mosque, which is under the control of the Tijaniyya, and the Sakasaka Mosque, which is the central mosque of the Ahlus-Sunna. What followed was a politicization of the split as it affected not only voting patterns during elections but also other alliances. According to Seidu, the 'reformers' (Ahlus-Sunna) supported the NAL whereas the Tijaniyya backed the PP during the 1969 elections; in 1978 the 'reformers' were in favour of Acheampong's Unigov-project while the Tijaniyya opposed it. During the 1979 election, the 'reformers'

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[270] Mumuni interview 11.3.2005.
[271] Ihle 2003, 90.

Plate 30. National Imam of the Ahlus-Sunna Shaykh Umar Ibrahim Imam, 2003; photo: HW.

backed the Social Democratic Front (SDF) whereas the Tijaniyya supported the PFP. In the Yendi Skin Conflict, the Ahlus-Sunna is linked to the Andani gate while the Tijaniyya supports the claims of the Abudu gate.[272]

Much less known is the development of the Ahlus-Sunna on a national level. Accra and Kumasi[273] have developed as the two centres of the Ahlus-Sunna, apart from Tamale in the North. It seems, however, that the emergence of the group in the South is much closer linked with Ghanaian students returning from Saudi Arabia than in the North, although Afa Ajurah, too, established during the 1960s links with Saudi Arabia. With the establishment of Saudi scholarship programmes for Ghanaian students in the 1960s, the number of 'converted' or 'sincere' Muslims seems to have increased, and the first Wahhabi/'reformist' organizations saw light during the early 1970s. Dr. Ahmed 'Umar established the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs as an umbrella organization for all Saudi-trained graduates in Kumasi and Shaykh 'Umar Ibrahim Imam and Alhaji Shaiab Abubakar, both Saudi-trained

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[272] Seidu 1989, 317, 322–323. According to Ihle (2003, 90), the Ahlus-Sunna grew enormously in the Northern Region during the 1990s so that today it constitutes a very large section of the Muslim population, at least in Tamale.

[273] Kumasi was shaken by intra-Muslim tensions during the 1950s due to the disputes between the backers of the CPP, especially Malam Mutawakkilu, and the MAP, first and foremost Alhaji Ahmad Baba. The conflict came to a climax with the deportation of Alhaji Ahmad Baba in 1957 (Schildkrout 1970a, 385). As in Tamale, this conflict was not yet an intra-religious one, as were later conflicts in Kumasi. In 1968, the Kumasi mosque was closed due to the clashes between the GMC and the GMM over the leadership of the mosque; it was reopened in 1970 only after government intervention (Mumuni 1994, 120).

Plate 31. Mosque of the Anbariyya Institute, Tamale, 2000; photo: HW.

students, established the Islamic Research and Reformation Centre as a Wahhabi 'propaganda' organization in Nima (Accra) in 1972.[274]

Wahhabi/Ahlus-Sunna criticism against Tijani imams and scholars on ritual and doctrinal matters soon led to increased tension between the two groups and bloody clashes since the 1970s. Tamale was shaken by intra-religious clashes in 1977 when the spiritual leader of the Ghanaian Tijanis, the late Shaykh Abdallah Mai Kano, visited the town.[275] As noted earlier, most of the problems arose after disputes in connection with the selection of imams,[276] which has led in many places to the establishment of two separate mosques. Quarrels concerning rituals, especially at funerals, have time and again erupted into violence.[277] However, though the brawls between the Ahlus-Sunna and Tijaniyya might be regarded as trifles, their impact on the local level is usually not trifling at all. For example, during the affrays in Bole in 2002, about one thousand persons had to flee.[278]

Outside intervention to ease the tension between the parties at loggerheads has so far yielded little success. The very first attempt to invite both parties to a dialogue was tried by the late Gulkpe-Na Alhassan in April 1969, but the outcome of the public debate between Afa Ajurah and Shaykh Mai Kano was that both sides

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[274] Mumuni 1994, 52, 77.

[275] Seidu 1989, 297–298.

[276] For example, the mosque of Sekondi-Takoradi was closed for some time after intra-Muslim affrays in 1992 (Mumuni 1994, 201).

[277] In January 1998, the adherents of the Ahlus-Sunna and the Tijaniyya clashed in Wenchi, leaving 4 dead and 26 injured whereas in August 1998, 5 persons were injured and over 100 arrested after affrays in Kumasi (Religious Freedom Report 1999: Ghana, 3). In 2000 three persons were injured in intra-religious disturbances in Effiduase in the Eastern Region (Religious Freedom Report 2001: Ghana, 4).

[278] "Two Muslim sects clash," http://wwwmclglobal.com/History/Mar2002/05c2002/05c2r.html (14.3.2002); "Northern conflicts displace five thousand," http://www.mclglobal.com/History/Apr2002/04d2002/04d2r.html (5.4.2002).

disregarded the position of the other. Another early attempt to open a dialogue between the conflicting parties in Tamale was the initiative by the Saudi Arabian Ambassador Fuad Alfiy in March 1972, but again there was little understanding between Afa Ajurah on the one side and Regional Chief Imam Alhaji Adam and Alhaji Tahiru Issah, Imam of Zogbeli Mosque, on the other.[279] Interestingly, after the violence in Tamale in 1977, there followed a period of increased cooperation among the Dagbamba youth, despite doctrinal differences. Partly, this change was due to the realization that the intra-religious conflict would only increase the economic and social distress in Dagbon, partly it can be seen as yet another expression of different generational agendas and visions. The cooperation culminated in 1979 when both Ahlus-Sunna and Tijani youth rallied together in a demonstration against the Regional Commissioner's disinterest in the deteriorating living conditions in Tamale. However, unity faded away in 1985 with the PNDC government decision in the Yendi Skin Conflict (PNDC Law 124 of 20th November, 1985) and, as Seidu notes, "Dagbon was once again thrown into confusion as the Munchire/Andani group and the Tijani/Abudu group engaged themselves in war of words."[280]

Eventually, at least in Dagbon, most of the tension between the two groups has abated since the late 1980s. This was mainly due to the positive effect of yet another attempt to reconcile the two groups. In February 1988, the Islamic Centre for Education and Development organized an international conference for National Islamic Delegates in Tamale, and both the Ahlus-Sunna as well as the Tijanis attended the conference.[281] According to Seidu, the turning point of the conference was the appeal by the Chief Imam of Mecca to the Muslims in Dagbon to bury their differences. Furthermore, for the first time in decades, Muslims participated in the prayers in each others' mosques.[282] Since then, at least in Tamale, tension between the two groups has eased. When I did my fieldwork in Tamale, the situation was a stable one. Though there was not exactly open cooperation and outright respect, both parties were doing their best to create a platform for mutual coexistence. Still, whenever Muslim leaders deliver speeches during the ‘id-festivals or Ramadan, the populace is warned of the imminent danger of intra-religious friction and Muslims are asked to work for unity and dialogue among the Muslims.[283] Similar public

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[279] Seidu 1989, 324.
[280] Seidu 1989, 329.
[281] Among the delegates were the Chief Imam of Mecca, Shaykh Muhammad bin Subail, the ambassadors and representatives of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Pakistan and Nigeria, professors and lecturers from Ghanaian universities and abroad (Seidu 1989, 330).
[282] Seidu 1989, 330–333.
[283] For example, such requests were made by Shaykh Hussein Rashid, Imam of Salawatiyya Mosque in Tamale, during the ‘id al-fitr prayers in 2003 (Accra Daily Mail, 27.11.2003, http://www.accra-mail.com/story.asp?ID=8467 [25.2.2004]) and by the leadership of the COMOG in their 2003 Ramadan goodwill message (Accra Daily Mail, 30.10.2003, http://www.accra-mail.com/story.asp?ID=8060 [25.2.2004]).

Plate 32. Alhaji Dawda Mustapha, first row, second from the right, 2000; photo: HW.

calls for peace and unity have been made several times during the last decades at meetings of Muslim organizations.[284]

5. MUSLIMS IN CONTEMPORARY GHANA: TOWARDS AN ASSESSMENT

The position of Muslims in Ghana has changed tremendously since independence. Today they constitute a visible and recognized minority. However, the increased visibility was as much out of necessity as a planned objective of the Muslims themselves. After the failure of rallying the Muslim population behind a common political party, the Muslim leadership at large chose to distance themselves as much as possible from the political arena, thereby increasing their and their communities marginalization in Ghanaian politics and society.

What is evident is the failure to renegotiate the relationship of the Muslim communities with the independent state. Instead, the old-established policy of mutual non-interference – Muslims not questioning the political order, the state granting

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[284] For example, a resolution on the peaceful coexistence among Muslims and members of other religious bodies was passed by the first national conference of the Tijaniyya Muslim Movement in Accra in August 2005 ("Tijaniyans call for peace, unity," *Accra Daily Mail*, 24.8.2005, http://www. accra-mail.com/mailnews.asp?ID=13817 [8.2.2006]). On the 8th Annual Congress of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Students' Association of Ghana, Maulvi A. Wahab Adam underlined the necessity of tolerance and mutual respect ("Maulvi Wahab Adam cautions against religious fanatics," *Accra Daily Mail*, 21.3.2006, http://www.accra-mail.com/mailnews.asp?ID=15968 [11.4.2006]).

internal religious and cultural autonomy to the Muslim communities – was to be continued as if contemporary society had changed little. However, although such a policy was to keep the Muslims out of the political struggle in Ghana during the 1960s and 1970s, in the end, this policy was counterproductive and backfired. In sum: when the Muslim communities decided to keep the modern state and modern society as much as possible outside their 'sphere', they lost, or at least weakened, their capacity to compete for diminishing public investments and services. The outcome has been a double marginalization, political and economic, of the Muslims in Ghana. This marginalization is linked with the perceived 'Northerness' of the Muslims as most of the Muslims are believed to live in the northern parts of the country which politically and economically still constitutes the backwater of the country.

However, in the last decade there has been a noticeable 'wind of change', both in the Muslim communities and in Ghanaian politics. A new generation of politically active Muslims has emerged since the 1990s. Compared with the 1950s and 1960s, this generation emphasizes the need for an intimate relationship with the state, but not in order to 'capture' or 'Islamize' the state from within. Instead, the new generation of Muslim politicians seem to use the secular state as a platform and an arena for actions. Thus, the new generation of Muslim politicians can be regarded as having introduced a new type of awareness among Ghanaian Muslims, namely that of nation-building and the common national cause. Interestingly, from a historical perspective such a position is not at all impossible: backing the secular state today is analogous to backing non-Muslim kings in the precolonial era or collaborating with the colonial state. Critical voices have been raised by Muslims who are hostile towards a too intimate relationship with the secular state, but none of them would condemn the political order as such but rather strive to strengthen the autonomy and distinctiveness of a 'Muslim sphere' in contemporary Ghana.

The Muslim community in Ghana cannot therefore be regarded as posing a threat to Ghanaian society or even challenging the secular order of the Ghanaian state. Time and again the Muslim leadership has underlined that their communities are an integral part of Ghanaian society. Thus, accommodation and not rejection constitutes the basis of the relationship between the Muslim community at large and the Ghanaian state – and vice versa. Political issues, such as an attempt to introduce Islamic Law or even an Islamic Order, are ruled out by the Muslim leadership. Instead, the secular constitution of the state is acknowledged by them and is the framework for political and societal activities of Muslims in Ghana.

There exists a relatively good working relationship between the Muslim leadership and the state authorities, both on the local and the state level. Muslim political activity is not channelled through a Muslim or even Islamic party but is articulated through the existing political system. Thus, whatever politicization of Islam that has occurred in Ghana, it has not led to the radicalization of the Muslim

population. In part, this is due to the constitutional ban on religious or ethnic political parties in Ghana.

There has been, on the other hand, a marked politicization of Islam within Ghanaian civil society since independence and especially during the last twenty years. Clashes between the various Muslim denominations, especially members of the Ahlus-Sunna or Wahhabis/Islamists/'reformists' and the Tijaniyya Sufi order, about mosques and imamships have erupted many times. More problematic, and perhaps constituting a possible cause of future intra-ethnic conflicts in Ghana, is the religious factor in the Northern Conflicts, although only on a local and regional level (i.e., in Northern Ghana). However, although any Northern Conflict has a negative national effect, it is unlikely that such a conflict would lead to the radicalization of either the Muslim or the Christian general population in Ghana.