

# The Ethnic Factor in International Politics: Constructing the Role of the Nawuri in the Pan-Ewe Nationalist Movement

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## Abstract

This paper examines the German colonial project in Alfai in Northern Ghana as well as the roles the Nawuri played in the political activism of the 1940s and 1950s that sought to define the administrative status of the two Trust Territories of former German Togoland. Described as the “Togoland Question” or the “Ewe Problem”, the political activism has been labeled an Ewe affair, and examined largely within the framework of the pan-Ewe nationalists seeking to project an Ewe identity and establish an Ewe-dominated state. This study shifts focus to the roles that the Nawuri, a non-Ewe ethnic group, played in the pan-Ewe nationalist movement, and argues that the pan-Ewe nationalist movement was not entirely an Ewe affair; Nawuri association with and participation in its activities were conspicuous.

**Keywords:** Alfai, British, Ghana, Gold Coast, German, Gonja, Kanankulaiwura, Kete-Krachi, nationalist, Nawuri, Nawuriwura, Northern Territories, Trust Territories, Togo, Togoland Question

## 1. Introduction

A cursory reading of literature on the imposition of colonial rule on present-day Ghana and Togo cannot but leave the interpretation that the establishment of the boundaries between these two countries was problematic. The partition of German Togo between Britain and France in 1919 subsequently gave rise to local political activism in the 1940s and 1950s aimed at re-uniting the two Trust Territories of Togoland. Literature on the “Togoland Question” or the “Ewe Problem”, as it came to be known, discusses the issue exclusively in the context of pan-Ewe nationalism. Austin (1963: 139-145) argues that the Ewe sought to use the Togoland Question as a leverage for creating an Ewe state complete with all the devices, structures, paraphernalia and symbols of a modern state – a flag, anthem, leader, capital, embassies abroad, representations and a voice in comity of nations. Amenumey (1989: 45) differs. For him the Togoland Question was not an attempt by the Ewe to establish an autonomous Ewe nation but to ensure that the Ewe remained a single component within a larger political unit. This narrow interpretation ignores the diversity of ethnic groups and interests encapsulated in the Togoland Question.

This paper provides a case study of the role played by the Nawuri, a non-Ewe people, in the Togoland Question generally depicted as a pan-Ewe nationalist movement. It seeks to examine the extent to which the German and British colonial projects in Nawuriland, commonly referred to as Alfai in colonial records, created conditions of some sorts between the Nawuri and the Ewe for the pursuit of their separate goals and interests.

## 2. Methodology

The approach adopted in this study is the orthodox approach to historical enquiry that combines archival research with published materials and oral evidence from the field. Data for the paper were qualitative derived from systematic enquiry, analyzed and interpreted to make a sense of colonialism in Alfai and Nawuri collaboration with the pan-Ewe nationalists within specific historical contexts. The study made a wide use of primary sources obtained from a corpus of first-hand or original data on colonial policy in northern Ghana and Alfai in particular, Nawuri-Gonja relations and Nawuri collaboration with the pan-Ewe nationalists. Identifying the strong influence of colonial policy on Nawuri collaboration with the pan-Ewe nationalists, the authors gleaned data from edited compilation of archival documents on British rule in the Gold Coast and German policy in Alfai in German Togoland. These were collected English records and translated German documents into English consisting of internal and external correspondences of the colonial authorities, colonial reports and

Nawuri petitions. Data was also obtained from primary materials such as letters, memoranda, petitions and telegraph communications of the Nawuri which were in private hands. Reports of committees of enquiry on varied issues relating to Nawuri-Gonja relations were also utilized. These were Ampiah (1991), Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Gonjas, Nawuris and Nanjuro Dispute and Dixon (1955), Report of Mr. J. Dixon, Administrative Officer Class I, on the Representations Made to the Trusteeship Council of the United Nations Organisation, Concerning the Status of the Nawuris and Nanjuros within the Togoland Area of the Gonja District. Another category of source utilized was field research. Conducting interviews with Nawuri informants in six Nawuri communities in Alfai – Kpandai, Jadigbe, Nkanchina, Katiejeli, Bladjai and Kitare – data was obtained from oral history about German rule in Alfai and Nawuri collaboration with the pan-Ewe nationalists. Data from interviews were edited, scrutinized and compared to ascertain veracity, dichotomies and consistencies. Use was also made of data from existing literature. Literature on the definition of international boundary between Ghana and Togo, colonialism and the pan-Ewe nationalist movement were reviewed and examined, and their data were tapped. Thus, the paper is a product of processed and analyzed data from a variety of sources, the contents of which were carefully scrutinized, compared, evaluated and synthesized.

### 3. The Study Area

The 'home' of the Nawuri is located in the eastern corridor of the Northern Region of Ghana. Nawuri territory borders the northern part of Volta Region, and shares common boundaries with the Achode/Chanla, Nchumurus, Krachi and Nanumba to the east, west, south and north, respectively. It lies approximately between latitude 8o 20' and about 8o 28' North, and stretches from longitude 0o 05'W to 0o 15'E on the map of the Republic of Ghana (see the map below). The Nawuri, the autochthones, were settled in Alfai long before the arrival of the first wave of Gonja immigrants in the seventeenth century. The Gonja neither conquered the Nawuri in Alfai nor did the two groups fight each other in the pre-colonial period. The two ethnic groups co-existed as political allies.

In about 1922, a small band of the Konkomba and the Bassari arrived in Alfai, and they were followed by waves of immigrants of different ethnic groups. The Gonja were a numerical minority in a heterogeneous Alfai. In 1948, the population of the Gonja in Alfai stood at 436. The Nawuri, Bassari, Konkomba, Kotokoli, Dagomba, Nchumuru and Chakosi populations were 1195, 1863, 2281, 510, 232, 250 and 211, respectively (NRG 8/2/10: Letter from Chief Commissioner to Ministry of Defence and External Affairs). In 1984, the number of inhabitants in Kpandai, the capital of Alfai, stood at 5252 of which only 700 were Gonja. The rest of the inhabitants belonged largely to the Nawuri (Ampiah 1991: part II, 215).

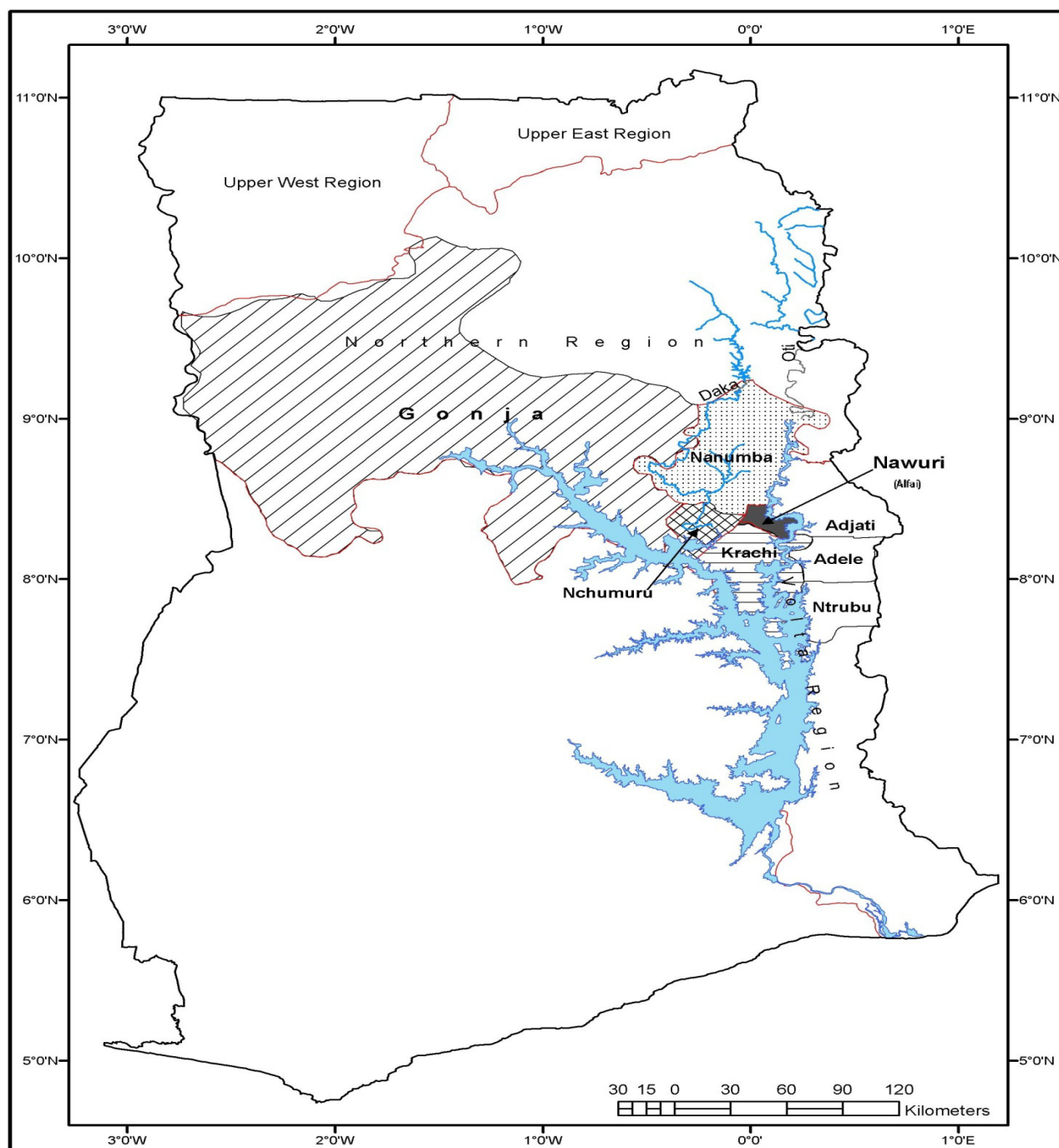
The Nawuri lived in several settlements in Alfai, and were ruled by their community chiefs. Their paramount chief, the Nawuriwura, resided in Kpandai. The Gonja immigrants lived in the "stranger quarter" (zongo) in Kpandai, and were ruled by their chief, the Kanankulaiwura. The earliest reference in recorded history to the office of the Kanankulaiwura and his role in Gonja political system was in 1751 (Wilks 1975: 265 and 275). From its primordial beginnings as the recognized head of the stranger community, the institution of Kanankulaiwura acquired the status of a traditional authority in Alfai in the colonial times.

Alfai (Nawuriland) as it appeared on Kate von Togo, a German map of 1906



Map 2: A map showing the location of Alfai (Nawuri) on the map of Ghana.

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



#### 4. Background to the imposition of German rule on the Nawuri Area

The history of German colonization of Togo and parts of northern Ghana begins with the arrival of Dr. Gustav Nachtigal and a party of German explorers and traders in Cameroon in July 1884 and the subsequent annexation of the Douala coast. Over time, the Germans moved inland, and extended their sphere of influence. In the same year, Nachtigal led a contingent of Germans to Lome and proclaimed a German protectorate over Togo. In 1886 and 1888, two German expeditions arrived in present-day northern Ghana, led by Krause and Captain von Francois, respectively. These two expeditions combined made contacts with settlements in present-day northern Ghana such as Savelugu, Yendi, Salaga, Gambaga, Karaga and Nanton (Staniland 1975: 9), and persuaded the

chiefs of these northern settlements to accept German protectorate.

The imperial penetration of the Germans in Northern Ghana alarmed the British as it threatened their commercial interests in the region by isolating their various coastal possessions in southern Ghana from the trade routes of the interior (Bening 1973: 229-261). Besides, Britain's eyes were set on Salaga, an important trade centre, and the caravan routes that converged on it. In the light of these commercial interests, Britain was determined to prevent the region from falling under the control of the Germans or the French, both of whom were pushing into Northern Ghana from Togoland and La Cote d'Ivoire, respectively. As the scramble for northern Ghana between Germany and Britain intensified, the two powers signed a bilateral treaty to determine their spheres of control. Consequently, a joint Anglo-German Commission was established in 1887, charged with defining the future limits of British and German Protectorates and spheres of influence in the territories lying in the interior of the Gold Coast Colony and the German Togo Protectorate. The Commission ultimately established boundaries for British sphere in the Gold Coast and a German sphere in Togoland. In addition, the Commission established a Neutral Zone between the spheres of control of the British and the Germans in the Gold Coast and Togoland, respectively. A conventional line was drawn on the latitude of the mouth of the river Daka by which the:

two governments shall naturally agree to regard the territories lying to the north of this line, within the limits marked on the accompanying map, as neutral ground, and to abstain from seeking to acquire within them protectorates or exclusive influence (Ibid.).

The Neutral Zone, as recommended by the Anglo-German Commission included Alfai. It stretched from Yeji to Yendi to the North-east of Asante and to the north of Eweland. The Neutral Zone protected that part of Northern Ghana against intrusion by either power. The agreement was silent about the advances by a third party into the Neutral Zone. Britain feared French advances into the region, which could jeopardize her commercial interests; accordingly, she considered it strategically expedient to negotiate treaties of friendship and trade with the local rulers in the Neutral Zone. Towards that end, Britain embarked on measures that could forestall French advances into Northern Ghana. For example, in 1892 and 1894 the British sent George Ekem Fergusson, a Gold Coaster, on an expedition to northern Ghana to sign treaties with the chiefs. For his first expedition in 1892, George Ekem Fergusson was instructed to "make treaties with Powers north of the nine degree latitude, outside of the Neutral Zone and to its west and north" (Thomas 1973: 181-215). In addition, he was instructed to conclude treaties with chiefs, who had parts of their territories overlapping the Neutral Zone. By the time Fergusson embarked on his second expedition in 1894, British apprehension about possible French intrusion into the Neutral Zone has increased and he was instructed to conclude treaties of "friendship and freedom of trade", but not treaties of "Protection."

Just like Britain, Germany also had a vested interest in Salaga due to its commercial significance. A statement in the German newspaper, the "Post", made reference to competition between Britain and Germany over Salaga, and insisted that "the possession of Salagaland must be one of Germany's inflexible demands" (Johnson (n.d.) SAL/98/1). Despite British and Germany interests in Salaga and other parts of the Neutral Zone, both powers refrained from proclaiming a protectorate over the states in the zone. Largely for economic reasons, Britain and Germany agreed to the partition of the Neutral Zone in a convention signed on 14 November, 1899. Article five of the agreement indicated that:

in the neutral zone the frontier between the German and English territories shall be formed by the river Daka as far as to the point of its intersection with the ninth degree of north latitude, then the frontier shall continue to the north, leaving Morozugu to Great Britain and shall be fixed on the spot by a mixed commission of the two powers, in such manner that Gambaga and all the territories of Mamprusi shall fall to Britain, and that Yendi and all the territories of Chakosi shall fall to Germany (Bening 1973: 229-261).

The division of the Neutral Zone led to the creation of international boundaries between Togo and the Gold Coast. Its effect was to bring a number of ethnic groups, including the Nawuri and the Ewe of present-day Ghana under German colonial administration in Togo.

#### *4.1 The German Colonial Project in Alfai*

By the beginning of 1900 German rule was firmly introduced in Alfai with characteristic German economic and political policies in place. Economically, the Germans attempted, though unsuccessfully, to make cotton cultivation the basis of rural economy. They, however, succeeded in stimulating a horticultural scheme that led to the growing of teak and mango trees in the area (Mbowura 2013: 201-220). Local labour was exploited for

carrying out government projects. As noted by Maier, “from the late 1890s onward all adult males were required to provide the German Government a certain number of days of labour – later it was set at 12 days annually and from 1909 onward the alternative of paying 6s. annually was instituted” (Maier 1983: 164). This system of “forced labour” was to become a major grievance of the Alfai people.

Politically, the German colonial project sought to configure the traditional political structure of Alfai. First, Alfai was included in the Kete-Krachi District, comprising six major traditional areas – Krachi, Nanumba, Nawuri, Nchumuru, Achode and Adele. Second, in an effort to centralize authority in Alfai, traditional norms and patterns of traditional observance were set aside. In their place, the Germans used the “warrant” system as a basis of investing traditional rulers with paramount power. By this policy, an immigrant Gonja, rather than an indigenous Nawuri, was made the paramount ruler in Alfai. As was the case of the warrant chiefs in Eastern Nigeria under British rule, the Germans ignored history and issued a ‘warrant’ to Kanankulaiwura Mahama Karatu, a Gonja to exercise centralized authority in Alfai that he had never exercised before. A document given to Mahama Karatu to that effect, dated September 5, 1913, and signed by Dr. Ravon, stated:

with the authority of Kaiserlichen station Kete-Krachi, the Native Mahama-Kratu of Kpandai is today to become Head Chief ... These villages are placed under him: (1) Kpandai, (2) Katiageli, (3) Balae, (4) Beyim, (5) Nkantschena, (6) Dodope, (7) Kabuwele, (8) Kotito, (9) Abrionko, (10) Suruku (Dixon 1955: 8).

Indeed, at the time of his recognition as the overlord of Alfai, Kanankulaiwura Mahama Karatu “had only come to Nawuri (Alfai in German Togoland) a short time before the outbreak of war” [World War I] (PRAAD, Accra ADM 11/1/1621 Extract from Report of Enquiry on the Sphere of Occupation of Togoland: 19). In the estimation of the Germans, Nawuri chiefs were unenlightened and incapable of an effective political administration in Alfai. Like their Nchumuru counterparts, Nawuri chiefs were deemed to be primitive, poor and unintelligent (PRAAD, Accra ADM 11/1/1621 Extract from Report of Enquiry on the Sphere of Occupation of Togoland: 18-19). By contrast, Mahama Karatu who was literate in Arabic, was described as enlightened and an “experienced man who had travelled much in the course of trade” (Brimah and Goody 1967: 70). In short, by the stroke of the pen and against history and tradition, the Germans made the Kanankulaiwura the repository of traditional authority in Alfai and subordinated the Nawuriwura to him. The result was that Kanankulaiwura Mahama Karatu and his successors were considered by the Germans and later the British as overlords and superior to Nawuri chiefs. When Alfai came under British sphere of Togoland in 1919, the British colonial authorities, for the sake of expediency, simply maintained the super-imposition of the Gonja as the overlords of Alfai. This sowed the seed of the subsequent rancorous relationship between the Nawuri and the Gonja.

#### *4.2 German Togo: the Making of an International Orphan*

German rule in Togo was short-lived, lasting only for fifteen years (1899-1914). In August 1914, the Gold Coast Regiment under the command of Captain Barker, accompanied by H.S. Newlands, a political officer, entered German Togoland, conquered and occupied it (Annual Report of British Togoland 1920/21:4 and 5). German Togo became an “international orphan” initially administered jointly by Britain and France first as a “mandate” of the League of Nations. By a provisional agreement signed in Paris on May 10, 1919, German Togo was partitioned. The western portion of the colony fell under British administration while the eastern portion fell under French administration. In July 1922, the League of Nations ratified the agreement and granted mandates to Britain and France over their spheres of influence in Togo. With the partition, Alfai and the entire Kete-Krachi District came under British rule.

Initially, the entire Kete-Krachi District was placed under the Ashanti Province. The Kete-Krachi District was made up of five divisions. These were the Krachi proper, Achode, Nawuri, Nchumuru and Nanumba. As British colonial authorities began to consolidate their administration in the Mandated Territory, they soon encountered the problem of poor communication and transportation network. The only motorable road passed through the district in a north-south direction. Kete-Krachi was “almost cut off from Kpandu and Ho by several un-bridged and difficult river crossings” (Bening 1999: 41). The all-weather road to Kete-Krachi was “through the Protectorate via Yendi.” There was no direct telephone link between Kete-Krachi and Kumasi. The result was that the administration of the Kete-Krachi District from Kumasi became problematic. For the sake of administrative efficiency, the Colonial Secretary and the Chief Commissioners for the Ashanti Province and the Northern Territories agreed, on September 1, 1922, to transfer the Kete-Krachi District to the Northern Territories (Ibid.).

In 1923 British Togoland was divided into the northern and southern sections for administrative convenience. By the British Togoland Order-in-Council of 1923, “it was decreed that 10,577 square miles (the northern section) of Mandated Territory should be administered as an integral part of the Northern Territories (PRAAD, Tamale NRG 8/3/53 Report of the Northern Territories for the Year 1935/1936: 5).” Until 1932, the northern section of British Togoland included Kete-Krachi, Eastern Dagomba and Kusasi measuring 3911, 4609, and 385 square miles, respectively (Bourret 1949: 98). The northern section of British Togoland was placed under the Northern Territories while the southern section was placed under the Eastern Province of the Gold Coast colony. This administrative arrangement was informed ostensibly by a so-called desire to integrate ethnic and traditional ties. In the words of Bourret, “it was because of tribal relationships that some two-thirds of the mandate was united with the Northern Territories, while only a small part was left for south Togoland (Ibid.).” It is important to note that the Permanent Mandates Commission had no intention of letting the mandatory power think that the territory thus administered was eventually to drift into annexation. However, this was not the case as the territory was eventually annexed to the Gold Coast (Ghana).

Meanwhile, the Kete-Krachi District to which Alfai belonged was kept intact except for Nanum, which was carved out of the Kete-Krachi District and added to the Dagomba District for historical, linguistic and cultural reasons. The Nanumba and the Dagomba belonged to the Mole-Dagbani speaking group, traced their descent from a common ancestor, and shared common cultural traits in all aspects of life. The new Kete-Krachi District was made up of Krachi proper, Alfai, Nchumuru and Achode areas with other tiny territories such as Agou (Chanlah), Adele and Ntrubo areas. Following the introduction of indirect rule in the Northern Territories in 1932, Alfai was carved out of the Kete-Krachi District and subsumed under the Gonja District. The Nawuri became subject to Gonja rule. They resented their subordination and subsequently petitioned the colonial government and the United Nations Organization to correct the injustice, but their petition was not heeded.

#### *4.3 The Nawuri and the Pan-Ewe Nationalist Movement*

In the late 1940s and the early 1950s as decolonization gathered momentum, the question of the future status of French and British territories of Togoland dominated political discussions in the French and British Territories of Togo. In Alfai, the Nawuri associated themselves with the cause of the pan-Ewe nationalists, who sought to reunite British and French spheres of Togo to await independence.

What made the Nawuri sympathetic to the cause of pan-Ewe nationalists? Until 1932, the British appear to be open to the possibility of Nawuri self-rule. This was implicit in a letter from the District Commissioner for Kete-Krachi District to the Provincial Commissioner of the Northern Territories dated September 4, 1932, which read:

I am sorry to hear poor man Kpembe (Kpembewura) is gone but he was too old and sick for the job and any-how the Kanukulaiwura will make an excellent successor and being educated he should do much for the prosperity and advancement of the division, he is not a man that the natives can take liberties with. The interesting point now is what are the Nawuris going to do? Are they going to submit to another Gonja chief or are they going to try and get a chief of their own [emphasis mine]? (PRAAD, Accra ADM 39/1/32 Letter from the District Commissioner of Kete-Krachi to the Provincial Commissioner of the Northern Territories).

However, as a result of the policy of indirect rule introduced in 1932, Gonja rule over the Nawuri was made irreversible. With the British subordination of the Nawuri to the Gonja, the former lost their allodial title to Alfai lands and their identity as an autonomous ethnic group. The “territorialization” of traditional authority changed the erstwhile power relations between the two ethnic groups and bred resentment and agitation on the part of the Nawuri. Nawuri agitation reached a crescendo in the 1950s which marked the peak of the political activism of the pan-Ewe nationalists in British Togoland. Ahead of the 1956 plebiscite to ascertain the future of the inhabitants of British Togoland, the Pan-Ewe nationalists in the northern sector of British Togoland sought to manipulate local feuds and grievances to their advantage. They appealed to the Bassari and the Nawuri by insinuating that unification of British Togo and the Gold Coast would mean their perpetual subjection to the Dagomba and the Gonja, respectively (Amenumey 1989: 265). The propaganda of the pan-Ewe nationalists appealed to the Nawuri and seemed to offer them a leverage; hence they were ready to work hand in hand with the pan-Ewe nationalists to their mutual benefit. By their collaboration with the pan-Ewe nationalists, the Nawuri sought to bring their local feud with the Gonja to the attention of the international community. The British colonial authorities were not unaware of the possible impact of the collaboration on the impending plebiscite. In the memorandum by the Secretary to the Governor, was this excerpt:

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

ascertain whether there is any discontent among other groups (PRAAD, Tamale NRG 8/2/211 Advisory Committee, “Memorandum by the Secretary to the Governor”).

What were the practical steps taken by the Nawuri to collaborate with the pan-Ewe nationalists and to internationalize their dispute with the Gonja? First, the Nawuri insisted that as the autochthones of Alfai, they and the Nchumuru be represented by their own indigenes on the Enlarged Joint Togoland Consultative Commission (EJTCC) created as a platform for consultations with the ethnicities in Togo. On July 14, 1950, the French and the British, as the mandated powers in Togoland, created the Enlarged Joint Togoland Consultative Commission (EJTCC) as a platform for consultation with the peoples in their respective territories of Togoland on their future. The Commission consisted of forty-five representatives – twenty eight from French Togoland and seventeen from British Togoland – freely elected. Alfai and Nchumuru areas under the Kpembe Division of the Gonja Native Authority in British Togoland were together given one seat on the EJTCC out of the fifteen seats reserved for British Togoland. On August 29, 1950, the Nawuri and the Nchumuru called a meeting and elected one Sawli Godfred Friko, a Nawuri, as their representative (Nawuri-Nanjuro Resolution 1950). The Kpembewura, the political head of the Kpembe Division of the Gonja kingdom, reacted against the action of the Nawuri and the Nchumuru, visited Kpandai and occupied it from 10th to 13th October 1950 with the help of a party of police personnel, demanded the nullification of the election of Friko, and succeeded in forcibly taking away all documents attesting to his election (Nawuri-Nanjuro Resolution 1950). In place of Friko, the Kpembewura appointed Alhassan Jawula, a Gonja, to represent Alfai on the EJTCC. Failing to annul the appointment of Alhassan Jawula, the Nawuri resorted to another practical measure; they invested in Mr. Wilhelm Helkel, the Krachi Representative on the EJTCC, what they called “our full MANDATE ... to put forth our full facts of our ultimate demands” to re-unite Togo. This measure was, however, unsuccessful as the Government of the Gold Coast prevented Wilhelm Henkel from representing Nawuri interests (PRAAD, Tamale NGR 8/2/210 “Mandate of the Nawuris: Enlarged Consultative Commission.”).

If other measures of collaboration failed; the sending of representations to the United Nations Organization by the Nawuri did not. In a league with other ethnic groups in the northern section of British Togoland, the Nawuri sent delegations to the United Nations Organization on a number of occasions and argued for a re-union of the two trust territories. For instance, in October 1952, the Nawuri and the Nchumuru authorised Mr. H.E. Anku Morny, to represent them at the UN General Assembly’s session. It is significant to note that H.E. Anku Morny was an Ewe in southern British Togoland, a pan-Ewe nationalist. His mandate was to protest against the amalgamation of Alfai with the Gonja kingdom, demand the transfer of their area from the Northern Territories to the Southern Section of Togoland, and demand the unification of British and French spheres of Togoland as demanded by the pan-Ewe nationalists (Nawuri-Nanjuro Petition 1952). In a letter to that effect, the Nawuri opined:

“we the under mentioned Natural rulers of Nawuriland and Nanjuroland in Togoland under United Kingdom Trusteeship do hereby authorize the bearer, Mr. H.E. Anku Morny to present our firm and foremost desire of being separated from the protectorate of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast and be placed in the Southern Section of Togoland, as were during the German Regime, and do hereby request our delegate and representative to protest against the arbitrary (division) of the Nanjuro tribe between the Krachi state and Salaga district in the protectorate of the Gold coast. That we also authorize the bearer, the said H.E. Anku Morny to protest vehemently against imperialists form of Administrative union which has absorbed our land which is part of the Togoland into the protectorate which is part of the Crown Colony of the Gold Coast before the General Assembly of the United States Organization, and to demand on our behalf the immediate unification and independence of Togoland” (Ibid.).

In the same year, the Nawuri and other ethnic groups in the northern section of British Togoland mandated Alhassan Chamba to present their oral and written representations to the United Nations General Assembly to add their voice to the demand of the pan-Ewe nationalists for a unification of British and French spheres of Togo. It is important to stress that Alhassan Chamba (the father of Mohammed Ibn Chambas) was a Nanumba Native in the Northern Territory of British Togoland. He was one of the few supporters of the Togoland Congress in Northern Territory of British Togoland. He accused government officials in the territory of conducting propaganda on behalf of those who wanted integration, and argued that the only solution possible was a plebiscite under the supervision of the United Nations Organization (Amenume 1989:244). By and large, the delegations added a non-Ewe factor to the pan-Ewe nationalist movement and also pushed Nawuri struggle for autonomy beyond the frontiers of the Government of the Gold Coast to the frontiers of the United Nations Organization.

Meanwhile, the Nawuri had not given up their idea of getting their own nominee to represent them on all



political forums or bodies established to determine the status of Togoland. In 1952 the EJTCC was replaced by the Joint Togoland Council. Alfai and the Nchumuru areas were together offered one seat on the new council to be occupied by a representative elected by adult suffrage. The hopes of the Nawuri in electing one of their own ethnic group to represent them on the council were dashed when the Alfai Local Council refused to sanction a general election, but decided to restrict the right to vote to its members. Two contestants – Alhassan Jawula (a Gonja) and J.K Mbimadong (a Nawuri) – were voted upon, but the former was elected by seventeen votes to three by the Gonja-dominated Alfai Local Council (PRAAD, Tamale NRG 8/2/210 “No.178/SF.9/185 Petition dated 1st February 1954 from Nawuris and Nanjuros.”; “Petition from Paramount Chiefs, Chiefs and Elders of the Nawuris and Nanjuros (T/PET.6/332).

Subsequent to the election, the Alfai Local Council decided to withdraw its representation on the Joint Togoland Council, since the Dagomba, Nanumba and Mamprusi areas had declined representation. Against Nawuri protest, the Council on June 19, 1953, voted to discontinue participation in the meetings of the Joint Togoland Council. In Nawuri circles, irrespective of the ethnicity of the representative of Alfai on the Joint Togoland Council, participation in it would sustain their collaborative efforts with the pan-Ewe nationalists; withdrawal would extinguish their yearning for a re-union of the two Trust Territories of Togoland. Pending general elections slated for 1954, the Gold Coast Government decided to suspend the participation of its Trust Territory in the Joint Togoland Council, but the Nawuri sustained their collaboration with the pan-Ewe nationalists. In 1954, the Nawuri decided to work through S.G. Antor, an Ewe and the key figure in the formation of the Togoland Congress in 1951, a party which was said to have adopted a militant posture against the British colonial authorities in its demand for a unification of the two Trust Territories of Togoland. Nawuri dealings with S.G. Antor, the “implacable opponent of British policy” (Amenumey 1989: 69) and the General-Secretary of the Togoland Congress demonstrated the strong collaborative links they maintained with the pan-Ewe nationalists. In 1954 the Nawuri and the Nchumuru mandated Alhassan Chamba and S.G. Antor to lay their concerns before the United Nations General Assembly. The content of the mandate was the same as that of 1952 (Petition of the Nawuri and Nanjuro 1954). In 1975 the Nawuri sent a delegation to Lome to attend a meeting of Togoland to discuss the possibility of resuscitating the scheme of the unification of former British Togoland and modern republic of Togo. Two of the Nawuri delegates – J.K. Mbimadong and Atta Karikari – were arrested by the government of Ghana, but the third – S.G. Friko – escaped (Petition of Nawuriwura Nana Bakianesu 1975). The two were subsequently released, but the arrests marked the demise of Nawuri collaboration with the pan-Ewe movement.

#### *4.4 The Togoland Congress and the 1956 plebiscite: the role of the Nawuri*

In 1951 the Togoland Congress was formed as one of the political parties dedicated to the cause of the pan-Ewe nationalists. It grew out of the division within the ranks of the Togoland Union over the question of whether or not there should be collaboration with the administering authorities and whether Togoland unification should be pursued within the existing administrative framework (Amenumey 1989: 139). As part of its strategy to expand its structures and support-base, the party sponsored J. K. Mbimadong, a Nawuri, to the Akome Gbogame Training College, with the objective of using him to increase its influence in Alfai (Letter: Mbimadong to Friko 1955). The party also made effort to spread its influence by electing executives for the northern section of British Togoland, and appointed Mbimadong as the Regional Secretary. In December 1952, the Togoland Congress sent a delegation to make oral and written representations to the Trusteeship Council of the United Nations Organization in support of the pan-Ewe nationalist demand for a unification of British and French spheres of Togo. The delegation, included Mbimadong, who affirmed that the people of the northern section of British Togoland were anxious to be united with French Togo. He stressed that union with French Togoland would accelerate the development of the northern section of British Togo (Amenumey 1989: 142). Mbimadong concluded by stressing that the people of the northern section of British Togoland had decided to support the pan-Ewe nationalist struggle for the unification of British and French spheres of Togo, and accused the British colonial authorities of suppressing their expressed wish (Ibid.).

Ultimately, the United Nations Organization conducted a plebiscite in British Togoland to determine integration or separation from the Gold Coast. No written records exist on the Nawuri role in the 1956 plebiscite, but facts gleaned from oral history suggest that the Togoland Congress mobilized the services of the Nawuri for propaganda purposes in support of separation (Mbowura 2002: 166). Propaganda was conducted both at the state and individual levels. Nawuri chiefs offered their support to the Togoland Congress, and utilized every little opportunity to campaign for a separation of British Togoland from the Gold Coast. At the individual level, Nawuri party agents roamed the entire Alfai territory, and mostly working in the Konkomba and Bassari

communities. Intimidations, and sometimes, physical attacks were unleashed by the Nawuri on their political opponents to subdue them. This, notwithstanding, the result of polls in the Nawuri and Nchumuru areas in the plebiscite showed 3,166 in favour of a union and 2,729 for separation of British sphere of Togo from the Gold Coast (Bening 1971: 88).

#### *4.5 Impact Analysis*

The impact of Nawuri association with the pan-Ewe nationalist movement was considerable. It deepened the rift between the Nawuri and the Gonja in the 1950s, which infrequently degenerated into skirmishes. The wrangle over the election of a representative to the Enlarged Joint Togoland Consultative Commission and the Joint Togoland Council divided the Nawuri and the Gonja into pro-pan-Ewe nationalists and anti-pan-Ewe nationalists, respectively, and this precipitated physical confrontations in Kpandai, usually at pito bars. The physical confrontations usually occurred on Kpandai Market days because on those occasions Nawuri traders trekked to Kpandai. The influx of Nawuri traders into the town created opportunities for attacks on the Gonja in Kpandai with or without provocations. One such physical confrontation between pro-pan-Ewe nationalist Nawuri and the Gonja occurred on a Kpandai market day on January 22, 1952 (PRAAD, Tamale NRG 8/2/210 "Note of a Meeting Held in the Ministry of Local Government on the 12th February 1952"; Letter from the Chief Commissioner, Tamale, to the Chief Secretary). The disturbance was apparently precipitated by a quarrel between a Gonja boy and a Nawuri girl in the market square in Kpandai against a background of the existing tense political situation in Alfai. The quarrel soon exploded into an inter-ethnic fight between the two ethnicities (PRAAD, Tamale NRG 8/2/210). There is the suggestion that the disturbance broke out because "some malcontents among the Nawuri in opposition to the Kanankulaiwura had moved from Kapiliagi (sic) [Katiejeli] ... and had had a brush with the Chief's (Kanankulaiwura) supporters in Kpandi (sic)" (PRAAD (Tamale) NRG 8/2/210 Letter from the Gold Coast Police, Tamale, to the Assistant Commission, Criminal Investigation Department.). About twenty people sustained various degrees of injuries at different scenes of fighting. The feuding relations remained unresolved after the 1956 plebiscite, continued into the 1990s, and subsequently led to the eruption of a conflict between them in 1991 and 1992.

Nawuri association with the pan-Ewe nationalist movement provided them with an opportunity to bring their local feud with the Gonja to the notice of the international community. In 1952, a United Nations Visiting Mission visited the various sections of British Togoland and collated views of the people concerning the future status of British and French territories of Togoland. The Mission reported that the leaders of the "Mamprusi, Dagomba and Nanumba tribes asked again as they have done in the past for continued integration with the Gold Coast" (Amenume 1989: 176). Alfai was the only exception to the rule. The three pro-pan-Ewe nationalist Nawuri on the Alfai Local Council consistently supported unification of British Togo with French Togo and asked for their state (Alfai) to be integrated into the southern section of British Togoland (Ibid.). The United Nations visiting Mission noted that their demand was quite secondary to their controversy with the Gonja; and that this controversy had arisen because the Nawuri were subjected to the Gonja under the Native Authority system. Accordingly, the Mission dismissed their petition as not being directly relevant to the Togo problem (Ibid.).

Collaboration with the pan-Ewe nationalists opened a window of opportunity for the Nawuri to send representations to the United Nations Organization. As already mentioned, the Nawuri sent delegations to the United Nations Organization in 1952 and 1954 to demand that British Togoland was re-united with French Togoland. Similarly, Nawuri support for the Togoland Congress opened a window of opportunity for J.K. Mbimadong to be included in the 1952 delegation of the party to the United Nations Organization.

Finally, Nawuri association with the pan-Ewe nationalist movement enabled them to gain access to legal counsel in their struggle against the Gonja for autonomy. In the 1950s, Yaw Datsa, an Ewe from the southern section of British Togoland, became the legal counsel for the Nawuri. It is unknown whether the Togoland Congress paid part of the fees for the legal services of Yaw Datsa on behalf of the Nawuri. What is known is that the Nawuri obtained Yaw Datsa's services at the behest of the Togoland Congress for mutual interests – to use him as a conduit to spread its influence in Alfai and to offer services to the Nawuri.

Nawuri association with the Togoland Congress increased Nawuri interest in western education. It has already been mentioned that the Togoland Congress sponsored J.K. Mbimadong to gain higher education at the Akome Gbogame Training College. Through Mbimadong, the Togoland Congress contributed indirectly to arousing the interest of the Nawuri in western education. Upon completion, Mbimadong did not offer his services to the Kpandai Local Council Primary and Middle Schools because of the preponderance of the population of Gonja

pupils in those schools, but offered his services to S.G. Friko, a Nawuri proprietor, who established the Katiejeli Primary School to provide educational opportunities for the people of Katiejeli in particular and Nawuri children in general (Log Book: Katiejeli Primary School). Indeed, it can be said that Mbimadong shifted the disposition of the 'illiterate and primitive Nawuri' towards western education. He was also instrumental in Nawuri struggle for autonomy. He spearheaded the formation of the Nawuri Youth Association in the 1970s, which became the structure within which Nawuri struggle for identity and autonomy were prosecuted.

#### 4.6 Lessons

The study provides useful and new insights for researchers on the pan-Ewe nationalist movement. An important lesson learnt is that it is misleading to label the pan-Ewe nationalist movement as exclusively an Ewe affair; non-Ewe ethnic groups associated themselves with, participated in, and contributed to it. The study has also shown that Nawuri identification and collaboration with the pan-Ewe nationalist movement was opportunistic brought about by the dictates of their local feud with the Gonja. The study provides a perspective and framework within which to interrogate the extent to which extraneous issues, rather than the desire to ensure that the Ewe remained a single component within a larger political unit, contributed to the crystallization of the pan-Ewe nationalist movement. Furthermore, it serves as a basis for examining the varied motives that brought non-Ewe ethnic groups such as the Krachi, Buem, Nkonya, Nchumuru, and to some extent, the Nanumba, among others, into collaboration with the pan-Ewe nationalist movement.

### 5. Conclusion

In 1899, the boundary of the Gold Coast-German Togoland was fixed, using the estuary of River Daka as the boundary mark. This brought parts of present-day northern Ghana, including Alfai, under German rule. In 1919 German Togoland ceased to exist as one political unit as it was partitioned between Britain and France, resulting in the separation of the Ewe into the two administrative areas, and the making of the Nawuri British subjects. The political activism in the 1940s and 1950s for the unification of British and French spheres of Togoland was not entirely an Ewe affair; non-Ewe ethnicities including the Nawuri associated themselves with the pan-Ewe nationalist movement and took an active part in it. Through the warrant system, which super-imposed the Kanankulaiwura over the Nawuri, the German colonial authorities created conditions which drove the Nawuri into the arms of the pan-Ewe movement. The amalgamation policy of the British colonial authorities which brought the Nawuri under Gonja rule created a Nawuri-Gonja imbroglio, which was exploited by the pan-Ewe nationalist movement for political advantage, and made Nawuri collaboration with the pan-Ewe nationalists expedient. In the 1950s the Nawuri utilized the opportunity of the political platforms created by the French and British administering powers of the Trust Territories of former German Togoland to jump into the bandwagon of the pan-Ewe nationalist demand for a unification of British and French spheres of Togo. Through sending representations to the United Nations Organization, and working through Anku Morny and S.G. Antor as well as the Togoland Congress, the Nawuri conspicuously collaborated with the pan-Ewe nationalists to bring pressure to bear on the United Nations Organization and the British colonial authorities to re-unite the two Trust Territories of former German Togoland.

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